

# CASE STUDY

## Kentucky School District Makes Great Strides in Reading With AR

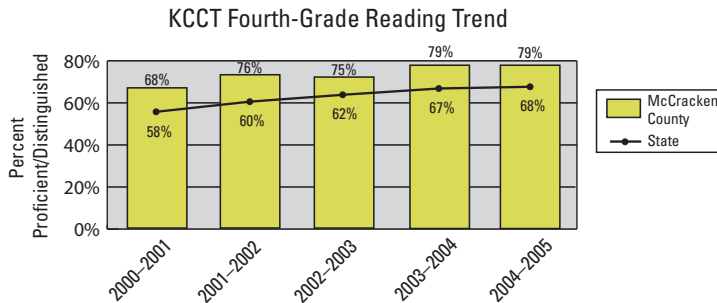
Sources: Barbara Vick, assistant superintendent, McCracken County Public Schools and Anne Fendley, library media specialist, Concord Elementary School

Research conducted during 2001–2005.

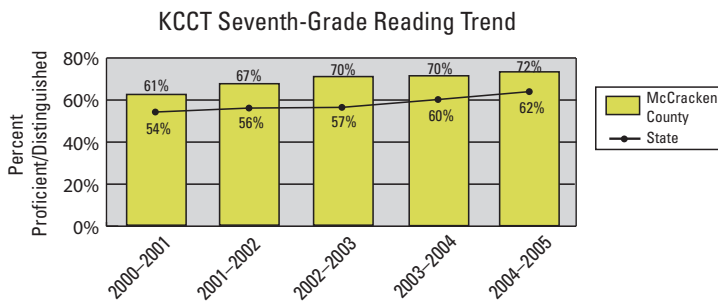
### Introduction

In the McCracken County Public School District, the implementation of Accelerated Reader (AR)<sup>™</sup>—a computer-based progress-monitoring tool—helped to improve Kentucky Core Content Test (KCCT)<sup>1</sup> reading scores (see Graphs below) and increase library circulation.

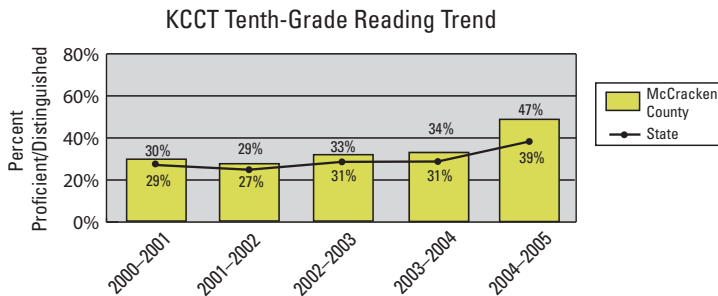
### Graph 1



### Graph 2



### Graph 3



During the 2004–2005 school year, 13 McCracken County teachers achieved Model Classroom Certification and 27 teachers achieved Master Classroom Certification.

### Educator Background

Devoting 23 years to education, **Barbara Vick, Ed.D.** has spent the last 8 years serving as the assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction for McCracken County Public Schools. She received a bachelor's degree in secondary education, a master's degree in education, and a rank I teacher certification in school administration from Murray State University in Murray, Kentucky. Dr. Vick completed her doctorate in educational leadership at the University of Kentucky.

Since 1997, **Ann Fendley** has been the library media specialist at Concord Elementary. She received a bachelor's degree and a fifth-year degree in secondary education with a school library media certification, K–12 from Murray State University in Murray, Kentucky.

### District Profile

McCracken County Public Schools  
Students: 6,854, Grades: Pre-K–12  
Paducah, Kentucky

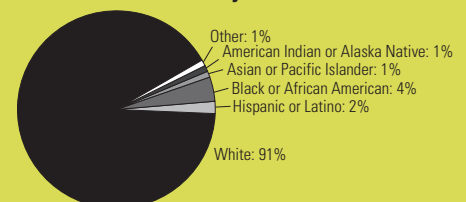
### District Demographics

Rural  
Free or reduced lunch: 44%

### Focus School Profile

Concord Elementary School  
Students: 423, Grades: Pre-K–5  
Title I

### District Race/Ethnicity



## Study Description

When Dr. Barbara Vick joined McCracken County Public Schools in 1997, all of the district's schools were using Accelerated Reader sporadically and in different ways. Encouraged by the research supporting AR, Vick believed if the district used the software and best practices as prescribed, they would have stronger results.

Twenty-five individuals on the Comprehensive District Improvement Plan Committee analyzed the overall needs of the district and determined that one deficit was in reading scores. To improve them, committee members suggested McCracken County schools standardize use of AR and its research-based best practices for classroom implementation. To this end, the committee decided to use dollars provided by the Title V Innovative Strategies Fund to implement standards set by Renaissance Learning's Model and Master Certification program,<sup>2</sup> and reward those who achieved the goals with books for their classrooms and attendance at conferences.

Concord Elementary School,<sup>3</sup> one of the district's 12 schools, had used Accelerated Reader for years, but first began implementing the software and best practices with fidelity during the 2002–03 school year. To ensure all teachers received training, the school conducted professional development sessions for three consecutive summers and hosted a Renaissance Learning professional development seminar for the entire district. Concord also spearheaded the implementation of a flexible library schedule, increased inventory of AR quizzes 10-fold, and started a partnership with the public library, making it easier for students to have access to a variety of books with AR quizzes.

## Results

Many McCracken County educators reached the Renaissance Certification goals set forth by the district.

During the 2004–05 school year alone, 13 teachers achieved Model Classroom, 27 teachers achieved Master Classroom (including 18 from Concord Elementary), one librarian achieved Model Library, Concord Elementary achieved Master School, and Concord educator Anne Fendley achieved Master Library.

Between the 2000–01 and 2004–05 school years, the percent of McCracken County students at the *Proficient* or *Distinguished* levels in reading on the KCCT increased 11 percentage points in fourth grade, 11 points in seventh grade, and 17 points in tenth grade—maintaining higher gains and higher scores than the state. (See Graphs on reverse.) And, according to the Spring 2005 Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS) District Rankings, McCracken County ranked 18 out of 176 districts in Kentucky, placing them in the top 10% statewide.

In addition, between the 2002–2003 and 2004–2005 school years, the percent of fourth-grade students at Concord Elementary at the *Proficient* or *Distinguished* levels in reading on the KCCT increased 8 percentage points, as compared to the 6 percent and 4 percent gains made by the state and district, respectively. Concord's library circulation nearly tripled in 4 years, beginning at 32,372 and raising to 90,023 in 2004–05.

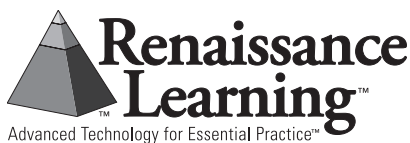
## Conclusion

With McCracken County district support and an emphasis on using AR consistently and with fidelity districtwide, McCracken County schools fulfilled a component of their Comprehensive District Improvement Plan—to increase reading scores. Students in this district realized great success as their schools worked together to implement research-based best practices, backed by the support of the district, parents, community, and educators.

<sup>1</sup> CTB/McGraw-Hill. (n.d.). Commonwealth Accountability Test (CAT): Kentucky Core Content Test (KCCT). Monterey, CA: Author.

<sup>2</sup> Renaissance Certification is a professional recognition program for educators implementing Accelerated Reader and/or Accelerated Math according to Renaissance Learning's research-based best practices. Before achieving Master Certification, Model Certification must be achieved; therefore, Master Certification is the utmost honor.

<sup>3</sup> Concord Elementary School demographics and race/ethnicity data are similar to the overall district data.



*For more information, or for additional copies of this report, contact:*

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