REALLY
GREAT
READING

The Study. Between the 2015/16 and 2018/19 school years, 29 schools in the Nebo School District (Utah) implemented Really Great Reading programs in Grades K through 3. Specifically, *Countdown* was implemented in Kindergarten, *Blast Foundations* in Grades 1 and 2, and *HD Word* in Grades 2 and 3. This study examined available district data from the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills Next (DIBELS) assessment[1] as well as student demographic data collected by the district. The percentage of students who met DIBELS benchmark goals in composite scores and individual subtests in each year and grade was calculated. Analyses use DIBELS data from the fall and spring of each school year.[2]

FINDINGS

Following districtwide implementation of Really Great Reading, the percentages of students in Grades 1, 2, and 3 who met DIBELS composite benchmark goals increased during the 2016/17, 2017/18, and 2018/19 school years.

During the 2016/17 and 2017/18 school year, declines in scores among Kindergarten students were reduced after implementation of Really Great Reading. During the 2018/19 school year, the percentages of students who met benchmark goals increased in all grades, including Kindergarten.

Similar patterns of pre/post increases were observed for some DIBELS subtest measures. Increases in percentages of students meeting benchmark goals during each year after implementation of Really Great Reading were observed for: Nonsense Word Fluency: Correct Letter Sounds (Grade 1), Nonsense Word Fluency: Whole Words Correct (Grade 1), Oral Reading Fluency (Grade 2), Oral Reading Fluency: Retell (Grade 2), and Daze (Grade 3). Percentages of students meeting benchmark goals decreased during the year prior to districtwide implementation and each subsequent year for the Oral Reading Fluency: Retell Quality subtest (Grade 3). Selected findings from these analyses are presented in charts on the subsequent pages.

KEY FINDINGS

Analyses of the percentages of students who met DIBELS composite benchmark goals suggest student growth after implementation of Really Great Reading.

▶ Analysis of DIBELS subtest measures reveal similar patterns for some measures.
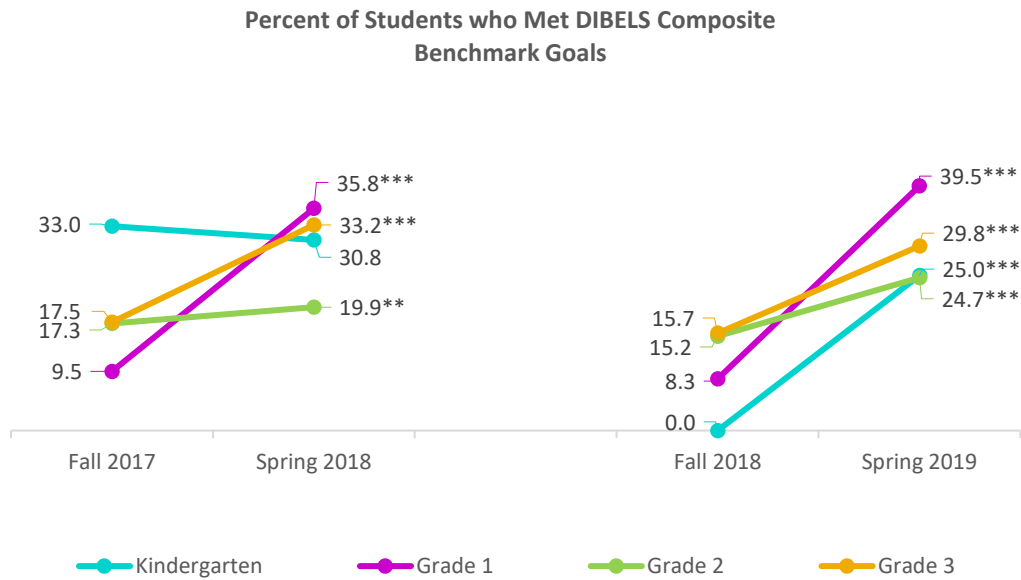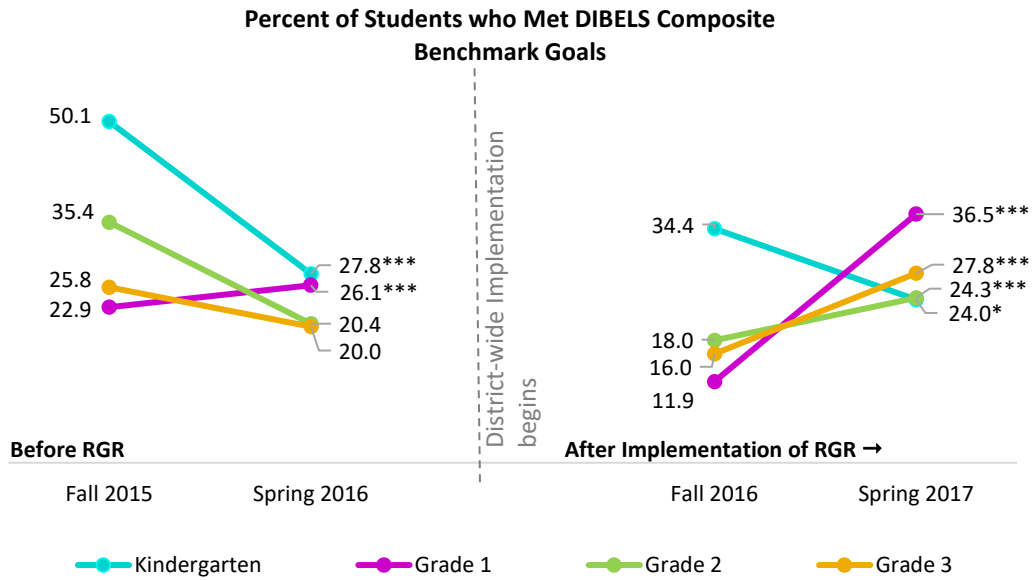
Percentages of students who met DIBELS benchmark goals varied by demographics.

▶ The percentages of students who met DIBELS benchmark goals varied by gender, race/ethnicity, English language learner status, free- and reduced-priced lunch eligibility, or special education status.

[1] DIBELS benchmark goals are criterion-referenced target scores for the DIBELS composite measure and subtests that represent adequate reading progress.

[2] Fall and spring data with the same group of students in each school year were analyzed to examine student growth. Sample sizes (respectively, by year for each grade) with both fall and spring data in each year are as follows: Kindergarten (335 in 2015/16, 221 in 2016/17, 273 in 2017/18, 204 in 2018/19), first grade (1,487 in 2015/16, 1,568 in 2016/17, 1,644 in 2017/18, 1,368 in 2018/19), second grade (1,360 in 2015/16, 1,006 in 2016/17, 990 in 2017/18, 945 in 2018/19), and third grade (1,105 in 2015/16, 1,124 in 2016/17, 1,058 in 2017/18, 1,025 in 2018/19).

Percent of Students who Met DIBELS Composite Benchmark Goals

Before RGR

Fall 2015 — Spring 2016

District-wide Implementation begins

After Implementation of RGR →

Fall 2016 — Spring 2017

Kindergarten — Grade 1 — Grade 2 — Grade 3

Percent of Students who Met DIBELS Composite Benchmark Goals

Fall 2017 — Spring 2018

Fall 2018 — Spring 2019
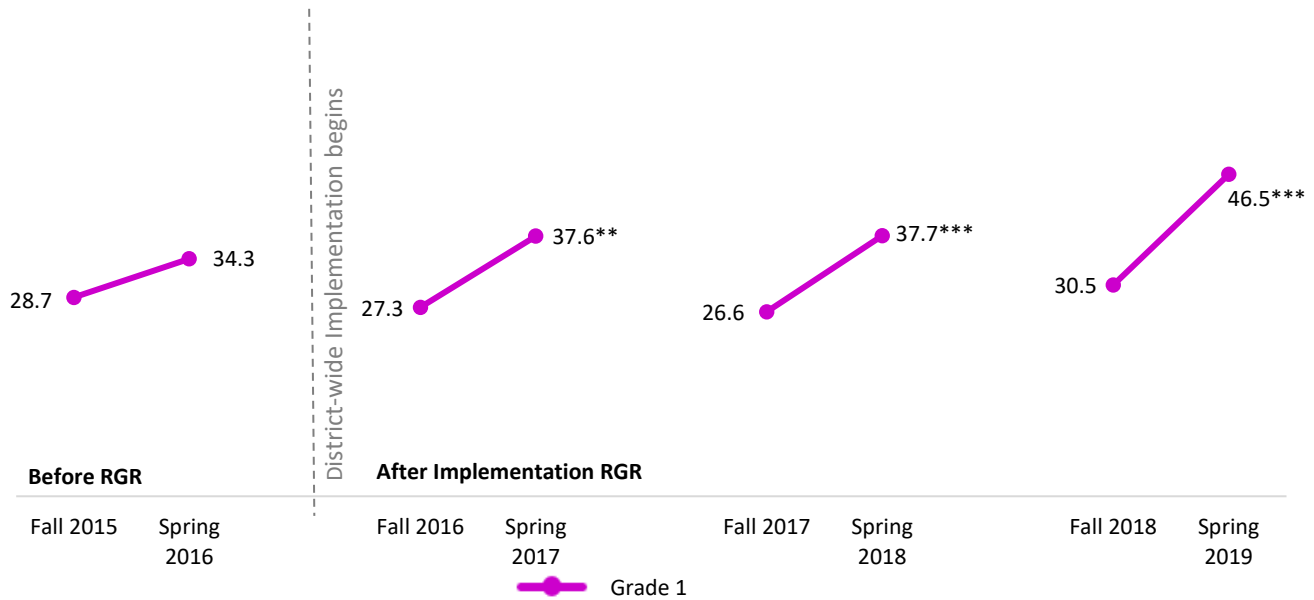
Kindergarten — Grade 1 — Grade 2 — Grade 3

Note: Paired sample *t*-tests[3] were conducted to examine fall-to-spring differences. Statistically significant results are noted as follows: **p < .01, *** *p* < .001.[4]

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[3] Paired samples *t*-tests are used to compare differences between matched pretest and posttest scores for a group. They compare the difference between the scores for each case and test to see if the average difference is significantly different from zero.
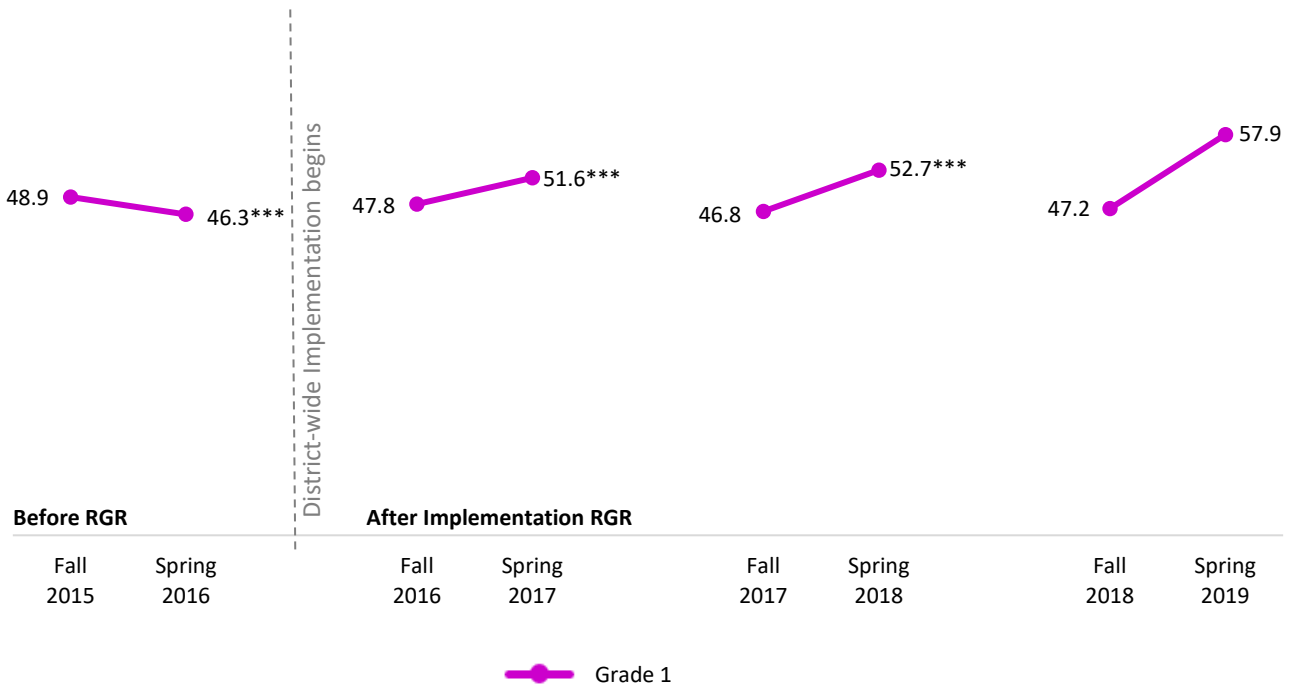
[4] *p*-value is an indicator that represents the likelihood that observed results occurred by chance. In education research, values of *p* < .05 (i.e., values indicating that observed results had a less than 5% chance of occurring by chance) are typically used to identify results that are statistically significant. Lower *p*-values indicate a smaller likelihood that observed results occurred by chance and are therefore associated with statistically significant findings.

Percent of Students who Met DIBELS Benchmark Goals for Nonsense Word Fluency: Correct Letter Sounds

District-wide Implementation begins

Before RGR

After Implementation RGR

| Fall 2015 | Spring 2016 | Fall 2016 | Spring 2017 | Fall 2017 | Spring 2018 | Fall 2018 | Spring 2019 |

28.7 — 34.3 — 27.3 — 37.6** — 26.6 — 37.7*** — 30.5 — 46.5***

Grade 1

Percent of Students who Met DIBELS Benchmark Goals for Nonsense Word Fluency: Whole Words Correct

District-wide Implementation begins

Before RGR

After Implementation RGR

| Fall 2015 | Spring 2016 | Fall 2016 | Spring 2017 | Fall 2017 | Spring 2018 | Fall 2018 | Spring 2019 |

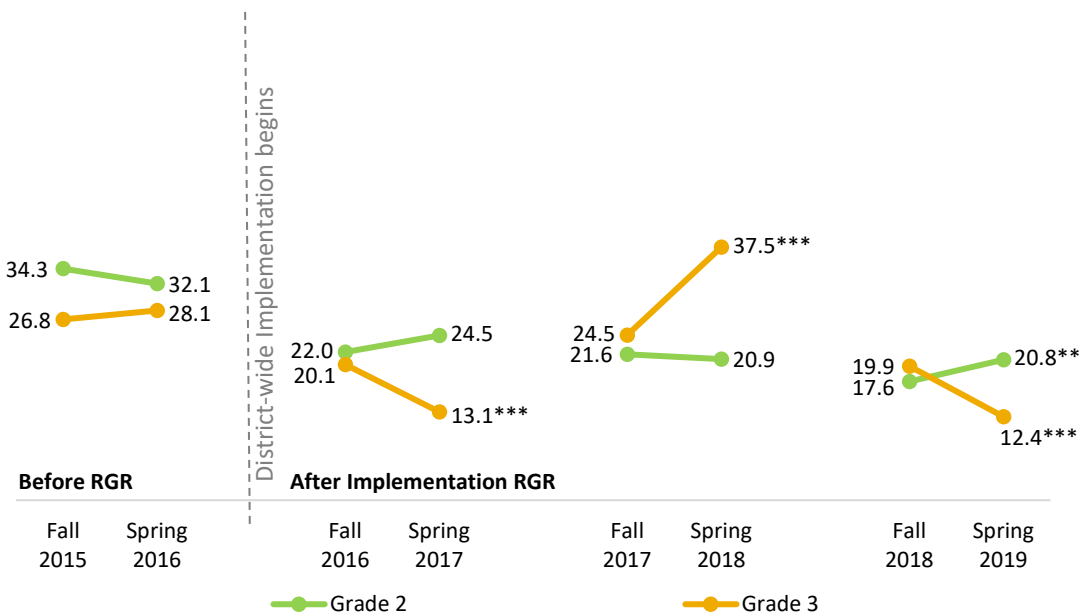48.9 — 46.3*** — 47.8 — 51.6*** — 46.8 — 52.7*** — 47.2 — 57.9

Grade 1

Note: Paired sample t-tests were conducted to examine fall-to-spring differences. Statistically significant results are noted as follows: ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Percent of Students who Met DIBELS Benchmark Goals for Oral Reading Fluency

District-wide Implementation begins

	Before RGR		After Implementation RGR					
	Fall 2015	Spring 2016	Fall 2016	Spring 2017	Fall 2017	Spring 2018	Fall 2018	Spring 2019

Grade 2: 23.2, 20.4 | 8.9, 12.1*** | 8.5, 8.8*** | 8.3, 8.8***
Grade 3: 19.9, 14.6** | 15.7, 13.1 | 16.8, 14.7 | 13.0, 12.4

Grade 2 — Grade 3
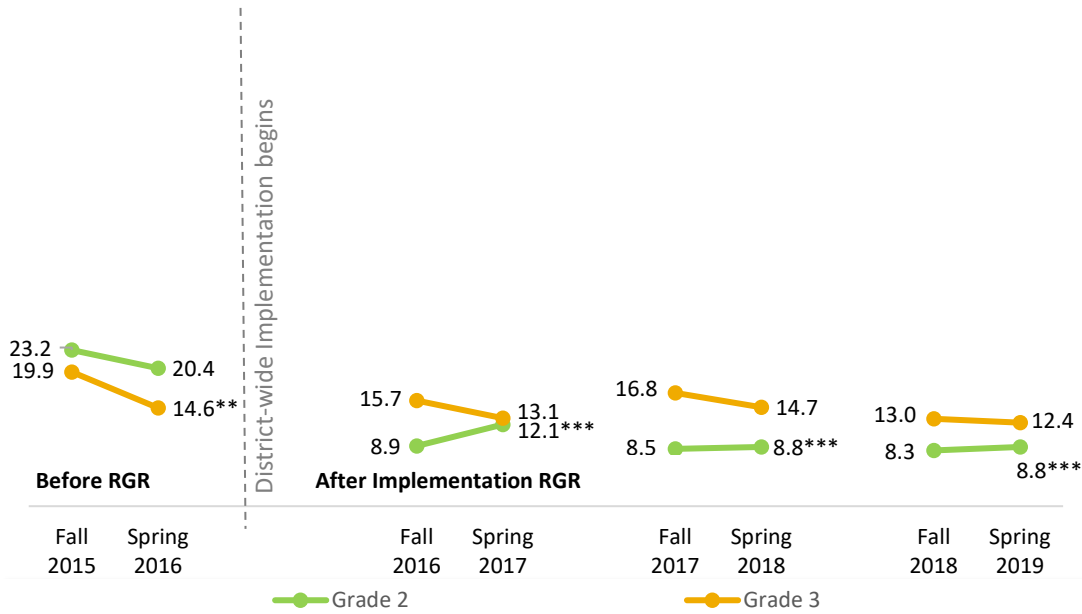
Percent of Students who Met DIBELS Benchmark Goals for Oral Reading Fluency: Accuracy

District-wide Implementation begins

	Before RGR		After Implementation RGR					
	Fall 2015	Spring 2016	Fall 2016	Spring 2017	Fall 2017	Spring 2018	Fall 2018	Spring 2019

Grade 2: 34.3, 32.1 | 22.0, 24.5 | 21.6, 20.9 | 19.9, 20.8**
Grade 3: 26.8, 28.1 | 20.1, 13.1*** | 24.5, 37.5*** | 17.6, 12.4***

Grade 2 — Grade 3
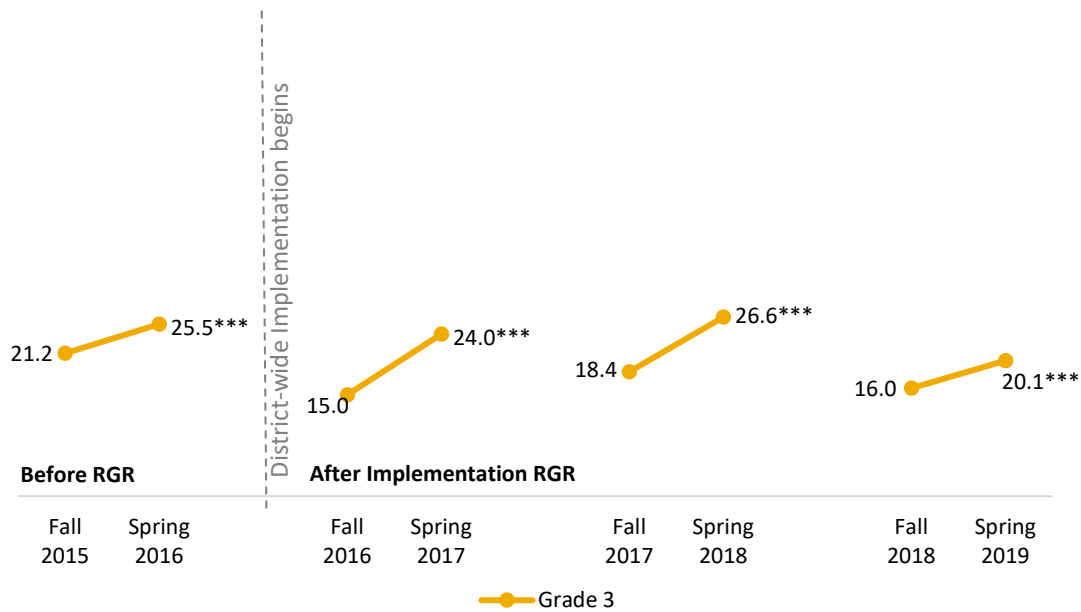
Note: Paired sample *t*-tests were conducted to examine fall-to-spring differences. Statistically significant results are noted as follows: **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$.

**Percent of Students who Met DIBELS Benchmark Goals for
Oral Reading Fluency: Retell**

District-wide Implementation begins

65.7 — 62.1
62.5 — 61.9**
60.5 — 56.4***
50.8 — 54.8
63.9 — 69.1**
44.2 — 56.6***
62.4 — 65.7**
46.6 — 60.6***

Before RGR | **After Implementation RGR**

| Fall 2015 | Spring 2016 | Fall 2016 | Spring 2017 | Fall 2017 | Spring 2018 | Fall 2018 | Spring 2019 |

Grade 2   Grade 3

Percent of Students who Met DIBELS Benchmark Goals for DAZE

District-wide Implementation begins

21.2 — 25.5***
15.0 — 24.0***
18.4 — 26.6***
16.0 — 20.1***

Before RGR | **After Implementation RGR**

| Fall 2015 | Spring 2016 | Fall 2016 | Spring 2017 | Fall 2017 | Spring 2018 | Fall 2018 | Spring 2019 |

Grade 3
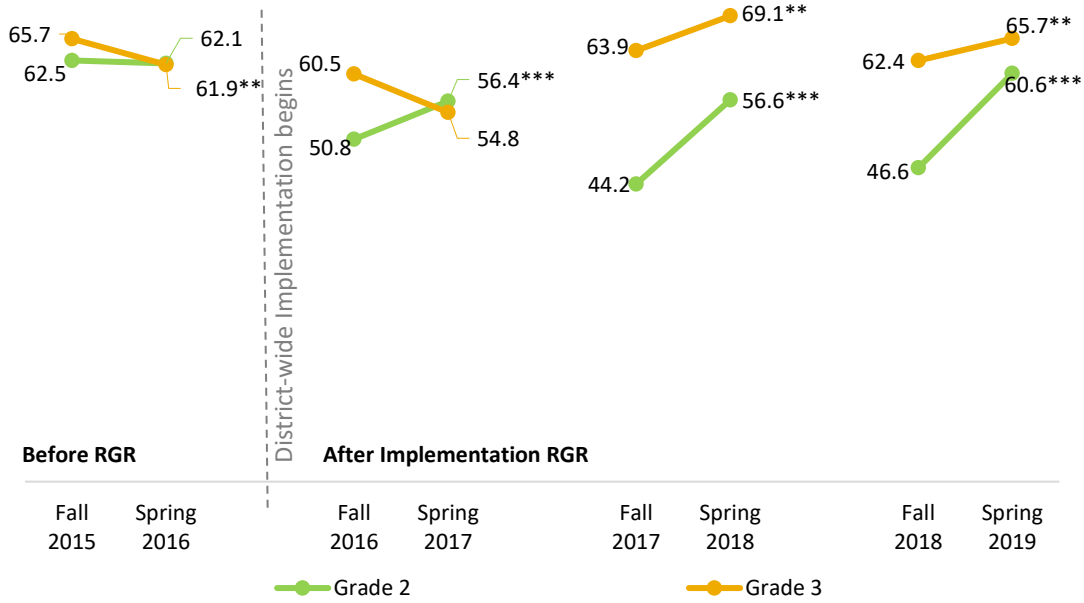
Note: Paired sample t-tests were conducted to examine fall-to-spring differences. Statistically significant results are noted as follows: **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$.

Subgroup analysis among students showed the percentage of students who met DIBELS benchmark goals varied by student demographics in Fall and those variations persisted in Spring.

Subgroup analyses were conducted to examine whether the percentage of students who met DIBELS benchmark goals differed by student demographics. Descriptive findings indicate that the percentage of students who met DIBELS Composite benchmark goals varied by gender, race/ethnicity, English language learner status, free and reduced-priced lunch eligibility, or special education status. Disproportionately small percentages of English language learners (11-21%), special education students (13-19%), and students eligible for free and reduced priced lunch (12-48%) met DIBELS composite benchmark goals in fall or spring of each school year.[5] Findings were consistent prior to and subsequent to Really Great Reading implementation.

Findings for gender and race/ethnicity were less consistent across fall and spring. For gender, findings generally suggested that disproportionately small percentages of male students (23-29%) met DIBELS composite benchmark goals.[6] For race/ethnicity, findings generally suggested that disproportionately small percentages of Hispanic students (12-17%) met DIBELS composite benchmark goals while disproportionally large percentages of White students (27-34%) met the same benchmark goals.[7]

Study Limitations and Implications for Future Research

Because DIBELS score calculation varies by grade and time of year, DIBELS scores may not be used to calculate student growth over time. Therefore, these analyses compare the percentages of students who met DIBELS benchmark goals for each implementation year. Future studies may target districts using scores from outcome measures that can be reliably compared over time.

The analyses in this study are descriptive and do not indicate causal relationships. Changes in student performance may be related to implementation of Really Great Reading, typical student growth, or other factors. Future research that compares outcomes among Really Great Reading participants and nonparticipants using a rigorous design would allow for stronger statements about impact.

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[5] In 2018/19, no English language learners or special education students were designated as receiving Really Great Reading so subgroup analyses could not be conducted.
[6] For gender, significant findings were found for fall of 2015/16 and spring of all 4 school years.
[7] For race/ethnicity, significant findings were found at all timepoints except fall of 2016/17 and fall of 2018/19.