

Superkids connects to project-based science skills

Superkids' cross-curricular engagement

At Hillcrest Elementary, a charter school located in Polk County, Florida, *The Superkids Reading Program™* forms a sturdy base from which K–2 instruction builds. Bolstering the reading and writing skills of primary students also means shoring up their science knowledge in accordance with the state's standards.

Curriculum specialist Kim Griffiths never expected that *Superkids®* would support other areas of the curriculum. "What our science resource teacher has done is unique," she says. "She's been able to take our science standards and tie them into *Superkids* for a project-based learning opportunity."

Science standards with Superkids

Science comes alive for primary students at Hillcrest. Although students in Florida aren't tested on science standards until grade 5, Hillcrest wondered how they could build stronger science knowledge in the primary grades that would stick with students through their elementary years. One of the best ways is project-based learning.

“There’s a big push right now for STEM-related activities and some of the activities in *Superkids* fit nicely.”

—Kim Griffiths, Curriculum Specialist

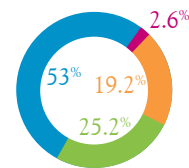
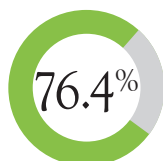
Science resource teacher Betty Finnell explains that she methodically explored all *Superkids* resources, then compared *Superkids* with the science standards.

"Teachers introduce the story using a hands-on project," Finnell explains. "Then they say, 'Let's dive in to see how the Superkids did it' or 'I wonder how the Superkids did it.'" Students compare and contrast their findings with those of the Superkids.

In that way, as Finnell points out, "they always have a purpose for reading," and at the same time their scientific knowledge is strengthened.

District Profile: Hillcrest Elementary School

A K–5 public charter school in suburban central Florida



Ethnicity
Caucasian: 53%
Hispanic: 25.2%
Black: 19.2%
Other Ethnicities: 2.6%

Hands-on life science learning

Early in grade 2, for example, Chapter 3 of the *Superkids* reader shows their teacher, Ms. Blossom, giving her Superkids students surprise gifts: daffodil bulbs! She leads the students to the roof of the school where they plant their daffodil bulbs so they can flower next spring.

Betty Finnell explains that at the same time, Hillcrest Elementary arranges for flower bulbs to be shipped in for grade 2 students. “Real bulbs let our kids understand what the Superkids are talking about and what they’re seeing.” Students plant their bulbs just like the Superkids do and wait for them to grow.

“**Science comes to life for them.**”
—Betty Finnell, Science Resource Teacher

Exploring the world through research

Hillcrest teachers jump from *Superkids* to science learning easily. Even if the particular *Superkids* project does not correlate easily with Florida science standards, Hillcrest students can follow the Superkids’ process.

“In one story where the Superkids are doing an experiment,” says Finnell, “we have our students start their Science Fair projects.” Hillcrest students did not have the same subject matter as the Superkids, but they followed the scientific process outlined in the reader. “They’re comparing and contrasting to what the Superkids are doing in the book,” says Finnell.

Making the connection between *Superkids* and a class and home science project “allows students to have a hands-on opportunity, and their reading program is the one providing background knowledge,” Griffiths says.

Scoring science gains

At Hillcrest, this practice of “horizontal relevance” in projects—connecting and integrating the science curriculum with *Superkids*—has led to solid results.

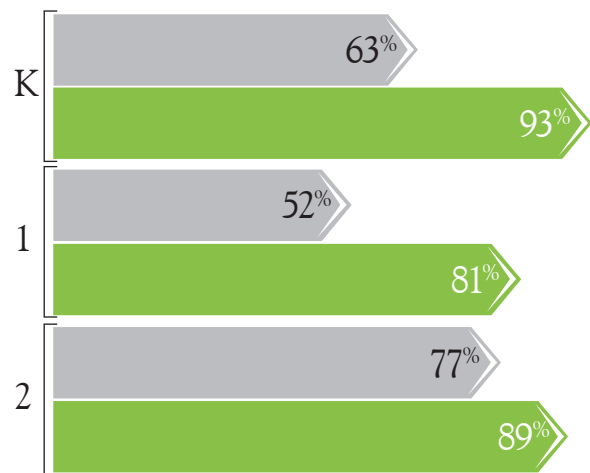
Administrators and teachers are thrilled with the gains they have seen in science scores in the short time they have connected science learning to *Superkids*.

“**We see the kids take reading and engage it with their writing; then we’re able to cross it over to science.**”
—Kim Griffiths, Curriculum Specialist

At Hillcrest, teachers use proprietary assessments for kindergarten through grade 2 students that cover each grade’s knowledge. In the first year of *Superkids*-based science links, all grades saw substantial increases in their scores—in kindergarten, a 30-point increase.

“**Our science scores are dramatically different.**”
—Betty Finnell, Science Resource Teacher

Percentage of Hillcrest students scoring proficient or higher in science



Start of the year | End of the year