

New populations and challenges lead to *Superkids*



A changing student population

The Gurnee School District in northern Illinois faced new opportunities with an increasing number of at-risk and English language learner students in the elementary grades. Teachers and administrators believed that consistent primary literacy instruction across classrooms and between grades would boost achievement for all their students. *The Superkids Reading Program™* helped them achieve almost immediate results.

Gurnee has two elementary schools with primary grades. Spaulding Elementary holds prekindergarten to grade 2, and River Trail Elementary has kindergarten through grade 8 students. The majority of the district population are now minorities. At Spaulding, for instance, one-quarter of students are English language learners. Colleen Pacatte, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Assessment, estimates the district has as many as 36 home languages in addition to English.

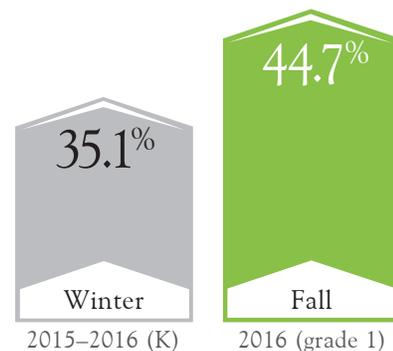
Consistent instruction backed by technology

Because an older traditional basal reading program was used in the Gurnee district, teachers felt compelled to augment the materials. Over time, teachers realized that

they needed to refocus on an integrated curriculum and use it with fidelity. “Everyone was doing their own thing,” says reading specialist Lisa McLeRoy, because teachers felt they couldn’t rely only on their existing materials. “We wanted to be of one mind.”

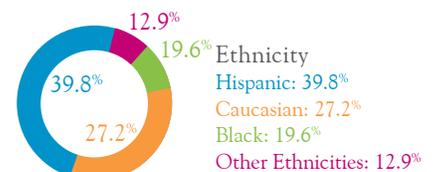
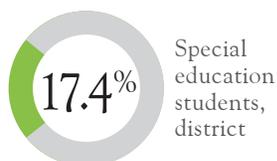
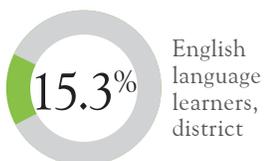
Superkids bolsters reading achievement at River Trail Elementary

After one year with *Superkids*, nearly 45% of students entering grade 1 scored above the 90th percentile for their grade in reading on the MAP® for Primary Grades.



District Profile: Gurnee School District 56

A rural school district with four public elementary schools, two that serve K–2 students



“With *Superkids*, if you do what you’re supposed to do, you’re meeting the needs of the next grade level.”

—Colleen Pacatte, Assistant Superintendent

Assistant superintendent Pacatte explains that the textbook committee looked at newer traditional basal reading programs but were unconvinced that they would boost achievement. “We wanted more, and we wanted better. We wanted different.” Teachers noted that students disliked the accompanying readers; “it was like pulling teeth to get them to read,” says one.

A committee began examining reading programs. “We did a lot of rubrics, a lot of work on the front end,” says McLeRoy, who also taught kindergarten during the first year of *Superkids*® implementation. Foremost on the list was compatible technology; all Gurnee students worked on iPads®.

Stories, books, and assessments had to be available digitally, and administrators found *Superkids* technology pieces work very well with the students’ and teachers’ iPads. “As a teacher, I like knowing my students have access to hundreds of books at home on their iPads,” says McLeRoy.

Supporting a range of students

Its unique population of students factored into the district’s deliberations when they chose *Superkids*. The program’s curriculum in the primary grades challenges both achieving and struggling students. “I have 10 language learners in my class,” says first-grade teacher Annette Aas, “and they’ve done very well with the *Superkids* program.”

McLeRoy admits she was at first wary of *Superkids* because she was trained in the philosophies of whole language and balanced literacy. “I was a hard sell,” she says. After using the program as a teacher, however, she saw that the *Superkids* approach led to real results.

Now she uses *Superkids* with her intervention students. “I love it from an interventionist standpoint because I

know where every kid is. I know the stories, the skills they’re working on. It’s not difficult for me to support the classroom teacher and the kid.”

First-grade teacher Aas agrees. “It’s really made a difference to have the reading specialist pulling them out, working on the same stories, the same skills.”

In addition, the program allows teachers to trust that students have the skills they need when they enter the next grade. “*Superkids* is written in such a way, if you do what you’re supposed to do and you do it well, you’re meeting the needs of the next grade level,” Pacatte explains.

“First graders are unafraid to tackle multisyllabic words!”

—Lisa McLeRoy, Reading Specialist

Results backed by research

“I knew if it wasn’t working, teachers would tell me,” says assistant superintendent Pacatte. “Our teachers are really good. If they hadn’t seen promise in the program, no way they would’ve let it go on for any length of time.” In addition, teachers were thrilled that students were excited about reading about the *Superkids* characters’ adventures.

“They cannot wait to turn the page to see what’s going to happen,” says McLeRoy, “because there’s drama” in the decodable readers. “They are so excited to read the story.”

“I’ve been here 15 years and I’ve never seen anything like it!”

—Annette Aas, First-Grade Teacher

Annette Aas welcomed the change to *Superkids*. Her professional studies placed her firmly in the decoding camp. “There’s just no substantial research out there to support using leveled guided reading books. But there’s tons of it in teaching kids to read and phonetically decode text,” she explains.

To learn more about what makes *Superkids* a great fit for your school, visit superkidsreading.com or call 888.378.9258.