

IMPLEMENTATION & RESULTS

Iron Springs
ELEMENTARY

Research Study

Reading Horizons

IN ELEMENTARY SETTINGS

Overview of the Reading Horizons Approach

Reading Horizons is a program designed to help beginning and struggling readers develop skills that make reading automatic, fluent, meaningful, and enjoyable. The Reading Horizons method (formerly known as Discover Intensive Phonics) delivers engaging, explicit, systematic phonics instruction through a multisensory approach based on Orton-Gillingham principles. Instruction is cumulative and organized in a sequence that enhances learning and simplifies teaching. Each sound of the English language is explicitly taught along with the letter(s) that represents the sound. Five Phonetic Skills are taught to help students recognize short and long vowel patterns in words and syllables. Two Decoding Skills are presented to show students how to decode multisyllabic words.

The multisensory approach used with the Reading Horizons method enhances learning and memory by engaging auditory, visual, and kinesthetic modalities simultaneously during instruction. A unique marking system is employed to draw student attention to the features and patterns of English as well as to give visual cues for pronunciation. Throughout the course of instruction, students are provided with motivating activities for practice and application of the skills learned.

Reading Horizons Discovery™ was created to teach the Reading Horizons method to students in kindergarten to third grade. *Reading Horizons Elevate™* was created for older students and is used as an intervention for elementary students in fourth grade to sixth grade.

Reading Horizons Discovery is designed to complement and supplement basal reading programs by employing explicit, systematic phonics instruction. *Reading Horizons Elevate* is used as a reading intervention for older students. Both the *Reading Horizons Discovery* and *Reading Horizons Elevate* programs correlate with the five pillars of effective reading instruction as identified by the National Reading Panel (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development [NICHD]) in 2000. (See the Reading Horizons Research Base white paper for more detailed information at www.ReadingHorizons.com/RESEARCH.)

Research Proving the Effectiveness of the Reading Horizons Approach

Reading Horizons recognizes the importance of conducting research to demonstrate the validity of its method and the effectiveness of its products. Reading Horizons research has been conducted over the last two decades in a variety of educational settings. The following studies provide a summary of results from just a few of these settings and represent diverse student populations. Ongoing research relating to Reading Horizons method and products continues, as true research is a continuous process.

IRON SPRINGS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

TYPE OF STUDY

Comparison group

TYPE OF SCHOOL

Public

POPULATION OF STUDENTS

General education

GRADE LEVEL

*Early elementary
(grades K – 3)*

LENGTH OF DATA COLLECTION

3 years

LOCATION

*Western United States,
Mountain Region*

POPULATION OF CITY

27,500 people

SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS

*39.2% of total enrollment
qualified for free or
reduced lunch*

NUMBER OF SCHOOLS

*1 school (Reading Horizons)
+ 1 comparison school (no RH)
+ district and statewide schools*

NUMBER OF STUDENTS

≥ 365 students

READING HORIZONS MATERIALS

*Direct instruction
and interactive software*

ASSESSMENT TOOLS

*State core assessment, IOWA Test
of Basic Skills, teacher survey,
student survey, interviews*

Summary of Findings

Students who received Reading Horizons instruction scored higher as a group on both criterion-referenced tests and norm-referenced tests than did students at a comparison school who did not receive Reading Horizons instruction. Additionally, teacher and student surveys showed positive attitudes about Reading Horizons use.

Background

The state office of education tasked an independent research firm to investigate the impact of Reading Horizons implementation on the reading outcomes of elementary students.

Resources

Reading Horizons direct instruction materials, Reading Horizons interactive software, teachers trained in the Reading Horizons method, and a school-wide educator mentor with specialization in reading instruction.

Implementation

Kindergarten through third grade teachers participated in training in the Reading Horizons program. Student achievement outcome data were gathered via multiple assessments (criterion-referenced and norm-referenced) and were compared with data from a control school similar in socioeconomic status and in suburban extent. Teachers and students also participated in surveys and interviews.



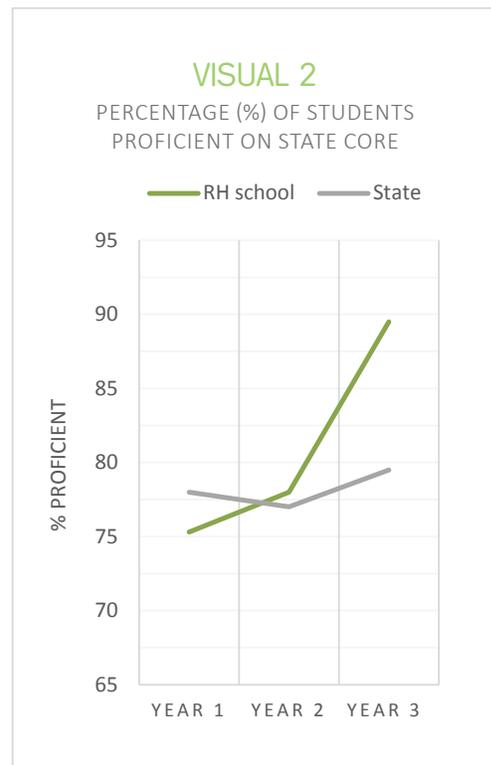
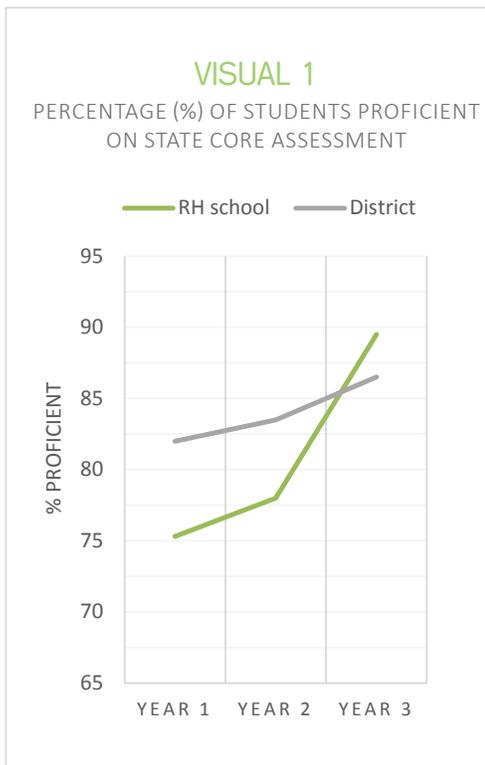
I really feel like Reading Horizons is the best phonics program I've ever taught. And I've taught for over 18 years with several other phonics programs."

– Second grade teacher

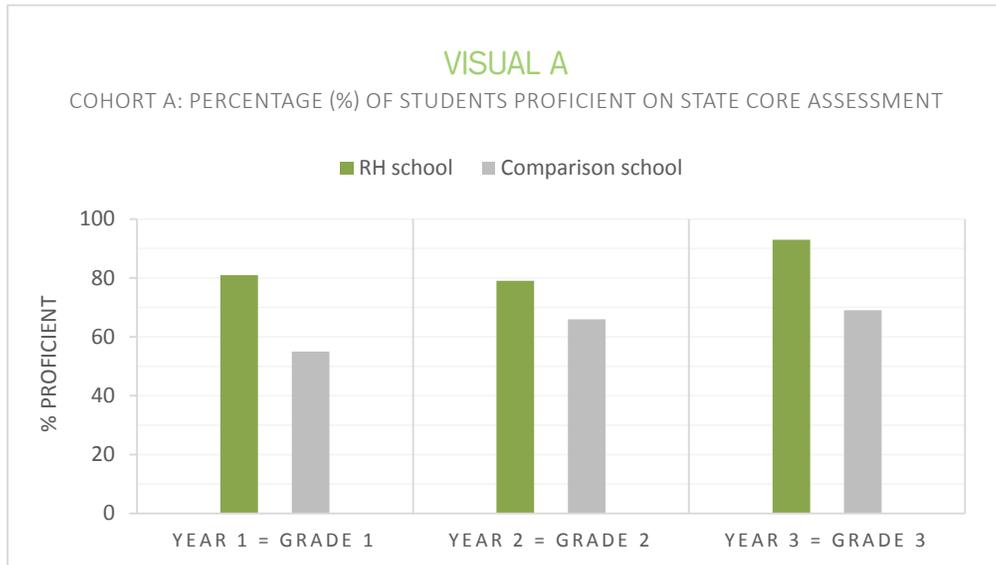
State Core Assessment Data

Outcomes reported as the percentage of students proficient on the state core assessment

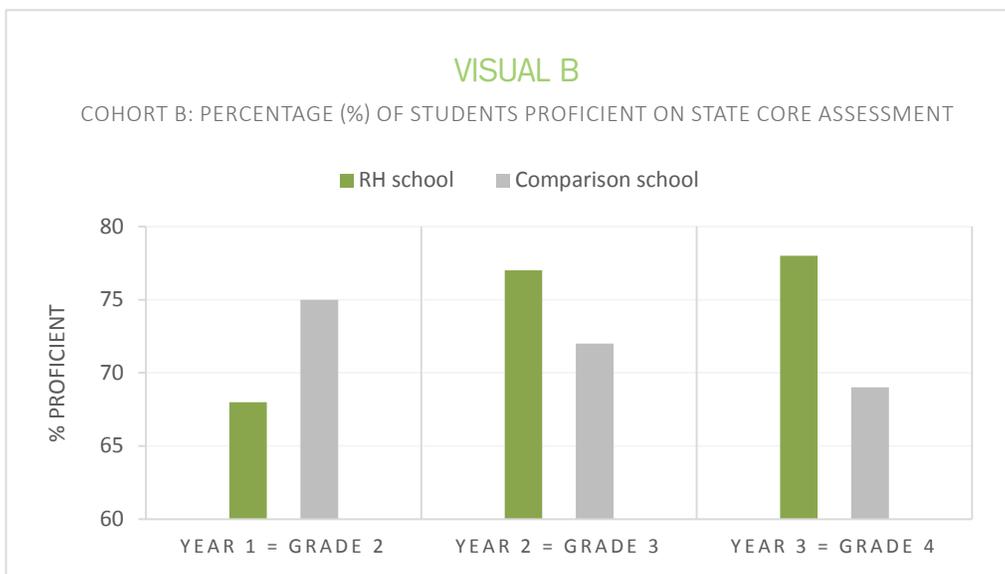
In the initial year of data collection, 75% of students (grades 2-3) at Iron Springs had proficient scores on the state core assessment, a lower proportion compared to students at the district or the state. Therefore, students at Iron Springs were a lower performing group compared to students grouped by district or state. This had changed by the third year of Reading Horizons instruction. At least 90% of students at Iron Springs were proficient on the state core assessment, surpassing the percent proficient at both the district and the state (Visual 1 and Visual 2).



Cohort A began Reading Horizons instruction in first grade. For all years of the study, more students in this cohort demonstrated proficient scores than did students in the same grade cohort at the comparison school (Visual A).

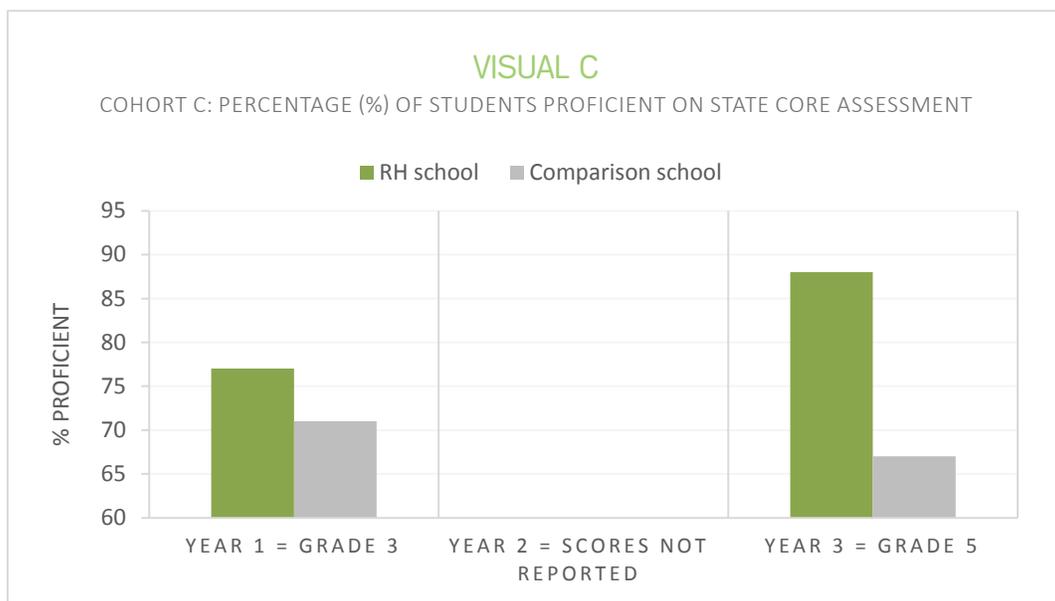


Cohort B began Reading Horizons instruction in second grade. In year one of data collection, students at the comparison school demonstrated higher proficiency on the state core assessment than did students at Iron Springs. However, in the second and third year of data collection, a greater percentage of students at Iron Springs were proficient on the state core assessment (Visual B). Across the three years of the study, the data show a steady increase in percent proficient for students who received Reading Horizons instruction and a steady decline for students who did not.



Cohort C received Reading Horizons instruction in third grade only. Scores in fifth grade were collected to understand the long-term impact of skills gained. At Iron Springs, the percentage of students proficient on the state core assessment increased from third grade to fifth grade, whereas it decreased at the comparison school. The gap of improved performance of students who received Reading Horizons instruction grew from 6% to 21% (Visual C).

Scores for this cohort of students at Iron Springs (in third grade during year one of data collection and fifth grade during year three), the comparison school, the Iron Springs district, and the state were analyzed. A pattern of decline was observed in the comparison school, district, and state data; fewer students demonstrated proficient skills in reading concepts in fifth grade compared to themselves two years prior in third grade. The decline was slight in the district and state data (-1%). However, students at Iron Springs did not match this pattern. The cohort of students who received Reading Horizons instruction demonstrated a trend of improvement during the school years following direct instruction in the method.

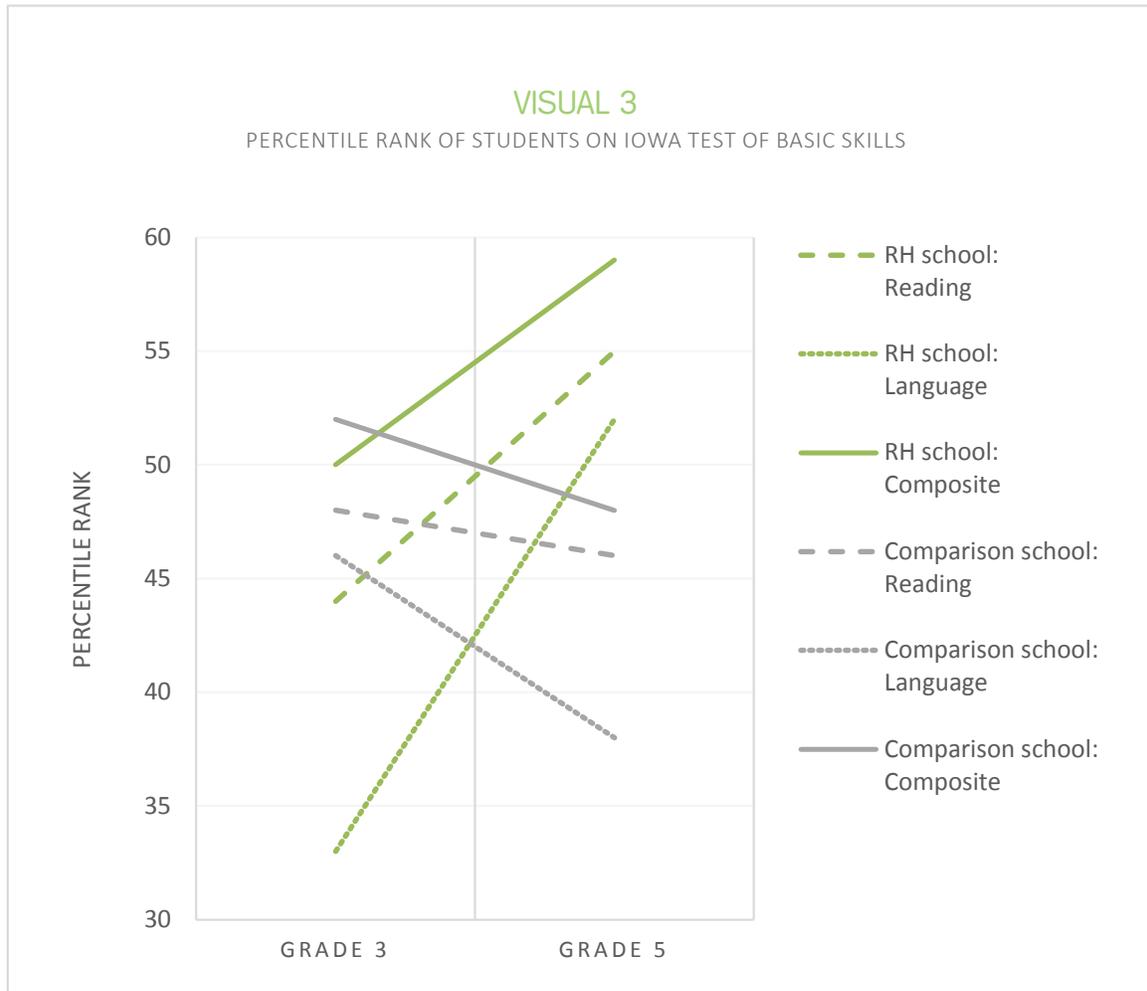


IOWA Test of Basic Skills Data

Outcomes reported as percentile rank on IOWA Test of Basic Skills

IOWA test scores were collected for students in Cohort C. There was skill retention and a positive trajectory on the norm-referenced test for students who received Reading Horizons instruction (Visual 3). Three portions of the IOWA test were reported in the study. The percentile rank scores of students who received Reading Horizons instruction improved on all three portions, whereas the scores of students at the comparison school declined. Although in third grade the scores of students who received Reading Horizons instruction were below the scores of students at the comparison school, two years later, the scores of Iron Springs students had surpassed those of students at the comparison school.

Fifth graders' scores ranked below the 50th percentile (below average) on all three sections of the IOWA test at the comparison school. Fifth grade students who received Reading Horizons instruction in third grade had above average scores (scores which ranked above the 50th percentile) in all sections of the IOWA test.



Teacher Survey and Interviews

Overall, teachers reported a very positive professional development experience for all three years of the study.

Overall, teachers reported a very positive experience with key areas of the program elements.

Student Survey

Attitudes about reading remained consistent across cohorts. Groups of students with significantly more positive reading attitudes than the national norm retained that attitude as they moved through their elementary grades.

Overall, attitudes about reading improved over the duration of the study.



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