

CASE STUDY

Georgia Primary School Reading Gains Remarkable for Five Consecutive Years

Sources: Algie Jones, principal and Kathy Coody, assistant principal, Bleckley County Primary School
 Research conducted during the 2000–2001 school year.



Introduction

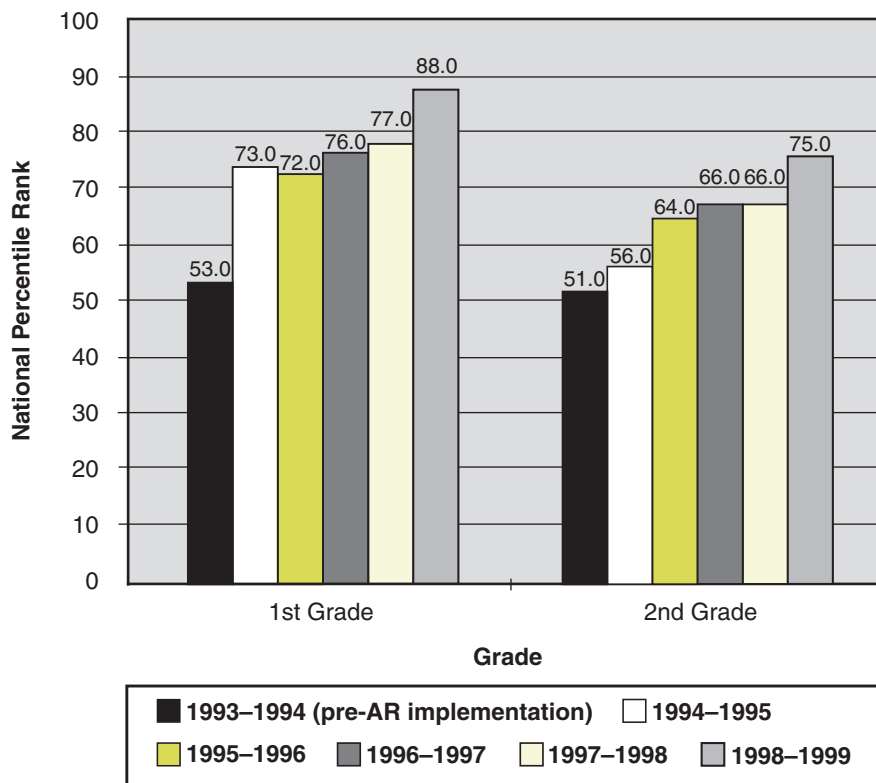
Since implementing Accelerated Reader™ (AR™) software in the fall of 1994, Bleckley County Primary School students' scores on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS)¹ have increased dramatically (see graph below). In 2001, due in part to these gains, the school achieved a National Title I Distinguished School Award.

Educator Background

An educator for 30 years, **Algie Jones** is the principal of Bleckley County Primary School. Jones earned a specialist degree in administration from Troy State University.

Assistant Principal **Kathy Coody** has 28 years of experience in education—25 as a teacher. Coody received a specialist degree from Mercer University. She is the Renaissance Coordinator for the school.

ITBS Reading Scores Increase²



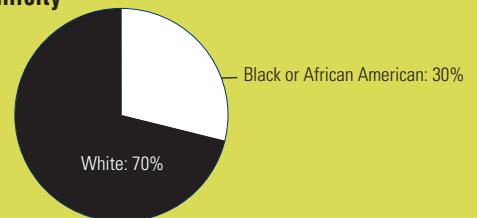
School Profile

Bleckley County Primary School
 Students: 540, Grades: Pre-K–2
 Cochran, Georgia

Demographics

Urban
 Title I
 Free or reduced lunch: 56%
 Mobility: 38.4%

Race/Ethnicity



Study Description

In November 1994, Bleckley County Primary School, a pre-k through second-grade school, began using Accelerated Reader, a computerized, daily progress-monitoring tool. The next fall, educators at the school enhanced this reading software by attending professional development training on Renaissance Learning's research-based best classroom practices.

The company offers a professional recognition program for educators that implement Renaissance tools according to these recommendations, and in February 1996, Bleckley Primary became one of the first schools in Georgia to earn a Reading Model School Certification. In order to achieve this reading certification, a school must use AR and best practices schoolwide and have no more than 15% of students considered at risk,³ among other criteria. Accelerated Reader remains central to Bleckley Primary's school improvement efforts; in fact, the 2000–2001 academic year marked the fifth year in a row that the school earned Model School Certification in reading.

Teachers at Bleckley Primary incorporate 60 minutes of reading practice with their students using the TWI approach. This scaffolded technique includes spending time reading books *to* and *with* students at levels slightly above their reading ability, as well as ensuring that students are reading books *independently* that are within their zone of proximal development (ZPD). Books that fall within a student's ZPD



range are at a the level where the student can achieve success because the book is neither too easy nor too difficult.

To augment this reading practice, Bleckley Primary's educators use other techniques such as Duolog Reading, research-based, structured, one-on-one tutoring that pairs independent readers with emerging readers; and Power Lessons, 10- to 15-minute skills lessons that teach a single objective students can then apply to their independent reading.

Results

Between 1994 and 1999, reading achievement at Bleckley Primary rose considerably, as measured by the ITBS. During this time, first-grade students' scores climbed from the 53rd percentile to the 88th percentile, an increase of 35 percentile points. Meanwhile, second graders gained 24 percentiles, increasing from the 51st percentile to the 75th percentile. (See graph on first page.) In 2001, the school was awarded for this remarkable progress when they earned a National Title I Distinguished School Award.

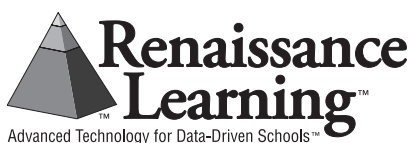
Conclusion

The educators and students at Bleckley County Primary School demonstrate that when Accelerated Reader is used effectively and implemented according to Renaissance Learning's research-based best classroom practices, significant gains in student reading achievement can be the result.

¹ Riverside Publishing. (n.d.) *Iowa Test of Basic Skills*. Itasca, IL: Author.

² Test scores not shown for 1999–2000 and 2000–2001 because Georgia's state-mandated assessment changed and scores are not comparable.

³ At risk indicates that a student is not demonstrating success in their reading practice, as determined by progress-monitoring data from Accelerated Reader.



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