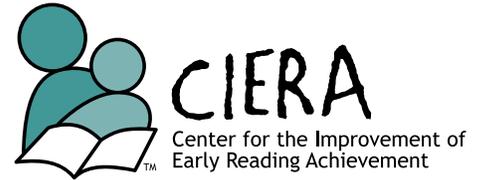


# READY REFERENCE FOR READING EXCELLENCE



Research Summary #1

## **Beating the Odds in Teaching All Children to Read: Lessons from Effective Schools and Exemplary Teachers**

Barbara M. Taylor, P. David Pearson, Kathleen Clark, and Sharon Walpole

### **BACKGROUND**

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A team of CIERA researchers led by Barbara M. Taylor at the University of Minnesota and P. David Pearson at Michigan State University examined which school factors and teacher factors were characteristic of the schools that were most effective in terms of student reading growth and achievement in the primary grades (K–3).

Principals and selected teachers and students from 14 schools in Virginia, Minnesota, Colorado, and California participated in the study. Principals at each school selected teachers and completed questionnaires. Teachers completed time logs of reading and language arts instructional activities and a questionnaire of school and classroom practices related to reading. Children in grades 1–3 were tested in November and May on various literacy skills. In addition, researchers observed each participating teacher on five occasions and interviewed some teachers and all principals.

A case study was developed for each school. It included a composite of students' gains in reading and a measure of grade 3 reading achievement that established each school's effectiveness. Four schools were rated most effective, 6 were moderately effective, and 4 were least effective.

Teacher observations were read and evaluated by two experts in elementary school supervision and reading. Forty-one percent of the teachers were identified as using many elements of culturally responsive teaching and effective teaching in their classrooms, 32% used some of these elements, and 27% used few.

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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The complete research report for this study will be published as a CIERA Report in 1999. Contact CIERA or check the CIERA website at [www.ciera.org](http://www.ciera.org) to obtain a copy of the full report.

The report described herein was supported under the Educational Research and Development Centers Program, PR/Award Number R305R70004, as administered by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education. However, the contents of the described report do not necessarily represent the positions or policies of the National Institute on Student Achievement, Curriculum, and Assessment or the National Institute on Early Childhood Development, or the U.S. Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal government.

**SEE OTHER SIDE FOR KEY FINDINGS >**

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## KEY FINDINGS

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### School Factors

#### Building Communication

Collaboration within and across grades was reported in all 4 of the schools as a reason for their success. Some of the manifestations of this include: teaming, peer coaching, program consistency, and seeing all children as everyone's responsibility.

#### Systematic Evaluation of Student Progress

All 4 of the most effective schools had a system in which children were regularly assessed, assessment data was shared, and instructional decisions were made based on assessment information. Two schools used words correct per minute to assess reading achievement, 2 used informal reading inventories.

#### Research-based Early Reading Intervention

Three of 4 schools mentioned interventions as a reason for their success. Three schools had small group interventions in grades K–3.

#### Ongoing Professional Development

Three schools used visits to schools with innovative programs to increase effectiveness. Three schools offered year-long workshops or district-sponsored graduate-level courses. These opportunities were related to early reading intervention.

#### School Organization for Reading Instruction

All 4 of the schools used a collaborative model involving regular teachers plus Title I, reading resource, and special education teachers who worked together to provide small group instruction. In 3 schools, resource teachers came into the classroom for 60 minutes a day. In 1 school, children went to resource teachers to work in groups of 2 or 3 for 45 minutes a day.

#### Reaching Out to Parents

The 4 most effective schools made a more concerted effort to reach out to parents than the other schools. Efforts included conducting focus groups, written or phone surveys, and having an active site council on which parents served.

### Teacher Factors

#### Home Communication

In addition to school-wide attempts to reach parents, teachers in the most effective schools were rated higher on parent communication than teachers in the other schools—they were much more likely to call home, send notes to parents, and distribute handouts about what was going on in the classroom.

#### Student Engagement

The most effective teachers created environments and activities in which 96% of students were on task and engaged. In contrast, teachers less skilled in maintaining engagement averaged 63% of their students on task.

#### Time Spent in Small Group Instruction

Compared to students of the least effective teachers, students of the most effective teachers spent 23 minutes more per day in small group instruction in reading (48 versus 25 minutes). In the 4 most effective schools, students spent more time in small group

instruction (60 minutes per day) than in the moderately effective (26 minutes) or the least effective schools (38 minutes).

#### Time Spent in Independent Reading

Students in the most effective and moderately effective schools spent more time engaged in independent reading (28 and 27 minutes per day, respectively) than students in the least effective schools (19 minutes).

#### Approaches to Word Recognition Instruction

Most teachers in all of the schools taught phonics in isolation. The real difference in word recognition instruction emerged in coaching provided to students as they attempted to use strategies, including phonics, to figure out words while reading. The most effective teachers provided this sort of coaching much more often than their counterparts in other schools.