

### Question

Is one-to-one volunteer tutoring effective in increasing reading and math literacy of elementary-school children?

### Application

Interim report to policy analysts on articles that best met criteria for good research methods.

### Literature Search

ERIC, PsychInfo, Linguistics & Language Behavior Abstracts, Social Services Abstracts, Sociological Abstracts, MLA International Bibliography; Web of Science, PAIS International (January 1980 - June 2004)

393 articles identified and imported to RefWorks™  
57 met inclusion criteria by abstract and/or full text review; 22 articles included comparison or control groups

Spotlights on articles with best methods = 10

### SUMMARY OF SPOTLIGHTS

Independently of whether parents or volunteers serve as tutors, tutors are trained, tutoring follows a defined procedure, the school grade level or SES background of the children, **tutoring improves reading skills.**

Studies report tutoring sessions in which  
tutor reads to child as a “warm up”  
tutor and child read in unison  
child reads to tutor  
tutor and child discuss material read

Studies include procedures in which  
child masters skill before advancing to next task  
child is encouraged, praised, and rewarded

#10 Shuck, A., Ulsh, F., & Platt, J. (1983). Parents encourage pupils (PEP): An innercity parent involvement reading project. *The Reading Teacher*, 36(6), 524-528.

**Abstract** Results of a study of 150 3rd-5th grade children of low socioeconomic status show that Ss in the parent tutoring program had significantly higher reading achievement scores than did controls. The reinforcement procedure was effective for both sexes and across grade levels.

### Relevance Summary

Children participating in the present study were delayed at least two grade levels in reading. Reading pre- and post-tests were administered using the Stanford Achievement Test, and intelligence was measured using the Slosson Intelligence test.

Children received 30 minutes per day of tutoring for 180 days, and parents tutored their children using PEP calendar books and individualized homework activities. Parents were not trained for the purpose of this study, however parent-teacher conferences were held 3 times within the school year to provide parents with a brief progress report. Parents maintained a record of activities by filling in the calendar provided with happy faces and circling the appropriate letter to identify the type of work completed that day. Using a point system, children were rewarded for completing their work at home and at school with a prize.

### Key Quotes

*“Parents can produce significant, positive results for their children at a very small response cost to the educator.” (p. 527)*



**Research Works!** for child literacy,  
funded by the Social Science and Humanities  
Research Council of Canada and the University of Waterloo,  
conducted the Review of Evidence in partnership with the  
Ontario Ministry of Education and the Canadian Centre for  
Knowledge Mobilisation.