Leaving Fewer Children Behind in Reading: Requirements at the Classroom and School level

Dr. Joseph K. Torgesen
Florida Center for Reading Research

Bureau of Indian Affairs Literacy Conference, January, 2006
Beginning with the End in Mind:
Our Ultimate Goal
Each year, to have more students at every grade level from 1\textsuperscript{st} on up able to:

- Read text written at their grade level with good comprehension and fluency

Examples:

- Pick up a piece of fiction and read it with enjoyment and good comprehension of plot, characters, and action
- Read a science text and grasp the main ideas as well as their connection to supporting details
- Read a social studies text and learn new vocabulary words as well as new concepts
What we know about the factors that affect reading comprehension

Proficient comprehension of text is influenced by:

- Accurate and fluent word reading skills
- Oral language skills (vocabulary, linguistic comprehension)
- Extent of conceptual and factual knowledge
- Knowledge and skill in use of cognitive strategies to improve comprehension or repair it when it breaks down.
- Reasoning and inferential skills
- Motivation to understand and interest in task and materials
Reading is a multifaceted skill, gradually acquired over years of instruction and practice.

Skilled Reading—fluent coordination of word reading and comprehension processes.
Text structure, vocabulary, print style and font, discourse, genre, motivating features

Word recognition, vocabulary, background knowledge, strategy use, inference-making abilities, motivation

Environment, purpose, social relations, cultural norms, motivating features (e.g. school/classroom climate, families, peers)
Three potential stumbling blocks to becoming a good reader (NRC Report, 1998)

1. Difficulty learning to read words accurately and fluently

2. Insufficient vocabulary and conceptual knowledge to support comprehension of text

3. Absence or loss of initial motivation to read, or failure to develop a mature appreciation of the rewards of reading.
We know that poor, and minority children often come to school unprepared in these areas:

1. They have had less exposure to print and the alphabet
2. They are behind in the development of phonemic sensitivity
3. Their vocabulary us usually less well developed – $\frac{1}{2}$ size in poor children
4. Their range of experience and conceptual knowledge is often limited or different compared to other students
5. They sometimes do not have good models of reading or support for academics in their homes
Relationship of “school challenge” to student performance

587 RF schools in Florida

Level of School Challenge based on % of students qualifying for FR lunch

% of 1-3 Students Performing At Grade Level at the End of Year

Increasing Challenge

Decreasing Performance

Average % at GL

Averadage % at GL

587 RF schools in Florida
The **Adult Learning and Performance Gap**

% of 1-3 Students Performing At Grade Level at the End of Year

---

**Level of School Challenge based on % of students qualifying for FR lunch**

- Top 15% Schools
- Low 15% schools

---

Approx. 25%
In order to leave fewer children behind in reading, we must do better at three educational tasks:

1. Prevent the emergence of serious reading problems in grades K-3

2. Provide strong literacy instruction in grades 4-12 to help all students acquire the increasingly sophisticated skills and knowledge required at each successive grade

3. Provide special instructional supports and interventions for students in grades 4-12 who learn more slowly or cannot read at grade level
Improvements in reading at three Ages

Latest results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress

No difference

Slight long term improvement - No recent difference

Recent improvement is largest in 30 years
The prevention of reading difficulties: three areas we must become stronger each year

1. Increase the quality, consistency, and reach of instruction in every K-3 classroom

2. Conduct timely and valid assessments of reading growth to identify struggling readers. Use this data to improve school level and instructional planning

3. Provide more intensive interventions to help struggling readers “catch up” to grade level standards in each grade K-3.
1. Efforts to help increase the quality, consistency, and **reach** of instruction in every K-3 classroom
   a. Insuring teachers have excellent professional development, including strong training in use of the core program to guide instruction
   b. Monitoring and supporting classroom instruction through principal walkthroughs
Improving fidelity and consistency of classroom instruction: Principal walkthroughs

Purposes of the walkthrough

The purpose of a classroom visit is to help teachers improve their instruction and identify the best teaching practices in your school. Observation visits reflect your interest in instruction and in your staff's professional growth. (Blase & Blase, 1998; Scholastic, 2005)
Value of the principal’s walkthrough
1. Efforts to help increase the quality, consistency, and **reach** of instruction in every K-3 classroom

   a. Insuring teachers have excellent professional development, including strong training in use of the core program to guide instruction

   b. Monitoring and supporting classroom instruction through principal walkthroughs

   Are teachers providing explicit, systematic, and motivating whole group instruction?

   Is small group instruction differentiated appropriately by student need?
Increasing the quality and power of teacher-led, small-group, differentiated instruction

Instruction should be differentiated to meet the needs of individual students in at least four ways:

**Frequency and duration of meeting in small groups** – every day, three times per week, etc.

**Size of instructional group** – 3 students, 6 students, 8 students, etc.

**Focus of instruction** – work in phonemic awareness in phonics, work in fluency and comprehension, etc.

**Lesson format** – guided reading vs. skills focused lessons
Four good books for instructional ideas

Making Sense of Phonics: The Hows and Whys
Isabel Beck: Guilford (2006)

Bringing Words to Life: Robust Vocabulary Instruction
Beck, McKeown, & Kucan: Guilford (2002)

Vocabulary Handbook
Consortium on Reading Excellence (2006)

Comprehension Process Instruction: Creating Success in Grades K-3
Block, Rogers, & Johnson (2004)
Points of Maximum Impact and Leadership Focus in Successful High Challenge Schools

1. Efforts to help increase the quality, consistency, and **reach** of instruction in every K-3 classroom
   a. Insuring teachers have excellent professional development, including strong training in use of the core program to guide instruction
   b. Monitoring and supporting classroom instruction through principal walkthroughs

   Are teachers providing explicit, systematic, and motivating whole group instruction?

   Is small group instruction differentiated appropriately by student need?

   Are other students engaged in independent learning activities that are appropriate and engaging?
Organization of a classroom during small group instruction

- Classroom teacher and group of 4
- Resource teacher and group of 3

Are these students working productively on appropriate practice activities?

Something that might be helpful: FCRR has developed 240 ISA’s for K-2 and 170 for 2-3 –

Independent Learning Activity (4)

Independent Learning Activity (3)

Independent Learning Activity (4)

Independent Learning Activity (4)
Effective independent student learning activities...
A source for high quality independent student learning activities

To download up to 240 independent student learning activities for K-1 classrooms, and up to 170 activities for students in grades 2-3, go to http://www.fcrr.org/Curriculum/studentCenterActivities.htm

There is also a teacher resource manual providing directions for classroom management during small group instruction, and approximately 70 minutes of video training.
2. Be sure school-level assessment plan is working, and provide leadership in use of data to plan instruction at the school and classroom level.

- Beginning of the year screening tests
- Progress monitoring tests during the year
- Diagnostic tests
- End-of-year outcome tests
Guidance on how to establish a comprehensive assessment plan for grades K-3

Points of Maximum Impact and Leadership
Focus in Successful Reading First Schools

2. Be sure school-level assessment plan is working, and provide leadership in use of data to plan instruction at the school and classroom level.

Two important uses of student data

1. School level planning involves identifying needs for materials, personnel, time – takes place in spring or early summer-has budget implications.
Budgeting for Success
Points of Maximum Impact and Leadership Focus in Successful Reading First Schools

2. Be sure school-level assessment plan is working, and provide leadership in use of data to plan instruction at the school and classroom level

Two important uses of student data

1. School level planning involves identifying needs for materials, personnel, time – takes place in spring or early summer—has budget implications

2. Provide leadership for the use of data to make adjustments and increase power of instruction for those who need it – attend important data meetings
Successful schools use data effectively
Making decisions and following up
Points of Maximum Impact and Leadership Focus in Successful Reading First Schools

3. Provide powerful interventions to students who need them for as long as they need them
   A. Developing a school schedule that allows sufficient time for interventions
Schedule Video
Example of Staggered Reading Blocks with “Walk and Read”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Writing</th>
<th>Math</th>
<th>Science / SS</th>
<th>Special Area</th>
<th>Lunch</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>8:45-10:30</td>
<td>10:30-11:30</td>
<td>1:35-2:35</td>
<td>12:15-12:50</td>
<td>12:50-1:35</td>
<td>11:30-12:15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>8:45-10:30</td>
<td>9:45-10:30</td>
<td>8:45-9:45</td>
<td>1:15-1:40</td>
<td>1:40-2:25</td>
<td>12:30-1:15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>10:30-12:15</td>
<td>9:30-10:30</td>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>2-2:30</td>
<td>8:45-9:30</td>
<td>12:15-1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Organization of a classroom during small group instruction

Classroom teacher and group of 4

Resource teacher and group of 3

Are these students working productively on appropriate practice activities?

Something that might be helpful: FCRR has developed 240 ISA’s for K-2 and 170 for 2-3 –

Independent Learning Activity (4)

Independent Learning Activity (3)

Independent Learning Activity (4)

Independent Learning Activity (4)
One principal’s comments about scheduling interventions during the small-group time of the reading block

1) reduced student travel time to intervention classes

2) increased coordination between the regular classroom and intervention teacher

3) provided additional learning opportunities for the regular classroom teacher who is able to occasionally observe the intervention teacher working with a group of struggling readers
Points of Maximum Impact and Leadership Focus in Successful Reading First Schools

3. Provide powerful interventions to students who need them for as long as they need them
   A. Developing a school schedule that allows sufficient time for interventions
   B. Identifying or providing sufficient personnel to deliver the intervention instruction
   C. Providing appropriate programs and materials to support the intervention instruction
      Will need something for early reading accuracy-phonics
      Will need something for fluency growth
      Will also likely need a supplement for vocabulary
Points of Maximum Impact and Leadership Focus in Successful Reading First Schools

3. Provide powerful interventions to students who need them for as long as they need them

   A. Developing a school schedule that allows sufficient time for interventions
   B. Identifying or providing sufficient personnel to deliver the intervention instruction
   C. Providing appropriate programs and materials to support the intervention instruction
   D. Oversight, energy, follow-up – use data meetings to ask about students, make decisions to increase support, etc.
Guidance on essential procedures for implementing effective interventions with young children

http://www.centeroninstruction.org/files/Principals%20guide%20to%20intervention.pdf
Obtain copy at:
http://www.fcrr.org/Interventions/pdf/teachingAllStudentsToReadComplete.pdf

Or,
Go to www.fcrr.org
Click on Interventions for struggling readers (in right column)
You will see the title of the document
Evidence from one school that we can do substantially better than ever before

School Characteristics:
70% Free and Reduced Lunch (going up each year)
65% minority (mostly African-American)

Elements of Curriculum Change:
Movement to a more balanced reading curriculum beginning in 1994-1995 school year (incomplete implementation) for K-2, then improved implementation in 1995-1996

Implementation in Fall of 1996 of screening and more intensive small group instruction for at-risk students
Hartsfield Elementary Progress over five years

Proportion falling below the 25th percentile in word reading ability at the end of first grade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Proportion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>31.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>20.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Average Percentile for entire grade (n=105)

- 1995: 48.9
- 1996: 55.2
- 1997: 61.4
- 1998: 73.5
- 1999: 81.7

Screening at beginning of first grade, with extra instruction for those in bottom 30-40%
**Hartsfield Elementary Progress over five years**

Proportion falling below the 25th Percentile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Proportion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>31.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>20.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Average Percentile

- 1995: 48.9
- 1996: 55.2
- 1997: 61.4
- 1998: 73.5
- 1999: 81.7

**Legend:**
- Blue bars represent the proportion falling below the 25th percentile.
- Red bars represent the annual average percentiles.
Changes in percent of students with serious reading difficulties from end of first year to end of third year in 318 Reading First Schools
Changes in percent of students with serious reading difficulties from end of first year to end of third year in 318 Reading First Schools
Changes in % identified as learning disabled across time in RF schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cohort 1</th>
<th>0304</th>
<th>0405</th>
<th>0506</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1\textsuperscript{st} Grade</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2\textsuperscript{nd} Grade</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3\textsuperscript{rd} Grade</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What about the challenges of literacy instruction in grades 4-12?
“Learning to read” continues after grade 3

Reading 4-12

Extend “sight vocabulary” to unfamiliar words in increasingly challenging text
Reading K-3 vs. 4-12

**Reading 4-12**

Extend “sight vocabulary” to unfamiliar words in increasingly challenging text

Learning meanings of thousands of new words – vocabulary expansion
### Why Oral language experience is not enough

Frequency of Word Use in Major Sources of Oral and Written Language (Hayes & Ahrens, 1988)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rare Words per 1,000</th>
<th>I. Printed texts</th>
<th>II. Television texts</th>
<th>III. Adult speech</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers</td>
<td>68.3</td>
<td>Adult shows</td>
<td>College graduates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Popular magazines</td>
<td>65.7</td>
<td>Children’s shows</td>
<td>17.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult books</td>
<td>52.7</td>
<td></td>
<td>talk with friends/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s books</td>
<td>30.9</td>
<td></td>
<td>spouses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool books</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reading K-3 vs. 4-12

**Reading 4-12**

- Extend “sight vocabulary” to unfamiliar words in increasingly challenging text
- Learning meanings of thousands of new words – vocabulary expansion
- Increasingly detailed knowledge of text structures and genres
- Expansion of content knowledge in many domains
- Thinking and reasoning skills increase
- Reading specific comprehension strategies become more complex
Reading K-3 vs. 4-12

Reading 4-12

Extend “sight vocabulary” to unfamiliar words in increasingly challenging text

Learning meanings of thousands of new words – vocabulary expansion

Increasingly detailed knowledge of text structures and genres

Expansion of content knowledge in many domains

Thinking and reasoning skills increase

Reading specific comprehension strategies become more complex
“Ensuring adequate ongoing literacy development for all students in the middle and high school years is a more challenging task than ensuring excellent reading education in the primary grades, for two reasons: first, secondary school literacy skills are more complex, more embedded in subject matters, and more multiply determined; second, adolescents are not as universally motivated to read better or as interested in school-based reading as kindergartners.”
Biancarosa & Snow, (2005)
Based on what we currently know, efforts should focus on three goals

1. Improve overall levels of reading proficiency for all students – more level 4 and level 5 readers

2. Insure that students at “grade level” in third grade are also at “grade level” in 10th grade

3. Accelerate development of students “below grade level toward grade level standards
To accomplish goals #1 & 2, both research and logic suggest that content area teachers must bear the main responsibility.

Adolescent literacy depends on broad and deep knowledge and high-level thinking skills, as well as skills specific to reading.

Some reading strategies and approaches are specific to content and style in science, mathematics, history, etc.

Students spend most of their time during the school day with content area teachers.
Current research provides support for **five areas of improvement/change by content area teachers to enhance literacy.**
5 Areas of Improvement

1. More explicit instruction and guided practice in the use of reading comprehension strategies
2. Increasing the amount of open, sustained discussion of content and ideas from text.
3. Maintaining high standards for the level of conversation, questions, vocabulary, that are used in discussions and in assignments
4. Adopting instructional methods that increase student engagement with text and motivation for reading
5. More powerful teaching of content and use of methods that allow all to learn critical content
To accomplish goal #3, both research and logic suggest:

1. We must work to prevent the loss of “grade level readers after grade 3.

2. We must find a way to deliver more intensive, more powerful instruction to students reading below grade level, because they must accelerate in their development.
Primary Characteristics of Struggling Readers in Middle and High School

They are almost always less fluent readers—sight word vocabularies many thousands of words smaller than average readers.

Usually know the meanings of fewer words.

Usually have less conceptual knowledge.

Are almost always less skilled in using strategies to enhance comprehension or repair it when it breaks down.

Will typically not enjoy reading or choose to read for pleasure.
As an initial approximation, there are two broadly different groups of struggling readers for us to be concerned about.

Students who are still struggling significantly with initial word reading skills (say, below the 3-4^{th} grade level)

What proportion of struggling readers is this?

*Reading Next* estimates 10%.

A recent study from University of Kansas found approximately 65% of Urban struggling readers had difficulties in this area.
As an initial approximation, there are two broadly different groups of struggling readers for us to be concerned about.

Students who are still struggling significantly with initial word reading skills (say, below the 3rd grade level)

Students who have “adequate” word level skills (though not fully fluent), but struggle with vocabulary, knowledge, reasoning, comprehension strategies, and motivation.
Findings from a recent review of interventions for older struggling readers led to important conclusions:

Schools need the capacity to provide high quality instruction in both word level and comprehension skills in order to meet the diverse needs of students who continue to struggle in reading in late elementary, middle and high school.

Successful interventions must be delivered with skill.
Successful interventions require an increase in instructional intensity – increased time and reduced class size.
Interventions should be provided on a continuum of intensity depending on student need.
Findings from a recent review of interventions for older struggling readers led to important conclusions:

There are significant overlaps between the instruction required for struggling readers and that required for grade-level readers in content area classrooms. Instructional elements should be coordinated between intervention and content classrooms.

Reading strategies taught in intervention classes should be reinforced and amplified in content classes.

Summarization, question generation, visualization, use of background knowledge, etc.
Conclusion:
The goal we are pursuing is very challenging:

*It will require:*  
More effective school leadership
Consistent, high quality professional development for teachers
More effective instruction by every teacher
More focused allocation of school resources, and perhaps more resources in the end
A reason for working toward continuous improvement....
And the rewards are great when we succeed...
Thank You