BRINGING SCIENCE TO SCALE

THROUGH INCREASED TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

by

Marybeth Flachbart

A dissertation

submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education in Curriculum and Instruction

Boise State University

May 2009

BOISE STATE UNIVERSITY GRADUATE COLLEGE

DEFENSE COMMITTEE AND FINAL READING APPROVALS

of the dissertation submitted by

Marybeth Flachbart

Thesis Title: Bringing Science to Scale Through Increased Technical Assistance

Date of Final Oral Examination: 19 March 2009

The following individuals read and discussed the dissertation submitted by student Marybeth Flachbart, and they evaluated her presentation and response to questions during the final oral examination. They found that the student passed the final oral examination.

William Parrett, Ph.D.	Chair, Supervisory Committee
Jonathan Brendefur, Ph.D.	Member, Supervisory Committee
Kathleen Budge, Ed.D.	Member, Supervisory Committee
Robert Smart, Ph.D.	Member, Supervisory Committee

The final reading approval of the dissertation was granted by Diane Boothe, D.P.A., Dean of the College of Education. The dissertation was approved for the Graduate College by John R. Pelton, Ph.D., Dean of the Graduate College.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to my husband, Ray Flachbart. He is my best friend, cheerleader, and a constant champion of improving outcomes for all of Idaho. Thank you for making me put down the cookbook and get back to writing, for enduring countless weekends of me at the computer, and for parenting our wonderful children when I was sequestered behind close doors.

Ray, you make all things seem possible and I am a better person because I've been loved by you.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I thank Bill Parrett for his counsel and friendship. I'm grateful to the members of my doctoral committee, Jonathan Brendefur, Kathleen Budge and Bob Smart. Your questions made me a better practitioner. I also want to acknowledge Roger Stewart's contribution to this project and to Idaho Reading First.

Both the Idaho Reading First schools and I have had continuous support from key policy makers both within and outside of Idaho such as Marilyn Howard (who made me rededicate myself to this work over and over again) to Jana Jones who was the ultimate exemplar - and the members of the Western Reading First Technical Assistance Center, Jerry Silbert, Kathy Howe, Elizabeth Jankowski, and Linda Carnine.

Idaho's Reading First schools have expanded my knowledge base and improved literacy rates for hundreds of children. The hardworking administrators and dedicated teachers are the reason this project and Reading First exists. Your pictures and thoughtful gifts fill my office.

I will always be grateful to Lindy High who has served as an editor, counselor, and friend. And Idaho's children are better off because of the amazing contributions made by Rosie Santana, Steve Underwood, Deb Pfost, Earnie Lewis, Rose Rettig and Lisa Kinnaman.

We've all had wonderful teachers, but I think it is perhaps rarer to meet a teacher much less two who make a difference in your life after you think you're a grown up.

Neither this project nor any of my work in the past ten years would be possible without Mary Lou Slania and Suzanne Carrreker of the Neuhaus Education Center in Houston, Texas. You and Neuhaus took a chance on me and my life was forever altered. Thank you.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Marybeth Flachbart is the Deputy Superintendent of Student Achievement and School Accountability for the Idaho State Department of Education. Marybeth oversees programs related to at-risk children such as NCLB and Special Education. She has also served as Associate Director of Boise State University's Center for School Improvement and Policy Studies. Marybeth was as a member of the National Governors Association's Early Childhood Task Force and served on the Idaho Governor's Coordinating Council for Families and Children, as well as the state's Early Childhood Cross Systems Task Force. She is a past president of the Idaho Branch of the International Reading Association.

Before coming to Idaho, Marybeth was part of the teaching staff at the Neuhaus Education Center in Houston, Texas. Her classroom experience includes ten years with the Houston Independent School District as a Reading Specialist and Reading Teacher Trainer. Marybeth holds a Masters degree in Special Education from Fairfield University, an undergraduate degree from Marymount Manhattan College and is as an Academic Language Therapist, K-12 special education teacher, and Dyslexia Specialist.

ABSTRACT

Reading First is a federally funded program designed to increase literacy rates of at-risk children by providing researched based reading instruction in schools with a history of low achievement. The guidance provided by the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) for Reading First (RF) is very prescriptive (NRFTAC, 2007) in terms of both the content of instruction and the organization of a school. While many RF schools have made progress in closing the achievement gap, some schools have made exemplary strides in improving outcomes for students. A study conducted by the National Center for Reading First Technical Assistance Center (NRFTAC, 2007) offers insight into the differences among schools. NRFTAC identified ten schools in western states that stood out because they had a higher level of challenge (beginning of year reading proficiency) and yet had made significant gains with their students. Through interviews with these schools and their technical assistance providers NRFTAC created a handbook of best practices. Four areas of school organization that appear to impact achievement results for struggling readers and were not included in the original guidance provided by the U.S. Department of Education are assessment and data utilization, time and resource management, focused instruction, and instructional delivery. Can sharing the best practices of these high performing schools with schools struggling to meet the needs of all learners result in higher literacy rates?

This research examined the impact of increased technical assistance based on NRFTAC's handbook on literacy rates in participating schools. Participation in the Increased Technical Assistance project (ITA) was voluntary. Schools were randomly selected from the quadrant of schools categorized by RF project staff as low achievement, low growth. Student achievement (both adequate progress and outcome) in the participating schools was compared to a control group (schools within the quadrant).

Participants reported that ITA was both useful and effective (NWREL, 2008). They identified actions such as strengthening data analysis, focused interventions, and incorporation of professional learning communities (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2006) in grade level team meetings. In spite of the positive experiences reported by both school personnel and ITA providers, student achievement data did not show a clear association between ITA and reading proficiency.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Reading First (RF) is a federally funded program designed to increase literacy rates of at-risk children by providing researched based reading instruction in schools with a history of low achievement. Reading First is a part of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) 2001 and was one of the few pieces of the NCLB legislation that provided additional funding to states. Between 2002 and 2008 Idaho received approximately 24 million dollars to improve early reading outcomes. A key finding of Idaho's RF implementation has been the variability in student literacy achievement both between schools' and between grades within schools (Stewart, 2006, 2007). The variance in results has presented a persistent challenge to RF project staff because RF has been noted for the prescriptive nature of the program (National Reading First Technical Assistance Center [NRFTAC], 2007; Manzo, 2006; Coles, 2003). Not only was the program prescriptive but so was the methodology used to determine grant awards. Only schools with greater than 60% of their students "at-risk" were eligible to apply for RF. In Idaho "at-risk" is defined as the combined percentage of students identified as low socio-economic, English language learners, migratory, and students with disabilities. An additional criterion was the school had to be located in a district with a low tax base. Low tax base was determined by a local education agency's ability to adequate fund schools. Only districts' with less than the state average were eligible for Reading First funding. At the time of the initial awards in 2002 the average local education agency's

per pupil expenditure was approximately $5,600. Each of the 20 funded districts spent less than the state average.

Along with the demographic similarities, each of the schools received the same amount of funding, used the same curricular materials, and received the same professional development for the past four years. In spite of the initial similarity, the difference in results is quite striking (Table 13). The question for RF staff was what variables separated these schools and what, if anything, could project staff do to improve outcomes?

While RF project staff considered this question the western branch of NRFTAC distributed the *Best Practices Handbook* (NRFTAC, unpublished manuscript 2007). NRFTAC's *Best Practices Handbook* is the result of interviews with RF schools in 10 western states that had greater levels of challenge (percentage of "at-risk" students) and significantly higher results. Through interviews with these schools and their technical assistance providers, NRFTAC identified four areas of school organization that high-performing RF schools have in place: assessment and data utilization, optimal time and resource management, instructional focus, and instructional delivery.

Perhaps because of the change in administration at the federal level (Manzo, 2006) or because of the change in technical assistance providers available to states, the U.S. Department of Education has decided not to distribute NRFTAC's handbook at this time (S. Klaiber, personal communication June 5, 2009). The author of this paper had a close working relationship with the Center and was therefore able to use the information in terms of planning professional development and technical assistance to schools. The

handbook first became available to Idaho in 2007. The availability of the handbook coupled with Idaho RF project staff's questions regarding variability in results led to this research study. (Copies of the *Best Practices Handbook* are available to Idaho schools through the Reading First Office, Center for School Improvement and Policy Studies, Boise State University).

We know how to teach children to read. There is converging multidisciplinary research accumulated and consolidated over the past 30 years (Adams, 1990; National Reading Panel, 2000; National Research Council, 1998). The research base has advanced our understanding of the nature of struggling readers and effective interventions (Coyne, Kame'enui & Simmons, 2004). We know more about reading than about all other learning disabilities combined (Stanovich, 2000). And yet controversy continues. The literature review section of this paper demonstrates that "Great Debate" (Chall, 1967) is still with us.

But while the debate goes on (what constitutes high quality reading instruction) what is clear is that as of 2009 we know less about the process. "Developing and sustaining the use of research-based classroom practices is far more complicated than announcing the existence of a knowledge base and requiring teachers to use it" (Gersten, Chard, & Baker, as cited in Crockett, 2004). We have yet to implement research based practices in all classrooms. But perhaps while RF was so prescriptive in what and how to teach reading, it could have gone further and included structural elements of school improvement such as assessment and data utilization, optimal use of time and resources, instructional focus, and increased intensity. This study examined whether or not highly

trained facilitators could help schools bridge that knowledge gap and bring science to scale in four Idaho schools.

Background

Policy makers on the federal level have tried to eradicate achievement gaps for more than forty years. The first Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was passed under the Johnson administration in 1965 (U.S. Department of Education, Elementary and Secondary Act of 1964, n.d.). ESEA was part of Johnson's vision of a "Great Society." In his speech at the University of Michigan, President Johnson unveiled a host of domestic programs that were intended to end poverty in America. "The Great Society is a place where every child can find knowledge to enrich his mind and to enlarge his talents" he said. "Your imagination, your initiative and your indignation will determine whether we build a society where progress is the servant of our needs, or a society where old values and new visions are buried under unbridled growth" (Johnson, 1964).

The establishment of ESEA required that the bill be reauthorized every five years. Substantial changes were made to the program in 1994, under the Clinton administration, with the passage of the Improving America's Schools Act (U.S. Department of Education, Improving America's Schools, n.d.). Congress' reauthorization of ESEA included holding states accountable for low performing schools, creation of charter schools, increased funding for bilingual education, education of migratory students, and an emphasis on research based practices.

The next reauthorization of ESEA was made in 2001 under the Bush administration. In this reauthorization not only was their language to support holding states, districts, and schools accountability but the addition of sanctions if schools failed to meet the state's definition of adequate yearly progress (U.S. Department of Education, Legislation, Regulations and Guidance, n.d.). Under NCLB schools that failed to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) for three years in a row were required to offer "school choice". If the school failed to make AYP for a fourth year the school was then required to offer supplemental educational services (tutoring). Most states only applied those sanctions to schools receiving federal funds. In 2001 Idaho did not have an accountability system but it was a requirement of the NCLB and in 2004 the Idaho State Board of Education chose to institute a universal accountability system. In other words regardless of whether or not a school received federal funding the state instituted the same sanctions (Idaho State Board of Education, Instruction Research and Student Affairs, n.d.1). ESEA is again due to be reauthorized but at this time it is unclear what if any significant changes will be made to the law.

National Reading Panel and Reading First

Much of what later became the guidance documents for Reading First had as its basis research that was supported by a prior administration. Under the Clinton administration, the National Institutes for Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) funded several important studies that became the basis of two national reports, The National Research Councils' *Preventing Reading Disabilities in Young Children*

(1998) and the National Reading Panel's (2000) Report. These reports played heavily in the Bush administration's 2001 reauthorization of ESEA, and the creation of a new program under ESEA; Reading First. According to the U. S. Department of Education (USDOE), Reading First is "A program that focuses on putting proven methods of early reading instruction in classrooms. Through Reading First, states and districts receive support to apply scientifically based reading research—and the proven instructional and assessment tools consistent with this research—to ensure that all children learn to read well by the end of third grade" (U. S. Department of Education, Reading First, n.d.1).

Controversy Surrounding Reading First

The implementation of Reading First has been plagued with controversy. Initially, controversy surrounded the publication of the National Reading Panel's (NRP) report that reduced reading instruction to five key areas: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension (2000). In *Reading the Naked Truth: Literacy, Legislation and Lies* (2003), Gerald Coles gives a detailed critique of the NRP's methodology and conclusions. Coles states that the report's findings were imported, with little modification and no criticism, into the Reading Section of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). He argued that this cozy fit was not coincidental and stated, "The NRP Report was an ideologically-driven effort to eliminate any 'wiggle room' from the conclusion that reading should be taught through programs based on phonemic awareness and phonics."

Coles was joined by others including the International Reading Association (IRA), in his criticism of both the NRP report and Reading First. The dissent among leading literacy experts began prior to NRP and Reading First. In 1995 Barbara Foorman published an article, "The Great Debate": Code-Oriented Versus Whole Language Approaches to Reading Instruction. Foorman is a faculty member at the University of Texas and she along with colleagues such as Jack Fletcher, David Francis has long supported an approach that emphasizes code instruction in early literacy instruction. Foorman served on the National Reading Panel, Coles did not. Apparently at one point the issues surrounding the report became so heated that members of the NRP felt the need to defend itself. In an article written for the International Reading Association's monthly publication *Reading Today* (1999) Timothy Shanahan, a professor at the University of Illinois and panel member, felt the need to defend himself and his colleagues. He explained the panels thinking:

> Needless to say, the appointment of the National Reading Panel has itself been controversial. For instance, on Feburary 18, 1998, *Education Week* ran a story entitled "New National Reading Panel Faulted Before It's Formed" (Manzo, 1998). In that article, Richard Allington, a former member of the Board of Directors of the International Reading Association, expressed his belief that the panel would not be able to do the job: 'To think that we can create a panel with no staff and little funding ... that is going to be able to provide us with any kind of comprehensiveness or reliability is unlikely... The public and legislators are being led down a primrose path that suggests that research has the answer.'

The National Reading Panel did come to conclusions and as Coles stated in his book, *Reading the Naked Truth,* many of the recommendations of the NRP's report became the basis of Reading First.

Over time the controversy became less about limiting literacy instruction to five areas and more about the manner in which Reading First was implemented. In the fall of 2006, the Inspector General for the USDOE stated in their report that USDOE violated conflict of interest rules when awarding grants to states and that officials improperly selected the members of review panels that awarded large grants to states, often failing to detect conflicts of interest and bias (Manzo, 2006). The release of the report was followed by the resignation of Chris Doherty, the Director of Reading First. Items about the program have appeared 567 times in *Education Week* since September of 2006. Issues relating to Reading First's implementation have not been limited to educational press. Stories about impropriety appeared in *USA Today* (8/7/2005) and the *New York Times* (9/23/2006).

While RF has been characterized by continued controversy, it had also consistently demonstrated positive results by external evaluators. The Institute of Educational Science (IES) (2008) released an interim evaluation of the program in April of 2008 which demonstrated RF did have a positive and statistically significant impact on the total class time spent on reading instruction. What IES was not able to determine was whether or not that additional time resulted in increased literacy (Manzo, 2008). The IES evaluation was an interim report. From a research perspective that makes sense because they were looking for trends over time, however RF is run out of time. The delay in

being able to definitively identify a difference between RF schools and other Title I schools has contributed to Reading First's zero funding in 2009 (Manzo, 2008).

Reading First had been a cornerstone of NCLB. Perhaps in an effort to sway the opinion of policy makers, approximately six weeks after IES released their evaluation, the USDOE released national data that paints a very different picture of the impact of the program. The U.S. Department of Education, Reading First: Student Achievement, Teacher Empowerment, National Success (n.d.) reported RF has resulted in increased comprehension. 44 out of 50 state education agencies reported increases in the percentages of students proficient in reading comprehension in grade one, 39 out of 52 in grade two and 27 out of 35 reported improvement in grade three.

Given that the chairs of both the House and Senate Appropriation Committees recommended zero funding the program in 2009 it appears highly unlikely that the program will provide as much financial support to state education agencies in the near future (L. Craig, personal communication, August 18, 2008). The Fordham Foundation released a report in March of 2008, *Too Good to Last: The True Story of Reading First* (Stern, 2008) which perhaps details the controversy best. RF was different from every other Title I program. It was prescriptive, it did impact the selection of curricular materials, and it did prescribe what would be taught and how. In the minds of some literacy experts and state leaders the withdrawal of financial support for RF is a tragedy (Lyons, personal communication, September 15, 2008; Jaquet, personal communication, October 31, 2008) to others it is a relief.

Reading First in Idaho

Reading First in Idaho was in many ways an extension of the state's reading initiative. The reading initiative is composed of three separate laws. The first law required all Idaho educators working with students in grades kindergarten through eight to complete a three-credit class in early literacy instruction. The course (Comprehensive Literacy) is based on the results of the National Reading Panel and includes both code-based instruction (phonics) and assessment.

The second law created the state's first early literacy assessment the Idaho Reading Indicator (IRI). Idaho's implementation of the IRI in 2000 changed reading instruction within the state. It changed instruction because it measured pre-cursor literacy skills such as phonemic awareness, letter recognition, and fluency. Prior to the creation of the IRI the state used the Iowa Test of Basic Skills as its measure of literacy achievement. The ITBS was first given in third grade and districts reported their results in terms of average achievement (Howard, personal communication, November 15, 2008). The IRI not only was a different type of assessment it also was the first state test to have the results disaggregated by sub-populations (ethnicity, socio-economic status, students with disabilities, English language learners and migratory students).

The third law requires that schools provide an additional 40 hours of intervention to any child who scores significantly below grade level. When the reading initiative was first passed in 1999 the legislature set aside $4 million to support the implementation of each of the requirements. By 2002 the economic situation in the state had changed and funding for the effort was cut to $2.8 million dollars.

Reading First offered additional funds to support the state's professional development and it also offered a mechanism to provide more specificity in terms of intervention than state law allowed. Since 2002, Idaho has received approximately 24 million dollars (U.S. Department of Education, Reading First State Grants, n.d.) to support its efforts.

The 30 participating schools that make up cohort one and two share demographics and histories of low achievement. Some Idaho schools have the data to demonstrate that Reading First has significantly improved the reading achievement. Findings from the most recent evaluation (Stewart, 2007) show the positive benefits:

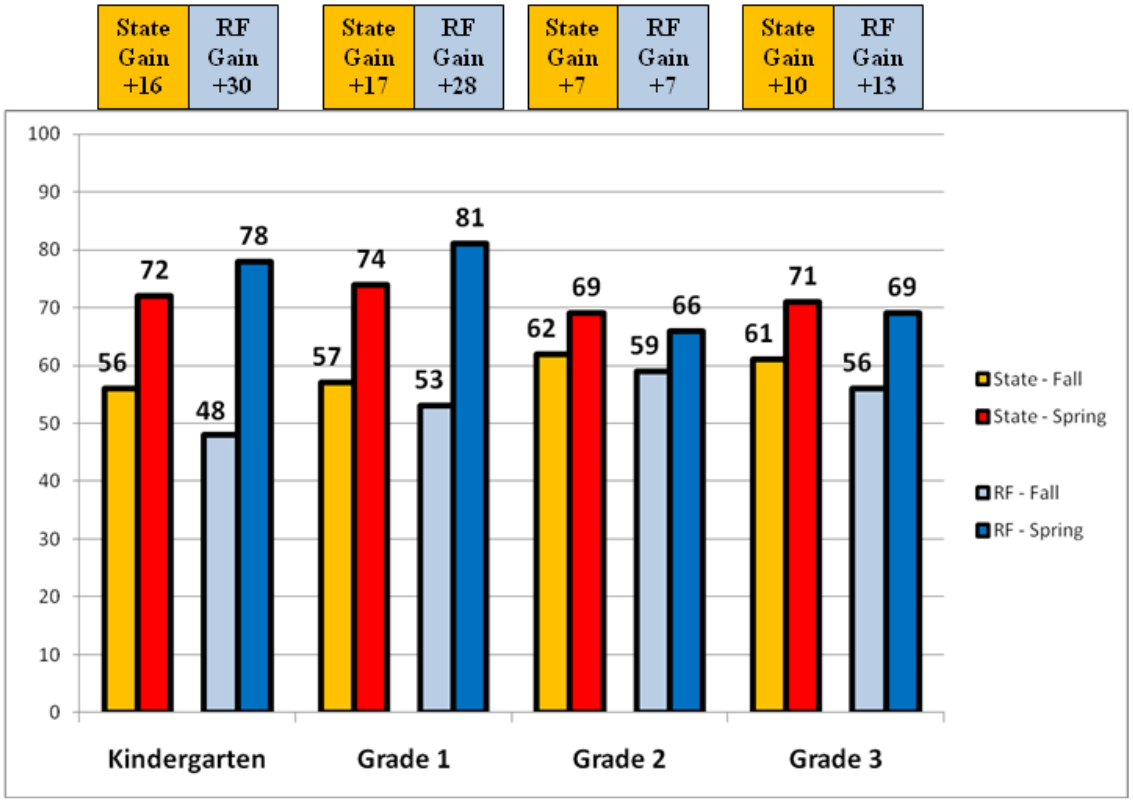
- Average 3rd grade Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) grade equivalent scores in Idaho RF schools are higher than the state average from the last year of statewide ITBS testing (2001). The average for all Idaho 3rd graders in 2001 was the 54th percentile, which equates to a grade equivalent score of 3.7. Idaho RF 3rd graders averaged 4.1 grade equivalent score in 2004, the first year of Idaho RF test data. This is substantially above the last available ITBS statewide average. The performance by 3rd graders has been sustained for the duration of the Idaho RF with average grade equivalent scores holding relatively steady at 4.1, in 2005, 4.0 in 2006, and 4.0 in 2007;
- On average 94% of kindergarteners passed a screener on the Texas Primary Reading Indicator (TPRI) during the spring 2007 administration of the assessment.

- A three-year trend in Hispanic kindergarten scores reveals that on average about 90% pass the TPRI screener each spring.
- In twelve Idaho RF schools, 100% of Hispanic kindergarten students passed a screener in the spring of 2007.

The Northwest Regional Education Laboratory (NWREL) is serving as the external evaluator of Idaho Reading First for 2007-2008. Table 1 is analysis of NWREL's findings regarding RF schools versus the state of Idaho as measured by the IRI. In all but one grade RF schools out perform the state average. This is particularly encouraging because of the demographics of RF schools.

Table 1

Comparison of RF Schools and State Averages



The state level data shows the positive impact Reading First has had on all schools, but one has to drill down further to uncover an issue that has persisted since the beginning of RF; variability in results. Not all schools are consistently improving outcomes. And even within the schools that are showing significant gains not all grades within the school are successful (Stewart, 2007, p. 5).

The variability in test scores is not new and not unique to Idaho. Student achievement has varied within Idaho RF schools since the first year of implementation. Variability among schools is also true on a national level (NRFTAC, 2007, unpublished manuscript). Given the prescriptive nature of the program the variance in student achievement is puzzling. Schools all received the same amount of funding (approximately $500,000 over five years), have had access to the same professional development, received the same level of technical assistance, and in the majority of schools use the same reading program. So why have some schools done so well while others are still struggling (Stewart, 2007)?

RF project staff looked for an association between curricular material and achievement. There was none. Schools with high and low achievement use the same reading program. Many of the low performing schools cited student mobility as an issue. As a result, mobility and the possible correlation to student achievement were examined in 2005, 2006 and 2007 (Stewart, 2007). There was no predictive value between student mobility and achievement (Stewart, 2006, 2007). Several high performing schools also have mobility rates.

RF project staff then explored building leadership. The Idaho State Department of Education contracted with Northwest Regional Education Laboratory (NWREL, 2006) to study principals within high and low achieving RF schools and found very little variance in terms of behaviors. Principals in the least successful (as measured by student achievement) and most successful schools appear to be engaging in the same number of

grade level team meetings, conducting the same number of observations, adhering to the same program requirements, etc.

So the question of what variables separate high and low achieving schools is still unanswered. The question impacts policy. How long do we continue to fund schools that are not making progress? Several western states have adopted a model first employed by the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) called "no excuses" (Reading First State Directors Meeting, 2006). BIE Reading First schools that do not achieve a minimum of 60% growth in student achievement are removed from the program after the first year. As a result of this approach, BIE's growth rate is extremely impressive. But the question that persists for Idaho's RF leadership team is what, if anything is being done to support the schools that fail to achieve those criteria?

Statement of Problem

The converging multidisciplinary research conducted over the past thirty years demonstrates that we know how to teach children to read (Adams, 1990; National Reading Panel, 2000; National Research Council, 1998). We know more about reading difficulties than all other learning disabilities (Stanovich, 2000). We have a clear understanding of effective interventions (Coyne, Kame'enui, & Simmons, 2004).

What we know less about is bringing the science to scale. How to do we ensure that best practices are happening in every class and for every student? "Developing and sustaining the use of research-based classroom practices is far more complicated than announcing the existence of a knowledge base and requiring teachers to use it" (Gersten,

Chard, & Baker, as cited in Crockett, 2004). Bringing all children to proficiency by third grade is complicated and requires making difficult decisions regarding curricular selection, scheduling, personnel assignments, etc. It means creating a school wide infrastructure that insures a system of support and also allows teachers to customize the infrastructure to meet the unique needs of the students in their classrooms. While we have not been universally successful, some schools have created that school wide infrastructure.

A study conducted by the National Reading First Technical Assistance Center (NRFTAC, 2007, unpublished manuscript) may offer some insight into the differences among schools. NRFTAC identified ten schools in western states that stood out because they had a higher level of challenge (beginning of year reading proficiency) and yet had made significant gains with their students. NRFTAC studied the school level systems through interviews with these schools and their technical assistance providers. The report may not be released by the USDOE (S. Klaiber, personal communication June 5, 2009) but it examines four areas of school organization that appear to impact achievement results for struggling readers. The areas are: data utilization, time and resources, focused instruction, and instructional delivery. These alterable school-wide variables may have a relationship to increased outcomes for at-risk students.

What we do not know, or have not been successful in doing within Idaho, is how to bring “science to scale”. How do we ensure that research based practices are in place in every classroom? According to Stewart (2006, 2007) and the Northwest Regional Education Laboratory (NWREL, 2008) in spite of the significant infusion of resources,

Idaho RF still sees variance both between schools and between grades within a school. How can we mitigate those variances in achievement?

Research Questions

A recurring theme in Idaho's RF implementation has been *the more intensive the needs of the student the greater the need for intense instruction.* What if Idaho's RF leadership team applied the same philosophy to the technical assistance provided to schools? What if we shared the results of the NRFTAC's unpublished manuscipt through on-site technical assistance with our RF schools struggling to meet the needs of all learners? The purpose of this research was to determine if increased technical assistance would result in increased student outcomes.

The two research questions of the study were:

- Will increased technical assistance result in higher student achievement?
- If not, does the presence of an external technical assistance provider result in significant organizational changes within the school?

Identifying Variance

Using 2007 student achievement data as measured by the ITBS (Riverside Publishing) and adequate progress data as measured by the Idaho Reading Indicator (IRI), schools can be sorted into four quadrants:

- High achievement, high growth schools
- High achievement, low growth schools

- Low achievement, high growth schools
- Low achievement, low growth schools.

RF project staff was not comfortable eliminating schools from the program and until they were certain that the schools had been provided intensive support. During the fall semester of the 2007-2008 school year project staff studied the variance and reflected on what could or should have done differently to support the schools. The working hypothesis was that perhaps the most needy schools simply need more: more assistance as they build the infrastructure to support a school wide intervention system, more direction as they implement data based decision making, and more support as they deal with resistance to change and the impact on their staff of a history of low performance (Fullan, 2006). Providing intensive support to small group of schools impacted RF project staff's ability to provide the same level of assistance to all schools and so they sought and received permission from the Executive Committee to differentiate technical assistance. Prior to this project technical assistance was provided equally to all schools. This project meant that some schools would get extensive technical assistance while others would receive very little if any. The RF Executive Committee is comprised of 12 elected representatives that represent district leaders, building administrator, reading coaches and teachers.

The alterable variables (assessment and data utilization, time and resources, focused instruction, instructional delivery) identified in NRFTAC's *Best Practices Handbook* (unpublished manuscript, 2007) were not part of the original guidance issued by the USDOE. Since they were not included in previous guidance, RF staff considered

that perhaps providing intensive training in these areas might positively impact student achievement. Using a combination of the information gained from the *Best Practices Handbook,* (NRFTAC, 2007, unpublished manuscript) and training materials developed by NRFTAC (*Meeting the Needs of All Learners,* in press) project staff committed to providing intensive support to four of nine schools in the lowest quadrant. Participation was voluntary and participating schools were randomly selected. Trained technical assistance providers assigned to each of the four schools spent one day a week for 8-10 weeks in each of the schools during the spring semester of 2008. Will increasing the support provided to schools result in improved outcomes for students?

Significance of the Study

The Elementary and Secondary Act (ESEA/NCLB) on average provides approximately 40 million dollars a year to Idaho to increase the proficiency of low socio-economic students. While 96% of those funds are distributed to local education agencies based on their percentage of poverty, 4% or $1.6 million is held by the state for school improvement. Traditionally those funds have been distributed to schools through grants. This method has produced varied results in terms of student achievement and the state has not seen a statistically significant increase in proficiency among students living in poverty (L. Kinnaman, personal communication, October 3, 2007).

The variability in results of the current method and an opportunity to apply for a new funding source for the state prompted Idaho's School Improvement Coordinator to research other methods of support. Many states have used a state system of support

(Barr & Parrett, 2007) with success for several years. Rather than applying for a specific project, schools apply to receive increased technical assistance for three years. Washington's state wide project has resulted in positive gains for many of the schools (Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction Washington, School Improvement Assistance, n.d.1). Given the additional funding source and the compelling results of the Washington project, Idaho has elected to alter the state's school improvement efforts.

RF was the first state wide approach to school improvement sponsored and supported by the Idaho Department of Education (SDE). As funding decreases from RF the SDE wants to continue a state system of support to schools but expand it beyond literacy and beyond primary grades. Using a combination of the structure created by Washington's school improvement efforts and the knowledge gained through the implementation of Idaho RF, a new effort, Idaho Building Capacity was launched in January of 2008. Before RF is discontinued we have an opportunity to learn from the schools. We know the leaders in RF schools. We have experience with their current systems and understand the demographics, curricular materials, and professional development models in place. Perhaps the knowledge gained by both the RF schools and technical assistance providers can add to the knowledge base of school improvement at both the state and local level.

Assumptions

This study makes the following assumptions:

1. The data included in the 2006 and 2007 reports (Stewart) are correct and that the conclusions drawn were accurate
2. Northwest Regional Laboratory's Evaluation of the Increased Technical Assistance Project is accurate
3. Honest and truthful information was provided both by the school personnel and the technical assistance providers involved in the project
4. Each school's assessment data is accurate as reported by the Idaho State Department of Education and Riverside Publishing.
5. Self reported data by schools is accurate.

Limitations

A limitation of this study was the length of time provided for increased technical assistance. As noted by NWREL, "After less than five months of assistance, it was likely too early for any measurable school-wide impact. Results do show a potential association between ITA and improved student outcomes in grade 3."

An additional limitation was the change in both the IRI and ITBS. In 2007 the state revised the IRI and adopted AIMSweb as its screening measure. While the assessment meets the USDOE's definition of valid and reliable the change in assessment limits comparisons to prior years. The same is true for the ITBS. In 2007 the state

elected to change the form used and comparisons between 2007 ITBS and prior years' administrations is therefore limited.

Another limitation of this project was the technical assistance providers' availability to schools. While each of the providers dedicated themselves to being in the schools no less than ten days between February and May, they all had many other responsibilities. One school was located more than 150 miles from the service provider. As a result visits to the school needed to be bundled and the once a week schedule was simply not possible.

District participation while not originally recognized - was also a limitation. In one school the district had launched a district wide leadership effort that often proved challenging for both the administrator and the technical assistance provider. The administrator tried to be available to the provider but his schedule was often not his own. In another district, any purchase of curricular materials had to be approved by the English/Language Arts Coordinator. In spite of the identified need, the additional level of approval prevented the administrator from implementing the change until the following school year. In summary the limitations of this project included:

- The length of time to implement the project
- The change in the assessments used within Idaho Reading First
- Staffing of the project (additional responsibilities beyond ITA)
- District policies, procedures and participation

This study might have been best if it had been conducted sometime in the future or even the past when longitudinal data from both assessments could have been

compared. However RF project staff has been studying RF schools and needed to eliminate variables such as curricular selection, mobility, and leadership to get to this point in the collective knowledge base. And while we could, for the sake of research, wait until we had longitudinal data available on the new assessments the reality is RF has simply run out of time. The difficult task of discontinuing schools must be considered and we need to know now if increasing the intensity of instruction for adult learners will result in better outcomes for children. A sense of urgency out weighed the limitations for project staff.

Delimitations

Delimits would be the fact that ITA was within the RF framework. Again as noted by NWREL several conditions supported the project. These included:

- All of the ITA schools were voluntary participants.
- ITA was provided within the context of Reading First and used familiar materials and methods such as action planning.
- ITA providers were experienced and skilled and had some opportunities to collaborate with each other.
- The state director, author of the original Idaho Reading First grant, and this paper was one of the technical assistance providers
- Resources support the “intensive” nature of the project (47 visits over five months).

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

The multidisciplinary research that was used to create Reading First legislation is well documented (Armbruster, Lehr, & Osborn, 2001; National Research Council, 1998; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000) what is not often seen in literacy research are the other significant processes that must be in a school for research based instruction to be supported and embraced. Both NRFTAC and Idaho RF project staff shared a sense of urgency. Perhaps NRFTAC's sense of urgency prevented them from doing a thorough literature review prior to their attempts to distribute the *Best Practices Handbook* and *Meeting the Needs of All Learners.* And while both products have not been thoroughly vetted or released by the USDOE they have been widely distributed within Idaho. NRFTAC has been reorganized.

Perhaps the reorganization was too early for these important works to be distributed nationally. One could speculate that the reorganization is a result of the Office of the Inspector General's report or perhaps it is simply because of limited funding. In either case the result is the same. The three literacy research centers associated with the project are no longer providing technical assistance to states. At this time it appears the *Meeting the Needs of All Learners* will be distributed nationally but the *Best Practices Handbook* will not (S. Klaiber, personal communication, June 5, 2009).

Initially NRFTAC was composed of the Florida Center for Reading Research, Vaughn-Gross Center at the University of Texas, and the University of Oregon's Center for Teaching and Learning. The Florida Center was headed by Joseph Torgesen, the Vaughn-Gross Center by Sharon Vaughn, and University of Oregon's Center was headed by Doug Carnine. Each of these individuals is considered a leader within the field of literacy instruction and was a past member of the National Reading Panel. Each of the three regional centers participated in either the data collection associated and/or the conclusions drawn from the study that formed the *Best Practices Handbook* and the subsequent training materials *Meeting the Needs of All Learners.* Each of the three regional centers recognized the need to distribute lessons learned from RF implementation before the project was no longer funded. Interestingly, the lessons learned are less about content and more about process.

Organizing Schools to Help Struggling Readers

Developing and sustaining the use of research-based classroom practices is far more complicated than announcing the existence of a knowledge base and requiring teachers to use it" (Gersten, Chard, & Baker, as cited in Crockett, 2004). Some literacy leaders believe RF went too far in trying to bring evidence based practices into schools (Coles, 2003) others feel it did not go far enough. In other words, the legislation "announced the existence of a knowledge base" but neglected to provide insight into how to implement those practices in the classroom. Bringing all children to proficiency by third grade is complicated and while RF has been the most prescriptive early reading

initiative ever sponsored by the USDOE it may have not gone far enough in terms of the structures that need to be in place in a school for substantial reading improvement. NRFTAC identified ten schools in western states that stood out because they had a higher level of challenge (beginning of year reading proficiency) and yet had made significant gains with their students (2007). What separated these high achieving schools was not the content of reading instruction (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension) but the organization of the schools. NRFTAC identified four areas of school organization substantially different in high achieving schools. These organizational differences were not part of the original RF guidance provided by the U.S. Department of Education. The four areas are assessment and data utilization, optimizing time and resources, instructional focus and instructional delivery. The information from the study became the basis of NRFTAC's *Best Practices Handbook* (unpublished manuscript 2007) and subsequent training materials *Meeting the Needs of All Learners* (in press).

The following literature review reflects the research in each of the areas. It should be noted that in some areas there are limited studies that meet the criteria of *high quality* research (National Institute for Literacy, Put Reading First: The Research Building Blocks for Teaching Children to Read, n.d.) which is both interesting and compelling because it speaks to the need for more research on implementing significant change within schools. The literature review for this study, in some instances, was limited to "promising practices". While there might not be a group of empirical studies that

support the practice, it deserves consideration based on the results of the schools that employ it.

Assessment and Data Utilization

Reading First requires schools to have what the USDOE considers a comprehensive assessment program for literacy in grades K-3. A comprehensive assessment program includes four types of tests: screening, diagnostic, progress monitoring, and outcome (U.S. Department of Education, Final Reading First Guidance, 2002). Prior to releasing Reading First funds to states, the USDOE convened a group of assessment experts that reviewed commonly used literacy assessments to determine their overall technical adequacy, including reliability and validity (Carnine, Silbert, Kame'enui, Tarver, & Jungjohann, 2006). The results of this review were posted on the University of Oregon's website however the panel's work is no longer posted by the University. Interestingly commercial vendors still post the summary of their work (AIMSweb, n.d.) and it was referred to by many RF state directors in writing the state application.

Screening Assessments

Screening assessments are to be given to all students in K-3 in the fall, winter, and spring. The purpose of the screening is to identify children who might be at risk for reading failure. There are two types of screening assessments, program specific tests and Curriculum Based Measurements (CBM) (Carnine, Silbert, Kame'enui, Tarver, &

Jungjohann, 2006). Depending on the reading program, program specific tests tell teachers whether students have mastered the necessary skills to move on in the curriculum or whether they need more instruction in a particular area. Program specific assessments are created by the publisher and are based on the curricular materials. While very helpful to teachers for planning purposes, they are not standardized.

CBMs are not linked to particular commercial reading programs but focus on the skills associated with reading success at that grade level. CBMs can be used as both screening and progress monitoring tools (Carnine, Silbert, Kame'enui, Tarver, & Jungjohann, 2006). A reading CBM is a measure that is tied to the developmental stage of reading. In other words, the skills measured in a first grade CBM would differ significantly from the skills measured in a third grade CBM. CBM are usually short in duration (often less than a minute) to facilitate frequent administration. A CBM allows for repeated measure of student performance and is designed to be sensitive to student achievement change over time (Hall & Mengel, n.d.2).

Diagnostic Assessments

If the administration of a CBM categorizes a student as "at-risk," further assessments need to be administered to identify the specific area of weakness. There are many diagnostic reading tests and it is up to each state to select the diagnostic assessment used in its Reading First schools. Common diagnostic assessments in Idaho are the Woodcock-Johnson (Woodcock, 1997), Test of Word Reading Efficiency (TOWRE, Pro-Ed), Gray Oral Reading Test (Weiderhold & Bryant, 2003) and the

Consortium of Reading Excellence's Phonics Survey (2008). Administering a diagnostic assessment is critical for struggling readers. The earlier an issue is detected the greater the likelihood of successful remediation. Torgesen's (2004) article *Catch them before they fall,* compares the outcomes of students with early intervention versus outcomes of students who are identified as having reading issues in third grade or beyond. According to Torgesen, the earlier students are identified as needing in intervention the greater the likelihood they will be proficient readers. Connie Juel (1988) concluded from her longitudinal research of struggling readers that for students who do not read on grade level when exiting third grade, the chances of them ever reading on grade level was 1 in 8.

Progress Monitoring

Like screening assessments, there are two kinds of progress monitoring: in-program progress monitoring assessments and CBM progress monitoring.

An in-program assessment is a criterion-referenced assessment that measures a student's knowledge against defined criteria. Did the student acquire the knowledge taught in the selected commercial reading series? In-program assessments are helpful to teachers because they can determine whether a particular student needs more instruction in an area or whether several students need additional intervention. For administrators results of in-program assessments allow them to determine 1) whether the teacher is adequately covering the material and 2) whether a particular class may need to have more resources to be able to keep up with their grade level peers.

A CBM progress monitoring tool assesses the student's growth towards the expected norm and is not based on a commercial reading program. According to the National Center on Student Progress monitoring (National Center on Student Progress Monitoring, n.d.), "Progress monitoring is a scientifically based practice that is used to assess students' academic performance and evaluate the effectiveness of instruction." Measuring progress for students performing below grade level often presents a challenge to teachers. Teachers want to measure growth, but grade level or in-program assessments are too advanced and way above the student's current instructional level. A CBM administered frequently can help teachers determine if the intervention they are providing is making a difference. To implement progress monitoring, the student's current levels of performance are determined and benchmarked. Goals are identified for learning that will take place over time.

One caution when implementing progress monitoring on a school level is that teachers need to understand the purpose. The purpose of progress monitoring is not to gather more data, but to gather data in order to make instructional decisions. Used appropriately, progress monitoring can be a very powerful tool in separating struggling readers from students with reading disabilities.

Outcome Assessments

A variety of outcome assessments are used in Reading First schools. The Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) is a common selection, as is the Stanford Achievement Test, 10th Edition (SAT). These tests are administered in addition to the state's accountability

assessment. Under the NCLB states are required to measure student knowledge each year in grades 3-8, and once in high school in reading and math. The reason Reading First requires a standardized test in addition to the state-mandated assessments do not allow for national comparison. Typically state tests are scored by levels (advanced, proficient, basic, below basic) like the NAEP. The ITBS and SAT give grade level norms and compare students nationally. The outcome measures allow evaluators of Reading First to conduct national comparisons and provide states a common measure of adequate progress.

On a national level, the data collected from both the progress monitoring assessments and outcome assessments has been informative. Program administrators have noted that although increasing numbers of students in Reading First schools are meeting grade level standards on progress-monitoring measures, fewer are able to demonstrate proficiency on state standards-based measures (Levy, 2007). This trend could be viewed in several different ways. If one followed Goodman's criticism (2006) one might believe the emphasis on improving discrete reading skills (phonics, fluency) has impacted students' ability to comprehend material. Or if one takes into consideration that to be eligible for Reading First the school has to be in a high poverty area, one might follow Hart and Risley's (1996) research that the majority of children living in poverty have impoverished language skills. Either way the data indicates that there needs to be an emphasis on vocabulary and comprehension for students in Reading First schools.

Figure 1 is taken from the NCFRTAC's manual *Meeting the Needs of All Learners.*

Comprehensive Assessment Plan

Assessment	*Time Frame*	*Students Assessed*	*Main Purposes*
Screening	Beginning of School Year	All K-3 Students	• Determine risk status • Determine instructional groups • Helps teachers differentiate instruction based upon identified instructional needs.
Diagnostic	As Needed	Selected Students (when more information is needed for program planning)	• Helps plan instruction. • Helps teachers differentiate instruction based upon identified instructional needs.
Progress Monitoring	Determined by Risk Status	All K-3 Students	• Determine if students are making adequate progress with current instruction. • Inform schoolwide action plans.
Outcome	End of School Year	All K-3 Students	• Gives school leaders and teachers feedback about the overall effectiveness of their reading program. • Inform schoolwide action plans.

Figure 1. Comprehensive Assessment Plan

Decision Making Rules

CBMs were originally created by Deno and Mirkin in 1977 to measure the effectiveness of interventions with students with reading disabilities. For many years CBMs were only used by teachers working with students with disabilities (Deno, 2007). Over the last ten years the use of CBMs has expanded to the general education community and they are now used by all state education agencies receiving RF funds.

However as previously stated, data collection is only one piece of the puzzle. Deno and his colleagues have advocated (Deno, 2007) using the information gained from administering CBMs to decision making rules for many years. NRFTAC study of high performing RF schools indicates that they employ a precise methodology in terms of decision making – 3 point decision rule or trendline analysis. Whether schools select the 3-point decision rule or a trendline approach, educators are required to set goals. Benchmark data (student's current level of proficiency) is established and goals are set before implementing the intervention. Data is collected over several weeks and then a decision is made as to whether the intervention is working.

Figure 2 shows a goal line for a fictitious student, Michael. Michael reads 53 words per minute. The goal established by the grade level team is to bring Michael near the third grade expected norm of 90 words per minute by the end of the school year.

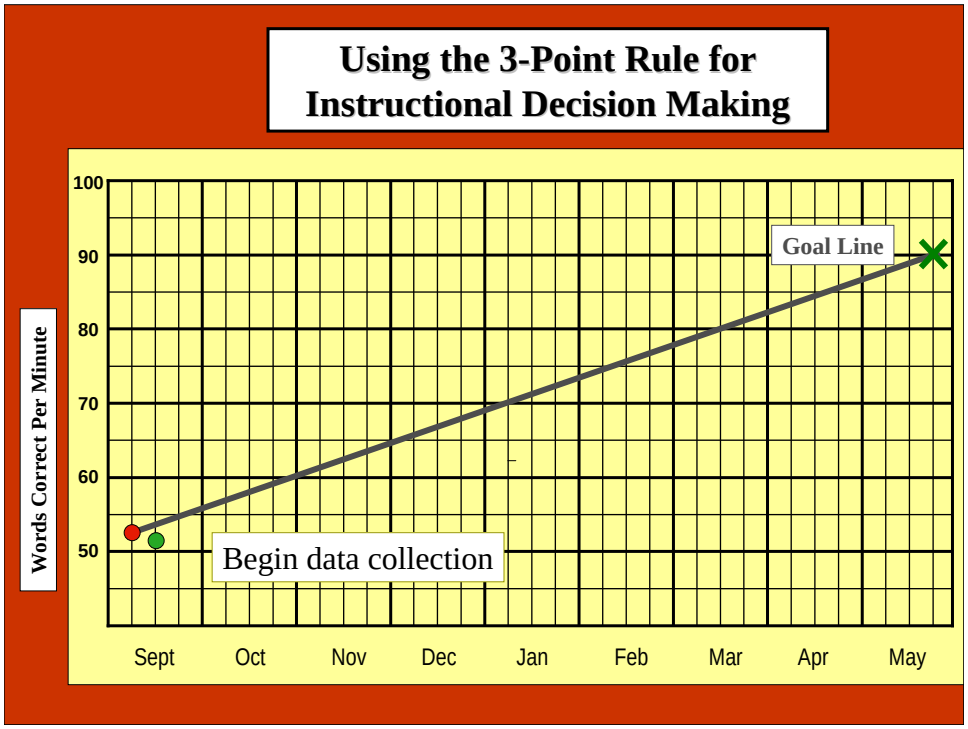


Figure 2. Goal line for a fictitious student, Michael

Michael's achievement is measured on a regular basis, in this case weekly, and progress toward meeting his goal is measured by comparing expected and actual rates of learning. Based on these measurements, teaching is adjusted as needed. The National Center on Student Progress Monitoring (n.d.1) recommends that teaching be adjusted as needed based on the student's response to the intervention.

The alteration of instruction based on 3 data points is referred to as the *three point decision rule.* A baseline is established by administering three probes within the same week. The baseline is the middle score. (In Figure 3 the three Xs in the left corner represent the initial probes.) Michael's progress toward meeting his goal is measured

weekly. To use the three point decision rule, six data points are selected, and the decision about whether the student is making sufficient progress is based on the last three data points. According to the National Center for Student Progress Monitoring (Hintze & Stecker, 2006) the data should be analyzed using these three rules:

- If 3 consecutive data points are below the goal line, consider making an instructional change in the student's program.
- If 3 consecutive data points are above the goal line, consider raising the goal.
- If the consecutive data points are neither all above or nor below the goal line, continue with the student's instructional program and monitor progress.

Figure 3. Depiction of Michael's progress toward the goal of 90 words per minute

Figure 3 is a depiction of Michael's progress toward the goal of 90 words per minute. Michael seems to be responding to the intervention (the three data points are neither all above nor all below the goal line) so the instructional decision would be to continue the current intervention. That may not always be the case and sometimes an instructional change is necessary. If the program is changed the teacher would indicate a change and then again gather three data points and make an adjustment. Figure 4 is an example where the teacher made an instructional change and continued to measure achievement.

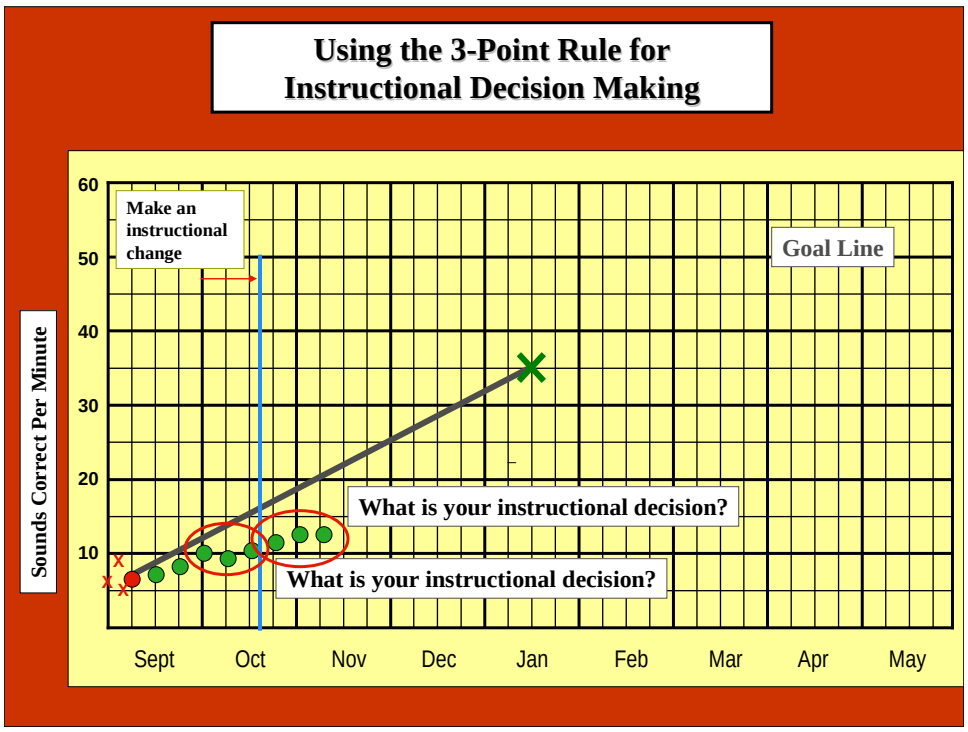


Figure 4. Student does not respond to intervention

This process of gathering data and adjusting instruction was included in the reauthorization of the Individual with Disabilities Education Act 2004 (U.S. Department of Education, 2006a) and is now being adopted nationally and is now being adopted nationally. The technique is commonly referred to as Response-to-Intervention (RTI). It is a way of separating those students who need additional support from those with specific learning disabilities. In the case depicted in Figure 4, the student did not respond to the intervention. The teacher and/or the grade level team would again adjust instruction to determine whether the student responds. These types of data sets can also be used as a way to document intervention as part of a request for special education services. In Figure 4 the student did not respond to the intervention. The grade level team would at this point have enough information to make a referral to special education. While it is clear from the graph that if this student continues to progress at the current rate he or she will not meet their goal, the overall trend is positive. Often with students with disabilities special educators use a different type of decision making rule: *trendline analysis.* Is the overall trend positive? A progress monitoring system allows educators to separate struggling readers (students who respond to intervention) from students with learning disabilities (Hintze & Stecker, 2006).

Sometimes students respond almost immediately to intervention. While it might appear students do not need to continue with intervention, it is suggested that instead the teacher or grade level team consider raising the goal line (Hintze & Stecker, 2006).

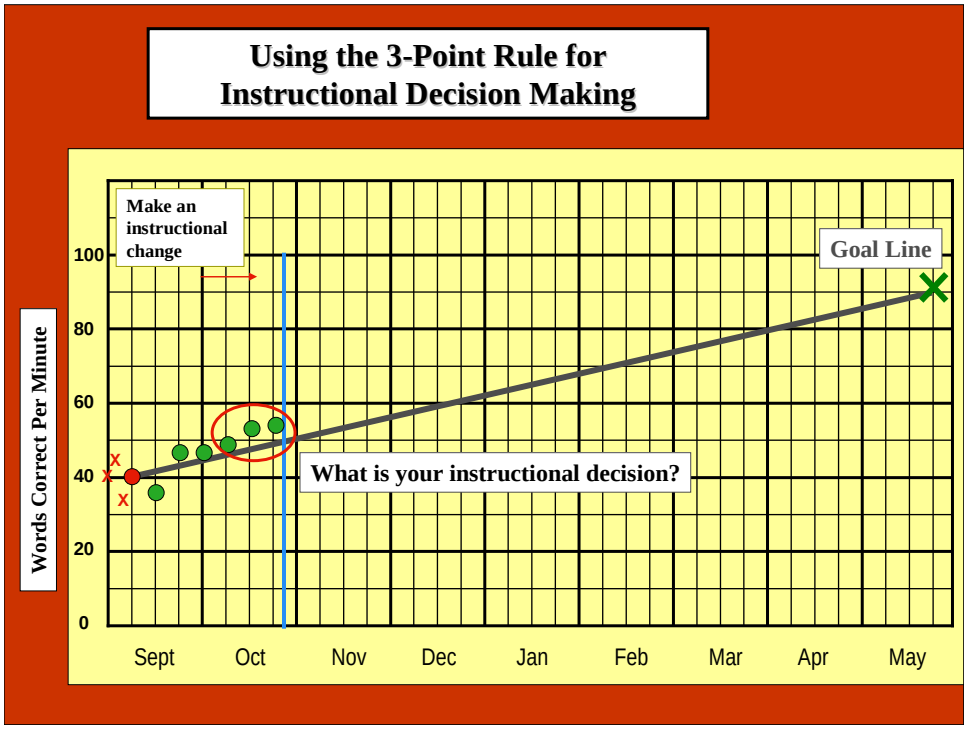


Figure 5. Graph from a student who benefited from the intervention

---

Figure 5 is a graph from a student who clearly benefitted from the intervention. Depending on the resources available to a school educators could decide to discontinue intervention or to raise the goal.

Progress monitoring assessments can also be used to measure groups of students. For example, Figure 6 is an achievement graph for a small group of students. In this scenario the teacher was collecting data on four second grade students.

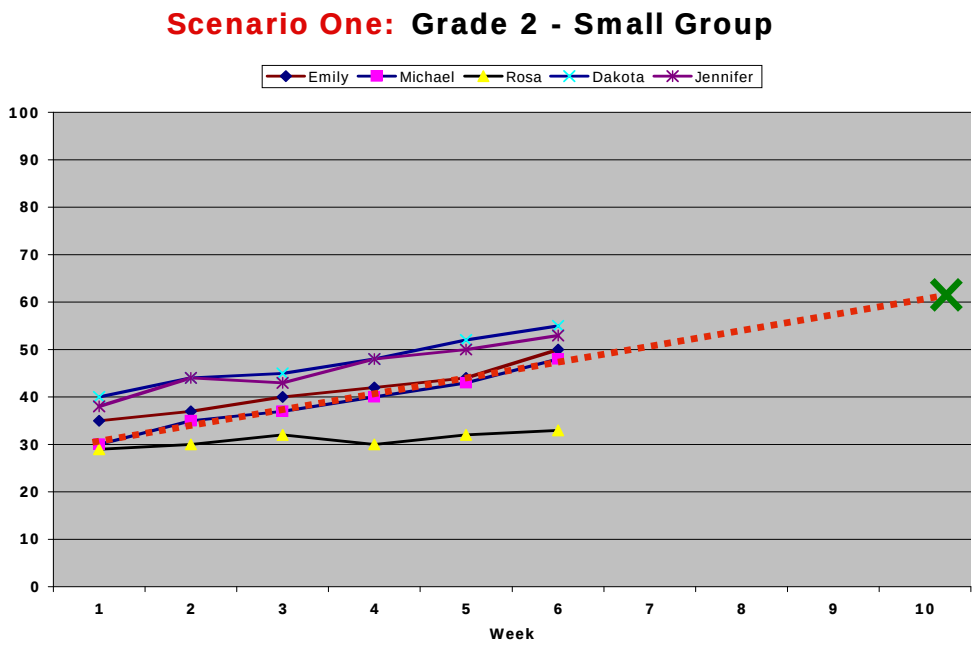


Figure 6. Achievement graph for a small group of students with four out of five meeting or exceeding the goal line

---

Four out of five students are meeting or exceeding the goal line. Only one student is struggling. In this instance the issue appears to be "student specific" and the grade level team would problem solve for the one child while maintaining the current intervention for the other four.

Figure 7 depicts the opposite scenario.

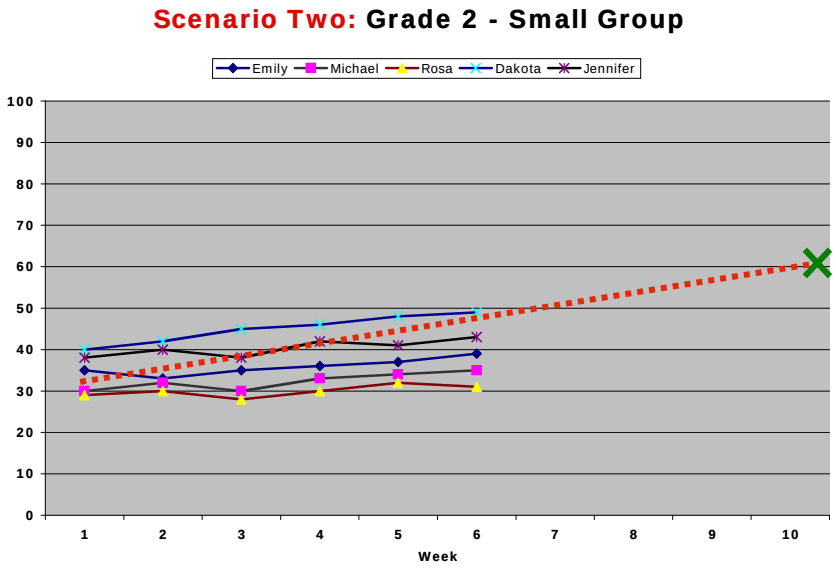


Figure 7. Achievement graph for a small group of students with one out of five meeting or exceeding the goal line

---

In this situation additional data would have to be collected since only one student is meeting the expected goal. It could be that while all the students need remediation they have different needs in terms of instructional focus. It could be that the curricular materials and/or methodology are not appropriate to the student needs. It also could also be that the person providing the remediation needs additional skills to work with at-risk students. The benefit of small group progress monitoring is that it encourages a separation between specific student needs and greater systemic issues.

Optimizing Time and Resources

In order for teachers to make decisions that impact instruction they need to work in a school that provides a system of support. “If you put a good teacher up against a weak system the system will win every time” (Schmoker, 2006). Regardless of the pre-literacy skills a child enters school with teachers have on average 720 days (180 school days x 4 years) to make a student a proficient reader. To meet that goal schools need to examine adjustable elements outside of the classroom teacher’s control. Two that are both alterable and have significant correlation to increasing outcomes for students are instructional time and use of resources (materials, personnel, space and funding). Research on high-performing, high-poverty schools demonstrates that schools that beat the odds dedicate sufficient instructional time to reading (e.g., Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Denton, Foorman, & Mathes, 2003; Hoffman, 1991; Taylor, Pearson, Clark, & Walpole, 2000; Weber, 1971). In contrast, studies of ineffective schools reveal the school's daily schedule was not an accurate guide to academic time usage and that resources often worked at cross-purposes (National Research Council, 1998). Accelerating learning challenges schools to examine their current schedules and find more time for instruction. Children certainly benefit from a well rounded education, but without the ability to read the likelihood of them acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills to be life long learners is doubtful. Over half of the men and women incarcerated in America are illiterate (Barr & Parrett, 2001). Making reading a priority in early elementary grades is critical for children living in poverty. Priority is not defined as importance, but rather order of importance. The research on high poverty/ high performing elementary schools

provides evidence that making reading instruction the ultimate priority in grades kindergarten – third grade benefits children.

Instructional Time

Some children need more time to meet grade level expectations. How much time is needed for instruction is based on the number of skill gaps. Children from low socioeconomic families will fall further behind their more affluent peers unless they are provided with remediation.

In Idaho, all Reading First schools use a system called the 3- Tier Model (Vaughn, Linan-Thompson & Elbaum, n.d.). The 3-Tier Model created by Vaughn, Linan-Thompson, and Elbaum was sponsored by the U.S. Office of Special Education (OSEP) and was designed to prevent reading disabilities by providing early intervention. Literature on the impact and implementation of the 3-Tier Model appears frequently in both special education and literacy journals (Denton, Vaughn, & Fletcher, 2003; Hjelm, Wanzek, Vaughn, in press; Vaughn-Gross Center, 2005, Vaughn & Fuchs, 2003). The three tiers are:

- Tier One – primary instruction for all Students
- Tier Two – Supplemental instruction for some students
- Tier Three – Intensive instruction for a small group of students

The 3-Tier model is not prescriptive but is a framework for schools to consider in terms allocating time, materials and personnel. It is usually represented by an inverted triangle.

Figure 8 represents a graphic depiction of the tiers.

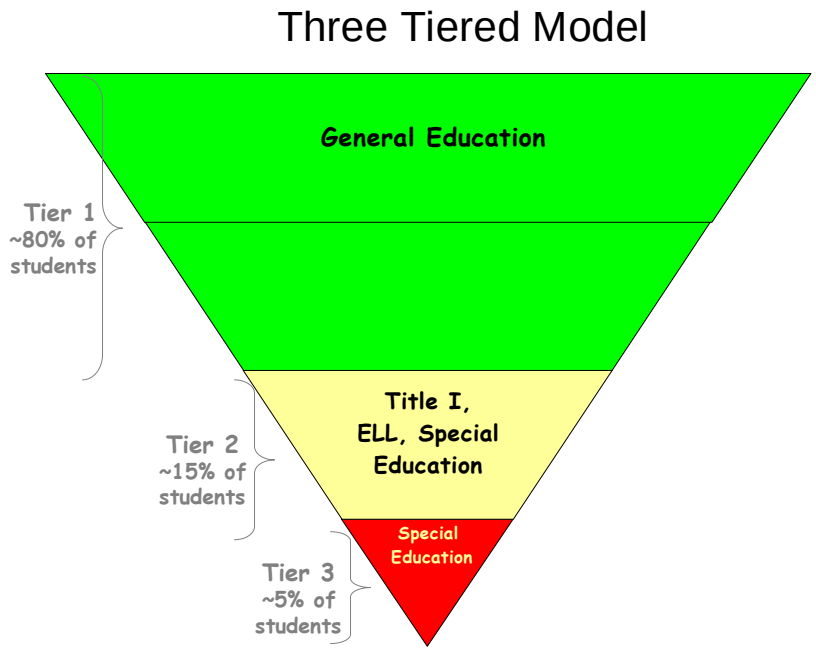


Figure 8. Three Tiered Model used by Idaho Reading First schools

Tier one is primary instruction – grade level material taught to all students. According to Sharon Vaughn and her colleagues, schools know if tier one instruction is working if their general education curriculum is meeting the needs of 80% of their students. In Idaho, all Reading First schools are required to have 90 minutes of uninterrupted reading instruction (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). The 90 minute reading block is Tier 1 or primary instruction. Tier 1 does not mean whole group, nor does it imply that students who need Tier 2 or Tier 3 instruction do not receive support

during the 90-minute block. For the 3-Tiered system to work, high quality instruction has to occur in all settings. The 90 minute block provides the equity shot (Diamond, personal communication, 2002).

Ninety minutes of instruction maybe insufficient for struggling readers. The research is clear that students struggling with reading need more instructional time (Foorman, 2007; Carnine, Silbert, Kame'enui, Tarver, Jungjohann, 2006; Vaughn & Linan-Thompson, 2003). It is a consistent finding that the amount of time that children are actively engaged in tasks they can perform successfully contributes significantly to achievement (Berliner, 1990; Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2004). Tier-2 is designed to provide that additional support and may need to be provided to 15% of the student population. According to NRFTAC's *Best Practice Handbook*, high achieving RF schools provide pre-teaching and re-teaching in small groups in addition to the 90 minute reading block. The additional 30 minutes is a time for teachers to scaffold and provide more practice.

Depending on the degree of deficit and the number of skills that need to be remediated some students may need even more time for instruction. In the 3-Tier framework that would be considered Tier-3. Students would receive intensive instruction, focused on their specific learning needs, in small groups.

Fielding, Kerr, and Rosier (2007) recently published a book on the experience of the Kennewick, Washington school district, *Teaching All Children to Read: Annual Growth plus Catch-Up Growth For All Students.* Kennewick is known for the district-wide approach taken towards reaching the 90% proficiency goal (Fielding, Kerr &

Rosier, 1998). In 2003 all but one of its seven elementary schools met that goal. And the school that did not had 89.4% proficiency. The Kennewick school district attempted to quantify the amount of time needed to remediate reading difficulties. The philosophy in the district is that catch-up growth is driven by proportional increases in direct instructional time.

Linda Carnine (personal communication, April 1, 2008) shared a presentation based on *Teaching All Children to Read: Annual Growth plus Catch-Up Growth for All Students* with Idaho's Reading First staff. In the presentation she used a fictitious student (Tony) to demonstrate the method for quantifying sufficient time. If Tony is reading is in the third grade and reading at the 12th percentile and only receives instruction during the 90 minute reading block he is likely to make at least one year's growth in third grade. However, that means he will still be in the 12th percentile entering fourth grade.

Fielding, Kerr, & Rosier then asked how many years of normal growth there are between the 12th and the 50th percentile in reading at the elementary schools? They equated each unit of 13 percentile points to the 50th percentile equals a year of growth. The state standard for proficiency in Washington is the 50th percentile. The difference between Tony's current percentile and the standard is 38; 38 divided by 13 is 2.9. So Tony is basically reading at a kindergarten level. When this method was used in Kennewick's schools it prompted school leaders to find more instructional time. Kennewick's most at-risk students in grades kindergarten through third the students receive 2.5-3 hours of reading instruction daily (Fielding, Kerr, & Rosier, 2007).

While it may be challenging for schools to meet the needs of all students, the growing body of research demonstrates that it is worth the effort to rethink the daily instructional schedule and plan for students who need additional time. As students move through the grades providing additional remediation time becomes more challenging and may impact students' ability to acquire knowledge and skills in other content areas. It also is unfortunately unlikely that students in grades four and above will ever close the gap (Juel, 1988).

Pacing Guides

Another time consideration has do with the amount of content covered during the school year. If learning is to be accelerated teachers need to move at sufficient enough pace during reading instruction to ensure that students make more than one year's growth each school year. A study by Hanushek, Kain, O'Brien, and Rivkin in 2005, National Bureau of Economic Research, revealed that there was more variability between classrooms within schools than between school settings, particularly in urban compared to rural settings (Foorman, York, Santi, & Francis, in press).

One way to ensure that all students receive the same content instruction is to use a pacing guide. A pacing guide is a curricular map. It is a way of laying out the year's curriculum with specific goals for completion dates and plans for interruptions in instruction such as assessment and vacation time.

A pacing guide also supports the use of other school personnel. Providing small group secondary and tertiary instruction often involves the use of Title I teachers, special

educators, and paraprofessionals. If the children receiving additional support are from a variety of classes it is much easier to align pre-teaching and re-teaching if teachers are covering approximately the same material in the 90-minute reading block (Coyne, Kame'enui, & Simmons, 2004). A pacing guide is a way to ensure that all students are receiving approximately the same instruction.

Some schools choose to go further in their planning and create specific instructional plans for each group by grade level (University of Oregon, 2006). A School Wide Instructional Plan (SWIP) identifies groups of learners, the content of their instruction, whether or not they receive secondary or tertiary instruction, the staff member responsible for each part of instruction, the method of determining effectiveness, and the frequency of progress monitoring. A sample SWIP is included in Appendix A.

Resource Allocation

If schools make reading proficiency a priority then resources such as personnel, space, and curricular materials also need to be used to support the acceleration of the most needy students. Unfortunately minority and low socio-economic students have not historically had access to the best teachers. For that reason, when ESEA (NCLB) was reauthorized in 2000 some of the most dramatic and far-reaching mandates involved new minimum qualifications for teachers and paraprofessionals (Cowan, 2005). *Good Teaching Matters* (Edtrust, 1998), a report by Edtrust states that "The teacher's influence on student achievement scores is twenty times greater than any other variable, including class size and student poverty." A more in-depth discussion on teaching is included in

the instructional delivery section of this literature review. However, since personnel assignments are often made at the administrative level, it is important for district and building leaders to consider the qualifications of the educator selected to serve at-risk readers.

Grouping Formats

In order to make the most efficient use of time schools need to examine how children are grouped during reading instruction.

High-performing schools use a variety of formats during the 90-minute reading block. Some schools group students heterogeneously, some homogeneously, and still others use a combination of both heterogeneous and homogeneous formats depending on the skills being taught. In schools grouping heterogeneously, the children stay in their homeroom classroom for reading instruction. Additional resources (personnel and supplemental materials) may be provided during the reading block to allow small group instruction. Figure 9 demonstrates a heterogeneous grouping format.

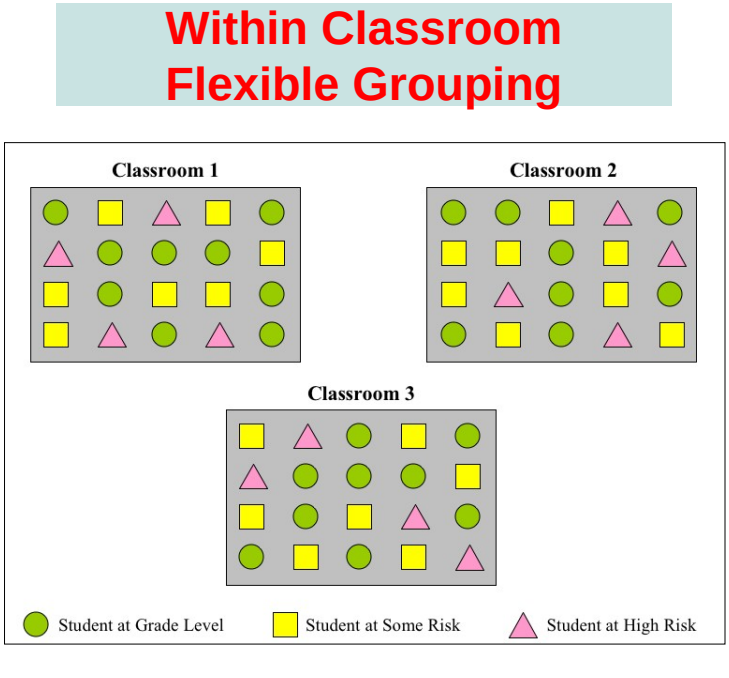


Figure 9. Heterogeneous grouping format

In schools that group students homogeneously students may receive reading instruction from their homeroom teacher, or they may have a different teacher for reading.

Homogeneous grouping is an area of great controversy. A quick Google search reveals 79,290 entries for homogeneous grouping. Homogeneous grouping can lead to tracking in which lower-performing students are placed and maintained in settings that do not match their full potential to learn (Carnine, Silbert, Kame'enui, Tarver, & Jungjohannn, 2006). Proponents of homogeneous grouping believe it can lead to

acceleration of student progress and higher student success levels. Acceleration is possible during the lesson, because the teacher does not have to make significant compromises between meeting the needs of higher performers and lower performers (Carnine, Silbert, Kame'enui, Tarver, & Jungjohannn, 2006). A key condition of the effective use of homogeneous grouping is that placement in groups be flexible. Frequently during the school year student performance must be monitored and grouping changed based on individual instructional needs. Figure 10 is a graphic representation of homogeneous grouping.

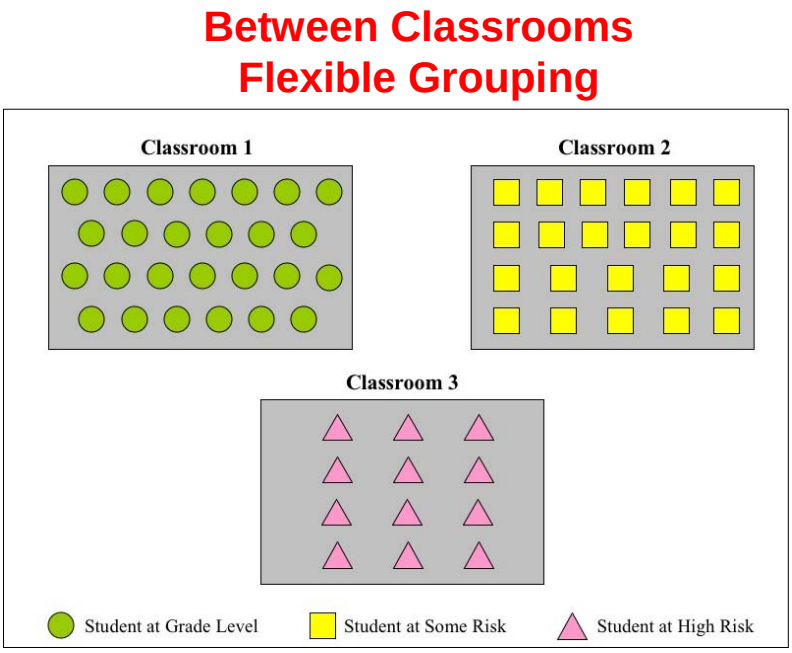


Figure 10. Homogeneous grouping format

Whether a school chooses heterogeneous or homogeneous grouping there are practical considerations to be measured.

In schools where the children are grouped heterogeneously and stay with their homeroom teacher for reading instruction, coordinating and communicating with other teachers is less of an issue. The teacher is aware of his/her own students' needs and can refer later in the day back to an area that a child struggled with during the reading block. It also allows for a great deal of flexibility in terms of organizing reading groups. In a study of 210 schools, Foorman and colleagues (in press) found that students with low fluency scores at the beginning of first grade had higher fluency outcomes at the end of second grade when they were in classrooms in which their peers had high fluency scores. Peers' oral reading fluency rate was an intervention all by itself (Foorman, 2007). Heterogeneous grouping does, however, require the teacher to be able to differentiate instruction to meet the various learning needs of their students and teachers may need support from other instructors as well as access to a variety of supplemental materials.

Homogeneous grouping requires a great deal of coordination among staff members. Regular meetings must be set up to communicate and share the progress of students among the reading teacher, homeroom teacher, and any other personnel who provide secondary or tertiary instruction. It also requires teachers to regularly monitor student progress so reading groups stay flexible and the grouping format does not become a method of tracking students. Homogeneous grouping enables the teacher to target instruction and when used well is very efficient. When a student is at his or her instructional level, the student has the sufficient knowledge of earlier content so that he

or she can be brought to mastery on new material while maintaining success during the lesson (Carnine, Silbert, Kame'enui, Tarver, & Jungjohann, 2006).

Idaho has chosen a combination of both grouping formats. In the first year of RF implementation the RF Leadership Team strongly encouraged schools to use a heterogeneous format because most of the schools had not required classroom teachers to teach all students. This is referred to by the Idaho Leadership Team as the equity shot (Diamond, personal communication, 2002). Exposing students to grade level curricula resulted in significant gains immediately (Stewart, 2005). There are students that in spite of the best efforts of schools simply need more acceleration. So in year two of implementation the team suggested that schools adopt an intervention core program. Programs such as Reading Mastery, Horizons, etc. (Idaho State Department of Education, 2006) are designed to accelerate learning (Engelman, Bruner, 2003). Figure 11 is a graphic representation of the grouping formats used by several Idaho RF schools.

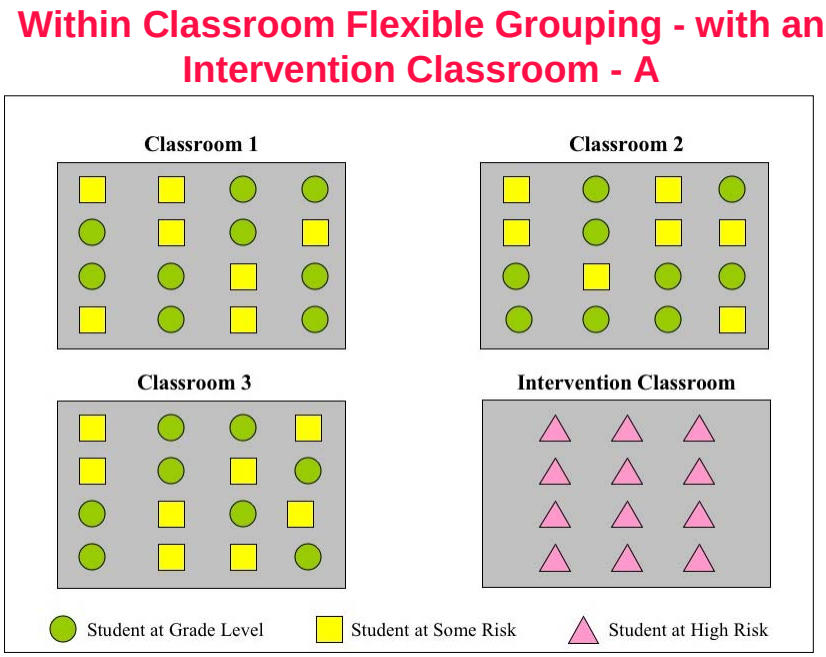


Figure 11. Representation of the grouping formats used by several Idaho RF schools

Many of Idaho's schools have restricted resources in terms of personnel so to create an intervention classroom it requires a walk-to-read model. In other words students may have to leave their homeroom teacher during the reading block. Figure 12 is a representation of this model.

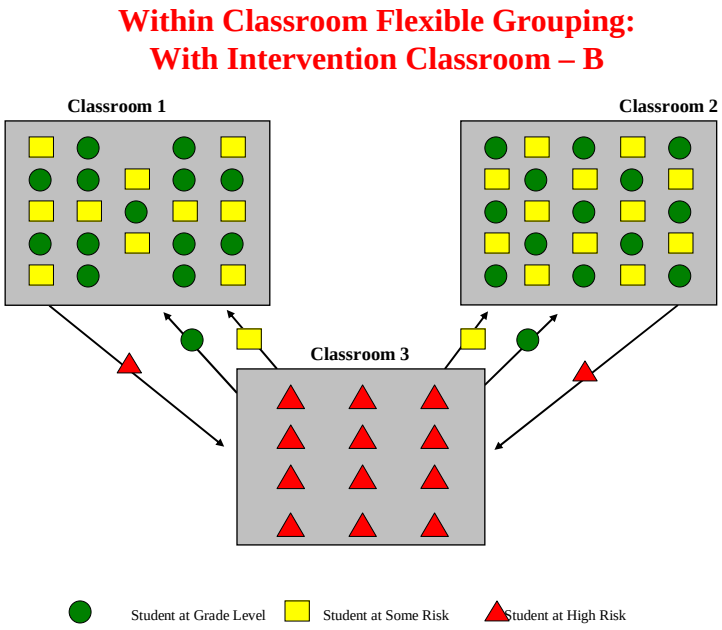


Figure 12. Within classroom flexible grouping: with intervention classroom - B

The RF Leadership Team cautions schools that if the school decided to place a student in an intervention core program, it would need both entry (i.e. two years below grade level on a variety of assessments) and exit criteria. Most Idaho RF schools group heterogeneously, but have an intervention classroom for students significantly below grade level (Santana, personal communication, 2007).

A meta-analysis of studies of grouping formats (Lou, Abrami, Spence, Paulse, Chambers, & d'Appollonio, 1996) revealed that students of all ability levels benefit from grouping, when compared to no grouping at all. It would appear that whether schools

group heterogeneously, homogeneously, or use a combination, thoughtful consideration of grouping formats impacts outcomes for all students.

Group Size

According to a report by the National Institute on the Education of "At-Risk" students (Finn, 1998) a common element among successful school reform models is a "smaller is better approach (Goodwin, 2002). Carnine, Silbert, Kame'enui, Tarver, & Jungjohannn (2006) suggest the number of children in an instructional group should depend on the instructional sophistication of the students (p. 243). "Children who are instructionally sophisticated, attentive to the teacher's instruction, and not likely to become confused easily can be taught with more children." On the other hand, children who are less attentive, easily confused, and more likely to need more practice to master content should be in instructional groups with fewer children (Carnine, Silbert, Kame'enui, Tarver, & Jungjohannn 2006). Ideally the more challenged the student the smaller the group.

Reading Recovery is a program that provides one-to-one tutoring to struggling first grade readers for thirty minutes per day for a maximum of ten weeks or until the child is reading proficiently (Iverson, Tumner, & Chapman, 2005). Reading Recovery was given a favorable rating by the Institute of Educational Science's (IES) What Works Clearinghouse in May 2007. It may be difficult for schools to provide one-on-one tutoring when there are significant numbers of students who need secondary and tertiary instruction.

Vaughn and Linan-Thompson(2003) recognized that providing one-on-one tutoring is not possible in many schools. They designed a study of 77 second graders all assigned to the same treatment (30 minutes of daily supplemental reading instruction for 58 sessions by a highly trained tutor) where the only variable was group size (one teacher with 10 students, 1:10; one teacher with three students 1:3; and one teacher with one student, 1:1). Students were randomly assigned to one of the three treatment groups. To ensure that instruction was the same in each of the groups the researchers developed a validity checklist and tutors were observed nine times during the course of 11 weeks. Vaughn and Linan-Thompson (2003) concluded that all of the groups made gains in comprehension, phoneme segmentation, and fluency. The key finding was that there was no statistical significance in outcomes for students in either the 1:1 or 1:3 group and both groups outperformed the students in the 1:10 treatment.

Instructional Focus

There are schools that consistently beat the odds. Even though they serve high-risk students (low socio-economic status, English language learners, minorities, and students with disabilities) students meet or exceed grade level proficiency. Studies of these schools reveal that the schools do not take one approach to closing the achievement gap; rather they vary in terms of their selection of pedagogy, curricular materials, grouping formats, time allocated for reading instruction, use of personnel, etc. What does unite them is adherence to instruction in the critical skills necessary for reading proficiency: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension

(National Institute of Child Health and Human Development [NICHD], 2000; National Research Council [NRC] 1998).

However, they share other variables as well as adherence to critical skills instruction. Researchers of high performing schools have identified those as (e.g., Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Denton, Foorman, & Mathes, 2003; Hoffman, 1991;Taylor, Pearson, Clark, & Walpole, 2000; Weber, 1971) positive social climate, strong instructional leadership, increased amount of time available for reading instruction, high expectations and strong accountability, continuous monitoring of student achievement, ongoing professional development based on effective strategies, and integral parental involvement.

Characteristics of ineffective schools have also been noted. Seven ways in which ineffective schools differed from their demographically matched peers are described by the National Research Council (1998):

> (1) they were not academically focused; (2) the school's daily schedule was not an accurate guide to academic time usage; (3) resources often worked at cross-purposes instructionally; (4) principals seemed uninterested in curricula; (5) 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; (6) libraries and other media resources were rarely used to their full potential; and (7) few systems of public reward for students' academic excellence were in place. (p. 130).

Number one on the list of characteristics in ineffective schools is focus. In evaluating the impact of the Reading First program in Idaho, Roger Stewart (2006) found that what separated high-performing classrooms from low-performing classrooms was academic focus, or as her termed it *academic press*.

In both the high-performing and low-performing classrooms that Stewart observed, the teachers were adhering to the district selected curriculum. The curricular materials met the state standard of evidenced based (Idaho State Department of Education, 2006) and the teachers were implementing the program with fidelity.

Observations and interviews with 29 of the teachers with the highest levels of student achievement revealed that the high performing teachers had high fidelity to the core program and extensive knowledge of the program's strengths and weaknesses. They were able to adapt the curricular materials to the students needs (Stewart, 2007). What differed in high-performing classrooms was the teacher's ability to go beyond the page and respond and adapt to the individual needs of the students in his or her class.

Part of going beyond the page is the recognition of the student's instructional profile and then focusing instruction on individual needs (NRFTAC, 2007). Highly successful schools use small, flexible, skills-based groups for remediation and acceleration of learning. RF schools have from the beginning used a 3-Tier model of instruction (Texas Education Agency, n.d.). Based on screening assessments students are identified as needing primary (meeting expected norms) secondary (missing some skills) or tertiary (significantly below expected norms) instruction. Movement through the tiers is a dynamic process with students entering and exiting as needed (Texas Education

Agency, n.d.). While Vaughn and colleagues define instruction as primary, secondary, and tertiary, students at each of these levels are defined as benchmark (only need primary instruction), strategic (need secondary instruction), and intensive (need tertiary instruction).

In a 3-tier model students considered strategic might receive their secondary instruction in small groups and teachers may use supplemental materials in addition to the commercial program used in the school. Students at the intensive level might receive tertiary instruction by increasing the amount of time devoted to reading instruction, more frequent small group instruction, or the use a replacement core program such as Reading Mastery (Engelman & Bruner, 2003). A replacement core program is a commercial reading program designed to accelerate learning. Replacement core programs are usually more explicit, provide more practice opportunities, and include regular progress monitoring (Engleman & Bruner, 2003).

A missing piece in the three tiered approach are students in the middle. Linda Carnine (*Meeting the Needs of All Students*, in press) created the graphic depiction included in Figure 13 which reflects a more comprehensive view of the variance among students.

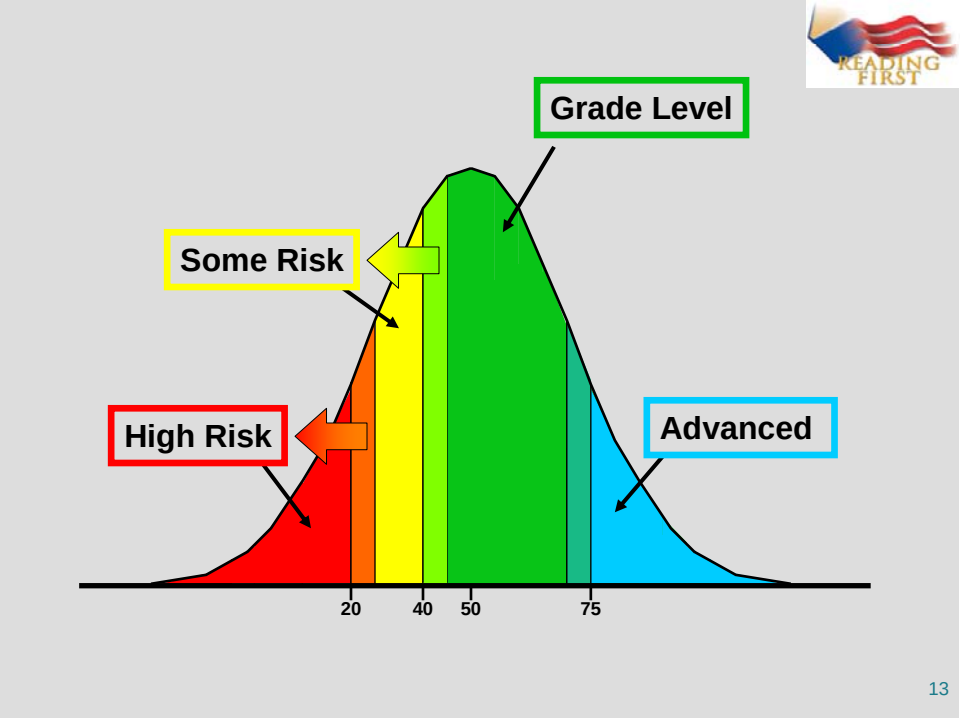


Figure 13. Comprehensive view of the variance among students

The critical element in focusing instruction is to identify the student's specific needs. Extending the time for reading instruction and providing a highly skilled teacher may not result in higher student achievement if the intervention does not match the student's skill gaps. For proficient students the school only needs to use their prior year's outcome assessment and the fall screening. If those students are at or above grade level no further assessment is necessary. Teachers should also insure that proficient students stay proficient by reviewing in-program assessments. The frequent review of in-program assessments is particularly important for English language learners (Francis, Carlson, Slavin, Lara-Olecio, & Hedges, 2006).

Some students may need an additional assessment to identify the skill gaps. Because of the strong link between knowledge of phonics and subsequent reading achievement NRFTAC recommends administration of a phonics screener (LaBerge & Samuels, 1991). A phonics screener is used to identify those students who lack fluency (ability to read quickly and accurately) vs. those that may have not yet mastered sound/symbol correspondence. (A phonics screener used by RF schools is included in Appendix B.) Both types of students would be considered at some risk and using Vaughn's tiered approach, strategic learners. While they may have the same functional ability on a CBM their instructional needs are very different.

Intensive or high-risk students read significantly below grade level. In those cases schools need to decide whether or not the student should be placed in an intervention core program or should receive additional support in addition to the material presented during the 90-minute reading block. Those decisions often depend on the age of the student. For example, students entering kindergarten and first grade that have not had exposure to literacy may just need time. In higher grades the deficits may be harder to remediate within the traditional reading block. Figure 14 is a graphic depiction of the concept of focused instruction based on students' identified needs.

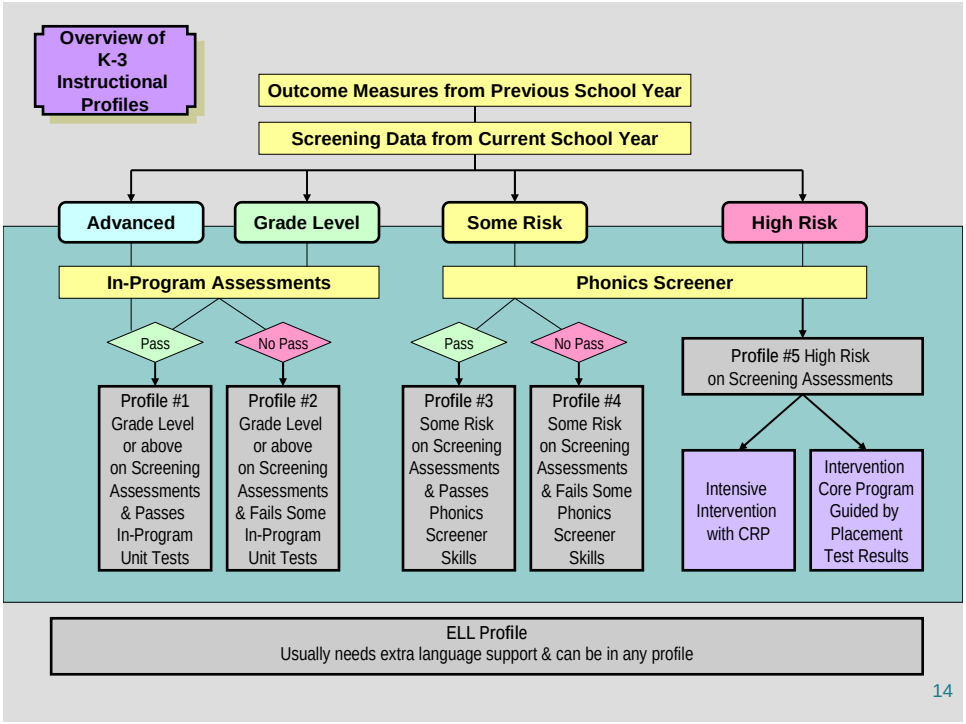


Figure 14. Concept of focused instruction based on students' identified needs

Instructional Delivery

Screening, diagnostic, and progress monitoring assessments identify students' needs. And creating a school-wide system that allows teachers to focus on those needs increases the likelihood of successful intervention (Foorman, Schatschneider, Eakin, Fletcher, Moats, & Francis, 2006). Both are necessary but not sufficient to remediate a reading deficit if the quality of the instruction is not adequate.

Research on Teacher Effects

The correlation between effective teaching and higher achievement has been studied since the late 1940s (Barr, 1948, Medley & Mitzel, 1959). The largest number of teacher effects studies were conducted during the 1970's (Rosenshine, 1997) and summarized by Rosenshine in 1971, Brophy and Good (1986) and by Rosenshine and Stevens in 1986. Their summaries concluded that across a number of studies effective teachers taught well-structured lessons and used the following procedures:

- Began a lesson with a short review of previous learning.
- Began a lesson with a short statement of goals.
- Presented new material in small steps, providing for student practice after each step.
- Gave clear and detailed instructions and explanations.
- Provided a high level of active practice for all students.
- Asked a large number of questions, checked for student understanding, and obtained responses from all students.
- Guided students during initial practice.
- Provided systematic feedback and corrections.
- Provided explicit instruction and practice for seatwork exercises and, where necessary, monitored students during seatwork.

Explicit Instruction

Explicit instruction design incorporates all of these elements. Explicit instruction means that the student is not required to infer any new knowledge (Mathes, Denton, Fletcher, Anthony, Francis, & Schatschneider, 2005); rather, new information is shared at a rate that insures mastery. According to Carnine, Silbert, Kame'enui, Tarver, Jungjohann, "Instruction is explicit when the teacher clearly, overtly, and thoroughly communicates to students how to do something" (2006).

While this type of instruction may not be necessary for all children to learn to read, explicit instruction - especially in the area of phonics -- is more effective than non-systematic or no phonics instruction (National Institute for Literacy, n.d.: National Reading Panel, 2000). According to the NRP's report, "The Panel determined that systematic phonics instruction leads to significant positive benefits for students in kindergarten through sixth grade and for children with difficulty learning to read. Kindergartners who receive systematic beginning phonics instruction read better and spell better than other children, and first graders are better able to decode and spell words. The students also show significant improvement in their ability to understand what they read."

Levels of Instruction

A key element of explicit instruction is creating the right fit between the learner and the level of challenge. It is important to match reading materials to the students' abilities. Independent reading level is material that children can read with 95-97%

accuracy. Instructional level is text that children can read with 90% accuracy, and anything below 90% accuracy is considered frustrational (Armbruster, Lehr, & Osborn, 2001). Some core reading programs include similar suggestions for instruction. For example, 100% correct responding indicates students are not being challenged enough and 50% correct responding indicates it is too difficult. Minimally 70% overall correct responding is optimal for initial introduction of a new skill but by the end of the lesson, students should be responding at nearly 100% accuracy (Engelman & Bruner, 2003).

In addition to insuring the material is at the right level, another element identified in Rosenshine's work and cited by others (Carnine, Silbert, Kame'enui, Tarver, & Jungjohannn, 2006) is clear and detailed instructions and explanations. Many at-risk children enter school with language deficits (Hart & Risley, 1995) and they may not have mastered concepts such as same and different or sequences (first, next, last). According to Carnine, Silbert, Kame'enui, Tarver, Jungjhohann (2006) teachers need to be cautious about using vocabulary or syntax that students do not understand. They suggest that a lot of the information early readers need can be taught using a simple framework - model, lead, test.

Presentation of New Material

Rosenshine's analysis of effective teaching practices and skills (1997) found that effective teachers present new material in small steps. "We learned, in the teacher effects research, that the least effective teachers would present an entire lesson, and then pass out worksheets and tell students to work the problems. However, the most effective teachers

taught new material in small steps. That is, they only presented small parts of new material at a single time, and after presenting the material the teachers then guided students in practicing the material that was taught."

Carnine, Silbert, Kame'enui, Tarver, and Jungjohann (2006) in *Teaching Struggling and At-Risk Readers: A Direct Instruction Approach* suggest that when working with struggling readers it is important to control the amount of new information. They believe teaching presentations that attempt to teach more than one new skill causes two problems. The first is that they reader needs to learn two skills at a time, and the second is that the teacher cannot easily identify the source of confusion. In *Put Reading First*, Armbruster, Lehr, and Osborn (2001) cite research demonstrating that children who receive instruction focusing on one or two types of phoneme manipulation make greater gains in reading and spelling than do children who are taught three or more types of manipulation. The authors hypothesize that when children are introduced to more than two types, they may become confused about which type to apply. Another possible explanation is that teaching a variety of phoneme manipulation skills may impact the amount of time for instruction. A third explanation may be that the children were introduced to more difficult tasks before they had mastered previous ones (Armbruster, Lehr & Osborn, 2001).

Rosenshine (1997) states that presenting material in small steps fits well into cognitive processing theory. "This procedure of teaching in small steps fits well with the findings from cognitive psychology on the limitations of our working memory. Our

working memory, where we process information, is small. It can only handle five to seven bits of information at once; any additional information swamps it."

Scaffolding

Scaffolding instruction is like putting training wheels on a bicycle and falls into two categories: initial instruction and practice. NRFTAC defines scaffolding as "temporary devices used by teachers to support students as they learn strategies" (NRTCAC *Meeting the Needs of All Learners,* in press). Examples of scaffolding in initial instruction could include prompts such as specific devices that can be employed for learning an overall cognitive strategy - something that students can refer to for assistance while working on a larger task (graphic organizers, cue cards, checklists). Scaffolding initial instruction could also mean demonstrating metacognition. When teachers provide "think alouds" it is a way of scaffolding instruction. A "think aloud" is when a teacher takes the student through his or her own experience of thinking about text. Figure 15 is a graphic depiction taken from *Meeting the Needs of All Learners* of the concept of scaffolding (NRFTAC, in press).

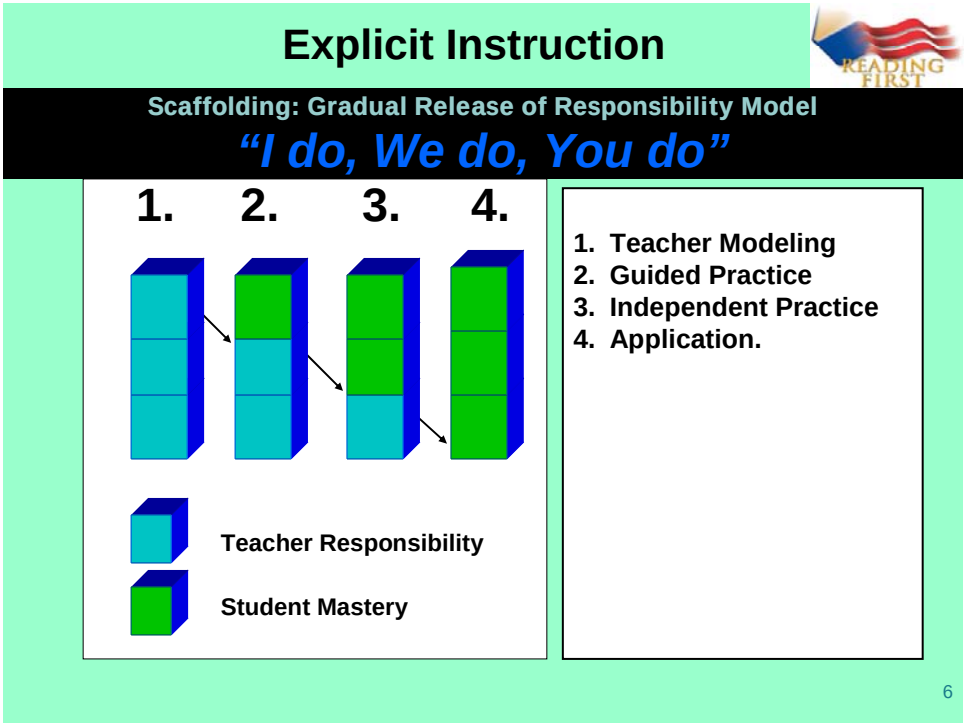


Figure 15. Graphic depiction taken from *Meeting the Needs of All Learners* of the concept of scaffolding (NRFTAC, in press)

Equally important to scaffolding initial instruction is scaffolding practice. Students who struggle to read need more practice and they also need to insure that they are practicing skills correctly. To quote Vince Lombardi, "Practice doesn't make perfect, only perfect practice makes perfect." In the daily schedule struggling students need to receive additional opportunities to practice the skills acquired during the reading block. While adequate opportunities to practice is critical, so too is accurate practice. Barbetta and colleagues (Barbetta, Heron, & Heward, 1993; Barbetta, Heward, & Bradley, 1993;

Barbetta, Heward, Bradley, & Miller, 1994) demonstrated the effectiveness of error correction on reading accuracy in a series of studies of learning disabled students. Alber, Gordy, and Nelson (2004) combined error correction with fluency practice (repeated readings) and found that combining immediate error correction and providing additional practice opportunities increased both accuracy and reading rate.

The amount of practice necessary to master concepts varies depending on the needs of the learner. For struggling students, Carnine, Silbert, Kame'enui, Tarver, Jungjhohann. suggest that when a new strategy is introduced, there needs to be sufficient practice within the lesson to attain mastery. They call within lesson repetition of a skill "massed practice." Rosenshine's evaluation of effective teaching practices suggests that the teacher closely monitor practice during the lesson and guide it. The concept of guided practice was developed by Hunter (1982) and appeared in the teacher effects literature in an experimental study by Good and Grouws (1979) and Rosenshine (1997):

> …the importance of guided practice comes from the fact that we construct and reconstruct knowledge. We do not, we cannot, simply repeat what we hear word for word. Rather, we connect our understanding of the new information to our existing concepts or "schema" and we then construct a "gist" of what we have heard. However, when left on their own, many students make errors in the process of constructing this gist. These errors occur, particularly, when the information is new and the student does not have adequate or well-formed background knowledge. These constructions are not errors so much as attempts

by the students to be logical in an area where their background knowledge is weak. (Rosenshine, 1997)

A critical element is that key concepts are practiced frequently. Figure 16 taken from *Meeting the Needs of All Learners* (NRFTAC, in press) is a graphic depiction of distributive practice.

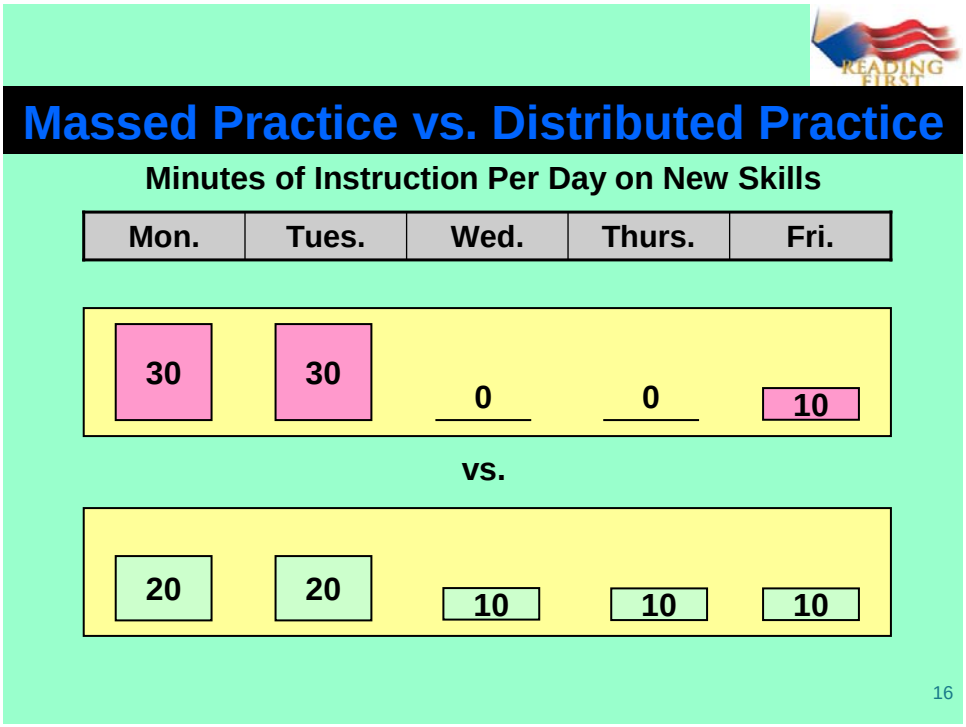


Figure 16. Graphic depiction of distributive practice taken from *Meeting the Needs of All Learners* (NRFTAC, in press)

Engaging Students

An explicit instructional design includes brisk pacing. The purpose is not to rush through material but to provide instruction with very little "down time" (Carnine, Silbert, Kame'enui, Tarver, & Jungjohannn 2006). Limiting down time is especially critical for students whose skills are below grade level. Every minute counts for children who start school below their peers in terms of background knowledge and literacy skills. Giving a presentation, Joe Torgesen referred to those moments of engagement as positive instructional interactions (fcrr.org). According to Torgesen, the most direct way to increase learning rate is by increasing the number of positive or successful instructional interactions per day. An instructional interaction can be successful even if a student responds incorrectly – if the teacher provides correction and if the student has additional opportunities to be successful.

According to Carnine, Silbert, Kame'enui, Tarver, Jungjhohann, a teacher working with younger students on oral tasks would pace his or her presentation so children respond about 10 to 15 times a minute. Some commercial programs designed for struggling readers have a rate of 10 responses per minute of instruction (Engelman & Bruner, 2003). One way that teachers can increase the number of opportunities to respond is to use choral responses when appropriate. Choral responses allow more students to participate, practice, and stay engaged. Anita Archer has developed a number of ways teachers can use choral responses (Archer & Torgesen 2007). She has also developed procedures for additional whole group engagement, such as acting out (vocabulary words), hand signals, etc. (Archer & Torgesen 2007). Teachers need to be

aware that effective practice is related to the amount of time a student actually spends reading rather than listening to others read. Whether it is teacher led, partner reading, whisper choral, or acting out, the opportunity to practice increases the positive instructional interactions for struggling readers (Carnine, Silbert, Kame'enui, Tarver, & Jungjohannn, 2006).

Building Capacity within Reading First

Bringing the best practices of the most successful Reading First schools to schools that have yet to meet adequate progress is a challenge for state leaders. To quote Oprah Winfrey (who may have been quoting Maya Angelou), "When you know better you do better." None of the information included in the previous literature review has up until the 2007-2008 school year been included in trainings provided to RF schools in Idaho. It would be wonderful if presenting this information would result in immediate, effective change in each of the low-achieving schools. However, the external evaluations (TIMES, 2004, Stewart, 2005, 2006, 20007) of Idaho Reading First demonstrate that simply presenting the information may not be enough. In fairness to the schools, the emphasis of professional development in Idaho schools has been on increasing educators' knowledge of beginning reading. The state-sponsored teacher workshops focused on the five big ideas in reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (Idaho Reading Academies, 2003-2007). Separate strands of training were offered to district leaders, building principals, and instructional coaches. It was not until late in 2007 that Idaho RF Leadership received a copy of the *Best Practices Handbook*

(NRFTAC unpublished manuscript 2007) which has still not been published. And it wasn't until the 2007-2008 school year that the emphasis shifted to other areas of school improvement (Boise State University, n.d.1). The shift in emphasis from content (what to teach) – to more process (how it should be organized and taught) came after Stewart's 2007 evaluation of the program and access to NRFTAC's *Best Practices Handbook.*

Given Idaho's external evaluation and the shift in focus, Reading First project staff decided that the best way to improve outcomes for all students might be to apply "positive pressure" (Fullan, 2006) through hands-on technical assistance. In his book *Turnaround Leadership,* (2006) Michael Fullan discusses the role of a capacity builder. "A person who applies positive pressure – pressure that serves to stimulate ongoing improvement, pressure that is built into the interactive culture of peers, pressure with a purpose." Each of the RF schools struggling to increase literacy has a system of support for all children. The problem is that the system is ineffective (based on student achievement data) and after five years it would be perhaps irresponsible to rely on these systems to self-correct. "We cannot rely on 'failing' schools to turn themselves around" (Arsen, Bell, & Plank, 2004, as noted by Elmore & Burney, 1997) "If schools knew what to do they would be doing it."

A requirement of Idaho's Reading First grant was the commitment to provide technical assistance to all schools in the project. A flaw in Idaho's plan may have been to provide the *same level* of technical assistance to every school. On the surface the schools look very similar. However the level of challenge varies greatly among the schools. Some schools faced more resistance from staff. Some schools had leaders with little or

no administrative experience. Some schools had more challenging demographics. And some schools had all of those issues. Conner's *Managing at the Speed of Change* refers to roles. If low-achieving RF schools are going to make significant changes after five years they are going to need both positive pressure and an *agent.* Conner defines an agent as one "who is responsible for actually making the change. An agent's success depends on their (sic) ability to diagnose potential problems, develop a plan to deal with these issues and execute it effectively."

Bertrani, Fullan and Quinn (2004) identified ten components that make large-scale improvement possible. One was establishing a relationship with an outside partner. "Well-placed pressure from external partners, combined with internal energy, can be the stimulus for tackling something that might otherwise not be addressed."

The idea of an external change agent, or capacity builder, is supported by Elementary and Secondary Education Act (U.S. Department of Education, 2006b) policy and Idaho's State's Accountability Workbook (Idaho State Board of Education, 2009), which specifically states that one way schools can qualify for status as restructured is to enter into a contract with a "technical assistance provider" that serves to facilitate the necessary changes within the school.

Idaho RF coordinators may have an advantage in being external change agents for these schools because relationships have already been established. But the prior relationship may also be a disadvantage because while Idaho's RF project staff has continued to provide technical assistance they have also continued to monitor

performance. It was important for the capacity builders to establish their new roles in a way that clearly demonstrated they were not in the schools to evaluate.

According to Fullan (2006), capacity builders need to suspend judgment if they are to be effective in the turnaround process. Teacher research demonstrates that the most effective teachers take students from the known to the unknown in small incremental steps (Carnine, Silbert, Kame'enui, Tarver, & Jungjohannn, 2006). The same methodology was important in the increased technical assistance provided to schools. "The main mark of successful leaders is not their impact on student learning at the end of

their tenure, but rather the number of good leaders they leave behind who can go even further" (Bertrani, Fullan, & Quinn, 2004). The RF project staff's goal was to leave leaders behind.

Summary

Perhaps a more accurate depiction of RF project staff's goal is not just to leave leaders behind; but to leave leaders that use data to make decisions. Leaders can not make decisions without input and a recurrent theme in RF implementation is the use student achievement data above all other input. While adequate yearly progress is measured by outcome data the emphasis within the Idaho RF community has been on formative assessment and the goal of RF project staff was to have the schools have gain a greater understanding of formative assessment and now know the difference and use of both in-program and CBM measures in terms of decision making.

Identifying student needs is not enough. As educators, we have to use that data to align and optimize our resources; to ensure our most gifted teachers work with out most challenged students. We also can use the data to narrow the focus of instruction and base it on student needs. We also need a system of intervention that increases the intensity of instruction for our most needy students. While the authors of the RF legislation are to be commended for their foresight in terms of the specificity of the content of instruction, the guidance in terms of how to implement significant change within a school was much less prescriptive. It is not too late to provide the guidance but time is now a significant constraint.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The two research questions of this study were:

- Will increased technical assistance result in higher student achievement?
- If not, does the presence of an external technical assistance provider result in significant organizational changes within the school?

Both of those questions came from the variance in achievement between schools and between grade levels within schools. The recurring theme in Idaho's RF implementation has been *the more intensive the needs of the student the greater the need for intense instruction.* What if Idaho's RF leadership team applied the same philosophy to the technical assistance provided to schools? What if we shared the results of the NRFTAC's *Best Practices Handbook* (unpublished manuscript, 2007) through on-site technical assistance with our RF schools struggling to meet the needs of all learners?

This study reflects a quasi-experimental design investigating the impact of increased technical assistance on reading achievement. Four out of nine Reading First schools in the lowest quadrant (low achievement, low growth) were randomly selected as the treatment group. The five remaining schools within the quadrant were the control group. Student achievement data was collected on all schools prior to implementation. Student achievement data – both growth and outcome from the treatment group -- was compared to the control group.

Both growth and outcome data were compared because while the schools share similar demographics, the percentage of proficient students varied. Growth data measures movement towards proficiency. The assessment selected for growth was the Idaho Reading Indicator (Idaho State Department of Education, n.d.). Growth was measured by comparing the percentage of students in high risk category and low risk in January of 2008 to the end of the school year (spring 2008). A student's IRI score falls into one of three categories: grade level, near grade level, and below grade level. Credit for moving students to the next level of proficiency is calculated differently in kindergarten and grade one than it is in grades two and three. Since it is easier to close the gaps on discrete skills (such as letter recognition and phoneme segmentation) schools are only given credit for growth if they take students from either below grade level or near grade level to grade level proficiency in kindergarten and first. In other words, if a kindergartener or first grade student scored below grade level in the fall, the school would only be given credit for growth if it brought the child to grade level proficiency by the spring administration of the test. On the other hand, because the test requires more in second and third and it becomes harder to close the literacy gap (Juel, 1988), schools are given credit for adequate growth for movement for bringing below grade level readers to near grade level, as well as near grade level to proficient. Figure 17 is a graphic depiction of one of the treatment school's growth summary.

Summary of School Data												
	Adequate Progress Data – Progress Monitoring From Date: Sept. 07 To Date: May 08								***RF Outcome Data*** School Year:			
	% and # Students **Moved**						% and # **Stayed**		<u>Total</u> % and # Students Proficient for ***IRI***		<u>Total</u> % and # Students Proficient for ***ITBS***	
Grade	From High Risk (1) to Grade Level (3) *or* Some Risk (2)		From High Risk (1) to Grade Level (3)		From Some Risk (2) to Grade Level (3)		From At or Above Grade Level (3) to At or Above Grade Level 3)					
			%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
K			50%	14/28	63%	38/60	91%	116/128	77%	174/225	Not Avail	
1			19%	3/16	61%	22/36	94%	137/146	81%	161/200	Not Avail	
2	% 22%	# 4/18			43%	21/49	98%	125/128	74%	150/204	Not Avail	
3	% 33%	# 8/24			68%	25/37	96%	118/123	78%	146/186	Not Avail	

Figure 17. Treatment school's growth summary

The IRI measures basic skills such as letter recognition, phonemic awareness (ability to recognize specific sounds in words and manipulate the sounds), alphabetic principle (sound/symbol correspondence), and fluency (ability to read quickly and accurately). These discrete skills are considered precursors to subsequent comprehension (National Reading Panel, 2000). The assessment does not measure either vocabulary or comprehension. Deriving meaning from text is the ultimate goal of reading and Idaho Reading First wanted to ensure that both discrete skills and comprehension were assessed in RF schools. Because of this Idaho Reading First selected the vocabulary and comprehension subtests of the ITBS as the outcome measure. The ITBS was given to all third graders within Idaho up until 2002 so it also allows RF to compare achievement to prior state data.

The two assessments are scored differently. For the IRI, the totals of individual subtests are added and depending on the composite score students receive a 1 (below grade level/high risk/intensive learner), a 2 (near grade level/some risk/strategic learner), or a 3 (grade level/low risk/benchmark learner). The purpose of the IRI is to identify students who might be at risk for reading failure. The assessment does not give either specific grade level equivalents such as 1.7 (first grade, seventh month) or percentiles. And comparisons with the past were limited to Idaho. The state's adoption of AIMSweb does allow for national comparisons. However, since this is the first year of the assessment and 71,000 Idaho students are included in the data summary, national comparisons at this time could be suspect (Steven Underwood, personal communication, August 18, 2008). The ITBS uses both grade level equivalency and percentiles and

allows for national comparison. In Idaho, students with a composite score at the 40th percentile or above are considered proficient.

This is a quantitative study although qualitative data was also collected. NWREL collected data from each of the ITA providers as well as the four treatment schools. Because this study will be used to inform other technical assistance projects within the state it was deemed necessary to collect data on the perceived value of the technical assistance provided. Qualitative data will not be used to evaluate the impact of the project but will be included in Chapter Six: Conclusions and Recommendations. An evaluation conducted by NWREL which used interviews with technical assistance providers, principals, and reading coaches. The evaluation focused on the following questions:

- What kind of technical assistance was delivered to the ITA schools?
- What was the intensity of the ITA?
- Did K-3 reading instruction change during the period of ITA? If so, how?
- Is there an association between receiving ITA and student outcomes?

One ITA school was selected as a case study school. The same evaluator visited this school, observed classrooms, and interviewed the principal and reading coach to gather more in-depth information about what ITA looked like and how it functioned.

Hypotheses

The purpose of this research is to determine whether or not increased technical assistance impacted student achievement as measured by the IRI and ITBS. And if the

increased technical assistance did not result in increased did the additional of an external technical assistance provider improve organizational practices that might increase student outcomes at a future date. As a result the study had four possible hypotheses:

- Null Hypothesis – There was not a statistically significant difference between the achievement of students in schools within the ITA project as compared to the control group.
- Alternate Hypothesis - There was a statistically significant difference between the achievement of students within the ITA project as compared to the control group.
- Null hypotheses – The presence of an external technical assistance provider did not result in significant organizational changes within the school.
- Alternate hypotheses – The presence of an external technical assistance provider did result in significant organizational changes within the school

Participants

While the ITA schools share similar demographics and a history of low achievement, each started at a different place in terms of the percentage of proficient student. Over the years RF leaders have moved from looking at just the spring results of the IRI and ITBS scores to both outcome data (results) and growth. Data sets from the 2006-2007 school year were studied by the RF project staff and schools were placed into one of four quadrants:

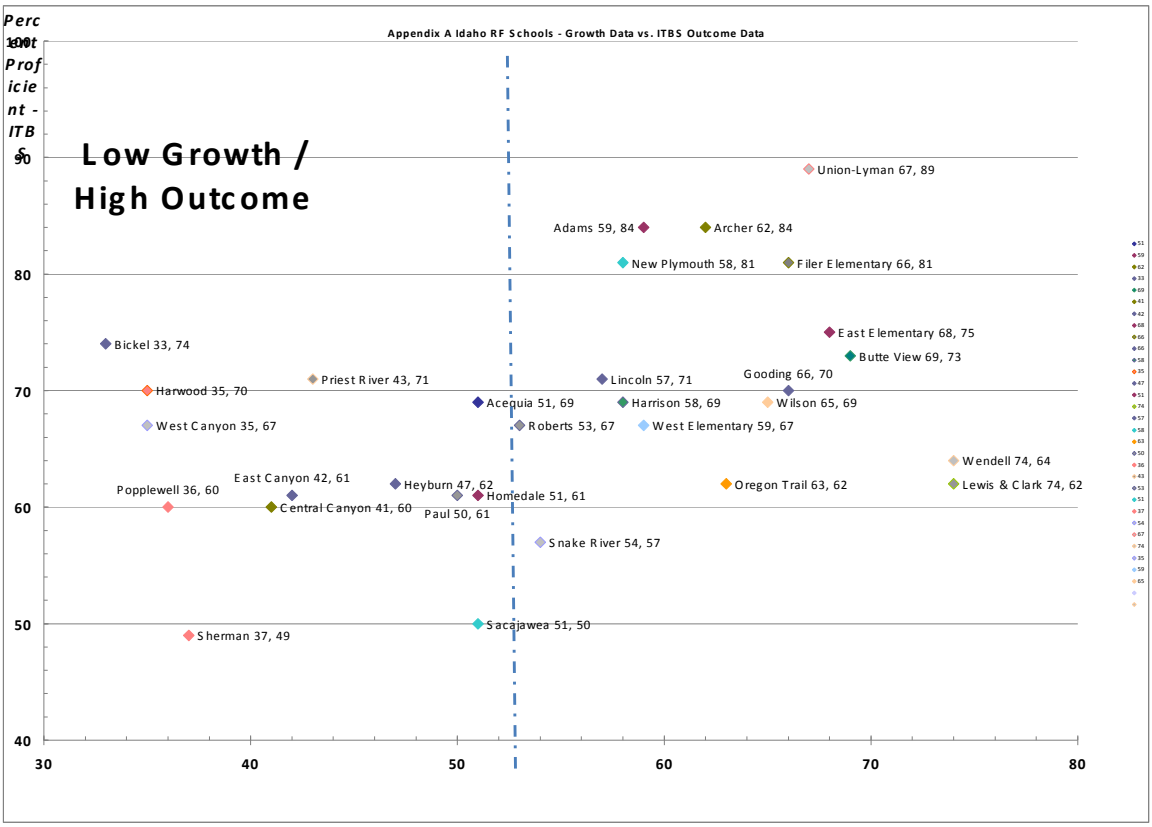
- High achievement, high growth

- High achievement, low growth
- Low achievement, high growth
- Low achievement, low growth

Participants in the study were limited to the nine Reading First schools in the low achievement, low growth category. Four schools were randomly selected to receive increased technical assistance. Participation was voluntary. One of the randomly selected schools chose not to participate because it was receiving technical assistance from a variety of providers during the year. Another school was then randomly selected. Table 2 depicts the range of achievement within Idaho RF schools.

Table 2

Range of Achievement within Idaho RF Schools



Situation

Each of the nine schools failed to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in reading in 2007. The schools range in terms of their identification for improvement from "alert" which means the school missed the State Board of Education Goals for AYP for one or two years, to "year two of improvement" which means missing the AYP goal for four consecutive years (Idaho State Board of Education, n.d.2). Idaho has 41 indicators

that schools need to make in order to be considered as having made AYP. The indicators include both the percentage of students tested as well as student proficiency as measured by the Idaho Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) in reading, math, and a third indicator. The local education agency (LEA) may select the third indicator from the choices in State Board Rule: language usage proficiency (as measured by the ISAT) or graduation rate. All nine schools selected language usage as the third indicator. Among the nine schools in the study, all of them missed indicators relating to student proficiency rather than to the percentage of students assessed. Of the schools randomly selected for treatment, the average number of indicators missed was seven, with the range from a high of 13 to a low of four.

Eligibility for RF was also based on quadrants. In Idaho LEAs fall into one of four quadrants:

- High risk, high resources
- Low risk, high resources
- Low risk, low resources
- High risk, low resources

To be eligible to participate in Reading First, an LEA had to fall in the fourth quadrant – high risk, low resources. Risk is determined by the combined percentage of at-risk students (low socio-economic status, migratory, limited English proficient, and students with disabilities). In each of the LEAs eligible for RF the percentage of at-risk students was greater than 60%. Within the LEA the schools eligible for Reading First had to have the highest need based on the school's achievement and demographics.

Low resources were measured by the amount of funding districts had available to allocate per pupil. At the time awards were given to the schools, each of the LEAs spent less than $5,600 per student.

The nine schools involved in this study have an average of 67.8% of their students receiving free or reduced lunch and 14.3% of the students are identified as limited English proficient. When eligibility for Reading First was first established, information on the number and percentage of both migratory and students with disabilities was available from the Idaho State Department of Education SDE. At the time all schools had a special education population close to the state average (10%) and the percentage of migratory students was at an average of 8%. Information on both migratory students and students with disabilities is still collected by the state however determining the percentage of migratory and students with disabilities in each school is problematic. Education of migratory students is a specific category under NCLB (U.S. Department of Education, Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, n.d.) yet neither LEAs nor schools are required to report the percentage of migratory students by either state or federal agencies currently enrolled in the school.

The participating schools now have less than 10% of their students identified as receiving special education services. While the percentage reported is accurate, according to the latest RF external evaluation (Stewart, 2007) a trend in RF schools is to provide intensive intervention to any student scoring below proficiency. As a result 19% of the students in RF schools are receiving intense intervention but less than half of that percentage is identified for special education services. As a result of the schools' intense

efforts to bring students to proficiency the number of students qualifying for special education within RF schools has decreased. If one follows the information provided from the National Center for Learning Disabilities (Johnson, n.d.) or the National Center for Student Progress Monitoring (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2005), the decrease in students served by special education is positive, however it does skew demographic data.

Treatment

Between September 2007 and January of 2008 all Idaho RF schools were required to create Action Plans (Boise State University, n.d.2) for increasing student growth. An Action Plan differs from a more traditional School Improvement plan because it is based on a theory of Rapid Process Improvement (Harrington 1991; Wagner, Glasgow, Davis, Bonomi, 2001). Rapid Process Improvement is a framework for improving quality that has been used in both manufacturing and more recently healthcare (Harrington, 1991; Joint Commission Resources, 2008). It requires a team of various functions from an organization to analyze a targeted process, identify opportunities to improve, and implement the solution quickly (Boise State University, n.d.2). The idea behind Rapid Process Improvement is that small incremental changes, sustained over time, improve outcomes (Harrington 1991).

Schools had the option of creating an Action Plan for a subset of students (limited English proficient, students with disabilities, migratory, etc.) a particular grade level or for a subset of students within a grade level (i.e. high risk or some risk). Action Plans required schools to:

- Pinpoint an explicit focus
- Write a brief analysis of the problem
- Use student achievement data to support the identification of the problem
- Set a specific goal for student achievement
- Identify members of the team that created the plan
- Create a timeline for implementation and progress monitoring towards goals

In addition to defining the problem and articulating the plan for improvement, each school then wrote brief summaries of the actions to be taken in the following areas:

- Materials and instructional practices
- Time, coverage, mastery and grouping practices
- Assessment practices
- Data utilization procedures
- Professional development
- School wide organization and support
- Instructional leadership
- Role of the coach

Each RF site had to include each of these elements in its Action Plan, include the staff members responsible for implementation, and identify the method by which they would gather evidence of implementation. A sample Action Plan is included in Appendix B.

School Action Plans were reviewed by the Reading First project staff and the schools received several rounds of technical assistance as they worked towards creating

plans that were specific, included measurable goals, and identified personnel, materials, and timelines for implementation.

All 30 schools received the same level of technical assistance in creating their Action Plans. However schools in the treatment group received additional support as they implemented the plans. The original plan for the ITA project was to visit each school once a week for ten weeks beginning in February and ending in May. Three out of four schools received at least ten visits but they averaged less than weekly. However, the total number of visits was greater than originally planned. There were 47 visits across the four schools and 231 hours of technical assistance were provided. Technical assistance providers varied in terms of the number of on site visits. Part of the variance can be explained by the school's distance from the provider. The number of visits from each provider ranged from seven to 18. The total number of hours on site was very similar in three schools (about 53 hours each) and more in one school (71 hours).

Table 3

Frequency of ITA Visits

	School A	School B	School C	School D
First Visit	January 10, 2008	February 4, 2008	February 1, 2008	January 29, 2008
Number of Visits	18	11	11	7
Average per wk	.6	.7	.7	.5
Total hours	71	54	55	51

Providers

ITA providers were all experienced educators. All four hold masters degree in education (administration, special education, and curriculum and instruction). Three of the providers were part of the Reading First project staff at the state level and the fourth was a retired administrator of an RF school with a strong background in working with at-risk students and experience in providing technical assistance. Each of the providers had more than ten years of experience in education and had been working with Idaho Reading First for at least five years.

Content of ITA

ITA was provided within the context of Reading First. The vision of the ITA project was that schools would self-identify their problems rather than the providers

imposing their thoughts. Once the school self identified the issue, providers used materials from either the *Best Practices Handbook* (NRFTAC, 2007, unpublished manuscript) or the training materials developed for the handbook (*Meeting the Needs of All Learners*, NRFTAC, in press) to support the school's implementation of the Action Plan. Each of the elements addressed in the Action Plan materials (time, coverage, mastery /grouping assessment practices / data utilization procedures / professional development / school wide organization and support / instructional leadership /role of the coach) is dealt with in either the *Best Practices Handbook* (NRFTAC, 2007, unpublished manuscript) or the training materials created for *Meeting the Needs of All Learners* (NRFTAC, in press).

The nine RF schools included in this study have been a part of Idaho RF community for at least four years. It was the belief of the RF leadership team and the Executive Committee that if the schools were to increase reading achievement and sustain those changes, schools needed to build their internal capacity by self identifying the issues and working towards a solution. The ITA providers were there to provide positive pressure.

With the exception of improving the effectiveness of Grade Level Teams each of the schools selected different areas of need. Table 4 describes the areas of concern in each of the schools.

Table 4

Areas of Concern for Schools

School A	Applying systems level of data analysis Creating skills based small groups Acquiring intervention materials
School B	Creating an intervention classroom for students significantly below grade level Improve effectiveness of Grade Level Team Meetings
School C	Increase student engagement Improve data analysis and connect with instruction
School D	Reorganize intervention system to be more aligned to student achievement data Improve effectiveness of Grade Level Teams

Collaboration

While each of the providers was highly skilled, it was decided that they would also collaborate regularly. Collaboration was done both formally (four times during the study) and informally (on a weekly or bi-weekly basis). The ITA providers felt collaboration was important both to compare experiences but also to draw on the experience of other providers. Notes from each provider's visits to schools were collected by the director of RF and weekly conference calls were set up with each provider to brainstorm obstacles to implementation within the schools.

Measurement

Growth Measures

The assessment selected for growth data is the Idaho Reading Indicator. The IRI is given every fall, winter, and spring to all students in kindergarten through third grade. In the fall of 2007 a new version of the IRI was implemented (Idaho State Department of Education, n.d.). Rather than using a state-created assessment, a committee of practitioners, chaired by the state's Reading Coordinator, selected AIMSweb (Chris Hanson, personal communication, June 2007). AIMSweb is a Curriculum Based Measurement (CBM) According to the publisher, AIMSweb informs the teaching and learning process by providing continuous student performance data and reporting improvement to enable evidence-based evaluation and data-driven instruction (Hosps, n.d.).

The assessment itself is given in a paper and pencil format. However software that accompanies the assessment allows for comparisons over time. AIMSweb received approval by the Reading First Assessment Committee because of its technical adequacy as a measure that can be used for both screening and progress monitoring (Carnine, Silbert, Kame'enui, Tarver, & Jungjohann, 2006).

AIMSweb is very similar to the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills, DIBELS (University of Oregon, n.d.). DIBELS is used in 38 states as a measure of progress in Reading First schools. What separates AIMSweb from DIBELS is the software package that eases the burden placed on educators in terms of setting goals and graphing achievement for both individual and groups of students.

AIMSweb includes a variety of subtests:

- Letter naming fluency
- Letter sound fluency
- Phoneme segmentation
- Nonsense word fluency
- Oral reading fluency
- Maze

Educators can select any of the subtests for administration. In Idaho the IRI Committee of Practitioners selected those most closely related to subsequent reading achievement (Chris Hanson, personal communication, June 2007). In kindergarten the skills measured are letter naming fluency, letter sound fluency (sound/symbol correspondence) and phoneme segmentation fluency. Phoneme segmentation fluency is also measured in first grade along with nonsense word fluency, and oral reading fluency. In the fall of second grade the assessment in 2007 included nonsense word fluency and oral reading fluency. The inclusion of nonsense word fluency may have impacted the growth rate seen in second grade (Steven Underwood, personal communication, August 31, 2008). According to Underwood, the authors of AIMSweb suggest that nonsense word fluency not be assessed beyond first grade and the committee has elected to not to administer that subtest in future administrations. The administration of nonsense word fluency in the fall of second grade may have resulted in false positive identification of students. A false positive is when a student is identified as proficient, but is actually at

some risk for reading failure. In third grade AIMSweb measures oral reading fluency only.

Idaho also elected not to use the Maze subtest, which assesses students reading comprehension through a cloze procedure. In a cloze procedure students must select the right word to finish the sentence. According to the state's Reading Coordinator (Chris Hanson, personal communication, June 2007), the reason Idaho elected not to use the Maze subtest was the state's requirement that the IRI's time for test administration not exceed ten minutes.

Students' scores fall into one of three categories:

1. Benchmark (meets grade level expectations/low risk)
2. Strategic (near grade level expectations/some risk)
3. Intensive (below grade level expectations/high risk)

Grade level proficiency is set by the publisher. However, Edformation has gone through a variety of external evaluations to demonstrate the validity and reliability of both the assessment and the norming process. In addition to being approved by the National Assessment Committee for Reading First, AIMSweb was also reviewed by The National Center for Student Progress Monitoring more recently (National Center for Student Progress Monitoring, n.d.2). The National Center for Student Progress Monitoring is funded by the U.S. Office of Special Education and is housed at the American Institute for Research. The Center's evaluation of AIMSweb was based on the degree to which the assessment met seven criteria derived from the Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing developed by the Joint Committee appointed by

the American Educational Research Association (AERA), the American Psychological Association (APA), and the National Council on Measurement Used in Education (NCMUE). The seven standards are: (1) sufficient number of alternate forms with evidence of equal difficulty, (2) rates of improvement specified, (3) benchmarks specified, (4) evidence of improved student learning or teacher planning, (5) sensitivity to student improvement, (6) reliability and (7) validity. AIMSweb's Curriculm-Based measures of reading fully met the standards set by the National Center for Student Progress Monitoring.

Outcome Measures

Two subtests of the Iowa Test of Basic Skills/ITBS (Hoover, Dunbar, & Frisbie, 2005) were selected as the assessment for outcome data. Prior to 2007 form A was used in Idaho RF schools. However, form B was implemented in the 2007-2008 school year. The change from form A to form B was made on the advice of Riverside Publishing's representative (Jenny Fisk, personal communication, November 2007). The SDE agreed to change to form B because it uses more contemporary language and new norms were set in 2005. While RF project staff agreed with the decision it did have the unintended consequence of limiting comparison to prior years. ITBS was originally selected as the outcome measure for two reasons.

The first reason was the technical adequacy and widespread use of ITBS. ITBS has been used as a standard achievement assessment for ninety years in more than half of all states (Riverside Publishing, 2008). Thus RF project staff can make comparisons

between the achievement of students in Idaho RF schools and their grade level peers across the country.

The second reason ITBS was selected as an outcome measure was because it was given in Idaho prior to the introduction of Reading First and allowed for a longitudinal comparison between Idaho Reading First schools and prior state and district averages (Stewart, 2007). The ITBS is considered an approved outcome assessment by the Reading First Assessment Committee (Carnine, Silbert, Kame'enui, Tarver, & Jungjohann, 2006). To create a well rounded picture of student achievement the subtests selected from the ITBS reading battery were vocabulary and comprehension.

The vocabulary test assesses the extent of a student's vocabulary and according to the publisher (Riverside Publishing, 2008) is a useful indicator of overall verbal ability. At level 6 (kindergarten), the focus is on listening vocabulary. Students hear a word, sometimes used in a sentence, and then they choose one of three pictures that best illustrates the word. Levels 7 and 8 are administered in first and second grade and measure reading vocabulary. A picture or written word is followed by a set of written responses. At level 9 (administered in third grade) each question presents a word in the context of a short phrase or sentence. Students select the answer that has the same meaning as the target word.

Comprehension is measured in two ways. In kindergarten comprehension is measured through a listening subtest. The listening subtest is composed of short scenarios followed by comprehension questions. The listening subtest only measures literal understanding (factual) such as how well students follow directions. Inferential

(ability to generalize meaning) is limited to sequencing and the ability to predict outcomes.

The comprehension subtests at Levels 7 and 8 (first and second grade) include a variety of reading tasks. Students answer questions about a picture that tells a story. At level 9 and above, each assessment contains reading passages of different lengths and difficulty. At each test level there is at least one narrative, a poem, and one passage derived from a content area (science, social studies). Some passages are excerpts from previously published works, while others have been commissioned by ITBS.

With the exception of the listening subtest administered in kindergarten, test items assess three types of understanding: factual, inferential and interpretive. Inferential/interpretive questions require students to demonstrate their understanding of what is implied in the passage. This type of reading comprehension assessment requires students to apply the information gained from the text and generalize the passage's main points and analyze aspects of the author's viewpoint or use of language (Riverside Publishing, 2008).

In kindergarten the administration of the vocabulary and comprehension subtests takes about 20 minutes each. In grades one and two administration of the vocabulary assessment is 15 minutes. The comprehension subtest is longer and is administered in two 15 minute sessions. In third grade reading comprehension assessment is administered in two 25 minute intervals (Riverside Publishing, 2008). The testing window for the ITBS has always remained the same (April 15-30th).

Idaho's selection of AIMSweb and the ITBS puts the state in a unique situation of having a valid assessment battery that measures early reading skills. AIMSweb measures discrete skills (letter recognition, phonemic awareness, fluency) which research indicates are necessary for subsequent reading achievement (National Research Council, 1998; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000). And the ITBS measures vocabulary and comprehension. The combination of assessments results in comprehensive state assessment system. Had other states implemented a more holistic approach to assessment the Institute of Education Science's Interim Report may have been more favorable (Institute for Educational Sciences, 2008).

Data Analysis

Data from the nine participating schools was analyzed to see if any of the original hypotheses could be proved:

- Null Hypothesis – There was not a statistically significant difference between the achievement of students in schools within the ITA project as compared to the control group.
- Alternate Hypothesis - There was a statistically significant difference between the achievement of students within the ITA project as compared to the control group.
- Null hypotheses – The presence of an external technical assistance provider did not result in significant organizational changes within the school.

- Alternate hypotheses – The presence of an external technical assistance provider did result in significant organizational changes within the school.

Student achievement data from all nine schools was analyzed to see if there was a difference in growth and/or outcome between the treatment group and the control group. Student achievement data for this study was provided by the Idaho State Department of Education, Riverside Publishing, and Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL). The source of all student data was the Idaho State Department of Education. Idaho requires elementary schools to report the results of the IRI to the SDE three times a year. The SDE also receives ITBS data which was also forwarded to RF project and NWREL for annual program evaluation of RF.

Growth goals were explicitly stated and reinforced in every leadership meeting throughout the 2007-2008 academic year. At a minimum, schools were to maintain 95% of the achievement among proficient/benchmark students. In kindergarten and first grade, meeting the growth goal meant bringing students to grade level proficiency by the end of the school year. Less than grade level proficiency could not be counted as growth in either grade. The reason that only proficient is considered growth is because of the urgency of remediating early reading problems by the end of first grade (Juel, 1988) and the recognition that the discrete skills measured in early grades are easier to remediate. The skills measured in second and third grade are more complex, as is the challenge of moving a child to grade level. Schools were able to meet growth goals in second and third grade by moving their students from high risk to some risk, and from some risk to grade level.

Growth was measured by comparing the number and percentage of students in each category – intensive, strategic and benchmark -- comparing results at each administration of the test (fall/winter/spring). Schools were only held accountable for those students who had been in attendance for 90% or more of the school year.

ITBS data analysis was limited to changes from 2007 to 2008 in the average ITBS normal curve equivalent. A normal curve equivalent (NCE) is a score received on a test based on the percentile rank. It is a measurement of where a student falls on a normal curve, indicating a student's rank compared to other students on the same test. NCE scores have a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 21.06 (Stewart, 2007). Roger Stewart elected to use NCE scores in the 2007 evaluation of RF as a method to show gain or losses over time. Since this study and focus was growth, it made sense to the author to continue measure outcome growth in the same format as Stewart had used for prior evaluations. Unfortunately, interpretation of ITBS data is limited because the SDE elected to change the form and norm year between 2007 and 2008 (NWREL, 2008).

RF project staff analyzes all data supplied by the SDE at least three times a year but is also required by the USDOE to have an external valuator. The Texas Institute for Measurement Evaluation and Statistics (TIMES) provided the first external evaluation (TIMES, 2004). Dr. Roger Stewart of Boise State University (BSU) provided the next three (Stewart, 2005, 2006, 2007). Due to the increased emphasis on avoiding any potential of conflict of interest (responsibility for professional development and technical assistance of RF shifted to BSU from the SDE in 2007) NWREL was asked to be the external evaluator in 2007.

NWREL has prepared the annual performance report (November 2008b) which was submitted to the USDOE as part of the 2008 annual performance report. NWREL was also asked to prepare a supplemental evaluation on the ITA project. NWREL was selected to collect and analyze data because of the potential for participant bias on the part of the principal investigator. Because of the author's association (as well as the association of the other technical assistance providers) with the program it was suggested that any quantitative and/or qualitative data be collected by an external entity to complete the analysis.

The goal of this study was to see if there might be a correlation between increased technical assistance and increased student achievement. The principal investigator recognized that because of prior relationships with the schools this would be a challenge and results could be biased by earlier interactions with the schools.

It is critical to both the future of Idaho's participation in RF as well as other state sponsored school improvement efforts that we have an accurate picture of both the benefits and limitations of increased technical assistance. There are many factors to consider and this juncture it is important to have an outsider's perspective of the impact of the program.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Introduction

The goal of this study was to see if a correlation existed between increased technical assistance and improved student outcomes. The student achievement data does not demonstrate a correlation between the two; however, participant data (building administrators, reading coaches, and teachers) indicates that the program may have merits in terms of changing school organization.

In terms of the original hypothesis; does increased technical assistance result in better student outcomes, the results of both the IRI and ITBS do not show any clear relationship between the increased technical assistance and higher reading achievement (Nelsestuen, 2008). At best results were mixed. Non-ITA schools outperformed ITA schools in several cases. According to NWREL, the findings have several limitations (Appendix D) but are strengthened by the random assignment of the nine schools to one of two groups (treatment vs. control).

Idaho Reading Indicator

Table 5 shows the percentage of students in ITA schools vs. non-ITA schools in each of the learning categories -- intensive (significantly below grade level, strategic (near grade level) and benchmark (at or above grade level) --on the spring 2008 IRI.

Table 5

IRI Spring 2008 Instructional Focus Categories for Schools Eligible for ITA

			Percentage of Students		
		N	Intensive	Strategic	Benchmark
K	ITA Schools	290	5%	19%	76%
	Non-ITA Schools	446	2%	16%	82%
1	ITA Schools	290	6%	17%	78%
	Non-ITA Schools	464	3%	16%	81%
2	ITA Schools	316	17%	23%	60%
	Non-ITA Schools	462	15%	24%	61%
3	ITA Schools	297	17%	24%	59%
	Non-ITA Schools	461	15%	22%	63%

The percentage of students at benchmark is slightly higher in non-ITA schools in all grades. And the percentage of students in the intensive category is also slightly lower in non-ITA schools. What Table 5 does not demonstrate is adequate growth – that is the number/percentage of students that moved from at-risk to proficient during the course of the school year.

IRI data was also examined to see if there was movement from intensive to strategic and strategic to benchmark. Figure 18 compares the percentage of students who made adequate growth from fall 2007 to spring 2008 in ITA and non-ITA schools. As stated previously, adequate growth in kindergarten and first grade is only given for students who are brought to grade level proficiency. In second and third grade schools can include movement from high risk or intensive to some risk or strategic.

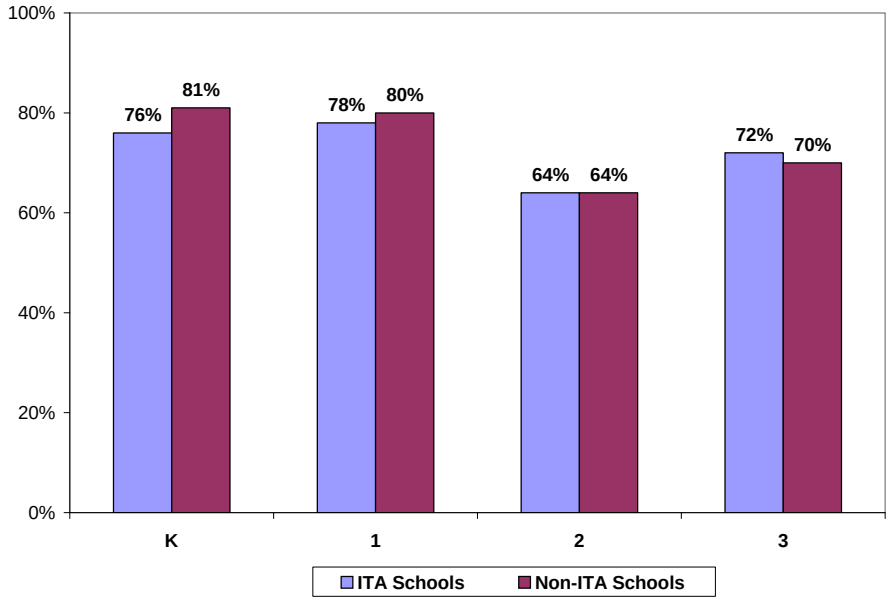


Figure 18. Comparison of the percentage of students who made adequate growth from fall 2007 to spring 2008 in ITA and non-ITA schools

The comparison does not show any clear association between ITA and adequate growth. Non-ITA schools outperformed ITA in schools in kindergarten and first grade. In second grade the growth rate is exactly the same and in third grade ITA schools exceeded non-ITA schools by a very small margin.

Table 6 is also a comparison of the percentage of students who made adequate growth from fall 2007 to spring 2008. However, it includes an additional column: percentage of growth of at-risk students. If we just look at the percentage of growth among students at risk, ITA schools outperformed non-ITA schools in both second and third grade.

Table 6

Percentage of Students who Made Adequate Growth from Fall 2007 to Spring 2008

	Growth from Intensive	Growth from Strategic	Maintained benchmark	Overall Growth – all students	Overall Growth – at risk students*
Kindergarten					
Non-ITA	61%	81%	91%	81%	71%
ITA	65%	73%	89%	76%	69%
Grade 1					
Non-ITA	39%	75%	96%	80%	65%
ITA	33%	70%	96%	78%	60%
Grade 2					
Non-ITA	23%	25%	90%	64%	24%
ITA	35%	30%	90%	64%	32%
Grade 3					
Non-ITA	40%	39%	95%	70%	39%
ITA	49%	59%	97%	72%	54%

The difference between Table 6 and Figure 18 is that Figure 18 only reflects overall growth, while Table 6 also includes the specific growth rate of at-risk students. When one includes the percentage of students who maintained grade level in the data set it somewhat eclipses movement within the categories because it includes a larger number of students. A focus solely on the movement of at-risk students provides a different picture. Both numbers are valuable and need to be considered when identifying the success of the program. At a minimum a goal of RF is to ensure that students who enter a grade proficient remain proficient, which is why the stated goal by RF project staff for benchmark students is 95%. But additionally, RF schools have been committed to

improving outcomes for at-risk students. Within RF schools both goals are equally important.

Within Group Variance

The problem with only looking at the mean scores of both groups is that it does reflect the variance in achievement both between grades and among groups. Variance in student achievement has been a continuing issue in Idaho RF and prompted this study. It was first identified by Roger Stewart in the 2005 evaluation and was mentioned in both 2006 and 2007. Variance in results in also identified in NWREL's interim reports. The following data sets show the range of achievement in both groups of schools.

The variability of achievement is significant. Within ITA schools the range of adequate growth for intensive students in kindergarten was between a high of 85% and a low of 29%. For non-ITA schools the range of adequate growth for intensive students was between 37% and 65 %.

Table 7

Kindergarten IRI Adequate Growth Fall 2007 to Spring 2008 ITA & Non-ITA

	Intensive Adequate Growth	Strategic Adequate Growth	Benchmark Adequate Growth	Total Adequate Growth
Non-ITA Schools	58%	80%	92%	79%
ITA Schools	65%	73%	89%	76%
School E	65%	68%	86%	74%
School F	67%	96%	98%	89%
School G	54%	72%	73%	68%
School H	54%	92%	100%	82%
School I	37%	78%	95%	80%
School A	70%	80%	92%	80%
School B	80%	67%	88%	80%
School C	85%	86%	97%	89%
School D	29%	57%	77%	53%

In first grade the greatest range is among non-ITA schools. In School G there was no growth in the percentage of intensive students moved to benchmark but in School B 71% of intensive students were brought to grade level proficiency.

Table 8

Grade 1 IRI Adequate Growth from Fall 2007 to Spring 2008 in ITA and non-ITA

	Intensive Adequate Growth	Strategic Adequate Growth	Benchmark Adequate Growth	Total Adequate Growth
Non-ITA Schools	42%	75%	96%	82%
ITA Schools	33%	70%	96%	78%
School E	47%	81%	100%	83%
School F	38%	84%	100%	85%
School G	0%	42%	88%	69%
School H	71%	87%	97%	90%
School I	25%	68%	97%	80%
School A	50%	76%	100%	91%
School B	29%	62%	90%	74%
School C	45%	78%	97%	81%
School D	22%	67%	94%	61%

In second grade the greatest range is within the ITA group. School C moved 69% of its intensive students to strategic, School B moved 0.

Table 9

Grade 2 IRI Adequate Growth from Fall 2007 to Spring 2008 in ITA and non-ITA

	Intensive Growth	Strategic Growth	Benchmark Growth	Total Adequate Growth
Non-ITA Schools	21%	24%	90%	65%
ITA Schools	35%	30%	90%	64%
School E	38%	27%	95%	67%
School F	13%	21%	94%	60%
School G	17%	11%	83%	67%
School H	20%	33%	92%	64%
School I	9%	21%	86%	68%
School A	25%	27%	94%	68%
School B	0%	29%	94%	76%
School C	69%	23%	84%	63%
School D	23%	43%	84%	50%

In grade three the range is again largest within the non-ITA schools. School G only moved 8% of its intensive students to strategic or proficient while School F moved 54%.

Table 10

Grade 3 IRI Adequate Growth from Fall 2007 to Spring 2008 in ITA and non-ITA

	Intensive Adequate Growth	Strategic Adequate Growth	Benchmark Adequate Growth	Total Adequate Growth
Non-ITA Schools	43%	42%	95%	71%
ITA Schools	49%	59%	97%	72%
School E	40%	42%	94%	73%
School F	54%	43%	92%	69%
School G	8%	43%	95%	65%
School H	42%	62%	95%	71%
School I	53%	28%	97%	76%
School A	50%	62%	94%	73%
School B	18%	32%	95%	59%
School C	68%	81%	100%	81%
School D	46%	71%	100%	76%

Summary of IRI Results

At best one could conclude that the results of the project were mixed. The number and percentage of at-risk students that achieved adequate growth in ITA schools was higher than the number and percentage of students in the non-ITA group. However, non-ITA schools outperformed the treatment group in both kindergarten and first grade. What is striking about the data sets displayed in Tables 7-11 is the variance within both groups.

Iowa Test of Basic Skills

As with the IRI, ITBS results did not indicate stronger outcomes for ITA schools compared to non-ITA schools. Early indications from NWREL (Kari Nelsestuen, personal communication 8.13.08) are that all RF schools may see a drop in scores from 2007. It is possible that the change in test forms (Idaho chose to move from form A to form B in 2007 pg 91) may have had an impact on student achievement. Table 11 is a comparison of Gain Scores (based on NCE) from 2007-2008.

Table 11

Comparison of Gain Scores (based on NCE) from 2007-2008

	Average ITBS Gain Scores from 2007 to 2008	
Grade	ITA schools (n=4)	Non-ITA schools (n=5)
K	-3.8	-4.5
1	-2.6	-0.6
2	-2.7	-3.0
3	0.2	3.3

With the exception of third, all grades and both groups saw a decrease in proficiency. In both ITA and non-ITA schools there were gains in third grade; however, in non-ITA schools' the gains were much stronger. Like the IRI scores, the ITBS results demonstrated a significant variability within groups. The data from Table 11 was broken down by individual school and is displayed in Table 12. Evaluation of the ITA project

stated that there were losses in 63 percent of ITA schools' grade-levels and in 56 percent of non-ITA grade-levels (Nelsestuen, 2008).

Table 12

Average ITBS Gain Scores in Each School Eligible for ITA, Spring 2007 to Spring 2008

	School	K	1	2	3
ITA schools	A	-1.5	**1.7**	-1.2	**1.9**
	B	-3.5	-10.1	**2.7**	**0.9**
	C	-7.7	-6.5	-1.4	-4.2
	D	-2.4	**4.4**	-11.0	**2.1**
Non-ITA schools	E	-4.1	-7.7	-0.4	**2.3**
	F	-5.4	-5.7	**1.7**	**3.0**
	G	-10.5	**4.6**	-5.6	**4.5**
	H	-0.7	**4.5**	-4.8	**5.7**
	I	-1.8	**1.5**	-5.9	**0.8**

In each grade and within both the treatment and control group there is a significant difference. For example in third grade the ITA schools had a range of a gain of 2.7 to a decrease of 11.0 in second grade. In first grade among the non-ITA schools there were two schools that had gains of better than 4.5 but one school that had a decrease of 7.7.

Discussion of Student Achievement Results

Comparisons of the 2008 results of the ITBS to the 2007 results are limited by the fact that the SDE elected to use a different form (NWREL, 2008b). And until the program evaluation for RF is completed the full impact will not be understood. However,

as with the IRI, the variance in achievement is still notable. In terms of the first hypothesis; does increased technical assistance result in better student outcomes, the results of both the IRI and ITBS do not show any clear relationship between the increased technical assistance and higher reading achievement (Nelsestuen, 2008). At best, results were mixed. Non-ITA schools outperformed ITA schools in several cases. According to NWREL, the findings have several limitations (Appendix D) but are strengthened by the random assignment of the nine schools to one of two groups (treatment vs. control).

Does Increased Technical Assistance Result in Significant Organizational Changes?

This study did not demonstrate a significant change in student achievement among the treatment schools however there were several potential adjustments in the school organization that may lead to increased student outcomes. Homedale Elementary created an intervention classroom for struggling third grade readers and the principal saw to it that the intervention would be continued in fourth grade as well as the intermediate school. The principal also planned to create intervention classrooms in second grade and midway through first. According to the current Reading First Director the earlier intervention programs are now in place (personal communication, Rosie Santana, December 2008). Paul Elementary has totally restructured and reassigned personnel to put the most accomplished teachers with the neediest students. Because the average tenure in that school is above or equal to the state average (17 years) the change is noteworthy.

And Sacajawea Elementary was recognized at the National Reading First Conference (Silverstein & Flachbart, 2008) for the school's commitment to increasing student engagement as a result of the change the principal was contacted by several other schools outside of Idaho and his observation forms are now being circulated nationally.

And yet at the time of data collection these major changes did not result in higher student achievement.

Summary of Findings

Student achievement as measured by the IRI and ITBS does not appear to demonstrate a relationship between increased technical assistance and higher student outcomes. It should be noted that because of the limitations in terms of timing, RF project staff has continued to collect growth data for each of the nine schools during the 2008-2009 school year to see if there is perhaps a delayed reaction in terms of student achievement to the changes made in terms of organization at the school level in treatment schools.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

Introduction

The impact of this study has several implications for the future direction of state wide sponsored school improvement efforts. If on the one hand the SDE only uses student achievement data then perhaps projects such as RF and Idaho's Building Capacity should be limited in terms of the state's investment in such efforts. But if the SDE also considers that bringing science to scale takes time the positive impression of the increased technical assistance among educators speaks to its value. In a very real sense the Idaho Department of Education needs to make a decision regarding future school improvement efforts. Does the SDE adopt a "no excuses" model currently employed by the Bureau of Indian Education or does the SDE take into consideration that different schools face different challenge and that patience and persistence may be needed to turn them around?

In addition to these larger questions, the results of the study also have to be considered in terms of the overall achievement in RF schools. During the 2007-2008 school year, Idaho RF schools saw an increase in overall performance. According to Stewart, Idaho RF schools had reached a plateau in terms of student achievement (Stewart, 2006, 2007). It may be that the increased focus on action planning and adequate growth positively skewed the data for all schools but eclipsed the impact of ITA on some schools.

The increased technical assistance could not be isolated as a determining factor for increased student outcomes. Student achievement results in the four schools randomly selected for treatment are not statistically higher than those in the control group. While the researcher had hoped to see a difference amount the two groups, RF schools as a whole were more successful in during the 2007-2008 school year. The schools may have finally broken the plateau of achievement that existed during the past three years (Stewart, 2006, 2007). Another factor to consider in terms of the results was the length of time of ITA. While the treatment schools received 47 visits and 231 hours of increased technical assistance, it all took place within the spring semester. Time was an identified limitation of the study. It may be that the compacted nature of the project outpaced subsequent student achievement. A flaw in the design of this study may have been not only the timing but the fact that the increased technical assistance took place in the second semester. The compacted nature of the project may have inadvertently eclipsed student achievement growth. In other words, had technical assistance providers been available to schools throughout the school year, rather than just the second semester, it may have allowed sufficient time to implement the suggested changes during the school year rather than waiting until the fall.

Impact of RF State Wide Activities in 2007-2008

While there was not a significant difference in terms of student achievement between ITA and the non-ITA group, RF schools in general saw high rates of growth during the 2007-2008 school year. Table 1 compared the growth of students in RF

schools to the state averages and in all but one grade RF schools outperformed the state average. In kindergarten Idaho state scores improved by 16% from fall to spring. *The growth in RF schools was 30%.* In first grade the state's increase was 17% and *among RF schools the increase was 28%.* In second grade RF results matched the state which can still be considered an achievement if one takes into consideration the level of challenge faced by RF schools (demographics and resources). *And in third grade RF schools improved outcomes by 13% compared to the state's improvement of 10%*. It may be that the enhanced focus on student growth impacted the results of this study. Because of the demographics of these schools (above 60% at-risk population and lowest tax base within the state) just keeping pace is a victory – exceeding the state's percentage of growth is an accomplishment.

In 2007 when RF leadership first discussed discontinuing grants based on the *"no excuses"* model only one school had 70% growth and the percentage of students' proficient on the ITBS would have been too low to justify continued funding. However, in 2008 six out of the 30 RF schools had an overall growth rate of 70% or higher. And six of the nine schools eligible for the project have improved either growth or outcome and would no longer qualify for ITA. Table 13 demonstrates this year's results.

It may be that the emphasis on growth in every RF Leadership Meeting and in every on-site technical assistance improved both growth and outcome data for all RF sites, and as a result this study could not isolate a significant difference between ITA and non-ITA schools. Breaking the achievement plateau first identified by Stewart (2006, 2007) is good news. The schools and the system of support have made a difference.

However, while RF project staff celebrates the achievements of all schools we had wished to see a different outcome for the treatment schools – but we did not. What we did learn was that variance in results is a factor that has to be addressed prior to implementation of any state wide program. We also learned that a school's readiness to benefit should be assessed prior to the commitment of state resources, and that readiness must be measured on a district as well as a school level. The following tables (13-17) demonstrate the student achievement of Idaho RF schools as well as the continued variance in results.

Table 13

ITBS Outcome Percentages at Proficient

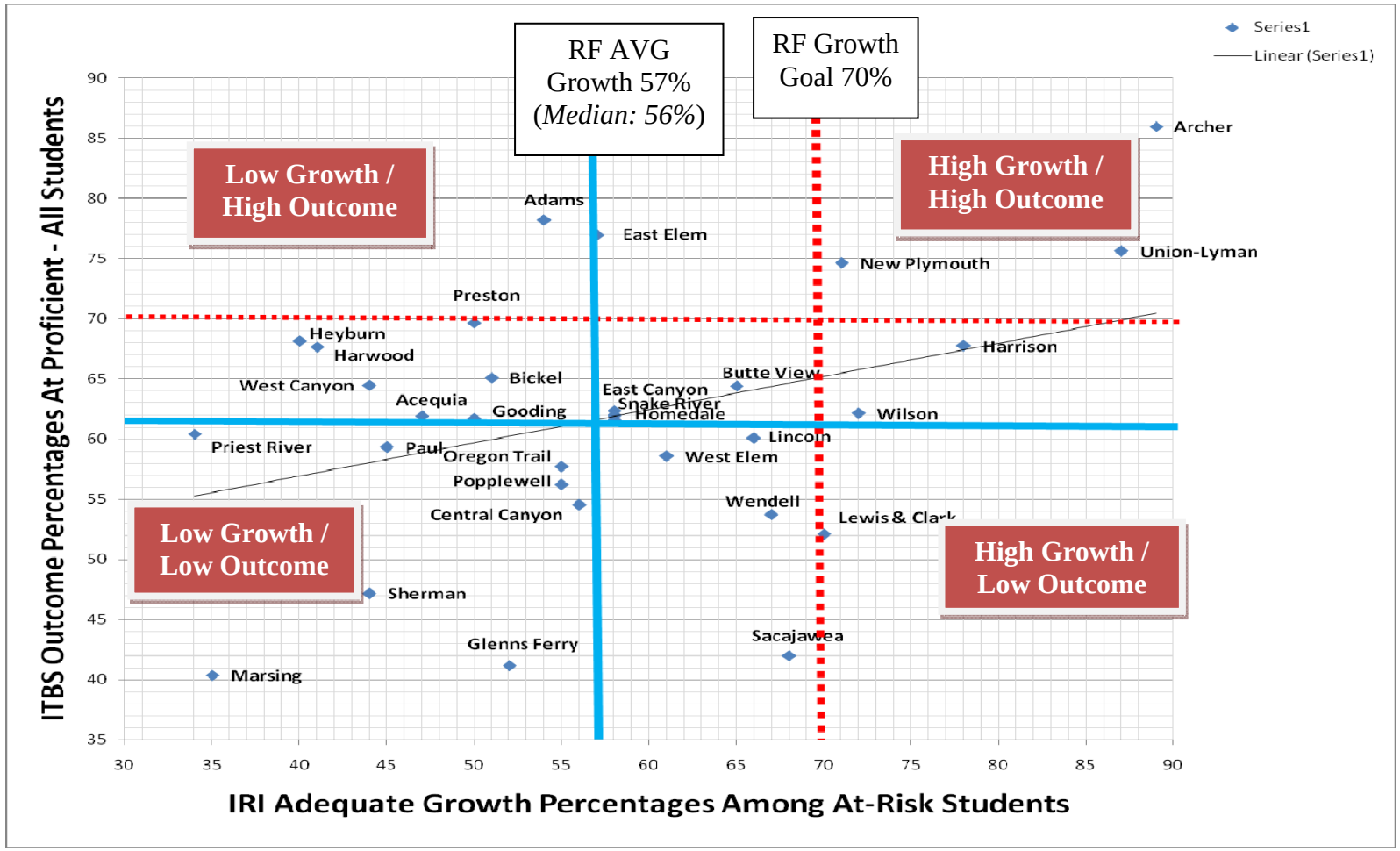


Table 14

Growth Among At-Risk Students in Kindergarten by School

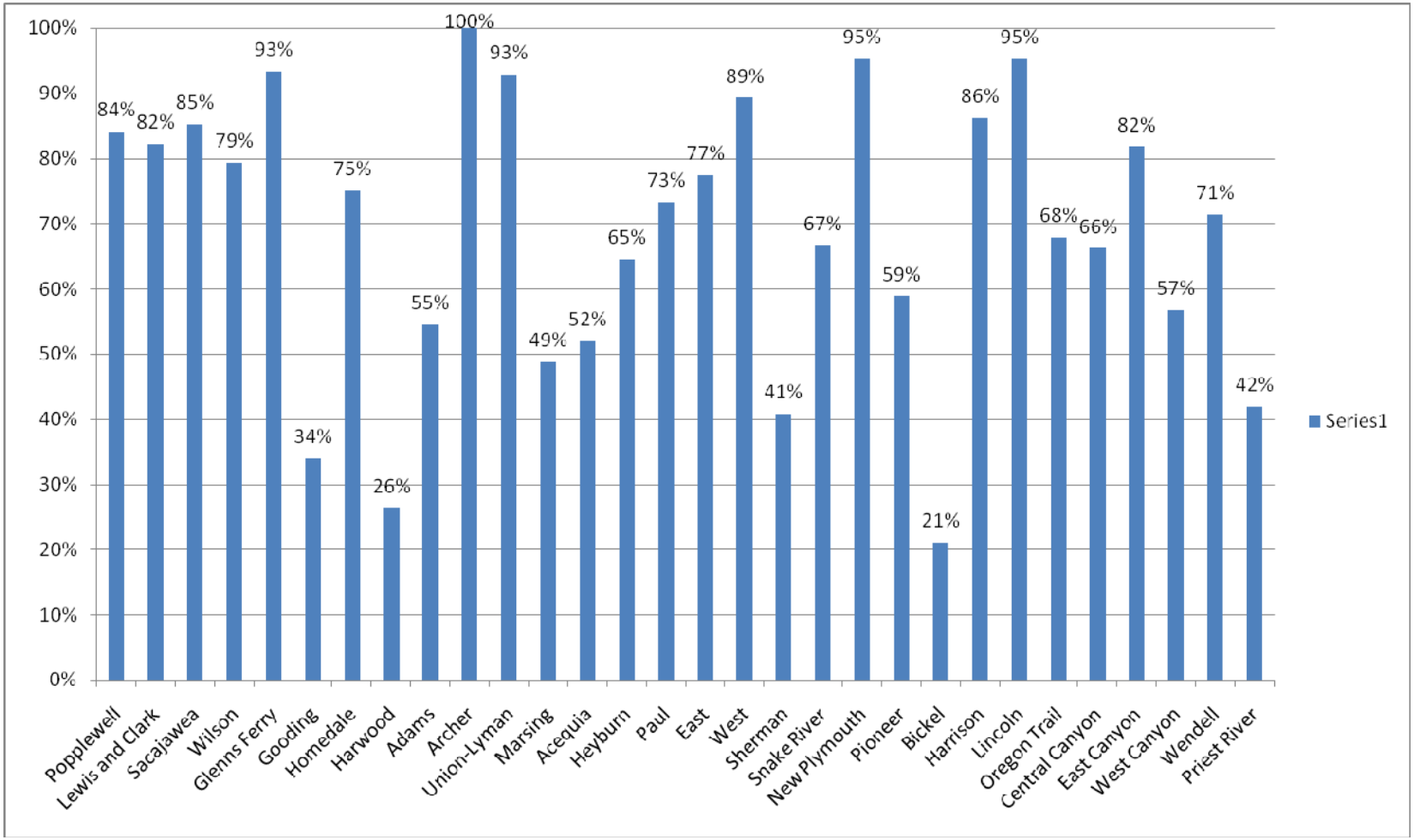


Table 15

Growth Among At-Risk Students in Grade 1 by School

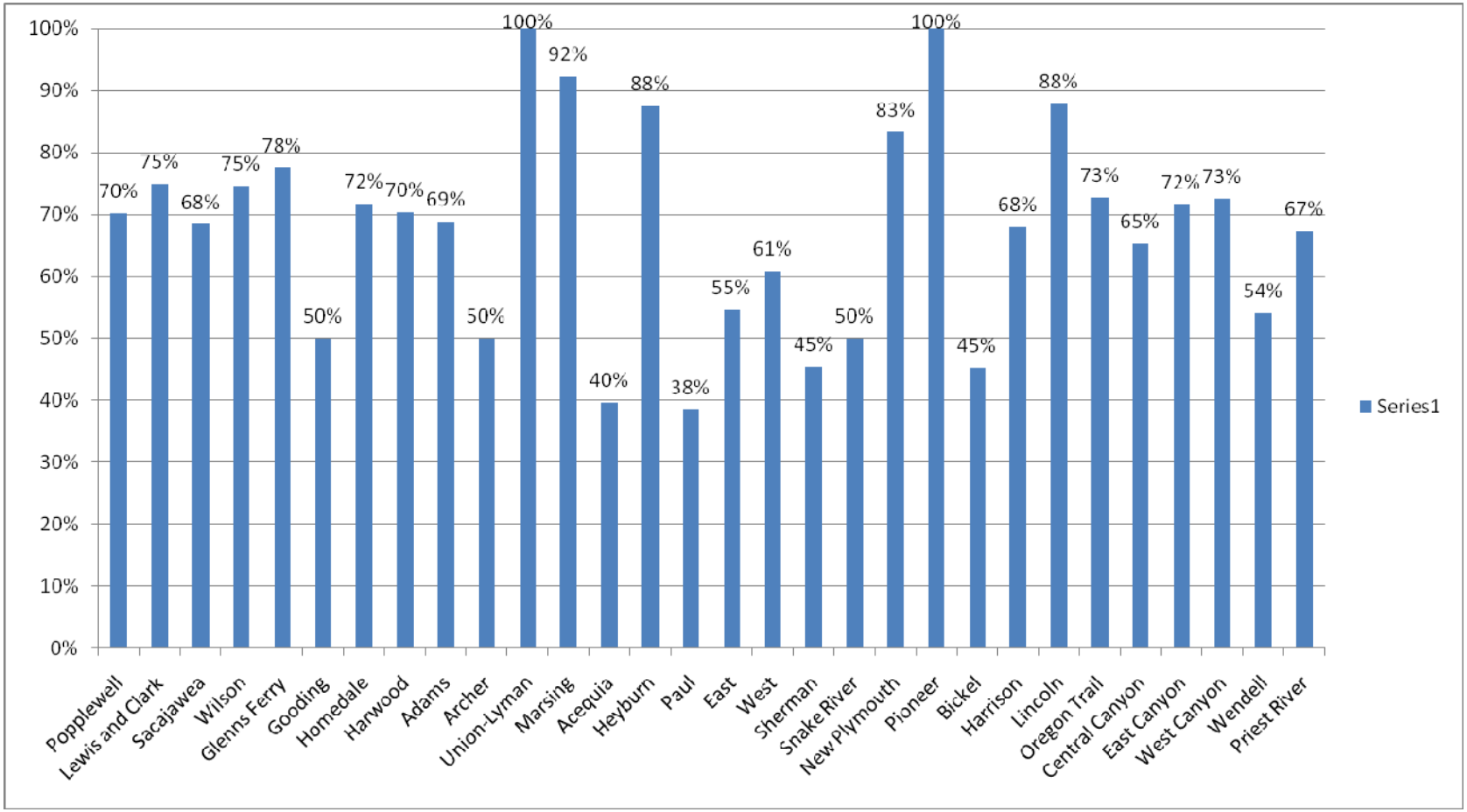


Table 16

Growth Among At-Risk Students in Grade 2 by School

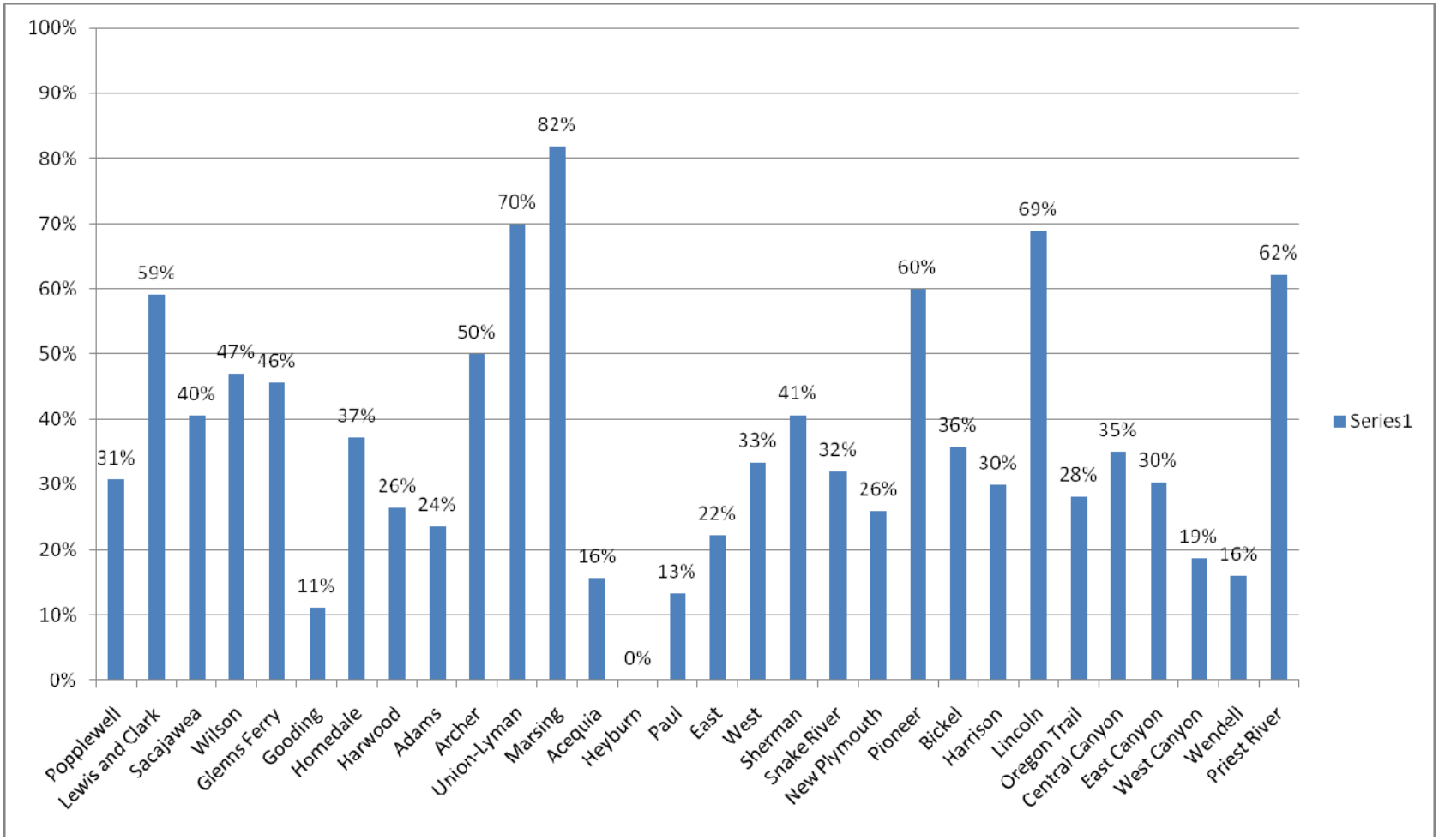
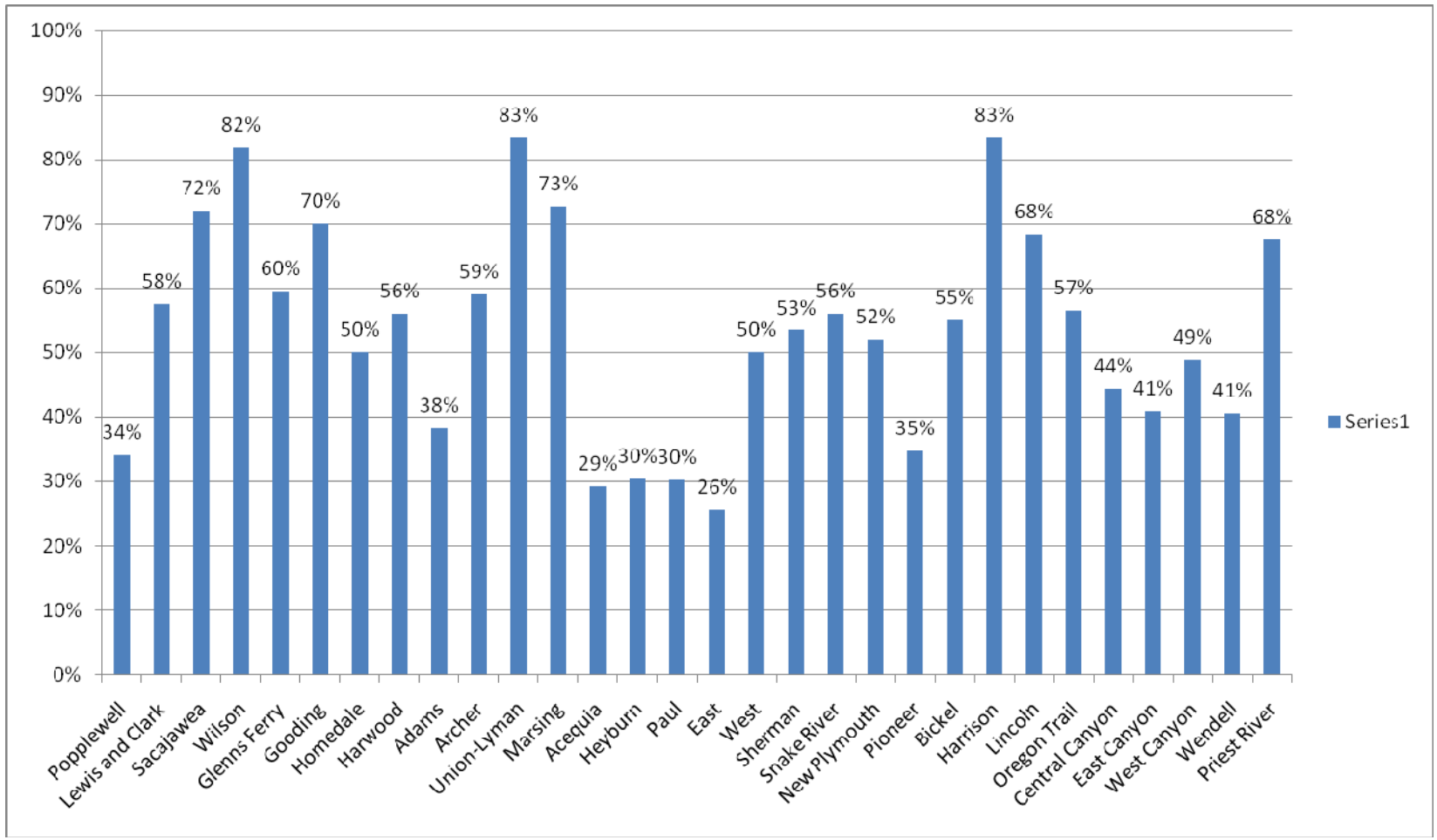


Table 17

Growth Among At-Risk Students in Grade 3 by School



Treatment Time

Another possible explanation of the results may be the length of the increased technical assistance. While student achievement data did not support the value of the project, adult participants reported very positive impressions. According to NWREL's evaluation:

> From the perspective of the participants, ITA was both useful and effective. They cited accomplishments such as strengthening data use, interventions, and professional teams. One school created an intervention classroom for struggling third-graders, while another reported an increase in the use of student engagement strategies. While providers were happy with these accomplishments, the pace of change was slower than expected.
>
> Nelsestuen, 2008

NWREL's evaluation of the project cautioned that perhaps time restraints impacted the project. "After less than five months of assistance, it was likely too early for any measureable school-wide impact" (Nelsestuen, 2008). In 2005 NWREL published *A Field Guide for Change Facilitators working with Low Performing Schools.* NWREL sent both the evaluation of the ITA project and *The Field Guide* to Idaho project staff. The guide is designed as primer for change facilitators and early on the guide equates the three phases of changes to seasons in the far north:

1. Phase One – Thawing Out – when old practices, norms, and accepted ideas are put up for question, discussion, and examination.
2. Phase Two – Breakup – The Muddy Time – when states of confusion may take place. This is the time between when old anchor points as security

blankets are abandoned, and before new anchor points have been identified. It is a messy time as new ideas and practices are examined, tried out and either discarded or adopted. Comfortable old landmarks may change or disappear.

3. Phase Three – Refreezing – when new practices, norms and ideas are accepted, put into place and become the new status quo.

Miller & Campbell, 2005

Change takes time. "Change facilitators must help clients to realize that school improvement requires dedicated resources of money, expertise of an internal and external change facilitators, and above all 'time' (Corallo & McDonald, 2001)." It may be that while the ITA project provided 47 visits and 231 hours of technical assistance, it was simply not long enough to impact school wide achievement and/or the technical assistance was not delivered over a long enough time to accommodate the typical phases and the change process.

Study Design

Time may not have been the only issue in the design of the study. While the study included student achievement data on 3,036 students, only nine schools participated. Perhaps a larger sample might have resulted in a different outcome. If the study were to be replicated a larger sample size would be recommended.

During the Action Plan process all RF schools had the same goals: 70% growth for at-risk students and maintain 95% of benchmark students. The universal goal may have seemed unrealistic to schools. While the Action Plan goals were based on

NRFTAC's *Best Practices Handbook* (NRFTAC, unpublished manuscript) it may have been wiser to let the schools set their own goals. Stewart's most recent evaluation cautioned that RF's insistence on fidelity to the program may have had unintended consequences in that it prevented the best teachers from going beyond the commercial program (Stewart, 2007). Perhaps the same is true about having the mandated goals? Allowing schools to set their own goals might result in more buy-in. It might require some delicate negotiations so that the goals set are both ambitious and attainable.

Infusing Ideas

Another factor that perhaps should be considered is that with the exception of one, each of the other treatment schools was within a school district with at least two other RF schools. Over the years the Idaho RF community has shared everything and while that is commendable the spirit of inclusion has limited our program evaluation in Idaho. The original program evaluation plan was to compare non-RF schools with similar demographics to RF schools (Texas Institute for Measurement Evaluation and Statistics, 2004). When administrators of RF districts saw the promising results they implemented the program district wide. Unfortunately the spirit of inclusion also forced the state director to abandon the original evaluation plan.

The same thing has happened nationally. One of the most frequently cited criticisms of the Institute of Education Science Study of Reading First was the selection of sample schools (Institute of Educational Science, 2008). They selected control schools within the same districts as RF schools. Many national, state and local leaders challenged

that those schools had also implemented the principles of Reading First (U.S. Department of Education, Reading First, n.d.2). Perhaps the same thing is true with the increased technical assistance project? School and district leaders meet at least monthly to brainstorm obstacles to implementation. It seems reasonable to at least consider that they shared promising practices proposed by their ITA providers.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

The original research questions of this study were "Will an increase in technical assistance result in higher student outcomes for RF schools?" And if not, does the presence of an external technical assistance provider result in significant changes within the organization of the school? The answer to the first question is no. Two hundred thirty one hours of technical assistance provided from highly skilled facilitators did not result in greater student outcomes as measured by the IRI or the ITBS. The answer to second question is harder to quantify. As stated previously, there certainly were successes. In one school they created an intervention classroom for third graders that had continually struggled to read. The intervention will continue through fourth and fifth grade and the principal has worked with district and middle school personnel to ensure that the students continue to get the intervention they need well into middle grades if necessary. The same school has also created intervention classrooms for struggling first and second graders and will closely monitor their progress towards meeting grade level standards.

Another school has restructured and reorganized their personnel to put the most accomplished teachers with the neediest students. Since the average tenure among the personnel is 17 years and the majority of their teachers have stayed with the same grade level this change in personnel assignments is significant. One ITA school was recognized at the national reading first conference for their commitment to increasing engagement within their entire school and their growth rate. In 2008 this school made

adequate yearly progress for the first time. And yet the accomplishments of the ITA project did not result in higher student outcomes. Perhaps the project was simply too short in duration to see it translate into higher achievement. Or perhaps project leaders and policy makers need to recognize that more resources does not necessarily equate to greater student success. It may be that no matter how accomplished the technical assistance provider schools need to be in a state of readiness before they can tackle significant change.

The results of this study indicate a need for the Idaho Department of Education to consider some significant policy changes in the allocation of school improvement dollars and technical assistance provided by the state. In summary:

- Variance in student achievement continues to be an issue within RF schools and needs to be further studied
- Readiness to benefit (both at the school and district level) needs to measured before allocating funds
- The SDE may need to create a differentiated funding process. Schools ready to benefit would receive full funding; schools not quite ready would receive financial support to assist their work
- Time is a significant factor in turning around schools, however the state needs to articulate the need to see progress early on, if not in student achievement than in processes that show promise of improving student outcomes
- Artifacts such as team meeting agendas, schedules, personnel assignments could also be assessed as measures of progress in organizational structure

- Performance agreements with commitments (either in terms of student achievement or school organization) need to be established prior to the implementation of any school improvement project
- Implementation of rapid process improvement efforts in the way of creating focused Action Plans appear to show promise in terms of increasing achievement

The author of this paper takes four overarching lessons from this project:

1. Need (as measured by student achievement or available funding) is not in and of itself sufficient to warrant inclusion in state sponsored school improvement efforts
2. Schools and districts must be ready to benefit - willing and able to make significant changes
3. Performance agreements that specify roles and responsibilities need to be negotiated prior to the implementation of any new program
4. A differentiated approach to school improvement should be instituted at the state level so that all schools are supported but the level of support differs depending on the need of the school

Continued Variance in Achievement

While NWREL's observation and cautions about the length of time dedicated to the project is well founded, the conclusion that more time is needed to improve student achievement among the schools within the lowest RF quadrant is also problematic for

state program administrators. These schools have been a part of RF for at least four years, have received more than $500,000, have participated in a variety of state sponsored professional development opportunities and have had the financial resources to purchase additional expertise if they deemed it necessary. In addition the ITA schools received 47 visits and 231 hours of technical assistance and yet all of this did not result in higher student outcomes. As a whole RF schools did well this year. However, the variance in achievement between schools continues. Variance in student achievement was identified by Roger Stewart in 2005 and is still an issue in the 2008 external evaluation of the program (NWREL, 2008b). Tables 14-17 depict the growth rate as measured by the IRI in RF schools.

What Tables 13-17 demonstrate is that while Idaho RF has worked in many schools it has worked less well in others. The infusion of funds, specificity in curricular material selection, and professional development has not improved outcomes for all students and has not improved outcomes in all schools. According to NWREL's evaluation of ITA the project may have resulted in improving a system of support among low achieving schools but further study would be necessary to prove that assumption and a continuance of technical assistance would also be required (Nelsestuen, 2008). Given the results, is continuance of ITA warranted?

The issue of continuing support to historically underperforming schools is not limited to this study. NCLB guidance regarding funding for school improvement explicitly states that state education agencies must give preference in terms of funding to

those school most in need. Given the experience with Idaho RF is that the best use of resources?

Recommendations

It would be a challenge to RF project staff to seek continued support from the Executive Committee. Forty-seven visits to four schools meant that 26 schools did not get the same amount of technical assistance as prior years. Since there was not a clear association between ITA and increased student achievement continuation of ITA may be a hard sell. In addition, Stewart's 2007 evaluation was clear: "The persistent lack of consistent test score growth within and across schools and the persistent large degree of variability in test score performance within and across schools should be addressed immediately". NWREL's 2008 evaluation also points to the fact that growth is inconsistent among and within the schools.

This study was not the first time RF schools have been examined. With the increase in funding came the burden of being part of continuing research. There has been an external evaluation of the program since its inception. The external evaluations have included curricular material selection, student achievement data, mobility, special education referrals, classroom observations, and participant surveys. The surveys collected data on a number of issues that evaluators thought might impact student achievement (positive school climate, school leadership, support provided through professional development, role of the reading coach, etc. (Stewart, 2007). And yet the issue of variance remains. This latest study has contributed another layer of

understanding in the variance in achievement. Even with this small set of schools the variance in achievement remained, however the issue of readiness to benefit emerged as a variable that needed further study. Some schools were ready to change others needed more time and more support in the process of change. This study is impactful in that it may influence how the State of Idaho awards future school improvement dollars. Just like students, not all schools are at the same place in terms of their ability to make change. Some schools may need more support and more time as they approach changing the culture of the school. Time has consistently been identified as a factor in school improvement (Bertrani, Fullan, & Quinn, 2004; Elmore & Burney, 1997; Fullan, 2006; Goodwin, 2000).

The issue of time was addressed in NWREL's evaluation. The evaluation cautioned that perhaps five months was too short a period time to change school-wide practices and *The Field Guide* provided to RF project staff supported that belief. RF project staff appreciated the positive nature of the evaluation and an alternative explanation for the relative failure of this project. But the question remains: how much time is sufficient? The schools included in this study were not new to RF, not new to the ITA providers, and certainly not new the idea of increasing achievement among at-risk readers. But time – or rather the length of time to institute change - came up again and again in ITA provider notes gathered by NWREL (Nelsestuen, 2008).

According to the interview notes, one ITA provider stated; "I just can't believe how long it takes. It is amazing that you have to make the systemic changes before you can see anything happen in the classroom. It takes so long!" Another noted, "I waited

around a lot [when people were too busy for me]. I would have conversations happen whenever they could; but it wasn't always ideal." And still another said, "I think I was happily welcomed in to facilitate a grade-level meeting, but only after I had been to the school seven times; I had to build relationships first. Once we got to a certain place [in our relationship], they let me in." Given the fact that none of the providers was new to the schools the length of time to establish relationships and, perhaps more important, to impact change is troubling. While none of the providers were new to the schools, the role of technical assistance provider was different from the schools' previous experience of RF staff. It may be that the change in roles required a longer period of time to establish trust (Fullan, 2006).

Continued Funding

A wise friend once said, "Nothing you do in life is wasted. You can always be the bad example." And perhaps in this instance it is true. In spite of the increased technical assistance, student achievement results were the same in ITA and Non-ITA schools. In this instance the Bureau of Indian Education's specific strategy of insisting upon 60% improvement may be the right approach to continue funding and Idaho may have been mistaken in keeping schools with less than average achievement within the RF community. One could argue that the ITA was not long enough to make an impact on student achievement (NWREL, 2008a). But one could also contend that these schools have received more funds, more professional development, and more technical assistance than any other elementary schools within the state and yet their results are still less than

stellar. Given Stewart's prior evaluations and the results of this study, it would not be unreasonable to discontinue funding to the ITA schools that remain in the bottom quadrant. However, if RF staff wants to continue the program into the fall semester, perhaps results would be improved if specific goals were set, clearly defined roles and responsibilities were established, and readiness to benefit was calculated into the improvement plan.

District Support & Establishing Roles

It is certainly appropriate for district level staff to be somewhat cautious about counsel provided by outsiders (Aldersebaes, Potter, & Hamilton, 2000). But in this instance the schools self identified the issues on which they chose to focus. ITA providers were not there to tell them what to do, but rather to support them as implemented the changes they deemed necessary. Project staff had discussed on several occasions what their role would be in the schools and their interviews with NWREL, "They described themselves as "guides" who were "there to assist" and to "collaborate" with school staff members (NWREL, 2008b). They tried to communicate this perspective with staff members early in the project:

> At our first meeting, we worked on our agreement. I was trying to find an entry point without being directive. We needed the ITA to be something collaborative. I was only the guide; the principal and coach were always the ones standing up in front of the staff. (ITA provider)

> The role I played was to ask the questions in the right areas and then provide assistance when they came against things or when they didn't know how to explicitly take a certain step. (ITA provider)

ITA providers saw their role as trying to stay somewhat in the background and support the principal and coach. One provider described scaffolding the learning for coaches and principals rather than taking over himself. Although participation was voluntary and district support was sought from each of the LEAs, there may have been some uncertainty on the part of the participating schools in terms of the role of the ITA providers.

Readiness to Benefit & Performance Agreements

As Idaho builds a state-wide system of support it is important to learn from its own experiences as well as the experience of other states. And in this circumstance the ITA schools can be the "bad example." While participation in the program was voluntary, RF project staff did not do much in terms of gathering data related to readiness to benefit nor did project staff require the execution of a performance agreement. Both are required within Washington State's system of support and in the one school within the treatment group where a performance agreement was negotiated and put in writing student achievement was higher.

Readiness to benefit is difficult to measure. Washington State has a rubric that it uses, but to this evaluator it does not seem to go far enough. So many variables in terms of readiness are hard to quantify (Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction

Washington, n.d.2) While readiness to benefit may be hard to capture, it does appear to impact the rate of change. Thus one recommendation of this study is that Idaho invest in learning more about the process of change and create a specific rubric by which it measures schools readiness. The recommendation is based on lack of success in our state's school improvement efforts, the variance in achievement among RF schools, and a concern that the additional school improvement funds may not result in greater student outcomes.

Included in NWREL's evaluation of ITA are quotes from both providers and participants. One principal from an ITA school noted, "The school was more 'ready' for the help at this particular point in time because they (meaning staff) had 'matured' enough to do the work". In this instance cited by NWREL (2008b), it appears the greatest issue that had impacted improved student outcomes in the past was related to teacher resistance. While teacher resistance is certainly not an inconsequential issue, if the school was dealing with this level of resistance was it ever wise to award an RF grant?

In justification to RF project staff, that school as well as many others did submit signature pages with the grant application that indicated more than 80% of the staff was ready and eager to implement RF. However after the first year of implementation, project staff learned to make site visits prior to granting awards. School visits during the first year revealed that many teachers did not understand the full implications of implementing RF. While it is encouraging that staff is now ready to do the work, more than $500,000 has been awarded to this school over the past five years in addition to

monthly technical assistance from RF project staff as well as from outside consultants. If the school is now ready to do the work was that the best use of funds?

So while Washington State's Readiness to benefit rubric may not deliver an entirely accurate picture, it does require schools to seriously consider their readiness to benefit from increased technical assistance (Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction Washington, n.d.2). In Washington, readiness includes both the ability and attitude of stakeholders. (Washington's rubric is included in Appendix C). Washington also provides a great many resources for schools. The following was retrieved from Washington's web site and it includes sample agendas, activities, ways to build consensus, etc:

- Readiness Assessment - General Readiness
- Leadership Team Meeting Agenda 1
- Leadership Team Meeting Agenda 2
- Planning Calendar for SIP Stages
- Jigsaw Procedure for School Improvement Planning
- School Improvement Process Puzzle
- Working Toward Consensus Methods
- Telling Our Story
- Beliefs, Vision, and Mission - Creating a Clear and Shared Focus
- Unpacking the Mission Statement
- Unpacking OUR Mission Statement

- Invent a New Mission Statement
- Tips on How to Meaningfully Involve Students in School Improvement

Given the results of this project and the external evaluations of Idaho RF over the past five years, it may be that the most important lesson learned is that an external force can only impact student outcomes if the participants share the same goals. Idaho has very limited resources to obligate towards school improvement and those resources may be best spent in schools ready to benefit from an external provider. And the SDE should consider a graduated scale in terms of grant funds. For schools that are not quite at the place of making significant change it may be that the SDE can be most helpful but giving a smaller award that allows schools to continue the work of getting to a place of change.

District Level Readiness

Readiness to benefit is also important at the district level. Schools did not apply for RF; district leaders did. The requirement was at the suggestion of Jerry Silbert (NRFTAC, 2003) and it may have been very wise because district support appears to impact the rate of change. In working with the same school where teacher resistance was an issue, the ITA provider stated that the district was a real impediment to making change. In fact, three of the four ITA providers noted in their summaries that district policies actually impeded progress. In one school the ITA provider identified a need for supplemental phonic materials. In spite of the fact that the school had funds available to purchase the materials, the building principal, reading coach and ITA provider had to wait until district personnel was available to discuss the purchase which delayed

implementation of the new program until the next school year. In contrast, another school purchased additional curricular materials and created a third grade intervention class on March 31st. The principal created the intervention class with the full support of the third grade teachers but did not need to seek district permission to either purchase the materials or implement the change.

In another district, the district had contracted with external technical assistance providers that provided executive coaching to the treatment school building principal. While the intention was certainly good on the district's part, the time commitment for both the district initiative and RF ITA imposed real time constraints on the principal's ability to meet with the ITA provider.

"If you put a good teacher up against a weak system the system will win every time" (Schmoker, 2006). Perhaps the same is true for building leaders. In at least two instances within this project, district policies and procedures actually impeded implementation of necessary changes either by requiring the building leader to seek approval or by imposing time restraints on the building leader.

Fielding, Kerr, and Rosier (2007) recently published book on the experience of the Kennewick, Washington school district *Teaching All Children to Read: Annual Growth plus Catch-Up Growth For All Students* may provide some insights for Idaho. Kennewick is known for the district-wide approach taken towards reaching the 90% proficiency goal (Fielding, Kerr & Rosier, 1998). In 2003 all but one of its seven elementary schools met that goal and all seven have continued at that level of achievement as of 2008.

According to Fielding, Kerr and Rosier the district only sets the goal. How schools get there is up to the individual schools. Schools make curricular materials selection, create their own schedules, and allocate personnel. The goal – 90% proficiency - is stated over and over again in district-sponsored events but the methodology for meeting the goal is left to schools to decide. This model is a direct contrast to the prescriptive nature imposed by the USDOE for Reading First, and yet it yielded significant and sustainable results.

Perhaps the creators of RF missed some important variables in their construction of the program. The content of reading instruction was certainly clearly specified but perhaps they also should have specified the delivery and limited grant awards to schools that were only willing to both implement the content but also reorganize the system of delivery. The same could be said for Idaho's implementation of RF. If we had investigated further the issues within each of those schools and ensured teacher level support, might the results have been more positive for all schools?

Performance Agreements

Until the ITA project, the relationship between participants and the Idaho Reading First could hardly be considered collaborative. While RF project staff's goal was to be helpful when providing TA the staff was also responsible for monitoring. And that dual role does not necessarily support collaboration. In *Learning by Doing* (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2006) the authors discuss talk the need for explicit team norms:

> If teachers are to work collaboratively to clarify the essential learning for their courses and grade level, write common assessments, and jointly analyze results, they must overcome the fear that they may be exposed to their colleagues and principals as ineffective.

Perhaps the same is true for districts and schools in relation to collaborating with state sponsored programs such as Reading First. Establishing trust is critical for technical assistance providers and ITA providers reported the need to gain entry (Loucks-Hoursley, & Mundry, 1991). Given their dual role some type of performance agreement that established norms and helped facilitate both their role and the expectations of all participants would be beneficial. In Washington State, the final step for schools to be accepted into its School Improvement Project is the completion of a performance agreement. A two-year performance agreement is jointly developed by the school, school district, and the State Department of Education. The agreement identifies the specific actions and resources that will be provided by the state, the district and the school. The agreement also contains a timeline for implementation and sets specific student achievement goals (Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction Washington, n.d.2). Had performance agreements been established in the ITA, schools, the project might have had a different result.

Policy Considerations

Since the inception of the program, Reading First has been very top down. The guidance for program administration was very specific and gave states little wiggle room

in terms of the implementation. Curricular materials and assessments were specified. For state's applications to be approved, the states' had to both identify the curricular materials that would be used as well as the assessment instruments in their grant proposals. Idaho was not allowed to use the IRI as a progress monitoring assessment until this school year and the Idaho Standard Achievement Test (ISAT) is still not considered adequate as an outcome assessment. While the USDOE may question the technical adequacy of ISAT, Idahoans use the assessments as a measure of achievement. Tying state's hands was one of the major criticisms cited by the Office of Management and Budget (Manzo, 2006).

And the mandates set forth by the USDOE were than translated in terms of the State's actions with schools. Finding the balance between mandates and choice is difficult from a policy perspective. Kennewick's results certainly support the idea of allowing local stakeholders a certain amount of latitude in terms of how they accomplish goals. On the other hand, many experts caution that "We cannot rely on 'failing' schools to turn themselves around. If schools knew what to do they would be doing it" (Arsen, Bell, & Plank, 2004, as noted by Elmore & Burney, 1997). How do we find the balance?

As a collective effort, Reading First has worked and Idaho should be proud of the accomplishments. However, the top down approach may be impacting the program's ability to bring all schools to next level. In contrast, the Kennewick district stated the goal but left the methodology to the schools and this approach has resulted in continued higher achievement. Perhaps the USDOE and Idaho's SDE should have followed the same paradigm: state the goal but leave the "how" up to schools.

RF funding in the future is questionable. However the state's Title I funds specifically allocated for school improvement have increased substantially (Marcia Beckman, personal communication, August 2008). It may be wise for the SDE to insist on both some mechanism for evaluating readiness to benefit and a performance agreement between the district and the SDE.

The Greater the Need the Stronger the Intervention

RF is a systemic implementation of Response-to-Intervention (RTI) limited to early literacy. RTI came from the field of special education and has as its goal reducing the number of students referred to special education (Mellard & Johnson, 2008). One of the tenets of RF was to separate those students who struggled with reading from those with a learning disability through powerful instruction. That philosophy is also reflected in the current guidance of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) that allows schools and school districts to put 15% of their funding towards early intervention services (U.S. Department of Education, 2006a.). Perhaps the same philosophy can be employed to schools. State education agencies may be wise to consider both the needs of the schools as well as their readiness to benefit before committing limited resources.

Once committed the commitment needs to be long term. If we have learned anything from RF as well as the research on school reform we know that change takes time. Idaho RF can be the bad example in the sense that we may have funded schools without being fully cognizant of their challenges. But this researcher is still not sure how eliminating struggling schools helps students. In the case of BIE schools it should to be

noted that eliminating some schools increases the student achievement results. But this researcher is still left with the question of what we do to improve results in *all* schools especially those that fail to meet the needs of all learners?

At this time, the new administration's Stimulus Package has been signed by both the Senate and the House of Representatives (February 15, 2009). At first glance, it appears that it will increase the state's discretionary school improvement funds by at least one third. Currently very little is known about the specifics of the grant but for the past eight years the emphasis and encouragement of federal guidance has told states to focus on those schools that were most challenged to meet AYP (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). This author would challenge that assumption. If we have learned anything from Idaho RF it is the expression "*necessary but not sufficient."* What we have learned from RF is that necessity does not in itself bring about change.

Change takes more. Defining more presents the challenge for state policy makers. Whether it is embracing the concept of "*No Excuses*" (Carter, 2001), The *Moral Imperative of School Leadership* (Fullan, 2003), or just as NWREL suggests the commitment to be patient, it requires more -more resources, more time and perhaps most importantly more commitment at the local level.

A state can offer resources but it can not create the burning desire to improve outcomes in a community's schools. Without the demonstrated presence of a shared desire to increase outcomes for all children policy makers at the Idaho Department of Education would be wise to limit the resources committed to schools. The question remains how does a district or school demonstrate desire? RF asked for a commitment.

Most grant applications came with more than eighty percent of the faculty committing to implement the necessary changes. When project staff realized that was not enough we then instituted school visits prior to awarding grants – and yet one ITA school is still struggling with resistance.

Links to Future Policy Considerations

Idaho project staff may want to study RF schools in more depth. The schools present a unique opportunity because of the similarity in both demographics and treatment over the last five years. However, given the results of this project and previous program evaluations it might be wiser to allocate state level resources towards the study of readiness. What are the tangible or intangible variables that make a school ready to change? NWREL's evaluation was certainly supportive of continuing the ITA project but limited resources may challenge that counsel. The ITA project was not the State's first attempt to improve outcomes in RF schools. These schools have been well funded (over $500,000), provided five years of continued professional development and consistent technical assistance. But in spite of RF and the ITA project they did not statistically improve student outcomes versus the non-ITA schools. Perhaps the organizational structure of the schools in other words, readiness to benefit, prevented ITA schools from taking full advantage of the additional technical assistance.

Readiness to Benefit

How does one measure readiness to benefit? A quick Google Scholar search resulted in 131,000 references which vary from rural community's readiness to implement a mental health plan to a ten step process for forensic science. Given the mixed results of this project perhaps articulating and quantifying what variables indicate a readiness to benefit may be the best use of state funds. And it appears that future research is needed in this area. Currently there are no specific, quantifiable measures for identifying readiness to benefit with any of the Idaho SDE's programs.

We could (Idaho Department of Education) create rubrics or readiness assessments that would give the state a greater sense of both a school's willingness to change and the district's level of support. Surveys designed to capture the organizational health of the school could be required for future grants. And the Department could also include the examination of documents such as the state's consolidated plan that establishes how federal funding will be allocated within a district could be examined to see if the district was actually willing to allocate resources towards the intended school improvement effort. The Department could also ask to see artifacts such as schedules that included both intervention time for students and collaboration time for personnel. The Idaho SDE could also request agendas from board meetings to ensure that community stakeholders have been informed.

These suggested requirements would probably be deemed invasive to some districts but from a policy perspective perhaps additional requirements would prevent schools that were not willing to make significant changes from applying for funding.

Idaho has reserved 4% of the Title I-A funds since 2003 for school improvement efforts. The 4% equates to approximately $2 million a year. When asked the director of NCLB programs could not demonstrate any relationship between School Improvement Grants and student achievement. Perhaps a more vigorous application process that included changes at the local level would increase the likelihood of success.

Time

How much time is needed to bring lasting change to a school? It is unclear how three years became the mantra of RF. But the three year cycle is common within the RF community. Through interviews with the RF directors of Montana, Wyoming, Washington, Alaska, and BIE the maximum amount of time they fund schools is three years. Perhaps three years is sufficient in terms of expecting results. But is it long enough? Idaho RF is certainly guilty of finically supporting schools that perhaps should have been eliminated from the program either because of their success or their failure. But would their elimination have benefitted the program?

According to Michael Fullan "Success may be real but it is fragile" (Fullan, 2006). So does the three year cycle support both high achieving and low achieving schools? And if not, what is a reasonable timeframe? Given the zero funding of RF in 2009 it appears that policy makers may have a limited attention span in regards to issues such as literacy. So what is the right combination of time and support?

Action Planning

The emphasis on rapid process improvement for all Idaho RF schools may have eclipsed the impact of the ITA project. However the process may have also led to RF schools surpassing the plateau in achievement that had been reached in 2005. Rapid Process Improvement has been used in manufacturing and healthcare and both communities embrace the concept (Harrington, 1991; Wagner, Glasgow, Davis, & Bonomi, 2001; Joint Commission Resources, 2008). It requires a team of various functions from an organization to analyze a targeted process, identify opportunities to improve, and implement the solution quickly. It worked well within the RF community. Idaho's RF schools outpaced the state averages in all but second grade. Since those schools are among Idaho's neediest the process may hold promise for future study.

Idaho has much to be proud of in terms of their implementation of Reading First. But we also have much to learn from. I have every confidence that we will.

REFERENCES

Adams, B. (1990). *Phonemic awareness and its relationship to reading achievement.* University of Wisconsin, School of Education. Retrieved February 2009 from: http://www.wisconsin.edu

AIMSweb. (n.d.). *Analysis of reading assessments K-3*. Retrieved February 2009 from: www.AIMSweb.com

Alber, S., Gordy, A., & Nelson, J. (2004). Effects of systematic error correction and repeated readings on the reading accuracy and proficiency of second graders with disabilities. *Education and Treatment of Children with Disabilities, 27*(3), 186-98

Aldersebaes, I., Potter, J., & Hamilton, N. (2000) *Programs don't – people do: Insights into schoolwide change.* Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.

Archer, A. (2007) Active Participation in Primary Grades. Nebraska Reading First Presentation, retrieved June 7, 2009 from www.nde.state.ne.us/ReadingFirst/AnitaArcher.htm

Archer, A., & Torgesen, J. (2007). *Increasing student responses*. National Reading First Comprehension Conferences.

Armbruster, B., Lehr, F., & Osborn, J. (2001). *Put reading first.* Retrieved from http://www.nifl.gov/partnershipforreading/publications/reading

Barbetta, P.M., Heron, T.E., & Heward, W.L. (1993). Effects of active student response during error correction on the acquisition, maintenance, and generalization of sight words by students with developmental disabilities. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 2*6, 111-119.

Barbetta, P.M., Heward, W.L., & Bradley, D.M.C. (1993). Relative effects of whole-word and phonetic-prompt error correction on the acquisition and maintenance of sight words by students with developmental disabilities. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 26*, 99-110

Barbetta, P.M., Heward, W.L., Bradley, D.M., & Miller, A.D. (1994). Effects of immediate and delayed error correction on the acquisition and maintenance of basic sight words by students with developmental disabilities. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 27*, 177-178.

Barr, A.S. (1948). The measurement and prediction of teaching efficiency: A summary of investigations. *Journal of Experimental Education, 16*, 203-283.

Barr, R., & Parrett, W. (2007). *The kids left behind: Catching up the underachieving children of poverty*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree.

Barr, R., & Parrett, W. (2001). *Hope fulfilled for at-risk and violent youth: K-12 programs that work* (2nd Edition). Needham Heights: Allyn & Bacon.

Berliner, D.C. (1990). What's all the fuss about instructional time? In M. Ben-Peretz and & R. Bromme (Eds.) *The Nature of Time in Schools: Theoretical concepts and Practictioners perceptions* (3-35) New York: Teachers College Press.

Bertrani, A., Fullan, M., & Quinn, J. (2004). New lessons for districtwide reform. *Educational Leadership, 61*, 42-46.

Boise State University. (n.d.1). *Center for School Improvement, Leadership Meetings, September 2007, November 2007, January 2008 March 2008*. Retrieved January 29, 2009 from: www.boisestate.edu/csi/readingfirst

Boise State University (n.d.2). *Center for School Improvement, Action Planning*. *September 2007*. Retrieved June 1, 2008 from: http://csi.boisestate.edu/readingfirst/RF_ResourcesForLeadership

Brophy, J. & Good, T. (1986) Teacher behavior and student achievement. In M.C. Wittrock (Ed.), *Handbook of research on teaching* (3rd ed.). New York: McMillan

Bryk, A. S., & Schneider, B. (2002). *Trust in schools: A core resource for improvement*. New York: Russell Sage.

Carnine, D., Silbert, J., Kame'enui, E., Tarver, S., & Jungjohann, K. (2006). *Teaching struggling and at-risk readers: A direct instruction approach.* Columbus, OH: Pearson.

Carter, S.C. (2001). *No excuses: Lessons from 21 high-performing, high poverty schools*. Washington DC: Heritage Foundation.

Chall, J. (1967). Learning to read: The great debate. Orlando, FL: Harcourt Brace College Publishers.

Coles, G. (2003). *Reading the Naked Truth: Literacy, Legislation and Lies* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Conner, D. (1993) *Managing at the Speed of Change.* New York: Villard Books

Consortium of Reading Excellence. (2008). *Assessing reading: Multiple measures.* Novo, CA: Arena Press.

Corallo, C. & McDonald, D. (2001). *What works with low-performing schools: A review of research on low-performing schools*. Retrieved on June 9, 2009 from www.centerforpubliceducation.org/site/c.kjJXJ%MPIwE/b.

Cowan, T. (2005). *Union announces national campaign to educate public and elected leaders on improving the No Child Left Behind Law*. Press release issued by the American Federation of Teachers, May 19th, Washington, D.C.

Coyne, M, Kame'enui, E., & Simmons, D. (May-June, 2004). Improving beginning reading instruction and intervention for students with LD: Reconciling "all" with "each." *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 37*(3), 231-239.

Crockett, J.B. (May-June, 2004). Supporting science in the schoolhouse. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 37*(3), 186-188.

Deno, S. (2007). *Supporting teachers who are instituting progress monitoring*. Presentation made at the Summer Institute for Progress Monitoring. Kansas City, MO. Retrieved February 2009 from http://www.studentprogress.org.

Denton, C., Foorman, B., & Mathes, P. (2003). Primary prevention in classroom reading instruction. *Teaching Exceptional Children.* Retrieved February 2009 from www.eed.state.ak.us/tls/readingfirst/pdf/RFSummit/AK%20RTI%20Keynote%20web.

Denton, C., Vaughn, S. & Fletcher, J. (2003) Bringing Research Based in Reading Intervention to Scale. *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice* 18(3):201-211 August 2003.

DuFour, R., DuFour, R., Eaker, R., & Many, T. (2006). *Learning by doing: A handbook for professional learning communities at work.* Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree.

Edtrust. (1998). *Good teaching matters: How well qualified teachers can close the gap.* Retrieved June 7, 2009 from www.2edtrust.org.

Elmore, R., & Burney, D. (1997). *Investing in teacher learning: staff development and instructional improvement in Community School District #2*. New York: National Commission on Teaching & America's Future & the Consortium for Policy Research in Education.

Engelman, S., Bruner, C. (2003) *Reading Mastery,* New York, NY SRA/McGraw-Hill

Fielding, L., Kerr, N., & Rosier, P. (2007). *Teaching all children to read: Annual growth plus catch-up growth for all students.* Kennewick, WA: National Children's Reading Foundation.

Fielding, L, Kerr, N., & Rosier, P. (1998). *The 90% reading goal.* National Children's Reading Foundation, Kennewick: WA

Finn, J. (1998). *Class size and students at risk: What is known? What is next?* National Institute on the Education of At-Risk Students, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved June 8, 2009 from www.ed.gov/offices/OERI/At-Risk/

Foorman, B. (1995). "The Great Debate": Code-oriented versus whole language approaches to reading instruction. *School Psychology Review, 24*(3), 376-392.

Foorman, B.R. (May-June, 2007). Primary prevention in classroom reading instruction. *Teaching Exceptional Children, 39*(5), 24-30.

Foorman, B., Schatschneider, C., Eakin, M. N., Fletcher, J. M., Moats, L. C., & Francis, D. J. (2006). The impact of instructional practices in grades 1 and 2 on reading and spelling achievement in high poverty schools. *Contemporary Educational Psychology, 31*, 1-29.

Foorman, B., York, M., Santi, K. L., & Francis, D. J. (in press). *Contextual effects on predicting risk for reading difficulties in first and second grade*. Reading and Writing.

Foorman, B.R., & Torgesen, J. (2001). Critical elements of classroom instruction and small group instruction to promote reading success in all children. *Learning Disabilities Research and Practice,* 16(4), 202-211

Francis, D., Carlson, C., Slavin, R, Lara-Alecio, R., & Hedges, L. (2006). *Experimental investigations of instruction and the language of instruction with Spanish-speaking English language learners*. Symposium presented to American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, CA. Retrieved June 9 2009 from http://yukon.cs.uh.edu:8090/david_francis/Presentations/2006/index

Fuchs, L., & Fuchs D. (2005). *Applying progress monitoring to response to intervention*. Retrieved August 21, 2008 from: www.studentprogress.org.

Fullan, M. (2003). *The moral imperative of school leadership*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Fullan, M. (2006). *Turnaround leadership.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Good, T. & Grouws, D. (1979). The Missouri teacher effectiveness program. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 71,* 355-362.

Goodwin, B. (2000). *Raising the achievement of low-performing students.* McRel Policy Brief.

Goodman, K. (2006). *The truth about DIBELS.* Portsmouth: NH: Heinemann.

Hall, T. & Mengel, M. (n.d.1). *Curriculum-based evaluations*. Retrieved December 2007 from: http://www.cast.org/publications/ncac/ncac_curriculumbe.html.

Hall, T. & Mengel, M. (n.d.2). *Curriculum based measures*. Retrieved December 2007 from: http://www.cast.org/publications/ncac/ncac_curriculumbe.html

Harrington, H. (1991*). Business process improvement: The breakthrough strategy for total quality and productivity.* New York: McGraw Hill.

Hanushek, E. A., Kain, J. F., O'Brien, D. M., & Rivkin, S. G. (2005). The market for teacher quality. (Working paper 11154). Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research.

Hart, M. & Risley, T. (1995). *Meaningful differences in the everyday experience of young American children.* Baltimore, MD: Brookes.

Hintze & Stecker. (2006). *Data based instructional decision making*. Retrieved August 4, 2008 from: www.studentprogress.org

Hjelm, J., Wanzek, J., & Vaughn, S. (in press) Preventing and remediating reading difficulties for elementary and secondary students. In G.D. Sideridis & T.A. Citro (Eds.), *Best Practices in Learning Disabilities: Vol. 2.*

Hoffman, J. V. (1991). Teacher and school effects in learning to read. In R. Barr, M. L. Kamil, E B. Mosenthal, & P. D. Pearson (Eds.), *Handbook of reading research* (Vol. 2, pp. 911-950). New York: Longman.

Hoover, H., & Dunbar, S., Frisbie, D. (2005). Iowa Test of Basic Skills. Meadows, IL: Riverside Publishing, Rolling

Hosps, M. (n.d.). *Variables that affect the correlation between fluency and accuracy with a measure of comprehension*. Retrieved August 2, 2008 from: www.AIMSweb.com

Hunter, M. (1982) *Mastery Teaching.* El Segunda: CA: TIP Publications

Idaho State Board of Education. (2009). *Accountability workbook*. Retrieved January 29, 2009 from: http://www.boardofed.idaho.gov/meetings/2009/01_26_09/04%20IRSA%20January%2009%20AGENDA.pdf

Idaho State Board of Education, Instruction Research and Student Affairs. (n.d.1). Board minutes. Retrieved February 2008 from: www.boardofed.idaho.gov.

Idaho State Board of Education. (n.d.2). *AYP final report summary 07/08*. Retrieved July 30, 2008 from: osbe.idaho.gov

Idaho State Department of Education. (2006). *Curricular materials*. Retrieved January 29, 2009 from: www.sde.idaho.gov

Idaho State Department of Education (n.d.). *Idaho Reading Indicator*. Retrieved August 2, 2008 from: www.sde.idaho.gov/IRI

Institute of Educational Science. (2008). *Reading First Impact Study: Interim Report* Retrieved February 2009 from: ies.ed.gov/ncee/pubs/20084016/execsumm_ program.asp

Iverson, S., Tumner, W., & Chapman, J. (2005). The effects of varying group size on the Reading Recovery approach to preventive early intervention. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 38, 256-72.

Johnson, L. (1964). *The great society*. Retrieved January 2009, from: http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/lbjthegreatsociety.htm).

Johnson. (n.d.). *Screening for reading problems*. Retrieved August 21, 2008 from: ncld.org.

Joint Commission Resources. (2008). Practiced-Based Learning and Improvement: A Clinical Improvement Action Guide, 2nd, Edition. Retrieved June 9, 2009 From: www.jcrinc.com

Juel, C. (1988). Learning to read and write: A longitudinal study of 54 children from first through fourth grades. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 80*(4).

LaBerge, D., & Samuels, S. (1991). Towards a theory of automatic information processing in reading. *Cognitive Psychology*, 6, 293-323.

Levy, S. (2007) National data trends in Reading First Schools. Presentation at the National Reading First Conference, St. Louis: MO

Lou, Y., Abrami, P., Spence, J., Paulse, C., Chambers, B., & d'Appolino, S. (1996). Within class grouping: A meta-analysis. *Review of Educational Research 66*(4)

Loucks-Horsely, S., & Mundry, S. (1991) Assisting change from without: The technical assistance function. In J. Bliss, W. Firestone, & C. Richards (Eds.), *Rethinking effective schools: Research and practice.* 112-127. Englewood Cliffs: NJ Prentice Hall.

Manzo, K. (1998). New national reading panel faulted before it's formed. *Education Week*. Retrieved from: edweek.org.

Manzo, K. (2006). Federal review of reading first identifies serious problems. *Education Week*. Retrieved August 2007 from: edweek.org.

Manzo, K. (June 3, 2008). Research shows no definitive answers. *Education Week.* Retrieved from: edweek.org.

Marzano, R., Pickering, D., Pollock, J. (2004) *Research-based strategies for increasing student achievement.* Alexandria, VA: ASCD

Mathes, P., Denton, C., Fletcher, J., Anthony, J., Francis, D., & Schatschneider, C. (2005). The effects of theoretically different instruction and student characteristics on the skills of struggling readers. *Reading Research Quarterly, 4*(2).

Medley, D. & Mitzel, H. (1959). Some behavioral correlates of teacher effectiveness. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 50,* 239-246.

Mellard, D. & Johnson, E. (2008). RTI: *A practitioner's guide to response to intervention*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press

Miller, B. & Campbell, J. (2005) *Change Facilitators: Working with low performing Schools.* Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.

National Center for Educational Statistics. (2008). National *Assessment of Educational Progress.* Retrieved February 2009 from nces.ed.gov/NATIONSREPORTCARD.

National Center on Student Progress Monitoring. (2007). *What is Progress Monitoring?* Retrieved December 2007 from: www.studentprogress.org

National Center on Student Progress Monitoring. (n.d.). *Tools*. Retrieved August 2, 2008 from: www.studentprogress.org

National Institute of Child Health and Human Development [NICHD]. (2000). *National Reading Panel-Teaching children to read: Reports of the subgroups* (NIH Pub. No. 00-4754). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

National Institute for Literacy, Put Reading First: The Research Building Blocks for Teaching Children to Read. (n.d.). Retrieved November 2008 from: www.nifl.gov/partnershipforreading/publications/reading_first1.html

National Reading First Technical Assistance Center [NRFTAC]. (2007). *Best practices handbook.* (Unpublished manuscript available to Idaho schools from the Reading First, Center for School Improvement and Policy Studies, Boise State University, 1910 University Drive, Boise, ID 83725.)

National Reading First Technical Assistance Center [NRFTAC]. (in press). *Meeting the needs of all learners.* (Unpublished manuscript available to Idaho schools from

the Reading First, Center for School Improvement and Policy Studies, Boise State University, 1910 University Drive, Boise, ID 83725.)

National Reading Panel. (2000). *Teaching Children to Read: An evidenced-based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction*. Retrieved June 7, 2009 from www.nationalreadingpanel.org

National Research Council. (1998). *Preventing reading difficulties in young children*. Committee on the Prevention of Reading Difficulties in Young Children, Commission on Behavioral and Social Science and Education, C. E. Snow, M. S. Bums, and P. Griffin (Eds.). Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

Nelsestuen, K. (2008). *Evaluation of the Idaho Reading First Intensive Technical Assistance Project.* Portland: OR, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory [NWREL]. (2006). *Study of Reading First Administrators,* Sponsored by the Idaho Department of Education, Boise, ID.

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory [NWREL]. (2008a). *Impact of Increased Technical Assistance on Idaho Reading First Schools*. Sponsored by the Idaho Department of Education, Boise, ID

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory [NWREL]. (2008b). *Program evaluation of Idaho Reading First*. Sponsored by the Idaho Department of Education, Boise, ID.

Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction Washington. (n.d.1). *School improvement assistance*. Retrieved July 2008 from: http://www.k12.wa.us/SchoolImprovement/overview.aspx).

Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction Washington (n.d.2). *Assess readiness to benefit*. Retrieved August 23, 2003 from: www.k12.wa.us/SchoolImprovement

Riverside Publishing. (2008). *Iowa Test of Basic Skills: Form A, Form B, Form C.* Retrieved August 3, 2008 from: www.riverpub.com/products/itbs/details.html

Rosenshine, B. (1997). Advances in Research on Instruction. In *Issues in educating students with disabilities*, pp. 197-221. J. Lloyd, E. Kame'enui, & D. Chard (Eds.). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Rosenshine, B. & Stevens, R. (1986). Teaching functions. In M.C. Wittrock (Ed.) *Handbook of research on teaching,* (3rd Ed.). New York, Macmillan

Schmoker, M. (2006). *Results now: How we can achieve unprecedented improvements in teaching and learning*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD. Retrieved from: www.texasreading.org/3-Tier

Shanahan, T. (1999) The National Reading Panel: Using Research to Create More Literate Students. *Reading Today*, Newark, DE, International Reading Association

Silverstein, J., & Flachbart, M. (2008) Grade Level Team Meetings, National Reading First Conference, July 28-30, Nashville, TN

Stanovich, K. (2000). *Progress in understanding reading*. New York: Guilford Press.

Stern, S. (2008). *Too good to last: The true story of Reading First*. Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, retrieved February 2009 www.fordhamfoundation.org.

Stewart, R. (2005). *Evaluation of Idaho Reading First*. Boise State University, Boise, ID

Stewart, R. (2006). *Evaluation of Idaho Reading First*. Boise State University, Boise, ID

Stewart, R (2007). *Evaluation of Idaho Reading First*. Boise State University, Boise: ID

Taylor, B., Pearson, P., Clark, K., Walpole, S. (1999). *Beating the odds in teaching all children to read, Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement*. Retrieved February 2009 from http://www.ciera.org.

Texas Education Agency. (n.d.). *3-Tier Model*. Retrieved January 29, 2009 from: www.texasreading.org/3tier

Texas Institute for Measurement Evaluation and Statistics (TIMES). (2004). *Evaluation of Idaho Reading First*. University of Houston, Houston, TX.

Torgesen, J. (2004). *Catch them before they fall*. Retrieved from: www.fcrr.org/staffpresentations

U.S. Department of Education. (2002). *Final Reading First guidance*. Retrieved July 2007 from: http://www.ed.gov/programs/readingfirst/guidance.doc

U.S. Department of Education. (2006a). *Topic: Early intervening services*. Retrieved January 29, 2009 from: www.ed.gov

U.S. Department of Education. (2006b). *LEA and school improvement: Non-Regulatory guidance*, retrieved January 29, 2009 from http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/schoolimprovementguid.doc

U.S. Department of Education. (2009). *Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, Legislation, Regulations, Guidance NCLB.* Retrieved February, 2009 from www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oese/legislation.html

U.S. Department of Education, Elementary and Secondary Act of 1964. (n.d.). Retrieved August 1, 2008 from: www.ed.gov/legislation/ESEA)

U.S. Department of Education, Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. (n.d.). *Title I, Part C, as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001; 20 U.S.C. 6391-6399*. Retrieved August 1, 2008 from: www.ed.gov

U.S. Department of Education, Improving America's Schools. (n.d.). Retrieved August 2007 from: http://clinton4.nara.gov.

U.S. Department of Education, Legislation, Regulations and Guidance. (n.d.). Retrieved February 2009 from: www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oese/legislation.html

U. S. Department of Education, Reading First. (n.d.1). Retrieved August 2007 from: www.ed.gov/ReadingFirst.

U.S. Department of Education, Reading First. (n.d.2). *Annual performance data*. Retrieved February 2009 from: www.ed.gov/programs/readingfirst/support

U.S. Department of Education, Reading First State Grants. (n.d.). Retrieved January, 2009 from: www.ed.gov/readingfirst

University of Oregon. (2006). *Instructional focus groups, small group instruction and independent time*. Retrieved January 29, 2009 from: http://oregonreadingfirst.uoregon.edu

University of Oregon. (n.d.). *Dynamic indicators of basic early literacy skills*. Retrieved August 2, 2008 from: dibels.uoregon.edu/measures.php

Vaughn, S., & Fuchs, L. (2003). Redefining learning disabilities as inadequate response to instruction: The promise and potential problems. *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice.* 18, 137-146

Vaughn, S. & Linan-Thompson, S. (2003). Group size and time allotted to intervention: Effects for students with reading disabilities. In B. Foorman, (Ed.). *Preventing and remediating reading difficulties: Bringing science to scale.* Baltimore, MD: York Press.

Vaughn, S., Linan-Thompson, S., & Elbaum, B. (n.d.). *Preventing reading difficulties: A three-tiered intervention model*. Retrieved from: www.texasreading.org/3-Tier.

Wagner, E., Glasgow, R., Davis, C., & Bonomi, A. (2001). *Quality improvement in chronic illness care: A collaborative approach.* Joint Commission Resources, Volume 27, 2.

Weber, G. (1971). *Inner-city children can be taught to read: Four successful schools* (CGE Occasional Paper No. 18). Washington, DC: Council for Basic Education. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 057 125)

Weiderhold, J. & Bryant B. (2003). *Gray Oral Reading Test* (4th Ed.). Minneapolis, MN: Pearson Publishing.

Woodcock, R. (1997). *Woodcock Diagnostic Reading Battery*. Itasca, IL: Riverside.

APPENDIX A

SWIP Tool

Summary of SWIP

School: **Grade:** **Time Frame/Year:**

Instructional Recommend	**Participation in Core Curriculum:**			**Supplemental & Intervention Programs/Strategies:**					**Determining Instructional Effectiveness**
Benchmark Subgroup 1:	**Whole**	**Small**	**IW**	**Curriculum 1:**	**Curriculum 2:**	**Curriculum 3:**	**Curriculum 4:**	**Independent Work:**	**Out-of-Program Testing**
n=	**Instructor:**	**Instructor:**		**Instructor:**	**Instructor:**	**Instructor:**		**Students Served:**	**Test #1:**
	Group Size:	**Group Size:**		**Students Served:**	**Students Served:**	**Students Served:**			**Frequency:**
				Group Size:	**Group Size:**	**Group Size:**			
	Activities:	**Activities:**	**Activities:**	**Activities:**	**Activities:**	**Activities:**	**Activities:**	**Activities:**	**Test #2:**
				__ w/in reading block __in addition to reading block	_w/in reading block __ in addition to reading block	__w/in reading block __in addition to reading block	__w/in reading block __in addition to reading block		**Frequency:**
	Minutes:	**Minutes:**	**Minutes:**	**Minutes:** **Days Per Week:**	**Minutes:** **Days Per Week:**	**Minutes:** **Days Per Week:**	**Minutes:** **Days Per Week:**	**Minutes:**	**Test #3:** **Frequency:**
	In-Program Tests:			**In-Program Tests:**	**In-Program Tests:**	**In-Program Tests:**	**In-Program Tests:**		

Instructional Recommend	**Participation in Core Curriculum:**			**Supplemental & Intervention Programs/Strategies:**					**Determining Instructional Effectiveness**
Benchmark Subgroup 2: n=	**Whole**	**Small**	**IW**	**Curriculum 1:**	**Curriculum 2:**	**Curriculum 3:**	**Curriculum 4:**	**Independent Work:**	**Out-of-Program Testing**
	Instructor:	**Instructor:**		**Instructor:**	**Instructor:**	**Instructor:**		**Students Served:**	**Test #1:**
	Group Size:	**Group Size:**		**Students Served:**	**Students Served:**	**Students Served:**			**Frequency:**
				Group Size:	**Group Size:**	**Group Size:**			
	Activities:	**Activities:**	**Activities:**	**Activities:**	**Activities:**	**Activities:**	**Activities:**	**Activities:**	**Test #2:**
				__ w/in reading block __in addition to reading block	_w/in reading block __ in addition to reading block	__w/in reading block __in addition to reading block	__w/in reading block __in addition to reading block		**Frequency:**
	Minutes:	**Minutes:**	**Minutes:**	**Minutes:** **Days Per Week:**	**Minutes:** **Days Per Week:**	**Minutes:** **Days Per Week:**	**Minutes:** **Days Per Week:**	**Minutes:**	**Test #3:** **Frequency:**
	In-Program Tests:			**In-Program Tests:**	**In-Program Tests:**	**In-Program Tests:**	**In-Program Tests:**		

Instructional Recommend	**Participation in Core Curriculum:**			**Supplemental & Intervention Programs/Strategies:**					**Determining Instructional Effectiveness**
Strategic Subgroup 1:	**Whole**	**Small**	**IW**	**Curriculum 1:**	**Curriculum 2:**	**Curriculum 3:**	**Curriculum 4:**	**Independent Work**:	**Out-of-Program Testing**
n=	**Instructor:**	**Instructor:**		**Instructor:**	**Instructor:**	**Instructor:**		**Students Served:**	**Test #1:**
	Group Size:	**Group Size:**		**Students Served:**	**Students Served:**	**Students Served:**			**Frequency:**
				Group Size:	**Group Size:**	**Group Size:**			
	Activities:	**Activities:**	**Activities:**	**Activities**:	**Activities:**	**Activities:**	**Activities:**	**Activities:**	**Test #2:**
				__ w/in reading block __in addition to reading block	_w/in reading block __ in addition to reading block	__w/in reading block __in addition to reading block	__w/in reading block __in addition to reading block		**Frequency:**
	Minutes:	**Minutes:**	**Minutes:**	**Minutes:** **Days Per Week:**	**Minutes:** **Days Per Week:**	**Minutes:** **Days Per Week:**	**Minutes:** **Days Per Week:**	**Minutes:**	**Test #3:** **Frequency:**
	In-Program Tests:			**In-Program Tests:**	**In-Program Tests:**	**In-Program Tests:**	**In-Program Tests:**		

Instructional Recommend	**Participation in Core Curriculum:**			**Supplemental & Intervention Programs/Strategies:**					**Determining Instructional Effectiveness**
Strategic Subgroup 2: n=	**Whole**	**Small**	**IW**	**Curriculum 1**:	**Curriculum 2:**	**Curriculum 3:**	**Curriculum 4:**	**Independent Work:**	**Out-of-Program Testing**
	Instructor:	**Instructor:**		**Instructor:**	**Instructor:**	**Instructor:**		**Students Served:**	**Test #1:**
	Group Size:	**Group Size**:		**Students Served:**	**Students Served:**	**Students Served:**			**Frequency:**
				Group Size:	**Group Size:**	**Group Size:**			
	Activities:	**Activities:**	**Activities:**	**Activities:**	**Activities:**	**Activities:**	**Activities:**	**Activities:**	**Test #2:**
				__ w/in reading block __in addition to reading block	_w/in reading block __ in addition to reading block	__w/in reading block __in addition to reading block	__w/in reading block __in addition to reading block		**Frequency:**
	Minutes:	**Minutes:**	**Minutes:**	**Minutes:** **Days Per Week:**	**Minutes:** **Days Per Week:**	**Minutes:** **Days Per Week:**	**Minutes:** **Days Per Week:**	**Minutes:**	**Test #3:** **Frequency:**
	In-Program Tests:			**In-Program Tests:**	**In-Program Tests:**	**In-Program Tests:**	**In-Program Tests:**		

Instructional Recommend	**Participation in Core Curriculum:**			**Supplemental & Intervention Programs/Strategies:**					**Determining Instructional Effectiveness**
Intensive Subgroup 1:	**Whole**	**Small**	**IW**	**Curriculum 1:**	**Curriculum 2:**	**Curriculum 3:**	**Curriculum 4:**	**Independent Work:**	**Out-of-Program Testing**
n=	**Instructor:**	**Instructor:**		**Instructor:**	**Instructor:**	**Instructor:**		**Students Served:**	**Test #1:**
	Group Size:	**Group Size:**		**Students Served:**	**Students Served**:	**Students Served:**			**Frequency:**
				Group Size:	**Group Size:**	**Group Size:**			
	Activities:	**Activities:**	**Activities:**	**Activities:**	**Activities:**	**Activities**:	**Activities:**	**Activities:**	**Test #2:**
				__ w/in reading block __in addition to reading block	_w/in reading block __ in addition to reading block	__w/in reading block __in addition to reading block	__w/in reading block __in addition to reading block		**Frequency:**
	Minutes:	**Minutes:**	**Minutes:**	**Minutes:** **Days Per Week:**	**Minutes:** **Days Per Week:**	**Minutes:** **Days Per Week:**	**Minutes:** **Days Per Week:**	**Minutes:**	**Test #3:** **Frequency:**
	In-Program Tests:			**In-Program Tests:**	**In-Program Tests:**	**In-Program Tests:**	**In-Program Tests:**		

Instructional Recommend	**Participation in Core Curriculum:**			**Supplemental & Intervention Programs/Strategies:**					**Determining Instructional Effectiveness**
Intensive Subgroup 2:	**Whole**	**Small**	**IW**	**Curriculum 1:**	**Curriculum 2:**	**Curriculum 3:**	**Curriculum 4:**	**Independent Work:**	**Out-of-Program Testing**
n=	**Instructor:**	**Instructor:**		**Instructor:**	**Instructor:**	**Instructor:**		**Students Served:**	**Test #1:**
	Group Size:	**Group Size:**		**Students Served:**	**Students Served:**	**Students Served:**			**Frequency:**
				Group Size:	**Group Size:**	**Group Size:**			
	Activities:	**Activities:**	**Activities:**	**Activities:**	**Activities:**	**Activities:**	**Activities:**	**Activities:**	**Test #2:**
				__ w/in reading block __in addition to reading block	_w/in reading block __ in addition to reading block	__w/in reading block __in addition to reading block	__w/in reading block __in addition to reading block		**Frequency:**
	Minutes:	**Minutes:**	**Minutes:**	**Minutes:** **Days Per Week:**	**Minutes:** **Days Per Week:**	**Minutes:** **Days Per Week:**	**Minutes:** **Days Per Week:**	**Minutes:**	**Test #3:** **Frequency:**
	In-Program Tests:			**In-Program Tests:**	**In-Program Tests:**	**In-Program Tests:**	**In-Program Tests:**		

APPENDIX B

Action Plan for Targeted Group

Action Plan for Targeted Group

School: __Idaho RF School **Grade Level: 2nd Grade** **Risk Status: Some Risk and High Risk**

Content Area: Reading

Date: __5-19-08_____ **Time Period for Action Plan:** __School Year 2008-2009_____

Staff Who Developed This Plan: ___Principal, Reading Coach, General Education Faculty, Special Education, ESL Teacher, Parent_____

Identify/Define the Problem: 70% of our 2nd graders at *either some risk or high Risk* status at the beginning of the school year were expected to move to *Proficient* by the end of the year; during the 2007-2008 school year only 2 out of 8 (25%) of these students moved to *Proficient* status, resulting in a difference between performance an expectation of 45 percentage points.

Summary of Problem Analysis: Materials/Instruction: A core intervention program does not exist for high risk students unless they qualify for Special Education services. For students at *high risk* status, a core intervention program needs to be in place in order to accelerate progress. For students at *some risk* status, consistent guidance on accurate reading of text as well as comprehension strategies is lacking. Grade 7 will be the primary focus for the 2008-2009 school year. However, other grade levels have seen less than adequate growth with these students as well, so some portions of our Action Plan will be implemented all grades.

Goal of the Action Plan: By the end of the 2008-2009 school year, 70% of our second grade students who start the year at *high risk* will move to some risk status. And 70% of our *some risk* will move to *Proficient* status.

Area for Action Plan	Action to Be Taken (be specific enough so that it is possible to determine when the action has been implemented)	Person Responsible	Report on Progress of Implementation
Materials and Instructional Practices	• Those students who remain *high risk* as determined by the Spring 2008 IRI *and* continue to have accuracy issues (based on CORE Phonics Survey given May 2008) will receive XYZ program as a full replacement program beginning September 2, 2008. • Those students who remain at *high risk or some risk* as determined by the Spring IRI and *do not* continue to have decoding issues (based on CORE Phonics Survey given May 2008) will spend their 30-minute intervention time in a "GORP" (Guided Oral Reading Practice) group in the regular classroom, beginning September 2, 2008. The classroom teacher will, based on individual and group needs, direct the group and select from a variety of texts – expository, narrative, poetry, etc. Teacher will use explicit modeling of the following comprehension techniques - previewing, note taking, summarizing, question generating, application of new information and self-talk. The students will then be provided with multiple opportunities for oral fluency practice through whisper reading, choral reading, and partner reading.	Title I Teacher Reading Coach Second Grade Teachers Paraprofessionals	***To be updated every 3 weeks***
Time / Coverage / Mastery and Grouping Practices	• Students placed in XYZ as a full replacement will be given the program's placement test and be instructed by trained adults (seventh grade teacher and a paraprofessional) for 150 minutes per day in groups of no more than seven. • The remaining teachers will instruct students placed in a GORP group during the 30-minute intervention period, in groups of no more than six. During the GORP group, teachers will spend 25 minutes of direct comprehension strategies and guided practice in applying skills in text. .	Second grade Teachers Title 1 Teacher Reading Coach Paraprofessionals	***To be updated every 3 weeks***

Assessment Practices	• All *high risk and some risk* status students will be monitored every other week using AIMSweb. After all students in the class have been progress monitored for each week, the progress monitoring assistance will e-mail students' AIMSweb chart to the classroom teacher for comparison of individual student performance vs. expected growth. • Students being progress monitored out-of-grade level, whether in the XYZ replacement core program or not, will be also be monitored every six weeks against a grade level expectation using a seventh grade fluency passage.	Title I Teacher Progress M. Assistant Second grade Teachers Paraprofessionals	***To be updated every 2 weeks***
Data Utilization Practices	• The Summary of School Data/Growth Report we be shared with each 2nd grade teacher the second week of September. The strengths and weakness of the current program and instruction will be stressed (94% of proficient students remained proficient. • Beginning in October 2008, review of progress monitoring data will occur every three weeks at grade levels meetings by viewing each student's data chart via computer and LCD projector. The classroom teacher will discuss his/her own student's progress and utilize the 3-point decision rule. When students are not progressing as expected, the team will use the "Alterable Variables to Intensify Instruction" matrix to assist in determining needed changes, with those changes occurring within a week of the decision. To track the effectiveness of the instructional change, a vertical line will be added to the student's progress monitoring chart at the time of the change.	Second grade Teachers Title I Teacher Coach Principal	***To be updated every 2 weeks***
Professional Development	• Beginning October 1, the principal will meet one-on-one with second grade teachers weekly to discuss workshop/intervention. Meetings will focus on using data (Unit Assessments, CORE Phonics, progress monitoring) to ensure students are provided with quality instructional that meets their needs. • The purposes, routines, and expectations for the GORP (Guided Oral Reading Practice) intervention will be shared with each classroom teacher during the first visit and will be reviewed on subsequent visits.	Title I Teacher Coach Trainer	***Schedule to be developed by September 1.*** ***Copies to be distributed to all grade level team members by 9/15***

Professional Development	• Several adults have already been trained in XYZ program. However, additional training will be provided by on August 5, 2008 to additional staff members as we transition to the Walk-to-Read model. • The frequency of in-class professional development in current program will continue to be determined by class performance, with struggling students/teachers receiving weekly support in both the 55 minute lesson and workshop/intervention. • A consultant will model lessons and provide support to targeted teachers with specific needs.		***To be updated every quarter Professional Development to be discussed monthly at Grade Level team meetings*** ***Identified needs to be recorded by team members and forwarded to principal***
Schoolwide Organization and Support	• XYZ groups will be staffed by at least two adults during both the 55-minute portion of the lesson in order to maintain a 1:7 ration.	Title I Teacher Paraprofessionals	***Completed prior to school starting***
School Leadership: Principal	• The principal will be an active member of grade level team meetings to review progress and data. The principal will conduct walk-thru observations weekly and give feedback to teachers, via e-mail, on observations during the 55-minute block, workshop, and intervention.	Principal	***Updated Weekly Minutes to be collected and distributed to all grade level team members***
External Consultant / Coach	• The Coach will be an active member of grade level team meetings to review progress and data. The coach will continue to model lessons and provide support to targeted teachers with specific needs. • The coach will hold one-on-one meetings weekly with individual teachers, observe second grade workshop/intervention blocks twice per week, and discuss those observations during the one-on-one meetings.	External Consultant	***Coach to provide summaries to principals weekly***

APPENDIX C

Readiness Assessment – General Assessment

Readiness Assessment—General Readiness

Issue /Challenge: Engage school stakeholders in a continuous improvement process focused on improving student achievement

Abilities (Able)		
	Yes	**No**
Stakeholders understand that the continuous improvement process is a process, not an event, and that the first "round" will take a number of months to complete.		
Leadership Team includes a person knowledgeable about the continuous improvement process or technical assistance for the process is available.		
2-3 hour blocks of time are available for whole staff involvement in the process (LID, early release, extended time, etc.).		
Resources are available to provide Leadership Team meetings.		
Relationship of School Improvement Leadership team with district office has been clarified and support exists at the district level.		
Communication and decision-making processes are established in the school.		
Relationship between the Leadership Team and Site Council has been clarified.		
Site Specific Factors:		

Attitude (Willing/Secure)		
	Yes	**No**
Staff are ready to focus on actions that will improve student achievement.		
Staff value the use of data for decision-making.		
Staff value giving input during decision-making.		
Staff are receptive to the idea that change may be necessary.		
Site Specific Factors:		

CONCLUSION: Relative to this issue/challenge, the constituents impacted are:

_____ Unable and Unwilling (or insecure) _____ Able but Unwilling (or insecure)

_____ Unable but Willing (or motivated) _____ Able and Willing (or motivated)

ACTION PLAN: Therefore, the proper leader/implementation plan is:

APPENDIX D

Evaluation of Idaho Reading ITA Project