



Research Supporting the Efficacy of the Learning Ally Audiobook Solution®

Exploring the capacity of the Learning Ally Audiobook Solution® to support literacy development, language comprehension, and content acquisition.

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Introduction

THE GROWING RESEARCH ON THE EFFICACY OF AUDIOBOOKS IN THE CLASSROOM

The use of audiobooks in education comes with no small amount of research supporting their benefits to students' literacy development, nor should their use surprise anyone who has read to a child at home or in the classroom.

According to recent research (Clinton, 2019), there are **no reliable differences between reading and listening comprehension**. In other words, the brain does not process the words we hear or the words we read differently, thereby busting the myth that listening to books counts as cheating.

In fact, **audiobooks offer unique advantages** in that they allow readers to access texts that may exceed their decoding abilities.

Reading with audiobooks **supports the development of all four language systems**: *phonological*, *semantic*, *syntactic*, and *pragmatic*. Audiobooks can model reading, teach critical listening, build on prior knowledge, improve vocabulary, encourage oral language usage, and increase comprehension (Wolfson, 2008).

Further, the influence of listening comprehension on variance in **reading comprehension grows as students progress in secondary education** (Catts, Hogan, & Adolf, 2005). A 2016 study indicated multiple benefits of a ten-week inclusion of a listening component in literacy instruction:

- » Improvements in reading comprehension.
- » A 33% increase in the rate of learning against the annual expected gain in achievement for that period.
- » Improvement in vocabulary and reading motivation (Flynn, Matlen, Atienza, & Schneider, 2016).



HUMAN-READ AUDIOBOOKS

Audiobook solutions that feature human narration offer particular benefits beyond what computer narration can provide.

In a 2017 study (Wood, et al.) aimed to determine the effects of read-alouds and text-to-speech tools on the reading comprehension of students with reading disabilities. The results showed a significant effect size of 0.35, which is consistent with a previous meta-analysis on read-aloud accommodations for students with disabilities. The study also suggests that **human-read audio had a 50% greater effect on student comprehension** versus synthetically narrated audio.

When students listen to texts that are human-read, they increase their acquisition of new content (Boyles et al., 2003) as well as their reading fluency (Esteves & Whitten, 2011). As facilitated by audiobooks, listening to text **introduces new vocabulary and concepts, provides a fluent and prosodic model for students to emulate, and enables students to access content** they are not yet reading independently (Serafini, 2004).

These are but a part of the ever-growing body of peer-reviewed research that demonstrates the efficacy of audiobooks as a reading resource for struggling students, as summarized below:

- » Audiobooks can provide a significant improvement in reading accuracy (Milani, Lorusso, & Molteni, 2010).
- » Upper elementary students with reading disabilities showed a greater increase in reading fluency rates when assisted with digital audiobooks (Esteves & Whitten, 2011).
- » A 2009 meta-analysis from What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) examined the impact of audiobooks with a narrator who models fluent reading and a reading coach who models comprehension, vocabulary, and self-monitoring strategies for successful readers. With a sample size of over 10,000 students, the findings affirm that audiobooks can play an instrumental role in literacy instruction programs in elementary through high school.



Human-read audio had a 50% greater effect on student comprehension versus synthetically narrated audio.

Audiobooks can provide a significant improvement in reading accuracy.

The Learning Ally Audiobook Solution®

The Learning Ally Audiobook Solution® is **an immersive multisensory reading support** designed with education in mind. It helps striving readers of all ages access grade-level content with ease by removing the barriers to reading that so many students experience, including struggles with essential reading skills.

It does not only provide access to content; it also **supports the development of essential reading skills** that may be holding them back.

Learning Ally's audiobooks feature human narration and serve as a powerful model of fluency, as they are recorded with deliberate attention to intonation, prosody, and expression. They **allow students to access words and stories they might otherwise not have access to**, actively encouraging the expansion of their background knowledge and, subsequently, building the capacity for higher-order thinking skills (McAllister et al., 2014).

Our audiobook technology features **highlighted read-along text that encourages increased familiarity with the letters and letter patterns that form the words they are hearing**. Students spend less time struggling and more time developing vocabulary and comprehension.

Reading with the Learning Ally Audiobook Solution® **removes the complicated task of decoding and word recognition, allowing students to engage with more sophisticated texts**, including high-interest content and themes aligned to their grade level. Plus, they give students the added satisfaction of reading independently, which **increases their self-esteem and engagement** in school.

The Learning Ally Audiobook Solution® gives students:

- » Authentic, human-read narration, which supports phonemic awareness, vocabulary, and fluency skills.
- » A diverse library of fiction, non-fiction, and curriculum-aligned textbooks that ensures engagement and helps students see themselves in the content they read.
- » Personalized online bookshelf with anytime, anywhere access to their downloaded books.
- » Improved grades, increased self-confidence, and more academic gains.

Designed for students in grades K-12, the Learning Ally Audiobook Solution® helps educators scaffold, personalize, and differentiate instruction. It **levels the playing field for struggling readers**, driving equity in the classroom and removing barriers to literacy so they can fully participate in learning.



Double the Rate of Reading Growth and Level the Playing Field for Struggling Readers

Learning Ally partners with over 21,000 schools across the country. More than 2 million students have benefited from the Audiobook Solution in the classroom and at home. Students who use the solution fidelity regularly see **increased reading grade levels, accelerated reading growth, and a healthy excitement for reading** and having access to the same titles as their peers. These directly lead to improved student performance and engagement in school.

The following are highlights of research conducted by Learning Ally or third parties that confirm the efficacy of the Learning Ally Audiobook Solution® as a tool to support literacy development, language comprehension, and content acquisition.

DENVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

A study conducted by Denver Public Schools (DPS) found that the 1,000+ students who used the Learning Ally Audiobook Solution® with fidelity saw an increase in DRA and EDL scores.

As a result, the DPS Department of Accountability, Research, and Evaluation concluded that “Students tended to see a higher increase in performance with increased usage of (the Learning Ally Audiobook Solution®).” The analysis also observed that students who used the Audiobook Solution with fidelity exhibited lower rates of chronic absenteeism compared to their peers.

“Students tended to see a higher increase in performance with increased usage of Learning Ally.”

– DEPT. OF ACCOUNTABILITY, RESEARCH & EVALUATION | DENVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS



EAST WINDSOR REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

In this study, data was collected and analyzed using the STAR Reading assessment to assess growth. District administrators compared students' reading with the Learning Ally Audiobook Solution®. Students not using the Audiobook Solution demonstrated an annual growth of 0.62 STAR Reading levels. In contrast, **students who used the Audiobook Solution with fidelity grew 1.25 STAR Reading Levels—twice the growth compared to non-users!**

BALTIMORE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

In a study conducted by Connie Dowling and Elyse Kantrowitz involving 35 schools, teachers submitted evaluations of 166 students based on Brigance Reading Assessment for Reading Comprehension and Word Recognition results. Students using the Learning Ally Audiobook Solution® demonstrated significant achievement gains, including:

- » An average increase of one full grade level in word recognition and 1.5 grade levels in reading comprehension for 8th grade students.
- » An average increase of 1.5 grade levels in both word recognition and reading comprehension for 9th grade students.

MORT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

This school in Tampa, Florida, implemented the Learning Ally Audiobook Solution® for their Exceptional Student Education (ESE) and English Language Learning (ELL) students. In addition to fostering a newfound enthusiasm for reading, the assistant principal credits the solution for unlocking academic growth with these learners that **raised the school grade level from a D to a C in one year.**

“ This is a great opportunity for them to have a human voice read a book to them to increase their fluency, their listening comprehension, their automaticity, their vocabulary, all the above. ”

– ESE SPECIALIST TEACHER | MORT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

ARCHDIOCESE OF DENVER

In this study conducted by the Zarlengo Foundation, students who used the Learning Ally Audiobook Solution® **doubled the rate of their reading growth in just 50 days.**

Prior to using the Audiobook Solution in the classroom, educators in the Denver Archdiocese could expect to improve reading levels among typical students who struggle to read at a rate of about 0.4 grade levels of improvement. Students who used the Learning Ally Audiobook Solution® with fidelity, however, typically achieved about double the rate of reading growth.

The study also found that the probability of students **achieving a full grade level of reading growth was almost twice as likely to occur when students used the solution** with fidelity.

“ The Learning Ally Audiobook Solution® simply helps level the playing field so that all students can have access to grade level material. ”

– **READING INTERVENTION TEACHER | ARCHDIOCESE OF DENVER SCHOOLS**

STATE ASSESSMENTS

Students appeared in the top 25% of state assessment reading scores. A study conducted by Learning Ally's internal evaluation team examined the effect of the Learning Ally Audiobook Solution® on school-level state assessments of reading. When comparing rates at which schools appeared in the top 35% of state assessment reading scores, **schools that were actively using the Audiobook Solution appeared more frequently in the top 35% than schools that were not.**



Conclusion

Literacy is a vital building block for continuous learning throughout a student's life. It enables them to engage with books, digital media, and other educational resources while fostering a culture of learning, critical thinking, and intellectual growth.

Districts and schools that partner with Learning Ally give their students an advantage by leveling the playing field to develop stronger comprehension and vocabulary-building skills. Learn more today.



Speak with a Literacy Consultant



Learn more about Strategies to Create Meaningful Reading Practice



Discover Learning Ally



Additional References

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Learning Ally is a leading nonprofit education solutions organization dedicated to equipping educators with proven solutions that help new and struggling learners reach their potential. Our range of literacy-focused offerings for students Pre-K to 12th grade and catalog of professional learning allow us to support more than 200,000 educators across the us.

For more information, call 800-221-1098 or visit LearningAlly.org.