

RESEARCH UPDATE

Brentwood Union Free School District
Long Island, NY

Sixth Grade *Expert 21* Students Demonstrate Significant Improvements in Proficiency on the New York State English Language Arts Test

PROFILE

District: Brentwood Union Free School District

Evaluation Period: 2010–2011 School Year

Grade: 6

Model: *Expert 21* Classrooms, ranging from 80 minutes to 120 minutes daily

Assessment: New York State English Language Arts test (NYS ELA)
Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI)

DISTRICT CHARACTERISTICS

Situated on New York's Long Island, Brentwood Union Free School District (BUFSD) enrolls more than 16,000 students in 17 schools. Nearly three quarters (72%) of students in the district are Latino, 16% are African American, 10% are Caucasian, and 2% are Asian or Pacific Islander. Approximately two-thirds (65%) of students receive free or reduced-price meals, and 25% are designated as Limited English Proficient.

IMPLEMENTATION OVERVIEW

Expert 21 is a comprehensive English Language Arts curriculum that prepares students for the literacy demands of the 21st Century. Developed with the foundational research and working drafts of the Common Core State Standards, the program includes a powerful combination of explicit instruction, inquiry-based learning, contemporary and relevant literature and informational texts, real-world writing and projects, and supportive technology. It is designed to

accelerate the acquisition of standards-aligned literacy skills, while integrating 21st Century competencies to ensure all students are college and career ready. In the fall of 2010, BUFSD piloted *Expert 21* in four middle school classrooms.

Implementation Model

Expert 21 was implemented in BUFSD in an 84-minute double period, five days a week. Teachers followed a typical *Expert 21* instructional model, which includes teacher-led exploration incorporating student workbooks, small group learning experiences, and use of Expert Space, an online learning environment that supports student reading and research.

Participants

Across the four middle schools, a total of 83 sixth grade students participated in *Expert 21* during the 2010-2011 school year. Of this sample, 53% of students are female. The majority of students (58%) are Hispanic, 14% are African American and 8% are Caucasian. The remaining students, 19%, do not have a race or ethnicity reported. The classrooms in all four middle schools contained students of mixed-ability levels.

Measures

New York State English Language Arts Test (NYS ELA Test)
The NYS ELA Test is a comprehensive test given in grades 3-8 that assesses reading, writing, and listening skills. The reading section consists of several literary and informational passages. In the writing section, students read several

passages and answer short-response and extended-responses questions. In the listening section students listen to passages from a variety of genres, and answer comprehension questions to demonstrate their understanding of the passages. Performance is reported as (a) a scale score which can range from approximately 400 to 800 and (b) one of four Performance Levels. Each Performance Level (Below Standard, Meets Basic Standard, Meets Proficiency Standard, and Exceed Proficiency Standard) is associated with range of scale scores for each grade level. Results from April 2010 and May 2011 were collected from all participating students.

Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI)

SRI measures reading comprehension by focusing on the following skills: identifying details in a passage; recognizing cause-and-effect relationships; pinpointing sequence of events; drawing conclusions; and making comparisons and generalizations. During test administration, the computer adapts the test continually according to student responses. Performance on the SRI is reported as a Lexile® (L) scale score. Scores can range from Beginning Reader (less than 100L) to Graduate-School Reader (1720L). The SRI was administered in fall 2010 and spring 2011, in order to measure growth in reading comprehension over time.

RESULTS

NYS ELA Test

Findings show that *Expert 21* sixth-grade students demonstrated significant gains on the NYS ELA Test from 2010 to 2011. In Spring 2010, prior to the introduction of *Expert 21*, 42% of sixth-grade students met or exceeded

the proficiency standard on the NYS ELA Test. In 2011, after using the *Expert 21* program, 65% of sixth-grade students did so; this represented a statistically significant gain of 23 percentage points ($p < .05$). See Graph 1.

SRI Results

Consistent with the NYS ELA Test findings, *Expert 21* students evidenced significant gains in reading comprehension on the SRI during the 2010-2011 school year (see Table 1). Results indicated that the 65 students who had pre- and posttest SRI scores (at least 90 days apart) averaged a statistically significant gain of 114L ($p < .05$), from an average pretest Lexile of 780L to an average posttest Lexile of 894L. Typically, sixth-grade students with a fall Lexile of 780L are expected to gain 51L on the SRI. Thus, this sample of *Expert 21* students demonstrated an average Lexile gain that was more than twice their expected growth.

CONCLUSION

Sixth-grade students who participated in the *Expert 21* program demonstrated significant improvements in performance on both the New York State English Language Arts Test (NYS ELA Test) and the *Scholastic Reading Inventory* (SRI). Results showed a significant increase in the percentage of students meeting or exceeding the proficiency standard on the NYS ELA Test after use of the *Expert 21* program. Moreover, these students demonstrated Lexile growth more than twice what was expected on the SRI. These results provide preliminary evidence of the effectiveness of *Expert 21* for students in the sixth grade.

Graph 1.

Brentwood Union Free School District *Expert 21* Students, Grade 6 (N=83)
 Performance on the NYS ELA Test in 2010 and 2011

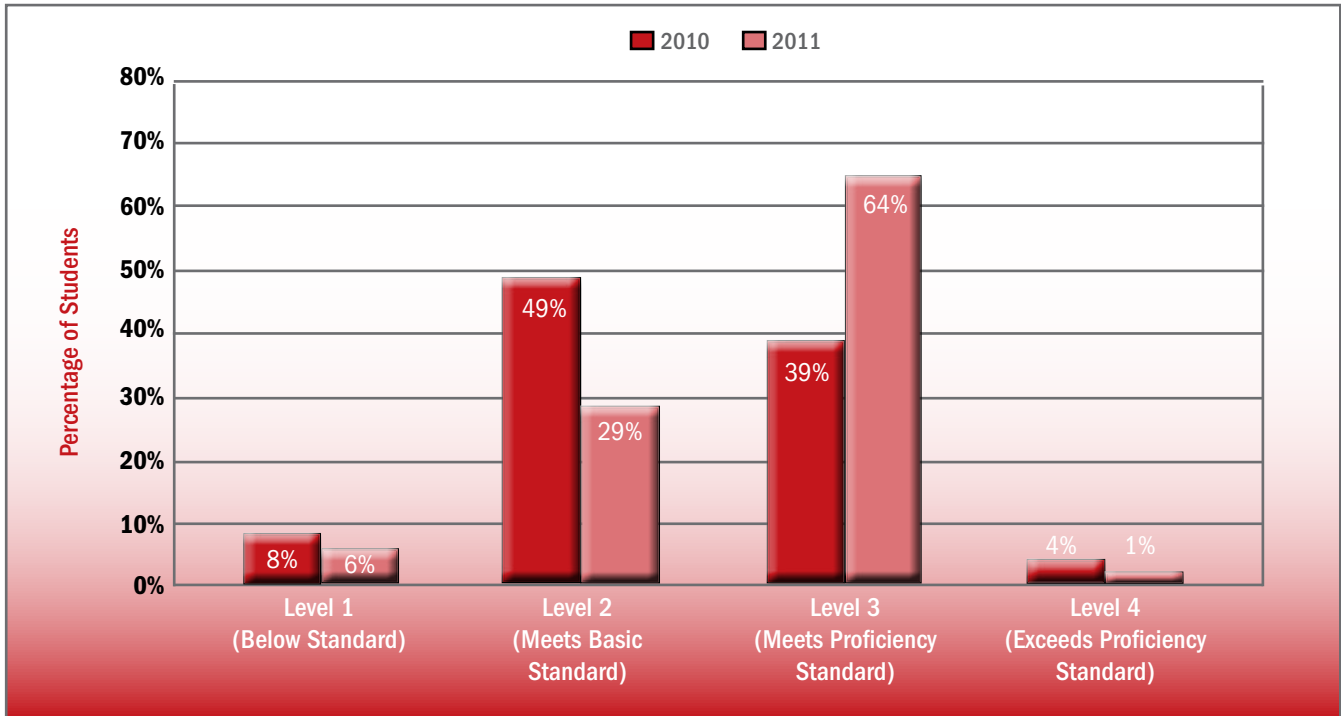


Table 1

Brentwood Union Free School District, *Expert 21* Students, Grade 6 (N=65)
 Performance on SRI 2010 and 2011

Grade	N	Mean SRI Pretest Lexile	Mean SRI Posttest Lexile	Mean Lexile Gain
6th	65	780L	894L	114

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