

| About the School: | | About the Students: | |
|----------------------|-------|---------------------|-----|
| Grades: | K-8 | African American: | - |
| Number of Students: | 140 | Caucasian: | 30% |
| Test(s): | STARS | Hispanic: | 70% |
| Reduced Price Lunch: | 90% | Asian: | - |
| | | Other: | - |
| | | ELL | 66% |

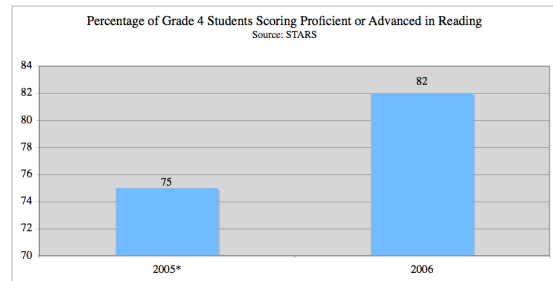


Nebraska Reading First School Reaches States Highest Scores With SRA Reading Programs

During the 2005–2006 school year, Sunrise Elementary School boasted the highest reading scores of all Reading First schools in the state of Nebraska, while serving the most diverse population of students. Principal John Milnar says dedicated teachers and SRA/McGraw-Hill’s reading programs are the reason behind the success.

“The programs are broken down into components that scientific research says you must have in a successful reading program,” he explained. “Concepts are presented in an extremely methodical manner that spirals, reviews, and progresses. These programs take the best practices of scientific research and actually put them into place, as opposed to other programs that don’t have the data to back them up.”

Before SRA’s *Open Court Reading* was fully adopted as the core reading curriculum at the start of the 2004–2005 school year in Grades K–3 and several Direct Instruction programs were implemented for intervention, 75% of Grade 4 students scored Proficient or Advanced in reading on the Student-based, Teacher-led Assessment and Reporting System (STARS). One year after implementation, 82% of students scored at that level.



* First year of implementation.

Reading First schools are required to implement a 90-minute daily reading block, but Sunrise Elementary School took that several steps further. All students experience a three-hour reading and language arts block each day with the following SRA programs: *Open Court Reading*, *Language for Learning*, and *Language for Thinking* in Grades K–3; and *Reading Mastery Plus* and *Corrective Reading* for intervention in Grades K–8.

Milnar said before the SRA reading programs began at-risk students seemed to make little progress and occasionally regressed.

“Teachers used a variety of programs that were not connected or articulated effectively. The staff was definitely ready for improvement and a more effective approach. Now teachers are speaking a common language and working as a team. We feel we have a true learning community that is focused on student learning, and we are seeing kids close the learning gap, despite a variety of risk factors,” Milnar said.



About two-thirds of Sunrise Elementary School students are English Language Learners (ELL). ELL Teacher Ann Fuchs said she and her colleagues had always looked for the program that would be the “one” to help students.

“Our search is over because we found *Open Court Reading* and Direct Instruction programs,” she said. “The reading curriculum is consistent during each day’s uninterrupted reading block, and student achievement is unbelievable. The ELL students are doing great because they need to hear the same terminology throughout their instruction and SRA programs provide exactly that.”

Literacy Coach and Special Education Teacher Lynette Mitzel said receiving a Reading First grant gave the school the money needed to implement the current system of reading instruction and evaluation.

“Sunrise Elementary is extremely proud to say our students are achieving unthinkable results,” she explained. “There are many layers to student achievement – a solid core program is the foundation that reaches a majority of students. In addition to good core instruction, systematic data review resulting in instructional change, sustained staff development, administrative and teacher leadership, and teamwork have truly built a successful reading program.”

Mitzel said the following quote has been the driving vision behind all efforts necessary to achieve literacy for all students:

“We will not allow the demographics of the neighborhood to determine the destiny of our children. We are willing to do whatever it takes to make sure that children will be literate.”

– Kathie Dobbertein, former and beloved Sunrise Elementary School teacher

According to Lynette Block, Nebraska’s Reading First Director, Sunrise teachers have been diligent in providing direct, explicit instruction in a systematic approach.

“Classroom, Title I, and special education teachers have coordinated an instructional plan to meet the learning needs at the correct level of difficulty using a comprehensive core reading program, *Open Court Reading*, and intensive interventions for students needing above and beyond the core program,” she said. “Interventions are in place so that students are provided the intensity needed to progress and not slip behind.”

About Sunrise Elementary School

Serving roughly 140 students in Grades K–8, this Title I elementary school’s student population is 70% Hispanic and 30% Caucasian. Ninety percent of the children qualify for free- or reduced-price lunch, 66% are classified as ELL, 13% receive special education services, and 20% are mobile. For more information about this school, please visit www.esu7.org/~1web/sunrise/sunrise.html.



For More Information

If you would like to learn more about success with *Open Court Reading* or Direct Instruction programs in your school or district, please contact us today at **1-888-SRA-4543**.