Florida Center for Reading Research

Teaching All Students to Read: Practices from *Reading First* Schools With Strong Intervention Outcomes

Complete Report

Just Read, Florida!

Elizabeth Crawford and Joseph Torgesen

Introduction

One of the most critical needs in Florida's *Reading First* schools is to improve the effectiveness of interventions for struggling readers. For example, during the 2005-2006 school year, only 17% of first grade students who began the year at some level of risk for reading difficulties finished the year with grade level skills on the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS®) measures. In second grade, the figure was only 9%, and in third grade it was 8%. We will never teach all students to read if we are not more successful with the most academically challenged students. Teaching all students to read requires a **school level system** for early identification of 'at risk' students and a **school level system** for providing those students with the intensive interventions they need to become proficient readers.

At the request of the Just Read, Florida! Office, the Florida Center for Reading Research has begun to collect information about practices being implemented in schools that are experiencing greater than average success providing interventions to their struggling readers. Schools that have been less successful in meeting the needs of their most struggling readers have also been visited. In this document, we will describe what we have learned from visiting successful schools. Although it is not possible, with this kind of study, to determine whether any single practice was critical to a school's success, it is possible to develop a list of "options" or "practices" that represent innovative or common-sense solutions to difficult problems faced by all schools. Whether these practices will lead to similar success in other school environments will depend on a very complex set of factors, including the quality of their implementation and the relevance and interaction with other existing practices. This document is a "manual of ideas" for meeting some of the most difficult challenges faced by *Reading First* schools in working with their struggling readers. School leaders will find ideas described here that can be applied to help them successfully meet the unique challenges within their own schools.

How effective schools were identified

The practices described in this document were found in 10 schools that were identified as among the most effective in providing interventions for struggling readers within the 390 schools participating in *Reading First* during the 2004-2005 school year. Using data from the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS®), it is possible to directly calculate two different indices of instructional effectiveness for each school.

The ECI (Effectiveness of Core Instruction) index indicates the percentage of students who began the year reading "at grade level" and who were still reading at grade level at the end of the year. The EI (Effectiveness of Intervention) index indicates the percentage of students who began the year at some level of risk for reading difficulties but who progressed rapidly enough to meet grade level expectations by the end of the year. For this project, the main point of interest was the Effectiveness of Intervention (EI) score across grades K-3 combined. Several schools were identified as having effective intervention programs (an EI index in the top percentile of *Reading First* schools). Once these schools were identified by their EI index, other important characteristics were utilized to select schools to be visited. First, schools had to have at least 50 students per grade level, and second, the school level percentages of minority students and students qualifying for free and reduced lunch had to be above average for *Reading First* schools in Florida. Lastly, the schools were required to have an ECI index above the 60th percentile. The table below provides the 2004-2005 EI and ECI index scores, along with student demographics, for each of the 10 effective schools that were visited. Both the EI and ECI were calculated as the combined average of all grades, K-3.

Data on the Top 10 Schools Meeting the Effective School Criteria

School	EI Score	EI %ile	ECI Score	ECI %ile	% free and reduced lunch	% minority	% ELL	# of children in K-3
A	39	99	83	82	89	84	47	499
B	36	97	83	79	99	98	55	463
C	34	95	89	95	80	83	22	455
D	33	93	88	93	93	94	42	487
E	33	91	84	84	75	78	31	428
F	32	89	85	89	85	80	37	618
G	32	89	80	67	93	93	25	480
H	32	89	84	84	73	67	31	556
I	31	89	79	66	87	95	27	301
J	31	89	80	67	70	99	11	575

After visiting the ten high-performing schools and a few less successful schools, several common qualities among the successful schools emerged. These qualities were not observed as consistently or as clearly in the less successful schools. The following seven traits were areas of strength for the schools in the top percentiles for intervention effectiveness. Each area deserves careful consideration when implementing a school wide intervention system that will be able to meet the needs of struggling readers. Under each of these headings, we will provide examples of specific practices implemented at successful schools. The terms 'successful' and 'high-performing' will be used in this document to refer to the schools that met the above-mentioned criteria for having 'effective intervention' programs.

Seven Common Traits Observed in Successful Schools

- Strong Leadership
- Positive Belief and Teacher Dedication
- Data Utilization and Analysis
- Effective Scheduling
- Professional Development
- Scientifically Based Intervention Programs
- Parent Involvement

1. Strong Leadership

Strong school-level leadership was observed in all of the successful schools. This leadership was provided by the principal, reading coach, and/or literacy teams. In some schools, it was the principal that provided the primary "vision" or leadership, and in other schools, effective leadership was provided by coaches with support from the principal. Several characteristics combine to create strong leadership, but one characteristic was universal - knowledge. The strong leaders had extensive knowledge of their children, reading programs, data, schedules, and teachers' needs. They also had a strong vision for the school, which they could explain clearly. A statement that was made almost immediately by a majority of the principals and coaches when asked about their success was, "**You have to know your children.**" By knowing the children and their needs, (especially the 'at risk' children), the principals had a greater understanding of their school's needs with regard to staffing and scheduling. One principal described "identifying the children in need" as his first step when he created his schedule and hired his support staff. For example, based on his school's data, he noted that 20 first grade children were 'at risk' for reading difficulty. As principal, this meant that he needed to hire enough support staff to teach those 20

children and schedule the reading blocks and intervention times in such a way that the support teachers could see the children in small groups. For this principal, hiring enough highly qualified reading intervention teachers was one of the most critical pieces of his successful intervention program. He determined his 'intervention needs' budget first, usually in the spring, and then worked to identify the funds within his budget to meet those needs. As he stated, "Budget allocation reflects needs of students."

Another important characteristic of strong leadership includes knowing what research-based programs are available and what areas each program addresses. A principal explained, 'You have to have a solid understanding of the programs and your children, then you will be able to assist in matching the two and allocating your funds for purchasing the various programs.' She did state that it was difficult to keep up on all of the various programs, but by working with her literacy team, she was able to maintain a basic knowledge of the available programs. Principals at the effective schools found research-based programs that teachers could use to guide their instruction in the most critical areas for struggling readers.

Effective leaders demonstrated the ability to interpret and use data effectively. In *Reading First* schools, there is an emphasis on 'data driven instruction.' The literacy teams reiterated that it is this type of instruction that is critical for students who are struggling in learning to read. Principals at the high-performing schools took an active role in the data meetings and worked with the teachers in understanding what the numbers meant for the children in their classrooms. The importance of data meetings will be discussed in more detail below.

Knowledge of efficient schedules and teachers' needs are two more components that were observed in the successful leaders. The principals at the high-performing schools made reading instruction a priority when creating their master schedules. They thought about the children in the 'high risk' category and how to allow ample time for reading instruction in small groups when scheduling lunch, physical education and other special area classes. Further information and examples of schedules will be discussed later in this document.

Principals had different mottos or statements that communicated their belief or vision for their school. One feeling that was expressed by several leaders was the need for high expectations. 'You need to have high expectations of your teachers and students and they need to know they are accountable for meeting those expectations.' One principal emphasized children's assessment results as one method for holding her teachers accountable. When asked why they were successful, the teachers at this school consistently responded with statements about high expectations and support. They knew the principal expected a lot of them and their students, but they also agreed that she provided the support they needed to be effective.

The teachers at the successful schools all expressed the feeling of being supported by their leaders. The teachers explained support meant they could go to the principal or coach to ask for something (model lesson, more leveled books, another adult during small groups or classroom supplies like pencils) and the leader would listen and problem solve with them.

Another principal stressed the importance of time on task as her main focus for her school. "Even during their 'choice time' the choices should be meaningful," she said, "but they still can be enjoyable." Again, when the teachers at her school were polled as to reasons for their success, the majority responded, "Time on task." The answers of the teachers at most of the high-performing schools reflected a clear vision that was initiated and modeled by the principal. The qualities of a strong leader spill over into many of the other areas and will be discussed in more detail in the following sections.

Examples of Strong Leadership

The principals that demonstrated strong leadership were involved in every aspect of their schools and, as a result, a sense of order and management were felt upon entering the school. At several of the high-performing schools, principals were observed to have similar morning routines. They would greet buses and students (knowing most children by name), make sure all classrooms were covered and walk around campus to make sure their teachers had what they needed to teach their students that day. The principals not only knew the students' names, but the children knew the principal and it was obvious they had interacted with him/her on a regular basis. One principal said, "This is no longer a desk job. We are their instructional leaders." The teachers at the high-performing schools expressed a great deal of respect for their principals. They also explained that the respect

was mutual. They felt supported and valued by their principals and felt that when they had a problem their principal's door was always open. The teachers also felt that their principals would not ask them to do anything that they would not do themselves. This last fact was very important to teachers across the successful schools. At the high-performing schools the principals were not seen as part of a separate team of administrators, but rather part of the school team. Although the principals were the "captains," the school functioned as one unified team with one unified goal.

2. Positive Belief and Teacher Dedication

A belief that ALL children can learn to read was an important element of the equation of success at the high-performing schools. During teacher interviews at the successful schools, it was clear that the teachers believed that despite the language barriers, limited support at home and low socioeconomic status, their students could learn to read. At some of the less successful schools, several reasons were given why their students were not successful (e.g. "The students have no support at home, some of our students don't speak English, they come from very rough neighborhoods, etc."). The successful schools also could have used these same reasons to explain why some of their students were struggling in learning to read, but they did not. Instead, the school staff stated over and over again that they had high expectations of their students and of themselves. The teachers also expressed that meeting these high expectations took a great deal of effort and hard work, but it was worth it in the end. The principals at the high-performing schools supported this idea during interviews stating, "I have the hardest working, most dedicated teachers." One principal added that almost 100% of her teachers were involved in teaching in the after school program because they are so committed to teaching their children to read.

The principals at these schools made it clear that they needed to raise the bar, not lower it. Principals and teachers expected their students to learn despite limited parent support, English as a second language, and low socioeconomic status. The teachers who worked in the schools where the expectations were high indicated that the principal had high expectations for all, **but** also backed those expectations with the support needed to meet those expectations. When asked what they meant by support, teachers stated, "She has high expectations of us, the students, and herself, but she also asks us what we need to make sure our students succeed. Whether we need more paper or more books, she always seems to find the money somewhere." This 'culture of belief' was tangible in the overall atmosphere of the school. The teachers in the schools where this feeling was prevalent shared that they had a vested interest in the children not only as students, but as people.

Principals used a variety of resources to help inspire and rally their staff to 'believe' or 'buy in' to the feeling that all children can learn to read. Two of the resources mentioned were Ruby Pain (*Framework for Understanding Poverty and Understanding Learning: The how, the why, the what*) and Steven Covey (T*he 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*). One principal gave all of his teachers a copy of the book, *What Great Teachers do differently: 14 Things that Matter Most,* by Todd Whitaker. This book has chapters titled: The Power of Expectations, Prevention versus Revenge, and Make it Cool to Care. This same principal also rented a bus and brought all of his teachers around to the neighborhoods where their children came from to show the need to "raise the bar" and help their children improve their reading skills in order to increase their future opportunities. It is important to note that simply buying these books and handing them out will probably not produce the desired effect on school culture. Rather, it seemed that the leadership and consistent example of the principal was the most important ingredient, with the readings being simply one means for helping to communicate ideas that are important to a positive school culture.

The 'belief' component of an effective school-level intervention system is one that will not require principals to adjust their schedules or hire more staff. It is something schools can technically get for free; something that provides energy and focus to help drive everything else that is done in the school.

3. Data Utilization and Analysis

Data Analysis is a critical component in using assessment to direct instruction. The high-performing schools had regular data meetings (bi-weekly or monthly) with systems in place to help them effectively use the data to inform instruction, accurately identify children as needing interventions, and regularly monitor and/or modify children's programs. Another important aspect of the data meetings was the people in attendance. A *key characteristic* was that the people present at the meetings were able to make school level decisions and had the authority to make changes immediately. The person most able to meet these criteria was the principal. Several principals explained that one advantage of being at the meeting was that it allowed him/her to remain knowledgeable about the children and the changing needs of the teachers at various grade levels. Another advantage of the principal attending the data meetings was it cut down on the 'middle' time. If a situation arose that required a schedule change or a personnel change, the principal could address the issue immediately and someone did not have to take on the task of tracking down the principal, asking the question, and then bringing the answer back to the next group meeting.

Another distinguishing characteristic of the data meetings at the high-performing schools was the structure or systems that were used during the meetings. In some of the less successful schools, the team knew they were supposed to meet to discuss DIBELS® data, but there was no clear plan for making decisions, and when the teachers left the meeting, they were still unsure of where to go next or how to maintain any progress the children were making. The successful schools had systems or forms that allowed them to keep track of and monitor several pieces of information on each child. (See Appendix A, B and C for examples of these forms). This information included programs and strategies used with children, any changes or modifications they had tried and other test data to be analyzed along with the DIBELS® scores. Usually this test data came from assessments that were administered more frequently, such as a Dolch sight word check, a curriculum based unit test or a report from a computer-based program. The teachers and the literacy team worked together to establish an efficient system that allowed each person on the team to understand the specific areas of weakness being addressed with a child, what was working and what was not working, what intervention programs were being used and who, when, and where the child was receiving that program. In order to have these meetings, the schedule often needed to be adjusted on meeting days and sometimes a substitute was required in order to allow classroom teachers and team leaders to be present at each meeting. Principals explained that the data meeting was an important consideration when creating the school's master schedule.

Although most of our conversations with principals focused on the use of data to make decisions that impacted children almost immediately, one very successful principal stressed the need to carefully analyze data from students in the spring in order to plan for the next school year. He advocated using reading performance data from the spring in order to anticipate instructional needs for the coming year. He stressed that waiting until the fall to plan for intervention for the coming year is too late. Information about both the number of students likely to need intervention as well as the areas in which they are lagging behind can be effectively used in the spring to determine what to buy with textbook monies, and it can also be very helpful in making decisions about priorities within the school budget that is being planned for the next year. This principal places students within classes based on student data in order to insure that teachers will be able to form instructional groups of reasonable size, and then he works to find budget resources to support adequate personnel to provide intensive interventions.

An example of a data meeting during teacher planning time

We found that the successful schools employed at least two different methods for scheduling their data meetings. At several of the successful schools, teacher planning time was utilized to hold a progress monitoring data meeting once a month lasting approximately 45 minutes. At one school, the principal, literacy team (*Reading First* coach, Literacy Specialist, Program Specialist, two Reading Intervention teachers) and grade level teachers were present at this meeting. If there were seven or eight teachers at a grade level, two meetings were held so each teacher had a chance to present his/her data. These monthly meetings were for progress monitoring using informal assessment data such as Dolch words, running records, etc. The teachers had data spreadsheets that they brought to these meetings allowing them to look at a child's data across time. Each teacher was required to keep a 'data notebook' to house data forms and spreadsheets (See Appendix C for a sample data spreadsheet).

After each DIBELS® assessment, the teachers at this school had different meetings as a grade level team with the *Reading First* coach and the Literacy Specialist. If any teachers had more serious concerns about a child then the Program Specialist also attended these meetings. The principal at this school does not attend these quarterly meetings, but rather, reviews the DIBELS® data at the monthly progress monitoring meetings using the data spreadsheets. The DIBELS® data meeting was also held during the grade level planning period. The teachers use two different forms to help them "make sense" of the DIBELS® data. (See Appendix A and B for worksheets). One is called "Planning for Instruction: Analyzing a DIBELS® Report" and the other is called, "DIBELS® Assessment #___." On the planning for instruction sheet, the abbreviations and definitions involved with DIBELS® are written out for the teachers at the top of the sheet. The teachers are then asked to use the "Student Recommended Instructional Level" report to answer some questions about their class. Who needs support? What are some instructional strategies you will use? The teachers fill out these worksheets before they come to the meeting so they are ready to discuss questions regarding grouping, differentiating instruction, and need for extra support from an intervention specialist.

The DIBELS® Assessment # __ sheet is used quarterly after each DIBELS® testing period. The teachers answer several questions on this sheet based on the DIBELS® data. How many students in your class? How many students made gains in your class? What instructional strategies do you feel contributed to the gains made by these students?

At another school in which the principal was a very strong advocate of data based instructional planning, he indicated that data was discussed in almost every grade level team meeting held at his school. He said, "If you have a regular 45 minute period set aside for a team meeting, this should be used to discuss data. Honestly, what else besides discussion of assessment and instruction should occur in these meetings? Student data should be discussed in every meeting."

An example of a data meeting during the school day

Several other schools used a different approach to their data meetings. Below is an example of how one school handles the problem of scheduling quarterly data meetings. They have 3 substitutes on the day of the meetings. The principal, the literacy team (reading coach, reading resource specialist, and Supplemental Academic Instruction (SAI) coordinator), the grade level team leader and one classroom teacher are present during these quarterly DIBELS® meetings. Substitute #1 stays in the team leader's classroom so he/she is able to attend all meetings with teachers at his/her grade level. Substitutes #2 and #3 alternate between the teachers' rooms. The meetings vary in length depending on several factors. First year teachers have longer meetings to ensure that all of their questions are answered. Teachers who have several "at risk" children also have longer meetings. After the teacher returns to the classroom, the substitute travels to the next name on the list. By having two substitutes, the meetings can move more smoothly and stay on schedule because the transition time is covered by the extra substitute. The school uses *Reading First* money to pay for the substitutes. See Table 4 for an illustration of the way this method works including the transition to another grade level (Teacher I).

Time*	Teacher	Substitute
8:10	Teacher A**	#1
8:20	Teacher B	#2
8:40	Teacher C	#3
9:00	Teacher D	#2
9:15	Teacher E	#3
9:35	Teacher F	#2
9:50	Teacher G	#3
10:05	Teacher H	#2
10:45	Teacher I**	#1
10:55	Teacher J	#3

* Time differs for first year teachers with more 'at risk' children
** Team leader

4. Effective scheduling

Principals in the high performing schools consistently identified scheduling as one of the most critical aspects of an effective intervention program for struggling readers. They emphasized that specific times must be set aside for interventions to be provided; otherwise they are much less likely to happen on a regular basis. Actually, they identified four important challenges that must be considered in the development of school schedules:

1. Set aside an uninterrupted period of time for reading instruction (90 minutes or more)
2. Identify specific times when intensive reading interventions will be provided
3. Enable the most efficient use of support staff to help provide intensive interventions
4. Provide for common planning times to facilitate grade-level meetings

The successful schools were guided by a clear understanding that interventions for struggling readers must increase the intensity of instruction (by adding time and reducing instructional group size), must be delivered skillfully, and must be targeted on the critical skills and knowledge the students are lacking. They recognized that good interventions for struggling readers exist on a continuum from appropriately differentiated small group instruction provided by the classroom teacher to extended instructional experiences provided by a reading specialist, paraprofessional, or other support personnel. In the schools we visited, intensive interventions were sometimes provided during the reading block by classroom teachers or extra support personnel, sometimes provided in homogenously group classrooms for extended periods of time, and sometimes provided by support personnel outside of the reading block time. In all cases, the schedules were arranged so that students who were behind in their reading growth received an extra dose of instruction that was targeted as closely as possible to their specific needs.

Scheduling the reading block

Principals reported that it was difficult to find time for an uninterrupted reading block when they also had to consider scheduling special area classes and lunch. When deciding where to place the reading block, principals had several options. A majority of the schools scheduled the reading block first thing in the morning across all grades. In schools that followed this model, principals hired a sufficient number of intervention teachers, used their trained special area teachers or had children move to homogenously grouped classrooms based on reading abilities. Principals would then place any extra support they had in the classrooms with the most at risk children.

Several successful schools staggered their reading blocks allowing their reading specialists and paraprofessionals to serve each grade during successive reading blocks throughout the day. This permitted the reading specialists and paraprofessionals more opportunities to provide small group instruction that took place during the reading block, and within the regular classroom. This model also allowed the reading coach to observe and model lessons in more classrooms during the reading block.

Once the reading block was established, it was critical that the entire school agreed that it was sacred and if changes needed to be made, they would occur outside of that block.

Scheduling times for intensive interventions

The two most popular ways of scheduling intensive interventions at the successful schools were:

1. A 90 minute reading block and then 30-45 minutes of time scheduled outside of that block to deliver the interventions. In almost all these cases, the interventions were provided by support personnel other than the regular classroom teacher.

2. An extended reading block of 105-120 minutes in which intensive intervention was included in the block of time designated for reading instruction. In these schedules, the interventions were sometimes provided by the regular classroom teacher, and sometimes by instructional support personnel.

Best use of staff to provide intensive interventions

Another scheduling challenge is how to arrange for the best use of reading specialists and paraprofessionals to provide interventions for their students. If no reading specialists or paraprofessionals are available, this challenge involves identifying ways that other teachers or support personnel within the school can assist in providing interventions for struggling readers. Principals handled this challenge in several ways. In some schools, the principals chose to use school funds to hire intervention teachers or paraprofessionals, while others chose to manipulate the schedule in such a way that they could maximize the intervention support provided by their current staff members.

Staggering the reading blocks or having children move to homogenously grouped classrooms as explained above allowed schools to utilize a limited number of support staff in a higher number of classrooms. If principals could not hire more reading teachers or could not use their special area teachers, grouping children homogenously during the reading block allowed them to place the support staff that was available in the classrooms that had the most 'at risk' students. For example, principals and coaches at the high-performing schools noted that the children who were on or above grade level were able to work more successfully in independent groups with their peers or with fewer teacher-led lessons, than are struggling readers. They noted that the children who were 'at risk' required more repetition of skills and more explicit instruction in smaller, teacher-led groups. The classrooms that served the 'at risk' children were more likely to have intervention teachers or paraprofessionals assigned to assist the classroom teacher.

One of the successful principals felt very strongly that providing intervention specialists to work within classrooms during the small group time was the most effective way to schedule and provide interventions to struggling readers. In his experience, when intervention teachers came into the classroom to work with small groups it: 1) reduced student travel time to intervention classes; 2) increased coordination between the regular classroom and intervention teacher; 3) provided additional learning opportunities for the regular classroom teacher who is able to occasionally observe the intervention teacher working with a group of struggling readers; 4) significantly reduced the amount of time "wasted" by the struggling readers because of their frequent difficulties profiting from independent learning activities.

The successful schools that chose to hire more support staff did so using a variety of different funds. One school primarily used Title I basic funds, Title I migrant funds, and ESOL funds. The school was also allowed to decide how to best utilize two teachers provided by ESOL immersion funds. The school leadership team decided to place one teacher in first grade to help reduce class size and to use the other teacher as a full time reading intervention teacher. The school also combined some part-time district provided positions with funds from other sources to create a full time position on the literacy team.

Other schools decided to begin special area classes after the morning reading block and trained their special area teachers so that they could work, along with reading specialists and ESE teachers, to assist classroom teachers during reading instruction.

By staggering the reading blocks, using special area teachers, hiring more intervention teachers, or using volunteers, principals were able to make sure that during the reading block there were extra adults in the classroom to support small group instruction. Although students still engaged in independent learning activities during part of the "small group time" during the reading block, extra adults in the room allowed some students to receive more small group instruction (which increased the intensity of their overall instructional experience) than they would otherwise have been able to receive.

Weekly common planning time for teachers

The most frequent way to allow teachers to have common meeting time, in which they could discuss student progress and plan instruction, was to use special area class time (art, physical education (P.E.), music, etc.). This often required hiring more teachers in those areas to cover each classroom at a grade level or splitting the classrooms into 'special area' groups. These 'special area' groups were created by dividing classrooms so that all the students in a given homeroom did not all go to art or music together. The children might be divided into blue, red, yellow and green groups. The children in the green group would go to P.E., the red group to music,

the blue group to art, etc. Principals suggested that having enough special area teachers to make common planning time a possibility may require trade offs with funds from other areas. One principal had 8 classes in kindergarten and first grade, but she made it a priority to hire 8 special area teachers to maintain a common grade level planning time. She then also used those 8 teachers as reading support teachers for one hour of every day working with the third grade students. Each special area teacher had two groups of 2-3 children that they met with for 30 minutes a day.

The schedules that follow are examples of how schools with different needs and challenges created effective schedules.

An example of using a "Walk and Read" and staggered reading blocks

A school with 895 total students, with 85% of their children qualifying for free and reduced lunch, 80% minority and 37% ESOL students uses a "walk and read" model. They have children move during the reading block to homogenously grouped classrooms in order to better utilize all of their trained staff. The reading blocks are staggered by grade level with two grade levels meeting at the same time (see Table 3 below). A student has one teacher who is designated as his/her reading teacher who could be his classroom teacher, an ESE teacher or an ESOL teacher depending on his/her needs.

Table 3 - Master Schedule

Team	Reading	Writing	Math	Science/SS	Special Area	Lunch
K	8:45 - 10:30	10:30 - 11:30	1:35 - 2:35	12:15 - 12:50	12:50 - 1:35	11:30 - 12:15
1	8:45 - 10:30	12:00 - 1:00	1:00 - 2:00	2:00 - 2:30	11:15 - 12:00	10:30 - 11:15
2	10:30 - 12:15	9:45 - 10:30	8:45 - 9:45	1:15 - 1:40	1:40 - 2:25	12:30 - 1:15
3	10:30 - 12:15	9:30 - 10:30	1:00 - 2:00	2:00 - 2:30	8:45 - 9:30	12:15 - 1:00
4	12:45 - 2:30	8:45 - 9:35	10:20 - 11:20	11:20 - 11:55	9:35 - 10:20	11:55 - 12:40
5	12:45 - 2:30	9:45 - 10:25	8:45 - 9:45	11:50 - 12:35	10:25 - 11:10	11:10 - 11:50

The principal uses his 4 ESOL teachers strictly as reading teachers. Each ESOL teacher forms a team with an assistant and each team has at least one member who speaks Spanish. The ESOL teachers see the children 3 days of the week and the ESOL assistants see the students 2 days a week; the ESOL teams share a classroom. During the reading block the ESOL teams use half the time in the reading program and half the time for language acquisition. The principal also utilizes his 3 ESE teachers as reading teachers. During the reading blocks, he has two to four extra teachers at each grade level due to the use of ESOL teachers and ESE teachers. The children are divided by needs (based on assessments) and then move to a specific classroom during the reading block. The teachers with the high-risk children have smaller groups of children during the reading block. The typical homeroom class size is about 20 children and the typical size of the class during the reading block is 15 children or smaller due to the use of the ESOL and ESE teachers.

An example of classroom teachers providing a double dose of reading interventions

A second example comes from a school with 70% of their children qualifying for free and reduced lunch, 99% minority students and 11% ESOL students with 575 children in K-3. This high-performing school decided to schedule the reading intervention time with the classroom teacher by extending their 90 minute block by 20 minutes. The classroom teacher has 3 reading groups. After a half hour of whole group instruction, the teacher then meets with each group for 20 minutes more while the other children are working independently at student centers. The most "at risk" group of students gets seen a second time for a double dose of intervention to address their instructional needs.

For example:

Reading	Group	Need
9:00 - 9:30	Whole Group	Mixed
9:30 - 9:50	Group A	High Risk
9:50 - 10:10	Group B	Moderate Risk
10:10 - 10:30	Group C	Low Risk
10:30 - 10:50	Group A	High Risk

An example of a schedule using the special area teachers during the reading block

Other successful schools utilized their special area teachers and non-classroom teachers during the reading block to increase the amount of small group instruction. Schools with smaller student enrollment could start their special area classes after the reading block and utilize their art, music and P.E. teachers to assist during the complete reading block. These schools also generally had shorter special area classes (i.e. 30-35 minutes). Other schools with larger numbers of students were only able to have their special area teachers assist for a portion of the reading block and in certain grade levels. One school chose to focus on their third grade population and put their extra support in those classrooms for one hour a day. In most schools that utilized non-classroom teachers, the non-classroom teachers were placed in the same classroom each day in order to gain knowledge of the students' needs and to build relationships with the children and the classroom teacher. Most of these schools also utilized the system of sending the children to special area classes in color-coded groups versus by homerooms. It is important to note that these special area teachers had been trained in explicit and systematic instruction and a majority of schools used a structured and 'scripted' program when utilizing special area teachers. As stated in the pamphlet titled A Principal's Guide to Intensive Interventions for Struggling Readers in *Reading First* Schools, "A good rule of thumb is that the less experienced the teacher, the more structured and "scripted" the intervention program should be."

5. Professional Development

The classroom teachers are the most important component and the anchor for all of the student's literacy instruction. It is also true that it requires more knowledge and skill to teach students who struggle in learning to read than it does to teach students who find it easier to learn. Therefore, professional development for teachers is particularly important as a foundation for success with struggling readers. It is also important to consider that like the students, teachers will need 'differentiated' professional development depending on their past experiences working with struggling readers. A crucial issue impacting professional development decisions in *Reading First* schools is the high rate of teacher turnover. This was mentioned in a number of the schools we visited and makes it essential to have an on-going plan for training of new teachers.

Most of the successful schools are using a combination of personnel from the district, the literacy team, the publishers, or the coaches to supply ongoing training. One of the schools sent the coach to a variety of workshops and then it was her responsibility to come back to the school and train the teachers. The decision to use the model of sending the coach was not solely based on funding, but also on the lack of high quality substitutes who could 'teach' the children while the classroom teachers were at the workshop.

The successful schools were also utilizing the follow up training offered by the publishers. Teachers explained that the follow up training was often more critical than the initial training because after the initial training they went back to their classrooms and began implementing the programs. It was then, once they were back using the program, that they had follow up questions. These questions could impact the fidelity of instruction. By having consultants and follow-up training, the teachers were able to ask 'real life' situational questions about using the program with children in their classrooms.

Another challenge in the area of professional development related to high teacher turnover rates is the time it requires coaches to train new teachers in all aspects of the *Reading First* grant. Several principals noted that when the reading coaches were spending a majority of their time training the new teachers, they had less time to model lessons, conference with teachers and collect student data. Successful schools were utilizing common grade level planning meetings to help solve this problem. The coach would do mini-workshops during the grade level meetings or would utilize the veteran teachers to assist them in the support of new teachers. During the grade level meetings, the veteran teachers would share activities or ideas that were successful in their classrooms.

Professional development is a critical component to the overall plan at the successful schools. Many schools used a combination of the models described below to maximize teacher learning. However, the classroom teacher was viewed as pivotal in a child's literacy instruction; therefore, training was planned to provide the knowledge in the most current, research-based programs and strategies to teach reading.

Example of using publishers and district support for professional development

One model of professional development relied heavily on publishers and district support for the majority of its program-based professional development. The coaches were also involved in professional development, but they primarily focused on the new teachers while the district handled the program training. One school's teachers indicated that they were provided with a large amount of training and were enjoying the on-site, follow-up training they were receiving from publishers of reading programs they were currently using in their classrooms. They felt that their children were performing better because they understood all the different nuances of the program they were using. The district was providing support to this school for funding professional development. One teacher at this same school stated, "I have had more training here in the past six months than I did in 35 years of teaching in New York."

Example of using the reading coach for professional development

A second model of professional development that was used at the high-performing schools was to use the coach and other literacy team members to lead book studies and 'mini workshops.' They do this at weekly meetings and depending on the topic, the grade levels in attendance varies. At several schools, the principal also joins the book studies when he/she can. Some topics that were covered at one school in the mini workshops were, "How to set up classroom libraries," "Using Poetry to address the Big 5," and "How the K-2 Initiative is similar to *Reading First*." Some of the book studies included, *The Fluent Reader,* by Timothy Rasinski and *Bringing Words to Life,* by Isabel Beck, Margaret McKeown, and Linda Kucan.

Example of using school funds for outside workshops

At one of the successful schools, the principal has set up a system where the teachers can apply for money to attend a conference or workshop outside of the district. The principal uses school improvement funds for these requests and encourages his teachers to seek out quality workshops. The School Advisory Committee (SAC), a committee of community members, parents, and school staff, reviews the requests for funds and decides whether or not a teacher will attend the workshop. After attending a workshop, the teacher is required to bring back information to present to the staff. This principal felt very strongly that teachers can learn a great deal from each other. He said, "I probably have some of the best traveled teachers and well informed teachers" implying that they have been to several different cities and states for workshops. He also felt that it was money well spent.

Example of professional development for special area teachers

At one school where they used the special area teachers for reading intervention, the reading resource teacher was responsible for training the special area teachers. The special area teachers meet with the children Monday through Thursday. The reading resource teacher meets with the special area teachers every Friday when they normally would see the children. She trains them in various comprehension strategies with a main strategy being QAR (Question Answer Relationship). The kindergarten, first and second grade teachers provide the reading intervention to their own children using an explicit and systematic published program targeting primarily phonological awareness and phonics. They receive their training through the district from either the publisher or someone at the district level who has been trained in the program.

6. Scientifically Based Intervention Programs

Some of the high-performing schools used intervention programs associated with their core reading program while others used published reading programs that were separate from their core program. A few of the successful schools selected their intervention materials from a variety of sources. Principals and teachers discussed the pros and cons to both systems. Some of the benefits in using a published program were having ready-made materials, professional development in the implementation of the program, a predetermined scope and sequence, and in some cases, research to support the use of the program. The most common drawback mentioned with regard to using a published program was the cost. Several programs required consumable student materials that needed to be replaced each year. One of the successful schools used plastic sleeves and wipe off markers to help curtail some of the costs of the consumables. Another drawback to having one intervention program was the program could not meet the needs of every child. In the successful schools, the coaches and the teachers worked together using data analysis to best match materials to a student's needs.

The schools that used materials from several different sources also shared what they felt were the benefits and challenges of this approach. The benefit discussed by many of the schools was the ability to match the materials to the child. When a teacher was selecting materials from multiple sources, he/she would analyze the data and determine the child's specific needs and find materials that met those specific needs. Two drawbacks to this approach were that it took a great deal of time and the teacher needed to have a very solid understanding of what the data meant at the student level. At some of the successful schools, these drawbacks were addressed by the support staff. The reading coach or literacy specialist would help create the materials or help the teacher analyze the data. This model was generally seen at schools that not only had a *Reading First* coach, but other experienced members of a literacy team who could support the teachers. For several schools, the success of this model varied depending on the experience of the coach or team members and their ability to "know where to find the right materials." Other major difficulties with using several sources were not having a set scope and sequence, the children may be learning the same skill in several different, conflicting ways and there was not always research to support the methods or materials being used for intervention. The staff at the high-performing schools worked as a team to determine the best combination to use with their student population.

Computer based programs

Technology played a role in the intervention programs at the successful schools. These programs ranged from very specific software covering only one component such as phonemic awareness or fluency (i.e. Read Naturally) to a few that included instruction in all five components. Other programs were specifically designed to target the needs of the ESOL population.

In some schools, computer-based intervention programs were used during the center rotation or were used in the computer lab. Other schools had children rotating through the computer programs throughout the school day. One successful principal stated, "Be sure the computer lab is used every minute of the day." His school invited the students who were on the 'cusp' of moving from Level 1 to 2 and Level 2 to 3 to use the computer lab before school. He also utilized his computer lab in his after school program. Both before and after school the children are able to do more lessons on Success Maker and Accelerated Reader. Several of these programs generated weekly or daily reports on the child's progress and some programs adjusted the child's instruction based on his/her performance on the previous lesson. The reports that were generated were then included in the school's data meetings, helping further drive instruction. The high-performing schools averaged 3-5 student computers in each classroom. Some schools decided to make the 'trade off' and buy more individual computers for the classrooms versus having a computer lab while others used grants or special school funds to have both a lab and computers in the classrooms.

7. Parent involvement

Principals at the high-performing schools noticed a difference in children's performance when they had familial support and/or after school support. The task of involving parents at schools when a majority of the parents don't speak English can be challenging according to the principals interviewed. "You need to make the parents feel that they are welcome at the school and that they are a vital part of their child's education." This idea was expressed by several of the principals that were interviewed. The successful schools have figured out several ways how parents can be involved in their child's education. One of the first steps that many schools take is to make contact with their parents for a positive reason first before they ever have to call about a concern or problem. This establishes a relationship between the parent and teacher/school that is built from a positive perspective rather than a negative one. Some schools have interpreters at meetings, parent nights at school when parents can ask questions about curriculum or learn activities they could do at home, send their notices home in multiple languages and even have parent liaisons visit the homes.

Another way schools have involved the parents or supported the continuation of learning outside the typical school day is with before or after school programs. Several schools had district and state support in using private tutoring companies to provide after school services, but many schools used grants or their own teachers and funds to provide the services. One issue that was consistently a concern at these schools was the transportation of the students after the programs had ended. By using grant money or school budget funds, several schools arranged for one or two buses to return to the school at a designated time to bring the children to their homes. Schools used a variety of programs during these after school programs including published programs, teacher created materials and technology based programs. If the teachers working in the after school program were not classroom teachers or not trained in reading, principals often chose programs that were more scripted and could be easily implemented by staff with limited training in the program.

Examples of parent involvement from one high-performing school

One school with a significant number of parents who spoke limited or no English made 'including parents in the school community in a variety of ways' one of their school goals. They accomplished this goal in multiple ways. First, the principal held a beginning of the year meeting in the three main communities that her children lived in welcoming the parents to the school and providing a calendar of the year's events. All notices that went home were provided in English and Spanish. An example of a notice that went home on a weekly basis was a school newsletter. This newsletter included school notes, lunch menus and upcoming events such as School Board meetings, a meeting of the Parent Leadership Council for ESOL families, and F.C.A.T. Information Night. At F.C.A.T. night, refreshments and baby sitters were provided as parents were asked to R.S.V.P. for the event.

Another resource that went home on a monthly basis was a "Reading Connection" newsletter with tips for reading success. Topics and sections from the December issue included "Read Aloud Favorites," "Parent to Parent," "Tales from Around the World," and "From ABCs to stories: Letters make Words, Words make Sentences and Sentences tell Stories." To further support reading success with a strong connection between school and home, this school created a program called "Roaring Readers."

"Roaring Readers is a celebration of reading, literature and companionship that takes place from 6:00-7:30 p.m. on the second Monday of every month in the school media center." All parents, students and community members are invited to attend. Many of the staff participate in these events. This program was designed to provide modeling of effective reading strategies which parents can use at home to help improve their children's reading skills. Each month the attendance at "Roaring Readers Night" increases. The school also holds the event at other locations in the community. Guest readers, stories in English and Spanish, and 5th grade students acting as bi-lingual greeters are just a few of the components that make this program a huge success. All of the children in attendance also leave with a book of their choice. These books and funds for the program are supported by businesses, community partners and grant dollars. Parents and students can also check out books on tape or backpacks filled with books and reading activities, in Spanish and English, which they can use at home. This program was recognized as an exemplary practice in the Sparkplugs 2005 Magazine prepared by the Bureau of Family Involvement and Community Outreach at the Florida Department of Education.

Another large piece to parent involvement at this school is the "Parent Support for Student Achievement" contract that the students, parents, teachers and principal sign (See Appendix D for contract). With this contract, the school staff as well as the parents and students agree to work together to make school an environment in which optimal learning can take place. The responsibilities of 'student achievement' are shared between the home and school with the student as the common thread throughout both settings. Several schools had similar contracts.

Concluding comments

When considered in isolation, none of the seven traits mentioned above will make a school successful. All of the successful schools were good exemplars of several of these traits. It is critical that as a school works to build an effective school-level intervention system, it considers aspects of each of the seven traits. It is difficult to say one trait is more important than any other or to discuss them as separate items because they are so intertwined. For example, professional development and belief systems may not seem as important as getting the schedule set or picking the best programs, but even if the schedule allows for the best student: teacher ratio, and a strong research based program is available to support instruction, success is not guaranteed. The program needs to be implemented with fidelity and skill, and the teacher needs to believe that all of his/her children can learn to read. It is important to have the time scheduled for small group instruction using a research-based program, but it is equally important to have teachers who understand how to use the program effectively and make adjustments to instruction based on student need. To facilitate knowing what to teach, the teacher will have to interpret data on a regular basis, and this same data will need to be the basis for school-level decisions about allocation of resources and scheduling. In order to manage this complex system, leaders must be knowledgeable about the children, the teachers, and the nature of effective instruction. Strong leaders need to inspire high standards and confidence that goals can be achieved to allow for the integration and implementation of the components of an effective school wide intervention program.

A Principal's Action Plan Outline for Building a Successful School-wide Intervention System

Common Traits of Successful Schools	Characteristic	Specific Feature	Observable Result *Successful Principals will...*
Strong Leadership	Knowledgeable	Recognize and identify all **student needs**	**Determine and establish:** • intervention budget needs • reading instruction as a priority **Provide:** • scheduling needs • sufficient staff
		Maintain basic knowledge of **research-based programs** and their availability	• locate research-based programs for teachers to guide intervention • allocate funding for research-based programs • match program to student need
		Data interpretation	• conduct and lead data meetings
		Recognize and identify **teacher and scheduling needs**	**Determine and establish:** • reading instruction as a priority • ample time for reading instruction in small groups • time on task as a priority • supply teacher support for problem solving and success
	Strong Vision	Provide, clearly explain, and describe **vision for the school**	• establish mottos; belief statements; expectations
Positive Belief	Beliefs about success with all students and teacher dedication	High expectations	**Provide:** • support to help teachers meet expectations • motivational workshops • research pointing to high performing, high poverty schools
Data Analysis	Ongoing data management and utilization	Data structures, disaggregation, and mobilization	**Attend monthly grade-level data meetings:** • to learn about school intervention needs • to make changes to personnel and/or programming **Scaffold teachers and staff to:** • discuss and share ideas about student progress • follow up in classroom with differentiated instruction • use data management systems to accurately and effectively analyze data

Common Traits of Successful Schools	Characteristic	Specific Feature	Observable Result *Successful Principals will...*
Effective Scheduling	Efficient	Flexible use of time, staff, and resources	**Arrange for:** • most appropriate provider of small group instruction • prioritize responsibilities and skills across staff and instructional personnel • common teacher planning time by grade-level • an uninterrupted reading block of 90 minutes or more • indentify specific times when iii will be provided
Professional Development	Differentiated	On-going and Follow-up	**Recognize and establish:** • on-going/follow-up training for veteran teachers • on-going/follow-up training for new teachers • problem of high teacher turnover rate and create a contingency plan for high turnover rates • building and district level people to provide training • time in school schedule for regular (monthly/weekly) training
Scientifically Based Intervention Programs	Targeted	Differentiated materials for more precise lesson planning A set scope and sequence focusing on a specific reading component Different components of reading addressed Technology-based reinforcement	• locate research-based intervention programs for teachers to guide instruction • allocate funding for research-based intervention programs • strategically select intervention programs based on student needs
Parent Involvement	Initiative in Communication	Flexible and accommodating Partnership perspective	**Provide:** • babysitting services at parent information nights • provide food at parent information nights • provide multiple parent information sessions – one in the morning hours and one in the evening • information in multiple languages • interpreters at parent meetings **Establish structures to:** • nurture parental relationships • involve students in their own learning, take ownership of their learning

Appendix A

Planning for Instruction: Analyzing a DIBELS® Report

LR – Low Risk — "Good to Go" (Performing at grade level) — Green **MR – Low Risk — "Caution" (Need additional instruction) — Yellow** **HR – High Risk — "DANGER" (Need intensive instruction) — Red**
LNF – Letter Naming Fluency **ORF – Oral Reading Fluency** **PSF – Phoneme Segmentation Fluency** **NWF – Nonsense Word Fluency** **ISF – Initial Sound Fluency**
Benchmark – An ultimate goal to show mastery of a sub-skill **Target – A predictor that a student will reach a benchmark**

Activity

Use the Student Recommended Instructional Level Report to answer the following questions for your class.

1. Who needs extra support?

2. How will you group students?

Who will be in which group?

Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4

3. Which skills need to be emphasized?

4. What are some instructional strategies you will use?

Appendix B

DIBELS® Assessment #_____

1. **How many students are in your classroom?** _____

2. **How many students made gains in your classroom?** _____

3. **What instructional strategies do you feel contributed to the gains made by these students?**

4. **Do you feel there are students in your classroom who are struggling and do not seem to be able to show improvement? If so, please list the students and their areas of weakness.**

5. **Please voice any questions, comments or concerns you may have.**

Appendix C

Sample Data Spreadsheet

Teacher: _____ Grade: _____

																	Last Name	
																	First Name	
																	Homeroom Teacher	
																	AIP	
																	ESE	
																	IEP	
																	ESOL Date	
																	Starting Reading Level 2005	
																	Reading Teacher	
																	Retained	
																	Q1 Target 37	DIBELS® Initial Sound Fluency Grade 1
																	Q1 Target 35	DIBELS® Phoneme Segmentation Fluency Grades 1-2
																	Q2 Target 35	
																	Q3 Target	
																	Q4 Target	
																	Q1 Target 24	DIBELS® Nonsense Word Fluency Grades 1-2
																	Q2 Target 41	
																	Q3 Target	
																	Q4 Target	
																	Q1 Target 7	DIBELS® Oral Reading Fluency Grades 1-2-3
																	Q2 Target 13	
																	Q3 Target	
																	Q4 Target	
																	End of Q1	Fluency Check (WCPM)
																	End of Q2	
																	End of Q3	
																	End of Q4	
																	End of Q1 — Lesson #	Core Program Progress
																	Q1 %	
																	End of Q2 — Lesson #	
																	Q2 %	
																	End of Q3 — Lesson #	
																	Q3 %	
																	End of Year Mastery Level	
																	Q4 %	
																	HOST / Tutorial	

ESE Codes: K – Specific Learning Disability; A – Educable Mentally Handicapped; J – Emotionally Handicapped; L – Gifted; G – Language Impaired; O – Occupational Therapy; F – Speech Impaired

Appendix D

Parent Support for Student Achievement

Parents' Panther Promises

I promise:

1. My child will be present and on time to school each day.
2. My child will wear his/her school uniform each day.
   (School is his/her place of business).
3. My child will complete his/her assignments for homework each evening.
4. My child will read **to** or **with** an adult each evening.
5. My child will receive reinforcement of the school rules at home in regard to behavior in the classroom.
6. My child will be praised for all the good things he/she does at school.

_____ _____

(Parent Signature) (Student Signature)

The staff at XXX promises to care for your child and continue to provide excellent educational opportunities for his/her academic achievement.

_____ _____

(Teacher Signature) (Principal Signature)

Together the home school partnership is a powerful force for your child's success.