Research and Outcomes Department

Dallas Independent School District, Dallas, TX

The Division of Evaluation and Accountability in the Dallas Independent School District (DISD) did an evaluation of the impact of Fast ForWord® products in ten schools in the District. The purpose of this evaluation was to collect and analyze data related to the context, process, and outcome of product use. This Briefing is a summary of the evaluation.

As part of the evaluation, results from criterion-referenced tests (Texas Assessment of Academic Skills [TAAS] and Texas Primary Reading Inventory [TPRI]) and norm-referenced tests (Stanford Achievement Test – Version 9 [SAT-9] and Aprenda) were analyzed, as were surveys from teachers, and participation data from the product.

The evaluation provided context, process, and outcome data for the use of Fast ForWord products. It determined that student achievement improved in curriculum-related areas – as demonstrated by the criterion-referenced tests. It also determined that Fast ForWord products improve aspects of student behavior including listening skills, classroom participation, and clear and fluid speech. Finally, it established that product completion is important and schools should encourage consistent participation.

Background

Ten DISD campuses – one high school and nine elementary schools – used Fast ForWord products during the 2001-2002 school year. The nine elementary schools all had student populations that were over 50% Hispanic – five were over 90% Hispanic. Five of the elementary schools had a majority of the students with limited English proficiency. At each of the elementary schools, the majority of students were of low socioeconomic status. The high school was 47% Hispanic and 47% African-American.

Of the 1,349 students who used Fast ForWord products during the 2001-2002 school year, demographic information was available for 1,317 of them. Nearly three-fourths (73.1%) were Hispanic, and over half (55.2%) had limited English proficiency. Sixty-eight percent were in grades 2 – 5 while 17% were in high school. In general, the schools selected the students who performed low on standardized measures of reading and/or math to use the Fast ForWord products.

Results

- Analysis of the Texas Learning Index (TLI) scores from the TAAS showed that the Fast ForWord students made statistically significant gains in both reading and mathematics. Of the 354 students, 44% of the students passed the TAAS Reading in 2001, 59% passed it in 2002. For Math, 50% passed in 2001 and 71% passed in 2002.
- There was a statistically significant relationship between Fast ForWord participation and higher TLI scores in reading [$F(1,386) = 4.851$, $p< 0.05$]. There was also a statistically significant relationship between higher TLIs in mathematics and Fast ForWord participation [$F(1,386) = 6.484$; $p<0.05$].
- The SAT-9 results indicate that on average, the Fast ForWord participants' Normal Curve Equivalents (NCEs) in reading, mathematics, and language increased at a greater rate than those for the entire District.
- For both the TAAS and the SAT-9, regression results showed that there were statistically significant relationships between the percent of the Fast ForWord Language content that was completed, and higher reading scores.

- The TPRI showed that after Fast ForWord participation, more than 80% of the students were able to read at an independent or instructional level in 2002, compared to only 40% in fall 2001. The students also more than doubled the number of words read correctly between the fall 2001 and spring 2002 tests.
- Eighty-three teachers returned survey forms. Over 90% had noticed student improvement in listening skills as well as in students' ability to follow the flow of conversation and recall events in the proper order. Over 90% also noticed student improvement in response time to questions and pronunciation while reading aloud. Most teachers had seen an improvement in student performance in reading, while some had also seen improvements in mathematics, social studies, and listening comprehension.

Approach and Methodology

TAAS: Results of the TAAS were obtained for all Fast ForWord participants as well as a matched control group. The 2001 test results were used as the pre-test measure and 2002 results as the post-test. Out of the 706 Fast ForWord students who took the 2002 TAAS, 354 had also taken the test in 2001. A matched comparison group was developed for 194 of the students who used Fast ForWord products. The Department of Special Projects Evaluation of the Dallas Independent School District created control groups by matching Fast ForWord students with students from the district's database. Students were matched on demographic variables (gender, ethnicity, limited English proficiency, socioeconomic status) and their TLI pre-test results. A multivariate analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was used to analyze the gains in test scores for the Fast ForWord students (the experimental group) and the control group.

SAT-9: There were 516 students who participated in Fast ForWord and took the SAT-9 in both 2001 (pre-test) and 2002 (post-test). The mean NCE and raw gain scores of the Fast ForWord participants were compared to the mean performance of the entire District in the areas of reading, mathematics, language, and spelling.

TPRI: The TPRI was used to evaluate the reading accuracy of 25 students in the 2nd grade who used Fast ForWord. A level of "independent" indicated that the student read at an accuracy rate of 95% or higher. A rate of 90-94% indicated the student read at an "instructional" level, and a level below 90% indicated a "frustrational" level. The students took the fall TPRI in September or November of 2001, and all but one took the spring test in April 2002.

**To find out more about this study, and how
Fast ForWord products can benefit students in
your classroom or district, please contact us.
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