

Research and Outcomes Department

Williamsport Area School District, PA

Located in north central Pennsylvania in Lycoming County, the largest geographical county in the state and part of the Allegheny Mountain range of the Appalachian Mountains, Williamsport is approximately 200 miles northwest of Philadelphia. Williamsport Area School District is the largest school district in its area with a student population of over 6,000. Jackson Elementary, one of six elementary schools in the district, chose to use the Fast ForWord Language product during the Fall of the 2004 – 2005 school year.

The district conducted a study with a group of second graders who used the Fast ForWord Language product. After product use, students made significant improvements in reading ability, either moving closer to or meeting the benchmark goals for Oral Reading Fluency and Phoneme Segmentation Fluency.

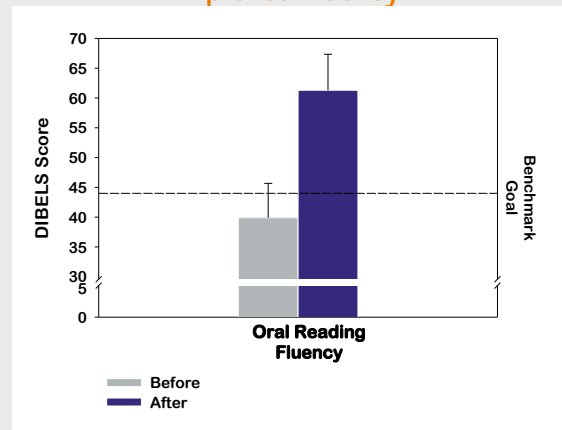
The Program Evaluation

Student reading ability was assessed with the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) before and after Fast ForWord Language product use.

The DIBELS are standardized, individually administered measures of early literacy development designed to monitor the development of pre-reading and early reading skills. Skills assessed range from phonemic awareness to phonics to fluency. The appropriate skills for measuring with the DIBELS vary with the grade of the students. For students in the second grade and beyond, the appropriate measure is Oral Reading Fluency, which is a standardized test of accuracy and fluency. The Phoneme Segmentation Fluency measure, which was also used in this study, is a standardized test of phonological awareness.

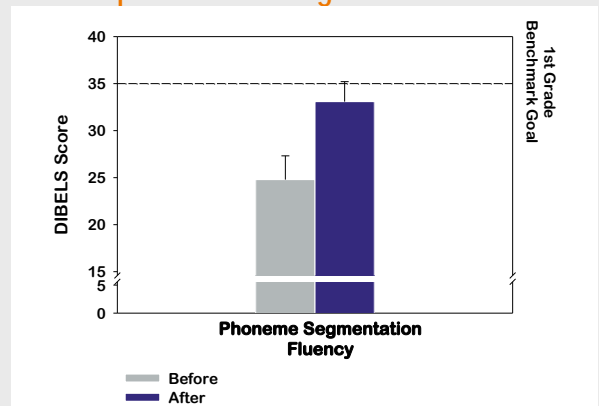
The Institute for the Development of Educational Achievement, in accordance with the Reading First legislation, recognizes the DIBELS as an appropriate assessment for measuring improvement in the reading skills of children in early elementary school.

Improved Fluency



Students, on average, made significant improvements after Fast ForWord use and met the benchmark goal for oral reading fluency.

Improved Phonological Awareness



On average, students significantly improved their reading skills after participating on the Fast ForWord product.

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.

Participation

Thirty-eight second graders from the Williamsport Area School District used the Fast ForWord Language product during the Fall of the 2004 – 2005 school year. The district chose to use the 50-Minute Fast ForWord

Language Protocol which calls for students to use the products for 50 minutes a day, five days per week for eight to twelve weeks.

Assessment Results

On average, students were performing below their benchmark level on Oral Reading Fluency and Phoneme Segmentation Fluency before using the Fast ForWord product. After Fast ForWord participation, students, on average, made significant improvements in reading ability, reaching the beginning of the year benchmark goal for Oral Reading Fluency.

The Phoneme Segmentation Fluency measure of the DIBELS is appropriate for first grade students and has no benchmark goals available for second graders. Using the benchmark goals for first grade, students in this study, on average, made significant gains and moved closer to the benchmark goal.

Discussion

Language and reading 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.

During the 2004 – 2005 school year, a group of second graders used the Fast ForWord Language product. On average, students made significant improvements in reading skills, moving closer to or achieving their benchmark goals after Fast ForWord use and increasing their reading rate by 50% from 40 words per minute to 61 words per minute. These findings demonstrate that, within Jackson Elementary, an optimal learning environment coupled with a focus on cognitive and early reading skills can help students attain a higher level of reading 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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