

Evaluating the Use of EL Education's K-2 Language Arts Curriculum

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EL Education's Language Arts Curriculum is a standards-based core literacy program for grades K-8 that uses real-world content and primary texts to engage students with literature. The curriculum covers all strands and standards of the Common Core English language arts standards for each grade level. For grades K-2, its complete curriculum includes Module Lessons, Reading Foundations Skills Block, and Literacy Labs; however, these components operate independently and districts and teachers may choose to use the components that align with instructional needs.

In school year 2018/19, one large Tennessee school district that was already using Module Lessons in all K-2 classrooms decided to implement the Reading Foundations Skills Block in selected schools, as a pilot. The pilot was conducted in partnership with EL Education, which provided professional learning and other support to schools using the Skills Block. WestEd, a national nonprofit research organization, conducted the external evaluation.

The overall purpose of the evaluation was to compare the difference in students' reading-assessment results in the spring of school year 2018/19 based on students' degree of exposure to the Language Arts Curriculum. To that end, the evaluation included two studies, both relying on student scores from NWEA MAP Growth reading assessments, adaptive tests that adjust to each student to determine what content the student knows and what the student is ready to learn. One study compared the assessment scores of district students whose teachers used both the Module Lessons and the Skills Block to the scores of a national sample of students whose teachers did not use the Language Arts Curriculum at all. The second study compared the assessment scores of district students who were exposed to the Skills Block and Module Lessons to the

scores of other district students whose teachers used only the Module Lessons.

In both studies, students with more exposure to the Language Arts Curriculum scored significantly higher than their peers on standardized reading assessments.

Overview

In the first study, the treatment group consisted of 1,095 K-2 students in seven elementary schools that used both the Module Lessons and the Reading Foundations Skills Block in 2018/19. NWEA provided WestEd with a national sample of approximately 1,095 students who were matched to treatment students based on having similar scores on their fall 2018 MAP Growth reading assessment, on grade level, and school settings. Any school using the Language Arts Curriculum was excluded from the comparison sample pool to ensure this group had no exposure to the curriculum.

In the second study, the treatment group consisted of 1,047 K-2 students from the same seven elementary schools that were using both the Module Lessons and the Reading Foundations Skills Block. The comparison sample for this study was formed by using a statistical matching technique called Propensity Score Matching to identify a set of 1,047 students in eight comparison schools in the district who looked similar to treatment students based on their fall 2018 MAP Growth scores in reading, gender, race and ethnicity, and grade level. The eight comparison schools were only using the Module Lessons.

The evaluation team analyzed scores from NWEA MAP Growth reading assessments administered in spring of school year 2018/19.



Implementation

Over the school year, EL Education provided treatment schools with professional development and other support for implementing the Skills Block. For school leaders, support included direct coaching and debriefs on implementation quality. Teachers had access to an intensive introduction to this particular curriculum, direct coaching, and a series of webinars provided by an EL Education curriculum specialist.

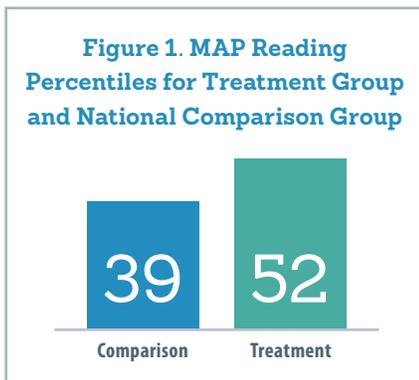
Outcome Analyses

WestEd conducted t-tests to estimate the difference in scores on the spring assessment administration between the treatment group and the national comparison group. For the within-district comparison, multi-level modeling was used to estimate difference in spring assessment scores between the two groups.

While the two comparison samples — national and within-district — were matched to be similar to the treatment group on observed characteristics, they are distinct and different populations. Additionally, different analytical methods were used to estimate assessment outcomes. Thus, assessment results of the two samples should not be compared directly.

Findings

Spring MAP Growth assessment scores were significantly higher for treatment students, who received the Language Arts Curriculum, than for students in the national comparison group.

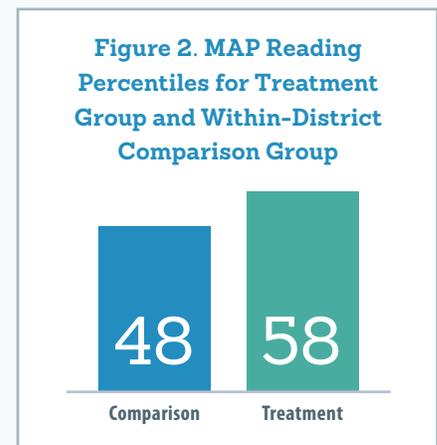


Treatment students scored **13 percentile points higher than comparison group students, a finding that is statistically significant.**¹ The largest achievement differences between the treatment

and comparison groups were for kindergarten and grade 1 students.

These same patterns held when looking at achievement differences between the treatment group and the within-district comparison group. Regression analysis showed that being in the treatment group is associated with scoring **9.8 percentile points higher than students from the within-district comparison group on the spring administration of the MAP Growth assessment.**² This finding is also statistically significant. This means that, while the average within-district comparison group student scored 47.8 on

the spring MAP assessment, the average treatment group student scored 57.6 on that same assessment administration.



Conclusion

While the study design cannot determine that this relationship is causal, the consistency of the findings between the within-district sample and the national sample lend support to greater exposure to the curriculum playing a role in achievement differences.

1. This 13 percentile point difference was equivalent to an effect size of 0.44.

2. This was equivalent to an effect size of 0.31. For more information, contact Jennifer McMaken at jmcmake@wested.org or EL Education at info@ELeducation.org.