Read Well Research Base

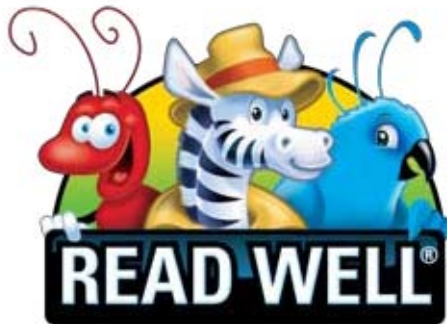Grades K–3

READ WELL®

Cambium
LEARNING®

Read Well® Research Base for Instructional Practices

Phonemic Awareness

Most poor readers have problems with the spoken language skill of phonemic awareness and the ability to associate phonemes with letter strings (Shankweiler et al., 1999). Research consistently indicates that phonemic awareness and letter-knowledge are the best school-entry predictors of how well children will learn to read during the first two years of instruction (Ball & Blanchman, 1991). Beginning readers who have difficulty perceiving the differences between sounds in spoken words (/d/ versus /b/, for example) will have difficulty learning and applying the letter-sound correspondences needed to decode words fluently and accurately.

The National Reading Panel (2000) found that "teaching two PA [Phonemic Awareness] skills to children has a greater long-term benefit for reading than teaching only one PA skill or teaching a global array of skills." The two skills recommended for instruction are blending and segmenting. "Blending phonemes helps children to decode unfamiliar words. Segmenting words into phonemes helps children to spell unfamiliar words and also to retain spellings in memory" (p. 21).

ALIGNMENT WITH THE READ WELL CURRICULUM. *Read Well®* is structured around a unique sound sequence that: (1) introduces high-frequency sounds before low-frequency sounds and (2) separates easily confused sounds. Students usually learn one new sound from the sound sequence in each unit. *Read Well* uses explicit instruction and multiple approaches to teach students to recognize, think about, and work with the new sound. The curriculum:

- Includes songs and poems that introduce new sounds and reinforce sound familiarity
- Helps students hear and isolate beginning, middle, and ending sounds
- Provides segmentation and sound counting instruction and practice (orally, through finger counting, and/or by following visual cues on blending cards)
- Provides sound blending instruction and practice (orally, through hand movements, by using a spring toy, and/or by following visual cues on blending cards)

Phonemic awareness instruction easily flows into phonics instruction. In *Read Well*, most phonemic awareness activities have accompanying cards or posters that guide students to make a connection between the sounds they are hearing and the letter that appears on the card.

"When we began the reading adoption process at the district level, we looked at research from the National Reading Panel and Reading First schools. *Read Well* met all the criteria for what was best for kids.

I've seen great results. The very first year we used *Read Well*, we saw significant gains in phonemic awareness and decoding scores.* Now, five years into the program, we have 80 percent of students benchmarking in December, when they don't need to be there until June."

—Jill Carlson
Principal, Crownhill Elementary, Bremerton, Washington

* as measured by *DIBELS®* (*Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills*)
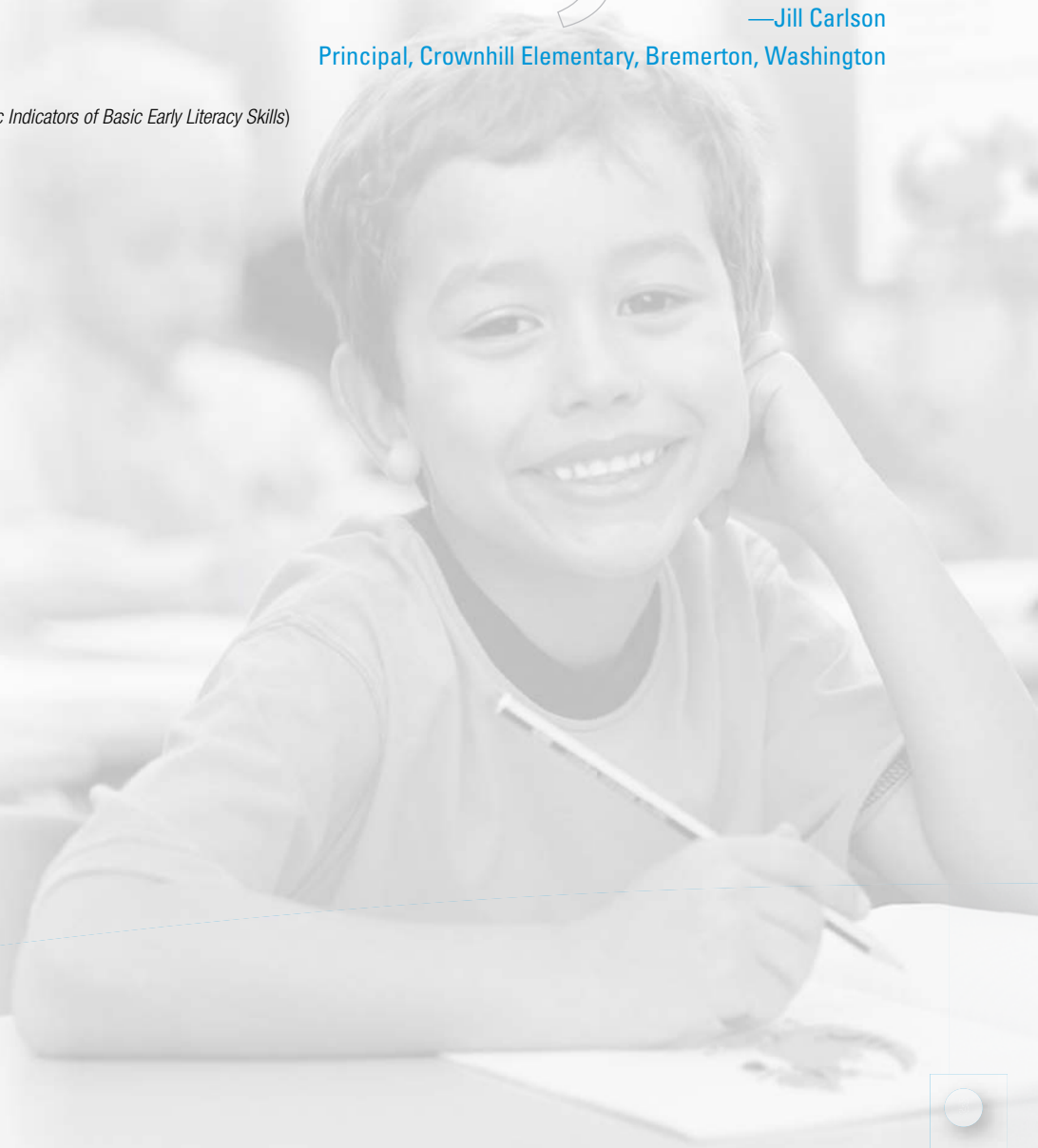
Read Well Research Base for Instructional Practices

Alphabetic Principle and Phonics

Beginning readers must understand the link—called the "alphabetic principle"—between the sounds of words (phonemes) and their abstract representations (letters or graphemes). Numerous studies support the importance of this knowledge in accounting for differences between good and poor readers (e.g., Juel, 1991), and there is converging evidence that explicit instruction in letter-sound correspondence helps children who have not grasped the alphabetic principle or who do not apply it (Foorman, Francis, & Fletcher, 1995; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). Research shows that explicit phonics instruction results in higher student achievement (Adams, 1990; Beck & Juel, 1995), most likely because "systematic and explicit phonics instruction significantly improves children's reading comprehension" (Armbruster, Lehr, & Osborn, 2001, p. 14). Intervention studies on phonological awareness training report both short-term and long-term positive effects on reading, spelling, and phonological awareness development (Iverson & Tunmer, 1993; Lundberg, Frost, & Peterson, 1998).

Young children benefit from systematic phonics instruction in kindergarten and first grade and are capable of learning phonemic and phonics concepts (National Reading Panel, 2000). Most young readers have adequate language comprehension for beginning reading but need help identifying printed words fluently and accurately (Adams, 1990; Liberman & Shankweiler, 1985). The National Reading Panel (2000) concluded that "growth in word-reading skills is strongly enhanced by systematic phonics instruction. ... Growth in reading comprehension is also boosted by systematic phonics instruction for younger students and reading disabled students. These findings should dispel any belief that teaching phonics systematically to young children interferes with their ability to read and comprehend text" (p. 86).

The National Reading Panel (2000) also reports that "systematic phonics instruction helped children at all SES [socioeconomic status] levels make greater gains in reading than did non-phonics instruction" (p. 126). The panel concluded that "systematic phonics instruction is beneficial to students regardless of their socioeconomic status" (p. 126).

In a key study, first- and second-grade students who received explicit phonics instruction performed significantly better on measures of reading achievement than students who received an implicit or embedded approach (Foorman, Fletcher, Francis, Schatschneider, & Mehta, 1998). Chard, Simmons, and Kame'enui (1998) explain these results by stating that the implicit or indirect approaches to phonics instruction place too much responsibility on the learner to isolate the letter-sound correspondence being taught from the other letters in proximity.

Armbruster, Lehr, and Osborn (2001) say "a program of systematic phonics instruction clearly identifies a carefully selected and useful set of letter-sound relationships and then organizes the introduction of these relationships into a logical instructional sequence" (p. 16). The Learning First Alliance (1998) also finds that "early in first grade, a child's reading materials should feature a high proportion of new words that use the letter-sound relationships they have been taught. It makes no sense to teach decoding strategies and then have children read materials in which these strategies won't work" (p. 13). Stahl, Osborn, & Lehr (1990) note that "skillful readers visually process virtually every individual letter of every word they read, and this is true whether they are reading isolated words or meaningful, connected text" (p. 18). When applying phonics skills to more complex words, Cunningham (1998) found that "many big words occur infrequently, but when they do occur they carry much of the meaning and content of what is being read. ... Students who learn to look for patterns in multisyllabic words will be better spellers and decoders" (p. 189).

ALIGNMENT WITH THE READ WELL CURRICULUM.
Read Well is a systematic phonics program. Each unit introduces one or more new letter-sound associations. Daily decoding practice introduces, maintains, and provides continuous review on the letter-sound associations and on key words that use them. The decoding practices:

- Apply phonemic knowledge to phonics skills

- Introduce words that students will also encounter in the unit Storybook

- Teach students to sound out and decode words

- Build accuracy and fluency through reading word lists and short practice passages

- Emphasize decoding and understanding of multisyllabic words

- Teach different word endings, consonant blends, pattern words, and rhyming words

As students learn and practice the phonics skills in the decoding practices, the number of words they can read grows exponentially. The *Read Well* strategy of introducing frequently used sounds first allows students to decode more words earlier, which enables them to comprehend meaningful sentences and stories sooner. Students begin reading meaningful text in the very first Storybook. As the program progresses, students gradually read more and more of the text, and the teacher reads less and less. Eventually, students can read all the stories in their entirety, which gives them the opportunity to develop independence and fluency in reading.

Vocabulary

Vocabulary development in typically developing children (Learning First Alliance, 1998) and in children with limited comprehension skills (Snow et al., 1998) is significantly enhanced by the amount and variety of material to which children are exposed. Students learn vocabulary and word meanings in relation to other known words and ideas (Beck & McKeown, 1991; Stahl, 1998). Words are remembered and recalled easily when students' understanding of words is deepened and their semantic networks widened. After reviewing research on vocabulary, Baumann and Kame'enui (1991) concluded that words should be used "many times in many situations." Similarly, Stahl (2003) explained that, "as we encounter a word repeatedly, more and more information accumulates about that word until we have a vague notion of what it 'means.' As we get more information, we are able to define that word" (p. 18). Beck, McKeown, & Kucan (2003) recommend providing robust vocabulary instruction "that offers rich information about words and their uses, provides frequent and varied opportunities for students to think about and use words, and enhances students' language comprehension and production" (p. 2). They also add that "young children's listening and speaking competence is in advance of their reading and writing competence. ... We certainly must not hold back adding vocabulary to children's repertoires until their word recognition becomes adequate" (p. 48).

ALIGNMENT WITH THE *READ WELL* CURRICULUM.
Rich unit themes in *Read Well* make it easy for students to remember and recall new vocabulary. *Read Well* builds vocabulary and background knowledge by having students explore and revisit the meanings and uses of words throughout the program. Teacher-read text in Storybooks, Lap Books, and literature books allows for the exploration of more sophisticated language, which creates more opportunities for the introduction of new word meanings and a richer content than is normally possible in decodable text alone.

Vocabulary words are:

- Read by the teacher in the teacher-read text; children begin hearing and orally using the word

- Spoken by the students as teacher-led questions prompt students to use the words orally and in class discussion

- Used repeatedly by the teacher throughout units in the teacher-read text

- Read by the students in decoding practice and then in the Storybooks

- Used extensively within and across units

Comprehension

Skilled readers comprehend what they read. They differ from less skilled readers in their use of background knowledge to comprehend text and to draw valid inferences about what they have read (Dickson, Simmons, & Kame'enui, 1998) and in their ability to decode fluently and accurately (Perfetti, 1985). To construct meaning, readers must decode words and access the text integration process. If word recognition is slow, the reader's attention remains focused on decoding rather than on gaining meaning from the text.

Hirsch (2003) summarized, " ... there is current scientific agreement on at least three principles that have useful implications for improving students' reading comprehension. The three principles ... are these:

1. Fluency allows the mind to focus on comprehension;

2. Breadth of vocabulary increases comprehension and facilitates further learning; and

3. Domain knowledge, the most recently understood principle, increases fluency, broadens vocabulary, and enables deeper comprehension" (p. 12).

According to Armbruster et al. (2001), "research shows that teacher questioning strongly supports and advances students' learning from reading. Questions ...

- give students a purpose for reading;

- focus students' attention on what they are to learn;

- help students to think actively as they read;

- encourage students to monitor their comprehension; and

- help students review content and relate what they have learned to what they already know" (p. 54).

The National Reading Panel (2000) concluded "comprehension instruction can effectively motivate and teach readers to learn and to use comprehension strategies that benefit the reader. These comprehension strategies yield increases in measures of near transfer such as recall, question answering and generation, and summarization of texts" (p. 6).

ALIGNMENT WITH THE *READ WELL* CURRICULUM. Emphasizing the interplay between basic knowledge and comprehension strategies, *Read Well* instruction includes: (1) developing background knowledge before reading selections by discussing new vocabulary and key concepts, then linking them to what students already know; (2) teacher-guided discussion of the story content before reading; and (3) explicit instruction on strategies such as summarizing, predicting, and self-monitoring (Learning First Alliance, 1998; Snow et al., 1998).

Read Well prompts teachers to ask questions that direct children to examine the central content of the story (as recommended by Beck, Omanson, & McKeown, 1982), predict what will happen, and identify important story elements. Teacher prompts are at point-of-use in the Storybooks to encourage highly interactive reading, build content knowledge, and encourage vocabulary development. Stories are then orally retold within a scaffolded summary process.

These strategies help prepare students for written story mapping, which increases comprehension (Baumann & Bergeron, 1993).

Read Well includes comprehension objectives that tap the multiple levels of thinking described in Bloom's Taxonomy and other thinking skills models. Through Comprehension and Skill Work activities, students:

- Make connections, predictions, and comparisons
- Enhance comprehension by identifying, describing, visualizing, illustrating, classifying, summarizing, responding, and evaluating
- Work with story elements, story maps, text structure, complete sentences, and vocabulary
- Practice study and test-taking skills

Fluent and Automatic Reading

Reading fluency is recognized by researchers as an essential element of comprehension (Adams, 1990; National Reading Panel, 2000; Samuels & Flor, 1997). Hirsch (2003) explains, "A person who reads fast has 'automated' many of the underlying processes involved in reading, and can, therefore, devote conscious attention to textual meaning rather than to the processes themselves." Effective reading instruction uses decodable text (e.g., student reading materials that contain a high percentage of words with regular decodable spelling patterns). Juel (1991) observed that beginning readers who read text selections that corresponded to their phonics instruction used more phonologically based word identification strategies than students who read texts consisting of predominantly sight words.

The National Reading Panel (2000) concluded that "guided repeated oral reading procedures that included guidance from teachers, peers, or parents had a significant and positive impact on word recognition, fluency, and comprehension across a range of grade levels" (p. 12).

ALIGNMENT WITH THE *READ WELL* CURRICULUM.
Read Well students build fluency gradually through repeated readings of the Duet and Solo Stories. Duet Stories contain both teacher-read text and fully decodable student text. Solo Stories are read only by students and are fully decodable. By Unit 34 of *Read Well® 1*, all stories are fully decodable. Students read stories every day, working first on accuracy; then on accuracy and expression; and finally on accuracy, expression, and rate. Students grow from slow, deliberate readers to expressive, fluent readers.

As students progress through the units, procedures change to purposefully develop fluency:

1. Students whisper-read the selection before engaging in guided reading. The teacher encourages students to read expressively by modeling, giving individual turns, and acknowledging efforts.

2. Students read the selection a second time aloud and work toward an accuracy goal.

3. Repeated readings include daily Partner Reading, daily homework, and periodic timed readings.

4. Students engage in Short Passage Practice, in which teachers demonstrate and guide repeated readings of paragraphs.

5. Later units include timed fluency assessments, while earlier units include some timed fluency readings.

Teachers assess students for fluency at the end of most units, and fluency goals guide instruction and practice.

Read Well Research Base for Instructional Practices

Screening, Continuous Assessment, and Differentiation

Students enter school with very different literacy backgrounds and predispositions for reading. The International Reading Association and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (1998) state that "goals and expectations for young children's achievement in reading and writing should be developmentally appropriate, that is, challenging but achievable, with sufficient adult support" (p. 15).

Effective reading instruction includes efficient screening and continuous progress assessments to guide decisions about grouping, the pace of instruction, and adjusting instruction for individuals (Learning First Alliance, 1998). The National Reading Panel (2000) agrees, pointing out that "at all grade levels, but particularly in kindergarten and the early grades, children are known to vary greatly in the skills they bring to school. ... Teachers should be able to assess the needs of the individual students and tailor instruction to meet specific needs" (p. 11).

ALIGNMENT WITH THE *READ WELL* CURRICULUM. *Read Well*'s unique curriculum design permits multiple points of entry so all children are taught at an "optimum" rate. At the beginning of *Read Well* instruction, teachers administer a Placement Inventory to put students at their exact point of learning—not too basic, not too difficult.

As instruction continues, *Read Well* helps teachers adjust instruction to meet individual variations in the pace at which young children learn. The curriculum uses end-of-unit assessments to monitor student progress.

These quick, individually administered assessments help teachers determine if students:

- Have mastered unit skills and are ready for the next unit
- Are learning at the appropriate pace
- Require additional practice or review
- Need reteaching of skills
- Need to be assigned to a different small group

Motivating Students to Read

Cultivating positive expectations about, and experience with, literacy is a critical component of effective reading instruction (National Reading Panel, 2000; Snow et al., 1998). Major stumbling blocks to skilled reading include an absence or loss of initial motivation to read or a failure to develop appreciation of the rewards of reading (Snow et al., 1998). Children need a great deal of experience with literature as both active listeners and active participants. The Learning First Alliance (1998) suggests that book reading involve multiple genres, including nonfiction and fiction.

ALIGNMENT WITH THE *READ WELL* CURRICULUM. The stories in the *Read Well* Storybooks captivate young children and encompass multiple genres, including fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. Children are also exposed to rich, interesting content through the recommended readings for each unit. *Read Well* fosters motivation by providing students with many opportunities to experience success in reading; students read on their own starting with the first Storybook. On a daily basis, students learn to systematically sound out words, recognize common word patterns, and identify high-frequency irregular words. Students practice skills to mastery and then immediately apply them to reading fully decodable stories. As a result, every child learns that he or she can read well.

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"At the beginning of the school year, only 37 percent of our students were reading proficiently.* By the end of the school year, 68 percent of our students were reading proficiently.* That translated to the highest growth rate in the state."

—Mike Looney
Superintendent, Butler County Schools
Former Assistant Superintendent, Montgomery Public Schools, Alabama

* as measured by *DIBELS*® (*Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills*)
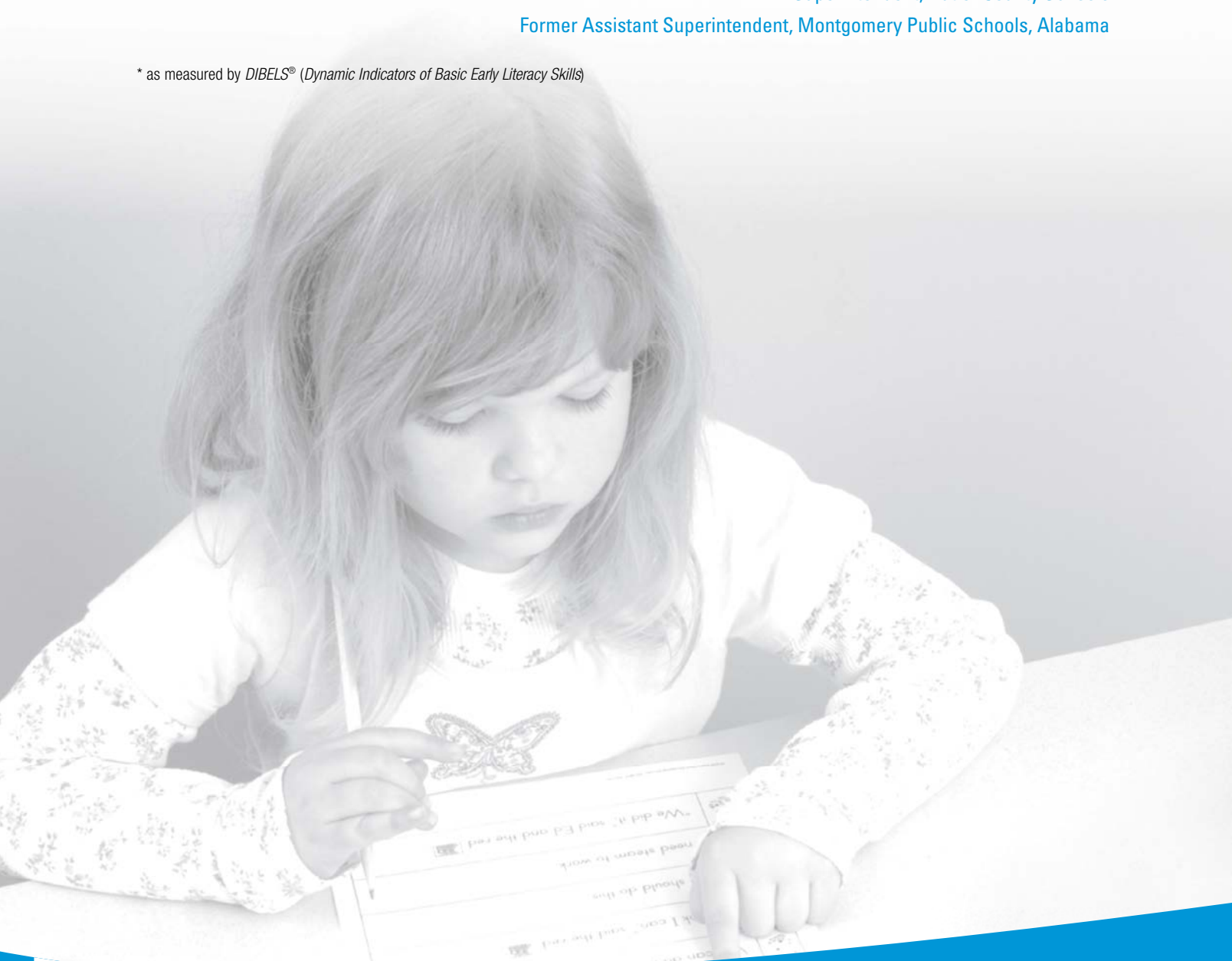
Northwest School Success

Pilot Evaluation of *Read Well*® With Second Grade Students

BACKGROUND

The *Read Well 1* and *Read Well*® *2* curricula were field-tested in eight second grade classrooms at three high-risk schools in the Northwest. In the field-test schools, 41 to 82 percent of students qualified for the Free/Reduced Lunch program (FRL), 13 to 75 percent were designated ethnic minority status, and 8 to 23 percent were English language learners (ELLs) (see Table 1).

All schools participated in a Walk-to-Read model where students left their regular classroom and walked to another classroom for *Read Well* instruction. Instruction was provided 60 minutes a day at two of the schools and 70 minutes a day at the other school.

RESULTS

During the 2006–2007 school year, data were collected using the Short Scale of the Woodcock Reading Mastery Test–Revised/Normative Update (WRMT–R/NU). The WRMT–R/NU Short Scale consists of the Word Identification subtest and the Passage Comprehension subtest; the Total Reading score represents a composite of these two subtests.

The WRMT–R/NU Short Scale was administered in the fall of 2006 prior to *Read Well* instruction and in the spring of 2007 after instruction. The WRMT–R/NU was selected for measuring growth because it provides norm-referenced scores and assesses reading skills at the word level and the passage level, both of which are targeted in *Read Well*.

Table 1

School Demographics

School	Setting	FRL Program	Ethnic Minority	ELL
1	Small City	76%	40%	18%
2	Large Inner City	82%	75%	23%
3	Small Rural Town	41%	13%	8%

Graph 1

WRMT–R/NU Results With Second Grade Students Before and After *Read Well* (n=159)
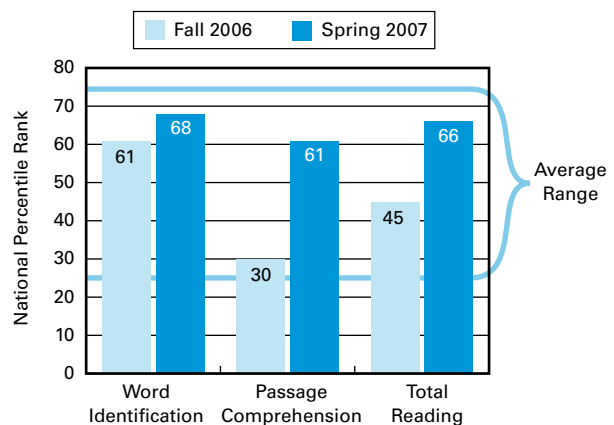
n=number of students

Read Well Effectiveness Data

All Students

Across all schools, students exceeded expected gains when compared with the national normative sample for the test. Performance of the students in second grade before and after *Read Well* instruction on Word Identification, Passage Comprehension, and the Total Reading composite of the WRMT–R/NU is presented in Graph 1. Graph 1 displays performance in national percentile rank where the 50th percentile is considered the middle of the average range. In the fall of second grade, *Read Well* students across all schools were performing, on average, at the 45th percentile on Total Reading. By spring of second grade, these students raised their reading skills one half of a standard deviation to the upper end of the average range, at the 66th percentile.

Results by Initial Placement and Pacing Subgroup

As *Read Well* is a mastery-based curriculum, students started instruction at different units in either *Read Well 1* or *Read Well 2* and completed instruction over the course of the school year on different pacing schedules according to student need. To assess whether student outcomes differed depending on the instructional start unit and the units covered in the curriculum, the sample was divided into three subgroups.

The first subgroup consisted of students who began instruction in *Read Well 1* and finished instruction at the end of the year in *Read Well 1*. The second subgroup consisted of students who began instruction in *Read Well 1* and finished instruction at the end of the year in *Read Well 2*. The third subgroup consisted of those who began instruction in *Read Well 2* and finished instruction at the end of the year in *Read Well 2*.
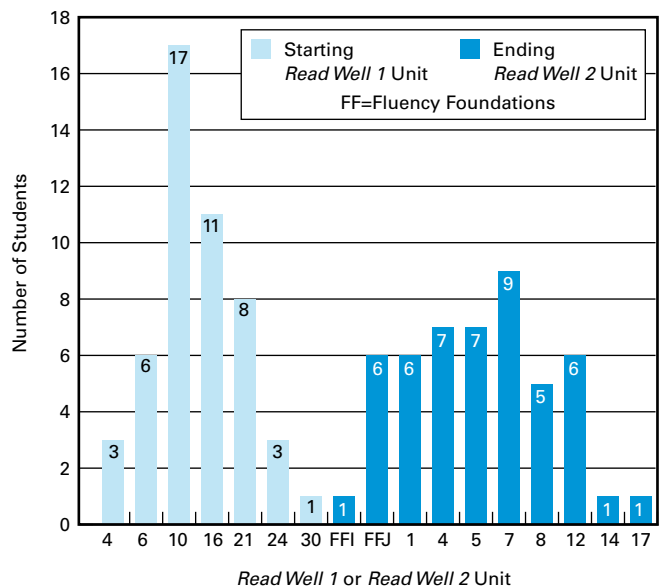
Graph 2

Starting and Ending Unit for Students Who Began and Ended Instruction in *Read Well 1*
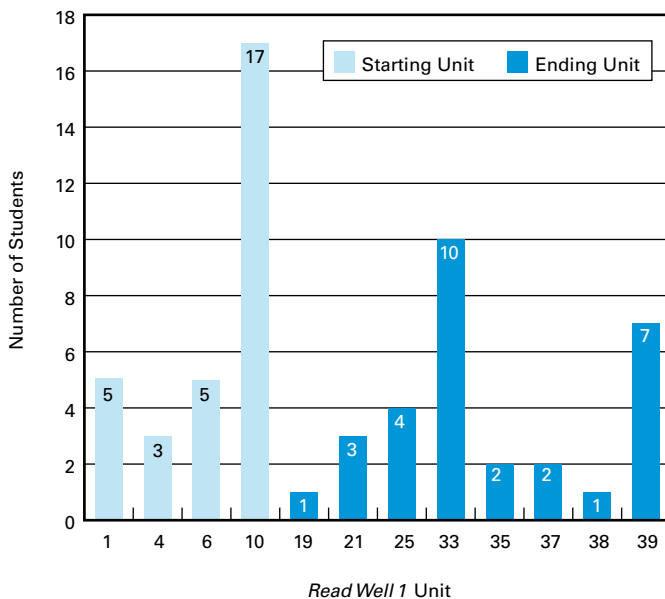
Graph 3

Starting and Ending Unit for Students Who Began Instruction in *Read Well 1* and Ended in *Read Well 2*

Within the group that started and finished in *Read Well 1* (n=30), students started anywhere between Unit 1 and Unit 10, with more than 56 percent starting in Unit 10. By the end of the year, students finished between Unit 19 and Unit 39, with 33 percent finishing in Unit 33 and 23 percent finishing in *Read Well® Plus* (Unit 39) (see Graph 2).

Within the group that started in *Read Well 1* and finished in *Read Well 2* (n=49), students started anywhere between Unit 4 and Unit 30, with 35 percent starting in Unit 10. By the end of the year, students finished between *Read Well 2 Fluency Foundations™* Unit 1 and *Read Well 2* Unit 17, with 18 percent finishing in Unit 7 (see Graph 3). To provide a reference point for the amount of instruction completed, *Read Well 2* Unit 19 represents instruction appropriately leveled for students at the end of second grade.

The group that started and finished in *Read Well 2* (n=79) included students who started anywhere between *Read Well 2 Fluency Foundations* Unit A and *Read Well 2* Unit 9, with 44 percent of students starting in *Fluency Foundations* Unit A and 44 percent starting in *Read Well 2* Unit 1. By the end of the

year, students finished between Unit 8 and Unit 17, with 38 percent finishing in Unit 14 and 57 percent finishing in Unit 17 (see Graph 4).

Average national percentile rank was determined on the WRMT–R/NU Total Reading composite in fall of 2006 before instruction and spring of 2007 after instruction across the three instructional pacing subgroups (see Graph 5). All three subgroups showed accelerated growth in overall reading. The group of students who began and ended instruction in *Read Well 1* increased 15 percentile points or three-quarters of a standard deviation in overall reading skill, from the 6th percentile to the 21st percentile. The group who began instruction in *Read Well 1* and ended in *Read Well 2* increased 22 percentile points or more than one-half of a standard deviation in overall reading, from the 30th percentile to the 52nd percentile. The group who began and ended instruction in *Read Well 2* performed at the 76th percentile in overall reading at pretest and scored at the 86th percentile—in the above-average range—at the end of the year, gaining nearly one-third of a standard deviation.
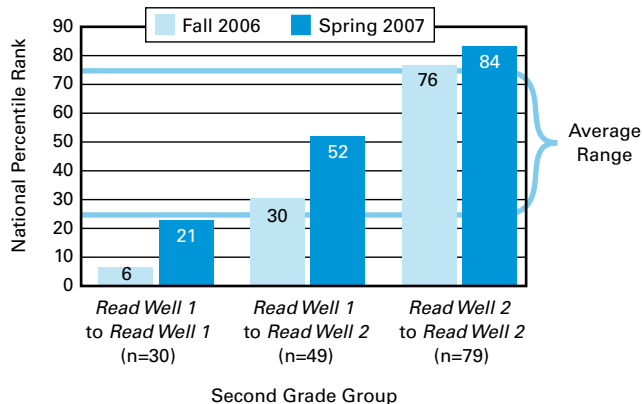
Graph 4

Starting and Ending Unit for Students Who Began and Ended Instruction in *Read Well 2*
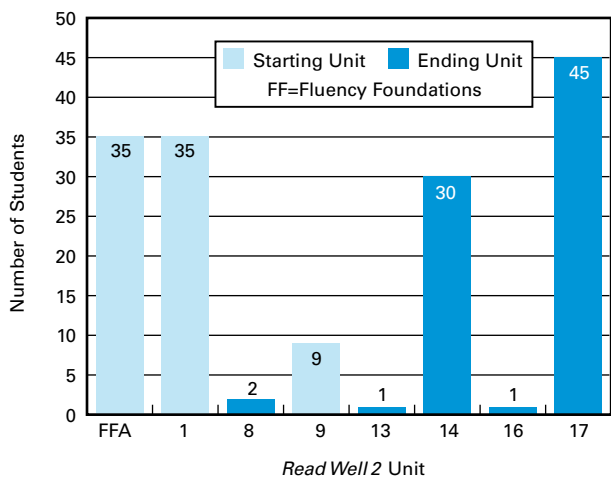
Graph 5

WRMT–R/NU Total Reading National Percentile Rank for Second Grade Students Across Instructional Pacing Subgroups Before and After *Read Well* Instruction

n=number of students

Student Performance in Alabama's Montgomery Public Schools

These data track the progress of students using the *Read Well* curriculum in Alabama's Montgomery Public Schools during the school years ending 2004–2009.

YEAR 1 (2003–2004)

In the fall of 2003, Montgomery Public Schools (MPS) implemented *Read Well* as the core literacy and intervention curriculum in all of its kindergarten and first grade classrooms. To aid with implementation, coaches were eventually placed in every school, and they, along with principals and teachers, participated in a series of professional development sessions.

Initially in Year 1 (fall 2003), coaches worked with only Reading First schools, and the principals and teachers from non-Reading First schools observed. However, MPS later decided to have limited coaching visits in all schools (regardless of Reading First designation). Consequently, Cambium Learning® Sopris West® conducted two visits to every non-Reading First school in the spring of 2004. Coaching visits included teaching demonstrations, classroom observations, meetings to discuss issues and questions, and analyzing program data for placement purposes. Extensive professional development was also provided for teachers, coaches, and principals in the spring and summer of 2004.

In order to measure student progress, *DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills)* measures were administered in the beginning and at the end of the first year of *Read Well* implementation in MPS. Because the curriculum was implemented in all schools with all students, the sample consisted of all students that were tested. Students counted in the official enrollment may have missed testing due to absence or leaving the school after the October count. The exact sample size (number of students tested) for 2003–2004 is unknown, but can be assumed to be close to the total enrollment: 2,585 kindergarten students; 2,695 first grade students; and 2,556 second grade students.

YEAR 2 (2004–2005)

MPS continued using *Read Well* as the core literacy and intervention curriculum in all kindergarten and first grade classrooms during the 2004–2005 school year. Additionally, coaching and professional development continued to aid with implementation. All MPS Reading First schools had one coaching day per month, and non-Reading First schools had two coach visits during the school year.

Again, the *DIBELS* measures were used to track student growth. The total enrollment for the 2004–2005 school year was: 2,580 kindergarten students; 2,781 first grade students; and 2,601 second grade students.

YEARS 3 THROUGH 6 (2005–2006, 2006–2007, 2007–2008, 2008–2009)

MPS continued using *Read Well* as the core literacy and intervention curriculum in all kindergarten and first grade classrooms for the school years ending 2006–2009. Additionally, coaching and professional development continued to aid with implementation. The *DIBELS* measures were used to monitor student growth.

RESULTS

Results are reported in terms of the percentage of students meeting benchmark goals on indicators of key early literacy skills administered at the beginning and end of kindergarten, first grade, and second grade. *DIBELS* benchmark goals are based on research and represent minimum levels of performance for all students to reach that suggest a student is on track for becoming a reader. Benchmark goals for each measure and time period were established using a minimum cut point at which the odds were in favor of a student achieving subsequent early literacy goals. The measures used by the District to monitor progress in early literacy skills were: Initial Sound Fluency (ISF) and Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (PSF) at the beginning and end of kindergarten, respectively; Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF)

and Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) at the beginning and end of first grade, respectively; and ORF at both the beginning and end of second grade (see Table 1). These measures were chosen by the District because they are considered to be the more heavily weighted predictors of reading success.

Graph 2 shows the percentage of kindergarten students who achieved benchmark at the beginning and end of each of six academic years of *Read Well K* implementation. The increase in the percentage of students achieving benchmark from the beginning to end of kindergarten ranged from 39 to 57 percent across the six school years, with a median of 46.5 percent. After using *Read Well K*, the percentage of students achieving benchmark ranged from 88 to 96 percent.

Table 1

	Measurement* Used by Grade Level and Time of Year	
	Beginning of Year	**End of Year**
Kindergarten	ISF	PSF
Grade 1	NWF	ORF
Grade 2	ORF	ORF

Graph 2

Six Years of Kindergarten *DIBELS* Results**

Year of *Read Well* Implementation
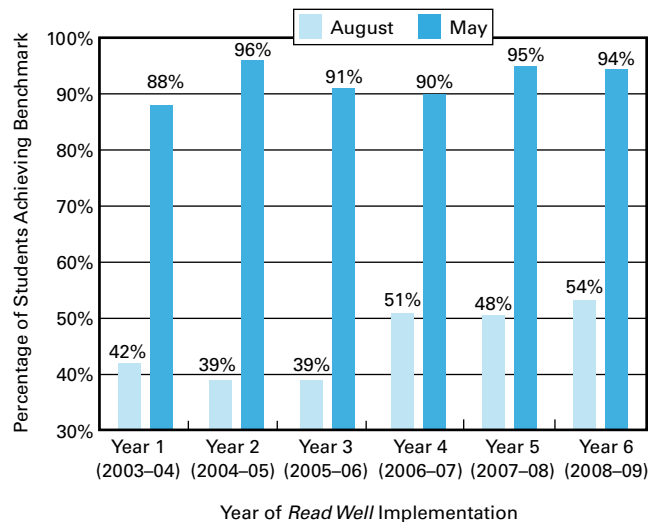
* All results reported were obtained by these measures unless otherwise noted.

** All *DIBELS* results are reported from summary of results documents released by MPS. The results do not reflect matched samples (i.e., the same group of students contributes to sets of scores at the beginning and end of school year or from one school year to the next). Hence, the results for end-of-year time points include, for example, new students who received no or partial prior instruction in *Read Well* and students who received *Read Well* instruction but missed the beginning-of-year test.

Read Well Effectiveness Data

As shown in Graph 3, in the first year of implementation, 65 percent of students achieved benchmark at the end of first grade, up from 32 percent at the beginning of the year. These students received *Read Well* instruction in first grade only. On average, 81.4 percent of students achieved benchmark on ORF at the end of first grade after using *Read Well 1* in the second through sixth years of implementation. These students received *Read Well* instruction in both kindergarten and first grade.

Graph 4 shows the percentage of students achieving benchmark at the end of kindergarten and first grade for the school year before *Read Well* was implemented (2002–2003)

and the six school years during the use of *Read Well*. The percent of students achieving the end of kindergarten NWF benchmark goal increased from 56 percent without *Read Well* to 85 to 96 percent for the six years with *Read Well*. The percent of students achieving the end of first grade ORF benchmark goal increased from 47 percent before *Read Well* to 79 to 84 percent in implementation years 2-6 when *Read Well* was used in kindergarten and first grade. These results represent a substantial increase in the percentage of low-risk students in MPS.

Graph 3

Six Years of First Grade *DIBELS* Results
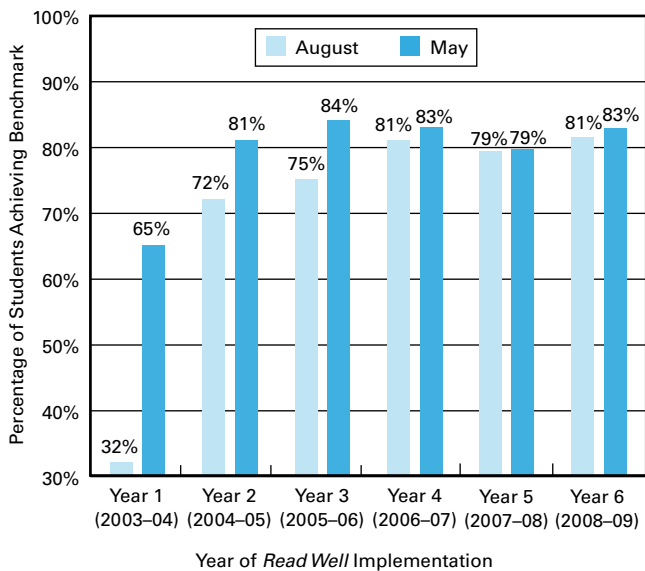
Graph 4

End-of-Year *DIBELS* Kindergarten NWF and First Grade ORF Results for Students Without and With *Read Well*
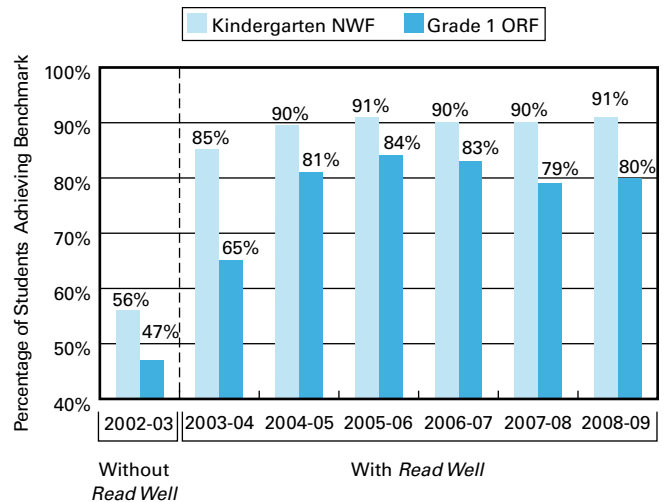
LONGITUDINAL RESULTS

Next, the impact of *Read Well* in helping students become readers was examined one and two years after students had exited the program. Graph 5 shows the percentage of students using *Read Well K* who achieved benchmark in the beginning and end of kindergarten and one year later at the end of first grade. This graph also shows that these same students continued to attain benchmark one and two years after exiting the program at the end of second and third grade.

Students who used *Read Well* in kindergarten and first grade scored at the 44th percentile rank on the third grade Stanford Achievement Test (SAT) in Reading administered two years after students exited *Read Well*, bringing these students significantly closer to the state average than non-*Read Well* students in earlier cohorts. MPS students who did not use *Read Well* scored at the 35 and 37 percentile rank on the third grade SAT in Reading (see Graph 6).

Graph 5

Four Years of Longitudinal *DIBELS* Results with *Read Well* in Kindergarten and First Grade and After 1 and 2 Year Follow-up Periods
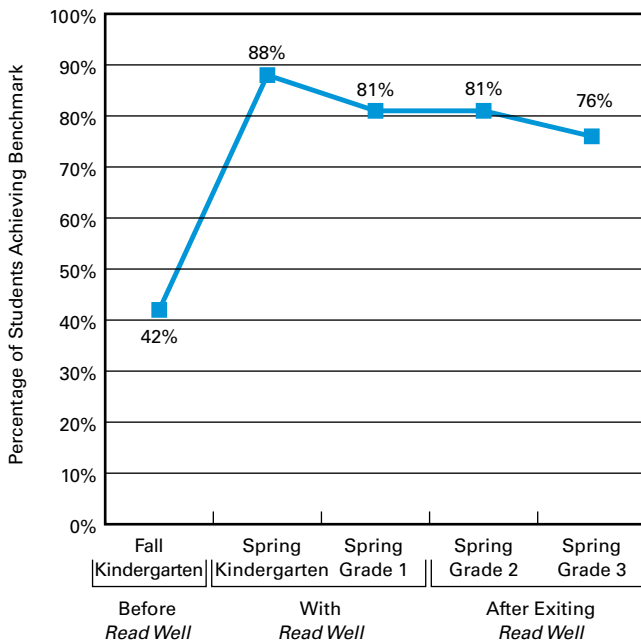
Graph 6

SAT Grade 3 Reading Results for Students Without and With *Read Well*
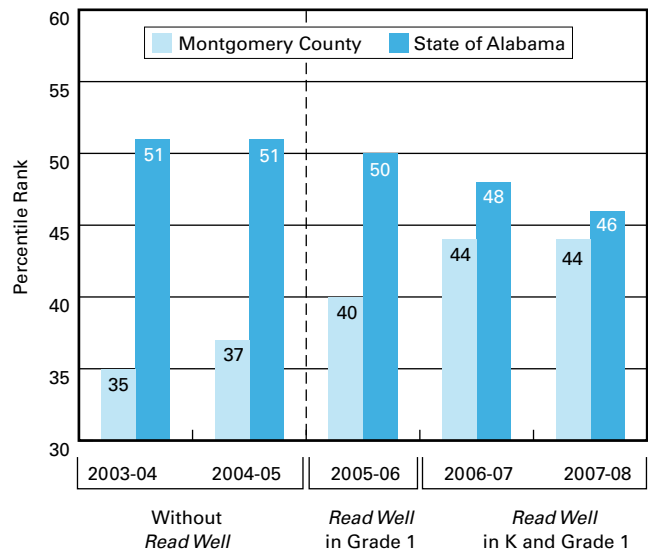
Read Well Effectiveness Data

The pie charts (Figures 4–9) depict the actual percentages of MPS students in each of the risk categories for each indicator by grade level and time of year.

MPS STUDENTS IN EACH RISK CATEGORY

Figure 4
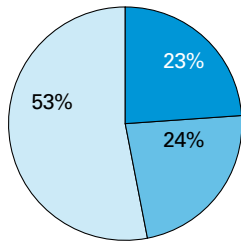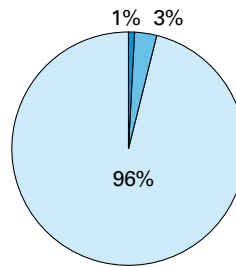
2004–05 Kindergarten Beginning-of-Year
ISF Risk Categories

23%
24%
53%

Figure 5

2004–05 Kindergarten End-of-Year
PSF Risk Categories

1% 3%
96%

- ■ High Risk
- ■ Medium Risk
- ▢ Low Risk

Figure 6

2004–05 First Grade Beginning-of-Year
NWF Risk Categories

13%
19%
68%
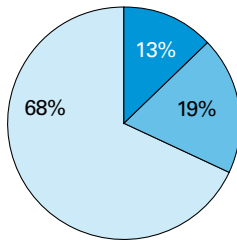
Figure 7

2004–05 First Grade End-of-Year
ORF Risk Categories

7%
13%
80%
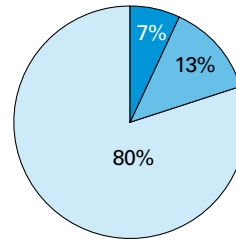
- ■ High Risk
- ■ Medium Risk
- ▢ Low Risk

Figure 8

2004–05 Second Grade Beginning-of-Year
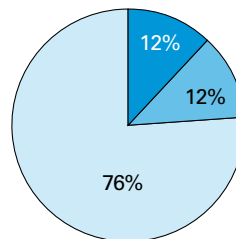ORF Risk Categories

17%
29%
54%
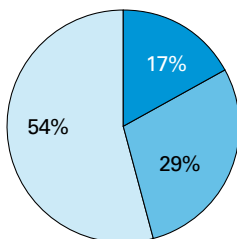
Figure 9

2004–05 Second Grade End-of-Year
ORF Risk Categories

12%
12%
76%

- ■ High Risk
- ■ Medium Risk
- ▢ Low Risk

Student Performance in Oregon's Westridge Elementary School

These data track the progress of students using the *Read Well* curriculum in Oregon's Westridge Elementary School (Lake Oswego School District) during the 2002–2003 and 2003–2004 school years.

YEAR 1 (2002–2003)

During the 2002–2003 school year, the *Read Well* curriculum was implemented in four first grade classrooms and two kindergarten classrooms. Pretest and posttest scores were collected from the six classrooms for a total of 76 students (51 in first grade and 25 in kindergarten). First grade students received *Read Well* instruction for 90 minutes, five days per week from September through June. Instructional hours and days are unknown for the two kindergarten classrooms.

YEAR 2 (2003–2004)

During the 2003–2004 school year, the *Read Well* curriculum was used in four first/second grade blended classrooms and three kindergarten classrooms. Most of the students in the first grade classrooms received instruction with the *Read Well* curriculum in Year 1 as kindergarten students. Pretest and posttest scores were collected from the six classrooms for a total of 61 students (23 in first grade and 38 in kindergarten). Instructional hours and days are unknown for the 2003–2004 school year.

RESULTS

Results are reported for gains achieved between pretests and posttests on the revised Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Achievement–Revised (WJ–R) in the following areas: Letter-Word Identification and Word Attack subtests; on the Test of Word Reading Efficiency (TOWRE), Sight Word Efficiency and Phonemic Decoding Efficiency subtests; and on the Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing (CTOPP) Phonological Awareness Composite.

First grade results are reported for all measures for both years. In Year 1, most kindergarten students were not able to read the stimuli on the word level measures. Therefore only TOWRE and CTOPP results are reported for kindergarten students in Year 1. In Year 2, kindergarten results are reported for all areas.

Read Well Effectiveness Data

Letter-Word Identification and Word Attack—First Grade

FIRST GRADE, YEAR 1

Figure 1 shows mean standard score gains achieved between pretest and posttest on the WJ–R Basic Reading subtests, Letter-Word Identification, and Word Attack. Students achieved statistically significant gains[1] in relative standing on both Letter-Word Identification and Word Attack subtests at grade 1, gaining nearly ⅘ of a standard deviation (11.9 standard score points) and nearly a full standard deviation (14.1 standard score points), respectively. Gains in percentile rank were 21 points on Letter-Word Identification, a measure of word recognition, and 24 points on Word Attack, a measure of phonemic decoding, indicating positive gains in basic reading skills. Four students were dropped from these analyses due to incorrect scoring.

Figure 2 depicts the distribution of national percentile ranks across quartiles on the WJ–R Letter-Word Identification subtest at pretest versus posttest. Out of 47 first grade students, the number scoring above the 74th percentile on the WJ–R Letter-Word Identification subtest increased from 25 students before *Read Well* to 39 after *Read Well*. The number of students who scored below the 25th percentile decreased from eight students to one student.

Figure 1

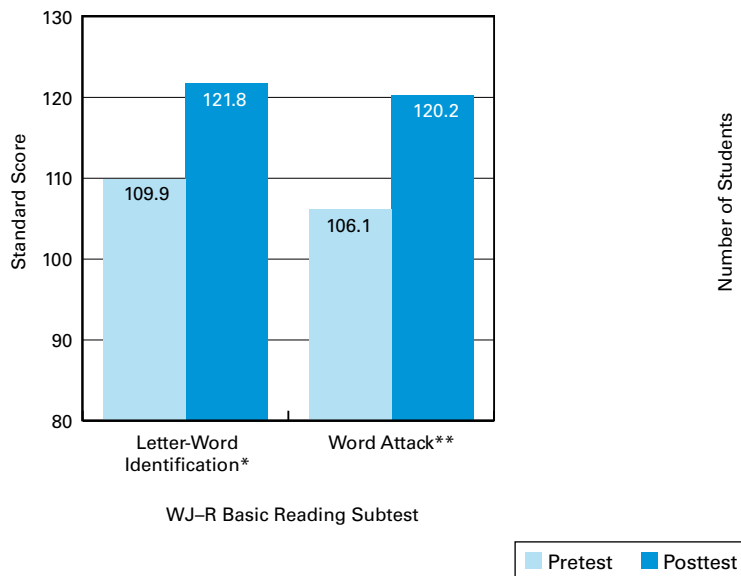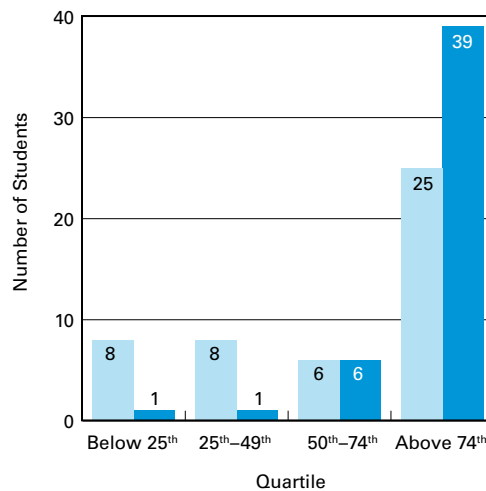Year 1 Standard Scores, Letter-Word Identification and Word Attack, First Grade

WJ–R Basic Reading Subtest

Figure 2

Year 1 Distribution of National Percentile Ranks, Letter-Word Identification Subtest, First Grade

Pretest Posttest

[1] *t(46)=5.79, p<001, SEM=2.05
  **t(46)=7.14, p<001, SEM=1.94

Figure 3 depicts the distribution of national percentile ranks across quartiles on the WJ–R Word Attack subtest at pretest versus posttest. The number of students scoring above the 74th percentile on the WJ–R Word Attack subtest increased from 21 before *Read Well* to 38 students after *Read Well* out of 47 first grade students. The number of students who scored below the 25th percentile decreased from eight students to one student.

FIRST GRADE, YEAR 2

These data show mean standard score gains achieved between pretest and posttest on the WJ–R, Basic Reading subtests, Letter-Word Identification, and Word Attack

(Figure 4). Students achieved statistically significant gains[2] in relative standing on both Letter-Word Identification and Word Attack subtests at grade 1, gaining nearly ⅗ of a standard deviation on both tasks (8.6 and 8.3 standard score points, respectively). Gains in percentile rank were 14 points on Letter-Word Identification and 14.6 points on Word Attack, indicating positive gains in basic reading skills. Four students were dropped from the Letter-Word Identification analysis and one student from the Word Attack analysis due to incorrect scoring. Four additional students' data are missing from the Word Attack analysis because these students were not able to read well enough to perform this task at pretest.

Figure 3

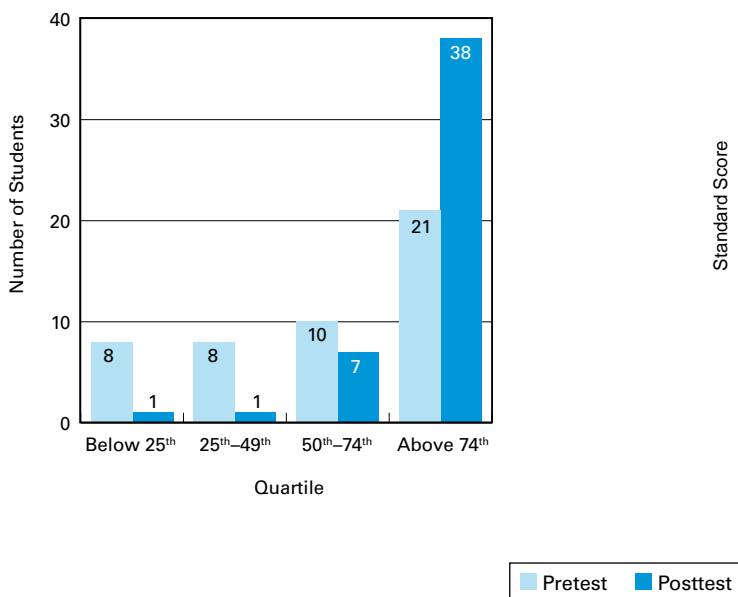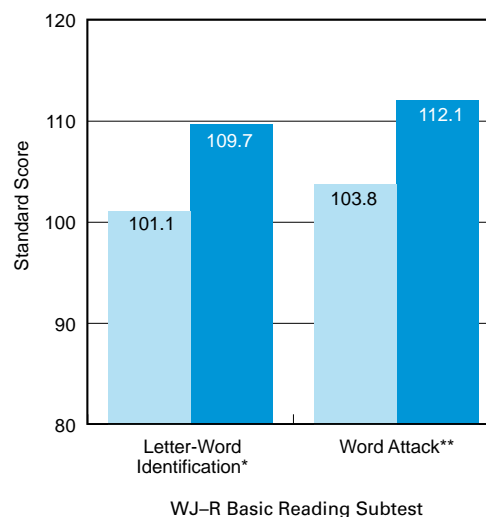Year 1 Distribution of National Percentile Ranks, WJ–R Word Attack, First Grade

Figure 4

Year 2 Standard Scores, WJ–R Letter-Word Identification and Word Attack, First Grade

Pretest   Posttest

[2] *t(18)=2.91, p<.01, SEM=2.97
  **t(16)=2.87, p<.05, SEM=2.92

Read Well Effectiveness Data

Figure 5 depicts the distribution of national percentile ranks across quartiles on the WJ–R Letter-Word Identification subtest at pretest versus posttest. The number of first grade students scoring above the 74th percentile on the WJ–R Letter-Word Identification subtest increased from four before *Read Well* to nine students after *Read Well* out of 19 first grade students. The number of students who scored below the 25th percentile decreased from five students to one student of the 19 students.

Figure 6 depicts the distribution of national percentile ranks across quartiles on the WJ–R Word Attack subtest at pretest versus posttest. The number of students scoring above the 74th percentile on the WJ–R Word Attack subtest increased from three before *Read Well* to 10 students after *Read Well* out of 22 first grade students. The number of students who scored below the 25th percentile decreased from five students to two students out of the 22 students (the four students who scored zero on pretest are included in this count).

Figure 5

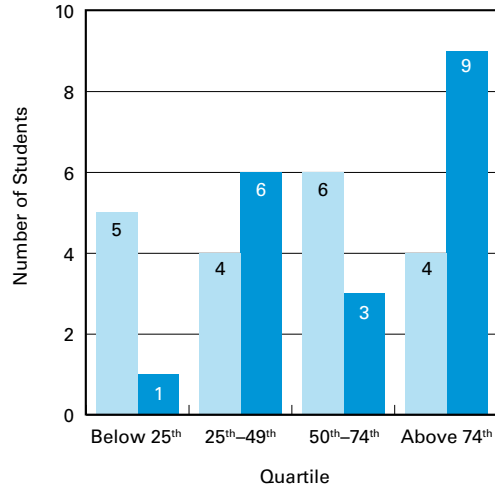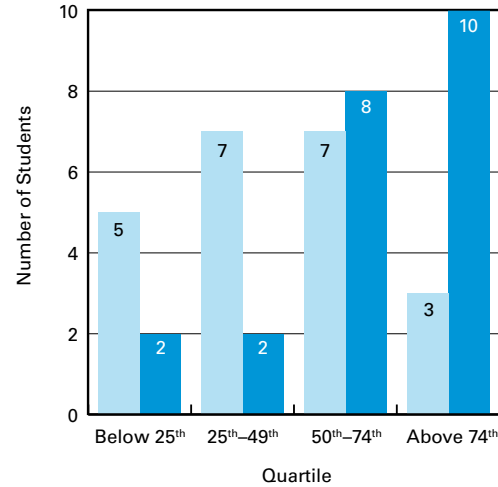Year 2 Distribution of National Percentile Ranks, WJ–R Letter-Word Identification, First Grade

Figure 6

Year 2 Distribution of National Percentile Ranks, WJ–R Word Attack Subtest, First Grade

Letter-Word Identification and Word Attack—Kindergarten

KINDERGARTEN, YEAR 1

Most kindergarten students did not have the reading level to register reliable scores on the WJ–R Letter-Word Identification and Word Attack subtests, so no scores are reported.

KINDERGARTEN, YEAR 2

These data show mean standard score gains achieved between pretest and posttest on the WJ–R Basic Reading subtest, Letter-Word Identification (Figure 7). Kindergarten students achieved statistically significant gains[3] in relative standing on Letter-Word Identification, gaining over ½ of a standard deviation (8 standard score points). Gains in percentile rank were 16 points on Letter-Word Identification, indicating positive gains in basic reading skills. One student was dropped from the Letter-Word Identification analysis due to incorrect scoring. On the Word Attack subtest,

75 percent (27 out of 36) of the students could not read nonwords well enough to perform this task. (Data were missing for two additional students.) At posttest, only 18 percent (7 out of 38) could not perform the task. The mean standard score of the 31 students who could perform this task at posttest was 110 (69th percentile), which is in the high average range of reading skill.

Figure 8 depicts the distribution of national percentile ranks across quartiles on the WJ–R Letter-Word Identification subtest at pretest versus posttest. The number of kindergarten students scoring above the 74th percentile on the WJ–R Letter-Word Identification subtest increased from six before *Read Well* to 15 students after *Read Well* out of 37 kindergarten students. The number of students who scored below the 25th percentile decreased from nine students to four students.

Figure 7

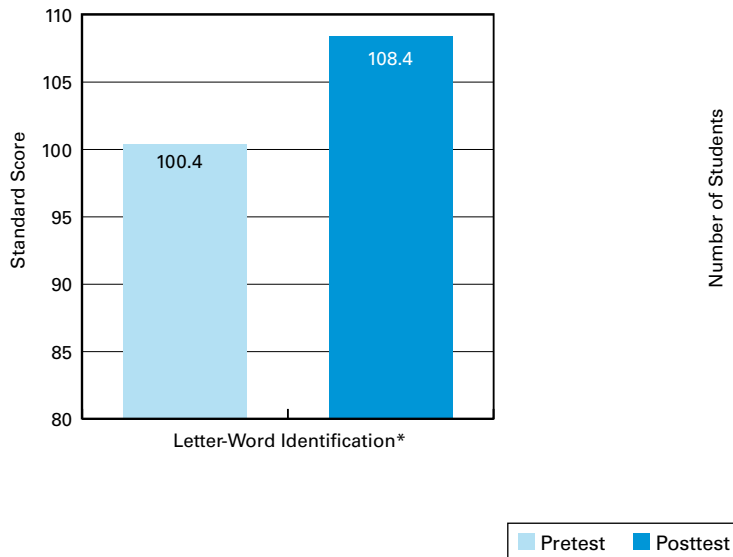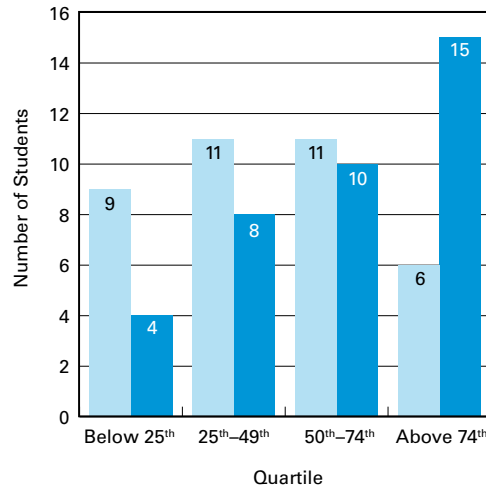Year 2 Standard Scores, WJ–R Letter-Word Identification, Kindergarten

Figure 8

Year 2 Distribution of National Percentile Ranks, WJ–R Letter-Word Identification, Kindergarten

Pretest ■ Posttest

[3] *t(36)=3.71, p<.01, SEM=2.16

Read Well Effectiveness Data

Figure 9 depicts the distribution of national percentile ranks across quartiles on the WJ–R Word Attack subtest at pretest versus posttest. The number of students scoring above the 74th percentile on the WJ–R Word Attack subtest increased from seven before *Read Well* to 15 students after *Read Well* out of 36 kindergarten students. The number of students who scored below the 25th percentile decreased from 27 students to seven students out of the 36 students (the 27 students who scored zero on pretest are included in this count).

Sight Word Recognition and Phonemic Decoding—First Grade

FIRST GRADE, YEAR 1

Figure 10 shows mean standard score gains achieved between pretest and posttest on the Test of Word Reading Efficiency (TOWRE) Sight Word Reading Efficiency subtest, a measure of word recognition fluency, and the Phonemic Decoding Efficiency subtest, a measure of phonemic decoding fluency.

Figure 9

Year 2 Distribution of National Percentile Ranks,
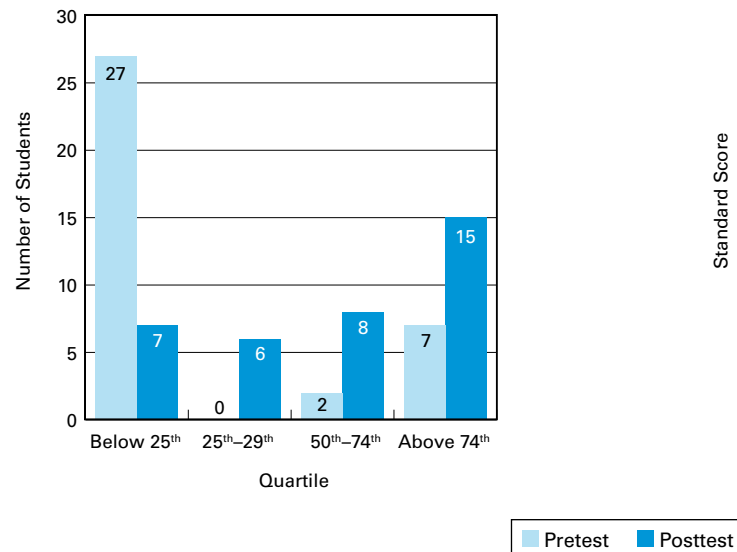WJ–R Word Attack Subtest, Kindergarten

Figure 10

Year 1 Standard Scores, TOWRE Sight Word and Phonemic
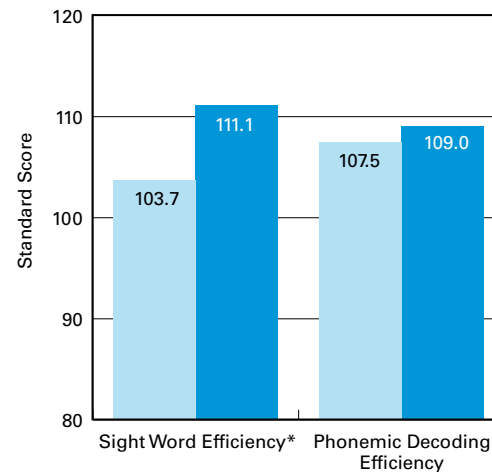Decoding Efficiency, First Grade

Figure 11 depicts that the number of first grade students scoring above the 74th percentile on Sight Word Efficiency increased from 12 before *Read Well* to 23 students after *Read Well* out of the 46 first grade students. The number of students who scored below the 25th percentile dropped from eight students to one student out of 46 students. These students achieved statistically significant gains[4] in relative standing, gaining ½ of a standard deviation (7.4 standard score points) as shown in Figure 10. Average gain in percentile points was 17 percentile points, indicating a positive gain in recognizing sight words accurately and fluently.

Figure 12 depicts that the number of first grade students scoring above the 74th percentile on Phonemic Decoding Efficiency increased from 17 before *Read Well* to 21 students after *Read Well* out of the 45 first grade students. The number of students who scored below the 25th percentile dropped from seven to zero. While these gains are meaningful, they are not statistically significant.

Figure 11

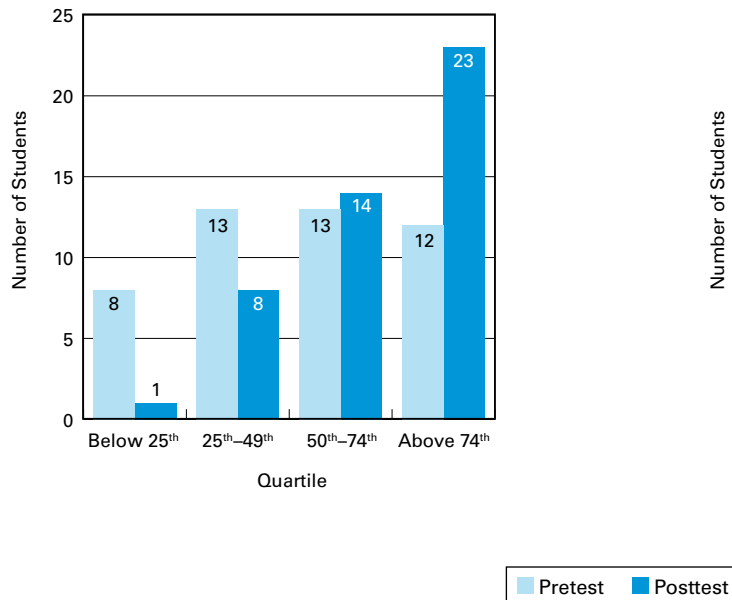Year 1 Distribution of National Percentile Ranks, TOWRE Sight Word Efficiency, First Grade
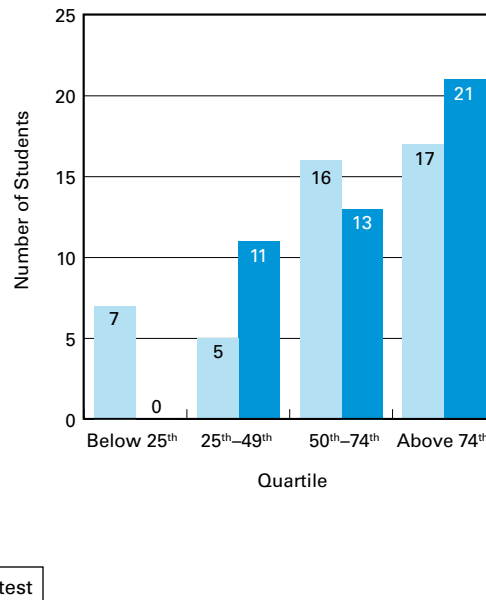
Figure 12

Year 1 Distribution of National Percentile Ranks, TOWRE Phonemic Decoding Efficiency, First Grade

Legend: ▢ Pretest ▪ Posttest

[4] *t(45)=5.97, p<.001, SEM 1.24

Read Well Effectiveness Data

FIRST GRADE, YEAR 2

Figure 13 shows mean standard score gains achieved between pretest and posttest on the TOWRE Sight Word Reading Efficiency subtest, a measure of word recognition fluency, and the Phonemic Decoding Efficiency subtest, a measure of phonemic decoding fluency. Students achieved statistically significant gains[5] in relative standing on both Sight Word Reading Efficiency and Phonemic Decoding Efficiency subtests at grade 1, gaining nearly ½ of a standard deviation (6.4 standard score points) and a full ½ of a standard deviation (7.6 standard score points), respectively. Gains in percentile rank were 10 points on the Sight Word Reading Efficiency subtest and 15 points on the Phonemic Decoding Efficiency subtest, indicating positive gains in ability to read real words and nonsense words accurately and fluently.

Six students were dropped from the Sight Word Reading Efficiency analysis and seven from the Phonemic Decoding Efficiency analysis because these students were not able to read well enough to perform this task at pretest.

Figure 14 depicts the distribution of national percentile ranks across quartiles on the TOWRE Sight Word Reading Efficiency subtest. The number of first grade students scoring below the 25th percentile on the TOWRE Sight Word Efficiency subtest dropped from 10 before *Read Well* to two students after *Read Well* out of the 23 first grade students. This lowest quartile (at pretest) includes six students who were not able to perform this task at pretest.

Figure 13

Year 2 Standard Scores, TOWRE Sight Word and Phonemic Decoding Efficiency, First Grade
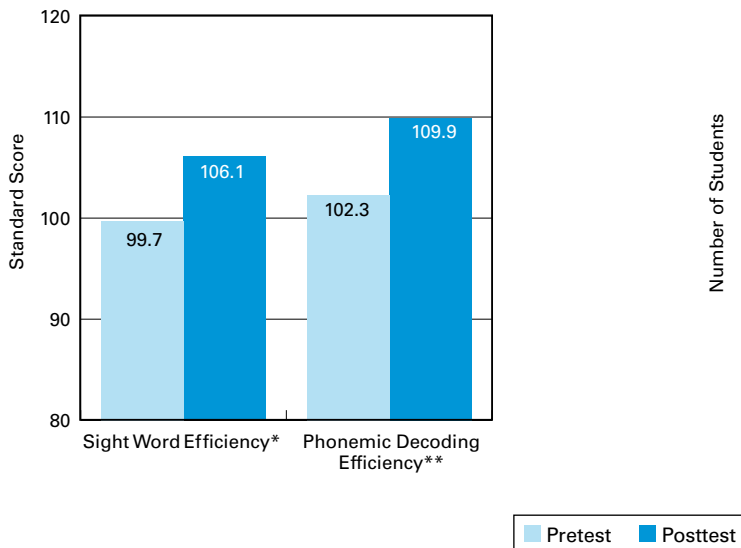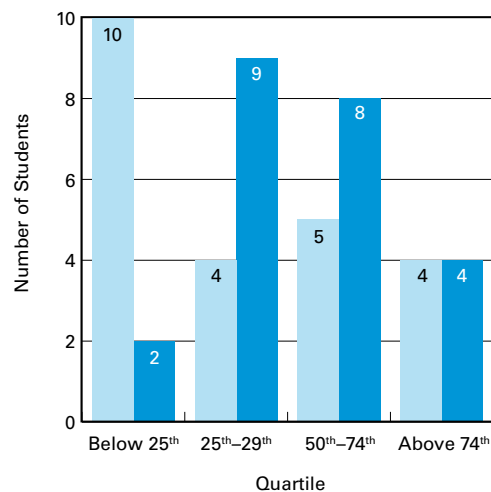

Figure 14

Year 2 Distribution of National Percentile Ranks, TOWRE Sight Word Efficiency, First Grade

[5] *t(16)=4.56, p<.001, SEM 1.41
  **t(15)=3.73, p<.01, SEM 2.06

Figure 15 shows that the number of first grade students scoring below the 25th percentile on the TOWRE Phonemic Decoding Efficiency subtest dropped from eight before *Read Well* to two students after *Read Well* out of the 23 first grade students. This lowest quartile (at pretest) includes seven students who were not able to perform this task at pretest.
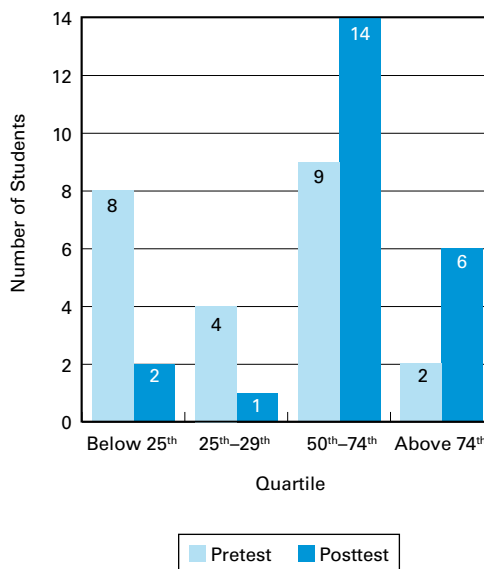
Sight Word Recognition and Phonemic Decoding—Kindergarten

KINDERGARTEN, YEAR 1

Before *Read Well*, 22 out of 25 kindergarten students could not recognize any words on the Sight Word Efficiency subtest of the TOWRE. After *Read Well*, 12 students read an average of 7.6 words on the subtest under standardized timed conditions, ranging from one to 19 words. Similarly, on the Phonemic Decoding Efficiency subtest, none of the 25 students could decode any of the stimulus words on the test. After *Read Well*, 11 students could decode an average of 5.5 nonsense words, ranging from one to 14 nonsense words. Without timing restrictions, these students decoded an average of 11.2 nonsense words, ranging from three to 24 words.

KINDERGARTEN, YEAR 2

Before *Read Well*, 30 out of 38 kindergarten students (79 percent could not recognize any words on the Sight Word Efficiency subtest of the TOWRE. After *Read Well*, 32 students (84 percent were able to read an average of 19 words on the subtest under standardized timed conditions (standard score = 99, percentile rank = 46th), ranging from six to 70 words. Similarly, on the Phonemic Decoding Efficiency subtest, 31 out of 38 kindergarten students (82 percent) could not decode any of the stimulus words on the test. After *Read Well*, 31 students could decode an average of 11 nonsense words (standard score = 107, percentile rank = 66th), ranging from three to 47 nonsense words.

Read Well Effectiveness Data

Phonological Awareness—Kindergarten and First Grade

KINDERGARTEN AND FIRST GRADE, YEAR 1

Results from the Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing (CTOPP) Phonological Awareness Composite are presented in Figure 16. Kindergarten students achieved statistically significant gains in relative standing on the Phonological Awareness Composite, gaining 9.6 standard score points (nearly ⅔ of a standard deviation). Average gain in percentile points was 18 percentile points, indicating a positive gain in phonological awareness skills. While the first grade students saw gains, they were not statistically significant.

KINDERGARTEN AND FIRST GRADE, YEAR 2

Results from the CTOPP Phonological Awareness Composite are presented in Figure 17. Kindergarten students achieved statistically significant gains in relative standing on the Phonological Awareness Composite, gaining 6.9 standard score points (nearly ½ of a standard deviation). Average gain in percentile points was 11, indicating a positive gain in phonological awareness skills. First grade students also achieved statistically significant gains in relative standing on the Phonological Awareness Composite, gaining 8.8 standard score points (nearly ⅔ of a standard deviation). Average gain in percentile points was 18, indicating a positive gain in phonological awareness skills.

Figure 16

Year 1 Standard Scores, CTOPP Phonological Awareness Composite, Pretest and Posttest Results, Kindergarten and First Grade
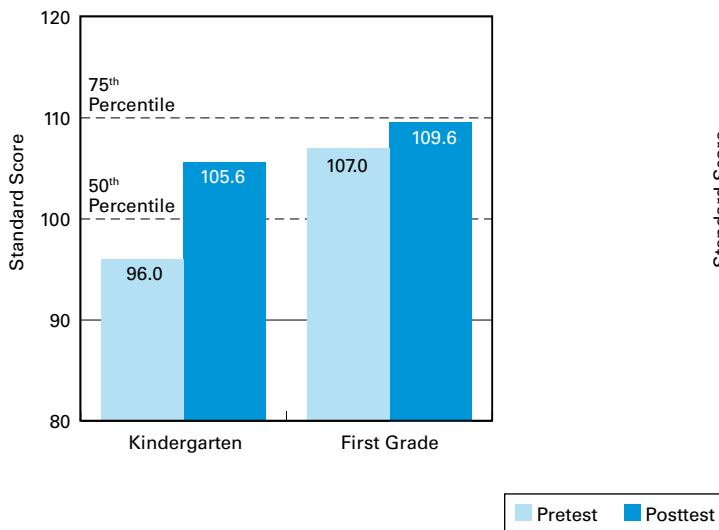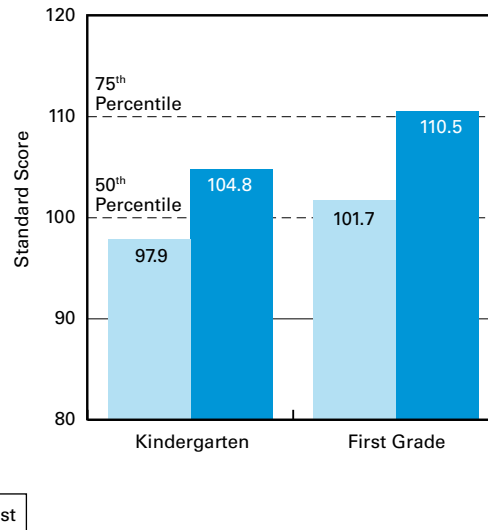

Figure 17

Year 2 Standard Scores, CTOPP Phonological Awareness Composite, Pretest and Posttest Results, Kindergarten and First Grade

Summary of Results

FIRST YEAR—FIRST GRADE

Table 1

Summary of first grade results with *Read Well* after one school year of instruction

	Standard Score						Percentile Rank		
	Pretest	Posttest	Gain	T statistic	P value	Standard error	Pretest	Posttest	%ile gain
WJ–R Letter-Word Identification (n=47)	109.9	121.8	11.9	5.78	.000	2.05	65	86	21
WJ–R Word Attack (n=47)	106.1	120.2	14.1	7.28	.000	1.94	61	86	24
TOWRE Sight Word Efficiency (n=46)	103.7	111.1	7.4	5.97	.000	1.24	56	71	15
TOWRE Phonemic Decoding Efficiency (n=45)	107.5	1109.0	1.5	1.34	Not sig.	NA	65	68	4
CTOPP Phonological Awareness Composite (n=51)	107.0	109.6	2.6	1.41	Not sig.	NA	64	68	4

SECOND YEAR—FIRST GRADE

Table 2

Summary of first grade results with *Read Well* after two school years of instruction

	Standard Score						Percentile Rank		
	Pretest	Posttest	Gain	T statistic	P value	Standard error	Pretest	Posttest	%ile gain
WJ–R Letter-Word Identification (n=19)	101.1	109.7	8.6	2.91	.009	2.97	51	65	14
WJ–R Word Attack (n=17)	103.8	112.1	8.3	2.87	.011	2.92	58	72	15
TOWRE Sight Word Efficiency (n=17)	99.7	106.1	6.4	4.56	.000	1.41	50	61	10
TOWRE Phonemic Decoding Efficiency (n=16)	102.3	109.9	7.6	3.73	.002	2..06	55	70	15
CTOPP Phonological Awareness Composite (n=23)	101.7	110.5	8.8	4.00	.001	2.22	54	72	18

Read Well Effectiveness Data

Table 3

Summary of kindergarten results with *Read Well* after one school year of instruction

	Standard Score						Percentile Rank		
	Pretest	Posttest	Gain	T statistic	P value	Standard error	Pretest	Posttest	%ile gain
WJ–R Letter-Word Identification (n=37)	100.4	108.4	8.0	3.71	.001	2.16	48	64	16
WJ–R Word Attack (n=31)	—	110	—	—	—	—	—	69	—
TOWRE Sight Word Efficiency (n=32)	—	99.1	—	—	—	—	—	46	—
TOWRE Phonemic Decoding Efficiency (n=31)	—	107.4	—	—	—	—	—	66	—
CTOPP Phonological Awareness Composite (n=37)	97.9	104.8	6.9	4.68	.000	1.47	45	56	11

Westridge *Read Well* Year 2 Kindergarten and First Grade Data Analysis, Modified Ceiling Rule Used to Score WJ–R Tests

A considerable number of the WJ–R subtests were not administered/scored according to precise protocol. Whereas the ceiling rule on these tests specifies "six items in a row incorrect," 12 of our test administrators (5 percent) exposed students to five words before discontinuing the test. The reasons for this early termination were typically attributable to the administrator's judgment that the student taking the test had reached a true ability limit prior to reaching the specified ceiling. The entire data set (approximately 410 subtests) was rescored using a modified ceiling rule of "five in a row incorrect" to determine at what point to discontinue the test. As a result of this rescoring, 5.5 percent of the original raw scores in the data set, which were based on standard criteria, were slightly lowered, usually by only one point. It is important to note that the modified ceiling rule was applied to all WJ–R subtests, both pretests and posttests. Therefore, any changes in standard scores as a result of the modified rule were consistent from pretest to posttest. When considering the mean standard scores and percentile ranks achieved by this group of students, one must keep in mind that these scores may actually be a slight under-representation of the student's true ability level on these tests. The under-representation applies equally for the pretest and the posttest data.

Student Performance in Mississippi's Public Schools

BACKGROUND

To evaluate the effectiveness of *Read Well* relative to comparison programs, a mixed methods comparative evaluation study was conducted with 144 students in three schools in two Mississippi school districts.[1]

On average, 84 percent, 15 percent, and 1 percent of participant students had the ethnic designation of black, white, and Hispanic, respectively; and across the two participant districts, 86 percent of students qualified for Free/Reduced Lunch (FRL) (see Table 1 for district demographics and Table 2 for subgroup and implementation details). It is important to note that the participant students at greatest risk for reading difficulties in each school—those scoring in the lowest third on a measure of letter naming[2] (kindergarten and first grade) and falling within the at-risk category on the Texas Primary Reading Inventory (first grade only)—received *Read Well* instruction. The remaining participant students received instruction in either a basal reading program or literature-based program with phonics instruction. The main goal of the study was to address whether students who are at-risk for reading difficulties and who use *Read Well* experience a level of accelerated growth that brings their performance closer to the level of their grade-level peers who receive instruction in reading programs other than *Read Well*.

Table 1 District Demographics

District	# of Schools	Enrollment	% Black	% White	% Latino/a	% Asian	% Native American	% FRL
District of Elementary School 1	59 schools including 10 elementary schools	> 32,000 students	97.3	2.1	<1	<1	<1	86
District of Elementary Schools 2 and 3	9 schools including 6 elementary schools	~3,900 students	71	28	<1	<1	0	85.7

Table 2 Subgroup, Implementation, and Program Details

District	*Read Well*	Basal	Literature-Based Phonics
Students (grade K)	23	25	24
Students (grade 1)	28	19	25
Teachers	2	4	4
Experience Teaching Program	1 semester	1 year	2+ years
Training	3–4 days	0–6 days	0–6 days
Instruction Time—per day	grade K—60 min.	grade K—60 min.	grade K—60 min.
	grade 1—90 min.	grade 1—90 min.	grade 1—90 min.

[1] Complete Technical Summary and Technical Report available upon request.

[2] Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (Kaminski & Good, 1998), Letter Naming Fluency subtest.

Read Well Effectiveness Data

For approximately eight months, each program was implemented for 90 minutes daily in most classrooms,[3] and the evaluation data captures changes over a three and one-half month period. Early reading and reading-related measures include the Texas Primary Reading Inventory (TPRI), multiple subtests from *DIBELS* and the Group Reading Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation (GRADE+).

RESULTS

The outcomes suggest that *Read Well* has a greater impact than the comparison programs in developing many critical literacy skills. Specifically, the results indicate that for kindergarten students, *Read Well* gains exceeded comparison program gains in the areas of letter naming, phonological awareness, phonemic decoding, listening comprehension, and total reading; and, for first grade students, *Read Well* gains exceeded comparison program gains in phonological awareness, phonemic decoding, oral reading fluency, and vocabulary and comprehension composite.

KINDERGARTEN HIGHLIGHTS

Read Well students testing into the Low Risk category in phonological awareness, as measured by the *DIBELS* Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (PSF) subtest, increased from 47 percent to 94 percent from mid-year to end of year, while the percent of comparison group students testing into the Low Risk category demonstrated no change (see Figure 1).
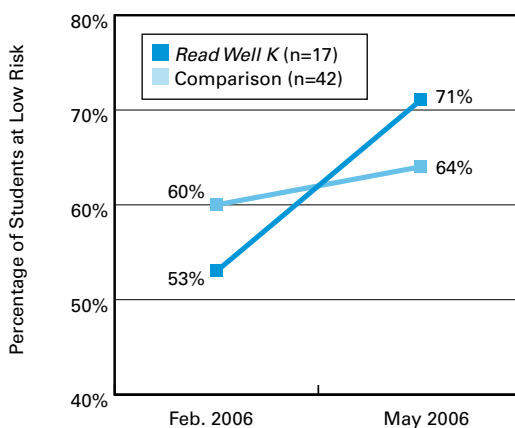
Figure 1

Kindergarten: Percentage of Students in *DIBELS* Low Risk Category on Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (PSF)*

Legend:
■ *Read Well K* (n=15)
■ Comparison (n=42)
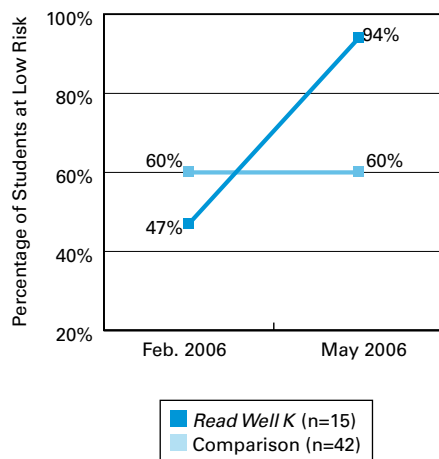
*Sample was reduced due to incomplete data.

Figure 2

Kindergarten: Percentage of Students in *DIBELS* Low Risk Category on Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF)*

Legend:
■ *Read Well K* (n=17)
■ Comparison (n=42)

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[3] It is important to note that Hurricane Katrina impacted both districts, decreasing program implementation time by one week to one month, creating student movement within and between districts, and delaying pretest data collection from fall 2005 to February 2006.

n=number of students

The percentage of *Read Well* students testing into the Low Risk category in phonemic decoding, as measured by *DIBELS* Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF), increased from 53 percent to 71 percent, while the percentage of comparison group students testing into the Low Risk category increased only marginally from 60 percent to 64 percent during the same time period (Figure 2).

Lastly, *Read Well* students testing into the Proficiency category—or "Developed" on the TPRI—increased from 80 percent at mid-year to 95 percent by the end of the year, while the percent of comparison group students testing into TPRI's Developed category remained the same at 89 percent during the same time period (Figure 3).

FIRST GRADE HIGHLIGHTS

For first grade, the percentage of *Read Well* students in the Established category on NWF rose by 14 percent from mid-year over the evaluation period; whereas comparison students in the same category decreased by approximately 2 percent (Figure 4).

In Oral Reading Fluency (ORF), as measured by *DIBELS*, *Read Well* students in the Established category increased by 12 percent, while comparison students in the same category decreased by 10 percent (Figure 5).

Figure 3

Kindergarten: Percentage of Students in TPRI Proficiency Category—Developed*
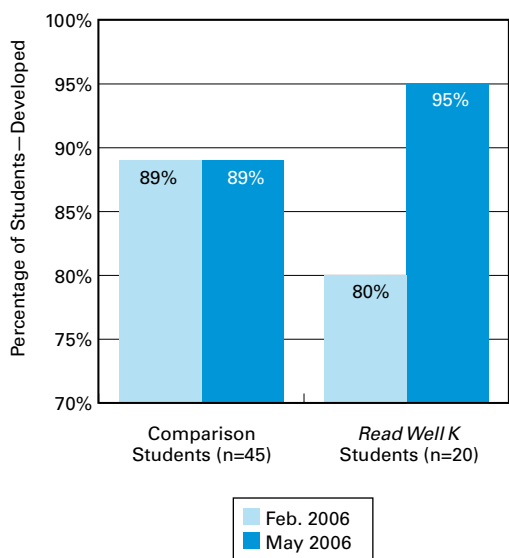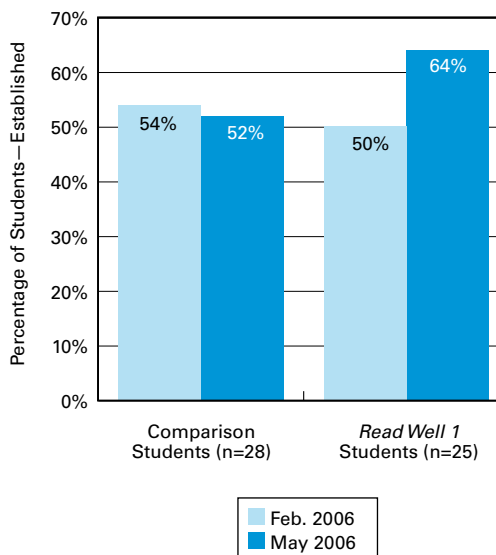
Figure 4

First Grade: Percentage of Students in *DIBELS* Established Category in Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF)*

* Sample was reduced due to incomplete data.

Read Well Effectiveness Data

OVERALL HIGHLIGHTS

Kindergarten students using *Read Well* began the study performing more than one standard deviation below average in total reading as measured by the GRADE+. By the end of the study, their performance was less than ⅓ of a standard deviation below the mean of the larger normative sample for the test. First grade students using *Read Well* began the study performing more than one standard deviation below the population average in vocabulary and comprehension, as measured by the GRADE+. By the end of the study, they improved their relative standing by ½ of a standard deviation.

Figure 5

First Grade: Percentage of Students in *DIBELS* Established Category in Oral Reading Fluency (ORF)*
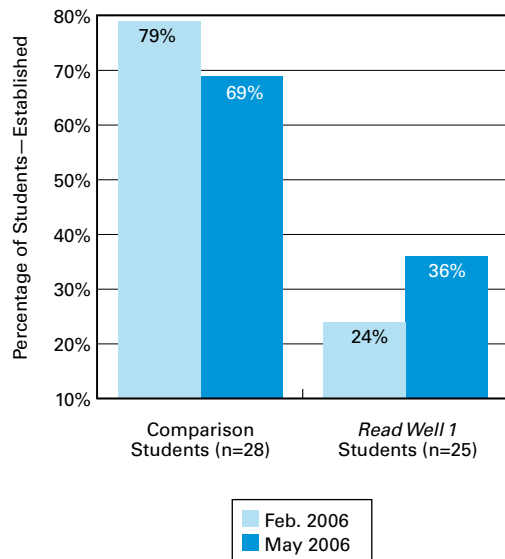
*Sample was reduced due to incomplete data.
n = number of students

Student Performance in Montana's Public Schools

BACKGROUND

During the 1999-2000 school year, the *Read Well* curriculum was taught to 40 students in three first grade classrooms, who were compared to a non-*Read Well* comparison group consisting of first grade students randomly selected from two other schools in the same school district. The comparison schools were similar to the *Read Well* school in socioeconomic status. Forty-two percent of the students in the school implementing *Read Well* were enrolled in the Free/Reduced Lunch (FRL)Program. Teachers received only a single-day training workshop, making this a less than ideal public school implementation. *Read Well* instruction was given either 25 or 50 minutes per day September 1999 to May 2000. Average instructional group size was 15 students.

RESULTS

The benefit of *Read Well* instruction was demonstrated in students' post-implementation scores on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) administered in May 2000 (Figure 1). The national percentile rank on the ITBS was statistically greater for *Read Well* students than for non-*Read Well* comparison students for the Reading Total (93 versus 71.5, respectively) and for the Language Total (96 versus 61, respectively). The Oral Reading Quotient on the Gray Oral Reading Test–3rd Edition (GORT–3)—which takes into consideration speed, accuracy, and comprehension of reading connected text— was significantly greater for the *Read Well* group than the comparison group (101 versus 94 points, respectively). Finally, students in the *Read Well* group showed significantly faster reading rate and greater reading accuracy than the comparison group, based on a one-minute timing measure of passage reading (as shown in Table 1).

Figure 1

Post-Implementation for *Read Well* Group and Comparison Group: ITBS Reading Total and Language Total National Percentile Ranks

Legend:
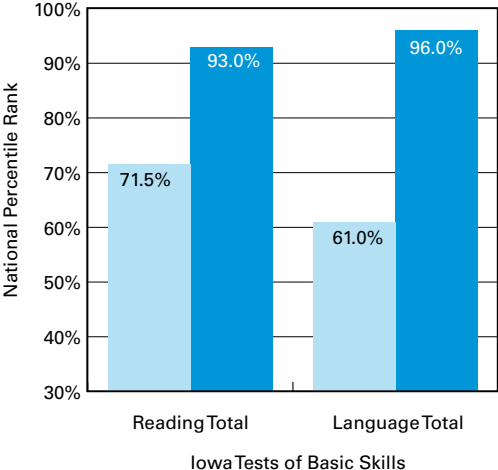- *Read Well K* (n=15)
- Comparison (n=42)

Table 1

Posttest Levels for Oral Reading Fluency (Words Correct per Minute) and Accuracy (Number of Words Missed) for *Read Well* and Comparison Groups

	Read Well	Comparison	Group Difference
Fluency	92	63	29
Accuracy (Words Missed)	3.3	5.3	2.0

Student Performance in Washington's Public Schools

BACKGROUND

A Washington elementary school served 440 students during the 1999–2000 school year; 60 percent to 70 percent qualified for Free/Reduced Lunch Program (FRL). The school, situated in the largest city in the county, had 40 percent to 50 percent mobility. The county had the highest percentage of mothers on public assistance in the state and the highest juvenile arrest rate in the state.

During the 1999–2000 school year, 66 first grade students received *Read Well*. Of the 66 students, 30 students had begun the curriculum in kindergarten and 36 in the beginning of first grade. Twelve of the 66 students qualified for special education services. First grade students received *Read Well* instruction for 70–90 minutes a day.

RESULTS

After enrollment in *Read Well*, 35 out of 66 students (53 percent of the students) scored above the 74th percentile on the Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests–Revised (WRMT–R) Short Scale Reading Cluster, which is nearly twice what would be expected in a normal distribution (Figure 1). Although 11 students received scores below the

25th percentile, it is important to note is that none of these students completed *Read Well* by the end of the school year, and they included eight students in special education who received less than half (17 out of 38) of the units of *Read Well* instruction.

Figure 1

Distribution of National Percentile Ranks Across Quartiles on the WRMT–R Short Scale Reading Cluster (Word Identification & Passage Comprehension) Administered After Enrollment in *Read Well*
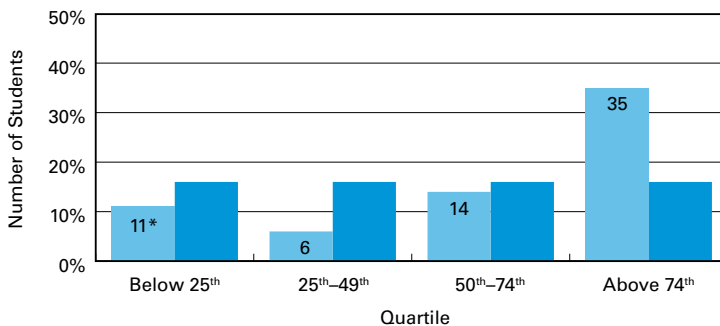
*Eight of these students were in special education and completed less than ½ of the *Read Well* units.

n = number of students

Students in *Read Well* are grouped according to their performance on the Placement Inventory, allowing them to move through the program at different paces. The small instructional groups help high-performing students excel in the *Read Well* program. Figure 2 shows that students who completed *Read Well* earlier tended to have higher reading scores. Of the 36 students who completed *Read Well* in early or late first grade, 33 (or 92 percent) received scores on the WRMT–R above the 75 percent percentile, including 5 (or 15 percent) who scored above the 95th percentile (Early First Grade Mean, M=93rd percentile; Late First Grade, M=82nd percentile). Of the 22 students who did not finish *Read Well* until the beginning of grade 2, 15 students (or 68 percent) received scores at or above the 50th percentile (M=51st percentile). Data from eight special education students are not represented here because they were not far enough in the *Read Well* curriculum to demonstrate results on standardized tests.

Figure 2

WRMT–R Short Scale Reading Cluster Administered in Grade 1; Mean and Range of Percentile Ranks As a Function of When Students Completed *Read Well*
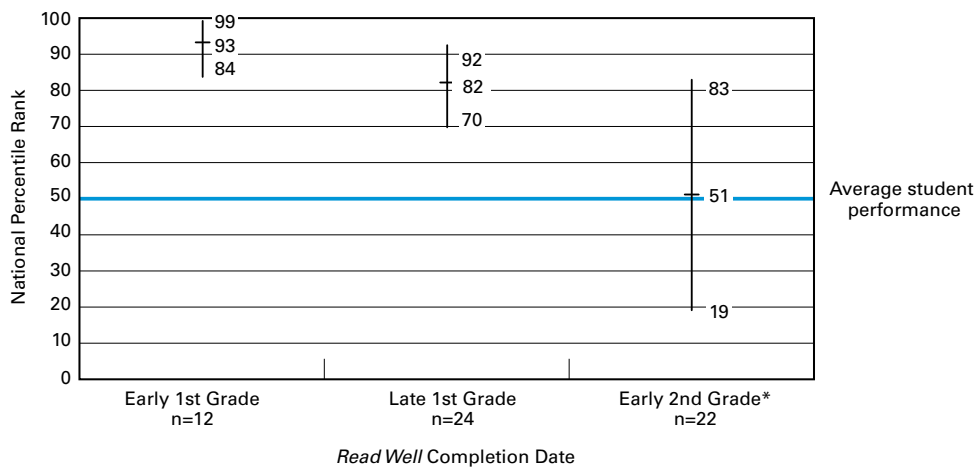
* Sample was reduced due to incomplete data.

Read Well Effectiveness Data

The benefit of the *Read Well* program was also reflected in students' oral reading fluency performance, measured by words correct per minute (WCPM) on grade 1 passages from the Multi-Level Academic Skills Inventory–Revised (MASI–R; depicted in Figure 3). Of the 35 students (one student moved) who completed *Read Well* in grade 1, all had fluency rates above 60 WCPM, which is a reasonable benchmark for the average student at the end of first grade, based on Hasbrouck and Tindal's (2006)[1] normative data. Eight of these students (or 23 percent) were reading over twice this first grade benchmark. Of the 22 students who finished about ¾ of *Read Well* in grade 1, six of these students (or 27 percent), were reading at or above the level expected at the end of grade 1. By spring of grade 2, these students achieved an average reading rate of 120, with WCPM ranging from 64 to as high as 176. These longitudinal results are impressive, given that 89 WCPM is the norm for an average student in the spring of grade 2 (Hasbrouck & Tindal, 2006).

Figure 3

Multi-Level Academic Skills Inventory–Revised (MASI-R); Mean and range of Words Correct Per Minute on first grade oral reading fluency passages administered at the end of Grade 1 as a function of when students completed *Read Well*
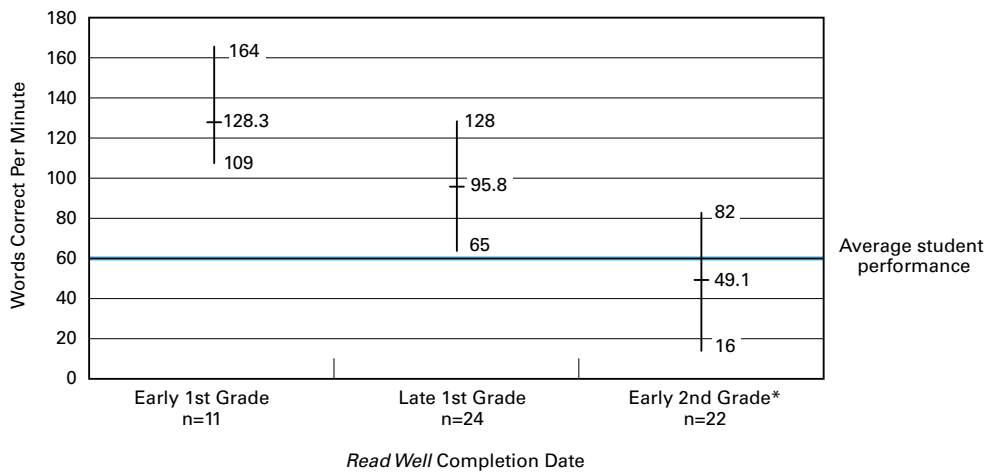
*These students had only completed ¾ of the *Read Well* units.

n=number of students

[1] Hasbrouck, J., & Tindal, G. (2006). Oral reading fluency norms: a valuable assessment tool for reading teachers. *The Reading Teacher*, 59(7), 636-644.

Districtwide Results of *Read Well* in Tacoma Public Schools

BACKGROUND

After piloting *Read Well* for two years, the Tacoma Public Schools implemented the curriculum as its districtwide core literacy program in all kindergarten and first grade classrooms in the fall of 2007. The research-based curriculum was specifically selected by the district for its systematic and explicit use of phonics instruction. The standardized implementation provided a comprehensive and consistent literacy curriculum across the district.

IMPLEMENTATION DETAILS

To implement *Read Well* in the district's 37 elementary schools, Cambium Learning Sopris West certified 15 in-district trainers. Teacher and principal trainings commenced with a one-day workshop in August of 2007. At the time, only one-half of the kindergarten classrooms maintained full-day instruction, so half-day kindergarten teachers received an additional four-hour training that provided strategies for incorporating the curriculum into a condensed format. Ongoing professional development sessions continued over the course of three district waiver days throughout the school year. Additional classroom support was provided by an instructional facilitator in each of the district's 28 Title I elementary schools. The support consisted of modeling effective instructional strategies and assisting in the delivery of the *Read Well* curriculum and district assessments.

The *Read Well* Placement Inventory was conducted in the fall to determine unit entry. From September 2007 to June 2008, full-day kindergarten and first grade students received *Read Well* instruction for 90 minutes per day, and half-day kindergarten students received 45 minutes of instruction daily. *Read Well* was used for both small group instruction and whole class activities, and was taught to all Tier I, Tier II, and the majority of Tier III students with the exception of intensive special education.

MEASURES

DIBELS[1] and the TSI (Tacoma Screening Instrument)[2] were used to assess students' acquisition of early literacy and reading skills during the evaluation period.

The *DIBELS* outcomes are reported as percent of students achieving benchmark goals. The benchmark goals are the minimum scores that suggest the student has the ability to apply the basic reading skill. They also indicate the probability of achieving the next benchmark goal.

The *DIBELS* measures used in this evaluation were Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (PSF) and Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF) in kindergarten, and Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) and NWF in first grade. These measures were selected because research has found that they have the highest reliability among the *DIBELS* measures (Good & Kaminski, 2002).[3] PSF measures phonemic awareness, NWF measures alphabetic principle skills, and ORF measures oral reading fluency with connected text.

The TSI was developed by the Tacoma Public Schools to measure the acquisition of beginning reading skills, and was administered to all first grade students in the fall, winter, and spring.

PARTICIPANTS

Of the 2,367 kindergarten students using *Read Well* in the 2007–08 school year, 83 percent had winter and spring *DIBELS* PSF and NWF scores. Of the 2,314 first grade students using *Read Well* in the 2007–08 school year, 75 percent had fall, winter, and spring TSI scores; 83 percent had *DIBELS* ORF scores; and 80 percent had *DIBELS* NWF scores.

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[1] *DIBELS* is an assessment instrument that measures how well a child is progressing in important skills (indicators) that are the predictors for early success in reading from kindergarten to sixth grade. Information was obtained from the University of Oregon at https://dibels.uoregon.edu/.

[2] The Tacoma Screening Instrument is a first grade sight word fluency measure developed by the Tacoma Public Schools. It is administered three times per year with an end-of-year benchmark goal of 200 words. Assessment information was obtained from the Tacoma Public Schools at www.tacoma.k12.wa.us.

[3] Good, R.H., & Kaminski, R.A. (Eds.). (2002). *Dynamic Indications of Basic Early Literacy Skills* (6th ed.). Eugene, OR: Institute for the Development of Educational Achievement.

Read Well Effectiveness Data

RESULTS

KINDERGARTEN

To assess whether the results varied for kindergarten half-day and full-day instructional models, students in the half-day model were compared with those in the full-day model.[4] The results showed that student outcomes were differentially affected by the type of instructional model. Therefore, the kindergarten results are presented separately for students in half-day and full-day kindergarten classrooms.

The percentage of students achieving benchmark in PSF was 52 percent for half-day and 87 percent for full-day instruction in the spring of kindergarten. These results demonstrate an increase of 9 percent for half-day and 18 percent for full-day kindergarten from winter to spring (see Graph 1).

The percentage of students achieving benchmark in NWF was 45 percent for half-day and 80 percent for full-day instruction in the spring of kindergarten. These results demonstrate a winter to spring decrease of 1 percent for half-day kindergarten students and a 12 percent increase for full-day kindergarten students.

By Special Education Eligibility

When the PSF data were analyzed for half-day instruction by subgroup,[5] 21 percent of special education students (n=71) and 56 percent of general education students (n=645) achieved benchmark in the spring of kindergarten. These results demonstrate an increase of 4 percent for special education and 10 percent for general education from winter to spring (see Graph 3).


Graph 1

DIBELS Phoneme Segmentation Fluency Results for Half-Day and Full-Day Kindergarten Students
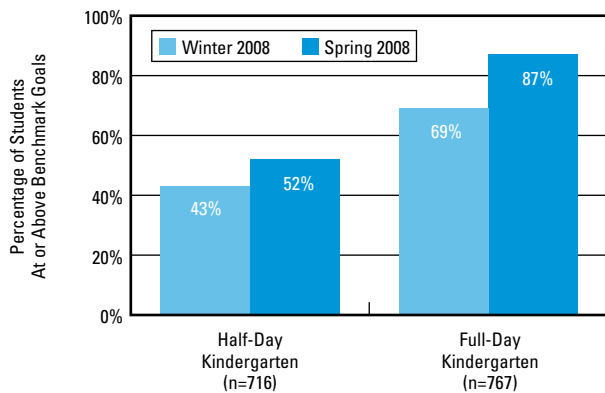
Full-day kindergarten students made substantially larger gains than half-day kindergarten students in phonemic awareness, indicating a strength in the full-day instructional model.

Graph 2

DIBELS Phoneme Segmentation Fluency Results for Half-Day and Full-Day Kindergarten Students by Special Education Eligibility
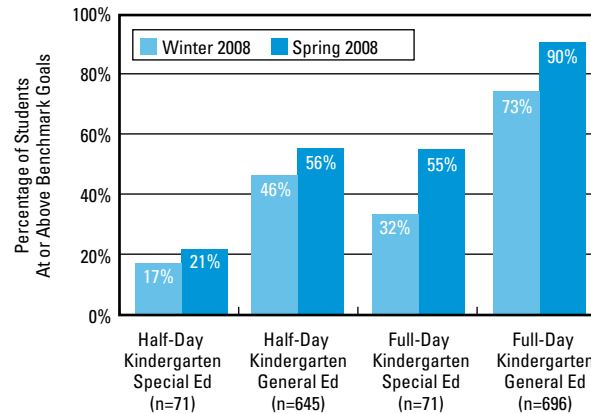
Half-day general education and both full-day special and general education students made substantial gains in phonemic awareness.

n=number of students

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[4] Students attending schools that maintained both types of classrooms were excluded from this analysis.

[5] English language learner *DIBELS* data were not available for kindergarten students in 2007–08. ELL data were obtained from the Tacoma Screening Instrument, which is only administered to first grade students.

By contrast, when the PSF data were analyzed for full-day instruction by subgroup, 55 percent of special education students (n=71) and 90 percent of general education students (n=696) achieved benchmark in the spring of kindergarten. These results demonstrate an increase of 23 percent for special education and 17 percent for general education from the winter administration, suggesting a relative strength in the full-day kindergarten model for special education and general education students.

By Race/Ethnicity Classification

The percent increase of half-day kindergarten students achieving benchmark in PSF by race/ethnicity classification was 3 percent for black, 10 percent for white and Asian, and 11 percent for Hispanic from winter to spring.

By contrast, the percent increase of full-day kindergarten students achieving benchmark in PSF was 15 percent for white and 16 percent for black and Asian. The Hispanic subgroup made the most substantial gain with a 23 percent increase, resulting in 91 percent of students achieving benchmark in the spring (see Table 1).

FIRST GRADE

In the spring of first grade, the percentage of students (n=1,925) achieving benchmark in *DIBELS* ORF was 62 percent, reflecting a 29 percent gain from the winter administration. The percentage of students (n=1,842) achieving benchmark in *DIBELS* NWF was 78 percent in the spring of first grade, reflecting a 20 percent gain from the fall administration (see Graph 4).

Table 1

DIBELS Phoneme Segmentation Fluency Percent of Half-Day and Full-Day Kindergarten Students Achieving Benchmark by Race/Ethnicity Classification

Half-Day Kindergarten Instruction			
Race/Ethnicity	Winter 2008	Spring 2008	Percent Increase
Black (n=157)	41%	44%	3%
White (n=306)	55%	65%	10%
Asian (n=84)	25%	35%	10%
Hispanic (n=129)	34%	45%	11%
Full-Day Kindergarten Instruction			
Race/Ethnicity	Winter 2008	Spring 2008	Percent Increase
Black (n=228)	68%	84%	16%
White (n=209)	74%	89%	15%
Asian (n=99)	66%	82%	16%
Hispanic (n=198)	68%	91%	23%

More than 80 percent of each race/ethnicity subgroup in a full-day kindergarten model achieved benchmark in the spring.

n=number of students

Graph 4

DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency and Nonsense Word Fluency Results for First Grade Students
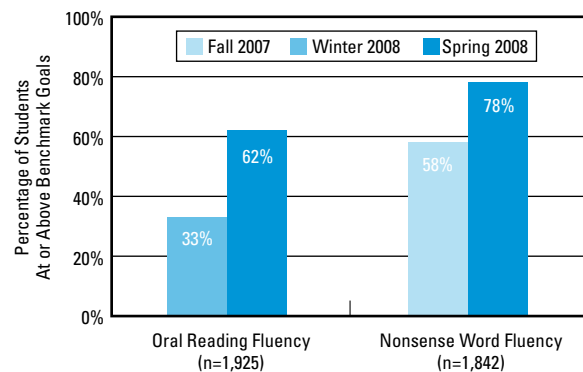
Read Well Effectiveness Data

Sight word recognition results, as measured by the TSI, are reported as percent of students achieving benchmark for ease of interpretation; however, a repeated measures ANOVA was conducted on the total number of words correctly recognized, with time (fall, winter, spring) as the within-subjects factor. Statistical significance was found at the .001 level for the observed increases in scores over time.[6]

In the spring of first grade, the percentage of students (n=1,737) achieving benchmark rose to 74 percent, reflecting a 59 percent gain from the fall (see Graph 5).

By Special Program Eligibility

In the spring of first grade, 28 percent of the special education, 46 percent of the Free/Reduced Lunch (FRL), 54 percent of the English language learner (ELL), and 66 percent of the general education subgroups achieved the benchmark goal in ORF (see Graph 6). These results demonstrate an increase of 12 percent for the special education, 22 percent for the FRL, 36 percent for the ELL, and 32 percent for the general education subgroups from winter to spring.

When the NWF data were analyzed by special program eligibility, 45 percent of the special education, 61 percent of the FRL, 76 percent of the ELL, and 81 percent of the general education subgroups achieved benchmark in the spring of first grade (see Graph 7). These results demonstrate an increase of 14 percent for both the special education and the FRL subgroups, 24 percent for the ELL, and 20 percent for the general education subgroups from fall to spring.

When the TSI data were analyzed by special program eligibility, 45 percent of the special education, 61 percent of the FRL, 67 percent of the ELL, and 77 percent of the general education subgroups achieved benchmark in the spring of first grade (see Graph 8). These results demonstrate an increase of 36 percent for the special education, 47 percent for the FRL, 63 percent for the ELL, and 61 percent for the general education subgroups from fall to spring.

By Race/Ethnicity Classification

The percent increase of students achieving benchmark in PSF by race/ethnicity classification was 27 percent for black, 28 percent for Native American, 29 percent for Asian, and 30 percent for white from winter to spring of first grade. The Hispanic subgroup made the most substantial gain with a 32 percent increase of students at benchmark.
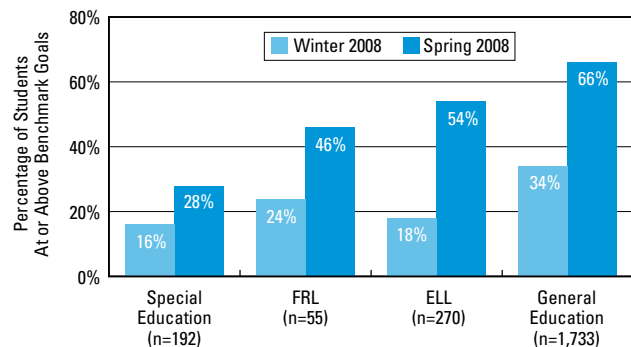
Graph 5

Sight Word Recognition Results for First Grade Students (n=1,737)
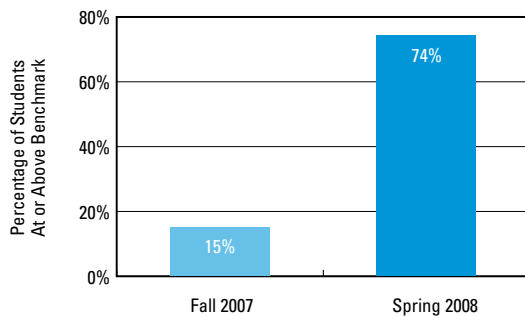
Graph 6

DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency Results for First Grade Students by Special Program Eligibility

[6]$F(2, 3472) = 3559.2, p < .001.$

n=number of students

The increase in the percent of students achieving the TSI benchmark in the Hispanic, Asian, and Native American race/ethnicity subgroups was approximately the same, between 62 and 63 percent, from fall to spring of first grade. The percentage of students achieving benchmark in the white and black subgroups increased by 56 and 58 percent, respectively. The Pacific Islander subgroup made the most substantial gain with a 68 percent increase from fall to spring.

SUMMARY

Findings from the evaluation of student growth during the first year of the districtwide *Read Well* adoption suggest that *Read Well* positively impacts early literacy skill acquisition and reading achievement of full-day kindergarten and first grade students.

A realistic goal for a school or district is to experience a 10–20 percent increase in the number of students achieving benchmark in kindergarten and first grade over the first two years of gathering *DIBELS* data (Good & Kaminski, 2002). Full-day kindergarten and first grade students met or exceeded this goal in less than one school year for both overall grade-level results and when disaggregated by special program and race/ethnicity classification.

In full-day kindergarten, the special education and Hispanic subgroups both demonstrated a 23 percent increase in the number of students achieving the phonemic awareness benchmark. In first grade, FRL, ELL, and general education subgroups demonstrated benchmark increases for oral reading fluency of 22 percent, 36 percent, and 32 percent, respectively.
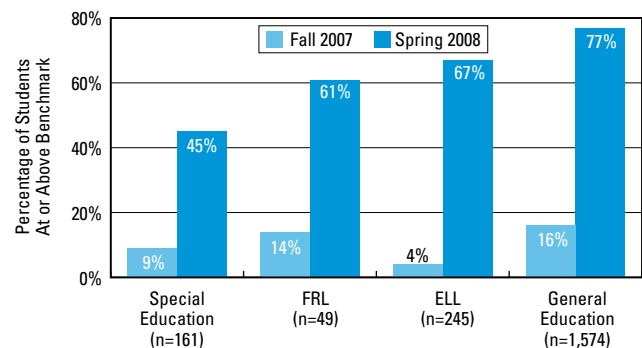
Graph 7

DIBELS Nonsense Word Fluency Results for First Grade Students by Special Program Eligibility
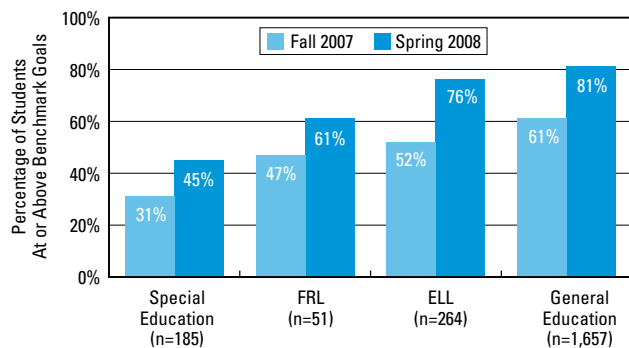
Graph 8

Sight Word Recognition Results for First Grade Students by Special Program Eligibility

Read Well Effectiveness Data

Longitudinal Results of the *Read Well* Pilot Implementation in Tacoma Public Schools

The longitudinal evaluation follows a group of students in the Tacoma Public Schools from kindergarten to first grade, when *Read Well* was piloted in the 2005–06 and 2006–07 school years, to the end of second grade in 2008, one year after exiting the program.[1]

MEASURES

DIBELS was administered in kindergarten, first grade, and second grade to assess student progress in early literacy skills and reading achievement.[2] The *DIBELS* measures used in this evaluation were Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (PSF) in kindergarten, Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF) in the kindergarten to first grade analysis, and Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) in the first grade to second grade analysis.

These measures were selected because research has found that they have the highest reliability among the *DIBELS* measures (Good & Kaminski, 2002).[3] PSF measures phonemic awareness, NWF measures alphabetic principle skills, and ORF measures oral reading fluency with connected text.

PARTICIPANTS

Of the 1,163 students enrolled in *Read Well* at the onset of the pilot in 2005–06, 54 percent had all *DIBELS* PSF, NWF, and ORF scores across kindergarten through second grade. This subset of students comprised the longitudinal sample, and their data were analyzed for the school years ending in 2006, 2007, and 2008.
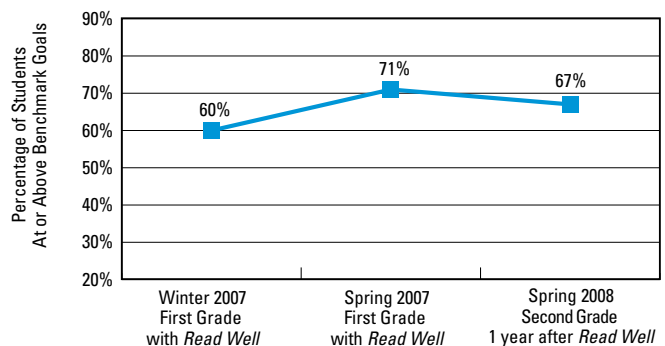
Graph 1

DIBELS Nonsense Word Fluency Results for Students Using Read Well in Kindergarten and First Grade (n = 628)
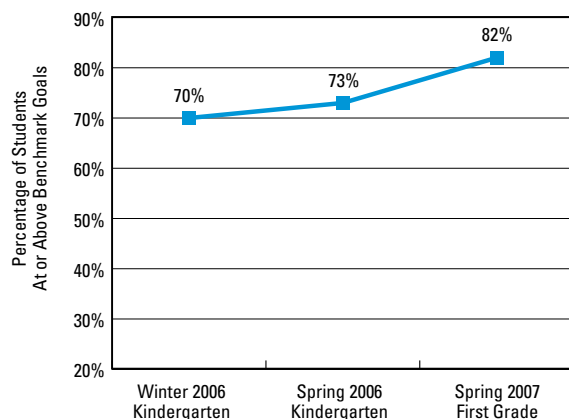
Graph 2

DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency Results for Students Using *Read Well* in First Grade and One Year after Exiting the Curriculum (n = 628)

[1] Descriptive information about the implementation of *Read Well* was limited at the time of the development of this report.

[2] See the Measures section in "Evaluation 1: First-Year Results of the Districtwide Adoption of *Read Well* at the Tacoma Public Schools" for a detailed description of *DIBELS*.

[3] Good, R. H., & Kaminski, R. A. (Eds.). (2002). Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (6th ed.). Eugene, OR: Institute for the Development of Educational Achievement.

All Students

KINDERGARTEN TO FIRST GRADE

In the spring of first grade, after two years of *Read Well* instruction, 82 percent of students achieved the benchmark goal in *DIBELS* NWF, reflecting an increase of 12 percent from the winter of kindergarten (see Graph 1).

FIRST GRADE TO SECOND GRADE

In the spring of first grade, after two years of *Read Well* instruction, 71 percent of students achieved the benchmark goal in *DIBELS* ORF, indicating an 11 percent increase from the winter of first grade.

In the spring of second grade, one year after exiting the *Read Well* curriculum, 67 percent of students maintained the benchmark goal in *DIBELS* ORF (see Graph 2).

This result indicates that all but four percent of students maintained benchmark from the time students exited *Read Well* at the end of first grade.
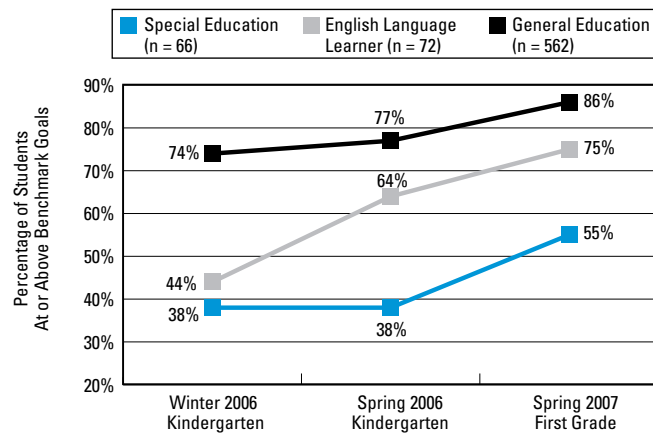
By Special Program Eligibility[4]

KINDERGARTEN

When the PSF kindergarten data were analyzed by special program eligibility, 49 percent of the special education, 60 percent of the English language learner (ELL), and 83 percent of the general education subgroups achieved benchmark in the spring of kindergarten. These results reflect an increase of 20 percent for special education, 27 percent for ELL, and 19 percent for general education subgroups from the winter administration.
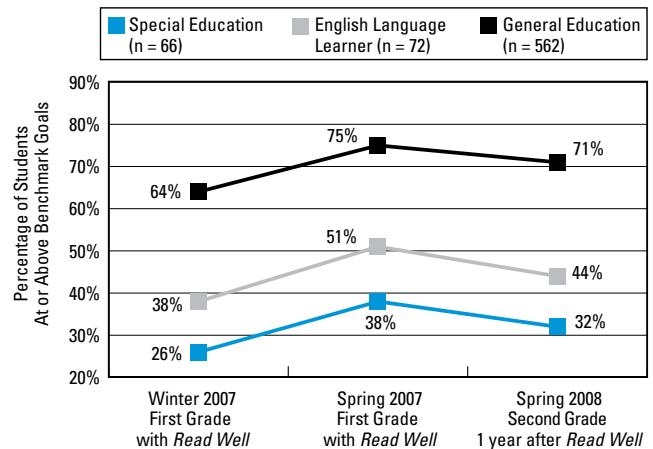

Graph 3

DIBELS Nonsense Word Fluency Results for Students Using *Read Well* in Kindergarten and First Grade by Special Program Eligibility

n=number of students

Graph 4

DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency Results for Students Using *Read Well* in First Grade and One Year After Exiting the Curriculum by Special Program Eligibility

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[4] Free/Reduced Lunch program data were not included in the longitudinal analysis due to a small sample size.

Read Well Effectiveness Data

KINDERGARTEN TO FIRST GRADE

In the spring of first grade, after two years of *Read Well* instruction, 55 percent of the special education, 75 percent of the ELL, and 86 percent of the general education subgroups achieved the NWF benchmark (see Graph 3). These results reflect an increase of 17 percent for special education, 31 percent for ELL, and 12 percent for general education from the winter of kindergarten.

FIRST GRADE TO SECOND GRADE

In the spring of first grade, after two years of *Read Well* instruction, 38 percent of the special education, 51 percent of the ELL, and 75 percent of the general education subgroups achieved the benchmark goal in ORF. This indicated an increase of 12 percent, 13 percent, and 11 percent, respectively, from the winter of first grade (see Graph 4).

While the number of students reaching benchmark decreased one year after exiting *Read Well*, the spring of second grade results showed a 6 to 7 percent increase in the number of students achieving benchmark from the winter administration in first grade (see Graph 4).
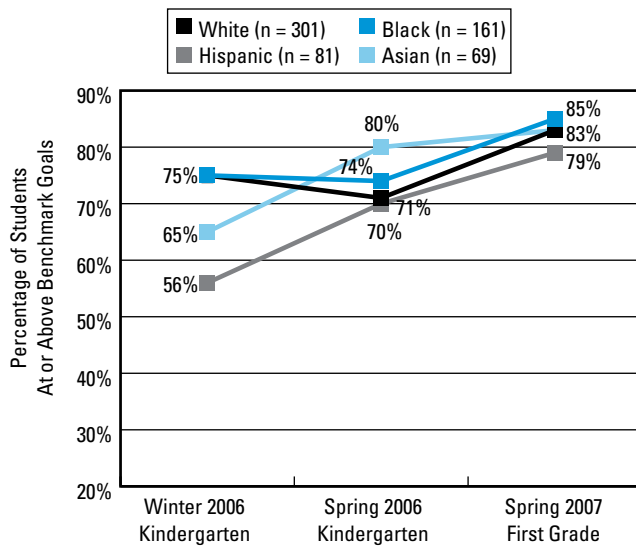
By Race/Ethnicity Classification

KINDERGARTEN TO FIRST GRADE

In the spring of first grade, after two years of *Read Well* instruction, increases were made by all race/ethnicity subgroups, resulting in 79 to 85 percent of students achieving benchmark in NWF (see Graph 5). The most notable gains were made by the Hispanic and Asian subgroups, with a respective 23 and 18 percent increase from the winter of kindergarten to the spring of first grade.
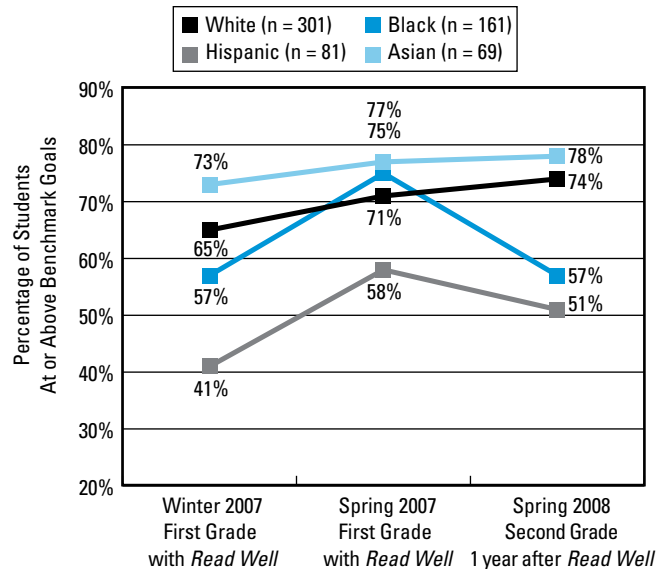
Graph 5

DIBELS Nonsense Word Fluency Results for Students Using *Read Well* in Kindergarten and First Grade by Race/Ethnicity Classification

Graph 6

DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency Results for Students Using *Read Well* in First Grade and One Year After Exiting the Curriculum by Race/Ethnicity Classification

FIRST GRADE TO SECOND GRADE

In the spring of first grade, after two years of *Read Well* instruction, the percent of students achieving the benchmark goal in ORF was between 71 and 77 percent for the Asian, black, and white subgroups, and 58 percent for the Hispanic subgroup. The most substantial increases in the number of students achieving benchmark from winter to spring of first grade were 18 percent for the black subgroup and 17 percent for the Hispanic subgroup (see Graph 6).

In the spring of second grade, one year after exiting *Read Well*, the black subgroup showed a decrease in the number of students at ORF benchmark to the initial level of the winter of first grade. The Hispanic subgroup showed a decrease in the percent at benchmark, but maintained a 10 percent increase over the winter of first grade. The white and Asian subgroups continued to increase the percent of students achieving benchmark to the end of second grade (see Graph 6).

SUMMARY

Longitudinal findings from the pilot of *Read Well* at the Tacoma Public Schools suggest that *Read Well* positively impacts early literacy skill acquisition and reading achievement of students in kindergarten and first grade.

A realistic goal for a school or district is to experience a 10–20 percent increase in the number of students achieving benchmark in kindergarten and first grade over the first two years of gathering *DIBELS* data (Good & Kaminski, 2002). Students in kindergarten and first grade, including nearly all special program and race/ethnicity subgroups, met or exceeded this goal in early literacy and reading skills. Notably, the ELL and Hispanic subgroups exceeded this goal in both kindergarten and first grade, with benchmark increases ranging from 23 to 31 percent.

One year after exiting *Read Well*, in the spring of second grade, the majority of students in the longitudinal evaluation continued to maintain benchmark; and the white and Asian subgroups increased the percent of students achieving benchmark. The four percent decrease in students meeting the oral reading fluency benchmark may be attributed to several unknown factors since implementation details were limited at the time of the development of this report. Potential factors in sustainability could include, but are not limited to, a lack of alignment in content and instructional practices between the second grade core reading program and *Read Well*. Alignment of reading instruction is a key component of literacy skill development and reading acquisition because it allows students to thoroughly learn and practice a consistent set of reading strategies and content.[5]

In addition, it is important to note that the representation of results in this evaluation, shown as the percent of students at benchmark, does not reflect growth achieved by students who remained below benchmark but improved from intensive to strategic performance categories.

[5] Wonder-McDowell, Carla (2008). The effects of aligning supplemental and core reading instruction on second-grade students' reading achievement. Ph.D. dissertation, Utah State University, United States. Retrieved March 3, 2009, from Dissertations & Theses: Full Text database. (Publication No. AAT 3320273).