

95 Percent Group

Program Description

95 Percent Group is a company that creates systematic phonics and structured literacy programming for grades pre-k to grade 6. Their programming includes tier 1, 2, and 3 instruction on: oral phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, morphology, spelling, fluency, and comprehension. Instruction is individualized to student needs and uses “multi-sensory” methods.

Previous Reviews:

Evidence for ESSA (John Hopkins) has evaluated 5 studies on the 95 Percent Group programming. They evaluated the research rigor on the core program as strong. They evaluated the research rigor on the phonological awareness program and the Phonics Lesson Library as moderate. They found a mean effect size of .11 (low) for the core program, .49 (high) for the phonological awareness program, and a mean effect size of .23 (moderate) for the Phonics Lesson Library.

Program Strengths:

The 95 Percent Group program is largely research based, as it teaches all of the pillars of literacy and includes systematic phonics instruction. It is especially great that the 95 Percent Group program includes morphology instruction, as not all structured literacy programs do. The 95 Percent Group programming is also unique in that caters to tier 1, 2, 3 instruction, as well as professional development. Few programs are this comprehensive.

Potential Weaknesses

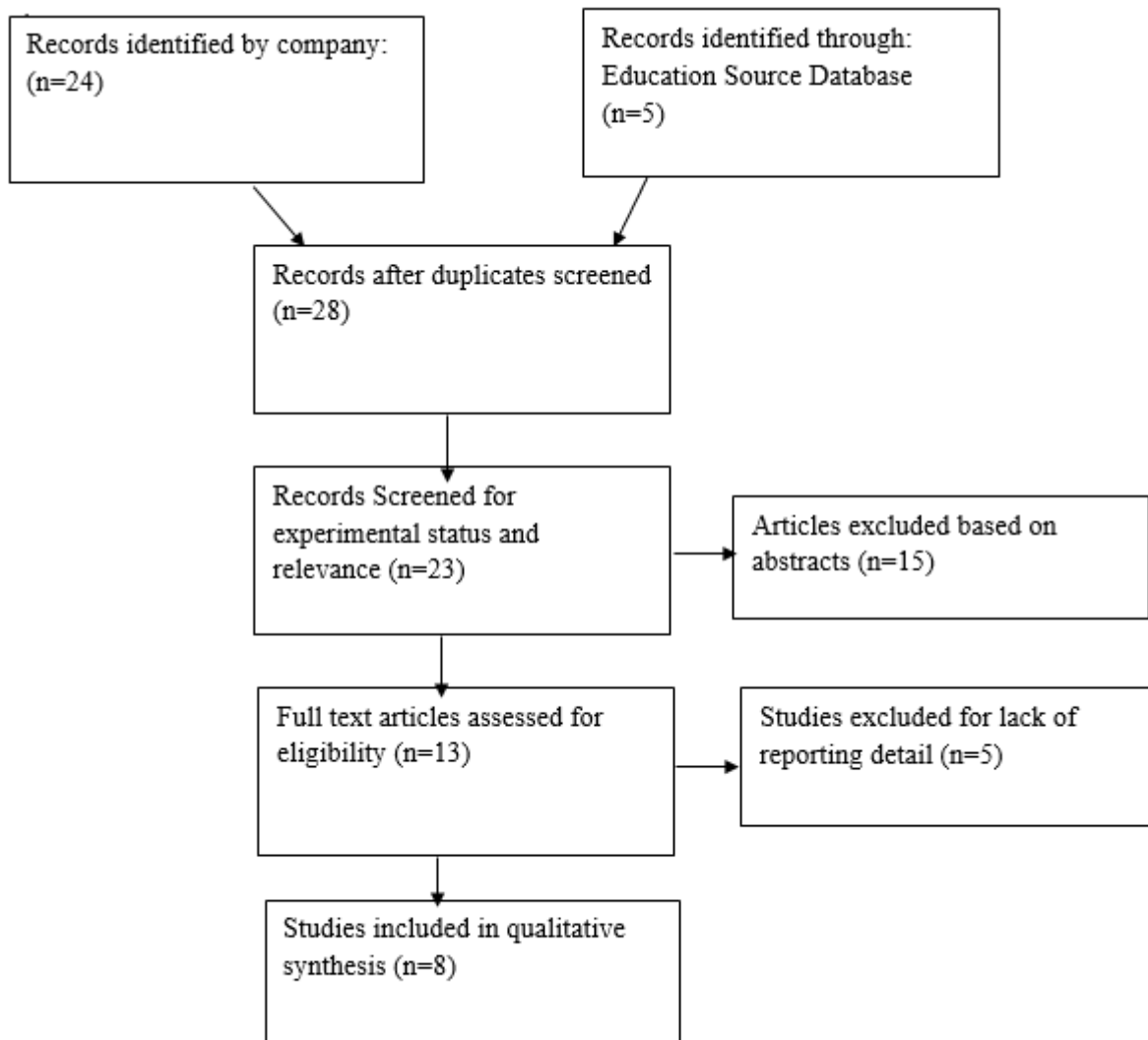
Some (not all) of the phonemic awareness instruction is done without letters, and includes manipulation and deletion drills. This type of phonemic awareness instruction has been shown to be less effective than blending and segmenting drills with letters (NRP, 2000; Rhefeld, 2022; Florina, 2024). However, 95 Percent Group is in the process of updating their phonemic awareness instruction to better align with research. I have been sent a copy of their updated scope and sequence, which now recommends most phonemic awareness instruction includes letters. While there is still some manipulation and deletion instruction the majority of the phonemic awareness instruction now focuses on blending and segmenting.

Review Methods

Systematic Search:

Pedagogy Non Grata was requested to do this review and was sent 24 references by one of the company’s external research partners, LXD Research. A search on the academic database “Education Source” was also conducted, from which 5 additional references were found. Fifteen of these references were excluded because they were not experimental. Five of these references were excluded because they had insufficient reporting details for the authors to independently calculate an effect size. One reference was excluded because it was a duplicate.

Figure 1: Exclusions and Inclusions



Coding and Effect-Size Calculations:

All coding and effect-size calculations were conducted by the primary author. Two paid contract associates of Pedagogy Non Grata replicated 50% of these calculations and coding decisions to ensure the validity. Of the studies coded by multiple parties, there was a complete consensus. Analysis of research was then sent back to the lead 95 Percent Group researcher, Dr. Rachel Schechter for comment. Dr. Rachel Shechter sent additional raw data to enable additional effect size calculations, not possible, based on publicly available data. Effect sizes were calculated by comparing the post test scores between groups and then dividing by the pooled standard deviation. Cohen's $d = (m1-m2)/\sqrt{((SD1^2+SD2^2)/2)}$. Effect sizes were then weighted by the inverse variance, to correct for sample size bias. Weighted effect sizes = $(1/(SE^2))*ES$.

Review Results

Overall Efficacy:

Overall, a mean effect size of .27, 95% CI = [.11, .42], with a weighted mean of .28 was found. Overall, these effect sizes are low according to Cohen's guide and when compared to other programs reviewed by Pedagogy Non Grata. That said, the reviewed studies are unique in that they are very high quality and higher quality studies on average show lower effect sizes. All reviewed studies used standardized tests, all reviewed studies had sample sizes above 400, and six out of eight studies used active control groups. Indeed, whereas most language program studies compare the treatment program to business as usual, half of these studies compared the treatment program to another popular structured literacy program.

Final Grade:

Individual Study Results and Coding:

Table 1 shows the coding and mean effect size for each study.

Table 1. *Study Coding and Results.*

Study	Design	Sample Type	Duration (in Months)	Sample Size	Control Group	Grade	Mean Effect Size
Schechter, Lynch, Ilievski, 2023	QE	Core	9	405	Nat Geo	K-1	0.41
Schechter & Chase 2022	QE	Tier 1	18	3755	BAU	4-5	0.11
Schechter & Lynch, 2023	QE	Tier 2	9	511	Wonders	K	0.51
Schechter & Chase, 2023	RCT	Core	18	431	I-Ready	K-1	-.04
Schechter, Gross, & Ilievski, 2024	QE	Tier 1	36	588	West Virginia Phonics	4-5	0.42
Schechter & Lynch, 2022	RCT	Core	9	2674	Ready Gen	K-2	0.13
Schechter & Lynch 2022	QE	Tier 2	9	442	Wonders	2-3	0.3
Schechter & Lynch 2022	QE	Tier 2 & 3	9	445	Heggerty	K	.32

Moderator Analysis

Table 2 shows how effect sizes changed across study grades and assessment types.

Table 2. Moderator Analysis.

Moderator Variable	Number of Studies	Mean Effect Size	95% CI
Kindergarten	2	0.69	[-1.12, 2.42]
Grade 1	3	0.21	[-.06, .50]
Grade 2	1	0.12	NA
Grade 3	1	0.17	NA
Grade 4	2	0.24	[-.64, 1.29]
Grade 5	2	0.29	[-2.69, 3.28]
Decoding	1	0.28	NA
Composite Score	8	0.30	[.05, .55]
Letter ID	1	0.24	NA

Final Grade: A

There were multiple high-quality studies with effect sizes above .40, on standardized assessments.

Qualitative Grade: 10/10

The program contains all essential types of instruction, including: explicit, systematic, individualized, phonemic awareness, phonics, morphology, vocabulary, spelling, and comprehension.

****Conflict of Interest Statement:**

Pedagogy Non Grata has a potential conflict of interest for this review, as the lead author for the reviewed research studies were all conducted by Dr. Rachel Schechter, a regular collaborator of Pedagogy Non Grata. To attempt and mitigate any potential risk at biased reporting, the grading for this company was blinded. The grader, Dr. Kathryn Garforth graded the program, based on the effect sizes of the coded studies, analyzed by Nathaniel Hansford, Elizabeth Reenstra, and Pamela Aitchison.

Written by Nathaniel Hansford, Elizabeth Reenstra, and Pamela Aitchison
Graded (blindly) by Dr. Kathryn Garforth

Last Edited 2024/05/07

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