

Reading Percentiles Increase by More Than 10 Percentiles at Nebraska Elementary School

First- and second-grade classes gain up to 21 percentiles

Source: Dr. Jeffrey Lofthus, principal, and Jane Uzzell, teacher, Lincoln Elementary
Research conducted during 2000–2001 school year.

Introduction

The Reading Renaissance improvement process has a significant impact on learning at Lincoln Elementary. The impact is most evident in reading scores, which increased by more than 10 percentiles in most classes. The three first- and second-grade multi-aged classes experienced the greatest improvement—gaining 21, 19, and 18 percentiles in just eight months.

Study Description

The Lincoln School Community (Lincoln Elementary) became a North Central Association (NCA) accredited school¹ in February 2001. To support this school improvement effort, Lincoln used a Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSR/D) grant to provide four days of Renaissance™ professional development training to teachers, paraprofessionals, and other educators in the district.

The staff at Lincoln recognized that Renaissance professional development was necessary for integrating Accelerated Reader® reading management software into the school's Balanced Literacy program. As principal, Lofthus knew that the training would thrust the school into the process of becoming a Reading Renaissance school, which it did. Lincoln staff were eager to work toward becoming a Renaissance school.

The Lincoln School Community has incorporated the following Reading Renaissance components into their school culture: one hour a day is devoted to reading practice; personalized goals are set for each student; Status of the Class² is performed daily; Accelerated Reader Diagnostic Reports are generated every Friday and monitored by classroom teachers and other program specialists; quarterly Reading Renaissance Recognition Assemblies are held to honor students who reach their personal goals; teachers are trained in Duolog Reading™³; and Family Reading Nights are held weekly.

On Family Reading Nights, parents and guardians are invited to accompany their children to school to read and relax as a family. The event is heavily promoted through flyers sent home (written in English and Spanish), brightly colored posters, and an electronic message board inside of the school building. Each year, Family Reading Night kicks off with a dinner and Accelerated Reader demonstration. Because of these efforts to reach out to parents, Family Reading Nights have been highly successful. They have continued into the summer, and the following school year.

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School Profile

Lincoln Elementary
Norfolk, Neb.

Students: 167, Grades K–6

Demographics:

Title I

Limited English
proficiency: 22%

Free or reduced lunch: 79%

Mobility: 73%

Race/Ethnicity:

American Indian or
Alaska Native: 2%

Black or African
American: 1%

Hispanic or Latino: 56%

White: 41%

Educator Backgrounds

Dr. Jeffrey Lofthus received his bachelor's, master's, and doctorate degrees from University of North Dakota in education, counseling, and educational leadership respectively. **Lofthus** has long had the vision that if a 'school community' works with and for students and their families and provides them with opportunities to become involved in school life in meaningful ways, the school will gain the family support necessary to make the school successful. For this reason, Lofthus calls his school "the Lincoln School Community" and works to maintain a community-like atmosphere within it.

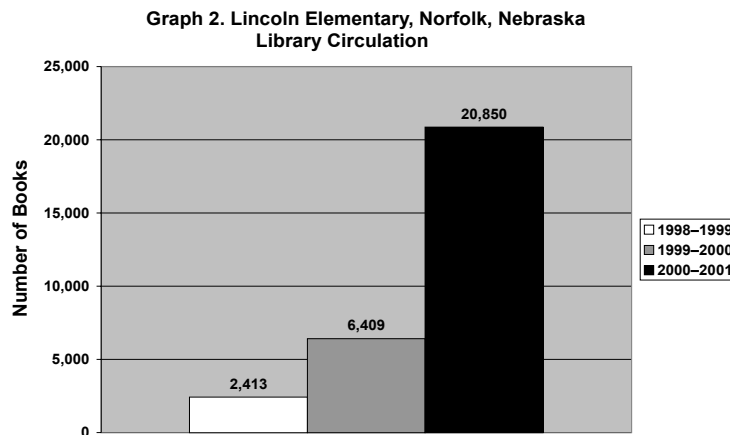
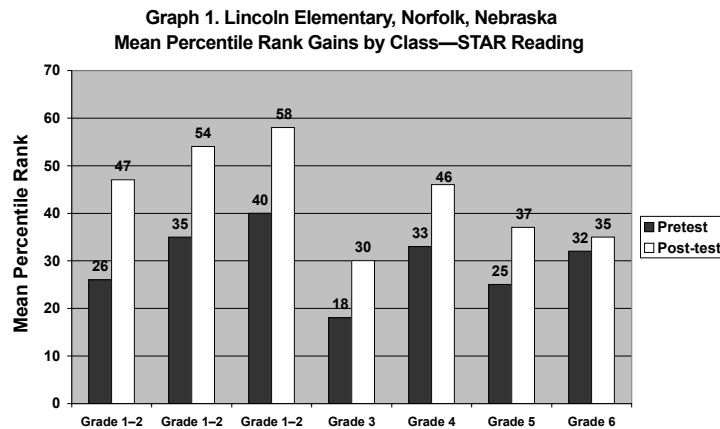
Jane Uzzell received her bachelor's degree from the University of South Dakota and her master's degree in elementary education from Wayne State College. **Uzzell**, an educator for 24 years, led the Lincoln staff in many of their school improvement efforts, including writing the Comprehensive School Reform Development grant.

Results

Students were pretested in September 2000 and post-tested in April 2001 using STAR Reading assessment. Scores show that significant gains were made in all grades (see Graph 1). The most dramatic improvements were experienced by the three multi-aged first-and second-grade classrooms, which gained 21, 19, and 18 percentiles over the eight-month span. In addition, library circulation increased 764% since the adoption of Reading Renaissance.

With mobility rates averaging 73% a year at Lincoln, these scores demonstrate the effectiveness of Reading Renaissance with high mobility populations.

The Lincoln School Community clearly demonstrates that strong leadership, teacher dedication, parental involvement, and Reading Renaissance work together to achieve comprehensive school improvement.



¹ The North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement is a school accreditation and evaluation organization.

² Status of the Class is an informal assessment that allows teachers to touch base with every student daily.

³ Duolog Reading is a research-based, structured tutoring technique that uses guided oral reading to help struggling readers develop reading skills, as well as to transition established readers into more challenging books.

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