



ASSESSING THE EFFICACY OF THE GRAPESEED ORAL-LANGUAGE ACQUISITION PROGRAM

SCHOOL #47, ULAN-UDE, BURYATIA, RUSSIA

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Researchers: Larisa Vydrina
Elena Fedotova
Chimita Abidueva
Timur Ochirov
Ekaterina Kruglikova

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Researchers: Larissa Vydrina, Elena Fedotova, Tchimita Abidueva, Timur Ochirov,
and Ekaterina Kruglikova

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Introduction

Ulan-Ude is the capital of the Republic of Buryatia, Russia. Located 5,640 kilometers (3,500 miles) east of Moscow, it is the third-largest populated city in Eastern Siberia.¹ Due to its location on trade routes between Russia, China, and Mongolia, it is also the region's commercial and industrial center.²

Both the government of Ulan-Ude and its parents are invested in the region's students learning English. As the language of international trade, a command of the English language can draw greater financial opportunity to the primarily blue collar, economically depressed area. For those seeking to leave the region, mastering English is the first step toward attending university or embarking on a career in Moscow and other large Russian cities.

Starting in 2020, high school graduation requirements will include passing a standardized English test. In preparation, School No. 47 implemented an English-language curriculum in September 2013. In order to offer students a more comprehensive and effective learning experience than the present curriculum provides, the school's English Teachers' Council adopted the GrapeSEED program shortly thereafter.

Larisa Vydrina, vice principal of the school, is thrilled with the program and its effect on student success. "Since supplementing our curriculum with GrapeSEED, our students learn and speak English better and more fluently than before," she says.

ABOUT THE STUDY

This report details a study comparing GrapeSEED's efficacy to that of the school's English curriculum alone. Conducted between November 2014 and May 2015, the study had both short-term objectives and long-term goals.

¹ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ulan-Ude>.

² <https://www.travelallrussia.com/sights/ulan-ude>.

Short-terms objectives

- Evaluate the use of the GrapeSEED English-learning program on Russian elementary- and junior-level students, who were learning English as a second language.
- Compare the results of students who were taught English with GrapeSEED to those who were not.

Long-term goals

- Assess the alignment of GrapeSEED's content with that of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, a guideline used to describe the achievements of learners of foreign languages.
- Establish data that demonstrate the value of the program to prospective parents.

Teachers were trained to deliver the program according to the established GrapeSEED procedures.

A total of 80 students—48 junior students (Grades 5–7) and 32 elementary students (Grade 3)—participated in the study.

From November 2014 to May 2015 teachers delivered a total of 84 60-minute lessons. Each student attended approximately 80 lessons; each lesson took 60 minutes.

In February, March, April, and May, students were tested on the following four speech activities using the Russian Learning Standards Assessment:

1. Reading Comprehension (Grade 3)
2. Listening Comprehension (Grades 5–7)
3. Writing (Grades 5–7)
4. Speaking (Grade 5)

Assessments

1 Reading Comprehension Grade 3

- GrapeSEED students scored an average of 13% higher than their curriculum-only peers.

TASK

Students read a text (“White Bengal Tigers”) and then answered 10 questions.

RESULTS

GrapeSEED students earned an average score of 8.1, with a high score of 10.0 and a low score of 6.0. Students who did not receive GrapeSEED earned an average score of 7.1, with a high score of 9.0 and a low score of 5.0 (figure 1).

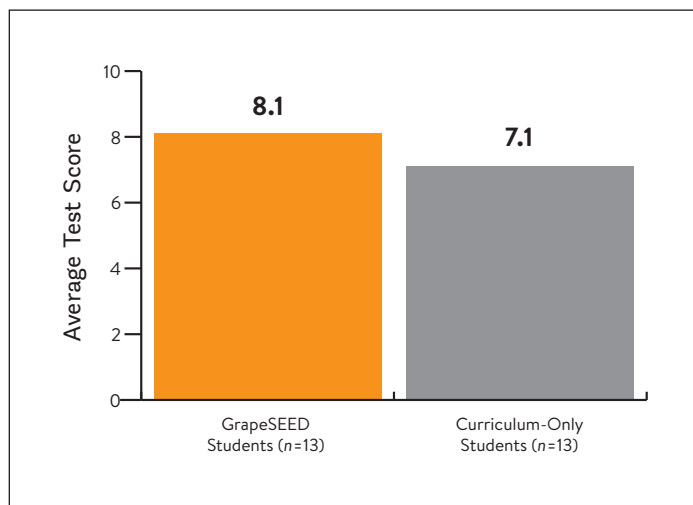


Figure 1. Average Reading Comprehension Scores with and without GrapeSEED, Grade 3 (N=26)

TEACHER OBSERVATIONS

GrapeSEED students:

1. Gave full answers using GrapeSEED vocabulary.
2. Understood the task.
3. Completed the task in two or fewer attempts.
4. Enjoyed taking the test.

Curriculum-only students:

1. Gave yes/no answers for open questions.
2. Had difficulty understanding the task.
3. Needed more than the allotted time to complete the task.

2 Listening Comprehension Grades 5–7

- GrapeSEED students scored an average of 20% higher than their curriculum-only peers.

TASK

Students listened to a brief story (“A Story about a Parrot”) that used vocabulary and phrases from topics they had previously studied. They then answered five true/false questions (testing their understanding of the main idea of the story) and matched the halves of five sentences (testing their understanding of specific words and phrases in the story). Students listened to the story two times.

3 Writing • Grades 5–7

- GrapeSEED students scored an average of 32% higher than their curriculum-only peers.
- Students who did not receive GrapeSEED exhibited a significant lack of mastery.

TASK

Teachers dictated a letter (“Two Sportsmen”) to students.

RESULTS

Out of a possible score of 10, based on correct spelling and use of punctuation, GrapeSEED students earned an average score of 7.0, with a high score of 10.0 and a low score of 6.0. Students who did not receive GrapeSEED earned an average score of 5.3, with a high score of 8.0 and a low score of 4.0 (figure 3).

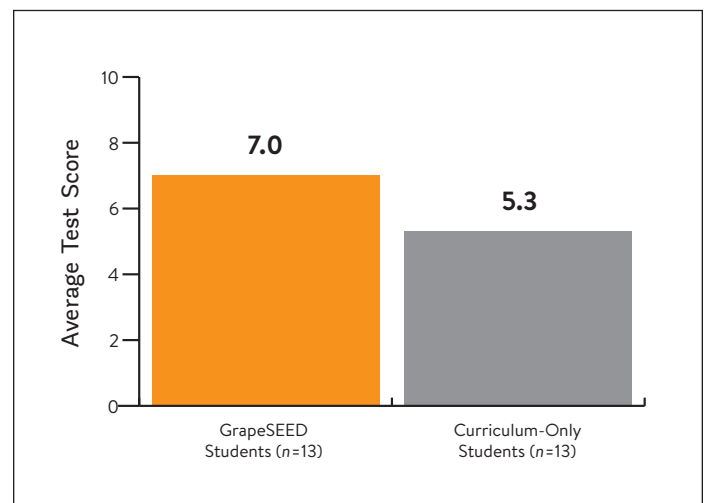


Figure 3. Average Writing Scores with and without GrapeSEED, Grades 5–7 (N=26)

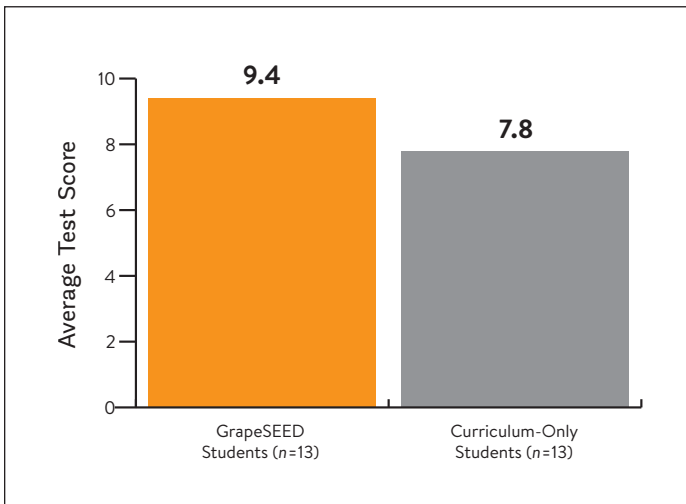


Figure 2. Average Listening Comprehension Scores with and without GrapeSEED, Grades 5–7 (N=26)

RESULTS

Out of a total of 10 questions, GrapeSEED students earned an average score of 9.4, with a high score of 10.0 and a low score of 8.0. The students who did not receive GrapeSEED earned an average score of 7.8, with a high score of 10.0 and a low score of 6.0 (figure 2).

TEACHER OBSERVATIONS

GrapeSEED students:

1. Understood the task.
2. Completed 90% of the test after the hearing the text twice.
3. Performed the test with great interest.

Curriculum-only students:

1. Had difficulty understanding the task.
2. After listening to the text three times, still could not complete the test.
3. Were unable to make decisions.

TEACHER OBSERVATIONS

GrapeSEED students:

1. Correctly spelled the majority of words.
2. Demonstrated knowledge of punctuation.

Curriculum-only students:

1. Struggled to write words.
2. Used almost no punctuation.

4 Speaking • Grade 5

- Students who received GrapeSEED scored an average of 52% higher than students who did not receive GrapeSEED.
- The speaking results revealed the greatest score difference between the GrapeSEED students and the curriculum-only students.

TASK

In this timed, oral test, teachers promoted short dialogues with students by asking simple questions about weather and clothes.

RESULTS

Out of a possible 10 points, GrapeSEED students earned an average score of 9.6, with a high score of 10.0 and a low score of 9.0. Students who did not receive GrapeSEED earned an average score of 6.3, with a high score of 8.0 and a low score of 5.0 (figure 4).

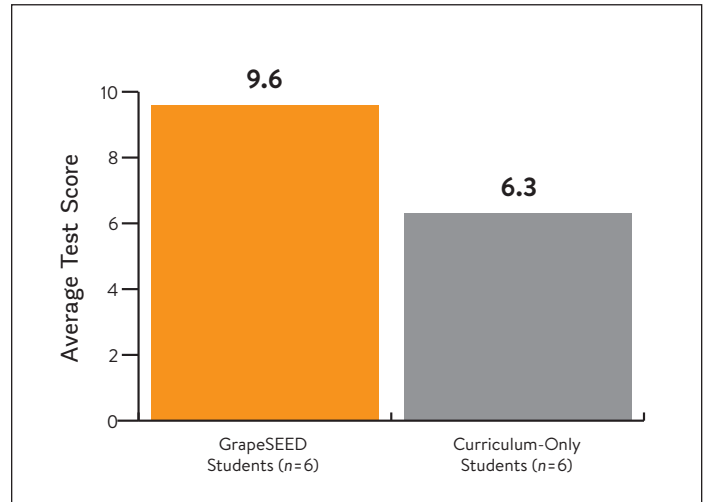


Figure 4. Average Speaking Scores with and without GrapeSEED, Grade 5 (N=12)

TEACHER OBSERVATIONS

GrapeSEED students:

1. Understood the questions.
2. Responded in complete, spoken sentences.
3. Were not afraid to make mistakes.
4. Were able to support and expand the conversation by offering more information.

Curriculum-only students:

1. Had difficulty understanding the question.
2. Provided “yes” or “no” to open-ended questions.
3. Were afraid of making mistakes and became confused.

Conclusion

Research shows that children in Russia typically take seven to nine years to reach grade-level proficiency in English.³ The results experienced at Ulan-Ude’s School No. 47, however, indicate that greater achievement—faster, more comprehensive achievement—is possible. While progress was made by both groups of students, GrapeSEED students demonstrated a higher level of understanding than did their curriculum-only peers in every speech domain (figure 5). Most important, they reached demonstrated English-language proficiency in less than three years.

Detailed analyses of the GrapeSEED students’ scores indicated the following:

- The students’ proficiency in a five-point grading scale reflected the natural progression of children learning language: first listening, then speaking, then reading.

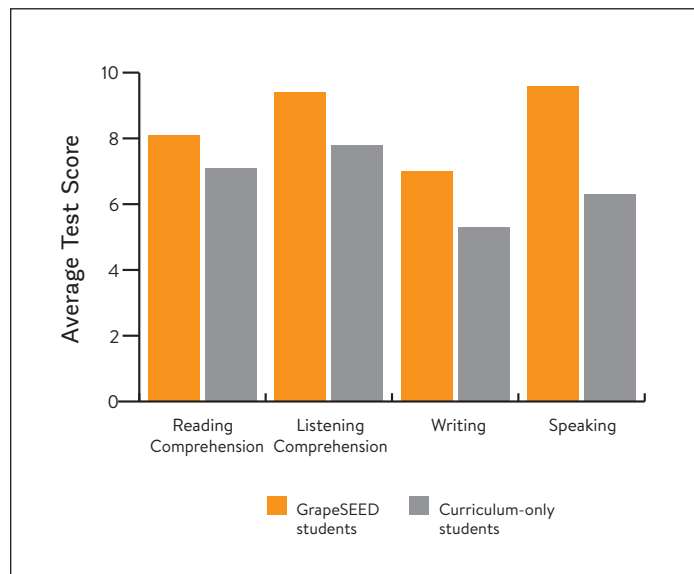


Figure 5. Summary of Average Scores with and without GrapeSEED (N=80)

“In both 2014 and 2015, our students competed in English-language competitions in nearby Mongolia—those students who received GrapeSEED won.”

Larisa Vydrina
Vice Principal, School No. 47

- Students experienced gains in all six areas of language development ranging from phonemic awareness to comprehension.
- The percent of students who tested at or above their age norm increased significantly, meaning it couldn’t happen by chance.
- Students, who previously earned average grades, improved to higher grades.
- Students, who already earned high grades, also improved, thereby increasing the school average.

The results of this study confirm what GrapeSEED teachers around the world already know: use of GrapeSEED results in measurable, repeatable, and accelerated English-language proficiency. For students in Ulan-Ude, this kind of language achievement equals success beyond elementary, junior, or even high school—it is the key to higher education, expanded job prospects, and attainment of their life dreams.

³ Baikal Educational Forum.

About GrapeSEED

GrapeSEED is an English oral-acquisition program for children. Backed by more than 40 years of pedagogical and curricular research, the program today serves 66,000 students in 860 schools and across 17 countries.

GROUNDING IN LANGUAGE-ACQUISITION THEORY AND RESEARCH

Hallmarks of the GrapeSEED program include accelerated language development, interactive teacher–student relationships, and enhanced student interest, engagement, and joy. And that’s no accident. GrapeSEED’s curriculum designers created the program’s framework based on respected language-acquisition theory and research.

Affective Filter Theory. Educational researcher Stephen Krashen identified the negative emotional and motivational factors that slow second-language acquisition. GrapeSEED classrooms are safe places where students take risks and willingly practice English.

Functional-Notional Approach. This approach is part of a learner-centered movement away from grammar-focused practices and toward the use of more-authentic language. GrapeSEED instruction is constructed around meaningful words practiced in relevant settings.

Progression-of-Learning Model. In this model, teachers gradually adjust instruction to help students progress from receptivity to expression. GrapeSEED students are exposed to vocabulary multiple times and in various contexts in order to embed the language into their memories and move them closer to fluency.

Natural Approach. Developed by Stephen Krashen and Tracy Terrell, this approach promotes second-language learning the way children learned their first languages. GrapeSEED’s curriculum emphasizes communication and includes strategically selected vocabulary and ideas, effective visuals, pertinent gestures, and repetition.

Vertical Phonics. GrapeSEED students get introduced to the most-frequent sounds of a phonogram at one time. Sound–phonogram relationships are memorized easily. And there are few special decoding rules.

Total Physical Response. Developed by James Asher, this teaching method coordinates language and physical movement so as to create brain links between speech and action. The language–body conversations are parts of every GrapeSEED lesson in order to boost language learning and vocabulary learning.

TEACHER TRAINING AND SUPPORT

GrapeSEED Foundation Training teaches the most-effective ways to achieve oral-language development. After implementation, GrapeSEED professional learning specialists provide personalized insight and coaching. In addition, GrapeSEED offers learning opportunities so educators can continue learning new ways to integrate best practices into their curricula.

OUR GOAL

GrapeSEED is committed to empowering students to overcome language barriers and gain command of the English language. Contact your GrapeSEED representative today to learn more.



ENGLISH EXCELLENCE FOR CHILDREN EVERYWHERE

+7 495 803 36 50 | contact-ru@grapeseed.com | grapeseed.com/ru