60% of Fast ForWord participants in middle and high schools in Marion County made Annual Learning Gains

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Implementation Objectives

The Marion County Public Schools in Ocala, FL, were interested in evaluating the effects of the Fast ForWord products on the academic achievement of their students. They used an observational study involving the assessment of student reading achievement before and after use of the Fast ForWord products and/or Reading Assistant software. Study participants were 6th through 9th graders at middle and high schools in the Marion County Public Schools; most students were eligible for Exceptional Student Services.

Methodology

School personnel tested the students' reading achievement at the beginning and end of the study with the Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test (FCAT).

At each school, educators were trained in:
- Current findings on the neuroscience of how phonemic awareness and the acoustic properties of speech impact rapid development of language and reading skills
- Current research findings on the relationship between fluency and comprehension and how guided oral reading practice can impact reading improvement
- Methods for identifying appropriate candidates for Fast ForWord or Reading Assistant use
- Appropriate measures for testing and evaluation
- Effective implementation techniques
- Use of Progress Tracker reports to monitor student performance
- Techniques for measuring gains students achieve after using the product

Schedule of Use

Students used Reading Assistant software and/or the 40-Minute Fast ForWord protocols. The 40-Minute protocols call for students to use the Fast ForWord products for 40 minutes a day, five days per week for nine to thirteen weeks. Students used the Reading Assistant software for an average of 11 days across 2 ½ months and the Fast ForWord products for an average of 55 days across slightly more than 4 months.

Assessment Results

The Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test (FCAT) is a high stakes test designed to assess student achievement of skills represented in Florida's Sunshine State Standards. Scores are reported in terms of a Developmental Scale Score (DSS).
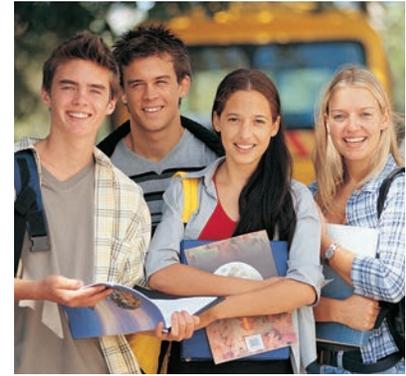

Improved Reading Achievement
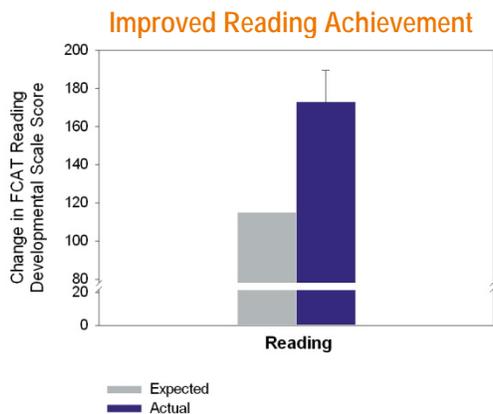
In order for students to meet their Annual Learning Gains (ALG), a component in determining a school's grade, the Florida Department of Education sets criteria. For students in this study, who were all at FCAT Reading Level 1 or 2, there were two criteria: the student must improve an achievement level or the student must improve their DSS by more than the expected gain. The expected gain varies by grade with an average across the students of 115 points. Sixty percent of the students made ALG with the actual improvement of 173 points exceeding the expected gain by a statistically significant amount (t(275) = 3.5; p < 0.05).

Educational Gains

The results found in this study support other studies demonstrating that using Scientific Learning products results in the strengthening of foundational reading skills, better positioning students to partake in the classroom curriculum.

The students significantly improved their reading achievement.

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