



# R.E.A.D.® ON!

Continuing Education for R.E.A.D. Teams

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## Mixed-Results Research Summary

In May of 2022, Jana Meixner and Kurt Kotrschal published something they called “A Systematic Review of Animal-Assisted Interventions with Dogs in Special Education.”

According to their abstract, their motivation was the fact that “dogs are becoming increasingly popular in pedagogical settings, and children with special educational needs, in particular, are believed to benefit from dog-assisted interventions. However, reliable evidence for supporting such claims is still scarce and reports on the effectiveness of this approach are often anecdotal.”

The authors aimed to evaluate the available literature to answer the question whether dog-assisted interventions in an educational setting can help children with special educational needs to improve and to develop their emotional, social and cognitive skills. Eighteen studies were finally included in their review, but

**Animal-Assisted Interventions With Dogs in Special Education-A Systematic Review**  
Jana Meixner & Kurt Kotrschal

**Findings Indicate the Presence of Dogs Can:**

- Activate the Oxytocin System
- Support Positive Social Behavior & Empathy
- Improve Attendance (“dog days” 100% - non dog days 75%)
- Improve Motivation to Read and Self-Perception as Readers in Students with Dyslexia

Communication Reigns  
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because they varied greatly in type of intervention, outcomes measured, sample sizes, and scientific quality, a formal meta-analysis was not possible. Hence, they “resorted to a narrative synthesis,” and termed it a systematic review.

Overall, the studies report mixed results in the different functional domains of stress reduction, motivation, social skills, cognitive abilities, reading abilities, social conduct, and mental wellbeing.

No study reported any negative effects of the intervention.

The most unequivocal evidence comes from studies on dogs’ effects on physiological stress response in challenging situations and on motivation and adherence to instructions, reporting significantly lower levels of cortisol in both children and pedagogues in the presence of

dogs, as well as increased motivation to learn and participate.

Findings for other outcomes, academic or social, however, remain inconclusive. Data on long-term effects are lacking altogether. Still, this review indicates the potentials of dog-assisted interventions in special pedagogy, particularly towards supporting a calm and trustful social atmosphere.

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As we have always known, literal quantitative research on the effects of the R.E.A.D.® program are hard to gather in a meaningful way. Nevertheless, the authors’ paw-print chart does reinforce effects that we have always claimed about R.E.A.D., and that we have all seen and experienced. Still good news!

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## The Next Edition of the Manual

We are excited to let you know that the next edition (the 16<sup>th</sup>) of the manual is coming out in January of 2024.

Our current edition (the 15<sup>th</sup>) is dated March 2020. It has taken much longer than normal to print another one because of the merciless interference of the global COVID pandemic and the slowing of all schools.

But all your programs are coming back to life, and as you know they are needed more than ever now, as kids’ reading levels deteriorated even worse during the pandemic.



The new edition will reflect a slight price increase for membership (the manual price will remain the same).

But when your students submit the original perforated application from the back of the manual, we will honor whatever prices are shown there, no matter the date it is received.

## Missing in Action?

We were, sort of. Temporarily. In case you wondered (or even noticed), there was no R.E.A.D. ON! issue in either August or September.