



The Efficacy of Waterford's Programs: A Meta-Analysis of a Decade of Research

Executive Summary



The Big Picture

Early learning lays the foundation for lifelong success. A decade of research shows Waterford programs work!

Key takeaways of this report:

- Waterford programs help children make learning gains **beyond what they would have achieved in a year.**
- On average, students advance **a full year or more** beyond expected growth.¹
- **Results span demographics** including children from the most under-resourced communities.



The Proof is in the Numbers

To find out if Waterford programs help children in PreK through 2nd grade learn critical skills, we conducted a meta-analysis—a study combining data from multiple studies to draw a single conclusion.

Data Included in the Meta-Analysis

38

Published, peer-reviewed studies

10

ESSA Tier 1
Studies

9

ESSA Tier 2
Studies

13

ESSA Tier 3
Studies

6

ESSA Tier 4
Studies

More than **48,000**
Waterford learners in
PreK through 2nd grade

Data from the last
10 years



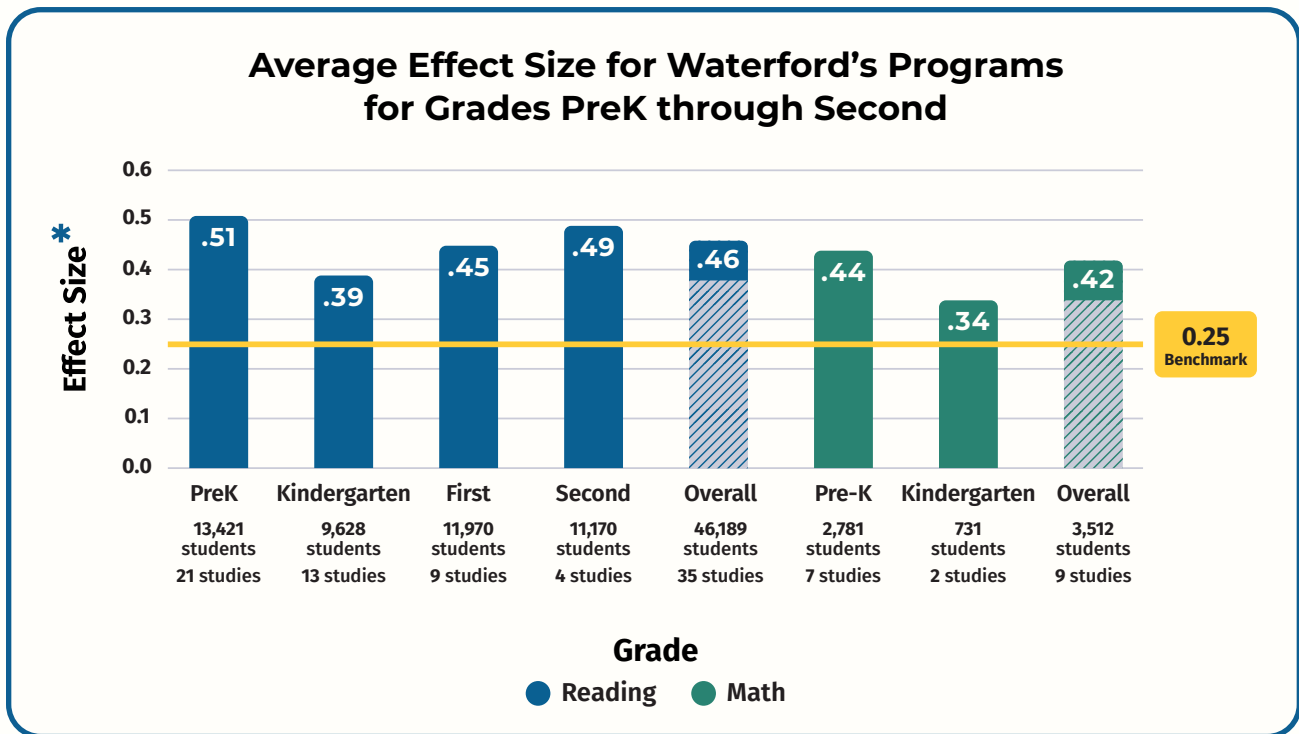
The Results?

Waterford Makes a Strong Impact on PreK through 2nd Grade Learning

Research shows Waterford’s reading and math programs help children learn foundational reading and math skills. Waterford works:

- For children in PreK through 2nd grade
- Across demographics:
 - Race and ethnicity
 - Children experiencing poverty
 - Multilingual learners
 - Children receiving special education services
- No matter where children use the program: at home or school

Children using Waterford programs make significant learning gains. **On average, students advance a full year or more beyond expected growth**—and those gains continue to benefit them in the long term.



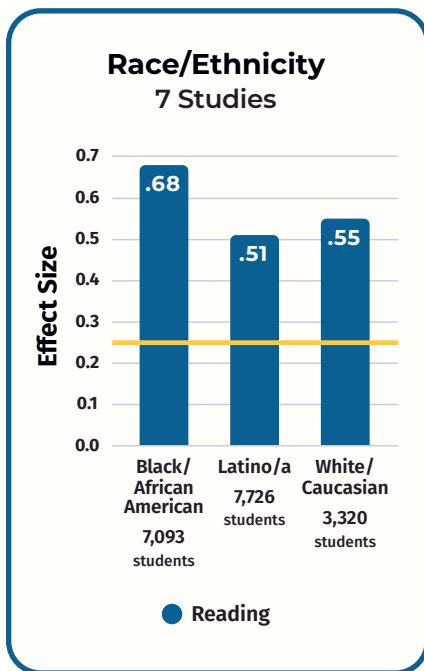
* Effect size is used to measure the magnitude of student growth. According to the National Institute for Direct Instruction (NIFDI), effect sizes over 0.25 are considered educationally important, providing a meaningful indication of student progress.



Effective Across Demographics

Across various demographics and backgrounds, children develop their skills with Waterford. Waterford works for children spanning race and ethnicity; those experiencing poverty; multilingual learners; and children receiving special education services.

Black/African American, Latino/a, and multilingual learners saw the most significant outcomes in reading, making learning gains beyond what is typical in an academic year.



Race and Ethnicity

Among the racial and ethnic groups in our studies, Waterford is a proven solution for growing children's literacy skills. The effects of using Waterford were larger than what is considered educationally significant.

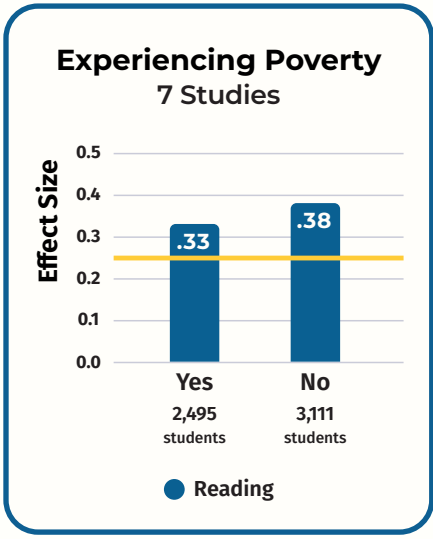
Black/African American students saw the most significant outcomes in reading, fostering learning gains beyond what they would have achieved in a year.

For Latino/a students, the impact of using Waterford well exceeded the benchmark for meaningful growth in reading, and that was also the case for White/Caucasian students.

These positive results for historically underserved populations highlight the program's potential to bridge achievement gaps.

→ [For more information in the white paper full text, see page 9.](#)

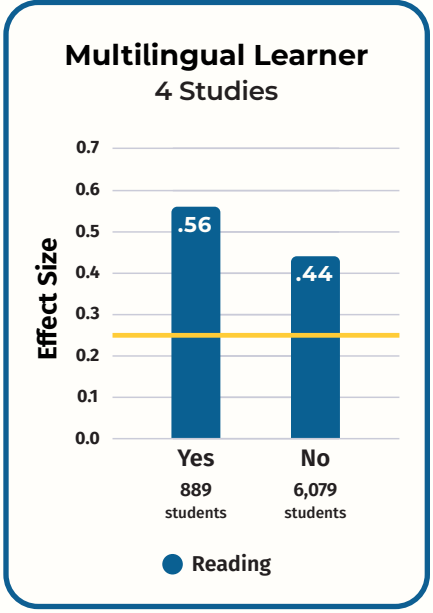




Children Experiencing Poverty

For children experiencing poverty, Waterford improves educational outcomes, helping students achieve reading gains beyond what they would have achieved in half a year. These strong results are demonstrated across seven studies, with nearly 2,500 students.

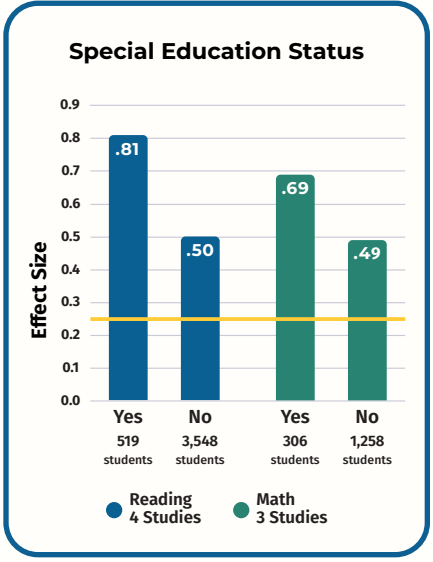
→ [For more information in the white paper full text, see page 9.](#)



Multilingual Learners

On average, multilingual learners using Waterford advanced more than a full year beyond expected growth—results that show how the program can help underserved students make significant literacy gains.

→ [For more information in the white paper full text, see page 9.](#)



Children Receiving Special Education Services

Results show students receiving special education services saw large improvements in both reading and math and advanced more than a full year beyond expected growth when using Waterford.

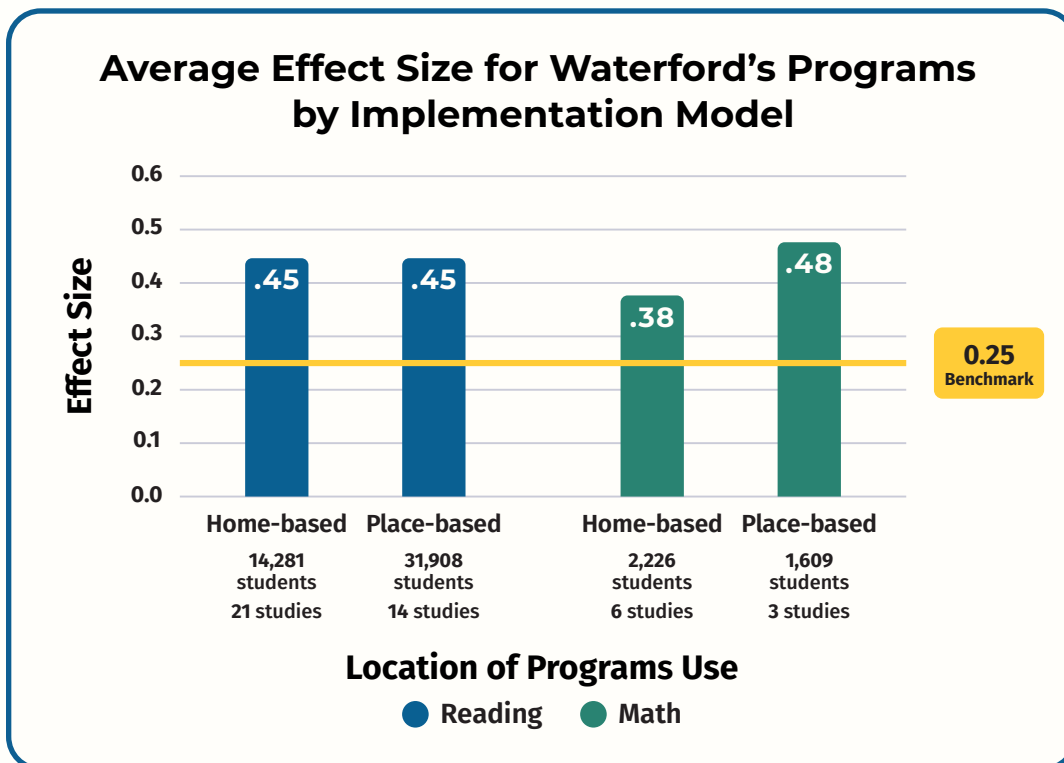
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Effective Wherever Children Use the Program

Children succeed in learning critical skills with Waterford whether they use the program at home or school, and no matter who is leading their learning--a parent, caregiver, or teacher. This flexibility can help level the playing field to meet children where they are with high-quality instructional materials.

→ [For more information in the white paper full text, see page 12.](#)

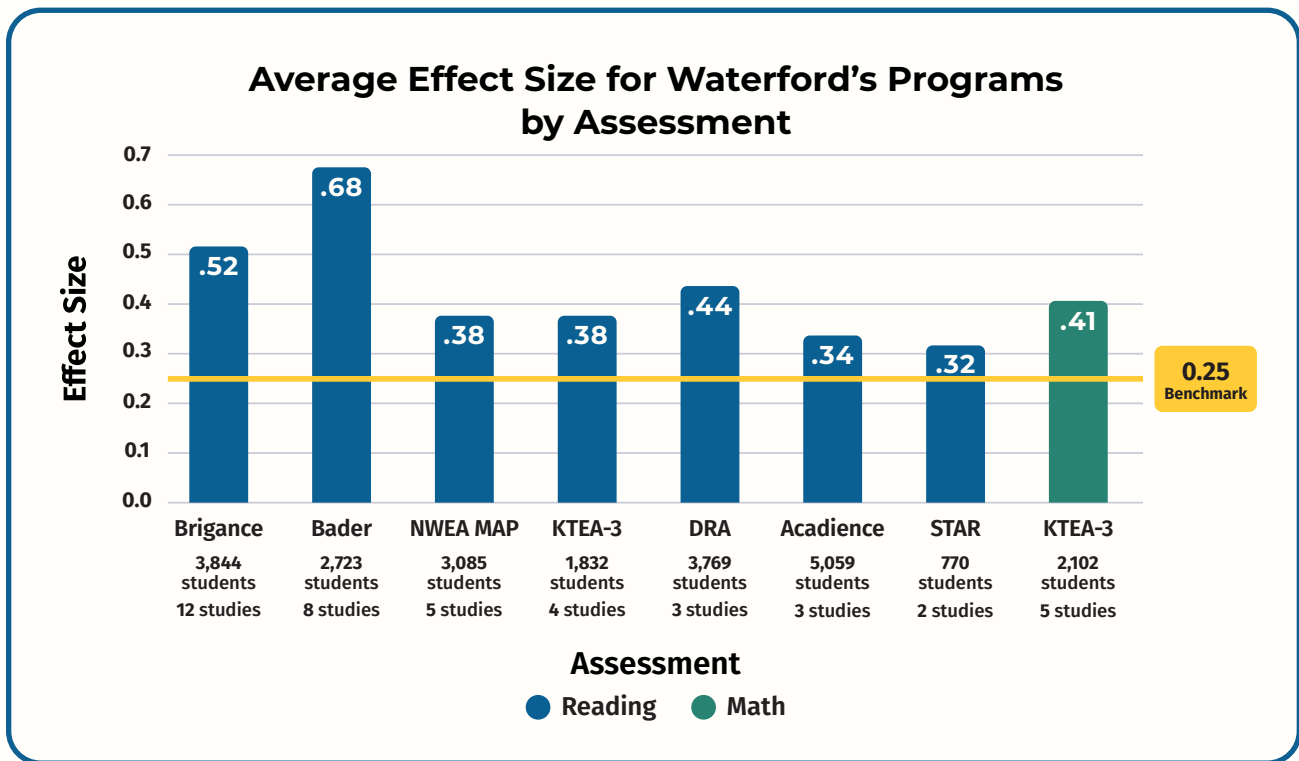


More Evidence That Waterford Works

Third-party Assessment Data Proves Waterford's Effectiveness

Analysis of outcomes from students using Waterford, as measured by third-party assessments, reveals two key findings: 1) on average, children who used Waterford outperformed those who did not, and 2) these results are consistent across all assessments.

→ [For more information in the white paper full text, see page 10.](#)



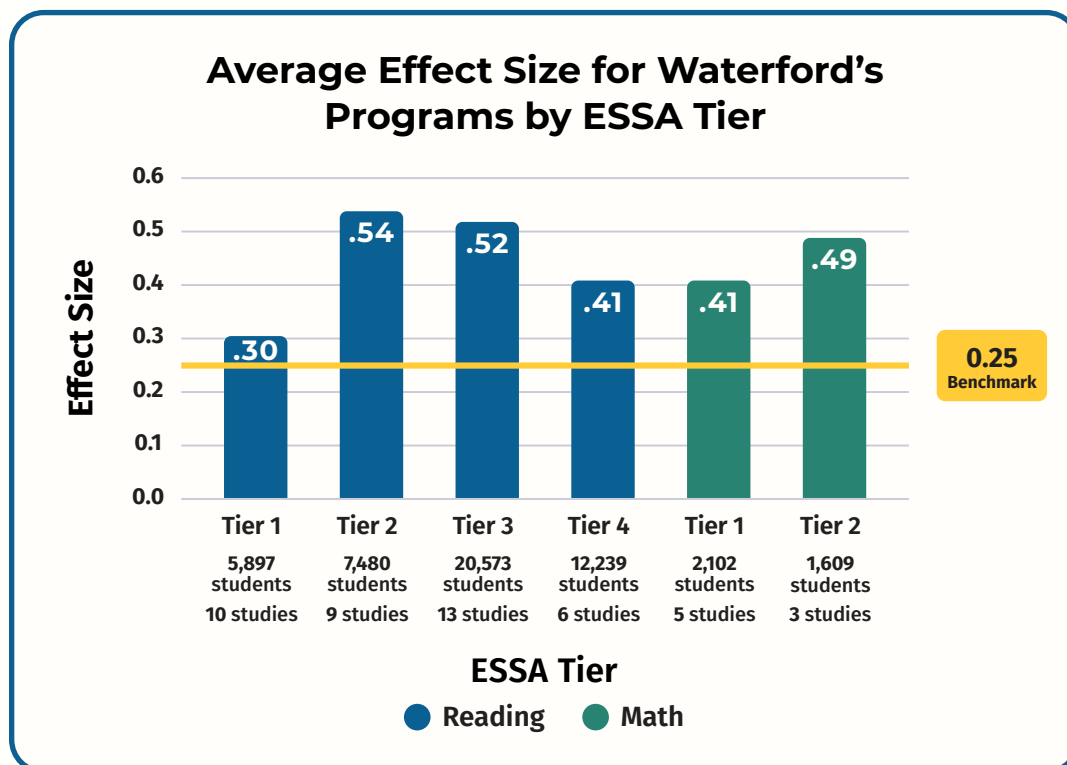
Our Programs Meet the Highest Standards Set by the U.S. Department of Education

The studies demonstrate Waterford's effectiveness using stringent standards. Among the most widely used standards for educational research is the four-tiered Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) system defined by the U.S. Department of Education.

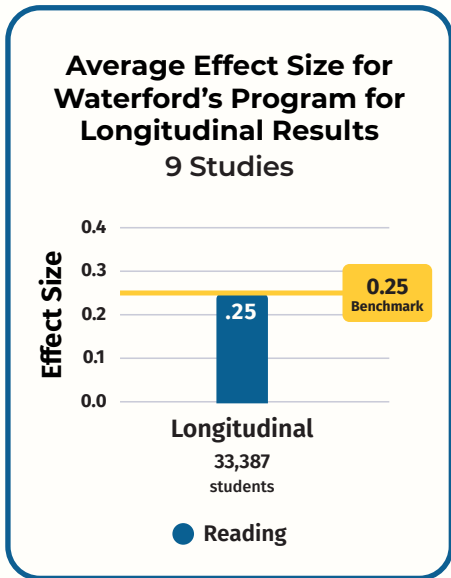
ESSA aims to improve student outcomes by setting standards for “evidence-based” interventions, making it easier for school systems to choose programs that work. These studies are well designed, show positive learning outcomes, and, for tier 1 and 2 studies, include at least 350 students in two locations.

Students using Waterford far exceed the educationally important benchmark across all ESSA tiers, demonstrating success across a body of rigorous research.

→ [For more information in the white paper full text, see page 11.](#)



Waterford Makes a Lasting Impact



When conducting research, one of the biggest questions is: *Do learning gains hold up over time?*

Data from 9 studies including over 33,000 students using Waterford's reading curriculum shows **the answer is yes!**

This is further evidence that Waterford can close early learning gaps for students across various backgrounds, putting them on a path for long-term academic success.



Ready to improve literacy in your community?

Let's discuss how we can work together to make an impact.

By partnering with Waterford, you're not just investing in a program; you're investing in your community's future. We believe in the power of collaboration, and we're ready to work with you to create an educational experience that gives every child the best chance to succeed. Let's make a difference together.

¹ An effect size of around 0.4 is commonly used as a benchmark for a year of academic growth, based on John Hattie's research in *Visible Learning for Teachers*. However, this value can vary depending on factors such as subject, grade level, assessment type, and educational context. Therefore, while 0.4 serves as a general guideline, interpreting effect size requires careful consideration of specific educational settings and assessment methods.





Waterford.org is a national early education nonprofit that provides research-backed PreK through 2nd grade reading, math, and science programs that children can use wherever they learn.

Our tailored programs help children reach critical milestones by third grade, laying the foundation for future success for every child.