

# Kids' Reading Success Boosted by Long-Term Individualized Instruction

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Students who consistently receive individualized reading instruction from first through third grade become better readers than those who don't, according to research published in [\*Psychological Science\*](#), a journal of the [Association for Psychological Science](#).

These findings come after a three-year study that followed several hundred Floridian students, who received varying amounts of individualized instruction, from first to third grade.

"Our results show that children need sustained, effective instruction from first through third grade if they are going to become proficient readers," said psychological scientist Carol McDonald Connor of Arizona State University, who led the research team.

Teachers involved in the longitudinal, randomized study used Assessment-to-instruction (A2i) software to make informed decisions about how to tailor reading instruction to meet their students' needs. Using algorithms, the A2i software recommended specific amounts and types of reading instruction based on the skills of each student.

Data from study showed that students who received individualized student instruction (ISI) in all three grades showed the strongest reading skills by the end of third grade, compared to those who received fewer years of individualized instruction.

“Another way to think about this is that 94 percent of the students in ISI classrooms from first through third grade were reading proficiently, compared to only 78 percent of the children who didn’t participate all three years,” said Connor.

In fact, students who were in ISI classrooms for all three years often achieved reading skills that were well above grade level expectations by the end of third grade, when measured by nationally-normed reading achievement tests.

The data are particularly promising given that they demonstrate improvement in reading scores for children from an economically and ethnically diverse school district that included urban, suburban, and rural communities.

The findings suggest that, with a little help from software programs such as A2i, teachers may be able to track student reading success and intervene more effectively.

“The individualized instruction was provided by regular classroom teachers,” added Connor. “So, I think the findings demonstrate that we can help teachers become more effective through professional development, supported by technology.”

Co-authors on this research include Frederick Morrison and Barry Fishman of the University of Michigan, Elizabeth Crowe and Christopher Schatschneider of Florida State University, and Stephanie Al Otaiba of the Southern Methodist University

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