

September 12, 2015  
New York, NY

In June of this year I was retained by Drake Bennett Summer Schools to administer before and after assessments of their summer school students. I have no other commercial relationship with Drake Bennett. All testing was done by me.

Drake Bennett Summer School is a full-day summer school for elementary grade students. Students are grouped homogeneously for Orton-Gillingham-based reading instruction for 60 minutes, 5 days/week for four weeks. In addition, students are grouped heterogeneously for an additional period of drama. All students attend classes in math, science, art, sports, and dance.

Each student's reading level is assessed at the beginning and end of the month using two Aimsweb tools: the Test of Early Literacy (TEL) and Reading-Curriculum Based Measurement (R-CBM). Assessment is done through one-minute, timed tasks. The TEL is comprised of four skill-based assessments that measure mastery of early reading measures: Letter Name Fluency; Letter Sound Fluency; Phoneme Segmentation Fluency; and Nonsense Word Fluency. Due to the high number of students at Drake Bennett with dyslexia, all students are administered the TEL even though it is normed only on students in grade K, 1, and 2. Given the short duration of the program, this permits us to see if students make progress in basic reading subskills apart from text reading.

The R-CBM is comprised of brief, grade-level reading passages. R-CBM is a particularly powerful measure that uses oral reading fluency as an indicator of global reading proficiency. Just as a doctor measures your temperature, weight, and blood pressure to monitor your overall health, R-CBM is a proven, accurate measure of reading ability. Aimsweb national norms data comprises the results from over 30,000 students per grade, nationwide. Norms include both ROI (rate of improvement expressed as number of words/week) and percentile ranks. The expected ROIs of these 28 students ranged from 0.11 to 1.28. As expected, nationally, children at the lower end have lower ROIs which reflects their slower rates of improvement. As a rule of thumb, children in grade 1 at the 50th and 75th %ile increase their reading rate by 1.5 and 1.8 words/week, respectively. Children in grades 2 through 5, at both the 50th and 75th %ile, increase their reading rate by about 1 word/week.

Two notes before looking at the Drake Bennett data: First, any reference to a child's grade is based on the grade they last completed. This is for two reasons. There is no "summer" Aimsweb data. So all Drake Bennett children's scores were compared to scores of children from the spring of the school year just completed. In addition, some of the Drake Bennett students are at risk of being held back in last year's grade, so it is not clear what grade they will be in come fall.

In July 2015, all kindergarteners showed significant growth in their NWF scores, surpassing their expected ROIs by a factor of at least 3. For one student, this did not yet translate into improved reading of text passages (CBM-R); for the other 2 students, their CBM-R ROIs were 6.75 and 9.

Overall, the CBM-R is the most accurate measure of reading progress. Of the 5 first-graders, three

children surpassed the expected ROI for children at their level by a factor of at least 2. The remaining two children showed no-minimal improvement in their text reading; however both demonstrated significant improvement in their Nonword Reading Fluency, achieving ROIs of 4.25 and 5.25 words/week.

Five 2nd graders completed the July program. Three improved at a faster rate than their national peers by a factor of at least 2. One of these children achieved an ROI of 6. Of the remaining two children who made minimal to no progress in their text reading, both demonstrated tremendous improvement in their Nonword Fluency (surpassing their expected ROI by a factor of 10) suggesting that these student's foundational skills are developing and need even more intensive work.

Eight 3rd graders were present for post-testing. Seven demonstrated ROIs that outpaced their expected rate, six of them by a factor of more than 4. One student, already in the 90th %ile for reading, was quite uncomfortable speaking due to a painful canker sore...she did not demonstrate any change in reading rate.

Five 4th graders completed the program. Three demonstrated ROIs of greater than 4 on the CBM-R. Of the two students who did not show growth, one achieved an ROI of 5.2 on the NWF task and one an ROI of 15.5 on the NWF task. The one 7th grader who completed the program achieved an ROI of 2.0 on the CBM-R, surpassing the ROI of his age- and performance-level peers of 0.64.)

High ROIs are necessary to advance slow readers. According to Aimsweb, performance at the 45th %ile on national norms indicates that the student is 80% likely to meet proficiency standards on a typical state test. Only programs that can demonstrate higher than average rates of improvement have the potential to not just maintain struggling students but to raise their reading levels to the level of their grade-level peers...to move them from one quartile to the next. If students could continue this level of progress throughout the school year, they would have a chance of really catching up.

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