

# What Works Clearinghouse



## Alphabetic Phonics

**Effectiveness<sup>1</sup>** No studies of *Alphabetic Phonics* that fall within the scope of the Students with Learning Disabilities review protocol meet What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) evidence standards. The lack of studies meeting WWC evidence standards means that, at this time, the WWC is unable to draw any conclusions based on research about the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of *Alphabetic Phonics* on students with learning disabilities.

**Program Description<sup>2</sup>** *Alphabetic Phonics* is an ungraded, multisensory curriculum<sup>3</sup> distributed by School Specialty Intervention (formerly Educators Publishing Service) that teaches the structure of the English language and can be taught to individuals or small groups of elementary or secondary school students. This phonetic program teaches reading, handwriting, spelling, verbal and written

expression, and comprehension by simultaneously engaging students in visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learning. Each daily, one-hour session alternates between ten different activities: alphabet, review of letters, review of sounds, multisensory introduction of a new letter, reading, cursive handwriting, spelling, verbal expression, review, and listening.

1. The studies in this report were reviewed using WWC Evidence Standards, Version 2.0 (see the WWC Procedures and Standards Handbook, Chapter III), as described in protocol Version 2.0.
2. The descriptive information for this program was obtained from a publicly available source: the program's website ([http://intervention.schoolspecialty.com/downloads/povs/S-alphabetic\\_phonics.pdf](http://intervention.schoolspecialty.com/downloads/povs/S-alphabetic_phonics.pdf), downloaded October 2009). The WWC requests developers to review the program description sections for accuracy from their perspective. Further verification of the accuracy of the descriptive information for this program is beyond the scope of this review. The literature search reflects documents publicly available by October 2009.
3. *Alphabetic Phonics* is one of many curricula that are based, in part, on the principles of the sequential, multisensory Orton-Gillingham approach to teaching reading. Other WWC intervention reports related to the multisensory Orton-Gillingham approach include *Barton Reading & Spelling System*<sup>®</sup>, *Fundations*<sup>®</sup>, *Herman Method*<sup>™</sup>, *Orton-Gillingham-based Strategies (Unbranded)*, *Wilson Reading System*<sup>®</sup>, *Project Read*, and *Dyslexia Training Program*.

## Program Description (continued)

### The WWC identified 13 studies of *Alphabetic Phonics* for students with learning disabilities that were published or released between 1989 and 2009.

None of the 13 studies meet WWC evidence standards with or without reservations.

Three studies are within the scope of the Students with Learning Disabilities review protocol but do not establish that the comparison group was comparable to the treatment group prior to the start of the intervention.

Ten studies are out of the scope of the Students with Learning Disabilities review protocol.

- Two studies do not use a comparison group.
- Five studies have samples that are not aligned with the protocol—for three studies, the sample includes less than 50% students with learning disabilities, and two studies use samples that are not within the age or grade range specified in the protocol.
- Three studies are ineligible for review because they are not primary analyses of the effectiveness of an intervention.

## References

### Studies that fall outside the Students with Learning Disabilities review protocol or do not meet evidence standards

Briggs, K. L., & Clark, C. (1997). *Reading programs for students in the lower elementary grades: What does the research say?* Austin, TX: Texas Center for Educational Research. The study is ineligible for review because it is not a primary analysis of the effectiveness of an intervention, such as a meta-analysis or research literature review.

Carter, M. L. (2000). *Alphabetic Phonics as a reading intervention for students identified as dyslexic*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Texas A & M University—Corpus Christi. The study does not meet WWC evidence standards because it uses a quasi-experimental design in which the analytic intervention and comparison groups are not shown to be equivalent.

Chandler, C. T. (1990). The effects of the Orton–Gillingham treatment on reading levels of community college developmental students. (Doctoral dissertation, East Texas State University, 1990). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 51(10A), 3313. The study is ineligible for review because the WWC could

not confirm that at least 50% of the sample was classified as students with learning disabilities.

Chandler, C. T., Munday, R., Tunnell, J. W., & Windham, R. (1993). Orton–Gillingham: A reading strategy revisited. *Reading Improvement*, 30(1), 59–64. The study is ineligible for review because it does not use a sample aligned with the protocol—the sample is not within the specified age or grade range.

Davenport, M. W. (1993). *The efficacy of Alphabetic Phonics and Sequential English Education in the remediation of children with developmental reading disorders*. Unpublished master's thesis, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, TX. The study does not meet WWC evidence standards because it uses a quasi-experimental design in which the analytic intervention and comparison groups are not shown to be equivalent.

Dooley, B. (1994). *Multisensorially integrating reading and composition: Effects on achievement of remedial readers in middle school*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Texas Woman's University, Denton. The study is ineligible for review because the WWC could not confirm that at least 50% of the sample was classified as students with learning disabilities.

## References *(continued)*

Eden, G. F., & Moats, L. (2002). The role of neuroscience in the remediation of students with dyslexia. *Nature Neuroscience*, 5(Suppl), 1080–1084. The study is ineligible for review because it is not a primary analysis of the effectiveness of an intervention, such as a meta-analysis or research literature review.

Foorman, B. R., Francis, D. J., Winikates, D., Mehta, P., Schatschneider, C., & Fletcher, J. M. (1997). Early interventions for children with reading disabilities. *Scientific Studies of Reading*, 1(3), 255–276. The study does not meet WWC evidence standards because it uses a quasi-experimental design in which the analytic intervention and comparison groups are not shown to be equivalent.

### **Additional source:**

Foorman, B. R., Francis, D. J., Beeler, T., Winikates, D., & Fletcher, J. M. (1997). Early interventions for children with reading problems: Study designs and preliminary findings. *Learning Disabilities: A Multidisciplinary Journal*, 8(1), 63–71.

Guyer, B. P., & Sabatino, D. (1989). The effectiveness of a multisensory alphabetic phonetic approach with college students who are learning disabled. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 22(7), 430–434. The study is ineligible for review because it does not use a sample aligned with the protocol—the sample is not within the specified age or grade range.

### **Additional source:**

Guyer, B. P. (1989). *H.E.L.P. (Higher Education for Learning Problems)*. Washington, DC: American Association of State Colleges and Universities.

Hutcheson, L., Selig, H., & Young, N. (1990). A success story: A large urban district offers a working model for implementing multisensory teaching into the resource and regular classroom. *Annals of Dyslexia*, 40(1), 77–96. The study is ineligible for review because it does not use a comparison group.

Kuveke, S. H. (1996). *Effecting instructional change: A collaborative approach*. ERIC Documentation Reproduction Service No. ED392029. The study is ineligible for review because it does not use a sample aligned with the protocol—the sample includes less than 50% students with learning disabilities.

Ogden, S., Hindman, S., & Turner, S. D. (1989). Multisensory programs in the public schools: A brighter future for LD children. *Annals of Dyslexia*, 39, 247–267. The study is ineligible for review because it does not use a comparison group.

Uhry, J. K., & Clark, D. B. (2004). *Dyslexia: Theory & practice of instruction (3rd ed.)*. Austin, TX: Pro-ED. The study is ineligible for review because it is not a primary analysis of the effectiveness of an intervention, such as a meta-analysis or research literature review.