

Early Intervention Helps Students Improve Performance on State Assessments, Exit LEP Status

J.S. Aucoin Elementary – St. Mary Parish Public Schools
Amelia, LA

School Statistics

Number of students: 285

Grades: PreK - 5

District Structure: Rural

Website:

<http://www.stmary.k12.la.us/jsae>

Student Population:

8% African-American

13% Asian

19% Caucasian

60% Hispanic

96% Economically disadvantaged

51% English language learners



Scientific
Learning®

Challenges

- High-poverty school
- Large English language learner (ELL) population

Solutions

- Fast ForWord
- Reading Assistant

Populations served:

- Pre-K-5 students including:
 - ELLs
 - Special education
 - General education

Results:

- Improved school grade from “C” to “A”
- Increased school performance score from 92.7 to 106.1 points
- Earned statewide recognition as a “Top Gains School”
- Increased percentage of students performing at or above grade level on state assessments
- Increased number of ELLs achieving level 5 on English Language Development Assessment
- Increased number of ELLs exiting limited English proficient (LEP) status

Can technology help students speed up the process of learning and comprehending both spoken and written English? Aucoin Elementary Principal Joseph Stadalis was skeptical until he saw it for himself. The Title I elementary school began using the Fast ForWord and Reading Assistant programs as part of a district initiative in St. Mary Parish Public Schools.

“We have a very diverse population and I was skeptical these programs could help,” said Stadalis. “But that all changed when I saw a student from Vietnam using Reading Assistant. He came to us in the third grade, with no English. He’d been here only four months when I saw him in the lab, reading aloud into the microphone, correctly pronouncing words in English — and the light bulb went off in my head. I’m happy to say that student continued to work on the Fast ForWord and Reading Assistant programs, and he’s now in honors classes in high school.”



Building fluency, comprehension, and a lifelong love of reading

All students in grades 1-5 work on Reading Assistant 20 minutes a day, one to five days a week depending on their grade level. Reading Assistant is the only online reading tool that uses speech recognition technology to correct and support students as they read aloud, building fluency and comprehension with the help of a supportive listener.

“Reading Assistant is very helpful for all our students, and for ELLs in particular. Students can listen to a fluent reading of a story and then read it aloud themselves. If they have difficulty reading a word, Reading Assistant provides a visual cue. If they don’t self-correct, it intervenes by pronouncing the word. They can play back recordings of themselves, which helps them grasp what they’re doing wrong so they know how to correct it. They can also click on underlined words to get the definition,” said Ramona Busbice, the Fast ForWord proctor at Aucoin Elementary. “All of that helps to build students’ fluency and comprehension, as well as their vocabulary.”

“Students really enjoy the stories in Reading Assistant,” added Stadalis. “That enjoyment is turning them into lifelong readers. In the last few years, we’ve seen our circulation of Accelerated Reader books more than triple. This passion for reading will help our students be successful in junior high, high school and beyond.”

“Having the Fast ForWord program is like having an individual tutor for each student”

Starting early to improve language and reading skills

While Aucoin Elementary initially began using the Fast ForWord program with all students in grades 3-5, it gradually shifted its use to kindergarten through grade 3. In addition, the Fast ForWord program is used by ELL students, students with disabilities, and struggling learners in grades 4-5, as needed.

“We quickly figured out that if students finish Fast ForWord Reading Level 3, the passing rate on our state test improves,” said Stadalis. “So we decided it would be best to get Fast ForWord into our lower grades as quickly as possible.”

Students work on the Fast ForWord program 30 to 40 minutes a day to build their language and reading skills, while concurrently developing foundational cognitive skills, including memory, attention and processing.

“We have a fifth grader who came to us in the second grade with no English. At first, he struggled in class and was unmotivated. But once he began using the Fast ForWord program, he began making remarkable gains. He saw his progress and how well he was doing, and became very motivated by his success,” said Busbice.

“Having the Fast ForWord program is like having an individual tutor for each student,” said Stadalis. “It also provides us with real-time data for each student, which is valuable for me and our teachers.”

“Thanks to Fast ForWord, our teachers are very aware of students’ needs,” added Busbice. “It helps them plan small group interventions for our tier 2 students, and really helps to close those gaps.”

Achieving schoolwide gains: from a 'C' to an 'A'

"In the time that Aucoin Elementary has had Fast ForWord and Reading Assistant, it has progressed from a 'C' school to an 'A' school," said Leonard Armato, superintendent of St. Mary Parish Public Schools. "These programs have had a positive impact on student performance on our state tests in both English language arts and math."

Aucoin Elementary

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
School Grade	C	B	B	A	A
School Performance Score	--	92.7	97.5	100.7	106.1

In 2016, Aucoin Elementary achieved a school performance score of 106.1 points, a gain of 5.4 points from the previous year. It received progress points for its efforts in increasing student achievement and exceeding growth expectations among the lowest-performing students on state accountability testing. In addition, it was named a "Top Gains School" in 2016 for achieving its growth target and meeting Adequate Yearly Progress within tested subgroups.

"When students are young they're like sponges, particularly with the part of the brain that's responsible for language development — whether it's English, Spanish, Vietnamese or any other language," said Stadalis. "If we can get students into the Fast ForWord and Reading Assistant programs at an early age, it has a tremendous impact on their language and reading skills, which plants the seeds for their future success. This is true for all of our students, whether they're native English speakers or English learners."

Assessing out of ELL programs

Aucoin Elementary has also seen gains in student performance on the English Language Development Assessment (ELDA), given annually to students who are learning English as a second language. ELDA measures proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, writing and comprehending English.

"In previous years, we rarely had students test out of our ELL program. In one year, we had eight or nine students achieve a level 5 on the ELDA and exit LEP status," said Stadalis. "They're really accelerating their learning with the Fast ForWord and Reading Assistant programs. These programs go hand-in-hand. They're a key part of what makes it all work here at our school."



For more info contact:
Phone: 888 810-0250
Email: info@scilearn.com