

Evaluating the Effectiveness of Reading Interventions for Students with Mild Mental Retardation

This project evaluates the effectiveness of theoretically motivated instructional reading programs for children with mild mental retardation. These programs are based upon increasingly convergent evidenced that early reading difficulties are primarily due to two core linguistic deficits: phonological awareness and naming retrieval/access speed.

We will target 240 students in Grades 1 through 5 with mild mental retardation who have not yet learned to read, or who have evidenced difficulty in developing their reading skills. We will use a factorial design (etiology x gender x ses) to evaluate the effectiveness of instruction for students within and across intervention programs. The design allows for the evaluation of program impact on both early developing reading skills (phonological awareness, word identification/decoding) and the development of reading fluency and beginning reading comprehension skills, including other developmentally related language and cognitive skills. Additional qualitative analyses will permit us to describe the responses of parents, teachers, and students to the programs, and to document the ability of teachers to administer the reading instruction programs. Findings will be disseminated to participating school district personnel and families as well as nationally via conference presentations and publications.