Primary Literacy Achievement: A Collaborative Urban Partnership

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Abstract

This study examined the effects of a collaborative urban partnership on student literacy achievement. The participants were approximately 220 students in kindergarten through third grade and 10 teachers. Participants were from an urban, low-income southeastern elementary school serving culturally diverse students. The school had been in its fourth year of Title I Program Improvement due to failure to achieve adequate gains on standardized test scores. The school leaders resolved to develop and implement an effective, research-based literacy program to ensure that all students would be able to read fluently and independently at grade level by the completion of third grade. The school leaders also realized the need to address the urban challenges of low teacher expectations for student achievement and lack of parental involvement. The collective efficacy, or shared belief system, of teachers and the resultant morale of teachers were also considered by school leaders. A collaborative urban partnership was created to furnish school and community supports to families while it provided inservice, preservice, and resource support for teachers to implement research-based instruction. Results of formal assessments from required state testing and from individual case studies indicated an increase in student literacy achievement. Informal data analysis also suggested an increase in student literacy achievement. Since it is possible that the gains in student achievement were due to other components of the collaborative partnership or even to other unspecified factors, further research is necessary.

Introduction

Urban schools with students from culturally diverse backgrounds present unique challenges to educators as well as opportunities for teaching and learning. Many urban areas are overwhelmed by social and community problems that result in inadequate funding for schools and in teacher apathy (Beachum & McCray, 2004). Diverse urban families of low-socioeconomic status, frequently the families most affected by a multitude of economic and social constraints, often provide little support for learning in the home environment. Research indicates that factors in the home environment and community have a direct impact on student achievement. Research also suggests that there is a significant gap between poor, culturally diverse students and white students in vocabulary development, even as students enter school (Hart & Risley, 2003; Resnick, 2004). Furthermore, instruction in low-income urban schools is often based on cognitively low-level, unchallenging rote material that fails to teach for understanding (Darling-Hammond, 1997). Research suggests that many teachers in low-income urban schools have limited expectations for student achievement and are inadequately trained to teach reading (Carter, 2001; McNeil, 2000).

There is also evidence that some programs and schools have been successful in raising low-income student achievement in urban areas. The Calvert program, Knowledge Is Power program, and the U.S. Department of Defense schools have proven to be successful in reducing the achievement gap

between culturally diverse students and white students. All of these programs and schools encourage high-quality teaching, emphasize high expectations for student achievement along with rigorous curricula, and promote strong community environments that support and value academic achievement (Carter, 2001; Resnick, 2004).

Background of the Study

During academic year 2000-2001, an urban southeastern elementary school with low-income, diverse students struggled into its fourth year of a Title I Program Improvement due to failure to achieve adequate gains on standardized test scores. Realizing that changes were needed to better serve the students, the school leaders resolved to develop and implement an effective, research-based literacy program to ensure that all students would be able to read fluently and independently at grade level by the completion of third grade. The school leaders also realized the need to address the urban challenges of low teacher expectations for student achievement and lack of parental involvement. To promote the successful implementation of the program, the potential barriers of teachers' negative perceptions of change and resultant low morale were addressed by the school leaders.

Attendance by a core team of teachers and administrators at the 2001 Reading Excellence Act (REA) Best Practices Institute in Atlanta served as an impetus for change. The Reading Excellence Act had as its purposes the providing of early intervention to children at risk of inappropriate identification for special education, the furnishing of support for preschool children to enhance learning to read once in school, and the teaching of children to read by the end of third grade. REA instruction was to be grounded in scientifically based reading research (Reading Programs, 1997-2005). Thus, a collaborative urban partnership for primary literacy education was created (see Figure 1). The collaborative partnership was comprised of support to teachers by inservice and preservice professional development and by a Reading Resource Center. Support was provided for children and their families through school and community inputs. Thus, a proposal was submitted to the REA organization that resulted in funding for a two-year grant to develop and implement the collaborative urban partnership in the primary grades.
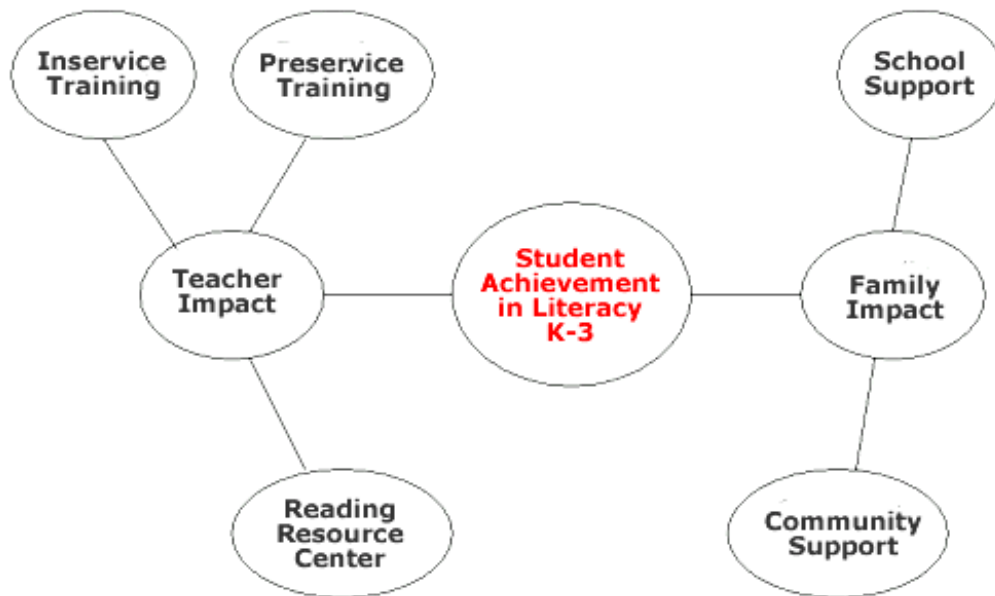

Figure 1. Collaborative Urban Partnership.

Support from Research

To design the new literacy program for kindergarten through grade 3 in accordance with the requirements of REA instruction, the scientifically based reading research was reviewed. This research uses scientific procedures to obtain information about how young children develop reading skills, how children can be taught to read, and how children can overcome reading difficulties (Armbruster, Lehr, & Osborn, 2003). Predictors of success in reading for all students include

cognitive abilities, positive expectations and experiences with early literacy in the home, and much support for positive literacy attitudes and activities from an early age. It was found that failure in learning to read adequately is often characteristic of poor and nonwhite children (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). The literacy environment in a home was found to be one of the most powerful predictors of reading and vocabulary knowledge. For low-income children, vocabulary was identified as a major problem for reading; and vocabulary difficulties tended to worsen as low-income children aged (Chall, Jacobs, & Baldwin, 1990). Therefore, a literacy program combining the elements of scientifically based reading research with school, home, and community support was envisioned.

To propose an effective program for primary-grade students from kindergarten through grade 3, the core team of teachers and administrators sought to create a literacy program that integrated word study, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension as set forth in the report of the National Reading Panel (2000) included in the federal *No Child Left Behind Act* (2002). Word study would incorporate the teaching of phonemic awareness, phonics, spelling, high-frequency word recognition, and vocabulary (Stewart, 2004; Vogt & Nagano, 2003). Word study also would include rhyming games, singing, and reading books by authors such as Dr. Seuss (Neuman, Copple, & Bredekamp, 2002). Students' invented spellings in journal writings would be utilized for explicit instruction in alphabet, phonics, word recognition, and spelling (Invernizzi, Juel, & Rosemary, 1996/97). The use of word boxes (Clay, 1993) to scaffold children's phonemic awareness, phonics, word identification, and spelling would be included. Word boxes are also referred to as Elkonin boxes, in which blocks are used to segment sounds in words. Rereading story books and authentic writing in response to stories would also be used to enhance word study (Invernizzi, Juel, & Rosemary, 1996/97).

To promote fluency in reading, repeated reading and guided oral reading in small reading groups and independent silent reading were proposed for the literacy program (Fontas & Pinnell, 1996). Since one of the best ways to develop automatic, fluent reading is to spend much time in reading (Allington, 2001), the teachers and administrators set a schedule of 180 minutes for reading and literacy activities each day. Readers Theatre productions were also proposed to promote fluency, speed, accuracy, and proper expression by the children (Martinez, Roser, & Strecker, 1998/99).

Instruction in vocabulary and in comprehension would be used to foster understanding of text, and wide reading to build vocabulary, language, and world knowledge would be encouraged (Beck & McKeown, 1991). Incorporating the listening and speaking competencies of students would be adopted with teacher read-alouds (Tompkins, 2002). Creating adventures and stories during Writing Workshop would promote vocabulary development and comprehension (Stewart, 2002). Shared book experiences (Eldredge, Reutzel, & Hollingsworth, 1996), flexible groupings of students (Stewart, 2004), and individual and group projects (Tompkins, 2002) would be used to encourage vocabulary and comprehension development.

Recognizing the necessity of family and community support for reading (Chall, Jacobs, & Baldwin, 1990), school leaders surveyed parents and teachers for their opinions and attitudes toward literacy, asked community leaders and experts to function as literacy resources, and invited local home and center-based child care facilities to become literacy program participants. Parents, teachers, local community leaders, and experts indicated support for the proposed literacy program.

To address possible barriers to implementation such as teacher resistance to change and resultant low morale, school leaders realized the importance of developing the collective efficacy of teachers. Collective efficacy denotes the beliefs of teachers that they, as faculty members, can implement a program of change necessary to have positive effects on the achievement of students (Goddard, 2001). To encourage teacher innovation, promote positive change in school culture, and equip teachers with critical literacy information and instructional strategies, a staff development program was designed to meet the unique needs of the teachers at the school.

Inservice Training and Development

Researchers have found a relationship between teachers' belief systems and their reading practices (Foertsch, n.d.; Levin, 2001). To develop teacher beliefs, norms, and values that endorse student and staff learning, a positive school culture must be understood and shaped. There are common

characteristics of school cultures in which teachers value student achievement, implement rigorous curricula and instruction, and focus on students (DuFour & Burnette, 2002; Peterson, 2002). The school cultures contain:

- a widely shared sense of purpose and values;
- norms of continuous learning and improvement;
- a commitment to and sense of responsibility for the learning of all students;
- collaborative, collegial relationships; and
- opportunities for staff reflection, collective inquiry, and sharing personal practice (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Fullan, 2001; Hord, 1998; Lambert, 1998; Stein, 1998).

Inservice training and development to enrich school culture must also include changes of teaching behaviors. These changes include the use of new materials, incorporation of new instructional practices, and modification of teachers' beliefs (Foertsch, n.d.). Teachers' certainty about their instructional practice has been found to be one of the most important factors in determining student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Rosenholtz, 1989). According to Sparks and Richardson (1997), without the professional development of teachers, change in instructional practice will not likely occur. Based on the National Staff Development Council's (2001) *Standards for Staff Development*, the data-driven and research-based staff development program was designed to deepen educators' content knowledge, to provide research-based instructional strategies, to foster high expectations for all students' academic achievements, and to furnish skills or strategies for parent and family involvement.

Recognizing that innovations in teachers' practice need to be fostered through learning opportunities that last longer than one day (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Lieberman, 1995; Rosenholtz, 1989), the school leaders set a minimum of 45 clock hours annually to train teachers in the implementation and assessment of literacy instruction. Educational experts from the Best Practices Institute in Atlanta offered training and materials in early literacy development, in using assessment instruments to align standards and curriculum, and in the awareness of exceptionalities for teachers seeking more effective methods of literacy instruction.

A Literacy Coach scheduled monthly staff development sessions. Faculty members received inservice education and materials in the areas of teaching phonemic awareness and comprehension strategies; in vocabulary, fluency, and motivational teaching; and in using assessment to guide reading instruction. Teachers were given weekly grade-level planning time and participated in professional book studies after school hours. Inservice development, therefore, enhanced school culture by fostering the use of new materials, new instructional practices, and positive beliefs by teachers concerning student achievement.

Inservice professional development sought to increase the collective efficacy of teachers by preparing teachers for necessary changes in their classrooms. Since research supports the importance of sustained and intentional investment by teachers in learning to improve their classroom practice (Richardson, 2005), inservice strategies focused on the collective efficacy and morale of teachers. Results of periodic Needs Assessment Surveys indicated positive changes in teachers' beliefs and behaviors. The teachers developed a focus on continuous improvement in teaching and learning, a commitment to student achievement, collaborative relationships among colleagues, and shared practice and reflection.

Program Implementation

The program implemented in the southeastern urban school included approximately 220 students and 10 teachers in kindergarten through third grade. Ninety-eight percent of the students were culturally diverse, 69% of the children received free or reduced lunches, and the mobility rate was 26%.

To implement the findings of scientifically based reading research, an instructional environment conducive to learning to read was crucial (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). During the 180 minutes of

daily literacy instruction, the students were provided instruction and experiences with word study, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

Instruction Components

Instruction in word study addressed the components of phonemic awareness and phonics. Phonemic awareness, the basic understanding that speech is composed of discrete, individual sounds, provides the groundwork for phonics. Instruction also addressed the set of relationships between the sounds in speech and the spelling patterns of written words, or phonics (Tompkins, 2005).

Using best practices for student engagement, teachers taught children to identify and categorize phonemes, to blend phonemes into words, to segment words into phonemes, to add or delete phonemes to create new words, and to substitute phonemes to make new words. Using the letters of the alphabet, the students participated in sound-matching and rhyming activities. Children identified the sounds at the beginning, middle, and end of words and selected pictures or objects that did and did not include the isolated sound. Sound-blending activities engaged the students in "putting together" sounds to form words. Wordplay books and songs stimulated the students to identify and segment sounds. The use of Elkonin boxes, or word boxes, demonstrated to students each sound in the name of an object.

Since systematic and explicit phonics instruction with meaningful opportunities for reading and writing is considered efficacious for student learning (Adams, 1990), teachers implemented lessons with a defined sequence of letter-sound relationships. Students learned sound-symbol correspondences, how to blend sounds to segment sounds and decode words, onset-rime relationships, and phonics generalizations or "rules." Teachers explained many phonics concepts using authentic literacy activities and as part of classroom reading and writing activities. Although a basal reading series was available, teachers used the basals primarily for mini-lessons and as resources for instruction.

Fluent readers read text accurately, quickly, and with expression. To promote students' development of fluency, teachers provided models of fluent reading, had students participate in repeated readings, and furnished opportunities for students to read books at their independent reading levels; i.e., relatively easy text for the reader with a 95% success rate (Armbruster, Lehr, & Osborn, 2002). Repeated readings included the use of choral or unison reading, partner reading as students took turns reading to one another, and student-adult reading as the adult modeled fluent reading followed by the student reading. Teachers also designed lessons for fluency that incorporated Readers Theatre. Reading from scripts rich in dialogue, students rehearsed and performed plays for peers, other classes, and parents. Without using props or materials, students portrayed characters or narrators as they shared a story or book. Readers Theatre promoted meaningful experiences with rereading text and practicing fluency. Readers Theatre also promoted cooperative social interaction and set an appealing purpose for reading. To promote fluency, teachers also created guided reading groups, provided independent reading time in their classrooms, and recommended that students join the local library to read more outside of school.

Vocabulary knowledge is vital to reading success and may be learned indirectly or directly by students. Most vocabulary is learned indirectly; to foster vocabulary development, teachers read to students daily, encouraged students to read on their own, and engaged students in daily conversations. Teachers provided direct instruction of vocabulary by using word walls, word posters, word maps, word sorts, word tea parties, and dramatizations of words. Teachers also used dictionaries and other reference aids; taught the use of context clues; used root words and affixes; and presented homonyms, synonyms, and antonyms. In addition, daily reading and writing activities for authentic tasks such as journal and story writing furnished students with important purposes and activities for vocabulary development.

The purpose of reading is comprehension, or understanding. Teachers promoted focused and active reading by setting a purpose for reading, generating and answering questions, incorporating graphic and semantic organizers, focusing on story structure, and summarizing important information. Teachers activated students' prior knowledge and encouraged the use of visual imagery by students.

Many opportunities with Reading and Writing Workshops enhanced student participation and comprehension of authentic text. Modeling and think-alouds by teachers demonstrated to students how to read for comprehension, and guided practice assisted students in applying new learning. Students worked together as partners or in small groups to complete assigned tasks and to foster comprehension of text. Thus, teachers designed instruction for students to learn multiple comprehension strategies.

To enhance instruction in word study, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension, an experienced, well-trained Literacy Coach worked with teachers and organized a Reading Resource Center with stimulating literacy materials. From grant funds, the coach purchased a myriad of trade books at different reading and interest levels. Other instructional materials, including puzzles, phonics and literacy games, magnetic letters and props, flannel boards, activity cards, and letter and word tiles, were purchased and shared with teachers. Computer software was purchased for the literacy laboratory used by teachers for classroom instruction. To promote family involvement and support, the Literacy Coach made the resource materials available for check-out and use by families within the school.

Preservice Training and Development

As an integral part of the REA grant, a local university provided preservice teacher candidates with training in diagnostic and prescriptive reading instruction using authentic case studies. An associate professor of education and program coordinator for the Graduate Reading Endorsement Program at the local university supervised nine upper-level preservice teachers conducting reading assessments of the children at the school. Then, the preservice teachers carried out appropriate one-on-one intervention strategies based on the young readers' assessment results. During the intervention sessions (averaging 2 hours per week for 10 weeks), each preservice teacher customized reading instruction for the individual student; thus, it was emphasized that one method of instruction is not sufficient for all children. To adapt reading instruction for an individual student's need, the preservice teacher translated symptoms into a clinical diagnosis that could be addressed through reading strategies identified by the National Reading Panel (2000). The assessments targeted the following skills and abilities related to reading performance:

- preliteracy skills—e.g., phonemic awareness, letter recognition and identification, concept development, print concept
- interests inventories to assist with selecting instructional materials
- attitudes toward reading
- phonics and other word-decoding skills
- physiological aspects of reading—auditory discrimination and visual discrimination
- word recognition by grade level and accuracy while reading
- comprehension—prompted and unprompted memories, passage retelling
- reading fluency
- vocabulary—receptive and expressive
- reading potential

Classroom teachers received information concerning each child's assessment results in a matrix format as well as suggested (NRP-endorsed) intervention strategies based on assessment results.

Family and Community Involvement

The final program component, family and community-based literacy support, involved adult and parent education in teaching young children important literacy skills. A new Family Literacy Coordinator offered each family support in literacy training and provided increased awareness of

available community literacy support agencies. The Literacy Coach and the Family Literacy Coordinator collaborated with support agencies that promote literacy education and parenting skills, including public libraries, parks and recreation facilities, and local child care centers. The Family Coordinator provided information for parent access to library cards for their children, GED classes, food stamp programs, bus passes, technical training, and other community offerings. Community leaders, including the mayor of the metropolitan city, visited the school to emphasize the significance of literacy-related activities and to highlight awareness of literacy supports in the community.

Family and community support efforts fostered a welcoming school climate by including parents and community members in school meetings, by purchasing and distributing books and materials for child and family utilization, and by creating an environment conducive to fun and fellowship with refreshments and conversations. A change in parents' beliefs and involvement with literacy was observed; parent involvement, which previously had been minimal, exploded as families and community members participated in Family Literacy Nights, parent workshops, Open House and orientation meetings, library nights, and literacy enrichment visits by the local child care centers. For further parent involvement and participation, family and community members volunteered at the school an average of 12 hours weekly during the grant implementation period.

To promote student achievement and to assist students and families during the summer, a literacy intervention session was offered 3 hours daily for 4 days during 4 weeks. Classroom teachers and paraprofessionals delivered literacy instruction for a maximum number of 10 students per classroom in kindergarten through grade 3. The students enjoyed nutritious lunches furnished daily at the session.

A new Parents as Teachers Coordinator visited families with children from birth to age 4 twice a month to discuss child development and to share stimulating books, toys, and materials related to early care and education. Repeated home visits during the grant implementation period assisted a total of 23 local families.

Results

Data collection and preliminary data analysis seemed to indicate that the literacy program was effective. The 10 classroom teachers collected informal data from observing and listening to students in the classroom, from reading students' learning journals, and from reviewing students' work products and projects. Used during classroom observations, teacher-made checklists recorded greater participation in students' literacy activities and in students' understanding and use of reading strategies. Teachers also noted an increased incidence of favorable comments among students, thereby indicating an increase in students' confidence and feelings of success toward literacy activities. As teachers reviewed the learning journals, they noticed increases in length and complexity of students' writing. A review of work products and projects demonstrated greater comprehension and involvement by students.

The formal state assessments of Annual Measurable Objective in Reading/English Language Arts indicated that the percentage of students in the category of "Basic/Does Not Meet" declined each academic year. From a high of 20% in 2002-2003, the category of "Basic/Does Not Meet" fell to 17% in academic year 2003-2004 and to 9.50% in academic year 2004-2005. The category of "Proficient/Meets" changed from 52% in academic year 2002-2003 to 58% in academic year 2003-2004 to 54% in academic year 2004-2005. The category of "Advanced/Exceeds" shifted from 30% in academic year 2002-2003 to 24% in academic year 2003-2004 and to 36.50% in academic year 2004-2005 (Georgia Department of Education, 2004-2005) (see Figure 2). Following the 2-year implementation of the REA grant and the resultant changes in the school, its teachers, parents, and community, the academic year 2004-2005 recorded a total of 90.50% of students scoring proficient or advanced in Reading/English Language Arts. Two years earlier in academic year 2002-2003, a total of 82% of students scored proficient or advanced in Reading/Language Arts. Student literacy achievement as measured by the formal state assessments increased by 8.5% in Reading/Language Arts over the 2-year period.

Because only preliminary data analysis was available, results are limited. Subsequent studies are needed and could include both informal and formal data collection with data analysis by year in school, gender, ethnicity, English-language learners, and economic status.
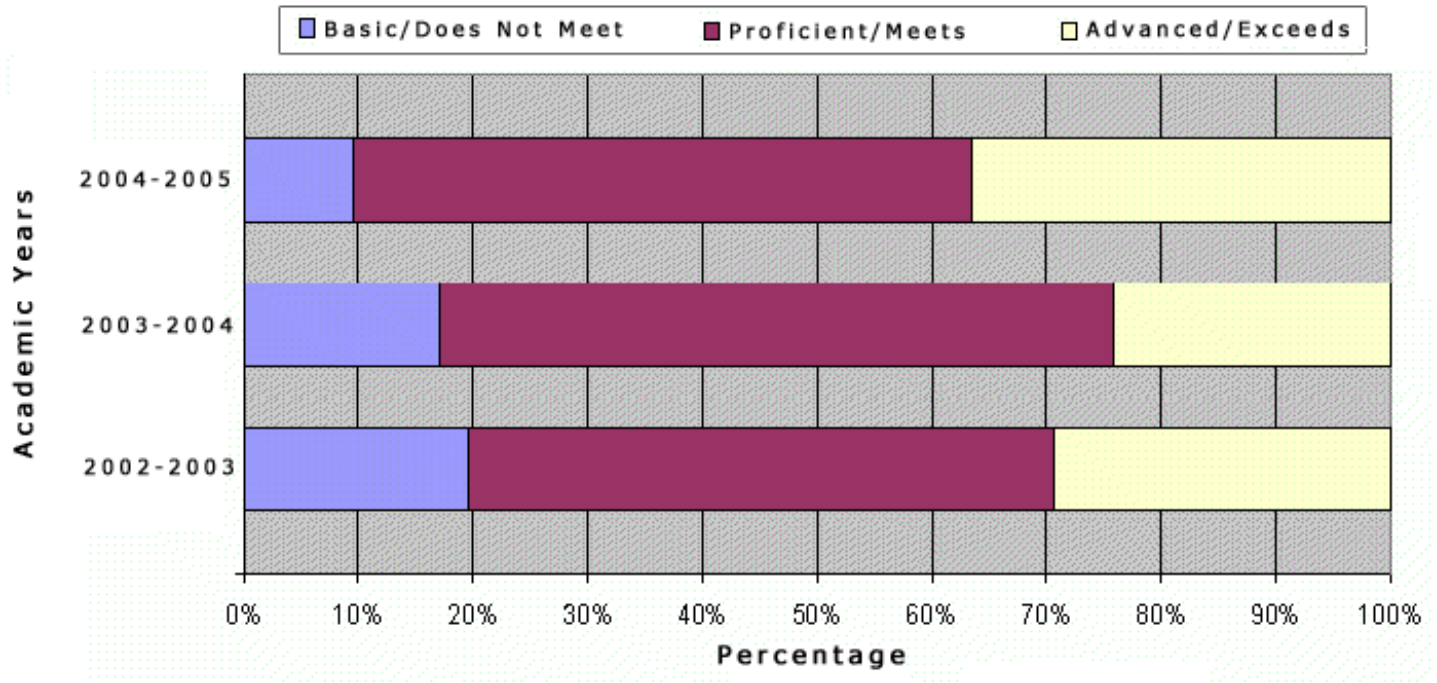

Figure 2. Annual measurable objective,
Reading/English-Language Arts.

Formal data were collected from preservice intervention strategies based on assessment results from individual case studies. The preservice teachers used *Bader Reading and Language Inventory* (Bader, 2002) and*Instructing Students Who Have Literacy Problems* (McCormick, 2003) as primary sources for assessment materials. Each preservice teacher worked with his or her assigned children for an average of 20 hours—2 hours to pretest, 16 hours to implement intervention strategies based on assessment results, and 2 hours to posttest. All children participating in the sessions improved their reading abilities as substantiated by informal assessments (observation and a portfolio of student work) and pre- and posttest results.

After approximately 16 hours of one-on-one instruction, the improvement documented in the assessments ranged from learning to identify letters and letter sounds to advancing a grade level in reading performance (see Table 1). While gains were identified, it could be possible that the increases in student achievement were attributable to other components of the collaborative partnership or even to other unspecified factors. Further research and data analysis are needed.

Table 1
Case Studies: Grade-Level Gains in Reading

	Pretest Reading Grade Level (Graded Passages)	Posttest Reading Grade Level (Graded Passages)	Grade-Level Gain
Spring 2003			
Student 1 3rd Grade	Grade level 3 Slow reading rate	Grade level 4 Some improvement in fluency	1 grade level
Student 2 3rd Grade	Grade level 3 Problems in story retelling	Grade level 4 Acceptable story retelling	1 grade level
Student 3 Kindergarten	Lower than preprimer Preliteracy stage	Preprimer Preliteracy stage	1 grade level Beginning reader

Student 4 Kindergarten	Preliteracy stage Word recognition Lower than preprimer	Preliteracy stage Word recognition Preprimer	Word recognition increased 1 level Beginning reader
Spring 2004			
Student 1 Kindergarten	Preliteracy pretest Deficiency in literacy concepts, letter knowledge, and blending and segmentation	Preliteracy posttest Child relocated before posttest could be administered	Incomplete case study
Student 2 Kindergarten	Preliteracy pretests – Literacy concepts, letter knowledge, blending and segmentation, phonics	Preliteracy posttest – Improvement in literacy concepts, letter knowledge, blending and segmentation, phonics	Improvement documented, but child is still in preliteracy stage
Student 3 1st Grade	Lower than preprimer grade passages	Preprimer level	1 grade level
Student 4 1st Grade	Grade level 1	Grade level 1	0 grade level On grade level
Student 5 1st Grade	Grade level 2	Grade level 3	1 grade level

Implications for Classroom Practice

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of a collaborative urban partnership on the literacy achievement of primary students. Results of formal assessments based on required state testing and individual case studies documented increased student achievement. Informal data also suggested increased student achievement.

Although the REA grant ended at the conclusion of academic year 2003-04, the school continued its commitment to effective, research-based literacy instruction. At the Title I school, the Academic Coach, formerly the Literacy Coach, now oversees all classroom instruction. The daily 180-minute literacy schedule incorporates expository text and flexible classroom groupings together with the components of word study, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Teacher inservice training is scheduled at least bimonthly, and the local university continues to utilize the school for the training of teacher candidates. The former Family Literacy Coordinator now serves as Title I Special Education Coordinator for parents and also as Prekindergarten Coordinator at the school. The school qualified as a participant in the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (Title IV, 1997-2004) after-school program. The school furnishes academic tutoring and enrichment activities to aid students in meeting state and local standards. Community and cultural activities also help to foster student involvement and achievement (Title IV, 1997-2004). The director of the after-school program is the former Parents as Teachers Coordinator. Therefore, the elements of scientifically based reading research for classroom literacy instruction, of family and community-based literacy support, and of continuing inservice and preservice teacher education continue.

The collaborative urban partnership proved successful because it furnished school and community supports to families while it provided inservice, preservice, and resource support for teachers. Results of this study suggest that student achievement in literacy increased because of continuing support and ongoing training for teachers to implement scientifically based instruction, along with parental and community involvement. Putting the pieces of parental and community involvement together with teacher training and support positively reinforced the efforts of the school by implementing best practices to promote student achievement in literacy education. The collaborative urban partnership deftly addressed the challenges of low expectations for student achievement and

lack of parental involvement since the program was delivered as a "one-stop-shop" of comprehensive supports. The partnership also seems to have enhanced the collective efficacy of teachers and resultant morale by altering the beliefs and behaviors of participating teachers; the beliefs and perceptions of parents and community members concerning literacy education were also strengthened.

While this study included information that might be helpful to teachers, leaders, and community members concerned with primary literacy achievement, more research is needed. Additional studies with larger sample sizes in differing geographical areas and in rural locales would be informative. If further research produced similar findings, perhaps a collaborative rural partnership could be established for areas that are predominantly composed of diverse, low-income students. With the availability of rural community supports such as local libraries, health departments, literacy and faith-based organizations, together with Title I funding, perhaps a rural school could access distance learning opportunities for teachers, offer after-school programs in the community, and enrich local child care facilities for preschool children.

In summary, the development of a collaborative urban partnership met the challenges of teachers' low expectations for student achievement and a lack of parental involvement; teachers' collective efficacy and morale were also tackled. The implementation of a scientifically based program of literacy instruction grounded in school and community supports resulted in increased student achievement for primary-grade students. The results of the study indicate a need for further examination of collaborative partnerships and their roles for increasing student literacy achievement.

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