Intensive remedial instruction for children with severe reading disabilities: Immediate and long-term outcomes from two instructional approaches


Abstract: Sixty children with severe reading disabilities were randomly assigned to two instructional programs that incorporated principles of effective instruction but differed in depth and extent of instruction in phonemic awareness and phonemic decoding skills. All children received 67.5 hours of one-to-one instruction in two 50-minute sessions per day for 8 weeks. Both instructional programs produced very large improvements in generalized reading skills that were stable over a 2-year follow-up period. When compared to the growth in broad reading ability that the participants made during their previous 16 months in learning disabilities resource rooms, their growth during the intervention produced effect sizes of 4.4 for one of the interventions and 3.9 for the other. Although the children's average scores on reading accuracy and comprehension were in the average range at the end of the follow-up period, measures of reading rate showed continued severe impairment for most of the children. Within 1 year following the intervention, 40% of the children were found to be no longer in need of special education services. The two methods of instruction were not differentially effective for children who entered the study with different levels of phonological ability, and the best overall predictors of long-term growth were resource room teacher ratings of attention/behavior, general verbal ability, and prior levels of component reading skills.

Year: 2001
Source title: Journal of Learning Disabilities
Volume: 34
Issue: 1
Page : 33-58+78
Cited by: 258
Link: Scopus Link
Document Type: Article
Source: Scopus
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