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EBLI Teacher and Student Lessons

Efficacy Study with Pull-Out Intervention:
Grades 3-6 with Fastbridge



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PROMISING

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Evidence-Based
Literacy Instruction™

This product has been rigorously evaluated and is hereby acknowledged for meeting the educational impact criteria of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), warranting a Tier 3 for **"Promising" Evidence**. This recognition is based on its proven effectiveness in enhancing grade-level learning outcomes in multiple studies.

REVIEWED BY THE LXD RESEARCH EXPERT REVIEW PANEL

January 25, 2025

Rachel Schechter, Ph.D.
Founder of LXD Research

DATE

Educators search for high-quality research and evidence-based interventions to strengthen grant applications, to support comprehensive and targeted schools, or to implement new programming in their schools. Evidence requirements under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) are designed to ensure that states, districts, and schools can identify programs, practices, products, and policies that work across various populations.

Educational programs document their evidence of design, effectiveness, and impact in order to be eligible for federal funding. While there is no singular authority that determines a program's tier, the Department of Education's Office of Educational Technology provides standards to assess the varying levels of strength of research for education products.

The categories for ESSA Evidence are: strong (Tier 1), moderate (Tier 2), and promising (Tier 3) evidence of effectiveness, or demonstrates a rationale to be effective (Tier 4).

This product meets the requirements for Tier 3:

- ✓ In correlational design, students who used the program are compared to normed referenced samples or other group averages for comparison.
- ✓ Multiple studies with the proper design and implementation with at least two teachers and 30 students show statistically significant, positive findings.
- ✓ The study uses a program implementation that could be replicated.
- ★ A third-party research organization has reviewed the documentation for ESSA validation.



When product designers leverage learning sciences to design and evaluate their programs, educators can better target instruction, and students' skills soar. Through multiple correlational studies, a statistical evaluation shows that student growth is associated with higher student product use. This product meets the criteria for LXD Research's ESSA Tier 3 Evidence.

– Rachel Schechter, Ph.D., Founder of LXD Research



EBLI STUDY SUMMARY

FASTBRIDGE, GRADES 3-6

2023-2024



PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

EBLI is a literacy professional development platform that provides educators with essential tools to effectively teach sound-letter relationships, enhancing their ability to instruct students in both decoding and encoding. The approach incorporates interactive practice to boost retention and accelerate literacy development to improve reading comprehension. The provided structured lessons reduces planning time and increases teacher confidence.

STUDY DETAILS

Analysis Sample Sizes

68 students across grades 3-6

Demographics

81% White; 10% Hispanic | 43% Female
23% FRL | 6% ELL | 40% SPED

Time Frame

August 2023-June 2024

Implementation Description

Interventionists used ETSL for pull-out intervention, which involved an additional 30-minutes of reading for enrichment or remediation, 4 to 5 days per week.

Methodology

Students' FastBridge scores and percentiles were examined at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year.

STUDY CONTEXT

EBLI collaborated with LXD Research to evaluate the impact of EBLI Teacher and Student Lessons (ETSL). This experimental study occurred in a Wisconsin school district during the 2023-2024 school year, in which two schools were randomly selected to use ETSL as its reading intervention program. Interventionists at the EBLI-assigned schools received teacher training, coaching, support, and school-level planning support at the start of the year. This report focuses on describing the growth made by the students receiving pull-out intervention with EBLI.

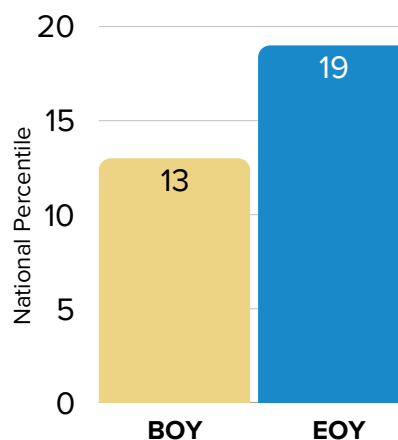
KEY FINDINGS

- The median national percentile of the *aReading* score for students receiving pull-out intervention increased from the 13th percentile to the 19th percentile.
- 68% of EBLI students increased their national score percentile by end-of-year, indicating an improvement in performance relative to other students.
- 46% of high-risk students from the fall advanced out of the high-risk category by spring.

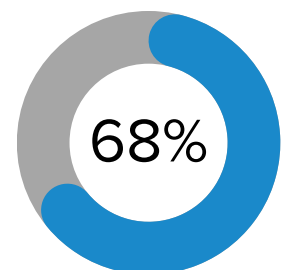


The majority of EBLI students increased their percentile rankings, demonstrating growth that outpaced the average student's progress.

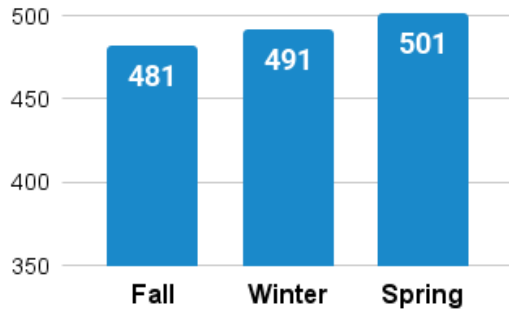
Grades 3-6 BOY vs EOY
Median National Percentile



Students who increased their national percentile by EOY



FastBridge aReading Scores Fall 2023 - Spring 2024



EBLI students made consistent gains on FastBridge aReading from beginning to end of year, averaging 10 points of growth each testing period. As 97% of students started the year below the 40th percentile nationally, for many, these gains translated into an increased percentile rank by the end of the year.

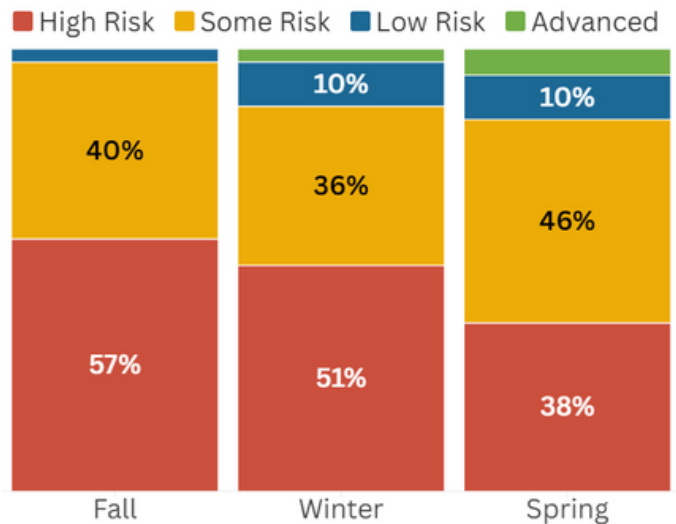
Grades 3-6 FastBridge Percentile Benchmarks Fall 2023 - Spring 2024

FAST Benchmarks indicate the student’s risk of performing below a future (usually end of year) performance target. These are based on national norms and correspond to the following percentile ranges:

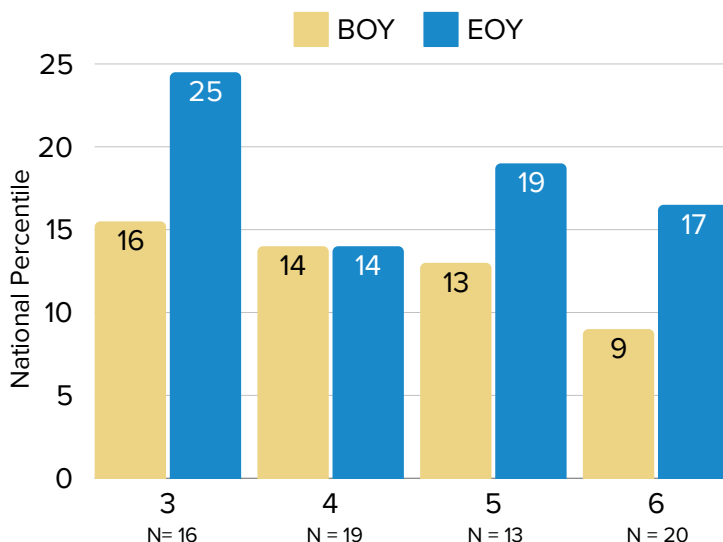
- High-Risk: 1st to 14th percentile
- Some-Risk: 15th–39th percentile
- Low-Risk: 40th–70th percentile
- Advanced: 71st-99th percentile

At the start of the year, 57% of EBLI students were considered high risk by benchmark standards. By spring, this figure decreased by 33% (or 19 percentage points), with nearly half (46%) of high-risk students moving out of the category. Additionally, a small but consistent increase was observed in the proportion of students achieving advanced status, performing better than at least 71% of their peers.

FastBridge Benchmarks Fall to Spring



BOY vs EOY Median National Percentile by Grade



The median national percentile of the aReading score for students receiving pull-out intervention increased for all grades, with the exception of grade 4, which remained even.

While percentile ranks adjust for expected score improvements throughout the year, percentile gains indicate that students grew at a faster rate than their national peers and made progress towards closing skill gaps. Of the EBLI students, 68% increased their national score percentile by end-of-year.



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EBLI Teacher and Student Lessons for Intervention in Grades 3-6 Efficacy Study with Fastbridge

Conducted by Rachel L. Schechter, Ph.D. and Anna Robinson M.A., [LXD Research](#) at Charles River Media

Abstract

This study examines the effectiveness of Evidence-Based Literacy Instruction (EBLI) Teacher and Student Lessons as a reading intervention for struggling readers in grades 3-6. Conducted in a Wisconsin school district during the 2023-2024 school year, the research employed a mixed-methods approach to evaluate implementation and outcomes across 68 students receiving pull-out intervention services. Quantitative analysis of FastBridge assessment data revealed meaningful improvements in reading performance, with the median national percentile ranking increasing from the 13th percentile at baseline to the 19th percentile by year-end. Notably, 68% of students demonstrated accelerated growth by improving their national percentile rankings, indicating faster progress than grade-level peers nationwide. Risk classification data showed a substantial 33% reduction in students meeting high-risk criteria, with 46% of initially high-risk students advancing to lower risk categories. This progress was consistent across most grade levels, with grades 3, 5, and 6 showing increases in median national percentile rankings. Qualitative feedback from eight educators provided implementation context and highlighted areas of perceived student improvement, particularly in reading fluency and comprehension. These findings suggest EBLI's speech-to-print methodology, which focuses on teaching the 44 speech sounds represented by the alphabet's 26 letters, offers promising support for struggling readers. However, the relatively small sample size and mixed educator feedback indicate opportunities for further program refinement and more extensive research to validate these preliminary results across diverse settings and populations.

Recommended citation:

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Introduction

Bolstering foundational reading skills during primary education remains a critical educational priority. Persistent stagnation in national reading scores has raised significant concerns about the effectiveness of elementary reading curricula in the United States (The Condition of Education 2020). This has intensified the urgency for educators to develop expertise in literacy instruction through both well-designed core curricula and precisely targeted interventions.

Recent educational disruptions have further complicated literacy development, with pandemic-related learning interruptions leaving many students significantly behind in reading proficiency. Data from over 9 million students in grades 1-8 underscore the scope of post-COVID academic recovery needed, revealing concerning lags in reading achievement and an increased population of students requiring accelerated progress to reach grade-level benchmarks (Curriculum Associates, 2023). The challenge of addressing diverse student needs—including varied ability levels and language backgrounds—within limited instructional time has become increasingly complex.

Contemporary literacy research, particularly The Science of Reading framework, emphasizes systematic skill building over multiple years (The Reading League, 2022) while balancing rigorous academic expectations with targeted support structures (Lambert & Sassone, 2020). Within this context, Evidence-Based Literacy Instruction (EBLI) offers a distinctive approach. Developed by Nora Chahbazi, who transitioned from a career in neonatal nursing to literacy advocacy after discovering an innovative speech-first approach to reading instruction, EBLI represents a departure from conventional phonics methodologies. Research suggests linguistic phonics approaches like EBLI's show advantages over traditional methods in developing critical reading components including phonemic awareness, letter-sound correspondence, decoding capabilities, and comprehension (Petscher et al., 2020).

Unlike traditional print-to-speech programs that often contain instructional gaps (Moats, 1998), EBLI's structured linguistic literacy framework builds from sound foundations outward. This approach operates on five key principles: oral language development precedes literacy, letters serve as sound symbols, sounds may be represented by multiple letters, sounds can have varied spellings, and letters may represent different sounds in different contexts. The growing evidence base indicates this speech-to-print methodology accelerates literacy development across multiple domains.

EBLI's instructional design features progressive concept reinforcement through interactive lessons while incorporating spaced and interleaved practice to maximize retention and engagement. A distinctive feature of the EBLI model is the integration of professional development directly within lesson structures, reducing preparation demands for teachers new to the methodology. This embedded support system builds educator knowledge and confidence—critical factors in successful literacy instruction implementation (Varghese et al.,



2016). Continuous refinement through practitioner feedback ensures the online course remains responsive to classroom implementation challenges and opportunities.

EBLI collaborated with Learning Experience Design (LXD) Research to independently evaluate EBLI Teacher and Student Lessons (ETSL). This study occurred in a Wisconsin school district during the 2023-2024 school year, in which two schools used ETSL as their reading intervention program. For core reading instruction, all elementary schools used Really Great Reading® and Sound Partners™ for word recognition skills in K-2, CKLA® 3-5 for knowledge-building skills, and CKLA® for grades 6-8. Interventionists at the EBLI-assigned schools received teacher training, coaching, support, and school-level planning support at the start of the year. Schools in this district use a combination of in-class instructional support and pull-out intervention support. This model leads to flexible integration of intervention and core instructional materials with all students. While the classroom teachers were not trained using EBLI, school leaders were told that EBLI practices could and should be reinforced throughout the school day as needed.

Program Key Features

Teachers can enhance their literacy instruction through EBLI's Teacher Training and Student Lessons (ETSL), which offers a distinctive alternative to traditional reading programs. Instead of providing static workbooks and prescriptive teacher guides, EBLI creates a dynamic instructional framework that equips educators with adaptable strategies responsive to individual student needs. This approach recognizes the foundational relationship between oral language proficiency and reading development.

What sets EBLI apart is its comprehensive instructional design covering all critical literacy components—phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, handwriting, spelling, and writing—through an accelerated, systematic, and explicit methodology. The program's unique speech-to-print orientation focuses on teaching the 44 speech sounds represented by the alphabet's 26 letters, contrasting with conventional print-to-speech approaches. This encoding-focused strategy is supported by research indicating superior outcomes compared to traditional decoding-only methods, particularly for students experiencing reading difficulties.

EBLI's implementation model features over 100 instructional activities delivered through a gradual release framework (Figure 1), where teachers initially learn alongside students through asynchronous video instruction before progressively assuming independent lesson delivery. This scaffolded approach builds teacher capacity while maintaining instructional integrity, creating a sustainable model for classroom implementation that evolves with teacher expertise and student progress.

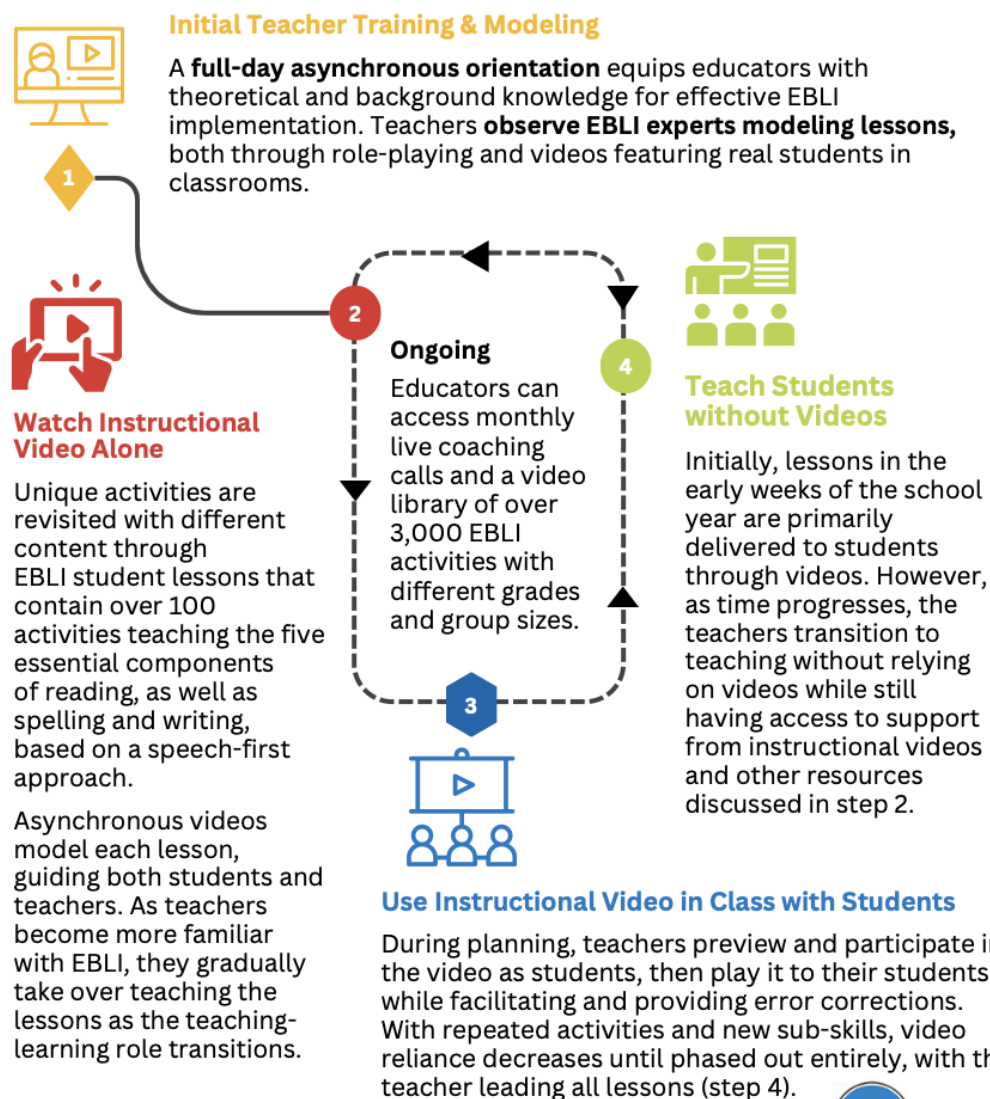


Evaluation Questions

The evaluation aims to answer the following questions:

1. How does the implementation of ETSL impact student achievement in both formative and summative reading assessments when compared to schools without the program?
2. How does ETSL's influence vary across grades and student subgroups (such as those qualifying for Free or Reduced-Price Meals, English language learners, students in special education, and racial and ethnic minority students)?
3. How do teachers and administrators perceive the quality and impact of ETSL?
4. What suggestions do they propose for enhancing the program?

Figure 1. EBLI Teacher & Student Lessons Description





Methods

Sample Description

This study examined EBLI implementation with 68 students across grades 3-6 during the 2023-2024 school year (Table 1). The mixed-method design included educator feedback surveys and administrator focus groups, as well as the monitoring of student literacy skill development. The sample consisted predominantly of White students (81%), with Hispanic students comprising the next largest group (10%). The gender distribution showed 43% female students. Among the participants, 23% qualified for free or reduced-price lunch, 6% were English language learners, and 40% received special education services.

Table 1: Complete Sample Description of pullout intervention

| Grade | # of Students using EBLI |
|--------------|--------------------------|
| 3 | 16 |
| 4 | 19 |
| 5 | 13 |
| 6 | 20 |
| Total | 68 |

Students received EBLI instruction through a pull-out intervention model, where interventionists provided an additional 30 minutes of targeted reading instruction 4-5 days per week. The intervention focused on both enrichment and remediation based on individual student needs.

Educator Feedback Tools

Twelve instructors at two elementary schools within the school district use the EBLI Training and Student Lessons (ETSL). Reading intervention at the school district involves an additional 30-minutes of reading for enrichment or remediation, which occurs 4 to 5 days per week. Students in grades 3 to 6 who are receiving tiers 2 and 3 reading intervention at treatment sites receive ETSL instruction and support from Student Learning Assistants (SLAs) who are part-time, hourly employees at the school district and Title 1 teachers. While SLAs are not certified teachers or reading specialists, they receive support from the district’s literacy coaches who are assigned to their school site. A survey and administrator focus groups helped researchers understand context and feedback about the EBLI intervention lessons.

Student Outcome Measures

To measure student progress, we analyzed FastBridge assessment data collected at three timepoints during the academic year: beginning-of-year (August 2023), middle-of-year (January



2024), and end-of-year (June 2024). FastBridge assessments provided both raw scores and national percentile rankings, allowing us to track individual student growth as well as performance relative to grade-level peers.

Other Materials Used in the District

The district uses Really Great Reading® and Sound Partners™ for word recognition skills, CKLA® 3-5 for knowledge-building, and CKLA® for grades 6-8. As an incentive for participating in the study, district leaders were granted complimentary access to the ETSL platform for the academic year 2023-2024. Additionally, discounts will be offered to teachers in comparison classrooms for the subsequent 2024-2025 school year. At the commencement of the academic year, all students underwent initial assessments within the first four weeks using the Fastbridge™ Reading formative evaluations.

Assessment: Fastbridge™

FastBridge™ integrates Computer Adaptive Tests (CAT) and Curriculum-Based Measures (CBM) to screen students, identify skill gaps, and provide recommendations for reading instruction and diagnostic interventions. It takes five to thirty minutes for educators and yields subject mastery data as well as intervention guidance in reading, math, and social-emotional behavior.

Percentile ranges were taken from [FastBridge™ Benchmark and Norms \(2023\) guide](#).

The following national percentile ranges are used as default benchmarks within the FastBridge™ system.

- High-Risk: 1st–14th percentile
- Some-Risk: 15th–39th percentile
- Low-Risk: 40th–99th percentile

For aReading and CBMreading, the low-risk range is divided into two levels.

- Low-Risk: 40th–70th percentile
- Advanced: 71st–99th percentile

The percentiles for reading and math were calculated using the percentiles specified in the FastBridge™ system (FastBridge™ Benchmark and Norms (2023) guide), which can be seen in Tables 2 and 3 below for Reading.

Table 2. Fastbridge™ aReading Score Means for Students in Grades 3-6

| Fall aReading Score | | Winter aReading Score | |
|---------------------|-------|-----------------------|-------|
| Mean | SD | Mean | SD |
| 480.48 | 17.12 | 489.9 | 29.08 |

*Table 3. Fastbridge™ Reading Winter Achievement Percentiles*

| Timing | N | High Risk | Some Risk | Low Risk | Advanced |
|--------|----|-----------|-----------|----------|----------|
| Fall | 70 | 57% | 40% | 3% | |
| Winter | 70 | 51% | 36% | 10% | 3% |

Results

Educator Voices

There were eight educators who participated in the survey, primarily Student Learning Assistants (7) and one interventionist, most with 0-4 years of teaching experience. The intervention was implemented as 30-minute small group sessions 4-5 days per week during "WIN Time" (What I Need Time), which aligns with the district's established intervention structure.

Context from administrator focus groups reveals that prior to EBLI, the district used multiple intervention programs, including FastBridge™, Really Great Reading Products®, and Sound Partners™. This multi-program approach allowed flexibility but made it challenging to evaluate effectiveness across programs. The implementation of EBLI represents a move toward more systematic intervention delivery.

Regarding student engagement, three teachers reported students were "somewhat engaged" with EBLI lessons, while two teachers noted lower engagement levels. Focus group data suggests several successful engagement strategies across programs, including small group personalization, cross-grade collaboration, sharing progress monitoring data with students, and implementing student goal-setting practices.

Teachers reported varying levels of impact across different skill areas. Four teachers observed improvements in reading fluency and comprehension, while two to three noted moderate gains in spelling skills and reading accuracy. Results were mixed for handwriting legibility and motor coordination. Three teachers observed moderate improvements in student behavior and attention during lessons.

Teachers also provided constructive feedback for program enhancement. They suggested incorporating more frequent passage reading activities and introducing greater variety in lesson patterns while maintaining effective core elements. They also recommended adapting materials to better suit structured school settings.

This integrated analysis suggests EBLI implementation aligns with district intervention structures while offering opportunities for refinement based on early implementation experiences. The



feedback from both teachers and administrators provides valuable context for understanding how EBLI fits within the broader landscape of reading intervention at these schools.

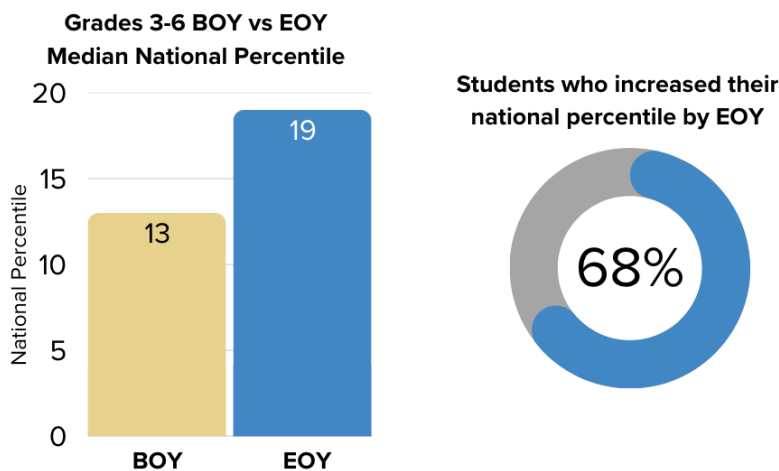
Student Outcomes

Results from the 2023-2024 academic year showed meaningful improvements in reading performance among students receiving EBLI intervention. The median national percentile ranking on the FastBridge™ aReading assessment increased from the 13th percentile at the beginning of the year to the 19th percentile by year's end, representing notable progress relative to national norms. This growth is particularly meaningful as percentile rankings inherently account for typical grade-level progression throughout the school year.

Over two-thirds of students (68%) demonstrated accelerated growth by improving their national percentile ranking between fall and spring, indicating they progressed at a faster rate than their grade-level peers nationwide. This growth was especially pronounced among initially high-risk students, with 46% advancing out of the high-risk category (defined as below the 14th percentile) by spring.

The widespread nature of these gains suggests the intervention's effectiveness in accelerating reading progress beyond typical growth rates, with the majority of EBLI students showing percentile rank improvements. This is particularly noteworthy given that these students began the year significantly behind grade level, with most performing below the 40th percentile nationally.

Figure 2. Percentile Change from BOY to EOY

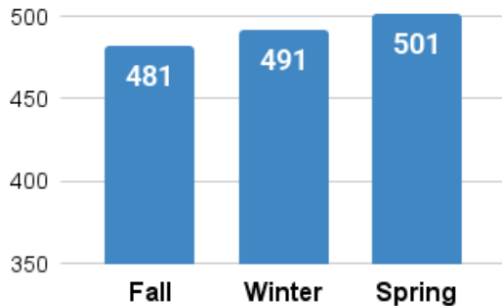


Analysis of FastBridge™ aReading scores revealed steady progress throughout the academic year, with EBLI students averaging 10 points of growth between each testing period. This consistent growth pattern is particularly meaningful given the students' initial performance levels.



97% of participating students began the year performing below the 40th percentile nationally, indicating substantial room for improvement. The steady accumulation of points across testing periods translated into meaningful shifts in percentile rankings for many students, suggesting that their rate of learning exceeded that of their national peer group. This pattern of consistent growth, rather than sporadic improvements, suggests the intervention supported sustained learning rather than temporary gains.

Figure 3. FastBridge™ aReading Scores Fall 2023-Spring 2024



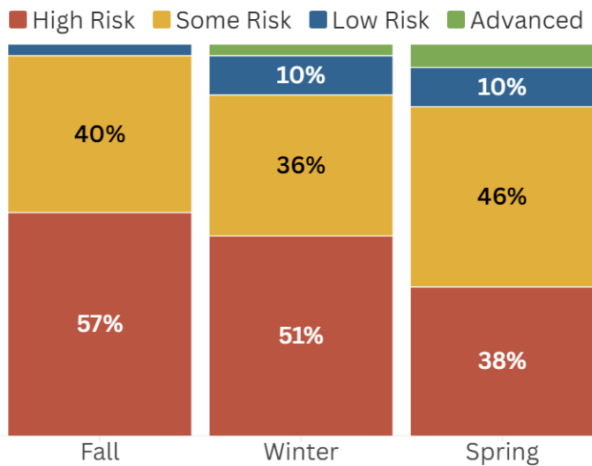
FastBridge™ benchmarks indicate the student’s risk of performing below a future (usually end of year) performance target. These are based on national norms and correspond to the following percentile ranges:

- High-Risk: 1st–14th percentile
- Some-Risk: 15th–39th percentile
- Low-Risk: 40th–70th percentile
- Advanced: 71st–99th percentile

Analysis of risk classification shifts revealed meaningful movement from higher to lower risk categories throughout the year. At baseline, more than half of EBLI students (57%) were classified as high-risk according to FastBridge™ benchmark standards (Figure 4). By the end of the year, this proportion had decreased substantially, with a 33% reduction (19 percentage points) in students meeting high-risk criteria. Of particular note, nearly half (46%) of students initially classified as high-risk had improved sufficiently to move into a lower risk category by spring. While the majority of students remained below grade-level benchmarks, there was also evidence of students achieving advanced proficiency, with a small but steady increase in the percentage of students performing above the 71st percentile nationally. These shifts in risk classification suggest the intervention supported meaningful progress for students across the achievement spectrum, with particularly strong effects for those starting at the highest risk levels.

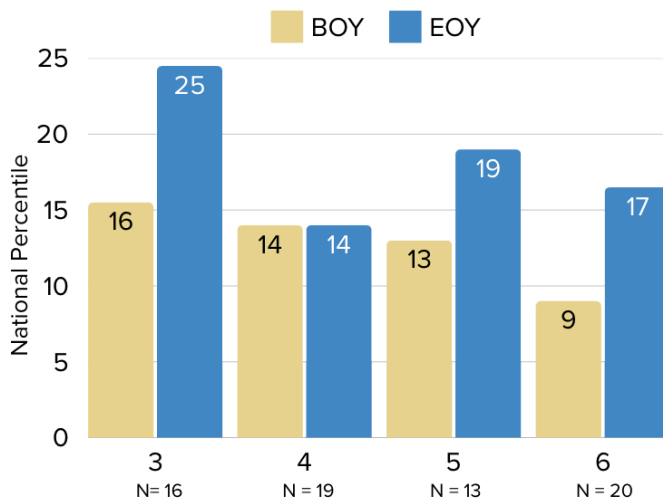


Figure 4. FastBridge Benchmarks in Fall, Winter, and Spring



Analysis of grade-level trends revealed improvement in median national percentile rankings across most grades. Students in grades 3, 5, and 6 demonstrated increases in their median national percentile rankings from fall to spring, while grade 4 students maintained stable percentile rankings (Figure 5). These percentile gains are particularly meaningful as they account for typical academic growth. Since percentile rankings automatically adjust for expected grade-level progress throughout the school year, any increase in percentile rank indicates accelerated learning relative to national norms. By year's end, more than two-thirds of EBLI students (68%) had improved their national percentile ranking, suggesting the intervention supported an accelerated rate of learning for most participants. This pattern of percentile rank improvements indicates students were not just making expected progress, but were actually closing achievement gaps with their grade-level peers.

Figure 5. Change in Median National Percentile Rank BOY to EOY by Grade





Conclusion

This initial study of EBLI implementation provides promising early indicators while highlighting opportunities for program refinement and future research. The integration of EBLI into existing intervention structures demonstrated feasibility, with teachers reporting some improvements in student reading fluency, comprehension, and engagement. However, the small scale of implementation and mixed feedback from educators suggests several key considerations for future studies and implementations.

First, a larger-scale efficacy study would help validate these preliminary findings and provide more robust evidence of EBLI's impact across diverse student populations and settings. Such a study should include more implementation sites and a larger sample of teachers to better understand how the program functions across different contexts.

Second, the study revealed the importance of alignment between intervention programs and school-wide literacy initiatives. Future implementations would benefit from stronger administrative buy-in from the outset, particularly at the building level where decisions about intervention programming are often made. Alternatively, partnering with districts that have already expressed interest in EBLI's approach could provide more favorable conditions for implementation and evaluation. Such bottom-up interest could help ensure the program receives adequate support and resources while fitting naturally within existing literacy frameworks.

As schools continue to seek effective reading interventions, particularly in the wake of pandemic-related learning disruptions, further research on EBLI's impact could help inform evidence-based decisions about literacy instruction. The experiences and feedback from this initial implementation provide valuable insights for program refinement and future studies that could more definitively establish EBLI's effectiveness as a literacy intervention tool.



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