

# Florida Center for Reading Research

## Barton Reading & Spelling System

### What is Barton Reading & Spelling System?

The *Barton Reading & Spelling System* is an Orton-Gillingham influenced phonics intervention program unique in that it is designed for individuals with and without formal training in teaching reading. This program allows tutors to work with young students through adults who struggle with learning to read. The publisher suggests that it will take a student with classic or moderate dyslexia who is tutored twice a week, in one-on-one hour long sessions, two to three years to complete the entire *Barton Reading & Spelling System*.

The program was originally designed for tutors or parents to use with students, but has been adopted for use in schools with individuals and small groups of students. There are ten levels to the *Barton Reading & Spelling System*. Each level is a prerequisite for the levels that follow. It is important to note that the levels are not equivalent to grade levels and that upon completion of the entire system the student will be at a mid-ninth grade level in reading, spelling, and basic writing. All students begin with Level 1 unless the student has participated in previous remediation of phonemic awareness skills. The post-test that accompanies Level 1 can be administered to determine where to begin instruction.

Before a tutor can begin instruction with students, the developer/publisher requires he or she take a "Tutor Screening" to ensure the tutor has the prerequisite phonemic awareness skills to help students experience success with this program. The screening can be taken online at the Barton website or in the Level 1 package of materials. If a tutor does not pass the screening he or she is asked to return the program to the publisher. Students are also given a screening to ensure they have enough auditory discrimination and phonological awareness of words and syllables to start with the phonemic awareness instruction in Level 1.

The scope and sequence is systematic and explicitly laid out for tutors to move through each lesson within the levels: Level 1-phonemic awareness; Level 2- consonants and short vowels; Level 3- closed and unit syllables; Level 4- multi-syllable words and vowel teams; Level 5- prefixes & suffixes; Level 6- six reasons for silent -e; Level 7- vowel- r's; Level 8- advanced vowel teams; Level 9- influences of foreign languages; Level 10- Latin roots and Greek combining forms. Within each level the number of lessons varies from five to fourteen. The instructional routines are consistent across each lesson in the program. A typical lesson contains these components: review from previous lessons, extra practice, phonemic awareness warm-up, one or two new teachings (reading and/or spelling), reading with tiles, spelling with tiles, practice reading at the word level, phrase level, and in decodable text.



Each level comes in a small, easy to store box that contains all the materials needed to teach each lesson of that level. The contents of the box vary depending on the level, but each box contains the teaching guide, DVDs containing five hours of step-by-step instruction to view before teaching the level, tiles for instruction and reproducible student worksheets. Materials are well-organized and easy to use. Each

level includes a pre-test and post-test with progress monitoring built into each lesson as the lessons cumulate and there are multiple practice opportunities of each skill throughout the program. There are optional games on the *Barton Reading & Spelling System* website for students to gain additional practice with new skills in levels 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6.

### How is the Barton Reading & Spelling System aligned with Current Reading Research?

The *Barton Reading & Spelling System's* instructional design and instructional content align with the findings of the National Reading Panel (2000) and closely mirror the lesson plan format used in the Orton-Gillingham Approach. The instructional delivery is explicit and systematic with scaffolding and coordinated instructional routines for phonemic awareness, phonics, and advanced word analysis. Each sound/symbol correspondence is explicitly taught, practiced and then reviewed during the next several lessons while additional sound/symbol correspondences are introduced. Further evidence of the influence of the Orton-Gillingham Approach is the attention to spelling at each level of the program. Spelling rules that complement the phonics instruction are included in each lesson. Mnemonics are frequently utilized to help students remember spelling patterns (e.g., Kiss the Cat Rule for the use of "k" versus "c").

The *Barton Reading & Spelling System* incorporates vocabulary and comprehension components at various points during instruction, typically after oral reading activities with teacher direction and higher level word work: prefixes, suffixes, Greek words, and Latin roots. Fluency instruction is embedded; each skill is introduced, taught to mastery, and practiced in phrases, sentences, and decodable texts.

The *Barton Reading & Spelling System* provides all the necessary professional development to implement the program with fidelity in the purchase of each level. Each level comes with two DVDs or VHS cassettes that provide about five hours of training. Susan Barton, the developer, models all the new teaching steps for the level with an adult who acts as a student and incorporates breaks in the DVD for tutors to stop and practice the new skills. The developer recommends that tutors watch the DVD in pairs so they can practice and help each other with the new information. In addition to the DVDs, tutors may obtain additional support from the company by calling or emailing with their questions.

### Research Support for Barton Reading & Spelling System



The *Barton Reading & Spelling System* was first published in June 1999. Since that time various schools and school districts that use this program have collected pre and post test scores on students who have completed the *Barton Reading & Spelling System* program. In 2005, the Pleasanton United School District (PUSD) in California compiled a summary report for their school board on student progress with the use of the *Barton Reading & Spelling System*. At the time of this report there were 75 student/tutor teams at four school sites (elementary, middle, and high school). Tutors were prescreened for phonological awareness and received an initial 9 hours of training. All tutored students were pre-tested using the Gray Oral Reading Test-4 (GORT-4) and the Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing (CTOPP). One-on-one tutoring took place during the school day, 2-3 times a week for 45-50 minute sessions. Tutors received additional training once a week until they completed all training necessary for Levels 1-3 of the system. The

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assessments used at pre-test were re-administered five months later. Posttest data indicated that after tutoring, 41 more students scored above the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile than at the pretest on measures of phonological awareness (total sample = 78). The summary report indicated that students at all grade levels made gains in percentile scores on the GORT-4. However, because of the design of this study (i.e., lack of control group, pre/post-test design), it cannot be determined that the gains reported are the direct result of the *Barton Reading & Spelling System*. The study also did not report average amount of improvement on the GORT-4 across all students, or how many students made significant progress on this test.

Although many of the principles of instruction implemented in the *Barton Reading & Spelling System* are consistent with current findings on the characteristics of effective interventions, no empirical research with proper control procedures has been conducted on the efficacy of the program the way it is exemplified in these materials. Future studies that employ control groups and have sound experimental designs will help determine the overall effectiveness of this program.

## Strengths & Weaknesses

Strengths of the *Barton Reading & Spelling System*:

- Video clips of the developer modeling each new teaching greatly assist accurate implementation of each lesson. Users of the program can watch them as many times as they need to feel comfortable implementing the program.
- Video clips have built in pauses for the viewer to stop and practice the new teaching to aid understanding of the concept.
- Volunteers, parents, and paraprofessionals, with no background in reading instruction, can use this program with students.
- All the materials needed to complete each level are provided in the kit.
- Each level has a section devoted to "tips" for tutors such as suggestions for how to provide corrective feedback when frequent errors are made by students.

Weaknesses of the *Barton Reading & Spelling System*:

- None were noted.

## Which Florida districts have schools that implement Barton Reading & Spelling System?

Bradford	904-966-6002	University of Florida	352-392-2046
Brevard	321-633-1000	University of Central Florida	407-249-4770
Collier	239-430-6900	Tampa United Methodist Centers Academy	813-248-0623
Dixie	352-498-6149	Covenant Community Academy	239-334-1136
Duval	904-858-4848	Christian Home Academy	904-278-4470
Educational Horizons Charter	321-729-0786	Providence School	904-223-1889
Florida School for the Deaf and Blind	904-827-2740	Venice Christian School	941-496-4411
Lee	239-337-8357	Christian Heritage	904-733-4722

Marion	352-671-4845	Academy Indian Rocks Christian School	727-596-4342
Orange	407-858-3180	Weston Christian Academy	954-349-9224
St. John	904-819-8540	Lighthouse Christian Academy	386-294-2994
St. Lucie	772-468-5830		

### For More Information

<http://www.bartonreading.com>

### References

Gillingham, A. & Stillman, B. W. (1997). *The gillingham manual: Remedial training for students with specific disability in reading, spelling, and penmanship*. (8<sup>th</sup> ed.). Cambridge, MA: Educators Publishing Service.



National Reading Panel (2000). *Teaching children to read: An evidence-based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction*. NIH Publication No. 00-4754. Washington, DC: National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.

Pleasanton Unified School District. (2005). [Updated summary of PUSD Barton Reading Program]. Unpublished raw data.

Wagner, R. K., Torgesen, J. K., & Rashotte, C. (1999). *Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing*. Austin, TX: PRO-ED.

Wiederholt, J. L., & Bryant, B. R. (2001). *Gray Oral Reading Tests 4<sup>th</sup> Ed*. Austin, TX: PRO-ED.

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Important Note: FCRR Reports are prepared in response to requests from Florida school districts for review of specific reading programs. The reports are intended to be a source of information about programs that will help teachers, principals, and district personnel in their choice of materials that can be used by skilled teachers to provide effective instruction. Whether or not a program has been reviewed does **not** constitute endorsement or lack of endorsement by the FCRR.

For more information about FCRR go to: [www.fcrr.org](http://www.fcrr.org)

Research Update 6 from Susan Barton  
Developer of the Barton Reading & Spelling System  
2009

When FCRR wrote their initial review of the Barton System many years ago, only a few independent research studies had been done. Although FCRR wrote an extremely favorable review, they stated (truthfully) that none of those research studies had included a control group the way as they require.

In the years since then, 12 more independent research studies have been done, and several of them did include control groups. So I approached FCRR two years ago to see if they would be able to examine the new research studies and change their statement about the research supporting the Barton System. They responded with:

Unfortunately, I am unable to update the report for you.

As you may know FCRR has suspended its review of reading programs and is maintaining the list of previously posted reports as a resource for educators. At this time, no further updates are being made to any of the reports.

Each report contains the month and year of the review and if you have conducted additional research since the time of the posting, I would encourage you to note the date on the FCRR report when sharing it with others.

By the way, the reason it is so difficult for researchers to do intervention research with a control group is that they are setting up research conditions at real schools with real children. As soon as teachers and administrators see children who receive one type of intervention significantly outperforming students receiving either no intervention or a different type, they always want to stop the research program and start providing those other children with the obviously better intervention. Despite their promises to the researchers, teachers and school administrators consider it immoral to allow those students to continue to struggle needlessly.

In case you would like to see the 14 independent research studies that prove the effectiveness of the Barton Reading & Spelling System, go to:

<http://www.bartonreading.com/research2.html#barton>