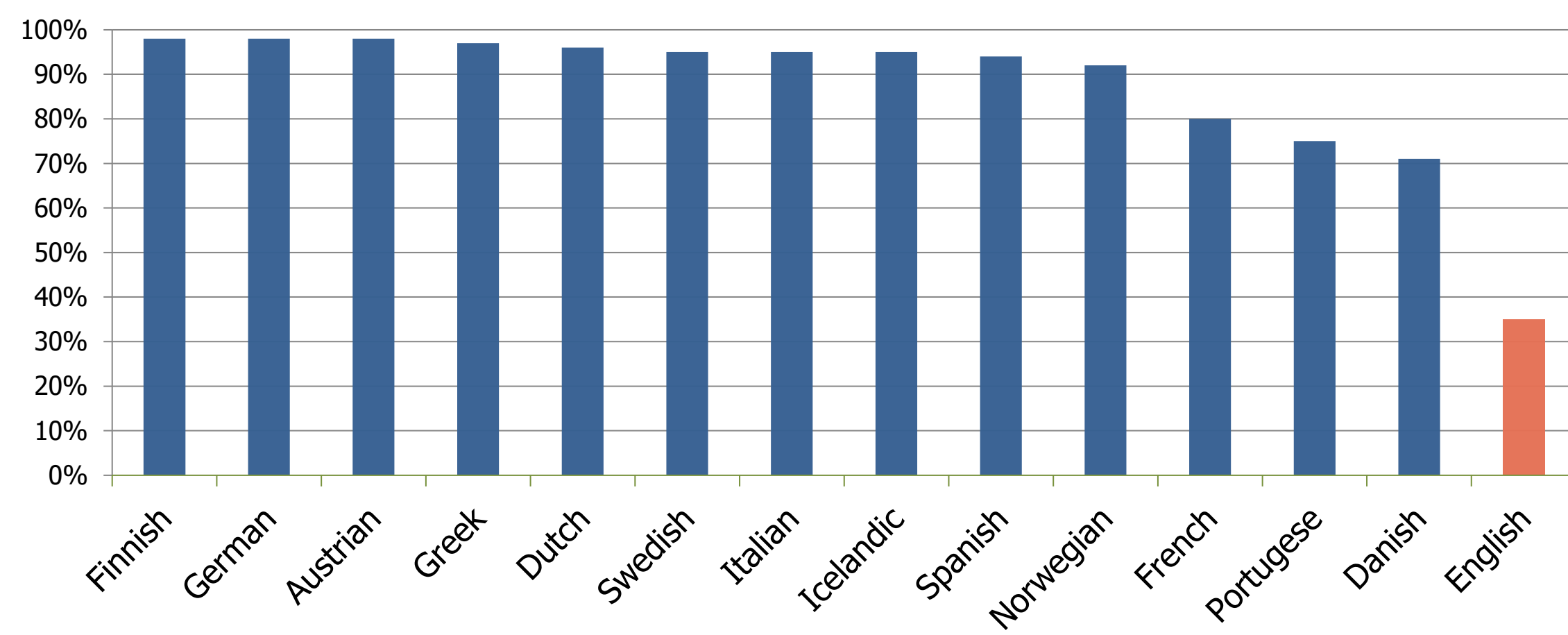


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## Background

**English is Hard to Learn to Read** because it does not follow the phonics rules. Students learning to read in languages where words follow simple phonics rules become skilled readers much more quickly than students learning to read English.

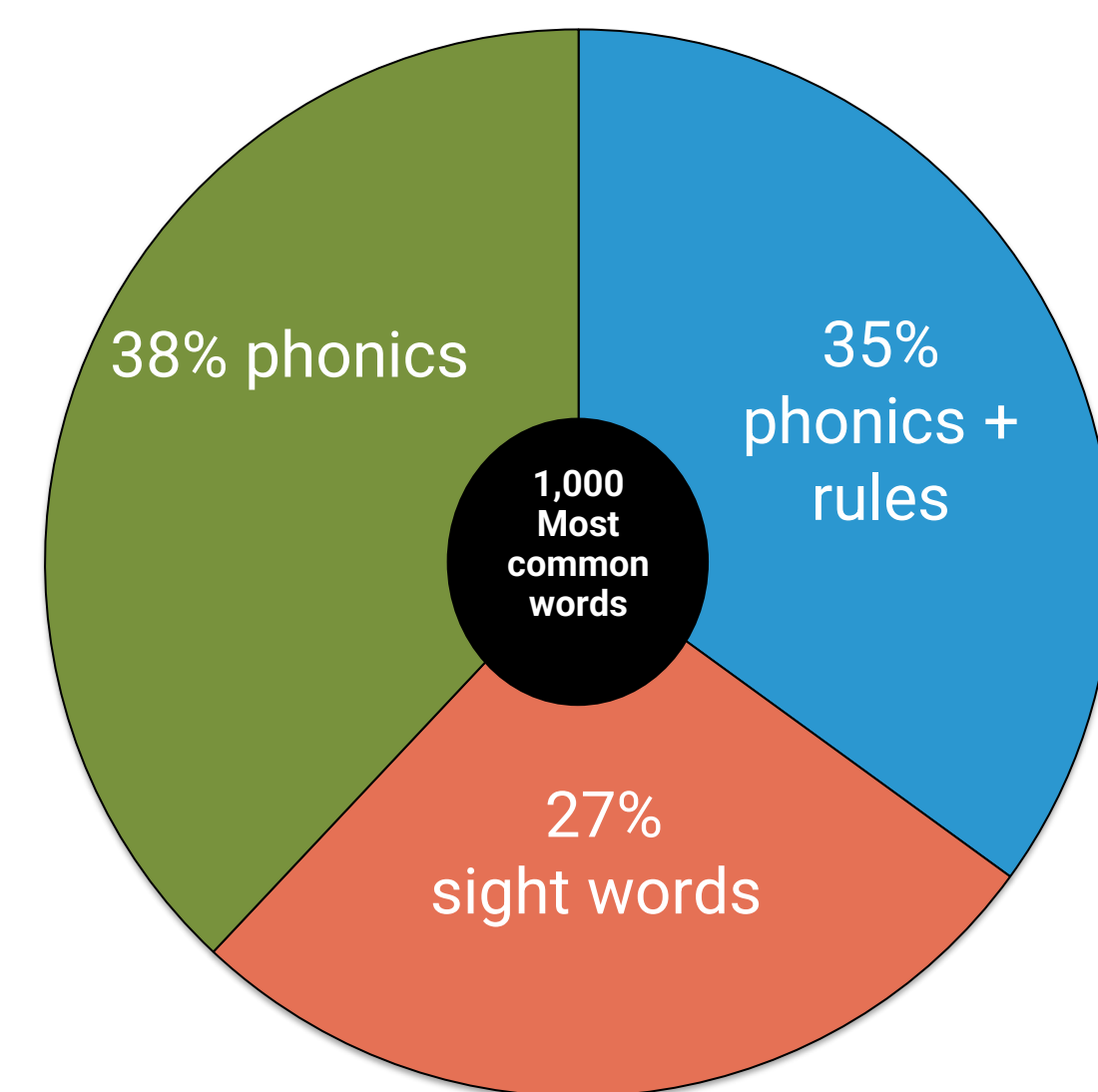


Word Reading Accuracy of Primary School Children After One Year of Instruction  
Seymour, 2003

**Consider the Huge Cognitive Load of Learning to Read English.** To learn to read the first 1,000 most common words, students must learn the primary 26 letter sounds, 12 digraphs, learn 45 spelling/decoding rules, and memorize 270 words that are exceptions.

Students need to learn the 26 alphabet sounds and 12 digraphs

- band
- chest
- expect



Students need to learn the 26 alphabet sounds, 12 digraphs and learn 45 rules

- small
- since

Students must memorize 270 exceptions

- flood
- women

### Why may students struggle to read the words on the page?

- English Learners may not recognize words.
- Students with dyslexia get bogged down in the decoding process.
- Increasing text complexity stumps initially successful readers.
- Students are/become instructional casualties.

### Reading fluency impacts reading comprehension

- Spending cognitive resources trying to read the words on the page leaves much less short-term memory available to consider what the words mean. Reading comprehension suffers when students cannot quickly, easily, and accurately read words and connected text.

## Introduction

### Students Need to Read to Succeed

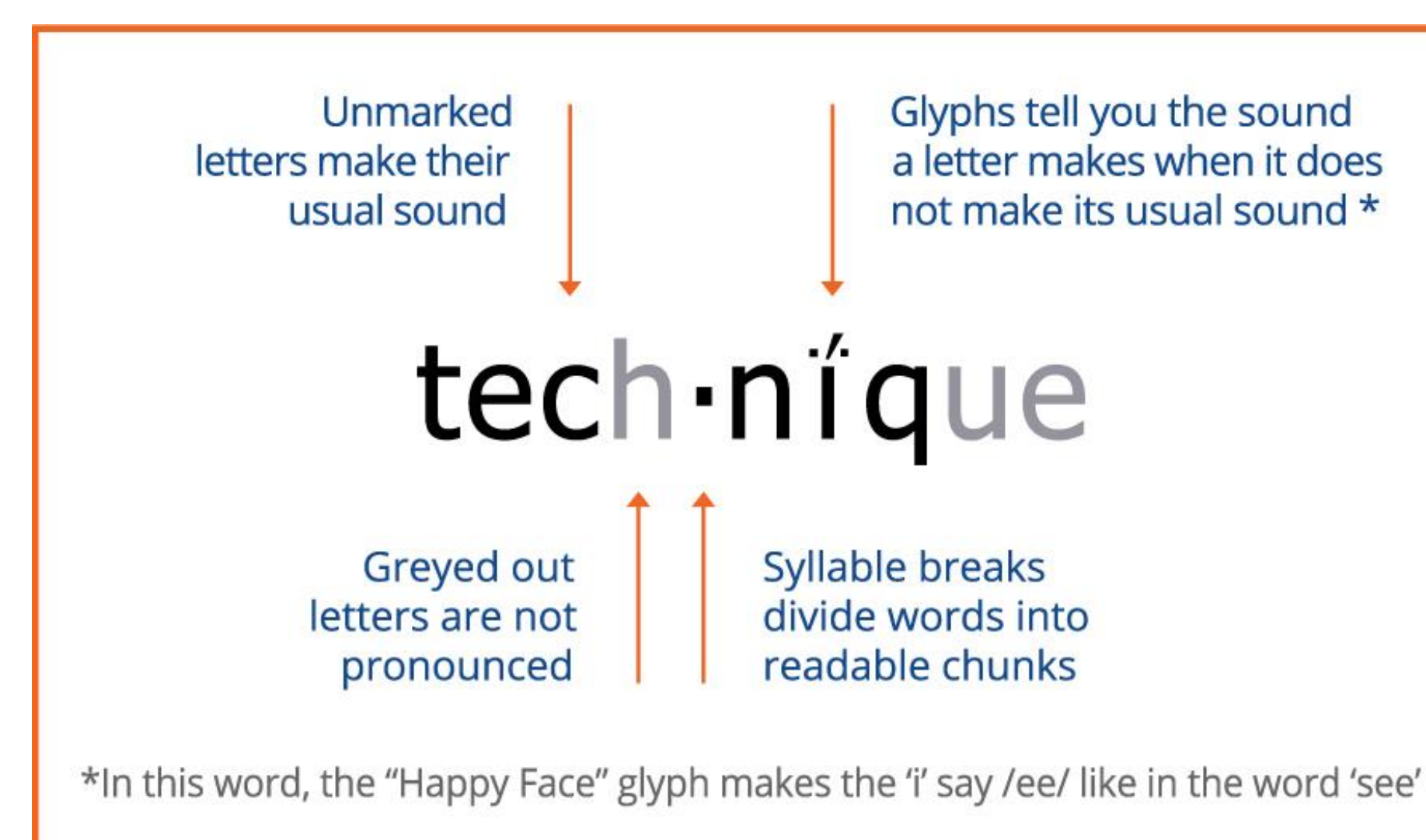
Instructional interruptions due to the pandemic caused the biggest slide in NAEP reading scores since testing began in 1992, only 31% of eighth graders are proficient readers (2022). Middle school students with reading difficulties were already struggling in a learning environment in which they are expected to read and comprehend increasingly complex, subject specific text to acquire knowledge. Many students are unable to read skillfully enough to fully access cross-curricular content. Accelerated reading remediation and reading supports must be found and used to help students become proficient readers.

### Effective Remediation is Difficult

Effective remediation of reading deficits of adolescent readers is complex and rarely effective for several reasons (Lovett et al., 2021). English is difficult to learn to read compared with more phonetic languages (Seymour, 2003; Caravolas et al., 2013). Middle school teachers are not taught how to teach reading and are often not supported with professional development and appropriate reading programs (IDA, 2018; Wanzek, 2011). Frustrated, students with reading difficulties develop avoidance behaviors (Lovett et al., 2021). New methods for effective and accelerated reading instruction are needed. Readable English offers a novel approach to reading remediation by making English completely phonetic.

### Readable English Intervention

The conversion tool is the secret sauce that differentiates Readable English from other Structured Literacy reading programs. Text converted to the Readable English mark-up becomes phonetic, helping speed up orthographic mapping.



## Study Design

### Purpose

This study examined whether and to what degree Readable English helps sixth, seventh, and eighth graders read faster, more accurately, and with better comprehension than students in control groups.

### Experimental Design Blocked by Grade Levels

### Student Demographics

- Rural, midwestern schools with 52% - 63% free/reduced lunch eligibility
- 4 schools, 17 teachers
- No English Learners
- N = 344

N = 344	Intervention	Typical practice
Grade 6	65	64
Grade 7	52	60
Grade 8	50	53
Total	167	177

Student Demographics	Intervention	Typical practice
N = 344	n = 167	n = 177
Female/Male	70/97	56/121
Special Education Eligible	100	139
Ethnicity		
Asian	1	1
Hispanic	9	1
Black	4	2
White	153	173

### Study Duration

Average of 63 instructional hours during SY 2020—2021 (includes avg. 28 hours to learn Readable English mark-up system)

### Reading Skills Assessments

*Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed.*

Oral Reading Fluency & Passage Comprehension subtests

*EasyCBM Grade Level Benchmarks*

Passage Reading Fluency & CCSS Passage Comprehension

### Analyses Performed

*A priori* & observed power, attrition, ANOVA, ANCOVA, Intraclass Correlations

### Comparison Group Instructional Fidelity & Description

**Treatment Group** - Readable English for 12 weeks, then same instruction as Typical Practice Group using Readable English mark-up with conversion tool. Teachers received 4 days of training and weekly coaching with Readable English instructional trainers.

**Typical Practice Group** - Amplify ELA + teacher-designed literacy projects. Teachers were previously trained in Amplify and had 2+ years experience teaching this program.



# Middle School Pandemic Reading Gains Using Readable English Across the Curriculum

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## Results

### ANCOVA

Reading Skill Measures			
Covariate	F(df)	P value	Partial $\eta^2$
<b>Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed.</b>			
Oral Reading Fluency - Growth Scale Values			
Condition Group	24.45	<.001	.13
Grade Level	6.73	.010	.04
Special Education Eligibility	6.28	.013	.04
Gender	0.14	.706	.00
Oral Reading Fluency - Grade Equivalent			
Condition Group	14.04	<.001	.08
Grade Level	0.04	.834	.00
Special Education Eligibility	22.18	<.001	.12
Gender	1.52	.219	.01
Passage Comprehension - Growth Scale Value			
Condition Group	57.24	<.001	.25
Grade Level	1.51	.221	.01
Special Education Eligibility	1.62	.205	.01
Gender	0.71	.400	.00
Prior Knowledge	28.51	<.001	.14
Passage Comprehension - Grade Equivalent			
Condition Group	54.00	<.001	.24
Grade Level	1.57	.213	.01
Special Education Eligibility	1.00	.318	.01
Gender	0.03	.860	.00
Prior Knowledge	7.55	.007	.04
<b>EasyCBM Reading Benchmarks</b>			
Passage Reading Fluency Accuracy			
Condition Group	30.59	<.001	0.08
Grade Level	0.77	.381	0.00
Special Education Eligibility	5.32	.022	0.02
Gender	0.29	.591	0.00
Passage Reading Words Correct Per Minute			
Condition Group	73.57	<.001	0.18
Grade Level	24.81	<.001	0.07
Special Education Eligibility	3.91	.049	0.01
Gender	4.46	.036	0.01
CCSS Passage Comprehension Raw Score (0-25)			
Condition Group	35.71	<.001	0.10
Grade Level	0.63	.427	0.00
Special Education Eligibility	5.08	.025	0.02
Gender	0.05	.830	0.00
Prior Knowledge	101.86	<.001	0.23

Near Large Effect

Medium Effect

Very Large Effect

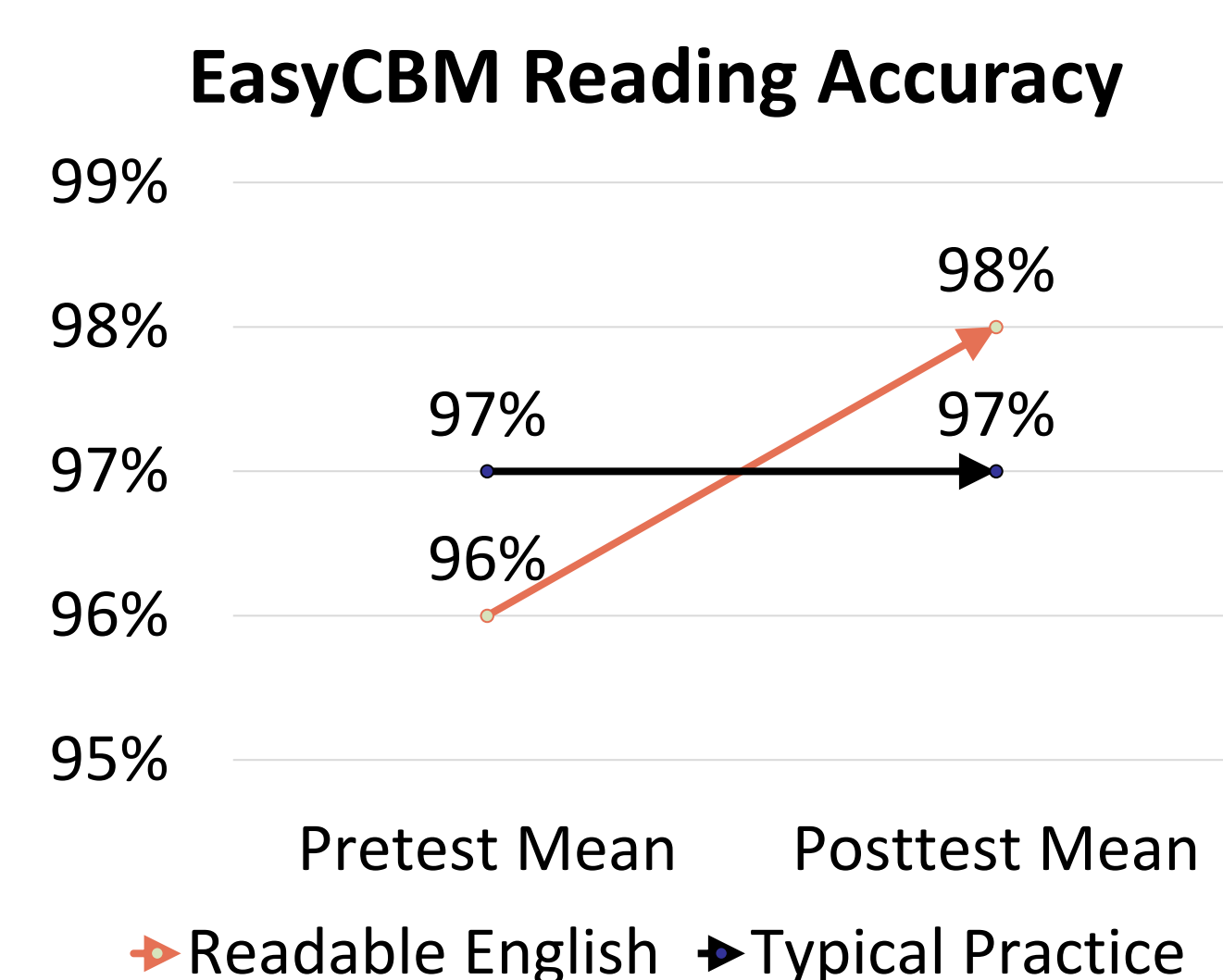
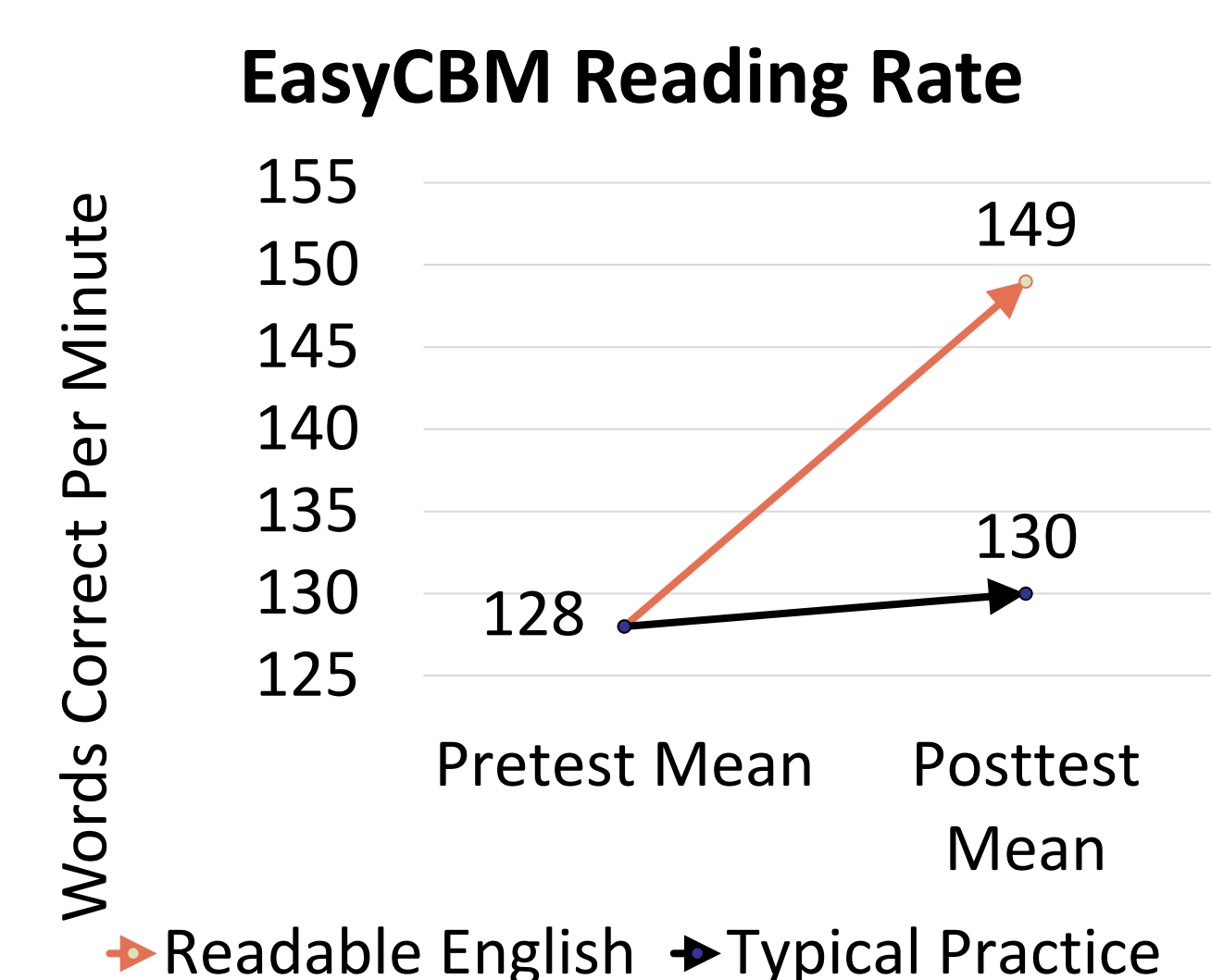
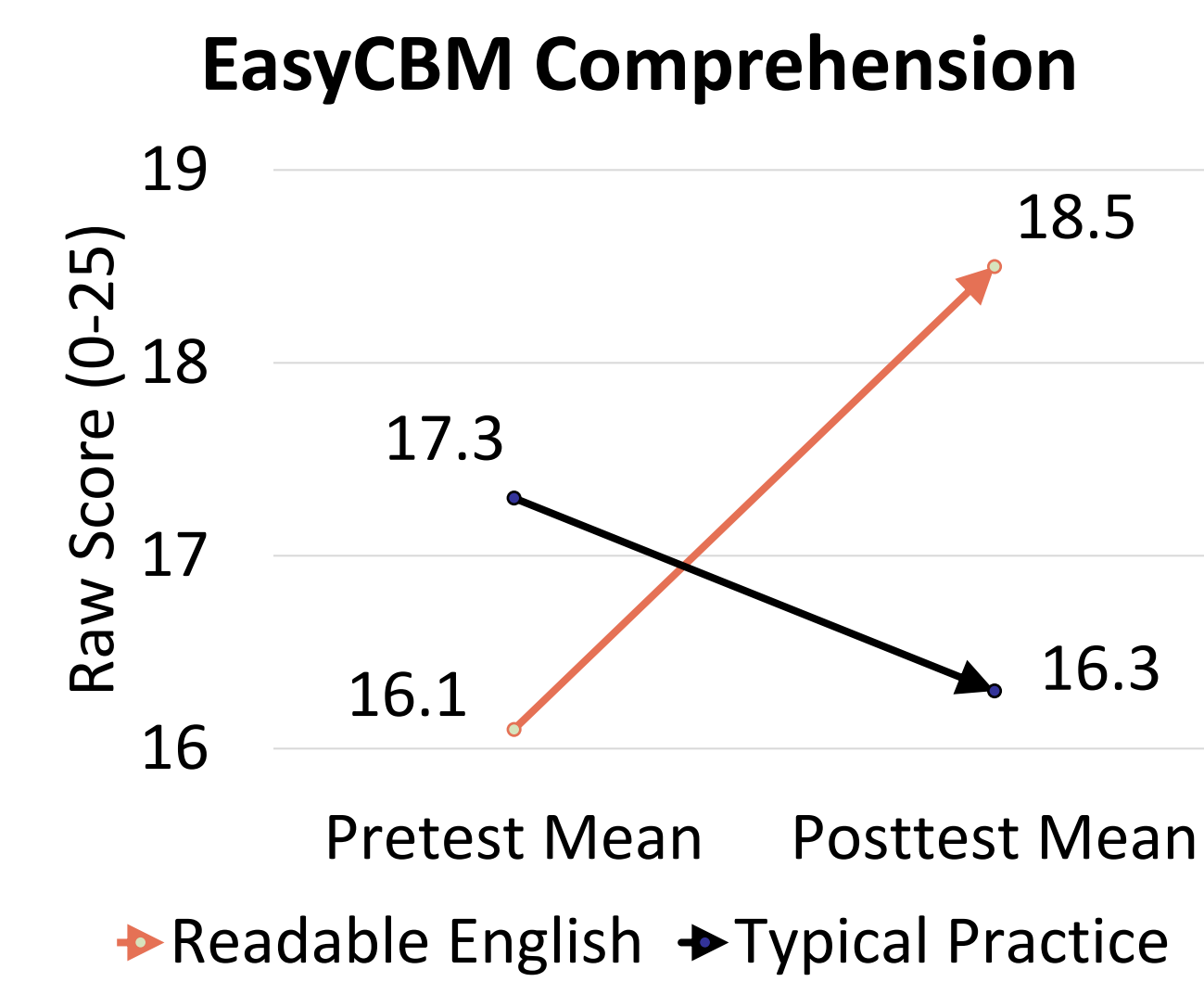
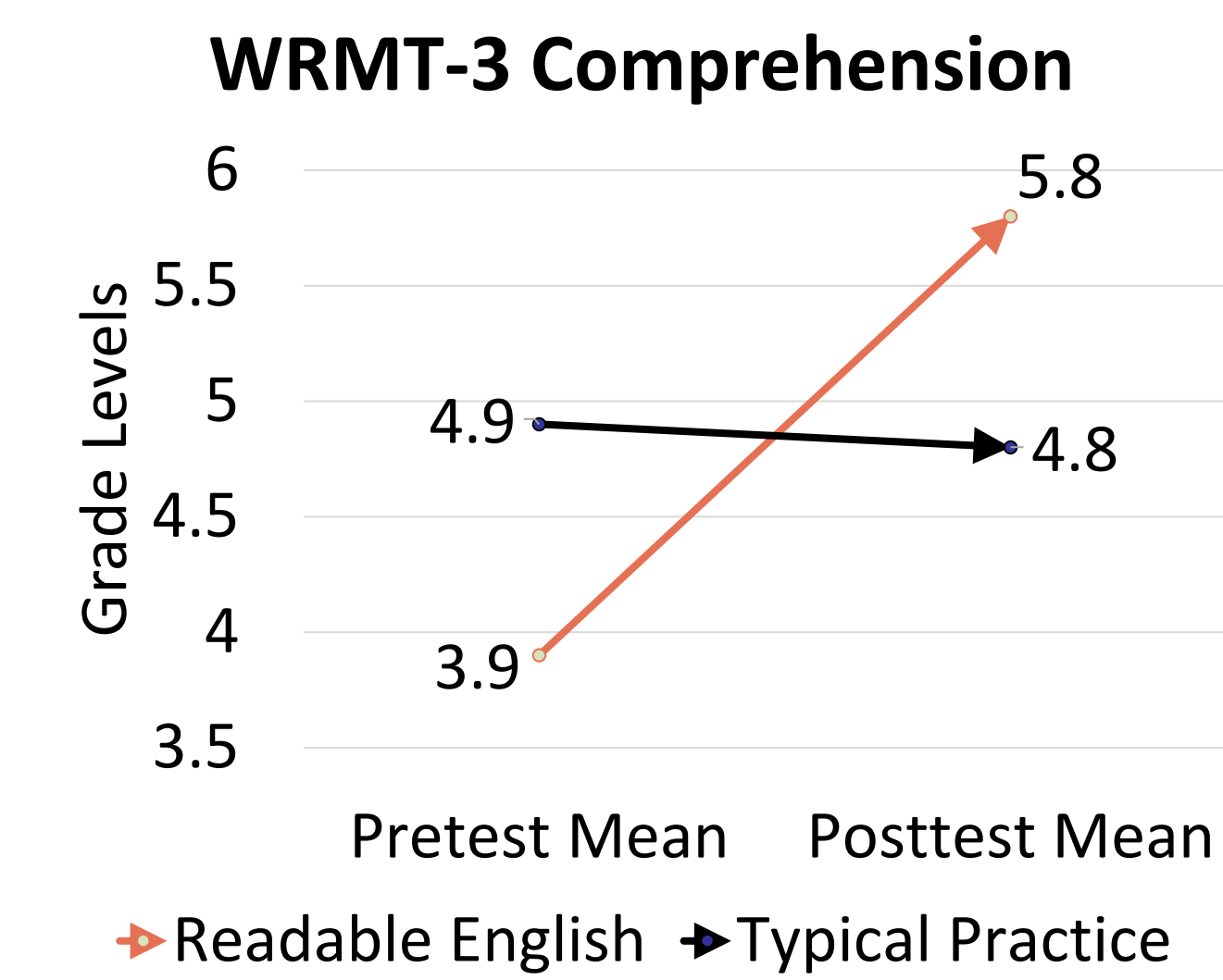
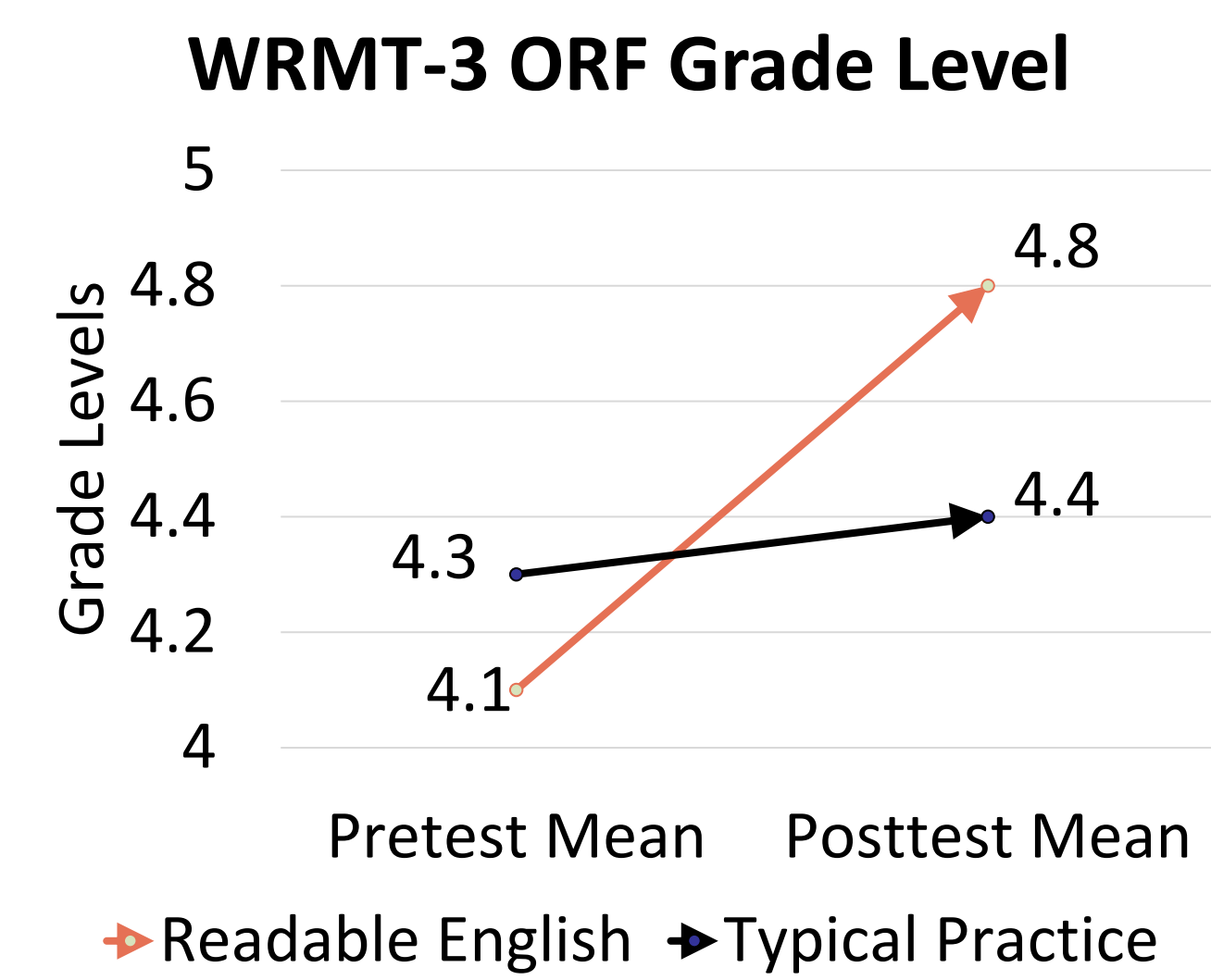
Large Effect

Medium Effect

Large Effect

Medium Effect

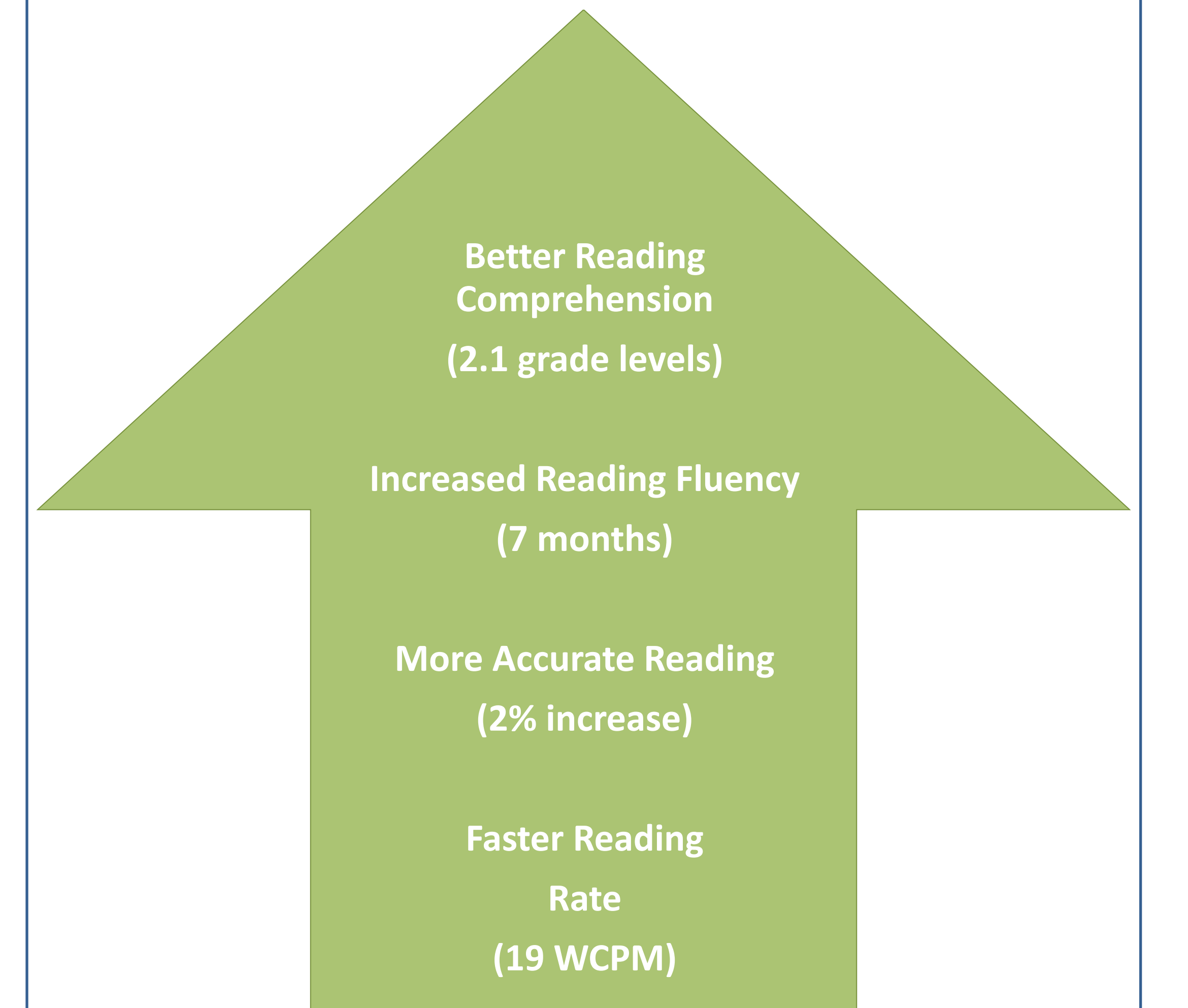
### Closing Reading Gaps



## Summary & Implications

Educational equity begins with assuring students become proficient readers who can thrive in a read-to-learn environment. Creating that environment means using sustainable, research-proven reading curriculum and instruction designed to support the wide array of students' literacy skills.

### The Goal: Proficient Reading



### The Reality: Struggling to Read

Students in the Readable English group experienced substantial reading fluency and comprehension growth despite pandemic related instructional interruptions. This study indicates that Readable English could be used as an effective accelerated remediation tool for middle school students. The conversion tool could be used as assistive technology to help students read grade level content across the curriculum.

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