

Fidelity vs. flexibility: Can structured teacher adaptations lead to better student outcomes?

MORE (Model of Reading Engagement) is THE elementary science and social studies program that builds schemas and improves academic achievement – including literacy and math.

Scaling up or expanding educational innovations often presents challenges. One such challenge is whether to flexibly **adapt** the program to new contexts or to maintain **fidelity**, or adherence to the program's principles. Historically, **fidelity** and **adaptation** have been viewed as incompatible.

But what if there was a middle-ground solution to this divide? **MORE** believes that the most effective way to scale evidence-based solutions is to help stakeholders **structure the adaptation of key principles**. Instead of strict fidelity or complete flexibility, structures are built in to help teachers and leaders use their expertise to make targeted adaptations, while preserving the program's core principles. We tested this approach during COVID-19.



? How does Adaptive MORE differ from Core MORE in improving student outcomes?

Our study randomly assigned 95 third-grade classrooms to either receive **Core MORE** (emphasizing **fidelity**) or **Adaptive MORE** (which included structured adaptations to better align with the local context). Adaptive MORE built in collaborative scaffolding to help teachers make the program better fit the local context, while also training teachers on the 'why' behind the core elements of MORE to encourage fidelity where it matters most.

Components	Core MORE	Adaptive MORE
Asynchronous activities: digital + paper reading activities	✓	✓
Synchronous MORE lessons on Zoom (10 lessons)	✓	✓
Whole-group teacher training to learn about Core MORE	✓	✓
Team-based teacher collaboration for adapting the digital and paper reading activities	✗	✓
An extension Zoom lesson to deepen vocabulary knowledge	✗	✓

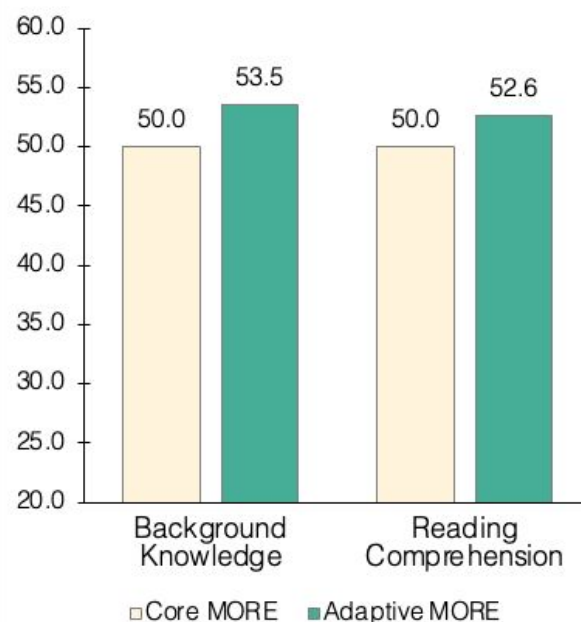
Structured teacher adaptations improved academic outcomes, elevated engagement, and fostered student-teacher interactions.



Students in classrooms with **Adaptive MORE** showed **better science background knowledge** and **science text comprehension** than **Core MORE** students.

Adaptive MORE allowed teachers to tailor engagement strategies to students' specific context, resulting in **higher motivation and engagement levels** with digital and paper reading activities.

Adaptive MORE fostered a more responsive online learning environment. Teachers provided more personalized feedback and engaged in **higher quality interactions** compared with **Core MORE**.



Empowering teachers to make structured adaptations improves student academic outcomes and engagement compared with strict fidelity.

Every school and classroom faces a unique set of challenges and opportunities. Building in a structured way to leverage stakeholders knowledge of the local context, while also ensuring that the core principles of the program remain consistent, seems key to effectively scaling evidence-based solutions. Our study found that the structured adaptation teachers made both preserved the integrity of the original MORE program while also improving its effectiveness.

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