

Comprehensive Early Intervention Results Positive

The development of strong decoding and comprehension skills by the end of third grade is vitally important; it is associated with academic success throughout the remainder of a student's school experience. As a result, Fort Smith Public Schools educators carefully monitor the development of those skills by administering the Istation Indicators of Progress (ISIP), a computer-adaptive formative assessment, multiple times throughout the school year.

ISIP reading assessment data reflected an achievement gap affecting economically disadvantaged and English Learner (EL) students in reading. To address this issue, FSPS implemented a comprehensive early intervention program utilizing the Lindamood-Bell Seeing Stars Program for Reading Fluency and Spelling and the Visualizing and Verbalizing Program for Cognitive Development, Comprehension, and Thinking. These strategies are not only research-based but also research-validated, meaning that scientific research strategies have been used to verify their efficacy.

As early as August 2016, dyslexia interventionists and special education resource teachers learned how to utilize these strategies with their students. Due to initially promising outcomes in these specialized programs, the pilot was expanded in January 2017 to include K-2 students at 11 elementary schools. Ten additional support staff and 53 classroom teachers were trained with the expectation that students would participate in 15 minutes per day of the Seeing Stars/Visualizing and Verbalizing activities.

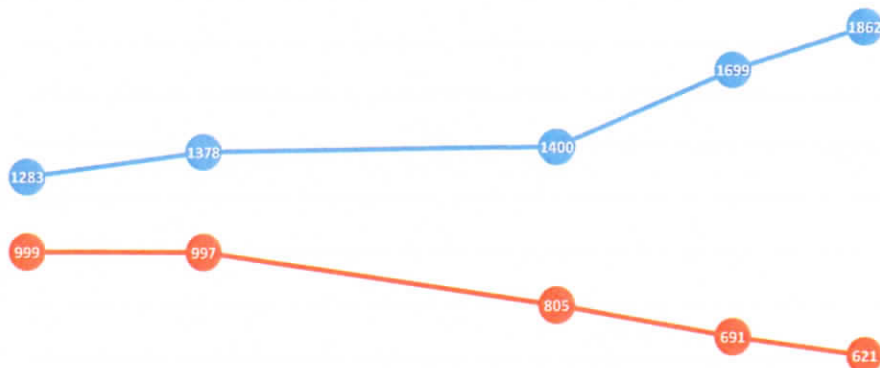
In May 2017, elementary campus leaders resolved to implement the Seeing Stars and Visualizing and Verbalizing programs district-wide. Approximately 120 classroom teachers and interventionists were then trained to teach using these strategies. Technology was leveraged to provide biweekly team coaching sessions and job-embedded, just-in-time staff development. Robots equipped with microphones and video cameras enabled Lindamood-Bell experts to virtually "move" between classrooms, observe instruction in real-time, and interact with teachers and students from hundreds of miles away.

The impact of this innovative approach to closing achievement gaps is reflected in our Istation ISIP overall reading results for 2019; they continue to trend in a positive direction.

EQUITY

Develop and implement a system-wide plan to provide all students with the resources they need to optimize their learning.

K-2 Overall Reading - Istation



Istation testing is administered to all K-2 students in September, January and April of each year to measure progress in foundational reading skills. The graph contrasts the number of students scoring in Tier 3 ("At Risk") and the number of students scoring in Tier 1 ("Grade Level") in Overall Reading. Since beginning the Lindamood-Bell program, there has been a steady increase in the number of students scoring at Tier 1 and a decrease in the number of students scoring at Tier 3.

Tier 1 represents the number of students who are performing at grade-level. Students scoring in Tier 3 are those who need extensive additional support to achieve grade-level goals.

Among the All Students group, students requiring Tier 3 intervention since the K-2 intervention program was implemented in 2017 has declined from 999 to 621, a decrease of 378 students or 38 percent. The number of students in grades K-2 who are now reading on grade level (Tier 1) has grown from 1,283 to 1,862, an increase of 579 students or 45 percent.

Among economically disadvantaged students, the number of students at grade level (Tier 1) has grown from 877 to 1,256, an increase of 379 or 43 percent. Students in the economically disadvantaged group that continue to require Tier 3 intervention has declined from 836 to 504, a decrease of 332 students or 40 percent.

Students in the English Learner group appear to have experienced the most dramatic improvement in reading. The number of students at grade level (Tier 1) has grown from 280 to 484, an increase of 204 students or 73 percent. The number of students in the economically disadvantaged group that continue to require Tier 3 intervention has declined from 395 to 283, a decrease of 112 students or 28 percent.

These gains significantly exceed the district goal of 20 percent growth by 2019. Continued

gains of this magnitude will contribute to the closing of achievement gaps across all groups.

Based on the positive results of this intervention program in grades K-2, FSPS is now piloting innovative strategies to expand access to these instructional strategies to students who were in grades K-2 prior to its implementation. The success of these pilots, as reflected in the ACT Aspire reading assessment results of older participants who had also been struggling with decoding and reading comprehension, have also been very positive. This supports findings that the growth in reading skills that our K-2 students have achieved over the past several years can be attributed to this innovative and research-validated intervention program.

In June 2018, 29 students in grades three, five, six, and seven participated in a summer reading camp based on scoring below the 25th percentile and "In Need of Improvement" on the 2017 ACT Aspire Assessment. Following this intensive summer intervention, 83 percent of the students showed growth by increasing their percentile ranking on the ACT Aspire Reading Assessment in 2019. The camp was expanded in June 2019 from one site to six and included 112 students. Program staff continue to analyze results to determine the impact on skill development among this year's participants.