

Florida Center for Reading Research

Great Leaps Reading

What is Great Leaps Reading?

Great Leaps Reading is designed as a supplementary reading program to be used in conjunction with the curriculum currently being implemented. Its primary emphasis is on fluency, with the assumption that comprehension will improve if the child becomes a more fluent reader. The materials consist of an instructor's manual and student practice pages. Included in the instructor's manual are assessment guidelines to determine student placement in *Great Leaps*. Teachers, paraprofessionals, or volunteers administer the lessons in a one-to-one fashion in 5-7 minute daily practice sessions. During those 5-7 minutes, the student reads three timed readings, one under each of the following three headings: phonics, sight phrases, and stories. Each reading is timed for one-minute and the goal is for the student to read each page with no more than 2 errors. Error correction is immediate and followed by modeling of the correct response. When mastery is attained on a page, the student progresses, or "leaps", to the next page of slightly more difficult material. The curriculum extends from grades K-12, and there is material for adult use as well.



Is Great Leaps Reading aligned with Reading First?

Reading First specifies five critical components to be included in a comprehensive reading program: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. *Great Leaps* is designed to be a fluency-building program, not a complete reading program. Phonics are practiced within a fluency context, but are not taught explicitly. Phonemic awareness, vocabulary, and comprehension are not addressed. However, *Great Leaps* stresses that increased fluency can produce broad benefits in reading ability, including improved grade-level reading scores and increased reading comprehension. Training videos and/or trainers provide the initial training for *Great Leaps*. Further assistance is available through direct contact with the authors via phone or electronic mail. In Florida, trainers are also provided as needed through the Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resource System (FDLRS).

Research Support for Great Leaps Reading

The effectiveness of the *Great Leaps* reading program was the subject of a formal study conducted by Mercer, Campbell, Miller, Mercer, and Lane in 2000. Participants in the study were 49 middle school students with learning disabilities. The program was implemented over a 6 to 25 month period (excluding summer months), depending on each student's availability. In a pretest, intervention, posttest 3 group design, *Great Leaps* was implemented according to directions provided in the manual. Pretest and posttests were administered using curriculum-based measures (CBM). The researchers found that the *Great Leaps* treatment produced statistically significant gains in reading level for all three groups of students participating in the study. Group 1 in the study gained 3.14 grade levels in 19-25 months of intervention, group 2 students gained 3.08 grade levels in 10-18 months, and group 3 participants gained 1.82 grade levels in 6-9 months of intervention. It should be noted that the only reading outcome measured in this study was reading fluency, so these "grade level"



gains reflect improvement in a relatively narrow range of reading skill. It is also important to note that this study did not employ a comparison or control group. Thus, although the gains in reading fluency reported in this study are impressive, it is not clear that they can be attributed to the use of the *Great Leaps* program. That said, it would be very unusual to achieve this level of reading improvement in the absence of an effective intervention.

In conclusion, it should be noted that *Great Leaps* is consistent with current research knowledge in both its instructional design and content. There is encouraging research support confirming the efficacy of *Great Leaps* in improving reading fluency for middle school students. At this point, the research supporting *Great Leaps* is targeted at the middle school level; however, because the instructional design and principles are consistent throughout every grade level for *Great Leaps*, it is likely that similar outcomes at the other levels could be expected.

Strengths & Weaknesses

Strengths of *Great Leaps*:

- It is easy to implement and can be used successfully by a wide variety of professionals, paraprofessionals, and volunteers.
- Great Leaps requires only 5-10 minutes of intervention per day per student.
- Student progress is monitored, charted, and rewarded, thus increasing student motivation.

Weaknesses of *Great Leap*:

- None were noted.

Which Florida Schools Implement Great Leaps Reading?

Alachua County	352-955-7527
Bay County	850-872-7700
Broward County	954-765-6271
Calhoun County	850-674-5927
Duval County	904-390-2115
Holmes County	850-547-9341
Indian River County	561-564-3150
Leon County	850-487-7147
Marion County	352-671-7702
Okaloosa County	850-833-3100
Putnam County	386-329-0150
Sarasota County	941-927-9000
St. Johns County	904-826-2100
Washington County	850-638-6222

For More Information

<http://greatleaps.com/>

References

Mercer, C.D., Campbell, K.U., Miller, W.D., Mercer, K.D., & Lane, H.B. (2000). Effects Of a reading fluency intervention for middle schoolers with specific learning Disabilities. *Learning Disabilities Research and Practice, 15*(4), 179-189.



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Important Note: FCRR Reports are prepared in response to requests from Florida school districts for review of specific reading programs. The reports are intended to be a source of information about programs that will help teachers, principals, and district personnel in their choice of materials that can be used by skilled teachers to provide effective instruction. Whether or not a program has been reviewed does **not** constitute endorsement or lack of endorsement by the FCRR.

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