Implementing EBLI: Evidence-Based Literacy Instruction at Hyde Park Day School

Executive Summary

SignalPoint Research conducted an evaluation of Hyde Park Day School's implementation of EBLI: Evidence-Based Literacy Instruction, a linguistics phonics speech-to-print approach to literacy instruction grounded in how language is neurologically processed. Unlike traditional phonics programs that move from print to speech (asking students to learn letter names and rules, then connect them to speech), EBLI begins with the sounds of spoken language and builds toward print. Hyde Park Day School (HPDS) is a program for students with dyslexia or students of average-to-superior intelligence with significant learning disabilities that impact their reading, writing, and academic progress. Over several years, HPDS instructors observed that students with severe reading delays were not making expected progress despite extensive, explicit instruction using the Wilson program. In response, HPDS launched a two-year developmental pilot to explore alternative approaches for strengthening foundational reading skills. Six teachers and speech-language pathologists volunteered to participate and received training in EBLI as part of this effort. These steps set the stage for a developmental evaluation of EBLI implemented across three HPDS campuses in 2023–24 and 2024–25, delivered under two pragmatic models (EBLI as the core reading block and EBLI as a supplemental intervention) by six trained teachers and speech-language pathologists.

Across the pilot sample, students made meaningful gains in foundational literacy skills, greater than typically seen by students with dyslexia and on pace with gains typically made by students without dyslexia. Averaging across students, oral reading fluency increased by approximately +25 words correct per minute (wcpm); spelling standard scores rose by about +6 points; and the proportion of students reading with less than 80% accuracy fell from 55% to 9%.

Both implementation models produced positive outcomes: total fluency gains were similar for EBLI as core (+23 wcpm) and EBLI as supplement (+26 wcpm), while growth-per-hour metrics favored the core model (+0.22 wcpm/hr. vs. +0.17 wcpm/hr.). Regardless of implementation model, students' growth per instructional hour was four to five times the prior average for HPDS students (+0.04 wcpm/hr.) who had not previously responded to Wilson instruction.

Fourteen students who received EBLI across both years averaged +41 wcpm total fluency growth over two years and showed unusually small summer declines (≈2–3 wcpm), suggesting durable gains for many participants.

Results varied by context and student characteristics. Campus-level outcomes diverged: Chicago showed the largest and most consistent gains and improved implementation efficiency in Year 2, whereas Lemont and Northfield experienced year-over-year declines that warrant monitoring. Grade-level patterns indicated the strongest responses in early grades (2–4), with diminishing returns in upper grades. Educators reported qualitative improvements, for example, greater decoding strategy use, more systematic spelling attempts, and increased student confidence, which complemented the quantitative gains and suggested improvements in orthographic mapping not fully captured by standardized scoring.

Interpretation should be tempered by study limitations. The pilot was developmental and pragmatic: instructional dosage varied, fidelity was not formally monitored, assessors were not blind to condition, and sample sizes for some campuses and grades were small. These constraints limit causal inference and generalizability but do not diminish the practical significance of the observed improvements for a population that had shown limited response to prior Wilson instruction.

Taken together, the pilot findings indicate that EBLI is a promising approach for improving fluency, accuracy, and spelling among HPDS students with persistent reading difficulties. The results support further, more controlled implementation cycles that include systematic fidelity monitoring, larger samples, and targeted adaptations for older students and campus contexts to optimize and sustain gains.

About the Author. **Dr. Ciancio** has over two decades of experience leading projects to improve learning and instruction in PreK-12 settings. His 50+ works of scholarship include experimental evaluations of promising interventions, conducting formative research, tools for educators to improve practice, and formative assessments of academic skills. Dr. Ciancio has served on the faculty WestEd, the University of Tennessee and the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston. He received his PhD in Developmental Psychology from the University of Notre Dame.

SignalPoint Research received funding from EBLI to analyze and interpret data for this study. Founded by Dr. Ciancio in 2025, **SignalPoint Research** provides research and evaluation services for Nonprofits, Program Developers, and State & Local Education Agencies. With expertise in literacy, learning sciences, evidence-building studies and data storytelling, **SignalPoint Research** empowers organizations to make informed decisions about their programs with confidence.