

SylvanSync:
Academic Update
Mid-Year Supplement

Submitted to

Sylvan Learning

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August 2015

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STUDY DESIGN

This report supplements the March 2015 SylvanSync *Academic Update* with a summary of recent research comparing the *actual* academic growth made by students enrolled in SylvanSync reading and math programs to their *expected* growth. These comparisons are made possible by access to Renaissance Learning’s growth norms, which allows Sylvan and its team of researchers to examine SylvanSync students’ performance on the STAR tests alongside the growth made by thousands of other students—in the same grade, at the same ability level, and over similar periods of time—who have not had a Sylvan experience.

The findings reported here continue to indicate that SylvanSync works to help students improve their reading and math skills. They also reflect Sylvan’s continuing commitment to refining its programs to ensure the most efficient paths toward competency for all students. To learn more about the background research on [SylvanSync](#), consult the [Sylvan Research Institute](#).

This supplement is based on assessment data from approximately 18,000 first through twelfth grade students who received reading or math instruction at Sylvan Centers from June 1, 2014 through May 31, 2015. Table 1 shows the numbers of students included in the analyses, by grade band and subject. These figures mirror the breakdowns in the *Academic Update* analyses and the enrollment patterns typically seen for Sylvan: sample sizes are smaller for upper grade bands than for lower ones, and reading students outnumber math students overall (n=10,424 vs.7,369) and in each grade band except sixth through eighth.

Table 1. Numbers of Students in the Study, by Grade Band and Subject

Grade Band	Subject	Number of Students
All Grades	Reading	10,424
	Math	7,369
1st–2nd	Reading	1,759
	Math	774
3rd–5th	Reading	5,051
	Math	3,083
6th–8th	Reading	2,513
	Math	2,629
9th–12th	Reading	1,101
	Math	883

Using Renaissance Learning’s “moderate”¹ weekly growth estimates as the “expected” measure, we compared SylvanSync students’ actual growth to their expected growth, overall and by grade band. As noted in previous reports, growth norms are particularly meaningful scores because they provide both absolute and relative scores for students. Growth norms start with the number of scaled score points gained from one testing interval to another on the STAR tests scale,¹ then compare these gains to those of similar students. For this update, we looked at changes in students’ expected versus actual growth from their initial assessment to their first performance assessments (PA1)—here administered after 21 to 40 instructional sessions.

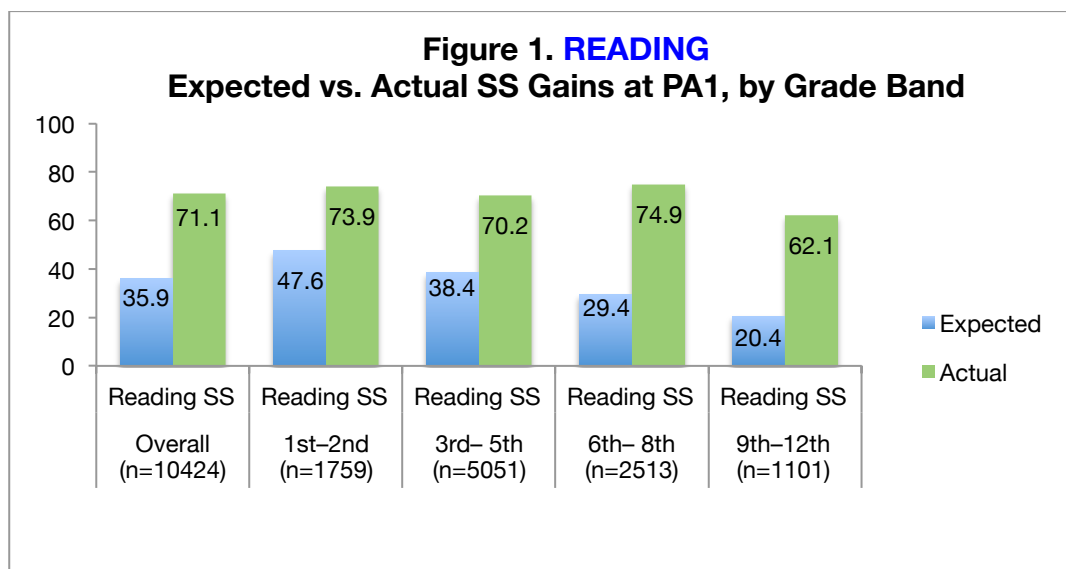
STUDY RESULTS

How does the actual academic growth of students enrolled in SylvanSync compare to their expected growth?

The updated analyses again showed that students’ *actual* academic growth consistently outpaced *expected* growth—across grade bands, in both reading and math. The trends in scores were similar to those noted in the March 2015 *Academic Update*. Reading scores were, overall, a little higher than math scores, and the differences between expected and actual growth, wider.

READING

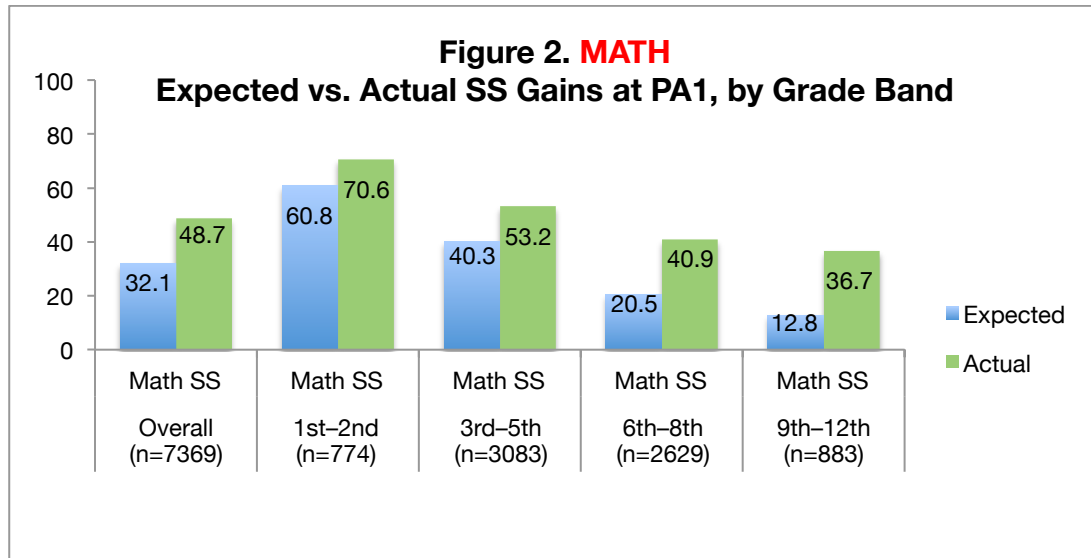
- Overall, actual reading scaled score (SS) gains at the first performance assessment (21–40 sessions) were **double the expected gains**, at 71.1 vs. 35.9 scaled score points (see Figure 1).
- Older students posted the largest gains: the 6th–8th grade group’s actual scaled scores topped expected scores by 45.5 points, or **two and a half times the expected growth**. The difference in 9th–12th graders’ actual vs. expected scaled scores was 41.7 points, just over **three times the expected growth** for the period.



¹ The moderate growth rate reflects the rate of scaled score point increases average students (those at the 50th percentile) at each level (grade, month, and incoming ability level) were able to achieve in a typical week of school instruction.

MATH

- Overall, actual math scaled score (SS) gains exceeded expectations by 16.6 points at 21-40 sessions.
- Students in grades 6–8 grade math saw actual growth that was **double the expected growth**.
- Students in grades 9–12 math made gains just under **three times the expected gains**.



SUMMARY

Ongoing research that compares students' actual academic growth to their expected growth does two important things: it confirms, along with other companion studies, that the personalized learning provided by Sylvan helps students' improve their reading and math skills. It also helps Sylvan understand the impact of the ongoing program modifications to ensure that they address the needs of the thousands of students served each year.