

Increasing Competence and Confidence for Middle School Students with Disabilities

Lovett, M., Frijters, J., Steinbach, K., Sevcik, R., & Morris, R. (2020). Effective intervention for adolescents with reading disabilities: Combining reading and motivational remediation to improve reading outcomes. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 113*(4), 656–689.

WHAT DID THEY DO?

Lovett and colleagues completed a randomized control trial of 6th, 7th, and 8th graders with a reading disability receiving intervention. Students were selected from urban schools in the Toronto and Atlanta Area. The sample included 514 students who scored poorly on a standardized reading measure. Researchers placed students into three intervention group types: PHAST Fluency, PHAST Comprehension, or a control group.

Students were grouped based on their reading skill rather than their grade and then randomly assigned to one of three interventions. Students grouped into PHAST comprehension focus or PHAST fluency focus received therapeutic motivational elements, (enhancing self esteem, reorienting reading perspective, peer support, and encouraging participation), interwoven into the lessons. Instruction included 4-5 sessions per week for 45-60 minutes, totaling 125 hours. Intervention was provided by teachers trained in PHAST programs, researchers, or special education teachers.

WHAT DID THEY FIND?

Students who received PHAST comprehension-focus or PHAST fluency-focus showed significantly greater growth on standardized assessments, experimental reading, and spelling outcomes than students in the school-based remedial program. Furthermore, students who participated in either PHAST intervention continued to grow in later developing reading skills a year after participating. PHAST comprehension and PHAST fluency equally showed positive outcomes for students. Additionally, participants of the two PHAST programs showed significant, positive effects on a sense of competence relative to participants in the remedial school-based groups. However, this motivational growth did not continue or accelerate for students a year after receiving the intervention.

WHAT COULD THIS MEAN?

The study suggests that a combined approach targeting decoding with either fluency or comprehension skills is effective for students with reading disabilities. This highlights the importance of moving beyond just basic phonics instruction and incorporating strategies to help students understand the meaning of what they read. The study also found that embedding motivational elements into lessons benefits students and builds their sense of competence in reading. Students attributed their reading success to their work in the PHAST interventions. Lastly, these interventions played a role in student reading achievement even a year after the intervention was given, showing its positive long term effects

Motivation	Interwoven into lessons, elements that enhanced reading self-esteem, reorient negative emotions, and built upon peer support, encouraged participation.
Decoding and Word ID	phonological and strategy-based reading instruction. 5 strategies taught: Sound out, rhyming, separating affixes, vowel variability, and seeking familiar parts in unfamiliar words.
Comp	five specific strategies: activating prior knowledge, predicting, setting goals, clarifying, questioning, summarizing
Fluency	students rereading various levels and applying word attack skills with automaticity. Direct and indirect vocabulary instruction. Students graphed progress.

