

## Research and Outcomes Department

### Niagara Falls City School District, NY

The Niagara Falls City School District, located on the Niagara River between Buffalo and Toronto, serves more than 9,000 students in 14 schools. Students in the District struggle with many challenges; increasingly more students are coming from families with single parents, two working parents, unemployed parents, or teenage parents. As the District guides students to become lifelong learners, and works towards having all students succeed, they were interested in a research-based intervention that would help them reach their goals. They turned to Fast ForWord products to build the foundation for student success.

#### The Program Evaluation

Students had their reading performance evaluated with the Oral and Written Language Scales (OWLS) and two subtests from the Test of Auditory Perceptual Skills (TAPS) before and after Fast ForWord participation.

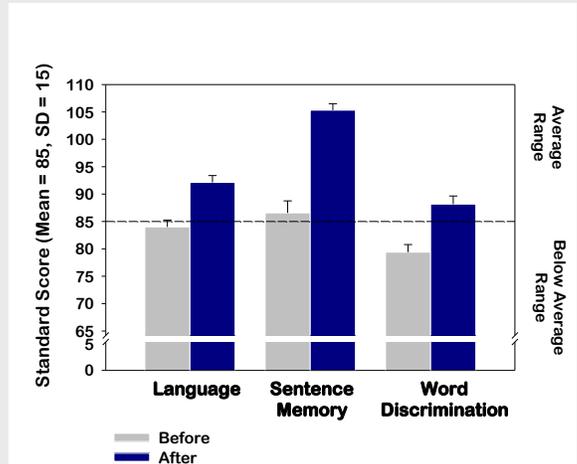
The OWLS is an assessment of receptive and expressive language. It is designed to assess vocabulary and grammar as well as higher-order thinking and the function and structure of language. The Oral Composite, used in this analysis, is an overall composite for the Listening Comprehension and Oral Expression Scales.

The TAPS is a nationally normed assessment that evaluates a student's auditory and/or language skills. The two subtests that were used for this study include Auditory Sentence Memory and Auditory Word Discrimination.

#### Approach and Methodology

Computer labs dedicated to the use of Fast ForWord products were set up in two elementary schools and a middle school. Students were selected to use the products through recommendations by pupil service

#### Improved Cognitive and Language Skills



Assessment scores from before and after participation on the Fast ForWord products show that, on average, the students made significant improvements in their language, memory, and auditory discrimination skills.

*On average, students achieved substantial improvements in their cognitive and language abilities with test scores improving between one-half a standard deviation (on language skills) and nearly one and one-half standard deviations (on auditory sentence memory skills.)*

teams and teachers, and through special education services.

Following training, speech teachers, classroom associates, teaching assistants, and classroom special education teachers monitored student use of the products. These monitors regularly shared student progress and data gathered from assessments with classroom teachers. In turn, classroom teachers used this information to adjust classroom instruction and student work.

## Participation

Seventy-seven students participated in this study and had pre- and post-participation data available for analysis. Sixty-six percent of the participants were receiving services for special education (9% in self-contained classrooms; 57% through consultant teachers). The rest (34%) were participating in the general education curriculum only.

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 Middle & High School and Fast ForWord Language to Reading protocols called for students to use the products for 90 minutes a day, 5 days a week for four to eight weeks.

## Assessment Results

On average, students who used the Fast ForWord products made significant improvements on all three assessments with greatest improvements on the TAPS: Auditory Sentence Memory (greater than one standard deviation), and the smallest improvements on the OWLS (greater than one-half standard deviation). Improvements were similar for students receiving services for special education and those participating in the general education curriculum.

## Discussion

Cognitive, language and listening skills are critical for all students, impacting their ability to benefit from instruction, follow instructions, and participate in class discussions. Strong linguistic skills also provide a critical foundation for building reading and writing skills.

Scores from before and after Fast ForWord participation show that, on average, students made substantial increases in their cognitive, language, and listening abilities. These improvements ranged from one-half a standard deviation on language skills to more than one standard deviation on auditory sentence memory skills. These improvements suggest that using the Fast ForWord products strengthened the students' foundational skills and better positioned the students to take advantage of the academic environment.

**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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