



DI'S EFFECTIVENESS WITH HIGH ACHIEVING 4TH GRADERS

A COMPARISON OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT IN READING MASTERY AND CELEBRATE READING PROGRAMS

Which program produced the best results for high achieving 4th graders: *Celebrate Reading* or *Reading Mastery*?

Schools everywhere are faced with high academic standards and are charged with evaluating programs and practices to find which ones will yield the best possible results for their students. They must determine which curriculum to implement in their districts and schools, a decision that becomes more difficult in the face of high expectations and low budgets. Is it worth spending the money on a different program? Will the extra expenditure generate different results? These questions plagued a school in Illinois who called in researchers to help answer them. School leaders asked researchers to compare the effectiveness of the program they had been using for the past eight years, Scott Foresman's *Celebrate Reading*, with another program they were considering for adoption, *Reading Mastery*.

In the study, researchers examined fluency and comprehension gains over one academic year with high-achieving (Tier 1) 4th graders as measured on AIMSweb. The school of approximately 400 students was relatively high-SES with about only one-third of students in the study qualifying for free-and-reduced lunch. All of the students participating were white.

Which program had a greater increase in fluency rates?

Students were assigned in equal numbers to one of two groups in the study. On average, students in each group were reading approximately 120 correct words per minute at the start of the study; however, by spring, students in *Reading Mastery* were out-performing the students in *Celebrate Reading*. **The *Reading***

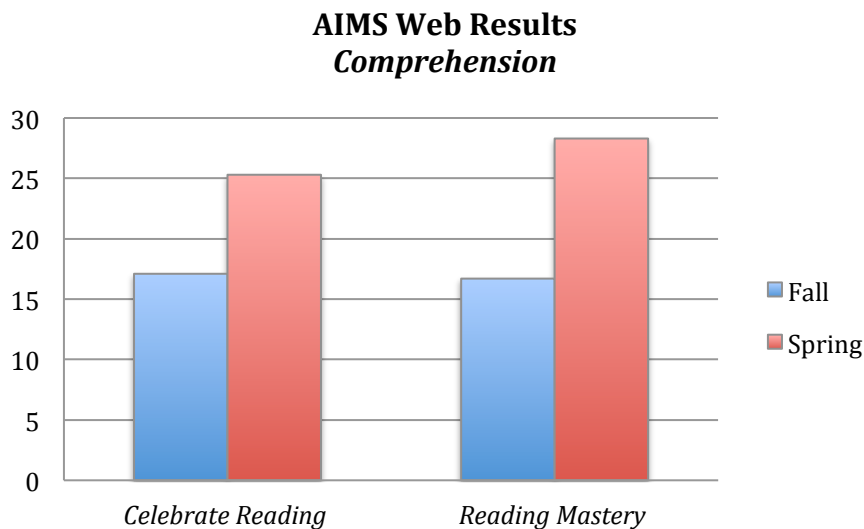
***Mastery* students gained over 50 correct words per minute, while the students in *Celebrate Reading* gained 30 correct words per minute on average – just over half of the gain experienced by students receiving instruction in *Reading Mastery*!** Not only did the *Reading Mastery* students do well in comparison to their peers receiving the alternate



program, but **they gained 1.52 words per week, which exceeds a common expectation of .85 to .90 words per week growth.** In fact, the gain exceeded the standards for ambitious achievement, which ranges from 1.1 to 1.5 words per week!

To what extent did students' comprehension skills improve?

Students in *Reading Mastery* also experienced an impressive growth in their comprehension skills. By spring, the ***Reading Mastery* students had gained an average of nearly 13 points, while students receiving instruction in *Celebrate Reading* gained only eight points on average.**



What impact did fluency have on reading comprehension?

The researchers were able to determine the degree of impact fluency had on students' reading comprehension skills. As many studies have identified before, students who read fluently expend less time and effort decoding words and are able to attend to the meaning of the text they are reading, instead. The findings in this study were no different. ***Reading Mastery* was responsible for the increase in fluency, which resulted in increased comprehension skills.** Four-fifths of the increase in comprehension in the *Reading Mastery* students was from an increase in reading fluency. The rest (one-fifth) of the increase in comprehension was a direct result of the use of *Reading Mastery*.

The results at Illinois are consistent with the experience of other schools implementing *Reading Mastery*, both with highly affluent students and high poverty populations. Access more than 30 years of research on Direct Instruction by visiting NIFDI's Research Database online at <http://www.nifdi.org/15/di-research-database>.

Source: "Fourth Grader's Growth in Reading Fluency and Comprehension: A Pretest-Posttest Randomized Control Study," NIFDI Technical Report, December 2011. For more information on this study, go to: <http://www.nifdi.org/15/nifdis-research-office> or request the full-text article by emailing the NIFDI Research Department at research@nifdi.org.