

Research Evidence for Independent Reading and Reading Achievement

“Struggling readers need to read a lot because it is during the actual reading that they can practice all those complicated strategies and skills they are developing in unison. There is good evidence (Torgeson & Hudson, 2006) that we can design interventions that include word recognition skills and strategies and still be left with students who cannot read fluently and with comprehension. It isn’t that teaching struggling readers better word reading skills and strategies isn’t important, but rather that better word reading skills and strategies will not necessarily improve the reading of text—real reading, the ultimate goal. What we need in order to help struggling readers develop is the substantially more complicated achievement of reading text accurately, fluently, and with comprehension. The only way to do this is to design interventions such that struggling readers engage in lots of text reading.” -Allington, R. A. (2009). *What Really Matters in Response to Intervention: Research-based Designs*. Boston, MA: Pearson Education.

Krashen, S. (2004). *The Power of Reading: Insights from the Research (2nd ed.)*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann. Krashen reports that in 93% of reading comprehension test comparisons, children who read in class or who read more in class performed as well or better than counterparts who didn’t read or didn’t read as much.

Allington, R. (2000). *What Really Matters for Struggling Readers: Designing Research-based Programs*. NY: Longman. Replacing whatever went on in classrooms with added reading time was just as effective as, or more effective than, traditional instruction in enhancing reading comprehension.”

Cullinan, B. (2000). *Independent Reading and School Achievement*. School Library Media Research. www.ala.org/ala/aasl/aaslpubsandjournals/slmrb . “Collectively, research supports the fact that during primary and elementary grades, even a small amount of independent reading helps increase students’ reading comprehension, vocabulary growth, spelling facility, understanding of grammar, and knowledge of the world.”

Lewis, M. & Samuels, S. J. (2005). *Read More, Read Better? A Meta-analysis of the Literature on the Relationship Between Exposure to Reading and Reading Achievement*. Unpublished manuscript, University of MN, Minneapolis. Lewis and Samuels report on a meta-analysis of experimental studies of the relationship between “exposure to reading” (independent reading in any format) and reading achievement. Results provided clear causal evidence that students who have in-school independent reading time in addition to regular reading instruction do significantly better on measures of reading achievement than peers who have not had reading time. Reading time was especially beneficial for students at earlier stages of reading development: students in lower grades, those experiencing difficulties in learning to read, and students learning English as a second language.

Block, C. & Mangieri, J. (2002). *Recreational Reading: Twenty Years Later*. *The Reading Teacher*, Vol. 55, No. 6, pp. 572-580. Block and Mangieri report that abundant recreational reading (in and out of

school) has been linked to higher achievement test scores, vocabulary growth, and more sophisticated writing styles.

Taylor, B. Frey, M., & Maruyama, K. (1990). Time Spent Reading and Reading Growth. *American Educational Research Journal*, Vol. 27, pp. 351-362. As few as 15 extra minutes of reading make a difference, especially for struggling readers.

Kuhn, M. R., & Schwanenflugel, P., Morris, R. D. et al. (2006) Teaching Children to Become Fluent and Automatic Readers. *Journal of Literacy Research*, Vol. 38, No. 4, pp. 357-388. Kuhn and colleagues compared a repeated reading intervention design with one where struggling readers did some repeated reading but spent most of their instructional time engaged in independent reading. They wrote: "By the end of the school year, FORI (repeated reading) and wide reading approaches showed similar benefits for standardized measures of word reading efficiency and reading comprehension compared to the control approaches...benefits of the wide reading approach emerged earlier and included oral text reading fluency skill."