

## Research and Outcomes Department

### Bay District Schools, FL

Students from Surfside Middle School in the Bay District Schools in Bay County, Florida used the Fast ForWord products during the 2003 – 2004 school year. Educators from the school district, located in northwestern Florida on the coast of the Gulf of Mexico, were interested in evaluating the effectiveness of the Fast ForWord products at improving the reading skills of their students. They found that students struggling with reading skills achieved significant improvements on tests of reading ability and achievement after using the products.

#### The Program Evaluation

Before and after Fast ForWord participation, students were evaluated with the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) and the STAR Reading assessment.

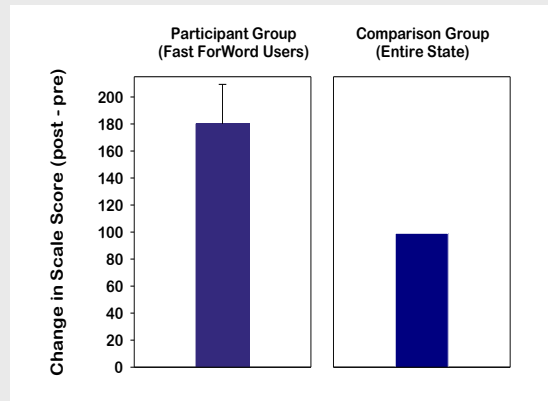
The reading portion of the FCAT is designed to assess student achievement of the high-order cognitive skills represented in the Sunshine State Standards (SSS) for Reading. This is a criterion-referenced test. Student performance on the FCAT can be reported in terms of Level, or in terms of a Developmental Scale Score.

The STAR Reading assessment is a criterion- and norm-referenced test of reading ability. It consists of computer adaptive multiple choice questions and is appropriate for grades 1 through 12.

#### Approach and Methodology

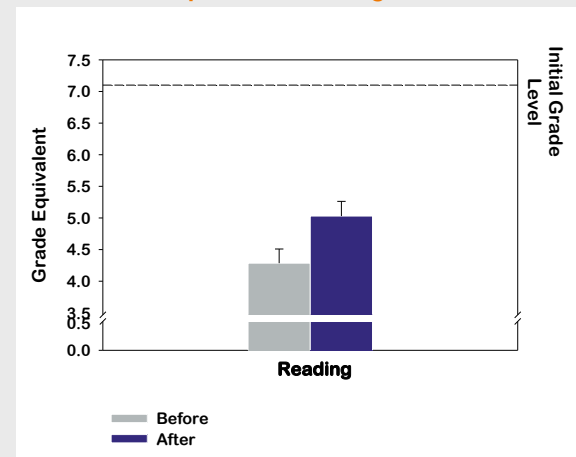
Educators were trained in current and established findings on the neuroscience of how phonemic awareness and the acoustic properties of speech impact rapid development of language and reading skills; methods for assessing potential product participants; the selection of appropriate measures for testing and evaluation; effective implementation techniques; approaches for monitoring student performance; and techniques for measuring the gains students have achieved after they have finished using the product. This

#### Improved Reading Skills



After Fast ForWord participation, students in this observational study made significant improvements in their reading abilities, nearly doubling the gains of students statewide in comparable grades.

#### Improved Reading Skills



Participants, who were reading well below their grade level, achieved significant improvements after using the Fast ForWord products.

training helped ensure successful product implementation.

## Participation

Thirty-six students participated in this study and had pre- and post-participation data available for analysis. The school district chose to use the 90-minute protocol that called for students to participate 90 minutes a day, 5 days a week for four to eight weeks.

## Assessment Results

Overall, after Fast ForWord product use, students made a 180 point change in their

Developmental Scale Score, nearly double that of students in comparable grades across the state.

Before using the Fast ForWord products, study participants from Surfside Middle School were, on average, reading at a low 4<sup>th</sup> grade reading level. Actual student grade level was 7.1. After participating on the Fast ForWord products, the group of students showed significant improvements in their reading skills, gaining nine months of achievement in the year between assessments – a substantial improvement for this group of struggling students.

## Discussion

Cognitive and early reading abilities are critical for all students, impacting their ability to benefit from instruction, follow instructions, 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 on the Fast ForWord products showed that, on average, students who used the products demonstrated significant increases in their reading achievement as measured by the reading section of the FCAT. This suggests that using the Fast ForWord products strengthened the students' foundational 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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