
1999–2002 • Studies of Student Reading Growth in Diverse Professional Development Networks

Support for the ongoing professional development activities of SLI, including its documentation of student outcomes, was provided by The Stuart Foundations, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the W. Clement & Jessie V. Stone Foundation, the Walter S. Johnson Foundation, the Flora Family Foundation, the Times Mirror Foundation, and the Stupski Family Foundation.

Based on SLI's Reading Apprenticeship instructional framework, as well as the inquiry-based professional development model, SLI began offering professional development services to diverse networks of teachers in secondary classrooms, in the greater Bay Area as well as around the state and country. During the 1999–2000 school year, two partnerships offered an opportunity to see how Reading Apprenticeship, integrated into diverse subject-area classrooms, might impact student reading achievement.

In one network, the Secondary School Literacy Project, studies continued through the 2000–2001 and 2001–2002 school years. We report data on student reading growth in these networks below.

Secondary School Literacy Project

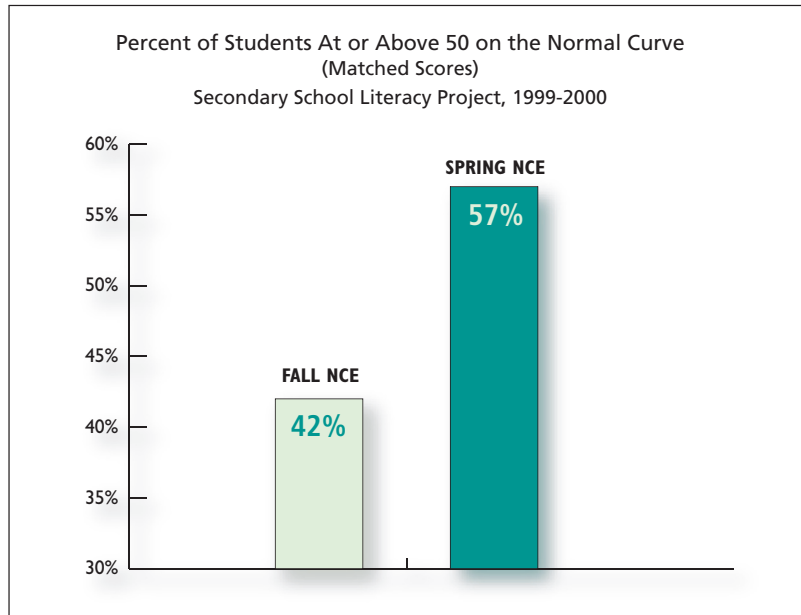
Beginning in the 1999–2000 school year, the Bay Area Coalition of Essential Schools (BAYCES) invited the Strategic Literacy Initiative to create a hybrid professional development network—the Secondary School Literacy Project—that would combine the system-level reforms supported by the Coalition with the classroom-based reforms supported by the Strategic Literacy Initiative. The network drew subject-area teachers, in teams, from seven different Bay Area middle and high schools.

Each of the teachers in these networks tested one class of students in the fall and spring, using the Degrees of Power standardized test of reading comprehension (DPR). Of the 478 students tested by their teachers in the BAYCES/SLI Secondary School Literacy Project network, 42% were initially scoring at or above the mean (50) on the normal

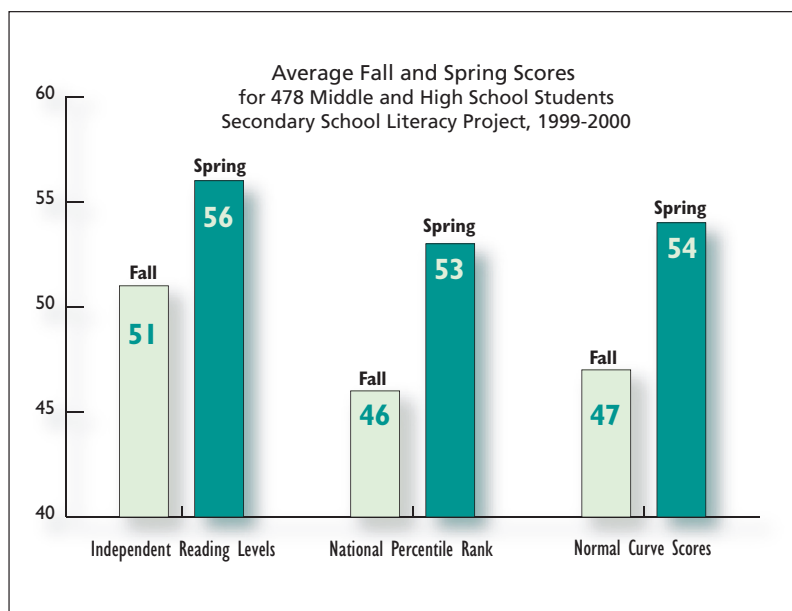


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curve. At the end of the year, 57% of these students were scoring at or above the mean, as the graph below demonstrates.

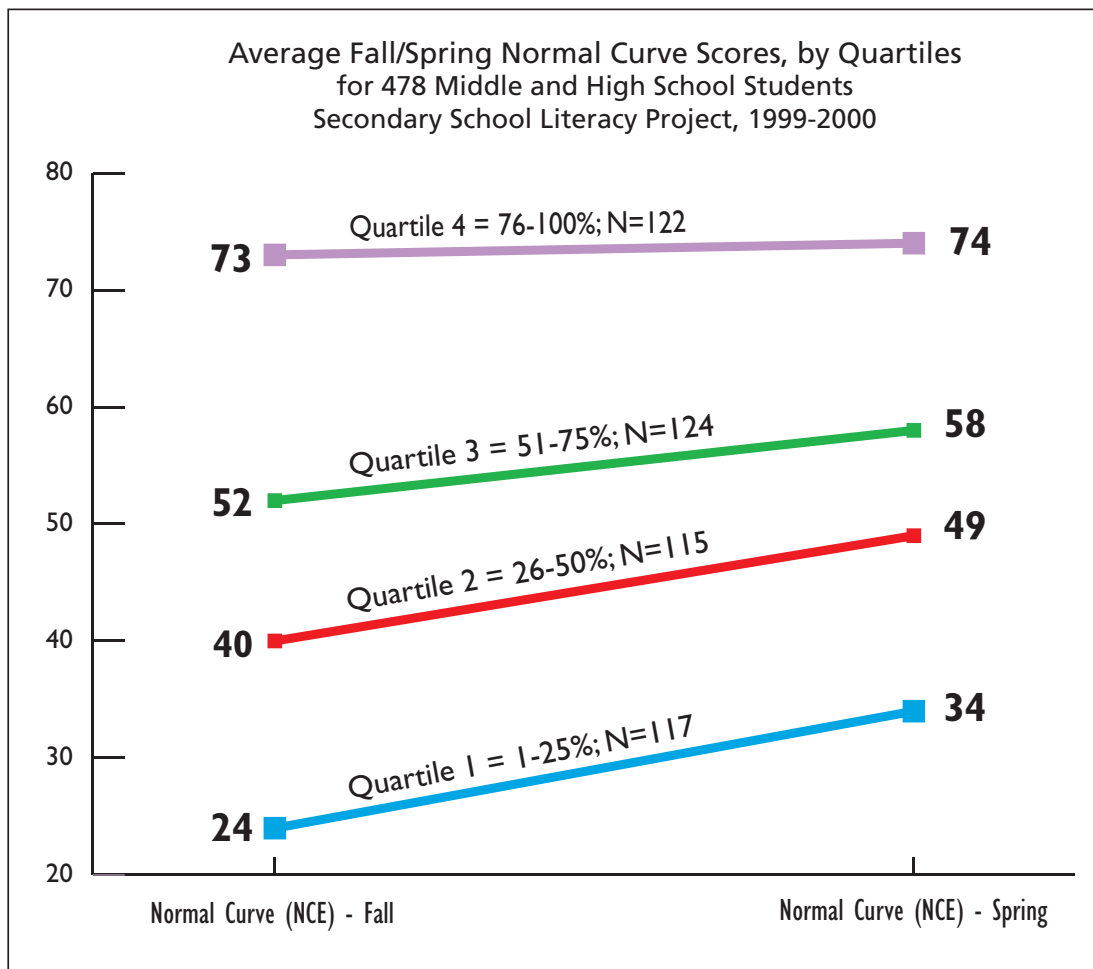


The middle and high school students in the classrooms of teachers participating in this network gained an average of 5 points in independent reading level from fall to spring, moving from the 46th to the 53rd percentile when compared to their grade-level peers ($t = -9.379$, $df = 477$, $p < .000$). Significantly, these students advanced up the normal curve, from a rank of 47 to 54 ($t = -12.206$, $df = 477$, $p < .000$).



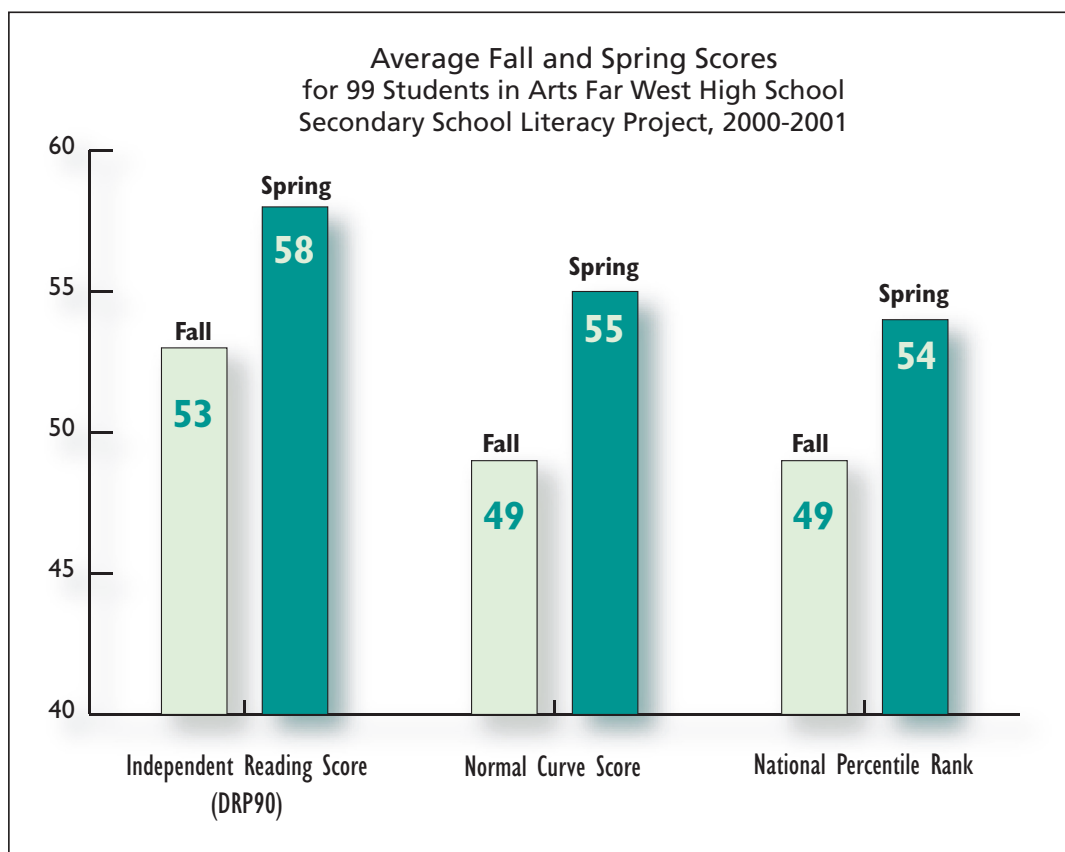
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As the following graph shows, when these students were divided into performance quartiles based on their fall scores on the DRP, the most rapid increases in achievement occurred among the two lowest scoring quartiles of students (those who were in most need of instructional support to build literacy proficiencies). Statistically significant gains in independent reading levels for quartiles 1, 2, and 3 (Q1 $t = -9.096$, $df = 116$, $p < .000$; Q2 $t = -8.154$, $df = 114$, $p < .000$; Q3 $t = -6.433$, $df = 123$, $p < .000$) were accompanied by statistically significant gains in normal curve rankings for these quartiles (Q1 $t = -8.438$, $df = 116$, $p < .000$; Q2 $t = -8.395$, $df = 114$, $p < .000$; Q3 $t = -6.280$, $df = 123$, $p < .000$). This finding demonstrates that students in classrooms where teachers are implementing Reading Apprenticeship accelerate their literacy learning when compared to a national norming population of grade-matched peers.



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The following year, 2000–2001, DRP testing was done in select schools in the Secondary School Literacy Project network. The implementation of Reading Apprenticeship continued to show benefit for the diverse students in the urban Bay Area, as the following chart from one school demonstrates. Ninth grade students in this small, alternative high school were tested at the beginning and end of the year in their English language arts, ESL, and history classrooms. The benefits for students when teachers integrated Reading Apprenticeship into their subject-area teaching in this small school community were clear.



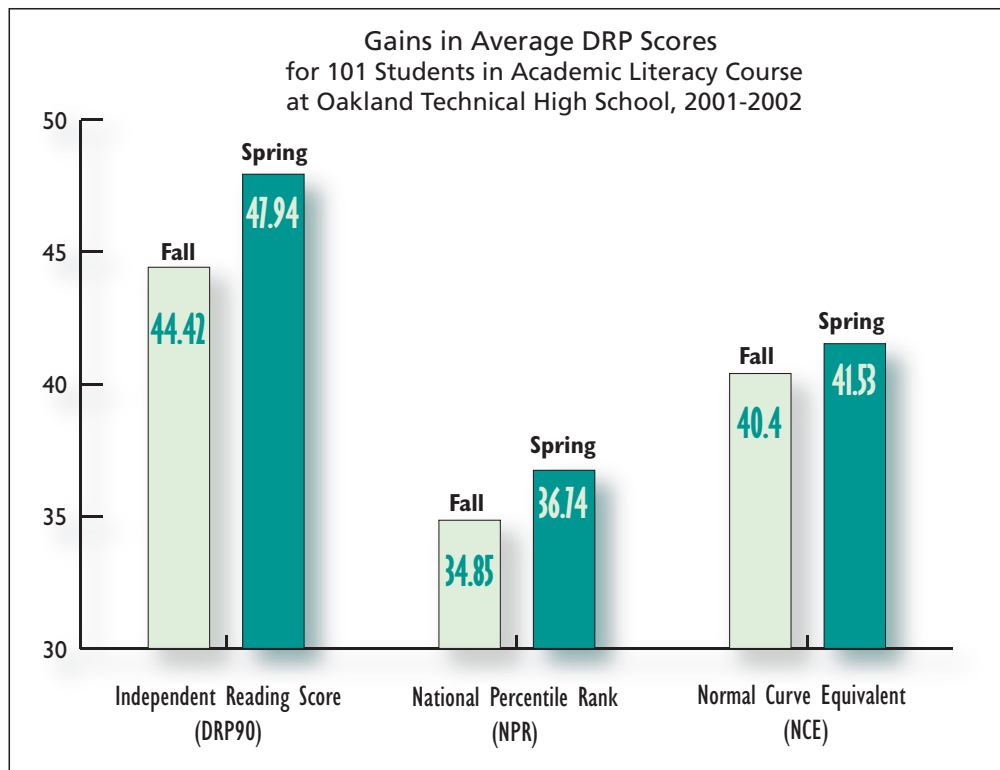
As an outcome of the Secondary School Literacy Project network, Oakland Technical High School was able to create an Academic Literacy course for incoming ninth graders, as an alternate to the district-mandated reading intervention that listed approved published reading curricula and materials for use for those students scoring below the 40th percentile on the state test of reading comprehension.

During the 2001 – 2002 school year, this course was a semester long, alternating with a semester of California History for ninth grade students. Even in this shortened Academic



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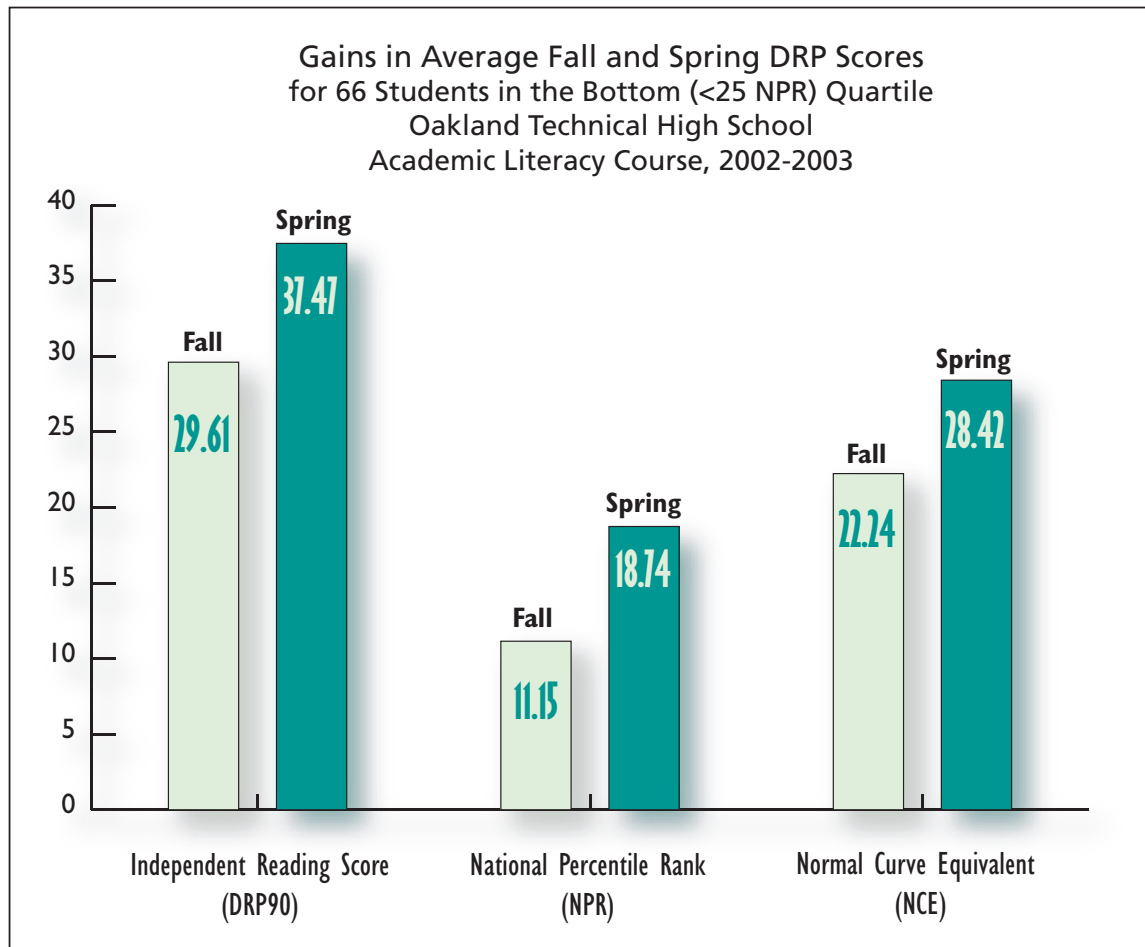
Literacy class where Reading Apprenticeship practices were implemented, students significantly increased their independent reading levels ($p < .000$) and made statistically significant gains in National Percentile ranking ($p < .05$).



The course continued to show benefit for Oakland Tech's underperforming students, as the following test scores from the 2002–2003 school year demonstrate. Ninth grade students at Oakland Tech made statistically significant improvement in mean independent reading levels ($p < .000$), mean National Percentile ranking ($p < .05$), and mean Normal Curve scores ($p < .05$).

Of special importance, given the district's mandate to provide an effective reading intervention course for students scoring below the 40th percentile, was the improvement of those students who began the year in the very lowest performance quartile, shown on the following graph.





These 66 students made statistically significant ($p < .000$) increases in independent reading levels, national percentile rankings, and normal curve scores. Indeed, they had moved out of the bottom performance quartile, as a group, by year's end.

This outcome is yet one more indication that Reading Apprenticeship practices, embedded in thematic curricular units in an Academic Literacy class, benefit the lowest performing students in our secondary schools. It is particularly important to note that this course is not a remedial, skills-focused course, but rather, engages students in complex, academic literacy tasks with explicit teaching and metacognitive conversation, as well as plentiful opportunities to read books of their own choosing. The benefit of such a course for the lowest scoring students calls into question, again, the widespread recommendation of more remedial and skills-based approaches, nationwide.



Los Angeles Unified School District Humanitas Network

During the 1999-2000 school year, the Los Angeles Education Partnership (LAEP) and Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) invited SLI to work with teachers in the Humanitas network, teachers who had worked to create academically challenging, integrated curricula for students in seven Los Angeles public high schools.

In the Los Angeles network, across all seven network schools, matched fall and spring DRP scores were available for a total of 394 students. In this group, average independent reading levels on the DRP rose from 47.02 in fall to 52.85 in spring, a gain in independent reading level of 5.83 units. Expected growth at the high school level is between one and two units; this group of students exceeded an expected year's growth by more than three units. Students started out ranked at 40.18 on the normal curve in the fall compared to their national age-mates. By spring they had made statistically significant gains, moving up to 45.57, an average growth of 5.39 points on the normal curve.

Within the population of students tested, 79 were designated as Limited English Proficient (LEP), 90 had been redesignated from LEP, and 27 were designated as "initially fluent." An additional 142 students self-reported as speaking two or more languages, but information was not available on their level of fluency. In their independent reading level from fall to spring, LEP students made an average gain of 4.89 units, re-designated students gained on average 5.67 units, and initially fluent students gained an average of 6.41 units. As a group, bilingual students (N=196) made mean score gains of 5.45, close to the gain of 5.8 for the total population of students tested (N=394). While LEP students started out scoring below their age-mates, they made significant gains, demonstrating the utility of this strategic reading approach for English language learners.



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As the following graph shows, in the LAUSD network as a whole, students at each entry-level quartile improved their reading during the school year, with students who started in the bottom quartile making the greatest gains. One hundred quartile 1 students (<25) gained 7.66 units in independent reading level; 94 quartile 2 students (25 > <50) gained 5.85 units; 103 quartile 3 students (50 > <75) gained 5.65 units; and 97 quartile 4 students (>75) gained 4.13 units. These data indicate that students in the bottom two quartiles of reading made the most growth. Notably, in this network of teachers working to integrate subject-area teaching and learning into a highly challenging, academic curriculum, students in all quartiles benefited from the strategic reading focus and the Reading Apprenticeship approach of their subject-area teachers.

