



A clear choice in *Superkids*

Directly comparing primary literacy programs

Evaluating *The Superkids Reading Program*™ against K–5 basal reading programs resulted in a clear choice for the Northland Pines School District in northern Wisconsin. Teachers piloted *Superkids*® during the 2013–2014 school year at one of three elementary schools. The other schools piloted well-known traditional basal reading programs from large publishers.

The head-to-head comparison resulted in the district choosing *Superkids* for its primary literacy curriculum. Teachers saw results with *Superkids* that they weren't seeing in the other programs.

Tony Duffek, principal at St. Germain Elementary, recalls, "We saw success with the kids, and all the teachers here that were piloting *Superkids* liked it. It was a consensus that everybody wanted to have *Superkids* for K–2."

Away from balanced literacy

Prior to *Superkids*, the district had been using a mixed, mostly balanced literacy approach. "When I got to the district we were using a whole language approach to reading with leveled texts," Donna Hejtmanek, Title 1



***Superkids* raised the bar and kids are meeting it.**

—Tony Duffek, St. Germain Elementary Principal

teacher and reading specialist, explains. Teachers tended to focus on the parts of the curriculum they were most comfortable with.

The balanced literacy approach wasn't working well in the district. "We needed to have something more systematic," Principal Duffek explains, "because the balanced literacy wasn't always done with fidelity." Good teachers were providing good instruction—but not always in the same things at the same time.

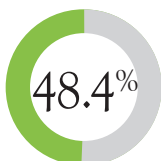
Using a balanced literacy curriculum, the district had not achieved the reading scores that they wanted. "I suggested to our curriculum director/principal at the time that we explore the use of some more science-based reading options," says Hejtmanek. *Superkids* fit the mandate.

District Profile: Northland Pines Elementary Schools

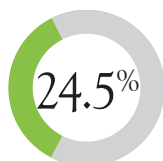
Located primarily in Vilas County, Wisconsin, with three rural, public elementary schools



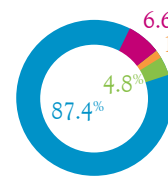
Students with disabilities



Students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch



Children in the district under age 17 in poverty



Ethnicity
Caucasian: 87.4%
Hispanic: 4.8%
Asian: 1.2%
Other Ethnicities: 6.6%

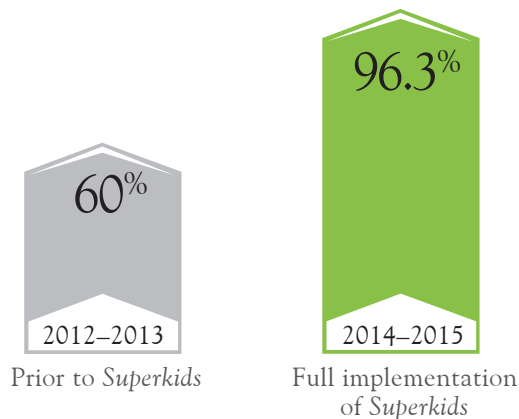
Integrated instruction success

Prior to *Superkids*, the district had been supplementing the balanced literacy approach with a national stand-alone phonics program. However, as principal Duffek discovered, “It really didn’t have a direct connection to what students were reading. We needed to have something that brought it all together.”

Transitioning to *Superkids* was a challenge; initially, teachers wondered whether students could handle solid, grade-level text. In their third year of implementation, teachers are convinced by the results they see.

Kindergarten students’ fluency at the end of their kindergarten year at St. Germain

AIMSweb™ data show increases in nonsense word fluency: More students test at Tier 1 (proficient and above).



Important effect on reading

Superkids has had an important effect on reading. AIMSweb data for kindergarten classes using *Superkids* show a dramatic rise in students’ ability to decode unknown words. During the first year of full implementation across the schools, the number of kindergartners achieving proficiency increased by over 36% compared to the prior year.

The Northland Pines School District comprises three public elementary schools: St. Germain, Land O’Lakes, and Eagle River schools. After piloting the three reading programs in 2013–2014, a district-wide committee evaluated the results and chose *Superkids* for the primary grades. Staff chose *Wonders* for grades 3–5.

“Students come into grade 3 with stronger spelling skills after *Superkids*.”

—Holly Geiger, Third-Grade Teacher

A coordinated curriculum

“My class really likes their structured routine,” Carrie Olson, kindergarten teacher, states. “They know what to expect and they can be successful with it.”

Kandice Stephens, a second-grade teacher, notes that “*Superkids* gave us a system, and it tied everything together” within and through the grades. Principal Duffek points out that *Superkids* provides all the resources that teachers need to produce skilled readers. Teachers are getting all the components they need to teach students reading and writing skills.

Superkids has also made conversations between teachers at different schools easier. “We can talk. We’re in the same place. We know the lesson,” explains Stephens. Teachers don’t have to explain to each other what their lesson covers. Instead, they can focus on how they’re approaching the *Superkids* lessons and how students are responding.

“Teachers know that what they’re doing will teach kids how to read.”

—Tony Duffek, St. Germain Elementary Principal

Students in Northland Pines have seen results. Third-grade reading scores have increased in all three schools since using *Superkids* in the primary grades, elevating the overall language arts scores for each elementary school. This is the kind of success the Northland Pines School District was hoping for when they implemented *Superkids*.