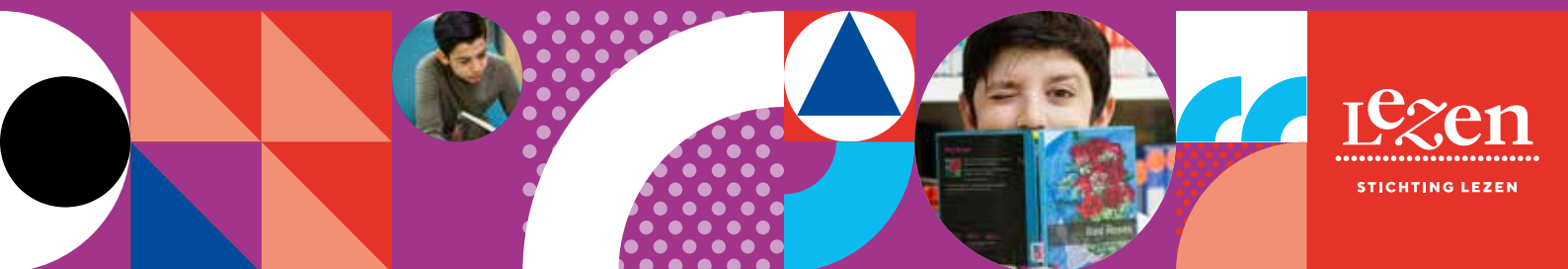


ONDERZOEKSPUBLICATIE

# Verrijkt vrij lezen

Een meta-analyse van de effecten van toevoegingen aan vrij lezen



Lezen  
STICHTING LEZEN

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## Summary

Reading, either quietly or freely, for a quarter of an hour at a fixed moment in the school day in a book which one has chosen oneself is an approach frequently used to promote reading amongst pupils. Free reading is expected to stimulate pleasure in reading and therefore also reading behaviour and reading proficiency. However, research has shown that free reading does not always have the desired outcomes. There are at least four problem areas that reduce its effectiveness (Reutzel *et al.*, 2010):

1. weak readers, in particular, are not always equally able to choose books that are suitable for them;
2. not all pupils are as involved in free reading and some pupils even find ways of avoiding reading;
3. pupils do not have to account for what they read; and
4. pupils are not always given the opportunity to talk about the books that they have read.

### The present research

In this meta-analysis, we focused on whether add-ons to free reading could remove these objections. These might include, for instance, assistance in choosing books, keeping a reading logbook or having discussions about books. We looked for answers to two questions:

1. Do such add-ons contribute to reading proficiency, the motivation to read and the reading behaviour of pupils in primary and secondary education?
2. Is the extent of such effects dependent on (a) the characteristics of the programme (in other words, the specific add-ons to free reading), (b) the characteristics of the sample and (c) the characteristics of the study and metrics?

### Results

Add-ons to free reading have a positive effect on general reading proficiency in the short term (in other words, on the extent to which fluent reading and comprehension are combined). Although it is small, this effect is encouraging. In almost all the studies, use was made of tests developed outside of the context of the programmes. Such tests often show small effects sooner than tests developed specially for the study. More importantly, what is actually tested with a standardised test is whether the effects of the programme can be generalised to knowledge and skills that extend beyond the context of the programme. In other words, what is studied is not whether pupils understand the texts that they read during the free-reading moments better, but whether they understand texts better in general. This appears to be the case.

If the separate add-ons to free reading are considered, we found that delineating the offering of books had a positive effect on the combined measurements of reading (in other words, general

reading proficiency, reading comprehension and fluent reading combined). Programmes that paid no attention to this had no effect. Contrary to what we expected, we also found that assistance or instructions during free reading moments and the addition of a social component had negative effects.

However, we cannot draw definite conclusions from these observations as the way such assistance and/or instructions were given or how the social components were designed differed considerably. Assistance and/or instruction involved, for instance, 'student-teacher conferences', but also programmes in which separate vocabulary or reading-strategy instructions were linked to free reading. A social component may be incorporated during the reading activity (through 'partner reading' or 'buddy reading'), but activities also regularly took place after free reading in the form of group discussions or 'book talks'. Finally, our results indicate that add-ons to free reading are favourable, in particular, for pupils at risk of learning deficits.

### **Conclusions and recommendations**

Earlier studies that provided overviews were not positive about the effects of free reading. Research even suggests that free reading is only favourable to pupils who have a reading routine, but has negative effects on pupils who do not have such a routine. The outcomes of this meta-analysis imply that add-ons to free reading may counter this negative impact and that pupils at risk of reading deficits, in particular, may benefit from this.

Delineating the offering of books is the most promising add-on and without such delineation we even saw that programmes had no effect. This outcome supports the idea that it is important for free reading that pupils read books that are consistent with their reading level. In other words, the books should not be too difficult, but they should be sufficiently challenging to encourage pupils to take the next step in their reading development.

