

New Heights Program

A case study on how the New Heights Program helped to increase oral reading fluency for second and third graders at Shore Acres Elementary School.



About Pinellas County Schools

Pinellas County Schools, an award-winning school district, has been recognized on the national and state levels for its strong efforts and dedication of its students, teachers, and staff. The district is located on Florida's west coast and is the seventh-largest school district in the state and 25th-largest district in the U. S. with a projected K–12 student enrollment of approximately 103,500. www.pinellas.k12.fl.us



required measure of fluency, was administered. Based on this assessment, teachers identified fluency as a critical need for 125 students in second and third grade. Following the November administration of the DIBELS, they began using the New Heights program four days a week with 49 second and 76 third grade students. Tests of Oral Reading Fluency were administered to track and monitor progress as students used the program on a regular basis throughout the school year. At the end of the school year, the DIBELS was administered, showing dramatic gains in fluency.

Teachers, administration, and students found that the program had a dramatic impact on students' ability to read fluently, which they believe attributed to increased comprehension. "We believe that fluency is the bridge between decoding and comprehension and found New Heights to be that bridge. Our teachers were pleased with the progress their students made. They found the program easy to implement and monitor. The administration appreciated how well the data collected helped them to show progress across the entire school. Our students loved listening to the audio books, especially the nonfiction titles, and we saw them become more confident readers."

Summary

Shore Acres Elementary, a neighbor school of 749 students, is focused on creating a research-based environment that maximizes individual student achievement. It serves a student population where 50% are eligible for free and reduced lunch. Approximately 12% of students are English-language learners, 18% are Black, 13% are Hispanic, and 12% of students receive special education services. They boast a high percentage of parent participation and low teacher turnover.

"A few years ago, we noticed that many of our students who were struggling with reading had fluency issues," explained school Instructional Coach Freda Pilcher. "We also noticed that many of our teachers weren't addressing fluency and needed a resource that not only provided instruction and supportive practice but one that also provided a tool for on-going progress monitoring. After reviewing several published fluency programs we selected New Heights. "

After it was first implemented in 2005–2006, they conducted a study to show the effectiveness of the program on students' fluency. At the beginning of the year, the DIBELS, a district-

The Results

Just after one year, students in grade 2, showed an average gain of 39 points while students in grade 3 increased an average of 32 points. Shore Acres Elementary School continues to use New Heights regularly with positive results.

