CLOSING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP BY IMPROVING READING INSTRUCTION

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED SEVENTH CONGRESS

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Table of Contents

OPENING STATEMENT OF CONGRESSMAN RIC KELLER, COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE..... 4

OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN JOHN BOEHNER, COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE..... 5

STATEMENT OF DR. JOAN MAHONEY, PRINCIPAL, LANCASTER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, ORLANDO, FL 7

STATEMENT OF DEBRA WRIGHT, PRINCIPAL, WINSTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, ORLANDO, FL 9

STATEMENT OF DR. JOSEPH TORGESEN, ROBERT N. GAGNE PROFESSOR OF PSYCHOLOGY AND EDUCATION, FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY, TALLAHASSEE, FL 12

STATEMENT OF PAMELA HERMANN, TEACHER, UNION PARK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, ORLANDO, FL 14

APPENDIX A - WRITTEN OPENING STATEMENT OF CONGRESSMAN RIC KELLER, COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE 29

APPENDIX B - WRITTEN OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN JOHN BOEHNER, COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE 33

APPENDIX C - WRITTEN STATEMENT OF DR. JOAN MAHONEY, PRINCIPAL, LANCASTER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, ORLANDO, FL..... 37

APPENDIX D - WRITTEN STATEMENTOF DEBRA WRIGHT, PRINCIPAL, WINSTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, LAKELAND, FL 41

APPENDIX E - WRITTEN STATEMENT OF DR. JOSEPH TORGESEN, ROBERT N. GAGNE PROFESSOR OF PSYCHOLOGY AND EDUCATION, FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY, TALLAHASSEE, FL..... 59

APPENDIX F - STATEMENT OF PAMELA HERMANN, TEACHER, UNION PARK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, ORLANDO, FL 65

APPENDIX G – SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD, READ WELL EVALUATION DATA, SECOND COHORT-2000/2001 FIRST GRADE, TITLE 1 SHOOL-WIDE PROJECT, WASHINGTON STATE 69

Table of Indexes 78

FIELD HEARING ON CLOSING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP BY IMPROVING READING INSTRUCTION

Tuesday, November 13, 2001

Committee on Education and the Workforce

U. S. House of Representatives

Washington, D.C.

The Committee met, pursuant to call, at 9:37 a.m., in the Lancaster Elementary School, 6700 Sheryl Ann Drive, Orlando, Florida, Hon. John Boehner, Chairman of the Committee, presiding.

Present: Representatives Boehner and Keller.

Staff Present: Bob Sweet, Professional Staff Member and Heather Valentine, Press Secretary.

Chairman Boehner. A quorum being present, the Committee on Education and the Workforce will come to order.

We are meeting today to hear testimony on closing the achievement gap by improving reading instruction and I want to thank Lancaster Elementary School for having us here. I appreciate their hospitality and I am certainly pleased to be here myself.

I am eager to hear from our witnesses, but before I begin, I must ask unanimous consent that the hearing record remain open for 14 days to allow Member statements and other extraneous material referenced during the hearing to be submitted to the official hearing record. Without objection, so ordered.

Before we get too involved in the hearing, I would like to introduce someone you all know, the Principal here at Lancaster, Dr. Joan Mahoney, who would like to make some introductions.

Dr. Mahoney. Thank you. Once again, I thank all of you for being here. It is truly a pleasure to have Congressman Keller here again for the second time and two pleasures to have you here, Chairman Boehner, along with your expertise.

We are blessed to have people in the audience at this hearing, who have played a genuine part in closing this gap. They are our partners in education and they help to fund our after-school program which we have for two hours after school four days a week; cheerleading, soccer, reading, math and writing. So we have extended education beyond the educational day.

I would love to have members of the Citizens Commission for Children and also Neighborhood Center for Families stand. Would you please stand, the Citizens Commission for Children and Neighborhood Center for Families? We certainly thank them for all that they have done.

[Applause.]

Now I know I am supposed to keep this very short. It is not something I do well, but I will try. We are very blessed today and this meeting will go absolutely perfectly because we have Father Charlie, a priest, with us. Please stand.

[Applause.]

And we have the police with us. With a priest and the police, we are set. We thank them.

We also have members of the Pinecastle Community Center, McCoy Bank and Pam Mello. And also, I need to introduce my boss, because if I do not do that, I will be in big trouble. So Mr. Mack Walker, Superintendent of Schools, would you please stand? And also Rick Rhodes, who is a Board Member, is with us.

[Applause.]

We have a young man who is going to do a little reading for us and he is going to give us an example of a program called Read Well that we use here at Lancaster. It has really helped us to be able to kick off and close that gap beginning in kindergarten and first grade. His name is Augie. Augie has promised me he will not wiggle too much, but he is five. So if he wiggles a little bit, just bear with him. He has been practicing so he can do a good job for you.

Augie, would you please get up and introduce yourself to everyone?

Augie. Hi.

Dr. Mahoney. Augie is going to read to you. I want you to be able to follow along on the overhead. I know the print may be a little small but this is what we call a duet. It is high-level

reading for very young readers and it allows them an opportunity to successfully read their part while it introduces them to some higher interest level of reading. This is about mammals. Mammals are animals that have a backbone. They breathe air and give birth to their babies. Horses, dogs, cats and people are all mammals. Mammals live in different habitats all over the world.

Your turn, Augie.

Augie. See the deer. He is in his forest habitat. He has antlers on his head. He needs the forest. The forest provides him with leaves, acorns and twigs to eat.

Dr. Mahoney. He took my turn and his turn together.

[Applause.]

When you have a smart child, they do not wait, they just take their turn and your turn. Would you like to read the next page for us, Augie? And this one is all yours.

Augie. That man sees the whale. The wind has the man's hat. The hat is in the wind. See that whale with the man's hat.

Dr. Mahoney. Very good.

[Applause.]

Augie has been in school for three and a half months and I think he is doing quite well for three and a half months at five years old.

Thank you, Augie. And thanks to all of you once again for being here and for this opportunity.

Chairman Boehner. Dr. Mahoney, thank you, we appreciate your hospitality and your introductions.

And I also want to thank my colleague on the Committee, Congressman Rick Keller who is from your home district. He is our host today, and because he is, I am going to recognize him and ask him if he would like to make an opening statement.

OPENING STATEMENT OF CONGRESSMAN RIC KELLER, COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE

Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman, I would. And I would like to begin by thanking you for holding this important Congressional hearing right here in my district of Orlando, Florida.

As I am the only Member of Congress from Florida who serves on the Subcommittee on Education Reform, I can tell you how much we all appreciate you taking your time to personally come here to Orlando. We also appreciate the fact that the Secretary of Education, Rod Paige, has already personally visited our school district twice this year. And to my knowledge, this is the first time the United States Congress has held an educational field hearing right here in Orlando.

We are here today to talk about reading. A child's success in school and in life is dependent upon his or her ability to read. Unfortunately, 70 percent of the fourth graders in our inner city schools cannot read at a basic level. In addition, 40 percent of all fourth graders in this country cannot read at a basic level. In other words, they cannot read and understand the short paragraph that one would find in a simple children's book.

President Bush has made the improvement of reading instruction a top priority. In addition, Congress has decided to take this challenge head-on. For example, we will invest $5 billion over the next five years on reading for children in grades K through 3.

When President Bush signs the No Child Left Behind Act into law in the near future, it will mean that federal funds for improving reading skills will be tripled. That money will be sent directly to the states and then distributed to individual school districts such as the Orange County School Board. Next year alone, we will receive an additional $42 million in federal funding from the new Reading First program. This situation raises questions: how will the money be spent, which programs are successful and which ones are not?

Well, when it comes to answering these questions, Florida is a good place to start. In April of 1999, the Florida legislature approved Governor Jeb Bush's A+ plan for education. What happened as a result? Our state went from having 78 F schools to zero F schools. One of the best examples in the entire state is right here in Orlando at Lancaster Elementary School; 87 percent of the children in Lancaster Elementary receive free lunch programs, 52 percent of Lancaster students are Hispanic and 22 percent are African-American. Lancaster Elementary has a whopping 70 percent mobility rate. Yet, despite these challenges, Lancaster has gone from being a D school to an A school, the highest grade. How did Lancaster Elementary School achieve this success? Well, that is what we are here to learn.

Chairman Boehner and I are here to listen. We look forward to listening to students, to teachers, school principals and reading experts to learn first-hand what has worked here at Lancaster Elementary School so we can duplicate that success all across the country.

I would like to personally thank Dr. Joan Mahoney, Ms. Debra Wright, Dr. Joseph Torgesen and Ms. Pamela Hermann for taking time out of their busy schedules to testify before Congress and educate us on these important issues.

WRITTEN OPENING STATEMENT OF CONGRESSMAN RICK KELLER, COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE
SEE APPENDIX A

Chairman Boehner. Thank you, Congressman Keller.

OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN JOHN BOEHNER, COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE

Ladies and gentlemen, I have not taken the opportunity to introduce myself. I am John Boehner from Ohio and I am Chairman of the Committee on Education and the Workforce in the United States House of Representatives. I want to extend a warm welcome to all of you and a special welcome and thank you to Congressman Keller for his willingness to host this meeting today. Rick has been a valuable Member of our Committee and has helped us a great deal to get the President's education bill to a point where we expect it to be passed in the next few weeks. It has been a long process, but we can finally see the light at the end of the tunnel.

And an important component of the President's education bill is the President's Reading First program. We will be tripling, as Rick said, the amount of funds available for states and local school districts to use for improving reading instruction. Decisions will be made at the local level on what books to buy and the best way to provide additional professional development for teachers. It will provide assistance to schools where the incidence of non-readers is very high.

I would especially like to thank Dr. Mahoney, the Principal here, and her staff for all the work they have done to help prepare for this morning's hearing and we look forward to hearing from her when she testifies. We enjoyed our tour of the school this morning. Watching the children and teachers working together reminds all of us why we are here.

We have held many hearings in Washington and several field hearings around the country earlier this year. We have worked hard to reflect on the suggestions that have been made by the public and our colleagues in the Congress. This has truly been a very bipartisan process and yes, we have had our differences and we have had some spirited discussions, but we resolved a lot of those differences and I believe that the result will be good for American education.

In particular, the Reading First portion of H.R. 1 is important because knowing how to read is fundamental to all other learning. If you cannot read, then the options of going to college, learning a trade or finding a good job are very limited. That is why the President has been so

determined to provide assistance to states and local communities to improve reading instruction for their students.

It takes the research community years to conduct valid clinical trials to determine the most effective ways of delivering instruction to our children. It requires leadership from school administrators and particularly from the principal of each school, to get the team pulling in the same direction. It takes local, state and federal tax dollars to keep the system afloat, but it takes dedicated, knowledgeable teachers to apply it in the classroom day after day. Today, we will hear about what research has discovered about reading instruction and how schools' principals have created an environment in which teachers can flourish and use their talents and creativity in teaching reading.

Once the President signs H.R. 1 into law, which I expect will happen very soon, Reading First and the Early Reading First funds will become available for improving reading instruction and, as a result, the reading deficit will be reduced. It is unacceptable to continue to have children going through years of schooling and not learning to read, especially when we know how to teach them. And so we look forward to hearing from all of you this morning.

WRITTEN OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN JOHN BOEHNER, COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE
SEE APPENDIX B

Chairman Boehner. It is now my pleasure to introduce our witnesses today.

Dr. Joan Mahoney, as you all know, is the Principal here. She has more than 30 years of experience in education as a classroom teacher for grades 1 through 4, a curriculum resource teacher, and a guidance counselor. Dr. Mahoney holds a master's degree in guidance from the University of Central Florida and a doctorate in educational leadership from Nova Southeastern University. Thank you for being here.

Ms. Debra Wright is the Principal of Winston Elementary School in Lakeland, Florida. She has over 27 years of experience in education, including significant time as a classroom teacher. Ms. Wright received her master's in education and educational specialist degrees from Rollins College.

Dr. Joseph Torgesen is the Robert N. Gagne Professor of Psychology and Education at Florida State University. In addition, he serves as an investigator on several large grants on reading that are funded by the National Institute for Child Health and Human Development. Dr. Torgesen holds a doctorate from the University of Michigan in developmental and clinical psychology.

Lastly, but certainly not least, is Ms. Pamela Hermann. Ms. Hermann is a second grade teacher at Union Park Elementary School in Orlando where she has taught pre-K and

kindergarten at the school. Prior to arriving at her current position, Ms. Hermann taught kindergarten at Killarney Elementary School in Winter Park, Florida. She holds a bachelor's degree from Louisiana Tech University and an early childhood certification from Centenary College.

And with that, Dr. Mahoney, you may begin. As I think you are all aware, under the Committee Rules, each of our witnesses will have five minutes to testify. If it takes a little longer, we did not bring any clocks with us like we have in Washington because no one knows how long five minutes is in Washington. So if you need a little longer, take it. Once we have heard from the four of you, it will be our chance to ask you questions.

Dr. Mahoney?

Dr. Mahoney. Thank you, Chairman Boehner.

I have been using an egg timer for the last two nights and when the beeper went off, I knew I had better be at the end of the line or else I would have that last paragraph cut off.

Chairman Boehner. I am a lot nicer than my staff.

STATEMENT OF DR. JOAN MAHONEY, PRINCIPAL, LANCASTER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, ORLANDO, FL

Thank you. Good morning again. I welcome you to Lancaster and I thank you for this opportunity to share the successes of our struggling readers and writers.

Last year, Lancaster went from a grade of D to A on the Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test, known as the FCAT. This was not a mistake, but the efforts of a six-year strategic plan. Like many Title I schools, our weakest academic areas were reading and writing. Both go hand in hand, a weak reader yields a weak writer.

Six years ago, following my assignment to Lancaster, I found a systematic approach to reading and writing was lacking. In addition, Title I, ESE and the transitional bilingual programs were void of a common curriculum, instructional approach or an assessment instrument. Because these essential teaching and monitoring systems were nonexistent, many students were passed from one grade to the next without sufficient knowledge to be successful.

We were fortunate to encounter a writing program that allows students to organize their thoughts and place them in a format that would guide their writing. Power Writing complements our reading programs while increasing student’s expository and narrative writing skills. Following three consecutive years of training and implementation, our writing scores on the FCAT fourth grade writing assessment soared. After meeting success in writing, it was time to focus on reading.

We searched a number of years for a program that would fill the gap that prevailed in our current basal text. The Read Well Program was introduced to us three years ago. Following intensive training, I knew that this was the program for our struggling monolingual and Spanish speaking readers. The program is formatted in a way that provides vocabulary, phonemic awareness, reading comprehension and writing, all done simultaneously. Students were able to grasp and connect their reading more readily using an approach that integrated reading and writing. I have submitted for the record background information pertaining to the Read Well Program.

Following a year of implementation, our top kindergarten group completed the entire Read Well series. This placed these students at a second grade readability level. The following fall when these students started first grade, the teachers were elated. They reported this was the first year that students had come to them from kindergarten reading.

In order to maximize the growth of every child with minimal frustration, students at Lancaster are ability-grouped for reading according to their academic level. And I need to stress, that is for language arts reading only. Before last year, our school was not able to score at even the minimal standard in reading. After ability grouping, aligning our instruction and curriculum, we finally made the grade. Students capable of receiving instruction at a higher level, that is instruction using analysis, synthesis and application, are placed in a higher ability group. Students struggling with basic knowledge requiring simple recall and comprehension are placed at a lower level, using a direct instruction approach. Using this instructional model, more capable students are challenged while those struggling move at a slower pace without becoming frustrated.

Frequent assessment is necessary to monitor and measure success. All students at Lancaster are given a quin assessment in reading, writing and math. We use an FCAT parallel assessment instrument. The Curriculum Resource Teacher and the principal, that is I, review all 850-student scores. Assessing and monitoring growth allows us to target all children to ensure that no child is left behind. This process also serves as a diagnostic gauge of students' readiness for the FCAT.

This process is not an easy or quick one; yet, it is one that will ensure results. Strong leadership will be necessary to usher in these innovative changes. We are hopeful that this process can be replicated at other schools, so that they also can experience success.

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF DR. JOAN MAHONEY, PRINCIPAL, LANCASTER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, ORLANDO, FL
SEE APPENDIX C

Chairman Boehner. Thank you.

Ms. Wright?

STATEMENT OF DEBRA WRIGHT, PRINCIPAL, WINSTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, ORLANDO, FL

Good morning. I sit here representing how dull and devastating a D can be. However, the course has changed at Winston Elementary School. No longer are we a D, we are an A school, and I sit here also representing how spectacular and sparkling an A+ school can be.

[Laughter.]

I would like to direct your attention, please, to the slides because I have an electronic presentation that accompanies this.

In 1999-2000, Winston was known as the D-determined school and today we shine and sparkle as an A+ school under the Governor's A+ Plan. In 1999, Winston presented us with a challenge to make a difference. We have certainly accomplished the goal.

Steps in creating an environment that reduces the number of non-readers is not easily explained in five minutes. Please do not under-estimate the complexity of these strategies, nor the time or finances it took to bring each one to our current status and maintain it.

Our population requires a lot of interventions. Many of our students who come to kindergarten have no idea of the concepts of print. Most of our kindergartners have never had anyone to read to them, nor do they know where to begin reading in a book. Concepts of print, letter recognition and phonemic awareness are the key skills taught in the beginning stages of kindergarten and our goal is fluency by the end of second grade. These were our steps in reducing the number of non-readers:

- Strategic planning was a two-step process. First, a small group of staff participants gathered, and with the help of a facilitator, we carefully planned the path in which we would take to create an environment of "I can." Second, classroom teachers met as teams to plan classroom instruction aligned with the state and the county standards.

- Vision is essential in any program and I am a Principal with vision. I believe in strong instructional leadership and I model what I expect. I changed the reading curriculum in grades K-2 to Open Court as well as other additional reading tools, because no one program covers everything.

- Training is essential. I do most of the professional training in my school. We provide training for teachers in word wall strategies, Accelerated Reader, Earobics, Leap Frog, Compass Lab, and Sing, Spell, Read and Write.

- By the pooling of resources, we purchased items and we focus those items on reading.

- We have smaller class sizes in grades K through 5.

- We purchased a computer-assisted program that strengthens reading. This chart indicates that our fourth grade reading skills grew from 42 percent to 63 percent, which is an increase of 21 points and a 50 percent gain. This disaggregated data shows a growth in all six areas for the past three years on the data driven principle.

- We allot reading instructional time that is undisturbed.

- We give diagnostic assessments that readily indicate reading success. Upon arrival, a student is assessed in reading to determine if the child is at-risk. As this chart indicates, our kindergarten students had a deficit in receptive language on the pre-test of 57 percent below the expected age, and on the post-test, it indicates our deficit decreased to 37 percent. So we had a decrease from 37 percent.

- We have intervention programs in K and 1. We use Sing, Spell, Read and Write as a safety net to catch the students who do not actually attain the skills in Open Court. Catching the students who have not acquired the necessary skill to go on is very important.

- There is an after school-tutoring program for the students at risk.

- We modify with small group instruction.

- Using additional para-professionals to work only with the students who are at or above grade level in reading.

- During the school day, we tutor students with Academic Improvement Plans and we also tutor our ESOL students.

- To promote parental support, we opened a parent resource center, which is stocked with reading resources for parents to check out.

- Books are always accessible to students in the form of well-stocked classroom libraries.

- We encourage classroom competitions to promote reading and we provide incentives to increase success.

- Our curriculum is integrated using our Art program, our PE program and the Morning TV Show.

- The curriculum alignment provides a list of skills and a systematic plan for accomplishing each skill by a certain time in the school calendar.

- We operate under the policy of no social promotions.

- Holiday book checkouts provide library books for parents to check out with students during the Christmas holiday and spring break. This pie graph shows our circulation almost doubled in the last two years.

Winston has teachers highly trained in the use of technology to enhance the reading instruction. We use technology as a resource during the school day and after school.

We are in a community where there is a lack of community-centered programs. Winston provides Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts and Big Brothers and Big Sisters. We started our own program with the assistance of the School Advisory Council for 40 at-risk boys from grades K through 4. Thirty percent of those STAR participants last year were honor roll students the first nine weeks of this year. This was a big accomplishment for those students!

We have many of the same challenges as most schools, high mobility, and a lack of family academic goals. And most of our parents are working people and 27.4 percent have less than a high school education. But we refuse to let that stop us. We work with the children when they walk in the door and we will not take no for an answer.

Winston has an excellent staff that is dedicated to the mission and vision of our school. We talk it, we walk it, and we love the children. Hard work, dedication, determination and the song "Ain't no stoppin' us now," drives us to maintain a safe, stable and consistent environment that provides a dazzling and wonderful education for all children who enter our school.

We sparkle and we shine with enthusiasm and each day brings us another opportunity to help a child learn to read.

WRITTEN STATEMENTOF DEBRA WRIGHT, PRINCIPAL, WINSTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, LAKELAND, FL - SEE APPENDIX D

Chairman Boehner. Ms. Wright, thank you.

Dr. Torgesen, you may begin.

Dr. Torgesen. Let me just start by saying that following these two really experienced educators at this hearing reminds me of something that I think Morris Udall said in another set of committee hearings. He said that "all the important things have already been said; it is just that not everybody has said them."

[Laughter.]

STATEMENT OF DR. JOSEPH TORGESEN, ROBERT N. GAGNE PROFESSOR OF PSYCHOLOGY AND EDUCATION, FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY, TALLAHASSEE, FL

I would like to begin by congratulating Congress, and the President for this Reading First legislation. My understanding of the provisions is that a lot of this language is really consistent with the major principles that over the last 15 years of our research in preventing reading problems in kids we have learned work well for children.

I would also like to say that we know from our research and from actually my experience with a number of schools that it really is possible to prevent reading problems in almost all children. It will do three things and it is interesting to hear both these principals talk about doing these three things in a variety of ways.

The first thing you have to do, you clearly have to improve the quality and consistency of reading instruction in every kindergarten to third grade classroom in our schools.

The second thing you have to do is institute a regular program of assessments using very reliable methods to identify kids lagging behind.

The third thing we have to do is have a safety net. You called it, a system of instruction that is more intensive, more explicit, and more supportive in many ways than kids receive in large classrooms, acting as a safety net for kids who have special difficulties.

In my view, the quickest way to improve the quality of reading instruction in K through 3 is to carefully research and adopt in the school a common core-reading curriculum using every kindergarten to third grade classroom in the school. This approach creates what I call vertical consistency, which is a term that is not widely used, but I think of it this way. We need vertical consistency in our reading curriculum in K through 3, particularly for at-risk kids. And by vertical consistency, I mean that every kindergarten child attending every kindergarten class is prepared to receive reading instruction by every first grade teacher in that school. And every first grade teacher in that school is working on a common set of goals and skills so that all the children coming out of first grade are prepared to receive instruction from any second grade teacher in that school. We do not have a mismatch between preparation and where the teacher starts in her instruction.

I think there is also another advantage of carefully selecting a high quality, consistent reading instruction program. When you have new teachers come into your school, it is a relatively straightforward matter to train them so that the instruction they provide is consistent with what everybody else is doing in the school. And that I think is particularly important for kids who are at risk with reading problems.

Every school I have worked with over the last 10 years has produced many important gains in reading outcomes for their kids. They have selected a common core curriculum in K through 3, they have trained all their teachers very well in implementing the curriculum, they have developed local school mentors to ensure that there is a high quality of implementation in

every classroom. And they have also provided broader training in the basic science of reading. It is really important for teachers to understand how all the parts fit together. This creates additional motivation for them to achieve high quality outcomes in all those important areas.

I think it is also important that we have two wonderful school principals here who really understand reading and know what good reading instruction looks like. Not every principal does. We really need to train our principals so that they know what good reading instruction looks like in the classroom. They also have to understand how all the parts fit together. We talked about these three elements, but we have heard that each of those three elements have a number of different wrinkles, and so principals have to understand how it all fits together. They are the management; they make it happen, they drive it for everybody in their school.

In my experience, a single, good, high quality, experienced teacher can make an enormous difference in her children in the year that she has them. But if you really want to change a school from a D school to an A school, you have to have that happening in every classroom in the school. The only way to do that is to have a coordinated, integrated reading initiative in the school and the principal to guide it.

I would also like to say that it is fortunate that this legislation is coming along at this time because we now have available, reliable and valid tests that will identify children who are lagging behind in those critical reading skills that are predictive of reading success. And I am really glad that in the legislation, I am working on a committee that is going to help with this, there is an intent to identify the very best measures and encourage schools to use those most reliable measures to identify kids that are at risk. That is critically important.

I would also like to make a final point, to elaborate on what has already been said, about the kind of instruction children need that experience difficulties learning to read. We know it has to be more intensive than they normally get in the classroom. It has to be more explicit. It has to be more supportive. And one of the things I think many schools have done is under-estimate the amount of instruction that it actually can take for some children to become good readers.

What impressed me in the remarks that were made is that relentless quality of good reading instruction. We have to pursue a child who is not making it in the regular classroom; we have to pursue them with more intensive instruction in a special setting. Some children you might have to pursue to the level of giving one-on-one instruction or one-on-two instruction if we are really serious about not leaving any children behind by third grade.

I would like to state one other thing. We have been experimenting with a well-structured, very explicit curriculum at Florida State in the last couple of years. We have learned that high quality, well trained para-professionals can play a very important role in providing this under-girding, safety net type of instruction for children. And so we are excited about that because that might help you deal with some of the financial costs of doing this.

I do believe that one of the greatest challenges we will face in schools in this country over the next five years is to see this legislation implemented, and how to give our at-risk kids the kind of instruction they really need so that no child is left behind.

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF DR. JOSEPH TORGESEN, ROBERT N. GAGNE PROFESSOR OF PSYCHOLOGY AND EDUCATION, FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY, TALLAHASSEE, FL – SEE APPENDIX E

Chairman Boehner. Thank you, Dr. Torgesen.

Ms. Hermann?

STATEMENT OF PAMELA HERMANN, TEACHER, UNION PARK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, ORLANDO, FL

Good morning. I am Pam Hermann and I am a second grade teacher at Union Park Elementary School here in Orlando. I am honored to bring some of my thoughts about reading instruction to you, and a little nervous. My public speaking role before today has been eight-year-olds that are about four feet tall.

In response to Dr. Torgesen, I would like to say that I agree with him about the leadership and we are very blessed at our school to have a principal that understands curriculum and is leading us in a good direction.

Throughout my 27 years of teaching experience in Louisiana and now Florida, many reading philosophies have come and gone; but the one belief we all embrace is the importance of reading. Secretary Rod Paige quoted President Bush when he said, “Reading is our nation's new civil right.”

As a teacher whose educational background and experience is primarily in early childhood education, I recognize that the basis of any good reading program begins with well-trained teachers whose instruction is the explicit teaching of sounds and blending of these sounds into words. Yet we know that just name-calling, decoding or blending words is not reading. Reading is a combination of decoding, reading with fluency and ultimately comprehension of the text of many genres. This does not happen by magic.

Good reading instruction must include print awareness, phonemic awareness, systematic phonics instruction, oral reading, vocabulary development and comprehension strategies and skills. Print awareness, phonemic awareness and reading aloud are fundamental blocks for children that they should be getting by kindergarten.

Print awareness is a learner's recognition of skills such as reading from left to right, recognizing print as speech, that books progress from front to back. Research states that a child's level of print awareness is an indicator of future reading achievement. Reading aloud to children

at any age helps to model and reinforce this important ingredient to the reading success.

Phonemic awareness is the recognition that sounds make up spoken words and letters represent the sounds. The ability to distinguish individual sounds within words is essential to associating sound with letters and a prerequisite to phonics instruction. Until children develop an awareness of these parts of words, they do not have the tools for decoding new words. Structured phonemic practice helps children hear and understand sounds from which words are made. In my second grade classroom, this phonemic practice through oral blending is the initial focus of our reading lesson.

Phonics is a way of teaching decoding and spelling to strengthen sound/symbol relationships. Through a systematic phonics instruction the student is introduced to spelling of each sound and direct blending of these sounds into words. In my classroom, this is followed by practice with the phonics skills that have been taught through the reading of decodable books. Blending teaches children a strategy for figuring out unfamiliar words. Initially students blend sound by sound, eventually blending word by word. This skill moves the reader to blending words into sentences, thus improving fluency. The goal of blending is to have the student reading words fluently, stopping only with unfamiliar and problem words.

Once the student has a good understanding of print and phonemic awareness and is blending words through phonics instruction, much practice of the reading skill is needed. Students are given decodable books, little books and good literature with which to practice their skills. Fluency is gained through reading of material at the reader's ability level. The more they read, the better they read. Accelerated Reader is a strong motivator that keeps my children reading. Students gain points for the amount of books they read and the comprehension from those books. Another program used in my classroom is Book It. It is a reading incentive program that helps to keep the students reading and practicing their skills.

Finally, vocabulary development, comprehension skills and strategies round out a good reading instruction program. For students to understand what they are reading, they must have a background or experience with the subject on which to build. Through discussion and questioning, students get interested in a story. Good readers not only understand what they read, they also recognize when they do not understand. And they use strategies to help them understand. These strategies and skills have to be taught and modeled for the students to internalize and use them. Good readers set a purpose for reading, such as considering what they know and what they want to learn. They respond to the text by asking questions about what they read, clarifying, making connections and predictions, summarizing and visualizing what happens to the text. These strategies are modeled by the teacher during the second or third reading of a piece of literature. Through class discussions and small group literature circles, students collaborate to form clear understanding of the selection. Later, students are guided into the responsibility of using these skills and strategies to develop a better understanding of the author's meaning on their own.

These five components are the keys to our primary goal, reading. I believe that a reading program that incorporates these essential ingredients is going to meet with success in the teaching of reading for all children. Put these together with teachers who have been taught these

valuable skills and their importance to the daily lives of their students and a nation of successful readers will be born.

STATEMENT OF PAMELA HERMANN, TEACHER, UNION PARK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, ORLANDO, FL – SEE APPENDIX F

Chairman Boehner. Ms. Hermann, thank you. And let me thank all of you for your excellent testimony.

Let me begin with Ms. Wright. Tell us a little bit about the makeup of your school. How many students participate in the free and reduced lunch program?

Ms. Wright. I have 85 percent free and reduced lunch participants. We are a Title I school. I have about 32 percent African-American, 10 percent Hispanic; and the others are Anglo-Saxon.

Chairman Boehner. All right. The reading program at your school sounds different than the reading program here. Is the school different? Does the school district make a difference in choices? Do different principals make different choices? Tell us a little bit about how you developed your program and how it would compare with the program here at Lancaster.

Ms. Wright. Well, it is very difficult to find one program that suits everyone's needs. My district has a mandate of Open Court K through 2, and 3 through 4. They mandated the McMillan Series, but they are in the process of looking for a new program at this time.

We found that Open Court is very effective in getting children to the point of looking at print. But when it comes to catching those kids who are really at risk, I usually end up with a small portion of those kids not attaining those skills that are needed to go on to the second grade or the first grade. So that is where the Sing, Spell, Read and Write Program comes in, because that program really addresses all of the different modalities along with the different kinds of learners. Therefore, we are able to address the needs of those kids who we did not catch in the first program.

Research says that you do not do the same thing over again. Many times retained children are put back in the same program and that is where you lose them because they hear the same thing. So we use a whole different program that coaches through music. Being an old music teacher, I was turned-on to Sing, Spell, Read and Write because I know you can remember much better when it is set to music. So I acquired this program to see if it would do what it said it would, and it has been very effective with those kids. Many times they are back on grade level by the end of the year.

Chairman Boehner. We know that, first of all, most children can learn to read and we know that most of the teachers and most of the programs that are out there are effective in getting most of the children to read. But I want to turn to those who do not fit into the program at school, those who do in fact fall behind, and get a better understanding of what kind of activity needs to

take place if we are serious about ensuring that every child in this country can read.

What I am looking for is what kind of resources are necessary and how do we ensure that all children are learning to read. I will start with you, Dr. Mahoney, and on down the row.

Dr. Mahoney. Thank you. I think that basically we are all saying about the same thing. We are just looking at some different resources, but it seems like we have similar education programs as far as our philosophies and our understanding of reading. Maybe that is why we have all been successful.

We also have the basic reader, which was adopted by Orange County Public Schools. But just as Ms. Wright has stated, and I am sure that others of you have found, prior to the FCAT and even during the FCAT, the grade is one, not all. We started looking at the curriculum six years ago, but we did not have a standard measure to look at all children. We need a standard measure and we are going to place a grade or a point where they are meeting success. So it helped us to look a little more aggressively I think.

We found that all texts have huge gaps that do not meet the needs of all children. So much like these individuals have done, we looked for a program to help us fill the gaps. We have found a program called Read Well, which presents material in a systematic way that involves reading and writing taught simultaneously. There is a lot of repetition and direct instruction for students that need that extra time, and that extra understanding of language while they are reading. It particularly was very helpful for our 54 percent Hispanic, Spanish speakers, because these children not only have to deal with learning concepts about print learning and awareness, but they also have a language barrier. So they come to us behind. They have to work through that language barrier as they are beginning to learn to read.

But we also believe that we have to be proactive. We have to begin in kindergarten. The longer we wait, the huger the gap, which is when we start worrying about dropouts. So we cannot wait for children to begin to learn, or developmentally catch on. We have to really take an aggressive look at reading.

We also did something that Dr. Torgesen mentioned. I am speaking of the entire language. You not only want to align horizontally on grade level to make sure there is consistency from one classroom to another classroom, but you do have to look at vertical alignment. You have to consistently see that kindergarten, first, second, third, fourth, and fifth grades are building upon the skills and that there is a string of prerequisite benchmarks that are being followed.

As of last year, I am a firm believer that you have to monitor the success of those children. You have to target every child. If you are going to teach down the middle, either you ignore the low or you are not going to challenge to the highest potential, then you are not targeting every child and you are not allowing them to learn at their full potential. So this is why we do look at all of our resources.

What we have done with our entire staff is called a task analysis workshop. We have done two of them already, one for reading and one for math. We take our Sunshine State standards; it is a working paper workshop. You spread those out, we take all the benchmarks, we spread those out, we put all of our books, all of our supplementals, our basals and we take a look at where those resources are just to ensure that every benchmark, every Sunshine State standard is addressed. The teachers write all that down so they have everything. What we have done is we have taken the first quin, which we could not do on day one. The teachers write down what benchmarks or standards they have taught to this quin. We have gotten smart about which benchmarks and which standards are going to be on the FCAT. So we teach those and write down the second quin, third quin, using all our resources. What is left over is what is not on the FCAT, which is the last quin.

The reason is because the FCAT comes before the end of the year. So we teach all benchmarks and all standards, because it is very difficult to take a test when you have not gotten to the end of the year but were expected to do well on that type of standardized test.

This is probably a lot more than you wanted to hear, but that is why I used that egg timer I told you about.

Chairman Boehner. Thank you.

Dr. Mahoney. Thank you.

Chairman Boehner. Ms. Wright.

Ms. Wright. Well, in regards to your question, first of all, I think what is most important is assessment. Immediately when a child enters a school, an assessment should be administered to that child to find out where the child is. Many times the children who are most at risk sit in the classroom for an extended amount of time and it is quite some time before the teacher realizes the child is behind. And so I have found an assessment provides a very key picture for me as the instructional leader, along with the classroom teachers, that can give us some feedback.

Then the other thing I wanted to talk about is resources. I have a large majority of at-risk children, and the class size means the difference. I know you have probably heard people who say no, but I am a strong advocate for small classes. The more problems you have and the more needs you have, if you want that teacher to be effective, you have to lower the size of the problems in the classroom. So the class size is a key part. No teacher, no matter how wonderful and how effective as far as knowledge, can apply it to so many problems at one time.

The other thing I want to talk about is a well-trained staff. You need a well-trained staff. As I said earlier, I go and I get trained and I come back and work with my staff because I know where the areas of weaknesses are. I am the model, I am the one who mentors and so, therefore, I feel that I am very effective doing the training as the instructional leader.

Varied resources are needed because no one program I have found works. You have to vary those resources within the school. For instance, we know that the data shows us that many

children do better on computer-driven programs. Why? I do not know, but they seem to respond. Look at society today and the things that they are exposed to such as the video games. How come? Because that is what they are used to. So we added the instructional program as a resource.

Monitoring is key. Programs will not work if no one monitors them. And so my last point is that the instructional leader must be well trained so that they monitor what is going on, as well as be strong in the area of instruction. I join Dr. Torgesen, in a key element. No program is going to be effective if the principal has no clue what is going on.

Chairman Boehner. Dr. Torgesen.

Dr. Torgesen. I would like to just say, first of all, that I think it is really not true that almost any program can teach most children to be good readers. And I think the proof of that is in the figures from the National Assessment of Educational Progress cited earlier where you have 37 percent of the children nationally and about that same number in Florida, who when they are in the fourth grade do not have adequate reading skills to accomplish grade level work. These children have been taught by a variety of methods by many different teachers, but 37 percent of them are not reading well enough to accomplish grade level work.

There are a number of very good research studies published in the last five or ten years that do show very clearly that the nature of reading instruction provided to children, as long as it is a high quality implementation, does make a difference. Ms. Hermann outlined what I think would be our current understanding of the critical elements in a good reading instruction program. And my view is, and this is again consistent with research we have done, that we will probably find a number of many different published curriculums that will be very effective as long as they have those elements in them. Many current instructional programs currently being offered do not have all those elements in them and so one of the real tasks with the Reading First initiative is for schools to carefully examine the curriculum being offered by publishing companies frequently to be sure they have all those elements. If they have those elements, they train the teachers well, plus they provide the kind of broad education in reading that helps teachers understand all the elements, then we will see a significant improvement in reading success.

However, if we don't do that, as I said earlier and both these principals have outlined, you will not be successful in "leaving no child behind" because children come to school enormously different from one another in their talent and in their preparation for learning to read.

Kids come to school and find it very, very difficult to acquire phonemic awareness, for example, not only because of a specific type of talent problem, but also because their main home/school environment has not prepared them and given them the kind of pre-literacy experience that is helpful in acquiring those concepts. To deal with those children, you need a safety net that involves more instruction for longer periods of time with smaller groups, provided more explicitly. And by explicit instruction, the principal at a very famous, benchmark school in Philadelphia said this, "For the children who come to school with low talent and low preparation, you cannot leave anything to chance. You cannot assume that they are going to figure things out

for themselves, you have to teach them directly everything they need to know to become a good reader." Now that takes extra time.

Ms. Wright is saying no one program works well with all children. I interpret that to mean that with a classroom curriculum with 20 or 25 kids, the teacher does not have the time to meet the needs of all the children in the class, particularly those that are really at risk. And so we need to have a safety net that will give those kids extra practice opportunities, more explicit instruction and those kinds of things.

I think one thing we are all going to have to work hard on, is how much instruction some children are really going to need, because right now, I do not know of a single research study that has documented that we know how to teach every child to read. It is interesting that no published study that I know of has every child reading at grade level by third grade. I have not seen one. I know some schools that get that down to about two percent of their children, and it would be interesting to take a hard look at what the actual percent of children still reading below basic level or below an acceptable level in these good schools is. I think we will still find 2 to 5 percent of kids.

So there is some more work to do and I think we have to do that work by doing clinical trails on different intervention methods to see which ones actually are most effective for which kinds of kids. Then we have to work to get that knowledge out to everybody.

Chairman Boehner. Ms. Hermann.

Ms. Hermann. I agree with the statement that assessment has to be one of the first things you look at in the classroom to determine where the children are. As far as students that are below level, you have to take into consideration their learning style and make a presentation to them in their learning style.

At Union Park, one of the programs that we use as our basal reader is Open Court. We are also using some computer programs, such as Success Maker and Accelerated Reader or ARO. We have assessed students with the STAR program.

Chairman Boehner. Let me call on my colleague on the Committee, Congressman Keller.

Mr. Keller. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to begin by asking all of you a question. I assume that it makes your job easier when kids show up on day one for kindergarten ready to read. As the parent of a five year old boy and a two year old little girl, I wanted to make sure that I was doing everything I could to help my kindergarten teacher so when my little boy shows up on day one, he will be ready to read. So I read through the literature and the gist of what I got out of it is that on day one, Nick should know the alphabet, he should know how to count to 10 and I should have read him hundreds of books. But I am no expert, so this is my question.

I want you to assume that the media is here and that every parent in America is listening to you. They want to know what three things their kid should know or do when he shows up on day one for kindergarten. What would you tell that parent, Dr. Mahoney, in terms of what that child should know on day one to help them be a reader?

Dr. Mahoney. I had a teacher state at a reading conference that I recently attended, that if a child finished the first grade reader, we do not want to go into the second grade reader because that would really intrude on second grade. My comment was you take a child as far as they are ready to go and as far as you are willing to take them. That would depend on the readiness of the child.

But certainly the language background gained in reading to them as much as you can and giving them rich experiences in vocabulary and comprehension allows them, if they are ready, to go beyond. I think we have a lot of research today pointing to the fact that the reason why some children come to us not ready is that they do not have that rich background knowledge of language.

Mr. Keller. So read to them a lot.

Ms. Wright, what would you say that a child should know how to do on day one in kindergarten that parents can help the child with?

Ms. Wright. Besides reading, I think that the child should have a concept of print, knowing the beginning of a book, the back of the book, where I start reading, where does the story end, or where is the picture. They need to be able to identify those kinds of things. They need to have letter recognition, just the basic alphabet and they need to know the lower and upper case alphabet. That moves the classroom along much farther because at that point, we can go on to sounds.

Mr. Keller. Dr. Torgesen, do you have an opinion on what a kid should know on day one that a parent could help prepare them for?

Dr. Torgesen. Actually, one of the interesting things that I will first of all say, is I know that President Bush has said a couple of times that he would like to make the preschool experiences, Head Start and so forth, more effective in preparing children for learning in kindergarten. I wholeheartedly agree with that.

There are things we can do that are developmentally appropriate in preschool for Head Start children and other preschoolers that will help them close the gap with children who come to school prepared in the home environment.

Parents should talk to their children while they read to them aloud with the goal of stimulating their vocabulary. There are enormous differences in vocabulary that are SES, socio-economically, related that really make it difficult for many children to understand instruction in kindergarten; so vocabulary. And my guess is you have taken care of that in your home. But

that is an example of one thing that parents should do.

Another thing that is related to, as Ms. Wright mentioned, the skills required for learning about print; so having been read to a lot, learning the alphabet song. Kids respond to these things in different ways and we never want to make this a drill kind of thing or an onerous thing for children.

If you want a really good book about this, it is called Straight Talk about Reading by Susan Hall and Lisa Moats available from www.Amazon.com for $12.50. That is one of the best books for parents that I know of. It has got activities in the back. But some of those activities have to do with learning nursery rhymes. Kids who learn about rhyme and do alliteration kinds of things such as thinking of all the things that start the same way cat does are better prepared to acquire phonemic awareness in kindergarten. Some kids have no sense of that at all.

So the two broad areas of vocabulary simulation and experiences with print, letters and the sounds of words are the areas that parents can really help their children in.

Mr. Keller. Thank you.

Ms. Hermann?

Ms. Hermann. I think everybody has pretty much said read, read to your child. Discuss the book; listen to their opinion, their predictions about what is happening in books. Play with words, get them hearing sounds and ready for that phonemic awareness.

Mr. Keller. So to sum up, for parents out there who want to play a key role in their children learning to read, when your child shows up at kindergarten on day one it would be great if they know the alphabet and a lot of books or nursery rhymes have been read to them. Is that fair to say?

[Witnesses nod.]

All right, the second topic I want to address is class size. Ms. Wright, I will start with you. I have read a lot of literature and the gist of it says that there are measurable differences in student performance when classes are smaller in K through 3, a much bigger change than say in high school grades. Assuming that we have only a limited amount of resources, we would love all classes to be small from a reading perspective, what are the absolute critical years in terms of getting the small class size? Is it for example kindergarten and first grade; is it second grade? If you only have enough money to create these super small classes for a couple of years, what years would you want?

Ms. Wright. K and 1, the greatest impact would be K and 1 for me.

Mr. Keller. And what would be a realistic class size that you think we should shoot for in K and 1?

Ms. Wright. Twenty.

Mr. Keller. Twenty.

Dr. Mahoney, what are your thoughts on that same issue?

Dr. Mahoney. I agree. We try to keep our class sizes down to between 17 and 19 and we also train our para-professionals as teachers. They go through the same research and the same training so that we can break up into two classes so they have two teachers with the same amount of training. That is absolutely necessary.

Mr. Keller. And you would agree with the K and 1?

Dr. Mahoney. Absolutely.

Mr. Keller. Okay. Do you have an opinion on that, Dr. Torgesen?

Dr. Torgesen. I would say something about size. If you have a limited number of resources and you reduce class size from say 22 down to 20 and that is all you can do, it is likely going to be less a factor with your seven lowest kids than if you took that money and provided more intensive instruction for your them.

I think a really important concept to understand, is that the low talent, low preparation children in our schools need instruction that is on the order of magnitude more intensive than other children. You have got 60 or 70 percent of your kids in most classrooms who will learn to read with good instruction in a classroom of 22 or 20. But if you cannot provide one on three, one on four, one on five, instruction for a consistent period of time for your poorest performing children, your least prepared children are going to be reading below the basic level when they get to the third and fourth grades.

Mr. Keller. Mr. Hermann, I know you are a second grade teacher, but is it okay if we make K and1classes smaller?

Ms. Hermann. My heart is in kindergarten. I taught kindergarten for many, many years. And I would have to say definitely kindergarten. Kindergartners come having to learn a whole lot of social development and if you can keep the numbers down in kindergarten so that the social development comes along, then you can make great headway as far as reading is concerned and readiness work. But definitely kindergarten, first grade and second grade if you can.

Mr. Keller. I want to get into an area that you started to bring up, Dr. Torgesen, helping the children who are falling behind. I had the happy privilege of bringing Secretary Paige here to Lancaster Elementary School earlier in the year and we toured a classroom and watched kindergartners and first graders who had previously been struggling with reading, reading wonderfully, and they were in groups of four to five.

I also, on another occasion, took Secretary Paige to another school in my district called Orla Vista Elementary School and that particular school used a bit different technique. They had one-on-one reading instruction for kids who had fallen behind and both worked very effectively.

My question is, and let me start with Ms. Wright. In terms of helping those kids who have fallen behind, I assume that there are different programs that work, some small groups of four to five, some one on one? Tell me what you do for a first grader at your school that has fallen behind, in terms of getting the extra help he needs?

Ms. Wright. Well, I have a safety net design where those kids who have fallen behind don't go on until they have acquired the skills that they need to go on. So we put them in a class of less than 15 with a para-professional in the morning that is trained in reading, along with the classroom teacher. And as I said earlier, we use the Sing, Spell, Read and Write Program.

I have found in my past experiences with programs, and this is my own personal opinion, that programs that work one-on-one in an at-risk school, with the number of children that I have, do not work. They are not cost effective and I have to look for something that can be put in the teacher's hand to help as many as possible. So that is why I found this program, Sing, Spell, Read and Write. I found that there is something about this program that can get those kids who fell through the cracks in kindergarten into a first grade basal of any book and they are able to read. That is the program I need, along with the teacher.

Mr. Keller. Right.

Ms. Wright. The teacher has the tools that they need to make it effective, because time is an element. With children like this, they require more planning, more individual instruction in the setting of 15.

So we look for programs that have closely mapped out schematics. You teach this first, you teach this next and nothing that is complicated, or which requires a doctorate degree to understand the manual.

Mr. Keller. But they are in small groups.

Ms. Wright. They are in a small group within a class setting.

Mr. Keller. Right.

Ms. Wright. And they get instruction all day just about reading in the reading area.

Mr. Keller. Dr. Mahoney, is that what you do here for the children that need a little extra help? You put them in small groups?

Dr. Mahoney. I have to agree with Ms. Wright, one of the things that we have to look at is cost effectiveness, number of teachers per student and how you are going to be able to stretch your faculty. We do use small groups for a program, as we talked of the systematic approach that is

an hour and a half long. So the students are engaged nearly all morning long reading and then again with rich experiences in the afternoon, and a lot of reinforcement.

Mr. Keller. Ms. Hermann, you have been teaching reading for 27 years. For children who are struggling, who did not come to school with as much preparation as the other kids or who have fallen behind, what do you think the best way to help those kids catch up is?

Ms. Hermann. In my second grade classroom, we teach a large group instruction. Having the computers and computer programs allows me to teach a large group and then be able to break the children up into ability groups and address issues for each level of grouping. But it is a grouping of five to eight children.

Mr. Keller. Dr. Torgesen, you mentioned vertical consistency. So for example, let us take Lancaster Elementary School, they use the Reading Well Program. When you say vertical consistency does that mean, if you are going to go with a particular program, make sure all K through 3s use the same program?

Dr. Torgesen. That would of course depend on the program. I think Read Well is a fairly, narrowly focused program. I do not know the program that well.

Mr. Keller. But is that what you are getting at?

Dr. Torgesen. That is what I am getting at.

Mr. Keller. Do not get a hodge-podge of programs.

Dr. Torgesen. The basic idea is that first grade teachers in a school should be able to expect kids who come into their classroom from kindergarten have been prepared in a set of skills. This is just good teaching, so that they do not have to go all the way back and cover everything because one of the kindergarten teachers was not teaching phonemic awareness. We are always trying to reduce diversity among our kids and their reading skills as they go up the scale. And so that is what I mean by vertical consistency. Clearly, kindergarten instruction in every classroom should be preparing children for the kind of instruction they are going to get in first grade, so there is not so much diversity among kids.

Mr. Keller. You heard President Bush talk about investing this money on scientifically based phonics instruction, not some new fad or something you heard about on the Psychic Friends Network.

[Laughter.]

Changing teaching practices in educators is often difficult because of the fads that have been part of the education practice for decades. How is a teacher to know if the latest research instruction is really valid or if it is just another swing of the pendulum?

Dr. Torgesen. That is really not a simple question; it is not a simple thing for a teacher to determine. The way I relate this idea to teachers is that we really are at a very different place in our knowledge about reading in the year 2001 than we have ever been before. The new research that we are drawing upon is really different from what we have had before. It has been much more extensive and I see the state has pumped $200 million into reading research over the last 20 years, and special education has done the same thing.

You have got a core set of knowledge that in my sincere opinion is not going to shift. We are going to have nuances emerge and small wrinkles, but we are not going to change our fundamental method. Now we understand how kids learn to read well in a way that we have never understood before.

I would not expect the teacher to believe that. I think we have to have study groups at our schools, we have to have good high level professional development so that they can actually see the findings. But even then it is difficult to interpret some of this research.

So I think one of the great things the government has done in the last three years, is that they have commissioned two reports in which they have actually asked teachers and researchers and administrators to come together and look at the research, evaluate it and come to a consensus. One is the book Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children, published by the National Academy of Sciences in 1998. The other is the more recent one; I have it right here. It is the report of the National Reading Panel. The government recognized how difficult it was to sort through all this complex research. They asked 17 experts, including teachers, to read it, carefully evaluate it and come to some conclusions. They have chapters on phonemic awareness, reading fluency, reading comprehension, use of technology. I would really recommend it. Not this big volume, but there is a small executive summary that every teacher should read, because that will help them have some confidence that the direction we are going now is the right one.

Mr. Keller. Let me follow up with you, Ms. Hermann. I was taking notes when you were speaking and I think you have been teaching 27 years and you have seen a lot of different reading programs come and go. Would you agree that the one thing we should have as a core of every reading program is scientifically based phonics instruction?

Ms. Hermann. Yes. Even 20 years ago when I first started teaching kindergarten, and most of my years of experience are in kindergarten, we looked at reading pictures and assuming what the words said. But even at that point, I was teaching children sounds and that letters represent sounds and how to put them together because they need to have that tool. They are not always going to have pictures. They are good to rely on and they are good initially, but they have to have the tools to unlock words.

Mr. Keller. Well, thank you.

Mr. Chairman, I have no further questions.

Chairman Boehner. Thank you.

Let me thank all of our witnesses today for your excellent testimony and for answering our questions. Thanks to the audience for your participation. This will go a long way in helping us do our job, which is to try to make decisions about what appropriate public policy should be. We cannot do that by ourselves. We have to go out and learn. That is why we go to districts around the country and we have hearings in Washington; to try to learn. So thank you for your participation.

This hearing is adjourned.

Whereupon, at 10:53 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.

APPENDIX A - WRITTEN OPENING STATEMENT OF CONGRESSMAN RIC KELLER, COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE

Statement of the Honorable Rick Keller
Committee on Education and the Workforce

November 13, 2001

Mr. Chairman, I would like to begin by thanking you for holding this important Congressional Hearing right here in my district of Orlando, Florida. As the only Member of Congress from Florida who serves on the Education Committee, I can tell you how much we appreciate your taking the time to personally come to Orlando. We also appreciate the fact that the Secretary of Education, Rod Paige, has also personally visited our school district twice this year. And to my knowledge, this is the first time the U.S. Congress has held an education field hearing in Orlando.

We're here today to talk about reading. A child's success in school, and indeed life, is dependent upon his or her ability to read. Unfortunately, 70% of the 4th graders in our inner city schools cannot read at a basic level. In addition, 40% of all 4th graders cannot read at a basic level. In other words, they cannot read and understand a short paragraph that one would find in a simple children's book.

President Bush has made the improvement of reading instruction a top priority. In addition, Congress has decided to take on this challenge head on. For example, we will invest $5 billion over the next five years in reading for children in grades K through 3.

When the No Child Left Behind Act is signed into law in the near future by President Bush, it will mean that federal funds for improving reading skills will be tripled. That money will be sent directly to the states, and then distributed to individual school districts, such as the Orange County School Board. Next year alone, Florida will receive an additional $42 million in federal funding from the new Federal Reading First Program.

This situation raises two questions. How will the money be spent? Which programs are successful, and which ones aren't? Well, when it comes to answering these questions, Florida is a good place to start.

In April of 1999, the Florida Legislature approved Governor Jeb Bush's A+ plan for education. What happened as a result? Our state went from having 78 "F" schools, to having 0 "F" schools.

One of the best examples of success is right here in Orlando at Lancaster Elementary School. 87% of the children at Lancaster Elementary School receive free or reduced hot lunches. 52% of Lancaster students are Hispanic, and 22% are African American. Lancaster Elementary also has a whopping 70% mobility rate.

Yet, despite these challenges, Lancaster has gone from being a "D" school to an "A" school.

How did Lancaster Elementary School achieve this success? How did the State of Florida achieve this success? Well, that's what we're here to learn. Chairman Boehner and I are here to listen. We look forward to listening to students, to teachers, to school principals, and to the head of Florida's educational system. Hopefully, by learning firsthand what has worked here at Lancaster Elementary School, we can duplicate this success all across the country.

I'd like to personally thank Dr. Joan Mahoney, Ms. Debra Wright, Dr. Joseph Torgeson, and Mr. Jim Horn, for taking time out of their busy schedules to testify before Congress and educate us on these important issues.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

APPENDIX B - WRITTEN OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN JOHN BOEHNER, COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE

Statement of the Honorable John Boehner
Chairman

Committee on Education and the Workforce

November 13, 2001

Good morning. I'm John Boehner, Chairman of the Committee on Education and the Workforce in the House of Representatives. I extend a warm welcome to all of you. My special thanks goes to Congressman Ric Keller for his willingness to host this hearing. Ric has been a valuable member of our Committee and has helped us get the President's education bill to the point where we expect it will be passed in the next few weeks. It has been a long process, but we can see the light at the end of the tunnel. A very important component of the education bill is the President's Reading First program. We will be tripling the amount of funds available for States and local school districts to use for improving reading instruction. Decisions will be made at the local level on what books to buy and the best way to provide additional professional development for your teachers. It will provide assistance to schools where the incidence of non-readers is very high.

I would especially like to thank Dr. Joan Mahoney, the Principal here at Lancaster Elementary School, and her staff for all the work she has done to prepare for this hearing, and we look forward to hearing from her when she testifies.

We enjoyed the tour of the school this morning, and watching the children and teachers working together remind us all of why we are here.

We held many hearings in Washington, DC and several field hearing earlier this year. And, we have worked hard to reflect the suggestions that have been made from the public, and our colleagues in Congress. This has truly been a bipartisan process. Yes, we have had our differences, and we have had some spirited discussions, but we have resolved our differences, and I believe that the result will be good for American Education.

In particular, the Reading First portion of H.R.1 is important because knowing how to read is fundamental to all other learning. If you can't read, then the options for going on to college, learning a trade and finding a good job are limited. That is why the President has been so determined to provide assistance to States and local communities to improve reading instruction for their students.

It takes the research community years to conduct valid, clinical trials to determine the most effective ways of delivering instruction to our children. It requires leadership from school administrators, and particularly from the Principal

of each school to get the team pulling in the same direction. It takes local, State and federal tax dollars to keep the system afloat, but it takes dedicated, knowledgeable teachers to apply it in the classroom, day after day after day.

Today we will hear about what research has discovered about reading instruction, how school Principals have created an environment in which teachers can flourish and use their talents and creativity in teaching reading.

Once the President has signed H.R.1 into law, which I expect will happen soon, Reading First and Early Reading First funds will become available for improving reading instruction and as a result reducing the reading deficit. It is just unacceptable to have children going through years of schooling and not learning to read, especially when we know how to teach them.

We look forward to hearing from each of you today. Now I'll turn to my good friend Ric Keller for any statement he would like to make.

APPENDIX C - WRITTEN STATEMENT OF DR. JOAN MAHONEY, PRINCIPAL, LANCASTER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, ORLANDO, FL

Testimony of Dr. Joan Mahoney

Before the Committee on Education and the Workforce

November 13, 2001

Lancaster Elementary Script:

Good Morning,

Again, I welcome you to Lancaster and thank you for this opportunity to share the successes of our struggling readers and writers.

Last year Lancaster went from a grade of "D" to "A" on the Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test, known as the FCAT. This was not a mistake, but the efforts of a six year strategic plan.

Like many Title I schools, our weakest academic areas were reading and writing. Both go hand in hand, a weak reader yields a weak writer.

Six years ago, following my assignment to Lancaster, I found lacking a systematic approach to reading and writing. In addition, Title I, ESE, and the transitional bilingual programs were void of a common curriculum, instructional approach or assessment instrument. Because these essential teaching and monitoring systems were nonexistent, many students were passed from one grade to the next without sufficient knowledge to be successful.

We were fortunate to encounter a writing program that allows students to organize their thoughts and place them in a format that would guide their writing. Power Writing complements our reading programs while increasing students expository and narrative writing skills. Following three consecutive years of training and implementation, our writing scores soared on the FCAT fourth grade writing assessment. After meeting success in writing, it was time to focus on reading.

We searched a number of years for a program that would fill the gap that prevailed in our current basal text. The Read Well Program was introduced to us three years ago.

Following intensive training, I knew that this was the program for our struggling monolingual and Spanish speaking readers. The program is formatted in a way that provides vocabulary, phonemic awareness, reading comprehension and writing-all done simultaneously. Students were able to grasp and connect their reading more readily using an approach that integrated reading and writing.

{I have submitted for the record background information pertaining to the Read Well Program.}

Following a year of implementation, our top kindergarten group completed the entire Read Well series. This placed these students at a second grade readability level. The following Fall when these students started first grade, the teachers were elated. They reported this was the first year that students had come to them from kindergarten reading.

In order to maximize the growth of every child with minimal frustration, students at Lancaster are ability grouped for reading according to their academic level. Before last year our school was not able to score at even the minimal standard in reading. After ability grouping, aligning our instruction and curriculum, we finally made the grade. (Students are ability grouped only for reading.) Students capable of receiving instruction at a higher level, that is instruction using analysis, synthesis and application, are placed in higher ability groups. Students struggling with basic knowledge requiring simple recall and comprehension, are placed at a lower level using a direct instruction approach. Using this instructional model, more capable students are challenged while those struggling move at a slower pace without becoming frustrated.

Frequent assessment is necessary to monitor and measure success. All students at Lancaster are given a quin assessment in reading, writing, and math using a FCAT parallel assessment instrument. The Curriculum Resource Teacher and the principal review all 850 student scores. Assessing and monitoring growth allows us to target all children to ensure that, " No child is left behind". (Pres. George W. Bush) This process also serves as a diagnostic gauge of students' readiness for the FCAT.

This process is not an easy or quick one, yet it is one that will ensure results. Strong leadership will be necessary to usher in these innovative changes. We are hopeful that this process can be replicated at other schools and also bring them success.

APPENDIX D - WRITTEN STATEMENTOF DEBRA WRIGHT, PRINCIPAL, WINSTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, LAKELAND, FL

Testimony of Ms. Debra Wright

Before the Committee on Education and the Workforce

November 13, 2001

In 1999-2000, Winston was known as the D-determined school and today we shine and sparkle as an A+ school under the Governor's A+ Plan. In 1999, Winston presented us with a challenge to make a difference. We have certainly accomplished that goal.

Steps in creating an environment that reduces the number of non-readers is not easily explained in five minutes. Please do not underestimate the complexity of these strategies, nor the time or finances it took to bring each one to our current status and maintain it.

Our population requires a lot of interventions. Many of the students who come to kindergarten have no idea of the concepts of print. Most of our kindergarteners have never had anyone read to them nor do they know where to begin reading a book. Concepts of print, letter recognition, and phonemic awareness are the key skills taught in the beginning stages of kindergarten and our goal is fluency by the end of 2nd grade. These were our steps in reducing the number of non-readers:

- Strategic planning was a two-step process. First, a small group of staff participants gathered and with the help of a facilitator, carefully planned the path in which we would take to create an "I can environment." Second, classroom teachers met as teams to plan classroom instruction aligned with state and county standards.

- Vision is essential in any program and I am a principal with vision. I believe in strong instructional leadership and I model what I expect. I changed the reading curriculum in grades K-2 to Open Court as well as other additional reading tools. No one program covers everything.

- Training is essential and I do most of the professional training in my school. We provide training for teachers in word wall strategies, Accelerated Reader, Earobics, Leap Frog, Compass Lab, and Sing, Spell, Read and Write.

- By the pooling of resources we purchased items that focus on reading.

- We have smaller class sizes in grades K-5.
- We purchased computer-assisted programs that strengthen reading. This chart indicates that our fourth grade reading skills grew from 42% to 63%, which is an increase of 21 points and a 50% gain. This disaggregated data shows a growth in all six areas for the past three years.
- We allot reading instructional time, which is undisturbed.
- We give diagnostic assessments that readily indicate reading success. Upon arrival a student is assessed in reading to determine if the child is at-risk. As this chart indicates our kindergarten students had a deficit in receptive language on the pre-test of 57% below the expected age, and on the post-test it indicates our deficit decreased to 37%.
- We have intervention programs in K and 1. Catching the students who have not acquired the necessary skills to go on.
- There is after school tutoring for students at-risk.
- We modify with small group instruction.
- Using additional paraprofessionals to work with students who are at or above grade level in reading.
- During the school day we tutor students with Academic Improvement Plans (AIP) & ESOL students.
- To promote parental support we opened our parent resource center, which is stocked with reading resources for parent checkout.
- Books are always accessible for students in the form of well-stocked classroom libraries.
- We encourage classroom competitions to promote reading and provide incentives to increase success.
- Our curriculum is integrated using our Art, PE, and TV Morning Show to emphasize reading skills.
- The curriculum alignment provides a list of skills and a systemic plan for accomplishing each skill by a certain time in the school calendar.

- We operate under the policy of no social promotions.
- Holiday book checkouts provide library books for parents to check out with students during Christmas and Spring Break. This pie graph shows our circulation almost doubled in the last two years.

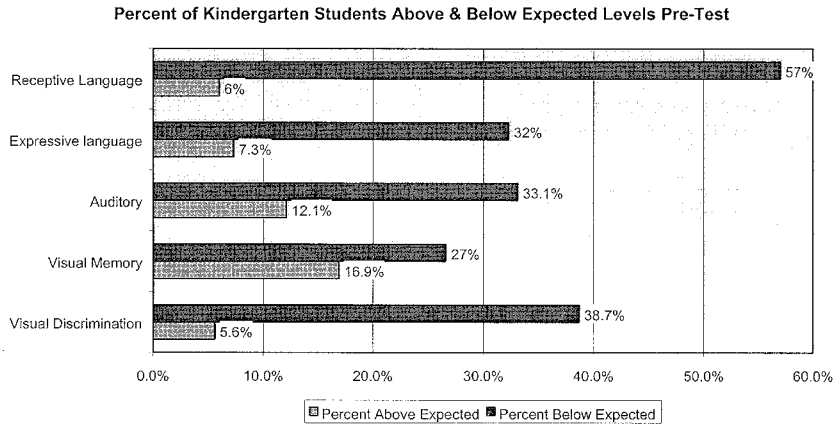
Winston has highly trained teachers in the use of technology to enhance reading instruction. We use technology as a resource during the school day and after school.

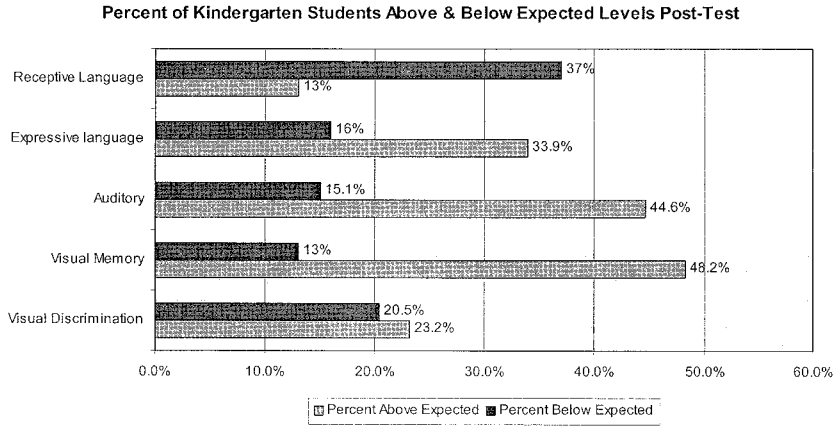
We are in a community where there is a lack of community-centered programs. Winston provides Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, Big Brothers & Sisters, and we started our own program with the assistance of the School Advisory Council for 40 boys who are at-risk from grades K-4. Thirty percent of our STAR participants from last year were honor roll students the first nine weeks of this year. This was a big accomplishment for these students!

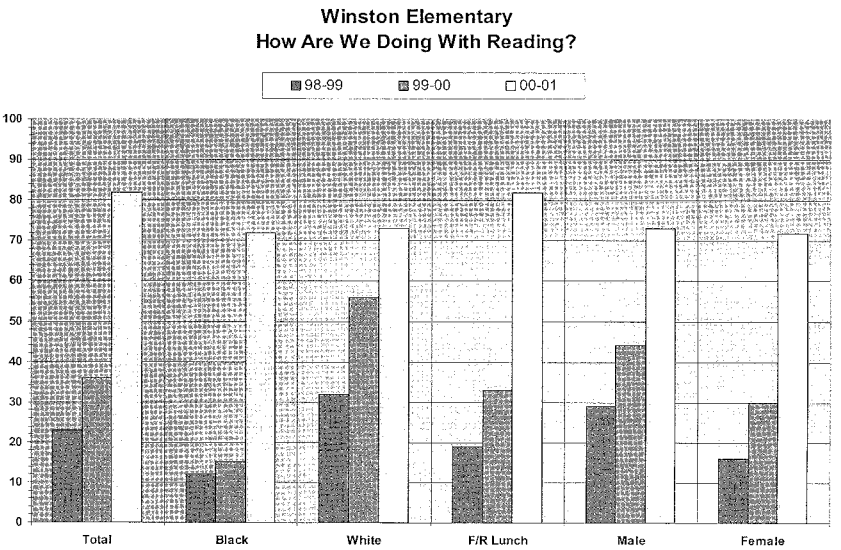
We have many of the same challenges as most schools, high mobility, and a lack of family academic goals. Most of our parents are working parents and 27.4% have less than a high school education. We refuse to let this stop us. We work with the children when they walk in the door and will not take no for an answer.

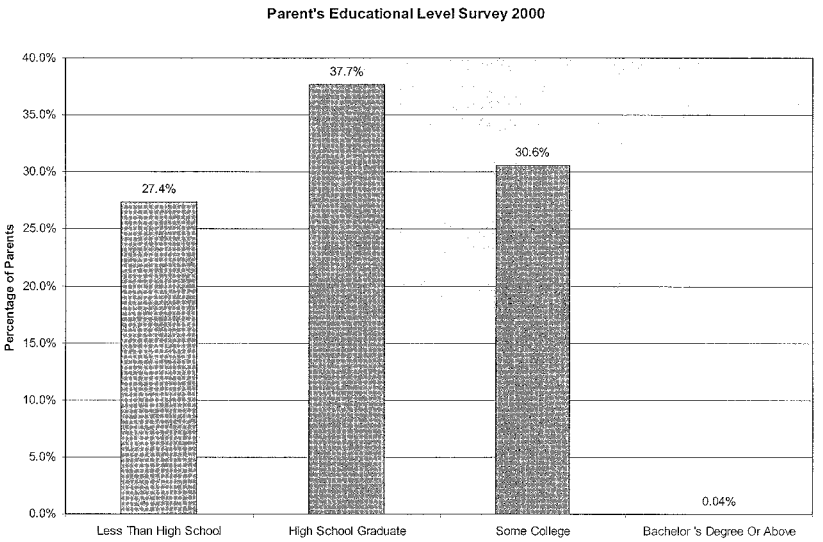
Winston has an excellent staff that is dedicated to the mission and vision of our school. We talk it, we walk it, and we love the children. Hard work, dedication, determination and the song "Ain't no Stoppin Us Now" drives us to maintain a safe, stable and consistent environment that provides a dazzling and wonderful education for all children who enter our school.

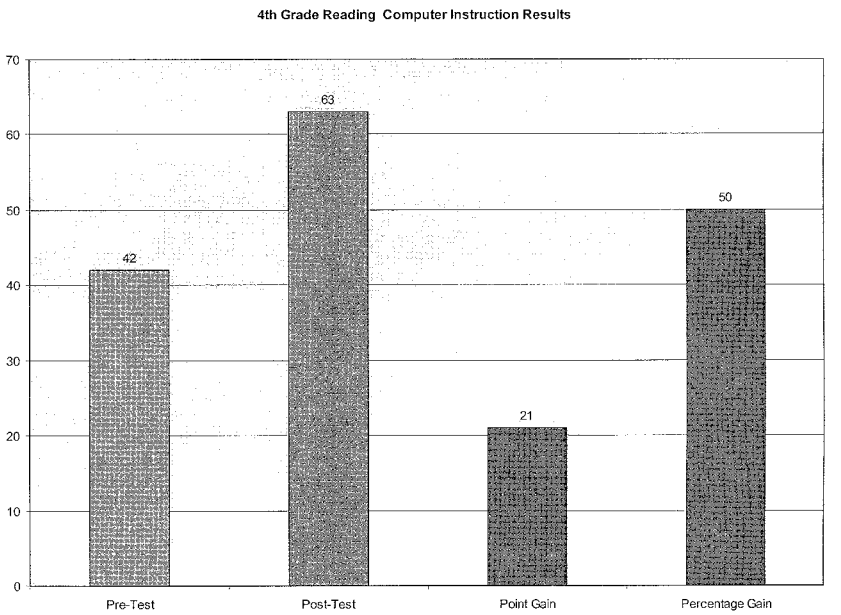
We sparkle and shine with enthusiasm and each day brings us another opportunity to help a child to learn to read.

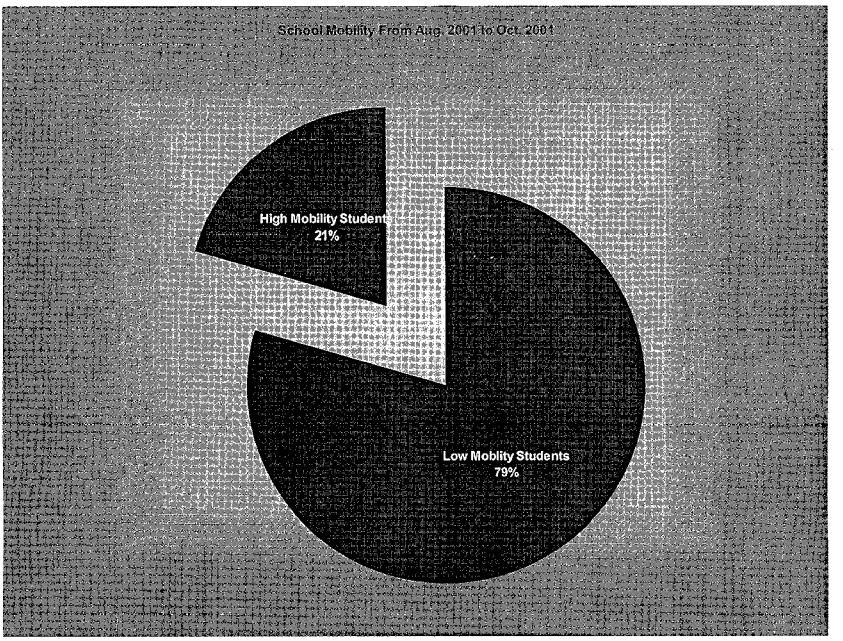

Percent of Kindergarten Students Above & Below Expected Levels Pre-Test
Receptive Language
Expressive language
Auditory
Visual Memory
Visual Discrimination
57%
6%
32%
7.3%
33.1%
12.1%
27%
16.9%
38.7%
5.6%
0.0%
10.0%
20.0%
30.0%
40.0%
50.0%
60.0%
Percent Above Expected
Percent Below Expected

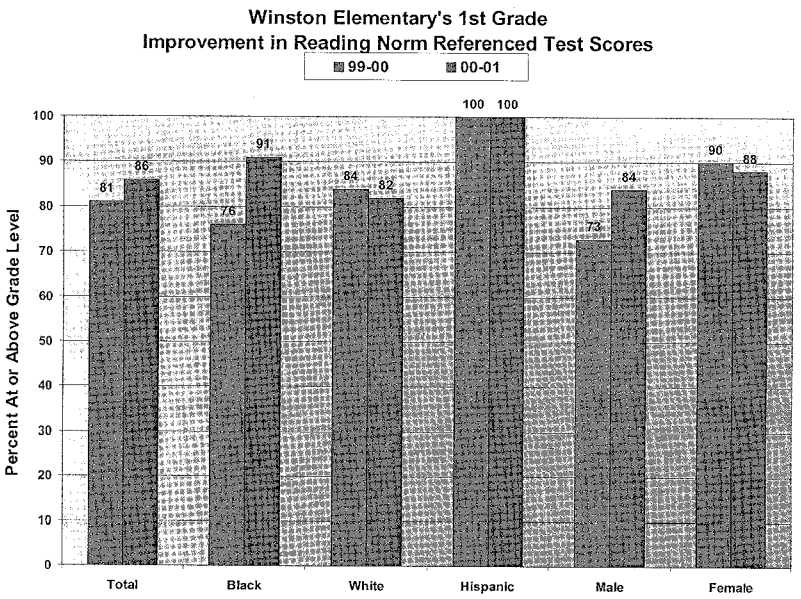

Percent of Kindergarten Students Above & Below Expected Levels Post-Test
Receptive Language
Expressive language
Auditory
Visual Memory
Visual Discrimination
37%
13%
16%
33.9%
15.1%
44.6%
13%
48.2%
20.5%
23.2%
0.0%
10.0%
20.0%
30.0%
40.0%
50.0%
60.0%
Percent Above Expected
Percent Below Expected

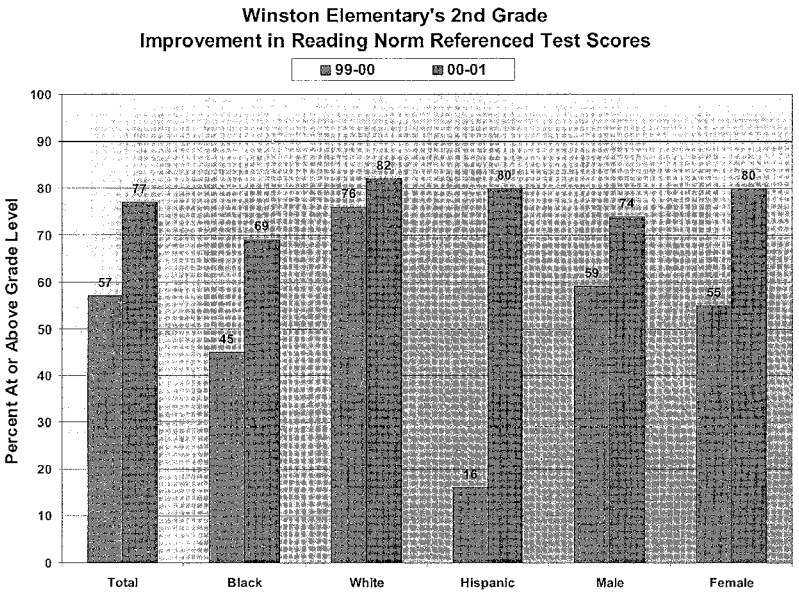

Winston Elementary
How Are We Doing With Reading?
98-99
99-00
00-01
100
90
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
Total
Black
White
F/R Lunch
Male
Female

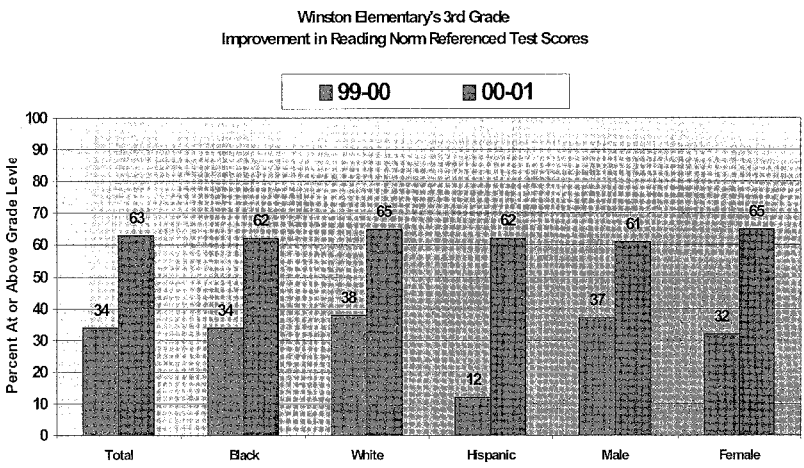

Parent's Educational Level Survey 2000
Percentage of Parents
40.0%
35.0%
30.0%
25.0%
20.0%
15.0%
10.0%
5.0%
0.0%
27.4%
37.7%
30.6%
0.04%
Less Than High School
High School Graduate
Some College
Bachelor 's Degree Or Above

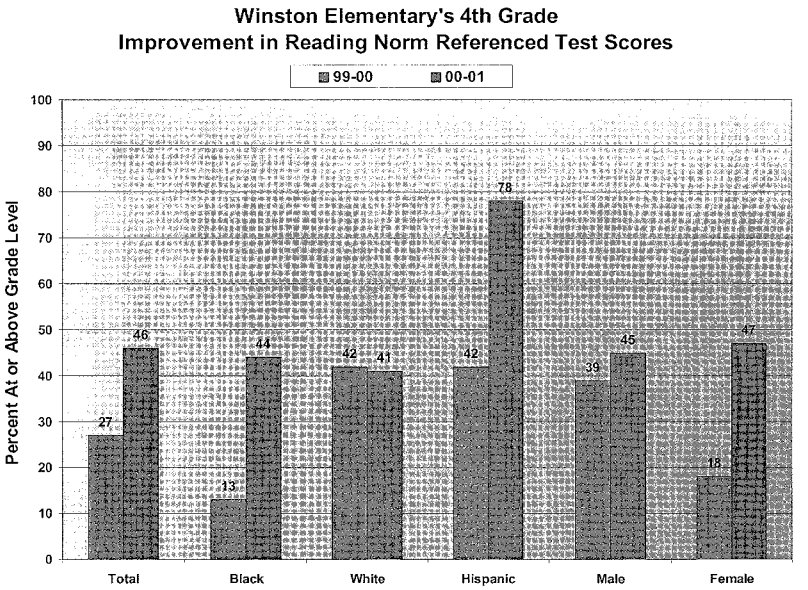

4th Grade Reading Computer Instruction Results
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
42
63
21
50
Pre-Test
Post-Test
Point Gain
Percentage Gain

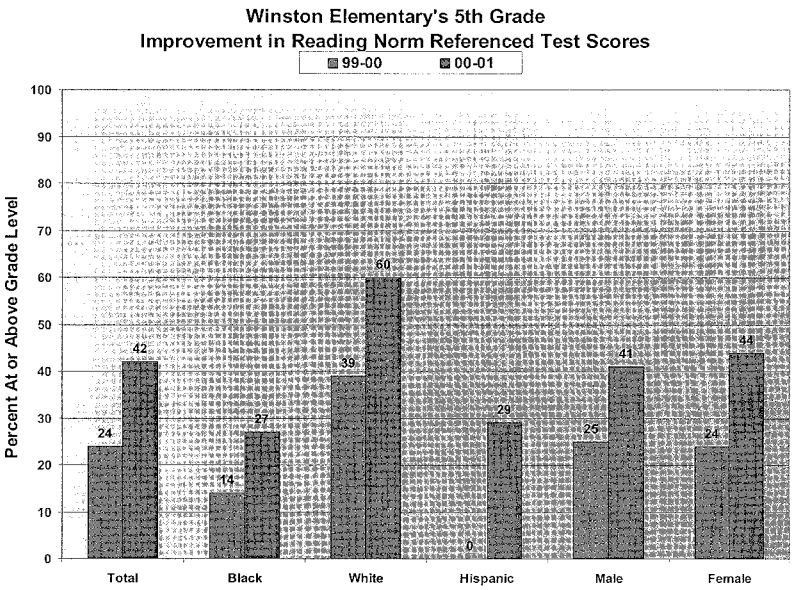

School Mobility From Aug. 2001 to Oct. 2001
High Mobility Students
21%
Low Moblity Students
79%

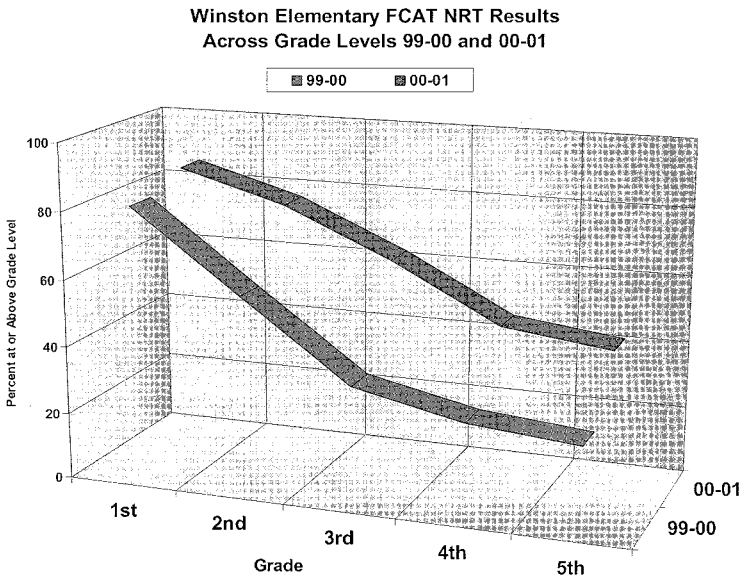

Winston Elementary's 1st Grade
Improvement in Reading Norm Referenced Test Scores
99-00
00-01
Percent At or Above Grade Level
100
90
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
81
86
76
91
84
82
100
100
73
84
90
88
Total
Black
White
Hispanic
Male
Female


Winston Elementary's 2nd Grade
Improvement in Reading Norm Referenced Test Scores
99-00
00-01
Percent At or Above Grade Level
100
90
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
57
77
45
69
76
82
16
80
59
74
55
80
Total
Black
White
Hispanic
Male
Female

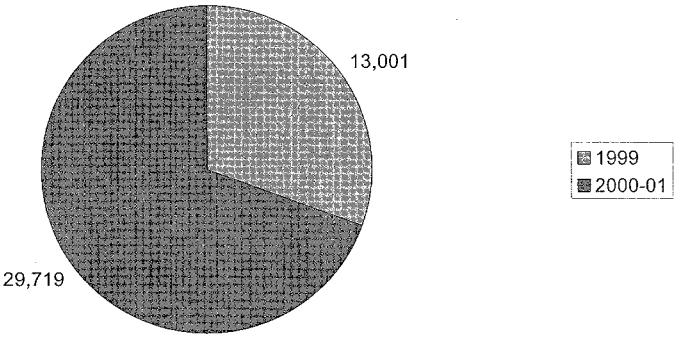

Winston Elementary's 3rd Grade
Improvement in Reading Norm Referenced Test Scores
99-00
00-01
Percent At or Above Grade Levle
100
90
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
34
63
34
62
38
65
12
62
37
61
32
65
Total
Black
White
Hispanic
Male
Female


Winston Elementary's 4th Grade
Improvement in Reading Norm Referenced Test Scores
99-00
00-01
Percent At or Above Grade Level
100
90
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
27
46
13
44
42
41
42
78
39
45
18
47
Total
Black
White
Hispanic
Male
Female

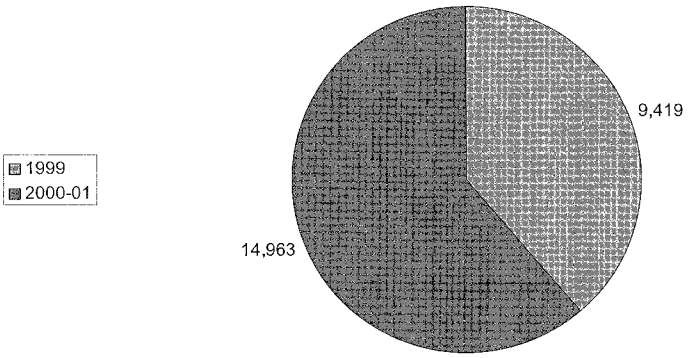

Winston Elementary's 5th Grade
Improvement in Reading Norm Referenced Test Scores
99-00
00-01
Percent At or Above Grade Level
100
90
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
24
42
14
27
39
60
0
29
25
41
24
44
Total
Black
White
Hispanic
Male
Female


Winston Elementary FCAT NRT Results
Across Grade Levels 99-00 and 00-01
99-00
00-01
Percent at or Above Grade Level
100
80
60
40
20
0
1st
2nd
3rd
4th
5th
Grade
00-01
99-00

Circulation of Library Books



Number of Books Available from the Library



APPENDIX E - WRITTEN STATEMENT OF DR. JOSEPH TORGESEN, ROBERT N. GAGNE PROFESSOR OF PSYCHOLOGY AND EDUCATION, FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY, TALLAHASSEE, FL

Testimony of Dr. Joseph Torgesen

Before the Committee on Education and the Workforce

November 13, 2001

Chairman Boehner and members of the committee: I personally am delighted with the language and the specific provisions of the new legislation that supports the Reading First initiative in our country. This legislation reflects many of the conclusions that my colleagues and I at Florida State University have arrived at after conducting research on the prevention of reading difficulties in young children for the last 15 years. From that research, and the research of our colleagues around the country, it is clear that we can prevent serious reading difficulties in most children if we will do three things.

1. Improve the consistency with which high quality instruction is provided to every child in classrooms from kindergarten through third grade.
2. Beginning in the second semester of kindergarten, carefully monitor the growth of critical reading skills to identify children who are lagging seriously behind in their reading growth.
3. Provide more intensive, explicit, and supportive instruction to all children identified as at-risk for reading difficulties for as long as they need it.

To prevent most reading failure, each elementary school must do all these things well. If we do not improve the quality and consistency of classroom instruction, too many children will be identified for special instruction so that our capacity to deliver this instruction will be overwhelmed. We also know that, even with high quality instruction in the classroom, it is the vary rare classroom teacher who can meet the needs of highly at risk children when teaching a group of 20 to 25 children. So, we must make provision for additional amounts of high quality instruction, on a more individualized basis, for children who are most at-risk for reading failure.

The quickest way to improve the quality and consistency of classroom instruction in grades K through 3 is to identify an excellent published curriculum and implement it in every classroom in all grades. This curriculum should provide explicit and systematic instruction in critical reading skills that is integrated with ample opportunities for children to apply these skills in rich and meaningful reading and writing experiences. The advantage of using a single high quality reading curriculum within a school is that it creates vertical consistency of the curriculum, which is particularly important for at-risk children. By vertical consistency, I mean

that reading instruction in K through 3 is guided by a consistent instructional philosophy, with critical skills being introduced sequentially and systematically across grades. This increases the likelihood that children who attend kindergarten in Mrs. Murphy's class will have all the skills and knowledge they need to respond well to reading instruction in Mr. Johnson's first grade class. By the same token, Mr. Johnson's instructional goals for the first grade year will mesh well with what Mrs. Smith expects her second grade children to know and be able to do at the beginning of their second year of formal reading instruction. Using a single high quality curriculum also makes it much more efficient to train new teachers coming into the school so that the instruction they provide will fit well with that provided in earlier and later grades. In addition, with use of a consistent curriculum, it is possible to develop local training capacity (mentors) who can work to insure that the curriculum is being effectively implemented in all classrooms.

All the schools I have worked with that have produced large gains in reading outcomes for their students have adopted a common, core curriculum in grades K through 3. Teachers must be well trained and mentored in the use of this curriculum. Further, they must also receive broader training in the basic science of reading and reading instruction so they will develop a useful understanding of how all the parts fit together as well as motivation to achieve instructional excellence in each critical skill.

We must also not neglect to train school administrators in the critical dimensions of reading instruction, because they must be knowledgeable in order to provide instructional oversight, understand the needs for sufficient uninterrupted time for reading instruction, and participate effectively in school wide efforts to improve reading outcomes. It must be clearly understood that, although individually excellent teachers can make a powerful difference for their children, to achieve consistently high outcomes for all children in a school, effective instructional leadership is essential.

We now have tests available to reliably assess all the critical early reading skills that are most predictive of future reading success. For example, we can reliably identify children lagging behind in the development of phonemic awareness in kindergarten and early first grade. We also know how to reliably measure critical skills in word reading accuracy and fluency beginning in first grade and extending through elementary school. Finally, beginning in kindergarten, we can also reliably assess the vocabulary and oral language skills that are critical to the development of reading comprehension, and we can begin to reliably monitor reading comprehension itself by the end of first grade. It is fortunate that the Reading First legislation encourages the use of well-validated, reliable assessments of reading development to identify children lagging behind.

I'd like to make a final point about the nature of reading instruction that will be required by the 10 to 40% (depending on population of the children being served) of children most at-risk for reading failure. We know that most of these children can learn to read within the average range, but we also know that, to do so, they must

receive instruction that is substantially more intensive, explicit, and supportive, than can usually be provided by the regular classroom teacher. Their instruction must be more intensive because they have more to learn, and they learn it more slowly than average children. The instruction must be more explicit and direct because these children do not easily discover what they need to know from simple reading and writing experiences. Finally, the instruction must be more supportive because the learning task itself is so much more difficult for them. We have recently learned in research conducted at Florida State that well trained paraprofessionals can provide very effective instruction for these children if they work within a well-structured and explicit curriculum. A major challenge for all of us over the next several years is to learn how to use the resources we have available to provide instruction of sufficient intensity to meet the needs of our most at-risk children.

APPENDIX F - STATEMENT OF PAMELA HERMANN, TEACHER, UNION PARK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, ORLANDO, FL

Testimony of Ms. Pamela Hermann

Before the Committee on Education and the Workforce

November 13, 2001

Hello, my name is Pam Hermann and I am a second grade teacher at Union Park Elementary School, here in Orlando. I am honored and nervous to share with you my thoughts on reading instruction. My public speaking role before this morning has been reserved to 8-year olds who are about four feet tall.

Throughout the 27 years of my teaching experience in Louisiana and now Florida, many reading programs and philosophies have come and gone; but, the one belief we all embrace is the importance of reading. Secretary Ron Page quoted President Bush when he said "Reading is our nation's new civil right." As a teacher whose educational background and experience is primarily in Early Childhood education, I recognize that the basis of any good reading program begins with well trained teachers. Teachers, whose instruction is the explicit teaching of sounds and blending these sounds into words. Yet we also know that just name calling, decoding, or blending words is not reading. Reading is the combination of decoding, reading with fluency and ultimately comprehending text of many genres. This does not happen by magic.

Good reading instruction must include print awareness, phonemic awareness, systematic phonics instruction, oral reading, vocabulary development and comprehension strategies and skills. Print awareness, phonemic awareness, and reading aloud are foundation blocks for reading that children should be getting in kindergarten.

Print awareness is a learner's recognition of skills such as reading from left to right; print represents speech or books progress from front to back. Research states that a child's level of print awareness is an indicator of future reading achievement. Reading aloud to a child at any age helps to model and reinforce this important ingredient to reading success.

Phonemic awareness is the recognition that sounds made up spoken words, and letters represent the sounds. The ability to distinguish individual sounds within words is essential to associating sounds with letters and a prerequisite to phonics instruction. Until children develop an awareness of these parts of word, they do not have the tools for decoding new words. Structured phonemic practice helps children hear and understand the sounds from which words are made. In my second grade class this phonemic practice through oral blending is the initial focus of our reading lesson.

Phonics is a way of teaching decoding and spelling to strengthen sound/symbol relationships. Through a systematic phonics instruction the student is introduced to the spelling of each sound and direct blending of these sounds into words. In my classroom, this is followed by practice of the phonic skills taught through the reading of decodable books. Blending teaches children a strategy for figuring out unfamiliar words. Initially students blend sound by sound eventually blending word by word. This skill moves the reader to blending words into sentences thus improving fluency. The goal of blending is to have the student reading words stopping only with unfamiliar or problem words.

Once the student has a good understanding of print and phonemic awareness and is blending words through phonic instruction much practice of the reading skill is needed. Students are given decodable books, little books and good literature with which to practice their skills. Fluency is gained through reading of material at the reader's ability level. The more they read the better they read. Accelerated Reader is a strong motivator in my classroom. Students gain points for the amount and comprehension of books they read. Another reading program, Book It, is a reading incentive program that helps to keep my students reading and practicing their skills.

Finally vocabulary development, comprehension skills and strategies round out a good reading instruction program. For students to understand what they are reading, they must have a background or experience with the subject on which to build. Through discussion and questioning student get interested in a story. Good readers not only understand what they read they also recognize when they don't understand and they use strategies to help them understand. These strategies and skills have to be taught and modeled for students to internalize and use them. Good readers set a purpose for reading, such as considering what they know and what they want to learn. They respond to the text by asking questions about what they read, clarify, make connections and predictions, summarize and visualize what happens in the text. These strategies are modeled by the teacher during the second and third reading of a piece of literature. Through class discussions and small group literature circle students collaborate to form clear understanding of a selection, Later; students are guided into the responsibility of using these skills and strategies to develop a better understanding of the author's meaning.

These five components are the keys to our primary goal – reading. I believe that a reading program that incorporates these essential ingredients is going to meet with success in the teaching of reading for all students. Put this together with teachers who have been taught these valuable skills and their importance in the daily lives of their students and a nation of successful readers will be born.

APPENDIX G – SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD, READ WELL EVALUATION DATA, SECOND COHORT-2000/2001 FIRST GRADE, TITLE 1 SHOOL-WIDE PROJECT, WASHINGTON STATE

Read Well Evaluation Data

Second Cohort—2000/2001 First Grade
Title I School-wide Project
Washington State

Demographic Information

County
- Highest percentage of mothers on public assistance
- Highest juvenile arrest record in the state

School
- One of the lowest income neighborhoods
- 20% minority, 80% white
- 60% to 70% on free and reduced lunch
- 40% to 50% mobility
- At the time these students were in kindergarten, 35 of 440 students born addicted to crack.

Assessment Information

Measure
- Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests-Revised

  Total Reading—Short Scale

  Word Identification Subtest
  Passage Comprehension Subtest

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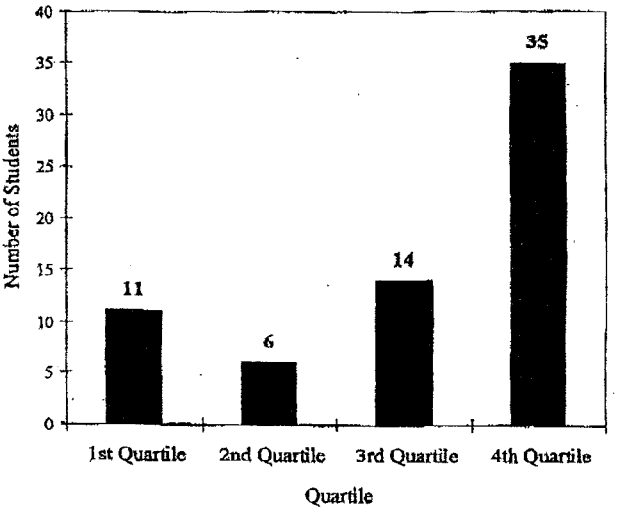
Results

Figure 1 presents the frequency distribution of percentile ranks achieved by first graders after enrollment in the *Read Well* program.

Figure 1. Frequency distribution of WRMT-R Short Scale Readin Cluster percentile ranks for first graders afte*Read Well**



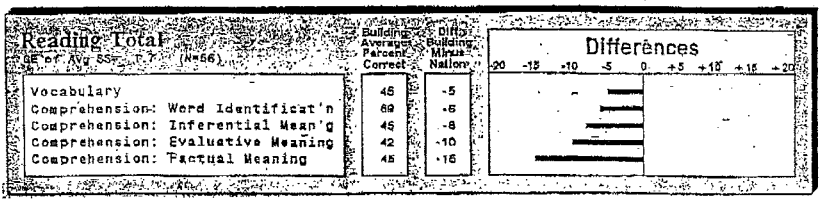
- 55 % of the students (35/64) who participated in *Read Well* scored above the 75th percentile, which is 7 times more than what would be expected in a normal distribution.

* Although 17% of the students (11/64) received scores below the 25th percentile, 8 of these students were in Special Education and completed less than half of the units of *Read Well* instruction (17/38 units) including 4 students with severe mental impairments and/or severe abuse. The remaining three students completed 28 out of the 38 units of instruction.

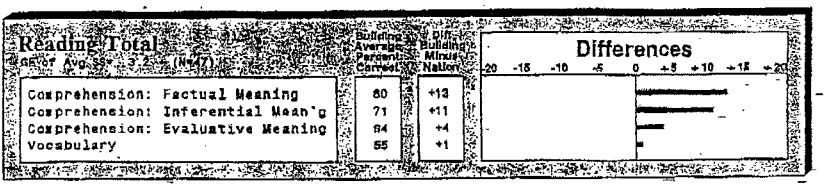
Iowa Test of Basic Skills

School Illinois

First Grade Spring 1999



Second Grade Spring 2000



SOPRIS WEST
EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

Read Well: A Research-Based Primary Reading Program
Results from a school-wide implementation

During the 1999-2000 school year, sixty-six first grade students were assessed to examine the effectiveness of the *Read Well Primary Reading Program.*

Demographics
The school was a Title I School-wide project in the Pacific Northwest.

The school:
- 440 students in grades K – 5
- largest city in the county, the lowest income neighborhood
- 20% minority, 80% white
- 60% to 70% students on free and reduced lunch
- 40% to 50% mobility
- currently serves 5 students living in families with heroin addicts and 35 students who were born addicted to crack/cocaine

The county:
- one of two counties remaining in economic recession in the state
- the highest percentage of mothers on public assistance in the state
- the highest juvenile arrest rate in the state

The first grade students enrolled in *Read Well* in the 1999-2000 school year:

N	66
% Male	50
% Minority	20
% Special Education	12

36 students began *Read Well* in kindergarten; 30 students began in the beginning of first grade.

Measures
The measures used to assess reading competency were:

- *Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests-Revised-NU* (WRMT-R) – *Total Reading Cluster: Short Scale* (comprised of the Passage Comprehension and Word Identification subtests).
- *Multi Level Skills Inventory-R* (MASI-R) – First grade oral reading fluency passages. The oral reading fluency test required students to read aloud unpracticed texts without adult assistance. The dependent measure was the number of words correct per minute.

Students who finished *Read Well* in November of 1st grade (2000)

	Total Rdg Short Scale GE	Total Rdg Short Scale Percentile Rank
1*	2.6	96%
2	2.7	96%
3	2.7	96%
4	2.8	97%
5*	2.7	97%
6	2.7	97%
7	2.8	97%
8	3.0	98%
9*	3.0	98%
10	3.4	99%
11	4.1	99.6%
12	4.2	99.6%

Students who finished *Read Well* in February of 1st grade (2001)

	Total Rdg Short Scale GE	Total Rdg Short Scale Percentile Rank
13	2.5	87%
14	2.5	87%
15	2.5	89%
16	2.6	90%
17	2.7	91%
18	2.7	91%
19	2.7	92%
20	2.7	92%
21	2.8	93%
22	3.1	95%
23	3.2	95%
24	3.2	95%
25	3.5	96%
26	3.8	97%

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Students who finished *Read Well* in early April of 1st grade (2001)

	Total Rdg Short Scale GE	Total Rdg Short Scale Percentile Rank
27	2.9	92%
28	3.2	94%

Students who finished *Read Well* in early/mid May of 1st grade (2001)

	Total Rdg Short Scale GE	Total Rdg Short Scale Percentile Rank
29	2.5	77%
30	2.5	79%
31	2.6	81%
32	2.6	81%
33	2.7	85%
34	2.7	85%
35	2.7	86%
36	2.8	86%
37	2.7	88%
38	2.7	88%
39	3.0	91%
40	4.2	97%

Students on Unit 38 of *Read Well* in June of 1st grade (2001)

	Total Rdg Short Scale GE	Total Rdg Short Scale Percentile Rank
41	2.0	56%
42	2.1	63%
43	2.3	70%
44	2.3	72%
45	2.4	73%
46	2.4	73%
47	2.4	76%
48	2.5	78%
49	2.5	79%
50	2.7	83%
51	2.8	87%
52	3.2	89%

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Students on *Read Well* Unit 36 in June of 1st grade (2001)

	Total Rdg Short Scale GE	Total Rdg Short Scale Percentile Rank
53	1.9	50%
54	1.9	53%
55	2.0	59%
56	2.0	59%
57	2.2	67%
58	2.2	68%
59	3.0	88%

Students on *Read Well* Unit 30 in June of 1st grade (2001)

	Total Rdg Short Scale GE	Total Rdg Short Scale Percentile Rank
60	1.7	41%
61	1.8	43%
62	1.9	50%
63	2.0	56%
64	2.0	59%
65	2.1	62%
66	2.5	77%

Students on *Read Well* Unit 25 in June of 1st grade (2001)

	Total Rdg Short Scale GE	Total Rdg Short Scale Percentile Rank
67	1.3	17%
68	1.3	17%
69	1.5	28%
70	1.6	33%
71	1.6	33%
72	1.7	38%
73	1.8	43%
74	2.3	72%

Special Ed Students on *Read Well* Unit 24 in June of 1st grade (2001)

	Total Rdg Short Scale GE	Total Rdg Short Scale Percentile Rank
75	1.1	9%
76	1.6	35%
77	1.8	43%

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Table of Indexes

Augie, 2, 3
Chairman Boehner, 1, 3, 5, 7, 8, 11, 14, 16, 18, 19, 20, 26
Mr. Keller, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26
Mr. Torgesen, 19, 21, 23, 25, 26
Ms. Hermann, 19, 20, 22, 23, 25, 26
Dr. Mahoney, 2, 3, 7, 17, 18, 21, 23, 24
Ms. Wright, 16, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24