

National Research Project
Northeastern Junior College Comparison Study
2005 – 2006
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During the 2005-2006 school year, a national study on the effectiveness of Reading Plus was undertaken by Dr. John Shelley-Tremblay, Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, University of South Alabama. Part of this involves a longitudinal study being conducted with nine schools, which will continue until spring 2007. In the fall of 2005, Northeastern Junior College in Sterling, Colorado, had 63 students enrolled in the Reading Plus system. In the spring of 2006, there were an additional 32 students, five of whom went through the entire course in both semesters and will, therefore, be treated separately.

This research project is being conducted to determine the effects of Reading Plus instruction on students' standardized test scores using the Accuplacer Test. Many studies have been conducted in the past over a period of a semester or a school year with younger students. This study is being conducted to document the results of using Reading Plus with college students.

All students at Northeastern Junior College are given the Accuplacer Test upon admission to the college. They are placed in various courses based on their scores. Of the 90 students who were placed in Reading Plus, 57 were retested on the Accuplacer at the end of one semester in Reading Plus. The five students who participated for the entire academic year were tested at the end of both the fall and spring semesters. The 57 students who participated for one full semester completed an average of 41 Guided Reading lessons. The five who continued in Reading Plus for both semesters completed an average of 61 lessons, for a combined average of 43 lessons. The students involved used a variety of Reading Plus programs, including PAVE, Guided Reading, Cloze Plus, Reading Around Words, and Comprehension Power. Of the fall students who took both the Accuplacer pre-tests and post-tests, 25 were also both pre- and post-

tested using the Visagraph Eye-Movement Recording System. This number included the five who continued for a second semester in Reading Plus.

A preliminary analysis has been done to evaluate the effectiveness of Reading Plus in increasing Accuplacer scores among college students. Table 1 shows the preliminary placement scores for all 62 students and their retest scores after engaging in a Reading Plus course of study. The score breakdowns of Below, At, or Above Basic are based on the interpretive recommendations made on the website of the College Board, creator of the Accuplacer assessment. The labels ascribed to each score category are based on the skill descriptions for each score category.

Overall, the students' scores did improve. Whereas on the preliminary assessment done upon entry into the college only 45 percent of the students were able to score at or above the Basic level, 73 percent of the students scored at these levels when they were reassessed at the end of their course of study.

Table 2 shows the change in Accuplacer preliminary assessment and retest scores of students participating in Reading Plus. Overall, the students also made clear gains within the Reading Plus system. The 57 students who participated for one semester completed an average of 41 lessons in Guided Reading with an average comprehension of 71 percent. The Part B, or guided slot, rate improved by an average of 126 words per minute, or 89 percent. The students who participated for one semester improved their Part A, or independent, reading rate by 52 percent, or an average of 69 words per minute. Table 3 shows the change in Guided Reading Part B initial and final rates for students who participated for one semester.

Table 4 shows the change in Guided Reading Part B rates for students who participated for two semesters. The five students who participated for both semesters completed an average of 61 lessons in Guided Reading with an average comprehension of 58 percent. The students' Part B, or guided slot, rate improved by an average of 166 words per minute, or 117 percent. The students who continued for both semesters improved their Part A, or independent, rate by 96 percent, or an average of 156 words per minute. The Accuplacer scores of these five students improved by an average of 43 percent, compared to the average 25 percent increase achieved by the other students.

Twenty-five of the students who were tested twice on the Accuplacer were also pre- and post-tested using the Visagraph Eye-Movement Recording System. The results are shown in Table 5. Students are expected to improve by one Grade Level Equivalent (GLE) over the course of a school year due to regular instruction, reading activities, and the normal maturation process. The GLE scores of students who were enrolled for a semester of Reading Plus improved by an average of 4.6 GLEs over the course of a single semester. This is significantly higher than the expected .5 GLE improvement. The students also decreased their number of fixations and regressions, and increased their assessed reading rate.

Overall, the students who participated in a Reading Plus course of study showed marked improvement in all of the assessed areas. Those who participated for two semesters showed a greater improvement than those who participated for only one semester. Continued assessment of the progress of students who participate in Reading Plus at Northeastern Junior College is planned. In addition, those students who complete a Reading Plus course of study will be tracked as they proceed through college to gauge their continued academic success.

Table 1. Preliminary Placement Scores and Retest Scores of Participating Students

	Preliminary Assessment	Retest After Reading Plus
Below Basic	34 students	17 students
Basic	25 students	33 students
Above Basic	3 students	12 students

Table 2. Preliminary Assessment and Retest Scores of Students Who Participated One Semester

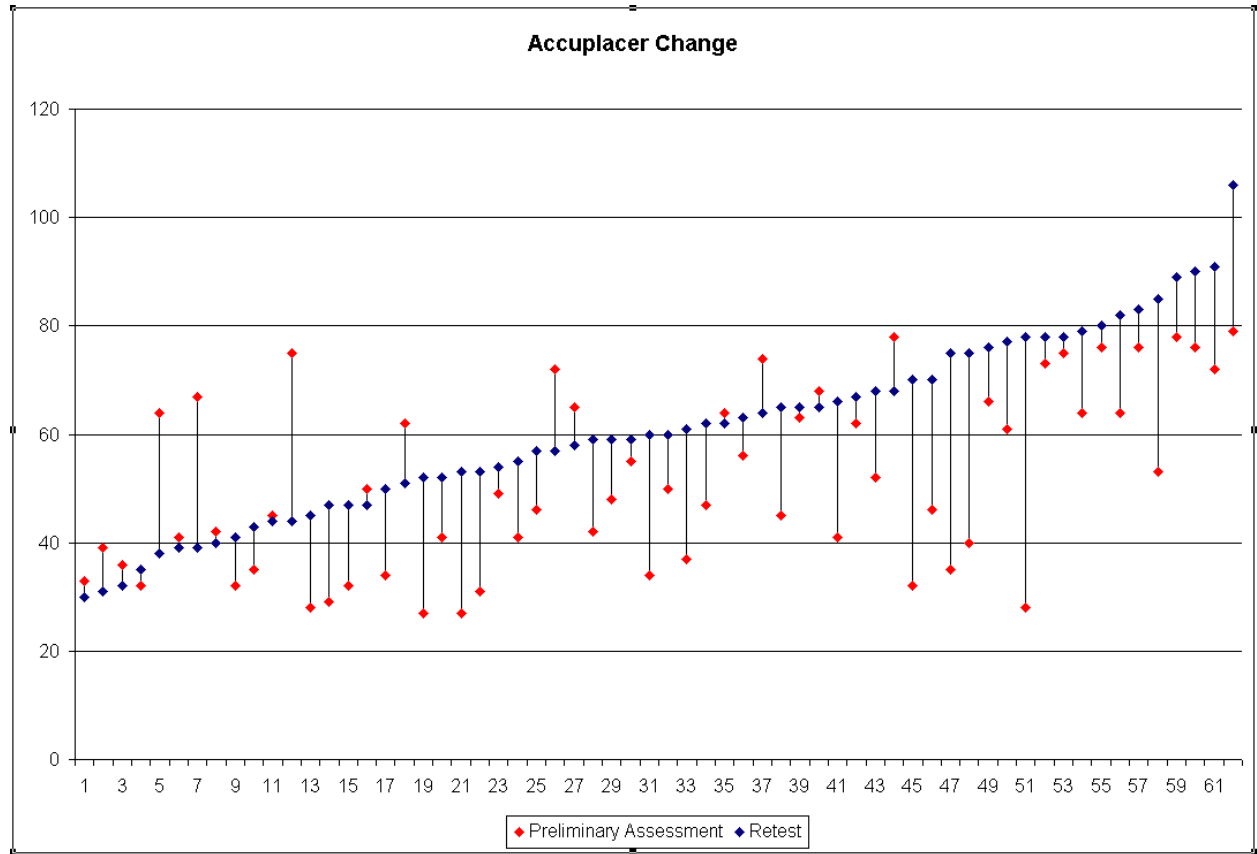


Table 3. Guided Reading Part B Rates for Students Who Participated One Semester

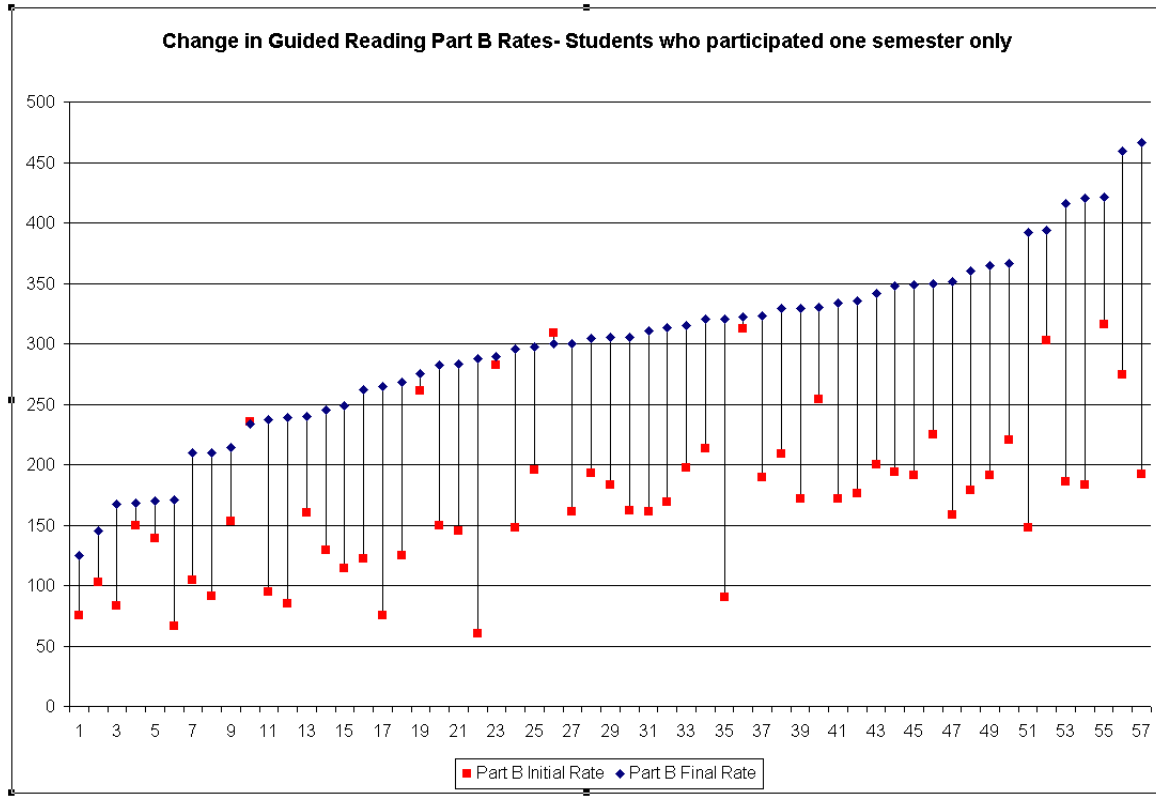


Table 4. Guided Reading Part B Rates for Students Who Participated Two Semesters

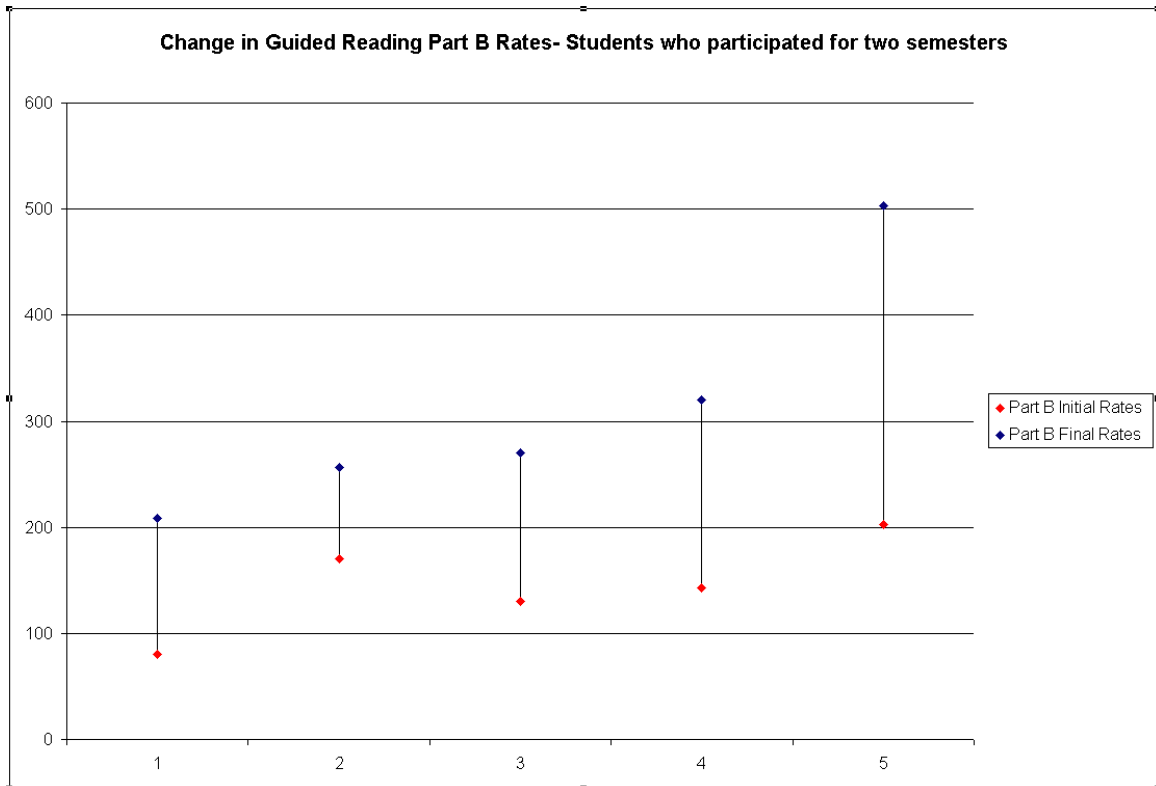


Table 5. Pre- and Post-Test Results of Participating Students

	Pre-test	Post-test	Change	National Norm*
Grade Level Equivalent	5.2	9.8	4.6	13
Visagraph Reading Rate	163.2	229.6	66.3	280
Fixations (fewer are better)	143.0	106.4	-36.5	90
Regressions (fewer are better)	22.1	9.3	-12.8	15
*National norms established in a study by Stanford Taylor et al.				