

Arkansas School Sees Schoolwide Improvements in Reading Achievement

High-achieving students experience average gains of 6 percentiles

Source: Marylee Noble, Librarian/Media Specialist, Pulaski Academy

Study conducted during the 2000–2001 school year.

Introduction

A commitment to Reading Renaissance® in the Lower and Middle divisions has enabled Pulaski Academy, a high-achieving school, to experience significant improvements in student achievement and motivation.

Study Description

The Lower and Middle Schools at Pulaski Academy have been using Accelerated Reader® reading management software since 1996. In 1998, Renaissance™ was implemented in grades three through six after four classroom teachers, an administrator, and Noble attended a *501: Introduction to Reading Renaissance* seminar. Pulaski Academy also began using STAR Reading®¹ and AR BookGuide®² that year. The seventh-grade class implemented Reading Renaissance during the 1999–2000 school year. And, the first and second grades implemented the process during the 2000–2001 school year.

In first-grade classrooms each child's reading progress is monitored and they are tested with Accelerated Reader. Teachers also employ the Renaissance TWI (Reading To, Reading With, Reading Independently) framework to help transition emergent readers into independent reading and independent readers into more challenging material. When emergent readers read books with a tutor or as a group, Accelerated Reader Recorded-Voice Quizzes allow them to test independently.

Students in grades two through four receive 60 minutes per day of structured reading

practice with books that are in their zone of proximal development (ZPD)³. Teachers set personalized reading goals for each student and perform Status of the Class, an informal reading assessment technique, integral to Renaissance, that involves touching base individually with every student. Power Lessons™⁴ are utilized extensively in grades three and four as the core of their reading program. Teachers of grades five through seven also incorporate Power Lessons into their classes, as well as ensure that students receive 30 minutes of independent reading practice with books in their correct ZPD. During this independent reading time the teachers conduct Status of the Class.

As the Renaissance Coordinator, Noble meets with groups of Lower and Middle School teachers at least once every nine weeks. At these meetings, educators discuss their concerns, share success stories, review the steps to Model and Master Certification⁵ (Pulaski Academy had eight teachers recertify as Model Educators, and one recertify as Model Librarian for the 2000–2001 school year), and analyze Accelerated Reader and STAR Reading reports. Noble comments that the meetings allow open communication and cooperation between teachers and administrative staff and help align all staff behind common goals. Noble also coordinates the school's efforts to ensure that every teacher at Pulaski Academy attends at least two Reading Renaissance professional development seminars during their employment at the school. Additionally, a number of teachers and administrators have attended the National Renaissance Conferences.

School Profile

Pulaski Academy

Little Rock, Ark.

Race/Ethnicity:

American Indian or
Alaska Native: 0.8%
Asian or Pacific Islander: 0.5%
Black or African
American: 3.5%
Hispanic or Latino: 0.4%
White: 89%
Other: 5.9%

Pulaski Academy Lower School

Students: 346, Grades 1–4

Pulaski Academy Middle School

Students: 394, Grades 5–8

Educator Background

Marylee Noble has been an educator for the past 32 years. She received her bachelor's degree in English from Ouachita Baptist University in 1963 and a master's degree in Library/Information Science from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock in 1983. Noble has worked as the librarian/media specialist at Pulaski Academy for the last 22 years and has been the Reading Renaissance Coordinator for the Lower and Middle Schools at Pulaski Academy since 1998. In 1995 she was awarded the Meyer Endowed Chair Award for excellence in teaching. Noble attributes Pulaski Academy's success with Reading Renaissance to the excellent Renaissance training all the teachers have received, the commitment of teachers, the support of administration, and the dedication of students and parents.

During the 2001–2002 school year, Pulaski Academy expanded the scope of their Renaissance program by implementing Accelerated Math® in the third grade and STAR Early Literacy™ in the first grade. In preparation for the implementation, teachers at Pulaski Academy attended a *910: Math Renaissance* seminar and have plans to attend a STAR Early Literacy seminar.

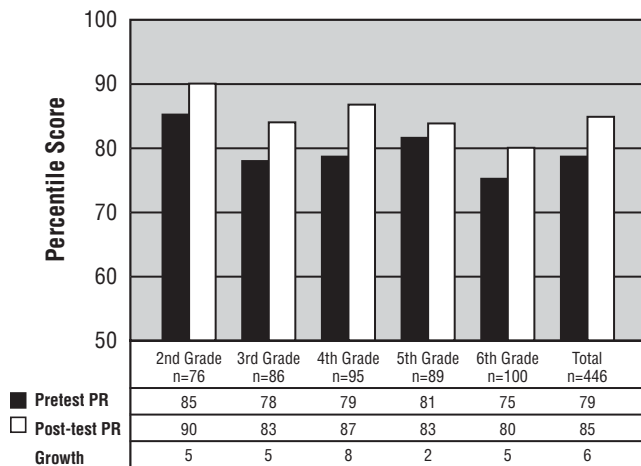
Results

Students in grades two through six were pre- and post-tested using STAR Reading software. Pretests took place in September 2000 and post-tests in May 2001. Test results show, on average, students gained six percentiles in their reading scores—an accelerated rate of growth. The fourth grade saw growth of eight percentiles, the largest of any grade in the school (see Graph 1). The acceleration in learning experienced by Pulaski Academy is especially impressive since the average pretest percentile score for every grade was 75 or above.

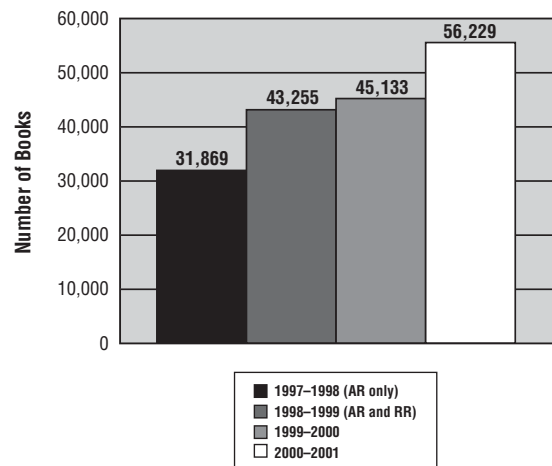
In addition, library circulation increased 76% at Pulaski Academy since the implementation of Reading Renaissance. Circulation rose from 31,869 books in 1997–1998 (Accelerated Reader only) to 56,229 in 2000–2001 (Reading Renaissance) (see Graph 2). What’s more, each classroom at Pulaski Academy has its own library where students can check out books daily. Classroom libraries are set up for Accelerated Reader, having books labeled with AR points and AR levels.

And, while Pulaski Academy students had very few serious discipline problems prior to Reading Renaissance, Noble reports that educators have noticed differences in the students—they are now more motivated, focused, self-disciplined, and self-directed.

Graph 1: Pulaski Academy, Little Rock, Ark.
Percentile Gains—STAR Reading



Graph 2: Pulaski Academy, Little Rock, Ark.
Library Circulation



¹ STAR Reading is a computer-adaptive standardized test that measures reading level, monitors reading growth, and identifies reading difficulties.

² AR BookGuide software is a book-search and library-development tool that helps librarians manage book collections easily.

³ The zone of proximal development (ZPD) is a student’s appropriate reading range. Reading within the proper ZPD allows a student to be challenged without becoming frustrated, and therefore leads to optimum reading growth.

⁴ Power Lessons are 10- to 15-minute skill lessons that teach a single objective and are integrated into individual reading work.

⁵ The Renaissance Certification program provides professional recognition to educators who have met clear, objective Renaissance implementation standards.

For more information, or for additional copies of this report, contact:



Helping educators improve schools through technology, professional development, and research

Renaissance Learning
Educational Research Department
PO Box 45016
Madison, WI 53744-5016
(800) 200-4848
www.renlearn.com