



**PENN GRADUATE  
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION**

**Penn Literacy Network  
215-898-1984**

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**Can Professional Development through  
PLN improve student test results?**

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*The goal of the Penn Literacy Network is to nurture and improve the quality of instruction to which students are exposed in the classroom. Can focused professional development tailored to the needs of individual schools and districts have a positive impact on measurable student achievement?*

*Common sense says “yes” as does teacher feedback in evaluating our program. Hard research data is harder to come by, but consider the following test results compiled by schools that enjoyed a close partnership with The Penn Literacy Network:*

**In Philadelphia, Pennsylvania**

A Philadelphia elementary school **improved its Reading Comprehension ranking from 175th in 1986 to 34th in 1994** after extended participation with PLN. At this same school, the **percentage of students reading on or above grade level rose from 15% to 40% in only two years** of participation in the Penn Literacy Network program.

**Colonial Schools, Delaware**

In 2001, The Colonial School District of Delaware achieved outstanding results in the state’s first-ever rating of schools based on student achievement. A total of 166 schools were rated as Superior, Commendable, or Under Review. **Colonial’s fourteen schools ranked number one in the state** in terms of both the number and percentage of superior ratings:

# of ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS	# RATED SUPERIOR	# RATED COMMENDABLE	% SUPERIOR/ COMMENDABLE
10	6	3	90%
# of TOTAL DISTRICT SCHOOLS	# RATED SUPERIOR	# RATED COMMENDABLE	% SUPERIOR/ COMMENDABLE
14	7	5	86%

These ratings reflect three areas of review: overall test performance, overall student improvement, and improvement for failing students for the years 1998-2001. Colonial’s ratings compare favorably to state averages: **50% of Colonial’s schools were awarded a Superior rating compared to a state average of 23% and 86% of Colonial’s schools earned a rating of Superior or Commendable compared to the state average of 70%**. This in a district with a diverse population and in which seven of its schools report over 30% of its students as “low income.” \*

PLN was a primary provider of professional development during this time period and is cited by the district superintendent as having a major influence on student learning and achievement.

\*SOURCE: [www.delawareonline.com](http://www.delawareonline.com) (provided by the Delaware State Department of Education)

## In Baltimore, Maryland

Coldstream Park Elementary School achieved outstanding growth as measured by the Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP) after a two year partnership with PLN:

### PERCENT OF STUDENTS MEETING OR SURPASSING THE MSPAP REQUIREMENTS BY GRADE AND CONTENT AREA AND AS COMPARED TO OTHER BALTIMORE AREA SCHOOLS IN 2000 \*

Grade 3	1997	2000	2000 BALTIMORE	Grade 5	1997	2000	2000 BALTIMORE
Reading	23.4	32.8	18.5	Reading	20.2	32.5	19.9
Writing	9.1	40.5	28.9	Writing	32.9	30.8	19.9
Language	26.0	35.5	26.8	Language	37.0	46.9	31.4
Science	13.0	51.9	16.9	Science	9.6	34.6	22.7
Soc. Studies	7.8	62.0	18.8	Soc. Studies	20.6	25.9	20.7

\* **SOURCE: Maryland School Performance Report 2000**

In fact, Coldstream Park was the recipient of an award for outstanding achievement in increasing test scores.

## New Jersey

One suburban New Jersey High School provides an exceptional example of the link between student achievement and the focused professional development PLN provides. This school enjoyed significant gains in writing scores on The High School Proficiency Test:

### DISTRICT FACTOR GROUP (DFG) RANKING IN TOTAL WRITING ON THE NEW JERSEY HSPT: \*

1991	1992	1993
23	14	9

These scores coincide with two years of PLN training for secondary staff across the content areas with a specific focus on writing instruction.

In a different, urban New Jersey district, **one elementary school saw its scores on the Grade 4 Elementary School Proficiency Assessment (ESPA) rise dramatically in only one year, from 67% of its general education population scoring Proficient or Advanced Proficient in 2000 to 100% of its general education AND special education students scoring Proficient or Advanced Proficient in 2001.\*** This increase followed the first two years of an ongoing partnership with the Penn Literacy Network.

\* **SOURCE: The New Jersey Department of Education**

*Numbers alone can never tell the whole story of the impact The Penn Literacy Network can have on achievement, but research-based professional development focused on improving student learning is key to providing each student opportunities for growth and success.*