

Meeting the Literacy Needs of Struggling Readers in the Early Elementary Years

Presentation for the Summer Institute

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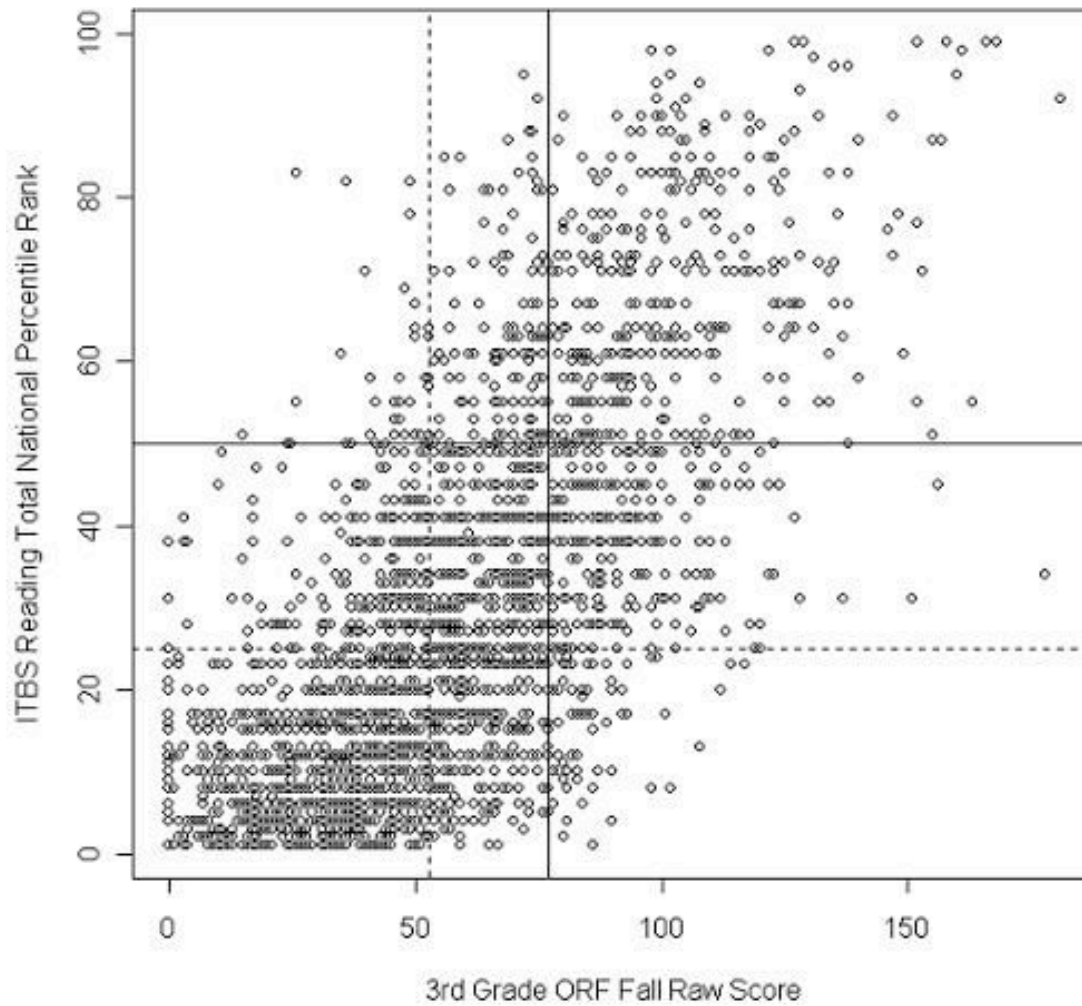
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Who ARE the struggling readers?

- Children who find it hard to grasp the relation of the spoken and written language
 - Phonological “deficit” is the most common reason for reading disabilities
- Children who lag behind their peers in development of standard American English
 - Second language learners or dialect users
 - Children with language disabilities
- Children with limited preschool experiences with written texts and rich exposure to language in the home

Figure 2: Scatterplot for Third Grade

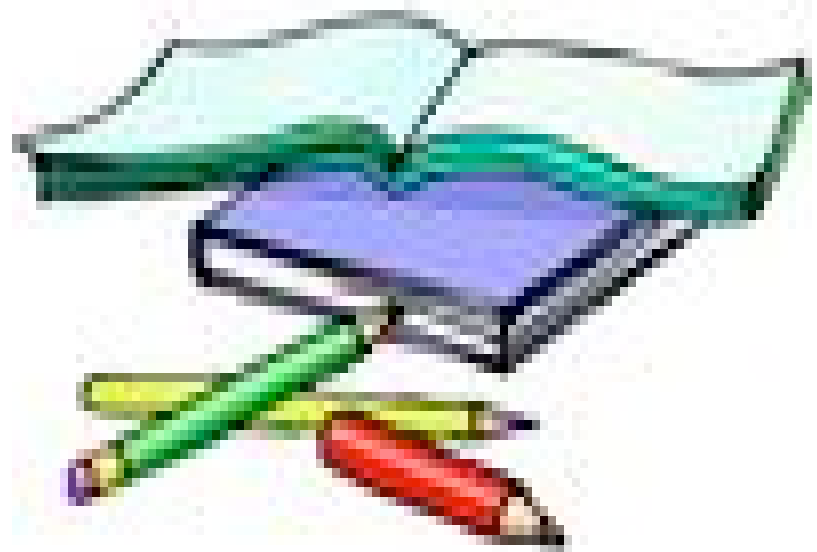


Why should we make every effort to address literacy needs early on?

- It is easier, less expensive, and more humane to prevent the onset of serious reading problems than to try to solve them, once they are entrenched
- Research shows that children failing in reading in grade 1 are very likely to be failing in reading (and in all academic areas) in grades 4, 8, and 12

HOW do we meet the needs of struggling readers?

- Identify problems and monitor progress
- Provide instruction targeted to needs;
- Provide a rich, motivating environment for learning to read
- Evaluate the effects of our instruction



Identifying problems and monitoring progress

Classroom screening and monitoring

- *Essential* if we are to meet the needs of struggling readers!
- Why? Consider the IEP for preschool children, where the appropriateness of objectives must be assessed every 6 months
 - Rapid developmental changes in the first years of school in reading-related areas
 - We must know how children are progressing on time-sensitive basic skills, as well as overall

The importance of selecting valid and reliable measures of reading

- Issues of validity: a test case
 - Imagine a Test of Reading Experience-- student checks titles of books:
 - *James and the Giant Peach*
 - *Horton Hatches the Egg*
 - *Owl Island*
 - *Stuart Little*
- What does a teacher learn about a child's literacy from the results?
- Further, will performance on this test relate to year-end reading achievement??

Developing a district or school plan for classroom-based assessment

- Assuring reliability: Are the results stable and trustworthy?
- Teachers must become knowledgeable about the constructs being assessed, the process for administering and scoring measures, and the interpretations that guide instructional decisions (Salinger, 2001)
- Results must be valued for the information they provide to parents--for their educational consequences

Linking classroom assessment to year-end achievement (Salinger, 2001)

- If classroom tests DO NOT predict year-end achievement, they will not provide information about what needs to be done so that children can make progress toward grade-level literacy goals
- Example: Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (web address: dibles.uoregon.edu)
 - How well does performance on Phoneme Segmentation Fluency or Oral Reading Fluency predict year-end reading achievement?
 - What are DIBELS “benchmarks”? How do teachers use them?

Correlations of Spring DIBELS and Spring ITBS Subtests for First Grade

ITBS subtest	Nonsense Wd Fluency	Phoneme Seg Fluency	Oral Rdg Fluency
Vocabulary	.53	.38	.63
Wd. Analysis	.60	.41	.66
Listening	.34	.30	.38
Language	.56	.39	.70
Reading Comp	.55	.33	.71
Reading Total	.58	.39	.71

Note. All $p < .001$

Correlations of DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency and Spring ITBS Subtests for Second Grade

ITBS subtest	ORF Fall	ORF Winter	ORF spring
Vocabulary	.62	.63	.63
Wd. Analysis	.59	.63	.64
Listening	.32	.33	.34
Language	.61	.65	.65
Reading Comp	.70	.74	.75
Reading Total	.71	.74	.74

Note. All $p < .001$

Correlations of DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency and Spring ITBS Subtests for Third Grade

ITBS subtest	ORF fall	ORF winter	ORF spring
Vocabulary	.61	.58	.56
Wd. Analysis	.62	.61	.60
Listening	.39	.38	.38
Language	.69	.69	.68
Reading Comp	.67	.65	.63
Reading Total	.70	.67	.65

Note. All $p < .001$

Prediction of ITBS Second Grade-Level Reading from ORF (Fall) Status

	DIBELS			
ITBS	High Risk (< 26 wpm)	Moderate Risk	Low Risk (> 43 wpm)	Total-ITBS
Below 50 %	980 (39% of total)	606	341	1927
At or Above 50 %	33	127	418 (17% of total)	578
Total-DIBELS	1013	733	759	2505

Summary

- Systematic assessment of student progress (e.g., reading fluency and retelling) distinguishes effective and less effective schools (Taylor & Pearson, 2002)
- DIBELS benchmarks are useful to identify progress in reading skills for grades K-3
 - Such systems do not attempt to measure all areas of literacy that are important in these years (e.g., vocabulary).
- What about assessment of areas other than those that lend themselves to progress monitoring?
 - Vocabulary? Writing? Text comprehension?

Provide instruction targeted to the
needs of struggling readers

Studies of effective literacy instruction

(e.g., Pressley; Taylor and Pearson) **show that teachers**

- Provide high-density skill instruction, including mini-lessons to address student needs
- Provide explicit instruction, but also teach students to self-regulate
 - Teaching multiple strategies for decoding, vocabulary, writing, and text comprehension
- Spend more time on academically demanding areas (e.g., revising a composition) than on less demanding parts (e.g., drawing a picture to go with the story)

Studies of first-grade literacy block

(PDR study, 2003-4)

- What aspects of literacy are teachers working on?
 - Lots of time spent on phonics, “centers,” writing (workbooks, handouts, etc), fluency (oral reading)
 - Much less time on comprehension, vocabulary, assessment
- Who is the teacher working with?
 - Most often the whole class;
 - Infrequently small groups or individuals
- Results suggest
 - relatively little use of flexible grouping arrangements to meet the different needs of struggling readers
 - Relatively little attention to vocabulary and comprehension

How does “flexible grouping” work?

- 9:30 AM: In this 2nd-grade class, groups are working on phonics
 - One small group includes children who are working on letter-sound correspondences with the teacher
 - Two other groups are doing word sorts with long and short vowel words
 - Two pairs of children are working cooperatively on a spelling challenge (finding and correcting misspelled words in a story)
- 10:00 AM: Whole class works on vocabulary and preparation for reading a story
 - Teacher completes first part of KWL sheet (transparency) as students contribute ideas about story
 - Teacher introduces unfamiliar words from story
- 10:30 AM: Grouping for reading the story
 - 15 children read the story at their own desks, write about the main character in their journals
 - Teacher reads story aloud to a group of 7 children, 4 ELLs, 3 nonreaders; they then assist in a second reading of the story

Planning systematic instruction and experiences for K-Grade 3

- Some aspects of early literacy have rapidly changing developmental expectations
- Others require consistent, regular experience and practice across the school years



What aspects of literacy lend themselves to explicit instruction with targeted goals?

- Aspects with developmental “benchmarks;” these are time sensitive in the early school years
 - Phonological awareness
 - Phonics
 - Fluency
- Aspects for which there are no benchmarks; these need consistent attention throughout the school years
 - Vocabulary
 - Comprehension
 - Written expression

Instructional goals in phonemic awareness cf. vocabulary?

- Phonemic awareness
 - Is sign. correlated with reading achievement in K - grade 2, not later
 - A continuing problem for students with RD
 - Has focused content
 - Onset-rime
 - Phoneme segmentation
 - Relation of sound/letters
 - Is best learned via explicit instruction
- Vocabulary
 - Is sign correlated with reading achievement in school years
 - Develops from birth on (about 3,000 per year)
 - Most words are acquired incidentally--gradual increases in depth and breadth of word knowledge
 - Explicit instruction may result in learning 300 wds

Two problematic aspects

- Vocabulary (for reading)
 - Small pay-off for time spent teaching specific words or strategies
 - Teachers are unsure how to teach vocabulary in Gr K-3
 - What does it take to make progress in this area for struggling readers?
- Independent reading
 - Good use of time for good readers
 - A waste of time for struggling readers?
 - How much time to spend on this?



"How do you ever expect to get anywhere with such a tiny vocabulary?"

What are teachers' options?

- Fostering incidental word learning
 - Lots of talk in the classroom
 - Listening to books read aloud
 - Playing word games
- Providing vocabulary instruction
 - Pre-reading study of critical vocabulary
 - Linking vocabulary to domain knowledge
 - Learning dictionary skills
- Teaching and encouraging the use of strategies to derive the meaning of unfamiliar words in texts

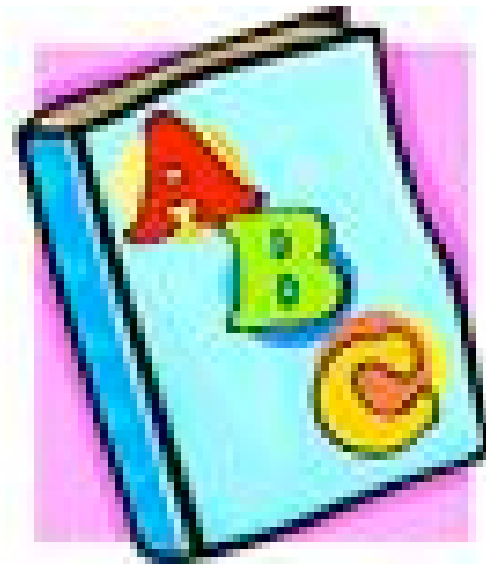
Independent reading can be modified to suit the needs of “nonreaders”



- Guidance in selection of books
- Support for reading
 - Books on tape
 - Reading with a peer
 - Reading with the teacher or a parent
- Combined shared reading and independent reading

Why is reading experience crucial for struggling readers?

- Language development
- Experience with literacy
- Learning about the world;
- Attitude, motivation, interest



Interactive story reading: Text Talk

(Beck & McKeown)

- Engaging child as an active listener--
- Ask open-ended, thought-provoking questions
- Ask the child to interpret or predict events
- Help the child connect information in the story to his/her own experiences
- Discuss a small number of words that are important for understanding the story

What do you do when. . .



- The child refuses to read?
- The child makes lots of mistakes?
- The child insists on reading a book that is too hard for him/her?

Summary

- Aspects of literacy that are *high priority* for grades K-2 include phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency
- Not all aspects of early literacy lend themselves to explicit instruction, but require regular attention
- Formats for instruction and activities should be selected to match the goals and needs of the children
- Effective teachers find ways to modify instruction and activities to foster learning of all children

Evaluating the effectiveness of our instruction

Who sets the goals and determines whether they have been achieved?

- State and federal standards and assessments
 - Curricular goals and assessment of attainment of these
 - Requirement of adequate yearly progress
- Parents and school administrators
 - Do they rely on results of MEAP and standardized test results?
- Teachers
 - Tend to be suspicious of standardized tests and worry about these as the only (or primary) evaluation of the effectiveness of their teaching.

Making evaluation of effectiveness a constructive aspect of teaching

- Collaboration with other teachers (grade or school level) on school-wide literacy goals and means of attaining them
 - Working as a team, developing grade-level plans
 - Sharing responsibility for students' learning
 - Selecting materials, designating timelines, etc.
- School organization
 - Do teachers have an opportunity to participate in decision-making? Do teachers feel valued and supported by their administration? Do administrators visit the classroom, provide feedback?

Parents

- Parent links are significantly related to student growth in reading achievement--and school effectiveness, too (Taylor & Pearson, 2002)
- Effective schools reach out to parents, making them feel like welcome partners
- Teachers partner with parents to foster progress in reading
 - For example, sending books in English and Spanish home for parents to read with their children

Teachers' self-evaluation

- Research suggests that the teachers who feel they are knowledgeable and competent tend to have high-achieving children (e.g., Taylor & Pearson, 2002)
- Effective teachers
 - Seek to improve their knowledge of reading and reading instruction
 - Seek opportunities to work with others
 - Evaluate their own work on a regular basis: effectiveness of instructional methods and materials, class formats, etc.

Some final thoughts for teachers

- Most struggling readers should be able to get past the “struggling” phase--they can learn, and the sooner, the better
- Children learn what they are taught, particularly if there is practice and application of knowledge and if what they are learning has value to them and others
- Teaching children to read is a shared responsibility:
 - District, school, parent support are crucial
 - Teachers need to support each other as well

Some resources

- *Put Reading First: The Research Blocks for Teaching Children to Read* (kindergarten through grade 3)--National Institute for Literacy (www.nifl.gov)
- Snow, Burns, & Griffin (1998) *Preventing Reading Difficulties*. Washington DC: National Academy Press.
- *Teaching Every Child to Read: Frequently Asked Questions*. Center for the Improvement of Early Literacy Achievement, University of Michigan (www.ciera.org)
- Beck & McKeown, *Bringing words to life*
- Rasinski, *Fluency*
- CIERA Erlbaum series:
 - Taylor & Pearson on teaching reading (effective schools, accomplished teachers)
 - van Kleeck & Stahl on storybook reading with children
 - Hoffman et al, on texts and reading
 - Paris & Stahl on assessment
- Up-coming issues of *Learning Disabilities Research and Practice* on second language learners
- Shaywitz, *Overcoming dyslexia*