

In Sarasota County, Visible Data for All

One of Florida's highest-performing districts is leaving nothing to chance in their quest to stay on top.



“We’re very proud of our proficiency levels.”

—Sue Meckler

Sue Meckler, Sarasota Schools Director of Curriculum and Instruction, recently addressed an audience of educators to talk about using diagnostic and growth data in schools.

Her district, ranked third and co-owner of the longest-running Grade A streak in Florida education history, can boast imposing stats with regard to performance on the state assessment framework.

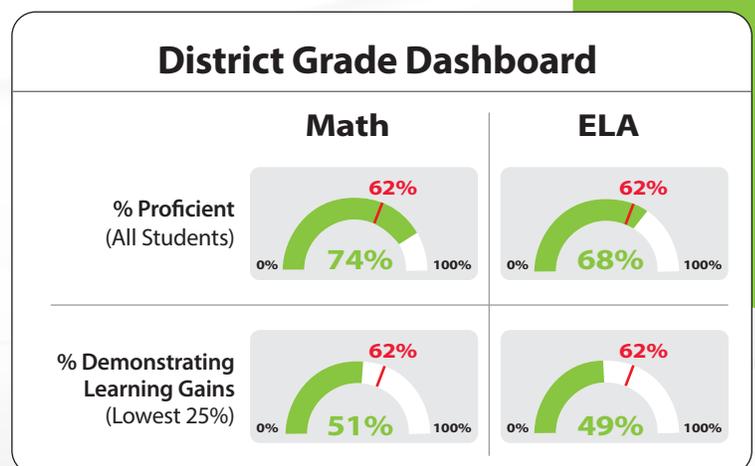
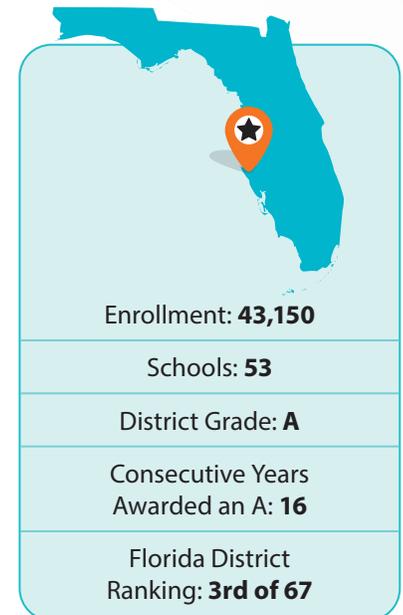
But Meckler, sharing Sarasota’s live and public District Grade Dashboard, quickly directed attention away from the limelight: “You’ll see there’s one area we struggle with: closing the achievement gap involving the lowest-performing 25 percent of kids in all our student groups. That includes minorities, exceptional students, and English Language Learners.”

The moment seemed fitting for a district that has made an unshrinking commitment to data-driven insights, whether it’s uncovering their own or training on and rallying around those of leading education researchers.

“We want to do the things that have the most impact in classrooms, which is the basis for John Hattie’s Visible Learning research,” says Chief Academic Officer Dr. Laura Kingsley. “When all of us believe we can come together to employ strategies that will make children learn, when we know we’re not going to give up—that’s called collective efficacy, and it has a highly significant effect size of 1.57.”

For Sarasota, one could say that “visible data” is feeding that potent belief, arming the community with real-time evidence of impact.

How do they do it?



A snapshot from Sarasota’s 2019 District Grade Dashboard for Grades 3–8, which displays their results on the Achievement and Learning Gains components of the Florida Standards Assessments (FSA). The marker at 62 percent indicates the threshold for earning an A on each component. “That’s the benchmark we target,” says Meckler.

Four (Open) Secrets to Sarasota's Success



To populate their public Academic Progress Dashboard, Sarasota uses the data captured by *i-Ready*. They administer *i-Ready's* adaptive Diagnostic to K–8 students three times a year, giving educators time-stamped snapshots to use for targeting instruction and monitoring progress.

Asked about a practical approach to districtwide data culture, Sarasota leaders point to these steps:

1. Share and Study Real-Time Results

The dashboard allows visitors to filter ELA and Mathematics data by any combination of school, grade level, and student subgroup going back three years.



A student at Laurel Nokomis School fist-bumps his teacher following a review of his *i-Ready* growth and online lesson data.

For each assessment window, one can review average *i-Ready* scale scores, minutes actively receiving instruction, and lessons completed, passed, and failed. Educators use this information to support one-on-one data chats with students and PLC meetings with colleagues.

“Every meeting that we have has a portion set aside for conversations about data,” notes Meckler. “If we don’t talk about data, we’re doing a disservice to our students.”

Adds Sarasota Assistant Principal Heather Wasserman: “Students who you wouldn’t expect to are asking, ‘Where am I in my *i-Ready*? I want to know if I’m on

grade level.’ We’re seeing them become owners of their data, and when the kids see they’re surpassing their goals, the motivation to succeed is contagious.”

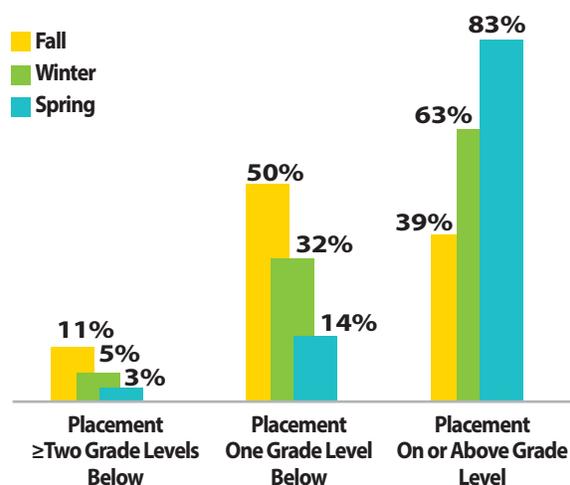
2. Rally around Growth

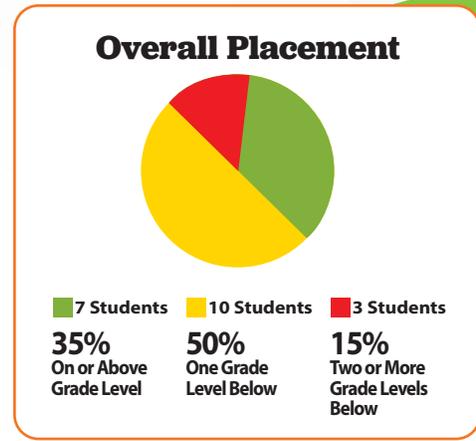
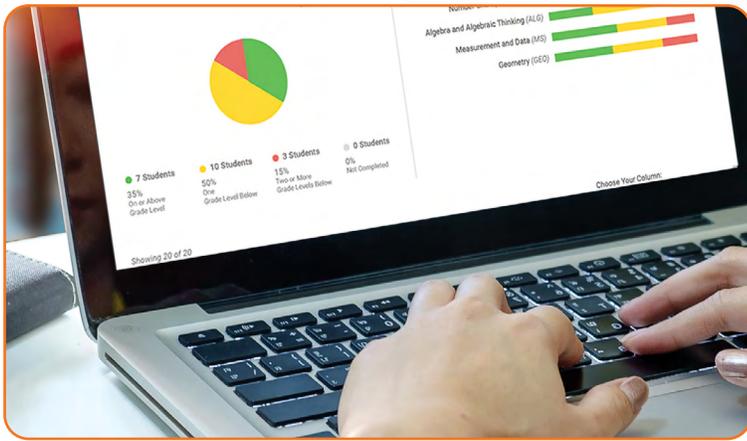
Growth is on everyone’s mind in Sarasota Schools, where 20 subcommittees are focused on supporting high expectations teaching. With each *i-Ready Diagnostic*, educators track changes in placement levels—is the gap closing? If so, by how much?—information that is also available to the public via the dashboard.

“We know that students who are further behind may require multiple years of reaching their Stretch Growth measure to catch up,” says Wasserman, referencing the *i-Ready* data point that helps chart each below-grade level student’s path to proficiency.

To celebrate standout results, the district’s Middle School Success Squad regularly interrupts classes with lively, themed awards ceremonies. At school sites, teachers and grade-level teams have devised their own methods for inserting suspense: On bulletin boards, you can find *i-Ready* March Madness brackets, scoreboards, and “100% Club” challenges.

Using *i-Ready* to Track Proficiency Grade 3 Math (2018–2019)





3. Equip Teachers to Differentiate Instruction

As all educators know, the more tailored the instruction to students' specific skill sets, the more students are likely to grow. As they also know, each student represents a unique constellation of deficits to uncover and address.

Meckler captures the conundrum for teachers: "The piece of differentiation that's hardest is, 'Alright, I know my kids all need different things, but how can I possibly find the time to arrange for three or four lessons to happen at once?'"

After seeing it work in the elementary grades, Meckler used *i-Ready* data to try a fresh approach in the district's middle schools. Students with similar skills deficits were grouped for small group instruction, and teachers pulled a targeted assortment of supplemental lesson plans and Center Activities from *i-Ready's* popular Teacher Toolbox.

"I can put a Toolbox activity on a flip chart, on the board, on their computer, or I can send it home as an assignment," says a sixth grade math teacher at Booker Middle School. "I have access to everything for all grades. If I need something from fifth grade, I can pull it."

Analysis by Curriculum Associates

Throughout the year, Sarasota leaders meet with their account team to go over analyses of their *i-Ready* data, allowing them to:

- Track the changing distribution of overall Tier I, II, and III placements from fall to winter to spring
- See which skills domains were most and least improved
- Review student populations across four quadrants from low performance/low growth to high performance/high growth
- Examine the relationship between *i-Ready* usage, lesson pass rates, and achievement of growth
- Compare Sarasota students' performance to a nationally representative sample of their peers

4. Vet and Choose Your Partners Carefully

Sarasota County Schools contracted with Curriculum Associates (CA) for districtwide use of *i-Ready* starting with the 2015–2016 school year.

Meckler recalls, "Implementing a common assessment became very important to us because we were finding that our own assessments weren't at the appropriate level of rigor based on the standards."

Today, the account is serviced by a five-person team, and leaders attend formal presentations of the data and its analysis by the creators of *i-Ready* at least three times a year.

As for professional development (PD), the district has purchased courses including *Analyzing Data to Prioritize Needs, Facilitating Data Chats with Teachers*, and *Data-Driven Instructional Planning*.

"CA has been a wonderful PD partner," says Meckler. "They provide tools for us that are very, very teacher-friendly and make using data a doable task."

Knowing Thy Impact

Dr. LaShawn Frost and Steven Royce are principals of Booker Middle and Gocio Elementary Schools, respectively—both Title I schools that have seen marked increases in proficiency in recent years.

Both leaders credit *i-Ready* with enabling the sharing of important information and data to improve collaboration amongst staff and instruction of students.



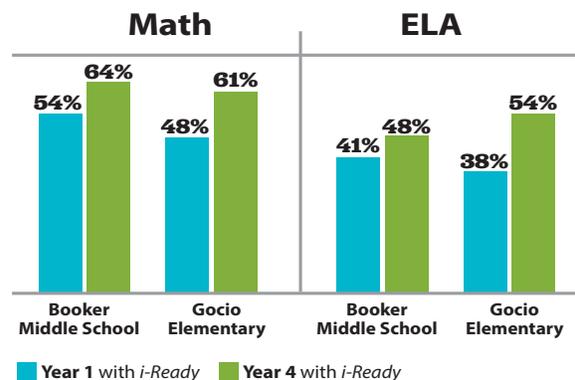
“Last year our theme was ‘Know thy impact.’ Sometimes we do things without truly knowing the impact we’re making. The data in *i-Ready* gives us the opportunity to validate which strategies have worked.

—**Dr. LaShawn Frost**, Sarasota County Schools 2019 Principal of the Year

Says Frost, “The data gives us opportunities. We’re probably the most diverse school in Sarasota County, and *i-Ready* has given us the opportunity to determine what we need to do specifically for every child on our campus.”

“The most important person in the room is the teacher, and the responsibility of *i-Ready* is to become a tool that works for them,” adds Royce. “The magic of *i-Ready* is that it keeps us all in the loop and is flexible enough to support any classroom well.”

Percentage of Students with Passing FSA Scores



How visible is your district’s commitment to data?

Visit [i-Ready.com/Empower](https://www.i-ready.com/Empower) to see how *i-Ready* can get everyone reviewing and working with data to target instruction and track growth.

