

UFLI: ASSESSING EFFICACY AND TEACHER ADHERENCE

Districtwide pilot study of UFLI foundations. WestEd. (n.d.).

<https://www.wested.org/resources/districtwide-pilot-study-of-uflf-foundations/>

WHAT DID THEY DO?

Researchers executed a quasi-experimental design with pre and post-tests given to an experimental group and baseline equivalence. WestEd conducted an external evaluation of the UFLI Foundations program in partnership with Alachua County Public Schools to assess its impact on reading skills in kindergarten and 1st-grade students. The research question focused on whether students who received a full year of UFLI Foundations instruction demonstrated greater reading gains than students who did not participate in the program.

The study used a quasi-experimental design with pre- and post-tests, employing DIBELS reading measures to assess students at the beginning and end of each school year. The sample included 1,084 kindergarten and 586 1st-grade students across 21 elementary schools.

Researchers created a comparison group using students from the previous school year who received "business-as-usual" instruction. They then used propensity score matching to ensure baseline equivalence between groups, controlling for demographic variables such as race, gender, and special education status. Multilevel models were also used to adjust for student characteristics and teacher/school-level variables. The fidelity of UFLI Foundations implementation was monitored through ratings by literacy coaches, with teachers scored on adherence and dosage.

WHAT COULD THIS MEAN?

For teachers, it means that faithfully following the program as intended—adhering closely to both the content and the amount of instruction specified—leads to significantly better reading growth for students. In other words, the more accurately teachers implement each aspect of UFLI (as scored by the adherence and dosage rating of up to 4), the greater the positive impact on students' reading outcomes. The findings suggest that teachers should aim for:

- Regularly incorporating UFLI strategies and meeting the program's recommended dosage (frequency and length of sessions) contributes to more robust student progress.
- Sticking to UFLI's instructional design without deviating from the structured approach maximizes effectiveness. High fidelity, as shown by higher adherence ratings, correlates with greater reading gains for students.

WHAT DID THEY FIND?

Students in the UFLI Foundations program showed significantly greater gains in reading skills than those in the comparison group. Specifically, the effect size was 1.20 for kindergarten and 1.42 for 1st grade, suggesting a meaningful positive impact.

Students in classrooms where teachers implemented UFLI with higher fidelity (rated up to 4 on a scale of adherence) showed even stronger reading improvements.

In kindergarten, Black students performed lower than White students, while Asian students scored higher. Special education students also performed lower than their non-special education peers.

