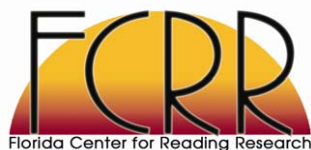


2007 Reading First Site Visits

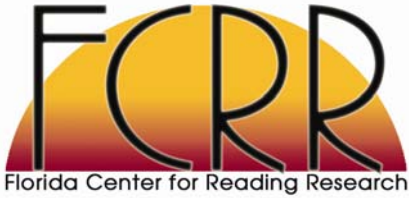
Statewide Report



**2007 Reading First Site Visits
Statewide Report**

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2007 *Reading First* Site Visits Statewide Report

To satisfy the requirements of Florida's *Reading First* grant, the Florida Center for Reading Research (FCRR) conducted site visits at a randomly selected sample of Florida's *Reading First* Schools during the spring of 2007. The purpose of this statewide report is to summarize data collected through all classroom observations, interviews and teacher focus groups. The data provide a snapshot of reading instruction and reading programs in Florida's *Reading First* schools that includes a compilation of the responses to a variety of questions regarding the implementation of district *Reading First* (RF) grants during the 2006-07 school year. When considered along with other data such as district and school observational records, student reading scores, and informal feedback from faculty and staff, the report can contribute information valuable to the continued implementation of the *Reading First* initiative in Florida.

I. Site Visit Process

The process of planning and implementing site visits involved several steps which actually began in 2002 in preparation for the first year of site visits during the 2003-2004 school year. One of the first tasks was to select an appropriate classroom observation instrument. After several tools for collecting data on teachers' delivery of reading instruction were reviewed, the revised Instructional Content Emphasis (ICE-R) instrument was selected. The ICE-R is a valid and reliable observation instrument used to systematically categorize and code the content of reading and language arts instruction; it can be used to collect data helpful in answering the following questions:

- What is being taught?
- How is it being taught?
- How well is it being taught?
- What is being used to teach?

Data were collected in ten major instructional categories:

1. Concepts of print
2. Phonological awareness
3. Alphabetic knowledge
4. Word study/phonics
5. Spelling
6. Oral language development/discussion
7. Fluency
8. Text reading
9. Comprehension
10. Writing or language arts

For a more detailed description of these ten categories, see Appendix A. The ICE-R also facilitates the collection of data on instructional focus, student engagement and instructional quality.

To help ensure the collection of reliable data, site visit reviewers were selected based on their ability to recognize various aspects of reading instruction. For example, reviewers had to be able to differentiate between phonological awareness and phonics instruction. Classroom reviewers were selected based on their expertise in teaching reading and on successful completion of a two-day training session during which participants practiced using the ICE-R instrument and learned site visit procedures.

Another critical part of the site visit process was scheduling the site visits with schools and districts. The FCRR Director of Professional Development communicated with the randomly selected schools in January 2007 to inform them of the upcoming site visit calendar and procedures. District *Reading First* coordinators ensured that school schedules would accommodate the 45-minute observations during each school's reading block. Three-member teams conducted one-day site visits in ten *Reading First* districts at twenty-five schools during the months of March, April and May. One hundred randomly selected classrooms were visited in grades K-3 with the number of students per classroom averaging 16. The average length of observations was 45 minutes and the average length of the reading block in observed classrooms was 100 minutes. Shorter informal walk-throughs were conducted in other K-3 classrooms at each school.

Information was collected at each school through classroom observations and interviews with teachers, principals and reading coaches. Two separate interviews were conducted with school principals and reading coaches, respectively. Every effort was made to conduct the interviews with consistency and objectivity. Focus groups were conducted with teachers to gather information on the implementation of the *Reading First* initiative from the teachers' perspective. Each school was asked to select one teacher per K-3 grade level, including ESE and ESOL, to participate in a school focus group conducted by the site visit team. These teachers responded to questions as the spokesperson for their grade level or instructional area; they were not informed of the focus group questions ahead of time. Focus groups consisted of 4-6 teachers and the site visit team with no other school personnel present. All interview and focus group information was collected via laptop computer and analyzed using a software program for coding qualitative data. Additionally, all electronic searches were analyzed in conjunction with the actual interview documents.

II. *Reading First* Schools

The original plan for 2007 site visits was to visit a random sample of fifty schools, half in the fall, and half in the spring; however, a decision was made by Florida's Leadership Triangle for *Reading First* to divert site visit resources to accomplish site visits to a large number of focus schools in the fall. These visits were made for the purpose of identifying needs for additional assistance during the school year. Thus, site visits were made to the random sample of schools only in the spring. Twenty-five schools were randomly

Spring 2007

selected for these visits. A listing of these schools can be found in Appendix B. Thirty-six percent (36%) of these schools were completing their fourth year of implementation of their *Reading First* grants, twelve percent (12%) were completing their third year of implementation, and fifty-two percent (52%) were completing their second year of implementation.

III. School Focus

School Focus concerns strategies the school principals have utilized to ensure a strong focus on the *Reading First* initiative, as well as to improve reading instruction at their respective schools. Principals noted several strategies in their comments which were divided into three categories: those identified with a frequency at 66% or above, those identified with a moderate frequency of between 34% and 65%, and those identified with a low frequency of 33% or less.

The only element of School Focus identified with greater than 66% frequency was “professional development.” Most of the principals (68%) praised professional development as key to reading improvement at their respective schools. One principal stated that since improvements at the school have been put in place, the “structure of professional development” at the school has become “much more specific,” because it has become “tied to the program,” and therefore “more focused.” The principal added that regular classroom teachers, the ESE teacher, and the ESOL teachers, “all participate in the same training.” Another principal stated that professional development has been provided at the school, “based on needs.” Still another principal cited a particular kind of professional development, “fishbowl training for our teachers.” The principal added, “This helps us with the implementation of the grant and with our overall curriculum.” Another principal noted that the “reading coaches are receiving professional development,” and added that the reading coaches now “have so much information to share with teachers.” Still another principal described how they have been using professional development to train “teachers to use more direct instruction, to concentrate on the Big Five.” Another principal stated that the school has had “school-wide professional development in reading,” and that “planning for the literacy block [had] been the emphasis throughout the year to ensure all students’ needs are being met.” Still another principal stated, “The training that teachers received from the *Reading First* Academies has been important.” The principal added that “100% of the staff in K-3 has had the training in *Reading First* Academies.”

Professional development for new teachers was a focus for several of the principals, especially training offered by the *Reading First* Academy. One principal stated, “If there are new teachers, we try to give them the professional development they need.” Another principal pointed out, “If they are not *Reading First* trained when hired, we ensure that teachers attend *Reading First* training.” Another principal stated that at the beginning of year, the school had several new teachers. The school offered school-based training for them, as well as for the veteran teachers. The school also had training in the use of the Core Reading Program (CRP), and training in *Soar to Success*, which was used for *iii* and the school’s extended day. The principal also noted that the teachers were scheduled to attend the *Reading First* Academy.

The following areas were identified by principals with frequency greater than 33% and less than 66%:

- Progress monitoring (52%)
- Data-driven instruction (52%)

- Reading block (48%)
- Interventions (*iii*) (48%)
- Professional learning community (48%)
- Resources (48%)
- Classroom walk-throughs (44%)

A majority of the principals interviewed mentioned “progress monitoring” (52%) and “data-driven instruction” (52%) as important elements in implementing *Reading First*. These two components are closely related, integral parts of *Reading First*. The progress monitoring identifies those areas which need special attention, and then data-driven instruction addresses those areas.

Concerning progress monitoring (52%), one principal stated, “Teachers now are required to keep a data notebook with DIBELS, county benchmarks, etc., so teachers know how to disaggregate data for grouping and regrouping.” This monitoring also has allowed the principal “to identify students who are below proficiency on a particular skill and make certain they receive special help.” Another principal praised the efficacy of “specific progress monitoring,” which “takes data and allows us to make predictions based on our strengths and weaknesses.” Another principal noted the use of “specific tracking charts for individual data.” Another principal stated, “We look at the data every single week. We have the ongoing progress monitoring piece. We are able to identify children who are progressing, and children who aren’t moving.” Finally one principal pointed out, “Whether it is progress monitoring or other assessments, this helps teachers become more explicit in pinpointing what the [students’] needs are.”

Data-driven instruction was a focus for the same majority of principals (52%), who agreed that they were using data to drive the instructional curriculum. One principal observed, “Teachers are more aware of how data should drive instruction.” Another principal stated, “We are using data-driven instruction, and we now have professional development geared to the needs of the grade level after we analyze the DIBELS reports by grade level.” Still another principal stated that the school has become “more focused on data, how teachers should look at it, analyze it, use it to guide their instruction.” Finally, one principal pointed out that the school has been having “data meetings [to] help us differentiate instruction.”

Of the principals interviewed, 48% also mentioned “reading block” as an important element in implementing *Reading First*. One principal described herself as “a believer in 90-minute reading block.” Another principal stated that the school has adapted the 90-minute reading block from the district model, “but made it more stringent.” A third principal reported, “We provide a two-hour reading block in order to make sure we can provide interventions and do learning centers.” Still another principal stated, “Planning for the literacy block has been the emphasis throughout the year to ensure that all students’ needs are being met.”

Protecting the integrity of the uninterrupted reading block was a primary concern for a number of principals. One principal has been focusing on preserving the 90-minute

reading block to make certain it is an “uninterrupted, protected time.” Another principal stated, “We tried to focus on scheduling, keeping the 90-minute reading block protected.” Still another principal stated, “The reading block drives the school from K-5, everything falls around that. We do no pull-out from the [reading] block; it’s our sacred time.”

Of the principals queried, 48% of them also mentioned “interventions” as an important element of *Reading First*. Intervention for struggling readers, including immediate intensive intervention (*iii*), is one of the hallmarks of *Reading First* implementation. One principal noted that *Soar to Success* “is used for *iii* and extended day.” Another principal stated, “We are taking a careful look at the master schedule to insure time for *iii*.” Another principal stated that their school has “45 minutes of *iii* time instead of 30.” Finally, another principal frankly observed, “We are really looking at *iii* instruction. We weren’t moving high risk students the way we wanted. We implemented programs to help with *iii* instruction: *Earobics, Literacy Success*.” The principal added, “[Intervention] teachers now are assigned to students rather than to [classroom] teachers, so they could work with the same students all the time. We had good conversations with teachers. Teachers needed to be aware of the fact that *iii* was an issue. They needed to get rid of some of the things they were doing that weren’t effective and move forward with research-based materials.”

“Professional learning communities,” as vehicles to support the implementation of *Reading First*, also were mentioned with 48% frequency. One principal stated, “Every team member facilitates at the professional learning community weekly grade level meetings.” Another principal observed, “Grade level chairs represent the grade level and give the literacy team . . . suggestions as to what their needs are.”

Principals also identified “resources” with 48% frequency as an important element of *Reading First*. Principals praised the plethora of materials, classroom libraries, and improved technology. One principal stated, “We’ve added classroom libraries, also added listening centers to all classrooms.” Another principal praised “the resources that have allowed us to bring in the classroom libraries,” and added, “We have a more concentrated understanding of what libraries should look like, and the importance of literacy across the curriculum.” Another principal observed, “The teachers have all of the resources at their fingertips so they don’t have to scramble looking for materials.”

Of the principals queried, 44% of them also mentioned “classroom walk-throughs” as an important element of *Reading First*. One principal stated, “We do walk-throughs in the classrooms . . . Sometimes they [teachers] will ask us [literacy team] to stay in their rooms during the walk-through to show us what they are doing. We check on the word walls, the centers. Our walk-throughs have shown them that we are interested and supportive. They no longer feel intimidated.”

In discussing School Focus, principals identified the following areas with frequency of 33% or less:

- Differentiated instruction (32%)
- Flexible reading groups (28%)

- Common planning time (20%)
- CRP (20%)
- Literacy centers (16%)
- Reading strategies (16%)
- Title I (16%)
- Inclusion model (12%)
- Parental involvement (12%)
- Classroom organization (8%)
- Attendance (8%)
- CISM (4%)
- Extended school year (4%)
- Media center (4%)
- New organization (4%)
- Reading research (4%)
- Re-assigning teachers (4%)

IV. Support for Reading

Participants in the interviews and focus groups were asked to identify and describe individuals who are making important contributions to the schools’ reading efforts. Table 1 reflects the responses of the principals, reading coaches and teachers.

Supporters of Schools’ Reading Efforts from the Perspective of:		
Principal	<i>Reading First</i> Coach	Teachers
Reading coach (96%)	<i>RF</i> PD coordinator (100%)	Reading coach (96%)
District staff (84%)	Principal (96%)	Principal (80%)
<i>RF</i> PD coordinator (80%)	District <i>RF</i> director (44%)	ESE teacher (44%)
District trainers (32%)	Speech/language teacher(s) (32%)	Speech/language teacher(s) (32%)
Title I (28%)	Assistant principal (28%)	Special area teacher(s) (28%)
District <i>RF</i> director (16%)	ESE teacher (28%)	Paraprofessionals/tutors (28%)

Table 1: Supporters of Schools’ Reading Efforts

Principals

Of the principals queried, 96% of the respondents identified “reading coach” as supportive of their schools’ efforts to improve reading achievement. The following are representative comments, which principals made regarding their respective reading coaches.

- “Knowledgeable”
- “Excellent”
- “Well-respected”
- “Excellent rapport [with teachers]”
- “Trusted”
- “Non-threatening”

- “Super”
- “Wonderful”

Several principals praised the relationship between the reading coach and the teachers, whose collegiality and mutual respect can improve the implementation of *Reading First* significantly. The principal at one school described the relationship as, “One of great trust.” The principal at another school stated that the reading coach and teachers have “excellent rapport,” and that the reading coach is “trusted by teachers.” Another principal agreed, “Teachers go to the [reading] coach for help, for information. They value her opinions. Anything she offers is in a non-judgmental manner; they are not threatened, so she has a good relationship with teachers.” Still another principal echoed the praise, “Our teachers are very accepting, trust her [reading coach], don’t feel threatened. She approaches issues in a non-threatening manner. . . . People feel comfortable approaching her when they need assistance.” Another principal commented, “The teachers respect her [reading coach]; they go to her. Even teachers who have been teaching a long time don’t hesitate to go to her. She has created a trusting relationship.” Another principal agreed, “She [reading coach] provides a great deal of professional and personal support. She helps in the classrooms, but also gives teachers pats on the back.” Another principal also agreed, “She’s a support person, never goes in to criticize, so very diplomatic, provides such good assistance that her constructive criticism is well-received. The relationship is great.” The principal at still another school stated that teachers see the reading coach “as a colleague.” The principal added, “She was a fourth grade teacher here; so they are comfortable approaching her. The trust factor is present which is very important to making her position work.” Another principal stated that the reading coach “has a very easy-going manner that lends itself to teachers’ opening up to her.” “The principal also stated, “They [teachers] see her as a colleague, and are not threatened by her. She is the first [person] they go to for help.”

Principals also praised the reading coaches for their knowledge, professionalism, and commitment. One principal stated that the school’s reading coach “is well respected as [a] knowledgeable, kind and gentle leader,” who “emphasizes research” to “share with the team and teachers.” Another principal stated that the reading coach is “respected for her knowledge. Her manner is always professional, inspirational. She shows others by doing; [she’s] always reliable, does what she says she is going to do.” The principal at another school stated, “People know how knowledgeable she [reading coach] is, and her relationships with people allow her to create a successful environment for students. She is in the classroom with teachers and becomes a co-teacher.” Still another principal stated that the reading coach is “respected for her knowledge in reading.” Another principal observed that teachers hold the reading coach “in the most high (sic) regard, [for] her depth of knowledge.” Another principal described an “open relationship built on trust and respect. Teachers know she [reading coach] is on their side.” Finally, as one principal succinctly stated, “They [teachers] respect her knowledge, as I do.”

Another category of support which a majority of principals (84%) listed was “district staff,” whom many of the principals praised for the support and training they have provided. The following comments are representative.

- “Wonderful”
- “Strong supporter”

One principal noted that the staff from the district office “helps with training.” Another principal described the district representative as someone who “never fails to come when we ask, [and who] wants to be part of the entire school.” The principal at another school stated that the district staff “gives us needed information.” A third principal stated that the “district literacy staff . . . come[s] without being called. . . . There’s a sense of collegiality between the district staff and our staff. They send emails to keep me apprised of what is happening. I would credit them with a lot of our success. . . . I appreciate the district folk.” Another principal noted the critical role provided by the district staff, who has “come out on many occasions to help analyze data, help us determine what our next steps will be,” as well having “demonstrated in classrooms.” The principal added that district staff provides “support, gives us whatever we ask for.” Another principal praised the “excellent support from the district team as a whole,” which has provided support to the school’s reading coach, including answering the coach’s “questions about staff development.” Still another principal stated that the district has “provided materials, support, professional development, comes out and observes, make suggestions—a big supporter of *Reading First*.” Another principal stated a member of district staff “has come [to the school] to help with leveling of books.” The principal added that district staff also has “helped in selection of books for libraries, assisted with centers and rotation schedules for centers, [and provided] professional development for teachers and the reading coach.” Another principal stated, “District people get us support, and materials, and funding, and the additional allocations that assist us with classroom libraries. The district has a mechanism in place to monitor us. It puts a certain urgency on the teachers to know that others are looking at the data and asking questions, in addition to the principal.” Finally, one principal praised the district staff as “outstanding elementary reading supervisors.”

A majority of principals mentioned still another category important to support for reading: *Reading First* professional development coordinator (80%), an integral part of *Reading First*, who provides training and support to the reading coaches in each district. Many principals described a professional who is deeply committed to improving reading instruction. The following comments are representative.

- “Great help”
- “Great resource”
- “Frequent contact”
- “Support”
- “Accessible”
- “Great professional development”
- “Liaison with reading coach”

One principal observed that the *Reading First* professional development coordinator “has visited several times” and modeled “reading aloud” for the teachers. Another principal noted that the coordinator had been to the school “at least eight times.” Another principal

stated that the coordinator has provided “information and support,” as well as “help with finding extra resources.” Another principal pointed out that the coordinator “is always available,” and also “provides professional development for all teachers at faculty meetings.” Finally, one principal stated, “The *Reading First* professional development coordinator has been very helpful. She responds promptly to our needs; [she has] very good turnaround time in communication.”

Reading Coaches

Of the reading coaches queried, all of the respondents (100%) listed the *Reading First* professional development coordinator as an important element in the implementation of *Reading First*. Many of the reading coaches expressed positive comments about the *Reading First* professional development coordinators. The following are representative:

- “Knowledgeable”
- “Excellent”
- “Very helpful”
- “Very effective”
- “Great resource”
- “Approachable”
- “Supportive”

A number of reading coaches stated that they communicate regularly with the *Reading First* professional development coordinators through school visitations, monthly meetings, telephone conversations and email. Several also stated that the coordinators provide additional professional development on reading instruction or data analysis when the schools request it, as well as training on classroom walk-throughs. One reading coach observed that the *Reading First* professional development coordinator “understands the importance of reading” and “supports the faculty.” A second reading coach stated that the coordinator “has been a huge help,” who “does anything you need.” The coach added, “She’s always there to help with problems, [and] never forgets about anything you want or need.” A third reading coach stated, “She [*RF* PD coordinator] is present at all of our district meetings, does professional development once a month, also [does] quarterly professional development at UCF [University of Central Florida], [and] comes to school once or more a month. I’m able to email with questions, and they’re always answered, tons of support.” Another reading coach stated that the coordinator “comes with lots of classroom experience, makes teachers feel comfortable, [and has] opened teachers’ eyes to LEaRN.” The reading coach added, “He also tries to attend our district meetings when he can, so we are all on the same page, and works hand-in-hand with the district coordinator, even comes to faculty meetings sometimes.” Still another reading coach stated, “She [*RF* PD coordinator] offers support, training, [and] materials.” Concerning the relationship between the two of them, one reading coach stated, “We have trust and a rapport,” and added that the coordinator “has been a mentor.” Finally, one reading coach in describing the coordinator stated, “She is fabulous as a supporter and trainer. Her insight has been invaluable in working with this school.”

Effective school leadership is another important element in the successful implementation of *Reading First*. Reading coaches were in agreement that the “principal” is a key

supporter of reading instruction, and they mentioned the principal with 96% frequency. The following are representative comments:

- “Knowledgeable”
- “Visible”
- “Great”
- “Amazing”
- “Supportive”

The reading coach at one school stated that the principal had been “a real advocate of *Reading First* from the beginning.” Another reading coach stated that the principal “believes in the goals of *Reading First*.” Another reading coach whose school was damaged by a hurricane stated that the principal “was great to help in getting materials, etc.,” to replace the ones which had been lost. The reading coach at another school noted that the principal “understands the importance of reading and supports this with the faculty.” Still another reading coach pointed out that the principal “sits in on every data meeting” and “empowers teachers, yet maintains close contact for follow-through.” Another reading coach noted that the principal “was the person who wanted us to be a *Reading First* school” and pointed out that the principal “really believes in people working with struggling readers, [and] high-quality teachers need to be working with these students, not [using] just computer programs.” The reading coach also stated that the principal “has allowed time for professional development” and “worked out a schedule for professional development,” because the principal “wants teachers to learn, and realizes how important this is.” The reading coach further stated, “If there is something we need, she will find the money.” The reading coach at another school stated that the principal set the schedule for the 90-minute reading block. The reading coach also stated, “She’s very supportive of coach’s role, looks to me for help with parent involvement, [and] ensures that I have time for professional development.” Finally, one reading coach stated the principal “has an action plan for all professional development trainings.” The reading coach added, “The principal is new. She wants to know everything. She supports coaches, attends training when she can, learning day-by-day what *Reading First* is all about.”

Teacher Focus Group

Among those queried, teachers mentioned “reading coach” as a supporter of reading with (96%) frequency. Most of the teachers described the reading coaches’ efforts to implement *Reading First* as either “excellent” or “very effective” and frequently mentioned how helpful the reading coach has been to them. Many of the teachers expressed positive comments about the reading coaches; the following are representative:

- “Very approachable”
- “Great attitude”
- “Wonderful”
- “The best”
- “Fantastic”
- “Amazing”

Teachers at one school stated that their reading coach “provides anything teachers ask for.” Teachers at another school stated, “She’s [reading coach] the best ever in the whole world! She’s always checking out our rooms to see what we need.” The teachers at a third school stated that the reading coach is “always willing to come to the [class]room.” The teachers also stated that the reading coach “models guided reading lessons,” “helps train on new materials,” and “helps analyzing data, both on grade level and individually.” The teachers also stated that the reading coach has “helped set up schedules” and “helped to decide which models [to use], push-ins, etc.” Teachers at a third school stated that the reading coach has been invaluable as a trainer of first-time teachers. Teachers at another school stated that the reading coach provides “daily help in modeling at the beginning of the year, especially for new teachers.” Teachers at another school stated that the reading coach “will move ‘heaven and earth’ to help teachers.” The teachers also stated that the reading coach “tries to get whatever they need in the classroom” and “encourages them to teach well everyday.” Teachers at still another school stated that their reading coach “helped guide the literacy committee to implement Text Talk.” The teachers also stated that the reading coach has “reviewed PPVT scores” and “done read alouds.” Some of the support noted by teachers at another school included modeling lessons at implementation meetings, rather than just giving the teachers resources. The teachers noted that the reading coach “doesn’t just give us stuff, [but] shows us how to use them,” and stated that the reading coach has helped with ideas “to assist struggling readers, helped set up classrooms and small groups, assisted with reading centers, and helped with differentiating DIBELS data.” They added, “She’s [reading coach] good at providing resources.” Teachers at still another school stated that the reading coach has had “workshops specifically targeting areas of need.” Finally, teachers at one school stated that their reading coach “encourages professional development, reminds us of accountability, [and] brings in people to help in needed areas of professional development.”

Teachers also mentioned principals with 80% frequency. The following are representative comments:

- “Always available”
- “Knowledgeable”
- “Very open”
- “Very data-driven”

Teachers at one school stated that the principal “really supports *Reading First*” and added that the principal is a “computer and organization queen.” Teachers at another school stated that the principal “sends us to trainings” and “finds ways to have materials we need.” Teachers at a third school stated that the principal “has an interest at each grade level. She sits in on DIBELS meetings and wants to know how to help.” The teachers added, “She’s a ‘magician.’ If we need something, she finds a way to get it for us.” Teachers at another school stated that the principal “provides resources” and “collaborates a lot with *Reading First* coach.” They added, “She knows what’s happening in our rooms.” Teachers at another school stated that the principal’s “data analysis with teachers has been very helpful,” because “the principal is able to explain [it].” The teachers also stated that the principal “meets with each teacher one-on-one with

suggestions about how to make instruction better.” Another teacher focus group stated that as far as the principal is concerned, “Anything for professional growth development she supports. She encourages this and shares journals with us.” Teachers at still another school pointed out that because of the principal, “We have everything you can ask for. She gives a lot of encouragement. She has an open-door policy.” Another focus group of teachers stated, “The principal has been very supportive of us. She does good creative problem-solving and respects our opinions.” Finally, the teachers at one school stated that the principal “has bent over backwards to get answers and help.” They observed, “He always asks, ‘What can I do to make your job easier?’ He meets and greets students and parents daily; he is well liked!” The teachers added, “Teachers do not mind his classroom visits. Students respect him and know that he loves them!”

V. Professional Development

The area of professional development includes coaching, modeling, workshops, assistance from the district *Reading First* director, and particular trainings on a special product such as the FCRR K-3 student center activities resource. When asked to describe activities or resources that had had a positive impact on the quality of their teaching, teachers at *Reading First* schools most often indicated professional development (96%). Teachers at several schools praised: the training they had received while attending the *Reading First* Academy held during the summer; other workshops and training programs provided by the district; the training they had received on the implementation of resources and materials including classroom libraries; and, training on technology including intervention software and websites. Teachers at a number of schools also identified training in assessments, including data analysis, as beneficial in improving instruction. Teachers at several schools praised the training on reading centers, and one group of teachers stated that the “reading coach’s training on center activity implementation encouraged teachers to implement FCRR binder materials.” Teachers at a number of schools also praised the training they had received on the implementation of the 90-minute reading block, including differentiating instruction and the Core Reading Program. Teachers at one school stated that “classroom management training,” which “stressed rules and basic routines,” had been beneficial, as well as training in guided reading, reading centers, and writing instruction. Teachers at another school identified “fishbowl” training by the district and book study as beneficial professional development. Finally, teachers at one school praised the reading coach’s “individual training and follow-up on word work . . . with teachers as they were ready.”

Several subcategories are subsumed within the larger category of professional development. Among these subcategories, the two identified with the most frequency were “reading strategies/techniques (52%) and resources (48%). Over half of the teachers queried identified “reading strategies/techniques,” such as training in guided reading and CRISS strategies, as significant opportunities to improve their reading instruction. Almost half of the teachers indicated that using the many resources provided by *Reading First* had had a positive impact on the quality of their teaching.

Other activities or resources subsumed within professional development that teachers specifically mentioned with less frequency included:

- Reading conference/convention (20%)

- *Reading First* professional development coordinator (16%)
- Core Reading Program (16%)
- Reading centers (16%)
- Interventions (*iii*) (12%)
- Key components of reading (12%)
- LEARN (12%)
- Assessments/data analysis (8%)
- Differentiated instruction (8%)
- Reading/reading endorsement coursework (8%)
- Visiting other *Reading First* classrooms/schools (8%)
- Classroom/behavior management (4%)
- Coaching (4%)
- Collegial sharing/teamwork (4%)
- Media center (4%)
- Peer assistance (4%)
- Reading coach (4%)
- Team planning (4%)
- Videos (4%)

When asked to describe activities or resources that had had a positive impact on the quality of their coaching, reading coaches at *Reading First* schools most often indicated the following:

- *Reading First* professional development coordinator (100%)
- Professional development (84%)

Reading coaches praised the support and training they were given by the *Reading First* professional development coordinator. The following comments are representative.

- “Very accessible”
- “Extremely helpful”
- “Great”
- “Mentor”

All of the reading coaches (100%) stated that the *Reading First* professional development coordinator had provided significant opportunities to improve the quality of their coaching. The reading coach at one school praised that *Reading First* professional development coordinator and stated, “The quarterly professional development on doing walk-throughs was especially helpful.” The reading coach at another school described the support she received, “The *Reading First* professional development coordinator asked [me] to do a videotape on guided reading with a classroom teacher, [and then I] did a follow-up coaching video. The whole experience brought me back to what coaching is really about.” Another reading coach stated that the *Reading First* professional development coordinator “has come out [to the school] and ‘squashed my fears of being a coach.’ She is wonderful, lets me vent. She helped me get ready for the site visit.” Another coach described the support she has received from the two *Reading First* professional development coordinators in her district, “I’ve learned so much from them.

This is my first year. They are here all of the time.” Another reading coach echoed her comments, “They are always available, either by phone, email, or coming here. We co-facilitated trainings.” Another reading coach praised “quarterly professional development from the *Reading First* professional development coordinator.” Another reading coach described the skills-focused training that she had received from the *Reading First* professional development coordinator, “She helped me explain it to the teachers in a way I couldn’t.” Another *Reading First* professional development coordinator shared “photos of other schools and their model practices” with the reading coach.

Of those reading coaches queried, 84% of them mentioned “professional development” as an opportunity to improve their coaching. Professional development includes coaching, modeling, workshops and training conferences, book study, training on assessments, and other training opportunities. One reading coach stated after receiving professional development on assessments, “Now I can see data in a new light, from a new vantage point; I feel I can now do a better job in evaluating data.” Several reading coaches also stated that the training they had received on resources had been useful. Finally, one reading coach stated, “The monthly coaches’ training and the quarterlies let you see all of those resources that you can use.”

Several subcategories are subsumed within the larger category of professional development. Among the subcategories are activities or resources that reading coaches mentioned with less frequency, which included:

- Reading techniques/strategies (20%)
- Quarterly *Reading First* meetings (16%)
- Assessments/data analysis (12%)
- Collegial sharing/teamwork (12%)
- Reading conference/convention (12%)
- Core Reading Program (8%)
- Use of resources (8%)
- Classroom walk-throughs (8%)
- Differentiated instruction (4%)
- District staff (4%)
- Interventions (*iii*) (4%)
- Key components of reading (4%)
- LEARN (4%)
- Reading centers (4%)
- Monthly coaches’ meetings (4%)
- NEFEC (4%)
- Program implementation/integration CRP, *RF* (4%)
- *Reading First* Coaches’ Guide (4%)
- *Reading First* Coaching Academy (4%)

VI. Reading Coach

During the site visit interviews and focus groups, teachers, reading coaches and principals were asked to provide information regarding the activities performed by the reading coach. Table 1 presents the most significant responses by the three groups.

Perceptions of Significant Activities Performed by Reading Coaches Spring 2007			
Activity	Principals	Teachers	Coaches
Coaching and modeling	92%	80%	92%
Providing professional development	80%	56%	64%
Providing resources	76%	80%	84%
Organizing/conducting assessments	76%	52%	72%
Analyzing data	68%	40%	72%
Team meetings	76%	16%	56%
Conferring with teachers	64%	32%	84%
Support/encouragement of teachers	28%	16%	32%
Classroom walk-throughs	12%	0%	48%

Table 1: Perceptions of Significant Activities Performed by Coaches

NOTE: Percentages indicate the portion of comments indicating coaches performed an activity, not the quantity of time spent performing an activity.

In discussing their work with teachers, reading coaches specified several aspects of *Reading First* that had had a positive impact on the quality of teacher practice in their school. Reading coaches listed “coaching and modeling” (92%), “conferring with teachers” (84%), and “providing resources” (84%) most frequently.

Reading coaches affirmed the importance and efficacy of coaching and modeling for improving reading instruction. One reading coach stated, “Coaching is the most important professional development piece.” The reading coach added that she begins with “the modeling piece, followed by the coaching piece.” One reading coach noted that she has “modeled Text Talk lessons.” A third reading coach stated that she has been performing “professional development on a daily basis,” including “modeling lessons in classrooms.” Another reading coach stated that she has been spending time daily “planning lessons for modeling.” Another reading coach stated that she has combined coaching and co-teaching. Still another reading coach stated she performed “modeling sessions [every] day, if I can.” Still another reading coach stated that she made certain to “follow through with modeling and coaching.” One reading coach stated that she “tries to do more coaching than modeling,” because she has found that “modeling [alone] wasn’t doing it here” at the school. Another reading coach stated that besides modeling, she also “does follow-up conferences to provide coaching feedback.” Another reading coach stated, “After the reading block, I set aside time where teachers can come for advice, and I do individual coaching.” Another reading coach stated that she “models, coaches, and confers, especially with new teachers.”

“Organizing/conducting assessments” (72%) was another important activity cited by the

reading coaches. Reading coaches frequently mentioned ongoing progress monitoring and DIBELS as examples of assessments performed at their schools. The reading coaches affirmed the importance of assessments. One reading coach stated, "Testing takes up a lot of time, especially with OPM, [but it is] very valuable; it provides us with a lot of information to guide instruction." Another reading coach stated, "OPM, planning for OPM, entering OPM data, these are constants," as well as "assessing new students when they enter school." Another reading coach stated that in addition to DIBELS, she also performs "other testing for *iii* students as needed." Finally, one reading coach stated, "Now I am heavily into assessments."

"Analyzing data" (72%) was another area identified as an important activity by the reading coaches. In addition to conducting the assessments, the reading coaches analyze the data and assist teachers in interpreting the data. One reading coach stated that she has been "looking at data for instructional purposes." Another reading coach stated that she analyzes data and helps teachers analyze it as well. She added that a chart on her wall shows student progress based on data reports.

VII. The Reading Block

All of the schools visited reported implementing at least a 90-minute reading block, and a few schools reported allotting additional time for reading during the school day.

Core Reading Program

When asked to describe the function of the core reading program in the reading block, 96% of the teachers' comments indicated that the core reading program had played a major role. The following are the core reading programs utilized by the visited schools:

- *Harcourt*
- *Reading Mastery Plus*
- *Voyager*
- *Houghton Mifflin*
- *Success for All*
- *Scott Foresman with Links*

Teachers were also asked to identify the strengths and weaknesses of their core reading programs. The results of their responses can be found in Appendix C.

Implementation

During the teacher focus groups, teachers were asked to describe both the aspects of the reading block that they had implemented well and those aspects that they wanted help in implementing better.

Teachers most frequently indicated that they implement the following elements well:

- Phonics (96%)
- Vocabulary (92%)
- Phonemic awareness (88%)

- Fluency (80%)

- Comprehension (88%)

The following percentages refer to the frequency with which teachers most frequently stated a need for assistance in improving implementation:

- Fluency (76%)
- Phonics (68%)
- Vocabulary (60%)
- Phonemic awareness (56%)
- Comprehension (56%)

Assessments for Grouping Students

Another topic presented to all focus groups was how students were grouped for reading instruction. Teachers reported using the following assessments to group students:

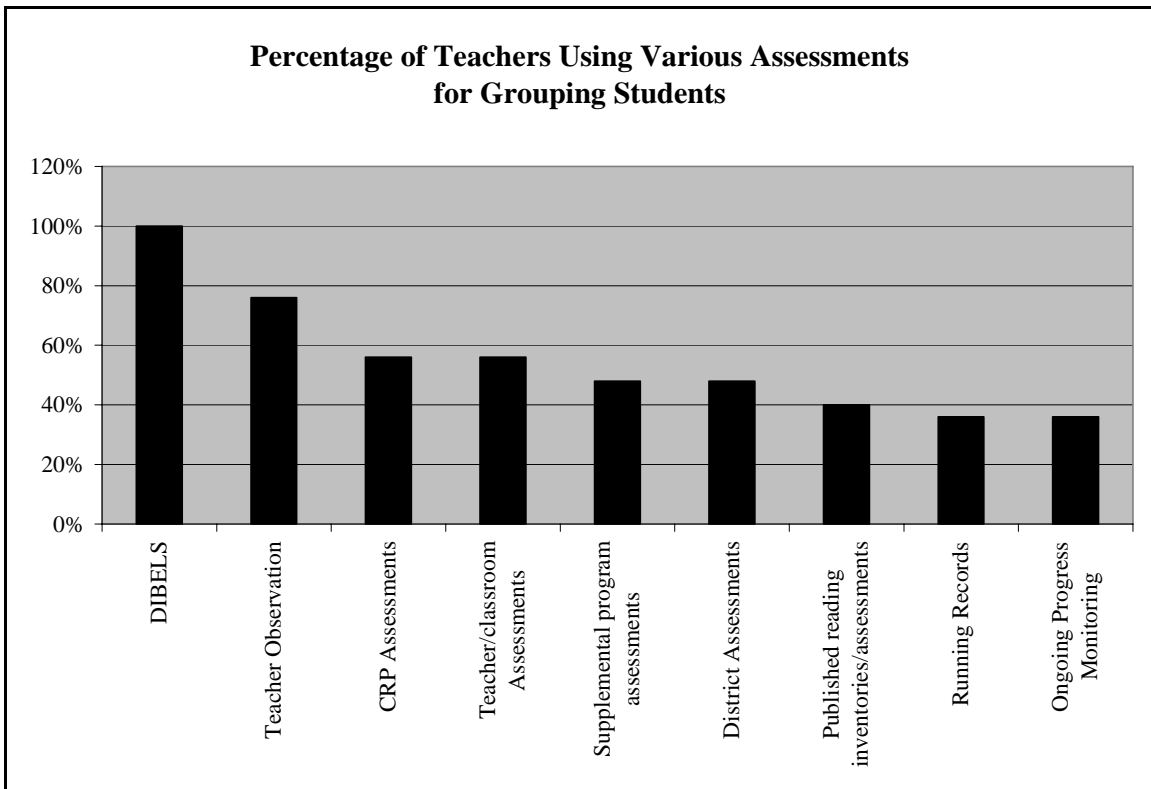


Chart 1. Percentage of Teachers Using Various Assessments

VIII. Reading First Challenges

Table 2 depicts challenges as identified by the comments of the three groups: principals, teachers and coaches in *Reading First* schools.

2007 Challenges of <i>Reading First</i> Schools			
Activity	Principals	Teachers	Coaches
Assessments	20%	16%	32%
Reading block/scheduling	40%	56%	44%
Lack of resources	12%	16%	16%
Resistant teachers	24%	0%	16%
Program implementation	16%	24%	16%
Lack of time for professional development	48%	20%	52%
Lack of time to accomplish all tasks	44%	56%	36%
Lack of personnel/teacher turnover	20%	20%	28%
Reading centers	28%	36%	8%
Differentiated instruction	12%	8%	8%
CRP	0%	12%	12%
FCRR student center activities	0%	12%	4%
Interventions (<i>iii</i>)	8%	4%	12%

Table 2: 2007 Challenges of *Reading First*

Principals' Challenges

Principals identified several challenges of *Reading First*. The most frequently identified challenge was “lack of time for professional development” (48%). One principal stated that it takes “time for teachers to be trained, to learn a new program.” Another principal agreed that there was a “lack of time to provide professional development, and added that she “would like to see more time for this [professional development], especially for small group guided reading lessons.” Another principal stated that it was a challenge “providing coverage to teachers to attend professional development.” Another principal noted that even though the reading coach meets with teachers once a week after school, “teachers have limited time due to tutoring responsibilities and limited staff school-wide.” Another principal stated, “We don’t have enough time to fit this [professional development] into the schedules.”

Training of new teachers was a particular concern to some principals. One principal stated, “We can’t use release time [for professional development]; we don’t have money for subs for this. Our teachers who come in after the year starts don’t receive the initial professional development they need.” Another principal stated, “I need to improve teacher knowledge and get new teachers trained.” Finally, another principal expressed a similar concern regarding professional development and said that new teachers needed “initial training for implementing *Reading First* at the reading academies,” and added, “There are several teachers who haven’t taken it because it is only offered in the summer.”

The second most frequently identified challenge mentioned by principals was “lack of

time to accomplish all tasks” (44%). One principal stated, “Teachers feel overwhelmed and need help to buy in.” Another principal stated that the teachers need more “time to implement the programs.”

The third most frequently mentioned challenge by principals was “reading block/scheduling” (40%). A number of principals noted problems in scheduling and implementing the reading block. One principal stated that scheduling was a challenge “both school-wide and [in the] classroom.” Another principal stated, “Scheduling is an issue, to get specials and content areas, and ESE into a school day.” Still another principal noted that scheduling was a challenge, “because of inclusion models.” The principal added, “We need to insure that we have small groups going on; our 90-minute [reading] block is so chock full.”

Teachers’ Challenges

Teachers identified several challenges of *Reading First*. The challenges they most frequently identified were “reading block/scheduling” (56%) and “lack of time to accomplish all tasks” (56%).

Concerning “reading block/scheduling” (56%), teachers at a number of schools agreed that scheduling the 90-minute uninterrupted reading block was a challenge. Teachers at one school stated, “Either the reading block isn’t long enough, or [there is] not enough time to fit in all components.” Teachers at another school were concerned about the “lack of flexibility within the reading block.” Another teacher focus group also commented on the difficulty with “scheduling [and] fitting in all the needed components.” Teachers at still another school stated that the reading block schedule made it “hard to schedule [and] fit in the content areas.” Teachers at another school expressed a similar concern: “keeping pace to fit all components into the reading block.” Finally, one teacher focus group suggested that a “120-minute [reading] block would allow more integration of content areas.”

Concerning lack of time to accomplish all tasks, teachers at one school stated succinctly, “Time is the issue.” Teachers at another school observed that it was a challenge “finding time and resources to add to the Core Reading Program when needed.” Finally, concerned teachers at one school stated that they needed more “time in setting up centers and time to teach the whole curriculum.”

The next most frequently identified challenge by teachers was “reading centers” (36%). Teachers at one school stated that the main challenge of reading centers was “keeping good centers going and having students be productive in centers.” Teachers at another school stated that centers were a challenge as far as “getting students to work at the centers independently.” Another group of teachers stated that a major challenge was “finding the right materials and making them” for the centers, which is “so time-consuming.” Finally, teachers at one school stated that they feel that reading centers “are not productive.”

Reading Coaches’ Challenges

Reading coaches cited several challenges of *Reading First*. The challenge they most frequently mentioned was “lack of time for professional development” (52%). The reading coach at one school stated, “High teacher turnover . . . has made coaching much more challenging because of the needs of these brand new teachers and catching them up about what it is like to be at a *Reading First* school.” Another reading coach stated, “I have to cram it [professional development] into a once-a-month, one-hour session. It has been a major challenge. To get subs, I have to submit a proposal.” Another reading coach pointed out that “due to her work with new teachers, [there has been a] lack of time to do more coaching and modeling.” Finally, one reading coach summed up the difficulties of providing adequate professional development, “Keeping staff trained in high quality reading instruction is challenging.”

The second challenge reading coaches most frequently identified was “reading block/scheduling” (44%). Several reading coaches expressed concern about maintaining the integrity of the 90-minute reading block. One reading coach stated that her school “needs a more specifically defined reading block.” Another reading coach stated, “We can’t elongate the reading block as much as we’d like.” Another reading coach pointed out that scheduling was a challenge because of “trying to serve everyone.”

The third challenge most frequently identified by the reading coaches was “lack of time to accomplish all tasks” (36%). One reading coach stated that there is not enough time “to get everything done during the day.” The reading coach added, “Teachers want to focus their groups specifically, but then don’t have time to teach to each individual and each skill.” Another reading coach stated, “[There is] not enough time to do everything I’m supposed to do. I often get pulled to do things that are not my job, like administrative duties. I attend at least three meetings a month, so I can’t do my job when I’m in the building if I have to do administrative jobs.” Reading coaches at two schools also stated that keeping the coach’s log is time-consuming and challenging for them.

IX. *Reading First* Benefits

The following table depicts benefits as identified by the comments of the three groups:

principals, teachers and coaches in *Reading First* Schools.

2007 Benefits of <i>Reading First</i> Schools			
Activity	Principals	Teachers	Coaches
Resources	44%	80%	72%
Assessments	36%	32%	48%
Professional development	28%	16%	44%
<i>RF</i> coach	64%	36%	32%
Reading focus	36%	28%	28%
Improved teacher knowledge of reading	48%	44%	32%
Student reading improvement	36%	28%	28%
Systematic/research-based	28%	24%	12%
Reading block	16%	24%	0%
Classroom libraries	16%	32%	16%
FCRR student center activities	0%	24%	12%
Collegial support	12%	0%	28%
Data-driven instruction	8%	12%	28%

Table 3. 2007 Benefits of *Reading First*

Principals' Benefits

Principals identified several benefits of *Reading First*. The benefit they most frequently identified was “*Reading First* coach” (64%). A significant number of principals praised the actions of the reading coach in implementing *Reading First*. One principal stated, “The reading coach encouraged everyone to grow and learn She knew how to get people on board and how to show the benefits.”

Of the principals queried, 48% of them listed “improved teacher knowledge of reading,” as an important benefit of *Reading First*. One principal stated, “*Reading First* has given us stronger teachers.” Another principal observed, “Teachers are getting stronger at delivering programs and interpreting data.” A third principal stated that the teachers have “improved instruction and improved teaching style,” because of *Reading First*. The principal at another school stated that teachers have an improved knowledge of reading, “thereby enhancing instruction.” Another principal stated, “Teachers have guided instruction in a way that is phenomenal. This is setting the foundation.” Principals generally were pleased with the effects of improved teacher knowledge on classroom instruction. One principal stated, “Teacher instruction is more specific now, and they know more about teaching reading now than ever before. When conferencing with parents we can give them more specific suggestions on how to help their children improve in reading.” Still another principal stated, “Teachers have increased their knowledge about teaching reading and using reading resources.” Finally, one principal noted, “Teachers have a better knowledge of reading interventions and the five components of reading.”

A significant number of the principals (44%) expressed positive comments about the

resources which *Reading First* brings to reading instruction. One principal stated, “Consistency of programs and materials has had a major impact.” Still another principal stated, “*Reading First* money has really allowed us to purchase materials.” Finally, one principal stated, “The materials are ‘phenomenal.’”

Teachers’ Benefits

Teacher focus groups cited several benefits of *Reading First*. The benefit they most frequently mentioned was “resources” (84%). Teachers at several schools noted the usefulness of the classroom libraries, leveled books, and reading resource rooms. Teachers at one school stated, “A hurricane wiped out most [of our resources]. It was wonderful to get *Reading First* funds to purchase [replacement] materials.” Teachers at another school specified *Elements of Reading, Vocabulary* as a new and useful resource. A teacher at another school noted, “I am more organized now than ever before, and it is because of the materials.”

Of the teacher focus groups queried, 44% of them cited “improved teacher knowledge of reading” as a benefit. A teacher in one focus group stated, “We are becoming effective teachers, and we can see results.” The teacher focus group at two schools stated that since they have improved teacher knowledge, they know better how to differentiate instruction for each child. The teachers at another school stated that they now have the “knowledge to plan better lessons.”

Of the teacher focus groups queried, 36% of them cited “*Reading First* coach” as a benefit. The teacher focus group at one school observed that relationships between teachers and coaches and reading coach/teacher conferences have “helped their instructional focus.” Finally, the teachers at one school noted that the *Reading First* coach was their “most important resource.”

Reading Coaches’ Benefits

Reading coaches cited several benefits of *Reading First*. The benefit they most frequently mentioned was “resources” (72%). Reading coaches were positive in their praise of the scope and quantity of *Reading First* resources. One reading coach observed that “the school had many materials before *Reading First*, but now there are enough to cover everyone.” A second reading coach stated, “*Reading First* has allowed us to buy books for first, second, and third grade to go along with the Core Reading Program. We didn’t have these prior to *Reading First*. It has allowed me to purchase enrichment readers for on-track students.” Another reading coach noted, “Teachers now have great books to use.” Finally, the reading coach at another school stated, “Teachers have great materials. Students have what they need.”

Of the reading coaches queried, (48%) of them stated that “assessments” have played an important role in implementing *Reading First*. The reading coach at one school stated that “assessments and the accountability because of these assessments” have improved instruction. The reading coach at another school stated, “DIBELS gives us enough information to help drive instruction.” The reading coach at another school stated, “Assessments are definitely a benefit as well, because [they] drive instruction and

professional development.” Another reading coach noted the efficacy of assessments, “The reports from the assessments cause the teachers to be reflective.” The reading coach at another school stated, “The data is helpful and user-friendly.” Still another reading coach observed, “Ongoing progress monitoring has changed more teachers’ approach than anything else.” Finally, the reading coach at a one school stated, “Teachers are really tuned into these [assessments] and anxious to see the results. This will help to drive their instruction.”

Of the reading coaches queried, (44%) of them stated that “professional development” has played an important role in implementing *Reading First*. One reading coach observed, “Now we have priority for county professional development, because we are a *Reading First* school.” Another reading coach praised the “ability to provide immediate staff development as needed on-site.” Another reading coach praised the summer *Reading First* Academies as an important aspect of professional development. Another reading coach observed, “Teachers have said they feel more comfortable with *Reading First* as a result of the professional development that *Reading First* has provided.” The reading coach at another school noted that “professional development for the reading coach, teachers, and paraprofessionals is well-aligned.” Still another reading coach stated, “The trainings that have come with it [*Reading First*] for me and the teachers have been great.” Finally, as one reading coach succinctly stated, “Professional development has exposed teachers to reading best practices and stimulated them to think about their practice [and to make] baby steps in the right direction.”

X. Suggestions for Program Improvement

School personnel and the site visit teams both offered ways in which the implementation of *Reading First* can be improved.

School Personnel Suggestions

Principals, teachers and reading coaches were asked to offer specific suggestions that would improve the implementation of high quality reading instruction. These suggestions are reported in the following chart.

2007 Suggestions for <i>Reading First</i>			
Suggestion	Principals	Teachers	Coaches
Increased/improved professional development	32%	36%	36%
Additional/improved personnel	36%	24%	16%
Improved scheduling for reading coach	0%	0%	28%
Improved implementation of CRP	0%	12%	0%
Additional/improved interventions	12%	4%	8%
Improved scheduling of reading block	8%	20%	20%

Table 4. 2007 Suggestions for *Reading First*

The principals made a number of suggestions for program improvement. The suggestions

most frequently mentioned were “additional/improved personnel” (36%) and “increased/improved professional development” (32%).

Concerning “additional/improved personnel” (36%), one principal stated that the school needs “more staff,” and added that “qualified people are more important than things at this point. We need more.” Another principal stated that the school needs more “teacher assistants and more paraprofessionals.” Another principal stated that their school needs “more personnel to provide *iii*.” Still another principal stated, “I would like to have more tutors . . . , some kind of floating aide to help monitor the reading centers to guide them [students], while they are in the centers.” Still another principal stated, “I would like to have the reading coach here more frequently to help monitor [instruction].”

Concerning “increased/improved professional development” (28%), one principal noted, “It would help to have more trainings before school starts, during the summer.” Another principal stated, “I want to have time to do more professional development; I want to continue in-house staff development.” Another principal observed, “I would like to expand the professional development piece at our school. We could have more time with teachers, especially with new teachers, to expand their knowledge through professional development, maybe a refresher course to review elements of *Reading First*.” The principal at another school stated, “We need to get more professional development for the teachers. We constantly get new teachers. Even the older teachers need the professional development in order to understand how to best implement instruction.” Another principal noted, “One thing that stands out for my staff is the teacher-directed instruction. The teachers could use more professional development in instructional delivery. They need to move away from recall in knowledge and dig deeper and be more explicit in all aspects of teaching, particularly in developing higher order thinking skills.” Finally, one principal stated, “We need quarterly professional development focused on what teachers want, led by the reading coach.”

The teacher focus groups made the same suggestions most frequently as the principals for program improvement: “increased/improved professional development” (36%) and more “additional/ improved personnel “(24%).

Concerning “increased/improved professional development” (36%), teachers at one school stated that they “need guidelines for giving direction about language arts instruction during the reading block,” as well as more “frequency of training, including more fishbowl training.” Teachers at another school stated, “We need trainings at the beginning of the year on centers and using binders so we can get off to an early start.” They also noted the need for “specific training in which activities to use for which specific skill improvement.” Teachers at another school stated that they need “more professional development time, and [especially] how to implement all of these wonderful resources within the classroom.” Teachers at another school stated that they would like “mini trainings for new teachers, [and] time where teams could plan together.” They added, “This has worked well for us, and planning together has been beneficial. We hope to keep doing it.” Finally, teachers at one school stated that they need “clarification of scheduling for the reading block, centers, [and] small groups.”

Concerning “additional/improved personnel” (24%), the teachers at one school stated that their school needs a “reading teacher” and “paraprofessionals.” Teachers at another school stated that they “would like more paraprofessionals involved with small-group instruction, [who have the] training necessary, so they are able to benefit students.” Teachers at another school stated that they need “more staff to provide *iii*, so that literacy development doesn’t stop [improving].” One of the teachers at another school stated, “I would like to have another person in the classroom.” Teachers at still another school stated, “We would like an additional reading coach to develop a schedule to work with teachers more often.” Finally, teachers at one school pointed out that the “school was trying to provide more support staff from people on-site for small group instruction and during progress monitoring.”

The reading coaches made the following suggestions for program improvement most frequently: increased/improved professional development (36%) and improved scheduling for the reading coach (28%).

The following reading coaches’ comments and suggestions concern “increased/improved professional development” (36%). One reading coach stated that she would like to conduct “more book studies and studies in research-based articles.” Another reading coach stated that she “needs more time to deliver professional development in short chunks to teachers.” She added, “With so many new teachers, many have difficulty attending the summer academies. We would like this training to be given during the year, on Saturdays for example, to meet this need.” The reading coach at another school stated that she would like to have substitutes covering for the teachers, “so teachers would have time for make-and-take workshops.” Another reading coach observed, “Our teachers have not been trained. Their being trained in June will improve our implementation of *Reading First*.” Another reading coach stated, “I would like more teachers to attend the K-3 academy.” Still another reading coach stated that she would like to have “more on-site staff development.” Finally, one reading coach stated, “We need more time for professional development. We can’t take teachers out of class, and we don’t have real meaningful time before or after school. We need to do more professional development in order to continue to improve instruction.”

The following reading coaches’ comments and suggestions are concerned with “improved scheduling for reading coach” (28%). One reading coach stated, “I would definitely [like to] make time for more professional development opportunities. I wish I had them more than once a month; that is not sufficient, for modeling, for getting into the classrooms. Teachers want me in their classrooms, but I have many obligations that take me away from the classrooms.” Another reading coach stated, “I need more time here at school. If [only] I could get an extra two weeks in the summer to complete my tasks, for time in the book room, to officially get preplanning time—.” Finally, another reading coach also stated that she needed to “have time to get in the classrooms more.”

Site Visit Team Suggestions

Reflections by team leaders who have visited 142 *Reading First* schools, both this year

and in previous years, and who have observed in hundreds of classrooms from 2004 to 2007 yielded suggestions that parallel many of the suggestions offered by school personnel over these years. These team leaders offer suggestions that could extend the impact of *Reading First* as plans evolve for the future.

Use of School Resources: At many of the schools visited, the principal, coaches, and teachers stated that, largely because of *Reading First*, resources were plentiful. A large number of reading programs, supplementary materials, and computer/technology programs are now available for use with struggling readers and for students who require *iii* instruction. At a number of schools, however, teachers are struggling to match appropriate materials to individual student needs; in these cases, students are often being instructed in two, three, or four of the available programs with little regard for which of these is the most appropriate. As a result of these observations, the following recommendation concerns the effective use of resources at the school level:

The *Reading First* coach at each school could be provided with additional professional development in aligning materials to student need, which would include determining the appropriate grade level and skill level(s) for each set of materials/program, determining the prerequisite skill(s) needed for effective use, and determining the effectiveness of the instruction in a specific reading component, e.g., fluency. Materials and or programs for *iii* instruction also would be included in this training. Reading coaches could be given brief training on the use of FCRR reports and the FCRR Summary Table to aid in this process. Reading coaches could then provide training to the teachers at their schools, which would allow the reading coach, and then the teachers to make more informed decisions about program use and would help them more closely align individual student data to appropriate materials for reading improvement/intervention.

Professional Development: A number of principals and reading coaches expressed the need for more ongoing professional development to meet the needs of, in many cases, a large number of new teachers at the beginning of each school year and a significant number of teachers who enter their schools during the school year. The personnel to provide this type of training is limited both at the school and the district level; yet, new teachers often cannot attend *Reading First* training until the following summer. To help with this issue the following recommendations are made:

Develop an easily accessible “Highlights” of high quality reading instruction to get new teachers “up and running,” using video, DVD and internet format. Examples of small group, whole group and individual instruction could be included. The five components of reading could be delineated with effective activities for instruction in each of these areas.

Develop several easily accessible programs of teachers effectively implementing the entire 90-minute reading block. Ideally, this video/DVD could be developed for each grade level, K-3.

Based on numerous classroom visits, team leaders observed only a few teachers differentiating instruction to the degree that is needed; most students get “busy work” to keep them occupied while the teacher works with small groups. Training and follow-up coaching on differentiated instruction is sorely needed.

XI. Observational Data

The following section provides information on the types of instruction that were observed in classrooms visited by the reviewers. These data were collected during the 45-minute observations conducted in 100 classes in grades K-3 at 25 *Reading First* schools. The average number of students in these classrooms was 16.

Table 4 summarizes data on quality of instruction, the amount of student engagement and instructional focus across all site visits conducted in spring 2007.

Ratings of Teachers' Quality of Instruction, Student Engagement and Instructional Focus in <i>Reading First</i> Schools					
	K	1st	2nd	3rd	All Grades
Overall quality of instruction (4 pt. scale)	2.72 (.66)	2.80 (.46)	2.84 (.40)	3.24 (.49)	2.92 (.28)
Overall student engagement (3 pt. scale)	2.76 (.36)	2.76 (.36)	2.84 (.27)	2.84 (.27)	2.82 (.16)
Percentage of instructional time focused on instructional activities	82% (9%)	85% (9%)	93% (6%)	94% (4%)	89% (5%)
Length of observation in minutes	45.0 (1.52)	45.88 (2.22)	45.84 (1.31)	45.04 (2.21)	45.19 (1.31)
Length of reading block in minutes	99.4 (13.54)	98.8 (12.98)	100.4 (14.51)	101.2 (17.63)	99.95 (12.84)

Table 4: Ratings of Teachers' Quality of Instruction, Student Engagement and Instructional Focus in *Reading First* Schools

The average instructional quality rating of the teachers who were observed was 2.92 on a 4-point scale, with 4 being the highest quality. Examples of teacher characteristics that would qualify as high quality include: using explicit, direct language; modeling examples for students; providing immediate, corrective feedback to students; and scaffolding tasks and materials to meet student needs. Similarly, student engagement during this observation period was 2.82 on a 3-point scale. High student engagement is described as when almost all students are actively engaged in a learning activity. During all observations, the average amount of the class time dedicated to instructional activities was 89%. During kindergarten observations, 82% of the time was focused on instructional activities. During the first grade observations, 85% of the time was focused on instructional activities. During the second grade observations, 93% of the time was focused on instructional activities. During the third grade observations, 94% of the time was focused on instructional activities. The remaining non-instructional time was spent on activities such as behavior management, announcements, instructions, distributing

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materials, facilitating seat work, etc.

Figures 1-4 show the percentages of instructional time dedicated to various reading categories in each grade across all classrooms in the 25 *Reading First* schools where observations were conducted during spring 2007. For a description of the instructional categories, refer to Appendix A.

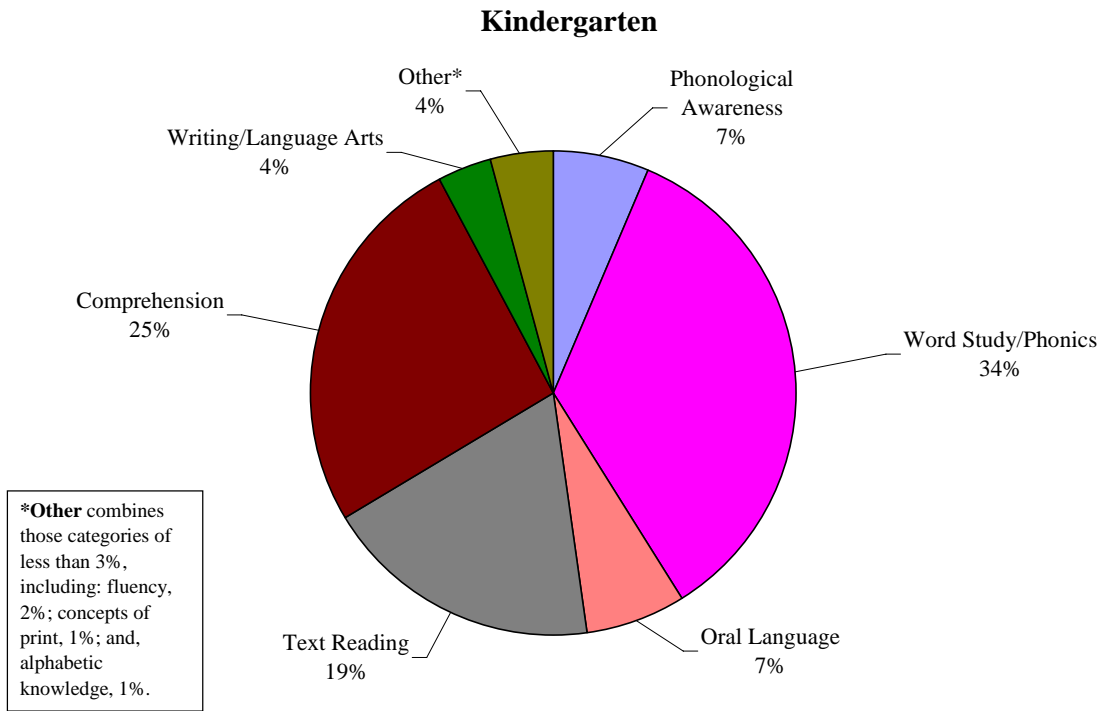


Figure 1

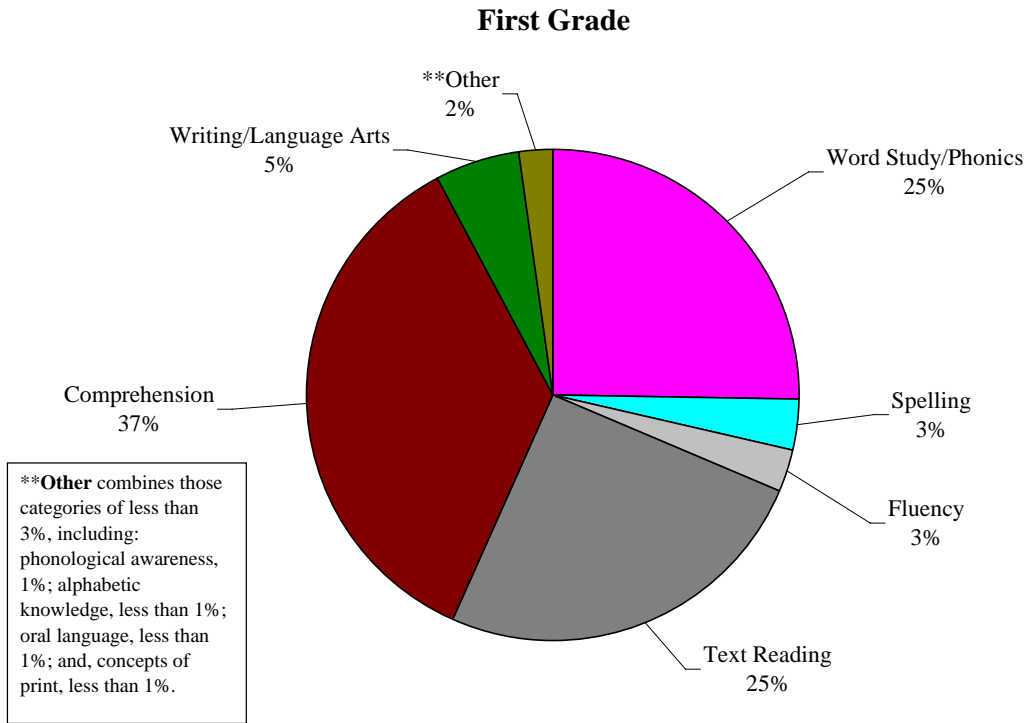


Figure 2

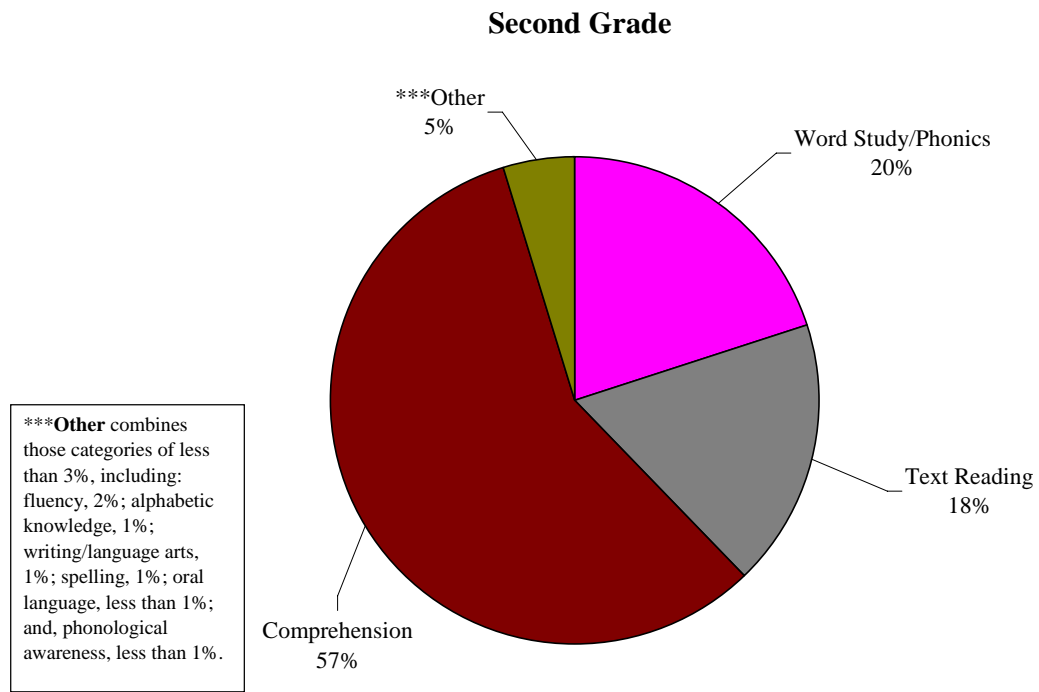


Figure 3

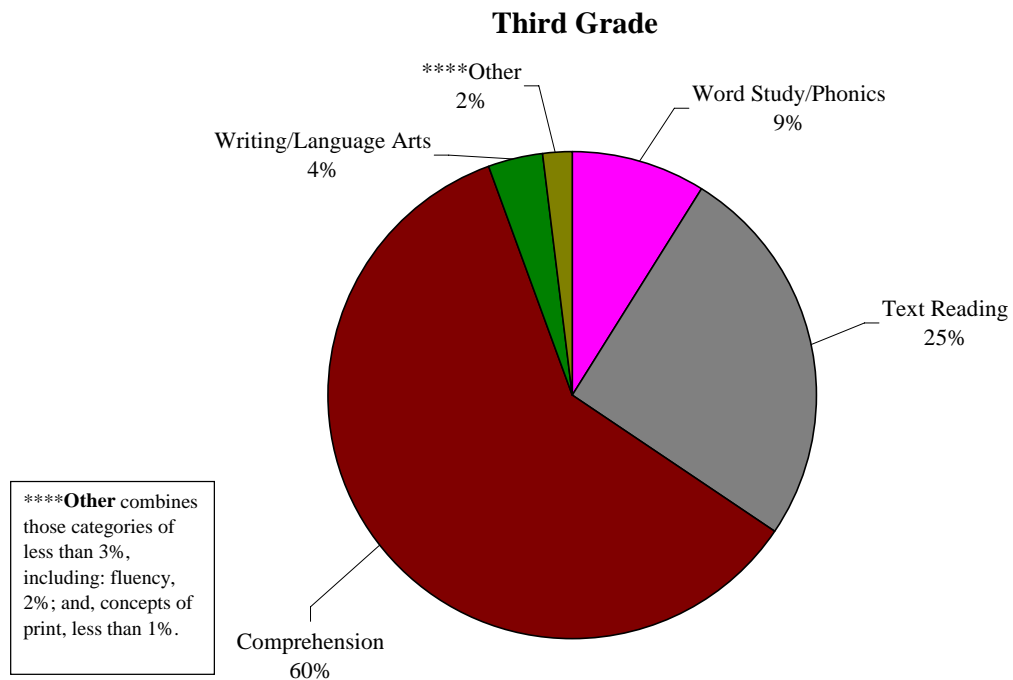


Figure 4