
**READING FIRST:
THE NATIONAL READING
PANEL FINDINGS
AND
EAROBICS®**

INTRODUCTION: READING FIRST AND EAROBICS® LITERACY LAUNCH™

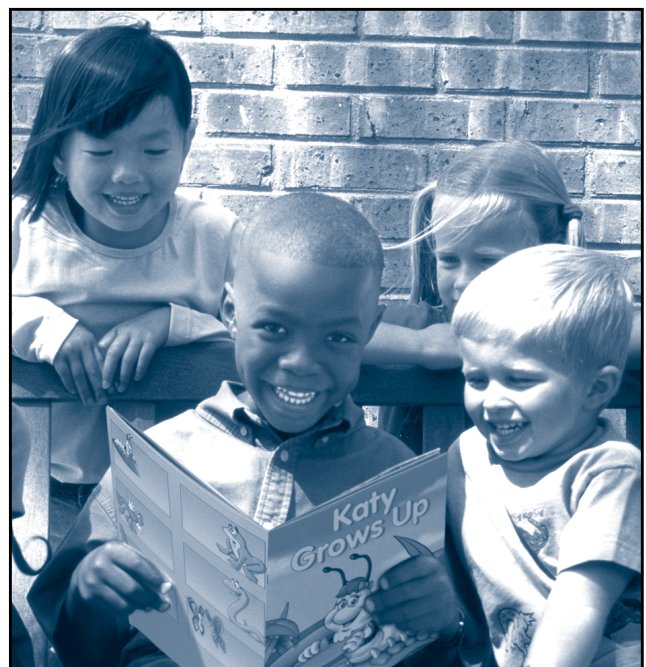
In 1997, the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, in conjunction with the Department of Education, formed the National Reading Panel (NRP), a group of educators, school administrators, parents and reading researchers dedicated to surveying the research on early literacy and reading instruction. The panel's goal was to determine what approaches have been proven by research to be most effective in teaching children to read and to recommend how such approaches might be implemented throughout schools nationwide.

The fact that this project was undertaken under the auspices of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development is significant: the National Reading Panel would be responsible not only for re-conceiving the ideas that shape early literacy curricula across the country, but for promoting the health and well-being of America's children. And literacy is indeed an issue of health, particularly in a society that is increasingly dependent on information and technology. Conventional wisdom suggests that children who fail to develop crucial literacy skills will become adults who lack the ability to make informed decisions in either the marketplace or public life; research proves that children who struggle with reading are more likely to suffer from, and contribute to, a host of social maladies. Sadly, some states base their projections for prison construction on the number of unsuccessful readers produced by their schools.

But these conditions are changing. With the release of the report of the National Reading Panel in 2000 and the passage of Reading First in 2001, schools across America are improving their approach to teaching essential literacy skills. Extending the efforts of the National Reading Panel, Reading First calls for scientifically-based reading programs and for innovative curricula that focus on what works. Earobics Literacy

Launch is one such program. Based on more than 20 years of literacy research, Earobics' scientifically-based software, multimedia, texts, manipulatives and lesson plans produce real improvements in students' ability to read. In numerous independent studies, Earobics has been proven to dramatically improve student performance in the foundational skills critical for reading success. As reported in *USA Today*, Earobics Literacy Launch has been cited by the National Institutes of Health as an effective, scientifically-based literacy program.

Earobics Literacy Launch has earned national recognition because of its effectiveness, and because of its innovative application of the research on how children learn to read. Earobics Literacy Launch enables educators to infuse their early literacy curricula with instruction that reflects and applies the National Reading Panel's recommendations, building better readers and above all else, students who are equipped with the skills necessary for a lifetime of learning.



1. NATIONAL READING PANEL FINDINGS: PHONEMIC AWARENESS

EFFECTIVE READING INSTRUCTION

As the single best school-entry predictor of how well children will perform during the first two years of reading instruction, phonemic awareness (i.e. learning to recognize and manipulate the sounds of language) is at the foundation of literacy and crucial to children's acquisition of alphabetic knowledge and their development of reading fluency and comprehension.

Report of the National Reading Panel pp. 2-1 - 2-3

Based on the same research highlighted by the NRP, Earobics Literacy Launch combines software, manipulatives and classroom activities to provide instruction in the full range of phonological awareness skills, including:

- Phoneme identification
- Blending
- Segmentation
- Rhyming
- Phoneme manipulation



Earobics is used by numerous teaching colleges to teach future teachers how to provide phonemic awareness instruction.

Instruction in phonemic awareness is effective in improving students' reading under a variety of teaching conditions and with a variety of learners, regardless of their reading readiness experiences, socio-economic status or native language.

Report of the National Reading Panel p. 2-5

The phonemic awareness instruction provided by Earobics Literacy Launch is specifically designed to help teachers reach each member of a diverse student body, with software that delivers directions in 10 languages and automatically adapts its level of difficulty to each student's instructional level. Earobics Literacy Launch also includes a wide variety of classroom activities and texts in multiple formats to meet the needs of every learner. Earobics activates auditory, visual and kinesthetic paths to learning, and gives teachers the flexibility to choose lesson plans that suit not only the needs of their students, but also the needs of their classroom scheduling and literacy curriculum.

EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS

Phonemic awareness instruction is most effective in improving reading and spelling skills when it is systematic and explicit.

Report of the National Reading Panel p. 2-4

Earobics Literacy Launch provides students with systematic and explicit phonemic awareness instruction, isolating specific skill sets for practice. The Earobics software also guides students through a scaffolded sequence of instruction that proceeds level by level and automatically adjusts its difficulty for each student.

In implementing phonemic awareness instruction, teachers should evaluate the methods they use against measured success in their own students.

Report of the National Reading Panel p. 2-7

The Earobics software automatically records and evaluates each response and adjusts the level of instruction accordingly, ensuring that students are provided with the appropriate instructional level and pace. Earobics software is also equipped with a data tracking feature that allows teachers to examine student performance in detail and to identify students with potential deficits or early reading difficulties. Using the information provided by the software's data management features, teachers can choose lessons from the Classroom Connections materials that further target areas of student need and provide students with meaningful learning experiences.

**Research-Based
Instructional
Methods
Supported
by Earobics
Literacy Launch**

Proven Results in Phonemic Awareness:

Chicago Public Schools,
Illinois, 2000

Daviess County Public Schools,
Kentucky, 2000

Northwestern University,
Illinois, 2000

Newport News Public Schools,
Virginia, 2001

District of Columbia
Public Schools,
Washington, D.C., 2002

Brevard County Public Schools,
Florida, 2002

Anne Arundel Public Schools,
Maryland, 2002

Cincinnati Children's Hospital
Medical Center,
Ohio, 2002

The motivation of teachers and students is a critical ingredient to the success of phonemic awareness instruction.

Report of the National Reading Panel pp. 2-1 - 2-3

In independent evaluations, teachers report that Earobics Literacy Launch increases students' interest in reading and their enthusiasm for participating in classroom activities, and improves students' ability to follow directions and their feelings of self-esteem. Teachers also report that Earobics Literacy Launch is easy to use, and that the Earobics' professional development supports and motivates their teaching.

While phonemic awareness is a critical skill in enabling students to make the transition from spoken word to print, it is only one portion of a balanced and complete reading program.

Report of the National Reading Panel p. 2-6



In addition to providing explicit and systematic phonemic awareness instruction, Earobics Literacy Launch also includes a wide range of materials and activities that provide instruction in phonics, vocabulary development, fluency and comprehension. Earobics also extends literacy instruction beyond the classroom, offering workshops for parents, take-home books and materials and parent activity guides in both English and Spanish.

2. NATIONAL READING PANEL FINDINGS: PHONICS

EFFECTIVE READING INSTRUCTION

Effective phonics instruction significantly improves reading comprehension.

Report of the National Reading Panel p. 2-94

Earobics Literacy Launch helps students make the transition from spoken language to print by providing them with a wide array of learning experiences that focus on alphabetic knowledge, spelling and decoding. Featuring manipulatives, such as letter-sound cards and alphabet mats, as well as decodable texts that emphasize the alphabetic principle, Earobics Literacy Launch supports effective phonics instruction from its foundation in developing a knowledge of letter-sound relationships to its culmination in fluent reading for comprehension.



**Research-based
Instructional
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EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS

Phonics instruction should be implemented as early as kindergarten and first grade.

Report of the National Reading Panel p. 2-93

Earobics Literacy Launch Step 1 provides beginning phonics instruction for kindergarten and first grade students. Earobics software assists students in making the transition from phonemic awareness instruction to an understanding of sound/symbol correspondence, and other elements of Earobics Literacy Launch Step 1 (including books, manipulatives, and classroom activities) provide instruction in the alphabetic principle to help students learn the connection between sounds, letters and words.

Explicit and systematic phonics instruction is more effective than non-systematic phonics instruction.

Report of the National Reading Panel, p. 2-92

Earobics Literacy Launch is designed to supplement any core literacy program's phonics instruction. Manipulatives such as alphabet mats and letter-sound cards help teachers provide students with tactile, kinesthetic and visual representations of a systematic presentation of phonics skills.



Effective phonics programs provide ample opportunities for children to apply what they are learning about letters and sounds to the reading of words and stories.

Report of the National Reading Panel, p. 2-97

Proven Results in Phonics:

Chicago Public Schools,
Illinois, 2000

Daviess County Public Schools,
Kentucky, 2000

Northwestern University,
Illinois, 2000

Culver City Unified School
District,
California, 2001

Newport News Public Schools,
Virginia, 2001

Spring Branch ISD,
Texas, 2001

Cincinnati Children's Hospital
Medical Center,
Ohio, 2002

Earobics Literacy Launch combines phonics instruction with application experiences, enabling students to practice decoding and spelling patterns in meaningful contexts. In conjunction with its phonics instruction, Earobics includes books that focus on rhyme families, building students' knowledge of letter-sound relationships and spelling patterns; it also includes the Sound Starters and Sound Stories series, which combine alliteration, music and stories to give students practice in the alphabetic principle that is both systematic and contextually meaningful.

Programs that focus too much on letter-sound relationships and not enough on putting those relationships to use are unlikely to be effective. Phonics should be part of a balanced program of reading instruction, one that develops phonemic awareness, fluency and comprehension strategies and provides opportunities to put phonics knowledge to practice in reading and writing.

Report of the National Reading Panel, p. 2-97

Earobics offers balanced literacy instruction, providing materials and activities that build students' phonemic awareness skills, while offering them a variety of ways to apply phonics knowledge to reading and writing. As it reinforces their knowledge of print concepts and their ability to match letter combinations to the sounds of oral language, the reading comprehension component of Earobics Literacy Launch engages students in story prediction, retelling, comparison and use of context clues.

It is important that teachers have a means to carry out phonics instruction creatively.

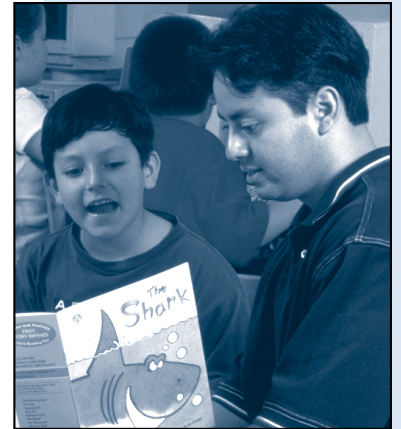
Report of the National Reading Panel, p. 2-96

Earobics introduces phonics instruction into the classroom in multiple ways, using a variety of media and a diverse range of activities to deliver learning experiences that avoid dull drilling and keep students and teachers engaged.

Phonics instruction is most effective when it is tailored to the individual needs of a student.

Report of the National Reading Panel, p. 2-97

Earobics Literacy Launch is designed to be flexible and to meet the needs of every student. Adaptive Earobics software delivers phonological awareness and phonics instruction that automatically adjusts to each student's skill level, and Earobics Classroom Connections provides a comprehensive collection of activities to allow teachers to focus on specific literacy skills. Earobics offers teachers a variety of classroom resources that support effective and varied phonics instruction, including manipulatives and texts that may be used by the class as a whole or by smaller groups of students. Texts appear in a variety of formats, including conventional print as well as videotapes, audiotapes and enhanced CD-ROM versions, and these different versions may be selected to serve each student's particular learning needs.



3. NATIONAL READING PANEL FINDINGS: FLUENCY

Research-based
Instructional
Method
Supported by
Earobics
Literacy Launch



EFFECTIVE READING INSTRUCTION

Repeated oral reading that includes guidance from teachers, peers or parents has significant and positive impact on word recognition, fluency and comprehension.

Report of the National Reading Panel, p. 3-3

Earobics Literacy Launch includes texts that create oral reading opportunities for students and helps them to develop reading fluency. Earobics includes texts in both big book and little book formats with accompanying audiotapes, enabling teachers and students to read aloud together, in groups, in pairs or individually. Earobics' School-to-Home Connections offers reproducible take-home books to help parents share reading at home, encouraging their children to read aloud and fostering an environment that supports literacy learning.

EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS

Students should practice reading aloud texts that are appropriate for their independent reading level.

Put Reading First: The Research Building Blocks for Teaching Children to Read, p. 27

Earobics Literacy Launch Step 1 provides skill-level appropriate texts for a variety of readers, with books that support students' growing vocabularies. Earobics Step 2 includes a series of leveled books that provide skill-appropriate content and are in a paperback format that appeals to students' emerging sense of autonomy and their desire to read fluently and independently. Students feel a sense of achievement and growing proficiency as they progress through each level of the series, which further reinforces their development of fluency.

Effective guided oral reading instruction strategies include:

- Student-adult reading
- Tape-assisted reading
- Choral reading
- Partner reading

Put Reading First: The Research Building Blocks for Teaching Children to Read, pp. 27-28

Proven Results in Fluency:

Culver City Unified School
District, California, 2001
Spring Branch ISD,
Texas, 2001

Earobics Literacy Launch supports all of these strategies, with Big Books that offer teachers a means of engaging their students in guided oral reading; a musical companion to the Sound Starters series that encourages children to sing-a-long and read in unison; books on tape; and mid-sized books that are perfect for reading with partners.

4. NATIONAL READING PANEL FINDINGS: VOCABULARY

EFFECTIVE READING INSTRUCTION

Vocabulary is learned both directly, through explicit instruction, and indirectly, through oral language interactions and guided and independent reading.

Report of the National Reading Panel, p. 4-4

Earobics Literacy Launch promotes a language-rich classroom environment that helps students become acquainted with words and establishes new words as part of their growing vocabulary. Language enrichment activities and vocabulary and comprehension lessons incorporate Earobics materials, including word cards and engaging texts, that focus on language concepts, conversation starters and vocabulary development.

EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS

Vocabulary instruction is most effective when its methods are customized to suit a student's age and reading skill level.

Report of the National Reading Panel, p. 4-4

The vocabulary and language enrichment activities included in Earobics Classroom Connections focus on expanding students' vocabularies and their understanding of language concepts. As with all elements of Earobics Literacy Launch, these activities facilitate students' development, while gradually increasing in complexity, so that teachers may easily locate activities that will best support the literacy skills that their students are developing. Step by step, students are introduced to key language concepts that promote vocabulary development and improved comprehension.

Research-based
Instructional
Methods
Supported
by Earobics
Literacy Launch

Proven Results in
Vocabulary Instruction:

Chicago Public Schools,
Illinois, 2000
Spring Branch ISD,
Texas, 2001

Repetition of unfamiliar words and multiple exposures to words are important, and vocabulary development is most effective when new words are encountered in a variety of contexts.

Report of the National Reading Panel, p. 4-4

Earobics Classroom Connections activities and multi-formatted texts help students develop word learning strategies, such as using context clues and background knowledge, and introduce students to new words and concepts that appear throughout the other subjects that make up the school curriculum. Classroom Connections and supporting materials, such as picture/word cards, give students diverse opportunities for repeated exposure to words within a variety of contexts, as well as additional language enrichment objectives and vocabulary building exercises.



5. NATIONAL READING PANEL FINDINGS: COMPREHENSION

EFFECTIVE READING INSTRUCTION

Effective reading is purposeful and active; comprehension is the purpose of reading.

Report of the National Reading Panel, p. 4-1

Earobics Literacy Launch includes integrated multimedia, texts and activities that build and support students' reading comprehension strategies. By combining engaging media and research-based instructional strategies, Earobics provides teachers with effective comprehension lessons that can be utilized with all classroom materials.

EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS

Text comprehension can be improved by instruction that helps readers utilize a variety of specific comprehension strategies as they approach a given text.

Report of the National Reading Panel, p. 4-6

Both the Step 1 and Step 2 versions of Earobics Literacy Launch use Classroom Connections activities to ensure that students' reading experiences are purposeful and active. These activities reinforce print concepts and develop students' ability to employ a variety of comprehension strategies, including:

- Predicting outcomes
- Using background knowledge
- Retelling
- Identifying cause and effect
- Asking questions
- Distinguishing fact from opinion and reality from fiction
- Dramatization
- Using graphic organizers to illustrate narrative structure and ideas that appear in print

Effective comprehension strategy instruction is explicit and systematic and employs the following methods:

- Direct explanation
- Modeling
- Guided Practice
- Application

Put Reading First: The Research Building Blocks for Teaching Children to Read, pp. 4-6

Earobics Literacy Launch supports a systematic and explicit method of comprehension strategy instruction, offering teachers texts, activities and materials that support the use of all four methods of promoting comprehension.

**Proven Results in
Text Comprehension
Instruction:**

Polk County Public Schools,
Florida, 2001

6. NATIONAL READING PANEL FINDINGS: TEACHER EDUCATION AND READING INSTRUCTION

Inservice professional development produces significantly higher student achievement.

Report of the National Reading Panel, pp. 5-13 - 5-14



Each implementation of Earobics Literacy Launch is supported by on-site, customized professional development that combines an overview of research-based early literacy instruction with practical, hands-on training that reflects the reality of today's classroom. These sessions are custom-designed to expand teachers' knowledge of the reading process and maximize their ability to use Earobics Literacy Launch to efficiently improve student reading performance.

Earobics also provides ongoing professional development and in-class coaching sessions that provide teachers with one-on-one consultations. These sessions may include assistance in working with struggling students, gathering and interpreting student data, modeling and practice in research-based literacy instruction and activities from Earobics Literacy Launch and consultation on the development of effective schedules and classroom management plans. Professional development specialists share the feedback that they receive from these sessions with teachers and administrators, collaborating with them to maximize the effect that Earobics Literacy Launch has on student reading performance.

The National Reading Panel. (2000). *Teaching children to read: An evidence-based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction*. Washington, DC: The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.

The Partnership for Reading. (2001). *Put reading first: the research building blocks for teaching children to read*. Washington, DC: National Institute for Literacy, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, & U.S. Department of Education.