

For Immediate Release

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Students Using *The Writing Road to Reading*, an explicit, multisensory, structured language arts program, scored highest in 4-Year Arizona Reading Achievement Study

Research Study Conducted by: Arizona State University-Technology Based Learning & Research (TBLR)

TEMPE, Arizona – This study compared the effectiveness of explicit, multisensory, structured language arts instruction to two conventional reading programs. Five Arizona experimental schools and six control schools with an average of 1,000 general education kindergarten through third-grade students participated each year. All students were tested three times each year on *Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS)*. Over four-years, the five experimental school students using *The Writing Road to Reading* program demonstrated higher mean values on every administration of DIBELS measures compared to six matched control schools using two conventional reading programs. Scores of experimental students exceeded control students' scores every year. The highest scoring experimental students (average effect size of 0.78) were those in the study from kindergarten through third-grade.

Fourth-year success was measured by oral reading fluency (ORF) on DIBELS. ORF has been recognized as the best overall indicator of reading proficiency for students in the early stages of learning to read. In addition to DIBELS, Arizona required all second-grade students to complete the *TerraNova*, a norm-referenced achievement test. Consistent with DIBELS results, experimental students' scores were significantly higher than control students.

Additional analyses show that experimental students' learning gains at each grade level exceeded the DIBELS decision rules benchmarks for achievement (as well as at each testing period). The average control student did not meet the DIBELS assessment for low-risk scores as of the middle of second-grade. Controls' achievement level average score was approximately five points below the DIBELS low risk threshold.

Although both control and experimental groups were evaluated by the Arizona Department of Education for research-based reading components -- phonemic awareness, phonics and word analysis, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension—results differed dramatically.

One difference between control and experimental programs is the method of instruction. The experimental program is explicit, multisensory, structured instruction incorporating all sensory pathways to the brain. Another unique aspect of *The Writing Road to Reading* is that unlike conventional programs, initial instruction connects speech to print rather than print to speech. That is a critical difference because new imaging technology reveals that early instruction determines how the brain organizes itself for reading.

ASU-TBLR – **Arizona State University** Technology Based Learning and Research (TBLR) is an independent research development entity founded by Dr. Gary G. Bitter at Arizona State University. TBLR's main goal is to provide a unified structure to coordinate various technology-based research and development projects. As an integral part of the College of Education, TBLR focuses on research and large-scale delivery of educational materials as well as technology training and integration using computers and other information and communication technologies.

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