

The percentage of 4th grade students meeting or exceeding the standard on the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) in the state's first cohort of 51 RF schools (n=3766) increased by more than 22 points (from 39.7% in 2003 to 62.3% in 2005), while the overall improvement for all schools in the state during that period was just 8 points. The RF schools improved another 3.4% in 2006 compared to an overall state improvement of just 1.5%.

The WASL is considered a sound test with respectable cut-off measures. Considering that RF schools by definition began as the worst schools in the state, this improvement is significant and likely understates the impact of the program, which was launched a year earlier, in 2002.

On Dibels, in the spring of 2006, 80.8% of kindergartners were at benchmark, up 22 points from spring 2004; 67.5% of 1st graders were at benchmark, up 11.5 points from spring 2004; 57.6% of 2nd graders were at benchmark, up 11.6 points; and 60.1% of 3rd graders were at benchmark, up 16.3 points.

To get a sense for the level of initial risk (how low students begin) and the value-add over a year: just 19% of students in RF schools ENTER kindergarten at the benchmark set for beginning kindergartners, while nearly 81% EXIT kindergarten at the benchmark set for kids leaving kindergarten.

According to state RF director Lexie Domaradzki, RF schools are outperforming district averages in several larger districts, including Tacoma, Yakima and Highline--significant because these districts have a not insignificant number of non-RF schools with middle and upper class populations.

The state has an approved curriculum list:

k-1: Open Court, Harcourt, Readwell (Readwell only goes thru 1st grade)
k-3: Reading Mastery and the more recent editions of Houghton Mifflin, Scott Foresman and SFA.

Lexie said all the publishers have been responsive to demands to improve their curricula.