



MERCED CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Merced, California

Waterford
Early
Learning™

“Waterford is like an assistant teacher instructing the students. We know developmentally all children do not learn all things at the same time, but when they are ready and the connection goes ... they get it ... and Waterford has been a great assistant in that effort.”

“When the students are using the Waterford program, there is so much excitement and enthusiasm going on.”

*– Pat Matthews
teacher*

PROFILE

School District: Merced City School District

School Enrollment: 12,000 students

Number of Schools: 16

Grades: Pre K-8

Free/Reduced Price Lunch: 72 percent of the students

Ethnicity:

- 53% Latino
- 24% Caucasian
- 16% Asian
- 7% African American

CHALLENGE

The district identified the need to increase academic performance and kindergarten readiness of preschool students from low-income households, to enable them to begin kindergarten at or near the functional level of their peers from middle- and high-income households.

Goals included leveling the playing field between disadvantaged children and children from enriched homes; prevention of academic difficulties instead of later intervention; optimizing student learning during the three-hour preschool program; and building on established social and emotional foundations of the program.

SOLUTION

Merced City School District researched quality preschool literacy software programs and concluded that Pearson's Waterford Early Reading Program™ was the right choice for their goals and needs. The district implemented the Waterford Early Reading Program in 2004. The program is funded by Title I, federal and state funds, and grants.

Two computers, which are equipped with the Reading Level One program, are set up in 16 classrooms. All preschool students have a 12-minute session every day using the Waterford Early Reading Program.

Continued



Waterford Early Learning™

“One of the best attributes of the Waterford program is that it gives them feedback right away. It helps individualize student learning because every child works at his or her own pace. If a child is accelerating in the program, then the program adapts to the child’s needs. I’ve seen tremendous growth in the children.”

“We have one class that is composed of 100 percent Spanish speaking children. These children did not know a word of English and these are the same kids that are using the Waterford program!”

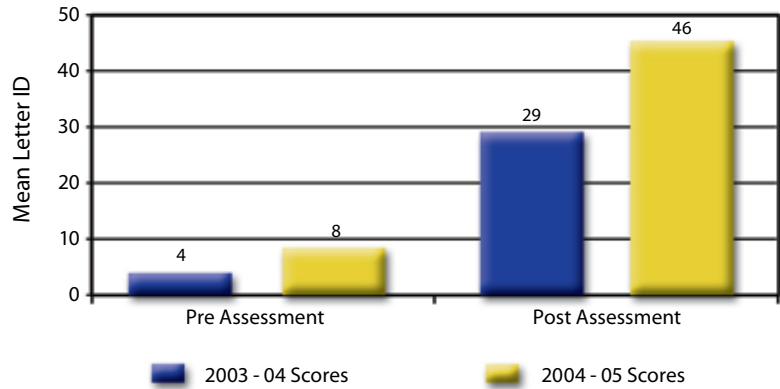
“The Waterford program motivates all students to learn because they are working independently. They have some time to work on their own, and that gives them a sense of accomplishment.”

— Josie Solis
literacy coach

RESULTS

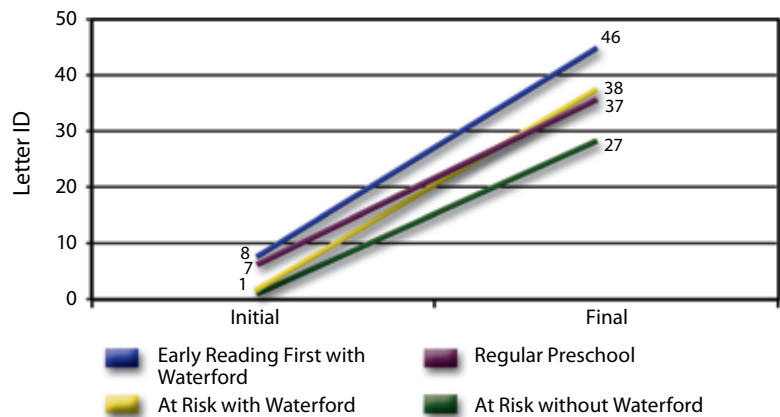
Statistics have shown that preschool students at Merced City School District using the Waterford program have scored approximately 30 percent higher in letter recognition over students not using the program.

Two Year Comparison



Students enter preschool with a mean letter ID average of 8 and leave with an average of 46 letters. This far exceeds the state average and is attributed to the usage of the Waterford program as a supplement to the high-quality preschool curriculum and instruction offered in the district.

Closing the Gap



Continued

Waterford Early Learning™

"I like that Waterford moves along with the child's level. It is based on their needs.

"With Waterford, we know that the children are working at their own level and at their own pace. I feel that the computer program is much more meaningful to their learning than prior to using Waterford in our classroom.

"I work with students that are in our intervention program. It is so exciting to watch them as things start to click for them. Then they become excited.

"At the beginning of the school year, we really focus on learning the letters in their names. When the children see their names flashing up in the different ways, each time they yell out, 'That's my name! That's my name!' They know the letters and then they begin spelling with those letters. It gives them a different format to see their names rather than just on paper. To see their names spelled out on a real computer program is very exciting for them.

"I love to observe the children when they are using Waterford. They are singing and giggling. And they love the games and all of the songs and rhymes!

"The Waterford program definitely motivates students to do their best because they enjoy it."

— Michele Garcia
intervention specialist

RESULTS (Continued)

Merced City School District has an intervention program in place for students identified as at risk. Students identified as at risk entered preschool with a mean letter ID average of 1, and those that received daily sessions of Waterford, as well as small group instruction, left with an average of 38. This exceeds the average of those students in the regular preschool deemed to be not at risk.

Waterford has met the expectations of the district with children using the program demonstrating higher letter recognition scores than their peers not using the program regardless of initial assessment scores, the program has proven to be the difference in closing the achievement gap. The program provides individualized instruction for each student and progress reports available within the Waterford program have allowed the district to monitor student growth and achievement in the areas of letter recognition, print concepts, and phonemic awareness. The reports also allow the district to monitor the number of lessons taught, the number of times a lesson is repeated before mastery, and each student's overall computer usage time.

According to Early Reading First Coordinator, Lori Slaven, "The Waterford program has accelerated our student learning of alphabet letter recognition, rhyming, phonological awareness, and concepts about print. Our students are actively engaged in learning while on the computer. They are very eager to take a turn and enjoy the lesson."