



Measuring the Benefits of Junior Great Books—2006 to 2013

Case Studies in Washington, D.C., New York, and Chicago

Junior Great Books® projects in Washington, D.C., Bronx, New York, and Chicago have significantly improved students' reading comprehension and writing. A strong commitment to using Junior Great Books paid major dividends in all three settings.

In Washington, D.C., as part of the DC Public Schools/Great Books Foundation Model Schools Project, students participating in Junior Great Books showed significantly greater improvement in writing skills and reading comprehension than a control group that did not use the program. Student writing samples were measured with the Stanford Writing Assessment Program Analytic Scoring Rubric and the SAT 9 test; reading comprehension was assessed using SAT 9 scores.

At CS 134 in the Bronx, a Great Books Comprehensive School Reform project helped substantially increase the percentage of students in grades 3, 4, and 5 who met or exceeded standards on the New York State English Language Arts (ELA) test. The percentage of students who did not meet standards dropped significantly.

In Chicago, four low-performing schools received Junior Great Books student and teacher materials through the generous support of the Chicago Mercantile Exchange (CME) Group Foundation. These schools implemented Junior Great Books in grades 3, 4, and 5. The project's goals were to build, strengthen, and enhance the teaching skills and strategies of the teachers participating in the project; to improve the reading comprehension, critical thinking, and writing skills of the students; and to enable students to score higher in reading comprehension on the Illinois State Achievement Test (ISAT).

Great Books professional learning programs were key to the success of all three projects. Teachers completed the two-day core course in Shared Inquiry™ to learn the basics of the Shared Inquiry method. Then, Great Books professional learning staff provided on-site consultation days, demonstrating, observing, coaching, and mentoring teachers who were implementing Junior Great Books.

Study Details: Washington, D.C.

Planning for the DC Public Schools/Great Books Foundation Model Schools Project began in 2001. The project's purpose was to implement and track Junior Great Books programs for grades 3, 4, and 5 in a controlled environment. A consortium of nine schools participated. The five schools that implemented Junior Great Books were designated as the research groups and the four participating schools that did not use Junior Great Books were designated as the control groups.

For students, reading comprehension, with an emphasis on critical thinking, and writing were the skills targeted for measurement. For teachers, the project also aimed to assess the value of multiyear professional learning programs.

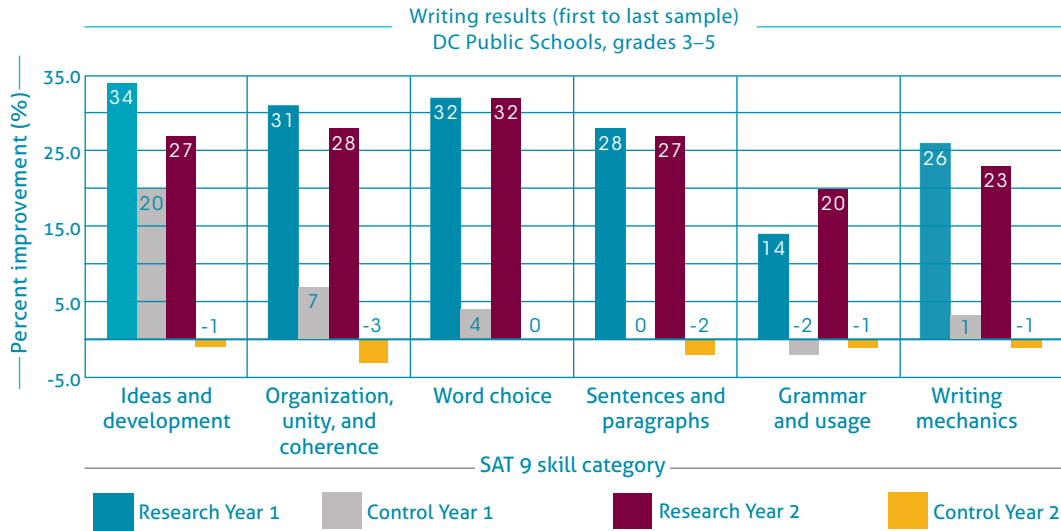
Project data indicate that the research groups showed greater improvement than the control groups in the six SAT 9 writing skill categories:

- Ideas and development
- Organization, unity, and coherence
- Word choice
- Sentences and paragraphs
- Grammar and usage
- Writing mechanics

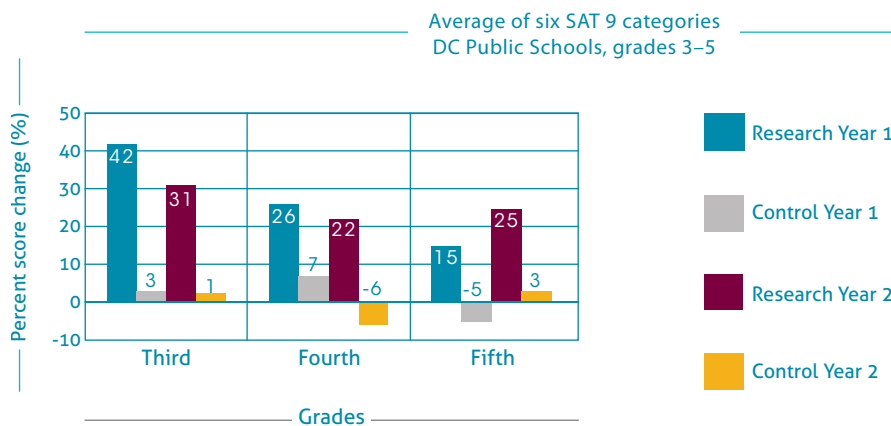
The SAT 9 normal curve equivalent compares the research and control groups in both reading and math. The study shows that not only did reading scores improve at a higher rate in the

research groups, but math scores did as well. These results suggest that improving students' language arts skills may also help improve math and other tested skills.

Washington, D.C. Study Results



The graph above shows the differences in improvement between the research and control groups over a two-year period. Each year, three writing samples from the research and control groups were rated using the SAT 9 rubric.



When scores in the six SAT 9 categories are averaged, it is clear that student performance improved more dramatically in earlier grade levels. Improvement was still substantial in fifth grade, but the research suggests that implementing a Junior Great Books program beginning in third or fourth grade could bring greater benefits.

Study Details: Bronx, New York

The Comprehensive School Reform project began at George F. Bristow Elementary School (CS 134) in fall 2002. The major objectives of the project were to:

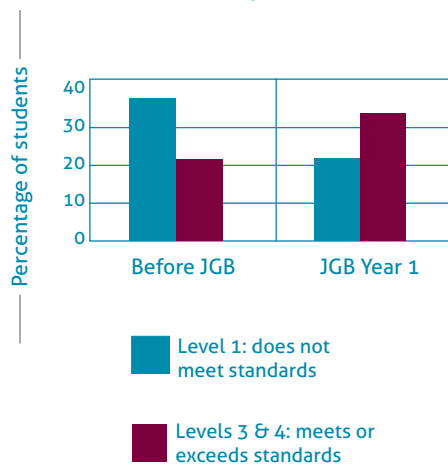
- Minimize the number of students scoring at level 1 (does not meet standards) on the New York State ELA test
- Maximize the number of students scoring at levels 3 and 4 (meets or exceeds learning standards, respectively)
- Quantify the magnitude of any progress being made

These objectives were achieved in the very first year of the Junior Great Books implementation, and improvement continued through the second year. As in the DC Public Schools study, math scores at CS 134 improved significantly, again suggesting the positive impact of improved language arts skills.

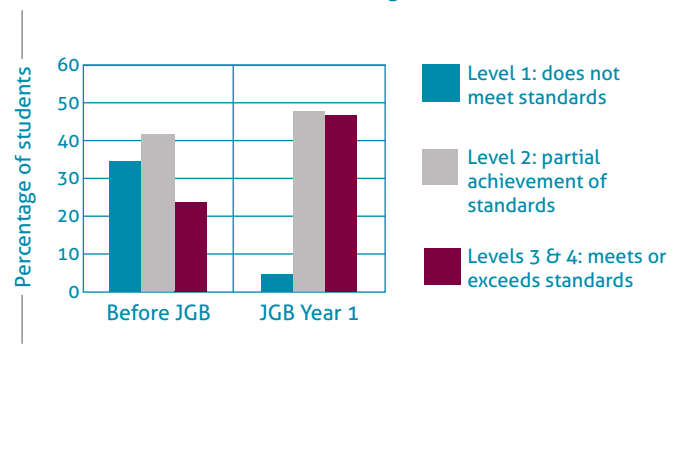
Some data from the project suggest that significant increases in test scores can be made very quickly. Compared to the prior year, twice as many fourth-grade students at CS 134 reached levels 3 and 4 on the ELA test in the first year of the Junior Great Books implementation, and only one-eighth as many students scored at level 1.

Bronx, New York Study Results

New York State ELA test results
Bronx CS 134, grades 3–5



New York State ELA test results
Bronx CS 134, grade 4



Implement a Junior Great Books Program in Your School or District!

The Great Books Foundation congratulates DC Public Schools, CS 134 in the Bronx, and the four participating Chicago public schools for their achievements. We are confident that we can help you replicate these results in your school or district.

For more about the effectiveness of Great Books K–12 programs, visit www.greatbooks.org/research. Or contact the sales representative for your state at 800-222-5870.

Study Details: Chicago, IL

The four participating Chicago public schools began implementing Junior Great Books in school year 2006–2007. An independent education statistician collected and analyzed data and compared ISAT reading comprehension scores from 2006, when the project began, to 2010, when it ended. The chart below shows the increase in students meeting or exceeding the state reading standards.

In addition, each teacher taking part in the project submitted student writing samples to the Foundation three times per year. A panel of teachers from outside the Chicago Public Schools system scored the samples, using the Junior Great Books Writing Rubric. The panel then offered participating teachers suggestions for improving students' writing and provided copies of the best writing samples.

As a result of this process, the writing skills of participating students improved greatly. Students went from writing simple sentences to completing two to three paragraphs of organized, insightful prose reflecting a grasp of the meaning of the selections they read.

The data below show that 86 percent of project students increased their writing performance from 2006 to 2010.

Prescott Elementary in 2013

A 2013 follow up at Prescott Elementary, one of the schools participating in the project, revealed that Junior Great Books had made a powerful impact. Building on the project's success, Prescott extended Junior Great Books to include all grades and all students, K–8. Today Junior Great Books is an essential component of the school's curriculum, and Prescott is no longer at risk of failing. In a follow-up visit in 2013, two eighth graders, each with six years' experience reading and discussing great literature, spoke in personal terms of the program's wide-ranging benefits:

"I just really understand books. My reading level as of now is 11th grade, and I do think JGB helped a lot with that." —Brandon

"Not only does [JGB] help kids become better readers and have a better understanding of the book, but it also helps improve their confidence by not being afraid to speak up and share their opinions." —Adamarys

CME Project: A Comparison of 2006 and 2010 ISAT Performance

Percentage of Students Meeting or Exceeding Proficiency in Reading

School	3rd grade			4th grade			5th grade		
	2006	2010	Change	2006	2010	Change	2006	2010	Change
A	32%	54%	69%	33%	50%	52%	32%	45%	41%
B	22%	57%	159%	17%	31%	82%	21%	27%	29%
C	23%	46%	100%	20%	31%	55%	22%	45%	105%
D	35%	51%	46%	43%	37%	-14%	37%	18%	-51%

The results show that:

- All schools improved third grade scores by 46 percent or more since 2006
- Three of the four schools improved fourth grade scores by 52 percent or more since 2006
- Three of the four schools improved fifth grade scores by 29 percent or more since 2006

CME Project: A Comparison of 2006 and 2010 Writing Scores

School	Number of Students with Amount of Increase						Scores Increased	Scores Remained Same	Scores Decreased
	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6/more			
A	4	3	1	1	2	1	11	4	0
B	2	5	5	0	4	1	17	0	0
C	4	4	0	0	1	0	7	2	0
D	3	3	0	4	1	1	8	0	1
Total	13	15	6	5	8	3	43	6	1
							86%	12%	2%