Welcome

Welcome to the February issue of Intervention News with a focus on Leadership. In this issue you will find: a summary of a book describing a district success story of Kennewick, WA, information regarding a program in Miami where principals are leading principals, a profile of a school with strong leadership and strong intervention data results, and goals for Reading First schools to aim for with ECI and EI indices.

Research Corner: A Review of the book Annual Growth for all Students, Catch-up Growth for Those who are Behind

By Liz Crawford, Director of Interventions and Elissa Arndt, Curriculum Specialist

“In the United States, public schools deliver 85% or more of their curriculum by reading textbooks, whiteboards, worksheets, and computer screens. It matters little what else they learn in elementary school if they do not learn to read at grade level. Even math depends on reading” (Fielding, Kerr, & Rosier, 2007, p.48). This is a concern for educators everywhere, but what can be done to meet this high literacy need for our students? One school district has developed a model to provide their students with reading success and their story is captured in this book.

The Kennewick School district is located in southeastern Washington State. It is an urban area with approximately 185,000 residents serving 15,000 students in its schools. Twenty-five percent of Kennewick’s students are ethnic minorities; 48% of students in elementary school qualify for federal lunch programs. What makes this district unique is in the spring of 1995, with an operating budget of $119 million, the Kennewick School Board set a goal that 90% of its third graders would read at or above grade level in 3 years. In the fall of 1995, 57% of third graders were at this level. Eleven years later, in 2006, the district achieved their 90% goal. How did they do it?

Hard work and a common focus helped them achieve this objective. It required conviction, perseverance, and cooperation. This book was published to chronicle their experience and encourage other districts throughout the country that with determination, a common goal, and support from top district personnel, this is an achievable goal. In order to describe their process, the authors organized this book into four parts. Part One discusses the techniques they utilized to achieve accelerated growth for lagging students: what worked and what didn’t. Part Two addresses the district-level components necessary for improved achievement in each school. Part Three explains the reasoning behind this urgent movement to have all students reading at grade level; economic, social, and legislative forces are explored and linked back to its impact at the school-level. Part Four summarizes the need for school personnel to look beyond kindergarten to the birth to five population in their district. Strategies used by the Kennewick district to help these children be ready for school are explained for others to incorporate. Excellent instructional leadership, expert use of data, high quality initial instruction, superb testing that monitors annual growth, and the four-step Targeted Accelerated Growth (TAG) loop were the factors that lead to their success. The TAG loop consists of the following four phases: diagnostic testing to determine the deficient sub-skills of those behind, proportional increases in direct instructional time, teaching to the deficient sub-skill, and retesting to assure that adequate catch-up growth actually occurred (p. 34).

Within the district-wide framework instructional time is sacred. “To achieve 90% at or above standard, elementary schools must create a growth pattern where the majority of students’ achieve annual growth and nearly all students in the lowest quintiles make double annual growth or more” (p. 188). The book describes the schools’ focus on not only increasing instructional time, but increasing quality. They examined their reading blocks and found that blocks of time were being used for silent reading or doing worksheets rather than direct instructional time with the teacher. They made adjustments and moved the practice portion to a time with paraprofessionals or another time that would not take away from working directly with the teacher. They emphasize that increasing the quantity of instruction, although a difficult task, can occur in one semester, but increasing the quality of instruction takes time. It can vary from teacher to teacher and requires a steadfast dedication to providing quality professional development and mentoring and coaching.

As a means of quantifying what this increase in instruction would look like in their schools, the authors provide an example for a student who scores in the 12th percentile on the state assessment at the end of second grade. Using various formulas, the school calculates this child is three years behind his peers who are scoring at the 50th percentile. They calculate that it would take 80 daily instructional minutes for a typical third grader to make annual growth. 80 minutes of daily instruction is also necessary for annual growth in fourth grade. In order for this student to “catch up” the three years he is behind it is estimated he will require an additional 240 minutes (3 years x 80 minutes) of daily instruction. Added together it requires this third and fourth grade student to receive a total of 400 minutes of daily instruction to reach the 50th percentile by the end of fourth grade and meet most state standards. Breaking it down by grade, he would need 200 minutes of reading instruction a day in 3rd and 200 minutes of instruction a day in fourth grade to become a grade level reader.
Discussion Questions

1. Dave Montague, an elementary school principal, has this quote in his office: “The fact that an opinion has been widely held is no evidence whatsoever that it is not utterly absurd” (p. 26). Reflect on this quote.
   - Are there beliefs in your school or district that are maintained because they’ve always been there or they are considered the status quo?
   - What evidence or data do you have to support these beliefs/opinions?
   - What steps would need to be taken to revise the beliefs for more effective reading instruction to occur?

2. “The power of Kennewick’s program is that we are responsible for getting 90% of our students to the goal, not that we have a specified number of minutes to teach reading. A quick way to gut this program would be to get obsessed with inputs rather than results” – Ted Mansfield, elementary school principal (p. 45). “It took several years for principals to get the focus off demographics, which they could not control, and onto curriculum, increased time, and quality of instruction which they could control.” – Ed Frost, School Board (p. 108).
   - What challenges do you see impacting your efforts to attain the Reading First goal of having your students reading at grade level by third grade? What can you or have you done to overcome them?

3. “On the first day of kindergarten, the range between students in the bottom and top quartile midpoints is six years in reading and four years in math.” (p. 226, Maxim # 6) What are you doing as a school to help the kindergarten teachers differentiate instruction at such varied levels?
   - What are you doing as a school to work with the families in your community to help reduce this gap before the children arrive in kindergarten?
   - Are there additional steps to be taken in your community? How could you bring them to fruition?

4. “We focus on direct, eyeball-to-eyeball instruction during the morning period, when students are fresh. Everyone teaches, including the aides, the librarians, the music and P.E. specialists. I look for students getting instruction from the teacher, not working alone.” (p. 24). Dave Montague Think about your reading block and the minutes dedicated to reading instruction. How much of that time is direct teacher instruction?
   - Are there ways you could adjust the reading block to provide more teacher instruction?
   - When are most of your students spending time practicing the skills they have been taught? Is this the most efficient use of time? If not, how could it be improved upon?

Reference
Visit the National Children's Reading Foundation's website (http://www.readingfoundation.org) and click on “Publications” for more information on this book.

Reading First Principals Leadership Project - Miami-Dade Vanguard Principals:
Principals Leading Principals By Arthur Head, Director of Miami-Dade Vanguard Project and Pauline Ward, Executive Director Reading First for Miami-Dade County Public Schools

The Florida Center for Reading Research in collaboration with Miami-Dade County Public Schools, Curriculum and Instruction, Division of Language Arts and Reading has developed a unique and innovative model to support leadership in Reading First Schools. Over the past year, the Reading First Principal’s Leadership Project (RFPLP), also known as The Vanguard Principals, has focused on the dynamics of leadership. The understanding of leader-follower development, effective change models and leadership vs. management and their importance in leadership practice are key components of the program. Professional development is designed to strengthen the practice of using multiple sources of data to make informed decisions about instruction, intervention and the distribution of resources and personnel.
The criteria developed for Vanguard participation begins with the “Receptive Factor”. Principals chosen to participate in the Vanguard group are willing to break the bonds of leadership isolation. They are willing to be responsible for others. The length and depth of administrative experience are not the deciding factors. Vanguard members come from schools distributed geographically throughout the district and represent schools of all performance levels.
Reading First Principals Leadership Project cont'd

The inaugural Vanguard (Cohort I) consisted of nine principals. In the 2007-2008 school year the RFPLP model of leadership development has expanded to include eighteen Associate principals to be paired with the nine Vanguard principals of Cohort I. Additionally, a second cohort of ten principals has been developed bringing the total participation to thirty-seven. This expansion now includes more than one-third of Miami-Dade’s Reading First principals in this principal leading principal leadership model. The intimate setting of these small group leadership forums reduces the culture of isolation of principals, aids in the codification of daily practice and provides an avenue to demonstrate newly acquired skills. Vanguard principals are provided opportunities to develop and present new insights to other principals both locally and at state level conferences.

Vanguard Principal Group brochure (PDF)

School Profile: W.F. Burns Oak Hill Elementary
By Liz Crawford, Director of Interventions

W.F. Burns Oak Hill Elementary School located in Volusia County is demonstrating success in reading instruction especially in providing interventions for struggling readers. Based on the 2006-2007 data, Burns Oak Hill teachers are increasing the number of their students who are reading on grade level and decreasing the number of students identified as ‘at risk.’ Mr. Torrence Broxton, an experienced principal, has been at Burns Oak Hill for 2 years. The school has approximately 148 students in K-3rd grades, with 71% qualifying for free or reduced lunch, 18% minority students, and very few (1%) English Language learners. Mr. Broxton works very closely with the Reading Coach, Mrs. Lida Grillo, on addressing the needs of their students. Mrs. Grillo has been the reading coach for three years and comes from an Exceptional Student Education (ESE) background. They view the first step to improving interventions as quality classroom instruction that reduces the number of children requiring such intervention. When you visit Burns Oak Hill you immediately get a strong sense of community. After observing in classes and speaking with the staff at the school, several common factors or themes reoccurred when discussing the reasons for the success of the school.

The leadership and support of both the coach and the principal was the first common factor discussed. The teachers praised Mr. Broxton and Mrs. Grillo for providing the materials, training, and time needed to provide high quality interventions, including planning time. An added benefit the teachers mentioned is that because of the small size of the school, the message they are receiving is consistent; by wearing many hats at the school, including the ESE coordinator and intervention teacher, Mrs. Grillo integrates all aspects of reading instruction.

The second reason cited as contributing to their success was the level of knowledge and skill of the teachers as well as their beliefs and attitude towards teaching all children to learn to read. The teaching staff at Burns Oak Hill feel supported and part of a community which has lead to low teacher turnover. This combination of knowledge and support allows the staff to have a very solid relationship among and across the grades allowing for strong collaboration and a mentality of doing “whatever it takes” to reach all readers. The teachers’ knowledge base extends to include the use of data. At Burns Oak Hill they have become more proficient in using their data to make instructional decisions and this allows them to focus their data meeting time on developing plans to respond to the data rather than on the first step of interpretation. The school has two, half-time reading intervention teachers and three full time special education teachers, plus a part time speech-language pathologist who all contribute to the reading instruction of struggling readers.

The third factor sited by the staff was their “+1” status. As a “+1 school” they have an extra hour of instruction per day which is funded through Title I. The whole staff agrees this extra hour allows them the time necessary to address the specific needs of their children. In K-2, the extra time is devoted to interventions in reading and in grades 3-5 the intervention block includes both reading and math depending on the needs of the students.

In Kindergarten they have a 90 minute reading block, 60 minute intervention block, plus 20 minutes with *Elements of Reading: Vocabulary. During the intervention time, the struggling readers get small group *Reading Mastery instruction as well as *Road to the Code. They focus on phonemic awareness and phonics with their struggling readers. The speech-language pathologist instructs children during the kindergarten intervention block as does the reading resource teacher. In First grade, it is the same schedule with intervention involving *Reading Mastery, and to address fluency needs *Read Naturally, *Quick Reads, or *Six Minute Solution programs are used.

In Second grade, they also have a 60 minute intervention block which they are constantly adjusting depending on the student needs because they are seeing fewer students showing up as “at risk” in second grade. Reading Mastery and Read Naturally are provided by the intervention teacher while Spiral Up Phonics and Harcourt Intervention are utilized by the classroom teachers. In Third grade the extra 60 minutes is focused primarily on reading every day, while in 4th-5th grades the children get an extra 30 minutes three to four times a week with an intervention teacher. They could also get math intervention support at this time from their classroom teacher. In third grade they primarily use *Corrective Reading, Spiral Up Phonics, Six Minute Solution, and various comprehension strategies. The fourth and fifth grade students use the *Rewards program and other comprehension strategies.

The second, third, and fourth grade teachers are consistently implementing Reciprocal Teaching strategies this year to support their student’s comprehension. Other literacy intervention programs are utilized throughout the grade levels depending on the identified needs of the students. Throughout the grades, teachers have in-
Establishing Goals for the ECI and EI indices
By Cari Miller, Director of Reading First

Many districts and schools have expressed the need for assistance on how to set reasonable goals for the indices that we provide related to Effectiveness of Core Instruction (ECI) and Effectiveness of Interventions (EI). Since goals should be both challenging and attainable with reasonable effort, we have proposed a set of goals for the various indices that are based on ECI/EI performance of the top 25% of Reading First schools last year.

The table to the right represents the recommended goals based on the top 25% of schools on each index at each grade level at the middle and end of the year.

We highly encourage schools to strive to reach these goals. We also remind you that the ECI index can help you understand whether your core instruction is strong enough to ensure that all students are making a full year’s growth on the critical skills measured by the DIBELS tests, and the EI indices can help you closely examine the extent to which your interventions are accelerating reading growth in “at risk” students. However, the ECI and EI measures are based on the DIBELS tests, which measure only a part of the reading improvement that students need to make each year. These indices do not assess reading comprehension; however, we have confidence that, as you reach the goals outlined above, you will also make strong improvements in the percent of your students that are able to meet grade level standards in reading comprehension.

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Effectiveness of Core Instruction (ECI) — this index shows the percentage of students who began the year reading “at grade level” and are continuing to meet grade level expectations at the end-of-year assessment.

Effectiveness of Interventions (EI) — this index shows the percentage of your students who began the year at some level of risk for reading difficulties (reading below grade level) but who have grown rapidly enough to advance to a lower level of risk by the end of the year (i.e. they move from intensive to strategic, from intensive to grade level, or from strategic to grade level).

Effectiveness of Interventions for Intensive Students (EI-I) — this index shows the percentage of students that moved from the “intensive” level to the “strategic” level or to grade level.

Effectiveness of Interventions for Strategic Students (EI-S) — this index shows the percentage of students that moved from the “strategic” level to grade level.