

## NEWS RELEASE

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*For Immediate Release*

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### **Students Make Major Reading Proficiency Gains at Elementary School Using Benchmark Education's Long-Term Professional Development**

**NEW ROCHELLE, NY, February 16, 2016** – K-12 Literacy specialist [Benchmark Education Company](#) (BEC) announced students' significant improvement in reading proficiency at a diverse Minnesota elementary school where teachers received BEC's Professional Development (PD). In this school, 8 to 10 percent more of the 229 participating students scored Proficient or higher in reading than the previous year, as measured by the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCA-III) Reading Test. The gains were noted during a comparison of students' scores in grades 3 to 5 in four demographically similar public schools—in the same district with the same curriculum—over the 2014–15 school year. Only one of the four schools, the only one where teachers received customized yearlong, monthly on-site BEC PD training, showed notable increases in students' reading proficiency. The other three schools did not receive PD. In stark contrast, the other three schools experienced reading proficiency decreases.

Additionally, the school receiving BEC PD went from lowest- to highest-performing of the four schools, according to the Minnesota Department of Education Multiple Measurements Rating (MMR) and Focus Rating (FR). The MMR measures school performance in the areas of proficiency, growth, achievement-gap reduction, and graduation rates; the FR measures achievement gap reduction among student groups. While the three other schools showed sharp declines in these ratings, the school receiving BEC PD was the only one that showed dramatic increases.

The biggest gains were measured among male students, 11 percent of whom achieved Proficient or higher scores compared to the previous year, significantly closing the gap with their female counterparts.

As a result of the remarkable improvement in reading proficiency in the school with long-term BEC PD last school year, the MN school district expanded their PD contract in the 2015-16 school year to include teachers at all four of the elementary schools in the training.

“We are proud of the success our Professional Development team achieved working with teachers in Minnesota to accelerate their students' progress through targeted instruction and intervention,” said Tom Reycraft, Benchmark Education President.

(more)

“Helping educators work productively with diverse learners develops highly qualified teachers, who in turn provide effective instruction that meets the district’s needs and goals. The PD team in Minnesota embodies the objective of our customized PD: to provide focused, productive learning experiences, leading to improved student performance and results.”

As part of the training, co-teaching strategies were introduced to general education teachers who partner with Special Education, English Language Learner, and/or intervention specialists in integrated service model classrooms in the school receiving BEC PD. No co-teaching strategies were taught in the other three schools.

With the goal of optimizing communication between teachers, BEC PD trainers modeled research-based best practices in teaching reading, and conducted demonstration lessons. Teachers learned purposeful planning of lessons and received one-on-one coaching. BEC PD trainers also provided student data analysis to review assessment results, and conducted ongoing meetings with district administrators.

These strategies form an integral part of BEC’s customized, long-term PD, and are aligned with the national professional development standards for adult learning.

For information about the school’s results in MN or BEC Professional Development services, contact Elisa Brente, BEC Director of PD, at [ebrente@benchmarkeducation.com](mailto:ebrente@benchmarkeducation.com), visit [www.benchmarkeducation.com](http://www.benchmarkeducation.com) or call [877-236-2465](tel:877-236-2465).

Benchmark Education has provided Professional Development and training services to all levels of educators since the founding of the company in 1998. The company’s Professional Development division focuses on creating systematic change by providing ongoing teacher training in literacy development, differentiated instruction, English language acquisition, and the Gradual Release of Responsibility instructional model. It addresses effective response-to-intervention strategies, developing content-area concepts, metacognition, and successful comprehensive literacy instruction, based on careful observation of student’s reading, writing, language proficiency stages, and learning behaviors. Benchmark Education’s Professional Development has resulted not only in students showing significant achievement gains, but also in eliminating achievement gaps for at-risk populations in research studies.

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