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Nebraska Reading First Evaluation Winter 2008 Newsletter

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**UPCOMING
DATES:**

Teacher logs:

Feb. 11-22

Apr 21-May 2

**DIBELS
DATES:**

April

**TEACHER
SURVEYS:**

April 1-25

Newsletter edited by
Emily Hayden

UNIVERSITY OF
Nebraska
Lincoln

Nebraska Reading First Evaluation Newsletter

VOLUME III, ISSUE 2

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Winter Newsletter

Welcome to winter in Nebraska!

As teachers ourselves, we know that these winter months can be turned into some of the most productive learning time for students. The holiday distractions are past; the weather is perfect for staying inside. This can be prime time for focus and involvement in the classroom. We hope you are finding your creative flow during these cold days, and seeing valuable skill growth in your students.

Fall Results

show some interesting patterns. First, that the impact of Reading First practices carries over from kindergarten and first grades to the following year. Students in first and second grades are starting their academic year stronger than previous groups. The unfortunate second point is that summer reading skill loss is evident across all grade levels. This is not a new problem. Teachers have known this, and it has been reported in research and evaluation for over 30 years. Summer skill building and enrichment activities are the solution, but we don't yet know the

most effective way to do this. Extending the school year has not been as effective as hoped. Third grade students present the biggest challenge for Nebraska Reading First teachers, and seem to have lost the most over the summer. The shift to a stronger focus on comprehension skills is our immediate challenge. E.H.

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Kristin Javorsky, Communication Coordinator, can be reached at 402 472-0730 or at javorsky@bigred.unl.edu

Our Diverse Classrooms

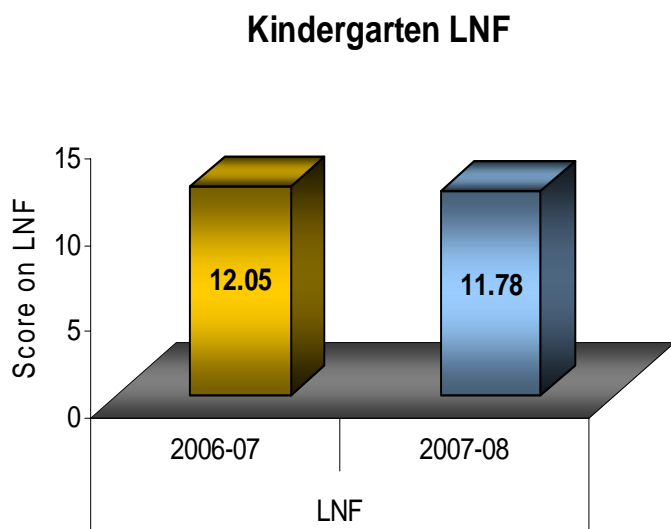
Nebraska Reading First classrooms serve distinct groups of students; far more culturally and economically diverse than the

state average. This puts Reading First teachers on the leading edge of work with diverse groups in Nebraska. Below are educational,

economic, and cultural group comparisons between state averages and Reading First classrooms. E.H.

	State: 2006-2007	Reading First, Round I & II 2007-2008
English Language Learners	6.5%	9.8%
Special Education Students	14.9%	12.2%
Free/Reduced Lunch Students	36.4%	57.5%
African American Students	7.7%	26.0%
Hispanic Students	12.2%	19.0%
Native American Students	1.7%	2.6%
White Students	76.5%	51.4%

A good start and challenges ahead for kindergarten



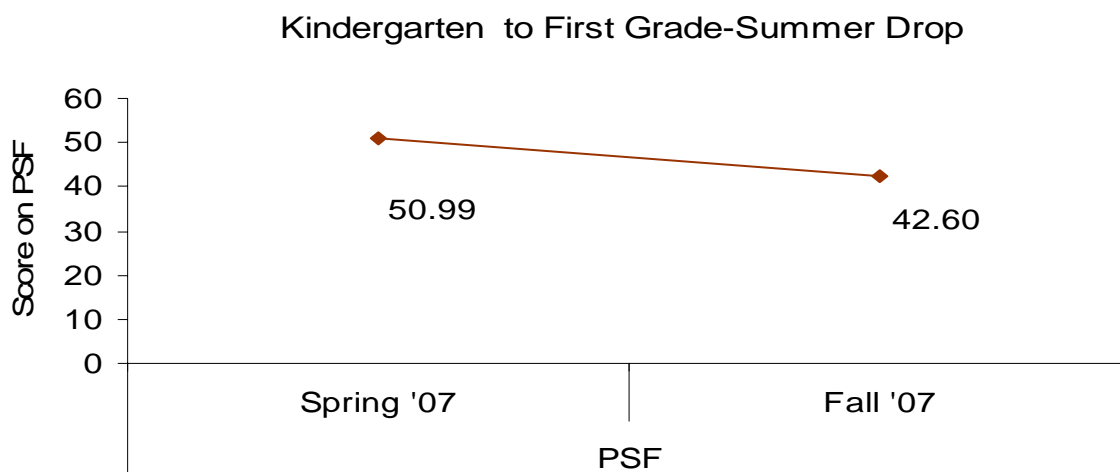
For the last two years **kindergarten** students in Reading First classrooms have performed at benchmark on Initial Sound Fluency (a test of phonemic awareness) and on Letter Naming Fluency. This encouraging performance indicates that students are beginning their school careers with proficiency in early reading skills. But as we know, there are still many challenges for kindergarten teachers in Reading First classrooms. Nearly half of all kindergarten students in both Rounds are at some level of risk. And the drop in skills over the summer between kindergarten and first grade means that teachers must insure that these reading skills are firmly established for all their students. E.H.

First graders rediscover lost skills, learn to decode

First grade scores on Letter Naming Fluency, Phoneme Segmentation Fluency, and Nonsense Word Fluency increased slightly in Fall 2007-2008. Strong skills in letter naming and phoneme segmentation may lead to the strong scores in nonsense word fluency, because students are better pre-

pared to grasp decoding skills when they get to first grade. This good news is tempered by the drop in Letter Naming Fluency and Phoneme Segmentation Fluency scores from spring to fall. The figure below shows this drop for Phoneme Segmentation Fluency, and the

drop in Letter Naming Fluency is almost identical. These drops point to a loss of skills over the summer. This is not a new problem to educators, but it illustrates the important work first grade teachers must do to help their students regain their skills in the fall. E.H.



At your request . . .

The evaluation team can compile individual PowerPoint presentations with results specific to your school or district. Contact Kristen Javorsky at 402 472-0730 or at javorsky@bigred.unl.edu if you would like to make use of this service. A separate fee will be assessed.

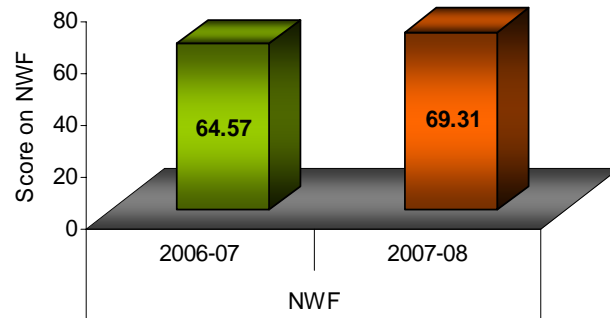


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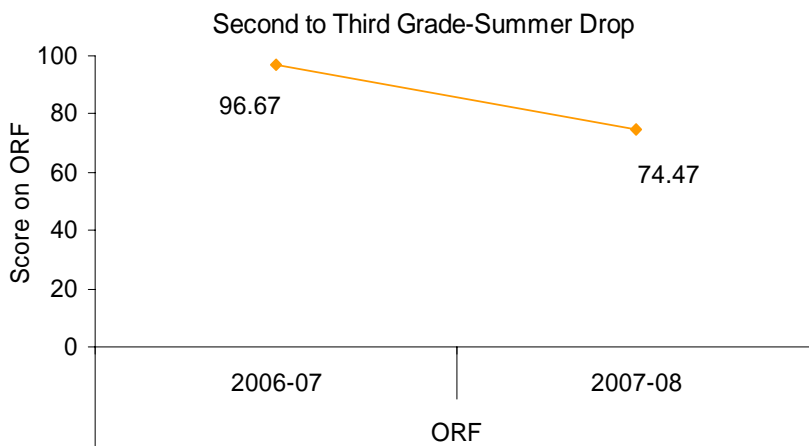
Second grade teachers revitalize decoding skills; build fluency

Second grade students show an encouraging pattern of growth in decoding skills measured by Nonsense Word Fluency. For the last two years they have scored significantly above the benchmark of 50. As with first grade, there is a noticeable drop in these skills over the summer between first and second grade. Second grade teachers have to work diligently in the fall to make up for these drops. However, the strong decoding skills measured in the fall indicate that most second graders are ready to shift their attention to developing oral reading fluency. And students are coming to second grade prepared to deal with fluency development. The scores on Oral Reading Fluency have been above the benchmark of 44 for the last two years. E.H.

Second Grade NWF



Making the third grade shift



Making the move to third grade means a shift in focus, from code based skills to Oral Reading Fluency. Fluency is an essential prerequisite skill for comprehending text, and developing fluency that leads to comprehension skill is crucial for our third graders for two reasons. First, third graders in Reading First schools seem to suffer the most skill loss over the summer: a drop of more than 20 points in Oral Reading Fluency scores from spring of second grade to fall of third grade. Second, the spring benchmarks for third graders measure comprehension as well as Oral Reading Fluency. In third grade, teachers must work intensely to establish skill in reading fluently for comprehension in connected text. This requires a shift in thinking, because comprehension requires a very broad set of skills, applied fluently, automatically, and flexibly in a variety of text settings. E.H.

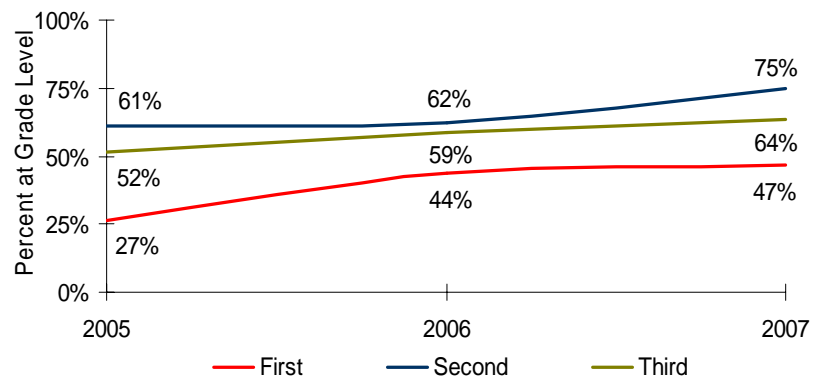
Our goal: Comprehension for all

Comprehension is measured each spring, using the Gray Oral Reading Test for a sample of first graders, and the Gates-MacGinitie comprehension assessment for all second and third graders.

Overall, students in all grades made steady growth since 2005. Over the three years the proportion of students at grade level increased significantly, 20% for first grade, 14% for second, and 12% for third. But there are significant gaps. While ELL, ethnically diverse groups, and students on free/reduced lunch have made progress, significant achievement gaps remain.

Teachers can help all students improve their comprehension by activating prior knowledge, monitoring comprehension, and helping students grapple with content through the use of graphic organizers, recognizing story structures, generating questions, and summarizing.

Comprehension Growth 2005-2007



Read the full report: **Impact of Nebraska Reading First on Reading Comprehension Across Three Years of Implementation at**

<http://www.nde.state.ne.us/ReadingFirst/NebraskaReadingFirstReports.htm>



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