

Keys to Literacy



Keys to Literacy Professional Development: *Real Results and Learning that Lasts*

The following provides an overview of the results of our teacher training. Our hope is that this provides the necessary information to evaluate our services and determine whether our content literacy professional development meets your requirements and standards for success.

As a provider of literacy-related professional development, we have two simple objectives:

- ★ improve student performance
- ★ improve instructional practice

To meet these objectives, we are guided by a strong set of beliefs about quality professional development, and we have built our practice on these beliefs. We believe that quality professional development:

- Uses research-based instructional practices that are linked to student performance;
- Promotes deep understanding of a topic;
- Is supported until new skills become a seamless part of instruction;
- Creates sustainable capacity;
- Is measured and evaluated based on teacher use and student performance;
- Embeds instructional practices in existing content materials; and
- Is planned and delivered to engage all teachers.

We have worked with hundreds of districts and thousands of teachers to implement research-based instruction for comprehension and vocabulary. As literacy and teacher training specialists, we have developed the content and processes to ensure that all teachers we train are equipped with the research-based literacy strategies that result in improved student performance, increased teacher knowledge and changes to instructional practice.

Too often, professional development is based on an ineffective one-day workshop model that neither increases teacher knowledge nor changes instructional practice. ***Our professional development approach is different:*** Our training is ***sustained, intense, collaborative, and job-embedded.*** As you'll see from our results, it delivers levels of use that go far beyond the initial training.

TEACHER USE AND PRACTICE

Our content literacy professional development becomes practice because it is tied to instructional needs, is supported by leadership, produces tangible results, and is embraced by teachers.

During the 2009-10 school year, Keys To Literacy was selected by 22 Massachusetts school districts as a partner in a statewide literacy professional development project. Overall, 1,069 teachers received

content literacy training in our *Key Comprehension Routine* or *Key Vocabulary Routine*. When surveyed 6 months after the completion of training, teachers reported the following:

- **98% increased their knowledge of content literacy strategies**
- **92% learned instructional strategies from the training that they will use in their teaching**
- **83% saw an increase in their use of comprehension strategies**

In 2009, we surveyed teachers who had used *The Key Comprehension Routine* for at least 6 months. As the following results indicate, there is a very strong carryover from training to classroom practice:

- **99% use at least two strategy activities**
- **90% use at least three strategy activities**
- **65% use all four strategy activities**

NOTE: The comprehension “strategy activities” noted above are the following: Two-Column Notes, Top-down Topic Webs, Summarizing and Question Generation.

In addition to the teacher surveys, we engaged a firm to interview administrators who were responsible for bringing Keys to Literacy professional development into their school or district. Their comments about teacher use indicate the strong connection between Keys to Literacy training and results:

*“It gave teachers the tools to **make content more meaningful** for their students...there were many kids in those classrooms who were struggling and are now making sense of the content.”*

Gail Briere, Assistant Superintendent, Nauset Public Schools (MA)

*“By providing teachers a **simple set of strategies** that are well-organized, we were able to have more effective instruction and tangible results.”*

Shelly Fachini, Principal, North Adams Public Schools (MA)

*“**Kids are thriving** from the structure, teachers are thinking at a **higher level.**”*

Kim McCaughey, Director of Reading, Pawtucket School Department (RI)

STUDENT RESULTS

Early University Research Results Demonstrate Success with Students

The Key Comprehension Routine is based on proven instructional methods; recently, the efficacy of ***The Key Comprehension Routine*** was studied in two urban schools in neighboring states located in the northeast by university researchers from The University of Massachusetts, Amherst and Lehigh University.

The quasi-experimental group design studies were conducted simultaneously in multiple inclusive classrooms serving students in grades 4-6. **The findings show that overall, students in the experimental classrooms significantly outperformed students in the comparison classrooms in reading subtests and in writing performance.** Specifically, significant differences were found between the 5th grade experimental and comparison classrooms in the Total Comprehension Raw Score subtest of the TORC (a standardized, norm-referenced assessment of reading comprehension), and significant

differences were found in researcher-designed assessments of written summary scores within 5th and 6th grade classes. This information has been presented nationally and data analyses are ongoing.

Teachers Strongly Believe Students Improve

In the spring of 2009, we polled teachers from 12 schools that had been trained in *The Key Comprehension Routine* to hear their thoughts on how the strategies were working with students. As you can see, teachers overwhelmingly believe that our *Key Comprehension Routine* is helping students learn. Of the teachers surveyed,

- **92%** agree/strongly agree that *The Key Comprehension Routine* **helps students better comprehend what they are reading.**
- **89%** agree/strongly agree that *The Key Comprehension Routine* **enhances students' ability to learn subject-area content.**
- **94%** agree/strongly agree that *The Key Comprehension Routine* is **easy for students to use.**
- **85%** agree/strongly agree that *The Key Comprehension Routine* **helps students study for tests.**
- **85%** agree/strongly agree that *The Key Comprehension Routine* **enhances their ability to teach.**

Educator comments also indicate that our content literacy strategies positively impact student learning:

*"We showed an **increase in MCAS ELA scores** in both general education and special education students."*

Shelly Fachini, Principal, North Adams Public Schools (MA)

*"My teachers quickly saw the benefits in the classroom, they were extremely excited because **they were seeing success** with the kids."*

Kim McCaughey, Director of Reading, Pawtucket School Department (RI)

*"We believe it has helped us increase, particularly in the middle grades, our aggregate student performance on MCAS ELA and our teachers and administrators are attributing this as one of the pieces **helping to close the achievement gap.**"*

Mary Borque, Assistant Superintendent, Chelsea Public Schools (MA)

State Assessment Scores Increase

In addition to this survey of teachers, we also reviewed state ELA assessment results for districts and schools using our programs from 2007-2009. This group included the following: Timberlane Regional School District (NH); ConVal School District (NH); Nauset Public Schools (MA); and Chelsea Public Schools (MA). The analysis included grades 6, 7, and 8 in 18 schools. While we are aware that other activities could contribute to assessment results, all the schools in the analysis had one program in common: *The Key Comprehension Routine*. The data indicates that there were significant gains in the number of students who scored *proficient* from 2007-2009.

Grade 6

- 55% scored *proficient* or *very proficient* in 2007
- 63% scored *proficient* or *very proficient* in 2009

→ **16% improvement** from 2007 to 2009

Grade 7

- 59% scored *proficient* or *very proficient* in 2007
 - 72% scored *proficient* or *very proficient* in 2009
- **21% improvement** from 2007 to 2009

Grade 8

- 65% scored *proficient* or *very proficient* in 2007
 - 72% scored *proficient* or *very proficient* in 2009
- **10% improvement** from 2007 to 2009

During the 2009-2010 school year, a group of 19 sixth and seventh grade students at the Higgins Middle School in Peabody, MA participated in afterschool instruction in an effort to improve their overall MCAS (Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System) scores. All of the selected students had MCAS scores the previous year that were in the *needs improvement* or *warning* ranges. Students participated in ten 45-minute instructional sessions after school and were taught the Keys to Literacy open response test taking routine, *The ANSWER Key to Open Response*, which provides instruction in the following strategies:

- Understand what a question is asking
- Identify main ideas while reading
- Differentiate between relevant and irrelevant details while reading
- Pull main ideas and details that must be included in the open response into formatted notes
- Organize information from the notes into a structured response
- Apply good sentence and paragraph writing skills

After multiple exposures to the *ANSWER* strategies, 18 of the students improved their MCAS scores from an average score of 221 to 231, an increase of 5%. A subset of IEP students demonstrated an average score increase of 4%, and non-IEP students had an average score increase of 6%.

Karen McGovern, Housemaster at Higgins Middle School, attributes the rise in scores to the *ANSWER* Key instructional strategies: “We believe that the *ANSWER* Key strategies were the variable that improved MCAS scores among these students.”

Strong Student Use of Strategies

In the winter of 2011, Lowell Public Schools (Lowell, MA) conducted a Frequency of Use Survey with students who had been taught the Keys to Literacy comprehension strategies. 2,181 students in grades 6-9 participated in the survey, which asked frequency of use questions related to the seven comprehension strategies that were integrated into their content instruction.

The results of the survey were very positive: **91%** of students surveyed said they used at least one of the strategies. Among those students who said they used the strategies, they indicated the following specific use.

STRATEGY	% of students surveyed who use this specific strategy	<i>Of students using this strategy, % who use it more than 3 times per month</i>
I put words into categories to learn vocabulary.	68%	48%
I identify main ideas to help me better understand what I read.	89%	67%
I use top-down topic webs to organize my thinking.	77%	52%
I create two-column notes to better understand main ideas and details.	91%	78%
I create questions before or during reading to help me better understand what I am reading.	72%	51%
I create questions at different levels to develop my thinking skills.	65%	48%
I use summarizing to better understand what I read and to improve my writing.	86%	63%

RESEARCH-BASED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Because our professional development is based on the most current research about teaching literacy and learning, the kind of results noted above are to be expected. We take painstaking care to stay informed about the current research on effective literacy instruction and – more importantly – to translate that knowledge into practical use for teachers. We continually revise and modify our training content to incorporate current research. This reflects our commitment not only to providing the highest quality teacher training available, but also our deep belief in evidence-based professional development. A review of the research supporting our programs is available on our website, www.keystoliteracy.com.