Teaching all students to read: Is it really possible?

Dr. Joseph K. Torgesen
Florida Center for Reading Research at Florida State University

International Dyslexia Association, November, 2008
In order to effectively prevent early reading difficulties, we need to apply two kinds of knowledge.

From the “science of reading”:
Information about the *individual* components of instruction and assessment that are most effective in raising literacy levels.

From effective schools:
Information about leadership, organizational, and classroom practices that are most effective in raising literacy levels.

Understanding, and Motivation to Apply.
A central problem in reading instruction arises, not from the absolute level of children’s preparation for learning to read, but from the diversity in their levels of preparation

(Olson, 1998)
Diversity in Preparation and Ability for Learning to Read

Diversity of Educational Response
Two important sources of diversity

1. Diversity in talent, or inherent abilities, for learning
   - Learning disabilities -- Dyslexia
   - Low general intelligence

2. Diversity in pre-school preparation, and family supports for learning to read
   - Poverty
   - Language status
Three important **kinds** of diversity

1. Diversity in the broad verbal and cognitive abilities required for the comprehension of language

2. Diversity in the specific verbal/linguistic abilities required for learning to read printed words accurately and fluently

3. Diversity in the motivational/behavioral attitudes and habits required for learning in school
The Effects of Weaknesses in Oral Language on Reading Growth
(Hirsch, 1996)

High Oral Language in Kindergarten

Low Oral Language in Kindergarten

5.2 years difference
Growth in “phonics” ability of children who begin first grade in the bottom 20% in Phoneme Awareness and Letter Knowledge (Torgesen & Mathes, 2000)
Growth in word reading ability of children who begin first grade in the bottom 20% in Phoneme Awareness and Letter Knowledge  
(Torgesen & Mathes, 2000)

- Low PA
- Ave PA

Grade level corresponding to age

Reading grade level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade level</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Growth in reading comprehension of children who begin first grade in the bottom 20% in Phoneme Awareness and Letter Knowledge (Torgesen & Mathes, 2000)
2007 results from National Assessment of Educational Progress at 4th Grade

Overall, 34% of 4th graders performed below the Basic Level of Proficiency in 17,600 schools.
When there is great diversity among students in their talent and preparation for learning to read...

*little* variation in teaching will always result in *great* variation in student learning.
Elements of a school level plan to provide reading instruction that is sufficiently powerful and adaptive to teach all students to read.
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
Diversity in Preparation and Ability for Learning to Read

Diversity of Educational Response
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.
Lessons learned from the Kennewick, Washington school district:

Located in southeastern Washington

Has about 15,000 students – 13 elementary schools, four middle schools, and 3 high schools

25% of students are ethnic minorities, and 48% of elementary school students qualify for free or reduced price lunch
Lessons learned from the Kennewick, Washington school district:

In 1995, the school board in Kennewick challenged the elementary schools to have 90% of their students at grade level in reading by the end of third grade – within 3 years.

The primary responsibility for accomplishing this was assigned to the school principals.
Lessons learned from the Kennewick, Washington school district:

From David Montague, a principal:

“We thought the board and the superintendent were crazy…I saw in the White Paper that elementary principals were responsible, and said ‘Why don’t they come down to our building and see the kids that come to our school?’ I mean, our kindergarten kids seem to enter school every year with lower skills…”
The District passed a bond that provided a district reading teacher for each school, and began to hold public meetings at a different elementary school every two weeks. They also began training principals in what strong instruction looked like…

“After that, the whining died down. The goal started to grow legs….”
At the schools...
“We began to have serious staff meetings...we began ....looking at the test data to see how far behind some of our kids were. It was the first time Washington had ever had such precise data. In the fall of 1995, 23% of our 3rd graders were reading at second grade level and 41% of our 3rd graders were reading at a kindergarten or 1st grade level.
Washington Elementary School

Growth in % of 3rd grade students meeting grade level standards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Year</th>
<th>Percent at Grade level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>95 96 97 98</td>
<td>57 72 72 68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>99 00 01 02</td>
<td>78 94 96 99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03 04 05 06</td>
<td>94 98 99 98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Working harder and more effectively at 3rd grade

Baseline year
From the Principal:

“By the 3rd year, we had exhausted our work-harder-at-third-grade strategy...More of the catch-up gain had to be made at second and first grade. Our first-and second-grade teachers realized that they had to become more accountable for their students’ learning. Even our kindergarten teachers, who had spent most of their class time on social activities, began the transition to teaching phonemic awareness along with letter and sound recognition.”
Washington Elementary School

Growth in % of 3rd grade students meeting grade level standards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Year</th>
<th>Percent at Grade level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>95</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>96</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>99</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Working harder and more effectively at 3rd grade
- Baseline year
- Began providing intensive interventions in the afternoon to many students
- Result of improvement at both 2nd and 3rd Grade
- Began testing in 2nd grade and focusing on earlier improvement
Washington Elementary School

School Characteristics
55% Free/reduced lunch
28% Minority
85% Stability

Teaching Staff
2 half-day kindergarten teachers
3 classroom teachers each in 1-5
1 District Reading Specialist
3 Title I Teachers
1.5 Resource room/special ed teachers
1 PE teacher
1 librarian, 1 Librarian secretary
3 Specials teachers
9 paraprofessionals
Washington Elementary School

How they get additional instructional power in first grade

During the Morning Reading Block
Small group reading during 1st hour of the day

It puts 13 adults with 75 students during the first hour in first grade

Struggling students get 1:3 with most skilled instructor
Advanced students get 1:7 ratios with paras and others

In the afternoon
Many students get additional small group or 1:1 instruction time as interventions
The reading block for 3 first grade classrooms

1st hour (8:45-9:45)

Small group instruction
3 classroom teachers
1 District Reading Teacher
2 Title I teachers
Specials teacher
PE teacher
6 paraprofessionals
The bell rings at 8:35 a.m. and a new school day begins in Stephanie Walton’s first-grade classroom.

After the flag salute and lunch count, her 22 students swiftly break into six small groups for the first hour of the morning reading block.

Three students go to the district reading specialist, three to the Title 1 teacher, while four head next door to learn with other students of their ability level. The teacher in the neighboring classroom sends over three of her students, and they take their places with three of Stephanie’s students.

In the back of the room, seven students gather for direct instruction with a para-educator who follows Stephanie’s lesson plan as is within her listening range.

In the hall, two students join a small reading group with the P.E. teacher.
The reading block for 3 first grade classrooms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1st hour (8:45-9:45)</th>
<th>2nd hour (9:45-10:45)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Small group instruction</td>
<td>Whole group instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 classroom teachers</td>
<td>1 District Reading Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 District Reading Teacher</td>
<td>2 Title I teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Title I teachers</td>
<td>Specials teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specials teacher</td>
<td>PE teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PE teacher</td>
<td>6 paraprofessionals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It's 9:43. Glancing up, Stephanie smiles at the students who are returning from other classes. “Your options are cards or workbook.” They know exactly what to do, and get right to work. She continues teaching until the rest of the students are back.

At 9:47 Stephanie asks the entire class to come to the carpet area in the front of the room. In less than two minutes they are settled in the story area gazing at the cover of *Things that Go*.

In 25 minutes, they use the same thematic material to do five different exercises to build vocabulary and comprehension.

Then the students move to their seats and spend the next 10 minutes on two workbook exercises reinforcing the meaning of five position words they just learned. They spend the rest of whole group time spelling on white boards.
The reading block for 3 first grade classrooms

1st hour (8:45-9:45)
Small group instruction
3 classroom teachers
1 District Reading Teacher
2 Title I teachers
Specials teacher
PE teacher
6 paraprofessionals

2nd hour (9:45-10:45)
Whole group instruction
1 District Reading Teacher
2 Title I teachers
Specials teacher
PE teacher
6 paraprofessionals

2nd hour (9:45-10:45)
Also, during the second hour, paras, Title 1, and others work in small groups with 2nd-5th grades

In the afternoon, many students are provided an additional 40-90 minutes of intervention
Targeted Accelerated Growth

The TAG Loop

1. Diagnostic Testing
2. Proportional increases in direct instructional time
3. Teaching to the deficient sub-skill
4. Retesting to be sure the skill has been learned
From David Motague

"By the fifth year, I was convinced high performance reading was about more time and better use of that time. Students who were behind needed more direct instruction. Some of them started getting 60 to 90 minutes extra each day for a total of 180 to 210 minutes a day. We spent that time on the sub-skills they hadn’t mastered."

Principals and many teachers at these schools saw the direct connection between increasing instructional time and increasing reading growth. Students who were a little behind needed a little more instructional time. Students who were a lot behind needed a lot more time.” P. 38.
“Growth is directly proportionate to the quality and quantity of instructional time. When we looked at our data student by student, we saw a painful fact with painful clarity. Most students who start behind stay behind. Time-starved reading programs that rely on sudden growth bursts from extraordinary instruction rarely move students from the 5th-30th percentiles up to grade level.” P. 48

“Catch-up growth is driven primarily by proportional increases in direct instructional time. Catch-up growth is so difficult to achieve that it can be the product only of quality instruction in great quantity.”
Teacher quality x time = growth

“Quantity of instructional time can be doubled or tripled in a semester. Quality of instructional time cannot. Improving quality occurs over extended periods of time, at different rates for different teachers in the same school, as a constant process of arduous, intelligent labor.

Teacher quality (1) x time (1) = growth (1)
Teacher quality (1) x time (2) = growth (2)
Teacher quality (1) x time (3) = growth (3)
Teacher quality x time = growth

“This is why the primary and immediate strategy for catch-up growth is proportional increase in direct instructional time.

Catch-up growth rarely occurs unless principals and teachers have good data, know each student’s learning needs, and schedule proportional increases in direct instructional time.”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>% FR Lunch</th>
<th>% at Grade Level, 2003</th>
<th>1st Grade Reading Block</th>
<th>1st Grade Interventions</th>
<th>2nd Grade Reading Block</th>
<th>2nd Grade Interventions</th>
<th>3rd Grade Reading Block</th>
<th>3rd Grade Interventions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Canyon V.</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westgate</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cascade</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawthorne</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amistad</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ridge View</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southgate</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vista</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunset View</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Annual Growth for All Students, Catch-up Growth for those who are behind

Lynn Fielding, Nancy Kerr, Paul Rosier

To Order:

New Foundation Press
Phone: 509-783-2139
FAX: 509-783-5237

Annual Growth for All Students, Catch-up growth for those who are behind

Fielding, Kerr, Rosier
Some important questions for reflection

If large numbers of your students continue to struggle to make expected yearly growth, have you considered increasing the length of the reading block?

Do students who struggle receive time for intervention instruction that is proportional to their difficulties?

Do some students receive as much as 60-90 minutes of intervention every day?
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.
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 — examination of core programs to supplement where weak – instructional routines? Vocabulary?
   b. Monitoring and supporting classroom instruction through principal walkthroughs
Value of the principal’s walkthrough
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/engaging** whole group instruction?  
   **Is small group instruction differentiated appropriately by student need?**
Go to the FCRR website (www.fcrr.org)

Go to the section for administrators, and look in the Curriculum and Instruction section
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

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 –

- Classroom teacher and group of 4
- Resource teacher and group of 4
- Independent Learning Activity (4)
- Independent Learning Activity (5)
- Independent Learning Activity (5)
Effective independent student learning activities…
Resources (free) that may help....

To download up to 240 independent student learning activities for K-1 classrooms, and up to 170 activities for students in grades grades 2-3, as well as activities for 4-5, go to 
FCRR website (www.fcrr.org). Select “For teachers” look for listed center activities.

There is also a teacher resource manual providing directions for classroom management during small group instruction, and approximately 70 minutes of video training. It is listed under “professional development” in the teacher section.
Providing Differentiated Instruction: The Challenges

Small group instruction is not really differentiated (time, frequency, focus) by student need

Students waste time at independent learning centers because they are not engaged and centers are not focused and leveled properly

Behavior management issues interfere with teacher-led small group instruction
It might be as hard as leading a heard of cats where you want them to go...
Points of Maximum Impact and Leadership Focus in Successful High Challenge 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 High Challenge 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.
Making decisions and following up
Guidance on how to establish a comprehensive assessment plan for grades K-3

Go www.fcrr.org and then go to the section for administrators then look under assessment programs.
Points of Maximum Impact and Leadership Focus in Successful High Challenge 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
Scheduling for success
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>12-1</td>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>2-2:30</td>
<td>11:15-12</td>
<td>10:30-11:15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>10:30-12:15</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>3</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>
Points of Maximum Impact and Leadership
Focus in Successful High Challenge 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
Three keys developing and sustaining a successful school-level intervention plan

1. Scheduling for success
2. Budgeting for success
3. Teaching for success
Ways that instruction must be made more powerful for students “at-risk” for reading difficulties.

More powerful instruction involves:

- More instructional time
- Smaller instructional groups
- More precisely targeted at right level
- Clearer and more detailed explanations
- More systematic instructional sequences
- More extensive opportunities for guided practice
- More opportunities for error correction and feedback
Who, or what, can contribute to more differentiated instruction and stronger interventions?

Regular classroom teacher
Special education teachers (IDEA 15% rule)
Reading resource teachers
Special area teachers (art, P.E., music), assistant principals, media specialists, if well trained and have a structured reading program
Paraprofessionals, if well trained and provided with explicitly structured (scripted) instructional materials
High quality, individualized instruction and practice delivered via computers

“A good rule of thumb is that, the less experienced the teacher, the more structured and “scripted” the intervention program should be”
Extensive Reading interventions for Grades K-3:
From Research to Practice

Go to Google
Type in: Center on Instruction
Click on Reading Section
Scroll through resources to find this document
Guidance on essential procedures for implementing effective interventions with young children

Download at www.fcrr.org, go to the section for administrators, and then to the section on Interventions for struggling readers.
Teaching Students to Read in Elementary School: A Guide for Principals

Download at www.fcrr.org. go to the section for administrators
It matters little what else they learn in elementary school if they do not learn to read at grade level.

The best reason for working toward continuous improvement....
Questions or Discussion