

Literacy First Comprehensive Reading Reform Process

Literacy First Research Base Alignment with Reading First

Introduction

The Literacy First Comprehensive Reading Reform Process is a professional development and change process. The Literacy First Comprehensive Reading Reform Process meets and exceeds all the criteria for professional development and implementation of reading programs established by No Child Left Behind/Reading First.

The effectiveness of reading instruction is determined by the percentage of students reading on grade level. Most states and districts use a norm referenced or criterion referenced assessment to make this determination. For students perform on or above grade level in these reading assessments they must have systematic and explicit instruction in all components of the reading process. The effectiveness of the systematic and explicit reading instruction is dependent upon the district and building **infrastructure** that includes the seven critical components of: leadership, assessment, curriculum, instruction, intervention processes, professional development and resource management. In addition to the infrastructure, the leadership must foster a district and building **culture** that has traditions, rituals habits and unwritten rules that support excellence in student reading achievement.

Benjamin Bloom, when describing his taxonomy, explains that one must first establish criteria before one can evaluate. A comprehensive review of the literature identifies

the criteria that are essential for both effective schools and excellence in student reading achievement. Every aspect of the Literacy First Comprehensive Reading Reform Process is grounded in scientifically rigorous, longitudinal research and each of the components is a composite of these studies.

In the remainder of this document, the reader will find the criteria identified by the research, illustrations of the research supporting the criteria and annotations that support the comprehensive reading reform process.

Literacy First is a comprehensive reading reform process. The goal of which is to close the reading achievement gap and ensure that all students become fluent readers who comprehend grade level text.

To re-invent the building infrastructure and culture, the Literacy First Comprehensive Reading Reform Process provides a systematic course of action, the major points of which are described below.

1. Analyze the school's current reading program infrastructure and culture in comparison to effective reading processes/programs.
2. Develop a three year strategic plan to meet the unique needs of the school.
3. Facilitate the successful implementation of this plan by building the capacity of the teachers and leadership team through
 - A. intensive professional development and
 - B. systematic, explicit on-site coaching and consulting.
4. Monitor, support and hold the leadership team and teachers accountable for the effective implementation of the plan.

Implementing this course of action requires continuous communication and support between the Literacy First consultants and members of the school and district.

During this comprehensive three (3) year reading reform process, each administrator and teacher receives eight (8) days of professional development. Participants receive a teacher manual and resource books that address the five essential components for reading instruction:

1. phonemic awareness,
2. phonics,

3. vocabulary development,
4. fluency and
5. comprehension.

Other important topics included in the eight (8) days of professional development are:

6. specific assessment protocols designed to inform instruction and measure its effectiveness
7. formation of flexible skills groupings for systematic and explicit reading instruction,
8. literacy centers to reinforce student reading knowledge, skills and processes,
9. strategic reading tools and metacognitive strategies to be used with comprehension skills to facilitate student comprehension of the text.
10. a plan to implement and effectively manage a two hour and 20 minutes reading block each day to ensure all students will accomplish the goal of reading on grade level.

In addition to the professional development and most critical to successful implementation, the Literacy First consultant spends 22 days doing systematic explicit on site coaching/consulting. Also, Literacy First consultants work with the principals, district-based and school-based literacy coaches and other district level staff to strengthen their instructional leadership knowledge and skills.

Curriculum

Literacy First/Reading First Alignment

In 1997, Congress asked the "Director of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, in partnership with the Department of Education, to form a National Reading Panel (NPR) to evaluate the status of research-based knowledge, including the effectiveness of various approaches to teaching children to read. (Report of the National Reading Panel, pg1)

The Panel identified many instructional approaches, methods and strategies that can be useful in helping teachers develop instructional applications with their students.

In combination with the findings of the Panel and the passing of the Reading First Act in 2001, schools are focusing their attention to providing explicit, relevant teaching in order to obtain higher achievement on the part of their students.

It has often been the case that research has not focused on teachers, emphasizing students, materials and tasks. (NRP, pg 5-3) During the regional meeting of the National Reading Panel teacher education and professional development emerged frequently as areas of concern.

Literacy First provides professional development consistent with the cohesive framework of scientifically based reading research called for in the **No Child Left Behind**. The training is sustained, ongoing, and capacity building across the five components of effective reading instruction, plus other essential components. Assessments are included in the sessions to enable the teachers to identify the areas of need and development that will address skill gaps and learning needs.

A brief description of the key findings of scientifically based reading research on the essential components of effective reading instruction and the Literacy First alignment are provided below.

Phonemic Awareness

Phonemic Awareness (PA) –The ability to hear, identify, and manipulate the individual sounds – phonemes – in spoken words (Put Reading First: The Research Building Blocks for Teaching Children to Read, pg. 4)

Literacy First provides educators with the necessary tools (resources student learning activities and instructional strategies) to ensure the development of reading for every child. Following are examples of topics included in the Literacy First Phonological Awareness training component:

1. Explanation of the differences between and roles of phonemic awareness, phonological awareness and phonics in the reading process.
2. Tool for assessing and diagnosing phonological and phonemic awareness

3. Systematic and explicit instruction to enable students to hear and manipulate phonemes
4. Teacher resource materials that provide teaching strategies to actively engage students in phonemic awareness

Phonics and Word Study

(including spelling and advanced decoding)

Phonics—The understanding that there is a predictable relationship between phonemes (the sounds of *spoken* language) and graphemes (the letters and spellings that represent those sounds in *written* language). (Put Reading First: The Research Building Blocks for Teaching Children to Read, pg. 4)

A significant body of research exists that indicates that the ability to decode individual words accounts for most of the variance in reading comprehension. Students need to learn how to remember and reproduce exact letter patterns (e.g., letter-sound correspondences, spelling patterns, syllables, and meaningful word parts). (Learning First Alliance, 2000; National Reading Panel, 2000; National Research Council, 1998).

Following are examples of topics included in the Literacy First Phonics /Word Study training component:

1. Explanation/demonstration of letter/sound relationships and the introduction of related phonics features
2. Explicit, systematic instruction in blending strategies and sounding out words
3. Valid and reliable tools for screening, diagnosing and measuring progress improvement phonics
4. Criterion referenced performance standards for phonics
5. Teacher resource materials to enable teachers to teach phonics in systematic and explicit manner.

Vocabulary

Vocabulary development: refers to the words we must know to communicate effectively. Vocabulary can be described as oral vocabulary or reading vocabulary. Oral vocabulary refers to words that we use in speaking or listening. Reading vocabulary refers to words we recognize or use in print. (Put Reading First: The Research Building Blocks for Teaching Children to Read, 2001, pg. 34)

Vocabulary is inextricably linked to comprehension and comprehension is the goal of all reading instruction. The ability to comprehend text is a very sophisticated process that is dependent on many skills. The systematic and explicit instruction of comprehension/vocabulary skills is critical for student success in reading. Following are examples of topics included in the Literacy First Vocabulary training component:

1. Strategies to cause students to learn over 2000 words per year.
2. The importance of daily practice reading) such as monitored repeated readings, choral readings, and monitored independent reading practice
3. The importance of read-alouds in learning new vocabulary.
4. Developing word consciousness in students.
5. Using graphic organizers to enhance vocabulary understanding.

Comprehension

Comprehension is intentional thinking during which meaning is constructed through interactions between text and reader (Harris & Hodges, 1995). Thus, readers derive meaning from text when they engage in intentional, problem solving thinking process. (Report of the National Reading Panel, 2000, pg. 14)

The ability to comprehend text is a very sophisticated process that is dependent on many skills. The systematic and explicit instruction of comprehension skills is critical for student success in reading. Following are examples of topics included in the Literacy First Phonics Comprehension training component:

1. Systemic, explicit instruction in retelling, main idea, clarifying, summarizing, predicting, questioning, basic signal words (who, what, when, where, why and how) and advanced signal words/text structures (compare-contrast, cause-effect, problem solving, and time sequence).
2. Strategies effective readers use before, during, and after reading which directly impact comprehension.
3. Developing metacognition by proving answers/opinions and explaining thought processes using text clues and prior knowledge.
4. Systematic, explicit instruction in strategic reading tools: activating prior knowledge, self-monitoring, Question-Answer Relationships, Visual Reading Guide, graphic organizers, visualizing, and fix-up strategies.
5. The importance of author's purpose, text selection and student motivation on comprehension.

Fluency

Fluency: the ability to read orally with speed, accuracy, and proper expression. (Report of the National Reading Panel, 2000, pg. 3-1)

Fluency represents a level of expertise beyond word recognition accuracy, and reading comprehension may be aided by fluency. Skilled readers read words accurately, rapidly and efficiently. Recent research on the efficacy of certain approaches to teaching fluency has led to increased recognition of its importance in the classroom and to changes in instructional practices. Following are examples of topics included in the Literacy First Fluency training component:

1. Assessment tool to screen, diagnose and measure students' progress in fluency
2. Instructional strategies for to increase the reading rate per minute of students
3. Instructional strategies to teach proper expression (prosody i.e. pauses, intonation)
4. How to use teacher read alouds, guided repeated readings, choral reading and monitored independent reading practice to increase fluency.

Flexible Groups - Literacy Centers

Flexible Skill Grouping: the process of continually grouping students based on assessment of instructional needs to enable teachers to instruct students in their zone of proximal development in a systematic and explicit manner.

Literacy Centers: These provide students with daily opportunities to practice/reinforce reading knowledge, skills and processes. During Literacy Centers teachers ensure students will experience at least a 95-98% success rate in all the activities in which they participate.

Flexible skill groups provide the opportunity to teach or reinforce any reading skill in a systematic and explicit manner. Teachers select students for flexible skill group instruction using assessment results. Following systematic, explicit instruction in the group setting, students continue to practice the skill at a literacy center. Following are examples of topics included in the Literacy First Flexible Skill Group and Literacy Center Training component.

1. Using assessment results to place students in the correct flexible skill group for—phonemic awareness, phonics/word study, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension
2. Teacher resource materials that provide hundreds of activities for small group lessons and for practice in centers
3. Flexible skill groups and literacy center activities provide differentiated instruction at the student's correct instructional level
4. Teacher resource materials that describe activities, rotation, organization, and management of literacy centers

Leadership

The principal is responsible for establishing the vision and infrastructure for the school. In addition, the principal must create the culture in which the subordinates willingly do whatever is necessary to accomplish the vision.

1. Characteristics of ineffective and effective schools

Snow and associates in Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children

(1998), identified the characteristics of **ineffective** schools. They differed from their demographically matched peers along six dimensions:

- A. they were not academically focused,
- B. the schools' daily schedule was not an accurate guide to academic time usage,
- C. resources often worked at cross-purposes instructionally,
- D. principals were relatively passive in the recruitment of new teachers, in the selection of professional development topics and opportunities for the teachers, and in the performance of teacher evaluations,
- E. libraries and other media resources were rarely used to their full potential
- F. there were few systems of public reward for students' academic excellence.

Six dimensions of **effective schools** that support excellence in student reading achievement are:

- A. they are academically focused
- B. the daily schedule was an accurate guide to academic time usage.
- C. resources are focused on accomplishing the same purpose.
- D. principals are active in the recruitment of new teachers, in the selection of professional development topics and principal's support, monitor and hold teachers accountable for the effective implementation of the concepts/skills presented during professional development.
- E. libraries and other media resources are used to their full potential
- F. there are many systems of public rewards for students' academic excellence.

2. Structure and a considerate climate are essential
In Stogdill's Handbook of Leadership (1981), Bass delineates the importance of the leader providing a clear operational structure that includes goals, objectives, action steps with specific time lines for accomplishment, identification of resources (time, people materials) and strategies to monitor progress. In addition, the leader must create a considerate organizational culture if the goals of the organization are to be accomplished. The essential elements for this considerate culture include: effective two-way communication, involving subordinates in the decision making process, recognition for accomplishments, providing necessary support for accomplishment of tasks, strengthen the self esteem of subordinates and positive collegial relationships.
3. Student achievement increases as a result of school leaders being high in structure and consideration. Bass reports, in Stogdill's Handbook of Leadership (1981), multiple studies that indicate increased student achievement and greater teacher job satisfaction resulting from district administrators and building principals initiating high structure and consideration.
4. Principal must function as an instructional leader. Smith and Andrews in Instructional Leadership: How Principals Make a Difference (1989) delineate the activities on which the principal focuses as an instructional leader. These include activities such as: ensuring the curriculum and assessments are aligned, strengthening the teachers' instructional skills through effective professional development, frequent visitations to classrooms to monitor student instruction and learning, and working with teachers to overcome obstacles they encounter in the teaching-learning process.
5. Systematic and systemic processes are needed building wide. In Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children (1998) the authors indicate the need for a systematic systemic process to ensure the district provides the curriculum, materials and support services necessary to support excellence in student reading achievement. In a poor performing school, change can not occur in

some classrooms and not in others. To be successful, the change must be building-wide and include all components of the building infrastructure and culture.

Application of the Leadership Research by the Literacy First Comprehensive Reading Reform Process

To effectively implement the Leadership research the Literacy First Process serves as a catalyst to facilitate the accomplishment of the following in each school and district with which we have a contract. This is accomplished through eight days of intensive professional development and 22 days of systematic, explicit coaching/consulting in the school.

1. The district-wide reading goal is to have 85-90% of all students reading on grade level.
2. The district has developed and implemented a three year strategic reading plan designed to facilitate the accomplishment of the district reading goals.
3. The district determines a student reading achievement goal for each school building in the district and establishes procedures for the monitoring and development of building plan to accomplish this goal.
4. The district has a job description for building principals that clearly outlines the behaviors expected of principals as they perform in their role of instructional leader.
5. Building principals are monitored in their role as instructional leader by specified district administrators. This monitoring and support is accomplished through frequent observations in their buildings and documentation that detail their performance.
6. District administrators support building principals in their role as instructional leaders by:

- A. facilitating the development of principal professional growth plans to enhance the principal’s instructional leadership skills,
 - B. providing constructive feedback on principal performance,
 - C. recognition for student achievement goal accomplishment in the principal’s building
7. The principal spends an hour per day in classrooms observing during reading instruction. The purpose of these observations is to compare reality to the vision, then reinforce and make changes as are necessary.

Following are examples of topics included in the Literacy First Instructional Leadership training component.

1. How to create the culture to support reading excellence
2. How to create the infrastructure to support reading excellence
3. How to teach each student at the correct instructional level
4. How to work effectively with “key communicators” to change the culture in support of reading excellence
5. What the district must do to support schools in achieving reading excellence
6. How to implement a multi-year strategic reading plan to focus on reading achievement for all students
7. Why classroom visitations and teacher conferencing are critical to acceleration of student reading achievement
8. How to coach for systematic, explicit reading instruction in all classrooms
9. The importance of teacher and student recognition and celebrations of success.

Assessment Criteria

Assessment and data analysis must drive ALL leadership and instructional decisions. These assessments must identify both formative and summative data.

The Institute for the Development of Educational Achievement (IDEA) at the University of Oregon, in their *Final Report: Analysis of Reading Assessment t Instruments for K-3* stated there are four kinds of reading assessments called for by Reading First:

Outcome assessments – these provide a bottom line evaluation of the effectiveness of the reading program.

Screening assessments – these determine which children are at risk for reading difficulty and who will need additional intervention.

Diagnosis assessments – help teachers plan instruction by providing in-depth information about student’s skills and instructional needs.

Progress Monitoring assessments – determine if students are making adequate progress or need more intervention to achieve grade level reading outcomes.

1. Purpose of assessment - Meisels (1989) states the purpose of assessing is to understand what the children do or do not know in order to design an instructional program that can improve their knowledge and skill. This should result in improved student learning and provide criterion referenced documentation to meet accountability requirements.
2. Lack of prerequisite skills prohibits reading success - Sagor (1993) explains that if students lack essential prerequisite skills related to the lesson objective, they would fail to accomplish the objective. It is essential for teachers to assess what students know and do not know and then teach to the deficits.
3. Formative assessment must drive daily reading instruction - In Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children (1998), the authors state that classroom teachers need to assess students on a regular basis to ensure they are teaching to improve the student’s skill deficits and to verify that students are accomplishing reading curricular objectives. These assessments must be formative in nature so they will be sensitive enough to specify the particular needs of each child. In the primary grades, criterion referenced, formative assessments are needed in at least the following: phonological awareness, phonics/spelling, letter identification and mechanics of reading.
4. Children learn more effectively if they are taught at their instructional level - Vygotsky (1978) defines the *zone of proximal development* as that area of thinking or action that a child is unable to do independently but can be successful with assistance of a skilled person. Multiple criterion referenced formative

assessments are needed to identify this level in relation to the child's reading ability.

Application of the Assessment Research by the Literacy First Comprehensive Reading Reform Process

To effectively implement the assessment research the Literacy First Comprehensive Reading Reform Process serves as a catalyst to facilitate the accomplishment of the following in each school and district with which we have a contract. This is accomplished through eight days of intensive professional development and 22 days of systematic, explicit coaching/consulting in the school.

1. The district will identify assessments to meet all the national and state criteria to determine progress toward the accomplishment of the district and building student reading achievement goals. These will include Outcome, Screening, Diagnosis and Progress Monitoring assessments.
2. Daily reading instruction is driven by data gathered from assessments.
3. Children will be systematically and explicitly assessed using a structured reading diagnostic process that uses multiple assessment tools.
4. All students K-8 are assessed, using multiple assessments, within the first two weeks of the school year and every marking period thereafter to determine their progress in relation to the criterion referenced benchmarked reading curriculum.
5. Screening and Diagnostic assessments are used to create small, flexible skill groups that enable teachers to provide explicit instruction in the child's zone of proximal development.
6. As soon as students demonstrate mastery of a skill they are moved to another flexible skill group.

Instruction Criteria

Instruction is key to children learning to read. All students benefit from effective instruction, but the struggling reader is the one most dependent on the teacher's instructional skills.

1. Effective instruction is the single most important component of an effective reading program - The authors of Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children (1998) reaffirm the importance of districts providing quality reading instruction PreK – 2 . The authors state that this “is the single best weapon against reading failure.”

2. Explicit instruction is essential for struggling readers. - In Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children (1998) the authors indicate the need for explicit instruction in both the decoding of words and comprehension skills. Bloom (1976) says that 95 % of students can learn what they need to learn if teachers aptly systematic and explicit instruction.

3. Academic Learning Time (ALT) defined - Fischer and associates (1978) defined Academic Learning Time as the time that students successfully spend actively manipulating criterion referenced content. For this to occur, students must understand the criterion (lesson objective), participate in some activity where they physically or mentally manipulate information related to the objective and experience a success rate of 75-95% during the manipulation of the content.

4. If students do not understand the lesson objective, no learning occurs - Sagor (1993) and Caine and Caine (1991) tell us that students need to understand the purpose of the learning activities. If students see no purpose for learning, they will make little effort to learn.

5. Active manipulation of the content in relation to the lesson objective is crucial –
 - A. Webb (1985) states that students who gain the most do so because they actively participate in rich and full discussions of the content to be learned.
 - B. Pressley, in Reading Instruction That Works, reports that reading instruction is more effective when students interact with the curriculum in an active, problem solving manner. This metacognitively rich approach helps children to understand the what, where, when, why and how of the reading process.

6. Sagor (1993) writes that during instruction, teachers must provide students with opportunities for active participation, reinforcement, feedback and reteaching if necessary
7. Good and Brophy (1994) tell us that active participation during the learning process is essential. Active participation is when students are involved with realistic applications, manipulatives, problem solving activities, simulations, lab work, role plays, research and debates. Lectures, work sheets and watching video tapes are not considered active participation.
8. There is a significant difference between ability groups and flexible skill groups Glase (1998) in What Works and doesn't with At-Risk Students, quotes extensive research that condemns ability grouping. However, a flexible skill group for reading instruction is supported.
9. Pikulski (1994) in a review of five effective reading programs states that we must provide individual or small group instruction for at-risk students.

Characteristics of classrooms that facilitate reading achievement

Pressley (1998) in Reading Instruction That Works, reports that in classrooms in which there is consistently high student reading achievement the following characteristics were present.

1. There were classroom routines. Students knew what they were supposed to be doing.
2. There were a variety of teaching configurations, whole and small group instruction, cooperative learning and independent work.
3. Teachers mixed direct skill instruction with whole language type activities.
4. There was a high density of instruction. There was always something to keep the children academically engaged.
5. The activities were consistently academically rich. There was an absence of copying, cutting/pasting, coloring, off task discussions. Busy work was not present.

6. The classrooms were filled with messages that communicate that children can and will learn. These teachers were determined that their students would develop as readers.
7. All students were reinforced for their achievement.
8. During the skills lessons, children were constantly shown how the skills were related to the reading process.
9. To ensure student success during each lesson, teachers used scaffolding to provide students with hints and prompts.
10. Teachers fostered student self-regulation. Students often worked independently or with other children. Children were engaged in productive learning regardless of whether the teacher monitored them.
11. There was nothing haphazard about the reading instruction. Teachers were highly aware of the practices and purposes that drove their instruction.
12. Classroom management was hardly noticeable. Students were busy and happy as they were learning, with virtually no misbehavior.

Application of the Instruction Research by the Literacy First Comprehensive Reading Reform Process

To effectively implement the Instruction research, the Literacy First Process serves as a catalyst to facilitate the accomplishment of the following in each school and district with which we have a contract. This is accomplished through eight days of intensive professional development and 22 days of systematic, explicit coaching/consulting in the school.

1. During instruction there is a preponderance of Academic Learning Time (ALT). The three critical attributes of ALT are:
 - A. Students understand the lesson objective.
 - B. Students actively manipulate the content of the lesson objective.
 - C. As students manipulate the content of the objective, each student is experiencing a 75 – 95 % success rate.
2. Teachers use whole class lessons to:
 - A. Develop students oral language skills

- B. Develop student vocabulary
 - C. Reinforce previous learned skills or concepts
3. During whole class lessons, teachers frequently use:
 - A. Discussions in pairs or trios
 - B. Signaling by students to indicate their opinion during discussions
 - C. Word walls and other “Walls that Teach”
 4. Teachers use flexible skill groups for systematic explicit reading instruction in the following areas: mechanics of reading, phonological awareness, phonics, spelling, advanced decoding, comprehension skills, strategic reading tools.
 5. When teachers are instructing in a flexible skill group, the remainder of the students are working productively, as evidenced by Academic Learning Time.
 6. Teachers have students working in literacy centers as the teacher is working with a flexible skill group.
 7. During whole class or small group lessons, students are frequently required to:
 - A. Support their answer with content from the text.
 - B. Explain the process used to get the answer.

Intervention Process Criteria

No matter how proactive or preventative a reading process, some students will fall behind. The Intervention Processes used with these students must significantly accelerate their reading achievement for them to be performing on grade level as soon as possible.

1. Early identification and remediation of reading problems is essential - In Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children (1998) the authors state, “Cognitive and educational research demonstrates the negative effects of deferring identification of, and intervention for, children who need additional support for

early language and literacy development.” They support early intervention programs. This includes the screening of PreK and K students as they begin each school year. This screening must include: phonological awareness, letter identification, understanding of the functions of print, verbal memory for stories and sentences (retelling), lexical skills such as naming vocabulary, receptive language skills, expressive language and overall language development.

2. The earlier the intervention the better the results - Baas (1991) states that intervention programs that begin in kindergarten or first grade can cause up to a six-fold savings as compared to the cost of intervening later in the child’s educational experience.
3. Characteristics of effective intervention programs - The authors of Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children (1998), substantiate the notion that even with effective reading instruction, some children will not show satisfactory progress and will need additional intensive instruction. They emphasize that this intensive instruction must be in addition to and coordinated with the instruction received in the child’s regular classroom. In addition, the authors make a strong statement related to who should be the provider of this additional intensive reading instruction. The provider should be a highly trained and skilled reading specialist rather than a teacher aide or volunteer. Finally, the authors report that this additional intensive instruction must be based on assessment that can specifically identify each child’s strengths and deficits in relation to the reading process.
4. Pikulski (1994) in a review of five effective reading programs lists characteristics of effective intervention program. They include:
 - A. the intervention is closely coordinated with the regular reading instructional program.
 - B. provide more instructional time for the at-risk reader than that which is scheduled for the on-grade level reader.
 - C. ongoing assessment must be used to monitor student performance
 - D. highly skilled and knowledgeable teachers should be assigned to work with the at-risk readers to ensure the highest quality instruction.

5. Glase (1998) in What Works and Doesn't with At-Risk Students, summarizes characteristics of effective Title I programs. She states that it is important to have a combination of diagnostic and prescriptive teaching using flexible skill groups to ensure there is a maximum amount of academic learning time.
6. Students' experiencing reading success in the first year of middle school is critical. Roderick (1993) reports, ". . . a student's performance during the first year of middle school had an important impact on the chances that he or she would drop out of school. Students who had difficulty during the first year of middle school were more likely to drop out even after including information on their school performance through the transition to high school."
7. Transitions from one building to another have a negative impact on student achievement. Roderick (1993) reports that according to several researchers transitions consistently lead to significant decline in average grades, regardless of the grade at which the student changed schools.

Application of the Intervention Research by the Literacy First Comprehensive Reading Reform Process

To effectively implement the Intervention research the Literacy First Process serves as a catalyst to facilitate the accomplishment of the following in each school and district with which we have a contract. This is accomplished through eight days of intensive professional development and 22 days of systematic, explicit coaching/consulting in the school.

A district wide intervention plan is in place for both elementary and middle/high school students which includes the following:

1. Elementary Students Intervention Process
 - A. All children are assessed within the first two weeks of the school year and each marking period thereafter.
 - B. Formative assessments are used to determine each student's progression on the criterion referenced, benchmarked reading curriculum.
 - C. An intervention plan is developed for any child not performing on grade level as determined by the formative assessments.
 - D. The purpose of the intervention plans are to accelerate the student's reading achievement to enable him/her to be performing on grade level as soon as possible.
2. Students on intervention plans receive instruction from their regular classroom teacher as well a reading specialist. This instruction is carefully coordinated between the two teachers to ensure it meets the child's specific needs.
 - A. Students on intervention plans receive more reading instruction time than students not on an intervention plan.
 - B. Highly trained reading specialists are working with the students during the intervention period that is in addition to their regular reading class.
 - C. Children receiving additional reading instruction are frequently grouped with 3-5 other children who have the same instructional needs.
3. Middle/High School Students Intervention Process
 - A. Prior to entering either the middle school or high school students are assessed using a norm referenced or criterion referenced reading assessment to determine if they are reading on grade level.
 - B. Students reading below grade level are further assessed with one or more of the following to determine their instructional needs: graded word list, phonics assessment, spelling assessment, and phonological awareness assessment
 - C. As a result of this further assessment, an intervention plan is developed for each student reading below grade level.
 - D. Each student with an intervention plan is scheduled for 90 minutes of reading instruction per day until the student is determined to be reading on grade level.

- E. The teachers working with these students are highly trained reading specialists with no more than 20 students per 90 minute reading period.
- F. Within these reading classes, the teachers are using flexible skill groups to ensure student receive explicit instruction at the specific point of need.

Professional Development Criteria

Teachers and administrators must continually strengthen their knowledge and skills as related to instruction, reading curriculum, leadership and the management of change.

1. Teachers must have instructional skills as well as understanding the intricacies of the reading process. The authors of Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children (1998) emphasize the critical importance of teachers possessing effective instructional skills and an explicit understanding of the intricacies of the reading process to ensure student reading achievement.

2. Pressley reports a startling finding in his book Reading Instruction That Works. In a 1994 study by Moats, she found that only 20% of teachers who were teaching reading understood basic phonics concepts such as being able to identify consonant blends and digraphs in written words. Without such basic knowledge, these teachers can not be expected to explicitly teach children to read.

3. Essential components for effective professional development - Snow, et.al., in Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children (1998) state the components of professional development programs. These components include:
 - A. Content determined by assessment of teachers strengths and deficits
 - B. Planned, research based and comprehensive, multi-session approach
 - C. Supporting research and rationale provided for content presented
 - D. Provides guidance for teachers in the classroom application of the content
 - E. Encourages teachers to be metacognitive about the process of teaching reading
 - F. Includes in-class coaching of the teachers following the professional development program
 - G. Implementation of content presented is supported and monitored by building leadership team

Application of Professional Development Research by the Literacy First Comprehensive Reading Reform Process

To effectively implement the professional development research, the Literacy First Process serves as a catalyst to facilitate the accomplishment of the following in each school and district with which we have a contract. This is accomplished through eight days of intensive professional development and 22 days of systematic, explicit coaching/consulting in the school.

1. Content for professional development programs is determined by assessment of teachers strengths and deficits in relation to the teaching process and the reading curriculum.
2. There is a comprehensive multi-year professional development plan established.
3. The professional development plan contains a component to train new teachers in the district who missed the original training when it was offered.
4. All content presented includes supporting research and rationale for use.
5. Each program provides guidance for teachers with the classroom application of the content.
6. Teachers are encouraged to be metacognitive about the process of teaching reading.
7. The professional development programs include in-class demonstrations and coaching of the teachers following the professional development session.
8. Implementation of content presented is supported and monitored by building leadership team.
9. Each professional development session is evaluated by the participants.

Resource Management Criteria

If the resources of time, people and material are not managed effectively, there is little potential for excellence in student reading achievement.

Resources - Time

1. The effective use of time is a prime factor in student reading achievement - Snow in Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children (1998) reports the use of time in schools is a prime indicator of the effectiveness of instruction and student reading achievement. Those schools with the lowest performing student reading achievement consistently had time on task that was uniformly low or uneven.

2. Daily time for independent reading practice is important. - In Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children (1998) the authors indicate the need for time and materials to accomplish three goals.
 - A. support daily independent reading, in school, of texts which are engaging to the students
 - B. promote daily independent reading, outside of school, of texts that are engaging to the students
 - C. support daily assisted reading and rereading of texts that are slightly more difficult than their independent level.

3. A period of 90 – 120 minutes must be allocated if students are expected to be reading on grade level. The authors of Effective Schools and Classrooms (1989) report that at least 2 hours per day are needed in K-2 for reading instruction if you expect children to perform on grade level. For students to be reading on grade in grades 3-5, children need no less than 90 minutes per day of reading instruction.

Application of the Resource of Time Research by the Literacy First Comprehensive Reading Reform Process

To effectively implement the Resource of Time research, the Literacy First Process serves as a catalyst to facilitate the accomplishment of the following in each school and district with which we have a contract. This is accomplished through eight days of intensive professional development and 22 days of systematic, explicit coaching/consulting in the school.

1. K-2 classrooms spend 3 hours per day devoted to language arts instruction and at least 2 hours of that time concentrating on reading instruction.
2. 3 - 8 classrooms allocate at least 90 minutes (2 periods) per day for reading instruction.
3. All middle/high school students who are not reading at grade level receive 90 minutes, daily, of high quality reading instruction until they perform on grade level.
4. All students in all classrooms have independent reading practice every day for 3 - 20 minutes, depending on grade level/reading ability.
5. All K-5 teachers do two ten minute “read alouds” to students on a daily basis.

Resources - People

1. Reading specialists needed - The authors of Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children (1998) make the point that every school should have access to a reading specialist who has the responsibility of coordinating the overall reading program in the building.
2. Teacher collaboration essential - Snow and associates in Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children (1998), indicated that **ineffective** schools were

structured such that teachers almost invariably taught in isolation from one another.

Application of the Resource of People Research by the Literacy First Comprehensive Reading Reform Process

To effectively implement the Resource of People research, the Literacy First Process serves as a catalyst to facilitate the accomplishment of the following in each school and district with which we have a contract. This is accomplished through eight days of intensive professional development and 22 days of systematic, explicit coaching/consulting in the school.

1. There is a reading coordinator for each school of at least 350 students.
2. There is a reading specialist in each building to work with children in the Intervention Program.
3. The strongest reading teachers are working with Pre-Kindergarten, Kindergarten, First Grade and Second grade.

Resources - Materials

1. Proportionate allocation of resources - In Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children (1998), we read that those schools with the highest number of children on free/reduced lunch should be receiving a proportionately greater amount of resources to meet the educational needs of the large number of children reading below grade level.
2. Significantly reduce/eliminate worksheets in reading - Snow and associates in Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children (1998) point out that ineffective schools were characterized by a preponderance of ditto sheets and other relatively unengaging tasks.
3. Use decodable texts - As reported in Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children (1998), Hanson found positive effect of using decodable texts during

reading instruction. Pressley, in Reading Instruction That Works (1998), reports that, “Success in reading during the primary years depends on a heavy dose of reading texts that contain the letter-sound associations and combinations that the child’s reading program teaches, i.e., a heavy dose of so-called decodable texts (Juel & Roper/Schneider, 1985).”

Application of the Resource of Materials Research by the Literacy First Comprehensive Reading Reform Process

To effectively implement the Resource of Materials research, the Literacy First Process serves as a catalyst to facilitate the accomplishment of the following in each school and district with which we have a contract. This is accomplished through eight days of intensive professional development and 22 days of systematic, explicit coaching/consulting in the school.

1. The basal reading series has been assessed to determine where it aligns with the district comprehensive, criterion referenced, benchmarked reading curriculum.
2. All classrooms district-wide have classroom libraries for independent reading practice of at least 350 different titles of high interest reading material spanning a three to five grade levels of reading ability. At least 60% of these titles should be nonfiction.
3. There is a differentiated appropriation of resources. Schools with the greatest amount of struggling readers are receiving a proportionately larger amount of resources.
4. Decodable texts are available all K- 5 teacher classrooms to be used as part of reading instruction.
5. Leveled books are available in all K-5 teacher classrooms to be used as part of reading instruction.

6. Supplemental reading materials such as manipulatives, big books, rhyming books, predictable books, books on tape, listening centers, etc. have been purchased to fill the gaps in the basal series as it relates to the district comprehensive, criterion referenced, benchmarked curriculum.