

SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

CASE STUDY

Chicago Inner-City School Raises Test Scores Significantly

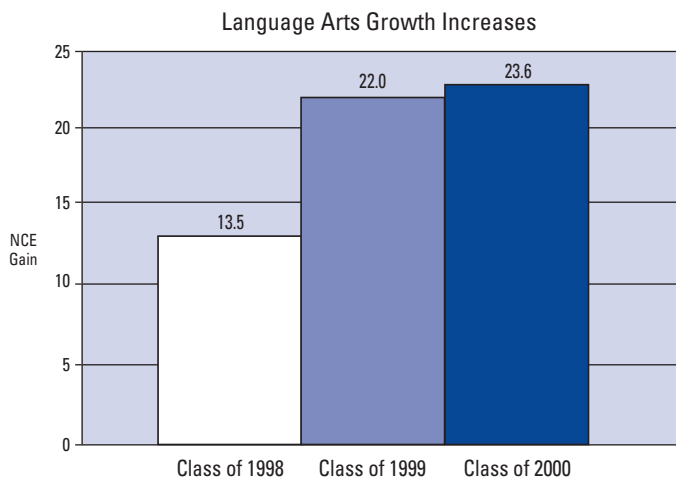
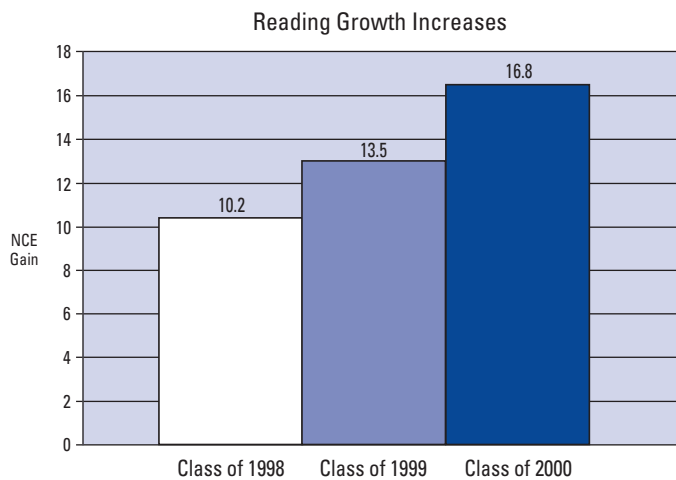
Language Arts Scores Increase By 23.6 NCEs; Reading Scores Increase by 16.8 NCEs

Source: Gordon Hannon, principal, San Miguel School

Research conducted during the 1998–2000 school years.

Introduction

The use of Accelerated Reader® and the implementation of Reading Renaissance® techniques at a 100% Title I middle school in Chicago's inner-city led to significant growth on Terra Nova Reading and Language Arts tests taken by the students.



School Profile

San Miguel School

Students: 78, Grades: 6–8

Chicago, Il.

Demographics:

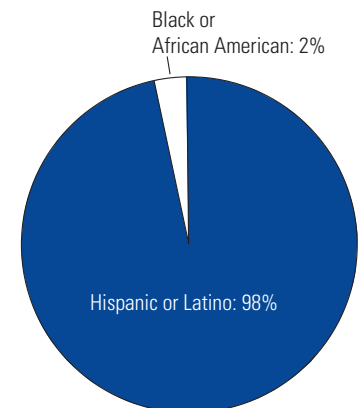
Title I: 100%

Urban Inner City

Free or reduced lunch: 95%

Limited English proficiency: 80%

Race/Ethnicity:



Educator Background

Brother Gordon Hannon received a bachelor's degree in biology and secondary education from Saint Mary's University of Minnesota and a master for teacher's degree from the University of Montana. Over his 14-year teaching career, Hannon has spent two years in the West Indies teaching secondary level science. As the co-founder and principal of San Miguel School, Hannon has been instrumental in integrating Reading Renaissance into the school day. He received his Renaissance training in 1997.

(more information on back)

Study Description

Founded in 1995, San Miguel School is an independent Catholic middle school on the south side of Chicago's inner city. Many of the 78 students are Spanish-speaking with limited English proficiency when they enter the school as sixth-graders. The goal of San Miguel is to prepare students to succeed in quality high schools (where the dropout rate for Hispanic boys is typically 70% by sophomore year).

At the start of the 1997–1998 school year, San Miguel began using Accelerated Reader. That winter, the school's president, Brother Edmund Siderewicz, and another teacher attended the 501 and 601 Reading Renaissance seminars. By the end of the school year, the entire teaching staff was trained in Renaissance® strategies and \$15,000 worth of trade books were purchased to keep the new readers of San Miguel satisfied.

Reading Renaissance recommends that students receive 60 minutes of reading practice per day to accelerate reading growth. Because more than 90% of San Miguel's entering students read at least one grade below average and most read two or more grades below level, the administration decided to provide 90 minutes of reading practice each day. Reading Renaissance's Reading To, With, and Independently (TWI) program was employed and the 90 minutes were broken into two 45-minute periods.

Results

San Miguel's 1998–2000 results on the Terra Nova Standardized Test¹ are reported in normal curve equivalents (NCEs). An NCE gain of zero indicates that student growth and learning have occurred at an average pace during the school year. Some educators and evaluators believe that any NCE gain greater than zero marks improvement in student performance. Other experts feel that a yearly change of more than three points is considered significant improvement. By either measurement standard, San Miguel's Terra Nova NCE scores show significant and dramatic academic growth.

Students at San Miguel were tested in the fall of their sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade years. The graphs on the front illustrate the reading and language arts scores that rose dramatically with each new class that entered the school.

San Miguel's class of 1998, who were part of the Reading Renaissance program during only their eighth-grade year, gained 10.2 NCEs in reading on the Terra Nova Standardized Test during their three years at San Miguel. The reading scores of the class of 1999, who were part of the Renaissance program for seventh and eighth grade, tested even higher than their predecessors with a gain of 13.5 NCEs.

The steady improvement continued with the class of 2000, who were part of the Renaissance program for all three middle school years. The reading scores of these students increased 16.8 NCEs from the sixth to eighth grades. In the end, students who were involved in the Reading Renaissance program for all three years gained 6.6 more NCEs than the students who were part of the program during only their eighth-grade year.

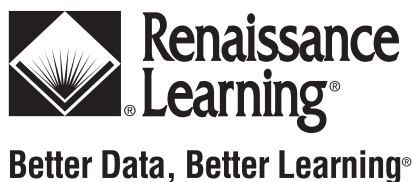
NCE gains in language arts were even greater than those made in reading. The class of 1998, who were part of the Reading Renaissance program during only their eighth-grade year, increased their language arts scores by 13.5 NCEs. The class of 1999, who participated in the Renaissance program during their seventh- and eighth-grade years, showed a gain of 22.0 NCEs. Finally, the class that was part of the Renaissance program for all three years, again exhibited the highest gain in scores with an increase of 23.6 NCEs by the eighth grade. A comparison of the three groups shows that students who participated in the Reading Renaissance program for three years gained 10.1 more NCEs in language arts than those who were part of the program during only their eighth-grade year.

In May 1998, San Miguel achieved Renaissance Certification as a Model School in Reading.

Conclusion

The achievements of San Miguel are particularly striking due to the fact that the volunteer teaching staff at San Miguel typically works at the school for two to three years. This suggests that the NCE gains may be related more to the implementation of Reading Renaissance than to the momentum of long-term professional growth of the teachers in the school.

¹CTB/McGraw-Hill. (n.d.) *Terra Nova Standardized Test*. Monterey, CA: CTB/McGraw-Hill



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