Evaluating the Effectiveness of *Imagine Learning English Level 1*

In Alsip Hazelgreen School District State of Illinois

July 16, 2007

ClearVue Research, Inc.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The goal of the study is to determine how the literacy development of children who use the *Imagine Learning English* software program compares with that of children who do not use it (as measured by a standardized literacy test). This is an independent study conducted by ClearVue Research, utilizing a quasi-experimental research design.

The study included 326 participants drawn from kindergarten and first-grade classes in the three elementary schools in the Alsip Hazelgreen School District 126: Hazelgreen, Lane, and Stony Creek. All schools are within a geographic region of 5.25 miles. Of the 326 participants, 105 were kindergarten students, 126 were first grade students, and there were 95 kindergarten students from a previous year, which added a historic view. Twenty-four kindergarteners and14 first graders belonged to the treatment group receiving *Imagine Learning English* instruction.

Students in these schools were given the Illinois Snapshot of Early Literacy (ISEL) assessment, as required by the State of Illinois each year. The ISEL pretest and posttest scores of students from kindergarten and first grade in all three schools were collected for two school years: 2005-2006 and 2006-2007. *Imagine Learning English* was implemented in 2006-2007, the second year. This offers a look at concurrent control students in the same class or other classes in the selected schools. Sites and data had to meet rigorous criteria to qualify for inclusion in the study.

RESULTS

The overall gains in English literacy were found to be clearly greater for students who had access to the *Imagine Learning English* system. These gains, when measured by well-established statistical methods were statistically significant as shown by the <.01 p-value obtained from the two sample t-tests applied to each of the three comparisons.

1. Kindergarten students using *Imagine Learning English* had a median improvement in the pretest to posttest ISEL score of 40%. In comparison, kindergarten students without *Imagine Learning English* gained less than 20% during the pretest to posttest period.
2. First grade students had a median improvement in their pretest to posttest ISEL composite scores of over 30%; while first grade students without *Imagine Learning English* gained 15%.
3. An additional measure of year-to-year differences validates the increased benefit of *Imagine Learning English:* Kindergarten ISEL pretest to posttest scores from the 2005-2006 school year (before *Imagine Learning English* was implemented) had a median improvement of 22% compared with the 40% growth achieved by *Imagine Learning English* students the following year (2006-2007).
4. *Imagine Learning English* has a gap-narrowing effect. Students selected to receive *Imagine Learning English* were the most needy as evidenced by pre-test scores. However post-test scores show that this gap is narrowed considerably due to the progress of *Imagine Learning English* students.

RESULTS DEPICTED BY BOX PLOTS[i]

1. Kindergarten Students

During the 2006-2007 school year, the kindergarten students using *Imagine Learning English* had a median improvement in their pretest to posttest ISEL composite score of 40%. In comparison, kindergarten students in the same schools receiving only the traditional teaching methods gained less than 20% during the pretest to posttest period as measured by the ISEL tests (see Figure 1).

The 24 kindergarten students from the 2006-2007 school year who used *Imagine Learning English* improved in their ISEL test scores by 40% in comparison to other kindergarten students not using the *Imagine Learning English* that improved by 15%. The difference between the two was 25%. Thus, one might say, that the *Imagine Learning English* program propelled the group of 24 kindergarten users 25 percent beyond what they probably would have achieved in a standard learning environment.

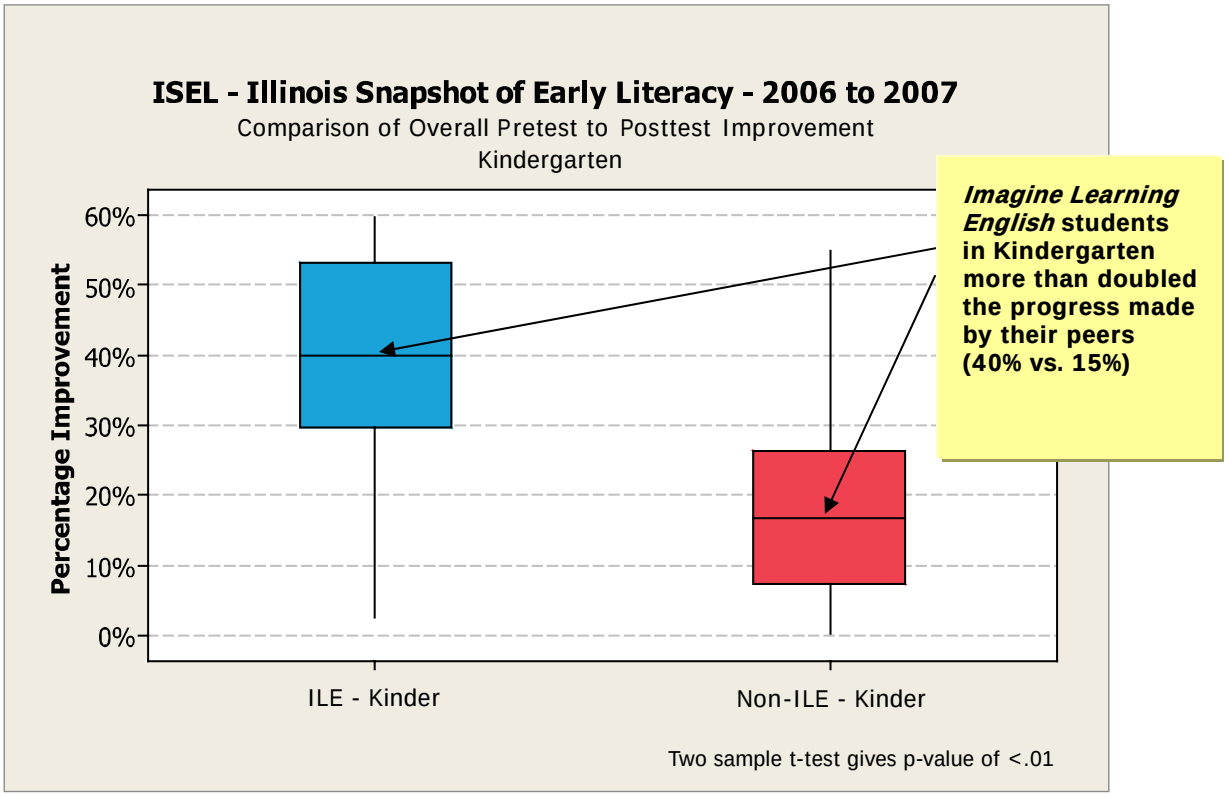


Figure 1

2. First Grade Students

Also, during the 2006-2007 school year, the first grade students using *Imagine Learning English* had a median improvement in their pretest to posttest ISEL composite scores of over 30%. The 1st grade students in the same schools receiving only the traditional teaching methods had a gain of only 15% in their pretest to posttest ISEL scores (see Figure 2).

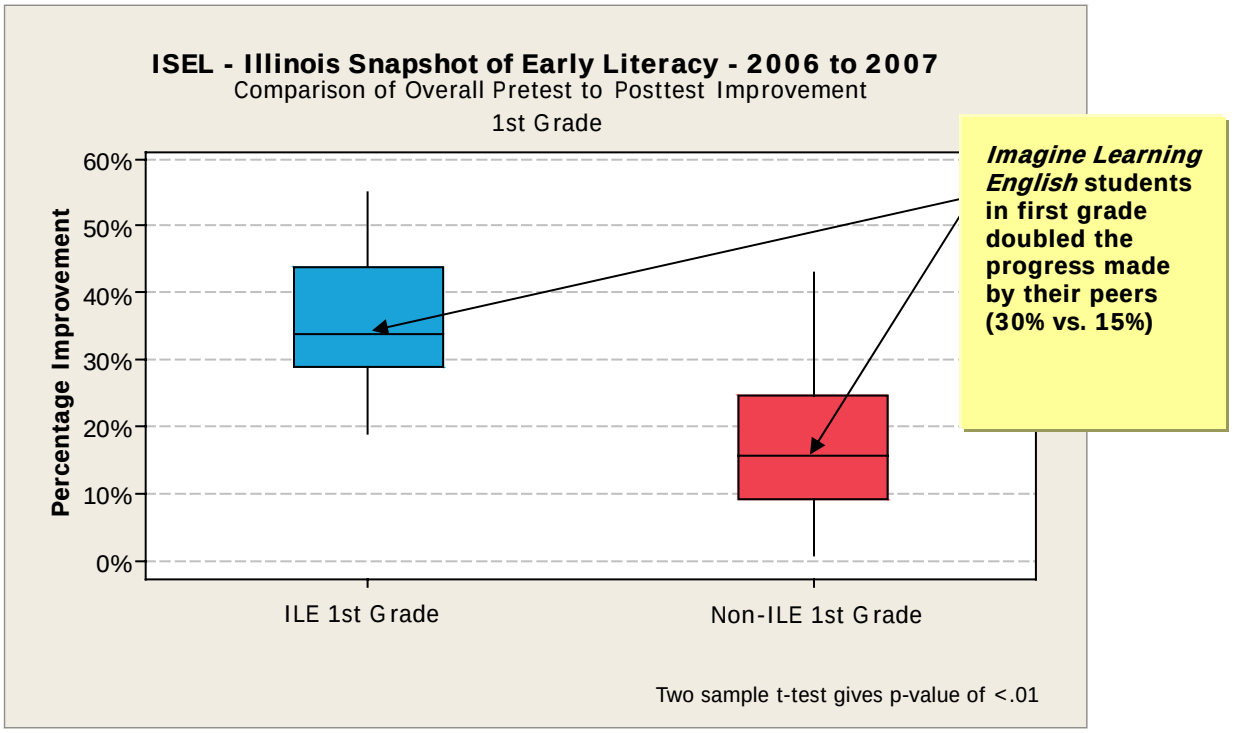


Figure 2

3. Year-to-year Comparisons

Kindergarten ISEL pretest to posttest scores from the 2005-2006 school year had a median improvement of 22% and then in the following year, 2006-2007, their improvement level actually dropped below 20% (as depicted in Figure 1: Non-*ILE* - Kinder). Based on this two-year student sample obtained from Illinois school administrators, it would appear that traditional teaching methods will produce about a 20% improvement in ISEL test scores for kindergarten students on a year-to-year basis. The *Imagine Learning English* users in these same schools saw a 40% improvement gain in their ISEL test scores. Therefore, the ISEL test results for the two school years assessed suggest that kindergarten students can expect to double their learning performance when using *Imagine Learning English* consistently (every week).

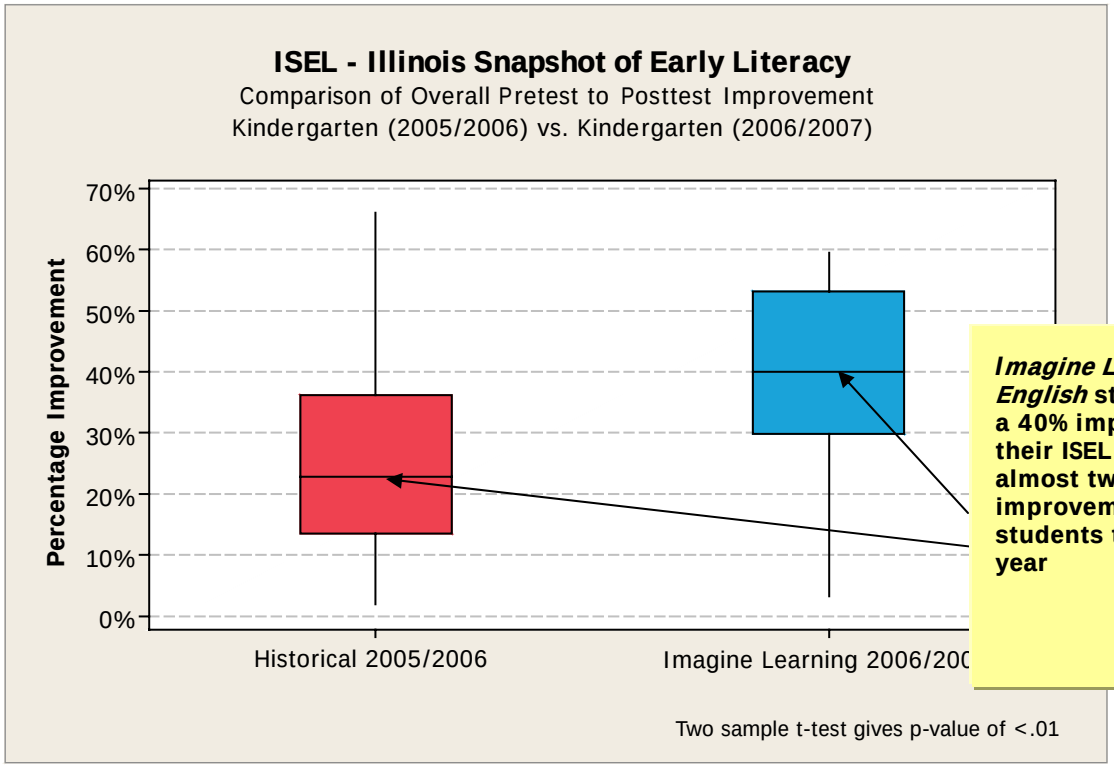
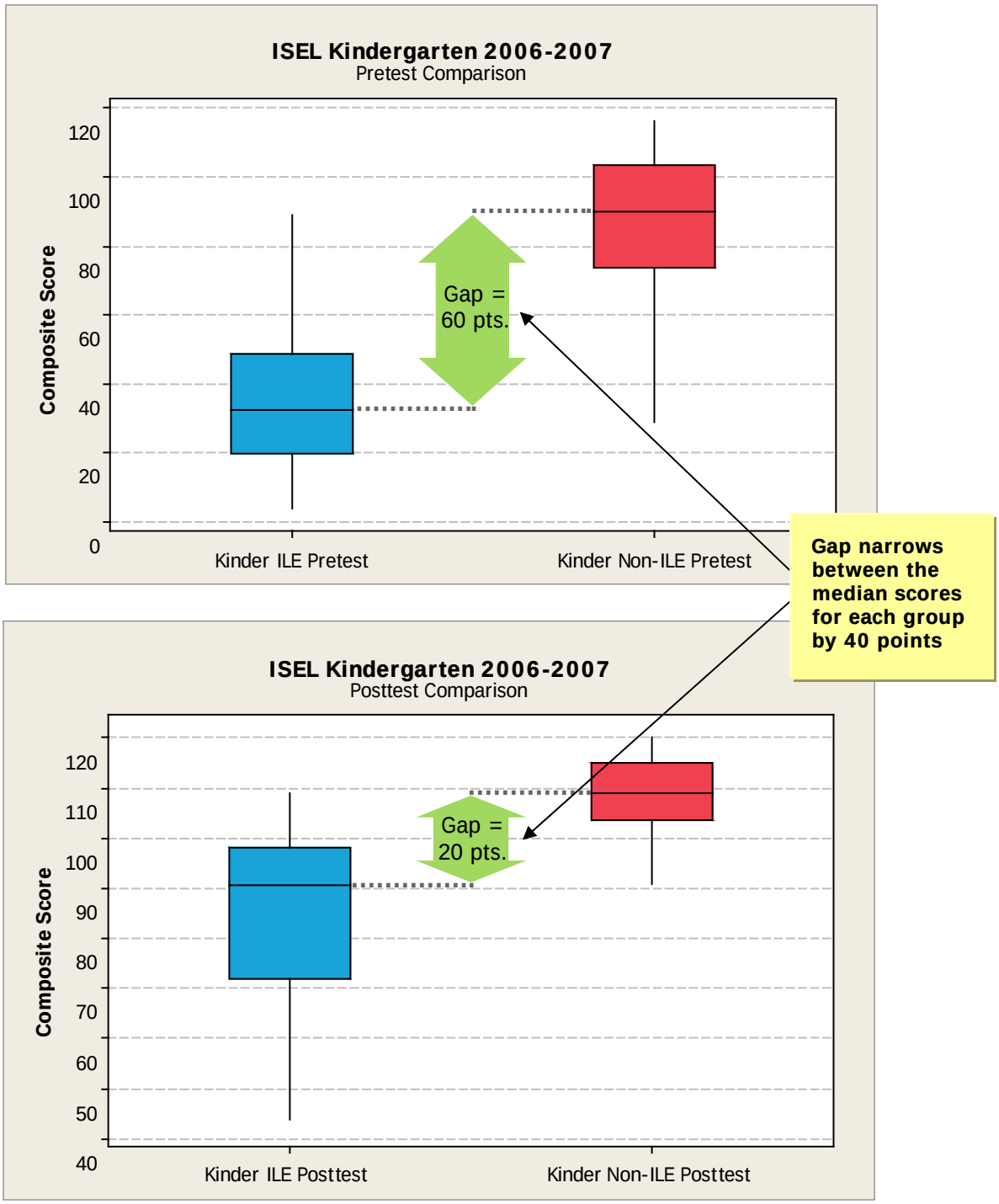


Figure 3

4. *Imagine Learning English* Narrows the Gap

The gap between *ILE* users and non-*ILE* users is evident in the pretest, but narrows in the post test. The 24 *ILE* users had a median pretest composite test score of 30 and the non-*ILE* students had a composite pretest score of 90 (maximum being 120)—a difference of 60 points. It makes sense that teachers selected the less-skilled students to receive *ILE;* aware of their English language needs. When students take the posttest, the difference narrows to 20 points (90 to 110). They overcame 40 of the 60 point difference.



CONCLUSION

The results of this study indicate a strong and beneficial effect on student ISEL scores that measure the language and literacy skills being examined by the ISEL assessment. Thus, when *Imagine Learning English* is implemented and administered properly, these results suggest it will provide a learning platform capable of outperforming traditional teaching methods by a substantial margin.

ClearVue Research, Inc does not hesitate, therefore, to recommend *Imagine Learning English* to public school administrators seeking a program designed to accelerate language and literacy skills in the early grades.

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[i] Box plots are a useful way of presenting and analyzing data when a quick and understandable assessment is needed. The lower edge of the box is the 25th percentile point and the upper edge of the box is the 75th percentile point. Thus, 50% of the data is contained within the box as shown by the gray shaded area. The "whiskers" (vertical lines) extending above and below the box show the full range of values of the data sample. The horizontal line through the box represents the median point of the data. The relative position of the median line in the box indicates the symmetry of the data distribution.

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Clear-Vue Research, Inc.

Imagine Learning, Inc. contracted with ClearVue Research, Inc., an external independent consulting firm that specializes in instructional design and educational research and evaluation, to conduct an independent efficacy study of *Imagine Learning English* software curriculum materials.

ClearVue Research, Inc. is a Utah-based educational evaluation company that has carried out research studies for several years. Mari Vawn Tinney is a Ph.D. in Instructional Technology with emphases on online education for ESL and international students. She has 14 years of experience as an instructional designer and course developer, including the design and development of several ESL computer-based or online courses. As a certified educator she taught 14 years at all levels—K-12, college, adult-ed, corporate, and government courses in the United States and in Mexico. She worked as a bilingual coordinator in the central offices of school districts in Utah and Maryland.

William Tinney, a Quality Assurance engineer, has a master's degree in statistics and was trained in Six Sigma analysis while employed at Ford Motor Co. Before retiring from Ford, he had worked over 40 years doing quality and reliability related analysis with other companies such as Motorola, Xerox, General Dynamics, and GTE.