

A Public School Initiative

The Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDOE) decided that it wanted to serve students with dyslexia and related disorders within the public school system. Seeing the teachers as their greatest resource, the department sought training that would empower selected teachers to serve those students. As of July 2012, 101 teachers have been trained or are in training through the SDOE program to provide therapy level training in multisensory structured language education.

Current research tells us that if students are given strong, structured core reading instruction, fewer will struggle with reading. If those who struggle receive short term, small group instruction in their area of difficulty, fewer will need intensive small group instruction. That intensive small group instruction is what we refer to as multisensory structured language education (MSLE). Following that logic, if teachers have the knowledge and skills to deliver the intensive MSLE intervention, they can also address the needs of the students who need basic instruction and those who need short term support.

In the summer of 2010, Shelton Outreach entered into a contract with the ALSDOE to train teachers to the therapy level in MSLE using the Shelton Academic Language Approach based on the curriculum from Texas Scottish Rite Hospital, *Take Flight: A Comprehensive Intervention for Students with Dyslexia*. (See Attachment A for a description of the program used.) This training was offered to teachers across the state. At this time there are three cohorts representing 39 different school districts in Alabama who have received training from Shelton Outreach/Training.

To assess the impact of these teachers on their school communities, the first ALSDOE cohort was asked to complete a survey at the end of the second year. They were asked how many students received the intensive intervention from them and how many students had received short-term support from them. We also asked if they had delivered in-service instruction to their colleagues and if they had implemented any programs on their campuses. Finally we asked how many students had received support based on those in-service trainings and programs.

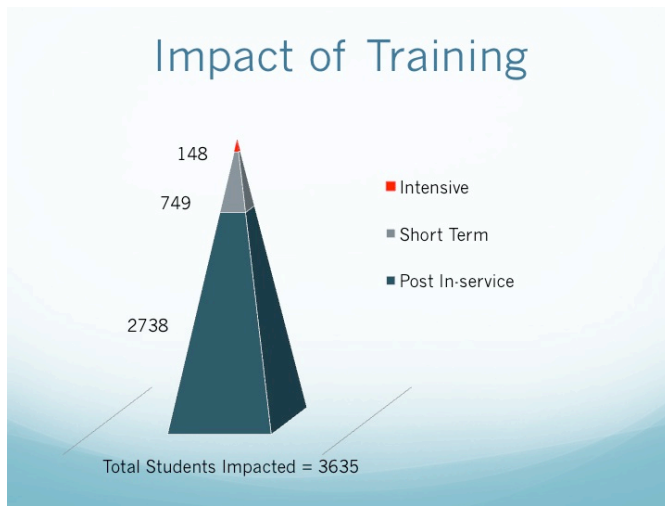
First, let us consider the impact of the training on the colleagues of those trained.

Teachers in the initial cohort..... 23
Teachers receiving in-service training from those teachers 612

The results on student impact were astonishing! The 23 therapist candidates from that first cohort reported the following:

Students receiving intensive intervention..... 148
Students receiving short term support..... 749
Students receiving support resulting from in-services provided..... 2738
Total students receiving support impacted by MSLE training 3635

(See figure 1.)

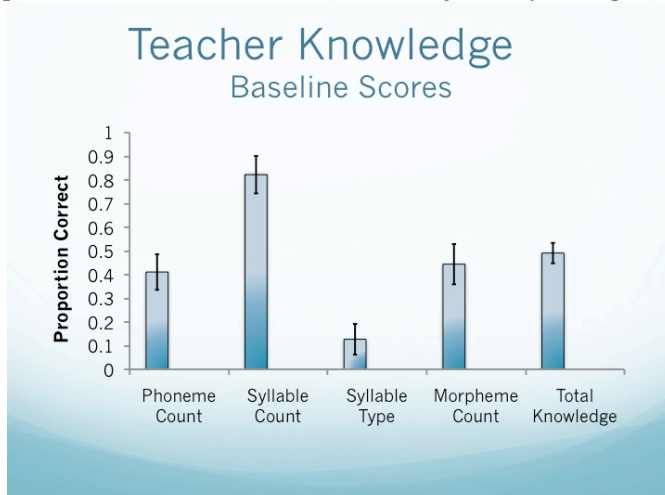


(Figure 1.)

These numbers represent the work of 23 teachers. That investment would appear to be a solid one! Within 24 months of beginning their training, on average, each of the teachers had impacted the professional knowledge of 26.6 fellow teachers and impacted the learning of 158 children. The number that we will never know is the number of students who never know failure because their teachers are more informed and more knowledgeable.

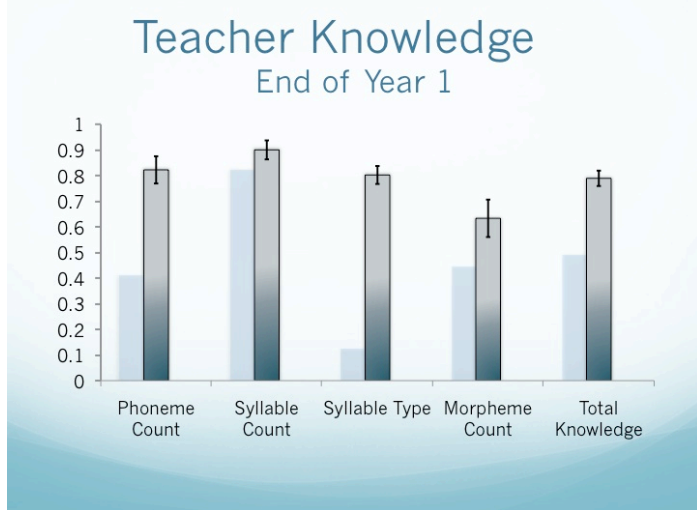
Knowing that those trained shared their new knowledge with colleagues as well as worked directly with students is important information, but knowing how the knowledge of the participants has increased is also very important. To assess the growth in teacher knowledge of the underlying structural components of the English language, the participants were given a knowledge survey at three points in their training: on the first day, at the end of the first year, and again at the end of the second year. The survey given was adapted for a survey developed by Louisa Moats. The survey measured four components of linguistic knowledge: phoneme counting, syllable counting, syllable type identification and morpheme counting. The results were analyzed by using proportion scores to standardize the scales.

Baseline scores indicated that the participants were able to count syllables reliably, but were not proficient in the other skills analyzed. (See figure 2.)



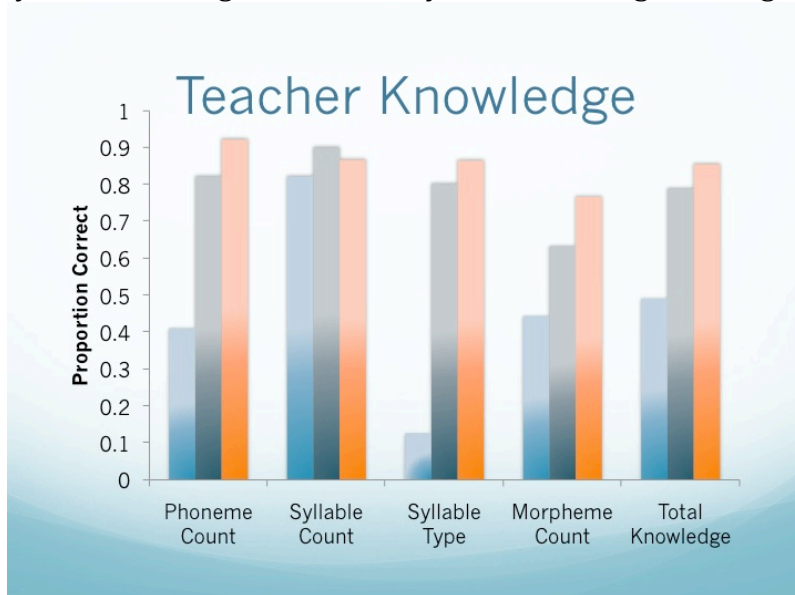
(Figure 2.)

At the end of the first year, significant growth was seen in phoneme count, syllable type identification and total knowledge. Growth was seen in morpheme counting, but it was not statistically significant. There was very little difference in the ability to count syllables, but that skill was strong prior to the training. (See figure 3.)



(Figure 3.)

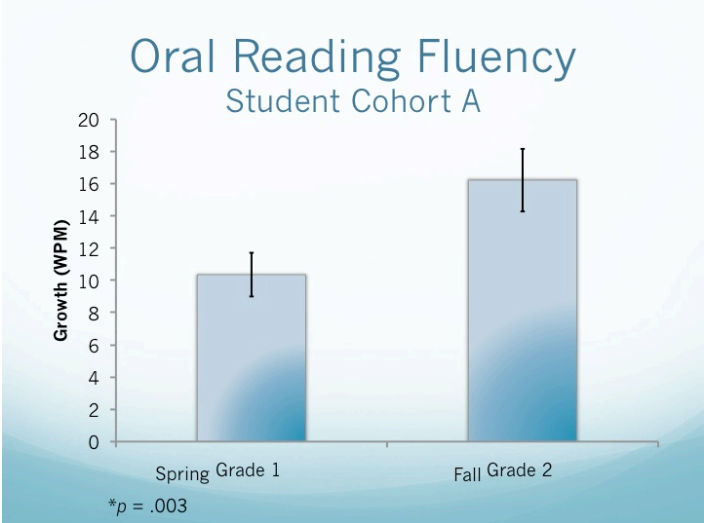
At the end of the second year, growth in teacher knowledge continued. With the exception of syllable counting, all areas analyzed showed significant growth. (See figure 4.)



(Figure 4.)

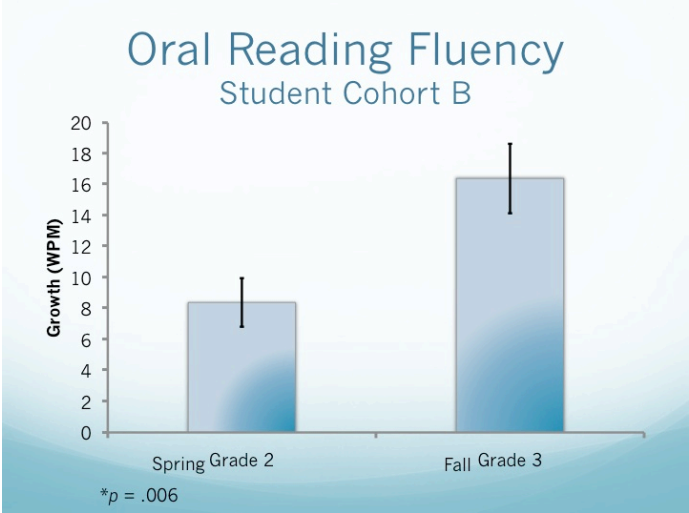
When teaching students to read, it is very important that the teacher understand the basic structure of the English language as reflected in phonology (phoneme counting as one component), orthography (syllable type knowledge as one component) and morphology (morpheme counting as one component). The ability to count syllables is the least significant skill in learning to decode words. The growth in the skills of phoneme counting, syllable type identification and morpheme counting is not only statistically significant, it is also significant in the ability of the teacher to meet the needs of the struggling reader.

The final question has to do with student improvement, our ultimate goal. To determine student growth, the oral fluency scores as measured by DIBELS of two cohorts of students were examined. Cohort A began their MSLE instruction in second grade. Their scores from the final semester of their first grade year were reviewed. These scores indicate the growth seen using general practices. The first grade scores were compared to scores after one semester of instruction by a teacher trained in MSLE. A significant difference was seen in the growth from the first grade year of standard practice and the first semester of the second grade year with instruction by a teacher trained in MSLE. A significant difference was seen in the growth from the first grade year of standard practice and the first semester of the second grade year with instruction by a teacher trained in MSLE. (See figure 5.)



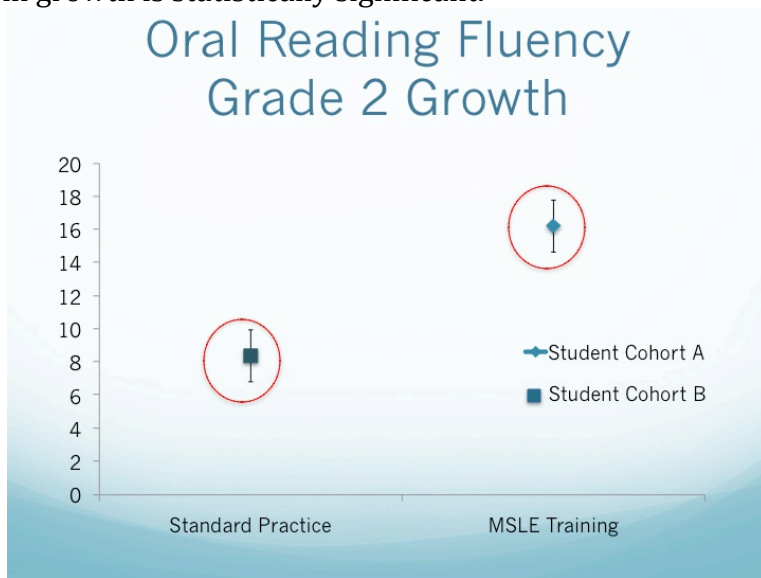
(Figure 5.)

Cohort B began their MSLE instruction in third grade. Their scores from the final semester of their second grade year were reviewed. These scores indicate the growth seen using general practices. The second grade scores were compared to scores after one semester of instruction by a teacher trained in MSLE. A significant difference was seen in the growth from the second grade year of standard practice and the first semester of the third grade year with instruction by a teacher trained in MSLE. (See figure 6.)



(Figure 6.)

Figure 7 shows a comparison of growth in oral reading fluency scores from second grade using standard practices and second grade groups taught by a teacher trained in MSLE. The difference in growth is statistically significant.



(Figure 7.)

In summary, intensive MSLE teacher training for a few teachers impacted the colleagues of those teachers as well as the students they served. Intensive MSLE teacher training significantly improved teacher knowledge of the structure of the English language. And finally, students instructed by these teachers made significantly greater gains in word reading when taught by a trained teacher using *Take Flight: A Comprehensive Intervention for Students with Dyslexia*. Even though more research needs to be done, it is clear that the investment of the Alabama State Department of Education in the training of teachers had made a significant impact.

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