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***SPIRE Up* Follow-Up Analysis**

Grade 3-8, Fall 2025

Martin County School District



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Educators search for high-quality research and evidence-based interventions to strengthen grant applications, to support comprehensive and targeted schools, 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 3:

- ✓ This study is combined with a previous study in this same district. In a correlational design, students who used the program are compared to norm-referenced samples or other group averages for comparison.
- ✓ At least one study with the proper design and implementation with at least two teachers and 30 students shows 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 their programs, educators can better target instruction, and students' skills soar. Through a correlational study design, a statistical evaluation shows that student growth is associated with student product use. This product meets the criteria for LXD Research's ESSA Tier 3 Evidence.

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



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PROMISING

LXD Research Recognition for *SPIRE Up*



This program has been rigorously evaluated in multiple studies and is hereby acknowledged for meeting the educational impact criteria of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), warranting a **Level 3** for "Promising" Evidence. This recognition is based on its proven effectiveness in enhancing grade-level learning outcomes with this and the previous study with the same district.

REVIEWED BY THE LXD RESEARCH EXPERT REVIEW PANEL

Rachel Schechter, Ph.D.
Founder of LXD Research

March 2026

DATE



SPIRE UP GRADES 3-8 2024-2025



LITERACY PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

SPIRE Up is an updated version of the SPIRE program, designed for special education or other students requiring intensive intervention. It integrates teacher instruction with digital assessments and practice. Rooted in the Orton-Gillingham approach, the program follows an “I do, We do, You do” process, which gradually releases responsibility to the student. Lessons start with teacher-led modeling, then scaffolded practice, followed by independent practice. The lessons and content are grounded in the Structured Literacy approach, emphasizing the five pillars of reading.

Martin County implemented *SPIRE Up* as a Tier 3 reading intervention based on students’ EPS Connect Initial Placement Assessment scores and students’ SPIRE levels from the previous school year. Reading specialists and special education teachers delivered the intervention in small group settings in 30-45 minute blocks multiple days a week. EPS Connect was used to monitor progress.

STUDY SUMMARY

Martin County implemented *SPIRE Up* as a targeted, evidence-based reading intervention for students with special education needs (SPED) to address the achievement gap between them and the general ed students.

Reading specialists and special education teachers delivered the intervention in small groups multiple times a week. EPS connect tracked student lesson completion that served as an indicator of progress and exposure.

Results showed that both elementary and middle school students significantly improved on the DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency and Maze subtests from the start to the middle of the year. Students’ growth on the DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency was comparable to other samples of special education students.

STUDY DETAILS

Sample Description

- Sample: 115 3rd-8th graders (N = 54 elementary, N = 58 middle school)
- Location: Martin County School District

Intervention

- Instruction occurred during dedicated pull-out blocks for elementary school and intervention blocks for middle school.

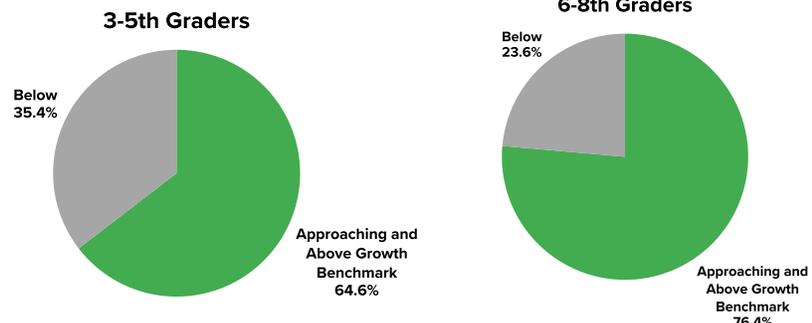
Methodology

- Design: Quasi-experimental with 115 SPED students
- Sample Demographics: 44% Female, 57% English Language Learners (ELL), 76% Hispanic
- Assessment Measures:
 - Outcomes: MOY 2026 DIBELS ORF/Maze
 - Baseline: BOY 2025 DIBELS ORF/Maze
- Statistical Controls: ELL Status, Race

KEY FINDINGS

- Students in all grades made significant gains on the DIBELS ORF and Maze from BOY to MOY.
- Students progressed an average of 10 skills on *SPIRE Up*.
- Over 64% of students in grades 3–5 and 76% of students in grades 6–8 demonstrated reading gains that approached or exceeded the average growth achieved by special education students in two independent national studies involving 3,990 students.

Students’ ORF Growth Benchmarks for SPED



Note: Students were grouped into categories for ORF Change based on the sample from the Christ et al., 2010 study, which examined oral reading fluency growth in elementary and middle school SPED students.

STUDY DESIGN



2025-2026:
115 Students



August 2025
Students take BOY
Assessments



16 Weeks of
Intervention



December 2025
Students take MOY
Assessments



Analysis of Results

IMPACT ON STUDENT READING ACHIEVEMENT

Students using *SPIRE Up* across all grade levels showed measurable progress on multiple reading measures indicating growth in foundational reading skills such as decoding and fluency. For younger students, gains in decoding and reading fluency need to occur before they can improve on advanced concepts such as comprehension (Aarnoutse et al., 2001). It is possible that with continued instruction, students may show growth on reading comprehension scores as well.

Change from BOY to MOY for Elementary School students (Grades 3-5)

Test	BOY Score	MOY Score	Paired-samples t-test	Effect size (Cohen's d)
DIBELS ORF	72.2	80.7	$t(51) = 2.94, p = .005$	d= 0.41
DIBELS Maze	3.2	5.7	$t(45) = 3.22, p = .002$	d= 0.48

Change from BOY to MOY for Middle School students (Grades 6-8)

Test	BOY Score	MOY Score	Paired-samples t-test	Effect size (Cohen's d)
DIBELS ORF	55.3	66.3	$t(52) = 4.86, p < .001$	d= 0.68
DIBELS Maze	7.7	9.3	$t(52) = 2.64, p = .01$	d= 0.36

BEST PRACTICES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES



Pair structured literacy training with multiple progress monitoring tools

- Students made significant gains on reading skills when the instruction was aligned with Structured Literacy principles and their progress was monitored regularly using multiple tools (backend data from the program's platform as well as growth on standardized assessments). The combination of these sources may help educators identify students' current skill levels and adjust support accordingly, ensuring that they meet students where they are and that they advance through skills at an appropriate pace.



Continue investing in blended resources (teacher-led instruction and independent digital practice)

- The blended model used in *SPIRE Up* allows teachers to provide direct instruction while the connected EPS platform offers opportunities for targeted practice and reinforcement. This combination may be particularly beneficial for special education students for whom individualized pacing and repeated practice can be especially beneficial for mastery.



Focus SPED instruction on foundational decoding and word recognition skills

- *SPIRE Up*'s explicit, systematic instruction in phonics, morphology, and word structure aligns with Structured Literacy practices. Programs that emphasize cumulative skill-building, from basic decoding to more complex morphological patterns may help students build automaticity in word reading, which supports improvements in advanced concepts such as fluency.



Examine the impact of *SPIRE Up* over time and with a more rigorous study design

- Future studies should analyze student outcomes from beginning of year to end of year to capture the cumulative effects of the program. Research with comparison groups would strengthen causal inferences and provide more rigorous evidence of the program's effectiveness. Incorporating measures of implementation fidelity, such as classroom observations, teacher reports, and educator interviews would also support understanding how *SPIRE Up* is used in practice. Longitudinal studies examining outcomes across grade levels and student characteristics could provide deeper insights into the program's potential differing impact on reading development for students with disabilities.

CONCLUSION

These findings provide preliminary evidence that *SPIRE Up* may help support meaningful progress in foundational reading skills for students with special education needs. Continued implementation and further research are needed to determine the program's long-term impact on sustained reading growth.

References:

- Aarnoutse, C., Van Leeuwe, J., Voeten, M., & Oud, H. (2001). Development of decoding, reading comprehension, vocabulary and spelling during the elementary school years. *Reading and Writing*, 14(1), 61-89.
- Chase, P. A., & Schechter, R. L. (2023). *SPIRE ESSA Level III Study Grades 3-5, 2022-2023*. LXD Research.
- Christ, T. J., Silbergitt, B., Yeo, S., & Cormier, D. (2010). Curriculum-based measurement of oral reading: An evaluation of growth rates and seasonal effects among students served in general and special education. *School Psychology Review*, 39(3), 447-462.
- O'Keeffe, B. V., Bundock, K., Kladis, K. L., Yan, R., & Nelson, K. (2017). Variability in DIBELS Next progress monitoring measures for students at risk for reading difficulties. *Remedial and Special Education*, 38(5), 272-283.

Additional Resources:

To learn more about the research behind the creation of *SPIRE Up* and previous research conducted on SPIRE, visit <https://www.epslearning.com/products/spire-up>.



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

[Learn more at www.lxdresearch.com](http://www.lxdresearch.com)



SPIRE Up combines teacher-led Structured Literacy intervention with digital tools to strengthen foundational reading skills and support high-fidelity implementation.

For additional information about ***SPIRE Up*** visit:

www.EPSlearning.com