



Leap Ahead in English

Executive Summary

December 2013

Program Description

Leap Ahead in English is a joint program of the Association for Change in Education and the British Council. The program operates within the Revadim initiative in 7 elementary schools in southern Israel. The program's goal is to bridge educational gaps in English between the periphery and central Israel. Underlying the program is the premise that a significant change in English teaching can only be achieved if teachers are provided with skills needed to instill active, pupil-oriented experiential teaching. In this type of teaching, the pupils are the focus of the learning process. The teacher's role is to help them discover and build knowledge on their own based on previous knowledge. The program is composed of two separate but supplementary core programs – teacher training and extra tutoring for pupils during after-school hours.

Research Goals

The research was designed to examine the effectiveness of the program in achieving its goals as well as to examine the changes that were effected in perceptions and actions of teachers and pupils.

Methodology

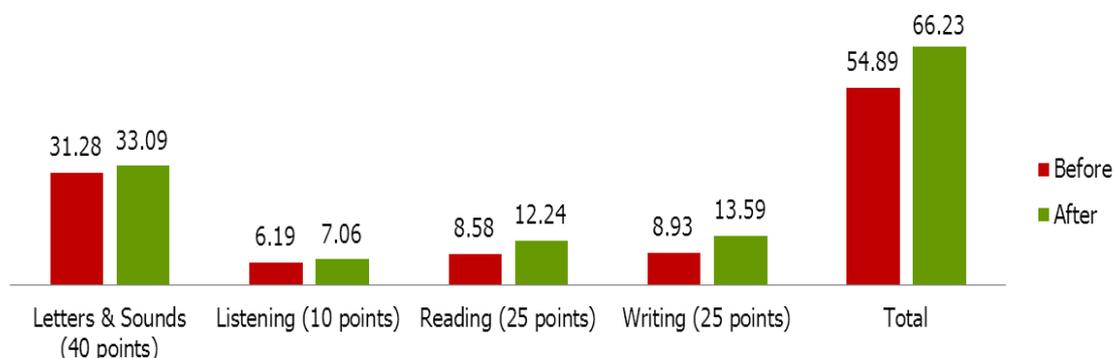
429 fourth and fifth-graders from seven elementary schools participating in the program took an English test (which included reading, writing, listening comprehension and identification of letters and sounds) at the start and at the end of the year. In addition, 29 pupils in a control group took the same test at the start and end of the year. The improvement in grades of pupils in the program was compared with that of pupils in the control group. Questionnaires were also administered to teachers participating in the program and to teachers in the control group at both the start and end of the year.

Main Findings

- Pupils who participated in the program improved their achievements in English more than did the pupils in the control group, in every area tested, and particularly in reading and writing. The average improvement in five of seven schools exceeded the school in the control group. When the program included both teacher training and

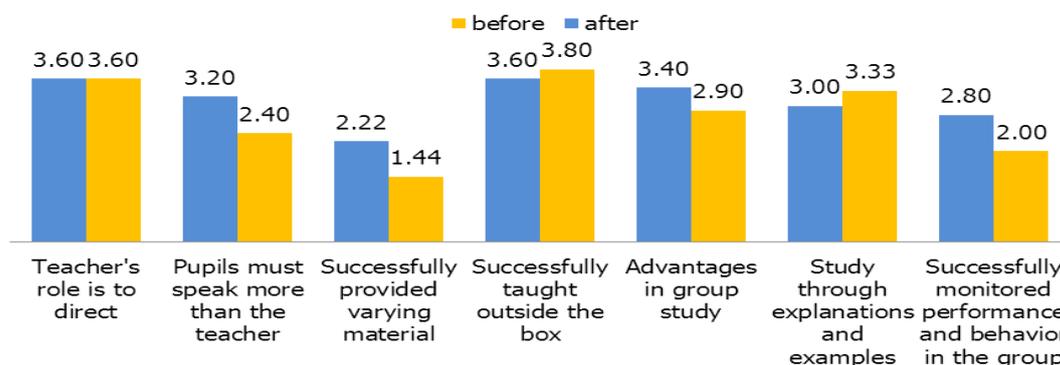
after-school tutoring for pupils, the improvements were higher in comparison with the situation in which one of the elements was lacking.

Pupil achievements on English test before and after the program (N=340)



- The main change in pupils' knowledge occurred in reading and writing, and less in listening comprehension and identification of letters and sounds.
- The program changed teacher perceptions about English teaching but did not change the teaching practices, with the exception of more extensive use of technology and pair/group work.

Perceptions about English teaching (N=11)



* On a scale of 1-4

- Teachers reported high satisfaction with the program, and believe that it helped the children as well. For example, over 90% of teachers reported that they would recommend the program and were interested in participating in it in the future.

Conclusions and Recommendations

- Emphasis must be placed in the curriculum on listening comprehension and identification of sounds and letters.
- A review of the program revealed that the full format is the most effective. The recommendation therefore is to operate the program in this format (mentoring + after-school).
- Since even at the start of the program, most teachers reported constructivist-oriented practices and perspectives, the differential needs of each teacher should be identified and the intervention shaped accordingly.