

SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

CASE STUDY

Reading and Math State Test Scores Climb at Rural Texas School

Percent of students who Met Standard and received Commended Performance on TAKS increased

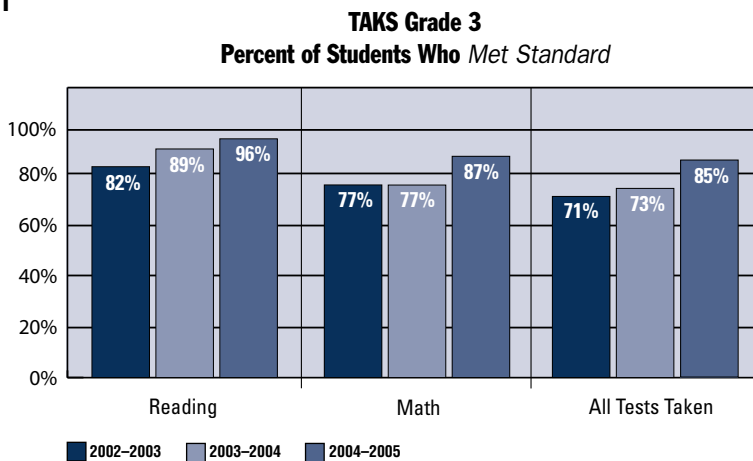
Source: Linda Staton, principal, Finley–Oates Elementary School

Research conducted during 2002–2005

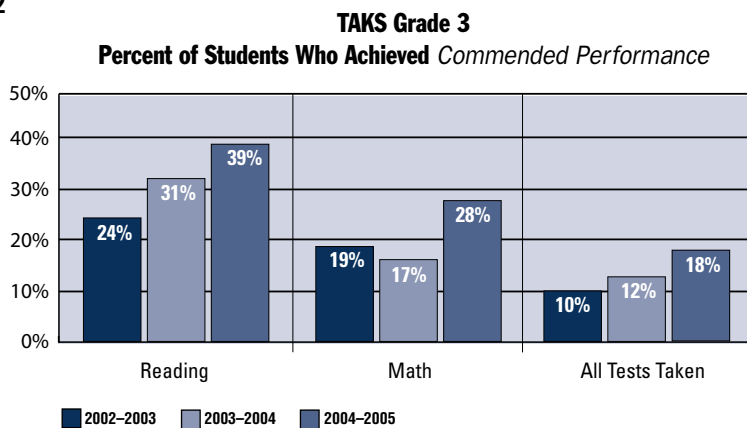
Introduction

Finley–Oates Elementary School’s implementation of Accelerated Reader and Accelerated Math helped to increase the percentage of students who *Met Standard* and received *Commended Performance*¹ in reading, mathematics, and all tests taken² on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS)³. (See Graphs 1 and 2.)

Graph 1



Graph 2



School Profile

Finley–Oates Elementary School

Students: 600, Grades: K–3

Bonham, Texas

Demographics

Rural

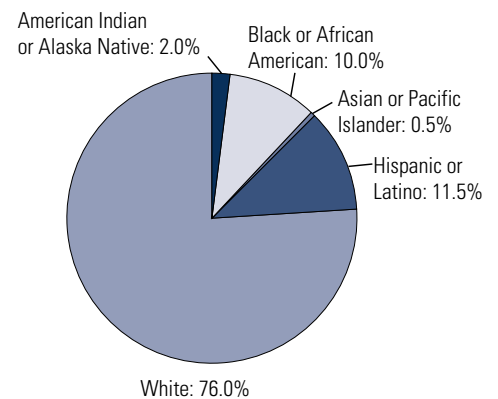
Title I

Limited English proficiency: 8%

Free or reduced lunch: 57%

Mobility: 22%

Race/Ethnicity



Educator Background

Linda Staton the Finley–Oates Elementary School principal, has been involved in education for 36 years—24 years in the classroom and 12 as a campus administrator. She holds a bachelor’s degree, a master’s degree, and a mid-management administrator certificate from East Texas State University. Because of her educational and community involvement, as well as her positive contributions thereof, Staton was selected as the 1990 Bonham community Citizen of the Year.

(more information on back)

Study Description

Bonham Independent School District first purchased Accelerated Reader—a daily progress-monitoring tool that provides feedback on comprehension of books read—in 1996 for grades 1–8, and soon it was successfully implemented at Finley–Oates Elementary School. Finley–Oates Elementary then purchased Accelerated Math to supplement the existing math curriculum and started using it extensively in 2001. Another daily progress-monitoring tool, Accelerated Math automates the assigning of practice sheets, scoring, record keeping, and progress toward mastery of math objectives for each student. STAR Math and STAR Reading—both reliable and valid assessments—were purchased in 2001 and 2002 respectively to assist in setting appropriate starting placements for students within the Accelerated Math libraries, to give students an appropriate starting Accelerated Reader ZPD (zone of proximal development) reading range, and to assess growth throughout the school year. Reading within the proper ZPD or working in the appropriate math library allows a student to be challenged without becoming frustrated, and is necessary for optimum growth.

Once students know their ZPD, they set individualized reading goals with their teachers and are given daily independent reading practice time. Students at Finley–Oates are given multiple opportunities to select, read, and take quizzes on a variety of books. For example, the library and computer lab are open before school providing monitored reading practice and quiz taking; the public library provides students easy access to more books; and the community has a volunteer, grant-funded program called the Family Life Center where kids can go after school, allowing a safe and positive place to select and read books, among other activities.

Unlike Accelerated Reader materials, Finley–Oates was faced with limited Accelerated Math resources and was unable to install the software in every classroom. Determined to ensure its

use in every classroom, the staff set up four computer carts each holding a computer with the loaded software, a printer, and a test scanner. They then developed a creative rotating schedule for Accelerated Math use. Even physical education and music teachers, as well as community members, got involved to help with cart rotation and various student tasks such as bubbling and scanning test cards, so that teachers could focus on helping students with their math lessons. In addition, the school experimented using the first-grade library for the Kindergarten students during the spring with great results.

Results

Since the TAKS test was administered in the spring of 2003¹, Finley–Oates has had an increase in the percent of students who *Met Standard*—14 percentage points in reading, 10 points in math, as well as 14 points for all tests taken. What's more, the percent of students achieving *Commended Performance* increased by 15 percentage points in reading, 9 points in math, and 8 points for all tests taken. (See Graphs 1 and 2.)

In addition, the school received an Accountability Rating of *Recognized*² by the Texas Education Agency for both the 2003–2004 and 2004–2005 school years. Even more impressive, Finley–Oates was awarded the Gold Performance Acknowledgment indicator of *Commended* on Reading/English Language Arts for these same school years.

Conclusion

A combination of hard work, a flexible schedule, and the implementation of Accelerated Reader and Accelerated Math resulted in reading and math growth at Finley–Oates Elementary. Students love these assessment tools; while teachers, administrators, and parents love what they do to accelerate students' learning.

¹In November 2002, the State Board of Education adopted two performance standards for the TAKS: *Met Standard* (e.g. passing) and *Commended Performance* (e.g. high performance). Because TAKS is much more challenging than its predecessor, the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS), the State Board and the TAKS Panel (composed of educators and citizens) agreed to a transition plan giving schools three years to work their way up to the new standard for passing. While lower scores were considered "passing" in 2003 and 2004, the percent of students at Finley–Oates reported at having *Met Standards* during these years, actually met the higher standards set as the goal for 2005.

²TAKS *All Tests Taken* represents the percent of students who passed all subject area tests. Since Finley–Oates Elementary is a K–3 school, it only administers math and reading tests to its third-grade students. Therefore, the *All Tests Taken* value represents the percent of students who passed **both** the math **and** reading tests.

³Texas Education Agency. (2002). *Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS)*. Austin, TX: Texas Education Agency, Student Assessment Division.

⁴The Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) was the state-mandated assessment of student performance given to Texas public school students from 1990 through 2002. In 2003 the TAKS assessment took the place of TAAS. Although Finley–Oates implemented both Accelerated Math and Accelerated Reader prior to 2003, the TAKS assessment and the previous TAAS assessment are not comparable. Therefore, only TAKS scores are shown and discussed starting with the 2002–2003 school year.

⁵The four possible accountability ratings ranked from highest to lowest are 1) Exemplary, 2) Recognized, 3) Academically Acceptable, and 4) Academically Unacceptable. Of the 7,908 schools in Texas, only 290 schools (3.7%) were rated *Exemplary* and only 1,866 (23.6%) were rated *Recognized* in 2005.



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