



Mobile intervention app
engages students; reading
skills improve.

York City
School District
SUCCESS STORY »

School Profile

City/State:

York, PA

School Type:

Public

District Enrollment:

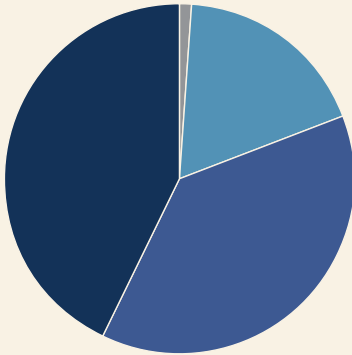
7,902 students

Grades:

K–12

Ethnicity:

- 43% Hispanic
- 38% African American
- 18% Caucasian
- 1% Asian



» York City School District Overview

York City School District, located in a small, urban community in south central Pennsylvania, faces many challenges. In its diverse student body, 26 percent of the students have limited English proficiency and 80 percent qualify for free and reduced lunch. The district entered Corrective Action II status in 2012 after not making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for five years and has been operating under a state-run Financial Recovery Plan since May 2013. To address these challenges, the district is committed to providing an engaging and challenging learning environment for all its students, including those who need academic or behavioral intervention. Using School Improvement Grant (SIG) and Title III funds, the district has implemented an intervention solution, and the data suggests that it is having a positive impact on reading growth.

» Challenge

William Penn High School failed to make AYP in 2012 based on its Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) scores. Assistant Principal Sue Long Moyer thought that a good literacy intervention program would help increase achievement. She explained, “We were looking for something because kids were historically coming to us reading below grade level. We were finding that because kids were not on grade level, they were struggling with the core content classes because it was just too difficult for them to read.”

English teacher Troy Sowers wanted to make sure the new program had a strong vocabulary-building component. “As an urban school, we always face challenges that the county schools don’t face as far as vocabulary and reading comprehension. A lot of our kids don’t use the language that is presented in the tests, and if you don’t know the words, you don’t even know what the questions mean.”

» Solution

Moyer heard about iLit, a digital literacy intervention program that runs on iPads and other mobile devices, from the district's federal program coordinator. The hands-on nature of the iLit curriculum, its research-based approach, the variety of texts, and the student appeal of a digital program piqued Moyer's interest, so she conducted more research and eventually included the program in a SIG proposal. The proposal was accepted, and William Penn High School introduced the program into three 9th-grade and three 10th-grade reading intervention classes in the fall of 2012.

Prior to the beginning of the 2012 school year, Moyer hand-selected students based on their PSSA scores, benchmark assessments, report card grades, and teacher recommendations to participate in the six classes. She capped class enrollment at twenty students to ensure that the program would be implemented with fidelity, and she arranged for professional development over the summer to help teachers become comfortable with the technology as well as the curriculum.

"I've seen and the data show that our kids are moving up multiple levels. Their comprehension is growing in both reading and science. The kids are taking the skills they learn in iLit and applying them in other subject areas."

*– Sue Long Moyer, Principal
Jackson School*

"The iLit program helps me reach my goals because of the variety of books it has to offer. I have read books about the different things I plan to do when I graduate from high school. I plan to attend a good college after I graduate and become a homicide detective or a nurse."

*– 9th-grade female student
William Penn High School*

» Results

iLit has been popular with students. Classes begin with fifteen minutes of independent, student-choice reading on iPads. Students enjoy this time so much that they come to school even when they are sick to avoid missing their reading time. They also started visiting the library to find books that they can take home since York keeps the iPads in classrooms. As one 9th-grade student explained, "There are tons of books to choose from for independent reading. There are books of all lengths and genres, so I have plenty of interesting books to read. Also, I like the notebook because I can keep my vocabulary there, and it saves me time when I have to edit or add words to my list."

Teachers are also pleased with the program, which seems to have increased vocabulary and reading confidence. Sowers noted, "There have been a few more kids that will take a chance to volunteer to orally read. I think now that the kids understand the reading strategies we're talking about, they can infer, visualize, retell, and synthesize information."

» Results (continued)

Moyer has also seen increased student time on task, engagement, and transfer of knowledge. She highlighted the impact of the program on a student with a history of behavioral issues. After he was in the reading intervention class for several weeks, she observed him actively engaged in a science class, using the reading skills he had learned to help fellow students find the answer to a question in their textbook.

Moyer was so impressed with the program that when she was promoted to principal of Jackson School in December 2012, she implemented iLit in her 6th- through 8th-grade English language learner (ELL) classes using Title III funds. During the 2013–2014 school year, 53 percent of 6th graders, 80 percent of 7th graders, and 71 percent of 8th graders showed scale score growth on the PSSA (see Figure 1). In addition, 41 percent of students in the program moved up an ELL level for the 2014–2015 school year.

Students at William Penn High School also showed growth. Over the 2013–2014 school year, 9th graders averaged 2.02 years of growth and 10th graders averaged 1.76 years of growth as measured by the Group Reading Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation (GRADE) (see Figure 2).

Given these positive results, both Jackson School and William Penn High School continue to use the iLit program, and Jackson School is considering adding iLit to its 5th-grade ELL classes. Principal Moyer is so pleased with the program that she has agreed to share her implementation experience and insights as a participant on the iLit Advisory Panel.

FIGURE 1: Percent of ELLs Showing Scale Score Growth on PSSA, Jackson School, 2013–2014

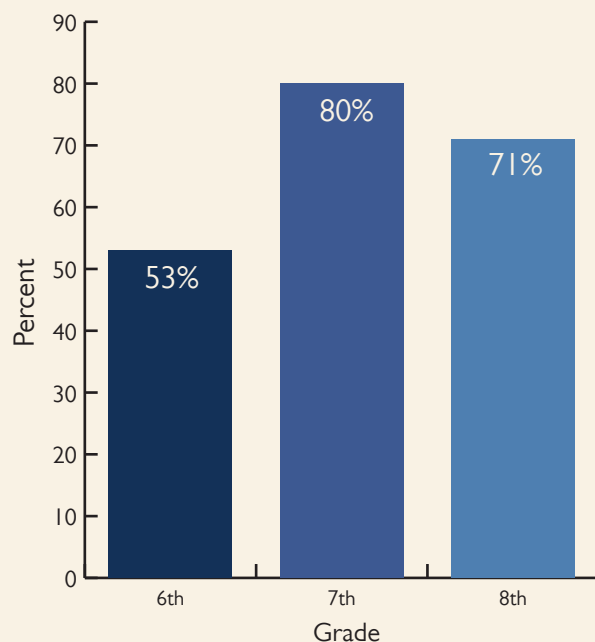
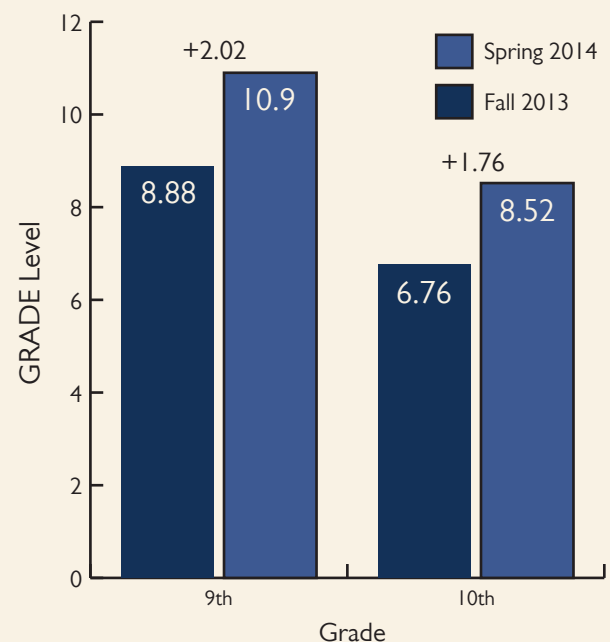


FIGURE 2: Growth in GRADE Level, William Penn High School, 2013–2014



To learn more about digital literacy solutions, visit
pearsonschool.com/iLit