



LXDRESEARCH
AT CHARLES RIVER MEDIA

Once

An Evaluation of the Effect of Paraprofessionals
Using the Once Early-Reading Program on i-Ready
Scores

Efficacy Study Report: Kindergarten 2024-2025



Authors:

Sofia Jimenez, Ph.D.
Rachel Schechter, Ph.D.
Ripley Cleghorn, M.S.

AUGUST, 2025



LXDRESEARCH
AT CHARLES RIVER MEDIA



PROMISING

LXD Research Recognition for Once

Once

This product has been rigorously evaluated and is hereby acknowledged for meeting the educational impact criteria of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), warranting a **Level III** for "**Promising**." This recognition is based on its proven effectiveness in enhancing grade-level learning outcomes.

REVIEWED BY THE LXD RESEARCH EXPERT REVIEW PANEL

Rachel Schechter, Ph.D.
Founder of LXD Research

August 31, 2025

DATE

Educators search for high-quality research and evidence-based interventions to strengthen grant applications, to support comprehensive and targeted schools, or to implement new programming in their schools. Evidence requirements under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) are designed to ensure that states, districts, and schools can identify programs, practices, products, and policies that work across various populations.

Educational programs document their evidence of design, effectiveness, and impact in order to be eligible for federal funding. While there is no singular authority that determines a program's tier, the Department of Education's Office of Educational Technology provides standards to assess the varying levels of strength of research for education products.

The categories for ESSA Evidence are: strong (Tier 1), moderate (Tier 2), and promising (Tier 3) evidence of effectiveness, or demonstrates a rationale to be effective (Tier 4).

This product meets the requirements for Tier 3:

- ✓ In correlational design, students who used the program are compared to normed referenced samples or other group averages for comparison.
- ✓ Multiple studies with the proper design and implementation with at least two teachers and 30 students show statistically significant, positive findings.
- ✓ The study uses a program implementation that could be replicated.
- ★ A third-party research organization has reviewed the documentation for ESSA validation.



When product designers leverage learning sciences to design and evaluate their programs, educators can better target instruction, and students' skills soar. Through a correlational study design, a statistical evaluation shows that student growth is associated with student product use. This product meets the criteria for LXD Research's ESSA Tier 3 Evidence.

– Rachel Schechter, Ph.D., Founder of LXD Research



Introduction

Research indicates that high-impact tutoring can play a critical role in strengthening early literacy development among young learners (Cortes et al., 2025; Robinson et al., 2024). Through regular, relationship-centered, personalized instruction, tutoring supports measurable growth in reading.

Founded in 2021, and serving 3,000 students across 10 of the largest 500 districts in the United States, Once is an early-reading program that upskills schools' support staff to deliver daily, evidence-based, one-on-one, in-person reading instruction to every targeted PreK, kindergarten, or 1st-grade student.

Once partnered with LXD Research to help educators understand the impact of Once tutoring in their schools. This end-of-year (EOY) report summarizes the implementation and presents outcomes from 15 schools that Once served in one school district in the Midwest in 2024-25 that used the i-Ready® literacy assessment (i-Ready) and provided beginning-of-year (BOY) and end-of-year (EOY) literacy data (Curriculum Associates, 2023).

Method

Implementation Description

Once is designed to be implemented as a Tier-I, Tier-II, or Tier-III intervention in kindergarten or 1st grade. This study focuses on kindergarten students only.

Once trains and coaches existing school-based support staff to provide reading tutoring by following a scripted curriculum based on the Science of Reading. All instructional sessions are video recorded, and instructors receive weekly, live video coaching from the Once team.

Utilizing existing school staff members allows students to form close relationships with tutors who deeply understand the school context in which they operate. This model also allows participating districts to minimize human resource expenditures (beyond the staff they have already hired), which is otherwise a barrier to scale (White et al., 2021).

The ONCE reading intervention program has provided significant benefits to our kindergarten students, particularly in improving decoding, fluency, and overall reading comprehension. I highly recommend ONCE for schools looking to enhance early literacy outcomes.

Principal



Once aligns with the [National Student Support Accelerator](#)'s design principles for high-impact tutoring.

- **Consistent Tutor and Coaching:** Once ensures students work with a consistent tutor for the entire year. Every instructional session is recorded, and tutors receive weekly coaching from a consistent coach who reviews the recordings.
- **Embedded in Schools and During the School Day:** Once tutoring sessions occur during the school day, integrating directly into the school environment.
- **Data-Informed:** School staff members delivering the Once program have real-time access to a data portal that displays various metrics on student participation and performance, as well as the instructor's proficiency. This data is reviewed weekly by instructors with their coaches.
- **Frequent and One-on-One Sessions:** Once provides one-on-one tutoring five days a week.
- **High-Quality, Standards-Aligned Materials:** Once materials are built on the Science of Reading and aligned to state standards. The scripted instructional content follows a structured trajectory with spiraled activities and engaging animal characters.
- **Grounded in Equity, Safety, and Cohesion:** Schools prioritize students with the greatest needs for Once, and the existing school support staff (who serve as tutors) often reflect the communities they work in. Once works closely with a designated point person at each school to ensure student safety, program alignment, and effective implementation.

The daily one on one time is very beneficial.

The ONCE team is fabulous! If we had any questions, they were right there to help support.

Principal

Literacy Achievement Measure

Literacy achievement was examined using three metrics from iReady Early Literacy: Percentile Ranking, Scale Scores, and Grade Level performance. iReady conducts studies to create these metrics using a wide range of students of different abilities, backgrounds, and geographic locations. **Percentile** ranking shows how a student's score compares to other students across the country. No change in percentile indicates typical growth, whereas an increase in percentile represents growth that outpaces the national average. **Scale scores** are numbers that show how much a student knows on a test, like points on a game scoreboard. They help track progress over time, even when the test questions change from year to year. Scale scores can show if a student is on **grade level** (meeting expectations), above grade level (working ahead), or below grade level (needing extra support).



Study Participants

There were 822 kindergarten students from 15 schools in one school district in the Midwest that implemented Once and provided both beginning-of-year (BOY) and end-of-year (EOY) data.

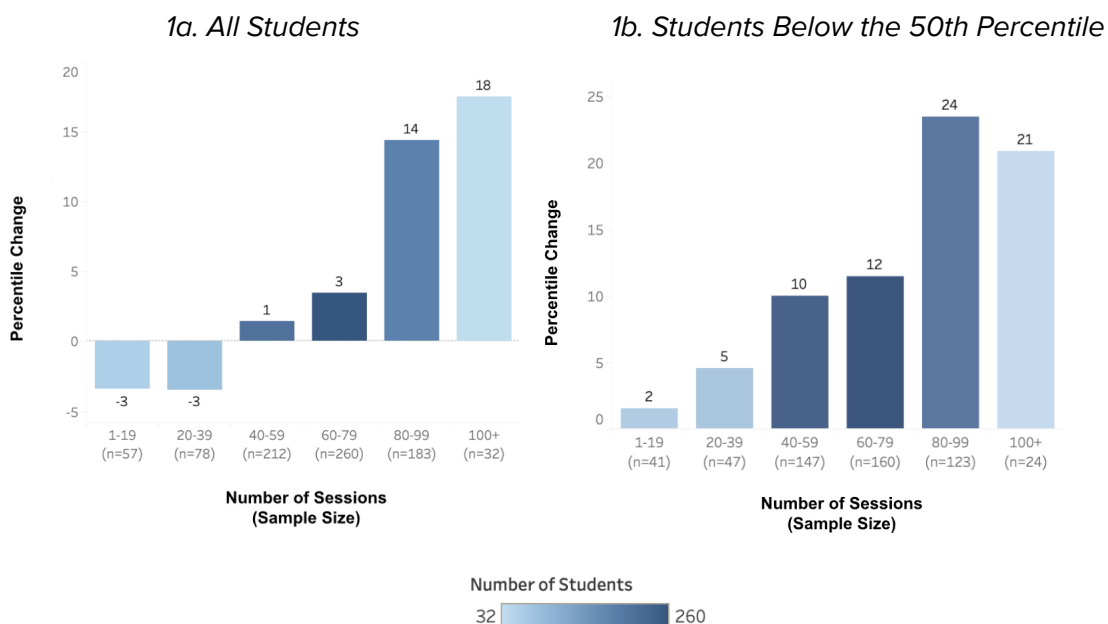
On average, students received 62 tutoring sessions (a maximum of 119 and a minimum of 1) and completed 44 lessons within the Once curriculum (range between 1 and 101).

Study Results

National Percentile Change by Usage

On average, students improved in terms of the national percentile from BOY to EOY on the i-Ready Early Literacy composite score when receiving Once. As a group, students started the year in the 40th percentile, and, after Once tutoring, they ended the year in the 45th percentile. Students who completed more than 30 sessions increased 6 percentile points from the beginning of the year to the end of the year (*Figure 1a*). The highest improvements in percentiles were from students who completed at least 80 sessions. The impact was more pronounced when focusing on students who started the year below the 50th percentile (*Figure 1b*).

Figure 1. National Percentile Change by Usage Group

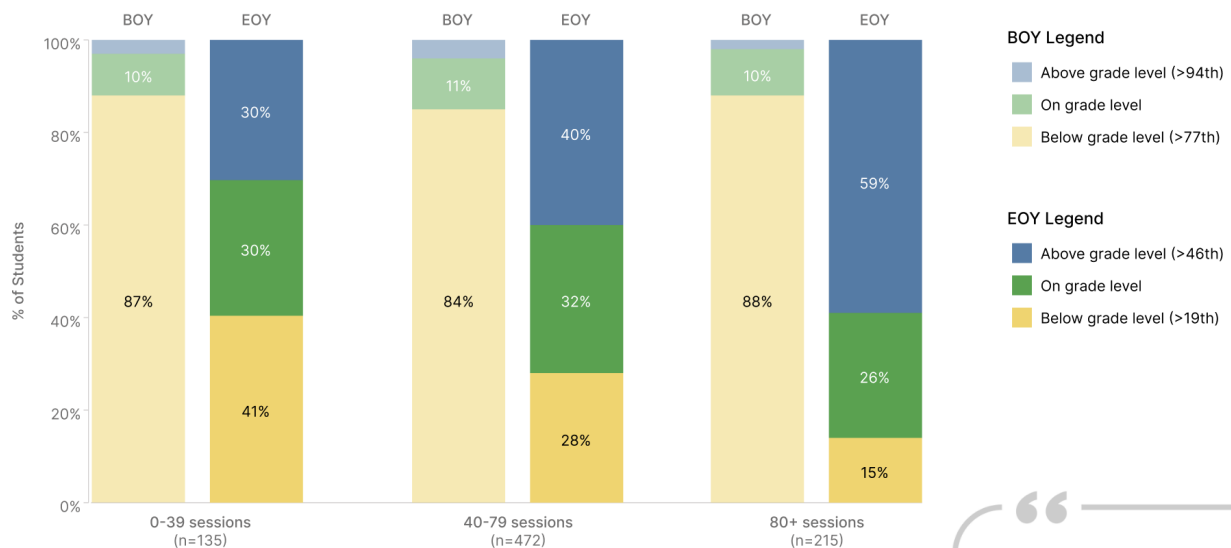




Grade Level Performance

To examine performance towards grade-level standards, three usage groups were examined. Among students who completed 40 sessions or more, more than three-quarters were on or above grade level (76%) by the end of the school year. Among students who completed 80 sessions or more, 86% were on or above grade level by the end of the school year. On the other hand, among students who completed fewer than 40 sessions, only 59% were on or above grade level by the end of the school year. Put another way, students who completed 40 sessions or more were 29% more likely to be on grade level or above by spring than those who did not. Students who completed 80 sessions or more were 46% more likely to be on grade level or above by spring than those who completed fewer than 40 sessions, as seen in *Figure 2*.

Figure 2. Grade Level Performance Status by Usage Sessions



Progress on Once program

There was a significant positive correlation between the number of Once sessions a Kindergartener completed and their scale-score growth from the beginning of the year to the end of the year¹. Students who completed more Once sessions showed higher increases in their scale-scores than students who completed fewer sessions. When only considering students who started the year below the 50th percentile, there was a significant

The time I am
doing ONCE is the
BEST part of my
day!

Instructor

¹ $r(822) = .295, p < .001$



positive correlation between the number of Once sessions a student completed and their scale-score from the beginning of the year to the end of the year².

As evident in the previous sections, the number of sessions completed was positively related to students' growth on i-Ready from BOY to EOY. By completing a step-wise regression, we confirmed that the number of sessions a student completed accounted for 4% of the variance in EOY i-Ready scores when accounting for BOY.³ We found that curriculum progress accounted for 13% of the variance in EOY i-Ready scores when accounting for BOY.⁴ On average, students who completed 10 additional lessons beyond their peers showed approximately 10 points higher performance on end-of-year assessments, even after accounting for their starting performance levels.

Conclusion

The study of 822 kindergarten students across 15 schools found that Once tutoring sessions led to meaningful improvements in early literacy outcomes as measured by the i-Ready assessment. Students who completed more sessions demonstrated greater improvement than students who completed fewer sessions. The impact was particularly pronounced for struggling readers who started below grade level. Students with higher program participation were substantially more likely to achieve grade-level performance by Spring. These findings demonstrate that consistent participation in the Once program, which uses trained school staff to deliver daily one-on-one instruction based on the Science of Reading, produces significant literacy gains for kindergarteners.

² $r(542) = .278, p < .001$

³ $(F(2, 819) = 290.7, p = <.001)$

⁴ $(F(2, 819) = 414.6, p = <.001)$



References

- Cortes, K. E., Kortecamp, K., Loeb, S., & Robinson, C. D. (2024). A scalable approach to high-impact tutoring for young readers. *Learning and Instruction*, 95, 102021–102021. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.learninstruc.2024.102021>
- Curriculum Associates. (2023). *i-Ready Diagnostic National Norms Tables for Reading and Mathematics for Grades K-8 2023-2024*.
- Robinson, C. D., Pollard, C., Novicoff, S., White, S., & Loeb, S. (2024). The Effects of Virtual Tutoring on Young Readers: Results From a Randomized Controlled Trial. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*. <https://doi.org/10.3102/01623737241288845>
- White, S., Carey, M., O'donnell, A., & Loeb, S. (n.d.). *National Student Support Accelerator 1 | Early Lessons from Implementing High-Impact Tutoring at Scale*. Retrieved September 4, 2025, from <https://nssa.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/Early%20Lessons%20from%20Implementing%20High-Impact%20Tutoring%20at%20Scale.pdf>



LXD Research is an independent research firm that evaluates educational programs with ESSA-aligned methods.

Learn more at www.lxdresearch.com

Once

For additional information about **Once** visit:

www.tryonce.com/