

# Research and Efficacy Studies

## Voices Related Research and Efficacy Studies

The *Voices* curricula and the proposed *Lift Every Voices* have been designed based on the research of the Voices authors and on scientifically proven best teaching practices:

- **Social Development Research.** The social development foundation of the *Voices* curricula and the proposed *Democratic Voices* builds primarily on the perspective taking research of Professor Robert Selman of the Harvard Graduate School of Education and a Voices author. See Selman's *The Promotion of Social Awareness* for an early history of Voices and an explanation of the role of perspective taking in social development (Selman 2003). Click here to go to [Professor. Selman's website](#) for a complete list of his publications.
- **Language and Literacy Research.** The major influence on our approach to language and literacy development is the research of Professor Catherine Snow, author of the National Reading Panel, professor at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, and a Voices author. Professor Snow, Professor Selman and their colleagues are currently conducting research on their theory of deep comprehension which stresses the importance of teaching complex reasoning and perspective taking in order to deepen students' listening and reading comprehension. Go to Professor Selman's website for a complete list of his publications. See "Understanding ourselves and each other through literacy: how social themes promote literacy learning" by Selman and Snow for an explanation of the relationships between perspective taking and literacy (Selman and Snow 2005). Click here

to go to [Professor Snow's website](#).

- **Writing.** With regard to writing, an early influence of the development of the *Voices* curricula was Prof. Colette Daiute of CUNY who studied the positive influence of the *Voices* themes and conflict resolution activities on narrative writing (Daiute 2000, Daiute 2001). (link to her website) More recently, Prof. Ernest Morrell has joined the author team and has emphasized the importance of teaching critical writing—the ability of students to use writing— to better understand themselves, analyze the world around them, and advocate ways to improve society (Morrell 2008, Morrell 2009).
- **English Language Learners.** Prof. Maria Carlo and Prof. Snow have worked together to develop our approach to promoting the language and literacy development of students for whom English is their second language (August, Carlo et al. 2005, August, Snow et al. 2006, Rolla, Mo et al. 2006). Prof. Carlo is associate professor of pediatrics at the University of Texas Medical Center.
- **Multicultural Literature.** Prof. Tyson has used her extensive knowledge of children's multicultural literature to help the author team to select authentic and relevant children's literature (Rogers, Tyson et al. 2000).
- **Social Conditions and Ethics.** Patrick Walker, PhD, founder and author of all the *Voices* programs, with a background in economics and theology, has brought to the author team his knowledge of social conditions and the importance of social values in promoting social justice and democratic reform. He is currently completing a book that provides a comprehensive explanation of the theory and research that has guided the development of the *Voices* curricula called, *Voices of Love and Freedom* (Walker Forthcoming).

For an overview of the case studies and efficacy studies of

the Voices products, see “Voices Scientific Research Base and Program Efficacy. More Than Twenty Years of Research, Implementation, and Efficacy” (Bluthardt 2014) . Selected studies are summarized below:

- **Boston Case Studies (1994–1998).** Data on the impact of *Voices for Love and Freedom* on students in one elementary school in Boston showed an effect size (Cohen’s  $d$ ) of 0.51 for a 9-month change in perspective learning (using the Relationship Questionnaire [Rel-Q] measure; Schultz & Selman, 1998). This effect size is higher than the effect size expected by natural child development, using national norms of the same measure (0.25; reference). Data also showed a 9-month reduction (Cohen’s  $d = -0.60$ ) in self-reported male students’ aggressive behavior (Hunt, 1994). Memphis, Tennessee Evaluation.
- **Memphis Longitudinal Evaluation (1998-2001).** An independent evaluation of 15 comprehensive school reform programs implemented across 93 elementary schools in Memphis City Schools included the Voices School Design which included the first version of *Voices Reading* as implemented in 6 elementary schools (Calaway, 2001). Voices School Design (*Voices Reading*) was one of the three programs to receive the highest possible rating (“some positive impact”) based on examination of longitudinal student data. Moreover, schools reported that organization and curriculum were the most important factors that contributed to school improvement. The evaluators noted that only Voices (at the elementary school level) and High Schools That Work (at the secondary school level) were able to provide factual information about the curriculum they provided to schools.
- **Cambridge Case Study (1999–2000).** The What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) published an intervention report on the Voices Literature and Character Education Program

(Voices LACE). One quasi-experimental design study with students in grades 6–7, which met the WWC standards with reservations, examined the impact of Voices LACE on students' perspective taking. The program was implemented over a 12-week period as a supplemental literacy and character education program (about 12 hours of instruction in total). The WWC found the results neither statistically significant nor substantively important. The program examined in this study is different than the ones assessed in other studies because it did not use a yearlong program implementation as intended by the developer.

- **Marzano Independent Research Study (2005–2006).** This study compared test results from experimental and control classrooms in grades 1 and 2 in three schools where *Voices Reading* was being implemented for the first year. A pre-test/post-test design was utilized to determine the growth of students over the 2005–2006 school year. The *Gates MacGinite Reading Test 4<sup>th</sup> Edition* (GMRT) was used to measure reading achievement, and the *Group for the Study of Interpersonal Development K–3 Version* (GSID) was administered to assess social skills development. The study was conducted in two school districts and three schools. One district, in the southeastern U.S., is classified as a large central city school district. The second district is located in the northeastern U.S. and is classified as a mid-size central city school district. A total of 307 students across all locations took the GMRT pre- and post-tests. In the area of social development, a total 310 students in grades 1–2 took the GSID assessment to measure social skills development. Both pre-test assessments were administered in the fall of 2005. Post-test assessments were administered in the spring of 2006. Based upon this evaluation of *Voices Reading*, the program showed statistically significant effects in the areas of

reading achievement and social skills development for students in second grade. In addition, this study shows that for students in first grade who received instruction in *Voices Reading*, adjusted mean scores were higher in both reading achievement and social skills development, as compared to students who did not receive instruction in *Voices Reading*.

- **San Francisco Case Studies (2010).** A pilot of *Voices Reading* as a core literacy curriculum in one urban elementary school in California, showed increases in the percentage of students proficient and advanced in reading within one year (Bluthardt, 2014). The school served an ethnically diverse student population (African American, Hispanic, and Filipino students). Changes for fifth-grade students (from 60% to 75%) were higher than the increases in fourth (from 63% to 66%) and third grades (from 46% to 47%). The same data trends were revealed in the replication of the program in two additional urban schools in California (Bluthardt, 2014).
- **Washington, DC Case Study (2010).** A replication of the program in one elementary school in Washington, DC, showed greater one-year increases in the percentage of proficient and advanced students in reading for fourth-grade students (from 35% to 65%) than students in fifth grade (from 32% to 46%) and students in third grade (from 50% to 60%; Bluthardt, 2014).
- **University of Cincinnati Efficacy Study (2013).** An independent evaluation conducted at the University of Cincinnati (Evaluation Services Center, 2013) provides evidence to the program potential to increase perspective taking and reading comprehension skills. A randomized controlled trial of the Voices Literacy and Writing (grades K–6) program was tested with four elementary schools in two school districts in North Carolina and Minnesota. This program was supplemental to the core literacy curriculum. Most of the teachers (90%)

taught the program for more than one hour per week over one school year. The sample schools served a diverse student population (64% eligible for free reduced lunch price program; 17% African American; 29% Hispanic; 29% English language learners). For children in grades K–3, results revealed significant effects on two of the three subscales of the *Rel-Q* (Schultz & Selman, 1998). Specifically, the mean gain score for the treatment children was significantly higher than the mean gain score for the comparison group of children on the interpersonal understanding dimension ( $t = 3.22, < .01$ ) and also on the perspective taking dimension ( $t = 1.67, p. < .05$ ). There was no significant difference between the groups on the interpersonal skills/conflict resolution dimension. No differences were found for students in grades 4–6, likely due to the low intensity of the program implementation. Students in grades 3–6 in the intervention group had statistically significant higher gains in reading comprehension scores on the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test than their peers in the comparison schools ( $t = 4.95, p. < .01$ ; Cohen's  $d = 0.37$ )