

From: McGee-Cullen, Mary [MCGEEMA@tcaps.net]  
Sent: Thursday, April 05, 2012 3:40 PM  
To: What Works  
Subject: Read Natually Studies  
Attachments: Read Naturally Report.doc

Susanne James-Burdumy,

Attached is a summary of my experience with the Read Naturally program.  
If  
you have any questions or need addition information, please do not  
hesitate to  
contact me.

Sincerely,

Mary McGee-Cullen  
President  
Traverse City Education Association  
947-8375  
mmcgee-cullen@mea.org <mailto:mmcgee-cullen@mea.org>

Literacy Specialist  
Central Grade  
933-8987  
mcgeema@tcaps.net

March 29, 2012

Susanne James-Burdumy,

I was pleased to hear that What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) will be conducting updated reviews of Beginning Reading interventions. At this time, four misleading studies are currently posted to your website. Please know these studies do not address the implementation steps of the Read Naturally strategy. Unfortunately, my district curriculum administration used these studies to try to avert the use of this research based fluency intervention. After several teachers requested to pilot, the district agreed to use this program.

Read Naturally has a strong research base that utilizes research proven strategies of teacher modeling, repeated reading, and progress monitoring. These important strategies help to assure success of every student.

Over the past seven years, I have used three researched based interventions, Read Naturally being one of them. My Read Naturally students increased their oral fluency as proven by the Reading Fluency Benchmark Assessor (RFBA), improved comprehension as demonstrated by the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI), and for the first time, hear themselves as readers. This self-awareness as a reader builds confidence and improves students' attitudes towards reading.

As a Reading Specialist, I work with struggling readers on a daily basis. One struggling reader, used to cry at the sight of a book. After just a few months of implementing the Read Naturally strategy, this student has had a change of heart toward books. He even reads at home for pleasure as reported by his parents.

There are hundreds of case studies proving that the Read Naturally strategy significantly improves fluency, accuracy and comprehension of developing and struggling readers. I encourage you to analyze the control group studies that validate the Read Naturally strategy that can be found on the website, with several links available from <http://www.readnaturally.com/approach/research.htm>).

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Mary McGee-Cullen  
Reading Specialist  
Traverse City Area Public Schools  
(231) 947-8987  
[mmcgeema@tcaps.net](mailto:mmcgeema@tcaps.net)

**From:** What Works  
**Sent:** Friday, May 11, 2012 12:11 PM  
**To:** 'McGee-Cullen, Mary'  
**Subject:** RE: Read Naturally Studies  
**Attachments:** QRT 2012008.pdf

Dear Ms. McGee-Cullen,

Attached is a response to the questions you raised in your April 5 message to the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC).

Thank you,

What Works Clearinghouse

The What Works Clearinghouse was established by the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences to provide educators, policymakers, researchers, and the public with a central and trusted source of scientific evidence of what works in education. For more information, please visit <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/>.

-----Original Message-----

**From:** McGee-Cullen, Mary [mailto:MCGEEMA@tcaps.net]  
**Sent:** Thursday, April 05, 2012 3:40 PM  
**To:** What Works  
**Subject:** Read Natually Studies

Susanne James-Burdumy,

Attached is a summary of my experience with the Read Naturally program. If you have any questions or need addition information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Mary McGee-Cullen  
President  
Traverse City Education Association  
947-8375  
mmcgee-cullen@mea.org <mailto:mmcgee-cullen@mea.org>

Literacy Specialist  
Central Grade  
933-8987  
mcgeema@tcaps.net

# What Works Clearinghouse **WWC**

A central and trusted source of scientific evidence for what works in education.

May 11, 2012

Mary McGee-Cullen  
Reading Specialist  
Traverse City Area Public Schools  
[mmcgeema@tcaps.net](mailto:mmcgeema@tcaps.net)

Reference: QR2012008

Dear Ms. McGee-Cullen:

Thank you for your email regarding your experience with Read Naturally® and your concerns with the WWC reviews of Read Naturally®. In response to your email, we conducted an independent quality review to address the concerns you've raised. The WWC quality review team responds to concerns raised about WWC reviews published on our website. When a quality review is conducted, a researcher who was not involved in the initial review undertakes an independent assessment of the studies in question. The researcher also investigates the procedures used and decisions made during the original review of the studies. These quality reviews are one of the tools used to ensure that the standards established by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) are upheld on every review conducted by the WWC.

Regarding your concern that the steps of Read Naturally® were not implemented fully or correctly in the studies reviewed by the WWC, the quality review found that the WWC followed protocol in the manner in which WWC publications describe the four studies that the WWC reviewed: Hancock (2002); Denton, Anthony, Parker, and Hasbrouck (2004); Kemp (2006); and Chenault, Thomson, Abbott, and Berninger (2006). As noted in the WWC Handbook (available in the Review Process section of our website at <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/ReviewProcess.aspx>), "The WWC makes no adjustments or corrections for variations in implementation of the intervention; however, if a study meets standards and is included in an intervention report, descriptions of implementation are provided in the report..." (page 16). This approach is appropriate because there is no standard metric for fidelity to intervention design. Thus, the WWC includes studies with variation in fidelity and does not evaluate implementation fidelity.

The quality review team verified that variations in implementation that are noted in the four studies and that may affect the interpretation of findings were properly included in the WWC publications. Specifically, for each of these four studies, the quality review had the following findings:

1. Hancock (2002). This study is reviewed in a WWC Intervention Report under the Beginning Reading Evidence Review Protocol. The study does not note any deviations in implementation. However, following an inquiry from the CEO of Read Naturally® about implementation in this study, the WWC contacted the author. Hancock's response indicated that the study excluded Read Naturally's pre-reading vocabulary instruction component and the placement system to individualize instruction. The WWC

# What Works Clearinghouse **WWC**

A central and trusted source of scientific evidence for what works in education.

Intervention Report was revised to note these variations in implementation (see <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/interventionreport.aspx?sid=407>, specifically footnote 4 on page 2 and Appendix A1.). The record of correspondence with Hancock did not note any other variations in implementation.

2. Denton, Anthony, Parker, and Hasbrouck (2004). This study is reviewed in a WWC Intervention Report under the English Language Learners Evidence Review Protocol. The quality review found that the study notes that Reading Naturally® was combined with additional activities. The WWC Intervention Report properly identifies this as a “modified version” of Read Naturally and describes the modifications (see <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/interventionreport.aspx?sid=408>, specifically footnote 7 on page 3 and Appendix A1). There were no other variations in implementation noted in the study and there is no record of correspondence with Denton about other variations in implementation.
3. Kemp (2006). This study is reviewed in a WWC Intervention Report under the English Language Learners Evidence Review Protocol. The quality review found that the study does not provide any indication of variation from program design. Specifically, the study states, “...it could be concluded that all teachers implemented the Read Naturally® program as prescribed” (page 40). Furthermore, there is no record of correspondence with the author about variations in implementation. Based on this information, the quality review concluded that there was no evidence that variations in implementation should have been noted in the WWC Intervention Report.
4. Chenault, Thomson, Abbott, and Berninger (2006). This study is reviewed in a WWC Intervention Report under the Students with Learning Disabilities Evidence Review Protocol. In accordance with the study, the WWC Intervention Report notes that the students in the study were identified by researchers as dyslexic and that they were provided only 10 sessions of Read Naturally® (see <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/interventionreport.aspx?sid=409>, specifically pages 2-3 and Appendix A1). No other variations in implementation were noted in the study and there is no record of correspondence with the authors about deviations in implementation.

Based on these findings, the quality review team recommends no changes to the descriptions of the Read Naturally® in WWC publications. However, as you noted, the WWC is in the process of updating the Intervention Report for Read Naturally®, reviewed under the Beginning Reading Evidence Review Protocol. In this update, the WWC will use the current WWC evidence standards to review all studies identified for the previous report and all studies identified since that time. If the WWC needs any further clarification related to these four studies or any other studies, we will contact the author(s).

Finally, I appreciate you providing information about additional studies available on the Read Naturally® website. The WWC is committed to a comprehensive and systematic literature search process for every review. As part of the search process for the in-progress review of Read

# What Works Clearinghouse **WWC**

A central and trusted source of scientific evidence for what works in education.

Naturally®, we have identified all of the studies available on the Read Naturally® website. We also have requested and received studies from the developers of Read Naturally®.

I hope that this letter has addressed your concerns. If you have other concerns, please do not hesitate to contact the WWC through [info@whatworks.ed.gov](mailto:info@whatworks.ed.gov).

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

Jill Constantine  
Director, What Works Clearinghouse

cc: (b)(6)