

RESEARCH RESULTS

Read 180: Promising Evidence During the Pandemic

STUDY PROFILE

DISTRICT:

Almond-Bancroft Middle School in Almond, WI
Berry Creek Middle School in Edwards, CO
Breckenridge Junior High School in Breckenridge, TX
Clinton Middle School in Clinton, MI
Brookwood Middle School in Genoa City, WI

GRADES:

6–8

STUDY DESIGN:

Promising (ESSA)

EVALUATION PERIOD:

2019–2020 school year

STUDY CONDUCTED BY:

RMC Research

OUTCOME MEASURE:

- *Reading Inventory*
- Texas STAAR
- MAP NWEA Reading and ELA
- FastBridge Reading
- Teacher/Admin Surveys, Focus Groups, Interviews

IMPLEMENTATION:

55–65 Minute Model

RMC Research conducted a study of *Read 180* Universal during the 2019–2020 academic year. The study was designed to provide rigorous evidence of impact, to examine the relationship between implementation and outcomes, and to provide descriptive information about implementation that may be used to guide program improvement and inform priorities for future research. Data were collected in five schools in four U.S. states where the program was provided to students in Grades 6–8. Initial study plans were revised to accommodate challenges associated with spring 2020 school closures associated with the global public health crisis of COVID-19. Revised plans included use of qualitative data collection, delayed collection of survey and achievement data (from spring 2019 to fall 2020), and examination of implementation and outcomes prior and subsequent to school closures.

DISTRICT CHARACTERISTICS

Five middle schools participated in the study: Almond-Bancroft Middle School in Almond (WI); Berry Creek Middle School in Edwards (CO); Breckenridge Junior High School in Breckenridge (TX); Brookwood Middle School in Genoa City (WI); and Clinton Middle School in Clinton (MI). School enrollments ranged from 80 to 416 students. Four of the five schools had a majority of White students (89% of students in Clinton, 80% in Brookwood, 71% in Almond-Bancroft, 60% in Breckenridge; 20% were White in Berry Creek). Nonwhite students were predominately identified as Hispanic. Forty to 60% of students in each study school were eligible for FRM. While over half of students were English learners in one school (Berry Creek), three schools had fewer than 15% of these students (and data were not available for one school). Less than 18% of students in each school were identified for special education services. The percentage of students

classified as gifted was available for four schools with one school having no gifted students and the other schools having 12% or fewer of these students. Per pupil expenditures ranged from \$6,634 in Breckenridge to \$17,445 in Berry Creek. Between 35 and 44 percent of students in each school tested as proficient in reading.

IMPLEMENTATION OVERVIEW

During the 2019–2020 school year, participating districts, schools, and teachers committed to implementation of *Read 180* Universal recommended dosage; provision of technology support, equipment/devices, and personnel for program implementation; communication and support to school personnel; implementation monitoring; and provision of administrative data including student demographics and assessment scores. Free licenses for the *Read 180* Universal program were provided to participating schools. Initial two-day Getting Started training along with ongoing coaching delivered both in person and virtually throughout the year were provided for teachers and administrators with information about setting up classes, using the program, and using program resources to monitor student performance.

Prior to school closures, teachers engaged students in *Read 180* Universal for an average of 4 days a week (range of 3 to 5). Teachers spent most time on the Student Application (Student App) followed by independent reading, which both averaged over an hour per week. Small-group learning, station rotations, and whole-group learning each averaged around a half-hour per week.

One school described three different groups that met for 30 minutes in the morning for whole- and small-group instruction, for 20 minutes during reading block for student application time, and for 15 minutes in an independent reading block which occurred in the afternoon. In other schools, *Read 180*[®] was implemented 55 minutes a day.

Students in Grades 6–8 who scored Basic or Below Basic on the baseline administration of the *Reading Inventory*[®] were eligible to participate in the study. HMH[®] coordinated with each school to select an implementation model for *Read 180* Universal that fit within their schools' schedule and allowed for the completion of whole-group, small-group, and independent activities. Student usage was monitored through the online *Read 180* Universal platform. Classrooms in the intervention condition were expected to use the following implementation components: Whole-Group learning; Student App; Small-Group Learning; and Independent Reading.

Teacher survey responses from about two-thirds of the *Read 180* Universal teachers indicated that various core reading instruction strategies and programs were used during 2019–2020. No teachers reported using *Read 180* Universal prior to 2019–2020, either at their current school or another school.

The intervention was designed to be implemented for one full academic year. Due to spring 2020 school closures, implementation models varied, some schools were not able to support full implementation of *Read 180* Universal for all students, and spring 2020 achievement data were not collected. Due to these circumstances, the study examines:

- Impact after one semester of participation in *Read 180* Universal on student achievement using winter 2019–2020 formative assessment and *Reading Inventory* scores; and
- Impact after one academic year of participation in *Read 180* Universal (and the subsequent summer) using fall 2020 formative assessments and *Reading Inventory* scores.

Random assignment. Prior to the start of the intervention, students were randomly assigned to participate in *Read 180* Universal or the business-as-usual comparison condition. A total of 283 students met the eligibility criteria for inclusion in the study. For four of the five participating schools, half of the eligible students within each grade level in each school were randomly assigned to participate in *Read 180* Universal and the other half of students were assigned to the wait-list comparison condition. Clinton Middle School did not have the capacity to provide half of the eligible students with *Read 180* Universal instruction. This school indicated that they had the capacity to provide *Read 180* Universal instruction to 40 students, 20 in sixth grade, 10 in seventh grade, and 10 in eighth grade. As such, only 80 of the 128 eligible students in this school were randomly selected to participate in the study. Students were randomly assigned to participate in *Read 180* Universal from among those randomly selected to participate in the study using the same method used in the other four study schools. A total of 235 students (47 in Almond-Bancroft, 15 in Berry Creek, 68 in Breckenridge, 25 in Brookwood, and 80 in Clinton) were randomized. The randomization resulted in 117 students in the *Read 180* Universal condition and 118 assigned to the comparison condition.

PARTICIPANTS

Students in Grades 6–8 in each school were administered the HMH *Reading Inventory* as a screener for participation in the study. Those who scored Basic or Below Basic on the HMH *Reading Inventory* were eligible to participate. These students were randomly assigned to participate in their school's business-as-usual supplementary support for striving readers or to participate in *Read 180* Universal. Students eligible for special education services in reading were excluded from randomization because they were likely to receive multiple additional supports that could not be reliably documented across districts, which has the potential to influence estimates of impact.

Initial Student Sample: The initial sample included 117 *Read 180* Universal students and 118 comparison students. Twelve *Read 180* Universal students and four comparison students withdrew from the study after randomization. Most withdrawals ($n = 11$) were due to parents requesting that their children not participate in the study. This was often due to the

intervention class overlapping with an elective the student had previously selected. Other reasons for withdrawal included students moving ($n = 2$), only attending school part time ($n = 1$) and changing eligibility for special education services ($n = 2$). The resulting sample included 219 students (105 *Read 180* Universal and 114 comparison students).

Study Sample Characteristics: Table 1 presents student demographics for the study sample. All students included in the study sample appear in one or more of the analytic samples. Over a third of students were male (35%), 31% were female, and gender information was unavailable for the remaining 34%. Over 80% of the full sample were White and almost 16% were Hispanic. Over 40% of students were eligible for FRL, 24% were not eligible, and FRL information was missing for the remaining 36%. About 7% were English learners, and 8% were eligible for special education services. The average age was 12 years old and attendance rate was 97%. Characteristics were similar across *Read 180* Universal and comparison students. Slightly higher proportions of *Read 180* Universal participants were male, non-White, Hispanic, and slightly lower proportions were eligible for FRL, and classified as English learners.

TABLE 1. CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDY PARTICIPANTS, 2019–2020

Student Characteristics	Study Sample (N=190)	<i>Read 180</i> Universal (N=100)	Comparison (N=90)
Gender (N)	125	60	65
Female	30.5%	22%	40%
Male	35.3%	38%	32.2%
Race (N)	169	84	85
White	80%	74%	86.7%
Black	1.1%	0%	2.4%
Other	9%	10%	5.6%
Ethnicity (N)	182	92	90
Hispanic	15.8%	17%	14.4%
FRL Status	40.5%	36%	45.6%
English Learners	6.8%	6%	7.8%
SPED	8.4%	8%	8.9%
Age (M(SD))	12.2 (0.9)	12.2 (0.9)	12.2 (0.9)
Attendance Rate (M(SD))	97 (3.3)	97 (3.7)	97.1 (2.9)

Note: The study sample includes students that are present in one or more of the analytic samples. Gender information is not available for 34.2% of students. Race information is not available for 11.1% of students. Ethnicity information is not available for 4.2% of students. FRL information was not available for 35.8% of students. English learner information was not available for 4.2% of students. Special Education information was not available for 5.8% of students. Age was not available for 34.7% of students. Attendance rate was not available for 45.3% of students.

MEASURES

Several measures of student reading achievement were collected and are described below. Fall 2019 data were collected for all measures and winter 2019–2020 data were also available for several measures. Because spring 2020 data were not available due to school closures, available fall 2020 data were also collected.

Renaissance Star Reading Assessment. Renaissance Star Reading scores were collected as the primary measure of student reading achievement as part of the study. Developed by Renaissance Learning[®], Star Reading is a short (20 minute) and adaptive formative assessment designed for students in Grades K–12. The assessment produces a vertically aligned scaled score to allow for the tracking of progress across grade levels. Scores were collected in fall 2019 and fall 2020.

HMH *Reading Inventory*. The *Reading Inventory* was administered to all students to determine eligibility for the study. This assessment provides a Lexile[®] score for each student which is used along with the student's current grade level to classify student reading proficiency as Below Basic, Basic, Proficient, or Advanced. Students who test at the Below Basic level are considered significantly below grade level, while students who test at the Basic level are considered to be reading below grade level. The *Reading Inventory* score obtained during screening was used as students' baseline measure. A follow-up *Reading Inventory* was administered to students in fall 2020. Study schools also had the option to administer the *Reading Inventory* in the winter of 2019–2020 allowing for examination of fall to winter gains in a subset of student.

MAP Formative Assessment. Two participating schools (Brookwood and Clinton) administered the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA®) Measures of Academic Progress (MAP®) Growth Assessment. This widely used formative assessment tool developed by the NWEA is adaptive and designed for students in Grades K–12 (NWEA, 2021). The schools provided MAP reading and English language arts (ELA) scores for the fall 2019, winter 2019–2020, and fall 2020 assessments. Standardized scores (Z-scores) were generated using percentile ranks based on a nationally normed sample for analyses of impact.

Texas STAAR Assessment. One school (Breckenridge) administered the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR™) interim assessment. This statewide formative assessment was developed by the state of Texas to be administered online to students in Grades 3–8 and those completing selected high school courses. Scale scores, Lexile scores, and percentile scores were available for fall 2019, winter 2019–2020, and fall 2020.

FastBridge Reading. One school (Almond-Bancroft) administered the FastBridge Reading Assessment. This widely used, computer-administered formative assessment tool is adaptive and designed for students in Grades K–12. Scale scores and percentile scores were available for those who completed the FastBridge Reading assessment in fall 2019, winter 2019–2020, and fall 2020.

Read 180 Universal Software Usage Data. Descriptive statistics (ranges, frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations) were used to describe variation in dosage, frequency, and fidelity of implementation by examining number of completed instructional segments, sessions, total time, time in each zone, median session length, and the average number of sessions required to complete a segment. Program usage data were examined for four time periods: fall, spring, during school closures, and for the whole year.

TEACHER AND STUDENT SURVEYS

Teacher Surveys. RMC Research administered electronic surveys to intervention and comparison teachers and students in 2020. The survey included questions about demographics, professional learning participation, curricula provided to intervention and comparison students, perceptions of preparedness and confidence to teach reading, teaching efficacy and beliefs, reading instructional practices and interventions, *Read 180 Universal* program implementation, perceptions of value and utility related to *Read 180 Universal*, and perceived impact on students. The electronic survey was administered via SurveyMonkey® during May 2020 and took approximately 15 minutes to complete.

Student Survey. The student survey included questions about student demographics, and scales adapted from Panorama's Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) measures which have demonstrated evidence of reliability and validity and are aligned with the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) competencies. Students completed the electronic survey via SurveyMonkey in September and October 2020 and were asked to reflect on their experiences from the previous year. Multi-item scales included growth mindset, teacher-student relationships, self-efficacy, and engagement.

Teacher focus groups. Teachers were asked about their background; professional development participation; program implementation, including frequency of *Read 180 Universal* use with students, rotation implementation, student progress monitoring, fidelity of implementation, support for teachers who may be struggling with the program, changes in instructional practice, attitudes towards striving readers, and collaboration; implementation during school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic; program quality, including quality of materials; and program impacts, including any variations based on student grade levels, demographic characteristics, growth mindset, relationship with the *Read 180 Universal* teacher, engagement in the *Read 180 Universal* class, and confidence in ability to do the work assigned. Teachers were also asked about factors that facilitated or impeded effective program implementation, lessons learned, suggestions for improvement, and comparison of *Read 180 Universal* to other programs and approaches their schools have used to help students who are striving readers.

Administrator/*Read 180 Universal* coordinator interviews.

Administrator/*Read 180 Universal* coordinators responded to questions about their background; professional development provided to teachers; program implementation, including frequency of *Read 180 Universal* use

with students, rotation implementation, student progress monitoring, fidelity of implementation, and support for teachers who may be struggling with the program; implementation during school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic; program quality, including quality of materials; and program impacts, including any variations based on student grade levels, demographic characteristics, growth mindset, relationship with the *Read 180 Universal* teacher, engagement in the *Read 180 Universal* class, and confidence in ability to do the work assigned. These interviews also asked about factors that facilitated or impeded effective program implementation, lessons learned, suggestions for improvement, and comparison of *Read 180 Universal* to other programs and approaches their schools have used to help students who are striving readers.

Observations. Observations of *Read 180 Universal* classrooms included collection of information about grade level(s) observed; objectives/content goals of the session; individuals present; the classroom physical environment; and whether or not English learners, special education students, and/or Tier II intervention students were served during the session. Observations were scripted at 5-minute intervals with notes on program components that occurred (whole-group instruction, student application, small-group learning, independent reading rotations); and instructional strategies and supports being used (social-emotional supports, behavior management, engaging instructional strategies, feedback given to students, and instructional dialogue).

RESULTS

In all analyses, student-level data were used to address the research questions and no missing data were imputed. Linear regression models were used to assess the impact of *Read 180 Universal* on student outcomes. School and grade level were included as covariates in each model to account for variation at these levels. Baseline measures were also included as covariates in each analytic model along with a binary indicator of having participated in *Read 180 Universal*. Student demographic characteristics were not included in analytic models due to low sample sizes and the prevalence of missing data on these indicators. No joiners were included in impact analyses. The Benjamini-Hochberg procedure was used to correct for multiple comparisons and effect sizes were calculated using Hedges' *g*. Linear regression models were also conducted to assess the relationship between variations in *Read 180 Universal* dosage and student outcomes.

STUDENT SOFTWARE USAGE

During 2019–2020, *Read 180 Universal* students engaged with the software for an average of 43 sessions, with a range between 7 and 108 sessions. On average, among students who engaged with *Read 180 Universal* during each time period, 19 sessions were completed in the fall, 20 in the spring, and 9 during school closures. During the fall, on average, student access to the software was highest in Almond-Bancroft and Brookwood (30 or more times) followed by Breckenridge (20 times), and Clinton and Berry Creek (fewer than 10 times). During the spring, students in four of the five schools accessed *Read 180 Universal* software an average of 20 or more times while those in Breckenridge accessed the software an average of 10 times. Students in Almond-Bancroft, Berry Creek, and Brookwood accessed the software an average of 10 or more times during school closures while those in Clinton and Breckenridge accessed the software fewer than 5 times, on average.

Total session times during 2019–2020 ranged from just under 100 minutes to 1,662 minutes with an average of 710 minutes. An average of 300 minutes were logged in the fall, 344 minutes in the spring, and 152 minutes during school closures. Students from Almond-Bancroft and Brookwood averaged over 450 minutes in the fall, those in Breckenridge averaged 346 minutes, and those in Clinton and Berry Creek averaged less than 160 minutes. Berry Creek had the highest average usage in spring with students logging over 600 minutes, followed by Clinton (433 minutes), and Almond-Bancroft, Breckenridge, and Brookwood (320 minutes or less). During school closures students in Almond-Bancroft and Berry Creek used *Read 180 Universal* for an average of over 200 minutes, while those enrolled in other schools used the software for 150 minutes or less. On average, students spent 17 minutes per session and just over 2 sessions per week. Students in Breckenridge, Clinton, and Berry Creek

averaged at least 17 minutes per session during fall, spring, and school closures while those in Almond-Bancroft and Brookwood averaged 15 or fewer minutes per session during each time period. On average, across time periods students in Almond-Bancroft engaged with *Read 180* Universal software most frequently.

Students completed an average of about 4 segments, with a range between 0 and 15 segments completed during 2019–2020. In the fall, students in Almond-Bancroft and Brookwood completed most segments on average (over 2) followed by Breckenridge (1.6), and Clinton and Berry Creek (less than 1). During the spring, students in Clinton, Berry Creek, and Brookwood completed the most segments on average (over 2), followed by Almond-Bancroft (1.8), and Breckenridge (1.4). During school closures students in Almond-Bancroft, Berry Creek, and Brookwood completed at least 1 segment, on average. During 2019–2020 students took an average of about 13 sessions to complete a segment (13 in the fall, 12 in the spring, and 8 during school closures).

EFFECTS OF *READ 180* UNIVERSAL ON STUDENT LITERACY ACHIEVEMENT

Reading Inventory. Analyses of *Reading Inventory* scores examined changes from fall 2019 to winter 2019–2020 and from fall 2019 to fall 2020. Scores on the *Reading Inventory* for *Read 180* Universal students increased from fall to winter while scores for students in the comparison group decreased during this time. *Read 180* Universal students had higher scores than comparison group students on both the fall and winter *Reading Inventory*. After controlling for pretest scores, participation in *Read 180* Universal was significantly and positively associated with winter *Reading Inventory* scores. See Table 2.

STAAR/FastBridge. Analyses of STAAR/FastBridge scores examined changes from fall 2019 to winter 2019–2020 and from fall 2019 to fall 2020. Scores on the STAAR/FastBridge for *Read 180* Universal students increased from fall to winter while scores for students in the comparison group decreased. After controlling for pretest scores, participation in *Read 180* Universal did not have a significant impact on winter STAAR/FastBridge scores. See Table 2.

MAP Reading/ELA: Analyses of MAP Reading and ELA scores examined changes from fall 2019 to winter 2019–2020. Scores on the MAP Reading and ELA assessments decreased from fall to winter for all students. However, scores for students who participated in *Read 180* Universal declined less than those for comparison group students. See Table 2.

TABLE 2. LITERACY ACHIEVEMENT OUTCOMES FOR <i>READ 180</i> AND COMPARISON STUDENTS					
Assessment	<i>Read 180</i>		Comparison		Condition
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	
Reading Inventory (Fall '19–Winter '20) M(SD)	n = 91 622.9 (273.4)	677.2 (254.8)	n = 24 571.5 (262.7)	539.9 (266.1)	99.0**
Reading Inventory (Fall '19–Fall '20) M(SD)	n = 40 657.5 (250.6)	714.6 (281.6)	n = 37 758.6 (159)	722.6 (249.6)	67.5
STAAR/ FastBridge (Fall '19–Winter '20) M(SD)	n = 30 -0.19 (1.15)	0.09 (0.98)	n = 29 0.23 (0.79)	0.04 (0.95)	0.31
STAAR/ FastBridge (Fall '19–Fall '20) M(SD)	n = 30 -0.19 (1.15)	0.07 (0.87)	n = 24 0.26 (0.81)	0.08 (1.04)	0.16
MAP Reading (Fall '19–Winter '20) M(SD)	n = 38 -0.38 (0.53)	-0.62 (0.68)	n = 45 -0.42 (0.61)	-0.87 (0.65)	0.24
MAP ELA (Fall '19–Winter '20) M(SD)	n = 38 -0.42 (0.51)	-0.54 (0.54)	n = 45 -0.59 (0.43)	-0.78 (0.62)	0.10

Note. Only data for those who have both pre and post scores are included in table. ** p < .01.

PERCEPTIONS OF EFFECTS BY EDUCATORS

Overall, teachers agreed that using *Read 180* Universal improved their students' spelling, academic vocabulary, reading fluency, and confidence in reading ability.

In focus groups, teachers reported that students had a better understanding of vocabulary, improved their overall quality of work since the beginning of the year, more frequently wrote in complete sentences, and gave more complete verbal answers after participating in *Read 180* Universal. Teachers shared anecdotes about several individual students—one an English learner and the other a special education student—who had experienced struggles with reading, saying that both had improved noticeably after participating in *Read 180* Universal.

Respondents noted that impacts seemed to be greater in the sixth and seventh grades than eighth grade, where students did not seem as motivated, especially during school closures. Teachers and administrators attributed differences in student outcomes to several factors:

- **Growth mindset.** Teachers felt that growth mindset, which was encouraged through program activities, was associated with more positive achievement outcomes.
- **Relationship with the *Read 180* Universal teacher.** Several teachers reported that positive student–teacher relationships led to more positive achievement outcomes. They mentioned the importance of demonstrating care for students, knowing students personally, creating a safe space in the classroom, having effective disciplinary practices, and maintaining high expectations.
- **Student engagement, confidence, and motivation.** Teachers emphasized the importance of these interrelated factors to student success. They reported that students who were most engaged in program activities, those who felt confident that they could succeed, and those who were most motivated were most successful.

ASSOCIATION BETWEEN *READ 180* UNIVERSAL SOFTWARE USAGE AND STUDENT LITERACY ACHIEVEMENT

Reading Inventory. Three of five usage measures (total sessions, total minutes, and average sessions per week) were significantly and positively related to winter 2019–2020 *Reading Inventory* scores. On average, controlling for fall 2019 achievement:

- Completion of each additional *Read 180* Universal session during the fall semester was associated with an increase of 3.2 Lexile measures;
- Each additional minute of participation in *Read 180* Universal during the fall semester was associated with an increase of 0.2 Lexile measures. Stated differently, each additional hour of participation was associated with an increase of 12 Lexile measures (0.2 x 60 minutes); and
- Having one additional session per week during the fall semester was associated with an increase of 57 Lexile measures.

In addition, a non-significant positive relationship was observed between winter *Reading Inventory* scores and segment completion. On average, controlling for fall 2019 achievement:

- Completing one additional segment in the software during the fall semester was associated with an increase of 23 Lexile measures.

MAP Reading. Three of five usage measures (total sessions, total minutes, and average sessions per week) were significantly and positively related to winter 2019–2020 MAP Reading scores. On average, controlling for fall 2019 achievement:

- Completion of each additional *Read 180* Universal session during the fall semester was associated with an increase of 0.2 of a standard deviation;
- Each additional minute of participation in *Read 180* Universal during the fall semester was associated with an increase of 0.001 of a standard deviation. Stated differently, each additional hour of participation was associated with an increase of 0.06 of a standard deviation (0.001 x 60 minutes)

and an additional 250 minutes of usage was associated with an increase of 0.25 of a standard deviation (0.001×250); and

- Having one additional session per week was associated with an increase of 0.4 of a standard deviation.

In addition, a non-significant positive relationship was observed between segment completion and winter MAP Reading scores. On average, controlling for fall 2019 achievement:

- Completing one additional segment in the software during the fall semester was associated with an increase of 0.15 of a standard deviation.

EFFECTS OF *READ 180* UNIVERSAL ON TEACHERS

Educator Confidence. Teacher survey ratings showed that teachers felt moderately confident and prepared to teach various components of reading, on average. Highest ratings were for teaching comprehension, basic vocabulary, and content area vocabulary.

Instructional Practices. Teachers described several ways their instructional practices had changed as a result of using *Read 180* Universal. One teacher mentioned becoming more relaxed and comfortable in using the materials, while another reported using close reading strategies in groups with students greatly enjoying the process. A third teacher said that she was using a Mindset approach and implementing the program with all reading classes. She said she reminded students that the reading class would help them succeed in all their other classes. In addition to instructional changes, these teachers also described changes in their feelings about working with striving readers as a result of using *Read 180* Universal. One teacher, who was new to special education, said it helped her realize how she needed to break down information for students so they could understand the content. Another teacher said that the program strengthened her belief in front-loading vocabulary and said her students told her how much they liked the vocabulary part of the program.

Teachers reported using more student-to-student interactions and increasing student choice in terms of the books they read or the modules they worked on. They indicated that *Read 180* Universal led to an increased focus on student comprehension skills. Teachers in a third school felt that their instructional practices had changed in the *Read 180* Universal class, as it was completely different than a regular reading class. One noted that striving readers improved their word recognition and spelling.

The reading specialist in the fourth school said she was accustomed to using mini-lessons and whole-group instruction, but that working with middle school students was new to her and she was learning how to manage the behavior of older children. She said that her experience with using *Read 180* Universal helped her to understand how interesting and motivating the software was to students. She also perceived that while some students were initially hesitant to do independent reading, they found the e-books to be engaging. She also liked that the *Read 180* Universal program was focused on vocabulary and other concepts, while other programs she had used were missing those crucial pieces.

Collaboration. Teachers noted an increase in collaboration associated with the use of *Read 180* Universal in fall 2019. In addition to working together more closely, these teachers kept other reading teachers informed about the use of the student application and the books students read during independent reading. They also reported sharing information on reading progress monthly with the other teachers.

PRECEPTIONS OF *READ 180* UNIVERSAL QUALITY AND UTILITY

Most teachers and administrators described the quality of *Read 180* Universal very positively and several identified areas for improvement. Respondents characterized the program as having good routines for striving readers, containing up-to-date materials, and feeling more like a full reading class than just an intervention. Several respondents also described the program as being more effective than others they had used to address needs of striving readers because it was comprehensive, prescriptive, based upon best practices in reading and literacy, and provided lessons for teachers to use so they did not need to spend time finding appropriate ones.

A superintendent described the overall quality of *Read 180* Universal as “superior” and said that the content was motivating to students and the format was teacher friendly, with materials that were easy for both new and experienced teachers to organize and use. A principal reported liking that *Read 180* Universal was taught through content rather than through discrete skills. Another principal characterized the overall quality of *Read 180* Universal as “great” and said it followed best practices by providing whole-class, small-group, and self-study experiences. She also regarded the design of the program as one that helped teachers through recommended pacing and clear instructions. Several administrators noted that they would have seen better results if schools had not been closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Comments from administrators and teachers about program quality included the following:

- *I think it is excellent. If we had had the opportunity to use it with the right amount of time and without closure, we'd see really good results.*
- *I love the program – it is very good and all-inclusive.*
- *I think Read 180 is one of the better programs out there. Anything we can do to infuse it into students' regular core subjects will help better the outcome.*
- *It is more engaging, there is lots of non-fiction text, and it is more comprehensive with writing and independent work for students.*
- *It is much more comprehensive, but many other interventions are more targeted. Depending on the type of student, I might use a specific program to target their specific deficit, but there is so much more included in this program.*

LESSONS LEARNED FOR TYPICAL IMPLEMENTATION IN CLASSROOM AND VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENTS

Administrators and teachers described several recommendations for others implementing *Read 180* Universal based on their experiences during 2019–2020, including:

- Schedule classes in advance so that teachers can complete a rotation within a single period rather than having to split a rotation across multiple class periods;
- Begin the program early in the academic year;
- Involve more staff in *Read 180* Universal training so they can step in if a teacher is absent for an extended period;
- Take the needed time to learn program components and how to best implement the rotations (*Read 180* Universal is “not just a program you can pick up and teach”); and
- Select appropriate teachers (e.g., teachers with experience teaching English learners, as appropriate, and teachers comfortable working with small groups).

Respondents also provided suggestions for schools transitioning to using *Read 180* Universal in a virtual environment, noticing that most also applied to typical classroom environments. Suggestions focused on finding ways to effectively motivate students, managing technology issues by teaching students how to log in to the software, and selecting teachers who excel in building relationships with their students, have good classroom management, maintain regular contact with students and families, and have experience with small-group instruction. Teachers also suggested recording small-group lessons so students could watch them asynchronously and complete the activities later. They also suggested having Google Meet™ or a similar video conferencing platform so students could see their teacher and the lesson could have been provided at a time when working parents could watch it with their children at home. Representative comments are below.

- *Establish how you are going to motivate students and place value on the program, seek ways to show them long-term success, somehow incorporate the workshop model with what other teachers are doing.*
- *Allow some opportunity for asynchronous learning but schedule class time as well. Continue to encourage and motivate students.*
- *Teach students to log in correctly – that is where you will spend a lot of your time.*

- *Like with any class, you need someone who is very good at relationships, classroom management and organization, rotations, and small-group management so the students stay engaged. If teachers stay strong and insistent, students will show growth.*
- *Be organized, have systems in place for accountability and checking in, and have secure ways to share whole-group lessons.*

CONCLUSION

This study was designed to meet rigorous evidence standards, however program implementation and data collection challenges, which were largely related to school closures in spring 2020, limited findings related to program impact and the conclusions that may be drawn. The various qualitative and quantitative data sources used for the study, however, provide a detailed picture of HMH professional development and implementation activities associated with *Read 180* Universal. These data, along with student software usage data also help to illustrate how *Read 180* Universal was implemented during school closures. Results showing literacy gains and positive relationships between software usage and literacy achievement along with positive feedback from educators and administrators provide promising evidence of impact.

Check out more *Read 180* research at hmhco.com/read180research.

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