

Start-to-Finish Core Curriculum Outcomes From a School District in Michigan

The *Start-to-Finish Core Curriculum* is a comprehensive reading instructional program designed to target the instructional needs of adolescents who struggle with reading. It addresses reading comprehension, fluency, and word identification through a variety of instructional approaches. The *Start-to-Finish Core Curriculum* is built around chapter books that were authored to appeal to adolescents who currently read and/or listen with comprehension at the 1st through 4th grade levels. It includes a systematic phonics instructional program intended to support students who struggle to read and spell words at the 1st and 2nd grade levels.

In the second half of the 2014-15 school year, some students in the Traverse Bay Intermediate School District began using the *Start-to-Finish Core Curriculum*. As part of this pilot, data were collected for a group of 8 students in seventh (n=1), eighth (n=1), ninth (n=2), tenth (n=1), eleventh (n=1) and twelfth (n=2) grades. Four of the students received special education services under the eligibility of ASD, two received services as a result of CI, one LD, and one TBI. Students completed a variety of assessments in late December or early January and then again in late May or early June. The specific assessments administered include: (1) The SRI comprehension assessment; (2) AIMSweb fluency; (3) Qualitative Reading Inventory silent reading comprehension; and (4) AIMSweb Maze. Students completed these assessments at the level that best matched their reading abilities at the beginning of the study.

As illustrated in table 1, results indicate that the group of eight students made gains on each measure as a result of one semester of intervention in the spring of 2015.

Table 1. Average Gains on Outcomes Measures Spring 2015

	SRI Comprehension	AIMSweb Fluency	AIMSweb Maze % Correct	AIMSweb Maze Total Words
Winter 2014-2015	439 (Lexile)	82.71 wpm	83%	13.75
Spring 2014-2015	460 (Lexile)	98.71 wpm	92%	18.63
Gains	21 (Lexile)	16 wpm	9%	4.88

In addition to the measures reported in Table 1, students completed a silent reading comprehension task that is part of the *Qualitative Reading Inventory*. This assessment requires students to read a passage silently and then respond orally to questions presented orally. Actual scores for individual students were not provided; however, the teachers reported if the student performed at one of three levels: (1) Frustration, a score of 0 – 50%; (2) Instructional, a score of 60-70%; or (3) Independent, a score of 80% or higher. Students read passages at the first (n=3), fourth (n=2), sixth (n=1), eighth (n=1), and tenth (n=1) grade levels depending on their reading level prior to beginning the intervention. Prior to the intervention, four students responded to questions at the Frustration level, three responded at the Instructional level (data for one of the students was missing). At the end of the semester of intervention, three students performed at the same level (two Frustration and one Instructional), but the remaining five students improved

their performance. In the end, two students continued to perform at the Frustration level (down from four), four now performed at the Instructional level (up from three), and two performed at the Independent level (up from zero).

In the end, this small group of students provides important preliminary evidence of the potential long-term effectiveness of the *Start-to-Finish Core Curriculum*. As a group, they made gains on every measure employed as pre- and post-test measures. Importantly, those measures addressed fluency and comprehension, which suggests that the curriculum is addressing reading in a comprehensive manner. It will be important to continue following these students as they engage with the curriculum over a longer period of time, and to gather data on a larger group of students so that the results of this small group can be confirmed on a larger scale.

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