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## TRF PARTNERS

*Institute for Public  
School Initiatives,  
University of Texas System  
Administration  
(UTS)*

*Texas Education Agency  
(TEA)*

*University of Houston—  
Texas Institute for  
Measurement,  
Evaluation, and Statistics  
(TIMES)*

*University of Texas Health  
Science Center-Houston  
Center for Academic  
Reading and Skills  
(CARS)*

*Vaughn Gross Center  
for Reading and  
Language Arts at  
The University of Texas  
at Austin  
(VGC)*

## 'Best Practices in Reading Instruction for English Language Learners' training session is a success



Alejandra Rodriguez-Galindo and Leticia Grimaldo present at the ELL training in February.

On Feb. 21 and 22 in Austin, Reading First reading technical assistance specialists (RTAs) attended a professional development session entitled “Best Practices in Reading Instruction for English Language Learners.” This training was designed to assist teachers in meeting the needs of English language learners (ELLs) in their classrooms, which is key to providing effective reading instruction in Texas, given the great diversity of the student population.

The main objectives of the training were to learn about second language development, review effective instructional strategies for ELLs, and discuss the latest research findings on reading instruction for ELLs. The information presented was designed to be appropriate for both bilingual classrooms in which instruction occurs in Spanish and for English-speaking

*(Article continues next page.)*

## News Flash!

The 4th Annual National Reading First Conference will be held July 18-20, 2007, at the America's Center in St. Louis, Missouri. The conference will focus on the major themes of Reading First: instructional strategies and programs, instructional assessments, professional development, instructional leadership, and performance-based results. Registration for the conference is open only to Reading First grantees. Each Reading First district can send two district representatives and two representatives from each Reading First campus.

To register for the conference, please visit [www.mikogroup.com](http://www.mikogroup.com). We look forward to seeing you in St. Louis!

## State-level Reading First partners in the field

Within the course of two and a half days in a medium-sized district, state-level partners conducted classroom observations, modeled Tier III lessons with students at the schools, provided professional development to LCCs and interventionists, and met with district and campus leaders to debrief and problem-solve. The team made several recommendations, including one to improve and increase communication

*(Article continues next page.)*

"I loved how you paired bilingual/monolingual people. This was the best training we have had on this subject."

— A participant at the ELL Best Practices presentation in February.

## Best Practices (cont.)

classrooms with students who are ELLs. In fact, monolingual English-speaking participants felt the training was easy to understand and applicable to everyday instruction. One participant commented: "I loved how you paired bilingual/monolingual people. This was the best training we have had on this subject."

The training consisted of seven modules presented in seven different sessions. The first two modules, "Linguistic Diversity and Second Language Development" and "Effective Instructional Practices for English Language Learners," explored second language development and effective strategies that can be applied in any reading lesson. The other five modules illustrated the five components of reading instruction — phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension — and the effective instructional accommodations that effective teachers implement when teaching these five components to ELLs.

This professional development session was a "trainer of trainers," meaning that RTAs can and will turn it around to Reading First campus coaches and teachers in the near future. For more information or to schedule this training on your campus, contact your RTA or local campus coach.

## Save the dates!

The third annual Leadership Summit will be held September 10–12, 2007 at the Westin Galleria in Houston. This exciting event will combine the Superintendent Summit and the Principals' Retreat into one cohesive leadership conference for district- and campus-level administrators. The conference will begin Monday afternoon with events designed for charter school administrators. Tuesday's sessions will be designed for charter and urban district and campus administrators, and Wednesday will be specifically for rural district and campus administrators. We hope to see you there!

## Reading First partners (cont.)

among classroom teachers and interventionists in regard to their instruction *and* the students' responses to their instruction. Brainstorming that the coaches and interventionists did to meet this challenge served as a catalyst for the discussion the following day among district and campus leaders, who produced their own ideas and discussed ways to implement them.

This story gives one example of the technical assistance (TA) that districts and campuses have been receiving throughout the year. In addition to continued support from the reading technical assistance specialists (RTAs), many districts have received TA from partner-level teams. From Texarkana to El Paso, Shallowater to Brownsville, statewide coordinators and project managers from the Texas Reading First Partnership have been observing in classrooms, meeting with teachers, problem-solving with leadership teams, and even modeling lessons in classrooms to support districts and campuses in their implementation of Reading First.

Team membership comprises partners from the four university centers that are part of Reading First: the Center for Academic and Reading Skills (CARS), Texas Health Science Center, University of Texas at Houston; Texas Institute for Measurement, Evaluation, and Statistics (TIMES), University of Houston; The Institute for Public School Initiatives University of Texas System Administration; and the Vaughn Gross Center for Reading and Language Arts at The University of Texas at Austin (VGC).

To begin the TA process, RTAs help districts prioritize their needs based on student data, classroom observations, and meetings with administrators and teachers. Partner-level teams are then formed based on the expertise of different team members. Then the fun begins!

Much of what these teams have been doing is helping districts problem-solve and think through some of the difficulties of  
(Article continues page 4.)



Small group instruction at Shallowater.

## Texas Reading First Spotlight on Success Shallowater ISD

High-quality Tier I instruction for all students is the focus at Shallowater ISD in Region 17. A sense of urgency in meeting the needs of all students using data-driven instruction is one of the many reasons for the district's success. Other contributing factors include a common language of instruction, high

expectations, strong leadership, and a positive teacher climate. A paradigm shift in Shallowater's instructional philosophy is attributed to Reading First practices and no doubt will continue to be the driving force to ensure sustainability after the grant period ends.

Shallowater is in its fourth year of implementation. According to Texas Institute for Measurement, Evaluation, and Statistics (TIMES) data from the 2005–2006 school year, both the elementary and intermediate schools are performing in the top 10 percent among Texas Reading First campuses.

Implementation appears to be the key. Jack Noles, principal at the Shallowater Intermediate campus, says he would be “remiss not to mention the willingness of classroom teachers to commit to a high degree of fidelity in program implementation.”

Mary Hughes, principal at Shallowater Elementary, stated, “It is our children, not your children or my children.” This philosophy forms the foundation as teachers work together to plan instruction. Rather than relying on special programs, the responsibility for ensuring that all students learn to read is personal for every staff member:

- Grade-level teams work collaboratively to establish data goals for the year and revisit those goals at each benchmark. It is this collegiality of goal setting and working toward a common goal that has been critical to student success, according to LCC Terri Nichols and RTA Linda Cranmer.
- Doris Scoggin, Reading First director, believes that what the district has learned through Reading First has improved instruction in all grades. The 3-Tier Model is now being used to provide both reading and math intervention in grades K–7. The referrals to special education have dropped by approximately 90 percent over four years. Referrals are almost nonexistent.
- A student with special needs had been served in a special education class in his first years of schooling. His school's implementation of the 3-Tier Reading Model enabled him to be placed in a second-grade classroom with high-quality Tier I instruction. He began to experience tremendous gains in all areas: His exposure to quality instructional methods had a positive impact on his reading performance, and his interaction with other students led to the development of social skills. Although initially skeptical, both his general education and special education teachers now have the knowledge they need to work together to meet his instructional needs. This student will no longer be left behind.

*(Article continues next page.)*

### SHALLOWATER SCORES

KINDERGARTEN PA  
04-05: 16% DEVELOPED  
05-06: 98% DEVELOPED

KINDERGARTEN GK  
04-05: 82% DEVELOPED  
05-06: 100% DEVELOPED

KINDERGARTEN LIST COMP  
04-05: 60% DEVELOPED  
05-06: 89% DEVELOPED

KINDERGARTEN ALL AREAS  
04-05: 15% DEVELOPED  
05-06: 88% DEVELOPED

FIRST GRADE SCREENING  
04-05: 65% DEVELOPED  
05-06: 97% DEVELOPED

FIRST GRADE PA  
04-05: 30 % DEVELOPED  
05-06: 98% DEVELOPED

FIRST GRADE GK  
04-05: 57% DEVELOPED  
05-06: 98% DEVELOPED

FIRST GRADE FLUENCY/COMP  
04-05: 41% DEVELOPED  
05-06: 88% DEVELOPED

FIRST GRADE ALL AREAS  
04-05: 26% DEVELOPED  
05-06: 80% DEVELOPED

SECOND GRADE GK  
04-05: 3% DEVELOPED  
05-06: 87% DEVELOPED

SECOND GRADE FLUENCY/COMP  
04-05: 67% DEVELOPED  
05-06: 78% DEVELOPED

SECOND GRADE ALL AREAS  
04-05: 3% DEVELOPED  
05-06: 74% DEVELOPED

**YEAR 4 TIMELINE  
FOR CYCLE 1 LEAs**

Grant period  
began:  
AUGUST 1, 2006

Interim Activity/  
Progress Report:  
FEBRUARY 1, 2007

Interim Expenditure  
Report:  
FEBRUARY 15, 2007

Deadline to file  
amendments:  
MAY 1, 2007

Final Activity/  
Progress Report:  
MAY 15, 2007

Grant period ends:  
JULY 31, 2007

Final Expenditure Report:  
AUGUST 30, 2007

**YEAR 3 TIMELINE  
FOR CYCLE 2 LEAs**

Grant period  
began:  
SEPTEMBER 1, 2006

Interim Activity/  
Progress Report:  
FEBRUARY 1, 2007

Interim Expenditure  
Report:  
MARCH 15, 2007

Final Activity/  
Progress Report:  
MAY 15, 2007

Deadline to file  
amendments:  
JUNE 1, 2007

Grant period ends:  
AUGUST 31, 2007

Final Expenditure Report:  
SEPTEMBER 30, 2007

## State-level RF partners (continued from page 2)

implementing such complex processes as the 3-tier framework or bilingual literacy instruction or trying to implement these two processes together. For example, partners met with the district leaders in Laredo ISD to discuss several questions, many of which related to special education or bilingual education, submitted from the TRF campuses. Although collaboration between the special education department and the Reading First coordinator had begun prior to this meeting, the presence of the dyslexia coordinator at this problem-solving meeting led to even more coordination among district leaders, benefiting students in the end.

Some quotes from the field are below.

“The teachers who attended [the professional development that was part of the proactive visit to Regions 2 and 3] were very excited and anxious to pass their new knowledge on to their fellow teachers. The selling point for them is that they are actually seeing growth in their students and know they are onto a good thing.”

— Melinda Kucherka, RTA

“They really provided me, Mrs. Wolf, and our third-grade team with valuable information that we can implement immediately. Thank you [Angela Neal, RTA] for setting us up with the project manager and the partners.”

—Brandy Jones, LCC at Marlin Elementary,  
Marlin ISD

No matter where these teams have been or what difficulties the districts have asked them to address, one result is constant: Partners are inspired by the dedication and hard work that administrators, coaches, and teachers put into improving the literacy skills of the students in their schools.

“The [professional development] was great. I think our participants really got some great strategies and practical information from the presenter. We are going to get to work on our problems with ELL. I’ll see to that! Thanks again for spending the day with us.”

—Sharon Barton, elementary reading coordinator, Corsicana ISD

## Shallowater ISD (cont.)

- District personnel praise the quality of professional development from the Reading First partners and the availability of the LCC and RTA, who work closely with the district leadership team. The professional development presented has involved all staff members, including pre-K and special education teachers, as well as paraprofessionals.

Superintendent Phil Warren stated recently that Reading First has changed the definition of quality reading instruction. He and the leadership team have made a commitment to continue implementation of such instruction after funding is no longer available. To achieve this, they have begun to think outside the box to create untapped revenue sources. For example, Shallowater is shifting resources from the utility budget to Reading First by passing a district bond that allows installation of wind turbines to provide a portion of the district’s electricity. Through the district’s participation in Reading First and commitment to implementation and sustainability, all students in Shallowater will be better prepared to succeed.

Wind turbines will provide additional resources for Shallowater ISD to sustain Reading First.



# Moving from administration to instruction: Bringing data to life

In Texas Reading First (TRF) classrooms, teachers devote significant instructional time to the administration of a mixture of informative assessments. The ultimate goal of assessment is not the *gathering* of performance data, but that the data is *understood* by teachers and administrators, and *used* as an aide to guide instruction and improve student learning.

It is not always easy, though, for teachers to understand and use the data they gather. Many teachers are skilled at informally assessing their students' performance but find more formal and complex assessment data difficult to evaluate. Often teachers work in isolation when trying to understand and use student scores on formal assessments. Working alone can increase teachers' frustration and decrease their efficiency and effectiveness. However, when teachers are able to work together to understand an assessment and the data it produces, their comfort builds and their control of the assessment data increases. As teachers work collaboratively with data, they also begin to make connections about student performance throughout the school and come to better understand their own students' abilities.

One effective way to support teachers is to create a process that brings them together with their coach to analyze assessment results and then use the resulting information to plan instruction. The next three sections present a simple progression of three short meetings that could be used as a data analysis process at a campus. These meetings would normally include a grade-level team and an LCC, and could take place during separate grade-level planning periods or during one longer professional development session after benchmark assessments are collected at the beginning of the year, middle of the year, and end of the year.

**Meeting 1: Analyzing Results.** At this meeting, teachers bring their benchmark assessment results to analyze and discuss their students' scores. Collecting and analyzing student scores allow teachers to review key components of their assessment and identify patterns in their data, such as student progress. Teachers look broadly for skills and concepts to be addressed in whole group settings, based on needs teachers identify in a majority of their students. Teachers also track student performance across different areas of the assessment, different classes, and from one administration period to the next.

**Meeting 2: Creating Small Groups Based on Student Needs.** The process of creating small groups involves identifying the instruction that will be most powerful for each student. Teachers organize their students according to instructional need and reading ability, planning interventions for students who need them. A critical element of this process is to plan instruction with a particular focus that will move each student forward. Creating small groups requires careful and deliberate prioritizing. It demands attention to data and making hard choices. To that end, what matters most in conversations among teachers is not always the decisions made. Instead, it is the process itself — the discussion, the problem solving, the struggle to find ways to serve all students well.

**Meeting 3: Planning Instruction.** In the final meeting within this process, teachers work together to plan instruction to address the small-group and/or whole-group instructional needs they have identified. This step draws from a variety of resources, from core and intervention programs to teacher-created lessons, from the Intervention Activities Guides included with the TPRI and Tejas LEE kits (if applicable) to

*(Article continues next page.)*

## TRFI SUGGESTED ASSESSMENT TIMELINE

MOY screening/  
diagnostic, Grades K-3:  
JANUARY 2007

MOY data due to TIMES:  
FEBRUARY 16, 2007

Outcome assessment,  
Grade 3 (TAKS):  
FEBRUARY 20, 2007

Implementation  
observation—  
All campuses;  
Classroom observations  
and parent home  
surveys —  
Randomly selected  
campuses:  
MARCH-APRIL 2007

EOY screening/  
diagnostic, Grades K-3:  
APRIL 2007

Outcome Assessments,  
Grades 1 and 2:  
APRIL 3–14, 2007

Online surveys for  
teachers, coaches &  
RTAs—  
Randomly selected  
campuses:  
APRIL 2007

EOY data due to TIMES;  
Kinder outcome data due  
to TIMES; Professional  
development logs:  
JUNE 11, 2007

Visit us on the Web!

[www.texasreading.org/  
trfquarterlynewsletter](http://www.texasreading.org/trfquarterlynewsletter)

## Join the Listserv!

If you would like more information and regular updates about the Texas Reading First initiative, you are encouraged to subscribe to the Reading First Listserv, administered through the Texas Education Agency (TEA).

To subscribe to the Reading First Listserv:

- Go to <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/list/>.
- Click on "Select a List" for pop-up menu of listserv names.
- Scroll down, select "Texas Reading First Initiative," and then click on "Join the List".
- Enter your e-mail address.
- Enter your name.
- A confirmation e-mail will be sent to your e-mail address.
- Respond to confirmation e-mail with "OK".

## Administration to Instruction (cont.)

the Texas Teacher Reading Academy resources. Tying assessment data directly to instruction helps teachers not only address student needs, but it also helps them to better understand the skills and concepts required of developing readers.

As we concentrate on students' performance data, we need to remember exactly why these data are collected. We want our schools to improve, and for this to happen, we must consistently raise the quality of our instruction. Many of the assessments teachers administer can be powerful instructional tools if teachers understand and use them well. Bringing teachers together, providing them guidance and support through collaboration with colleagues and coaches, and developing a process for studying and using assessment data are several ways to move our schools forward.

## RTA Corner

### *Ongoing Training Opportunity for RTAs*

In an attempt to provide continuous improvement and ongoing, targeted service to schools, some RTAs who have been hired during this academic year were in Austin on April 12 and 13 attending training sessions.

The Vaughn Gross Center (VGC) provided training on intervention and differentiated instruction, progress monitoring, the OTRA study guides, and the Principal's Toolkit. The Center for Academic and Reading Skills (CARS) provided training on grouping students for differentiated instruction using the grouping mats as a tool, the coaching cycle and coaching conferencing tool, and the writing of Glows and Grows.

## Focus on:

## Texas Reading First/ESC Collaborative

Texas Reading First (TRF) is excited to once again have an opportunity to work closely with its 20 Education Service Centers (ESCs). Dr. Kathy Stewart, manager/director of Texas Reading First at the Texas Education Agency, states, "One of our goals in Reading First is to build a strong reading network to ensure our local education agencies (LEAs) continue to have expert resources/support long after funding ends—critical for sustainability. Our ESCs will help sustain our Reading First professional development and technical assistance efforts. We will be able to reach more children and support more LEAs through our ESC collaborative."

ESCs are encouraged to be actively involved in all trainings TRF provides and to turn trainings around in their respective regions based on LEA needs. This support model has worked well for Texas in the past and will continue to help sustain scientifically based reading research for many years to come. The TRF partnership includes LEAs; University of Texas System; Vaughn Gross Center for Reading and Language Arts at The University of Texas at Austin; Center for Academic and Reading Skills at the University of Texas Health Science Center in Houston; Texas Institute for Measurement, Evaluation, and Statistics at the University of Houston; all 20 ESCs; and the Texas Education Agency.

# Instructional Connection

## *What is immediate corrective feedback?*

Immediate corrective feedback is one of the features of effective instruction. Other features include:

- Explicit instruction,
- Systematic instruction,
- Ample practice opportunities, and
- Adequate pacing.

Immediate corrective feedback can be defined as carefully listening to student responses and providing an immediate corrective response if students have not answered accurately. Immediate corrective feedback ensures students are learning and practicing concepts and strategies correctly. All students in Tier I and/or intervention instruction benefit from and need immediate corrective feedback.

**Non-example of immediate corrective feedback:** A student is working on a decoding lesson. During the lesson, the student tries to decode the word “flip” and says the following: “/f/ /l/ /a/ /p/ — flap.” The teacher responds: “Please read that word again. One sound is incorrect.”

**Example of immediate corrective feedback:** After the student says “flap,” the teacher points to the “i” in “flip” and says, “This sound is /i/ like ‘itch.’ What is this sound? Please try again from the beginning.” After the student reads the word correctly, the teacher would further reinforce the concept by asking: “What was the tricky sound in that word? Whenever you see an ‘i’ followed by a consonant, this is a short ‘i’ sound, and it sounds like /i/ in ‘itch.’” The teacher might quickly write three other words (“slit,” “drip,” “grim”) that follow the same phonetic pattern and target sound and ask the student to decode the words to further reinforce the concept that was confusing. “Read the following words and remember our target sound. What sound does the short ‘i’ make?”

This example not only provided the student with specific, corrective feedback, but it also provided the student with opportunities to practice the skill with teacher supervision to ensure the student mastered the concept.

# Congressional News

A federal program for adolescent literacy is picking up steam.

President Bush’s budget request for fiscal year (FY) 2008 includes an increase for the Striving Readers program from approximately \$30 million to \$100 million. Additionally, Senators Jeff Sessions (R-AL), Patty Murray (D-WA), and nine co-sponsors introduced a bill in March to expand the scope of Striving Readers and to increase the funding. The Striving Readers Act would authorize \$200 million in FY 2008, with increased funding through FY 2012 that, once fully phased in, would reach \$1 billion.

Striving Readers, which began in 2004, is a program to help below-grade-level students in grades 6–12 receive the targeted, intensive literacy instruction they need to catch up to their peers and reach grade level, reducing the dropout risk. For more information, visit the Striving Readers page on the U.S. Department of Education’s Web site, [www.ed.gov](http://www.ed.gov).

## Don’t Forget!

The upcoming Advanced Coaching Institute is scheduled for May 22 and 23 at the Westin Galleria in Houston.

To access the 2006-07 Commissioner’s List please go to:  
<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/reading/ordering/RComList0607.pdf>

Please send comments or questions to  
[ReadingFirst@tea.state.tx.us](mailto:ReadingFirst@tea.state.tx.us)