Jill Constantine,

I am requesting that What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) change its Beginning Reading effectiveness rating on reading fluency for Read Naturally, Inc. from mixed effects to positive effects for several reasons. Please consider and respond to the following information.

First, in a recent WWC review of a study by Dr. David Heistad, statistically significant gains in oral reading fluency for third grade students across multiple schools were not considered in the evaluation of the effects of a Read Naturally intervention on fluency. After reviewing the most recent WWC Procedures and Standards Handbook (February, 2013), the reason for exclusion may be due to a simple misunderstanding.

Page 15 of the WWC Procedures and Standards Handbook (Outcome Eligibility and Reporting section) states the following:

"....outcome measures is that they not be over aligned with the intervention. When outcome measures are closely aligned with or tailored to the intervention, the study findings may not be an accurate indication of the effect of the intervention. For example, an outcome measure based on an assessment that relied on materials used in the intervention condition but not in the comparison condition...."

The measure of oral reading fluency in Dr. Heistad's study was *The Reading Fluency Monitor*. It should be noted that *The Reading Fluency Monitor* is not a component of the Read Naturally Intervention. The *Reading Fluency Monitor* was developed by RMC Research Corporation, located in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Dr. Heistad's implication that *The Reading Fluency Monitor* was developed by Read Naturally, Inc. was a miscommunication in the Test Instruments section of his study. Heistad's verification of this misunderstanding is attached.

Second, the Arvans study summary analysis underestimated the effect of the Read Naturally group on oral reading fluency. The Read Naturally group had a large effect size of .81 for fluency. The control EAU group had a moderate effect size of .57 for fluency. Both groups had excellent fluency gains. It should be noted that the use of the Read Naturally Intervention was extensive at the school before the study was conducted. The teachers were well versed in the Read Naturally strategy. Students used Read Naturally in the first and second grade in the two years prior to the study. Also, some students in the EAU group used Read Naturally during the study. That is, it seems as though the EAU group may not have been demonstrative of a true control group. The difference between the Read Naturally group's .81 effect size and EAU's .57 effect size was .24 after eight weeks. An effect size difference of .24 is significant when extrapolated over a school year.

Ethan R. Van Norman, M.A., performed a similar analysis to what appeared in the Christ and Davie study (2008). In that study, the authors first calculated a slope estimate from three time points for each student in the EAU and the experimental group. The slope estimate represented the number of words read correct per minute (WCPM) improvement per week. The mean and standard deviation of slopes were then calculated for each group. The percent of improvement of the experimental group in relation to the EAU group was calculated. After this, the authors used the percent of improvement and applied it

to an aggressive rate of growth (1.50 WCPM improvement per week). That value was then multiplied by 36, and 1.50 was multiplied by 36. The difference between those values was then interpreted as a hypothetical effect if the Read Naturally Intervention was delivered across an entire school year.

A similar analysis was conducted on the Arvans dataset. Slope estimates were calculated for each student from two observations eight weeks apart. The mean slope value for the experimental group was 2.92 WCPM improvement per week (SD = 1.54) compared to the EAU group, which had a mean slope estimate of 2.24 (SD = 2.36). The .68 difference in mean slope for the Read Naturally Intervention group represents a 30% improvement over the EAU group. Assuming an aggressive rate of growth of 1.50 WCPM for typical students, a 30% increase would translate to a 1.95 rate of growth. Extended across 36 weeks, this represents a net increase of 70 WCPM compared to 54 WCPM with a typical rate of growth (1.50 WCPM improvement per week across 36 weeks).

Although not ideal, slope estimates from two time points have been used to summarize growth in previous CBM-R research studies (e.g., Christ, Silberglit, Yeo & Cormier, 2010). See the attached document for further details.

Another way to analyze the Arvans study is to use the Hasbrouck-Tindal Oral Reading Fluency Norms (http://www.readnaturally.com/howto/orftable.htm). The table suggests that third grade students at the 50th percentile have an average weekly improvement of 1.1 WCPM. The performance of the Read Naturally group in the Arvans study is also impressive when compared to the typical rate of fluency growth of third grade students.

Ethan R. Van Norman, M.A., did an analysis to extrapolate growth in the same manner using normative values. For third grade students, weekly growth estimates for students in the 50th percentile typically approximate 1.10 WCPM per week. Assuming the Read Naturally group's 30% improvement over the EAU group and the intervention is delivered for 36 weeks, a student in the 50th percentile, on average would be improving at a rate of 1.43 WCPM per week. After 36 weeks this would translate to an improvement of 51 WCPM compared to 40 WCPM if the student did not receive the intervention. This is a substantial difference.

Considering all of this information, Read Naturally programs should receive a positive effects rating for fluency. A timely reevaluation is critical so that WWC may change Read Naturally's effectiveness rating for fluency from mixed effects to positive effects. Please respond to the points I've raised in this email and let me know if you need further information.

Sincerely,

Tom Ihnot
CEO

Read Naturally, Inc.
2945 Lone Oak Drive, Suite 190
St. Paul, MN 55121
www.readnaturally.com
www.oneminutereader.com
651-452-4085
800-788-4085
651-452-9204 - fax

Read Naturally® CELEBRATING 20 YEARS

From:	Karla Ramy <kramy@readnaturally.com>
Sent:	Thursday, September 05, 2013 11:14 AM
To:	What Works
Subject:	To Neil Seftor
Attachments:	Christ Silberglitt Yeo Cormier (2010).pdf; Heistad.docx; EditedDeveloper Contact Attachment_Read Naturally Description.docx

Neil Seftor,

I have made a couple of minor changes in the program description for Read Naturally. (see attached)

In an August 26, 2013 letter from What Works Clearinghouse (WWC), Jill Constantine said:
> *Order of findings.* We appreciate and agree with your suggestion of July 17, in which you propose that the WWC list findings in order of their strength, consistent with the presentation on the web. Therefore, we will revise the order of findings listed in the text on the front page of the report, the associated table, and the website summary for the three reports with findings in more than one domain. We anticipate that the revised intervention reports will be posted to the web by the end of September. (Reference :QR2010013, WWC2304)

I look forward to this change being executed in September, 2013.

Please email a verification that the change in order of findings will read:

Read Naturally® programs were found to have potentially positive effects on general reading achievement, mixed effects on reading fluency, and no discernible effects on alphabetics and comprehension for beginning readers.

Also, I sent an email to Jill Constantine on August 26, 2013 requesting WWC to change its Beginning Reading effectiveness rating on reading fluency for Read Naturally, Inc. from mixed effects to positive effects. (See below)

Will my request in the August 26, 2013 email be reviewed now so that the Read Naturally revisions will include an effectiveness rating change from mixed effects to positive effects for reading fluency?

I look forward to the changes. It is critical that educators get accurate and up to date information.
Sincerely,

Tom Ihnot
CEO

Read Naturally, Inc.
2945 Lone Oak Drive, Suite 190
St. Paul, MN 55121
www.readnaturally.com
www.oneminutereader.com
651-452-4085
800-788-4085
651-452-9204 - fax

Jill Constantine,

I am requesting that What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) change its Beginning Reading effectiveness rating on reading fluency for Read Naturally, Inc. from mixed effects to positive effects for several reasons. Please consider and respond to the following information.

First, in a recent WWC review of a study by Dr. David Heistad, statistically significant gains in oral reading fluency for third grade students across multiple schools were not considered in the evaluation of the effects of a Read Naturally intervention on fluency. After reviewing the most recent WWC Procedures and Standards Handbook (February, 2013), the reason for exclusion may be due to a simple misunderstanding.

Page 15 of the WWC Procedures and Standards Handbook (Outcome Eligibility and Reporting section) states the following:

"….outcome measures is that they not be over aligned with the intervention. When outcome measures are closely aligned with or tailored to the intervention, the study findings may not be an accurate indication of the effect of the intervention. For example, an outcome measure based on an assessment that relied on materials used in the intervention condition but not in the comparison condition…."

The measure of oral reading fluency in Dr. Heistad's study was *The Reading Fluency Monitor*. It should be noted that *The Reading Fluency Monitor* is not a component of the Read Naturally Intervention. The *Reading Fluency Monitor* was developed by RMC Research Corporation, located in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Dr. Heistad's implication that *The Reading Fluency Monitor* was developed by Read Naturally, Inc. was a miscommunication in the Test Instruments section of his study. Heistad's verification of this misunderstanding is attached.

Second, the Arvans study summary analysis underestimated the effect of the Read Naturally group on oral reading fluency. The Read Naturally group had a large effect size of .81 for fluency. The control EAU group had a moderate effect size of .57 for fluency. Both groups had excellent fluency gains. It should be noted that the use of the Read Naturally Intervention was extensive at the school before the study was conducted. The teachers were well versed in the Read Naturally strategy. Students used Read Naturally in the first and second grade in the two years prior to the study. Also, some students in the EAU group used Read Naturally during the study. That is, it seems as though the EAU group may not have been demonstrative of a true control group. The difference between the Read Naturally group's .81 effect size and EAU's .57 effect size was .24 after eight weeks. An effect size difference of .24 is significant when extrapolated over a school year.

Ethan R. Van Norman, M.A., performed a similar analysis to what appeared in the Christ and Davie study (2008). In that study, the authors first calculated a slope estimate from three time points for each student in the EAU and the experimental group. The slope estimate represented the number of words

read correct per minute (WCPM) improvement per week. The mean and standard deviation of slopes were then calculated for each group. The percent of improvement of the experimental group in relation to the EAU group was calculated. After this, the authors used the percent of improvement and applied it to an aggressive rate of growth (1.50 WCPM improvement per week). That value was then multiplied by 36, and 1.50 was multiplied by 36. The difference between those values was then interpreted as a hypothetical effect if the Read Naturally Intervention was delivered across an entire school year.

A similar analysis was conducted on the Arvans dataset. Slope estimates were calculated for each student from two observations eight weeks apart. The mean slope value for the experimental group was 2.92 WCPM improvement per week (SD = 1.54) compared to the EAU group, which had a mean slope estimate of 2.24 (SD = 2.36). The .68 difference in mean slope for the Read Naturally Intervention group represents a 30% improvement over the EAU group. Assuming an aggressive rate of growth of 1.50 WCPM for typical students, a 30% increase would translate to a 1.95 rate of growth. Extended across 36 weeks, this represents a net increase of 70 WCPM compared to 54 WCPM with a typical rate of growth (1.50 WCPM improvement per week across 36 weeks).

Although not ideal, slope estimates from two time points have been used to summarize growth in previous CBM-R research studies (e.g., Christ, Silberglit, Yeo & Cormier, 2010). See the attached document for further details.

Another way to analyze the Arvans study is to use the Hasbrouck-Tindal Oral Reading Fluency Norms (http://www.readnaturally.com/howto/orftable.htm). The table suggests that third grade students at the 50th percentile have an average weekly improvement of 1.1 WCPM. The performance of the Read Naturally group in the Arvans study is also impressive when compared to the typical rate of fluency growth of third grade students.

Ethan R. Van Norman, M.A., did an analysis to extrapolate growth in the same manner using normative values. For third grade students, weekly growth estimates for students in the 50th percentile typically approximate 1.10 WCPM per week. Assuming the Read Naturally group's 30% improvement over the EAU group and the intervention is delivered for 36 weeks, a student in the 50th percentile, on average would be improving at a rate of 1.43 WCPM per week. After 36 weeks this would translate to an improvement of 51 WCPM compared to 40 WCPM if the student did not receive the intervention. This is a substantial difference.

Considering all of this information, Read Naturally programs should receive a positive effects rating for fluency. A timely reevaluation is critical so that WWC may change Read Naturally's effectiveness rating for fluency from mixed effects to positive effects. Please respond to the points I've raised in this email and let me know if you need further information.

Sincerely,

Tom Ihnot
CEO

From:	What Works
Sent:	Wednesday, September 04, 2013 3:07 PM
To:	Karla Ramy; info@readnaturally.com
Subject:	WWC Description of Read Naturally
Attachments:	Developer Contact Attachment_Read Naturally Description.pdf; Developer Contact Letter_Review of Read Naturally Program Description.pdf

Dear Mr. Ihnot,

The What Works Clearinghouse (WWC), an initiative of the U. S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences, was established to provide educators, policymakers, researchers, and the public with a central and trusted source of scientific evidence of what works in education. As such, we review studies on education interventions that may be included in our reports.

The purpose of the attached letter is to notify you that we are in the process of revising the four intervention reports that discuss Read Naturally® – Beginning Reading (update released July 2013), English Language Learners (update released July 2010), Students with Learning Disabilities (released July 2010), and Adolescent Literacy (released March 2013) – as discussed in recent communication from the WWC. In this letter, we ask you to review a brief intervention summary.

Sincerely,

Neil Seftor
Co-Principal Investigator and Deputy Project Director
What Works Clearinghouse at Mathematica Policy Research