



Superkids Ready to Read

A state-sponsored opportunity

Like many states, Tennessee’s leaders have a renewed focus on third grade students’ reading proficiency because their students’ English language arts scores have been stagnant for several years on standardized tests. The state’s Read to be Ready initiative has the ambitious goal that by 2025, 75% of third graders will be proficient in reading, compared to the 43% reading at grade level by the end of the 2015–2016 school year.

For administrators, principals, and teachers in Cocke County’s nine elementary schools, Read to be Ready offered them the chance to take a deep dive into early literacy. Naturally, the initiative allowed them to explore the advantages of *The Superkids Reading Program*.™

The challenge of new standards

Administrators knew they needed to rethink their early reading curriculum. “In the past, we were in the top 25% of the state on our achievement scores in mathematics in grades three through eight,” Dr. Amanda Waits, Instructional Supervisor for Cocke County Schools,

“*Superkids* worked diligently to help us pull out the pieces we needed for Read to be Ready standards.”

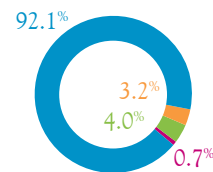
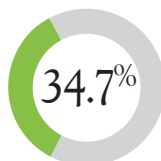
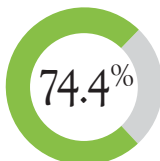
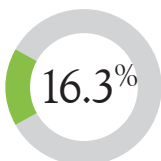
—Carol Byrum, Instructional Coach

explains. “Yet our English language arts scores were in the bottom 10% of the state. And I said, ‘If our kids can do the math, they can do the reading.’”

Cocke County K–2 teachers needed a reliably consistent reading program that was focused on early literacy. Several principals had seen a *Superkids*® conference presentation and brought the program to Dr. Waits. “We needed a curriculum to support teachers teaching reading,” she says, and *Superkids* met the challenge. Her school principals voted unanimously to move forward with *Superkids*, rolling out grade by grade over three years.

District Profile: Cocke County School District

A public school district in primarily rural East Tennessee with nine elementary schools



Ethnicity
Caucasian: 92.1%
Hispanic: 3.2%
Black: 4.0%
Other/two or more races: 0.7%

Deeply incorporating read-alouds

The Read to be Ready initiative promotes students' access to complex texts as a way to build vocabulary, ideas, and content knowledge, and it especially focuses on read-aloud texts.

Read-alouds are one of the strongest pieces to teach comprehension.

—Carol Byrum, Instructional Coach

With the district's prior reading program, "I can't tell you how many hours we spent just searching for good read-aloud books for our teachers to use and then build units on them," says Carol Byrum, Instructional Coach at Cocke County. Teachers appreciate the predictable inclusion of read-alouds into the *Superkids* curriculum and are thrilled that the *Superkids* program contains interactive read-alouds students actually enjoy. "The texts are recently written, and they are texts we might not have known about otherwise," Byrum says. "Teachers like them, and students like them."

Superkids integrates all the language arts

Cocke County teachers spent hours trying to align their prior reading program to the new Read to be Ready structure. Academic coaches tasked with writing a Read to be Ready lesson plan found it frustrating and time consuming to match the disparate pieces and parts from their prior program. "With Read to be Ready, the teachers need to build units," explains Waits. "It took our coaches about four weeks for one unit! I looked at that and said, 'There's no way I'm having teachers do this.'"

I can see a huge difference with *Superkids*, especially in handwriting.

—Larissa Reece, Kindergarten Teacher

With *Superkids*, teachers have a complete and solid curriculum that meshes with Read to be Ready. "We just tweaked a few things with *Superkids* to match the Read to

be Ready framework," Waits says. Cocke County teachers especially appreciate the integrated handwriting and composition lessons.

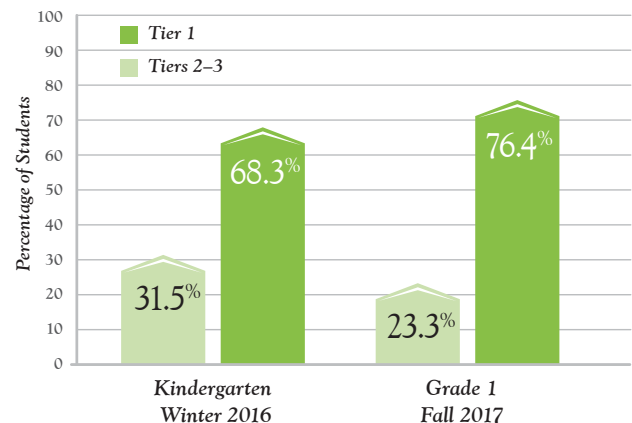
Students are reading *Superkids*

Tiffany Marshall, Read to be Ready Coach for the district, is confident that *Superkids* will give students the phonics skills they need. "The kids are really able to write sentences by the end of kindergarten, and they're doing it within the context that they're being taught. I've been impressed with their writing."

First-grade teacher Melissa Webb, who taught kindergarten last year and has the same class of students this year, sees real growth in her students. "My kids are really writing better, showing more higher-order thinking with their writing, and the pace is just phenomenal, as far as coming out of kindergarten and going into first grade." She adds that the integration of all language arts works well for her. "Everything with *Superkids* flows together into this beautiful little river."

AIMSweb® data for nonsense word fluency

Using *Superkids* in kindergarten, the district increased Tier 1 students by 8 points in less than one school year



Kindergarten teacher Larissa Reece agrees. "I find that they are excited about the program. They're excited to see who's coming up next and what it is that's special about that character. I have noticed that mine really enjoy that aspect of it." That motivation helps students want to read. Waits believes that students must spend 40% of their day reading authentic texts: "That's when you start to see a shift in student achievement," she says. "With *Superkids*, kids actually read. That's what's going to lead to our third-grade success."