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Report: Elementary students achieve double-digit gains in reading and math scores with help of educational technology

CLAYMONT – Reading and math scores increased “significantly” among first- and second-grade students in the statewide Delaware Challenge education technology project, according to a University of Delaware report released today.

Students achieved double-digit gains in their reading and math scores on the national Stanford 9 tests after participating in the Delaware Challenge project – an innovative initiative in 36 elementary schools in 16 school districts across Delaware that encourages schools to use technology for student learning. The first state in the nation to wire every public school classroom for Internet access, Delaware also has the lowest ratio of students to computers in America.

The report, which was released today at Darley Road Elementary School in Claymont, stated, “For two consecutive years, first- and second-grade students who participated in the Delaware Challenge grant project experienced large and significant increases in both their reading and mathematics achievement scores.”

The project – funded by the U.S. Department of Education and administered across the state by the Capital School District – uses instructional programs created by the Lightspan Partnership. It goes beyond traditional classroom use by extending technology into the home -- enabling family TV sets to run instructional software. Parents participate in a training program that helps them set up the equipment and use the instructional programs effectively with their children. The project focuses on a majority of children

(more)

from low-income families and is practical since less than 5 percent of students from low-income families have computers, compared to roughly 50 percent of students from high-income homes. By contrast, 99 percent of homes have a TV set. The project also includes a set of free Internet services that further support instruction in the home for students and parents who have Internet access. Teachers, students and parents can also use E-mail provided by the project to enhance communication between schools and homes.

Other results of the Delaware Challenge project also showed:

- parental involvement in the education of their kids increased;
- parent/teacher communication improved, and;
- kids spent more time learning and less time watching TV.

Governor Thomas R. Carper, an advocate for equipping students and schools with technology to support excellence in instruction, said, "I have long stressed the importance of both technology and parental involvement in creating a world-class education system here in Delaware. This innovative school-home connection goes a long way toward addressing both of these needs. When viewed in the context of our other initiatives -- early childhood education, school discipline, raising student achievement, and bringing education technology to every Delaware public school classroom -- this project is an important element in preparing our students for a lifetime of learning."

Dr. Susan P. Giancola, senior associate for evaluation at the University of Delaware's Education Research and Development Center, said, "The Delaware Challenge grant project seems to have had a positive impact on many students. Analysis of student achievement data suggest that the program has worked best for underachieving students -- that is, students who initially test below the 50th percentile appear to benefit greatly from using the Lightspan software."

Listed below are two years of achievement data for second-grade students in the project. The data was compiled by the University of Delaware's Education Research and Development Center.

	Reading				Mathematics			
	Fall 1997	Spring 1998	Fall 1998	Spring 1999	Fall 1997	Spring 1998	Fall 1998	Spring 1999
Scaled Score	539.2	568.1	520.6	566.1	559.5	589.1	556.4	586.0
Percentile Rank	40.2	55.4	29.7	53.7	43.0	56.9	38.9	55.0
Stanine	4.32	5.40	3.54	5.28	4.61	5.42	4.36	5.32

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