

SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

CASE STUDY

Reading Proficiency More than Doubles on Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System

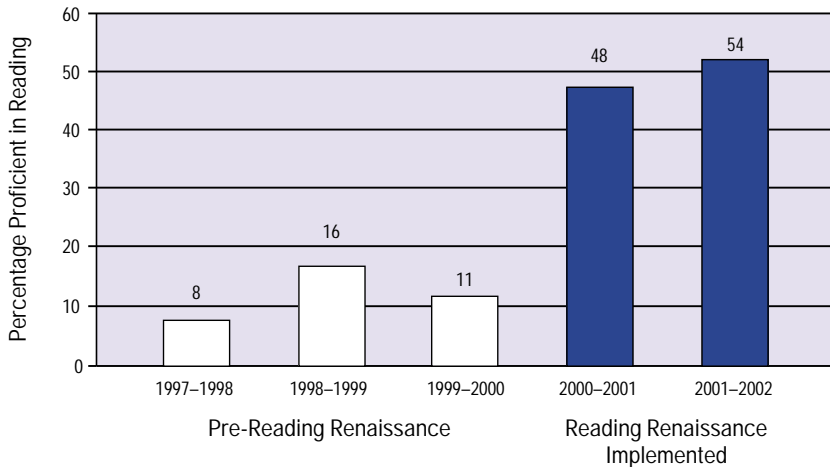
Source: Virginia Cutler, Title I director and reading specialist

Research conducted from 1997–2001, report submitted 2002.

Introduction

Since adopting Accelerated Reader™ and Reading Renaissance™ at Acushnet Elementary, the amount of students' reading and their enthusiasm for reading have increased significantly. In addition, the percent of students achieving reading proficiency on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS)¹ increased 43 points in just two years (See Graph 1).

Graph 1: Fourth-Grade Students' Reading Proficiency Increases Dramatically in Two Years (Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System)



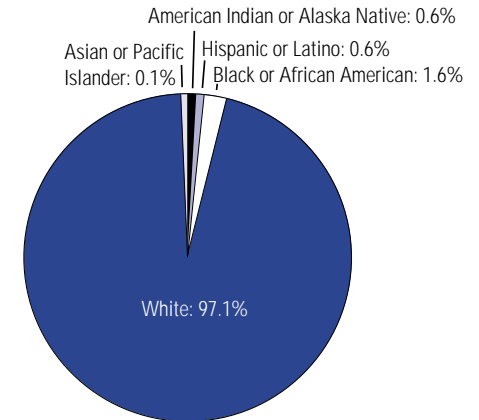
School Profile

Acushnet Elementary School
Students: 687, Grades pre-K–6
Acushnet, Mass.

Demographics

Rural
Free or Reduced Lunch: 12%

Race/Ethnicity:



Educator Background

Virginia Cutler has been an educator for 26 years and the Title I director and reading specialist at Acushnet Elementary since 1990 and 1995, respectively. Cutler received a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education in 1970 from University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth and a master's degree in reading in 1995 from Bridgewater State College. She attended her first Reading Renaissance training in 1999. Cutler credits her success with Reading Renaissance to Acushnet's dedicated staff, students, parents, and administration.

(more information on back)

Study Description

Acushnet Elementary School piloted Accelerated Reader reading management software during the 1999–2000 school year². Understanding that professional development is critical when starting a new program, a one-day *501: Introduction to Reading Renaissance* seminar was held at the school so the entire staff could receive training. Kindergarten through fifth-grade staff members received further training at the two-day *601: Advanced Reading Renaissance* seminar.

Consistent with Reading Renaissance recommendations, teachers at Acushnet set personalized reading goals with each student quarterly. Students are challenged to read different genres and non-fiction, to read longer books or chapter books, and for beginning readers, to read a certain number of books independently. These goals are monitored through Accelerated Reader software.

Acushnet also has a strong community component within its reading program. Each year, local businesses buy every student a book to read over summer vacation. The books come with a bookmark containing Accelerated Reader-like comprehension questions. Acushnet students are encouraged to bring their bookmarks back to the school the following fall and begin the school year by successfully completing an Accelerated Reader quiz.

Results

Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System results from 1997–1998 through 2001–2002 illustrate the trend in fourth-grade reading scores before Reading Renaissance and the significant increase in scores since Reading Renaissance was implemented. Between 1997 and 2000, 11% of all fourth-grade students, on average, were demonstrating proficiency in reading. However, in 2001–2002, after only two years of Reading Renaissance in the fourth grade, the percentage of students reaching proficiency jumped by 43 points to 54%. Acushnet attributes this increase to Reading Renaissance.

Since the MCAS is fairly new to Massachusetts, longitudinal standardized reading scores are currently available only for fourth-grade students. Undoubtedly, the percentage of students in grades two, three, five, and six demonstrating proficient reading skills will be evident as future testing data becomes available.

Reading Renaissance has significantly affected school culture at Acushnet Elementary. All students in second through fifth grade are now engrossed in reading. They recommend books to others, are establishing personal tastes and preferences, talk about books and authors during lunch, and demonstrate general enthusiasm about reading. Parents also report increased amounts of reading time at home.

Conclusion

Reading Renaissance is a powerful program that transformed the academic culture of Acushnet Elementary School. By combining the technology of Accelerated Reader with techniques learned in Reading Renaissance training, Acushnet staff have focused on helping every student in the school become a successful reader.

¹Massachusetts Department of Education. (n.d.). *Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System*. Malden, MA: Massachusetts Department of Education.

²Accelerated Reader was piloted in all third-grade classes, one fifth-grade, and one sixth-grade class. Because of the initial success of Reading Renaissance at Acushnet, the program is now implemented schoolwide in second- through fifth-grade.



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