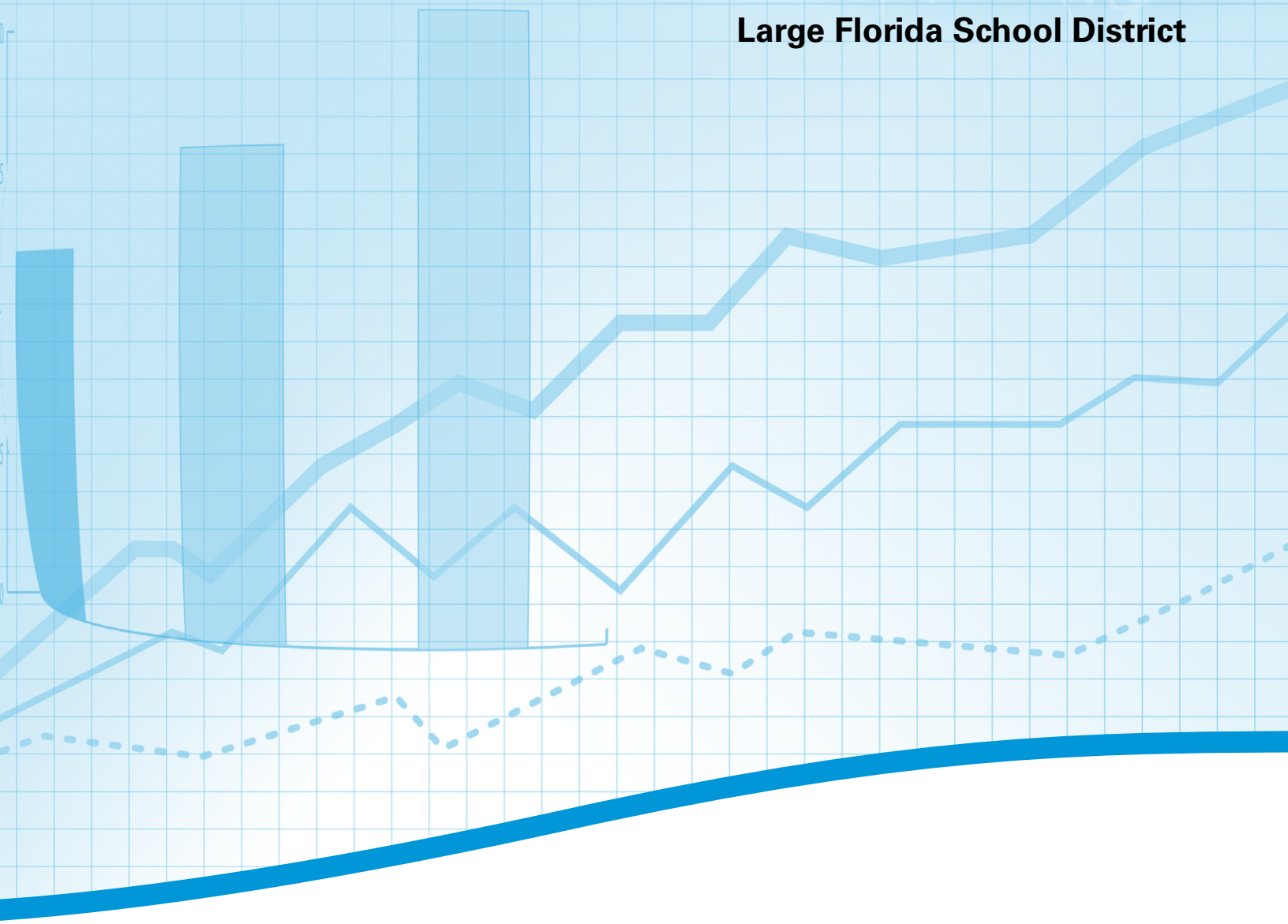
Lee County Public Schools

READ WELL®

Read Well® Results in a Large Florida School District



VOYAGER SOPRIS LEARNING®

Lee County Public Schools

A single-group posttest evaluation examined student literacy skills during the implementation of *Read Well*® in 38 elementary schools in Lee County Public Schools, a high-poverty district in Florida serving more than 80,000 students.[1] The evaluation assessed student achievement at the end of kindergarten during *Read Well* instruction and at the end of first grade at a one-year follow-up.[2] The district implemented both the whole class and small group formats of *Read Well K* as its districtwide core literacy program in all kindergarten classrooms 90 minutes a day. For those students identified as needing more intensive instruction, an additional 30 minutes was provided in either a walk-to-read model, where students travel to a teacher who is teaching to that particular student's needs, or through intensive reading classrooms. Students who completed *Read Well K* before finishing kindergarten received instruction in *Read Well 1*. Of the 4,132 students who participated in the evaluation, 23 percent were enrolled in the Limited English Proficient (LEP) program, 7 percent qualified for special education services, and 55 percent were classified as nonwhite.

Key Details

Total Participants: 4,132

Grade Levels: K–1

Instructional Period:

- 2008–09 and 2009–10

Instructional Time:

- 90 minutes daily

Measures:

- SAT®-10 Reading
- *DIBELS*®

Participant Demographics:

- 55% Nonwhite
- 23% Limited English Proficient (LEP)
- 7% Special Education Status

District Demographics*:

- 70% Free/Reduced Lunch
- 11% LEP
- 14% Special Education Status

Ethnicity:

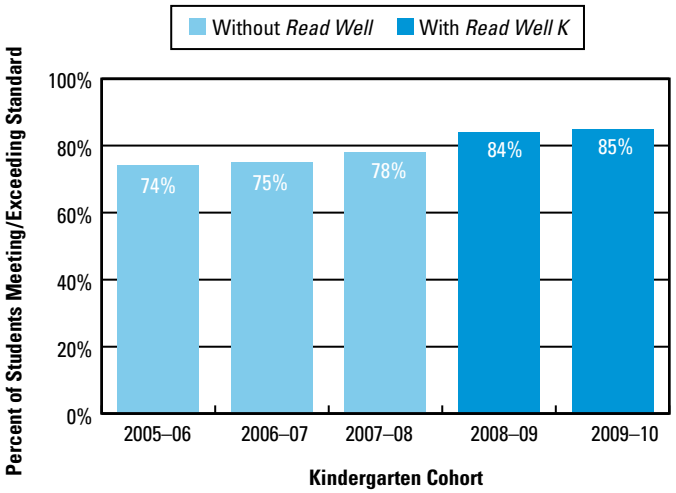
- 1.5% Asian
- 15.2% Black
- 29.5% Hispanic
- 0.2% Native American
- 50.5% White
- 3.1% Multiracial

*District demographic information was obtained from the Lee County Public Schools' Web site: www.leeschools.net/info/facts.htm

RESULTS

At the beginning of kindergarten, 78 percent of students scored in the low-risk category on the *DIBELS*® (*Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills*) Letter Naming Fluency, and 69 percent of students met or exceeded the district's grade-level standards on Initial Sound Fluency.[3] After seven months of using *Read Well* in kindergarten during the first year of districtwide implementation, 84 percent of students met or exceeded grade-level standards in reading on the Stanford Achievement Test Series-10th Edition (SAT®-10),[4] up from 78 percent for the 2007–08 kindergarten cohort during the year prior to *Read Well*. In the 2009–10 school year, during the second year of *Read Well* implementation, the SAT-10 results remained high, with 85 percent of kindergarten students meeting or exceeding grade-level standards in reading (see *Figure 1*).

Figure 1 SAT-10 Reading kindergarten results: All students meeting/exceeding district grade-level standard.



[1] The evaluation was carried out by researchers Richard Itzen and Larry Tihen, and Christine Busenbark from Lee County Public Schools in collaboration with Cambium Learning Group's Department of Research and Development.

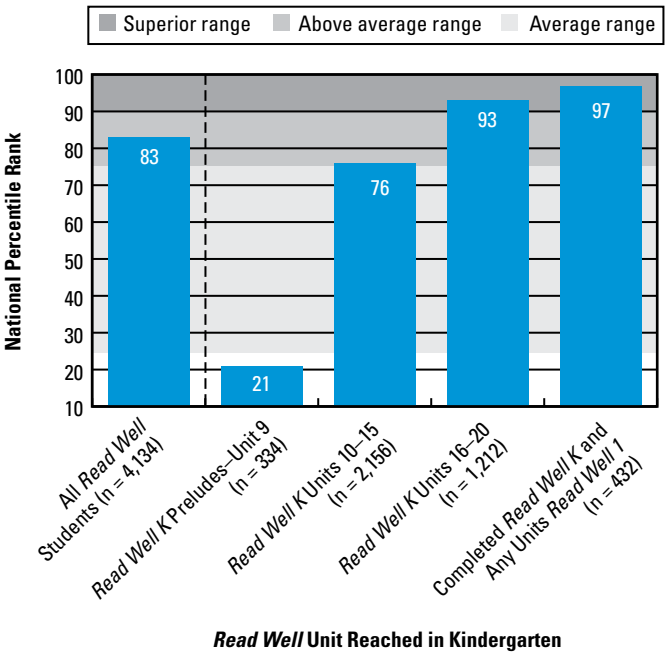
[2] While most students who used *Read Well* in kindergarten during the 2008–09 school year placed in first grade in 2009–10 and received instruction in a non-*Read Well* core program, some of the students received *Read Well 1* as a core replacement, comprehensive intervention program in first grade.

[3] *DIBELS* Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (PSF) and Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF) were not administered until the end of kindergarten. Results on these measures, therefore, were not available for the beginning of kindergarten.

[4] The SAT-10 is the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test Norm-Referenced Test (FCAT NRT). It is a research-based, norm-referenced achievement test developed by Harcourt Assessment, Inc. The reading portion of the test measures sounds and letters, as well as word and sentence reading at the end of kindergarten; and word study skills, word and sentence reading, and reading comprehension at the end of first grade.

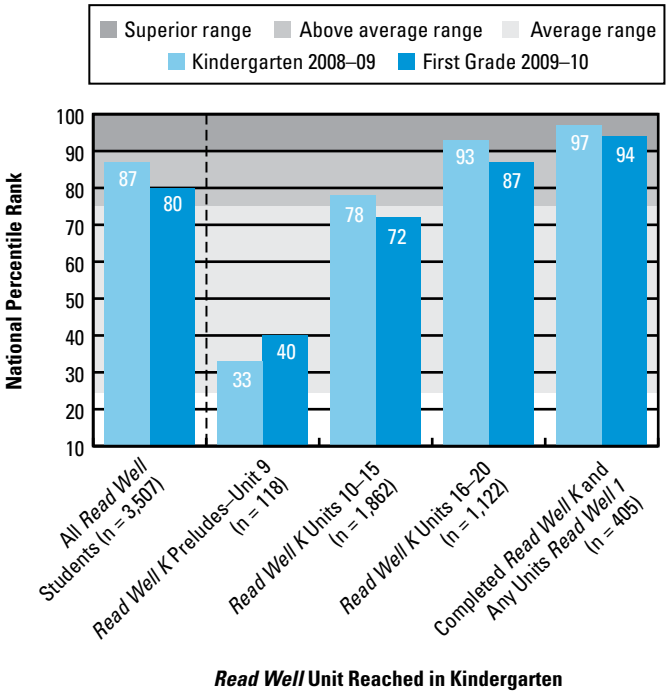
The evaluation also found a positive relationship between reading outcomes at the end of kindergarten and the number of *Read Well* small group instructional units mastered during kindergarten.[5] That is, students who achieved mastery of more instructional units during the school year showed greater SAT-10 Reading scores than students who mastered fewer units (see *Figure 2*). Specifically, students who only mastered anywhere between *Read Well K* Preludes through Unit 9 scored in the *below average* range in reading, whereas students who achieved mastery of *Read Well K* Unit 10 to Unit 15 scored at the high end of the *average* range. Students who mastered *Read Well K* Unit 16 or above and students who completed *Read Well K* and began using *Read Well 1* scored in the *superior* range.

Figure 2 SAT-10 Reading kindergarten results by maximum *Read Well* unit mastered.



Reading outcomes for students at the end of first grade one year after exiting *Read Well* are shown in *Figure 3*;[6] the results are disaggregated by the maximum small group instructional unit range mastered in kindergarten. The subgroup that mastered the fewest *Read Well* instructional units, the *Read Well K* Preludes–Unit 9 subgroup, scored at the 33rd percentile and improved to the 40th percentile at the end of first grade. The remaining subgroups scored in the *above average* or *superior* range at the end of kindergarten. The performance of these subgroups was in the *average*, *above average*, or *superior* range at the end of first grade.

Figure 3 SAT-10 Reading results for *Read Well* students in kindergarten and first grade one year after exiting *Read Well* by maximum *Read Well* unit mastered in kindergarten.



[5] The number of *Read Well* units mastered by the end of kindergarten was positively related to SAT-10 Reading Normal Curve Equivalents in kindergarten ($r(4142) = .41$, $p < .0001$) and first grade ($r(3833) = .33$, $p < .0001$). The kindergarten correlation was significant even after controlling for Letter Naming Fluency scores obtained in the beginning of kindergarten ($r(3681) = .23$, $p < .0001$).

[6] Students who repeated kindergarten in 2009–10 were not included in this analysis because first grade SAT-10 scores were not available for these students. Students who repeated kindergarten and stayed in *Read Well* for two years showed dramatic improvement in reading, scoring at the high end of the *average* range (73rd percentile) after exiting *Read Well*.

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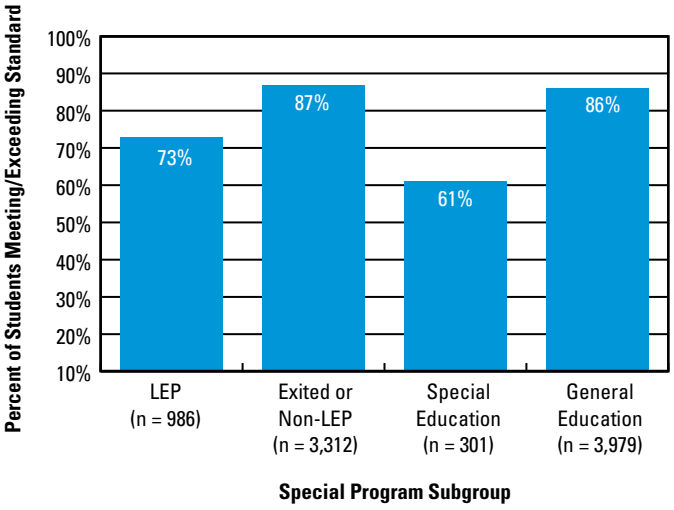
Kindergarten performance on the SAT-10 Reading is disaggregated by special program status in *Figure 4*. After seven months of using *Read Well*, 73 percent of the Limited English Proficient (LEP) and 61 percent of the special education subgroup met or exceeded the grade-level standard for kindergarten. *Figure 5* shows kindergarten and first grade reading results for students at the end of kindergarten and first grade. After using *Read Well* in kindergarten, the LEP and special education subgroups scored at the high end of the *average* range in reading. Students not enrolled in or who had exited the LEP program, as well as the general education subgroup, scored in the *above average* range at the 89th and 87th percentiles, respectively. The end-of-kindergarten results demonstrated by the exited/non-LEP general education subgroups held within 6 percentiles at the end of first grade; the LEP and special education subgroups fell back 8 and 14 percentiles, respectively, after exiting *Read Well*.

Figure 4 SAT-10 Reading results for *Read Well K* students in kindergarten by special program enrollment: Students meeting/exceeding district grade-level standard.



Kindergarten and first grade performance on the SAT-10 Reading was disaggregated by race/ethnicity classification as shown in *Figure 6*. After seven months of using *Read Well* in kindergarten, all race/ethnicity subgroups scored in the *above average* range with reading scores spanning between the 80th and the 92nd percentile. At the end of first grade, one year after exiting *Read Well*, all subgroups maintained their standing within 7 percentiles, except for the black subgroup, which dropped 12 percentiles at the end of first grade.

Figure 5 SAT-10 Reading results for *Read Well K* students in kindergarten and first grade by special program enrollment.

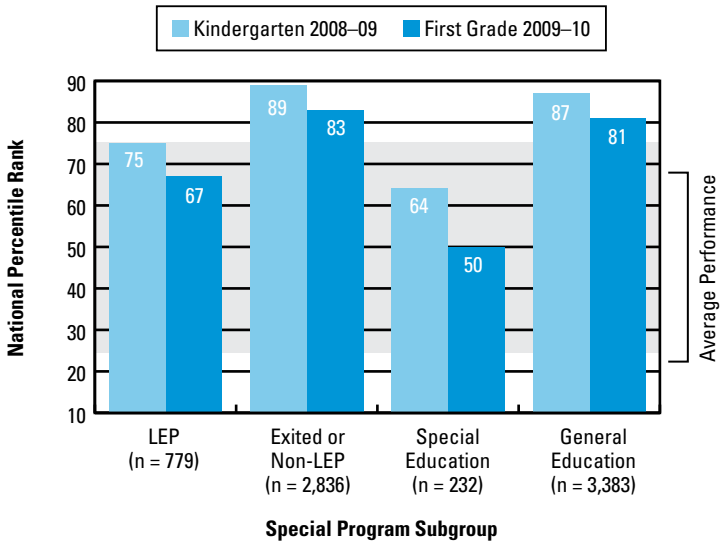
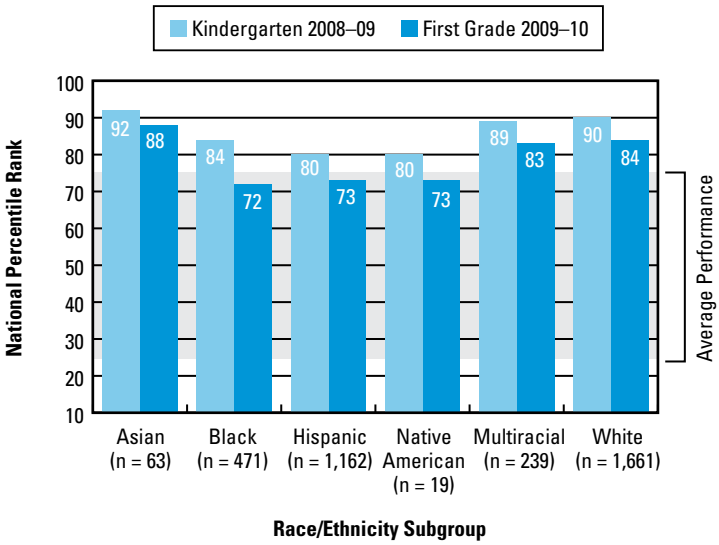


Figure 6 **SAT-10 Reading results for *Read Well K* students in kindergarten and first grade by race/ethnicity classification.**



SUMMARY

In sum, the current evaluation found that *Read Well* students from a high-poverty, predominantly nonwhite school district in the state of Florida demonstrated *above average* performance on a nationally norm-referenced, standardized test of reading at the end of kindergarten and at a one-year follow-up at the end of first grade. The evaluation also found a positive relationship between reading outcomes and the number of *Read Well* small group instructional units mastered during kindergarten. That is, students who mastered more instructional units during the school year showed greater reading scores at the end of kindergarten and the end of first grade than students who mastered fewer instructional units.

The LEP and special education subgroups showed reading performance at the high end of the *average* range (75th and 64th percentiles, respectively) at the end of kindergarten after using *Read Well*. Although their performance decreased somewhat one year after exiting *Read Well*, they maintained scores in the *average* range (67th and 50th percentile). Finally, all race/ethnicity subgroups demonstrated reading performance in the *above average* range after using *Read Well* and at the high end of the *average* range or in the *above average* range at the one-year follow-up.