

Program Assessment of



AMIGO Program

Dr. Diana Wagner
Department of Education Specialties
Salisbury University
Salisbury, Maryland
Evaluator

July 29, 2009

Table of Contents

Summary of Significant Findings	2
Introduction	3
Characteristics of Student Participants	4
Pre-Test Scores of Student Participants	4
Test Score Comparison of Student Participants: Grade 1	5
Significant Areas of Progress.....	6
Test Score Comparison of Student Participants: Grades 2-5	7
Significant Areas of Progress.....	8
Summary and Recommendations.....	8
About the Evaluator	9

Summary of Significant Findings

This paper reports the findings of a study of test scores of more than 600 California English Language Learners who participated in the Guitars in the Classroom AMIGO program in Spring 2009.

Numerous significant and positive findings were made regarding students participating in the AMIGO program:

- Grade 1 AMIGO participants showed better than expected progress in Decoding and Word Recognition
- Grade 2-5 students showed small, but better than expected gains in five areas:
 - Decoding and Word Recognition
 - Reading Comprehension
 - Writing Skills
 - Spelling
 - Listening

This short-term study is somewhat limited in the breadth of its conclusions because data were examined over only a 3-month instructional window. Recommendations for expanding this study are included in the Summary and Discussion.

Program Assessment: Guitars in the Classroom AMIGO Program

Introduction

The Guitars in the Classroom AMIGO program trains teachers whose classes include a significant number of English Language Learners (ELLs), to make and lead music with their students every day. Singing memorable melodies with strong rhythms and educational lyrics gives ELLs a daily and much needed chance to practice their academic language proficiency while developing language comprehension, vocabulary, fluency, and new levels of understanding of academic lessons in every subject area. In this way, language learning and core studies happen together in a fun and meaningful atmosphere that bonds students and builds community in GITC classrooms.

The AMIGO program materials include lyrics and vocabulary lists in both Spanish and English. These help teachers who do not speak Spanish give their ELLs sufficient information to cross the language bridge from Spanish to English with full comprehension.

AMIGO songs have been chosen to address topics such as family, weather, time, clothing, the body, transportation, and other topics, in alignment with established lesson outcomes for attaining English Language Proficiency. The AMIGO development team has been extremely careful to write literal translations that include commonly used expressions that are recognizable by most Spanish-speaking children.

Regional AMIGO classes are provided free of charge to P-8 teachers whenever funding is available. Enrollment occurs on a first come, first served basis. In 2008-2009, pilot AMIGO classes were offered in 19 regions of California, as well as Omaha, Nebraska, Washington, DC, and in Chicago, Illinois.

Scope of Assessment

This report summarizes the analysis of test score data from 623 children in the Oakley Union Elementary School District, California, who were assessed in January and April 2009. Students in California use the Houghton Mifflin Reading California Edition Curriculum and were tested using the California Summative Tests (CSA, hereafter), which are correlated to the curriculum in use. The goal of this report is to assess the short-term impact of the Guitars in the Classroom (GITC) AMIGO program. For this analysis, students were grouped according to whether or not their teachers had integrated the AMIGO curriculum.

Statistical Methodology

CSA Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences 15 (SPSS). Descriptive analyses were conducted, as were independent, one-sample, and paired-sample t-tests to compare means between AMIGO and non-AMIGO groups. Because we would expect there to be some change in test scores over time under normal instructional conditions, the t-test examines test scores to see if any changes in group data differ significantly from expected values.

The t-tests require a significance value of .05. This means that there is more than a 95% chance that significant differences are due to the AMIGO program.

Characteristics of the Student Participants

The students examined for this study represent almost equally AMIGO and non-AMIGO classrooms. Nearly half of this large sample received AMIGO instruction, as reflected in Table 1.

Table 1. AMIGO Program Participation

AMIGO Program	n	Percent
Yes	304	48.8
No	319	51.2
Total	623	100.0

Students in this sample also represent multiple grade levels. The distribution across grades shown in Table 2, with the exception of grade 2, is nearly equal. Because the proficiency scores of grades 2-5 are identical, these grades are reported together and, therefore, the small number of second-graders is inconsequential.

Table 2. Distribution of Students Across Grade Levels

Grade	n	Percent
1	149	23.9
2	34	5.5
3	160	25.7
4	114	18.3
5	166	26.6

Pre-Test Scores of Student Participants

To see if AMIGO and non-AMIGO student groups varied significantly from each other prior to final testing, sub-test and total test scores were compared.

Because students are not tested in all sub-tests in all grade levels, the total number of participants for each sub-test does will not equal 623.

AMIGO participants had higher pre-test score averages to start in two areas: Phonetic Awareness and Decoding and Word Recognition. Otherwise, the student groups are statistically indistinguishable from each other.

Table 3. Pre-Test Scores of Participants

CSA Sub-Score	Amigo	n	Mean Score	Significant?	Significance Level
Phonetic Awareness	Y	68	8.65	YES	.000
	N	69	7.75		
Decoding & Word Recognition	Y	147	10.84	YES	.004
	N	172	9.85		
Vocabulary & Concept Development	Y	288	10.69	NO	
	N	300	10.78		
Reading Comprehension: Lit Response	Y	286	8.57		
	N	301	8.77		
Writing Strategies	Y	219	5.86		
	N	231	5.67		
Sentence Structure	Y	284	6.35		
	N	300	6.27		
Grammar, Capitalization, & Punctuation	Y	283	5.38		
	N	298	5.06		
Spelling	Y	283	4.31		
	N	298	4.20		
Listening	Y	288	3.21		
	N	299	3.15		
TOTAL Pre-Test Score	Y	257	48.05		
	N	247	49.95		

Test Score Comparison of Student Participants: Grade 1

Grade 1 test results are presented in Table 4. Significant area(s) of progress for AMIGO students are highlighted.

Student scores for AMIGO participants increased in every instance, with two significant exceptions.

Phonetic awareness performance decreased among the AMIGO group, while non-AMIGO students showed only a negligible increase. Because the AMIGO group began with a higher than expected score in this area, the subsequent decline might be due to natural score correction.

In the Reading Comprehension sub-test, both groups scored lower than would be expected.

These decreases may be due to the curricular sequence. For example, it is possible that students received more test-specific instruction immediately prior to the January test. Given the short time window of this test comparison—only three months—it is very difficult to draw any specific conclusions about the reasons for the decreased performance.

Significant Areas of Progress for Grade 1 AMIGO Participants

Students participating in AMIGO scored significantly higher than would be expected in Decoding and Word Recognition ($p=.01$). Score increases in other areas were within expected values.

Table 4. Pre- and Post-Test Scores for Grade 1

CSA Sub-Score	Amigo	n	Pre-Test (January)	Post-Test (April)	Change
Phonetic Awareness	Y	68	8.65	7.51	-1.14
	N	69	7.75	8.19	0.44
Decoding & Word Recognition	Y	67	12.81	13.56	0.75
	N	69	11.09	12.24	1.15
Vocabulary & Concept Development	Y	68	4.49	4.67	0.18
	N	69	4.19	4.34	0.15
Reading Comprehension: Lit Response	Y	67	5.16	4.60	-0.56
	N	69	4.41	4.29	-0.12
Sentence Structure	Y	67	1.72	1.83	0.11
	N	69	1.65	1.72	0.07
Grammar, Capitalization, & Punctuation	Y	67	4.36	4.69	0.33
	N	69	4.01	4.88	0.87
Spelling	Y	67	7.22	7.49	0.27
	N	69	7.13	7.15	0.02
Listening	Y	68	1.69	1.78	0.09
	N	70	1.51	1.69	0.18
TOTAL	Y	68	36.99	37.64	0.65
	N	69	41.84	44.21	2.37

Test Score Comparison of Student Participants: Grades 2-5

Test results for students in grades 2 through 5 are presented in Table 5. Significant area(s) of progress for AMIGO students are highlighted.

In grades 2-5, we see AMIGO students score lower in Vocabulary, Sentence Structure, and Grammar. These score differences, however, are not statistically significant. 5

Significant Areas of Progress for Grade2 2-5 AMIGO Participants

Students participating in the AMIGO program had small but significant score improvements in five areas:

- Decoding and Word Recognition (p=.016)
- Reading Comprehension (p=.000)
- Writing Skills (p=.000)
- Spelling (p=.000)
- Listening (p=.000)

Table 5. Pre- and Post-Test Scores for Grades 2-5

CSA Sub-Score	Amigo	n	Pre-Test (January)	Post-Test (April)	Change
Decoding & Word Recognition	Y	80	9.19	9.41	0.22
	N	103	9.02	9.26	0.24
Vocabulary & Concept Development	Y	220	12.60	12.47	-0.13
	N	231	12.75	12.76	0.01
Reading Comprehension: Lit Response	Y	219	9.61	10.38	0.77
	N	232	10.06	10.00	-0.06
Writing Skills	Y	219	5.86	6.70	0.84
	N	231	5.67	6.48	0.81
Sentence Structure	Y	217	7.78	7.88	0.10
	N	231	7.65	7.54	-0.11
Grammar, Capitalization, & Punctuation	Y	216	5.70	5.68	-0.02
	N	229	5.37	5.44	0.07
Spelling	Y	216	3.41	3.86	0.45
	N	229	3.31	3.56	0.25
Listening	Y	220	3.68	4.19	0.51
	N	229	3.66	4.66	1.00
TOTAL		189	52.04	54.67	2.63
		178	53.10	53.63	0.53

Summary and Recommendations

There is sufficient preliminary evidence that the AMIGO program is having a focused, positive impact on student performance on the California English Language Development Test.

Students exposed to the AMIGO program in grade 1 show significant short-term improvement in Decoding and Word Recognition.

The AMIGO program appears to have a broader impact on specific language skills in the higher grades, with students in grades 2-5 making small, but significant short-term gains in 5 sub-test areas.

The short time-window of these data, only three months, makes it difficult to draw more specific conclusions—be they positive, negative or neutral—about the classroom experiences of these children.

In order to more fully evaluate the impact of AMIGO instruction and in order to identify areas of increased long-term student achievement, the evaluator recommends that all students in grades 2-5 in the 2009-2010 school year have their January 2010 test scores compared to their January 2009 test scores. A one year period of evaluation will capture the impact of cumulative instruction in a way that a short-term study cannot.

About the Evaluator

Diana Wagner is a faculty member in the Department of Education Specialties at Salisbury (MD) University. Dr. Wagner holds the doctorate in educational leadership from University of Delaware, where her dissertation focuses on effective survey techniques for evaluating educational programs. Dr. Wagner teaches educational research methods in the Master of Education program and specializes in stakeholder feedback in educational evaluation.

Diana Wagner is also an acoustic musician and folksinger with an interest in preserving and sharing historic and traditional folk music. As an historian, collector, and performer of historic and traditional music, Diana is known for performing *a capella* roots music and music of the Civil War and the women's experience. In 2008, Diana Wagner released her CD, *Tradition Bearer*, a moving collection of traditional music.

Diana Wagner brought Guitars in the Classroom to Salisbury University in 2008, where she teaches a new cohort of public school teachers each semester.

More information about Dr. Wagner is available at <http://faculty.salisbury.edu/~dmwagner>