



# Effective reading instruction for English language learners

DreamBox Reading (formerly Reading Plus) is a comprehensive reading development program with a strong research foundation that addresses the critical dimensions of reading success for students in grades 3 – 12, including English language learners (ELLs).

English language learners are the fastest-growing K – 12 student population in the United States. Regardless of their native language literacy backgrounds, all ELLs must develop and master English literacy skills to succeed in school.

DreamBox Reading is a WIDA-certified resource<sup>1</sup> that aligns with TESOL's Principles for Exemplary Teaching of English Learners.<sup>2</sup>

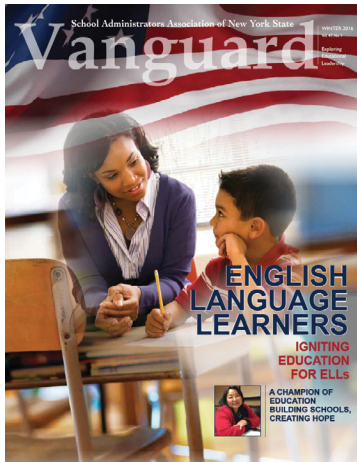
DreamBox Reading excels in a variety of areas that support ELL students, such as:

- ✓ Presenting students with texts that match their proficiency levels
- ✓ Following state and national standards for language development
- ✓ Providing scaffolding supports to aid students in their progress



Peer-reviewed research study:

## Structured silent reading practice: effective educational support for ELL students



This peer-reviewed research study of DreamBox Reading instruction in a large district in South Florida involved large numbers of ELL students in multiple grade groups and all academic achievement levels. Results provide compelling evidence that structured silent reading instruction and practice with DreamBox Reading is a highly effective educational support for developing reading proficiency in ELL students.

Across all grade groups (elementary, middle and high school), ELL students who engaged in DreamBox Reading instruction (~30 hours) were more likely to advance from below-satisfactory to satisfactory levels on their state test than their ELL and non-ELL peers who did not engage in DreamBox Reading practice. In addition, ELL students who engaged in DreamBox Reading instruction were nearly as likely to advance from below to at/above satisfactory levels on their state test than their non-ELL peers who engaged in DreamBox Reading instruction for the same amount of time (~30 hours).

**Publication:** Vanguard, special issue: “Supporting English Language Learners.” Latham, NY: School Administrators Association of New York State (SAANYS), 45(1), 23-25, 2016

**Authors:** Alexandra N. Spichtig and Jeffrey P. Pascoe

### Study profile

**Type of study:** research review

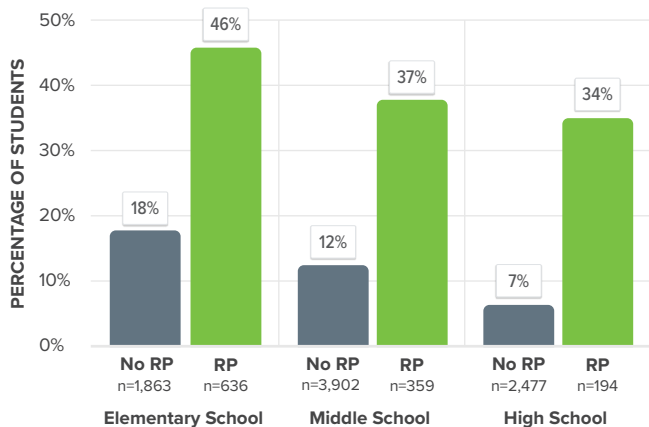
**Participants:** grades 4 – 10 (n=27,910)

English language learners (levels 1 – 4; n=9,431)

**Measure:** FCAT

### Significant achievement across all grade groupings

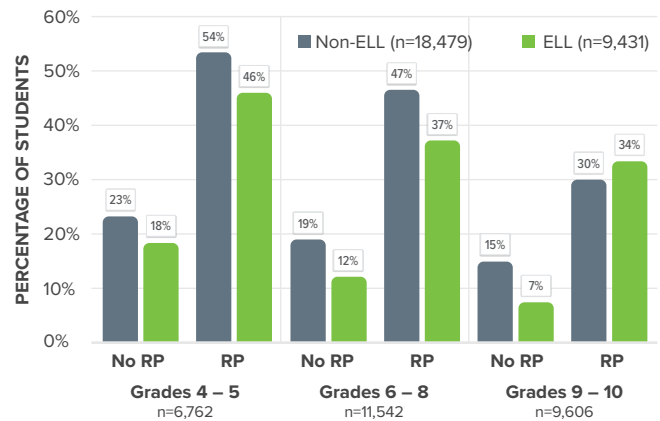
ELL students who advanced from below satisfactory to satisfactory



Significantly higher percentages of ELL students who completed DreamBox Reading instruction advanced from below to satisfactory or higher levels in reading as compared with their peers who did not use the DreamBox Reading program ( $X^2$  tests,  $p < .001$  in each comparison).

### Achieving equality with non-ELL peers

ELL and non-ell students who advanced from below satisfactory to satisfactory



ELL students who engaged in DreamBox Reading were also more likely to transition to satisfactory performance levels on the state test compared with their ELL and non-ELL peers who did not engage in DreamBox Reading instruction, and they nearly matched the percent of non-ELL students who engaged in DreamBox Reading practice in transitioning from below to at/above satisfactory levels on their state test.



The TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) International Association provides an authoritative summary of guidelines for instruction for English Language Learners. The table below lists TESOL's Principles for Exemplary Teaching of English Learners<sup>2</sup> and describes how DreamBox Reading aligns with these principles to meet the needs of English Language Learners.

## How DreamBox Reading aligns with TESOL principles

### Principle 1: Know your learners

#### Practice 1: Teachers gain information about their learners.

“Teachers collect information about their students’ linguistic and educational backgrounds to determine correct placement for students.”

**DreamBox Reading** begins with an adaptive literacy assessment designed to provide each student with a personalized instructional path. A student’s ELL status is taken into account during this process. The assessment responds dynamically to a student’s performance, adjusts test difficulty accordingly and provides information about each student’s level of reading motivation, vocabulary level, comprehension level and silent reading rate. This information is then used to define each student’s instructional path, including placement within assigned instructional components and recommended instructional intensity.

#### Practice 2: Teachers embrace and leverage the resources that learners bring to the classroom.

“Teachers tap their learners’ prior knowledge purposefully in their teaching. They try to determine what gifts and talents students bring to the classroom, what interests motivate them, what life experiences they have had that are curriculum-related, and what else in their backgrounds has influenced their personalities and beliefs.”

**DreamBox Reading** provides personalized and adaptive instruction, using an extensive library of engaging informational and literary selections that support instructional objectives through student-centered learning. Students choose from an array of selections that enable them to see themselves in what they read, relate to shared experiences and discover the world around them.

Lesson plans, comprehension skill sheets and online activities allow for independent, small group and teacher-directed instruction. Writing prompts encourage students to make connections between what they read and their background experience, as well as expand upon what they have read.

## Principle 2: Create conditions for language learning

### Practice 1: Teachers demonstrate expectations of success for all learners.

“Student achievement is affected by teacher expectations of success. Teachers must hold high expectations and communicate them clearly to all their students – English language learners and other classmates – which will motivate them to perform at a high level.”

With **DreamBox Reading**, teachers are given the tools to help ALL students master grade-level content. Each student has access to texts that are appropriately matched to his or her proficiency level. Further, while students may begin their instruction at a different starting point, the system dynamically adjusts the instruction, providing scaffolds as needed to ensure students are always appropriately challenged toward reaching grade-level mastery.

In the student dashboard, students clearly see where they are in their current level, the work needed to make progress toward the next level, as well as where they are heading long term. Within the educator management system, teachers are provided with monitoring tools that enable them to review student progress and share feedback and expectations with individuals as well as with groups of students.

### Practice 2: Teachers plan instruction to enhance and support students’ motivation for language learning.

“We know that motivation is an important condition for language learning, so teachers need to engage their learners and motivate them to work persistently at learning the new language.”

**DreamBox Reading** is the only reading intervention that measures student motivation. Educators can use this data to understand their students’ level of motivation, prioritize motivational supports, as well as gauge how student motivation increases along with fluency and comprehension.

Students self-select texts through eight interest filters that provide choice and control over reading material. A student who is passionate about sports, for example, can filter selections by the Get in the Game category. Within this category, the student will find a wide variety of sports-related texts from global sources that support the acquisition of knowledge in curriculum areas of STEM, social science, and literature.

The DreamBox Reading Learn Site provides teachers with an assortment of motivational strategies and ideas. The program also provides motivational incentives, including award certificates to print and display for students who advance in the program.



### Principle 3: Design high-quality lessons for language development

#### Practice 1: Teachers use comprehensible input to convey information to students.

“Comprehensible input is of primary importance for progress in the target language. Whether oral or written, comprehensible input helps English language learners understand the meaning of the communication. Teachers scaffold the language input in multiple ways to aid learner perception and promote understanding.”

Due to the fact that **DreamBox Reading** provides personalized and adaptive instruction, each student works at a level that matches his or her language ability. Depending on a student’s instructional needs, selections may be accompanied by lush photographic images that enhance the learning experience, as well as reading scaffolds that support student success. Dynamic scaffolds provide extra assistance to those students who need it. For example, texts may be segmented into smaller reading units, and rereads with clues are available during comprehension tasks.

DreamBox Reading provides five levels of high-interest, low-readability selections that are available to students in grades 6 and higher who are reading on a 1<sup>st</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup>-grade level. This content provides older struggling readers with age-appropriate, engaging selections that have suitable text complexity for their growing skill levels.

In addition, the DreamBox Reading adaptive vocabulary instruction and practices teach students 2,400 Words to Master, a research-based compilation of valuable, cross-curriculum, general academic vocabulary. Mastering these words helps students glean the meaning of complex texts across curriculum domains.

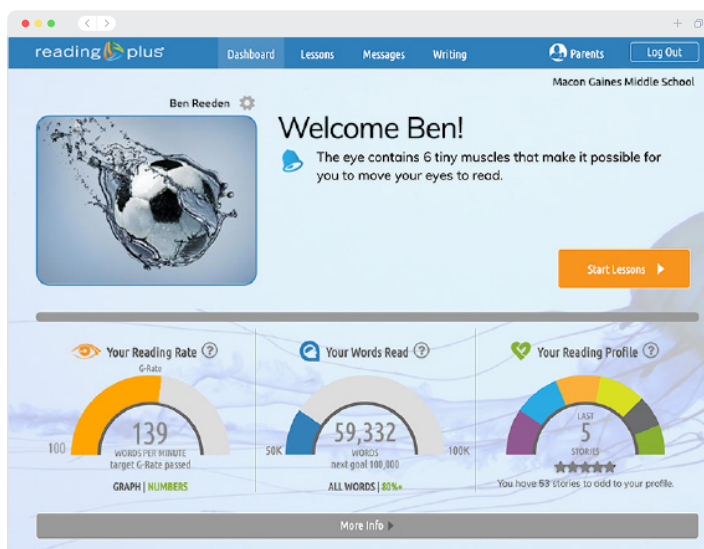
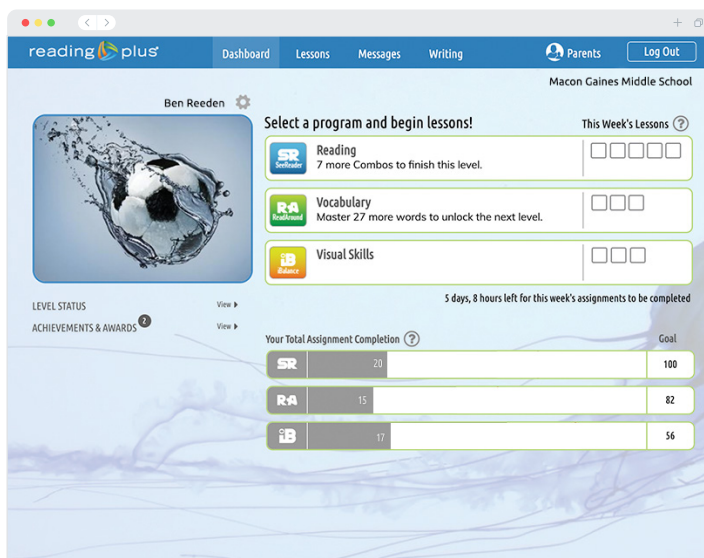


**Practice 2: Teachers communicate clear instructions to carry out the learning task.**

“Teachers use and teach consistent classroom management practices and routines throughout the school year in an effort to help students understand what is expected of them in a classroom and throughout a lesson. Teachers use simple directions with patterned language that they repeat each time.”

Instructional rules and expectations are clearly communicated and supported by visuals in DreamBox Reading. Progress toward reaching goals is displayed both in terms of short-term (weekly) and longer-term (i.e., grade-level) goals. The student dashboard is designed to encourage students to take control of their learning and maintain accountability as they see their progress toward their goals at a glance.

DreamBox Reading encourages students to take an active part in their success. Through personalized practice and adaptive instruction, students gain independence in the classroom as they engage in instructional tasks that meet their instructional needs as well as motivate them.



## Principle 4: Adapt lesson delivery as needed

### **Practice 1: Teachers check student comprehension frequently and adjust instruction according to learner responses.**

“To teach effectively, teachers need to evaluate what students know and what they do not know, in real time. We do not want to wait until the end of a lesson or the end of a unit to discover that our students have misunderstood a key concept or have incorrectly learned critical vocabulary.”

The **DreamBox Reading** adaptive instruction is continuously collecting data on student performance in order to dynamically customize instruction for every student. If students are struggling, instructional scaffolds are enhanced to provide additional support (e.g., students may be provided with just-in-time rereads and/or clues to support understanding when they experience difficulties). As students demonstrate higher levels of success, supports are gradually reduced and instructional difficulty is increased.

Students receive immediate feedback on their performance with comprehension questions and vocabulary tasks. When students show signs of struggle, the program makes decisions on how to dynamically adjust the instruction and practice parameters to best assist them in progressing through the learning objectives.

Educators are provided with individual reports and grouping filters to identify students with similar challenges for targeted small group instruction. Lesson plans and various offline learning tools are provided for targeted supplemental individual and small group instruction.

### **Practice 2: Teachers adjust their talk, the task or the materials according to learner responses.**

“If teachers notice student confusion or misunderstanding during a lesson, they make adjustments so that all learners can meet the learning goals. They might adapt a task by adding more time, finding supplemental resources or pulling a small group of students together for reteaching.”

Integrated formative assessment allows **DreamBox Reading** to adapt instruction dynamically at any point. Instructional scaffolds may be intensified if needed, removed if students are ready for greater independence, or instructional difficulty may be increased if students demonstrate readiness for an increase in challenge.

The teacher is also alerted if a student struggles with a program component. The student may be temporarily paused in the program until the teacher can review and meet with the student to discuss difficulties as well as provide direct instruction. Educators have access to an extensive bank of targeted teaching tools for whole group, small group, and individual instruction.

## Principle 5: Monitor and assess student language development

### Practice 1: Teachers monitor student errors.

“By interacting frequently with our students, we can acquire a great deal of information about their progress. Some teachers record the results of their interactions (e.g., correct and incorrect uses of English) in an anecdotal way, use a checklist or change student grouping patterns and/or partners, depending on their newly developing proficiency.”

As students engage in practice, performance data are collected and evaluated continuously. Teachers have access to an assortment of actionable reports to review each student’s individual performance (including performance history) as well as performance patterns for entire classes or custom groups. Ongoing performance data are available for general academic vocabulary mastery, discrete comprehension skills, comprehension based silent reading rate and overall proficiency, as well as data on program use and performance over time.

**DreamBox Reading** may automatically assign targeted skill instruction based on a student’s performance with these skills. The program also groups students who experience similar skill challenges, facilitating small group instruction.

### Practice 2: Teachers provide ongoing effective feedback strategically.

“A teacher’s feedback in response to a learner’s error is delivered strategically and in a timely manner. The feedback can be positive or corrective. It is important that the feedback be specific and related to what learners are doing well in addition to what they can improve.”

Ongoing formative assessments enable the **DreamBox Reading** program to automatically and continuously adapt instruction in terms of pacing, level of difficulty, necessary scaffolds and the amount and intensity of practice required.

Progress is also monitored by the teacher throughout the year with the support of the educator dashboard and custom reports that serve as the basis for providing each student with targeted feedback. Real-time, actionable, data-informed reports present teachers with an overview of student and class progress, providing them with valuable insights throughout the year.



#### REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> Reading Plus WIDA Prime V2 Correlation

<sup>2</sup> The 6 Principles for Exemplary Teaching of English Learners, TESOL International Association, <https://www.tesol.org/the-6-principles/about>



Learn more.  
Visit [dreambox.com](https://dreambox.com)

Learn More >



© 2022 DreamBox Learning, Inc.  
All rights reserved.