Introduction
Since implementing Reading Renaissance in 2001, Saint Paul Elementary School has experienced dramatically improved Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) reading scores. On average, scores have increased five percentiles per year for the past two years. In addition, library circulation has quadrupled and students are more disciplined, responsible, and independent.

School Profile
Saint Paul School, Grades pre-K–8
Students: 270
New York City, N.Y.

Demographics:
Inner-City, Urban

Race/Ethnicity:
African American: 57%
Hispanic: 43%

Educator Backgrounds
An educator for 33 years, Agnes Sayaman has spent the last 22 years at Saint Paul School in the Harlem neighborhood of New York City. She began at Saint Paul teaching math, science, and English. She was appointed as Principal five years ago. She holds a bachelor’s in education and English from the University of Santo Tomas in the Philippines.

Emily Severance has been the reading specialist at Saint Paul for the last four years. She’s been instrumental in the implementation of Renaissance programs at the school. She holds a bachelor’s in English from the University of Michigan and a master’s degree in Studio Arts from The Art Institute of Chicago.
Study Description

Principal Sayaman needed to find a reading program that would support Saint Paul's reading curriculum. Promotional materials for all the programs she reviewed promised strong reading gains for students, yet she was skeptical that any could actually deliver on their promises. In 2001, she decided to implement Reading Renaissance and has not looked back since.

Saint Paul had the financial support of William Ruane, a well-known philanthropist who established a private charitable foundation to improve neighborhoods and schools in Harlem. Ruane provided Saint Paul with funding to purchase computers, Reading Renaissance software, books, and add additional staff.

Reading Renaissance combines a school's existing curriculum with information technology, professional development, consulting services, classroom resources, and evaluation services to increase reading skills development and facilitate individualized instruction. Saint Paul hired a reading specialist to guide the implementation of Reading Renaissance and it hosted an on-site 501: Introduction to Reading Renaissance seminar.

With encouragement from the reading specialist, Emily Severance, educators at Saint Paul began implementing Reading Renaissance classroom techniques learned in the seminar. Severance helps classroom teachers review the students' progress toward the goals. And, each week she reviews diagnostic reports with the teachers to help them respond to the needs of at-risk students.

Saint Paul receives Leadership Distance Consulting from Renaissance Learning. This service provides the school with timely feedback in the form of reports and a professional telephone consultation after each marking period. The reports provide a snapshot of how each group of students is progressing. And, at the end of the year, the Summative Analysis report highlights the annual growth of students and the relationship between their reading practice and their academic growth.

Results

Saint Paul has experienced consistent and steady growth in academic improvement since their implementation of Reading Renaissance. Students in second through seventh grade gained an average of 10 percentiles on the reading portion of the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS)1 since 2001. Seventh-grade scores increased the most over two years—19 percentiles (see graph on front). This overall improvement makes the school a model for other inner-city schools struggling to increase the reading achievement of their students.

In addition to increased reading scores, library circulation has quadrupled. Each student read an average of 158 books during the 2002–2003 school year—which equals 4 to 5 books per week.

And, perhaps most importantly, the school has experienced an improvement in student behavior. Students are now more disciplined and responsible. They behave in the library, on their own, and in small groups. Parents are also actively involved in promoting the culture of reading at the school. Parent volunteers come in during the day and after school to read with students.

Conclusion

The improvement in student achievement at Saint Paul is due to the dedication of the educators who work to ensure that every student achieves to their maximum potential and the school’s implementation of Reading Renaissance. Since 2001, the school has experienced sustained reading growth as measured by the ITBS (scores increased an average of 10 percentiles over two years), increased library circulation, and better-behaved students.
