

Case Study

Unique Reader Secondary Statistically Proves Itself at Pioneer Middle School

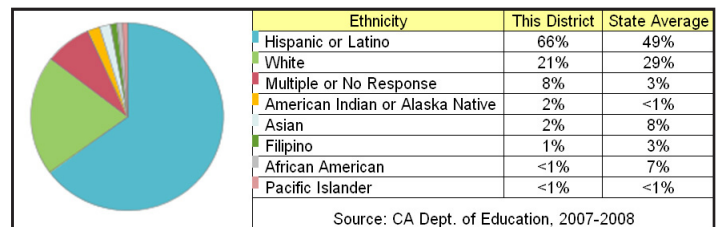
"...the program was so easy and fast that the kids did not get bored and they could not wait to do the program each day. It was such a good program that I had my children try it!"

- Isabel Magana, program coach

| At a Glance... | |
|-------------------|---|
| Product Used | DORA, Unique Reader, Unique Reader Secondary |
| School & Students | Pioneer Middle, 176 students |
| Time Period | 12 weeks |
| Deployment Type | After-school |
| Benefits | - Easy diagnosis - Effective online reading instruction - Easy teacher control and monitoring |
| Results | - High comprehension growth - Significant STAR gains |

Customer Profile:

Pioneer Middle School is located in the Porterville Unified School District in central California. The Porterville region's economy is primarily agriculture-based. As such, it is faced with some of the typical socio-economic challenges of an agricultural economy. Pioneer Middle School has a significantly higher percentage of migrant families than other regions of California. In addition, 86% of its students are on the free or reduced lunch program. 17% of students are identified as English Language Learners. Finally, the school rated 2 out of 10 on the 2006 Academic Performance Index (API), meaning it ranks in the lowest 20th percentile in academic achievement of schools in the state.



Program Objective:

Middle school students who are behind in reading quickly fall behind in all subject areas because of the need for content area reading skills. The same students who have been struggling for many years may lack motivation and therefore may not respond as quickly to remediation. These were issues that needed to be addressed at Pioneer Middle School. By using the DORA comprehension sub-set we are able to measure the current level of performance as well as identify where program and differentiated instruction placement is needed.

Study Methodology and Data:

This study examined the impact of Let's Go Learn's *Unique Reader Secondary* program on 176 seventh and eighth graders who participated in a 12-week after-school intervention program. All students were initially assessed using DORA and then were put into *Unique Reader Secondary* online instruction. Five percent of the students also received *Unique Reader* instruction, which teaches decoding, vocabulary, and comprehension strategies, because of their need for additional decoding instruction. When serving a high at-risk population of students, participation will normally vary with respect to attendance as well as effort. After 12 weeks, roughly one third of the students received only minimal instruction due to low attendance. Another third attended half the time. And finally, the last third had high attendance. Let's Go Learn's *Unique Reader Secondary* and *Unique Reader* were used for differentiated reading instruction for qualifying students. 95% of the students used *Unique Reader Secondary*, which

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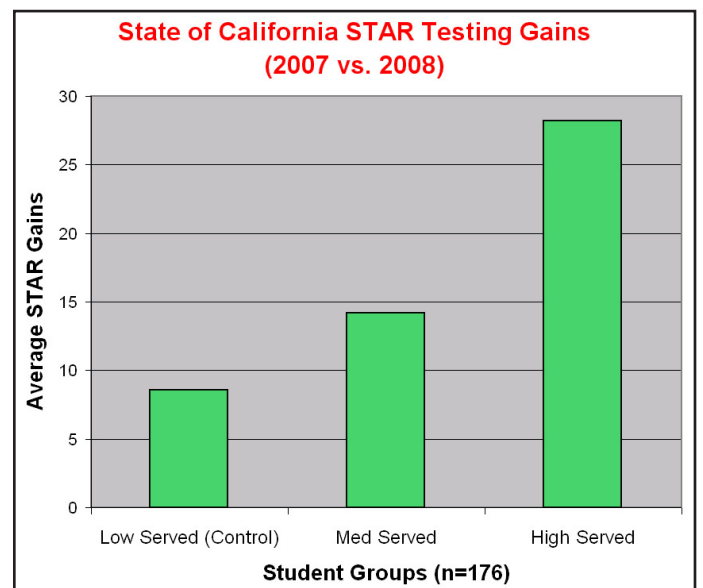


Figure 1: The green bars indicate average student gain in the STAR scores separately for the three levels of student participation: Low, Medium, and High *Unique Reader* usage. The positive trend in average increase in STAR scores associated with *Unique Reader* participation is statistically significant.

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focuses on the development of comprehension strategies. Finally, students were given *DORA* as a post-assessment following 12 weeks of individualized online instruction.

For the purpose of this study, if students missed the post-assessment they were removed from the data, since there would be no way to determine growth. Furthermore, students whose attendance was low were removed from the “medium” and “high” served groups. In determining success, we first examined the percentage of students who made gains versus students who did not make gains. Next, we looked at the students with gains and examined these gains as ranges of growth as well as total average growth. We examined the data in this fashion in order to isolate the external factor of student motivation. STAR results (the state of California uses the STAR program Standardized Testing and Reporting, to measure student learning in grades 2 through 11) were also examined for all students who completed a pre- and post-*DORA* assessment. The STAR program includes the California Standards Tests (CSTs, a series of standards-based assessments), the California Modified Assessment (CMA, a standards-based test for many students with individualized education programs), the California Alternate Performance Assessment (CAPA, for students with significant cognitive disabilities who are unable to take the CSTs or CMA), and Standards-based Tests in Spanish (STS).

Results:*

Even without full participation, the results for *Unique Reader Secondary* were outstanding! Students with medium and high attendance had significant gains on both the *DORA* and the California State tests. Of the students with high attendance, 61% had measurable gains on *DORA*. For these students, the average gain in comprehension was nearly 1.8 years. The STAR results show the high attendance group had an average gain of 28.2 points over the previous year’s test scores—compared to the low attendance group, with an average gain of only 8.6 points. STAR uses a scale score for all students taking the California State tests without modifications. The scale scores for each grade and subject area range from between 150 (low) and 600 (high).

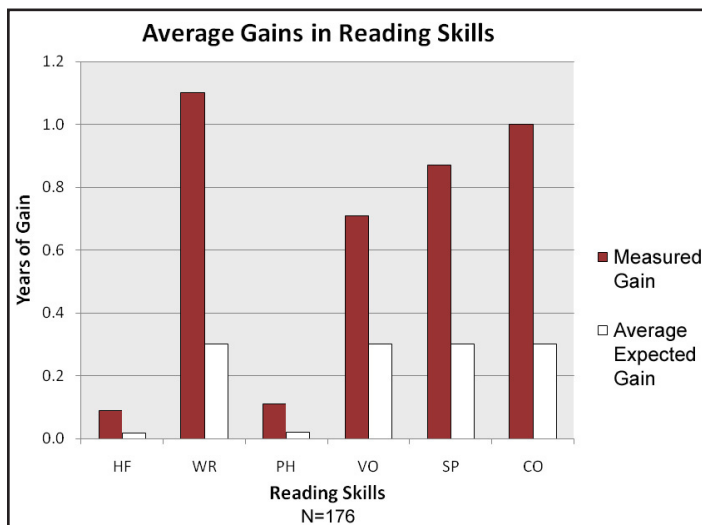


Figure 2: The red bars indicate the average gains in the reading skills measured by *DORA* for all 175 students taken together. For purposes of comparison, the white bars indicate the amount of gain expected over three months, which is the average length of time between pre-test and post-test for the 175 students. Although sporadic participation would have tended to reduce any measure of average benefit derived from *Unique Reader Secondary*, the group as a whole showed average gains exceeding expectations in four of the six measured skills, some exceeding by large margins. For all six skills, the gains are statistically significant.

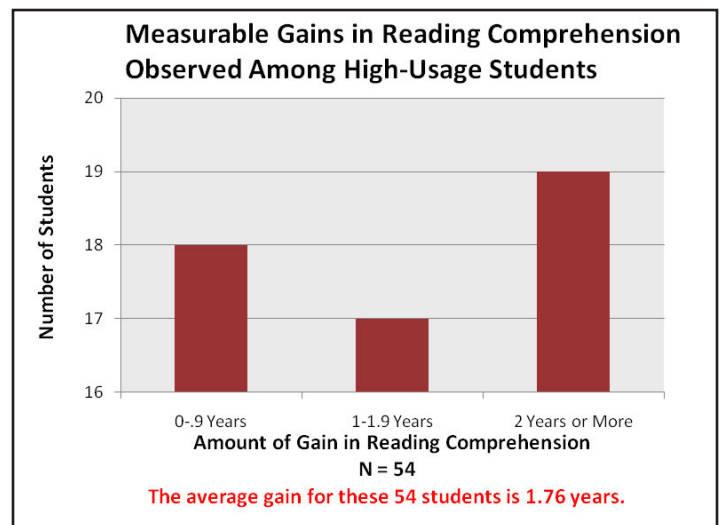


Figure 3: This graph focuses on the 54 students, out of the total of 87 students in the High Served group, for whom measurable gains were observed in the *DORA* pre- and post-test scores for Reading Comprehension. The red bars indicate the number of these students whose gains in Reading Comprehension are up to a one-year gain, from one to two years gain, and two years or more—18, 17, and 20 students, respectively.

Conclusions:*

DORA, *Unique Reader*, and *Unique Reader Secondary* reach out to students at whatever level their reading-skill strengths and weaknesses may be, and help them and their teachers support progress that leads to measurable gains—not only within the specific skill set directly addressed by these resources, but also on a broader trajectory of academic development, including class work and standards-based assessment.

* Data Analysis performed by Stephen Moore, Associate Director, Berkeley Evaluation and Assessment Research Center, Graduate School of Education, University of California, Berkeley.