

The UConn I-MTSS Research Team studied the effects of integrated Tier 1 instruction in a **randomized controlled trial**. We partnered with **10 schools in two districts** in New England to randomly assign all **88 K-2 classrooms** to implement evidence-based foundational reading skills instruction, using the Enhanced Core Reading Instruction (ECRI; Fein et al., 2015), with or without integrated classroom positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS).

- **Reading (ECRI Only):** ECRI is a series of routines designed to increase the effectiveness of whole group foundational skills instruction in core reading programs. ECRI routines include research-informed instructional practices: detailed explanation, modeling, group and individual practice, and specific corrective feedback.
- **Integrated (ECRI + PBIS):** Within ECRI routines, we integrated evidence-based classroom PBIS practices: explicit instruction in classroom expectations (e.g., kindness), prompts for expected behavior, specific positive feedback, and group contingency to support student engagement (e.g., Student/Teacher Game; Center on PBIS, 2020).

Specifically, all K-2 teachers participated in ECRI training before the start of the year. After beginning of year assessments (in fall), we randomly assigned teachers to either (a) reading (ECRI-only) or (b) integrated (ECRI + PBIS) instruction. As depicted in Figure 1, both groups received additional training and ongoing coaching to support implementation of their assigned intervention (reading or integrated). This brief describes preliminary findings from the first cohort of educators ($n = 88$) and their students ($n = 1,800$) participating in this study.

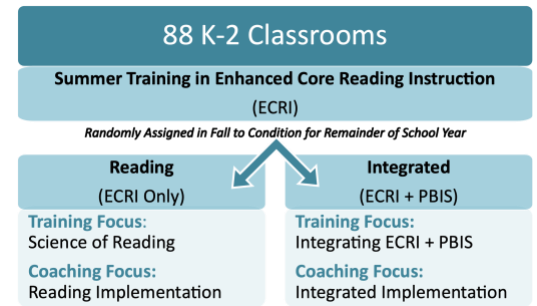


Figure 1. Overview of Randomized Controlled Trial

What are the effects of integrated (ECRI + PBIS) implementation on...

... teachers' implementation fidelity?

Teachers implementing integrated (ECRI + PBIS) support had higher fidelity of implementation of reading and behavior supports than their colleagues implementing only reading support (see **Figure 2**). In other words, supporting students' behavior **increased the fidelity** of teachers' (rather than interfered with) reading instruction.

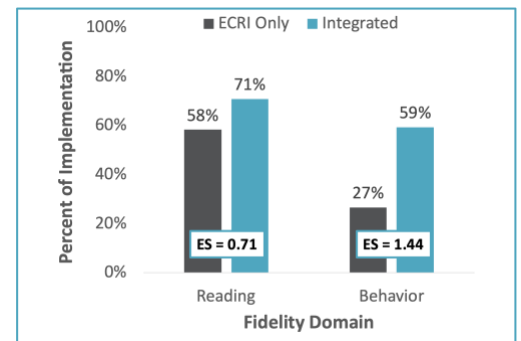


Figure 2. Fidelity of Implementation
Note. ES = Effect Size

...teachers' classroom practices?

Across three time points (beginning, middle, and end of year), all teachers provided similarly high **opportunities to respond**—an indicator of engaging reading instruction, low **specific corrections**, and high **general praise**.

By the end of the study, teachers in the integrated condition enhanced their implementation of key evidence-based classroom PBIS practices: they implemented higher rates of **prompts** and **specific praise** (and lower rates of **general corrections**) than teachers in reading-only condition (see **Figure 3**).

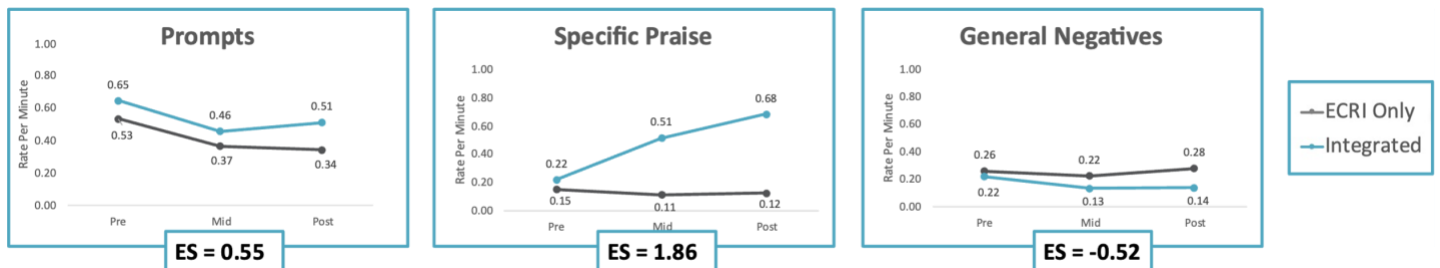


Figure 3. Teachers' Practice Rates.
Note. ES = Effect Size

... teachers' ratings of students' behavioral strengths?

Teachers in both groups rated students using the Devereaux Student Strengths Assessment-Mini (DESSA-Mini; Shapiro et al., 2017), and students in the integrated condition were rated as having statistically **higher behavioral strengths** (see **Figure 4**).

...students' academic engagement?

Across three time points (beginning, middle, and end of year), students were observed to be **more academically engaged** and **less off task** during integrated instruction (see **Figure 5**).

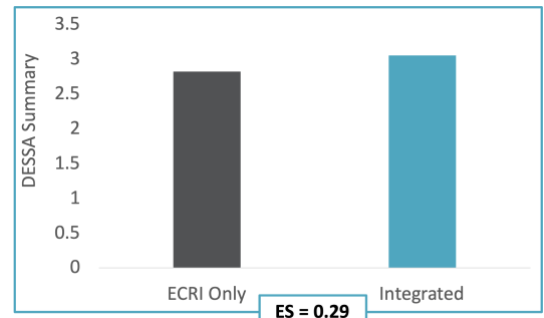


Figure 4. Teachers' Ratings of Students' Behavioral Strengths
Note. ES = Effect Size

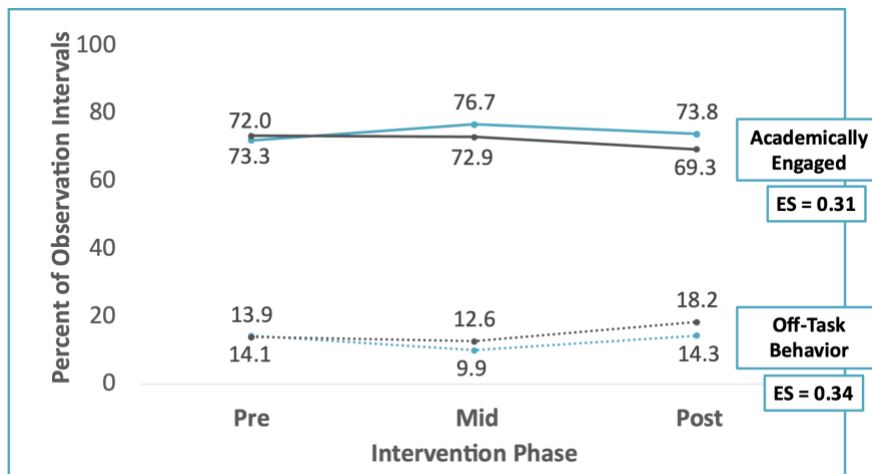


Figure 5. Observed levels of Academically Engaged and Off-Task Behavior
Note. ES = Effect Size

What are key takeaways?

- Integrating PBIS practices into evidence-based Tier 1 reading instruction can support teachers' implementation of both reading and behavior support.
- Students can be more academically engaged (and less off-task) when their teachers integrate PBIS practices into Tier 1 reading instruction.

Acknowledgements and Disclaimers

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References

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