

The Superkids[★] Reading Program

A Summary of
EFFECTIVENESS STUDIES



INTRODUCTION

This document summarizes the results of many years of research studies on the effectiveness of *The Superkids Reading Program* for grades K–2. To date, *Superkids* research has been conducted in schools in nearly every region of the United States and with every major student group. This large body of evidence confirms that *Superkids* is highly effective in improving reading achievement for students of all backgrounds in all types of schools.

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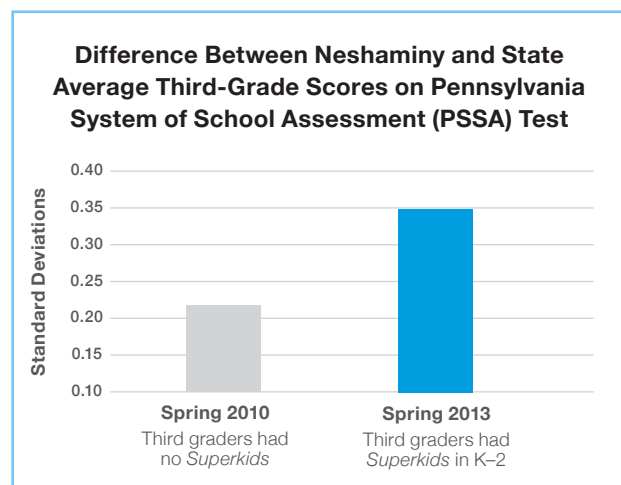
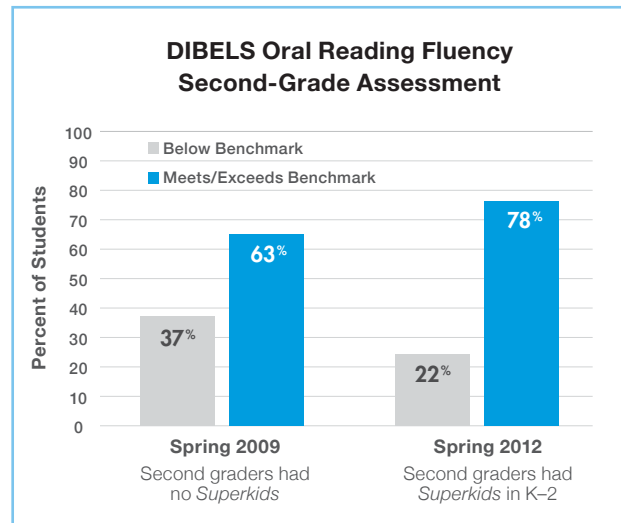
Throughout this document, student results are often presented as average or median percentile ranks. Such results were calculated by first determining the average or median scale score for the relevant test, then using percentile rank tables provided by the test’s publisher to determine the percentile rank of the average or median scale score.

1 Three-Year Longitudinal Study: *Superkids* Prepares Students for Third-Grade Success

Neshaminy School District in Langhorne, Pennsylvania, near Philadelphia, began using *Superkids* with about 1,800 students in kindergarten through second grade in the 2009–10 school year. Dr. Jerome D'Agostino, professor at The Ohio State University, analyzed the district's 2007–2012 DIBELS data to measure the impact of *Superkids* over time. With this data, it was possible to measure the three-year impact of the *Superkids* program (Rowland Reading Foundation, 2012).

Dr. D'Agostino found that the percentage of students meeting benchmark on the DIBELS second-grade Oral Reading Fluency measure increased from 63% before *Superkids* was implemented to 78% after three years of *Superkids*. This means that nearly 100 more children in a class of about 610 reached the proficient level of reading fluency. During the same period, the number of students performing below benchmark declined from 37% to 22%. To determine if these findings could be attributed to *Superkids*, Dr. D'Agostino conducted a quasi-experimental, longitudinal study that employed an analytical method called hierarchical linear modeling. In addition to finding that groups with more *Superkids* instruction experienced greater growth on DIBELS than groups with less *Superkids* instruction (with effect sizes as high as .24), his analysis found that the gains were attributable neither to initial differences in student ability nor to teachers' increased experience teaching the program over time. The most likely explanation for the statistically significant improvement was the *Superkids* program itself.

Dr. D'Agostino also analyzed Neshaminy's third-grade data from the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) from 2010 through 2013. He compared the district's average third-grade PSSA scores to the state average, with differences measured in standard deviations. In both spring 2010 and spring 2013, Neshaminy's



third graders scored higher than the state average. But in spring 2013, after three years of *Superkids* implementation, the gap had increased significantly. Using *Superkids*, Neshaminy students' performance on the third-grade PSSA test had improved at a faster rate than the state average.

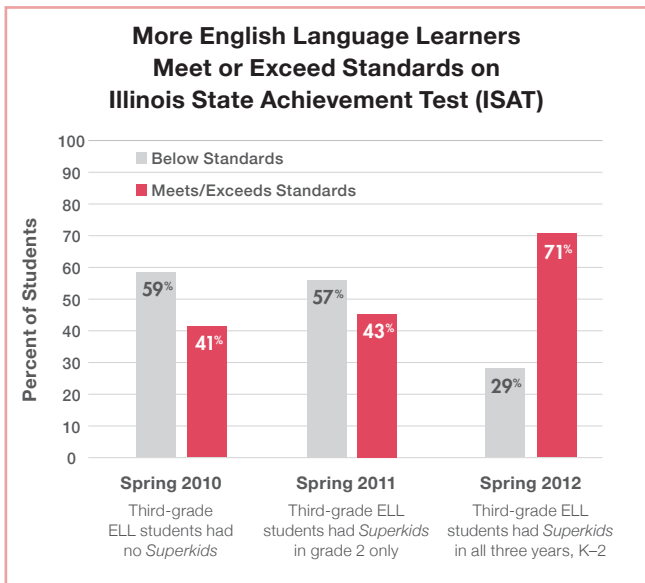
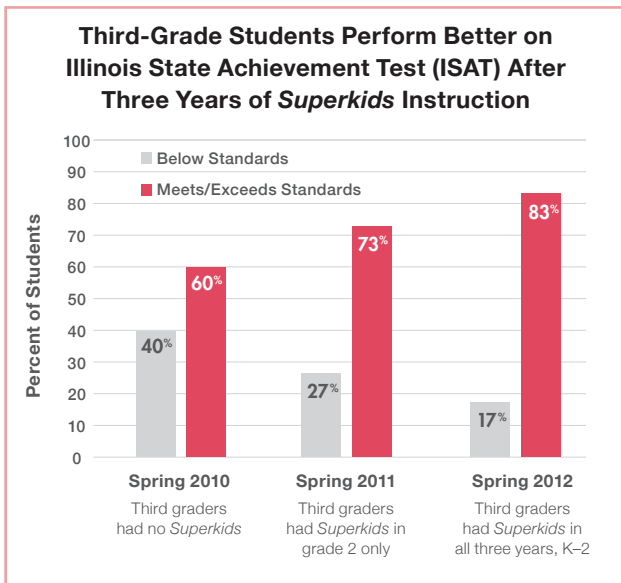
Rowland Reading Foundation. (2012). *Three-Year Longitudinal Study Shows Impressive Gains for 1,800 Superkids Students*. Madison, WI.

2

English Language Learners' Third-Grade Scores Improve Dramatically After Using *Superkids* in K-2

Union Ridge School is located in Harwood Heights, Illinois, an inner suburb of Chicago. Thirty percent of the students are English language learners. The school began implementing *Superkids* in kindergarten during the 2008–09 school year. The following year, they implemented *Superkids* in kindergarten through second grade. The 2011–12 school year was the first in which third graders had been given *Superkids* instruction in kindergarten through second grade.

As third graders had more *Superkids* instruction, the percentage who met or exceeded standards on the Illinois Standard Achievement Test steadily improved (Rowland Reading Foundation, 2013). In spring of 2012, when third graders had been taught with *Superkids* in K–2, the percentage of students who met or exceeded standards was 23 points higher than in spring 2010, when third graders had no instruction with *Superkids*. The improvement for ELL students was even more dramatic: the percentage of English language learners who met or exceeded standards in spring 2012 was 30 points higher than in spring 2010.



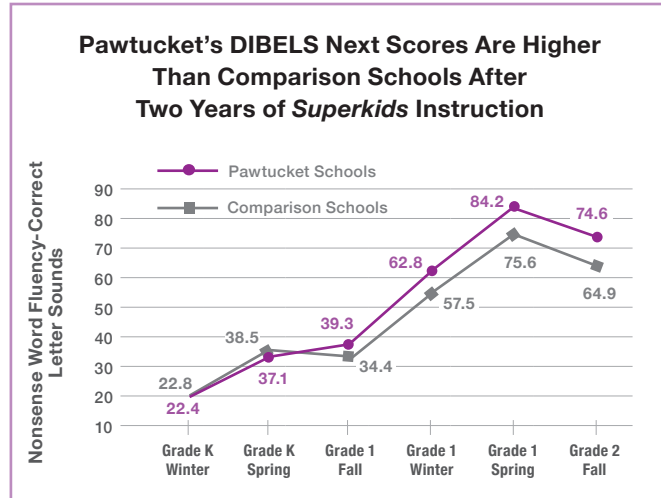
Rowland Reading Foundation. (2013). *Third-Grade Scores Improve Dramatically for Students Taught with Superkids in K-2*. Madison, WI.

3

Longitudinal Study With Control Group Shows Strong Results After Two Years of *Superkids*

Dr. Kenneth Wong, professor at Brown University, and Magnolia Consulting of Charlottesville, Virginia, were commissioned to conduct a four-year longitudinal study in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, near Providence. The 5,227 students in this study were highly diverse: 39% were Hispanic, 26% were Black, 27% were White, 85% were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, and 13% were English language learners. DIBELS Next data were collected from all ten elementary schools in Pawtucket and from eight similar schools in a nearby district that had adopted a different reading program. In addition, teachers, principals, and parents in Pawtucket were asked to complete surveys.

After two years of *Superkids* instruction, Pawtucket students scored higher on DIBELS Next Nonsense Word Fluency than the comparison schools. Nonsense Word Fluency is a key indicator of students' knowledge of the alphabetic principle and their ability to blend



letters from left to right. In addition, teachers, principals, and parents reported high satisfaction with the *Superkids* program.

Key Stakeholders in Pawtucket Are Positive About *Superkids*

STAKEHOLDER	QUESTION	RESPONSE
Principals (n=8)	Would you recommend the <i>Superkids</i> program to other schools?	100% responded yes
Teachers (n=84)	Would you recommend the <i>Superkids</i> program to other teachers?	79% responded yes
Parents (n=1,043)	Do you think the <i>Superkids</i> program has been effective for your child this year?	85% responded yes

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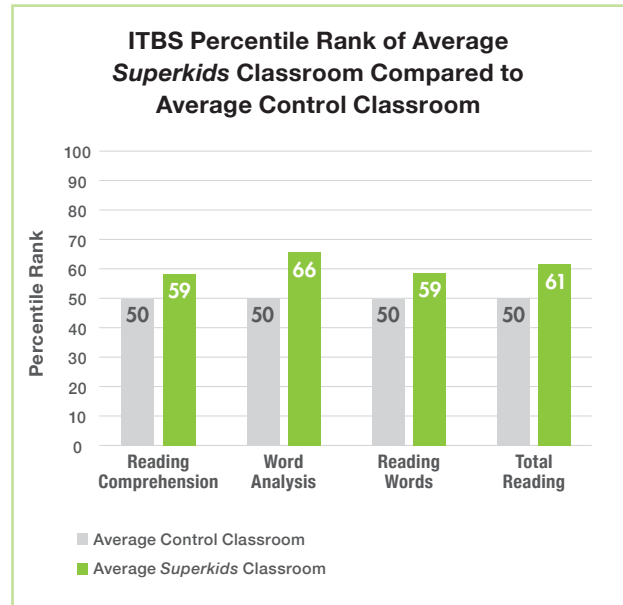
Superkids Produces Superior Results in Two Large-Scale Treatment/Control Studies

The *Superkids Reading Program* was tested in two large-scale, national quasi-experiments, one by Dr. Geoffrey Borman, professor at the University of Wisconsin, and the other by Dr. Jerome D'Agostino, professor at The Ohio State University (Borman & Dowling, 2009; D'Agostino, 2009).

In Dr. Borman's study, 23 kindergarten classrooms that used *Superkids* as their core reading curriculum were compared to 20 classrooms in the same schools that used traditional basal reading programs. These schools were located in six states in different regions of the country. The demographic characteristics, teachers' experience, and baseline reading achievement of the 390 students in the *Superkids* classrooms were very similar to those of the 360 students in the control classrooms. The only meaningful difference between the two groups of classrooms was the reading program used. Students were tested at the beginning of the school year and again at the end of the school year with the Stanford Early School Achievement Test (SESAT). Results showed that the *Superkids* students' performance on the end-of-year test was superior to the control group's in all reading domains tested. Effect sizes ranged from 0.11 to 0.25.

"Quantitative studies of published reading programs using such a broad national sample of schools, classrooms, teachers, and students are rare," said Dr. Borman. "These results bear serious consideration by any school seeking to improve its reading program. This study demonstrates the potential for widespread, cost-effective improvement of literacy through the implementation of *Superkids*."

The study conducted by Dr. D'Agostino also compared *Superkids* classrooms to control classrooms, but used control classrooms in different schools. His sample consisted of 21 kindergarten classrooms using *Superkids* in 11 schools and 22 similar classrooms using other reading programs in 11 demographically similar schools. The percentages of low-income students and students of



various racial/ethnic groups in the sample were nationally representative. Schools were located in seven states in different regions of the country. The 382 *Superkids* students and 368 control students were tested at the beginning and end of the year with the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS).

Results of Dr. D'Agostino's analysis corroborate the results of Dr. Borman's study. At the end of the school year, *Superkids* students outperformed control students in four measures of reading skills. Effect sizes were greater than in Dr. Borman's study, ranging from 0.23 to 0.41. "These effect sizes are large for whole-classroom programs implemented for a full school year," Dr. D'Agostino said. "The effect sizes mean that the **average classroom** using *Superkids* performed from 9 to 16 percentiles higher than the average control classroom after one year of the *Superkids* program." Dr. Borman's study was conducted during the 2006–07 school year. Dr. D'Agostino's study took place in the 2007–08 school year.

Borman, G. D., & Dowling, N. M. (2009). Student and teacher outcomes of the *Superkids* quasi-experimental study. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*, 14(3), 207–225.

D'Agostino, J. (2009). *The Effectiveness of the Superkids on Student Achievement and Teacher Outcomes*. Columbus, OH: Ohio State University.

5 **Superkids: More Effective, More Efficient, and Less Costly**

A number of state and federal programs have proven less effective, less efficient, and more costly than *Superkids*. Title I is a federal program that has spent hundreds of billions of dollars in funds targeted to low-income children since its beginning in 1965. Tennessee Project STAR (Student-Teacher Achievement Ratio), a well-known four-year experiment that tested the effect of reducing class sizes from 25 students to 15 in grades K–3, cost an estimated \$1,800 per student per year. The following analyses were completed at the time Dr. Geoffrey Borman and Dr. Jerome D'Agostino completed their studies (see previous page); per student costs were accurate at that time.

More Cost-Effective Than STAR

In Dr. Geoffrey Borman's national study (see previous page), he compared *Superkids*'s effect sizes to those for the above two programs. He found that the *Superkids* program's effect sizes, which ranged from 0.11 to 0.25 in his study, were comparable to those from Tennessee Project STAR, which were 0.11 to 0.22. In another national study by Dr. Jerome D'Agostino (see previous page), the *Superkids* program's effect sizes (0.23 to 0.41) were larger than Tennessee Project STAR's. In other words, the *Superkids* program, with a cost of about \$50 per student per year, produced larger effects on student achievement than Tennessee Project STAR, which cost an estimated \$1,800 per student per year.

Double the Results of Title I

Dr. Borman also found that the *Superkids* program's effect sizes were larger than the average effect (0.11) achieved by Title I programs across 29 years of federal evaluations. In fact, the average effect size from Dr. Borman's and Dr. D'Agostino's studies was double that of Title I.

More Efficient in Less Teaching Time

In addition to test data, Drs. Borman and D'Agostino analyzed teacher-interview responses. Both researchers found that the superior effects of the *Superkids* program were achieved despite the fact that *Superkids* teachers reported spending less time per day teaching language arts than control teachers (105 minutes compared to 132 minutes in Dr. Borman's study and 99 minutes compared to 141 minutes in Dr. D'Agostino's study). According to Dr. Borman, "*Superkids* appeared to offer a more efficient overall language arts program in that it produced stronger achievement effects, but demanded less overall time to teach."

In both studies, *Superkids* teachers also reported spending a greater proportion of their language arts time teaching *Superkids* than control teachers spent teaching their core reading programs (79% compared to 44% in Dr. Borman's study and 91% compared to 49% in Dr. D'Agostino's study). "Because the *Superkids* program integrates reading, writing, spelling, and grammar, teachers likely saw less need to supplement *Superkids* with other literacy materials, and thereby may have realized important savings both in terms of time and money," said Dr. Borman.

Greater Teacher Satisfaction

Finally, teachers in both studies reported significantly greater satisfaction with *Superkids* than control teachers reported with their core reading programs. On a 5-point scale, *Superkids* teachers in both studies combined reported greater overall satisfaction (4.65 versus 3.85), greater perceived effectiveness (4.74 versus 3.90), greater perceived motivation of students (4.83 versus 3.75), and easier implementation (4.63 versus 3.95) than control teachers.

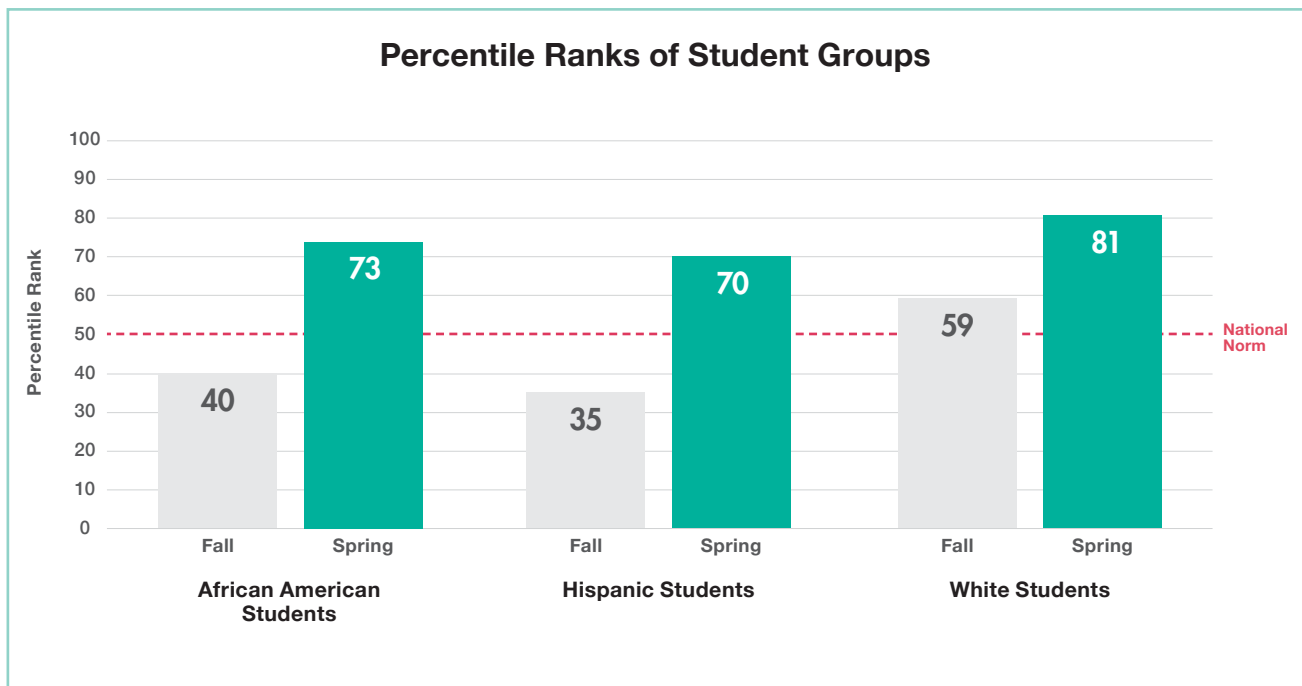
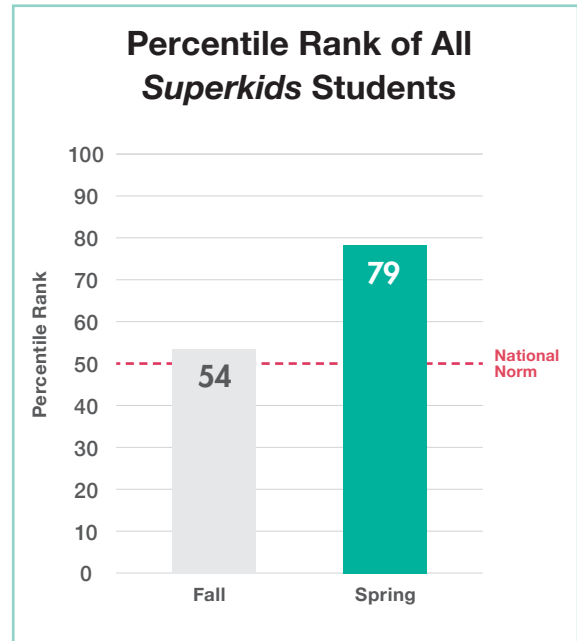
Dr. D'Agostino concluded, "The evidence...indicates that *Superkids* is a complete program that is easy and efficient to implement, and that produces positive learning outcomes that are most vital for student success."

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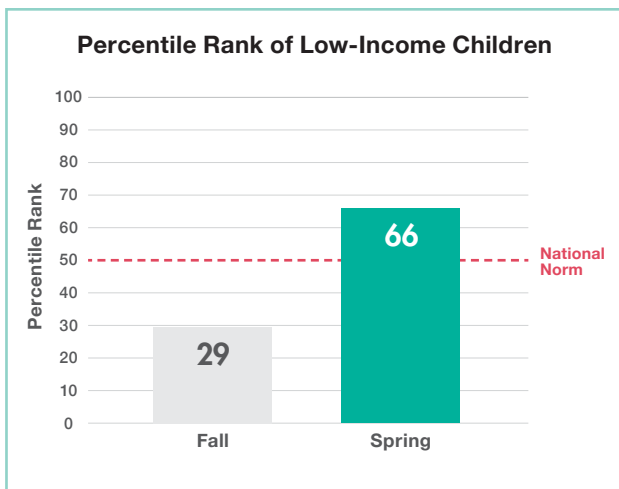
3,200 Students Move From 54th to 79th Percentile, on Average, in One Year

The *Superkids Reading Program* was tested in a national trial involving 3,200 kindergarten students in 193 classrooms. These classrooms were in 83 schools in 22 states. The ethnic/racial mix of the student sample (12% African American, 17% Hispanic, 66% White, and 5% other) reflected the nation as a whole. In both years of the study, students took the Stanford Early School Achievement Test (SESAT) in the fall and spring. The results showed that the students started kindergarten on average at the 54th percentile in reading compared to children nationally and ended kindergarten on average at the 79th percentile—a 25 percentile point gain. If these students had merely kept pace with students nationally, they would have stayed at the 54th percentile at the end of kindergarten.

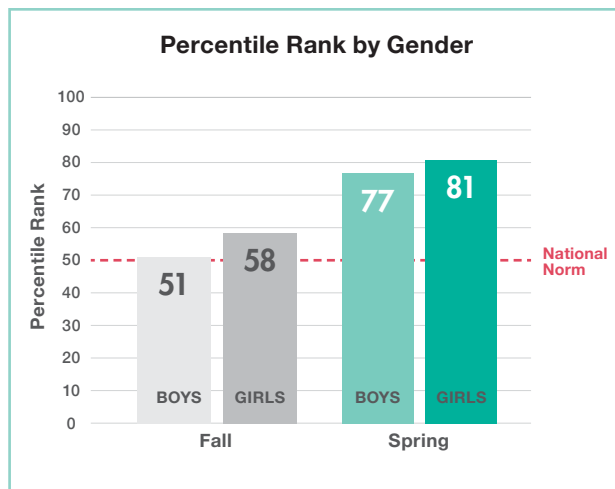
Students of all ethnicities made dramatic progress after one year of *Superkids* instruction. By spring, averages for African American, Hispanic, and White students were at or above the 70th percentile.



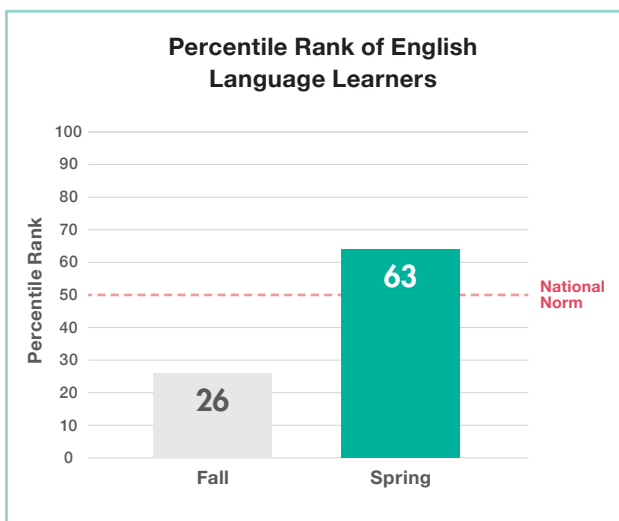
Low-income children scored on average at the 29th percentile in the fall. In the spring, this group scored at the 66th percentile, well above the national norm and a gain of 37 percentile points. Low-income children made up 29% of the population tested.



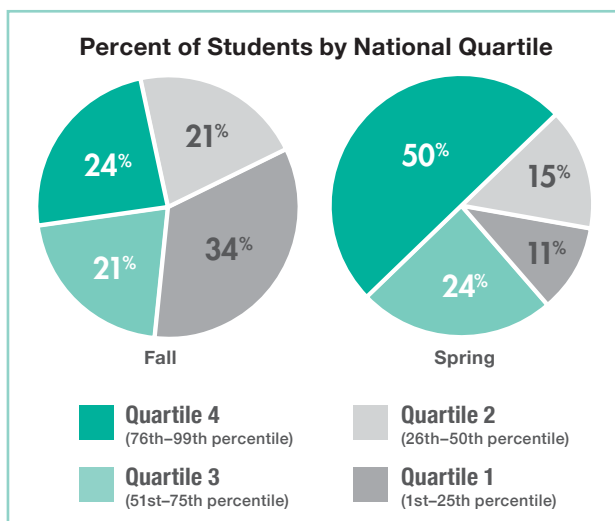
The gender gap between boys' and girls' achievement was reduced by nearly half after one year of *Superkids* instruction. This gender gap in reading is typically observed in the earliest years of school, and it grows wider over time. Educators increasingly believe that it is critical for boys to get a strong start in reading in the primary grades.



English language learners scored on average far below the national norm at the 26th percentile in the fall. By spring, this group made striking gains, finishing the year above the national norm at the 63rd percentile, a gain of 37 percentile points. English language learners made up 8% of the population tested.



Students of all abilities made dramatic gains after only one year of *Superkids* instruction. On the fall test, 34% of students scored in the lowest quartile. By spring, only 11% of students scored in this quartile. High-achieving students also made gains. By spring, twice as many students—**fully half of all students tested**—scored in the highest quartile. This study was conducted during the 2006–07 and 2007–08 school years.



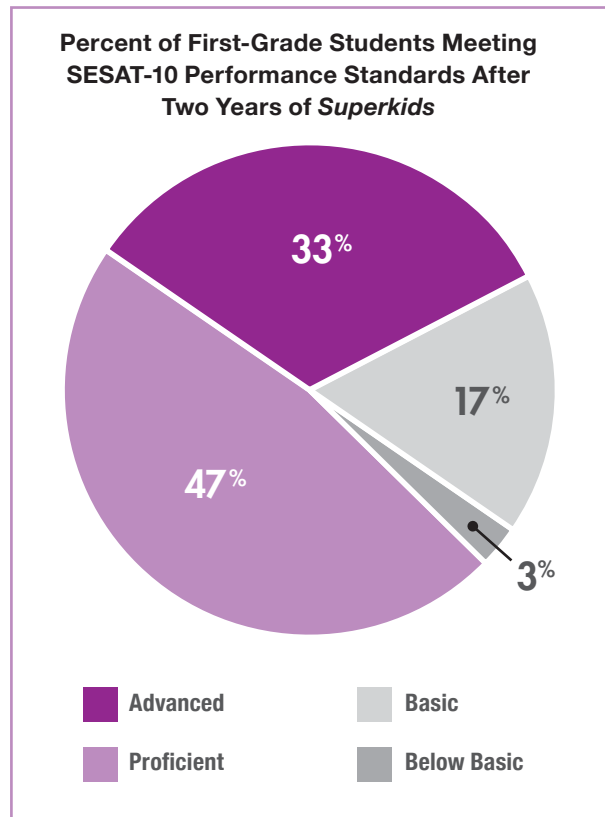
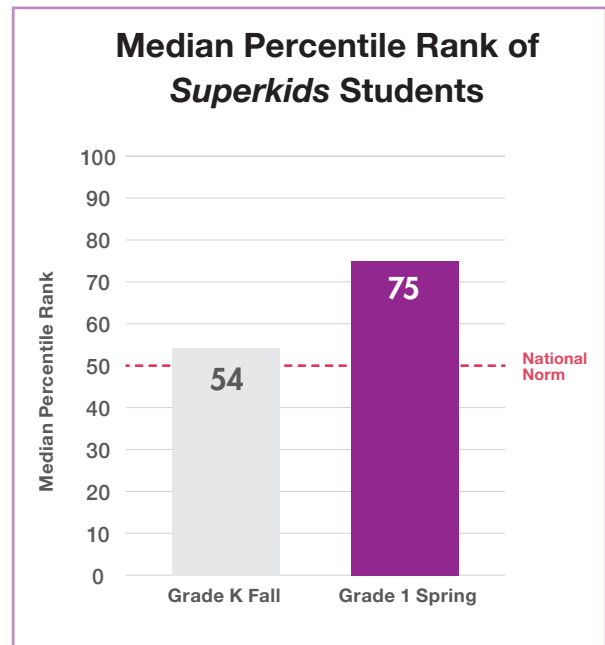
7 Two Studies Show Strong Two-Year Impact of *Superkids*

The *Superkids Reading Program* was tested in a national trial involving more than 400 students during their kindergarten and first-grade years. These children were enrolled in 36 classrooms in 18 schools located in Florida, Kentucky, Illinois, Massachusetts, Texas, and Wisconsin. Students were given the Stanford Achievement Test, Tenth Edition (SAT-10) in fall and spring of both years. The results showed that students started kindergarten on average at the 54th percentile in reading compared to children nationally and ended first grade on average at the 75th percentile—a 21-point gain.

If these children had merely progressed at a normal rate, they would have ended first-grade at about the 54th percentile. This study was conducted during the 2006–07 and 2007–08 school years.

In a separate study, 370 first-grade students in 10 schools took part in a study of *The Superkids Reading Program*. Schools were located in Arizona, Illinois, Ohio, Maryland, Missouri, Texas, and Wisconsin. Students were given the Stanford Early School Achievement Test, Tenth Edition (SESAT-10) in fall and spring of the school year. About 90% of the students in the study were taught with *Superkids* in both kindergarten and first grade.

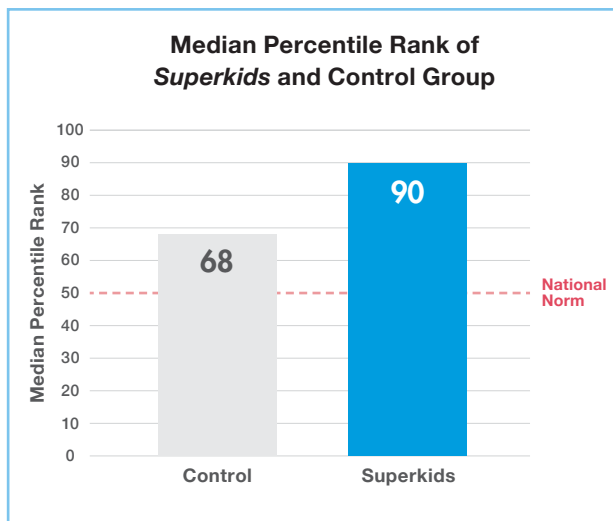
Results of analysis show that, after two years of instruction with the *Superkids* program, 80% of first graders achieved at the Proficient or Advanced levels of the SESAT-10. This means that the students in this study were well on their way to entering the intermediate grades with a solid foundation. In light of the fact that two-thirds of American fourth graders read below the Proficient level, according to the 2017 Nation’s Report Card from the U.S. Department of Education, these figures are particularly important. Solid literacy instruction in the primary grades is the way to prevent reading failure and ensure academic success in the years beyond. This study was conducted during the 2009–10 school year.



8

Treatment/Control Study by CREP Shows “Extremely Positive” Results

The Center for Research in Educational Policy (CREP) at the University of Memphis conducted a quasi-experiment in two Texas schools (Rowland Reading Foundation, 2007). The sample consisted of 152 children in eight kindergarten classrooms that used *Superkids* as their core reading program and 120 similar students in seven kindergarten classrooms that used other reading programs (the control group). At the end of the year, researchers administered the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test. According to CREP, “The results were extremely positive favoring the *Superkids* students.” The median percentile rank for the *Superkids* students was 90, while the median percentile rank of the control group was 68. Effect sizes ranged from 0.27 to 0.46. This study was conducted in the 2005–06 school year.



Rowland Reading Foundation. (2007). *Independent Study: Superkids Students Dramatically Outperform Control Group*. Madison, WI.

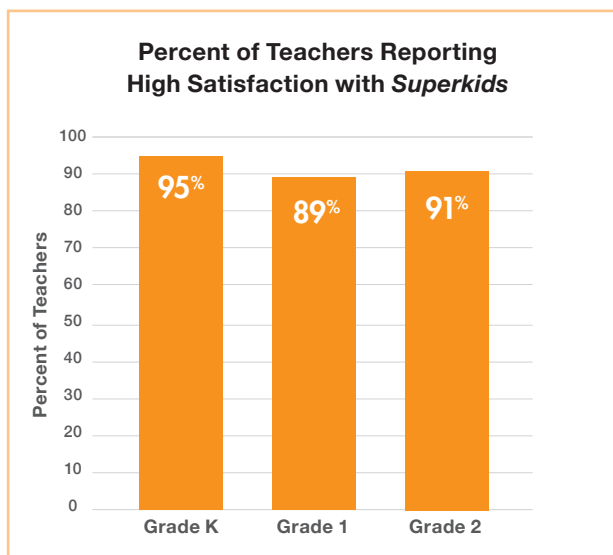
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Teachers Give *Superkids* Top Ratings

In May 2011, 691 teachers who used the *Superkids* program as their core reading curriculum in kindergarten, first grade, or second grade took part in an online survey. Dr. Walter Heinecke of the Curry School of Education at the University of Virginia analyzed the data.

Key Findings

- 88% of the teachers who reported that they’ve used programs other than *Superkids* say *Superkids* is more effective than those programs.
- 96% of respondents said they would recommend *Superkids* to colleagues.
- On a 5-point scale, with 5 the highest rating, teachers scored *Superkids* 4.5 on average.



4.5 for its effectiveness teaching students how to read



4.5 for its effectiveness motivating students to learn



4.5 for ease of use



The Superkids Reading Program

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