

RESEARCH UPDATE

Holyoke Public Schools
Holyoke, Massachusetts

READ 180[®] Students Show Significant Increases in Proficiency on the MCAS

PROFILE

District: Holyoke Public Schools

Evaluation Period: 2006-2008

Grades: 6th, 7th, 8th

Model: Daily 70-minute *READ 180* block in addition to regular ELA class

Assessment: *Scholastic Reading Inventory* (SRI) and Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System Reading Test (MCAS)

DISTRICT CHARACTERISTICS

The Holyoke Public Schools District enrolls more than 5,000 students in 11 schools. The urban school district is situated in one of the poorest communities in Massachusetts. According to district officials, one out of every ten students is homeless and 76% are from low-income backgrounds. The district's student population is largely Hispanic (76%), while the remainder of students is mainly White (19%) and African American (3%). Twenty-four percent of students are identified as Limited English Proficient, and a quarter receive special education services.

IMPLEMENTATION OVERVIEW

In 2002 the Holyoke Public Schools District was declared underperforming. It entered into a partnership with the Massachusetts Department of Education and its Turn-Around Partner, America's Choice. Over the last several years, the Holyoke Public Schools District has taken several steps to address its performance issues, including adopting *READ 180*. In September 2002, Holyoke Public Schools began piloting *READ 180* at Peck Middle School and the Holyoke Alternative Program. The program targeted 6th-7th graders at Peck Middle School and all students enrolled at the Holyoke Alternative Program. Over the past seven years, the program was so successful that it was expanded into seven additional middle schools with the goal of replicating the district's early success with a greater number of students.

IMPLEMENTATION MODEL

Beginning with the 2006-2007 school year, *READ 180* was used as an intervention program for struggling middle school students in the expanded group of nine middle schools. The *READ 180* instructional model was modified to fit into a 70-minute period, and was delivered daily in addition to students' regular ELA classes. The students who were selected for *READ 180* were performing 2-4 years below grade level. Participating students include English language learners and students in special education.

PARTICIPANTS

The district used the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) and *Scholastic Reading Inventory* (SRI) results, along with teacher recommendations, to identify and place students in the program. Cohort 1 consisted of 47 students who used *READ 180* during both the 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 school years. Cohort 2 consisted of a separate group of 197 students who used *READ 180* during the 2007-2008 school year only. The total sample included 244 *READ 180* students who completed a minimum of six software sessions, and had pretest and posttest MCAS scores (spring to spring) and SRI scores (fall to spring).

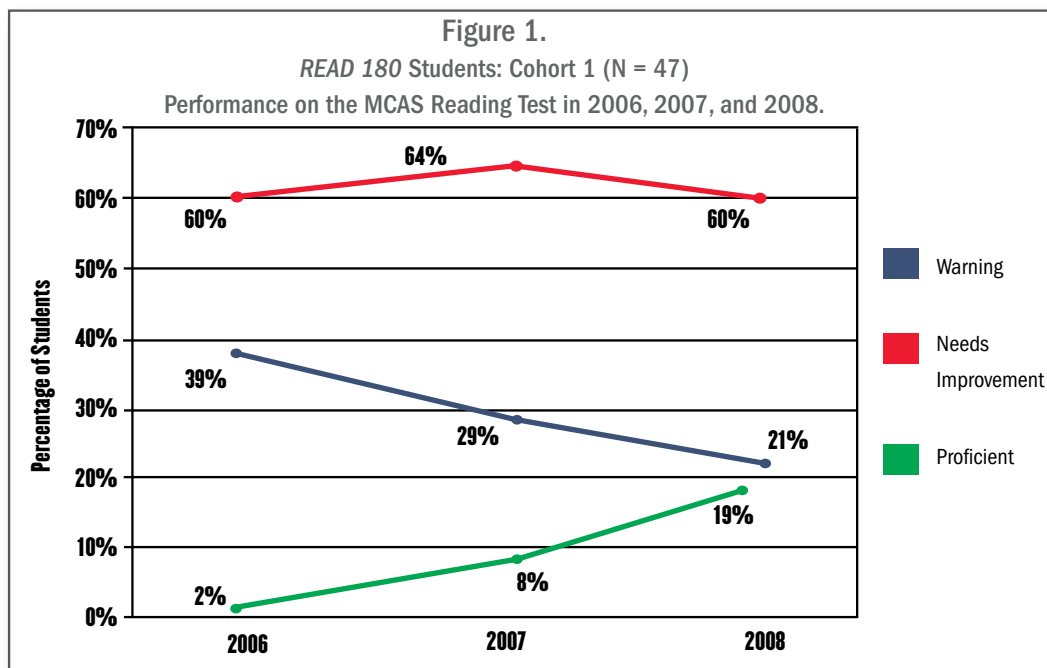
MEASURES

Scores on the MCAS were used as a measure of progress for participating students. The MCAS is a statewide test developed to assess whether students are proficient in the state reading standards. Results are reported for individuals according to four performance levels: Advanced, Proficient, Needs Improvement, and Warning. For this report, the percentages of students falling into the Warning, Needs Improvement, and Proficient categories were examined for 2006, 2007, and 2008.

RESULTS

Analyses of MCAS data showed that, among students with two consecutive years of *READ 180* (Cohort 1), the percentage of students performing in the Proficient range increased nearly tenfold (from 2% to 19%), while the percentage of students performing in the Warning range decreased by almost half (from 39% to 21%). This positive change in MCAS achievement level from 2006-2008 was statistically significant ($t(1,46) = 3.072, p < .001$). See Figure 1.

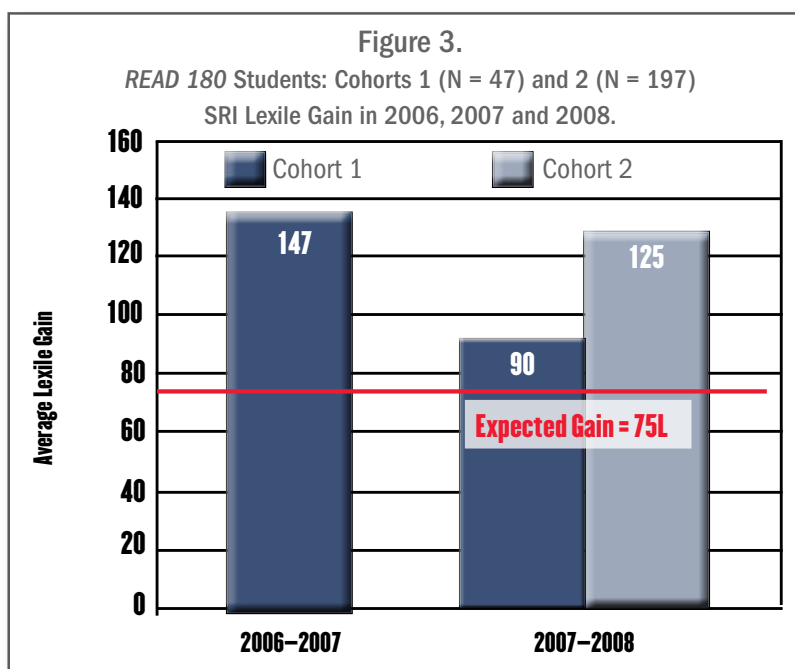
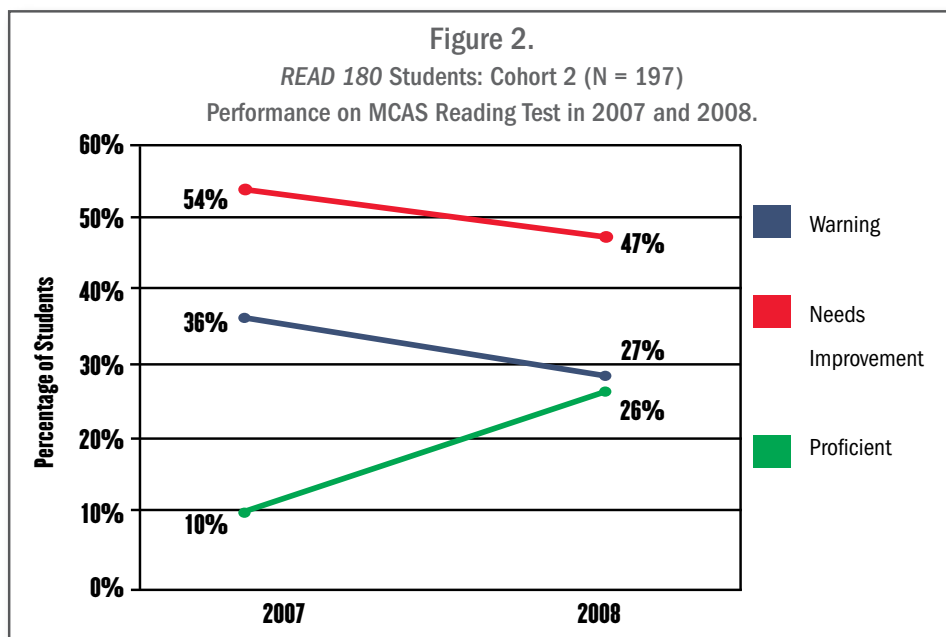
Among students with one year of *READ 180* (Cohort 2), the percentage of students performing in the Proficient range more than doubled, from 10% to 26%, while the percentage of students in the Warning range decreased from 36% to 27%. Dependent t-tests demonstrated that the percentage of students performing in the Proficient range was significantly higher in 2008 than it was in 2007 ($t(1,196) = 5.145, p < .001$). See Figure 2.



READ 180 students also demonstrated impressive gains on the *Scholastic Reading Inventory* (SRI). Students in Cohort 1 achieved a statistically significant average gain of 147L from 2006-2007 ($t(1,46)=5.869, p<.001$), and a statistically significant average gain of 90L from 2007-2008 ($t(1,46)=5.348, p<.001$). Similarly, students in Cohort 2 achieved a statistically significant average gain of 125L from 2007-2008 ($t(1,196)=12.333, p<.001$). Moreover, both cohorts, on average, exceeded the expected fall-to-spring gain of 75L (as determined by the SRI normative sample). See Figure 3.

CONCLUSION

Middle school students who participated in the READ 180 program showed substantial gains on the MCAS Reading Test. The percentage of these struggling readers achieving MCAS Reading proficiency increased significantly after one or two years of READ 180, and fewer students fell into the Warning range. READ 180 students also demonstrated statistically significant positive growth on the SRI, exceeding the expected fall-to-spring gain.



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