

## Research and Outcomes Department

### Boone County School District, Florence, KY

As the third-largest school district in Kentucky, Boone County School District supports over 15,000 students in 18 schools. When their school board and the superintendent mandated significant improvements in reading for all students in the school district, Boone County officials researched their options. They decided to tackle the problem at its roots: their students' cognitive capacity. Research has repeatedly shown that enhancing cognitive capacity—Memory, Attention, Processing, and Sequencing (or Learning MAPs)—significantly increases the effectiveness of classroom instruction. After several principals sent information on Fast ForWord® products to the District Administration, administrators attended a presentation at a national school administrators conference and decided to try the products, purchasing them with funds from a variety of sources including a Title I grant.

Boone County staff have seen increasing numbers of students using Fast ForWord products in the past two years, with strong results at every level.

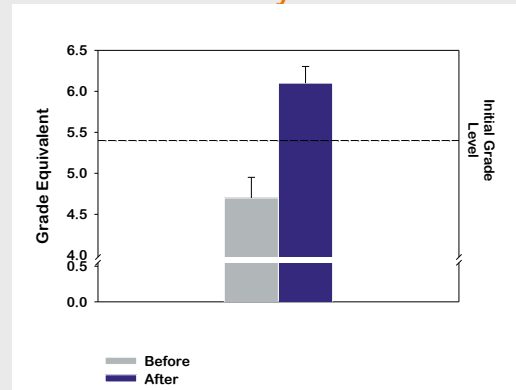
#### The Program Evaluation

Boone County chose two schools to implement Fast ForWord products as part of the study: one elementary school and one middle school. School staff evaluated student performance using the EdVision (now Scantron Performance Series) assessment before and after student participation in the Fast ForWord products.

#### Approach and Methodology

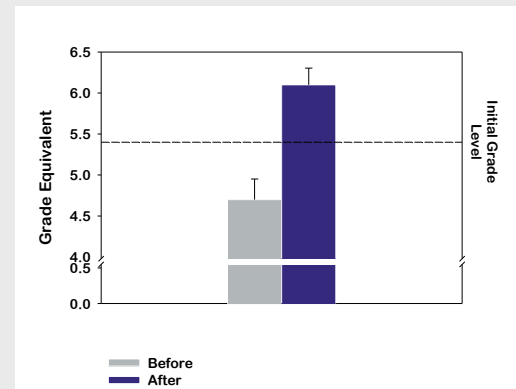
The Boone County School District first implemented the Fast ForWord products at an elementary school and at a middle school. Since the initial study, Administrators have noticed that not only the low-achieving or at-risk students benefit from the Fast ForWord products. Other elementary schools have added their at-risk students to the Fast ForWord program and implementations have quickly grown to cover all elementary students in the county, the middle schools and one high school.

#### Reading Achievement by Students in the Elementary School



The academic abilities of the elementary school students were evaluated with the Scantron Performance Series. On average, students made significant improvements in their language and reading skills after using the Fast ForWord products improving 2 years in 11 months.

#### Reading Achievement by Students in the Middle School



On average, the middle school students' academic performance, as measured by the Scantron Performance Series, increased significantly, with students improving their reading achievement by an average of 16 months in a year's time.

The district funds Fast ForWord products through a creative variety of funding methods: a Title I grant, part of a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center grant, business partnerships, and parent-teacher organizations. The district currently provides 50 percent of the necessary funding from its General Fund.

Since schools have a great deal of autonomy in the district, teachers and staff have implemented Fast ForWord products in a variety of settings (in a computer lab, in a classroom computer center, or at a computer in the back of the class) and periods (during school, after school, and in summer programs).

## Participation

Sixty-seven students, ranging from second to sixth grade, participated in this study. The students in the study were selected for the study because they were academically at-risk. On average, the students performed substantially below the level of their peers.

Students in the elementary school used the Fast ForWord Language, Fast ForWord Language to Reading, and Fast ForWord to Reading 3 products. The middle school students used the Fast ForWord Language, Fast ForWord Middle

& High School, and Fast ForWord Language to Reading products. The Fast ForWord Language protocol called for students to use the product 100 minutes per day, for 5 days a week for four to eight weeks. The Fast ForWord Middle & High School, Fast ForWord Language to Reading, and Fast ForWord to Reading 3 protocols called for students to participate for 90 minutes per day, 5 days a week for four to eight weeks.

## Assessment Results

Before participation on the Fast ForWord products, students were performing below their actual grade level. Elementary school students at an average grade level of 3.15 were performing at an average level of 2.8 and middle school students with an average grade level of 5.4 were performing, on average, at a 4.7 grade level. After participation, students made significant gains in their language and reading skills, moving closer to their actual grade level. In eleven months time, the elementary school students improved their reading achievement by an average of two years, and in one year, the middle school students improved their reading achievement by an average of 16 months.

## Discussion

Language and learning skills are critical for all students, impacting their ability to benefit from instruction, follow directions, and participate in class discussions. Strong linguistic skills also provide a critical foundation for building reading and writing skills.

Scores from before and after participation show that, on average, after using the Fast ForWord products, students demonstrated substantial increases in their academic achievement. This suggests that using Fast ForWord products strengthened the students' foundational skills and reading skills, and helped them benefit more from the classroom curriculum.

**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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