

Case Study Research Summaries of

Saxon Phonics and Spelling

March 2005

Case Study Research Summaries of *Saxon Phonics and Spelling*

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¹ A school was classified with a minority enrollment of “high” if the school minority enrollment was 50% or more.

² A school was classified with a socioeconomic status of “low” if the number of students eligible for the free- and reduced-lunch program was 50% or more, “mid-level” if the range was between 30% and 49%, and “high” where the number of eligible students was 29% or below.

Case Study Research Summaries of *Saxon Phonics and Spelling*

To examine the effectiveness of the *Saxon Phonics and Spelling* program, voluntarily submitted case study data were compiled from 12 schools across the United States that had been implementing the *Saxon Phonics and Spelling* program for at least one school year.

Although more than 12 schools submitted data, only those cases in which complete data were available and for which statistical analysis could be conducted were selected for inclusion in this compilation. Although limited by the parameters of case study research, this compilation of data represents statistically significant findings from a variety of student environments and, when taken together, an overarching pattern can be determined.

Because of the diversity of this document's audience, the individual case study findings can be differentially accessed. As a whole, the case studies are organized in the document by their respective state. Additionally, they may be examined categorically by the schools' metropolitan status, the percent of minority enrollment, or socioeconomic status as indicated by the schools' reported percentage of students eligible for the free- and reduced-lunch program. The table of contents is conveniently divided into these categories for ease in locating data representative of these specific demographic characteristics.

Alabama

Northern Alabama³

Demographics

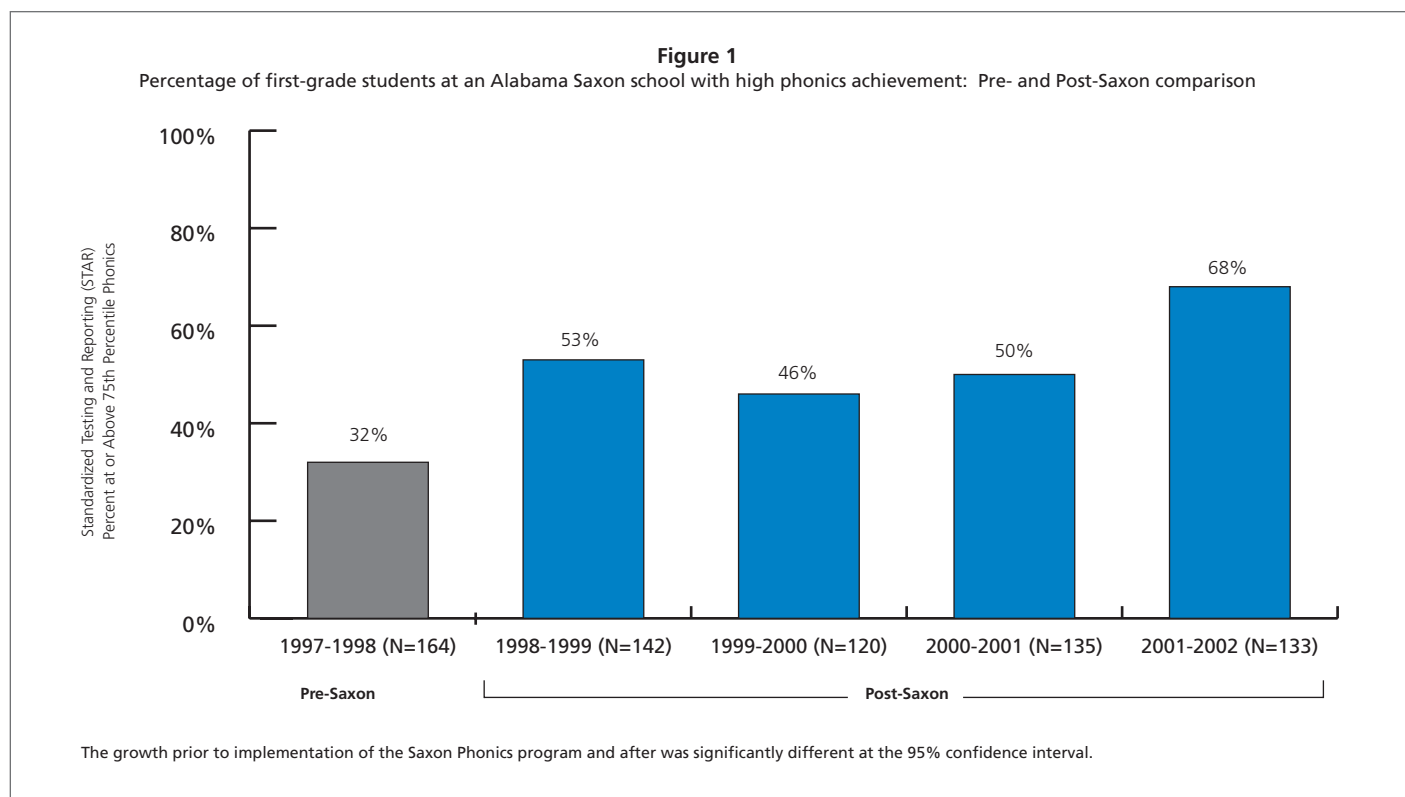
Type of School: Public
Metropolitan Status: Rural
Grade Levels: K–6
Number of Students: 962
Number of Teachers: 74
Percentage of Students Qualifying for Free-Lunch Program: 24%

Multicultural Student Percentages:

African American: 4%
Asian American: <1%
Caucasian: 94%
Hispanic American: 0%
Native American: 1%

Background and Analysis⁴

This Alabama school began using the *Saxon Phonics and Spelling* program during the 1997-1998 school year to combat below-average reading achievement scores for its first-grade students. During the first year of implementation of the program, the percentage of students scoring above the 75th percentile on the *Standardized Testing and Reporting* (STAR) assessment (phonics subtest) rose significantly from 32% to 53% (see Figure 1). These results indicate that even during a first-year implementation of the *Saxon Phonics and Spelling* program, the program contributes to increased achievement in phonics skills.



³ No individual school names are provided in order to protect the anonymity of the respective schools and their students.

⁴ Note that all analyses in this report were conducted with N counts retrieved from the Common Core of Data (CCD). Any inconsistencies between the actual counts the percentile scores were based on and those from the CCD are presumed to be minimal.

Arizona

South Central Arizona

Demographics

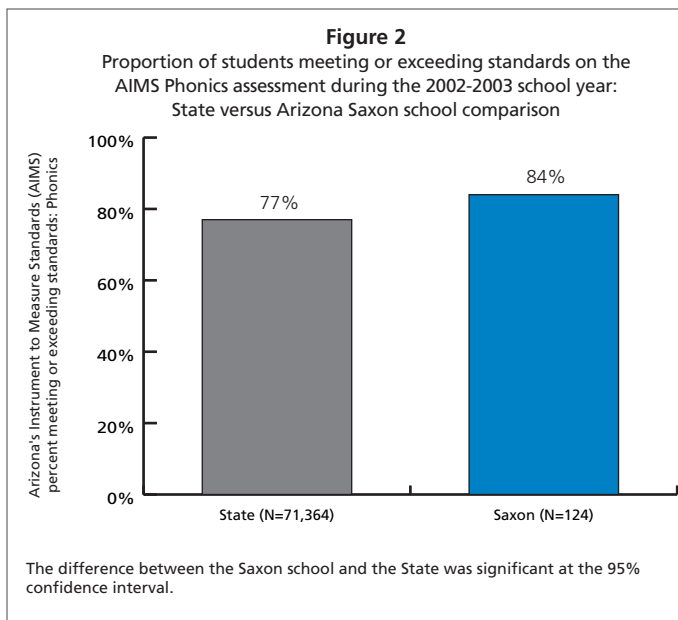
Type of School: Public
Metropolitan Status: Urban
Grade Levels: K–6
Number of Students: 774
Number of Teachers: 36
Percentage of Students Qualifying for Free-Lunch Program: 6%

Multicultural Student Percentages:

African American: 5%
Asian American: 1%
Caucasian: 70%
Hispanic American: 21%
Native American: 1%

Background and Analysis

During a yearlong implementation of the *Saxon Phonics and Spelling* program, the percentage of third-grade students meeting or exceeding standards on *Arizona's Instrument to Measure Standards* (AIMS) assessment significantly outranked the performance of the third-graders in the state. As can be seen in Figure 2, 84% of the third-grade students using *Saxon Phonics and Spelling* met or exceeded the standards



while only 77% of the state's third-grade students reached the same level of achievement. The difference between the state and this school's performance was statistically significant.

South Central Arizona

District Demographics

Type of Schools: Public
Metropolitan Status: Urban
Number of Schools: 33
Number of Students: 33,205
Number of Teachers: 1,888
Percentage of Students Qualifying for Free-Lunch Program: 7%

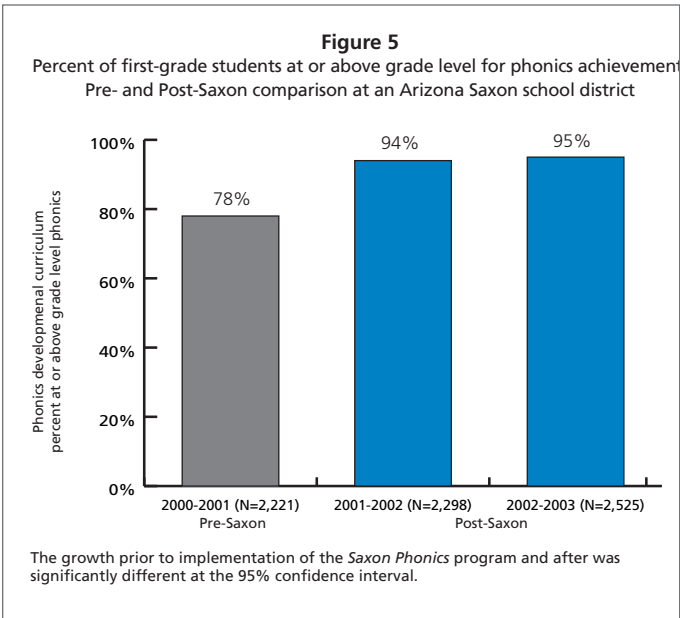
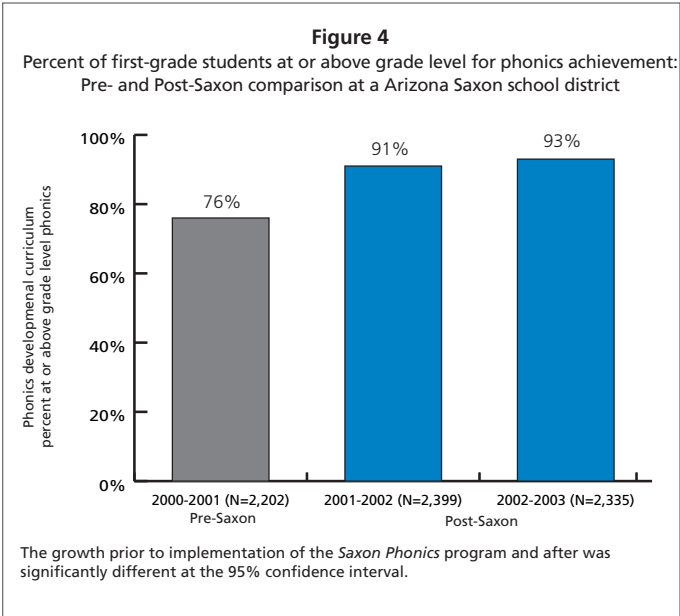
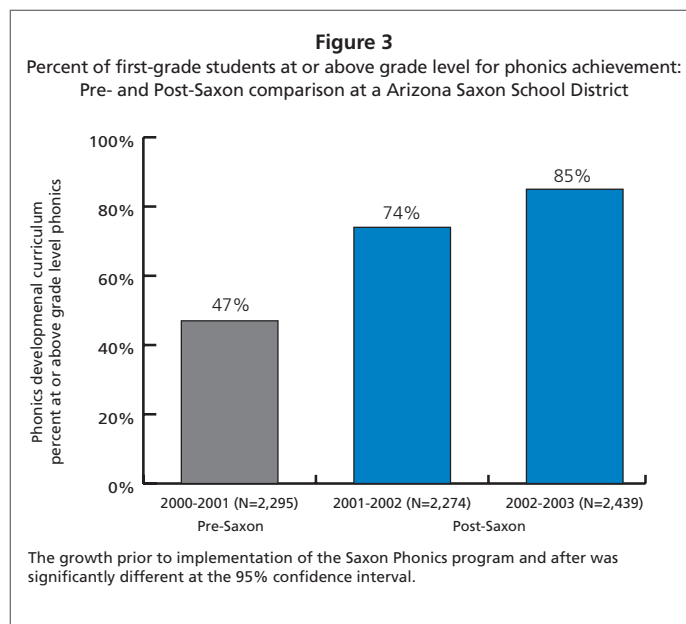
Multicultural Student Percentages:

African American: 2%
Asian American: 2%
Caucasian: 83%
Hispanic American: 10%
Native American: <1%

Background and Analysis

This school district in Arizona began using the *Saxon Phonics and Spelling* program district-wide in the 2000-2001 school year in an effort to increase the percentage of students performing at grade level on the district defined Phonics Developmental Continuum. The data from the first year of implementation of the *Saxon Phonics and Spelling* program was aggregated over the district's 33 schools by grade level. Figures 3-5 display the growth in phonics achievement that was seen in the district. The first-grade students experienced the most growth during the first year of implementation. Prior to using the *Saxon Phonics and Spelling* program, only 47% of the first-grade students in the district were classified as at or above grade level for phonics knowledge. After students used the *Saxon Phonics and Spelling* program for one year, this percentage rose dramatically and significantly to 74% and rose significantly again during the second year of implementation to 85%. The same pattern can be seen for both the second- and third-grade students in the

district. Although these students were already performing at a high level before implementation of the *Saxon Phonics and Spelling* program, the percentage of students reaching on-grade-level performance still has significantly risen year to year.



Florida

Southern Coastal Florida

Demographics

Type of School: Public
Metropolitan Status: Urban
Grade Levels: Pre-K–5
Number of Students: 598
Number of Teachers: 40
Percentage of Students Qualifying for Free-Lunch Program: 53%

Multicultural Student Percentages:

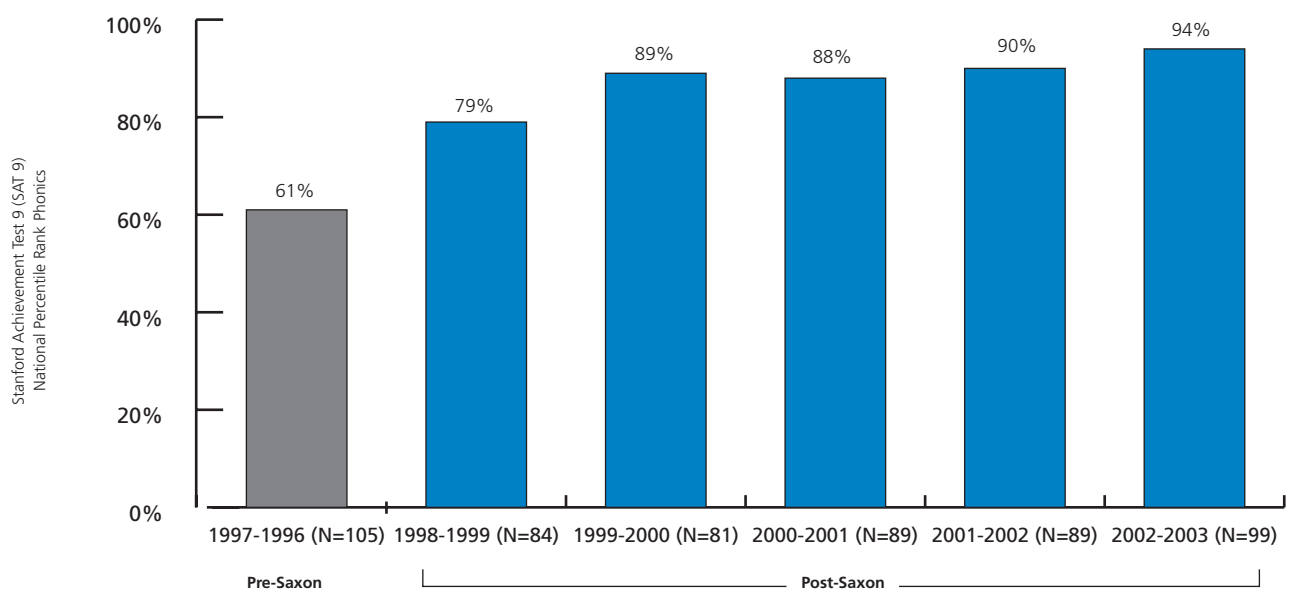
African American: 9%
Asian American: 1%
Caucasian: 73%
Hispanic American: 17%
Native American: 1%

Background and Analysis

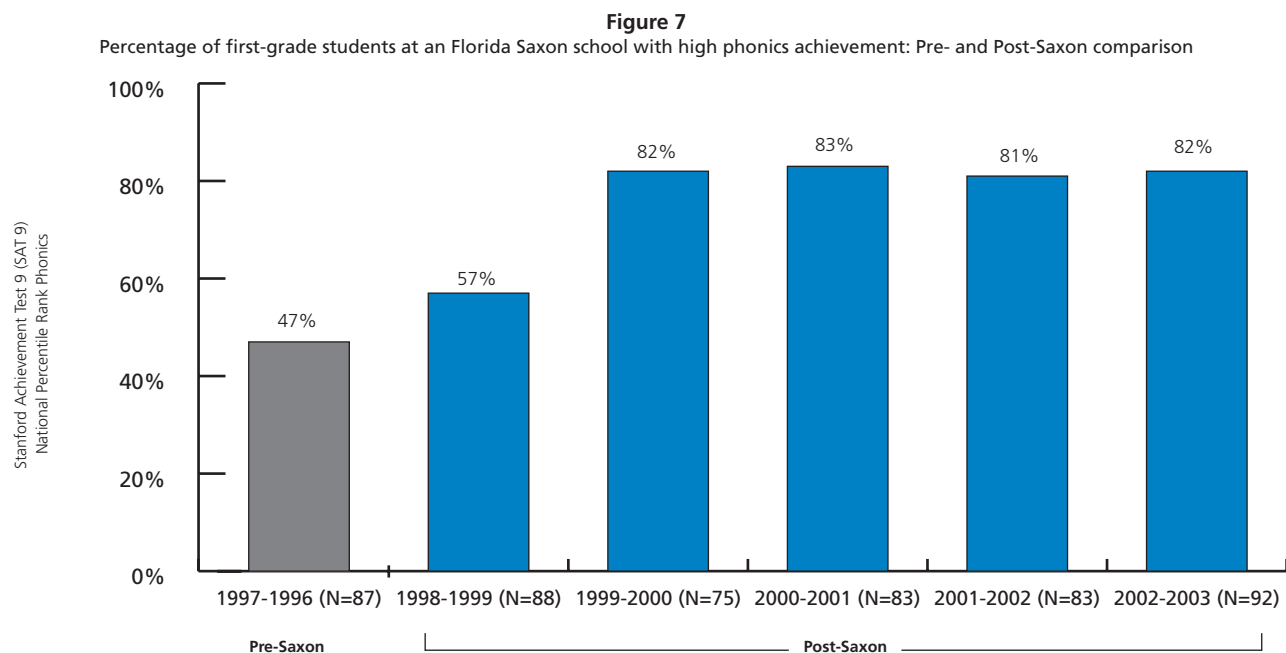
This Florida school has been using the *Saxon Phonics and Spelling* program for the past five years in its first- and second-grade classrooms. During that time, the *Saxon Phonics and Spelling* program has contributed to the rising *Stanford Achievement Test 9th Edition* (SAT 9) phonics scores of these students. As can be seen in Figure 6, prior to implementing the *Saxon Phonics and Spelling* program, first-grade students at this school had a national percentile rank of 61% on the SAT 9. During the first year of program implementation, this ranking rose significantly to 79% and again rose significantly to 89% in the second year. Students have maintained this performance since that initial year and their scores have even continued to grow. The second-grade findings follow a similar pattern. While beginning at a lower rank than the first-grade students, the *Saxon Phonics and Spelling* program has helped the second-grade students reach a significantly higher ranking up to 83% and has contributed to consistent performance over time (see Figure 7).

Figure 6

Percentage of first-grade students at an Florida Saxon school with high phonics achievement: Pre- and Post-Saxon comparison



The growth prior to implementation of the *Saxon Phonics* program and after was significantly different at the 95% confidence interval.



The growth prior to implementation of the *Saxon Phonics* program and after was significantly different at the 95% confidence interval

Eastern Coastal Florida

Demographics

Type of School: Public

Metropolitan Status: Rural

Grade Levels: K-5

Number of Students: 449

Number of Teachers: 19

Percentage of Students Qualifying for Free-Lunch Program: 24%

Multicultural Student Percentages:

African American: 20%

Asian American: <1%

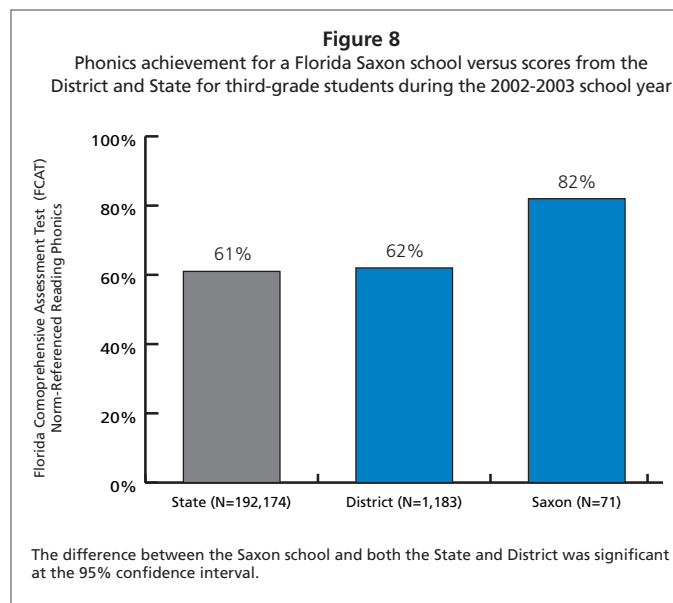
Caucasian: 78%

Hispanic American: 2%

Native American: <1%

Background and Analysis

This Florida school began using the *Saxon Phonics and Spelling* program in the 1999-2000 school year in kindergarten, as well as the first and second grades, to build more phonics practice into a whole-language curriculum. During the 2002-2003 school year, the third-grade students who had begun using the *Saxon Phonics and Spelling* program in kindergarten were the first group of third-grade students from this



school to take the *Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT)* with a Saxon curriculum background. As can be seen in Figure 8, these students not only scored higher than third-grade students from the state, but they also out-performed other third-grade students in their district whose performance equaled that of other third-grade students in the state. The difference between the school's performance and that of the state and district was statistically significant.

Georgia

Central Georgia

Demographics

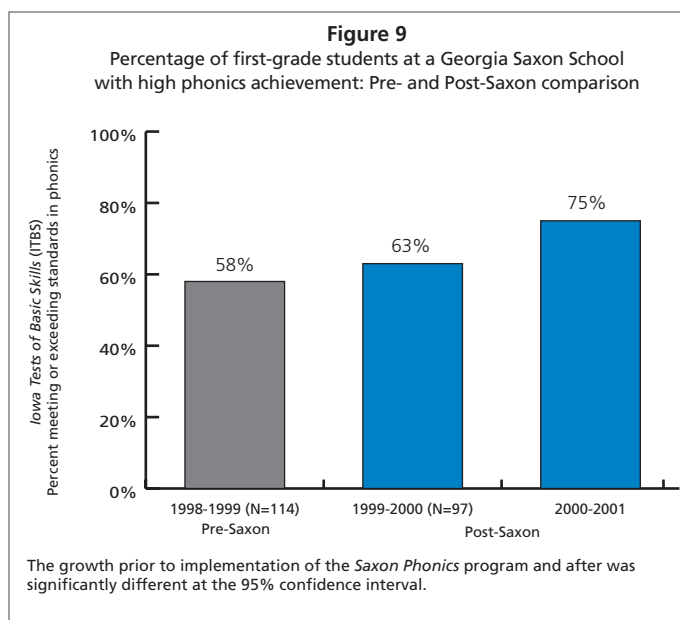
Type of School: Public
Metropolitan Status: Rural
Grade Levels: Pre-K–5
Number of Students: 958
Number of Teachers: 100
Percentage of Students Qualifying for Free-Lunch Program: 67%

Multicultural Student Percentages:

African American: 23%
Asian American: <1%
Caucasian: 74%
Hispanic American: 2%
Native American: <1%

Background and Analysis

This elementary school in Georgia began using the *Saxon Phonics and Spelling* program during the 1998–1999 school year in an effort to improve kindergarten students’ phonics skills. The growth in phonics knowledge that has been seen over time in the kindergarten classrooms in this school has been statistically significant. As can be seen in Figure 9,



prior to implementing the *Saxon Phonics and Spelling* program, only 58% of the kindergarten students were meeting or exceeding standards on the *Iowa Tests of Basic Skills* (ITBS) assessment. During the first two years of implementation, student performance steadily rose reaching a significantly higher rate of achievement during the 2000–2001 school year.

Northwestern Georgia

Demographics⁵

Type of School: Public
Metropolitan Status: Suburban
Grade Levels: K–5
Number of Students: 570
Number of Teachers: 18
Percentage of Students Qualifying for Free-Lunch Program: 65%

Multicultural Student Percentages:

African American: 53%
Asian American: 7%
Caucasian: 34%
Hispanic American: 4%
Native American: 1%

Background and Analysis⁶

Implementation of the *Saxon Phonics and Spelling* program began at this Georgian elementary school during the 1998–1999 school year as an initiative to add more phonics work to a balanced reading curriculum. First-grade students achieved a statistically significant boost in their national percentile ranking on the *Iowa Tests of Basic Skills* (ITBS) assessment during the first year the *Saxon Phonics and Spelling* program was in place, rising from a ranking of 54% to 76%. This level of increased achievement remained consistent over time as the program continued to be in use (see Figure 10).

⁵ Demographics were collected during the 2001–2002 school year.

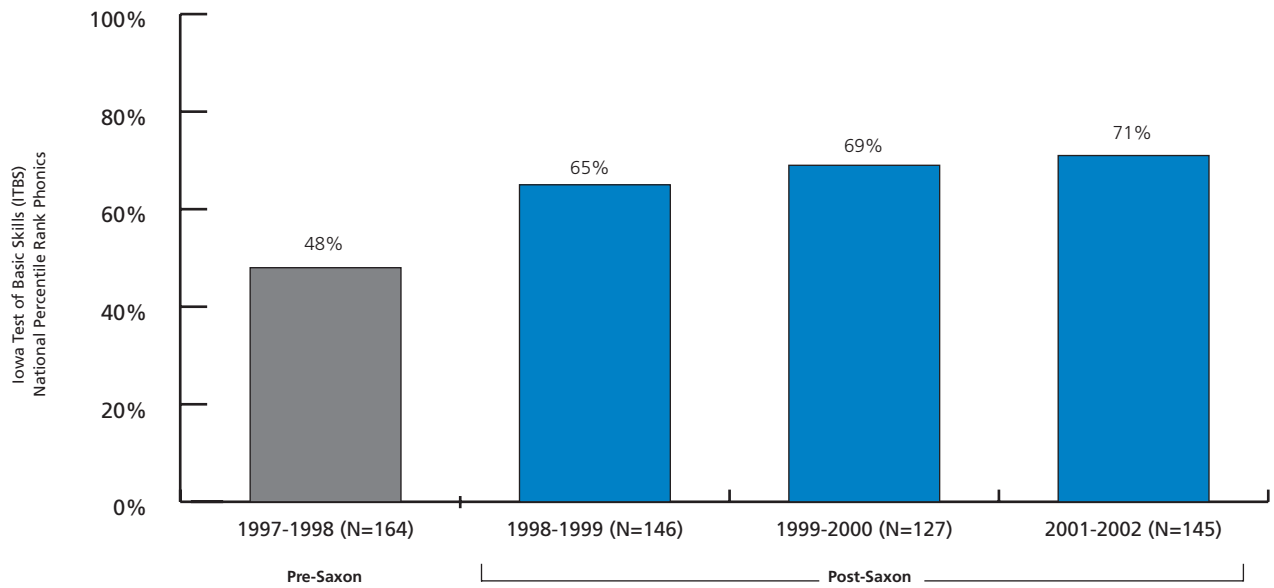
⁶ Data were collected, analyzed, and reported during the 2001–2002 school year.

A bar chart titled 'Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) National Percentile Rank Phonics'. The y-axis represents the percentage, ranging from 0% to 100% in 20% increments. The x-axis shows four time periods: 1997-1998 (N=164), 1998-1999 (N=89), 1999-2000 (N=95), and 2001-2002 (N=98). The first bar (1997-1998) is grey and labeled 'Pre-Saxon' with a value of 54%. The subsequent three bars (1998-1999, 1999-2000, and 2001-2002) are blue and labeled 'Post-Saxon' with values of 76%, 72%, and 73% respectively. A bracket at the bottom groups the three Post-Saxon bars together.

Year	Group	N	Score (%)
1997-1998	Pre-Saxon	164	54%
1998-1999	Post-Saxon	89	76%
1999-2000	Post-Saxon	95	72%
2001-2002	Post-Saxon	98	73%

Figure 11

Phonics achievement scores for first-grade students at a Georgia Saxon school: Pre- and Post-Saxon comparison



The growth prior to implementation of the Saxon Phonics program and after was significantly different at the 95% confidence interval.

Idaho

Southeastern Idaho

District Demographics⁹

Type of School: Public
Metropolitan Status: Rural
Grade Levels: Pre-K–12
Number of Students: 7,618
Number of Teachers: 461
Percentage of Students Qualifying for Free-Lunch Program: 19%

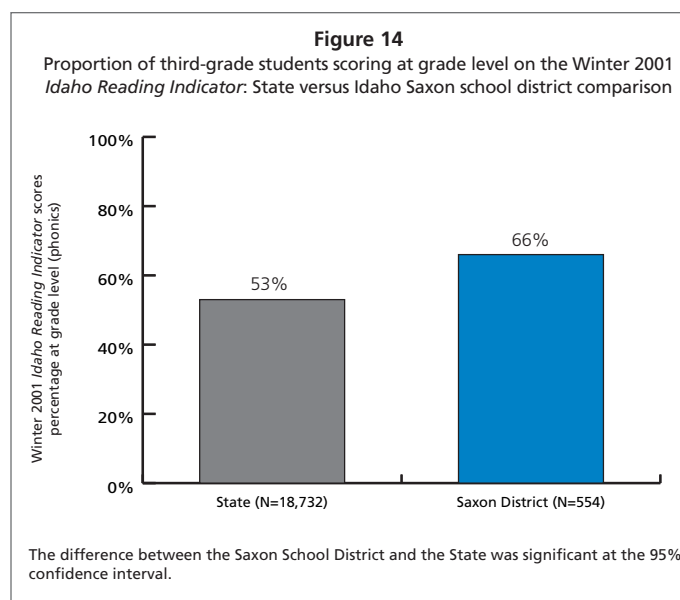
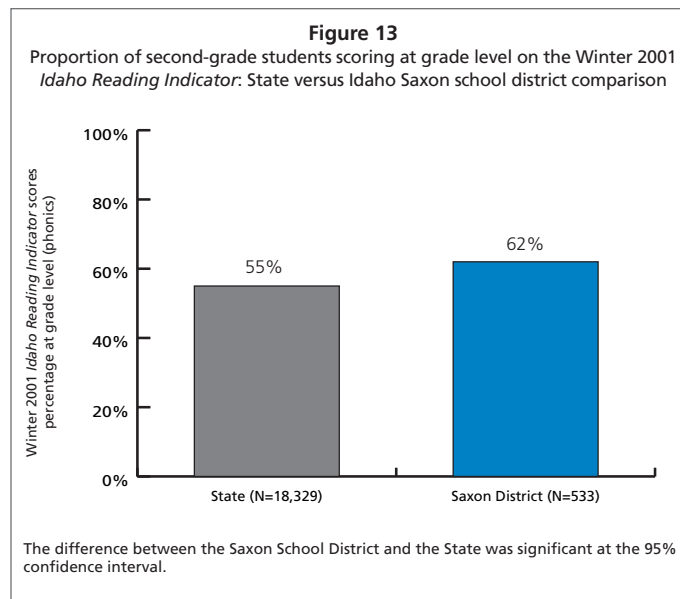
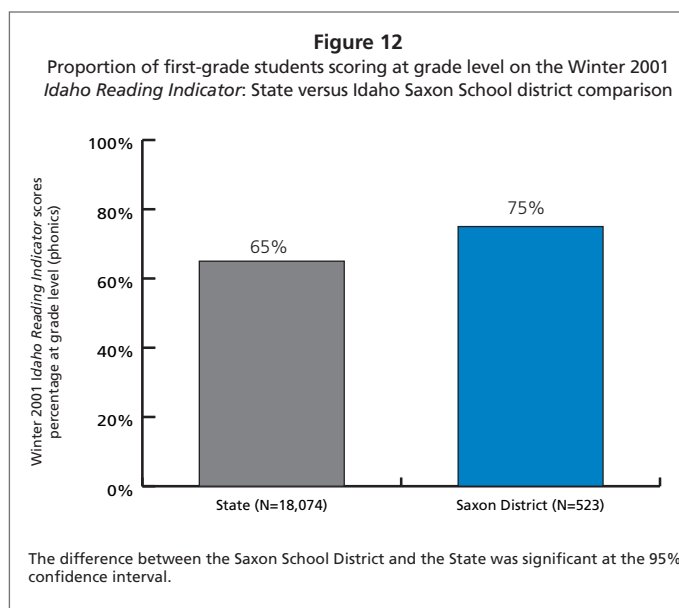
Multicultural Student Percentages:

African American: <1%
Asian American: 1%
Caucasian: 96%
Hispanic American: 2%
Native American: <1%

Background and Analysis

During the 1997-1998 school year, *Saxon Phonics and Spelling* was first introduced into the curriculum at this Idaho school district, and has contributed to growth in student achievement over time. This is best evidenced in comparisons of students in this district to other students in the state. As can be seen in Figures 12-14, students in the first, second, and third

grades have significantly outperformed their counterparts in the state. For example, in 2001 75% of the first-grade students met grade-level expectations on the *Idaho Reading Indicator*. This was 10% higher than the performance seen from other first-grade students in the state, which was a statistically significant difference. The performance rate was similar for both the second- and third-grade students, indicating that *Saxon Phonics and Spelling* has contributed to student reading achievement.



⁹ Demographics were collected during the 2001-2002 school year.

Mississippi

Southern Mississippi

Demographics

Type of School: Public
Metropolitan Status: Rural
Grade Levels: K–4
Number of Students: 510
Number of Teachers: 30
Percentage of Students Qualifying for Free-Lunch Program: 36%

Multicultural Student Percentages:

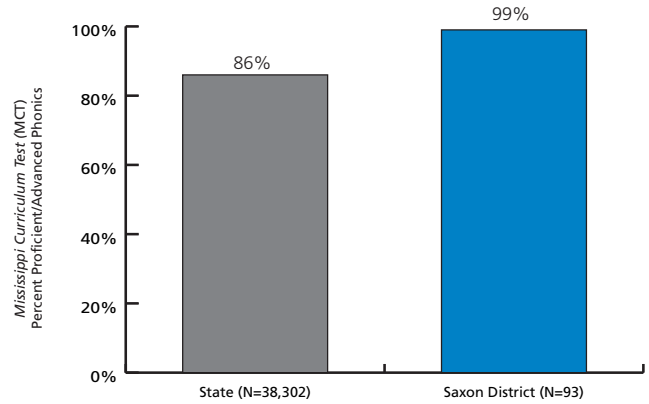
African American: 11%
Asian American: <1%
Caucasian: 88%
Hispanic American: <1%
Native American: <1%

Background and Analysis

After a yearlong implementation of the *Saxon Phonics and Spelling* program at this Mississippi elementary school during the 2002-2003 school year, *Mississippi Curriculum Test* (MCT) scores were compared for second- and third-grade students enrolled in the school to those of second- and third-grade students in the state. For both the second and third grade, a significantly higher percentage of students at the school using the *Saxon Phonics and Spelling* program were classified as Proficient/Advanced on the MCT. As can be seen in Figure 15 and 16, 99% of second-grade students were considered Proficient/Advanced for phonics knowledge and 92% of third-grade students received this ranking.

Figure 15

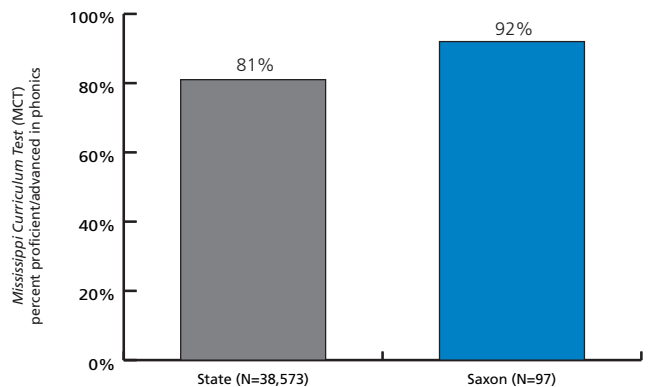
Proportion of second-grade students at a Mississippi Saxon school with proficient phonics skills during the 2002-2003 school year



The difference between the Saxon School and the State was significant at the 95% confidence interval.

Figure 16

Proportion of third-grade students at a Mississippi Saxon school with proficient phonics skills during the 2002-2003 school year



The difference between the Saxon School and the State was significant at the 95% confidence interval.

Ohio

Northern Ohio

District Demographics

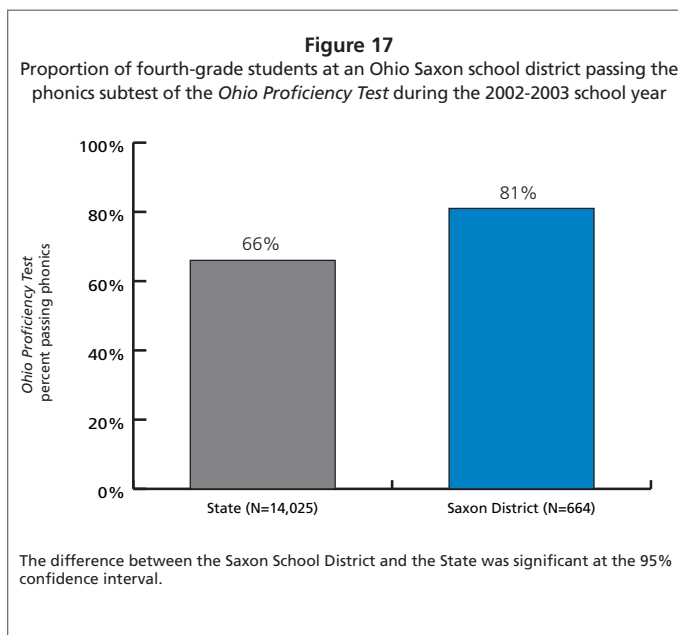
Type of School: Public
Metropolitan Status: Suburban
Number of Schools: 13
Number of Students: 9,413
Number of Teachers: 554
Percentage of Students Qualifying for Free-Lunch Program: 19%

Multicultural Student Percentages:

African American: 2%
Asian American: 1%
Caucasian: 96%
Hispanic American: <1%
Native American: <1%

Background and Analysis

This school district in Ohio began implementing the *Saxon Phonics and Spelling* program in elementary schools in the district four years ago in an effort to improve the phonics knowledge of its students district-wide. Students who were enrolled in the fourth grade during the 2002-2003 school year had been exposed to the *Saxon Phonics and Spelling* methodology since kindergarten, which has contributed to their outstanding performance on standardized tests. As Figure 17 shows, when fourth-grade students in this district are compared to other fourth-grade students in the state on their performance on the *Ohio Proficiency Test*, the fourth-grade students using *Saxon Phonics and Spelling* significantly outperformed the fourth-grade students in the state. Eighty-one percent of fourth-grade students in this district passed the *Ohio Proficiency Test*, which was significantly higher than the 66% passing rate for fourth-grade students in the state.



South Carolina

Northeastern South Carolina

District Demographics

Type of School: Public

Metropolitan Status: Rural

Grade Levels: K-3

Number of Students: 559

Number of Teachers: 37

Percentage of Students Qualifying for Free-Lunch Program: 82%

Multicultural Student Percentages:

African American: 48%

Asian American: <1%

Caucasian: 45%

Hispanic American: 3%

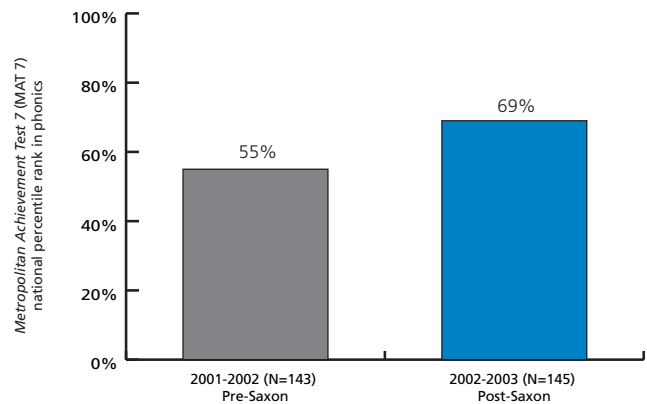
Native American: 4%

Background and Analysis

The 2002-2003 school year was the first year this South Carolina elementary school began implementing the *Saxon Phonics and Spelling* program. During the year prior, first-grade students received a national percentile rank of 55% on the *Metropolitan Achievement Test 7th Edition* (MAT 7). However, after only one year of implementation of the *Saxon Phonics and Spelling* program, first-grade students' MAT 7 scores rose significantly to reach a national percentile ranking of 69%, almost 15 points higher. This indicates that *Saxon Phonics and Spelling* contributes to raising student achievement in reading.

Figure 18

Percentage of first-grade students at an South Carolina Saxon School with high phonics achievement: Pre- and Post-Saxon comparison



The growth prior to implementation of the *Saxon Phonics* program and after was significantly different at the 95% confidence interval.

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