

# The Superkids

.....

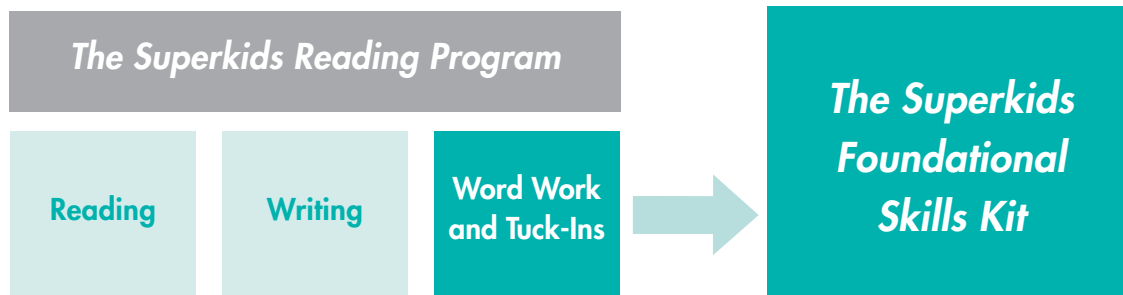
## Foundational Skills Kit

### How Does *The Superkids Foundational Skills Kit* Meet the Evidence Requirements of the Every Student Succeeds Act?

According to the **Evidence for ESSA** website developed by the Center for Research and Reform in Education at Johns Hopkins University, *The Superkids Reading Program* features two qualifying evaluations that “found significant positive outcomes on measures of sound and word reading” and therefore reaches the second of three levels of evidence, **Moderate**, that are required for funding by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)<sup>1</sup>. In addition, *The Superkids Reading Program* has been subjected to evidence-based research that meets other federal requirements and other evidence-based requirements. To date, research on *Superkids* has been conducted in schools in nearly every region of the United States and with every major student group since the program’s inception in 2003. The research studies were conducted by independent evaluators and by the program’s founders.

### *The Superkids Foundational Skills Kit* Contains the Evidence-Based Literacy Activities of *The Superkids Reading Program*

Because the quasi-experimental studies highlighted by the Evidence for ESSA website as supporting the Moderate rating focus on the Word Work (and Ten-Minute Tuck-Ins reinforcement), their findings also support *The Superkids Foundational Skills Kit*—because the skills kit arises directly from the Word Work activities in the full program.



*The Superkids Foundational Skills Kit* contains the evidence-based instruction in foundational skills found in the full reading program’s Word Work lessons. **Thus, *The Superkids Foundational Skills Kit* also meets ESSA criteria for a Moderate level of effectiveness because its parent program, *The Superkids Reading Program* for kindergarten through grade 2, meets the ESSA requirements to demonstrate a positive effect on student early reading skills.**

<sup>1</sup> The review of *The Superkids Reading Program* may be found at <https://www.evidencefoessa.org/programs/reading/superkids-reading-program>.

## The Research Behind *The Superkids Reading Program* Also Endorses *The Superkids Foundational Skills Kit*

Large quasi-experimental studies have evaluated *The Superkids Reading Program*, and both found significant positive outcomes on measures of sound and word reading. The average effect size compared to controls was +0.23, qualifying *The Superkids Reading Program* for the ESSA Moderate intervention effects category (<https://www.evidenceforessa.org/programs/reading/superkids-reading-program>).

Because the quasi-experimental studies highlighted by the Evidence for ESSA website as supporting the Moderate rating focus on the Word Work (and Ten-Minute Tuck-Ins reinforcement), their findings also support *The Superkids Foundational Skills Kit*—because the skills kit arises directly from the Word Work activities in the full program. *The Superkids Foundational Skills Kit* contains the evidence-based instruction in foundational skills found in the full reading program's Word Work lessons. The kit was developed so that teachers may use *The Superkids Foundational Skills Kit* to supplement a basal reading program with evidence-based instruction in the foundational skills in sound and word reading.

The What Works Clearinghouse Educator's Practice Guide, *Foundational Skills to Support Reading for Understanding in Kindergarten Through 3rd Grade*, focuses on the foundational reading skills that enable students to read words (alphabetic), relate those words to their oral language, and read connected text with sufficient accuracy and fluency to understand what they read. These are the skills taught in *Superkids* Word Work activities. Recommendations 2 and 3 focus on awareness of the segments of sounds in speech and how they link to letters (2) and decoding words and analyzing word parts (3). Many basal reading programs do not support these recommendations. However, research clearly identifies the skills children must master in kindergarten, first, and second grade in order to read well. Research also shows that these skills must be explicitly taught. In explicit instruction, the objective of the lesson is clear and teaching is intentional (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983; Archer & Hughes, 2011). *The Superkids Reading Program* Word Work activities fully fulfill these recommendations.

*The Superkids Foundational Skills Kit* was developed so that teachers may use *The Superkids Foundational Skills Kit* to supplement a basal reading program with evidence-based instruction in the foundational skills in sound and word reading. *The Superkids Foundational Skills Kit* collates the Word Work lessons and student materials into one kit, for 30–40 minutes of daily explicit instruction focused exclusively on building the foundational skills for reading. The kit supplements and complements a balanced literacy framework or other reading programs by providing instruction in the following discrete foundational skills: print concepts, phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics, and fluency. The explicit instruction in these skills is what makes the *Superkids* program and its foundational skills kit effective.

The kit reiterates the same strategies and explicit instruction in foundational skills measured by the quasi-experimental studies on the full program accepted as evidence by the Evidence for ESSA website developed by the Center for Research and Reform in Education at Johns Hopkins University; a wide range of other studies also demonstrates the effectiveness of the foundational skills in *Superkids* that are consolidated in *The Superkids Foundational Skills Kit*.

## **The Superkids Reading Program Qualifies as an Evidence-Based Literacy Program**

The Every Student Succeeds Act, passed in December 2015, includes criteria for which instructional programs and curricula can be called “evidence based.” ESSA describes an evidence-based program as one that “demonstrates a statistically significant effect on improving student outcomes” and is based on research and ongoing efforts to examine its effects. The ESSA definition of evidence-based programs is meant to help states and districts make informed decisions about which programs to adopt. *The Superkids Reading Program* was tested in two large-scale, national quasi-experimental studies (Borman & Dowling, 2009; D’Agostino, 2009). *The Superkids Reading Program* achieved Moderate effectiveness ESSA ratings based on these studies, which both featured a matched control group against which *Superkids* classrooms were compared.

During the 2006–2007 school year, the Borman and Dowling study recruited

## **WHAT IS AN “EVIDENCE-BASED” INTERVENTION?**

(§8101(21)(A) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act)

...the term “evidence-based,” when used with respect to a State, local educational agency, or school activity, means an activity, strategy, or intervention that—

(i) demonstrates a statistically significant effect on improving student outcomes or other relevant outcomes based on—

(I) strong evidence from at least one well-designed and well-implemented experimental study;

(II) moderate evidence from at least one well-designed and well-implemented quasi-experimental study; or

(III) promising evidence from at least one well-designed and well-implemented correlational study with statistical controls for selection bias; or

(ii) (I) demonstrates a rationale based on high-quality research findings or positive evaluation that such activity, strategy, or intervention is likely to improve student outcomes or other relevant outcomes; and

(II) includes ongoing efforts to examine the effects of such activity, strategy, or intervention.

---

23 kindergarten teachers to implement *The Superkids Reading Program* from diverse, predominantly ethnic minority classrooms across the United States (Borman & Dowling, 2009). Researchers employed a precise computerized matching methodology to derive a statistically equivalent comparison group of 20 control teachers who implemented their standard “business as usual” core literacy program. Multilevel analyses of classroom-level effects of *Superkids* revealed achievement advantages of more than one-tenth standard deviation ( $SD = 0.11$ ) to one-quarter standard deviation ( $SD = 0.25$ ) for the treatment group on the five subtests from the Stanford Achievement Test, 10th edition.

The D’Agostino study compared *Superkids* classrooms to control classrooms but used control classrooms in different schools located in seven states in different regions of the country; the study was conducted during the 2007–2008 school year. The study sample comprised 21 kindergarten classrooms using *Superkids* in 11 schools and 22 similar classrooms using other reading programs in 11 demographically similar schools. The percentages of low-income students and students of various racial/ethnic groups in the sample were nationally representative. The 382 *Superkids* students and 368 control students were tested at the beginning and end of the year with the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. Results corroborate the results of the earlier study: at the end of the school year, *Superkids* students outperformed control students in four measures of reading skills. Effect sizes in D’Agostino (2009) were greater than in Borman and Dowling (2009), ranging from 0.23 to 0.41.

The Evidence for ESSA website determined that results of these quasi-experimental studies on *The Superkids Reading Program* meet the criteria for a Moderate level rating. They both demonstrate positive, significant outcomes on measures of sound and word reading in students in the studies’ classrooms. The full program’s comprehensive daily lesson plans incorporate three consistent parts: Word Work, Reading, and Writing. Within *The Superkids Reading Program*, students learn foundational literacy skills as part of daily Word Work in the instructional lessons the program provides. These are the activities that are best measured by the evidence in the qualifying experimental studies above.

Daily Word Work instruction grows in complexity and rigor across the grades; kindergarten starts with learning the letters of the alphabet, one sound for each letter, and then applying new skills to blend letter-sounds to read and write words and sentences. In grades 1 and 2, students master more complex phonetic elements, learn to decode and encode structural patterns, and apply their knowledge to read grade-level text fluently. These foundational skills in Word Work activities are also often repeated in Ten-Minute Tuck-Ins, which give teachers and students the opportunity to practice these skills. Reviewing the two studies shows that their measures of effectiveness are based on the daily Word Work activities and repeated reinforcement found in the full *Superkids* program.

## **The Superkids Foundational Skills Kit Contains the Evidence-Based Literacy Activities of The Superkids Reading Program**

Because the quasi-experimental studies highlighted by the Evidence for ESSA website as supporting the Moderate rating focus on the Word Work (and Ten-Minute Tuck-Ins reinforcement), their findings also support *The Superkids Foundational Skills Kit*—because the skills kit arises directly from the Word Work activities in the full program. *The Superkids Foundational Skills Kit* contains the evidence-based instruction in foundational skills found in the full reading program’s Word Work lessons. The kit was developed so that teachers may use *The Superkids Foundational Skills Kit* to supplement a basal reading program with evidence-based instruction in the foundational skills in sound and word reading.

The What Works Clearinghouse Educator’s Practice Guide, *Foundational Skills to Support Reading for Understanding in Kindergarten Through 3rd Grade*, focuses on the foundational reading skills that enable students to read words (alphabetic), relate those words to their oral language, and read connected text with sufficient accuracy and fluency to understand what they read. These are the skills taught in *Superkids* Word Work activities. Recommendations 2 and 3 focus on awareness of the segments of sounds in speech and how they link to letters (2) and decoding words and analyzing word parts (3). Many basal reading programs do not support these recommendations. However, research clearly identifies the skills children must master in kindergarten, first, and second grade in order to read well. Research also shows that these skills must be explicitly taught. In explicit instruction, the objective of the lesson is clear and teaching is intentional (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983; Archer & Hughes, 2011). *The Superkids Reading Program* Word Work activities fully fulfill these recommendations.

*The Superkids Foundational Skills Kit* collates the Word Work lessons and student materials into one kit, for 30–40 minutes of daily explicit instruction focused exclusively on building the foundational skills for reading. *The Superkids Foundational Skills Kit* supplements and complements a balanced literacy framework or other reading programs by providing instruction in the following discrete foundational skills: print concepts, phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics, and fluency. The explicit instruction in these skills is what makes the *Superkids* program and its foundational skills kit effective.

The kit reiterates the same strategies and explicit instruction in foundational skills measured by the quasi-experimental studies on the full program accepted as evidence by the Evidence for ESSA website developed by the Center for Research and Reform in Education at Johns Hopkins University; a wide range of other studies also demonstrates the effectiveness of the foundational skills in *Superkids* that are consolidated in *The Superkids Foundational Skills Kit*. **Therefore, *The Superkids Foundational Skills Kit* also meets criteria for a Moderate level of effectiveness because *The Superkids Reading Program* for kindergarten through grade 2 meets the ESSA requirements to demonstrate a positive effect on student early reading skills.**

## References

Archer, A., & Hughes, C. A. (2011). *Explicit instruction: Effective and efficient teaching*. New York: The Guilford Press.

Borman, G. D., & Dowling, N. M. (2009). Student and teacher outcomes of the *Superkids* quasi-experimental study. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*, 14(3), 207–225.

D'Agostino, J. (2009). *The effectiveness of the Superkids on student achievement and teacher outcomes*. Columbus, OH: The Ohio State University.

Pearson, P. D., & Gallagher, M. C. (1983). The instruction of reading comprehension. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 8, 317–334.