

# Literacy Collaborative

## **The Effect of Literacy Collaborative Intermediate on Students' Literacy Attitudes, Behaviors, and Skills: A Case Study**

Teachers often note that one of the first changes they see in their students after implementing Literacy Collaborative is a positive change in students' attitudes toward literacy. To document this finding, and to uncover the aspects of the model teachers think might influence positive student attitudes, behaviors, and skills, Literacy Collaborative researchers at Lesley University conducted a case study in April 2004 of the Franklin Avenue Elementary School in Westfield, Massachusetts. The aim of the study was to explore how Literacy Collaborative influenced the literacy attitudes, behaviors, and skills of intermediate students (grades 3-5) in a highly-implementing Literacy Collaborative school.

Across multiple data sources, including student surveys, student focus groups, readers notebooks, classroom observations, and interviews, students demonstrated very positive attitudes toward reading. Of several hundred remarks coded as "attitudes" throughout the various data sources, only 20 comments were negative. Although reading received more positive remarks than writing, the latter also received a significant number of affirmative comments. Over 90% of students said they liked to read or liked to read "sometimes." The same was true for writing. The data across multiple sources also revealed that Franklin Avenue intermediate students demonstrated a great deal of pride and self-confidence in their reading and writing abilities.

In regard to behaviors, students were found to be engaging in significant amounts of literacy related activities. Multiple data sources revealed students engaging in reading and writing in school during their free time, as well as at home, recommending books to classmates, borrowing greater numbers of books from the lending library than they had prior to Literacy Collaborative implementation, and buying more books.

Students' literacy skills also improved since the implementation of Literacy Collaborative, according to both comments of teachers and staff interviewed and standardized test scores. Teachers noted greater sophistication in their students' literacy skills, particularly in writing. State accountability measures have also validated the substantial progress in student achievement. After four years of not meeting state progress benchmarks for student achievement in English Language Arts and Mathematics, Franklin Avenue met the state-assigned target for Adequate Yearly Progress in both areas and with all subgroups in 2003 and 2004.

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Overall, teachers attributed the improvement in students' literacy attitudes, behaviors, and skills to the greater amount of time they were spending on literacy activities with their students. They felt the mandatory block of time set aside to implement the Literacy Collaborative language and literacy framework had contributed to their students' overall improvements in students' attitudes, behaviors, and skills by exposing children to more books, writing, and words. Teachers also felt the model helped them to more effectively individualize instruction for children, allowing students at all levels to participate in literacy activities. Finally, the LC framework was also credited with improving the attitudes, behaviors, and skills of students by helping them to be independent learners and to choose literature that interested them and that they could connect to their own lives.

The findings from this case study provide evidence of the positive influence of the Literacy Collaborative model on students' attitudes, behaviors, and skills in a school with high levels of Literacy Collaborative primary and intermediate implementation. Multiple data sources indicated that Franklin Avenue students were excited and enthusiastic about literacy. They had also taken on many behaviors typical of good readers and writers, and had clearly demonstrated their increasingly solid literacy skills on state tests.

The findings also suggest that schools *can* play an important role in encouraging positive changes in literacy attitudes, behaviors, and skills. What goes on in the classroom is critical, and can have a significant impact on students' outcomes, especially for those students who do not experience literacy-rich home environments. By providing, among other things, sufficient and quality time for reading and writing; broad exposure to books, writing, and words; individualized instruction; and independence and student choice in literacy activities, Literacy Collaborative schools can create environments that promote positive student outcomes.



For more information, contact:

Linda Caswell, Director of Research  
Center for Reading Recovery &  
Literacy Collaborative  
1815 Mass Ave, Suite 378  
Cambridge, MA 02140  
E-mail: [lcaswell@leslev.edu](mailto:lcaswell@leslev.edu)

