
Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI)

Reading Progress for LLI students in the Northwest Vermont Reading Recovery Consortium
2009-2010

Introduction

The following report describes reading gains for students enrolled in the Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI) program in the Northwest Vermont Reading Recovery Consortium located in a mixed rural, farm, and suburban community in the northeast region of the United States. The students served in this consortium are mostly White; between 16 and 40% are characterized as low income and 2.5-14% are described as English Language Learners.

Data were collected from 19 teachers who agreed to submit individual data forms for their students who participated in LLI during the 2009-2010 school year. The 101 students were from 17 different schools in the Northwest Vermont Reading Recovery Consortium. The completed data forms were sent to the author of this report either by the individual LLI teachers or by a district level contact.

What Is Leveled Literacy Intervention?

LLI is a short-term, small-group, supplementary intervention developed by Irene Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell. LLI is designed to serve struggling readers in grades K-2, although some school districts may use the intervention with older students (see Table 2). LLI is built around the text reading gradient designed by Fountas and Pinnell; this system designates leveled texts from A (the easiest texts) to Z (the most difficult).

LLI is described as a *system* because it includes reading, writing, and word study, each used together and systematically across increasingly difficult levels of texts. Three LLI systems currently exist:

- Orange, recommended for Kindergarten, levels A to C;
- Green, recommended for Grade 1, levels A to J; and
- Blue, recommended for Grade 2, levels C to N.

The K-2 LLI systems are designed to provide 14 to 20 weeks of daily, intensive extra reading lessons (beyond classroom service) that result in accelerated progress with flexible decision making about student entry and exit. Students enrolled in LLI participate in daily (five times per week), 30-minute literacy lessons taught by an LLI trained teacher. The recommended group size is three students at a time with one teacher to allow for close observation and differentiated response to student strengths and needs. Because of restrictions or limited resources, some school districts may alter these requirements but the goal of 1:3 and 5 lessons per week is highly recommended for the strongest outcomes.

The objective of LLI is to help students reduce the gap between their current instructional reading level and their expected instructional reading level.

The intended term of the intervention ranges from about 14 to 18 weeks after which time the students are released if approximate grade level expectations are met. At the end of this time period, students who have made progress but do not yet meet expected instructional reading levels for grade and time are re-

evaluated. The evaluation may suggest more time in LLI lessons or an alternative intervention (such as individual tutoring). Students who have not received a full program of services and are in the intervention at the end of the school year may continue to receive service at the beginning of the next school year. Some students who are taken in to the intervention may have achievement levels more than a year below grade level. Though grade level performance may not be achieved in the short term, if resources allow for service to continue, steady progress may warrant longer term service.

LLI Teachers

Data were voluntarily reported on 101 LLI students taught by 19 LLI teachers in 17 schools. The LLI teachers reported serving a variety of roles in their schools which included Reading, Reading Recovery, and Title 1 teacher.

The LLI systems were new to many of these teachers. Within the LLI Systems, lesson guides, professional development tutorials and DVD examples of lessons are provided. Many of the teachers did not report the source of their LLI training. Of those who did report their LLI training source, most were trained by Lesley University (see Table 1).

Training Source	% of Teachers
Lesley University	26.3% (n=5)
Heinemann	5.3% (n=1)
Other	5.3% (n=1)

Table 1. Source of LLI Teacher Training.

Only three teachers reported the amount of LLI training they received. Of those three, the LLI teachers received 42.7 hours or approximately five days, on average, of LLI training (*range*: 38-45, *SD* = 4.0). In addition, all of the teachers were trained in Reading Recovery, an individual tutoring approach that offers intensive literacy intervention for first graders (see whatworksclearinghouse.com).

Student Characteristics

Data were submitted for 101 kindergarten through third grade students. Of the total group, 54.5% were male and 44.6% were female, 81.2% were White, 7.9% were Black, 5.9% were Multi-Racial, 2.0% were Asian/Pacific Island, and 2.0% of the student's ethnic background was reportedly "Other". As an indication of students' economic status, information on free/reduced lunch was collected and 51.5% fell into this category. In addition, 12.9% of the children were English Language Learners. Refer to Table 2 for a summary of the LLI student sample size by grade and refer to Table 3 for a summary of the student demographics.

Student Sample Size			
Kindergarten	1 st Grade	2 nd Grade	3 rd Grade
4.0% (n=4)	45.5% (n=46)	41.6% (n=42)	7.9% (n=8)

Table 2. Student Sample Size.

Student Demographics								
% Male	% Female	% White	% Black	% Multi-Racial	% Asian/Pacific Island	% Other	% English Language Learners	% Free/Reduced Lunch
54.5% (n=55)	44.6% (n=45)	81.2% (n=82)	7.9% (n=8)	5.9% (n=6)	2.0% (n=2)	2.0% (n=2)	12.9% (n=13)	51.5% (n=52)

Table 3. Student Demographics.

Of the total group of LLI students, 4.0% ($n = 4$) had individualized education plans that mandated that they receive support for Reading and 10.9% ($n = 11$) of the LLI students had an IEP for other support services including support for Autism, speech and language, and emotional issues. Reading Recovery (RR) services were provided to 44.6% ($n = 45$) of the students prior to entering LLI. Of those LLI students who had RR attendance data available, the students received an average of 70.3 RR lessons ($n = 38$, *range*: 41-87, $SD = 10.8$) and 17.8% ($n = 18$) of them successfully discontinued from Reading Recovery prior to entry to LLI. While we did not ask the LLI teachers why students who had successfully discontinued from RR were subsequently placed in LLI, it is possible that these students required additional support to build confidence, fluency or other skill areas.

Results – Reading Progress

Below is a summary of the reading progress of 101 students who received LLI during the 2009/2010 school year in the Northwest Vermont Reading Recovery Consortium. Of the total group, 3 of the LLI students did not complete the full set of sessions offered to them because they moved, and thus, their data were eliminated from the analyses reported below. Furthermore, some of the data submitted by the LLI teachers contained missing or incomplete information. The reported results below also exclude cases with missing data.

LLI Groups and Student Attendance

LLI was designed to be delivered in a group of three students with one teacher, five days per week; however, the delivery of LLI in the Northwest Vermont Reading Recovery Consortium varied somewhat. Overall, each of the LLI groups was comprised of between two and four students ($M = 2.9$, $SD = .5$) and the groups met between four and five days a week ($M = 4.9$, $SD = .3$) for 30 minutes per session (see Table 5). Additionally, 95.9% of the LLI students received additional small group reading instruction in their classrooms (*range*: 2-6, $M = 4.0$ lessons per week, $SD = 1.2$).

The LLI students who completed the full set of LLI sessions offered to them and for whom attendance information was available received LLI for an average of 17.7 weeks (*range*: 4-35, $SD = 7.5$) and they attended an average of 63.5 LLI lessons (*range*: 14-162, $SD = 26.1$) (see Table 5). It should be noted, however, that some students were not able to receive the full intervention as the school year ended and their LLI teachers indicated that they would receive more LLI the following year.

Reading Progress

The data were collected and reported for LLI students only. No control group was identified and assessed and therefore, the Northwest Vermont Reading Recovery Consortium LLI student growth was compared to

Fountas and Pinnell grade level criteria (see Table 4) to assess the group’s progress. Each student’s reading gain was determined by looking at their pre- and post- LLI instructional reading levels (ranging from Pre-A to Z) which are based on the Fountas and Pinnell leveled text system.

- Obtaining Fountas and Pinnell Instructional Reading Levels**
 The F&P instructional reading levels were obtained through the teachers’ reports of their students’ instructional reading levels which were determined by administration of the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System or by the conversion to F&P levels of the teacher’s reports of their students’ score on other assessments including the DRA or DRA2, the Reading Recovery Observation Survey with Running Records, the Rigby Benchmark, and other reading assessments.
- Conversion to Time Equivalent (TE) Score**
 Once each child’s instructional level at entry and exit was obtained, the levels were converted to a Time Equivalent (TE) score which represents the number of months of school a typically progressing student is expected to have completed when they demonstrate the reading behaviors associated with each level according to Fountas and Pinnell guidelines. The TE scores represent the number of months the student was in school and are based on a ten month school year because children are not in school for two months of each year. If an instructional reading level is expected over more than one month, the TE score reflects the middle point of the expected band of time that the particular level is expected (see Table 4). For example, level C is expected at months eight, nine, and ten during Kindergarten and the time equivalent for level C is month nine.
- Calculating Reading Gain**
 The difference between the entry and exit TE score reflects the gain (number of months of progress) the student made between entry and exit from LLI. For example, a student who enters LLI at level A and exits at level C has progressed from what is expected in the fourth month of Kindergarten to what is expected in the ninth month of Kindergarten and thus, the student’s reading gain is five months.

Fountas and Pinnell Instructional Level Expectations for Reading and Time Equivalent Scores (months) for each Level										
	Month 1	Month 2	Month 3	Month 4	Month 5	Month 6	Month 7	Month 8	Month 9	Month 10
Kindergarten	Pre-A TE=2	Pre-A TE=2	Pre-A TE=2	A TE=4	A/B TE=5	B TE=6.5	B TE=6.5	C TE=9	C TE=9	C TE=9
1st Grade	C/D TE=11	D TE=12	E TE=13	E/F TE=14	F TE=15	G TE=16	G/H TE=17	H TE=18	I TE=19.5	I TE=19.5
2nd Grade	I/J TE=21	J TE=22.5	J TE=22.5	J/K TE=24	K TE=25	K/L TE=26	L TE=27.5	L TE=27.5	M TE=29.5	M TE=29.5
3rd Grade	M/N TE=31	N TE=33	N TE=33	N TE=33	O TE=36	O TE=36	O TE=36	P TE=39	P TE=39	P TE=39
4th Grade	P/Q TE=41	Q TE=43	Q TE=43	Q TE=43	R TE=46	R TE=46	R TE=46	S TE=49	S TE=49	S TE=49
5th Grade	S/T TE=51	T TE=53	T TE=53	T TE=53	U TE=56	U TE=56	U TE=56	V TE=59	V TE=59	V TE=59

Table 4. Fountas and Pinnell Instructional Level Expectations for Reading and Time Equivalent Scores (months) for each Level.

Overall, the LLI students progressed an average of 9.3 months ($n = 91$, $SD = 4.7$) from entry until exit from LLI. This growth was achieved during participation in LLI for an average of 17.7 weeks. It should be noted that while the LLI teachers strived to provide all scheduled LLI lessons each week, vacation and absentee days often made this impossible. In spite of this, the LLI students progressed an average of more than nine months in about four and a half months. Most of the LLI students moved forward at an accelerated pace when compared to typical reading progress over time according to Fountas and Pinnell guidelines (see Table 5 and Chart 1 below).

All LLI Students: Average: Number of Students in Group, Number of Weeks of LLI, Number of LLI Lessons per Week, Number of LLI Lessons, Student Growth					
	Average # of Students in Group	Average # of Weeks of LLI	Average # of LLI Lessons Per Week	Average # of LLI Lessons	Average Student Growth in Months
Kindergarten	M = 4.0 n = 4 SD = 0	M = 8.5 n = 4 SD = 0	M = 4.0 n = 4 SD = 0	M = 46.0 n = 4 SD = 0	M = 2.5 n = 4 SD = 0
Grade 1	M = 2.9 n = 44 SD = .3	M = 14.6 n = 43 SD = 4.8	M = 5.0 n = 43 SD = 0	M = 59.2 n = 43 SD = 26.8	M = 7.2 n = 40 SD = 3.3
Grade 2	M = 2.8 n = 41 SD = .4	M = 22.9 n = 41 SD = 7.0	M = 4.9 n = 41 SD = .3	M = 76.5 n = 39 SD = 19.9	M = 12.2 n = 39 SD = 4.6
Grade 3	M = 3.4 n = 8 SD = .7	M = 12.4 n = 8 SD = 7.2	M = 4.6 n = 8 SD = .5	M = 31.8 n = 8 SD = 15.1	M = 9.7 n = 8 SD = 2.7
Grades K-3	M = 2.9 n = 97 SD = .5	M = 17.7 n = 96 SD = 7.5	M = 4.9 n = 96 SD = .3	M = 63.5 n = 94 SD = 26.1	M = 9.3 n = 91 SD = 4.7

Table 5. Average Number of Students in Group, Average Number of Weeks of LLI, Average Number of LLI Lessons per Week, Average Number of LLI Lessons, and Average Student Growth in Months, by Grade.

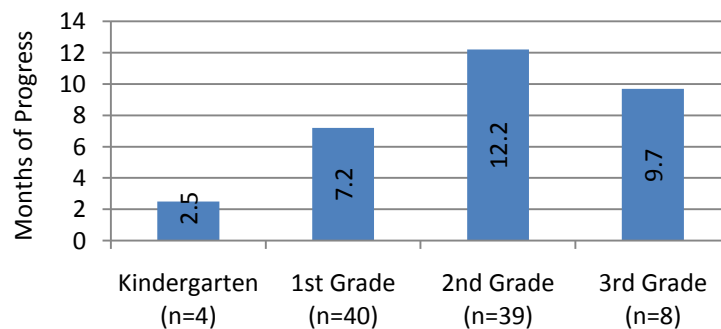


Chart 1. Student Growth (in months) by Grade ($n=91$)

The instructional reading level gain for the LLI students is depicted in Chart 2 below. 84.7% of the LLI students demonstrated an instructional reading level at least three levels higher than their pre-LLI level and

16.5% raised their reading skills seven or more levels, which in all grades represents more than a year's progress (see Chart 2).

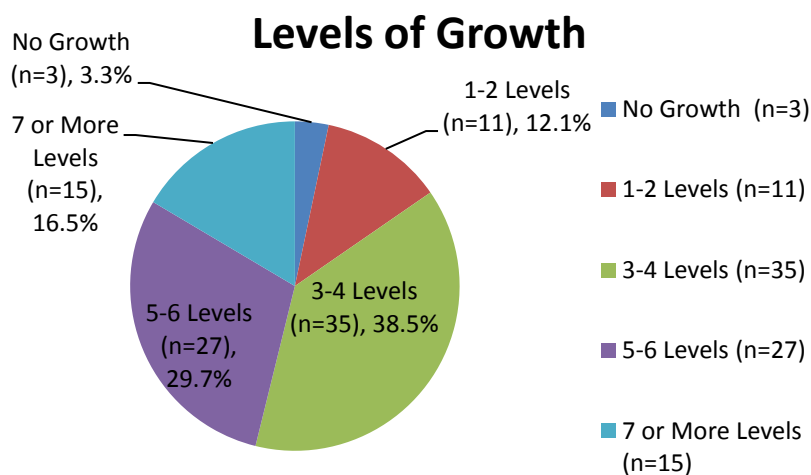


Chart 2. Levels of Growth (n=91).

The results reported for the entire data set are extremely positive given the variation in the grade level of students and the degree to which they were reading below grade level. Only a very small percentage of students made no growth and 84.7% made significant progress.

Grade Level Attainment

The percentage of students who were below grade level or at or above grade level at entry and exit from LLI is depicted below (see Table 4 and Chart 3). Overall, 79.2% were at or within one text reading level of their expected instructional reading level when their LLI instruction ended (see Table 4 and Chart 3); and 88.6% were at or within two text reading levels of grade level expectation.

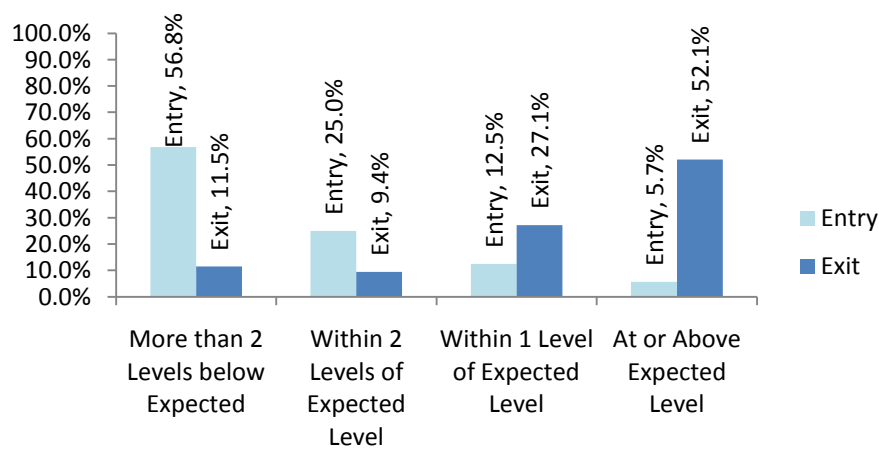


Chart 3. Instructional Reading Level at Entry (n=88) and Exit (n=96).

Key Findings

- On average, the 101 Northwest Vermont Reading Recovery Consortium LLI students demonstrated reading progress over the span of time they participated in the intervention which is comparable to expected reading progress over 9.3 months during the school year. This progress was achieved during participation in LLI for an average of 17.7 weeks or approximately four and a half months.
- Post-LLI, 84.7% of the LLI students demonstrated an instructional reading level at least three levels higher than their pre-LLI level and 16.5% raised their reading skills seven or more levels.
- Post-LLI, 79.2% of the LLI students were within one text reading level of grade level expectation, according to Fountas and Pinnell guidelines.

Conclusions

Results of this evaluation indicate that as a group, the 101 Vermont struggling readers who received Leveled Literacy Intervention supplementary instruction in the Northwest Vermont Reading Recovery Consortium demonstrated accelerated progress over the period they received LLI. Overall, the LLI students made approximately twice the amount of reading progress, on average, when compared to typical reading progress over time (Fountas and Pinnell 10 month guidelines). In addition, only a very small percentage made no growth and more than three quarters of the students made significant progress. Furthermore, post-LLI, more than three quarters of the LLI students reached were within one text reading level of grade level expectations.