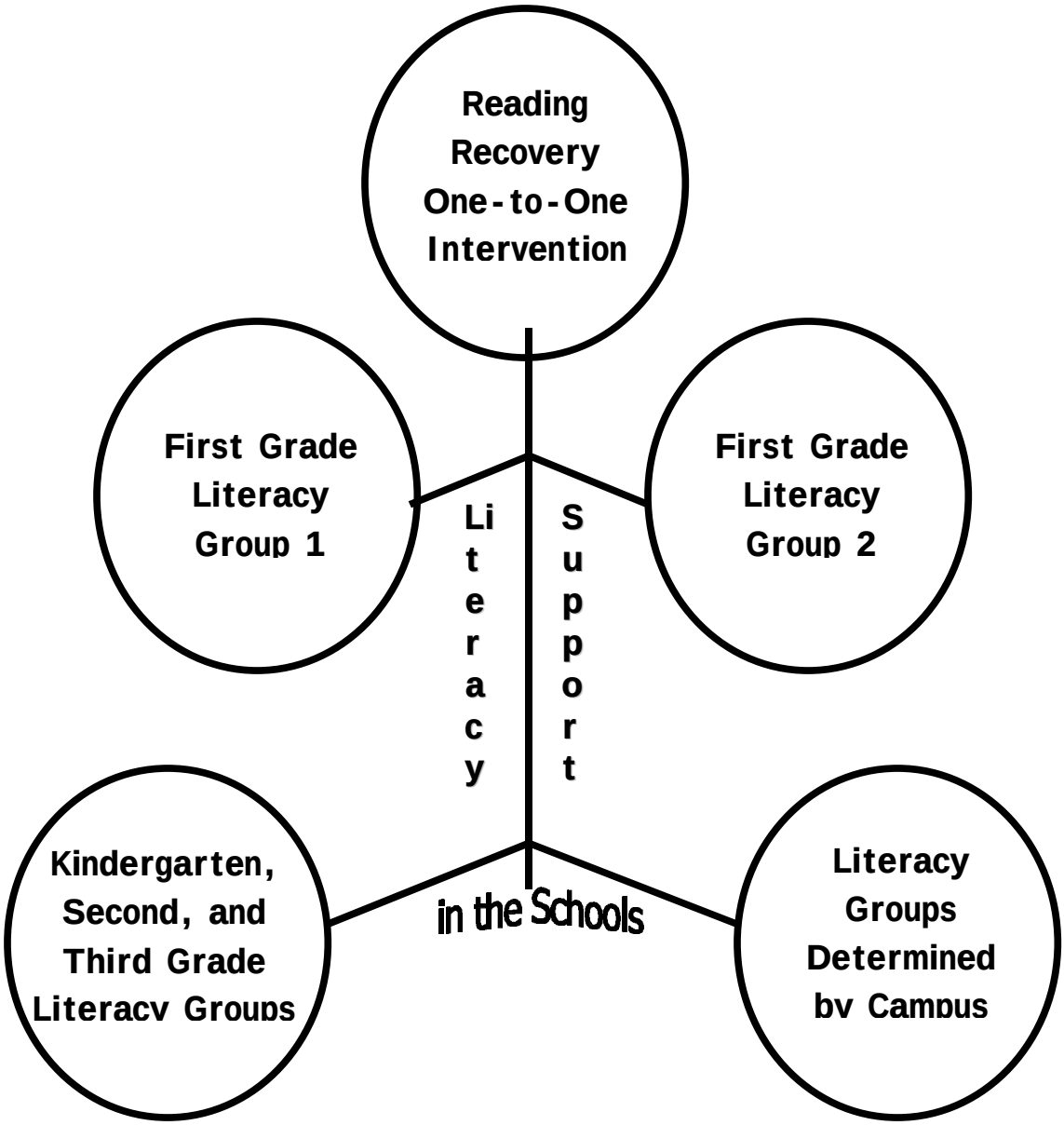
# Literacy Support Plan Evaluation, 1999-2000




Austin Independent School District
Office of Program Evaluation

April 2001

*Literacy Support Plan Evaluation, 1999-2000*
*Austin Independent School District*

# *Executive Summary*

The Literacy Support Plan is a comprehensive reading intervention initiative for kindergarten through grade 3 students in the Austin Independent School District (AISD). The purpose of the program is to provide additional assistance for students who are identified as needing extra help in acquiring literacy skills. The Literacy Support Plan was designed to provide a Reading Recovery-trained teacher (literacy support specialist) to every elementary campus in the district. The three-tier implementation of the plan began in 1997-98 at 23 schools with the highest concentrations of children from low-income families.

The framework for the program is Reading Recovery. The literacy support specialist provides one-on-one Reading Recovery tutoring to grade 1 students who are lowest in literacy and also works with students who need reading support in small-group interventions called literacy groups. While grade 1 intervention is the primary focus of the program, literacy support specialists also work with kindergarten, grade 2, and grade 3 students in literacy groups. In addition to the 71 literacy support specialists funded by the district in 1999-2000, 32 schools used other monies (i.e., Title I or grants) to fund 42 additional Reading Recovery teachers to meet the needs of students at their campuses, including serving some students in grades 4-6 who needed support.

The professional development model that is part of the Literacy Support Plan provides for three-layers of training: teacher leaders complete university training in Reading Recovery; teacher leaders train literacy support specialists in Reading Recovery and provide ongoing training for all Reading Recovery teachers; and literacy support specialists provide training and literacy support to the classroom teachers at their campuses.

In 1999-2000, the first year of full implementation of the Literacy Support Plan, a total of 3,738 students participated in Reading Recovery and/or literacy group instruction. Additional general information about the literacy support program in 1999-2000 includes the following:

- The grade distribution of the literacy support program was 13% kindergarten, 53% grade 1, 21% grade 2, 12% grade 3, and 1% grades 4-6.
- English was the language of instruction for 84% of the students.
- The ethnic distribution of students served by the program was 22% African American, 55% Hispanic, 22% Anglo/Other, and 1% Asian. Sixty-six percent of students served were from low-income families.
- A total of 3,374 kindergarten through grade 6 students received reading intervention during literacy groups (1,504 grade 1 students participated in Reading Recovery and literacy groups.)
- The literacy support program served 30% of all AISD grade 1 students. Overall, the program served 14% of all kindergarten through grade 3 students.

- Four times the number of grade 1 students received Reading Recovery in 1999-2000 (n=1,064) than in 1993-94 (n=268), the first year of Reading Recovery in the district.
- Reading Recovery teachers provided reading intervention to an average of 33 students each, nine of these through one-on-one instruction.
- The cost of this reading intervention at all of the elementary schools was $5,083,064 ($3,115,803 from the district budget and $1,967261 from Title I and other grants). The cost per student served is estimated at $1,360 for literacy support in 1999-2000.

## MAJOR FINDINGS

Program effectiveness for the Literacy Support Plan was determined using several assessment measures. The text reading level, measured by the Marie Clay's *Observation Survey*, was used for comparison in grades 1-4. Text reading level is a determination of reading level based on actual books organized by a gradient of difficulty. The number of text reading levels to be achieved during the year varies by grade level. Pretest and posttest scores were available for 3,315 kindergarten through grade 4 students.

In addition, *Texas Assessment of Academic Skills* (TAAS) reading and writing and *Developmental Reading Assessment* (DRA) data were reviewed. Six study campuses were selected for a closer look at the program. Major achievement findings include the following:

- The average gain on the *Observation Survey* for grade 1- 4 literacy support students was *8.7* text reading levels. (Page 9)
- Ninety-six percent of all grade 1-4 students served by the literacy support program made gains. Ninety-three students (3%) were referred for special education assessment. (Pages 9 & 14)
- A total of 118 grade 1-4 literacy support students (4%) were at or above grade level in reading (text reading level 16 or above) at the pretest and 1,095 students (38%) were at or above grade level in reading at the posttest. (Page 11)
- The average gain for grade 1 students who received Reading Recovery only was *10.8* text reading levels representing about one year of progress in reading. The average gain was *9.5* text reading levels for students who participated in literacy group only. (Page 14)
- Forty-six percent of grade 1 literacy support students were reading at text reading level 14 (considered to be on grade level at mid-year) or above at the end of grade 1. (Page 15)
- For a comparison group for Reading Recovery, a random sample of 97 AISD grade 1 students who did not have reading intervention during the year was tested with the *Observation Survey*. Reading Recovery students had a higher average gain (13.2) in text reading level than a random sample (11.7), but started the year at a much lower average text reading level (0.7) than the random sample (5.2). Thus, Reading Recovery students showed a faster rate of acceleration than the random sample, but were unable to close the gap in reading by the end of first grade (posttest of 13.9 and 16.9, respectively). (Page 25)
- When looking at achievement by tier of implementation, the difference is most dramatic at grade 1. While 24% of tier 1 and 23% of tier 2 literacy support students in grade 1 were at or above grade level at the end of the year, 47% of tier 3 grade 1 literacy support students finished the year at or above grade level. (All grade 1 students began the program below grade level in reading.) (Page 12)

- The average posttest scores for kindergarten literacy support students on three *Observation Survey* assessments, concepts about print (*11.8*), hearing and recording sounds in words (*12.0*), and letter identification (*38.6*) were all above the target end of year scores for kindergarten (scores of *10*, *5*, and *20*, respectively). (Page 19)
- TAAS 2000 results show that 55% of 1999-2000 grade 3 literacy support students passed TAAS reading (83% for the district). In addition, 47% of grade 4 literacy support students passed TAAS reading (84% for the district) and 66% passed TAAS writing (86% for district). (Page 21)
- During summer 2000, 839 literacy support students in kindergarten through grade 2, who were still below grade level at the end of the school year, attended S.O.A.R., the district's summer reading program. Of these students, 194 (23%) reached grade level in reading during S.O.A.R 2000. (Page 23)

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The Literacy Support Plan has been implemented as planned according to those who were involved with the original design. The prediction made by the district in an *Early Literacy Research Review* in 1998 that 3,200 students would be served when the plan was fully implemented has been surpassed by over 500 students. Program managers have succeeded in adapting Reading Recovery to a plan that serves more students. There are some ways the program can be strengthened, but even without modification it will likely continue to have a strong impact on some students. The following recommendations are offered for consideration:

1. *Continue the Literacy Support Program.* In the final year of implementation, the Literacy Support Plan has provided a framework for reading intervention that has made an impact on reading instruction and literacy learning. The structure of the program provides a "safety net" of support for students in the primary grades. The program managers continue to make changes to the program to better serve students. Principals and classroom teachers who were interviewed were very appreciative of the expertise of the literacy support specialist at the campus. The literacy support specialist is considered to be another professional available to help students who are having difficulty with literacy skills. In addition, literacy specialists offer teacher training on balanced literacy, establish and maintain literacy libraries, and participate in parent conferences and parent training.
2. *Recruit more Spanish bilingual teachers to be trained in Reading Recovery.* As the LEP population in AISD increases, the district will need to provide more opportunities for reading intervention for Spanish speaking students who are having difficulty reading. While the demand for bilingual teachers is great nationwide, it is critical to the future reading success for hundreds of AISD students. While 16% of the students served by the literacy support program in 1999-2000 were Spanish LEP students, the district percentage of LEP students in kindergarten through grade 3 is 23%.
3. *Consider a formula for equity for high needs schools.* While a literacy support specialist is beneficial to all elementary campuses, many of the Title I schools have high needs due to high percentages of low-income and LEP students. For example, 900 students were enrolled at Houston Elementary, 86% of whom were from low income families and 49% of whom were limited English proficient (LEP). These percentages are much higher than the district averages for elementary low-income (53%) and LEP (21%) students. Houston uses Title I monies to fund two additional Reading Recovery teachers, but this does not allow enough coverage for kindergarten and grade 3 literacy groups, as the Literacy Support Plan prescribes. If increased resources are not available for the higher needs campuses due to budget constraints, a possible solution would be to shift some of the funding for literacy specialists from the higher achieving campuses to higher needs campuses.
4. *Emphasize professional development for classroom teachers to support literacy learning.* The reading intervention provided by this plan will not make a long lasting impact unless classroom instruction supports the students who are low in literacy. According to the National Research Council, “It is nothing short of foolhardy to make

enormous investments in remedial instruction and then return children to classroom instruction that will not serve to maintain the gains they made in the remedial program." In a teacher survey, teachers were unsure if they had received training that would support students who were participating in reading intervention. Opportunities for meaningful professional development in reading instruction for classroom teachers are essential to improve reading scores. District training is seldom mandatory for teachers and principals even when it supports a districtwide initiative (e.g., balanced literacy training). Principals should require primary education teachers to show evidence of implementation of the balanced literacy model in their classrooms. The district should publicize and promote professional development offered to primary education teachers through the state *Student Success Initiative*. Kindergarten, grade 1, and grade 2 teachers who attend the Teacher Reading Academies in summer 2001 will receive stipends to attend training that supports the state and district goal to ensure that all students are reading on grade level by the end of the third grade. The Master Reading Teacher (MRT) Certificate (with stipend) is also available through the *Texas Reading Initiative* for teachers who successfully complete the certification process and who teach at a "high needs" campus designated by the Commissioner of Education. The Learning Walk that is part of the *Institute for Learning* initiative supports a classroom structure that allows students to reach high standards of achievement.

5. *Develop a standard method for reporting reading level.* After review of *Observation Survey*, and DRA text reading levels reported by teachers, it is apparent that there are different approaches to determine "reading on grade level." (There is the instructional level, which is 90% accuracy, and the proficient level, which is 95% accuracy.) There should be a district standard that is consistent from program to program.
6. *Continue to monitor the program for effectiveness.* The cost effectiveness concern of this plan is understandable given the current budget constraints. The district should continue to explore and pilot research-based reading interventions to determine if they address student needs while reducing the costs to the district. With the upcoming state requirements that a grade 3 student must pass TAAS reading to be promoted to grade 4 beginning in 2002-03, increases in the percentage of students passing TAAS reading will be a true test of the Literacy Support Plan. With the full implementation of the plan in place, the expectation is that the percentage of elementary students passing TAAS reading would increase each year. Because TAAS is the accountability measure for the State of Texas, it is recommended that Office of Program Evaluation staff continue to monitor the percentage of former Reading Recovery and literacy group students who pass TAAS reading and writing.

One of the district's objectives to support the long-range goal of improved student achievement states that primary students will be reading on grade level by the end of grade 3, and all students will show continuous progress in gaining proficiency in reading, writing, social studies, and science throughout their school years. This will require a schoolwide effort that incorporates the TEKS (*Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills*), Institute for Learning *Principles of Learning*, and the districtwide balanced literacy initiative to make an impact on the continuous progress in literacy learning of students. While Reading Recovery is not *the* program that can

meet the needs of all children who are falling behind in literacy learning, it can be one of the components of an early literacy program that strives to do what is best for students where everyone is invested in growing and learning.

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## Acknowledgements

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# LITERACY SUPPORT PLAN

Reading Recovery was first introduced in AISD during 1992-93 with 10 teachers in training and 268 students at 10 Title I schools. In 1996, AISD curriculum staff proposed a literacy support initiative to the Board of Trustees that would include district funding of one Reading Recovery teacher at each of the elementary campuses. The purpose of the initiative, which parents and principals had requested, was to provide additional assistance for those students who were identified as needing extra help in acquiring literacy skills. The curriculum staff worked with a nationwide consultant and designed a plan that used the *Arkansas Comprehensive Literacy Model* as a framework. (See Appendix A for a review of reading intervention literature.)

In addition to providing Reading Recovery instruction, the AISD model would serve more children by using the expertise of the Reading Recovery teachers with students in small groups called literacy groups. The goal was to give each campus a Reading Recovery trained person who could function as a literacy specialist. Marie Clay, founder of Reading Recovery, was asked to come to Austin to speak with the superintendent, principals, and staff to share the vision. The Board of Trustees approved the Literacy Support Plan in June 1997.

The program was implemented over a three-year period with the highest needs schools included in the first tier. The literacy support program began in 1997-98 (tier 1) with 23 literacy support specialists; added 24 literacy support specialists in 1998-99 (tier 2); and was completed with 24 literacy support specialists in 1999-2000 (tier 3) for a total of 71 teachers. (See Appendix B for the list of schools by implementation tier.)

The literacy support program centers on a literacy support specialist who is trained in Reading Recovery. The literacy support specialist provides one-on-one Reading Recovery instruction to grade 1 students and works with small groups of kindergarten through grade 3 students who are falling behind in literacy learning.

## Reading Recovery

The literacy support specialist at each campus is trained in Reading Recovery. Reading Recovery is an early intervention program designed to teach first grade students who are having the most difficulty learning to read (the lowest 20% in reading skills). Students meet daily in one-on-one sessions with specially trained teachers for an average of 12-20 weeks. The goal of the program is for children to develop effective reading and writing strategies so that they can work within the average reading level in the regular classroom.

Identification of grade 1 students in need of reading intervention begins with the classroom teacher. Students are ranked by reading skills and the lowest in reading skills are referred to the Reading Recovery teacher. The literacy specialist then assesses the referred students with the *Observation Survey* to identify those most in need of Reading Recovery. Each Reading Recovery teacher provides one-on-one intervention with the lowest four first grade students 30 minutes each day, serving a minimum of eight students during the school year. Students who do not receive Reading Recovery instruction, but are also low in literacy are placed in literacy groups and are eligible to move to Reading Recovery when a space becomes available.

### Literacy Groups

In addition to Reading Recovery instruction for grade 1 students, the literacy specialist at each campus works in small-group intervention (3-5 students) with kindergarten through grade 3 students who are low in literacy skills for a minimum of 30 minutes each day throughout the school year. The literacy support model calls for the literacy specialist to work with four literacy groups each day: two groups of grade 1 students; a group that would rotate among grade 2, grade 3, and kindergarten students (in that order); and a group determined by the campus.

The literacy groups for students in grades 2 and 3 offer maintenance for previous Reading Recovery students as well as assistance to other students having difficulty in reading. The grade 2 literacy group, which lasts approximately 12-13 weeks, helps former Reading Recovery students reach or maintain grade level in reading and assists other students in need of reading intervention. For schools new to Reading Recovery, the grade 2 group students are selected from the lowest level readers. The grade 3 group provides follow up support for previous Reading Recovery if needed, or other students in need of intervention (approximately 12-15 weeks). A kindergarten group is offered the last eight to nine weeks in the school year when need is identified. One session is reserved to meet a need determined by the campus, which can include working with grade 4-6 students on TAAS preparation during literacy group. (See Appendix C for a summary of the Literacy Support Plan.)

### Assessment

All students were assessed with Marie Clay's *Observation Survey* in the fall and at the end of the program. Grade 1 students were tested with all six parts of the *Observation Survey* including letter identification, word test, concepts about print, writing vocabulary, hearing sounds in words, and text reading. Kindergarten students were assessed with the letter identification, concepts about print, and hearing and recording sounds in words. Grade 2 students were assessed with three parts of the *Observation Survey* (writing vocabulary, hearing sounds in words, and text reading), while grade 3 students were assessed only on text reading. Ongoing assessment is central to this literacy support program. (See Appendix C for a description of the measures of the *Observation Survey*.)

### Teacher Training

Professional development is an essential part of Reading Recovery. Training utilizes a three-tiered approach that includes teachers, teacher leaders, and university trainers. The Reading Recovery teacher leaders, who oversee the literacy support program and train the Reading Recovery teachers, must first complete a one-year training at Texas Woman's University (or another Reading Recovery training university) to be certified as teacher leaders. Professional development for teachers begins with year-long graduate level study and is followed by ongoing training in succeeding years.

Literacy specialists must be trained in Reading Recovery. Training classes include basic strategies for observing, assessing, and teaching children. Each teacher begins the year with a four-day assessment workshop during which teachers learn to administer the six assessments that are part of the *Observation Survey* followed by three-hour weekly sessions. Each teacher participates in at least three "behind the glass" training lessons with a child while peers observed, described, and analyzed behavior, and analyzed teacher decisions. Afterwards, the teacher has the opportunity to discuss his/her training lesson with the group. Other class discussions revolve

around reading assignments from *Reading Recovery, A Guidebook for Teachers in Training* (Clay, 1993); *Becoming Literate: The Construction of Inner Control* (Clay, 1991), and *Partners in Learning: Teachers and Children in Reading Recovery* (Lyons, Pinnell, Deford, 1993). A variety of articles from current reading journals are also included. The trained teachers receive six hours of graduate level college credit for successfully completing the Reading Recovery training.

In addition, trained Reading Recovery teachers participate in six ongoing training sessions during the first year of their school's implementation. The four Reading Recovery teacher leaders in AISD, who supervised the literacy support program in 1999-2000, conducted the half-day training sessions. Literacy specialists also participated in colleague visits during the school year.

## EVALUATION DESIGN

During 1999-2000, the Title I evaluation staff worked with the language arts team leader and the Reading Recovery teacher leaders to develop an evaluation design for the Literacy Support Plan in its third year of implementation. Data collected by the Reading Recovery teacher leaders minimized duplication of data requests for Reading Recovery teachers. Student and teacher demographics are presented.

The Reading Recovery team leaders, as well as the language arts team leader, were interviewed to get a broader view of the literacy program. A literature review of literacy programs is also included for the reader's information. Budget information about the literacy program is presented by local and Title I expenditures.

Program effectiveness for this evaluation is based on the district's standard for "reading on grade level." (Beginning in 2003, the TAAS reading standard for passing will determine "reading on grade level.") *Observation Survey* data (grades K-3) and TAAS reading and writing scores (grades 3-6) are analyzed to determine the benefit of this type of reading intervention for early literacy learners. Historical TAAS data for students who participated in Reading Recovery from 1993-94 through 1996-97 were analyzed along with TAAS scores for 1999-2000 grade 3 and 4 literacy group students. Comparison data will include scores from the *Developmental Reading Assessment* (DRA), which was used by the primary education teachers in the district during the school year and during the districtwide summer reading program, *Summer Opportunity to Accelerate Reading* (S.O.A.R.), to determine text reading levels.

## STUDY SCHOOLS

Six schools representing different levels of implementation, Title I and non-Title I schools, and regular-calendar and year-round schools were selected for a more thorough look at the literacy support program. The random number method was used to select the six schools using the following strata: 1) two schools from each of the three tiers; 2) four Title I and two non-Title I schools; 3) one year-round school; 4) at least two schools that offer the Spanish version of Reading Recovery, *Descubriendo la Lectura* (DLL); and %) schools with varied geographic location.

The selected schools are: Bryker Woods, Govalle, Graham, Highland Park, Houston, and Widen elementary schools. Qualitative data from these schools include observations of literacy groups and interviews with literacy support specialists, classroom teachers, and principals. All kindergarten through grade 3 classroom teachers at the six schools were asked to respond to questions about the program on a teacher survey. Site visits were conducted in February 2000.

### OTHER FUNDING

In addition to the 71 Reading Recovery positions funded by the local budget, 31 Title I funded Reading Recovery teachers with other monies (e.g., Title I, grants). Because all of these teachers receive the same training and supervision, and they work with similar students, this evaluation will include all students served by Reading Recovery and literacy groups regardless of funding source. All teachers are Reading Recovery trained and all teachers work with students one-on-one (Reading Recovery) and in literacy groups. For the purpose of this report, ***literacy support students*** will refer to all students who have received instruction from Reading Recovery teachers in one-on-one or group situations.

### RECENT LEGISLATION

Senate Bill 4 passed by the 76th Texas Legislature in 1999 places even more importance on reading on grade level by the end of third grade. Beginning in 2003, grade 3 students will be required to pass TAAS reading to be promoted to grade 4. In 2005, promotion to grade 6 will require a grade 5 student to pass the English or Spanish version of TAAS reading and mathematics, and in 2008, promotion to grade 9 will require a grade 8 student to pass the English version of TAAS reading and mathematics.

The Literacy Support Plan is part of the district's plan to provide early intervention to accelerate literacy learning for primary students in an effort to meet the district and state goal that all students read at or above grade level by the end of third grade. Other AISD literacy initiatives include balanced literacy in primary classrooms, the S.O.A.R. summer reading program, prekindergarten, and the Institute for Learning, *Principles of Learning*.

### EVIDENCE FOR NEED

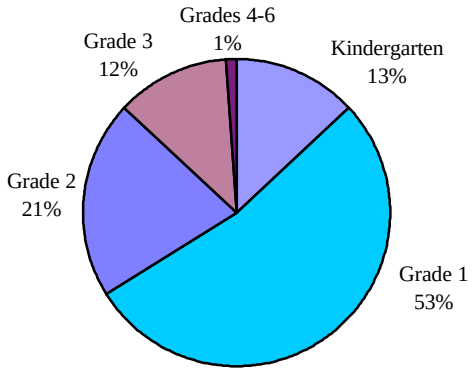
Large numbers of school-age children, including children from all economic levels, face difficulties in learning to read (Burns & Snow, 1999). According to most educators, there is no other skill taught in school that is more important than reading. It is the gateway to all other knowledge (National Center to Improve the Tools of Educators, 1996). Teaching students to ready by the end of the third grade is the single most important task assigned to our schools. A review of reading intervention literature can be found in Appendix A.

# LITERACY SUPPORT PLAN OVERVIEW

## STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

In 1999-2000, a total of 3,738 kindergarten through grade 6 students benefited from instruction by Reading Recovery trained teachers; 2,636 students were funded by the local budget and 1,102 students through Title I or other grants. Although the literacy support model is designed to work with kindergarten through grade 3 students, 59 students in grade 4-6 also participated in literacy groups for TAAS reading preparation. The majority of students participating in the program were from grade 1 (1,961 students), followed by grade 2 (800 students). The program served similar numbers of kindergarten and grade 3 students (466 and 452, respectively). Figure 1 shows the distribution of literacy support students by grade.

Figure 1: Grade Distribution of Literacy Support Students, 1999-2000




The number of students participating in the Literacy Support Plan has almost doubled from 2,053 students in 1997-98 (the first year of implementation) to 3,738 students in 1999-2000. Coverage is calculated by comparing the number of students served and the number of students enrolled. Table 1 gives a closer look at the reading intervention coverage by the literacy programs at kindergarten through grade 3. Thirty percent of all grade 1 students received instruction through Reading Recovery or literacy groups. Overall, 14% of all students in kindergarten through grade 3 were served by the literacy support program.

Table 1: Number of Students Served by Grade and Districtwide Coverage

| Grade | # of Students Served | AISD 1999-2000 Enrollment | % of AISD Students Served |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Kindergarten** | 466 | 7,918 | 6% |
| **Grade 1** | 1,961 | 6,505 | 30% |
| **Grade 2** | 800 | 6,233 | 12% |
| **Grade 3** | 452 | 6,228 | 7% |
| *Total* | *3,679* | *26,884* | *14%* |

* There are not enough literacy support students in grades 4-6 to report.

The distribution of ethnicity for literacy support students was diverse with 55% Hispanic, 22% African American, 22% Anglo/Other, and 1% Asian students. Sixty-six percent of the

students were from low-income families. According to AISD data files, other 1999-2000 demographics for literacy support students include the following:

- Fifty-seven percent of the students were male,
- Nineteen percent of the students were limited English proficient (LEP), and
- One percent of the students were in special education.

A comparison with AISD demographics for all elementary students in kindergarten through grade 3 in Table 2 shows that the percentages of African American, Hispanic, and low-income students are higher in the literacy support program (kindergarten through grade 3) than in the district overall.

Table 2: Demographic Comparison of Kindergarten Through Grade 3 Literacy Support Students and AISD Elementary Students, 1999-2000

| | African American | Hispanic | Anglo/ Other | Asian | Low Income | LEP |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Literacy Support Grades K-3 (N=3,667)** | 818 | 1990 | 832 | 27 | 2,411 | 586 |
| ***% Served*** | *22%* | *54%* | *23%* | *1%* | *66%* | *16%* |
| **AISD Elementary K-Grade 3 (N=26,884)** | 4,180 | 12,693 | 9,325 | 686 | 14,398 | 6,039 |
| ***% Total*** | *15%* | *47%* | *35%* | *2%* | *54%* | *23%* |

* Kindergarten through grade 3 demographics are compared for literacy support students and students districtwide because the Literacy Support Plan is designed to serve these grades.

Reading instruction was offered in both English and Spanish. The Spanish version of Reading Recovery, *Descubriendo la Lectura (DLL)*, was offered for Spanish-speaking students at 37% (26) of AISD elementary campuses in 1999-2000. Eighty-four percent of students served by the program were instructed in English. While the literacy support program serves larger percentages of minority and low-income students than the district elementary percentages, the percentage of LEP (limited English proficient) students (16%) served by the program is lower than the district elementary (23%) percentage.

### TEACHER DEMOGRAPHICS

Although the district provides one Reading Recovery teacher to each elementary school, each campus may fund additional Reading Recovery teachers with Title I or grant monies. Thirty-nine AISD elementary schools had only the one teacher designated by the district as the literacy support teacher; 22 schools had two Reading Recovery teachers; 9 schools had three teachers; and one school (Govalle) had 4 positions.

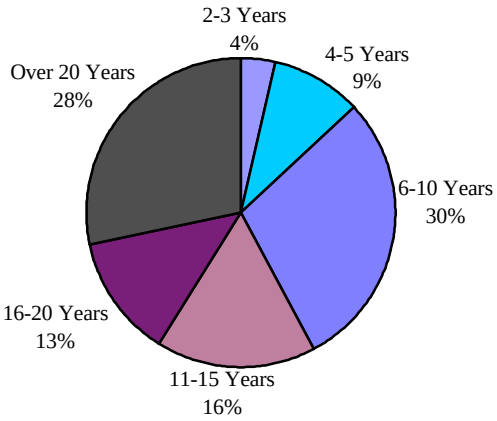
Forty-four percent (31) of the elementary schools have identified, through historical TAAS data, an additional need for reading intervention. All 31 schools with additional Reading Recovery teachers were Title I schools.

A total of 115 teachers taught Reading Recovery and led literacy support groups in 71 AISD elementary schools in 1999-2000. For most of the schools, the literacy support model involved one teacher teaching Reading Recovery with four students half of the day and working with literacy groups the other half of the day. However, at two schools, two teachers shared a first grade classroom and each taught Reading Recovery half a day for a total of 113 full-time equivalents. Of these 113 positions, 71 were funded with local monies and 42 were campus funded with other monies. The ethnicity distribution for all literacy support specialists was 63%

Anglo/Other, 30% Hispanic, and 7% African American. Ninety-seven percent of the teachers were female.

In 1999-2000, Reading Recovery teachers had an average of 14.2 years teaching experience. None of the teachers had fewer than two years of teaching experience. According to the *Reading Recovery Annual Results Packet for Austin ISD: 1999-2000*, 27% of the Reading Recovery teachers have advanced degrees. The highest number of years experience was 6-10 years (30%) and over 20 years (28%). Figure 2 shows the distribution of experience teaching for Reading Recovery teachers in 1999-2000.

Figure 2: Teaching Experience of Reading Recovery Teachers, 1999-2000

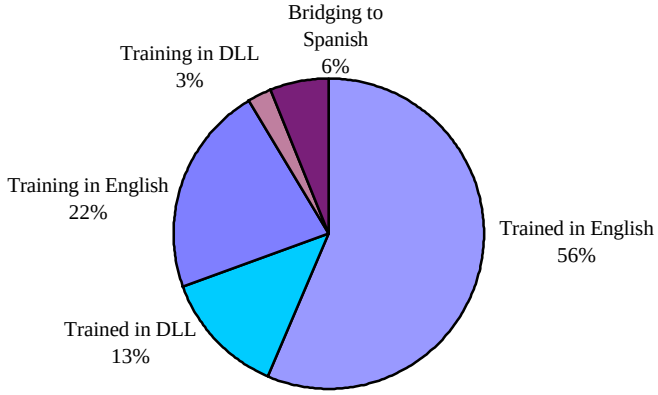



Tier 1 teachers had the highest average number of years teaching experience (16.9), followed by tier 3 (12.4), and tier 2 (12.2). Teachers served an average of 33 students each, which is one and a half times the normal class size of 22 students. On average, literacy support specialists worked one-on-one with nine Reading Recovery students during the year.

## TEACHER TRAINING

Teacher training is at the heart of the Reading Recovery program. In 1999-2000, 80 teachers were previously trained (Reading Recovery and DLL), 28 teachers were in training (25 in English and 3 in DLL), and 7 teachers were bridging to Spanish DLL. Teachers bridging to Spanish have already been trained in Reading Recovery. Figure 3 shows that 25% of Reading Recovery teachers were in training in 1999-2000.

Figure 3: Reading Recovery Training, 1999-2000



When looking at teacher training by tier, the percentage teachers trained in Reading Recovery prior to 1999-2000 was 72% for tier 1, 84% for tier 2, and 40% for tier 3. The lower percentage of trained teachers in tier 3 is a reflection of the fact that tier 3 was added in 1999-2000 with 23 schools. The 2000-01 program will benefit from 92 previously trained Reading Recovery teachers. Seventeen teachers (16%) are training in the 2000-01 school year.

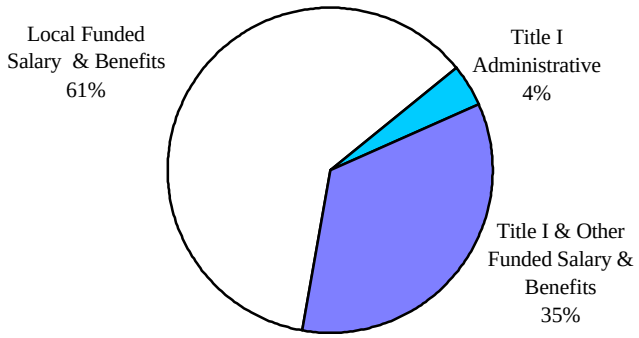
## BUDGET, 1999-2000

The local funding for 71 teachers is the major cost of the literacy support program. Because of the finding of job coding inconsistencies for Reading Recovery teachers in 1999-2000, costs reported should be considered estimated expenditures. In 1999-2000, the first year of full implementation of the Literacy Support Plan, the estimated cost for Reading Recovery teacher salaries and benefits funded by the local AISD budget was $3,115,803.

The estimated payroll costs for the 42 Reading Recovery teachers (salaries and benefits) that used the literacy support model, but were funded through Title I and other grants, was $1,755,716. The average salary and benefits for a Reading Recovery teacher (average of 14.2 years experience) was $43,111 ($37,787 salary and $5,324 benefits) in 1999-2000.

Funding of $211,545 for salary and benefits of two teacher leaders and support staff, professional development, tuition for a teacher in training at Texas Woman's University, and books and supplies was provided by Title I. Combining costs for this type of reading intervention for all of the schools, the budget for the literacy support model used for both locally funded Reading Recovery teachers and for Reading Recovery teachers funded by Title I and other grants totals was $5,083,064. The cost per student served is estimated at $1,360 for 1999-2000. Figure 4 shows teacher funding for all Reading Recovery teachers in 1999-2000.

Figure 4: Percentage of Estimated Costs for Reading Recovery, 1999-2000



## STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Ongoing assessment is central to the Literacy Support Plan. Reading Recovery and literacy group students were assessed with Marie Clay's *Observation Survey* at the pretest and posttest. Running records used to determine text reading levels were completed often for grade 1-4 students participating in the program. The text reading level assessment is used for grades 1-4 in this evaluation because it is common to all grades. Achievement gains for kindergarten students will be reported on letter identification, concepts about print, and hearing and recording sounds in words.

The literacy support model was designed to offer intervention and support for kindergarten through grade 3 students. However, some of the schools with campus-funded Reading Recovery teachers offered literacy groups for grades 4-6 for TAAS preparation. Achievement data will be presented for kindergarten and grade 1-4 students. Because the numbers are small, scores for students in grades 5 and 6 will not be reported.

Achievement data for the overall program are presented first. Grade 1 achievement data are examined more closely to determine if one type of intervention was more effective for grade 1 students low in literacy learning. Kindergarten achievement data are discussed separately because different assessment tools were used for the kindergarten assessment. TAAS reading and writing passing percentages are examined for former and current year literacy support students and compared to the district. Additional achievement data presented are reading on grade level comparisons, 1999-2000 DRA text reading level, and follow-up 2000 S.O.A.R. text reading levels for students who participated in the literacy support program.

### LITERACY SUPPORT GRADES 1-4 ACHIEVEMENT OVERVIEW

The text reading level for Reading Recovery is the achievement measure used for comparison in grades 1-4. Gains for the literacy support program were based on the scores of students with pretest and posttest scores for text reading level. Although 3,272 (1,065 Reading Recovery and 2,673 literacy group) grade 1-4 students received instruction through the literacy support program, only 2,908 students had pre- and posttest scores. The largest group of students with pre- and posttest scores was grade 1 with 1,785, followed by grade 2 with 730, grade 3 with 359, and grade 4 with 34 students.

The major focus of the literacy support program is to offer reading intervention to first grade students and to offer reading support to students in kindergarten, grade 2, and grade 3. When looking at average pretest and posttest scores by grade (Table 7), it can be seen that the average gain was highest for grade 1 students (9.5 reading levels), perhaps because they were the primary focus of the intervention. The average gain for all grade 1-4 students was 8.7 text reading levels. The average posttest score for grade 4 students was a text reading level of 26, which is considered on grade level for that grade. The grade 3 average posttest score was 23.7, slightly below reading grade level of 24 for grade 3. Ninety-six percent (2,795) of all grade 1-4 students who were served made gains. Table 3 shows the average pretest and posttest text reading levels, average gains, and target end of year text reading levels for grade 1-4 students in 1999-2000.

Table 3: Text Reading Levels by Average Pretest, Posttest, and Gain for Grade 1-4 Literacy Support Students, 1999-2000

| Grade | Average Fall Pretest | Average Spring Posttest | Target End of Year | Average Gain |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Grade 1 (n=1,785)*** | 2.1 | 11.6 | 16 | 9.5 |
| **Grade 2 (n=730)** | 8.9 | 16.8 | 20 | 7.9 |
| **Grade 3 (n=359)** | 18.3 | 23.7 | 24 | 5.4 |
| **Grade 4 (n=35)** | 22.1 | 26.0 | 26 | 3.9 |
| ***Average (n=2,908)*** | *5.6* | *14.4* | - | *8.7* |

* Number includes Reading Recovery and literacy group students.

## Language

Eighty-four percent of the literacy support grade 1-4 students (n=2,746) received literacy instruction in English. The other 526 students received DLL one-on-one and/or Spanish literacy group instruction. Table 4 shows the average pretest, posttest, and gain for English and Spanish students served by the literacy support program. The students instructed with DLL began and ended the year with lower average scores than the English language students, but had an average gain higher than students instructed in English. While this finding is statistically significant, it is not educationally significant.

Table 4: Text Reading Levels for Grade 1-4 Literacy Support Students by Average Pretest, Posttest, and Gain and by Language

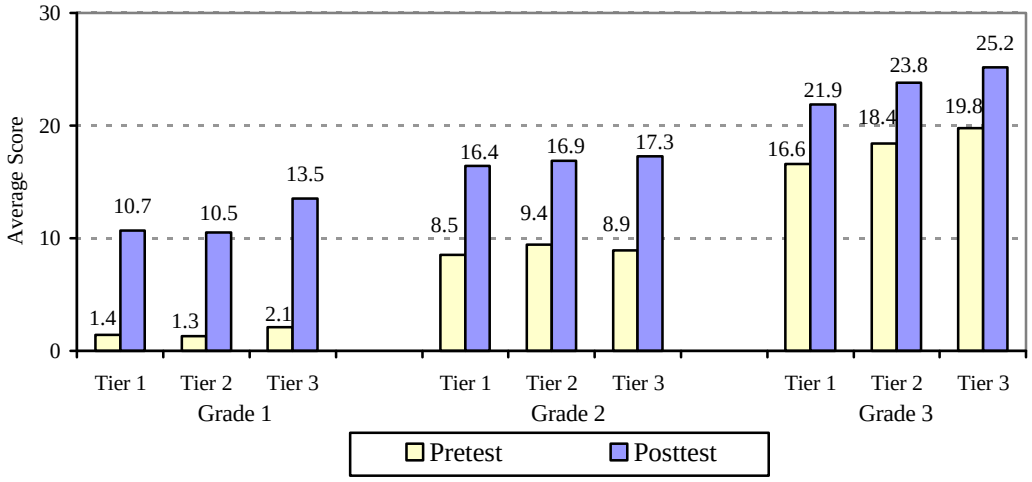
| Language | Average Pretest | Average Posttest | Average Gain |
|---|---|---|---|
| **English (n=2,746)** | 6.0 | 14.6 | 8.5 |
| **Spanish (n=526)** | 4.1 | 13.6 | 9.5 |

## Grade and Tier

The 23 schools that were part of the first tier of implementation of the literacy support plan were the some of the lowest socioeconomic elementary schools in the district. With the exception of Boone, Oak Hill, and Sunset Valley, all of the tier 1 schools were Title I schools. Twenty-three of the 24 schools that were a part of the tier 2 implementation were Title I schools. Tier 3 consisted of the higher socioeconomic schools with the exception of Rodriguez Elementary, which opened in 1999-2000 as a Title I campus. Because students with different academic needs were served in the three-tier implementation, the achievement gains for each tier are presented for comparison.

Figure 5 shows the average pretest and posttest scores by grade and tier for 1999-2000. When the data are examined closely, it can be seen that Tier 3 students have higher pre- and posttest scores than students in the first two tiers, except at grade 2. Because the first tier of implementation involved the most needy schools, the expectation would be for tier 1 students to have the lowest pretest average and tier 3 students to have the highest pretest average. This is true for grade 3 literacy support students only. However, the percentage of students at or above grade level at the posttest is higher for tier 3 students than for tier 1 or 2 students in all grades.

Figure 5: Average Pretest and Posttest Scores by Grade and Tier, 1999-2000

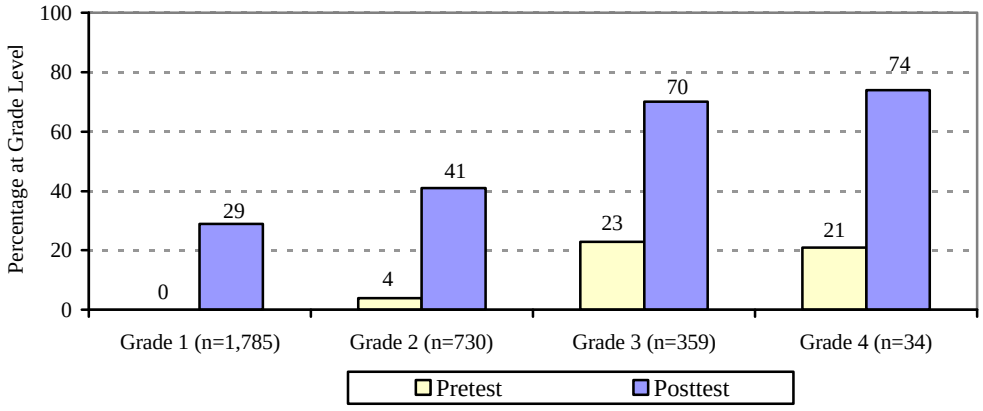



## Grade Level

The state and district goal is for students to be reading on grade level at the end of third grade. Until 2003 when the new accountability measure is in place, districts determine their own standards for "reading on grade level." After 2003, reading on grade level will be determined by passing TAAS reading.

To be considered to be on grade level on the *Observation Survey*, AISD has determined that a student must attain the following text reading levels at the end of the school year: grade 1 (level 16); grade 2 (level 20); grade 3 (level 24); and grade 4 (level 26). Appendix D shows Reading Recovery reading levels compared with *Developmental Reading Assessment* (DRA) levels. Figure 6 shows the number and percent of students at or above grade level in reading on the pretest compared to the posttest. A total of 118 grade 1-4 students (4%) were at or above grade level at the pretest and 1,095 students (38%) were at or above grade level at the posttest. The greatest growth happened with grade 4 students (n=34) who received support prior to the TAAS reading test. None of the 1,785 grade 1 students were at or above grade level at the pretest.

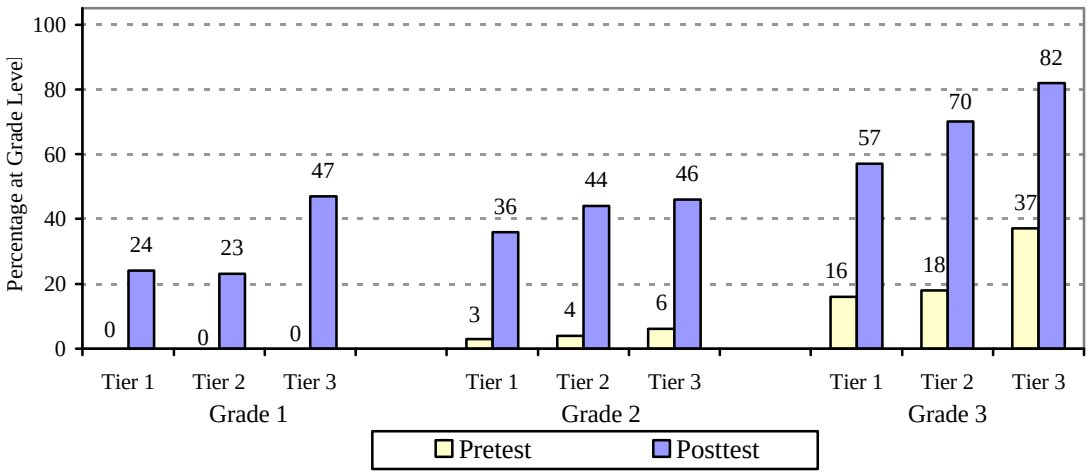
Figure 6: Percentage of Literacy Support Students on Grade Level in Reading at Pretest and Posttest




For further analysis, the percentages of students reading on grade level are examined by tier and by grade. Figure 7 shows the percentage of students at or above grade level on the pretest and posttest by tier and grade. The difference in achievement gains by tier of implementation is

most dramatic at grade 1. While 24% of tier 1 and 23% of tier 2 literacy support students in grade 1 were at or above grade level at the end of the year, 47% of tier 3 grade 1 literacy support students finished the end at or above grade level.

Figure 7: Percentage of Students At or Above Grade Level in Reading at Pretest and Posttest by Tier and Grade, 1999-2000




Figures 8 through 10 show the progress of students at each grade toward improvement in reading levels. Basal reading levels used in this comparison are: kindergarten readiness-levels A-2; pre-primer-levels 3-8; primer-levels 9-13; grade 1-levels 14-16; grade 2-levels 17-20; grade 3-levels 22-24; grade 4-levels 25-26; grade 5-level 28; and grade 6-level 30. (See Appendix D for basal reading levels.) Figure 9 shows that 80% of grade 1 literacy support students began the year at the lowest basal reading level (kindergarten readiness levels A-2), while only 7% of students were still at that level at the end of the year. While some students progressed to grade 2 and grade 3 reading levels, most of the grade 1 students were at pre-primer (28%), primer (21%), grade 1 (28%) levels at the end of the school year.

Figure 8: Percentage of Grade 1 Students at Basal Reading Levels at Pretest and Posttest

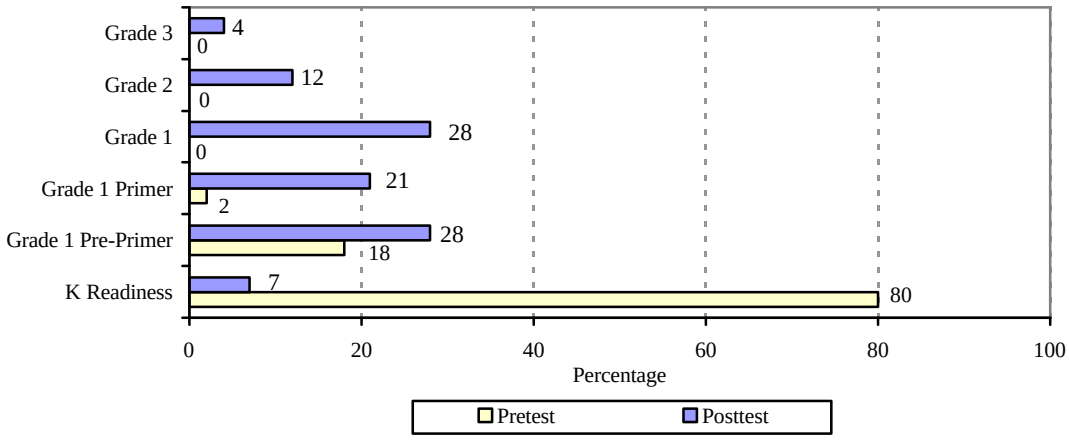



Figure 9 shows that the majority of grade 2 students were at the two lowest basal reading levels on the pretest. At the posttest, the majority of the students were at grade 2 and above.

Figure 9: Percentage of Grade 2 Students at Basal Reading Levels at Pretest and Posttest

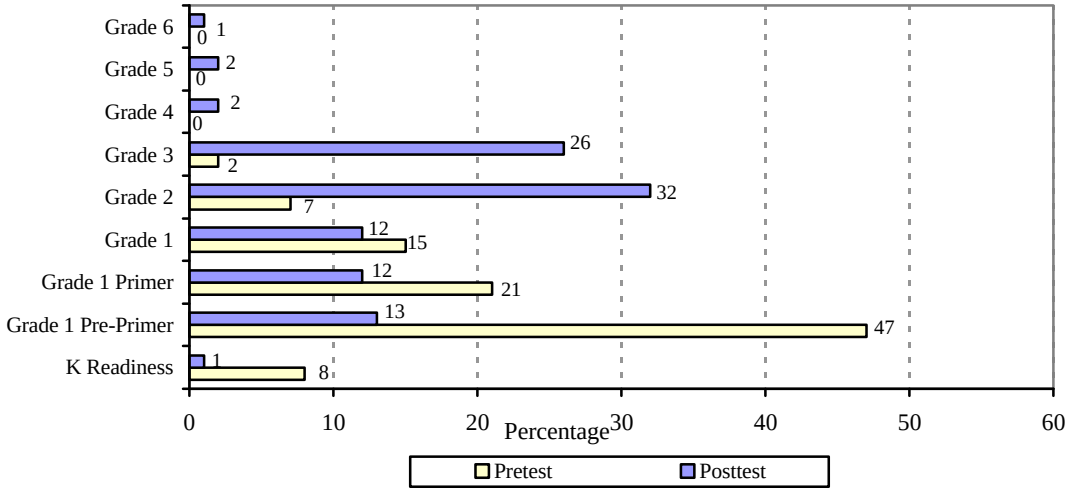
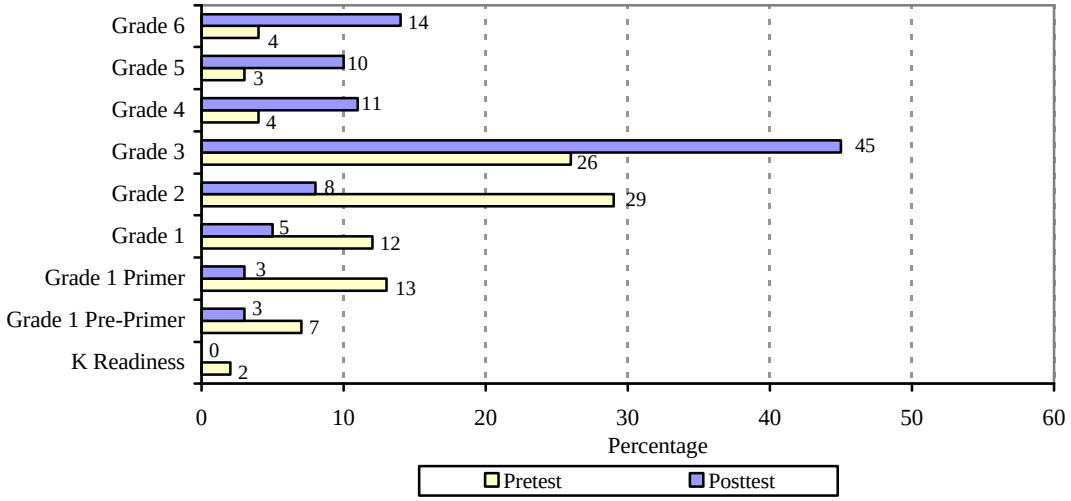



Figure 10 shows the same to be true for grade 3 students--the majority of students at grade 2 level or below at the pretest and at grade 3 level or above at the posttest.

Figure 10: Percentage of Grade 3 Students at Basal Reading Levels at Pretest and Posttest




## REASONS FOR TERMINATION OF SERVICE

Documentation of service is completed for each student who participated in Reading Recovery or literacy group. AISD allows 20 weeks of one-on-one Reading Recovery intervention for students to achieve grade level status in reading before exiting the program. There are six codes that can be used when a child is no longer in the program. The *discontinued* (n=371) term is used by Reading Recovery to indicate that the student successfully completed the Reading Recovery program and was returned to the classroom at the average level of the class or grade level. Reading Recovery students received an average of 68 lessons. *Completed* (n=1,126) is the term used for literacy group students who have reached grade level in reading.

There are many reasons why students do not successfully complete the program. Absenteeism is sometimes a problem causing some students to be removed from the program to allow another child the opportunity to participate. Literacy support specialists often *recommend*

*action* for the student such as literacy group or summer school. Many of the students *move* before they have finished the program. *Special education referrals* are sometimes required if the student is not making adequate progress in reading. A student may have an *incomplete program* if she/he does not have an opportunity to complete a 20-week program of intervention at the end of the year. An additional code was used for this evaluation to indicate if students who moved were served by the new campus. Thirty-five students who moved to another campus in AISD were served by more than one campus. A total of 2,415 students (65%) left the program. Table 5 shows the average pretest, posttest, and gain score by category for

Table 5: Average Pretest, Posttest, and Gain Scores for Students Who Left the Program

| Discontinuation Code for Students Who Left the Program (n=2,415) | % of All Literacy Support (N=3,738) | Average Pretest | Average Posttest | Average Gain |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Discontinued (n=371)** | 10 | 1.7 | 17.0 | 15.3 |
| **Completed (n=1,126)** | 30 | 9.5 | 19.6 | 10.0 |
| **Recommended Action (n=208)** | 6 | 0.6 | 6.7 | 6.1 |
| **Moved (n=285)** | 12 | 3.3 | 8.3 | 5.0 |
| **Special Education (n=93)** | 3 | 0.9 | 4.3 | 3.4 |
| **Incomplete Program (n=297)** | 8 | 1.5 | 7.9 | 6.3 |
| **Served by more than one campus (n=35)** | 1 | 1.7 | 8.3 | 6.6 |

## GRADE 1 ACHIEVEMENT

Fifty-three percent of all students served by the program were grade 1 students. There were four variations of service offered through the Literacy Support Plan: Reading Recovery only; Reading Recovery followed by literacy group; literacy group followed by Reading Recovery; and literacy group only. Grade 1 students could receive instruction through any of these variations. Of the 1,785 grade 1 students who had valid pre- and posttest scores, 1,023 (57%) received Reading Recovery at some time during the year and 762 (43%) participated in literacy groups only.

To measure the effect of the four types of reading intervention offered at grade 1, the mean gains were analyzed. The average gain for grade 1 students who received Reading Recovery only was 10.8 text reading levels representing about one year of progress in reading. This average gain was found to be significantly higher than the average gain of 9.5 for students who participated in literacy group only. (A student who begins grade 1 on grade level is expected to progress 11 text reading levels during first grade.)

Mean gains for students who had Reading Recovery followed by literacy group were significantly lower than any other group. In addition to having the lowest average gain, this group of students, which started the year in Reading Recovery and went to literacy group later, had the lowest average pretest score (0.5) of all the groups. These students received the additional literacy group support, but were unable advance to a similar level as the other groups of students served. Table 6 shows the average pretest, posttest, and gain by type of service for grade 1 students.

Table 6: Text Reading Levels for Grade 1 Literacy Support Students by Average Pretest, Posttest, and Gain and Type of Service (Grade 1 Target is 16)

| Type of Service | Average Pretest | Average Posttest | Average Gain |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Reading Recovery Only (n=324)** | 1.7 | 12.5 | 10.8 |
| **Reading Recovery/Literacy Group (n=308)** | 0.5 | 8.9 | 8.3 |
| **Literacy Group/Reading Recovery (n=391)** | 1.2 | 12.1 | 10.9 |
| **Literacy Group Only (n=762)** | 2.1 | 11.6 | 9.5 |
| ***Total (n=1,785)*** | *1.6* | *11.4* | *9.8* |

## READING ON GRADE LEVEL

Table 7 shows the number and percent of grade 1 students reading at or above grade level by type of service. Forty-two percent of the grade 1 students who received Reading Recovery instruction reached grade level by the end of the year. Overall, 29% of grade 1 students reached grade level in reading by the end of the year. In addition, 281 students (16%) ended the year at text reading level 14, which is considered on grade level at the mid year of grade 1. This makes a total of 45% of students who were at text reading level 14 or above at the end of grade 1.

Table 7: Number and Percentage of Grade 1 Students At or Above Grade Level at the Posttest by Type of Service

| Type of Service | # And % At or Above Grade Level at Pretest | # and % At or Above Grade Level at Posttest |
|---|---|---|
| **Reading Recovery Only (n=324)** | 0% (n=0) | 42% (n=135) |
| **Reading Recovery/Literacy Group (n=308)** | 0% (n=0) | 15% (n=48) |
| **Literacy Group/Reading Recovery (n=391)** | 0% (n=0) | 33% (n=130) |
| **Literacy Group Only (n=762)** | 0% (n=0) | 27% (n=207) |
| ***Total (N=1,785)*** | *0% (n=0)* | *29% (n=520)* |

## Language

Eighty-three percent (1,484) of grade 1 literacy support students received reading intervention in English. None of the grade 1 English or Spanish students were at grade level in reading at the pretest. At the posttest, 34% of students instructed in Spanish were at or above grade level (level 16) and 28% of students instructed in English were at or above grade level in reading. Table 8 shows the number and percent of students who were at or above grade level by language of instruction.

Table 8: Number and Percentage of Grade 1 Students At or Above Grade Level by Language

| Language | # And % At or Above Grade Level at Pretest | # and % At or Above Grade Level at Posttest |
|---|---|---|
| **English (n=1,484)** | 0% (n=0) | 28% (n=419) |
| **Spanish (n=301)** | 0% (n=0) | 34% (n=101) |
| ***Total (N=1,785)*** | *0% (n=0)* | *30% (n=520)* |

The average gain (10.3) for the students who received instruction in Spanish was significantly higher than the gain (9.7) for English language students. Although students who received instruction in Spanish started with a lower average pretest score than students instructed in English, the Spanish language students ended the year with a similar posttest average. Table 9 shows the average pretests, posttests, and gains for all grade 1 students by language of instruction.

Table 9: Average Pretest, Posttest, and Gain Scores for Grade 1 Students, by Language

| Language | Average Pretest | Average Posttest | Average Gain |
|---|---|---|---|
| **English (n=1,484)** | 1.7 | 11.4 | 9.7 |
| **Spanish (n=301)** | 1.0 | 11.3 | 10.3 |

## Implementation Tier

The three tiers of implementation because they serve different levels of need. Looking at the average pretest, posttest, and gain scores for students in each tier shown in Table 10, it can be seen that tier 3 students began and ended the program at higher levels and had a higher average gain than tier 1 and 2 students.

Table 10: Text Reading Levels for Grade 1 Students by Average Pretest, Posttest, and Gain Scores, and by Tier

| Implementation Tier | Average Pretest | Average Posttest | Average Gain |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Tier 1 (n=654))** | 1.4 | 10.7 | 9.3 |
| **Tier 2 (n=654)** | 1.3 | 10.5 | 9.2 |
| **Tier 3 (n=477)** | 2.1 | 13.5 | 11.4 |

Table 11 shows the number and percentage of students at and above grade level at the posttest. The number of students (n=654) participating in the literacy support program and the percentage of students at and above grade level at the posttest were very similar for tier 1 and tier 2 schools. Twenty-four percent of literacy support students at tier 1 and tier 2 schools were reading at or above grade level at the posttest. However, 44% of tier 3 literacy support students were at or above grade level at the posttest. This is probably not an indication of the quality of the program for each tier, but rather a reflection of the need.

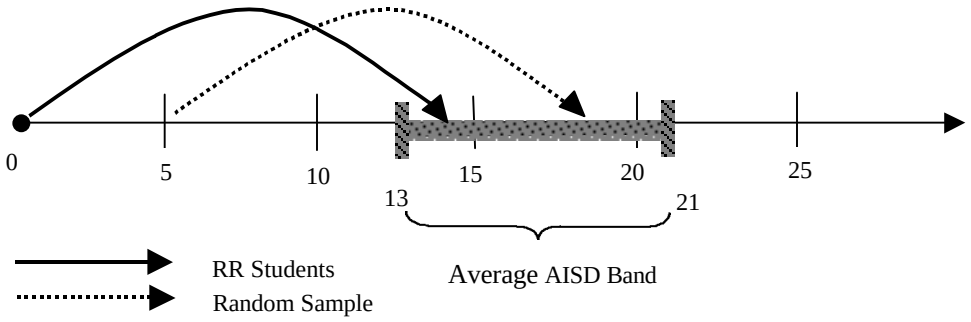
Table 11: Number and Percentage of Students At or Above Grade Level by Tier

| Implementation Tier | # And % At or Above Grade Level at Pretest | # and % At or Above Grade Level at Posttest |
|---|---|---|
| **Tier 1 (n=654)** | 0% (n=0) | 24% (n=159) |
| **Tier 2 (n=654)** | 0% (n=0) | 24% (n=153) |
| **Tier 3 (n=477)** | 0% (n=0) | 44% (n=208) |
| ***Total (N=1,785)*** | *0% (n=0)* | *30% (n=520)* |

## Random Sample Comparison

Each year, the Reading Recovery teacher leaders are required by Ohio State University to test a random sample of grade 1 students who did not have any reading intervention during the year. End-of-year scores on all six tasks of Clay's Observation Survey for all Reading Recovery children were compared to a site average band. In 1999-2000, a group of 97 students, who did not have Reading Recovery or literacy group during the year, were pre- and posttested with the text reading level assessment that is part of the *Observation Survey*. An average band of scores is determined first by calculating the mean scores of the random sample children. The average band (text reading level 13 through 21) was then calculated to be 0.5 standard deviation above and below the random sample mean. The Reading Recovery students (n=464) who received a full 20-week program or who are *discontinued* are compared to the random sample of AISD students. The average text reading level of the random sample was 5.2 in the fall and 16.9 in the spring. The Reading Recovery posttest average text reading level score of 13.9 falls within the average band for grade 1 students in AISD. Reading Recovery students had a higher average gain (13.2) in text reading level than the random sample (11.7), but started the year at a much lower average text reading level (0.7) than the random sample (5.2). Thus, Reading Recovery students showed a faster acceleration than the random sample, but were unable to close the gap in reading by the end of first grade (posttests of 13.9 and 16.9, respectively). Figure 11 shows a graphic comparison of the Reading Recovery group and the random sample.

Figure 11: Comparison of the Average Band for Grade 1 Students in AISD and Reading Recovery Students, 1999-2000



### Second Grade Reading Recovery Follow-up Study

Reading Recovery teachers do a follow-up study at the end of each year to follow reading progress for grade 2 students who successfully *discontinued* Reading Recovery when they were in first grade. Teachers complete a running record on the students available for testing at the end of the second grade year. In spring 2000, a total of 181 students were tested (147 in English and 34 in Spanish). Eighty-three percent of grade 2 students who discontinued Reading Recovery the previous year maintained or surpassed the text reading level for grade 2. These students participated in Reading Recovery in 1998-99. Table 12 shows the number and percent of tested grade 2 students who were below, at, and above grade level by language. These data indicate that strong classroom instruction is necessary for successful Reading Recovery students to maintain grade level reading status.

Table 12: Number and Percentage of Former Reading Recovery Students by Grade Level Status and Language, 1999-2000

| Grade 2 | # and % Below Grade Level | # and % At or Above Grade Level |
|---|---|---|
| **English (n=147)** | 16% (n=23) | 84% (n=124) |
| **Spanish (n=34)** | 23% (n=8) | 77% (n=26) |
| **Total (N=181)** | 17% (n=31) | 83% (n=150) |

## KINDERGARTEN ACHIEVEMENT

Kindergarten emergent literacy groups were offered at most schools late in the school year. Kindergarten students identified by classroom teachers as low in literacy were placed in literacy groups for 30 minutes daily for approximately eight to nine weeks.

A total of 466 kindergarten students participated in literacy groups in 1999-2000. Sixty-seven schools offered literacy groups to kindergarten. Four schools (Blackshear, Dawson, Houston, and Maplewood) did not include kindergarten in their literacy support model. Four of the schools that offered kindergarten literacy groups (Brown, Graham, Kocurek, and Linder) had 15 or more kindergarten students participate. The demographics of the kindergarten group were similar to that of the whole group (24% African American, 51% Hispanic, and 25% Anglo/Other). Sixty-nine percent of the kindergarten students were from low-income families and 17% were LEP.

The text reading level assessment used for grades 1-4 was not used for kindergarten. Rather, three *Observation Survey* assessment tools were used to assess literacy growth for kindergarten students who participated in the program. A total of 407 kindergarten students had pre- and posttest scores for comparison. For a student to be on grade level at the end of kindergarten, the expected outcomes would be a score of 20 in letter identification, 10 in concepts about print, and 5 in hearing and recording sounds in words. Kindergarten students were strong in letter identification shown by average pretest and posttest scores above the end of kindergarten expected score of 20. The average posttests for each of the assessments were above the expected grade level outcomes for kindergarten.

The average gains for all kindergarten students in letter identification were the largest (10.7), followed by hearing and recording sounds in words (7.6), and concepts about print (4.2). Table 13 shows the average pretest, posttest, and gain for each of the assessments used.

Table 13: Average Pretest, Posttest, and Gain for Kindergarten Literacy Group Students, 1999-2000

| Observation Survey Assessment | Average Pretest | Average Posttest | Target Level | Average Gain |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Letter Identification** | 27.7 | 38.6 | 20 | 10.9 |
| **Concepts about Print** | 7.6 | 11.8 | 10 | 4.2 |
| **Hearing & Recording Sounds in Words** | 4.3 | 12.0 | 5 | 7.6 |

The average posttest scores in letter identification are well above the expected outcome of 20 for both English and Spanish language students. Average pretests, posttests, and gains in concepts about print were similar for both groups. The largest difference in average gains for students with English and Spanish instruction can be seen with the hearing sounds and recording words assessment. Table 14 shows the average pretest, posttest, and gains in each assessment by language.

Table 14: Average Pretest, Posttest, and Gain for Kindergarten Literacy Group Students, by Language, 1999-2000

| Language | Average Pretest | Average Posttest | Target Score | Average Gain |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***English (n=405)*** | | | | |
| **Letter Identification** | 28.1 | 38.4 | 20 | 10.2 |
| **Concepts About Print** | 7.8 | 11.9 | 10 | 4.1 |
| **Hearing Sounds & Recording Words** | 4.2 | 11.2 | 5 | 6.9 |
| ***Spanish (n=61)*** | | | | |
| **Letter Identification** | 25.0 | 39.7 | 20 | 14.6 |
| **Concepts About Print** | 6.3 | 11.1 | 10 | 4.8 |
| **Hearing Sounds & Recording Words** | 5.2 | 16.9 | 5 | 11.9 |

Table 15 shows the average pretest, posttest, and gains by assessment and tier. Because of the difference in the needs of the schools, kindergarten gains were examined by tier of implementation. As expected, tier 3 students had higher average pretest and posttest scores than tiers 1 and 2. Tier 3 kindergarten students averaged above the end of year target score at the pretest for letter identification and hearing sounds and recording words assessments. At all tiers of implementation, the average pretests for letter identification were above the end of year kindergarten expected score of 20. Average gains were most dissimilar for the hearing sounds and recording words assessment.

Table 15: Average Pretest, Posttest, and Gain for Kindergarten Literacy Group Students by Tier, 1999-2000

| Tier of Implementation | Average Pretest | Average Posttest | Target Score | Average Gain |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***Tier 1 (n=202)*** | | | | |
| **Letter Identification** | 25.8 | 37.4 | 20 | 11.4 |
| **Concepts About Print** | 7.0 | 11.4 | 10 | 4.4 |
| **Hearing Sounds & Recording Words** | 3.9 | 11.4 | 5 | 7.6 |
| ***Tier 2 (n=124)*** | | | | |
| **Letter Identification** | 26.0 | 37.0 | 20 | 10.8 |
| **Concepts About Print** | 7.0 | 10.8 | 10 | 3.8 |
| **Hearing Sounds & Recording Words** | 4.0 | 9.5 | 5 | 5.5 |
| ***Tier 3 (n=140)*** | | | | |
| **Letter Identification** | 31.6 | 41.5 | 20 | 9.9 |
| **Concepts About Print** | 8.8 | 13.0 | 10 | 4.2 |
| **Hearing Sounds & Recording Words** | 5.1 | 14.7 | 5 | 9.6 |

## TAAS DATA

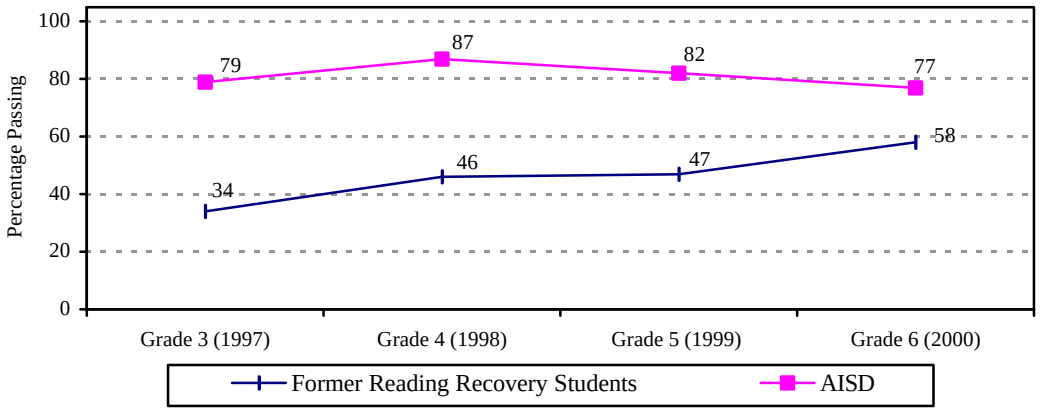
Because TAAS is the accountability measure for public school students in the State of Texas, it is relevant to look at TAAS scores for students served in Reading Recovery and literacy groups. Although the literacy support plan began in 1997-98, there were students at Title I schools who received Reading Recovery beginning in 1992-93. The student identification numbers for students who received Reading Recovery in 1994-95, 1995-96, and 1996-97 were accessed and matched with their TAAS scores (in 1997, 1998, and 1999). As a means of tracking student progress over time, the percentage of students passing TAAS in grade 3, 4, 5, and 6 were examined where applicable. The percentage of students passing TAAS reading increased each year for all three cohorts of students. Table 16 presents the number and percentage of former Reading Recovery students passing TAAS reading by year of service and TAAS grade.

Table 16: Number and Percentage of Former Reading Recovery Students Passing TAAS Reading by Year of Service and TAAS Grade

| Year of Reading Recovery | Grade 3 TAAS | Grade 4 TAAS | Grade 5 TAAS | Grade 6 TAAS* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1994-95** | 34% (n=112) | 46% (n=116) | 47% (n=128) | 58% (n=119) |
| **1995-96** | 57% (n=148) | 58% (n=164) | 62% (n=157) | NA |
| **1996-97** | 52% (n=171) | 56% (n=152) | NA | NA |

First grade students who received Reading Recovery and/or literacy group in 1994-95 have four years of TAAS data. To show the Reading Recovery students' progress on TAAS compared to district, the percentage of students passing TAAS reading for the 1994-95 Reading Recovery cohort and the district are compared in Figure 12. The percentage of Reading Recovery students passing TAAS reading increased each year of the comparison, while the percentage of students from the 1994-95 district cohort passing TAAS reading has declined the last two years. It appears that the 1994-95 cohort of Reading Recovery students were closing the gap in achievement by grade 6.

Figure 12: Percentage of Students Passing TAAS Reading
for the 1994-95 Grade 1 Cohort by Grade




Elementary students take TAAS writing in grade 4. The percentage of students who received Reading Recovery in 1994-95, 1995-96, and 1996-97 who passed TAAS writing is presented in Table 17. The 1995-96 Reading Recovery students passed the grade 4 TAAS writing test with the highest percentage of the three years presented.

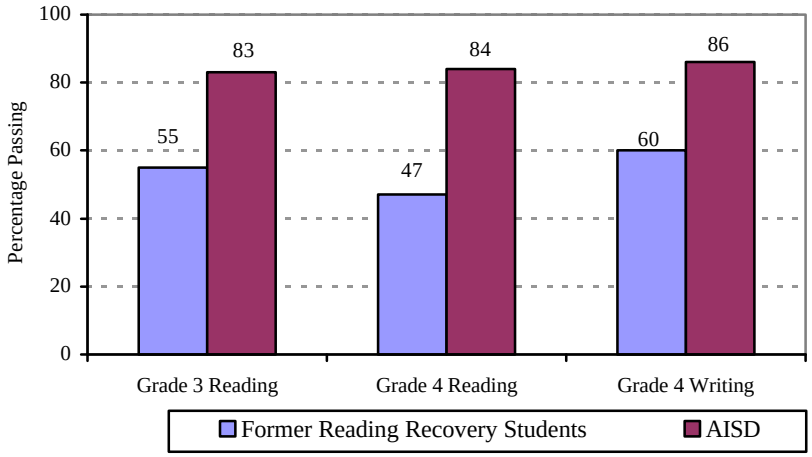
Table 17: Percentage Passing Grade 4 TAAS Writing for Students Who Received Reading Recovery in 1994-95, 1995-96, and 1996-97, and the District

| Year of Reading Recovery | % of Reading Recovery Passing Grade 4 Writing | % of AISD Passing Grade 4 Writing |
|---|---|---|
| **1994-95 (n=114) (1997 TAAS)** | 48 | 84 |
| **1995-96 (n=164) (1998 TAAS)** | 59 | 84 |
| **1996-97 (n=179) (1999 TAAS)** | 55 | 84 |

## 1999-2000 Literacy Groups

Students in grade 3 and 4 literacy groups in 1999-2000 were preparing for the TAAS reading and writing tests. A total of 375 grade 3 and 47 grade 4 literacy support students took the 2000 TAAS tests. These were students who needed assistance and support to pass the TAAS tests. As would be expected, the district passing rate was higher than the passing rate for literacy support students in 2000. Fifty-five percent of grade 3 literacy support students passed TAAS reading, while 47% of grade 4 students passed TAAS reading and 66% passed TAAS writing. It is not known what percentage of these students would not have passed TAAS without the support offered through the literacy groups. Figure 13 show the percentage of 1999-2000 grade 3 and grade 4 students who participated in literacy groups and passed TAAS reading and writing.

Figure 13: Percentage of 1999-2000 Grade 3 and Grade 4 Literacy Group Students and Students Districtwide Passing 2000 TAAS Reading and Writing

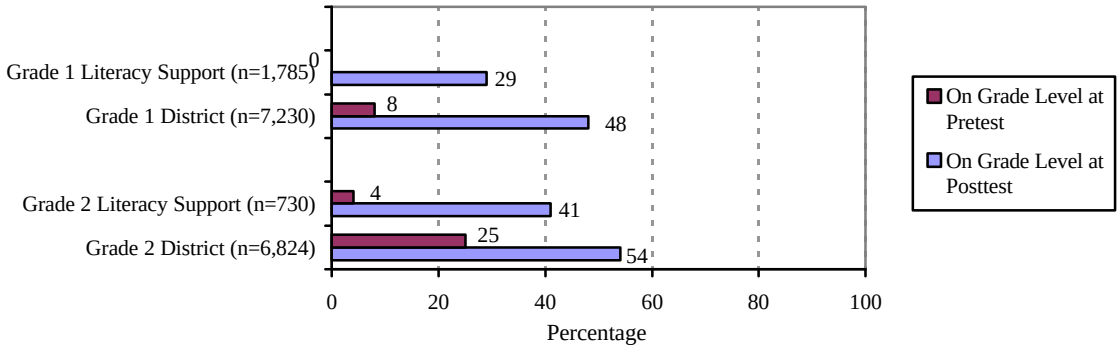



## DRA Assessment

In 1999-2000, the *Developmental Reading Assessment* (DRA) was used as part of the *Primary Assessment of Language Arts and Mathematics* (PALM) assessment to determine reading level for students in kindergarten through grade 2.

The DRA incorporates the running record procedures developed by Dr. Marie Clay in the *Observation Survey*. Figure 14 shows the comparison of percentages of students reading at or above grade level at the pretest and posttest for grade 1 and 2 literacy support students and students districtwide. (Reading on grade level is considered level 16 for grade 1 for both DRA and the *Observation Survey*. For grade 2, reading on grade level is level 20 on the *Observation Survey* and level 28 on the DRA.)

Figure 14: Percentages of Grade 1 and 2 Literacy Support Students and Students Districtwide Who Were Reading At or Above Grade Level at Pretest and Posttest




## 2000 SOAR Data for Literacy Support Students

The literacy support program is one of the reading interventions offered to students in AISD. Another intervention that began the first year of the literacy support program is S.O.A.R. (*Summer Opportunity to Accelerate Reading*), a 21-day summer reading program. In an attempt to follow the reading progress of the 1999-2000 literacy support students, student identification numbers were matched for students that received literacy support instruction and who also

attended S.O.A.R. A total of 839 student identification numbers (125 kindergarten, 423 grade 1, and 191 grade 2 students) were matched (702 had valid pretest and posttest scores).

The DRA was used to monitor reading progress at S.O.A.R. The procedure of the running record is the same in the DRA and the *Observation Survey*, but the text reading levels are organized differently. To maintain consistency of test administrator and assessment tool, only the DRA averages are reported for literacy support students who attended S.O.A.R. 2000. Valid pre- and posttest scores were available for 111 kindergarten, 413 grade 1, and 178 grade 2 students. Average pretest and posttest text reading levels are presented for students who participated in the literacy support program and who also attended S.O.A.R. (See Appendix D for the text reading levels for the DRA.)

According to the DRA, reading on grade level would mean that a student would be at text reading level 2 at the end of kindergarten, at text reading level 16 at the end of grade 1, and at text reading level 28 at the end of grade 2. Table 18 shows the average text reading level at the pretest and the posttest during S.O.A.R, by grade. Kindergarten students had an average reading text level of 2.1 at the posttest, which is considered on grade level.

Table 18: Average Text Reading Level at Pretest and Posttest for Literacy Support Students Who Attended S.O.A.R. 2000, by Grade

| 1999-2000 Literacy Support Students Who Attended S.O.A.R. 2000 | Average Text Reading Level at Pretest | Average Text Reading Level at Posttest | Target Text Reading Level |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Kindergarten (n=111)** | 0.8 | 2.1 | 2 |
| **Grade 1 (n=413)** | 9.0 | 13.1 | 16 |
| **Grade 2 (n=178)** | 16.3 | 22.2 | 24 |

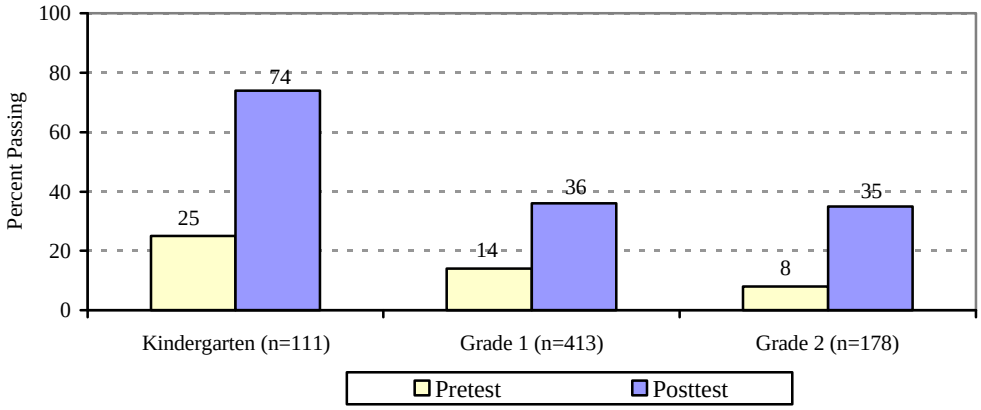
Table 19 shows the average gains in actual text reading levels as calculated with the change in level from pretest to posttest. In addition, average gains for literacy support students and all S.O.A.R. students made during the summer intervention are also presented for comparison. In each case, the gains are slightly less for literacy support students than for all students. The results show that students who participated in literacy group intervention during the year continued to make gains in text reading level during S.O.A.R.

Table 19: Average Gain in Text Reading Level for 1999-2000 Literacy Support Students During S.O.A.R. 2000 Compared to All S.O.A.R. Students

| Literacy Support Students Who Attended S.O.A.R. | Average Gain in Text Reading Level for Literacy Support Students at S.O.A.R. | Average Gain in Text Reading Level for All S.O.A.R. Students |
|---|---|---|
| **Kindergarten (n=111)** | 1.3 | 1.5 |
| **Grade 1 (n=413)** | 2.0 | 2.2 |
| **Grade 2 (n=178)** | 2.2 | 2.3 |

Another look at the S.O.A.R. results shows that an additional 194 (23%) students who participated in the Literacy Support Plan during the school year reached grade level in reading during S.O.A.R. Figure 15 shows the percentage of students at or above grade level in reading on the S.O.A.R. pretest and the posttest, by grade.

Figure 15: Percentage of Literacy Support Students on Grade Level in Reading at the S.O.A.R. Pretest and Posttest, by Grade




A positive aspect of the Literacy Support Plan is that it works like a "safety net" for students who are below grade level in reading. Kindergarten through grade 2 students who received reading intervention through Reading Recovery and/or literacy groups during the year can attend S.O.A.R. for an intensive reading program for four weeks during the summer. If they are still below grade level in reading when they return to school in the fall, they have the opportunity for additional small group instruction in reading.

## A Closer Look at Six Study Schools

For a closer look at the literacy support program in AISD, six elementary campuses were asked to participate as study schools. The schools were randomly selected to represent each of the implementation tiers, Title I and non-Title I status, regular-calendar and year-round schedules, varied geographic locations, and English and Spanish language instruction. The selected schools were Bryker Woods, Govalle, Graham, Highland Park, Houston, and Widen elementary schools. Table 20 shows these criteria for each of the six study schools.

Table 20 : 1999-2000 Literacy Support Program Observation Schools

| School | Tier | Title I School | Year-Round School | Spanish Support Offered | Location in City | Number Literacy Teachers |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Bryker Woods** | 3 | | | | Central | 1 |
| **Govalle** | 1 | 3 | | 3 | East | 5 |
| **Graham** | 2 | 3 | | | Northeast | 2 |
| **Highland Park** | 3 | | | | Northwest | 1 |
| **Houston** | 1 | 3 | | 3 | Southeast | 3 |
| **Widen** | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | Southeast | 3 |

Evaluation staff members conducted interviews with Reading Recovery teachers, classroom teachers, and principals during site visits at the six schools. Teachers in kindergarten through grade 3 were asked to respond to survey questions about the literacy support program at their campus. These interviews and surveys will be summarized in this section. In addition, interviews with Reading Recovery teacher leaders and the administrative supervisor will be included to give more insight into the program. Demographic information for the study schools are also reported.

### Demographics

Two schools from each implementation tier were selected for this study: tier 1 schools – Govalle and Houston; tier 2 schools – Graham and Widen; and tier 3 schools – Bryker Woods and Highland Park. There was diversity of size in schools that were examined in this study. Houston was the largest school with 870 students, and Bryker Woods was the smallest school with 398 students in 1999-2000. Govalle had the highest percentage of low-income students (87.9%) and Highland Park had the lowest percentage of low-income students (3.5%). The tier 1 and 2 schools all offered prekindergarten classes. About half of the students at Houston were LEP eligible in 1999-2000. Other study schools with a higher percentage of LEP students than the district elementary average (21%) were Widen (39%) and Govalle (25%). Govalle and Houston, both tier 1 schools, did not offer grade 3 literacy groups in order to meet the needs of the younger students. A snapshot of the student demographics of the six schools shown in Table 21 illustrates the demographic differences of students in the three implementation tiers in 1999-2000.

Table 21: Demographic Information for Six Literacy Support Study Schools, 1999-2000

| School | Tier | # Enrolled | % Low Income | % Asian | % African American | % Hispanic | % Anglo/ Other | % LEP |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Govalle** | 1 | 610 | 87.9 | 0.0 | 19.5 | 79.2 | 1.4 | 25 |
| **Houston** | 1 | 870 | 85.9 | 0.6 | 12.0 | 81.6 | 5.8 | 49 |
| **Graham** | 2 | 608 | 73.2 | 2.0 | 44.1 | 36.0 | 17.9 | 19 |
| **Widen** | 2 | 749 | 80.0 | 0.1 | 15.2 | 78.5 | 6.1 | 39 |
| **Bryker Woods** | 3 | 398 | 12.8 | 2.5 | 5.3 | 18.8 | 73.4 | 3 |
| **Highland Park** | 3 | 544 | 3.5 | 1.3 | 1.8 | 5.7 | 91.2 | <1 |

## INTERVIEWS AND SURVEYS

Teachers, principals, and support staff that experience the literacy support program at the campus level have valuable information to share. Administrative personnel are also valuable resources. Comments about the program from interviews and surveys at the six study schools are summarized in the following section.

### Teacher Survey

Teachers of kindergarten and grade 1-3 students at the study schools were asked to complete a multiple choice survey. Of a possible 120 teachers, 58 (48%) responded to the survey questions. Grade 1 teachers had the greatest return rate with 61% of the teachers responding. The lowest return rate (31%) was from grade 3 teachers. This corresponds to the amount of support received by the literacy support program--grade 1 with the largest number of students and grade 3 with the smallest number of students to participate. Comments written by the teachers on their surveys will be reported later in this section.

Grade 1 teachers strongly agreed that the literacy support program at their campus was effective in supporting students low in literacy in kindergarten through grade 3 (mean response of 4.7 based on a 5.0 point scale). Grade 1 teachers also strongly agreed (mean response of 4.8) that the Reading Recovery/literacy support specialist effectively communicated with them about the progress of students in their classrooms. See Appendices E and F for a complete list of mean responses to the teacher survey by campus and by grade.

The lowest mean responses were given by teachers at all grade levels concerning training. Teachers were asked to respond to the statement, "I have received training necessary for classroom support of students who are participating in reading intervention." Grade 2 and 3 teachers' mean response was lowest (3.2 and 3.1, respectively).

Three of the study schools, Bryker Woods, Graham, and Highland Park, did not offer reading intervention in Spanish. Graham had a need for Spanish reading intervention, but did not have a DLL instructor. Teachers of Spanish-speaking students at all grades at the Title I schools asked that there be more coverage to help their students. Houston Elementary teachers expressed the most disagreement (mean response of 2.9) when asked if the Spanish intervention offered at their campus met the needs of students who require reading intervention in Spanish. Houston Elementary had a large LEP population that was served by a part-time Reading Recovery who was bridging to DLL. Classroom teacher interviews are summarized below by topic.

Classroom teachers at the study schools are very supportive of the literacy support program at their campuses. As one teacher said, they "now have another professional to help diagnose reading problems and offer strategies."

### Identification Process

Classroom teachers at the study schools were asked to describe the process for identifying students to participate in reading intervention. Teachers in grades 1-3 are asked to do a ranking of students based on literacy skills the first week of school to identify the students most in need of reading intervention. Teachers used various methods to identify students in need of reading intervention. First grade teachers mentioned using assessment tools such as the DRA, PALM, kindergarten ranking, teacher observation, *Observation Survey*, IRI (*Individualized Reading Inventory*), and MRT (*Metropolitan Readiness Test*). New teachers seemed a little overwhelmed by this process because there is "no universal criteria for this ranking," as one teacher said. While teachers realize that the process needs to start as soon as possible, some teachers say it could be a problem to test the first few days of school because a student in need of assistance might not be identified. At grade 1, the lowest students are identified for Reading Recovery and the next lowest students are placed in literacy groups as space is available. Each Reading Recovery teacher works with four students one-on-one and has two grade 1 literacy groups throughout the year.

In addition, Reading Recovery teachers work with a literacy group that alternates among grade 2, grade 3, and kindergarten students as well as a group that is determined by the campus. Former Reading Recovery students who are in need of reading support in later grades are first to be considered for literacy groups. After it is determined which former Reading Recovery students need support, Reading Recovery teachers let classroom teachers know how many slots will be available. To determine which students may need assistance, second and third grade teachers said they used assessment tools such as running records, teacher observation, writing samples, the *Brigance*, and TAAS practice tests.

### Coverage

When teachers were asked if they felt that the students most in need of reading intervention were receiving service, teachers overwhelmingly agreed. One teacher said, "In first grade, the lowest ones can receive the instruction to improve their reading skills or be identified for special services early." One first grade teacher said about half of her class had been served either in Reading Recovery or literacy support groups.

Concerns voiced by teachers at Govalle, Graham, and Houston were that there was not enough Spanish language reading support. One third grade teacher said that two of her students needed transitional service, which was not available. Second and third grade teachers said they wish that there could be more trained reading specialists who could serve students in need of reading intervention.

### Balance Literacy in the Classroom

Balanced literacy is a comprehensive design adopted by the district including reading and writing instruction for grades kindergarten through grade 5. (See Appendix G for a detailed description of balanced literacy.) Classroom teachers from the six study schools were asked if the balanced literacy approach was used at their campuses. The answer was "yes," with varying degrees of implementation. The strategies are being used in kindergarten through grade 2 with less focus in grades 3-5. Teachers from Bryker Woods and Widen said that their campuses were using the balanced literacy before the district implemented the model.

In 1999-2000, the district offered balanced literacy training at the Professional Development Academy, and some principals offered training on campus. Balanced literacy strategies being used by teachers were centers, guided reading, word wall, read-aloud, big books, shared reading, and interactive writing. Leveling books for literacy libraries was an important job for the Reading Recovery teachers that supports guided reading. At Widen, teachers incorporate Marie Carbo's *Learning Styles* with literacy teaching. Teachers at Graham said that the support of a primary education specialist through the Academics 2000 grant was very helpful with the balanced literacy strategies. Literacy Backbone training and Reading Recovery conferences were also mentioned as additional balanced literacy training.

### Impact on Reading

Teachers were asked if the literacy support program had impacted reading instruction at their campuses. Teachers stated that the combination of Reading Recovery and literacy groups offered now at every campus was making an impact on reading achievement. One teacher said," I think the program has greatly increased attitude and ability of young readers at our school." Several teachers commented that they now have another professional to help diagnose reading problems and offer strategies. A first grade teacher said that the program has given her "comfort" because she "worried about children who struggle, but don't get referred to special services." A first grade teacher commented that, "This year's first grade class was the best prepared ever."

Other teacher comments include the following:

- The program helps focus on students in need of extra support.
- Students with learning disabilities can be identified earlier.
- The program is especially effective at first grade.
- Reading Recovery teachers present workshops to classroom teachers.
- An awareness of the reading process is higher across the campus.
- Reading Recovery teachers have modeled guided reading in the classroom for new teachers.
- The literacy program has given students self-confidence.
- There is another professional to help the students.
- Reading Recovery teachers also attend parent conferences to inform parents about the student's progress and to give tips to parents on what they can do at home.
- The program allows the classroom teacher to work more closely with other students.

A Widen teacher said, "Test scores are improving, and it seems the literacy support program has contributed to that. More students are closer to grade level." A third grade teacher said that her two literacy group students rarely participated in regular classroom activities prior to

literacy group. Since participating in literacy group, "Their attitudes became so much more positive about participating in the regular classroom activities and turning in homework after literacy classes."

A concern offered by a third grade teacher is that the pullout schedule for third grade is very disruptive to her teaching. Because there are so many different schedules, the Reading Recovery teacher assigns her class a time slot. This interferes with the student's classroom work, she added.

### Communication With Reading Recovery Teacher

Communication between the classroom teacher and Reading Recovery teacher is most often informal, in the hall, at lunch, or after school according to teachers. More formal communication was at grade level meetings and parent teacher conferences. For grade 1 teachers the communication happens "almost daily, at least twice a week," probably because the majority of the students who participate in Reading Recovery and/or literacy group were grade 1 students. At Govalle, Reading Recovery teachers have the same conference time as first grade teachers, which they say makes it easier to communicate about the progress of specific students.

For grade 2 and 3 teachers, the communication was less frequent, but most teachers felt that it was adequate. However, one second grade teacher said she got "very little feedback" from the Reading Recovery teacher about her students. She would like to know more and felt that "communication could be improved."

### Strengths of the Literacy Support Program

According to a first grade teacher, the literacy support program "helps jumpstart kids who are having difficulty with letters and sounds the first part of the year. It supports writing as well as reading the latter part of the year." A first grade teacher said that Reading Recovery teachers "work together with the classroom teacher to provide a double dose of instruction needed." Another teacher said that she was "very pleased to have this districtwide support." Reading Recovery is beneficial for schools like Bryker Woods, says one teacher. "I can see that other schools might need two or more teachers." Other comments include the following:

- The literacy support program is especially helpful for new classroom teachers.
- The program should "pay off" as first graders move to second and third grade.
- The literacy groups give students confidence and builds self-esteem.
- The Reading Recovery teacher gives support to the campus. She/he is a resource on reading techniques.
- The quiet time away from the classroom for the child to focus is good for the child.
- The program cuts down on special education referrals.[1]
- Grade 3 students who will be taking TAAS for the first time can get extra help.
- Students receive individualized attention.
- The program supports students and assists them in moving to the same level as classmates.
- The Reading Recovery trained teacher is the main strength. She/he listens,

[1] Referrals for initial assessment for special education in AISD elementary schools have gone down from 2.9% in 1998-99 to 2.5% in 1999-2000. However, this is not necessarily related to the literacy support program.

investigates, compares, assesses, and discusses strategies to help the student in reading progress.

- The number of students served this year has increased.
- The structure of the program is good.
- Reading Recovery teachers model guided reading for other teachers.
- The Reading Recovery teachers go above and beyond.
- This program offers an intense reading focus.
- Lots of students do not need special education serves because of the intervention.
- The Reading Recovery teacher supports teacher assessment in ARD meetings.

### Suggestions for Improving the Program

As with any program, there is room for improvement. One teacher said that experience would make the program better. Most of the responses made by teachers had to do with district support; other responses were about actions specific to the local campus. Comments include the following:

- Reading Recovery teachers should not be pulled for non-teaching duties.
- I would like to attend optional training after school for teachers interested in the balanced literacy approach and Reading Recovery strategies.
- Additional help with the ranking and more time to prepare ranking.
- A progress report (second grade) every few weeks would be good.
- A monthly follow up on students who have transitioned back into the classroom.
- Most schools need more leveled books for the literacy library.
- We need more support for the third grade (Graham).
- We need another DLL teacher (Govalle, Graham, Houston, and Widen).
- If we had more Reading Recovery teachers, we could serve more students.
- Students need parental support when doing homework each night.

A Widen teacher said, "Because of the low level of parental support at home and because we have so many entering kindergarten and first grade below grade level in reading, we really need more reading specialists to give one-on-one help and also to teach the parents how to help." This sentiment was repeated by teachers at Graham, Govalle, and Houston, all Title I schools.

**Principals support the Literacy Support Plan. According to the one principal, "The presence of the literacy support specialist has facilitated a dialogue about reading instruction." Title I Schools expressed the need for additional teachers, particularly Spanish DLL trained teachers.**

## PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW

Principals are important to the literacy support program because they are the academic leaders of the campus and they hire the teachers that will be trained in Reading Recovery. It is necessary that they be part of the process that determines how the Literacy Support Plan will work at their campus. They should be familiar with strategies for early intervention with reading difficulties.

Principals at most of the six study schools all said that the literacy support specialist follows the prescribed program for the Literacy Support Plan. They provide one-on-one instruction as well as literacy groups. The literacy support model may vary for campuses with a Reading Recovery teacher funded by sources other than the local budget (most indicated Title I funds). Govalle had one position that was shared by two teachers. The teachers shared a first grade classroom and taught Reading Recovery the other half of the day. The drawback of this model, according to the teachers, was that they did not get to work with literacy groups.

Houston had a Reading Recovery teacher who worked three-quarters time and was bridging to Spanish (she was already trained in Reading Recovery). As a requirement of her training, she had to work one-on-one with both English and Spanish speaking students, which reduced the number of Spanish-speaking students she could serve.

Some additional duties of the literacy support specialist according to principals include:

- Help identify the most at-risk students and provide intervention services.
- Support the staff in reading diagnostics.
- Help establish a literacy library.
- Work with the teachers on literacy concerns.
- Model guided reading.
- Participate in parent-teacher conferences.
- Provide balanced literacy training to campus teachers.

### Coverage

Principals were asked if the literacy support program provided adequate coverage for students who needed intervention at their campuses. The tier 3 (Bryker Woods and Highland Park) principals indicated that that the coverage was adequate with the 1999-2000 population. Although the LEP population was small, future LEP students would benefit from this type of intervention, according to the Bryker Woods principal.

The principal of Govalle said that a big concern was for Spanish-speaking students, especially those that must transition to English in the upper grades. At Graham, there was no DLL trained teacher to support students with reading in bilingual classrooms.

The Houston principal said that that they need more DLL coverage. She is pleased that the district decided to no longer require DLL teachers to train in English and then transition to Spanish. She said that Houston needs more coverage for third grade. They decided not to serve third grade because the need was so great at the lower grades. They had 900 students in 1999-2000 with a large percentage of low-income students. She says, "The 2 3/4 teachers do not cover the need."

The Widen principal was new to AISD in 1999-2000, having previously worked in Dallas ISD. She was impressed with the district's Literacy Support Plan. She said that Widen needs another bilingual teacher to meet the needs of students.

### Impact on Reading

According to the Bryker Woods principal, "The presence of the literacy support specialist has facilitated a dialogue about reading instruction." He thinks the program has improved discussion and expectations.

The literacy support program has had a positive impact at Govalle, according to the principal. The program provides data for the low-achieving students to allow for tracking their progress. She added that the Reading Recovery teachers model guided reading to classroom teachers and support their efforts.

At Graham, the literacy support program has provided more support to students who are struggling, the principal said. The running records and observations of the Reading Recovery teachers help with diagnosis of learning disabilities.

The Highland Park principal said that there is "not a high evidence" of classroom usage of the balanced literacy approaches. She added that the literacy support specialist "has modeled uses in some classrooms and the teachers seem to like it."

The Houston principal says that the program has "tremendously" impacted her campus. The Reading Recovery teachers model guided reading with teachers, look at classroom strategies, and help teachers with what they need to know to help students be successful. "One-on-one makes sense," she added.

At Widen, over 70% of the students were below grade level at the beginning of the year. The principal said, "Without Reading Recovery, Widen would not be able to bring students as far as they need to go."

### Other Campus-wide Initiatives

All six campuses visited had literacy libraries, which were established by Reading Recovery teachers. The literacy libraries varied in size from a few leveled books in the back of the library (Bryker Woods) to elaborate libraries with color-coded systems of leveling (Govalle, Houston, and Widen). The campuses had different funding sources for the literacy libraries such as the local Excel grant, state and federal grants, and Title I funds.

Balanced literacy is a districtwide initiative and is used at all six campuses. Principals said that it was being implemented to varying degrees. Early childhood teachers were using the model, but the upper grades were not as comfortable with balanced literacy centers, they said. At Graham, Academics 2000 grant monies provided for balanced literacy training for two kindergarten and one first grade teacher to improve reading instruction.

At Houston, balanced literacy is across all grades through grade 5. All teachers have access to the leveled books. The DRA, purchased by the district, helps teachers have "a common language" about reading levels, according to the principal. Teachers at Houston also use student-driven literature circles, which is a type of interest group. Students choose books and discuss them in groups.

Widen teachers use Marie Carbo's *Learning Styles* (which stresses individual learning styles) campus-wide. This program goes hand-in-hand with balanced literacy, according to the principal.

### Strengths of the Program

While Bryker Woods had not had a complete year with the program at the time of the visit, the principal said that it is making a difference for struggling students. All of the principals appreciate the district support in reading intervention. The program provides continuing support to second and third grade students. According to the Houston principal, the literacy support

program provides a focus for language arts instruction. Comments by principals include the following:

- The Reading Recovery teacher is a partner for the primary classroom teachers, especially the new teachers.
- The model provides one-on-one intervention and on-going assessment.
- The expertise of the Reading Recovery teachers benefits the entire campus.
- The program acknowledges the children's difficulty reading.
- Different methods are used for reading instruction.
- The individual planning and record keeping help drive instruction.
- Children need constant reinforcement. They are prodded to succeed.
- The program lays the foundation for academics.
- The district support is great.
- The program provides ongoing support for students.
- The literacy support program provides a common language for teachers.
- The program helps keep kids out of special education.

### Suggestions for Improvement

More funding for additional teachers and more teaching materials were mentioned by all principals as suggestions for improving the literacy support program. One principal said the district should reevaluate the funding formula because lower socio-economic schools have a need for more positions. Additional reading support for the upper grades was also mentioned as a need by principals.

The principal of Houston said, "Because the Houston campus is so large (900 students), and so many of the students are from low-income families, the need is great. Because the research shows that the small school provides the best learning environment, Houston students have another disadvantage," she said. The principal added that $1,600 less was spent per Houston student than per Ridgetop student (300 students) in 1998-99. She believes that this is unfair to Houston students. Additional reading specialists, both English and Spanish, are needed at Houston, according to the principal.

The Govalle and Widen principals also expressed the need for more Spanish reading intervention at their campuses. The Govalle principal said that perhaps Govalle could share an additional teacher with another campus or share funding with the district for a full time Reading Recovery teacher.

**Professional development is an integral part of the Literacy Support Plan. The literacy support specialist is trained in Reading Recovery and is considered an in-house reading expert for classroom teachers.**

## LITERACY SUPPORT SPECIALIST INTERVIEWS

*Literacy support specialist* is the title assigned to the Reading Recovery trained teacher who is funded by the district at each of the elementary campuses. All Reading Recovery teachers, were interviewed at the six study campuses to get an idea of how the district's use of the

literacy support model impacts student literacy learning. In this summary of interviews, the term literacy support specialist will refer to all Reading Recovery teachers in AISD. Fifteen literacy support specialists from the six study schools were interviewed for their insight about the Literacy Support Plan.

### Identification and Intervention

Literacy support specialists began the year by helping first grade teachers do a ranking of their students based on literacy skills to identify the lowest one-third of the class. Teachers were encouraged to use assessment tools such as the kindergarten ranking list, observation, PALM, DRA, or other assessments. The literacy support specialist tested the identified students with the *Observation Survey* to determine which students should receive Reading Recovery in the first round (first 20 weeks of school). Other factors to be considered for eligibility included attendance in kindergarten and home language. Each teacher takes four students for Reading Recovery and places the next group of students in literacy groups (two first grade groups of 4-5 students).

The literacy support model also requires that there be two other literacy groups available for kindergarten, grade 2, and grade 3 students. One literacy group is designed to serve second (12-13 weeks), third (12-13 weeks), and kindergarten students (8-9 weeks). The focus of the other literacy group is determined at the campus based on student need. One of the study schools, Houston, varied from the model because of the great need at grades 1 and 2. The principal made the choice not to serve third grade students because she did not want to drop second grade students who were not on grade level to pick up third graders. In addition, kindergarten students at Houston did not participate in literacy groups although the kindergarten classes have an aide who was a qualified teacher from another state.

When students *discontinue* (read on grade level), another student is selected for Reading Recovery. If he/she was in a literacy group, a place opens up in the group for another student. Literacy support specialists do ongoing assessment to determine reading level and fluency. The process is very fluid with students moving in and out of the classroom, Reading Recovery, and literacy groups as needs are determined and met. Teachers said students who were discontinued or exited (20 weeks without reaching grade level) in the fall, can be supported in the literacy groups the second semester. Teachers have the advantage of having access to reading assessment for students who transfer from other AISD schools. Because each of the schools has the literacy support program, teachers can have reading level information in a few days, and the student can be placed in reading intervention when space is available.

Literacy support specialists said that most of their communication with classroom teachers is verbal and usually informal. At Graham, there is a “care team” for some of the students that meets to discuss concerns and strategies for helping the student. All of the literacy support specialists reported sending letters to parents, calling to report progress, inviting parents to observe in class, and attending parent-teacher conferences to share information with the parents about their child’s reading progress. Literacy support specialists send home books each night for students to read with their parents and include a form for parents to sign off on after they have listened to the child read.

### Coverage

The literacy support specialists, classroom teachers, and principals at Title I schools agreed that the coverage for Spanish speaking students was inadequate. Literacy support specialists also expressed concern for coverage of the third grade. Even at Bryker Woods, a tier 3 campus, there is concern that Spanish instruction will be needed because of the makeup of the 1999-2000 kindergarten class. Students are encouraged to attend S.O.A.R. or the bilingual summer school to continue their reading growth.

The coverage should be about 20%, according to literacy support specialists. In 1999-2000, the coverage was 15-18% at Widen (three Reading Recovery teachers). One of the teachers said it would be her dream to have 50% coverage.

### Professional Development

Professional development is an integral part of the Literacy Support Plan. One of the new literacy support specialists describes her Reading Recovery training as follows: "Currently, I am receiving training in behind-the-glass activities. I go for three hours each Wednesday after school. We observe each other modeling an activity. At the end of the observation, we critique and debrief each other on the activity. We look up case references in the Marie Clay guide. In the behind-the-glass modeling, which happens twice each week, teachers in training take turns demonstrating Reading Recovery strategies with students while the other teachers look on and discuss the strategies used. The behind-the-glass is an excellent learning tool. I attend literacy support training once per month. Also, we do colleague observations twice per year as part of our literacy support specialist training. Language arts personnel present ideas for literacy groups. I think the literacy support training is great."

Some of the experienced Reading Recovery teachers said they felt that more training was needed for literacy groups. There is no exact model to follow, they said. Literacy support specialists were trained in the literacy group model the year that the program was implemented at their school. For teachers who were trained the first year, they did not benefit from training the next two years. Overall, literacy support teachers said that principals and teacher leaders had provided "great support."

### Campus Literacy Responsibilities

As one teacher said, the "Reading Recovery teachers are considered in-house experts and do many campus-wide duties regarding literacy." The following list includes some of the additional campus-wide duties of the literacy support specialists.

- Level books and organize a literacy library.
- Maintain, order, and inventory literacy library.
- Provide running record training for the campus teachers.
- Read and share instructional books on guided reading with classroom teachers.
- Volunteer to assist teachers when they have students that are struggling in specific skill areas.
- Team teach with a new third grade teacher at the beginning of the year.
- Attend continuing contact five times each year.
- Provide balanced literacy training for campus teachers.
- Make recommendations for students to attend summer school.

- Work with parent programs (such as KLRU Family Literacy) and provide training for parents.

At some of the campuses, the teacher turnover rate was high, which the literacy support teachers say affects the literacy learning at their campus. Many of the literacy support specialists indicated that they have modeled guided reading for new teachers.

### Strengths of the Program

According to one teacher, "This program is giving kids a foundation." Literacy support specialists said that they appreciate the support of the principal and staff. The program helps teachers work together to help children learn to read. "We are able to target students who are not low enough for resource, who just need a boost," said one teacher. Other strengths listed by the literacy support specialists include the following:

- The training received and the continuing contact with the teacher leaders make this a strong program.
- Instruction is individualized for the child.
- The availability of leveled texts makes this program strong.
- The kids really enjoy coming. They feel comfortable about their ability in the small groups.
- Daily assessment helps teachers adjust instruction.
- Students read with a skilled adult every day.
- This is a team program that involves the whole school.
- The program has a great impact on the first grade.

### Suggestions for Improving the Program

Most of the literacy support specialists interviewed said that they would like to have more opportunities to share experiences and observe at other schools. They believe that all elementary classroom teachers should use the balanced literacy approach. Several literacy support specialists said that principals should not pull literacy support teachers to do other duties. Other comments about making the program stronger include the following:

- Need another DLL teacher (Graham, Houston, Widen).
- Continue training and contact with the teacher leaders.
- Share more ideas with classroom teachers.
- Work with grade 4 and 5 teachers to provide reading support.
- Increase individual reading time.
- Promote Family Reading nights.
- Need more leveled books in English and Spanish.
- Receive more information from conferences attended by the teacher leaders.

Literacy support specialists at Houston reiterated that the schools with the greatest need should be given more locally funded literacy support specialists. If the size of the school is large and the percentage of low-income and LEP students is high, an additional literacy support specialist should be justified.

> In a strong literacy support program, there is a connection between classroom learning and Reading Recovery (i.e., balanced literacy). Training uses reading and writing connection. Assessment is ongoing and instruction is modified based on assessment. - Teacher Leaders -

### Reading Recovery Teacher Leader Interviews

In 1999-2000, the third year of the implementation plan, there were three Reading Recovery teacher leaders and one teacher leader in training at TWU. Prior to the Literacy Support Plan, the Reading Recovery teachers in the district were only at Title I campuses. The teachers followed the Reading Recovery guidelines for half of the day and worked with four students one-on-one. The other half of the day they were under the direction of the Title I coordinator. According to one teacher leader, there was no consistent plan for serving other students.

In 1996-97, the AISD curriculum director began formulating a plan to have a Reading Recovery teacher at each elementary campus that would serve more children than Reading Recovery alone. A nationwide consultant, Susan Paynter, who had been trained in the *Arkansas Comprehensive Literacy Model*, was asked to assist with the design that would include Reading Recovery and literacy support groups. After Board approval in summer 1997, the Literacy Support Plan began with the first tier of schools in 1997-98.

After the completion of the third year of the plan, the teacher leaders were asked if the implementation went as planned. All of the teacher leaders believe that the plan has worked well. They are still working on improvements to the plan. It has worked well at Allan Elementary, for example, where two additional Reading Recovery teachers are funded by Title I. "All children in first grade at Allan who are in need of intervention have been helped, but this is not true at all schools," according to one teacher leader. The plan has made a difference in the number of students served by Reading Recovery teachers, they say.

### Characteristics of a Strong Literacy Support Program

The teacher leaders were asked to list the characteristics of a strong literacy support program. Their list of characteristics include the following:

- There is a connection between classroom learning and Reading Recovery (i.e., balanced literacy).
- Training uses reading and writing connection.
- Assessment is ongoing. Instruction is modified based on assessment.
- There is reading instruction from the teacher every day.
- There are components of balanced literacy in the classroom.
- The teacher is engaged in teaching reading.
- Teachers have a full conceptual framework of literacy K-3 continuum of learning.
- Teachers have knowledge of different learning styles.
- There is support for the classroom teacher.
- The literacy support offered is supplemental to classroom reading instruction, not in place of classroom instruction.

- The literacy support specialist has a strong two-way communication with teachers.
- The literacy support specialist expresses/demonstrates willingness to help other teachers.
- The literacy support specialist helps establish a literacy library.
- The literacy support specialist is an advocate for every student in need.

### Balanced Literacy

AISD does not require balanced literacy training even though it is a districtwide initiative. Schools are talking about balanced literacy and seeing the value of it, according to one teacher leader. Balanced literacy training is a perfect match for Reading Recovery, one teacher leader said. Classroom teachers can be trained in techniques that enhance and support reading.

One teacher leader believes that about 75% of kindergarten through grade 3 teachers are using some components of balanced literacy. However, " not very many of them are highly effective with it yet," she added. The LearningWalk© that is part of the new district initiative, *Institute for Learning*, should help the whole process, she said. The persons evaluating have to go to the child to check for understanding. "Changes have to start at the principal level because she/he is the academic leader of the campus," she added.

### Coverage

Teacher leaders agree that the coverage for all students who need reading intervention is not adequate, especially for the schools with the greatest need. As a rule, a typical coverage is described as 20% of the first grade. This works out to one Reading Recovery teacher for every 40-45 first grade students. However, many schools have a greater need than this–maybe 40% or more in need, according to one teacher leader.

According to the teacher leaders, the equity issue is real. High poverty areas need top teachers in the classrooms and higher coverage for Reading Recovery. It is important to assess the needs of the campus and customize the service. Contrary to some beliefs, one teacher leader added, tier 2 and 3 schools are also needy, and may not have other funds to supplement this program and others.

### Other Initiatives

The Reading Recovery teacher leaders helped develop the S.O.A.R. model. S.O.A.R. is very consistent with the Literacy Support Plan, they said. The teacher leaders help identify students for S.O.A.R. Many of the literacy support specialists have taught in S.O.A.R. According to one teacher leader, "The collaboration with teachers from different schools helps teachers get better and children learn. These teachers can be a catalyst for change at their home school."

The state *Student Success Initiative* provided funds for reading intervention for kindergarten students in 1999-2000. AISD used the funds for S.O.A.R. for those kindergarten students identified as needing reading intervention. Teacher leaders say that the Literacy Support Plan was designed to support kindergarten students at the end of the year. These students would then go on the S.O.A.R. for summer school. With these two interventions, the teacher leaders think that students will be stronger in first grade. The teacher leaders have worked more with

phonemic awareness in the training for the literacy support specialists to support kindergarten strategies.

### Future Needs

The teacher leaders said that changes and improvements are still being made to the program. For example, a change for 2000-01 involves ongoing training. Each of the three years of the implementation process, only the new literacy support specialists have been trained. A lot has been learned since the first year, they said. In 2000-01, teacher leaders will have all the literacy support specialists come to the six training sessions. At the training, teachers will divide into groups of about 20 to share and learn from each other.

Teacher leaders will continue to teach new Reading Recovery teachers and support trained teachers. Reading Recovery and DLL teachers attend a graduate level course called *Balanced Literacy for English and Bilingual Teachers,* which is taught by the teacher leaders. In 1999-2000, they had 31 complete the fall course and 29 complete the spring course.

Teacher leaders are also required to teach two Reading Recovery students during the year. They meet with principals each year. They have goal-setting meetings with the principal, teacher, and teacher leader, and then meet at the end of the year to see if the goals were met. In addition, the teacher leaders are part of the language arts team.

Teacher leaders would like to have more Reading Recovery teachers and better coverage. They would also like to have another teacher leader. One teacher leader retired at the end of year so they have only three teacher leaders in 2000-01. The program is growing because two new schools opened in fall 2000.

> "We are creating specialists for children. We are creating specialists for teachers. There is a ripple effect of this training. The teacher leaders provide training for the teachers and the teachers provide workshops at their campuses for classroom teachers to further educate teachers about balanced literacy."
> -Terry Ross, Administrative Supervisor for Language and Literacy, 1999-2000-

### Administrative Supervisor for Language and Literacy

In 1999-2000, Terry Ross was the administrative supervisor for language and literacy and was interviewed about the impact of the Literacy Support Plan. She says that the Literacy Support Plan is working "exactly as envisioned." The goal was to give a Reading Recovery trained person to each campus who could function as a literacy specialist. "Now we have more reading specialists in the elementary schools," she added.

The strength of the program design is the training provided for Reading Recovery teachers, according to Ms. Ross. "We are creating specialists for children." The four teacher leaders divide the schools and each works with a group of teachers mentoring, modeling, and supporting. They supervise, problem-solve, and assess. They provide on-the-job training. Teacher leaders also work with two Reading Recovery students during the year, which keeps them in touch with the students, she added. "There is a ripple effect of this training. The teacher leaders provide training for the teachers and the teachers provide workshops at their campuses for classroom teachers to further educate teachers about balanced literacy," according to Ms. Ross.

She believes that, if classroom teachers use appropriate literacy strategies, the impact with students will be positive.

### Weaknesses of the Program Design

Ms. Ross is in agreement with others who were interviewed that the high need schools cannot provide coverage with one Reading Recovery teacher. It would be a good idea to factor poverty of students and size of campus into a formula to decide how many Reading Recovery teachers are needed at the campuses most in need. However, the district budget has to be considered, she added.

Reading Recovery is *not the answer* for high needs schools, according to Ms. Ross. The schools need school reform initiatives. A strong instructional program is needed. Teachers need more understanding of the theory--what works in the classroom, she added. If there is not strong classroom reading instruction, then the literacy support program is not as successful.

Teacher leaders are constantly looking for ways to improve the training, Ms. Ross said. One of the teacher leaders worked with a literacy group to better understand the questions of the Reading Recovery teachers. The teacher leaders have determined that the third grade literacy group structure needs help because the Reading Recovery teachers are not used to working with this level students, according to Ms. Ross.

Ms. Ross agreed with others interviewed that the schools need more DLL coverage. Some schools do not have a trained DLL teacher, and other schools need more DLL trained teachers to meet the need.

There are many needs specific to students at different campuses. While the population of the district is large and diverse, Ms. Ross said that there is more support and training in AISD for literacy learning than in other nearby districts.

### Parent Comments

Literacy support specialists sent home a questionnaire with parents at the end of the year to get their comments about the program. Some of these comments include:

- "I am so grateful for this program. My son went from not reading at all to reading in a matter of weeks." - Bryker Woods parent
- "My child is reading better and better each day. She's determined to read her books every day." - Graham parent
- "Everything improved drastically when he started Reading Recovery." - Highland Park parent
- "He feels more confident now when he reads." - Houston parent

# APPENDICES

## Appendix A: Review of Reading Intervention Literature

A devastatingly large number of people in America cannot read as well as they need to read for success in life (Burns & Snow, 1999). Large numbers of school-age children, including children from all economic levels, face difficulties in learning to read. Failure to read adequately for continued school success is especially likely among poor children, among children who are members of racial minority groups, and among those whose native language is not English (Burns & Snow, 1999). Despite progress over the past 15-20 years, Hispanic students in the United States are about twice as likely as non-Hispanic whites to read well below average for their age.

In 1994, 44% of grade 4 students performed below the "basic" level on the *National Assessment of Educational Progress* (NAEP). An additional 10% of grade 4 students did not participate in the NAEP because they could not read well enough to take it. According to the National Center to Improve the Tools of Educators (1996), reading failure is not concentrated among specific groups of students. Students who have difficulty reading represent a "virtual cross-section of American children" including "rich and poor, male and female, rural and urban, and public and private school children in all sections of the country." Thirty-two percent of fourth graders whose parents graduated from college read below basic level on the 1994 NAEP. According to the National Research Council (1998), "children who need additional support for early language and literacy development should receive it as early as possible."

The past decade has brought major breakthroughs in the knowledge of how children learn to read and why so many fail (National Research Council, 1998). Children who do not learn to read well in the first and second grades are likely to struggle with reading throughout their lives (National Center to Improve the Tools of Educators, 1996). Teaching students to read by the end of the third grade is the single most important task assigned to our schools. Starting in fourth grade, schooling takes on a different purpose, one that is more complex and that demands higher-order thinking skills. Without efficient reading skills the English language, history, mathematics, current events, and the enriching experiences of literature and science become inaccessible to students.

### Implications for Instruction

A statement from the International Reading Association (IRA) in 2000 reads, "We must ensure that all children receive the excellent instruction and support they need to learn to read and write." Schools face enormous challenges in teaching all children to read and write including poverty, stress on families, increasing diversity in the school-age population, and teacher shortages. Suggestions for meeting these challenges include making classrooms places where many professionals interact to help each child learn. In addition, investments must be made in professional development, reading materials, and education research. "We must also invest in preparing reading specialists who (in addition to teaching children) can support other teachers and guide reform efforts" (IRA, 2000).

If children are having difficulty in first grade reading achievement, their classrooms should be examined to see if they need improvement (Burns, Griffin, & Snow, 1999). Burns and colleagues (1999) also assert that if their classroom instruction is appropriate but they are having difficulty in reading achievement, they should immediately receive supplementary reading assistance with one-on-one tutoring by a well-qualified reading instructor. Further, the authors

add that in order to be effective, tutoring sessions should be integrated with what the child is learning and doing in the classroom.

The problems many children encounter in learning to read could be prevented with excellent instruction and an early exposure to language skills and rich literature, according to a report by the National Research Council (NRC), *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children* (1998*)*. This well-received report recommends that children learn to read through explicit phonics instruction and by sounding out unfamiliar words, but it also urges daily exposure to literature and attention to comprehension. The teaching of reading, according to the NRC, must encompass an integration of techniques that develop phonemic awareness, reading fluency, and comprehension throughout early childhood, and cannot rely on one method of instruction.

According to Louisa Moats (1999), teaching reading is a job for an expert. Learning to read is a complex linguistic achievement. For many children, it requires effort and incremental skill development. In addition, Moats states that teaching reading requires considerable knowledge and skill, acquired over many years of focused study and supervised practice.

It is important to consider the classroom demands of the teacher who teaches reading (Moats, 1999). "Children's interest in reading must be stimulated through regular exposure to interesting books and through discussions in which students respond to many kinds of texts. For best results, the teacher must instruct most students directly, systematically, and explicitly to decipher words in print, all the while keeping in mind the ultimate purpose of reading, which is to learn, enjoy, and understand. To accommodate children's variability, the teacher must assess children and tailor lessons to individuals. She must interpret errors, give corrective feedback, select examples to illustrate concepts, explain new ideas in several ways, and connect linguistic symbols with reading and writing. No one can develop such expertise by taking one or two college courses, or attending a few inservice workshops."

To promote reading success for all children, teachers need to be highly skilled in reading techniques and strategies (Manzo & Sack, 1997). Extensive teacher training is essential to children learning to read. Most elementary teachers have little formal training in the structure of the language and in how children learn to read. According to Robert Slavin, a researcher at Johns Hopkins University and creator of Success for All, "In a sense, there is an enormous retooling job to be done to bring teachers of beginning reading up to the current conception" of how to teach reading (Manzo & Sack, 1997).

### READING INTERVENTIONS

There is increased interest in preventing reading problems before they develop and in engaging young children in activities that will enable them to be successful readers in the early grades. According to Diana Quatroche (1999), the characteristics of a successful intervention program include the following practices:

- one-on-one and small-group tutoring;
- individual attention and extra instructional time;
- coordination with regular classroom instruction;
- explicit instruction in letter-sound relationships, word identification strategies, phonological awareness, letters, words, and work patterns;

- repeated exposure to words to encourage mastery and the presentation of words in small practice sets to provide scaffolding for struggling readers;
- explicit instruction in techniques that will improve reading comprehension; and
- multiple opportunities for repeated reading of connected texts to develop fluency.

While there is no one best method that can be identified, nor is there consensus on one definition of a struggling reader, teachers must be aware of a child's background (social, economic, and cultural) and individual learning style (Foretsch, 1997). According to Foretsch, the following factors are critical to providing supportive environments for all readers, but particularly struggling readers:

- access and opportunity to read a wide variety of materials;
- motivation to want to read and to want to engage in reading;
- time to read in real texts;
- supportive instruction in the "how-tos" of reading;
- self-esteem and confidence, which play integral roles in successful reading development; and
- high expectations for success in supported environments.

In *Program Under Construction* (Aldridge, 1998), an example of an early literacy program model includes extended day kindergarten, embedded staff development, peer support for all staff, Reading Recovery, flexible grouping within guided reading, ongoing assessment, a literacy intervention team, a parent involvement coordinator, standards, and a local research design to measure growth. According to Aldridge (1998), the program is always "under construction," which means those who are delivering the program also are always thinking about what is best for students, and how to have schools and programs "where everyone is invested in growing and learning."

In a review of research literature, Pikulski (1997) indicated that there are at least five early reading intervention programs that have documented effectiveness. Schoolwide programs include Success for All and Winston-Salem Project; and pullout programs include Boulder Program, Reading Recovery, and Early Intervention in Reading Program. All five programs clearly acknowledge that the small-group or individual early intervention instruction that students receive is in addition to, not a substitute for, the instruction they receive as part of the regular classroom program.

### Reading Recovery

Reading Recovery is an early intervention program designed by Marie M. Clay (1979, 1985) to assist children in first grade who are having difficulty learning to read and write. The goal of Reading Recovery is to accelerate learning. Children are expected to make faster than average progress to catch up with other children in their class (Swartz & Klein, 1997). Reading Recovery is supplemental to classroom instruction and lasts an average of 12-20 weeks.

The Reading Recovery program was based upon longitudinal studies of beginning readers and writers (Clay, 1993; DeFord, Pinnell, Lyons, & Place, 1990). Reading Recovery teachers keep extensive documentation of each child's performance and progress and of their own teaching actions and decisions. Because everyone involved in Reading Recovery continues to teach children at least some of the time, a vast reservoir of shared understanding of early literacy

has developed (Clay 1993; DeFord, Lyons, & Pinnell, 1991; Lyons, Pinnell, & DeFord, 1993; Pinnell, 1990). From the time that a child enters the program, teachers work to encourage the child's initiative and independence in learning (Clay, 1991).

Reading Recovery is embraced by both phonics and whole-language advocates as an effective reading program (Levine, 1994). Reading Recovery combines quick, accessible phonics instruction with whole-language activities. The early reading intervention effort, designed by Marie Clay, began as a nationwide program in New Zealand in 1979 (Pinnell, DeFord, & Lyons, 1988).

Successful readers learn a system of behaviors, which continues to accumulate skills merely because it operates (Clay, 1993). Reading efforts often fail for lack of experienced teaching and for lack of persistence and continuity of efforts. According to Marie Clay, reading interventions often fail because they are begun too late.

The *Observation Survey* was developed by Marie Clay to provide a method for systematic observation and recording of children's behavior when reading. The *Observation Survey* introduces teachers to ways of observing children's progress in the early years of learning about literacy, and leads to the selection of children for whom supplementary teaching is essential (Clay, 1993). Three steps to prevention of reading and writing difficulties for students includes the following, according to Clay:

- a good preschool experience;
- good curriculum for literacy learning in the early years of school; and
- an early intervention for children who are being left behind by fast-learning classmates.

There is a wealth of research about Reading Recovery, though findings and viewpoints are mixed. In the publication, *Reading Recovery Review: Understandings, Outcomes, and Implications*, Askew, Fountas, Lyons, Pinnell, and Schmitt (1998) present a review of Reading Recovery Studies and a response to issues of program integrity. Some of the research summarized in *Reading Recovery: An Evaluation of Benefits and Costs* (Glynn, Coulter, & Ruggles, 1996) questions the Reading Recovery data reporting system (Shanahan & Barr, 1995), the number of students who actually benefit from Reading Recovery and the rationale that Reading Recovery reduces the need for other compensatory reading services (Pollack, 1994), its cost effectiveness, and whether there are sustained effects over time (Glynn, Crooks, Bethune, Ballard, & Smith, 1989). According to Grossen, Coulter, and Ruggles (1996), close alignment of the research design, the measure, and the program, along with data collection procedures that are controlled within the Reading Recovery implementation system, creates and increases potential for bias in the evaluation results. In 1999-2000, in response to these questions, Reading Recovery began including all students who received Reading Recovery in the national data set (unlike the early days of Reading Recovery when only students with a program of 60 lessons were included).

Because of the increasing popularity of Reading Recovery and its expense, more independent evaluators are raising questions that Reading Recovery is not the single answer to literacy problems (Opitz, 1991). According to Michael Opitz, Reading Recovery should not be considered "a miracle cure, but rather a promising program that can be directly related to the effort expended by various members of the education system."

Despite the controversies regarding the efficacy of Reading Recovery, a number of intervention programs owe their design features to it (National Research Council). For example, running records, the systematic notation system of the teacher's observations of the child's processing of new text designed by Marie Clay, are used by many other intervention programs. According to the NRC, two important lessons that can be learned from the Reading Recovery program are:

- The program demonstrates that in order to approach reading instruction with a deep and principled understanding of the reading process and its implications for instruction, teachers need opportunities for sustained professional development.
- It is nothing short of foolhardy to make enormous investments in remedial instruction and then return children to classroom instruction that will not serve to maintain the gains they made in the remedial program.

### Literacy Groups

Because it is difficult to serve all children who need early reading intervention through one-on-one tutoring, the idea of working with low-achieving children in groups has emerged (Dorn & Allen, 1995). Some schools have designed their literacy programs to include Reading Recovery and small literacy groups that utilize the expertise of the Reading Recovery teacher. This also addresses the issue of cost-effectiveness.

According to Dorn & Allen (1995), Reading Recovery has a reported history of successfully helping children who are experiencing early reading difficulties. The theoretical principles that support Marie Clay's Reading Recovery program can be used for instructional practices with small groups of low-achieving children, as well as instruction for all beginning readers. According to Dorn & Allen, the Reading Recovery principles include: "observing children as they engage in reading and writing activities; using children's known concepts as a basis for teaching unknown concepts; employing a variety of 'real' books and writing experiences to help children learn to read; accelerating children's literacy processes by providing balanced opportunities for independent and assisted learning; and focusing instructional interactions at a strategic problem-solving level."

Reading Recovery is the AISD districtwide reading intervention initiative. The Literacy Support Plan, adopted by the AISD Board of Trustees, describes the implementation of a plan to provide a Reading Recovery teacher to each elementary campus. The Reading Recovery trained teacher is a literacy support specialist who conducts small literacy support groups of kindergarten through grade 3 students in addition to Reading Recovery requirements. The Literacy Support Plan was based on the *Arkansas Comprehensive Literacy Model*, which originated at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock.

In 1991-92, the *Arkansas Comprehensive Literacy Model* was piloted in four Arkansas schools in which Reading Recovery programs were already in operation (Dorn & Allen, 1995). The program originated from Arkansas Reading Recovery educators' concerns about the high numbers of low-achieving children in the State of Arkansas. The fear was that the children unable to enter Reading Recovery in the first semester of first grade would fall farther behind in the regular classroom. Under the pilot program, the lowest achieving first grade students would receive Reading Recovery interventions. Children who were placed on a waiting list due to lack

of space received small-group instruction from Reading Recovery teachers. Each Reading Recovery teacher provided individual instruction to five students and taught two literacy groups of five students each on a daily basis.

At the end of the pilot year, preliminary results indicated that schools using the Reading Recovery/Early Literacy program were able to serve and successfully discontinue greater numbers of children than were schools without the small-group intervention. While the authors acknowledge that the one-on-one tutoring of Reading Recovering is the most effective intervention, they state that the purpose of the small group program was to provide support for low-achieving children unable to receive Reading Recovery at a crucial time in their reading development (Dorn & Allen). The findings indicate that the small-group program enabled Reading Recovery teachers to provide support to a large number of these children. In addition, about 30% of children who participated in the small groups reached average levels without Reading Recovery, which allowed Reading Recovery teachers to focus one-on-one instruction on the first grade students most in need of reading intervention.

### Early Literacy Initiatives in Texas

In January 1996, then-Governor George W. Bush issued a challenge to the citizens of Texas stating that all Texas children were to read at or above grade level by the end of third grade. The *Texas Reading Initiative* was created to help organize educators, parents, state officials, business people, and other community members as they worked to meet the Governor's challenge. The goal of the *Texas Reading Initiative* is for all students to read on grade level by the end of grade 3, and to continue to read on grade level throughout their schooling. In May 1999, the 76$^{th}$ Texas Legislature created even more urgency for success in reading, when it passed legislation that would require students, beginning in 2003, to pass TAAS reading at grades 3 and 5 to be promoted to the following grades.

The book, *Apprenticeship in Literacy: Transitions Across Reading and Writing* (Dorn, French, Jones, 1999), states emphatically, "Literacy must be viewed through a wide angle lens. It takes many dedicated people working together to ensure every child's right to literacy. A single program or a single teacher cannot bring about comprehensive changes within the school."

The importance of teachers working together as a team of educators whose goal is to support the total child cannot be understated (Dorn, et al.,). Teams of teachers with a common goal can do much more than an individual teacher working alone. Teachers must be knowledgeable about learning theory and effective literacy practices for working with young children. According to Dorn, et al., "Systemic change lies in our understanding of how our children learn and in our ability to problem solve with colleagues who work with our children, who share our common experiences, and who speak our language of literacy."

In Texas, as in the rest of the country, teaching reading presents a great challenge. A quote by Marilyn Haring in the *Purdue News* (April 1998) summarizes the issue: *"Literacy is THE most important skill we teach, and it should be taught early and well. It is the key to every student's future success in school. To help our children achieve the proficiency they need, it is our responsibility to use any proven method available to us."*

## Appendix B: Literacy Support Plan Implementation, by Tier

### Tier 1 Schools (1997-98 Implementation)

Allan
Allison
Becker
Blackshear
Boone
Brooke
Brown
Campbell
Cook
Govalle
Harris
Houston
Jordan
Linder
Metz
Norman
Oak Hill
Oak Springs
Ridgetop
Sims
Sunset Valley
Travis heights
Zavala

### Tier 2 Schools (1998-99 Implementation)

Andrews
Barrington
Blanton
Dawson
Galindo
Graham
Hart
Joslin
Langford
Maplewood
Odom
Ortega
Palm
Pecan Springs
Pleasant Hill
Reilly
Sanchez
St. Elmo
Walnut Creek
Widen
Winn
Wooldridge
Wooten
Zilker

### Tier 3 Schools (1999-2000 Implementation)

Baranoff
Barton Hills
Brentwood
Bryker Woods
Casey
Casis
Cunningham
Davis
Doss
Gullett
Highland Park
Hill
Kiker
Kocurek
Lee
Mathews
Mechaca
Mills
Patton
Pease
Pillow
Rodriguez
Summitt
Williams

## Appendix C: Description of the Literacy Support Model

### Role of Literacy Support Specialist:

The literacy support specialist is trained in Reading Recovery and instructs students in the following types of reading intervention:

Reading Recovery:

- Works with 4 children individually
- Serves approximately 8 students during the year

Literacy Group

- Group instruction for kindergarten through grade 3 students
- Grade 1 – two groups all year
- Grade 2, Grade 3, and kindergarten – one time slot rotates

### Structure of the Literacy Groups

First Grade Group

- Children from Reading Recovery student selection list
- Children from groups may go into Reading Recovery
- Four or five students per group
- 30-45 minutes daily
- Two first grade groups served daily

Second Grade Maintenance Group for Schools Continuing with Reading Recovery

- Former *discontinued* Reading Recovery students and children with incomplete programs
- Four or five students per group
- 30 minutes daily
- Approximately 12-13 weeks

Second Grade Groups Beginning to Implement Reading Recovery

- Four or five children per group
- 30 minutes daily
- Approximately 12-15 weeks

Third Grade Maintenance Groups for Schools Continuing with Reading Recovery

- Replaces second grade group slot with former *discontinued* Reading Recovery students or children with incomplete programs
- Four or five children per group
- 30 Minutes daily
- Approximately 12-13 weeks

Third Grade Groups Beginning to Implement Reading Recovery

- Replaces second grade group slot
- Four or five children per group
- 30 minutes daily
- Approximately 12-15 weeks

Kindergarten Emergent Literacy Groups

- Replaces third grade group slot
- Four or five children per group
- Meets at least 30 minutes daily
- Approximately 8-9 weeks in length

## Assessment

Measures of the Observation Survey found in Marie Clay's book, *An Observation of Early Literacy Achievement*, are listed below. Spanish varies only in number of items for some tasks.

1. *Letter Identification* - Children are asked to identify 54 characters, including upper and lower case standard letters.
2. *Word Test*- Children read a list of 20 high-frequency words.
3. *Concepts about Print* – Children are asked to respond to a variety of tasks as the tester reads a book. The tasks represent book handling concepts, as well as concepts about printer language.
4. *Writing Vocabulary* – Children are asked to write all of the words they can within a maximum 10-minute limit.
5. *Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words* – The examiner reads a short sentence or two and asks the child to write the words.
6. *Text Reading Level* – Children are asked to read a series of increasingly more difficult texts that they have not seen before. Levels represent basal reading systems that are not part of the school's instructional program or Reading Recovery instruction. This oral reading task yields the highest text level read with an accuracy level of 90 percent or better.

*Observation Survey* Measures Used at Each Grade

| Grade | Letter Identification | Word Test | Concepts About Print | Writing Vocabulary | Hearing Sounds in Words | Text Reading |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Kindergarten** | | | | | | |
| **Grade 1** | | | | | | |
| **Grade 2** | | | | | | |
| **Grade 3** | | | | | | |

## Lessons – Balanced Literacy

Components of balanced literacy are used in the literacy group lessons. The component of literacy maintenance groups for students in grades 2 and 3 includes the following:

- Familiar Reading and Running Record
- Guided Reading
- Word Building
- Oral and Written Retelling

## Appendix C Continued: AISD First Grade Literacy Small Group Program

| Component | Materials | Purpose |
|---|---|---|
| Shared reading of alphabet<br>Fluency word work<br>Monday - Friday | Large ABC chart<br>Letters around the room<br>ABC books | To promote letter knowledge<br>To learn a special letter/sound/ word cue for reading and writing |
| Shared reading<br>Monday - Friday | 2 - 3 poems<br>Student-made books<br>Big Books | To model good reading behaviors<br>To practice strategy-use<br>To promote fluency |
| Read-Aloud<br>Monday - Friday | Trade books, etc. | To model fluency<br>To build background knowledge of story structure, book talk, concepts, vocabulary, etc.<br>To express enjoyment of books<br>To link reading to writing |
| Word Building<br>Monday - Friday | Letter cards<br>Magnetic letters<br>Word wall<br>Word cards<br>Sentence holders | To develop letter knowledge<br>To acquire high frequency words<br>To promote visual searching<br>To make analogies w/words<br>To link to reading/writing |
| Interactive writing<br>Monday - Thursday<br><br>Friday - Children share their books (self-made) | Chart tablets<br><br>Colored markers | To promote early concepts of print<br>To acquire high frequency words<br>To learn to say words slowly<br>To learn letter/sounds relations<br>To model the writing process<br>To construct a meaningful story<br>To develop phonological processes<br>To develop fluency with known words<br>To practice writing strategies |
| Familiar Reading<br>Monday - Friday | Colored markers<br>Small ABC charts<br>Small books<br>Big books<br>Wall stories & poetry | To practice reading strategies<br>To develop fluency<br>To develop fluency with known words |

**During the journal writing and familiar reading components, the teacher works individually with the focus child in reading and writing.**

| Component | Materials | Purpose |
|---|---|---|
| Individualized reading instruction<br><br>Monday - Friday | Running Record on new book | To promote independent strategy use on a new book<br>To provide the teacher with evidence of child's strategy use during reading of a new book |
| | Cut-up Sentence | To use visual processing strategies to assemble a story |
| New book introduction & first reading | New book | To engage group in making predictions about a story<br>To promote visual processes by predicting letters from text<br>To provide supportive framework for building story meaning<br>To allow the focus child to read independently selected parts of new story |

## Appendix D: Text Reading Levels

The following chart illustrates how text reading levels correlate to each other and to school grade levels.

| Grade Level (Basal Level) | DRA Level* (Joetta Beaver) | *Observation Survey* Level** |
|---|---|---|
| **K (Readiness)** | A | - |
| | 1 | 1 |
| | 2 | 2 |
| **Grade 1 (Pre-Primer)** | 3 | 3 & 4 |
| **Grade 1 (Pre-Primer)** | 4 | 5 & 6 |
| **Grade 1 ( Pre-Primer)** | 6-8 | 7 & 8 |
| **Grade 1 (Primer)** | 10 | 9 & 10 |
| **Grade 1 (Primer)** | 12 | 12 |
| **Grade 1** | 14 | 14 |
| **Grade 1 (Late)** | 16 | 16 |
| **Grade 2** | 18 - 28 | 18-20 |
| **Grade 3** | 30-38 | 22-24 |
| **Grade 4** | 40 | 26 |

* *Developmental Reading Assessment* (DRA), developed by Joetta Beaver in collaboration with primary classroom teachers, also provides a leveling system appropriate for classroom use. DRA benchmark titles were field-tested by 78 primary classrooms from urban, suburban, rural, and small town school districts throughout the United States and Canada to assess the accuracy of the levels. The DRA system uses a numeric code and offers a broad range of texts appropriate for guided and independent reading.

** Observation Survey was developed by Marie Clay for Reading Recovery. There are six assessments-letter identification, word test, concepts about print, writing vocabulary, hearing and recording sounds in words, and text reading level. This column presents the text reading levels by grade.

Appendix E: Mean Responses to Literacy Support Program Teacher Survey by Campus and Across Campuses

| Survey Questions | Bryker Woods (n=5) | Govalle (n=7) | Graham (n=6) | Highland Park (n=6) | Houston (n=12) | Widen (n=7) | All (n=43) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1. The Literacy Support Groups provided by the Literacy Support Specialist/Reading Recovery teacher(s) are effective in supporting students low in literacy in kindergarten through grade 3 at my campus.** | 4.3 | 4.1 | 4.6 | 4.8 | 3.7 | 4.8 | 4.3 |
| **2. Reading Recovery intervention offered by the Literacy Support Specialist/Reading Recovery teacher(s) at my campus meets the needs of grade 1 students who require reading intervention in English.** | 4.0 | 3.6 | 3.9 | 4.4 | 3.6 | 4.2 | 3.9 |
| **3. *Descubriendo La Lectura* (the Spanish version of Reading Recovery) intervention offered by the Literacy Support Specialist/Reading Recovery teacher(s) at my campus meets the needs of student who require reading intervention in Spanish.** | NA | 4.0 | 3.3 | NA | 2.9 | 4.3 | 3.6 |
| **4. Students who return to the classroom after reading intervention offered by the Literacy Support Specialist/Reading Recovery teacher(s) have acquired strategies to help them read.** | 4.2 | 3.8 | 4.4 | 4.5 | 3.7 | 4.3 | 4.1 |
| **5. The Literacy Support Specialist/Reading Recovery teacher(s) at my school communicate effectively with me about progress for students from my class who are participating in reading intervention.** | 3.7 | 3.9 | 3.9 | 4.7 | 3.9 | 4.3 | 4.1 |
| **6. I have received training necessary for classroom support of students who are participating in reading intervention.** | 2.8 | 3.2 | 4.0 | 3.6 | 3.4 | 4.3 | 3.6 |

Note: Scale is as follows: 5=Strongly Agree; 4= Agree; 3=Unsure; 2=Disagree; and 1=Strongly Disagree
Mean Responses below 3.5 are highlighted to indicate responses with lesser agreement.

Appendix F: Mean Responses to Literacy Support Program Teacher Survey, by Grade and Across Grades

| Survey Questions | Kindergarten (n=15 ) | Grade 1 (n=14) | Grade 2 (n=14) | Grade 3 (n=14) | All (n=43) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1. The Literacy Support Groups provided by the Literacy Support Specialist/Reading Recovery teacher(s) are effective in supporting students low in literacy in kindergarten through grade 3 at my campus.** | 4.1 | 4.7 | 4.1 | 4.1 | 4.3 |
| **2. Reading Recovery intervention offered by the Literacy Support Specialist/Reading Recovery teacher(s) at my campus meets the needs of grade 1 students who require reading intervention in English.** | 3.4 | 4.6 | 3.7 | 4.0 | 3.9 |
| **3. *Descubriendo La Lectura* (the Spanish version of Reading Recovery) intervention offered by the Literacy Support Specialist/Reading Recovery teacher(s) at my campus meets the needs of student who require reading intervention in Spanish.** | 3.8 | 4.7 | 3.3 | 3.8 | 3.6 |
| **4. Students who return to the classroom after reading intervention offered by the Literacy Support Specialist/Reading Recovery teacher(s) have acquired strategies to help them read.** | 3.7 | 4.6 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 4.1 |
| **5. The Literacy Support Specialist/Reading Recovery teacher(s) at my school communicate effectively with me about progress for students from my class who are participating in reading intervention.** | 3.6 | 4.8 | 3.6 | 4.0 | 4.1 |
| **6. I have received training necessary for classroom support of students who are participating in reading intervention.** | 3.6 | 3.7 | 3.2 | 3.1 | 3.6 |

Note: Scale is as follows: 5=Strongly Agree; 4= Agree; 3=Unsure; 2=Disagree; and 1=Strongly Disagree

Mean Responses below 3.5 are highlighted to indicate responses with lesser agreement.

## Appendix G: Components of Balanced Literacy

The components of a balanced literacy program are defined in the research-based Ohio State University Early Literacy Learning Initiative developed in 1984 (Fountas, 1995). A balanced language arts program includes a combination, or balance, of the following components, which together comprise a daily reading/language instructional program:

- *Reading Aloud to Children*. Throughout the day the teacher reads to students a variety of quality literature – fiction, nonfiction and poetry. By reading to the students, the teacher models fluent, expressive reading and shares an enthusiasm for books. Reading aloud is seen as the single most influential factor in the young child's success in learning to read.
- *Shared Reading.* During shared reading, the teacher and students read together from a big book, or other enlarged text such as group-produced projects and experience charts. During shared reading, students learn concepts about print, vocabulary in context, and other reading skills.
- *Guided Reading.* Guided reading provides the opportunity to work with small groups on books that present a challenge. From careful observations and assessment, the teacher determines which book would be at an appropriate level for each child. Groupings remain flexible so that students can move ahead as quickly as possible. According to Regie Routman (*Invitations*, 1991), *"Guided reading is the heart of the instructional reading program."*
- *Independent Reading*. Children read on their own or with partners from a wide range of materials. Voluntary self-selected reading is critical to the reading program.
- *Shared Writing*. The teacher and students work together to compose messages and stories. The teacher supports the process as scribe.
- *Interactive Writing.* Similar to shared writing, but stories are written using a "shared pen" technique that involves children in the writing.
- *Guided Writing or Writing Workshop.* During guided writing, the teacher serves as a facilitator and guide to an individual or a small group of students.
- *Independent Writing*. It is important to provide many opportunities throughout the day for students to engage in independent writing activities, such as journal entry or a new version of a familiar story.

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