

Impacts of a Comprehensive
Early Literacy Curriculum on
the Reading and Language
Growth of Students with
Intellectual and
Developmental Disabilities

Greg Benner, Keith Smolkowski, Jill Allor, Stephanie Al Otaiba, June Preast, Charlotte Gregor, and Stephanie Hermecz

25th International Conference on Autism, Intellectual Disability & Developmental Disabilities
January 18, 2024



Agenda

- Why
- Study
- Intervention
- Results
- Case Studies
- Discussion
- Questions







Current Project Intensity Team







Friends on the Block Research and Development



Acknowledgments: Support for carrying out research on the Friends on the Block curriculum was provided by grants H324K040011, R324A130102, and R324A200151 from the Institute of Education Sciences. The views expressed herein are those of the authors and have not been reviewed or approved by the granting agency. Jill Allor and Stephanie Al Otaiba acknowledge a financial interest in the Friends on the Block books and curriculum. Any inquiries should be directed to the Office of Research Compliance at Southern Methodist University.







Literature Review: Recent research on comprehensive programs

- Historically, research on reading for students with IDD (intellectual and developmental disabilities) has been limited
- Research in recent years has shown students with IDD respond favorably to more comprehensive programs of reading instruction (e.g., Allor, et al., 2014; Allor, et al., 2013; Browder, Mims, Spooner, Ahlgrim-Delzell, & Lee 2008; Connor, Alberto, Compton, & O'Connor, 2014; Lemons, et al., 2015).



Research with Friends on the Block (from IES development grant)

- Allor, J. H., Gifford, D. B., Jones, F. G., Al Otaiba, S., Yovanoff, P., Ortiz, M. B., & Cheatham, J. P. (2018). The effects of a text-centered literacy curriculum for students with intellectual disability. *American Journal for Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*. [pilot study with 8 students]
- Jones, F. J., Gifford, D. B., Yovanoff, P., Al Otaiba, S., Levy, D., & Allor, J.
 (2018). Alternate assessment formats for progress monitoring students with intellectual disabilities and below average intellectual quotients: An exploratory study. Focus on Autism and Developmental Disabilities.

 [assessment study]
- Allor, J. H., Yovanoff, P., Al Otaiba, S., Ortiz, M. B., & Conner, C. (2020). Literacy intervention for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities: A meta-analysis. [analysis of all 18 students from pilot studies]



The Study







Primary Research Questions

Do students who participate in FOTB demonstrate greater outcomes compared to students who participate in BAU reading instruction?

- Reading
- Language



Overall Mean Average School Demographics

- Enrollment: 544 (Range: 316-770)
- Minority Enrollment: 76% (6-99%)
- Economically Disadvantaged: 79% (51-91%)
- Student/Teacher Ratio: 15.3:1 (12:1 to 18:1)



Participant Mean Average IQ

- Composite Kaufman Brief Intelligence Test Second Edition (KBIT-2)
- 73.1 (Range: 40 to 106)



Dosage

- Weeks of Instruction: 36.9
- Minutes of Instruction: 3150.9
- Average minutes per week: 86.1
- Level Completed: 12 (out of 14 FOTB levels)



Participants

- 58 elementary-aged students
 - Control: 28
 - Treatment: 30
- Mean age at beginning of intervention:
 - Control: 7.6 (SD=1.5)
 - Treatment: 7.6 (SD=1.1)

Participants

- Gender: 59% male, 41% female
- Race: 57% African American, 34% White, 9% Hispanic/other
- Disability labels:
 - 12% Intellectual Disability
 - 47% Developmental Delay
 - 14% Autism (IQ mean=64.4; SD=17.6)
 - 19% Specific Learning Disability
 - 2% Speech/ Language Disorder
 - 3% Other Health Impairment/ Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder
 - 3% Not Available



Reading Variables & Measures

- Phonemic Awareness
 - Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing, 2nd Edition—Blending Words
- Decoding
 - Non-words
 - Wechsler Individual Achievement Test, Fourth Edition (WIAT-IV) Pseudoword Decoding
 - Real words
 - FOTB Word List
 - WIAT-IV Word Reading
- Fluency
 - WIAT-III Oral Reading Fluency



Language Variables & Measures

- Oral Expression
 - WIAT-IV Oral Expression
- Listening
 - WIAT-IV Listening Comprehension



Think, Pair, Share

What is the biggest challenge you face in teaching students with IDD to read?



Intervention







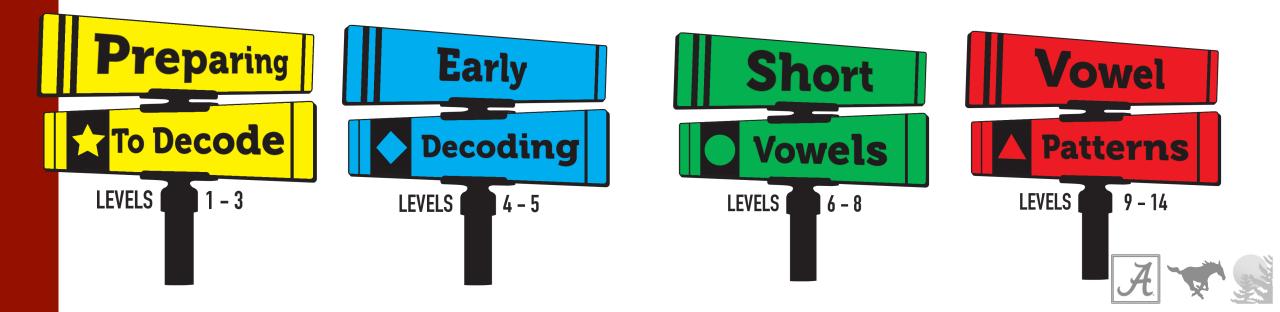
What is Friends on the Block?

A comprehensive and intensive early literacy program (initial instruction or intervention) designed to be customizable and provide needed supports and practice so all students can attain early literacy skills, particularly those with intensive needs such as students with disabilities (e.g., dyslexia, learning disabilities, intellectual and developmental disabilities).



What are the components of FOTB?

- 60 student books with carefully controlled, decodable text
- Each book has a detailed Teacher's Guide and materials
- Over 100 learning games that provide specific cumulative practice of skills
- Organized into 14 levels that span four stages of skill development



What research supports it? Applies Existing Research (Coyne et al., 2006; Kame'ennui et al., 2002; Coyne al al., 2011)

Principles of Effective Instruction

Explicit step-by-step modeling with many examples and clear explanations

Systematic orderly, carefully sequenced and thorough; organized from simple to complex; skills are integrated

Scaffolding temporary support that is faded over time

Ample Practice intensive; organized flexibly to provide sufficient practice for Opportunities students with varying needs

Immediate Corrective clear and positive; ensures students do not practice skills Feedback incorrectly

Ongoing Progress informal measures included; aligns with instruments based upon Monitoring scientific research

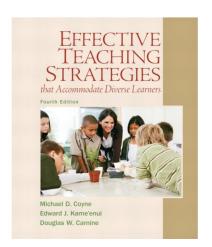
Research: Evidence-based practices AND innovation

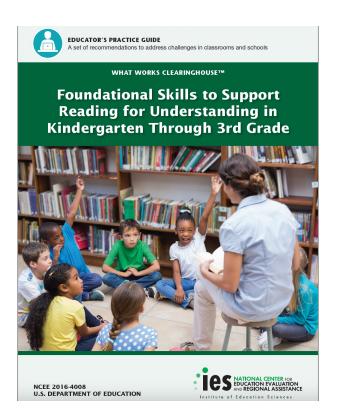
National Reading Panel (2000)

WWC Practice Guide (2016)



• Principles of Effective Instruction (Coyne et al., 2006; Kame'ennui et al., 2002; Coyne al al., 2011)





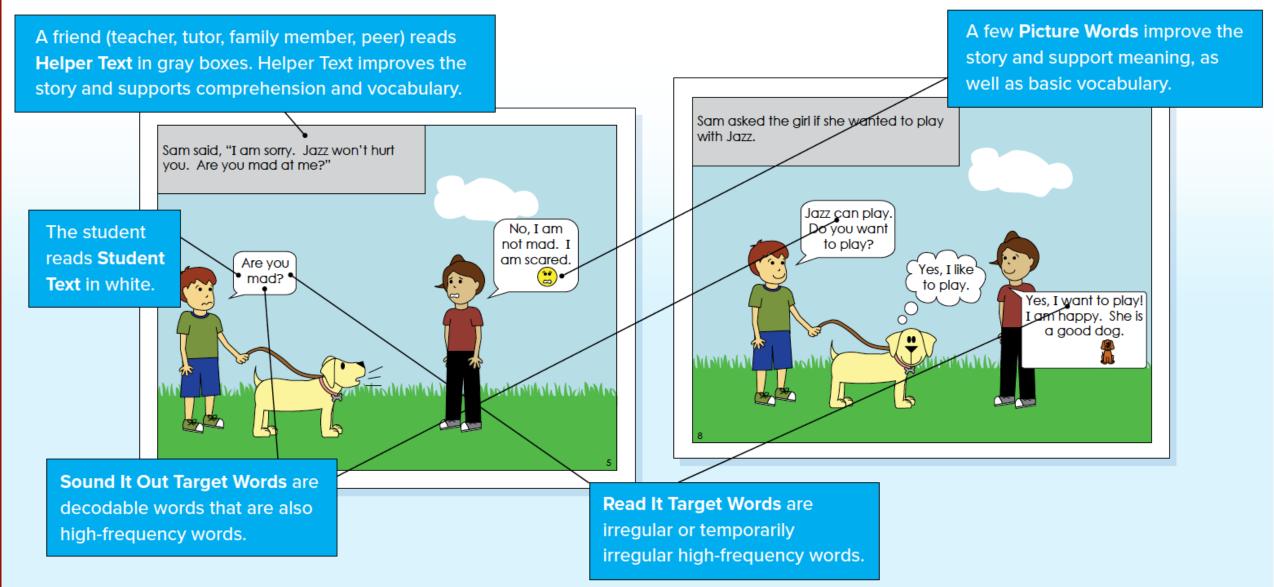


What makes Friends on the Block Special? Multicriteria Student Books

- Natural sounding sentences that reflect spoken language to facilitate comprehension
- Includes only words that have been taught or that can be decoded based on the skills taught (decodable text)
- Extensive repetition of high-frequency and decodable words
- Culturally diverse
- Meaningful stories in common settings (familiar)
- Simple illustrations that enhance meaning and engagement
- Includes nonfiction books with photographs
- Features enable students to begin reading in a book, with support, in the very first lesson



LEVEL 4 BOOK SAMPLE PAGES



Target Word List and Phonics Patterns

Preparing

Early

LEVELS 4 - 5

Decoding

Friends on the Block Target Word List and Phonics Patterns

	☆ Preparing to Decode					Short Vowels			Vowel Patterns						
	Level 1 Level 2 Level 3		Level 4 Level 5		Level 6 Level 7 Level 8		Level 9				Level 12 Level 13 Level 14				
Letter Sounds	c, f, p, m, s, t	d, j, n	b, g, h,	ck, k, a, z	u	ch, th,	i, o, sh, qu, v	e	a-e, i-e, o-e	ai, ay,	al, ea,	ar, igh, er	oa, or,	ir, oo, ur	
Journas		4.0			2.00		big	bed		cold	all	after	before	bird	
Sound It Out Words (Decodable)	In Levels 1-3 students are			am and	am and	am and	did	best	came fine	day	call	better	below	book	
	learning phonemic			and	ariu	ariu	got	end	five	hold	clean	chapter	door	burn	
	awareness blending and			can	can	can	him	get	gave	may	each	different	follow	cook	
	segmenting, letter-sounds,			dad	dad	dad	if	help	home	old	eat	hard	forget	disturb	
ĕ	and a small number of			mad	mad	fun	in	let	hope	plain	feel	high	goal	girl	
1) S	irregular words. Students			sad	sad	had	it	next	like	play	green	light	know	good	
or d	begin in the level in which t					hat	mom	red	made	rain	neat	might	more	hook	
Š	_ ~			•		mad	not	step	make	roll	need	never	morning	hurt	
l ặ l	more target words (Levels 1-5) or four or				ran	on	tell	nine	say	read	night	own	shirt		
프	more target words (Levels 6-14). As soon as				run	sit	them	same	stay	see	number	road	stood		
pu	the students learn most of the words in the				sad	stop	then	side	tail	seem	part	short	third		
Sou	starting level, move to the next level. (Note:				sun	this	went	smile	told	small	right	show	took		
,	Sound it Out words in Levels 4-5 are repeated				up	will	when	time	wait	tall	start	slow	turn		
	in Level 6.)				us	with	yes	white	way	wall	together		wood		
	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6	Level 7	Level 8	Level 9	Level 10	Level 11				
	a	dad	are	good	big	be	because	again	about	any	another	almost	above	able	
	do	here	at	help	have	friend	care	away	animal	ball	answer	book	alone	along	
	101	is	happy	play	little	give	come	came	been	both	kind	bought	by	carry	
Ē	like	look	in	there	my	go	could	clothes	day	boy	know	break	eight	color	
Read It Words (Irregular)	not	mom	no she	to	please	he	feel first	cold	does	done	our	buy	find	full	
	want	see the	I .	was	very what	her it	of	eat food	down	family	people	easy four	house idea	great heard	
		where	yes you		Wilat	me	how	for	every	girl	question really	learn	often	instead	
	Noto: Mo		,	un of natt	orns	on	next	from	many one	more most	right	money	special	live	
Š	Note: Words in blue are made up of patterns				so	said	need	or	once	second	new	talk	love		
#	taught in later levels so they are temporarily				thank	should	oh	other	room	soon	probably		move		
ad	irregular. They are introduced prior to the pattern				we	take	out	push	saw	sure	review	usually	only		
8	to facilitate meaning and may facilitate learning of				who	too	put	snow	their	thought	these	walk	over		
	the phonics pattern.				6	with	why	ready	they	warm	word	two	water	try	
					Friends Block	your	would	somé	were	young	work	watch	worry	world	

© 2022 Jill H. Allor, Jennifer P. Cheatham, and Stephanie Al Otaiba



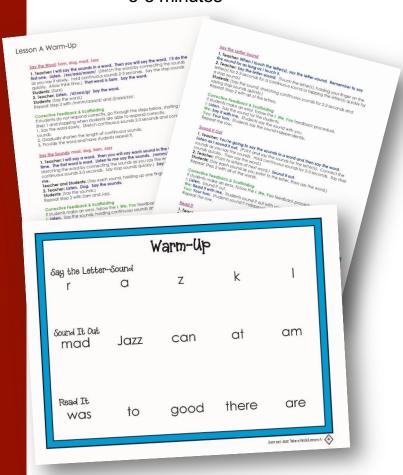






A Typical Lesson (Flexible: About 30 minutes) Level 4 Example

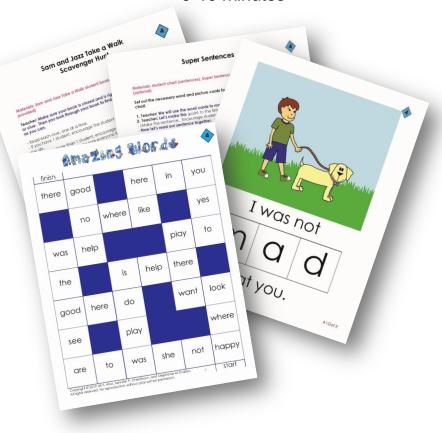
Part 1: Warm-Ups
5-8 minutes



Part 2: Book Reading
10-15 minutes



Part 3: Learning Games
5-10 minutes





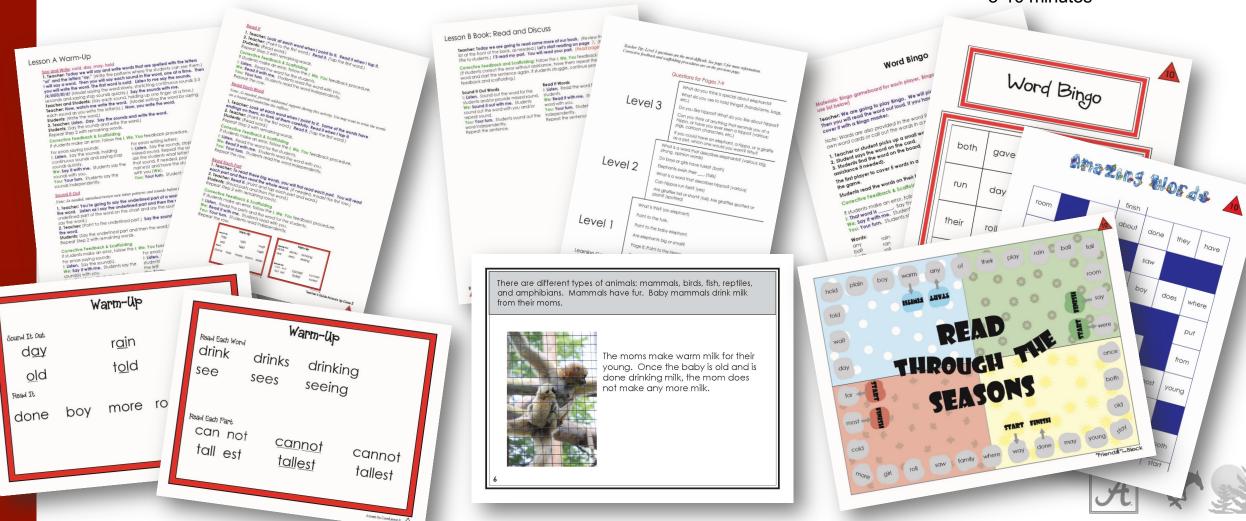
A Typical Lesson (Flexible: About 30 minutes) Level 10 Example

Part 1: Warm-Ups

5-8 minutes

Part 2: Book Reading
10-15 minutes

Part 3: Learning Games
5-10 minutes



Scope and Sequence

- Focuses on key skills within all strands of word recognition and language
- Facilitates integration of skills across strands and apply as they read books



Scope and Sequence

_	Jeope and S	Activity	_			
Strand	Objective/Skill	Learning Game	1-3	4-5	6-8	9-14
<u> </u>	Make oral predictions about a text	Predict				
e: Isio ary	Develop language and comprehension	Discuss				
Language: mprehensi Vocabular	Discuss and summarize a text using a	Review/ Get the Gist				
ngt ora	graphic organizer	(Level 12+)				
Language: Comprehension & Vocabulary	Develop oral language by sorting words based on meaning	Think and Sort				
Phonemic Awareness	Orally blend the first sound and rime into a	Say the Word				
	spoken word	Sounds Bingo				
are	South a first sound of analyan words	Say the First Sound				
A A	Say the first sound of spoken words	Sounds Bingo				
از ۲	Orally bland acumda (abonamas) into a ward	Say the Word				
eш	Orally blend sounds (phonemes) into a word	Sounds Bingo				
nor	Say the sounds (phonemes) in spoken	Say the Sounds				
늅	words	Sounds Bingo				
		Read It				
	Fluently pronounce taught irregular (or	Amazing Words				
	temporarily irregular) words	Word Bingo				
		Word Play				
	Fluently say the most common sound for	Say the Letter-Sound				
	taught letters	Climb and Slide				
ion	Sound out and read short vowel words with	Sound It Out				
ī	taught letters/patterns	I Got It				
603	Sound out and fluority road words with	Sound It Out				
Word Recognition	Sound out and fluently read words with taught letters/patterns	Speed Reader				
p.	taugiit letters/patterns	I Got It				
Mo	Fluently read target words, including taught	Read through the Seasons				
	irregular words and words with taught	Word Bingo				
	letters/patterns	Word Play				
	Pronounce words with taught patterns with s,ed, and ing	Read the Groups				
	Pronounce words with taught spelling patterns and syllable types	Read the Parts				
Fluency	Read target words and sentences fluently	Super Sentences				
	Read text with increasing fluency	Read				
D	Say the sounds in spoken words; spell	I Got It				
ţi	words with taught letters/patterns	Say and Write				
Writing	Write sentences fluently	Writing Super Sentences				
Apply	Apply various skills in the context of a book	Scavenger Hunt				



Lessons can be easily customized by...

- Selecting the appropriate starting level with our simple placement test
- Deciding when to move from one level to the next
 - Students do not need to read all the books and complete all the lessons in each level
 - They move to the next level as soon as they know most of the target words in that level
 - Students with intensive needs will need to read more of the books and complete more of the lessons before moving to the next level; other students may move through the levels more quickly
- Selecting games to practice specific skills based on student need
- Adjust amount of time spent on book reading and games (we recommend doing ALL 3 parts of every lesson – warmup, book, game)





Results





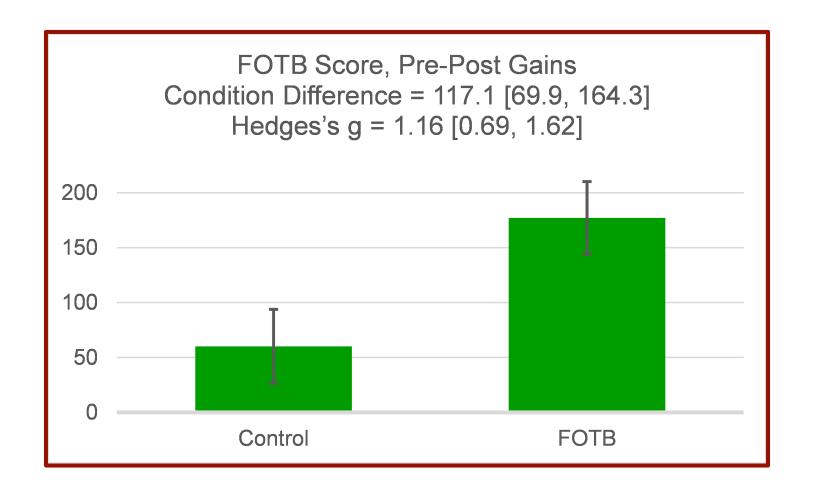


Results Overview

- Preliminary results—first cohort of two cohorts of students
- Analyzed 22 measures—reported a representative summary
 - Proximal measure for FOTB
 - Phonemic Awareness
 - Pseudoword Decoding
 - Word Reading
 - Reading Fluency
 - Listening Comprehension
 - Oral Expression
 - Reading Comprehension

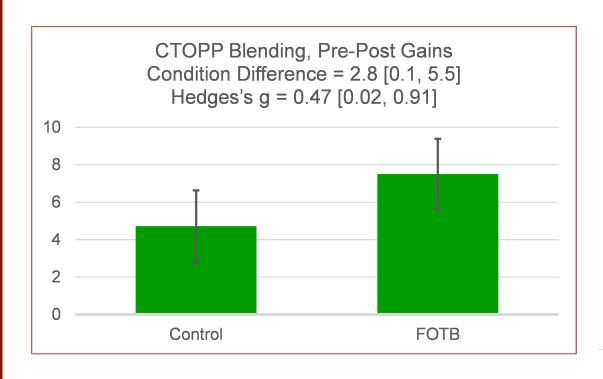


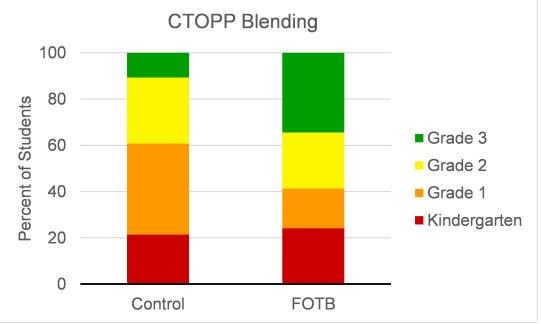
Proximal measure for FOTB





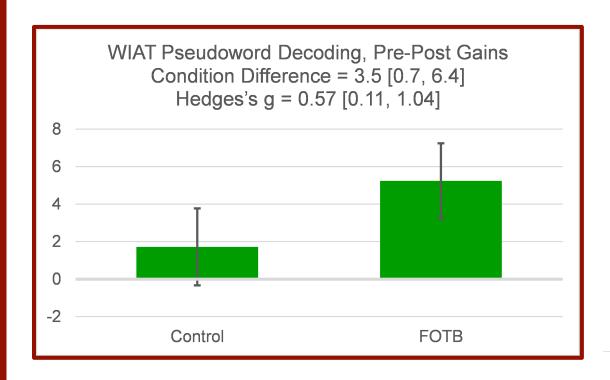
Phonemic Awareness

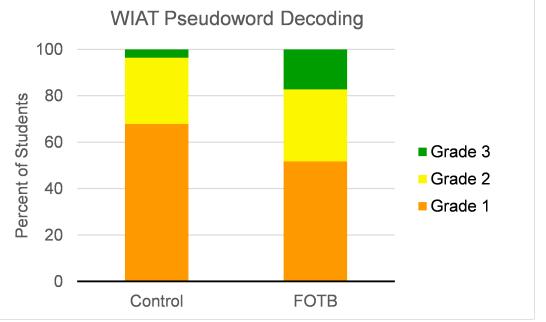






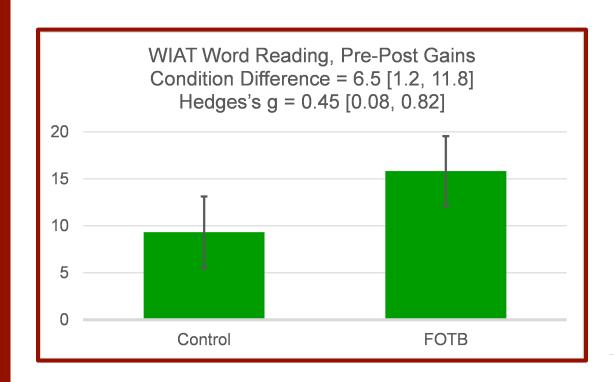
Pseudoword Decoding

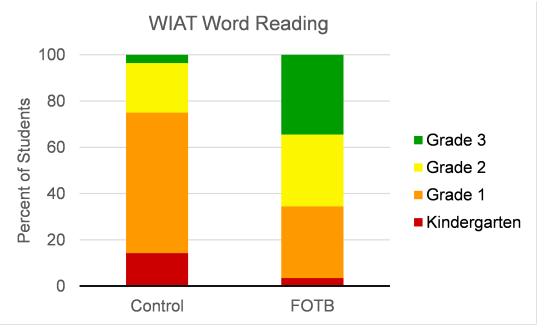






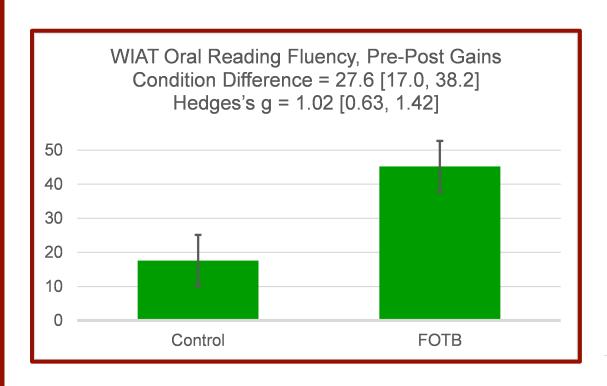
Word Reading

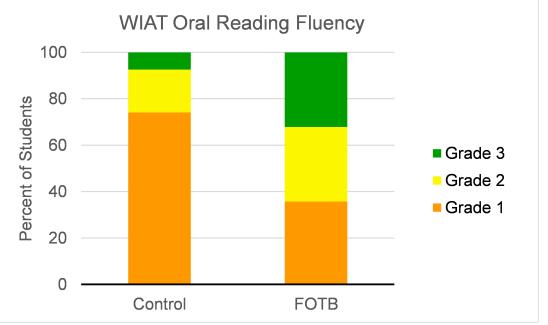






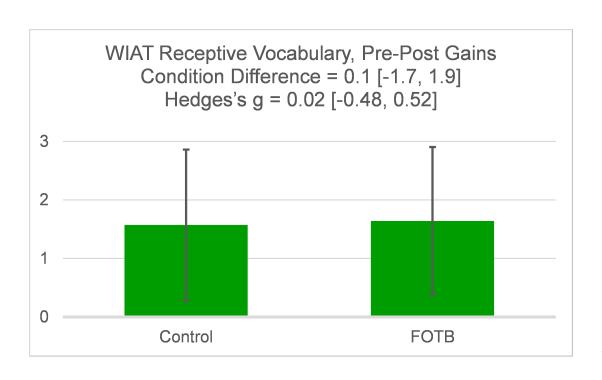
Oral Reading Fluency

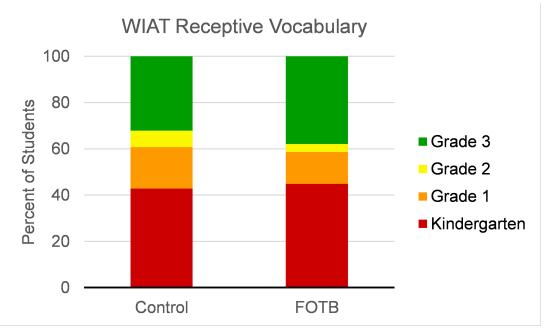






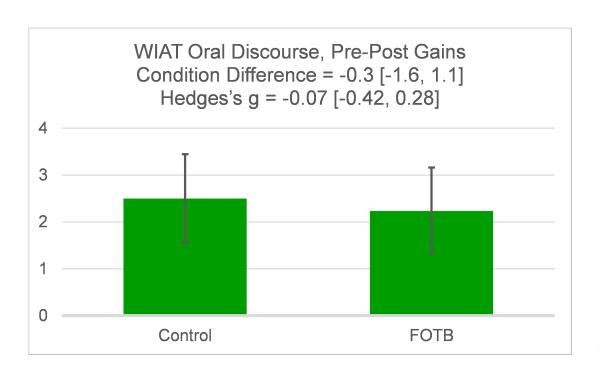
Listening Comprehension

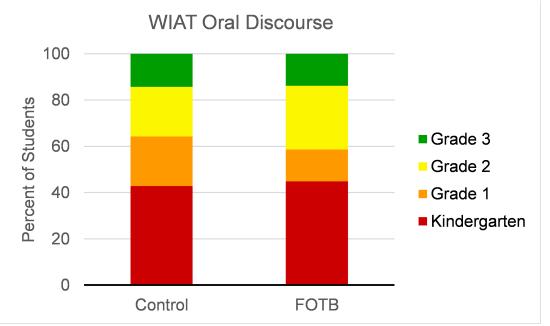






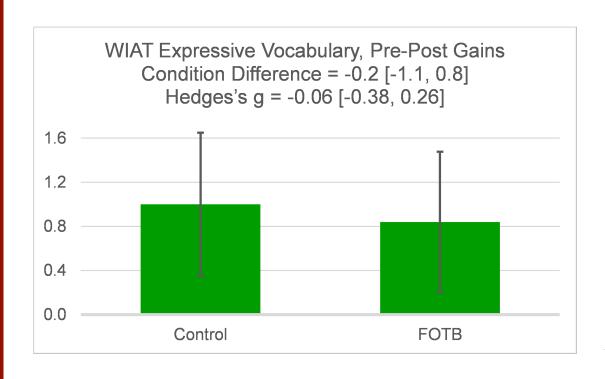
Listening Comprehension

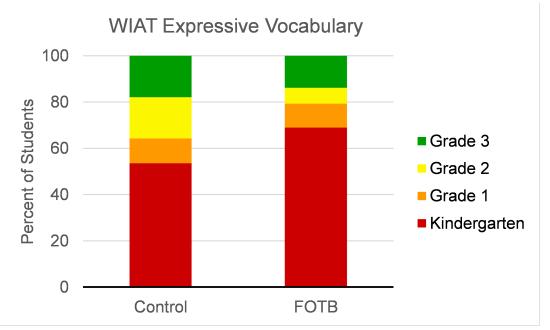






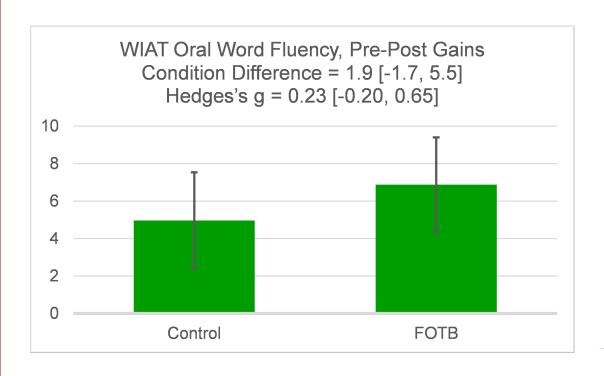
Oral Expression

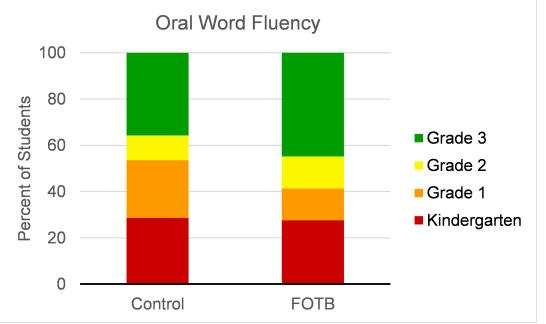






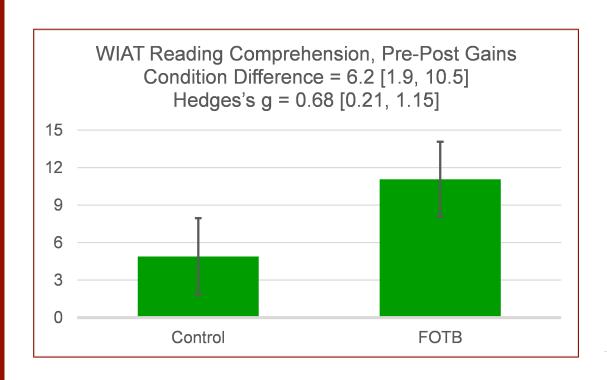
Oral Expression

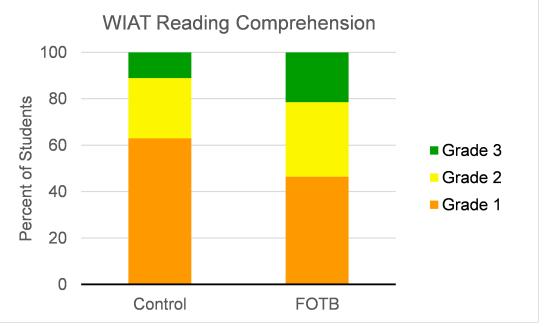






Reading Comprehension







Results Summary

Measures Reported Today

p	g		
.0006	1.2		
.0702	0.5		
.0326	0.6		
.0326	0.4		
.0006	1.0		
.9388	0.0		
.7561	-0.1		
.7606	-0.1		
.4026	0.2		
.0176	0.7		
	.0006 .0702 .0326 .0326 .0006 .9388 .7561 .7606 .4026		

Additional 12 Measures

Measure	р	g
WIAT Sentence Repetition	.5565	0.1
Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test	.5482	-0.1
Expressive Vocabulary	.4658	0.1
CUBED Phonological Awareness	.2208	0.3
CUBED Word ID	.0326	0.6
CUBED Decoding	.0006	0.9
CUBED Narrative Lang. Reading WPM	.0006	0.9
CUBED NL Reading Story Qs	.0310	0.6
CUBED NL Listening Story Qs	.0310	0.7
CTOPP Elision	.0018	0.8
CTOPP Sound Matching	.0136	0.9
CTOPP Phoneme Isolation	.2313	0.4





Case Studies







First Name (pseud.)	IQ	Initial Age	Pre PPVT AE	Primary Disability	Hrs of Instruction	FOTB Starting & Ending Levels	Pre FOTB Words	Post FOTB Words	Pre WI GE	Post WI GE	Pre RC GE	Post RC GE	Post ORF GE
Aiden	50	5.83	3.17	DD	46	1/2	2	7	0.7	1	1.3	1.2	Low
Ava	60	6.92	4	DD	42	1/14	19	296	1.4	2.5	1.3	2.2	4.6
Benjamin	63	9.08	5.33	DD	65	1/14	3	265	0.9	3	1.4	2.2	4
Caleb	64	6.33	4.42	AU	38	5/14	100	294	1.5	3.4	1.5	1.8	2.9
Carter	67	6.58	3.83	DD	69	1/14	13	295	1.3	2.3	1.3	2.2	2.4
Emma	67	7.42	4.83	DD	63	1/13	11	241	1.3	1.9	1.3	1.7	Low
Isaac	70	10.92	6.5	AU	49	1/5	2	5	Low	0.1	1.7	N/A	N/A
Madelyn	70	6.83	3.42	DD	61	1/11	1	198	0.6	2.4	1.2	1.8	2.5
Michael	77	7.92	4.5	ID	46	1/7A	1	79	0.6	1.5	1.3	1.6	Low
Olivia	80	5.67	4.08	DD	49	1/8A	2	120	0.6	1.5	1.3	1.6	Low



First Name (pseud.)	IQ	Initial Age	Pre PPVT AE	Primary Disability	Hrs of Instruction	FOTB Starting & Ending Levels	Pre FOTB Words	Post FOTB Words	Pre WI GE	Post WI GE	Pre RC GE	Post RC GE	Post ORF GE
Aiden	50	5.83	3.17	DD	46	1/2	2	7	0.7	1	1.3	1.2	Low
Ava	60	6.92	4	DD	42	1/14	19	296	1.4	2.5	1.3	2.2	4.6
Benjamin	63	9.08	5.33	DD	65	1/14	3	265	0.9	3	1.4	2.2	4
Caleb	64	6.33	4.42	AU	38	5/14	100	294	1.5	3.4	1.5	1.8	2.9
Carter	67	6.58	3.83	DD	69	1/14	13	295	1.3	2.3	1.3	2.2	2.4
Emma	67	7.42	4.83	DD	63	1/13	11	241	1.3	1.9	1.3	1.7	Low
Isaac	70	10.92	6.5	AU	49	1/5	2	5	Low	0.1	1.7	N/A	N/A
Madelyn	70	6.83	3.42	DD	61	1/11	1	198	0.6	2.4	1.2	1.8	2.5
Michael	77	7.92	4.5	ID	46	1/7A	1	79	0.6	1.5	1.3	1.6	Low
Olivia	80	5.67	4.08	DD	49	1/8A	2	120	0.6	1.5	1.3	1.6	Low



First Name (pseud.)	IQ	Initial Age	Pre PPVT AE	Primary Disability	Hrs of Instruction	FOTB Starting & Ending Levels	Pre FOTB Words	Post FOTB Words	Pre WI GE	Post WI GE	Pre RC GE	Post RC GE	Post ORF GE
Aiden	50	5.83	3.17	DD	46	1/2	2	7	0.7	1	1.3	1.2	Low
Ava	60	6.92	4	DD	42	1/14	19	296	1.4	2.5	1.3	2.2	4.6
Benjamin	63	9.08	5.33	DD	65	1/14	3	265	0.9	3	1.4	2.2	4
Caleb	64	6.33	4.42	AU	38	5/14	100	294	1.5	3.4	1.5	1.8	2.9
Carter	67	6.58	3.83	DD	69	1/14	13	295	1.3	2.3	1.3	2.2	2.4
Emma	67	7.42	4.83	DD	63	1/13	11	241	1.3	1.9	1.3	1.7	Low
Isaac	70	10.92	6.5	AU	49	1/5	2	5	Low	0.1	1.7	N/A	N/A
Madelyn	70	6.83	3.42	DD	61	1/11	1	198	0.6	2.4	1.2	1.8	2.5
Michael	77	7.92	4.5	ID	46	1/7A	1	79	0.6	1.5	1.3	1.6	Low
Olivia	80	5.67	4.08	DD	49	1/8A	2	120	0.6	1.5	1.3	1.6	Low



First Name (pseud.)	IQ	Initial Age	Pre PPVT AE	Primary Disability	Hrs of Instruction	FOTB Starting & Ending Levels	Pre FOTB Words	Post FOTB Words	Pre WI GE	Post WI GE	Pre RC GE	Post RC GE	Post ORF GE
Aiden	50	5.83	3.17	DD	46	1/2	2	7	0.7	1	1.3	1.2	Low
Ava	60	6.92	4	DD	42	1/14	19	296	1.4	2.5	1.3	2.2	4.6
Benjamin	63	9.08	5.33	DD	65	1/14	3	265	0.9	3	1.4	2.2	4
Caleb	64	6.33	4.42	AU	38	5/14	100	294	1.5	3.4	1.5	1.8	2.9
Carter	67	6.58	3.83	DD	69	1/14	13	295	1.3	2.3	1.3	2.2	2.4
Emma	67	7.42	4.83	DD	63	1/13	11	241	1.3	1.9	1.3	1.7	Low
Isaac	70	10.92	6.5	AU	49	1/5	2	5	Low	0.1	1.7	N/A	N/A
Madelyn	70	6.83	3.42	DD	61	1/11	1	198	0.6	2.4	1.2	1.8	2.5
Michael	77	7.92	4.5	ID	46	1/7A	1	79	0.6	1.5	1.3	1.6	Low
Olivia	80	5.67	4.08	DD	49	1/8A	2	120	0.6	1.5	1.3	1.6	Low



Discussion







Results Summary

Measures Reported Today

- Statistically significant (p < .05)
 - FOTB
 - WIAT Pseudoword Decoding
 - WIAT Word Reading
 - WIAT Oral Reading Fluency
 - WIAT Reading Comprehension
- Marginally significant (p < .10)
 - CTOPP Blending

Note. p values adjusted with Benjamini– Hochberg correction for 22 total tests

- Our effects for word reading are stronger than prior research, including our own.
- We did not find effects favoring FOTB for language measures.
- Anecdotally, students enjoyed reading the books and engaged with the characters and settings.



Limitations and Directions for Future Research

- A limitation is that our interventionists provided the intervention, rather than teachers.
- We have more data to analyze (other measures, observations of the BAU, formal evaluation of fidelity,).
- These results should be considered preliminary as we have another cohort.
- Given the limited language effects on WIAT, we will explore with additional analyses of other measures.
- In future, we will continue to refine the intervention, including bolstering or emphasizing the language instructional components.



Additional Future Directions to Explore

- Do individual student differences moderate improvements in students' reading outcomes? (i.e., IQ, language)
- Do individual family differences moderate improvements in students' reading or language outcomes? (i.e., home literacy environment, parent education, SES)
- Are differences on reading or language outcomes identified between conditions at the end-of-treatment maintained one or two years later?



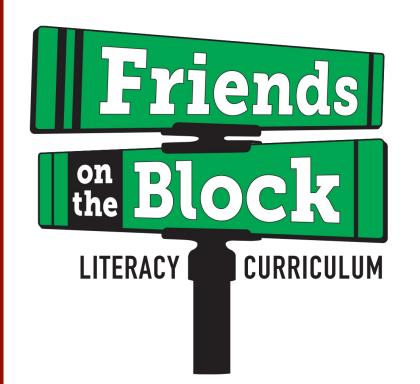
Questions A







For More Information on Friends on the Block



Overview & Demonstration Videos

FREE Materials



Acknowledgements Support for research and development provided by grants #H324K040011-05, R324A130102, and R324A200151 from the Institute of Education Sciences to Southern Methodist University. Jill Allor and Stephanie Al Otaiba acknowledge a financial interest in the Friends on the Block books and curriculum. The views expressed are those of the authors and have not been reviewed or approved by the granting agency.





Thank you!

Takeaway: FOTB is effective in boosting the early literacy skills of children with IDD.

Greg Benner, benner@ua.edu

Keith Smolkowski, keiths@ori.org

Jill Allor, jallor@smu.edu

Stephanie Al Otaiba, salotaiba@smu.edu

June Preast, jlpreast@ua.edu

Charlotte Gregor, cshowalter@smu.edu

Stephanie Hermecz, shermecz@ua.edu

