

Susan Evans  
Standard Level III  
FIE Testimony

FIE is a masterfully designed program that actually helps students become more strategic thinkers in school and in real life situations. I would characterize FIE as highly novel and engaging. The program appeals to students because the tasks are non academic, often humorous, and challenging – and there is no homework.

Students want to finish the FIE tasks because they are so engaging. Each activity makes the student really want to press through to successfully finish; and, if the student struggles, he discovers how to navigate through the task with effective thinking strategies. This discovery takes place with the help of a mediator (the FIE instructor) who uses questioning techniques to guide the student to success. With the successful completion of each task, a sense of competence and internal satisfaction is established.

FIE tasks are designed to be bridged (or linked) to the classroom experience and real life experiences. Students begin to see how order and relationships exist in all that we do. This bridging pays off by improved performance at school and at home.

For the past 2.5 years I worked as an IE instructor with a middle school boy who had some severe learning differences, documented by psycho-educational testing. His mother came to me with the testing report and wanted to get him some help. So, beginning in his 6<sup>th</sup> grade year and finishing at the end of his 8<sup>th</sup> grade year, he completed Standard FIE Levels I and II. FIE transformed my student's thinking. And to my surprise, it impacted my own thinking!

To understand how my student improved, a little background on the student will help. As I said before, this student is a middle school boy who started working with me in FIE when he was in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade. He was a year older than his peers because he was held back a year. He had many weaknesses, a few of which are:

- visual perceptual skills (which affected processing what he sees in an accurate manner)
- sustaining focus for tasks
- impulsive
- working memory
- vocabulary (expressive language)

His weaknesses affected test taking skills, homework completion (often needed parent's help), reading and following all directions (would overlook pieces of multi step directions), oral expression (couldn't recall words on demand and didn't use verbal hooks to aid memory), written expression (had difficulty planning what to write in an orderly sequential manner, writing sentences with enough elaboration to sound like a middle school student's writing, sequencing thoughts in a logical and sequential manner in sentences and in paragraphs, noticing errors of omission like punctuation and spelling errors and then making all necessary corrections) and reading comprehension and decoding (had difficulty reading multisyllabic words).

FIE sessions were held after school twice a week. Session length was 1 hour for the first session and 1.5 hours for the second session (two days later). A snack was provided. The student participated willingly and was intrigued by the FIE tasks. He found them challenging, but not frustrating. He worked eagerly to understand and solve the tasks. I'm convinced this is due to the novelty of the FIE tasks and the fact that these do not look like academic tasks.

FIE was completed over this time span:

6<sup>th</sup> grade: Began Level I

7<sup>th</sup> grade: Completed Level I and began Level II with supplemental activities

8<sup>th</sup> grade: Completed Level II and supplemental activities to exercise the weak areas of language, writing, and reading.

The results can be summarized as follows:

6<sup>th</sup> grade:

Results from a Gray Oral Reading pre and post test showed significant progress (in the span of approximately 5 -6 months – 6<sup>th</sup> grade year). He became independent in homework completion, per mother's report and his report. He told me that there are more steps to thinking than he had ever realized. He learned how to break words apart to decode a multisyllabic word (without intense reading decoding instruction\*). He began to identify and use previously learned cognitive functions to complete later FIE tasks. He made connections between the FIE tasks and his own school and home life.

7<sup>th</sup> / 8<sup>th</sup> grades:

He marveled aloud at the genius way FIE tasks are constructed: Who ever was able to think this (program) up?

\*We reviewed syllabication rules over the course of about 4 sessions. I arranged alphabet tiles on a table to form a multisyllabic word. He showed me where the word should be divided and then pronounced the word. He had difficulty placing stress on appropriate syllables and did not know how to tell from hearing if a syllable received more stress than others. He learned a technique to improve this skill.