

**BELLEVILLE TOWNSHIP
HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT**
BELLEVILLE, ILLINOIS



“For years we have been searching for a program that focuses on comprehension skills and strategies, and we finally found it. MCI is exactly what we have been looking for!”

Marci Reeves, Belleville East High School
Belleville Township High School District #201, Belleville, IL

THE CHALLENGE

Belleville Township High School District No. 201, Illinois consists of two campuses that have a rich tradition of providing educational excellence to its students. The district serves over 5,000 students coming from a diverse set of backgrounds. Over the past several years, a comprehensive reading intervention program, Academy of READING, has been successfully implemented to ensure students entering the freshman class have a solid foundation in core reading skills. While this strategy has been successful in addressing decoding and fluency deficiencies, a substantial portion of the Title One population was still challenged by some of the more complex comprehension tasks that are necessary to be successful at higher-grade levels. For years, Belleville

teachers have been looking for a program that would develop specific comprehension strategies to help student’s “connect” to the text and improve understanding of what they were reading. According to Lead Teacher Marci Reeves, *“those students remaining in reading remediation classes at the high school level were the ones who needed a different approach.”* When EPS/School Specialty Literacy and Intervention was looking for schools to Beta Test MCI (Making Connections Intervention), Belleville East High School was selected as one of the trial sites.

WHAT IS MCI?

MCI (Making Connections Intervention) is a research-based intervention program for Middle-High school students focused on comprehension strategies and skills. MCI’s unique design blends teacher-led instruction and practice using print materials with MCI-Online – an engaging, interactive online program. *“MCI focused on reading skills such as cause and effect, compare and contrast, etc. Our students could use reading attack skills to word call, but they needed the specific reading comprehension skills presented in MCI to understand it”,* says Marci Reeves. Through carefully scaffolded lessons,

“We were so impressed with MCI we have purchased it for 10 classes at both Belleville East and Belleville West for the 2012-2013 school year.”

Andrea Gannon,
Director of Curriculum

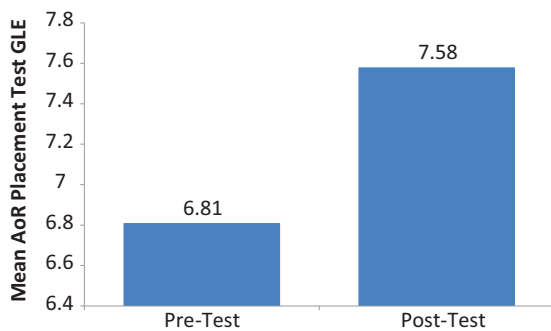


Figure 1: Mean student GLE scores before and after training on MCI Online.

According to the study, students reading ability significantly improved from the pre-test to the post-test.

students learn to use skills and apply strategies to master comprehension. The blended model integrates the best of teacher-led, direct instruction with engaging, individualized online instruction to maximize the depth, intensity, and effectiveness of the intervention.

Students used the MCI program five times a week as part of their English block, with approximately 30% of their time spent in the online portion and the remaining 70% spent in group instruction and class work. During the course of MCI training, students focus on six thematic units - each unit focused on a specific skill. Every unit assessed general comprehension in addition to tracking specific skill and strategy acquisition with student data consolidated in a real-time web based management system at the class, school, and district level. Woven through every lesson are multiple opportunities to also build students' vocabulary and fluency. Also included in MCI are units addressing student vocabulary and writing skills. *MCI Word Study* provides support for those students struggling with word sounds or the meaning of words. *MCI Writing* provides writing instruction and practice tailored to the needs of struggling Middle to High School students.

THE RESULTS WERE IMPRESSIVE!

The results from the beta trial from September to December 2011 were so impressive that Belleville East asked to continue use of MCI for the remainder of the 2011-2012 school year.

ABOUT EDUCATION TECHNOLOGY PARTNERS

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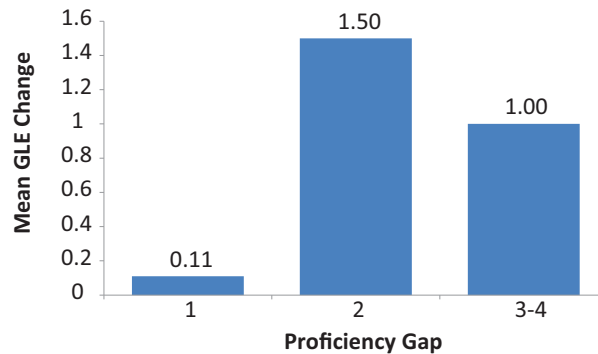


Figure 2: Mean GLE gains by proficiency gap.

Students who performed two or more grade levels below their actual grade level achieved the greatest gains, achieving average gains of 1.50 grade level.

Download the EPS/AutoSkill study at:
www.edtechpartners.com/downloads/BellevilleMCI_2012.pdf

Andrea Gannon, Director of Curriculum for Belleville #201 stated, *“MCI has provided our teachers and students with a blended classroom and technology tool that has assisted in bringing students closer to being on grade level targets in their reading comprehension skills. We were so impressed with MCI we have purchased it for 10 classes at both Belleville East and Belleville West for the 2012-2013 school year.”*

The gains made during the MCI Beta Trial also attracted the

attention of Dr. Edina Torlakovic, Senior Research Scientist at EPS/AutoSkill, resulting in a study. **Results from the study showed that students had average gains of 1.2 levels, and some had gained as many as three levels. On average, students reading ability increased by 0.77 GLE in just one semester!**

EASY IMPLEMENTATION

Feedback from both teachers and students was positive. *“We really liked the blending of teacher-led instruction, text materials, and the computer program MCI-Online”*, said Marci Reeves. *“Students like the variety of activities. And MCI was a great compliment to our reading curriculum. We saw much better grades on assessments once we covered those skills in MCI.”* Teacher Sarah Davis, adds *“Students like how the program is interactive and engaging. Some students gained as much as 3 years on his/her reading level! My lowest level students showed the highest gains, but all students benefitted in some manner.”*