

Renaissance

See Every Student.

SPECIAL REPORT

APRIL 2025

Trends in Student Outcome Measures

The Impact of myON on Student Achievement



Reports and screens are regularly reviewed and may vary from those shown as enhancements are made.

All logos, designs, and brand names for Renaissance's products and services are trademarks of Renaissance Learning, Inc., and its subsidiaries, registered, common law, or pending registration in the United States and other countries. All other product and company names should be considered the property of their respective companies and organizations.

© 2025 by Renaissance Learning, Inc. All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America.

This publication is protected by U.S. and international copyright laws. It is unlawful to duplicate or reproduce any copyrighted material without authorization from the copyright holder. For more information, contact

Renaissance
PO Box 8036
Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54495-8036
(800) 338-4204
www.renaissance.com

04/25

Contents

- 4 Overview
- 7 Results
- 13 Conclusion

Table

- 6 Table 1. Study sample by grade

Figures

- 8 Figure 1. Students using myON as recommended grew more than nonusers, including struggling readers, ELL students, and students at Title I schools
- 9 Figure 2. When meeting recommended myON usage guidelines, students who read both at home and school achieved more growth than students reading only at school
- 9 Figure 3. Students reading on myON both at home and at school spent more time reading overall
- 10 Figure 4. Students reading on myON with audio narration within or below their target ZPD range grew more than nonusers, students who didn't use audio, and students who used audio but above their range

Key Findings

- Students who used myON with fidelity showed higher growth rates compared to students who did not use myON and those who did not use it with fidelity. This relationship stood true for students struggling with reading, English language learners, and students at Title I schools.
- Students who use the audio feature when reading books within or below their ZPD range experienced the most growth compared to the control group, students who did not use audio, and students who used audio with books above their ZPD range.
- Students who used myON to read nonfiction text had higher growth than both comparison students and students who read mostly fiction books on myON.
- More than a quarter of struggling readers who used myON with fidelity while reading a majority of books below or within their ZPD range gained an additional half year of learning beyond expected.

Overview

Renaissance myON is a personalized literacy platform offering students unlimited access to thousands of digital books. As students read books on myON, data about their reading practice is available to the student, teacher, and caregiver(s) to track reading habits and facilitate communication. The program presents trends for various aspects of reading practice, such as skill development, reading volume, text difficulty, progress towards goals, and changes over time. Recommended reading lists, tailored to each student's individual interests, age, and reading level, present a wide, easy-to-access, and customizable library of literature that helps support fluency development and maintain engagement.¹ While reading, students can choose to support their reading practice with literacy tools like text highlighting, note taking, and journaling.

As a comprehensive digital reading platform, myON supports literacy learning both at home and at school. myON meets the requirements of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), falling under the category of evidence-based activities, strategies, or interventions.² Likewise, Digital Promise has deemed myON a Research-Based Certified Product, which underscores the program's foundation in evidence-based research aimed at helping students grow literacy skills.³

1 Renaissance Learning. (2022a). *Research foundation for myON*. <https://docs.renaissance.com/R63613>

2 Renaissance Learning (2018). *Renaissance myON meets the "evidence-based" requirements of ESSA*. <https://docs.renaissance.com/R62045>

3 Digital Promise: Research-Based Certified Products: <https://digitalpromise.org/product-certifications/research-based-certified-products/>

Research Questions

- How do differences in student usage of myON affect growth compared to nonusers?
- How does myON usage differ across subgroups, such as students struggling with reading (with a percentile rank (PR) ≤ 25), English language learners (ELLs), and students at Title I schools?
- How do using audio narration in myON and reading within ZPD⁴ interact to affect student growth?
- How does reading fiction books versus nonfiction books on myON affect students' skill growth?

Main findings

Reading practice on myON was associated with higher levels of growth in general literacy achievement. Students who used myON at recommended levels, read within their ZPD range, and read a majority nonfiction books all experienced the most growth. Less intense reading, reading outside of one's skill level, and reading mostly fiction books were associated with less achievement. These overall findings persisted across students struggling with reading, ELL students and students at Title I schools.

Data

To explore how myON use relates to growth in general reading ability, we studied users' hosted data from the 2023–2024 school year for myON and from two Renaissance Star Assessments. As the table shows, the myON user sample consisted of 457,643 students and the comparison group included 183,889 students. Students in both groups must have completed either a Star Reading⁵ or Star Early Literacy⁶ or test during both the fall and spring testing windows. Students included in the myON user group had to have begun using myON after their fall test and before their posttest. Students in the comparison group were in the same districts as the treatment group but had no myON usage during or before the testing windows. We matched the comparison group to the myON users by grade and percentile rank on their fall test. Specifically, within each grade, we grouped students by percentile rank into bins of 5 PR points. For each grade and PR band, if there were fewer students in the comparison group than the myON users' group, we included all comparison students. If there were more students in the comparison group, we selected a random sample from the comparison group to match the sample size of the myON users' group.

4 ZPD, which is based on the concept of Zone of Proximal Development first created by psychologist Leve Vygotsky, is the "zone" where students can comprehend most of a text's words and use context or external support to make up for unknown words.

5 Renaissance Learning. (2024b). *Star Reading technical manual*. Available by request to research@renaissance.com.

6 Renaissance Learning. (2024a). *Star Early Literacy technical manual*. Available by request to research@renaissance.com.

Table 1. Study sample size by grade bands

	myON Users	Non-myON users
K–2	148,694	72,269
3–5	216,544	66,405
6–8	87,129	40,666
9–12	5,276	4,549

Outcome measures

Star Reading and Star Early Literacy are computer adaptive assessments that measure reading comprehension and early literacy skills, respectively. Though myON focuses on reading comprehension, we included students in the study who took either assessment because it also offers access to texts for emerging readers and tools for prereaders, like audio narration, which is useful for students working on decoding skills.

Student growth was measured using Student Growth Percentile (SGP),⁷ a widely accepted indicator of student progress. SGPs are used for a variety of purposes ranging from informing individual instructional decisions to program evaluation to school and district accountability. Interpreted much like a PR score, SGPs convey how much a student grew relative to academic peers. For example, an SGP of 60 means a student grew more than 60 percent of students in the same grade with a similar score history. SGPs range from 1 to 99, with higher values indicating more progress and 50 representing the national average.

Usage metrics

To study myON best practice recommendations, this analysis considered three student-usage metrics:

1. **Recommended myON usage.** We grouped students based on weekly usage and active sessions. To have met or exceeded recommended usage, students read on myON for, on average, at least 50 minutes/week for 16 “active” weeks throughout the year. Also, we analyzed where students were reading to understand if reading environment played a role in supporting students’ growth. (i.e., students reading on weekdays during school hours read “At School” and students reading in the evenings or on weekends read “At Home.”)
2. **ZPD and audio narration:** We divided students into groups by whether they read at least 50% of books within their ZPD range (i.e., their target reading range). After taking the myON placement test, the program provides each student with (a) a *ZPD range*, which is the span of ATOS book levels that represent appropriate text difficulty given a student’s current skill level,

7 Renaissance Learning. (2022). *Student Growth Percentile in Star Assessments*. <https://docs.renaissance.com/R57137>

and (b) book recommendations based on this range.⁸ In addition, students were divided by whether they used myON's audio narration function that reads books to users.

3. **Fiction versus nonfiction:** We considered whether students spent most of their time on myON ($\geq 50\%$) reading fiction or nonfiction books.

Results

Using myON was associated with stronger rates of growth in reading comprehension skills. Students using myON as recommended achieved the most growth in reading skills.

The purpose of this study was to examine patterns of growth for students using myON.

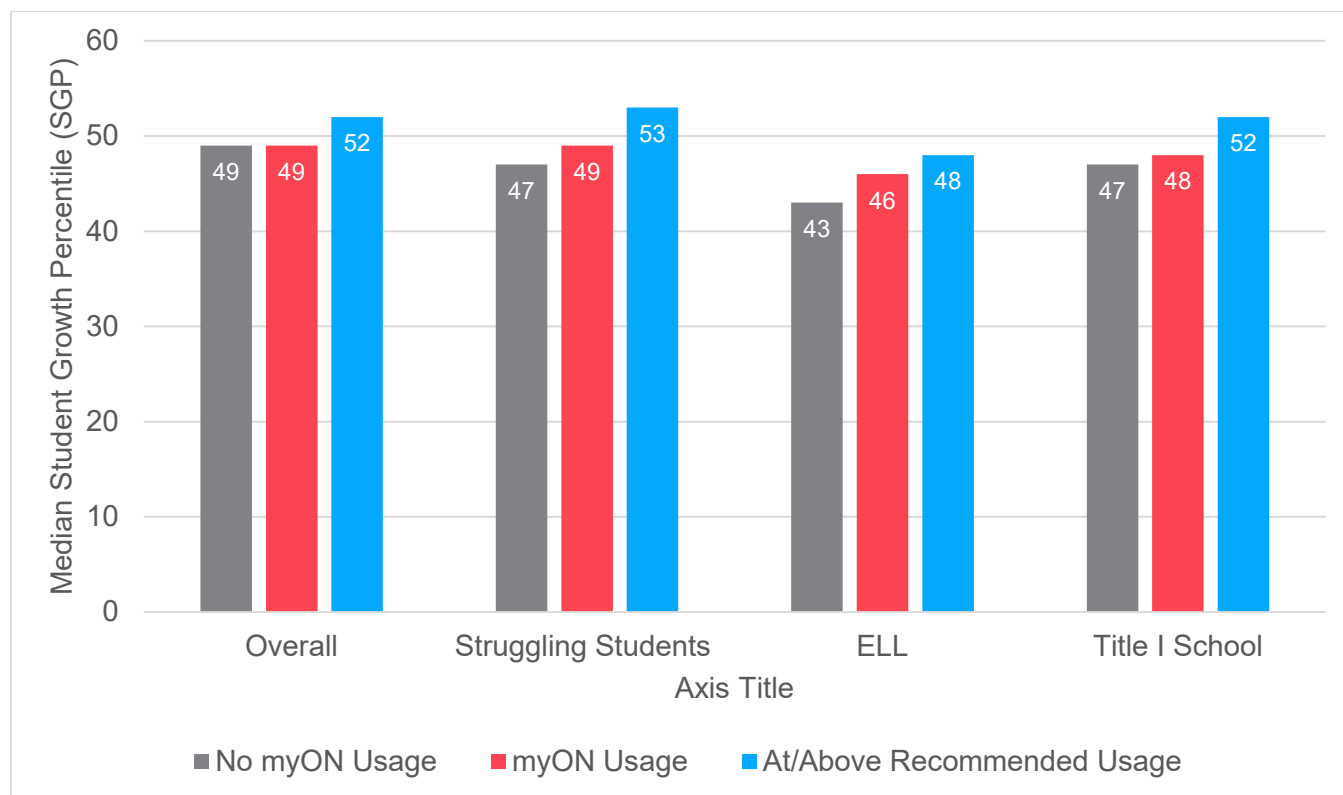
Recommended myON usage

Results indicate that reading on myON was associated with higher levels of annual growth in general reading ability. Students who read on myON at recommended levels (on average, at least 50 minutes per week for at least 16 active weeks) experienced more growth on Star Assessments than students not using myON. As figure 1 shows, these results persisted across the general population, struggling readers, ELL students, and students in Title I schools.⁹

⁸ The ATOS Readability Formula is a measure of complexity that puts readers and texts on the same scale to match students with text at individualized difficulty levels. ATOS considers three key predictors: average sentence length, average word length, and average word-difficulty level, and reports levels on a grade-level scale (e.g., ATOS 5.4 indicates text a fifth grader could likely read and understand by about mid-school year). See <https://www.renaissance.com/resources/atos-analyzer/> and <https://docs.renaissance.com/R42508>

⁹ Differences were statistically significant using mean SGP values, $F(1, 641530) = 3.1, p < 0.07$. Post hoc comparisons indicated that students using myON at recommended usage levels grew significantly more than non-users ($d = 0.07, p < .001$).

Figure 1. Students using myON as recommended grew more than nonusers, including struggling readers, ELL students, and students at Title I schools



The What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) uses an *improvement index* formula “to help readers judge the practical importance of the magnitude of intervention effects. ... interpreted as the expected change in percentile rank for an average comparison group student if the student had received the intervention.” Using the WWC improvement index to analyze these results, students who used myON at or above recommended levels grew, on average, 2.8 PR points from the beginning of the school year.¹⁰

Using the WWC improvement index, **students who used myON at or above recommended levels grew, on average, 2.8 PR points** from the beginning of the school year.

The next two analyses further emphasize the importance of meeting recommended usage guidelines and increasing time spent reading to improve reading skills. In figure 2, the data show that even when all students were reading at recommended levels on myON, those who spent time reading both at home and at school experienced more growth in reading achievement, compared to students who read only at school. Figure 3 displays the potential explanation for the increased growth—students who read both at home and at school spent more minutes reading overall than students who read only at school.

¹⁰ See [What Works Clearinghouse Procedures and Standards Handbook, Version 5.0](#).

Figure 2. When meeting recommended myON usage guidelines, students who read both at home and school achieved more growth than students reading only at school

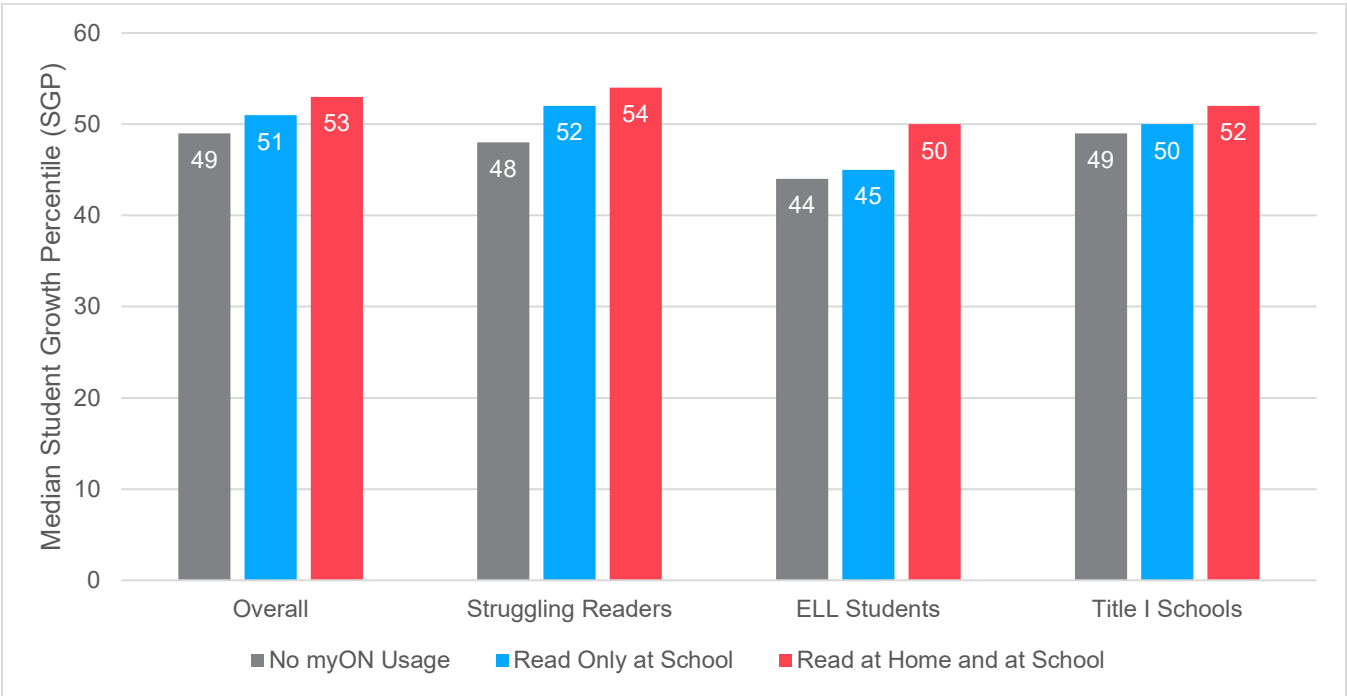
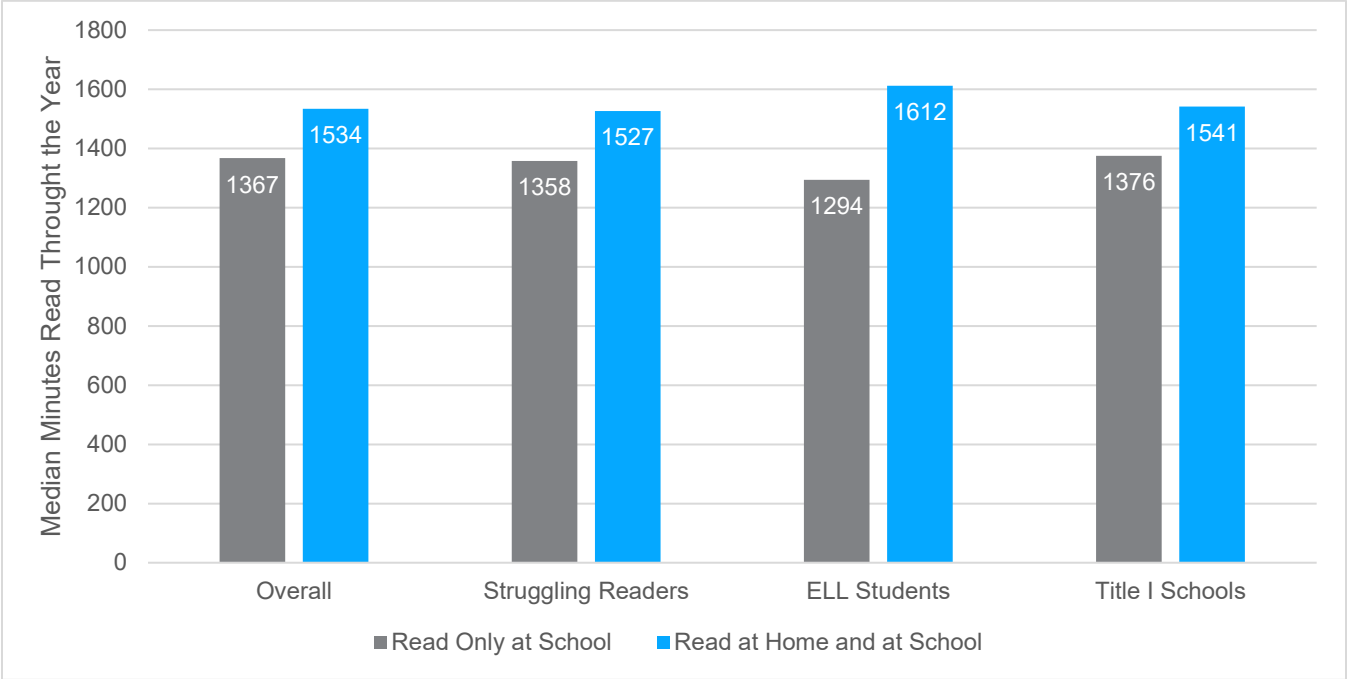


Figure 3. Students reading on myON both at home and at school spent more time reading overall

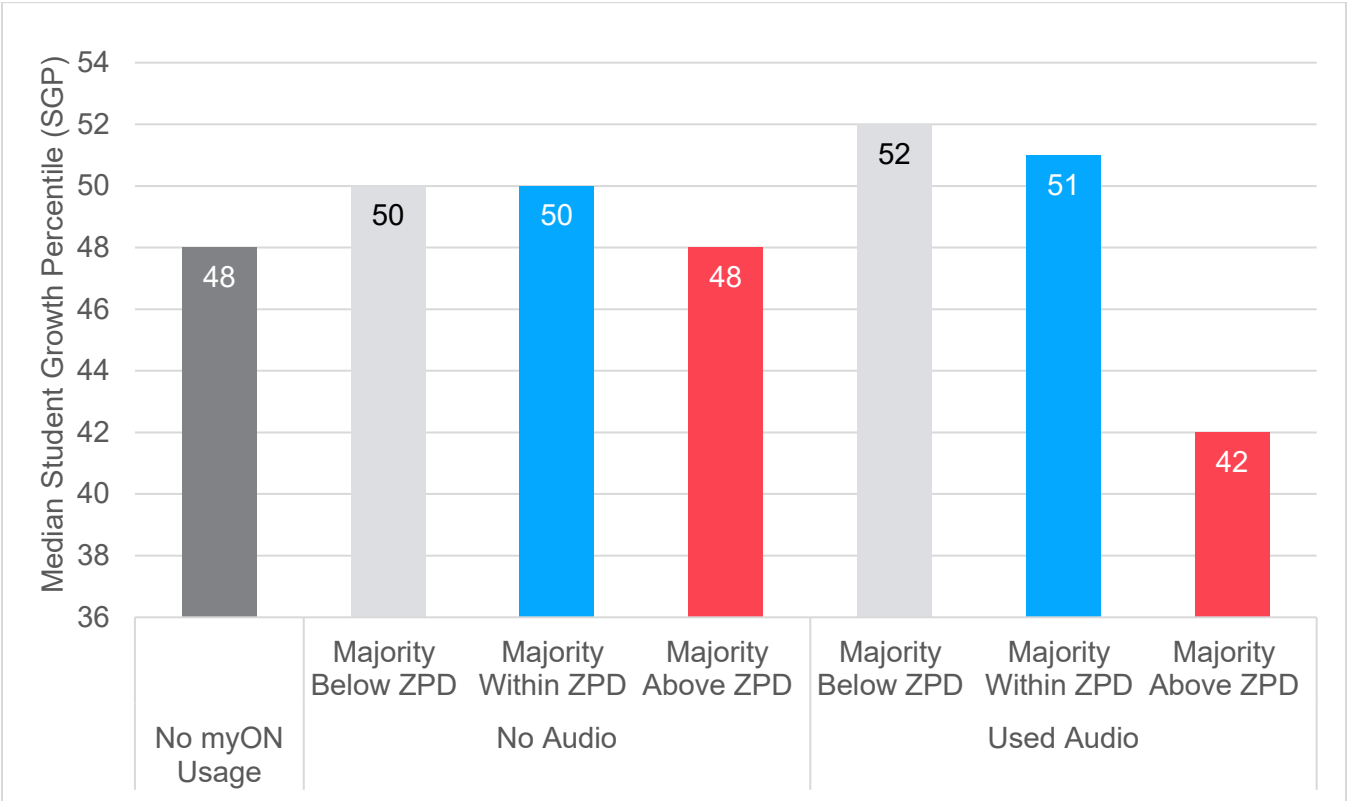


ZPD and audio narration

Students reading mostly within their target ZPD range while using audio narration on myON experienced the most growth compared with both nonusers and students who read within their ZPD range but did not use audio (see figure 4). In addition, 33% of struggling readers using myON with fidelity, while reading within or below their ZPD range gained an additional half year of learning beyond what was expected. Students who stray far above their target reading range may not benefit as much from their reading practice time and may become frustrated with the material, leaving them unmotivated to continue.¹¹ Figure 4 supports these findings, in that students who spent most of their time on myON reading within their target range saw the most growth.

33% of struggling readers who used myON with fidelity and read below or within their ZPD range gained an **additional half year of learning beyond expected.**

Figure 4. Students reading on myON with audio narration within or below their target ZPD range grew more than nonusers, students who didn't use audio, and students who used audio but above their range



The results suggest using audio narration can help students to read more effectively within their ZPD range. As text-to-speech and audio support tools become more popular, there has been discussion

¹¹ Lundgren, A. (2023). The zone of proximal development and content area instruction for middle school English language learner students: A phenomenological study.

among educators and other experts regarding whether students *should* experience books this way. Though allowing students to use audio support is a decision best made locally by teachers for individual students, research suggests it could serve quite useful for students as they read within their ZPD range. For example, audio narration may help students with reading comprehension if they struggle with decoding. Related, it could offer students with learning disabilities (e.g., with dyslexia or hyperactive attention deficit disorder) additional means to actively read and work on comprehension skills.¹² Finally, audio usage has been shown to improve fluency for ELL students, helping with pronunciation, cadence, and demonstration of differing dialects.¹³

A blog by Dr. Gene Kerns, Chief Academic Officer at Renaissance, discusses the three distinct categories of students' reading practice time: being read to, reading with someone else, and reading independently.¹⁴ All three methods will help students grow as readers, but Kerns notes the first two types are ways teachers can help students "read to learn" while they are "learning to read." Using audio narration, like the feature built into myON as an option for each book, is a great way to provide an experience of "reading to" students, though the importance of reading live to and with another person cannot be minimized. However, easy access to audio narration can help students replicate the read to/with experience and access texts they could perhaps otherwise not read on their own. Audio narration also models fluent reading for students as well as how to use inflection and tone of voice to express meaning.

Ultimately, to help build students' confidence so they continue to practice reading for both pleasure and learning, they need to see the benefit of reading and enjoying books on their own.¹⁵ Our findings support the existing literature for audio support and text-to-speech tools, in that audio narration on myON helped students using it comprehend text and experience more growth in reading achievement than students not using audio while reading at their skill level.

Fiction versus nonfiction

Results show differences in growth for students reading fiction versus nonfiction books. As displayed in figure 5, students who spent at least 50 percent of their time on myON reading nonfiction books achieved more growth than both nonusers and students who read mostly fiction books.

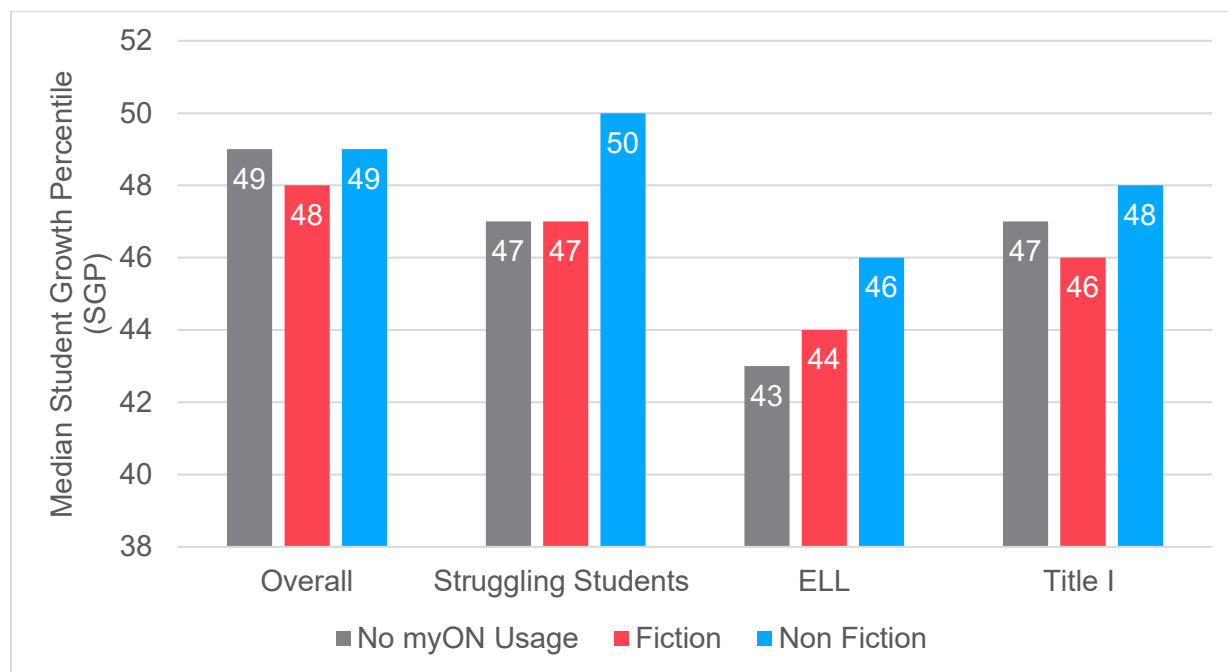
12 Chang, A. C. S. (2011). The effect of reading while listening to audiobooks: Listening fluency and vocabulary gain. *Asian Anthropology*. (1683478X), 10.

13 Lundgren, A. (2023). The zone of proximal development and content area instruction for middle school English language learner students: A phenomenological study.

14 See <https://www.renaissance.com/2022/01/21/blog-what-many-people-dont-understand-about-student-reading-practice/>

15 Willingham, D. (2015). *Raising kids who read: What parents and teachers can do*. Jossey-Bass.

Figure 5. Students reading mostly nonfiction on myON saw greater gains than nonusers and fiction readers



Research shows that building background knowledge and reading nonfiction text are critical to developing reading comprehension skills for all students.¹⁶ Even though beginning readers may not need as much contextualization or inferencing skills to read nonfiction text because of the clear and concise nature of these books, reading the text itself helps to build background knowledge to be used in the future on more difficult text.

Unfortunately, students tend to get little exposure to nonfiction while they are learning to read (compared to later when they spend time reading to learn information). It is important for students to have access to a good mix of fiction and nonfiction books as early as possible. In fact, both the National Assessment of Educational Progress and the updated state standards suggest a 50/50 distribution of literary and informational text for grades K–5.¹⁷ Even so, evidence shows that students do not read as much nonfiction text as they do fiction, with one study finding that students are exposed to about 3 minutes of nonfiction text per day.¹⁸ Similarly, in analyzing data for our annual national *What Kids are Reading* report, we have found that the overwhelming majority of books students read most are fiction titles.¹⁹

Fortunately, myON helps teachers and caregivers put a vast library of nonfiction reading right at students' fingertips in a virtual library easily accessed at school or at home.

¹⁶ For more information, see Renaissance Learning. (2022). *Research foundation for myON*. <https://docs.renaissance.com/R63613>

¹⁷ For more information, see: <https://learning.ccsso.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/ADA-Compliant-ELA-Standards.pdf>

¹⁸ Duke, N. K. (2000). 3.6 minutes per day: The scarcity of informational texts in first grade. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 35(2), 202–224.

¹⁹ The annual *What Kids Are Reading* report is available upon request from www.renaissance.com/whatkidsarereading.

Note for Interpretation

Note that program use for this analysis was voluntary (students were not recruited to participate nor randomly assigned) and that results should be considered correlational, not causal. While trends presented are helpful to understand the relationship between digital reading practice and patterns of growth, more work is needed to establish a causal relationship and inform best-practice recommendations.

In interpreting the results, note that most likely students did not complete all reading practice throughout the school year on myON. Thus, data collected through myON represents only a portion of students' overall reading experience. Though not a comprehensive window into student reading practice, overall the results suggest that the more students read, the more their general reading achievement is likely to improve, and that myON is an effective platform for (1) removing barriers to obtaining reading material, (2) guiding students to books at individual skill levels, and (3) providing supports such as audio narration.

Conclusion

Students who read books on myON during the 2023–2024 school year demonstrated typical to above-typical growth relative to students in the same school district who did not use myON. Student growth increased the more intensely students used the program. The results offer support for many well-regarded theories of reading and literacy development, such as that students experience higher growth when reading within their skill level, using audio support as needed, and building contextual knowledge via nonfiction text. The promising results of this analysis suggest that supplementing typical reading practice with a differentiated online library like myON may be an efficient and effective way to boost literacy skills.