

Saratoga Springs City School District

Reading Growth Accelerated in First Year with ARC Core®

Saratoga Springs City School District administrators and teachers concluded their search for a new ELA curriculum as the dust was settling from the pandemic. They wanted to build a culture of reading and writing and set their sights on materials that emphasized knowledge building, student choice, collaboration, and engagement supported by ongoing professional learning. ARC Core fit the bill. After just one year of implementation in grades K–2, Saratoga Springs students realized impressive growth.

The Power of a Knowledge-Building Curriculum

My students have loved being able to call themselves zoologists or entomologists. Learning about animals and bugs is super intriguing and engages students in writing and reading. The cross-curricular aspect of ARC Core allows students to soar and reach their academic potential.

—Teacher, Division Street Elementary School

About the District

The Saratoga Springs City School District is located in New York and serves students from the city of Saratoga Springs and the Saratoga County towns of Milton, Wilton, Malta, Greenfield and Saratoga.

Implementation of ARC Core began in 2021–2022 in grades K–2. In the 2022–2023 school year, they expanded ARC Core implementation through grade 5.

- 5,945 students
- 6 elementary schools
- 1 middle school
- 1 high school
- 1% of students are English language learners
- 12% of students receive special education services
- 27% of students are from economically disadvantaged families

First- and Second-Grade Accomplishments

The Independent Reading Level Assessment® (IRLA®) measures student reading growth throughout the year. Students are expected to grow at a rate of 0.1 per month, or 1.0 per year, or more if they are not reading on grade level. Saratoga Springs' 1st and 2nd graders exceeded growth expectations during the first year of ARC Core implementation, 2021–2022 (see Figure 1). By the end of the year, 78% of 1st and 2nd graders who began the year working at emergency were no longer working at emergency.

At the start of the 2021–2022 school year, results on another spring assessment, iReady, showed 14% of 1st graders and 32% of 2nd graders as reading on or above grade level. By spring, the percent of 1st graders reading on or above grade level more than tripled, and the percent of 2nd graders reading on or above grade level nearly doubled (see Figure 2).

Figure 1
Average Growth by Beginning of Year Tier

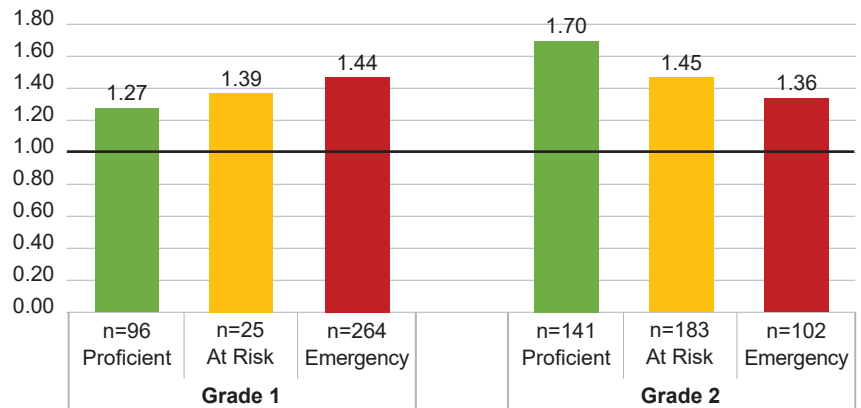
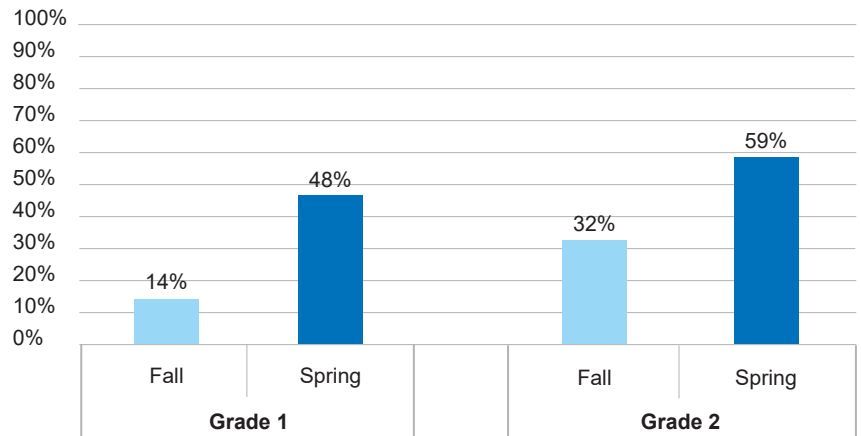


Figure 2
iReady: On or Above Grade Level



As part of Saratoga Springs' comprehensive local assessment system, data from multiple assessments are used to monitor student progress toward grade-level expectations.

The **IRLA** is a standards-based framework that teachers use to measure the extent to which students independently demonstrate reading proficiency. Research shows that the IRLA is predictive of how students will perform on standardized tests.¹

SchoolPace®, ARC's data management system, uses IRLA scores to place students' performance into tiers:

- **Proficient or Above:** IRLA level is on or above grade level
- **At-risk:** IRLA level is below grade level
- **Emergency:** IRLA level is significantly below grade level

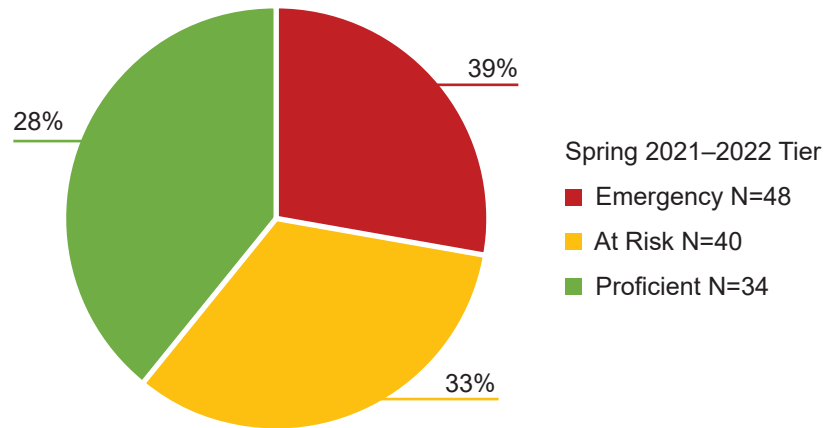
iReady Diagnostic Reading is a computer-adaptive assessment that measures a series of early reading skills, codifying students' performance and progress toward reaching grade-level expectations.

¹ For more information, see our Research Brief: Validity of the IRLA: <https://arc.red/validity>.

Kindergarten Accomplishments

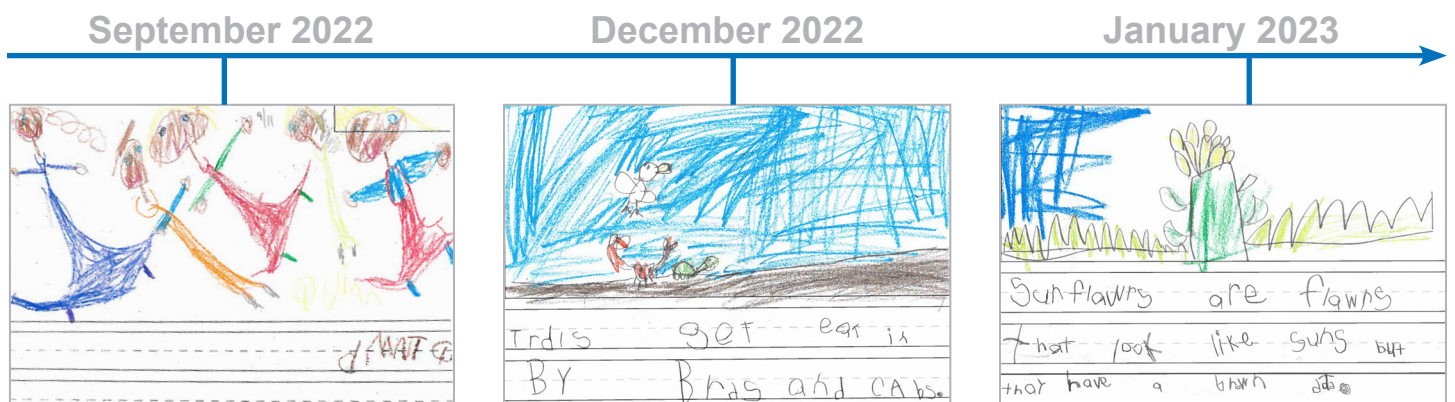
Reading: By spring of the first year, 61% of kindergarten students who began the year working at emergency were no longer at emergency as measured by IRLA: 28% moved to proficient, 33% moved to at-risk (see Figure 3). Results on the spring iReady assessment showed that 66% of all kindergarten students were proficient, an increase of 30% reading on or above grade level from the fall.

Figure 3
Students Who Began K Working in Emergency Tier



Writing: Kindergarten students made great strides in developing their writing skills. The student work below shows how one kindergarten student’s letter formation, spacing, spelling of high-frequency words, self-expression, and communication of scientific knowledge grew over four months. This student used foundational skills to write about science concepts in the first half of kindergarten!

The student work below is just one example of how students in a kindergarten classroom are engaged in reading and writing. The teacher’s excitement about how ARC Core motivated her students is evident: “My students love to say they are authors or scientists. Whenever I say, ‘go grab your lab notebooks’ or ‘grab your writer’s notebook,’ their faces light up. They are motivated to learn as much as they can about the topic we are in... Motivation, engagement, believing in their abilities are something that this program instills in my students unlike any program I have taught.”



Successful Moves

To realize their vision, Saratoga Springs partnered with ARC to build systems in which:

- Students select books that they can—and want to—read
- Teachers use the IRLA to identify each student’s Power Goal, providing a clear skills focus for both student and teacher
- Teachers develop expertise in implementing ARC Core with integrity through ongoing, curriculum-aligned professional learning and collaboration
- Leaders examine and refine overall system design as they nurture a culture focused on continuous improvement