

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 458 567

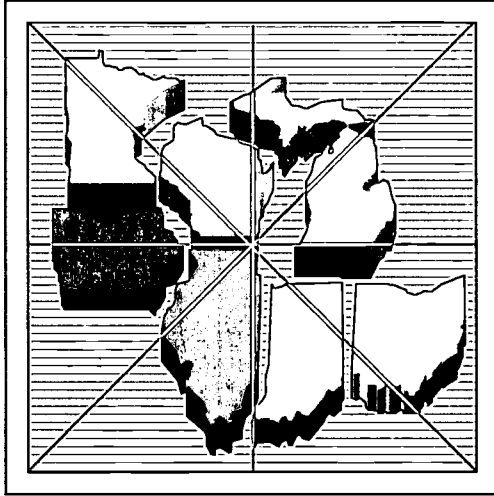
CS 014 540

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TITLE Report of the Regional Literacy Network Annual Meeting (1st, Chicago, Illinois, April 24, 2001).
INSTITUTION North Central Regional Educational Lab., Oak Brook, IL.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE 2001-00-00
NOTE 43p.
CONTRACT ED-01-CO-0011
AVAILABLE FROM North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 1120 East Diehl Road, Suite 200, Naperville, IL 60563. Tel: 800-356-2735 (Toll Free).
PUB TYPE Collected Works - Proceedings (021)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Educational Cooperation; Elementary Secondary Education; *Literacy; Public Schools; *Reading Achievement; State Departments of Education; *Teamwork
IDENTIFIERS North Central Regional Educational Laboratory; Professional Meetings

ABSTRACT

Housed within the Center for Curriculum and Technology at the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL) is the Literature Signature Area, with the primary purpose of improving the reading achievement of all students by providing assistance to state education agencies, intermediate state educational units, and local school districts in defining and implementing research-based best practices in literacy. One activity was to establish and convene state education literacy teams to facilitate information sharing and collaboration in the North Central Region. NCREL formed state literacy teams that included educators from state departments, district and school administrators, university educators, curriculum specialists, and elementary and secondary educators. These teams became the Regional Literacy Network, which focused on the following themes: ascertaining individual state needs; building capacity and collaboration within the region; and developing an awareness of the different perspectives held by literacy professional educators. This report summarizes the two sessions held at NCREL's first annual meeting, outlining the following for the morning session: Rationale; Critical Issues; Analysis; Goals, Action Plans, and Evaluations; Reading Excellence Act (REA); and States' Initiatives; and for the afternoon session: Rationale; Points of Cross-States Collaboration; Cross-States Group Session Reports; Evaluation and Survey; and Future Plans. (Contains a participants' list.) (NKA)

Report of the Regional Literacy Network Annual Meeting



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"Applying Research and Technology to Learning"

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Regional Literacy Network

NCREL

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Acknowledgments

Report of the Annual Meeting of the Regional Literacy Network

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Special thanks are extended to the members of the Regional Literacy Network for their participation and input at the first annual meeting of the Network. Their discussion and comments form the basis of this Report, and their contributions were invaluable.

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About NCREL

The North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL) is one of ten regional educational laboratories funded by the U.S. Department of Education. It is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to helping schools—and the students they serve—reach their full potential.

Since 1984, NCREL has been providing research-based resources and assistance to educators, policymakers, and communities in Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin. Its Midwest region is home to more than 20 percent of the nation's schools, teachers, and students. The ultimate goal of NCREL is to help its clients apply proven practices to create productive schools where all students can develop their skills and abilities. NCREL draws on the latest research and best practices to strengthen and support schools and communities to achieve this goal.

Center for Curriculum and Technology/ Literacy Signature Area

Housed within the Center for Curriculum and Technology at NCREL is the Literacy Signature Area. Its primary purpose is to improve the reading achievement of all students by providing assistance to state education agencies, intermediate state educational units, and local school districts in defining and implementing research-based best practices in literacy. The Literacy Signature Area identifies resources, develops materials, and helps schools in improving the reading achievement of all students, and when appropriate, uses technology to support its efforts.

Regional Literacy Network (RLN)

The scope of work for the Literacy Signature Area proposes activities that include research, policy, and practice. These activities are designed to improve literacy and literacy instruction throughout NCREL's seven-state region.

One of the primary activities within this scope of work was to establish and convene state education agency literacy teams to facilitate information sharing and collaboration in the North Central Region. NCREL formed state literacy teams that included educators from state departments, district and school administrators, university educators, curriculum specialists, and elementary and secondary educators. These teams became the Regional Literacy Network, which focused on the following themes:

- Ascertaining individual state needs.
- Building capacity and collaboration within the region.
- Developing an awareness of the different perspectives held by literacy professional educators.

The first annual meeting of the Regional Literacy Network was held on April 24, 2001, at NCREL's facility outside Chicago. Small group sessions of the state teams were held in the morning to identify the critical issue(s) of each state and to discuss goals, an action plan, and an evaluation plan. In the afternoon, cross-state small group sessions were held for sharing ideas and strategic planning for positive interventions for professional development in schools and districts. Also, a special breakout session was held in the morning for specialists of the Reading Excellence Act to collaborate and share their knowledge with the larger group.

The work of the Regional Literacy Network will be long term and sustained through annual meetings, interaction/communication by NCREL's liaison for each state, and a message board and e-mail list on NCREL's Literacy Research and Best Practices Web site. (www.ncrel.org/litweb)

A resulting product of the first annual meeting of the Network is the following report that will provide state team members and state departments of education with information about individual state initiatives, literacy programs, and best practices that successfully lower the level of reading failure.

Rationale

The morning session centered around capturing the critical issues of the seven states, identifying what was happening with these issues in each state, and looking for commonality across the states.

The session began with the state teams meeting individually to identify their most pressing literacy issues. Each group was given a list of 15 critical issues generated from research conducted by NCREL's literacy staff within its region. The states were asked to rank the following issues from high to low:

- Balanced literacy curriculum
- Emergent literacy
- Elementary school literacy
- Middle and secondary school literacy
- English as a second language
- Linguistic and cultural diversity
- Children's and adolescent literature
- Best practice reading strategies
- Struggling readers and special needs students
- Assessment and accountability
- Monitoring and evaluating reading programs
- Preservice and inservice training
- Teacher certification requirements and testing
- Innovations for parent interaction
- Administrative leadership in literacy

Each group was then asked to select the three to five issues that were most important to its state. From this information and related discussion, each group conducted a Case Study Analysis by selecting the state's number one area of need and by providing a design framework for either a prevention model, an intervention model, or a professional development model.

The design framework included:

- Critical needs
- Goals
- Action plans/strategies for meeting goals

- Evaluation plans for assessing progress

An individual from each state reported on the design framework when the large group convened.

Critical Issues

In the first step of the Case Study Analysis, the state groups were asked to identify their number one area of need or their most critical issue. The following critical issues/needs for each state emerged:

Illinois

Critical Issue: Marie Jernigan, Curriculum Coordinator, Chicago Mathematics, Science & Technologies Academies, Office of High School Development, Chicago Public Schools, reported for the Illinois team. They agreed that balanced literacy instruction was the umbrella, or primary critical issue, with the remaining issues being critical needs for getting to balanced literacy instruction.

- Professional development for new teachers
- Inservice for veterans
- High-interest/low reading level literature
- Balanced literacy instruction
 - Best practices for reading strategies
 - Struggling readers and special needs students
 - Preservice and inservice training
 - Administrative leadership in literacy

Indiana

Critical Issue: Maribeth Schmitt, Professor of Literacy and Language at Purdue University, reported that the Indiana team identified its number one priority as “having to do with linguistics and cultural diversity and everything else can fit into that.” They then identified their most critical needs as:

- Professional development based on demographic changes/shifts
- Support services to accommodate acculturation
- Curriculum modifications

Iowa

Critical Issue: Judith Cunningham, Executive Director of Elementary and Early Childhood, Des Moines Public Schools, reported that the Iowa team identified five critical needs, but decided that elementary school literacy was their most critical issue or “No. 1 critical need,” emphasizing that, “elementary school literacy was the place where we want to start, probably because that is where our charge is.” Iowa’s five critical needs are:

- Elementary school literacy
- Emergent literacy
- Ongoing use of available data for decision making
- Best practices of teaching reading
- Preservice and inservice professional development

Michigan

Critical Issue: Elaine Weber, Language Arts Consultant, Macomb Intermediate School District, Clinton Township, Michigan, reported that the Michigan team identified and prioritized its most critical issue by looking at the attributes of a literate person. She stated, “This is not the child that we were, or our mothers were, or our grandparents were. This is an entirely different kind of person that we are looking at, and we don’t have all of the knowledge that we need to have about the child to provide the kind of instruction, curriculum program for them So our No. 1 concern is that we have all of the information that we need to have about this person that we are trying to develop.”

The Michigan team then summarized their critical issues/needs as:

- Defining the attributes of a literate individual
- Understanding the roles/interactions of these attributes
- Locating, maximizing, and engaging all resources

Minnesota/Ohio

Critical Issues: The Minnesota and Ohio teams joined together to discuss their most critical issues. Rosilyn Carroll, Academic Director, Center for Excellence in Urban Teaching at Hamline University in St. Paul, Minnesota, reported for both teams.

The teams identified as their priority or most critical issue a new kind of preservice and inservice training inclusive of the following:

- Balanced literacy
- Linguistics and cultural diversity
- Best practice reading strategies
- Struggling readers and special needs students
- English as a second language
- Assessment and accountability

Wisconsin

Critical Issue: Mike Ford, Associate Professor, Human Resources, College of Education, University of Wisconsin at Oshkosh, reported for the Wisconsin team.

The Wisconsin team focused on preservice and inservice preparation (including administrative leadership) and defined their critical needs as:

- Understanding best practices
- Understanding assessment and its impact on practice
- Reversing eroding support for preservice teacher preparation
- Addressing issues of quality in alternative certification programs
- Addressing issues of schedule/time and access (due to lack of substitutes) for staff development

Analysis

As needs across the region were identified, significant critical issues reoccurred throughout the states. The most critical issue identified by the majority of the seven states was the need for professional development that would include preservice teacher preparation and inservice training. Other critical needs that emerged from the sessions included:

- Best practices of teaching reading
- Struggling readers and special needs students
- Linguistics and cultural diversity
- Balanced literacy instruction
- Assessment and accountability
- Curriculum modifications
- High-interest/low reading level literature
- Emergent literacy
- Ongoing use of available data for decision making
- Addressing issues of quality in alternative certification programs
- Addressing issues of schedule/time and access (due to lack of substitutes) for staff development
- Defining the attributes of a literate individual and understanding the roles/interactions of these attributes
- Locating, maximizing, and engaging resources
- Administrative leadership in literacy
- Support services to accommodate acculturation
- Elementary school literacy

An analysis of the critical issues that emerged revealed six issues that were common themes identified by at least three of the seven states. Those six common issues are reflected in the table below.

Common Critical Issues Within the Region

- ♦ Professional development to include preservice teacher preparation and inservice training
- ♦ Best practices of teaching reading
- ♦ Struggling readers and special needs studentsLinguistics and cultural diversity
- ♦ Balanced literacy instruction
- ♦ Assessment and accountability

Goals, Action Plans, and Evaluations

In addition to identifying the most critical literacy issues in their state, several of the states designed a framework around those issues to include goals, action plans, and evaluation. The following are samples from those states.

Indiana

Critical Issues: Maribeth Schmitt, Professor of Literacy and Language at Purdue University, reported for the Indiana team. The group determined that the *number one priority* around which they wanted to develop an action plan “had to do with linguistics and cultural diversity and that, in fact, everything else can fit into that.” They then identified their most critical needs as:

- Professional development based on demographic changes/shifts
- Support services to accommodate acculturation
- Curriculum modifications

Goal: The Indiana team came up with one goal—a broad, overarching goal that all children would be acclimated into their educational context to meet the above critical needs.

Action Plan:

- Provide teacher education programs with coursework designed to meet the needs of changing/shifting populations.

- Promote growth incentives that will attract professionals into support services areas.
- Provide professional development for teachers in the area of cultural sensitivity and incorporate modified instructional strategies.
- Seek support from administrative leadership for the above plan as a priority for the educational setting.

Evaluation Plan: Evaluation was addressed by Peggy Harrington, Director of the Bilingual Education Program for the School City of Hammond.

“We brought along a practitioner, Maritza Medina, who is a wonderful, bilingual instructor in our district. One of the things we note is that for half of her day, she works with a group of children who for the rest of that day are in a mainstream building where, unfortunately, we have untrained teachers ... that may not be as sensitive to the issues as someone who has grown up in a diverse culture and walked in the shoes of the children. Our evaluation of those children is that when they are with Maritza Medina for half a day, they are highly successful. When they return back to the mainstream, they are failures. The hope and dream we give them is the day and the time that they spend with all of those areas that Maritza incorporates. That is the evaluation and the most qualitative evaluation that you can find when you see that you can save that child and you can make that kind of difference in their life. That is the evaluation that we talked about, not the quantitative, not the standardized test scores, just the success that you see when a child stays in school versus leaving because they have no success.”

Minnesota/Ohio

Critical Issue: The Minnesota and Ohio teams designed the framework below around their most critical issue—the need for preservice and inservice training that included:

- Balanced literacy
- Linguistics and cultural diversity
- Best practice reading strategies
- Struggling readers and special need students
- English as a second language
- Assessment and accountability

Goals

- Preservice and inservice educators would be given knowledge (research, best practices, etc.) in the critical needs areas, through experiential learning that is inclusive of the diverse populations.

- Time and opportunity would be provided for inservice educators to network and share strategies and educational learning about educational experiences and research.

Rosilyn Carroll, Academic Director, Center for Excellence in Urban Teaching, at Hamline University, stated in connection with the first goal that “we are really talking about shifting paradigms, not using the old schooling, but moving to one that is reflective of the new millennium.” With regard to the second goal, she added, “All of the research said that it is all about relationships, relationships, and relationships; and we are the only institution that is about relationships that does not give the people who need to form relationships time to do that. And so we said that was one of the goals we would have.”

Action Plan: In discussing an action plan to implement their goals, the teams felt that their first and most critical step would be to have “buy in” by the stakeholders, and identified them as follows:

- Higher-education institutions
 - Presidents/boards
 - Deans
 - Faculty
- School districts
 - Boards
 - Superintendents
 - Administration
 - Teachers
- Parents/community/businesses
- State agencies and certification boards (particularly departments of education)
- Politicians/legislators
- Mental health representatives
- Judicial officials
- Human services personnel
- Children

Rosilyn Carroll added that to get the stakeholders to “buy in,” they would collaborate on capacity building, partnering, and training, and have a campaign to elect and select individuals who would buy into the goal.

In addition to the “buy in” plan, the group outlined other strategies for meeting their goals:

- Inservice—Retrain school administrators to incorporate the new practices and learn the new knowledge, and get them involved in changing paradigms.
- Preservice—Reach out to new teachers and work with senior teachers.

In discussing how to accomplish the preservice strategy, the team came up with the following steps:

- On a monthly basis, bring in the community and parents and work with the students during the school day.
- Use the local university as a resource, bringing in the following groups:
 - Student teachers
 - Students who are in the education program
 - Seniors
 - Graduate-level students
 - Professors
- Work with the unions to get support for having monthly and weekly meetings.
- Set a high priority for preservice and inservice training.
- Train the parents and community on what is being done in literacy in these critical areas.

Evaluation Plan:

- Create a training report card.
- Issue certificates of completion and competency.
- Measure competency through observation, performance, rubrics, and portfolios.
- Have NCREL partner with them to design the evaluation process.

Wisconsin

Critical Issue: After focusing on preservice and inservice preparation (including administrative leadership) as their most critical issue and defining the following critical needs, the Wisconsin team designed goals, an action plan, and an evaluation plan.

- Understanding best practices
- Understanding assessment and its impact on practice
- Reversing eroding support for preservice teacher preparation
- Addressing issues of quality in alternative certification programs

- Addressing issues of schedule/time and access (due to lack of substitutes) for staff development

Goals:

- To promote better understanding of best practices in preservice programs and staff development programs for all educators including administrators
- To promote better understanding of assessment, especially as it informs practice, in preservice programs and staff development for all educators including administration
- To examine innovative structures for staff development based on obstacles presented by schedules, access, and lack of incentives
- To inform policymakers about what we know and are learning about the preparation of teachers

Action Plan: Their action plan tied in initially to the idea that Wisconsin is already in the throes of a new cycle of state curricular documents. Their action then became the following:

- Create and promote professional “documents” making ideas related to best practice and assessment available to all schools and all teacher education programs including administrative leadership preparation programs, and making sure that they get them to policymakers.

Evaluation Plan: To evaluate whether they had any impact, they would:

- Survey and observe best practices in action.
- Monitor outcomes of measures of performance and achievement, rates of referral, and mediation and retention.

Reading Excellence Act (REA)

The agenda for the Regional Literacy Network meeting also included a breakout session for discussion on the Reading Excellence Act. Eunice Greer from the Illinois State Board of Education conducted this session and reported back to the larger group.

Representatives from Indiana, Michigan, and Wisconsin attended the session and Eunice Greer represented Illinois, which was the only state that had been funded. She provided a general overview of REA requirements and application process. She discussed what Illinois is trying to do with its REA funds and talked about the lessons Illinois has learned in securing funding for the Reading Excellence Act.

General Overview

Ms. Greer reported that Illinois applied for the Reading Excellent Act (REA) funds in order to improve the teaching and learning of reading by children in Grades K-3 in 15 of the poorest and lowest performing districts in the state. She explained that there are three ways for districts to qualify:

1. The two districts in the state with the *largest number* of low-income students
2. The two districts in the state with the *highest proportion* of low-income students
3. Any district with a Title I school designated as not making adequate reading progress

She explained, "Once you've got the district identified where you've got the maximum of four districts in the first two categories and then all of your districts with Title I, the criteria is basically the same to qualify within each of those districts. That doesn't mean every school has to be included. Every district has to identify which two schools have the highest number of students with reading problems, the two schools with the highest proportion of students with reading problems, and the Title I schools."

She added that once the schools have been chosen, "Then it goes through the applications, what the focus might be of REA work in each of the grade levels, how you judge it, the continuum of effectiveness, then what should be happening at the local levels, what a general model for REA is, what the district roles are, what the state roles are, who should be in your partnership, a little bit about ESL issues, and then how to contact the folks in D.C."

Greer reported that Illinois received \$37.9 million with about 90 eligible districts. She stated that they articulated four goals upfront in their proposal, which they felt were very close to the REA goals. Those goals were:

1. All children in REA-funded schools in Illinois will learn to read by the end of third grade.
2. All children in REA-funded schools in Illinois who are at risk of reading failure will receive individualized intervention support that is grounded in scientifically based research, resulting in a decrease in the number of children who are inappropriately identified for special education.
3. All children in early childhood centers in REA-funded districts will receive the necessary preparation and support for learning to read.

4. All families of children in REA-funded schools in Illinois will have access to high-quality family literacy programs.

According to Greer, Illinois will employ several strategies to achieve these goals, and they will be firmly grounded in relevant, scientifically based reading research.

The strategies include:

- Focused, ongoing staff development for all staff who work with K-3 students and their families
- Reduction of class size and restructuring of the school day
- Improved instruction and assessment
- Early intervention and support for children in prekindergarten programs that feed into REA schools
- Improved instructional materials, classroom libraries, and professional libraries
- Building of local capacity to sustain reform efforts
- Strengthening of family and community support for literacy and learning

To implement these strategies, explained Greer, they developed a “five-prong approach” for supporting the schools.

1. The Illinois Center for Achieving Reading Excellence (ICARE) is the four-university consortium consisting of a virtual faculty that will provide staff development. Greer explained:

“When schools create their budget, they have to allocate seven percent of their budget to support this consortium Universities will respond to a Request-For-Proposal (RFP), and four will be selected based on their proposal on how to deliver the professional development statewide and also on the compelling evidence that they are going to deliver research-based reading instruction. We identified 14 topics they need to address in our proposal. So they will be using distance learning, weekend seminars, and regional seminars—all different ways to deliver this professional development statewide.”

2. The Principals’ Cadre is a consortium of elementary school principals who have successfully led reading reform efforts in Illinois schools. Greer stated,

“We have identified in Illinois a core group of outstanding principals in schools that are stressed. They have already experienced some success in turning schools around. Each one of those principals will be assigned to an REA school principal as a mentor so every principal will have a

mentor who knows probably more than they do about reading and also knows about leadership and change and making improvements in the building.”

3. The Regional Offices of Education (ROEs) assist schools and districts in coordinating and implementing ongoing professional development.

Greer explained:

“They tend to be where our greatest expertise is in terms of professional development. Obviously NCREL is another resource for professional development, which we identified in our proposal as one group that we would be partnering with. But these regional offices of Education—there are 50 of them—know each of their schools. They will be the go-between between the university and the school to help design the delivery system so that it works for the teachers in their region. . . . They are funded through legislation. The schools are required to make a three percent contribution that will then go to the regional offices.”

4. The Family/Community Partnership Network is a family literacy training and technical assistance resource. According to Greer:

“The Illinois State Board of Education staff is going to coordinate the local community family partnerships just to make sure that something is going on there and that schools are hooking up.”

5. An external contract was awarded for the state-level evaluation. Greer stated:

“Our external evaluator, as part of their contract, is expected to provide technical assistance at the local level in terms of assessment and collecting data, and using data and making sure their assessment system is aligned with their goals.”

Helpful Hints

Greer shared some of the lessons Illinois learned. She said they were primarily about grant writing and the result of a meeting ISBE staff had in Washington with REA officials at the Department of Education in the beginning of their process.

“Since we were not funded the first time,” said Greer, “I can talk about what we learned from the first year and what we did differently the second year. They brought in their staff and walked through our proposal and showed us how it was different from the ones that were funded in the first year and where we needed to be focusing our work in the second year. And that was really a big help.”

Greer listed the following lessons Illinois learned in the grant application process:

1. **“The first hurdle is to prove that you know the research.** And it is not the kitchen sink literature review. It’s got to be effective early reading instructions. The best sources I know of are Preventing Reading Difficulties, The National Panel Report, and Reading Research Quarterly. The articles are cited in there, but you have to prove that you know the work and you have read the articles as well **So you have to have a focused single theme supported by the research. You have to establish a need for funds.** That is one of the things we didn’t do the first year. We talked about all of the stuff we had going on in the state.”
2. **“Show that your current work is aligned to REA.** They want to know what is going on in your state. They want to know that you have begun to work on reading improvement, but they also want you to show how it already reinforces what is going on relative to the REA goals.”
3. **“Your partnerships are essential.** One person cannot write this proposal. . . . I thought I knew about PreK. I didn’t know what I needed to know about PreK. I didn’t know enough about family literacy. I didn’t know that there were four strands for Even Start and that they were all important and that you had to have four. . . . I knew a lot about reading research, but all of that has to be in there. So, your partnerships are really critical. Support from your Governor’s office is very critical and support from your legislature.”
4. **“This is about focused, intensive work.** It’s about what the feds want. . . . At the end of this funding round, they want to be able to say, ‘Here are some models of what has really worked.’ When you spend a lot of money and really try to do it right, we can now say that it works and that we can make it happen. Ask for what you need, you can’t negotiate, you can’t go back and say, ‘Oh, we need more.’ Create the need and build the budget, but ask for what you need.”
5. **“Describe in detail what’s going to change in schools and why.** They really want to know that. They don’t just want a sort of ephemeral everything is going to be happy because we know the research and we know schools do the right thing.”
6. **“Make sure you address what is going to happen for second language learners.** They are very interested. We know that there is not as much research about second language learners as there is about early reading and first language learners. So if you have a second language learner population, you want to talk about what’s going to happen. And if you don’t have a second learner population, make that clear up front, so they don’t keep reading, saying,

‘Why aren’t they addressing second language learners?’ Make it clear up front when you are talking about your needs.”

7. **“They like graphs and charts.** The first year Illinois proposal had no graphs or charts, and nothing was summarized. There was a lot of process and not a lot of reading. . . . A little process is important; too much is bad.”
8. **“Implementation of timelines.** What are your key activities at the state level? at the district level? at the local level? That’s the level of detail that they want to see—that you’ve thought out what your big activities are and when they are going to happen and who is going to be involved. And Joe Conaty, whom we met with from the U.S. Department of Education, is very fond of saying, ‘If you are not doing something different, you are not doing REA.’ So make sure you talk about what’s going to be different. This is not about making what’s already happening better, it’s about putting something new in because the old thing isn’t working.”

In reporting back to the larger group on the REA session, Greer summarized the above information and added: “The advantage of being a second-year REA state is that you can learn from mistakes made the first time around. When I spoke with state directors at some of the meetings I attended, one of the things I was hearing was that in those states that had set up systems where local districts were responsible for building their own professional development, the small districts were really suffering. They didn’t have the capacity or the expertise or really the clout to pull in the consultants that they wanted to pull in. So these small districts were spending all of their time trying to build their professional development, instead of getting anything delivered. A lot of first-year states were saying that they have had to slow down and go back and rethink how they were going to deliver their professional development through the REA.”

She concluded: “We are fortunate to be in a position where there is probably a lot more money coming from the federal government in reading. So we may be able to roll that out on a continued timeline using federal money for a while, but that’s sort of building capacity at the state level. We talk a lot about building capacity at the local level. If we can do this in Illinois, I think that we can . . . continue to support improving reading instruction, not just in the districts that we fund through REA, but, hopefully, eventually throughout the state.”

(To view the Illinois REA proposal online, visit their Web site at www.illinoisreads.org.)

States' Initiatives

Illinois

Spokesperson Eunice Greer stated that four strategies have been identified to improve reading in Illinois.

“The first is to articulate in Illinois what should be going on in K-2 classrooms. We have learning standards, but they articulate what needs to be happening by the end of third grade. And when you think about what needs to be happening in a child’s life before third grade, making it clear what the piece of the pie is for PreK through Grade 2 teachers, in a system that until recently only talked about Grade 3, is a very important addition. Obviously, if we are going to improve reading in Illinois, we need staff development. We have a statewide development initiative. We have an early intervention initiative. We have identified 14 or 15 model programs. We have a network that consists of the faculty from those programs, and we are beginning to roll out the initiative and make it clear what is going on in these programs. We have a goal of really making those programs demonstration sites and adding more intervention sites as we become aware of additional programs that are databased and have a very clear history of data collection, that shows us that what we are doing is improving what is happening for kids in K-3. And finally, we have a family literacy piece. We are developing resources for families.”

In support of these four strategies, she described the following key activities of the Illinois Reads initiative.

“Last year we built classroom reading kits for all of our PreK-2 teacher and elementary principals. Over 35,000 kits were distributed to teachers and principals in Illinois. This year we are doing a third-grade kit, an early intervention kit, and a bilingual resource kit. We started statewide staff development K-2 last year. We are adding statewide staff development 3-5 this year, and we do the trainers-of-trainers model. We have Illinois reading days, which are modeled on Texas reading days. Those are specifically for principals and reading specialists. We have had four regional reading days so far. We have brought in Catherine Snow, Louisa Moats, Michael Opitz, Susan Neuman, and Pat Cunningham—lots of people to talk with principals about how to be instructional leaders in effective reading programs. We are doing training for CReating Independence through Student-owned Strategies (CRISS) for upper-grade-level teachers. We have just begun publishing a monograph series—our first one.”

She added, that for the early intervention initiative, “We are developing a early literacy assessment called the Illinois Snapshot of Early Literacy (ISEL), which goes online in the fall; we have the Early Reading Intervention Network; and we have the Reading Excellence Act.”

Indiana

Earlene Holland, Indiana State Department of Education, stated, “We have a statewide literacy initiative that goes from PreK through adult. It has been in effect about four years, and we are finding it to be very successful. We do a research study with the Indiana Education Policy Center at Indiana University, Bloomington, on our early intervention part of it, which has PreK through Grade 2. We are finding out what works. We have put out several documents to give the schools to help them decide how to develop a needs assessment and find out what works for them in their own schools. We also put out a document called “Grade One Diagnostic Reading Assessment” in trying to teach children how to read [and in trying to teach] how to assess students.”

She added, “As a part of our early literacy initiative, we have the Reading Recovery program and literacy collaborative in our state. We have a library books grant that has done a lot to help our schools develop their school libraries. We also have an adult literacy program with adults who don’t read . . . and have really made some progress in that area. We have a remediation grant that focuses on reading and math and the reading part also includes Reading Recovery, and we are making great strides with that through various types of programs.”

(For more documents on Indiana’s early intervention program, visit their Web site at www.doe.state.in.us.)

Iowa

Deb Hansen, Iowa Department of Education, reported on the state’s initiative.

“We have a multifaceted initiative called “Every Child Reads.” Also, the Reading Excellence Act is a portion of that initiative. I will just comment on a few of the themes that we try to support in the birth to kindergarten part of that initiative, also the K-3 part of that initiative, and the REA grant. [Those themes have] to do with how to build capacity of the schools and the agencies that support schools to use student performance data in an ongoing way to drive decision-making professional development and use what is called the action-research model. We have modeled in all our staff development how you use an external knowledge base, how you look at the status of students in your care, and how to use implementation data regarding the implementation of our initiative to drive staff development.”

She added: “We also model for people in an ongoing way how you deliver quality professional development tied to school buildingwide achievement, not classroom by classroom, not the individual teacher having the skills, but looking collectively across the building, how you raise student achievement at the building level. We work very closely with intermediate units in our state. We have 15 Area Education Agencies. We are trying to build their capacity to go into school districts and use action research and professional development around whatever research-based practices the school district identifies based on their research.”

Hansen concluded: “We’ve been simulating a lot of our activities around comprehension because we feel that all students could benefit from comprehension regardless of what age. All of us are continuing to develop our comprehension skills.”

Michigan

Sheila Potter, Coordinator, English Language Arts, Michigan Department of Education, reported on their state’s initiative.

“Our legislature has been very generous to us. We have \$850 million over the next three years targeted for literacy programs for preschool through Grade 3. . . . We have funded 110 school districts in this program called “Literacy Achievement.” Each building is given \$85,000 (each eligible building in these eligible districts). We’ve also gotten some money (a small portion of the amount that I mentioned before) that has gone to eight regional literacy training centers. We have 56 ISDs (Intermediate School Districts) in our state—eight of them have been named regional literacy training centers, and they are responsible for providing the professional development in literacy throughout our state. They are focusing mainly on early literacy right now, but we also have some initiatives in middle school and high school.”

“We have a project funded by Goals 2000 money called CLIMB. It stands for Clarifying Language In Michigan’s Benchmarks. We have had hundreds of teachers across the state who are actually developing and been involved in writing these clarification statements of our state benchmarks as well as exemplars in instruction assessments, rubrics, etc. Each will be up on a CD-Rom in August. So we are real excited about that.”

Potter concluded: “We have a number of initiatives in teacher education, both preservice induction period and inservice. We have state standards for that. We have a strong early literacy initiative, very strong. We have an early literacy assessment called the Michigan Literacy Progress Profile—11 performance assessments. We have a strong initiative in building standards-based thematic units based on our contents standards and benchmarks.”

Minnesota

Rosilyn Carroll, Academic Director, Center for Excellence in Urban Teaching, Hamline University, in St. Paul, reported on Minnesota's initiatives.

"Minnesota is known as the state with standards, and we have had them for a long time. We call them "outcomes." We are in our second year of implementation when kids can't graduate as a result of not passing."

"Something good our state has done is the legislature has funded \$5,000 for every first-, second-, and third-year teacher for training. This is in collaboration with the district where the legislature gives \$3,000 and the district puts in \$2,000 so that training can be done for first- and second-year teachers."

"Last, but not least, the Center was funded over a two-year period for \$800,000, and our task is to work with first-, second-, and third-year teachers, as well as senior teachers. We have a brochure that has all of the institutions of Minnesota that deal with education. We give these to students. Our certificate program is urban teaching so we retrain at graduate level. Also, we have a brochure that has a redefinition of an urban learner. We are redefining urban to a positive thing."

Ohio

Anne Stephens, Executive Director of the Office of School Reform and Federal Student Programs, Department of Education, reported on Ohio's initiatives.

"Literacy in Ohio has been a very big initiative for quite a while in collaboration with the Governor's office. It has been a very important initiative to Governor Bob Taft and his wife, Hope Taft, who have actually adopted schools in the state of Ohio. They go into the school, read to the children, and perform instructional tasks. We have a two-part campaign in literacy. One of them is an awareness campaign, which would involve community and parents in what literacy is all about and also the literacy initiative. This falls into the actual academic part of literacy—a very strong preschool feeling that you have to get the conditions right for learning and a very strong campaign start to early reading and early learning."

She added: "We have CSRD grants and we have our Reading Excellence Act. We have done a lot of studies and research on best practices, and we are beginning to promote only good research-based best practices, as far as being able to adopt specific programs that can go into our schools. We are trying to take a look at the overall curriculum and what has been fed

in. I heard someone say before that all these initiatives get put in and very little get weeded out. You should keep little bits and pieces of things, but you don't have to keep everything that clutters up your curriculum and gets in the way of learning."

Stephens concluded: "We have literacy coordinators. Our goal is for our coordinator to be in every building and every school district in the state of Ohio. Some of this is being funded through Title I funds. Ohio is a big Title I state with over \$300 million coming in from Title I funds. We have summer trainings—we trained over 7,000 teachers last year, and we have about 12,000 signed up for this year."

Wisconsin

Maxine Hough, Title I, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, reported on their initiatives.

"One of the things that prompted some really good information is what we call our Wisconsin Information Network for Successful Schools. A couple of years ago our legislature said there will be an electronic report card that everybody could access. Well, of course, it was public record. But then we said, 'Fine, electronic report cards are okay for every school district to access and people to look at, but let's make it helpful.' So, with the help of many people working at DPI, this is something that you can access through our Department Web site. You can look up an individual school district or an individual school. It certainly does have all the test scores there. But more importantly, the whole Web site is based on what we call the characteristics of a successful school. Wisconsin did not invent this—it's leadership, high academic standards, standards of the heart—all the things that we as educators have always known. So we talk about why children are successful in one area and not in others.' A myriad of resources will lead the person looking at that Web Site into other areas. We are really proud of that."

Hough added: "*The Characteristics of Successful Schools* is a guide that we as consultants take out and work with schools districts as they need them. Another big initiative is our minority student achievement. Everyone talks about it continually, and now we have a group in the Department working with important, educational leaders throughout the state, truly addressing the issue. We have a good family literacy program, and we are updating our curriculum guides."

Rationale

Facilitators led teams in building capacity and collaboration, and in developing an awareness of the different perspectives held by professional educators.

Cross-state teams were formed, and members were asked to share the top three to five literacy areas that, during in the morning session, their state team had identified as being significant for cross-state collaboration. They were then asked to share one or more topics that their state team believed would make an excellent cross-state activity and one in which they would be willing to participate. The cross-state group then spent time brainstorming ideas and activities that would support cross-state collaboration, using their agreed-upon topics. Each group selected an individual who would be responsible for reporting back to the larger group.

Following the meeting of the cross-state groups, each state team was asked to review the ideas and activities of all of the cross-state groups; to build on ideas already listed; and to add new ideas. This brainstorming process continued until all groups responded. As a result of this interactive process, the following ideas and activities emerged in support of cross-state collaboration.

Points of Cross-State Collaboration

Professional Development (Preservice and Inservice)

Participants' Comments:

The goal of professional development for literacy should be to include teachers, staff, administration, the community, and parents and be inclusive of the needs of diverse groups (culture; linguistic; social economies; and human development, i.e., how students learn).

There needs to be an awareness of the importance of professional development.

Preservice should include articulation between colleges/universities and school districts and states regarding teacher training.

Examine new teacher orientation programs.

There should be additional dialogue on how to design professional development through teleconferencing and optional delivery.

It should be a research-based design.

Model quality professional development—how to deliver and monitor implementation.

There should be an understanding of reading and writing across the curriculum.

It should include strategies/best practices, assessment, and identification of needs.

Professional development should strive to change what the teacher does (cannot change the children).

It should include balanced literacy to meet individual needs.

Coordinate preservice and inservice through NCREL to include a speakers' bureau, threaded discussions online, and a listserv.

Advance professional development through regional conferences, the use of technology for distance learning, teleconferencing, and the identification of regional teleconferencing sites.

Create professional development seminars on common concern topics.

“Minority” Student Achievement Gap

Understand the needs of second language learners.

Focus on specific groups when the data reveals that specific groups are in need of attention.

Look at support systems for all minority groups.

Identify useful data that shows achievement gaps.

Understand the new learner by acknowledging diversity and recognizing that the principal is the guiding force to providing resources to help the teachers meet the needs of the individual learners.

Focus on developing cultural diversity, definition, and application (“urban”).

Dealing with the teacher shortage

Use a teacher-exchange program.

Consider differentiated staffing.

Increase the interactive use of technology.

Comparison of state standards and benchmarks for commonalities

Develop cross-state study teams on specific topics

These topics were the following critical issues identified by the states in the morning session:

Professional development to include preservice teacher preparation and inservice training

Best practices of teaching reading
Struggling readers and specials needs students
Linguistics and cultural diversity
Balanced literacy instruction
Assessment and accountability/linking assessment to instruction
Administrative leadership in literacy

Hold more statewide forums

Meet regularly.

Rotate hosts.

Have onsite school visits.

Create physical space for a positive, spacious learning environment—share ideas about how to do this.

Create monographs

Monographs would be created around literacy critical issues in K-12.

Identify and share successful programs/schools/strategies

Adapt the Illinois Reading Kits across the states.

Add an online technology piece to the Illinois Reading Kits.

Have the Illinois Reading Kits evaluated by cross-state groups

Use professional development and mentoring to support the Illinois Reading Kits.

Set up onsite cross-state visits to schools and state departments.

Have literacy advisors.

Participate in training sessions.

Share performance of students

Use videos, case studies, and students' work.

Show connection between the student behavior you want to increase and the teacher behavior (instructional strategies).

Cross-States Group Session Reports

Following the cross-states group meetings and the brainstorming activities, Peggy Grant, an NCREL facilitator for the meeting, asked the designated participant from each group to report. “Talk about the possibilities for collaboration you noticed as you moved around the room, what ideas you have about what you might do next to make some of these collaborations come to pass. Tell us what the most important things were.”

Mike Ford, Associate Professor, Human Resources, University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh, reported for Wisconsin: “Well, I guess one thing we want to put on the table is that since many of the topics are ones that have been with us for a long time and many of the methods have been with us for a while, the one comment we added on professional development is to really think about what sort of structural changes we would have to make in order not to be here five years from now having these conversations.”

Peggy Harrington, Director, Bilingual Education Program, School City of Hammond, said, “We thought what we would like to do—and we saw this throughout the room all day today—is to increase preservice and inservice training. We need to take that training beyond what we have always done. We need to find a way to have teachers change behaviors and apply that training.”

Judith Schneebeck, Deputy Director of Curriculum, Des Moines Public Schools, reported, “Four quick points: the need for principals to have support in their leadership; keeping the focus on comprehension strategies; balanced literacy to meet individual needs, right out of the mouth of a second-grade teacher in our midst, and finally; all students will read keeping a respect for development.”

Anne Cothran, Dean of Instruction, Jay Sterling Morton High School, Cicero, Illinois, reported for Illinois. “We concentrated on the development of the importance of continued networking. Most importantly, as each of us are developing resources for things like a training network and speakers bureau, if we keep a comprehensive list that can be shared between the states in our region, then we won’t be duplicating our work. Instead, we will be building on each other’s work.”

The spokesperson for Michigan said, “In looking at preservice and inservice, [what we saw was] more like a collaborative effort to look at what excellence is for a literate person—How do they show that? Having the administrators and teachers and all the professionals next to each other, pulling up those attributes and going back and developing the assessment based on what a literate person does in this day and age.”

Anne Stephens, Executive Director, Ohio Department of Education, reported for Ohio. "What is literacy? Maybe we can't come up with an agreement. Everywhere we go, you hear something different on what composes literacy. So [if] we begin with common ground and also have common knowledge of what we are after, then the possibilities for collaboration would be [around] research-based practices used by all of our states." According to Stephens, the results of this collaboration could be documented over a three-year period of time and published with the assistance of NCREL.

Evaluation and Survey

Prior to the close of the afternoon session, each participant was asked to complete an evaluation that NCREL could use to ascertain the effectiveness of the Regional Literacy Network meeting and the literacy and technology needs and interests within the region. The following form was used. It includes the results of the evaluation along with additional comments made by the participants.

Sponsored by NCREL

April 24, 2001

Feedback Form

Thank you for your evaluation of the Literacy Network Meeting that you attended on April 24, 2001. This information will be used to improve future meetings.

Please take a few moments to share your feedback.

The survey should take about five minutes to complete.

Your responses will be kept confidential and results will be reported on an aggregate basis only.

Please contact Edyth Young, Director of Research, at 630/649-6563 or edyth.young@ncrel.org if you have any questions on this survey.

Feedback form

	Very Much So	For the Most Part	Somewhat	Only Slightly	Not at All	Total Amount
Considering your current job responsibilities, did this meeting meet your needs?	12	11	3	1	0	27
Considering the information you received about literacy, did the meeting meet your expectations?	13	10	4	1	0	28
Was the content timely regarding current practices in your field?	15	11	2	0	0	28
Did this meeting increase your knowledge of literacy needs and initiatives in the seven-state region?	17	6	4	0	0	27
Has this meeting increased your opportunities for and commitment to cross-state collaboration?	19	6	2	1	0	28
Did the meeting increase your awareness of literacy perspectives from a variety of different professional educators (e.g., elementary teachers, secondary teachers, university faculty, state department professionals, superintendents, principals, reading specialists, etc.)?	17	5	4	2	0	28
Have you acquired any new skills or strategies from this meeting that will be valuable in your current and/or anticipated work assignments?	9	8	6	4	1	28
Will you apply the information presented in this meeting to your current and/or anticipated job responsibilities?	14	8	5	1	0	27
Did this meeting provide information and support for application for the Reading Excellence Act (REA)?	8	6	6	1	1	22
How would you rate the overall quality of the facilities?	Excellent 22	Good 3	Fair 0	Marginal 0	Poor 0	Total 25
How would you rate the overall quality of the presenters?	18	5	1	0	0	25
In terms of preparing you to do your job better, how would you rate the overall quality of the Regional Literacy Network meeting?	12	9	3	1	0	25

What additional comments do you have concerning the meeting and the next steps for the Regional Literacy Network?

Would like to see continued sessions of this nature. We acquired so much information.

Everything was well organized.

Discuss Terminology – Literacy.

Very good. Thank you for inviting me.

Diagnosis is important beyond K-2. State reading testing assesses students' grade-level proficiency. Let's revisit the importance of testing and instructing students at their instructional (developmental) reading levels.

Rotate regional meetings with "host" sites.

Continue to develop some of the ideas.

I think that you should provide further opportunities for cross state meetings. I would like to see it focused on a specific literacy challenge.

Thank you for the opportunity to share, collaborate, and build meaning. Rarely do we have such opportunities.

You are gracious hosts and wonderful facilitators.

What an honor to have attended this meeting.

Thank you for your hard work. Very impressive.

Continue conversations, threaded discussions; encourage collaboration.

Role-alike sessions for state department folks

A great first step

I'd like more opportunity to actually facilitate cross-state literacy initiative.

Activities required more time for thorough processing—they were great activities.

I would like to see an actual plan developed through this. Ex: Regional collaboration on state kits.

A teacher-exchange program possibly

Set specific goals so that we can really develop and implement a plan.

Much of what was generated today could have been drawn from research on school reform and professional development. Some of the ideas suggested are probably examples of practices that have not been associated with improved student achievement—perpetuating myths and practices that don't field positive outcomes.

Evaluation items don't seem to match role of team members [as described in NCREL's letter of invitation] not sure that these are the purposes that we are rating.

Facilitators did a good job sharing directions and making tasks clear.

Well-planned; organized well; day went by quickly.

Cyber-connections should be put in place as soon as possible.

Directions before activities need to be made clearer. Time was wasted trying to clarify what needed to be done.

National skills—this was not skill training. The information shared did not provide strategy training.

My current job doesn't allow me the opportunity to use very much [the information from the meeting today]. However, in the very near future it will be MOST beneficial.

Thank you for your feedback!

Future Plans

The work of the Regional Literacy Network will be long-term and sustained through annual meetings; interaction and communication by NCREL's liaison for each state; and a message board and e-mail list on NCREL's Literacy Research and Best Practices Web site (www.ncrel.org/litweb). Also, plans are under way to form cross-state study teams to study specific topics identified at the meeting as critical issues; and a literacy technology task force is being developed to enhance NCREL's Literacy Research and Best Practices Web site.

Participants List

Attached is a list of the names, addresses, and phone numbers of the members of the Regional Literacy Network and the NCREL staff.

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