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Reading First Annual Report Year 3

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GREAT PLAINS INSTITUTE
OF READING AND WRITING

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SCIENCES

UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA LINCOLN

ANNUAL REPORT

YEAR THREE OF IMPLEMENTATION—2006-2007

NEBRASKA READING FIRST

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

While this is an overview of results for the grant as a whole, schools and districts present unique profiles and varied results.

In kindergarten and first grade classrooms the impact has been impressive with a vast majority of students on grade level, indicating they are receiving the necessary prerequisite reading skills for success in later grades. This is evident in overall achievement but even more so in the reduction of achievement gaps for English language learners, economically disadvantaged students, and ethnic minorities. Further, Round II schools, for which this is the first year of implementation, showed great progress.

In second and third grade there have been great improvements over the past three years, however, gains in achievement for the more advanced skills is slower. Consistent with previous years, the challenge is in fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. The challenge can be best seen by following the achievement gaps over the past three years. The gaps are generally shrinking but at a fairly slow pace that is not inline with program goals. Round II schools are also struggling more in second and third grade implementation as is evident in observations as well as in student achievement which is still below the national average. The challenge in these grades should not obscure the very significant gains made in all participating schools.

The one group of students that is consistently underperforming in meeting criteria and growth trajectory is the group who receive special education services. These students are improving but are being outpaced by their non-disabled peers. Since the rates of identification for special education are declining in first through third grade, it is logical to assume that the students who are identified present a greater challenge to educators. Based on input provided by Reading First coaches throughout the state, the vast majority of students are responding optimally to the curriculum and interventions provided in their classrooms. As a result, the divide between these students and the treatment resistant students has become more apparent.

Classroom practice continues to evolve under Reading First coaches and state leadership. The feedback from previous years has changed teacher practice in Round I schools and was almost immediately adopted by Round II schools in their first year of implementation. Specialist teachers (ELL, SPED etc.) have reported positive changes in their schools in terms of relationship, collaboration, and student achievement. Finally, an analysis of teacher retention revealed no overall significant teacher turnover in the program; however, individual schools show such high turnover that may have an impact on Reading First implementation and cumulative improvement.

Teacher collective efficacy, i.e. "how we as a school can teach all students", has shown increasing improvement over the past three years. It is important to note that there is a relationship between collective efficacy and achievement. Student growth is higher in schools in which teachers have higher collective efficacy even after taking into account school characteristics.

Dissemination of approaches and results is an important outcome for Reading First. An examination of dissemination efforts shows an overall positive response. Teachers participating in summer institutes seem to find many useful ideas that they plan to implement in their classrooms. Evidence for the potential for school wide changes is less strong, showing that administrators still lack information they can act on. We recommend that Educational Service Units and the State Department try to identify schools willing to conduct such reform and create a plan to support them.

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OVERVIEW

The 2006-2007 Annual Progress Report offers an overview of the way Reading First schools adjusted teacher practice and improved student achievement. The report examines the impact of the implementation of reading programs selected by Reading First schools on all students including different ethnic groups, economically disadvantaged students, English language learners, and special education students.

The current report begins with a look at student demographics across three years of Reading First implementation in Nebraska followed by a detailed analysis of student achievement. The student achievement data is divided into sections based on funding round (Round I: schools who started implementation in Fall 2004; and Round II: schools who started implementation in Fall 2006). This is followed by a comparison of the student progress between the two rounds. Included in the section on Round I student achievement is an examination of student achievement based on school clusters. Clusters are used to group similar schools together and enable Reading First leadership and school administration to make valid comparisons. Given the significant differences between schools in size, proportion of minority, disadvantaged and special education students, it was clear that analyzing student achievement based on cluster membership would better allow educators to make instructional adjustments that meet the unique needs of students in their schools. Schools will be provided with the code letter specific to their school.

The subsequent section provides an analysis of the growth in student achievement across the first three years of Reading First implementation in Round I schools including changes in the number of students qualifying for special education. Next, we show the changes in reading achievement gaps between English language learners (ELL), economically disadvantaged students (FRL), minority students, and students with disabilities (special education) and their peers. The longitudinal analyses (2004-2007) are separated by grade level since measures and results often vary between grades.

Following this section is an examination of teacher-based factors. This section begins with a look at teacher logs based on cluster membership. This is followed by an examination of the teacher survey which shows the impact of Reading First on collective efficacy, perceptions of expectations for

reading instruction, instructional choice, prioritizing instruction, and teacher change. Next is an analysis of teacher retention by cluster across three years of Reading First implementation in Nebraska. The final teacher-based section describes the special point of view that specialist teachers (ELL, Special education etc.) had on Reading First and its impact in their schools.

In the final section we attempt to capture the impact of Reading First dissemination in Nebraska. The professional development section captures the impact of Reading First dissemination efforts statewide. The impact was based on feedback from teachers and administrators with regard to the perceived effectiveness of these sessions. Another way to measure the impact on other schools in the state is described in section 5. In this section, Non-Reading First administrators share opinions, understanding, and the impact of Reading First on instruction in their schools.

SECTION 1

STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Student demographic characteristics have remained relatively stable across the first three years of Reading First implementation in Nebraska (See Table 1.1). The most marked change has been in the number of students receiving Free/Reduced lunches (FRL) indicating a rise in the number of children living in low income environments.

Table 1.1: Student demographics by category in RF schools in Nebraska*.

	State**	2004-2005***	2005-2006	2006-2007	
		Round I	Round I	Round I	Round II
English Learners	5.80%	3.40%	3.50%	4.7%	**14.3%**
Special Education		5.60%	7.20%	7.1%	**3.9%**
Free/Reduced Lunch	34.80%	33.10%	43.00%	48.3%	56.6%
African American	7.40%	21.70%	20.80%	23.0%	**27.5%**
Hispanic	10.80%	12.80%	14.10%	14.3%	27.8%
Native American	1.60%	2.30%	2.10%	2.2%	1.3%
White (non Hispanic)	78.50%	62.10%	62.00%	59.8%	42.6%

* Numbers may not add to 100% because of rounding and overlapping categories
** State percentages were taken from the 2004-5 report which is the latest available data
*** In Ethnicity only the three main categories were included

There have been small increases in proportion of ELL, minority students, and students receiving special education services in Round I schools. Round II schools have a higher percentage of students receiving Free/Reduced lunches, ELL, and minority students compared to Round I schools. However, Round II schools have a lower percentage of students receiving special education services.

Both Round I and Round II schools have much higher proportion of students receiving Free/Reduced lunches and minority students than statewide averages. Round I schools have a slightly lower percentage of ELL than the state average whereas Round II schools have a much higher percentage.

STUDENT POPULATION BY CLUSTER

Student and district characteristics vary greatly between many Nebraska Reading First schools. For this reason a ***cluster analysis*** was conducted in order to determine which schools could be grouped together based on like characteristics, allowing valid comparisons of achievement to like schools. A cluster analysis is an exploratory statistical method for sorting objects into groups based on the degree of association between specific meaningful characteristics. Student performance based on cluster membership is beneficial in that it allows us to make more effective comparisons. The specific characteristics used in this analysis were: school size, student ethnic group proportion, percentage of English language learners, percentage of students receiving Free and Reduced price lunch, and percentage of students in special education.

Figure 1.1 shows the population characteristics for each cluster. A visual analysis reveals that characteristics vary greatly between the clusters. For example, Cluster Three has a much higher percentage of minority students and students receiving Free/Reduced lunch as compared to clusters One and Two. Additionally, this cluster has twice the percentage of English Language Learners. There are also notable differences between clusters One and Two. Cluster One has 20% more students receiving Free/Reduced lunch, 5% more English Language Learners, and nearly twice as many students receiving special education services as compared to Cluster Two.

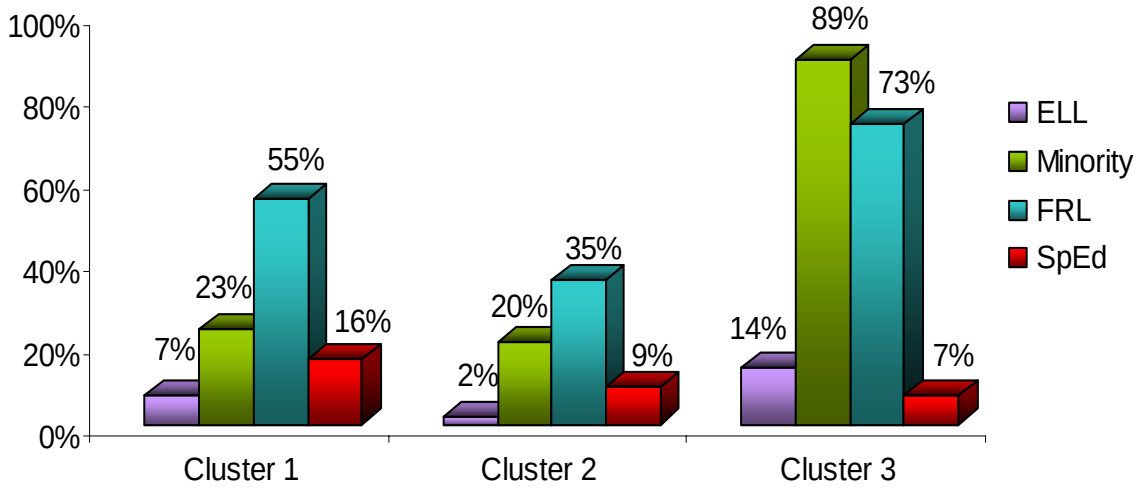

Figure 1.1: Percentage of ELL, Minority, FRL, and Special Education per cluster.

SECTION 2

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

KINDERGARTEN—ROUND I SCHOOLS

Kindergarten students in Round I schools made steady progress throughout the 2006-2007 school year. As shown in Figure 2.1, there were significant increases in letter knowledge (LNF) between all three assessment cycles. Kindergarten students also made significant increases in performance as measured by phonemic awareness (PSF) and decoding (NWF) between the winter and spring assessment cycles.

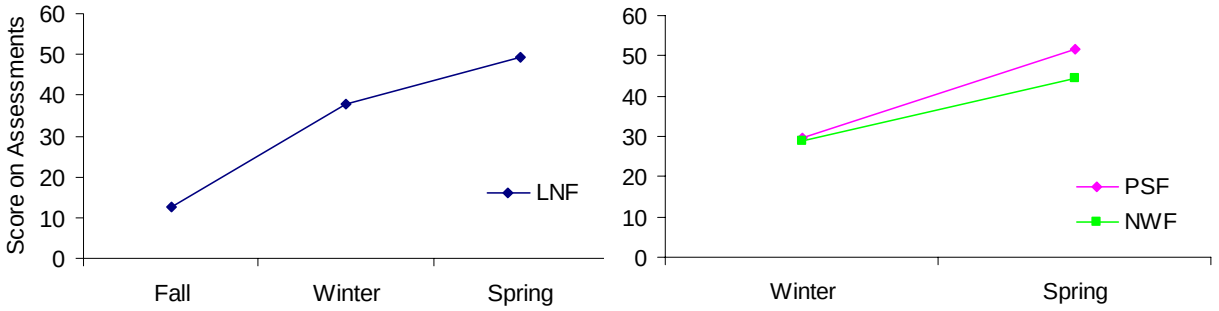

Figure 2.1: Kindergarten progress throughout the 2006-2007 school year in Round I schools as measured by letter identification (LNF), phonemic awareness (PSF), and decoding (NWF).

Figure 2.2 shows the change in risk levels of kindergarten students in Round I schools throughout the current school year. In the fall, half of these students were in the low risk category with approximately one-third in the at-risk category as measured by letter knowledge (LNF). By the spring assessment cycle, over 75% of these students were in the low risk category with less than 5% in the at-risk category as measured by decoding (NWF). Based on these results, the vast majority of these students have the literacy prerequisite *skills* to be successful in first grade.

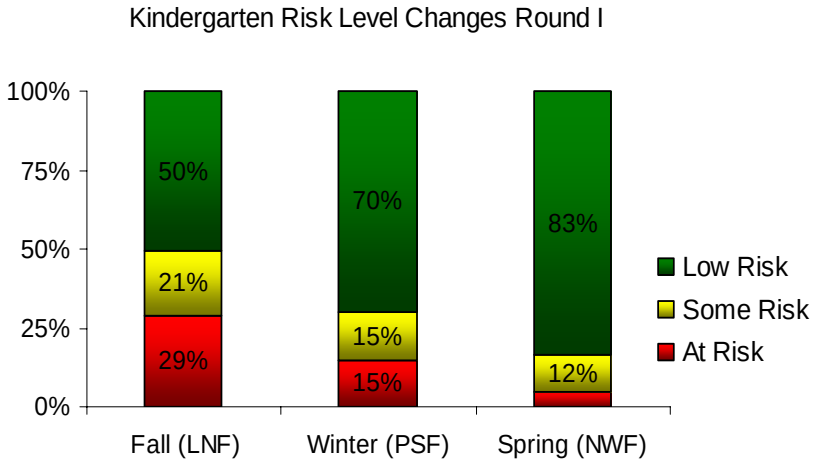

Figure 2.2: Risk level changes in kindergarten during the 2006-2007 school year.

Kindergarten students in Nebraska Reading First Round I schools have made remarkable progress throughout the first three years of implementation as indicated by measures of letter knowledge (LNF), phonemic awareness (PSF), and decoding (NWF). The growth trajectories show the greatest level of improvement between years one and two with notable continued growth between years two and three (see Figure 2.3). In kindergarten there is no cumulative effect on students since every year students are new to the program. This provides a strong indication of the positive impact of Reading First implementation on teacher practice, and as a consequence, on the early reading skills of kindergarten students in these schools.

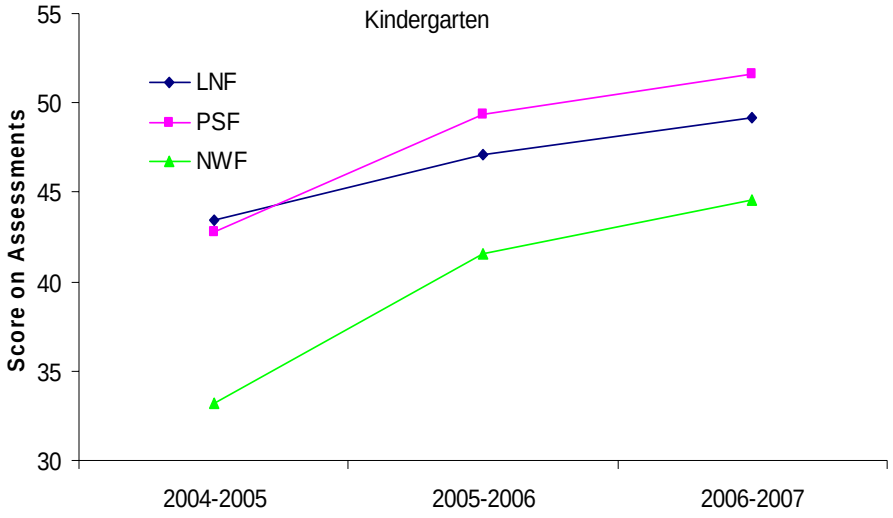

Figure 2.3: Kindergarten growth on measures of letter naming fluency (LNF), phonemic awareness (PSF), decoding (NWF) across three years of Reading First implementation.

FIRST GRADE—ROUND I SCHOOLS

First grade students in Round I schools made steady progress throughout the 2006-2007 school year. As seen in Figure 2.4, the most notable progress throughout the school year was in decoding (NWF). There were gains in phonemic awareness (PSF) between the fall and winter assessment

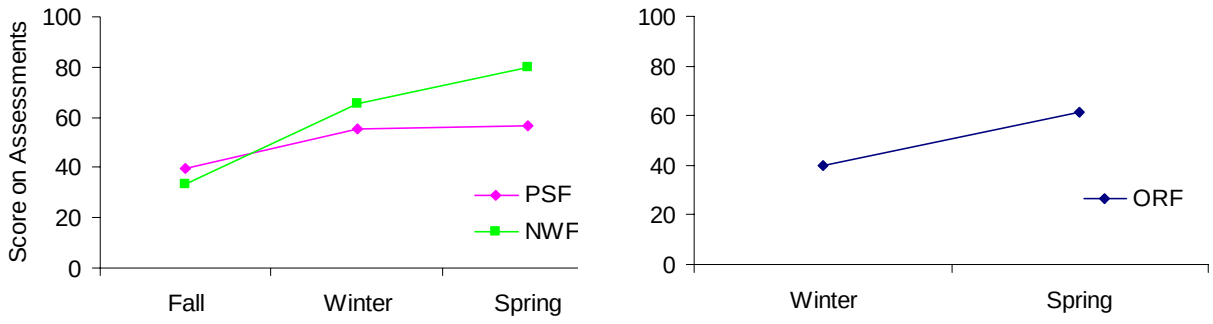

Figure 2.4: First grade progress throughout the 2006-2007 school year in Round I schools as measured by phonemic awareness (PSF), decoding (NWF), and reading fluency (ORF).

cycles with less notable progress between winter and spring probably as a result of a ceiling effect. First grade students made significant progress in reading fluency (ORF) between the winter and spring assessment cycles with an increase of nearly 20 correct words per minute (CWPM). This is a strong indication that these students are effectively transitioning from a focus on single word decoding to connected text.

Figure 2.5 shows the risk level changes of first grade students in Round I schools throughout the current school year. Throughout all three assessment cycles, a very low percentage (less than 10%) of these first grade students were in the at-risk category

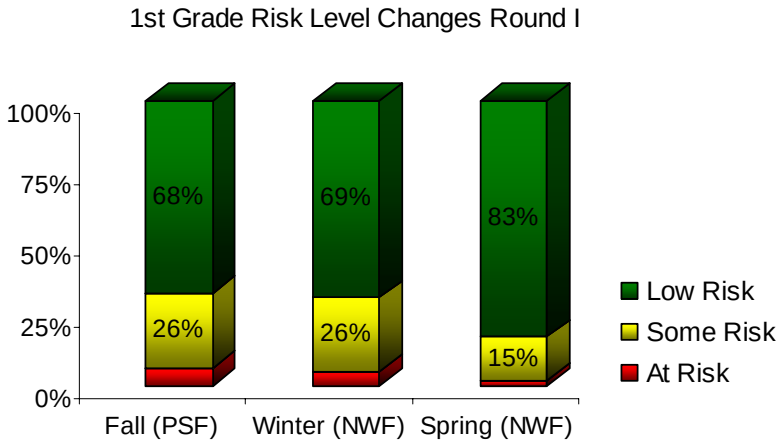

Figure 2.5: Risk level changes in first grade across the three assessment cycles of the 2006-2007 school year.

as measured by phonemic awareness (PSF) and decoding (NWF). Over 80% of these students were in the low risk category by the end of the school year as measured by decoding (NWF). Decoding ability will support the development of reading fluency and comprehension in second and third grade.

First grade students in Nebraska Reading First Round I schools have made remarkable progress throughout the first three years of implementation as indicated by measures of phonemic awareness (PSF), decoding (NWF), and reading fluency—(ORF). Consistent with kindergarten performance, growth trajectories in first grade show the greatest degree of improvement between years one and two with notable continued growth between years two and three (See Figure 2.6). These results clearly show that first grade students in Nebraska Reading First Round I schools are responding positively to instruction in these areas. They also show that Reading First had a substantial impact on classroom instruction in first grade classrooms.

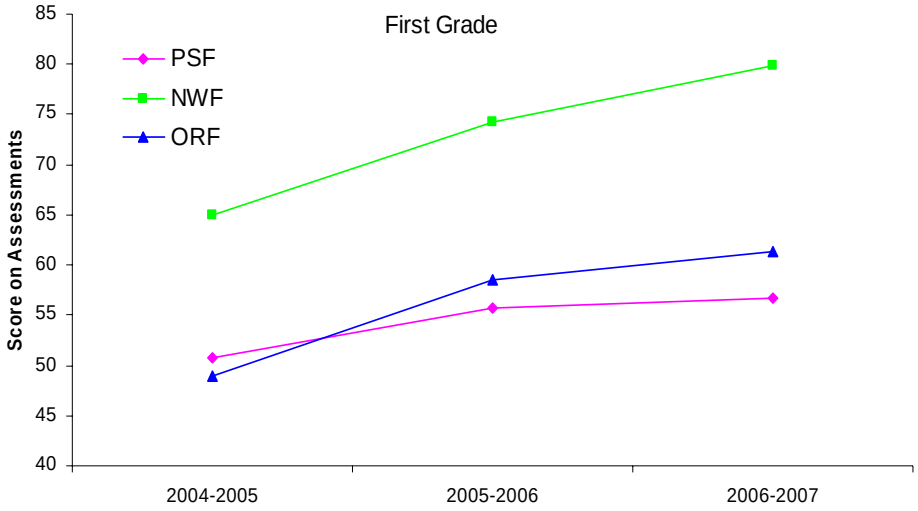

Figure 2.6: First grade growth on measures of phonemic awareness (PSF), decoding (NWF), and reading fluency (ORF) across three years of Reading First implementation.

SECOND GRADE—ROUND I SCHOOLS

Second grade students in Round I schools made steady progress throughout the 2006-2007 school year. As seen in Figure 2.7, the growth trajectory in reading fluency (ORF) was steeper between the fall and winter assessment cycles with less pronounced growth between winter and spring. There was an increase of 35 correct words per minute (CWPM) between the fall and winter assessment cycles with an increase of 18 CWPM between winter and spring.

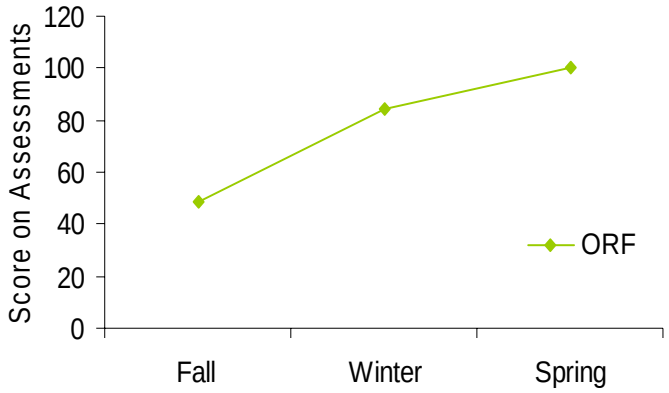

Figure 2.7: Second grade progress throughout the 2006-2007 school year in Round I schools as measured by reading fluency (ORF).

Figure 2.8 shows the risk level changes of second grade students in Round I schools as measured by reading fluency (ORF) throughout the current school year. In the fall, less than half of second grade students were in the low risk category with 22% in the at-risk category. The percentage of students in the at-risk category in the winter assessment cycle was 19% with no change between the winter and spring assessment cycles. This gives a clear indication of the need for a greater focus on reading fluency practice in this grade level throughout Round I schools.

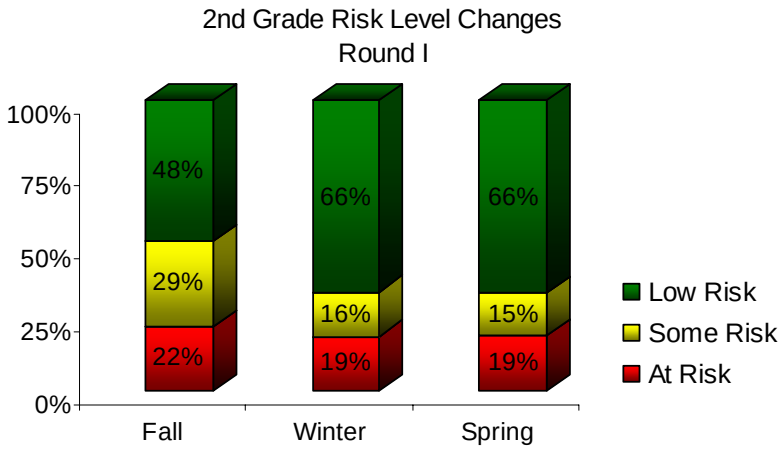

Figure 2.8: Risk level changes in second grade across the three assessment cycles of the 2006-2007 school year.

Second grade students in Nebraska Reading First schools have made remarkable progress throughout the first three years of implementation as indicated by measures of reading fluency (ORF), vocabulary knowledge, and comprehension (see Figure 2.9). The incremental improvement in fluency is likely to be a result of both growing teacher attention and expertise in teaching fluency as well as better prepared students reaching second grade with adequate decoding abilities.

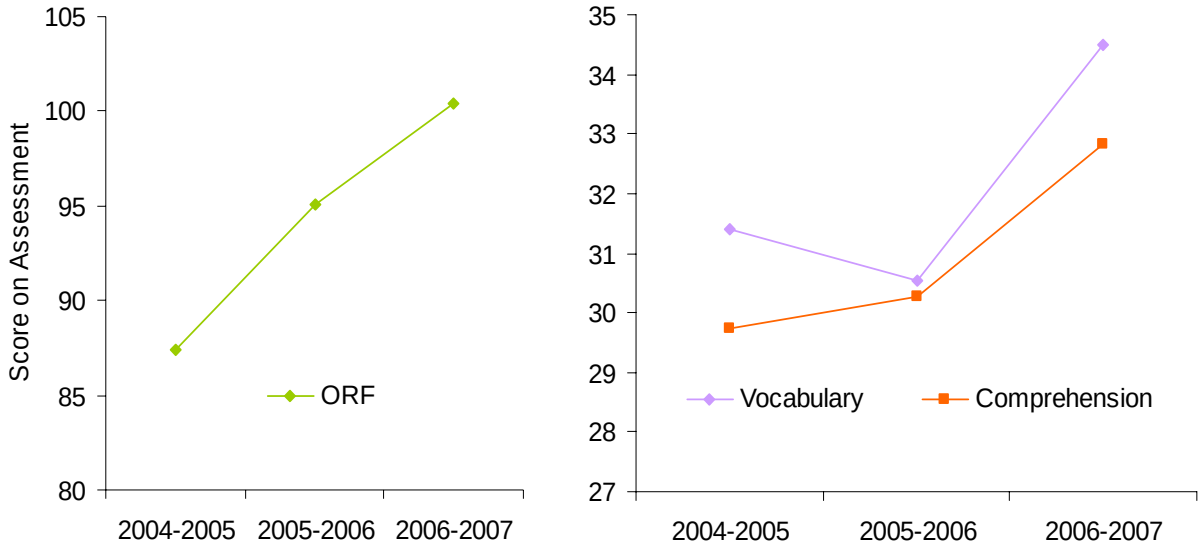

Figure 2.9: Second grade growth trajectories across three years of Reading First implementation on measures of reading fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

Second grade students have also made notable growth in comprehension (Gates-McGinitie) with the steepest growth between years two and three of implementation. There was a drop in vocabulary knowledge (Gates-McGinitie) between years one and two but an impressive increase between years two and three. Just as with kindergarten and first grade, this is likely the result of reallocation of resources and the emphasis put on comprehension and vocabulary in year three of implementation.

THIRD GRADE—ROUND I SCHOOLS

Third grade students in Round I schools made steady progress in reading fluency (ORF) throughout the 2006-2007 school year. This important achievement marker has shown consistent growth over time. As seen in Figure 2.10, the growth trajectory in reading fluency (ORF) was fairly steady across all three assessment cycles. There was an increase of 23 CWPM between the fall and winter assessment cycle and an increase of 18 CWPM between winter and spring. Third grade results in oral reading fluency (ORF) reflect normative and constant growth of about 20 correct words per minute every five months. This represents a steeper growth trajectory than the national average indicating that third grade students are closing the gap.

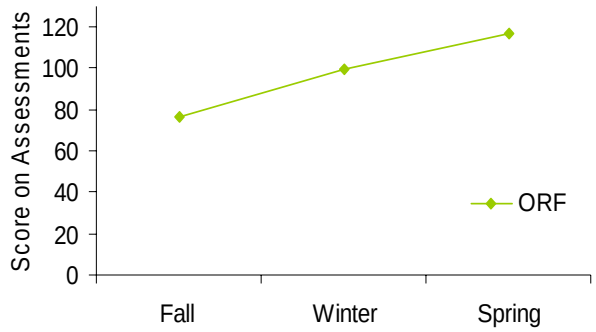

Figure 2.10: Third grade progress throughout the 2006-2007 school year in Round I schools as measured by reading fluency (ORF).

Figure 2.11 shows the risk level changes of third grade students in the 2006-2007 school year in Round I schools as measured by reading fluency (ORF). The percentage of third grade students in the low risk category consistently increased throughout the year. By the spring assessment cycle, 67% of third grade students were in the low risk category with 15% in the at-risk category. This represents excellent progress since spring of the 2005-2006 school year when only 47% of third grade students were in the low risk category.

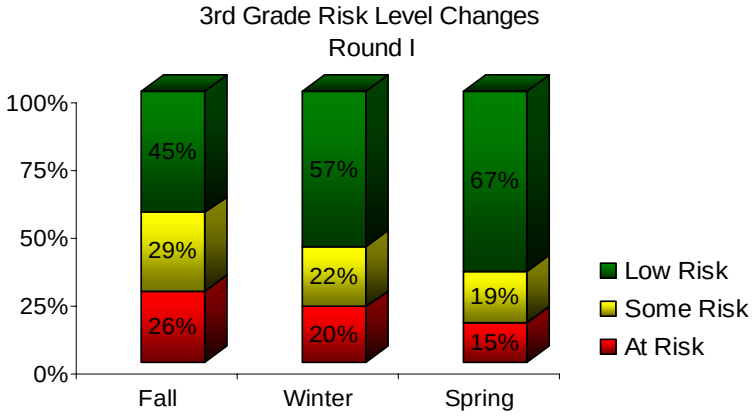

Figure 2.11 Risk level changes in third grade across the three assessment cycles of the 2006-2007 school year.

Third grade students in Nebraska Reading First Round I schools have made remarkable progress throughout the first three years of implementation as indicated by measures of reading fluency (ORF), vocabulary knowledge, and comprehension (see Figure 2.12). Reading fluency (ORF) scores in third grade across three years have increased by nearly 15 CWPM since the first year of implementation. Scores on Gates-McGinitie vocabulary and comprehension assessments have also increased, with the most remarkable increases between years two and three. This is consistent with second grade results and is evidence that schools are responding to student needs and evaluation results.

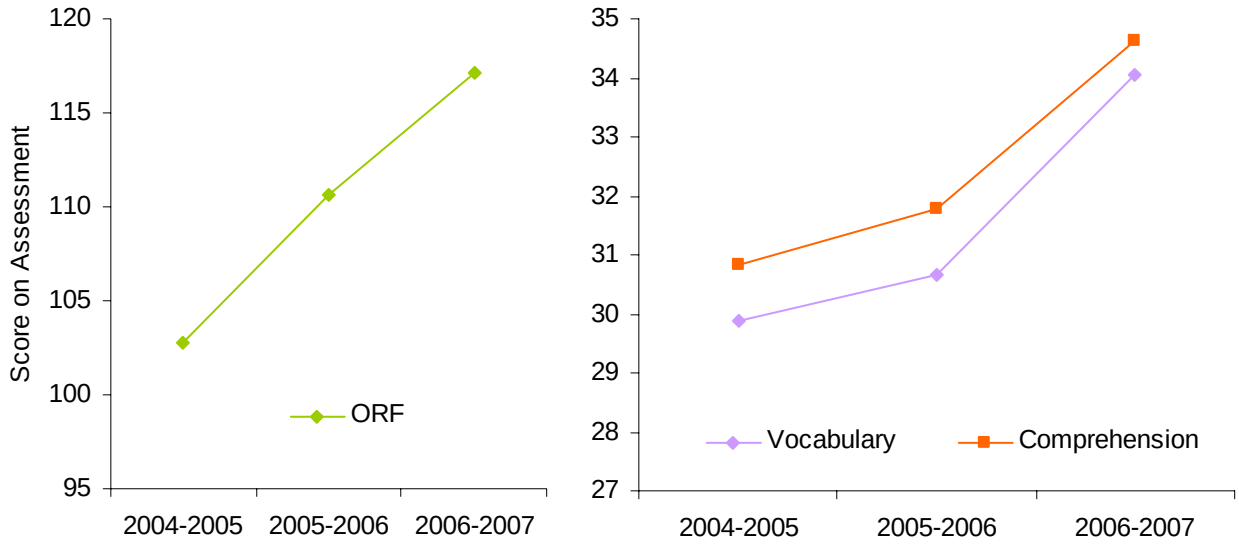

Figure 2.12: Third grade growth trajectories across three years of Reading First implementation on measures of reading fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

KINDERGARTEN—ROUND II SCHOOLS

Kindergarten students in Round II schools made steady progress throughout the 2006-2007 school year. As shown in Figure 2.13, there were significant increases in letter knowledge (LNF) between all three assessment cycles, with steeper growth between the fall and winter assessment cycles. These students also made significant increases in performance as measured by phonemic awareness (PSF) and decoding (NWF) between the winter and spring assessment cycles.

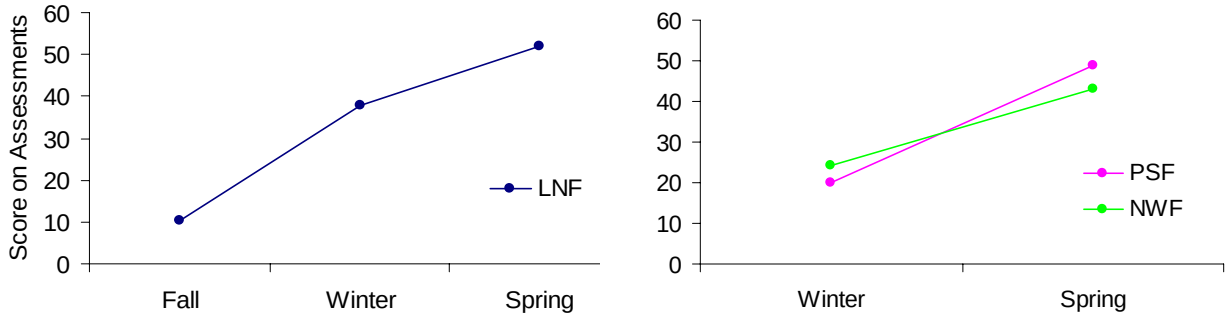

Figure 2.13: Kindergarten growth in letter knowledge (LNF), phonemic awareness (PSF), and decoding (NWF) in Round II schools.

Figure 2.14 is a between-cohort comparison between Round I and Round II kindergarten students at the **end of their first year** of Reading First implementation. This comparison allows us to compare the rate of implementation without disregarding the cumulative effects on Round I schools. Round II students performed significantly higher in letter naming (LNF), phonemic awareness (PSF), and decoding (NWF) compared to Round I schools during their first year of implementation. This is likely due to the higher degree of experience by the state leadership team in training and dissemination of

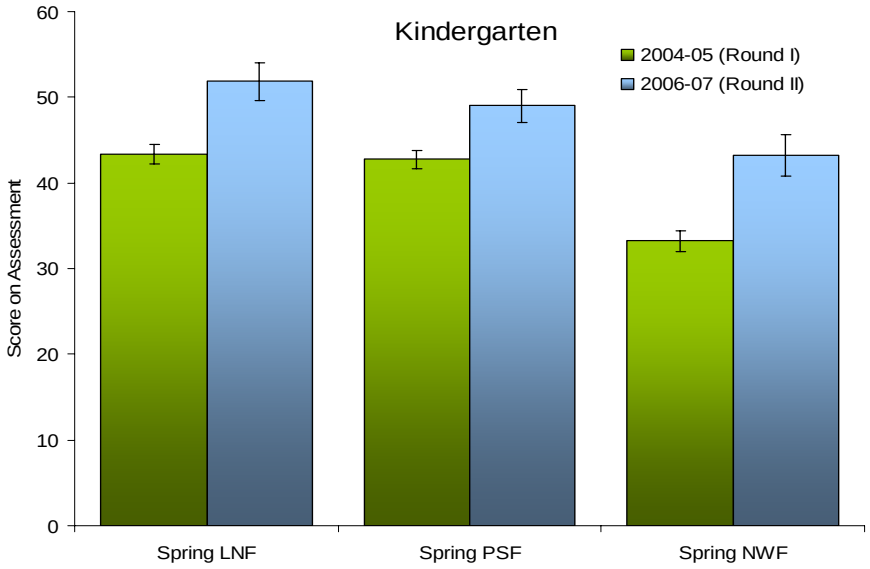

Figure 2.14: Comparison between Round I and Round II schools after first year of Reading First implementation.

information. Secondly, many Round II schools were encouraged to immediately implement a parallel curriculum to more effectively serve struggling students.

Figure 2.15 shows the risk level changes of kindergarten students in the 2006-2007 school year in Round II schools as measured by letter knowledge (LNF), phonemic awareness (PSF), and decoding (NWF). In the fall, 43% of kindergarten students were in the low risk category as measured by letter knowledge (LNF) with 33% in the at-risk category. By the spring assessment cycle, 86% of these students were in the low risk category with only 5% in the at-risk category. Based on these results, the vast majority of kindergarten students have the literacy prerequisite *skills* to be successful in first grade.

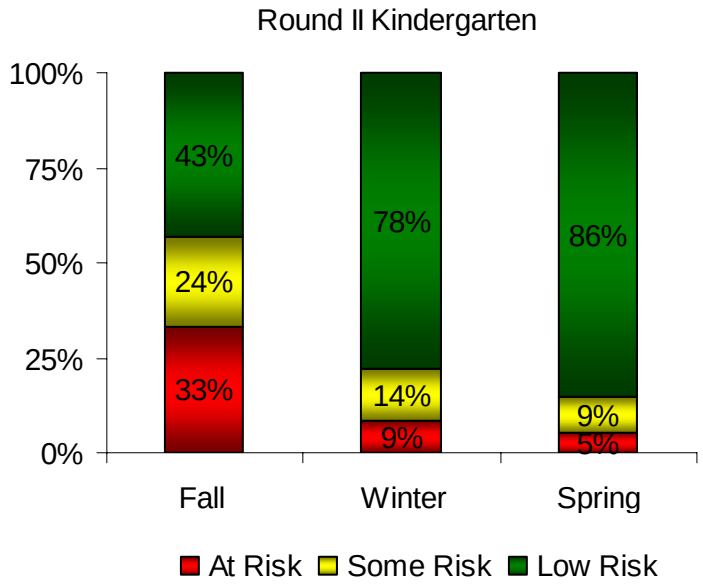

Figure 2.15: Kindergarten changes in risk categories throughout the 2006-2007 school year as measured by letter naming fluency (LNF—Fall) and decoding (NWF—Winter, Spring) in Round II schools.

FIRST GRADE—ROUND II SCHOOLS

First grade students in Round II schools made steady progress throughout the 2006-2007 school year in phonemic awareness (PSF), decoding (NWF), and reading fluency (ORF). As seen in Figure 2.16, these students made remarkable progress in decoding (NWF) with less pronounced growth in phonemic awareness (PSF). The diminished growth in phonemic awareness is probably due to a ceiling effect indicating that students are transitioning to more advanced skills. Solid growth was made in reading fluency with a gain of over 20 CWPM between the winter and spring assessment cycles. This is a strong indication that these students are effectively transitioning from a focus on single word decoding to connected text.

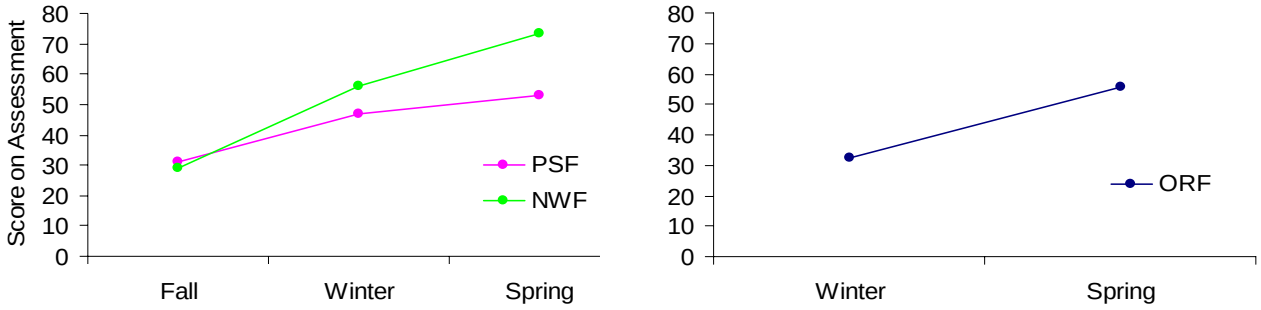

Figure 2.16: First grade growth in phonemic awareness (PSF), decoding (NWF), and oral reading fluency (ORF) in Round II schools.

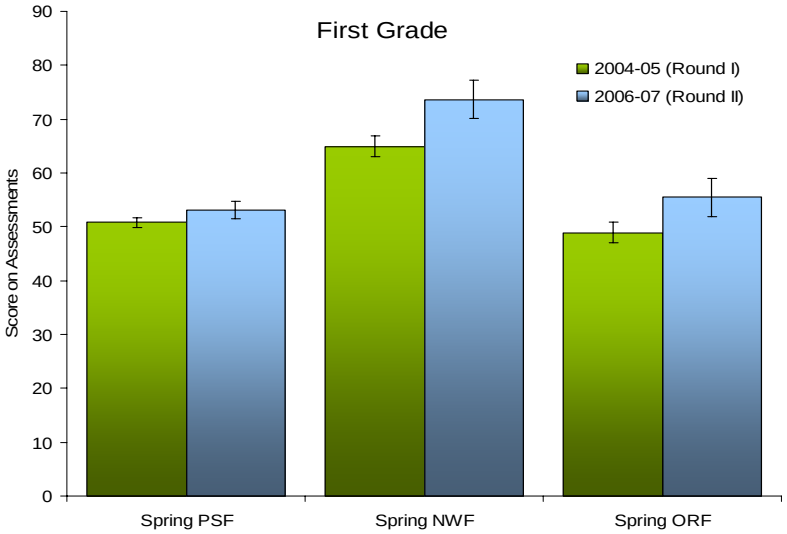

Figure 2.17: Comparison between Round I and Round II schools in first grade after first year of Reading First implementation.

Figure 2.17 is a between-cohort comparison between Round I and Round II first grade students at the end of their **first year of Reading First implementation**. Round II students performed slightly, though not significantly, higher than Round I students in

phonemic awareness (PSF). On measures of decoding (NWF) and reading fluency (ORF) first grade students in Round II schools significantly outperformed students in Round I schools at the end of their respective first years of Reading First implementation.

Figure 2.18 shows the risk level changes of first grade students in the 2006-2007 school year in Round II schools as measured by phonemic awareness (PSF) in the fall and decoding (NWF) in the winter and spring assessment cycles. In the fall, 56% of first grade students in Round II schools were in the low risk category with 18% in the at-risk category. Remarkable progress was made throughout the school year as 76% of these students were in the low risk category and only 4% were in the at-risk category. These results are very promising as decoding ability will support reading fluency and comprehension in second and third grade. It also shows that teachers and schools in Round II have taken advantage of the lessons learned in Round I schools to transition more quickly and effectively.

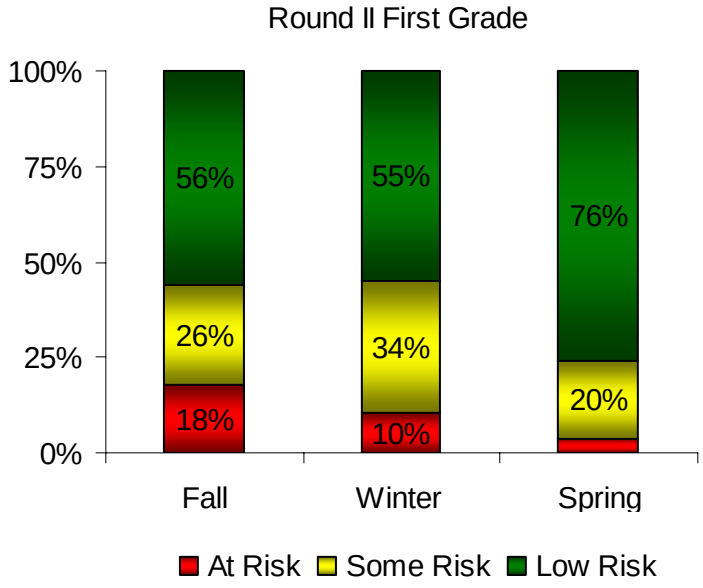

Figure 2.18: First grade changes in risk categories throughout the 2006-2007 school year as measured by decoding (NWF) in Round II schools.

SECOND GRADE—ROUND II SCHOOLS

Second grade students in Round II schools made steady progress throughout the 2006-2007 school year. As seen in Figure 2.19, the growth trajectory in reading fluency (ORF) was steeper between the fall and winter assessment cycles, with less pronounced growth between winter and spring. There was an increase of 26 correct words per minute (CWPM) between the fall and winter assessment cycles and an increase of 14 CWPM between winter and spring.

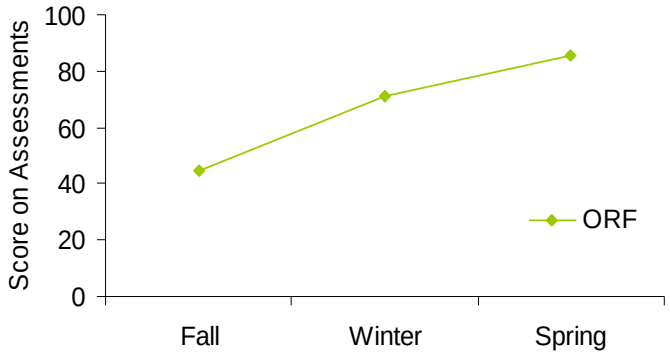

Figure 2.19: Second grade growth in oral reading fluency in Round II schools.

Figure 2.20 is a between-cohort comparison between Round I and Round II second grade students at the end of their **first year of Reading First implementation**. Round II students performed slightly lower in reading fluency, and slightly higher in vocabulary and comprehension than Round I students at the end of the first year. In order to narrow the gap in reading fluency in second grade between Round I and Round II schools, a greater instructional emphasis must be given to reading fluency practice since it is a major focus in this grade level.

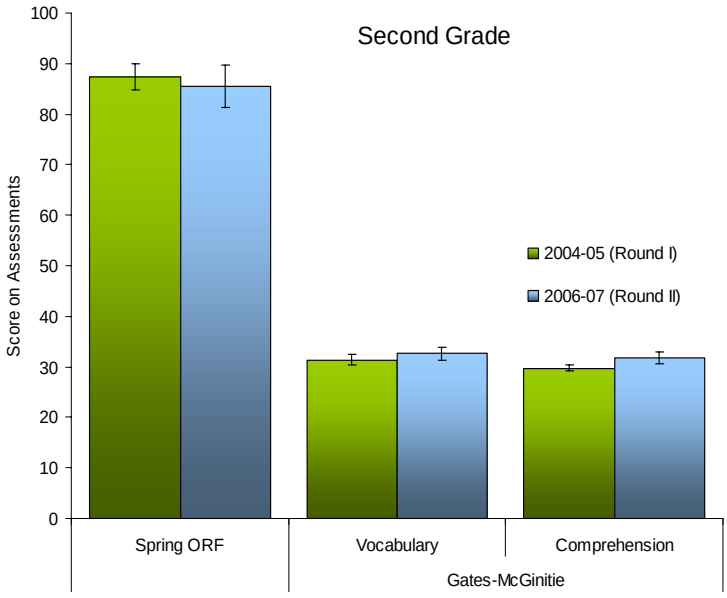

Figure 2.20: Comparison between Round I and Round II schools in second grade after first year of Reading First implementation.

Figure 2.21 shows the risk level changes of second grade students in Round II schools as measured by reading fluency (ORF) throughout the current school year. In the fall, 44% of these students were in the low risk category with 28% in the at-risk category. Though the number of students in the low risk category rose to 52% by the spring assessment cycle, the percentage of students in the at-risk category increased to 31%. This clearly shows the necessity of much greater instructional focus on reading fluency for second grade students in Round II schools.

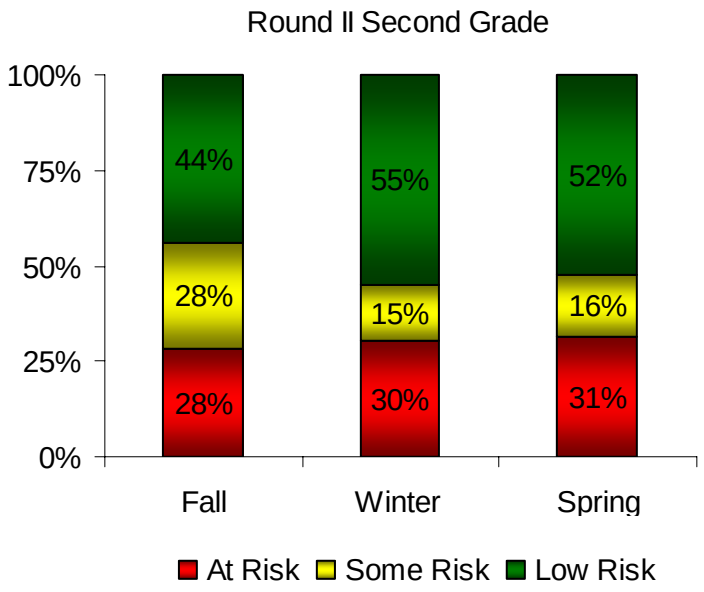

Figure 2.21: Second grade changes in risk categories throughout the 2006-2007 school year as measured by oral reading fluency in Round II schools.

THIRD GRADE—ROUND II SCHOOLS

Third grade students in Round II schools made steady progress throughout the 2006-2007 school year. Since oral reading fluency is one of the main goals in third grade, it is encouraging that this important achievement marker has shown consistent growth over time. As seen in Figure 2.22, the growth trajectory in reading fluency (ORF) was fairly steady between all three assessment cycles. There was an increase of 18 CWPM between the fall and winter assessment cycle and an increase of 14 CWPM between winter and spring. The rate of increase in reading fluency by the third grade students in Round II schools is below the national average.

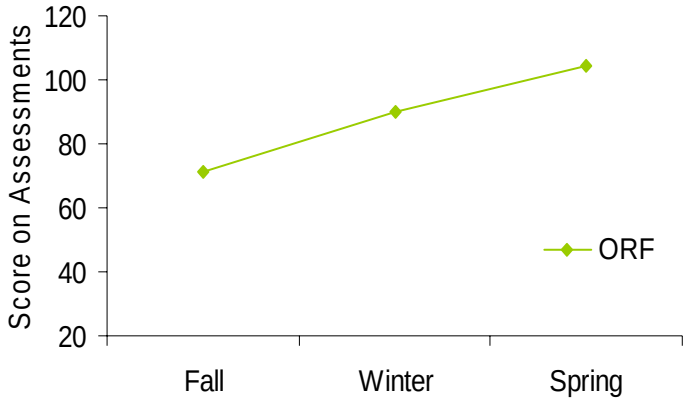

Figure 2.22: Third grade growth in oral reading fluency in Round II schools.

Figure 2.23 is a between-cohort comparison between Round I and Round II third grade students at the end of their **first year of Reading First implementation**. Round II students performed only

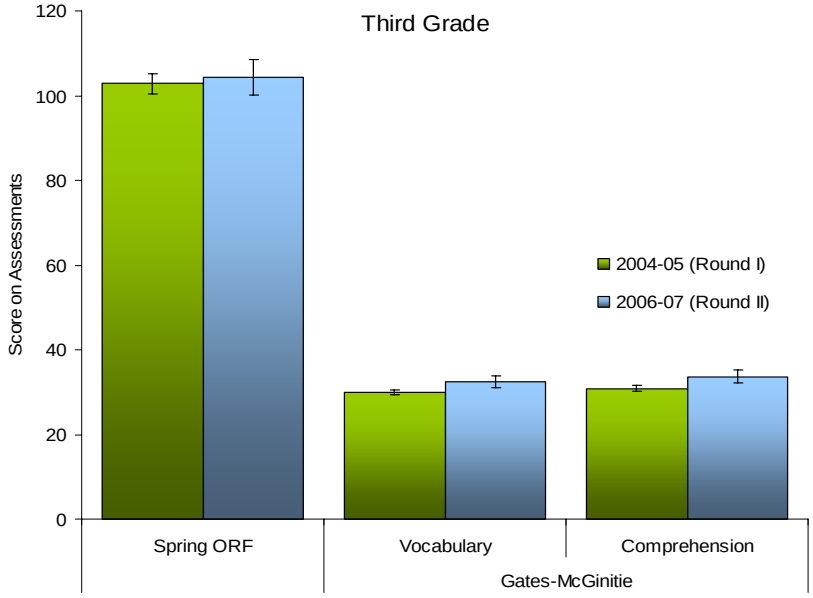

Figure 2.23: Comparison between Round I and Round II schools in third grade after first year of Reading First implementation.

minimally higher in reading fluency (ORF) and on Gates-McGinitie vocabulary and comprehension. This is probably the result of two main factors: the first is that third grade students participating may have lingering difficulties from previous years, especially in decoding; the second factor is that implementation of a research based program aimed at fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary takes longer to develop.

Figure 2.24 shows the risk level changes of third grade students in Round II schools as measured by reading fluency (ORF) throughout the current school year. In the fall, 38% of third grade students in Round II schools were in the low risk category with 32% in the at-risk category. By the spring assessment cycle, the percentage of students in the low risk category rose to 50% with 24% in the at-risk category. These results are below national averages and need to be addressed in subsequent years. Consistent with recommendations in second grade, third grade teachers in Round II schools need to make instructional adjustments in order to allow for a higher level of reading fluency practice and instruction.

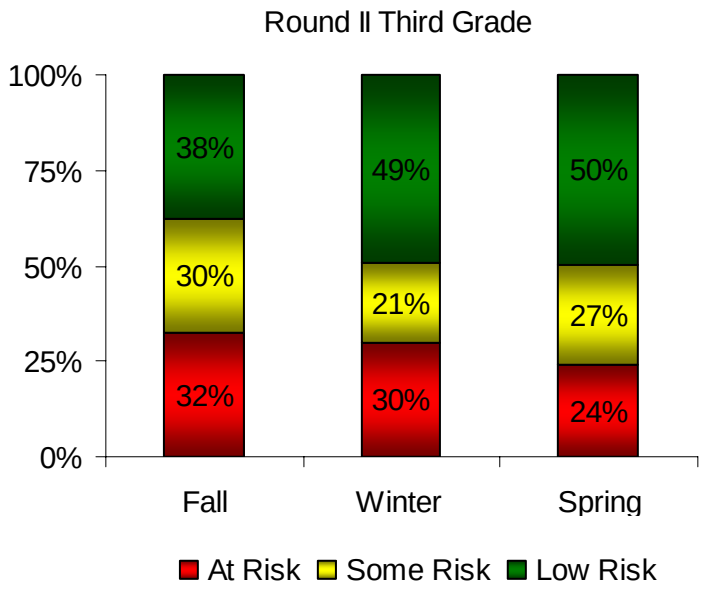

Figure 2.24 Third grade changes in risk categories throughout the 2006-2007 school year as measured by oral reading fluency in Round II schools.

KINDERGARTEN—ROUND ONE/ROUND TWO COMPARISONS

In this section we explore the differences between achievement in Round I and Round II schools. Comparisons of kindergarten students in Round I and Round II schools on measures of letter knowledge (LNF), phonemic awareness (PSF), and decoding (NWF) across the three assessment cycles of the 2006-2007 school year are in Figure 2.25. In letter knowledge (LNF), kindergarten students in Round I schools began the year slightly higher than the students in Round II schools. By the spring, kindergarten students in Round II schools had slightly exceeded the performance of

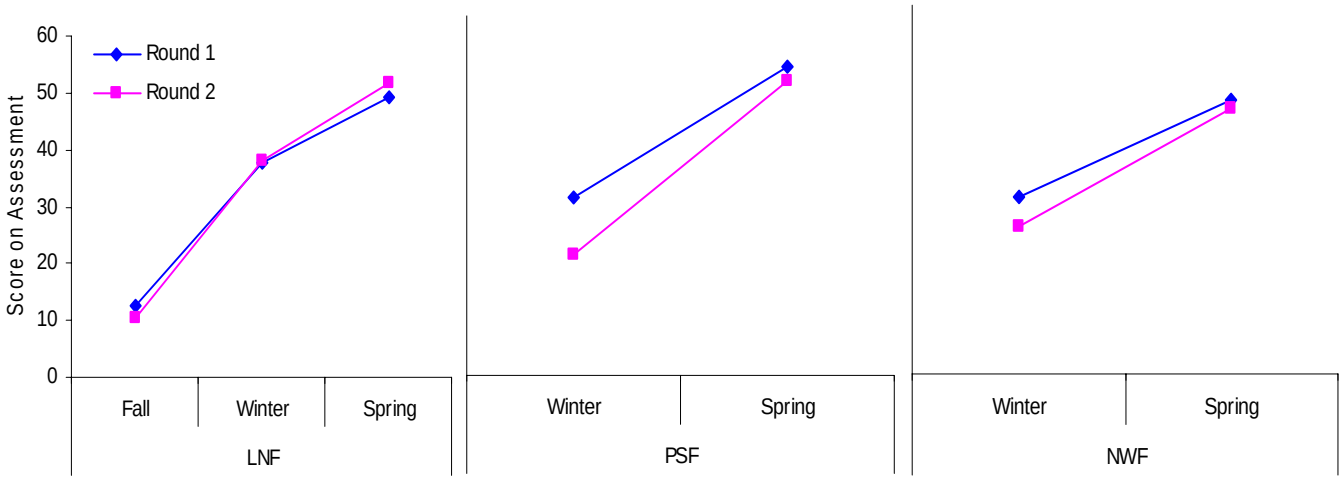

Figure 2.25: Round I and Round II kindergarten growth trajectory comparison on measures of letter naming fluency (LNF), phonemic awareness (PSF), and decoding (NWF).

Round I students on this measure. On the measure of phonemic awareness (PSF), students in Round I schools began the school year significantly higher than students in Round II schools. The growth trajectory of Round II kindergarteners was much steeper than Round I students, and the achievement difference on this measure was almost completely eliminated by the spring. Kindergarten students in Round I schools began the school year higher in decoding (NWF) but the achievement difference had become insignificant by spring. Taken together, the kindergarten students in Round II schools exhibited much steeper growth trajectories throughout the 2006-2007 school year which allowed them to compensate for the lower starting point. Based on these results, it appears that teachers in Round II schools have made effective adjustments to their instruction.

Figure 2.26 summarizes kindergarten levels of risk in Round I and Round II schools using decoding ability (NWF) as the criteria. Kindergarten students in both Round I and Round II schools are showing similar levels of performance with approximately 85% in the low risk categories in both sets of schools with less than 5% in the at-risk category.

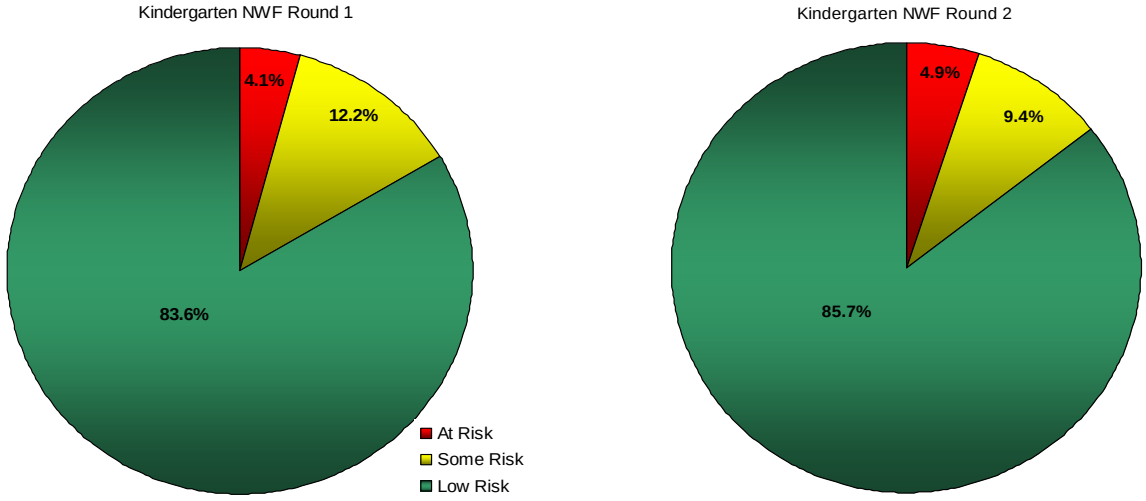

Figure 2.26: Kindergarten risk level comparison between Round I and Round II schools as measured by decoding—Non-word Fluency (NWF).

This represents impressive progress during the first year of implementation by kindergarten students in Round II schools, especially considering the very low starting point of these students (See Table 1.1). In the fall, 43% of Round II kindergarteners were in the at-risk category as indicated by letter naming fluency (LNF) compared to less than 5% in the spring based on decoding ability (NWF).

As shown in Figure 2.27, 45% of kindergarten students in Cluster One began the 2006-2007 school year below grade level as indicated by letter knowledge (Letter Naming Fluency—LNF) and this percentage dropped to 26% by the spring assessment cycle as measured by decoding ability (Non-Word Fluency—NWF). Half of the kindergarten students in Cluster Two began the school year below grade level. This percentage was reduced to less than 20% by the end of the school year. Nearly half of kindergarten students in Cluster Three were below grade level at the beginning of the school year. This was reduced dramatically to 10% by the spring assessment cycle.

Clearly, kindergarten teachers in all three clusters were providing effective instruction in order to considerably reduce the percentage of children performing below grade level expectations. It is also evident that kindergarten teachers in Cluster Three, while facing the largest challenges, are making effective instructional decisions in order to meet the unique needs of children in this cluster as indicated by the very low percentage of students below grade level.

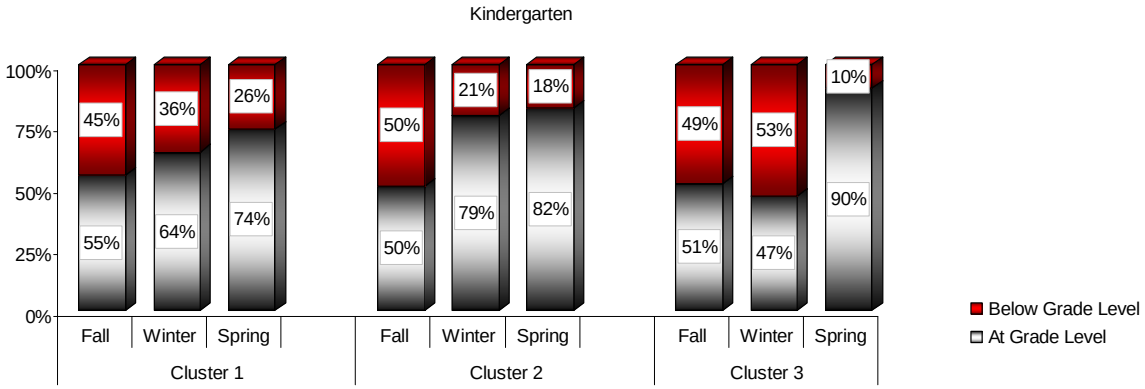

Figure 2.27: Percentage of kindergarten students at or below grade level based on cluster membership.

FIRST GRADE—ROUND ONE/ROUND TWO COMPARISONS

Comparisons between first grade students in Round I and Round II schools on measures of phonemic awareness (PSF), decoding (NWF), and reading fluency (ORF) are presented in Figure 2.28. First grade students in Round I schools performed higher on all three measures throughout

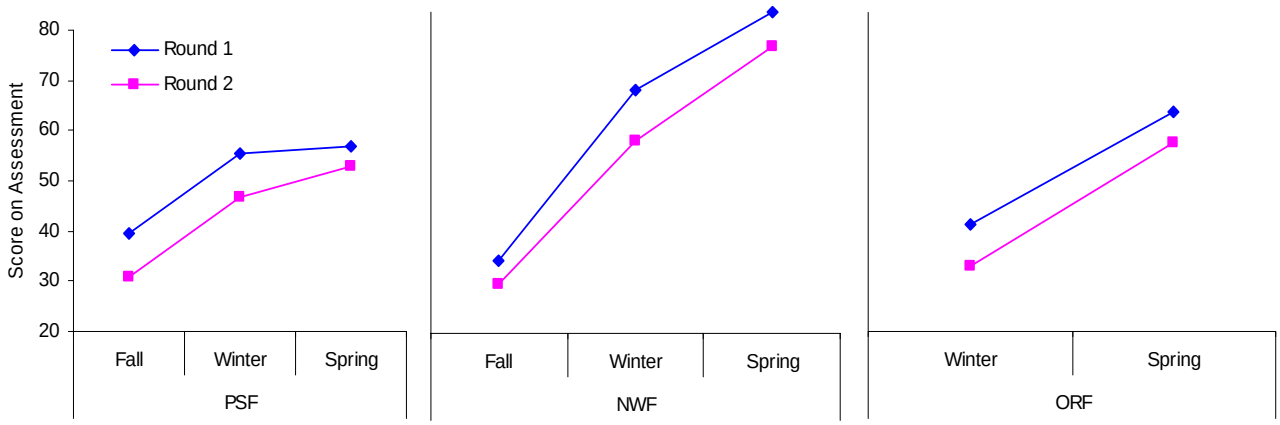

Figure 2.28: Round I and Round II first grade growth trajectory comparison on measures of phonemic awareness (PSF), decoding (NWF), and oral reading fluency (ORF).

the 2006-2007 school year. The achievement difference between the two sets of schools narrowed slightly in phonemic awareness (PSF), but remained relatively constant in decoding (NWF) and reading fluency (ORF).

Figure 2.29 summarizes first grade levels of risk in Round I and Round II schools using decoding

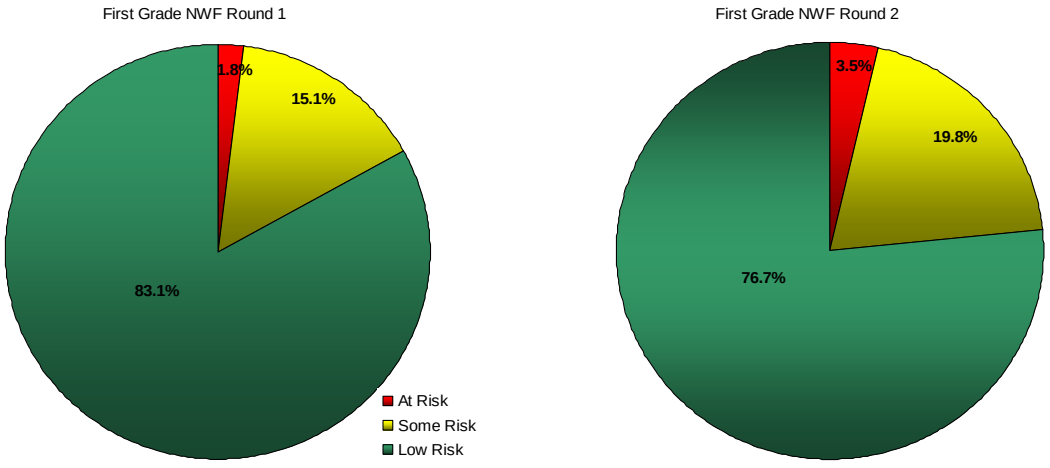

Figure 2.29: First grade risk level comparison between Round I and Round II schools as measured by decoding—Non-word Fluency (NWF).

ability (NWF) as the criteria. Eighty-three percent of first grade students in Round I schools are in the low risk category with less than 2% in the at-risk category. Seventy-six percent are in the low risk category in Round II schools with 3.5% in the at-risk category. Nearly 20% of Round II first grade students are in the some risk category compared with 15% in Round I schools. While Round II schools are lagging behind Round I, it is important to point out that this result is still significantly better than national average. Based on these results it is clear that there needs to be an increased concentration on instruction supporting decoding and reading fluency for first grade students in Round II schools in order to keep up with kindergarten students in Round I schools.

There were sizable differences in the number of first grade students performing below grade level across the three clusters at the beginning of the 2006-2007 school year (see Figure 2.30). Over half of the first grade students in Cluster One were performing below grade level expectations as measured by phonemic awareness (Phoneme Segmentation Fluency—PSF). This was reduced to 24% by the spring assessment cycle as measured by decoding ability (NWF). Over one-quarter of first grade students in Cluster Two were below grade level in the fall with less than 20% below grade level in the spring. Forty-three percent of first grade students in Cluster Three began the school year below grade level. This was reduced to 17% by the end of the school year.

First grade teachers in Nebraska Reading First schools are providing effective instruction to their students as indicated by the decreases in the percentage of students performing below grade level expectations. The most dramatic reductions were shown in Cluster One and Cluster Three.

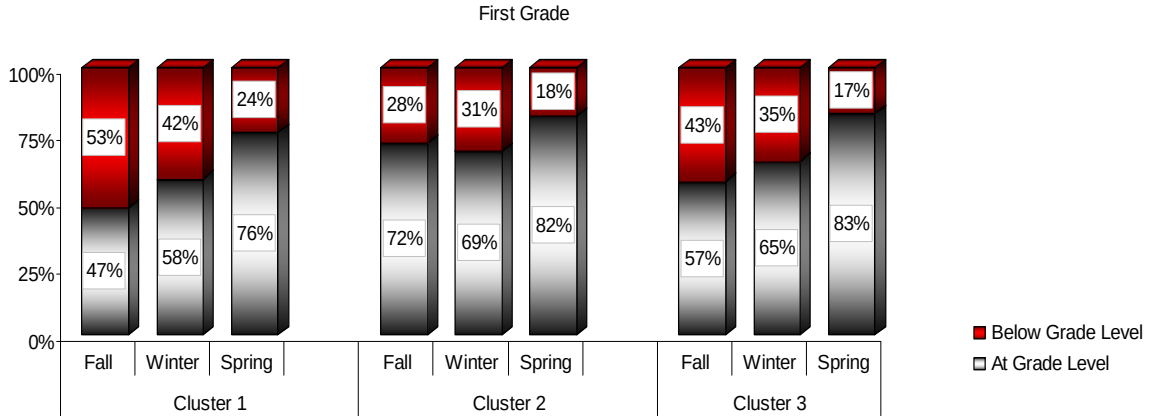

Figure 2.30: Percentage of first grade students at or below grade level based on cluster membership.

SECOND GRADE—ROUND ONE/ROUND TWO COMPARISONS

Comparisons between second grade students in Round I and Round II schools were made on measures of reading fluency (ORF), vocabulary (Gates-McGinitie), and comprehension (Gates-McGinitie). In reading fluency (ORF), second grade students in both sets of schools began the year with nearly the same level of performance. The achievement gap widened throughout the school year with Round I students significantly outperforming Round II students by the spring (see Figure 2.31). This indicates the need for a much stronger focus on reading fluency instruction and practice for second grade students in Round II schools.

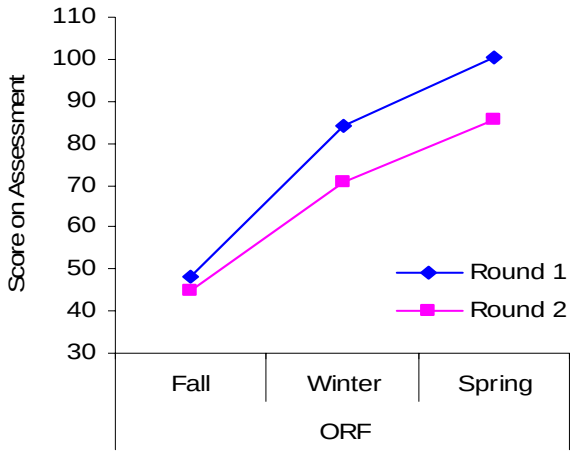

Figure 2.31: Second grade growth trajectory comparison between Round I and Round II schools as measured by reading fluency (ORF).

Students in Round I schools outperformed students in Round II schools on Gates-McGinitie vocabulary and comprehension subtests (see Figure 2.32). The differences on these subtests were not statistically significant.

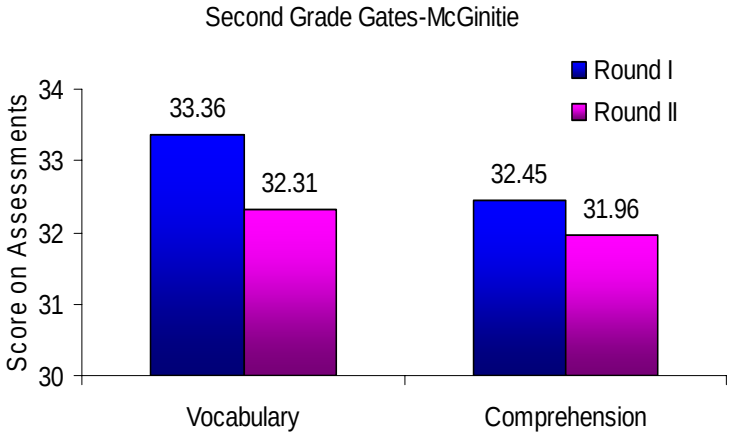

Figure 2.32: Second grade growth trajectory comparison between Round I and Round II schools as measured by Gates-McGinitie Vocabulary and Comprehension subtests.

Figure 2.33 summarizes second grade levels of risk in Round I and Round II schools using reading fluency (ORF) as the criteria. Approximately two-thirds of second grade students in Round I schools are in the low risk category compared to just over one-half in Round II schools. Nearly 20% are in the at-risk category in Round I schools with approximately 30% in Round II schools. Round I schools are better than national average while Round II schools are somewhat below. These figures show that, although there is a lower percentage of at-risk students in Round I schools, both sets of schools need a sustained focus on improving student performance in the reading fluency of second grade students.

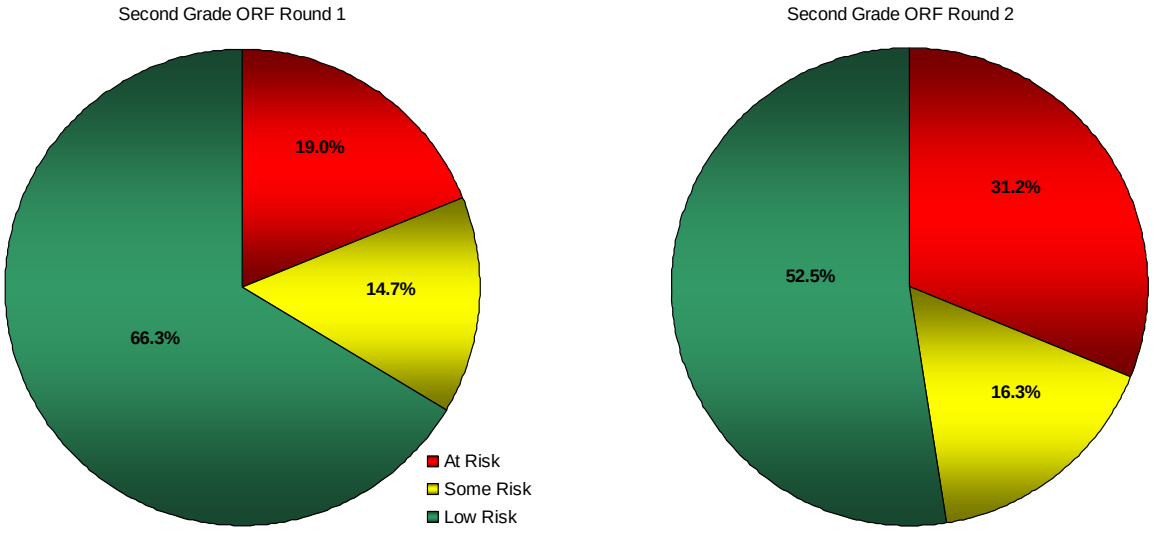

Figure 2.33: Second grade risk level comparison between Round I and Round II schools as measured by reading fluency—(ORF).

Examination of second grade levels of performance across clusters shows sizable difference at the beginning of the 2006-2007 school year (see Figure 2.34). Over 60% of second grade students in Cluster Three began the school year below grade level as measured by reading fluency (Oral Reading Fluency—ORF) compared to approximately 50% in clusters one and two. Although the number of students performing below grade level expectations was reduced across all three clusters by the end of the school year, the reductions were smaller than for kindergarten and first grade. This shows the greater challenge in addressing the reading skills of older students.

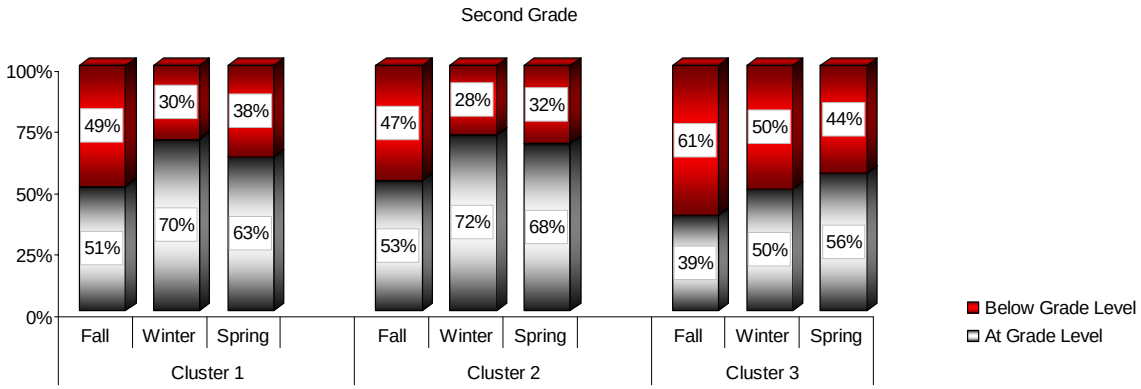

Figure 2.34: Percentage of second grade students at or below grade level based on cluster membership.

THIRD GRADE—ROUND ONE/ROUND TWO COMPARISONS

Comparisons were made between third grade students in Round I and Round II schools on measures of reading fluency (ORF), vocabulary (Gates-McGinitie), and comprehension (Gates-McGinitie). In reading fluency (ORF), third grade students in Round I schools began the 2006-2007 school year at a slightly higher level of performance (see Figure 2.35). Throughout the school year, students in Round I schools exhibited a steeper growth trajectory which widened the achievement gap in reading fluency between the two sets of schools.

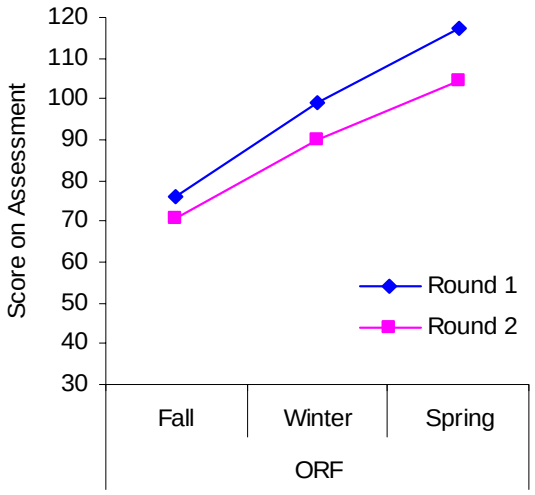

Figure 2.35: Round I and Round II third grade growth trajectory comparison on oral reading fluency (ORF).

Students in Round I schools outperformed students in Round II schools on Gates-McGinitie vocabulary and comprehension subtests (see Figure 2.36). Third grade students in Round I schools significantly outperformed students in Round II schools on the Gates-McGinitie vocabulary subtest. Round I students also performed higher on the Gates-McGinitie comprehension subtest, though these differences were not significant.

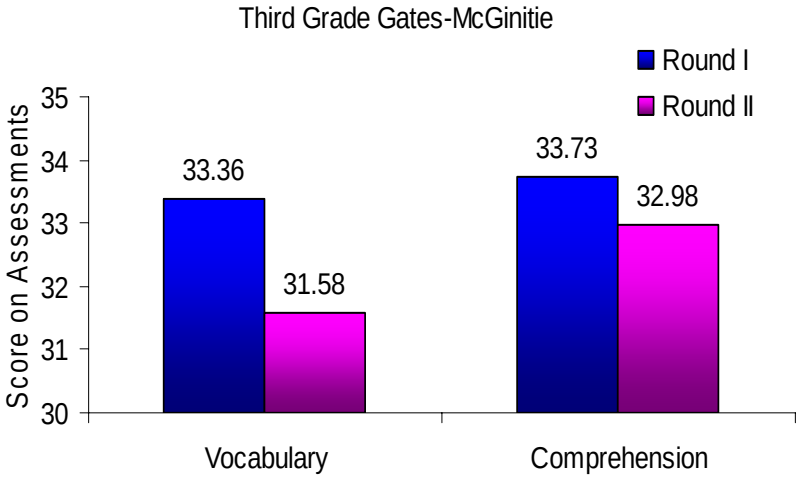

Figure 2.44: Third grade growth trajectory comparison between Round I and Round II schools as measured by Gates-McGinitie Vocabulary and Comprehension subtests.

Figure 2.37 summarizes third grade levels of risk in Round I and Round II schools using reading fluency (ORF) as the criterion. Approximately two-thirds of third grade students in Round I schools are in the low risk category compared to one-half in Round II schools. Fourteen percent (14%) are in the at-risk category in Round I schools with approximately 23% in Round II schools. This is consistent with second grade results and shows the need for greater instructional focus and student practice in the area of reading fluency. As in second grade, Round I schools are performing better than national averages while Round II schools are below them.

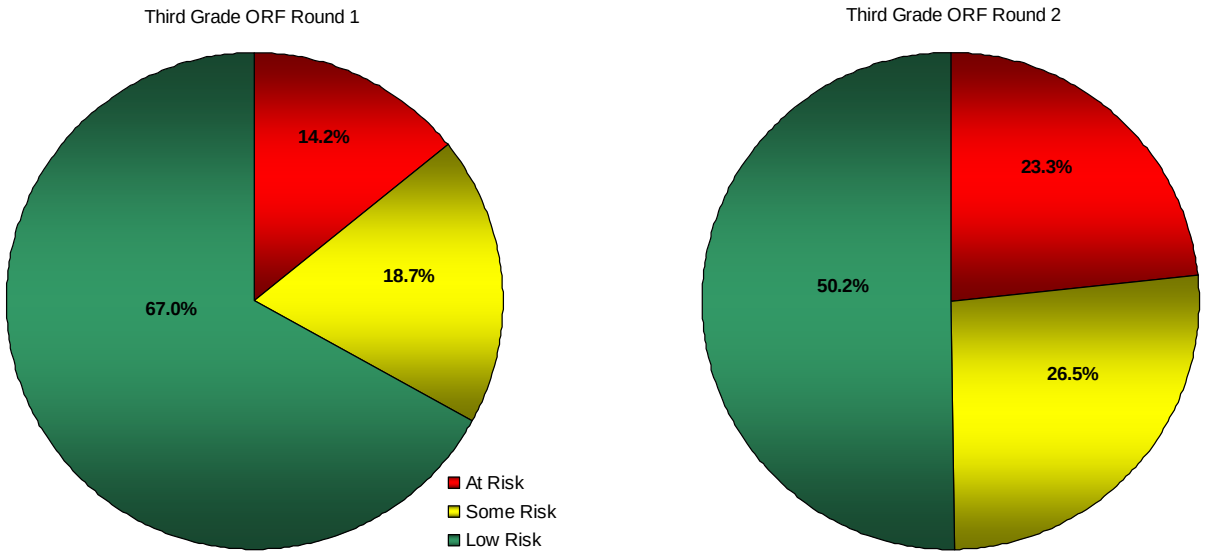

Figure 2.37: Third grade risk level comparison between Round I and Round II schools as measured by reading fluency —(ORF).

Third grade performance across all three clusters was similar to second grade (see Figure 2.38). Clusters Two and Three had a 20% reduction in the number of second grade students performing below grade level by the end of the school year, with only a 10% reduction in Cluster One. The second and third grade results are consistent with past results which have shown a need for a greater emphasis on reading fluency practice across Nebraska Reading First schools.

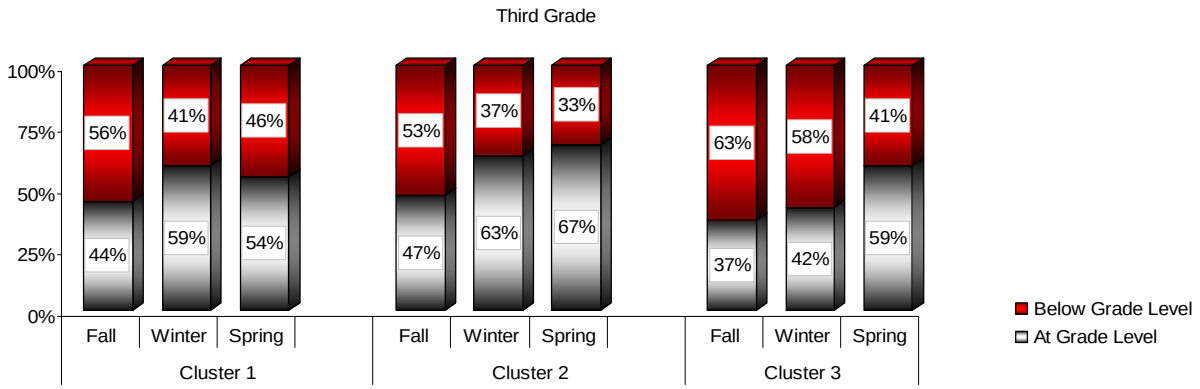

Figure 2.38: Percentage of third grade students at or below grade level based on cluster membership.

SECTION 3

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT ACROSS THREE YEARS OF READING FIRST IMPLEMENTATION

ACHIEVEMENT ACROSS THREE YEARS OF READING FIRST IMPLEMENTATION

A within cohort comparison was conducted between those students whose participation remained constant (STABLE) across all three years of Reading First implementation beginning in kindergarten and the total student population (see Figure 3.1). The total student population (ALL) represents the mean achievement of stable students, mobile students, and those students who participated in fewer than the full three years of Reading First implementation. When interpreting this figure it is important to note that different significant tests were used for each of the assessment cycles represented in the figure. Significant tests were selected because they represent the critical literacy skills at a given point within each grade level.

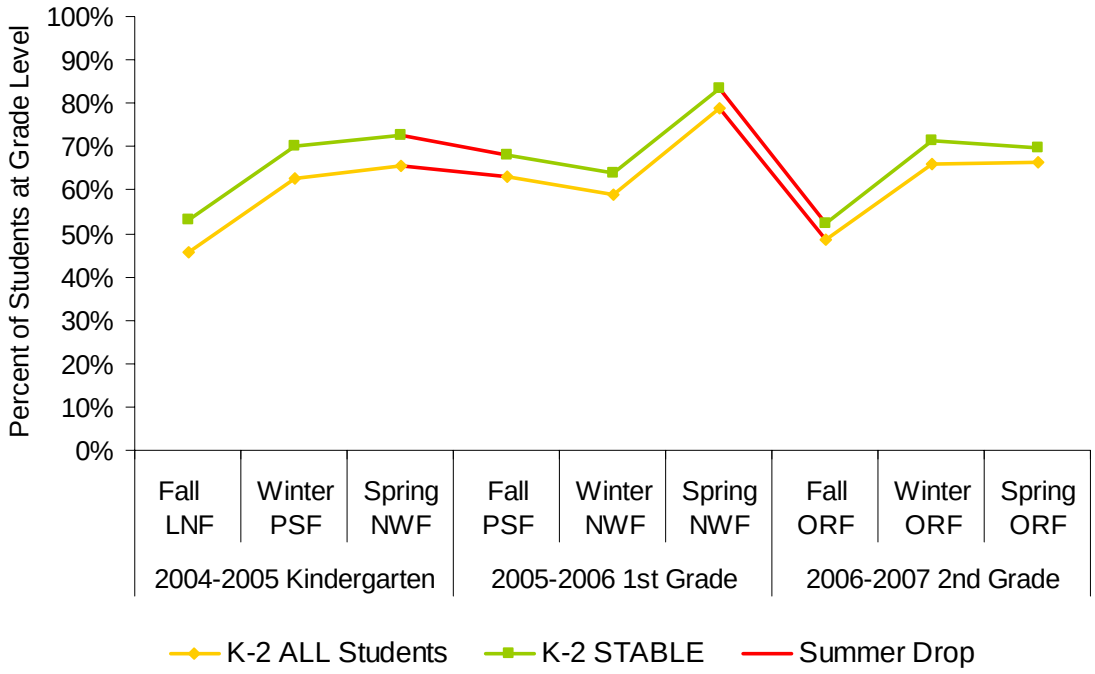

Figure 3.1: Within cohort comparison of students who have remained in Reading First classrooms each year since kindergarten compared to total student population (including mobile).

The cohort of students who were in kindergarten during the first year of Reading First is the first cohort in Nebraska to be part of Reading First throughout their schooling. Student achievement made steady progress during kindergarten with an expected drop after summer break. There was also a drop between the fall and spring assessment cycle as a result of a change in assessment demands from phonemic awareness (PSF) to decoding (NWF). As a result of teacher efforts, the

percentage of students at grade level increased sharply by the spring assessment cycle. Summer break produced a notable drop again. In second grade, the percentage of students who were at grade level increased between the fall and winter assessment cycle, but actually dropped between winter and spring. Throughout the three years of Reading First implementation, those students who continuously attended Reading First classrooms performed consistently higher than the total student population, although the difference did not grow over time.

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Figure 3.2 shows student progress for the cohort who was in first grade during the first year of Reading First implementation in Nebraska. Within this cohort there is a less noticeable difference between those students who continuously attended Reading First schools compared to the cohort who began in kindergarten. A comparison between Figures 3.1 and 3.2 shows second grade students who had the benefit of two previous years in Reading First classrooms performed notably higher at the end of second grade with 8% more students (70% compared to 62%) performing at grade level as measured by reading fluency.

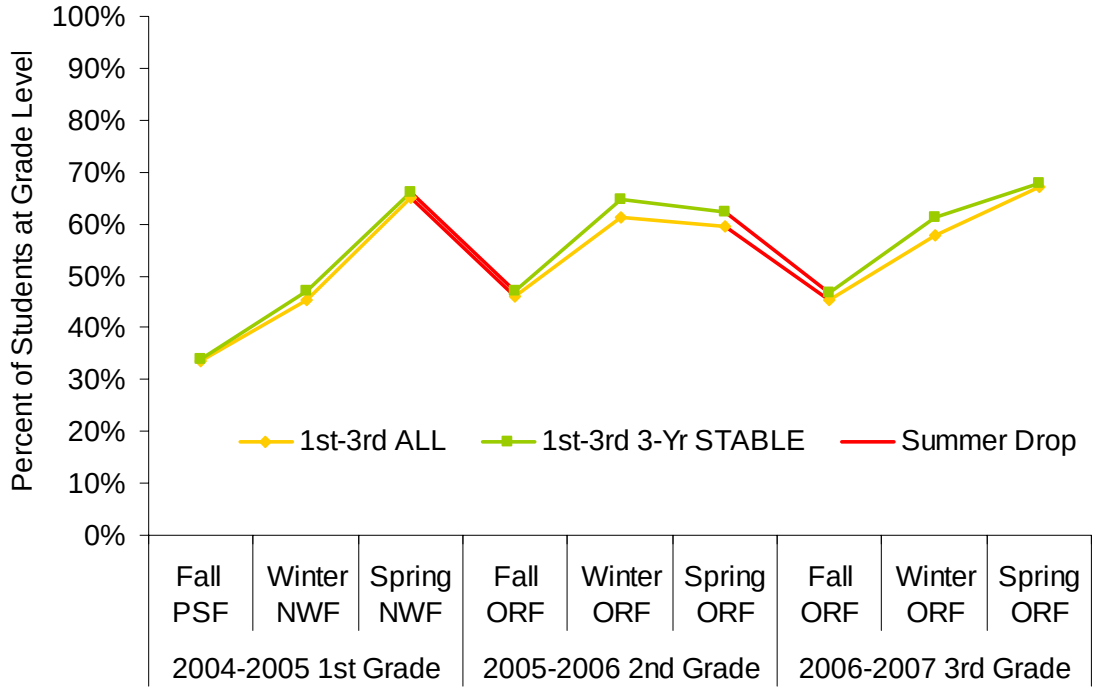


Figure 3.2: Within cohort comparison of students who have remained in Reading First classrooms each year since first grade compared to total student population (including mobile).

SPECIAL EDUCATION CHANGES

To measure the impact of Reading First on special education qualification across three years of implementation, we analyzed the changes in the number of students receiving special education services during each school year within each grade level (see Figure 3.3). The overall expectation of Reading First is that, over time, the proportion of students in Special Education will decline. This decline is expected in the mild disabilities group, which is the largest group in special education. The numbers included here are from a select group of schools that have supplied consistent information about special education placement. For a few schools procedures for identifying and reporting have changed during Reading First implementation, making it impossible to include their data in this analysis.

In kindergarten there was an increase in the number of students receiving special education services during the second year of Reading First implementation. Although there was a drop between years two and three, the number of kindergarten students receiving special education services remains higher than in the first year of implementation. This is likely the result of prompt attention and referral for those students who are not progressing at a rate commensurate with their peers based on timely assessments. There has been a steady decrease in the number of first grade students who received special education services. This is not surprising, as classroom observations and teacher log analysis have shown that first grade teachers are providing the most consistent application of balanced literacy practices. In second grade there has been an increase in the number of students qualifying for special education services

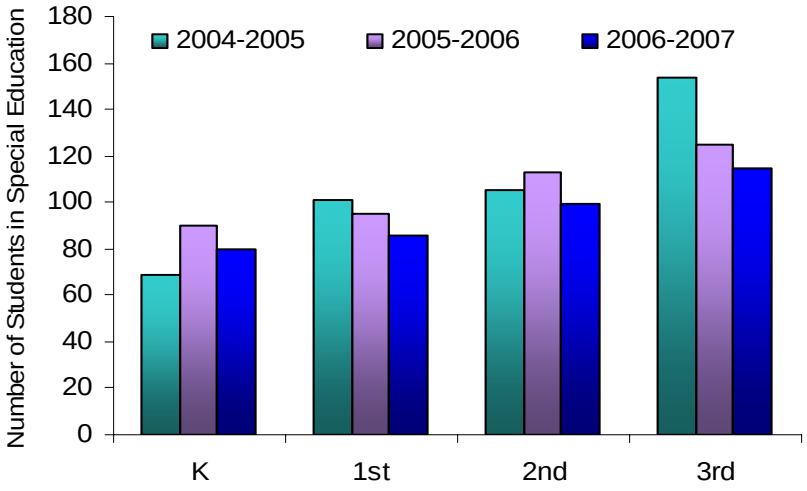


Figure 3.3: Changes in number of children qualifying for Special Education services over the first three years of Reading First implementation in Nebraska.

during the 2005-2006 school year; however, during the current school year, the number of second grade students receiving special education services was lower than in the first year of implementation.

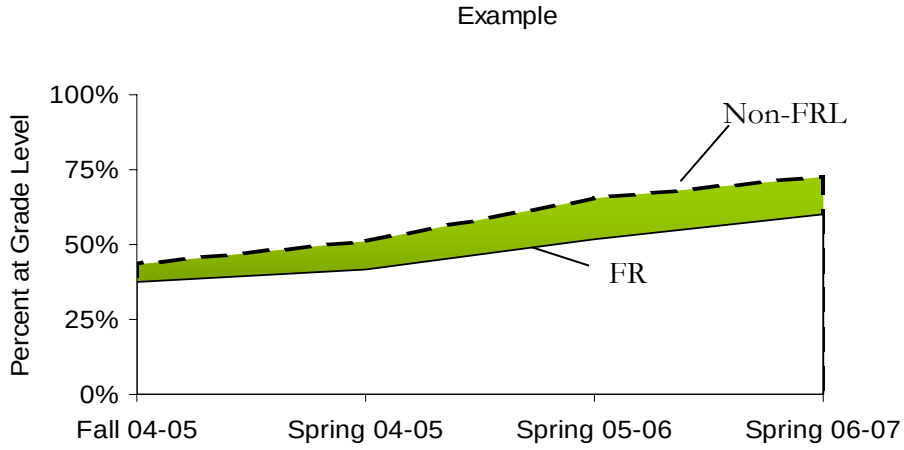
Finally, the number of third grade students receiving special education services has dropped each year since 2004-2005. This is perhaps the best representation of the positive impact of early intervention being provided to students in kindergarten through third grade in Nebraska Reading First classrooms.

ACHIEVEMENT GAPS

One of the key expectations for Reading First is that successful implementation of research-based reading instruction will lead to a reduction in the achievement gaps between the populations considered at-risk and the main stream population. Such reductions are likely to occur when parallel core and other services are lined up to assist those who are not making adequate progress. Since information analyses of classroom practice show that all students benefit from curricular improvement, instructional reform often leads to improved achievement while achievement gaps remain static.

Achievement gaps across the first three years of Reading First implementation were analyzed between students who are classified as English Language Learners (ELL), minorities, economically disadvantaged (FRL), special education, and their peers. Changes in achievement gaps varied by category and across grade levels. Reading First implementation appears to be the most effective at reducing achievement gaps in kindergarten and first grades, with a lesser impact in second and third grades. The gap that remains the most pronounced across all grade levels is between students receiving special education services and their general education counterparts.

Achievement gap figures are presented by category within each grade level. The figure below is an example of the achievement gap figures. Here, the dotted line (usually the top line) is the percentage of students **not** receiving free or reduced lunch who are performing at grade level. The solid line (usually the lower line) is the percentage of students receiving Free/Reduced lunches who are at grade level. The shaded area in between each set of lines is the achievement gap between the two populations.



KINDERGARTEN ACHIEVEMENT GAPS

The figures below show the changes in kindergarten achievement gaps between English Language Learners (ELL), minorities, disadvantaged (FRL), and special education students. The test used for this analysis was Non-Word Fluency (NWF). Based on the results of these analyses, the gaps between ELL/English Only, and FRL/Non-FRL have been significantly reduced since the inception of Reading First implementation. Of great significance is the reversal of achievement gap between white and minority students (81% and 88% at grade level, respectively).

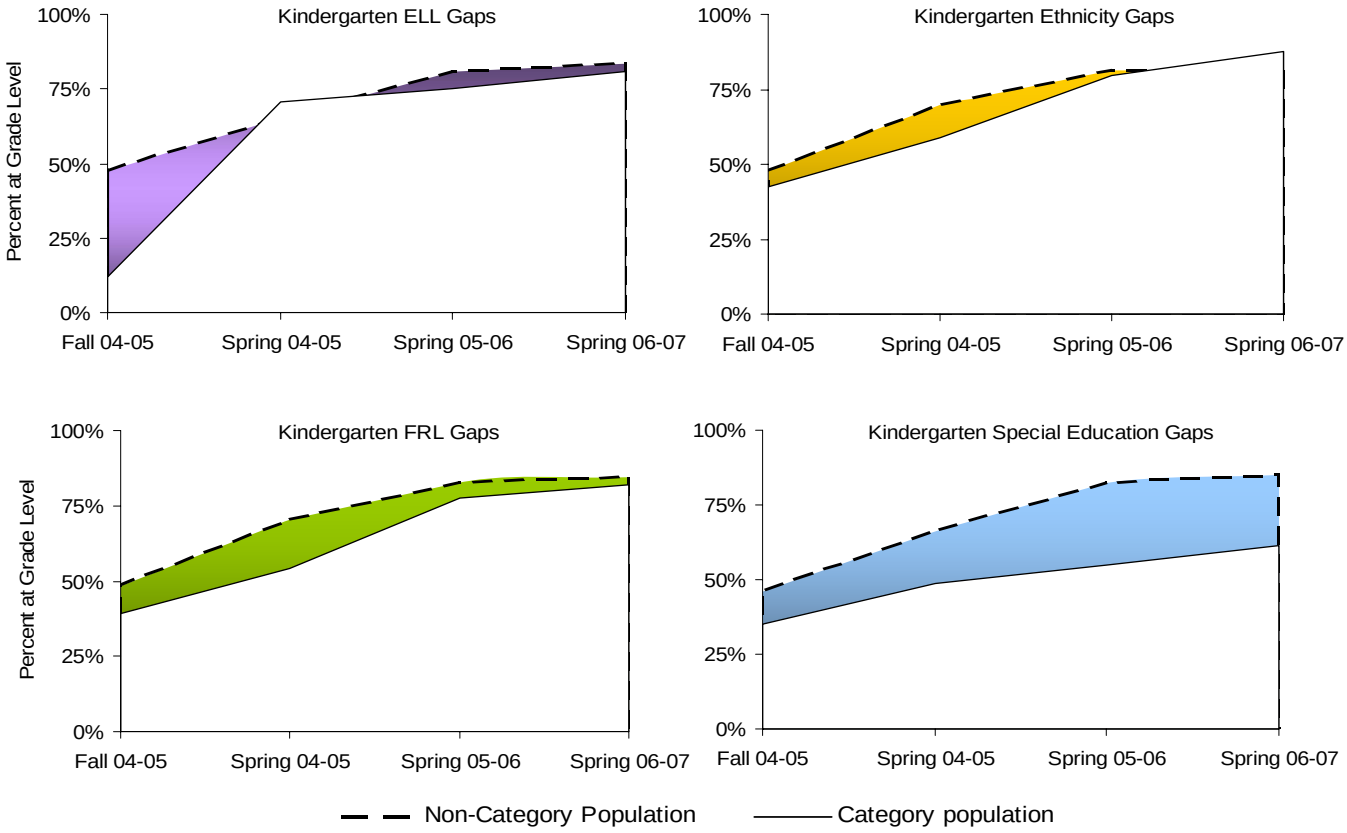


Figure 3.4: Kindergarten achievement gaps by ELL, ethnicity, FRL, and special education status.

The reductions in the achievement gaps represent effective instructional delivery and decision making on the part of kindergarten teachers in Reading First schools throughout the state. It is apparent from these results that kindergarten students in these schools are responding positively to changes in the quality and type of instruction being offered in these classrooms. Even though

significant reductions have been made for most students, the achievement gap between students receiving special education services and their general education peers is actually widening. This is likely the result of mainstream students' ability to take advantage of instruction and the underlying difficulties of students with disabilities that make such gains harder. We must also recognize that while the gap widened overall, special education students are making positive gains as compared to the baseline year.

FIRST GRADE ACHIEVEMENT GAPS

The figures below represent changes in first grade achievement gaps between English Language Learners (ELL), minorities, disadvantaged (FRL), and special education. The assessment used for this analysis was Non-Word Fluency (NWF). Based on the results of these analyses, the gaps between ELL/English Only, minority/white, and FRL/Non-FRL have nearly disappeared since the inception of Reading First implementation. Consistent with results in kindergarten, the achievement gap between students receiving special education services and their general education peers actually widened in the spring of the 2005-2006 school year and narrowed somewhat during the current school year.

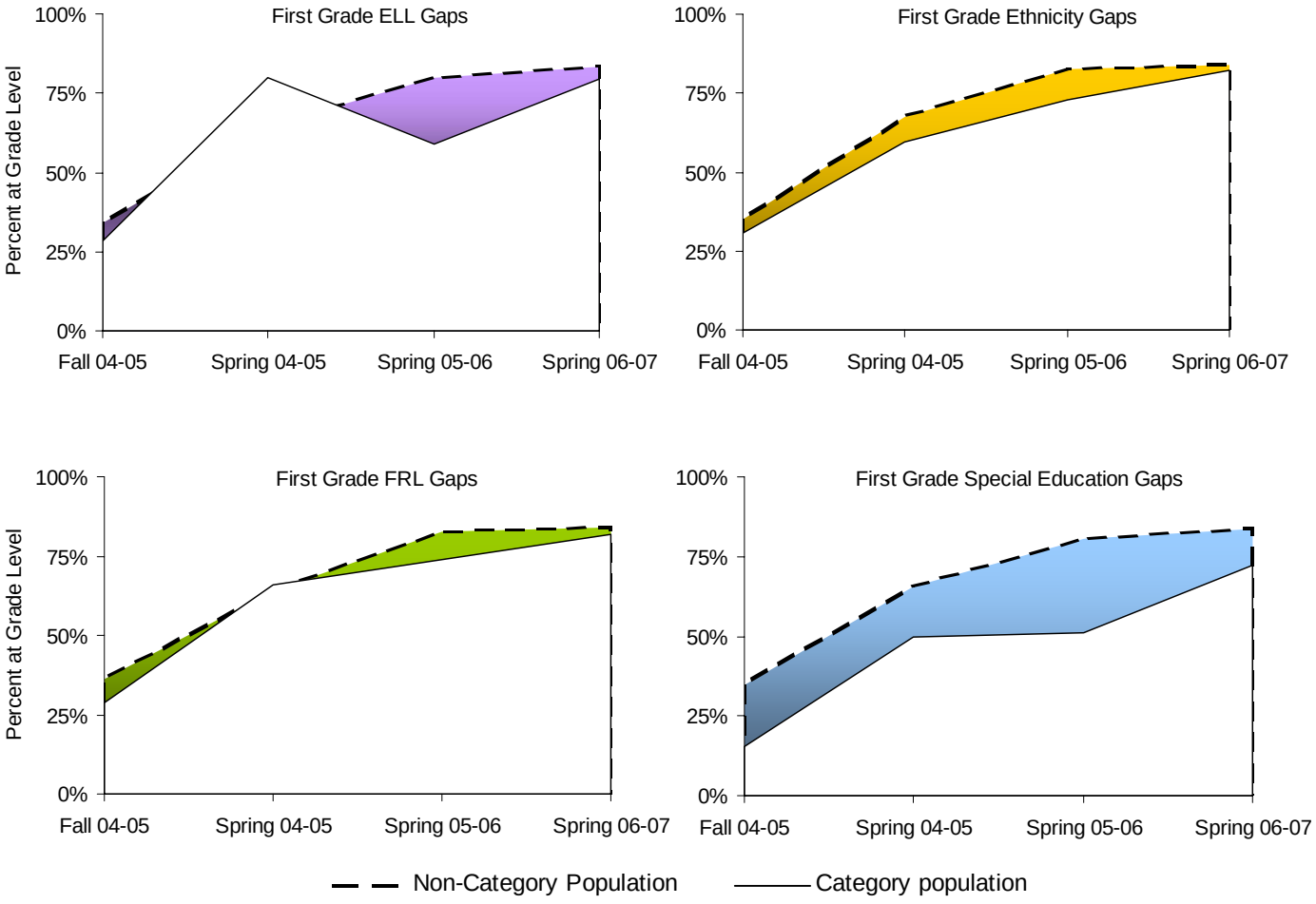


Figure 3.5: First grade achievement gaps by ELL, ethnicity, FRL, and special education status.

SECOND GRADE ACHIEVEMENT GAPS

The figures below represent changes in second grade achievement gaps between English Language Learners (ELL), minorities, disadvantaged (FRL), and special education students. The assessment used for this analysis was Oral Reading Fluency (ORF). Unlike kindergarten and first grade, the results of these analyses show that the gaps between these groups have actually increased since the inception of Reading First implementation. This is most notable in the ELL and special education

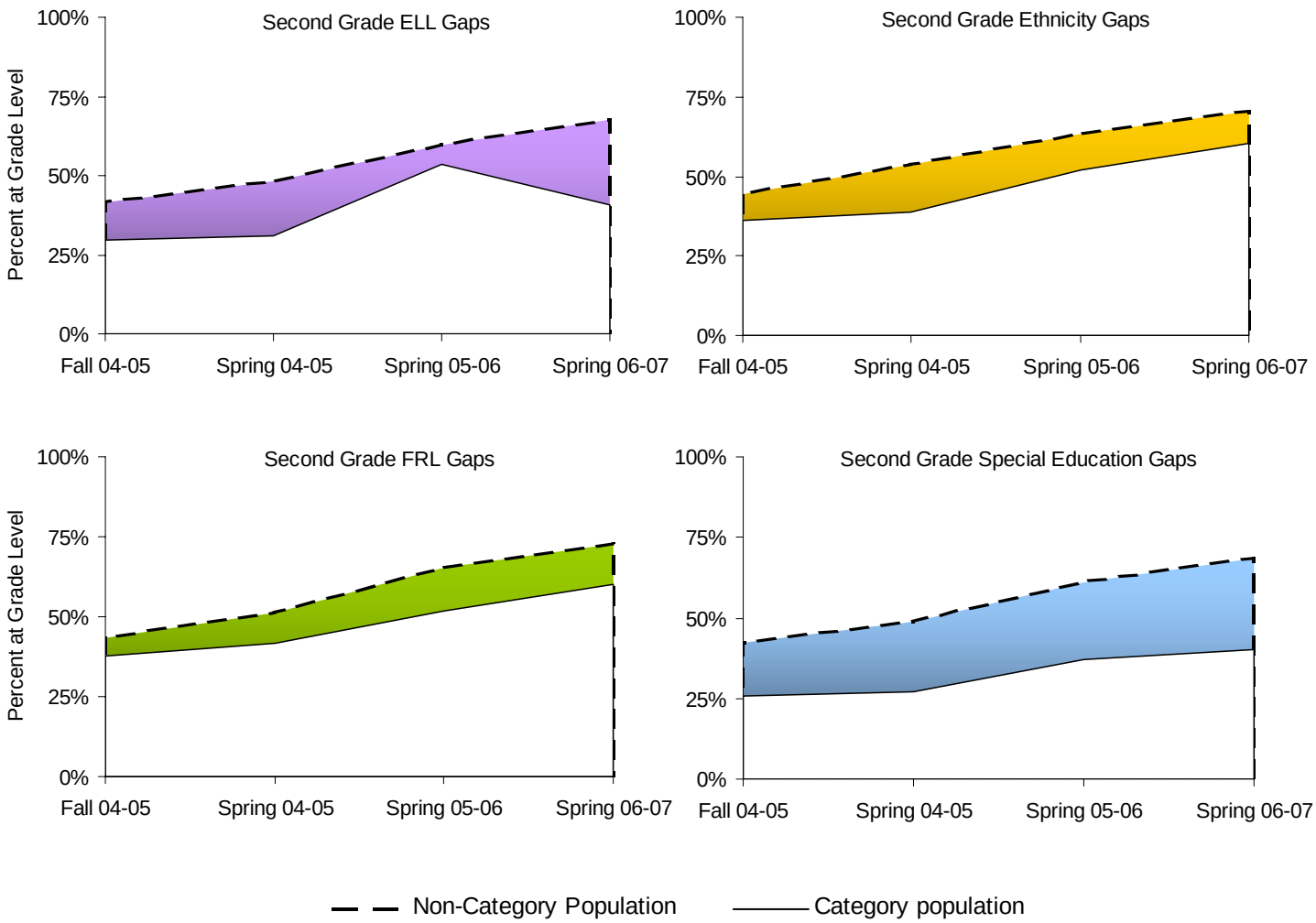


Figure 3.6: Second grade achievement gaps by ELL, ethnicity, FRL, and special education status.

categories. There was some narrowing of the gap for ELL and general population students in the spring of the 2005-2006 school year, but the gap has actually widened in the spring of the current school year. The gap between students receiving special education services and their general

education peers has widened each year since Reading First began in these schools. Just as with kindergarten and first grade, this is likely the result of mainstream students' ability to take advantage of instruction and the underlying difficulties of students with disabilities that make such gains more difficult.

These results highlight the slower progress students make in more advanced literacy skills, and the challenge of using parallel core and interventions with these skills. As a program, Nebraska's Reading First leadership at the school and state level must place a priority on creating and supporting the structures that would help at-risk students reduce the achievement gap.

THIRD GRADE ACHIEVEMENT GAPS

The figures below represent changes in third grade achievement gaps between English Language Learners (ELL), minorities, disadvantaged (FRL), and special education students compared to non-category populations. The assessment used for this analysis was Oral Reading Fluency (ORF). The achievement gaps are narrowing (some fluctuations are evident) but not at a fast enough pace. There has been a minimal increase in the achievement gap between students receiving FRL and their non-category peers since the inception of Reading First implementation. The achievement gap between students receiving special education and their general education peers has remained relatively unchanged.

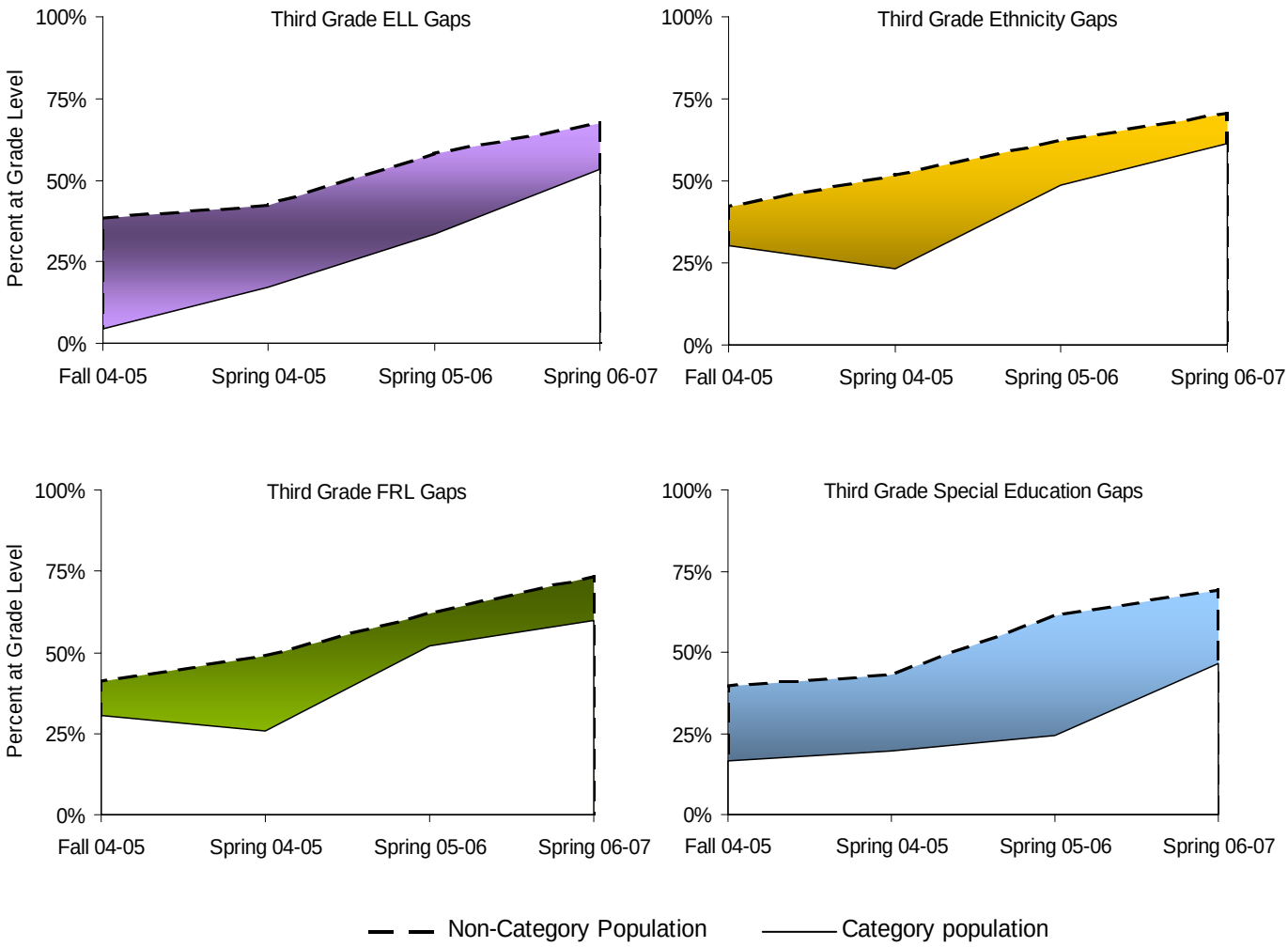


Figure 3.7: Third grade achievement gaps by ELL, ethnicity, FRL, and special education status.

SECTION 4

TEACHER-BASED FACTORS

TEACHER LOGS

In the spring, teachers in Nebraska Reading First schools completed teacher logs which report major and minor focus of specific areas of literacy instruction. The logs asked teachers to indicate the level of focus that their instruction gave to phonemic awareness, phonics instruction, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. These logs provide valuable insight into actual daily classroom practices by teachers in these schools in addition to our observations. For the purpose of the current report, teacher responses will be reported at each grade level by cluster.

PHONEMIC AWARENESS

There was a good deal of variance in teacher-reported focus on phonemic awareness across grade levels and by clusters (see Figure 4.1). The differences between grade levels are expected because the level of concentration on phonemic awareness instruction decreases as grade levels increase. The differences between clusters within each grade level are more noteworthy, as this information provides insight into how these teachers are serving the unique needs of children in their schools.

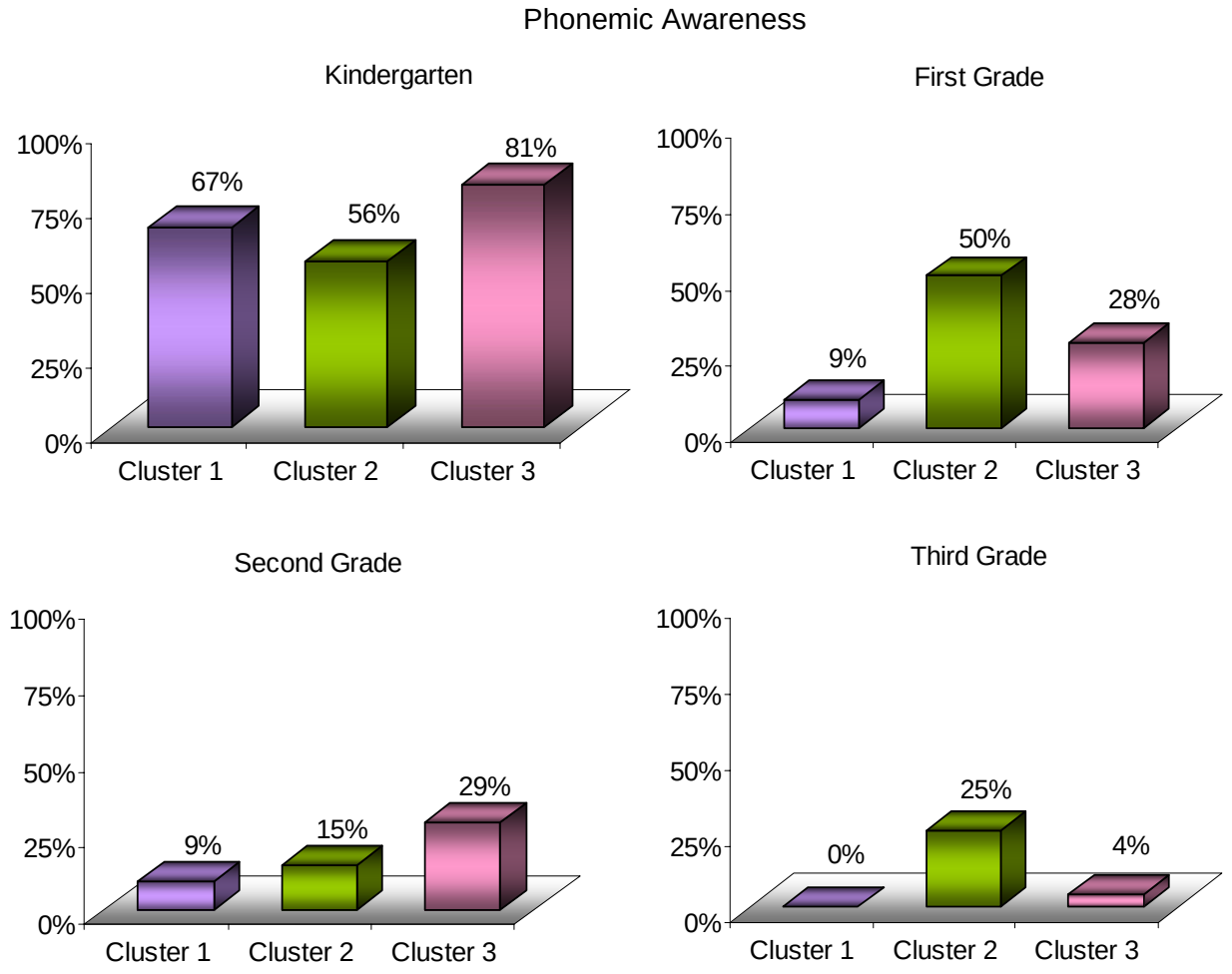


Figure 4.1: Percentage of teachers who reported a major focus on phonemic awareness instruction in kindergarten through third grade by clusters.

Kindergarten teachers in Cluster One report a high emphasis on phonemic awareness, but relatively little focus in first through third grades. Kindergarten teachers in Cluster Two appear to maintain a consistently high level of phonemic awareness instruction between kindergarten and first grades. Cluster Three has the highest percentage of teacher reported focus on phonemic awareness in kindergarten, but a much lower emphasis in first grade. Figure 4.2 shows the percentage of teachers within each cluster who reported that their instruction in phonemic awareness included identification of upper and lowercase letters, identifying rhyming words, saying initial, final, and vowel sounds, and segmenting/blending of real words. For example, of the kindergarten teachers in Cluster One who reported a major focus on phonemic awareness instruction, all reported their instruction included identification of upper and lowercase letters, 89% included identifying rhyming words, 79% included saying initial, final, and vowel sounds, and 71% included segmenting/blending of real words.

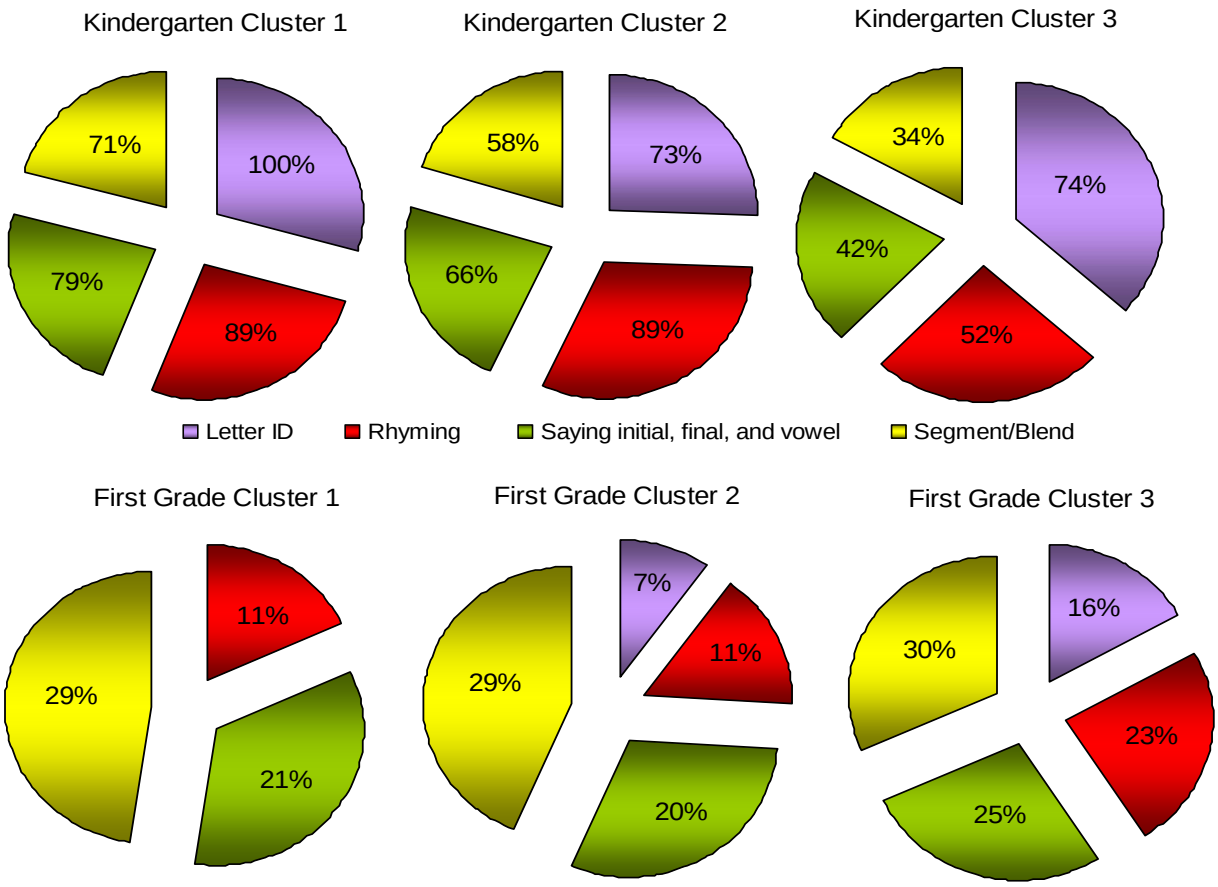


Figure 4.2: Percentage of kindergarten and first grade teacher reported focus on phonemic awareness instruction as related to identification of upper/lowercase letters, rhyming, saying initial, final and vowel sounds, and segmenting/blending by clusters.

WORD LEVEL WORK

There was also a fair amount of variance in teacher reported focus on word level work across grade levels and by clusters (see Figure 4.3). Just as with phonemic awareness, the differences between grade levels are expected because the level of concentration on word level work decreases as grade levels increase. In kindergarten, a high percentage of teachers reported a major focus on word level work, with the highest percentage in all three clusters. In Cluster One there was an increase in the teacher reported focus on word level work in first grade. In Cluster Two, teachers in kindergarten and first grade reported a similar degree of focus in this area. There was notably less focus on word level work in Cluster Three between kindergarten and first grade. The level of focus in first grade was certainly within a reasonable range for this age group in the spring of the school year.

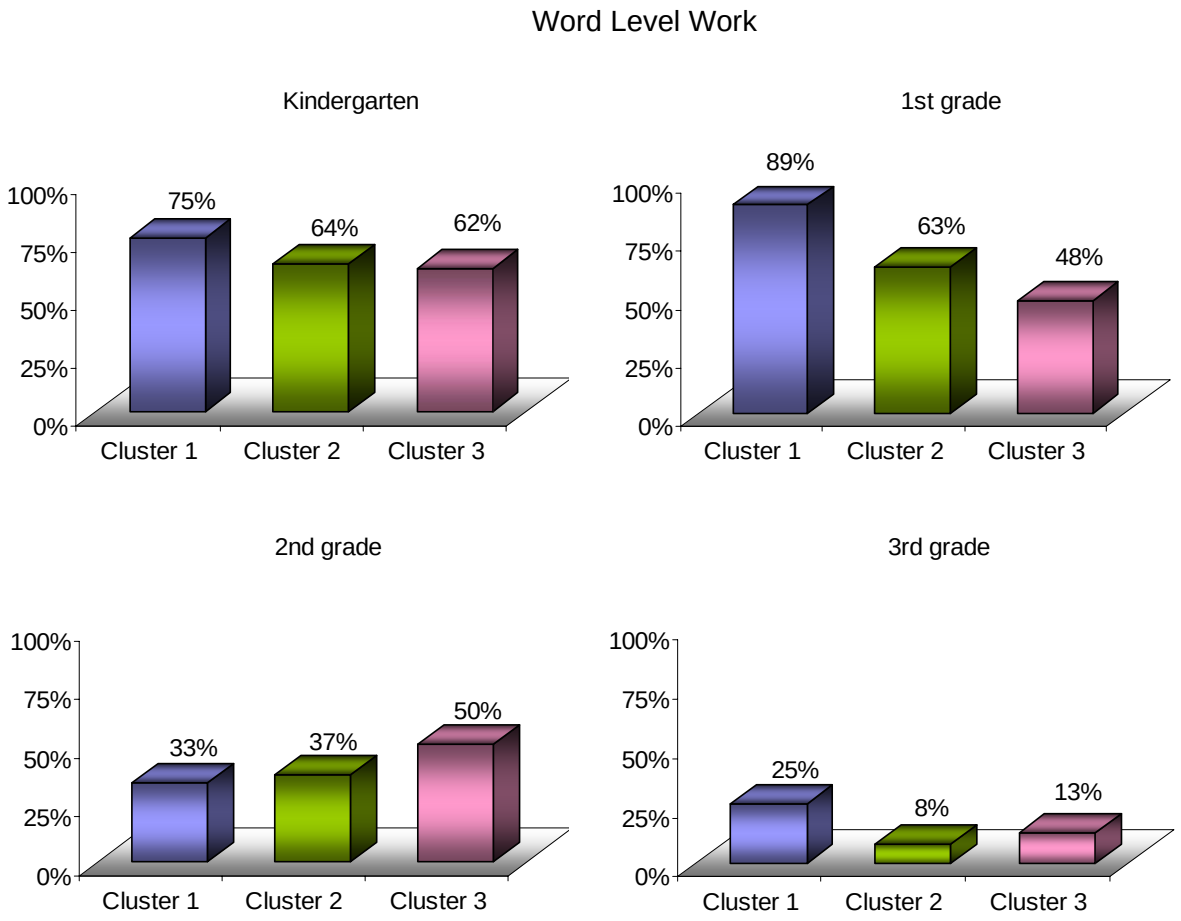


Figure 4.3: Percentage of teachers who reported a major focus on word level work in kindergarten through third grade by clusters.

Since word level work has greatest relevance to kindergarten and first grade students, a breakdown of specific areas of focus is provided in Figure 4.4. These figures show the percentage of teachers within each cluster who reported that their instruction in word level work included isolating words using letter sound correspondence, segmenting/blending letters with sounds, instruction in sight words, and examination of word families.

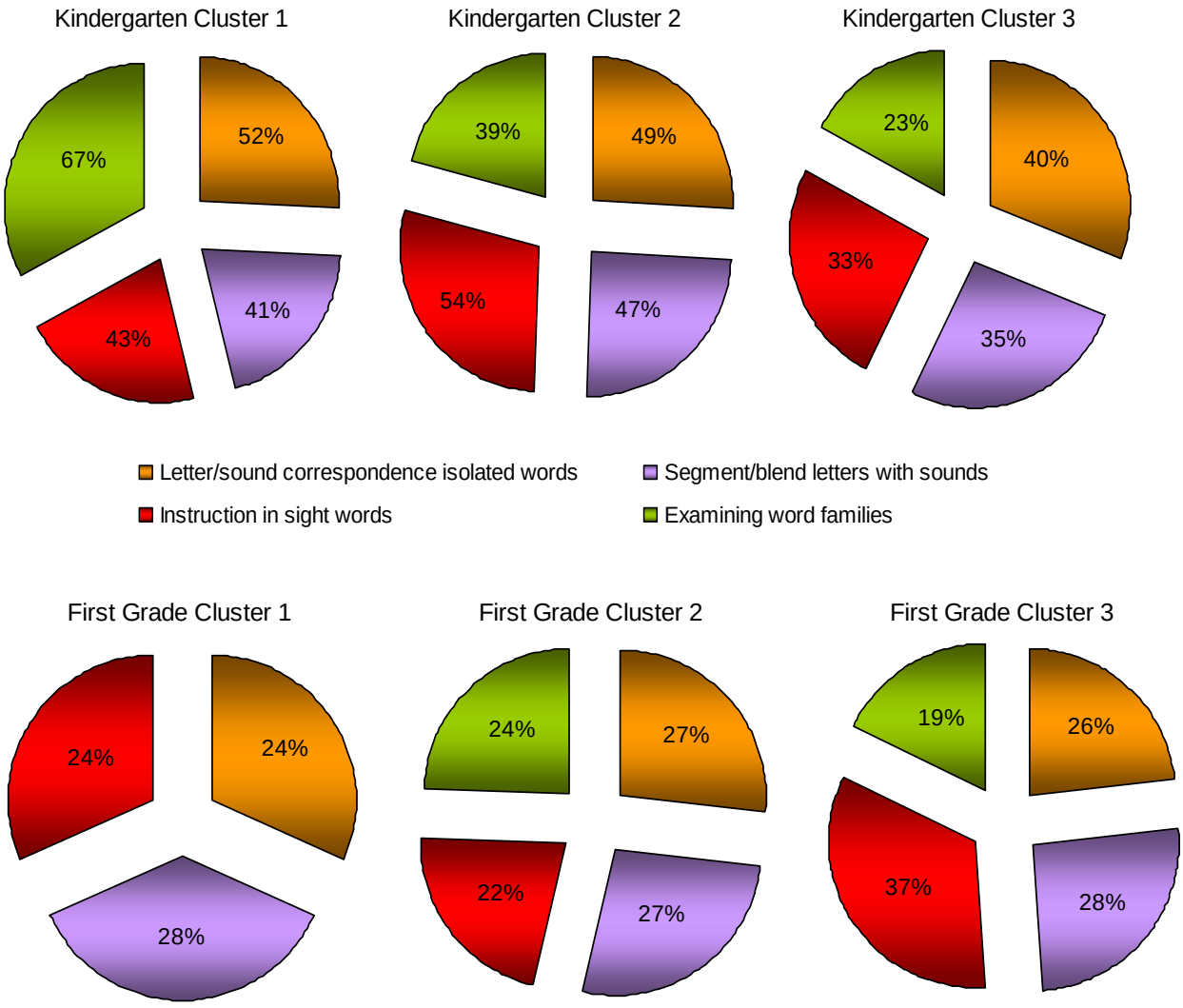


Figure 4.4: Percentage of kindergarten and first grade teacher reported focus on word level work as related to letter/sound correspondence, segmenting/blending, sight word instruction, and examination of word families by clusters.

FLUENCY

Teacher reports of focus on fluency instruction across grade levels and by clusters are reported in Figure 4.5. Of greatest significance were the differences between clusters reported in grade three. A high percentage of **third grade** teachers in Cluster One and Cluster Two reported a major focus on fluency instruction whereas less than half of the teachers in Cluster Three reported a focus in this area. This emphasis helps explain some of the challenging results in third grade.

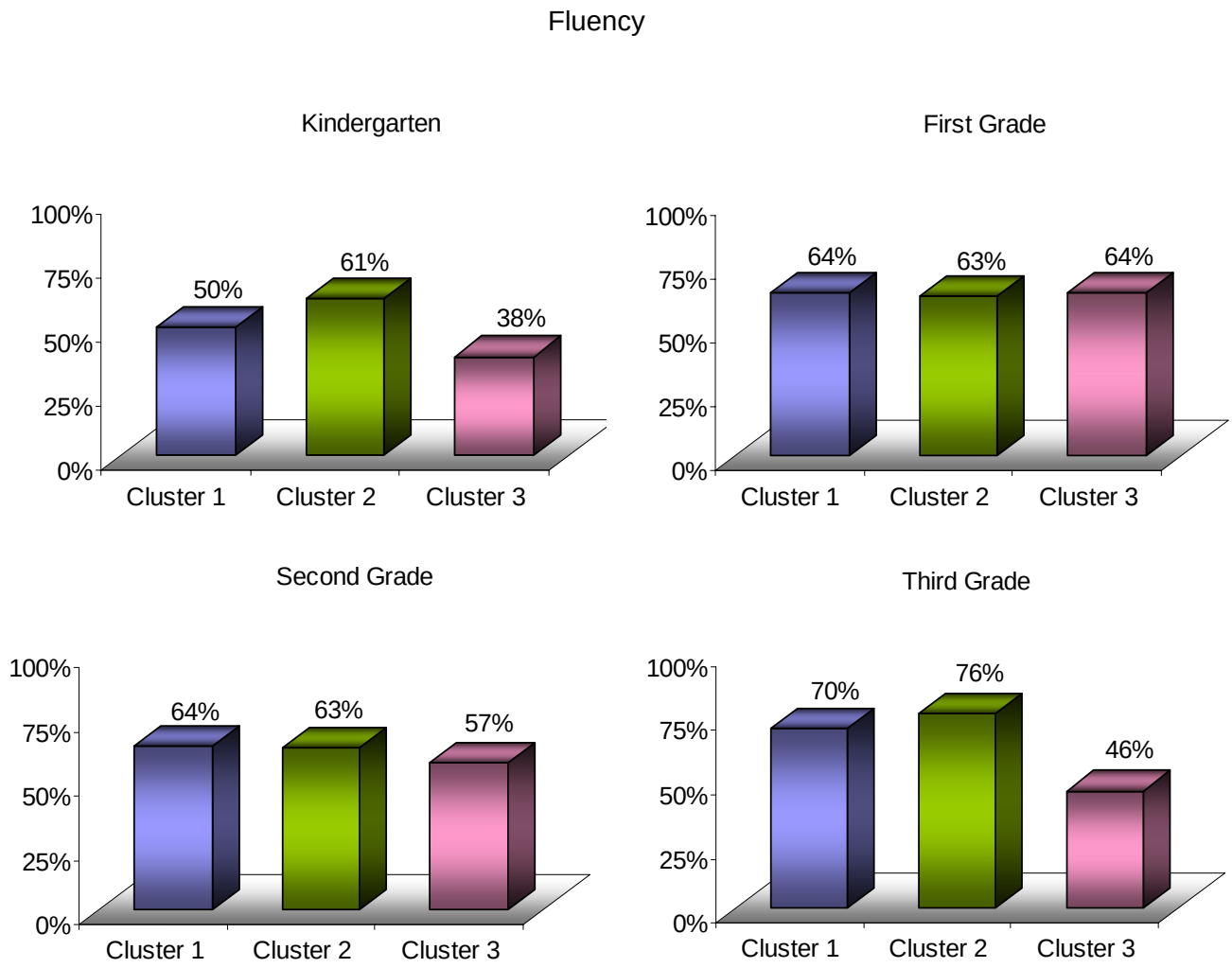


Figure 4.5: Percentage of teachers who reported a major focus on fluency instruction in kindergarten through third grade by clusters.

Since reading fluency has greatest relevance to second and third grade students, a breakdown of specific areas of focus are provided in Figure 4.6. According to second grade teacher reports, there is a balanced emphasis on repeated readings, paired reading, and progress monitoring. The percentage of teachers who reported a focus on independent reading across all three clusters is extremely low. Ideally, students should be given the opportunity for independent reading practice every day in school.

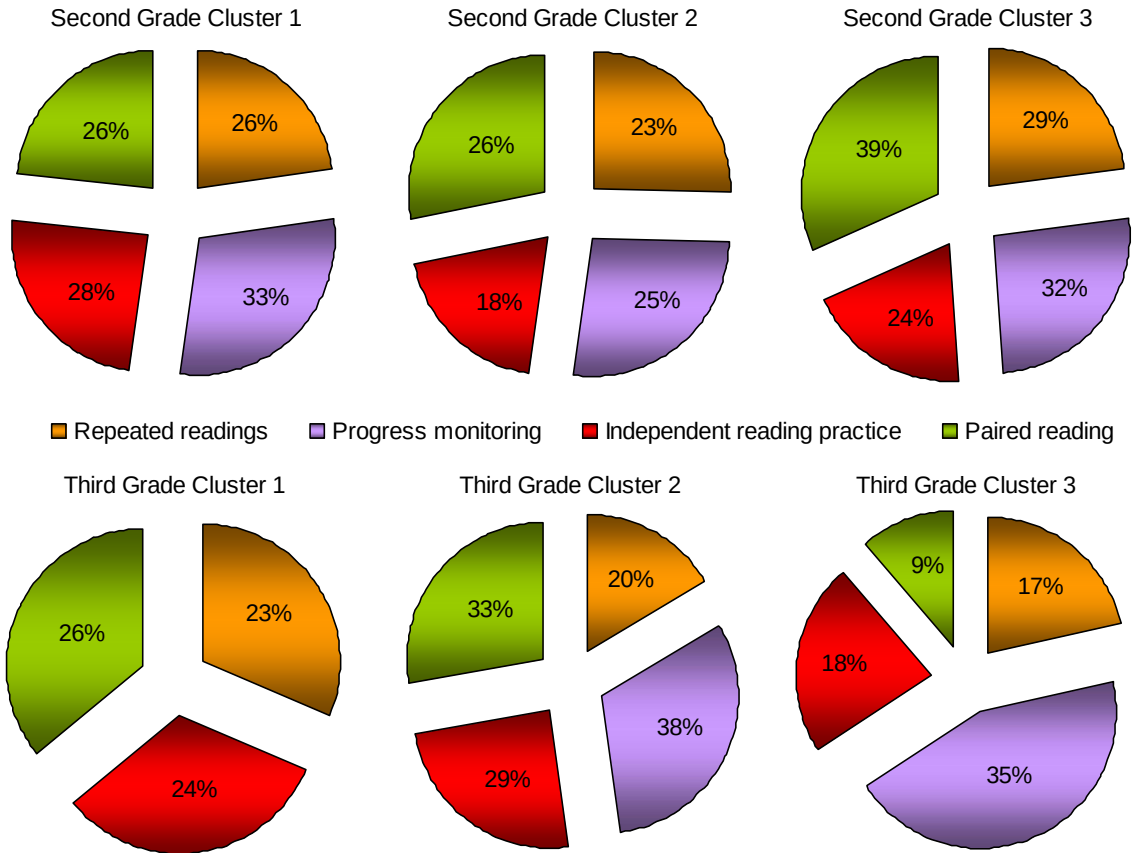


Figure 4.6: Percentage of second and third grade teacher reported focus on fluency instruction as related to repeated reading, progress monitoring, independent reading practice, and paired reading by clusters.

Third grade teachers across the three clusters reported vastly different levels of focus in fluency instruction. No teachers in Cluster One reported a focus on progress monitoring, compared to over one-third of teachers in Cluster Two and Cluster Three. Progress monitoring is an integral area of fluency instruction, as it allows students and teachers to set goals, as well as offering students a graphical depiction of growth. Just as with second grade teacher reports, a low percentage of third grade teachers across clusters reported a focus on independent reading practice.

VOCABULARY

Teacher reports of focus on vocabulary instruction across grade levels and by clusters are reported in Figure 4.7. There was a good deal of variance between teacher reported focus on vocabulary instruction in kindergarten and third grade in Cluster One and Cluster Two. Fifty-eight percent (58%) of kindergarten teachers in Cluster One reported a major focus on vocabulary instruction, as compared to 22% and 27% in Cluster Two and Cluster Three, respectively. Eighty percent (80%) of third grade teachers in Cluster One reported a major focus on vocabulary instruction, as compared to just over 50% in Cluster Two and Cluster Three.

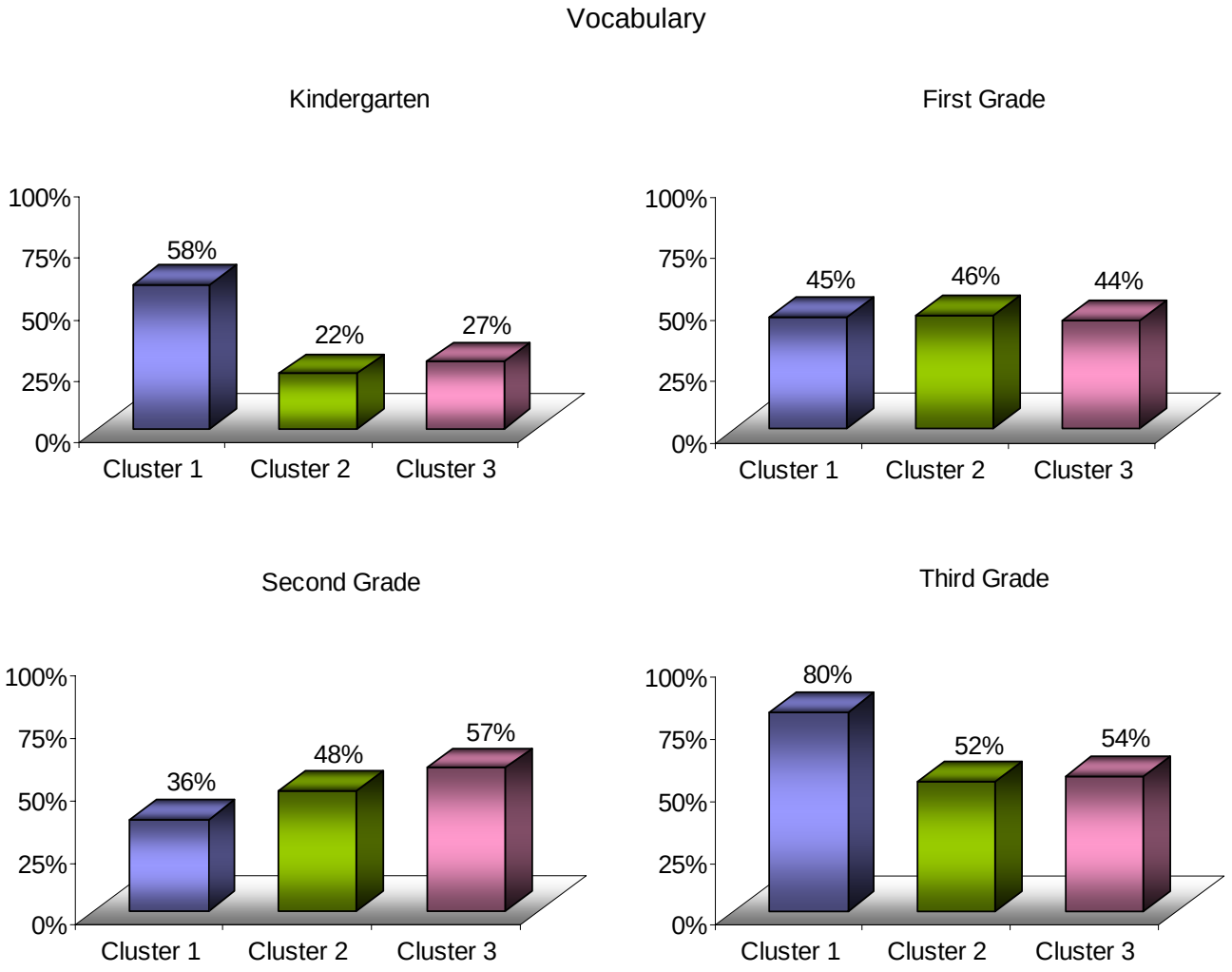


Figure 4.7: Percentage of teachers who reported a major focus on vocabulary instruction in kindergarten through third grade by clusters.

These figures below show the percentage of kindergarten and first grade teachers within each cluster who reported that their instruction in vocabulary included pre-teaching vocabulary, dictionary use, use of context, and semantic mapping. Because of little variability between clusters, teacher reports of vocabulary instruction as related to affixes, antonyms/synonyms, and compound words are not reported. For this reason some of the percentages represented in each pie may be less than one-hundred percent.

There was a great degree of variability between kindergarten teacher reports across the three clusters with regard to the focus of their vocabulary instruction. Only kindergarten teachers in Cluster Three reported using semantic mapping, which is a very beneficial method of helping students understand new vocabulary via visual representation of connections between concepts. Thirty-one (31%) percent of kindergarten teachers in Cluster Three reported using a dictionary to confirm meanings which is extraordinarily high, especially for this grade level.

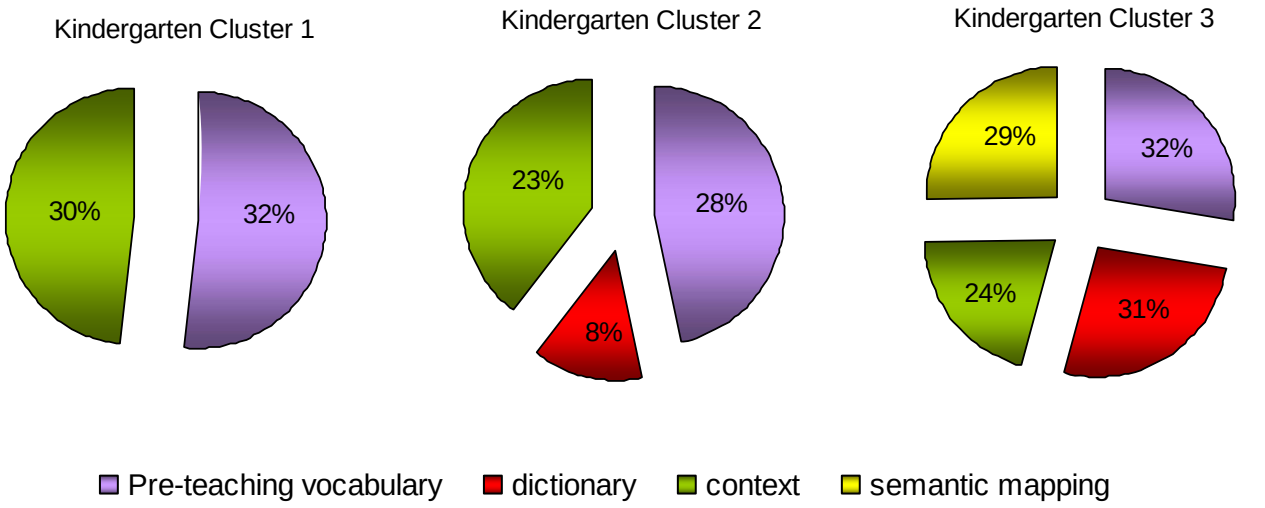


Figure 4.8: Percentage of kindergarten teacher reported focus on pre-teaching vocabulary, dictionary use, use of context cues, and semantic mapping by clusters.

Consistent with teacher reports across clusters in kindergarten, no teachers in Cluster One or Cluster Two reported a focus on semantic mapping. All three clusters reported similar levels of vocabulary instruction using dictionaries, context cues, and activating prior knowledge.

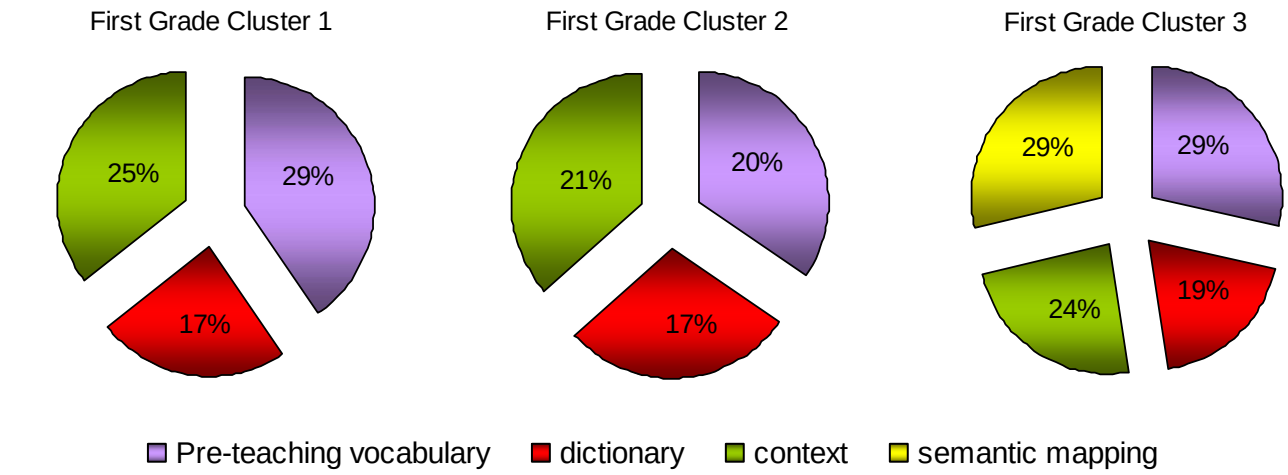


Figure 4.9: Percentage of first grade teacher reported focus on pre-teaching vocabulary, dictionary use, use of context cues, and semantic mapping by clusters.

Second grade teachers in Cluster Three report a good balance of pre-teaching vocabulary, context cues, semantic mapping, and dictionary use (see Figure 4.10). Just as with reports in kindergarten and first grade, second grade teachers in Cluster One and Cluster Two reported no emphasis on semantic mapping. Finally, second grade teachers in Cluster One reported an extremely high focus on the use of dictionaries to confirm meanings.

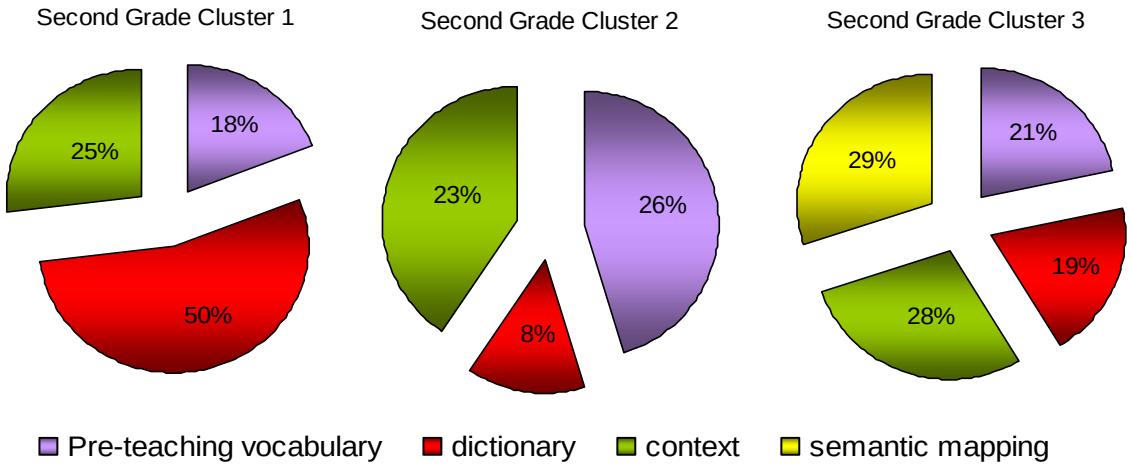


Figure 4.10: Percentage of second grade teacher reported focus on pre-teaching vocabulary, dictionary use, use of context cues, and semantic mapping by clusters.

Third grade teachers across all three clusters reported using pre-teaching, context cues, and semantic mapping as a part of their vocabulary instruction (see Figure 4.11). Of the teachers who reported a major focus on vocabulary instruction in Cluster One and Cluster Two, 100% reported making use of semantic mapping. A high percentage of third grade teachers in all three clusters reported dictionary use.

Dictionary use can be an important tool to discover word meanings, but caution must be used. Proper dictionary use must be modeled by teachers in order to allow students to understand that words often have multiple meanings. Selecting the correct meaning is challenging for many students, which is why dictionary use must be carefully monitored by classroom teachers.

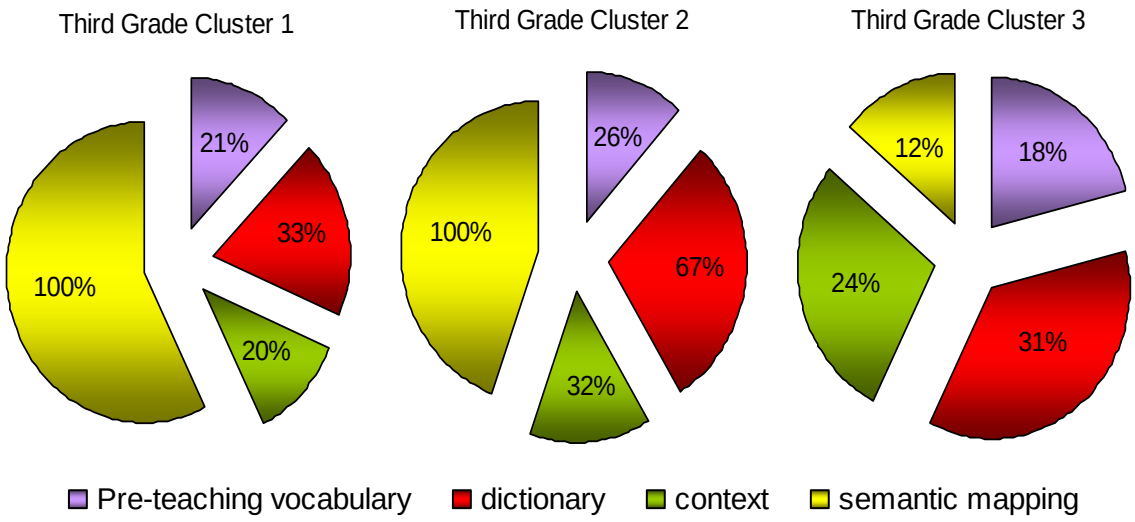


Figure 4.11: Percentage of third grade teacher reported focus on pre-teaching vocabulary, dictionary use, context use, and semantic mapping by clusters.

COMPREHENSION

Teacher reports of focus on comprehension instruction across grade levels and by clusters are reported in Figure 4.12. The highest percentage of teachers who reported a major focus on comprehension instruction was in second grade classrooms. Fifty percent (50%) or more first grade teachers reported a major focus on comprehension, while third grade teachers reported a relatively low level of focus across all three clusters.

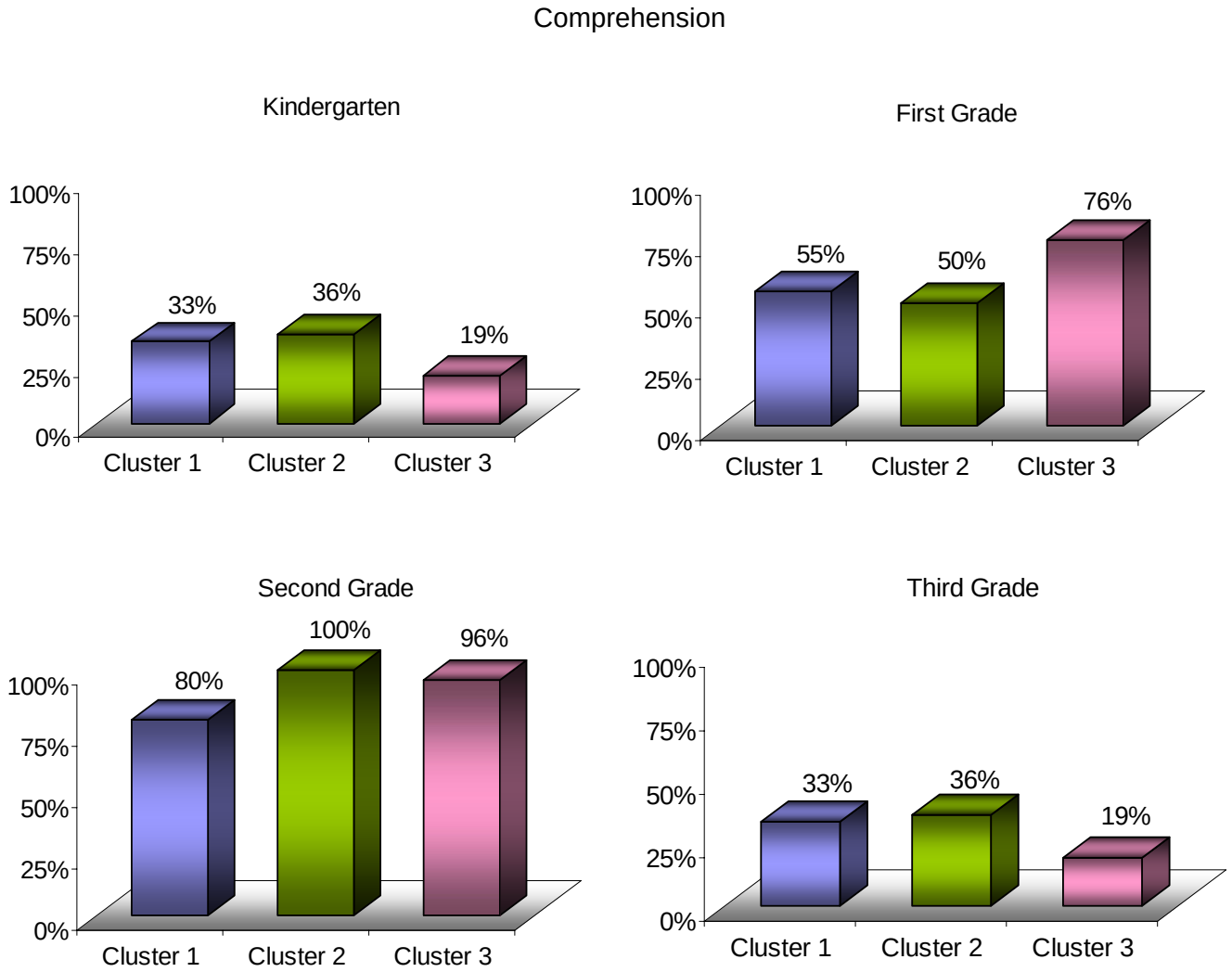


Figure 4.12: Percentage of teachers who reported a major focus on comprehension instruction in kindergarten through third grade by clusters.

The figures below show the percentage of instructional focus by teachers in kindergarten and first grade who reported a major focus on comprehension instruction through activating prior knowledge, making predictions, self-monitoring, and graphic organizers. Teachers in each grade level across all three clusters reported using graphic organizers in their comprehension instruction. This is a highly effective tool for increasing comprehension with all students. All of these teachers also reported activating prior knowledge, making predictions, and self-monitoring.

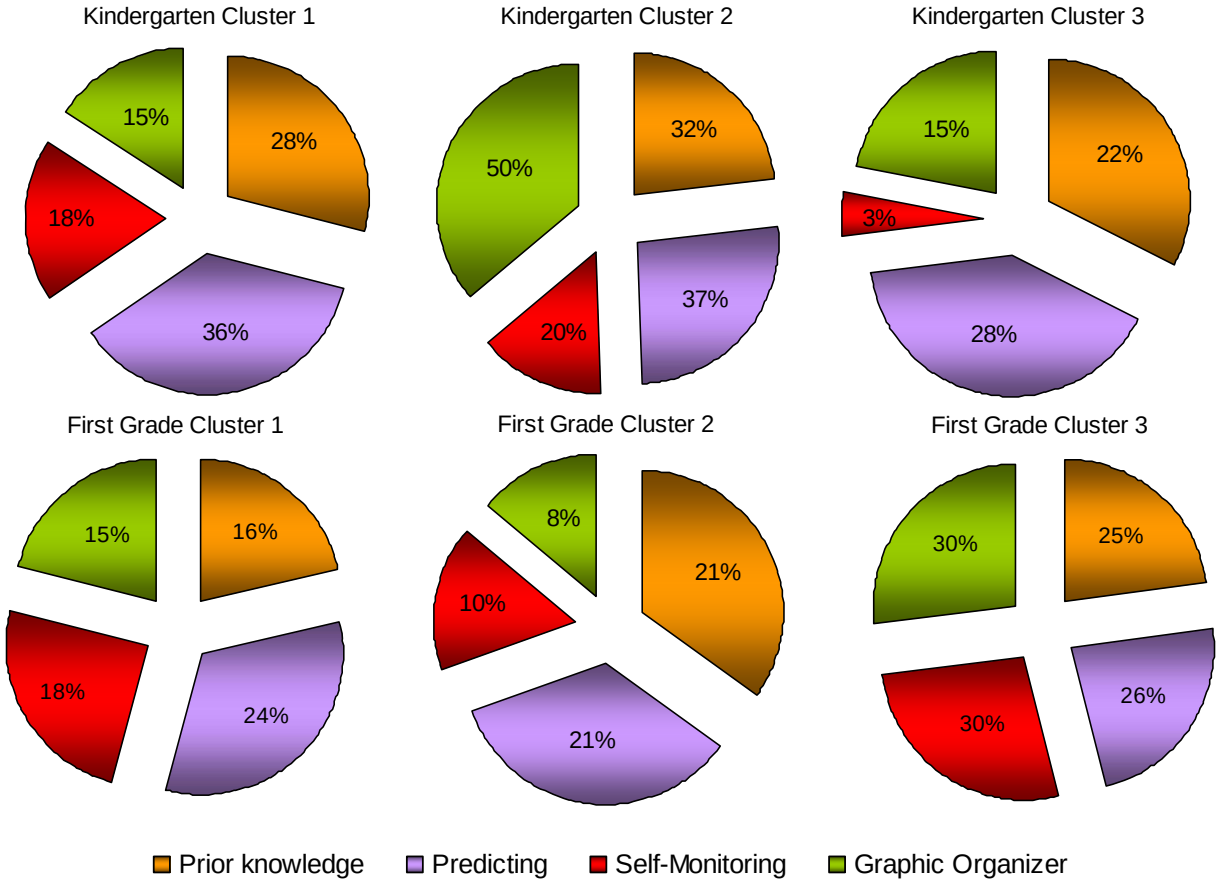


Figure 4.13: Percentage of kindergarten and first grade teacher reported focus on prior knowledge, predicting, self-monitoring, and graphic organizers during comprehension instruction by clusters.

Second and third grade teachers who reported that they placed a major focus on comprehension instruction revealed a good mix of activating prior knowledge, making predictions, self-monitoring, and use of graphic organizers (see Figure 4.14). These teachers reported lower levels of focus on making predictions, as compared to kindergarten and first grade teachers, which would be expected at these grade levels. In turn, these teachers reported higher percentages of self-monitoring for meaning which would be of great importance to students in second and third grades.

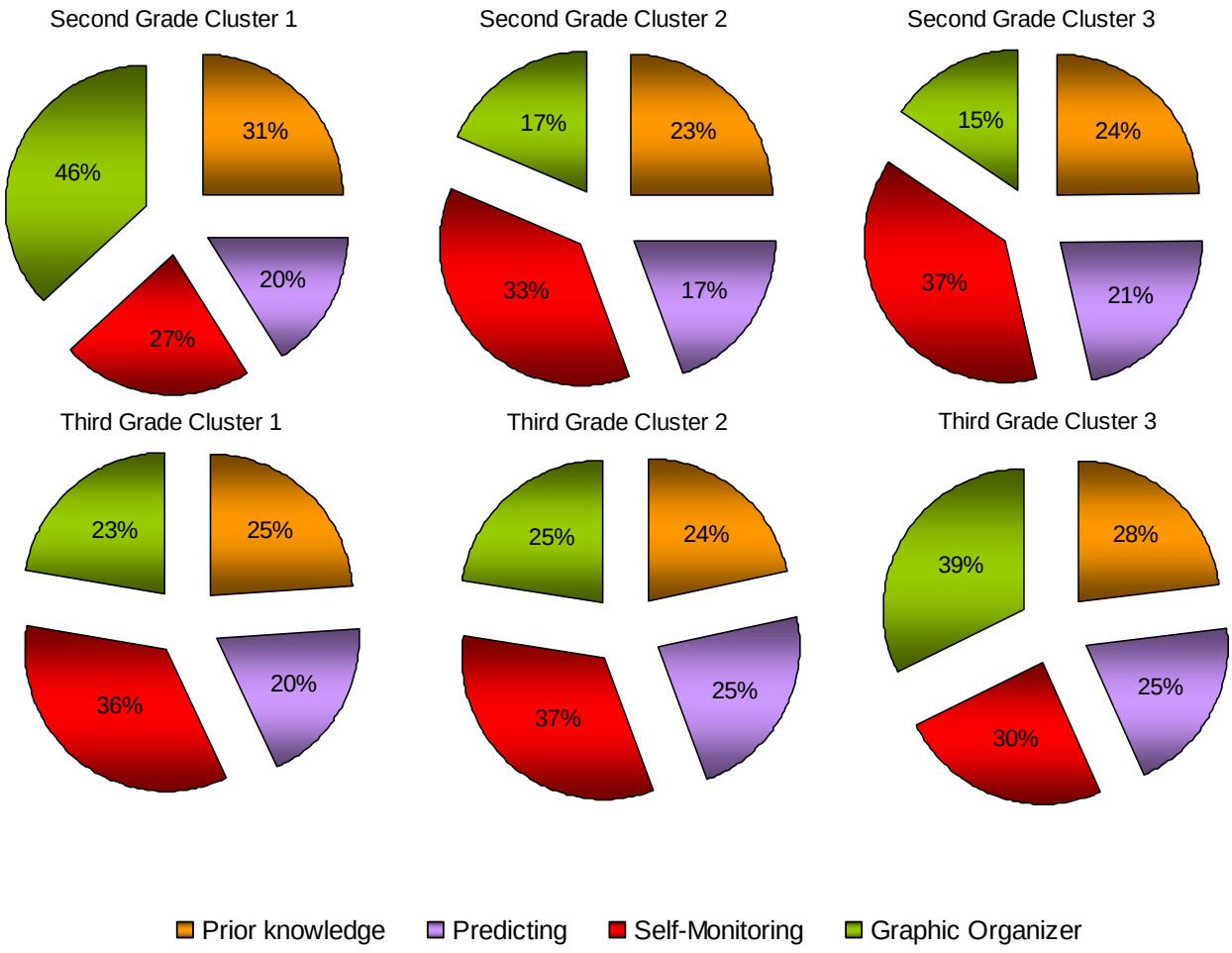


Figure 4.14: Percentage of second and third teacher reported focus on prior knowledge, predicting, self-monitoring, and graphic organizers during comprehension instruction by clusters.

TEACHER SURVEY

Collective Efficacy

Teachers were asked to rate their perceptions of their schools' ability to successfully teach all children and, more specifically, their collaborative teams' ability to do so. To assess this collective efficacy, we asked ten questions addressing teachers' perceptions of the ability of their school and faculty to address challenges, establish scientifically based approaches to reading instruction, guarantee high quality instruction when resources are scarce, work creatively and collaboratively within cohesive teams, and communicate their reading goals effectively to parents.

Each of the ten questions asked teachers to rate their level of agreement with the statement on a four point scale, considering how it applied to their school or team. Each response on the scale had a point value assigned for scoring purposes: Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), Strongly Disagree (1). Each teacher's responses were then scored. The highest possible score for any teacher was 40. Since all items were written in the positive form, this highest score would have been obtained by answering "Strongly Agree" to all ten items. Group scores were determined for grade level and for each round by finding the average of each group's score: the Collective Efficacy (CE) score. Figure 4.15 shows these CE scores by grade level and by round.

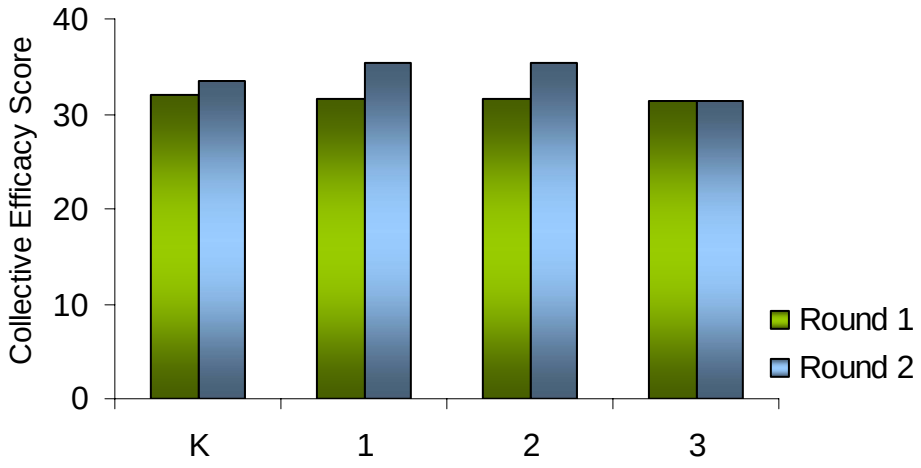


Figure 4.15: Comparison of collective efficacy (CE) scores by grade level and Round.

Across all grade levels and both rounds of implementation, teachers reported a high level of Collective Efficacy. This indicates their confidence in the abilities of their schools and their teams to implement successfully the scientifically based instructional interventions called for by Reading First plans.

The Impact of Collective Efficacy on Achievement

The research on teacher collective efficacy links this construct to student achievement. It allows us to measure reliably whether having higher expectations and belief in the ability to meet them will actually be connected to student achievement. To determine what organizational level explains collective efficacy scores, we conducted two analyses. In each, the organizational level (school or district) was used as an independent variable predicting collective efficacy scores. Results show that school districts were not a significant factor predicting teacher collective efficacy. School, however, was a highly significant factor and was a relevant predictor explaining 23% of the variance in individual teacher collective efficacy.

In exploring the link between collective efficacy in the school and student achievement, we used teacher mean collective efficacy as measured by school. Collective efficacy was converted to a factor by using median split.

Table 4.1: Collective Efficacy and Achievement

	Mean School Score	
	Mean Square (df)	F
Fall Achievement	.41 (1)	34.7**
Grade	.47 (3)	39.9**
Collective Efficacy (high/Low)	.05 (1)	4.2*
Error	.012 (165)	
R^2	.43	

* Significant at p<.05; ** significant at p<.001

The results presented in Table 4.1 show that collective efficacy was predictive of student achievement. While the effect size is limited, it does show that the higher collective efficacy that is typical of Reading First schools leads to improved student achievement.

Contradictory expectations for reading instruction

In order to get a better idea of how teachers were thinking about, and responding to, the changes called for by Reading First, we examined several other items on the teacher surveys.

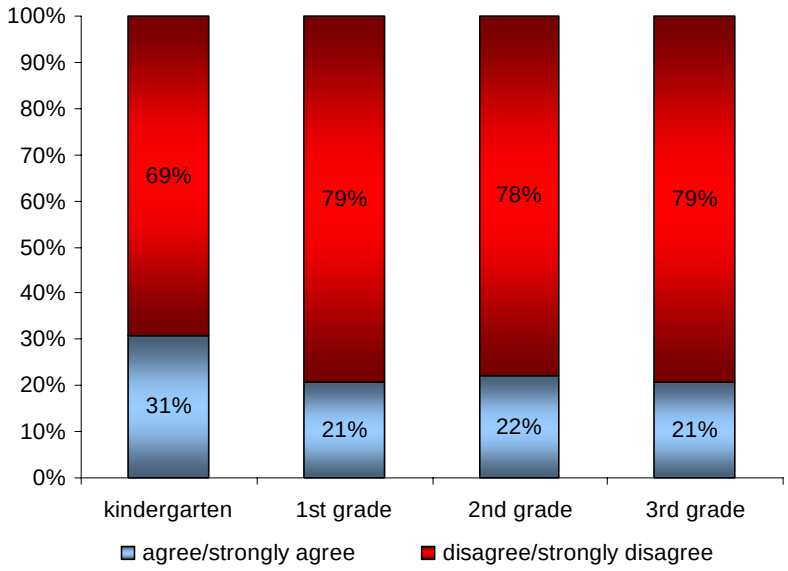


Figure 4.16: Round I teacher reports that expectations for teaching reading are contradictory.

We asked teachers to assess the nature of the expectations for teaching reading: were these perceived as contradictory or consistent? There were different perceptions among teachers in Round I. More than 69% of teachers at all grade levels disagreed that expectations were contradictory, leaving 20% to 31% who stated that expectations were contradictory. Figure 4.16 shows responses for Round I teachers.

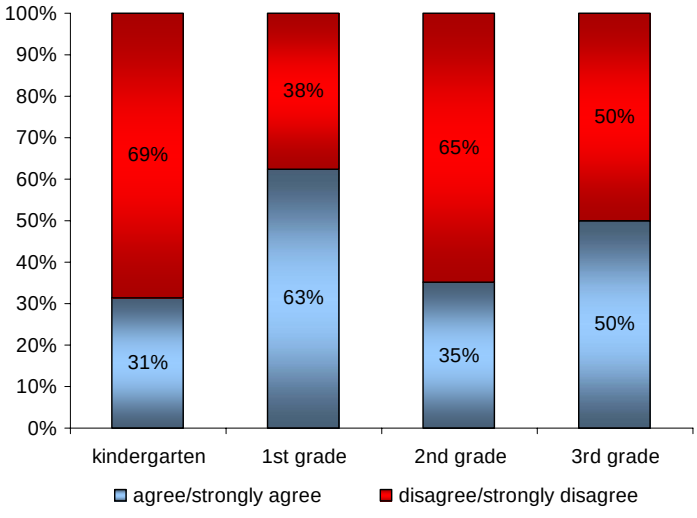


Figure 4.17: Round II teacher reports that expectations for teaching reading are contradictory.

In Round II there were pronounced differences of opinion on whether or not expectations for teaching reading were contradictory. Half or more of the teachers at first grade and third grade agreed that expectations were contradictory. It may be that Round I teachers find that expectations line up more clearly after additional years in Reading First, though there is still some evidence that teachers find the expectations contradictory. Figure 4.17 shows responses for Round II teachers.

Choosing among instructional options

We asked teachers about the difficulties of instructional decision-making for reading instruction. In Round I, 20% of second and third grade teachers expressed difficulty in choosing what to do among of all the options for reading instruction. Figure 4.18 illustrates Round I teacher responses to this question.

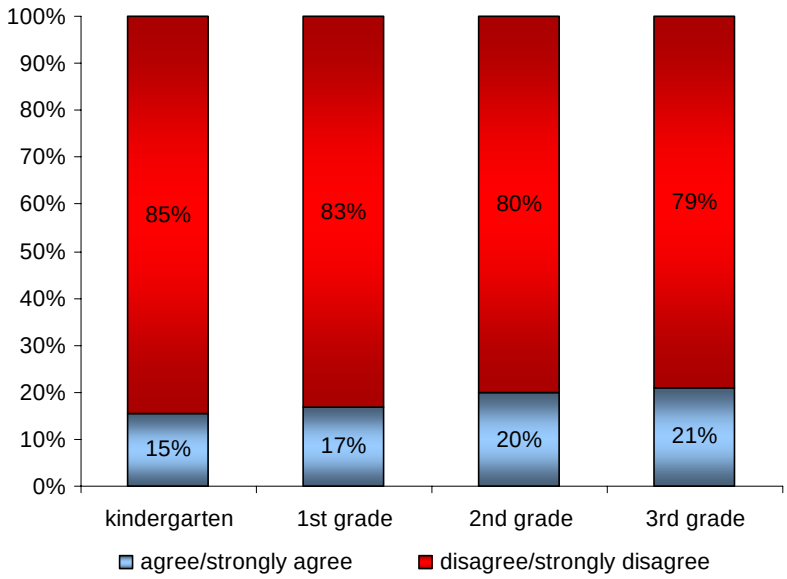


Figure 4.18: Round I teachers reporting difficulty choosing among options for reading instruction.

In Round II, 35% of first grade and 29% of second grade teachers (roughly one-third of teachers at these grades) agreed that this is difficult. Figure 4.19 illustrates Round II teacher responses to this question. Kindergarten teachers in both rounds were confident in choosing from their instructional options.

Teachers of first through third grade may benefit from support tailored to choosing instructional methods for their specific classroom and grade level.

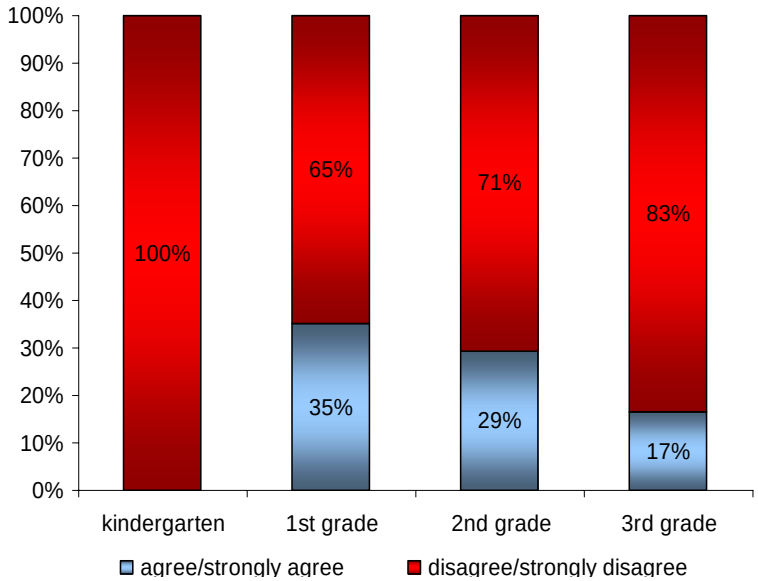


Figure 4.19: Round II teachers reporting difficulty choosing among options for reading instruction.

Prioritizing instruction

Some teachers in each round indicated difficulty prioritizing the information they receive about teaching reading. In Round I, these difficulties were most pronounced at third grade, where one-third of teachers agreed that this was difficult. Conversely, teachers of kindergarten, first grade, and second grade in Round I indicated confidence in their abilities to prioritize reading instruction. Figure 4.20 shows teacher response for Round I.

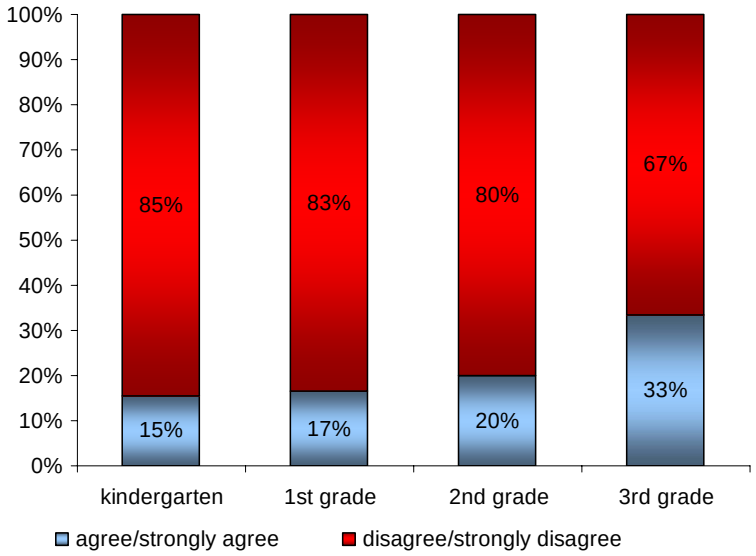


Figure 4.20: Round I teacher reports of difficulty in prioritizing instructional interventions.

In Round II, more than half of teachers at every grade level agreed that prioritizing instruction was often difficult. This represents a significant need for Round II teachers. Figure 4.21 provides the breakdown of responses from Round II teachers. Round II teachers especially need support in prioritizing information on reading instruction. One-third of Round I third grade teachers expressed this need as well. It may be that all teachers would benefit from more support for organizing and prioritizing the many options for effective reading instruction in the most useful way. In addition, school and district

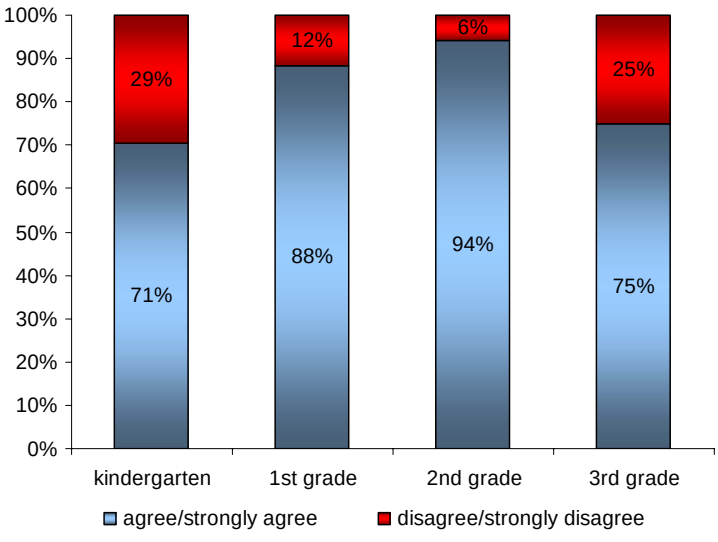


Figure 4.21: Round II teacher reports of difficulty in prioritizing instructional interventions.

leaders may want to explore ways to encourage collaboration among teachers within and across grade levels, so that the lessons learned by one grade level can be shared with others.

Major changes required by Reading First plans

Do teachers perceive Reading First as requiring major changes in how they conduct their classroom instruction? In Round I, teachers are nearly evenly divided in their answers to this question. In kindergarten, second grade, and third grade, more than half the teachers agreed that Reading First requires a major change in classroom practice. In first grade, the opposite was true. Figure 4.22 provides a breakdown of the responses from Round I teachers to this question.

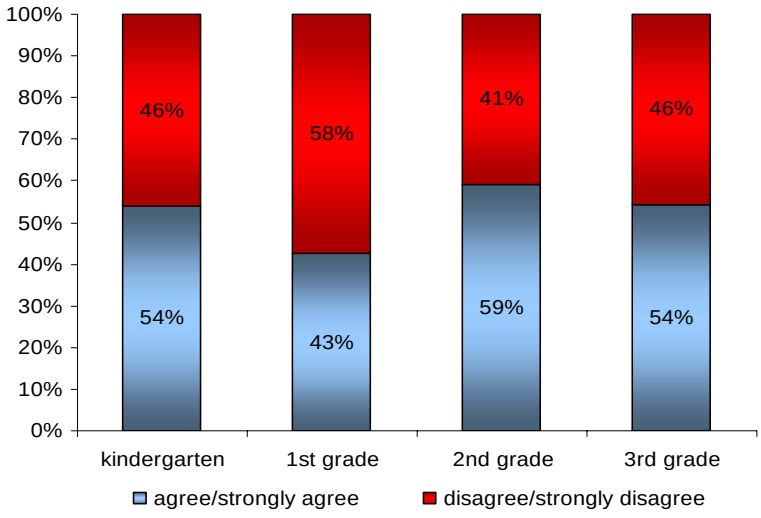


Figure 4.22: Round I teacher responses on Reading First requiring major instructional change.

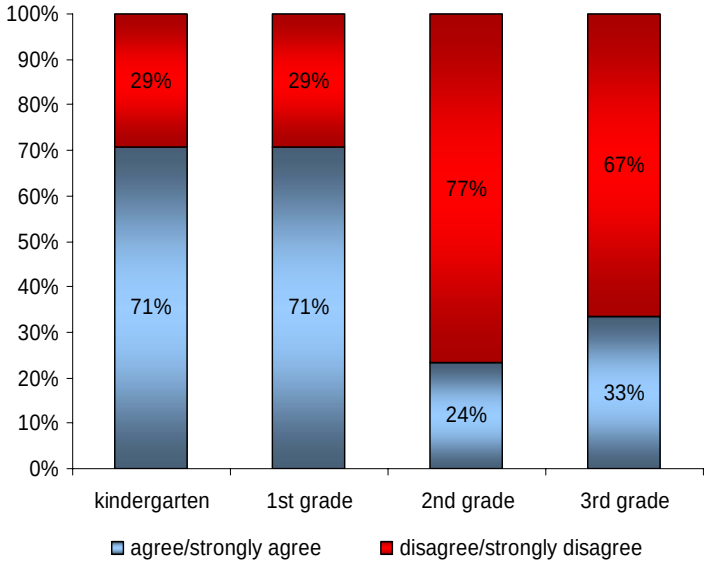


Figure 4.23: Round II teacher responses on Reading First requiring major instructional change.

In Round II, the divisions among teachers at each grade level are more pronounced. In kindergarten and first grade 70% of teachers agreed that major changes in practice were required by Reading First plans. In second and third grade just the opposite was true: 76% of second grade teachers and 66% of third grade teachers disagreed with the statement, indicating that major changes were not required by their district's Reading First plan. Figure 4.23

represents responses for teachers by grade level in Round II.

While many teachers in both rounds consider themselves to be working within the instructional parameters of the Reading First plan without having to make major changes, more than half the teachers at both rounds are experiencing major changes. Continuing to develop supportive frameworks and collaborative teams within districts is necessary to assist teachers as they negotiate the changes in practice that are being encountered through Reading First plans.

TEACHER TURNOVER

In an effort to evaluate the impact of Reading First on teachers, we examined teacher turnover in Reading First classrooms. Teacher retention is defined within Reading First, e.g. a teacher who taught third grade in 2004-5 and then switched to fourth grade within the same school is still considered part of teacher turnover even though (s)he has not left the building, let alone the profession. Teacher turnover is important since Reading First aims to build achievement through teacher development and growth. If teachers turnover at a fast rate, such growth is limited.

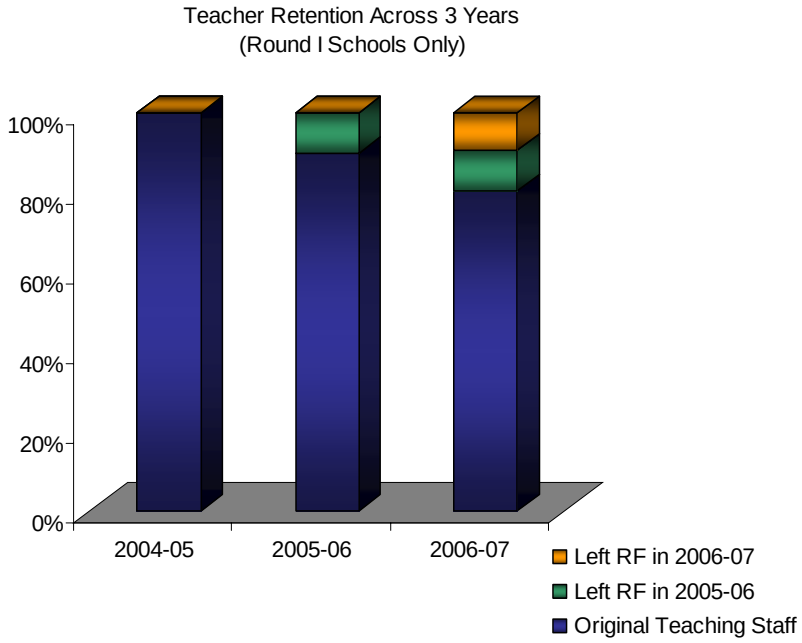


Figure 4.24: Teacher retention across three years of Reading First.

We hypothesized that some teachers who were not comfortable with Reading First practices would seek a way to shift from such classrooms. The results presented in Figure 4.24 show that teachers had low turnover after the first year (just under 10%) and a slightly higher 12% figure after the second year. Overall teacher turnover does not seem unusually high in Reading First schools.

Further examination of the results by district and school reveal great variability. In fact, while overall turnover was not high, some individual districts and schools saw considerably high levels while others had no turnover whatsoever. The cluster comparison presented in Figure 4.25 shows that schools in different environments had considerably different teacher turnover: from under 10% for two years in Cluster One (small rural schools with low minority populations) to close to 40% in larger more urban and diverse districts. This can be explained by relying on teacher interview data collected over the last three years. First, larger districts present teachers with multiple opportunities not available in rural settings, thus the pattern is part of a larger pattern of teacher mobility that exists regardless of Reading First; second, the pressures of Reading First in larger more urban and diverse districts create more frustration and disappointment.

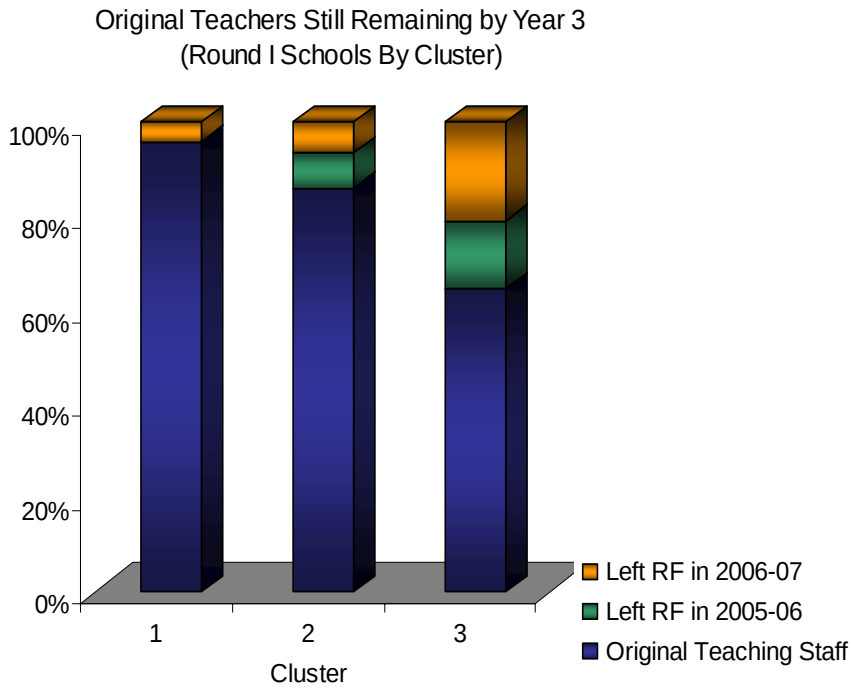


Figure 4.25: Teacher turnover by cluster.

Finally we examined school turnover by school in Figure 4.26. Here we see that variability by school is still large, even within a cluster of similar schools. This number reflects the ability of district and school administration to attract, support, and retain teachers. Attention to specific school challenges can increase the impact of reform since teachers have time to acquire the necessary set of skills and improve them and thus, impact student achievement. However, if reading coaches have to continuously train new teachers to Reading First, less time can be devoted to assisting students and teachers in developing further.

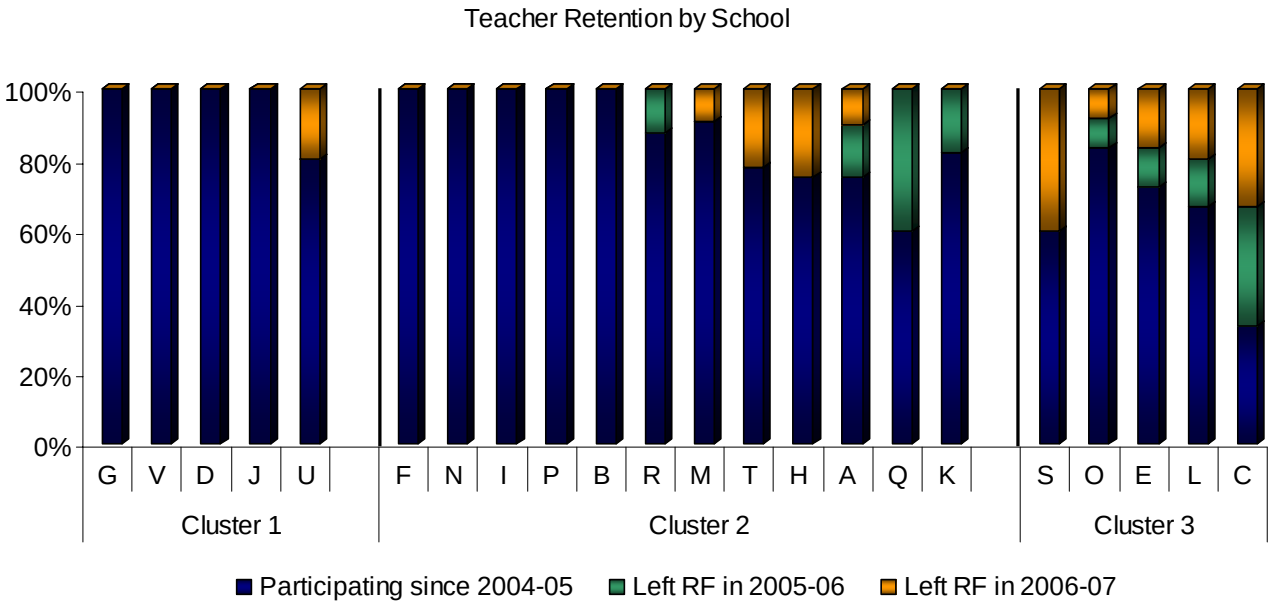


Figure 4.26: Teacher retention by school within each cluster.

SPECIALIST TEACHER SURVEY

We conducted a survey to assess the impact of Reading First through the eyes of the professionals who deal with the students who are hardest to teach. This group includes special education teachers, ELL teachers, Title One teachers, and speech pathologists. The survey was sent to 74 such professionals across all Round I schools. Response rate was more than 93%, distributed as presented in Figure 4.27.

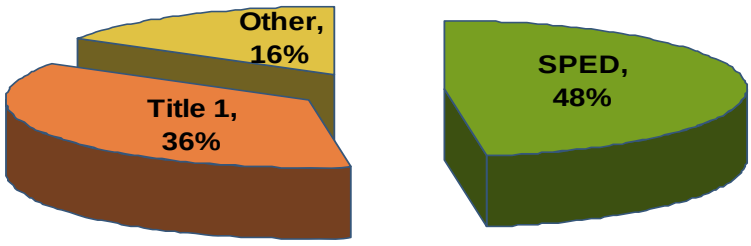


Figure 4.27: Survey respondents by teaching position.

The survey attempted to gauge the impact of Reading First on two linked issues: (a) the nature of the professional community in the school and, (b) the impact on student achievement. Reading First is focused on professional development and supports that lead to a more coherent and communicative school environment. These opportunities should foster a professional community that supports specialist teachers in their efforts to help the hardest to teach students. The impact on the community should translate into improved student achievement as the school community works together.

As can be seen in Figure 4.28, two-thirds of the specialist teachers have professional experience exceeding ten years, and a similar proportion have spent at least five within their current schools. As a result, their perspective on the impact of Reading First on their students and schools comes from meaningful experience. They are a valuable source of information combining a view on the hardest to teach students over long periods of time.

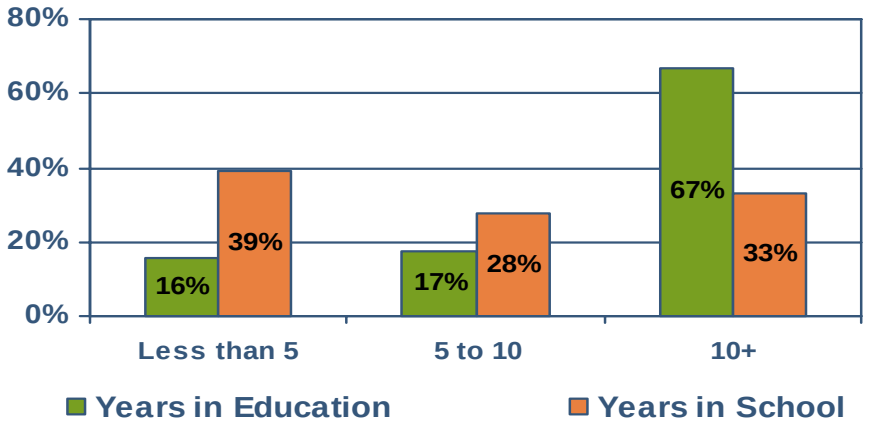


Figure 4.28: Specialist teacher experience.

Most (87%) of the respondents reported that, since Reading First has begun, the appreciation and understanding of their expertise has increased. The relationship with school administration has improved for 35% of the respondents, has remained static for most (58%), and deteriorated for only 7%; thus, the concern that the perceived prescriptive nature of Reading First might create friction between professionals and school administrators is alleviated.

The relationship with teachers presents an even brighter picture, with most specialists reporting improved relationship with teachers (54%), 39% reporting no change, and a few (7%) reporting deterioration in relationships. It is clear from these results that the school community under Reading First has improved communication, understanding, and cooperation.

Finally, when asked to evaluate if student achievement has improved since the beginning of Reading First, the response was overwhelmingly positive. Eighty-four percent (84%) of specialist teachers reported that student achievement has improved, and only 16% reported they saw no change. No teachers reported a downturn in achievement due to Reading First. It can be concluded from this

survey that the school community has improved since the inception of Reading First. And, in addition, student achievement has risen due to the change in methods and communication within the school.

SECTION 5

READING FIRST DISSEMINATION

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND DISSEMINATION—READING FIRST SUMMER INSTITUTES

Overview

The professional development and dissemination chapter of the report is based on text responses submitted during summer institutes in the 2006-7 academic year. The institutes were conducted in five locations providing access to schools around the state. The locations were: North Platte, Kearney, Norfolk, Lincoln, and Omaha.

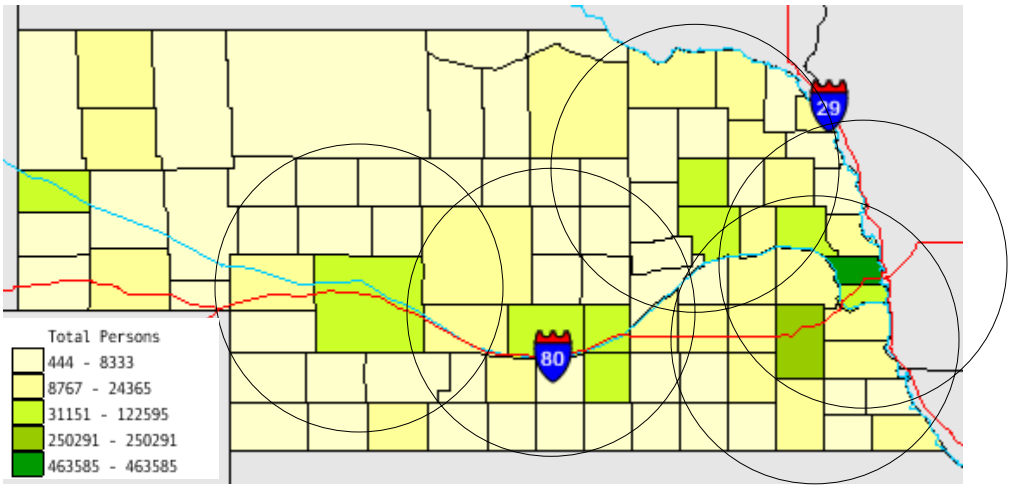


Figure 5.1: Coverage of summer institute within 2 hours driving time.

Response rates varied from location to location as presented in Table 5.1. Out of 547 respondents, 99.2% identified their role in schools, however less than 20% identified the grade levels they were teaching. As a result the information in Table 5.1 does not include grade levels.

Table 5.1: Responses by Location and Participant Type

	Omaha	Lincoln	Norfolk	Kearney	North Platte	**Total**
Classroom Teachers	79	73	83	90	47	372 (68%)
Resource/ SPED Teachers	6	13	17	17	8	61 (11.2%)
Title 1 Teachers	3	13	8	15	3	42 (7.7%)
Admin./Lit Leadership/Coaches	7	4	3	9	2	25 (4.6%)
Para-Professionals	0	1	4	2	7	14 (2.6%)
School Psychologists/ SLP	0	0	0	8	0	8 (1.5%)
ELL Teachers	2	0	0	3	0	5 (.9%)
Others	6	2	0	7	5	20 (3.6)
Total	103	106	115	151	72	547

While the number of responses underestimates the actual number of participants, it does represent well the proportion of participants who were engaged enough to comment on the summer institutes. Over 90% of participants were classroom teachers, indicating that schools saw this opportunity at the teacher level only, and not as part of school wide change. Further, participation patterns show that the Omaha summer institute participants had a much lower proportion of special education educators than other institutes. Across all institutes very few ELL teachers participated, perhaps signifying a divide between Reading First efforts and the perceived needs of ELL teachers. Future evaluation efforts will attempt to examine the reasons behind these patterns.

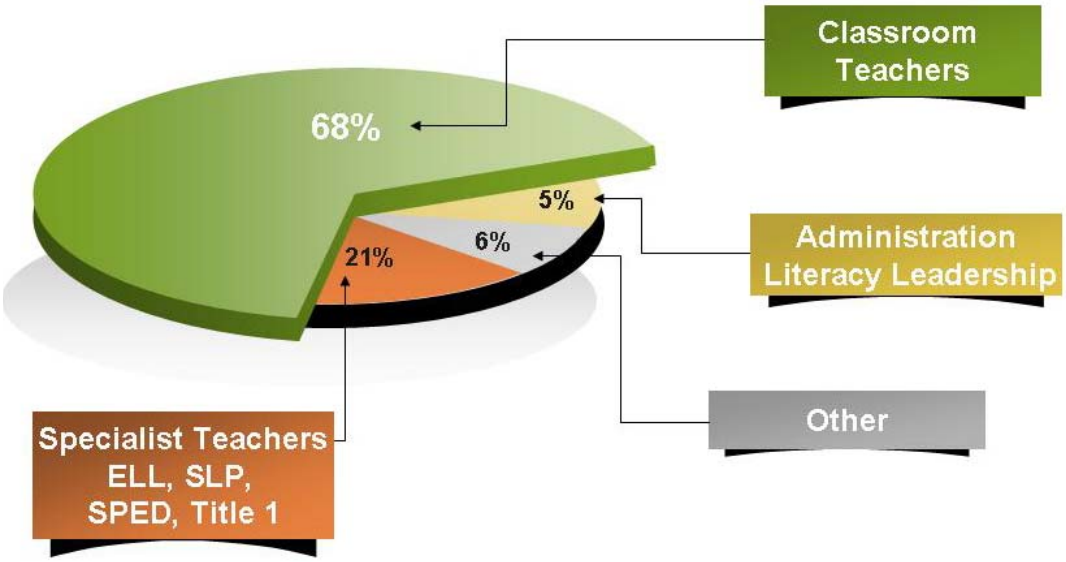


Figure 5.2: Respondents by category.

Each participant responded to three prompts and a fourth comment section. The prompts addressed were:

- What I learned…
- What I can use to improve and support student learning…
- I would like to learn more about…

What I learned & What I can use to improve and support student learning

All participants used highly positive expressions when describing the ideas they learned and plan to use in their practice. For example, one classroom teacher wrote: *"the graphic organizers under comprehension will be an* ***excellent*** *resource in my classroom. I guess I didn't realize there were so many."* Most teachers reported that they plan to implement most of what they've learned. The general conclusion was that the meeting was so focused on reading instruction practice that teachers found almost no difference between what they learned and the strategies they were going to use in their classrooms and schools. As a result, the categories were combined.

Overall responses were very positive and often included statements such as:

An enormous amount of information. As a former HS teacher I wish I would have had this training as I now feel teaching reading K-12 is vital. Grouping students and expecting them to read @ grade level and moving the students as opposed to they should just know the info.

Another stated:

*I cannot write the # of things I've learned! I have learned so much. Here are just a few things: * specific ways to use direct instruction * how to assess my students' fluency * to teach my kids how to "think" * use small lined paper.*

However, some (a minority) report frustration after seeing one too many educational reforms:

Education is a very confusing job. I have taught for 15+ years & I truly feel that we as educators are the reason students are not learning like they could. Most students from the time they have been in school for 13 years have had 4 or 5 different methods of teaching. ex - Whole Language, A-R, Basal, etc. then, we as educators suddenly say "A-R is now no good, but Whole Language is, so we switch - again!"

Participants reported learning about the five domains of reading. As can be seen in Table 5.2, most of the participants (61.9%) pointed to added knowledge in at least one of the five big ideas as part of what they learned.

Table 5.2: What I learned comments by domain

Domain	*Frequency /percent*	*Specific Ideas*
Phonemic Awareness	109 / 19.9%	Ideas for instruction, understanding, links to phonics and spelling
Alphabetic Principle (Phonics)	74 / 13.5%	Ideas for instruction, understanding, links to phonemic awareness, fluency, and spelling
Fluency	93 / 17.0%	Importance, ways of teaching
Vocabulary	86 / 15.7%	Pre-teaching, importance of emphasis, morphology
Comprehension	59 / 10.8%	Good ideas, use of graphic organizers, link to vocabulary
Support Skills		
Spelling	49 / 9.0%	Connecting Phonics and spelling, Spelling rules, ideas of how to teach

Some other concepts that were mentioned frequently were assessment (3%) and time management (4%). There were very few differences between teachers and other participants in their reports of what they've learned. Teachers, however, were a lot more likely to report "Aha!" moments in which their practical knowledge and new understandings came together:

> *Oral language is huge before you continue with the letters & sound correlation. I went straight into letters & sound and now I see why they struggled learning parts in the words. I liked the phoneme & phonics comparison sheets - that clarified it for me better!*

Participants focused on the applicability of this information to students in all categories (ELL, SPED, and all learners) and some have expressed worry about helping schools move in the directions suggested in the workshops. Participants (10%) also focused on the importance of direct instruction models: "[I learned] the importance of direct instruction on students' comprehension. I now understand what direct instruction is."

What I would like to learn more about

All survey participants (n=547) responded to this category. Two patterns emerge from the data. First, respondents identified specific reading and literacy domains in which they needed more information. However, this varied between individuals; thus, there is no clear pattern of perceived needs. The second pattern was a request to shift the emphasis from a lecture/explain mode to more small-group, *Hands-On*, and *How-To* practice with application and ideas for newly acquired knowledge. The theme was: Help us see it in action and try it ourselves.

Reading and Literacy Domains (Big 5 +)

Most requests in specific domains were brief. A typical request reads: *"* fluency * how to check comprehension understanding * types of literacy centers"*. Many requests focused on skills intervention: "*phonics programs applicable to struggling readers. What are the programs which are effective? Which one will deliver the most "bang" for our school "buck"?"*

Table 5.3: Respondents Perceived Needs by Domain			
Domain	Number of Requests	Specific Ideas	Comments
Phonemic Awareness	16	Specific Activities, Efficacy of Curricula, Sound Partners, Interventions	
Phonics	30	Integration with Curriculum, Interventions for struggling students	
Fluency	18	Ideas for instruction	
Vocabulary	21	How to help students practice and build vocabulary, interventions	Conceptual understanding seems lacking
Comprehension	24	Comprehension strategies, Implementing the strategies with core curriculum	
Support Skills			
Spelling	15	Connecting Phonics and spelling, Spelling rules, ideas of how to teach	
Writing	10	Integrating writing activities that support Reading First Core	

Organization

Many of the participants wanted to know more about organizing classrooms to accommodate the Reading First ideas. The most common question was focused on time management (n=86). Many of the participants wanted information and examples of the 90 minute block and the way the school day was restructured. For example:

- *How the "average" 90 minute time slot looks in the kindergarten classroom.*
- *Time management w/so many standards to teach & meet for assessments in a 1/2 day program & still keep smiling*
- *Scheduling that 90 minute language arts block in regard to serving special ed. kids.*
- *Scheduling - how do we put this all together in a day - week.*

- *how to convince all faculty to get on board since it will mean "change" and more flexibility w/support staff. Also will take a time commitment for how to plan and organize a workable schedule!*

A second organizational concern had to do with the classroom itself. Participants wondered about the organization of students into groups (n=13). In addition many participants asked about the organization of learning centers (n=37). For example:

- *Reading First - how to do reading groups, large group, center ideas*
- *What a 90 min period looks & sounds like * how to teach using basal to 2 different groups * what a week's lesson plan for 2 groups would look like using a basal*
- *Classroom management during the small groups--examples of what to put into centers and how to differentiate the instruction appropriately.*

How-to

The most common request from participants was to extend their ability to translate theoretical and general ideas into classroom practice. *How to* was requested directly by 124 different respondents.

- *Strategies and activities I can take back to the classroom.*
- *More information about what is included in 90 m block*
- *How to teach phonics to motivate all my students*
- *how to effectively manage pull out schedules - ELL, reading recovery, title, speech, resource*
- *way for support staff to be involved*

Out of those asking for a focus on practice, 37 asked specifically about second and third tier interventions:

- *Other interventions & strategies for struggling readers*
- *Interventions for struggling readers & what I can do in the classroom (& how to plan for them) to help those students*

Aligning Curriculum and Assessment

Participants were looking for additional information about the integration of the ideas with assessment and with their existing curricula. In assessment (n=28), the concern was about finding the best tools for specific domains and grade levels:

- *Vocabulary - how to assess correctly*
- *Choosing a quality assessment to guide instruction*
- *Interventions for struggling readers * actual assessment reading inventories appropriate for groups/ grade levels (she addressed this well though)*

Participants were also concerned about ways to integrate the ideas with schools' Reading Language Arts curricula, sometimes wondering whether it is even possible. For example: *"using Walk to Read in my school - how to set it up & have it run successfully"*, and *"what it looks like with the McGraw-Hill text*".

At-risk Populations

Respondents were concerned about specific approaches to working with struggling readers with and without disabilities (n=36): For example: *"Really reaching the students who struggle--ideas and strategies to use and help them in their learning, The most important things to teach when you only see them for a short amount of time (35-40 minutes)"* and *"The process of interventions to help struggling readers"*.
Others were concerned with English language learners (n=9) showing that despite the low ELL teacher turnout this is an important concern for teachers. *"How to build a good foundation of reading in my non-English speakers (about half my class). By about February they are "ready to go," but we have moved on to the next steps"*

Further Comments

The comments sections was mainly used to provide positive feedback such as *"Loved it! Jeanette is wonderful! Thanks!"* Comments were made by 81% of respondents. Two hundred and ninety five of the participants' comments were highly positive and only 32 comments (8.3%) were critical. The

comments section repeats many of the previously discussed ideas. This section is important in evaluating participants' attitudes since it is not directed in any way (stated in a neutral voice) and was completely optional. Seen from this perspective, the summer institutes were received very well and appreciated by participants.

Positive comments

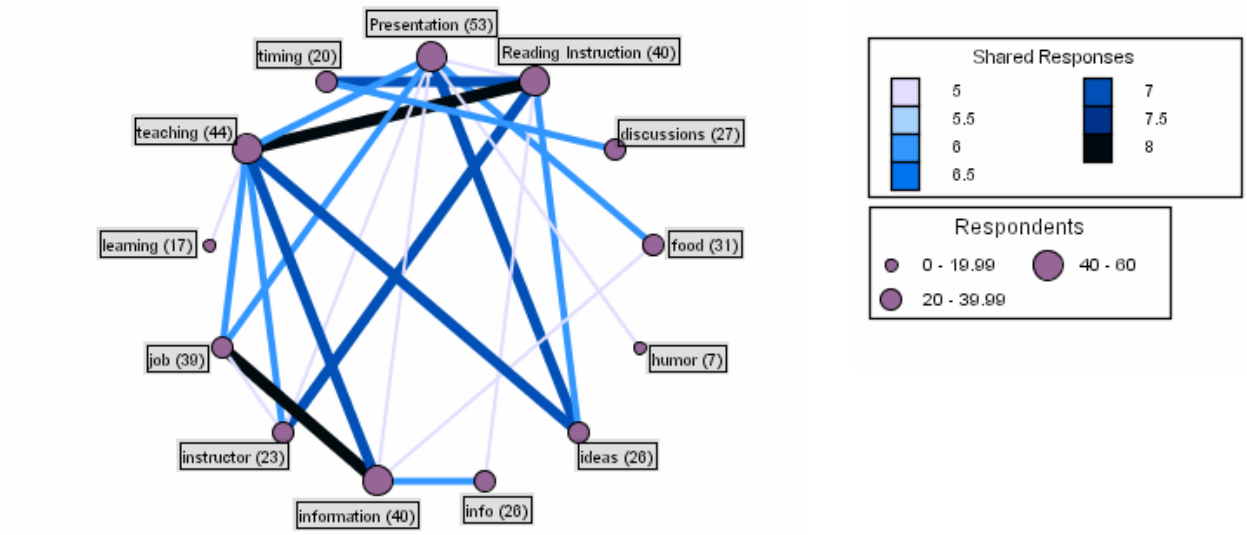


Figure 5.3: Terms associated with positive comments (frequency of 4 and above).

Positive comments focused on the quality of presentation (Delivery) with 142 comments under the general headings of presentation, instructor, job, and discussion. A second important category concentrated on the quality of information (Content) with 193 comments. Comment categories and participant overlap is presented in Figure 5.3.

Comments specified presenters by name: Lynette (24), Jeanette (19), and to a lesser degree Peggy Stahr. The comments highlighted the professional knowledge, clear and accessible delivery, and the energy and humor that were part of every presentation.

Examples include:

This was an excellent conference. I learned a lot and I am anxious to use these techniques in my classroom.

We used the 4 blocks format in our district. After all the training and reading I'm still floundering. I think many items brought up this week come from 4-blocks yet I now have more to go with it and understand TEACHING reading even more. Thank you!

I've thoroughly enjoyed this course… I've especially appreciated the discussions loaded with lots of suggestions & ideas. Jeanette has a wonderful speaking voice and manner of presentation. The time went too quickly!

Lynette Block does a great job of presenting information to a group of people who are using a variety of different reading companies! She really believes Reading First is beneficial for all students. I feel like I have materials that will be helpful for my students. I am excited to teach 1st grade this coming year.

I hope to attend more of your workshops. It was such practical & helpful information.

Critical comments

A relatively small number of comments were critical. Some of these comments focused on exposure to vast amounts of new information in a short amount of time that overwhelmed the participants. Others complained that certain sessions could have been conducted faster. The delivery comments were clearly related to the participants' background knowledge and confidence in teaching certain skills:

Why not take 5 days to give this topic a fuller amount of time to discuss? So much information, so little time to give it justice.

It is overwhelming to try and organize how to implement all these core items efficiently and effectively. I am willing to try. It is wonderful to have so many of our staff here so we are consistent.

Conversely:

…moved too slow… spent too much time on spelling & word origin - not enough resources to support inclusion into daily teaching practice

The first day was not helpful to me. The introduction from the first day seemed to consume the entire day. Nothing much else was covered.

A lot of this information I already knew

As such, these comments do not criticize the ideas so much as the format and the difficulties in implementation.

A second group of comments challenge the ideas at the core of Reading First. These comments point to lack of fit with the teacher's professional world view:

> *I'm concerned that we are going back to the way I taught 23 years ago/ I'm not sure it worked then, will it work now. You know what you are talking about, but I am not sure you are open to talking to us about what is working at our schools, and how we can make it work together. We never talked about comprehension. Isn't that very important?*
>
> *Reading recovery, which is highly effective and research based seems to be contradicted by Reading First techniques. As a RR teacher I have trouble teaching in isolation as this seems to promote, I would like to see how Reading First fits in with this idea.*

Higher Education Connection

Few of the participants commented on the connection to college/university teacher preparation classes. The comments were divided into two groups some indicated that the content was similar to their college classes:

> *I enjoyed the speaker and the handouts. The information was a good review for me. Many of the strategies presented had been covered during my college courses.*

Others indicated that, in their cases, this was not so, or that they see a place for it now in teacher preparation classes:

> *This was wonderful, and it really helped to be with all kindergarten teachers. You are wonderful presenters! You both taught me more than I learned in college. Thanks!*

And:

> *This would be good for college level education to teach their education students before they become teachers.*

The paucity of references to higher education prevents us from coming to any conclusions. We will include a specific instrument to measure such impact in subsequent years.

Reading First Conference

One hundred and sixty nine participants responded to the post-conference evaluation sheet. Most were classroom teachers (59.2%), while other categories included specialist teachers (Title 1, SPED, ELL, etc.) 18.9%, Coaches (7.1%), and administrators (5.9%). Close to 9% of participants chose not to identify their role. Participants came from forty different schools around the state—overwhelmingly from Reading First schools.

Classroom teachers were equally divided across the grades K-3 with 22-24 teachers in each grade level.

The evaluation of the conference used the same format as the evaluation of summer institutes in asking:

- What I learned…
- What I can use to improve and support student learning…
- I would like to learn more about…
- Comments

What I learned & what I can use to improve and support student learning

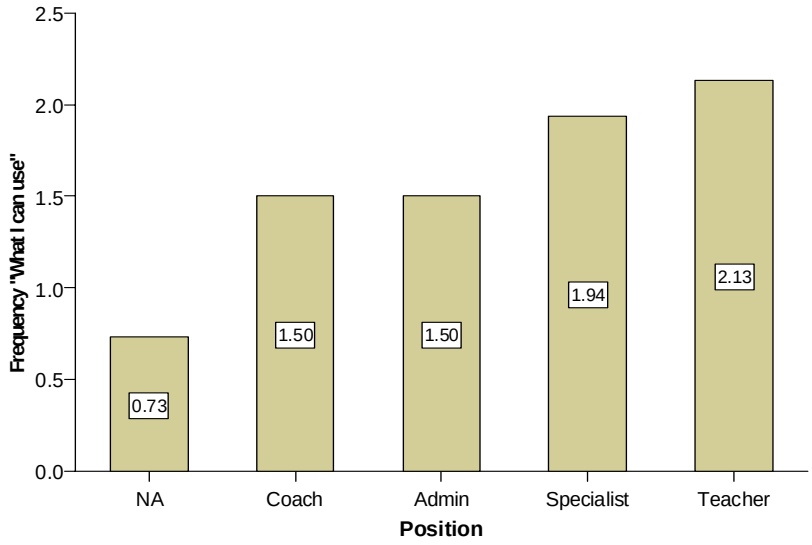


Figure 5.4: Topics learned in RF conference.

In Figure 5.4 we summarized the mean number of comments made by individuals about discreet ideas they have learned in professional development events. From the results, it is very clear that teachers and specialists reported learning the most. These differences were statistically significant. Multiple comparisons show: NA<Coach/Admin<Specialist/Teacher. (See Figure 5.4). Overall attitude was positive: "*Dr. Beck and Freddie Hiebert both were very insightful. I learned an awful lot about teaching strategies for vocabulary comprehension and phonics. They were both funny, entertaining and really very knowledgeable about reading. I learned how I can use those three areas and teach it in a much better way.*"

Most comments about learning focused on Vocabulary, with 104 participants relaying that they learned about vocabulary and 87 participants saying they would use the new vocabulary techniques in their respective classrooms. Typical comments were:

Children need to read text to improve vocabulary, Increase vocabulary by making connections/clusters, Improved read-alouds

Language background and the need for students to read texts more and more, The need for students to be able to understand language--vocabulary, morphemes, synonym con., antonym con.

Text is where vocabulary gets expanded, Phonics instruction, more reading in instructional programs, linguistics--semantic (synonym) clusters.

The second emphasis was a focus on phonics instruction (n=40). Teachers found the new information about short-term memory and the need for blending the first two sounds especially illuminating. For example: *"Blending sounds in a new way--from m-a-t to ma-t.*" and *"the first two sounds is new to me. I also used vowel, ending and substituted"*. Participants also reported learning about morphological and orthographical rules for more advanced word building work:

> *I really enjoyed the word building activities from Isabel Beck. I can't wait to read her phonics book.*
>
> *Text is where vocabulary is extended., Read, read, read--get to 1,000,000, Synonyms--find words, use words that relate, Thank you for the phonics help and books!*
>
> *Using the chin drop instead of clapping for teaching syllables, The process of building by using the word cards and pockets, That if phonics instruction focuses too much on just teaching letter-sound relationships and not enough on putting them to use, it is unlikely to be effective.*

Two word teaching strategies that were referred to often were a more efficient use of word walls (n=32) and morphological rules (n=49). For example:

What I can use in my classroom:

> *It's important to make word learning a part of daily routines. This school year it will be important to focus on expanding vocabulary because students have a solid foundation on decoding words, Encourage students to use new words outside the classroom, Word walls*
>
> *Grade-level clusters, Word groups that are very different from the 'common ones.' Synonym strategy, Antonym strategy.*

Learning more & Further comments

The category "what I would like to learn more about…" was ignored by about 40% of participants. The rest of the participants had varied requests that do not have a clear theme. Vocabulary, one of the main points of the conference, was the most requested topic (n=28). Other requests included more about fluency, silent reading, comprehension strategies, and a translation into classroom practice (as can be seen in Figure 5.5).

Despite the overall positive remarks, some participants had criticism. The critical remarks focused on the limited applicability of the theoretical information presented. Participants were also critical of presentation quality at times (although most comments were positive.)

> *Thursday presentation was long and boring. Suggest she read one book to us so we know entire story--and use examples from that book that we know. Don't need same example from 10 books. Stick to movie clips. Totally enjoyed Friday presenter!*
>
> *I'm feeling rather overwhelmed at this point! I've received a lot to reflect and act upon! I appreciate the sharing time at the end!*
>
> *Although Dr. Beck is an outstanding reading specialist, and I love her books, I was disappointed in her presentation. Should the first presentation be energetic and engaging? Could the afternoon sessions be shorter segments?*

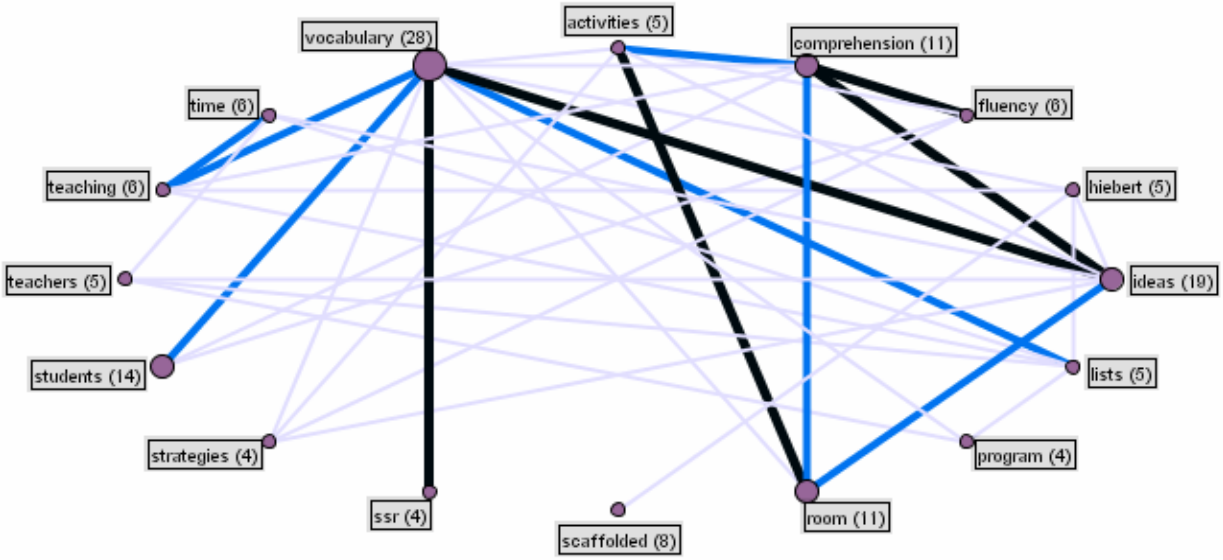


Figure 5.5: Comment map for learning further
Note: thicker, darker lines indicate the strength of relationship

Comments were mostly positive (83%). The positive comments overwhelmingly focused on the presenters (52.6%). This was closely followed by positive remarks on the information and ideas delivered. Typical comments were:

> *I felt the presenters were very knowledgeable and grounded in their research. I felt that the information presented was information that we've been exposed it before. Research is very important, but as teachers, we're very interested in practical strategies and ideas that we can use in our classrooms. Maybe it would be more beneficial to have one day for Round I groups who've been doing this awhile and one day for those getting started.*
>
> *I enjoyed Dr. Hiebert's presentation! Her ideas make sense! I'm anxious to hear more!*
>
> *Thank you! The time you spend on presenting strategies and information helps keep me focused on improving reading instruction.*

Summary

Professional development efforts beyond Reading First schools have been, according to all indicators, a resounding success. All participating professionals saw great value in the different formats. Teachers enjoyed the new information and had a clear vision of how the new ideas can be translated into classroom practice. While there was no clear pattern of needs that identifies a specific area of need for further study, most participants indicated a need for more hands-on training with opportunities to practice. Response to selection of topics and the skill of the presenters was overwhelmingly positive and indicates that professional development opportunities were well organized, well-thought out, and useful.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Create an advanced professional development for those who participated before.
- The State reading/language arts leadership can capitalize on this development and create "spin-off" events and professional support.
- Continue the emphasis on quality presenters at all levels—the participants appreciate them and learn.
- Add hands-on presentations so participants (especially those new to Reading First) can see how the ideas are played out in classrooms.

NON-READING FIRST ADMINISTRATOR SURVEY

In an attempt to assess the impact of Reading First beyond participating schools, we sent a survey to all elementary principals. The survey was voluntary and was conducted online anonymously. Eighty-nine non-Reading First administrators responded to the survey (the data for Reading First administrators who responded was removed). The survey measured the understanding of Reading First, the amount of experience with Reading First professional development, and finally, the willingness to incorporate Reading First ideas into their own schools.

Principals' knowledge of Reading First was limited. Most have heard about the program and 28% said they heard "a great deal" but when asked to elaborate, only 1% exhibited extensive understanding, and more than 14% had never heard of Reading First. One-third of the principals did not know whether their school was eligible to apply for Reading First grants. This proportion is not surprising since eligible districts and principals were approached directly by the project coordinator if their data indicated that they would be eligible. Most principals did not have a clear idea of who would be eligible and only 20% indicated the link to student achievement as the determining factor. Not surprisingly, Figure 5.6 shows a lack of a clear position in regards to Reading First by most principals who responded.

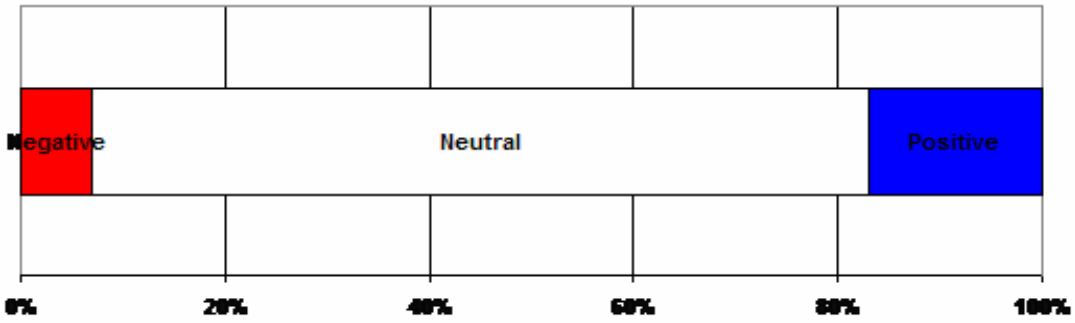


Figure 5.6: What is your attitude toward Reading First?

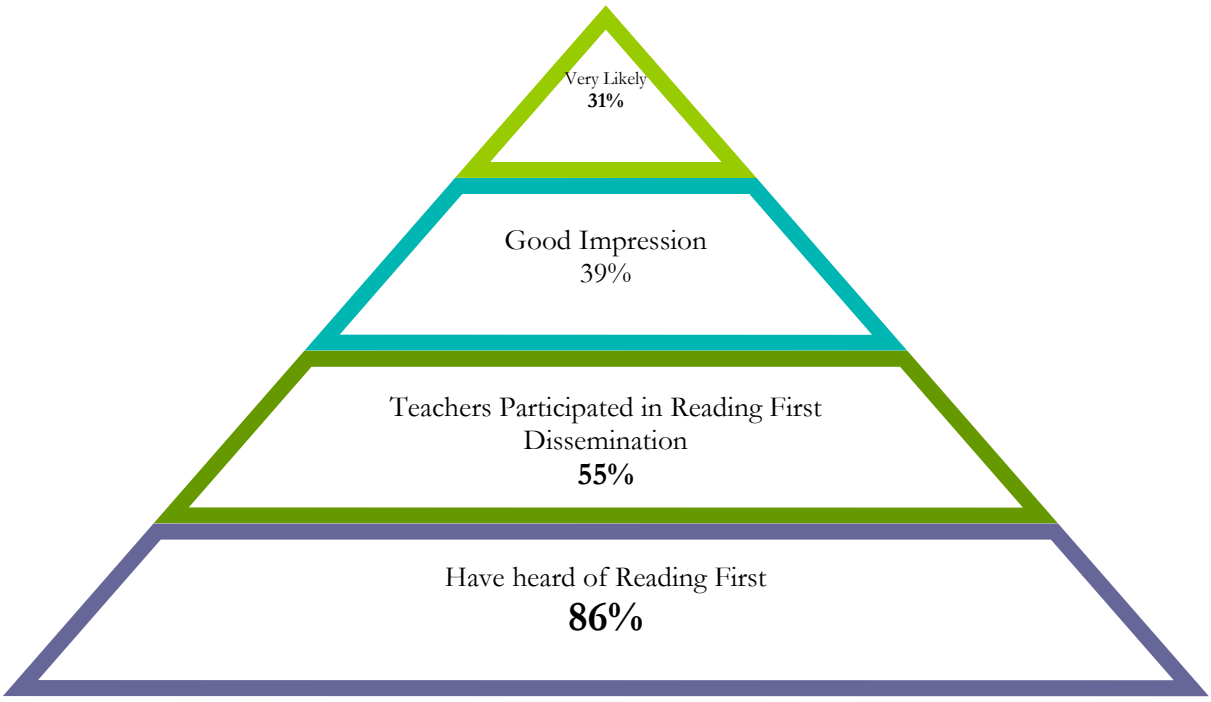


Figure 5.7: Administrator's responses to survey.

We asked those principals indicating their schools were eligible why their districts decided not to apply. Half of the eligible principals responded that the Reading First initiative was perceived as too restrictive by the leadership team in the school and district, and therefore they did not attempt a proposal.

More than half the principals (55%) indicated that someone from their school participated in Reading First professional development (10% were not sure). Of those who participated, 71% reported very positive feedback from dissemination events and only 6% reported negative impressions. On top of that, 27% of principals reported that faculty in their building are very interested (another 25% somewhat interested) in replicating some of the ideas stemming from Reading First dissemination events.

Principals in one out of three of the schools (38%) reported some attempt to replicate Reading First ideas. It is not clear what these attempts included, especially since principals showed fairly little understanding of Reading First procedures. Finally, greater than 58% of principals reported that it was likely or very likely that their school will adopt Reading First ideas.

As can be seen in Figure 5.7, about 31% of principals indicated that Reading First procedures are very likely to be implemented. The main challenge faced by Reading First, State Department of Education, and the Educational Service Units is creating a template for action that would translate the positive energy and positive attitude into meaningful action. It is not clear how much actual understanding of the procedures exist. Without the funds that accompany Reading First, schools need an action plan that is both realistic and meaningful.

Appendix A

Cluster One

G
Y
V
D
AB
X
J
U

Cluster Two

F
N
AC
I
P
B
R
M
T
H
A
Q

Cluster Three

S
AD
O
Z
E
AA
L
W
C

Appendix B

Percentage of students at grade level by school

	Kindergarten	First Grade	Second Grade	Third Grade
	NWF		ORF	
A	75.9%	79.4%	68.3%	69.2%
B	87.5%	87.8%	75.0%	71.1%
C	100.0%	96.4%	71.2%	68.4%
D	100.0%	85.0%	56.3%	75.0%
E	85.2%	79.7%	52.7%	55.6%
F	88.2%	95.0%	94.7%	82.4%
G	100.0%	100.0%	66.7%	70.0%
H	86.7%	87.8%	68.6%	59.5%
I	100.0%	100.0%	60.6%	76.7%
J	65.1%	78.9%	64.9%	57.1%
K	46.8%	80.4%	67.8%	64.0%
L	90.0%	82.7%	69.8%	63.6%
M	100.0%	81.0%	79.5%	75.0%
N	100.0%	87.5%	85.7%	87.5%
O	94.8%	87.7%	43.1%	67.6%
P	86.8%	87.7%	64.1%	65.6%
Q	77.8%	63.4%	56.0%	73.9%
R	95.7%	81.8%	78.6%	74.5%
S	82.9%	71.9%	52.6%	61.3%
T	86.8%	87.7%	64.1%	65.6%
U	46.7%	80.6%	75.0%	33.3%
V	61.5%	47.4%	76.9%	69.2%
W	100.0%	100.0%	82.1%	66.7%
X	73.3%	67.9%	58.3%	33.3%
Y	77.1%	80.4%	60.0%	60.0%
Z	84.2%	57.1%	37.5%	52.9%
AA	79.4%	75.0%	25.8%	31.8%
AB	100.0%	78.6%	53.3%	55.6%
AC	77.8%	56.8%	38.9%	35.0%
AD	92.1%	82.7%	56.2%	55.8%