Alabama School Success

READ WELL®

**Evidence of Effectiveness
With the *Read Well*® Curriculum**

VOYAGER SOPRIS
LEARNING®
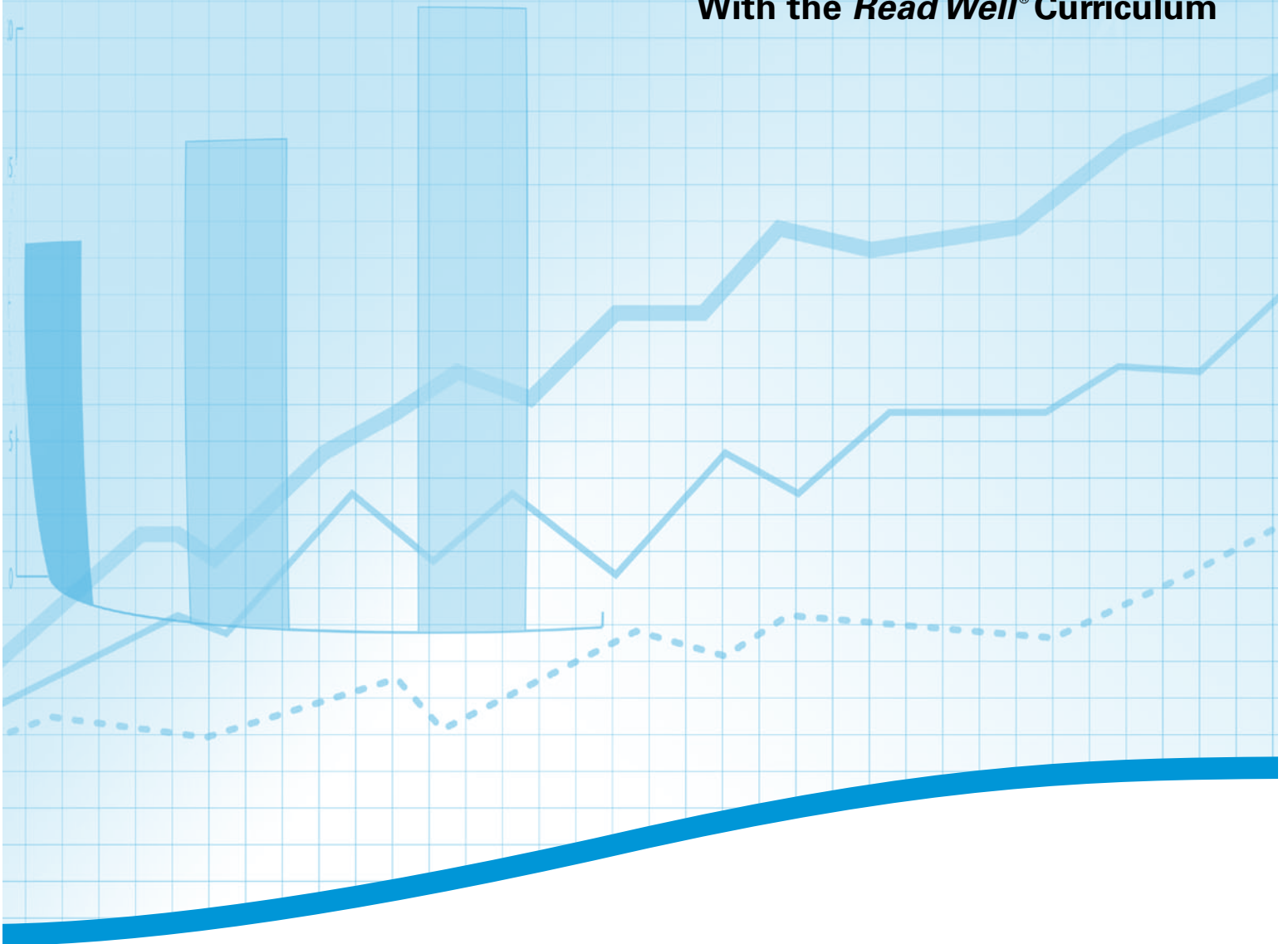
Montgomery Public Schools

The data presented in this report track the progress of students using the *Read Well*® curriculum in Alabama's Montgomery Public Schools (MPS) during the school years ending in 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, and 2009. The district is responsible for the education of more than 31,000 students across 59 schools including 32 elementary schools.

MPS has a very high percentage of nonwhite students (81 percent in 2005–2006). Of these, the majority is black, which may account for the low proportion of English language learners (ELLs)s. The district also has a high percentage of students eligible for the federal Free/Reduced Lunch (FRL) program (see box at right).

Year 1 (2003–2004)

In the fall of 2003, 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 only with 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, Sopris West® Educational Services conducted two visits to every non-Reading First school in the spring of 2004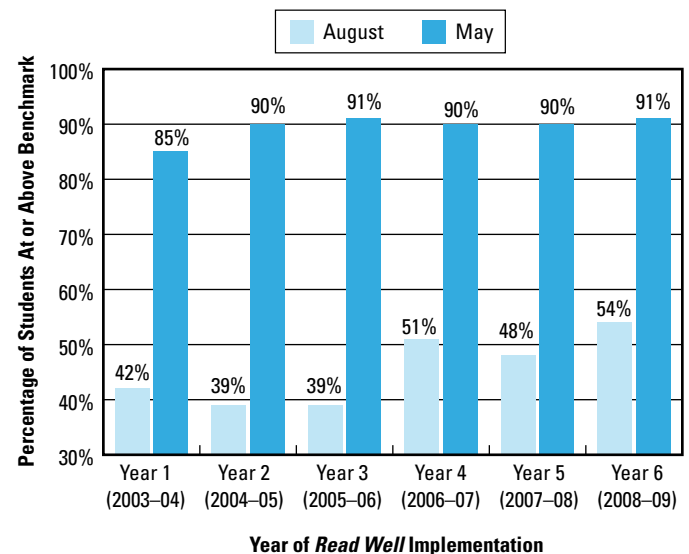. Coaching visits included teaching demonstrations, classroom observations, meetings to discuss issues and questions, and analyzing program data for placement purposes. Extensive professional development was also provided for teachers, coaches, and principals in the spring and summer of 2004.

Key Details

Total Participants: Approximately 5,000 per school year

Grade Levels: K–1

Instructional Period: 2003–2009

Instructional Time: 90 minutes

Demographics of Montgomery Public Schools:*
- 66% Free/Reduced Lunch (FRL)
- 2% English language learner (ELL)
- 81% Nonwhite
  - 77% Black
  - 2% Hispanic
  - 2% Asian/Pacific Islander
- 16% Special education status

Measure: *DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills) and Stanford Achievement Test (SAT)*

*Over the six school years when student progress was evaluated, the demography of MPS changed very little. Thus, the demographics for the 2005–2006 school year are presented to represent the demographic makeup of MPS for the six years studied.

Table 1

Measurement Used by Grade Level and Time of Year		
	Beginning of Year	**End of Year**
Kindergarten	ISF	NWF
Grade 1	NWF	ORF
Grade 2	ORF	ORF
Grade 3	ORF	ORF

Graph 1

Six Years of Kindergarten *DIBELS* Results From MPS

Legend: August, May

Percentage of Students At or Above Benchmark

	Year 1 (2003–04)	Year 2 (2004–05)	Year 3 (2005–06)	Year 4 (2006–07)	Year 5 (2007–08)	Year 6 (2008–09)
August	42%	39%	39%	51%	48%	54%
May	85%	90%	91%	90%	90%	91%

Year of *Read Well* Implementation

Montgomery Public Schools

In order to measure student progress, *DIBELS®* (*Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills*) measures[1] 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 K–1 students, the sample consisted of all students who 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.

Years 2 Through 6 (2004–2005, 2005–2006, 2006–2007, 2007–2008, 2008–2009)

MPS continued using *Read Well* as the core literacy and intervention program in all kindergarten and first grade classrooms during the 2004–2005 school year. 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, *DIBELS* measures were used to track student growth. The total enrollment for the 2004–2005 school year was as follows: 2,580 kindergarten students; 2,781 first grade students; and 2,601 second grade students.

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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.
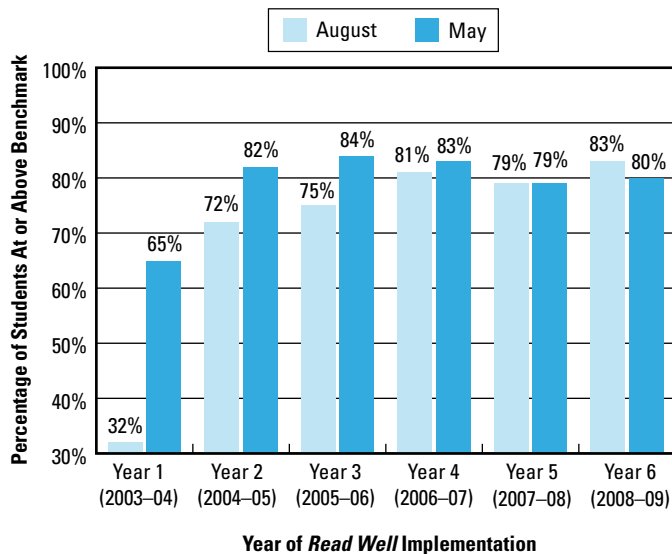
RESULTS

Results are reported in terms of benchmark fluency scores based on a number of early literacy indicators depending on grade level and time of year. *DIBELS* benchmark scores for each of the indicators are the minimum scores that suggest the student has the ability to apply a basic reading skill. These established levels of performance for each measure predict success for the subsequent level of performance. As Table 1 shows, for kindergarten, Initial Sound Fluency (ISF) was used as the beginning-of-year measurement, and Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF) was used at the end. NWF was used at the beginning of first grade, while Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) was the end of first grade measurement. ORF was used as the measurement for both the beginning and end of second grade and third grade. These measures were chosen because they are considered to be the more heavily weighted predictors of reading success.

Graph 1 shows the percent of kindergarten students who reached benchmark in *DIBELS* at the beginning and end of each of six years of *Read Well® K* implementation. After receiving *Read Well K* instruction, the percent of students who reached benchmark in phonemic decoding ranged from 85 to 91 percent.
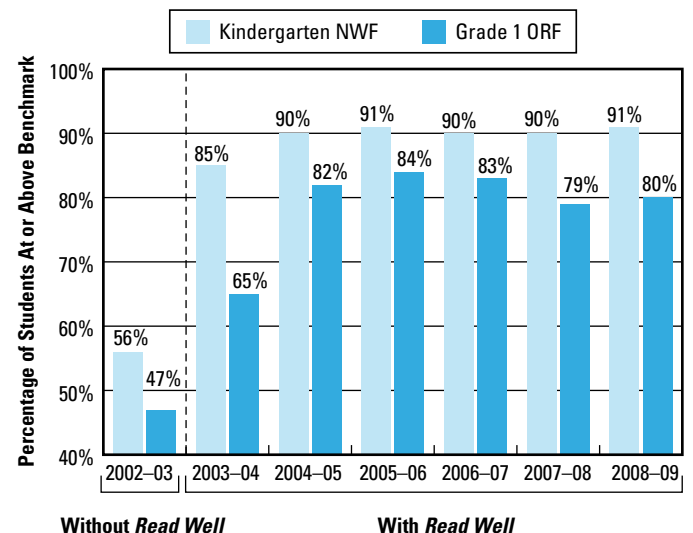
Graph 2

Six Years of First Grade *DIBELS* Results From MPS

Graph 3

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

Montgomery Public Schools

As shown in *Graph 2*, in the first year of implementation, 65 percent of first grade students reached benchmark by the end of the school year, up from 32 percent. These students received *Read Well* instruction in first grade only. Approximately 82 percent, 84 percent, 83 percent, 79 percent, and 80 percent of students met benchmark in oral reading fluency by the end of the school year 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.

During the six academic years that *Read Well* was implemented in MPS, the percentage of kindergarten students at or above benchmark ranged from 85 to 91 percent on NWF, and the percent of first grade students at or above benchmark ranged from 65 to 84 percent on ORF (see *Graph 3*). In the spring of the 2002–03 school year, before *Read Well* was implemented, only 56 percent of kindergarten students were at or above the *DIBELS* NWF benchmark, and only 47 percent of first grade students were at or above the *DIBELS* ORF benchmark. These results represent a substantial increase in the percentage of low-risk students in MPS.

Longitudinal Results

Next, early literacy skills for the same group of students from the beginning of kindergarten to the end of second grade were examined. *Graph 4* shows the percent of kindergarten students in *Read Well* who achieved benchmark at the beginning and end of the 2003–2004 school year and at the end of first grade (May 2005). This graph also shows that these same students continued to reach benchmark one and two years after exiting the curriculum (May 2006 and May 2007).

Lastly, third grade Stanford Achievement Test (SAT®) Reading results were examined for students who used *Read Well* in first grade only and students who used *Read Well* in kindergarten and first grade. Students who used *Read Well* in kindergarten and first grade scored at the 44th percentile rank on the Stanford Achievement Test in Reading administered two years after they exited *Read Well*, bringing these students closer to the state average than students in earlier cohorts. MPS students who did not use *Read Well* scored at the 35th and 37th percentile rank on the third grade SAT in Reading. (see *Graph 5*).
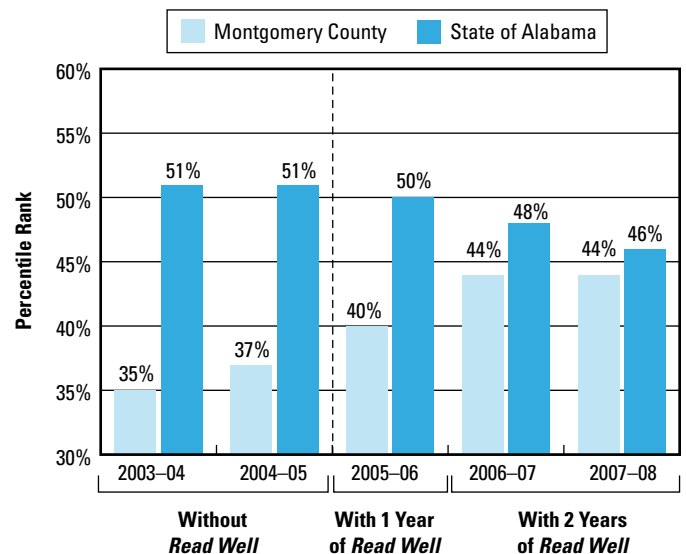
Graph 4

Four Years of Longitudinal *DIBELS* Results with *Read Well* in Kindergarten and Grade 1 and the Following 2 Years
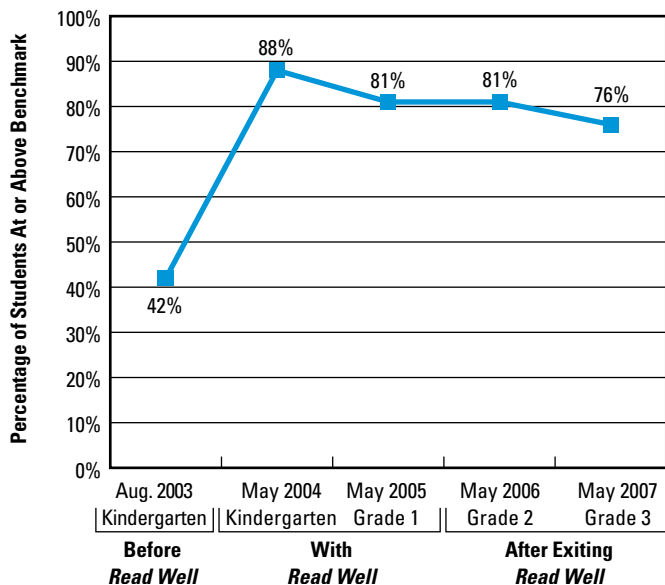
Graph 5

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

Walker County Public School System

Walker County Public School System, located in northwestern Alabama, serves more than 8,000 students from all of Walker County, except the city of Jasper. In 2005, most of the district's schools with kindergarten and first grade adopted the *Read Well*® curriculum in order to improve the percentage of students meeting benchmark on the *DIBELS*® (*Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills*) assessments.

RESULTS

Walker County Public School System saw an increase in the percentage of first grade students scoring at or above benchmark in six out of nine schools from the spring of 2005 prior to *Read Well* to the spring of 2006 after the first year of *Read Well* implementation. After two years of *Read Well* implementation, the number of schools seeing an increase jumped to eight out of nine in spring 2007.

Further, while the percentage of first grade students at or above benchmark on *DIBELS* rose 7 percent across all schools in the state from 2005–2007, the percentage of first grade students at schools using *Read Well* increased 11 percent during the same time period (see *Graph 1*). This is noteworthy, as 2005 was the first year of *Read Well* implementation.

Graph 1

First Grade Students' Performance on *DIBELS* From 2005–2007

Legend:
- *Read Well* Schools' Average
- State Average

Y-axis: Percentage of Students At or Above Benchmark

Data points:
- Spring 2005: *Read Well* Schools' Average 73%, State Average 72%
- Spring 2006: *Read Well* Schools' Average 84%, State Average 79%

Houston County Schools

Houston County Schools, located in southeast Alabama, serves approximately 6,229 students. In 2005, all five schools with kindergarten and first grade adopted the *Read Well*® curriculum in order to improve the percentage of students meeting benchmark on the *DIBELS*® (*Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills*) assessments.

RESULTS

In spring of 2005, before the implementation of *Read Well*, the majority of schools in Houston County Schools had a lower percentage of students at or above benchmark relative to the state average. After *Read Well*, in the spring of 2006 and spring of 2007, almost all of the schools had a greater percentage of students at or above benchmark relative to the state average in kindergarten and first grade.

Further, while the percentage of first grade students at or above benchmark on *DIBELS* rose across all schools in the state from 2005–2007, the schools using *Read Well* saw an even greater rate of growth during the same time period (see *Graph 1*). This is noteworthy, as 2005 was the first year of *Read Well* implementation.

Key Details

Total Participants: Approximately 1,000

Grade Levels: K–1

Instructional Period: 2005–2007
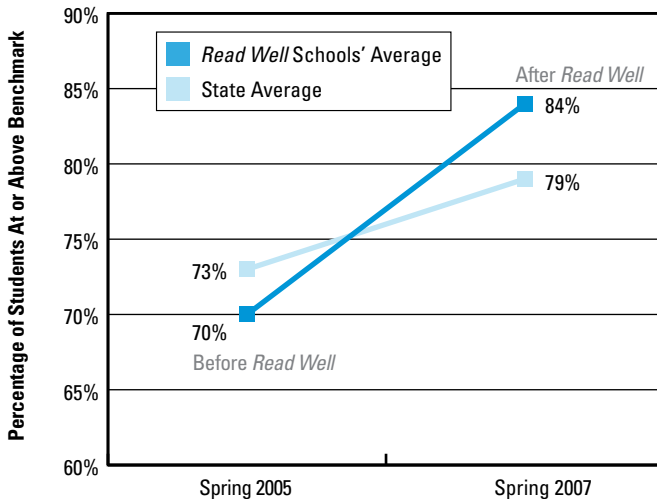
Instructional Time: 90 minutes

Demographics of Houston County Schools:
- 56% Free/Reduced Lunch (FRL)
- 20% Nonwhite
  - 18% Black
  - 1% Hispanic
- 16% Special education status

Measure: *DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills)*

Graph 1

First Grade Students' Performance on *DIBELS* From 2005–2007

Legend:
- *Read Well* Schools' Average
- State Average

After *Read Well*: 84%, 79%
Before *Read Well*: 70%, 73%

Y-axis: Percentage of Students At or Above Benchmark (60%–90%)
X-axis: Spring 2005, Spring 2007

Huntsville City Schools

Huntsville City Schools, located in northern Alabama, serves approximately 23,000 students. The school district has 29 elementary schools, and in 2005, all schools with kindergarten and first grade adopted the *Read Well*® curriculum in order to improve the percentage of students meeting benchmark on the *DIBELS*® (*Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills*) assessments. Results from the two schools that had the lowest percentage of students scoring at or above benchmark before *Read Well* instruction began are reported here.

RESULTS

Before *Read Well* implementation, Mountain Gap Elementary (see *Table 1* for demographics) had the lowest percentage of kindergarten students in the county scoring at or above benchmark in the spring of 2005; 45 percent of their kindergarten students scored at or above benchmark, compared with the state average of 91 percent. After two years of *Read Well* instruction, the percentage of Mountain Gap students scoring at or above benchmark increased to 95 percent, reflecting a 50 percent gain and placing the school above the state average (see *Graph 1*).

Similarly, before *Read Well* was implemented, Montview Elementary School posted the lowest percentage of first grade students in the county scoring at or above benchmark in spring 2005; 33 percent of students were at or above benchmark, compared with the state average of 72 percent. After two years of *Read Well* instruction, the percentage of students at or above benchmark increased to 73 percent, reflecting a 40 percent gain (see *Graph 2*).

Key Details

Total Participants: Approximately 99

Grade Levels: K–1

Instructional Period: 2005–2007

Instructional Time: 90 minutes

Demographics of Huntsville City Schools:
- 38% Free/Reduced Lunch (FRL)
- 3% English language learner (ELL)
- 50% Nonwhite
  - 43% Black
  - 4% Hispanic
  - 2% Asian/Pacific Islander
  - 1% Native American/Alaskan Native
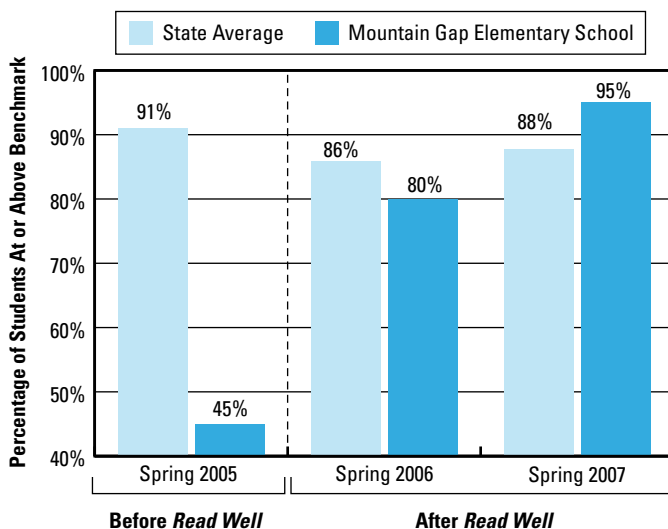- 23% Special education status

Measure: *DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills)*

Table 1: School Demographics

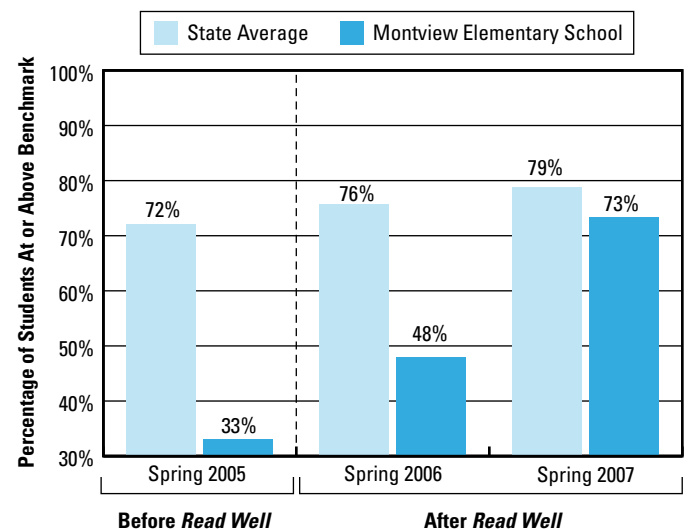| School Name	% Ethnic Minority	% Free/Reduced Lunch (FRL)
Montview Elementary	97%	72%
Mountain Gap Elementary	10%	15%

Graph 1

Kindergarten Students' Performance on *DIBELS* From 2005–2007

Graph 2

First Grade Students' Performance on *DIBELS* From 2005–2007

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