A User-friendly Guide to the *ReadingWise English* RCT Results

Dr John Durkin, the RCT designer and statistician, has written a formal academic paper summarising the results of the RCT which we will now seek to get peer-reviewed and published. This document is to give a non-academic, non-statistical, yet quantitative view of the results.

Headline Results

1. **The average increase in reading age across all pupils was 9.7 months. We consider that an increase of this size for a 20-hour intervention is very good indeed. We have not so far found any other remedial reading RCT which has results of this order. Note that the intervention can be delivered in one month – which it was at two schools – or spread over two months – which it was at the three other schools.**
2. **We asked the teachers concerned to tell us which pupils had behaviour problems irrespective of any official diagnosis. These pupils did much better than average – their increase in reading age was 12.4 months – that's a boost of one complete year.**
3. **There was no measurable difference in improvements between classes run by teaching assistants and those run by teachers. This is important because it strengthens the economic case for RWE.**
4. The rate of impovement was no different with dyslexics and non-dyslexics.   In other words, the program works equally well on both groups.

Notes

1. We asked each school to list any *official* diagnosis of reading or related difficulty with each pupil. We have not used these as parameters in the RCT because there can be a financial and/or resource incentive to assigning learning difficulty labels to pupils.
5. It should be noted that the RCT was about *decoding*, which is just one part of reading. Other parts include letter recognition and comprehension. The

ReadingWise English suite of programs addresses all these parts, but the only part of the program that was used in the RCT was that concerned with decoding. We only accepted pupils who had letter recognition across the full alphabet. We did not test comprehension because it is a separate skill. It should be noted that most standard reading tests combine decoding and comprehension which we believe to be unhelpful.

6. Our original design intended that we only include pupils of 6 years of age and upwards. We found that 5 year olds struggled with the computer skills needed and this impaired their learning. There was only one of these year 1 classes, and we excluded them from the study.

7. We used 4 different third party assessments pre and post, and discounted one of them – the GL NGRT test. This is an online test with audio prompts. We found that about one third of the pupils did not make any effort to answer the questions properly. Observedly, many pupils just kept pressing the NEXT button on the screen without answering the questions. This test is a combined decoding and comprehension test. We consider that it is not suitable for pupils at the low end of the reading scale ability.

8. We used Schonell and Burt tests because even though they are considered somewhat old fashioned now, they do specifically address only decoding, and they are easy to administer in a consistent fashion, and they are generally recognised in most English-speaking countries, and ReadingWise English is intended for all English-speaking countries. Most of the Schonell and Burt assessments were video'd for verification purposes.

9. As a general observation, it was very noticeable that the mood of the child when starting the tests made a big difference to their attention, motivation and eagerness to do the test. The mood of the pupils observedly changed from day to day and we predict that it had a significant effect on the results. The mood of the pupils anecdotally appeared to be dependent on
    a. the emotional atmosphere of their home prior to departure for school in the morning;
    b. interactions with other pupils between home and arriving in class;
    c. the length of time between breakfast (if any) and assessment time.

    We are resolved to account for these factors in future assessments. It is arguable that most if not all other remedial reading RCTs have suffered from this problem as we have not seen it described in the literature.

10. We started off all pupils on the same lesson plan. We soon found that in many cases, the pupils spent too long on the early lessons of RWE, which emphasised simple blends and short "trigger" words, and they needed to be moved up to later lessons which emphasised chunking of syllables and reading whole sentences. In the future, we will put the pupils on a lesson plan which is appropriate to their abilities.

This will cut the 20 hours down to a little less, and should bump the reading age increases up even further.

11. The total cost of developing the program from scratch AND doing the RCT was less than £150,000. This is a low amount of money for such an undertaking.

12. There will be further editions of the RCT paper and of this document in October 2013 when we have the results of the "crossover" batch – the control groups who will be participating in RWE during the next school term.

Next Steps

1. As with all RCTs, it is important to get them peer-reviewed and published.

2. We are confident that there is enough evidence in this RCT to make a case for an independently funded, independently run RCT which builds on the results of this one, and reinforces it.

3. We would like to see the following assessment-related factors in the next RCT:

    a. Measurement of increase in comprehension ability through our new module *ComprehensionWise*.

    b. A further set of established reading assessments which primarily address decoding.

    c. If possible, a pre- and post-assessment to detect improvements, if any, in behaviour.

    d. A way of adjusting for variations in emotional state of the testees, which we predict will seriously affect the results of the tests.