

Minnesota EBRI Stories of Success

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These inspiring stories of success were collected over five years from Minnesota ABE reading teachers who completed Evidence-Based Reading Instruction (EBRI) Study Circles. They report positive changes in programming, teacher knowledge and confidence, and student performance or interest in the reading process. *Note: Some of the contributors' original wording was revised for clarity or consistency.*

Program Successes

- My staff -- who have the most exposure to low-level readers -- [learned about EBRI] and it added to their established reading programs and strategies.
- My teachers gained a better understanding of where students are at and feel positive about the new tools available to them. It was also a reality check for several new teachers.
- I am excited and encouraged to see all the ways and resources available to teach alphabets -- and that you can do it in daily, short routines!
- I am also excited that our ABE/ESL teachers now have a shared language around reading instruction.

Teacher Successes

- [EBRI reminded me of] why I plan instruction the way that I do. Giving students the reasons for why and what we are doing, why we are using [certain] materials, and consistent feedback has been quite motivational.
- EBRI improved my understanding of reading instruction and gave me confidence in implementing diagnostic assessments, [providing explicit] instruction, and managing the ongoing process.
- EBRI made a difference for me primarily based on my comfort level with teaching fluency and alphabets. I feel this will tremendously benefit the lower quarter of my class.
- I had never conducted an individual reading assessment, so doing one of those was a success story for me. I learned that my students were at a lower level than I had thought they were.

- EBRI made me realize that students need to be “told” instead of asked and given guided practice. This will help me become a better teacher because I realize the importance of all [explicit instruction] steps.
- I am [looking] at what I am teaching and [thinking about] how to incorporate more guided practice.
- [EBRI] simplified how I choose to group students and what tasks I ask them to do. Before I felt like I was just taking my best guess at what each group should be working on, but now I have real evidence! I gained a lot of confidence as a reading teacher.
- The EBRI study circle was really helpful. I found the material was not necessarily new, but brought clarity and unity to many of the strategies I have tried from time to time in my class.
- I now teach explicit alphabets and feel comfortable teaching it.
- I can teach reading intentionally now.
- My reading instruction has improved a lot! It was hit or miss before, and now I have a plan. I realized from the testing that I need to concentrate on short vowel sounds and word meanings.
- [EBRI] got me looking at more styles/options and how to teach. More importantly, what to teach and resources available to get there.
- I can see that I’m teaching at the correct level.
- [EBRI] opened up my mind to the usefulness of reading aloud fluently as a means of improving comprehension.
- [I learned about] *Six Way Paragraphs*, which has adult content and a variety of texts that meet the needs of high-Beginning to Advanced learners.
- [EBRI] increased my ability to set aside time each week [to teach] two new vocabulary words.
- I love the “new-to-me” online resource, *ReadWorks*. It makes it easy to find level-appropriate materials in a hurry.
- I learned about [EBRI] tools to use in my classroom.
- I made use of *Vocabulary Workouts* with a young woman [who also does Marshall ABE readings]. She sees similarities [between] the two.
- The [EBRI] process helped my student to be better prepared for learning.
- [I plan to use the academic vocabulary plan] with future college probation students.

- I better understand [the connection] between vocabulary and comprehension.
- EBRI was successful in my classroom because it involves explicit instruction, beginning by explaining to students the purpose and goals of the strategy. Then, there is modeling, guiding, and providing an opportunity for independent practice. Review is naturally built into this approach [and] helps students retain more of what is introduced. [This is] especially important for ESL students, who are acquiring large amounts of new vocabulary as they learn to make sense of the English code.
- I tried a new alphabetics resource, *Morpheme Matrices*. The students' feedback was positive and it was refreshing for me to use something new.
- I conducted a word test and phonics inventory. I thought my students would score much higher than they did; I found out what my students [actually] needed and learned "make no assumptions!"
- After testing my students' alphabetics skills, I now have a better idea of where their reading is breaking down. I also feel better equipped to help them.
- I tested my whole class for phonics needs!
- I taught a class on the short + long sounds for a + i. My students now have a clearer understanding and are able to differentiate these sounds in common words.
- I implemented a word dictation practice for taught vowel sounds. My students reported improvements in their skills and expressed enthusiasm for this activity.
- I incorporated word dictation with short vowel sounds. I found out which sounds were most troublesome, and I also gave immediate feedback, which my students appreciated. They loved this activity and are asking for more!
- I devoted the first 15-30 minutes of class to instruction on short vowel sounds and initial consonant blends. My students have been engaged in this work and want more of this practice.
- I learned the importance of explaining why and how in my teaching practice.

Student Successes

- Many [students] attending my classes also participate in a health program. I assessed them using the alphabetics and vocabulary [tests] and shared their results. *For the first time*, one student was able to explain to his counselor and me the specifics about what he is having trouble with in the health program.
- As I was testing my students [in vocabulary], I became more aware of individual thought processes and how each task/each question was approached. This helped me understand [their] learning profile/personalities.
- [My EBRI class] has a different tone. My adult learners [now believe] that I am invested in their learning. I demonstrate [this] through assessment and discussion with each student individually - *20 min. goes a long way*.
- One of my students told me how learning vocabulary helped promote fluency when doing our group readings. In addition, he noted that awareness of Tier Two words helped him in his own personal reading of written text. [When] he cannot define the words, he now has the tools necessary to find the meaning, related synonyms, antonyms and proper usage.
- I now introduce new vocabulary words on Monday and Tuesday, students work together to complete practice worksheets and share answers on Wednesday and Thursday, and on Friday we play a vocabulary cube game.
- A student, who was initially very resistant, took a very active interest in learning new words and perusing the dictionary at the end of class. As a result, [his] improved vocabulary has increased [his] comprehension and fluency.
- An older man in my class came in not wanting to be in school. He never felt comfortable with his reading or confident in his learning. After doing the diagnostic assessments, he realized that he knew more than he thought he did. He spent time on the Marshall Reading stories and accomplished better fluency rate and comprehension confidence.
- I have two students who are pursuing college enrollment because they have improved their reading comprehension in my class. They now feel confident that they can do college work.
- Students come to class and talk about seeing/hearing the vocabulary words in their world: TV and conversations or writing to family/friends.

- After being in class for several months, a student stated that he did something for the first time: [went] to the library, checked out a book, and [is] reading it!
- A student has learned to search for meaning in unknown words rather than just [skipping] them. He also keeps a word journal.
- My student is so motivated; he wants to set aside computer skills training and just focus on [reading instruction].
- My students see how learning more vocabulary words will enable them to be better writers – especially for extended responses.
- [Several of my students] have complete buy-in to EBRI.
- My student was excited to participate in EBRI. In the past, she has felt inadequate. This gives her promise for a better future!
- [Using the fluency assessment resulted in] more personal conversations with students [and I learned their] reading and comprehension “style”.
- My student is learning to decode! He can now break down and sound out words – it is very exciting.
- I had a student claim that phonics was “babyish.” I gave him the phonics inventory and he now chooses to do phonics [with the class].
- I taught common phonograms and it helped my students to hear and speak sound patterns.
- After learning a set of phonograms, a student was better able to read words and feels a renewed sense of confidence.
- My students and I have done several echo readings as a class. Their feedback has been positive.
- I have a student who struggles with spelling. *Morpheme Matrices* has enlightened her understanding of English chunks and given her another way to put together words.
- I used a non-fiction passage from *ReadWorks*. My student enjoyed reading it and answered the questions seriously. She now wants to visit the zoo to see a live polar bear!