

## Kingsley: *i-Ready* helps Sarasota County students achieve success

By Laura Kingsley, Guest Columnist

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Every day I hear from teachers the value that *i-Ready* brings to their classroom instruction and individual students. Likewise, our principals strategically utilize this tool to boost student learning and academic outcomes.

Given recent articles that question the *i-Ready* program, the school district would like to help our community become “unwary” of the individualized instructional learning system our teachers use in kindergarten through eighth grades.

The ever-increasing competition among publishers to enter the instructional sales market raises questions about the influence that company lobbyists and other interest groups may have to discredit programs such as *i-Ready* and disseminate misleading and often incorrect information.

We want to share facts about what *i-Ready* is and the impact it has in Sarasota.

*i-Ready* is a tool that combines three components to make it an invaluable support to our teachers:

1. Diagnostic Assessments (three per year) that diagnose specific learning gaps and strengths by adapting the level of questions to each child’s performance so the child is appropriately challenged.
2. Online instruction that adapts to the child’s needs based on the Diagnostic Assessment report.
3. Teacher-led instruction utilizing the Teacher Toolkit and accompanying books with specific lessons that address the learning needs or enrichment for each child.

How do teachers use this tool? Teachers do not sit children in front of a computer as a substitute for their teaching. Well-trained teachers integrate *i-Ready* into instructional time. They may set up computers as online learning centers while they hold targeted, small-group instruction. They may also pull students who are struggling for one-on-one instruction during class lab time using the Toolkit’s printed resources.

More time on *i-Ready* is not better! We believe that children should spend less time using digital screens, especially gaming, watching TV, texting and engaging in social media. From an academics perspective, however, some screen time is needed to boost learning for individual children.

The recommendation of using the computer for 45 minutes in math and 45 minutes in reading per week is perfect — students don’t need more than that. These 90 minutes of screen time include the online instruction and time spent taking the Diagnostic Assessment and are an appropriate use of screen time.

*“I love the rigor of i-Ready. It allows my high achievers to move at their own pace and it takes into consideration my struggling learners.”*

*–Sarasota County Schools teacher*



**Kingsley: *i-Ready* helps Sarasota County students achieve success, *continued***

Of the 2,100 minutes the school district has our children every week, Sarasota County Schools averaged only 70 minutes of online coursework per week last year — slightly below the recommendation. This is important for children who have learning needs. Our teachers know these students don't need more time with *i-Ready*; they need more time with them.

Because the Diagnostic Assessment can be used as an alternative to retaining children in third grade due to their FSA scores, more remediation time on the computer is not desired nor is it even possible. Our third-graders are relieved of the need for yet another test since the state allows this Diagnostic to be used to prove the child does not need to be retained.

One of the articles I've read recently noted that research behind *i-Ready* is not accurate; however, in Sarasota County, it is spot-on! Last year *i-Ready* predicted Sarasota's FSA scores within two percentage points, so it is a good diagnostic tool for our school district to utilize to gauge success.

We continue to be impressed with the rigor of this program, alignment with Florida Standards, and the quality of results. We are grateful to have a tool that provides comparable data across Sarasota County and 57 other districts in Florida who use *i-Ready*, and, because it is used in most states, we can even determine how well our grade levels perform compared with peers across the country.

Additionally, our community partners have used *i-Ready* for years to monitor the investments they make in the summer and after-school programs where our children learn and eliminate summer learning loss.

The school district is fortunate to have this diagnostic tool available to our K-8 teachers who use it to ensure the success of every child. Because in Sarasota County, we believe it's all about "every child, every day — whatever it takes."

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