Foundations
What Works Centre for Children & Families

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Intervention website: https://sheffield-real-project.sites.sheffield.ac.uk/

GUIDEBOOK INTERVENTION INFORMATION SHEET

Raising Early Achievement in Literacy (REAL)

Please note that in the 'Intervention Summary' table below 'child age', 'level of need', and 'race and ethnicities information is **as evaluated in studies**. Information in other fields describes the intervention as **offered/supported by the intervention provider**.

Intervention summary	
Description	Raising Early Achievement in Literacy (REAL) is a home-based intervention for families living in disadvantaged areas with a 3-year-old child. Early Years teachers deliver 10 sessions to families in their home over a period of 18 months. These sessions are complemented by five group sessions involving up to eight families. During each session, parents learn strategies for enhancing the home learning environment and promoting early literacy.
Evidence rating	3
Cost rating	3
Child outcomes	• Enhancing school achievement & employment - Improved early literacy.
Child age (population characteristic)	3 years old
Level of need (population characteristic)	Targeted Selected

Intervention summary	
Race and ethnicities (population characteristic)	• Pakistani • White British.
Type (model characteristic)	Home visiting
Setting (model characteristic)	• Family home • Community centre • Early years setting.
Workforce (model characteristic)	Early years teachers
UK available?	Yes
UK tested?	Yes

Model description

Raising Early Achievement in Literacy (REAL) is a home visiting intervention for families living in disadvantaged areas with a 3-year-old child.

Early Years teachers deliver 10 sessions to families in their home over a period of 18 months. These sessions are complemented by five group sessions involving up to eight families. During these sessions, parents learn strategies for supporting their child's early literacy development, as well as other important school readiness skills.

The sessions incorporate six strands:

- Home visits: teachers focus on a particular strand of literacy in each visit, loan resources, and make suggestions to parents for supporting the child's development
- Provision of literacy resources, including books and writing materials
- Centre-based group activities: groups of parents meet with the teacher to talk about an aspect of literacy, e.g. storytelling workshops and book parties
- Special events, including library visits and 'print walks' in the local community
- Postal communication: teachers send birthday cards, postcards, and reminders to the child
- Optional parent education component, giving information about emergent literacy.

REAL is based on the ORIM Framework of four factors which help learners:

- Opportunities for learning
- Recognition of children's activities
- Interaction with children through literacy activities
- Modelling literacy behaviours.

Teachers aim to facilitate parents' learning in a respectful and tailored way, rather than giving instructional teaching, and draw on their expertise to suggest strategies and ideas to parents to help them teach emergent literacy to their child.

Target population

Age of child	3 to 5 years old
Target population	Preschool children living in disadvantaged communities

Please note that the information in this section on target population is as **offered/supported by the intervention provider**.

Theory of change

Why			How	What		
Science-based assumption	**Science-based assumption**	**Science-based assumption**	**Intervention**	**Short-term outcomes**	**Medium-term outcomes**	**Long-term outcomes**
Preliteracy skills are critical for school readiness and are predictive of children's success in primary school.	The quality of the home learning environment, including parents' ability to scaffold early literacy, consistently predicts children's early literacy by the time they enter school.	Low family income negatively impacts parents' ability to provide an enriching home learning environment.	• Parents learn strategies for promoting early literacy through common, daily activities • Parents are provided with books and other materials to further promote literacy in the home • Parents and children attend special events and group activities aimed at promoting vocabulary development and letter recognition.	• Parents are better able to support their children's early literacy • Parents are better able to support their children's early school readiness.	Improved child literacy skills at school.	Improved child academic achievement.

Implementation requirements

Who is eligible?	Families with a child aged 3 to 5 years old in their pre-school year, living in a disadvantaged community.
How is it delivered?	REAL is delivered over 12 to 18 months in five group sessions of 45 minutes' duration each by a practitioner, to groups of approximately eight families; in 10 home visits by a practitioner to individual families; and in optional centre-based groups and special events.
What happens during the intervention?	The intervention is delivered over 12 or 18 months and is designed for families with children aged between 3 and 5 years living in disadvantaged communities.
	REAL has six main components: home visits by intervention teachers; provision of literacy resources (particularly books); centre-based group activities; special events (e.g. group library visits); postal communication between the teacher and child; and appropriate adult education opportunities for parents.
	The intervention is based on the ORIM concepts: Opportunities, Recognition, Interaction, and Models of literacy.
	Operating within this framework, the intervention aims to support parents' contribution to their children's literacy learning through: i) providing opportunities to learn; ii) recognising and valuing early achievements; iii) interacting in learning situations; and iv) modelling literacy behaviours.
Who can deliver it?	The practitioner who delivers this intervention is an Early Years practitioner (e.g. nursery or reception teacher) with the equivalent of a bachelor's qualification in teaching.
What are the training requirements?	The practitioners have 64 hours of intervention training. Booster training of practitioners is not required.
How are practitioners supervised?	In the evaluated REAL project, supervision was provided by two intervention developer supervisors.
What are the systems for maintaining fidelity?	Intervention fidelity is maintained through the following processes: • Training manual • Other online material • Video or DVD training • Face-to-face training.

Implementation requirements (cont.)

Is there a licensing requirement?	No
Contact details	Contact person: Professor Cathy Nutbrown Organisation: The Sheffield REAL project Email address: c.e.nutbrown@sheffield.ac.uk Website/s: https://sheffield-real-project.sites.sheffield.ac.uk/ *Please note that this information may not be up to date. In this case, please visit the listed intervention website for up to date contact details

Evidence summary

REAL's most rigorous evidence comes from a single RCT which was conducted in the UK that is consistent with Foundations' Level 3 evidence strength criteria.

This study identified statistically significant improvements in REAL children's early literacy compared to children who did not receive the intervention.

REAL can be described as evidence-based: it has evidence from at least one rigorously conducted RCT or QED demonstrating a statistically significant positive impact on at least one child outcome.

Child outcomes			
Outcome	**Improvement index**	**Interpretation**	**Study**
Improved early literacy	+16	3.4-point improvement on the Sheffield Early Literacy Development Profile	1
Improved early literacy (letter recognition)	+12	4.7-point improvement on the Clay Letter Recognition Test	1

Search and review

	Number of studies
Identified in search	7
Studies reviewed	2
Meeting the L2 threshold	0
Meeting the L3 threshold	1
Contributing to the L4 threshold	0
Ineligible	1

Individual study summary: Study 1

Study 1	
Study design	RCT
Country	UK
Sample characteristics	176 children
Race, ethnicities, and nationalities	- Pakistani - White British.
Population risk factors	Children were on waitlists for schools in disadvantaged areas
Timing	- Baseline - Post-intervention - Two-year follow-up.
Child outcomes	Improved child early literacy

Study 1	
Other outcomes	None
Study Rating	3
Citations	**Study 1a:** Hannon, P., Nutbrown, C. & Morgan, A. (2020) Effects of extending disadvantaged families' teaching of emergent literacy. *Research Papers in Education*. 35 (3), 310–336. **Study 1b:** Nutbrown, C., Hannon, P. & Morgan, A. (2005) *Early literacy work with families*. SAGE Publications.

Brief summary

Population characteristics

This study involved 176 disadvantaged 3-year-old children living in Sheffield, UK.

57% of the sample were boys. 9% of children had English as an Additional Language. 40% of mothers reported having no educational qualifications. They study does not report ethnicity of the sample in detail, but reports that one school had significant numbers of children of bilingual Pakistani-origin for whom English was an Additional Language.

Study design

176 children were randomly selected from wait-lists at 11 schools, 16 from each school. For each school, 8 children were randomly assigned to the REAL group and 8 to the business-as-usual control group, resulting in 88 children in each group.

The REAL and BAU groups were equivalent on all pre-test measures.

Measurement

Assessments were conducted baseline (pre-intervention), post-intervention, and at a two-year post-intervention follow-up.

Baseline
- **Teacher-led** assessments involved the Sheffield Early Literacy Development Profile (SELDP), and the British Picture Vocabulary Scale – Revised (BPVS-II).

Post-intervention
- **Teacher-led** assessments included the SELDP, BPVS, and a letter recognition test.

Two-year post-intervention follow-up
- **Administrative records** included Key Stage 1 literacy assessments total score.

Study retention

Post-intervention

94% (165) of the sample participated in assessments post-intervention, including 96% (85) of those allocated to the REAL group and 91% (80) allocated to BAU.

Two-year follow-up

89% (156) of the sample was retained in the two-year follow-up, including 89% (78) of those allocated to REAL and 89% (78) of those allocated to BAU.

Results

Data-analytic plan

One-tailed t-tests of means between groups were used. Where scores were available pre-intervention and post-intervention, t-tests of gain scores between groups were also used. No covariates were added to the model.

Findings

The study observed statistically significant benefits favouring REAL children's early literacy and letter recognition skills.

A sub-group analysis of children whose mothers reported no educational qualifications also showed significant benefits favouring REAL children, including improvements in children's early literacy and vocabulary, with larger effect sizes than for the group as a whole.

There were no significant differences between groups at the two-year follow-up.

Study 1: Outcomes table

Outcome	Measure	Effect size	Statistical significance	Number of participants	Measurement time point
Child outcomes					
Child early literacy	Sheffield Early Literacy Development Profile (SELDP) (teacher assessment)	d = 0.42	Yes	165	Post-intervention

Outcome	Measure	Effect size	Statistical significance	Number of participants	Measurement time point
Child language (vocabulary)	British Picture Vocabulary Scale – Revised (BPVS-II) (teacher assessment)	Not reported	No	164	Post-intervention
Child early literacy	The Clay Letter Recognition Test	d = 0.29	Yes	164	Post-intervention only
Child literacy (reading and writing)	Key Stage 1 literacy assessments total score	Not reported	No	156	Approximately 2 years after the intervention

Other studies

The following studies were identified for this intervention but did not count towards the intervention's overall evidence rating. An intervention receives the same rating as its most robust study or studies.

Hirst, K., Hannon, P. & Nutbrown, C. (2010) Effects of a preschool bilingual family literacy programme. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*. *10* (2), 183–208.

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Note on provider involvement: This provider has agreed to Foundations' terms of reference (or the Early Intervention Foundation's terms of reference), and the assessment has been conducted and published with the full cooperation of the intervention provider.