Teaching All Students to Read: Practices from *Reading First* Schools With Strong Intervention Outcomes

Summary Document

Just Read, Florida!

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Introduction

One of the most critical needs in Florida's *Reading First* schools is to improve the effectiveness of interventions for struggling readers. For example, during the 2005-2006 school year, only 17% of first grade students who began the year at some level of risk for reading difficulties finished the year with grade level skills on the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS®) measures. In second grade, the figure was only 9%, and in third grade it was 8%. We will never teach all students to read if we are not more successful with the most academically challenged students. Teaching all students to read requires a **school level system** for early identification of 'at risk' students and a **school level system** for providing those students with the intensive interventions they need to become proficient readers.

This summary document highlights the main ideas from our complete report which describes what we have learned by visiting *Reading First* schools demonstrating success in reaching their struggling readers. Together, the summary and complete report (available at **http://www.fcrr.org**) will serve as a "manual of ideas" for meeting some of the most difficult challenges faced by *Reading First* schools in working with their struggling readers. School leaders will find ideas described here that can be applied to help them successfully meet the unique challenges within their own schools.

The *Reading First* Plan for Success

- We must increase the quality, consistency, and **reach** of classroom instruction by providing systematic and explicit initial instruction, and by providing differentiated instruction delivered individually or in small groups. Small groups should be differentiated by:
  - the *frequency* of meeting in small groups (3x/week, 5x/week)
  - the *size* of the instructional group (3, 6, 8, students)
  - the *focus* of instruction (phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension)
  - the *format* of the lesson (guided reading vs. skills-focused)
- We must administer timely and valid assessments to identify students lagging behind and monitor progress.
- We must provide intensive interventions for students who are lagging behind in development of critical reading skills.

Why must we work at the school level to provide effective interventions?

- Children enter school with very *diverse* instructional needs
  - They differ in:
    - their *talent* and their *preparation* for learning to read words accurately and fluently
    - their *oral language knowledge* and *abilities* — vocabulary and world knowledge
    - their abilities to manage their *learning behaviors* and their *motivation* to apply themselves to learning to read
- Some children may require instruction that is 4 or 5 times more powerful than the rest of the students.
- The classroom teacher, alone, may not be able to provide sufficiently powerful instruction to meet the needs of all students.

What do we know about the characteristics of effective interventions?

- They always increase the **intensity** of instruction
  - To increase intensity:
    - increase instructional *time*
    - decrease *number* of children in instructional group
    - improve *quality* of instruction
- They always provide many more opportunities for re-teaching, review, and supervised practice.
- They are focused carefully on the most essential learning needs of the students.
- They provide instruction that is both explicit and systematic.

How was the information provided in this document collected?

- We visited and interviewed principals, teachers, and coaches at schools that were having the most success in providing effective interventions.
- We also visited schools that were having less success – in order to help identify more specifically some practices that were unique to the successful schools.

How were effective schools identified?

- We first identified the *Reading First* schools from 2004-2005 that had the highest Index of Effectiveness for Interventions (EI) across grades K-3 combined.
    - The EI (Effectiveness of Intervention) Index indicates the percentage of students who began the year at some level of risk for reading difficulties, based on their DIBELS® performance, but who grew rapidly enough to meet grade level expectations by the end of the year as measured by the DIBELS® tests.
- Once the schools with the highest EI percentiles were identified, **four criteria** were used to identify 10 schools for visits:
    1. an ECI index score above the 60th percentile
        - The ECI (Effectiveness of Core Instruction) Index indicates the percentage of students who began the year reading "at grade level" based on their DIBELS® performance, and who were still reading at grade level at the end of the year as measured by the DIBELS® tests.
    2. at least 50 students per grade level
    3. percentage of minority students above the state *Reading First* average of 66%
    4. percentage of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch above the state *Reading First* average of 74%

Data on the Top 10 Schools Meeting the Effective School Criteria

School	EI Score	EI %ile	ECI Score	ECI %ile	% free and reduced lunch	% minority	% ELL	# of children in K-3
A	39	99	83	82	89	84	47	499
B	36	97	83	79	99	98	55	463
C	34	95	89	95	80	83	22	455
D	33	93	88	93	93	94	42	487
E	33	91	84	84	75	78	31	428
F	32	89	85	89	85	80	37	618
G	32	89	80	67	93	93	25	480
H	32	89	84	84	73	67	31	556
I	31	89	79	66	87	95	27	301
J	31	89	80	67	70	99	11	575

After visiting the ten high-performing schools and a few less successful schools, several common qualities among the successful schools emerged. These qualities were not observed as consistently or as clearly in the less successful schools. The following seven traits were areas of strength for the schools in the top percentiles for intervention effectiveness. Each area deserves careful consideration when implementing a school wide intervention system that will be able to meet the needs of struggling readers. Under each of these headings, we will provide examples of specific practices implemented at successful schools.

Seven Common Traits Observed in Successful Schools

- Strong Leadership
- Positive Belief and Teacher Dedication
- Data Utilization and Analysis
- Effective Scheduling
- Professional Development
- Scientifically Based Intervention Programs
- Parent Involvement

Indicators of Common Traits

Strong Leadership

- Characterized by extensive **knowledge** of:
    - children
    - reading programs
    - data
    - schedules
    - teachers' needs
- Leadership was provided by principals, reading coaches and/or literacy teams

Examples

- "Our leader not only has a mission for our school which is *what* we want to do, but she has a vision of *how* we are going to do it."
- Involved in every aspect of their school's reading program
- Mutual respect between teachers and principal
- Principal seen as "Captain" of the team working toward a common goal
- High expectations of teachers and students and accountability for meeting expectations
- "This is no longer a desk job. We are their instructional leaders."

Positive Belief and Teacher Dedication

- Despite… teachers at successful schools believed ALL their students could read
    - language barriers
    - limited support at home
    - low socioeconomic status
- Teachers committed to extra hours to make sure they were able to meet the needs of ALL of their students.
- Teachers raised the bar, not lowered it.

Examples

- "We have high expectations for ourselves and our students."
- "It takes extra planning to meet the needs of all of our students."
- "We need to raise the bar for our students, not lower it."
- At one school, almost 100% of teachers were involved in teaching in the after school program.

Data Utilization and Analysis

- Data meetings
    - held on a regular basis (bi-weekly/monthly)
    - *key characteristic—attendees were able to make school level decisions and could make changes–principal usually involved
    - systems/worksheets used for structure
    - data compiled from multiple sources

Examples

- Data meeting held during the school day
    - substitutes are hired
    - a schedule of rotation is created
    - individual teachers meet with literacy team
- Data meeting held during the teacher's planning period
    - no substitutes required
    - a set time/day is established for the meeting
    - grade level teachers meet with literacy team

Effective Scheduling

- Teachers wanted, "More Time!"
- An efficient schedule allows for:
    - an uninterrupted period of time for reading instruction (90 minutes or more)
    - specific times when intensive reading interventions will be provided
    - the most efficient use of support staff to help provide intensive interventions
    - a common planning time to facilitate grade-level meetings

Examples

- Reading Blocks
    - All grades have reading at the same time
        - The principal hires enough intervention teachers.
        - The principal uses "special area" teachers to assist with reading instruction.
        - The children move to homogeneously grouped classroom during the reading block.
    - The reading blocks are staggered
        - The principal rotates his intervention teachers.
        - The reading coach is able to observe and model lessons in more classrooms during the reading block.
- Intensive Interventions
    - A 90 minute reading block and then 30-45 minutes of time scheduled outside of that block to deliver the interventions.
    - An extended reading block of 105-120 minutes in which intensive intervention was included in the block of time designated for reading instruction.
- Common planning time
    - during "special area" time
    - at the end of the day after students have left

Professional Development

- It takes more knowledge and skill to teach students who struggle in learning to read than it does for students who find it easier to learn.
- Utilizing a combination of personnel to deliver professional development
- High teacher turn-over rate is something that needs to be addressed in the professional development plan.

- Keeping up with training new teachers can be time consuming for coaches.
- Training for 'Special Area' teachers
- Differentiated Professional Development for teachers

Examples
- "Mini workshops" provided by:
    - o district level personnel
    - o reading coaches
    - o publishers
    - o classroom teachers that have attended an outside district training
- Professional development provided:
    - o during common planning times
    - o after school
    - o Saturdays
    - o summer

Scientifically Based Intervention Programs
- Published Intervention Programs
- Materials drawn from several sources
- Computer-based programs

Examples
- *Using published intervention programs*
    - o Pros
        - ▪ having ready made materials
        - ▪ professional development in the implementation of the program
        - ▪ a predetermined scope and sequence
        - ▪ research to support the use of the program (in some cases)
    - o Cons
        - ▪ the cost
        - ▪ a single program may not meet every child's needs - several different programs may be required
- *Using a variety of sources for intervention materials*
    - o Pros
        - ▪ the ability to match the materials to the child
    - o Cons
        - ▪ takes a great deal of time to gather materials
        - ▪ teachers need to have a solid understanding of what the data means at the student level
        - ▪ not one set scope and sequence
- *Using Computer Based Intervention Programs*
    - o Programs used in schools targeted:
        - ▪ one reading component (i.e. fluency)
        - ▪ multiple reading components (i.e. phonemic awareness and phonics)
        - ▪ ESOL population
    - o Were used during center rotation or throughout the day on a rotating basis
    - o Some programs generated reports daily or weekly
    - o Some programs altered the items presented to the children based on their performance on prior lessons

Parent Involvement
- Make the parents feel welcome at the school
- Can be challenging when parents speak limited English
- Need to think "outside of the box" to plan a parent night
    - provide food and babysitting
    - offer two meeting times – one during the day and one in the evening
    - bring the meeting to the communities

Examples
- "The first call you make to a parent should be concerning a positive behavior or action rather than a negative one."
- Establish a relationship early in the school year.
- Interpreters at meetings
- Parent nights at school
    - Parents can ask questions about curriculum
    - Parents can learn activities they could use at home
- Send notices home in multiple languages
- Have babysitting services and food at night meetings
- Parent liaisons visit the homes

Concluding Thoughts and Resources
- Schools need to consider aspects of each of the seven traits to be successful.
- The traits are intertwined in producing success. Strong leadership at the school level is critical for the success of school level systems.
- To make this complex system work, knowledgeable leaders and dedicated teachers need to work together to establish a school culture focused on high standards and confidence that goals can be achieved.

Any of the seven traits mentioned above when considered in isolation will not make a school successful. All of the successful schools were good exemplars of several of these traits. It is critical that as a school works to build an effective intervention program, it considers aspects of each of the seven traits. It is difficult to say one trait is more important than any other or to discuss them as separate items because they are so intertwined. For example, professional development and belief systems may not seem as important as getting the schedule set or picking the best programs, but even if the schedule allows for the best student: teacher ratio, and a strong research based program is available to support instruction, success is not guaranteed. The program needs to be implemented with fidelity and skill, and the teacher needs to believe that all of his/her children can learn to read. It is important to have the time scheduled for small group instruction using a research-based program, but it is equally important to have teachers who understand how to use the program effectively and make adjustments to instruction based on student need. To facilitate knowing what to teach, the teacher will have to interpret data on a regular basis, and this same data will need to be the basis for school-level decisions about allocation of resources and scheduling. In order to manage this complex system, leaders must be knowledgeable about the children, the teachers, and the nature of effective instruction. Strong leaders need to inspire high standards and confidence that goals can be achieved to allow for the integration and implementation of the components of an effective school wide intervention program.

Resources available free to all schools, principals and teachers
- To download the complete report on which this summary is based, visit **http://www.fcrr.org**
- To download over 300 independent student learning activities for K-3 classrooms, go to **http://www.fcrr.org/activities/**
- To find objective, teacher-written reviews of commercially available intervention programs and materials, go to **http://www.fcrr.org/FCRReports/**

A Principal's Action Plan Outline for Building a Successful School-wide Intervention System

Common Traits of Successful Schools	Characteristic	Specific Feature	Observable Result *Successful Principals will...*
Strong Leadership	Knowledgeable	Recognize and identify all **student needs**	**Determine and establish:** • intervention budget needs • reading instruction as a priority **Provide:** • scheduling needs • sufficient staff
		Maintain basic knowledge of **research-based programs** and their availability	• locate research-based programs for teachers to guide intervention • allocate funding for research-based programs • match program to student need
		Data interpretation	• conduct and lead data meetings
		Recognize and identify **teacher and scheduling needs**	**Determine and establish:** • reading instruction as a priority • ample time for reading instruction in small groups • time on task as a priority • supply teacher support for problem solving and success
	Strong Vision	Provide, clearly explain, and describe **vision for the school**	• establish mottos; belief statements; expectations
Positive Belief	Beliefs about success with all students and teacher dedication	High expectations	**Provide:** • support to help teachers meet expectations • motivational workshops • research pointing to high performing, high poverty schools
Data Analysis	Ongoing data management and utilization	Data structures, disaggregation, and mobilization	**Attend monthly grade-level data meetings:** • to learn about school intervention needs • to make changes to personnel and/or programming **Scaffold teachers and staff to:** • discuss and share ideas about student progress • follow up in classroom with differentiated instruction • use data management systems to accurately and effectively analyze data

Common Traits of Successful Schools	Characteristic	Specific Feature	Observable Result *Successful Principals will...*
Effective Scheduling	Efficient	Flexible use of time, staff, and resources	**Arrange for:** • most appropriate provider of small group instruction • prioritize responsibilities and skills across staff and instructional personnel • common teacher planning time by grade-level • an uninterrupted reading block of 90 minutes or more • indentify specific times when iii will be provided
Professional Development	Differentiated	On-going and Follow-up	**Recognize and establish:** • on-going/follow-up training for veteran teachers • on-going/follow-up training for new teachers • problem of high teacher turnover rate and create a contingency plan for high turnover rates • building and district level people to provide training • time in school schedule for regular (monthly/weekly) training
Scientifically Based Intervention Programs	Targeted	Differentiated materials for more precise lesson planning A set scope and sequence focusing on a specific reading component Different components of reading addressed Technology-based reinforcement	• locate research-based intervention programs for teachers to guide instruction • allocate funding for research-based intervention programs • strategically select intervention programs based on student needs
Parent Involvement	Initiative in Communication	Flexible and accommodating	**Provide:** • babysitting services at parent information nights • provide food at parent information nights • provide multiple parent information sessions – one in the morning hours and one in the evening • information in multiple languages • interpreters at parent meetings
		Partnership perspective	**Establish structures to:** • nurture parental relationships • involve students in their own learning, take ownership of their learning