What Reading Leaders Should Know About Successful Reading Instruction

A presentation by Linda Diamond and Judith Martin of Consortium on Reading Excellence, Inc.
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Self-Reflection

Use the following rating system to begin to reflect upon the six steps to effective reading program implementation.

1 = no implementation  2 = limited implementation  3 = moderate implementation  4 = full implementation

For each element, place an X under the corresponding rating.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>1—None</th>
<th>2—Limited</th>
<th>3—Moderate</th>
<th>4—Full</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Full implementation of a research-based program</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Create a timeline</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comments:</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Evaluate student progress</td>
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<td>Comments:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Analyze the data</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comments:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Intervene immediately</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comments:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Validate and recalibrate</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Comments:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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Sample District Collection Testing Calendar Traditional School Year

Program Assessments are in italics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Testing Calendar</th>
<th>Fall Administration (Oct. 2-4) Due Oct. 7</th>
<th>Winter Administration (Jan. 28-30) Due Jan. 31</th>
<th>Spring Administration (May 5-9) Due May 12</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade</td>
<td>Unit 1</td>
<td>Unit 4 Program Assessment</td>
<td>Program Assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>Number Recognition</td>
<td>Word Pairs</td>
<td>Letter Recognition</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Letter Recognition</td>
<td>Letter Sound</td>
<td>Word Reading</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Frequency Words</td>
<td>Long Vowel Sounds</td>
<td>Blending and Segmentation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alphabet Sequence</td>
<td>Words that Describe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Words that Name</td>
<td>Blending and Segmentation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade</td>
<td>Unit 2</td>
<td>Unit 7</td>
<td>Unit 8</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Reviewing Letters and Sounds</td>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>Comprehension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Frequency Words</td>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>Spelling</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Oral Fluency</td>
<td>Oral Fluency</td>
<td>Oral Fluency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade</td>
<td>Unit 1</td>
<td>Unit 2</td>
<td>Unit 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
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<td>Comprehension</td>
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<td>Oral Fluency</td>
<td>Oral Fluency</td>
<td>Oral Fluency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade</td>
<td>Unit 1</td>
<td>Unit 3</td>
<td>Unit 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>Comprehension</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>Spelling</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Oral Fluency</td>
<td>Oral Fluency</td>
<td>Oral Fluency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade</td>
<td>Unit 1</td>
<td>Unit 2</td>
<td>Unit 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>Comprehension</td>
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<td>Spelling</td>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>Spelling</td>
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<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Oral Fluency</td>
<td>Oral Fluency</td>
<td>Oral Fluency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade</td>
<td>Unit 1</td>
<td>Unit 3</td>
<td>Unit 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>Comprehension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>Spelling</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Oral Fluency</td>
<td>Oral Fluency</td>
<td>Oral Fluency</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Sample for Do Right Middle School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Name and Total Time</th>
<th>Materials</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Necessary Professional Development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Benchmark and Advanced</strong></td>
<td>English 2 periods</td>
<td>Prentice Hall Literature plus one core novel plus outside reading</td>
<td>Standard district measures and regular program tests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strategic</strong></td>
<td>English 2 periods</td>
<td>Prentice Hall Literature plus added support components (Reader’s Companions) plus Rewards plus outside reading</td>
<td>Standard measures plus more frequent progress monitoring using fluency measures or DAR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intensive</strong></td>
<td>Reading Support 3 periods</td>
<td>REACH: Corrective Reading Decoding, Corrective Reading Comprehension, Spelling through Morphographs, and Reasoning and Writing</td>
<td>Program-specific monitoring tests: weekly plus frequent progress monitoring using fluency measures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EL Classes</strong></td>
<td>ELD 1, 2, 3, and 4 3 periods</td>
<td>High Point Basics through Level C; with additional Phonics Kit for levels A-C</td>
<td>Program-specific monitoring: selection and unit tests, Language Development assessments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Special Education Classes</strong></td>
<td>Reading Support 3 periods</td>
<td>REACH: Corrective Reading Decoding, Corrective Reading Comprehension, Spelling through Morphographs, and Reasoning and Writing</td>
<td>Program-specific monitoring tests: weekly plus frequent progress monitoring using fluency measures</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sample for Do Right High School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Name and Total Time</th>
<th>Materials</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Necessary Professional Development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Advanced</strong></td>
<td>Honors or AP English 1 period</td>
<td>Core curriculum plus selections from <em>Prentice Hall Literature</em> plus outside reading OR AP curriculum</td>
<td>On the Prentice Hall program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Benchmark</strong></td>
<td>English 9–12 1 period</td>
<td><em>Prentice Hall Literature</em> plus core novels plus outside reading</td>
<td>Standard district measures and regular program tests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strategic</strong></td>
<td>English 9–12 2 periods Plus Reading Support</td>
<td><em>Prentice Hall Literature</em> plus added support components (Reader’s Companions) plus <em>Rewards</em> plus outside reading</td>
<td>Standard measures plus more frequent progress monitoring using fluency measures or DAR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intensive</strong></td>
<td>Reading Support 2 periods for <em>Read 180</em>, 3 periods for <em>REACH</em></td>
<td>Read 180 for students reading at grade level 5–7 <em>Corrective Reading</em> (REACH) materials for students reading below fifth grade level</td>
<td>Program-specific monitoring tests: weekly plus frequent progress monitoring using fluency measures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EL Classes</strong></td>
<td>ELD 1, 2, 3, and 4 3 periods</td>
<td><em>High Point</em> Basics through Level C; with additional Phonics Kit for levels A–C</td>
<td>Program-specific monitoring: selection and unit tests, Language Development assessments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Special Education Classes</strong></td>
<td>Reading Support 3 periods</td>
<td><em>REACH: Corrective Reading Decoding</em>, <em>Corrective Reading Comprehension</em>, <em>Spelling through Morphographs</em>, and <em>Reasoning and Writing</em></td>
<td>Program-specific monitoring tests: weekly plus frequent progress monitoring using fluency measures</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Implementing and Sustaining an Effective Reading Program
A CORE Briefing Paper
Linda Diamond

What Does It Take?

“The best practices of any profession are not gained in a vacuum, but implemented and sustained in environments that intentionally support, enhance, and sustain those practices and include several dimensions.” (Reading/Language Arts Framework for California Public Schools 1999, p. 11)

An effective reading program develops reading competence in all students. It is based on proven practices. Three components are critical to the design, implementation, and sustainability of powerful reading instruction: professional development to equip educators with a solid knowledge base; effective instructional tools aligned to the knowledge base; and school systems that support and nurture implementation.

Professional Development

Professional development is critical to equip teachers and school leaders with the research-based knowledge they need to design their reading program, select the right tools, and develop support systems. The most effective school implementation designs will take into account the need for ongoing professional development in order to create and sustain a culture of continuous learning and continuous improvement. To facilitate ongoing learning, teachers need time to learn. Professional development needs to be multidimensional to be effective. Some professional development will occur in traditional workshop settings and seminars, some will take place at the school during collegial meetings, and some will take place within the classroom. In The New Structure of School Improvement: Inquiring Schools
**Presentation of Theory** Participants need to learn the theoretical underpinnings of the teaching approach. This component is the traditional workshop and consists of readings, lecture, discussion, and interaction. Since reading instruction is complex and research-based reading practices have not been the norm in many schools, 20 to 30 hours may be required to provide teachers and school leaders with the necessary understandings (Joyce and Showers 1982, 1995). Generally, if this is the sole component of training, as few as 10 percent of the participants are likely to be able to implement the new approach (Joyce et al. 1999, p. 120).

**Modeling and Demonstrations** Modeling of the instructional procedures and demonstration lessons will increase the likelihood of implementation. Demonstrations and modeling can be presented live or through the use of videotapes, but it is crucial that teachers expected to implement a new procedure or strategy see effective illustrations. Demonstrations can take place in the workshop sessions with students brought in for special lessons. Modeling and demonstrations can also take place during visits to actual classrooms. The model lessons may be provided by the outside experts as well as by skilled teachers from the school itself. When this component is added to the theoretical training, another 10 percent of the participants are likely to be able to implement the practice (Joyce et al. 1999, p. 120).

**Practice in Workshop Setting and Under Simulated Conditions** In addition to seeing models and demonstrations, participants benefit from simulated practice both in the workshop setting and in classrooms. Such practice, done with peers or students brought in for the session, provides participants with a controlled environment for learning without worrying about managing their whole class of students. Teachers can make mistakes and improve.

**Structured Feedback** Structured feedback helps all new learners to correct and adjust their behaviors. To provide such feedback, a system for observing participant behavior is critical. Those giving the feedback need to know what to notice. Feedback can be self-administered, or it can be provided by the outside trainer or others trained in the approach. It can be combined with the simulated practice in the workshop setting or offered during classroom visitations and observations. Joyce et al. state that even with a combination of practice and feedback, they would be surprised “if as many as 20 percent” of participants could transfer their newly learned skills to their classrooms on a regular basis (1999, p. 120). When structured feedback is combined with theory, modeling, and practice, the total implementation rate may go up to about 40 percent.

**Coaching for Classroom Application** When the first four training components are combined, the implementation rate is strengthened considerably. However, for sustained, consistent use, the most important component of training appears to be direct coaching in the classroom. In an earlier study of transfer of training to classroom implementation and consistent use, Showers (1982) found that no teachers transferred their newly learned skills without coaching. Coaching involves helping teachers plan and deliver lessons using the new approach. It involves helping teachers to reflect upon their own teaching and make improvements. It also includes side-by-side coaching and co-teaching. Coaches, whether outside experts or peers, must themselves receive training and support in the use of observation tools and feedback techniques. When coaching is added, implementation rates go up significantly.
Instructional Tools

In addition to a training design that should include the components listed above, teachers need the best possible instructional tools. Not all reading programs are alike. Many published programs claim to be based on research; few, however, actually live up to that claim. Research clearly supports the need for explicit instruction in phonemic awareness skills, decoding skills, vocabulary and comprehension, all supported by appropriate texts and good literature. A recent study investigated the impact of various approaches to beginning reading on Chapter 1 student achievement. This study concluded that programs utilizing an explicit phonics approach result in higher achievement, especially for students who may be at risk of reading failure (Foorman, Francis, Fletcher, Schatschneider, and Mehta 1998). Similarly, there is a strong body of evidence for the use of decodable books in early first grade as children develop insight into the code of written English. The support for the use of decodable books comes from practice theory and several large-scale reading program evaluation studies (Adams 1990; Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, and Wilkinson 1985; Beck and Juel 1995; Chall 1967). The programs studied included materials that featured a “systematic relationship between the phonics strategies taught in the program and the connected text provided for the students to read” (Stein, Johnson, and Gutlohn 1999). A study by Juel and Roper/Schneider identified two factors that contributed to the development of sound/spelling knowledge: “early use of decodable text and prior literacy knowledge as evidenced by performance on the Metropolitan Reading Readiness Test” (Juel and Roper/Schneider 1985). The study concluded that the type of text students read influences their word identification strategies. Stein et al. (1999) studied several basal reading programs and evaluated the relationship between the program of instruction and the text selections supplied to the students. They concluded that these two factors were not always aligned:

Currently, many publishers claim to have balanced reading programs that offer both explicit phonics instruction and literature-based instruction… Teachers must look beyond publishers’ claims and marketing strategies and evaluate the instructional integrity of these materials by using research-based criteria. The impact of poorly conceived and ill-designed instruction—instruction not supported by the findings of the research literature—cannot be underestimated. (p. 286)

Once a school selects an instructional program, it is crucial that the program be fully implemented with high fidelity. This falls to the school leadership.

School Support Systems and Leadership

Over the past several years, school reforms have been too numerous to count. All have been well intentioned, but few have resulted in actual improved student achievement. Many of the reforms have focused on processes (site-based decision making and block schedules) with little attention paid to teaching and learning. Others have focused on instruction but failed to address systemic matters that make it difficult to implement the new approach. The best reforms focus on both these factors—processes and instruction. At the heart of any successful implementation is leadership. Leadership comes not just from the building principal or district superintendent, but also from teacher leaders and mentors. Above all else, it requires determination, commitment, and perseverance. Once the school embraces a new curriculum for reading instruction, it must be nurtured by frequent review, regular meetings for collective discussion and troubleshooting, ongoing professional development, implementation monitoring systems, and coaching support for continuous improvement. Assessment systems, planned restructuring of classroom organization, and instructional time and grouping for differentiated instruction are also part of the crucial support package. It falls to the school leadership to ensure that systematic changes are made.
### School Leadership

It is the school leadership who must unite the entire staff in support of a collective vision of reading instruction. The school principal must thoroughly understand the elements of a research-based reading program and should establish a school culture that values effective research-based proven practices. The school leadership is responsible for marshalling resources, providing time, and staying the course. The school leadership must be “heroic,” able to resist the many forces that may inhibit implementation of an effective reading program. Those forces will include the need to attend to other curriculum areas or to district- and state-mandated reforms. Still other forces will come from within the staff, as teachers struggle with implementation problems. But the school principal needs to understand that he or she cannot do this alone. Rather, the skilled school administrator will identify the other leaders and utilize their expertise to build a solid leadership team. This team will be essential to successful program implementation.

The first year of the implementation of a new reading program presents the challenge of changing teachers’ beliefs about reading instruction and initiating the new research-based approach. The second year consists of refining the approach while ensuring consistency and adherence to the program design. The third year, however, poses a new challenge, described by one Sacramento educator as “domestication” (Cooper 1999). As educators become comfortable with a program, they tend to want to alter it, adjust it, and do it “my own way”—in short, to domesticate it. Unfortunately, tinkering with or changing a well-designed reading program often diminishes its effectiveness. This is because other materials that conflict with the selected program may slip back into use, and important elements of the chosen program may be neglected. It is during the second and third year of an implementation that the school leadership will face its most serious challenges. This is when staying power is essential. During these years the school leadership needs to have the best research to support continued use of the reading program. The principals, who are ultimately responsible for implementation, will serve many roles. Principals need to be able to praise, collaborate, and apply strategic and intensive intervention as needed based on teacher performance as measured by student achievement. Table 1 describes their roles.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Training with others</td>
<td>Provide needed training on assessment instruments, frequency, and use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervising/monitoring</td>
<td>Visit classrooms, analyze periodic assessments, debrief with teachers, monitor pacing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching</td>
<td>Observe and provide constructive feedback; provide opportunities for visits and peer support; get assistance from guides and district coaches, if any; arrange for video models</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborating and facilitating</td>
<td>Set up regular grade and staff meetings with a clear purpose and support teachers to stay focused on data; support collaborative conversations during staff meetings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The principals and school leadership will need to support and intervene with teachers based on differentiated needs. Richard Elmore, in his article *Building a New Structure for School Leadership*, refers to this as “differential treatment based on practice and performance.” (Elmore, R. *Building a New Structure for School Leadership*, page 30). In addition, he indicates that autonomy is increased or decreased based on practice and performance. In other words, schools that perform well have more discretion than schools that do not. Thus, in an ideal model, the levels of assistance, supervision, and scrutiny vary based on the status of a school’s implementation derived from assessment data and classroom observations.

**Assessment** Student achievement information is crucial. The best assessments will be aligned to the reading program, tracking student progress and monitoring teacher pacing and program use. In an effective reading program, assessment is used to inform instruction for both large groups and individuals. Different assessment instruments serve different purposes. For example, statewide achievement tests serve to inform the public about system-wide instructional efficacy. Individual diagnostic tests enable the classroom teacher to plan instruction as well as to inform parents of student needs. Regular assessments are necessary to guide grouping decisions, instructional pace, and individual need for support.

In the early grades, it is important to assess the specific skills and strategies that provide the foundation for long-term outcomes such as comprehension and fluency. Because students need to master these precursor skills, reading assessment in the early grades must be frequent and specific. In the upper grades, assessment is necessary to monitor progress but also to identify causes of reading weakness. Unlike primary-grade assessment, which starts with discrete skills, upper-grade assessment often starts with reading comprehension and then becomes more discrete in order to pinpoint particular sub-skills that are causing reading difficulty. In this way, assessment in the upper grades becomes increasingly diagnostic.

Schools need to organize their assessment toolkits around three broad categories: screening assessments (assessments that provide information about the students’ existing knowledge and skill base); formative and ongoing assessments (assessments to monitor progress and adjust instruction); and summative assessments (assessments at the end of a unit or time period, used to evaluate). In all cases, teachers need to understand the expected targets of mastery for individual skills in order to identify students at risk of difficulty and to tailor instruction to meet identified needs.

Assessment information will provide the evidence not only that students are learning, but also that teachers are teaching. Assessment information should provide the guidance necessary for grouping students for special intervention and added support. Four categories of students will be used to help the leadership organize instructional intervention and focused support. The categories are advanced, benchmark, strategic, and intensive. **Table 2** shows the categories and descriptive characteristics.
Table 2. Four Learners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learner</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Curriculum and Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>• May already know much of the content</td>
<td>• Advanced classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• At or above grade level standards</td>
<td>• Extended opportunities within the regular program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Benefits from opportunities for elaboration</td>
<td>• Enrichment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• May appear bored</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benchmark</td>
<td>• Generally can meet standards</td>
<td>• Regular program (about two periods)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Average learner</td>
<td>• “Well-checks” every 6–8 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Can adapt and adjust to teacher’s style</td>
<td>• Occasional in-class modifications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Proven vocabulary and comprehension strategies instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic</td>
<td>• Typically tests between the 30th–49th percentile on normative measures</td>
<td>• May be in regular core program (usually two periods) with added support (back-up) class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Gaps in skills and knowledge</td>
<td>• Targeted intervention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 1–2 years behind</td>
<td>• Separate reading intervention of one-two periods, replacing English class, but for a short time (semester)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Can basically read but not with depth</td>
<td>• Added tutoring period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Does not apply self and may appear unmotivated</td>
<td>• “Well-checks” every 3–4 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Content area work may be challenging</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• May not complete homework</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intensive</td>
<td>• Tests below the 30th percentile on normative measures</td>
<td>• Separate intensive intervention of at least two hours replaces traditional reading/English class and something else for 1–2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Very low performance</td>
<td>• “Well-checks” every 1–2 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Reading skills are very limited</td>
<td>• Explicit, systematic instruction and direct instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Very frustrated and unmotivated</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Demonstrates behavior and absentee problems</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Cannot handle content area work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Doesn’t turn in homework</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 shows the way to focus attention and understand assessment information at three levels: individual student, whole classroom, and whole school. The most important consideration is to determine overall program and teacher effectiveness. If at least 75–80% of students in a given classroom are meeting benchmark targets, this is good evidence that the program is effective and that the teacher is implementing it as designed. In these benchmark classrooms the focus of support should be the student. If the program is effective, but fewer than 75% of the students within a given classroom are meeting the targets, this indicates that the individual teacher will need assistance to implement the program. The focus of support becomes the teacher rather than just the students.
Table 3. Levels of Differentiated Support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual Students Within a Well-Implemented Classroom</th>
<th>Classroom Unit</th>
<th>Whole School Unit</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Advanced</strong> Students consistently exceed the targets and can handle advanced materials. <strong>Intervention:</strong> Need challenge, extension and enrichment  <strong>Assessment:</strong> Every 6–8 weeks  <strong>Materials:</strong> Standard</td>
<td>Almost all students in the classroom are exceeding the benchmarks; the teacher is teaching the program with fidelity; teachers are models and resources for others. <strong>Intervention:</strong> Use of enrichment and challenge components of program. Classrooms may be videotaped.</td>
<td>Almost all classrooms have most students exceeding the benchmarks; the school is a model and resource for other schools; school has significant decision-making autonomy.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Benchmark</strong> Students are generally making good progress; occasional need for reteaching. <strong>Intervention:</strong> Generally none needed, reteach as problems show up  <strong>Assessment:</strong> Every 6–8 weeks  <strong>Materials:</strong> Standard</td>
<td>75–80% of students are making good progress; teacher needs praise and recognition and may serve as a resource to others. The teacher is teaching the program with high fidelity. <strong>Intervention:</strong> Videotaped lessons to serve as models for others. Good classrooms for visits.</td>
<td>75–80% of the classrooms are meeting the targets. Schools are freed from certain regulations and have high degree of autonomy as long as they maintain high achievement. The school will serve as a good demonstration site for others to visit.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Strategic</strong> Those students who are not meeting benchmark targets on one or more important indicator. <strong>Intervention:</strong> Direct instruction with teacher or one-on-one in the form of reteaching, preteaching, adjustments of pace and complexity  <strong>Assessment:</strong> Diagnostic tests to pinpoint problems and target intervention. Assess students every 3-4 weeks.  <strong>Materials:</strong> Special materials may also provide a supplement to the regular program</td>
<td>Classrooms where about one-third of the students are not meeting benchmarks. <strong>Intervention:</strong> The teacher needs assistance to teach the program as designed. An assigned coach should support this teacher with model lessons and side-by-side teaching.</td>
<td>Many classrooms (at least one-third) resemble the classroom described in the Strategic classroom cell. These schools receive directed assistance from central administration but may negotiate a certain limited amount of autonomy. Principal will need to visit model sites and get expert assistance.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Intensive</strong> Individual students who are in well-implemented classrooms and are chronically low on many indicators. <strong>Intervention:</strong> Students in grades K–3 may be able to use the intervention components of the existing program during teacher-directed independent work time and small-group time. These students will regularly need 30 minutes at least focused on their targeted areas of weakness. Some may require a change of program and outside support. Grade 4–6 students will need a separate, intensive intervention replacing their base program.  <strong>Assessment:</strong> Assess every 1–2 weeks and use diagnostic tests to pinpoint areas of weakness.  <strong>Materials:</strong> Special supplementary materials will be needed. Students placed in an intensive replacement program will need specialized programs.</td>
<td>Classrooms in which over half of the students are not meeting benchmark indicators. These teachers must be held accountable to teach the program as designed. While students will certainly need added teaching to catch up, the focus is on the teacher who is the root cause of this performance profile. <strong>Intervention:</strong> Intensive coaching and model lessons provided by site, district coaching staff, and external experts at principal’s request. Principal provides explicit direction to teacher. Principal arranges for visits to model classrooms.</td>
<td>Most classrooms resemble the classroom described in the Intensive classroom cell. These schools will receive directed assistance with limited or no autonomy from the central administration. Principals seek assistance from district staff. District leadership will provide close supervision and scrutiny of these schools.</td>
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</table>
In order to have this model take hold, it is critical that progress-monitoring assessments are administered as planned and the data immediately made available to principals, teachers, and supervisors. Principals should be examining the classroom assessments at least every six weeks. This data will then be used in grade-level meetings of teachers to analyze implementation and to work toward improvements. It is recommended that districts use a combination of the adopted program unit assessments and an external assessment, such as those that qualify for Reading First. All of this requires time.

- **Time** Of all the variables under a school’s control, the most important is making good use of time to maximize learning. In grades 1 through 3, a minimum of two and a half hours of daily instruction is optimal for language arts; one hour is optimal in kindergarten. In grades 4 through 8, at least two hours of daily instruction is necessary. Additional time beyond the two hours is needed for special one-to-one or small-group intervention. Students identified as poor readers face what Kame’enui (1993) refers to as “the tyranny of time” in trying to catch up to their peers. Simply keeping pace with one’s peers is not enough. These students will need increased time and instruction of the highest quality. The Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (CIERA) studied school and classroom practices in effective and unexpectedly high-achieving schools with large at-risk populations and compared them to practices in moderately and less effective schools. In the most effective schools, teachers spent about 134 minutes a day on reading. This included small- and whole-group instruction, independent seatwork activities, independent reading, and writing related to reading (Taylor, Pearson, Clark, and Walpole 1999). The moderately and least effective schools averaged 113 minutes a day on reading.

In addition to student learning time, teachers need regular time to collaborate and plan together, and analyze and plan from student assessment data. During the first year of a new program’s implementation, regular collaboration is crucial. During the grade-level meetings, teachers can observe videos of effective implementation, watch others demonstrate, discuss problem spots, and share ideas.

- **Instructional Grouping** The CIERA study also found that in the most effective schools, more time was spent in small-group instruction. This can be a powerful means of providing differentiated instruction to meet students’ needs. During small-group instruction, both the pace and complexity of teaching may be adjusted. To make the best use of small-group instruction, the most effective schools functioned as teams. Title I employees, resource specialists, reading teachers, and regular teachers all worked together to provide effective small-group instruction. Such instruction tended to be based on reading achievement and skill need. In the most effective schools, movement across groups was common because of frequent and ongoing assessment and early intervention. Often the small-group instruction focused on direct teaching of word recognition skills and on the application of word recognition strategies while the children were reading (Taylor et al. 1999).

- **Coaching** Since coaching is so important to the effective implementation of any new concept, it falls to the leadership to design and implement a system of peer and expert coaching. Such coaching should be supported by clear expectations and guidelines and should be aligned to the adopted reading program materials. Coaches will assist and support teachers as they try a strategy, implement new materials, and engage in the assessment of and planned intervention for students. The most important role for coaches is the modeling of lessons from a newly selected program, side-by-side coaching as a teacher tries the new program, and collegial feedback to refine implementation. Coaches need to be trained and mentored as they grow into this role.
The Home-School Connection  For implementation to be effective, there must be a deep connection between the school and the students’ homes. Since independent, outside reading is so important to develop reading proficiency, parents must thoroughly understand the school expectations for outside reading, the nature of the reading program, and strategies that they can use at home. Parent education and parent engagement are vital. In the early grades, children will be taking home small decodable books for fluency development. Parents need to understand what these books are used for and how to help their youngsters to use them. Parents may also fill vital tutoring roles. Children who need additional support may be able to receive it through well-trained parent volunteers.

Conclusion

Designing, implementing, and sustaining an effective reading program is everybody’s business. It requires well-designed and ongoing professional development to equip educators with the knowledge base they need for effective reading instruction; it requires the selection of appropriate tools tightly linked to the research; and finally, it requires support systems initiated by the local leadership to ensure smooth implementation and enduring effects.

References


For secondary-level students in grades seven through twelve, the social and economic consequences of not reading well can be cumulative and profound: the failure to attain a high school diploma, a barrier to higher education, underemployment or unemployment, and difficulty in managing personal and family life.

Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 2000

Our middle and high schools are facing a literacy crisis of monumental proportions. Too few students enter with the skills they need to complete grade-level work. All too many leave unmotivated, with limited futures, and promises unrealized. While blame can be assigned to social conditions and to unproven reading instructional practices in the elementary grades, middle and high schools cannot wait for a well-prepared entering class. They cannot wait for students who come to them literate homes, well nourished, and speaking fluent English. On the contrary, the population entering middle and high school today, and surely continuing to enter middle and high school in the future, is more diverse than ever. These diverse learners depend almost entirely on the schools for their educational success. Who are these students with great need? Some are students with mild learning disabilities for whom regular classroom teachers are responsible. Some are students whose primary languages are different from the language of the classroom. Many are “skilled evaders of reading, who know the stress of not being able to read successfully” (Peterson, Caverly, Nicholson, O’Neal, and Cusenbary, 2000). These are the students who demonstrated poor reading ability in third grade; national longitudinal studies show that about 75% of students with reading problems in third grade will have them in ninth grade (Shaywitz, Stuebing, Shaywitz, and Fletcher, 1996). In fact, the research shows that the gap between good and poor readers actually widens in later grades. Mikulecky studied a group of secondary students two or more years behind their peers in reading ability and found that they actually experienced declines in reading comprehension over the two-year period of the study (Mikulecky, 1990). In addition to poor academic achievement, these students suffer emotional and psychological consequences from their reading
problems, including low motivation, anxiety, and lack of self-efficacy (Wigfield and Eccles, 1994). They also manifest behavior problems, although the relationship is unclear. Some studies have actually found reading difficulty to cause behavior problems rather than the other way around. Finally, the movement to curriculum standards and high-stakes exams, while important steps for improving overall student achievement, make the middle and high school’s task all the more challenging. For without effective strategies for teaching students with diverse needs, high standards merely highlight the limitations of teachers and the failure of schools.

To ensure achievement for diverse learners, middle and high schools must design programs and curriculums that take into account a lack of background knowledge, delayed language development, and limited successful reading experiences. This means that middle and high schools will need to design programs of intensive intervention for the least prepared, a sort of educational triage with well-run intensive care units. In addition, middle and high schools will need to plan other curriculum interventions of lesser intensity, and will need to help all teachers reach an increasingly diverse population. In order to plan effectively, it is useful to think of four different types of learners with differing needs for curriculum, instruction, intensity, and duration (Kame’enui and Simmons, 2000). Table 1 summarizes these learners, their characteristics, and their curriculum options.

Table 1. Four Learners

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<tr>
<th>Learner</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Curriculum and Assessment</th>
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| Advanced | ● May already know much of the content  
● At or above grade-level standards  
● Benefits from opportunities for elaboration  
● May appear bored | ● Advanced classes  
● Extended opportunities within the regular program  
● Enrichment |
| Benchmark | ● Generally can meet standards  
● Average learner  
● Can adapt and adjust to teacher’s style | ● Regular program (about two periods in MS)  
● “Well-checks” every 5–8 weeks  
● Occasional in-class modifications  
● Proven vocabulary and comprehension strategies instruction |
| Strategic | ● Typically tests between the 30th–49th percentile on normative measures  
● Gaps in skills and knowledge  
● 1–2 years behind  
● Can basically read but not with depth  
● Does not apply him/herself and may appear unmotivated  
● Content area work may be challenging  
● May not complete homework | ● May be in regular core program (usually two periods) with added support (back-up) class  
● Targeted intervention  
● Separate reading intervention of 1–2 periods, replacing English class, but for a short time (semester)  
● Added tutoring period  
● “Well-checks” every 3–5 weeks |
| Intensive | ● Tests below the 30th percentile on normative measures  
● Very low performance  
● Reading skills are very limited  
● Very frustrated and unmotivated  
● Demonstrates behavior and absentee problems  
● Cannot handle content area work  
● Does not turn in homework | ● Separate intensive intervention of at least 2 hours replaces traditional English class plus something else for 1–2 years  
● “Well-checks” every 1–3 weeks  
● Explicit, systematic instruction and direct instruction |
Middle and high schools will need to design their programs with these different learners in mind. Presently, most middle and high schools are designed to meet the needs of benchmark learners, with a few honors classes thrown in for the advanced learners in high schools. Only students formally identified as qualifying for special education receive specialized help, and the help they receive may not be adequate. To meet the needs of all students, middle and high schools will want to rethink their organization and schedules, their teacher skills and knowledge, and their curriculum materials and programs. It is crucial to implement well-designed intervention classes (replacing the regular English class) of sufficient duration (usually two periods at least) to lift the intensive learners (more than two standard deviations below the mean) to basic literacy within two years. While some consider this tracking, others recognize it as the only way to meet the needs of significantly below-level students. In addition to this intensive intervention, middle and high schools can add support classes for students in the core curriculum (untracked classrooms) who are only one to two years behind their peers—the strategic learners. In fact, in order to complete the comprehensive curriculums most good publisher programs now provide to middle schools, two periods are needed by all students. Finally, middle and high schools can support all teachers in learning to use more powerful research-based strategies for helping all students in all content areas develop vocabulary and comprehend text.

Effective reading intervention programs exist with proven track records, yet just implementing these research-based programs may not be sufficient to produce significant gains in student performance. Leslie McPeak and Frank Smith, educators from the Stanislaus County Office of Education in California, document six reasons why implementing research-based reading programs may fail (McPeak and Smith, 2001).

1. Not all teachers involved receive sufficient in-service training to successfully teach the new program.
2. Coaching is not provided during the year to support implementation.
3. The grouping and scheduling requirements of the selected program were not followed.
4. The program is not implemented with sufficient intensity to catch students up quickly.
5. Teachers do not monitor progress frequently enough.
6. Too many initiatives interfere with effective implementation of the reading program, diffusing time, resources, and support.

Three components are critical to the design, implementation, and sustainability of reading interventions for the average middle and high school to overcome these problems: effective professional development to equip educators with a solid knowledge base; effective instructional tools aligned to the knowledge base; and significant systemic reorganization and support. In addition, middle and high school staffs will have to seriously rethink the current popular reform models, most of which do not sufficiently improve literacy for our most vulnerable students and, in fact, may actually impede successful program implementation.

Professional Development

Professional development is critical to equip teachers and school leaders with the research-based knowledge they need to design their reading programs, select the right tools, and develop support systems. The most effective school implementation designs will take into account the need for ongoing professional development in order to create and sustain a culture of continuous learning and continuous improvement. The targeted audience should be the teachers who will teach an intervention class as well
as those content area teachers who would benefit from improved strategies to help students develop vocabulary and comprehension. To facilitate ongoing learning, teachers need time to learn. Professional development needs to be multidimensional to be effective. Effective professional development will take into account teacher background, the school culture, and the particular needs of adolescents. Some professional development will occur in traditional workshop settings and seminars, some will take place at the school during collegial meetings, and some will take place within the classroom. In *The New Structure of School Improvement: Inquiring Schools and Achieving Students*, Joyce, Calhoun, and Hopkins (1999) describe an approach to staff development vastly different from the workshop training packages employed by most schools. They argue for five major components.

- **Presentation of Theory** Participants need to learn the theoretical underpinnings of the teaching approach. This component is the traditional workshop and consists of readings, lecture, discussion, and interaction. Since reading instruction is complex and most middle and high school teachers have not been taught to teach reading, 20 to 40 hours may be required to provide teachers and school leaders with the necessary understandings (Joyce and Showers 1982, 1995). For a particular intervention program, the theory should be connected directly to the program materials. For middle and high school teachers the theory presented must include adolescent learning issues as well. If presentation of theory is the sole component of training, however, as few as 10 percent of the participants are likely to be able to implement the new approach (Joyce et al., 1999). Ongoing support and mentoring are essential to implementation success.

- **Modeling and Demonstrations** Modeling of the instructional procedures and demonstration lessons will increase the likelihood of implementation. Demonstrations and modeling can be presented live or through the use of videotapes, but it is crucial that teachers expected to implement a new strategy or program see effective illustrations. Modeling and demonstrations should take place during visits to actual classrooms. The model lessons may be provided by outside experts as well as by skilled teachers from the school itself. For intervention programs, it is important that demonstration lessons come right from the material selected. When this component is added to the theoretical training, another 10 to 15 percent of the participants are likely to be able to implement the new approach (Joyce et al., 1999).

- **Practice in Workshop Settings and Under Simulated Conditions** In addition to seeing models and demonstrations within the classroom, participants benefit from simulated practice in the workshop setting. Such practice, done with peers or students brought in for the session, provides participants with a controlled environment for learning without worrying about managing their whole class of students. Teachers can make mistakes and improve.

- **Structured Feedback** Structured feedback helps all new learners to correct and adjust their behaviors. To provide such feedback, a system for observing participant behavior is critical. Those giving the feedback need to know what to notice. Feedback can be self-administered, or it can be provided by the outside trainer or by skilled colleagues. It can be combined with the simulated practice in the workshop setting and offered during classroom visitations and observations. Joyce et al. state that even with a combination of practice and feedback, they would be surprised “if as many as 20 percent” of participants could transfer their learning to their classrooms on a regular basis (Joyce et al., 1999). When structured feedback is combined with theory, modeling, and practice, the total implementation rate may go up to about 40 percent.

- **Coaching for Classroom Application** When the first four training components are combined, the implementation rate is strengthened considerably. However, for sustained, consistent use, the most important component of training appears to be direct coaching in the classroom. In an earlier study of transfer of training to classroom implementation and consistent use, Showers (1982) found that no teachers transferred their newly learned skills without coaching. Coaching involves
helping teachers plan and deliver lessons using the new approach. It includes modeling, side-by-side teaching, and helping teachers to reflect upon their own teaching and to make improvements. Coaches, whether outside experts or peers, must themselves receive training and support in the use of observation tools and feedback techniques. When coaching is added, implementation rates go up significantly—as high as 90 percent.

**Instructional Tools**

In addition to a training design that should include the components listed above, teachers need the best possible instructional tools. Not all reading programs or reading intervention programs are alike. Many published programs claim to be based on research; few, however, actually live up to that claim. The Southwest Educational Development Laboratory published a summary of the research on effective reading intervention program resources for secondary students (Peterson et al., 2000). Research indicates that for secondary students, effective programs will address the following four components:

1. **Motivation to read** This refers to intrinsic motivation to want to read and read widely.
2. **Decoding skills and fluency** This includes basic decoding skills and fluency.
3. **Language comprehension** This includes linguistic knowledge, morphemic knowledge, semantic and syntactic knowledge.
4. **Text comprehension** This includes teaching students how to be active with text and make personal connections, how to make inferences and activate background knowledge, and how to interact with different types of texts.

Traditionally, secondary reading intervention has focused on comprehension rather than on decoding. This has occurred because struggling readers most often manifest comprehension weakness; however, the underlying causes generally have not been treated. That is why comprehension interventions alone may result in short-term gains which are not sustained and do not transfer (Kulik, Kulik, and Bangert-Downs, 1990). Research clearly supports the need for programs that address the four components noted above. Middle and high school staffs should use the research on effective reading instruction for older students to select program materials.

- **Motivation to read** Proficient readers tend to read widely. They do so because reading is not laborious and because they find reading rewarding. As students move up the grades, their motivation to read declines (Guthrie and Wigfield, 2000). For unsuccessful readers, reading is associated with failure. The older, struggling reader doesn’t like to read, and therefore avoids reading. Thus the amount of actual reading practice these students get is very low. For these students it is especially important to design programs that include materials students can read successfully but are age-appropriate, as well as to provide newspapers and magazines for real-life reading opportunities and for choice. It is also important to help students select their own materials and to match students to appropriately readable text. Programs need to help teachers understand how to build a classroom climate that fosters student motivation, how to establish effective independent reading programs, and how to monitor student reading.

- **Decoding skills and fluency** Well-designed reading intervention programs will include instruction in basic decoding skills. Most scientific research indicates that a core linguistic deficit is at the heart of reading problems (Catts et al., 1999; Shaywitz et al., 1999). Regardless of age, when an individual’s reading comprehension lags behind listening comprehension, word recognition problems are generally the root cause (Shankweiler et al., 1999). By middle and high school, even the most struggling reader has learned to read some words by sight. Yet most often...
these words are irregular, high-frequency words; these students have not internalized the basic sound-symbol relationships of English to be able to use that knowledge to figure out unfamiliar words, and have not become sufficiently automatic at a large enough number of words to lead to fluent reading of connected text. Basic decoding depends on recognition of letters and phonemic awareness (awareness of the smallest sound units of language) and on the ability to manipulate phonemes to decode and to spell. In one study of struggling high school students, Shankweiler, Lundquist, Dreyer, and Dickinson (1996) found that differences in phonological processing accounted for differences in text comprehension. While these readers could map phonemes to print, they had difficulty at the morphemic level, the level that should be obtained by high school. Many also found decoding of multisyllabic words and more complex vowel patterns to be the stumbling block. The ability to fully analyze words by their sound/spellings helps the reader decode unfamiliar words and spell words as well. Spelling ability contributes positively to word recognition, and indirectly to comprehension (Stanovich and Cunningham, 1993). Therefore, middle and high schools need to find intervention programs that explicitly teach students decoding and multisyllabic word attack skills and develop spelling ability through identifiable stages, from basic alphabetic spelling to within-word pattern spelling and ultimately to spelling patterns based on meaning.

In addition to explicit instruction in decoding skills, well-designed programs will need to address the neglected skill of fluency development. Fluency includes speed and accuracy and a third dimension—prosody. This third dimension, the musicality of reading, is a hallmark of a comprehending reader, one who recognizes phrasal junctures and understands the words sufficiently to know which words to emphasize, where to pause, and where to move quickly. Fluency improves with practice (Dowhower, 1987), and it depends on a reader’s basic decoding skills and syntactic knowledge. Fluent readers demonstrate greater comprehension. This is because excessively slow reading impedes comprehension by using up mental resources needed for making meaning. Laborious reading also diminishes the desire to read (Nathan and Stanovich, 1991; Samuels, 1994). The use of contextual clues to decode actually does not compensate for a lack of automaticity in decoding skill (Shaywitz, 1996). Many struggling secondary readers lack fluency. These students read less and therefore fail to develop vocabulary since wide reading is the greatest contributor to vocabulary growth. Thus comprehension suffers further. This correlation is well established. A well-designed reading intervention program for older struggling readers will include a great deal of practice to develop automaticity in decoding, and rapid and accurate reading of sentences and easy level text. Well-designed base programs for regular middle school students will also include added fluency practice.

Language comprehension Language comprehension includes linguistic and syntactic knowledge, and semantics or word meaning knowledge. Text comprehension rests on the ability to recognize words fluently and effortlessly. This implies that readers understand the language system we use in our texts—our phonology (sounds), our morphology (units of meaning within a word), and our syntax (the underlying grammatical structure). While weaker readers need explicit instruction in English phonology as they learn decoding, most secondary students have a rudimentary understanding of the sounds and syntax of our language. However, they may still profit from systematic instruction in morphemic elements of English—roots, prefixes, and suffixes—as well as from careful development of vocabulary. Building a strong vocabulary is absolutely essential since research is quite clear about the strong correlation between comprehension and the size and depth of one’s vocabulary (Beck and McKeown, 1991). Proficient readers read widely, and books are their greatest source of vocabulary growth (Hayes and Ahrens, 1988). Because struggling readers do not read widely, a huge gap in word knowledge distinguishes them from their proficient reading peers (Baker, Simmons, and Kame’enui, 1995).
In addition to linguistic and word knowledge, struggling middle and high school readers will benefit from more explicit understanding of English syntax. Weaker readers tend to have more difficulty as the sentence length and complexity increases, and sentences include adverbial clauses, subordinate construction, and pronoun references. This is especially true for English language learners.

- **Text comprehension** Struggling secondary readers suffer from a lack of background knowledge about reading and about different text structures. This is largely because the source to develop background knowledge about academic language and books is wide reading, and struggling readers avoid this. Therefore, in addition to opportunities for self-selection of appropriate texts, struggling readers will benefit from explicit instruction in making connections, self-monitoring while reading, and in understanding texts. Struggling high school students may comprehend at a surface level but have difficulty making inferences. The ability to make inferences is dependent not only on solid vocabulary, word recognition, and syntactic knowledge, but also on the ability to *read between the lines*. To build inferencing skills, secondary students profit from clear instruction, often through the use of teacher models called “think alouds.” This includes teaching students how to locate both text-explicit information and text-implicit information (Carnine et al., 1997; Raphael, 1982, 1984, 1986). In addition to difficulty with inferences, struggling readers do not generally know how to monitor their comprehension. Teachers can help these students build self-monitoring capacity by again modeling expert reading through think alouds and by explicitly teaching comprehension strategies and helping students know when, why, and under what conditions to use various meaning-making strategies.

Finally, because struggling readers lack text experience, the more teachers can do to explicitly unpack the underlying structure of different types of texts the better. Students need to be taught how to deal with narrative story structure and narrative story elements. More important to the middle and high school curriculum, students will need explicit instruction in dealing with content-area informational text. Pearson and Fielding (1991) found that when students understood the structural patterns in expository text, they were better able to recall information and the main ideas within the text. This includes directly teaching various expository text structures, signal words often used in the structures, and the use of graphic organizers to assist in text comprehension. Additionally, students need instruction in locating information and using the presentation signals provided by headings, different fonts, and charts and graphs (Dickson, Simmons, and Kame’enui, 1998). All of these strategies will need to be incorporated in intensive intervention classes, in regular English classes, and within the teaching repertoire of content area teachers.

**School Support Systems and Leadership**

Over the past several years, school reforms have been too numerous to count. All have been well intentioned, but few have resulted in actual improved student achievement. Many of the reforms have focused on processes (site-based decision making and block schedules) with little attention paid to teaching and learning. Others have focused on instruction but failed to address systemic matters that make it difficult to implement the new approach. The best reforms focus on both these factors—processes and instruction. At the heart of any successful implementation is leadership. Leadership comes not just from the building principal or district superintendent, but also from teacher leaders and mentors. Above all else, it requires determination, commitment, and perseverance. Once the school embraces a new curriculum for reading instruction, it must be nurtured by frequent review, regular meetings for collective discussion and troubleshooting, ongoing professional development, implementation monitoring systems, and coaching support for continuous improvement. Assessment systems, planned restructuring of classroom
organization, and instructional time and grouping for differentiated instruction are also part of the crucial support package. It falls to the school leadership to ensure that systematic changes are made.

- **School leadership** It is the school leadership who must unite the entire staff in support of a collective vision of reading instruction for struggling readers and reading instruction guaranteed to raise the achievement of all students in general. The administrators, department chairs, and teacher leaders must thoroughly understand the elements of research-based reading instruction and should establish a school culture that values effective research-based proven practices. The school leadership is responsible for marshalling resources, providing time, and staying the course. The school leadership must be heroic, able to resist the many forces that may inhibit implementation of an effective school-wide reading program plan. Those forces will include the need to attend to other curriculum areas or to district- and state-mandated reforms. School reform models that fail to address the needs of the most vulnerable students also bombard middle and high school leaders. Scheduling challenges may prove the most intractable. Still other forces will come from within the staff, as teachers struggle with implementation problems. The first year of the implementation of a new reading program presents the challenge of changing teachers’ beliefs about reading instruction and initiating the new research-based approach. The second year consists of refining the approach while ensuring consistency and adherence to the program design. The third year, however, poses a new challenge, described by one Sacramento educator as “domestication” (Cooper, 1999). As educators become comfortable with a program, they tend to want to alter it, adjust it, and do it their own way—in short to domesticate it. Unfortunately, teachers often utilize a pick-and-choose approach to program implementation. This tactic will result in less fidelity to the program design and consequently a lower success rate. Just as it is important for an ill person to carefully follow an established medical protocol for maximum results, a reading teacher needs to implement a well-designed reading intervention as intended. It is during the second and third year of an implementation that the school leadership will face its most serious challenges. This is when staying power is essential. During these years the school leadership needs to have the best research to support continued use of the reading approach. This includes student achievement information, or assessment.

- **Assessment** Student achievement information is crucial. The best assessments will be aligned to the reading intervention program selected and will provide clear placement information, track student progress, and monitor teacher pacing and program use. In an effective overall reading approach, assessment is used to inform instruction for both large groups and individuals. Different assessment instruments serve different purposes. For example, statewide achievement tests serve to inform the public about system-wide instructional efficacy. Individual diagnostic tests enable the classroom teacher to target instruction as well as to inform parents of student needs. Regular assessments are necessary to guide decisions about grouping, instructional pace, and individual need for support. Easy-to-use diagnostic and progress-monitoring tests are crucial. Assessment is necessary to monitor progress but also to identify causes of reading weakness.

Schools need to organize their assessment toolkits around three broad categories: screening assessments (assessments that provide information about a student’s existing knowledge and skill base); formative and ongoing assessments (assessments to monitor progress and adjust instruction); and summative assessments (assessments at the end of a quarter, semester, or year, used to evaluate). In all cases, teachers need to understand the expected targets of mastery for individual skills in order to identify students at risk of difficulty and to tailor instruction to meet identified needs.

- **Time** Of all the variables under a school’s control, the most important is making good use of time to maximize learning. For significantly below-level secondary students, two hours (or two periods blocked) a day at least of targeted reading intervention is crucial. Additional time beyond...
the two periods is needed for special one-to-one or small-group intervention. Students identified as poor readers face what Kame’enui (1993) refers to as “the tyranny of time” in trying to catch up to their peers. Simply keeping pace with one’s peers is not enough. These students will need increased time and instruction of the highest quality.

- **Instructional grouping for intervention** To make instruction effective for the most naïve readers, students will need to be carefully placed based on identified need. This is in stark contrast to the current de-tracking movement. While de-tracked, heterogeneous classes are the goal, for the significantly below-level student, this is impractical and actually does a disservice to the student. These students are never fully equipped with the skills they need to be independent learners. Typical one-period interventions are not intensive nor of sufficient duration to bring these students up to speed and help them read as quickly as possible. To ensure that their instruction is targeted, swift, and complete, placement tests tied to the selected intervention program will provide the information for effective and efficient grouping.

- **Coaching** Since coaching is so important to the effective implementation of any new concept, it falls to the leadership to design and implement a system of peer and expert coaching. Such coaching should be supported by clear expectations and guidelines and should be aligned to the selected materials as well. Coaches will assist and support teachers as they try a strategy, implement new materials, and engage in the assessment of and planned intervention for students. Coaches need to be trained and mentored as they grow into this role.

- **The home-school connection** For implementation to be effective, there must be a deep connection between the school and the students’ homes. Since independent, outside reading is so important to enhance reading vocabulary and build background knowledge, parents must thoroughly understand the school expectations for outside reading, the nature of the reading program, and strategies that they can use at home. Parent education and parent engagement are vital. Parents may also fill vital tutoring roles.

### Conclusion

Designing, implementing, and sustaining an effective reading program is everybody’s business. It requires well-designed and ongoing professional development to equip educators with the knowledge base they need for effective reading instruction; it requires the selection of appropriate tools tightly linked to the research; and finally, it requires support systems initiated by the local leadership to ensure smooth implementation and enduring effects.

### References


Overheads

What Reading Leaders Should Know About Successful Reading Instruction

A Presentation by Linda Diamond and Judith Martin, Ph.D.

Statistics Do Tell a Story

- One third of all poor readers nationwide are from college-educated families
- Forty-four million Americans are functionally illiterate. That’s 22% of our adult population. That is a sin in a country that is this rich.

Abraham Lincoln Middle School:
Percent of Students At or Above Proficient - Reading

[Graph showing percent of students at or above proficient in Reading]

0%
10%
20%
30%
40%
50%
60%
70%
80%
90%

ALL | White | Af. Am. | Low Inc.

0% | 10% | 20% | 30% | 40% | 50% | 60% | 70% | 80% | 90% | ALL | White | Af. Am. | Low Inc.
What it Takes!

Know How

The Right Tools

Systems of Support

So Who is a Reading Leader?

- The person or persons who believes every child can become a successful reader
  AND
- Commits the resources, will, courage, and shear doggedness to doing whatever it takes

What is Successful Reading Instruction?

- It is instruction that is explicit, consistent, systematic, comprehensive, and evidence-based.
- It provides for differentiated needs.
- It includes phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.
- If it is an intervention, it is intensive, robust, and supported by a track record of success.
**Six Steps to Success**

1. Fully implement a research-based program
2. Create a timeline
3. Evaluate progress
4. Analyze the data
5. Intervene immediately
6. Validate and recalibrate

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**What is Full Implementation?**

- Get all the program materials for all teacher users.
- Train all the teacher users.
- Provide the structure and time.
- Plan for coaching support and constant intervention.
- Ensure teachers know expectations around program fidelity.

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- Your doctor prescribes two different pills for you to take three times a day.
- You decide to take one pill twice a day.

*What happens?*
Fidelity

1. Faithfulness to obligations, duties, or observances.
2. Exact correspondence with fact or with a given quality, condition, or event; accuracy.

Why Program Fidelity is Important

- To ensure sufficient practice, correct sequence, and precise method.
- To make sure the entire treatment occurred.
- To be able to effectively gauge the quality of the selected program/treatment.
- To provide the substance for teachers who are new, overworked, unskilled, or ineffective.

Why a Lack of Fidelity: Program Reasons

- Program selected was actually weaker than suspected and had many gaps.
- Teachers were not trained and prepared to teach the program selected.
- The program complexity required greater skill at implementation.
- The system didn’t redesign the organizational structures necessary to implement the program.
Why a Lack of Fidelity: People Reasons

- Resistance, recalcitrance, and downright insubordination
- Inadequate support and training
- The administration is not clear, firm, and tenacious
- The myth of autonomy and academic freedom: teachers want to pick and choose
- Philosophical beliefs

A Timeline or Pacing Plan

- A planned schedule for all teachers system-wide to teach, test, and intervene
- Regular times for team meetings to study benchmark test and quiz outcomes
- Used to hold the entire system accountable

Evaluate Progress

- Frequent assessments tied to the selected program to assess the skills taught in an established unit of time—to answer the question: Is the program being taught as designed?
- External measures to answer the question: Are the kids learning to read?
- Both answer: is my program effective and are the teachers teaching and the kids learning?
### Analyze Data

- Regularly study the data.
- Identify students who are not meeting targets.
- Determine which teachers need assistance to meet the needs of ALL their students.
- Identify based on the data the program and instruction challenges.

### Intervene Immediately

- Don’t get the data to teachers three weeks later!
- Adjust instruction promptly for students.
- Enhance support of teachers right away.
- Adjust organizational structures to allow for interventions.

### Validate and Recalibrate

- The high stakes state test!
- How did we do?
- Do we adjust the timeline?
- Is our program rigorous enough?
- What professional development is needed?
- Are students placed properly?
- Is time adequate?
T.T. Minor Elementary Reduced the Number of Students Not Proficient by 10%: Students At or Above Proficient - Reading 2002 vs. 2003

Synthesis

What “squared” or agreed with something you already knew?

What did you see from a new “angle”?

What did you learn that was new or completed a “circle of knowledge” for you? Perhaps you had part of the information on a topic but did not have a thorough understanding.