

DuPage-Villa Park, IL School District

Reading Proficiency Grows Stronger Every Year with ARC Core®

In 2020–21, Villa Park School District engaged teachers from across the district to select their new English Language Arts curriculum. Through a materials review and pilot process, their committee set out to find high-quality materials that would support their bilingual program and instill a love of reading in all students.

The curriculum review process was driven by the district's comprehensive improvement plan. Villa Park used the Instructional Materials Evaluation Tool (IMET) and a district-created rubric aligned to their instructional goals, including the use of culturally sustaining and relevant practices and materials, as well as principles of universal design for learning (UDL).

Key aspects of ARC Core, including parity between English and Spanish materials, systematic and explicitly taught foundational skills, a wealth of authentic texts, a high volume of daily reading and writing, and a focus on engagement, met Villa Park's needs. They piloted and eventually selected ARC Core for grades K–5.

In just two years, Villa Park's implementation of ARC Core in English and Spanish has produced exciting results.

“We've not only improved reading proficiency but also built a foundation for a lifetime of literacy. Our district's progress is a testament to the hard work of our educators and the effectiveness of a guaranteed and viable curriculum aligned to our vision for student success.”

—Christine M. Arado, Ed.S.
Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction

About the District

DuPage-Villa Park School District is located in the suburbs west of Chicago in Illinois. It serves the communities of Villa Park, Lombard, Oakbrook Terrace, and Elmhurst.

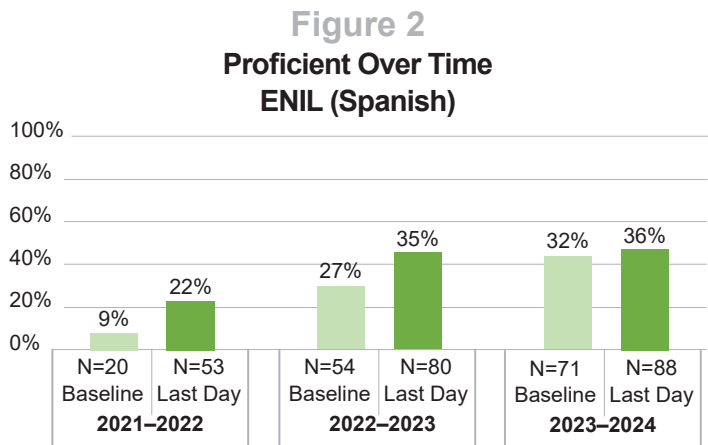
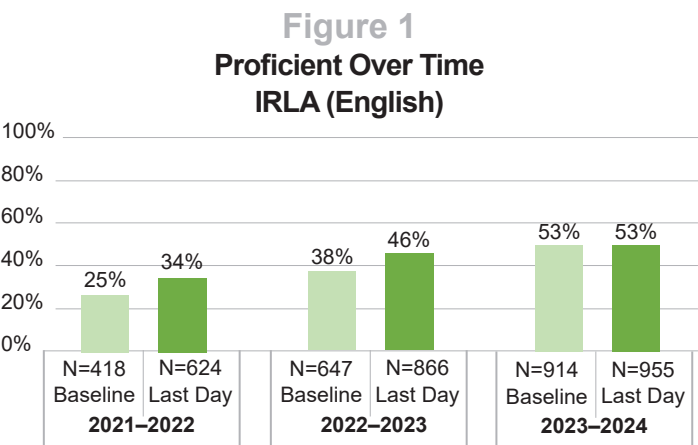
Implementation of ARC Core began in 2021–2022 in grades K–5.

- 3,100 students PreK-8
- 1 early childhood center
- 6 elementary schools
- 2 middle schools
- 44% of students are from low-income families
- 24% of students have Individualized Education Plans (IEPs)
- 27% of students are multilingual learners (MLL)
- 111 newcomers in 2023–2024

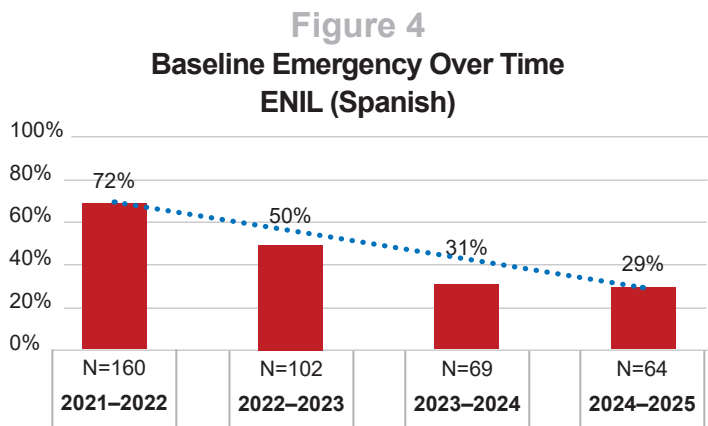
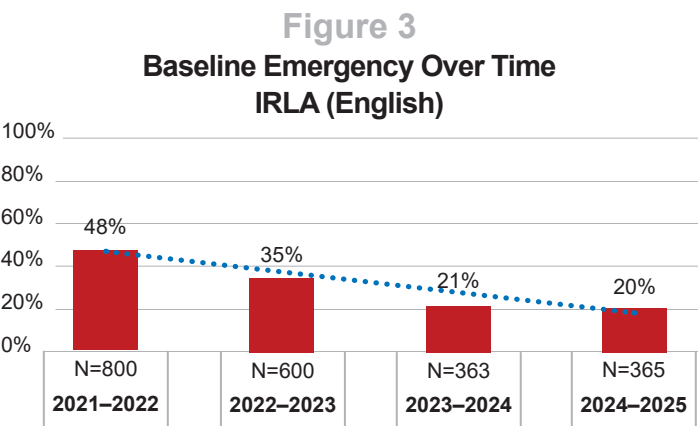
System-wide Accomplishments

As ARC Core was first being implemented at the start of the 2021–2022 school year, just 25% of students in Villa Park were reading on or above grade level. By the end of year 3 of the implementation, 53% of students were reading on or above grade level (see Figure 1).

For students in the bilingual program, results followed a similar trajectory, increasing from 9% scoring proficient in Spanish at the beginning of 2021–2022 to 36% scoring proficient by the end of the 2023–2024 school year (see Figure 2).



At the same time, students who began the year reading significantly below grade level (reading at emergency levels in IRLA/ENIL) at the beginning of the 2021–2022 school year decreased from 48% to 20% on the IRLA (see Figure 3) and from 72% to 29% on the ENIL by the beginning of 2024–2025 (see Figure 4).

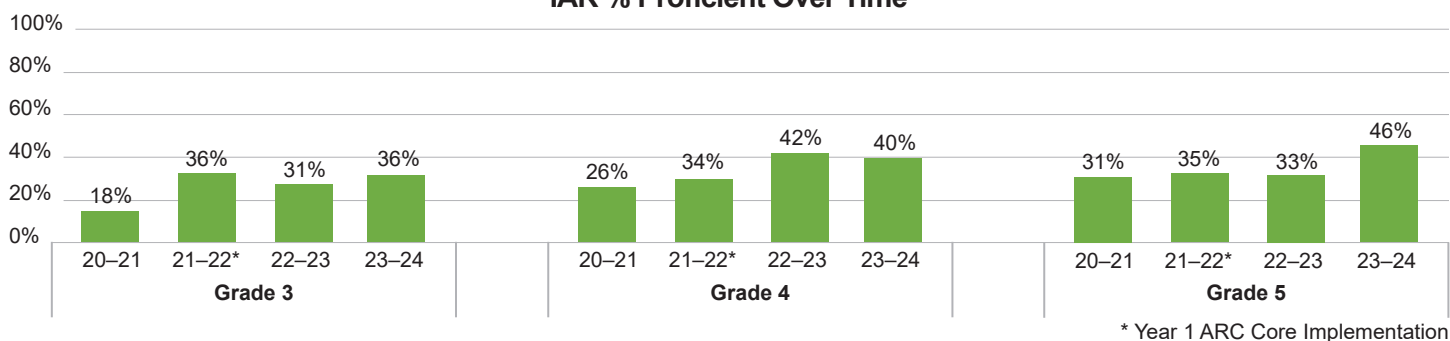


Growth of students who began the year reading in emergency levels was monitored across each school year. In 2023–2024, 49% of the 365 students who the IRLA classified as working at emergency levels at the beginning of the year moved out of emergency by the end of the year. Similarly, 41% of the 64 students who the ENIL classified as working at emergency levels at the beginning of the year moved out of emergency by the end of the year. The data speak loudly to the fact that “There’s magic happening in Villa Park,” according to ARC Academic Advisory Board Member Dr. Alfred Tatum during a recent visit.

Growth on State Test

Illinois Assessment of Readiness (IAR) results show a trend of increasing proficiency since Villa Park implemented ARC Core. Grade 3 increased proficiency from 18% in 2020–2021 to 36% in 2023–2024. Grade 4 increased from 26% to 40% proficient and grade 5 increased from 31% to 46% proficient. Gains of 18, 14, and 15 percentage points across the first 3 years with ARC Core are impressive (see Figure 5).

Figure 5
IAR % Proficient Over Time



Assessment Overview

The **Independent Reading Level Assessment® (IRLA®)** is a standards-based formative assessment that teachers use to measure the extent to which students independently demonstrate reading proficiency in English. The **Evaluación del nivel independiente de lectura® (ENIL®)** is a developmental reading taxonomy for students, paralleling the IRLA while reflecting how the stages of learning to read differ between Spanish and English.

Research conducted in districts across the country shows that the IRLA is predictive of how students will perform on standardized tests¹. A validity study conducted in Villa Park showed strong statistical correlations between students' performance on the IRLA and their performance on the NWEA Measures of Academic Performance (MAP) assessment, and the Illinois state test, the Illinois Assessment of Readiness (IAR). The study also showed strong statistical correlations between students' performance on the ENIL and their performance on the NWEA MAP in Spanish.

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

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

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

Successful Moves

- Teachers played a key role in the curriculum selection process, ensuring all voices were heard.
- The tool used to evaluate curricula was designed by the district to align with district priorities.
- The district trained teachers on the IRLA/ENIL in the spring, prior to full rollout of ARC Core.
- The district invested in ongoing job-embedded coaching and professional learning for teachers and leadership support for administrators.
- School improvement plans were revised to align systems, resources, and goals to provide consistency and accountability, smoothing district-wide implementation.
- Teachers and administrators leaned into data and data protocols to drive improvement.