

AWARD INTERVENTION REPORT ON A FIVE-WEEK STUDY IN SAN DIEGO

September 15, 2009 – November 10, 2009

Project Research and Training

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Introduction

AWARD Reading is a K-3 literacy program that fully integrates technology and print to accelerate reading achievement for all students. The program consists of over 300 narrative and informational texts. The traditional print component is matched with the same texts in digital format and over 800 interactive skills activities delivered on the internet or on CD-ROM. The program also has phonics components—alphabet (K), letter combinations (Grade 1), and word families (Grade 1).

Students show a high-level of interest when technology is partnered with print. This carries over into their instructional experiences whether in small groups or as an independent literacy activity. Literacy development needs a sound framework and AWARD provides this with scaffolded skills instruction.

A recent year-long research study conducted by Dr. Cathy Collins Block and Dr. John N. Mangieri in New York City schools found that students using AWARD produced positive results whether they were ELLs or Title I students, and whether the program was used as an after-school, push-in, pull-out, or self contained model. (See the full report in the Appendix)

Proposal

San Diego Unified District reviewed the New York City research report and sought to use AWARD as an intervention package containing technology and print to look for evidence of the program's success in San Diego. However, unlike New York, the timeline was only five weeks.

Dr. Linda Gohlke, Program Director, Curriculum, Assessment, and Instructional Design, met with AWARD Reading representatives and agreed to a proposal to conduct a five-week study of a 30-minute intervention program outside of the literacy block, which uses the basal from Houghton Mifflin, to extend a unit of study by using AWARD Reading on a daily basis in the classroom.

Dr. Gohlke invited schools with low-achieving students who had already purchased AWARD to participate in the study, and from the respondents, two were selected that could guarantee more than three computers per classroom for the intervention students to work on daily.

The principals of the two selected schools chose two classes at random at each grade level from kindergarten through to grade three to take part in the study. This totaled 16 classes altogether.

The classroom teachers selected their five lowest (struggling) Tier II students to receive the AWARD Reading instruction for the 25 days of the study. This totaled 80 students. Among those selected, there were some Tier III students.

Richard Allington believes the smaller the group, the more likely the intervention will succeed (*What Really Matters in Response to Intervention*, Allyn & Bacon, 2009).

...we find a near unanimous agreement that very small instructional groups or tutorials are needed (Allington, 2006; Denton, Vaughn, & Fletcher, 2003; Foorman & Torgeson, 2001; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2005; McEneaney, Lose, & Schwartz, 2006).

September	15–22 Teacher training 21–28 Pre-tests 28–30 Study
October	1–30 Study
November	2–6 Post-tests 10 Report due

Procedures

Approval to conduct the research investigation was given by Dr. Linda Gohlke. Following this approval, the schools in the study were identified and an explanation of the AWARD program was provided to the school principals, literacy facilitators, and teachers. Further AWARD Reading instructional materials for the five-week intervention study were delivered to each of the classes in the two schools.

AWARD Reading is a comprehensive, balanced literacy curriculum program that partners print and technology to deliver literacy outcomes to 21st-century students. Students use technology with text in the program every day. The following components are part of the daily instruction.

- Sequential learning
- Phonics instruction
- Explicit instruction
- Differentiation options
- Tools to provide feedback to parents and students
- Computer-assisted skills-based assessment
- Instruction based on research

Adjustment of levels for Intervention

Kindergarten

The first half of the Kindergarten level (Magenta) was used.

(DRA levels A, 1 & 2; Fountas & Pinnell A, B) See the full correlation in the Appendix.

Grade 1

The second half of the Kindergarten level (Red) was used.

(DRA levels 3 & 4; Fountas & Pinnell C)

Grade 2

The highest level of Grade 1 (Green) was used.

(DRA levels 12 & 14; Fountas & Pinnell G, H)

Grade 3

The lowest level of Grade 2 (Orange) was used.

(DRA level 16; Fountas & Pinnell I)

Training

The class teachers involved in the study met for professional development with AWARD consultants. The teachers at School 1 met for a period of 30 minutes per class per grade level. At School 2, the training session was for one hour per class per grade level.

Training Plan

Overview of AWARD

Participants learn how to recognize and use the components of the program, a hands-on experience

Model the AWARD Unit of Study

AWARD consultants support teachers with an understanding of the AWARD Units of Study

Implementation

Participants learn to integrate technology daily into the AWARD Units of Study to enhance small group instruction

Management plans will be shared to support a rotation of computer access for students.

Debriefing

Participants have the opportunity to clarify and share ideas.

The CD-ROM sample is shared during this presentation. Teachers are asked to ensure students in the study have computer access using AWARD for at least 15 minutes per day out of the 30 minutes allocated for intervention.

As the first Unit of Study for the school year from Houghton Mifflin (the basal used by the schools) was a non-fiction unit, AWARD was mindful of this and supplied suggestions in the training to complement and extend the non-fiction theme. Mini units of study were designed for the 25-day study using non-fiction at each grade level.

Follow-up Visit

The trainer visited classrooms midway through the five-week study to answer any questions. She found the teachers were committed to supporting students and they reported that students were engaged and enjoyed working on AWARD daily. The computers were effectively running the program and most teachers had the number of computers they needed so that intervention students could use AWARD for at least 15 minutes each day. The teachers had been successful at integrating technology with group reading. They were focused on meeting the needs of their students.

A research-based intervention design

The model for the small group intervention was a daily 30-minute design, based on one in Richard Allington's *What Really Matters in Response to Intervention*.

- 20 minutes of reading appropriate new texts and rereading previously read texts
- 5 minutes of word work or phonological skills work
- 5 minutes of work on comprehension skills and strategies (p. 67)

Student Timetable

Daily model (30 minutes allocated)

5–10 minutes	Small Group Instruction Group Reading of text and modeling activities on CD-ROM
15 minutes	Independent Learning Independent time on computers to practice reading and skills activities
5–10 minutes	Implementation of the Unit of Study Activity Choose an activity from the Unit of Study to implement e.g. Reading, Word/Language or Writing

Allington states,

What will be absolutely critical is that in this redesign we must ensure that reading volume is dramatically increased if accelerated reading growth is the intended outcome. (p. 69)

In the AWARD model (see above), the small group instruction and independent learning provide a total of 20 minutes of reading appropriate new texts and rereading previously read texts in print and on the computers.

Administration of the Tests

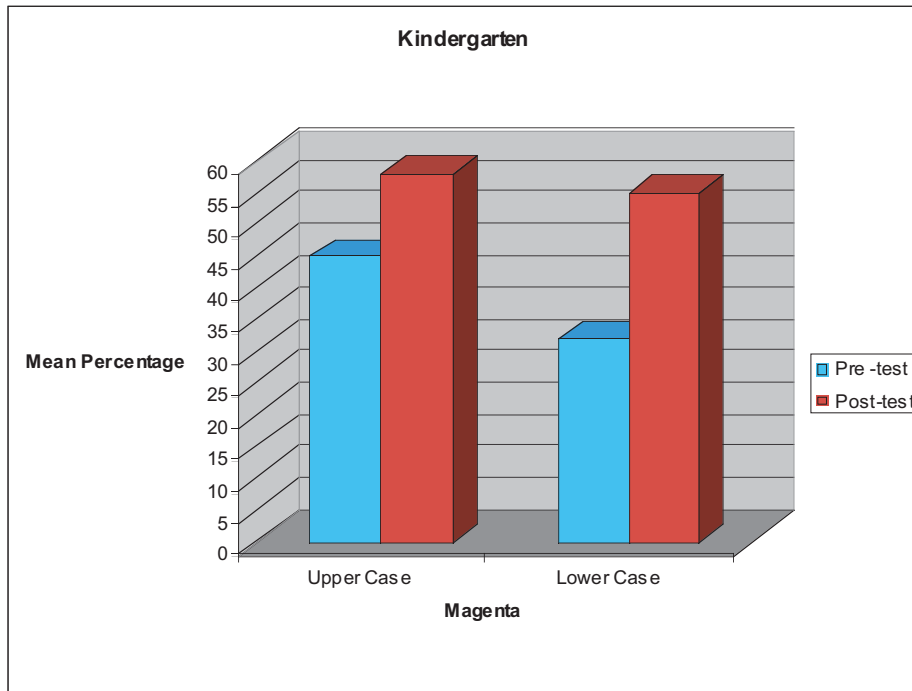
The study was for five weeks of instruction, with one week allocated for pre-testing and one week for post-testing as requested by the San Diego Department of Education.

Two consultants were hired and trained by AWARD in testing procedure as set out in the pre- and post-test document. (see Appendix) The tests were selected from the AWARD formative assessment computer program. This software was loaded onto the class computers. All testing was done on the computer and the results were saved to a database where they could be printed out as raw results or as a bar graph. (see Appendix for a sample printout)

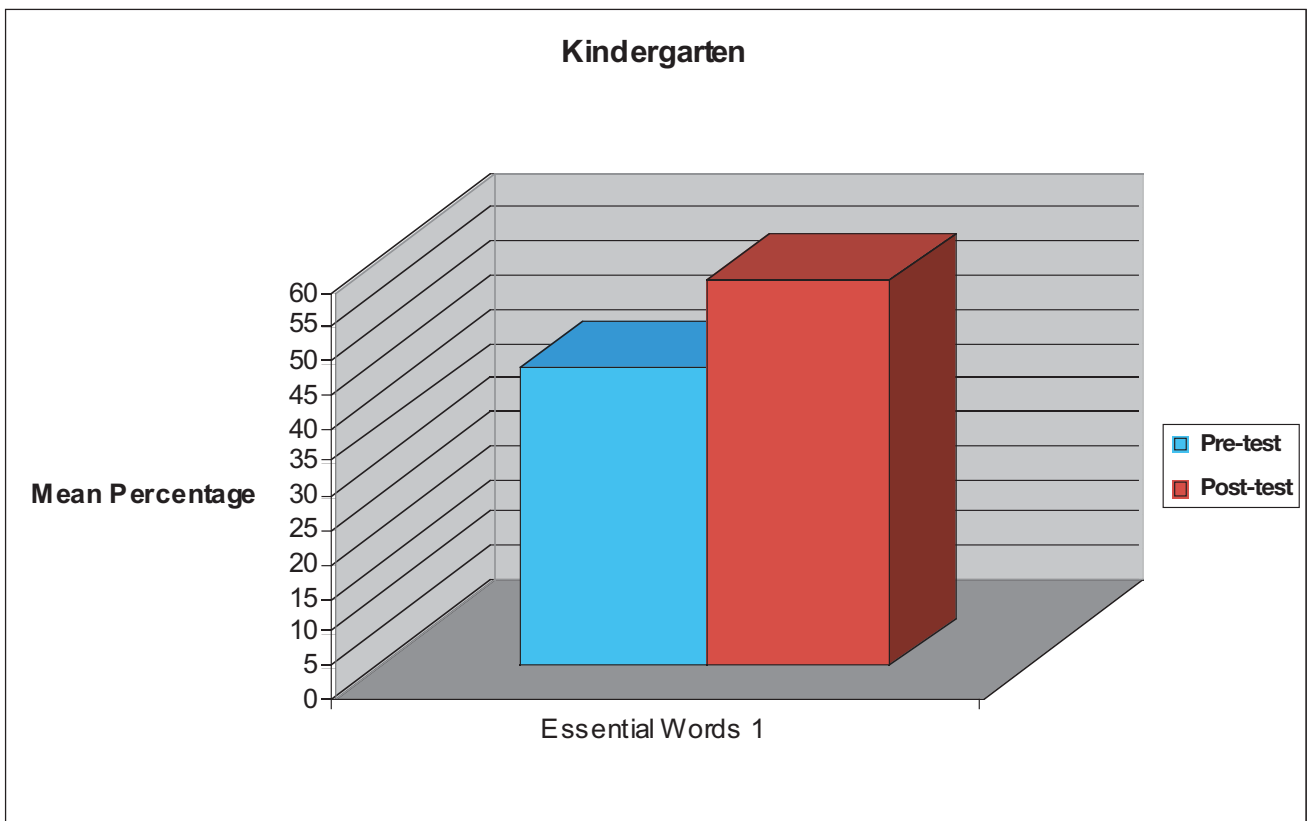
The testing personnel followed a timetable drawn up by the principals to ensure each student completed the tests on the computer. Each test took approximately 15 minutes.

Pre-test and post-test results were printed and delivered by the testing personnel to an independent evaluator for analysis and a final report.

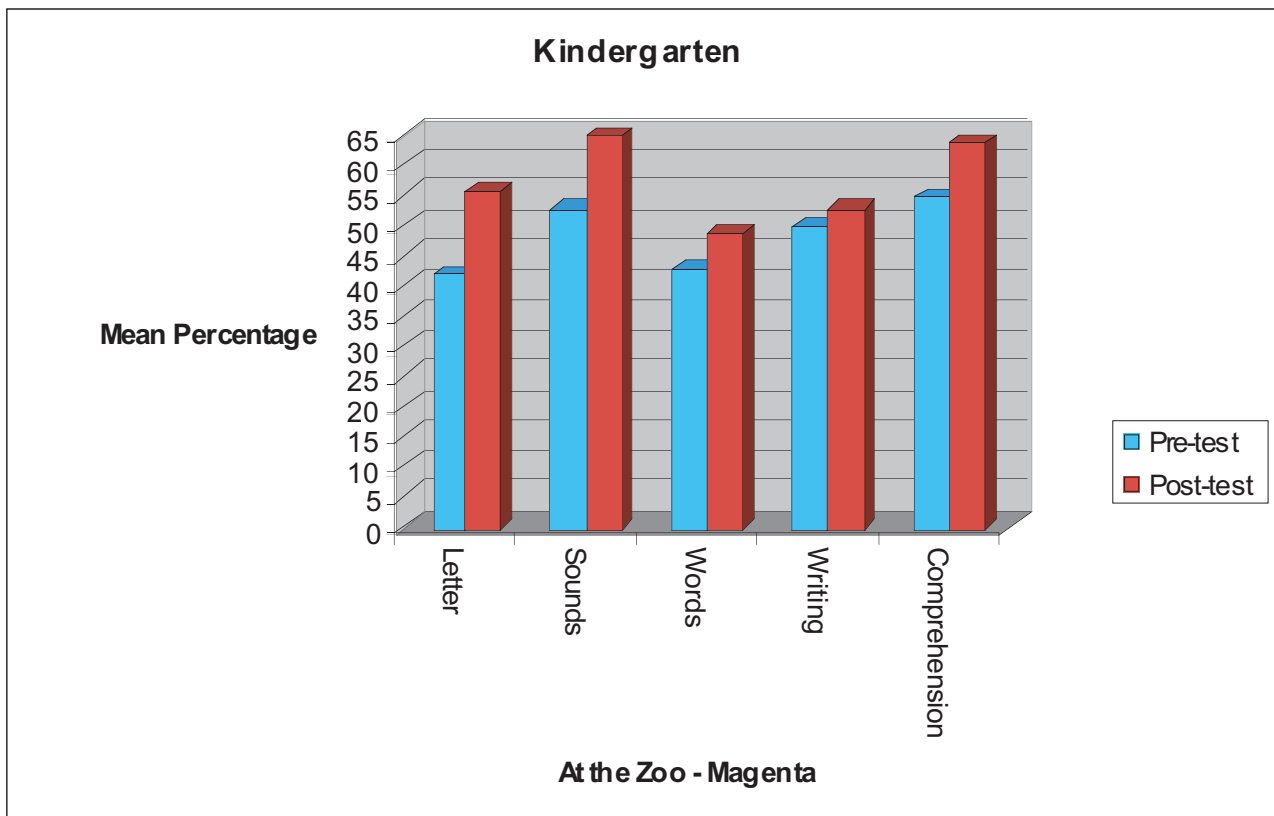
Results



The Kindergarten results show that over the five weeks there has been a positive shift of 13% in the students' recognition of upper case letters and 23% in their recognition of lower case letters. Sixteen students were assessed on both pre- and post-test. 88% of the students showed an improvement, with the most significant being a student showing a shift from 8% to 100%.



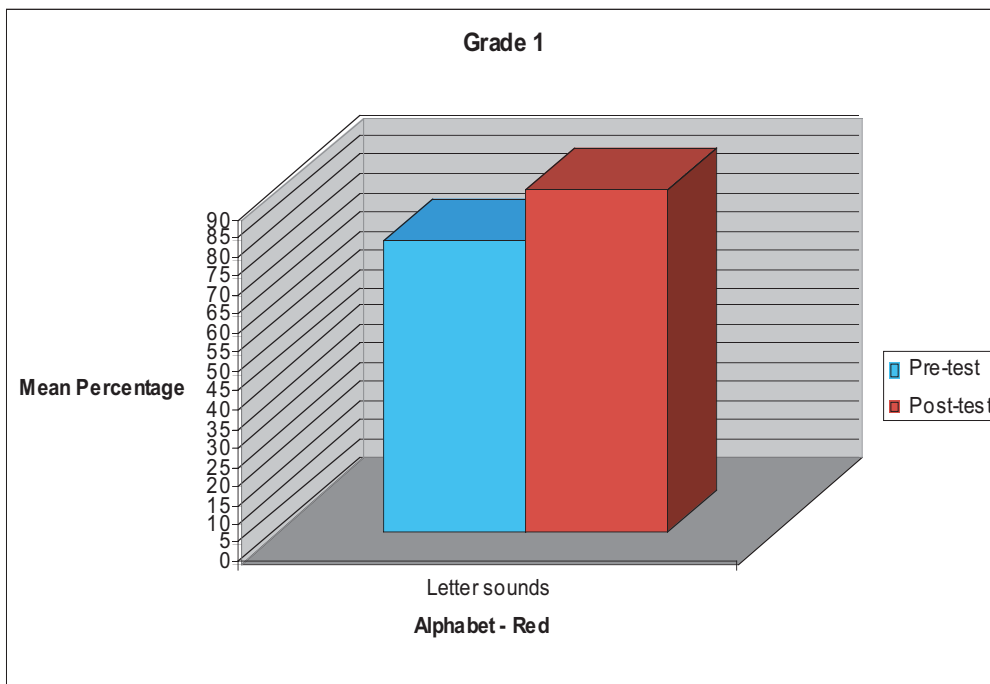
These results show an improvement of 33% in students' recognition of essential words 1 from pre-test to post-test. 17 students were assessed on both pre- and post-tests. 70% of the students improved their score and 12% scored the same on both tests.



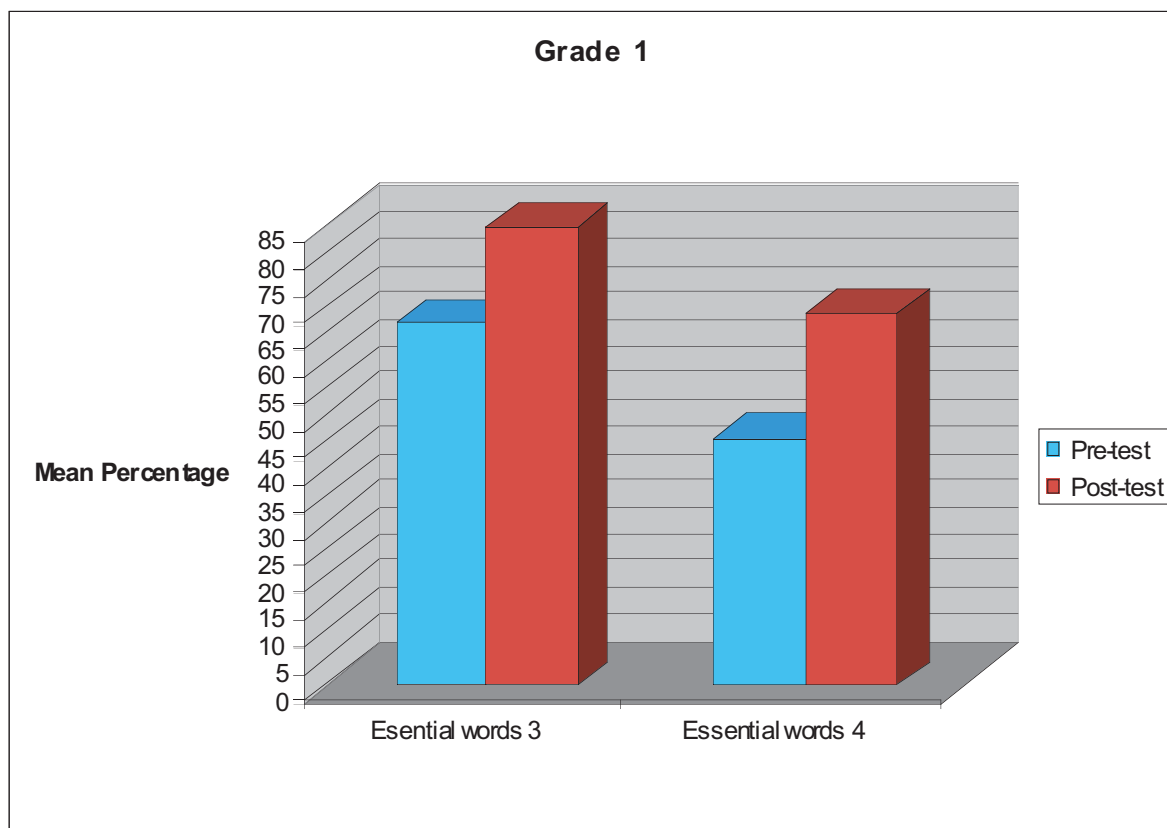
These results show an improvement in all areas assessed. Seventeen students were assessed on both pre- and post-tests. The four students who scored 100% on the pre-test for letters also scored 100% on the post-test. Two students scored 0% on the pre-test for letters and 100% on the post-test. 88% of students retained or improved their score for sounds on the post-test. There was minimal shift in words and writing from pre-test to post-test.

47% of students improved their comprehension score in the post-test. 41% of students retained their score on the post-test.

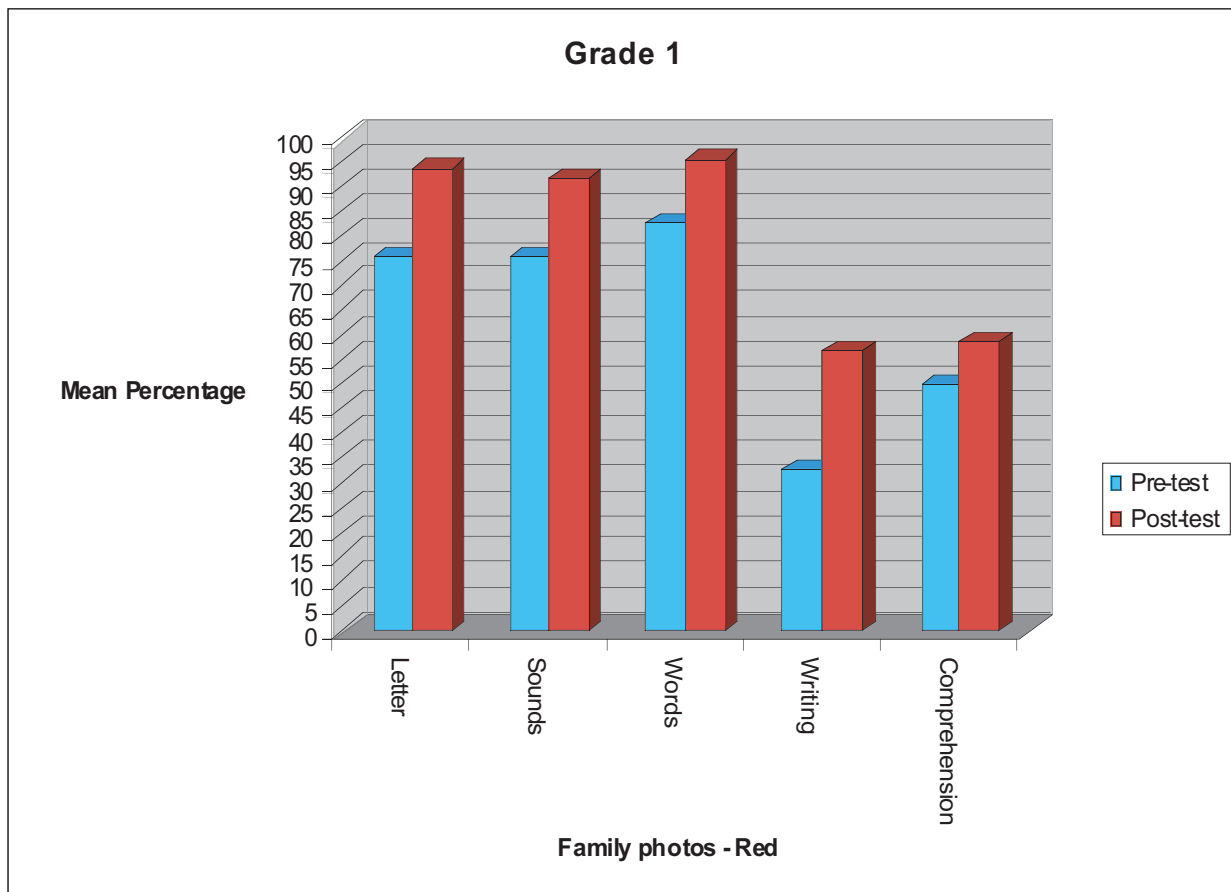
Due to teacher absenteeism students in three of the assessed classes were on the AWARD program for only 22 days instead of the 25. Of the 18 students assessed only seven had full attendance, with some students being absent for up to three days.



The Grade 1 results show that over the five weeks there has been a positive shift of 13% in the students' knowledge of letter sounds. Of the 19 students who were assessed, 84% showed an improvement or retained their pre-test score.



These results show a positive shift of 18% in students' recognition of essential words 3 and 23 % of essential words 4 from pre-test to post-test. The three students who scored 100% on the pre-test, scored 100% on the post-test. Nine students scored 100% on the post-tests.



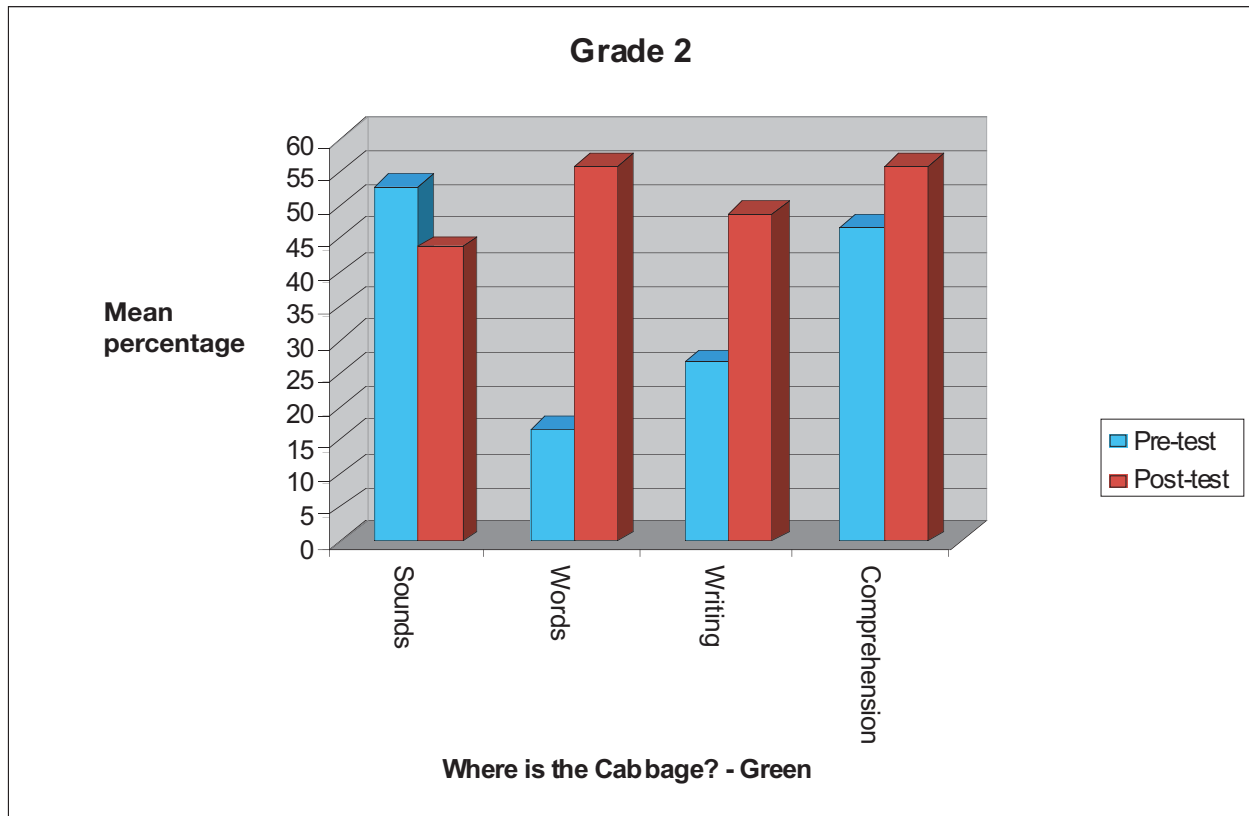
These results show a positive shift in all areas assessed from pre-test to post-test. Eighteen students were assessed on the pre-test and the post-test. The 10 students who scored 100% on the pre-test for letters also scored 100% on the post-test. Sixteen students increased their score to 100% on the post-test for letters.

The seven students who scored 100% on the pre-test for sounds also scored 100% on the post-test. Five students increased their score to 100% on the post-test. Sixteen students scored 100% on the post-test for words.

There was a significant shift in the writing score with one student improving his score from 0% to 100% from pre-test to post-test.

77% of students retained or improved their comprehension results.

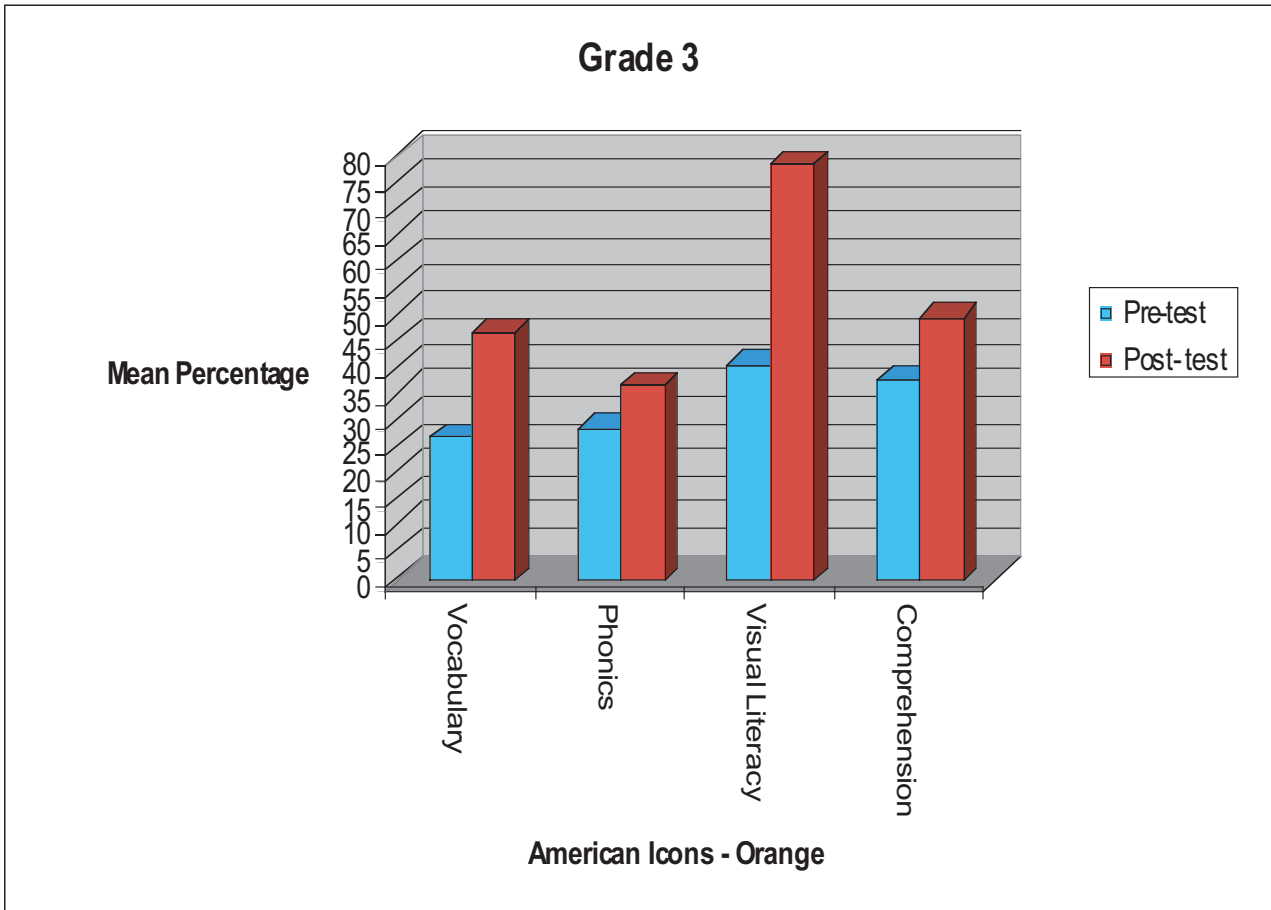
Due to teacher absenteeism, students in two of the assessed classes were on the AWARD program for only 22 days instead of the 25, and one class for 23 days. 50% of the 20 students assessed were absent for one or two days.



These are the results from two classes instead of four. One teacher lost her job and the students were moved to other classes shortly after the pre-test. They were therefore not part of the AWARD program study. The other Grade 2 class was assessed at the Grade 1 assessment. Due to teacher absenteeism, the students in one of the assessed classes were on the AWARD program for less than 25 days. Eight students from the classes were absent for 1–4 days during the AWARD program study dates.

The Grade 2 results (nine students) show that over the five weeks there has been significant improvement in most areas assessed. In the words assessment, six students scored 0% at the pre-test and between 50–100% at the post-test.

99% of the students assessed improved or retained their pre-test score for writing and comprehension.



These are the results from three classes instead of four. One Grade 3 class was assessed at the Grade 2 assessment. Due to teacher absenteeism, students in two of the assessed classes were on the AWARD program for only 22 days instead of the 25. Of the 15 students assessed only four had full attendance.

In the vocabulary assessment 80% of the students assessed improved or retained their pre-test score. These results show a 38% increase in the students' understanding of visual literacy.

86% of the students improved or retained their pre-test score for comprehension.

Limitations

1. The study was undertaken by teachers who had very limited professional development in the use of AWARD Reading: 30 minutes per class per grade level for School 1 and one hour per class per grade level for School 2.
2. The basal instruction used by the two schools had little or no technology. In contrast teachers found themselves using technology and print daily for this intervention, a new experience for many of them.
3. The students were all Tier II and Tier III.
4. The timeline of five weeks for instruction was limited compared to the New York study.

Conclusions

This evaluation has shown positive improvement as an intervention program. It shows that the AWARD program is successful in teaching children to read in an interesting and effective way. It produced impressive gains in the students' ability to recognize letters and sounds, to read a wider range of words, and to improve their comprehension and visual literacy.

It would be preferable to introduce the AWARD program using narrative rather than informational texts. This would foster a more positive outcome in the students' understanding of phonics.

The program was trialed over a short period of five weeks. Taking into consideration the absenteeism of students and teachers, and the fact that a large percentage of the students are English Language Learners, the progress made is outstanding. There is every indication that if the AWARD program was implemented for a year, the results would be similar to those attained in the New York study.

Wendy Dorset

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