UFLI Boosts Learning Outcomes

Article

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What did they do?

Researchers conducted a study on the effect of an instructional reading skills program on 1429 Kindergarten students and 1338 First Grade students in a north central Florida district over a period of two years. Students were divided into two groups: one conducted business as usual (the existing reading program), and the other implemented UFLI Foundations in addition to the reading program. Student growth in reading skills was measured in the Fall and Spring using DIBELS 8th Edition subtests.

Using an implementation checklist, researchers also evaluated each teacher's adherence to and dosage of the reading program.

What did they find?

- The effect of the program is statistically significant, with students in classrooms that participated in UFLI Foundations performing higher than those in classrooms where students did not.
- The researchers noted that each component of the program contributed to student gains, specifically citing systemic encoding, continuous phoneme blending, articulatory gestures, intentional review, immediate feedback, decodable practice, and small-group sessions.
- Researchers found a correlation between the fidelity of implementation and student outcomes. The stricter that teachers adhered to the UFLI Foundations program, the better students performed on the end-of-year assessments.

What could this mean for teachers?

- A key component of UFLI Foundations is the practice of blending without breaking the speech stream. When students sound out words, they do not need to segment each sound, but instead, they blend as they go. This decoding strategy prevents memory lapses and reduces cognitive load, allowing students to put all of their focus toward the process of blending.
- When data show that older students are missing some foundational reading skills, explicit instruction in phoneme-grapheme correspondence, encoding, and decoding will improve outcomes.
- Interleaving is the practice of regularly, continuously, and systematically reviewing previously taught skills while teaching new skills. Extensive interleaving allows students to build skills with automaticity and confidence, especially when teachers focus on buildable skills related to the current lesson.
- Implementation fidelity of UFLI Foundations is encouraged and ensured through the use of the actionable framework embedded in the program, alongside teacher-specific coaching that enhances instruction.

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