

# What Works Clearinghouse



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## WWC Quick Review of the Report “The Effectiveness of a Program to Accelerate Vocabulary Development in Kindergarten”<sup>1,2</sup>

### What is this study about?

The study examined whether exposure to Kindergarten PAVEd for Success, a vocabulary instruction program, improved expressive vocabulary of kindergartners.

The study analyzed data for nearly 1,300 kindergarten students in 64 schools serving predominantly rural and high poverty youth in the Mississippi Delta region and surrounding areas.

Eligible schools were grouped by their existing core language arts curriculum and then randomly assigned within these groups to either supplement the core curriculum with the Kindergarten PAVEd for Success program or not. At each school, the study followed the achievement of a random sample of 10 students in two randomly selected classrooms.

The primary study outcome was expressive vocabulary, as measured using the standardized Expressive Vocabulary Test–2nd Edition. The study assessed the Kindergarten PAVEd for Success program’s effectiveness by comparing the expressive vocabulary of students in the treatment and control groups at the end of the school year.

### WWC Rating

***The research described in this report meets WWC evidence standards***

**Strengths:** The study is a well-implemented randomized controlled trial.

### Features of the Kindergarten PAVEd for Success Program

The Kindergarten PAVEd for Success Program is a 24-week in-class supplement to a school’s core language arts program. It is built around three components:

- (1) *Explicit Vocabulary Instruction* on a large set of target words aligned with themes in Mississippi’s science and social studies frameworks
- (2) *Interactive Book Reading*, which involves teachers asking questions that promote comprehension and oral language skills during story-reading time
- (3) *Adult-Child Conversations*, which involves frequent teacher conversations with individual or small groups of students to introduce or use new vocabulary

### What did the study find?

Kindergarten students in schools using Kindergarten PAVEd for Success as a supplement to regular literacy instruction performed better than kindergarten students in control schools on expressive vocabulary. The estimated effect size was 0.14, a statistically significant result.

The authors reported that students who received Kindergarten PAVEd for Success instruction were one month ahead in vocabulary development at the end of kindergarten compared with students in the control group.

<sup>1</sup> Goodson, B., Wolf, A., Bell, S., Turner, H., & Finney, P. B. (2010). *The effectiveness of a program to accelerate vocabulary development in kindergarten (VOCAB)* (NCEE 2010-4014). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education.

<sup>2</sup> Absence of conflict of interest: The study’s authors were provided technical assistance by Mathematica Policy Research, which also operates the WWC. For this reason, staff from Concentric, ICF International, and Chesapeake Research Associates reviewed this study.

Quick reviews examine evidence published in a study (supplemented, if necessary, by information from author queries) to assess whether that study’s design meets WWC evidence standards. Quick reviews rely on the effect sizes and significance levels reported by study authors.

The WWC rating applies only to the summarized results, and not necessarily to all results presented in the study.