

HIGH-QUALITY PRESCHOOL POSITIONS STUDENTS FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Case Study: Granite School District



VOYAGER SOPRIS
LEARNING®

STUDY PROFILE

SCHOOL YEARS:

2006-2007 to 2011-2012

LOCATION:

Granite School District,
Salt Lake City, Utah

GRADE LEVELS:

PreK – Grade 4

NUMBER OF STUDENTS:

737

VOYAGER PROGRAM:

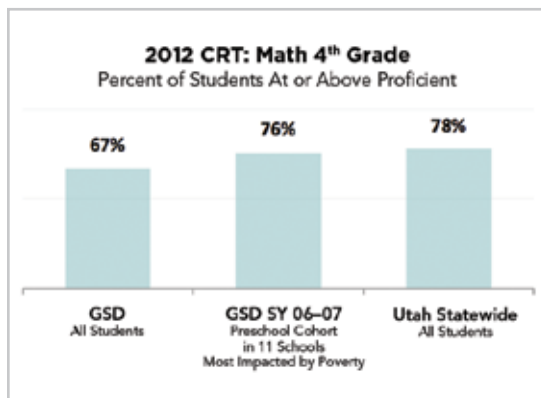
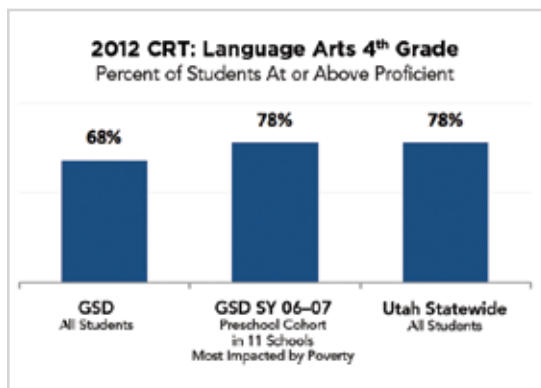
We Can! Early Childhood Curriculum

SUMMARY: In partnership with Granite School District, Voices for Utah Children* conducted a longitudinal study of the outcomes associated with three cohorts of 4-year-old students in 11 schools most impacted by poverty in Granite School District. Students in the study attended Granite School District's Title I preschool program, which used the *We Can!™ Early Childhood Curriculum*, starting in the 2006-2007 school year.

EVALUATION: These reports tracked students from kindergarten through fourth grade, monitoring sustained academic gains, the poverty gap, referrals to special education, and per-pupil spending.

FINDINGS: Of the 737 at-risk students in the three cohorts who experienced quality preschool instruction, only 11 were referred for special education services (see Decreased Referrals to Special Education section). Other findings include:

- ☀ A quality preschool program positions students for K–12 academic success over time
- ☀ The achievement gap between non-economically disadvantaged and economically disadvantaged students decreased substantially in both reading and math
- ☀ There was a substantial reduction in the number of students referred for special education services
- ☀ Return on Investment of a quality preschool program was more than \$1.75 million



SUSTAINABLE ACADEMIC GAINS

An analysis of the percent of fourth-grade students who scored at or above proficiency on the 2012 Criterion-Referenced Tests (CRT) in Language Arts and Mathematics was conducted**. Results were analyzed comparing three groups of students: (1) Granite School District's fourth-grade students overall, (2) fourth-grade students who attended Granite's preschool program in one of the 11 Granite schools most impacted by poverty, and (3) all fourth-grade students in the state of Utah.

Across the state of Utah, 78 percent of fourth-grade students were at or above proficiency on the 2012 Language Arts and Math CRT. In Granite's Preschool Cohort, 78 percent of fourth-grade students who attended Granite's preschool program were at or above proficiency on the 2012 CRT Language Arts assessment, tying the state average and surpassing the overall district performance. On the math section of the assessment, 76 percent of Granite's Preschool Cohort scored at or above proficiency, outperforming the district by nine percentage points, and only two points behind the performance of Utah fourth-grade students statewide.

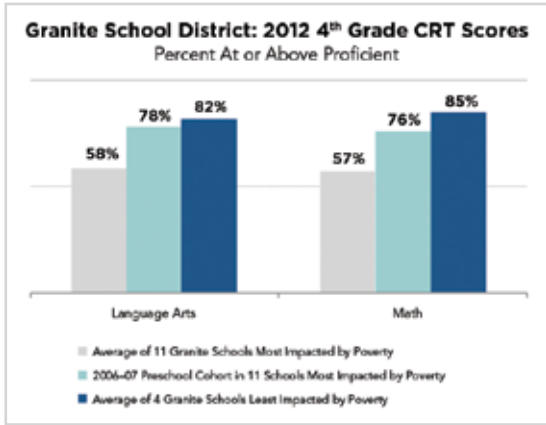
These data indicate that students in Granite's Preschool Cohort continue to demonstrate academic gains over time.

CLOSING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP

The achievement gap between fourth-grade students in the four Granite schools least impacted by poverty (28% Free/Reduced lunch) and the 11 schools most impacted by poverty (80% FRL) was analyzed.**

* Dubno, J. (2011). A sustainable financing model: High quality preschool for at-risk children, results from Granite School District in Utah. Retrieved from www.utahchildren.org/newsroom/in-the-news/147-a-sustainablefinancingmodelhigh-quality-preschool-for-at-risk-children-results-from-the-granite-school-district-in-utah-janet-dubno

** Dubno, J. (2012). High quality preschool closes the achievement gap and reduces special education costs for at-risk children: Evidence from the high quality Title I preschool program in the Granite School District in Utah. Salt Lake City, UT: Voices for Utah Children.



Students in the Preschool Cohort in the 11 high-poverty schools nearly closed the achievement gap with the students in the low-poverty schools.

In CRT Language Arts, the achievement gap between the high-poverty and low-poverty schools was 24 percentage points (58% to 82%). For the preschool cohort, the achievement gap was just four points (78% to 82%).

In CRT Mathematics, the achievement gap between the high-poverty and low-poverty schools was 28 percentage points (57% to 85%). For the preschool cohort, the achievement gap was 9 points (76% to 85%).

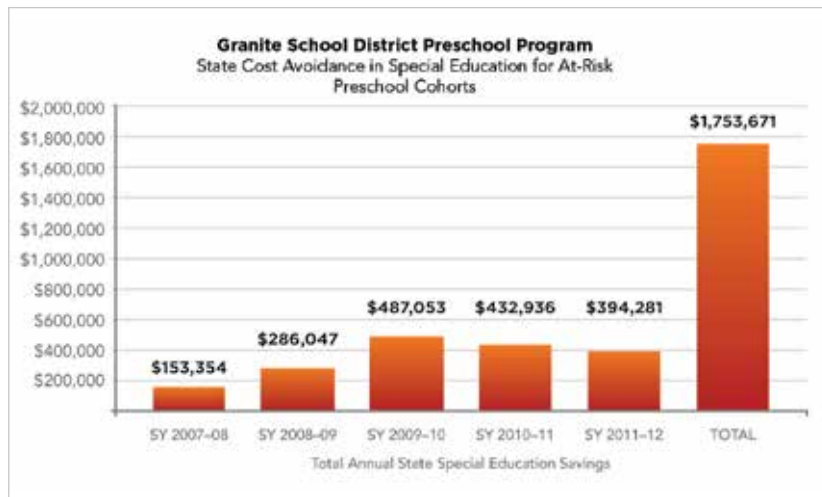
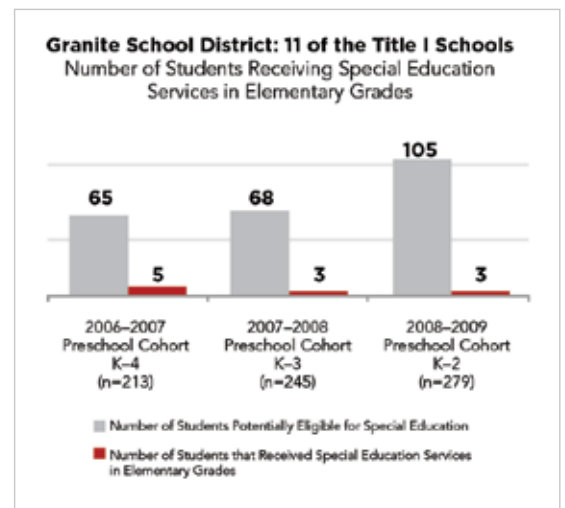
The poverty gap was virtually erased by quality preschool instruction delivered by well-prepared teachers.

DECREASED REFERRALS TO SPECIAL EDUCATION

Based on the 2011 report by Voices for Utah Children, students who enter special education in early elementary school rarely exit into general education. One of the best ways to avoid special education referrals is to prepare students for success through a quality preschool program, including research-based curriculum, well-informed teachers, and a proven classroom management system.

Of the 737 students in the three cohorts who experienced quality preschool instruction, 238 had been identified as potentially eligible for special education using the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test. Of those 238 students, only 11 students (4.6%) were referred for special education services.**

Granite School District has demonstrated the lasting impact of a quality preschool program. **The longitudinal effects of the quality preschool program are seen in the significantly reduced number of referrals to special education year after year.**



COST SAVINGS DUE TO QUALITY PRESCHOOL INSTRUCTION

Research shows that at-risk students who receive high-quality preschool instruction are much less likely to be referred for special education services in kindergarten through grade 12 than their peers who do not receive high-quality preschool instruction. This reduction in referrals to special education is a cost savings to the state and federal governments.

Granite School District has saved more than \$1.75 million in state special education spending through the 2011-2012 school year as a result of reduced special education use among the at-risk preschool students included in the study.**



BUILDING THE FOUNDATION FOR KINDERGARTEN SUCCESS

DISCOVER WE CAN

Authored by prominent early childhood consultant, educator, and trainer Vicki Gibson, Ph.D., *We Can* is a dynamic, evidence-based preK and early learning curriculum that provides age-appropriate, engaging, cross-curricular content designed to increase kindergarten readiness.

PREPARE ALL CHILDREN FOR SUCCESS IN KINDERGARTEN AND BEYOND

- Aligned to Head Start and National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) standards
- Addresses the reading and math foundational skills of the Common Core State Standards in kindergarten
- Integrates differentiated instruction to address a range of abilities
- Includes high-quality professional development to support teacher growth at all levels
- Provides explicit lesson plans that include a robust daily focus on literacy, numeracy, and oral language development

NUMERACY. LITERACY. LEARNING. GROWTH.

We Can Early Learning Curriculum cultivates young learners by supporting teachers of all skill and experience levels. The robust, multidisciplinary curriculum provides a clear road map for early learning success – including easy-to-implement lesson plans and a range of innovative learning tools. *We Can* integrates assessment with instruction, allowing teachers multiple opportunities to observe children, identify their capabilities and needs, and monitor their progress.

**LEARN MORE ABOUT VOYAGER LEARNING'S
WE CAN EARLY LEARNING CURRICULUM AT:
www.voyagerlearning.com/wecan**



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17855 Dallas Parkway, Suite 400
Dallas, TX 75287

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