

HOW SCHOLASTIC F.I.R.S.T. AND LITERACY PRO RAISED READING SCORES ON TWO FLORIDA ASSESSMENTS

Summary

During the 2021-22 school year, an urban southern Florida school district saw a significant improvement in reading ability as measured by the Renaissance Star Early Literacy Assessment and FAST ELA Reading Assessment. The Renaissance Star Early Literacy Assessment measures early language, reading, and foundational skills in Grades PreK–3. It helps to quickly identify any learning gaps and assess individual growth. The FAST ELA Reading Assessment starts in third grade and focuses on reading across genres including prose, poetry, and informational texts. Scores are organized into five achievement levels to gauge early literacy skills. Higher scores were reported across every demographic group and grade from K–5.

This impressive increase was partially attributed to the implementation of two Scholastic programs: Scholastic F.I.R.S.T. and Literacy Pro. F.I.R.S.T. is a research-based PreK–2 foundational reading program and Scholastic Literacy Pro is a K–8 independent reading program.

The following research demonstrates that students who used Scholastic F.I.R.S.T. and Scholastic Literacy Pro—as a supplement to the core curriculum—showed significant improvement in reading ability over the 2021-2022 school year.

Two Powerhouse Reading Programs

Scholastic F.I.R.S.T. (Foundations in Reading, Sounds & Text) is a research-based program that focuses on the five foundational reading skills (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension) through adaptive, interactive activities and games. The digital platform is designed to seamlessly integrate into any classroom schedule during small-group rotations or independent learning. It's designed for PreK–2 classrooms, but during this study it was also implemented in Grades 3–5 to supplement grade-level materials.

Scholastic Literacy Pro is a reading management solution with a library of over 2,800 high-quality, authentic ebooks for students in Grades K–8. Teachers access recommended reading tools to drive students toward books aligned with their interests, grade level, and reading level. Comprehension checks for these books, assessments, and other resources are available to support teachers and families.

To optimize results of the study, Scholastic recommended both F.I.R.S.T. and Literacy Pro programs be used at a minimum of 60 minutes per week in addition to the regular class schedule. This equates to 1,920 minutes of program use a year when used over 32 weeks.

Higher Scores Across the Board

After using Scholastic F.I.R.S.T. and Scholastic Literacy Pro together, students across each grade level made statistically significant gains throughout the 2021-2022 school year on the Star and FAST ELA assessments.

Results after one year:

- Proportion of Grades K–2 students performing on or above benchmark for the Star assessment significantly increased.
- On average, kindergarten and second grade students who used the programs improved more on the Star assessments than their grade-level peers.
- Kindergarteners had the most notable improvement on the Star assessment.
- 19% of Scholastic F.I.R.S.T. students and 17% of Scholastic Literacy Pro students moved from below to above benchmark on the Star assessment.
- Proportion of Grades 3–5 students performing on or above grade level for the FAST assessment also increased.
- FAST ELA gains were highest in Grade 4.
- 28% of Scholastic F.I.R.S.T. students and 30% of Scholastic Literacy Pro students moved from below to on-grade-level reading on the FAST assessment.

No matter what their demographic, students improved on both assessments when they used Scholastic F.I.R.S.T. and Scholastic Literacy Pro together with the core curriculum. In fact, students in Grades 3–4 experienced gains on the FAST ELA assessment even though they didn't receive the full recommended dosage requirements of 1,920 minutes a year.

Quality Products & Effective Programs Benefit All

In addition to overall reading improvements, the high-quality books and other materials included with these programs provided even more benefits.

- For Grades K–2 students participating in Scholastic F.I.R.S.T., the number of books read predicted advancement into the at/above benchmark level on the Star assessment.
- Grade 3 Scholastic Literacy Pro students who completed more Think More activities performed at/above benchmark or on/above grade level on the FAST ELA assessment.
- Grade 4 Scholastic F.I.R.S.T. students who read more books were also more likely to perform at on/above grade level on the FAST ELA assessment.

Conclusion

By implementing Scholastic F.I.R.S.T. and Scholastic Literacy Pro in Grades K–5 students made significant gains in reading across every grade level and demographic. In addition, the programs provided teachers with straightforward tools that motivated students to drive these results. Anything that can make a teacher's job easier and improve an essential skill like reading is primed to make a lasting impact across any curriculum.