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Nebraska's Reading First State Report Fall 2005-6

Guy Trainin
gtrainin2@unl.edu

Oren Yagil
UNL

GREAT PLAINS INSTITUTE
OF READING AND WRITING

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SCIENCES

UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA LINCOLN

FALL 2005-2006 PROGRESS REPORT

NEBRASKA READING FIRST

STATE REPORT

Report prepared by

Guy Trainin Ph.D.

Oren Yagil M.Ed.

Nebraska
Lincoln

The Great Plains Institute
of Reading & Writing
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Fall Progress Report

OVERVIEW

The Fall Progress Report offers an overview of student baseline achievement. Student achievement will be interpreted through two separate comparisons. In each section we start with a comparison of this years' baseline and last years' baseline; a *between cohorts* comparison. This comparison will show whether the starting point of Reading First schools is higher this year as we anticipated. A second comparison focuses on following student achievement from spring of 2004-2005 to fall of 2005-2006. This within cohort comparison shows the sustainability of last years gains and the effects of the *Summer Reading Setback*.

Student population: Student characteristics have remained relatively stable. There was no significant change in student body demographics from academic year 2004-2005 to 2005-2006. The only change that was found was an increase of almost 9% in students participating in the Free/Reduced Lunch program.

Table 1: students' demographics by category in RF schools in Nebraska.

	2005-2006	2005-2006
Free/Reduced Lunch	36%	**44%**
Special Education	6%	7%
ELL	3%	4%
White Non Hispanic	61%	60%
Hispanic	13%	15%
African American	23%	22%

Kindergarten Achievement. Kindergarten students in Reading First schools in Nebraska are at a somewhat better starting point than kindergartners from the previous year (figure 1, bars represent confidence intervals). Across both main measures early phonemic awareness (ISF) and early literacy skills (LNF) kindergartners this year have scored higher compared to last year.

Students' distribution by risk level at both measures shows that kindergartners are mostly at low risk with an average of approximately 48% at low risk (figure 2).
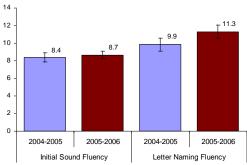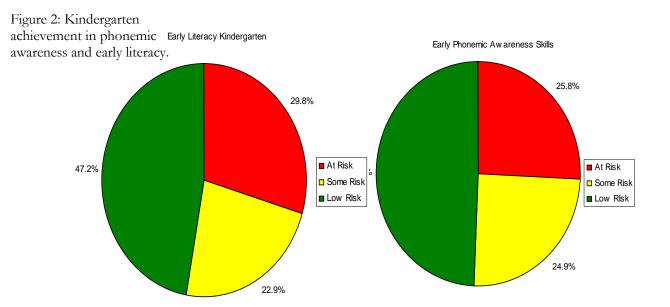

Figure 1: Kindergarten baseline achievement by cohort.

Figure 2: Kindergarten achievement in phonemic awareness and early literacy.

First-Grade Achievement. First grade students have a higher baseline achievement than last year's cohort across all tests administered (figure 3). The differences are substantial with this year's cohort being the first to have Reading First instruction last year.

First grade students this fall scored lower than they did last spring representing summer loss (figure 4). This is an expected small drop in scores over the summer. However, a significant drop in scores in phonological decoding (NWF) has occurred which may require some investigation as to the reasons.

Analyzing the data by the required benchmarks shows that the majority of first-graders (54%) are at low risk in early literacy (LNF) with only 21% at risk (figure 5). Almost 62% are at low risk in advanced phonemic awareness with over 6% at risk. Finally, 56% of first-graders are at low risk in phonological decoding with over 15% at risk.
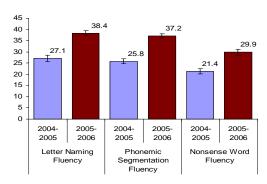

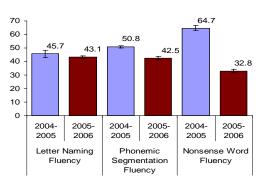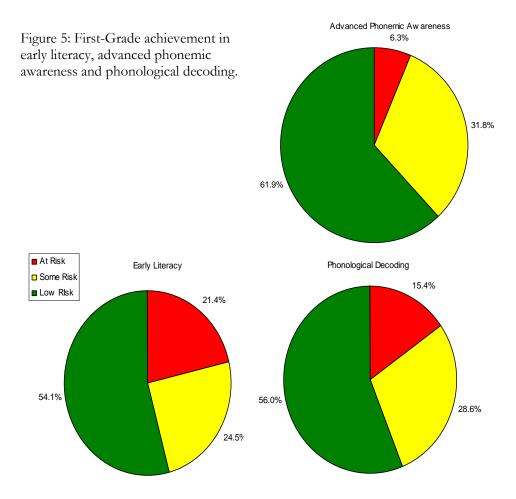Figure 3: First-Grade baseline achievement by cohort.

Figure 4: Change in achievement from spring 2004-2005 to fall 2005-2006

Figure 5: First-Grade achievement in early literacy, advanced phonemic awareness and phonological decoding.

Advanced Phonemic Awareness

6.3%

31.8%

61.9%

At Risk
Some Risk
Low Risk

Early Literacy

21.4%

54.1%

24.5%

Phonological Decoding

15.4%

56.0%

28.6%

Second-Grade achievement. Second grade students have a higher baseline achievement than last year's cohort across all tests administered (figure 6). Differences between baseline achievements are significant except in DIBELS Retell. Baseline achievements are lower than spring of last year for the same students (figure 7). This summer drop is expected.
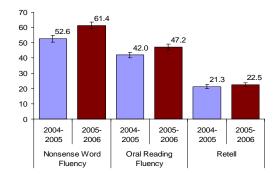
Figure 6: Second-Grade baseline achievement by cohort.

Analyzing the data by grade-level expectations shows that the majority of second-grade students (60%) are at low risk in phonological decoding (NWF), with 33% at some risk and only 7% are at risk. In reading fluency (ORF) 46% of the students are at low risk and close to 30% are at some risk. This leaves just under a quarter of second-grade students at risk
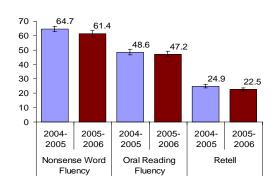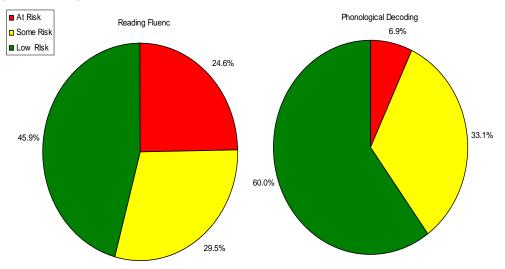

Figure 7: Second-Grade change from spring 2004-2005 and fall 2005-2006.

(figure 8). This indicates that early emphasis on fluency can get most of these students to grade level expectations.

Figure 8: Second grade achievement in reading fluency and phonological decoding.

Third-Grade achievement. Third grade students have a higher baseline achievement than last year's cohort across all tests administered (figure 9). The higher baseline, especially in comprehension (Retell) is significant when considering that at higher grades Reading First has had less of an impact on their achievements. As observed in the lower grades there is a significant drop in baseline achievement from last spring to this fall (figure 10).

Analyzing the data by the required benchmarks in reading fluency shows that the over a third of third-grade students (39%) are at low risk, over 32% are at some risk, and 28% are at risk (figure 11).
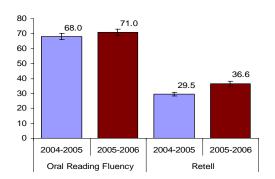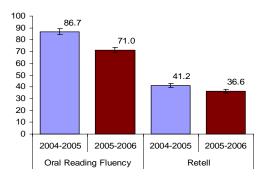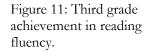
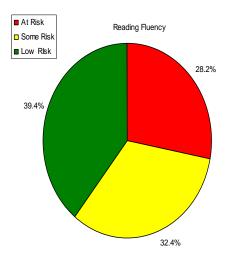Figure 9: Third-Grade baseline achievement by cohort.

Figure 10: Third-Grade change from spring 2004-2005 and fall 2005-2006.

Figure 11: Third grade achievement in reading fluency.

Student Achievement by Group. Data was analyzed by the different categories (ELL, SPED, F/RL, and ethnicity). An analysis of variance found that there was no interaction between grade and demographic group indicating that gaps were consistent across all grades. The following figures show the gap in mean scores between general education students and demographic groups. Narrowing gaps are presented in blue. Widening gaps are presented in red.

SPED: The comparison of Special Education students' achievement from fall 2004-2005 and fall 2005-2006 shows that the gap between general education and special education students has narrowed (figure 12). The figure also shows that the mean scores of all students have increased.
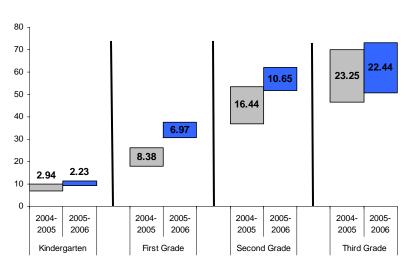

Figure 12: Fall assessment gap between general education and special education students over 2 years.

ELL: The comparison between English Only students and English Learners (figure 13) shows that mean scores for all students at all grades have risen even when the gaps have increased. In first-grade, however, the gap between English Learners and English Only students
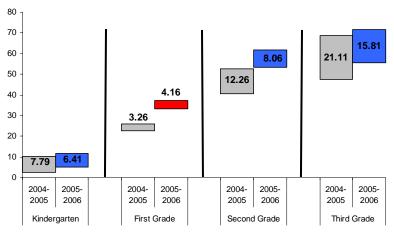

Figure 13: Fall assessment gap between English only students and English learners over 2 years.

has widened from fall 2004-2005 to fall 2005-2006 (gap is marked in red). This gap is a result of a unique first-grade cohort in Lakeview Community Schools.

FRL: The comparison between non-F/RL students and those participating in the F/RL program (figure 14) shows increasing gaps across grades. Only in third-grade the gap narrowed. In all other grades the gap has widened. In kindergarten and second-grade it has widened significantly.
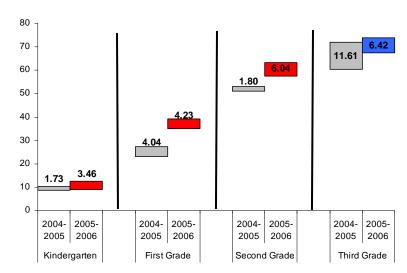
Figure 14: Fall assessment gap between Non-F/RL and F/RL students over 2 years.

Ethnicity: The comparison by student ethnicity (figure 15) was made using mean scores for each ethnicity group compared to the mean for White Non-Hispanic group. Analyzing the data shows that in three cases- Native Americans in kindergarten, Hispanic and Native American in third-grade the mean scores on the DIBELS assessments are lower in fall 2005-6 than it was in 2004-5. Any conclusion about Native Americans should be qualified because of the low number of Native Americans enrolled in Reading First Schools. In all other cases the mean scores in each ethnicity increased even if gaps did not decrease. The ethnic achievement gap between each ethnicity and White Non-Hispanic narrowed in three cases and widened in nine, showing that Reading First may be benefiting all students but white students more than others. This is a common phenomenon observed in school wide interventions, all students benefit and those with better starting points benefit even more. To reduce gaps we may have to add extra support to lagging population.
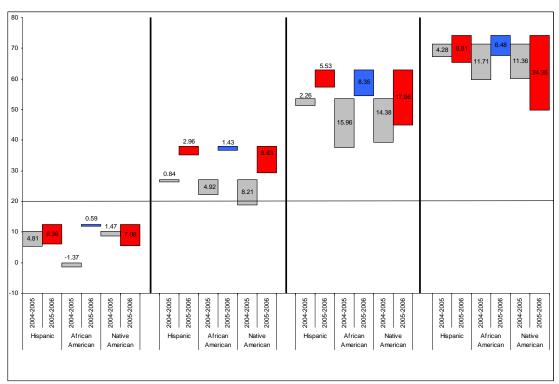
Figure 15: Fall assessment gap between White non-Hispanic students and other ethnicities over 2 years.

Percent of Students at Grade Level by Demographic Group.

The following figures show the percentage of students, by group, that have scored above grade level (at low-risk) compared with the entire Reading First cohort. The bars indicate the percentage of students by group, and the lines the percentage in the whole Reading First cohort. The percentage of English Learners and Special Education students at grade level in kindergarten
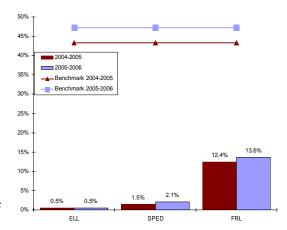

Figure 16: Percent of kindergarten students at benchmark by demographic.

is very low but climbing. The percentage of students in the F/RL program that have reached grade-level is significantly higher. It is still well below the results of the Reading First cohort. We must remember however that Reading First has no impact on fall kindergarten results as no instruction has occurred yet. It does indicate that early attention can help Reading First become successful.

In first-grade, English Learners and Special Education students are still far behind. Students who receive F/RL have improved considerably (figure 17). Note that the overall percentage of students that have scored at or above grade level has increased from fall 2004-2005 to fall 2005-2006. Thus, we have set a much higher bar.

In second-grade the percentage of students reaching the benchmark has increased from fall 2004-2005 to fall 2005-2006. But the increase in percentage of students in the different groups has increased only slightly, compared to the rest of the population.

Finally, in third-grade, the percentage of students from the entire student population that have reached the benchmark has increased only slightly from fall 2004-2005 to fall 2005-2006, as have the percentage of students in ELL and SPED (figure 19). The increase of FRL students on grade-level was more significant.
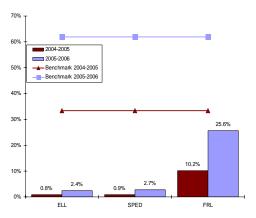
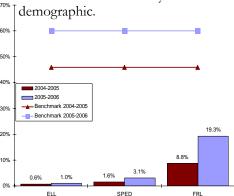Figure 17: Percent of first grade students at benchmark by demographic.

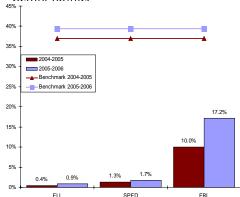Figure 18: Percent of second grade students at benchmark by demographic.

Figure 19: Percent of third-grade students at benchmark by demographic.

11

Summary: A few conclusions can be suggested based the data.

An added layer of pre K curriculum for at-risk populations (e.g. Early Reading First) would help start off students at a more equal footing and set off kindergarten success. Within cohorts comparisons across all grades show a drop between spring and fall of the next grade. This summer reading drop impacts weaker students more than others. Research has shown that summer interventions (not just summer school) can decrease this drop; such an approach can increase the long-term success of Reading First dramatically. Second grade students are at a much better shape than last year seeming to need a boost in fluency now that decoding seem to be well in place. Third grade continues to be our most challenging age group starting with just under 40% of students at grade-level. An emphasis on fluency and comprehension this year will improve the outcomes. English Language learners and Special Education students are still very far from their peers. Only high-power secondary and tertiary interventions will enable them to reduce the gap significantly. This report shows that last years gains have not dissipated and provide a solid foundation for even higher gains this year.
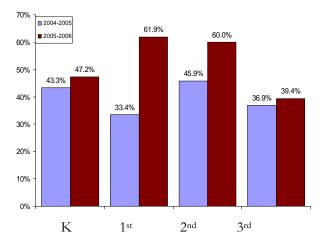

Figure 20: All grades percentage of students above benchmarks (low risk).