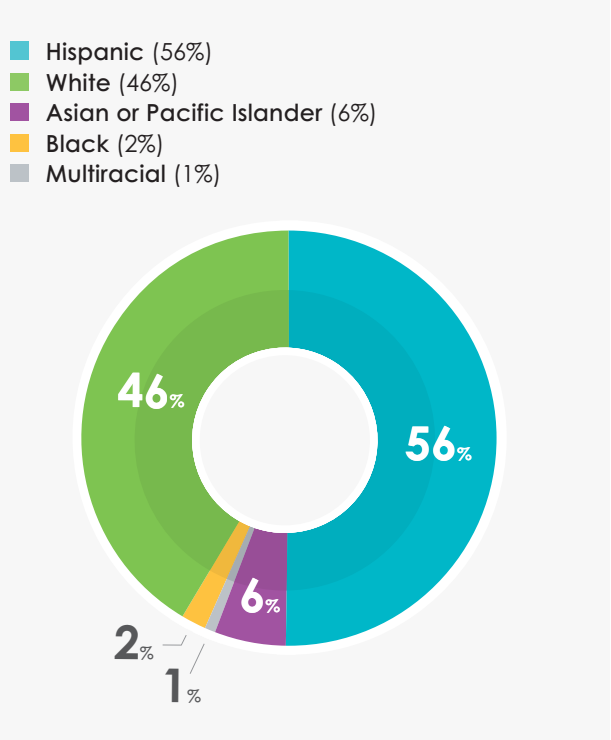
Really Great Reading®

Washington School uses Phonics Suite™ to achieve significant gains in fluency and comprehension.

Profile

Located in central Washington, the study site enrolled 429 students. Of these students, 46% were White, 56% Hispanic, 6% Asian or Pacific Islander, 1% Black, and 2% multiracial. Of these students, 71% were eligible for free or reduced lunch and almost 15% qualify for special education. Of interest, 28% of the total student population were transitional bilingual and 3% were reported as children of migrant workers.



Overview

The school recognized that many students displayed underdeveloped basic literacy skills and were struggling to pass the Measurement of Student Progress (MSP) for 2011–2012. The district decided to implement the Phonics Suite approach with 29 students, grades 3–5, who were below benchmark on the MSP and Daze. Oral Reading Fluency scores indicated that these students were struggling to read grade-level text at an appropriate rate and with sufficient accuracy. Only one student in this cohort had an active IEP, and two other students received English language learner services. The remaining 23 students in this cohort are considered general education students.

The Diagnostic Decoding Surveys (DDS) were used to better understand students' decoding strengths and weaknesses. The average score on the DDS was 57/80, which indicated very low decoding skills. The results from the surveys, together with other literacy data, were used grouped students together for instruction.

After the initial assessments, students with decoding difficulties were identified and grouped for Phonic Boost™ instruction, a phonics-based reading intervention. Students began Phonics Boost instruction in fourth grade and continued to the end of fifth grade. Most students completed Phonic Boost as part of a pull-out reading intervention program, which included phonemic awareness skill building, phonics instruction, and oral reading practice.

Impact and Results

Phonics Boost™ helps children better achieve on high stakes tests, like the MSP, by strengthening their basic foundational reading skills. After Phonics Boost intervention, students showed significant gains on several common measures.

Improvement in decoding led to gains in other important areas:

- **Figure 1** shows combined gains on the Beginning Decoding Survey (BDS) and the Advanced Decoding Survey (ADS). The average score on the BDS given in the winter of fourth grade was 43 out of 50. By the end of the intervention in the spring of fifth grade, the average score increased to 48 out of 50. In winter of fourth grade, the ADS average score was 15 out of 30. This score grew to 20 by the end of fifth grade.

- **Figure 2** illustrates the gains that students made in their reading rate (WCPM). The average student gain was 35 WCPM. Since most of these students started with reading rates well below national averages, this gain is substantial, and well above the ambitious calculated goal.

- **Figure 3** illustrates gains on the Daze, a measure of comprehension, closing gaps between themselves and their peers. All students started below benchmark and seven of those students exceeded benchmark.

- **Figure 4** shows gains on the MSP, Washington's state test. Nearly half of the students went from failing the MSP to passing.

The study findings indicate that not only are the benefits of decoding instruction with Phonics Suite immediate, but improvement continues over time. Most students in this group met standards and surpassed annual grade-level expectations for middle school.

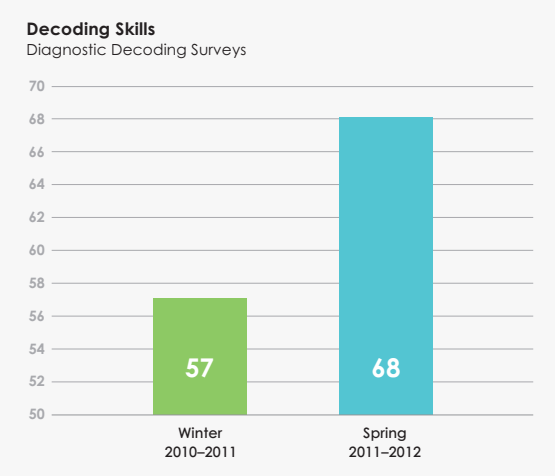


Figure 1

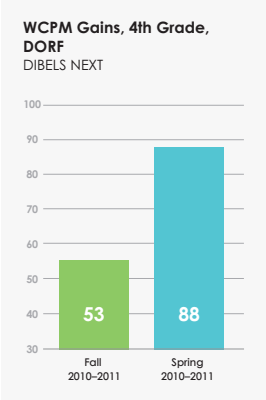


Figure 2

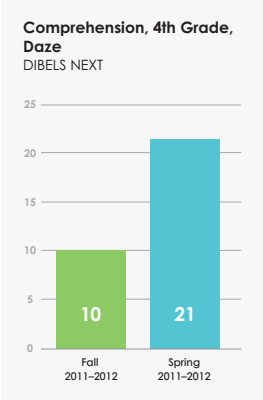


Figure 3

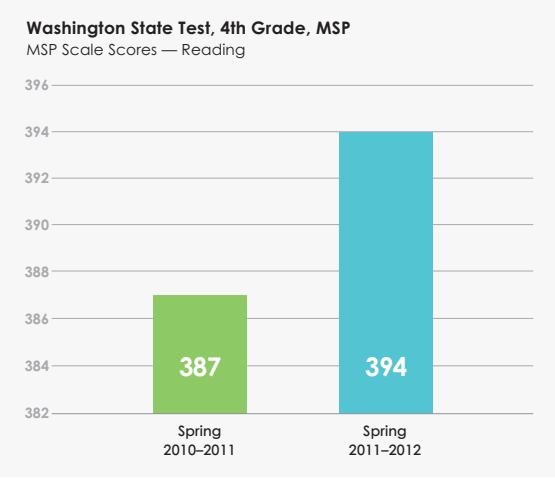


Figure 4