

Research and Outcomes Department

Anne Arundel County Public Schools, MD

In the Anne Arundel County Public Schools in Annapolis, Maryland, Sunset Elementary School took an aggressive approach towards teaching reading to struggling students. Their approach involved using Fast ForWord products to build the foundation, and then direct instruction. After Fast ForWord participation and direct instruction, 80% of the fourth grade students receiving special education services at Sunset Elementary were proficient readers.

The Program Evaluation

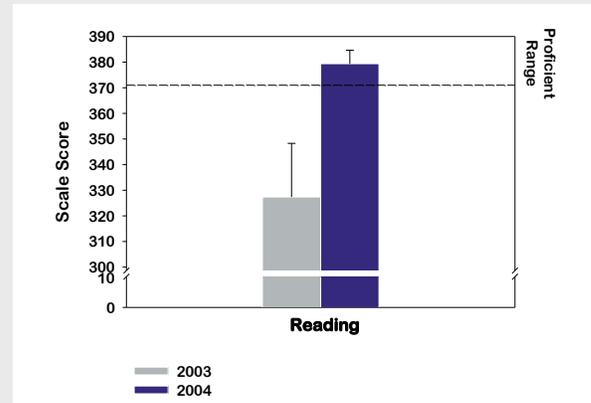
Struggling students at Sunset Elementary School, who were in the fourth grade during the 2003 – 2004 school year, used the Fast ForWord products as second and/or third graders. In 2003, after participation on the Fast ForWord products, students had their reading skills evaluated with the Maryland School Assessment (MSA). A direct instruction curriculum, SRA Corrective Reading, was then implemented county-wide, and the students' skills were re-evaluated in 2004.

The MSA is an annual state assessment that evaluates knowledge of state content standards and measures student achievement in reading for grades K-8. It is a criterion- and norm-referenced assessment and meets the requirements of No Child Left Behind. Scores are reported as three statewide performance standards: Basic, Proficient, and Advanced.

For the Reading section of the MSA, a score of Proficient indicates a student is able to read and comprehend grade appropriate literature and informational passages.

SRA Corrective Reading is a direct instruction intervention that includes four levels of decoding and four levels of comprehension targeted at the reading deficits and skill levels found in older students. It includes a point system based on realistic goals designed to encourage students who are often expected to fail.

Improved Reading Skills



On average, the students who used the Fast ForWord products showed significant improvements in their reading achievement after Fast ForWord participation and direct instruction. The students receiving services for special education out-performed other students in the district who were receiving services but who had not used Fast ForWord products.

After using the combination of Fast ForWord products and direct instruction, students in this study had one of the highest levels of proficient readers in the district among students receiving special education services.

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

Twenty-one students participated in this study and had MSA scores available for analysis. All 21 used the Fast ForWord Language product; 18 also used 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

During the 2003 – 2004 school year, direct instruction was implemented county-wide for addressing the needs of struggling readers. Following the use of direct instruction, 56% of the fourth graders in the Anne Arundel County Public Schools who were receiving services for special education were proficient readers. At Sunset Elementary School, 80% of the fourth graders receiving services for special education were proficient readers – nearly as high as the percentage of proficient readers county-wide in the regular education population (86%). Sunset Elementary aggressively used interventions to develop the skills that struggling readers needed. These interventions included the use of Fast ForWord products to develop the students' foundational skills.

Discussion

The Anne Arundel County Public Schools used SRA Corrective Reading for instructional intervention for all struggling readers in the district but only students in this study also participated on the Fast ForWord products. With the implementation of an array of interventions, including Fast ForWord products to establish foundational cognitive and early reading skills, 80% of students at Sunset Elementary who were receiving special education services achieved proficient reading levels.

This combination of Fast ForWord products and Corrective Reading resulted in students making significant improvements in their foundational cognitive and reading skills, suggesting that using the Fast ForWord products strengthened the students' foundational skills and helped them benefit more from the classroom curriculum.

**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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