



Efficacy Study

SRA FLEX Literacy Spurs Reading Growth

A Washington middle school improves across multiple measures



Deer Park, Washington

Introduction

During the 2013–2014 school year, the Deer Park School District (DPSD) in Deer Park, Wash., implemented *SRA FLEX Literacy*™ in four classrooms in Deer Park Middle School that served at-risk readers.

About the Site

At the time of program implementation, Deer Park Middle School was serving 476 students in Grades 6–8. The school population was predominantly Caucasian (90.5 percent) and of low socioeconomic status (54.2 percent). Roughly 15 percent of the school's students were identified with special needs. Only a negligible percentage of students were identified as Limited English Proficient. On the 2014 administration of the state reading test, about 70 percent of the school's Grade 6 students, 57 percent of its Grade 7 students, and 73 percent of its Grade 8 students were considered proficient in reading.

44 participants in Grades 7 & 8 received SRA **FLEX LITERACY** reading instruction

Study Participants

Study participants included 241 students in Grades 7 and 8, 44 of whom received *SRA FLEX Literacy* instruction. These 44 students were identified as being both at-risk in reading and eligible to receive Tier 3 reading support through the school’s Learning Assistance Program. Students were selected for the Learning Assistance Program based on their performance on the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI)[™] Lexile[®] measure, the *AIMSweb*[®] assessment, and the state reading test. The majority of students selected to participate in the program performed below proficient on all three criteria, but some performed below proficient in two areas.

The remaining 197 students in the study, who were not identified as being at-risk readers, received reading instruction using Houghton Mifflin Harcourt’s *Holt McDougal Literature* series. These students served as a comparison group for assessing the reading gains of the at-risk readers. *Table 1* presents a summary of the characteristics of students in the *SRA FLEX Literacy* and comparison groups.

Demographic	<i>SRA FLEX Literacy</i> Group (n = 44)	Comparison Group (n = 197)
Grade		
7	54.5	46.7
8	45.5	53.3
Gender		
Female	38.6	48.2
Male	61.4	51.8
Ethnicity		
African American	6.8	0.5
Caucasian	88.6	81.2
Hispanic	4.5	5.1
Other Ethnicities	--	3.5
No Data	--	9.6
Free/Reduced Price Lunch		
Yes	72.7	53.8
No	27.3	22.3
No Data	--	23.9

Table 1. Student Demographics as a Percentage of the Sample for *SRA FLEX Literacy* and Comparison Groups

Implementation

In September 2013, four classrooms containing the 44 students selected for the Learning Assistance Program began using *SRA FLEX Literacy* as their comprehensive reading curriculum. Students received instruction using The Digital, Print, and Project Experiences within *SRA FLEX Literacy*. Over the course of the school year, students worked on The Digital and Print Experiences four days per week and The Project Experience one day per week.

To ensure that *SRA FLEX Literacy* was implemented with fidelity, McGraw-Hill Education provided a day of pre-implementation training and assisted in classroom set-up. Throughout the course of the study, McGraw-Hill Education consultants conducted three on-site visits and observations to assess instructional integrity and provide feedback to the teacher.

Measures

Students in both groups completed Lexile assessments before *SRA FLEX Literacy* was implemented, during benchmark periods, and at the end of the year. (These research-based, computer-adaptive reading comprehension assessments measures reading skill and text difficulty.) Both groups of students also took periodic oral reading fluency (ORF) assessments through the *AIMSweb*®. These assessments presented students with a reading passage and asked them to read aloud for one minute. The number of words they read correctly represents their ORF scores.

Results

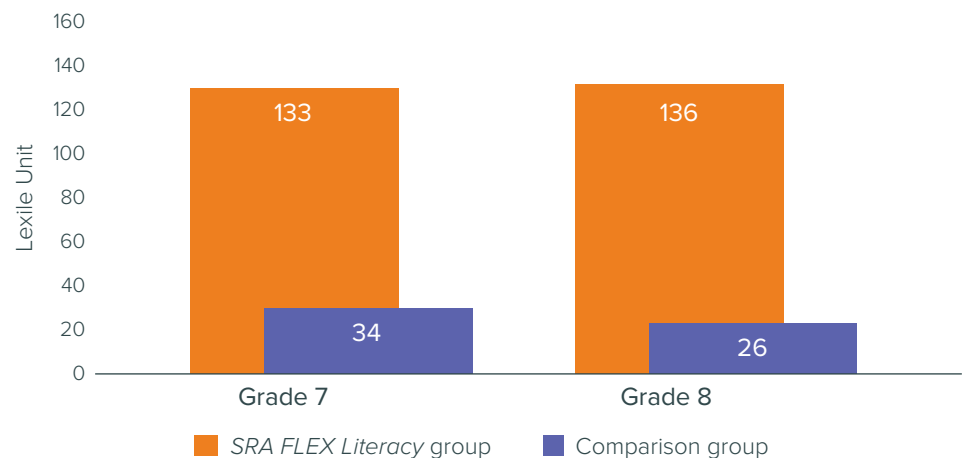


Figure 1. Yearly Lexile Growth

Figure 1 details the mean Lexile growth after one year of instruction. Grade 7 students receiving *SRA FLEX Literacy* instruction increased their Lexile scores by an average of 133L, compared to 34L for students in the comparison group. Grade 8 students receiving *SRA FLEX Literacy* instruction increased their Lexile scores by an average of 136L, compared to 26L for the comparison group. The difference between the Lexile growth rates of the two groups is statistically significant.

GRADE 7 & 8
students receiving *SRA FLEX LITERACY*
reading instruction
INCREASED Lexile
scores by an average of
133 - 136L

In **SPRING 2014** students showed a **265% INCREASE** in reading proficiency from their fall 2013 level

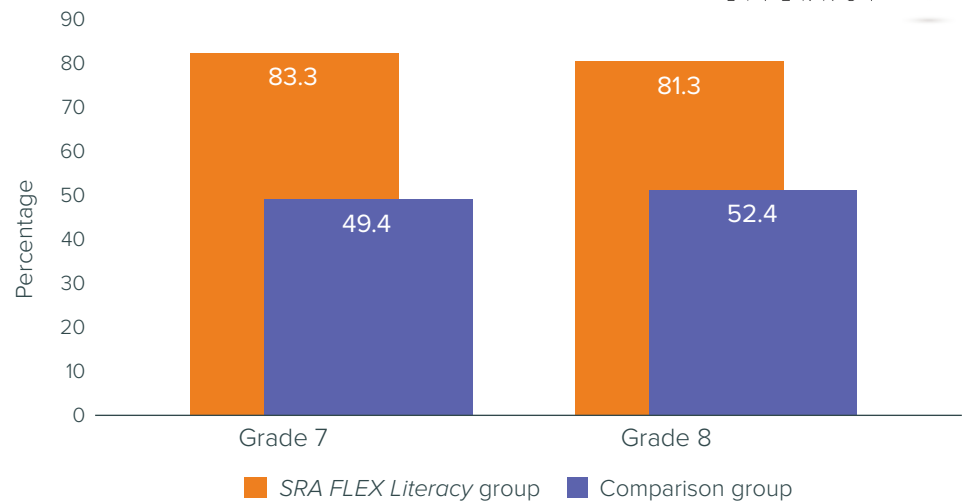


Figure 2. Percentage of Grade 7 and 8 Students Meeting Individualized Growth Expectations

The students' Fall 2013 Lexile scores determined their individualized growth expectations for the year. The lower the students' scores, the more they were expected to grow to reach acceptable levels. *Figure 2* represents the percentage of Grade 7 and Grade 8 students who met their individualized growth expectations based on their Fall Lexile scores. In Grade 7, about 83 percent of students in the *SRA FLEX Literacy* group met their individual growth expectations, while only 49 percent of students in the comparison group met their individual growth expectations. In Grade 8, about 81 percent of students in the *SRA FLEX Literacy* group met their individual growth expectations, while only about 52 percent of students in the comparison group met their individual growth expectations.

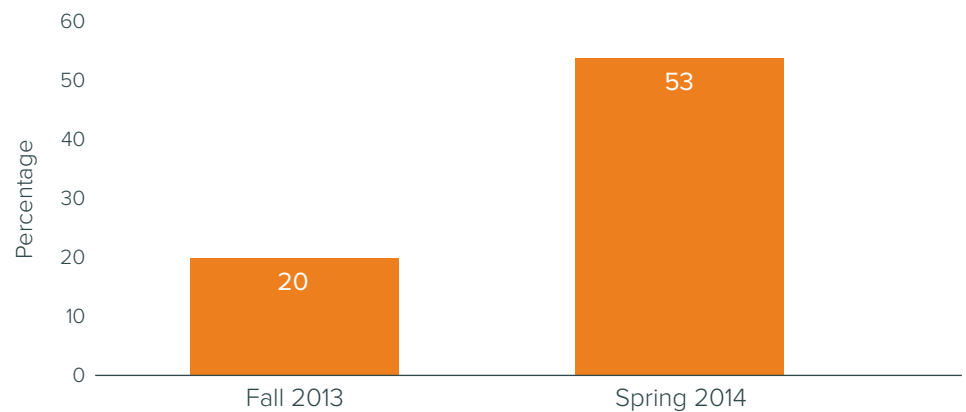


Figure 3. Percentage of Students Proficient Based on Lexile

Figure 3 shows the percentages of *SRA FLEX Literacy* students who scored proficient in the Fall (before receiving *SRA FLEX Literacy* instruction) and in the Spring (after receiving *SRA FLEX Literacy* instruction). In Fall 2013, about 20 percent of the *SRA FLEX Literacy* students were considered to be proficient or above proficient. In Spring 2014, slightly more than half of them (53 percent) were considered proficient or above—a 265 percent increase from the Fall 2013 level.

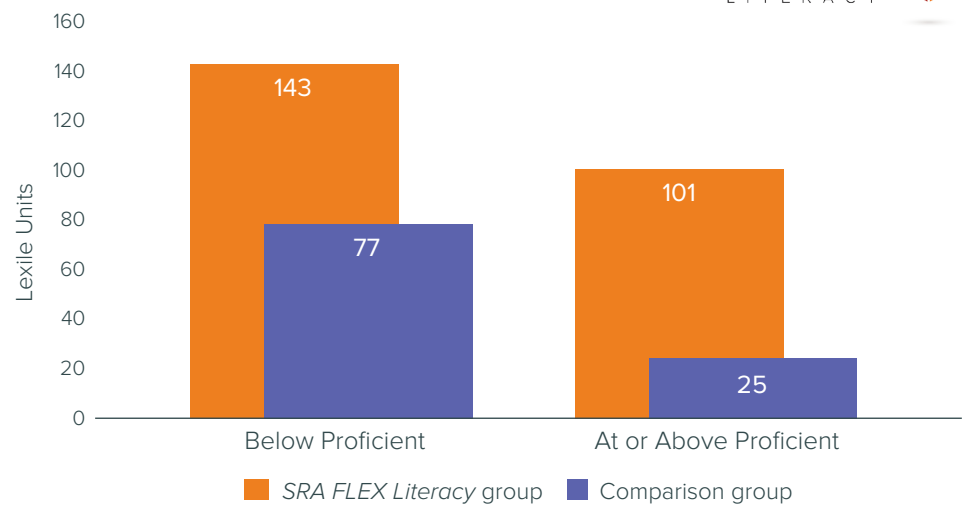


Figure 4. Average Lexile Growth by Fall Lexile Band

Figure 4 highlights the (weighted) average Lexile gain according to proficiency band on the Fall Lexile measure. For simplicity, these groups were collapsed into two categories: *Below Proficient* and *At or Above Proficient*. The *Below Proficient* group includes students scoring in the *Below Basic* to *Basic* range. The *At or Above Proficient* group includes students scoring in the *Proficient* to *Advanced* range. The *SRA FLEX Literacy* students initially considered *Below Proficient* gained about 143L, while the comparison group students initially considered *Below Proficient* gained about 77L. Even students who were initially stronger readers and received *SRA FLEX Literacy* instruction outperformed their peers—*SRA FLEX Literacy* students gained an average of 101L, while students in the comparison group gained an average of 25L.

GRADE 7
students **GAINED**
oral reading fluency
by about **43%**

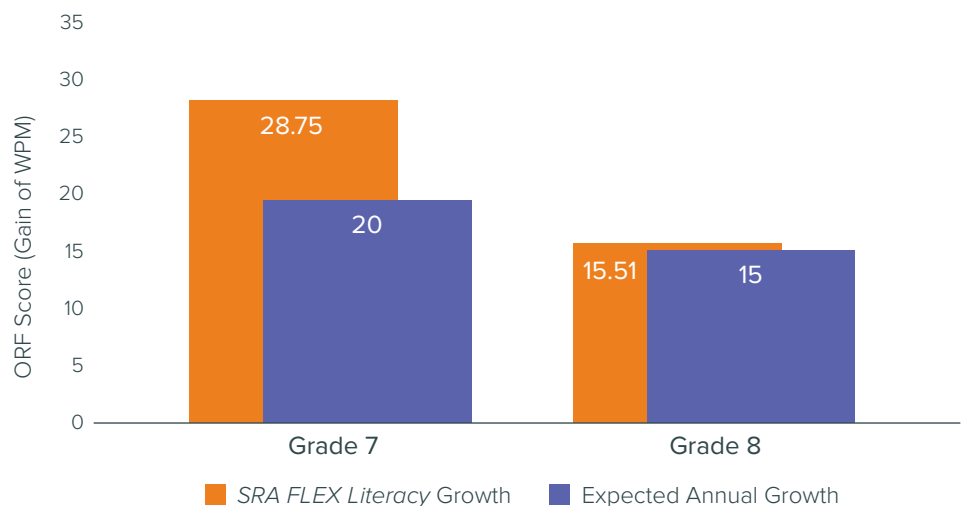


Figure 5. Student Performance on Fall and Spring Administration of the ORF Assessment

Figure 5 details the mean words per minute (WPM) on the Fall and Spring administration of the ORF Assessment for students receiving instruction with *SRA FLEX Literacy*. Students without a complete set of data (e.g., scores for both Fall and Spring) were excluded from the analysis. The annual expected growth is derived from oral reading fluency norms constructed by Hasbrouck

GREATEST GAINS were seen in students considered low-proficiency who **SURPASSED** those of students of similar proficiency in the **COMPARISON** group

and Tindal (2006). For Grade 7 students, the expected growth was 20 WPM; for Grade 8 students, it was 15 WPM. On average, Grade 7 students gained 28.75 WPM, which exceeds the expected growth by about 43 percent. Grade 8 students gained, on average, about 15.51 WPM, which exceeds the expected growth by about three percent. The effect size was considered large for students in Grade 7 and medium for students in Grade 8.

Conclusion

Results indicate that, after instruction with *SRA FLEX Literacy*, a small group of middle school students initially considered at-risk in reading made significant gains on various measures of reading skill, including statistically significant gains in their Lexile scores compared to students in a comparison group. Roughly 80 percent of *SRA FLEX Literacy* students met their individual Lexile growth expectations, while about 50 percent of students in the comparison group met their individual Lexile expectations. More than twice as many of the *SRA FLEX Literacy* students performed in the proficient range at the end of the school year than at the beginning. Some of the greatest gains were seen in those students initially considered in the lowest bands of proficiency, and the gains surpassed those of students of similar proficiency in the comparison group. Finally, the majority of students met and exceeded their expected growth on ORF measures. *SRA FLEX Literacy* instruction was associated with significant gains on various measures of reading skill for the group of students in this study and it was a valuable tool in helping these students ‘close the gap’ in reading performance.