



A case study on how *High Wire Magazines* helped to improve the reading performance of students at Weeks Middle School in Des Moines, IA.

About Des Moines Public Schools

Des Moines Public Schools serves 31,924 students on 63 campuses. Located in the capital of Iowa, it currently enrolls 49.6% minority students with 64.7% of all students eligible for free and reduced lunch. Forty-four different languages are spoken by a growing population of students whose native language is not English. Des Moines has undertaken a targeted effort to increase student achievement and boasts a 82% graduation rate, the highest in five years.

www.dmps.k12.ia.us

During the 2008-2009 school year, the High Wire program was introduced to the middle school teachers in the Des Moines public school system as a way to increase reading comprehension. Chosen for the alignment of strategies to state standards, the *High Wire Magazines* presented highly engaging nonfiction text—a must for reluctant and struggling readers.

During the implementation, teachers received two days of professional development training with on-going support during the course of the year. “Teachers need to have a good concept and concrete models of effective small-group instruction,” commented Joellen Latham, Curriculum Supervisor. “This was not a common practice in our middle schools, and to increase implementation, we provided on-going support for the design of small-group instruction.”

Following the initial implementation, teachers at Weeks Middle School began using the program on a regular basis following the progress of 250 seventh grade students. Weeks Middle School has a student population of 756 students; 49% of the students are white, 14% are African American, and 28% are Hispanic. 69.2% of students are on Free and Reduced lunch status.

In the fall of 2008, 250 seventh grade students were administered a grade level passage from the Analytical Reading Inventory (ARI). 51% of the students met the comprehension benchmark on this assessment. In the spring of 2009, 68% of the students met the comprehension benchmark on the same passage of the ARI.

Results

Results of the first year of implementation reflected an overall gain of 17% of students meeting or exceeding the District benchmark.

The Results

Results of the first year of implementation reflected an overall gain of 15% of students meeting or exceeding the District benchmark.

