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Texas Reading First hosts Leadership Summit 2007 in Houston



Ronald Ferguson of Harvard University delivered the keynote address.

More than 600 campus and district leaders from across Texas came together for the annual Leadership Summit on Sept. 10–12 at the Westin Galleria in Houston. Unlike last year, this year's Summit, themed "Sustaining Success Through Collaboration and Change," brought together Reading First district leadership with campus leadership. By all accounts, this format was a huge success.

On the morning of Sept. 10, representatives from Texas Reading First charter schools visited two Houston-area charter schools: Ser Niños Charter School and KIPP Shine Prep. In the afternoon, Ramona Trevino, CEO and principal of the University of Texas Elementary School, provided insights to implementing a 3-Tier Reading Model, and Marina Ballantyne Walne discussed aspects of budgeting and funding that are unique to charter schools. The day included a panel discussion of Reading First peers: Daniel Amador, superintendent of Jubilee Academic Center; Robert Olivarez, superintendent of Vanguard Academy; and

(Article continues next page)

Welcome Karen Nelson!

Texas Reading First is pleased to introduce Karen Nelson, the new director of academic foundation initiatives at the Institute for Public School Initiatives (IPSI), University of Texas System. Nelson will be responsible for overseeing a large portion of the technical assistance efforts in managing the project managers and reading technical assistants (RTAs).

Nelson comes to IPSI with extensive experience. She worked for the Texas Reading Initiative in Region 13, facilitating campus and district leadership, and contributed to both the Texas Teacher Reading Academies and the Effective Reading Intervention grant. She also worked in Ector County ISD as a speech and language specialist, providing management and leadership for district speech and language services.

Nelson's commitment is evident: "I believe that building a strong academic foundation is the best prevention for academic failure. I believe that 'college begins in kindergarten' (to quote the Education Trust). I am especially passionate about effective early reading instruction for all children and the Reading First Initiative."

All of us in the Reading First Partnership are thrilled to have Karen join us!



If students are to reach the goals set for them, their instructional leaders must be willing to adjust the instructional plan when students are not making adequate progress.

To access the 2006-2007 Commissioner's List, please go to:
http://www.tea.state.tx.us/reading/ordering/COMMLIST2007_2008.pdf

Progress monitoring: An essential step in the assessment cycle

Let's begin with an excerpt from Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.

"Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?"

"That depends a good deal on where you want to get to," said the Cat.

"I don't much care where," said Alice.

"Then it doesn't matter which way you go," said the Cat.

As this wonderful exchange between Alice and the Cat illustrates, having a goal or expectation is imperative to determining which road, or course of action, one should take. Without an end-goal in mind, one is, like Alice, wandering aimlessly. When it comes to students,

(Article continues page 4)

Leadership Summit 2007 (cont.)

Carlos Villagrana, superintendent of Amigos Por Vida/Friends for Life Charter.

On Sept. 11 and 12, Kathy Stewart, manager of the Texas Reading First Initiative, started each day by sharing district success stories and discussing sustainability. Ronald Ferguson, an economist and senior research associate at the Malcolm Wiener Center for Social Policy at Harvard University, delivered the keynote address on the topic of "Leadership for Raising Achievement Levels and Closing Achievement Gaps." Ferguson discussed his recent research and The Tripod Project, which he founded. The Tripod Project aims to strengthen the three legs of the academic tripod — content, pedagogy, and relationships — in ways that raise achievement for all students while narrowing achievement gaps between racial and ethnic groups. Ferguson also discussed his recent research findings from more than 500 schools on classroom goal structures and academic persistence.

Participants were treated to breakout sessions in the afternoon that focused on data analysis and connecting instruction to data. "Exploring the Data: Tools for Analysis and Prioritizing Needs to Build the 2007–2008 Reading First Action Plan" allowed participants to use their own data to plan, network, and start to build their action plans for the year. In small groups, participants analyzed their data, discussed strategies for improving target areas, and problem-solved an implementation plan. Superintendents had the opportunity to discuss their grants and plan for sustainability with Mona Corbett and Kathy Stewart of the Texas Education Agency (TEA).

A separate breakout session focused on building and sustaining instructional leadership through an active presence in classrooms. In "Valuing and Supporting the Work Teachers Do," participants discussed what to look for during classroom observations, such as the five components of reading, the features of effective instruction, and grouping techniques. Participants then had an opportunity to practice using the observation tools that were introduced through a multimedia

(Article continues page 7)




J.K. Hileman Elementary, Queen City ISD.

Since its inception in 1982, J.K. Hileman Elementary has believed in the underlying principles of the intervention model for reading, writing, and mathematics, but with the advent of Reading First and implementation of the 3-Tier Reading Model, early intervention has been elevated to a new level on the campus.

When Cycle One schools were being awarded grants in 2003, J.K. Hileman Elementary — the only elementary campus in the Queen City Independent School District — was among them. The school's 432 prekindergarten through fourth-grade students now have their own reading coach, two reading interventionists, and a dyslexia therapist trained in the Scottish Rite Program. The interventionists rotate in the kindergarten through third-grade classes to assist in small groups with Tier II students in the 90-minute reading block. They then meet with these same students later in the day for an additional 30 minutes. Paraprofessionals serving each grade level also assist with small-group instruction.

Known for its progressive approach to education, J.K. Hileman Elementary strives to perfect and implement innovative strategies to promote a community of readers. “Book Buddies,” older students who read to younger students, not only provide examples of good reading but also serve as mentors. Certified teachers not on the district's staff regularly tutor students to prevent entry into Tier II, and community volunteers read to classes during the school day. To increase vocabulary, the principal introduces a new word during each morning message, and each month brings a focus on a different literary genre. The centrally located professional library provides examples of explicit strategies for teaching the five components of reading and insights into classroom management geared for small-group instruction.

Reading First has made a huge difference in Queen City ISD. J.K. Hileman used to have two special education teachers for students in Tier III. When the Reading First intensive interventions began to take effect, the school's special education numbers began to drop. Two years ago, the campus reduced its special education teaching positions to one. The Tier II numbers also have declined. For the fourth year in a row, 100 percent of J.K. Hileman's third-graders passed the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS), while passing rates on the fifth-grade TAKS have gone from 74 percent in 2004 to 100 percent in 2007, a testament to the long-term achievement of students taught by teachers grounded in Reading First principles. J.K. Hileman Elementary also adopted a 90-minute timeframe for math that includes intensive intervention.

With the success achieved in math and reading, along with excellent science, writing, and social studies instruction, J.K. Hileman Elementary received “Exemplary” status in 2007 after earning the “Recognized” designation the previous three years. The administrators and teaching staff see a bright future for J.K. Hileman Elementary as it holds fast to its vision of building a stronger community of readers and leaders. 

Texas Reading First Spotlight on Success J.K. Hileman Elementary

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2007–2008 GRANT PERIODS & REPORTING DEADLINES

CYCLE 1, YEAR 5 GRANT CYCLE:

SEPTEMBER 1, 2007, TO
SEPTEMBER 30, 2008

Interim Expenditure

Reporting Period:

AUGUST 1, 2007, TO
JANUARY 31, 2008

REPORT DUE: FEBRUARY 15, 2008

Final Expenditure

Reporting Period:

FEBRUARY 1, 2008, TO
JULY 31, 2008

REPORT DUE: OCTOBER 30, 2008

First Activity Progress

Reporting Period:

AUGUST 1, 2007, TO
JANUARY 15, 2008

REPORT DUE: FEBRUARY 1, 2008

Final Activity Progress

Reporting Period:

JANUARY 16, 2008, TO
MAY 1, 2008

REPORT DUE: MAY 16, 2008

CYCLE 2, YEAR 4 GRANT CYCLE:

SEPTEMBER 1, 2007, TO
AUGUST 31, 2008

Interim Expenditure

Reporting Period:

AUGUST 1, 2007, TO
FEBRUARY 29, 2008

REPORT DUE: MARCH 15, 2008

Final Expenditure

Reporting Period:

MARCH 1, 2008, TO
AUGUST 31, 2008

REPORT DUE: AUGUST 31, 2008

First Activity Progress

Reporting Period:

SEPTEMBER 1, 2007, TO
JANUARY 15, 2008

REPORT DUE: FEBRUARY 1, 2008

Final Activity Progress

Reporting Period:

JANUARY 16, 2008, TO
MAY 1, 2008

REPORT DUE: MAY 16, 2008

Progress monitoring (continued from page 2)

knowing the right instructional path is perhaps one of the biggest challenges that educators face. Teachers want to *know* what the child needs, rather than *assume*. Fortunately, several tools are available to help teachers individually target students' needs and put students on a road that will lead to success.


Perhaps the most important of these tools is assessment. Through screening and diagnosis, assessment helps to identify and validate the specific needs of students. Once the need has been established, teachers can use these data to guide instruction as well as group children into same-ability groups where differentiated instruction can take place. Next in this assessment cycle is to progress monitor students to determine the effectiveness of the instruction and to measure whether growth is taking place.

Effective progress monitoring is a vital step on the path to successful reading. Without frequently checking to see whether growth is occurring, teachers have no way of knowing whether the implemented instruction or intervention strategies are effective. If students are to reach the goals set for them, their instructional leaders must be willing to monitor and adjust the instructional plan when students are not making adequate progress.

An effective progress-monitoring tool:

- 1) Must specifically and directly assess skills. For this to happen, problems the student is facing must be stated explicitly. This will enable the problem-solving team to target the skills rather than guess and estimate.
- 2) May assess marker variables that will lead to the instructional target. For example, many assessments use a fluency rate as a marker variable because of its strong relation to word recognition, vocabulary, and comprehension. Teachers should ensure that the marker for growth is both appropriate and relevant to the student progressing toward his or her goal.
- 3) Should be administered frequently and quickly. Struggling students should be formally progress monitored at least every two weeks. Teachers need multiple opportunities to observe student performance so that instructional adjustments can be made as quickly as possible.
- 4) Should be sensitive to small increments of growth over time.
- 5) Should have results that can be readily summarized in data displays. Data should be graphed so that scores from different time periods are easy to compare and track.

While data, graphs, assessment results, and effective tools all make up a substantial part of progress monitoring, the most significant piece is the classroom teacher. It is often said that data drive instruction. If that were true, there would be no need for progress monitoring — the data would select the appropriate instruction, and monitoring for growth would not be necessary. The truth is that the teachers drive the instruction while the data help to guide them.

Ultimately, teachers are the ones encountering a lost Alice wandering down a winding path. Rather than saying, "It doesn't matter which way you go," as the Cat said, dedicated teachers will always say, "Let's figure out where you need to go, and I will help you get there." 

Assessment Update

Fluency – More than just a number

With benchmark and progress-monitoring assessments in place, and core and intervention programs in action, Texas Reading First teachers regularly turn their attention to the oral reading fluency of their students.


When formally assessing oral reading fluency, teachers derive a single score that indicates the speed with which a student reads a string of words. Administrators, teachers, and students are paying more attention to this number — and for good reason. As any experienced Reading First teacher could explain, fluency scores are important because strong fluency is an indicator that students can effectively recognize and decode words, and are better equipped to understand what they read. If a student's fluency rate improves, educators can make assumptions about the positive impact of instruction.

But this focus on fluency being represented by a single number can frustrate teachers and confound students. Educators can't be reminded too often that fluency is about more than reading quickly. Fluency is as much (or even more) about reading smoothly and expressively. Strong, fluent reading helps students derive meaning from text. Racing through reading does the opposite.

A larger goal for teachers of reading is to help students understand and enjoy increasingly challenging and varied texts. Looking at fluency too narrowly or exclusively can distract teachers from this goal. It is helpful to look at fluency as only one indicator of student reading performance. Fluency scores become more powerful indicators when teachers look at how these scores connect to other characteristics of student reading, such as performance on phonemic awareness and phonics tasks, text difficulty, comprehension, vocabulary, and performance over time. Looking at fluency scores in relation to these other factors makes educators better prepared to understand and reach the readers they teach.

Tips and reminders for MOY TPRI and Tejas LEE administration

In January, it will be time for middle of the year (MOY) Texas Primary Reading Inventory (TPRI) and Tejas LEE assessments. Here are a few tips to remember:

- In kindergarten and first grade, students “jump in” on the phonemic awareness (PA) and graphophonemic knowledge (GK) portions of the TPRI. Start with the first task for which the student scored still developing (SD) at the beginning of the year (BOY).
- For the kindergarten listening comprehension task at BOY, students were read either Story 1 or Story 2. At MOY, Stories 1 and 2 are used again, but students who heard Story 1 at BOY should be read Story 2 at MOY and vice versa.
- When students read the story placement word lists and stories, remember the “Three-second Hesitation Rule.” When reading the word lists, if a student hesitates longer than three seconds, mark the word as incorrect and ask the student to read the next word, but do not provide the word. When students are reading a story and hesitate longer than three seconds, provide the word and mark it as an error. Remember that a “hesitation” is when a student pauses or takes longer than three seconds to sound out a word.
- When scoring comprehension questions on the listening comprehension or reading accuracy, fluency, and comprehension tasks, remember to use your best professional judgment. Students do not have to submit one of the suggested responses in order to be scored as correct. Base your score on whether you believe the student response reflects an accurate understanding of the material in the story. 

Mark your
calendar!

Tune in for the
MOY and EOY
assessment
update webcasts
happening on
Jan. 11
and
Apr. 11,
respectively.

News Flash!


Save the dates, May 13-14, 2008, for the Advanced Coaching Institute III. Once again, the meeting will convene at the Westin Galleria in Houston. By press time, noted consultants and authors Anita Archer and Jo Robinson had confirmed as guest speakers. Exciting breakout sessions that will guide educators in differentiating instruction for Texas students and in supporting teachers across the state also are planned. Mark your calendar today. Registration is expected to open on January 1, 2008.

RTA Corner

A busy time for RTAs

Throughout July, August, and September, Texas Reading First reading technical assistance specialists (RTAs) planned and delivered professional development to schools and districts across the state. From the 3-Tier Reading Model to the *Ready, Set, Teach* professional development courses, RTAs prepared for and met the needs of the sites for which they provide support.

RTAs also received and participated in continuous professional development sessions. At the end of July and beginning of August, the Vaughn Gross Center for Reading and Language Arts (VGC) provided training in the areas of leadership and intervention, and the Texas Institute for Measurement, Evaluation, and Statistics (TIMES) provided updates on the campus online data system.

RTAs also participated in small-group study guide sessions that emphasized graphophonemic knowledge and multisensory teaching of spelling through reading research “literature circle” discussions. And at the end of August, an in-depth session of analyzing data, both program and outcome, was held. This analysis supported all stakeholders during the Leadership Summit held in September. 


Focus on: Searchlight

Searchlight (<http://searchlight.utexas.org>) is an online tool that provides access to, and targeted searches of, many of the instructional materials created by the Vaughn Gross Center for Reading and Language Arts (VGC).

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) provided the VGC with Reading First funds to use its technology expertise to build Searchlight. Searchlight aims to meet educators’ continuing needs to access current information on research-based reading instruction and to assist reading technical assistance specialists (RTAs), education service centers (ESCs), coaches, and other Reading First leaders in their professional development efforts.

Searchlight has integrated many of the products developed by the VGC into a searchable database to provide easy access

to the entire product as well as the option to search smaller clusters of information. For example, the complete *Texas Kindergarten Online Teacher Reading Academy* is available as an online course, but users also have the option of working through just one section. If only one particular lesson is needed, a teacher or other user can take advantage of the search function to access the database of example lessons.

Whatever the instructional need — from handouts to lessons to instructional videos to online courses — visit the Searchlight database of readily available scientifically based reading resources. And don’t forget: To maximize the Searchlight experience, visit the TIPS section of the homepage to access help documents such as “Frequently Asked Questions” and “Getting Started With Go Learn”. 

Instructional Connection

Key points to remember for small-group and intervention instruction

Effectively implementing a response to intervention (RTI) model helps to ensure that struggling students receive targeted instruction to meet their specific academic needs. Depending on performance on benchmark assessments, some students may receive this instruction in an intervention setting. Intervention includes providing additional, individualized support for identified student needs through differentiated instruction, most often in a small-group setting.

While intervention and small-group instruction have many similarities, there are several key points to remember. Test your knowledge by answering the following true or false questions:

1. Intervention lessons typically cover only one of the five components.
2. Intervention may take place in the classroom with the classroom teacher or as a pullout with a different teacher.
3. In an intervention lesson, pacing should be faster than in a small-group lesson.
4. Only certified teachers who have been designated as “highly qualified” should lead intervention instruction to ensure maximum effectiveness.
5. Intervention lesson content should be coordinated with the content taught throughout the scope and sequence of Tier I.


Answers:

1. False: While small-group instruction may focus on one of the five components, intervention typically includes all five components. However, it is critical that data inform the differentiation of instruction for each student.
2. True: If instruction takes place in a “pullout” setting, it is crucial that teachers and interventionists collaborate and discuss student progress to reinforce concepts and strategies presented in both settings.
3. False: Pacing should be determined by student needs. Especially in Tier III, the pacing may be slower. However, as a general rule, pacing should be as brisk as possible with multiple opportunities to respond, and teachers should scaffold concepts as necessary.
4. False: Research shows that intervention can be led by certified teachers as well as paraprofessionals who are highly trained in scientifically based reading research (SBR) and RTI and are appropriately supported.
5. True: Although the instructional strategies will be individualized, Tier I content should be coordinated with intervention content to provide cohesion and minimize confusion for students. While the content may not be exactly the same, intervention should reinforce, review, extend, and/or scaffold Tier I lessons.

Leadership Summit 2007 (cont.)

presentation, which included a video of classroom instruction as an example.

On Sept. 12, two superintendents, Phil Warren from Shallowater ISD and Marvin Beaty from Troup ISD, shared their successes with Reading First and their strategies toward sustaining the program.

All of the materials from the Leadership Summit (including presentation slides and handouts, planning templates, and action plans) can be downloaded at: http://texasreading.org/utcr/pd/trfi/leadership_2007. For more information about this year’s Leadership Summit, contact Meredith Doxey at doxey@mail.utexas.edu. 

Join the Listserv!

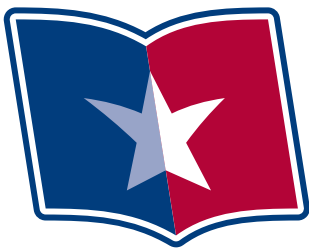
If you would like more information and regular updates about the Texas Reading First Initiative, you are encouraged to subscribe to the Reading First Listserv, administered through the Texas Education Agency (TEA).

To subscribe to the Reading First Listserv, go to <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/list>.

Please send comments or questions to ReadingFirst@tea.state.tx.us

Vaughn Gross Center for Reading and Language Arts
College of Education SZB 228
The University of Texas at Austin
1 University Station D4900
Austin, Texas 78712-0365

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— Japanese proverb

"Better than a thousand days of diligent study is one day with a great teacher."