
**External Analysis of the Impact of
Mondo Publishing's
Building Essential Literacy (BEL) and
Bookshop Reading Program
on High Needs Schools in
Southern Florida, 2002-2005**

Russell Cole

University of Pennsylvania¹

Jonathan Supovitz

University of Pennsylvania¹

¹ This report is an independent study conducted by Jonathan Supovitz and Russell Cole.
The opinions expressed are those of the author and do not reflect the positions of the University of Pennsylvania in any way.

Abstract

The Building Essential Literacy Project (BEL) and the *Bookshop* Reading Program (BEL-*Bookshop*) have been successful in improving student achievement as measured in the 3rd grade Florida Comprehensive Assessment Tests (FCAT). Against a cohort of 71 Southern Florida schools matched by a similar proportion of Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) students, a cohort of 6 BEL-*Bookshop* schools demonstrated superior improvement on the FCAT. The BEL-*Bookshop* schools decreased the proportion of students scoring in Level 1 by 16.67%, while the 71 matched Southern Florida schools only decreased their Level 1 proportions by 9.51% in the period from 2002–2005. In addition, the BEL-*Bookshop* schools were able to raise the proportion of students scoring Level 3 or above by 15.83%, while the matched set of Southern Florida schools were able to raise this proportion by 9.08% during the same 2002–2005 period. The BEL-*Bookshop* schools made increased progress on the 3rd grade English component of the FCAT than comparable Southern Florida schools, in that during the 2001–2002 the BEL-*Bookshop* student populations were performing at a lower level than the similar Southern Florida schools, but by 2005 the BEL-*Bookshop* students' performance was equivalent to the matched Southern Florida schools.

Program

Building Essential Literacy (BEL) Project in combination with the *Bookshop* Reading Program is an intervention for improving the literacy of students in the first three years of schooling. BEL-*Bookshop* emphasizes a whole-school approach to early literacy that aims to have all classes perform at the level of the most effective classes, and thus maximize improvements in student outcomes. *Bookshop* is a comprehensive reading program used as the primary literary resource in all classrooms. These literacy resources include systematically leveled texts, complete lesson plans, as well as additional materials. (<http://www.mondopub.com/articles/Hill.Jaggar.Supovitz.pdf>).

Data

In order to evaluate the efficacy of the BEL-*Bookshop* program, Florida Comprehensive Assessment Tests (FCAT) performance in BEL-*Bookshop* schools was compared against a sample of similar schools in the same region of Southern Florida. Six BEL-*Bookshop* elementary schools were matched against a cohort of 71 similar schools from five comparable school districts: Broward, Collier, Dade, Monroe, and Palm Beach counties. Comparison schools were selected based on the criterion of having an equivalent Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) proportion of students to the BEL-*Bookshop* schools. The six BEL-*Bookshop* schools ranged from 70% to 92% FRL, with an average of 88%. Schools were selected from the six counties if their FRL proportion was in the range of 83–92% (Within 5% above or below the BEL-*Bookshop* school average). 12 schools were selected from Broward county, 2 from Collier, 47 from Dade, and 10 from Palm Beach. None of the schools in

Monroe county were eligible for inclusion in the comparison group, as the FRL proportion was less than 64% in all schools in that county.

FCAT test scores were obtained from the official state website (<http://www.firn.edu/doe/sas/fcat.htm>). The school level FCAT results were available from 2001–2005 for the 6 BEL-Bookshop schools, and from 2002-2005 for the matched set of 71 Southern Florida schools. Student level data was not available for this analysis; however, school level results were available for each year. In this analysis, the proportions of students scoring in Level 1 and Level 3 or above on the FCAT test will be compared in the BEL-Bookshop schools versus the cohort of Southern Florida schools. The results associated with each school are the proportion of third graders in each of the categories.

Students who fall in the Level 1 category are associated with little success in meeting the *Sunshine State Standards* (<http://www.firn.edu/doe/sas/fcat/pdf/achieveleveldefine.pdf>). Students, who achieve a Level 3 categorization or higher, are associated with success or at least partial success in answering most of the test answers correctly. As such, these proportions serve as indicators of progress toward meeting state standards. By decreasing the proportion of Level 1 students, and increasing the proportion of Level 3 (or higher) students, schools can be said to be making progress toward meeting state standards.

Analysis

Table 1 contains the mean proportion of students scoring Level 1 and Level 3+ in the six BEL-Bookshop schools as compared to the 71 similar Southern Florida elementary schools. The comparison of the BEL-Bookshop schools with the cohort on the Level 1 results are shown in Figure 1, and the Level 3+ results are shown in Figure 2.

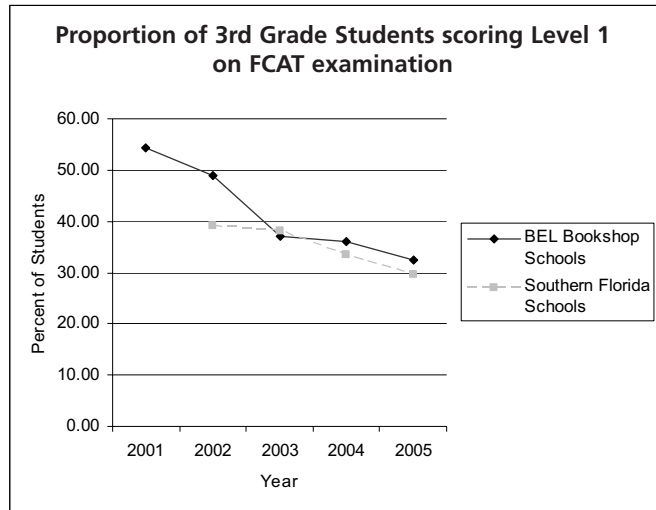
Table 1
Proportion of 3rd grade students scoring in Level 1 and Level 3+ on FCAT examination

Year	Level 1		Level 3+	
	BEL-Bookshop Schools	Southern Florida Schools	BEL-Bookshop Schools	Southern Florida Schools
2001	54.33	NA	28.67	NA
2002	49.00	39.24	36.33	44.17
2003	37.17	38.18	41.67	44.18
2004	36.00	33.56	49.67	49.65
2005	32.33	29.73	52.17	53.25

Note: Data was not available (NA) for the matched cohort for the 2001 year.

On average, the BEL-Bookshop schools were able to reduce the proportion of Level 1 students by 16.67% during the period from 2002-2005, while the matched cohort of 71 Southern Florida schools were able to reduce this proportion by 9.51%. If the additional 2001 data is used, the BEL-Bookshop schools decreased their Level 1 proportion by 22% in total between the years 2001 and 2005. A comparison of these results can be seen in Figure 1. There is a downward trend to the proportion of students who score in the Level 1 category in the BEL-Bookshop schools. Also, in 2002, the BEL-Bookshop schools commenced with a lower performance level than the matched cohort of Southern Florida schools, but were able to increase the level of student performance to perform at an equivalent level to the matched cohort by 2005.

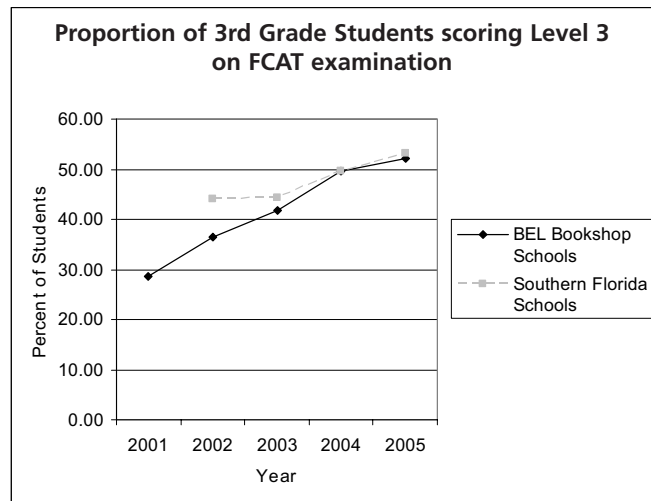
Figure 1
Proportion of 3rd grade students scoring in Level 1 of FCAT examination



Note: Data was not available (NA) for the matched cohort for the 2001 year.

In addition, the BEL-Bookshop schools were able to increase the proportion of students scoring Level 3 or higher over the course of 2001–2005. Between 2002 and 2005, the BEL-Bookshop schools on average increased the proportion of students scoring Level 3 or above by 15.83%, while the matched Southern Florida schools were able to increase this proportion by 9.08%. Again, if the additional year of data (2001) is included for the BEL-Bookshop schools, the overall increase in the average proportion of students scoring Level 3 or above increases to 23.5%. These results can be seen in Figure 2. It is clear that the BEL-Bookshop schools commenced at a significantly lower level than the matched set in 2002, but were able to raise performance to be nearly equivalent to that of matched Southern Florida schools by 2005.

Figure 2
Proportion of 3rd grade students scoring in Level 3+ on FCAT examination



Note: Data was not available (NA) for the matched cohort for the 2001 year.

Discussion

The 6 *BEL-Bookshop* schools are making better progress than the other Southern Florida elementary schools, in that the *BEL-Bookshop* student population in 2002 was performing at a significantly lower level than the matched cohort and have made accelerative progress to perform at an equivalent level by 2005. The current status of the *BEL-Bookshop* school performance is nearly identical to that of the matched cohort of Southern Florida schools, despite commencing at a lower performance level. While the data is not available for 2001 for the 71 Southern Florida schools, it is clear that the trend of improvement associated with the *BEL-Bookshop* initiative does indeed exhibit itself in that earliest period. The lack of 2001 data for the Southern Florida schools could play a role in the overall findings, but it is clear that for the years of available data, the *BEL-Bookshop* schools are performing better than the matched schools. The general improvement trend can be seen in both the Level 1 and in Level 3+ proportions. As a result of this analysis, it can be stated that the *BEL-Bookshop* schools are associated with greater gains on the 3rd grade FCAT test than similar schools in Southern Florida (in terms of the proportion of FRL students), commencing with a significantly lower level of student performance, and making accelerated gains against the progress of matched Southern Florida elementary schools to perform at an equivalent level to these schools in 2005.