

Merrillville boosts ISTEP+ scores using Fast ForWord products

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Implementation Objectives

The Merrillville Community School Corporation has experienced rapidly changing demographics. Fifteen years ago, 28% of the district's students were minority students and 12% were eligible for free or reduced-price lunches. During the 2011-12 school year, 83% of the students were minority students and 57% were eligible for free or reduced-price lunches. In this rapidly changing environment, the district was interested in evaluating the effects of the Fast ForWord products on the academic achievement of its students. Using an observational study design, Fast ForWord participants in 4th through 8th grade were evaluated before and after product use.

Methodology

School personnel tested the students' reading achievement at the beginning and end of the study with the Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress Plus (ISTEP+).

At each school, educators were trained in:

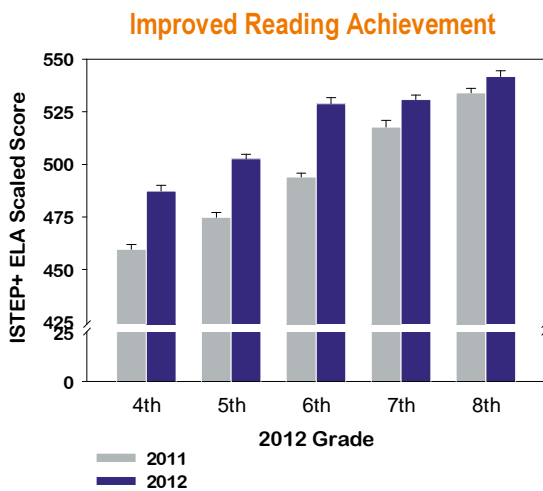
- Current findings on the neuroscience of how phonemic awareness and the acoustic properties of speech impact rapid development of language and reading skills
- Methods for assessing candidates for use of Fast ForWord
- Appropriate measures for testing and evaluation
- Effective implementation techniques
- Use of Progress Tracker reports to monitor student performance
- Techniques for measuring gains students achieve after using the Fast ForWord products

Schedule of Use

In school wide implementations, students used a variety of protocols ranging from 30-Minutes to 90-Minutes. These protocols call for students to use the Fast ForWord products for 30 to 90 minutes a day, five days per week for four to sixteen weeks. Students used the products for an average of 85 days across eight months,

Assessment Results

The Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress Plus (ISTEP+) is a high stakes test designed to measure the achievement of students in 3rd – 8th grade in a variety of subject areas including English language arts (ELA). Results are reported on a vertical scale showing student growth from year to year.



Starting in January, 2011, Fast ForWord products were used with selected students. During the 2011 – 2012 school year, the district implemented the products across the elementary, intermediate, and middle schools. The figure at the left shows the average ISTEP+ ELA scores for five cohorts of students. Each cohort made statistically significant improvements and most cohorts performed better in 2012 than their peers had in 2011. Overall, in 2012, 78% of the students demonstrated Proficiency, up from 71% in 2010. According to Dr. Tony Lux, the Superintendent,

“Fast ForWord has substantially accelerated the increase in student achievement for Merrillville students. The combination of improving the mental operations of processing, memory, attention and sequencing skills in connection with a strong literacy program has enabled students to learn more quickly and to a higher degree.”

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.



Program Study Statistics

School Years:

2010-2012

Number of Schools:

8

Number of Students:

1,944

Grade Level:

4th – 8th Grades

Products Used:

Fast ForWord Language Basics
Fast ForWord Language Series
Fast ForWord Literacy Series
Fast ForWord Reading Readiness
Fast ForWord Reading Levels 1 - 5

Assessment Tool Used:

Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress Plus (ISTEP+)

District Statistics

Ethnic Breakdown

African American: 57%
Hispanic: 19%
Caucasian: 18%
Multiracial: 7%

Classifications

Economically Disadvantaged: 57%
Special Education: 12%
Limited English Proficiency: 3%

Environment:

Suburban Public Schools

For other reports showing significant academic gains following use of Scientific Learning products go to: www.scilearn.com/resultsreports

Contact us for more information:

1-888-282-7401 (US & Canada)
info@scilearn.com
www.scientificlearning.com

