RightToRead

Measuring Reading Improvement

The RightToRead initiative aims to improve students' English reading and comprehension ability by integrating tech-enabled reading with the school curriculum.

Teachers and students constantly provide feedback that the program increases engagement leading to higher retention and learning. However, as the program rolls out to cover millions of students across grades, cultures and geographies, it becomes imperative to be able to measure the impact in a quantified, standardized basis. English-Helper™ has commissioned independent assessments to gauge this impact in several states, including West Bengal, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Punjab. These assessments are designed as baseline-end line assessments comparing outcomes of students studying in schools that implement the program (Treatment group) with those from schools that have not deployed tech-enabled reading in class (Control group).

All the assessments are conducted in an unbiased, low-stakes environment through an electronic medium, either using tablets or computers.

The assessments maintain contextual relevance for students in that they are designed based on the textbooks. At the same time, all the assessments follow a standard rubric appropriate for each grade level. This enables examination of the reading proficiency of students across various segments and over time.

RightToRead has been implemented in partnership with IL&FS Education and American India Foundation with support from USAID.

Editor's Note

Since launching the initiative in 2013, we have been sharing news of progress. Thus far most of what we have conveyed relates to excitement & engagement in class, overwhelming positive response from teachers and growing the footprint of the program.

RightToRead has a simple and compelling vision: tech-enabled reading must reach every school age child and eradicate illiteracy at speed. The path is not without challenge. We must prove the model works. This Newsletter talks about the emerging indicators from massive scale tests being conducted across the country.

The assessments being conducted are telling us about existing proficiency and the difference that can be made by implementing the program. We are also able to compare reading skills of students across regions using common measures. Text books are being analysed to enable correlation of desired standard, actual ability and the intervention needed to bridge the gap.

Yet, this is simply the tip of the proverbial iceberg. Technological reach creates amazing possibilities. Immense quantity of data becomes available at low cost, very quickly and from everywhere.

Yes, we have a burning platform. As long as our children cannot read that becomes priority number 1. However, our young citizens deserve more and the best suit is tailored to fit. As we reach big we aim to help educate smarter.

Sanjay Gupta

Reading proficiency:
West Bengal shows the way!

West Bengal schools follow the calendar year. The RightToRead (RTR) program has been implemented across 11 districts covering 769 schools. RTR enables about 1.75 lakh students to read their text books in class using multi-sensory reading & comprehension technology. To measure reading proficiency improvement, Baseline and End Line assessments were conducted in Q 1 & Q 4, 2016, respectively. The results from West Bengal tell a heartening story.

Across both grades assessed (grades 5 and 6), students from the Treatment group have performed significantly better in the End Line, exhibiting an increase in 24% and 26% in average score, respectively (calculated as improvement over Baseline). Students from the Control group, who have not been exposed to the tech-enabled reading program, show a much lower increase being 11% in grade 5 and
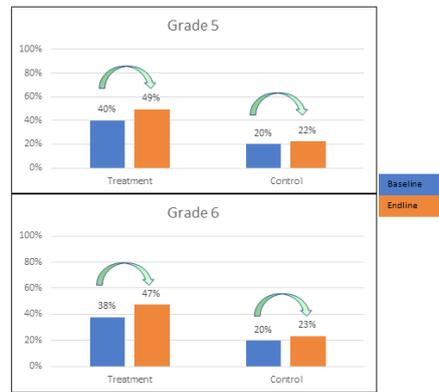
17% in grade 6 during the corresponding period.

It could be argued that students who were already performing better in the baseline have exhibited higher scores in the End Line, thus improving the average for the Treatment group. However, it is noted that students from the Treatment group who were at lower scores in the baseline have

shown the most significant improvement. In other words, the program has enabled reading improvement across the entire Treatment group with lower proficiency students recording impressive gains.

In 2016, schools in West Bengal were challenged by a number of factors adversely impacting the scholastic calendar. More than half the scheduled school days were not available for learning activity and consequently, the number of technology enabled reading classes offered to students were only about 40% compared to plan. Thus, the reading improvements recorded must be viewed in this context. The reading gains by students covered by the program provide confidence in the RightToRead tech-enabled model. The impressive achievement of the students validates the anecdotal evidence i.e. positive feedback from students and teachers.

Reading Lights up Homes In A Little Village

Students of Selva Vinayagar High School (SVHS) in Kothamangalam, Sivaganga trudge into school every day after a three-kilometer walk. These students are from BOP families

Like many other schools, SVHS has difficulty finding and retaining teachers who are proficient in English. In October 2016, SVHS implemented reading & comprehension software to enable multi-sensory technology enabled reading of English text books in class. The story thus far is typical of many schools across the country that have embraced the RightToRead initiative.

In less than 6 months, after the introduction of the program across grades 1 to 8, students are reading with much greater confidence and comprehension. SVHS serves a community where literacy is a privilege. Reading English was a distant dream. However, SVHS

students are now actively engaged at home to help their parents read documents and, where needed, teach them how to write their names.

Delighted by the progress students have made the school management is looking to enhance usage of the software.