

Sadlier® School

# Building Reading Success with Wiley Blevins

ESSA Tier 3 Promising Evidence Study Results

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Prepared by Project Tomorrow®

June 2024



## ***Building Reading Success with Wiley Blevins* ESSA Tier 3 Promising Evidence Study Results**

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*“[Using **Building Reading Success**], the students grew in skills and continue to do so. They look forward to placing their knowledge and carrying over the tasks to other skills and most importantly students are feeling more confident and becoming successful readers. They are loving to read because they are encountering success with the skills they are presented with on a daily basis!”*

Reading Interventionist, Grade 1

A recent American Institute of Research study examined the relationship between students’ phonological awareness in first grade and their fourth grade reading achievement as measured by the Nation’s Report Card, the NAEP.<sup>1</sup> The August 2023 study report determined that a strong correlation exists between students finishing first grade without mastery of phonological awareness and a subsequent fourth grade NAEP reading assessment score that was below the basic level. Since effective reading skills are life skills, it is therefore critical that early literacy interventions for young learners are highly targeted and address the key components of the Science of Reading framework.

William H. Sadlier’s *Building Reading Success* is a module-based intervention program that develops K–5 students’ proficiency in foundational literacy skills. Authored by Wiley Blevins, the program focuses on fluency—a critical component for students receiving literacy intervention—with daily reading and writing applications, as well as phonics, comprehension, syntax, vocabulary, and word study support. It can be used to supplement any early literacy program.<sup>2</sup>

To understand the efficacy of the new *Building Reading Success* program, Sadlier contracted with Project Tomorrow, a national education nonprofit organization, to design and implement a pilot study project during the 2023-24 school year with a select set of schools and teachers. The study sampling included four schools in three different communities in urban New York City, suburban Chicago and rural Missouri. Fifteen (15) classroom teachers and reading specialists were recruited for the study. Nine (9) of the teachers were provided with access to Module 3 Short Vowels of the *Building Reading Success with Wiley Blevins* program to use with their tier 2 students (our “treatment group”). The other six teachers (our “control group”) used their standard interventions with a similar set of students. In total, 75 students in grades 1 and 2 were involved in the study process.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.air.org/resource/report/early-reading-skill-development-and-characteristics-reading-skill-profiles-analysis>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.sadlier.com/school/building-reading-success-with-wiley-blevins>

Students are generally identified for a tier 2 intervention if they are one grade level behind in reading proficiency. The Massachusetts Department of Education uses the following more formalized definition:

*Tier 2 is preventive intervention offered to students who fall behind, who demonstrate difficulty based on screening measures, or who make weak progress from regular classroom instruction. Instruction in tier 2 must be targeted to the underlying difficulty(s) impacting the students' progress in literacy. Students in tier 2 receive supplemental ("in addition to") small group instruction. Importantly, this instruction should be systematic, explicit, and highly interactive.*<sup>3</sup>

As part of the pilot study, Project Tomorrow collected feedback from the fifteen teachers about the challenges with current reading intervention programs and their preferences for more effective interventions for their tier 2 students. Additionally, the teachers in the treatment group provided their insights on the efficacy of the *Building Reading Success* program based upon their usage during the pilot timeframe. Project Tomorrow implemented the following data collection vehicles as part of this study project: a) an online pre-intervention survey for the treatment and control teachers, b) an online post intervention survey for the treatment teachers, and c) two semi-structured focus group discussions with the treatment teachers. Additionally, to evaluate the efficacy of the intervention on student academic outcomes, de-identified pre and post intervention assessment data was reviewed.

This Leadership Brief has been created by Project Tomorrow to provide school and district administrators with summary results from the *Building Reading Success with Wiley Blevins* pilot study project. The Brief documents four key findings including demonstrating how the new program satisfies the requirements for the Tier 3 Promising Evidence requirements according to the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

**Key finding 1: Teachers and reading specialists highly value  
*Building Reading with Wiley Blevins.***

Project Tomorrow's review of the teachers' feedback revealed a common theme: their very high approval of the *Building Reading Success with Wiley Blevins* program, both in terms of its ease of use and fit within their instructional practices, and the positive impact that the program had on their students' phonemic awareness.

A summary of the most significant findings from the analysis includes:

- **100% of the teachers strongly agreed that the *Building Reading Success* program encompasses recognized key concepts and principles of effective phonemic awareness development.**

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<sup>3</sup><https://www.doe.mass.edu/massliteracy/leading-mtss/tiered-instruction.html#:~:text=Tier%20,used%20to%20group%20students%20periodically.>



The classroom teachers and reading specialists also agreed on the value of the following attributes and characteristics of Building Reading Success with Wiley Blevins and especially the connection to helping their students improve their phonemic awareness.

Attributes or characteristics of <i>Building Reading Success with Wiley Blevins</i>	Percentage of teachers who agreed with these statements
<i>Building Reading Success</i> is appropriate for their Grade 1 and Grade 2 tier 2 students.	100% agreed
The program was easy to use in their classroom.	100% agreed.
Using the Module 3 Short Vowels within the program improved their students’ phonemic awareness.	100% agreed
The support tools and resources for students were effective.	100% agreed
The organization of the teacher edition content was effective.	100% agreed

*“Many of our students were below the 15th percentile when I started working with them. And now after winter benchmarking, there’s one student that is reading well over 45 words with very nice accuracy and has been exited from interventional altogether. Another four students that were in the program as well that they went from below the 15th or below the 15th percentile, and now they’re tailoring 20 seconds, 23, 24.”*

Reading Specialist

**Key finding 2: Usage of *Building Reading Success with Wiley Blevins* results in positive statistically significant student outcomes.**

To support the evaluation of the efficacy of *the Building Reading Success* intervention with tier 2 students, Project Tomorrow conducted a two-tailed t-test on the pre and post assessment data from both the control and treatment groups of students. The goal with these tests was to determine if there was positive statistical significance with the findings.

The results from each of the four pilot study school sites demonstrated positive statistically significant results. The four schools in the sampling were:

- i. PS 377Q: S.T.A.R Leadership Academy in Queens, New York (urban school setting)

- ii. Euclid Elementary School, River Trails School District: Mount Prospect, Illinois (suburban school setting)
- iii. Indian Trails Elementary School, River Trails School District: Mount Prospect, Illinois (suburban school setting)
- iv. Marion County Elementary School, Marion County R-II Schools: Philadelphia, Missouri (rural school setting)

*Overall student achievement across the study sampling:*

- There was a positive statistical significance in the student achievement data in terms of **increased accuracy among all students using the *Building Reading Success* program when reviewed across all schools** in the study sampling.
- There was a positive statistical significance in the student achievement data in terms of **increased accuracy among the 1<sup>st</sup> grade students using the *Building Reading Success* program when reviewed across all schools** in the study sampling.

*School specific student achievement:*

- There was a positive statistical significance in the student achievement data in terms of **increased accuracy and fluency for all students using *Building Reading Success* at PS 377.**
- There was a positive statistical significance in the student achievement data in terms of **increased accuracy for all students using *Building Reading Success* at Euclid Elementary School and Indian Trails Elementary Schools.**
- There was a positive statistical significance in the student achievement data in terms of **increased fluency for all students using *Building Reading Success* at Marion County Elementary School.**

These findings are noteworthy for several reasons. First, both increased accuracy and increased fluency are relevant outcomes for a study of a reading intervention program for tier 2 identified first and second graders. Project Tomorrow documented a positive statistically significant result for both outcomes. Second, though the sampling was small per the pilot specifications, the positive statistical significance of the increased accuracy of the students using *Building Reading Success with Wiley Blevins* across all schools is particularly noteworthy. Third, the significance of the finding of increased accuracy and fluency for all students using the *Building Reading Success with Wiley Blevins* program at PS 377 deserves special attention due to the demographics of the student population (86% minority) and that only 50% of the PS 377 students scored at the state level of proficiency in reading in the 2022-23 school year. This indicates that the *Building Reading Success* intervention in grades 1 and 2 can potentially have an even larger impact on the school's overall reading proficiency levels. As school leaders ponder how to address low student proficiency levels in reading, the achievements noted in this study should yield attention.

*“I was pulling all kinds of random stuff to try to use these skills and focus on this. But having such a sequential program that she can follow and build on has done wonders for her reading progress. The student made huge gains because they're so familiar with the routine.”*

2nd Grade Teacher

Several teachers expressed the same sentiments as this 2<sup>nd</sup> grade teacher from Mount Prospect, Illinois. Familiar classroom routines coupled with additional targeted support on deficit skills is helping their students to build the necessary skills to advance their literacy knowledge and performance.

**Key finding 3: Teachers want to continue to use *Building Reading Success with Wiley Blevins* – and would recommend it to another teacher.**

It is well known that teachers like to use the recommendations or evaluations of other teachers to identify instructional materials for classroom usage. Teachers value the opinions of their peers. Teachers are often reluctant, however, to share a product recommendation unless they feel very strongly about the benefits of that product or intervention.

It is therefore significant that **100% of the teachers** using the *Building Reading Success with Wiley Blevins* program said they were not only **interested in personally using the intervention again next school year** with their students, but also **likely to recommend the program to another teacher or colleague**. The intensity of that response indicates that the teachers in our study felt strongly about the benefits of the *Building Reading Success* program for students.

**Key finding 4: *Building Reading Success with Wiley Blevins* satisfies ESSA Tier 3 - Promising Evidence requirements.**

The requirements for ESSA Tier 3 Promising Evidence qualification include several factors. As part of the Project Tomorrow study, each factor was evaluated to see if *Building Reading Success with Wiley Blevins* met the requirements for Tier 3 Promising Evidence. The result of that analysis is as follows:

**Requirement #1: Well-designed and implemented correlational study, statistically controlling for selection bias.**

- *Building Reading Success* pilot study: Met all requirements.
  - a. Study was a correlation study.
  - b. There was no selection bias. Selection of the control and treatment teachers were randomly assigned. Students were randomly assigned to the teachers.
  - c. Study was well-designed and implemented.

**Requirement #2: Statistically significant positive effect on a relevant outcome.**

- *Building Reading Success* pilot study. Met all requirements.
  - d. As noted above, statistically significant positive effects on relevant outcomes were noted in each school and across the entire sampling.

**Requirement #3: No strong negative findings from experimental or quasi-experimental studies.**

- *Building Reading Success* pilot study. Met all requirements.
  - e. There were no negative findings from the quasi-experimental study.

Per this evaluation, *Building Reading Success with Wiley Blevins* meets the requirements for qualification as an ESSA Tier 3 Promising Evidence intervention.

*“I love the way the program focuses on so many areas of reading not only phonics and phonemic awareness but how it incorporates encoding and comprehension in the activities the kids complete. This program goes so well with the tier 1 curriculum without having the kids do the exact same lesson that they were already presented through the tier one program. I love the way that they are able to transfer the skills and routine to something new.”*

Reading Interventionist, Grade 1

**About Project Tomorrow**

Project Tomorrow is a nationally recognized, education nonprofit organization with a focus on understanding the impact of new learning models and interventions on student outcomes and teacher effectiveness. Our mission is to help education, business and policy leaders make the best decisions for education through the effective use of research-based insights that highly leverage the authentic views and perspectives of K-12 stakeholders, notably students, parents, teachers, and administrators. Our work includes the highly regarded Speak Up Research Project and an annual series of customized evaluation, feedback and efficacy studies that examine key trends in education. Learn more at [www.tomorrow.org](http://www.tomorrow.org).

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