

INTEGRATING LITERACY & CONTENT IS EFFECTIVE IN FIRST GRADE

ARTICLE

Kim, J. S., Burkhauser, M. A., Mesite, L. M., Asher, C. A., Relyea, J. E., Fitzgerald, J., & Elmore, J. (2021). Improving reading comprehension, science domain knowledge, and reading engagement through a first-grade content literacy intervention. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 113(1), 3–26.

WHAT DID THEY DO?

Researchers examined a content-based literacy unit on first graders' ability to acquire science-based knowledge and vocabulary, and their engagement with and comprehension of text. Model of Reading Engagement (MORE) program was used.

In the study, 38 first grade classrooms were randomly assigned to either implement MORE or continue with their current literacy practices in 10 schools. Both groups had similar gender, race, ELL status, and IEP status demographics.

Teachers implementing the MORE program received 2-hour professional development, as well as ongoing support from literacy facilitators.

WHAT DID THEY FIND?

Students in the MORE group outperformed the control group on vocabulary knowledge assessments, argumentative writing performance, and on the Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) Primary Grade Reading assessment.

Reading engagement measures demonstrated similar results between both groups.

No adverse effects or significant growth were observed on mCLASS Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), which focuses more on basic literacy skills.

WHAT ARE MORE LESSONS?

- Were fully scripted, with autonomy for "teacher voice"
- Covered 10 days and were 60 minutes each
- Focused on a thematic units aligned to state and Next Generation Science Standards
- Lessons included carefully selected content vocabulary, interactive-read alouds of complex texts, explicit teaching of content vocabulary with multisensory strategies, creation of a class concept map, argumentative writing with open-ended questions, and a collaborative research group

WHAT COULD THIS MEAN?

This study emphasizes the importance of explicit vocabulary instruction, exposure to complex texts, and utilizing various modes of assessment. The results of the study highlight the benefits of integrating literacy and content, and following an explicit and systematic approach to vocabulary instruction.

It is important to highlight that no evidence of incidental vocabulary acquisition was found within this study. This further supports the importance of explicit vocabulary instruction.

Lastly, the researchers emphasize the importance of code-based instruction, in addition to language-based, at the first grade level.

