
Voices Literature & Writing **Scientific Research Base and** **Program Efficacy**

More Than Twenty Years of Research, Implementation, and Efficacy

Zaner-Bloser
Voices
Literature & Writing

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Voices Research and Efficacy Summary

- *Voices* programs are **supported by decades of research** on children’s social development conducted by Professor Robert Selman of the Harvard Graduate School of Education and on literacy development by Professor Catherine Snow, an author of the National Reading Panel and Professor at the Harvard Graduate School of Education.
- *Voices* programs have been **developed and piloted for two decades in urban, suburban, and rural classrooms** across the country, constantly being assessed and refined for maximum impact on children’s social and academic development.
- Evaluations, assessments, and case studies of *Voices* core reading, supplemental literature, and early education programs have **demonstrated a significant impact on reading comprehension, writing achievement, vocabulary development, social skills development** (social awareness, perspective taking and conflict resolution, e.g.), and reductions in negative behaviors such as fighting and office referrals.
- *Voices* has been **rated a “Select” program by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)**, chosen from among hundreds of social and emotional learning programs across the country.
- Research on a group of over two hundred school-based, universal social and emotional learning programs established that compared to control groups, **participants in social development programs demonstrated significantly improved social and emotional skills, attitudes, behavior, and academic performance** that reflected an eleven-percentile-point gain in achievement (Durlak, et al., 2010).
- Today, Zaner-Bloser has developed a new and flexible supplemental edition of *Voices*, ***Voices Literature & Writing***, which embodies the skills and outcomes of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in English Language Arts for Grades K–6, highlighting oral language development, vocabulary enrichment, deep comprehension, and process and trait-based writing in CCSS genre-based and project-based learning.

This curriculum is built around universal themes for social development that give students the tools to develop pro-social behavior in and out of the classroom to help foster positive classroom and school climate.

Grounded in research from leading literacy and social development experts and built on program frameworks that have been tested and evaluated in classrooms for over twenty years, *Voices Literature & Writing* promotes the critical literacy and social skills that are necessary to succeed in the twenty-first century.



Voices supplemental, core reading, and early education programs have been **developed and implemented for over two decades in urban, suburban, and rural classrooms** across the country, constantly being assessed and refined for maximum impact on children’s academic and social development.

Items in red indicate efficacy results.

1991—Research and efficacy partnership is formed with Professor Robert Selman of the Harvard Graduate School of Education, an expert in children’s social development.

1992—*Voices* supplemental literature program receives federal funding to develop and pilot program in all public schools in Jamaica Plain neighborhood of **Boston**.

1994—With support of **Boston Public Schools** Superintendent Thomas Payzant, *Voices* is adopted district wide as literature-based character education program.

1994—*Early evaluations demonstrate that *Voices* has a significant impact on the development of students’ interpersonal skills and reading achievement while reducing negative behaviors. Later case studies during 1998–2001 reinforce these findings.*

1996—*Voices* is invited by **Memphis City Schools** to transform supplemental program into core reading and Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) program.

1998—Catherine Snow from the Harvard University Graduate School of Education, an expert on literacy development, joins *Voices* as author.

1998—*Voices* is implemented in eight of Memphis district’s highest poverty/lowest achieving schools.

2001—*Memphis district evaluation finds that *Voices* had the most impact on academic achievement of all the CSR models in the district.*

2001–2006—*Voices* is disseminated in school districts across country with federal Comprehensive School Reform funding in **Boston, Detroit, Denver, San Francisco, Seattle**, and other districts.

2003—*The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) rates *Voices Reading* a “select” program that meets the standards of excellence, selected from among hundreds of national social and emotional learning (SEL) programs.*

2004–Present*—Zaner-Bloser, a Highlights for Children family-owned educational publisher, publishes *Voices* supplemental literature, core reading, and early education programs.

2005–2006—*Independent evaluation of *Voices Reading* implementation in **Atlanta and Lebanon (PA)** school districts is conducted by Marzano & Associates and shows statistically significant effects in the areas of reading achievement and social skills development.*

2006—*Voices* implementation in Harding Public Schools in Lebanon, PA, a working class city outside Harrisburg, results in dramatic reduction of discipline referrals and increase in reading scores.

2007–Present*—New York State Department of Education provides a grant to the **New York City Public Schools** to implement *Voices* supplemental and core reading programs in four schools in the Bronx focused on promoting civility, character, and literacy.

2008–Present*—Consortium of public schools receives federal “Safe Schools/Healthy Students” grant to implement *Voices* as literacy and social development program in schools serving students on the **Navajo Reservation** in Arizona and New Mexico.

2009–Present*—**Chicago Public Schools, District of Columbia Public Schools**, and cross section of urban, suburban, and rural public and private schools implement *Voices Reading* with **positive results for achievement and school climate**.

2009–Present*—**Governor Wentworth School District** in rural New Hampshire adopts *Voices* district-wide as reading and supplemental literature program.

2009–Present*—Longfellow Elementary School in **San Francisco Unified School District** adopts *Voices Reading* and **achieves significant gains in reading, writing, and positive school climate while closing the achievement gap**.

2011—Zaner-Bloser publishes ***Voices Literature & Writing (VLW)***, a new and flexible supplemental program which promotes students’ social and academic skills through reading, discussing, and writing about multicultural literature and which incorporates Common Core State Standards.

**This document was published in early 2012.*

I. Twenty Years of Research, Implementation, and Efficacy

Voices Literature & Writing, a groundbreaking approach to promoting literacy and social development through reading, discussing, and writing in response to high quality, culturally responsive literature, is built on a foundation of research, implementation, and efficacy spanning nearly two decades.

The *Voices* approach to literacy and social development started in 1992 as a violence prevention and character education program adopted by the Boston Public Schools. The philosophy behind the program was to use multicultural literature and the themes that emerge from these texts as a springboard for discussions and other instructional activities that promote conflict resolution and social skill development while enhancing reading and writing skills. This **early version of *Voices* was developed in collaboration with and evaluated by a team of researchers from the Harvard Graduate School of Education** led by Professor Robert Selman, a leading expert in children’s social development.

In 1998, an early version of *Voices* was implemented in eight schools in the Memphis City Schools. A research study conducted by the Memphis City Schools found that ***Voices* had the most positive impact on increasing student achievement of any school reform model in the district** at that time (Calaway, 2001).

Between 1998 and 2004, *Voices* continued to evolve and improve in response to feedback from various implementation sites, including Boston, Seattle, San Francisco, Phoenix, and Denver. The *Voices* program staff **continued to refine the curriculum as well as develop high-quality professional development support** to help teachers implement the program successfully. With the assistance of federal and state grants, schools across

the country adopted *Voices* as their school-improvement initiative designed to significantly increase reading and student achievement, improve teacher quality, and create a positive school culture.

In 2004, Zaner-Bloser acquired the *Voices* programs and published core reading, early education, and supplemental literature programs based on the *Voices* model of integrating literacy instruction and social development. The development plan was based upon decades of research in the fields of reading, literacy, child psychology and social development, including the research of *Voices* author Professor Catherine Snow, an internationally recognized expert in literacy, as well as lessons learned from years of early *Voices* implementation in diverse classrooms across the country.

In 2011, coinciding with the release of the Common Core State Standards, **Zaner-Bloser has published a new approach to promoting deep comprehension, rich vocabulary gains, improved writing, increased self-esteem and confidence, a respectful learning environment, and over-all growth in academic achievement.** Anchored by a collection of appealing, relevant, and culturally responsive literature used as Teacher Read-Alouds, *Voices Literature & Writing* draws on the foundations and history of successful development and implementation of the *Voices* programs.

II. Research Base: Literacy and Social Development

Voices Literature & Writing is a research-based literacy and social development program for grades K–6 that is founded upon decades of research conducted by leading authorities in literacy instruction and social and emotional learning (SEL).

Literacy and Social Development

In addition to promoting literacy development, *Voices* seamlessly and systematically integrates social and character development into the curriculum to address the social and emotional needs of young children and to foster a positive classroom and school climate.

By integrating literacy instruction with social and emotional skill development, *Voices* increases student achievement by addressing the myriad of skills necessary to create competent, thoughtful, lifelong learners. By anchoring the program in meaningful text and promoting partner learning, *Voices* engages students' interests and deepens the impact of social and emotional learning in the classroom.

Contemporary research indicates that there is a link between literacy and social development (Lobron and Selman, 2007; Miles & Stipek, 2006). Some studies identify social competence as a significant predictor of academic success (Caprara et al., 2002), as well as other positive life outcomes (Schultz & Selman, 2004; Zins, et al., 2004).

A 2010 meta-analysis of 213 school-based, universal social and emotional learning programs, involving 270,034 kindergarten through high school students, demonstrated that, compared to controls, SEL participants demonstrated significantly improved social and emotional skills, attitudes, behavior, and academic performance that reflected an eleven-percentile-point gain in achievement (Durlak, et al., 2010).

In addition, participants in these programs in sum showed

- 9% improvement in attitudes about self, others, and school.
- 9% improvement in pro-social behavior.
- 9% reduction in problem behaviors.
- 10% reduction in emotional distress.

Voices promotes prevention of negative behavior by focusing on the development of a set of core social skills, including perspective taking, problem solving, and conflict resolution. Recent research indicates that social and emotional learning programs that involve early interventions “were more effective than interventions with older students. These results suggest that resources in classroom-based social skills interventions are best invested in younger students...” (January, Casey, & Paulson, 2011).

Voices builds on the strong relationship between literacy and character development by aligning literature with important character development themes and providing systematic character development curriculum within the instructional plan. All activities that are developed from the Teacher Read-Aloud books and Leveled Library books are organized around six universal themes for character development:

- Identity Awareness
- Perspective Taking
- Conflict Resolution
- Family, Friends, and Community
- Social Awareness
- Democracy

Activities to deepen comprehension, discussions, and writing activities build students’ understanding of these themes and connect them to their lives. Character development vocabulary tied to the themes addresses character development concepts. Among them, the themes cover the character development, social, and emotional elements that researchers have identified as important components of social and emotional learning (CEP, 2010, CASEL, 2003; ECS, 2003; Elias, et al., 1997).

Reading Aloud and Oral Language Development

Research studies conducted in the area of oral language development show that reading aloud to children is a significant component of reading instruction across grade levels (Dreher, 2003; Fisher, et al., 2004; Martin, 1993; Richardson, 2000; Routman, 1991; Sipe, 2000; Trelease, 1989). “In the teaching of reading, there is only a handful of things that everyone agrees is essential. Perhaps the most important of these is the fact that children need to listen to the best of children’s literature read aloud to them” (Calkins, 2000).

The Common Core State Standards also indicates the importance of Teacher Read-Alouds: “By reading a story or nonfiction selection aloud, teachers allow children to experience written language without the burden of decoding, granting them access to content that they may not be able to read and understand by themselves. Children are then free to focus their mental energy on the words and ideas presented in the text, and they will eventually be better prepared to tackle rich written content on their own.” (Appendix a, 2010).

In addition, research has verified the importance of oral language in developing literacy (Dickinson and Snow, 1987; Snow, et al., 1995; Tabors & Snow, 2001; Verhoeven & Snow, 2001).

Research highlighted in the Common Core State Standards indicates that “oral language development precedes and is the foundation for written language development; in other words, oral language is primary, and written language builds on it. Children’s oral language competence is strongly predictive of their facility in learning to read and write: listening and speaking vocabulary and even mastery of syntax set boundaries as to what children can read and understand no matter how well they can decode (Catts, Adolf, & Weismer, 2006; Hart & Risley, 1995; Hoover & Gough, 1990; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998).” (Appendix a, 2010).

This focus on oral language is of greatest importance for the children most at risk—children for whom English is a second language and children who have not been exposed at home to the kind of language found in

written texts (Dickinson & Smith, 1994). Ensuring that all children in the United States have access to an excellent education requires that issues of oral language come to the fore in elementary classrooms.

Voices Literature & Writing provides engaging, theme-based, multicultural trade books for Teacher Read-Alouds. The Teacher Editions offer guidance in the use of these books to introduce character development concepts, build listening and speaking skills and vocabulary, and develop a “love of literature” (Himmele & Himmele, 2009). “Teachers need to use authentic and challenging texts (high-quality children’s literature and well written nonfiction) to help their students move along the continuum from novice to proficient reader” (Keene & Zimmerman, 1997).

Students interact with the Teacher Read-Alouds and themes’ concepts by responding to questions as they discuss the key concepts in relation to their own lives. Additional activities further develop their oral language skills and “deep comprehension” of the ideas in the texts. *Voices Leveled Libraries* contain leveled texts that extend the social concepts developed in the Teacher Read-Aloud. “Children’s comprehension of the ideas in text increases when they have conversations about literature with peers and teachers” (Pressley, 2002).

Deep Comprehension

Voices author Catherine Snow suggests that despite certain successes in federal and state policies focused on primary literacy, data from the *Early Childhood Longitudinal Survey* and other assessments found the largest disparities on higher-order comprehension measures are those that require the ability to make inferences, to extrapolate from texts, and to evaluate arguments.

If we take as our goal the preparation of students who can later perform successfully in higher education settings, who can participate in 21st century communication streams, and who can function as informed citizens of a democratic society, we need to go beyond the “simple view of reading” (the product of decoding and oral language skills) to focus on “deep comprehension,” the product of simple comprehension, background knowledge, and three classes of skill: perspective taking, complex reasoning, and academic language skill (Snow, 2011).

Voices Literature & Writing is grounded in deep comprehension by providing explicit instruction in the development of perspective taking through reading and discussing culturally diverse literature. Social and emotional learning activities that encourage students to analyze literature and life lessons through multiple points of view also contribute to deeper understanding (Selman 2003).

Writing

Recent research underscores the importance of teaching writing and social skills in the classroom, highlighting a positive relationship between skills such as social awareness and quality of writing in persuasive letters and narratives (Dray, Selman, & Schultz, 2009; Dray & Selman, 2011; Bamberg & Damrad-Frye, 1991; Daiute & Buteau, 2002; Dyson, 2003; Morrell, 2003, 2007).

Daiute and colleagues further argue that children’s narratives contain evidence of perspective-taking as well as the social values they bring from personal experience (Daiute, 2002; Daiute, et al., 2002).

“Writing is a social activity that influences, and is influenced by, the communities in which a writer participates. By writing about their experiences in the world and having the opportunity to engage in varied learning experiences, young writers develop a personal voice and gain confidence in their ability to write with authority about a range of topics” (National Council of Teachers of English, 2008).

Common Core State Standards (CCSS)

Zaner-Bloser has developed an alignment demonstrating the strong connections between the expectations of the research-based CCSS and the instructional approach of *Voices Literature & Writing* and *Voices Leveled Library*.

- For example, one of the key design considerations for the Common Core State Standards is “An Integrated model of literacy (p. 4): Although the Standards are divided into Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening, and Language strands for conceptual clarity, **the processes of communication are closely connected...** [emphasis added].” In response, *Voices Literature & Writing* integrates literacy strands along with Social Development and Social Emotional Learning concepts. High quality Teacher Read-Aloud trade book literature is the springboard for oral discussion and writing to reflect, respond, and support a point of view.
- Also, the CCSS call for a “Focus and coherence in instruction and assessment (p. 5): While the Standards delineate specific expectations in reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language, each standard need not be a separate focus for instruction and assessment. **Often, several standards can be addressed by a single rich task** [emphasis added]. In response, the cohesive approach at the heart of *Voices* promotes literacy, effective communication skills and social development with efficiency in instructional time. Discussion following each Teacher Read-Aloud provides opportunity for speaking and listening that contributes to the development of deep comprehension, writing, critical thinking, and the use of new vocabulary. [Ex: Grade 4, Solving Community Problems theme, T 39, 42, 65, 73, 81, 92–94]
- CCSS, p. 7: “Students Who are College and Career Ready in Reading, Writing, Speaking, Listening, and Language...They come to understand other perspectives and cultures.”

Voices Literature and Writing and *Voices Leveled Library* provide literary selections representing diverse experiences and cultures. Explicit instruction on perspective taking is a major part of the social development instruction within the resources. Teachers’ support guides students to be respectful of each other’s personal experiences, cultures, and perspectives.

Bullying

Lack of social competence, perspective-taking, conflict resolution skills, empathy, and compassion create growing antisocial behavior in the nation’s schools. A recent federal department of education summit indicated that youth ages 8 to 15 years rank bullying as more of a problem in their lives than discrimination, racism, or violence (U.S. Department of Education, 2011).

Research confirms that social and emotional learning can be advanced by school-based programs (CASEL, 2009; Elias and Weissberg, 2000; Farrington & Tfofi, 2009). Students with greater social and emotional competency are less likely to be aggressors, targets of bullying, or passive bystanders (Farrington & Tfofi, 2009; Ferguson, et al., 2007).

At an early age, students can discuss and develop empathy with others’ feelings. They can consider reasons not to be a bully, how to respond to bullying, and how to respond as a witness to bullying. They can discuss and formulate strategies for conflict resolution and responses to social injustice. In *Voices Literature & Writing*, students are guided to develop empathy, discuss positive ways to resolve conflict, consider how to stand up for fairness and justice, and deal directly with bullying and teasing in the comfortable context of literature and with the support of a caring adult. *Voices Leveled Library* titles offer an opportunity to extend the concepts either in independent reading or guided reading groups.

Unfortunately, many attempts to reduce the problem—such as engaging bullies and victims in peer mediation,

punishing bullies, telling victimized children to ignore the bullying or to work things out on their own (Merrell et al., 2008), inserting a few bullying prevention lessons in the curriculum, or adopting an anti-bullying policy without any of the needed supports—are not effective and are unlikely to have a lasting impact. (CASEL, 2009)

However, schools can take specific steps to improve the school climate and create more positive interactions among students. When schools embed bullying prevention efforts within a supportive framework like *Voices*, these efforts become a natural extension of the underlying social and emotional learning practices in the school and are more likely to succeed. By fostering an overall climate of inclusion, warmth, and respect, such schools can promote the development of core social and emotional skills in students and staff alike.

Positive School Climate

Research shows that safe, caring, connected, participatory, and responsive school climate is associated with and/or predicts positive youth development, effective risk prevention efforts, and academic achievement (Cohen, et al., 2009). Successful schools—ones that foster both academic excellence and ethics—have positive, effective school cultures.

The Character Education Partnership defines a positive school culture broadly to include “the schoolwide ethos and the culture of individual classrooms, high expectations for learning and achievement, a safe and caring environment, shared values and relational trust, a powerful pedagogy and curriculum, high student motivation and engagement, a professional faculty culture, and partnerships with families and the community” (CEP, 2010).

Voices Literature & Writing addresses these criteria as a research-based curriculum that draws on culturally responsive trade books and themes to advance students’ literacy and social development; promotes student partnerships, intrinsic motivation, and engagement in the classroom; and fosters supportive relationships between teachers and students and throughout the classroom and entire school community. *Voices Leveled Library* books further extend literacy and social development.

III. Voices Literature & Writing Author Team

Senior Authors

Catherine Snow, Ph.D., is the Patricia Albjerg Graham Professor of Education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. She is an expert on children’s language and literacy development, focusing on how oral language skills are acquired and how they relate to literacy outcomes. Snow has collaborated on three major longitudinal studies of language and literacy skills among low-income children, one of which focused primarily on how low-income bilingual learners transfer these skills from first to second language.

Robert L. Selman, Ph.D., is the Roy Edward Larsen Professor of Education and Human Development at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and Professor of Psychology at Harvard Medical School. His practice-based research on children’s social and ethical development focuses on diversity issues for elementary students, school-based support and prevention programs for middle school students, and curricula for high school students.

Patrick C. Walker, Ph.D., helped develop a neighborhood-wide drug and violence prevention coalition in Boston that is the foundation of *Voices Literature & Writing*. Armed with research on effective, culturally appropriate prevention programs, Walker proposed a far-reaching solution: a school-based program that uses culturally diverse literature to promote literacy, social development, and drug and violence prevention.

Consulting Authors

Cynthia Tyson, Ph.D., Literature Specialist, is Professor in the School of Teaching and Learning at The Ohio State University where she has conducted research and taught courses in children's literature and social studies education. Her work has primarily addressed the social, cultural, and critical issues of our times through the use of multicultural children's books. Tyson has authored many articles and books on children's literature, social studies/multicultural education, and teaching for social justice.

Maria Carlo, Ph.D., ELL Specialist, is currently an Associate Professor of Teaching and Learning in the School of Education at the University of Miami. An expert in the area of English language learning and bilingualism, her research focuses on the cognitive processes that underlie reading in a second language. Carlo has authored several articles on reading development, vocabulary instruction, and the cross-language transfer of academic skills.

Ernest Morrell, Ph.D., Writing Specialist, is Professor of Arts and Humanities and director of the Institute for Urban and Minority Education at Teachers College, Columbia University. Recognized for his commitment to teaching and service, Dr. Morrell shares a vision of powerful literacy practices in urban education that provide youth the skills they need to succeed academically and function more powerfully as citizens in our democracy.

Senior Consultant

Sonya Whitaker Ed.D., is Superintendent for Fairmont School District 89, in Lockport, Illinois. As a Superintendent, former Director for Academic Improvement, educational consultant, workshop facilitator, and teacher, Dr. Whitaker is passionate about ensuring that all students experience academic success. She is a published author and has recently released a professional development DVD, *The Culturally Responsive Teacher: How Understanding Culture Positively Impacts Instruction and Student Achievement*.

IV. Research Symposium—*Promoting Social Development in Schools: Where We've Been and Where We're Going*, Harvard Graduate School of Education

Building on a long-standing commitment to integrating the latest research and best practices into its programs, Zaner-Bloser convened a research symposium in June 2011 at the Harvard Graduate School of Education titled *Promoting Social Development in Schools: Where We've Been and Where We're Going*.

The symposium brought together distinguished researchers and practitioners in the areas of social and emotional learning, literacy, child and youth development, and program assessment, including *Voices Literature & Writing* senior authors Catherine Snow, Ph.D., Robert Selman, Ph.D., and Patrick Walker, Ph.D. The five following researchers and practitioners also participated.

Ron Walker is Executive Director of the Coalition of Schools Educating Boys of Color (COSEBOC), and was the Associate Director of ATLAS Communities, a comprehensive school reform organization. Mr. Walker was recently the recipient of a Harvard University Gates Fellowship for senior-level education-change coaches.

Stephanie Jones, Ph.D., is an assistant professor affiliated with the Prevention Science and Practice program at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Her basic developmental research focuses on the longitudinal effects of poverty and exposure to violence on social and emotional development in early childhood and adolescence.

Maggie Pagan is a National Professional Development/English Language Learners Specialist providing Professional Development presentations and training nationwide. She has had extensive experience in the

field of Second Language Acquisition; Literacy Development with ELLs and Multicultural Education.

Ed Dunkelblau, Ph.D., is an Illinois Licensed Psychologist and the Director of the Institute for Emotionally Intelligent Learning in the Chicago area. He is an internationally known speaker and consultant on the topics of Social Emotional Learning, and is working with the character education Partnership to develop social development learning standards for the Kansas Department of Education.

Sheldon H. Berman, Ph.D., is the Superintendent of the Eugene School District 4J in Eugene, OR. He previously served as Superintendent of the Jefferson County Public Schools in Louisville, Kentucky, and Hudson Public Schools in Hudson, Massachusetts. As superintendent in Hudson, he initiated innovations in civic education, social-emotional learning, service learning, mathematics and science reform, high school restructuring, teacher evaluation, and computer technology.

The goal of the symposium was to develop a richer understanding of the relationship between social and academic development that could inform Zaner-Bloser's program development, implementation, professional development, and assessment, particularly related to its new *Voices Literature & Writing* program.

Key findings included:

- Research and evaluations of SEL programs support the **impact that social development has on academic achievement** (Durlak, et al., 2010).
- Professor Jones reported that “we know from research and practice that social-emotional, behavioral, and mental health problems co-occur with poor academic gains. These domains of development are fundamentally intertwined in children, and in places.”
- To capitalize on these research findings that there is a reciprocal relationship between SEL and academic learning, **programs should blend meaningful, daily, standards-aligned academic instruction and SEL lessons.**
- Programs should incorporate the **SAFE criteria (Sequenced, Active, Focused, and Explicit)** that recent research suggests are the foundation for effective programs (Durlak, Weissberg, & Pachan, 2010).
- Perspective taking and problem solving skills are involved in the **deep comprehension frameworks** designed by *Voices Literature & Writing* author and literacy expert Catherine Snow and the social learning theories developed by *Voices Literature & Writing* author and professor Robert Selman, which are critical to instilling 21st century communication skills in all children (Selman, 2003; Snow, 2011).
- Based on a review of key outcomes, evidence- and theory-based teaching and school practices, and program design guidelines provided by Professor Stephanie Jones, **programs should be able to be flexibly implemented in multiple ways**—morning/class meetings, teacher read-aloud times, during reading/writing workshops, after-school programs, summer school, etc.
- With the release of **Common Core State Standards** and the **Framework for 21st Century Learning**, educators and policy makers are focusing on the skills that will be necessary to succeed in the 21st century classroom, community, and workplace. Social and character development programs that develop social skills such as perspective taking, problem solving, conflict resolution, social awareness in the context of reading and writing will be aligned with these new findings.

V. Voices Assessment, Program Development, and Field Testing (1992–2000)

A. Research and Efficacy Foundation (1992–1993)

In his book *The Promotion of Social Awareness: Powerful Lessons from the Partnership of Developmental Theory and Classroom Practice*, Professor Robert Selman chronicles a quarter century in the development of his groundbreaking theories on the growth of children’s perspective-taking skills and classroom-based practices and programs like *Voices* that foster them (Selman, 2003).

Selman presents the classroom as a place where students have opportunities to safely express ideas and, with the guidance of an effective teacher, to develop increasingly complex social perspectives. He writes, “Teachers can harness children’s natural focus on peer relationships . . . to promote academic and social learning in the classroom” (p. 191). The challenge becomes to incorporate a social curriculum without sacrificing the teaching of academic skills. In response, Selman and his colleagues have explored the relationship between literacy and interpersonal development and how the components of a literacy curriculum serve to scaffold the development of increasingly sophisticated perspective taking. This research-practice relationship is a critical strength of the new *Voices Literature & Writing* program.

Voices was initially developed and evaluated in collaboration with educators and researchers from the Harvard Graduate School of Education (HGSE) under the direction of Professor Selman. A developmental approach to the assessment of psychosocial abilities was used to design a student questionnaire that measures the student’s ability to understand other people’s points of view, negotiate conflict, and make meaning out of their lives.

The initial evaluation of *Voices* was based on the hypothesis that if the program could increase the developmental level of the interpersonal relationship competencies of students relative to similar students in comparison schools, then negative risk behaviors (e.g., violence and drug use) would decrease. To test this main hypothesis, a student self-report questionnaire, the *Relationship Questionnaire*, was developed to measure the maturity of these competencies. Cross-sectional pilot assessments of program and comparison school students from fourth through twelfth grade in the spring and fall of 1992 supported the ability of the questionnaire to test the hypothesis underlying the prevention program: students’ developmental level of interpersonal understanding and social skills across all relationships (particularly relationships with friends, but also within family and community) was significantly inversely related to both violent behavior and drug use.

B. Case Study of Voices in Boston, MA (1994–1999)

School/District: Hernandez School, Boston Public Schools, MA

School Type: Urban

Time Period: 1994–1999

Background:

- A pilot evaluation of *Voices* followed 130 fourth through eighth graders at the Hernandez School for one and a half school years, from January 1994 through June 1995.
- The Hernandez School is a K–8, two-way bilingual (Spanish and English) school in the Boston Public Schools. The school included 45% bilingual students, 60% Hispanic, 25% African American, and 15% White students.

Conclusions/Findings:

- Social Skills Assessment. Three waves of data were collected: students were given the Relationship

Questionnaire in January 1994, early fall 1994, and late spring 1995.

- In the second two testing points (fall 1994 and spring 1995), the students were also given a risk-taking questionnaire adapted from one developed by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) to measure their fighting behavior and drug use.
- In addition, reading and math achievement scores from the *Metropolitan Achievement Test* administered by the school system in spring 1994 and spring 1995 were obtained.
- The students showed growth that was significantly different from zero on the overall score from the *Relationship Questionnaire* between each of the three testing points.
- That is, the students showed significant growth in interpersonal skills from January 1994 to fall 1994 ($t = 2.91$, $p = .0042$), and from fall 1994 to spring 1995 ($t = 4.06$, $p < .0001$), as well as across the entire year and a half period ($t = 6.95$, $p < .0001$). The mean developmental level of interpersonal skills increased from 1.82 to 1.97 to 2.15.
- This change was substantive as well as significant: a validation study of the *Relationship Questionnaire* has found that individuals change a quarter of a developmental level of interpersonal skills (.25 of a level) in each of two four year periods (between fourth grade and eighth grade as well as between eighth grade and twelfth grade).
- Thus, the 130 students who participated in *Voices* for one and a half years showed growth in their interpersonal skills (.33 or one-third of a level) greater than would be expected naturally over a four-year period (.25 or one-quarter of a level).
- Fights and Substance Abuse. Across the 1994–95 school year, the number of fights students reported decreased significantly for boys ($t = -2.40$, $p = .0194$), though not for girls ($t = 0.70$, $p = .4834$).
- Boys fought more than girls in the fall (5 versus 3 fights in the last year), and fought about the same amount by the spring (3 fights in the last year).
- Students' drug use (including drinking alcohol, reported over the last two months) did not increase across the school year ($t = 0.80$, $p = .4248$).
- Because fighting rather than drug use seems to be the principal risk-taking behavior of elementary students, the *Voices* program tended to function as more of a prevention than an intervention with regard to drug use at the elementary level.
- Further, change in level of interpersonal skills was significantly negatively correlated with change in fighting ($r = -.23$, $p = .0159$) and change in carrying weapons to school ($r = -.29$, $p = .0030$), and also negatively correlated with change in drug use, though not significantly ($r = -.14$, $p = .1560$).
- Thus, students whose relationship capacity was enhanced across the school year engaged in fewer negative risk behaviors.
- In addition, change in level of interpersonal skills was positively correlated with change in reading achievement at a level approaching significance.
- Also, change in reading achievement was significantly negatively correlated with change in fighting

($r = -.36$, $p < .0001$), change in carrying weapons to school ($r = -.31$, $p = .0003$), and change in drug use ($r = -.18$, $p = .0448$).

- This pattern of results suggests that for students participating in *Voices*, growth in literacy and interpersonal skills are to some extent linked, and both are associated with decreases in violent behavior and drug use.

C. Case Study: Voices in Memphis, TN (1993–94)

School/District: Oakhaven Elementary School, Memphis, TN

School Type: Urban

Time Period: 1993–1994

Conclusions/Findings:

- Case study based on “A Report on a Summative Evaluation of *Voices*” conducted by the Center for Research in Educational Policy at the University of Memphis.
- Implementing this program can help traditional classrooms, students, and teachers to redesign their approach to literacy and violence prevention.
- “*Voices* is a catalyst within a school to focus faculty, staff, and students on thinking about and expanding alternative choices to violent behavior.”
- “If teachers use this strategy, they can expect several benefits: more reading about peace building issues, creation of a classroom community, reduction of violent acts in school, improved student relationships, and improvement of literacy skills.”
- In addition, the principal of the Oakhaven Elementary School reports that *Voices* was directly responsible for reducing the number of handgun violations in the school from one of the highest in the city to below the city average.

D. Evaluation of Voices in Cambridge Public Schools, MA (1999–2000).

School Type: Urban

Time Period: 1999–2000

Conclusions/Findings:

- According to an evaluation conducted by the school district, students participating in a pilot program using *Voices* as a violence prevention program in the Cambridge Public Schools (MA) showed statistically significant changes in overall relationship maturity.
- The growth attained in this ten-week pilot program was roughly equivalent to one year of normal social development (interpersonal understanding, perspective taking, conflict resolution skills, e.g.).

E. Drug Strategies Assessment of Voices in 1996

- The *Voices* supplemental program was rated as the top K–12 violence prevention program in 1998 in the country by Drug Strategies, a nationally recognized organization that evaluates drug and violence prevention programs.
- Drug Strategies gave *Voices* its highest rating for Program Quality and for five additional categories, calling it a “creative, innovative program...strongly grounded in developmental research.”
- *Voices* was rated higher than the *Resolving Conflicts Creatively Program* (RCCP) in the K–12 category, and had a rating equal to *Second Step*. (Drug Strategies, 1996)

VI. Early Evaluations of the Voices Model (1998–2006)

A. School/District: Memphis City Schools, TN

School Type: Urban

Time Period: 1998–2001

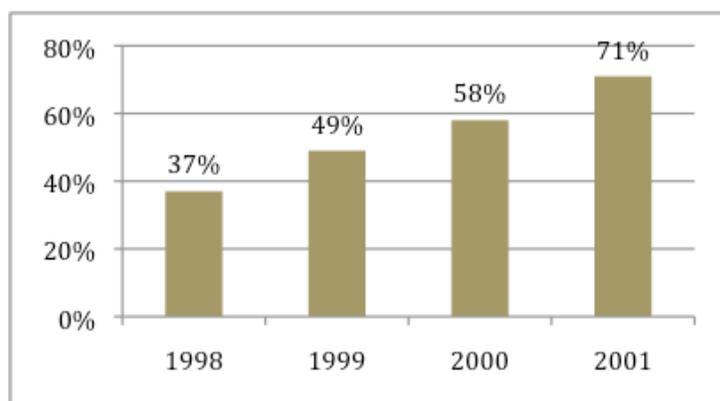
Background: In 1998, the Memphis City Schools invited the *Voices* author team to transform its supplemental *Voices* literature-based character education program into a comprehensive reading program. Eight schools in Memphis subsequently implemented the early version of the *Voices Reading* program between 1998 and 2001.

Conclusions/Findings:

- In February 1998 (the year before *Voices Reading* was piloted), 37% of the students in these schools were proficient (level 4) in writing on the state TCAP assessment.
- In February 1999, after seven months of implementation of *Voices Reading*, 49% of the students scored at level 4 in writing.
- After the first full year of implementation of *Voices Reading*, the percentage of students scoring proficient in writing increased to 58%.
- By February 2001, 71% of all students scored proficient in writing (level 4)—a 91% increase over three years.
- Over a three-year period (1998–2001), the eight schools implementing *Voices Reading*, which had some of the highest rates of poverty of any of the Memphis schools, outperformed and surpassed the district and the state in the area of writing, according to an independent evaluation conducted by the district (Calaway, 2001).

Schools	Students	Free/Reduced Lunch %
Berclair Elementary	431	83
Brookmeade Elementary	758	86
Georgian Hills Elementary	500	99
Hanley Elementary	748	86
Knight Road Elementary	866	90
Oakhaven Elementary	820	81
South Park Elementary	440	90
Whitney Elementary	690	96

Memphis City Schools, Memphis, TN Level 4 Writing Score Increases on TCAP (1998–2001)



B. School/District: Boston Public Schools, MA

School Type: Urban

Time Period: 1999–2001

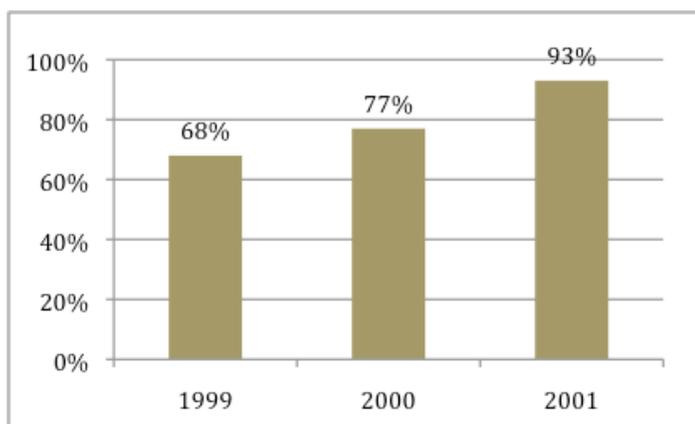
Background:

- In September 1999, the John F. Kennedy School in the Boston Public Schools began implementing the forerunner of the *Voices Reading* program.
- Kennedy had more than 500 students in Grades K–5 and had one of the largest concentrations of Spanish bilingual students in the district.
- The student body was approximately 75% Hispanic, 23% African American, 1% white, and 1% Asian; approximately two-thirds spoke Spanish “always” or “mostly” at home.
- Approximately 44% were limited English proficient (LEP), almost double the district rate. Nearly all students (more than 96%) were eligible for free/reduced meals, with most families from low socioeconomic backgrounds.
- All second grade students in Boston were assessed using the *Stanford 9 Open-Ended Reading Assessment* (SAT-9) in the spring of each year. The goal was for all students to be at level 2 (Proficient) or higher on this assessment.

Conclusion/Findings:

- In Spring 1999 (pre-implementation baseline assessment), only 68% of Kennedy School students were level 2 or higher on the SAT-9.
- After one year of using the *Voices* program, this number increased to 77%; by spring 2001, after two years of using this program, a significant 93% of all students were level 2 or higher.

John F. Kennedy School, Boston, MA Grade 2 Students Scoring “Proficient” in Reading on SAT-9 (1999–2001)



C. School/District: Lebanon Public Schools, PA

School Type: Urban

Time Period: 2005-2006

Background:

- Harding Elementary School purchased *Voices Reading* for Grades K–2 to implement during the 2005–2006 school year.
- The principal and staff members collected and analyzed school-based and district data to track the impact that the *Voices Reading* curriculum was having on students.
- The staff tracked *DIBELS* scores for Grades K–2.
- They also analyzed *Terra Nova Reading* composite scores from the baseline year of 2004–2005 and compared them to scores from the end of 2005–2006 (the first year of implementation of *Voices Reading*).
- They tracked the number of discipline referrals from 2005–2006 compared to the previous year.

Conclusions/Findings:

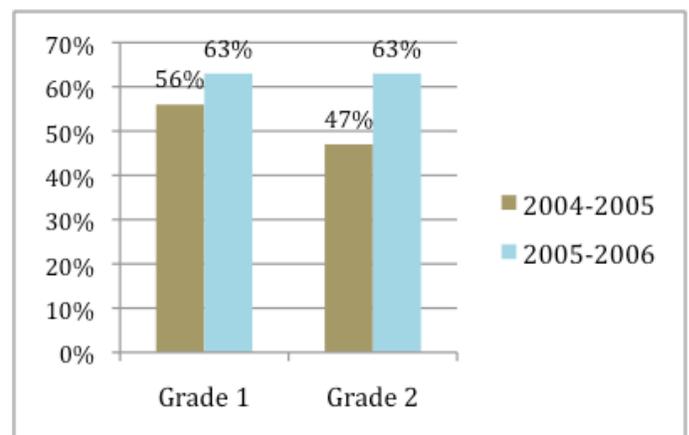
- After analyzing and comparing the data, the staff discovered that there were noticeable increases in reading fluency for Grades K, 1, and 2 as measured by the *DIBELS* assessment.
- In Grade 2, 53% of students scored above grade level on the *Oral Reading Fluency* (ORF) in 2005, increasing to 79% in 2006.
- *Terra Nova Reading* composite scores went up in both Grades 1 and 2 during the 2005–2006 school year as compared to those in 2004–2005.
- Students scoring “proficient/advanced” in Grade 1 Reading went from 56% to 63% after one year—a gain of 7 points or 12.5%.
- In Grade 2, *Terra Nova Reading* composite scores rose from 47% to 63% “proficient/advanced”—a gain of 16 points or 34%.

Harding Elementary School, Lebanon, PA

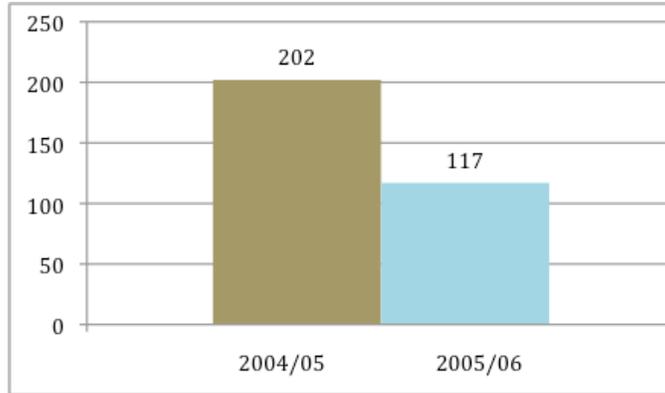
Terra Nova Reading

Composite Score Increases (2004–2006)

- School-wide discipline referrals dropped from 202 incidents during the 2004–2005 school year to 117 by the end of the 2005–2006 school year.
- This drop represents a 42% decrease in the number of discipline referrals in just one year.
- In addition, teachers reported fewer discipline problems in classrooms, greater order and respect in hallways, and increased interest in learning.



**Harding Elementary School, Lebanon, PA
School-wide Discipline Referrals (2004–2006)**



**D. Independent Research Study
Marzano & Associates (2005–2006)**

School/District: Lebanon Public Schools, PA (2 schools); Atlanta Public Schools, GA (1 school)

School Type: Urban

Time Period: 2005–2006

Background:

- Dr. Robert Marzano & Associates, Inc., conducted a study on the effects of *Voices Reading* on the reading skill and social skill development of primary level students in the 2005–2006 school year.
- The study compared test results from experimental and control classrooms in Grades 1 and 2 in three schools where *Voices Reading* was being implemented for the first year.
- A pre-test/post-test design was utilized to determine the growth of students' skills over the 2005–2006 school year.
- The *Gates MacGinitie Reading Test 4th Edition (GMRT)* was used to measure reading achievement, and the *Relationship Questionnaire Grade 3 Version (Rel-Q)* was administered to assess social skills development.
- A total of 307 students across all locations took the *GMRT* pre- and post-tests. In the area of social development, 310 students in Grades 1 and 2 took the *Rel-Q* assessment to measure social skills development.
- Both pre-test assessments were administered in the fall of 2005. Post-test assessments were administered in the spring of 2006.

Conclusions/Findings:

- Based upon this evaluation of *Voices Reading*, the program showed statistically significant effects in reading achievement and social skills development for students in second grade.
- Using Rosenthal and Rubin's (1982) *Binomial Effect Size Display (BESD)* index—in which students in *Voices Reading* classrooms and OTHER classrooms are given a reading test that 50% are expected to pass and 50% are expected to fail—60.5% of *Voices Reading* students would pass the reading test and 58.5% would pass the social skills test in second grade as compared to 39.5% and 41.5% in the OTHER classrooms respectively.

Voices Reading versus OTHER expected to pass reading and social skills (Grade 2)

Program	Expected to Pass: Reading	Expected to Pass: Social Skills
<i>Voices Reading</i>	60.5%	58.5%
OTHER	39.5%	41.5%

- In addition, using the same *BESD* index, this study shows that for students in first grade who received instruction in *Voices Reading*, adjusted mean scores were higher in both reading achievement and social skills development as compared to students who did not receive instruction in *Voices Reading*.

Voices Reading versus OTHER expected to pass reading and social skills (Grade 1)

Program	Expected to Pass: Reading	Expected to Pass: Social Skills
<i>Voices Reading</i>	56.5%	54.5%
Other	43.5%	45.5%

VII. Recent Case Studies and Evaluations (2006–2011)

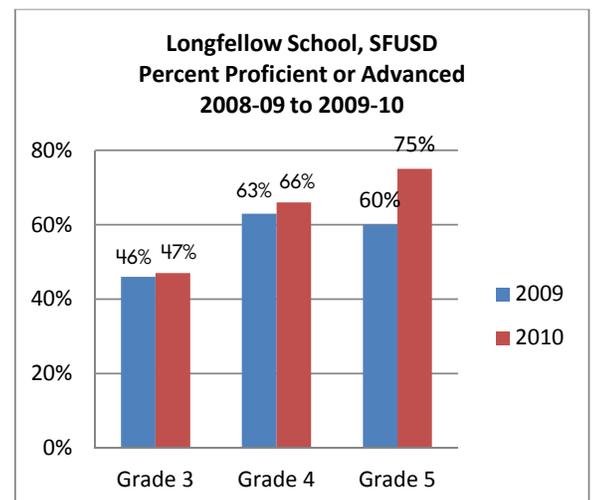
A. Longfellow Elementary School San Francisco Unified School District San Francisco, CA (2009–2011)

Longfellow Elementary School in the Excelsior/Outer Mission neighborhood of San Francisco serves more than 600 students in Grades K–5, with approximately 71% receiving free or reduced-price lunch and 60% designated as English Language Learners.

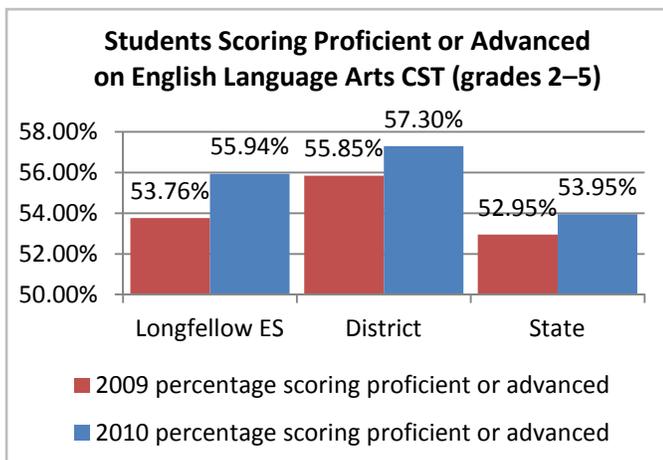
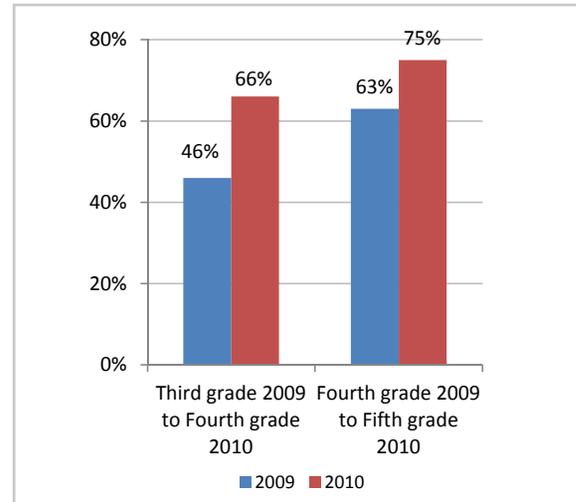
The ethnic composition of the student body is 32% Latino, 31% Filipino, 25% Asian, 4% African American, 2% Pacific Island, 2% white, and 4% multiracial or no response.

The school adopted *Voices Reading* as its core reading program in September 2009.

Data from the state’s English Language Arts “California Standards Test” for 2009 and 2010 shows that there was an increase in student achievement in grades 3–5 during the year that *Voices Reading* was implemented at Longfellow School, and these trends have continued into 2010–11.



The percentage of fourth grade students scoring at or above proficiency grew by 20 points in 2010 compared to their performance as third graders in 2009 (46% in third grade to 66% in fourth grade), whereas the percentage of fifth grade students scoring at or above proficiency grew by 12 points in 2010 compared to their performance as fourth graders in 2009 (63% in fourth grade to 75% in fifth grade).



Between 2009 and 2010, the percentage of Longfellow students achieving at the Proficient and Advanced levels in Grades 2–5 increased more than the district’s or state’s levels increased: Longfellow’s increase was approx. 2.2% versus the district (1.45%) and the state (1%).

The school demonstrated significant progress in moving students into higher performance levels from 2009 to 2010.

For example:

- Of the eleven students testing “far below basic” in 2009, 6 increased their tests scores to “basic” or above in the 2010 test.
- Of the 25 students testing “below basic” in 2009, 12 increased their tests scores to “basic” or above in the 2010 test.
- Of the 75 students scoring “basic” on the 2009 test, 30 scored “proficient” or “advanced” on the 2010 test.

The school significantly increased its *Academic Performance Index (API) Growth Score* from 802 to 825 from 2008 to 2011.

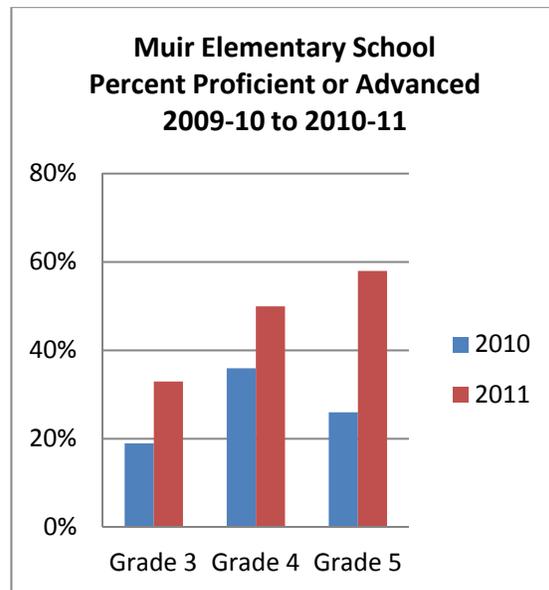
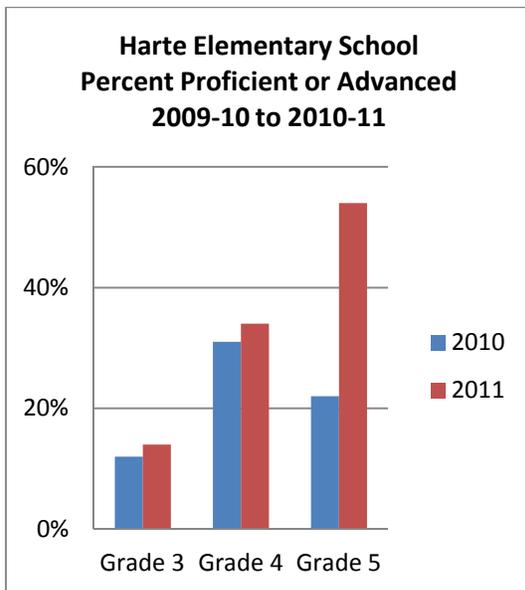
API Data	08-09	09-10	10-11
Growth Target *	A	A	A
Statewide Rank**	7	6	6
Similar Schools Rank**	8	7	6
API Growth Score	802	808	825

* “A” means the school scored at or above the statewide performance target of 800. **These rankings are based on the previous year’s data. The school has made progress closing the achievement gap as measured by the *API Growth Score*.

- African American students scored 51 points more in 2010–11 than 2009–10, from 671 to 722.
- Latino students (136) scored 50 points more than the previous year, from 718 to 768.
- Filipino students scored 839, and Asian students scored 916.
- Low income students (297) scored 787 in 2009–10 and increased 21 points to 808 in 2010–11.
- English Language Learners (245) scored 797 in 2009–10 increasing 19 points to 816 in 2010–11.

API Data	2009	2010	2011
Met All AYP Criteria	No	No	Yes

Based on the strength of these results, two additional schools have implemented *Voices Reading* in all grades and demonstrated positive results after the first year of implementing the program.



B. Robert Brent Elementary School
District of Columbia Public Schools
Washington D.C. (2009–2011)

Robert Brent Elementary School, in the shadow of the Capitol Building in Washington, D.C., educates 277 students in grades K–5, with approximately 28% receiving free or reduced-price lunch.

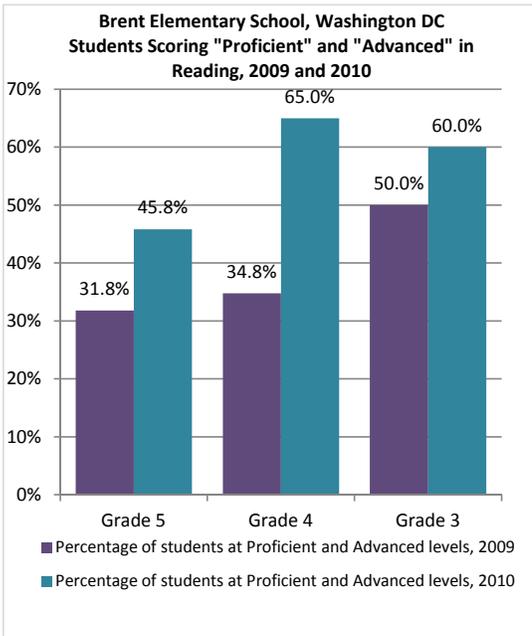
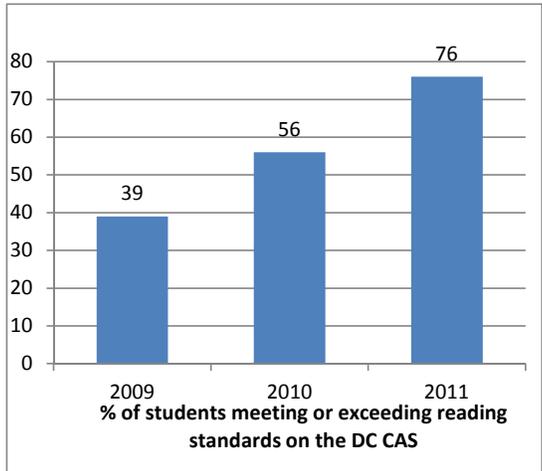
The ethnic composition of the student body is 55% African American, 36% white, 6% Hispanic, and 4% Asian/Pacific Islander.

The school adopted *Voices Reading* as its core reading program in September 2009.

The percentage of students meeting or exceeding reading standards on the *District of Columbia-Comprehensive Assessment System (DC-CAS)* test rose from 39% in 2009 to 56% in 2010 to 76% in 2011.

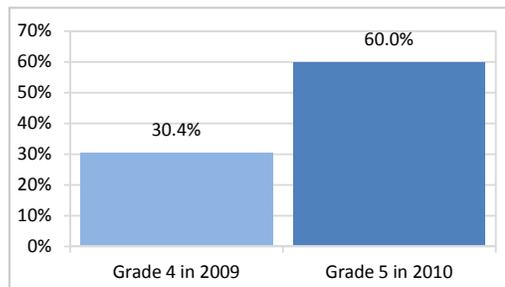
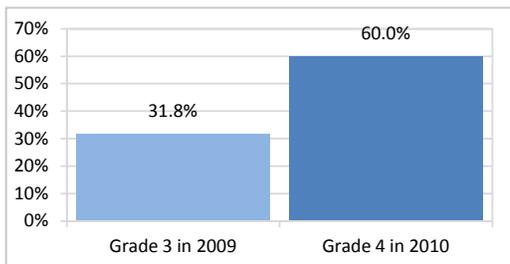
This growth reverses a three-year downward trend.

Below are the results for 2009–2010:

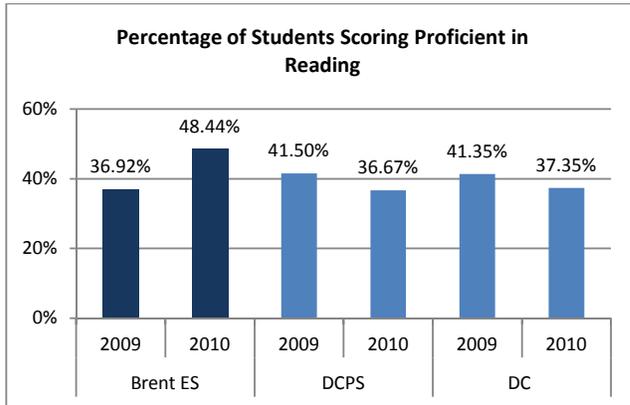


The percentage of fifth grade students scoring at or above proficiency grew by almost 30 points in 2010 compared to their performance as fourth graders in 2009 (30.4% in fourth grade to 60% in fifth grade), while the percentage of fourth grade students scoring at or above proficiency grew by 28.2 points in 2010 compared to their performance as third graders in 2009 (31.8% in third grade to 60% in fourth grade).

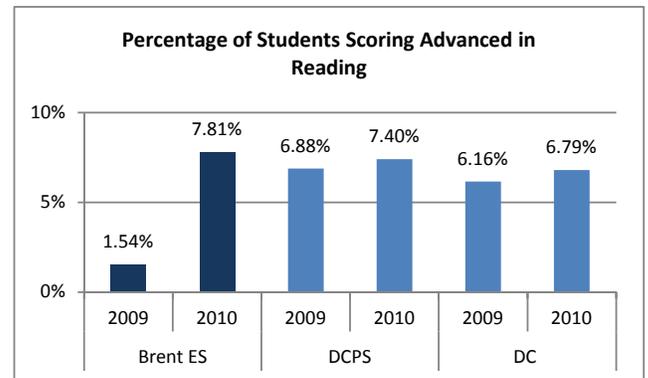
Change in Brent Elementary School Student Groups Percent of students scoring at or above proficiency



In addition, the school demonstrated greater progress than the district or state in moving students into the Proficient category from 2009 to 2010.



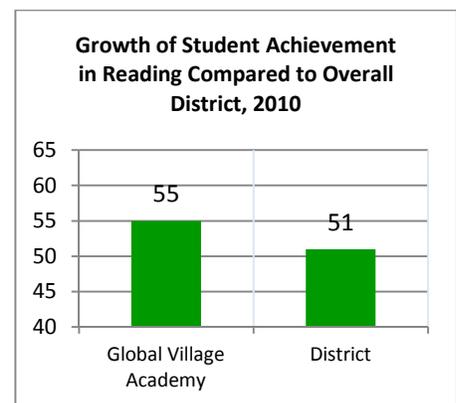
Brent also moved a greater percentage of students into the Advanced category and at a greater rate than the district and state from 2009 to 2010.



**C. Global Village Academy Charter School
Aurora Public Schools
Aurora, CO (2007–2010)**

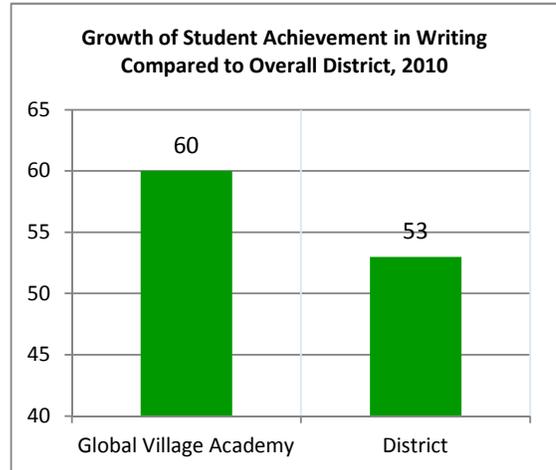
Global Village Academy (GVA) is a unique K–8 charter school in Aurora, Colorado, teaching Global Literacy and Language Immersion in Mandarin Chinese, Spanish, and French. Its students are diverse: 36.1% are Hispanic, 27% are white, 22.3% are African American, and 14.4% are Asian. More than 43% of these students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. GVA has used *Voices Reading* since first enrolling students in 2007.

Colorado schools measure success based on the Colorado Growth Model, which measures school achievement not by static scores but by the improvement a school is making as reflected in its students’ increasing test scores over time. A student’s growth percentile compares his or her increase in achievement against the percentage of students starting at the same place in the state. “Typical” growth equals the 50th percentile (the median of statewide achievement scores), and the aggregate of students’ increase in achievement is used to calculate the school’s overall achievement.

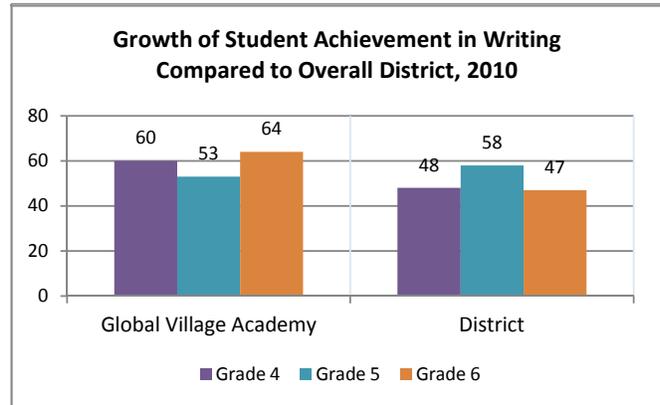
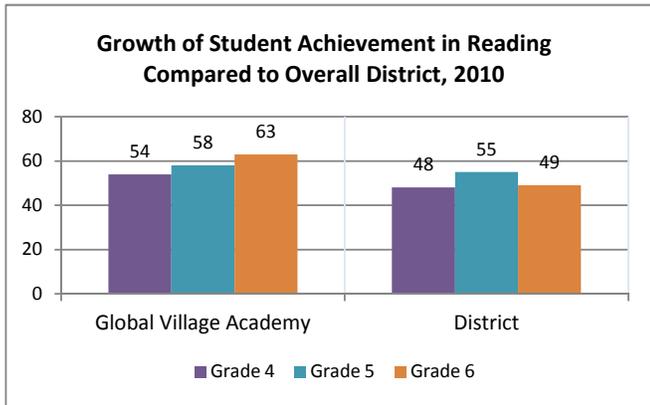


In its third year of using *Voices Reading*, Global Village Academy has seen better growth in reading achievement than has its district: at all grades, its achievement growth exceeds the district's and is higher than the state's median (which is always 50).

In Grade 6, for example, students at GVA saw greater gains in their test scores than did most of Colorado's other Grade 6 students. Similar results occurred in writing where students in each tested grade increased their achievement more than their counterparts in the district and the state:



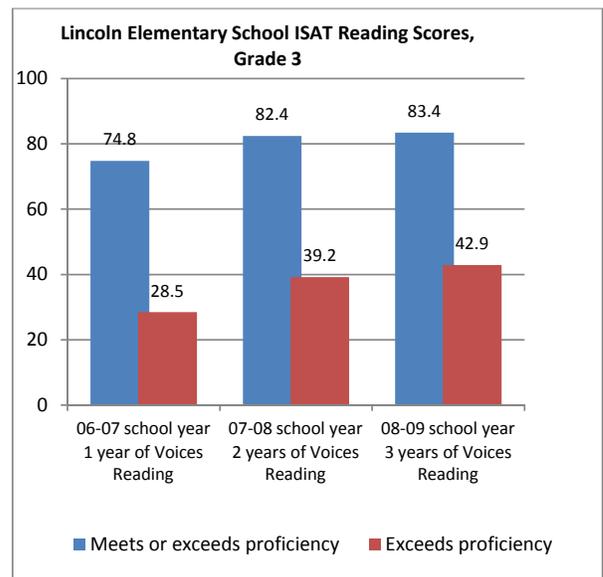
Global Village Academy overall showed greater growth in both reading and writing compared to its district and the state during its third year of *Voices Reading*.



D. Lincoln Elementary School Macomb Public Schools Macomb, IL (2006–2009)

Lincoln Elementary School educates more than 500 students in Grades K–3 in suburban Macomb, Illinois. In this School-wide Title I public school, 47% of students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. The student population is 82% white, 12% African American, 4% Asian, 2% Hispanic, and less than 1% American Indian and other nationalities.

The number of Lincoln students “exceeding proficiency” on the third grade *Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT)* reading scores increased by 48% between the 2006–2007 and 2008–2009 school years, rising 14.4 points from 28.5% to 42.9%. The number of students meeting or exceeding proficiency also increased from 74.8% in 2006–2007 to 83.4% in 2008–2009.

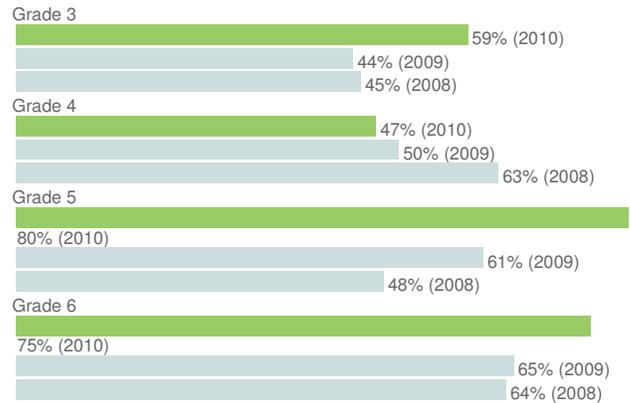


**E. John Fiske Elementary School
Chicago Public Schools (2009–2010)**

Fiske adopted *Voices Reading* for Grades K–6 in September 2009 and showed significant progress increasing reading scores as measured on the state’s *ISAT* reading achievement test in three out of four grades.

The school educates 304 children (K–8) who are 99% African American and 1% White or Hispanic and 98% of whom qualify for free/reduced lunch.

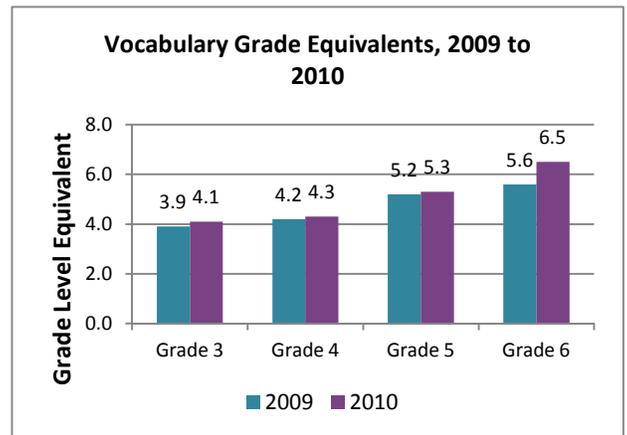
Scale: % meeting or exceeding standards Reading



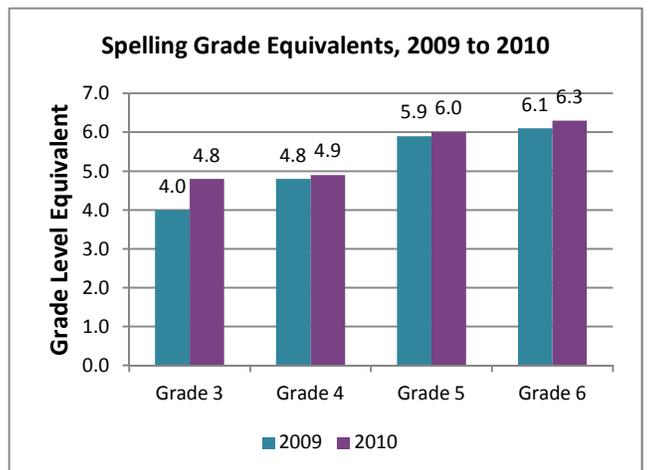
**F. Catholic School
Northeast U.S. (2009–2010)**

This Catholic school in an urban district in the northeast, which began using *Voices Reading* in January 2009, serves students in Grades preK–8. The ethnic composition of the student body is 86% Hispanic, 8% African American, 6% white, and less than 1% Asian. The school’s policy is to release test data without reference to the identity of the school.

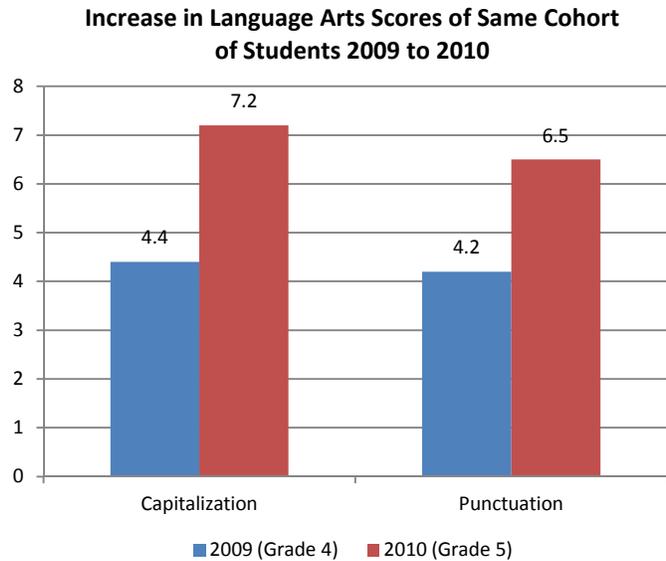
Instead of state assessments, students at this school take the *Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS)*, a norm-referenced assessment that calculates student’s scores based on grade level as compared to similar students across the country. Students performed well on the *ITBS* reading and writing assessments after one year of using *Voices Reading*. Compared to their results on the 2009 *ITBS*, this school’s students earned higher scores in 2010 on vocabulary.



Similarly, the students did better in 2010 on the spelling portion of the test than they did in 2009.



Looking across the scores, each class of students improved its scores on these portions. For example, in 2009 the Grade 4 class scored 4.2 in vocabulary and 4.8 in spelling; as fifth graders, these students scored 5.3 in vocabulary and 6.0 in spelling—an increase in both categories that is greater than the grade level average increase across years (which is always one, denoting one grade level). This cohort of students also saw other improvements that exceeded a typical grade level increase.



G. CASEL Assessment of *Voices Reading*. The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) rates *Voices Reading* a “select” program that meets the standards of excellence, selected from among hundreds of national social and emotional learning (SEL) programs. *Voices Reading* had the highest rating in 9 of the 12 CASEL review categories:

- Relationship Skills
- Responsible Decision Making
- Professional Development
- Student Assessment Measures
- Classroom Implementation Tools
- Schoolwide Coordination
- Family Partnerships
- Community Partnerships

H. *Voices Reading* Teacher and Student Survey 2010. In the spring of 2010, Zaner-Bloser administered a survey to nine schools across the country about their experience with *Voices Reading*. Some schools had been using the program for several years, and others for the first time.

- Cuffe Math Science and Technology Academy
Chicago Public Schools (IL)
Public School
- Longfellow Elementary School
San Francisco Unified School District (CA)
Public School
- Miami Country Day School
Miami (FL)
Private School
- Ossipee Central School
Governor Wentworth Reg. District (NH)
Public School (rural)

- Robert Brent Elementary School
District of Columbia Public Schools (DC)
Public School
- Sexton Elementary School
Chicago Public Schools (IL)
Public School
- St. Thomas Aquinas Elementary School
Dallas (TX)
Catholic School
- Washington Elementary School
Trenton Public Schools (NJ)
Public School
- Washington Middle School for Girls
District of Columbia (DC)
Private School

These public and private schools represent over 2,500 students from varying communities and demographic backgrounds.

Survey responses from teachers and administrators focus on *Voices Reading's* impact on students' literacy development, social skills, and classroom/school climate, noting positive impacts in all three areas. Below are sample responses from teachers and administrators to a series of questions about the impact of *Voices Reading* on students' literacy and social development:

- 73% report that their **students' speaking vocabulary increased** during the school year.
- 78.8% report that their students' **reading vocabulary increased** during the school year.
- 62.4% feel confident that they are **meeting district and/or state reading standards** through *Voices Reading*.
- 63.5% of respondents report that their **students appear more confident about their reading** ability this year.
- 90.9% of respondents report that their students **participate actively** in classroom discussions and activities.
- 68.8% report they have spent more time in class talking with their students about **how to resolve conflicts and solve problems**.
- 72.2% of respondents report they **focus on character education** throughout the school day.
- 91% of respondents find it **easy to connect with their students** and understand what they need emotionally.

VIII. Future Research and Evaluation

The instructional engine within *Voices Literature & Writing* for promoting literacy and social development has not changed since the program's initial development almost twenty years ago:

- The use of high-quality multicultural literature as a platform for social and academic learning

- The promotion of oral language and “voice”
- The deepening of learning through writing that is engaging and meaningful

However, the updated version of *Voices* will be subjected to the same type of rigorous independent evaluation as its predecessors.

Zaner-Bloser will contract with the University of Cincinnati Evaluation Services Center to implement a rigorous, quasi-experimental study of *Voices Literature & Writing*, comparing the effects of the program on “treatment” schools versus “control” schools that do not receive the program.

Given the consistency of the program design, with the additions of content to address the Common Core State Standards, Zaner-Bloser is confident that *Voices Literature & Writing* will show the same kind of significant impact on students’ social and academic growth.

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