

Accelerated Reader® has Positive Impact on Reading Growth in New Zealand Boys' High School

Source: Denny Newburn, teacher, Rotorua Boys' High School

Research conducted during the 2000 school year.

Introduction

Rotorua Boys' High School began implementing Accelerated Reader in an effort to improve reading skills. A computer-based reading management program, Accelerated Reader increases the quality and quantity of student reading practice. This report discusses the positive impact of Accelerated Reader on reading growth at the high school.

School Profile

Rotorua Boys' High School

Students: 1,100, Years 9–12

Rotorua, New Zealand

Demographics:

State school

Maori and Pacific Island Students: 39%

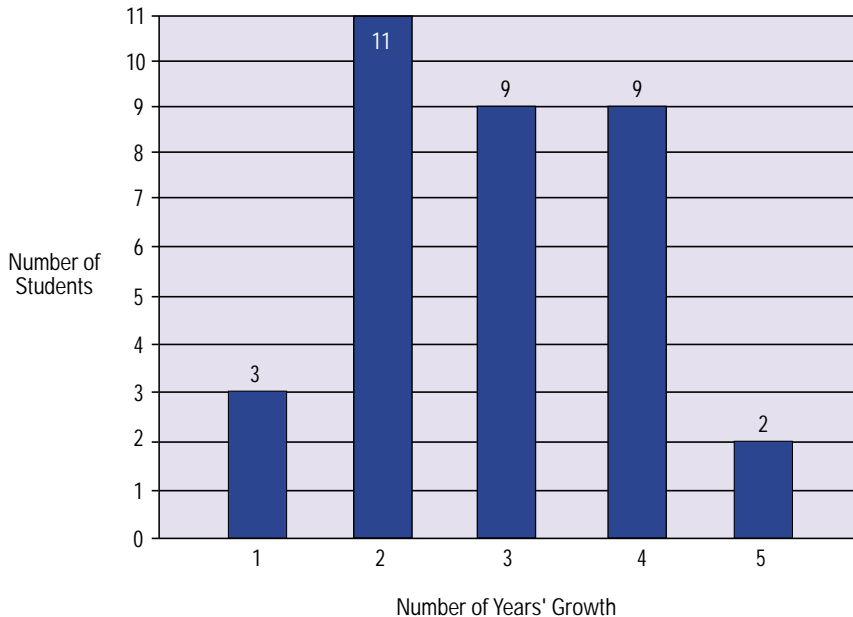
ESL: 3%

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Educator Background

Denny Newburn has been teaching in South Australia and New Zealand in the Special Needs area for 20 years. She has a B.A., a Dip. Teaching and a post-graduate diploma in the Teaching of Reading.

Students Achieve Multiple Years of Reading Growth in One Year



Implementation

In May of 2000, Denny Newburn, a teacher at Rotorua Boys' High School, began using Accelerated Reader with her students in a remedial reading program. Two to three times a week, students would come to her classroom, select books within their zone of proximal development (appropriate reading range)¹, read the books, take short quizzes at the computer, discuss the results of the quizzes with Newburn, and then select a new book and begin the process again.

Students in Newburn's class reacted positively to the Accelerated Reader program. They enjoyed selecting their own books and not being tied to class sets. The students also appreciated the individualized nature of the program that allowed them to progress at their own pace. Using the computer to take Accelerated Reader quizzes also proved to be a strong incentive for reading. Furthermore, the TOPS™ (The Opportunity to Praise a Student) Reports created for each student after completing a quiz were motivating to the students, who appreciated the immediate feedback.

Renaissance solutions are based on seven basic principles². One is that reading is a skill which is only improved through practice. Newburn stressed this point to her students and encouraged their reading practice. Personalized goal setting is another basic Renaissance principle. Newburn found that setting and achieving student reading goals was a positive factor in motivating students to read more books.

Results

To document growth in reading, students were pre- and post-tested using Running Records, a reading assessment technique that gauges reading fluency and comprehension.

The Running Records data indicate that 34 of the 35 students involved in the project made significant gains in reading over the school year. Within Newburn's class, three students acquired one full year of reading skills, while 11 students advanced two full years. For the majority of the class, however, the gains were even more dramatic, with nine students gaining three years and another nine students gaining four years of reading skills in one school year. The final two students advanced five years in reading skills during the year that Accelerated Reader was used, see the graph on the front.

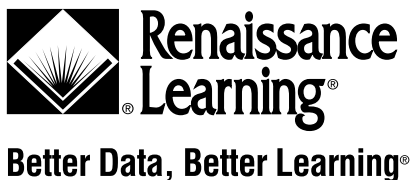
Because Accelerated Reader is a computerized reading management program, the data it produces can be analyzed to gain a clearer picture of classroom reading activity and reading progress. For instance, the Accelerated Reader data indicate that the 35 boys in the remedial reading class read a total of 578 books during the school year.

Conclusion

The Accelerated Reader project in Rotorua Boys' High School strongly suggests that when used by committed teachers, it significantly benefits students in New Zealand and worldwide.

¹Vygotsky, L.S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

²The seven principals are: increased practice time, appropriate level, information feedback, personalized goal setting, best use of technology, universal success, and research-proven effectiveness.



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