



RITE PROGRAM EXTERNAL EVALUATION

2003-2004 (Executive Summary)

Submitted by

**The Texas Institute for Measurement,
Evaluation and Statistics**

Dr. Coleen D. Carlson

Dr. David J. Francis

Sarah Priebe

Lubaina Latif

Submitted on November 10, 2004

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Evaluation Studies

The 2003-2004 RITE program evaluation consists of 5 separate components, or studies. The first study focused on the evaluation of the RITE students in Head Start classrooms and compared RITE Head Start student performance to the performance of students in Head Start only classrooms. The second study involved the evaluation of Kindergarten student performance as a function of RITE Pre-K participation. Of specific interest was the cumulative impact of Pre-K and Kindergarten RITE participation in relation to participation in only Kindergarten RITE or non-RITE Kindergarten programs. The third study in this evaluation focused on Kindergarten through second grade classrooms implementing the RITE program. Of primary focus was the cumulative impact of participation in the RITE program for ESL students. The fourth component focused on one newer school district and examined the performance of the first and second grade students in RITE or non-RITE classrooms. The goal of this study was to show replication of previous program impact within the new district. Finally, the fifth component of this evaluation focused on teacher and principal feedback surveys.

Part 1: Head Start/RITE Evaluation

This portion of the evaluation focuses on comparisons in performance between students in Head Start Only classrooms (comparison) and those in Head Start classrooms where RITE is also being implemented (Head Start and RITE) utilizing SRA's Language For Learning.

Two RITE ESC centers and two non-RITE ESC centers were included in this portion of the evaluation. Within each school, 5 Head Start classrooms were randomly selected (or in the case of only five Head Start classrooms within a school, all were selected). Because attrition was expected, we randomly selected slightly larger numbers of students for the beginning of year assessment to ensure that the sample would be close to a total of 200 at the end of the school year. Thus, in the beginning of the year, 111 RITE and 110 on-RITE students participated in the skill assessment. In total, 98 RITE Head Start

students, and 95 Head Start Only students participated in assessments at both the beginning and end of the school year.

Students completed an assessment battery of emergent and pre-reading literacy skills at both the beginning (October) and end (April/May) of the school year. A non-standardized, prepublication version of the Preschool Comprehensive Test of Phonological and Print Processing (PreCTOPP) was used to assess children's letter name knowledge, letter sound knowledge, blending and elision skills, ability to rapidly name objects, and print concept awareness.

Results indicate that both the Head Start program alone and the RITE Head Start program provide students with instruction that allows similar gains in alphabetic knowledge (i.e., letter naming and letter sound identification) and receptive vocabulary skills during the Pre-K year. However, as pre-literacy and literacy skills increase in difficulty, the performance differences between the RITE Head Start students and those in Head Start only widen. RITE Head Start students end the Pre-K year with higher levels of: expressive vocabulary; phonological awareness skills (blending and elision); and word reading skills than Head Start Only students (see graphs 1-4 on pages 12-13). Thus, it appears that the addition of the RITE program that implements SRA's Language For Learning, to Head Start results in students whose higher level skills are more developed at the end of the Pre-K school year.

Part 2: Kindergarten with Pre-K Evaluation

This portion of the evaluation focuses on the degree to which RITE Pre-K experience results in added gains over the Kindergarten year RITE experience. To accomplish this, we examined the extent to which the gains seen in Kindergarten are larger for students with two years of RITE experience (Pre-K and K) versus only one year (K only) versus no RITE experience (Comparison students).

Within each RITE and comparison school, student participation in Pre-K as well as whether the Pre-K attended was a RITE or Non-RITE Pre-K was tracked. Listed below is the number of students who participated in this study in each of the three groups targeted for this study.

2002-2003 (PRE-K)	2003-2004 (KINDER)	# OF STUDENTS
RITE	RITE	95
NON-RITE	RITE	97
NON-RITE	NON-RITE	96

Students completed an assessment battery of reading and reading related literacy skills at both the beginning (October) and end (April/May) of the school year. The standardized version of the Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing (CTOPP) was used to assess children’s letter name knowledge, letter sound knowledge, blending and segmenting skills, initial sound identification, and word reading. In addition, two subtests from the Woodcock Johnson Language Proficiency Battery-Revised were administered, including Listening Comprehension and Picture Vocabulary.

Results indicate no significant performance differences between the RITE students with Pre-K RITE only, Pre-K and Kindergarten RITE, and comparison students in regard to alphabetic knowledge and picture vocabulary skills. However, there are significant group differences in performance on skills requiring a greater depth of knowledge including: phonological awareness, reading words in isolation and listening comprehension (see graphs 5-9 on pages 14-16). RITE Kindergarten students, regardless of whether they participated for 1 or 2 years previous, performed at higher levels than the comparison students on blending and initial sound identification subtests. These subtests measure skills that are considered to be on the easier end of the phonological awareness continuum, or at least, represent skills that are learned earlier and typically mastered by most students. Thus, it appears that these skills are acquired more rapidly in the students’ early experience with the RITE program. Furthermore, the point at which that exposure to the program is experienced (Pre-K or K) does not seem to impact the development of this set of phonemic awareness skills.

Contrary to this, the number of years of participation in the RITE program does impact the development of more difficult phonological awareness skills, word level reading and reading related skills. Specifically, students who participated in the RITE program in both Pre-K and Kinder performed at significantly higher levels than all other students in their ability to segment words into phonemes, read isolated words in print, and listening comprehension. In addition, students with RITE only in Kindergarten showed

higher average levels of skills in these three areas than comparison students with no RITE experience.

Overall, these results suggest that participation in the RITE program, that utilized Language For Learning and Reading Mastery, during both the Pre-K and Kindergarten year results in students' whose skill levels are more advanced than those students with less RITE experience or no RITE experience. Students who participate in the RITE program only during the Kindergarten year develop some early reading skills more quickly than students with no RITE experience, however, they do not show the same gains in more advanced skills as those students who participated in RITE during Pre-K.

Part 3: ESL Evaluation

Results from the 2003-2004 evaluation of the RITE ESL students suggested that students in ESL classrooms implementing the RITE program performed at higher skill levels at the end of the school year than their comparison school peers. However, the impact of previous years of participation in the RITE program in the ESL setting was not included in that evaluation. As a result, examination of cumulative years of RITE experience within the ESL setting could not be examined.

In the 2003-2004 school year, the ESL portion of the evaluation focuses on the degree to which RITE ESL student performance is a result of additive years in the RITE program. Specifically, we examined the extent to which the gains seen in the student's current grade level are related to the number of years the students has been in a RITE ESL classroom.

In total, 263 RITE and 187 non-RITE students participated in this portion of the evaluation. In the RITE ESL program, 81 second grade, 89 first grade, and 93 kindergarten students participated in the study where SRA's Reading Mastery was implemented in kindergarten, first and second grade and Language For Learning was implemented in kindergarten. In the non-RITE ESL sample, 45 second grade, 58 first grade, and 64 kindergarten students participated in the study.

Students SAT10 total reading scores from the spring were collected from the district and used for the present analyses. All analyses were conducted for each grade level separately. All models examined differences in end of year performance as a function of the number of years of exposure to the RITE program in an ESL classroom.

Results in all grade levels indicate that students with greater exposure to RITE through ESL results in higher performance levels. An analysis of average scale score differences between groups, suggests that two years in ESL classrooms with RITE may be a threshold above which performance begins to plateau. However, since analysis of average scores alone may mask some of the distributional shifts that occur in student performance, the distributions within each grade were plotted and examined (see graphs 10-12 on pages 17-18). A similar pattern to that seen with the average scale score differences was seen in the distribution of scores within each grade. However, some interesting differences should be noted. In first and second grade, while the students with 2 or more years of RITE, that implemented SRA's Reading Mastery, are not performing at significantly different average performance levels, the distribution of scores does appear to shift slightly. Specifically, in first grade there is an incremental drop in the percentage of students who perform below the 25th percentile as a function of years of exposure to the RITE program. In second grade a similar shift is seen in the number of students who perform at or above the 50th percentile, with those students with more RITE exposure being more likely to perform at or above the 50th percentile.

Most important to note is the fact that students in all grades with more exposure to the RITE program are less likely to be identified as needing additional intervention, and more likely to be classified as being on grade level. The performance of students who have had two or more years of exposure to the RITE program within an ESL classroom follows the distribution we would expect to see in the general native English population – approximately 25% below the 25th percentile and 50% above the 50th percentile. Thus, it appears that two years in an ESL classroom implementing the RITE program provides these students with the instruction necessary to develop skill that are, when measured by the SAT10, on par with their peers.

Part 4: NFISD Evaluation

Several previous evaluations of the RITE program have shown strong, consistent results indicating that students who begin the RITE program early, implementing SRA's Language For Learning and Reading Mastery, and who spend more years in the program outperform their schoolmates with less program experience, students who began the program later, and students who never participated in the program (comparison school

students). These previous results suggest that being in the RITE program provides students with the tools that allow for accelerated growth in pre-reading and reading skills in kindergarten and first grade. By second grade, the acceleration of this development has slowed, such that skill development in second grade continues at rates that are comparable to those of non-program students. Similar patterns of performance have been documented in two different school districts, but comparable analyses have yet to be conducted for the third district included in the RITE program.

This portion of the current evaluation focuses on the performance of first and second grade students in NFISD who have been participating in the RITE program for 1 or 2 years. The goal was to include Kindergarten students in the analyses as well, however, the district data was not forthcoming and procurement of the data was derived from other sources which did not include kindergarten level data.

The current sample consisted of 184 RITE and 191 Non-RITE students split relatively evenly across first and second grade. The performance data used in the current analyses was collected from the school districts assessment using the ITBS. The focus of this evaluation is the ITBS Total Reading, Total Language, Word Attack and Reading Comprehension subtests from the ITBS.

Results of RITE and Comparison student performance within NFISD show similar patterns to results found in other school districts in past evaluations, and as such provide additional evidence of the positive impact of the RITE program on student performance. In the present analyses, again suggest that there is a cumulative impact of the program on student performance with students participating in Kindergarten through grade 1 performing at the highest levels (see graphs 13-16 on pages 19-20).

The results also support past findings that exposure to the RITE program in second grade alone is not enough to show marked progress beyond that seen by students in other programs. However, there does appear to be a slight advantage for students who, by the end of second grade, have been in the program for two years.

Overall, we again seem to be seeing the cumulative impact of the SRA's Language For Learning on student performance (first grade 2 year students). Furthermore, those students who have never had this same foundation (first grade 1 year; and all second

graders in this study) appear to be less likely to excel in the same fashion as those who have had this exposure.

Part 5: Teacher/Principal Feedback Survey

RITE principals and teachers were asked to complete a survey asking multiple questions about their attitudes regarding certain types of reading instruction, specific instructional approaches to teaching reading, their beliefs about the usefulness of certain aspects of the RITE program, whether they would recommend the RITE program to others, and some general questions about school climate.

Principal and Teacher Education

The educational background of most teachers (64%) is a BA/BS degree (although some of these teachers have taken graduate courses without earning an additional degree), and 26% of all teachers also report holding a MA/MS/Med/EdS degree. The educational background of most principals is similar, with the majority holding a BA/BS degree (79%) (all of these principals also report having taken graduate courses without earning an additional degree). In addition, 7% of all principals report holding an MA/MS/Med/EdS degree, and 14% a doctorate.

While there is a substantial amount of variance in the types and locations of institutions the teachers and principals have attended to earn their degrees or to attend courses, the majority of the instruction was acquired at institutions within the state of Texas. More specifically, more individuals reported earning their degrees from Texas Southern University than any other institution.

In addition to formal degrees (e.g., BA, etc.), teachers and principals were also asked to indicate any special credentials they had earned. Few principals hold credentials in addition to regular classroom teaching. Only 7% hold Reading related credentials, and 7% have Special Education credentials. Teachers, however, hold more additional credentials, with 36% being credentialed in early childhood education, 25% in ESL, and 5% in reading credentialed or as a reading specialist. Most noticeable, is the percentage of teachers who are temporary or provisionally credentialed (5%) and those who have no credentials at all (1%). The number of temporary or provisional credentials is not

uncommon in the district, and often indicates that the teacher is enrolled in an alternative certification program.

School Climate

In general, principals and most teachers agree that the schools have set goals and expectations for both student and teacher performance. While the majority of teachers and principals do endorse that the administration at the school provides them with the necessary resources, is sensitive to teacher needs, allows teachers input in discussions regarding school goals, and provides teachers with opportunities to review school achievement data, the teachers are less likely than principals to endorse these items.

Teachers were asked how often their principal visited their classroom during the schools year. The majority of the teachers reported visits from the principal once a month or more. However, in approximately 10% of the cases in all grade levels, the teachers reported that the principal never visited their classroom during the school year.

RITE Training, Support and Ideology

Only 71% of all principals reported receiving RITE training, but the vast majority (all but 1) indicated that their beliefs about teaching reading were similar or very similar to those of the RITE program. Conversely, the vast majority of the teachers indicated receiving RITE training (99%), but only about 67% indicated that the match between their own and RITE's beliefs about teaching reading were similar or very similar. In most cases, the teachers indicating less agreement were those from schools that are relatively new to the RITE program (1st or 2nd year schools).

Teachers were also asked if they received ongoing support for the RITE program and if a RITE trainer observed their classroom on a regular basis. Overall, 97-98% of the teachers reported a trainer observing their classroom and receiving ongoing support (respectively).

Program Recommendation

The majority of principals (93%) and teachers (86%) report that they would recommend the RITE program to the district, a colleague (93% & 74%), and would like for the program to continue in their school (100% & 74%: although principals are more likely

to endorse this recommendation than teachers). Principals are also more likely than teachers to report that they would recommend the program for students with special needs, ESL students, and students at risk.

Support and Benefit of RITE

All principals and 77% of the teachers believed that the staff in their school was supportive of the RITE program. The teachers who indicated this to not be true were predominately from schools which were in their 1st or 2nd year of the program. Significantly more principals than teachers reported that parents were knowledgeable about the RITE program. Overall, the low percentage of teachers endorsing this item suggests a possible need for future efforts to increase parental awareness of the program.

Interestingly, the vast majority of the principals reported that the ability of the teachers in their school to teach reading improved as a result of the RITE program. Significantly fewer teachers reported this same belief, with 72% of the teachers reporting that they believed that their teaching ability increased as a result of their participation in the RITE program. Furthermore, 72% of principals reported that their teacher's classroom management skills improved as a result of the RITE program, whereas only 43% of teachers endorsed this same belief.

These lower levels of teacher agreement could be due to the fact that it is difficult to disentangle what specifically results in personal growth and change, especially if the teachers were involved in more than one type of professional development activity. While seemingly low, the endorsement of this statement by even half of the teachers is encouraging, given the difficult nature of the identification of cause and effect in our own behaviors.

Appropriateness of RITE Program Activities

In general, across Kindergarten, first and second grade, the endorsement of different components of the RITE program follow a pattern to be expected given the age range of the students being taught. Specifically, ability grouping, unison responses and correction procedures are common practices in the program regardless of grade level (K-2), and the majority of teachers at each grade level report finding these components valuable. Mastery and Accuracy assessments, board work, and seat work are slightly less

endorsed in Kindergarten than in first and second grade. Of concern is the 20% of Kindergarten teachers who report finding the Mastery and Accuracy assessment of little value in their classroom. This may be a reflection of some individuals' beliefs that Kindergarten students should not be tested. However, given the climate today, and the known benefits of identifying students with potential problems as early as possible to ensure they receive proper support, this may be an area where additional information and guidance could be provided to these teachers.

Benefit of RITE program to teaching and students

At the end of the survey teachers were asked to respond, in an open comment format, to two questions about the impact of the RITE program. The first question asked about the impact they felt the RITE program had on their own teaching, and the second about the impact the program had on their students. For each question, a large percentage of teachers did not provide written responses. Approximately 70% of all teachers did not respond to the question about the impact the RITE program had on their teaching, and 41% did not respond to the question about the impact the program had on the students.

Overall, of the teachers who responded to the question about the impact of the RITE program on their teaching, felt the program had a positive impact on their teaching, and most specifically the teaching and knowledge of reading. A smaller, but still significant percentage of the teachers also indicated that the RITE program improved their teaching through their ability to better manage their classroom. A small percentage (4% and 6%) of the teachers felt that the RITE program stifled their creativity in the classroom and negatively affected their ability to teach other subjects to their students (i.e., because of time spent on RITE). However, 22% of the teachers stated the opposite in terms of stifling creativity and said that they felt the program, enhanced the creativity because it gave them a base that allowed them to focus more time on enhancing the classroom instruction than simply planning the basics.

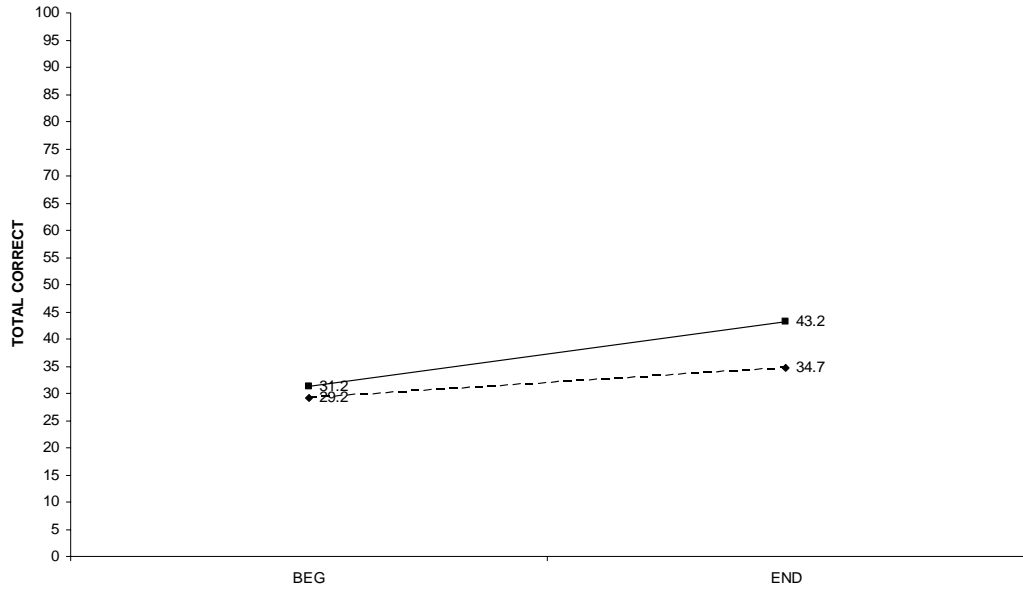
In terms of the impact on students, very few teachers reported any drawbacks of the RITE program. The majority of all responses were positive endorsements of the program and the students increased literacy abilities, confidence in their abilities and interest in reading.

Head Start Study Graphs 1 and 2

Graph 1

EXPRESSIVE VOCABULARY

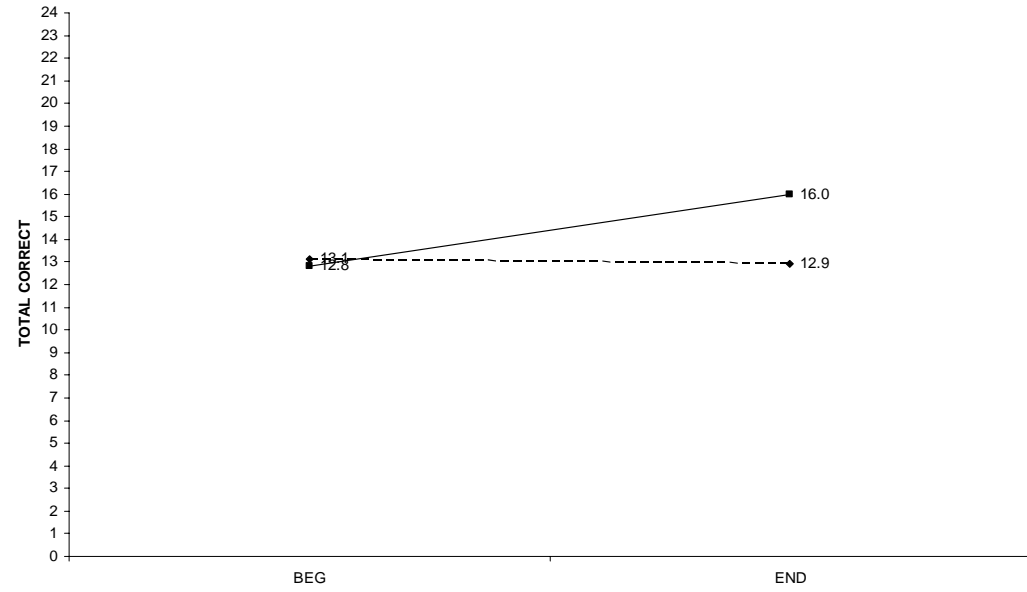
---◆--- HEAD START ONLY —■— HEAD START AND RITE



Graph 2

BLENDED SYLLABLES AND PHONEMES INTO WORDS

---◆--- HEAD START ONLY —■— HEAD START AND RITE

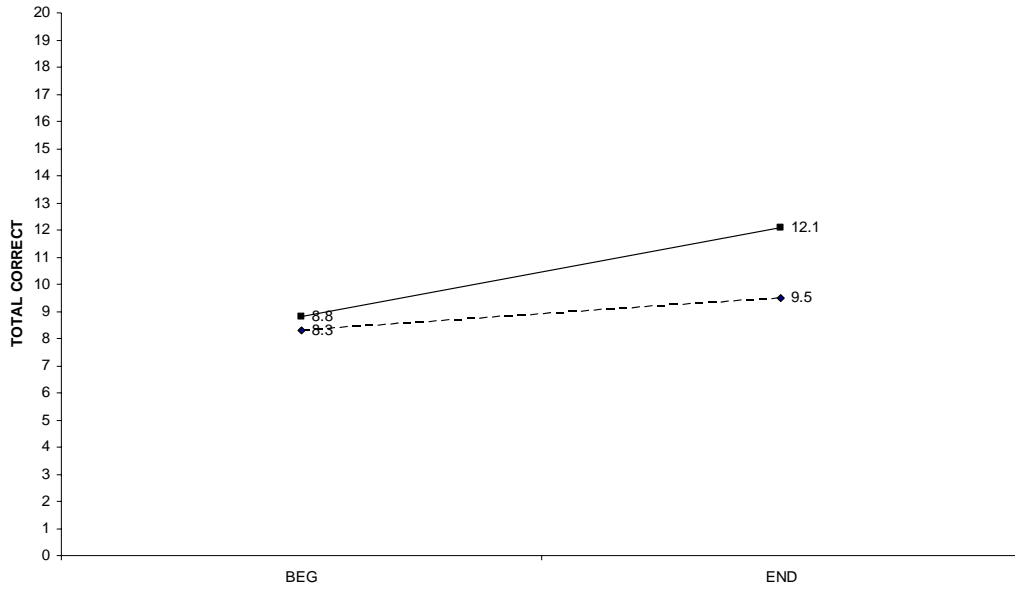


Head Start Study Graphs 3 and 4

Graph 3

SYLLABLES AND PHONEMES ELISION

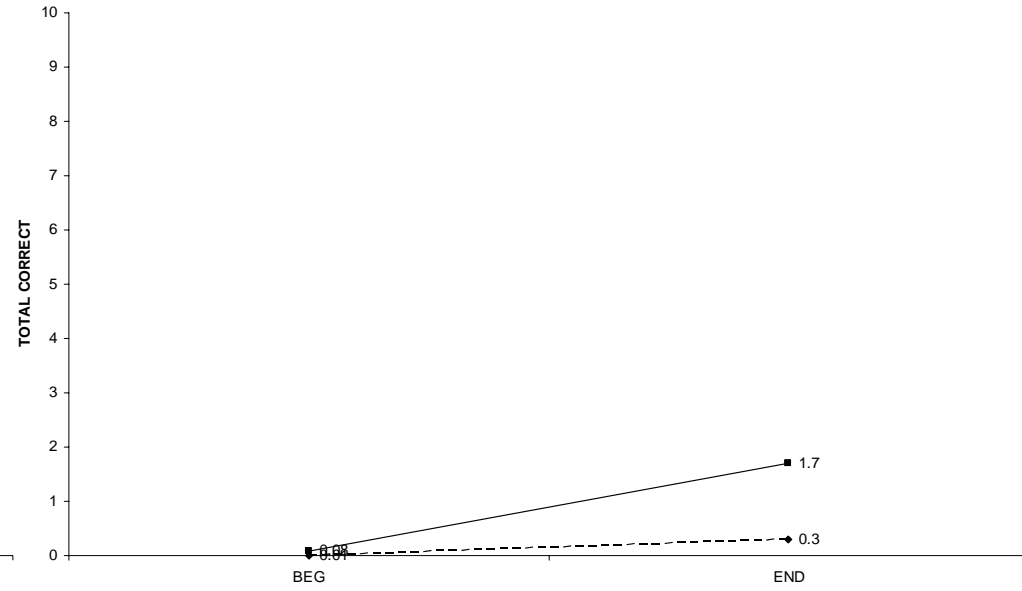
---◆--- HEAD START ONLY —■— HEAD START AND RITE



Graph 4

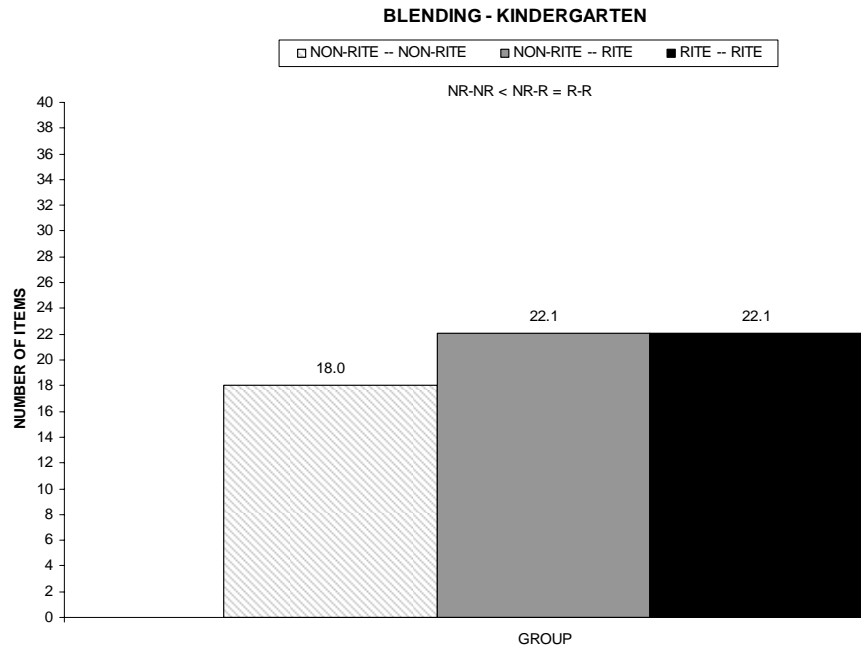
WORD READING

---◆--- HEAD START ONLY —■— HEAD START AND RITE

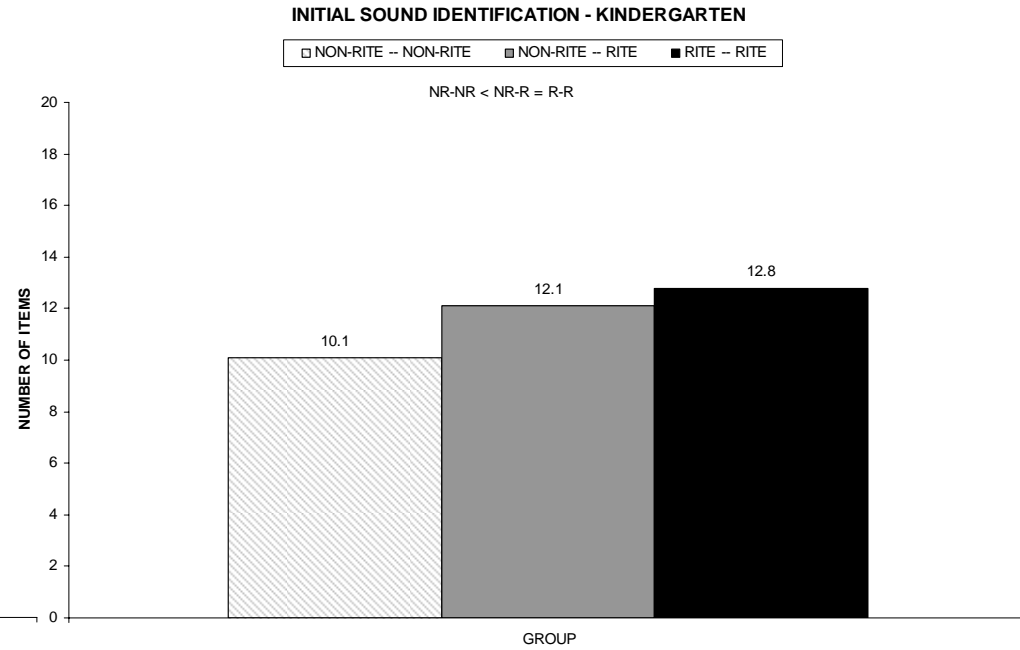


Kindergarten with Pre-K Study Graphs 5 and 6

Graph 5

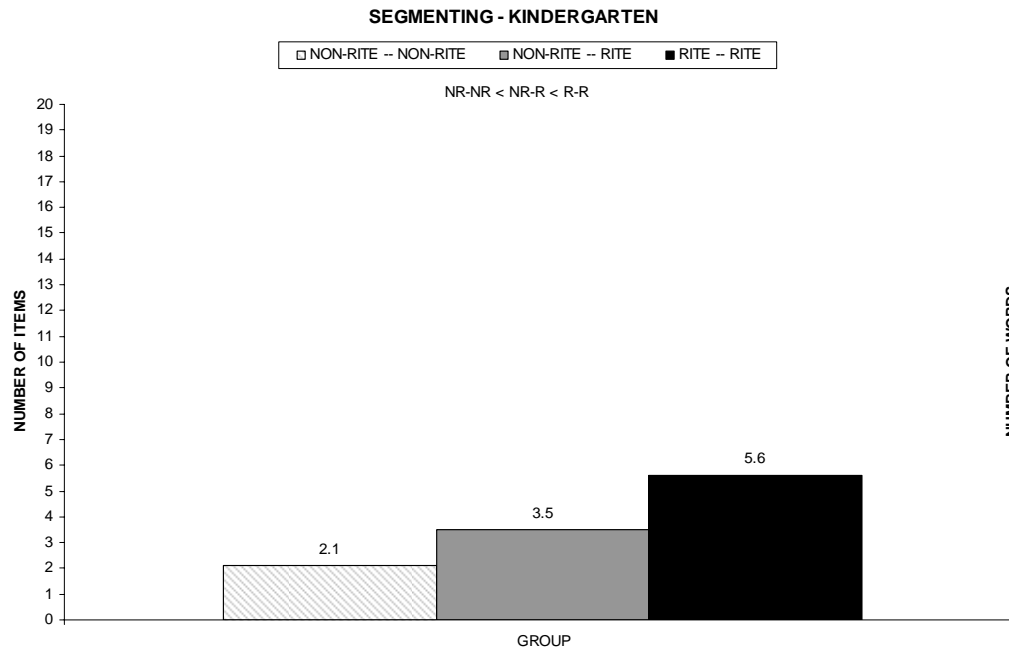


Graph 6

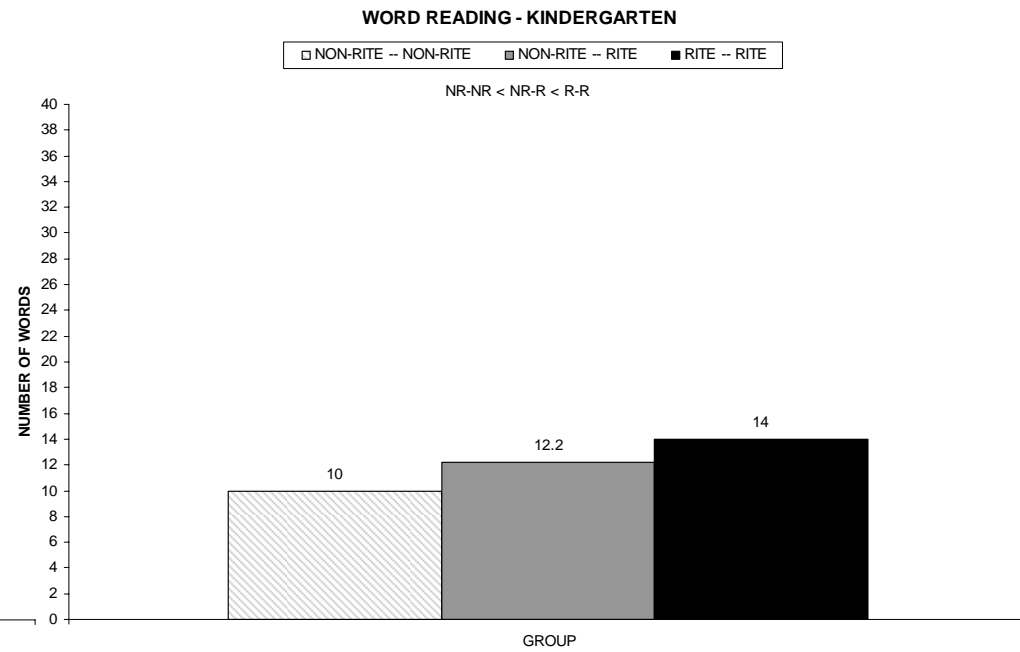


Kindergarten with Pre-K Study Graphs 7 and 8

Graph 7



Graph 8



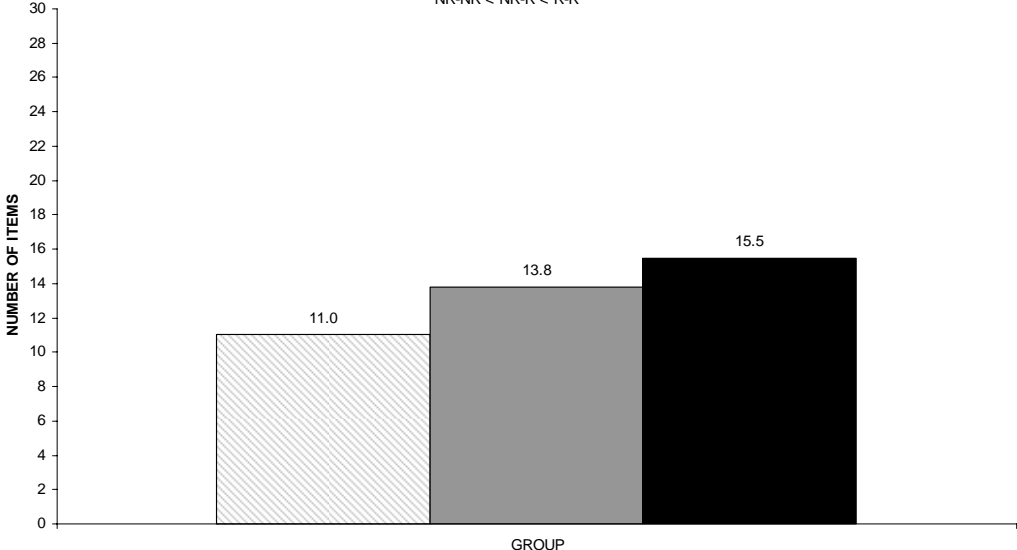
Kindergarten with Pre-K Study Graph 9

Graph 9

LISTENING COMPREHENSION - KINDERGARTEN

□ NON-RITE -- NON-RITE ■ NON-RITE -- RITE ■ RITE -- RITE

NR-NR < NR-R < R-R

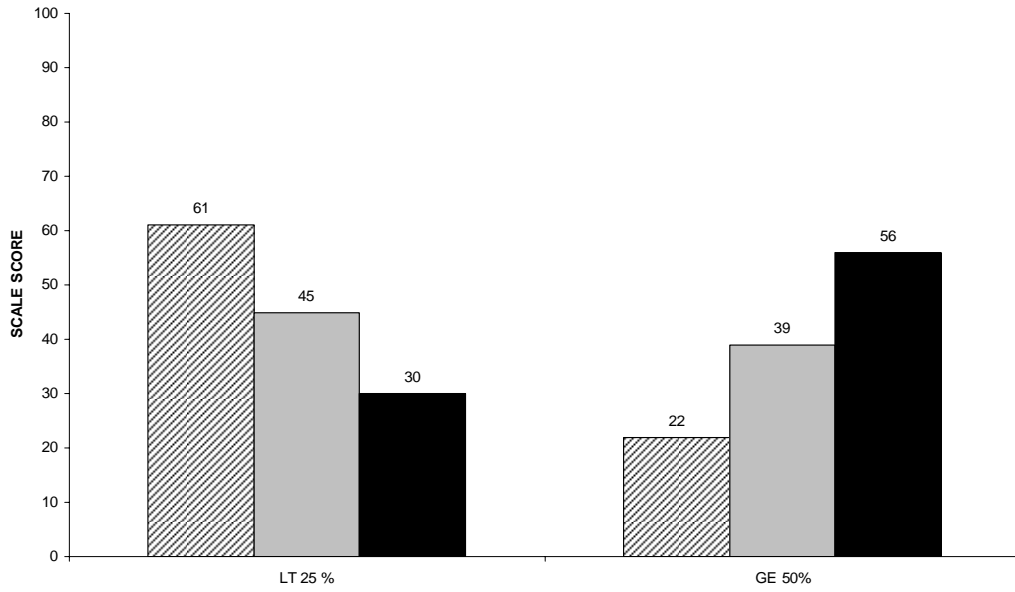


ESL Study Graphs 10 and 11

Graph 10

SAT 10: TOTAL READING - KINDERGARTEN

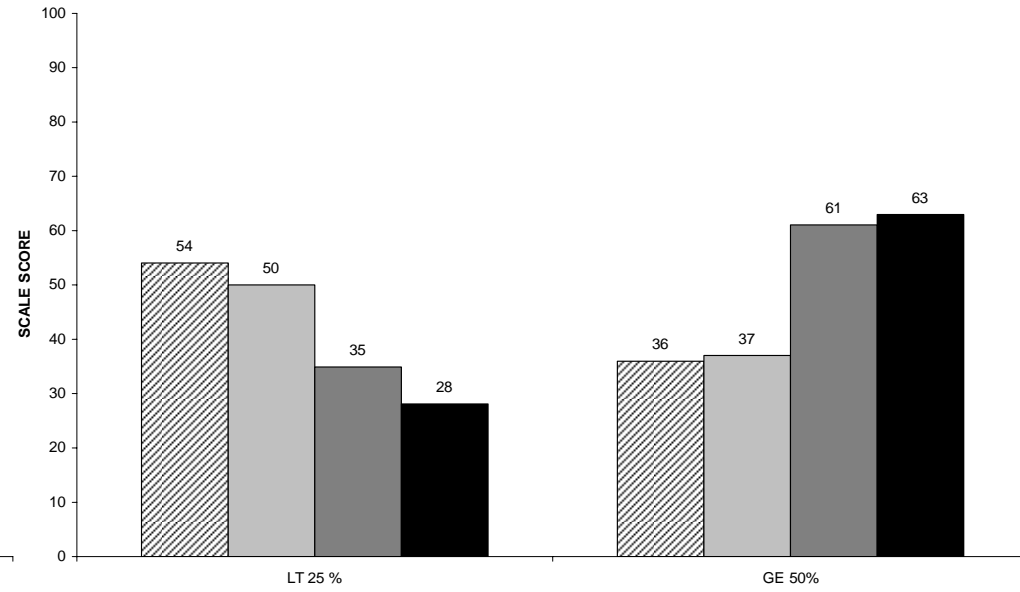
COMPARISON
 RITE - 1 YEAR
 RITE - 2 YEARS



Graph 11

SAT 10: TOTAL READING - FIRST GRADE

COMPARISON
 RITE - 1 YEAR
 RITE - 2 YEARS
 RITE - 3 YEARS

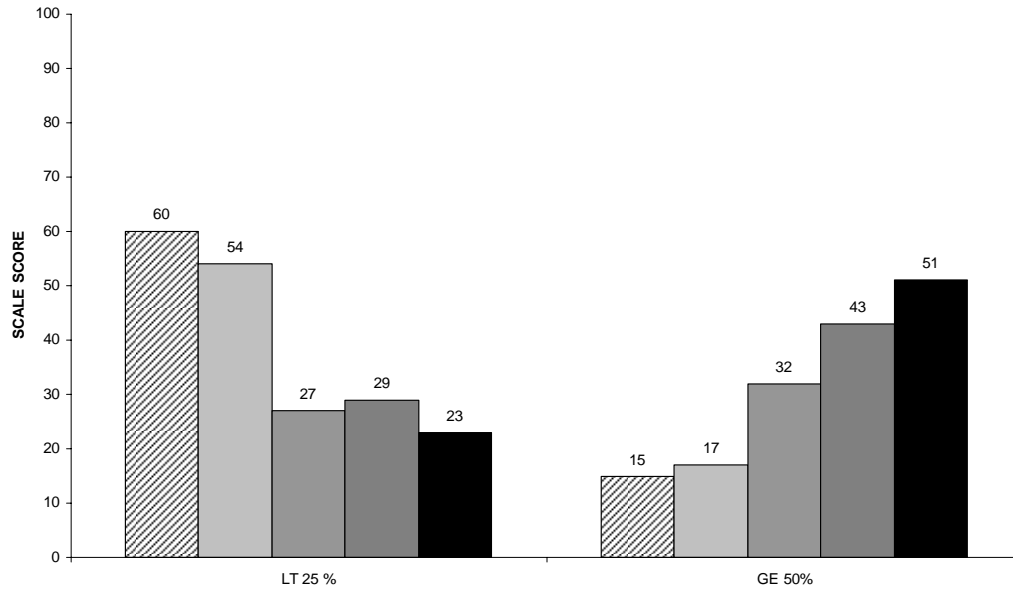


ESL Study Graph 12

Graph 12

SAT 10: TOTAL READING - SECOND GRADE

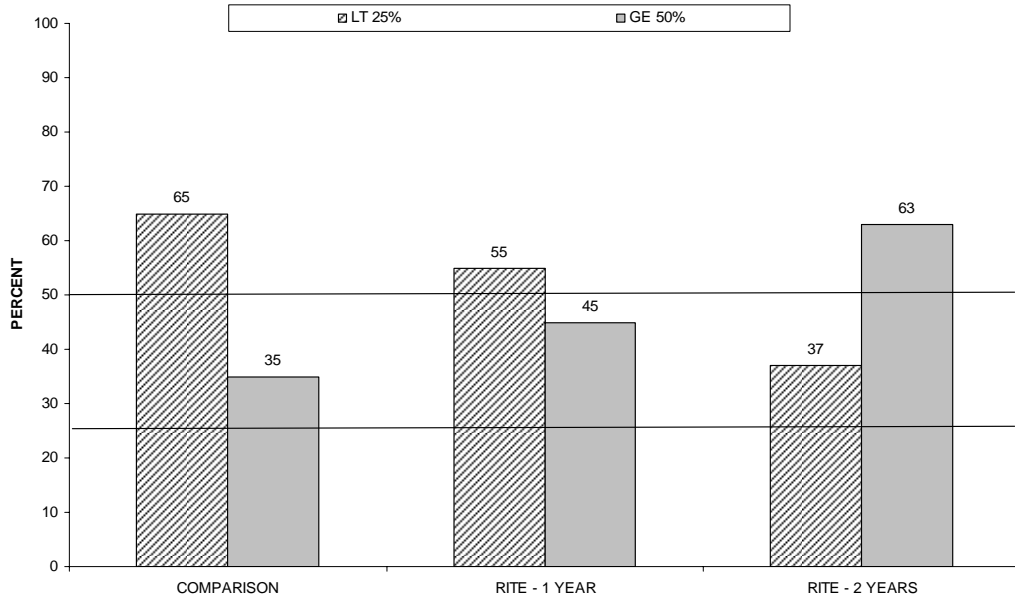
COMPARISON RITE - 1 YEAR RITE - 2 YEARS RITE - 3 YEARS RITE - 4 YEARS



NFISD Study Graphs 13 and 14

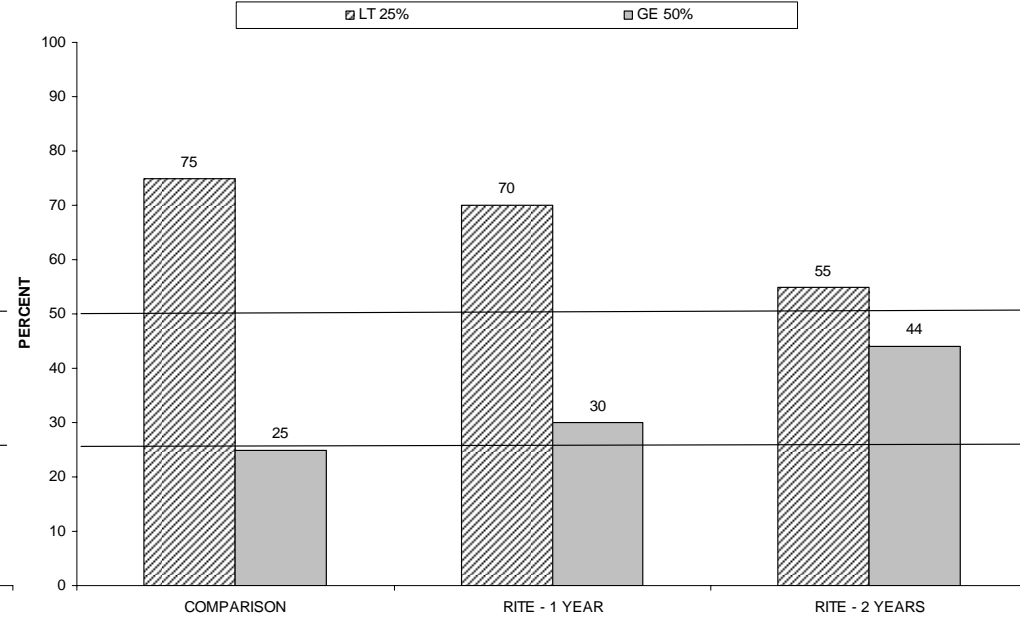
Graph 13

NORTH FOREST: FIRST GRADE
ITBS: TOTAL READING



Graph 14

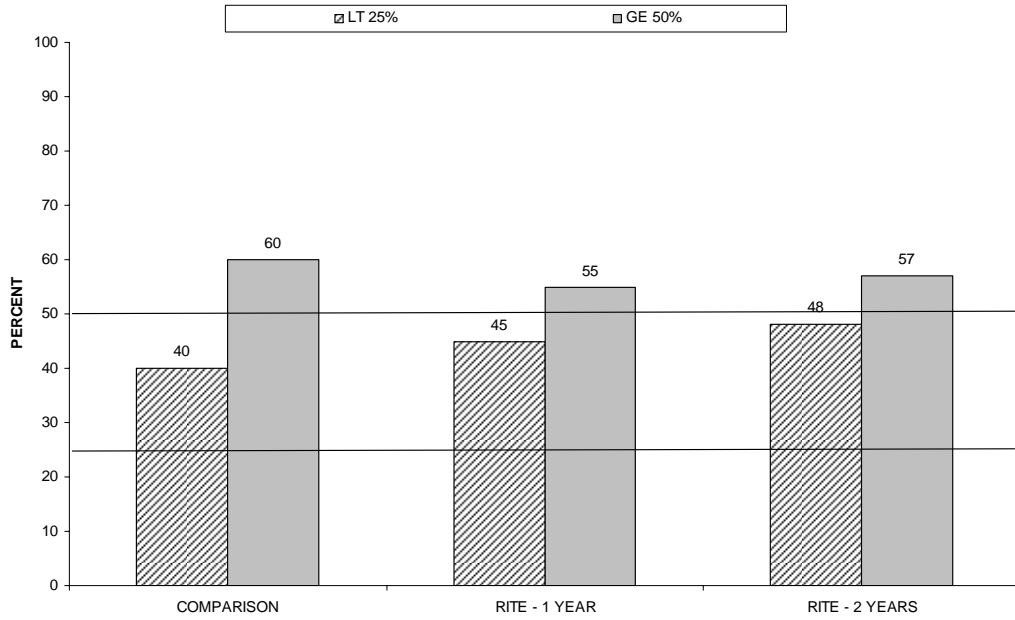
NORTH FOREST: FIRST GRADE
ITBS: TOTAL LANGUAGE



NFISD Study Graphs 15 and 16

Graph 15

NORTH FOREST: FIRST GRADE
ITBS: WORD ATTACK



Graph 16

NORTH FOREST: FIRST GRADE
ITBS: READING COMPREHENSION

