

Research and Outcomes Department

Miami-Dade County Public Schools, FL

This study investigated a group of students who were attending Madie Ives Elementary School in the Miami-Dade County Public Schools. All the students had been retained in the third grade following the 2002 – 2003 school year and used Fast ForWord products during the 2003 – 2004 school year. The students showed significant improvements on their FCAT Reading scores following Fast ForWord use with 54% attaining Level 3 or above on the FCAT Reading.

The Program Evaluation

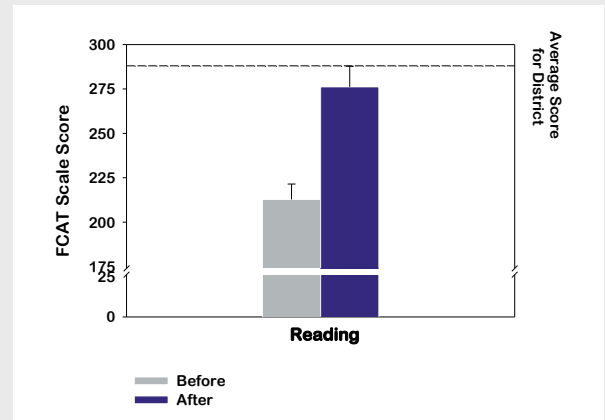
In the Spring of 2003, before Fast ForWord use, students had their reading achievement evaluated with the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). Students were tested again in Spring of 2004, after Fast ForWord use.

The FCAT is an annual state 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. All students in Grades 3-10 take the FCAT in Reading and Mathematics in the spring of each year. The primary metric for reporting student performance on the FCAT is the Scale Score. FCAT Scale Scores are designed to remain roughly the same from year to year for the student who maintains steady progress, neither overtaking nor falling behind his or her peers.

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 training helped ensure successful product implementation.

Improved Reading Skills



Average FCAT scores for students in the third grade prior to Fast ForWord participation, and then again following Fast ForWord participation.

After using the Fast ForWord products, students who had been retained the previous school year made significant improvements in their reading skills, as measured by the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test.

Participation

Twenty-eight students participated in this study and had FCAT Reading scores available for analysis. All 28 students used both the Fast ForWord Language product and the Fast ForWord Language to Reading product. The school district chose to use the 100-Minute Fast ForWord Language Protocol that called for students to participate 100 minutes a day, 5 days a week for four to eight weeks. The Fast ForWord Language to Reading protocol called for students to use the product for 90 minutes a day, 5 days a week for four to eight weeks.

Assessment Results

On average, students had a Reading scale score of 276 after the Spring 2004 FCAT testing, a significant improvement from their score of 213 in the Spring of 2003. Scale scores on the FCAT can be converted to levels, which range from 1-5 with level 1 corresponding to: student has little success with the challenging content of the Sunshine State Standards. All students in this study were at level 1 before Fast ForWord participation. In 2004, after Fast ForWord use, 54% of the students had moved to FCAT Reading level 3 or above.

Discussion

Students in this study had been retained in the third grade following the 2002 – 2003 school year. They used the Fast ForWord products during the 2003 – 2004 school year. Students had very low academic performance—a mean score of 213 on the FCAT in the Spring of 2003 before participation on the Fast ForWord products. After Fast ForWord use, the group of students significantly improved its average FCAT Reading score to 276, approaching the average Reading scale score for third graders in the Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

These findings demonstrate that, within the Miami-Dade County Public Schools, an optimal learning environment coupled with a focus on cognitive and early reading skills can help students attain a higher level of academic achievement.

**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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