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IMSE's Orton-Gillingham Plus (OG+) Efficacy Study

Examining the Impact of IMSE's OG+ Program on K–1 Early Literacy Skills in a Low-SES School District



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MODERATE

LXD Research Recognition for IMSE's Orton-Gillingham Plus (OG+)



institute for
multi-sensory
education



This product has been rigorously evaluated and is hereby acknowledged for meeting the educational impact criteria of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), warranting a **Level 2** for "Moderate" Evidence. This recognition is based on its proven effectiveness in enhancing grade-level learning outcomes.

REVIEWED BY THE LXD RESEARCH EXPERT REVIEW PANEL

VERIFIED BY:

JULY 2025

EVIDENCE
for ESSA

Rachel Schechter, Ph.D.
Founder of LXD Research

DATE

Educators search for high-quality research and evidence-based solutions to strengthen grant applications, to support comprehensive and targeted instruction, or to implement new programming in their schools. Evidence requirements under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) are designed to ensure that states, districts, and schools can identify programs, practices, products, and policies that work across various populations.

Educational programs document their evidence of design, effectiveness, and impact in order to be eligible for federal funding. While there is no singular authority that determines a program's tier, the Department of Education's Office of Educational Technology provides standards to assess the varying levels of strength of research for education products.

The categories for ESSA Evidence are: strong (Tier 1), moderate (Tier 2), and promising (Tier 3) evidence of effectiveness, or demonstrates a rationale to be effective (Tier 4).

This product meets the requirements for Tier 2:

- ✓ In a quasi-experimental design, students who used the program are examined against a comparison group who did not use the program.
- ✓ At least one quasi-experimental study with the proper design and implementation with at least two teachers and a multi-site sample of 350 students showed statistically significant, positive findings.
- ✓ The study uses a program implementation that could be replicated.
- ★ A third-party research organization has reviewed the documentation for ESSA validation.



When product designers leverage learning sciences to design and evaluate the effectiveness of their programs, educators can better target instruction, and students' skills soar. A quasi-experimental study design using standardized assessment data, an analysis of student growth, and educator feedback demonstrates this product's efficacy, meeting the criteria for LXD Research's ESSA Tier 2 Evidence.

– Rachel Schechter, Ph.D., Founder of LXD Research



EFFICACY STUDY SUMMARY

GRADES K–1

2022–2023



PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

IMSE's Orton-Gillingham Plus (OG+) is a Structured Literacy program designed for K–2 foundational literacy and intervention for students in grades 3 and beyond. Rooted in explicit, systematic, and cumulative instruction, it builds phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension through multimodal techniques and guided practice. This evidence-based program equips educators with the tools to teach every student to read.

STUDY DETAILS

Sample Description

- **Total students:** 397 in Grades K–1, spread across four schools
- **Treatment group:** Students taught using IMSE's OG+ program: 220 students
- **Comparison group:** Students who received standard district literacy instruction: 177 students
- **Location:** Michigan

Time Frame

- Fall 2022–Spring 2023

Methodology

- **Study Design:** Quasi-experimental design with treatment and comparison groups.
- **Instructional Model:** Treatment teachers completed 30 hours of professional development before the start of the school year and implemented IMSE's OG+ program in daily 30-minute sessions, five times per week. The comparison group followed district-standard literacy instruction.
- **Assessment Measure:** NWEA MAP Growth at Fall 2022 (baseline) and Spring 2023 (outcome).
- **Statistical Analysis:** Linear regression of student growth, controlling for baseline scores, ethnicity, and school fixed effects, with clustered standard errors at the teacher level.

STUDY SUMMARY

LXD Research conducted a quasi-experimental study to evaluate the impact of IMSE's Orton-Gillingham Plus (OG+) program on early literacy outcomes in a Title 1 school district in Michigan. The study analyzed student progress using MAP Growth from fall to spring, comparing students taught using IMSE's OG+ program to a comparison group. Results demonstrated that students taught using IMSE's OG+ program showed significantly greater literacy skill growth in kindergarten and first grade. The study included 397 students across four schools and compared those taught by teachers using IMSE's OG+ program to students whose teachers followed the district's standard literacy practices. MAP Growth was used to measure student progress at the beginning and end of the school year. Statistical analyses confirmed that students taught using IMSE's OG+ program demonstrated more substantial literacy skill development, with particularly notable gains in foundational reading skills.

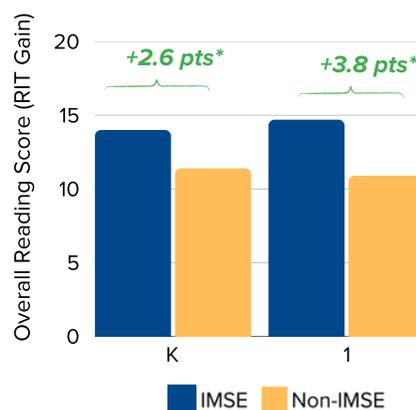
KEY FINDINGS

- Students taught using IMSE's OG+ program had **significantly higher spring scores and fall-to-spring gains** compared to the comparison group, controlling for fall baseline scores.
- The **impact was observed across both grade levels on multiple subdomains**, with notably consistent boosts in applying foundational skills in Language and Writing.
- **Educators highlighted strong student engagement and growth**, crediting the program's structured approach and consistent implementation.
- **Teachers reported strong confidence in IMSE's OG+**, noting earlier and more fluent student mastery of literacy skills.



Students in Grades K and 1 who received instruction using IMSE's OG+ program showed significantly greater gains on MAP

Average RIT Gains from Fall to Spring by Group



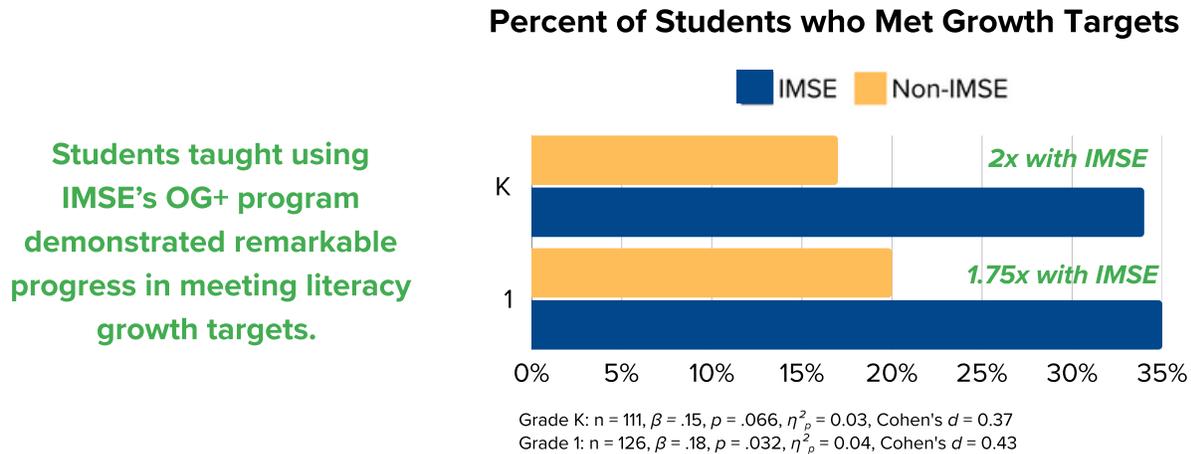
These improvements were the equivalent of **2 additional months of growth with IMSE**

*Statistically significant difference in adjusted Spring scores, after controlling for Fall MAP score, ethnicity, and school fixed effects, with clustered standard errors.

Grade K: $n = 179, \beta = 2.54, p = .027, \eta^2 = 0.03, \text{Cohen's } d = .33$
 Grade 1: $n = 218, \beta = 3.77, p = .002, \eta^2 = 0.05, \text{Cohen's } d = .48$

GROWTH TARGET ACHIEVEMENT

MAP provides each student with a personalized growth target based on their grade and baseline skill level. For 237 students¹, MAP indicated whether or not students met or did not meet these targets. Students taught using IMSE's OG+ program demonstrated remarkable progress in meeting their expected literacy growth targets. In kindergarten, 35% of students taught using IMSE's OG+ program met their growth targets, compared to just 17% in the comparison group. In first grade, 35% of students taught using IMSE's OG+ program met their growth targets, versus only 20% in the comparison group. Across both grades, nearly twice the proportion of students met their growth targets when their teachers received IMSE's OG+ training before the school year began.

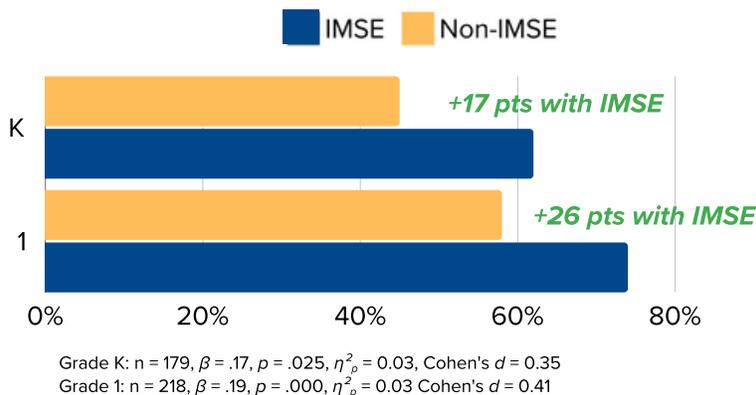


Students taught using IMSE's OG+ program demonstrated remarkable progress in meeting literacy growth targets.

PERFORMANCE LEVEL PROGRESSION

For each assessment period, MAP provides one of five performance levels for each student based on their percentile ranking (e.g., Low is 1st–20th, LowAvg is 21st–40th, etc.; HiAvg and High were combined for this analysis, covering the 61st–100th percentiles). Students may maintain, improve or decline in their performance level through the year. The study revealed significant improvements in students' ability to maintain or advance their performance levels. Across the year, students taught using IMSE's OG+ program showed substantial gains in maintaining or improving their performance level. In kindergarten, students taught using IMSE's OG+ program saw 62% students maintaining or improving their performance level compared to the comparison group's 45%. First grade showed an even more dramatic difference, with 74% of students maintaining or improving their performance level compared to 58%. This suggests that IMSE's OG+ approach not only supports learning but helps prevent learning regression, particularly in these critical early education years.

Percent of Students who Maintained or Improved their Performance Level



Students taught using IMSE's OG+ program showed substantial gains in maintaining or improving their performance levels.

¹MAP indicates meeting the growth target by Yes, Yes*, No, or No* with * indicating low confidence. Students with a * were excluded from this analysis. 237 out of 397 (~60% of analytic sample) had data for meeting projected growth in the spring.

SUBDOMAIN IMPACT: TARGETED LITERACY SKILL DEVELOPMENT

The NWEA MAP assesses multiple subdomains, covering critical components of early literacy. Gains on these subdomains were compared for students taught using IMSE's OG+ program and those in non-IMSE classrooms.

Structure of MAP Subdomains



MAP assessments revealed nuanced improvements across critical literacy skill areas. In kindergarten, students taught using IMSE's OG+ program demonstrated statistically significant gains across multiple subdomains. Foundational skills showed meaningful progress, while language and writing skills demonstrated the most pronounced improvement. Vocabulary use and functions also saw notable gains. First grade results presented an even more compelling picture, with foundational skills improvement and particularly strong gains in literature and informational text comprehension and vocabulary use and functions. These targeted improvements highlight IMSE's OG+ structured approach to addressing specific literacy skill gaps, suggesting the program's effectiveness in supporting early literacy development across multiple critical domains.

Subdomain Impact - Gains from BOY to EOY

	Goal	Kindergarten	First Grade
 IMSE students had greater gains  IMSE students had similar gains	Foundational skills		
	Language and Writing		
	Literature and informational Text		
	Vocabulary Use and Functions		

*IMSE outperformed comparison group, means are estimated marginal means after controlling for Fall MAP score (same goal), ethnicity, and school fixed effects

Kindergarten:

- Foundational skills: $n = 177, \beta = 2.92, p = .042, \eta^2_p = .02$, Cohen's $d = .25$
- Language and writing: $n = 179, \beta = 3.17, p = .006, \eta^2_p = .02$, Cohen's $d = .29$
- Vocabulary use and functions: $n = 177, \beta = 2.99, p = .094, \eta^2_p = .02$, Cohen's $d = .25$

First Grade:

- Foundational skills: $n = 218, \beta = 3.61, p = .072, \eta^2_p = .02$, Cohen's $d = .30$
- Language and writing: $n = 218, \beta = 2.61, p = .041, \eta^2_p = .01$, Cohen's $d = .23$
- Literature and informational text: $n = 218, \beta = 4.28, p = .017, \eta^2_p = .02$, Cohen's $d = .35$
- Vocabulary use and functions: $n = 218, \beta = 4.37, p = .009, \eta^2_p = .03$, Cohen's $d = .36$

Students taught using IMSE's OG+ program showed greater gains on multiple subdomains.

EDUCATOR VOICES: SCHOOL AND INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP INSIGHTS

Educators and school leaders consistently emphasized the relevance, structure, and observable impact of IMSE's OG+ program. Key implementation insights include:

- **Relevance to Literacy Challenge:** Educators reported that OG+ was suited to address literacy challenges observed in their school district, particularly in foundational literacy skill gaps in early grades. As one administrator put it, “We’ve had to turn the wheel over and get to phonics again... Kids can’t do that like they used to be able to do.”
- **High Levels of Student Engagement:** Educators also highlighted the program’s ability to engage students overall: “The program is engaging. The kids like it. It’s fun. I’ve watched as they’re blending words together... kids tend to be engaged in it.”
- **Administrator Investment and Fidelity of Implementation:** Leaders identified administrator investment and fidelity of implementation as critical to success. A principal reflected, “If as an administrator, if you’re behind it, they’re behind it. So I try to show my buy-in whenever possible.” Another emphasized, “I would say definitely to make sure that your lower [elementary] team is using it with fidelity... do what you need to do to make sure it’s getting taught.”
- **Systematic Progression and Learning Continuum Set OG+ Apart:** The structured and developmental nature of the OG+ curriculum stood out as a strength. As one ELA coordinator observed, “IMSE has a learning continuum and there is reasoning behind the specific order of concepts and skills. All of the other curriculums that I’ve used are lacking this.” The coordinator also noted, “The OG+ [curriculum] builds from one lesson to the next and makes sense developmentally. The letters and sounds are ordered at each level in a way that students are ready for and it builds upon itself where other programs do not.”
- **Evidence of Impact Seen in Data:** Several educators described not just anecdotal success but growth supported by assessment data over time. A principal noted, “One thing I will say is, from four years ago we went from being minimally effective on our scores to effective. One thing that we are seeing is growth, which is amazing...[we] love to celebrate the growth...”

"The OG+ [curriculum] builds from one lesson to the next and makes sense developmentally. The letters and sounds are ordered at each level in a way that students are ready for and it builds upon itself where other programs do not."

–ELA Coordinator

"One thing I will say is, from four years ago we went from being minimally effective on our scores to effective. One thing that we are seeing is growth, which is amazing...[we] love to celebrate the growth..."

–Principal

EDUCATOR VOICES: TEACHER SURVEY INSIGHTS

Most educators reported strong confidence in implementing IMSE's OG+ with notable improvements in student literacy outcomes. Key implementation insights include:

- **High Efficacy Ratings Across Core Literacy Skills:** Survey respondents reported high confidence in OG+'s effectiveness across fundamental literacy domains particularly in teaching phonics (82% agreement), reading fluency (77%), and spelling (73%). One teacher elaborated: "What I have noticed most is that the students in my class have definitely been able to learn their letters and sounds much sooner and quicker and apply those to the curriculum. Like the text, they are... breaking up words and syllables and chunking and they're applying it to decodable text much sooner."
- **Strong Implementation Confidence Despite Integration Challenges:** Teachers expressed high confidence in their ability to implement IMSE's OG+ routines (82% agreement) yet revealed more mixed feelings about program integration into existing instruction (64% agreement). This pattern suggests that while educators feel competent using IMSE's methods, systemic integration remains a challenge, which may in part be explained by the district context, which involves several programs as part of their comprehensive literacy toolkit.
- **Sustained Student Engagement as a Key Success Factor:** Survey findings reinforced the interview theme of high student engagement, with 77% of teachers agreeing that students are engaged when using the OG+ program. One noted, "The children really like it and they're engaged in it, and I've noticed that their spelling ability has improved and that their ability to decode words is much better."
- **Implementation Across Instructional Settings:** IMSE's OG+ demonstrated effectiveness in both whole-class and small-group contexts, with educators adapting the program to meet diverse student needs. One teacher explained, "I can't tell you enough how much my students have grown with their phonics, which in turn has increased their reading levels... about three-quarters of my class are on grade level with reading." The program's structured components—including dictation, decodable readers, and daily cumulative review drills—functioned effectively regardless of group size, allowing educators to maintain fidelity while differentiating instruction based on student needs and classroom contexts.
- **Accelerated Skill Acquisition and Universal Success:** Teachers reported that students were mastering literacy concepts earlier and with more consistency. One teacher observed, "What I have noticed most is that the students in my class have definitely been able to learn their letters and sounds much sooner and quicker and apply them when they're reading. Like the text, they are breaking up words and syllables and chunking and they're applying it to decodable text much sooner." The same teacher noted that fewer students were struggling: "It seems that it's a majority of the students who are grasping the concepts... where sometimes I would have half and half." The program's multimodal approach was seen as a major contributor to these results.

"I can't tell you enough how much my students have grown with their phonics, which in turn has increased their reading levels... about three-quarters of my class are on grade level with reading."

–Teacher

"What I have noticed most is that the students in my class have definitely been able to learn their letters and sounds much sooner and quicker and apply those to the curriculum. Like the text, they are rhyming and breaking up words and syllables and chunking and they're applying it to decodable text much sooner."

– Teacher

CONCLUSION

Students in kindergarten and first grade taught by teachers using IMSE's OG+ program showed **significant and substantial gains** compared to a comparison group of students. The current mixed-methods quasi-experimental study shows a **clear impact** of IMSE's OG+ program on supporting progress for kindergarten and first-grade students in meeting literacy growth targets, maintaining or improving performance levels, and demonstrating growth within subdomains. The present findings suggest the program's explicit, systematic, and cumulative method of instruction is effective at supporting student learning, with its comprehensive coverage of phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension through multimodal techniques and guided practice.

Impacts on student performance were **echoed by educators** interviewed as part of the study. Administrators and coaches reported seeing the results in students first-hand and in real-time. Educators overall reported positive experiences with IMSE's OG+ program that reinforce the evident impact of the program on student learning and literacy skill development in kindergarten and first grade.

- ✔ **Students taught using IMSE's OG+ program demonstrated remarkable progress in meeting literacy growth targets.**
- ✔ **Students taught using IMSE's OG+ program showed substantial gains in maintaining or improving their performance levels.**
- ✔ **Students taught using IMSE's OG+ program showed greater gains on multiple literacy subdomains.**





LXD Research is an independent research firm that evaluates educational programs with ESSA-aligned methods.

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