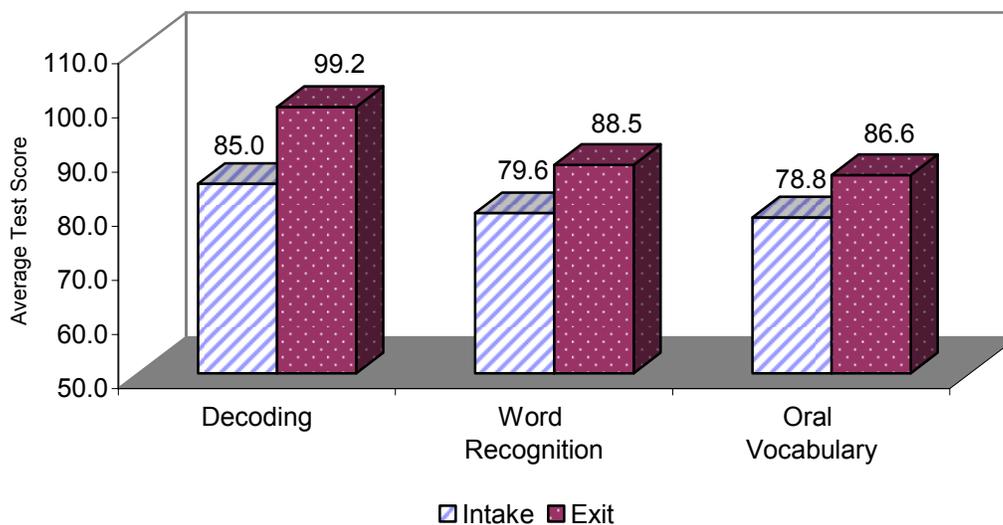


**Literacy Problem Addressed Through Local Program** Volume 7 Issue 2

It has been well documented that individuals involved in the justice system are more likely to drop out of school<sup>1</sup>, have learning disabilities<sup>2</sup>, and read below their grade level<sup>3</sup>. Research has also shown that improving reading skills and providing quality education is one of the most effective forms of crime prevention. In 2002, a coalition which included juvenile justice system practitioners was formed to address the local literacy crisis among male youth incarcerated in Probation Department rehabilitation facilities. At the time, local test scores showed adjudicated juvenile males were entering the system reading 3.8 years below grade level. To target this problem, the coalition partnered with literacy experts from Lindamood-Bell Learning Processes and offered intensive literacy instruction to male juvenile offenders at the Juvenile Ranch Facility and Camp Barrett.

Between September 2002 and May 2004, 198 youth received program services after being randomly assigned through an experimental research design. After receiving approximately 88 hours of instruction, program participants made significant gains in verbal ability, word recognition, decoding, spelling and comprehension, as well as in following oral directions. Figure 1 presents intake and exit scores for three of nine tests as an example of the gains made by these youth.

**Figure 1  
PROGRAM CLIENTS SHOWED SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENT IN READING ABILITIES**



**Sample Size = 179-180**

Other outcomes included increases in participants' grade point average and positive ratings of the program from program participants. For example, more than nine out of ten said they would recommend the program to other students. For readers interested in a full description of the findings, including recidivism in the one-year follow-up, a final evaluation report for this program will be available in mid-March from SANDAG at [www.sandag.org/cj](http://www.sandag.org/cj).

<sup>1</sup> Harlow, C. W. (2003). *Education and Correctional Populations (Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report NCJ Publication No. 195670)*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice. <sup>2</sup> Keith, J. M., & McCray, A. D. (2002). Juvenile Offenders with Special Needs: Critical Issues and Bleak Outcomes. *Qualitative Studies in Education*, 15, 697-710. <sup>3</sup> Center on Crime, Communities, and Culture (1997). *Research Brief: Education as Crime Prevention*. New York, NY: Open Society Institute.