

## Can English learners improve their reading and writing through science and social studies classes?

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



English learners (ELs) make up the fastest-growing student group in the United States.<sup>1</sup> In an attempt to help these students build their language skills, some schools pull ELs from science and social study classes to focus strictly on language training. But what if a language- and content-rich science and social studies program could actually help ELs become better readers and writers?

Our study shows that **MORE benefits both English-proficient students and their English learner classmates.** MORE's integrated approach, combining content knowledge building and language learning, improves *all* students' vocabulary knowledge and reading and writing abilities, and especially enhances English learners' speaking and listening skills.



**Do both English learners and their English-proficient classmates benefit from MORE?**

In our study, we randomly assigned **307 first- and second-grade classrooms** to either teach 20 MORE science and social studies lessons (the “treatment” group) or continue with the school’s usual curriculum (the “control” group).

At the end of the units, we tested all students on their vocabulary and argumentative writing skills in both science and social studies, as well as their reading proficiency. We also assessed English learners’ oral proficiency (their speaking and listening skills).

MORE builds students’ content and vocabulary knowledge through informational texts, equitable discussions, and concept mapping using domain-specific vocabulary, with the goal of helping students transfer their knowledge to improve their reading and argumentative writing.

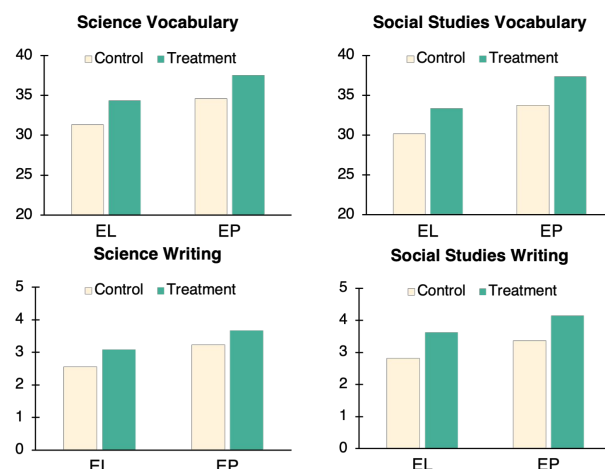
1. National Center for Education Statistics, 2022

**MORE benefits both English learners (ELs) and their English-proficient (EP) peers, with MORE ELs sometimes *outperforming* the EPs in the control group.**



**MORE** English learners scored higher in **science** and **social studies vocabulary knowledge** than control group English learners, even matching the scores of the control group English-proficient students.

**MORE** English learners also outperformed control group English learners in **science** and **social studies writing**. They *surpassed* the control group's English-proficient students in **social studies writing**.



**MORE** English learners also showed greater gains in **English oral proficiency** (speaking and listening skills) than control group English learners. Vocabulary knowledge and oral proficiency are key skills linked to improving reading and writing.



**Young English learners thrive in language- and content-rich classrooms, where they can develop key literacy skills as they build content knowledge together with their peers.**

Contrary to the strategy of pulling English learners from science and social studies classes to focus on language training, our research shows that English learners can benefit from instruction that *integrates* language learning and content knowledge building. Content-integrated literacy instruction such as MORE can help promote equitable learning opportunities for English learners, ensuring that *all* students have the chance to succeed.

Relyea, J. E., Kim, J. S., Rich, P., & Fitzgerald, J. (2024). Effects of Tier 1 content literacy intervention on early-grade English learners' reading and writing: Exploring the mediating roles of domain-specific vocabulary and oral language proficiency. *Journal of Educational Psychology*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1037/edu0000882>

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