

# **Schools that Beat the Odds: Effective Use of Resources**



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# Reading Achievement for Children Living in Poverty

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- 20-25% of U.S. children are living in poverty.
- Students placed at risk by poverty are not evenly distributed among America's schools. Many are concentrated in high poverty urban schools.
- 1998 NAEP 4th Grade Reading,
  - 59% children in poverty scored below the "basic" level compared to 29% of those not eligible; and,
  - 87% scored below "proficient" level.

# Resource Allocation Study in Beat the Odds Schools



- Fisher & Adler. (1998). Early reading programs in high poverty schools: A case of beating the odds.
- Fisher & Adler. (1999). Early reading programs in high-poverty schools: Emerald Elementary beats the odds
- Adler & Fisher. (1999). A cross case analysis of successful early reading programs in high-poverty, high-performing schools
- Adler & Fisher. (2000). An initial cross-case analysis of early reading programs in high-performing, high-poverty schools: How school-wide structures make a difference

# Study Questions



- What characteristics do high-poverty, high-performing schools share that distinguish them from their low-performing counterparts?
- How do these schools plan, organize, and implement their successful early reading programs within available resources?

# Study Design



- High-poverty high-performing schools on state reading measures & FRL data
- Case studies of 6 schools (in 3 states)
- Structured interviews of principal and early reading staff
- Site visits with classroom observations
- Focus on features of early reading program

# Data Collection Phases

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- Phase 1: Schools identified & surveyed  
(in collaboration with other CIERA research, Taylor & Pearson)
  - Criteria:
    - | 50% eligible for Free & Reduced Lunch
    - | 50% achieving satisfactory on 3/4 grade reading
- Over 430 Schools Identified
- 140 in 39 states return completed surveys
  - | 7 per school (1 principal, 6 teachers)

# Phases (cont'd)



- Phase 2: Subset of schools selected
  - Key states identified
  - Network of informants developed & contacted
  - Assessment data analyzed
  - Demographic data considered
  - 6 schools--2 schools per state (MI, TX, CA)

# Phases (cont'd)



- Phase 3: Case studies
  - 52 “elite” interviews
  - 10-12 hours classroom observations per school
  - Field and journal notes
  - Artifacts from early reading programs
  - Relevant school, district, and state document obtained



# Phases (cont'd)

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- Phase 4: Comparison schools
  - 1-2 High Poverty -Low Achieving schools identified
  - Invitations to participate sent to 31 schools  
(follow up is on going as of this report)
- Phase 5: Analysis and Writing
  - Individual cases
  - Cross Case

# Case Study Schools

- Urban/urban fringe locations (1 year round; 1 border school)
- Pre-K - Grade 5 (3 schools Pre K-5; 3 schools K-5)
- 2 Schools with Spanish language bilingual programs
- Outperformed/approximated district/state 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> grade reading achievement at satisfactory and above levels for over at least 3 consecutive years.
- Higher percentage of students eligible for FRL than district and state averages

# Case Study Schools (cont'd)

■ FRL	50%	-	89%
■ Mobility	21%	-	40%
■ Enrollment	412	-	829
■ LEP	0%	-	37%
■ Class Size	20	-	29
■ Per Pupil	\$4002	-	\$4983

# Case Study Schools (cont'd)

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- 91% African American
- 67% white
- 95% Hispanic
- 48% white and 47% students of color (African American & Hispanic)
- 74 % students of color (African American & Hispanic)
- 67% students of color (African American & Hispanic)

# **Case Study Participants**



- Building Administrators
- Reading Specialists
- Pre-K-3 Teaching Staff
- Others (e.g. Special education teachers, librarian, attendance officer, classroom aides, etc. )



**What Do Resource  
Allocations Look Like  
in These Schools?**

# **Type of Resources**



- **Fiscal Resources (Funding)**
- **Human Resources (Personnel)**
- **Intellectual Resources (Knowledge)**
- **Organizational Resources (Infrastructure)**
- **Temporal Resources (Time)**

# **Fiscal Resources**

## **(Funding)**



- Per pupil funding is not significantly different from other schools in same district.
- Title I School-wide funding has aided schools in implementing programs.
- Proactive schools are ever ready to tap additional funding when available.



# **Human Resources (Personnel)**



- Leadership
  - Administrative
  - Instructional
- Expectations for students & staff are high
- Professional Knowledge & Attitude
  - Core of experienced professionals
  - Knowledge seeking
  - Mentoring
  - Problem solving

# **Intellectual Resources**


## **(Knowledge)**

- Instruction is data driven and research based.
- Multiple approaches to reading instruction
  - No one philosophy of reading espoused
  - Balanced, focused, and comprehensive instruction
  - Writing on a regular basis
- Professional Development
  - On-going
  - School, district, & personal

# **Organizational Resources**

## **(Infrastructure)**

- School-level committees/teams allow for
  - Shared Responsibility
  - Early Reading Focus
- Grade level planning allows for collaboration
  - Vertical - across grade levels
  - Horizontal - within grade levels
    - Curriculum and instruction
    - Individual children

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- Classroom level organization allows for flexible and dynamic student grouping
    - Grouping based on individual students needs (whole group, small group, & one on one)
    - Group membership changes as often as every two weeks
  - Safety nets for struggling readers

# Safety Nets for Struggling Readers

During School day	Before/After School	Extended Year
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•One on One Tutoring Reading Recovery</li><li>•Small Group Project Read Structure of Intellect</li><li>•Whole Class 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Academy Literacy Rotation</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•One on One Tutoring</li><li>•Small Group Extended Day Program</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Small Group Summer School Inter-session Extended year</li></ul>

# **Temporal Resources (Time)**




- Each of study schools developed their programs over a number of years.
- Time in development has allowed for experimentation.
- Allocation of time throughout the day and year for instruction and planning has been crucial.

# Conclusion



- Each school has strong leadership at the school level and competent instruction at the classroom level.
- Each school has systematic schoolwide arrangements to provide continuous support struggling readers.
- Each school has well developed procedures for program implementation.
- Programmatic decisions made at school level.

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- Systems in place to deal with concerns and requests for program implementation, e.g. school improvement teams, student support teams.
  - Programs themselves appear to be idiosyncratic.
  - None of these schools have achieved success over night.
  - Essentially, these are “blameless” schools where everyone operates from an “if there’s a problem we can fix it” mode.