

Effects of an intervention for first-grade students at risk for dyslexia

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The present study investigated the effects of an intervention for first-grade students at risk for dyslexia. Students at risk for dyslexia were randomly assigned to an experimental condition or a control condition. During first grade, 111 students in the experimental condition participated in a new training program comprising 76 sessions of small-group instruction in basic letter-sound knowledge, letter-sound analysis, blending for reading short words, and scaffolded reading of short texts. Teaching in the experimental condition replaced some ordinary classroom teaching. These students were compared to a control group of 96 students who received the usual instruction provided by their schools ('business as usual'). The students in both groups were assessed at the end of kindergarten before intervention and again at the end of Grade 1 shortly after intervention. Results documented medium to large training effects for letter-sound knowledge and reading of untrained words and non-words. The training was associated with a reduction of the proportion of non-readers by more than 50 percent as well as a significant reduction of risk for dyslexia at the end of Grade 1.

KEYWORDS: intervention study; prevention; reading difficulties; dyslexia