

# All in with Superkids



Teachers and administrators at Bellwood School District 88 invested in *The Superkids Reading Program* for long-term results in English language arts that their students deserved. “Our data showed that in the intermediate grades, our students were struggling at the most basic, foundational level of reading,” explains reading specialist Ramona Blair.

## Investing in the future

Teachers knew that a K–2 focus would benefit students long after they left the early grades. “I come from a middle school background,” says Tamara Larson, now a K–5 reading specialist. “I was seeing a lot of deficits in middle school in foundational reading skills. At that point, quick fixes were not working.”

Bellwood teachers and administrators attended a *Superkids* workshop on the science of reading acquisition; they immediately recognized their current literacy program was not research based. Bellwood had been using the same basal reading program for nearly 40 years, and students struggled. “We knew

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*We adopted The Superkids Reading Program because we saw the benefits that it would offer our students in the long run, in our upper grades.*”

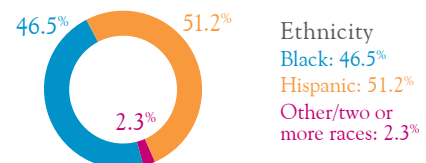
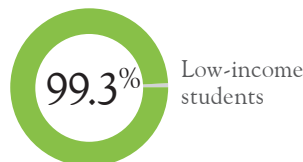
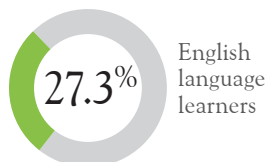
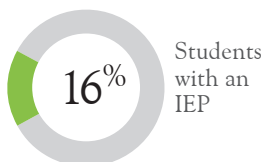
—Ramona Blair, Reading Specialist

that the research says students must be supported by daily, systemic phonics instruction—something that our current reading program lacked,” says Blair. “Students struggled with decoding.”

Bellwood piloted *Superkids* at all three grade levels in one of its four elementary schools—starting in January, halfway through the school year. Within just the semester-long pilot, teachers saw results.

## District Profile: Bellwood School District 88

Bellwood, Illinois, a western Chicago suburb  
All district students, 2018–2019 school year



“Prior to *Superkids*, 5 or 6 students out of a class of 20 were leaving able to read using our previous materials,” Blair explains. “But with Ms. Palermo’s pilot kindergarten class, even just using the materials from January to May, 15 out of 17 of her students left reading—and reading multisyllabic words.” Jennifer Palermo, the kindergarten pilot teacher, agrees. “By May, my students were reading multisyllabic words and reading books that their parents didn’t expect they could.” Ultimately, Bellwood piloted *Superkids* during the second semester in one school, for one classroom each in kindergarten and grades 1 and 2.

Results After One Semester of <i>Superkids</i>	
<p>Bellwood SD 88 teachers saw their students improve in these areas after one semester of <i>Superkids</i>.</p> <p><small>Source: Teacher survey, Bellwood SD 88</small></p>	▶ Apply phonics skills as a word-attack strategy
	▶ Read multisyllabic words
	▶ Have solid foundation in phonics
	▶ Gain confidence in decoding text
	▶ Enjoy expressing themselves in writing
	▶ Intentionally improve handwriting

### “All-in” support

Bellwood school district leaders committed to providing the highest level of support for *Superkids* implementation in two ways. First, administrators purchased advanced and ongoing professional development for all Bellwood teachers and reading specialists. “We invested heavily in professional development,” Dr. Victoria Hansen, curriculum director, confirms.

Second, teachers jettisoned non-research-based programs and instructional materials from their classrooms. “We removed every other reading program’s materials from the classrooms! We really wanted to use what *Superkids* had to offer,” Blair emphasizes. Principal Rosalind Banks points out that having coaching and support to take this step was paramount to teachers’ success with *Superkids*.

Larson explains, “I was very happy to give up all the old materials because of the support of our professional development coach, administrators, and everyone else to help us use the materials and tools already built into *Superkids*.” Removing other materials allowed

teachers to focus on what *Superkids* could give their students. “When my students took the benchmark tests,” Palermo remembers, “they thought they were so hard. By consistently using *Superkids* that semester, however, I saw the light bulbs suddenly go on. Click, click, click for each kid! It was amazing.”

### Surprising results in writing

An unexpected, welcome surprise for teachers and specialists was their students’ writing improvement with *Superkids*. Teachers credit their students’ enjoyment of writing and their increased skills to the program’s writing subjects and models.

First-grade teacher Jalisa Holmes says, “*Superkids* provides models for the writing skills students practice for that week. The kids are motivated when they write, so they really like writing.” Kelva Chatman, who teaches kindergarten, agrees. “*Superkids* writing gets the kids really involved. The models are kid friendly. The lessons that they write, they can relate to. And that’s what makes it really exciting, not only to them but to me, too.”

“*By the time our students take those high-stakes tests, they’ll be empowered by Superkids to be proficient writers.*”

—Rosalind Banks, Principal

“My kids are writing two pages long, and they are writing sentences,” Mirella Perez, second-grade teacher, says. She adds, “Within the writing lessons, you can see the students’ development from the beginning to the middle to the end. And the mechanics of writing are there in Word Work.”

Reading specialist Ramona Blair champions *Superkids* in the district, and she is quick to agree that its writing instruction works for Bellwood students. “One day I saw kindergarten students spontaneously developing their own sentences from the sentence the teacher dictated. They used the pattern, substituting different names. Writing wasn’t a chore for them. It was phenomenal!”