

Summary of: *Exploring the value-added of a guided, silent reading intervention: Effects on struggling third-grade students' reading achievement**

Purpose of Study

The study by Reutzel, Petscher, and Spichtig (in press) explored the effects of Reading Plus® with struggling third-grade readers who were retained in third grade as a result of their performance on the reading portion of the FCAT**, an end-of-year high-stakes assessment. A full report of this study has been accepted for publication in *The Journal of Educational Research*.

Background

Ensuring students learn to read is among the highest priorities of elementary schools (Boyer, 1995). By the end of third grade, students are expected to independently and proficiently read both narrative and informational texts at the high end of the grade 2-3 band for text complexity (Common Core State Standards, 2011). Fluent reading is the bridge between word recognition and reading comprehension processes (National Reading Panel, 2000; Rasinski, 1989; Reutzel & Hollingsworth, 1993; Samuels & Farstrup, 2006). Fluency is a foundational skill that supports comprehension and therefore must be developed as part of a third-grade reading curriculum (Common Core State Standards, 2011).

Reading Plus®

In alignment with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), Reading Plus® offers a wide range of carefully leveled narrative and informational texts that engage students, encourage students to read with purpose and understanding, and develop the skills needed to achieve year-end expectations as outlined in CCSS. Reading practice lessons are carefully scaffolded to address individual student needs and facilitate each student's development of comprehension-based silent reading fluency toward level goals and independent silent reading proficiency.

Population

The propensity score sample constructed for this study's matched quasi-experimental research design contained 80 third-grade students enrolled in 11 schools in a large, urban public school system in the state of Florida. All 80 third-grade students were not promoted to fourth grade based on their performance on the FCAT; all students had scored an FCAT level 1 on the pre-test.

Implementation Overview

All 80 retained students followed the state-approved Comprehensive Core Reading Program adopted by this large, urban Florida school district over the course of a school year. All 80 students engaged in a dedicated and uninterrupted two-hour block of classroom reading instruction daily. The first 30-40 minutes involved whole group instruction using Houghton Mifflin's comprehensive core *Reading* program. Another 30 minutes were dedicated to writing instruction. For the remainder of the two-hour block, teachers differentiated instruction using small groups and center rotations. Approved supplemental reading intervention programs included *Quick Reads®*, *Elements of Reading: Vocabulary* and supplemental activities provided by Houghton Mifflin's *Reading* program. In addition to the dedicated two-hour block, all 80 students engaged in a 30-minute supplemental reading block daily. The 40 treatment students used *Reading Plus®* and the 40 control students used any of the following programs: *Soar to Success*, *Essential Elements of Reading*, *Vocabulary*, *Voyager Passport™*, or *Earobics®*.

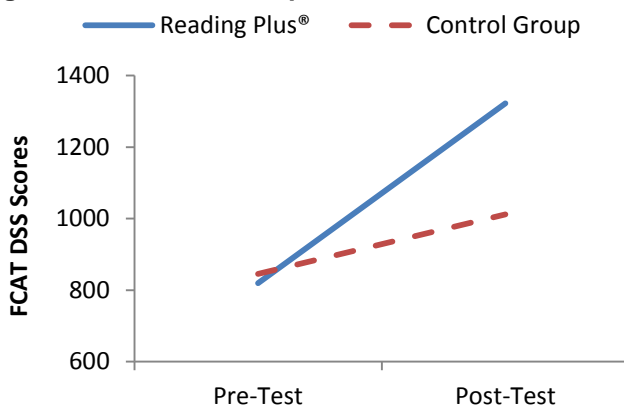
Summary of Findings

Reading Plus® demonstrated a statistically significant effect on the retained third-grade students' FCAT achievement at a probability level of < .001.

Results

The Reading Plus® students' mean FCAT Developmental Scaled Scores (DSS) improved by an average of 502.7 points, effectively moving the scores from a mean of 819.9 (SD = 217.9) to 1322.6 (SD=171.2). By contrast, the control group's mean FCAT DSS scores improved only by 166.8 points from a pre-test mean of 845.5 (SD = 117.7) to a post-test mean of 1012.3 (SD = 357.5). The gain difference between the two groups was significant at a probability level of $<.001$. Figure 1 shows a depiction of the FCAT improvement between pre- and post-test.

Figure 1. FCAT Score Improvement



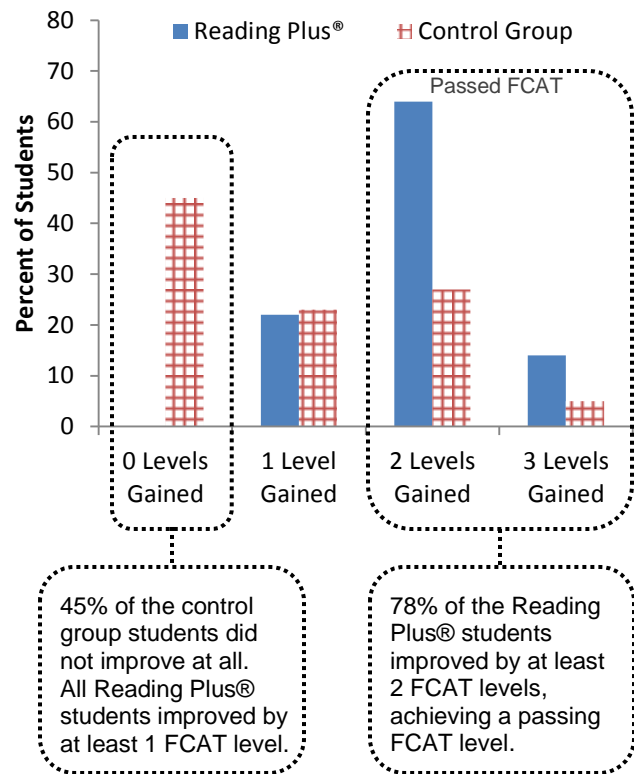
The mean FCAT score change difference is significant at $p < .001$.

All students who participated in the study had achieved an FCAT level 1 on the pre-test. Following the treatment phase, all students from the Reading Plus® group moved out of level 1. By improving to FCAT level 3 or higher, 78% of the treatment group students achieved a passing FCAT level. In contrast, 45% of the control group students were not able to improve and remained within FCAT level 1. Only 32% of the control group students achieved a passing FCAT level. See Figure 2 for a depiction of the FCAT level gains for both Reading Plus® and control groups.

* This Research Brief is a summary of the findings described in the article *Exploring the value-added of a guided, silent reading intervention: Effects on struggling third-grade students' reading achievement* by D. Ray Reutzel (Utah State University), Yaacov Petscher (Florida State University), and Alexandra N. Spichtig (Capella University) that was published in *The Journal of Educational Research*, Vol. 105(6), September 2012, pp.404-415.

** The Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) is utilized to assess Florida's Sunshine State Standards in reading, writing, math, and science. The internal-consistency reliability for the FCAT is .90 (Cronbach's alpha) with a correlation between year-to-year FCAT scores of approximately .75 in elementary schools (Florida Department of Education, 2001).

Figure 2. FCAT Level Gains



The Reading Plus® students also achieved higher SAT-10 gains than the control group students. The gain difference between the two groups was approaching significance. However, the student sample was too small to provide sufficient statistical power to detect a statistically significant difference.

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