

# *Shurley English:*

## *The Relationship Between Shurley English and Student Language Arts Performance*



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## *The Relationship Between Shurley English and Student Language Arts Performance*

### **Executive Summary**

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Whether or not a strong foundation of language arts skills has been established early on often sets the stage, and strongly predicts whether or not children will flourish in their future educational and career endeavors. Unfortunately, research suggests that U.S. students' language arts skills continue to fall short. In order to help improve upon the English language arts skills of students, Shurley Instructional Materials' developed the *Shurley English* curriculum for students in grades K-8. This English language arts program was designed to help students master the key fundamentals such as vocabulary, mechanics, usage, editing, and sentence work. In an effort to provide preliminary information on *Shurley English*, PRES Associates conducted analyses to examine the relationship between *Shurley English* and student language arts performance on state assessments. The statistical analyses used existing assessment data available from three states: Georgia, Mississippi, and Indiana. The total sample included 225 *Shurley English* schools.

Major findings, organized by the key evaluation questions, include:

#### ***Are there significant changes in the language arts performance of students who use Shurley English over time?***

- Results showed that 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders in *Shurley English* schools demonstrated statistically significant language arts gains. Specifically, the percent of 4<sup>th</sup> grade students who were proficient

significantly increased by 4.3% and the percent of 5<sup>th</sup> grade students who were proficient significantly increased by 1.5%. In addition, while students in 3<sup>rd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades showed small improvement (0.2% and 0.6%), the percent of 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students who were proficient increased substantially by 4.7% and 5.5% respectively, although this was not statistically significant<sup>1</sup>.

#### ***Do schools show accelerated language arts performance following the introduction of Shurley English as compared to before Shurley English was used?***

- Analysis of pre-post changes in student performance showed that overall proficient and advanced students demonstrated significant accelerated language arts gains following introduction of *Shurley English* as compared to before *Shurley English* was used. There were also significant declines in the percent of students at the below basic level following usage of *Shurley English*.
- It is interesting to note that while long term gains were observed over time among the proficient and advanced students, the percent of proficient students first declined immediately following usage of *Shurley English* (i.e., during the Spring of their first year of usage). However, this is likely due to a learning curve that teachers and students

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<sup>1</sup> Note that the lack of significance among the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students is due to the more limited sample size at these grade levels, which negatively affects power.

experienced as they became accustomed to the new language arts program. Indeed, this is supported by the aforementioned findings that proficient and advanced students showed significant *accelerated* language arts gains during the years that followed initial implementation of *Shurley English*.

***How do patterns of student achievement in language arts among students in schools using Shurley English compare to statewide performance overall?***

- Across all three states, *Shurley English* schools showed more positive changes over time as compared to the average statewide performance. Specifically, *Shurley English* schools demonstrated a 4% increase in the percent of students who were proficient in language arts whereas statewide student performance declined by 2%.
- Overall, positive changes were observed among *Shurley English* schools in Georgia that exceeded those observed statewide. These findings were consistent within grades 3-5.
- Similar to the patterns observed in Georgia, *Shurley English* students in Mississippi and at the majority of grade levels tended to show more positive changes from 2008 to 2009 as measured by the Mississippi state language arts test than the statewide average. In addition, on the 2009 Mississippi Writing Test, there was a higher percentage of students in *Shurley English* schools who were proficient in writing as compared to students statewide.

- Patterns observed in the state of Indiana were also consistent with those obtained in Georgia and Mississippi. In particular, greater gains in language arts proficiency were observed among *Shurley English* schools as compared to statewide for 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> graders. Among 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade students, *Shurley English* schools were able to maintain the same level of proficiency over time as compared to declines in the percent of students statewide who were proficient.

PRES Associates' preliminary findings on the *Shurley English* program using existing data sources revealed that the program is associated with improvements in student language arts performance. Furthermore, the consistency of positive trends across different state standards and grade levels lends more credence to the observed patterns. In sum, while this study provides preliminary information on the relationship between *Shurley English* use and student performance, further research is needed to examine the effectiveness of the *Shurley English* program.

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## Project Background

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*“Student writers enter the classroom with diverse needs and skills, including multiple languages, grammars, cultures, and extracurricular literacy practices; therefore, various approaches and assessments are necessary in order to decrease the gaps between more-advantaged and less-advantaged writers. Attention to these gaps is especially important because writing acts as a gatekeeper; weak writing skills limit school, job, and advancement opportunities.” National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE, 2008, p. 1)*

Whether or not a strong foundation of language arts skills has been established early on often sets the stage, and strongly predicts whether or not children will flourish in their future educational and career endeavors. Indeed, college instructors often report that students arrive in their classes without being fully prepared “to take up the literacy tasks of higher education, and employers lament the inadequate literacy skills of young workers” (NCTE, 2007, p. 1). These claims are supported by research which reveals that 40 percent of high school seniors never or rarely write a paper of three or more pages, and less than half of the 2005 ACT-tested high school graduates demonstrated readiness for college-level reading (Applebee & Langer, 2006; ACT, 2006). Furthermore, on the 2007 National Assessment of Educational Progress (2010), only 33% of 8<sup>th</sup> graders and 24% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders were at or above proficiency in writing. In the area of reading, the latest 2009 NAEP results show that approximately 1/3 of 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students read at a proficient level.

Given these disturbing statistics, it is clear that the literacy skills of our youth must be improved upon. Indeed, it is imperative that effective language arts programs be designed so that students may successfully participate in future academic and occupational arenas. Shurley Instructional Materials’ *Shurley English* curriculum was developed with this goal in mind. *Shurley English*, for students in grades K-8, was designed to help students master the key fundamentals such as vocabulary, mechanics, usage, editing, and sentence work. With *Shurley English*, students learn many skills to help them master language concepts. They are given specific techniques to learn not only the concept, but also the entire thought process necessary to apply the concept. Aligned with national standards and the learning phases as described by Bloom’s Taxonomy and Webb’s Depth of Knowledge, *Shurley English* helps promote comprehension, application, retention, and critical-thinking skills.

Given how important literacy skills are to the future success of students, programs that can help in the development of these skills need to be looked at carefully to determine the extent to which they help students attain such critical skills. In an effort to provide preliminary information on *Shurley English*, Planning, Research, and Evaluation Services (PRES Associates, Inc.)<sup>2</sup> conducted analyses to examine the relationship between use of *Shurley English* and student performance using existing state assessment data collected in the states of Georgia, Mississippi, and Indiana.

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<sup>2</sup> PRES Associates, Inc. is an independent external research and evaluation firm with over twenty years of experience conducting applied educational research.

## Project Overview

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The purpose of this report is to present the results of statistical analyses conducted on existing state assessment data in order to examine whether *Shurley English* was associated with improvements in student reading/language arts performance. Specifically, the analyses were designed to address the following key evaluation questions:

1. Are there significant changes in the language arts performance of students who use *Shurley English* over time?
2. Do schools show accelerated language arts performance following the introduction of *Shurley English* as compared to before *Shurley English* was used?
3. How do patterns of student achievement in language arts among students in schools using *Shurley English* compare to statewide performance overall?

The remainder of this report includes: 1) a description of the methodology of the study, including a more detailed description of the sample and the *Shurley English* program; 2) detailed results of the analyses performed organized by evaluation questions; and 3) overall conclusions as well as recommendations for future research.

## Methodology

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This observational study consists of a single-group pre-post design<sup>3</sup>. To address the aforementioned evaluation questions, PRES Associates took advantage of the availability of assessment data from states as a result of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001, which requires measurement of school performance towards adequate yearly progress (AYP)<sup>4</sup>. As part of this legislation, states are required to administer language arts assessments to students in grades 3 to 8 (and once during high school) and make school results available to the public.

State assessment data was downloaded from state department of education websites. To the extent possible, data from at least one to two years prior to when schools began implementation was retrieved so as to examine changes in student performance. This data was analyzed within states so as to determine how *Shurley English* schools compare to statewide performance. In addition, analyses were conducted across states to examine how *Shurley English* schools performed overall. Given the variability of state assessment data available

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<sup>3</sup> This study is descriptive in nature and as such, can provide preliminary information on the relationship between *Shurley English* and student performance; however, it does not allow for causal inferences to be made concerning the effectiveness of *Shurley English*.

<sup>4</sup> Indeed, there are several advantages for researchers to draw upon state assessment data. First, it is available, requiring no actual data collection – this allows for studies to be undertaken during a relatively short time period. Thus, there is no additional testing time for students and evaluation costs are generally reduced by eliminating the need to purchase and score assessments. Drawing upon existing state assessment data as part of a battery of outcome measures could also potentially enhance the sensitivity of an evaluation. Finally, given the importance being placed on how students perform on state assessments, these measures can be highly meaningful in the minds of educators and other stakeholders associated with an evaluation effort.



across states<sup>5</sup>, in order to be able to compare data from diverse schools/districts located in multiple states, researchers used the aggregated percent of students proficient in language arts as the outcome measure.

It is important to note that this study consists of primarily descriptive analyses. That is, there is no comparison group (matched or randomized) that consists of similar schools using other language arts programs. Furthermore, this study lacks information on how teachers used the *Shurley English* program and whether it was implemented with fidelity. As such, this study does not allow for causal inferences to be made as to how schools using *Shurley English* perform compared to other schools not using this program. That said, examination of trends across multiple states provides preliminary information on the relationship between *Shurley English* and student language arts performance. Moreover, if similar positive patterns are observed across different states, it lends credence to the conclusion that *Shurley English* is positively related to student performance.

### ***Shurley English* Sample**

The sample consisted of schools that have used *Shurley English* and contained elementary and middle school level students (K-8). Researchers were provided with information on the schools/districts that used *Shurley English* and what year they began using the program by edition (1997 and 2007). The following table presents a

<sup>5</sup> In particular, there is considerable variation across state assessments in terms of: a) type, quality and difficulty; b) alignment to state standards; c) established proficiency levels or cut scores (and the processes used to determine them); d) the types of scores produced; e) the comparability of such scores over time and cohorts of students; and f) state and local policies for making such data available to outside research agencies (Chudowsky & Chudowsky, 2007).

breakdown of the number schools identified as *Shurley English* users by school level, and the year in which *Shurley English* started being implemented. As shown, there is some variation both between and within states in terms of when *Shurley English* began to be used, with the majority of schools starting to use the program within the prior 3 years. In addition, there was a sufficient number of schools that had performance data both prior to and following usage of *Shurley English* so that researchers could make pre-post comparisons.

**Table 1. *Shurley English* Schools**

State	Level	N	Years Used	
			Year Began	# of schools
GA	Elementary	39	2004	9
	Middle	1	2005	2
			2006	3
			2007	16
			2008	10
MS	Elementary	31	2007	26
	Middle	10	2008	25
	K-8	10		
IN	Elementary	88	1999	17
	Middle	38	2008	117
	K-8 / 3-8	8		
TOTAL	Elementary	158	≤2004	26
	Middle	49	2005	2
	K-8 / 3-8	18	2006	3
			2007	42
			2008	152

Table 2 shows the characteristics of the students in the sample schools. The majority of students are African American (50%), followed by White (38%). In addition, across all schools there is a large proportion of students who receive free/reduced lunch (84%). The range also shows that there is variation in the distribution of student characteristics between the schools. For example, there are some schools that are heavily African American and others that

are heavily Hispanic. In sum, there was a diverse sample of schools included in the study that showed a variation in ethnicity and socioeconomic status. Such variation in schools helps improve upon the generalizability of findings.

**Table 2. Shurley English School Characteristics\***

		Avg. %	Range	
			Min. %	Max. %
Gender	Male	52.0%	16.0%	85.3%
	Female	48.0%	14.7%	84.0%
Ethnicity	White	38.4%	.0%	100%
	Hispanic	11.7%	.0%	75.5%
	African American	50.2%	.0%	100%
	Asian	1.2%	.0%	15.6%
	Native American	0.5%	.0%	3.8%
	Multi	4.3%	.0%	14.3%
Free/Reduced Lunch	FRL	84.3%	.0%	100%
English Language Learner Status	ELL	10.1%	.0%	62.5%

\*School-level gender data was not available from Indiana. Data on ELL distributions was not available from Mississippi. Free/reduced lunch data was not available from Georgia.

## State Assessments

### Georgia

Georgia's Criterion-Referenced Competency Test (CRCT) is designed to measure student acquisition and understanding of the knowledge, concepts, and skills described in the Georgia Performance Standards (GPS). The CRCT is specifically intended to test Georgia's content standards outlined in the Quality Core Curriculum. Since Spring 2002, all students in grades one through eight take the CRCT in the content areas of reading, English/language arts, and mathematics.

Students in grades three through eight are also assessed in science and social studies.

The English/Language Arts content area testing domains include: 1) Grammar/Phonological Awareness/Phonics, Sentence Construction and Research in first grade; 2) Grammar/Phonics, Sentence Construction and Research in second grade; and 3) Grammar/Sentence Construction, and Research/Writing process in grades 3-8. Proficiency is measured by scale scores ranging from 150-450 for each grade level. A score below 300 does not meet standards, 300-349 meets standards, and 350 and above exceeds standards. The results are used to diagnose individual student strengths and weaknesses as related to the instruction of the GPS, and to gauge the quality of education throughout Georgia. School level CRCT data on the percent of students proficient at each level was available from 2005 to 2009 and used in the present study.

Georgia also administers a performance-based writing assessment to students in grades three, five, eight, and eleven. While this data was available to researchers, Georgia *Shurley English* schools did not use the writing portion of the *Shurley English* program. As such, analyses on the Georgia writing assessment were not conducted.

### Mississippi

The Mississippi Curriculum Test, Second Edition, (MCT2) is a measure of student achievement in Language Arts and Mathematics in grades 3-8 based on the 2006 Mississippi Language Arts Framework - Revised and 2007 Mississippi Mathematics Framework - Revised. In addition to being the basis for state accountability in these grades, the MCT2 is designed to meet the federal testing requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), 2001. The MCT2

contains test questions of varying degrees of difficulty that are aligned to the content, skills, and processes represented by Mississippi's academic content standards as specified in the state curriculum frameworks and the academic performance level descriptors.

The MCT2 for Language Arts measures a student's knowledge of grade-level curriculum in vocabulary, reading, writing and grammar. The performance level descriptors or proficiency levels are organized into four distinct levels: advanced, proficient, basic and minimal. These levels describe the content and processes that a student at a given level is expected to know, demonstrate or perform.

The MCT2 has been used in its current form since the 2007-2008 school year. Prior to this year the state used the Mississippi Curriculum Test (MCT). In place since the 2000-2001 school year, the exam underwent various changes until the implementation of the MCT2. Test scores prior to 2008 were not equated to the MCT2 and therefore could not be examined in the current study.

The Mississippi statewide assessment program also includes a writing assessment. The Writing II exam was developed in response to the Mississippi Student Achievement Improvement Act of 1999 which stated that standards for high school graduation shall include student "mastery of minimum academic skills as measured by assessments developed and administered by the State Board of Education." In 2008, Mississippi expanded the writing assessment to include writing assessments for grades 4 and 7 with the first operational test administered in spring 2009. This test data was examined in the present study.

## Indiana

The Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress-Plus (ISTEP+) is based on Indiana's Academic Standards and provides a learning checkup for students, making sure they are on track and signaling when extra help is needed. A criterion referenced test, the ISTEP+ measures what students know and are able to do at each grade level. Indiana students have been taking the ISTEP+ in its current version since 2002. Students are tested in the spring in English and math in grades 3-8, science in grades 4 and 6, and social studies in grades 5 and 7. The Indiana Academic Standards define the three categories of student achievement in English/language arts and mathematics as Pass +, Pass and Did Not Pass.

The ISTEP+ for Language Arts measures students' ability to understand while reading appropriate grade level text. Students are tested in the reading content areas of word recognition, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension and analysis. The Language Arts test also measures the students' ability to demonstrate writing skills when producing different writing forms using appropriate standard English conventions.

## Intervention

*Shurley English* is a K through 8 comprehensive language arts curriculum. Based on neuroscientific research, memory research, educational research, and effective strategy research on student learning, *Shurley English* incorporates:

- Direct Instruction
- The Memory Model
- Multiple Intelligences
- Brain-Compatible Instruction
- Cooperative Learning

- Multi-Sensory Learning

The most defining teaching model, the *Question and Answer Flow*, utilizes the different learning styles of students, includes enough repetition for students to master grammar easily, and incorporates the part-to-whole and whole-to-part philosophy. Furthermore, *Shurley English* writing teaches concrete organizational patterns for a variety of writing purposes.

Additional features of *Shurley English* include:

- **Uses All Learning Styles.** Students are constantly exposed to “see it, hear it, say it, do it” activities that meet the visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learning styles of students.
- **Never Teaches Isolated Concepts.** A concrete set of questions about each word in a sentence is used to teach students how all the parts of a sentence fit together.
- **Interactively Teaches During the Class Period.** *Shurley English* uses repetition, fun, and student/teacher interaction to help students learn difficult English skills. The teacher models each new step in *Shurley English* for the students. Then, the students actively participate with the teacher as the steps are practiced.
- **Uses Repetition to Attain Mastery.** *Shurley English* provides enough repetition for students to master each concept taught. Lessons include daily practice of old skills while new skills are being added.
- **Provides Tools for Writing Excellence.** The students are taught how to merge a strong skill foundation with the writing process. As a result, teachers can spend less

time laying foundational skills and can spend more time on advanced skills and writing concepts.

- **Promotes Higher Order Thinking Skills.** Students use their grammar and writing skills automatically with dependable results. This leads to higher level thinking skills because the students are stimulated to learn and use their own thought processes to solve difficult language problems.

According to the publishers, these key features of *Shurley English* work together to give students the concrete steps necessary to relate a definition to a concept, a concept to a skill practice, and a skill practice to writing and editing – all of which positively contribute to literacy development. To achieve this goal, the program includes:

- Student Textbook
- Student Workbook
- Teacher Pack
- Skill & Test Pages
- Teacher Workbook Keys
- Transparencies & eTransparencies
- Vocabulary Madness
- Jingle Time Music Pack
- Posters and Coloring Book
- English Language Learner support materials
- Shurley Grammar

In summary, *Shurley English* was designed to meet the unique needs of students so that they can become successful writers and readers. The present study was designed to further explore this curriculum by analyzing extant state assessment data to provide preliminary information on how well students at *Shurley English* schools perform. However, it is important to reiterate that the lack of a comparison group makes it difficult to attribute changes to this program alone. Moreover, it is unknown the extent to which teachers at these schools

implemented the *Shurley English* program as it is intended. That being said, the longitudinal analyses of students over time allows for performance trends to be monitored before and after exposure to *Shurley English*. With this in mind, the following presents a summary of the results, followed by a more detailed account.

## Summary of Results

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Analysis of the data revealed that *Shurley English* is associated with improved student language arts performance. Major findings include the following:

### ***Are there significant changes in the language arts performance of students who use Shurley English over time?***

- Results showed that 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders in *Shurley English* schools demonstrated statistically significant language arts gains. Specifically, the percent of 4<sup>th</sup> grade students who were proficient significantly increased by 4.3% and the percent of 5<sup>th</sup> grade students who were proficient significantly increased by 1.5%. In addition, while students in 3<sup>rd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades showed small improvement (0.2% and 0.6%), the percent of 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students who were proficient increased substantially by 4.7% and 5.5% respectively, although this was not statistically significant<sup>6</sup>.

### ***Do schools show accelerated language arts performance following the introduction of Shurley English as compared to before Shurley English was used?***

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<sup>6</sup> Note that the lack of significance among the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students is due to the more limited sample size at these grade levels, which negatively affects power.

- Analysis of pre-post changes in student performance showed that overall proficient and advanced students demonstrated significant accelerated language arts gains following introduction of *Shurley English* as compared to before *Shurley English* was used. There were also significant declines in the percent of students at the below basic level following usage of *Shurley English*.
- It is interesting to note that while long term gains were observed over time among the proficient and advanced students, the percent of proficient students first declined immediately following usage of *Shurley English* (i.e., during the Spring of their first year of usage). However, this is likely due to a learning curve that teachers and students experienced as they became accustomed to the new language arts program. Indeed, this is supported by the aforementioned findings that proficient and advanced students showed significant *accelerated* language arts gains during the years that followed initial implementation of *Shurley English*.

### ***How do patterns of student achievement in language arts among students in schools using Shurley English compare to statewide performance overall?***

- Across all three states, *Shurley English* schools showed more positive changes over time as compared to the average statewide performance. Specifically, *Shurley English* schools demonstrated a 4% increase in the percent of students who were proficient in language arts whereas statewide student performance declined by 2%.

- Overall, positive changes were observed among *Shurley English* schools in Georgia that exceeded those observed statewide. These findings were consistent within grades 3-5.
- Similar to the patterns observed in Georgia, *Shurley English* students in Mississippi and at the majority of grade levels tended to show more positive changes from 2008 to 2009 as measured by the Mississippi state language arts test than the statewide average. In addition, on the 2009 Mississippi Writing Test, there was a higher percentage of students in *Shurley English* schools who were proficient in writing as compared to students statewide.
- Patterns observed in the state of Indiana were also consistent with those obtained in Georgia and Mississippi. In particular, greater gains in language arts proficiency were observed among *Shurley English* schools as compared to statewide for 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> graders. Among 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade students, *Shurley English* schools were able to maintain the same level of proficiency over time as compared to declines in the percent of students statewide who were proficient.

What follows is a detailed account of the findings, which are organized by the evaluation questions. Included are the main statistical results and associated statistics.

## Detailed Results

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### *Are there significant changes in the language arts performance of students who use Shurley English over time?*

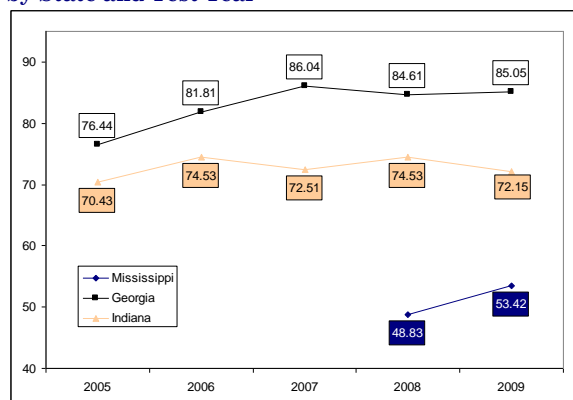
Analyses were performed to examine changes in student performance on the state English language arts assessments among *Shurley English* schools. Multilevel modeling was performed to determine if changes in performance from the initial data point (2005 for IN and GA and 2008 for MS) to 2009 were statistically significant. As previously noted, while researchers were able to obtain data since the 2005 testing year, given the significant change on the Mississippi state test only data from 2008 and 2009 testing years were analyzed for Mississippi.

Data was aggregated across all three states and grade levels (3<sup>rd</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup>) in order to determine if the overall change in the percent of students proficient on the state language arts assessments was significant<sup>7</sup>. Results showed that this was the case with student performance among *Shurley English* schools increasing significantly over time,  $\beta_{\text{slope}}=1.97, t\text{-ratio}=6.30, p<.001$ . Figure 1 shows the changes observed over time by state.

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<sup>7</sup> Statistical analysis by state is not appropriate given the small sample sizes involved.

**Figure 1. Percent of Students Proficient in English/Language Arts in Shurley English Schools by State and Test Year**



○ Among Shurley English schools in Georgia, Mississippi, and Indiana, results showed a significant overall gain in the percent of students who were proficient on the English/ language arts state assessments over time across all states.

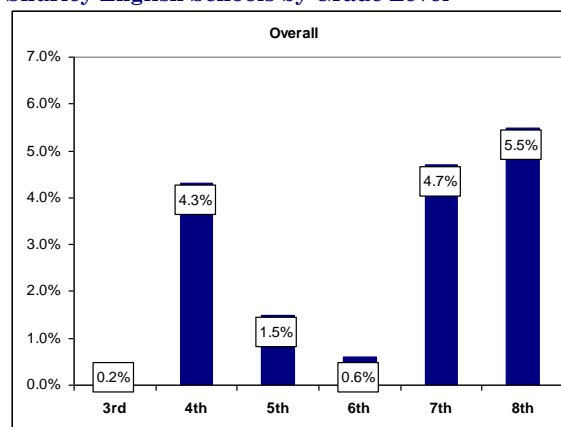
It is important to note that proficiency standards did not change during the time periods examined. Thus, any changes in performance are likely to be due to real changes in student abilities and skills.

In addition, trend analyses were conducted to examine if these gains across states were also seen within each grade level. In other words, analyses focused on whether there were significant changes among 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> graders. Results from multilevel models showed that 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade students in *Shurley English* schools showed significant gains in language arts performance,  $\beta_{\text{slope}}=4.31$ ,  $t\text{-ratio}=6.21$ ,  $p<.001$ . and  $\beta_{\text{slope}}=1.55$ ,  $t\text{-ratio}=2.92$ ,  $p<.01$ , respectively. Figure 2 shows the average increase in the percent of students in *Shurley English* schools who were proficient in the language arts assessments by grade. In addition, Figures 3-5 show the average percent of changes observed for each state<sup>8</sup>. Of note is that

<sup>8</sup> To calculate, the difference in performance from one year to the next was calculated. These difference scores were combined to obtain an overall change score.

gains were observed in the majority of cases—and no declines in performance were observed.

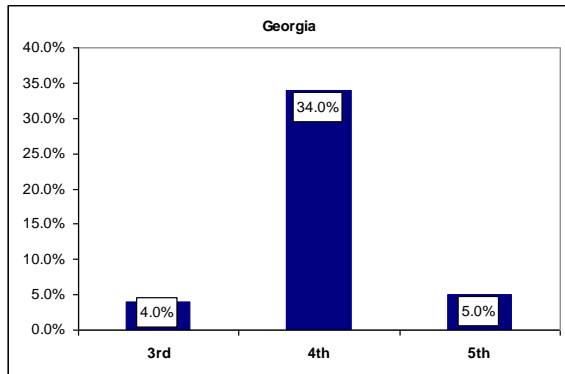
**Figure 2. Overall Average Gains<sup>9</sup> in Percent of Students Proficient in English/Language Arts in Shurley English Schools by Grade Level**



○ Results showed that 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders in *Shurley English* schools demonstrated significant language arts gains. Specifically, the percent of 4<sup>th</sup> grade students who were proficient increased by 4.3% and the percent of 5<sup>th</sup> grade students who were proficient increased by 1.5%. In addition, while students in 3<sup>rd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades showed small improvements, the percent of 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students who were proficient substantially increased by 4.7% and 5.5% respectively, although these latter findings were not significant.

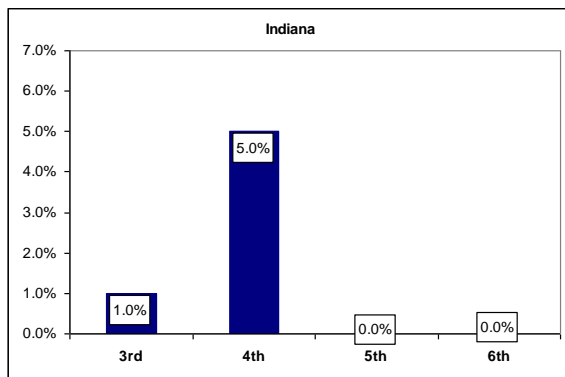
<sup>9</sup> Note that although 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders demonstrated the largest amount of growth, due to the more limited sample size at these grade levels (and power), statistics did not reach statistical significance.

**Figure 3. Average Gains Between 2005 and 2009 in Percent of Students Proficient in English/Language Arts in Shurley English Schools by Grade Level: Georgia**



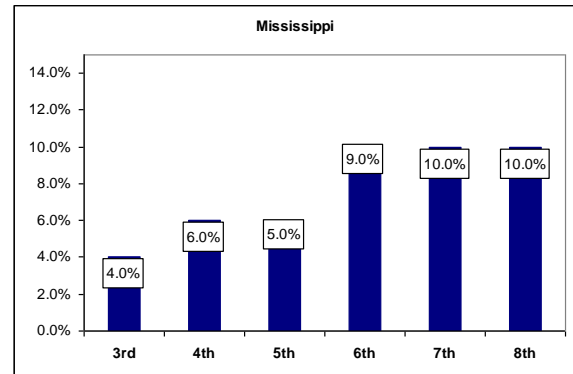
- Among Georgia students in Shurley English schools, 4<sup>th</sup> grade students made the largest gains between 2005 and 2009 as noted by the 34% increase in the percent of students proficient in the Georgia English/language arts test.

**Figure 4. Average Gains Between 2005 and 2009 in Percent of Students Proficient in English/Language Arts in Shurley English Schools by Grade Level: Indiana**



- From 2005 to 2009, the percent of Indiana 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade students proficient in the language arts state exam increased over time (1% and 5%). No changes were observed among 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders.

**Figure 5. Average Gains Between 2008 and 2009 in Percent of Students Proficient in English/Language Arts in Shurley English Schools by Grade Level: Mississippi**



- Mississippi students in Shurley English schools demonstrated improvement from 2008 to 2009 at all grade levels, with the largest increases occurring at the 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade levels (9-10%).

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*Across the states of Georgia, Mississippi, and Indiana, results showed a significant improvement in the percent of students in Shurley English schools who were proficient in language arts over time. In general, this positive pattern of results was also observed across grade levels and individual states.*

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***Do schools show accelerated language arts performance following the introduction of Shurley English as compared to before Shurley English was used?***

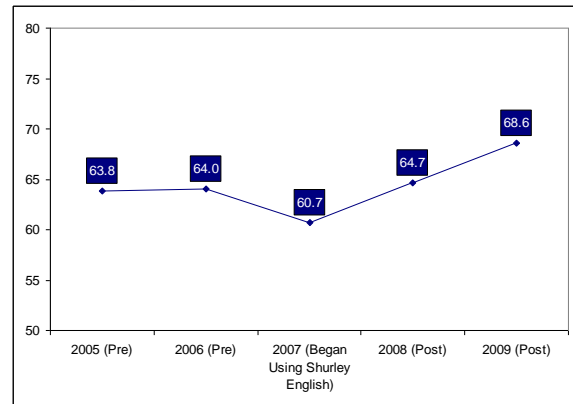
A stronger examination of student changes in language arts performance is provided by examining whether schools demonstrated significant changes in performance following the introduction of *Shurley English*. In order to conduct this analysis, schools that had pretest (i.e., test scores prior to *Shurley English* usage) were identified among the Indiana and Georgia samples. Since Mississippi's state assessment was notably altered for the 2007-08 school year, no Mississippi schools were included in these analyses. Of interest are: (1) whether there is an immediate increase in performance following implementation of *Shurley English* (i.e., is there an initial bump up in test scores?); and (2) whether there are any accelerated learning gains following usage of *Shurley English* (i.e., are changes observed after greater than changes observed before).

Prior to discussing the results, it should be reiterated that due to the lack of implementation information on the sample schools, it is not possible to draw strong conclusions with respect to the impact of *Shurley English*. Instead, the following presents descriptive information on patterns observed in the data available.

Analyses were conducted via multilevel modeling. Results showed a significant decline in the percent of students proficient in language arts during the Spring following the schools adoption of *Shurley English*,  $\beta_{\text{slope}}=-3.52$ ,  $t\text{-ratio}=-3.25$ ,  $p<.01$ . However, this may be indicative of a learning curve as teachers and students become more familiar with the program. Indeed, this is supported by the significant accelerated learning gains that

were observed during the years following *Shurley English* implementation,  $\beta_{\text{slope}}=7.23$ ,  $t\text{-ratio}=4.81$ ,  $p<.001$ . In sum, while the percent of students who were proficient initially declined, these students showed significant gains after using *Shurley English* during the years that followed. Figure 6 displays these results.

**Figure 6. Percent of Students Proficient in English/Language Arts Before and After *Shurley English* Exposure**

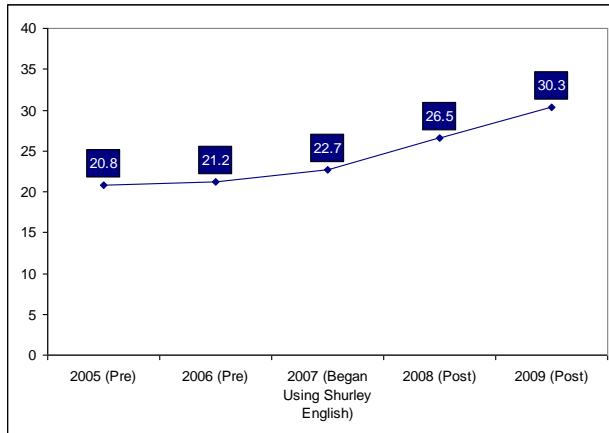


○ Results showed a significant accelerated gain in the percent of students proficient in language arts during the years following *Shurley English* usage. However, it is interesting to note that there was also an initial decrease in the percent of students who were proficient during the Spring immediately after *Shurley English* was introduced. The initial decline may be attributable to a learning curve as teachers and students become accustomed to the program.

Data on the percent of students who were advanced and below basic was also examined to determine if these subgroups showed similar or distinct patterns. Results showed that the percent of *advanced* students: 1) increased immediately following implementation of *Shurley English*,  $\beta_{\text{slope}}=1.23$ ,  $t\text{-ratio}=2.12$ ,  $p<.05$ ; and 2) these increases were sustained during the years that followed,  $\beta_{\text{slope}}=2.20$ ,  $t\text{-ratio}=2.72$ ,  $p<.01$ . In contrast, the percent of students who were *below basic* significantly decreased during the years that followed implementation of

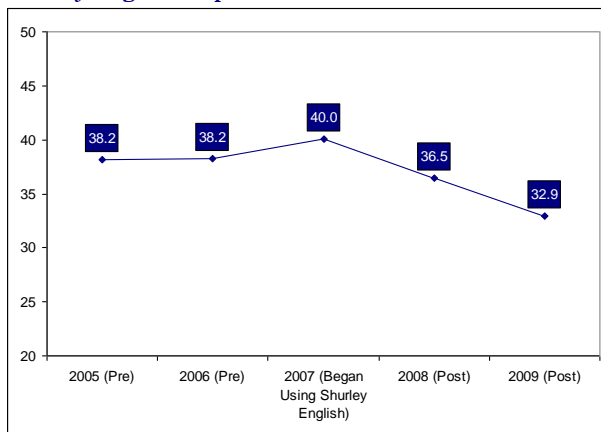
*Shurley English*  $\beta_{\text{slope}}=-5.36$ ,  $t\text{-ratio}=-4.30$ ,  $p<.001$ . These findings are illustrated in Figures 7-8.

**Figure 7. Percent of Students Who Were Advanced in English/Language Arts Before and After *Shurley English* Exposure**



- Results showed a significant immediate gain in the percent of advanced students at *Shurley English* schools. Moreover, there were significant accelerated gains following this increase which suggests that the *Shurley English* program helps build upon student language arts skills.

**Figure 8. Percent of Students Who Were Below Basic in English/Language Arts Before and After *Shurley English* Exposure**



- Another positive finding is evident when examining the percent of students who were below basic. If a program is showing a positive relationship to student performance, one expects the percent of students who are lower performing to decrease over time and, concurrently the percent of students who are proficient or above to increase over time. Analyses of the

percent of students who were at a below basic level of proficiency showed this positive pattern. Specifically, significant declines in the percent of students who were below basic occurred after schools began using *Shurley English* as compared to before *Shurley English* was used.

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*Analysis of pre-post changes in student performance showed that proficient and advanced students demonstrated significant accelerated language arts gains following introduction of *Shurley English* as compared to before *Shurley English* was used. There were also significant declines in the percent of students at the below basic level following usage of *Shurley English*—another positive finding. In addition, while long term gains were observed over time among the proficient and advanced students, the percent of proficient students first declined immediately following usage of *Shurley English* (i.e., during the Spring of their first year of usage). However, this is likely due to a learning curve that teachers and students experienced as they became accustomed to the new language arts program.*

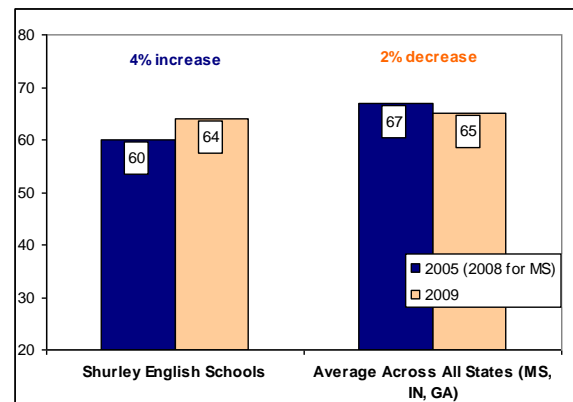
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*How do patterns of student achievement in language arts among students in schools using Shurley English compare to statewide performance overall?*

In order to obtain information on the performance of *Shurley English* schools relative to average state performance, data on average percent of students statewide who were proficient in language arts was obtained for each state, grade level, and testing year of interest (2005-2009 for IN and GA, and 2008-2009 for MS). Of note is that full statistics were unavailable for all states and as such, analyses on statistical significance could not be performed. Instead, the following consists of purely descriptive information which should provide useful, preliminary information on how *Shurley English* schools compare to schools statewide. To reiterate, however, while patterns can be observed, no conclusive findings can be deduced from these data due to a lack of comparison group and implementation information.

Figure 9 shows the percent of students who were proficient in language arts across all states and grade levels. This information is presented for students at *Shurley English* schools and for students statewide. As shown, overall *Shurley English* schools showed more positive changes over time whereas student performance statewide declined by 2%. To more thoroughly understand this overall pattern, performance was examined within each state and grade level. These are discussed in the following sections.

Figure 9. Percent of Students Proficient in English/Language Arts in Shurley English Schools and Across All States



- Overall, results showed a positive increase (4%) in the percent of students who were proficient in language arts and attended *Shurley English* schools. In contrast, on average there was a decline (2%) in proficiency across all three study states.

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*Across all three states, Shurley English schools showed more positive changes over time as compared to the average statewide performance. Specifically, Shurley English schools demonstrated a 4% increase in the percent of students who were proficient in language arts whereas statewide student performance declined by 2%.*

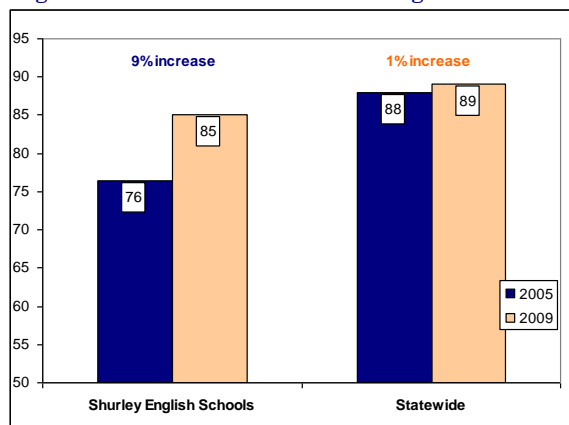
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## Georgia

Examination of Georgia state assessment data shows that overall (across all grade levels) students in *Shurley English* schools showed greater improvement (9% increase) than the statewide average (1% increase) between 2005 and 2009, see Figure 10. Figures 11-13 shows this information for each elementary grade level (3-5)<sup>10</sup>.

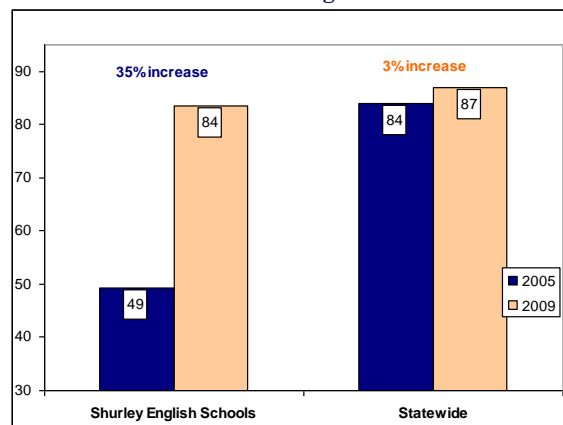
<sup>10</sup> Only one middle school (grades 6-8) in Georgia was identified as a *Shurley English* school. To ensure the confidentiality of this school, data from this school is not presented.

**Figure 10. Percent of Students (Grades 3-5) Proficient in English/Language Arts in Shurley English Schools and Statewide: Georgia**



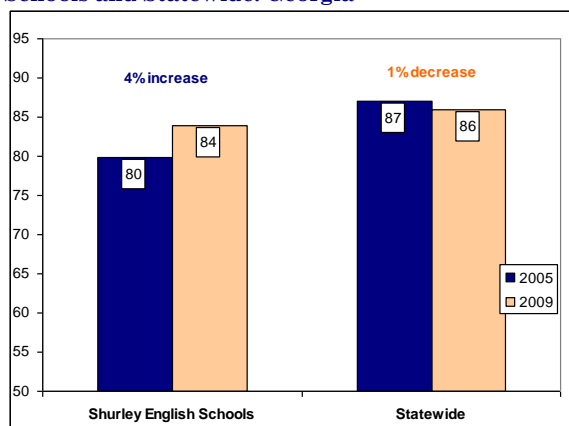
- On the Georgia state language arts test, students in Shurley English schools showed greater gains (9% increase) from 2005 to 2009 than the statewide average (1% increase).

**Figure 12. Percent of 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Students Proficient in English/Language Arts in Shurley English Schools and Statewide: Georgia**



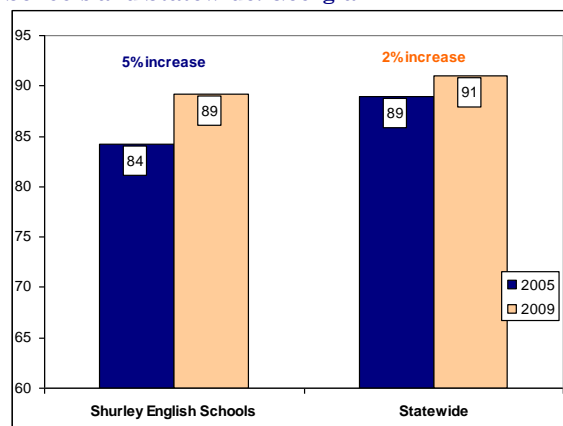
- There was a very large increase (35%) in the percent of students proficient in language arts and attending schools using Shurley English<sup>11</sup>. In comparison, statewide 4<sup>th</sup> graders improved by 3%.

**Figure 11. Percent of 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Students Proficient in English/Language Arts in Shurley English Schools and Statewide: Georgia**



- Statewide, there was a 1% decrease in the percent of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students proficient in language arts between 2005 and 2009. In contrast, there was a 4% increase among 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students in Georgia Shurley English schools.

**Figure 13. Percent of 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Students Proficient in English/Language Arts in Shurley English Schools and Statewide: Georgia**



- Among 5<sup>th</sup> grade Georgia students, Shurley English students showed a greater increase in language arts than students statewide. Specifically, there was a 5% increase in the percent of students in Shurley English schools who were proficient in language arts as compared to the 2% increase observed statewide.

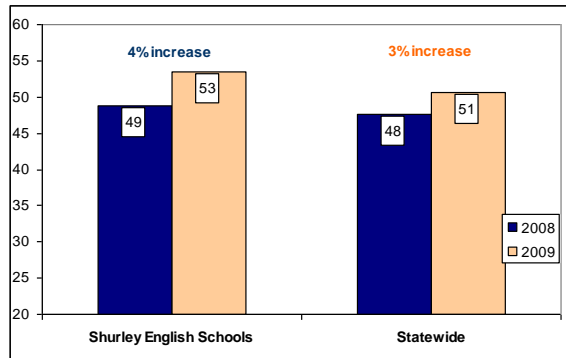
<sup>11</sup> It should be noted that schools using Shurley English in 2005 generally consisted of low-performing schools, hence the discrepancy with the statewide average.

*Overall, positive changes were observed among Shurley English schools in Georgia that exceeded those observed statewide. These findings were consistent across grades 3-5.*

## Mississippi

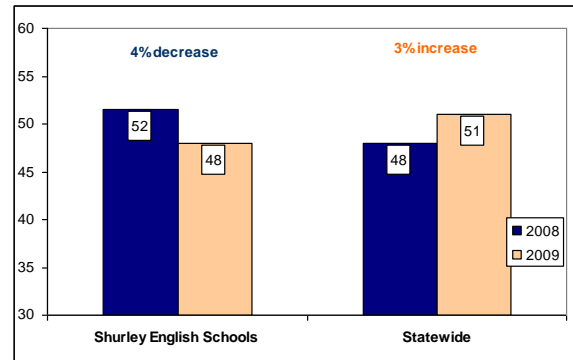
Given the recent change in the Mississippi state assessment, information for the prior two years that the MCT2 has been used is displayed in the following figures. As shown in Figure 15, students across all grade levels (3-8) who took the Mississippi state language arts test showed greater improvement (4% increase) than the statewide average (3% increase) between 2008 and 2009. Figures 16-21 shows this information for each grade level (3-8).

**Figure 15. Percent of Students (Grades 3-5) Proficient in English/Language Arts in Shurley English Schools and Statewide: Mississippi**



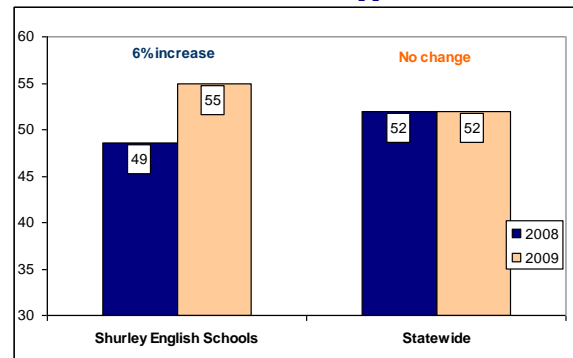
- On the Mississippi state language arts test, students across all grade levels in Shurley English schools showed greater gains (4% increase) from 2008 to 2009 than the statewide average (3% increase).

**Figure 16. Percent of 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Students Proficient in English/Language Arts in Shurley English Schools and Statewide: Mississippi**



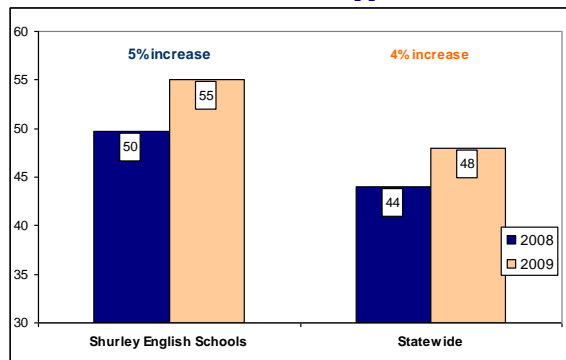
- Statewide, there was a 3% increase in the percent of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students proficient in language arts between 2008 and 2009. In contrast, there was a 4% decrease among 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students in Mississippi Shurley English schools.

**Figure 17. Percent of 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Students Proficient in English/Language Arts in Shurley English Schools and Statewide: Mississippi**



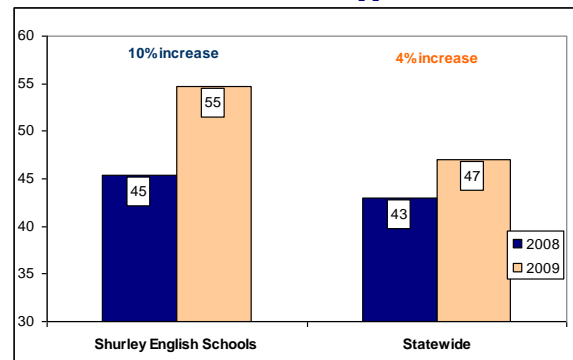
- While there was no change statewide in the percent of 4<sup>th</sup> graders proficient on the Mississippi language arts test, students in Shurley English schools showed a 6% increase.

**Figure 18. Percent of 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Students Proficient in English/Language Arts in Shurley English Schools and Statewide: Mississippi**



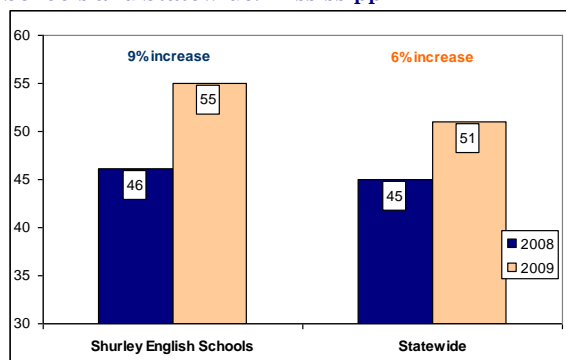
- There was a greater increase (5%) among 5<sup>th</sup> grade students who attended Shurley English schools in language arts proficiency than the statewide increase (4%) between 2008 to 2009.

**Figure 20. Percent of 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Students Proficient in English/Language Arts in Shurley English Schools and Statewide: Mississippi**



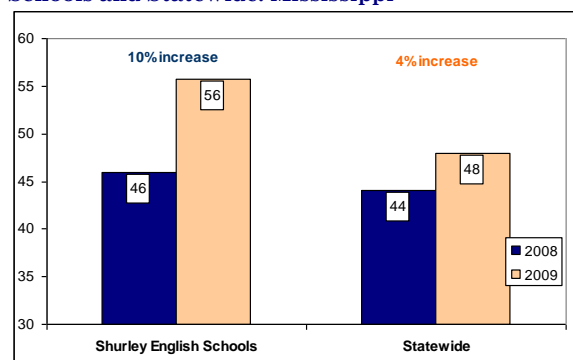
- There was a large increase (10%) in the percent of 7<sup>th</sup> graders proficient in language arts and attending schools using Shurley English from 2008 to 2009. In comparison, statewide 7<sup>th</sup> graders improved by 4%.

**Figure 19. Percent of 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Students Proficient in English/Language Arts in Shurley English Schools and Statewide: Mississippi**



- Among 6<sup>th</sup> grade Mississippi students, there was a 9% increase in the percent of students proficient in language arts and in Shurley English schools as compared to the 6% increase observed statewide.

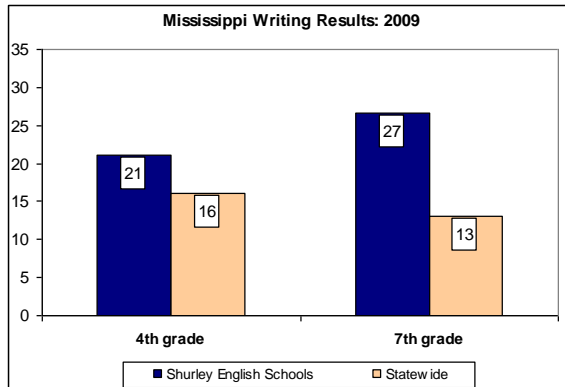
**Figure 21. Percent of 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Students Proficient in English/Language Arts in Shurley English Schools and Statewide: Mississippi**



- Similar results were obtained for 8<sup>th</sup> grade students. Eighth graders attending Shurley English schools showed greater gains (10%) in language arts proficiency than students statewide (4% increase).

Data was also available on the Mississippi writing test taken by 4<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> graders for the Spring 2009 testing period only. Figure 22 shows that among both 4<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade students, there was a higher percentage of writing proficient students in *Shurley English* schools as compared to the statewide average.

**Figure 22. Percent of 4<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Students Proficient in Mississippi Writing Test: Shurley English Schools and Statewide Average**



- On the 2009 Mississippi Writing Test, 4<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade students who attended *Shurley English* schools showed greater levels of writing proficiency than students statewide.

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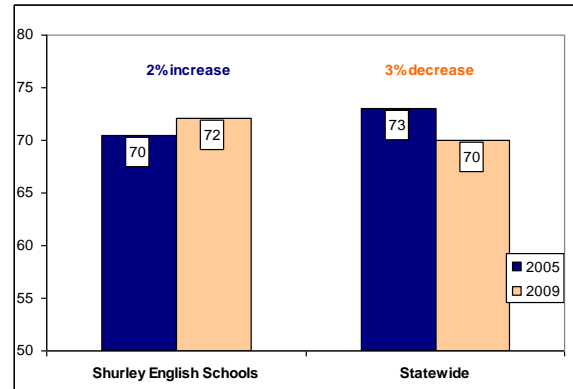
*Similar to the patterns observed in Georgia, Shurley English students in Mississippi and at the majority of grade levels tended to show more positive changes from 2008 to 2009 as measured by the Mississippi state language arts test than the statewide average. In addition, on the 2009 Mississippi Writing Test, there was a higher percentage of students in Shurley English schools who were proficient in writing as compared to students statewide.*

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## Indiana

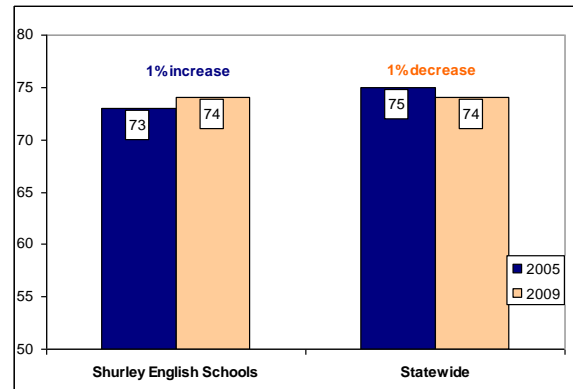
Examination of Indiana state assessment data shows that across all grade levels students in *Shurley English* schools showed an improvement (2% increase) in language arts proficiency from 2005 to 2009. In contrast, statewide there was a 3% decrease during this same time period, see Figure 23. Figures 24-27 shows this information for each grade level (3-6) that *Shurley English* schools contained.

**Figure 23. Percent of Students (Grades 3-6) Proficient in English/Language Arts in Shurley English Schools and Statewide: Indiana**



- On the Indiana state language arts test, students in *Shurley English* schools showed a gain of 2% in proficiency from 2005 to 2009. In comparison, statewide the percent of students proficient in language arts decreased by 3%.

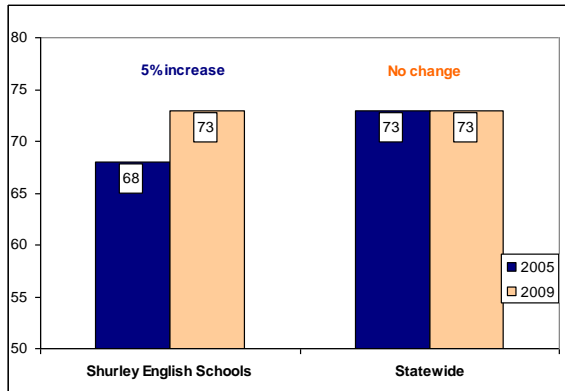
**Figure 24. Percent of 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Students Proficient in English/Language Arts in Shurley English Schools and Statewide: Indiana**



- There was a 1% increase among 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students in Georgia *Shurley English*

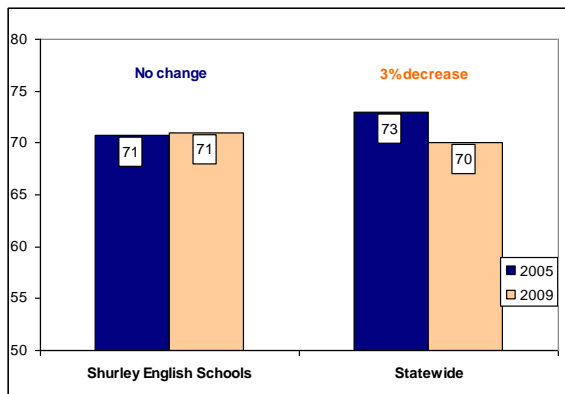
*schools. In contrast, across the state of Indiana, there was a 1% decrease in the percent of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students proficient in language arts between 2005 and 2009.*

**Figure 25. Percent of 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Students Proficient in English/Language Arts in Shurley English Schools and Statewide: Indiana**



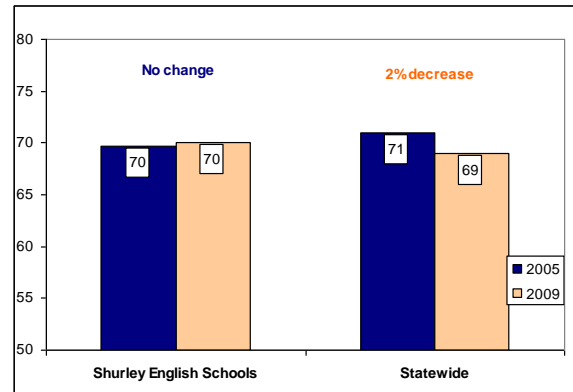
- *While statewide there was no change in the percent of 4<sup>th</sup> graders proficient in language arts from 2005 to 2009, there was an increase (5%) among 4<sup>th</sup> graders attending schools using Shurley English.*

**Figure 26. Percent of 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Students Proficient in English/Language Arts in Shurley English Schools and Statewide: Indiana**



- *Among 5<sup>th</sup> grade Indiana students, there was a 3% decrease in the percent of students proficient in language arts. However, Shurley English schools maintained the same level of proficient students.*

**Figure 27. Percent of 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Students Proficient in English/Language Arts in Shurley English Schools and Statewide: Indiana**



- *Similarly, while there was a 2% decrease statewide in language arts proficiency among 6<sup>th</sup> graders, the proficiency rates in Shurley English schools stayed the same at 70%.*

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*Patterns observed in the state of Indiana were also consistent with those obtained in Georgia and Mississippi. In particular, greater gains in language arts proficiency were observed among Shurley English schools as compared to statewide for 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> graders. Among 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade students, there were decreases statewide between 2005 and 2009. In contrast, Shurley English schools were able to maintain the same level of proficiency.*

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## Conclusion

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Overall, results obtained from this descriptive study showed that *Shurley English* is positively related to student language arts performance as measured by state assessment data. In particular, there were positive changes observed over time across all states and within each of the individual states. In addition, gains observed in *Shurley English* schools oftentimes exceeded the statewide average. Moreover, analysis of pre-post trends provides some evidence that students exhibited accelerated patterns of growth in language arts proficiency during the years after schools implemented *Shurley English*.

It should be emphasized that the consistency of positive trends across different state standards and grade levels lends more credence to the observed patterns. However, as discussed in the following section, more rigorous scientific research is needed to determine if the *Shurley English* program is effective in improving upon the language arts skills of students.

### ***Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research***

PRES Associates' preliminary findings on the *Shurley English* program using existing data sources revealed that the program is associated with improvements in student language arts performance. While this study provides preliminary information on the relationship between *Shurley English* use and student performance, it was limited in that: a) a comparison group was unavailable; b) the state samples were limited; and c) it is unknown how teachers used the *Shurley English* program and whether it was implemented with fidelity.

As such, further research is needed and may include the following:

- **Comparisons between *Shurley English* users and non-*Shurley English* users.** Given the lack of any comparison groups, information is lacking on how student performance is affected by usage of *Shurley English* as compared to other language arts curricula. In order to make conclusive, causal statements about the effects of *Shurley English*, well-implemented experimental or quasi-experimental research is needed in which students using *Shurley English* are compared to a group of students not using *Shurley English* (comparison groups could be designated either by random assignment or careful matching of groups). The present study was limited in that it did not include randomization to control and treatment groups and as such, causal conclusions are not warranted.
- **Additional assessment measures.** While data consisted of tests that are aligned to the MS, GA, and IN state standards, these tests are specific to these three states and as such, generalizability to students nationwide is limited. Research using a national, norm-referenced assessment would allow for results to generalize to a broader population. That said, the consistent patterns of results observed across the three states help enhance the reliability of results.
- **More in-depth research regarding how level of implementation relates to improvement in performance.** Further research

should include teacher implementation information. Additionally, research could focus on looking at the effects of *Shurley English* when it is implemented with high fidelity and sufficient intensity and duration. Alternatively, research could also focus on different program components in order to gain insight into how implementation relates to student performance.

In summary, the results of this study provide support for a positive relationship between the *Shurley English* program and student language arts performance. These findings are especially notable because of the consistency in findings across multiple states. However, while this study provides preliminary information on the relationship between *Shurley English* and student language arts performance, further research is needed to examine the effectiveness of the *Shurley English* program.

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