

Frequently Asked Questions for Districts and Schools

Efficacy Study of the Pearson *Writing Coach* Program

Cobblestone Applied Research and Evaluation, Inc. will be conducting a writing intervention study during the 2011-12 school year. The following is a list of frequently asked questions about the study. Please feel free to contact us via phone or email with any additional questions.

- 1. What is Writing Coach?** *Writing Coach* is a digitally-driven grammar and writing program that uses students' writing samples to diagnose strengths and weaknesses in their grammar and writing skills. The online program supports them with personalized feedback, grammar instruction, and remediation.
- 2. Why is Cobblestone conducting this study?** Under *No Child Left Behind*, textbook publishers are required to demonstrate that their programs are "scientifically based". Also, many districts and states are interested in finding effective literacy intervention options for struggling writers at the middle school level. To objectively evaluate their programs, Pearson Education has hired an external research firm (Cobblestone) to conduct an experimental study of their program (*Writing Coach*) to find how it affects student achievement. We have designed this study to comply with requirements from the National Center on Response to Intervention (NCRTI), which outlines specific criteria for studies on intervention programs. For more information on NCRTI, please visit:
http://www.rti4success.org/index.php?option=com_frontpage&Itemid=1
- 3. Who is participating in the research study?** Interventionists (e.g., teachers or reading coaches) and groups of students from schools throughout the U.S. are participating at the 7th and 8th grades. Participating students are those who are considered "Tier II" and eligible for writing intervention. Participants include those teachers and their students that are in the "treatment" group (using the *Writing Coach* program) and the "control" group (continuing to conduct business as usual).
- 4. How do you determine who uses the new program or not?** To participate in the study, those students identified at a school as possibly being eligible for participation in the study (Tier II students) will complete an initial diagnostic assessment (such as the AIMSweb assessment). Once it is determined that specific students meet the study criteria (scoring below the 30th percentile on the AIMSweb), eligible students will be randomly assigned by Cobblestone to either the treatment group or the control group. Schools will be informed of each student's placement after random assignment is complete.

5. **How will this study be conducted at our school?** Students selected to participate in the study will complete a norm-referenced assessment and a student survey as pretests (before beginning the intervention) and as posttests (about one month before the school year ends). Both treatment and control students will complete the pretests and posttests. In addition, the AIMSweb will be administered as an initial diagnostic assessment.
6. **How do parents give permission for their child to participate?** An interventionist at each school will also serve as the study liaison. The interventionist will be responsible for distributing parent consent forms. Passive parent consent forms will be used in which children will automatically participate in the study unless specifically opted out by a parent.
7. **How is participant information protected?** All names will remain confidential once it has been established which students will be participating in the study. An identification number will be assigned to all students. The data will remain locked in a filing cabinet and on secure computers. The research team will be the only ones who have access to the files.
8. **What are the benefits of participating?** Schools will receive free Teacher Edition textbooks and *Writing Coach* site licenses, training, and other resources for participating in the study. In addition, the school district, teachers, and their students benefit from participating by contributing to the broader knowledge base regarding which intervention programs might be best for their students. The study has no anticipated risks to participating students, teachers, schools or districts.



For more information about the study or eligibility requirements, please contact:

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