

Pearson Efficacy & Quality CASE STUDY

▶ SuccessMaker®

FARMINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
FARMINGTON, MICHIGAN

© 2015

KEY FINDINGS

From 2010 to 2014, Farmington Public Schools (FPS) reduced the gap in the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) Reading proficiency rates between English Language Learners (ELL) and non-ELL students. While the percentage of non-ELLs achieving proficiency grew just over 1 point during that time, the percentage of ELLs achieving proficiency increased by over 11 points, from 41.1% in 2010 to 52.2% in 2014. This is also higher than the statewide ELL proficiency rate growth, which grew just over 9 points, from 27.2% in 2010 to 36.5% in 2014. The data suggest, and FPS ELL staff concur, that SuccessMaker®–Reading, which FPS used exclusively for ELL students, may have contributed to this growth.

DEMOGRAPHICS

The city of Farmington, located in Oakland County just outside of Detroit, Michigan, was first settled in 1824 by Arthur Power, a Quaker from Farmington, New York. Farmington served as a station on the Underground Railroad during the time of slavery. Considered a small farming community until the 1950s, Farmington was transformed into a suburban area when families moved out of Detroit during the post-war building boom. In 2013, Time Inc.'s Money.com ranked Farmington the 27th best place to live in the U.S. Among the notable statistics was its Racial Diversity Index of 125.6 (100 is the national average; higher numbers indicate greater diversity).

As of fall 2014, Farmington Public Schools (FPS) served over 11,000 students in Farmington, Farmington Hills, and part of West Bloomfield. The district includes 19 schools for Pre-K through 12th Grade students and additional special services centers, including an International Academy and a center for students with disabilities. FPS has nine elementary schools (Grades K–4), two upper elementary schools (Grades 5–6), two middle schools (Grades 7–8), and four high schools (Grades 9–12).

Table 1: FPS District Demographics, 2013–2014¹

ETHNICITY	
Caucasian	55.8%
African-American	24.4%
Asian	12.2%
Hispanic	2.5%
Other	5.1%
OTHER	
Economically Disadvantaged (Eligible for Free/Reduced-Price Lunch)	23.5%
English Language Learners	26%*
Students with Disabilities	10.9%
Mobility	6%**
GENDER	
Male	50.4%
Female	49.6%
STUDENT-TO-TEACHER RATIO	
District Average	16.74:1

* ELL rate is from the Bilingual/ELL Department at Farmington Public School

**Mobility rate is from 2012 to 2013.

¹ <https://www.mischooldata.org/DistrictSchoolProfiles/StudentInformation/StudentCounts/StudentCount.aspx>

Nearly 100 different languages are spoken in the district (Table 2). A majority of the ELL population at FPS speaks Chaldean, a language spoken primarily in Iraq.

Table 2: Languages Spoken by School at FPS, November 2014

SCHOOL	TOTAL SCHOOL ENROLLMENT	NUMBER OF DIFFERENT LANGUAGES SPOKEN	MOST PREVALENT LANGUAGES OTHER THAN ENGLISH, IN ORDER OF USE
Beechview Elementary School (K-4)	304	24	Arabic, Japanese, Romanian, Pushto
Forest Elementary School (K-4)	391	27	Chaldean, Arabic, Japanese, Hindi
Gill Elementary School (K-4)	456	30	Albanian, Romanian, Arabic, Hindi, Urdu
Highmeadow Common Campus (K-4)	278	18	Telugu, Urdu, Hindi, Gujarti, Arabic
Hillside Elementary School (K-4)	515	33	Tamil, Telugu, Hindi, Arabic
Kenbrook Elementary School (K-4)	355	20	Chaldean, Arabic, Russian, Japanese, Tamil
Lanigan Elementary School (K-4)	458	29	Spanish, Albanian, Arabic, Urdu, Russian
Longacre Elementary School (K-4)	336	17	Telugu, Hindi, Kannada, Tamil
Wood Creek Elementary School (K-4)	352	23	Arabic, Chaldean, Romanian, Korean, Spanish
Power Upper Elementary School (5-6)	633	46	Telugu, Urdu, Spanish, Tamil, Arabic
Warner Upper Elementary School (5-6)	788	42	Arabic, Chaldean, Spanish, Romanian, Urdu
O.E. Dunckel Middle School (7-8)	758	39	Arabic, Chaldean, Urdu, Russian, Spanish
East Middle School (7-8)	872	42	Arabic, Telugu, Albanian, Spanish, Chaldean
Farmington Central High School (9-12)	112	4	Arabic, Chaldean, French, Spanish
Farmington High School (9-12)	1147	44	Telugu, Albanian, Arabic, Hindi, Spanish
Harrison High School (9-12)	1177	50	Arabic, Chaldean, Albanian, Urdu, Spanish
North Farmington High School (9-12)	1254	45	Arabic, Chaldean, Urdu, Spanish, Russian
TOTAL*	10,186		

* Total excludes special services centers.

The number of ELLs with high needs is on the rise at FPS—many of these new ELLs are from Syria, Iraq, and areas in Africa and Latin America. “There are many refugees, mostly from Syria and Iraq. Students are coming from war zones and some have not been in school for 3-4 years. Some of these students have been traumatized,” reported Rola Masri, bilingual paraprofessional, who works with the ELL program and SuccessMaker. According to the ELL department staff, these new students typically have low literacy levels in their native language, score lower on newcomer assessments, and have lower proficiency levels in all subject areas. “But the students are resilient and strong. They have a drive and are hungry for education. They learn quickly. We work hard to create a comfort zone for them and accommodate all our students’ needs,” said Ms. Masri.

Impacting the overall ELL population in 2014 at FPS is the recent opening of a nearby K-5 charter school, in the summer of 2014, which drew approximately 200 of the higher functioning ELLs, specifically Indian and Urdu students, out of the district. For example, Highmeadow Elementary School lost an estimated 20% of its ELL students.

Three buildings at FPS have Newcomer Centers to support immigrants and their families. The district also has newcomer classrooms, within two of the elementary schools, which combine two-thirds native English speaking students with one-third newcomers. Students are assisted by bilingual paraprofessionals.

State Standards and Assessment

The state of Michigan assesses students with the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) in Grades 3 through 8 in reading, mathematics, writing (Grades 4 and 7 only), and science (Grades 5 and 8 only). Social Studies is tested in Grades 6 and 9 only. Students are assessed in the fall of each year on the prior year’s expectations. Students in Grades 11 and 12 take the Michigan Merit Exam (MME), introduced in 2007. In spring 2015, the M-STEP (Michigan Student Test of Educational Progress) will replace the MEAP and MME exams. The M-STEP is online and includes Michigan-developed content, as well as content from the multi-state Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium. Michigan adopted the Common Core in 2013 and is a governing state in the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, one of two groups developing online assessments based on the standards.

State Standards and Assessment for entering and exiting the ELL Program

The state’s classifications and assessments for ELLs drive the work of the ELL program staff and its students. The ELL program staff not only run the ELL program, but perform other ELL functions in the district, including:

- Screening students to determine ELL program eligibility.
- Working with and monitoring students in the ELL program, in all aspects including SuccessMaker.
- Monitoring students whose language skills are too high-functioning for the ELL program, but obtain language support in other programs at FPS.
- Testing students to exit the program.
- Monitoring students who exit the program.

All of the above functions are part of the district’s Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMAO). The federal government uses AMAOs to assess districts that receive Title III funding for language instruction for ELLs and immigrant students, like FPS.

Federal guidelines specify that at the beginning of the school year, districts have 30 days to screen and place students new to the district with a primary or home language other than English. Throughout the remainder of the school year, this screening and placement must occur within two weeks of a student’s enrollment.

The district enters students into ELL services based on their results on the World-Class Instructional Design Assessment (WIDA), as required by state law. Michigan began using the WIDA in the 2013–2014 school year for ELL identification and reporting. Prior to WIDA, Michigan used the English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELPA). According to the FPS Board of Education’s report in February 2013, Michigan needed the more rigorous English Language Proficiency (ELP) assessment of WIDA with the state’s adoption of the Common Core.

WIDA identifies the ELP levels of students according to the WIDA ELP Standards' levels 1–6. The levels are: 1=entering, 2=beginning, 3=developing, 4=expanding, 5=branching, and 6=reaching (considered the exit level). Scores are reported for each of the four language domains: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Students who score in levels 1–3 are placed into the ELL program at FPS. Students who score in levels 4 and 5 are considered General Education students, but are entitled by state law to receive ELL services. These students receive EL support by methods outside the ELL department, such as literacy coaches, and the ELL department monitors these students' growth.

A separate annual test, called ACCESS for ELLs, measures a student's progress in acquiring academic English and is taken after the student is enrolled in school. This assessment is administered to all students identified as English Language Learners in Grades K–12.

In 2013–2014, Michigan became much more stringent in its criteria to exit students from the ELL program. A student needs a composite score of 5 on the WIDA-ACCESS exam, given once a year in June, a passing score on MEAP in reading, math, and writing, and satisfactory grades in their content area classes. Students must have attained the language proficiency needed to fully participate in content area classrooms, without support, and on state academic exams without accommodations. Once a student exits the ELL program, they are considered a FLEP (Former Limited English Proficient) and the EL department monitors their MEAP scores for two years. FLEP students who do not earn a passing score on MEAP re-enter the ELL program. Students in Grades 3 and higher are eligible for the WIDA-ACCESS.

STUDY METHODOLOGY

This study investigates SuccessMaker, which FPS uses exclusively for ELLs. Pearson's Efficacy team interviewed two FPS staff members about the district's ELL program: Jeanine Clever, English language learning coordinator, and Rola Masri, bilingual paraprofessional. Pearson also researched the district and state websites and analyzed publicly available data, including MEAP—Reading exam scores. SuccessMaker data from FPS's summer ELL program was also used. No personally identifying student information was requested, accepted, or reported at any time in the study. Due to FPS' emphasis on SuccessMaker-Reading this study considers MEAP—Reading scores only.

CHALLENGES AND GOALS

The complexity of the ELLs' circumstances, the population of higher-need ELLs, and the more rigorous new standards to exit the program pose a challenge for Farmington and its ELL department and staff. Other indicators of the need for improvement include the Michigan School Accountability Scorecard, a tool to identify schools' and districts' strengths and areas in need of improvement. The Scorecard includes factors such as student assessment data, graduation rates, attendance rates, and compliance with state and federal laws. In 2013–2014, Michigan's Department of Education designated FPS with a score of 66.67% and an overall Yellow Status. Yellow Status indicates that the district received between 60% and 70% of possible points.

FPS provides interventions to meet the specific needs of students scoring at the bottom 30% of MEAP assessments to improve their academic skills and performance. SuccessMaker is a large part of FPS's improvement program. FPS uses SuccessMaker–Reading and SuccessMaker–Math throughout the school year exclusively for its ELL students, a group that comprises a large part of the lower performing 30% in need of improvement. FPS implemented the SuccessMaker program for ELLs to:

1. Improve students' reading skills to meet grade level and reduce the gap between non-ELLs and ELLs.
2. Evaluate and monitor growth in ELLs through data analysis.

FPS also runs a summer ELL program. The purpose of the summer program is to give the ELLs a head start for the upcoming school year.

IMPLEMENTATION

FPS sought ways to achieve its goals by meeting the diverse needs of the learners in the school setting. The district purchased SuccessMaker with Title III funding in the spring of 2011, exclusively for use by ELLs and to monitor their achievement and growth. “We were looking for a computer-based program that would make it easy for us to monitor growth for ELLs,” said Ms. Clever, English language learning coordinator for FPS. The district was using another program at the time, but according to Ms. Clever, “It was not meeting the needs of the ELL students. My background is in literacy, and the reading program wasn’t as strong as we needed.”

HOW SUCCESSMAKER WORKS

SuccessMaker is an interactive online course for supplemental instruction and practice in essential reading and math skills. Students in K–12 begin with the Initial Placement Motion (IPM) in SuccessMaker to identify their place in the online program based on their reading and math abilities at the screening. For example, a 4th Grade newcomer student might place at a Kindergarten level in SuccessMaker–Reading. “It adjusts based on what users’ needs are. We’ve done the same thing for our high school newcomers. They really like SuccessMaker a lot at the middle and high school level, especially our newcomer children,” said Ms. Clever.

The SuccessMaker program responds to each student individually upon completion of the IPM. The system then offers curriculum that is at higher or lower levels as it evaluates the current instructional level of the student in each of the 16 math strands and eight reading strands. The reading strands are:

- Concepts of Print
- Comprehension
- Fluency
- Phonics
- Phonemic Awareness
- Vocabulary
- Grammar
- Spelling

Once the IPM is completed, the system calculates an average of the strand level scores and places the student at the appropriate level. For example, a student might have an instructional level of 4.3 in reading, but a vocabulary level of 3.9. This student would begin at the level at which he or she scored on the IPM for each strand, not at the average level of 4.3. The student in this example would begin work in vocabulary at the 3.9 instructional level. The process is the same for math.

It is recommended that students work 20 hours or more, per year, in SuccessMaker in order to achieve one academic year of growth in either Reading or Math. SuccessMaker collects data on each student as they work and these data contribute to the following reports about student usage, performance, and content mastery:

- System Enrollment and Usage (SEU)—Time on task and number of sessions
- Cumulative Performance Report (CPR)—Level of each strand, IPM level, current level, and gains (the difference between the student’s current level and her IPM level)
- Student Performance Report (SPR)—Overall average, overall percentage, average time on task
- Areas of Difficulty (AOD) —Specific areas of difficulty for that student

SuccessMaker administrators and teachers run these reports, interpret their data, and share the findings with classroom teachers. The classroom teacher then adjusts his or her teaching for individual students or the class, based on the areas where students need improvement. SuccessMaker is a supplemental program, often used separately from the classroom. By sharing students’ SuccessMaker data with the classroom teacher and using it to affect classroom learning, SuccessMaker can have a greater influence on student achievement than when the work is confined to the computer lab.

ELL Program and SuccessMaker

Ms. Clever has worked as the ELL coordinator for K–12 students in all of the schools at FPS since 2010. As the coordinator, she trains and coaches EL and General Education teachers and support staff. ELL services are provided by five, full-time traveling EL teachers, four EL teachers for newcomer students, and bilingual paraprofessionals who work on-site at each school. These services are delivered in small-group or individual settings, dependent on the student’s need. For elementary students in year two of the ELL program (mid-level ELLs) using SuccessMaker with a bilingual paraprofessional is a large part of their work. FPS’s target students for SuccessMaker usage are mid-level ELLs in Grades 2 and 3 for reading. For high school students, ELLs at all levels use SuccessMaker.

The ELL implementation methods vary in the district. Some ELLs are in classes where all the students are ELLs, others are pulled out for ELL instruction, and some General Education teachers use SuccessMaker on computers in the back of their classrooms. FPS also uses a co-teaching model in some classes in which an EL teacher and a General Education teacher work together.

Rola Masri, bilingual paraprofessional at FPS, has worked in the district’s high schools for 11 years. In March 2013, she was assigned to two elementary schools: Wood Creek and Gill. She works with 10 students for three days a week at Wood Creek Elementary and 21 students for two days a week at Gill Elementary. Ms. Masri works in inclusion classes to help ELL students with writing and to support their teacher. She also pulls designated ELL students out of class, during their reading time, to use SuccessMaker-Reading for 20-minute sessions. The students are on a set schedule for SuccessMaker. They come into the lab, log in, and record the date, time, and their score at the end of the session.

Newcomer classes are staffed with an EL teacher who monitors SuccessMaker with the students for more intensive support. These students also work one-on-one with a traveling EL teacher for further individualized instruction. “Many students come in not knowing a word of English, and they need a lot of support. You speak to them in their language and slowly introduce English words,” said Ms. Masri. Once the students are mid-level, they transition to the SuccessMaker lab and work with a bilingual paraprofessional.

SuccessMaker Reports

The ELL team monitors student data from SuccessMaker to identify the areas of difficulty for each student and report this to the General Education teachers, who then can adjust instruction to meet the individual needs of the ELL students in their classes. “Every two weeks I hand the reports to the General Education teachers, so that we can look at them together,” said Ms. Masri. “They can see what their students are doing, how much they are gaining, what goal we are setting, and where the student is in relation to that goal. It’s very visual and tells you what the problem areas are. I have teachers who love those reports. Teachers use the Areas of Difficulty reports to identify what to focus on in class and small-group instruction.”

According to Ms. Clever, “When teachers see the data, they like the program. We have received some really good responses from the teachers who are using the reports for small group intervention or working with the student individually.” In some schools the General Education teachers can adjust teaching on their own, based on SuccessMaker data. In schools where there are higher-need ELLs, an EL teacher works with the General Education teacher to adjust the instruction. The bilingual paraprofessionals also provide EL teachers an end-of-year report from SuccessMaker for their students to monitor progress.

Additionally, students in the SuccessMaker program chart their own data. “We have students even as young as first graders who write logs for themselves. For instance, ‘What is my percentage when I logged off?’” said Ms. Clever. Older students chart their gains on the wall of the classroom or on a goal sheet. Students also identify areas in which they would like to improve and use their SuccessMaker data to set their individual goals each week in conjunction with their teacher. For instance, a student might identify a desire to get better at nouns and verbs. Then, the teacher works with the student to determine how classroom work can support the student’s goal. By charting their own goals, students are motivated to learn and understand why they are working on specific topics. “When students get 100%, they are on cloud nine,” said Ms. Masri.

ELL Summer School Program

The summer program serves FPS students in Grades K–5, and all students in the program use SuccessMaker. In the summer of 2014, 90 students, all ELLs and a majority newcomers, enrolled. The program ran four days a week for four weeks of summer school. Each day the students used SuccessMaker–Math for 15 minutes and SuccessMaker–Reading for 20 minutes.

Distinct features of the SuccessMaker implementation at FPS (Figure 1) are (1) the staff to support (1) the staff to support it and (2) the use of frequent 15-20 minute sessions.

- Student SuccessMaker sessions are in short increments of time, scheduled multiple times a week: 15 minutes for math and 20 minutes for reading, 2-3 times a week, per SuccessMaker guidelines.
- EL teachers run the EL program for each school.
- Bilingual paraprofessionals
 - o Work directly with students in the SuccessMaker labs.
 - o Run, interpret, and share SuccessMaker reports for General Education teachers and help them adjust their teaching to meet students' individual needs.
 - o Foster student motivation by asking students to:
 - Chart their SuccessMaker growth.
 - Identify areas in which they would like to improve.
 - Set their individual goals with their teacher.

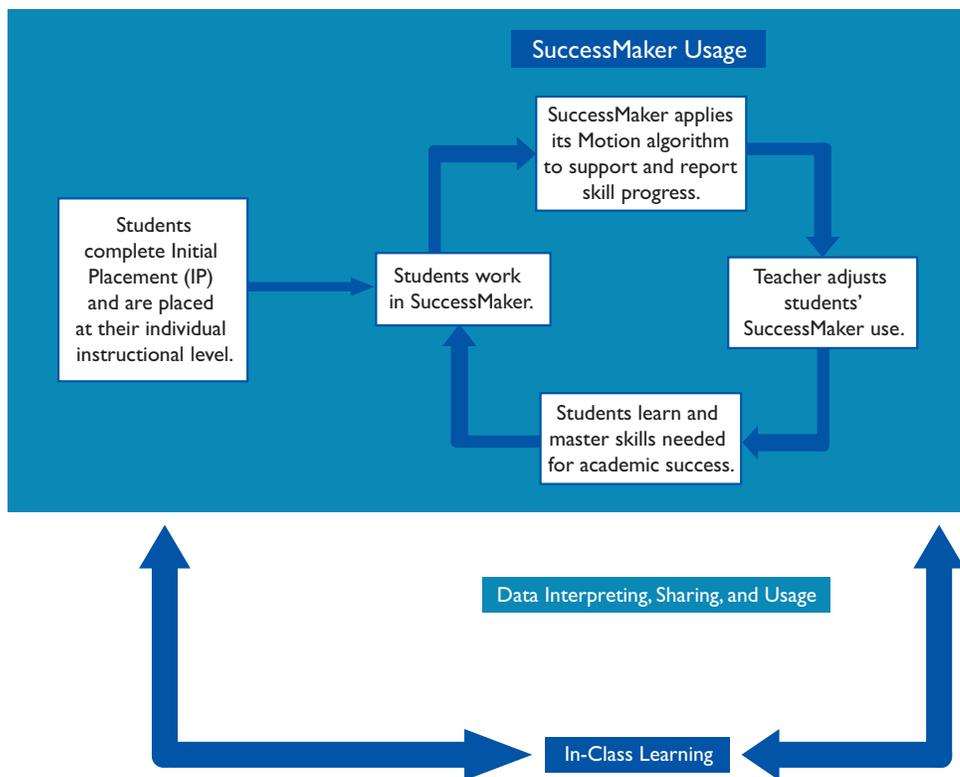


Figure 1: SuccessMaker Implementation Model at Farmington Public Schools

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Pearson provides ongoing support with site visits. Members of the ELL team attend Pearson's SuccessMaker Best Practices conference every year. "Every year that I go, I learn new things," said Ms. Clever. "I appreciate going to the sessions to be able to figure out what my next step is with SuccessMaker." At the conference, SuccessMaker users from Michigan collaborate with and learn from each other to strengthen their implementation. Topics include:

- Using data to drive effective instruction
- SuccessMaker and Common Core
- New SuccessMaker features
- Secrets of success from fellow users

FPS’s practice of having students chart their own goals came from a Best Practices conference where SuccessMaker users from another district in Michigan shared implementation strategies with FPS.

RESULTS AND DATA²

A total of 258 ELL students in Grades 3–8 at FPS used SuccessMaker–Reading in the 2013–2014 school year. The usage data showed the following mean time spent per student:

- Grade 3: 11:32 hours
- Grade 4: 12:33 hours
- Grade 5: 15:23 hours
- Grade 6: 11:08 hours
- Grade 7: 12:31 hours
- Grade 8: 9:15 hours

Although these hours are below the recommended time for SuccessMaker usage to achieve one academic year of growth, the ELL department attributes some of their students’ success to SuccessMaker. In addition, FPS has demonstrated effective use of both sharing and using data to affect in-class instruction. This work makes the students’ SuccessMaker time more efficient.

As noted earlier, the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) is the state’s general assessment for students in Grades 3 through 8 in reading and mathematics. Students are assessed in the fall of each year on the prior year’s expectations. The MEAP Performance Levels include:

- Level 1—Advanced
- Level 2—Proficient
- Level 3—Partially Proficient
- Level 4—Not Proficient

Levels 1 and 2 are considered proficient and Levels 3 and 4 are considered not proficient.³

Because FPS implemented SuccessMaker in spring 2011 and the MEAP is given in the fall to test the prior year, ELL performance on MEAP—Reading for school years 2010–2011 to 2013–2014 is examined. Table 3 shows FPS’s enrollment during 2010 to 2014 for the six MEAP-tested grades. ELL enrollment at that time is in Table 4. Not all ELL students use SuccessMaker every year.

Table 3: FPS Enrollment for 2010–2014 for the six MEAP-tested grades⁴

Yearly FPS Enrollment for Grades 3–8						
	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
2010–2011	790	845	872	805	868	897
2011–2012	806	785	832	898	810	898
2012–2013	748	776	790	852	892	834
2013–2014	691	734	747	789	832	890

² <https://www.mischooldata.org/DistrictSchoolProfiles/AssessmentResults/Meap/MeapPerformanceSummary.aspx>

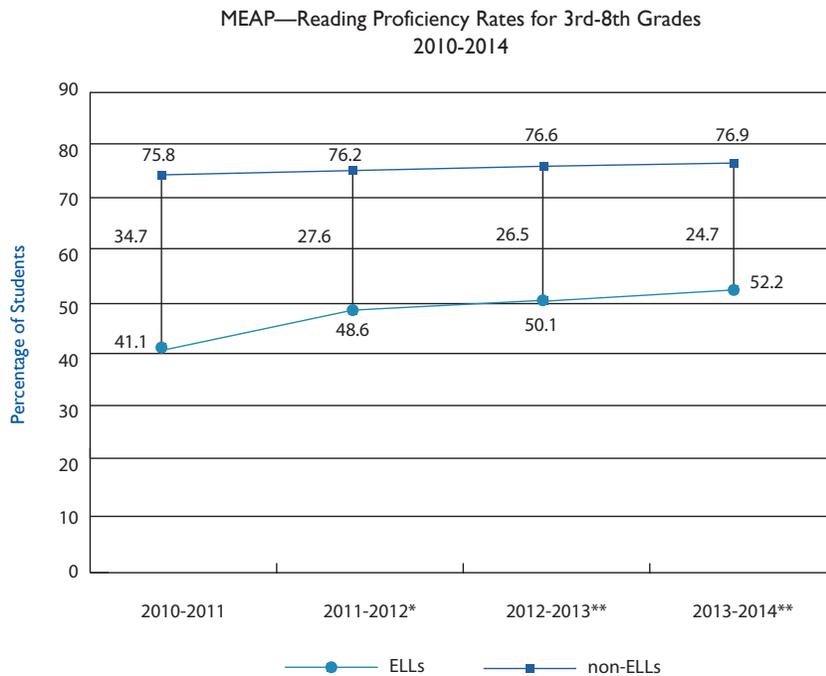
³ http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/2013_Guide_To_Reports_448577_7.pdf

⁴ <https://www.mischooldata.org/DistrictSchoolProfiles/StudentInformation/StudentCounts/StudentCount.aspx>

Table 4: FPS ELL Enrollment for 2010–2014 for the six MEAP-tested grades⁵

Yearly FPS ELL Enrollment for Grades 3–8						
	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
2010–2011	145	109	81	52	60	48
2011–2012	124	95	69	54	53	49
2012–2013	116	110	84	62	60	52
2013–2014	130	111	105	88	79	77

Figures 1–7 show MEAP—Reading proficiency data for Farmington’s students in Grades 3–8. Students in Grades K–2 do not take MEAP. Between 2010 and 2014, Farmington improved its MEAP—Reading proficiency rates for all students, but saw higher gains in its ELLs. While the percentage of non-ELLs achieving proficiency grew just over 1 point during that time, the percentage of ELLs achieving proficiency increased by over 11 points, from 41.1% in 2010 to 52.2% in 2014 (Figure 2). FPS reduced the gap between ELLs’ and non-ELLs’ MEAP—Reading proficiency rates by ten percentage points. This reflects FPS’s hard work and progress towards its goal of reducing the gap between its highest and lowest achieving students.



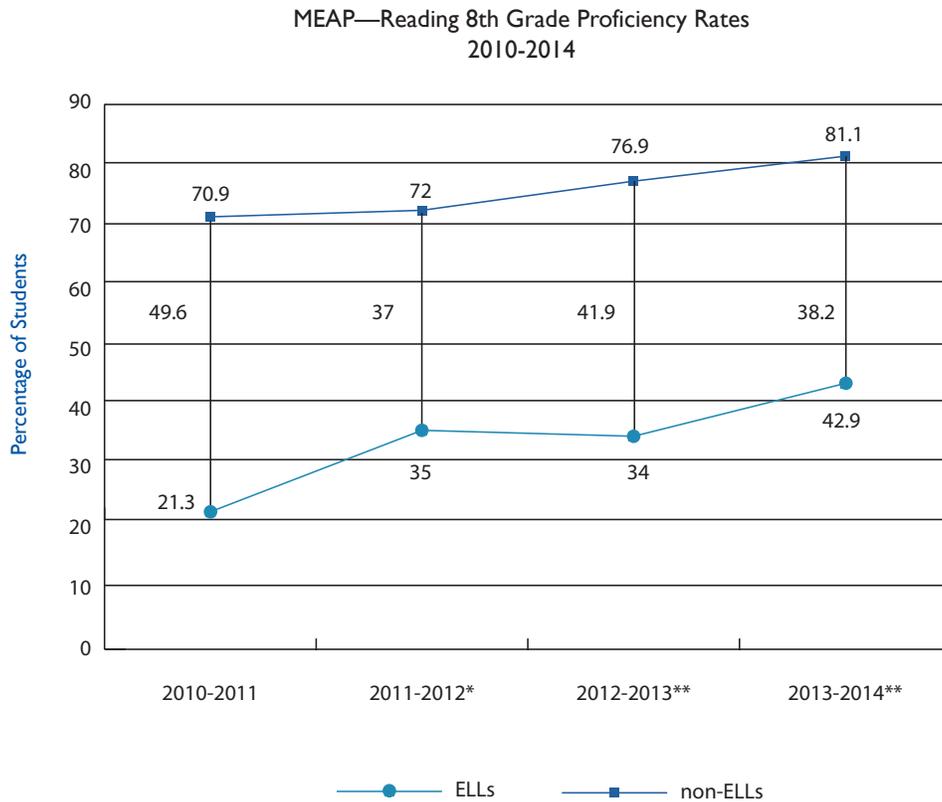
*Reflects one semester of SuccessMaker implementation

**Reflects a full year of SuccessMaker implementation

Figure 2: From the 2010–2011 school year to the 2013–2014 school year, the percentage of Farmington’s ELLs who achieved a proficient or higher on MEAP—Reading grew at a faster rate than that of non-ELLs at FPS.

⁵ <https://www.mischooldata.org/DistrictSchoolProfiles/StudentInformation/StudentCounts/StudentCount.aspx>

In 2010–2011, the year before FPS implemented SuccessMaker for its ELLs, the difference between the proportion of 8th Grade ELLs and non-ELLs earning a proficient or higher on the MEAP—Reading assessment was 49.6 points. After two and a half years of the implementation, in 2013–2014, more students in the district earned a proficient or higher (non-ELLs did not use SuccessMaker) and the gap between ELLs and non-ELLs decreased to 38.2 points, an improvement of 11.4 points. Between 2010 and 2014, the percentage of 8th Grade ELL students considered proficient on MEAP—Reading increased by over 21 points (Figure 3).



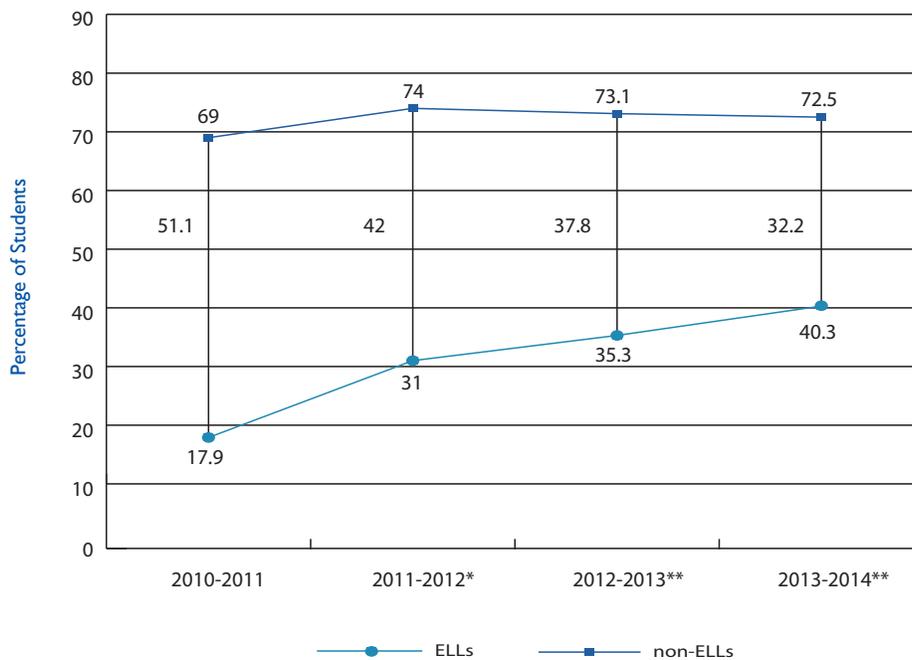
*Reflects one semester of SuccessMaker implementation

**Reflects a full year of SuccessMaker implementation

Figure 3: The percentage of 8th Grade ELL students who achieved a proficient or higher on MEAP—Reading increased by more than 21 points between 2010 and 2014.

In 2010–2011, the difference between the proportion of 7th Grade ELLs and non-ELLs considered proficient on the MEAP—Reading was 51.1 percentage points. In 2013–2014, a higher percentage of students in the district achieved proficiency (non-ELLs did not use SuccessMaker), and the gap between ELLs and non-ELLs was 32.2 points, closing the achievement gap by nearly 19 points. The percentage of 7th Grade ELL students considered proficient on MEAP—Reading increased more than 22 points from 2010 to 2014 (Figure 4).

MEAP—Reading 7th Grade Proficiency Rates
2010-2014



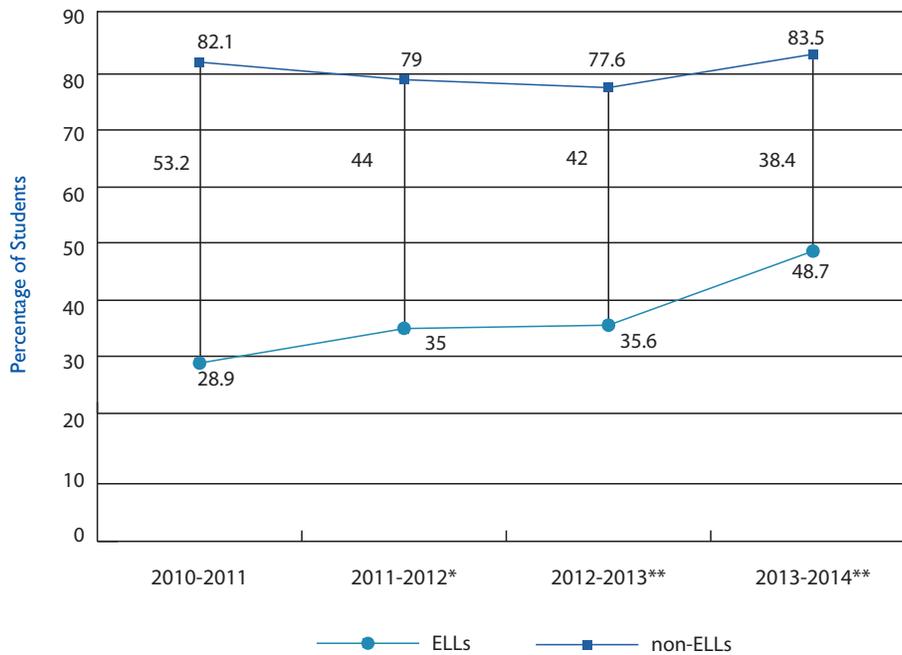
*Reflects one semester of SuccessMaker implementation

**Reflects a full year of SuccessMaker implementation

Figure 4: The percentage of 7th Grade ELL students who achieved a proficient or higher on MEAP—Reading increased by more than 22 points between 2010 and 2014.

In 2010–2011, the difference between the proportion of 6th Grade ELLs and non-ELLs considered proficient on the MEAP—Reading was 53.2 percentage points. In 2013–2014, a higher percentage of students in the district earned a proficient or higher (non-ELLs did not use SuccessMaker), and the gap between ELLs and non-ELLs was 38.4 points, thereby closing the achievement gap by nearly 15 points. The percentage of 6th Grade students considered proficient on MEAP—Reading increased by almost 20 points from 2010 to 2014 (Figure 5).

MEAP—Reading 6th Grade Proficiency Rates
2010-2014



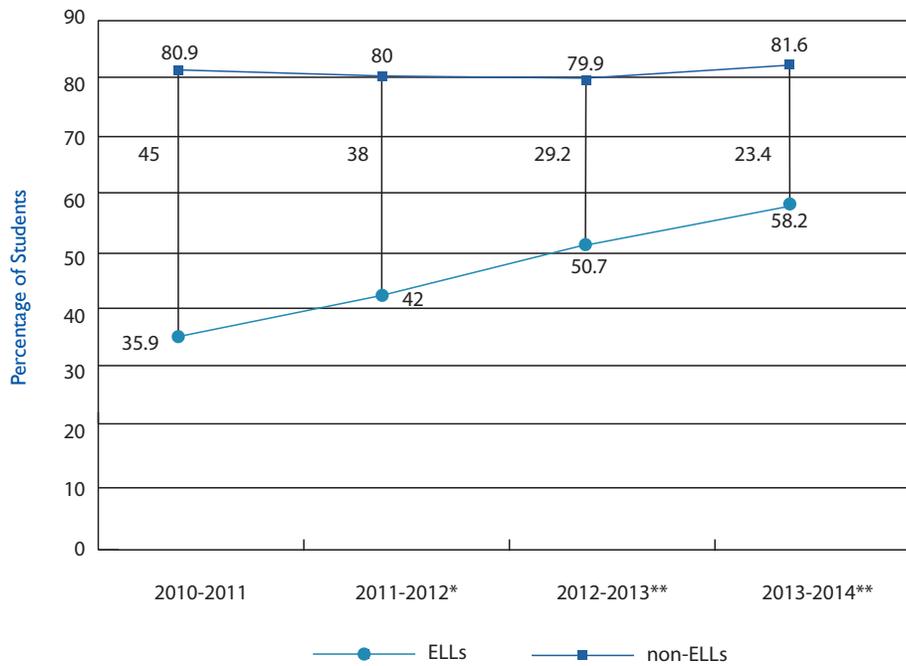
*Reflects one semester of SuccessMaker implementation

**Reflects a full year of SuccessMaker implementation

Figure 5: The percentage of 6th Grade ELL students who achieved a proficient or higher on MEAP—Reading increased by almost 20 points between 2010 and 2014.

In 2010–2011, the difference between the proportion of 5th Grade ELLs and non-ELLs considered proficient on the MEAP—Reading was 45 percentage points. In 2013–2014, a higher percentage of students in the district earned a proficient or higher (non-ELLs did not use SuccessMaker), and the gap between ELLs and non-ELLs was 23.4 points, thereby narrowing the achievement gap by 21.6 points. The percentage of students considered proficient increased overall, but this was especially true for ELLs, whose proficiency rate increased by 22.3 points (Figure 6).

MEAP—Reading 5th Grade Proficiency Rates
2010-2014



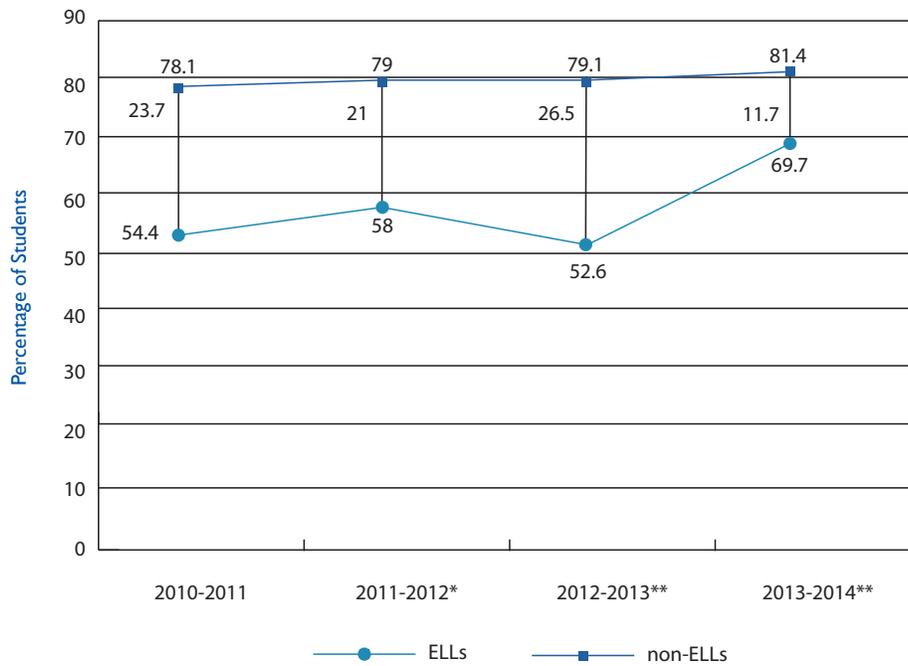
*Reflects one semester of SuccessMaker implementation

**Reflects a full year of SuccessMaker implementation

Figure 6: The percentage of 5th Grade ELL students who achieved a proficient or higher on MEAP—Reading increased by more than 22 points between 2010 and 2014.

Prior to implementing SuccessMaker (2010–2011), 54.4% of the ELLs in 4th Grade scored a proficient or higher on the MEAP—Reading exam, while 78.1% of non-ELL students achieved the same, a difference of 23.7 percentage points (Figure 7). By the third year of the SuccessMaker implementation (2013–2014), 69.7% of the ELL students in 4th Grade earned a proficient score, while 81.4% of the non-ELL students achieved a proficient grade—a difference of 11.7 points. The gap between the two groups grew in 2012–2013 to its highest rate, at 26.5 points. According to FPS, this is reflective of the new conditions in the ELL population, such as the influx of higher-needs students, at the lower grades. Overall, ELLs improved in their MEAP—Reading by 15.3 points from 2010 to 2014, narrowing the achievement gap by 12 points.

MEAP—Reading 4th Grade Proficiency Rates
2010-2014



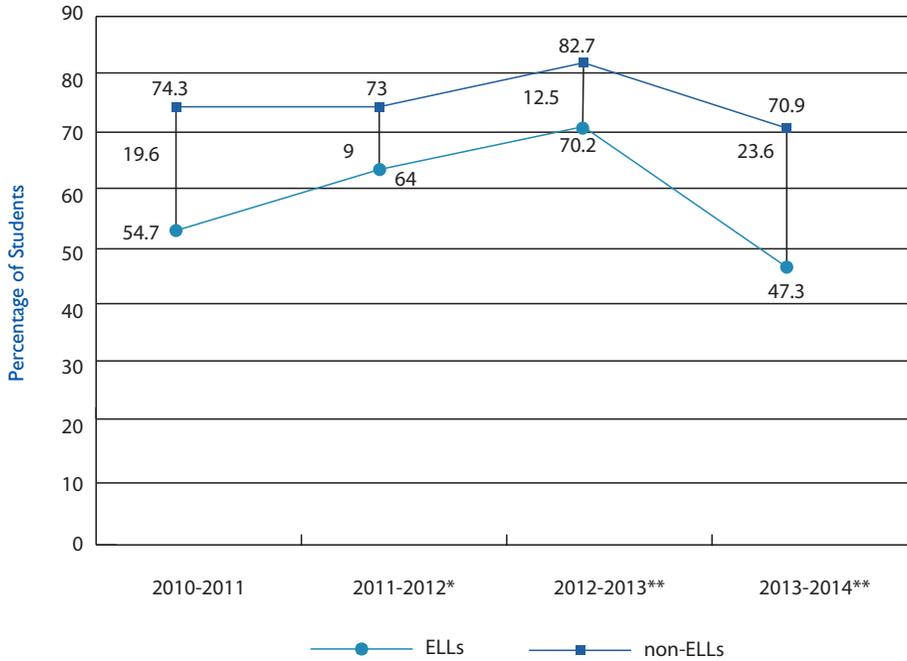
*Reflects one semester of SuccessMaker implementation

**Reflects a full year of SuccessMaker implementation

Figure 7: The percentage of 4th Grade ELL students who achieved a proficient or higher on MEAP—Reading increased by more than 15 points between 2010 and 2014.

Students in 3rd Grade take state exams for the first time. These students increased in their MEAP—Reading scores between 2010–2011 and 2012–2013. The difference between the 3rd Grade ELL and non-ELL proficiency on the MEAP—Reading was 19.6 percentage points in 2010–2011 (Figure 8). In 2012–2013, after a year and a half of the SuccessMaker implementation, a higher percentage of students in the district achieved a proficient score (non-ELLs did not use SuccessMaker), and the difference between the two groups narrowed to 12.5 percentage points. In spite of these gains, the next year, 2013–2014, the difference between these two groups widened to 23.6 percentage points. The percentage of students passing the MEAP—Reading declined in both non-ELLs and ELLs. However, the decline for ELL students was steeper. The changing ELL population, the lower proficiency of newcomers, and the departure of higher-functioning speakers to the new charter school may have contributed to the decrease in ELL students’ MEAP—Reading proficiency rates.

MEAP—Reading 3rd Grade Proficiency Rates
2010-2014



*Reflects one semester of SuccessMaker implementation

**Reflects a full year of SuccessMaker implementation

Figure 8: The percentage of 3rd Grade students who achieved a proficient or higher on MEAP—Reading increased over 15 points between 2010 and 2013. It then dropped by almost 23 percentage points in the 2013–2014 school year, widening the gap between non-ELLs and ELLs. This may be attributed to the lower proficiency of newcomers entering the district and the departure of high-performing ELLs to a new charter school.

Comparisons with the state of Michigan

In spite of the declines in 3rd Grade ELLs between 2013 and 2014 and 4th Grade ELLs between 2012 and 2013, the percentage of 3rd and 4th Grade ELLs at Farmington who scored a passing grade was consistently higher than ELLs in the state of Michigan (Figure 9).

MEAP—Reading Proficiency Rates
3rd–4th Grades, 2012–2014

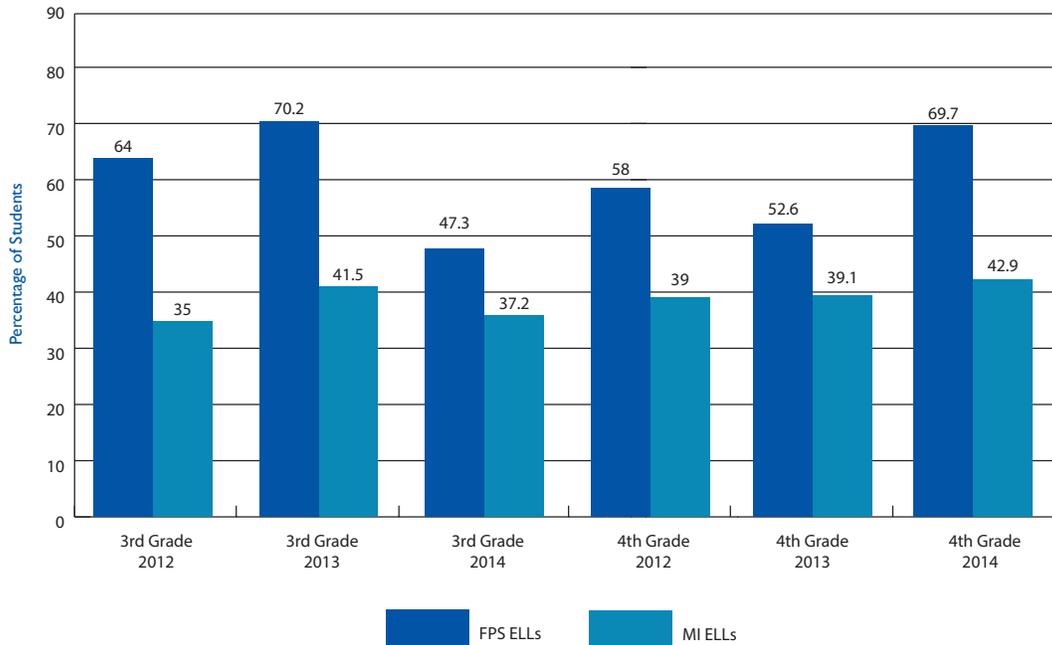
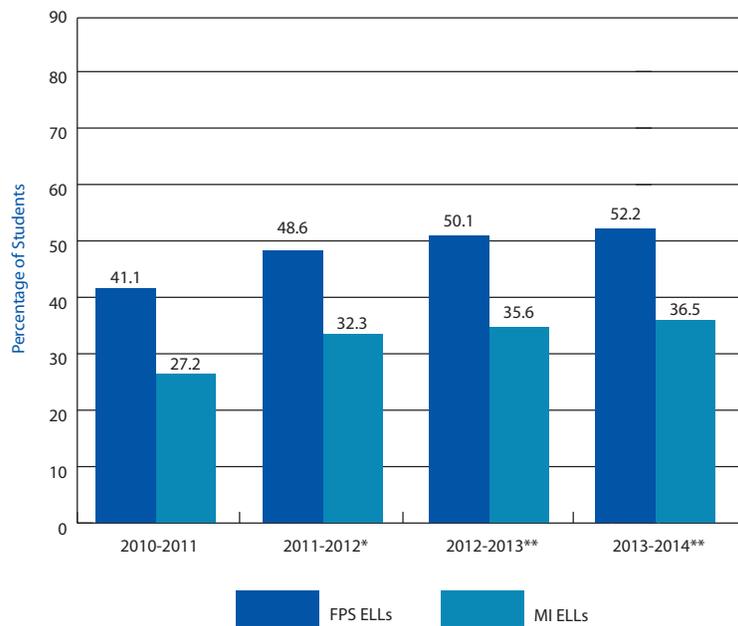


Figure 9: The percentage of FPS 3rd and 4th Grade ELLs who achieved a proficient or higher on MEAP—Reading was consistently higher than that of the state between 2012 and 2014.

The percentage of Farmington’s ELLs in Grades 3–8 who scored a proficient or higher on MEAP—Reading was consistently higher than ELLs in the state of Michigan, from 2010 to 2014 (Figure 10). FPS’s overall growth in the percentage of ELL students achieving proficiency on the MEAP—Reading assessment increased by 11.1 points, from 41.1% in the 2010–2011 school year to 52.2% the 2013–2014 school year. This is also higher than the state, which grew just over 9 points, from 27.2% in 2010 to 36.5% in 2014.

MEAP—Reading Proficiency Rates
3rd–8th Grades, 2010–2014



*Reflects one semester of SuccessMaker implementation

**Reflects a full year of SuccessMaker implementation

Figure 10: From the 2010–2011 school year to the 2013–2014 school year, the percentage of Farmington’s ELLs who achieved a proficient or higher in MEAP—Reading was consistently higher than that of ELLs in the state of Michigan. FPS’s overall growth in the percentage of ELL students achieving proficiency on the MEAP—Reading assessment outpaced ELL proficiency rate growth statewide.

USER EXPERIENCE

Student Experience

According to Ms. Clever, the upper ELLs (middle and high school EL students) like the non-fiction embedded in many of the reading passages in SuccessMaker. Although general education students typically do better with fiction, the EL students typically do better with non-fiction supported by pictures. “SuccessMaker has so much information-based content; it’s helpful for ELL students. The Common Core includes many informational and essay-type items, so SuccessMaker supports that as well.”

“It takes some time to work with the students to really see what they can do,” said Ms. Masri. “They love the program and the SuccessMaker characters. It’s fun for them. They work individually at their own pace and are excited about their independent work. It’s a great tool.” Among the ELL staff, the bilingual paraprofessionals spend the most time with SuccessMaker, assisting and motivating students, coordinating the schedules, and communicating results with teachers. “We feel like SuccessMaker has impacted our bilingual and ELL students in a positive way,” she said.

Teacher, Staff, and Administrator Experience

“I love the reading, particularly the short passages,” said Ms. Clever. “SuccessMaker reads to the kids and includes mini-tutorials. It cycles back on things to support the students’ prior learning.”

“We use the data to monitor the students’ work, including year-to-year updates,” said Ms. Clever. “I can drill into areas of difficulty and share the data with classroom teachers to identify areas where students are doing well and areas in which they need to do additional intervention work. SuccessMaker is linked to standards, and you can tie it back to direct instruction with the students.” The ELL staff reported that teachers are interested in seeing their students’ progress and gains. “SuccessMaker has been a very positive experience for me, and I want to keep it up,” said Ms. Masri.

One of the challenges for the implementation is that many of the computer labs in the district have older technology. This can create compatibility issues with new versions of SuccessMaker. Downloading the required Java updates for the program is another challenge, which will be addressed in the next version of the program.

Parent Experience

Parents are often involved in the Newcomer programs and classes, but they have not been involved with the SuccessMaker program. “Parents want their kids to move quicker in their learning,” reported Ms. Masri. According to Ms. Clever, the ELL department would like to expand SuccessMaker to home use and involve parents. Due to the universal nature of mathematical symbols, it may be easier to use math rather than reading to involve parents of ELL students.

CONCLUSION

The goal of the administration at FPS was to raise the MEAP—Reading scores of ELL students so that they achieved proficiency at rates closer to those of their non-ELL counterparts. After implementing SuccessMaker and providing ELL support staff to work with students in the program, FPS continues to demonstrate gains in MEAP—Reading scores to close the gap. The MEAP—Reading assessment data suggest that SuccessMaker, which was used exclusively for ELLs, may have contributed to this growth. Student achievement improved, and the proficiency gap between the ELL and non-ELL groups decreased.

For further achievement, FPS staff should continue sharing and using SuccessMaker data, and students should spend more time in the program.