THYNK

Evaluation of **a Cognitive Skills Training Curriculum**

In The Osceola County School District



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Background

Students who are unable to regulate their attention and behavior represent a significant challenge for school districts. Attention is a foundational skill that is associated with current and later academic achievement (e.g., Rabiner et al., 2016; Eisensmith et al., 2022; Sayal et al., 2015; Tan et al., 2021). According to the National Center for Education Statistics, 25% of school leaders report that lack of focus has a severe negative impact on learning (NCES, 2024).

Schools are under-equipped to meet the growing challenge. There are only a limited number of curricula that directly target attention and behavior, and those that do often place a substantial time burden on teachers and staff with minimal results. To cope, districts are forced to turn to costly, hard-to-find behavior technicians—straining budgets without addressing students' core needs.

Executive Summary

Presented below are the findings from a 2024 pilot of Skylar's Run conducted by the Osceola County School District, a Central Florida district serving over 70,000 students. The pilot involved 28 students who demonstrated impairments in attention and academic performance per parent, teacher and/or counselor reports.

Schools are increasingly under-equipped to meet the rising challenges of attention and behavioral issues. Few curricula directly target these needs, and those that do often require significant teacher or staff involvement with limited outcomes. As a result, many districts rely on costly, hard-to-find behavior technicians—putting additional strain on budgets without solving the root problem.

Skylar's Run is a clinically validated, easy-to-implement solution that helps school leaders:

- Superintendents reduce behavioral referrals and boost academic outcomes across the district
- Special Education teams accelerate progress toward IEP and 504 goals, especially for Tier 2 and Tier 3 students
- Principals improve classroom climate and student self-regulation

Developed by Thynk, Inc., Skylar's Run is a modern, clinically validated curriculum designed to improve attention and impulse control in students.

It combines:

- An Attention Visualization (AV) headset that reads real-time focus levels
- A 15-mission video game that adapts to the student's attention levels to reinforce focus and self-regulation

Once introduced, the program can be used independently by students, making it appropriate for individual, small-group, or full-classroom implementation with minimal teacher intervention.

How Pilots Were Delivered

Narcoossee Elementary School implemented Skylar's Run in group sessions held during the school day, 30 minutes per session, 2–3 times per week. Student progress was tracked using the in-game portal. The Vanderbilt Attention and Hyperactivity Assessment Scale Survey and Woodcock Johnson IV Math and Reading Fluency Subtests tests were given at the beginning and end of play to measure student's behavioral and academic progress.

School Session

The eight-week school session included 15 students aged 8–11. Students were recruited through parent outreach emails. While an ADHD diagnosis was not required, 12 students had formal ADHD diagnoses, and 8 were on medication. Participants were recommended by program leads, teachers, or counselors due to challenges with attention, focus, or academic performance.

Summer Camp Session

The four-week summer session was part of a camp-based program. Students signed up voluntarily. Of the 35 participants, 22 students aged 8 to 11 completed both the Math and Reading Fluency subtests before and after the training. Students who completed at least six training missions and missed no more than two consecutive weeks were included in the final analysis.

Student Feedback:

> *It was fun and it helped me remember that you can do anything you put your mind to*

> *Skylar's run was amazing*

> *I am so glad I was in Skylar's run*

> *It is very very fun*

Caregiver Feedback

> *She gets angry when frustrated but she has been a lot better at regulating anger. She thinks for a moment before hitting. If she does get angry, she will apologize, more self-aware.*
>
> ***(OS0012)***

> *I've seen him pick up his book a couple of times and go read on his own*
>
> ***(OS0014)***

> *Not only was my child more focused but they were also more calm throughout the day*
>
> ***(OS0003)***

> *I did notice that he will pause and think before his actions and is more cooperative.*
>
> ***(OS0008)***

> *More calm, even though his morning medication has worn off…[no need] to give him his afternoon medication in order to do his homework/manage his behavior just for the past few weeks.*
>
> ***(OS0003)***

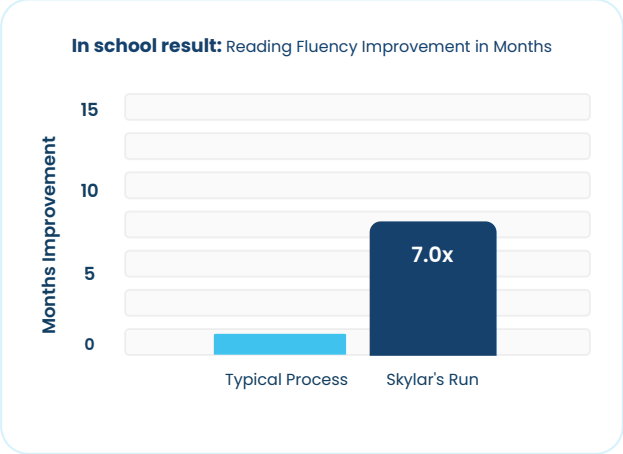
> *Better focus and coordination in behavior*
>
> ***(OS0011)***

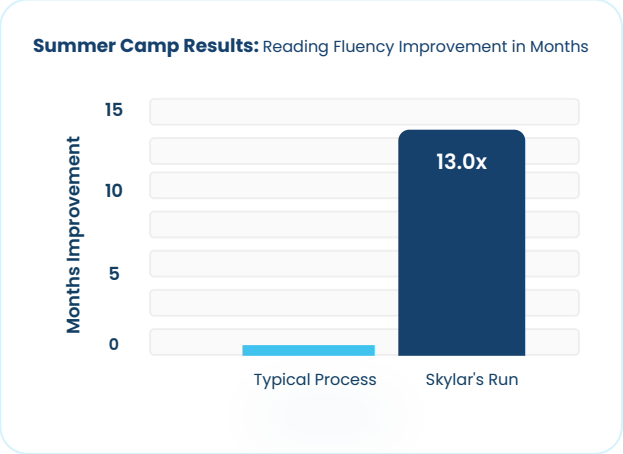
> *More excited to go to school*
>
> ***(OS00001)***

Reading and Math Fluency Results

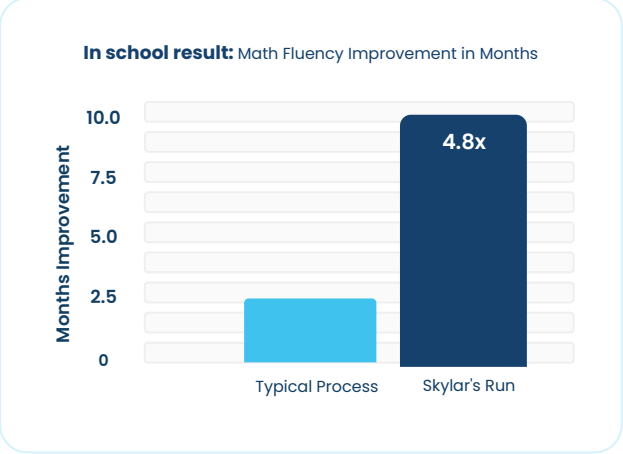
Academic performance was assessed across the in school and summer cohort using the Woodcock Johnson IV Math and Reading Fluency Subtests. Results are reported below in terms of age-equivalent gains measured in months.

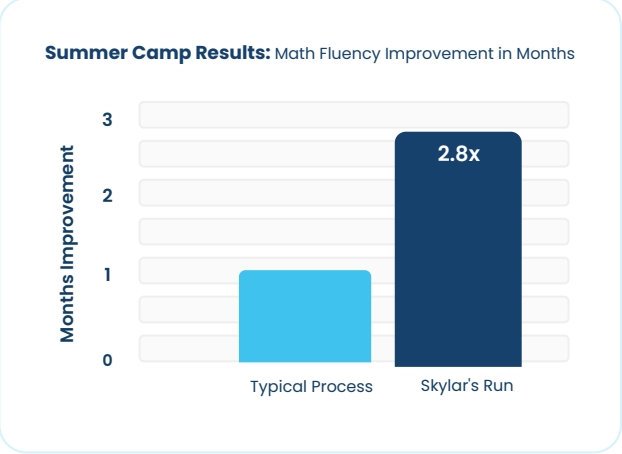
Reading fluency: Results showed gains equivalent to 56 weeks of progress—over 9 times the typical rate. Those who started below grade level showed even greater progress—averaging a 64-week improvement.





Math Fluency: Results showed gains equivalent to 24 weeks of progress—over four times the typical rate. For those who participated in the training for at least 6 weeks, the improvement increased to 28 weeks.



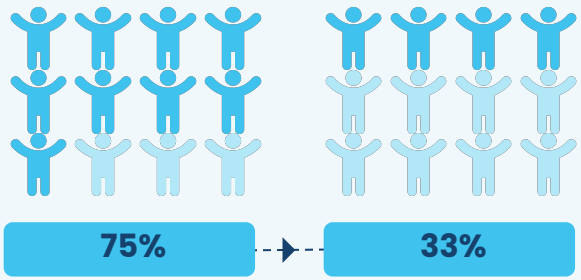


These results highlight Skylar's Run's ability to drive far transfer of attention skills to core learning outcomes.

Inattention and Hyperactivity Results

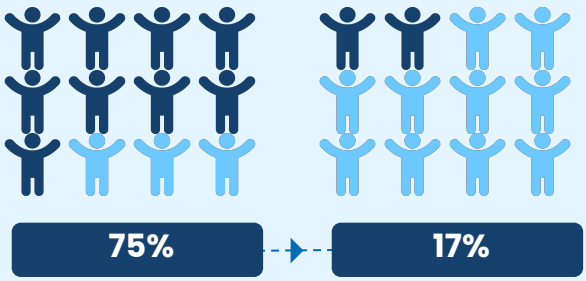
Behavioral outcomes (inattention and hyperactivity) were assessed across the in-school program participants using the Vanderbilt Attention and Hyperactivity Assessment Scale.
Results are presented below as before-and-after comparisons of student populations to illustrate the impact of the intervention.

Hyperactivity



Completion of Skylar's Run reduced the percentage of highly hyperactive students from 75% to 33%

Inattention



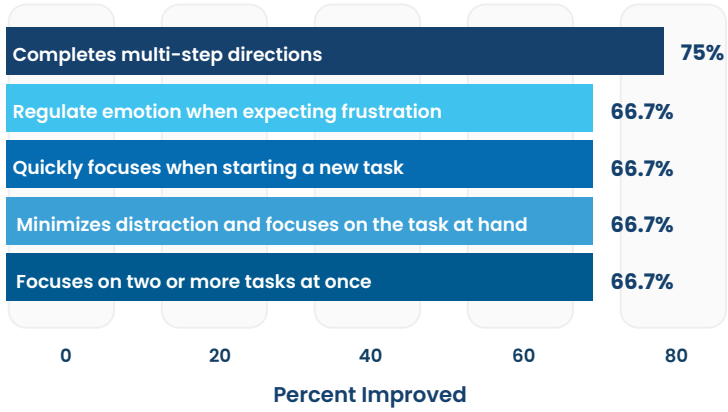
Completion of Skylar's Run reduced the percentage of highly inattentive students from 75% to 17%

Cognitive Skills Results

Thynk developed a 15-item parent-reported survey to measure changes in cognitive skills targeted by Skylar's Run. Parents rate how often their child struggles with each skill on a 4-point scale (0-3), with higher scores indicating greater difficulty. Real-life examples help parents relate the skills to their child's behavior. Across all children assessed before overall improvement in the targeted cognitive skills.

Top 5 Cognitive Skills with Most Student Improvement

Percentage of students who improved in each cognitive skill after completing Skylar's Run



Student Engagement and Perceived Impact

Post-training exit interviews revealed high levels of student engagement with Skylar's Run. 80% of students rated the experience as "fun" or "really fun," reflecting high user satisfaction. In addition to enjoying the gameplay, many students reported a heightened sense of control over their own attention by the end of the program, suggesting that the training not only held their interest but also fostered greater self-awareness.

Easy Implementation

The curriculum is designed for easy implementation and, once introduced, can be used independently by students with minimal teacher involvement—making it well-suited for full classrooms, small groups, or individualized interventions.

One Start, One Finish

Unlike many programs requiring extended use to show results, Sklar's Run delivers measurable improvements within 6-8 weeks. Gains have been shown to persist for up to five months without further training, though students may choose to continue with an optional maintenance plan.



To learn more about the Skylar's Run curriculum and explore implementation options for your school, contact Thynk, Inc.
Email: support@thynk.com

References

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