



EVERY CHILD A READER

Online Preview Edition

September, 1998

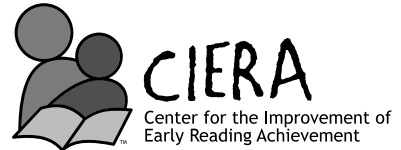


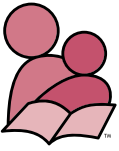
Note:

It is not possible to print this special preview edition.

Printed copies are available for purchase from CIERA.
For more information, see www.ciera.org

[Click here to continue](#)



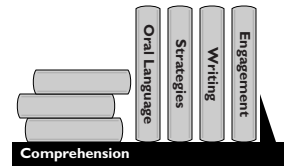
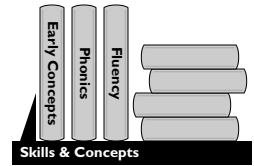


EVERY CHILD A READER

TOPIC 8

School-Wide Reading Programs

In schools that are successful in fostering high levels of reading achievement, all adults in the school work together on the reading program, build systematic program links across the grades, accept responsibility for all children, and closely monitor students' progress.



School-level activities contribute to student learning.

The schools that children attend make a difference in their reading achievement.¹ In schools that draw on the same communities and have the same resources, the achievement patterns of children at the end of third grade can be quite different. In one school, the majority of children will have attained the goal of independent reading, while in the second school, many children will leave third grade as struggling readers.

What are the differences between these schools? For two decades, we have known that effective schools exhibit a consistent set of features: high expectations for all students, agreement on goals among school personnel, and increased time on tasks.²

More recently, we have learned that high reading achievement is found in schools which have reading programs with clear and consistent connections from classroom to classroom.³ This clarity and consistency characterizes both the program for students (what and how they are taught) and the support that teachers receive to help them implement the reading program. Clarity and consistency from grade to grade are especially critical. Consistency across grade levels does not mean that content is the same across grade levels, but that the activities of one grade build on the activities of the previous grade.

Clarity and consistency only occur when there is communication and collaboration among teachers, families, and other school personnel.

For every child to become a reader, collaboration among all adults in the school must be extensive. For many children, the programs that are put into place as a result of planning and coordination are sufficient for them to become independent readers by the end of third grade. Other children, though, require additional supports in the form of **interventions** (instructional efforts focused on a particular set of goals during a particular period of time). The success of the children who struggle most with reading depends on a consistent school-wide reading program, including coordination and communication between the standard program and any special interventions designed explicitly for these children.

Shared Reading Accomplishments

A consistent program is defined by a shared perspective on what needs to happen during particular periods in children’s school careers to ensure reading success.

A successful school-wide reading program is not identical in every grade, but the parts need to fit together to help readers develop a rich and balanced set of reading strategies. Observations of reading instruction in a school⁴ without a coherent program showed significant variations in the content and experiences children had from one grade to the next throughout the primary years—the target years for reading acquisition.

In kindergarten, children participated in holistic activities like journal writing and shared reading with very little specific instruction on phonemic awareness or letter-sound matching. As first graders, the same children were expected to participate in a highly structured program that required competent phonics analysis. The second-grade instruction required completing numerous workbook exercises, rather than extended reading and writing activities that children need to consolidate all the skills they are learning in word recognition, comprehension, spelling, and composition. In third grade, children read and discussed literature.

Clearly, this school’s literacy program lacked consistency and clarity in its reading program, which limited students’ opportunities to build on earlier learning as they progressed from kindergarten through third grade. The children whose accuracy and fluency in word recognition were not highly developed had few occasions for feedback on existing strategies or the acquisition of new strategies. While some children may go unharmed by a lack of clarity and consistency in reading instruction, struggling readers will suffer from inconsistent programs in the primary years.

Focusing on a set of accomplishments such as those presented in Topics 1 to 7 of this series illustrates the form that a shared perspective of children’s reading acquisition can take.

Programs change across the primary grades to reflect the experiences children need at different points of time to master key tasks. These changes, however, need to complement one another, contributing to the creation of successful readers. Throughout *Every Child a Reader*, the accomplishments from *Preventing Reading Difficulties*⁵ were used to illustrate the tasks that confront children in their movement toward independent reading. Many states have established frameworks of accomplishments⁶ as have districts around the country. Such frameworks can be useful as a place for teachers in a school or district to discuss the connections within their primary reading programs. Frameworks of accomplishments within these documents, including *Preventing Reading Difficulties*, were never meant to be viewed as mandates for instruction. However, these documents can be valuable as starting points for discussions in schools and school districts about the learning and instruction that students need to ensure independent reading by the end of third grade.

Regular Opportunities for Teacher Collaboration

Collaboration among teachers, which is the foundation of a consistent reading program, is initiated and sustained by systemic effort on the part of school leaders.

A clear understanding of a school's shared goals is the cornerstone to successful reading programs. This understanding can only be achieved through regular dialogue between teachers. Schools that are highly successful in promoting children's reading build on their shared view of reading as teachers, principals, and other school personnel design instruction, choose assessments, and identify the foci of their ongoing professional development.

Teachers agree on the core content of the reading program. Schools should have atmospheres where teachers can talk freely as colleagues about their practices, beliefs, challenges, and successes. They also need to explore the nature of reading programs in their area, and look closely at programs that have been successful with students similar to their own. Whether the teachers in a school select an external program to use or develop a "homegrown" program, they need time to establish what works with their students.

Monitoring student achievement provides critical information. Although testing programs are cross-sectional and tend to focus on a particular grade level, teachers should view student development longitudinally and across grade levels. Assessment should be aligned with the agreed-upon goals. These goals should be a primary consideration when assessing reading growth.

Professional development is crucial to school change. Whether teachers select a prepackaged program or create their own, opportunities for professional learning are critical to the process.⁷ Professional learning within a successful school is long term and requires extensive follow-through. It involves all teachers in the school, encourages collegiality, incorporates current knowledge from well-designed research, and involves adequate funds for materials and substitute teachers so teachers have time for the learning experiences that they need. Professional development should be aligned with the established goals for students. Finally, professional development should involve a continual analysis of how it and the reading program work in relationship to the school's overall goals.

Provision of Interventions for Struggling Readers

Students who struggle to learn to read benefit from interventions, usually in the form of small group or tutoring programs.

No matter how good it is, the standard reading program in a school is not likely to meet the needs of all children. One study, for example, suggests that perhaps one-quarter of the at-risk students undergoing whole-class training in phonological awareness gain little insight into the structure of the spoken words, much less into reading.⁸ When that happens, schools and teachers should have alternative programs or interventions available for students who will otherwise fall farther and farther behind. All available evidence points to the need for these interventions to include intensive small group or tutorial support. When interventions have been conducted with the entire class, their

TOPIC 8 SCHOOL PROGRAMS

efficacy for struggling readers has not been comparable to small group or tutorial efforts.⁹

Primary level teachers working in conjunction with teachers who have specialties such as Title I have several routes available to them when implementing interventions. Support can be acquired through a national effort. Teachers can read about and visit smaller-scale efforts that have been implemented in only a few sites but whose successful outcomes have been documented. Or teachers can develop a “homegrown” model, capitalizing on the strengths and addressing the challenges of their particular school.

Even when a national model is implemented, its expression within a school often takes on a homegrown character.¹⁰ Successful implementation of any intervention whatever its source, requires extensive involvement of all adults in the school.

Recent years have witnessed an explosion of high quality, effective interventions for primary-level students.

The group of interventions that are presented here is by no means exhaustive. The aim is to provide a sampling of the primary types of interventions that are available. These include tutoring efforts conducted by specially trained teachers or by volunteers; small-group efforts conducted by classroom teachers or by Title 1, special education, and bilingual teachers; and school-wide restructuring of the reading program, including the implementation of tutoring for some children. The outcomes of all of these interventions have been described in the research literature. Their level of dissemination, however, differs greatly. In some cases, extensive dissemination of the models has occurred; in others, the efforts have remained at a local site. If you are interested in any of these programs, please consult the original sources and investigate them in depth.

TEACHER-STUDENT RATIO	MODEL	DESCRIPTION
School-wide	Success for All ¹¹	K–5: 90 minutes of reading a day for all children in ability-grouped classes of 15–20; additional individual tutoring is provided for a portion of the students.
Small-group	Early Intervention in Reading (EIR) ¹²	A classroom teacher provides 20 minutes of extra instruction for 5–7 struggling readers in first or second grade
	Restructured Chapter 1 ¹³	Title I or special education teachers work with 3–4 children daily for particular periods of time, adding or “graduating” children from instruction on the basis of quarterly assessments.
Individual tutorials	Reading Recovery ¹⁴	Specially trained teachers work with first graders individually in half-hour daily tutoring sessions for at least a school term.
	Book Buddies ¹⁵	Tutors are volunteers who meet several times a week with first and second grade children. Tutors are supervised by trained reading teachers.

The nature of the intervention or group of interventions that work in a school will be a function of the profile of a school and the backgrounds of its teachers.

In each of these programs there are agreed-upon goals for what children need to learn at particular points in learning to read. In most efforts, the instructional texts are carefully identified. In schools where substantial number of children require additional support to become independent readers by the end of third grade, several different interventions may need to be considered. For example, an intensive effort of specially trained teachers working with a portion of the first graders may need to be augmented with small-group instruction by classroom teachers.

Further, the efforts of classroom teachers in the primary grades should be rethought. For example, if a tutoring effort has been effective with a portion of the first grade, a volunteer program might need to be initiated for second graders who are new to the school in second grade.

Another factor requiring consideration in choosing an intervention is teachers' backgrounds in teaching reading. The nature of support that is provided in different interventions differs substantially, influencing the number of children who are served over a period of time as well as the levels of reading that children achieve. Whatever route is taken, it is important that all teachers in a given school are aware of and collaborate with those who are developing and implementing these programs.

Every child can become a reader when schools, communities, and families work together in building skills and concepts, comprehension foundations, and engagement in reading and writing.

Creating and implementing school-wide reading programs requires teamwork, time, and commitment to a shared vision of successful reading among teachers and school personnel. Teachers who understand children's reading as a series of developmental accomplishments that build on each other are sensitive to the integrated nature of reading. The key features of effective reading programs include:

- a firm foundation on oral language and communication,
- extensive opportunities to practice phonics analysis and word recognition,
- early instruction on letter names and sounds, phonemic awareness, and concepts about print,
- repeated use of high frequency words in authentic reading and writing activities,
- scaffolded instruction with comprehension strategies,
- many opportunities to write for meaningful purposes and audiences, and
- classroom activities that engage children's interests and support positive self-perceptions of their growing abilities as readers.

It is not easy to implement a school-wide program combining these features, but when such programs are created by teachers and administrators and delivered in successive grades, they provide consistent support for the development of independent, life-long readers.

**EVERY CHILD A READER:
COMPANION READINGS**

Duke, N., & Stewart, B. (1997). Standards in action in a first-grade classroom: The purpose dimension. *The Reading Teacher*, 51, 228–237.

Pikulski, J. (1994). Preventing reading failure: A review of five effective programs. *The Reading Teacher*, 48, 30–39.

NOTES

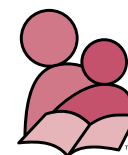
- ¹ Teddlie, C. & Stringfield, S. (1993). *Schools make a difference: Lessons learned from a 10-year study of school effects*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- ² Edmonds, R. (1985). Characteristics of effective schools: Research and implementation. In J. Osborn, P.T. Wilson, & R.C. Anderson (Eds.), *Reading education: Foundations for a literate America* (pp. 123–130). Lexington, MA: Lexington Books.
- ³ Briggs, K. & Thomas, K. (1997) *Patterns of success: Successful pathways to elementary literacy in Texas spotlight schools*. Austin, TX: Texas Center for Educational Research. (<http://tasb.org/tcer/spotlight.html#context>)
- ⁴ Richardson, V. (1998). Professional development in the instruction of reading. In J. Osborn & F. Lehr (Eds.), *Literacy for all: Issues for teaching and learning*. (pp. 303–318). Chicago: Guilford Press.
- ⁵ Snow, C.E., Burns, M.S., & Griffin, P. (Eds.). (1998). *Preventing reading difficulties in young children*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.
- ⁶ Wixson, K.K., & Dutro, E. (1998). *Standards for primary-grade reading: An analysis of state frameworks* (CIERA Report #3–001). Ann Arbor, MI: Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement.
- ⁷ McLaughlin, M.W. (1991). Enabling professional development: What have we learned. In A. Lieberman & L. Miller (Eds.), *Staff development for education in the '90s* (pp. 61–82). New York: Teachers College Press.
- ⁸ Torgesen, J.K., Morgan, S., & David, C. (1997). Effects of two types of phonological awareness training on word learning in kindergarten children. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 84, 364–370.
- ⁹ Foorman, B.R., Francis, D.J., Fletcher, J.M., Schatschneider, C., & Mehta, P. (1998). The role of instruction in learning to read: Preventing reading failure in at-risk children. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 90, 37–55.
- ¹⁰ Stringfield, S., Milsap, M.A., & Herman, R. (1997). *Urban and suburban/rural strategies for educating disadvantaged children*. Washington, DC: Planning & Evaluation, U.S. Department of Education.
- ¹¹ Slavin, R., et al. (1994). Success for all: A comprehensive approach to prevention and early intervention. In R. Slavin, N. Karweit, & B.A. Wasik (Eds.), *Preventing early school failure* (pp. 175–205). Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- ¹² Taylor, B.M., Frye, B.J., Short, R. & Shearer, B.L. (1992). Classroom teachers prevent reading failure among low-achieving first grade students. *The Reading Teacher*, 45, 592–597.
- ¹³ Hiebert, E.H., et al. (1992). Reading and writing of first-grade students in a restructured Chapter 1 program. *American Educational Research Journal*, 29, 45–72.
- ¹⁴ Clay, M. (1991). *Reading Recovery: A guidebook for teachers in training*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- ¹⁵ Invernizzi, M., Rosemary, C., Juel, C., & Richard, H. (1997). At-risk readers and community volunteers: A three-year perspective. *Scientific Studies of Reading*, 1, 277–300.

This topic is part of the series *Every Child a Reader* by E.H. Hiebert, P.D. Pearson, B.M. Taylor, V. Richardson, & S.G. Paris of the Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (CIERA).

Every Child a Reader: Companion Readings has been compiled by E.H. Hiebert, K. Skalitzky, & K. Tesnar and is available through CIERA (courtesy of the International Reading Association).

©1998 CIERA. All rights reserved.

21011-08 (9/98)


CIERA

Center for the Improvement of
Early Reading Achievement

www.ciera.org