A summary of recent research on MindPlay’s My Virtual Reading Coach (MVRC)

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Note: This research involved larger samples of students across more grades than previously published research.

This article reports on research using two different activities:

1. Analysing (correlational design) MindPlay data from students in Years 2 to 6 in a single school district in the Midwest of the US. Data from 2,531 students were analysed.

   Assessment results from MindPlay from the first term of the school year when MindPlay was implemented were compared with results from the final term of the school year.

   At pretest, results indicated that students in this sample were well below grade level in reading fluency, ranging from one year behind at Year 3 to two years behind for Years 4 to 6.

   The number of hours students spent doing MindPlay varied from 17 to 75. The recommended amount of time or dose for MindPlay is 30 minutes per day for 4 or 5 days per week. Thus 17 hours would equate to about 8 weeks at the recommended dose. 75 hours equates to 30 to 35 weeks of intervention at the recommended dose, basically the full school year in the US.

   Results were as follows:

   • All students using MindPlay made progress, even those who only used MindPlay for a brief time, but those using it the longest made the greatest progress.

   • In a year, improvement varied from a grade equivalence of 0.8 (Year 2 students who only averaged 36 hours or around 15 weeks at the recommended dose) to 1.8 for Year 5 students averaging 60 hours (around 25 weeks at the recommended dose). In fact, in one school, Year 5 students made an average gain of 2 grade equivalents.

   • It has to be remembered that these students were all below their expected class levels at the outset, so it can be estimated that they made an average of 0.7 grade equivalence every school year before beginning MindPlay. They were falling further behind over time.

   • Results showed that, on average, students needed at least 40 hours of MindPlay (around 18 weeks or 6 months) to start catching up and make one year’s progress in a school year.
2. Researchers used a quasi experimental design to compare student progress across these conditions: business as usual; MindPlay and another computer based reading intervention chosen by the school. Schools were from the same Midwest region of the US.

Data from 142 Year 2 students from 6 classrooms and 172 Year 4 students from 9 classrooms were collected and analysed. Teachers in each of the two computer intervention conditions were asked to have their students use these programs for 30 minutes every day. The study ran for 9 weeks (about 20 hours for the computer groups).

Results were as follows:

- Improvements were significantly greater for the MindPlay group over the other computer group who were better than the business as usual group. In 9 weeks (around 0.25 of a US school year), MindPlay students made an average gain of 0.7 grade equivalence at Year 2 and 0.8 at Year 4. Those using a school chosen computer program averaged 0.3 at Year 2 and 0.4 at Year 4. Business as usual averaged 0.2.

- In addition, the improvement for the MindPlay group was across all skill levels while progress in the business as usual group was skewed towards those who started with above average scores.

- Progress was better with these students than in the first study as the schools served higher SES areas and students were generally at higher levels of reading fluency before the intervention. While the Year 2 students started at a Year 1 level in fluency, the Year 4 group were close to grade level.

The authors commented:

“(these studies) provide conclusive evidence for the positive effect of (MindPlay’s) MVRC on reading fluency.”

“MVRC time affected improvements in reading fluency more than in phonics, and it affected improvements in phonics more than in listening vocabulary.”

“Two randomized control trials (Grades 2 and 4) revealed a strong effect of MVRC on reading fluency, compared to instruction as usual and compared to an alternative technology”