

Professional Development

Excerpts from
The Knowledge Loom: Educators Sharing and Learning Together
Web site
(<http://knowledgeloom.org>)

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The Knowledge Loom: Educators Sharing and Learning Together

<http://knowledgeloom.org>

The attached document is a user-generated download of selected content found on The Knowledge Loom Web site. Content on The Knowledge Loom is always being updated and changed. **Check online for the most current information.**

What is The Knowledge Loom?

The Knowledge Loom is an online professional development resource featuring specially organized spotlights on high-priority education issues, including:

- a list of promising practices (including an explanation of each practice and a summary of the research or theories that support the practice)
- stories about the practices in action in actual education settings
- lists of related resources found on other web sites.

The site is designed to help educators facilitate decision-making, planning, and benchmarking for improved teaching and learning through collaborative activities.

Are there other resources on The Knowledge Loom?

In addition to printable content, the site features interactive tools that allow users to share information and knowledge, read what panels of practitioners have to say about selected topics, ask questions of content experts, and print custom documents like this one. A companion guidebook, *Using The Knowledge Loom: Ideas and Tools for Collaborative Professional Development* (<http://knowledgeloom.org/guidebook>), can be downloaded. It offers activities and graphic organizers to support collaborative inquiry about what works in teaching and learning in support of school improvement.

What spotlight topics are currently available?

- Adolescent Literacy in the Content Areas
- Culturally Responsive Teaching
- Elementary Literacy
- Good Models of Teaching with Technology
- Leadership Principles in Technology
- Middle School Mathematics
- Principal as Instructional Leader
- Redesigning High Schools to Personalize Learning
- School, Family, and Community Partnerships
- Successful Professional Development
- Teaching for Artistic Behavior: Choice-Based Art

Overview of Spotlight: Professional Development

This overview provides an outline of all content components of this spotlight that are published on The Knowledge Loom Web site. The creator of this document may have printed only selected content from this spotlight. View complete content online (<http://knowledgeloom.org/>).

Many factors contribute to an effective and successful professional development program. The following 8 principles of effective professional development are among those identified from the findings of recent research and reports of expert opinion. These 8 principles focus attention on professional development strategies for improving students' learning over time.

Practices

Each practice includes an explanation, a summary of each story that exemplifies the practice, a research summary (review of the literature), a reference list of the literature, and a short list of related Web resources (URLs and full annotations provided online or in the Related Web Resources section if it has been printed).

- Professional development should be based on analyses of the differences between (a) actual student performance and (b) goals and standards for student learning.
- Professional development should involve teachers in the identification of what they need to learn and in the development of the learning experiences in which they will be involved.
- Professional development should provide learning opportunities that relate to individual needs but are, for the most part, organized around collaborative problem solving.
- Professional development should be primarily school-based and built into the day-to-day work of teaching.
- Professional development should be continuous and on-going, involving follow-up and support for further learning, including support from sources external to the school that can provide necessary resources and new perspectives.
- Professional development should incorporate evaluation of multiple sources of information on (a) outcomes for students and (b) the instruction and other processes that are involved in implementing the lessons learned.
- Professional development should provide opportunities to gain an understanding of the theory underlying the knowledge and skills being learned.
- Professional development should be connected to a comprehensive change process focused on improving student learning.

National Staff Development Council (NSDC) Standards for Staff Development, Revised (2001)

NSDC's Standards for Staff Development, Revised Edition synthesizes several decades of research in the field and builds on numerous examples of successful practice. The standards identify the context, processes, and content that research identifies as necessary to improve student achievement through staff development.

Context Standards

Staff development that improves the learning of all students	Essential Elements
Organizes adults into learning communities whose goals are aligned with those of the district and school.	Shared vision and goals Expectation for collaboration Learning time
Requires skillful school and district leaders who guide continuous instructional improvement.	Role of teachers Distributed leadership Policies and structures
Requires resources to support adult learning and collaboration	Financial and other support Time Access to learning opportunities

Process Standards

Staff development that improves the learning of all students	Essential Elements
uses disaggregated student data to determine adult learning priorities, monitor progress, and help sustain continuous improvement.	Data disaggregation Need analysis Continuous improvement
uses multiple sources of information to guide the improvement and demonstrate its impact.	Evaluation design Learner evaluation Student results
prepares educators to apply research to decision making	Access to research Application of research Action research
uses learning strategies appropriate to the intended goal.	Delivery options Learning strategies Follow-up support
applies knowledge about human learning and change.	Supporting change Adult learning needs Educators' professional

	goals
provides educators with the knowledge and skills to collaborate.	Collaborative climate Interactivity Group development

Content Standards

Staff development that improves the learning of all students	Essential Elements
prepares educators to understand and appreciate all students, create safe, orderly, and supportive learning environment, and hold high expectations for their academic achievement.	Demonstrating respect and understanding Student learning needs High expectations for all students
deepens educators' knowledge, provides them with research-based instructional strategies to assist students in meeting rigorous academic standards, and prepares them to appropriately use various types of classroom assessments.	Alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment Meeting individual student needs Deepen content knowledge
Provides educators with knowledge and skills to appropriately involve families and other stakeholders	Communication with families Cultural understanding and respect Community commitment

Learn more about the NSDC standards for professional development at <http://www.nsd.org/standards/>. For information on how the standards relate to online learning, download NSDC's book "E-Learning for Educators: Implementing the Standards for Staff Development" <http://www.nsd.org/library/authors/e-learning.pdf>.

Stories

The Stories correspond to the summaries printed as part of each practice published on The Knowledge Loom. These are detailed examples of how the practices look in action in educational settings.

Accelerated Learning Laboratory (ALL School)
Alton Elementary School
Carroll Independent School District
Edmonds School District
Ganado Intermediate School
Geneva City School District
H.D. Hilley Elementary School
International High School
Jolane Roy's 7th grade class, An Wang School; and Deborah Romeo's 8th grade class, Edith N. Rogers School
Keene School Administrative Unit (S.A.U.) #29
Lawrence Public School District
Lewisville Independent School District
Louisiana's America2000 Technology Innovation Program
Mexico Academy and Central School District
Montview Elementary School
Norman Public Schools
Olathe School District
P.S. 721R Hungerford School
RI Statewide Professional Development I-Plans
Samuel Mason Elementary School
Samuel Mason Elementary School
San Francisco Unified School District
Shallowford Falls Elementary School
Sprayberry High School
Spring Woods High School
The New York City Lab School for Collaborative Studies
Wherry Elementary School
Wilton School District
Woodrow Wilson Elementary School

Related Web Resources: 45

This is an annotated list of resources found on other Web sites that relate to the spotlight topic on The Knowledge Loom.

National Awards Program for Model Professional Development
National Partnership for Excellence & Accountability in Teaching
National Staff Development Council
Edvantia
Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL)
The Education Alliance at Brown University

Practices

This section presents the Knowledge Loom practices for the spotlight you selected.

Each practice includes an explanation, a summary of each story that exemplifies the practice, a research summary (review of the literature), a reference list of the literature, and a short list of related Web resources (URLs and full annotations provided online or in the Related Web Resources section of this document).

For an overview of additional content presented on The Knowledge Loom Web site that may not have been selected for this print document, see the Overview of Spotlight located earlier in the document.

Reading Instruction, Grades K–3

Practices ELL Overview Source Material

The K–3 reading content in this spotlight is based on the recommendations of the National Reading Panel (NRP), The Partnership for Reading (PFR), the International Reading Association (IRA), the U.S. Department of Education's Reading First Program, and the Northeast and Islands Regional Technology in Education Consortium (NEIRTEC).

This section presents seven practices for reading instruction in grades K–3 and includes recommendations on how technology can support the implementation of each practice. From kindergarten through grade 3, learning to read is a particularly intense endeavor for the teacher and learner. Students are "cracking the code" and building the foundation for literacy during this critical time period. To support this process, effective teachers carefully integrate reading into daily classroom activities that capitalize on how reading, writing, speaking, and listening support one another. As you read these practices, consider how you can serve as a model for your students, allowing them to emulate your behaviors until they attain mastery of literacy processes.

- Teachers combine multiple research–based methods and strategies into a coherent plan for reading instruction that meets the diverse learning needs of their students.
- Teachers use systematic and explicit instruction to develop students' phonemic awareness.
- Teachers develop students' phonics skills through systematic instruction on sound–symbol relationships, spending appropriate time to meet individual needs.
- Teachers frequently engage students in oral reading to develop their reading fluency.
- Teachers use numerous research–based methods for both direct and indirect vocabulary instruction.
- Teachers promote students' reading comprehension through research–supported techniques and explicit strategies.
- Teachers use computer technology to support reading instruction.

ELL Overview

As the National Reading Report (April, 2000) states, "Learning to read is a complex task for beginners" (*Teaching Children to Read: Reports of the Subgroups*. Chapter 2, p. 99).

Yet, this clearly poses an even greater challenge for English language learners (ELLs), who must learn to perform these complex cognitive processes in a new language. ELLs who have not learned to read in their primary or home language face the enormous challenge of acquiring the initial concepts and skills of literacy in English, a language they have not fully mastered. Others who have already developed literacy and academic skills in their home languages must apply their literacy knowledge to the task of reading English, with its distinct sound system, spelling patterns, vocabulary, and sentence patterns. In addition, ELLs often have to make meaning from texts which require cultural knowledge

different from their own. Finally, many ELLs find reading difficult because they have not previously experienced consistent schooling or appropriate instruction in either language.

Each of the five components of effective reading identified by the National Reading Panel (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension) presents its own set of difficulties for ELLs to overcome with help from their teachers.

Teachers of all students will find useful insights and strategies in the sections **Implications for ELLs** and **Strategies for Supporting ELLs** below each practice under **[What Is It?]**.

Source Material

Because educators are increasingly concerned with the U.S. Department of Education's call for research-based teaching practice, this section draws heavily on the recommendations of both researchers and policymakers. It provides information from the federally sponsored National Reading Panel (NRP) and the federal Reading First legislation that may be of use for both instructional planning and grant writing. It also includes recommendations from the Partnership for Reading (PFR), the International Reading Association (IRA), and the Northeast and Islands Regional Technology in Education Consortium (NEIRTEC).

Highlights from the National Reading Panel:

"Learning to read is a complex task for beginners. They must coordinate many cognitive processes to read accurately and fluently. Readers must be able to apply their alphabetic knowledge to decode unfamiliar words and to remember how to read words they have read before. When reading connected text, they must construct sentence meanings and retain them in memory as they move on to new sentences. At the same time, they must monitor their word recognition to make sure that the words activated in their minds fit the meaning of the context. In addition, they must link new information to what they have already read, as well as to their background knowledge, and use this to anticipate forthcoming information. When one stops to take stock of all the processes that readers perform when they read and comprehend text, one is reminded how amazing the act of reading is and how much there is for beginners to learn." (*Teaching Children to Read: Reports of the Subgroups*. April 2000, Chapter 2, p. 99)

The fundamental findings of the National Reading Panel affirm that children who become good readers usually develop all of the following components of effective reading:

- **phonemic awareness:** an understanding of the sounds that make up spoken language
- **phonics skills:** an understanding of the sounds that letters and letter combinations make
- **ability to read fluently and accurately**
- **ability to comprehend what is read**

The National Reading Panel also offers recommendations for reading instruction, which appear on The Partnership for Reading Web site and serve as the basis for the reading practices in this section of the spotlight. However, it is important to note that because the NRP considered only experimental or

quasi-experimental research in reaching its conclusions about effective reading instruction, its recommendations do not include many promising practices that are now used effectively in classrooms. (For more information on the screening criteria for research included in the NRP report, consult the *Report of the National Reading Panel: Teaching Children to Read: Reports of the Subgroups*, Section 1, pp. 5–7 and the "Minority View" at the end of the report, pp. 1–3.)

As you read the material in Reading Instruction, Grades K–3, consider how you can link the findings of the National Reading Panel to other promising practices and to your own reading instruction practices.

Sources:

The National Reading Panel (NRP) convened in 1997 at the request of Congress to assess the effectiveness of different approaches used to teach children to read. Organized by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) in consultation with the Secretary of Education, the NRP reviewed research-based knowledge on reading instruction and held open panel meetings across the United States. On April 13, 2000, the NRP concluded its work and submitted "The Report of the National Reading Panel: Teaching Children to Read." (See: <http://www.nationalreadingpanel.org/>)

Reading First, established in 2002 by the No Child Left Behind legislation, is a focused nationwide effort to enable all students to become successful early readers. It dedicates funds to help states and local school districts eliminate the reading deficit by establishing high-quality, comprehensive reading instruction in kindergarten through grade 3. (See: <http://www.ed.gov/programs/readingfirst/index.html>)

Through The Partnership for Reading Web site, The National Institute for Literacy (NIFL), the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), and the U.S. Department of Education disseminate research and information related to NCLB. (See: <http://www.nifl.gov/partnershipforreading/>)

The International Reading Association (IRA) is a professional membership organization whose mission is to promote high levels of literacy for all by improving the quality of reading instruction, disseminating research and information about reading, and encouraging the lifetime reading habit. (See: <http://www.reading.org/>)

The Northeast and Islands Regional Technology in Education Consortium (NEIRTEC)—a collaboration of Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC), TERC, Learning Innovations at WestEd, and The Education Alliance at Brown University—is one of the ten regional technology in education consortia funded by the U.S. Department of Education. NEIRTEC serves the six New England States, New York, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. NEIRTEC focuses on helping educational leaders at the state, district, and school levels address the many challenges involved in putting technology to effective use, with a particular emphasis on the needs of schools in underserved urban and rural communities. (See: <http://www.neirtec.org>)

Teachers combine multiple research-based methods and strategies into a coherent plan for reading instruction that meets the diverse learning needs of their students.

What Is It?
Technology Tips
Implications for ELLs
Strategies for Supporting ELLs
Glimpse of the Classroom
Questions to Think About

What Is It?

The K–3 reading content in this spotlight is based on the recommendations of the National Reading Panel (NRP), The Partnership for Reading (PFR), the International Reading Association (IRA), the U.S. Department of Education's Reading First Program, and the Northeast and Islands Regional Technology in Education Consortium (NEIRTEC).

There are many methods that have been used to teach children to read, and the evidence suggests that no one method is effective on its own.

"A reading method is a set of teaching and learning materials and/or activities often given a label such as phonics method, literature-based method, or language experience method... There is no single method or single combination of methods that can successfully teach all children to read." (*Using Multiple Methods of Beginning Reading Instruction*. International Reading Association Position Statement, 1999)

Successful early reading instruction requires that teachers know which reading methods are more effective and plan a combination of methods that is most appropriate for their students. The teaching strategies used to implement these methods are critical. The young learner's success depends upon the teacher's ability to match methods to student learning needs and then to plan instructional strategies accordingly. It necessitates a teacher's knowledge of "how children learn to read, why some children have difficulty reading, and how to identify and implement instructional strategies for different children" (The Partnership for Reading Web site. Available: <http://www.nifl.gov/partnershipforreading/explore/principles.html>).

According to the U.S. Department of Education's Guidance for the Reading First Program (April, 2002),

"A high-quality reading program that is based on scientifically based research must ... [be] integrated into a coherent instructional design. A coherent design includes explicit instructional strategies that address students' specific strengths and weaknesses, coordinated instructional sequences, ample practice opportunities and aligned student materials, and may include the use of targeted, scientifically based instructional strategies as appropriate. The design should also consider the allocation

of time, including a protected, uninterrupted block of time for reading instruction of more than 90 minutes per day. A high-quality reading program also includes assessment strategies for diagnosing student needs and measuring progress, as well as a professional development plan that ensures teachers have the skills and support necessary to implement the program effectively and to meet the reading needs of individual students." (Available: <http://www.ed.gov/programs/readingfirst/index.html>)

Technology Tips

The following technology recommendations for reading are direct excerpts from "Technology and Teaching Children to Read," published by the Northeast and Islands Regional Technology in Education Consortium (NEIRTEC) in 2004. The complete NEIRTEC report can be downloaded as a PDF file from the link provided at <http://knowledgeloom.org/elemlit>.

"Knowledgeable and dedicated teachers are the critical element in successful reading instruction programs. While technology can support these teachers and help them to be more successful with all children, it can never replace qualified teachers because teaching children to read is too complex – it requires insight into children's cognitive abilities and emotional needs, and is dependent upon the types of reinforcement, guidance, and support that can only be provided by caring, knowledgeable teachers.

"[NEIRTEC'S] technology framework consists of four general capabilities that computers can provide to support students learning to read. Computers can:

- ◆ present information and activities to students;
- ◆ assess students' work;
- ◆ respond to students' work; and
- ◆ provide *scaffolds*, such as access to word pronunciation and definitions that help students read successfully.

These four key capabilities, whether supplied by teachers using traditional materials, books, and audiotapes or by computers, have proven to be important components in reading instruction. Computers can now provide each of these capabilities to support teaching and learning in new ways." (pp. 2–3)

Implications for ELLs

In any class, students represent a range of strengths and instructional needs. Effective teachers recognize that students, especially English language learners (ELLs), come to school from varied backgrounds and with different prior knowledge. Therefore, multiple approaches to reading instruction are especially important.

Strategies for Supporting ELLs

To address the diverse learning needs, backgrounds, and strengths of English language learners (ELLs), effective teachers use a wide variety of instructional strategies. For example, teaching ELLs to recognize and use cognates ("sister words" that share origins and meanings across languages) gives students a valuable comprehension strategy. Spanish-speaking students and students who speak other Latin-root languages have a great advantage when they are able to read and understand words like *ancient* and *enormous* because of the Spanish cognates *anciano* and *enorme*. But for ELLs from other language backgrounds, teachers need to provide additional explanations, definitions, and examples of these same words. In contrast, proficient English speakers might already know these words or infer their meaning from the context of the reading material.

Some beginning ELL readers benefit from approaches that reinforce the relationships between experience, talk, and print. For example, in the Language Experience approach, students' attention is focused on an everyday or school experience such as taking a class walk to collect leaves, blowing bubbles, making popcorn, going to pick apples, or experimenting with magnets. The teacher leads a discussion of the experience, eliciting narratives from the students and supplying needed vocabulary. Discussion culminates in the verbal composition of individual or group stories, which the teacher transcribes and rereads with students.

In this approach, teachers say things like:

- Now let's write about our trip.
- We'll decide what we want to say and I'll write it down.
- How shall we start?
- Shall we start by telling where we went and how we got there?
- What should we tell about next?
- What was the first thing that happened when we got there?

Glimpse of the Classroom

At Carlisle Elementary School, the classroom environment may look informal, but the students and teachers are very busy. All morning the reading room is bustling with students rotating in and out as they engage in self-directed, individualized reading. Mrs. P. sits with a small group of half-day students. One student is reading aloud to her; one is reading silently; and another is working on an "ABC" book (a reinforcement of letter/sound recognition) and occasionally seeking Mrs. P.'s support. Around the reading room, the other children are

- at the listening center listening to a story on tape (goal is to work on fluency);
- at the computer (working on a phonemic awareness game);
- at the art center reading with an America Reads volunteer; or
- in various cozy book nooks and lofts reading self-selected books independently. (There is a cozy antique bathtub lined with soft cushions, a perfect place to curl up with a good book.)

The block of literacy instruction balances whole-group spelling and phonics instruction; flexible, small-group reading discussion groups; and individualized folder and workbook exercises. This year, the primary teachers have adopted a guided reading approach as well as Reading Recovery, which provides essential service to individual children and also defines the types of classroom practice employed by the teachers. Phonological awareness, too, has become a priority.

(Adapted from *Elementary Schools Where Students Succeed in Reading*. Mosenthal, et al., 2001. Providence, RI: The Education Alliance at Brown University.)

Questions to Think About

1. In order to match each student's learning needs to various methods and strategies, what characteristics of the learner should be considered?
2. What reading methods are available and familiar to you, and when is each appropriate to use?
3. What types of information complement test scores as sources of information to help teachers make instructional decisions about English language learners (ELLs)?

Story Summaries

Beeman Elementary School

- Multi-age classrooms (grades 1–2 and grades 3–4)
- No single approach to instruction by all teachers
- Literacy block scheduling with no interruptions
- Grades 3–4 use literature-based discussion
- DEAR (Drop Everything and Read): sustained in-class silent reading time with Storybox, "Step" books, trade books
- From 0% of staff in group professional development (PD) to 100% participation in a phonological development course
- At least 80% of second graders now meeting the state reading standard

Teachers at Beeman Elementary School in New Haven, Vermont describe their instructional approach as varied yet consistent. Says one teacher of a combination grade 3–4 classroom: "Reading has a lot of different faces, and it happens several different times throughout every day of the week. So I would say there isn't just one way I teach reading." Teachers draw from a wide variety of materials, including Storybox and other little books, "Step" books, and trade books. The school does not rely on commercial programs. Teachers use methodologies such as individualized and self-selected reading, guided reading, word walls, and phonological awareness training.

Charter Oak Primary School

"The diversity of kids in the building is our strength," says one teacher from Charter Oak Primary School in Peoria, Illinois. With one in five students identified as having special needs, the teachers agree that integrating students with disabilities has resulted in better academic performance and social skills for students with special needs, without jeopardizing the success of other students in the class. At the root of Charter Oak's success is the differentiated instructional philosophy, drawn from the inclusion model and adapted in classrooms at every grade in the building. Staff attribute students' literacy success to several factors: leadership, staffing, high expectations, differentiated instruction, and a focus on data. The U.S. Department of Education recognized Charter Oak Primary School as a 2003 Blue Ribbon School in its No Child Left Behind–Blue Ribbon Schools Program (see:

Skidmore–Tynan Elementary School: Students and Teachers Reaching for Success

With high expectations and strong support from a spirited principal, the professional teaching staff has met the literacy challenges of this small, rural elementary school in the community of Bee County, Texas. To implement an effective, well–rounded literacy program, teachers at Skidmore–Tynan Elementary School plan and teach collaboratively, use a structured cycle of instruction and assessment, emphasize phonics and phonemic awareness, and receive the professional development and support they need. Kindergarten teachers focus on phonics and use multiple strategies for phonemic awareness and pre–reading. Grades 1–5 follow a consistent reading program involving a weekly instructional reading cycle, with assessment at the end of each week. The U.S. Department of Education has recognized Skidmore–Tynan Elementary School as a 2003 Blue Ribbon School in its No Child Left Behind–Blue Ribbon Schools Program (see: <http://www.ed.gov/programs/nclbbrs/index.html>).

Research Summary

Research Supporting the Practice
Technology Research Supporting the Practice
General Research on ELL Reading Instruction

Research Supporting the Practice

The K–3 reading content in this spotlight is based on the recommendations of the National Reading Panel (NRP), The Partnership for Reading (PFR), the International Reading Association (IRA), the U.S. Department of Education's Reading First Program, and the Northeast and Islands Regional Technology in Education Consortium (NEIRTEC).

"The National Reading Panel (NRP)'s research suggests that reading instruction is complex. Children come into the classroom with different levels of preparation, as do their teachers. In addition, learning to read requires a combination of skills, including phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, and text reading comprehension skills. Not all children learn in the same way, and one strategy does not work for all children. As a result, the NRP's findings demonstrate that although learning phonics skills is critical for positive reading development, the best results will be achieved when teachers combine phonics instruction with the development of other skills, and when teachers use a combination of explicit instructional strategies to build those skills." (National Reading Panel. Available: <http://www.nationalreadingpanel.org/FAQ/faq.htm#6>)

The U.S. Department of Education's Guidance for the Reading First Program (April, 2002) summarizes what should be evident in implementing a high–quality reading program:

- ◆ "Standards and accountability are the foundation of the Reading First classroom.
- ◆ Expectations are clear, as are strategies for monitoring progress toward meeting them.

- ◆ A comprehensive reading program provides the basis for instruction and connects meaningfully to supplemental materials.
- ◆ In-class grouping strategies are in use, including small-group instruction as appropriate to meet student needs. Student placement in groups is flexible, with placement and movement based on ongoing assessment, and different curricula may be in use to instruct different groups.
- ◆ There is active student engagement in a variety of reading-based activities, which connect to the five essential components of reading and to overall, clearly articulated academic goals.
- ◆ Effective classroom management and high levels of time on task are also evident."

(Section C, p. 6. Available: <http://www.ed.gov/programs/readingfirst/guidance.doc>)

Top

Technology Research Supporting the Practice

The following technology research summary for reading presents direct excerpts from "Technology and Teaching Children to Read," published by the Northeast and Islands Regional Technology in Education Consortium (NEIRTEC) in 2004. The complete NEIRTEC report can be downloaded as a PDF file from the link provided at <http://knowledgeloom.org/elemlit>.

"Our review of the research on technology and teaching children to read leads to the conclusion that multimedia digital technology, with capabilities such as hypertext, text-to-speech conversion, and speech recognition, has significant potential to enhance reading instruction at the K-6 level. This potential may be of the most value for students who have difficulty in learning to read, since the technology can help provide appropriate levels of activities, repetitive practice, individualized feedback, supportive scaffolding, and detailed record-keeping to inform instructional decisions. Therefore, technology can help teachers provide more of the individualized instruction that children with reading difficulties need. However, the research on technology and teaching children to read is still in its infancy, especially in regard to technologies, such as speech recognition, that have only recently become affordable for use in schools. The existing research findings are based on small-scale studies, in particular contexts, so it is difficult to know whether they generalize to a variety of schools, students, and teaching approaches.

"Our conclusions are consistent with those of the National Reading Panel, which found that: 'The rapid development of capabilities of computer technology, particularly in speech recognition and multimedia presentations, promises even more successful applications in literacy for the future' and 'There has been relatively little research in this important area and, consequently, many unanswered questions remain.'

"Educators responsible for decisions about classroom practices will find these conclusions to be encouraging about the potential of technology, but also very limited in their usefulness. The available research does not provide much information to help educators decide about specific technologies to use in specific ways within specific

instructional approaches for specific groups of students, so the critical question--*How can we make informed decisions about effectively applying technology in reading instruction within our school?*--remains to be answered." (p. 17)

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General Research on ELL Reading Instruction

There is general agreement that becoming a proficient reader in a second language is a difficult task. Snow, Burns, and Griffin (1998) and August and Hakuta (1997) underscore the enormous cognitive challenge faced by young ELLs who must acquire oral and literacy skills in English simultaneously. ELLs who are already literate in a home language are able to transfer some of their skills for use in English reading (Garcia, 2000), but that does not imply that learning to read well in English will be an easy task. Reading involves the use of both "higher level cognitive knowledge, ... abilities... and learning strategies," as well as "low level linguistic knowledge and processing strategies (Birch 2002, p. x.) Throughout the elementary grades, ELLs are likely to encounter difficulties with both "high" and "low" levels of the reading process, especially as they tackle increasingly complex readings (Droop & Verhoeven, 1998).

Knowledge of the relationships between sounds and letters is essential for learning to read English (Ehri, 1998). Verhoeven's (1999) work cautions teachers that it is unrealistic to expect ELLs to decode words independently until they are familiar with the sound system of English. To help ELLs become adept at using sound-letter relationships, Birch (2002) recommends practice in a variety of tasks: identifying a particular phoneme in words, discriminating between that phoneme and similar ones, linking the sound to the printed letter, visually discriminating the letter from other visually similar letters, recognizing and printing the letter in both upper and lowercase forms, finding the letter at the beginnings and endings of words alone and in connected text, and drawing things that begin with the letter and labeling them (p. 72). Other teaching suggestions include: playing games with rhyming words and alliterative words to develop students' awareness of how sounds combine to form words (Antunez, 2002; Kaufman & Franco, 2004), and, in the case of Spanish-speaking ELLs, building upon the similarities and differences between the sound systems of the two languages

(Helman, 2004).

Many researchers point out the difficulty of comprehending text when one has a limited vocabulary (Verhallen & Schoonen, 1993; Garcia, 1991; McLaughlin, 1993; Jimenez, Garcia, & Pearson, 1995, 1996). ELLs of any age often know too few words or only a single meaning for a word. McLaughlin et al. (2004) have had promising results in increasing ELLs' vocabulary knowledge through an intervention that pre-selected challenging and high-utility words from a reading selection. The intervention involved direct teaching of word meanings; teaching and raising awareness of words with multiple meanings; systemic teaching of word analysis skills including roots and affixes; engaging students in word games, riddles, and other activities designed to promote deeper understanding and use of the words in new and meaningful contexts; and finding the words outside of school. The intervention also focused on increasing Latino students' awareness of Spanish/English cognate words and ability to use cognate recognition as a legitimate and productive comprehension strategy.

Several researchers have documented that ELLs benefit from cognate recognition training (Garc'a & Nagy, 1993; Durgunoglu et al., 1993). Kress (2002) contains a useful reference list of Spanish-English cognates. Similarly, Au (1993), Nagy (1988), Dixon and Nessel (1983), and others recommend that teachers integrate vocabulary instruction with content instruction and with story reading. Hickman et al. (2004) describe a successful approach to teaching vocabulary to primary-grade ELLs during storybook reading. The approach involves careful selection of several storybooks or informational texts that focus on a theme of interest to the students in the class and are at a reading level above students' grade level. Teachers carefully select from the texts those vocabulary words which students could encounter and use in other contexts. Over the course of five days, the class previews the story and the vocabulary words, and the story is read aloud, discussed, re-read, and summarized. Discussions focus on using the vocabulary words and encouraging children to relate these words to their own life experiences.

Carrell and Eisterhold (1988) and Carrell (1983, 1984) have demonstrated the positive impact that prior knowledge of a topic or situational context has on ELLs' reading comprehension. However, stories and other texts often contain cultural contexts and assumptions that are unfamiliar to young ELLs and make comprehension difficult or impossible. Researchers advise teachers to support comprehension before students read by eliciting and building upon ELLs' prior knowledge and experiences relevant to story theme, setting, and content. Many researchers also support the value of teaching content reading strategies such as previewing a chapter before reading it and formulating questions, self-monitoring, and using imagery during reading (Carasquillo et al., 2004; Chamot & O'Malley, 1994; Echeverria et al., 2000; Schifini, 1994). Researchers agree that teachers should model and support comprehension before, during, and after reading by teaching text structures; using graphic organizers such as Venn diagrams, cause and effect charts, and story maps; and creating study guides that students can complete (Carasquillo et al., 2004).

One recommended approach to increase comprehension and engagement is the use of culturally relevant texts and multicultural literature (Au, 1998, 1993; Barrera, 1992; Harris, 1994). Larrick's 1965 landmark article, "The All-White World of Children's Books" (reprinted in Muse, 1997) pointed out that minority children had few opportunities to read about characters like themselves or see themselves in these books. In Larrick's review, these children's books often depicted those minority characters in offensive or demeaning ways. More recently, Singer and Smith (2003) point out that

Multicultural children's literature provides self-affirmation for readers when it conveys that people like themselves have lives worth knowing about and worth sharing with others (Bishop, 1997; Tenorio, 1994). This is particularly significant for readers who are members of marginalized groups (p.17).

Daphne Muse's book, *Multicultural Resources for Young Readers* (1997), contains an extensive annotated bibliography of such literature likely to engage ELLs readers and to build upon their experiences and prior knowledge.

Students' knowledge and experience are the starting points for The Language Experience Approach to reading, used with beginning English readers of all ages (Moustafa, 1987; Tharp & Gallimore, 1989; Tinajero & Calderon, 1988). Through questioning, teachers prompt students to speak about their individual or in-class experiences. The teacher writes down students' oral narratives, and the resulting text becomes the basis of reading instruction. Often teachers plan a group activity (e.g., taking a walk) to provide a common experiential base for reading.

Hoggard's 1996 review of the "critical attributes of classroom culture" for ESL literacy learners includes "the teacher as guide," "meaningful literacy experiences, a sense of ownership," "a community of learners," and "interactive classroom discourse" (pp. 5–9). Other researchers have also highlighted the importance of student participation in conversations that relate book themes to students' personal experiences and to other books. The instructional conversations (IC) approach is one way of structuring such book-centered interactions. Teachers promote general participation in small-group discussion by not calling on children but waiting for them to volunteer to speak, by responding to student contributions, and by encouraging students to connect their comments to those of previous speakers and build upon what they said (Rueda et al., 1992; Saunders & Goldenberg, 1999). IC also promotes skimming, scanning, and careful reading by requiring students to find text passages that support their opinions and interpretations (Goldenberg, 1991, 1992/1993; Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1990). Literature circles are another discussion format that promotes comprehension and academic language in a social context. Ruby (2003) discusses their effectiveness when properly scaffolded for English language learners. Gordon (2003) offers another good example of how teachers can effectively use literature response journals with English language learners.

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Related Web Resources

FCRR Reports on Reading Programs (0)

Guided Reading With Gay Su Pinnell (0)

Using Multiple Methods of Beginning Reading Instruction (1999) (0)

Teachers use systematic and explicit instruction to develop students' phonemic awareness.

What Is It?
Technology Tips
Implications for ELLs
Strategies for Supporting ELLs
Glimpse of the Classroom
Questions to Think About

What Is It?

The K–3 reading content in this spotlight is based on the recommendations of the National Reading Panel (NRP), The Partnership for Reading (PFR), the International Reading Association (IRA), the U.S. Department of Education's Reading First Program, and the Northeast and Islands Regional Technology in Education Consortium (NEIRTEC).

"Phonemic awareness is the ability to notice, think about, and work with the individual sounds in spoken words" (The Partnership for Reading Web site. Available: <http://www.nifl.gov/partnershipforreading/explore/phonemic.html>). "It is not the same as phonics, which involves knowing how specific written letters relate to specific spoken sounds" (Available: <http://www.nifl.gov/partnershipforreading/explore/phonemic.html>).

To develop phonemic awareness in children, teachers provide activities that help students practice rhyme, beginning sounds, and spoken syllables. Effective vehicles for these activities are nursery rhymes, riddles, songs, poems, and read-aloud books that manipulate sounds. Although by definition phonemic awareness focuses on the ear, interacting with print through teacher-led read-alouds, shared reading, and invented spelling also supports growth in phonemic awareness, and vice versa.

The National Reading Panel (NRP) lists the following tasks as representative of phonemic awareness:

1. "Phonemic isolation, which requires recognizing individual sounds in words. For example, 'Tell me the first sound in *paste*.' (/p/)"
2. "Phonemic identity, which requires recognizing the common sound in different words. For example, 'Tell me the sound that is the same in *bike*, *boy*, and *bell*.' (/b/)"
3. "Phoneme categorization, which requires recognizing the word with the odd sound in a sequence of three or four words. For example, 'Which word does not belong? *Bus*, *bun*, *rug*?' (rug)"
4. "Phoneme blending, which requires listening to a sequence of separately spoken sounds and combining them to form a recognizable word. For example, 'What word is /s/k/u/l/?' (school)"
5. "Phoneme segmentation, which requires breaking a word into its sounds by tapping out or counting the sounds or by pronouncing and positioning a marker for each sound. For example, 'How many phonemes are there in *ship*?' (three: /sh/i/p/)"
6. "Phoneme deletion, which requires recognizing what word remains when a specified phoneme is removed. For example, 'What is *smile* without the /s/?' (mile)"

(*Report of the National Reading Panel. Teaching Children to Read: Reports of the Subgroups*. April 2000, Chapter 2, p. 2)

To become good readers, children usually develop all of the following:

- phonemic awareness,
- phonics skills (an understanding of the sounds that letters and letter combinations make),
- the ability to read fluently and accurately, and
- the ability to comprehend what is read.

Although phonemic awareness is a strong predictor of success in learning to read, effective teacher practice requires a skillful blend of all four components.

In its position statement, the International Reading Association (IRA) recommends the following for the development of phonemic awareness and success in learning to read:

- Offer students a print-rich environment within which to interact.
- Engage students with surrounding print as both readers and writers.
- Engage children in language activities that focus on both the form and the content of spoken and written language.
- Provide explicit explanations in support of students' discovery of the alphabetic principle.
- Provide opportunities for students to practice reading and writing for real reasons in a variety of contexts to promote fluency and independence.

(*Phonemic Awareness and the Teaching of Reading*. International Reading Association Position Statement, July 1998, p.7)

In the same position statement, the IRA refers to "the 20% of children who have not achieved phonemic awareness by the middle of the first grade." These are the children who could benefit most from early identification of lags in phonemic awareness, from more systematic instruction, and from more intensive programs of instruction that include engagement with spoken language, its sounds, and its print contexts. (*Phonemic Awareness and the Teaching of Reading*. International Reading Association Position Statement, July 1998, p. 6)

The NRP cautions teachers about the following issues:

- Phonemic awareness is acquired for its value in helping learners understand and use the alphabetic system to read and write.
- It is important to recognize that children will differ in their phonemic awareness and that some will need more instruction than others will. Nonreaders will need much more phonemic awareness and letter instruction than those who are already reading.
- Phonemic awareness training does not constitute a complete reading program and is only a critical foundation piece.
- A number of phonemic awareness programs were found to be effective. Teachers need to evaluate the programs/methods they use against measured success in their own students.
- Phonemic awareness instruction should be as relevant and exciting as possible so that the instruction engages children's interest and attention.
- Results of the meta-analysis (NRP findings) should not be over-interpreted and should not be used to dictate oversimplified prescriptions regarding phonemic awareness instruction such as how long phonemic awareness training for students should last.

(Report of the National Reading Panel. *Teaching Children to Read: Reports to the Subgroup*. April 2000, Chapter 2, p. 6)

Technology Tips *The following technology recommendations for reading are direct excerpts from "Technology and Teaching Children to Read," published by the Northeast and Islands Regional Technology in Education Consortium (NEIRTEC) in 2004. The complete NEIRTEC report can be downloaded as a PDF file from the link provided at <http://knowledgeloom.org/elemlit>.*

"Computers can present a variety of phonemic awareness practice activities and provide feedback to students and reports to teachers about students' progress. Multimedia presentations can address many different learning styles by integrating sound, text, and moving images. These presentations can also accept input from a variety of sources by letting students enter responses by pointing, typing, or speaking. For example, many software programs for young children incorporate matching activities in which students are asked to match a sound with pictures of objects that start with that sound, a sequence of sounds with the word they form when blended together, or pictures of objects with names that start with the same sound or which rhyme. In these types of activities, many of the capabilities of computers described above can be employed to:

- ◆ provide tasks that involve both segmenting words into sounds and blending sounds into words;
- ◆ provide immediate feedback to let students know whether their answers were correct, give them hints or additional chances, and provide correct answers;
- ◆ individualize problem sets to focus on the phonemes that the student has not yet mastered;
- ◆ repeat activities and alter the speed of speech to meet individual needs;
- ◆ provide activities that ask children to match sounds and letters;
- ◆ provide activities designed for two or three children to work together;
- ◆ provide game contexts, attractive visual presentations, and motivating speech to engage and hold children's interest;
- ◆ provide reports for teachers' and children's progress and areas in which individual children need additional work; and
- ◆ engage children in productive self-directed work on phonemic awareness while the teacher works directly with other children, thereby helping the teacher meet the individual needs of each student." (pp. 6–7)

Implications for ELLs

In order to learn to read and write English, a learner must be able to perceive the small units of sound called phonemes which make up spoken words.

To those of us who can already read and write English, it is apparent that a word like *boat* has three component sounds, or phonemes: /b/ /o/ /t/. However, there is evidence that the ability to perceive a spoken word as a sequence of phonemes varies from individual to individual.

In addition to individual differences, phonemic segmentation of English words is particularly difficult

for those with little prior experience listening to English speech sounds. Phonemic segmentation of English words is also particularly difficult for those with little experience in English rhyme, alliteration, or other word play.

ELLs may find it difficult to differentiate certain phonemes of English. For example, /v/ and /b/ may sound alike to some Spanish speakers, and /l/ and /r/ may be indistinguishable to some Japanese speakers. Similarly, while English speakers would identify *pot* and *spot* as both containing the phoneme /p/, Hindi speakers might perceive the /p/ in *pot* and the /p/ in *spot* as two distinct phonemes differentiated by the presence or absence of an initial puff of air (aspiration). ELLs who experience difficulties with the sounds of English do not require referral to a speech language pathologist. That is only appropriate for students who have speech difficulties in their native language as well.

Strategies for Supporting ELLs

English language learners (ELLs) can develop phonemic awareness through listening to read-alouds, songs, poems, and chants. Listening to the sounds, rhymes, and rhythms of English provides ELLs with the auditory experiences they need to pronounce and read English. It is important for teachers to understand that listening to well-chosen, engaging language creates the necessary foundation for reading.

Effective teachers explicitly model phonemic segmentation (how to pronounce words phoneme by phoneme). They illustrate concepts, such as onset (the beginning of a syllable) and rime (the ending of a syllable), which enable us to rhyme words like *cat*, *mat*, *pat*, and *bat* or *low*, *toe*, and *go*. To further clarify these concepts, teachers often use visual aids and props, such as colored blocks or rods, which can physically represent phonological units.

Teachers who familiarize themselves with the similarities and differences between the students' primary languages and English will be able to anticipate and address areas of potential confusion. For example, if teachers are aware that the consonant sounds /p/, /b/, /t/, /d/, /k/, /g/, /m/, /n/, /f/, /s/ and /l/ are found at the beginnings of words in both English and Spanish, teachers may expect Spanish-speaking students to be successful in recognizing and distinguishing them. Knowing that most Spanish words end with a vowel, not a consonant, teachers can provide extra practice to help Spanish speakers distinguish and pronounce consonants at the ends of words. Similarly, knowing that in Korean /p/ and /f/ are not distinct phonemes, teachers can provide extra practice distinguishing between words such as *pat/fat* and *pill/fill*.

Aware that some English phonemes such as the sounds represented by /th/ in *either* and *ether* are present in few other languages, teachers can demonstrate how the /th/ sounds are formed (with the tongue and front teeth) and can help their students practice pronouncing words that feature these sounds.

To obtain information about students' primary languages, teachers can consult reference materials, ask bilingual adults, and listen carefully to sound patterns of English and other languages.

Effective teachers say things like:

- Watch how my lips press together when I say the /b/ sound in *ban* and *berry*.
- Watch how my top teeth touch my bottom lip when I say the /v/ sound in *van* and *very*.

- Now don't watch my lips, just listen. I'm going to say two words. Tell me if the two words are the same or different:
 - ◆ *ban/ ban*
 - ◆ *ban/van*
 - ◆ *van/van*
 - ◆ *van/ ban*
 - ◆ *very/ very*
 - ◆ *berry/very*
 - ◆ *very/berry*
 - ◆ *berry/berry*
- Now listen to the sound you hear at the beginning of the word.
- If you hear /b/, hold up the card that says B. If you hear the /v/ sound, hold up the card that says V.
 - ◆ *Ban*
 - ◆ *Boy*
 - ◆ *Van*
 - ◆ *Very*
 - ◆ *Bell*
 - ◆ *Velvet*
 - ◆ *Village*
 - ◆ *Bunny*
- We've been talking about words that start with the /m/ sound like *mom* and *money* and *mine*. Can you tell me some words in Spanish or Polish that start with the /m/ sound that we hear in *mom* and *mine*?

Glimpse of the Classroom

Mr. Y. forms a circle with his kindergarten class and teaches them a simple and repetitive African chant. As they all chant, they walk slowly around in a circle and shake their hands at their sides to the rhythm.

As the chant ends, Mr. Y. breaks from the circle and walks into the center, saying, "I'm thinking of a phoneme."

He points to individual students, who say their first names and go to the center of the circle as they are selected.

"Kerrie."

"Kaisha."

"Ken."

"Erica."

Isabelle yells out, "Erica!" identifying the initial phoneme that did not match. All players return to the circle.

Isabelle then falls into the place where Mr. Y. left off, and says, "I'm thinking of a phoneme," as she selects students from the circle.

"Harry."

"Mary."

"Yvette."

"Billy."

Yvette yells out, "Yvette!" identifying the ending phoneme that did not match. She takes Isabelle's place, and the game continues.

At the end of the game, Mr. Y. reviews the initial and ending sounds that the winners have identified. He challenges them to think of four more names they might use next time. After this 10-minute warm up, students settle into their seats.

Students look forward to opening their language arts block with these types of activities, where they have opportunities to move, vocalize, share about themselves, and practice their phonemic awareness skills. Some days the warm-up is to listen for certain sounds in a story that the teacher reads to the class. Other days they create poems or songs using particular patterns of sounds.

Questions to Think About

1. How can instruction in phonemic awareness connect to other literacy activities?
2. What visual aids, props, or body language might be used to focus students' attention on important phonological features?
3. What resources (poems, songs, stories, rhymes, word games, etc.) do you know that can develop English language learners' familiarity with particular features of the sound system of English?

Research Summary

Research Supporting the Practice
Technology Research Supporting the Practice
General Research on ELL Reading Instruction

Research Supporting the Practice

The K–3 reading content in this spotlight is based on the recommendations of the National Reading Panel (NRP), The Partnership for Reading (PFR), the International Reading Association (IRA), the U.S. Department of Education's Reading First Program, and the Northeast and Islands Regional Technology in Education Consortium (NEIRTEC). This section is summarized from the National Reading Panel Report.

The results of the National Reading Panel (NRP) meta-analysis were impressive. Overall, the findings showed that teaching children to manipulate phonemes in words was highly effective under a variety of teaching conditions with a variety of learners across a range of grade and age levels. In addition, the findings showed that teaching phonemic awareness to children significantly improves their reading more than instruction that lacks any attention to phonemic awareness. Specifically, the results of the experimental studies led the NRP to conclude that phonemic awareness training was the cause of improvement in students' phonemic awareness, reading, and spelling following training. The

findings were replicated repeatedly across multiple experiments and thus provide converging evidence for causal claims. While phonemic awareness training exerted strong and significant effects on reading and spelling development, it did not have an impact on children's performance on math tests. This indicates that halo/Hawthorne (novelty) effects did not explain the findings and that indeed the training effects were directly connected with and limited to the targeted domain under study. Importantly, the effects of phonemic awareness instruction on reading lasted well beyond the end of training. Children of varying abilities improved their phonemic awareness and their reading skills as a function of phonemic awareness training.

Phonemic awareness instruction also helped normally achieving children learn to spell, and the effects lasted well beyond the end of training. However, the instruction was not effective for improving spelling in disabled readers. Programs in all of the studies provided explicit instruction in phonemic awareness. Specifically, the characteristics of phonemic awareness training found to be most effective in enhancing phonemic awareness, reading, and spelling skills included explicitly and systematically teaching children to manipulate phonemes with letters, focusing the instruction on one or two types of phoneme manipulation rather than multiple types, and teaching children in small groups.

Phonemic awareness instruction is ready for implementation in the classroom, but teachers should keep in mind several cautions. First, phonemic awareness training does not constitute a complete reading program. Rather, it provides children with essential foundational knowledge in the alphabetic system. It is one necessary instructional component within a complete and integrated reading program. Several additional competencies must be acquired as well to ensure that children will learn to read and write. Second, there are many ways to teach phonemic awareness effectively. In implementing phonemic awareness instruction, teachers need to evaluate the methods they use against measured success in their own students. Third, the motivation of both students and their teachers is a critical ingredient of success. Research has not specifically focused on this. (*Report of the National Reading Panel. Teaching Children to Read: Reports of the Subgroups*. April 2000, Chapter 2, pp.1–8)

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Technology Research Supporting the Practice

The following technology research summary for reading presents direct excerpts from "Technology and Teaching Children to Read," published by the Northeast and Islands Regional Technology in Education Consortium (NEIRTEC) in 2004. The complete NEIRTEC report can be downloaded as a PDF file from the link provided at <http://knowledgeloom.org/elemlit>.

"Several research studies have shown positive results of using software with text-to-speech capabilities designed to help young children develop phonemic awareness and, in some studies, phonics abilities. In one study (Mitchell & Fox 2001), kindergarten and first-grade students who were at-risk for reading problems received software intervention on blending phonemes. The results show that these students improved their skills as much as a group of peers who worked directly with a teacher. A third group of students who received no intervention failed to show any notable improvement. Students at the two grade levels responded equally well to the software, indicating that it is not necessarily essential for students to begin working with such software in the first year of reading instruction.

"A similar study in the Netherlands (Reitsma & Wesseling 1998) noted that primary

school children who received phonemic awareness instruction through a software application significantly outperformed classmates who received no instruction, and performed on par with or slightly below a group of classmates who worked directly with the teacher during this time. Additionally, students who received instruction from both the teacher and the computer improved significantly more than those students who worked only with the teacher, indicating that the computer could be effective as a supplement to the teacher.

"Another study of Dutch kindergarteners found that children who practiced with a software application designed to teach blending and reinforce phonemic awareness instruction could read more words and identify letters more readily than peers who did not use the software (van Daal & Reitsma 2000). Similarly, in a U.S. study of first-grade students who used a software application with text-to-speech capabilities designed to support the development of phonemic awareness, children in the experimental group outperformed their peers in both the specific skills the software was explicitly drilling and in their consequent ability to identify and read words (Barker and Torgesen 1995).

"These studies suggest that there is good potential to using technology to support phonemic awareness and phonics instruction by providing increased opportunities for students to practice blending phonemes and segmenting words. However, research has not yet determined the most effective ways to design and use software that provides these capabilities, thus educators are left to judge whether the software makes good use of the capabilities of the technology, follows the principles of effective phonemic awareness instruction, and provides a good fit to the overall reading instructional approach used." (pp. 7-8)

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General Research on ELL Reading Instruction

There is general agreement that becoming a proficient reader in a second language is a difficult task. Snow, Burns, and Griffin (1998) and August and Hakuta (1997) underscore the enormous cognitive challenge faced by young ELLs who must acquire oral and literacy skills in English simultaneously. ELLs who are already literate in a home language are able to transfer some of their skills for use in English reading (Garcia, 2000), but that does not imply that learning to read well in English will be an easy task. Reading involves the use of both "higher level cognitive knowledge, ... abilities... and learning strategies," as well as "low level linguistic knowledge and processing strategies (Birch 2002,

p. x.) Throughout the elementary grades, ELLs are likely to encounter difficulties with both "high" and "low" levels of the reading process, especially as they tackle increasingly complex readings (Droop & Verhoeven, 1998).

Knowledge of the relationships between sounds and letters is essential for learning to read English (Ehri, 1998). Verhoeven's (1999) work cautions teachers that it is unrealistic to expect ELLs to decode words independently until they are familiar with the sound system of English. To help ELLs become adept at using sound-letter relationships, Birch (2002) recommends practice in a variety of tasks: identifying a particular phoneme in words, discriminating between that phoneme and similar ones, linking the sound to the printed letter, visually discriminating the letter from other visually similar letters, recognizing and printing the letter in both upper and lowercase forms, finding the letter at the beginnings and endings of words alone and in connected text, and drawing things that begin with the letter and labeling them (p. 72). Other teaching suggestions include: playing games with rhyming words and alliterative words to develop students' awareness of how sounds combine to form words (Antunez, 2002; Kaufman & Franco, 2004), and, in the case of Spanish-speaking ELLs, building upon the similarities and differences between the sound systems of the two languages (Helman, 2004).

Many researchers point out the difficulty of comprehending text when one has a limited vocabulary (Verhallen & Schoonen, 1993; Garcia, 1991; McLaughlin, 1993; Jimenez, Garcia, & Pearson, 1995, 1996). ELLs of any age often know too few words or only a single meaning for a word. McLaughlin et al. (2004) have had promising results in increasing ELLs' vocabulary knowledge through an intervention that pre-selected challenging and high-utility words from a reading selection. The intervention involved direct teaching of word meanings; teaching and raising awareness of words with multiple meanings; systemic teaching of word analysis skills including roots and affixes; engaging students in word games, riddles, and other activities designed to promote deeper understanding and use of the words in new and meaningful contexts; and finding the words outside of school. The intervention also focused on increasing Latino students' awareness of Spanish/English cognate words and ability to use cognate recognition as a legitimate and productive comprehension strategy.

Several researchers have documented that ELLs benefit from cognate recognition training (Garc'a & Nagy, 1993; Durgunoglu et al., 1993). Kress (2002) contains a useful reference list of Spanish-English cognates. Similarly, Au (1993), Nagy (1988), Dixon and Nessel (1983), and others recommend that teachers integrate vocabulary instruction with content instruction and with story reading. Hickman et al. (2004) describe a successful approach to teaching vocabulary to primary-grade ELLs during storybook reading. The approach involves careful selection of several storybooks or informational texts that focus on a theme of interest to the students in the class and are at a reading level above students' grade level. Teachers carefully select from the texts those vocabulary words which students could encounter and use in other contexts. Over the course of five days, the class previews the story and the vocabulary words, and the story is read aloud, discussed, re-read, and summarized. Discussions focus on using the vocabulary words and encouraging children to relate these words to their own life experiences.

Carrell and Eisterhold (1988) and Carrell (1983, 1984) have demonstrated the positive impact that prior knowledge of a topic or situational context has on ELLs' reading comprehension. However, stories and other texts often contain cultural contexts and assumptions that are unfamiliar to young ELLs and make comprehension difficult or impossible. Researchers advise teachers to support comprehension before students read by eliciting and building upon ELLs' prior knowledge and experiences relevant to story theme, setting, and content. Many researchers also support the value of teaching content reading strategies such as previewing a chapter before reading it and formulating questions, self-monitoring, and using imagery during reading (Carasquillo et al., 2004; Chamot

&O'Malley, 1994; Echeverria et al., 2000; Schifini, 1994). Researchers agree that teachers should model and support comprehension before, during, and after reading by teaching text structures; using graphic organizers such as Venn diagrams, cause and effect charts, and story maps; and creating study guides that students can complete (Carasquillo et al., 2004).

One recommended approach to increase comprehension and engagement is the use of culturally relevant texts and multicultural literature (Au, 1998, 1993; Barrera, 1992; Harris, 1994). Larrick's 1965 landmark article, "The All-White World of Children's Books" (reprinted in Muse, 1997) pointed out that minority children had few opportunities to read about characters like themselves or see themselves in these books. In Larrick's review, these children's books often depicted those minority characters in offensive or demeaning ways. More recently, Singer and Smith (2003) point out that

Multicultural children's literature provides self-affirmation for readers when it conveys that people like themselves have lives worth knowing about and worth sharing with others (Bishop, 1997; Tenorio, 1994). This is particularly significant for readers who are members of marginalized groups (p.17).

Daphne Muse's book, *Multicultural Resources for Young Readers* (1997), contains an extensive annotated bibliography of such literature likely to engage ELLs readers and to build upon their experiences and prior knowledge.

Students' knowledge and experience are the starting points for The Language Experience Approach to reading, used with beginning English readers of all ages (Moustafa, 1987; Tharp & Gallimore, 1989; Tinajero & Calderon, 1988). Through questioning, teachers prompt students to speak about their individual or in-class experiences. The teacher writes down students' oral narratives, and the resulting text becomes the basis of reading instruction. Often teachers plan a group activity (e.g., taking a walk) to provide a common experiential base for reading.

Hoggard's 1996 review of the "critical attributes of classroom culture" for ESL literacy learners includes "the teacher as guide," "meaningful literacy experiences, a sense of ownership," "a community of learners," and "interactive classroom discourse" (pp. 5–9). Other researchers have also highlighted the importance of student participation in conversations that relate book themes to students' personal experiences and to other books. The instructional conversations (IC) approach is one way of structuring such book-centered interactions. Teachers promote general participation in small-group discussion by not calling on children but waiting for them to volunteer to speak, by responding to student contributions, and by encouraging students to connect their comments to those of previous speakers and build upon what they said (Rueda et al., 1992; Saunders & Goldenberg, 1999). IC also promotes skimming, scanning, and careful reading by requiring students to find text passages that support their opinions and interpretations (Goldenberg, 1991, 1992/1993; Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1990). Literature circles are another discussion format that promotes comprehension and academic language in a social context. Ruby (2003) discusses their effectiveness when properly scaffolded for English language learners. Gordon (2003) offers another good example of how teachers can effectively use literature response journals with English language learners.

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Related Web Resources

Every Child a Reader Topic 2, Concepts of Print, Letter Naming, and Phonemic Awareness (0)
Explore the Evidence-Based Research on Reading Instruction Using This Database (0)
Generating Rhymes: Developing Phonemic Awareness (0)
How Now Brown Cow: Phoneme Awareness Activities (0)
Statement on Phonemic Awareness: International Reading Association (0)
Supporting Phonemic Awareness in the Classroom (0)
Using Songwriting to Build Awareness of Beginning Letter Sounds (0)

Teachers develop students' phonics skills through systematic instruction on sound–symbol relationships, spending appropriate time to meet individual needs.

What Is It?
Technology Tips
Implications for ELLs
Strategies for Supporting ELLs
Glimpse of the Classroom
Questions to Think About

What Is It?

The K–3 reading content in this spotlight is based on the recommendations of the National Reading Panel (NRP), The Partnership for Reading (PFR), the International Reading Association (IRA), the U.S. Department of Education's Reading First Program, and the Northeast and Islands Regional Technology in Education Consortium (NEIRTEC).

Phonics instruction focuses on the relationships between sounds and symbols. In its most effective form, phonics instruction is embedded in the context of a total reading/language arts program. Knowing the relationships between sounds and symbols enables early readers to recognize familiar words and to decode new words. Like phonemic awareness, phonics knowledge is an essential early building block, critical but not sufficient to support growing independence in reading.

The National Reading Panel states that a key distinguishing feature of systematic and explicit phonics instruction is in its "identification of the full array of letter–sound correspondences" (*Report of the National Reading Panel. Teaching Children to Read: Reports to the Subgroups*, April 2000, Chapter 2, p. 99).

The array includes the sound–symbol correspondences for

- consonant letters;
- short and long vowel letters;
- vowel and consonant digraphs;
- blends of letter sounds that recur as sub–units in many words (initial blends, final stems).

Effective teachers of reading and writing ask when, how much, and under what circumstances phonics should be taught (*The Role of Phonics in Reading Instruction*. International Reading Association Position Statement, April 1997). One practice for determining whether a student needs more instruction with particular phonics elements is to pre–test /post–test and to observe students' reading for their ability to use the sound–symbol correspondences (see list above). Information from running records is usually sufficient. Depending on the results of observations or classroom assessments (the pretests), teachers can use large–group, small–group, or individual instruction. Normally, sufficient phonics instruction occurs by the end of the second grade, as students demonstrate increasing fluency in decoding age–appropriate reading materials.

Technology Tips

The following technology recommendations for reading are direct excerpts from "Technology and Teaching Children to Read," published by the Northeast and Islands Regional Technology in Education Consortium (NEIRTEC) in 2004. The complete NEIRTEC report can be downloaded as a PDF file from the link provided at <http://knowledgeloom.org/elemlit>.

"Many of the capabilities of computers for phonics instruction overlap those already described for phonemic awareness instruction. In fact, many of the software applications that support phonics development also make use of additional scaffolding to enable phonics practice to be integrated with reading meaningful text and with students' writing. Potential uses of technology to enhance phonics instruction include the ability to:

- ◆ provide tasks that involve students matching sounds and letters, and spoken and written words. In some cases, this simply involves adding letters and a written word component to phonemic awareness activities;
- ◆ provide immediate feedback to let students know whether their answers were correct, give them hints or additional chances, and provide correct answers;
- ◆ individualize problem sets and present stories to focus on the letter-sound correspondences and words that the student has not yet mastered;
- ◆ provide as many repetitions as necessary and alter the speed of speech to meet individual needs;
- ◆ provide game contexts, attractive visual presentations, and motivating speech, to engage and hold children's interest;
- ◆ provide reports for teachers' and children's progress and areas in which individual children need additional work;
- ◆ provide texts for children to read with scaffolds to support phonic skills –for example, software can enable a child to click on any word and hear the individual sounds of the word or the whole spoken word; and
- ◆ engage children in productive self-directed work on phonics while the teacher works directly with other children, thereby helping the teacher meet the individual needs of each student." (pp. 8–9)

Implications for ELLs

In order to learn to read English, a learner must be able to connect particular letters and letter combinations with the component sounds (phonemes) of familiar spoken words.

To do this, an English language learner must

- have a basic oral vocabulary of familiar English words,
- be able to accurately perceive these English words as a sequence of distinct phonemes,
- recognize letters in both their upper and lower case forms,
- associate particular letters and letter combinations of the Roman alphabet with the phonemes they represent in English,
- decode and identify the spoken English word that is represented by a combination of printed letters, and
- practice and develop the ability to automatically identify English words seen frequently in print.

Students must also be aware of the various and most frequent letter combinations that represent particular sounds as in *meet*, *mete*, and *meat* or *fold*, *phone* and *tough*.

Effective teachers are aware that in some languages like Spanish, decoding words is much easier than in English because the relationships between sounds and letters are more consistent. This may cause students to try to pronounce silent letters like the *l* in *walk* and *talk* and *should* when they read these familiar words.

Strategies for Supporting ELLs

Teachers, reading coaches, and administrators are aware that English language learners (ELLs) may need more time than English-proficient students to master the phonological and vocabulary knowledge upon which phonics instruction builds.

Effective teachers adapt and tailor their phonics instruction to emphasize the sounds that affect particular language groups in the class. When teachers model their writing for students, teachers think out loud, explicitly discussing the relationship between sounds and letters.

They say things like:

- I'm writing a story about my friend Libby.
- I wrote the beginning of the title, *My Friend...*
- See if you can help me spell my friend's name: Libby.
- Listen to the first sound /l/. What letter is that?
- The next sound in her name is /i/. What letter makes the /i/ sound?

- We've made a list of words we know that have the sound /sh/.
- Let's look at how the sound is spelled.
- What letters make the /sh/ sound in *she* and *show* and *shopping* and *shell*?

- Yes, usually, we write /sh/ with *s-h* in most words.
- But here's an exception. Something is different.
- What about these words: *Chicago*, *chef*, *machine*.
- How is the /sh/ sound spelled in these words?

Glimpse of the Classroom

Joseph and Stephen, two second graders, are participating in guided reading with their teacher, Mrs. R. The boys are not yet reading at the second-grade level. Mrs. R. uses a picture walk to take them through their graded reading book, *Hide and Seek*. She introduces vocabulary and elements of the story in a way that creates a great deal of interaction between herself and the students.

Joseph and Stephen practice reading the book with each other. When they are done, each reads the book orally and individually to Mrs. R. As she hears each student read, she provides and reinforces numerous strategies for decoding difficult words. At the same time, she makes running records of the reading. She systematically notes specific words and sound-symbol combinations that she calls the "tricky parts." She creates individual cards using the words and sound-symbol combinations for use in follow-up sessions. Her running records support a systematic approach to mastering phonics elements by helping her gather data on each reader. She obtains her data while teaching and can use

the process to inventory the phonics elements that each student has mastered. In this way, she tailors subsequent instruction that is based on exactly what the student can and cannot do.

Questions to Think About

1. How can teachers adjust their approach to accommodate the varying phonics skills of different students?
2. What are the implications of this practice when selecting phonics programs, materials, and software?
3. What adaptations to phonics instruction might teachers have to make for English language learners (ELLs)? How may such adaptations affect progress toward benchmarks and ultimate mastery?

Story Summaries

Lawrence School (Elementary)

- Teacher observations of student progress in phonics through daily running records of student reading
- Reading Recovery as the intervention for struggling readers
- Yearly action plans in response to state assessment results
- Consistent follow up in subsequent grades
- Students meeting state writing goals: 64% in 1998, compared to 19% in 1993
- Writing scores 6% higher than the average state scores
- Students meeting state reading goals: 59% in 1998, compared to 44% in 1993
- Reading scores 5% higher than the average state scores

Lawrence School's transformation from a low performing to high-performing elementary school began when the state of Connecticut mandated standards for all students. Three features reflect Lawrence's responsiveness to student literacy needs. One is that staff members believe all children can read, and they provide Reading Recovery as an early intervention program for struggling first-grade beginning readers. In keeping daily running records, teachers are able to apply phonics elements systematically and according to specific student needs. In using Reading Recovery, students spend extra time and effort on their letter-sound associations and word recognition strategies. A second feature is how teachers plan instruction based on student performance data throughout the grades. A third feature is the way that teachers use classroom space, considering every student as they plan for how the space can be more conducive to attaining instructional goals.

Research Summary

Research Supporting the Practice
Technology Research Supporting the Practice
General Research on ELL Reading Instruction

Research Supporting the Practice

The K–3 reading content in this spotlight is based on the recommendations of the National Reading Panel (NRP), The Partnership for Reading (PFR), the International Reading Association (IRA), the U.S. Department of Education's Reading First Program, and the Northeast and Islands Regional Technology in Education Consortium (NEIRTEC). This section is summarized from the National Reading Panel Report.

The National Reading Panel (NRP) meta-analysis revealed that systematic phonics instruction produces significant benefits for students in kindergarten through sixth grade and for children having difficulty learning to read. The ability to read and spell words was enhanced in kindergartners who received systematic beginning phonics instruction. First graders who were taught phonics systematically were better able to decode and spell, and they showed significant improvement in their ability to comprehend text. Older children receiving phonics instruction were better able to decode and spell words and to read text orally, but their comprehension of text was not significantly improved.

Systematic synthetic phonics instruction (see glossary) had a positive and significant effect on disabled readers' reading skills. These children improved substantially in their ability to read words and showed significant, albeit small, gains in their ability to process text as a result of systematic synthetic phonics instruction. This type of phonics instruction benefits both students with learning disabilities and low-achieving students who are not disabled. Moreover, systematic synthetic phonics instruction was significantly more effective in improving low socioeconomic status (SES) children's alphabetic knowledge and word reading skills than instructional approaches that were less focused on these initial reading skills.

Across all grade levels, systematic phonics instruction improved the ability of good readers to spell. The impact was strongest for kindergartners and decreased in later grades. For poor readers, the impact of phonics instruction on spelling was small, perhaps reflecting the consistent finding that disabled readers have trouble learning to spell. Although conventional wisdom has suggested that kindergarten students might not be ready for phonics instruction, this assumption was not supported by the data. The effects of systematic early phonics instruction were significant and substantial in kindergarten and first grade, indicating that systematic phonics programs should be implemented at those age and grade levels.

The NRP analysis indicated that systematic phonics instruction is ready for implementation in the classroom. Their findings regarding the effectiveness of explicit, systematic phonics instruction were derived from studies conducted in many classrooms with typical classroom teachers and typical American or English-speaking students from a variety of backgrounds and socio-economic levels. Thus, the results of the analysis are indicative of what can be accomplished when explicit, systematic phonics programs are implemented in today's classrooms. Systematic phonics instruction has been used widely over a long period of time with positive results, and a variety of systematic phonics programs have proven effective with children of different ages, abilities, and socioeconomic backgrounds. These facts and findings provide converging evidence that explicit, systematic phonics instruction is a valuable and essential part of a successful classroom reading program. (*Report of the National Reading Panel. Teaching Children to Read: Reports to the Subgroups*. April 2000, Chapter 2, pp. 92-96)

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"Software specifically designed to drill students on consonant and vowel letter-sound relationships may make use of a number of computer capabilities, including visual highlighting and synthesized speech. When appropriately designed and used, this software can have a substantial impact on student learning (Grabe and Grabe 1996). In most classrooms, instructionally appropriate drills can supplement teaching very effectively, and may, in fact, be convenient tools in helping students develop fluency and accuracy in word identification (Burns, Roe & Ross 1996).

"Several studies have shown positive results of technology to support phonics instruction with young children. Beginning readers in the Netherlands substantially improved their rate and accuracy of word identification after working with software that offered digitized pronunciation of words (Reitsma 1988). In a study of first-grade students who used a software application with speech capabilities, children in the experimental group outperformed their peers in both phonemic awareness and in their consequent ability to identify and read words (Barker and Torgesen 1995).

"Some phonics software helps develop children's understanding of word segmentation by breaking the word into recognizable components visually or audibly. Several studies have found positive effects of this type of software on students' learning. Wise, Olson, and Treiman (1990) found that first-grade students who used software with visual highlighting and synthesized speech improved in their abilities to blend words after hearing them segmented at the onset-rime (first sound-rest of word) level. When the children later encountered these words in other contexts, they were able to identify them readily. Wise (1992) found that a word segmentation drill that also used visual highlighting and speech feedback proved extremely effective in enhancing whole-word and syllable recognition among emergent readers. Although teachers sometimes express concern that such tools will become a crutch, eight-year-old students using hypertext pronunciation aids relied less and less on the feature as they became more sure of the text (Miller, Blackstock, & Miller 1994). These studies support the idea that computers are able to combine text-to-speech capabilities with visual material to create a unique resource to support and enhance traditional methods of phonics instruction.

"Upper elementary students with reading difficulties may also have much to gain from software designed to drill phonics; for students at lower reading levels or with learning disabilities, these gains have been shown to be especially significant (Olson, Wise, Ring, & Johnson 1997). One such study (Jones, Torgesen, & Sexton 1987) found that American ten-year-olds with learning disabilities made substantial improvements in medial vowel identification after practicing with a vowel program.

In addition, the students were able to use the skills they learned to identify words that did not appear in the program. An earlier study of similar software (Roth & Beck 1987) involved fourth-grade students at various reading levels and found that low level readers could visually identify more medial vowels and could blend onset-rimes more effectively after using a software application that drilled them on these skills.

"Research has not yet established the value of digital speech to scaffold students reading and writing in ways that support their learning of phonics. One initial study exploring the use of talking word processors and story tools with preschool children found that their spelling improved, indicating that they were more aware of the associations between letters and sounds (Moxley, Warash, et al 1997). However, Jones (1998) found that the speech features of such software often hold little appeal for young children who do not yet grasp the connection between words and sounds, raising questions of when and how these types of supports could best be used. Most of the research on the use of talking story books focuses on vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension, though Lewin (1997) found positive effects of these on children's word decoding strategies as well. Additional research is necessary to provide evidence and guidance about the use of technology to support embedding phonics instruction in students reading and writing of meaningful text." (pp. 9–10)

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General Research on ELL Reading Instruction

There is general agreement that becoming a proficient reader in a second language is a difficult task. Snow, Burns, and Griffin (1998) and August and Hakuta (1997) underscore the enormous cognitive challenge faced by young ELLs who must acquire oral and literacy skills in English simultaneously. ELLs who are already literate in a home language are able to transfer some of their skills for use in English reading (Garcia, 2000), but that does not imply that learning to read well in English will be an easy task. Reading involves the use of both "higher level cognitive knowledge, ... abilities... and learning strategies," as well as "low level linguistic knowledge and processing strategies (Birch 2002, p. x.) Throughout the elementary grades, ELLs are likely to encounter difficulties with both "high" and "low" levels of the reading process, especially as they tackle increasingly complex readings (Droop & Verhoeven, 1998).

Knowledge of the relationships between sounds and letters is essential for learning to read English (Ehri, 1998). Verhoeven's (1999) work cautions teachers that it is unrealistic to expect ELLs to

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Carrell and Eisterhold (1988) and Carrell (1983, 1984) have demonstrated the positive impact that prior knowledge of a topic or situational context has on ELLs' reading comprehension. However, stories and other texts often contain cultural contexts and assumptions that are unfamiliar to young ELLs and make comprehension difficult or impossible. Researchers advise teachers to support comprehension before students read by eliciting and building upon ELLs' prior knowledge and experiences relevant to story theme, setting, and content. Many researchers also support the value of teaching content reading strategies such as previewing a chapter before reading it and formulating questions, self-monitoring, and using imagery during reading (Carasquillo et al., 2004; Chamot & O'Malley, 1994; Echeverria et al., 2000; Schifini, 1994). Researchers agree that teachers should model and support comprehension before, during, and after reading by teaching text structures; using graphic organizers such as Venn diagrams, cause and effect charts, and story maps; and creating study guides that students can complete (Carasquillo et al., 2004).

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Related Web Resources

#1138 Word Wall Activity List (0)

Between the Lions: Exploring Short-Vowel Sounds (0)

Every Child a Reader Topic 3, Phonics and Word Recognition Accuracy (0)

Explicit Systematic Phonics (0)

Explore the Evidence-Based Research on Reading Instruction Using This Database (0)

Gingerbread Phonics (0)

Learning Phonics: Strategies That Support Beginning Readers and Writers (0)

Teaching Phonics With Wiley Blevins (0)

Using Folktales: Vowel Influences on the letter G (0)

Word Walls That Work (0)

Teachers frequently engage students in oral reading to develop their reading fluency.

What Is It?
Technology Tips
Implications for ELLs
Strategies for Supporting ELLs
Glimpse of the Classroom
Questions to Think About

What Is It?

The K–3 reading content in this spotlight is based on the recommendations of the National Reading Panel (NRP), The Partnership for Reading (PFR), the International Reading Association (IRA), the U.S. Department of Education's Reading First Program, and the Northeast and Islands Regional Technology in Education Consortium (NEIRTEC).

Oral reading fluency is the ability to read printed words aloud with decoding accuracy, appropriate phrasing, and normal speed. Fluent readers are better able to focus their attention on what the text means. Fluency can vary, depending on what readers are reading, their familiarity with the words, and their amount of practice with reading text. When teachers provide frequent and motivating opportunities for oral reading, students improve their understanding of what they read. Such opportunities require appropriate scaffolding through pre-reading instruction and adequate (silent or group) practice before reading orally to an audience.

Recent research on the efficacy of certain approaches to teaching fluency has led to increased recognition of its importance in the classroom and to changes in instructional practices. Practicing is generally recognized as an important contributor to fluency. Guided and repeated oral reading practice encourages students to read passages aloud with explicit guidance and feedback from the teacher. (This practice should not be confused with "round-robin" reading, in which students take turns reading passages from the same text and which usually do not offer opportunities to practice and to read silently first.)

Technology Tips

The following technology recommendations for reading are direct excerpts from "Technology and Teaching Children to Read," published by the Northeast and Islands Regional Technology in Education Consortium (NEIRTEC) in 2004. The complete NEIRTEC report can be downloaded as a PDF file from the link provided at <http://knowledgeloom.org/elemlit>.

"Electronic books, or e-books, present traditional picture book text and images in an alternative on-screen format. The simplest electronic books simply transfer the story from paper to the screen, and allow the child to listen as the program reads the story aloud. Some e-books may also highlight each word as the child progresses through the book. More complex electronic books create a more malleable story, allowing children to manipulate the text and introduce features not found in traditional books

(Labbo & Kuhn 1998).

E-books, with features designed specifically to support children learning to read fluently, can provide multiple supports for fluency instruction, including the ability to:

- ◆ provide a model of fluent oral reading;
- ◆ provide on-demand or automated help in decoding individual words, so that a problem with a few words does not disrupt the child reading;
- ◆ provide visual highlighting of phrases to guide the child in learning to read with expression;
- ◆ allow beginning readers to tackle more varied and challenging texts with additional support for pronunciation and meaning, thereby allowing them to "read" on their own more successfully and gain additional experience with text;
- ◆ provide speech recognition tools so that students can get immediate help while reading aloud; and
- ◆ provide recording and analysis tools for teachers to help them assess students' levels of fluency and to inform instructional decisions." (pp. 10–11)

Implications for ELLs

Fluency in speaking English is an important factor underlying fluent oral reading. Reading quickly, accurately, and expressively can pose a challenge to English language learners (ELLs). They need rich opportunities to listen, speak, and internalize the sounds, rhythms, and patterns of English over a period of time.

If the vocabulary or the sentence patterns of a passage are unfamiliar, ELLs will find it difficult to read aloud fluently. With repeated exposure and practice, ELLs can develop the ability to automatically identify English words seen frequently in print.

Even ELLs who are quite proficient in reading comprehension and silent reading in English may feel self-conscious about reading orally, especially in large-group settings. Criticism, ridicule, or public correction is likely to exacerbate anxieties that ELLs may have about having an accent or being different.

Strategies for Supporting ELLs

Effective teachers provide English language learners (ELLs) with opportunities to listen and follow along as they read stories aloud. To prepare ELLs to read a text orally, teachers read it to them a few times. The goal is for students to understand the story well and to hear the sounds and rhythms of the language. Sometimes teachers move their fingers under the text as they read so that students can match what they hear with what they see. Sometimes students move their own fingers under the text as they listen. Such experiences give ELLs the linguistic information and the confidence they need to practice reading and rereading a book until they can read it fluently.

Often, teachers have students dictate their stories for initial fluency practice because the language and the concepts will be familiar. Some teachers work with students to standardize spelling and sentence structure before the stories are practiced and read aloud. Predictable pattern books also help young

ELLs to develop fluency. Other good read-aloud choices are simple call-and-response poems and short skits, where the teacher reads a more difficult part and students join in for a predictable refrain.

After hearing the text repeatedly, students can read it with the teacher and then practice reading it aloud to themselves and others. They can practice reading aloud as a class chorus, in small groups or pairs, and at home to family members. Librarians, community volunteers, parents, and "reading buddies" from the upper grades can read with students. Classmates can also take turns reading aloud with "reading buddies" in class. Hearing their classmates read aloud often has a motivating effect on ELLs.

Glimpse of the Classroom

Students in Mrs. D.'s second-grade English learners class begin almost every day reading books from their "chair bags," individually selected books that are "just right." All the students are reading orally, while Mrs. D. circulates through the class and occasionally assists a student with a difficult word.

Students complete reading logs that rate books by difficulty and indicate why they liked a particular book the best. Today, Dominick has a chance to do a "commercial" to sell a book he liked to other members of the class.

When Mrs. D. says, "We're going to have free reading now," students in her class scurry to find their books. They practice. Most of the class is reading simultaneously in pairs—"buddy reading"—while Mrs. D. works with a pair of students on their understanding of their book. Some students take turns, others read in unison, and a few read silently.

Daniel likes *Alligators Abound*. He reads aloud to a partner:

*"B—Bursting Balloons,
C—Catching rabbits,
D—Doing dishes,
E—Eating pizza,
H—Having headaches,
I—Imitating Indians,
J—Juggling Jelly bowls,
K—Kissing people . . ."*

Questions to Think About

1. What are some engaging and motivating ways to practice reading orally?
2. How can an oral reading activity serve as a classroom assessment tool and as an instructional planning device?
3. How can teachers ensure an accepting classroom atmosphere where English language learners (ELLs) feel safe to read aloud without fear of embarrassment?

Story Summaries

The Story Workshop" Approach"Reading and writing are taught equally in this course. . . Reading became easier, more enjoyable, and writing was given a voice with power. . . [Both] improved so dramatically, scores in other subjects soared," said one fourth-grade public school teacher after a 10-week Story Workshop program. Originated and developed by John Schultz and conducted in diverse classes from grade school to grad school, the Story Workshop approach emphasizes reading, writing, speaking, listening, and thinking relationships. This story describes the approach, illustrated with linked video segments of actual classroom experiences with elementary school students. Because of the way in which this approach integrates oral telling, reading, and writing skills into classroom activities, it connects to multiple practices in the elementary literacy spotlight (see practices list).

Research Summary

Research Supporting the Practice
Technology Research Supporting the Practice
General Research on ELL Reading Instruction

Research Supporting the Practice

The K–3 reading content in this spotlight is based on the recommendations of the National Reading Panel (NRP), The Partnership for Reading (PFR), the International Reading Association (IRA), the U.S. Department of Education's Reading First Program, and the Northeast and Islands Regional Technology in Education Consortium (NEIRTEC). This section is summarized from the National Reading Panel Report.

The National Reading Panel (NRP) concluded that repeated oral reading procedures that included guidance from teachers, peers, or parents had a significant and positive impact on word recognition, fluency, and comprehension across a range of grade levels. These studies were conducted in a variety of classrooms in both regular and special education settings with teachers using widely available instructional materials. This supports the usefulness of guided oral reading and repeated reading procedures in the classroom. These results also apply to all students—good readers as well as those experiencing reading difficulties. Nevertheless, there were important gaps in the research. In particular, the NRP could find no multiyear studies providing information on the relationship between guided oral reading and the emergence of fluency.

With regard to the efficacy of having students engage in independent silent reading with minimal guidance or feedback, the NRP was unable to find a positive relationship between programs and instruction that encourage large amounts of independent reading and improvements in reading achievement, including fluency. In other words, even though encouraging students to read more is intuitively appealing, there is still not sufficient research evidence obtained from studies of high methodological quality to support the idea that such efforts reliably increase how much students read or that such programs result in improved reading skills. Given the extensive use of these techniques, it is important that such research be conducted.

It should be made clear that these findings do not negate the positive influence that independent silent reading may have on reading fluency, nor do the findings negate the possibility that wide independent reading significantly influences vocabulary development and reading comprehension. Rather, there are simply not sufficient data from well-designed studies capable of testing questions of causation to substantiate causal claims. The available data do suggest that independent silent reading is not an effective practice when used as the only type of reading instruction to develop fluency and other reading skills, particularly with students who have not yet developed critical alphabetic and word reading skills. In sum, methodologically rigorous research designed to assess the specific influences that independent silent reading practices have on reading fluency and other reading skills and the motivation to read has not yet been conducted. (*Report of the National Reading Panel. Teaching Children to Read: Reports of the Subgroups*. April 2000, Chapter 3, pp.1–28)

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Technology Research Supporting the Practice

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"The fluency of oral reading has not been the focus of research on the uses of technology to enhance reading instruction, although some of the research on phonics, vocabulary, and comprehension measured changes in students' abilities to read out loud. With the recent advances in computerized speech recognition, new tools and products designed to assess and provide useful feedback about children's oral reading are becoming available, and research on the effectiveness of these tools is underway."
(p. 11)

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General Research on ELL Reading Instruction

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ELLs who are already literate in a home language are able to transfer some of their skills for use in English reading (Garcia, 2000), but that does not imply that learning to read well in English will be an easy task. Reading involves the use of both "higher level cognitive knowledge, ... abilities... and learning strategies," as well as "low level linguistic knowledge and processing strategies (Birch 2002, p. x.) Throughout the elementary grades, ELLs are likely to encounter difficulties with both "high" and "low" levels of the reading process, especially as they tackle increasingly complex readings (Droop & Verhoeven, 1998).

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Related Web Resources

5 Surefire Strategies for Developing Reading Fluency (0)

Every Child a Reader Topic 4, High Frequency Words and Fluency (0)

Explore the Evidence-Based Research on Reading Instruction Using This Database (0)

Fluency Development as the Bird Learns to Fly (0)

Teachers use numerous research–based methods for both direct and indirect vocabulary instruction.

What Is It?
Technology Tips
Implications for ELLs
Strategies for Supporting ELLs
Glimpse of the Classroom
Questions to Think About

What Is It?

The K–3 reading content in this spotlight is based on the recommendations of the National Reading Panel (NRP), The Partnership for Reading (PFR), the International Reading Association (IRA), the U.S. Department of Education's Reading First Program, and the Northeast and Islands Regional Technology in Education Consortium (NEIRTEC).

The National Reading Panel (NRP)'s review of qualified studies suggests that effective methods for teaching vocabulary include the following:

- Pre-instruction of vocabulary before using words in text
- Both direct (apart from a narrative or text) and indirect instruction (as words are encountered in a text)
- Repetition and multiple exposures of new vocabulary words and meanings in varied contexts
- Task restructuring – by altering the passage (substituting easier words), by clarifying the task (modeling the components of a definition), and by teacher–guided small–group vocabulary learning activities
- Active student engagement in vocabulary instruction

(Report of the National Reading Panel. Teaching Children to Read: Reports of the Subgroups. April 2000, Chapter 4, p. 22)

For many decades, reading teachers and scholars have connected vocabulary or word knowledge acquisition to comprehending text and to becoming a successful reader. A number of the vocabulary instruction methods recommended by the NRP report have been used effectively for years. More recently, promising additional methods for developing vocabulary have appeared. Teachers now use multimedia methods such as semantic mapping and graphic representations of word attributes. They use hypertext to enhance understandings of word meanings and use American Sign Language "to increase vocabulary capitalizing on encoding in a haptic medium" (NRP, 2000, Chapter 4, p. 18). Computers increasingly have found a place as a useful ancillary aid. The NRP lists 21 vocabulary instruction methods (Chapter 4, p. 35).

Teachers also increasingly select vocabulary from content–area reading matter in order to equip the reader to deal with content–area material and to learn important new concepts. For their low–achieving or at–risk students, teachers carefully structure and plan vocabulary tasks.

Technology Tips

The following technology recommendations for reading are direct excerpts from "Technology and Teaching Children to Read," published by the Northeast and Islands Regional Technology in Education Consortium (NEIRTEC) in 2004. The complete NEIRTEC report can be downloaded as a PDF file from the link provided at <http://knowledgeloom.org/elemlit>.

"Technology can support vocabulary development in children, including the ability to:

- ◆ provide online, interactive vocabulary lessons, with the features to engage students, provide feedback, individualize instruction, and keep records for teachers;
- ◆ provide online dictionaries, thesauri, and encyclopedias, with speech capabilities, to give students access to tools to use with their word learning strategies;
- ◆ provide online texts with hyperlinks that give students definitions of words and further information about key ideas in the text; and
- ◆ provide students with additional opportunities to extend their vocabularies by increasing the amount of reading and writing they do through the use of online materials and exchanges. Examples of such opportunities include Web sites, discussions, online publishing, web logs, and other technology-enabled uses of text." (pp. 11–12)

Implications for ELLs

Limited vocabulary knowledge is often a major hindrance to reading comprehension for English language learners (ELLs). Some ELLs may be able to repeat or pronounce English words and phrases without really understanding them. They may be able to decode words and produce the appropriate sounds without extracting or constructing meaning.

ELLs initially learn word meanings through explicit instruction and rich opportunities to listen, observe, participate, and interact. They link word sounds to meanings through the context provided by predictable routines, concrete objects, pictures, gestures, physical movements, and experiential activities. ELLs also learn word meanings through listening to repeated readings, explicit explanations, and discussions of picture books on a variety of topics in fiction and nonfiction.

Most ELLs acquire the vocabulary involved in daily routines, play, and social interaction before they learn academic and rare words. Inferring the meaning of unknown words from context can be difficult for ELLs who may not fully understand that context.

ELLs need explicit instruction and practice in word analysis. Learning word roots and the meanings of common prefixes and suffixes helps ELLs to understand many unfamiliar words. Speakers of languages that share commonalities with English, such as Spanish and Portuguese, may find cognate or "sister words" (e.g., *intelligent*; *intelligente*) to be a valuable resource when reading English.

When English-proficient bilingual students explain English word meanings to less-proficient classmates, they are providing a valuable service while increasing their own interpretation and metalinguistic skills.

Strategies for Supporting ELLs

Vocabulary is of critical importance to English language learners (ELLs). In addition to learning word definitions, ELLs need repeated exposure to new words in a variety of contexts, as well as opportunities to use the words in meaningful contexts. Thematic teaching across the curriculum and reading many books on the same or related topics are two ways to provide students with repeated exposure to the same words and to word forms (e.g. *immigrant*, *immigrate*, and *immigration*).

Effective teachers promote vocabulary learning through multiple strategies. For example, they can have students choose which of two newly learned words best applies to a given situation, discuss semantic features that differentiate close synonyms, and rank words according to meaningful criteria to help ELLs achieve deeper understanding.

Teachers say things like:

- In the story, is Henrietta *stingy* or *thrifty*? Explain your choice.
- What do the words *feast* and *snack* have in common?
- How are they different?

In addition, teachers provide explicit explanation of potentially confusing words such as homophones (e.g., *to*, *too*, *two*; *due*, *dew*, *do*) and homographs (e.g., *wind*, *wind*; *sow*, *sow*). They also help students match pronunciations with print forms of words (e.g., *debris*, *chaos*). Explicit instruction and practice in word analysis, including word roots and the meanings of common prefixes and suffixes, help ELLs understand many unfamiliar words.

ELLs and their teachers should be aware that some words appear to be related but are not. The English word *pie* (a dessert) and the Spanish word *pie* (foot) are examples of such false cognates. (Cognates are "sister words" sharing common origins and meanings across languages.) Recognizing and using cognates is a valuable comprehension strategy. Students have a great advantage when they read words like *ancient* and *enormous* and are able to understand them because of their Spanish cognates *anciano* and *enorme*.

To promote word awareness, teachers have frequent vocabulary discussions; encourage students to ask questions about words; and develop word webs, lists, and semantic feature charts with students.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge the contribution and skill of bilingual students who provide translations to less proficient students who need and want such help. Translating develops the linguistic skills of the interpreter and may provide less-proficient students with access to academic content.

Glimpse of the Classroom

Mr. N. is introducing Shel Silverstein's book, *The Giving Tree*, to his second-grade class. He uses an activity called "The Sculpture Garden" (see http://artslit.org/handbook_enteringtext.htm) to introduce key vocabulary words before his students see the text itself.

He has students work in pairs, designating one person as the sculptor and the other as the clay. The sculptor will form the clay into their interpretation of that word or phrase.

"Neither of you should talk during the exercise," says Mr. N. "Communicate through touch. Feel free

to create sculptures of various levels—tall, short, high, and low. For instance, you might want to create a sculpture on the ground or have the clay reach for the ceiling."

Mr. N. plays music while the sculptors go to work. When they finish, he asks them to stand on one side of the room. All of the clay remains frozen in the middle of the room. He asks the sculptors to wander around the sculpture garden and view different interpretations of the word. He plays the music again as they walk around the room.

Finally, Mr. N. asks the sculptor and the clay to exchange roles and start again from the beginning. After viewing the second set of sculptures, he asks the class a series of questions, "How have the members of the class interpreted the words differently? What was the difference between being the sculptor and the clay? Which did you like best? What did all of the words have in common? If these words were from a poem, what might the poem be about?"

Mr. N. often uses this activity often to engage students in learning vocabulary. When there isn't as much time, Mr. N. speeds up the activity by allowing the sculptor to give verbal instructions to the clay. When he needs to introduce numerous words, Mr. N. sometimes passes out slips of paper with a different vocabulary word on each slip and has a group of three or four students co-create their sculpture. At the end, he uses the same reflection questions.

Questions to Think About

1. How does this practice differ from traditional ways of introducing vocabulary?
2. How might a teacher plan vocabulary instruction so that it is both direct and indirect?
3. What are some ways to create a personally meaningful context in which students can learn vocabulary?
4. When bilingual students translate and explain English text for less proficient students, what are the benefits for all parties involved? What, if any, classroom norms might be applied to translation and why?

Research Summary

Research Supporting the Practice
Technology Research Supporting the Practice
General Research on ELL Reading Instruction

Research Supporting the Practice

The K–3 reading content in this spotlight is based on the recommendations of the National Reading Panel (NRP), The Partnership for Reading (PFR), the International Reading Association (IRA), the U.S. Department of Education's Reading First Program, and the Northeast and Islands Regional Technology in Education Consortium (NEIRTEC).

Vocabulary knowledge has held an important place in the development of reading skills far back into the history of reading instruction and research. As early as 1924, researchers noted that growth in reading power means continuous growth in word knowledge (Whipple, 1925, p. 15).

Vocabulary is critically important in oral reading instruction. There are two types of vocabulary—oral and print. A reader who encounters a strange word in print can decode the word to speech. If it is in the reader's oral vocabulary, the reader will be able to understand it. If the word is not in the reader's oral vocabulary, the reader will have to determine the meaning by other means, if possible. Consequently, the larger the reader's vocabulary (either oral or print), the easier it is to make sense of the text.

Mindful of the critical importance of vocabulary knowledge and of the longstanding history of research on vocabulary development, the NRP found recently published meta-analyses for selected variables and decided not to duplicate those efforts. Also, a substantial amount of published research on vocabulary instruction did not meet NRP research methodology criteria. The NRP wanted to glean as much information as possible from the existing studies, however, and reviewed the vocabulary instruction database for trends across the studies. The NRP reviewed in detail 50 studies dating from 1979 to the present. There were 21 different methods represented in these studies.

The studies suggest the following:

1. Vocabulary instruction leads to gains in comprehension when teachers use methods appropriate to the age and ability of the reader.
2. The use of computers in vocabulary instruction was more effective than some traditional methods, suggesting its clear potential as a valuable aid to classroom teachers in the area of vocabulary instruction.
3. Students can also learn vocabulary incidentally in the context of storybook reading or in listening to others.
4. Learning vocabulary before reading a text is helpful.
5. Techniques such as task restructuring enhance vocabulary.
6. Repeated exposures during the same class period in which students encounter important words in various contexts may enhance vocabulary development.

NRP's findings on vocabulary yielded several specific implications for teaching reading:

- Vocabulary should be taught both directly and indirectly.
- Repetition and multiple exposures to vocabulary items are important.
- Learning in rich contexts, incidental learning, and use of computer technology all enhance the acquisition of vocabulary.
- Direct instruction should include task restructuring as necessary and should actively engage the student.
- Dependence on a single vocabulary instruction method will not result in optimal learning.
- While researchers and practitioners know about the importance of vocabulary to success in reading, there is little research on the best methods or combinations of methods of vocabulary instruction and measurement.

(Report of the National Reading Panel. Teaching Children to Read: Reports of the Subgroups. April 2000, Chapter 4, pp. 3–5)

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Technology Research Supporting the Practice

The following technology research summary for reading presents direct excerpts from "Technology and Teaching Children to Read," published by the Northeast and Islands Regional Technology in Education Consortium (NEIRTEC) in 2004. The complete NEIRTEC report can be downloaded as a PDF file from the link provided at <http://knowledgeloom.org/elemlit>.

"In one study of direct vocabulary instruction, Jones, Torgesen, & Sexton (1987) found that children who work with software applications specifically focused on building vocabulary developed better strategies for identifying words that do not appear in the program, indicating that these programs help children acquire word learning strategies, not just the meaning of the specific words taught.

A number of studies at different grade levels have found positive impact on students' vocabulary learning to result from the use of electronic talking books and electronic texts with scaffolds to support vocabulary development. Students in a multi-age primary classroom were able to use hypermedia and hypertext features to read books above their reading levels and also showed significant gains in vocabulary (McKenna & Watkins, 1996). At-risk readers also scored higher on vocabulary tests after using electronic textual aids (Anderson-Inman & Horney, 1998). Studies of upper elementary and middle school students show marked improvement in vocabulary and text comprehension in students who used electronic texts in place of traditional print-based texts (Reinking & Rickman, 1990). The research on hypertext described in the comprehension instruction section below is also relevant to vocabulary learning, since it involves engaging students in active reading, which can enrich vocabulary." (p. 12)

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General Research on ELL Reading Instruction

There is general agreement that becoming a proficient reader in a second language is a difficult task. Snow, Burns, and Griffin (1998) and August and Hakuta (1997) underscore the enormous cognitive challenge faced by young ELLs who must acquire oral and literacy skills in English simultaneously. ELLs who are already literate in a home language are able to transfer some of their skills for use in English reading (Garcia, 2000), but that does not imply that learning to read well in English will be an easy task. Reading involves the use of both "higher level cognitive knowledge, ... abilities... and learning strategies," as well as "low level linguistic knowledge and processing strategies (Birch 2002, p. x.) Throughout the elementary grades, ELLs are likely to encounter difficulties with both "high" and "low" levels of the reading process, especially as they tackle increasingly complex readings (Droop & Verhoeven, 1998).

Knowledge of the relationships between sounds and letters is essential for learning to read English (Ehri, 1998). Verhoeven's (1999) work cautions teachers that it is unrealistic to expect ELLs to decode words independently until they are familiar with the sound system of English. To help ELLs become adept at using sound-letter relationships, Birch (2002) recommends practice in a variety of tasks: identifying a particular phoneme in words, discriminating between that phoneme and similar ones, linking the sound to the printed letter, visually discriminating the letter from other visually similar letters, recognizing and printing the letter in both upper and lowercase forms, finding the letter at the beginnings and endings of words alone and in connected text, and drawing things that begin with the letter and labeling them (p. 72). Other teaching suggestions include: playing games with rhyming words and alliterative words to develop students' awareness of how sounds combine to form words (Antunez, 2002; Kaufman & Franco, 2004), and, in the case of Spanish-speaking ELLs, building upon the similarities and differences between the sound systems of the two languages (Helman, 2004).

Many researchers point out the difficulty of comprehending text when one has a limited vocabulary (Verhallen & Schoonen, 1993; Garcia, 1991; McLaughlin, 1993; Jimenez, Garcia, & Pearson, 1995, 1996). ELLs of any age often know too few words or only a single meaning for a word. McLaughlin et al. (2004) have had promising results in increasing ELLs' vocabulary knowledge through an intervention that pre-selected challenging and high-utility words from a reading selection. The intervention involved direct teaching of word meanings; teaching and raising awareness of words with multiple meanings; systemic teaching of word analysis skills including roots and affixes; engaging students in word games, riddles, and other activities designed to promote deeper understanding and use of the words in new and meaningful contexts; and finding the words outside of school. The intervention also focused on increasing Latino students' awareness of Spanish/English cognate words and ability to use cognate recognition as a legitimate and productive comprehension strategy.

Several researchers have documented that ELLs benefit from cognate recognition training (Garc'a & Nagy, 1993; Durgunoglu et al., 1993). Kress (2002) contains a useful reference list of Spanish-English cognates. Similarly, Au (1993), Nagy (1988), Dixon and Nessel (1983), and others recommend that teachers integrate vocabulary instruction with content instruction and with story reading. Hickman et al. (2004) describe a successful approach to teaching vocabulary to primary-grade ELLs during storybook reading. The approach involves careful selection of several storybooks or informational texts that focus on a theme of interest to the students in the class and are at a reading level above students' grade level. Teachers carefully select from the texts those vocabulary words which students could encounter and use in other contexts. Over the course of five days, the class previews the story and the vocabulary words, and the story is read aloud, discussed, re-read, and summarized. Discussions focus on using the vocabulary words and encouraging children to relate these words to their own life experiences.

Carrell and Eisterhold (1988) and Carrell (1983, 1984) have demonstrated the positive impact that prior knowledge of a topic or situational context has on ELLs' reading comprehension. However, stories and other texts often contain cultural contexts and assumptions that are unfamiliar to young ELLs and make comprehension difficult or impossible. Researchers advise teachers to support comprehension before students read by eliciting and building upon ELLs' prior knowledge and experiences relevant to story theme, setting, and content. Many researchers also support the value of teaching content reading strategies such as previewing a chapter before reading it and formulating questions, self-monitoring, and using imagery during reading (Carasquillo et al., 2004; Chamot & O'Malley, 1994; Echeverria et al., 2000; Schifini, 1994). Researchers agree that teachers should model and support comprehension before, during, and after reading by teaching text structures; using graphic organizers such as Venn diagrams, cause and effect charts, and story maps; and creating study guides that students can complete (Carasquillo et al., 2004).

One recommended approach to increase comprehension and engagement is the use of culturally relevant texts and multicultural literature (Au, 1998, 1993; Barrera, 1992; Harris, 1994). Larrick's 1965 landmark article, "The All-White World of Children's Books" (reprinted in Muse, 1997) pointed out that minority children had few opportunities to read about characters like themselves or see themselves in these books. In Larrick's review, these children's books often depicted those minority characters in offensive or demeaning ways. More recently, Singer and Smith (2003) point out that

Multicultural children's literature provides self-affirmation for readers when it conveys that people like themselves have lives worth knowing about and worth sharing with others (Bishop, 1997; Tenorio, 1994). This is particularly significant for readers who are members of marginalized groups (p.17).

Daphne Muse's book, *Multicultural Resources for Young Readers* (1997), contains an extensive annotated bibliography of such literature likely to engage ELLs readers and to build upon their experiences and prior knowledge.

Students' knowledge and experience are the starting points for The Language Experience Approach to reading, used with beginning English readers of all ages (Moustafa, 1987; Tharp & Gallimore, 1989; Tinajero & Calderon, 1988). Through questioning, teachers prompt students to speak about their individual or in-class experiences. The teacher writes down students' oral narratives, and the resulting text becomes the basis of reading instruction. Often teachers plan a group activity (e.g., taking a walk) to provide a common experiential base for reading.

Hoggard's 1996 review of the "critical attributes of classroom culture" for ESL literacy learners includes "the teacher as guide," "meaningful literacy experiences, a sense of ownership," "a community of learners," and "interactive classroom discourse" (pp. 5–9). Other researchers have also highlighted the importance of student participation in conversations that relate book themes to students' personal experiences and to other books. The instructional conversations (IC) approach is one way of structuring such book-centered interactions. Teachers promote general participation in small-group discussion by not calling on children but waiting for them to volunteer to speak, by responding to student contributions, and by encouraging students to connect their comments to those of previous speakers and build upon what they said (Rueda et al., 1992; Saunders & Goldenberg, 1999). IC also promotes skimming, scanning, and careful reading by requiring students to find text passages that support their opinions and interpretations (Goldenberg, 1991, 1992/1993; Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1990). Literature circles are another discussion format that promotes comprehension and academic language in a social context. Ruby (2003) discusses their effectiveness when properly scaffolded for English language learners. Gordon (2003) offers another good example of how teachers can effectively use literature response journals with English language learners.

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Related Web Resources

ABC Bookmaking Builds Vocabulary in the Content Areas (0)

Explore the Evidence-Based Research on Reading Instruction Using This Database (0)

My World of Words: Building Vocabulary Lists (0)

The Clarifying Routine Elaborating Vocabulary Instruction (0)
Wisconsin Literacy Education and Reading Network Source: Teaching/Learning Activities for
Vocabulary (0)

Teachers promote students' reading comprehension through research-supported techniques and explicit strategies.

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What Is It?

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Reading comprehension—deriving meaning from text—is dependent on active and thoughtful interaction of the reader with the text. For the more effective teacher, reading comprehension instruction is not simply a matter of asking students questions after they have read a passage—a practice which may only help to assess a student's reading comprehension.

Instead, effective teachers focus reading comprehension instruction on developing strategic readers. Laura Robb describes strategic readers as "readers who know how to activate prior knowledge before, during, and after reading; decide what's important in a text; synthesize information; draw inferences during and after reading; ask questions; and self-monitor and repair faulty comprehension" (*Teaching Reading in Middle School: A Strategic Approach to Teaching Reading That Improves Comprehension and Thinking*, 2000).

Although Robb's work focuses on strategic reading at the middle school level, it is important for elementary school teachers to introduce similar and precursor comprehension strategies to their students. Using these strategies in combination and in contexts that generate high levels of student involvement and engagement can have positive effects on reading comprehension (*Report of the National Reading Panel. Teaching Children to Read: Reports of the Subgroups*. April 2000, Chapter 4, pp. 94, 95, 114, 125).

The National Reading Panel (NRP) meta-analysis of studies identified eight effective strategies for developing reading comprehension:

- I. Graphic organizers
- II. Story structure
- III. Question answering
- IV. Question generating
- V. Monitoring comprehension
- VI. Summarizing
- VII. Cooperative learning

VIII. Combinations of the above

In addition to using the strategies that are listed above, it is essential for teachers to help readers to grow in their ability to read increasingly difficult text and to succeed in comprehension by providing instruction and reading materials at an appropriate level of difficulty. In reading, a student's optimal level of difficulty, called his/her "instructional level," is adequately challenging—not too hard and not too easy. It is a level of difficulty—in the vocabulary and syntax of the print material—that gives the learner opportunities for teacher-directed guidance, for needed practice, and for new learning without becoming hopelessly frustrated.

Technology Tips

The following technology recommendations for reading are direct excerpts from "Technology and Teaching Children to Read," published by the Northeast and Islands Regional Technology in Education Consortium (NEIRTEC) in 2004. The complete NEIRTEC report can be downloaded as a PDF file from the link provided at <http://knowledgeloom.org/elemlit>.

"There are several ways in which technology can provide direct instruction in comprehension strategies, including the ability to:

- ◆ provide hypertext and hypermedia that includes scaffolding of children's text comprehension to support their learning, such as clarifications, summaries, concept maps, and key questions related to specific parts of the texts;
- ◆ provide embedded prompts that ask students to answer questions, add to concept maps or other graphic organizers, or summarize information, and online tools, such as a word processor or a concept mapping tool, to support their work; and
- ◆ encourage active reading by providing scaffolding options to read words aloud, provide definitions, explain concepts in texts, and provide visual aids. These supports help students experience successful reading, provide learning opportunities within the context of meaningful texts, make reading more engaging, and encourage the active use of comprehension strategies." (p. 13)

Implications for ELLs

An individual student's reading comprehension varies from text to text. One important variable is prior knowledge of the topic. When students read about familiar topics and cultural contexts, they comprehend and retain information better than when they read about topics of which they have little or no background knowledge.

Other factors that affect students' ability to comprehend are the presence of unknown vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, complex sentence structure, and an unfamiliar style such as a regional dialect. Texts vary in the degree to which they provide background information or require that readers have the knowledge necessary to "fill in the blanks." This is especially true for English language learners (ELLs).

The following eight types of instruction identified by the National Reading Panel (2000) are highly appropriate for ELLs but may require additional scaffolding and practice.

The National Reading Panel (NRP) meta-analysis of studies found eight effective areas of instruction

for developing reading strategy:

1. Graphic organizers
2. Story structure
3. Question answering
4. Question generating
5. Monitoring Comprehension
6. Summarizing
7. Cooperative learning
8. Combinations of the above

(Report of the National Reading Panel. Teaching Children to Read: Reports of the Subgroups)

Strategies for Supporting ELLs

Teachers can help English language learners (ELLs) increase reading comprehension in a number of different ways.

Effective teachers examine reading selections ahead of time for linguistic features and cultural material that may require explanation prior to reading. Often, teachers assess, activate, and build students' background knowledge through the use of pre-reading discussion of illustrations, titles, or issues. It is beneficial to precede nonfiction readings with demonstrations or experiential activities related to the topic. Students are more successful readers when they have a framework for understanding the new information presented in the text.

It is important to find reading material with settings, characters, problems, and topics that are familiar or meaningful to students. When teachers help students to select their own reading materials, teachers promote students' motivation, enjoyment, and sense of efficacy.

Graphic organizers and story maps provide support to ELLs who may tend to get lost in the words and not see organizing ideas or patterns. Effective teachers are aware that these devices work best with repeated explanations of their purpose and demonstrations of use. They introduce graphic organizers and story maps by applying them first to easy or familiar texts. This enables students to focus on learning why and how to use these organizers before applying them as tools for comprehending more demanding texts.

Summarizing is a valuable and surprisingly difficult skill that teachers must model and explain. Teachers explicitly discuss their decisions about what constitutes the main points in a summary. To become effective summarizers, ELLs need instruction in combining sentences and in the use of superordinates, so that they can use category words (e.g., *relatives, hobbies, injuries, mammals, countries*) rather than enumerating lists.

Learning to answer and generate questions about the text can be very productive for ELLs. Teacher modeling and guided practice help students gain an understanding of how to ask productive questions in various linguistic forms (e.g., *Why John went West?/ Why did John go West?/ Why do you think John went West?*).

When teachers ask students to provide evidence from the text to support their opinions, students read and reread more closely.

Effective teachers say things like:

- You said that in the story John is angry.
- What pictures, words, or sentences show us that he might be angry?
- Do we know what he's angry about? How do we know?
- Can you find any words or sentences that tell us that?

Glimpse of the Classroom

Mrs. N.'s English language learners' class has finished reading *Thomas' Snowsuit*. Today, she plans to have her class retell the story. She works with the entire group to demonstrate and scaffold the concepts of retelling and the specifics of the assignment that they will later do in pairs.

She has prepared three "Go Charts" with graphic symbols that depict the beginning, middle, and ending of the story. Students will retell the story, take five pictures from the book, and place them in the correct order. Her "beginning" chart uses the words *characters*, *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, and *setting*, which she encourages her students to discuss. The "middle" chart uses the words *problem* and *solution*. In this activity, students eagerly share their ideas about the structure of the story and their appreciation of its humor.

Mrs. N. has combined three research-supported strategies in her "story retelling" lesson with her English learners' class. She uses (1) graphic organizers; (2) mapping of story structure (beginning, middle, and ending of the story; elements of the story problem and solution; and who, what, when, where, and setting); and (3) cooperative learning, which she calls "buddy work."

Questions to Think About

1. How does this practice differ from traditional ways of teaching reading comprehension?
2. How can teachers judge whether they are working with a student at his/her instructional level?
3. What are some examples of reading comprehension activities that seem to generate high levels of student involvement and engagement?
4. How can teachers use cooperative learning activities to help English language learners (ELLs) and other students better comprehend informational content-area text? What are the benefits and challenges of cooperative learning with ELLs and other students?

Story Summaries

Smith School (K-5)

- Non-English home language: 58% of students
- Eligible for free or reduced-priced meals: 61% of students
- Literacy block scheduling for 90-minute period
- Daily running records and Developmental Reading Assessments
- Full-day kindergarten for bilingual students
- After-school literacy programs
- Class-size reduction

- Students reaching the reading state goal increased 24% in 5 years
- Students reaching the writing state goal increased 45% in 5 years
- Grade 4 reading in the state mastery test increased from 36.4 in 1993 to 55.2 in 1998
- Five years to implement state standards effectively

Since the fall of 1993, Smith School in New Britain, Connecticut has made a dramatic transformation from a low-performing school to an exemplary school. The percentage of Smith students meeting the state goal in reading has almost tripled and has exceeded its own district by four percentage points. For more than five years, Smith School has steadily integrated a state standards initiative and a strong, award-winning Title I program to develop systemic school change.

Teachers keep a keen eye on each student's instructional level and on pacing difficulty and challenge to the instructional level. A student returns to his or her third-grade teacher for grade 4, an important year for statewide testing. By using this approach (looping), no time is lost identifying skill sets that need bolstering. Teachers use running records for reading instruction, and they administer the Developmental Reading Assessment to students. Across the grades, block scheduling assures time for intense, uninterrupted time on task. Teachers also use strategies of Reading Recovery, an early intervention program, to guide instruction across grades. After school, students have extra time for literacy development, supported through Title I funds.

The Story Workshop" Approach"Reading and writing are taught equally in this course. . . Reading became easier, more enjoyable, and writing was given a voice with power. . . [Both] improved so dramatically, scores in other subjects soared," said one fourth-grade public school teacher after a 10-week Story Workshop program. Originated and developed by John Schultz and conducted in diverse classes from grade school to grad school, the Story Workshop approach emphasizes reading, writing, speaking, listening, and thinking relationships. This story describes the approach, illustrated with linked video segments of actual classroom experiences with elementary school students. Because of the way in which this approach integrates oral telling, reading, and writing skills into classroom activities, it connects to multiple practices in the elementary literacy spotlight (see practices list).

Research Summary

Research Supporting the Practice
Technology Research Supporting the Practice
General Research on ELL Reading Instruction

Research Supporting the Practice

The K–3 reading content in this spotlight is based on the recommendations of the National Reading Panel (NRP), The Partnership for Reading (PFR), the International Reading Association (IRA), the U.S. Department of Education's Reading First Program, and the Northeast and Islands Regional Technology in Education Consortium (NEIRTEC). This section is summarized from the National Reading Panel Report.

Comprehension is defined as "intentional thinking during which meaning is constructed through interactions between text and reader" (Harris & Hodges, p. 39). Thus, readers derive meaning from text when they engage in intentional, problem-solving thinking processes. The data suggest that text comprehension is enhanced when readers actively relate the ideas represented in print to their own knowledge and experiences and construct mental representations in memory.

The rationale for the explicit teaching of comprehension skills is that comprehension can be improved by teaching students to use specific cognitive strategies or to reason strategically when they encounter barriers to understanding what they are reading. Readers acquire these strategies informally to some extent, but explicit or formal instruction in the application of comprehension strategies has been shown to be highly effective in enhancing understanding. The teacher generally demonstrates such strategies for students until the students are able to carry them out independently.

In its review, the National Reading Panel (NRP) identified 16 categories of text comprehension instruction of which 8 appear to have a solid scientific basis for concluding that these types of instruction improve comprehension in non-impaired readers.

1. Multiple strategies of instruction, combining the use of the following
2. Monitoring comprehension, where readers learn how to be aware of their understanding of the material
3. Cooperative learning, where students learn reading strategies together
4. Use of graphic and semantic organizers (including story maps), where readers make graphic representations of the material to assist comprehension
5. Answering questions, where readers answer questions posed by the teacher and receive immediate feedback
6. Generating question, where readers ask themselves questions about various aspects of the story
7. Story structure, where students are taught to use the structure of the story as a means of helping them recall story content in order to answer questions about what they have read
8. Summarization, where readers are taught to integrate ideas and generalize from the text information

(Report of the National Reading Panel. Teaching Children to Read: Reports of the Subgroups. April 2000, Chapter 4, p. 6)

In general, the evidence suggests that teaching a combination of reading comprehension techniques is the most effective. When students use these techniques appropriately, the techniques help students improve their ability to recall, answer questions, generate questions, and summarize text. When used in combination, these techniques can improve results in standardized comprehension tests. Nevertheless, some questions remain unanswered. More information is needed on how to increase teacher capacity for using proven comprehension strategies. The NRP investigation also found evidence that teaching comprehension in the context of specific academic areas, for example, social studies, may be an effective way to teach the content.

Questions remain as to which strategies are most effective for which age groups. More research is necessary to determine whether the techniques apply to all types of text genres, including narrative and expository texts, and whether the level of difficulty of the texts has an impact on the effectiveness of the strategies.

Finally, it is critically important to know what teachers need to teach their students to read strategically. Teaching reading comprehension strategies to students at all grade levels is complex.

Teachers not only must have a firm grasp of the content presented in text, but also must have substantial knowledge of the strategies themselves, of which strategies are most effective for different students and types of content, and of how best to teach and model strategy use. Research on comprehension strategies has evolved dramatically over the last two decades. Initially, investigators focused on teaching one strategy at a time; later studies examined the effectiveness of teaching several strategies in combination. However, implementation of this promising approach has been problematic. Teachers must be skillful in their instruction and be able to respond flexibly and opportunistically to students' needs for instructive feedback as they read.

The initial NRP search for studies relevant to the preparation of teachers for comprehension strategy instruction provided 635 citations. Of these, only four studies met the NRP research methodology criteria. Hence, the limited number of studies eligible for further analysis precluded meta-analysis of the data derived from these investigations. However, because there were only four studies, the NRP was able to review them in detail. The studies investigate two major approaches: Direct Explanation and Transactional Strategy Instruction. The Direct Explanation approach focuses on the teacher's ability to explain explicitly the reasoning and mental processes involved in successful reading comprehension. Rather than teach specific strategies, teachers help students to (1) view reading as a problem-solving task that necessitates the use of strategic thinking, and (2) learn to think strategically about solving comprehension problems. For example, teachers are taught that they could teach students the skill of finding the main idea by casting it as a problem-solving task and reasoning about it strategically. Transactional Strategy Instruction also emphasizes the teacher's ability to provide explicit explanations of thinking processes. Further, it emphasizes the ability of teachers to facilitate student discussions in which students collaborate to form joint interpretations of text and acquire a deeper understanding of the mental and cognitive processes involved in comprehension.

The four studies (two studies for each approach) demonstrated that teachers could be instructed in these methods. Teachers required instruction in explaining what they are teaching, modeling their thinking processes, encouraging student inquiry, and keeping students engaged. Data from all four studies indicated clearly that in order for teachers to use strategies effectively, extensive formal instruction in reading comprehension is necessary, preferably beginning as early as pre-service.

More research is needed to address the following questions.

- Which components of teacher preparation are most effective?
- Can reading comprehension strategies be successfully incorporated into content-area instruction? How can the effectiveness of strategies be measured in an optimal manner?
- Can strategies be taught as early as grades 1 and 2, when children also are trying to master phonics, word recognition, and fluency?
- How can teachers be taught to provide the most optimal instruction?

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Technology Research Supporting the Practice

The following technology research summary for reading presents direct excerpts from "Technology and Teaching Children to Read," published by the Northeast and Islands Regional Technology in Education Consortium (NEIRTEC) in 2004. The complete NEIRTEC report can be downloaded as a PDF file from the link provided at <http://knowledgeloom.org/elemlit>.

"A growing body of research supports the value of computers, with well designed software, to support comprehension instruction.

"In one of the first extensive studies of interactive texts, children in kindergarten through third grade used an interactive basal reader that featured synthesized speech, animations, definitions, pictures, and other tools (Higgins & Boone 1991). During the first year, students at three of the four grade levels significantly outperformed their counterparts in classrooms using the traditional basal readers. In a British study, Medwell (1996) found that early readers increased the accuracy of word recognition and text comprehension significantly when they used electronic books; peers using paper copies of the same books did not show the same gains, even with teacher support. The value of this type of technology is further supported by a study by Matthew (1997), who found that repeated use of electronic books increased early readers' abilities to retell stories they read.

"Lewin (1997) found that children using electronic talking books were able to read more independently possibly because the computer provided them with cues to cross-check meanings, and the colorful illustrations and animations motivated the children to use the program on their own. The children were also able to develop effective decoding strategies using the various components of the software, allowing them to read more of the text on their own. Electronic books have also been found to have value with older children who have learning disabilities. An early study of this technology found that upper elementary students with learning disabilities could dramatically improve their comprehension and word recognition skills by working with electronic talking books (Olson, Foltz, & Wise 1986); later research found that this held true for many students in need of remedial reading instruction (Wise, Olson, et al 1989; Lewin 1995). Olofsson (1992) found that learning-disabled upper elementary students—particularly those above grade four—improved substantially in overall reading ability after working with software that used synthetic speech.

"Children who repeatedly use electronic talking books begin to rely on multiple sign systems for meaning, including the expected sounds of words and the images on the screen (Harste 1994; Rowe 1994). Equipped with additional tools to decode the text, students can increase their overall comprehension of the books.

"The NRP report stated that, although little research is available, 'the application of hypertext concepts to reading and reading instruction seems to have a great deal of potential' (p. 6–9). Hypertext—interactive text that is searchable and contains links to other documents—has long been one of the fundamental components of the World Wide Web. Increasingly, software developers are relying on this technology to enhance text for early readers. Hypermedia is essentially a combination of hypertext and multimedia; in addition to linking documents to one another, software developers can also interlink animations, sounds, movies, and pictures. In elementary reading software, hypertext and hypermedia can enrich text with pictures, sounds, and animations to aid comprehension; change the nature of the story by creating nonlinear story paths for children to follow; and provide supplementary resources such as glossaries, pronunciation guides, or more in-depth information at the click of button. The means by which children can interact with hypertext vary, but most often, children can click on images and words to activate special features, find word pronunciations and definitions, or make choices for characters in the book. The ability of hypertext stories to directly involve students in choosing options represents

a fundamental change in the nature of books, and creates a nonlinear story path in which the child has greater control (Karchmer 2001). In addition, dictionaries, glossaries, encyclopedias, textbooks, and other traditional media can be transformed into hypertext with interactive features that allow students to cross-reference information, look up words, hear material read back to them, and access related supplementary material instantly.

"Hypertext and hypermedia can also be effective in supporting text comprehension instruction. In particular, images and sounds may serve to clarify and ingrain meaning; children who interact with animated features in software demonstrate an enhanced ability to recount story events (Underwood & Underwood 1998). Older learning-disabled students were also able to enhance their understanding of texts by reading hypermedia versions of the material that included pictures, definitions, and digitized pronunciations (Anderson-Inman & Horney 1998; MacArthur & Haynes 1995). In addition, fourth-grade students reading long and difficult passages could answer comprehension questions more accurately when they had read the text on the computer. However, with shorter passages, the use of the computer did not impact overall comprehension in any notable way (Greenlee-Moore & Smith 1996).

"A recent study by Dalton, Pisha, Eagleton, Coyne and Deysher (2002, see also Rose and Dalton, 2002) tested software with digital novels that provided:

- ◆ strategy instruction and embedded strategy prompts;
- ◆ student goal setting and self-monitoring;
- ◆ work logs that collected and stored students' responses to strategy prompts;
- ◆ embedded assessments; and
- ◆ hypertext scaffolding to provide spoken text and vocabulary definitions when needed.

"The students involved in the study were in middle school and reading at or below the 25th percentile. One group of students received computer-supported comprehension strategy instruction, while a control group received strategy instruction without the computer support. The results showed that the students in the computer-support group gained more than .5 grade equivalents in the pre-test to post-test comparison, while students in the non-computer group gained about .2 grade equivalents, a statistically significant difference. In addition, the scaffolds enabled students to read text that was well above their decoding level but which was age-appropriate in content and at their interest level, and the strategy prompts led students to read more strategically." (pp. 13-15)

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General Research on ELL Reading Instruction

There is general agreement that becoming a proficient reader in a second language is a difficult task. Snow, Burns, and Griffin (1998) and August and Hakuta (1997) underscore the enormous cognitive challenge faced by young ELLs who must acquire oral and literacy skills in English simultaneously. ELLs who are already literate in a home language are able to transfer some of their skills for use in English reading (Garcia, 2000), but that does not imply that learning to read well in English will be an easy task. Reading involves the use of both "higher level cognitive knowledge, ... abilities... and learning strategies," as well as "low level linguistic knowledge and processing strategies (Birch 2002, p. x.) Throughout the elementary grades, ELLs are likely to encounter difficulties with both "high" and "low" levels of the reading process, especially as they tackle increasingly complex readings (Droop & Verhoeven, 1998).

Knowledge of the relationships between sounds and letters is essential for learning to read English (Ehri, 1998). Verhoeven's (1999) work cautions teachers that it is unrealistic to expect ELLs to decode words independently until they are familiar with the sound system of English. To help ELLs become adept at using sound-letter relationships, Birch (2002) recommends practice in a variety of tasks: identifying a particular phoneme in words, discriminating between that phoneme and similar ones, linking the sound to the printed letter, visually discriminating the letter from other visually similar letters, recognizing and printing the letter in both upper and lowercase forms, finding the letter at the beginnings and endings of words alone and in connected text, and drawing things that begin with the letter and labeling them (p. 72). Other teaching suggestions include: playing games with rhyming words and alliterative words to develop students' awareness of how sounds combine to form words (Antunez, 2002; Kaufman & Franco, 2004), and, in the case of Spanish-speaking ELLs, building upon the similarities and differences between the sound systems of the two languages (Helman, 2004).

Many researchers point out the difficulty of comprehending text when one has a limited vocabulary (Verhallen & Schoonen, 1993; Garcia, 1991; McLaughlin, 1993; Jimenez, Garcia, & Pearson, 1995, 1996). ELLs of any age often know too few words or only a single meaning for a word. McLaughlin et al. (2004) have had promising results in increasing ELLs' vocabulary knowledge through an intervention that pre-selected challenging and high-utility words from a reading selection. The intervention involved direct teaching of word meanings; teaching and raising awareness of words with multiple meanings; systemic teaching of word analysis skills including roots and affixes; engaging students in word games, riddles, and other activities designed to promote deeper understanding and use of the words in new and meaningful contexts; and finding the words outside of school. The intervention also focused on increasing Latino students' awareness of Spanish/English cognate words and ability to use cognate recognition as a legitimate and productive comprehension strategy.

Several researchers have documented that ELLs benefit from cognate recognition training (Garc'a & Nagy, 1993; Durgunoglu et al., 1993). Kress (2002) contains a useful reference list of Spanish-English cognates. Similarly, Au (1993), Nagy (1988), Dixon and Nessel (1983), and others recommend that teachers integrate vocabulary instruction with content instruction and with story

reading. Hickman et al. (2004) describe a successful approach to teaching vocabulary to primary-grade ELLs during storybook reading. The approach involves careful selection of several storybooks or informational texts that focus on a theme of interest to the students in the class and are at a reading level above students' grade level. Teachers carefully select from the texts those vocabulary words which students could encounter and use in other contexts. Over the course of five days, the class previews the story and the vocabulary words, and the story is read aloud, discussed, re-read, and summarized. Discussions focus on using the vocabulary words and encouraging children to relate these words to their own life experiences.

Carrell and Eisterhold (1988) and Carrell (1983, 1984) have demonstrated the positive impact that prior knowledge of a topic or situational context has on ELLs' reading comprehension. However, stories and other texts often contain cultural contexts and assumptions that are unfamiliar to young ELLs and make comprehension difficult or impossible. Researchers advise teachers to support comprehension before students read by eliciting and building upon ELLs' prior knowledge and experiences relevant to story theme, setting, and content. Many researchers also support the value of teaching content reading strategies such as previewing a chapter before reading it and formulating questions, self-monitoring, and using imagery during reading (Carasquillo et al., 2004; Chamot & O'Malley, 1994; Echeverria et al., 2000; Schifini, 1994). Researchers agree that teachers should model and support comprehension before, during, and after reading by teaching text structures; using graphic organizers such as Venn diagrams, cause and effect charts, and story maps; and creating study guides that students can complete (Carasquillo et al., 2004).

One recommended approach to increase comprehension and engagement is the use of culturally relevant texts and multicultural literature (Au, 1998, 1993; Barrera, 1992; Harris, 1994). Larrick's 1965 landmark article, "The All-White World of Children's Books" (reprinted in Muse, 1997) pointed out that minority children had few opportunities to read about characters like themselves or see themselves in these books. In Larrick's review, these children's books often depicted those minority characters in offensive or demeaning ways. More recently, Singer and Smith (2003) point out that

Multicultural children's literature provides self-affirmation for readers when it conveys that people like themselves have lives worth knowing about and worth sharing with others (Bishop, 1997; Tenorio, 1994). This is particularly significant for readers who are members of marginalized groups (p.17).

Daphne Muse's book, *Multicultural Resources for Young Readers* (1997), contains an extensive annotated bibliography of such literature likely to engage ELLs readers and to build upon their experiences and prior knowledge.

Students' knowledge and experience are the starting points for The Language Experience Approach to reading, used with beginning English readers of all ages (Moustafa, 1987; Tharp & Gallimore, 1989; Tinajero & Calderon, 1988). Through questioning, teachers prompt students to speak about their individual or in-class experiences. The teacher writes down students' oral narratives, and the resulting text becomes the basis of reading instruction. Often teachers plan a group activity (e.g., taking a walk) to provide a common experiential base for reading.

Hoggard's 1996 review of the "critical attributes of classroom culture" for ESL literacy learners includes "the teacher as guide," "meaningful literacy experiences, a sense of ownership," "a community of learners," and "interactive classroom discourse" (pp. 5–9). Other researchers have also highlighted the importance of student participation in conversations that relate book themes to students' personal experiences and to other books. The instructional conversations (IC) approach is one way of structuring such book-centered interactions. Teachers promote general participation in

small-group discussion by not calling on children but waiting for them to volunteer to speak, by responding to student contributions, and by encouraging students to connect their comments to those of previous speakers and build upon what they said (Rueda et al., 1992; Saunders & Goldenberg, 1999). IC also promotes skimming, scanning, and careful reading by requiring students to find text passages that support their opinions and interpretations (Goldenberg, 1991, 1992/1993; Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1990). Literature circles are another discussion format that promotes comprehension and academic language in a social context. Ruby (2003) discusses their effectiveness when properly scaffolded for English language learners. Gordon (2003) offers another good example of how teachers can effectively use literature response journals with English language learners.

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Related Web Resources

Best Practices Teaching Comprehension With Jeff Wilhelm (0)

Every Child a Reader Topic 5, Strategic Comprehension (0)

Explore the Evidence-Based Research on Reading Instruction Using This Database (0)

Readquest Strategies for Reading Comprehension (0)

Webquest Matrix of Examples; Top (0)

Teachers use computer technology to support reading instruction.

What Is It?
Technology Tips
Implications for ELLs
Strategies for Supporting ELLs
Glimpse of the Classroom
Questions to Think About

What Is It?

The K–3 reading content in this spotlight is based on the recommendations of the National Reading Panel (NRP), The Partnership for Reading (PFR), the International Reading Association (IRA), the U.S. Department of Education's Reading First Program, and the Northeast and Islands Regional Technology in Education Consortium (NEIRTEC).

The report "Technology and Teaching Children to Read," published by the Northeast and Islands Regional Technology in Education Consortium (NEIRTEC) in 2004, offers recommendations for educators to consider in using technology to support reading instruction. The excerpt below describes four key ways in which educators can use computers in the classroom.

A Framework for Technology to Support Reading Instruction

"We will provide a general framework of multimedia computer capabilities that can be employed to help children learn to read. Note that this framework for technology is based upon a critical assumption: Knowledgeable and dedicated teachers are the critical element in successful reading instruction programs. While technology can support these teachers and help them to be more successful with all children, it can never replace qualified teachers because teaching children to read is too complex – it requires insight into children's cognitive abilities and emotional needs, and is dependent upon the types of reinforcement, guidance, and support that can only be provided by caring, knowledgeable teachers.

"The technology framework consists of four general capabilities that computers can provide to support students learning to read. Computers can

- ◆ present information and activities to students;
- ◆ assess students' work;
- ◆ respond to students' work; and
- ◆ provide *scaffolds*, such as access to word pronunciation and definitions that help students read successfully.

These four key capabilities, whether supplied by teachers using traditional materials books and audiotapes, or by computers, have proven to be important components in reading instruction. Computers can now provide each of these capabilities to support teaching and learning in new ways." (pp. 2–3)

The NEIRTEC report expands upon the findings of the National Reading Panel (NRP) in 2000. The NRP examined 21 studies focused on the use of computer technology to aid reading instruction. These were the only studies in the field that met their rigorous research criteria. The NRP report acknowledged the difficulty of basing instructional recommendations on such a limited amount of research, but it did offer the following conclusions:

"One conclusion is that it is possible to use computer technology for reading instruction. All the studies in the analysis report positive results...It is clear that some students can benefit from the use of computer technology in reading instruction. In particular, studies on the addition of speech to print suggest that this may be a promising alternative, especially given the powerful multimedia computers now available and those being developed. In addition, use of hypertext and word processing appear to hold promise for application to reading instruction." (*Report of the National Reading Panel. Teaching Children to Read: reports of the Subgroups.* April 2000. Chapter 6, p.2)

The NRP report also suggests that "this is an area that needs a great deal of additional exploration" (Chapter 6, p.2).

NEIRTEC, in its report, elaborates on the five components of elementary reading instruction set out in the NRP report: Phonemic Awareness, Phonics Instruction, Fluency Instruction, Vocabulary Instruction, and Text Comprehension Instruction. (For more specific NEIRTEC technology recommendations for each component, please visit the "**Technology Tips**" under each K-3 Reading Instruction practice: Click on "**List of Practices**" in the navigation bar on this page and then click on the "**What Is It?**" link under each practice. To find NIERTEC's technology research summaries for each component, click on "**Research.**")

The complete NEIRTEC report can be downloaded as a PDF file from the link provided at <http://knowledgeloom.org/elemlit>.

(For further technology resources on The Knowledge Loom, see: <http://knowledgeloom.org/gmott> and <http://knowledgeloom.org/tech>)

Implications for ELLs

Computer programs and multimedia products (e.g., books with audiotapes) enable English language learners (ELLs) and others to develop reading skills through the synergistic effects of visual images, printed text, and audio text. These technological tools allow ELLs to exercise control over the pace of instruction and to replay or review as many times as they wish without self-consciousness. Having quick access to definitions while reading in some computer programs also helps students sustain momentum.

Strategies for Supporting ELLs

Despite the many benefits that technology offers, one pitfall is that it can be isolating, and for English language learners (ELLs), face-to-face interaction with others is an important way to learn. Effective teachers have students work at computers or listening centers in pairs or small groups, where talking with each other about the activities and their content provides an important social dimension.

Much educational software is now available in multiple languages. Bilingual students often enjoy using both primary language and English versions. Comparing texts enables them to confirm their comprehension and to increase metalinguistic awareness.

Carefully guided Internet visits provide access to reading materials on a wide range of motivating topics at various reading levels and in multiple languages. Like pen pals, "key pal" arrangements with other "sister" classrooms also provide great connections, reading material, and learning opportunities.

Glimpse of the Classroom

In Ms. M.'s second-grade classroom, two groups of students are pursuing independent reading and writing activities. The readers survey the books that Ms. M. organized by reading level and select an appropriate book to read in the comfort of the beanbag chairs in the corner of the room. The writers take turns using the class computer to create stories. They are doing exercises from a computer program for creative writing. The computer talks to the students, helping them to choose different story settings and providing them with prompts to develop their story.

Ms. M. gathers both groups of students into a circle. They discuss stories and how some words contain a particular "key," or set of phonemes. Ms. M. writes the keys on chart paper. For example, a recent story entitled, *The Dark, Dark House*, focused on the key *ar*, and another entitled, *The Skunk in the Trunk*, focused on the key *unk*. Ms. M. helps students to create their own story that will show how well they understand the concepts that they have been studying.

Using desktop publishing software, Ms. M. types up and prints out their stories, providing copies for the students. They then illustrate their story and highlight the phoneme key whenever it appears in the text. Occasionally, depending on the time of year and the level of the group, Ms. M. varies the process – either allowing students to create their own stories, which they dictate to her, or writing the stories herself—to reinforce that week's key.

Questions to Think About

1. Is there a process in your school or district for reading specialists, technology specialists, classroom teachers, and special educators to collaborate on developing ways to use technology in their reading instruction?
2. What technologies (hardware and software) are available in your school or district to support reading instruction and how are they currently being used?
3. What support do teachers need to effectively use computer technology in their reading instruction?
4. Which of the five components of effective reading instruction (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension) need to be strengthened in your school or district? Which technologies can enhance these components?
5. How can technology support teachers in helping students who are reading below their grade levels, as well as meeting the learning needs of English language learners and special needs students?
6. Is your school or district providing information to parents about how technology can help their children learn to read both at school and at home?

Story Summaries

Joseph Rodman West Elementary School

The use of technology in all facets of education, and especially reading, is one of the unique features of the Joseph Rodman West Elementary School in northwest Washington, D.C. A few years ago, West received two DC education awards, which the school used to invest in technology. Today classrooms are equipped with television monitors and VCR players for distance learning through ITFS (Instructional Television Fixed Service) and closed circuit programming. With the arrival of Principal Richard Bachman, the school rapidly adopted and integrated digital technology into all aspects of the school's operation. He trained his staff in analyzing student test scores and refocusing instruction, and he created a series of templates, available online, for student performance plans. In 2003, West Elementary students exceeded state and district averages at all grade levels on the Stanford 9 exams in reading, and 82% of sixth grade students were at or above proficient in reading. The U.S. Department of Education has recognized Skidmore-Tynan Elementary School as a 2003 Blue Ribbon School in its No Child Left Behind-Blue Ribbon Schools Program (see: <http://www.ed.gov/programs/nclbbrs/index.html>).

Research Summary

The K-3 reading content in this spotlight is based on the recommendations of the National Reading Panel (NRP), The Partnership for Reading (PFR), the International Reading Association (IRA), and the U.S. Department of Education's Reading First Program, and the Northeast and Islands Regional Technology in Education Consortium (NEIRTEC). This section draws from the report, "Technology and Teaching Children to Read," published by the Northeast and Islands Regional Technology in Education Consortium (NEIRTEC) in 2004. (The complete NEIRTEC report can be downloaded as a PDF file from the link provided at <http://knowledgeloom.org/elemlit>)

The excerpts below from "Technology and Teaching Children to Read" describe the criteria used by the National Reading Panel (NRP) and the Northeast and Islands Regional Technology in Education Consortium (NEIRTEC) to select appropriate research on technology and reading instruction for inclusion in their respective reports. (Please visit the "**Research**" section under each K-3 Reading Instruction practice for the related technology research summary.)

Research Criteria
Technology and Students' Motivation
Integrated Learning Systems
Reading Management and Assessment Tools
Word Processing and Reading Instruction

Research Criteria

"The National Reading Panel reviewed the current research on technology and reading. As in all of its reviews, the panel considered only those research studies that met stringent design criteria and included control group or baseline comparison

measures in hopes of providing evidence of causal connections between teaching methods and student learning. Because computers available in schools have only recently reached high levels of performances for multimedia, speech recognition, text analysis, and networking, there has not yet been time to conduct the studies necessary to build a solid research base on the many ways in which technology can support reading instruction. Because this is a relatively new field, the number of studies published in this area is small—for example, only 21 studies met the NRP research methodology criteria required for consideration. However, all of these studies reported positive results, suggesting that the use of computer technology to enhance reading instruction is worth careful consideration. In particular, the NRP notes seven studies found positive effects from the capability of computers to provide spoken versions of written text, which indicates that this may be a promising use of technology in reading instruction. The panel also reports that the use of hypertext (text that allows the reader to select different paths, such as links to definitions, clarifications, or elaborations) and word processing show promise, but that sufficient research is not yet available to draw firm conclusions on these or the many other possible uses of technology to enhance reading instruction.

"Our review extends the work of the National Reading Panel in this area. We organize our analysis in terms of the five major building blocks of effective reading instruction described above. For each component, we summarize some of the research-based teaching recommendations, potential uses of technology to support these recommendations, and currently available research on these uses of technology. The teaching recommendations presented here are based largely on the *Put Reading First: The Research Building Blocks for Teaching Children to Read* report (Armbruster and Osborn, 2001), which summarizes the implications of the National Reading Panel report for classroom practices. A concrete set of examples linking teaching recommendations and potential uses of technology are summarized in the table in Appendix A.

"We use the NRP criteria of including only those research studies that examined instructional uses of technology and tested these uses with experimental or quasi-experimental methods. However, we broaden the reviews to include studies of special education populations reading at the K–6 level that meet the research quality criteria. Our review covers research published from 1987 to 2002, therefore including studies that were not included in the NRP review. We did exclude studies in which we considered the technology to be obsolete and therefore lacking relevance to decisions about currently available technologies. For example, early speech recognition technologies were so limited and unreliable, that research on these should not be used to inform decisions about the use of the far more powerful speech recognition technologies available today. The list of resources reviewed is provided in Appendix B." (pp. 5–6)

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Technology and Students' Motivation

"One additional benefit of computer-supported instruction is the effect technology may have on students' motivation to learn and to read. A study of kindergarten students using hypermedia-based software to teach letter recognition found that, although at-risk readers benefited the most from the software, all students were enthusiastic about using the computers and were motivated to explore and learn from the software (Boone, Higgins et al 1996). Presented with comparable paper and electronic resources, kindergarten and first-grade students preferred to wait for an opportunity to use the electronic version, even if a print version was immediately available (Mitchell & Fox 2001). An earlier study of such motivation found that the enthusiasm for learning in the target content areas persists even after the computers are taken away (Moxley & Warash 1990-1991).

"Older students also showed an enthusiasm for using reading software, even when they were otherwise reluctant to work on the reading concepts the software targeted. One research team posited that there might exist a unique and distinct group of students who responded to the software and made significant gains, but who would not have responded to teacher intervention (Nicolson, Fawcett, & Nicolson, 2000). Sixth-grade students assessing a hypermedia authoring project cited greater control over the nature of the work as a result of the technology as one of the most satisfying aspects of using the project (Finkelman & McMunn 1995). Similarly, third-grade students reflecting on CD-ROM storybooks noted that they especially liked the pronunciation features and definitions; they also recognized that the animations and sounds could both enhance and interfere with comprehension (Matthew 1996). With upper-elementary children, a study of hypermedia use in mainstream fourth- and fifth-grade classrooms found a number of secondary benefits in addition to students' gains in reading abilities and willingness to work collaboratively (Reinking & Watkins 1996). Classroom teachers reported marked increases in several relevant areas: the number of hours spent on recreational reading, the number of students holding library cards, and the number of students ordering summer book club memberships, among others. Parents of the students also reported that their children were more enthusiastic about reading. A similar project in six California school districts used a literacy program designed to teach reading through writing and reported instructional benefits for all students, including learning-disabled students and second-language learners. Again, parents reported increased reading and writing at home, and teachers and principals rated the technology highly (Casey 1994).

"Taken together, these studies suggest that the increased flexibility, supports, responsiveness to students, and visual attractiveness of computer-presented hypertext and hypermedia may be valuable tools to help increase students' motivation to read.

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Integrated Learning Systems

"The phrase *Integrated Learning System* (ILS) "is used to describe software programs that provide tutorial instruction in basic skill areas at several grade levels while keeping extensive records of student progress on networked computer systems. ILSs manage student registration, assign students to classes or classrooms, prepare reports on student progress for teachers, and manage student progress toward intended outcomes or objections" (Kulik, 2003). ILS software can include many of the capabilities of computers to support reading instruction described above, but how many capabilities are included, and how well they are designed, depends upon the particular system.

"Kulik (2003) provides a recent summary of the research on ILS systems for reading instruction. He identified nine controlled evaluations, and finds that they show that the ILSs used did not result in significant improvements in reading scores: "The median effect of ILS instruction in the nine studies was an increase in reading scores of only 0.06 standard deviations, a trivial increment." That is, reading scores of ILS and control groups were nearly identical. This is consistent with the conclusion of an earlier review of ILS effectiveness by Becker (1994). However, Kulik also points out that the effect of ILSs might be much stronger if these systems were used as the developers planned. Students typically spend only 15% to 30% of the recommended amount of time on ILS instruction.

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Reading Management and Assessment Tools

"A number of products are designed to record the books that students read, provide rewards that motivate students to read more, provide tests to assess students' comprehension, and provide useful data to teachers about individual students and the overall class. Topping (1999) summarizes the research on the mostly widely used of these products, Accelerated Reader, while Labbo (1999) raises important questions about this research. While Topping notes that the research generally reports positive results, he also notes that most of the research does not meet the NRP research quality criteria and therefore does not provide evidence of causal connections between the use of the software tools and impact on students' reading. Topping concludes his analysis by emphasizing that the critical factors are whether the teachers receive adequate professional development in the effective use of the technology and then implement it well in their classrooms, not simply the availability of the technology.

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Word Processing and Reading Instruction

"Instruction in reading and writing is often intertwined. Since both are dependent upon students' abilities to work with written language, they tend to develop together and reinforce each other. In fact, some approaches blend reading and writing, using children's own writing as part of reading instruction. In addition, writing is a path to reinforcing phonics skills and increasing vocabulary. Therefore, research on the use of technology to enhance writing instruction at the elementary level is also relevant in this report.

"A meta-analysis on technology and writing instruction by Goldberg, Russell and Cook (2003), summarizes the research findings in this area. After identifying 99 research articles published from 1992–2002, they determined that 26 met their standards for research, which were consistent with those of the National Reading Panel.

"This meta-analysis focused on the impact of the technology on three major variables in children's writing: quantity of writing, quality of writing, and frequency of revisions during the writing processes. In each case, the studies reviewed compared these variables for students who used word processors in writing instruction and those who did not. The key findings show that students who write with word processors, as compared to students who write with pencil and paper, tend to produce longer and higher quality passages, and make more changes to their writing between drafts. The differences in quantity and quality were larger at the middle and high school levels than at the elementary level.

"These conclusions are consistent with another recent summary of the research by Kulik (2003), who concludes "For two decades, then, evaluation studies have been reporting that students who use word processors for writing compositions demonstrate superior writing skills in later follow-up tests of writing skills." Kulik also points out that while the effects are educationally meaningful, they are not usually dramatic in size, with typical studies showing an increase of about 0.3 standard deviations, equivalent to an increase from the 50th to the 62nd percentile on a writing test. However, the size of the effect may increase as the technology becomes more readily available, the software improves, and teachers learn more about using word processing effectively in teaching children to read and write." (pp. 15–17)

Top

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Reading Instruction, Grades 4–6

Practices ELL Overview

This section presents seven best practices for reading instruction in grades 4–6. Building upon the reading instruction practices for grades K–3, these practices support students at this critical time period when they are focusing on deriving meaning from text. While older elementary students can work independently, it is important for teachers to demonstrate how to comprehend more advanced reading material, provide ample time for students to practice these reading comprehension strategies, and assess student progress to inform their instruction. As you read these practices, consider how they overlap with this spotlight's grade K–6 practices in writing, speaking, and listening.

- Teachers are good role models for reading.
- Teachers provide a variety of daily opportunities for students to practice reading and to share what they have learned.
- Teachers demonstrate reading comprehension strategies that emphasize the importance of deriving meaning from text.
- Teachers promote reading as a tool for learning content.
- Teachers provide ample opportunities for students to choose from a wide variety of reading material.
- Teachers expand students' vocabulary through systematic, explicit instruction.
- Teachers regularly assess students' reading progress and refine their instruction based on assessment results.

ELL Overview

English language learners (ELLs) at the intermediate grades in elementary school display a wide range of language and literacy levels. For some students, English reading is close to grade level, while others are beginners. Some students are highly literate in their primary or home language, but not in English. ELL students who have not yet learned to read in their primary or home language face the enormous challenge of acquiring the initial concepts and skills of literacy in English, a language they have not fully mastered. Others who have already developed literacy and academic skills in their home languages must apply their literacy knowledge to the task of reading English, with its distinct sound system, spelling patterns, vocabulary, and sentence structure. ELLs often have to make meaning from texts that require cultural knowledge different from their own. Finally, many ELLs find reading difficult because they have not previously experienced consistent schooling or appropriate instruction.

The key is to tailor reading instruction. Teachers of ELLs in grades 4–6 often face the challenge of providing reading instruction at a more basic level than expected while at the same time acknowledging students' age and maturity. To help build and maintain students' self-esteem, teachers can avoid books and activities that seem "babyish."

It is important to realize that many ELLs may be under stress. Newcomers are trying hard to understand and function well in an unfamiliar environment, wanting (like all children) to grow more

competent, yet finding themselves in a new environment where they are less competent. ELLs who have been in an English-speaking environment for a long time may feel frustrated that they still cannot read with fluency and comprehension. These students need skillful, dedicated teachers who take time to know them, believe in their abilities, and are well informed about ELL instructional strategies.

Teachers of all students will find useful insights and strategies in the sections **Implications for ELLs** and **Strategies for Supporting ELLs** below each practice under **What Is It?**.

Teachers are good role models for reading.

What Is It?
Implications for ELLs
Strategies for Supporting ELLs
Glimpse of the Classroom
Questions to Think About

What Is It?

As students in grades 4–6 become more independent learners, it is important for teachers to model and support higher level reading. Being a good role model means that teachers share their reading habits and interests with their students and model effective reading strategies and behaviors. First and foremost, teachers need to be avid readers themselves. Students are eager to know what and how much their teachers are reading on their own time.

An especially powerful way for teachers to model good reading is to show their own enjoyment of quality literature by reading aloud to their students. In daily read-alouds, teachers can pique student interest in old favorites and in new books (Newbery Award-winning books are usually popular in grades 4–6). Older elementary school students still love to hear adults read aloud.

Students also benefit from learning that expert readers think about their reading. Teachers can demonstrate how mature readers ask questions and make predictions before they read and how they continue to reflect during and after reading. By describing and revealing their own thinking processes to students as they read aloud, teachers can "make reading visible." Effective teachers explain and model specific reading strategies, and then offer guidance as needed while students practice first with peers and then independently. Through this combination of modeling and guided student practice, teachers gradually release control and increase student independence in learning.

Implications for ELLs

Reading aloud to English language learners (ELLs) in grades 4–6 is an excellent way to model higher level reading. Read-alouds provide students with access to interesting and age-appropriate materials that might be too difficult for them to read independently. When teachers read aloud, it exposes ELLs to the sounds, structural patterns, and vocabulary of English as well as to different literary styles and genres.

Strategies for Supporting ELLs

At the intermediate grades in elementary school, beginning English language learners (ELLs) can benefit from listening to read-alouds. Teachers can read picture books, using the illustrations to develop vocabulary and to make story meaning clear. This works best in contexts where ELLs will not be self-conscious or fearful that more proficient students will tease them about reading "baby books." One such context might be a class project doing a "study" of children's literature.

Effective teachers can use read-alouds of chapter books as opportunities for language development. Before reading each new chapter, teachers and students review and summarize the previous chapters, making predictions about what will happen next. This provides multiple opportunities to understand, hear, and practice the language of the story.

To learn more about the countries, languages, and cultures of their students, teachers can read culturally specific books. Students may be excited to see a book about Mexican music, Cambodian temples, Nigerian legends, or a Lithuanian inventor on their teacher's desk. When teachers read such books, they demonstrate interest in and respect for students' backgrounds. In addition, this creates an opportunity for conversations in which ELLs can demonstrate that they possess valuable background knowledge. (It is also important not to assume that ELLs are experts on all topics relating to their culture.) To make the hidden cognitive processes of reading and writing more accessible to ELLs, teachers orally narrate their thoughts and indicate how they are using reading strategies.

Effective teachers say things like:

- I'm looking at the picture of the palm trees on the cover of this book, and I'm thinking that the setting of the story is a tropical place.
- I wonder where it is.
- I'm wondering why that boy on the cover looks so sad.
- The title makes me think that...
- I don't understand that sentence I just read, so I'm going to read it again and see if it makes more sense.
- I'm going to tell my story through letters. I'm going to have my character write letters to her grandma, like in *Dear Mr. Henshaw*. The title of my story will be *Dear Grandma, Far Away*.

Glimpse of the Classroom

Mrs. C. is talking with her fourth graders about "thinking about your reading." A chart next to her says *Reading Is Thinking*. She begins the lesson by sharing her own examples.

"Sometimes I think about how the book makes me feel. I often do a lot of thinking aloud, and sometimes I think in my head. I was thinking about the story, *Thank You, Mr. Faulkner*. I felt for Tricia when the other children were making fun of her. I felt angry at them. When I was reading the *Lotta* book, I did some predicting about Caroline's problem. What would happen? Sometimes I think about what I like. Sometimes I think about the author's language—whether I liked the way she described something. You might think about the way it reminds you of someone.

"Today, I've left two post-its on your desk so you can find two spots in your book that you respond to. You will make a note about your response and mark the two passages in your books with the post-it. Later we will share these passages and our responses with each other."

She invites the students to list things to think about while reading. They volunteer ideas.

"Something interesting—funny," says one student.

"Something you wonder about—I wonder why the character did that," offers another.

"Something that makes you nervous, scared."

"Excited."

"Feel badly."

"Loved the ending enough to share it with others."

"Makes you sad."

"Yes," responds Mrs. C. "I've read books that made me cry. I don't even *know* the people in the book, but the author has made me so interested in the character and describes the characters so well that if something sad happens, I cry, and I think to myself, 'This is ridiculous; they are not even people I know.' But you feel like you know the character. Reading can do that to you."

Mrs. C. writes the list on the board, and says, "This is an excellent list. We may even add to it later when we notice more things during our reading."

She repeats the instructions for the assignment, and students return to their desks to read and to find passages that relate to items on the list.

Mrs. C. has modeled and practiced "thinking about reading" together with her class so that students will be able to work on their own.

Questions to Think About

1. What are some effective ways for teachers to share their reading interests with their students?
2. In addition to read-alouds, what other activities can teachers use to model good reading skills and habits?
3. What are some helpful resources and criteria for teachers to use in compiling a list of the best read-alouds for each grade level--4, 5, and 6?

Story Summaries

The Story Workshop" Approach

"Reading and writing are taught equally in this course. . . Reading became easier, more enjoyable, and writing was given a voice with power. . . [Both] improved so dramatically, scores in other subjects soared," said one fourth-grade public school teacher after a 10-week Story Workshop program. Originated and developed by John Schultz and conducted in diverse classes from grade school to grad school, the Story Workshop approach emphasizes reading, writing, speaking, listening, and thinking relationships. This story describes the approach, illustrated with linked video segments of actual classroom experiences with elementary school students. Because of the way in which this approach integrates oral telling, reading, and writing skills into classroom activities, it connects to multiple practices in the elementary literacy spotlight (see practices list).

Research Summary

Research Supporting the Practice
General Research on ELL Reading Instruction

Research Supporting the Practice

Educational psychologists inform us that modeling or exposure to a good example teaches children behaviors better than rewards or punishments do. Simply by being avid and enthusiastic readers themselves, parents and teachers can show children how to be good readers. For this reason, Duffy (1998) concluded that, in addition to knowledge of methods, teachers must develop and exhibit a sense of themselves as readers.

Greenleaf and Schoenbach (2001) refer to the metaphor of the "cognitive apprenticeship," in which an expert draws on his or her expertise to model, direct, support, and shape the apprentice's growing repertoire of practice. Teacher and student learn by doing together. Palincsar and Brown (1984) showed how students' reading comprehension improved at a faster rate when teachers modeled literacy strategies that their students followed.

The most rigorous form of modeling suggests that teachers need to tailor modeling to student needs while demonstrating and scaffolding strategies. For decades, literacy researchers have explored transactional strategies instruction. Rather than simply modeling literacy strategies that the reading passage seems to call for, teachers model specific strategies in response to student needs that teachers notice during instruction (Pressley, 2000). A number of researchers (Barr, 1984; Bond & Dykstra, 1967; Pearson, 1997; Pressley, 2000; Stahl & Miller, 1989) have confirmed superior reading comprehension results when teachers used a combination of as-needed strategy modeling, direct instruction, and guided practice.

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General Research on ELL Reading Instruction

There is general agreement that becoming a proficient reader in a second language is a difficult task. Snow, Burns, and Griffin (1998) and August and Hakuta (1997) underscore the enormous cognitive challenge faced by young ELLs who must acquire oral and literacy skills in English simultaneously. ELLs who are already literate in a home language are able to transfer some of their skills for use in English reading (Garcia, 2000), but that does not imply that learning to read well in English will be an easy task. Reading involves the use of both "higher level cognitive knowledge, ... abilities... and learning strategies," as well as "low level linguistic knowledge and processing strategies (Birch 2002, p. x.) Throughout the elementary grades, ELLs are likely to encounter difficulties with both "high" and "low" levels of the reading process, especially as they tackle increasingly complex readings (Droop & Verhoeven, 1998).

Knowledge of the relationships between sounds and letters is essential for learning to read English (Ehri, 1998). Verhoeven's (1999) work cautions teachers that it is unrealistic to expect ELLs to decode words independently until they are familiar with the sound system of English. To help ELLs become adept at using sound-letter relationships, Birch (2002) recommends practice in a variety of tasks: identifying a particular phoneme in words, discriminating between that phoneme and similar ones, linking the sound to the printed letter, visually discriminating the letter from other visually similar letters, recognizing and printing the letter in both upper and lowercase forms, finding the letter at the beginnings and endings of words alone and in connected text, and drawing things that begin with the letter and labeling them (p. 72). Other teaching suggestions include: playing games with rhyming words and alliterative words to develop students' awareness of how sounds combine to form words (Antunez, 2002; Kaufman & Franco, 2004), and, in the case of Spanish-speaking ELLs, building upon the similarities and differences between the sound systems of the two languages (Helman, 2004).

Many researchers point out the difficulty of comprehending text when one has a limited vocabulary (Verhallen & Schoonen, 1993; Garcia, 1991; McLaughlin, 1993; Jimenez, Garcia, & Pearson, 1995, 1996). ELLs of any age often know too few words or only a single meaning for a word. McLaughlin et al. (2004) have had promising results in increasing ELLs' vocabulary knowledge through an intervention that pre-selected challenging and high-utility words from a reading selection. The intervention involved direct teaching of word meanings; teaching and raising awareness of words with multiple meanings; systemic teaching of word analysis skills including roots and affixes; engaging students in word games, riddles, and other activities designed to promote deeper understanding and use of the words in new and meaningful contexts; and finding the words outside of school. The intervention also focused on increasing Latino students' awareness of Spanish/English cognate words and ability to use cognate recognition as a legitimate and productive comprehension strategy.

Several researchers have documented that ELLs benefit from cognate recognition training (Garc'a & Nagy, 1993; Durgunoglu et al., 1993). Kress (2002) contains a useful reference list of Spanish-English cognates. Similarly, Au (1993), Nagy (1988), Dixon and Nessel (1983), and others recommend that teachers integrate vocabulary instruction with content instruction and with story reading. Hickman et al. (2004) describe a successful approach to teaching vocabulary to primary-grade ELLs during storybook reading. The approach involves careful selection of several storybooks or informational texts that focus on a theme of interest to the students in the class and are at a reading level above students' grade level. Teachers carefully select from the texts those vocabulary words which students could encounter and use in other contexts. Over the course of five days, the class previews the story and the vocabulary words, and the story is read aloud, discussed, re-read, and summarized. Discussions focus on using the vocabulary words and encouraging children to relate these words to their own life experiences.

Carrell and Eisterhold (1988) and Carrell (1983, 1984) have demonstrated the positive impact that prior knowledge of a topic or situational context has on ELLs' reading comprehension. However, stories and other texts often contain cultural contexts and assumptions that are unfamiliar to young ELLs and make comprehension difficult or impossible. Researchers advise teachers to support comprehension before students read by eliciting and building upon ELLs' prior knowledge and experiences relevant to story theme, setting, and content. Many researchers also support the value of teaching content reading strategies such as previewing a chapter before reading it and formulating questions, self-monitoring, and using imagery during reading (Carasquillo et al., 2004; Chamot & O'Malley, 1994; Echeverria et al., 2000; Schifini, 1994). Researchers agree that teachers should model and support comprehension before, during, and after reading by teaching text structures; using graphic organizers such as Venn diagrams, cause and effect charts, and story maps; and creating study guides that students can complete (Carasquillo et al., 2004).

One recommended approach to increase comprehension and engagement is the use of culturally relevant texts and multicultural literature (Au, 1998, 1993; Barrera, 1992; Harris, 1994). Larrick's 1965 landmark article, "The All-White World of Children's Books" (reprinted in Muse, 1997) pointed out that minority children had few opportunities to read about characters like themselves or see themselves in these books. In Larrick's review, these children's books often depicted those minority characters in offensive or demeaning ways. More recently, Singer and Smith (2003) point out that

Multicultural children's literature provides self-affirmation for readers when it conveys that people like themselves have lives worth knowing about and worth sharing with others (Bishop, 1997; Tenorio, 1994). This is particularly significant for readers who are members of marginalized groups (p.17).

Daphne Muse's book, *Multicultural Resources for Young Readers* (1997), contains an extensive annotated bibliography of such literature likely to engage ELLs readers and to build upon their experiences and prior knowledge.

Students' knowledge and experience are the starting points for The Language Experience Approach to reading, used with beginning English readers of all ages (Moustafa, 1987; Tharp & Gallimore, 1989; Tinajero & Calderon, 1988). Through questioning, teachers prompt students to speak about their individual or in-class experiences. The teacher writes down students' oral narratives, and the resulting text becomes the basis of reading instruction. Often teachers plan a group activity (e.g., taking a walk) to provide a common experiential base for reading.

Hoggard's 1996 review of the "critical attributes of classroom culture" for ESL literacy learners includes "the teacher as guide," "meaningful literacy experiences, a sense of ownership," "a community of learners," and "interactive classroom discourse" (pp. 5–9). Other researchers have also highlighted the importance of student participation in conversations that relate book themes to students' personal experiences and to other books. The instructional conversations (IC) approach is one way of structuring such book-centered interactions. Teachers promote general participation in small-group discussion by not calling on children but waiting for them to volunteer to speak, by responding to student contributions, and by encouraging students to connect their comments to those of previous speakers and build upon what they said (Rueda et al., 1992; Saunders & Goldenberg, 1999). IC also promotes skimming, scanning, and careful reading by requiring students to find text passages that support their opinions and interpretations (Goldenberg, 1991, 1992/1993; Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1990). Literature circles are another discussion format that promotes comprehension and academic language in a social context. Ruby (2003) discusses their effectiveness when properly scaffolded for English language learners. Gordon (2003) offers another good example of how teachers can effectively use literature response journals with English language learners.

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Related Web Resources

Reading to Learn: A Classroom Guide to Reading Strategy Instruction (0)
The Strategic Literacy Initiative: Resources for Teachers (0)

Teachers provide a variety of daily opportunities for students to practice reading and to share what they have learned.

What Is It?
Implications for ELLs
Strategies for Supporting ELLs
Glimpse of the Classroom
Questions to Think About

What Is It?

The more students read, the more proficient they become. If teachers expect students to become avid and fluent readers, teachers must provide frequent opportunities for students to read and to discuss their reading during the school day.

To support more class time for reading in combination with other literacy activities, it is important to implement school-wide scheduling changes that allow for uninterrupted blocks of literacy activity, extending the time for language arts to at least 90 minutes daily.

To make self-selected reading a purposeful and productive part of instruction, teachers help students manage their own recordkeeping of independent work. Students keep logs of their reading, recording book titles, authors, genres, pages read, and dates completed. Effective teachers guide students on how to select appropriate books, when to abandon an inappropriate book, and how to share their readings with peers. Students are more likely to read actively and thoroughly when striving to understand something about which they are curious or that reflects their interests, cultures, and experiences.

Effective teachers also schedule individual conferences with students at least once per week. During that time, teachers can check student comprehension and monitor recordkeeping. Many teachers also require students to respond in writing to what they have been reading. In this way, the conference provides an opportunity to determine student progress in writing ability.

In addition to allocating time for self-selected reading, teachers can provide many and varied opportunities for student-led conversations about books. By increasing the social component of class activities, teachers also increase student motivation. Among the most popular activities are book talks, literature circles, reciprocal teaching, and jigsaw reading.

Book talks are a time for students to discuss their favorite books, especially those which they have read during free reading time. Some teachers call this Wonderfully Exciting Books or WEB. This activity allows students to discuss what they liked or disliked about particular books and makes students aware of new books as well as old favorites. Hearing a peer describe a favorite book is a powerful incentive to read because students want to share the same experience.

Holding literature circles is another popular activity that promotes enjoyable sharing and discussion of recently read books. In the literature circle, all students in the group read the same book. Each student

has an assigned task such as the Story Summarizer, the Word Wizard, the Artful Artist, etc. When the literature circle meets, each student has an opportunity to present his or her assigned task to the other members of the group. While literature circles help develop speaking skills, they also broaden students' conceptions of how mature readers think and talk about books.

Reciprocal teaching is an effective activity for groups of students to share what they have learned with each other and to hone reading skills. This activity is often described as taking turns being the teacher. In reciprocal teaching, a group of students engage in a process where students read the same printed material but stop at regular intervals to ask questions, summarize, predict, and clarify. Teachers guide reciprocal teaching procedures until students are able to work independently within a group.

Jigsaw reading is a cooperative learning activity that engages students in sharing, discussing, and synthesizing information. Students read different sections of a single text or different articles on related subjects and then pool their information to accomplish a task such as filling in a chart, preparing an oral presentation, or solving a problem. Teachers can provide texts at different levels of difficulty to enable students at a range of reading levels to collaborate.

It is important for teachers in grades 4–6 to think in terms of developing their students into lifelong readers. Students need time to read independently during the school day as well as outside of school. The route to fluency and comprehension is to read, read, read.

Implications for ELLs

English language learners (ELLs) benefit from opportunities to read self-selected books that interest them and academic books that are at appropriate levels. Sometimes easy books provide enjoyment, feelings of competency, and opportunities to read fluently. However, a steady diet of easy books may not challenge thinking or provide the new vocabulary or more complex language structures that ELLs need for language development. On the other hand, when books are too difficult, there is the risk that students will become discouraged and give up trying to read these books independently and silently. These same books may be good choices for guided reading or reciprocal reading where teachers provide more support for comprehension.

Strategies for Supporting ELLs

Books on tape can serve as tools for supporting beginning English language learners (ELLs) as they tackle difficult texts. Students can listen to each chapter on tape either before reading or while reading and following along in their books. Books on tape are also helpful to intermediate ELLs who are tackling difficult texts.

In addition, ELLs can become familiar with content concepts and vocabulary by looking at highly illustrated informational books, such as the Eyewitness series of books on science, nature, and history topics.

As an alternative to silent reading, ELLs benefit from one-on-one opportunities to read aloud with a teacher or tutor who can give them encouragement, feedback, and individualized help. Knowing that it may be difficult or intimidating for ELLs to express their thoughts about their reading, effective teachers assign hands-on book response projects, such as making posters, mobiles, and dioramas, which allow ELLs to demonstrate artistic and comprehension skills. Group book response projects promote communication, cooperation, and a variety of skills.

When facilitating book discussions with ELLs, some teachers use the Instructional Conversation (IC) approach (Goldenberg, 1991). Instructional Conversations focus on an engaging theme from the reading, such as the meaning of friendship. Instructional Conversations activate background knowledge, promote more complex language expression, and encourage students to identify text-based evidence to support their opinions. During Instructional Conversations, teachers ask fewer "known-answer" questions, respond thoughtfully to student contributions, and encourage students to respond to and build upon each other's remarks.

Glimpse of the Classroom

Today, Mrs. B.'s fourth-grade students are meeting in literature circles. Mrs. B. has selected a different book for each small group of students to read and discuss. Students read silently from the book (a required number of pages each day) and do a "job of the day." Afterward, they report back to their groups to show how they have carried out their jobs. The literature circles operate independently of the teacher.

Enrique is the student facilitator of his group, and these students clearly understand how to work together respectfully. Janelle's job is to select an interesting passage and to read it to the group. She takes keen pleasure in having an audience. Other members of the group listen attentively to her reading. Other jobs involve employing vocabulary-building strategies and using graphic organizers such as a Venn diagram to compare two characters.

During class, Mrs. B.'s students also have an opportunity to read a self-selected book. They keep reading logs and write weekly about the connections that they have made with the text. Mrs. B. holds short book conferences with individual students. Although conferences are only 10 minutes long, students look forward to the important one-on-one time that they have with their teacher. During the conference, students share story elements that they have found while reading. Mrs. B. asks students to read a favorite passage aloud, and then she keeps a running record of any difficulties or miscues in their oral reading.

In any class time or literacy block, Mrs. B. mixes self-directed and student-directed activities. In addition to providing small-group and individual activities, she meets frequently with the whole class to provide information about new books. Students often share their observations about books with each other in large-group discussion. In one class project, students made a bulletin board to display their favorite books; they photocopied the book covers and affixed post-it notes with their comments on the cover. Last week Mrs. B. convened a large group to fine-tune students' reciprocal teaching procedures, and yesterday Mrs. B. introduced the concept of literary genre to the same group. The whole class will gather for culminating activities such as student presentations and performances that grow out of their work with texts. They enjoy the festive, celebratory energy of their large-group activities. The school year has just begun, and Mrs. B.'s class is off to a productive and enthusiastic start.

Questions to Think About

1. How can free reading time be scheduled into an already packed school day?
2. What are some innovative, motivating ways for students to share books that they have read?
3. How can teachers at the same grade level support each other when implementing literature circles in their classrooms?
4. What kinds of reading records should students maintain? What kinds of records should

teachers maintain? How can these records be used most profitably with students' caregivers?

Story Summaries

The Story Workshop" Approach

"Reading and writing are taught equally in this course. . . Reading became easier, more enjoyable, and writing was given a voice with power. . . [Both] improved so dramatically, scores in other subjects soared," said one fourth-grade public school teacher after a 10-week Story Workshop program. Originated and developed by John Schultz and conducted in diverse classes from grade school to grad school, the Story Workshop approach emphasizes reading, writing, speaking, listening, and thinking relationships. This story describes the approach, illustrated with linked video segments of actual classroom experiences with elementary school students. Because of the way in which this approach integrates oral telling, reading, and writing skills into classroom activities, it connects to multiple practices in the elementary literacy spotlight (see practices list).

Research Summary

Research Supporting the Practice General Research on ELL Reading Instruction

Research Supporting the Practice

Teachers can play a powerful role in increasing the amount that students read by providing ample time and opportunities for reading and by structuring activities that stimulate optimal engagement and motivation.

Research has shown the importance of the quality of reading comprehension instruction that students receive and the amount of reading that students do inside and outside of class. In 1979, Delores Durkin published an often-cited study demonstrating that there was little, if any, reading comprehension instruction happening in most classrooms and that the quality of what did occur amounted to "mentioning" rather than teaching. Durkin observed 11 minutes devoted to comprehension instruction out of 4,000 minutes of classroom instruction observation (Durkin, 1979). More recently, researchers (e.g., Beck et al., 1989; Pressley & Wharton-McDonald, 1998) have found a dearth of reading comprehension instruction in most elementary classrooms, signifying that instruction in reading comprehension had not responded to the Durkin evidence. According to Kati Haycock (2000) of the Education Trust, American middle-grade students still do surprisingly little reading in school and for homework. Only about one in seven read more than 20 pages daily, and about one in seven read 16 to 20 pages daily (p. 57).

Through modeling and scaffolding, teachers can facilitate and shape effective student literature discussions—whether those discussions take the form of reciprocal teaching, jigsaw readings, literature circles, or other approaches. As Wollman-Bonilla (1994) demonstrated, students need structured lessons on how discussion groups operate. Eeds and Wells (1989) found that, when teachers actively participated in literature discussions that were relevant to students' experiences and

to their existing knowledge, students were able to make personal connections with what they read.

A number of research studies support instruction that emphasizes student collaboration, social interaction, and dialogue during discussion of text; activities of this nature provide excellent learning opportunities for all students at this age and are especially valuable to culturally and linguistically diverse learners (Garcia, 1993; Goatley et al., 1995; McCarty et al., 1991; McCollum, 1989; McLaughlin, 1989; Raphael et al., 1996; Weisner et al., 1988; Yamauchi &Tharp, 1995).

Almasi et al. (2001) cite a body of reading research attesting to the specific benefits of peer discussion of text for cognitive, social, and affective development: Almasi, 1995; Alpert, 1987; Alvermann et al., 1990; Eeds &Wells, 1989; Goatley et al., 1995; Leal, 1992; Many &Wiseman, 1992; Martinez et al., 1992; McGee, 1992; O'Flahavan, 1989; and Slavin, 1990. Alvermann et al. (1990) report that students themselves find peer discussion valuable in helping them to understand print.

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One recommended approach to increase comprehension and engagement is the use of culturally relevant texts and multicultural literature (Au, 1998, 1993; Barrera, 1992; Harris, 1994). Larrick's 1965 landmark article, "The All-White World of Children's Books" (reprinted in Muse, 1997) pointed out that minority children had few opportunities to read about characters like themselves or see themselves in these books. In Larrick's review, these children's books often depicted those minority characters in offensive or demeaning ways. More recently, Singer and Smith (2003) point out that

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Related Web Resources

The Teacher's Workshop: Professional Development Resources for Teachers (0)

Teachers promote reading as a tool for learning content.

What Is It?
Implications for ELLs
Strategies for Supporting ELLs
Glimpse of the Classroom
Questions to Think About

What Is It?

Beginning in grade 4 and continuing through high school and college, the demands for strong literacy skills expand exponentially. To learn increasingly complex subject matter and meet curricular requirements, students must develop strong reading skills. At the intermediate grades in elementary school, reading comprehension moves to the foreground. Teachers place greater emphasis on reading for understanding as students encounter a variety of subject matter and texts. In addition, writing and reading are interconnected through writing activities that help students understand content. With the increase in content material comes a greater number of new concepts and a need for a broader reading vocabulary. For this reason, it is important that teachers stress the specialized language of subject areas that students may not have previously encountered.

In the intermediate grades, reading materials include more expository texts and complex narratives. As students tackle content-area text, they need to develop a repertoire of strategies for understanding various reading materials. For both narrative and expository texts, students need to develop their knowledge of text structures. For challenging texts, it is important to learn how to visually "map" or organize information. Effective teachers devote class time to building students' skills in reading charts, tables, and graphs. To support their ideas, students learn to identify key facts from their readings in social studies, science, language arts, and mathematics.

Effective teachers also make a conscious effort to expand their students' understanding of key words. They plan engaging vocabulary-building exercises relevant to the content material being studied. Classes actively explore the study of affixes and word origins, and activities reinforce the meaning of new words. During read-alouds, teachers take time to discuss new vocabulary and develop students' concepts of words. Teachers can model how to select key vocabulary words and have students select their own vocabulary words. In addition, teachers may choose to use activities that allow students to play the roles of teacher, such as reciprocal teaching or Question the Author, to increase student engagement in learning. (For more information, see the practice on vocabulary building.)

Implications for ELLs

English language learners (ELLs) vary considerably in the vocabulary and the world knowledge that they bring to their reading. Beginners and students with little prior education may find certain content readings so difficult that they are unable to formulate questions or goals for reading.

Texts also vary in clarity, writing style, and in the authors' assumptions about the readers' prior

knowledge. Effective teachers select texts that are clearly written and well organized, with meaningful section headings and topic sentences that provide readers with a "road map" of what is to follow.

Strategies for Supporting ELLs

Effective teachers of English language learners (ELLs) support and scaffold students' content reading in a number of ways. These include activating and assessing students' prior knowledge of the topic through discussion; building upon students' knowledge through hands-on activities and visual media; preteaching words critical to the comprehension of main ideas; and providing a prereading "tour" of the text to examine its structure, section headings, guiding questions, pictures, and data displays.

Content reading procedures, such as SQ3R (Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review), DRTA (Directed Reading and Thinking Activity), and (GRP) Guided Reading Procedure can help students formulate questions about the topic. Students read more purposefully when they are looking for answers to their questions in the text. Effective teachers provide note-taking organizers such as cause-effect charts, time lines, T-lists, and Venn diagrams for students to fill in as or after they read. Three instructional approaches specifically addressing ELL content instruction are Sheltered Instruction (SI), Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE), and the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA).

It is important to look for reading and instructional materials that reflect students' backgrounds, languages, cultures, and local communities whenever possible. From these resources, students are motivated to choose reading and research topics that mirror their own interests and backgrounds.

Effective teachers assign tasks that require close reading of texts: for example, a letter or diary entry by a historical figure, a skit that takes place during a particular historical event, a travel brochure, or a matching game.

In addition, it is effective to model expository writing for students. As teachers and students read and write together, teachers point out structural and rhetorical features of written texts such as a thesis or argument, supporting evidence, introductions, conclusions, paragraph organization, and topic sentences.

Glimpse of the Classroom

This week, Mr. W. is introducing his fifth graders to a new Webquest (<http://webquest.org/>) on the Internet.

Walking down the hall to his classroom, Mr. W. explains to another teacher that he wants his students to see explicit relationships between their language arts skills and their ability to gain information from expository text. "The Webquest unit fits the fifth-grade social studies curriculum in our district," he continues, "and my class can gain computer experience by undertaking these guided lessons."

In this unit, students will read, write, and perform as they learn about immigration to the United States. Students are eager to work on their assignments because they have enjoyed previous Webquests. Mr. W. has selected "A New Life: Coming to America" (K. Carlson & D. Downs, 2000).

In class, Mr. W. supports all of the activities for this unit. Students find the lesson at the Web site and read:

"You belong to the American Players Acting Company, and your group has been selected to present a play for the Heritage Festival in Los Angeles. The play will be an original production that you will research, write, and perform. It needs to focus on a group of immigrants who arrive at the Ellis Island port of entry. You may depict their journey to America, their arrival, and how they were processed through Ellis Island. You also need to include your immigrants' thoughts and feelings as they view the Statue of Liberty for the first time. Please include three or more scenes to help depict the thoughts and feelings of your immigrants as they struggle to make a new life for themselves.

"To complete this assignment, you will be asked to perform six tasks.

- 1. Introduction to Immigration*
- 2. Immigration Identity*
- 3. Research Ellis Island*
- 4. An Immigrant's Story*
- 5. Write Your Play*
- 6. Perform Your Play*

See also:

What You Learned

Extra credit activities

Evaluation work sheet

Each task is designed to help you collect information on immigration and guide you through the process of researching, writing, and performing your play. Please read each task very carefully and follow all of the directions. Make sure that you write down ideas for your play as you move through the tasks. Keep notes and stay organized. Above all, have fun! I look forward to seeing you on opening night!"
 (<http://hale.pepperdine.edu/~klwehner/A%20New%20Life.htm>)

The prospect of a final performance energizes each group's activity. However, Mr. W. still notices that he must work with the class as a whole and individually with each group to support progress. He models strategies, helps students when they seem bogged down in the research and writing, and clarifies the use of the various rubrics that students encounter throughout the unit. He breaks down phases of the unit to help each group with time and task management. As the final performance approaches, he is pleased to see that students have enlisted help from home with creating costumes and props, just in time for opening night.

Questions to Think About

1. What tools can teachers use to help students understand the structure of narrative text?
2. How can teachers model different strategies for gaining information from expository texts?
3. What are some engaging activities that might help to reinforce students' understanding of new concepts introduced in science, math, or social studies reading?

Research Summary

Research Supporting the Practice General Research on ELL Reading Instruction

Research Supporting the Practice

Researchers affirm the effectiveness of explicit literacy strategy instruction for improving content learning. The RAND report (Snow, 2002) states, "Teachers who provide comprehension strategy instruction that is deeply connected within the context of subject matter learning, such as history and science, foster comprehension development" (p. 39).

Guthrie et al. (1996) found gains in third- and fifth-grade students' literacy engagement after a yearlong science/language arts program that included explicit instruction in reading and writing strategies. Using science trade books, teachers emphasized the metacognitive strategies of searching for information, representing ideas graphically, planning, and evaluating (pp. 323–324). In a later study, Guthrie et al. (2001) studied the impact of integrated reading instruction on reading achievement in grades 4–6. They found that when students had more opportunities to read and teachers integrated literacy instruction, the result was increased reading comprehension, conceptual knowledge, problem-solving skills in science, and motivation to read.

Similarly, Roser and Keehn's study (2002) of older elementary readers linked social studies and literacy learning. Roser and Keehn studied students' progress as readers when given opportunities to participate in teacher-facilitated literacy routines such as teacher read-alouds, book clubs, and inquiry learning. In addition to book club reading and discussion formats, students kept reflective/responsive journals and took field trips. They charted the supporting evidence that they derived from various readings, and they debated their positions among peers. The researchers found that, by using these literacy strategies, students improved their understanding of the concepts and content. Postassessments showed that children's accurate notions increased and that their misconceptions were reduced by half. "No child held the same misconception he or she had at the unit's onset" (p. 424).

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General Research on ELL Reading Instruction

There is general agreement that becoming a proficient reader in a second language is a difficult task. Snow, Burns, and Griffin (1998) and August and Hakuta (1997) underscore the enormous cognitive challenge faced by young ELLs who must acquire oral and literacy skills in English simultaneously. ELLs who are already literate in a home language are able to transfer some of their skills for use in English reading (Garcia, 2000), but that does not imply that learning to read well in English will be an easy task. Reading involves the use of both "higher level cognitive knowledge, ... abilities... and learning strategies," as well as "low level linguistic knowledge and processing strategies (Birch 2002, p. x.) Throughout the elementary grades, ELLs are likely to encounter difficulties with both "high" and "low" levels of the reading process, especially as they tackle increasingly complex readings (Droop & Verhoeven, 1998).

Knowledge of the relationships between sounds and letters is essential for learning to read English (Ehri, 1998). Verhoeven's (1999) work cautions teachers that it is unrealistic to expect ELLs to decode words independently until they are familiar with the sound system of English. To help ELLs become adept at using sound-letter relationships, Birch (2002) recommends practice in a variety of tasks: identifying a particular phoneme in words, discriminating between that phoneme and similar ones, linking the sound to the printed letter, visually discriminating the letter from other visually similar letters, recognizing and printing the letter in both upper and lowercase forms, finding the letter at the beginnings and endings of words alone and in connected text, and drawing things that begin with the letter and labeling them (p. 72). Other teaching suggestions include: playing games with rhyming words and alliterative words to develop students' awareness of how sounds combine to form words (Antunez, 2002; Kaufman & Franco, 2004), and, in the case of Spanish-speaking ELLs, building upon the similarities and differences between the sound systems of the two languages (Helman, 2004).

Many researchers point out the difficulty of comprehending text when one has a limited vocabulary (Verhallen & Schoonen, 1993; Garcia, 1991; McLaughlin, 1993; Jimenez, Garcia, & Pearson, 1995, 1996). ELLs of any age often know too few words or only a single meaning for a word. McLaughlin et al. (2004) have had promising results in increasing ELLs' vocabulary knowledge through an intervention that pre-selected challenging and high-utility words from a reading selection. The intervention involved direct teaching of word meanings; teaching and raising awareness of words with multiple meanings; systemic teaching of word analysis skills including roots and affixes; engaging students in word games, riddles, and other activities designed to promote deeper understanding and use of the words in new and meaningful contexts; and finding the words outside of school. The intervention also focused on increasing Latino students' awareness of Spanish/English cognate words and ability to use cognate recognition as a legitimate and productive comprehension strategy.

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Jimenez, R. T., Garcia, G. E., & Pearson, P. D. (1995). Three children, two languages, and strategic reading: Case studies in bilingual/monolingual reading. *American Educational Research Journal*, 32(1), 67–97.

Related Web Resources

Ideas and Strategies for Teaching in the Content Areas (0)

Reading to Learn: A Classroom Guide to Reading Strategy Instruction (0)

Reciprocal Teaching (0)

Reciprocal Teaching: A Reading Strategy (0)
Teaching With Documents: Lesson Plans (0)

Teachers regularly assess students' reading progress and refine their instruction based on assessment results.

What Is It?
Implications for ELLs
Strategies for Supporting ELLs
Glimpse of the Classroom
Questions to Think About

What Is It?

Assessments play an essential role in helping teachers to guide students' growth as readers. Teachers have at their disposal a range of assessment tools that they can use to gather information about what their students have learned and what areas of reading to emphasize in class. Assessments range from informal classroom checks to commercially produced formal tests such as the Stanford Achievement Tests (SAT 9) and the New Standards Reference Exams (NSRE). The best forms of assessment are aligned with a set of standards so that each test item measures performance of a defined standard and can provide valuable information to teachers about their students' instructional needs. School, district, or national standards help teachers by providing a framework that defines clearly what students need to learn and when they need to learn it. When classroom instruction and assessments share the same standards and when teachers use assessment results to guide instruction, student learning is more likely to improve.

Effective teachers gauge students' *instructional reading levels* and plan ongoing instruction accordingly to promote growth in reading ability. A student's instructional reading level represents an optimal pairing of text difficulty with student ability, and it is indicated when a student reads with 95% accuracy in word recognition and answers roughly 75% of the comprehension questions correctly. As students progress, they continually outgrow their instructional levels and can tackle increasingly difficult text. Informal reading inventories and developmental reading assessments help teachers to determine each student's instructional reading level. Monitoring instructional reading levels can provide teachers with valuable information to guide text selection and to differentiate instruction.

In contrast to grade K–3 reading assessments, grade 4–6 informal classroom assessments usually emphasize student independence and reading for content information. As the amounts of assigned and self-selected reading increase, the individual reading conference becomes a critical way for the teacher to observe student progress. Teachers can also use student reading logs, response journals, or portfolios. With the emphasis in grades 4–6 on reading for information, effective teachers focus on assessing students' understanding and application of literacy strategies. Student-managed group assignments and collaborative efforts (including presentations, publications, and performances) are effective ways to demonstrate the use of literacy strategies. Assessments of student performance can involve well-constructed checklists and rubrics. With adequate modeling and scaffolding, intermediate-grade students are generally mature and self-sufficient enough to use rubrics to assess their own and their peers' work. Effective teachers balance the use of various assessment tools and use the results to tailor instruction to students' learning needs.

Implications for ELLs

Assessment procedures that are embedded in instruction can provide accurate information about how English Language Learners (ELLs) are progressing in the curriculum. These assessments highlight students' instructional needs and their accomplishments. Informal classroom-based assessment of comprehension offers a fuller picture of ELL readers, whose understandings are not always captured well by tests.

Periodic one-on-one reading conferences serve several purposes. First, they provide valuable experiences in which individual ELL students can interact with the teacher. Second, they are an opportunity for teachers to look for evidence that students understand what they read. It is important not to confuse a student's nonstandard grammar or accented speech with lack of comprehension. During conferences, teachers try to determine which comprehension strategies students are using and which strategies they need to learn to use. Effective teachers not only assess students' reading comprehension but also support comprehension through explanation, skillful questioning, and demonstration of reading strategies. Regular reading conferences enable teachers to pinpoint instructional needs for individuals as well as needs common to several students, and then to plan lessons to address these needs.

Strategies for Supporting ELLs

Reading aloud individually or in small groups can be a valuable experience for English language learners (ELLs). As ELLs read aloud, teachers make notes on students' miscues (misreadings) and on the strategies students use to "repair" (or reread and try to correct or clarify meaning). When necessary, teachers prompt students to use comprehension strategies such as rereading a sentence from the beginning, summarizing what has happened so far, predicting what the sentence might say, identifying and thinking about word parts, and looking for cognates (sister words across languages).

After ELLs finish reading, teachers ask them to retell or recall orally what they have read. For beginners, teachers may scaffold retelling with story picture cards, sentence strips, and incomplete sentences that students can finish. In cases where the teacher understands the student's home language, retelling in that language can serve as an excellent way to assess comprehension, as distinct from speaking ability. Teachers also ask ELLs comprehension questions at several levels of difficulty (e.g., literal, interpretive, generalizing, and personalizing).

Effective teachers make notes on what students do and do not understand, on what kinds of scaffolding and prompts students need in order to read and retell the story, and on students' vocabulary comprehension and word use. In reviewing their notes, teachers can determine which reading skills need strengthening and which prompts and scaffolds support comprehension. This information guides planning for future lessons that incorporate appropriate teaching strategies.

ELLs keep reading logs, recording information and reactions to the books that they have read. Teachers help students to keep reading logs by teaching, modeling, and practicing the use of graphic organizers in class.

Title:		Author:	
Characters	Setting	Problems	Solutions

Other kids should read it because...
Other kids should not read it because...

ELLs may be unaccustomed to assessing their own comprehension. It is helpful when teachers and classmates model this process.

To model, teachers and classmates say things like:

- The characters in this story are...
- This story takes place in...
- The problem in the story is...
- The character wants...
- Which words tell us that...

Glimpse of the Classroom

It is the beginning of the school year, and Mrs. B.'s fourth-grade students are starting to keep individual response journals. Mrs. B. reviews with the class how the journal should include a date, book title, genre, and level of difficulty. The journal will become a simple portfolio of each student's reading progress throughout the school year.

Mrs. B. has written a letter to her students. It introduces the three kinds of connections for which they will look (text-to-text, text-to-self, and text-to-world) and provides sample responses. Mrs. B. also reviews a rubric to use when writing a response to reading. The rubric provides a description of the desirable qualities for responding in writing: providing relevant evidence that makes a strong connection (to self, text, or world); expressing yourself and communicating ideas clearly; making few mistakes in writing conventions such as grammar, spelling, and punctuation; demonstrating self-awareness by expressing opinions and feelings; and following directions by responding to the teacher's questions or comments. Mrs. B. will respond in writing to each student's weekly journal entry.

When she first introduced her students to the daily 30-minute self-selected reading time, Mrs. B. announced that she would also hold 5-minute individual conferences. Today, as she conducts the conferences, she sometimes asks a student to read a favorite passage aloud, and she keeps running records, which is a system of coding that keeps track of how each student reads aloud. The students look comfortable with the routine that Mrs. B. has established around her conferences. During the conference with Candace, Mrs. B. asks questions from her teacher-made Story Element Cards. The questions on the cards have to do with genre, expository content, character, author, theme, mood, style, conflict, point of view, and the illustrations. Knowing what Mrs. B. wants her to focus on, Candace returns to her desk and begins her independent reading.

Questions to Think About

1. What information can authentic assessments provide that is not usually provided by standardized tests?
2. How might teachers explain to parents the different uses of formative and summative assessments of students' progress?

3. What useful information might teachers learn from students' own reading logs and response journals?

Story Summaries

Frank T. Simpson–Waverly Elementary School

The philosophy of the Frank T. Simpson–Waverly Elementary School is summed up in a banner that hangs at the school's entrance: *Listening to the voices of our children: Looking at the ordinary and seeing the extraordinary*. Despite the realities of serving the poorest and most crime-ridden neighborhoods in Hartford, Connecticut, the Frank T. Simpson–Waverly Elementary School has improved from a low-performing school to one of the top performers in the state over the last seven years. To do so, the principal, teachers, and student assessment team have focused their efforts on using student data to inform instruction. The U.S. Department of Education has recognized Simpson–Waverly as a 2003 Blue Ribbon School in its No Child Left Behind–Blue Ribbon Schools Program (see: <http://www.ed.gov/programs/nclbbrs/index.html>).

Joseph Rodman West Elementary School

At Joseph Rodman West Elementary School in northwest Washington, D.C., frequent assessment is one key to students' success as readers. West Elementary faculty members devote the first month of the school year to setting the climate for instruction, assessing student achievement, and creating goals and plans for each student. Weekly assessments help teachers to track student progress and adapt their instruction accordingly. Every teacher and every child has a portfolio, which is examined at midyear and at the year's end. Student portfolios include student test performances, journals, and class work. Ongoing evaluations of teachers' and students' work and regular monitoring of student progress reinforce the school's culture of high expectations and contribute to students' high achievement. In 2003, West Elementary students exceeded state and district averages at all grade levels on the Stanford 9 reading exams. In the same year, 82% of sixth grade students were at or above proficient in reading.

Research Summary

Research Supporting the Practice General Research on ELL Reading Instruction

Research Supporting the Practice

The passage of the No Child Left Behind legislation in 2002 had a significant impact on an already growing trend in assessment practices of schools throughout the country, requiring high-stakes, statewide assessments that measure the proficiency of students by school and by subgroup (e.g., economically disadvantaged students, major racial or ethnic groups, English language learners (ELLs), and students with disabilities). However, while such testing may play a valuable role in promoting accountability, research to date shows that on its own standardized testing has little impact on classroom instruction or student learning (Tierney et al., 2000, p. 248). Rather, for student learning

to improve, teachers must adapt their instruction based on what standardized tests and other assessments reveal about their students' needs. According to researcher Sheila Valencia, "teachers who understand and focus on content standards, and who make links between instruction and classroom assessment" are the key to improving students' literacy skills (Tierney et al., 2000, p. 248). As Valencia suggests, ongoing classroom-based assessment can provide teachers with more specific and current information about their students' learning needs than annual standardized tests. Studies of literacy teaching and learning show that "more specificity in standards and assessment promotes changes in the desired direction" (Valencia & Wixson, 2000, p. 930). Thus, in addition to targeted standardized testing, the assessments that teachers conduct regularly in their own classrooms can provide the most critical information needed to tailor instruction and help students meet the appropriate reading standards.

Authentic assessments, such as informal reading inventories (IRIs), which focus on classroom and out-of-classroom reading behaviors, have become an increasingly popular and effective way to measure students' ability in reading comprehension. During the late 1990s, several literacy researchers reported that the use of authentic assessment could serve the dual purpose of improving instruction and providing accountability information (e.g., Hoffman et al., 1996, The PALM study; Salinger & Chittenden, 1994, The South Brunswick Early Literacy Portfolio study; and Valencia & Au, 1997). Nevertheless, these promising findings have not yet been validated on a large scale. The RAND Reading Study Group Report (Snow, 2002) states that there is an extensive research agenda to accomplish before educators can construct authentic reading comprehension assessments that can effectively guide instruction.

Teachers need reliable and valid assessments tied closely to curricula so that they can see which students are learning as expected and which need extra help. In addition, schools, districts, and states are increasingly calling for reliable and valid assessments that reflect progress toward general benchmarks of reading, writing, and mathematics ability. For the area of reading comprehension, good assessments that are tied to curriculum as well as good assessments of general comprehension capacity are sorely needed. (RAND report, p. 53)

The researchers of the 1990s and current practitioners concur that authentic assessment supports effective teaching. Recognizing that reading comprehension is a complex, multifaceted process, current researchers raise the bar by requiring greater understanding about the developmental nature of comprehension and the interactions among the reader, activity, text, and context. As researchers share their increasing understanding, test developers and teachers can improve assessments and thus better support reading instruction and students' reading success.

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General Research on ELL Reading Instruction

There is general agreement that becoming a proficient reader in a second language is a difficult task. Snow, Burns, and Griffin (1998) and August and Hakuta (1997) underscore the enormous cognitive challenge faced by young ELLs who must acquire oral and literacy skills in English simultaneously. ELLs who are already literate in a home language are able to transfer some of their skills for use in English reading (Garcia, 2000), but that does not imply that learning to read well in English will be an easy task. Reading involves the use of both "higher level cognitive knowledge, ... abilities... and learning strategies," as well as "low level linguistic knowledge and processing strategies (Birch 2002, p. x.) Throughout the elementary grades, ELLs are likely to encounter difficulties with both "high" and "low" levels of the reading process, especially as they tackle increasingly complex readings (Droop & Verhoeven, 1998).

Knowledge of the relationships between sounds and letters is essential for learning to read English (Ehri, 1998). Verhoeven's (1999) work cautions teachers that it is unrealistic to expect ELLs to decode words independently until they are familiar with the sound system of English. To help ELLs become adept at using sound-letter relationships, Birch (2002) recommends practice in a variety of tasks: identifying a particular phoneme in words, discriminating between that phoneme and similar ones, linking the sound to the printed letter, visually discriminating the letter from other visually similar letters, recognizing and printing the letter in both upper and lowercase forms, finding the letter at the beginnings and endings of words alone and in connected text, and drawing things that begin with the letter and labeling them (p. 72). Other teaching suggestions include: playing games with rhyming words and alliterative words to develop students' awareness of how sounds combine to form words (Antunez, 2002; Kaufman & Franco, 2004), and, in the case of Spanish-speaking ELLs, building upon the similarities and differences between the sound systems of the two languages (Helman, 2004).

Many researchers point out the difficulty of comprehending text when one has a limited vocabulary (Verhallen & Schoonen, 1993; Garcia, 1991; McLaughlin, 1993; Jimenez, Garcia, & Pearson, 1995, 1996). ELLs of any age often know too few words or only a single meaning for a word. McLaughlin et al. (2004) have had promising results in increasing ELLs' vocabulary knowledge through an intervention that pre-selected challenging and high-utility words from a reading selection. The intervention involved direct teaching of word meanings; teaching and raising awareness of words with multiple meanings; systemic teaching of word analysis skills including roots and affixes; engaging students in word games, riddles, and other activities designed to promote deeper understanding and use of the words in new and meaningful contexts; and finding the words outside of school. The intervention also focused on increasing Latino students' awareness of Spanish/English cognate words and ability to use cognate recognition as a legitimate and productive comprehension strategy.

Several researchers have documented that ELLs benefit from cognate recognition training (Garc'a

&Nagy, 1993; Durgunoglu et al., 1993). Kress (2002) contains a useful reference list of Spanish–English cognates. Similarly, Au (1993), Nagy (1988), Dixon and Nessel (1983), and others recommend that teachers integrate vocabulary instruction with content instruction and with story reading. Hickman et al. (2004) describe a successful approach to teaching vocabulary to primary–grade ELLs during storybook reading. The approach involves careful selection of several storybooks or informational texts that focus on a theme of interest to the students in the class and are at a reading level above students' grade level. Teachers carefully select from the texts those vocabulary words which students could encounter and use in other contexts. Over the course of five days, the class previews the story and the vocabulary words, and the story is read aloud, discussed, re–read, and summarized. Discussions focus on using the vocabulary words and encouraging children to relate these words to their own life experiences.

Carrell and Eisterhold (1988) and Carrell (1983, 1984) have demonstrated the positive impact that prior knowledge of a topic or situational context has on ELLs' reading comprehension. However, stories and other texts often contain cultural contexts and assumptions that are unfamiliar to young ELLs and make comprehension difficult or impossible. Researchers advise teachers to support comprehension before students read by eliciting and building upon ELLs' prior knowledge and experiences relevant to story theme, setting, and content. Many researchers also support the value of teaching content reading strategies such as previewing a chapter before reading it and formulating questions, self–monitoring, and using imagery during reading (Carasquillo et al., 2004; Chamot & O'Malley, 1994; Echeverria et al., 2000; Schifini, 1994). Researchers agree that teachers should model and support comprehension before, during, and after reading by teaching text structures; using graphic organizers such as Venn diagrams, cause and effect charts, and story maps; and creating study guides that students can complete (Carasquillo et al., 2004).

One recommended approach to increase comprehension and engagement is the use of culturally relevant texts and multicultural literature (Au, 1998, 1993; Barrera, 1992; Harris, 1994). Larrick's 1965 landmark article, "The All–White World of Children's Books" (reprinted in Muse, 1997) pointed out that minority children had few opportunities to read about characters like themselves or see themselves in these books. In Larrick's review, these children's books often depicted those minority characters in offensive or demeaning ways. More recently, Singer and Smith (2003) point out that

Multicultural children's literature provides self–affirmation for readers when it conveys that people like themselves have lives worth knowing about and worth sharing with others (Bishop, 1997; Tenorio, 1994). This is particularly significant for readers who are members of marginalized groups (p.17).

Daphne Muse's book, *Multicultural Resources for Young Readers* (1997), contains an extensive annotated bibliography of such literature likely to engage ELLs readers and to build upon their experiences and prior knowledge.

Students' knowledge and experience are the starting points for The Language Experience Approach to reading, used with beginning English readers of all ages (Moustafa, 1987; Tharp & Gallimore, 1989; Tinajero & Calderon, 1988). Through questioning, teachers prompt students to speak about their individual or in–class experiences. The teacher writes down students' oral narratives, and the resulting text becomes the basis of reading instruction. Often teachers plan a group activity (e.g., taking a walk) to provide a common experiential base for reading.

Hoggard's 1996 review of the "critical attributes of classroom culture" for ESL literacy learners includes "the teacher as guide," "meaningful literacy experiences, a sense of ownership," "a community of learners," and "interactive classroom discourse" (pp. 5– 9). Other researchers have also

highlighted the importance of student participation in conversations that relate book themes to students' personal experiences and to other books. The instructional conversations (IC) approach is one way of structuring such book-centered interactions. Teachers promote general participation in small-group discussion by not calling on children but waiting for them to volunteer to speak, by responding to student contributions, and by encouraging students to connect their comments to those of previous speakers and build upon what they said (Rueda et al., 1992; Saunders & Goldenberg, 1999). IC also promotes skimming, scanning, and careful reading by requiring students to find text passages that support their opinions and interpretations (Goldenberg, 1991, 1992/1993; Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1990). Literature circles are another discussion format that promotes comprehension and academic language in a social context. Ruby (2003) discusses their effectiveness when properly scaffolded for English language learners. Gordon (2003) offers another good example of how teachers can effectively use literature response journals with English language learners.

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Related Web Resources

Portfolio Assessment (0)

Teachers demonstrate reading comprehension strategies that emphasize the importance of deriving meaning from text.

What Is It?
Implications for ELLs
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Questions to Think About

What Is It?

We read in order to get meaning from text and to enrich our understanding of the world. Although teachers promote reading comprehension strategies at the primary grades in elementary school, it is during the intermediate grades that students can become truly proficient in comprehension. By this time, most students have learned to use essential word recognition or decoding skills more automatically, freeing energy for understanding what they read. In grades 4–6, students still need instruction on how to decipher multisyllabic words and need to learn new vocabulary, but for the most part, students should possess relatively complete decoding strategies. Thus, at the intermediate grades, comprehension moves to the foreground.

A primary way in which we comprehend is by making connections between our reading and our past experiences. Making connections allows us to attach or "Velcro" our reading with information gained through firsthand and vicarious experiences. Reading comes alive when we can see these connections. Teachers can help students make connections by tapping into students' knowledge, cultures, lifestyles, lives, and their relationships with peers and adults.

Fluent readers are continually interacting with the text as they are reading. They ask themselves questions such as "Does this make sense?", "What might happen next?", and "How is this similar to something I already know?" In short, they are monitoring their reading. Reading comprehension breaks down when things do not make sense to the reader. Competent readers realize when comprehension breaks down and then use appropriate fix-up strategies, such as re-reading a sentence or paragraph. Teachers can model all of these aspects of expert reading and facilitate students' self-monitoring and fix-up strategies.

For both narrative and expository texts, intermediate-grade students also benefit from comprehension instruction using graphic aids such as story maps, chapter grids, character maps, time lines, and cause-and-effect charts. These graphic organizers serve as visual prompts to help students understand expository text, recognize and appreciate the structure of narrative text, and see how authors craft their work. Later, as students gain self-reliance with these text structures, teachers can also encourage students to devise their own graphic depictions of text.

It is important for intermediate-grade students to explore complex topics that may not have single answers. As students mature, they are able to grapple with many issues and multiple points of view that their younger schoolmates are unable to grasp; this transition takes place in the intermediate grades. An author's intent, for example, is not something that students can easily discern unless they

have been taught to look beyond the literal meaning of the text. Newspaper editorials are a prime example of how authors can influence readers' judgments by expressing a point of view. Grades 4–6 are an optimal time for teachers to stress the importance of finding evidence in the text that supports or refutes students' interpretations.

To boost reading comprehension with this age group, effective teachers routinely incorporate comprehension strategies and activities, such as reciprocal teaching, book clubs, and Question the Author. Reciprocal teaching is an activity that can help students comprehend text, particularly expository text. Teacher and students take turns leading a dialogue concerning sections of a text. They engage in four activities: predicting, questioning, summarizing, and clarifying the text. First the teacher models and scaffolds these activities, then gradually allows the student group to conduct them.

Teachers can organize book club activities as student-led discussion groups. Each book club is composed of four to five students, heterogeneously grouped for reading level, gender, or verbal ability. Students remain in these book clubs throughout a unit, reading the same book or different books on a shared theme. The books are age-appropriate and sufficiently complex to support in-depth discussion. Within book clubs, students discuss ideas that emerged from their reading, airing their questions and related personal experiences. Teachers reinforce norms for appropriate behavior in book club discussion, such as listening with respect, building on others' ideas, debating and critiquing ideas, assuming leadership, and following another's lead.

Question the Author (QtA) is an activity that usually involves five basic questions:

1. What is the author trying to tell you?
2. Why is the author telling you that?
3. Does the author say it clearly?
4. How could the author have said things more clearly?
5. What would you say instead?

Students read a selection of text (one or more paragraphs), and then the teacher asks the five questions, which center on the author's intention and effectiveness. As the strategy becomes routine, students can assume a greater role in the discussions and monitor their own comprehension.

Implications for ELLs

In grades 4–6, English language learners (ELLs) still require instruction and practice in phonemic awareness, phonemic segmentation, and decoding words. However, instructional time should also include an age-appropriate focus on deriving meaning from text. Effective teachers provide explicit discussion of how to make connections to text.

ELLs' prior knowledge may not always match that required to make sense of particular texts. Effective teachers are on the alert for language and content that may require explanation. They also select books that will build upon culturally diverse students' backgrounds, languages, knowledge, and experiences.

Some ELLs have a primary language that shares cognate or sister words with English. These pairs of English and Spanish words are cognates: *observe/observar*, *anniversary/aniversario*, *respiraci—n/respiration*, and *monument/monumento*. Some cognates, such as *stomach* and *est—mago* or *azure* and *azael*, are more similar in their written forms than in spoken forms. However, ELLs also need to watch for false cognates, words that resemble each other but do not share meaning: for example, *actual* (real or genuine in English) and *actu#l* (current or contemporary in Spanish). Some

ELLs routinely recognize cognates and use them as a resource for comprehending English text. Other students are not aware that their knowledge of their home language can be such an asset in reading English. Effective teachers help students capitalize on their home language to learn English.

Strategies for Supporting ELLs

Recognizing cognates can boost reading comprehension. Effective teachers discuss cognates and cognate recognition with English language learners (ELLs) who speak and read Spanish, Portuguese, French, and other related languages. Teachers have students keep lists of the cognates they encounter. Teachers access and provide cognate lists, such as the one found in *The ESL Teacher's Book of Lists* (Kress, 2002), for their own and students' reference. As teachers preview reading materials to look for words and concepts that may require preteaching, they also scan for cognates that can serve as resources for students from certain language backgrounds.

To make the hidden cognitive processes of reading and writing more accessible to ELLs, effective teachers orally narrate their own comprehension strategies.

Teachers say things like:

- I know that the book *Bud Not Buddy* (Curtis, 2000) takes place in the United States around the year 1930.
- I know that during the 1930s the U.S. had a lot of economic troubles. There weren't enough jobs. The banks even ran out of money. It was called the Depression.
- When I think about what I know about the setting, it gives me some ideas about the story. I'm thinking that the people in the story might have money problems, that they might not have jobs or money or enough to eat.

In addition, graphic organizers are excellent devices for scaffolding ELLs' reading comprehension and ability to monitor their own comprehension. Graphic organizers such as story maps and cause-and-effect charts visually represent categories of information necessary for comprehension. Attempting to fill in a story map can help ELLs articulate their understanding of the story and identify gaps in comprehension.

Teachers model how to fill in a chart about a story by saying things like:

- Who are the main characters?
- Where and when does the story take place?
- What is the problem?
- Is there a solution? Does the problem get fixed?

For this example of expository text, teachers might say things like:

- We're going to read about three different vitamin deficiencies.
- These are diseases that people can get when they don't get enough of certain vitamins in their food. For example, people can get a disease called scurvy if they lack certain vitamins. That's the cause: not enough vitamin C. A lack of vitamin C causes scurvy. The symptoms of scurvy are the effects. The symptoms of scurvy are bleeding gums and loose teeth.
- As you read, I want you to look in the book for information to fill in the chart. I found this information about scurvy on page 102 of our health book. Open your health books to page 102 and look for the same information I found to put in my chart. Let's look at the example:

- What information goes in the left-hand column?
- What information goes in the middle column?
- What information goes in the right-hand column?

Name of disease	CAUSE Is caused by lack of...	EFFECT The symptoms are...
Scurvy	Vitamin C	Bleeding gums and loose teeth
Rickets (rachitis)	—	—
—	—	—

Glimpse of the Classroom

Today, Mrs. T. is reviewing the types of connections that her fourth-grade students have been looking for as they read their assigned and self-selected books.

She points to a chart. It reads:

Connections TS – Text-to-Self TT – Text-to-Text TW – Text-to-World
--

She encourages students to see connections between what they read and their own lives. She discusses how students can find relationships between the book they are reading now and texts that they have read previously. She challenges them to think about how ideas from their reading are relevant in the world outside books. She tells them that it is the most difficult connection to make but often the most interesting.

Next, Mrs. T. reads passages aloud to demonstrate various connections to text. She reads a passage from Patricia MacLachlan's book *Sarah, Plain and Tall*, which mentions dandelion seeds blowing in the wind. For her, this recalls a childhood memory—her father's taboo against blowing on dandelion seeds because they would spread more dandelions. She makes a text-to-text connection between this book and Laura Ingalls Wilder's book *Little House on the Prairie*.

One student, Courtney, shares two connections that she has made. In her response journal, Courtney wrote her reaction to Roald Dahl's book *Mathilda*, which is about a smart girl whose parents don't notice her. Courtney reads what she has written, "Sometimes I think my parents don't notice me." When Mrs. T. asks if anyone else has ever felt that way, other students raise their hands. Courtney

then connects the nickname Sugar Plum that Mr. Wormwood uses with the same name on a candle in her house; because of this, she thinks Sugar Plum is a silly name.

Mrs. T. asks the classroom aide, Mrs. S., to share the connections she has found. Mrs. S. talks about the similarities between the Harry Potter books and movies and the Star Wars movies: Both have young heroes in training with special powers, wise old men, sidekicks, and evil forces. Now that they have reviewed the kinds of connections they can make while reading, students begin to select and read books during free reading time.

Questions to Think About

1. What approaches can teachers use when working with students who over rely on decoding to the exclusion of comprehending?
2. What steps can teachers take to improve students' ability to self-monitor when reading?
3. How can teachers use visual prompts in instruction to aid students' comprehension? What are some good sources for these graphic aids?

Story Summaries

The Story Workshop" Approach

"Reading and writing are taught equally in this course. . . Reading became easier, more enjoyable, and writing was given a voice with power. . . [Both] improved so dramatically, scores in other subjects soared," said one fourth-grade public school teacher after a 10-week Story Workshop program. Originated and developed by John Schultz and conducted in diverse classes from grade school to grad school, the Story Workshop approach emphasizes reading, writing, speaking, listening, and thinking relationships. This story describes the approach, illustrated with linked video segments of actual classroom experiences with elementary school students. Because of the way in which this approach integrates oral telling, reading, and writing skills into classroom activities, it connects to multiple practices in the elementary literacy spotlight (see practices list).

Research Summary

Research Supporting the Practice General Research on ELL Reading Instruction

Research Supporting the Practice

In the intermediate grades, the research suggests that teachers need to show students explicitly that the purpose of expert reading is to understand the meaning of text. Jimenez (1992) learned that both mainstream and language minority readers who are struggling have two main erroneous or naïve conceptions concerning the purpose of reading: (1) that finishing the reading task is the primary purpose and (2) that reading is synonymous with decoding and pronouncing isolated words. Effective instruction makes clear that successful reading is about understanding meaning.

Duke and Pearson (2002) found six comprehension strategies to be effective in improving students' comprehension of text (p. 14); these are closely related to those identified by the National Reading Panel (See Reading Instruction, Grades K–3). They are (1) prediction/prior knowledge; (2) think-aloud; (3) text structure; (4) visual representation of text (such as the use of graphic organizers); (5) summarization; and (6) questions/questioning (pp. 6–14).

Think-alouds and other metacognitive strategies help students to work with each other and with their teacher to elicit meaning from a text. Teacher and student talk out loud about what they are thinking about the text's meaning and the strategies that they are using for reading and comprehending. Haller et al. (1988) found that "metacognitive training had the least effect on reading comprehension performance in the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades, and had the greatest impact on performance in the seventh and eighth grades" (NCREL Web site. Available: <http://www.ncrel.org/litweb/comp48/metacog.htm>). This suggests that students benefit from maturation and practice as they develop cumulative metacognitive strategies. The literature also supports using metacognitive strategy instruction for students with learning disabilities (Vaidya, 1999; Hattie et al., 1996) and for English learners at all age levels (NCREL, 2002).

The question/questioning strategy identified by Duke and Pearson can take a number of different forms (2002). Two activities based on the strategy are reciprocal teaching and Questioning the Author (QtA). Both involve students learning how to generate their own questions about text.

Reciprocal teaching is an activity in which students take turns leading discussions and teaching their peers, with the teacher first modeling scaffolding techniques, then releasing control to the students. Rosenshine and Meister (1994) reviewed 16 studies that found reciprocal teaching effective for teaching comprehension, and Moore (1988) also found reciprocal teaching effective across multiple studies.

Questioning the Author, or QtA, combines student questioning with metacognitive sharing; as students read a passage, they have conversations about the author's intent and "construct meaning as they go" (Lipson & Cooper, 2002, p. 13). Reciprocal teaching and QtA are particularly effective with English language learners (Goatley et al., 1995).

Lipson and Cooper (2002), who provide a similar set of five comprehension strategies, stress that, beginning with grade 4, strategic reading is absolutely essential. They report that these strategies individually are "not as important as a strategic approach, which allows readers to respond differently to different topics, text, genres, and tasks" (p. 6). They summarize the research of Duffy (1993), Dole et al. (1991), Paris et al. (1983), and Pearson et al. (1992) by saying, "The hallmark of truly effective readers and writers is that they are able to use their strategic knowledge flexibly, coordinating and adapting the various skills and strategies to fit a particular reading or writing task and purpose" (Lipson & Cooper, 2002, p. 6).

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General Research on ELL Reading Instruction

There is general agreement that becoming a proficient reader in a second language is a difficult task. Snow, Burns, and Griffin (1998) and August and Hakuta (1997) underscore the enormous cognitive challenge faced by young ELLs who must acquire oral and literacy skills in English simultaneously. ELLs who are already literate in a home language are able to transfer some of their skills for use in English reading (Garcia, 2000), but that does not imply that learning to read well in English will be an easy task. Reading involves the use of both "higher level cognitive knowledge, ... abilities... and learning strategies," as well as "low level linguistic knowledge and processing strategies (Birch 2002, p. x.) Throughout the elementary grades, ELLs are likely to encounter difficulties with both "high" and "low" levels of the reading process, especially as they tackle increasingly complex readings (Droop & Verhoeven, 1998).

Knowledge of the relationships between sounds and letters is essential for learning to read English

(Ehri, 1998). Verhoeven's (1999) work cautions teachers that it is unrealistic to expect ELLs to decode words independently until they are familiar with the sound system of English. To help ELLs become adept at using sound–letter relationships, Birch (2002) recommends practice in a variety of tasks: identifying a particular phoneme in words, discriminating between that phoneme and similar ones, linking the sound to the printed letter, visually discriminating the letter from other visually similar letters, recognizing and printing the letter in both upper and lowercase forms, finding the letter at the beginnings and endings of words alone and in connected text, and drawing things that begin with the letter and labeling them (p. 72). Other teaching suggestions include: playing games with rhyming words and alliterative words to develop students' awareness of how sounds combine to form words (Antunez, 2002; Kaufman & Franco, 2004), and, in the case of Spanish-speaking ELLs, building upon the similarities and differences between the sound systems of the two languages (Helman, 2004).

Many researchers point out the difficulty of comprehending text when one has a limited vocabulary (Verhallen & Schoonen, 1993; Garcia, 1991; McLaughlin, 1993; Jimenez, Garcia, & Pearson, 1995, 1996). ELLs of any age often know too few words or only a single meaning for a word. McLaughlin et al. (2004) have had promising results in increasing ELLs' vocabulary knowledge through an intervention that pre-selected challenging and high-utility words from a reading selection. The intervention involved direct teaching of word meanings; teaching and raising awareness of words with multiple meanings; systemic teaching of word analysis skills including roots and affixes; engaging students in word games, riddles, and other activities designed to promote deeper understanding and use of the words in new and meaningful contexts; and finding the words outside of school. The intervention also focused on increasing Latino students' awareness of Spanish/English cognate words and ability to use cognate recognition as a legitimate and productive comprehension strategy.

Several researchers have documented that ELLs benefit from cognate recognition training (Garc'a & Nagy, 1993; Durgunoglu et al., 1993). Kress (2002) contains a useful reference list of Spanish–English cognates. Similarly, Au (1993), Nagy (1988), Dixon and Nessel (1983), and others recommend that teachers integrate vocabulary instruction with content instruction and with story reading. Hickman et al. (2004) describe a successful approach to teaching vocabulary to primary-grade ELLs during storybook reading. The approach involves careful selection of several storybooks or informational texts that focus on a theme of interest to the students in the class and are at a reading level above students' grade level. Teachers carefully select from the texts those vocabulary words which students could encounter and use in other contexts. Over the course of five days, the class previews the story and the vocabulary words, and the story is read aloud, discussed, re-read, and summarized. Discussions focus on using the vocabulary words and encouraging children to relate these words to their own life experiences.

Carrell and Eisterhold (1988) and Carrell (1983, 1984) have demonstrated the positive impact that prior knowledge of a topic or situational context has on ELLs' reading comprehension. However, stories and other texts often contain cultural contexts and assumptions that are unfamiliar to young ELLs and make comprehension difficult or impossible. Researchers advise teachers to support comprehension before students read by eliciting and building upon ELLs' prior knowledge and experiences relevant to story theme, setting, and content. Many researchers also support the value of teaching content reading strategies such as previewing a chapter before reading it and formulating questions, self-monitoring, and using imagery during reading (Carasquillo et al., 2004; Chamot & O'Malley, 1994; Echeverria et al., 2000; Schifini, 1994). Researchers agree that teachers should model and support comprehension before, during, and after reading by teaching text structures; using graphic organizers such as Venn diagrams, cause and effect charts, and story maps; and creating study guides that students can complete (Carasquillo et al., 2004).

One recommended approach to increase comprehension and engagement is the use of culturally relevant texts and multicultural literature (Au, 1998, 1993; Barrera, 1992; Harris, 1994). Larrick's 1965 landmark article, "The All-White World of Children's Books" (reprinted in Muse, 1997) pointed out that minority children had few opportunities to read about characters like themselves or see themselves in these books. In Larrick's review, these children's books often depicted those minority characters in offensive or demeaning ways. More recently, Singer and Smith (2003) point out that

Multicultural children's literature provides self-affirmation for readers when it conveys that people like themselves have lives worth knowing about and worth sharing with others (Bishop, 1997; Tenorio, 1994). This is particularly significant for readers who are members of marginalized groups (p.17).

Daphne Muse's book, *Multicultural Resources for Young Readers* (1997), contains an extensive annotated bibliography of such literature likely to engage ELLs readers and to build upon their experiences and prior knowledge.

Students' knowledge and experience are the starting points for The Language Experience Approach to reading, used with beginning English readers of all ages (Moustafa, 1987; Tharp & Gallimore, 1989; Tinajero & Calderon, 1988). Through questioning, teachers prompt students to speak about their individual or in-class experiences. The teacher writes down students' oral narratives, and the resulting text becomes the basis of reading instruction. Often teachers plan a group activity (e.g., taking a walk) to provide a common experiential base for reading.

Hoggard's 1996 review of the "critical attributes of classroom culture" for ESL literacy learners includes "the teacher as guide," "meaningful literacy experiences, a sense of ownership," "a community of learners," and "interactive classroom discourse" (pp. 5–9). Other researchers have also highlighted the importance of student participation in conversations that relate book themes to students' personal experiences and to other books. The instructional conversations (IC) approach is one way of structuring such book-centered interactions. Teachers promote general participation in small-group discussion by not calling on children but waiting for them to volunteer to speak, by responding to student contributions, and by encouraging students to connect their comments to those of previous speakers and build upon what they said (Rueda et al., 1992; Saunders & Goldenberg, 1999). IC also promotes skimming, scanning, and careful reading by requiring students to find text passages that support their opinions and interpretations (Goldenberg, 1991, 1992/1993; Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1990). Literature circles are another discussion format that promotes comprehension and academic language in a social context. Ruby (2003) discusses their effectiveness when properly scaffolded for English language learners. Gordon (2003) offers another good example of how teachers can effectively use literature response journals with English language learners.

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Related Web Resources

Readquest Strategies for Reading Comprehension (0)

Teachers expand students' vocabulary through systematic, explicit instruction.

What Is It?
Implications for ELLs
Strategies for Supporting ELLs
Glimpse of the Classroom
Questions to Think About

What Is It?

In the intermediate grades in elementary school, students' knowledge of the world can expand rapidly through both academic and independent reading. To help students comprehend increasingly complex reading material, it is crucial that teachers show them how to build their vocabularies.

Teachers can build students' reading vocabularies by capitalizing on their listening and speaking skills. For example, teachers can expose students to new vocabulary during read-alouds. Through repeated exposure and opportunities to practice, students will begin to comprehend new vocabulary words in their reading and use them in their writing and speech.

In addition, teachers can build student vocabularies through the systematic study of prefixes, suffixes, and base words. By modeling and scaffolding this type of "word building," teachers encourage students to infer the meaning of untaught words that they encounter while reading.

Effective teachers prepare students to learn the specific vocabulary of content-area subjects. Words such as the geologic terms *terminal moraine*, *esker*, and *alluvial fan* are quite content-specific, and unless teachers make a conscious effort to expand students' knowledge of content-related words, students will not be able to gain a full understanding of the subject matter.

As students advance, teachers can release more of the vocabulary learning to students themselves by using literacy activities such as reciprocal teaching, where (among other tasks) students have opportunities to select the vocabulary words that they need to learn. If a teacher is not using reciprocal teaching yet, she can use a simpler strategy format in which students discuss the words that puzzle them and share their techniques for "word sleuthing."

Implications for ELLs

Limited vocabulary knowledge is often a major hindrance to reading comprehension for English language learners (ELLs). Some ELLs may be able to repeat or pronounce English words and phrases without really understanding them. They may be able to decode words and produce the appropriate sounds without extracting or constructing meaning.

ELLs learn word meanings through explicit instruction and through rich opportunities to listen, observe, participate, and interact. Beginners link word sounds to meanings through the context provided by predictable routines, concrete objects, pictures, gestures, physical movements, and

experiential activities. ELLs also learn word meanings through listening to repeated readings, explicit explanations, and discussions of books on a variety of topics in fiction and nonfiction.

Most ELLs acquire the vocabulary involved in daily routines, play, and social interaction before they learn academic and rare words. Inferring the meaning of unknown words from context can be difficult for ELLs who may not fully understand that context.

ELLs need explicit instruction and practice in word analysis. Learning word roots and the meanings of common prefixes and suffixes helps ELLs to understand many unfamiliar words. Speakers of languages that share commonalities with English, such as Spanish and Portuguese, may find cognate or "sister words" (e.g., *intelligent*; *inteligente*) to be a valuable resource when reading English.

When English-proficient bilingual students explain English word meanings to less-proficient classmates, they can provide a valuable service while increasing their own interpretation skills.

Strategies for Supporting ELLs

Vocabulary is of critical importance to English language learners (ELLs). In addition to learning word definitions, ELLs need multiple exposures to new words in a variety of formats, as well as opportunities to use the words in meaningful contexts.

Effective teachers promote vocabulary learning through multiple strategies. For example, they can have students choose which of two newly learned words best applies to a given situation, discuss semantic features that differentiate close synonyms (e.g., *shout* and *scream*), and rank words according to meaningful criteria to help ELLs achieve deeper understanding.

Teachers say things like:

- In the story, is Henrietta *stingy* or *thrifty*? Explain your choice.
- What do the words *feast* and *snack* have in common?
- How are they different?

Effective teachers provide explicit explanation of potentially confusing words such as homophones (e.g., *to*, *too*, *two*; *due*, *dew*, *do*) and homographs (e.g., *wind*, *wind*; *sow*, *sow*). They also provide explicit help in matching pronunciations with print forms of words (e.g., *debris*, *chaos*). Explicit instruction and practice in word analysis, including word roots and the meanings of common prefixes and suffixes, help ELLs understand many unfamiliar words.

ELLs who are literate in Spanish may be taught to recognize and use cognates ("sister words" sharing common origins and meanings across languages) as a comprehension strategy. Students have a great advantage when they read words such as *ancient* and *enormous* and are able to understand them because of their Spanish cognates *anciano* and *enorme*. Teachers point out to students that not every pair of look-alike words is a cognate pair. *Pie* in English is a pastry dessert, while the Spanish *pie* means foot.

Teachers promote word awareness by having frequent vocabulary discussions; encouraging students to ask questions about words; and developing word webs, lists, and semantic feature charts with students. Semantic feature analysis charts can help students differentiate among words that have similar meanings.

A Semantic Feature Analysis Chart

You can eat a meal, a snack, a feast, or a banquet. What are the differences that distinguish each word from the others?

—	Size	Speed	Occasion	Formality
meal	any size	any speed	3 times a day: morning, noon, and evening	from informal to formal
snack	small	fast	any time you're hungry	none
feast	large	slow	to celebrate a holiday or special event	formal
banquet	large	slow	in honor of someone or something, there are speeches	very formal

Or, teachers write a group of related words on the board and say things like:

- You can crawl, walk, skip, hop, run, race, jog, trudge, tippy-toe, march, amble, strut, stumble, or saunter down the street.
- What are the differences?

Teachers convert student comments, such as "Race is fast; crawl is slow," into categories:

- Fast and slow are two different...
Speeds. So, I'll write speed up here in the top row. What other differences do you see among these words?
- You can ride bicycles, unicycles, motorcycles, motorbikes, scooters, snowmobiles, skateboards, and jet-skis.
- What are the differences?

In addition, effective teachers acknowledge the contribution and skill of bilingual students who provide translations to less-proficient students who need and want such help. Translating develops the linguistic skills of the interpreter and may provide less-proficient students with access to academic content.

Glimpse of the Classroom

Ms. M.'s class has just come inside from their outdoor lunch break. As students take their seats, they notice that their teacher has put a familiar chart up in front of the class.

HOW TO BUILD YOUR VOCABULARY

When you are reading and meet a word you don't know:

- Recognize that you don't know the word.
- Decide if you need to understand the word to understand the passage.
- Try to unlock the meaning of the word from the context surrounding it.
- Try to unlock the meaning by breaking the word into meaningful parts.
- Try to pronounce the word to see if you come up with a word you know.
- Turn to a glossary, a dictionary, or another person for the meaning.

(Adapted from Graves, 2002)

Every Friday Ms. M. conducts a fun activity that helps students practice for tests. This afternoon, she is using the vocabulary-building chart to practice a vocabulary think-aloud activity with her students. They are working on a vocabulary practice test question that focuses on the word *tripod*.

He set up his camera on a tripod.
What does the word tripod mean?

- B.** A square table
- C. A rectangular base
- D. A platform with four legs
- E. A support with three legs

Ms. M. says, "Let's think about the four answers. A tripod has to be something that could hold a camera. But knowing that fact does not help you narrow down the answers. All four answers--a table, a base, a platform, or a support--could hold a camera. So the context is not leading you directly to the meaning of *tripod*.

"But there is something familiar about the word *tripod*, something you have seen before: a meaningful part at the beginning of the word. *Tri* sounds familiar. You've heard that part before on the words *triangle* and *tricycle*. A *triangle* has three sides. A *tricycle* has three wheels. Maybe a *tripod* has three of something.

"As soon as the three connection pops into your mind, you're on your way to the right answer. Only one of the choices mentions three: 'D. A support with three legs.' The familiar prefix *tri* leads you to the correct answer.

"Notice that we used more than one strategy to unlock word meaning in our think-aloud. Notice how often it is helpful to say to ourselves, 'Let's think in slow motion about the meaning of this term,' or 'Suppose you were thinking aloud about each of the multiple-choice answers; your reasoning might sound like this . . .'"

After modeling the first think-aloud, she asks the class to look at the next sample item and asks if someone would like to pick a friend to help lead a think-aloud together. She promises to help if they get stuck at any point. Hands shoot up.

Adapted from the following:

Mountain, L. (2003). *Ten essential vocabulary strategies: Practice for success on standardized tests*. Educators Publishing Service. Retrieved November 4, 2004 from http://www.epsbooks.com/downloads/research_papers/TEVS_research.pdf

Harmon, J.M. (2000). Assessing and supporting independent word learning strategies of middle school students, *Journal of Adolescent Adult Literacy*, 43(6), 518–527.

Graves, M. (2002). *Reading comprehension instruction in grades 4–8*. Naperville, IL: North Central Regional Educational Laboratory.

Questions to Think About

1. What are better options for vocabulary building than the common practice of having students find words in the dictionary, write their meaning, and use them in sentences?
2. How can teachers tap into a student's background knowledge to improve his or her vocabulary? How can teachers help more students gain the background information needed for a specific topic?
3. What steps can teachers take to ensure that students have an adequate reading vocabulary before engaging in silent, independent reading?
4. How can teachers model their own efforts to expand their personal reading vocabularies?

Research Summary

Research Supporting the Practice General Research on ELL Reading Instruction

Research Supporting the Practice

A long history of literacy research has made clear that vocabulary knowledge is important to reading achievement and strongly linked to reading comprehension (Snow, 2002; NRP, 2000; Freebody & Anderson, 1983; Davis, 1942; Whipple, 1925). However, the research on exactly how to teach vocabulary is limited (Snow, p. 36).

Graves (2000) describes four components of an effective vocabulary curriculum: (1) teaching individual words, (2) encouraging wide reading, (3) teaching word-learning strategies, and (4) promoting word consciousness (p. 118). Snow (2002) acknowledges that this type of curriculum is "likely to make an important contribution to students' long-term vocabulary growth and, hence, to their reading comprehension" (p. 39).

In their review of the research on vocabulary instruction, Blachowicz and Fisher (2000) say that there are in general four main principles to guide instruction (pp. 504–508):

1. Students should be active in developing their understanding of words and ways to learn them. Instead of working with definitions, students learn and remember new vocabulary more effectively if they have used semantic mapping, semantic feature analysis, and

semantic/syntactic feature analysis strategies. Students and teachers sharing their thoughts on how they figured out meanings of words—their metacognitive processing—benefits students of varying ages and ability levels (Buikema & Graves, 1993; Friedland, 1992; Gifford, 1993). In these studies, successful instruction on using context clues was explicit and scaffolded, providing opportunities for practice and feedback.

2. Students should personalize word learning. Included in this category are allowing students to select their own words to learn (e.g., Fisher & Danielsen's 1998 study with fourth graders) and reciprocal teaching, in which students retain control over their learning in group settings.
3. Students should be immersed in words. Through listening or reading, "incidental" word learning "will always be a part of students' general vocabulary development." Blachowicz and Fisher list numerous studies with varying contexts and ages of learners that all confirm that environments where language and word use are celebrated and noted encourage vocabulary learning.
4. Students should build on multiple sources of information to learn words through repeated exposures. Word-rich environments (see #3 above) also provide opportunities for repeated exposures from multiple sources of information. Stanley and Ginther (1991), working with sixth graders, supported earlier findings of other researchers that exposing a word in differing contexts facilitates word learning (p. 508).

With regard to the teaching of individual words, a substantial proportion of the research on vocabulary development has been dedicated to which words are optimal for teachers to choose for instruction. For example, Nation (1989, 1999) and Laufer (1999) categorize words as high-frequency words, domain-specific technical vocabulary, low-frequency words, and high-utility academic vocabulary (Snow, p. 37). Vocabulary researchers vary as to which category is most beneficial to comprehension and for what group of learners (e.g., English language learners).

Although the National Reading Panel (2000) did not find compelling evidence that extensive independent reading such as sustained silent reading promoted vocabulary growth, the RAND report points out a "powerful correlational relationship between the volume of reading and vocabulary growth among first-language learners in Stanovich and Cunningham's (1992) research and second language learners" (Elley, 1991).

Practitioners can rely on the well-documented instructional strategies of modeling, scaffolding, and student engagement; focusing instruction on student-selected and "need to know" high-utility and domain-specific vocabulary; and using context clues and identifying morphemes (the meaning-bearing parts of words). A major benefit of the RAND metasynthesis of the research has been to define the areas of need for research so that in the future these practitioner-validated practices can be better supported by systematic research.

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General Research on ELL Reading Instruction

There is general agreement that becoming a proficient reader in a second language is a difficult task. Snow, Burns, and Griffin (1998) and August and Hakuta (1997) underscore the enormous cognitive challenge faced by young ELLs who must acquire oral and literacy skills in English simultaneously. ELLs who are already literate in a home language are able to transfer some of their skills for use in English reading (Garcia, 2000), but that does not imply that learning to read well in English will be an easy task. Reading involves the use of both "higher level cognitive knowledge, ... abilities... and learning strategies," as well as "low level linguistic knowledge and processing strategies (Birch 2002, p. x.) Throughout the elementary grades, ELLs are likely to encounter difficulties with both "high" and "low" levels of the reading process, especially as they tackle increasingly complex readings (Droop & Verhoeven, 1998).

Knowledge of the relationships between sounds and letters is essential for learning to read English (Ehri, 1998). Verhoeven's (1999) work cautions teachers that it is unrealistic to expect ELLs to decode words independently until they are familiar with the sound system of English. To help ELLs become adept at using sound-letter relationships, Birch (2002) recommends practice in a variety of tasks: identifying a particular phoneme in words, discriminating between that phoneme and similar ones, linking the sound to the printed letter, visually discriminating the letter from other visually similar letters, recognizing and printing the letter in both upper and lowercase forms, finding the letter at the beginnings and endings of words alone and in connected text, and drawing things that begin with the letter and labeling them (p. 72). Other teaching suggestions include: playing games with rhyming words and alliterative words to develop students' awareness of how sounds combine to form words (Antunez, 2002; Kaufman & Franco, 2004), and, in the case of Spanish-speaking ELLs, building upon the similarities and differences between the sound systems of the two languages (Helman, 2004).

Many researchers point out the difficulty of comprehending text when one has a limited vocabulary (Verhallen & Schoonen, 1993; Garcia, 1991; McLaughlin, 1993; Jimenez, Garcia, & Pearson, 1995, 1996). ELLs of any age often know too few words or only a single meaning for a word. McLaughlin et al. (2004) have had promising results in increasing ELLs' vocabulary knowledge through an intervention that pre-selected challenging and high-utility words from a reading selection. The intervention involved direct teaching of word meanings; teaching and raising awareness of words with multiple meanings; systemic teaching of word analysis skills including roots and affixes; engaging students in word games, riddles, and other activities designed to promote deeper understanding and use of the words in new and meaningful contexts; and finding the words outside of school. The intervention also focused on increasing Latino students' awareness of Spanish/English cognate words and ability to use cognate recognition as a legitimate and productive comprehension strategy.

Several researchers have documented that ELLs benefit from cognate recognition training (Garc'a & Nagy, 1993; Durgunoglu et al., 1993). Kress (2002) contains a useful reference list of Spanish-English cognates. Similarly, Au (1993), Nagy (1988), Dixon and Nessel (1983), and others recommend that teachers integrate vocabulary instruction with content instruction and with story reading. Hickman et al. (2004) describe a successful approach to teaching vocabulary to primary-grade ELLs during storybook reading. The approach involves careful selection of several storybooks or informational texts that focus on a theme of interest to the students in the class and are at a reading level above students' grade level. Teachers carefully select from the texts those vocabulary words which students could encounter and use in other contexts. Over the course of five days, the class previews the story and the vocabulary words, and the story is read aloud, discussed, re-read, and summarized. Discussions focus on using the vocabulary words and encouraging children to relate these words to their own life experiences.

Carrell and Eisterhold (1988) and Carrell (1983, 1984) have demonstrated the positive impact that prior knowledge of a topic or situational context has on ELLs' reading comprehension. However, stories and other texts often contain cultural contexts and assumptions that are unfamiliar to young ELLs and make comprehension difficult or impossible. Researchers advise teachers to support comprehension before students read by eliciting and building upon ELLs' prior knowledge and experiences relevant to story theme, setting, and content. Many researchers also support the value of teaching content reading strategies such as previewing a chapter before reading it and formulating questions, self-monitoring, and using imagery during reading (Carasquillo et al., 2004; Chamot & O'Malley, 1994; Echeverria et al., 2000; Schifini, 1994). Researchers agree that teachers should model and support comprehension before, during, and after reading by teaching text structures; using graphic organizers such as Venn diagrams, cause and effect charts, and story maps; and creating study guides that students can complete (Carasquillo et al., 2004).

One recommended approach to increase comprehension and engagement is the use of culturally relevant texts and multicultural literature (Au, 1998, 1993; Barrera, 1992; Harris, 1994). Larrick's 1965 landmark article, "The All-White World of Children's Books" (reprinted in Muse, 1997) pointed out that minority children had few opportunities to read about characters like themselves or see themselves in these books. In Larrick's review, these children's books often depicted those minority characters in offensive or demeaning ways. More recently, Singer and Smith (2003) point out that

Multicultural children's literature provides self-affirmation for readers when it conveys that people like themselves have lives worth knowing about and worth sharing with others (Bishop, 1997; Tenorio, 1994). This is particularly significant for readers who are members of marginalized groups (p.17).

Daphne Muse's book, *Multicultural Resources for Young Readers* (1997), contains an extensive annotated bibliography of such literature likely to engage ELLs readers and to build upon their experiences and prior knowledge.

Students' knowledge and experience are the starting points for The Language Experience Approach to reading, used with beginning English readers of all ages (Moustafa, 1987; Tharp & Gallimore, 1989; Tinajero & Calderon, 1988). Through questioning, teachers prompt students to speak about their individual or in-class experiences. The teacher writes down students' oral narratives, and the resulting text becomes the basis of reading instruction. Often teachers plan a group activity (e.g., taking a walk) to provide a common experiential base for reading.

Hoggard's 1996 review of the "critical attributes of classroom culture" for ESL literacy learners includes "the teacher as guide," "meaningful literacy experiences, a sense of ownership," "a community of learners," and "interactive classroom discourse" (pp. 5–9). Other researchers have also highlighted the importance of student participation in conversations that relate book themes to students' personal experiences and to other books. The instructional conversations (IC) approach is one way of structuring such book-centered interactions. Teachers promote general participation in small-group discussion by not calling on children but waiting for them to volunteer to speak, by responding to student contributions, and by encouraging students to connect their comments to those of previous speakers and build upon what they said (Rueda et al., 1992; Saunders & Goldenberg, 1999). IC also promotes skimming, scanning, and careful reading by requiring students to find text passages that support their opinions and interpretations (Goldenberg, 1991, 1992/1993; Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1990). Literature circles are another discussion format that promotes comprehension and academic language in a social context. Ruby (2003) discusses their effectiveness when properly scaffolded for English language learners. Gordon (2003) offers another good example of how teachers can effectively use literature response journals with English language learners.

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Related Web Resources

ABC Bookmaking Builds Vocabulary in the Content Areas (0)
Choosing, Chatting, and Collecting: Vocabulary Self-Collection Strategy (0)

Teachers provide ample opportunities for students to choose from a wide variety of reading material.

What Is It?
Implications for ELLs
Strategies for Supporting ELLs
Glimpse of the Classroom
Questions to Think About

What Is It?

At the intermediate grades, students become increasingly competent as readers, and they are eager to understand the world around them. They enjoy reading for entertainment as well as for learning information. It is important that teachers take advantage of students' intrinsic curiosity and motivation to learn by providing opportunities for students to read a wide variety of material.

In addition to reading books, students at this level are ready to become more familiar with newspapers, essays, advertisements, and electronic media such as the World Wide Web and e-mail. Fourth grade is a good time for teachers to introduce students to different genres such as poetry, historical fiction, nonfiction, informational texts, mystery, and science fiction. Fourth graders usually need explicit reading strategy instruction and scaffolded support for reading and comprehending this array of new and complex genres.

To support reading development, a wide range of books must be available to students. The most convenient place to obtain books is the classroom library. Some authorities recommend that each classroom library contain as many as 1,000 books. School and public libraries are also important sources of reading materials, including books, magazines, brochures, and reference books. Many school and public libraries have connections to the Internet where students can access information that broadens their understanding of the world. Effective teachers hunt for enjoyable and age-appropriate new sources such as youth-oriented magazines, newspapers, Internet sites, popular music lyrics, books on tape, and movies and television productions based on books.

By helping students make good choices in reading materials, teachers encourage students to become avid readers. Effective teachers provide explicit instruction on how mature readers select materials for independent reading by reviewing book jacket covers, studying information about authors, reading leads, sampling text for appropriate readability level, checking the table of contents, and previewing pictures. In addition, teachers instruct students on how to determine when a book is inappropriate and that it is permissible to abandon reading material if it is not at the right level. Teachers can also structure assignments that allow students to explore their reading choices. By planning specific activities around a wide variety of resources, teachers can encourage their students to become literate, lifelong readers.

Implications for ELLs

English language learners (ELLs) in the intermediate grades display a wide range of language and

literacy levels. Proficiency in oral English does not necessarily mean that children can read well. Consequently, it may be more difficult to determine a student's independent and instructional reading levels. Some beginning ELLs in grades 4–6 may require materials typically used in lower grades, such as simplified easy readers or high-interest materials at a low reading level.

ELLs and their parents may be unfamiliar with the range of reading materials and genres available in the classroom, school, and public libraries. They may need explicit orientation to resources, where to find them, and how to select books at an appropriate level of difficulty.

Strategies for Supporting ELLs

Effective teachers and librarians make sure that their bookshelves contain books and periodicals at a range of reading levels to accommodate beginning to advanced readers, as well as a variety of topics related to ELLs' places of origin (e.g., biographies of famous people, fables, folktales, poetry, history, and informational books). When students can borrow and share these materials with their families, connections between home and school are strengthened. Teachers may want to investigate bilingual software and online resources for students in students' home languages.

Glimpse of the Classroom

Mrs. C. previews new books that she has recently added to the sixth-grade classroom library. She uses boxes to organize and to store books for students' easy retrieval by genre and by level. Mrs. C. also keeps periodicals in neatly organized shelves and designs content-area assignments that encourage students to select from the magazines and newspapers.

Students have a lot of choices. They can read from math, science, news, and literature magazines published by Scholastic Teachers (see <http://teacher.scholastic.com/products/classmags.htm#elementary>). For social studies and literature, Mrs. C. subscribes to *Cobblestone* (American history), *Cricket*, and *Calliope* (world history with maps, time lines, illustrations, and art from major museums). She also provides *Boys' Life*, *National Geographic World*, and *Time for Kids* (from Time Magazine). *Scope*, which is oriented more toward the sixth grade and higher, is another Scholastic magazine that focuses on nonfiction, classics, and contemporary and multicultural young-adult literature; it is especially designed to engage reluctant readers with a variety of celebrity features and stories that incorporate high-interest news and contemporary issues. Mrs. C. has provided a great deal of material for students' self-selected reading period and encourages them to read books that may be easy, just right, and challenging.

Today, students review the criteria for *easy* ("You just breeze through and understand it perfectly."); for *just right* ("You may have one or two unfamiliar or difficult words in a hundred, but you can understand it pretty well."); and for *challenging* ("It is difficult to understand, and you read it over more than once."). Mrs. C. reminds students that to look for social studies or science information often involves challenging reading and will require more time and effort.

Students are eager to read their books because they know that when they all have completed at least one free-reading book, Mrs. C. will have a book celebration. For the next book celebration, students may choose the best of three celebration formats for their book. If they think others should read it, they develop a sales pitch or advertisement to persuade others on the merits of reading their book. If they have a favorite scene (narrative or expository), they may write and produce the scene and invite their classmates to take parts. They introduce the scene by summarizing the context of the book so

that the class will understand the significance of the scene. Or they can play "Meet the Press," in which they sit in a chair in front of the class as their favorite character or as the author and answer questions from the class as if it were a press conference. The only requirement is that the class will use a rubric for evaluating how clearly they present their book and how persuasive they are. Now it is time for free reading to begin.

Questions to Think About

1. How are students best encouraged to read a variety of genres?
2. What recourse do teachers have when their classroom or school libraries have insufficient print materials? What roles might public libraries and community organizations play?
3. What are some effective ways for teachers to keep their students informed about new and popular books for intermediate-grade students?

Research Summary

Research Supporting the Practice General Research on ELL Reading Instruction

Research Supporting the Practice

"Students with high intrinsic motivation . . . are relatively active readers and high achievers" (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000, p. 408). It is important to note that motivation shifts across the upper elementary and early secondary school years (Eccles et al., 1998, p. 1068). Intrinsic motivation for learning declines, and extrinsic motivation tends to increase, accompanied by a focus on performance goals. The first decline of intrinsic motivation occurs across grades 1 to 4, and another decline occurs in the transition from elementary school to middle school (or junior high school). Guthrie and Wigfield (2000) suggest that these declines may be attributable to changes in instructional practices in reading (p. 409). Instructional practices that focus on social comparison and competition at this time can contribute to declines in students' competence beliefs, reducing their intrinsic motivation.

To offset this negative effect, the authors suggest certain instructional practices that promote motivation and engagement in learning during these periods. Among them are learning and knowledge goals that are developed jointly by teacher and student; real-world content; meaningful choices; an abundance of texts for instruction (matched to the interest and competency of the reader); reading strategy instruction with scaffolded and guided practice that gradually releases control to the learner; opportunities for students to collaborate and interact; thoughtful praise, rewards, and evaluation; a genuine involvement by the teacher with individual learners; and a well-planned instructional process that combines a number of these practices (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000, pp. 409–416).

Having choices motivates and engages students. Guthrie and Wigfield see choice as motivating because it affords student control (p. 411). To provide ample opportunities for student choice, teachers must make available a wide variety of high-interest print and electronic material. Abundant and varied materials in combination with literacy activities such as reciprocal teaching, metacognitive thinking or think-alouds, book clubs, and Question the Author (QtA) improve reading

comprehension. Studies on these instructional strategies (Duke & Pearson, 2002; Beck et al., 1996) suggest that their effectiveness in improving reading comprehension and higher order thinking lie to a large part in the control that students share in the learning process. Even vocabulary learning for this age group has been shown to be more effective if teachers have students select the vocabulary words they need to study (Fisher et al. 1991; Fisher & Danielson, 1998). Smith and Wilhelm's (2002) research on boys found that "the centrality of choice also challenges our past practices. Our data have convinced us that we provided too few ways for students to make choices. By far the most prevalent piece of advice our boys offered to teachers was to give students choices" (p. 197).

Campbell et al. (1997) sampled students in various grades nationally and found that "as students become engaged readers, they provide themselves with self-generated learning opportunities that are equivalent to several years of education" (p. 404). They state that engaged learning can compensate for--indeed, can overcome--the challenges usually associated with family backgrounds, such as limited education or low income, and even student differences such as gender (e.g., highly motivated boys achieved better than naturally advantaged but less-motivated girls). Guthrie and Wigfield (2000) assert that engagement and motivation can reverse "the Matthew effect" (p. 405)--the well-documented dilemma in which, over time, high achievers grow far more rapidly than low achievers, and low achievers fall so far behind that they never catch up (Stanovich, 1986).

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General Research on ELL Reading Instruction

There is general agreement that becoming a proficient reader in a second language is a difficult task. Snow, Burns, and Griffin (1998) and August and Hakuta (1997) underscore the enormous cognitive challenge faced by young ELLs who must acquire oral and literacy skills in English simultaneously. ELLs who are already literate in a home language are able to transfer some of their skills for use in English reading (Garcia, 2000), but that does not imply that learning to read well in English will be an easy task. Reading involves the use of both "higher level cognitive knowledge, ... abilities... and learning strategies," as well as "low level linguistic knowledge and processing strategies (Birch 2002, p. x.) Throughout the elementary grades, ELLs are likely to encounter difficulties with both "high" and "low" levels of the reading process, especially as they tackle increasingly complex readings (Droop & Verhoeven, 1998).

Knowledge of the relationships between sounds and letters is essential for learning to read English (Ehri, 1998). Verhoeven's (1999) work cautions teachers that it is unrealistic to expect ELLs to decode words independently until they are familiar with the sound system of English. To help ELLs become adept at using sound–letter relationships, Birch (2002) recommends practice in a variety of tasks: identifying a particular phoneme in words, discriminating between that phoneme and similar ones, linking the sound to the printed letter, visually discriminating the letter from other visually similar letters, recognizing and printing the letter in both upper and lowercase forms, finding the letter at the beginnings and endings of words alone and in connected text, and drawing things that begin with the letter and labeling them (p. 72). Other teaching suggestions include: playing games with rhyming words and alliterative words to develop students' awareness of how sounds combine to form words (Antunez, 2002; Kaufman & Franco, 2004), and, in the case of Spanish–speaking ELLs, building upon the similarities and differences between the sound systems of the two languages (Helman, 2004).

Many researchers point out the difficulty of comprehending text when one has a limited vocabulary (Verhallen & Schoonen, 1993; Garcia, 1991; McLaughlin, 1993; Jimenez, Garcia, & Pearson, 1995, 1996). ELLs of any age often know too few words or only a single meaning for a word. McLaughlin et al. (2004) have had promising results in increasing ELLs' vocabulary knowledge through an intervention that pre–selected challenging and high–utility words from a reading selection. The intervention involved direct teaching of word meanings; teaching and raising awareness of words with multiple meanings; systemic teaching of word analysis skills including roots and affixes; engaging students in word games, riddles, and other activities designed to promote deeper understanding and use of the words in new and meaningful contexts; and finding the words outside of school. The intervention also focused on increasing Latino students' awareness of Spanish/English cognate words and ability to use cognate recognition as a legitimate and productive comprehension strategy.

Several researchers have documented that ELLs benefit from cognate recognition training (Garc'a & Nagy, 1993; Durgunoglu et al., 1993). Kress (2002) contains a useful reference list of Spanish–English cognates. Similarly, Au (1993), Nagy (1988), Dixon and Nessel (1983), and others recommend that teachers integrate vocabulary instruction with content instruction and with story reading. Hickman et al. (2004) describe a successful approach to teaching vocabulary to primary–grade ELLs during storybook reading. The approach involves careful selection of several storybooks or informational texts that focus on a theme of interest to the students in the class and are at a reading level above students' grade level. Teachers carefully select from the texts those

vocabulary words which students could encounter and use in other contexts. Over the course of five days, the class previews the story and the vocabulary words, and the story is read aloud, discussed, re-read, and summarized. Discussions focus on using the vocabulary words and encouraging children to relate these words to their own life experiences.

Carrell and Eisterhold (1988) and Carrell (1983, 1984) have demonstrated the positive impact that prior knowledge of a topic or situational context has on ELLs' reading comprehension. However, stories and other texts often contain cultural contexts and assumptions that are unfamiliar to young ELLs and make comprehension difficult or impossible. Researchers advise teachers to support comprehension before students read by eliciting and building upon ELLs' prior knowledge and experiences relevant to story theme, setting, and content. Many researchers also support the value of teaching content reading strategies such as previewing a chapter before reading it and formulating questions, self-monitoring, and using imagery during reading (Carasquillo et al., 2004; Chamot & O'Malley, 1994; Echeverria et al., 2000; Schifini, 1994). Researchers agree that teachers should model and support comprehension before, during, and after reading by teaching text structures; using graphic organizers such as Venn diagrams, cause and effect charts, and story maps; and creating study guides that students can complete (Carasquillo et al., 2004).

One recommended approach to increase comprehension and engagement is the use of culturally relevant texts and multicultural literature (Au, 1998, 1993; Barrera, 1992; Harris, 1994). Larrick's 1965 landmark article, "The All-White World of Children's Books" (reprinted in Muse, 1997) pointed out that minority children had few opportunities to read about characters like themselves or see themselves in these books. In Larrick's review, these children's books often depicted those minority characters in offensive or demeaning ways. More recently, Singer and Smith (2003) point out that

Multicultural children's literature provides self-affirmation for readers when it conveys that people like themselves have lives worth knowing about and worth sharing with others (Bishop, 1997; Tenorio, 1994). This is particularly significant for readers who are members of marginalized groups (p.17).

Daphne Muse's book, *Multicultural Resources for Young Readers* (1997), contains an extensive annotated bibliography of such literature likely to engage ELLs readers and to build upon their experiences and prior knowledge.

Students' knowledge and experience are the starting points for The Language Experience Approach to reading, used with beginning English readers of all ages (Moustafa, 1987; Tharp & Gallimore, 1989; Tinajero & Calderon, 1988). Through questioning, teachers prompt students to speak about their individual or in-class experiences. The teacher writes down students' oral narratives, and the resulting text becomes the basis of reading instruction. Often teachers plan a group activity (e.g., taking a walk) to provide a common experiential base for reading.

Hoggard's 1996 review of the "critical attributes of classroom culture" for ESL literacy learners includes "the teacher as guide," "meaningful literacy experiences, a sense of ownership," "a community of learners," and "interactive classroom discourse" (pp. 5–9). Other researchers have also highlighted the importance of student participation in conversations that relate book themes to students' personal experiences and to other books. The instructional conversations (IC) approach is one way of structuring such book-centered interactions. Teachers promote general participation in small-group discussion by not calling on children but waiting for them to volunteer to speak, by responding to student contributions, and by encouraging students to connect their comments to those of previous speakers and build upon what they said (Rueda et al., 1992; Saunders & Goldenberg, 1999). IC also promotes skimming, scanning, and careful reading by requiring students to find text

passages that support their opinions and interpretations (Goldenberg, 1991, 1992/1993; Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1990). Literature circles are another discussion format that promotes comprehension and academic language in a social context. Ruby (2003) discusses their effectiveness when properly scaffolded for English language learners. Gordon (2003) offers another good example of how teachers can effectively use literature response journals with English language learners.

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Related Web Resources

Module 4: The Learner as Inquirer, Theme Units, and Good Strategies to Support ESL Students and Struggling Readers (0)

Module 5: Ideas and Strategies for Teaching in the Content Areas (0)

Writing Instruction, Grades K–6

Practices ELL Overview

This section presents eight practices for writing instruction in grades K–6. Reading and writing are reciprocal processes, in that one is decoding and one is encoding; they should be explicitly connected in the day-to-day instruction of students. In addition, listening helps students expand their spoken vocabularies, which, in turn, results in more varied writing styles. Writing is a developmental process; writers at all levels are continually refining their craft. As you read these practices, notice the importance of you, the teacher, serving as a model for your students. If you expect your students to become good writers, you need to be a writer, too.

- Teachers demonstrate how writing and reading are connected.
- Teachers demonstrate how writing and reading are tools for thinking and learning.
- Teachers explicitly demonstrate how brainstorming, drafting, revising, and editing are recursive processes.
- Teachers model exemplary writing practices for their students and demonstrate how writers write about topics that are meaningful to them.
- Teachers teach grammar in the context of actual writing.
- Teachers provide varied and increasingly challenging writing experiences for students at all grade levels.
- Teachers develop a list of core words for their students to use in their writing.
- Teachers regularly integrate spelling into writing and reading instruction.

ELL Overview

When students write, they draw upon the sum of their experiences in listening, speaking, and reading. As English language learners (ELLs) apply themselves to solving the problems they face in writing, such as how to spell a word, where to place a period or an adjective, how to introduce a character, or how to organize supporting details, they gain metalinguistic awareness. Producing text encourages conscious attention to the ways in which language conveys meaning.

Effective teachers try to differentiate between ELLs' content knowledge and their writing proficiency. Although ELLs may achieve a high level of content knowledge, aspects of their writing (e.g., incomplete knowledge of idioms, vocabulary, and writing styles) can suggest a poor grasp of content. ELLs need opportunities to explain their writing to teachers and to obtain help in expressing their knowledge effectively.

ELLs need to experience rich and well-integrated opportunities to participate in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Learning standard writing conventions is especially difficult for young ELLs who depend so much on visual cues and contextual relationships. Teachers help provide such cues and relationships when they write interactively with students and make writing a social activity.

When writing interactively, teachers verbalize their thinking as they write (e.g., "I'm going to put a comma here after bananas because I want to list three fruits: bananas comma apples comma and grapes period. The comma tells the reader to pause in between, and the period says that's the end of

the sentence."). Writing is interactive when teachers invite student participation (e.g., "What would be a good title for this journal entry? What was my topic?").

Effective teachers often provide a visual context for writing by having students draw a picture before they write. Teachers may elicit more detail and provide language models by talking with students about their drawings (e.g., "Tell me more about what's happening? I see the dog near the house. What's the dog doing? Is he barking? Is he making noise?").

Writing becomes a social activity when the teacher and students brainstorm together, read their work to each other, and talk about each other's writing. When it is the focus of social interaction, writing is supported by oral language and interpersonal relationships. Students write for the audience of their classmates and are eager to hear what others have written. There are many opportunities for students to learn from each other and from the teacher's interactions with their peers.

Because writing in English is challenging for ELLs, their progress depends greatly on the learning environment and the scaffolding provided. When large writing tasks are subdivided into manageable steps, students experience greater success. ELLs may need more help with vocabulary, spelling, and word order than English-proficient students do, but helping ELLs get started is an investment in their development.

Advice like "Sound it out" or "Find it on the word wall" can be appropriate for English-proficient students with strong literacy backgrounds. Beginning ELLs, on the other hand, may need help with breaking down a word into component sounds or with identifying the word on the wall. Effective teachers observe students carefully for indications of what tasks they are ready to manage successfully on their own. In addition, purposeful writing projects, such as making invitations, get well cards, announcements, and class helper charts, engage students in the types of writing that they may see in their homes. When teachers provide such integrated opportunities for learning, ELLs can thrive as writers.

Teachers of all students will find useful insights and strategies in the sections **Implications for ELLs** and **Strategies for Supporting ELLs** below each practice under **[What Is It?]**.

Teachers demonstrate how writing and reading are connected.

What Is It?
Implications for ELLs
Strategies for Supporting ELLs
Glimpse of the Classroom
Questions to Think About

What Is It?

Writers, young and old, learn to write by reading and trying on different writing styles from various genres. While writing is an idiosyncratic process, students learn to write by having good models and by encountering printed material that they can read and discuss. Knowledge of writing styles comes through reading various authors and then experimenting with writing, attempting to emulate proficient writers. This occurs early in a student's schooling career.

Implications for ELLs

Young English language learners (ELLs) often depend upon the school environment and teachers for models of English reading and writing. However, shared reading and writing activities and conversations with adults in their home language also contribute greatly to students' English literacy development. It's beneficial when teachers learn about students' home language and literacy practices and try to create literacy linkages between home and school.

Beginning ELL readers concentrate on word recognition and on grasping meaning. Differences in narrative style, voice, and genre may not be apparent to ELLs unless explicitly pointed out. Once students' basic reading skills become more automatic, they can begin to notice stylistic differences. Likewise, when ELLs master basic writing skills, they can begin to "try on" or emulate the styles they have read.

Strategies for Supporting ELLs

A variety of strategies can draw students' attention to differences in narrative style and genre. To increase English language learners' (ELLs) exposure to a variety of texts, teachers can arrange for volunteers, aides, librarians, and older students to read to and with them. Book selection is not random. Teachers can choose two different books to compare their genres, such as the topic of animal behavior in fiction and nonfiction books. They can choose books by different authors to compare their styles. A week of reading informational books on animals can be followed by a group analysis of the types of information such books include (e.g., habitats, food, species, breeds, caring for young). This explicit analysis prepares students to write their own informational pieces. Students can compare different books using Venn diagrams and focusing questions.

To compare texts, effective teachers say things like:

- Let's look at the books we read this week.
- We read *The Cat in the Hat* and *Cross Country Cat*.
- What do the two books have in common?
- What's the same about them?
- That's right, they're both about cats.
- Are the cats in these books real cats like mine?
- That's right. They're not.
- Tell me what the cats in these books can do that our cats can't do?
- Now listen to the first page of each book. (Teacher reads aloud.)
- Do they sound the same, or do they sound different?
- What differences do you notice?
- Let's talk about the book *Dear Mr. Henshaw*.
- What's special about how this book is written?
- Is there a narrator who tells us about the characters?
- Do the characters speak to the reader?

Effective teachers also seek information about home literacy practices and find interesting and often unexpected models to build upon.

They say things like:

- Draw me a picture of someone in your family reading and writing.
- Tell me about the picture.
- Does anyone in your family read newspapers or magazines?
- What language are they in?
- Does anyone in your house write letters?
- Whom do they write to? What language do they write in?
- Does anyone in your house do homework?
- What kind of homework is it?
- Who else do you see reading and writing?

Teachers also try to establish a flow of books to and from home. ELLs can read at home with English-speaking older siblings and family members. Parents who speak little or no English are often thrilled and proud to have their own students read to them in English. Appropriate children's books in Spanish and other languages may be read aloud in school by bilingual adults or older students, and the books may be sent home for families to enjoy together.

Glimpse of the Classroom

Mrs. D. sits on a chair in the front of her class. Her students are sitting cross-legged on the floor.

"When I go to a bookstore, I always like to see how authors begin their stories," says Mrs. D.

"Authors use different ways to start their stories, so today, when I read to you, I want you to listen to how authors use different ways to start their stories. We can learn how authors begin their stories and then use what they use to help us in our writing."

"The book we are going to read today is *Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge* by Mem Fox. Have any of you read this book before?"

Though the class is silent, students lean forward to see the book that the teacher is holding.

"What do you notice about the cover?" Mrs. D. asks the class.

One of the students notices that grandma is sitting on a chicken.

"What does that tell you about the story?" she asks.

"Perhaps they live on a farm," responds one student.

"What about the little boy?" asks Mrs. D.

"He's skateboarding," someone says.

Mrs. D. does a picture introduction to the first page. She reads the first page aloud, and the class discovers that the boy lives next door to an old-folks home. She pauses and says "Mmmmm...that makes me think..." Several students pick up on her cue and offer what they are thinking about.

As her reading continues, students follow the plot of the story. The story tells how the boy connects with some of the people at the old-folks home. But, the person he likes best is a woman who has four names, just like he does. The woman is 96 years old and has lost her memory. Perplexed, the boy asks many of the people in the home, "What is a memory?" Then the boy finds a hen's egg and gives it to the woman. He gives her an ocean shell, a medal, a puppet, and a football. He sees how each item triggers the woman's memory.

Next, Mrs. D. talks about the writer's craft. She describes how this author jumps right into the story and tells us who the main character is. She compares this lead with those in other books.

In *The Secret Shortcut*, the author begins the story by introducing a problem.

The Day Jimmy's Boa Ate the Wash starts with a question.

The True Story of the Three Little Pigs begins with an incredible fact.

Cloudy With a Chance of Meatballs uses setting as a lead.

I Hate English uses dialogue and voice.

And, in *Mirandy and Brother Wind*, the author uses sound.

Mrs. D. makes a list of the ways authors use leads. The list includes:

- Question
- Dialogue
- Problem
- Startling Fact
- Setting
- Voice
- Sound

"Now, I'm going to write a story about what happened to me this week," says Mrs. D.

Once she has written the story, she goes back and changes the lead using items from the list.

My husband and I went on a trip to New York. On the way we had suddenly run out of gas in the middle of a busy highway. Great! What were we to do now?

First, she shows how she could start with a question.

"What is happening? Why are you slowing down, Don?"

Next, she models a lead using a sound.

Voom! Voom! The cars on the highway were all passing us by so fast we seemed to be crawling.

Finally, she shows an example of voice and dialogue together.

"Don! What are you doing? You're going to get us killed." His driving was atrocious.

She points out how she can start a story in many different ways. She explains how even in personal journals, we can experiment with leads. She concludes the class by saying that if students have questions, they can discuss different leads during their conferences.

Questions to Think About

1. How can teachers take examples from their personal lives and bring them into the classroom to show how they, themselves, are readers and writers?
2. How do teachers illustrate to students that decoding and spelling strategies can lead to competency in reading and writing?
3. Where can teachers find books in English language learners' home languages, and how can they use these resources?

Story Summaries

The Story Workshop" Approach

"Reading and writing are taught equally in this course. . . Reading became easier, more enjoyable, and writing was given a voice with power. . . [Both] improved so dramatically, scores in other subjects soared," said one fourth-grade public school teacher after a 10-week Story Workshop program. Originated and developed by John Schultz and conducted in diverse classes from grade school to grad school, the Story Workshop approach emphasizes reading, writing, speaking, listening, and thinking relationships. This story describes the approach, illustrated with linked video segments of actual classroom experiences with elementary school students. Because of the way in which this approach integrates oral telling, reading, and writing skills into classroom activities, it connects to multiple practices in the elementary literacy spotlight (see practices list).

Research Summary

Research Supporting the Practice
General Research on ELL Writing Instruction

Research Supporting the Practice

Social demonstrations of reading and writing play a crucial role in developing young readers and writers. Reading books, listening to read-alouds (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1984; Newkirk, 1982), watching other writers, and talking to others about their writing all affect a student's writing. When teachers conduct and model how students can do read-alouds with others, students better understand the reading, and they experience greater enjoyment of both reading and writing. Students who have not been read to do not understand the content as well as those who have. In addition, students who participate in read-alouds are more apt to stay on task, have richer discussions, and take discussions beyond the scope of the text (Galda, Ash & Cullinan, 2002). This language-rich learning has an additional benefit when students engage in writing.

Using a scaffolding of instruction, readers and writers better understand the task required (Mazzoni & Gambrell, 2003). Literacy is not gained by simply learning a set of identified behaviors. Instead, teachers must model, encourage, question, challenge, reteach, and review material with students (Routman, 2000).

Furthermore, students from literate home environments come to school motivated to learn more about reading and writing. Thus, when teachers model literate behavior, these students are apt to be more engaged than students from non-literate home environments.

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General Research on ELL Writing Instruction

Writing has been characterized as the most challenging of the literacy domains (Juel, 1994). Nelson and Nelson (1978) underscore the difficulty of writing by describing it as "a complex of interconnected systems" (p. 278). Writing requires simultaneous use of phonological, graphic, orthographic, semantic, syntactic, and discourse rule systems (Dyson & Freedman, 1991, p. 762). Most students learn to understand speech first, and then learn to read and write; English language learners (ELLs) have to do all this simultaneously. August and Hakuta (1997) acknowledge that there is little research that sheds light upon the enormous cognitive challenge faced by ELLs who must acquire oral and literacy skills.

Yedlin (2003) identifies the prerequisite skills and knowledge that English writing demands of ELLs in the primary grades:

In order to even begin writing English, the child must be able to discriminate aurally among various phonemes (sounds) and visually among graphemes (letters), and understand the relationships between sounds of speech and letters of the alphabet. Children must also recognize and remember high-frequency words that do not conform to orthographic regularities. Children must master the motor skills necessary to form and arrange the letters and to space words evenly. They must decide what to write about and be able to generate topics suitable for school writing. Furthermore, they must access and produce vocabulary and construct discourse patterns appropriate to their topics (pp. 111–12).

ELLs who have already learned to write in another language have knowledge and literacy skills that

can help them write in English, but they still face many difficulties (Kroll, 1990). To become effective and fluent writers, ELLs must overcome their unfamiliarity with English syntax (Ammon, 1985) and develop their vocabulary. ELLs typically need to develop larger repertoires of words and to learn more about the multiple meanings, connotations, and usages of the words that they already recognize and use (August & Hakuta, 1997). In order to sound out and spell English words accurately, ELLs must surmount their unfamiliarity with the English sound system (Verhoeven, 1999; Yopp, 1992) and learn to perceive "speech chunks" as strings of individual words (Ellis, 1994). Finally, writers from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds may already be accustomed to different styles of writing and argumentation (Connor, 1987). Montaño-Harmon's (1991) research showed that Mexican students' English writing reflected the same discourse patterns that they had learned to use in Spanish. Kaplan (1967) found that many ELL compositions rated as vague, disorganized, or off-topic by U.S. teachers, actually conformed to organizational styles favored by students' home cultures.

The consensus of researchers and practitioners is that reading and listening to read-alouds has positive effects on developing ELLs' vocabulary and other facets of their second language development, including writing (Krashen, 2004; Elley, 1991). However, there is little research yet to directly link listening and reading with writing performance (Lightbown et al., 2002).

Studies by Kreeft-Peyton (1990), Hudelson (1986, 1989), Franklin (1986), Ammon (1985), and Urzua (1987) demonstrate that when in supportive contexts, ELL students in the primary grades can write productively. Kreeft-Peyton defines supportive contexts as those characterized by:

1. "frequent opportunities to write,
2. rich language input from the teacher, and
3. teacher feedback focused primarily on content" (p. 195).

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Research [Yedlin, 2003; Kucer & Silva (in press)] and Carasquillo et al.'s (2004) review of literature on writing all point to the benefits of intensive teacher modeling of writing accompanied by the teacher's explicit moment-to-moment account of thinking processes. Teachers model their composing processes by verbalizing their own thoughts about purpose, audience, genre, vocabulary choice, and spelling as they write demonstrations in class. Teachers model their revising and editing processes by rereading and evaluating out loud what they have written. Students may simply observe and listen or the teacher may engage students as participants by asking for help or opinions (Yedlin, 2003).

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markers that signal what follows (e.g., Once upon a time, but, since, because, for example). Gradually, teachers involve students in interactive and shared writing activities where students gain increasing independence and teachers respond by "relinquishing control" (Carasquillo et al., 2004, p. 46).

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Related Web Resources

An Overview of Vermont's Writing Program (0)

Writing in the Early Grades, K-2 (0)

Writing in the Intermediate Grades, 3-5 (0)

Teachers demonstrate how writing and reading are tools for thinking and learning.

What Is It?
Implications for ELLs
Strategies for Supporting ELLs
Glimpse of the Classroom
Questions to Think About

What Is It?

Writers need to learn that word choice, sentence structure, use of descriptive language, and other facets of writing help the reader better comprehend text. Through regular writing routines, writers learn the importance of editing and revision. As authors write, they learn new ways of gathering information, stating facts, explaining situations, and understanding the world about which they are writing. Simply put, writing helps us to learn. Eventually, writers begin to view their world more perceptively.

Implications for ELLs

Early on, English language learners (ELLs) need to write frequently and become accustomed to the idea that writing is an iterative process. With skillful teacher modeling and a sequence of manageable steps to follow, ELLs can use writing and reading as tools for thinking and learning. Effective teachers demonstrate how writers read their writing and get more ideas about what else to write. They model some of the questions that writers ask themselves to evaluate what they have written.

Strategies for Supporting ELLs

There are many ways that teachers can support students' reading, writing, and thinking skills. English language learners (ELLs) can learn how to write from sources (e.g., two different fire engine books), to conduct and write up research (e.g., stories from their grandparents, a survey of classmates' pets, or school staff members' favorite foods), and to write persuasively about their opinions (e.g., "I think football is better than baseball because..."). Effective teachers show students how to use graphic organizers such as timelines, Venn diagrams, semantic webs, and lists of pros and cons for decision making. Teachers demonstrate how they evaluate their own writing and prompt students to do the same.

To show students how to review their writing, teachers say things like:

- Did I introduce my main character, the person that the story is about?
- Did I tell where my story happens?
- Did I tell when my story takes place, night or day, summer or winter?
- Does my title fit my story?

Some teachers encourage ELLs to review their writing portfolios and to think and talk about what they have learned (e.g., Students make reflective comments such as, "I learned to use periods." "I use more capital letters now." "I didn't know how to spell *school*." "My daily journals were very short. It didn't have details."). ELLs are often amazed to see their own progress. Some teachers ask their students to select a paper from the portfolio to revise and edit once they have learned more.

Glimpse of the Classroom

Glacie is one of the more prolific writers in her second-grade classroom. She is also an avid reader. Through her reading, she has learned how books are designed and how authors sometimes include a dedication page. She has applied that knowledge to her latest project, a book she has written entitled *The Day My Mom and Dad Took Me to the Beach*. As she turns to the second page of her book, she beams from ear to ear. It's her dedication page. It reads, *I dedicate this book to my mom and dad*.

She turns the page and begins to read. Each page is vividly illustrated in bright colors.

*I was excited that I was going to the beach.
First we packed up the sandwiches and juice. We put them in the cooler.
It took a long time to get to the beach.
Finally, we got to the beach.
I had fun. I built five sand castles.
Then I had to eat. I ate one sandwich.
After eating, I went to play. I built a big hill.
When I went to the water, my dad built a sand castle on top of my hill.
Then we had to leave the beach because the water was getting up to the beach.
I had to leave my sand castle. My dad said the sand castle would stay.
It took a long time to get home. Finally we got home.
I had fun playing on the beach.
When it was night, I went to bed.
The next day, my father said, "Tomorrow, we are going to the beach."
We packed our lunch. We packed up sandwiches and juice.
My dad said that we were going to another beach.
We got there on time.
I played and played. I had fun.
The End.*

Glacie has come to understand many things about the formatting of books; the logic of story; and the need for stories to have a beginning, middle, and end. Not only that, her story has voice. What makes this story so incredible is that for Glacie, a second-grade English as a second language (ESL) student, Portuguese was her primary language before she entered school.

Questions to Think About

1. If reading and writing are tools for learning, how might these two areas be best assessed?
2. What can students learn about themselves as readers as they engage in self-selected reading?
3. What can students learn about themselves as writers and thinkers as they engage in personal writing?
4. To what extent can English language learners (ELLs) help each other to become better writers? What are some effective ways for ELLs to assess their own progress?

Story Summaries

The Story Workshop" Approach

"Reading and writing are taught equally in this course. . . Reading became easier, more enjoyable, and writing was given a voice with power. . . [Both] improved so dramatically, scores in other subjects soared," said one fourth-grade public school teacher after a 10-week Story Workshop program. Originated and developed by John Schultz and conducted in diverse classes from grade school to grad school, the Story Workshop approach emphasizes reading, writing, speaking, listening, and thinking relationships. This story describes the approach, illustrated with linked video segments of actual classroom experiences with elementary school students. Because of the way in which this approach integrates oral telling, reading, and writing skills into classroom activities, it connects to multiple practices in the elementary literacy spotlight (see practices list).

Research Summary

Research Supporting the Practice
General Research on ELL Writing Instruction

Research Supporting the Practice

Writers learn to write by writing, (National Center on Education and the Economy, 1999; Edwards et al., 1995; Pappas, 1993). Student writers need to follow the routines of practicing writers as if they were apprentices: writing regularly, rethinking how they convey their message, and becoming wordsmiths. As they continue to write, students learn that writing can actually change their perceptions of situations (Angelillo, 2003).

Murray (1990) describes the process and experience of writing. Writers, for example, frequently start to write about one topic but as they continue to write, their words take a different direction than originally anticipated. Writers sometimes better understand topics and situations as a result of their writing. Finally, people who write learn to be more perceptive and express themselves in unique ways.

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General Research on ELL Writing Instruction

Writing has been characterized as the most challenging of the literacy domains (Juel, 1994). Nelson and Nelson (1978) underscore the difficulty of writing by describing it as "a complex of interconnected systems" (p. 278). Writing requires simultaneous use of phonological, graphic, orthographic, semantic, syntactic, and discourse rule systems (Dyson & Freedman, 1991, p. 762). Most students learn to understand speech first, and then learn to read and write; English language learners (ELLs) have to do all this simultaneously. August and Hakuta (1997) acknowledge that there is little research that sheds light upon the enormous cognitive challenge faced by ELLs who must acquire oral and literacy skills.

Yedlin (2003) identifies the prerequisite skills and knowledge that English writing demands of ELLs in the primary grades:

In order to even begin writing English, the child must be able to discriminate aurally among various phonemes (sounds) and visually among graphemes (letters), and understand the relationships between sounds of speech and letters of the alphabet. Children must also recognize and remember high-frequency words that do not conform to orthographic regularities. Children must master the motor skills necessary to form and arrange the letters and to space words evenly. They must decide what to write about and be able to generate topics suitable for school writing. Furthermore, they must access and produce vocabulary and construct discourse patterns appropriate to their topics (pp. 111–12).

ELLs who have already learned to write in another language have knowledge and literacy skills that can help them write in English, but they still face many difficulties (Kroll, 1990). To become effective and fluent writers, ELLs must overcome their unfamiliarity with English syntax (Ammon, 1985) and develop their vocabulary. ELLs typically need to develop larger repertoires of words and to learn more about the multiple meanings, connotations, and usages of the words that they already recognize and use (August & Hakuta, 1997). In order to sound out and spell English words accurately, ELLs must surmount their unfamiliarity with the English sound system (Verhoeven, 1999; Yopp, 1992) and learn to perceive "speech chunks" as strings of individual words (Ellis, 1994). Finally, writers from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds may already be accustomed to different styles of writing and argumentation (Connor, 1987). Montaño-Harmon's (1991) research showed that Mexican students' English writing reflected the same discourse patterns that they had learned to use in Spanish. Kaplan (1967) found that many ELL compositions rated as vague, disorganized, or off-topic by U.S. teachers, actually conformed to organizational styles favored by students' home cultures.

The consensus of researchers and practitioners is that reading and listening to read-alouds has positive effects on developing ELLs' vocabulary and other facets of their second language development, including writing (Krashen, 2004; Elley, 1991). However, there is little research yet to directly link listening and reading with writing performance (Lightbown et al., 2002).

Studies by Kreeft-Peyton (1990), Hudelson (1986, 1989), Franklin (1986), Ammon (1985), and Urzua (1987) demonstrate that when in supportive contexts, ELL students in the primary grades can write productively. Kreeft-Peyton defines supportive contexts as those characterized by:

1. "frequent opportunities to write,
2. rich language input from the teacher, and
3. teacher feedback focused primarily on content" (p. 195).

In studies of a first-grade ESL class where writing improved substantially over the course of a school year, Yedlin (2003, 2004) observed the first two characteristics above, but also noted that the ESL teacher provided students with feedback on both content and form. In addition, Yedlin observed that this classroom supported ELL writing through a rich print environment containing a word wall and semantic chart listing frequently used words. Perego and Boyle (1997) have found that ELLs often use drawing as a pre-write and illustrate their stories and journal entries to support the communicative power of their writing. Yedlin (2003, 2004) described how a teacher used ELLs' drawings as a basis for conversation with students and for eliciting written elaboration of journal entries and stories. Dialogue journals, in which teachers reply in writing to student entries, and learning logs, in which students write about their content learning, have been found effective in encouraging ELLs to write daily, interact with the teacher, and reflect upon their learning and their comprehension (Kreeft-Peyton & Reed, 1990; Dolly, 1990).

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Related Web Resources

Develop an Elementary School Writing Policy (0)

Ten Myths About Learning to Write (0)

Writing in the Intermediate Grades, 3–5 (0)

Teachers explicitly demonstrate how brainstorming, drafting, revising, and editing are recursive processes.

What Is It?
Implications for ELLs
Strategies for Supporting ELLs
Glimpse of the Classroom
Questions to Think About

What Is It?

Writers must constantly be willing to rethink the effectiveness of their written message. Word choice, phrases, and sentence structure all help to develop a rhythm and clarity of language. Good writers continually monitor their writing process and edit their work, thereby enabling the reader to better understand the written word.

Implications for ELLs

Revising and editing are essential to good writing. Both processes involve reading the written text critically and keeping in mind the writer's message, audience, and language. Effective teachers of English language learners (ELLs) employ a variety of strategies to encourage revision and editing. In formal and informal writing conferences, teachers ask young writers for more information or clarification. These prompts for revision can come from both teachers and students when students read to their classmates from the "author's chair" or during a writing workshop.

Strategies for Supporting ELLs

To engage students in all aspects of the writing process, effective teachers structure writing projects in deliberate and distinct stages that require multiple re-readings and rewritings leading to "publication." For example, a first-grade English as a second language (ESL) teacher has her students write their stories in stages: beginning, middle, and end. After each section is completed, the writer reads it aloud to classmates and makes some revisions based on their responses. As students complete their story drafts, they have a publishing conference with the teacher. Each student reads aloud to the teacher, and she types the text using the class computer, often asking questions or making suggestions for revision. As the teacher makes the revisions on the computer, the student has to make the same changes to the original hand-written draft to better understand the revision process. The final printed pages are then illustrated, bound, and proudly read to classroom visitors, families, and friends.

Glimpse of the Classroom

Danielle is a second-grade English as a second language (ESL) student from Columbia. She has been writing a story about her family's trip to Virginia during a recent school vacation. Over the past two weeks, she has made several rough drafts of the story and, with the teacher's help, is now ready to

publish her story in a class booklet. Her teacher has typed sentences from her story on the bottom of a series of pages, leaving room for illustrations in the booklet. Danielle is now ready to illustrate her memoir. She proudly holds up one page of her story. The page that she is illustrating reads, *The next morning we ate breakfast and we packed everything.*

She looks up from her reading and begins to tell about her cousin, Catalina, who lives in Virginia. Then she continues with her reading.

But, then Diana and I said goodbye to my big brother, his wife, and Catalina.

She flips to another page.

Then we left. I was sad. My dad took Diana and her mom home.

And then she turns to the last page.

That's the end of my story about when I went to Virginia.

Danielle is learning about the writing process and how it consists of a series of drafts, revisions, and editing sessions before it is ready to be typed and illustrated. It is almost ready to be "published" as part of the class memoir book. Danielle has become an author.

Questions to Think About

1. How can teachers best incorporate authors' visits into their classroom activities so students have an opportunity to learn most effectively from practicing writers?
2. What are effective ways for teachers to share how they integrate the processes of brainstorming, drafting, revising, and editing into their own writing?
3. What are some good approaches for teachers who do not want to discourage or overwhelm English language learners (ELLs) with lots of corrections and revisions, but also don't want to hold ELLs to a lower standard than other English-proficient students?

Story Summaries

The Story Workshop" Approach

"Reading and writing are taught equally in this course. . . Reading became easier, more enjoyable, and writing was given a voice with power. . . [Both] improved so dramatically, scores in other subjects soared," said one fourth-grade public school teacher after a 10-week Story Workshop program. Originated and developed by John Schultz and conducted in diverse classes from grade school to grad school, the Story Workshop approach emphasizes reading, writing, speaking, listening, and thinking relationships. This story describes the approach, illustrated with linked video segments of actual classroom experiences with elementary school students. Because of the way in which this approach integrates oral telling, reading, and writing skills into classroom activities, it connects to multiple practices in the elementary literacy spotlight (see practices list).

Research Summary

Research Supporting the Practice General Research on ELL Writing Instruction

Research Supporting the Practice

Lucy Calkins (1991) discusses how she used to view writing as simply getting a draft on paper and then repairing it. Only later did she realize that writing is about process, not product. If we are to help student writers to become all that they can, we must view writing as a never-ending process of honing the craft.

Fletcher and Portalupi (2001) lay out a path for teachers to follow when working with young writers. As students become more fluent, they build on the skills they have already learned (Graves, 1983). The writing cycle centers on prewriting, drafting, revising, proofreading, and publishing. Reading, according to Fletcher and Portalupi, is "the glue that connects the stages of writing" (p. 69). Hansen (1998) elaborates on this fact when she points out that even though there is an overall continuum of growth in writing skills across children, variation among individual children is expected. Shanahan (1988) also supports this point of view. Thus, teachers continually must be alert to the fact that students, even at the same grade or ability level, may have unique writing needs that instruction should address.

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General Research on ELL Writing Instruction

Writing has been characterized as the most challenging of the literacy domains (Juel, 1994). Nelson and Nelson (1978) underscore the difficulty of writing by describing it as "a complex of interconnected systems" (p. 278). Writing requires simultaneous use of phonological, graphic, orthographic, semantic, syntactic, and discourse rule systems (Dyson & Freedman, 1991, p. 762). Most students learn to understand speech first, and then learn to read and write; English language learners (ELLs) have to do all this simultaneously. August and Hakuta (1997) acknowledge that there is little research that sheds light upon the enormous cognitive challenge faced by ELLs who must acquire oral and literacy skills.

Yedlin (2003) identifies the prerequisite skills and knowledge that English writing demands of ELLs in the primary grades:

In order to even begin writing English, the child must be able to discriminate aurally among various phonemes (sounds) and visually among graphemes (letters), and understand the relationships between sounds of speech and letters of the alphabet. Children must also recognize and remember high-frequency words that do not conform to orthographic regularities. Children must master the motor skills necessary to form and arrange the letters and to space words evenly. They must decide what to write about and be able to generate topics suitable for school writing. Furthermore, they must access and produce vocabulary and construct discourse patterns appropriate to their topics (pp. 111–12).

ELLs who have already learned to write in another language have knowledge and literacy skills that can help them write in English, but they still face many difficulties (Kroll, 1990). To become effective and fluent writers, ELLs must overcome their unfamiliarity with English syntax (Ammon, 1985) and develop their vocabulary. ELLs typically need to develop larger repertoires of words and to learn more about the multiple meanings, connotations, and usages of the words that they already recognize and use (August & Hakuta, 1997). In order to sound out and spell English words accurately, ELLs must surmount their unfamiliarity with the English sound system (Verhoeven, 1999; Yopp, 1992) and learn to perceive "speech chunks" as strings of individual words (Ellis, 1994). Finally, writers from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds may already be accustomed to different styles of writing and argumentation (Connor, 1987). Montaño-Harmon's (1991) research showed that Mexican students' English writing reflected the same discourse patterns that they had learned to use in Spanish. Kaplan (1967) found that many ELL compositions rated as vague, disorganized, or off-topic by U.S. teachers, actually conformed to organizational styles favored by students' home cultures.

The consensus of researchers and practitioners is that reading and listening to read-alouds has positive effects on developing ELLs' vocabulary and other facets of their second language development, including writing (Krashen, 2004; Elley, 1991). However, there is little research yet to directly link listening and reading with writing performance (Lightbown et al., 2002).

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Research [Yedlin, 2003; Kucer & Silva (in press)] and Carasquillo et al.'s (2004) review of literature

on writing all point to the benefits of intensive teacher modeling of writing accompanied by the teacher's explicit moment-to-moment account of thinking processes. Teachers model their composing processes by verbalizing their own thoughts about purpose, audience, genre, vocabulary choice, and spelling as they write demonstrations in class. Teachers model their revising and editing processes by rereading and evaluating out loud what they have written. Students may simply observe and listen or the teacher may engage students as participants by asking for help or opinions (Yedlin, 2003).

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Related Web Resources

Develop an Elementary School Writing Policy (0)

Ten Myths About Learning to Write (0)

Writing in the Early Grades, K–2 (0)

Writing in the Intermediate Grades, 3–5 (0)

Teachers model exemplary writing practices for their students and demonstrate how writers write about topics that are meaningful to them.

What Is It?
Implications for ELLs
Strategies for Supporting ELLs
Glimpse of the Classroom
Questions to Think About

What Is It?

Parents often serve as the child's first model of readers and writers. Caregivers read and tell stories, and they write lists of projects to accomplish, groceries to purchase, and notes to remind themselves of appointments. Later, teachers serve as models of writing. At the kindergarten and first-grade level, teachers frequently model sentences or stories about events that occurred at home or at school. Usually, teachers transcribe these written pieces onto chart paper. Effective teachers not only model their writing processes in front of their class, but at the same time they describe the thought processes that are occurring. In this way, students become aware of how writers think when they write. Students are then free to model their own writing based on what was demonstrated by the teacher.

It is incumbent upon teachers to demonstrate their own writing so that students have a model from which to begin. Not only can a teacher's personal writing have an important bearing upon a student's work, but also the writing of other popular children's authors can serve as models for students to emulate. As students progress through the grades, teachers model more advanced forms of written language, such as letters, reports, or fiction stories.

Experts agree that students pass through stages as they are learning to write. Early in their writing careers, students use one-sentence narratives to describe pictures that they may have drawn. Later, they embellish these drawings with multi-sentence samples of print. Next, they write stories as if listing their experiences.

At an early age, writing can be stimulated from first-hand experiences because we write best about that which we know and that has meaning for us. As students develop, they write about the experiences of others or write about things that they have read. This developmental sequence continues into adulthood.

Implications for ELLs

English language learners (ELLs) may not be familiar with the many functions and types of writing used in our society and practiced in our schools. They may not know what to write about or may feel daunted by the difficulty of writing. For these reasons, effective teachers model how to write for a purpose and for an audience. By inviting students to observe and participate in the teacher's own writing process, ELLs can better understand ways to approach the task of writing.

Strategies for Supporting ELLs

Effective teachers model not only the process of writing but also topic selection. They often model interactively, asking English language learners (ELLs) to participate in various dimensions of the teacher's writing process. This provides practice in the tasks of a writer and a glimpse into the decision-making process.

Teachers say things like:

- Next Sunday is Mother's Day, so I am thinking about writing a Mother's Day card to my mother. I want to say thank you for many things.
- How does a letter start?
- We're going to Sunflower farm next week, so I'm going to write a description of it. I'm going to write about what it's like there. My title will be *Sunflower Farm* because that's my topic.
- Most of you usually draw beautiful illustrations to go with your journal entries, but sometimes people just scribble very fast and don't use many colors or they don't draw a picture that goes with their writing topic. So today I'd like you to help me write a rubric for illustrations. I want your help to think about what makes a good illustration.
- Okay, we agreed that a good illustration has five or more colors in it. I'm going to write that: *f-i-v*? Next, there's a silent?
- Right, silent *e*.
- I want to write a scary ghost story for Halloween. Should I start it by writing "One sunny day?" or by writing "One dark night?"
- Why?
- Okay, I wrote: *One dark night, Maggie heard a strange noise* – Now, what goes here?
- Right, a period. It's the end of my sentence.
- When I start the next sentence, what kind of letter do I need?

Glimpse of the Classroom

Mrs. S. is having her first-grade students interview her. It is the first step in encouraging them to write about themselves. Before they begin, however, she needs to model how writing works. As the students sit at her feet and ask her interview questions, she writes three sentences on a large sheet of chart paper.

Mrs. S. does not have any kids.

Mrs. S. went to college.

Mrs. S. is a teacher because she likes kids.

This is a very short story, but it serves as an effective model of how writing occurs. Moreover, it focuses on an important person in these students' lives—their teacher.

After the dictation, Mrs. S. asks the students if they can find some high-frequency words. The words *a*, *is*, *to*, and *kids* are underlined.

Mrs. S. now explains that each day, the class will interview one of their classmates. Also each day, they will write a short story about this student. In this way, all of the students will be interviewed within the first month of school. Furthermore, they will all experience the power of writing about themselves. This constitutes their first experience with memoir writing. Today, the class selects Jared as the "The Student of the Day" and begins interviewing him.

Questions to Think About

1. What are possible writing topics that would be meaningful to students at the different elementary grades?
2. How can teachers handle a situation where students choose a topic that might be considered taboo?
3. How does modeling change throughout the elementary grades?
4. When teachers model the writing process and ask for student participation, how can they engage all students from a mixed-English-proficiency class in the process?

Research Summary

Research Supporting the Practice
General Research on ELL Writing Instruction

Research Supporting the Practice

Many teachers include a writing block within their school day (Zaragoza & Vaughn, 1995). An important part of this block is the 10-minute mini-lesson where the teacher uses an overhead projector or a large piece of chart paper to demonstrate to the class what writers do (Cunningham, Hall, & Sigmon, 1999).

Reutzel (2003) has documented the importance of these mini-lessons. Teachers model writing in three types of mini-lessons: procedural, literary, and strategy/skills. Procedural lessons lead students to understand the routines that the class will follow. Literary lessons focus on the specifics of literary devices that authors use when they write. Strategy and skill mini-lessons give students an understanding of how to use specific aspects of writing, such as rhyming in poetry.

Baumann and Ivey (1997), after conducting an extensive ethnographic study of a second-grade classroom in which one of the authors served as the teacher, concluded that there is an important bi-directional relationship between the work students do and the instruction the teacher provides. They described good instruction as an "elegant dance of understandings, routines, and expectations" (p. 272).

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Related Web Resources

Writing in the Intermediate Grades, 3–5 (0)

Teachers develop a list of core words for their students to use in their writing.

What Is It?
Implications for ELLs
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Glimpse of the Classroom
Questions to Think About

What Is It?

Accuracy in word identification is a key component of becoming a successful reader and writer. Quick and easy identification of words enables fluency to develop which, in turn, permits better understanding of the material read and greater clarity in writing.

To encourage automatic decoding skills, it is important that teachers select a list of core, high-frequency words for students to learn. Through focusing on this list of core words, students learn to manipulate words and word parts in written language, which will enhance word identification in reading and use in writing.

Teachers may develop a list of core words from common word lists or from words used to teach spelling patterns. This list can also include commonly misspelled words. Each grade level should have its own list of words. As students advance through the grades, they work with increasingly challenging core words, and their understanding of common spelling patterns improves along with their vocabulary and comprehension.

Implications for ELLs

The success of a piece of writing depends largely on the writer's vocabulary choices. In order to communicate effectively, writers need to know many words and to know those words well. This means knowing the various meanings a word may have (e.g., *Mean, root, log*, and *citation* are all examples of words with multiple meanings.); knowing how to use the word grammatically (e.g., We use a mop to mop the floor, but we don't broom the floor when we use a broom; we sweep it.); knowing the words it typically occurs with (e.g., *toxic waste; poisonous snake*); and knowing its level of politeness or formality (e.g., *kids* versus *children*, *fake* versus *fictitious*). Because this knowledge requires time and multiple exposures to each word in a variety of contexts, English language learners (ELLs) are likely to need a great deal of work in vocabulary in order to read and write like their English-proficient peers.

Young writers also need to know how to spell words conventionally or how to represent them phonetically so that readers can understand them. To learn all of this, ELLs need rich listening, speaking, and reading experiences, multiple exposures to words, and explicit teaching of definitions and usage. Using words in writing to express their ideas is a culminating experience in which ELLs and other students make words their own!

Strategies for Supporting ELLs

When working with English language learners (ELLs) at varying levels, effective teachers work with and augment the core word list for their grade level in several ways.

Their classroom word walls and word webs include words that were taught in previous grades. They define words that students have asked for in their writing (e.g., How do you write *video games*? I don't know how to write *Santo Domingo*. How do you write *grandma*?). Teachers make sure to include content-area and thematic words by connecting with the science, math, and social studies curricula as well as to cross-curricular themes.

In classrooms where many ELLs can already read Spanish, lists of Spanish-English cognates (i.e., "sister words" with common origins and meanings across languages, *telephono/telephone*, *sal/salt*, *estudiar/study*) are posted on the wall for Spanish-speaking students' reference. Picture dictionaries, labeled posters, and graphic organizers are also posted and discussed for the benefit of all children.

Glimpse of the Classroom

In the front of the room, Mrs. R. has a large bulletin board entitled, Our Word Wall. On the wall, a new word is added each day. In addition, high-frequency words that appear in speaking and writing are listed. Today, the teacher introduces two commonly confused words: *were* and *where*.

Several easy sentences using the word *were* are printed on the board. Mrs. R. and the class discuss the word, how it is spelled, and if it makes sense in these sentences.

Next, she writes two more sentences using the word *where*. Again, the class reads and discusses these sentences.

Mrs. R. now conducts a compare/contrast activity. The class explores the similarities and differences between the words.

Lastly, Mrs. R. writes four sentences on the board with deleted spots where the two words might occur. Students are asked which word would be an appropriate fit. Then, they are asked to spell it. Following their spelling, Mrs. R. writes it in the appropriate blank.

She says, "These are two, often confused words, so when you are reading and writing, make sure that the word makes sense and is spelled correctly."

These words are displayed on the word wall for consultation whenever students need them in their writing.

Questions to Think About

1. How do teachers within the same grade level agree on a common list of core words that all students should learn?
2. What processes exist to enhance the communication among different grade levels to ensure that all students possess knowledge of core words by the time they graduate from the elementary school?
3. What constitutes "mastery" of a list of core words?
4. How might the study of word patterns enhance both the reading and spelling ability of

elementary school students?

5. How can teachers of English language learners (ELLs) maximize the usefulness of word walls, word webs, and other print displayed in the classroom? How can teachers prevent beginners from being overwhelmed or confused by a print-rich classroom?

Research Summary

Research Supporting the Practice
General Research on ELL Writing Instruction

Research Supporting the Practice

Learning to read and write high-frequency words and patterns allows students to decode and spell many other words (Cunningham, Hall, & Sigmon, 1999). Furthermore, learning to spell is a developmental process (Ganske, 2000; Bear et al., 2004). According to Bear et al., all spellers pass through five distinct stages: emergent spellers, letter name spellers, within-word spellers, syllable and affixes spellers, and derivational relations spellers. Enabling young writers to be fluent in spelling high-frequency words frees them to concentrate on the message that they are attempting to convey and to devote their energies toward correctly spelling new and unfamiliar words. Teachers, therefore, need to devote time to the study of high-frequency words and word patterns. This can occur simultaneously in reading, writing, and spelling. Johnston (1999) contends that learning a list of core words that are based on high-frequency rimes also allows students to generate many additional words that are not on the core list.

While core words are important, teachers should not overlook words that are also found in informational texts. Duke (2000), after studying 20 first-grade classrooms, discovered that written language activities using informational texts were almost non-existent. Only 1.9 to 3.6 minutes were devoted to writing focusing on informational texts. Duke underscored the need for greater awareness of how informational texts can be used in first grade. Teachers could also build their collections of expository texts in their classroom libraries, thereby exposing young children to a wider range of printed material. Having the experience of reading expository texts should help these students become better readers and spellers. Finally, Duke reported some evidence indicating that expository text reading in first grade has a beneficial effect on the writing of science-related material.

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General Research on ELL Writing Instruction

Writing has been characterized as the most challenging of the literacy domains (Juel, 1994). Nelson and Nelson (1978) underscore the difficulty of writing by describing it as "a complex of interconnected systems" (p. 278). Writing requires simultaneous use of phonological, graphic, orthographic, semantic, syntactic, and discourse rule systems (Dyson & Freedman, 1991, p. 762). Most students learn to understand speech first, and then learn to read and write; English language learners (ELLs) have to do all this simultaneously. August and Hakuta (1997) acknowledge that there is little research that sheds light upon the enormous cognitive challenge faced by ELLs who must acquire oral and literacy skills.

Yedlin (2003) identifies the prerequisite skills and knowledge that English writing demands of ELLs in the primary grades:

In order to even begin writing English, the child must be able to discriminate aurally among various phonemes (sounds) and visually among graphemes (letters), and understand the relationships between sounds of speech and letters of the alphabet. Children must also recognize and remember high-frequency words that do not conform to orthographic regularities. Children must master the motor skills necessary to form and arrange the letters and to space words evenly. They must decide what to write about and be able to generate topics suitable for school writing. Furthermore, they must access and produce vocabulary and construct discourse patterns appropriate to their topics (pp. 111–12).

ELLs who have already learned to write in another language have knowledge and literacy skills that can help them write in English, but they still face many difficulties (Kroll, 1990). To become effective and fluent writers, ELLs must overcome their unfamiliarity with English syntax (Ammon, 1985) and develop their vocabulary. ELLs typically need to develop larger repertoires of words and to learn more about the multiple meanings, connotations, and usages of the words that they already recognize and use (August & Hakuta, 1997). In order to sound out and spell English words accurately, ELLs must surmount their unfamiliarity with the English sound system (Verhoeven, 1999; Yopp, 1992) and learn to perceive "speech chunks" as strings of individual words (Ellis, 1994). Finally, writers from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds may already be accustomed to different styles of writing and argumentation (Connor, 1987). Montaño-Harmon's (1991) research showed that Mexican students' English writing reflected the same discourse patterns that they had learned to use in Spanish. Kaplan (1967) found that many ELL compositions rated as vague, disorganized, or off-topic by U.S. teachers, actually conformed to organizational styles favored by students' home cultures.

The consensus of researchers and practitioners is that reading and listening to read-alouds has positive effects on developing ELLs' vocabulary and other facets of their second language development, including writing (Krashen, 2004; Elley, 1991). However, there is little research yet to directly link listening and reading with writing performance (Lightbown et al., 2002).

Studies by Kreeft-Peyton (1990), Hudelson (1986, 1989), Franklin (1986), Ammon (1985), and Urzua (1987) demonstrate that when in supportive contexts, ELL students in the primary grades can write productively. Kreeft-Peyton defines supportive contexts as those characterized by:

1. "frequent opportunities to write,
2. rich language input from the teacher, and
3. teacher feedback focused primarily on content" (p. 195).

In studies of a first-grade ESL class where writing improved substantially over the course of a school year, Yedlin (2003, 2004) observed the first two characteristics above, but also noted that the ESL teacher provided students with feedback on both content and form. In addition, Yedlin observed that this classroom supported ELL writing through a rich print environment containing a word wall and semantic chart listing frequently used words. Peregoy and Boyle (1997) have found that ELLs often use drawing as a pre-write and illustrate their stories and journal entries to support the communicative power of their writing. Yedlin (2003, 2004) described how a teacher used ELLs' drawings as a basis for conversation with students and for eliciting written elaboration of journal entries and stories. Dialogue journals, in which teachers reply in writing to student entries, and learning logs, in which students write about their content learning, have been found effective in encouraging ELLs to write daily, interact with the teacher, and reflect upon their learning and their comprehension (Kreeft-Peyton & Reed, 1990; Dolly, 1990).

Research [Yedlin, 2003; Kucer & Silva (in press)] and Carasquillo et al.'s (2004) review of literature on writing all point to the benefits of intensive teacher modeling of writing accompanied by the teacher's explicit moment-to-moment account of thinking processes. Teachers model their composing processes by verbalizing their own thoughts about purpose, audience, genre, vocabulary choice, and spelling as they write demonstrations in class. Teachers model their revising and editing processes by rereading and evaluating out loud what they have written. Students may simply observe and listen or the teacher may engage students as participants by asking for help or opinions (Yedlin, 2003).

Another way to assist ELLs with composing, rereading, and revising is for teachers to reference and graphically display structural features (e.g., beginning, middle, and end; setting and character; or cause and effect) and use rubrics. In such contexts, teachers use and explicitly explain discourse markers that signal what follows (e.g., Once upon a time, but, since, because, for example). Gradually, teachers involve students in interactive and shared writing activities where students gain increasing independence and teachers respond by "relinquishing control" (Carasquillo et al., 2004, p. 46).

Teachers also support students' writing by simplifying complex tasks into steps and stages that ELLs can manage (Yedlin, 2003, 2004). When well scaffolded, assignments to write reports, essays, and other genres (e.g., letters or journal entries by a historical figure) can encourage academic writing (Peregoy & Boyle, 1997). Authentic writing assignments such as invitations, letters, recipes, and simple books for younger children are highly motivating for ELLs. Maculaitis and Scheraga (1988) suggested that ELL students write easy-to-understand student handbooks for new arrivals. ELLs can be highly motivated by opportunities to write on culturally relevant topics in formats such as oral histories, country reports, and biographies of their heroes and celebrities (Peregoy & Boyle, 1997). Writing may well be the most challenging of the literacy domains (Juel, 1994), but a rich and responsive environment and well-scaffolded writing tasks can help ELLs flourish as writers.

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Related Web Resources

High-Frequency Sight Words (0)
Practice With Sight Words (0)

Teachers regularly integrate spelling into writing and reading instruction.

What Is It?
Implications for ELLs
Strategies for Supporting ELLs
Glimpse of the Classroom
Questions to Think About

What Is It?

Good spelling is an important convention of good writing. The more students read, the more exposure they have to conventional spelling. Because spelling is a developmental process, unconventional spelling is to be expected as students experiment with a wider variety of words throughout the elementary grades.

Through systematic word study, students learn the nuances of the written word and expand their writing and reading vocabularies. For example, the systematic study of onsets, rimes, and words improves spelling. Many classrooms utilize word walls when studying onsets and rimes. Word walls provide daily reminders to students about how words are constructed and how common word elements are found in many words. Contrary to what many educational critics say, the spelling of English is relatively consistent when the morphology (the study of word patterns) is examined. Researchers have also identified systematic, developmental stages of spelling: preliterate, letter name or alphabetic, within-word pattern, syllable juncture, and derivational constancy.

Implications for ELLs

Sounding out words and inventing spelling may be quite difficult for English language learners (ELLs) for a variety of reasons. ELLs may have inaccurate impressions of how some words are pronounced. They may be unclear about how particular sounds are represented in English. Some ELLs come from language backgrounds where sound-letter relationships are more constant or from backgrounds that disapprove of unconventional spelling. To learn to spell, ELLs need explicit instruction in the conventions of English spelling in the context of actual reading and writing.

Strategies for Supporting ELLs

In order to help English language learners (ELLs) learn to spell, effective teachers direct students' attention to the spellings of words encountered while reading. They point out common spelling patterns and ask students to think of other words that follow the pattern (e.g., *ate*, *late*, *gate*, *date*) as well as derivational patterns (*beauty/beautiful*). Teachers point out spelling oddities (e.g., the /f/ sound in *phone* and *photograph* or the rhyming words *good* and *should*).

When teachers write with students, they demonstrate how to segment words into phonemes and how to represent the phonemes with letters. Teachers use spelling terminology such as "silent e" or "double

letter." They reference rules as they write (e.g., "I'm going to write about our parties. How do you spell *party*? When we write the plural, *parties*, I know I have to change this *y* to *i* and add *es*. Do you know any other words like that? How about *puppy* and *bunny*?").

Some ELLs "play it safe" when they write, using only words they have memorized or can copy from the classroom print environment. This can result in writing that has no spelling errors but also little individuality. Effective teachers encourage ELLs to figure out the spellings of new and different words that express their thoughts. It is important to see the proliferation of unconventional spelling as progress when the spelling reflects a student's willingness to experiment with sound-letter relationships and a desire to say interesting things. To cultivate accurate spelling, teachers design manipulative spelling activities in which students arrange, combine, match, and sort cards containing words, letters, syllables, prefixes, and suffixes.

Glimpse of the Classroom

Mrs. D. is standing in front of her class of 17 students. She instructs them to write their names and dates on their papers. Today, they will be writing 10 words, 5 from their word wall and 5 others. This is the application of their prior word work lessons.

She encourages students to use what they know to write the words that they may not know. Students can use the word wall to help them write these new words. They also should use the rimes (chunks) from the word wall to help them write the words.

The words she dictates, each accompanied by a sentence, are:

Stamp

Strike

Split

Explain

Mistake

She then covers the word wall, and students must use their knowledge of onsets and rimes to write the next series of words:

Spill

Slice

Crack

Cracker

Smart

Once all of the words have been dictated, Mrs. D. talks about the "chunks," such as the *amp*, *ike*, or *it*, in each of the words. She correctly writes each word on the board, but not before students identify which word on the word wall helps them to encode the word. Mrs. D. continually encourages students to think about what words they need to get for the new word they are attempting to spell.

Next, the class does a sorting activity. At the top of each page, there are a series of chunks. On the rest of the page, there are three columns of words. Students can cut the words apart and sort them in a way of their choice: number of letters, chunks, first letter, or vowels. This is called an open sort or a free sort.

Glacie sorts by the chunks *at* and *all*.

Kenny sorts by the first letter.

Janessa sorts by the number of letters in each word.

Someone even sorts by the common last letters in a word. Mrs. D. points out that if you have sorted by the last letter, you have also sorted by chunk.

As a final activity, students sort by common chunks and glue the words on to paper. This also provides Mrs. D. and her aide with a way to check students' understanding of spelling knowledge.

Questions to Think About

1. In addition to the dictionary, what other resources can teachers employ to help students become better spellers?
2. What role can technology play in assisting students with their spelling?
3. How can teachers best adapt instruction so that each child is receiving spelling instruction at their developmental level?
4. How can morphology (the study of word patterns) improve both spelling and vocabulary?
5. What are the advantages for English language learners (ELLs) of spelling activities in which students manipulate, combine, and sort word chunks?

Research Summary

Research Supporting the Practice
General Research on ELL Writing Instruction

Research Supporting the Practice

According to Bromley (2003), spelling is an important part of the writing program, but it should not overshadow the main purpose of writing—to convey the author's message. Because good spellers have learned a system to figure out words and view spelling as a mostly logical system (Routman, 2000), it is important that teachers implement a spelling program based on the logical principles of how words are formed. Routman suggests that good spelling programs are comprised of (a) assessment and evaluation, (b) authentic writing purposes, (c) developing a spelling consciousness, (d) learning and using spelling strategies, (e) spending time on word study, and (f) communicating the goals of the program to parents. Both Ganske (2000) and Bear et al. (2004) have designed and published programs that follow most of these guidelines. Teacher-designed programs can also be effective (Wagstaff, 1998).

Leslie and Allen (1999) found that teaching rime patterns to inner-city students improved their reading skills. They concluded that this word study helped students use multiple cueing strategies more easily and automatically than could those students who did not receive the instruction.

Journal entries can also provide valuable insights into a student's spelling skills. Fresch (2001), for example, found that by examining students' journal writing, she was able to observe the spelling progress of her students in natural and authentic settings. Then, she tailored her spelling instruction to her students' needs. Word sorts and self-discovery (i.e., when teachers structure the lessons using word sorts to help students arrive at understanding) also serve as powerful tools to help students internalize the generalizations of spelling patterns (Fresch & Wheaton, 1997).

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General Research on ELL Writing Instruction

Writing has been characterized as the most challenging of the literacy domains (Juel, 1994). Nelson and Nelson (1978) underscore the difficulty of writing by describing it as "a complex of interconnected systems" (p. 278). Writing requires simultaneous use of phonological, graphic, orthographic, semantic, syntactic, and discourse rule systems (Dyson & Freedman, 1991, p. 762). Most students learn to understand speech first, and then learn to read and write; English language learners (ELLs) have to do all this simultaneously. August and Hakuta (1997) acknowledge that there is little research that sheds light upon the enormous cognitive challenge faced by ELLs who must acquire oral and literacy skills.

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Related Web Resources

Ten Myths About Learning to Write (0)

Writing in the Intermediate Grades, 3–5 (0)

Teachers teach grammar in the context of actual writing.

What Is It?
Implications for ELLs
Strategies for Supporting ELLs
Glimpse of the Classroom
Questions to Think About

What Is It?

At the elementary school level, grammar is most meaningful when taught on a daily basis using students' actual writing. Because they are applying their learning to their actual work, students see the advantage of choosing powerful action verbs or descriptive nouns, for example. Using their personal writing as a vehicle for grammar instruction makes sense because it builds upon students' understanding of how oral language works. By having students re-read their written work, they not only apply their use of language, but also see how word choice, grammar, and the conventions of writing go hand-in-hand.

Implications for ELLs

English language learners (ELLs) learn many structural patterns of English unconsciously through hearing them and then using them in their speech. Basic communication is the first goal of language development. Effective teachers acknowledge the accomplishments of young ELLs and beginners who achieve basic communication in speaking and writing. When students speak or write sentences such as "No like."; "Want book."; or "Him taking pencil, mine.", they are conveying messages effectively, although these sentences are not conventionally grammatical. Beginners do not have an intuitive sense of what "sounds right" in English; that sense develops with time and experience. ELLs' grammar improves over time when they are provided with good language models, guided practice, clear explanations, and tactful but explicit feedback on grammatical correctness. Writing activities provide excellent context for providing the models, practice, explanations, and feedback that ELLs need.

Strategies for Supporting ELLs

Effective teachers model their own writing process, using the opportunity to present mini-lessons in grammar. They say things like:

- I wrote two sentences: *We walked in the woods yesterday. We fished in the river.*
- Who knows why I put *ed* after the verbs *walk* and *fish*?
- Listen to me say these words: /walkt/ / fisht/. What sound do you hear at the end?
- What does it mean when I say /walkt/ instead of /walk/?
- What does the /t/ sound tell you?

In addition, teachers use students' writing as an opportunity to focus on form. They say things like:

- I enjoyed reading in your journal about your day at the circus with Kim. It sounds like you two had a great time. It was really interesting to read about the acrobat dogs! Now let's go back and read your journal writing again to look at the language. I saw a sentence that needs some revising.
- *Me and Kim ate hot dogs and popcorn.* Mm? delicious, but do you see anything that needs to be changed?
- Well, I do. It's here, *Me and Kim*. It will be better writing if you change it to *Kim and I*. In English we're supposed to put the other person first. I guess it's more polite. So we'll write *Kim and I*. We'll write *I* instead of *me*. When you talk about yourself doing something, when you're the subject of the sentence, use *I*. We don't use *me* to begin a sentence.
- Listen to this, "I ate hot dogs. Kim and I ate hotdogs." Can you say that?
- "I ate popcorn. Kim and I ate popcorn." Say it. Good, now you can cross that out with a thin line and rewrite it.

Taking it a step further, teachers design guided writing practice activities to focus on grammatical features that need attention. Using the above example:

On a Monday morning, the teacher asks each child to write three sentences about something that they did over the weekend with a friend or relative. The students first brainstorm a list of past tense verbs that they can use. The teacher calls on students for their suggestions, and she writes their words on chart paper. As she writes, she divides the words into two columns to highlight the difference between irregular past forms, such as *went, saw, had, ate, bought, made*, and regular verbs, such as *talked, fished, played, cooked, visited*. When a student contributes a verb without using the past tense, like *listen*, the teacher prompts the student to say the past form, *listened*.

Before students begin to write, the teacher reviews the sentence pattern they should use: " _____ and I _____ on Saturday/Sunday."

She asks some volunteers to share their experiences orally.

"Tasha and I played hide-and-seek on Saturday."

"My cousins and I visited our grandmother on Sunday."

"My brother and I washed our car on Saturday morning."

After they finish their compositions, the students read them aloud, and their classmates point out any edits that are needed. (Only a few "me and him"s slip through.) They post the compositions on the wall and reread them from time to time. The teacher and students refer to these compositions whenever there is a problem with first-person subject pronouns.

Glimpse of the Classroom

Two second-grade girls, Juana and Amanda, are beginning a peer editing session. Both are English as a second language (ESL) students. Earlier in the school year, the teacher, Mrs. D., modeled how peer editing occurs.

"What do you know about her? Is she mean or rude?" asks Juana. She is taking these words from a prompt sheet of descriptive adjectives supplied by the teacher. Meanwhile, Mrs. D. is working with a group of six students in another corner of the classroom.

Juana and Amanda negotiate which words should be inserted into the draft of their document.

Especially noticeable is their use of syntax as they edit their work. They discuss which phrase sounds best: "She does very hard work" vs. "She works very hard."

These students are making use of oral language to help them compose their writing. At this early age, English-proficient students have no need for formal grammar instruction. Intuitively, they know how language works and how it can be used when they are writing stories. English language learners (ELLs) need time to develop such an intuitive sense.

Questions to Think About

1. What is the best way to bring grammar into the classroom without simply having students memorize terms or doing isolated drills with little carryover into their daily writing?
2. How do teachers convey to parents the importance of teaching grammar without resorting to isolated "skill and drill"?
3. What children's books might illustrate particular grammatical patterns and features and help focus students' attention, especially that of English language learners (ELLs), on the structures of English?

Research Summary

Research Supporting the Practice
General Research on ELL Writing Instruction

Research Supporting the Practice

Students' use of print conventions becomes more sophisticated over time. In first grade, for example, students' use of punctuation may be erratic (National Center on Education and the Economy, 1999). By second grade, they demonstrate increased sophistication in their use of capital letters at the beginning of sentences, periods, quotation marks, question marks, exclamation marks, and contractions. By third grade, students have become even more adept in applying these conventions.

In an examination of preschoolers' use of grammar, Muter and Snowling (1998) found that the best predictors of later reading accuracy are grammatical knowledge, phonemic awareness, and speech rate. Furthermore, grammatical accuracy improves over time. Students' writing style and syntax begins to resemble many of the books they read. A variety of syntactic patterns emerge in their writing as they become more literate. According to Routman (2000), grammar is understood best after students write fluently and have a strong sense of language.

The National Council of Teachers of English (1985) passed a resolution that addressed the issue of teaching grammar in schools. In part, they wrote that they "affirm the position that the use of isolated grammar and usage exercises are not supported by theory and research" (Routman, 1996, p.187). They went on to say "that NCTE urge the discontinuance of testing practices that encourage the teaching of grammar rather than English language arts instruction" (Routman, 1996, p. 187). Hillocks (1987) also found that students' writing suffered when teachers conducted only isolated grammar exercises in the classroom.

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General Research on ELL Writing Instruction

Writing has been characterized as the most challenging of the literacy domains (Juel, 1994). Nelson and Nelson (1978) underscore the difficulty of writing by describing it as "a complex of interconnected systems" (p. 278). Writing requires simultaneous use of phonological, graphic, orthographic, semantic, syntactic, and discourse rule systems (Dyson & Freedman, 1991, p. 762). Most students learn to understand speech first, and then learn to read and write; English language learners (ELLs) have to do all this simultaneously. August and Hakuta (1997) acknowledge that there is little research that sheds light upon the enormous cognitive challenge faced by ELLs who must acquire oral and literacy skills.

Yedlin (2003) identifies the prerequisite skills and knowledge that English writing demands of ELLs in the primary grades:

In order to even begin writing English, the child must be able to discriminate aurally among various phonemes (sounds) and visually among graphemes (letters), and understand the relationships between sounds of speech and letters of the alphabet. Children must also recognize and remember high-frequency words that do not conform to orthographic regularities. Children must master the motor skills necessary to form and arrange the letters and to space words evenly. They must decide what to write about and be able to generate topics suitable for school writing. Furthermore, they must access and produce vocabulary and construct discourse patterns appropriate to their topics (pp. 111–12).

ELLs who have already learned to write in another language have knowledge and literacy skills that can help them write in English, but they still face many difficulties (Kroll, 1990). To become effective and fluent writers, ELLs must overcome their unfamiliarity with English syntax (Ammon, 1985) and develop their vocabulary. ELLs typically need to develop larger repertoires of words and to learn more about the multiple meanings, connotations, and usages of the words that they already recognize and use (August & Hakuta, 1997). In order to sound out and spell English words accurately, ELLs must surmount their unfamiliarity with the English sound system (Verhoeven, 1999; Yopp, 1992) and learn to perceive "speech chunks" as strings of individual words (Ellis, 1994). Finally, writers from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds may already be accustomed to different styles of writing and argumentation (Connor, 1987). Montaño-Harmon's (1991) research showed that Mexican students' English writing reflected the same discourse patterns that they had learned to use in Spanish. Kaplan (1967) found that many ELL compositions rated as vague, disorganized, or off-topic by U.S.

teachers, actually conformed to organizational styles favored by students' home cultures.

The consensus of researchers and practitioners is that reading and listening to read-alouds has positive effects on developing ELLs' vocabulary and other facets of their second language development, including writing (Krashen, 2004; Elley, 1991). However, there is little research yet to directly link listening and reading with writing performance (Lightbown et al., 2002).

Studies by Kreeft-Peyton (1990), Hudelson (1986, 1989), Franklin (1986), Ammon (1985), and Urzua (1987) demonstrate that when in supportive contexts, ELL students in the primary grades can write productively. Kreeft-Peyton defines supportive contexts as those characterized by:

1. "frequent opportunities to write,
2. rich language input from the teacher, and
3. teacher feedback focused primarily on content" (p. 195).

In studies of a first-grade ESL class where writing improved substantially over the course of a school year, Yedlin (2003, 2004) observed the first two characteristics above, but also noted that the ESL teacher provided students with feedback on both content and form. In addition, Yedlin observed that this classroom supported ELL writing through a rich print environment containing a word wall and semantic chart listing frequently used words. Perego and Boyle (1997) have found that ELLs often use drawing as a pre-write and illustrate their stories and journal entries to support the communicative power of their writing. Yedlin (2003, 2004) described how a teacher used ELLs' drawings as a basis for conversation with students and for eliciting written elaboration of journal entries and stories. Dialogue journals, in which teachers reply in writing to student entries, and learning logs, in which students write about their content learning, have been found effective in encouraging ELLs to write daily, interact with the teacher, and reflect upon their learning and their comprehension (Kreeft-Peyton & Reed, 1990; Dolly, 1990).

Research [Yedlin, 2003; Kucer & Silva (in press)] and Carasquillo et al.'s (2004) review of literature on writing all point to the benefits of intensive teacher modeling of writing accompanied by the teacher's explicit moment-to-moment account of thinking processes. Teachers model their composing processes by verbalizing their own thoughts about purpose, audience, genre, vocabulary choice, and spelling as they write demonstrations in class. Teachers model their revising and editing processes by rereading and evaluating out loud what they have written. Students may simply observe and listen or the teacher may engage students as participants by asking for help or opinions (Yedlin, 2003).

Another way to assist ELLs with composing, rereading, and revising is for teachers to reference and graphically display structural features (e.g., beginning, middle, and end; setting and character; or cause and effect) and use rubrics. In such contexts, teachers use and explicitly explain discourse markers that signal what follows (e.g., Once upon a time, but, since, because, for example).

Gradually, teachers involve students in interactive and shared writing activities where students gain increasing independence and teachers respond by "relinquishing control" (Carasquillo et al., 2004, p. 46).

Teachers also support students' writing by simplifying complex tasks into steps and stages that ELLs can manage (Yedlin, 2003, 2004). When well scaffolded, assignments to write reports, essays, and other genres (e.g., letters or journal entries by a historical figure) can encourage academic writing (Perego & Boyle, 1997). Authentic writing assignments such as invitations, letters, recipes, and simple books for younger children are highly motivating for ELLs. Maculaitis and Scheraga (1988) suggested that ELL students write easy-to-understand student handbooks for new arrivals. ELLs can

be highly motivated by opportunities to write on culturally relevant topics in formats such as oral histories, country reports, and biographies of their heroes and celebrities (Peregoy & Boyle, 1997). Writing may well be the most challenging of the literacy domains (Juel, 1994), but a rich and responsive environment and well-scaffolded writing tasks can help ELLs flourish as writers.

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Related Web Resources

On Grammar Exercises to Teach Speaking and Writing (0)
Writing in the Intermediate Grades, 3–5 (0)

Teachers provide varied and increasingly challenging writing experiences for students at all grade levels.

What Is It?
Implications for ELLs
Strategies for Supporting ELLs
Glimpse of the Classroom
Questions to Think About

What Is It?

Because there are numerous styles of writing, it is important that teachers at all grade levels teach writing. In the earliest stage, writing reinforces the idea that there is a sound–symbol relationship between language and print. Later, students learn that print conveys messages. Still later, students learn about different forms for writing, such as letters and reports.

Writing is a complex skill that needs to be taught throughout a student's career. As students develop as writers, they need information about the various genres that writers use to communicate their ideas. At the earliest primary grades, students can learn to write simple autobiographies in which they describe their likes and dislikes, siblings, caregivers, etc. Later, they engage in journal writing, descriptive writing, letter writing, biographical writing, expository writing, and poetry writing.

As students progress through the grades, effective teachers provide direct instruction to ensure that students master all genres of writing. This is best accomplished by structuring a portion of each day for writers' workshop. During this block of time, teachers model what good writers do through mini–lessons and then provide ample opportunities for students to practice their writing. Teacher–student conferences are also held during this period.

In a school, teachers articulate writing goals to ensure that students receive a good grounding in a variety of writing styles. Communication among teachers helps each to have a clear idea of what genres have been taught and what still need to be explored. Curriculum guidelines should ensure that every student is exposed to a variety of writing styles by the time they complete their elementary schooling experience.

Implications for ELLs

While it is a good idea to have curricular guidelines specifying writing genres for each grade level, teachers cannot assume that all English language learners (ELLs) arrive in their classrooms with grade–level skills and experience in those genres. Teachers may not always be able to ascertain whether a particular writing style, skill, or genre was taught by previous teachers or whether the student was able to understand it when it was taught.

Effective teachers understand that ELLs may need to gain experience in basic genres typically learned in earlier grades, such as picture labeling and "I like..." lists. ELLs who are beyond the beginner stage can write in more challenging genres, such as informational reports, short skits, and fictional

narratives, when their teachers plan and structure the writing tasks carefully and provide good models.

Strategies for Supporting ELLs

To get young English language learners (ELLs) started, teachers assign writing projects such as journals, narratives, letters, plays, poems, reports, instructions, lab reports, book reports, persuasive essays, and other genres that students will practice again in the grades to come. Effective teachers of ELLs in the upper grades add new and challenging writing tasks, while revisiting writing genres that their students may or may not have experienced or mastered previously.

The following example is adapted from *Teacher Talk and Writing Development in an Urban, First-Grade, English as a Second Language Classroom*. Yedlin, J., 2003. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Harvard University.

An experienced English as a second language (ESL) teacher, Mrs. R. describes her formula for teaching a multilevel group of first graders: "Review, reiterate, and revisit again and again and again." Although her class makes great progress over the course of the year, taking on increasingly challenging writing tasks, Mrs. R. continues to revisit basics, such as letter names and sounds, sentence punctuation and capitalization, possessives and apostrophes, throughout the school year. She knows that when she teaches these basics in the fall, some newly arrived students, like Ricardo, are unable to understand. "Ricardo will never get the chance to learn basic punctuation if I've already packed it up and put it away when he's ready for it," she reflects.

Even in the last month of the school year, when modeling her own three-part narrative, Mrs. R. asks for students' help with spelling, punctuating, and capitalizing. This provides Ricardo and students with another exposure to this material now that they are ready for it. Ricardo watches with interest as Mrs. R. writes down each letter of the word that the students spell for her.

At the end of each sentence, she asks, "What goes here?"

When students tell her, she writes the period and says, "That's right, a period, a period goes at the end?"

"Of a sentence!" respond several children.

During a brainstorming session on the topic of Our Favorite Places, Mona volunteers that her favorite place is "My cousin's house." Mrs. R. asks, "Whose house it? Who does the house belong to?"

"My cousin," answers Mona.

"The house belongs to her cousin, that is what this apostrophe means. This mark, this apostrophe means it belongs to her cousin. It isn't my house or Mona's house. It's her?"

"Cousin's house!" chorus several children.

Ricardo, who could do little more than listen and point in September, listens intently, and he joins the chorus, a beat or two after the others.

Glimpse of the Classroom

Mrs. T. has overhauled her reading program, and it is now Day 10 of the new school year. Her fourth-grade students have been doing independent reading from leveled texts – small, paperback books that contain a complete story and short chapter books – in the library. Today, she wants to introduce her students to a new author, Patricia Polocco, and to a new format of communicating about their reading: response journals. She does this through modeling the letter-writing format that they should use in their response journals. On chart paper, she displays a model of the letter she has written

to the class about Polacco's book *Thank You Mr. Faulker*. She reads aloud her letter entry into her hypothetical response journal:

Dear Class:

I really enjoy Patricia Polacco as an author. One thing I thought about as I read Thank You Mr. Faulker was how Trisha must have felt when the other kids called her dumb. That made me angry! Not everyone does everything perfectly!

Another thing I noticed is how the author creates pictures in the readers' minds. I like how she uses details to make scenes clear for the readers. For example, Polacco writes that the stars were holes in the sky. They were the light of heaven coming from the other side.

I really enjoyed this because it's a memoir and the plot is a real event. I hope you enjoy your books, too. Looking forward to our letters.

*Love,
Mrs. T.*

She then walks her students through the basic parts of a letter: the date, the greeting, the body, the closing, and the signature.

She hands each student a response journal. She asks the class to follow the letter-writing format and write a letter to her regarding the book they are presently reading. Students will turn their journals in to Mrs. T. that day. Later, the class will follow a rotating system for turning them in.

Mrs. T. has accomplished several goals. First, she has taught her students the format of letter writing. Second, she has created a way to monitor their reading progress. Third, she has created a way to check their reading comprehension.

Questions to Think About

1. How much time should be devoted to writing instruction each week?
2. How can teachers support students who complain that they have nothing to write about on a particular day?
3. What genres lend themselves to being introduced first?
4. Assuming that all students demonstrate different degrees of proficiency in writing and that some students such as English language learners (ELLs) have varying levels of proficiency in English, how does this translate into a meaningful grading practice?

Story Summaries

Becky Baun's 6th Grade Social Studies Class – Manchester Memorial School? 6th grade social studies class in rural community north of Boston ? Teacher integrates technology projects into her World Geography curriculum ? All units require students to collect information from multiple and varied sources ? Students are required to write in a variety of genres, employing creative, persuasive, and research-oriented techniques Sixth grade teacher Becky Baun wanted to create an updated and engaging series of units for her World Geography class. She decided to use technology to enhance the material. Students studied four continents during the course of the year, using the five themes of

geography as a foundation, and incorporating increasingly sophisticated technology components into each unit. For each lesson, students were required to read and collect information from a wide variety of sources including textbooks, encyclopedias, and online resources. In addition, they practiced writing in a number of different styles, including creative and persuasive writing for a travel brochure, presenting research information in a PowerPoint presentation, and writing a script for a video project. Each lesson built upon skills learned in the previous one, allowing students to experiment with increasingly challenging reading and writing tasks.

Research Summary

Research Supporting the Practice General Research on ELL Writing Instruction

Research Supporting the Practice

According to the National Center on Education and the Economy (1999), a full understanding of writing genres takes years to develop. It is never too early to begin this instruction, however. Wollman-Bonilla (2001) found that even first-graders can demonstrate an awareness of audience. Drawing can also be a bridge to early writing (Sidelnick & Svoboda, 2000). Thus, it is incumbent upon primary teachers to plan for daily writing experiences in their classes. One way to do this is through writing workshops (Calkins, 1999; Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001; Routman, 2000). Cunningham, Hall, and Sigmon suggest devoting 25–40 minutes each day to a writing block consisting of mini-lessons, writing and conferencing, and sharing. Including a daily block of writing time throughout the elementary school years will provide students with adequate opportunities to engage in a variety of writing activities.

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General Research on ELL Writing Instruction

Writing has been characterized as the most challenging of the literacy domains (Juel, 1994). Nelson and Nelson (1978) underscore the difficulty of writing by describing it as "a complex of interconnected systems" (p. 278). Writing requires simultaneous use of phonological, graphic, orthographic, semantic, syntactic, and discourse rule systems (Dyson & Freedman, 1991, p. 762). Most students learn to understand speech first, and then learn to read and write; English language learners (ELLs) have to do all this simultaneously. August and Hakuta (1997) acknowledge that there is little research that sheds light upon the enormous cognitive challenge faced by ELLs who must acquire oral and literacy skills.

Yedlin (2003) identifies the prerequisite skills and knowledge that English writing demands of ELLs in the primary grades:

In order to even begin writing English, the child must be able to discriminate aurally among various phonemes (sounds) and visually among graphemes (letters), and understand the relationships between sounds of speech and letters of the alphabet. Children must also recognize and remember high-frequency words that do not conform to orthographic regularities. Children must master the motor skills necessary to form and arrange the letters and to space words evenly. They must decide what to write about and be able to generate topics suitable for school writing. Furthermore, they must access and produce vocabulary and construct discourse patterns appropriate to their topics (pp. 111–12).

ELLs who have already learned to write in another language have knowledge and literacy skills that can help them write in English, but they still face many difficulties (Kroll, 1990). To become effective and fluent writers, ELLs must overcome their unfamiliarity with English syntax (Ammon, 1985) and develop their vocabulary. ELLs typically need to develop larger repertoires of words and to learn more about the multiple meanings, connotations, and usages of the words that they already recognize and use (August & Hakuta, 1997). In order to sound out and spell English words accurately, ELLs must surmount their unfamiliarity with the English sound system (Verhoeven, 1999; Yopp, 1992) and learn to perceive "speech chunks" as strings of individual words (Ellis, 1994). Finally, writers from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds may already be accustomed to different styles of writing and argumentation (Connor, 1987). Montaño-Harmon's (1991) research showed that Mexican students' English writing reflected the same discourse patterns that they had learned to use in Spanish. Kaplan (1967) found that many ELL compositions rated as vague, disorganized, or off-topic by U.S. teachers, actually conformed to organizational styles favored by students' home cultures.

The consensus of researchers and practitioners is that reading and listening to read-alouds has positive effects on developing ELLs' vocabulary and other facets of their second language development, including writing (Krashen, 2004; Elley, 1991). However, there is little research yet to directly link listening and reading with writing performance (Lightbown et al., 2002).

Studies by Kreeft-Peyton (1990), Hudelson (1986, 1989), Franklin (1986), Ammon (1985), and Urzua (1987) demonstrate that when in supportive contexts, ELL students in the primary grades can write productively. Kreeft-Peyton defines supportive contexts as those characterized by:

1. "frequent opportunities to write,
2. rich language input from the teacher, and
3. teacher feedback focused primarily on content" (p. 195).

In studies of a first-grade ESL class where writing improved substantially over the course of a school year, Yedlin (2003, 2004) observed the first two characteristics above, but also noted that the ESL teacher provided students with feedback on both content and form. In addition, Yedlin observed that this classroom supported ELL writing through a rich print environment containing a word wall and semantic chart listing frequently used words. Perego and Boyle (1997) have found that ELLs often use drawing as a pre-write and illustrate their stories and journal entries to support the communicative power of their writing. Yedlin (2003, 2004) described how a teacher used ELLs' drawings as a basis for conversation with students and for eliciting written elaboration of journal entries and stories. Dialogue journals, in which teachers reply in writing to student entries, and learning logs, in which students write about their content learning, have been found effective in encouraging ELLs to write daily, interact with the teacher, and reflect upon their learning and their comprehension (Kreft-Peyton & Reed, 1990; Dolly, 1990).

Research [Yedlin, 2003; Kucer & Silva (in press)] and Carasquillo et al.'s (2004) review of literature on writing all point to the benefits of intensive teacher modeling of writing accompanied by the teacher's explicit moment-to-moment account of thinking processes. Teachers model their composing processes by verbalizing their own thoughts about purpose, audience, genre, vocabulary choice, and spelling as they write demonstrations in class. Teachers model their revising and editing processes by rereading and evaluating out loud what they have written. Students may simply observe and listen or the teacher may engage students as participants by asking for help or opinions (Yedlin, 2003).

Another way to assist ELLs with composing, rereading, and revising is for teachers to reference and graphically display structural features (e.g., beginning, middle, and end; setting and character; or cause and effect) and use rubrics. In such contexts, teachers use and explicitly explain discourse markers that signal what follows (e.g., Once upon a time, but, since, because, for example). Gradually, teachers involve students in interactive and shared writing activities where students gain increasing independence and teachers respond by "relinquishing control" (Carasquillo et al., 2004, p. 46).

Teachers also support students' writing by simplifying complex tasks into steps and stages that ELLs can manage (Yedlin, 2003, 2004). When well scaffolded, assignments to write reports, essays, and other genres (e.g., letters or journal entries by a historical figure) can encourage academic writing (Perego & Boyle, 1997). Authentic writing assignments such as invitations, letters, recipes, and simple books for younger children are highly motivating for ELLs. Maculaitis and Scheraga (1988) suggested that ELL students write easy-to-understand student handbooks for new arrivals. ELLs can be highly motivated by opportunities to write on culturally relevant topics in formats such as oral histories, country reports, and biographies of their heroes and celebrities (Perego & Boyle, 1997). Writing may well be the most challenging of the literacy domains (Juel, 1994), but a rich and responsive environment and well-scaffolded writing tasks can help ELLs flourish as writers.

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Related Web Resources

Project WRITE: A Look at Children's Writing, K–5 (0)
Writing in the Intermediate Grades, 3–5 (0)

Speaking Instruction, Grades K–6

Practices ELL Overview

This section presents six practices for speaking instruction in grades K–6. Because speaking is an integral and engaging part of the learning process, speaking instruction should be woven into reading and writing instruction. Talk is important in a classroom: Through speaking and listening to others, students refine their ability to tell stories, present information, and clarify their understanding of what they want to say. The teacher's job is to provide meaningful opportunities for discussion throughout the school day. As you read these practices, keep in mind that when students are provided opportunities to share their insights about what they read and write, their comprehension increases.

- Teachers provide opportunities for students to discuss insights from their reading with each other.
- Teachers model and explain text–to–self, text–to–text, and text–to–world connections for their students.
- Teachers include daily sharing as an important activity in their classrooms.
- Teachers provide ample opportunities for students to talk about familiar topics and then demonstrate to students how talking better enables them to write.
- Teachers have regular conversations with individual students about their writing, thereby enabling students to improve the quality of their work.
- Teachers model how to verbalize understandings and questions about readings and then provide opportunities for students to practice these comprehension strategies.

ELL Overview

Oral language provides the foundation for English literacy development. English language learners (ELLs) need daily opportunities to learn and practice oral language in order for their literacy skills to flourish.

It is important to consider that many ELLs go through a "silent period," during which they listen and observe more than they speak. ELLs may speak at first in single words or short phrases. They may speak fluently when using greetings and other basic phrases in routine interpersonal situations, but speak haltingly when constructing English sentences to express more complex ideas.

ELLs' speech may be ungrammatical, reflecting their lack of experience with English word order, grammatical patterns, or word endings. Their speech may be "accented," reflecting lack of experience with English sounds, rhythms, and stress patterns. As a result, ELLs may feel self-conscious about speaking, especially in large groups. Criticism, ridicule, and public correction exacerbate these anxieties. ELLs are likely to be more comfortable speaking in small groups.

ELLs may over-use high frequency words like *nice* or *go* until they acquire a larger repertoire of more differentiated words, such as *beautiful*, *happy*, *entertaining*, *kind*, *generous* or *leave*, *depart*, *travel*, *journey*, *race*, *hike*, *skip*. While young ELLs naturally acquire the language of play and daily life from social interaction with other students and adults, ELLs require explicit instruction and

modeling of the more formal language used in academic settings to talk about reading and writing.

In some cultures, discussion and story telling are filled with personal anecdotes that are implicitly rather than explicitly connected to the topic. Teachers may sometimes perceive these narratives as rambling or disorganized. Writing conferences and other opportunities for one-on-one conversations with a teacher provide great support for the development of topic-centered narrative styles for use in academic contexts.

In addition, use of their native language can provide ELLs with much-needed clarification, explanation, and self-expression as they go through the difficult process of learning to speak, read, and write in English.

Teachers of all students will find useful insights and strategies in the sections **Implications for ELLs** and **Strategies for Supporting ELLs** below each practice under **[What Is It?]**.

Teachers provide opportunities for students to discuss insights from their reading with each other.

What Is It?
Implications for ELLs
Strategies for Supporting ELLs
Glimpse of the Classroom
Questions to Think About

What Is It?

Having students talk about their reading is one of the best ways to gauge their understanding of the text. Using a free-recall permits a teacher to discern "the big picture" of a student's comprehension. Teachers can follow a free-recall with probing questions designed to gain insights into understanding.

Encouraging students to share their books with each other is an effective way to promote interest and literacy in a classroom. Some teachers use this strategy to "sell" a book to students in the classroom. At the intermediate grades, literature circles provide opportunities for students to share their favorite parts of a story or to identify the highlights of commonly read books. When students read content-area materials, such as science and social studies texts or trade books, they are also learning information that can be shared with peers.

As adults, we relish the opportunity to share information about the latest book we have read with others. Usually these discussions take place in informal settings. Occasionally, however, we join book clubs where we share our insights. Students, too, need opportunities to share their latest reads with their peers. One way this can occur is by having a scheduled time each week when students can discuss a new book. Some teachers have dubbed this time WEB time, WEB standing for Wonderfully Exciting Books. Book sharing inspires others to read the books that have been discussed.

Top

Implications for ELLs

Like all students, English language learners (ELLs) benefit from opportunities to participate in book discussions, interacting with teachers and peers. For many students, book-centered conversation may be a new experience, and they may be unsure of the expectations. They may not understand the differences between summarizing and retelling; recounting versus interpreting or critiquing; revealing the ending of a story or tantalizing their classmates by withholding it. Students may be unaware of conventions such as stating title, author, and topic; describing characters and setting; or explaining why they would or would not recommend the book to others. ELLs and other students may be nervous about engaging in this new type of talk in a large-group setting.

Having a student recall or retell a story can help a teacher assess the student's reading comprehension. However, a student's limited oral English proficiency or self-consciousness about speaking English may inhibit the student's performance and cause the teacher to underestimate the student's

comprehension.

Top

Strategies for Supporting ELLs

Teachers who speak English language learners' (ELLs) home languages and who wish to assess students' English reading comprehension can use cross-linguistic approaches. Students can benefit from retelling an English story in their home language; conversely, students can read books in their home languages and benefit from reporting on the books orally in English. Research suggests that such cross-linguistic literacy activity promotes metalinguistic awareness.

Effective teachers help ELLs by modeling and explicitly stating goals and expectations.

Examples of explicit language models are:

- The title of this book is...?
- The author is...?
- It takes place...?
- This is a nonfiction book about...?

Teachers often let students practice, or even present, in pairs or teams.

To support students' academic language development, teachers listen carefully to how students ask questions and then encourage students to clarify, elaborate, and be more precise.

Effective teachers say things like:

- So, your book was about horses.
- What did you learn about horses?
- What kinds of horses did the book tell you about?
- What did the book say about what horses eat?
- Let's look back and remember what other kinds of information about horses we have read.
- You told us that the characters in your book are Henry and Mudge.
- Is there one other character?
- Is there a grown-up character?
- You said that the setting of the story is Henry's backyard.
- Do you remember what season it is?
- How do we know what season it is?
- You drew a picture of Henry and a flower.
- Tell me about the flower. Is it important in this story?
- You said that Henry can't pick the flower. Did somebody tell him not to pick it?
- Tell me more about that.

Top

Glimpse of the Classroom

Five fourth-grade students, the members of a book group reading *A Taste of Blackberries*, are sitting around a table. Each student has an assigned task.

The Summarizer talks about the overall theme of the chapter.

The Word Wizard picks *thicket* as a troubling word. He reads aloud a sentence from the chapter: "*Jamie ran into the thicket of the blackberry patch.*" His next word is *scornfully*. He reads, "*Jamie says scornfully.*" He goes on to give the definitions of the words.

The Meaning Mapper tells the group what he thinks is the most important point of the chapter and how he feels about the action in the story.

The Artful Artist holds up a picture that he has drawn of the two boys in the story. It cleverly depicts the scene that they have read about.

The leader of the group raises several questions for discussion. Each student freely offers his or her point of view. As the discussion continues, each student listens respectfully to the opinions of others.

The classroom teacher has carefully organized her literacy program to provide opportunities for students to share their impressions from reading a common book. Even though students have just begun reading this book, they know the roles which they have been assigned because Mrs. C. has taken the time to scaffold how to have literate discussions about books.

Now it is time for the Teacher's Pet book group to come to the table. The first group goes back to their desks and continues reading chapter two of *A Taste of Blackberries*.

Top

Questions to Think About

1. How do teachers ensure that even reluctant readers are given a place at the table during book talks?
2. What different strategies can teachers model for discussions of fiction and nonfiction?
3. Is there a place for the age-old practice of written book reports in the sharing of reading material?
4. What other formats, activities, and media can teachers use in their lessons to encourage English language learners (ELLs) to communicate about their reading?

Research Summary

Research Supporting the Practice

General Research on ELL Speaking Instruction

Research Supporting the Practice

Through active book discussions and sharing, students learn how to listen to different viewpoints and provide evidence to support their point of view. They learn to use language to talk about texts (Dorn & Soffos, 2001). Students also learn to make connections to their own world. Bond (2001) found that when elementary school students engaged in literature circle study, they most often identified the role

of "connector," that is, being able to relate an event in a story with something that happened in their own lives. According to Harvey and Goudvis (2000) and Brown et al. (2001), literature circles provide opportunities for peer discussion. They also build a sense of community in the classroom. Cunningham and Allington (2003) call these literature conversations. They contend that school reading must be linked to student choice, and students must have opportunities to discuss their reading with their peers.

To improve their students' comprehension, teachers must provide reoccurring opportunities for students to share their thoughts about reading. Furthermore, teachers need to model how adults converse about books if they expect students to engage in literate conversations. Thoughtful literacy requires large blocks of time for reading, but it also must provide for discussion, conversations, reflection, and revision (Allington & Cunningham, 2002). Using and talking about high-quality children's literature can lead to higher standardized test scores, as well (Roser, Hoffman, & Farest, 1990).

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General Research on ELL Speaking Instruction

Oral language is the foundation upon which literacy skills develop (Snow, 1983; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998; Dickinson & Tabors, 2001). Unlike students who come to school already proficient in English, English language learners (ELLs) depend greatly upon school for interactions that support the development of oral English skills, including academic talk (Bartolom, 1998; Delpit, 1995; Gutierrez, 1995; Reyes, 1992; Heath, 1982, 1985).

Many ELLs go through a "silent" or pre-production period during which they listen and observe more than they speak (Krashen, 1982). They may speak fluently when using greetings and other basic phrases in routine interpersonal situations, but speak haltingly when constructing English sentences to express more complex ideas (Cummins, 2001; Tabors, 1997) or in settings where they feel self-conscious and insecure (Krashen & Terrel, 1983). Small-group work, work with a partner, and one-on-one conferences or conversations with the teacher (Yedlin, 2003) may help ELLs feel more at ease speaking.

While ELLs acquire the language of socialization and daily life from social interaction with other students and adults (Tabors, 1997), they also require explicit instruction and modeling of the more formal language used in academic settings to talk about reading and writing (Bartolom , 1998), as well as explicit instruction and feedback on language forms and usage (Fillmore & Snow, 2000).

Skillful second language teachers create verbal scaffolds and participation structures that support and extend language performance beyond what ELLs are able to produce independently (Chaudron, 1988; Ellis, 1994; Yedlin 2003, 2004). Goldenberg (1993) and Ellis (1994) suggest that participation in such collaborative discourse extends and develops second language learners' communication skills. Culturally relevant texts, multicultural literature, and acknowledgement of culturally diverse experiences all promote increased comprehension and engagement (Au, 1998, 1993; Barrera, 1992; Harris, 1994; Conant et al., 2001; Gonzalez, Huerta-Macias, & Tinajero, 1998).

Skillful teachers ask ELLs clarifying questions to elicit more complex language from them (Yedlin, 2003, 2004). Researchers have also noticed that the speech patterns of effective second language teachers contain a high frequency of utterances that serve to extend, expand, and or paraphrase learner utterances (Chaudron, 1988; Ellis, 1994). Such utterances provide students with good language models for more effectively expressing their ideas.

During daily sharing time and class discussions, ELLs' contributions may be influenced by the narrative and conversational styles of their home communities as well as by their limited English proficiency (McCabe & Bliss, 2003). (See *The Diversity Kit, Part III: Language* (2002). Available through Alliance publications: http://www.alliance.brown.edu/db/ea_catalog.php. Researchers caution teachers not to confuse cross-cultural differences in style with cognitive deficits (Cazden, 2001; Delpit, 1995, Michaels, 1981). Teachers are advised to use print media, multicultural literature, and recordings to draw students' attention to diverse organizational patterns and to analyze the ways in which these differ (Adger, 1997). Activities such as situational role-playing can raise issues such as how to speak effectively in different roles and settings (e.g., talking with cousins at home or a college admissions interview) (Cazden, 2001; Heath, 1996; Gutierrez, 1999).

Research shows that ELLs benefit from explicit instruction and modeling of how to participate in text-based discussions. The instructional conversations (IC) approach (Saunders & Goldenberg, 1998; Tharp & Gallimore, 1991) is one way of structuring topic-centered and book-centered interactions. Through professional development, teachers learn how to promote discussion in which students explicitly build upon each other's contributions, ask for and provide clarifications, use complex language to express themselves, and provide text-based evidence for their opinions.

To help students meet the expectations for academic talk, Bartolom (1998) advocates for assignments such as oral reports and formal presentations that have specific guidelines for academic talk; this sets these assignments apart from daily informal conversations. Literature circles are another discussion format with specified participant roles such as summarizer, questioner, and connector. Ruby (2003) and Heyden (2003) report on how ELL students can learn academic participation norms and develop oral language skills through the carefully scaffolded participation in literature circles.

Harris-Wright (1999) describes "bi-dialectical" programs where young speakers of African American vernacular English are taught strategies for helping make their oral and written narratives more understandable to listeners and readers from outside their communities. Such strategies include considering and supplying background information that their listeners may lack and organizing their accounts of events chronologically.

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Related Web Resources

Literature Circles Build Excitement for Books! (0)

Literature Circles.com (0)

Literature Circles: A Review of Current Websites (0)

Teachers model and explain text-to-self, text-to-text, and text-to-world connections for their students.

What Is It?
Implications for ELLs
Strategies for Supporting ELLs
Glimpse of the Classroom
Questions to Think About

What Is It?

Text-to-self connections occur when students can relate aspects of the books that they have read to their own lives. For example, a boy who reads a story about someone who has been cut from a soccer team makes a connection when he relates that event to not making the team himself. Text-to-text connections occur when students are able to find similarities, such as themes or events, between the book that they are reading and other books that they have read. The theme of rejection in *The Ugly Duckling*, for example, is found in a number of other popular books. Text-to-world connections occur when students see a link between a book and something that happens in the world. In Lynn Cherry's book, *A River Runs Wild*, for example, the story of industrial pollution relates to concerns in our day-to-day world.

Once teachers have modeled how they make connections between their reading and their lives, students can be expected to make their own connections. During read-alouds, students can explain how the book the teacher is reading connects to their own lives, to other books they have read or heard read, and to their lives outside the classroom. This sharing of ideas fosters both listening and reading comprehension. Furthermore, students are eager to share their experiences in the supportive atmosphere of a group.

Top

Implications for ELLs

As with most students, when English language learners (ELLs) can see connections between reading and their own lives, their reading comprehension and engagement increase. However, it can be difficult for ELLs to find such connections if most books and materials represent mainstream culture. Students who rarely find reflections of their own faces, lives, or histories in their books may begin to feel alienated from those books and from school.

Top

Strategies for Supporting ELLs

While teachers help students identify with universal themes in books, such as rejection in *The Ugly Duckling*, they also make sure to study some books that reflect diverse experiences and cultural

backgrounds.

By studying fiction and nonfiction narratives that reflect experiences of ethnic communities, such as *Lion Dancer: Ernie Wan's Chinese New Year* (Waters, Slovenz-Low, & Cooper, 1991) and *My Little Island* (Lessac, 1995), English language learners (ELLs) see that others share their experiences of having relatives and roots elsewhere.

Effective teachers hold discussions that draw out the students' culturally specific relationships to such texts.

Teachers say things like:

- Have any of you ever seen the New Year's Parade in Chinatown?
- Have any of you been to a place that looks like the island in the picture?

It is also important to highlight the broader connections that other students can make.

Effective teachers say things like:

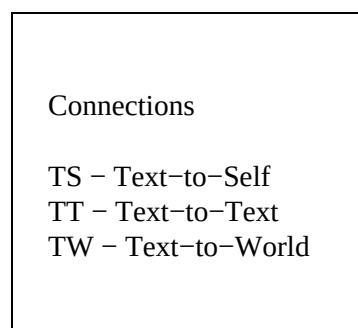
- Have you ever been in a show or an important parade?
- How did you feel?
- Do you have relatives who live far away?

In a similar vein, informational texts on familiar subjects, such as food in *Everyone Eats Rice* (Powell, 1997), build upon students' experiences and reduce any feelings of marginalization.

Top

Glimpse of the Classroom

There is a large chart hanging in front of the room. It reads:



Mrs. T. points to the chart and reminds her students about the importance of making connections. She says that when she reads books, she uses post-it notes to mark special parts of the book where she has made connections. Next, she discusses what is meant by the word *text*. Amber responds that the word *text* means the same thing as *book*.

Mrs. T. begins a mini-lesson about how to make connections. Chapter 7 of *Sarah, Plain and Tall* by Patricia MacLachlan begins with a sentence about dandelions and how they seed and are blown about in the wind. Mrs. T. remarks that when she was a young child, her father always warned her about

blowing the seeds around the yard because the seeds would soon sprout into more dandelions. She tells students that she labeled this page of the book with the letters T/S because that was a text-to-self connection.

At the bottom of the first page, the author writes about a young girl who has her hair styled in long braids and tucked on top of her head. Mrs. T. tells the class that this was another T/S connection because she remembers having this hair style when she was in a wedding as a child. She asks the girls in class if that would be a connection for them. Many girls raise their hands.

Another connection for Mrs. T. is when the characters Sarah and Maggie decorate their table for an important event. Mrs. T. explains that they have theme parties at her home, and she sometimes decorates her table, too. Here was another text-to-self connection.

Mrs. T. tells the students that this is a historical fiction book. When she first read it, she was reminded of a text-to-text connection between it and all of the Laura Ingalls Wilder books that she loved to read as a child. She holds up three Wilder books for the class to see. She explains that these books will soon be placed in the class browsing box.

On page 42, Sarah learns to drive the wagon. Mrs. T. points out another text-to-text connection to another book by the same author.

Mrs. T. asks one student, Courtney, to come to the front of the class and share her response journal, in which she has made several text-to-self connections.

Mrs. S., the classroom aide, comes to the front of the classroom and talks about how she made a text-to-world connection between the popular Harry Potter books and the Star Wars movies. She does a character-by-character connection between the book and the movie.

Each of these activities demonstrates to students that literacy does not take place in a vacuum but in the context of the world in which they live.

Top

Questions to Think About

1. What are some specific ways in which speaking instruction can be integrated into a social studies or science lesson?
2. What types of assessment would determine whether students are meeting the standards for speaking?
3. What kinds of developmental criteria and observational protocols can assess and support growth in English language learners' (ELLs) speaking skills?

Research Summary

Research Supporting the Practice

General Research on ELL Speaking Instruction

Research Supporting the Practice

To comprehend reading is to make connections with the text. According to Owocki (2003), connections may happen before, during, or after reading. Effective teachers ask their students thoughtful questions to assess whether these connections are happening.

Harvey and Goudvis (2000) call this making a bridge from the new to the known. They suggest having students talk about connections (e.g., saying, "It reminds me of?"); relating characters to themselves; finding common themes in author studies; and building background knowledge based on personal and text-to-world connections.

Cunningham & Allington (2003) state that good readers make these kinds of connections as they actively read a story or book. They point out that literature circles are an effective way for students to share their insights and thus improve their comprehension.

Connecting with students' background knowledge or schemata is especially pertinent when teaching English language learners (ELLs). Williams (2001) elucidates a variety of strategies that ELLs need as they become literate consumers of the oral and written language of English. One effective strategy is teacher think-alouds (Baumann, et al., 1992).

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General Research on ELL Speaking Instruction

Oral language is the foundation upon which literacy skills develop (Snow, 1983; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998; Dickinson & Tabors, 2001). Unlike students who come to school already proficient in English, English language learners (ELLs) depend greatly upon school for interactions that support the development of oral English skills, including academic talk (Bartolom, 1998; Delpit, 1995; Gutierrez, 1995; Reyes, 1992; Heath, 1982, 1985).

Many ELLs go through a "silent" or pre-production period during which they listen and observe more than they speak (Krashen, 1982). They may speak fluently when using greetings and other basic phrases in routine interpersonal situations, but speak haltingly when constructing English sentences to express more complex ideas (Cummins, 2001; Tabors, 1997) or in settings where they feel self-conscious and insecure (Krashen & Terrel, 1983). Small-group work, work with a partner, and one-on-one conferences or conversations with the teacher (Yedlin, 2003) may help ELLs feel more

at ease speaking.

While ELLs acquire the language of socialization and daily life from social interaction with other students and adults (Tabors, 1997), they also require explicit instruction and modeling of the more formal language used in academic settings to talk about reading and writing (Bartolom , 1998), as well as explicit instruction and feedback on language forms and usage (Fillmore & Snow, 2000).

Skillful second language teachers create verbal scaffolds and participation structures that support and extend language performance beyond what ELLs are able to produce independently (Chaudron, 1988; Ellis, 1994; Yedlin 2003, 2004). Goldenberg (1993) and Ellis (1994) suggest that participation in such collaborative discourse extends and develops second language learners' communication skills.

Culturally relevant texts, multicultural literature, and acknowledgement of culturally diverse experiences all promote increased comprehension and engagement (Au, 1998, 1993; Barrera, 1992; Harris, 1994; Conant et al., 2001; Gonzalez, Huerta-Macias, & Tinajero, 1998).

Skillful teachers ask ELLs clarifying questions to elicit more complex language from them (Yedlin, 2003, 2004). Researchers have also noticed that the speech patterns of effective second language teachers contain a high frequency of utterances that serve to extend, expand, and or paraphrase learner utterances (Chaudron, 1988; Ellis, 1994). Such utterances provide students with good language models for more effectively expressing their ideas.

During daily sharing time and class discussions, ELLs' contributions may be influenced by the narrative and conversational styles of their home communities as well as by their limited English proficiency (McCabe & Bliss, 2003). (See *The Diversity Kit, Part III: Language* (2002). Available through Alliance publications: http://www.alliance.brown.edu/db/ea_catalog.php. Researchers caution teachers not to confuse cross-cultural differences in style with cognitive deficits (Cazden, 2001; Delpit, 1995, Michaels, 1981). Teachers are advised to use print media, multicultural literature, and recordings to draw students' attention to diverse organizational patterns and to analyze the ways in which these differ (Adger, 1997). Activities such as situational role-playing can raise issues such as how to speak effectively in different roles and settings (e.g., talking with cousins at home or a college admissions interview) (Cazden, 2001; Heath, 1996; Gutierrez, 1999).

Research shows that ELLs benefit from explicit instruction and modeling of how to participate in text-based discussions. The instructional conversations (IC) approach (Saunders & Goldenberg, 1998; Tharp & Gallimore, 1991) is one way of structuring topic-centered and book-centered interactions. Through professional development, teachers learn how to promote discussion in which students explicitly build upon each other's contributions, ask for and provide clarifications, use complex language to express themselves, and provide text-based evidence for their opinions.

To help students meet the expectations for academic talk, Bartolom (1998) advocates for assignments such as oral reports and formal presentations that have specific guidelines for academic talk; this sets these assignments apart from daily informal conversations. Literature circles are another discussion format with specified participant roles such as summarizer, questioner, and connector. Ruby (2003) and Heyden (2003) report on how ELL students can learn academic participation norms and develop oral language skills through the carefully scaffolded participation in literature circles.

Harris-Wright (1999) describes "bi-dialectical" programs where young speakers of African American vernacular English are taught strategies for helping make their oral and written narratives more understandable to listeners and readers from outside their communities. Such strategies include considering and supplying background information that their listeners may lack and organizing their accounts of events chronologically.

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Related Web Resources

Effective Beginning Reading Instruction Paper Commissioned by the National Reading Conference (0)

Writing in the Intermediate Grades, 3–5 (0)

Teachers have regular conversations with individual students about their writing, thereby enabling students to improve the quality of their work.

What Is It?
Implications for ELLs
Strategies for Supporting ELLs
Glimpse of the Classroom
Questions to Think About

What Is It?

The primary vehicle for improving the quality of writing is the teacher–student conference. During these sessions, teachers pose questions to students to challenge their thinking and guide their writing. The teacher's job is to ask probing questions that help the student look more introspectively at his or her own work. Some questions may focus on mechanical aspects of writing, but at other times the questions might probe deeper into the origins of the writing: why the writer chose specific format or where the writer intends to go next with the piece. In responding to these questions, students clarify and expand their ideas. Conferences are not intended to supply pat answers to questions. Instead, they are opportunities for students to ponder answers to questions raised. Through discussions, students better understand their own writing.

Top

Implications for ELLs

Teacher–student writing conferences provide excellent opportunities for English language learners (ELLs) to interact one–on–one with the teacher. Not only do students receive individualized attention, but also they are able to speak in a setting that does not present competition from more verbally proficient classmates. Conferences provide teachers with a unique opportunity to learn more about each student and to strengthen the teacher–student relationship.

Top

Strategies for Supporting ELLs

In conferences, teachers are responsive to the individual student's needs and interests. Teachers adjust their language to the student's comprehension level. During conferences, teachers respond to what students have written and drawn, and they ask clarifying questions to improve the quality of the students' speaking and writing. Beginning English language learners (ELLs) who are not yet writing may come to the conference with a drawing that the teacher can respond to verbally and in print.

Effective teachers say things like:

- I like your picture. You used so many colors!
- Tell me about the people you drew.
- Is this your family?
- Who is this?
- You wrote that your sister's dress was nice, I want to know more about it.
- Tell me the color.
- Was it a long dress or a short dress? [Teacher gestures.]
- You said that your cousin got mad but you didn't explain why.
- What happened that made your cousin angry?
- Did something happen?

Top

Glimpse of the Classroom

Mrs. T. uses response journals and teacher–student conferences to help students develop into more fluent writers. Today, 20 days into the new school year, she will meet with four students to discuss their writing. Each student spends about 5 minutes with Mrs. T.

The first student, Amber, is a struggling writer. She has been reading *The Magic Finger*. Amber and Mrs. T. sit side-by-side as Mrs. T. reads her written response to Amber. She explains what she likes about Amber's work and raises several questions in her letter. Amber uses a highlighter to mark the questions so she is sure to answer them later. Mrs. T. encourages Amber to make connections to her reading. She also reminds Amber to check her punctuation and spelling when she turns in her journal next time.

The second student, Katarina, is a candidate for special literacy instruction. Katerina has been reading an Amber Brown book. Again, Mrs. T. reads her written comments to the student. She also highlights questions that Mrs. T. raises in response to her writing. It is obvious that Katerina doesn't understand the convention of indenting the first line in each paragraph because each line is indented more and more until there is no consistent left-hand margin. Lastly, Mrs. T. reminds Katerina to include the date and greeting for each entry.

Michael is also a candidate for special literacy instruction. He has been reading a Junie B. Jones book. Even though his writing shows a number of mechanical problems, Mrs. T. addresses only a few so Michael can pay more attention to them. Michael has also forgotten to answer a number of Mrs. T.'s questions, but she decides to overlook that at this point. Instead, she focuses on making connections, remembering to date the response journal, remembering to use a comma after the closing and the greeting, and remembering to indent the first word in each paragraph.

Alexa is a very bright girl, one of the top students in the class. Mrs. T. once again reads her response to Alexa. She notes that Alexa should try to include the title, author, supportive opinion, and connections next time. She also reminds Alexa to indent the first word of each paragraph. Finally, she points out that *truly* shouldn't be spelled with an *e*.

Each of these students has a special need. Through individual conferences, Mrs. T. has effectively led them toward becoming more fluent writers.

Top

Questions to Think About

1. What are some engaging ways for teachers to open conversations with students regarding speaking, listening, reading, and writing?
2. What strategies can teachers employ to engage students who cannot yet converse in English?
3. How can teachers structure one-on-one interactions to help students who do not yet understand much English?

Research Summary

Research Supporting the Practice
General Research on ELL Speaking Instruction

Research Supporting the Practice

Many authorities recommend regularly scheduled conferences to improve students' literacy skills (Cox, 2002; Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001; Routman, 2000). The keys to having meaningful discussions with students about their writing are to keep the conferences short – less than 15 minutes, get the students involved, and keep the conferences focused on one facet of instruction (Routman, 2000).

Routman (2000) describes two types of conferences: content conferences and editing conferences. In a content conference, teachers and students discuss the substance of the material. The teacher focuses on what the student is attempting to say. Having the student read the piece aloud to the teacher sometimes helps focus on content. Editing conferences, on the other hand, focus on the mechanics of writing such as misspellings, writing conventions, format, and so forth. When teachers have a clear idea of what they hope to accomplish during the conference, there is a greater probability that they will accomplish their goals.

As students become more knowledgeable about conferences, teachers may want to introduce peer conferences. These conferences free teachers to work with other students. Peer editing groups can also serve a valuable purpose for writers (Cox, 2002). In peer conferences, students are sharing their work with each other. Peers sit side-by-side and work through the technical issues of writing. McCarthy (1994, 1996) notes, however, that teachers need to be cautious when introducing peer conferences into their classrooms: Students from diverse backgrounds may be tentative about sharing their work with others.

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Yedlin, J. (2004, January/February). Teacher talk: Enabling ELLs to "grab on" and climb high. *Perspectives*. Available: <http://www.mec.edu/mascd/docs/yedlin.htm>

Related Web Resources

Children's Writing in ESL (0)
 Encouraging Young Children's Writing (0)
 Project WRITE: A Look at Children's Writing, K–5 (0)
 Scaffolding Children's Writing in a Range of Genres (0)
 The Building Blocks to Children's Writing (0)

Teachers include daily sharing as an important activity in their classrooms.

What Is It?
Implications for ELLs
Strategies for Supporting ELLs
Glimpse of the Classroom
Questions to Think About

What Is It?

Orally sharing experiences has long been an important component in schooling. Most of us remember kindergarten "show and tell" time. As students progress through the grades, it is important that teachers continue to provide opportunities for students to share important events in their lives. A special trip, an unexpected happening, or current events all have a place in a literacy-rich classroom.

Best practices in literacy also support the notion that students need a variety of opportunities to share their literacy skills with one another. Sharing can take the form of talking about books or meaningful experiences and reading aloud selections of written work or from their journals. Effective teachers provide ample opportunities for both. Written work can include a wide range of student projects from autobiographies to fiction stories to poems. The results are not only shared through speaking, but also displayed throughout the classroom.

Top

Implications for ELLs

Cultural factors influence the style of oral language. People from diverse cultures differ in what they tell and how they tell it. Because of language structure and tradition, English speakers tend to center on a topic, present information in a sequential order, and tell linear stories using cause and effect; however, not all cultural groups organize their communications this way. When students from culturally diverse backgrounds share stories in English, teachers sometimes perceive these narratives as rambling or disorganized. Yet, adult members of the students' own communities judge these narratives as well-structured. While it is the responsibility of the school to teach socially valued and academic ways of speaking, effective teachers avoid judging narratives that spring from diverse cultures as evidence of poor thinking skills.

Top

Strategies for Supporting ELLs

It is important to understand that limited English proficiency and culturally diverse styles of narration influence how students share stories and experiences in class. Effective teachers welcome all students' contributions to class conversations, but also provide guidance in the narrative styles for which

students will be held accountable.

Teachers say things like:

- It sounds like you had so much fun when your cousins visited.
- I can tell that you really enjoy them.
- I want to make sure I hear about all the places you took them, so let's make a list:
 - ◆ What day did they arrive?
 - ◆ How long did they stay?
- Okay, I'll write down Saturday, Sunday, and Monday.
- Let's write down the things you did on each day.

Top

Glimpse of the Classroom

Daniel is one of the most loveable kids in this second-grade classroom. Neither of Daniel's parents speak English; Polish is their native tongue. Nevertheless, Daniel is an articulate English speaker and loves to share stories about his home.

In class, his teacher Mrs. E. is reading aloud a book entitled *My Secret Place*. Daniel eagerly raises his hand, and Mrs. E. calls on him.

"I have a secret place, too," offers Daniel. Mrs. E. chuckles because she knows Daniel loves to bring his world into the classroom. "And, where is that?" Mrs. E. asks.

"It's behind my couch," Daniel replies. "It's my favorite secret place because I can lie there and read books and stuff," he tells the class.

Mrs. E. has created a welcoming, conducive environment for children to connect their home and neighborhood to what they read and talk about in class. Daniel and his classmates love Mrs. E. and when asked why they like her, the class chimes in, "because she's the best!!!"

Top

Questions to Think About

1. What ground rules need to be established before sharing becomes a part of the school day?
2. How can daily sharing be used to improve students' understanding of their reading and the world around them?
3. Does something as simple as daily sharing need to be evaluated using an agreed upon rubric?
4. How can teachers encourage beginning English language learners (ELLs) to participate in daily sharing activities—while respecting the fact that ELLs may have anxieties about speaking in public?

Research Summary

Research Supporting the Practice

General Research on ELL Speaking Instruction

Research Supporting the Practice

According to Cox (2002), speaking accounts for only 30% of an average teacher's language arts block. Furthermore, about 66% of the school day is devoted to teacher talk whereas only 33% is devoted to student talk. Cox recommends that teachers teach speaking and listening by planning student-led conversations, offering instruction in conversation skills, and having a regularly planned time for sharing. This is especially important when dealing with bilingual students and English language learners. Both reading and writing improve when teachers discuss vocabulary meanings with students and present specific background knowledge related to the material being studied (Fitzgerald, 2000).

Vukelich, Christie, and Enz (2002) offer a variety of suggestions for stimulating speaking in the classroom: group activities, learning centers, dramatic play, play settings, sharing, story telling, language play, songs, and plays using finger puppets.

Galda and West (1995) suggest exploring literature and speech through drama. Pantomimes, reenactments, interpretations, improvisations, role playing, and reader's theatre are some suggested ways of fostering speaking as well as reading comprehension.

Classrooms are places where social interaction plays an important role. Research shows that social interaction patterns enhance the literacy development of elementary school children (Almasi & Gambrell, 1994). Thus, it behooves teachers to structure the classroom so that meaningful interactions can occur among students.

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General Research on ELL Speaking Instruction

Oral language is the foundation upon which literacy skills develop (Snow, 1983; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998; Dickinson & Tabors, 2001). Unlike students who come to school already proficient in English, English language learners (ELLs) depend greatly upon school for interactions that support the development of oral English skills, including academic talk (Bartolom, 1998; Delpit, 1995; Gutierrez, 1995; Reyes, 1992; Heath, 1982, 1985).

Many ELLs go through a "silent" or pre-production period during which they listen and observe more than they speak (Krashen, 1982). They may speak fluently when using greetings and other basic phrases in routine interpersonal situations, but speak haltingly when constructing English sentences to express more complex ideas (Cummins, 2001; Tabors, 1997) or in settings where they feel self-conscious and insecure (Krashen & Terrel, 1983). Small-group work, work with a partner, and one-on-one conferences or conversations with the teacher (Yedlin, 2003) may help ELLs feel more at ease speaking.

While ELLs acquire the language of socialization and daily life from social interaction with other students and adults (Tabors, 1997), they also require explicit instruction and modeling of the more formal language used in academic settings to talk about reading and writing (Bartolom, 1998), as well as explicit instruction and feedback on language forms and usage (Fillmore & Snow, 2000).

Skillful second language teachers create verbal scaffolds and participation structures that support and extend language performance beyond what ELLs are able to produce independently (Chaudron, 1988; Ellis, 1994; Yedlin 2003, 2004). Goldenberg (1993) and Ellis (1994) suggest that participation in such collaborative discourse extends and develops second language learners' communication skills. Culturally relevant texts, multicultural literature, and acknowledgement of culturally diverse experiences all promote increased comprehension and engagement (Au, 1998, 1993; Barrera, 1992; Harris, 1994; Conant et al., 2001; Gonzalez, Huerta-Macias, & Tinajero, 1998).

Skillful teachers ask ELLs clarifying questions to elicit more complex language from them (Yedlin, 2003, 2004). Researchers have also noticed that the speech patterns of effective second language teachers contain a high frequency of utterances that serve to extend, expand, and or paraphrase learner utterances (Chaudron, 1988; Ellis, 1994). Such utterances provide students with good language models for more effectively expressing their ideas.

During daily sharing time and class discussions, ELLs' contributions may be influenced by the narrative and conversational styles of their home communities as well as by their limited English proficiency (McCabe & Bliss, 2003). (See *The Diversity Kit, Part III: Language* (2002). Available through Alliance publications: http://www.alliance.brown.edu/db/ea_catalog.php. Researchers caution teachers not to confuse cross-cultural differences in style with cognitive deficits (Cazden, 2001; Delpit, 1995, Michaels, 1981). Teachers are advised to use print media, multicultural literature, and recordings to draw students' attention to diverse organizational patterns and to analyze the ways in which these differ (Adger, 1997). Activities such as situational role-playing can raise issues such as how to speak effectively in different roles and settings (e.g., talking with cousins at home or a college admissions interview) (Cazden, 2001; Heath, 1996; Gutierrez, 1999).

Research shows that ELLs benefit from explicit instruction and modeling of how to participate in text-based discussions. The instructional conversations (IC) approach (Saunders & Goldenberg, 1998; Tharp & Gallimore, 1991) is one way of structuring topic-centered and book-centered interactions. Through professional development, teachers learn how to promote discussion in which students explicitly build upon each other's contributions, ask for and provide clarifications, use complex

language to express themselves, and provide text-based evidence for their opinions.

To help students meet the expectations for academic talk, Bartolom (1998) advocates for assignments such as oral reports and formal presentations that have specific guidelines for academic talk; this sets these assignments apart from daily informal conversations. Literature circles are another discussion format with specified participant roles such as summarizer, questioner, and connector. Ruby (2003) and Heyden (2003) report on how ELL students can learn academic participation norms and develop oral language skills through the carefully scaffolded participation in literature circles.

Harris-Wright (1999) describes "bi-dialectical" programs where young speakers of African American vernacular English are taught strategies for helping make their oral and written narratives more understandable to listeners and readers from outside their communities. Such strategies include considering and supplying background information that their listeners may lack and organizing their accounts of events chronologically.

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Related Web Resources

Writing in the Early Grades, K–2 (0)

Writing in the Intermediate Grades, 3–5 (0)

Teachers provide ample opportunities for students to talk about familiar topics and then demonstrate to students how talking better enables them to write.

What Is It?
Implications for ELLs
Strategies for Supporting ELLs
Glimpse of the Classroom
Questions to Think About

What Is It?

One important reason for fostering student discourse is that talking can serve as a precursor to writing. Coupled with the fact that many young writers struggle to find topics about which to write, it makes sense to encourage students to write about things with which they are most familiar.

Effective teachers create opportunities for students to tell details about events in their lives. Usually, this takes place in one-on-one teacher-student conferences. At other times, it occurs during paired student discussions. Once students have orally shared their experiences, they find writing much easier.

To scaffold writing for students, teachers demonstrate the value of first talking in general terms about their own recent experiences and then beginning to write. For example, once a teacher has finished relating her story, she says to students, "Now I want to put my thoughts and words into print." At this point, she can use a chalkboard, chart paper, or an overhead projector and write her story for the class to see. The teacher explains that she didn't need to include all the details of her verbal story to make her written piece convey the meaning she intended. She describes why she chose some words over others, how she wanted to begin her story, and how she wanted to end it. Throughout this process, she stresses the fact that talking about the story first made it easier to write.

Top

Implications for ELLs

The connection between speaking and writing is an especially important one for English language learners (ELLs). By observing and participating in the teacher's composing processes, ELLs gain insight into many aspects of writing. Students learn writing may begin with the intention to interact, inform, amuse, remember, persuade, or celebrate. They realize that words can be broken into sounds which are represented by letters. They notice that the teacher doesn't always try to "sound out" words but sometimes just remembers them or consults the word wall. They see how the teacher thinks about her title as a way to focus her writing. They hear the teacher consider how to begin with an attention-grabbing sentence, and they learn that the teacher is always thinking about what will interest and inform the audience. In this way, they discover the logic behind capitalization, punctuation, and paragraphing. Finally, they are privy to the teacher's self-evaluation (e.g., Teachers say, "Did I tell you what my favorite place is? Did I tell you why I like it there? Did I tell you what I do there? Do I have details? Did I write a conclusion? I forgot the conclusion. Where should my

conclusion go? What should I say?"). Gradually, students understand that if you can say it you can write it.

Top

Strategies for Supporting ELLs

Teachers of English language learners (ELLs) scaffold the transformation of oral language into written language in a variety of ways. Sometimes teachers use the Language Experience Approach, asking students to tell a story about a drawing or experience, which the teacher then transcribes for them. Students read and reread the story aloud. The teacher cuts the story apart into sentence strips and word cards for students to scramble and put back in order. After students can competently put the sentences and words in the correct order, the teacher prepares a version with selected words replaced by blanks for students to fill in, or students recopy the complete story.

Another scaffolding strategy is to hold a group discussion on a familiar topic such as favorite weekend activities.

Effective teachers say things like:

- On Saturdays and Sundays, I like to walk my dog with my son.
- On Saturdays and Sundays, I like to go have coffee with my mother.
- On weekends, I like to go shopping with my sister.
- What do you like to do on Saturday and Sunday?

Then teachers write a model sentence and list the students' oral contributions on chart paper.

On weekends I like to _____ with _____.

<i>play outside</i>	<i>my dog</i>
<i>play baseball</i>	<i>my friends</i>
<i>go to the movies</i>	<i>Fred and Kenny</i>
<i>watch TV</i>	<i>my sister</i>
<i>play video games</i>	<i>my neighbors</i>
<i>eat at a restaurant</i>	<i>my mom and dad</i>
<i>visit my grandpa</i>	

Beginning ELLs may need to repeat the sentence pattern and the listed items after the teacher says them in order to match the spoken and written words. Using the chart as a model, students write about their own weekend favorites. Students read their final stories to the class for feedback and discussion. They can illustrate the stories and display them in the classroom. Finally, the stories can even provide the basis for a guessing game.

Top

Glimpse of the Classroom

Mrs. M. asks the class to listen to the following scenario. This past weekend, her dog was struck by a car. While her dog was not seriously injured, she had to take him to the veterinarian to check for broken bones. She describes her experiences and anxiety while in the waiting room and later in the examination room. Fortunately, the dog was fine—bruised but no broken bones.

After Mrs. M. relates the story to her class, she begins to write about the event on large chart paper. As she writes, she refers to her oral retelling of the episode so that students can see how events in their lives can be recorded. Mrs. M. asks students to recall an important point in their lives and share it with a classmate. After their stories are shared orally, they write them in their journals.

This is an example of the power of oral language and how it can shape writing.

Top

Questions to Think About

1. What are some ways in which student discourse can serve as a springboard for writing?
2. How can teachers channel the energy of students who insist on monopolizing classroom discussion?
3. What is the best way to move from group discussion to independent work and writing?
4. What are the pros and cons of writing students' words exactly as students say them, versus restating and writing the words in a more grammatically correct form?

Story Summaries

The Story Workshop" Approach

"Reading and writing are taught equally in this course. . . Reading became easier, more enjoyable, and writing was given a voice with power. . . [Both] improved so dramatically, scores in other subjects soared," said one fourth-grade public school teacher after a 10-week Story Workshop program. Originated and developed by John Schultz and conducted in diverse classes from grade school to grad school, the Story Workshop approach emphasizes reading, writing, speaking, listening, and thinking relationships. This story describes the approach, illustrated with linked video segments of actual classroom experiences with elementary school students. Because of the way in which this approach integrates oral telling, reading, and writing skills into classroom activities, it connects to multiple practices in the elementary literacy spotlight (see practices list).

Research Summary

Research Supporting the Practice
General Research on ELL Speaking Instruction

Research Suupporting the Practice

Calkins (2001) writes about "writing to follow trails of thought" (p. 381). Students use speech to mull over ideas and thoughts before they commit those thoughts to writing. One way that students can improve their reading and writing is through asking questions (Miller, 2002). When students learn to pose questions purposefully, they see that the process of questioning applies to other areas of their personal and academic lives. Nystrand and Gamoran (1991, 1997) found that although it was difficult to change classroom discourse, when students were asked authentic, open-ended questions and teachers were open to divergent answers, there was a significantly higher achievement on the part of those students given written assessments.

One of the best ways to encourage spoken communication in your classroom is through sharing. Fisher (1995) describes the different types of sharing she uses in her first-grade classroom: informal sharing, large-group sharing, and the author's chair. In each of these situations, students read their written work to their peers and teacher. Senechal et al. (1998) discovered that storybook exposure at home enhanced children's oral language skills, but direct teaching at school is needed to enhance written language skill. Thus, teachers need to build upon a student's oral literacy background and scaffold instruction to lead students into the realm of writing.

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General Research on ELL Speaking Instruction

Oral language is the foundation upon which literacy skills develop (Snow, 1983; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998; Dickinson & Tabors, 2001). Unlike students who come to school already proficient in English, English language learners (ELLs) depend greatly upon school for interactions that support the development of oral English skills, including academic talk (Bartolom, 1998; Delpit, 1995; Gutierrez, 1995; Reyes, 1992; Heath, 1982, 1985).

Many ELLs go through a "silent" or pre-production period during which they listen and observe more than they speak (Krashen, 1982). They may speak fluently when using greetings and other basic phrases in routine interpersonal situations, but speak haltingly when constructing English sentences to express more complex ideas (Cummins, 2001; Tabors, 1997) or in settings where they feel self-conscious and insecure (Krashen & Terrel, 1983). Small-group work, work with a partner, and

one-on-one conferences or conversations with the teacher (Yedlin, 2003) may help ELLs feel more at ease speaking.

While ELLs acquire the language of socialization and daily life from social interaction with other students and adults (Tabors, 1997), they also require explicit instruction and modeling of the more formal language used in academic settings to talk about reading and writing (Bartolom , 1998), as well as explicit instruction and feedback on language forms and usage (Fillmore & Snow, 2000).

Skillful second language teachers create verbal scaffolds and participation structures that support and extend language performance beyond what ELLs are able to produce independently (Chaudron, 1988; Ellis, 1994; Yedlin 2003, 2004). Goldenberg (1993) and Ellis (1994) suggest that participation in such collaborative discourse extends and develops second language learners' communication skills. Culturally relevant texts, multicultural literature, and acknowledgement of culturally diverse experiences all promote increased comprehension and engagement (Au, 1998, 1993; Barrera, 1992; Harris, 1994; Conant et al., 2001; Gonzalez, Huerta-Macias, & Tinajero, 1998).

Skillful teachers ask ELLs clarifying questions to elicit more complex language from them (Yedlin, 2003, 2004). Researchers have also noticed that the speech patterns of effective second language teachers contain a high frequency of utterances that serve to extend, expand, and or paraphrase learner utterances (Chaudron, 1988; Ellis, 1994). Such utterances provide students with good language models for more effectively expressing their ideas.

During daily sharing time and class discussions, ELLs' contributions may be influenced by the narrative and conversational styles of their home communities as well as by their limited English proficiency (McCabe & Bliss, 2003). (See *The Diversity Kit, Part III: Language* (2002). Available through Alliance publications: http://www.alliance.brown.edu/db/ea_catalog.php. Researchers caution teachers not to confuse cross-cultural differences in style with cognitive deficits (Cazden, 2001; Delpit, 1995, Michaels, 1981). Teachers are advised to use print media, multicultural literature, and recordings to draw students' attention to diverse organizational patterns and to analyze the ways in which these differ (Adger, 1997). Activities such as situational role-playing can raise issues such as how to speak effectively in different roles and settings (e.g., talking with cousins at home or a college admissions interview) (Cazden, 2001; Heath, 1996; Gutierrez, 1999).

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Related Web Resources

Writing in the Early Grades, K-2 (0)

Writing in the Intermediate Grades, 3-5 (0)

Teachers model how to verbalize understandings and questions about readings and then provide opportunities for students to practice these comprehension strategies.

What Is It?
Implications for ELLs
Strategies for Supporting ELLs
Glimpse of the Classroom
Questions to Think About

What Is It?

Teaching students to monitor their own reading is one of the best ways a teacher can help improve student comprehension. Using the "inner language" of speech, effective readers ask themselves questions such as: Does this make sense? What may happen next? How does this connect to something I already know? These metacognitive strategies can keep students actively engaged in their reading.

Top

Implications for ELLs

English language learners (ELLs) spend a great part of their time and energy trying to understand the oral and written English that surrounds them. ELLs benefit from learning how to ask themselves and other people questions that focus on finding and clarifying the information they need. Helpful strategies for ELLs include: rereading, skimming, scanning, and consulting resources to obtain clarification. Explicit modeling and instruction helps students to monitor their comprehension by verbalizing their understandings and pinpointing areas of confusion or missing information. Beginners in English and those who have not yet learned to read in their primary languages will need more modeling and clear explanations of the strategies in order to understand and use them.

Top

Strategies for Supporting ELLs

Teachers of English language learners (ELLs) keep in mind that limited English word knowledge is an important, but not the only, reason that ELLs may have difficulty understanding what they read. Many stories are difficult for ELLs to understand because the authors have written for an audience that shares background knowledge of American culture, history, and customs.

Effective teachers use, explain, demonstrate, and revisit comprehension strategies throughout the school year. Students who may not be ready to understand a strategy early in the school year may be

able to understand and use the strategy when it is explained and modeled again a few months later.

To engage students in their reading, teachers model and explain questioning strategies that send students back to the text to look for story elements such as character (Who?), setting (Where? When?), and problem (What's the matter?). For informational text comprehension, teachers model graphic organizers appropriate to the subject matter, such as the one below.

What's the animal's name?	What's the baby's name?	Where do they live?	What do they eat?
horse	foal colt	farm ranch	grass hay
duck	duckling	ponds rivers lakes	water plants bread

Top

Glimpse of the Classroom

Zach, a second grader, and Mrs. R. are sitting side-by-side at the reading table.

Mrs. R. says, "This is a book that has some really tricky language in it, but I've already introduced it to you, so you should be able to read it. What's the one thing that you always want to make sure of when you read?"

"The book has to make sense," Zach responds. Zach has said earlier that when he reads and gets it, reading is fun.

He starts to read aloud:

"One day, a little mouse jumped onto a sleeping lion.

The lion woke up.

'Got you!' he said.

'Eee-eee! said the mouse.

'Please let me go!

Please let me go!

One day I may help you.'"

The next page of text presents a problem for Zach. It reads:

"Ha-ha-ha," laughed the lion.

"A little mouse like you can't help a big lion like me!"

But he let the mouse go.

"Thank you," said the little mouse

and away she ran to her hole.

Zach is stuck on the words *Ha-ha-ha*.

Mrs. R. points to the quotation marks. "What do you know about these marks, Zach?"

"They're talk marks," replies Zach.

He looks at the picture of the laughing lion on the opposing page.

"I think I know who is talking," he says as he points to the picture of the laughing lion.

Now the word *laughed* is presenting a problem for him. Being a strategic reader, he substitutes the word *blank* for *laughed* and re-reads the sentence.

"Mmmmm. What makes sense?" Mrs. R. asks.

"Laughing?" Zach suggests.

"Try it and see if it makes sense," says Mrs. R.

Zach reads the sentence again, substituting *laughing* for *laughed*. He now realizes that *laughed* is the correct word, so he rereads the sentence again, this time correctly identifying each word.

Even at this young age, Zach has realized that you need to read for meaning and monitor what you read. If it doesn't make sense, you need to go back and use a fix-up strategy to make the passage read correctly. He goes on to read the rest of the text without committing a miscue.

Top

Questions to Think About

1. How can teachers motivate students to generate questions while reading?
2. How can teachers adapt self-questioning strategies to make them appropriate for different grade levels?
3. How might teachers encourage English language learners (ELLs) to develop comprehension strategies based upon students' knowledge of their home languages?

Story Summaries

The Story Workshop" Approach

"Reading and writing are taught equally in this course. . . Reading became easier, more enjoyable, and writing was given a voice with power. . . [Both] improved so dramatically, scores in other subjects soared," said one fourth-grade public school teacher after a 10-week Story Workshop program. Originated and developed by John Schultz and conducted in diverse classes from grade school to grad school, the Story Workshop approach emphasizes reading, writing, speaking, listening, and thinking relationships. This story describes the approach, illustrated with linked video segments of actual classroom experiences with elementary school students. Because of the way in which this approach integrates oral telling, reading, and writing skills into classroom activities, it connects to multiple practices in the elementary literacy spotlight (see practices list).

Research Summary

Research Supporting the Practice
General Research on ELL Speaking Instruction

Research Supporting the Practice

Proficient readers are metacognitively aware (Harvey & Goudvis, 2000). Metacognition means students understand how they think and then use strategies to help themselves read and write. Metacognitive readers monitor their own learning (Nist & Simpson, 2000). Originally, metacognitive research mainly focused on older students, but recently, more and more educators have recognized its implications for all readers, regardless of age. Neuman and Roskos (1997) have shown that even very young children can use metacognitive strategies in their literacy activities, such as monitoring their own reading and using fix-up strategies when meaning breaks down, etc. Ability to monitor doesn't develop naturally, however; it must be taught (Schwartz, 1997).

Research on metacognition with English language learners (ELLs) has also shown that bilingual Latino students can use metacognitive strategies to improve their reading (Garcia, 2000). Regardless of ethnicity, however, all students need to be taught to become self-regulated learners who use metacognitive strategies to facilitate their own learning (Dorn & Soffos, 2001).

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General Research on ELL Speaking Instruction

Oral language is the foundation upon which literacy skills develop (Snow, 1983; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998; Dickinson & Tabors, 2001). Unlike students who come to school already proficient in English, English language learners (ELLs) depend greatly upon school for interactions that support the development of oral English skills, including academic talk (Bartolom, 1998; Delpit, 1995; Gutierrez, 1995; Reyes, 1992; Heath, 1982, 1985).

Many ELLs go through a "silent" or pre-production period during which they listen and observe more than they speak (Krashen, 1982). They may speak fluently when using greetings and other basic phrases in routine interpersonal situations, but speak haltingly when constructing English sentences to express more complex ideas (Cummins, 2001; Tabors, 1997) or in settings where they feel self-conscious and insecure (Krashen & Terrel, 1983). Small-group work, work with a partner, and one-on-one conferences or conversations with the teacher (Yedlin, 2003) may help ELLs feel more at ease speaking.

While ELLs acquire the language of socialization and daily life from social interaction with other

students and adults (Tabors, 1997), they also require explicit instruction and modeling of the more formal language used in academic settings to talk about reading and writing (Bartolom , 1998), as well as explicit instruction and feedback on language forms and usage (Fillmore & Snow, 2000).

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Related Web Resources

Metacognition and Reading to Learn (0)

Preventing Early Reading Failure With One-to-One Tutoring: A Review of Five Programs (0)

Listening Instruction, Grades K–6

Practices ELL Overview

This section presents four practices for listening instruction in grades K–6. Listening is the reciprocal process of speaking. A student's listening vocabulary will expand his or her speaking vocabulary, eventually resulting in a richer writing vocabulary. Learning to listen critically builds thinking skills as students learn to organize information and evaluate spoken messages. The teacher plays a key role in organizing instruction to allow good listening skills to develop. Notice how these practices reinforce the importance of choosing good books for read-alouds and then modeling how to make connections between what one hears and what one knows.

- Teachers include listening as an integral part of reading and writing instruction.
- Teachers employ a variety of effective strategies that involve students as active and engaged listeners.
- Teachers guide students to identify literary elements as they read aloud, listen to, and discuss books together.
- Teachers help students understand and make connections to their reading through social interactions in which students listen to and build upon each other's responses to the text.

ELL Overview

English language learners (ELLs) learn English primarily by listening to language in use around them, while using context to figure out what the spoken words mean. This language serves as the input or data that learners internalize and use to express their own meanings. Many ELLs go through a "silent period," during which they listen and observe more than they speak. Effective teachers are aware that ELLs who are quiet in class may be hard at work listening and comprehending. ELLs may take longer to answer a question or volunteer a comment because they need more time to process the meaning and to formulate an appropriate response. With time and lots of opportunities to listen, observe, participate, and interact, ELLs progress in understanding and are able to produce language that is increasingly complete, complex, and grammatical. This is similar to the natural way that most young children learn the languages spoken by their families at home—in the context of activities and relationships.

Listening to the distinctive sounds and rhythms of English provides the foundation for speaking English and for literacy development. As ELLs listen to literature that is read aloud, they become familiar with its language (e.g., *Once upon a time; happily ever after*) and its structure (introduction of characters and setting, problem, solution), which are important prerequisites for reading.

Oral language and interpersonal relationships also support the development of writing skills. Students write for the audience of their classmates and are eager to hear what others have written. When writing is the focus of social interaction, ELLs can thrive as writers. ELLs need daily opportunities to hear and use oral language in order for all their English literacy skills to flourish.

The listening instruction practices in this spotlight provide guidance on this important element of literacy. Teachers of all students will find useful insights and strategies in the sections **Implications**

for ELLs and Strategies for Supporting ELLs below each practice under **[What Is It?]**.

Teachers include listening as an integral part of reading and writing instruction.

What Is It?
Implications for ELLs
Strategies for Supporting ELLs
Glimpse of the Classroom
Questions to Think About

What Is It?

When listening to teachers read books aloud, students hear good models of fluent and phrased reading. In addition, teachers can demonstrate to students how to make connections between books and their lives. When teachers read aloud and comment on connections, students learn how to use their prior experiences and mental images to help them understand what they hear. Personal feelings, attitudes, ideas, information, and instructions all play vital roles in reading comprehension.

Many commonly used literacy strategies encourage students to become better listeners. Teachers often use listening activities to help students predict events in a story. Or, teachers may ask students to visualize a particularly vivid scene in a story. Sometimes, teachers have students "play with language" after listening to something that is read. For example, the teacher asks the students how they might describe a scene or event by using different words than the author. After listening to a chapter, older students can summarize what they have heard.

As students become more fluent writers, they may sit in the "author's chair" and read their writing to other students. After listening to a writer read his or her work, other students can ask questions, say what they liked about a piece, or offer constructive feedback. In both reading and writing, listening skills play an important role in clarifying the meaning of the text.

Top

Implications for ELLs

Teachers' talk is a primary source of information and language input for ELLs. It not only conveys ideas about the topics being discussed but models how to use language, serving as the input or data which learners internalize and use to express their own meanings. The qualities of the teacher's talk are of great importance. Effective teachers often adapt their speech to facilitate language learning. These adaptations may include speaking slowly, using short sentences, paraphrasing the same message several different ways, and explaining word meanings. Teachers also use gestures, pictures, and props to make the meaning more clear.

ELLs learn from listening to read-alouds, songs, poems, and chants. Listening to the sounds, rhymes, and rhythms of English provides ELLs with the auditory experiences they need to pronounce and read English. Beginning ELLs benefit greatly from listening to read-alouds of picture books. Effective teachers use the illustrations to develop vocabulary and to make story meaning clear.

Many ELLs go through a "silent period," during which they listen and observe more than they speak. During this silent period, ELLs benefit from opportunities to participate and interact with others in activities that use gesture, physical movement, art, experiential activities, and single words or short phrases. Effective teachers are aware that ELLs who are quiet in class may be hard at work listening and comprehending. ELLs may take longer to answer a question or volunteer a comment because they need more time to process the meaning and to formulate an appropriate response.

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Strategies for Supporting ELLs

Effective teachers monitor students' listening comprehension. This can be especially useful when English language learners (ELLs) are in their "silent period," during which they listen and observe more than they speak.

Effective teachers say things like:

- Show me the dog.
- Show me the dog house.
- Point to the clouds in the sky.
- Where is the mouse in the picture?
- In the story Annie is very sad. Show me a sad face.
- At the end of the story they all shook hands.
- Victor, Shake hands with Tommy now.
- Look everybody, Victor and Tommy are shaking hands, just like the people in the story.

As ELLs become more proficient in English, teachers begin to read from chapter books and other age-appropriate materials. In this way, they continue to build and monitor students' vocabulary development and listening comprehension.

Effective teachers say things like:

- We heard that the witch was very wicked.
- What's another word for wicked?
- What does wicked mean?
- The witch was not nice at all. She was very...?
- Would you rather have a teacher who is kind or a teacher who is wicked?
- I read that the boy lived in a log cabin in the forest.
- Is a cabin a big house or a little house?
- Was the cabin made of wood or of plastic?
- What's the word that means little pieces of a tree?

To foster reading comprehension, teachers model how readers make explicit comparisons between the text and their own lives.

Effective teachers say things like:

- In the story, Annie is very sad because her dog is lost.
- That makes me think about my dog.
- It makes me sad to think about my dog getting lost.
- Who else here has a dog?

- Did your dog ever get lost?
- Did you ever lose something or somebody else?
- Did you feel sad like Annie?
- Are there other things that make you sad?

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Glimpse of the Classroom

Mrs. D. sits in front of the 17 students gathered at her feet. They are in the Reading Corner of the classroom.

"Today, boys and girls, we are going to read chapter 3 from *My Name Is Maria Isabel* entitled, 'Recess.'"

"What do we remember from what we've read so far?" she asks the class.

Danny raises his hand and says, "Maria had her name changed to Mary when she came to America, and she doesn't like it."

Someone else says, "She doesn't feel like it's really her!"

Another student calls out, "Just like you, Mrs. D., when you came to this country, and your name was changed and YOU didn't like it."

"Why did the teacher change Maria's name?" Mrs. D. asks.

"Because there was already a Maria in the class," a petite girl responds.

Mrs. D. retorts, "Well, there are four Daniels in our class but did we change any of their names?"

"NOOOOO!" the class cries out in unison.

To continue the reading, Mrs. D. reminds the children where they left off in the text. Suddenly, one of the children sings out a phrase from a song.

"Where did you get that?" Mrs. D. asks.

"From the book *Molly's Pilgrim*!" comes the response.

"Ohhh...you've made a text-to-text connection," she suggests. "What else do you remember?"

"In *Molly's Pilgrim*," says Daniel, "they made fun of Molly and sang 'Jolly Molly.' Maybe they'll make fun of Maria and sing 'Jolly Maria.'"

Mrs. D. starts to read from chapter 3. She speaks with inflection, and her reading mesmerizes the students. Periodically, she stops to ask students what certain words may mean or what their predictions might be. The class sits cross-legged, hanging on every word, eyes glued to Mrs. D. As she reads, she engages the students with a series of strategically placed questions and comments about how all readers need to make "pictures in their head."

When she says the word *plaid*, someone asks what the word means. Mrs. D. stops and points to a student who is wearing a plaid shirt.

She reads, "...*feeling the coolness of the clear water beneath the hot sun.*"

The class sits motionless, enthralled by her reading.

She breaks and says, "Oh, what beautiful language the author is using. Listen. Let me read it again: *feeling the coolness of the clear water.*"

Kenny volunteers, "Mrs. D., this story has voice."

A classmate offers, "Juliana always has voice when she writes stories."

"Yes," Mrs. D. responds. "So do Glacie and others of you."

She finishes the rest of the chapter.

"Is there anything more you wonder about?" she asks.

The class raises several "I Wonder" questions, and students generate tentative answers as the read-aloud begins to wind down.

"The next chapter is entitled, '*Mary Lopez*.' What do you think will happen next?" asks Mrs. D. As the class predicts several possible outcomes, a spirited discussion concludes the lesson for the day.

Top

Questions to Think About

1. How does effective listening instruction change from grade to grade?
2. Given the fact that reading and writing instruction often play a more dominant role in literacy instruction, what types of listening activities can best be integrated into the school day?
3. How can teachers support and check listening comprehension of class discussions and of the stories read aloud—for English language learners (ELLs) and for students who are reluctant to speak publicly?
4. How should teacher support for listening comprehension change as English language learners (ELLs) and other students develop greater English proficiency?

Story Summaries

The Story Workshop" Approach

"Reading and writing are taught equally in this course. . . Reading became easier, more enjoyable, and writing was given a voice with power. . . [Both] improved so dramatically, scores in other subjects soared," said one fourth-grade public school teacher after a 10-week Story Workshop program. Originated and developed by John Schultz and conducted in diverse classes from grade school to grad school, the Story Workshop approach emphasizes reading, writing, speaking, listening, and thinking relationships. This story describes the approach, illustrated with linked video segments of actual classroom experiences with elementary school students. Because of the way in which this approach integrates oral telling, reading, and writing skills into classroom activities, it connects to multiple practices in the elementary literacy spotlight (see practices list).

Research Summary

Research Supporting the Practice

General Research on ELL Listening Instruction

Research Supporting the Practice

Many authorities recognize the importance of read-alouds. Read-alouds are especially effective for students who come from home backgrounds where "school-like" literacy does not exist. Wilkinson and Silliman (2000) found that read-alouds were very important for the literacy development of African American students who came from homes where language activities varied from those expected at school. Wilkinson, Freebody, and Elkins (2000) studied New Zealand Maori students who

similarly benefit from teacher read-alouds. Even read-alouds of picture storybooks have a positive effect on younger students' learning (Sipe, 2000). Students can learn about jacket covers, front and back covers, end pages, title and half-title pages, and dedication pages. In addition, listening to readings of picture books helps students appreciate the use of pictures to communicate the meaning in stories and, thus, may encourage a deeper, richer appreciation of the stories.

Cox (2002), Trelease (2001), and Routman (1996) suggest that teachers engage in daily read-alouds. Students who consistently hear stories learn to listen for clues in the story that signal important events, and they acquire an understanding of how stories work (Dorn & Soffos, 2001). Blachowicz and Fisher (2003) point out that reading aloud to students improves their word recognition as well as their ability to use new words in retelling stories. Listening to daily read-alouds has a major impact on young students' literacy development.

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General Research on ELL Listening Instruction

The work of Asher (1977) and Krashen (1982) establish the research base for the common-sense notion that second language learners need ample opportunity to listen to and develop understanding of their new language. The language that they hear and understand becomes the linguistic input necessary for the process of language acquisition. Second language learners can better understand the language that they hear when contextual clues, such as actions, gestures, visuals, props, settings, and predictable routines, help make the meaning comprehensible (Echeverria, Vogt, & Short, 2004).

Teachers are advised to promote students' language development by simplifying and modifying their

language in order to facilitate comprehension. Skillful teachers tune their speech modifications according to students' comprehension levels and prior knowledge. Researchers suggest that all teachers should simplify less and less as students improve their understanding (Kliefgen, 1985; Snow, 1995; Yedlin, 2003, 2004).

Typically comprehension develops in advance of the ability to produce language. Therefore, students can understand more complex language than what they can produce (Asher, 1977). A message that is largely comprehensible but that contains some challenging words or structures is generally considered optimal input for language acquisition. Many second language learners pass through a "silent period" during which they focus on comprehending and speak very little (Krashen, 1982). To monitor and advance students' comprehension during the period, teachers elicit and observe physical responses to instructions such as "Take out your crayons" or "Show me the lines of latitude on the map" (Asher, 1977; Krashen & Terrel, 1983). As teachers observe students' appropriate responses, they can slowly begin to increase the complexity of their instructions and invite students to produce one-word answers, sentence completions, and short phrases (see Speaking Section).

Listening to stories, poems, and talk familiarizes ELLs with the sound system of English, preparing the way for accurate pronunciation and phonemic awareness (Verhoeven, 1999). Listening to interesting and comprehensible stories, poems, and instructional talk can also supply students with vocabulary (Hickman, Pollard-Durodola, & Vaughn, 2004) and with understanding of literary discourse conventions such as Once upon a time and The End (Elley, 1989; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998; Dickinson & Tabors, 2001). Read-alouds and other opportunities to listen to interesting and understandable oral language and texts are of critical importance to ELLs, as are opportunities to interact with peers and teachers about texts. Instructional Conversations (Saunders & Goldenberg, 1998; Tharp & Gallimore, 1991) provide models of how listening to others builds academic discourse and comprehension skills.

Beginning ELLs who are not confident speaking in a group can benefit from listening to the language of their peers and experiencing academic conversation. Listening to their classmates' questions and comments in English and/or in a shared primary language can support ELLs' efforts to comprehend difficult texts. ELLs benefit from participating in and listening to conversations where explicit connections are made both between texts and the readers' experiences and among texts (Au, 1979). Instructional Conversations (Saunders & Goldenberg, 1998; Tharp & Gallimore, 1991), Reciprocal Teaching (Palinscar & Brown, 19xx) and Literature Circles (Ruby, 2003) are among the approaches to conversation designed to help literacy learners make such connections. (See ELL Research Summary in Speaking Section for more information on Instructional Conversations and Literature Circles.

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Related Web Resources

Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement Presentation Archives (0)
Chapter Books to Read Aloud (0)
Favorite Read–Alouds (0)
Predicting and Retelling Read–Alouds (0)
Read–Aloud Guide Picks (0)
Writing in the Intermediate Grades, 3–5 (0)

Teachers guide students to identify literary elements as they read aloud, listen to, and discuss books together.

What Is It?
Implications for ELLs
Strategies for Supporting ELLs
Glimpse of the Classroom
Questions to Think About

What Is It?

During the primary grades, teachers introduce students to the literary elements of stories such as characters, setting, plot, problem, and resolution. Through listening to stories, students become familiar with how authors use common literary devices, such as opening a story with "Once upon a time..."

As students get older and listen to quality literature during read-alouds, they learn more sophisticated elements of stories and writing techniques. Through read-alouds, effective teachers show students how authors use figurative language or vary sentence length to achieve a desired effect. During discussions, teachers point out writing strategies such as flashbacks and foreshadowing.

It is also important to monitor the books students select for independent reading. Familiarity with children's literature and young adult books allows teachers and students to talk about favorite parts of commonly read books. Effective teachers point out the different literary elements authors use. Sometimes these teacher-student discussions occur in a group setting, while at other times a one-on-one conference is appropriate.

Through reading aloud and discussing books, teachers--and caregivers--help students become more sophisticated listeners and readers of text. Teachers can find excellent books for read-alouds, self-selected reading, and loans for reading books with parents and caregivers in a variety of places. The state library association publishes a list of popular books released during the past year. Professional publications such as *The Reading Teacher* and *Language Arts* also provide regular features that highlight books for read-alouds. (Also see Related Resources in this spotlight for Web sites listing read-aloud favorites.)

Top

Implications for ELLs

Abstract concepts can be very difficult to learn for the first time in a new language. To successfully introduce literary concepts, teachers find concrete and tangible ways to illustrate the concepts, and they give English language learners (ELLs) repeated and cumulative opportunities to learn them.

Top

Strategies for Supporting ELLs

Beginning English language learners (ELLs) and first-time readers need to have literary elements explained, reviewed, and restated. To illustrate literary elements, effective teachers use props to stimulate discussion. For example, they illustrate story structure with a paper folded in thirds labeled "beginning, middle, and end." They differentiate the concepts of character and setting using cutouts, color forms, or flannel board figures and backgrounds. During discussions about books, they review these literary elements in context.

Effective teachers say things like:

- We just read *Annie and the Wild Animals*. Who was the main character?
- When we read *An Evening at Alfie's*, who was the main character?
- What about when we read *Alfie Gives a Hand*?
- The main character was Alfie again, but the setting was different.
- The two Alfie stories happened in different places.
- Where did they happen?
- The settings were different.
- Setting is the place where the story happens, and character is the person or the animal that the story is about.

Top

Glimpse of the Classroom

Mrs. B.'s students all keep a reading log for self-selected reading. In addition, each student has a set of different bookmarks that are used to initiate discussion during the teacher-student conference. The themes of the bookmarks are character, setting, plot, theme, mood, style, and genre. During the reading conference, Mrs. B. also introduces topics using a set of cards, linked by a wire ring. The cards address the following categories: Type or Genre, Setting, Expository Questions, Characters, Plot, Theme, Author, Style, Mood, Conflict, Point of View, and Illustration. Each card has information that can help guide the teacher and student through the conference.

Mrs. B. is having a conference with a young girl, and they are discussing the genre of the book. Mrs. B. leads the student to discover that the book, entitled *The Great Railroad Race: The Diary of Libby West*, is historical fiction. The student then presents a capsulated account of the book and reads aloud a passage to Mrs. B. The student reads fluently, with accurate phrasing. Mrs. B. makes some anecdotal notes in her teacher's log and praises the student for a job well done. It's now time to check on another student's reading.

Top

Questions to Think About

1. How is the day-to-day language that students use similar and different from the written language that authors use? How can teachers address these similarities and differences?
2. What books and authors help English language learners (ELLs) and culturally diverse children build upon the prior knowledge they bring from their home cultures and languages? How can teachers show their interest and respect for such knowledge?

Research Summary

Research Supporting the Practice

General Research on ELL Reading Instruction

Research Supporting the Practice

While the overall reading ability of students in the United States compares favorably with that of students in other countries, Routman (1996) identifies two major areas for improvement: (1) the need for more difficult texts to challenge average and better readers; and (2) activities that engage students in more critical analysis and synthesis of information from multiple texts. According to Routman, teachers using commercial textbooks are less able to emphasize a higher level of thinking.

Wilkinson and Silliman (2000) point out that optimal tasks for higher level learning include group discussions that are open-ended, subject to multiple interpretations, friendly, and motivated by the topic, thus allowing students to contribute ideas for discussion. Owoki (2003) provides specific, practical suggestions for how teachers can engage students as they work to improve student comprehension.

Parents are especially important in advancing a child's listening literacy. After examining 31 studies spanning 30 years, Bus et al. (1995) declared that the frequency of parents' reading books to children is a strong predictor of later reading success.

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Related Web Resources

Reading Aloud -- Are Students Ever Too Old? (0)
Tips on Reading Aloud (0)

Teachers help students understand and make connections to their reading through social interactions in which students listen to and build upon each other's responses to the text.

What Is It?
Implications for ELLs
Strategies for Supporting ELLs
Glimpse of the Classroom
Questions to Think About

What Is It?

To develop higher level comprehension, students need to discuss their reading with others and share their interpretations. Discussions about literature and other reader response activities are valuable social interactions that provide opportunities for listening as well as re-evaluating or refining thinking.

According to Vygotsky, literacy improves when students have social interactions with others because they are required to construct meaning from what they hear. Effective teachers demonstrate how adults comprehend better after discussing their readings with other adults. This social interaction fosters the connection-making process and, hence, improves comprehension.

When students actively read for understanding, they are constantly interacting with the text, and this helps their comprehension. If they have opportunities to discuss their reading, they refine their understanding and appreciation even more. Through discussion, they modify interpretations that they had when reading. Effective teachers model think-aloud strategies to demonstrate how readers initially interact with text and then how their thinking shifts as they share their responses with other readers. This is where the social interaction aspects of learning occur.

Generally, literacy instruction can be categorized into two major groups. The first is skills-based instruction, which is driven by commercial materials such as reading textbooks. The second category is literature-based instruction, which is more teacher-driven and uses popular children's literature and young adult books. Students who are provided literature-based instruction become more strategic listeners and readers; develop a higher metacognitive approach to literacy; and are usually better at story telling, writing original stories, and revising than their peers who receive only skills-based instruction.

Top

Implications for ELLs

Participating in literature-based discussions provides English language learners (ELLs) with rich opportunities for learning. Beginning ELLs who are not confident speaking in a group can benefit

from listening to the language of their peers and experiencing academic conversation. Listening to their classmates' questions and comments in English and/or in a shared primary language can support ELLs' efforts to comprehend difficult texts. ELLs who are reluctant to speak in large-group discussions may feel more comfortable in small groups. Conversation with classmates from diverse backgrounds provides cultural insights and information that can increase comprehension.

Top

Strategies for Supporting ELLs

Effective teachers vary reading response activities to include art as another way for English language learners (ELLs) to demonstrate their comprehension and reactions. Students can listen and draw, make book posters, and act or pantomime a scene or an emotion. Both teachers and classmates can respond to these artworks, thereby providing ELLs with more language input.

They say things like:

- I see you drew the big elephant and the little mouse helping him.
- The elephant is bigger than the trees. The elephant and the mouse are talking.
- I like how you looked surprised when you were being the elephant.

In addition, effective teachers help ELLs discuss stories together by modeling phrases like these:

- I agree with what Kim said because...
- I don't agree. I think that...
- I want to know...
- I wonder if/why...
- Why do you think...
- What does...mean...

Top

Glimpse of the Classroom

Mrs. C. is beginning a discussion with her students about how she thinks when she reads. On a large sheet of chart paper in front of her are the words *Reading Is Thinking*. She describes how she thinks about specific books that she has read. She talks about how as she is reading she may be making predictions, having feelings, recalling things she likes, considering the author's language, and remembering someone she knew.

Today, Mrs. C. asks students to use post-it notes to mark two passages in their story that will be shared with others at a later time. On the post-it note, they should write the thoughts they'd like to share. The students and Mrs. C. compile a list of things to think about. The list reads:

1. *It could scare you*
2. *Love the language*
3. *Reminds you of a person or character from another story*
4. *Descriptions of characters*
5. *Something you wonder about*

After an extended discussion about the list, Mrs. C. tells the students to go back to their desks and do a free reading. As they read, they should think about the things on the list and write notes about their thoughts on the post-its by their selected passages. Later in the week they will have an opportunity to share their books and thoughts with the rest of the class.

Top

Questions to Think About

1. Think of a connection you have made between your reading and something you have heard someone talk about. How could this experience serve as a model to show your students how to make connections?
2. How is the idea of improving comprehension through making connections different/similar from answering the typical comprehension questions found at the conclusion of a passage or story?
3. When using popular read-aloud books, consider the following: What cultural knowledge do the books reflect? What might require additional explanation for English language learners (ELLs) and other culturally diverse students? How can you help students make connections between these books and their lives?

Story Summaries

The Story Workshop" Approach

"Reading and writing are taught equally in this course. . . Reading became easier, more enjoyable, and writing was given a voice with power. . . [Both] improved so dramatically, scores in other subjects soared," said one fourth-grade public school teacher after a 10-week Story Workshop program. Originated and developed by John Schultz and conducted in diverse classes from grade school to grad school, the Story Workshop approach emphasizes reading, writing, speaking, listening, and thinking relationships. This story describes the approach, illustrated with linked video segments of actual classroom experiences with elementary school students. Because of the way in which this approach integrates oral telling, reading, and writing skills into classroom activities, it connects to multiple practices in the elementary literacy spotlight (see practices list).

Research Summary

Research Supporting the Practice

General Research on ELL Reading Instruction

Research Supporting the Practice

Good readers are active and strategic as they read. One way they comprehend is through reflection and discussion about their reading (Almasi & Gambrell, 1994; Block & Pressley, 2003). Their reflections are frequently based on their prior knowledge and current opinions. Teachers who take

time to model and teach reflective processes report positive results on their students' standardized reading tests.

Harvey and Goudvis (2000) write about the importance of making connections. They describe it as making a bridge from the new to the known. Not only can students learn how to make connections to ideas in the text, but they also can make connections to genre, format of books, form of writing, authors, text structure, cueing words, writing styles, and other literary features. Good readers are engaged readers (Campbell et al., 1997), and engaged readers are higher achievers than their less-engaged peers.

Teachers need to remember that comprehension isn't improved simply by asking students questions. This type of activity is assessment. Good teaching involves teaching for strategies (Harvey & Goudvis, 2000; McGee & Richgels, 2000) through demonstration and then a gradual release of responsibility so that students have opportunities to apply what they have been taught. One of the most effective strategies is the Group Think Aloud/Activating Prior Knowledge (Hoyt, 2000). In this activity, teachers or students have an opportunity to think out loud, and others have an opportunity to witness the thinking process, which in turn enhances the listeners' comprehension.

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General Research on ELL Listening Instruction

The work of Asher (1977) and Krashen (1982) establish the research base for the common-sense notion that second language learners need ample opportunity to listen to and develop understanding of their new language. The language that they hear and understand becomes the linguistic input necessary for the process of language acquisition. Second language learners can better understand the language that they hear when contextual clues, such as actions, gestures, visuals, props, settings, and predictable routines, help make the meaning comprehensible (Echeverria, Vogt, & Short, 2004).

Teachers are advised to promote students' language development by simplifying and modifying their language in order to facilitate comprehension. Skillful teachers tune their speech modifications according to students' comprehension levels and prior knowledge. Researchers suggest that all

teachers should simplify less and less as students improve their understanding (Kliefgren, 1985; Snow, 1995; Yedlin, 2003, 2004).

Typically comprehension develops in advance of the ability to produce language. Therefore, students can understand more complex language than what they can produce (Asher, 1977). A message that is largely comprehensible but that contains some challenging words or structures is generally considered optimal input for language acquisition. Many second language learners pass through a "silent period" during which they focus on comprehending and speak very little (Krashen, 1982). To monitor and advance students' comprehension during the period, teachers elicit and observe physical responses to instructions such as "Take out your crayons" or "Show me the lines of latitude on the map" (Asher, 1977; Krashen & Terrel, 1983). As teachers observe students' appropriate responses, they can slowly begin to increase the complexity of their instructions and invite students to produce one-word answers, sentence completions, and short phrases (see Speaking Section).

Listening to stories, poems, and talk familiarizes ELLs with the sound system of English, preparing the way for accurate pronunciation and phonemic awareness (Verhoeven, 1999). Listening to interesting and comprehensible stories, poems, and instructional talk can also supply students with vocabulary (Hickman, Pollard-Durodola, & Vaughn, 2004) and with understanding of literary discourse conventions such as Once upon a time and The End (Elley, 1989; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998; Dickinson & Tabors, 2001). Read-alouds and other opportunities to listen to interesting and understandable oral language and texts are of critical importance to ELLs, as are opportunities to interact with peers and teachers about texts. Instructional Conversations (Saunders & Goldenberg, 1998; Tharp & Gallimore, 1991) provide models of how listening to others builds academic discourse and comprehension skills.

Beginning ELLs who are not confident speaking in a group can benefit from listening to the language of their peers and experiencing academic conversation. Listening to their classmates' questions and comments in English and/or in a shared primary language can support ELLs' efforts to comprehend difficult texts. ELLs benefit from participating in and listening to conversations where explicit connections are made both between texts and the readers' experiences and among texts (Au, 1979). Instructional Conversations (Saunders & Goldenberg, 1998; Tharp & Gallimore, 1991), Reciprocal Teaching (Palinscar & Brown, 19xx) and Literature Circles (Ruby, 2003) are among the approaches to conversation designed to help literacy learners make such connections. (See ELL Research Summary in Speaking Section for more information on Instructional Conversations and Literature Circles.

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Yedlin, J. (2004, January/February). Teacher talk: Enabling ELLs to "grab on" and climb high. *Perspectives*. Available: <http://www.mec.edu/mascd/docs/yedlin.htm>

Related Web Resources

A Treasury of Read-Aloud Books from the Jim Trelease Read-Aloud Handbook (0)
 Reading Together Strengthens Families ? Family Literacy Project (Cultural Folklore Books) (0)
 Reading Together Strengthens Families ? Family Literacy Project (Techniques to Use) (0)
 Story Reading in the Classroom (0)

Teachers employ a variety of effective strategies that involve students as active and engaged listeners.

What Is It?
Implications for ELLs
Strategies for Supporting ELLs
Glimpse of the Classroom
Questions to Think About

What Is It?

Listening strategies can be divided into two categories: aesthetic listening and efferent listening. Aesthetic listening strategies are those techniques that allow students to make personal connections with something that is being told, read, or watched. Examples are: listening to a poem and making a connection to one's life, making a mental picture after listening to a person describe an event in his or her life, and watching and listening to videotapes or audiotapes of a story that the class has read and then making a comparison between the written text and spoken word. Efferent listening strategies engage students in summarizing or listing events they have heard. Examples are: taking notes from a presentation and summarizing or identifying key details from something that was read to them. Efferent listening skills are related to the way a person learns and organizes information.

Roughly 85% of today's classroom teachers regularly read literature to their students. This activity provides ample opportunities for the use of both aesthetic and efferent listening strategies. It also allows students to hear new words read in contextual settings. Read-alouds help students make connections with what they hear. Through being read to, students develop the metacognitive skills needed to understand reading tasks. Language development and increased vocabulary are directly linked to being read to on a frequent basis.

Effective teachers have specific goals when conducting read-aloud activities. The mere act of reading a story aloud is not enough to result in improved comprehension. Students need specific instruction that models how to construct meaning; how to share personal experiences related to listening; and how to hypothesize, predict, confirm, generalize, and evaluate what they read. Students need to support their answers by being able to relate back to the text.

When children's literature is used in the classroom, students are more apt to have a personal response to what they hear. This is especially true when literature is brought into the content areas. Effective teachers seek culturally responsive books and preview book content to ensure that students can make connections to the text.

Top

Implications for ELLs

Explicit instruction in listening comprehension strategies is extremely beneficial for English language learners (ELLs). However, beginners in English and those who have not yet learned to read in their

primary languages will need more modeling and repeated, explicit explanations of the strategies in order to understand and use them.

Effective teachers use, explain, demonstrate, and revisit strategies throughout the school year. Students who may not be ready to understand the explanations of a strategy in October or November may be able to understand and use the strategy when it is explained and modeled again in February.

Limited English proficiency is not the only reason that ELLs may have difficulty understanding a story. Many stories are difficult for ELLs to understand because the stories contain references to American culture, history, and customs—background knowledge that an ELL may not yet have absorbed.

Top

Strategies for Supporting ELLs

English language learners (ELLs) learn strategies best when teachers provide explicit instruction and modeling. For example, teachers prepare students to use the strategy of predicting what may happen next in a story.

Effective teachers say things like:

1. I think Annie is going to find her cat.
2. I predict she will find her cat.
3. That's what I think is going to happen next.
4. That's what I predict.
5. *Predict* means what I think will happen.
6. What do you predict?
7. What do you think is going to happen next in the story?
8. Say, "I predict..." and then say what you think will happen.
9. Do you think that the girl in the story did a good thing or a bad thing?
10. When you tell me what you think, you need to explain why you think it was good or bad.
11. If you think it was good, say, "I think what she did was good because..."
12. If you think it was bad, say, "I think what she did was bad because..."

In addition, effective teachers recognize when the context or premise of a story may be unfamiliar to ELLs. Teachers preview the books they read aloud for cultural content that may require explanation before or during the reading. They try to help students make connections to their own experiences. They also select some books because they reflect students' cultures, homelands, languages, and experiences.

Effective teachers say things like:

- In the story the boy's father tells him stories about when he was a little boy.
- Do any grown ups tell you about when they were little boys and girls?
- What do they tell you?
- This is a story from Puerto Rico, and it's about a character named Juan Bobo.
- What do you know about him? Can you tell us about Juan Bobo?

Top

Glimpse of the Classroom

In one corner of the classroom, a literature circle, consisting of five fourth graders with assigned roles, is in progress. They are discussing the book *Stone Fox*.

Louis is the Story Summarizer. He reads from his journal while the other students listen intently: "Willie was ahead of everyone until Stone Fox was 100 feet from the finish line. That's when Searchlight died."

The student serving as the Word Wizard provides her words and meanings. The words are *approached* and *pursuit*. She offers her best guess of the meanings before she looks the words up, provides the dictionary definitions, and reads the contextual settings of the words from the book.

The Meaning Mapper speaks next. She has elected to do a compare/contrast activity between the protagonist Little Willie and his dog Searchlight. She explains how the two main characters are similar and different and shows the group a Venn diagram that she has constructed to visually represent the two characters.

The Passage Picker reads two passages selected from the text. The passages illustrate how Stone Fox, the best musher, was the slowest team to go down Main Street and how everyone thought something must be wrong. The second passage is on page 70, paragraph four. It describes how the road was filled with dangerous twists and turns, but Little Willie only had a one-dog team and, hence, was more maneuverable than the other multi-dog teams.

The last student leads the discussion with a series of questions: "Did you feel sad because Searchlight died?" "What do you think Little Willie will do next?" "Do you think Stone Fox is being nice by stopping everyone before the finish line and letting Little Willie cross the finish line?" "Why do you think he did this?"

Throughout this 15-minute session, each child listens intently and contributes to the group discussion. There is no need for the teacher to intervene. The group has already been instructed and guided on how to engage in meaningful dialogue when discussing books. All students are not only good listeners but active participants as well.

Top

Questions to Think About

1. What authors and books are appropriate for read-alouds at the various grade levels?
2. How might teachers best use read-alouds to improve students' listening vocabularies? How can these new vocabulary words be integrated into their reading, speaking, and writing vocabularies?
3. What characteristics best typify books that lend themselves to Directed Listening-Thinking Activities?
4. How can teachers most effectively transition students from using prediction strategies when listening to using these same strategies when reading?
5. How might teachers find out what kinds of listening experiences their students have at home?

Story Summaries

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"Reading and writing are taught equally in this course. . . Reading became easier, more enjoyable, and writing was given a voice with power. . . [Both] improved so dramatically, scores in other subjects soared," said one fourth-grade public school teacher after a 10-week Story Workshop program. Originated and developed by John Schultz and conducted in diverse classes from grade school to grad school, the Story Workshop approach emphasizes reading, writing, speaking, listening, and thinking relationships. This story describes the approach, illustrated with linked video segments of actual classroom experiences with elementary school students. Because of the way in which this approach integrates oral telling, reading, and writing skills into classroom activities, it connects to multiple practices in the elementary literacy spotlight (see practices list).

Research Summary

Research Supporting the Practice

General Research on ELL Reading Instruction

Research Supporting the Practice

Successful teachers employ a wide variety of listening activities in their classrooms. Conducting read-alouds, showing students how adult readers process and comprehend text, and discussing books are all effective. These activities lead to rich oral student language (Blachowicz & Fisher, 2003) and improved achievement in other important literacy-related skills, such as conceptions of story and word knowledge (Otto, 1993; Morrow, 1989; Neuman and Soundy, 1991).

Routman (1996) suggests giving students opportunities to discuss excellent literature in a small group. This encourages students to listen to and value others' insights about the literature.

Listening not only develops students' reading skills, it also builds their understanding of language patterns, vocabulary, and writing (Cox, 2002). Listening is also linked to a child's oral language. Students with rich language backgrounds use more complex language, score higher on vocabulary and intelligence tests, and perform better in reading and writing.

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Yedlin, J. (2004, January/February). Teacher talk: Enabling ELLs to "grab on" and climb high. *Perspectives*. Available: <http://www.mec.edu/mascd/docs/yedlin.htm>

Related Web Resources

Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement Presentation Archives (0)
Chapter Books to Read Aloud (0)
Favorite Read-Alouds (0)
Predicting and Retelling Read-Alouds (0)
Read-Aloud Guide Picks (0)

Stories

This section presents Knowledge Loom stories about classrooms, schools, or districts that exemplify one or more of the practices in the spotlight.

Each story contains a full feature article and a set of facts about how the practice was put into action. Each story lists the practices it exemplifies and the name of the content provider.

For an overview of additional content presented on The Knowledge Loom Web site that may not have been selected for this print document, see the Spotlight Map located earlier in the document.

Edmonds School District

Edmonds School District

Lynnwood, WA

School Type: Public

School Setting: Suburban

Level: K–12

School Design: Traditional

Content Presented By:

In the years from 1990 to 2000, the Edmonds School District in Lynnwood, Washington, has become a strong and focused school district with increasing student results. The Joint Professional Development Committee formed in association with the Edmonds Education Association served as the catalyst for the reform in professional development. The committee identified principles for professional development, surveyed staff regarding their needs, and created teacher performance standards in the core content areas. Starting in the year 2000 the Joint Professional Development Committee and the Professional Excellence Committee will begin setting standards for all certified employees and aligning selection, evaluation, and compensation with the standards. These two groups annually evaluate the effectiveness of staff development by examining student achievement data and program participant responses.

There are three keys to success in Edmonds. The first is the building of a culture of collaboration and participation. The second is the development of teachers as instructional leaders who design and provide professional development. The last is the use of data to inform decisions.

Overcoming the longest teacher strike in history just ten years ago (in 1990), this district of almost 22,000 students in Washington state made progress toward the first key to success by building trust and capacity, taking time to learn to work together, and establishing a highly decentralized culture. "Trust building with the association is absolutely requisite for doing this. There is no shortcut. This is deep work. You have to have the relationship in place," says Sally Harrison, Director of Standards, Assessment, and Instructional Delivery.

The district's staff development program evolved from a National Science Foundation grant that helped the district create school-based math teams with teacher leaders: the second key to success. These teachers expanded their knowledge and practice in mathematics, and shared their learning with their fellow staff members. Through this model of teacher-led professional development, the district created a similar model in literacy and science. Success with this model promoted the district to replicate teacher-led professional development in other content areas.

In the application for the Model Professional Development Award, the district states, "The professional development model is one of collaboration in which teachers are in key leadership positions in development and provision of professional development. Teacher leaders and teacher teams provide training and support to their peers. The model affords teachers the opportunity to meet together to learn, discuss and share new ideas and classroom experiences that go well-beyond the typical, one-shot training workshops."

The district uses its six non-student days a year to provide professional development. Content of professional development comes from the curriculum framework. When there is curriculum writing

that identifies what students should know and be able to do, there is a companion piece for teachers on what they should know and be able to do. This is tied to the evaluation system and creates the needs for professional development.

FOCUS, the annual summer institute taught largely by teachers, supports the district's move to become a performance-based, standards-based educational system. This four-day event includes training and professional dialogue in curriculum, instruction, and assessment. For the last eight summers, FOCUS has been a significant professional development process for promoting the districts goals. "It sets the stage. It's not just words but the action. It's building a picture together. When the teachers disperse, hopefully they carry the picture with them," says Harrison.

Other structures for professional development in Edmonds include action research (led by teams of teachers), intensive summer mathematics institutes, collaboration, and ongoing professional development opportunities. The district also supports six full-time and five part-time teachers on special assignment who develop curriculum and provide professional development.

The third key to success in Edmonds has been the use of student achievement data to identify the areas of focus. The district uses student data to develop school improvement plans and monitor progress. A team of central office staff including the superintendent visits each school to review performance data and the school's plan to improve student achievement. During these visits the team asks what is working and what gets in the way. These visits are constructive opportunities for the district staff to learn how they can best support and assist the schools in their improvement efforts. In addition, these visits initiate the problem solving process to help schools design and implement their improvement process.

Student performance in Edmonds has steadily increased over the last five years in reading, language, math, writing, and listening. Students participate in state and district assessments. The best evidence of the success of the professional development efforts in Edmonds has been the decrease in the achievement gap among groups of students. Schools with the largest percentage of students receiving free and reduced price lunch are achieving at or above the district average growth rate.

In Edmonds, professional development is teacher-directed. Teachers have an integral role in designing, delivering, and implementing professional development. Teachers have multiple opportunities for learning, applying what they learned, receiving feedback, and reflecting on their learning.

Demographics

The Edmonds School District has a total enrollment of 21,469 students.

Student Racial/Ethnic Composition:

- 1.8% American Indian or Alaska Native
- 12.0% Asian or Pacific Islander
- 3.8% African American, not of Hispanic origin
- 4.9% Hispanic
- 77.6% White, not of Hispanic origin

Limited English Proficient: 5.3%
Different Languages: 58

Students Qualifying for Free or Reduced Priced Lunch: 21.1%

Students Receiving Special Education Services: 12%

Background

Edmonds School District has a history of collaborative professional development that involves staff in planning, implementing, and decision-making. The original district-wide change model grew out of a National Science Foundation grant created to restructure mathematics. The model evolved to address all areas of teaching and learning. Committees set up to respond to the needs of this evolution identified principles for professional development, surveyed staff on their development needs, drafted teacher performance standards in core subjects, and drafted a teacher self-appraisal guide. Throughout these efforts, professional development has continued to be collaborative, involving district administrators, teachers, support staff, and the professional development association.

The aim of professional development at Edmonds is to create and sustain a learning community among staff that nurtures a culture of innovation and risk taking, with a focus on improvement. The goal is to maximize the potential of each staff member by increasing knowledge, skills, and abilities to teach students. Staff are accountable for the quality of their performance. The ultimate goal of the district's program is to increase the number of students who meet or exceed state standards in math, reading, writing, and listening to ensure that all students realize their academic potential.

Design & Implementation

- Edmonds Professional Development Program (EPDP). The program addresses both district-wide and building goals, while offering opportunities for individual professional growth. The EPDP provides opportunities to:
 1. give and receive feedback;
 2. engage in educational research and development;
 3. synthesize new educational research;
 4. recognize and stimulate exemplary professional performance;
 5. pursue advanced degrees;
 6. induct new employees;
 7. develop new teaching skills;
 8. make best use of new technologies;
 9. teach other colleagues; and,
 10. use mentoring and other collegial practices to enhance training.
- Teacher Leaders and Teacher Teams. The professional development model is collaborative, where teachers occupy key leadership positions in providing professional development. The Leaders and Teams provide their peers with training and support.
- Reform Initiative. This integrated strategy groups around four tasks:
 1. district-wide standards and performance assessments;
 2. learning environment/community supports;
 3. public engagement;
 4. high performance management.

Continuous staff development is at the core of the initiative, with improved student learning as its goal. Professional staff are involved in all areas: reviewing and researching best

practices and current theory, networking within and beyond the state, and obtaining grants for research and development.

- **FOCUS.** This is a district-sponsored, four-day, paid professional development opportunity. It includes training and collegial dialogue in the curriculum frameworks and in various instructional strategies and curriculum. Teacher leaders offer the primary development; outside experts run special sessions.

Results

The Edmonds School District staff development program was modeled after a successful National Science Foundation grant focused on math. The model of teacher leadership and teacher-led professional development served as the foundation for the design of the expanded district professional development program.

Findings from the math project indicate:

1. Teacher leaders made substantial changes in their beliefs and practices, including how they organized their classroom, how they taught and how they observed, assessed, and recorded student performance.
2. Teachers valued working together and positively responded to the teacher leader model.
3. Teacher leaders played a critical role in leading and supporting their colleagues to learn and practice new conception of mathematics and teaching.
4. The fact that the professional model offered both summer institutes and school-year sessions over time signaled to teachers a major serious commitment to their learning by the district.
5. Teachers made visible changes in their classroom, in their use of materials in their teaching as a result of professional development.

Math scores on the district's Level Tests increased from 1995–96 to 1997–98 at every grade level.

	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
1995–96	12.8	9.1	3.4	7.0	5.2	5.7
1997–98	12.8	10.0	3.7	8.0	6.7	6.8

CTBS results have improved during the last four years.

Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills				
Grade 8	Reading	Language	Math	Total
1994	53	50	47	50
1995	53	52	48	51
1996	54	52	50	53
1997	54	52	51	53

The performance of students on the Washington Assessment of Student Learning also indicated improvement. The state's assessment in writing changed between 1997 and 1998 and the new test required students to demonstrate a more complex form of writing. The table also indicates that students' performance in Edmonds exceeded state scores.

Washington Assessment of Student Learning, 4th Grade								
Ê	Math		Reading		Writing		Listening	
Ê	1997	1998	1997	1998	1997	1998	1997	1998
Edmonds	26.8	33.3	54.0	57.4	49.2	41.7	62.3	72.9
State	21.4	31.2	47.9	55.6	42.7	36.7	62.2	71.3

Overall the district has experienced a narrowing of the achievement gap for students in high and low SES groups in the last several years. Schools with the highest percentage of students receiving free or reduced-price lunch are achieving at or above the district growth average.

Site Visit Documentation

Criteria	Evidence
Collected data provide evidence that the professional development activities lead to improved teaching.	A large number of teachers are involved in professional development and their testimony supports the connection between teacher and student learning. Teachers are requesting more high-level, top-notch workshops. Teachers are encouraged to attain National Board of Professional Teaching Standards certification. Student portfolios and classroom observations reflect high quality instruction.
Collected data provide evidence that the professional development activities lead to improved student learning.	Disaggregated data from state and district testing indicate long-term improvements. Students work toward a certificate of mastery. Student portfolios demonstrate quality performance and standards-based assessments are used to measure student growth.
Collected data provide evidence that	Districts and schools focus on improving performance of students

the professional development activities lead to a narrowing of exiting achievement gaps.	within special populations. The gap between students in high and low SES groups is narrowing over time. The district disaggregates student achievement data. These data are used to make decisions. Each school selects a focus area for a school year. Classroom teachers work with individual students' needs.
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Replication Details

Edmonds School District enjoys a strong collaborative relationship with the teachers' association. Several joint committees guide decisions related to professional development. The Joint Professional Development Committee identified principles for professional development, survey staff regarding professional development needs, and designed teacher performance standards. The Professional Excellence Committee involves district teachers, support staff, administrators, and the teachers' association.

Edmonds built its professional development program on a model of success that resulted from the National Science Foundation math project. Using what they learned from this successful project, central office personnel were able to expand the model to include other content areas. The National Science Foundation provided substantial funding for the development and implementation of the math project.

Costs and Funding

The district invests approximately \$100,000 in an annual summer institute, which focuses on standards-based education. Teachers receive a stipend for participation. The district also supports six full-time and five part-time teachers on special assignment who provide professional and curriculum development. This cost is approximately \$480,000.

Contact Information

Dr. Sally Harrison
Executive Director, Teaching and Learning Division
204020 68th Avenue West
Lynnwood, WA 98036-7400
Telephone: 425-670-7179
Fax: 425-670-7123
harrisons@edmonds.wednet.edu

Dr. Wayne Robertson
Superintendent
425-670-7003
robinsonw@edmonds.wednet.edu

Rating Criteria

The Edmonds School District, Lynnwood, Washington, was selected as a winner of the 1998–1999 National Awards Program for Model Professional Development.

What is the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development?

As part of a continuing effort to honor excellence in education, the U.S. Department of Education sponsors the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development. This program recognizes schools and school districts with exemplary professional development programs and disseminates information about high-quality professional development efforts that provide evidence of student learning and increased teacher effectiveness. Since the focus of this competition is on professional development for teachers and other educators in pre-kindergarten through grade 12 settings, only individual schools (public or private) or school districts may apply. Schools or districts may, however, submit applications that describe their partnerships with other entities, in particular, institutions of higher education. Recognition under this awards program is based on how well applicants demonstrate the success of their programs, using identified selection criteria that their professional development program results in increased student outcomes. Criteria for selection* include:

Background and Overview of Professional Development

The applicant provides a brief explanation of why the representatives consider professional development in their schools or districts exemplary by describing the program's key components and relating those to the U.S. Department of Education's Mission and Principles of Professional Development. This description must provide evidence that the professional development activities are not narrowly focused on one subgroup of students or staff within the school or district.

Goals and Outcomes

The applicant describes the professional development goals, including how they: (1) are developed; (2) relate to school improvement; (3) are based on a needs assessment; and (4) address the achievement of all students regardless of gender, socio-economic level or disadvantaged status, race, ethnic or cultural background, exceptional abilities or disabilities, or limited-English proficiency. Applicants must also address the changes in teaching and student learning that are expected to result from professional development. They must describe how professional development goals and outcomes promote teaching and learning to high standards.

Professional Development Design and Implementation

The applicant provides evidence that professional development reflects research and best practice; includes comprehensive evaluation; includes organizational structures (e.g., administrative and policy support) and resources (e.g., use of time, expertise, funds) that support it; promotes continuous inquiry and improvement; and ensures that the larger school community understands its importance to school improvement.

Objective Evidence of Success

The applicant clearly demonstrates that teacher effectiveness and student learning have improved as a direct result of the implemented professional development activities. Data that reflect this connection must be provided and discussed. The focus of this criterion is objective

evidence, and a compelling argument must be made for the way in which professional development positively affects outcomes for all teachers and all students. This argument must emphasize areas where any achievement gaps between groups (e.g., gender, socio-economic status, ethnicity) have been addressed and narrowed.

Implications for the Field

The applicant describes the lessons learned as the professional development activities have matured.

*These criteria are derived from the Mission and Principles of Professional Development prepared by the U.S. Department of Education in 1995, in consultation with numerous educational organizations, and have been previously published for public comment.

Information about the current award cycle for the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development can be found at <http://www.ed.gov/inits/TeachersWeb/>.

This story exemplifies the following practices:

Professional development should provide opportunities to gain an understanding of the theory underlying the knowledge and skills being learned.

Samuel Mason Elementary School

Samuel Mason Elementary School

Roxbury, MA

School Type: Public

School

Setting: Urban

Level: Elementary

School

Design: Traditional

Content Presented By:

National Awards Program for Model
Professional Development



At the Samuel Mason Elementary School, situated in an old warehouse district in Boston, the students aren't the only ones learning more than ever before. From secretary to teacher to principal, every staff member here is required to formulate a personal development plan each September. Although all of the teachers by now have obtained dual certification in regular and special education, they are still expected to continuously identify what they don't yet know and to structure their learning accordingly. Summer and release-day time is set aside for school-wide work, and creative scheduling throughout the year enables grade-level teams and study groups to meet once a week during the normal school day to discuss upcoming efforts. Lead teachers in each subject area are available to assist others with incorporating new practices.

If all this sounds like a radical approach to system-wide professional development, it should -- if only because drastic situations call for such measures. A controlled-choice public school in the Roxbury neighborhood of the city -- a predominately African American enclave -- the Samuel Mason faced the threat of closure in the 1980s due to poor performance. It ranked as the school least-chosen by parents in Boston, at the bottom of a list of 79. It was only when Principal Mary Russo took the helm in 1990, bringing with her a comprehensive professional development plan which turned the school upside down, that the Samuel Mason began to undergo a dramatic shift in student performance and public perceptions.

"We asked ourselves, 'What do kids who are excellent readers and writers look like, and where are people doing the best job of teaching kids to read and write well?'" says Russo. "And then we designed together the best way to make those things happen here, and the best way to get people here trained to be able to do those things."

Russo's emphasis on continuous needs assessment and her willingness to build in time for individual and team efforts have yielded stark results: an improvement in student achievement in reading and writing that has surpassed that of the Boston schools as a whole and an enrollment that has more than doubled, from 133 to 296. Today, the Samuel Mason is the 12th most-selected school in the city. Parents are drawn to the "Bright Start" program for kindergartners, the increased use of technology for learning, and the literacy program that enables students to read to community members and business professionals.

"For us, it was a powerful turnaround story, because our school had been a school that traditionally had failed children," says Russo. "About a third of the kids were not reading on grade level at any

other time in the history of the school. And we reversed those statistics."

Still, the process has not been an easy one, and some teachers chose to leave at the outset. At a K–5 school that draws students from several nearby housing projects, where 74 percent of the pupils qualify for free or reduced–priced lunch and 26 percent receive special education services, faculty members here already faced a challenging set of circumstances. But to Russo, this meant only that training efforts would need to make it possible for every teacher to become equipped to support the students before them.

At the beginning of every school year, the designated Professional Development Team, comprised of teachers, parents, and Russo, prepares the yearly school improvement plan that aligns professional development activities with the goals for student achievement. Grade–level teams select a set of strategies to learn and then use weekly meetings to study and apply them. Teachers compile student achievement data each month in order to assess impacts and identify trouble spots.

Other components of the plan include whole–school training events, school–based and external workshops, study groups, coaching, mentoring, model classrooms, summer externships, grant–funded release days, and the creation of a Family Center for parents. Teachers are also working with local colleges to develop a Samuel Mason reading curriculum, and outside consultants are used along with school staff who have special expertise. As Russo sees it, teachers who are given the time and the tools hold the power to veritably transform their own schools.

"The word that comes to mind when I think of professional development is 'reciprocity,'" she explains. "If you're asking people to change their teaching practice, to do the work that it takes to do that, the reciprocal part is that you need to give them the supports and the time that they need. But we have to awaken to the notion that we can create what we need and that we don't have to have other people telling us what to do, although we do need their support. At this point there's a real expertise that got built up in the school, and that's not going to evaporate. That's going to continue to be strong."

Demographics

Samuel Mason is a controlled choice school in the Boston Public Schools. The school sits in an old warehouse district and draws students from several nearby housing projects. A large proportion of students are of Cape Verdean decent, and there is a high percentage of parents who are unemployed. Mason is a K–5 school with 296 students.

Student Racial/Ethnic Composition:

- 71% African American
- 14% White (not Hispanic)
- 11% Hispanic
- 2% Asian or Pacific Islander
- 2% Native American or Native Alaskan

Limited English Proficient Students (5 languages spoken): 23%

Qualify for free/reduced lunch: 74%

Receive special education services: 26%

Background

1. The appointment of a new principal in 1990 saved the school from closure. This principal had a vision that incorporated a belief in site-based management and concern for all the students in the building. Mason was a controlled choice school. Under this new leadership, in five years (1991–96), Mason went from the least chosen (79th) to the 12th most selected school in Boston, while more than doubling its enrollment from 133 to 296 students. The groundwork for the professional development model was begun in 1990 with the creation of the School-Based Management/Shared Decision-Making Team. The initial focus for this group was school improvement in instruction, curriculum, and assessment.
2. The threat of closure served as a catalyst to rethink "business as usual" at Mason. The conversation focused on how better to serve the students in the building. Issues concerning reading, writing, and problem solving, as well as parental involvement in schooling, emerged as primary concerns.
3. The commitment of the teachers at Mason to raising the achievement of all students proved to be an important factor in the subsequent development of a professional development model that is grounded in analyzing student achievement data and using research on best practices to reform instruction.

Design & Implementation

The Professional Development Team (comprising teachers, principal, and parents) prepares the yearly school improvement plan that aligns professional development activities with the goals for student achievement. All the staff in the school, including the school secretary and the principal, are required to complete personal professional development plans. Several blocks of time are used at Mason to address the professional development needs of teachers:

1. Summer and release-day time is used for schoolwide work. Mason has embraced much of the Accelerated Schools model for school improvement (schoolwide work has included a focus on the principles of accelerated learning, project-based learning, technology as a learning tool, and alternative assessment strategies).
2. Creative scheduling is used to enable both grade-level teams and study groups to meet once a week during the school day; typically, a single issue is investigated across the school year. In addition, teachers frequently meet both before and after school to incorporate readings, discussion, and the use of consultants into their problem-solving.
3. Lead teachers in each subject area are available to assist other teachers in incorporating new practices into their classrooms. These lead teachers engage in direct instruction, team-teaching, mentoring/consultation, and participation in common planning.
4. Time is created for teachers to visit each other's classrooms (for observation and peer coaching), as well other exemplary classrooms within and outside the Boston Public School system. Finally, teachers are supported to make professional presentations at both regional and national meetings.

Several programmatic initiatives designed to raise student achievement provide teachers additional opportunities to engage in professional development: student teachers and interns from local universities work with teachers to develop best practices to enhance student learning; teachers mentor a ten-member team of young adults (sponsored by a partnership with City Year) who spend a year assisting in classrooms; and teachers work with a large number of parent volunteers.

NOTE: For tips on how this design can be replicated, select "Replication Details" from the menu.

Results

Evaluation of the impact of professional development activities is a high priority at Mason. This is noteworthy, because the school has adopted a policy of including children with mild, moderate, and severe disabilities in all classrooms. Approximately a quarter of the students are classified as Limited English Proficient, so a number of different indicators are used to measure success.

Not surprisingly, reading and writing receive the major emphasis. Data from the Metropolitan Achievement Test in Reading Comprehension (a standardized test) show that Mason's average three year gain for Grades 2–5 surpassed that of the City of Boston. Also, data from a Grade 4 writing test developed by the Center for the Study of Testing, Evaluation and Educational Policy at Boston College show that in each of four subtests, Mason students exceeded the average score for the City of Boston and other urban school systems involved in the UDAC project. In addition to these measures, work–sampling assessment, portfolios, and twice–yearly exhibits of student's work in writing, art, and science show growth.

To connect these data with professional development activities, grade–level teams monitor these data on a four–week cycle. Adjustments are made to the content of the professional development program based on these periodic assessments.

An emphasis on measurement, data collection, and analysis has enabled the Mason School to document important outcomes in the areas of student achievement, student enrollment, increased parent choice of the school under Boston's controlled–choice student assignment plan, lower than average student loss due to transfers out, increased parent involvement, use of portfolio assessment, inclusion of students with special needs, increase in teachers' and parents' participation in professional development activities, increase in teacher–developed grants and presentations, increase in reporting on student outcomes. Consistent with the design of the Mason School's professional development model that aims at schoolwide improvement, evidence to support the effectiveness of the model is presented by multiple measures of data. For example:

1. A standardized test administered to students in Grades 2–5 at the Mason School
[See Results]
2. A test of student achievement in reading administered to all Grade 4 students at the Mason School developed by Boston College's Center for the Study of Testing, Evaluation, and Educational Policy. The test consists of open–ended and performance items in reading comprehension that are approximations of the reading levels designated by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).
[See Results]
3. A test of student achievement in writing administered to all Grade 4 students at the Mason School developed by Boston College's Center for the Study of Testing, Evaluation, and Educational Policy. The test consists of open–ended and performance items in writing that are approximations of the writing categories designated by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).
[See Results]
4. In addition to reading and writing scores, other outcomes were noted.
[See Results]

Reading – Standardized Test Results Grades 2–5

The Table below shows the Pre and Post-test NCE mean gains of students in grades 2–5 at the Mason School on the Metropolitan Achievement Test in Reading Comprehension – Advanced Skills, 1986 edition administered on a Spring–Spring testing schedule to the entire school system.

Tests were administered according to directions in the publisher's manual and scored by the Boston Public Schools Office of Information Systems. The Table presents NCE gains in reading comprehension over a three year period 1993 – 1995 aggregated across grades 2–5.

The Mason School's average three-year gain surpassed that of the City of Boston.

NCE Reading Comprehension Gains					
	Year	MASON SCHOOL Pretest NCE Mean	MASON SCHOOL Posttest NCE Mean	MASON SCHOOL School Mean NCE Gain	BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS Mean NCE Gain
Reading Comprehension Advanced Skills	5/3–5/11/93	–1.34	2.49	3.83	3.47
	5/2–5/10/94	2.49	14.24	11.95	2.14
	5/1–5/9/95	14.24	15.08	.84	3.03
Ê	Average 3-year gain	Ê	Ê	5.54	2.88

Source of data: Boston Public Schools Performance and Achievement Report 1993, 1994, 1995

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Reading – Achievement Test Results Grade 4

In the Table below, the reading comprehension scores of all Grade 4 students enrolled at the Mason School on a test developed by Boston College's Center for the Study of Testing, Evaluation, and Educational Policy were compared to scores of Grade 4 students in the Boston Public Schools and in 11 other urban school systems involved in the Center's Urban District Assessment Consortium (UDAC) Project.

The test consisted of a complete 'block' of National Association of Educational Progress (NAEP) items. The levels indicated are approximations of the levels designated by the NAEP. Tests were administered by staff from the Center for Testing in June 1993, June 1994, and in June 1995 and scored by teams of scorers from UDAC.

The Table presents the average percentage of items answered correctly in reading comprehension from 1993 to 1995 and illustrate how the Mason School's Grade 4 students compared to the Boston Public Schools' sample of fourth graders and those in other urban areas.

On all three levels of the test, the Mason School's gains increased from 1993 to 1995 and surpassed the 1994 and 1995 results for the City of Boston and other urban school systems involved in the UDAC project.

READING GRADE 4						
NAEP Level	Urban 1995	Boston 1995	Mason 1995	Urban 1994	Boston 1994	Mason 1994
200	53%	55%	81%	50%	53%	76%
250	47%	50%	65%	46%	49%	63%
300	40%	42%	52%	43%	46%	16%
350	It is not appropriate to test fourth graders at this level.					

Source of data: Report for the Spring 1994 and Spring 1995 Assessment Results – Boston College Center for the Study of Testing, Evaluation, and Educational Policy – Urban District Assessment Consortium Project, October 1994 and October 1995.

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Writing – Achievement Test Results Grade 4

The Table below presents the writing scores of all Grade 4 students at the Mason School as compared to scores of Grade 4 students in the Boston Public Schools' sample and in other urban schools systems involved in the UDAC project. Results indicate the percentage of students demonstrating proficiency in that category.

The test, developed by the Center for the Study of Testing, Evaluation, and Educational Policy at Boston College, consists of writing prompts that are approximations of the writing categories designated by NAEP. The test was administered in Spring 1994 and in Spring 1995 was rated by a team of raters from the Center.

The Mason School's results in all four levels exceeded the average score for the City of Boston sample and for other urban school systems involved in the UDAC project.

WRITING GRADE 4						
NAEP LEVEL	Urban 1995	Boston 1995	Mason 1995	Urban 1994	Boston 1994	Mason 1994
Informative	46%	51%	62%	44%	51%	60%
Creative	35%	57%	62%	38%	58%	61%
Narrative	64%	15%	73%	60%	7%	73%
Persuasive	43%	50%	62%	40%	50%	56%

Source of data: Report for the Spring 1994 and 1995 Assessment Results – Boston College Center for the Study of Testing, Evaluation, and Educational Policy – Urban District Assessment Consortium Project, October 1994 and October 1995.

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Other Outcomes	1991	1996
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City rank in number of parents of all races selecting school as number 1 choice	79th in city	12th in city
Increase in student enrollment	133 students	296 students
Decrease in student transfers out	39 (21%)	21 (7%)
Increase in parent involvement • turnout at parent conferences • annual volunteer hours • percent participating in 3 training activities	6% 40 hours 3%	92% 600 hours 60%
Use of portfolio assessment	0%	100%
Inclusion of students with special needs	33%	100%
Increase in participation in professional development activities (average number of hours per teacher)	6 hours	50 hours
Increase in teacher-developed grants/presentations	0 per year	10 per year
Increase in monitoring of progress • Mid-Year Reports • End-of-Year Reports	0 0	6 6

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Replication Details

NOTE: If you have not already read the 'Design and Implementation' section, selecting that from the menu before reading further will provide a context for the replication details below.



Mary Russo, Principal 1990-6

Hear Mary Russo comment on getting started. (transcript)

A mapping process was used to assess phases, reforms, and points of reference:

Summary of Mapping Exercise					
1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995-6
Major Phases					
Preparation	Putting structure in place	Deeper structural development	Change in ways of doing business	Control of resources	Consolidation and future planning

Development/Reforms					
Reflection on status	Team development	Schoolwide	Locus of control	Recognition	Future orientation
Scouting reform	Taking stock	Program development	Training	Staff development	Learning
Training	Vision	Inclusion	Inquiry/evaluation	Use of talent	
New leadership	Expectations	Teaching & learning	Outcomes	Inclusion	
	Customer focus	Partnerships	Teacher teams	Technology	
			Teaching & learning		
Key Events/Points of Reference					
X becomes Principal	School-based management	Became Title I Schoolwide Program	John Hancock/TQM training	Wheelock reading program	Bright Start program
Choice is implemented in Boston schools	Accelerated Schools training implemented early childhood program	Inclusion in early childhood program	Teacher reports/plans	25–50 hours staff development	Teacher study groups
Basal-driven reading curriculum	Teams (curriculum, teacher, school climate)	Whole language	program evaluation	Began winning awards	Focus on core academic mission
		Portfolios		Computers in classes	Student motivation/learning increasing
				Dual-certification of teachers	

Site Visit Documentation

Samuel Mason Elementary School's success was recorded based on a site visit conducted by the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development in 1996:

Criteria	Evidence
There is a connection between professional development and school/district improvement plans (needs assessment). If goals and mission have changed over	1. From 1991–1996, Mason School's professional development plan has been based on continuous needs assessment of what should be done to achieve goals in the school plan. This connection is evident at individual, grade, and organizational levels.

time, there is a rationale for change.	2. Goals are adjusted as needs change; for example, early needs -- as determined by teachers, parents, and the principal -- were recruitment of students, establishment of an after-school program, and increased reading achievement for all students. The last is being accomplished through inclusion of all special education students in regular classrooms. Other early goals were to increase enrollment (it went from 133 to 296), and to provide an after-school program (which now has a waiting list). Needs being addressed today include more effective teaching of reading and mathematics and appropriate integration of technology into the curriculum.
There is a connection to student achievement (including the process of how professional development is connected to student outcomes).	1. The connection is strong. For example, as part of their professional development interests a groups of teachers conducted action research that involved surveying students and parents to determine if curricular and other changes were effective and valued. Due to student and parent dissatisfaction with the health (the school has no gymnasium for an active PE-Health program) and reading curricula, staff changed both. Students now have swimming lessons at a local pool and creation of a new reading curriculum was undertaken. 2. All teachers have obtained dual certification in regular and special education in order to better serve students who are included in all regular classrooms. A consultant from Wheelock College attends the school regularly to help with inclusion. In turn, the school provides year-long internships for students seeking master's degrees in special education from the

	college.
There is evidence of the extent to which distinct professional development experiences are connected and ongoing and linked to goals.	1. Staff first draw on strengths among staff before seeking outside help, thus, teacher talents are fully used. All teachers have developed their own areas of expertise to help and guide other staff, and teachers offer their support to and rely on the support of other teachers on an ongoing basis. 2. When expertise from outside is needed, teachers interview and select consultants. For example, during 1995–1996, a consultant has trained teachers first to use technologies and then to integrate technology into their curriculum. A lead teacher at the school has now undertaken the technology leadership role.
There is evidence of teacher change (teacher outcomes).	1. There is an abundance of evidence. Based on specific professional development activities, teachers evidence considerable growth in understanding new assessment and instructional strategies. 2. During 1991–1996, the entire staff has become dual certified in regular and special education. There is higher staff satisfaction and leadership; participation in professional development has increased from 6 hours in 1991 to 50 hours in 1996. Improved school climate is directly attributable to staff development.
There is evidence of desired student outcomes. There are ways for the school/district to show that professional development activities lead to desired teacher and	1. Student attendance improved from 87.9% to 95.2% for kindergarten and from 89.8% to 92.4% for grades 1–5. 2. Throughout 1993–1996, second through fifth graders have shown a greater gain on the Metropolitan Achievement Test in reading and mathematics than second through

student outcomes.	fifth graders in the Boston Public School System at large.
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Costs and Funding

Mason staff have been particularly resourceful in locating funding to support this range of professional development activities. The budget draws revenue from the City of Boston General School Purposes Fund, Massachusetts Department of Education's Education Reform and Restructuring Network, Federal Title I, and grant writing. A partnership with John Hancock also provides an invaluable in-kind support for summer externships that team teachers with parents. Two important components of the program supported because of this resourcefulness are the involvement of parents in programming (e.g., monthly parent workshops and the school-based Family Center, offering weekly meetings to integrate all those adults who have an impact on student learning), and the after-school and Mason Summer Camp initiatives, which extend the learning opportunities for students.

Sources of funding for Samuel Mason School's professional development 1996:

1. City of Boston General School Purposes	\$5,000
2. Title I	\$2,000
3. Massachusetts Department of Education	\$2,000
4. Harcourt General Cinema Foundation	\$4,000
5. John Hancock Financial Services	In-kind
(summer externship)	\$2,000
6. Parents United for Child Care (parent training)	\$15,000*

* The cost is approximately \$600 per teacher and pays for consultants, stipends for the lead teachers, and substitute teacher coverage.

Contact Information

Samuel W. Mason Elementary School, Roxbury MA
 Mary L. Russo
 Former Principal, 1990–1996, of Samuel W. Mason Elementary School
 Current Principal of Richard J. Murphy Elementary School
 1 Worrell Street
 Boston, Massachusetts 02122
 Telephone: 617–635–8781
 Fax: 617–635–8787
 russo@meol.mass.edu

Rating Criteria

Samuel Mason Elementary School, Roxbury, Massachusetts was selected as a winner of the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development, 1996–7.

What is the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development?

As part of a continuing effort to honor excellence in education, the U.S. Department of Education sponsors the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development. This program recognizes schools and school districts with exemplary professional development programs and disseminates information about high-quality professional development efforts that provide evidence of student learning and increased teacher effectiveness. Since the focus of this competition is on professional development for teachers and other educators in pre-kindergarten through grade 12 settings, only individual schools (public or private) or school districts may apply. Schools or districts may, however, submit applications that describe their partnerships with other entities, in particular, institutions of higher education. Recognition under this awards program is based on how well applicants demonstrate, using identified selection criteria that their professional development program results in increased student outcomes. Criteria for selection* include:

Background and Overview of Professional Development

The applicant provides a brief explanation of why they consider professional development in their schools or districts exemplary by describing the program's key components and relating those to the U.S. Department of Education's Mission and Principles of Professional Development. This description must provide evidence that the professional development activities are not narrowly focused on one subgroup of students or staff within the school or district.

Goals and Outcomes

The applicant describes the professional development goals, including how they: (1) are developed; (2) relate to school improvement; (3) are based on a needs assessment; and (4) address the achievement of all students regardless of gender, socio-economic level or disadvantaged status, race, ethnic or cultural background, exceptional abilities or disabilities, or limited-English proficiency. Applicants also must address the changes in teaching and student learning that are expected to result from professional development, and must describe how professional development goals and outcomes promote teaching and learning to high standards.

Professional Development Design and Implementation

The applicant provides evidence that professional development reflects research and best practice; includes comprehensive evaluation; includes organizational structures (e.g., administrative and policy support) and resources (e.g., use of time, expertise, funds) that support it; promotes continuous inquiry and improvement; and ensures that the larger school community understands its importance to school improvement.

Objective Evidence of Success

The applicant clearly demonstrates that teacher effectiveness and student learning have improved as a direct result of the implemented professional development activities. Data that indicate this connection must be provided and discussed. The focus of this criterion is objective evidence, and a compelling argument must be made for how professional development positively affects outcomes for all teachers and all students, and must emphasize areas where any achievement gaps between groups (e.g., gender, socio-economic status, ethnicity) have been addressed and narrowed.

Implications for the Field

The applicant describes the lessons learned as the professional development activities have matured.

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This story exemplifies the following practices:

Professional development should be based on analyses of the differences between (a) actual student performance and (b) goals and standards for student learning.

International High School

International High School

Long Island City, NY

School Type: Public

**School
Setting:** Urban

Level: High

**School
Design:** Alternative

Content Presented By:

National Awards Program for Model
Professional Development



For a feature story on this school, please visit the WestEd website at
http://www.wested.org/wested/pubs/online/modelPD/49_app_a4.shtml.

Demographics

International High School (IHS) was established in 1985 as part of the alternative high school system in New York City and the Center for Collaborative Education. IHS targets the needs of limited English-speaking adolescents who have been in the U.S. four years or less. To enter, students must score below the 20th percentile on the English Language Assessment Battery. The school serves approximately 450 students in Grades 9–12, and shares its campus with LaGuardia Community College.

Student Racial/Ethnic Composition:

45% Hispanic
30% Asian or Pacific Islander
22% White (not of Hispanic origin)
2% African American (not of Hispanic origin)

LEP Students: 73%

Number of Languages: 37

Qualify for Free/Reduced Price Lunch: 82%

Receive Special Education Services: 0%

Background

IHS's Comprehensive Educational Plan specifies that for effective professional development, three elements are indispensable: shared leadership, diversity of philosophy and teaching styles, and consensus. Professional development is infused into, rather than added onto, the school culture through constant reflection. Professional development experiences for IHS faculty model the kinds of innovative teaching strategies (e.g., collaborative learning, portfolio assessment) that the teachers use in their classrooms.

Design & Implementation

- Interdisciplinary Teams. Student needs drive the structure of professional development. The faculty and student body are organized into six teams. On each team, five faculty members (math, science, English, and social studies teachers and a counselor) are jointly responsible for a multi-age group of about 75 ninth through twelfth graders. The faculty works with the same group of students for an entire year, providing a full academic program that focuses on one theme. Each team has significant decision-making power over the curriculum, budget, and scheduling, and three hours of meeting time are built into each faculty team's weekly schedule (via the early release of students on that day). Team members use this time to determine student needs, to set professional development team goals, to plan and carry out activities to reach the goals (including budgeting time and allocating funds), and to monitor and evaluate their practices constantly. Teams track student learning by observing and assessing daily classroom activities, projects, and portfolios. In addition to team efforts, each staff member prepares individual professional development plans which include goals, activities, and outcomes that relate to improving student achievement. Individuals seek support from fellow team members and are accountable to them for executing the plan. In addition to the interdisciplinary teams, teachers team teach, mentor, and observe each other, and engage in peer review.
- School-Wide Cooperative Leadership. The entire school staff determines the direction of professional development through stages of recommendation and approval by different teacher groups. This process of decision-making is bottom-up; everyone's expertise contributes to the professional development of everyone else.
- Substantial Fiscal Allotment. 50% of IHS's discretionary funds, totaling about \$80,000, are allocated to professional development. However, the school speaks of fiscal resources in terms of time; each team has 500 hours to divide among its members for attending and presenting at conferences, taking courses, and pursuing other interests. No request for professional time has ever been denied, and the staff shares what they learn from extra-school activities.

NOTE: For tips on how this design can be replicated, select "Replication Details" from the menu.

Results

Evidence of effective professional development at IHS is found in student outcomes. IHS students' graduation rate in four years for the class of 1993 (54%) was higher than the rate, not only for NYC students (44%), but also for all LEP students (34%). In subsequent years, IHS graduation rates were 54.8%, 60.6%, and 72% for 1994, 1995, and 1996, respectively.

In contrast to some highly specialized, elite public schools in New York City that have entrance exams, IHS enrolls students based on needs. Nevertheless, IHS graduation rate as a function of total enrollment compared favorably to these schools. Rates were Stuyvesant (23%), Brooklyn Tech (20.9%), Bronx HS of Science (20.4%), IHS (20%), La Guardia High School of Music and Art (18.8%). In addition, IHS students improved their English more than similar students in NYC: 69.2% (IHS); 61.4% (LEP students in NYC) in 1994–95 and 70.5% (IHS); 65.4% (LEP in NYC) in 1995–96.

IHS students' course pass rates have increased since interdisciplinary course clusters were adopted and are dramatically better than NYC students as a whole. IHS pass rate in 1994–95 was 91%; between 1995–97 it was 93%.

Attendance is up: 93.2% (1994–95), 93.9% (1995–96), and 94.8% (1996–97). Drop-out rates are below the city average: 1.7% compared to 16.4% for New York City. College acceptance for IHS students is between 92% and 95% every year.

Finally, with essentially no student subgroups at IHS (all are limited English speaking and there are no special education students), the question of outcomes relative to reducing gaps doesn't apply. See chart below.

IHS Student Information					
Ê	1992–3	1993–4	1994–5	1995–6	1996–7
Graduation Rates (in four years)	54%	54.8%	60.6%	72%	NA
Course Pass Rates	NA	NA	91%	93%	93%
Attendance	NA	NA	93.2%	93.9%	94.8%
Students Improving Their English	NA	NA	69.2%	70.5%	NA
Ê					
Graduation Rate (comp. to total enrollment)	20%				
Drop-out Rate	1.7% (compared to 16.4% for New York City)				
College Acceptance	Between 92% and 95% every year				

The collaborative atmosphere among the faculty and staff is conducive to high morale and low absenteeism. Our teachers are absent due to self-treated illness on average 2.7 days per year as compared to the New York City average of 6.2 days per year. In the thirteen years of existence, no staff member has ever left for a comparable position in another New York City public school.

Site Visit Documentation

International High School's success was recorded based on a site visit conducted by the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development in 1997:

Criteria	Evidence
Expected changes in teaching and student learning that will result from participation in professional development are stated.	Staff must specify in their personal PD plans the direct connection between their PD goals and planned activities and desired student outcomes. Participation in PD activities serves as a catalyst for change in teaching and student learning at team and schoolwide levels. All teachers and other staff who were interviewed clearly stated the importance of ultimately improving student learning through their own and the school's PD efforts.

The professional development goals and outcomes focus on increasing teachers' expertise in teaching to high standards.	Major goals in 1997 were to develop performance-based assessment and rubrics tied to state standards along with ongoing curriculum development and effective project-based learning. The personnel peer review process is based on this connection between student and teacher performance, and teacher outcomes are judged against student outcomes (students participate in this process as well). Individual, team, and schoolwide goals and outcomes focus on high teaching standards.
There is a credible rationale for believing that given the attainment of the expected teacher outcomes, student outcomes will be achieved.	The school's philosophy is that all PD activity is tied to achieving student outcomes. Abundant examples were evident, for instance, in the peer review process and documents, cluster team and coordinating council agendas and meeting notes, the Comprehensive Educational Plan, PD goals form, teachers' action research reports, and teacher portfolios. Interviews and observations confirmed the importance of student performance to these teachers. This basic tenet about the purpose and function of PD was very strong and contrasts sharply with attitudes and beliefs in schools without such a vision.
There is a continuous process for ensuring that the school community understands how the professional development components fit together and connect to the overall school or district improvement plan.	It is impossible to work in this school – or even to visit it – without being keenly aware of individual, collegial, and schoolwide PD activity and opportunities. The larger community—parents, business, and other community members—is informed through handbooks and other documents. Community members, especially parents, are offered classes suited to their needs. 500 local businesses provide internships to IHS students. Students work closely with their internship supervisors on projects, conduct interviews of workers at

	the site, and write a paper that connects the internship experience with their academic learning. Students create an Internship Album that includes this information. Such projects "spread the word" throughout the community about the IHS program, including its professional development.
The data collected provide evidence that the professional development activities lead to improved teaching and student learning.	Extensive statistics collected for many years provide evidence of positive student outcomes and improved and enhanced teaching. Furthermore, examination of student portfolios showed high levels of learning and performance in academic areas within their interdisciplinary clusters. Graduation portfolios are extensive, requiring complex projects, research, and writing, among other tasks. The NYC Annual School Report compares IHS students and students citywide; IHS students tend to do as well or better than citywide students on many indicators. In addition, staff interviews—and even unsolicited interviews with local university researchers (at the school when we were there) studying how the students learn English, school support staff, and community college staff—made it clear to us that IHS students exceed expectations. This success can be attributed to the strong focus in PD (and other school efforts resulting from PD) on improving student learning. The school's success is remarkable, given that students enter the school speaking little or no English and sometimes with no literacy skills even in their own language. IHS teachers are highly committed to their work and their students. They work long hours to improve

	what they do, to help others, and to seek new knowledge, because they view themselves as professionals devoted to improving their students' learning.
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Replication Details

NOTE: If you have not already read the "Design and Implementation" section, selecting that from the menu before reading further will provide a context for the replication details below.

The Basic Unit for Professional Development: The Interdisciplinary Team

The faculty and the student body are organized into six interdisciplinary teams. On each team, five faculty members (math, science, English, and social studies teachers) are jointly responsible for a heterogeneous group of about 75 ninth through twelfth graders. The faculty works with the same group of students for a full year providing a full academic program organized around themes such as "Motion", "Conflict and Resolution", or "The American Dream". Faculty time is provided for teams to provide affective and academic counseling.

The interdisciplinary teams provide an ideal infrastructure for professional development. Significant decision-making power over curriculum, budget, and scheduling is delegated to the teams, and three hours of meeting time are built into each faculty team's weekly schedule.

Cross-Team Professional Development

The policy-setting body for the school is the Coordinating Council which includes administrators, student government representatives, PTA representatives, the union chapter chair, and a representative from each interdisciplinary team.

Cross-School Professional Development

Several professional development days are built into the school year. Generally, these are held jointly with two newer schools, established with assistance from the IHS staff. Brooklyn International (established in 1994) and Manhattan International (established in 1993) also serve new immigrants through similar teaching methodologies, organizational structures and assessment strategies. These joint staff development days supplemented by regular meetings of representatives from the three schools provide opportunities to share and generalize successful practices across schools. Faculty also serve on the graduation portfolio panels at these sister schools, an effective way to jointly develop performance standards and share curriculum.

Congruence with the Mission and Principles of Professional Development

What makes this approach to professional development exemplary, is that, consistent with U.S. Department of Education's Mission and Principles of Professional Development:

- It is built, seamlessly, into the governance and instructional organization of the school.
- It gives teachers the necessary time and decision-making authority to support each others' professional development on and across teams.
- It supports individual professional growth and the sharing of best practice through peer coaching and evaluation by other team members, regularly scheduled teacher portfolio

presentations, and team-teaching opportunities for new faculty members.

- It provides regular opportunities for collegial collaboration and the sharing of successful practice both within the school and with other schools serving similar students.
- It allows for regular, systematic interaction with the college and with businesses and community organizations, helping faculty constantly reassess how it is preparing students for higher education and the world of work.
- It shares best practices with the larger educational community through hosting a constant flow of American and international visitors, collaboration with outside researchers, membership in citywide and national networks, and faculty participation as instructors in various university teacher-education programs and as presenters at a wide range of conferences.
- Its content is determined collaboratively by representative bodies based on the school community's on-going assessment of the instructional program.
- It promotes a climate of inquiry and continuous improvement, as evidenced by a series of performance-driven organizational reforms implemented over the past 13 years.
- It is driven by a coherent long-term strategy working backward from graduation requirements to ensure that all students have the necessary supports to meet rigorous graduation criteria.

The faculty's peer support, review, and evaluation system became a powerful force in shaping a common set of strongly held values and principles for guiding both the design and the practice of student assessment. Over time, student assessment practices have evolved from traditional, periodic tests and quizzes to a continuous process of self-reflection, peer assessment, and teacher assessment organized around collaborative performance tasks and individual portfolio development.

Site Visit Documentation

International High School's success was recorded based on a site visit conducted by the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development in 1997:

Criteria	Evidence
There is clear evidence of the infrastructure, content, and process components of professional development.	All components of professional development are evident in (a) documents (e.g., school schedule, school governance plan, PD plan, teacher PD plans and portfolios, meeting minutes); (b) observations (e.g., staff collaboration and student learning in team meetings and classrooms); and (c) interviews (e.g., staff stressed shared leadership and devotion to change and improvement of teaching and learning through PD).
The professional development is comprehensive and long-term and not narrowly focused on one subgroup of students or staff.	PD is designed to meet the learning needs of all students and achieve state standards and other student outcomes (e.g., attending higher education institutions). All staff and administrators and sometimes students participate in PD, and there are also ample PD opportunities for parents and community members.

	Staff and administrators shape their own personal and group PD through direct participation in Interdisciplinary Instructional Teams as well as through participation in many other groups in the school.
There are clear professional development goals based on needs assessment and focused on improving ALL students' learning.	PD needs are assessed through formal and informal inventories, interviews and discussions, observations and self-reports, and records of activities. Needs and goals are driven by student performance measured against standards and other factors related to student learning (e.g., parent involvement). For example, this year several instructional teams identified the need for stronger science instruction, and their team's PD focused at least in part on that need. Needs and goals are stated in the school's Comprehensive Educational Plan and were addressed in the team meetings we observed. Other documents, e.g., team, coordinating council, and steering committee meeting agendas; descriptions of whole school and partner schools PD activities; and individual PD plans which are required to connect PD goals to student outcomes, also include goals directly related to students' learning.
The professional development goals and plan were developed through an inclusionary process.	The school is organized in interdisciplinary instructional teams, which develop project-based learning in interdisciplinary instructional clusters. Cluster teams identify PD goals for their group based on student work and how effective the team thinks its instruction is. Individual goals may also be partly formed here. Teams propose schoolwide goals to the Coordination Council, which discusses PD needs and goals with the Steering Committee, which then sets schoolwide PD goals. Thus, individuals make decisions about PD goals for themselves, teams determine their goals, and the

	steering committee determines goals for the whole school. The process is bottom up. Staff recognize that everyone has expertise and can offer PD opportunities to everyone else.
The professional development goals are part of a long-term school improvement plan.	Professional development is aligned to the school's Comprehensive Educational Plan, which is the school improvement plan. The major purpose of all PD, stated in the plan, is to improve student learning and related outcomes. In our interviews, teachers and the principal also stressed this alignment.
Professional development is integral to the school culture and promotes continuous inquiry and improvement.	PD is based largely on reflective practice. Teachers take ownership of problems, focus on developing resolutions, and are not afraid to take risks to solve problems and try new ideas through various means (e.g., seeking advice or mentoring, conducting action research, taking classes, presenting ideas at team meetings). No request for personal professional development has ever been denied. Individual teacher styles are valued and disagreement is considered a necessary condition for learning and growth. Inquiry is evident in formal and informal staff interactions. When staff see a need for improving practice, they seek solutions among themselves or from experts outside the school. Parents receive handbooks written by staff and parents in English, Chinese, Polish, Russian, Spanish, and Bengali, and are offered ESL and immigration classes.
The professional development activities reflect the best available research and practice in teaching, learning, and leadership.	PD is based on a range of solid research. Content for current group and schoolwide PD, as well as PD with the two partner schools in Manhattan and Brooklyn, is the development of rubrics for student portfolios. This is a logical next step in ongoing work on developing appropriate activities and projects for student portfolios, other alternative assessment strategies, and graduation criteria.

The specific content, instructional strategies, and learning activities are designed to reach the professional development goals.	Links between content, instructional strategies, and learning activities and the PD goals are evident in many documents and are at the forefront of staff discussion and work. For example, staff explained that their goal for student collaboration was best reached by having staff collaborate as they expected students to do. Similarly, having teachers prepare their own portfolios helped them better understand student portfolios. Awareness of links among PD content, strategies, and activities was evident in the PRISM meeting (Partnerships Realizing the International Schools model) with the Manhattan and Brooklyn schools, whom IHS mentors and otherwise supports.
There are processes for documenting and monitoring the alignment of school improvement plans, professional development activities, teacher and student outcomes.	Ongoing assessments relate what the school is doing to teacher and student outcomes. The Coordination Committee, Interdisciplinary Instructional Teams, and Personnel Committee all monitor alignment. A very strong communication system for ongoing, daily monitoring is embedded in and supported by the organizational structures of the school. Individual staff and teams monitor at least weekly whether their efforts are aligned, are achieving PD goals, and are helping students and teachers self-assess their teaching.
Organizational structures support the implementation of professional development activities on the individual, collegial, and organizational levels.	Individual PD plans (written each year and benefiting from both collegial and student input) address individual PD. Collegial PD takes place nearly daily in Interdisciplinary Instructional Teams and in other collegial groups; PD occurs across teams as well (e.g., discussion, observation, team teaching). Other examples of activities are "critical friends", mentoring, action research, and Peer Review Teams (formed for each new teacher's review and less frequently for tenured teachers). The larger,

	representative teams (Coordination Committee, Steering Committee, PRISM) support PD at the school level and between schools. New teachers receive strong support through all of the above as well as through more formal efforts. PD at IHS is so outstanding that a local teacher college sends students there for their entire pre-service education. No new, or experienced teacher, need ever feel isolated or unsupported.
The professional development design includes a comprehensive evaluation.	A plan exists. Teacher and student portfolios provide much evaluation data as do more quantitative data collected by the school and district. Part of the teacher portfolio includes students' evaluation of teachers. Evaluation is an ongoing process in Interdisciplinary Instructional Team meetings and critical in the Peer Review process.
The data collected are used to make appropriate programmatic adjustments to professional development.	Formative evaluation is ongoing. When PD efforts are judged not to be working well, adjustments are made. For example, participants at a PRISM meeting determined that collaboration with partner schools on rubric development was problematic, and process changes were being planned. Rubrics, peer observation, feedback from students, and other sources of information are used to determine if program adjustments need to be made. Since information is readily available on an ongoing basis, timely changes can be made.
There is adequate description of the infrastructure, content, and process components to understand and draw lessons from the professional development plan.	Other schools and districts can benefit from the efforts of IHS. Many documents created by IHS can guide other schools setting up a similar program or a program that adapts one aspect of the school's efforts (e.g., Peer Review as PD, collaborative interdisciplinary curriculum development as PD). IHS Staff stress that strategies must fit the context into which they are being adapted, of course. The school welcomes visitors, and both teachers

	and administrators make presentations at conferences around the country. The NCREST report provides useful information about the development and effect of different instructional strategies and alternative assessment at IHS that can also inform other schools and districts.
The lessons learned are useful for other schools or districts.	Staff shared with us their convictions about factors that make their school successful: infused PD rather than add-on, peripheral PD; adequate time for PD; block scheduling; shared leadership; student collaboration and staff collaboration; alignment of all components, from needs and goals to teacher and student outcomes; reduction of teacher isolation; staff sense of high professionalism and being treated as professionals; teacher choice; counseling for students; and vocational education. They stressed an important intrinsic (their term) factor (staff share a common goal and mission) and two important extrinsic (again, their term) factors (a structure that lets people work to the best of their ability and a mixture of experienced and new teachers). Regarding the latter, they believe both new and experienced teachers are necessary for supporting change and ongoing vitality in a school.

Costs and Funding

Since professional development is so important in the school, many resources are devoted to it. The school has an Annenberg grant and Title VII funds. 50% of discretionary funds, totaling about \$80,000, is devoted to professional development. Each of the 6 Interdisciplinary Instructional Teams receives 1/6 of these funds. The other 50% of discretionary funds is for technology, and a part of those funds is used for PD in technology. Generally, the school speaks of fiscal resources in terms of time. All staff have the equivalent of a full day each week for team meetings. Each team has 500 hours to divide among its members for attending and presenting at conferences, taking courses, and pursuing other interests. Students are dismissed early one day per week, the remaining time is provided through block scheduling and coordinating classes so that teachers have time to meet. Noteworthy is staff commitment to share what they've learned while away from the school. Finally, some funds support the PRISM Partnership in which IHS serves as a mentor to the two schools that are beginning their work as alternative LEP schools.

Contact Information

Aaron Listhaus
Chair of Coordinating Council
The International High School at LaGuardia Community College
31-10 Thomson Avenue
Long Island City, NY 11101
Telephone: (718) 482-5482
Fax: (718) 392-6904

Rating Criteria

International High School, Long Island City, New York, was selected as a winner of the 1997-1998 National Awards Program for Model Professional Development.

What is the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development?

As part of a continuing effort to honor excellence in education, the U.S. Department of Education sponsors the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development. This program recognizes schools and school districts with exemplary professional development programs and disseminates information about high-quality professional development efforts that provide evidence of student learning and increased teacher effectiveness. Since the focus of this competition is on professional development for teachers and other educators in pre-kindergarten through grade 12 settings, only individual schools (public or private) or school districts may apply. Schools or districts may, however, submit applications that describe their partnerships with other entities, in particular, institutions of higher education. Recognition under this awards program is based on how well applicants demonstrate, using identified selection criteria that their professional development program results in increased student outcomes. Criteria for selection* include:

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The applicant provides evidence that professional development reflects research and best practice; includes comprehensive evaluation; includes organizational structures (e.g., administrative and policy support) and resources (e.g., use of time, expertise, funds) that support it; promotes continuous inquiry and improvement; and ensures that the larger school community understands its importance to school improvement.

Objective Evidence of Success

The applicant clearly demonstrates that teacher effectiveness and student learning have improved as a direct result of the implemented professional development activities. Data that indicate this connection must be provided and discussed. The focus of this criterion is objective evidence, and a compelling argument must be made for how professional development positively affects outcomes for all teachers and all students, and must emphasize areas where any achievement gaps between groups (e.g., gender, socio-economic status, ethnicity) have been addressed and narrowed.

Implications for the Field

The applicant describes the lessons learned as the professional development activities have matured.

*These criteria are derived from the Mission and Principles of Professional Development prepared by the U.S. Department of Education in 1995, in consultation with numerous educational organizations, and have been previously published for public comment.

Information about the current award cycle for the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development can be found at <http://www.ed.gov/inits/TeachersWeb/>.

This story exemplifies the following practices:

Professional development should be based on analyses of the differences between (a) actual student performance and (b) goals and standards for student learning.

Professional development should be primarily school-based and built into the day-to-day work of teaching.

Shallowford Falls Elementary School

Shallowford Falls Elementary School

Marietta, GA

School Type: Public

**School
Setting:** Suburban

Level: Elementary

**School
Design:** Traditional

Content Presented By:

National Awards Program for Model
Professional Development



For a feature story on this school, please visit the WestEd website at
http://www.wested.org/wested/pubs/online/modelPD/49_app_a7.shtml.

Demographics

Shallowford Falls Elementary is one of 61 elementary schools in the Cobb County Public School System, which serves a suburb of Atlanta. Shallowford serves approximately 660 students in grades K–5 in an affluent community.

Student Racial/Ethnic Composition:

90% White (not of Hispanic origin)
3% Asian or Pacific Islander
3% African American (not of Hispanic origin)
3% Hispanic

LEP Students: 0.5%

Qualify for Free/Reduced Price Lunch: 3%

Receive Special Education Services: 15%

Background

Although Shallowford students had been high achievers since the opening of the school in 1990, the staff and administration committed itself to continuous improvements. To achieve this goal, they instituted site-based decision making and total quality management processes. Over the course of the school's growth, the staff professional development has evolved from content-specific improvements to improvements of the entire instructional program. Literacy across all subjects has been the focus of the last three years' professional development.

Design & Implementation

- Teacher Governance. Initially, the principal provided guidance and vision in determining the direction of school improvement efforts. However, because of the teacher teams and

committees, the staff now assumes power over school direction. Teachers observe and provide feedback to their colleagues on a regular basis. Groups of teachers or staff who perform related roles in the school are divided into teams. Each team has a representative on one of five major committees, and driven by the school's vision and philosophy, these committees work continuously to achieve the school's academic performance goals each year. With a web of committees, each meeting once each month, Shallowford's teachers interact often and target a variety of school issues that all focus on improving student achievement.

- **Performance Standards.** Shallowford staff sets specific, observable, and measurable student objectives and designs professional development activities to produce desired results. Using identified standards, the staff tracks each student's progress in reading, language, and mathematics.

NOTE: For tips on how this design can be replicated, select "Replication Details" from the menu.

Results

Shallowford's scores on the ITBS have been steadily improving, even though their scores were already consistently higher than the district and state averages. Students' scores from 1995–1997 have risen in reading, language, and mathematics, and student performance on the state-mandated writing assessment also improved between 1996 and 1997.

During the 1993–94 Pay-for-Performance year, Shallowford targeted mathematics and science. That year the school set extraordinarily high performance goals on achievement and school improvement efforts as we emphasized accelerated student learning and professional development activities. Out of 55 elementary schools in the system, Shallowford scored the top in both mathematics and science that year in 3rd and 5th grades (only those grades were tested) on both the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) and on the state criterion reference tests. Prior to this year, Shallowford students had scored among the top ten, but not in first place. The entire community collaborated to help reach these goals. Shallowford qualified as one of the first ten state Pay-for-Performance schools.

The results from the 1995–1997 spring testing of third and fifth graders on the ITBS are below. (In 1997, the fourth grade also took the ITBS at the end of the school year instead of in the fall, as they usually do.)

ITBS TEST SCORES – 1995–1997									
Ê	3RD GRADE			4TH GRADE			5TH GRADE		
	'95	'96	'97	'95	'96	'97	'95	'96	'97
Reading Total	74	78	81	NA	NA	81	75	77	80
Language	74	80	81	NA	NA	85	71	83	87
Mathematics	82	88	90	NA	NA	87	85	90	91
Core (weighted average of the above)	77	83	85	NA	NA	86	78	86	89
	NA	85	86	NA	NA	85	NA	85	88

Composite (including other subtests, too)									
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Shallowford's academic program seems to strengthen each year. As stated by teachers, children come to each subsequent grade better prepared. (See chart below indicating school's goal achievement in improving writing scores.)

The state-mandated fifth grade writing assessment was administered in January 1997. The fifth grade students were required to write a paper on an assigned topic. Student papers were sent to the state department and read by trained raters and scored holistically according to the six Developmental Stages/Score Guidelines developed by Georgia educators. The writing development stages are listed in descending order from a fully elaborated topic development (stage 6) to little or no topic development (stage 1).

Compared to other students in the Cobb County System, Shallowford Falls fifth graders ranked second, having the second highest percentage of students scoring in the most advanced stage. In comparing the 1997 Shallowford Falls fifth graders to the 1996 class, a higher percentage of fifth graders this past school year scored in Stage 6.

STATE-MANDATED WRITING ASSESSMENTS, GRADE 5				
Percent at Development Stages	Georgia (%)	Cobb County (%)	1996 Shallowford Falls (%)	1997 Shallowford Falls (%)
Stage 6	11.8	18.0	34	40.9
Stage 5	26.1	31.5	43	29.1
Stage 4	37.0	34.0	22	20.0
Stage 3	21.1	14.3	1	9.1
Stage 2	3.4	1.5	0	0
Stage 1	0.3	0.1	0	0

The third grade writing assessment is completed by third grade teachers. The assessment involves a review of student writing samples and a determination of the dominant stage of the student's writing. Third grade teachers complete a report for each student and summarize data for their classes. The class summary sheets are forwarded to the state department, with individual student reports filed in students' permanent records and copies given to parents. Comparing Shallowford Falls students to other third graders in the system and state as well as to previous classes at Shallowford Falls indicates the strengthening of our current students' writing compositional abilities.

3RD GRADE WRITING ASSESSMENT				
Percent at Development Stages	Georgia (%)	Cobb County (%)	1996 Shallowford Falls (%)	1997 Shallowford Falls (%)

Stage 6	4.6	4.5	8.7	17.5
Stage 5	14.7	19.1	42.7	41.8
Stage 4	26.5	32.9	34.0	23.3
Stage 3	29.2	29.6	12.6	14.6
Stage 2	16.7	10.0	1.0	2.9
Stage 1	6.1	2.1	0	0

Replication Details

NOTE: If you have not already read the "Design and Implementation" section, selecting that from the menu before reading further will provide a context for the replication details below.

Professional development at Shallowford Falls Elementary School aligns content, process, and support for professional development implementation with identified student needs. The result is continual growth for both teachers and students. In keeping with the Mission and Principles of Professional Development, there is extensive documentation of improvements in teacher effectiveness and of increases in student learning. The school's atmosphere of inquiry focused on standards-based instruction, collegiality, and community leads to the achievement of learning goals and continuously raises standards for all students.

The entire faculty establishes goals with input from parents and the community. Site-based, Total Quality Management principles organize the staff into teams to address specific areas of school governance. These teams meet regularly and seek input from all staff before making decisions. Individual staff analyze student data to identify needs and record progress. Teams look at identified needs, research options, and present best options to the whole staff for review and adoption. Professional development has changed from addressing specific content concerns to improving the entire instructional program.

Professional development activities vary from overnight staff retreats away from the campus to small, focused study groups addressing a particular issue. Literacy was the basis for a long-term study that involved defining personal beliefs about teaching and learning, exploring the beliefs and theories of others, and comparing and contrasting varying personal beliefs. Interested in developing communication skills across the curriculum, participants considered implications of their beliefs for classroom teaching, tried new practices in their own classrooms, and reflected on the outcomes with a supportive peer group. Even after completion of the literacy study, this process continues to be their professional development model.

Experienced staff share materials and ideas with new staff members. In return, grade-level teams seek new ideas and contributions from new staff. Over the past seven years, teacher turnover has been extremely low. New staff, whose views must be consistent with the mission and principles of the school and complement the strengths of the current staff, are hired through an interview process that includes grade-level teachers. Grade-level members help new staff incorporate adopted strategies into their practice. Although the principal and other staff regularly monitor implementation of classroom strategies and the attainment of objectives, the teachers' own sense of ownership and responsibility ensures that programs and strategies are implemented.

In setting performance standards for student achievement, Shallowford Falls based its improvement plan on the Georgia Pay-for-Performance Program, which required that specific, observable, and

measurable student objectives be accompanied by specific activities to produce desired results. A staff-incorporated plan requires the collection and analysis of data on each student in reading, language, and mathematics. While focusing on each student's achieving identified standards, teachers, in effect, create individualized education plans. Shallowford Falls was one of ten schools to receive the Pay-for-Performance incentives in the first year of the program. Although scores started out very good, Shallowford's Iowa Test of Basic Skills scores improved significantly over each of the last three years. (Only third and fifth grades were tested.) Student performance on the state-mandated writing assessment has also significantly improved. Ethnic, racial, and gender subgroups performed as well as, or better than, the school as a whole. The state, the district, and the "Atlanta Constitution's" report on area schools have recognized the school's success.

In 1990, the principal selected staff who were committed to a participatory decision-making school. She immediately led the staff in developing a philosophy, mission, vision, belief statements, performance goals, as well as student and teacher handbooks through site-based (SBM) and total quality management (TQM) processes. The students then selected the mascot, motto, and school colors. While we creating these aspects of their "essence of being"—the foundation and structure of the school—the principal modeled and taught the SBM/TQM processes. She was one of the first members on the systemwide SBM committee, attending numerous national workshops, writing a local guidebook for the system, and instructing other schools in the SBM processes.

Governance of the school is built on the SBM and TQM processes. The organizational structure is simple. Specific groups of people are identified as teams: grade-level teachers (approximately five each of kindergarten through fifth grade), school specialists (art, music, physical education, media), counselor, learner support strategies (the instructional lead teacher), special education (resource, self-contained, speech, gifted), paraprofessionals, clerical staff members, custodians, and food service workers. Each staff team has a representative on one of five major committees. Parents, the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA), Partners-In-Education (PIE), and students serve on most of the committees. The committees are Building Leadership Team (the BLTs handle curriculum and discipline issues), Enrichment/School Spirit (plan extra-curricular activities), Budget Committee (assess instructional needs and determine priorities for expenditures), Student Support Team (develop individual educational plans for needy students not served by special education, plus refer students to psychological services), and Sunshine Committee (in charge of staff socials and remembrances).

The five major committees are governed by the school's vision, motto, philosophy, and belief statements and they work continuously to achieve the school's academic performance goals each year. In addition, all team members also serve on secondary committees during the year. The five committees meet simultaneously, usually once a month. Issues are discussed, and the vote is tabled until the representatives have discussed and received input from their teams. Team meetings are held a couple of times a month. All Thursday afternoons, after school, are reserved for meetings: committees (first Thursdays), teams (second Thursdays), faculty meetings (third Thursdays), and staff development (fourth Thursdays). The agendas for all meetings are focused on pursuing and accomplishing school instructional performance goals established the previous year by the staff.

The faculty was involved in intense professional development throughout the year, with an emphasis on reading and language. They voted to be trained in "Frameworks," a balanced literacy reading model. "Frameworks" is based on the work of Cambourne, Turbill, Butler, Lanston, and current brain-based learning research. "Frameworks", staff development model recommended by the district office, was used to develop a consistent philosophy/approach for the teaching of reading, language arts, writing, and spelling at Shallowford Falls. Throughout the year, there were a minimum of eight sessions, each session running two to three hours. The first three sessions of "Frameworks" were introduced at a two-day faculty retreat. The final five sessions took place after school and during

released planning when substitute teachers relieved teachers of their classroom instructional duties.

During the 1997–98 school year, the faculty developed a school improvement plan which was consistent throughout the school and based on their reading/language philosophy. Their balanced–literacy philosophy, defined through intensive, extensive teacher dialogue about brain–based learning and research–based teaching, served as the foundation for the performance goals and objective, professional development plan, and instructional activities.

Coordinating a school improvement plan such as this one is a massive undertaking. The principal meets with the School Improvement Plan (SIP) Committee once a month, building a timeline to ensure that every activity in the plan is scheduled and that responsibilities are assigned, planned thoroughly, and communicated to all concerned. The SIP Committee is comprised of a representative from each team. One or two faculty meetings a month are devoted to the execution of the plan. Faculty members, parents, and students determine together how to achieve their goals. Communication is constant. At meetings and through surveys, all parties are asked for their opinions and for suggestions.

Site Visit Documentation

In 1997, the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development conducted a site visit to the Shallowford Falls Elementary School and documented its success.

Criteria	Evidence
There is clear evidence of the infrastructure, content, and process components of professional development.	Elaborated on by school improvement and action plans for pay–for–performance.
The professional development is comprehensive and long–term and not narrowly focused on one subgroup of students or staff.	The professional development is comprehensive and part of a continuous improvement process that involves all school employees and community participation.
Professional development is integral to the school culture and promotes continuous inquiry and improvement.	The level of collegiality and degree of professionalism exhibited by the staff is remarkable and leads to a focus on continual improvement.
There are processes for documenting and monitoring the alignment of school improvement plans, professional	There is an extensive process for monitoring and supporting the implementation of strategies and programs.

development activities, teacher and student outcomes.	
There is a continuous process for ensuring that the school community understands how the professional development components fit together and connect to the overall school or district improvement plan.	Parents are an integral part of the school's life and the principal and staff communicate with parents on a frequent and extensive basis.

Costs and Funding

In 1995–96, system–wide professional teachers were sent to numerous professional development inservices and state–wide conferences on reading and language. Early in the fall, kindergarten, first, and second grade teachers wrote their own model for teaching balanced literacy for a proposed cost of \$6,000. The intermediate teachers wrote a corresponding model which would also cost \$6,000.

Contact Information

Cheryl Hunt Clements, Ph.D.
Principal, Shallowford Falls Elementary School
3529 Lassiter Road
Marietta, GA 30062
Telephone: (770) 640–4815
Fax: (770) 640–4820

Rating Criteria

Shallowford Falls Elementary School, Marietta, Georgia was selected as a winner of the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development, 1997–8.

What is the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development?

As part of a continuing effort to honor excellence in education, the U.S. Department of Education sponsors the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development. This program recognizes schools and school districts with exemplary professional development programs and disseminates information about high–quality professional development efforts that provide evidence of student learning and increased teacher effectiveness. Since the focus of this competition is on professional development for teachers and other educators in pre–kindergarten through grade 12 settings, only individual schools (public or private) or school districts may apply. Schools or districts may, however, submit applications that describe their partnerships with other entities, in particular, institutions of higher education. Recognition under this awards program is based on how well applicants demonstrate, using identified selection criteria that their professional development program results in increased student outcomes. Criteria for selection* include:

Background and Overview of Professional Development

- The applicant provides a brief explanation of why they consider professional development in their schools or districts exemplary by describing the program's key components and relating those to the U.S. Department of Education's Mission and Principles of Professional Development. This description must provide evidence that the professional development activities are not narrowly focused on one subgroup of students or staff within the school or district.

Goals and Outcomes

- The applicant describes the professional development goals, including how they: (1) are developed; (2) relate to school improvement; (3) are based on a needs assessment; and (4) address the achievement of all students regardless of gender, socio-economic level or disadvantaged status, race, ethnic or cultural background, exceptional abilities or disabilities, or limited-English proficiency. Applicants also must address the changes in teaching and student learning that are expected to result from professional development, and must describe how professional development goals and outcomes promote teaching and learning to high standards.

Professional Development Design and Implementation

- The applicant provides evidence that professional development reflects research and best practice; includes comprehensive evaluation; includes organizational structures (e.g., administrative and policy support) and resources (e.g., use of time, expertise, funds) that support it; promotes continuous inquiry and improvement; and ensures that the larger school community understands its importance to school improvement.

Objective Evidence of Success

- The applicant clearly demonstrates that teacher effectiveness and student learning have improved as a direct result of the implemented professional development activities. Data that indicate this connection must be provided and discussed. The focus of this criterion is objective evidence, and a compelling argument must be made for how professional development positively affects outcomes for all teachers and all students, and must emphasize areas where any achievement gaps between groups (e.g., gender, socio-economic status, ethnicity) have been addressed and narrowed.

Implications for the Field

- The applicant describes the lessons learned as the professional development activities have matured.

*These criteria are derived from the Mission and Principles of Professional Development prepared by the U.S. Department of Education in 1995, in consultation with numerous educational organizations, and have been previously published for public comment.

Information about the current award cycle for the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development can be found at <http://www.ed.gov/inits/TeachersWeb/>.

This story exemplifies the following practices:

Professional development should be based on analyses of the differences between (a) actual student performance and (b) goals and standards for student learning.

Professional development should incorporate evaluation of multiple sources of information on (a) outcomes for students and (b) the instruction and other processes that are involved in implementing the lessons learned.

Professional development should provide opportunities to gain an understanding of the theory underlying the knowledge and skills being learned.

Professional development should be connected to a comprehensive change process focused on improving student learning.

Montview Elementary School

Montview Elementary School,

Aurora, CO

School Type: Public

**School
Setting:** Suburban

Level: Elementary

**School
Design:** Traditional

Content Presented By:

National Awards Program for Model
Professional Development



For a feature story on this school, please visit the WestEd website at
http://www.wested.org/wested/pubs/online/modelPD/49_app_a6.shtml.

Demographics

Montview Elementary is a four track, year-round school serving approximately 860 students in grades K–5. Montview serves a diverse and highly transient student population. In the 1996–97 school year, Montview had a transiency rate of 126%, the highest in the district.

Student Racial/Ethnic Composition:

46% Hispanic
27% African American (not of Hispanic origin)
21% White (not of Hispanic origin)
5% Asian or Pacific Islander
1% American Indian or Alaska Native

LEP Students: 42%

Number of Languages: 9

Qualify for Free/Reduced Price Lunch: 77%

Receive Special Education Services: 13%

Background

Montview began its restructuring process five years ago as the regular education, Title I, Special Education, and ESL staff and administrators explored ways that would effectively meet the needs of its diverse student population and high concentration of low-income families. Literacy was chosen as the thrust of restructuring based on the belief that the practices of teaching and learning developed through literacy would benefit the rest of the school curriculum.

Design & Implementation

- **Partnership with the "Literacy Learning Network".** Using a model that parallels the literacy instruction and staff development in New Zealand, Montview has institutionalized a range of practices that integrate professional learning into teachers' daily work lives. Teachers participate in weekly coaching sessions with a teacher-leader, and through analysis of student data, reflect on their practice and develop future goals.
- **Quarterly Reviews.** The entire staff has adopted a philosophy of "no excuses"; each teacher is responsible for improving the academic achievement of all students. Periodically, each teacher discusses the progress of his/her students in the areas of literacy and mathematics with a leadership team that includes: an administrator, the teacher-leader who is the presenting teacher's coach, and a team of specialists who support students in the teacher's class. Quarterly reviews serve several purposes: they provide the presenting teacher with opportunities for improved teaching strategies; they provide the overall support team with a focus for coordinated efforts; they provide the coaches and administrators with data for planning professional development programs; and they allow the administration to monitor the progress of students on a classroom-by-classroom basis. This system supports the school's transient student population by enabling Montview to provide a receiving school with useful information about a student.
- **Restructuring Use of Title I Funds.** Montview has redesigned its Title I allocations to support its professional development. Title I funds pay for teacher-leaders, who coach other teachers, and for education specialists, who are assigned to assist teachers in classrooms based on the number of high-risk students.

NOTE: For tips on how this design can be replicated, select "Replication Details" from the menu.

Results

Montview utilizes multiple assessments to track student achievement. Classroom teachers maintain student monitoring notebooks in literacy and mathematics, which include observations and examinations of student work. Data on standardized tests show increased achievement. Iowa Test of Basic Skills, average scores in reading, language, and math have increased, and data on the Riverside Integrated Language Arts Performance Assessment showed an elimination of gaps in performance between white and non-white students.

Standardized testing includes the norm-referenced Iowa Test of Basic Skills, administered to all students in the district at the end of grade 4. Between 1995 and 1997, average student scores at Montview increased in reading, language, and math by 0.7, 0.6, and 0.7 respectively. Disaggregated data show African-American student increases of 0.8, 0.9, and 0.7 in the same series of tests; for Hispanic students, the comparable increases were 0.9, 0.3, and 0.8.

Similarly, data on the Riverside Integrated Language Arts Performance Assessment, which is also administered to fourth grade students in the district, show increases for all students between 1995 and 1997 and a virtual elimination of gaps in performance between Caucasian students and both Hispanic and African-American students.

Montview administrators perform as "head learners" modeling the attitudes, understandings, and behaviors they expect of their staff and students. Montview's principal has been awarded the Outstanding Literacy Administrator Award for 1996 and the Wright Way Award from the Colorado Principal's Center in 1997 for her restructuring efforts by the Colorado Council of the International Reading Association.

A study completed by RMC Research of Denver concluded that coaching was associated with the

greatest change in classroom practice, and was viewed as very positive and critically important by the individuals coached. In this same study, dialogue groups were viewed as most effective because they helped participants solve immediate problems.

The four-day Literacy Learning Institute was viewed as very effective in motivating participants to change, introducing them to the Literacy Learning philosophy and the five major constructs: the conditions of learning, the teaching/learning cycle, the reading process, the writing process, and the math process.

In addition to the above study, the assistant principal at Montview conducted a survey to measure the culture within the building and to compare those results with the RMC study and the student achievement data available. The study was based on the research of Jon Saphier and Matthew King. Saphier and King identified 12 norms of school culture which relate to student achievement. Of the 12, the three which have the highest correlation to student achievement are collegiality, experimentation and reaching out to the knowledge base. Using a modified version of Saphier's and King's four point rating scale for each cultural norm the Montview staff rated those three norms as follows: collegiality, 3.7; experimentation, 3.6, and reaching out to the knowledge base, 3.8. The remaining eight norms were rated as follows:

High expectations – 3.8

Involvement in
decision-making – 3.6

Trust and confidence – 3.5

Protection of what's important
– 3.5

Tangible support – 3.8

Traditions – 3.1

Appreciation and recognition – 3.4

Honest, open communication –
3.4

Caring, celebration, and humor – 3.5

Ê

During the spring, all fourth graders throughout Aurora Public Schools take two different standardized tests. One is the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills Battery, and the other is the Riverside Language Arts Performance Assessment. The results of the years 1995–1997 illustrate that Montview's students exceed scores of students from higher socio-economic, more stable schools. The 1996 and 1997 scores on the Riverside were the highest in the district.

RIVERSIDE INTEGRATED LANGUAGE ARTS PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT (In Percentiles)			
Ê		Montview	Aurora District
General	1995	73 (pilot)	Not given
	1996	82	70
	1997	92	68
African– Americans	1995	55 (pilot)	Not given
	1996	82	58

	1997	89	60
Hispanic	1995	57 (pilot)	Not given
	1996	75	65
	1997	92	61
White	1995	80 (pilot)	Not given
	1996	89	74
	1997	93	72

RESULTS OF THE IOWA TESTS OF BASIC SKILLS 1994–1997 (TAKEN BY 4TH GRADERS)			
Ê	1994–1995	1995–1996	1996–1997
Reading	4.2	4.6	4.9
Language	4.0	4.6	4.6
Math	4.5	4.6	5.2
Advanced Reading	4.2	4.4	5.0
Advanced Language	4.1	5.0	5.1
Advanced Math	4.6	5.0	5.5

RESULTS OF THE IOWA TESTS OF BASIC SKILLS 1994–1997 (TAKEN BY 4TH GRADERS) (Broken down into African–American, Caucasian, and Hispanic)									
Ê	African– American (27%)			Caucasian (21%)			Hispanic (46%)		
	94–5	95–6	96–7	94–5	95–6	96–7	94–5	95–6	96–7
Reading	3.9	4.3	4.7	4.5	5.4	5.2	4.1	3.9	5.0
Language	3.6	4.4	4.5	4.2	5.0	5.2	4.2	4.2	4.5
Math	3.9	4.3	4.6	5.1	5.4	5.6	4.6	4.3	5.4
Advanced Reading	3.9	4.3	4.5	4.4	5.1	5.1	4.4	3.8	5.6
Advanced Language	3.8	4.8	4.9	4.7	5.8	5.5	3.9	4.4	5.1
Advanced Math	4.0	4.6	4.9	5.2	5.8	5.9	4.6	4.6	5.7

Other evidence that supports improved student achievement are the past results for Limited English Proficiency (LEP) students and the past Title I results. Students designated as Lau A (monolingual speakers of a language other than English) decreased from 23% to 2.5% during the 1996–97 school year. Montview's Title I students in grades two through five achieved an average of 16 NCE's in reading three years ago and in math a gain of eighteen. The following year, 1995–96, the NCE gains for reading were 13.6 and for math, 18.8. Montview also has given a writing assessment which is scored with a four point rubric to measure students' progress toward the District writing standards. Over the past three years, Montview's students in grades one through five have gone from 20.5 percent meeting the standard in writing for a variety of purposes and audiences to 79.2 percent in May 1997. Also in the fall of 1994, only 11.7 percent of the students met the standard for writing organization in comparison with 78.1 percent meeting that standard in May 1997.

Site Visit Documentation

Montview Elementary School's success was recorded based on a site visit conducted by the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development in 1997:

Criteria	Evidence
Expected changes in teaching and student learning that will result from participation in professional development are stated.	During coaching sessions, all staff specifically identify changes of their own teaching and next goals for student learning. A case-by-case individualized approach is used to identify needed changes.
The professional development goals and outcomes focus on increasing teachers' expertise in teaching to high standards.	A continuum of teaching behaviors is identified and used in coaching session. Professional dialogues focus on teaching. Quarterly reviews with the leadership team do likewise.
There is a continuous process for ensuring that the school community understands how the professional development components fit together and connect to the overall school or district improvement plan.	The quarterly reviews, coaching sessions, dialogue sessions, and use of monitoring notebooks all keep teachers connected to the "big picture."

Replication Details

NOTE: If you have not already read the "Design and Implementation" section, selecting that from the menu before reading further will provide a context for the replication details below.

The Montview school community has a shared vision that includes a "no excuse" culture.

Professional development at Montview is linked and aligned with respect to several types of systems and dimensions. Individual professional growth goals for teachers are nested within school goals, school goals within district goals, and district goals within state requirements and model standards. Professional learning occurs in relationship to a cycle of data-based assessment, planning, and action. Central to all decisions is a set of shared beliefs that places students at the center of all decisions and that focuses on teachers deepening their understanding as well as developing their skills to support student learning.

At the level of classroom practice, teachers' skills are polished and extended through weekly coaching sessions with a teacher-leader. These sessions are based on the content of teachers' action plans, which they develop through their analysis of various forms of student data. On a quarterly basis, each teacher discusses the progress of his/her students in the areas of literacy and mathematics with a leadership team comprised of an administrator, the teacher-leader who is the presenting teacher's coach, and the team of specialists who support students in the teacher's class.

Montview uses a model of site-based shared decision-making. Teachers are integral to all planning and decisions. For example, professional development has included work by groups of teachers to develop school policy in the areas of reading, writing, spelling, and handwriting. (Math policy is currently being addressed.) The policy that teachers have developed in each area includes a continuum of student performance standard that teachers use to assess both student progress and their own professional learning needs.

With the development and implementation of a mission and belief system, Montview has been highly successful in:

1. Providing opportunities for all children to meet proficient and advanced levels of performance
2. Developing and implementing an ongoing professional development program
3. Creating partnerships among the school, parents, and community

The Literacy Learning Network became the school's partner, and with their help Montview adopted a model that parallels the literacy instruction and staff development in New Zealand. At that time New Zealand had the highest literacy rate in the world with demographics similar to Colorado. The staff development component focused on developing understandings in literacy based on the research of Marie Clay, Margaret Mooney, Richard Allington, Brian Cambourne, Don Holloway, and Lev Vygotsky.

The following belief statements were developed collaboratively among staff during our first year of school wide implementation:

1. Good initial instruction is better than any remedial approach.
2. All students can learn.
3. A productive learning environment is characterized by student engagement versus on task behavior.
4. Formative assessment data is as valid and reliable and actually more important than summative assessment data.
5. Reading and writing are the acts of constructing meaning.

6. Research based understandings drive practice.
7. Individualized instruction is possible and manageable.
8. Class size, without change in instruction, has little to do with improving student achievement.
9. Consistency in philosophy, language, approaches, and assessment develops a communication system within the Community of Learners.
10. Each of us is responsible for professionalizing teaching and accelerating student learning.

All teachers at Montview are assigned a teacher-leader, or coach, who helps build their literacy and math practices. This is accomplished by weekly observation and feedback sessions by the teacher-leader based on an action plan written by each certified staff member and administrator toward his/her own professional development goals. All staff spend 30 minutes a week in conference with their coach, polishing and perfecting their diagnostic skills and matching student needs with precise resources and approaches. The instructional approach requires a lot from its teachers. They are coached to create classrooms where children are actively engaged in their own learning and where literacy and math are looked forward to even more than recess. In addition to the weekly coaching, teachers average six hours of planning time a week. This is possible because an educational assistant is hired to relieve staff for coaching so that their planning time is not sacrificed.

Technology has been essential to instruction. Each classroom has been equipped with three computers, funded through the District and PTO. A printer is provided for every three classrooms. One specialist instructs all students in the use of technology and assists students and teachers in integrating technology into classroom instruction for constructing and publishing writing pieces, math investigations, and practicing and maintaining old and new learning.

Building a Community of Learners A Balanced Staff Development Model

Teachers' Understandings Drive Classroom Practice

Student Needs:

- Professional Action Planning
- Collegial Observations
- Coaching Feedback
- Coaching Visits
- Professional Institutes and Conferences
- Dialogue Sessions
- Professional Reading
- Staff Meetings
- Building Inservice
- Consultant Visits

Site Visit Documentation

Montview Elementary School's success was recorded based on a site visit conducted by the National

Awards Program for Model Professional Development in 1997:

Criteria	Evidence
There is clear evidence of the infrastructure, content, and process components of professional development.	District mentoring and professional development opportunities support site efforts. District supports site-based decision-making. School is engaged in becoming a professional development school. District supports administrators in learning about the change process.
The professional development goals are part of a long-term school improvement plan.	Three-year action plan links instruction to professional development goals and outcomes. Data are continually reviewed to refine and adjust the plan and activities.
Professional development is integral to the school culture and promotes continuous inquiry and improvement.	Math teachers are currently engaging colleagues in dialogue around the elements of balanced math practice. Teachers feel renewed by their learning opportunities.
The specific content, instructional strategies, and learning activities are designed to reach the professional development goals.	Instructional professional development materials focus on literacy goals and individual action plans. Dialogues and coaching are linked to professional development goals.
There are processes for documenting and monitoring the alignment of school improvement plans, professional development activities, teacher and student outcomes.	Each teacher creates a body of evidence for each student in math and literature. Teachers review these bodies of evidence in quarterly meetings with the leadership team.
Organizational structures support the implementation of professional development activities on the individual, collegial, and organizational levels.	Time for individual planning and professional development is built in to the teacher's day.

The professional development design includes a comprehensive evaluation.	School commissioned one comprehensive evaluation and is in the process of arranging for another. Quarterly reviews of all students' progress are used to gauge the effectiveness of the professional development activities.
The data collected are used to make appropriate programmatic adjustments to professional development.	Quarterly conferences often result in topics for subsequent group dialogue sessions. Results from quarterly reviews are used by teacher leaders to plan professional development activities.
The lessons learned are useful for other schools or districts.	Staff participate regularly as presenters in professional development conferences.

Costs and Funding

Administrators, through a shared decision-making process with parents and staff, have adopted new methods for allocating the District and Title I budgets. Teacher leaders are funded through Title I. Instead of having teachers remediate students, teacher leaders have become instructional experts who coach teachers to in-depth understandings, which in turn drive their classroom practices, improving learning of all students. Teachers have pooled all instructional resources into a shared resource room, where materials are checked out as needed instead of being left in classrooms unused, or duplicated. Human resources such as specialists, paraprofessionals and special education staff are assigned to individual classrooms based on the number of high risk students in each room as opposed to giving each classroom the same amount of specialist or paraprofessional support.

By restructuring their use of Title I funds, the school is able to mobilize and implement resources to support teaching and learning. Title I money pays for educational assistants, who relieve teachers for participation in coaching sessions, so that teachers' planning time is not sacrificed; these assistants have regular opportunities for professional learning so that they can actively support student learning. Resource teachers in specialty areas (e.g., music, art, technology) both allow for the provision of planning time for teachers and reinforce instructional goals; for example, the technology teacher's work with students is linked to development of literacy skills.

Contact Information

Jane Dooley-Stuart
 Assistant Principal
 Montview Elementary School
 2055 Moline St.
 Aurora, CO 80010
 Telephone: (303) 364-8549
 Fax: (303) 340-0735

Rating Criteria

Montview Elementary School, Aurora, Colorado was selected as a winner of the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development, 1997–8.

What is the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development?

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The applicant provides a brief explanation of why they consider professional development in their schools or districts exemplary by describing the program's key components and relating those to the U.S. Department of Education's Mission and Principles of Professional Development. This description must provide evidence that the professional development activities are not narrowly focused on one subgroup of students or staff within the school or district.

Goals and Outcomes

The applicant describes the professional development goals, including how they: (1) are developed; (2) relate to school improvement; (3) are based on a needs assessment; and (4) address the achievement of all students regardless of gender, socio-economic level or disadvantaged status, race, ethnic or cultural background, exceptional abilities or disabilities, or limited-English proficiency. Applicants also must address the changes in teaching and student learning that are expected to result from professional development, and must describe how professional development goals and outcomes promote teaching and learning to high standards.

Professional Development Design and Implementation

The applicant provides evidence that professional development reflects research and best practice; includes comprehensive evaluation; includes organizational structures (e.g., administrative and policy support) and resources (e.g., use of time, expertise, funds) that support it; promotes continuous inquiry and improvement; and ensures that the larger school community understands its importance to school improvement.

Objective Evidence of Success

The applicant clearly demonstrates that teacher effectiveness and student learning have improved as a direct result of the implemented professional development activities. Data that indicate this connection must be provided and discussed. The focus of this criterion is objective evidence, and a compelling argument must be made for how professional development positively affects outcomes for all teachers and all students, and must emphasize areas where any achievement gaps between groups (e.g., gender, socio-economic status, ethnicity) have been addressed and narrowed.

Implications for the Field

The applicant describes the lessons learned as the professional development activities have matured.

*These criteria are derived from the Mission and Principles of Professional Development prepared by the U.S. Department of Education in 1995, in consultation with numerous educational organizations, and have been previously published for public comment.

Information about the current award cycle for the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development can be found at <http://www.ed.gov/inits/TeachersWeb/>.

This story exemplifies the following practices:

Professional development should be primarily school-based and built into the day-to-day work of teaching.

Professional development should be continuous and on-going, involving follow-up and support for further learning, including support from sources external to the school that can provide necessary resources and new perspectives.

Professional development should provide opportunities to gain an understanding of the theory underlying the knowledge and skills being learned.

Ganado Intermediate School

Ganado Intermediate School,

Navajo Nation, AZ

School Type: Public

**School
Setting:** Rural

Level: Elementary

**School
Design:** Traditional

Content Presented By:

National Awards Program for Model
Professional Development



For a feature story on this school, please visit the WestEd website at
http://www.wested.org/wested/pubs/online/modelPD/49_app_a1.shtml.

Demographics

Ganado Intermediate School serves 515 students in grades three through five within a four-school district educating 2,200 students. Ganado is located in a rural and isolated valley in northeastern Arizona within the Navajo Nation.

Student Racial/Ethnic Composition:

98% American Indian (Navajo)
1% White (not of Hispanic origin)
1% Other

LEP Students: 68%

Qualify for Free/Reduced Price Lunch: 88%

Receive Special Education Services: 11%

Background

The staff at Ganado were concerned that their students were consistently scoring in the lowest quartile on the state-mandated, norm-referenced tests (Iowa Test of Basic Skills and Stanford 9). In 1992, through a collaborative process, the school staff identified reading as the most important area needing improvement, with writing and thinking skills as vital corollaries. Rather than leaving the curriculum, instruction, assessment, and program design to others, the staff created their own instructional plans and research-based strategies, and evaluated their practice based on student achievement.

Design & Implementation

- Career Ladder. The Career Ladder model offers structured support for new teachers and self-directed support for veteran teachers. In consultation with the principal and the

grade-level team teachers, the ladder creates three-year professional development plans that set individual goals for more effective instruction. The plans are designed to assist with school, grade level, and classroom needs, and the plans outline the specific activities that will help teachers attain their goals. The professional development plans involve constant self-assessment through the use of teaching portfolios, through which teachers monitor their progress based on student achievement.

- Increased Incorporation of Students' Culture. Two-thirds of the teachers at Ganado are Anglo, and the staff realized that the Navajo community that they served had specific cultural needs which the curriculum and teaching techniques were failing to accommodate. The staff integrates learning with the Din (Navajo) philosophy of education to align the curriculum with local values and utilize computers and multimedia labs to capitalize on the students' learning styles. To better understand the community they serve, the school sends regular correspondence to parents, and parents teach teachers about the Din culture.
- Collaboration Among Staff. Communication and continuous reflection are integral elements of Ganado's school culture, and the school holds regular grade-level meetings to discuss curriculum and student needs. In such meetings, the staff looks at specific results of a particular initiative or activity and reflects on why they achieved those results. They continually discuss individual children and how to better accommodate students' difficulties and learning styles.
- Partnerships with Outside Organizations and Institutions. Six partners support Ganado's professional development plan: (1) Bread Loaf School of English, Middlebury College, Vermont; (2) Northern Arizona Writing Project; (3) Northern Arizona University; (4) Din College; (5) Northland Pioneer College; and (6) Tempe Elementary School District. Through these partnerships, Ganado is closely linked to the latest research and best practices in teaching and learning, and the school also receives specialized assistance from university personnel (e.g., in LEP classes).

NOTE: For tips on how this design can be replicated, select "Replication Details" from the menu.

Results

Scores on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills and Stanford 9 tests indicate that the average scores of students at Ganado (including the scores of special education students) have increased. Students with limited English proficiency are making gains in reading and writing, and the disparity between boys' and girls' scores has narrowed.

All but a few of the children score among the lowest in the nation at their grade levels, so our programs are designed to accelerate their learning. An important development in our programs evolved from teachers' observations that the children seemed to prefer spatial and kinesthetic activities over verbal ones, with the exception of storytelling, which engaged virtually all of the children. Ever since the 1993-94 school year, we have administered the Raven CPM to third graders. Typically, 75-80 percent score in the upper two quartiles on this norm-referenced test. Through the CPM, we have identified 7-10 percent of our students as gifted, in the 97-99th percentile range. Based on their observations of students' strength in spatial and non-verbal thinking and verification through the CPM, teachers asked for professional development to find teaching strategies to build on this strength. As a result, we have completed workshops and courses in multiple intelligences, integrated thematic learning, and implemented those strategies in the classrooms.

The Ganado Intermediate School professional development program serves 80 staff members and 515 children. One-third of our professional staff of 35 are *Din*, as are all but two of our paraprofessional staff members. Each year, four to nine new professionals join our staff. We continually offer

beginning through advanced learning opportunities to meet the needs of professionals at various stages of development. Effectiveness of professional development for individuals may be multiplied through longer experience and participation.

Toward our goal of increasing the number of Din teachers through support of paraprofessionals in teacher education programs, we offer the following results: three paraprofessionals became teachers this year; two more are completing student teaching now; and two more hope to be certified within two years.

Contributing to our goal of literacy development, teachers and paraprofessionals have facilitated students' voluntary and at-home reading from 14,000 books in 1993–94 to 42,000; 60,000; and 55,000 books in the subsequent years.

In five years our school has progressed toward our goal of positive parent relationships in several ways. As we looked for a positive way to bring parents and community members into the school, we increased from zero to 24 part-time teacher helpers who tutor students in classrooms and participate in site-based management and shared decision-making. We also increased from the sparse parent visitation we had six years ago to the remarkable 100 percent parent involvement we saw in the 1996–97 school year. Halfway through this year, we are already at 70 percent parental involvement.

Each year, all students complete a pre- and post-assessment in reading fiction and in writing personal experience narratives. In school years 1993–94 and 1994–95, third grade reading assessments were administered in third, fourth, and fifth grades. In 1995–96 we began to administer reading assessments at grade level standards. When considering the average scores, it is good to remember the change to more difficult reading selections and skills. In addition, there are differences in some of the pre- and post-score relationships. For example, notice that the third-graders have scored an average of 9.2 or 9.4 in three years, but they have improved from pre-assessment scores ranging from 7.3 in the first year to 5.5 and 5.8 in the last two years. Writing scores typically have met or exceeded the goal score, set 0.5 higher than the district standard for this assessment. The district standard for high school seniors is a score of 5.0 on a 0–8 scale; by fifth grade our students are meeting our school goal of 3.5. All other assessment goals are set at 75 percent scores. The reading and writing tables show student achievement average (mean) scores on ASAP assessments. The mathematics table shows the average scores on math pre- and post-assessment tests.

GRADE 3 READING AND WRITING						
Ê	Goal	1993–94	1994–95	Goal	1995–96	1996–97
Grade Level Standard	Ê	3	3	Ê	3	3
Reading Pre-Assessment	Ê	7.3	6.1	Ê	5.5	5.8
Reading Proficiency	12	9.2	12.8	12	9.4	9.2
Writing Pre-Assessment	Ê	2.1	2.4	Ê	2.1	2.1
Writing Proficiency	2.5	2.4	3.0	2.5	2.6	2.5

GRADE 4 READING AND WRITING						
Ê	Goal	1993–94	1994–95	Goal	1995–96	1996–97

Grade Level Standard	Ê	3	3	Ê	4	4
Reading Pre-Assessment	Ê	8.6	8.4	Ê	10.4	10.7
Reading Proficiency	12	10.1	11.0	13	13.0	12.6
Writing Pre-Assessment	Ê	2.4	2.8	Ê	2.7	2.7
Writing Proficiency	3.0	2.9	3.2	3.0	3.3	3.0

GRADE 5 READING AND WRITING						
Ê	Goal	1993-94	1994-95	Goal	1995-96	1996-97
Grade Level Standard	Ê	3	3	Ê	5	5
Reading Pre-Assessment	Ê	10.4	9.3	Ê	10.9	11.2
Reading Proficiency	12	12.1	11.5	13	13.1	12.5
Writing Pre-Assessment	Ê	2.9	3.2	Ê	3.0	3.1
Writing Proficiency	3.5	3.5	3.6	3.5	3.5	3.6

GRADE 5 MATHEMATICS						
Ê	Goal	1993-94	1994-95	Goal	1995-96	1996-97
Grade Level Standard	Ê	Ê	Ê	Ê	5	5
Math Patterns Pre-Assessment	Ê	Ê	Ê	Ê	13.8	14.1
Math Patterns Proficiency	18	NA	NA	Ê	18.0	17.4
Computation Pre-Assessment	Ê	Ê	Ê	Ê	Ê	9.8
Computation Proficiency	27	NA	NA	Ê	NA	20.0

Site Visit Documentation

Ganado Intermediate School's success was recorded based on a site visit conducted by the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development in 1997.

Criteria	Evidence
Expected changes in teaching and student learning that will result from participation in professional development are stated.	The professional development plan stipulates improvement in student achievement on the Arizona Student Assessment Program (ASAP). The goal of achieving at 70% mastery on these 34 state outcomes is stated, and mastery is achieved by 75% of the student

body. Teachers also report improvement in instructional practice as a result of their professional development activities. For instance, knowing more about the reading process helps them help students who are struggling with reading. Practicing the writing process themselves helps them understand students' difficulty and helps them demonstrate to students the difference between "draft" or "sloppy copy," and "finished copy." The teachers in the Spencer Foundation action research project have changed the way they look at their students. As one participant said, the school reform process helped identify the strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum, and the professional development program was built; the Spencer process helped her look at herself, and she examined how she affects her students. In addition, the Teacher Portfolio, which is part of the Career Ladder program, includes a student achievement section where it is stated, "Teachers completing the student achievement component will improve students' learning" and where the teacher must document that student growth as a result of a submitted lesson plan. (Note: The portfolio process indicates that teacher knowledge can grow even if the submitted lesson plan didn't work as designed. Student growth is desirable, of course, but mistakes can be just as informative as successes, and teachers are encouraged to learn from both their mistakes and their successes.) In addition, the Foundations of Learning curriculum guide lists learning objectives in the areas of communication, thinking, career, social and interpersonal relations, and respect and reverence, with an

	expectation of proficiency by achieving a list of stated skills.
The professional development goals and outcomes focus on increasing teachers' expertise in teaching to high standards.	The professional development goals and outcomes were developed to increase teachers' expertise and consequently increase student learning. Ganado students are expected to meet or exceed standards set by the state for all students across Arizona. Writing scores, for example, exceed the goal score and are set higher than the district standards. These standards are further supported by the Diné curriculum with its expectations for conduct and critical thinking. The Teacher Portfolio, part of the Career Ladder program, expects the teacher to establish realistic, yet challenging objectives and proficiency levels that reflect learning at an application level or above. And the Bread Loaf connection, with its focus on inquiry and reflection and its expectations for documentation and sharing, raises aspirations for the entire school. It even has a waiting list for participation.
There is a credible rationale for believing that given the attainment of the expected teacher outcomes, student outcomes will be achieved.	Based on the goals identified in the areas of reading, writing, and mathematics, students are improving as documented by the ASAP, informal assessment, teachers' anecdotal records, results of action research, and teacher portfolios which include a record of student achievement. The goal to increase the use of technology as a teaching and learning tool has not only increased, but it has afforded the teachers the opportunity to tap into the strong visual and kinesthetic learning preferences of the students. Where students once labored over paper and pencil, writing only a few words on a page, they have progressed to publishing fluent stories on laser printers accompanied by scanned

	pictures and graphics. The multimedia technology has begun to deliver on the promise of helping the school meet its literacy goals. The plan to involve more parents with their children's education via the paraprofessional program has not only increased such involvement, but teachers report that the students' self-esteem has been raised because they see their parents in this role. In addition, the children's respect for adults has been positively influenced, and the level of trust and feeling of security on the part of the children has been raised because of their involvement with the paraprofessionals on a one-to-one basis.
There is a continuous process for ensuring that the school community understands how the professional development components fit together and connect to the overall school or district improvement plan.	While the staff as a whole used to be confused about the connection between the professional development plan and the school improvement plan, they are now more aware of the relationship between the two. However, since the faculty see only part of the whole picture ? the part they as grade-level team members work on ? they are at a disadvantage; the paraprofessional staff are even less sure of the connections. The principal wrestles with the whole picture and strives to convey this big picture to the staff. COOL School nights are an excellent example of how community outreach (the CO of COOL) helps inform the community about the opportunities for learning (the OL of COOL) and builds the kind of rapport that is necessary to maintain parent involvement.
The data collected provide evidence that the professional development activities lead to improved teaching	Using the ASAP which aligns with the Arizona state standards, the school has collected data that provides evidence that students are improving as a result of improved instruction based on the

and student learning.	professional development activities. The fact that students perform above competence range on the reading and writing portions of the test indicates that the professional development activities in reading and writing (the Collaborative Literacy Intervention Program and the Northern Arizona Writing Project) are making a difference in student outcomes. The data from the ASAP scores are examined in conjunction with the teachers' professional development documentation, such as their Career Ladder portfolios. Scores on norm-referenced tests show increases of statistical significance. Even though movement is only from the lowest quartile to the low-average quartile, the trend is in the right direction and says clearly to the principal that the school's professional development plan is making a positive difference.
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Replication Details

NOTE: If you have not already read the "Design and Implementation" section, selecting that from the menu before reading further will provide a context for the replication details below.

All teachers except the after-school program group share preparation time the last 45 minutes of each day. Grade level and support teams share a common, duty-free 45-minute lunch. Teacher teams each have a three-hour and a one-hour block of additional common collaboration time each week. In these block times, teachers and the principal work on curriculum, instruction, assessment, study, and planning for improved learning. Professional development plans to supplement the core program emerge from this collaborative work. At least once or twice a year, these teams assess student progress and identify professional development priorities. Paraprofessional courses and workshops are planned based on what they want as well as on what the teachers they work with suggest. Graduate courses meet after the school day. The researchers meet twice monthly after school and several weekends during the year.

In our professional development program, participants study the best practices and more theoretical research. Teachers develop expertise in teaching content and strategies, and they become reflective practitioners engaged in continual personal improvement.

At the district level, the Career Ladder program's professional development specialist provides excellent support to the school in planning, preparing, and presenting workshops and courses. (More information on the Career Ladder Program can be found in the design and implementation section.)

During 1992–93, all staff members participated in a process of strategic envisioning and planning. Since then, four teacher teams, two paraprofessional teams, and one combination team have met regularly to collaborate on curriculum, instruction, and assessment work, including professional development needed to meet goals. Needs assessments and plans are made by these groups annually and as needed. Small components of professional development, such as day-long inservice training are generated by these groups.

The six partners support our professional development program:

1. Bread Loaf School of English, Middlebury College, Vermont
2. Northern Arizona Writing Project (NAWP)
3. Northern Arizona University (NAU)
4. Din College
5. Northland Pioneer College
6. Tempe Elementary School District

We offer a summer institute for teachers and paraprofessionals during June, a K–3 academy for paraprofessionals in August, and courses for both groups during the school year. All of our teachers participate in refining curriculum, instruction, and assessments in alignment with the Arizona Student Assessment Program (ASAP) and national standards.

Bread Loaf

Bread Loaf provides fellowships for teachers' graduate study at the Vermont, Santa Fe, and Oxford programs, under the Bread Loaf Rural Schools Network (BLRSN) and a program for Native American educators.

Northern Arizona Writing Project

In June NAWP provides a summer institute with as many as six graduate and undergraduate courses in writing, Native American literature, integrated thematic instruction, and multiple intelligences. In addition, we offer writing project courses throughout the year based on interests and needs.

Northern Arizona University

NAU provides on-site courses in curriculum, gifted and special education, and technology applications. These courses are taught by NAU instructors who are also on our faculty.

Din College

In cooperation with Arizona State University, Din College provides pre-professional courses for teachers as well as a four-year teacher education program. More importantly, Din College teacher (and Bread Loaf associate) Rex Lee Jim has provided the entire staff with a year-long in-service series about the Din philosophy of education.

Northland Pioneer College

Northland Pioneer College provides paraprofessional courses in teaching assistance and technology.

Tempe Elementary School District

Tempe Elementary School District was the originator of the Collaborative Literacy Intervention Project (CLIP), a program to accelerate reading development based on the work of Marie Clay. CLIP training is provided through seven NAU graduate hours taught by a Ganado Intermediate School teacher, another example of faculty leadership and advanced professional development.

Site Visit Documentation

Ganado Intermediate School's success was recorded based on a site visit conducted by the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development in 1997.

Criteria	Evidence
There is clear evidence of the infrastructure, content, and process components of professional development.	There is evidence of a long-term process that identifies specific and special content that fits the school's needs. The infrastructure is clear; it is a framework based on a network rather than a hierarchy, which means relationships are based on shared purpose and interests, not rank, and which the school considers more sensitive to the needs of the children and the teachers. It is also a framework based on shared decision-making, where all staff members participate and speak for themselves rather than being represented by a smaller leadership team. This framework for operating fosters school-wide support for professional development, with participation ranging from that of parent volunteers to that of district superintendent. The site visit uncovered more evidence of an infrastructure that supports professional development. This includes the schedule at the other three schools in the district that allows flexibility to create several consecutive early release days for professional development activities. In addition, the building itself reflects the professional development goal of promoting communication and collaboration: each grade level is organized around pods, where a central area can be devoted as a space for computer mini-lab, reading centers, small group activities, or teacher work. "Infrastructure" includes policies, processes, and practices to support a program, but it also includes attitudes that help support the program. In this respect, the leadership provided by

	the superintendent is significant. His positive attitude and his expectations for achievement and high standards complement his encouragement of risk-taking. The principal publicly acknowledged that he fosters an environment where it is safe to create a school that works.
The professional development is comprehensive and long-term and not narrowly focused on one subgroup of students or staff.	Strategic planning, which started in 1992, crosses content areas and is long-term, as evidenced by the continuous periodic notes and revisions in the plan itself. The entire staff ? administration, faculty, and paraprofessionals provide input into the planning process via grade level meetings, and everyone (again, administration, faculty, and paraprofessionals) has the opportunity to update their skills through a wide variety of professional development activities. They can choose from credit courses, workshops conducted at the school, paraprofessional academies, summer institutes, action research, committee leadership, and service as a mentor or coach to new staff. These activities cover a wide range of topics, such as classroom management, technology, using the state standards in the classroom, conferencing with parents, team building, lesson planning, and coaching for reflective teaching.
There are clear professional development goals based on needs assessment and focused on improving ALL students' learning.	Needs assessments, both formal and informal (such as surveys and dialogue), are administered to staff to build the professional development program. The staff analyzed the children's strengths, analyzed the school's strengths, and decided what programs could serve those strengths and bolster those needs. Based on the work done on the school improvement plan, the staff identified priority concerns

	and defined five goals of professional development to help address these concerns. These included building a knowledge and practice base in several key content areas, integrating the Din (Navajo) philosophy into the curriculum, encouraging and assisting paraprofessionals (parents) to become certified teachers, using technology to support learning, and strengthening the staff's reflective practice. Complementary to these primary goals are a core of support activities, such as workshops in portfolio assessment, lesson planning, using the state assessment criteria in the classroom, teaching reading as thinking, and classroom management. These various professional development activities and others that are part of the Career Ladder program are offered to both professional and non-professional staff, with the clear objective of improving student learning.
The professional development goals and plan were developed through an inclusionary process.	The staff's request to follow a shared decision-making model, which includes the administration, 35 professional staff, 45 classified employees, and a parent advisory committee in the process, is definitely inclusionary. Through systemic change planning, professional development goals were developed during 1992–1993. The staff has since that time continued to build on these goals, again through regular grade level meetings, teacher assistant meetings, and entire staff meetings. The staff have a say in what practices and activities to focus on and the means by which to accomplish their goals. Teachers, for instance, suggest courses that should be added to the roster of

	available options and they identify areas where they need more knowledge, such as in learning styles. Teacher assistants and parent volunteers feel very much a part of this process; they know their input is valued and they see how their ideas become part of the program. For example, the development of the Din curriculum, or the Foundations of Learning, was developed by a committee of community members, students, teachers, counselors, administrators, and governing board members. The committee continues to refine the curriculum to more fully describe the symbolism and to strengthen the integration into all instruction. In another example, during annual reviews of the plan, the staff consistently identified parent involvement as a need to be addressed. Efforts to increase parent involvement in the school lives of their children became a school-wide focus. Among the activities to spring from this effort was an at-home reading program, designed and carried out by the staff.
The professional development goals are part of a long-term school improvement plan.	Begun in 1992–93, the school improvement plan has been revisited annually. With the overarching goal of improving student achievement on state and national standards, something which cannot be accomplished in a single year, it is clear that the school staff are looking at a long-term plan. Additionally, the action research group realized that becoming competent researchers is a developmental process, and they consequently requested a second year of funding so they may continue their exploration and continue building their expertise.

Professional development is integral to the school culture and promotes continuous inquiry and improvement.	With so much importance placed on communication, the school culture, promotes continuous inquiry and improvement. Regular grade-level meetings to discuss curriculum and student needs are a significant means to exploring improvement; in fact, the principal views them as the most effective professional development. In such meetings, staff look at specific results of a particular initiative or activity and analyze why they achieved those results. They share their understanding of grade-level performance standards. They discuss individual children as they score ASAP assessments, exploring continually how their students learn. Such inquiry is not perceived as formal because it happens so routinely. The shared decision-making model promotes this inquiry and improvement, and the action research project especially provides an impetus for inquiry.
The professional development activities reflect the best available research and practice in teaching, learning, and leadership.	A major strength of the professional development at the site is the partnership with universities and colleges which provide the latest research and best practices in teaching and learning. Examples include the Writing Project component (NAWP), the accelerated literacy component (CLIP), and the Bread Loaf School of English action research project. The school also bases its decisions on a variety of data, both quantitative and qualitative. In addition, shared decision-making and teacher empowerment are hallmarks of current research on leadership, a direction this school is definitely taking.
The specific content, instructional strategies, and learning activities are	The credit courses offered in reading and writing explicitly address the desire to improve instruction and achievement in

designed to reach the professional development goals.	these areas. The year-long inservice for the entire staff on the Din culture and the class on the Din culture for all students were specifically designed to achieve the goal of integrating learning within the Din philosophy of education. Classes to help teacher assistants to be more effective in the classroom and classes to help them become certified were developed to achieve the goal of improving the level of involvement and the effectiveness of support provided by parents. Building the technology infrastructure to make way for a computer lab and providing classes for teachers to learn how to incorporate technology into their instruction directly address the goal of making technology a learning tool. And the action research project funded by the Spencer Foundation has strengthened the staff's reflective practice as they strive to build the knowledge base about their students and their achievement. Other workshops, such as the ones on learning styles, multiple intelligences, and integrated thematic instruction, were planned to meet the specific needs of their children. Every opportunity is part of a design, part of a plan to improve the opportunities for the students.
There are processes for documenting and monitoring the alignment of school improvement plans, professional development activities, and teacher and student outcomes.	The process for documenting and maintaining alignment is woven through the fabric of the strategic plan. Ongoing discussions that take place throughout the entire school community, both formal and informal, assist in the alignment of the professional development plan with the strategic plan. For example, at grade-level meetings, the staff and the principal discuss alignment of the curriculum with the state standards, and they plan

how professional development activities can strengthen that alignment. In strategic planning discussions as well as grade-level discussions, the staff identify gaps in student achievement and performance and further identify how professional development activities can close these gaps. These discussions are documented in the strategic plan portfolio. In addition, the school's story is documented in a planned book that relates the journey of the group of teachers involved in the action research project as they explore learning, teaching, and school reform. They gather information in multiple ways ? observation, reflection, audio and video tapes, previous school records, interviews, student word samples, surveys, and assessment, and they use it all to answer their questions more deeply. These teachers report becoming more observant, responsive, and creative in their instructional approaches, and they are required to document the positive effects of the changes they made in order to match their students' ways of knowing. They are also encouraged and stimulated to share their inquiry with other teachers. Finally, the Career Ladder Teacher Portfolio is a means for documenting and monitoring the alignment of school improvement plans, professional development activities, and teacher and student outcomes. Its stated purposes are to demonstrate and record specific activities of teachers, create data that the district can use to document the success of the school, and improve student performance and success particularly in the Din curriculum and the Arizona State Essential Skills. It has four components: Student Achievement Plan and

	Results, Parent Involvement Activities, Professional Leadership, and Professional Development. It includes specific requests for teacher reflection, drawing conclusions from what was learned, and making plan adaptations.
Organizational structures support the implementation of professional development activities on the individual, collegial, and organizational levels.	Structures are in place to provide ongoing support to professional development activities. These structures include individual professional development plans, grade level teams, virtual teams, parent meetings, and paraprofessional meetings. The structure also fosters continual communication among the staff, providing a forum for all voices to be heard and heeded. It provides a means to build leadership capacity in the classroom, the school, and the district through opportunities (and expectations) such as serving as lead teachers, participating in study teams, sharing with each other, and mentoring and peer coaching.
The professional development design includes a comprehensive evaluation.	Staff meet regularly to discuss student achievement and ways to better meet the needs of students, and to ask where they should go next and how they should get there. This reflective dialogue prompts the staff to explore what they can do to provide higher quality instruction and services. The discussions are linked back to ASAP scores, the at-home reading program, and other projects that are directly related to student learning. They are interested in seeing not only individual achievement, but growth trends over the years. Evaluation of various components of the professional development plan are documented in the teacher portfolios, where reflection, conclusions, and analysis are

	recorded, as well as in the minutes of some of the school reform planning meetings, where professional development options are discussed and modified.
The data collected are used to make appropriate programmatic adjustments to professional development.	Based on standardized test information that reveals a high visual-spatial ability among the student population, the staff asked for professional development opportunities to better address the learning styles and preferences of their students. This led to an intensive exploration of Gardner's learning styles and Kovalik's thematic instruction. A closer look at the ASAP assessments revealed unclear language use in the directions, particularly for Limited English Proficient (LEP) students, which prompted the staff to rewrite the instructions using simpler language. They also created culturally appropriate texts to use for the pre- and post-test reading assessments. This past year the faculty developed a new series of math assessments that are in alignment with the new state standards. It is significant that such activities are viewed as professional development, and is an example of how professional development is embedded in the daily life of the school. Feedback from the evaluation of credit courses prompted ESL classes to be taught on site, with an instructor from the university living on campus to provide additional, specialized assistance in the classrooms; and they prompted an advanced course in Navajo literature for the summer writing project to meet the needs and interests of the faculty. There are other kinds of data that prompted programmatic adjustments and that show the promise of those adaptations: Three

	paraprofessionals became teachers recently, two more are completing student teaching, two more should be certified within two years, and one is completing an internship to become a principal; Also, 24 teacher helpers are in the classrooms to tutor students and to participate in site-based management, up from zero parents involved five years ago. The number of books read at home since the at-home reading program was initiated has increased from 14,000 to 60,000; and teacher inquiry that focuses on developing teaching strategies that utilize student strengths has expanded to a second year.
There is adequate description of the infrastructure, content, and process components to understand and draw lessons from the professional development plan.	The site visit helped to reveal how this school's professional development program could be viewed as a model. Drawing all the components together shows a strong emphasis on applying professional development to the classroom and extending it throughout the school and beyond to the family and culture. Programmatic examples include strong multicultural training, parent involvement, and reading and writing programs. Organizational examples include the determination to share decision-making. While this process is described, the school does not provide a specific prescription or framework for making this work. Communication seems to be the key.
The lessons learned are useful for other schools or districts.	The program demonstrates how strongly the teachers believe that children are central to education. Consequently, they build an environment where they can understand their children and they can be wise about making decisions to meet the children's needs. It demonstrates that teachers

	need not be demeaned by imposing decisions on them, but rather teacher capacity for leadership can be fostered by including them in the decision-making process. Just one example of this is the importance put on teacher recommendations for hiring new staff, based on teacher representation in the hiring process. The program demonstrates that it is possible to make professional development opportunities easily available to teachers by such things as offering classes on site rather than making teachers drive to the university. Further, it demonstrates the value of offering opportunities to be thoughtful about one's practice and to engage with each other in dialogue about common tasks. It shows how effective it is to tell stories about the changes that take place in a school community. The program demonstrates the value of collaboration on standards and assessments and of interweaving these into the curriculum. It demonstrates the value of offering theory in the context of practical application. Very importantly, the program demonstrates the benefits of reflection and dialogue. If other schools adopt a policy of listening and communicating, their efforts to improve student learning can bear fruit as well.
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Costs and Funding

Sustained resources (human, fiscal, and technological) are committed to support the professional development plan.

Title I and Title II funds, state-funded Career Ladder programs, state-funded early childhood programs, district maintenance and operation budgets, and a research grant from the Spencer Foundation provide the fiscal resources for the professional development program; these sources are aggressively protected. Some of these resources have been used to buy books, periodicals, media equipment, and computers to support language development. Each classroom has a book collection to supplement the library's, and children are encouraged to take books home to read.

The Spencer Foundation funded stipends for eight teachers to participate in the action research project, and the school committed funds to pay two additional stipends. Staff members themselves are certified to teach credit courses. Consultants are contracted to provide some coursework and individualized help.

The district technology plan makes provisions for using technology as a tool now, and even more in the future. Considerable ongoing time is allotted by the principal and the staff to both the planning process and to carrying out the district plan. The Superintendent commends this, stating that such a comprehensive commitment in terms of resources has been rare in this area.

Professional development budgets are protected in order to guarantee that teachers, support personnel, and the principal will have opportunities to develop their potential. For example, line items for our programs, many of which we share with other schools, include the following:

1. \$20,000 for NAWP
2. \$40,000 for CLIP
3. \$20,000 for paraprofessional courses
4. \$15,000 for technology courses

Contact Information

Susan Stropko, Principal
Ganado Intermediate School
P.O. Box 1757
Ganado, AZ 86505
Telephone: (520) 755-1120
Fax: (520) 755-1139
susan_stropko@breadnet.middlebury.edu

Rating Criteria

Ganado Intermediate School, Ganado, Arizona, was selected as a winner of the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development, 1997-98.

What is the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development?

As part of a continuing effort to honor excellence in education, the U.S. Department of Education sponsors the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development. This program recognizes schools and school districts with exemplary professional development programs and disseminates information about high-quality professional development efforts that provide evidence of student learning and increased teacher effectiveness. Since the focus of this competition is on professional development for teachers and other educators in pre-kindergarten through grade 12 settings, only individual schools (public or private) or school districts may apply. Schools or districts may, however, submit applications that describe their partnerships with other entities, in particular, institutions of higher education. Recognition under this awards program is based on how well applicants demonstrate, using identified selection criteria that their professional development program results in increased student outcomes. Criteria for selection* include:

Background and Overview of Professional Development

The applicant provides a brief explanation of why they consider professional development in their schools or districts exemplary by describing the program's key components and relating those to the U.S. Department of Education's Mission and Principles of Professional Development. This description must provide evidence that the professional development activities are not narrowly focused on one subgroup of students or staff within the school or district.

Goals and Outcomes

The applicant describes the professional development goals, including how they: (1) are developed; (2) relate to school improvement; (3) are based on a needs assessment; and (4) address the achievement of all students regardless of gender, socio-economic level or disadvantaged status, race, ethnic or cultural background, exceptional abilities or disabilities, or limited-English proficiency. Applicants also must address the changes in teaching and student learning that are expected to result from professional development, and must describe how professional development goals and outcomes promote teaching and learning to high standards.

Professional Development Design and Implementation

The applicant provides evidence that professional development reflects research and best practice; includes comprehensive evaluation; includes organizational structures (e.g., administrative and policy support) and resources (e.g., use of time, expertise, funds) that support it; promotes continuous inquiry and improvement; and ensures that the larger school community understands its importance to school improvement.

Objective Evidence of Success

The applicant clearly demonstrates that teacher effectiveness and student learning have improved as a direct result of the implemented professional development activities. Data that indicate this connection must be provided and discussed. The focus of this criterion is objective evidence, and a compelling argument must be made for how professional development positively affects outcomes for all teachers and all students, and must emphasize areas where any achievement gaps between groups (e.g., gender, socio-economic status, ethnicity) have been addressed and narrowed.

Implications for the Field

The applicant describes the lessons learned as the professional development activities have matured.

*These criteria are derived from the Mission and Principles of Professional Development prepared by the U.S. Department of Education in 1995, in consultation with numerous educational organizations, and have been previously published for public comment.

Information about the current award cycle for the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development can be found at <http://www.ed.gov/inits/TeachersWeb/>.

This story exemplifies the following practices:

Professional development should be continuous and on-going, involving follow-up and support for further learning, including support from sources external to the school that can provide necessary resources and new perspectives.

Professional development should involve teachers in the identification of what they need to learn and in the development of the learning experiences in which they will be involved.

Professional development should be connected to a comprehensive change process focused on improving student learning.

Keene School Administrative Unit (S.A.U.) #29

Keene School Administrative Unit (S.A.U.) #29

Keene, NH

School Type: Public

**School
Setting:** Suburban

Level: K-12

**School
Design:** Traditional

Content Presented By:

The Education Alliance at Brown
University



This story is available only as a Short Summary.

Demographics

Keene is comprised of seven independent school districts: Chesterfield, Harrisville, Keene, Marlborough, Marlow, Nelson, and Westmoreland. The populations in these towns range from almost 24,000 in Keene to fewer than 600 in Nelson. Geographically, S.A.U. #29 is the largest multi-district administrative unit in the state of New Hampshire, covering 211 square miles in the southwestern corner of the state. S.A.U. #29 employs more than 650 people--415 of them teachers. It maintains 14 school buildings, including a regional high school in Keene, and it enrolls more than of 5,000 students.

Approximately 98% of the district's students are white. Nearly 1 in 5 students qualify for free or reduced-price lunches. At three schools in the Keene school district, however, more than 1 in 3 students receive free or reduced lunches.

Background

- In a School Administrative Unit (S.A.U.) with a history of being in the forefront in terms of the technology in its schools, much of S.A.U. #29's professional development had historically been outsourced, in spite of the fact that many district teachers possessed great expertise in using technology. Yet time for teacher professional development, money for such training, and a commitment from the teachers to participate in staff development were issues that the S.A.U. perennially faced.
- The S.A.U. administration, particularly the superintendent and an assistant superintendent, were supportive of attempts to design a professional development program for teachers around the use of technology, and they were active in getting this professional development program off the ground.
- Deb Couture, the S.A.U. director of technology and director of continuing education, realized that the success of such a program would depend on addressing issues of time, money, and commitment. The program itself arose from the S.A.U.'s desire to use its own staff as technology trainers and from the willingness and ability of many of those staff to serve as

trainers.

Design & Implementation

1. The planning and design of this professional development program was completed by a K-12 technology team made up of S.A.U. teachers, administrators, parents, and board members. The team conducted a technology needs assessment by surveying the more than 600 staff members and teaching faculty of S.A.U. #29. The response rate to the survey was about 85%, and the technology team learned that staff and faculty desired ongoing professional development, conducted by well-prepared trainers, and with peer support provided on-site as a follow up. To implement such a plan, the technology team considered a "train-the-trainers" model whereby a certain number of teachers from each school were trained to work with others and to provide on-site support.
2. Trainers' contracts stipulated that they would participate in training; attend all training sessions; and, once trained, agree to teach at least two classes and to work as a resource in their schools for teachers in need of help.
3. For teachers going through the professional development program, their training could be used in two ways: as S.A.U.-required contract days and as clock hours for staff development (New Hampshire law requires that teachers obtain 50 clock hours of staff development every three years to be recertified). By providing on-site training which meets teachers' needs and allows them to fulfill other requirements, this model has helped to keep teachers in the district for their professional development; worked to keep trainers motivated to learn more; and cut costs substantially, since the S.A.U. no longer has to pay as much in travel costs associated with teachers attending out-of-district professional development events.
4. Trainers design the curriculum, and training takes place in the summer (although during 2000 the S.A.U. will experiment with courses offered during the school year, at night, and on weekends). Workshops range from 4 to 15 hours each, and they are offered in a wide range of subject areas. The program is limited to 30 trainers (trainers are replaced as they leave), and the curriculum is consistently updated.

Results

The success of the program in terms of teachers participation has been phenomenal. For example, during the first summer of the program, over 1,600 people were trained in over 65 workshops. In the first three years of the program, the equivalent of 4,500 people attended training sessions. [These enrollment numbers were obtained by counting participants once for each course taken.]

In addition, the response to these courses from teachers and from staff has been extremely positive. Evaluations –from every class and for every trainer– have generally been excellent, and these evaluations have taken the form of both peer assessments and visits to classes made by S.A.U. administrators. Those being trained have shown ongoing support for this program and their motivation level has remained high. Faculty and staff have given up evenings and Saturdays in the summer to attend these training sessions, and the teachers who originally asked for this training keep asking for more.

Along with the aforementioned results, implementing this program has resulted in some important learning opportunities for the S.A.U. The S.A.U. has learned that technology use in schools needs to be driven by the curriculum. Therefore, the focus for courses for 2000 will be on helping teachers

learn to integrate technology into content areas. In line with the rethinking of these technology-related courses, curriculum benchmark skills for K–12 are being devised for each content area, and a member of the technology team will work to help incorporate technology skills into each content area. Hopefully, this realignment of technology skills with learning benchmarks will allow the S.A.U. to evaluate technology use in terms of student outcomes. The S.A.U. staff has also come to see that they do not need a technology plan but a district improvement plan, including portions dealing with different issues such as staff development, technology, and curriculum. In response to questions raised by the school board concerning the role and value of technology in schools, a committee has drafted a vision statement addressing these issues. The drafting committee has included S.A.U. staff along with influential members of the community. By involving community and business leaders in drafting this document, the voices of those outside of the S.A.U. have been included with voices from within.

Replication Details

Keene, NH School District (rural)

Best Practice: Professional Development

[no further data currently available]

Costs and Funding

Keene School Administrative Unit #29 has been both creative and resourceful in funding its technology training program for teachers. Much of the money used for funding this program comes from the federal government in the form of Title II and Title IV funds. Another source of income, however, has come from tying this teacher professional development program to the S.A.U.'s continuing education program. Since the community education division operates as a non-profit entity, the S.A.U. can afford to offer technology training to local businesses at a very reasonable rate. The tuition charged to businesses to allow their employees to participate in such training generates close to one-eighth of the operating expenses for the program.

Allowing local businesses to enroll their employees in this program is only one way in which the commercial realm has supported or informed the design of this program; Deb Couture, the director of technology and continuing education for the S.A.U., also borrowed from the realm of business in considering the appropriate compensation for trainers. Realizing that in the business world, trainers are paid quite well, the pay rate for trainers was an important consideration. Formerly, the S.A.U.'s staff development model paid teachers \$10 per hour, but the new model pays \$37.50 per hour of training. Trainers are also paid \$75 for a six-hour day to be trained as staff developers.

Sources of funding for S.A.U. #29's professional development in 1998:

1. Title II Eisenhower Funds – \$ 20,000
2. Title IV – \$ 5,000
3. tuition from outside participants – \$ 3,500

Contact Information

Deborah Couture, Director of Technology
Center for Instructional Resources, Technology, and Training (CIRTT)
438 Washington St.
Keene, NH 03431
Telephone: (603) 352-0640
dcouture@sau29.k12.nh.us

Rating Criteria

The Education Alliance at Brown University identified S.A.U. #29's technology-related professional development program as exemplary after the Advisory Board of the Northeast Superintendents Leadership Council (NSLC) requested information on exceptional educational practice in districts in the greater Northeast (New York and New England). This teacher training program was brought to the attention of the Director of the NSLC, John Correiro, as both a well-informed design for professional development and as exemplary practice related to the use of technology in the classroom.

Upon visiting the S.A.U., the staff of The Education Alliance had a chance to speak with district personnel and to see evidence of the strengths of this professional development initiative. They also saw that this teacher-training model embodied the notions that professional development should involve teachers in the identification of that which they need to learn and in the development of the learning experiences in which they will be involved, and that it should be organized around collaborative problem-solving. After experiencing the success in training teachers to use technology, district personnel have also come to realize that professional development should be connected to a comprehensive change process focused on improving student learning. The Education Alliance intends to develop case studies of such exemplary programs to be published in monograph form and to be made available to superintendents involved in the work of the (NSLC).

The NSLC is a consortium promoting equity and excellence in schools. Originally formed in response to requests from superintendents in the Northeast for information on language minority populations, the council has expanded its area of interest to include a large number of issues related to education reform in public schools. The council's objectives include: providing leadership and advocacy, facilitating professional development, and sharing information on issues of interest to this group of school administrators. The council also provides a forum for networking and mentoring between and among superintendents.

This story exemplifies the following practices:

Professional development should involve teachers in the identification of what they need to learn and in the development of the learning experiences in which they will be involved.

Professional development should provide learning opportunities that relate to individual needs but are, for the most part, organized around collaborative problem solving.

Professional development should be connected to a comprehensive change process focused on improving student learning.

San Francisco Unified School District

San Francisco Unified School District,

San Francisco, CA

School Type: Public

**School
Setting:** Urban

Level: K–12

**School
Design:** Traditional

Content Presented By:

National Awards Program for Model
Professional Development



This story is available only as a Short Summary.

Demographics

The San Francisco School District serves a major urban community with a very diverse population. The district's enrollment is 63,961 students (PreK –12).

Student Racial/Ethnic Composition:

48% Asian or Pacific Islander
20% Hispanic
17% African American
13 % White (not Hispanic)
1% Native American or Native Alaskan

Limited English Proficient Students (39 languages spoken): 30%

Qualify for free/reduced lunch: 59%

Receive special education services: 10%

Background

1. The former superintendent, Waldemar Rojas, issued a set of priorities that included raising the achievement of students scoring in the bottom quartile on standardized tests, developing instructional strategies to better meet the needs of all students, and improving the scope and effectiveness of professional development.
2. Each year the district must hire about 200 new teachers. Close to thirty–five percent of all teachers in the district have less than four years of experience. (This situation will be exacerbated in the 1998–99 school year when 450 new teachers will be needed to respond to the state initiative to reduce class size.) Such large numbers of novice teachers served as a catalyst for the district to develop effective professional development.

Design &Implementation

The framework for professional development in the district combines centralized activities with site-based initiatives. The Professional Development Initiative requires each school to analyze a broad range of student achievement data (disaggregated by factors such as race, gender and quartile), rethink its curriculum, and create an improvement plan that connects activities with professional development plans. In the 25 professional development "model schools," for example, each school presents a preliminary plan for review to others in this grouping. This critical feedback is used by the planning committees in each school to refine the school improvement plan. This also provides an opportunity for schools to collaborate and share resources where appropriate. In the spring each school evaluates its plans and progress toward implementation by creating a portfolio that is once again submitted to peer schools for review.

Eight days are set aside in the school year for professional development. Three are used by the district (recent activities have included early literacy, biotechnology, mathematics, and technology) and follow the format of a summer institute, multiple follow-up sessions, and targeted on-site activities. One day is set aside for special education issues. The remaining four days are available for individual schools to use to meet their own professional development needs. In addition, schools are expected to engage in professional development activities beyond these four non-student days. Typically, schools use a combination of an early release and creative scheduling to focus on the high-priority areas identified in their improvement plans. Depending on the specific goals included in these plans, additional professional development might include all the faculty, grade level or action research teams, curriculum teams, or individuals. (Each teacher is required to complete an Individual Professional Growth Plan that connects the individual's interests with both the district and his/her school's priorities.)

Several other professional development initiatives in the district make important contributions to the goal of raising student achievement. The district sponsors an orientation for teachers new to the San Francisco Schools. In addition, teachers may join the Beginning Teachers Support and Assessment Program (BTSA), a state-initiated program, that involves novice teachers in an extended mentoring relationship with master teachers in the district. At the secondary level Site Support Teams have been identified to work with teachers to develop content and performance standards in areas targeted for improvement (literacy and math were the most recent areas). An extensive Learning Resource Bank has been created, comprising professional development and curriculum materials. Included are books, periodicals, tapes, model units and lessons, instructional and assessment materials, as well as electronic links to libraries and universities.

NOTE: For tips on how this design can be replicated, select "Replication Details" from the menu.

Results

The K-8 Mathematics Initiative serves as a good example of the way in which professional development in the district combines both centralized workshops with school site activity. During the summer a team of 200 teachers and administrators attended an institute focused on the new mathematics adoption K-8, instructional strategies for Limited English Proficient students, and bottom quartile improvement strategies. This team subsequently planned and delivered three district-wide professional development days designed for teachers, paraprofessionals, principals, and parents. (Additional parent/family sessions were offered at school-sites during the evenings and on Saturdays.) Teacher leaders from each school facilitated on-site follow-up that included issues such as family math, managing manipulatives, planning a standards-based math program, and assessing student growth. This initiative was supported by a number of local universities.

Test scores for reading and math on the CTBS have been used to show the impact of the professional

development program. These data show that there has been a significant growth for all students in both areas for three consecutive years. Moreover, students attending "focus schools" with an emphasis on math and/or literacy show more than a year's growth for a year's instruction. This finding is especially encouraging since the emphasis is now on raising the performance level of the students in the bottom quartile. The emphasis on elementary science is also beginning to show a change in classroom practice. In the mid 1990s, elementary teachers reported spending an average of less than 30 minutes each week on science. Currently, in 2000, teachers are reporting an average of 140 minutes devoted to science.

The district plans to continue to refine this professional development model, giving schools more time, resources and technical assistance. Three areas will receive attention in the future: an administrators' institute, bilingual education, and technology.

San Francisco students have benefited from focused professional development efforts. The test scores in the standardized test CTBS have shown significant growth in achievement for all students in both reading and mathematics for three consecutive years. Students in schools with mathematics and/or literacy focused professional development efforts show more than a year's growth. This is particularly important in the effort to narrow the differential performance gap between Latino, African American and low income groups as standards are raised for all students.

Evidence shows that more time has been spent on science instruction throughout the system. In 1990, 80% of the elementary teachers reported teaching science less than 30 minutes a week, middle school offered on the average a year and a half of science and only three high schools offered science in the ninth grade. By 1996, students received an average of 140 minutes of science a week throughout the elementary grades with different time requirements at targeted grade levels, middle school students received three years of science, and most high schools were offering ninth grade science.

More classrooms have moved from the lecture mode to more interactive learning. Whole schools have aligned themselves to the standards and are engaging students in long term investigations, projects and meaning centered activities. We are beginning to see significant reform efforts being sustained beyond the life of initial grants or seed efforts.

Site Visit Documentation

San Francisco Unified School District's success was recorded based on a site visit conducted by the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development in 1996:

Criteria	Evidence
Connection to student achievement (including the process of how professional development is connected to student outcomes).	There has been increased student achievement documented by sites over a three year period through standardized tests, student work, and observations. Professional development experiences are designed to address site needs based on desired student learning outcomes.
Evidence of teacher change (teacher outcomes).	Supervisors indicate that change in teacher capacity is evident through observation of classroom instruction and working relationships of grade-level and faculty teams. There is increased willingness to meet district and site goals and to take advantage of leadership opportunities throughout the district.

Evidence of desired student outcomes. There are ways for the school/district to show that professional development activities lead to desired teacher and student outcomes.	The goals of professional development that address student learning in reading and mathematics have resulted in increased student achievement in those areas. Samples of student work demonstrate an increased quality and sophistication over time. Efforts are underway to collect samples of student work illustrating levels of competency and to establish benchmarks for the district.
Methods for evaluating the professional development initiative (collection of appropriate data and use of data).	Evaluation at each site is done by instructional leaders and teachers on special assignment. Individual district initiatives have evaluations conducted by outside evaluators. Portfolios are collected and used in site presentations through a peer evaluation process as well.

Other Outcomes

For 1996–1997, San Francisco Unified School District's Professional Development Initiative (PDI) offered three new areas of professional development that were born out of their needs and designed using research from other successful PDI efforts. Each program was designed to strengthen the total initiative.

Administrators Institute – All administrators participated in a comprehensive three-day institute in August focused on standards with up to eight follow-up sessions during the year. Each administrator chose a content area (mathematics, science, or literacy) to gain knowledge and skills in program improvement and coaching effective instructional practices.

Bilingual – The Bilingual Department in the district had traditionally operated separate from the Curriculum Improvement and Professional Development Department (CIPD). The Bilingual Department was merged with CIPD and all curriculum and professional development for bilingual education was developed under CIPD using the PDI model and tools.

Technology – The technology resource teachers who had traditionally focused on running computer labs at school sites were provided a new job description which included linking technology to the curriculum improvement and professional development efforts. They were supported through a technology collaborative and developed resources and expertise in a particular curriculum area for integrated uses of technology in the curriculum areas of language arts and mathematics.

San Francisco Unified School District is learning, growing, and succeeding, as a result of PDI to improve student achievement and plan to sustain these efforts.

Replication Details

NOTE: If you have not already read the "Design and Implementation" section, selecting that from the menu before reading further will provide a context for the replication details below.

Site Visit Documentation

San Francisco Unified School District's success was recorded based on a site visit conducted by the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development in 1996:

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Criteria	Evidence
Connection between professional development and school/district improvement plans (needs assessment).	The professional development initiative incorporates the district mission and goals while allowing sites to design their individual agendas based on an analysis of student data. There are district offerings designed to provide a common emphasis and focus for the district. There has been a shift over time from emphasis on district mandated professional development to the empowering of local sites to evaluate their progress toward district goals and determine areas for study and improvement.
Extent to which distinct professional development experiences are connected and ongoing and linked to goals.	Professional development experiences are linked to goals of sites that address the mission and goals of the district. Experiences are long-term and extend over the school year, including extended summer sessions.
Connection to research and best practices.	Efforts at each site, as well as the district, are focused on research and best practice in designing and implementing professional development activities. Attendance at conferences and capacity-building training is made available to staff.
There is evidence that the professional development content has direct application for teaching.	The site experiences are based on direct application and support for implementation of objectives of professional development. On-site support is available through mentors, coaches, and district-level personnel.
Diversity in types of professional development experiences.	Experiences offered include workshops, study groups, action research, conferences, demonstration teaching, coaching, modeling, master practitioners, and opportunities for discussion and reflection.
Strategies for supporting ongoing professional development (time for professional development and how it is embedded).	There are eight days of professional development during the contract year provided by the district. Furthermore, school sites have added additional time through block scheduling, flexible scheduling, early release or late start, and common grade-level planning time.
The professional development program is institutionalized rather than dependent on specific resources or personalities.	The program is designed to place responsibility on each site for the customization of professional development activities to meet their individual needs. There is also an attempt to develop capacity within each site while at the same time providing specific assistance for common needs through district resources. The objective of the initiative is to create a culture where the process is self-sustaining. There is a required financial contribution by all school sites to the professional development activities, thus creating an inherent interest in receiving benefit from that investment.

Costs and Funding

The following is a list of sources of funding for the Unified School District's professional development:

- District General Fund
- 5% of each District's Program and Department non-personnel budget
- Title 1 Funds
- State/Federal Categorical Funds
- Desegregation Funds/Consent Decree
- California Post Secondary Education Commission CPEC, State Eisenhower Competitive Grants (3 awards)
- National Science Foundation NSF, Teacher Enhancement and Local Systemic Change (2 awards)
- Goals 2000 award
- Local Eisenhower Funds
- SB 1882 Funds
- Mentor Teacher Program, California State Department of Education
- Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (award), California State Department of Education
- Robert Noyce Foundation (2 awards)
- Genentech Foundation for Biomedical Sciences (2 awards)
- Exxon Education Foundation (award)
- The San Francisco Foundation
- GAP Foundation (award)
- Clarence E. Heller Foundation (2 awards)

Contact Information

Maria Santos
Assistant Superintendent
San Francisco Unified School District
2550 25th Avenue
San Francisco, California 94116
Telephone: 415-759-2950
Fax: 415-759-2903
msantos@sfusd.k-12

Rating Criteria

San Francisco Unified School District, San Francisco, California was selected as a winner of the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development, 1996-7.

What is the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development?

As part of a continuing effort to honor excellence in education, the U.S. Department of Education sponsors the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development. This program recognizes schools and school districts with exemplary professional development programs and disseminates information about high-quality professional development efforts that provide evidence of student learning and increased teacher effectiveness. Since the focus of this competition is on professional development for teachers and other educators in pre-kindergarten through grade 12 settings, only individual schools (public or private) or school districts may apply. Schools or districts may, however, submit applications that describe their partnerships with other entities, in particular,

institutions of higher education. Recognition under this awards program is based on how well applicants demonstrate the success of their programs, using identified selection criteria that their professional development program results in increased student outcomes. Criteria for selection* include:

Background and Overview of Professional Development

The applicant provides a brief explanation of why the representatives consider professional development in their schools or districts exemplary by describing the program's key components and relating those to the U.S. Department of Education's Mission and Principles of Professional Development. This description must provide evidence that the professional development activities are not narrowly focused on one subgroup of students or staff within the school or district.

Goals and Outcomes

The applicant describes the professional development goals, including how they: (1) are developed; (2) relate to school improvement; (3) are based on a needs assessment; and (4) address the achievement of all students regardless of gender, socio-economic level or disadvantaged status, race, ethnic or cultural background, exceptional abilities or disabilities, or limited-English proficiency. Applicants must also address the changes in teaching and student learning that are expected to result from professional development. They must describe how professional development goals and outcomes promote teaching and learning to high standards.

Professional Development Design and Implementation

The applicant provides evidence that professional development reflects research and best practice; includes comprehensive evaluation; includes organizational structures (e.g., administrative and policy support) and resources (e.g., use of time, expertise, funds) that support it; promotes continuous inquiry and improvement; and ensures that the larger school community understands its importance to school improvement.

Objective Evidence of Success

The applicant clearly demonstrates that teacher effectiveness and student learning have improved as a direct result of the implemented professional development activities. Data that reflect this connection must be provided and discussed. The focus of this criterion is objective evidence, and a compelling argument must be made for the way in which professional development positively affects outcomes for all teachers and all students. This argument must emphasize areas where any achievement gaps between groups (e.g., gender, socio-economic status, ethnicity) have been addressed and narrowed.

Implications for the Field

The applicant describes the lessons learned as the professional development activities have matured.

*These criteria are derived from the Mission and Principles of Professional Development prepared by the U.S. Department of Education in 1995, in consultation with numerous educational organizations, and have been previously published for public comment.

Information about the current award cycle for the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development can be found at <http://www.ed.gov/inits/TeachersWeb/>.

This story exemplifies the following practices:

Professional development should provide learning opportunities that relate to individual needs but are, for the most part, organized around collaborative problem solving.

Professional development should be connected to a comprehensive change process focused on improving student learning.

Geneva City School District

Geneva City School District,

Geneva, NY

School Type: Public

**School
Setting:** Rural

Level: K–12

**School
Design:** Traditional

Content Presented By:

National Awards Program for Model
Professional Development



This story is available only as a Short Summary.

Demographics

The Geneva City School District is more than forty miles from the nearest metropolitan cities of Rochester, Ithaca, or Syracuse and serves approximately 2,500 students. It would be a "typical" rural district were it not for the pockets of urban poverty within the region. Geneva has the highest percentage of low income families in Ontario County —more than 95% of the county's low-income housing is located in the city of Geneva.

Student Racial/Ethnic Composition:

73% White (not of Hispanic origin)
15% African American (not of Hispanic origin)
9% Hispanic
1% American Indian or Alaska Native
1% Asian or Pacific Islander

LEP Students: 3%

Qualify for Free/Reduced-Price Lunch: 41%

Receive Special Education Services: 20%

Background

In 1993, recognizing that it had an aging teaching force and a changing student population, the district decided to devote substantial time and energy to long-term professional development strategies. After the initial wariness of teachers to accept a set of new programs, the faculty members in the district's schools have become believers as the district's support and empowerment have produced success with students.

Design & Implementation

- **Financial Support.** The district requires forty-five hours of professional development for each staff member, and it commits to support this requirement with quality programs aimed to increase student achievement. Based on the decisions of the Administrative Council and input from teachers, the district invests 2% of its budget in professional development. The funds support training by experts, peer coaching, semi-monthly study groups, group reflection on practices, and release-time and summer training sessions. These district programs, which incorporate conversations among teachers, model the culture of teaching and learning they hope to replicate in the individual schools.
 - **Proven Links to Student Improvement.** Before a professional development program is adopted or endorsed by the district, the program must be proven to align with the district standards and demonstrate that it produces results. For example, a program for grades 1–5 was planned and piloted for over two years, and after the school psychologist found that the students involved in the program had higher academic gains than the control group, the district adopted it. On the other hand, after extensive review, one pre-first grade program tested did not meet its intended goals, and was dropped.
 - **Teacher-driven improvement programs.** Grade level and content-area teams, which include teachers in the district, regularly work together writing curriculum, developing benchmarks, creating interdisciplinary units, and developing strategies to meet the needs of students who have difficulties.
-

NOTE: For tips on how this design can be replicated, select "Replication Details" from the menu.

Results

Attention to student learning styles and an understanding of strategies effective for meeting the needs of diverse learners that has resulted from multiple years in Learning Styles professional development is also meeting with success. Between the 1995–96 and 1996–97 school years, the number of students dropping out declined by more than 50% (currently a four-year low of 1.9% or 14 students) with even sharper declines in ethnic minority dropouts. Teachers interviewed across grade levels and subjects reported that while they are changing they noticed that more students are achieving gains in test scores, are motivated to learn, take greater responsibility for their own learning, and are increasingly self-disciplined.

The district found that once children were identified for and entered the Title I program, few were able to obtain the requisite scores to leave the program. Teachers piloted a number of computer-assisted instructional programs, and after adopting one they felt was most appropriate for their students during 1994–95, there has been a dramatic rise in exit rates. During 1995–96, 70% of the 244 Title I students had raised their achievement scores enough to leave the program. Of the 72 students remaining in the program, 36 exited the program during the 1996–97 year, and only 31 students have re-entered the program. In math, 77% of the students have left the program and have not re-entered. For all students district-wide, the percentage of students passing the New York State third grade reading exam had been declining from 1993 to 1996. After an analysis of student needs and implementation of a new professional development program, 99% of all students (including special education students) passed the exam in 1997.

By February of 1997, all elementary students in first through fifth grades were using the CCC math program 15 minutes each day in addition to the normal instructional time for math. T-test analysis of scores indicated significant learning gains for grades one and four. There was improvement in the other grade levels but it was not statistically significant.

An example of how professional development has been used to produce excellent results in solving a major issue in one of our elementary schools is in the use of "Learning Styles" and early literary practices based on "Reading Recovery" theory. For three consecutive years, the percent of students passing the NYS third grade reading exam had been declining (1993–94: 93 percent, 1994–95: 87 percent, 1995–96: 77 percent). These results did not include our special education students' test scores because these were not required by the state.

Replication Details

NOTE: If you have not already read the "Design and Implementation" section, selecting that from the menu before reading further will provide a context for the replication details below.

Investment in top-quality personnel, combined with training in research-based effective strategies and high expectations for implementation of techniques learned in professional development, is the formula the district uses to effect improvement in student performance.

Professional development goals and outcomes focus on increasing teachers' expertise. In New York state, where the commissioner of education has promised to raise the standards for all students, to increase the capacity of each district to help students reach higher standards, and to relentlessly report the progress to the public, there is support and pressure for change. The professional development that is made available to the school community must match the focus and demonstrate that it produces results, or it is not offered. All teachers have participated in awareness sessions in which the standards, assessments, and new requirements have been discussed and analyzed to determine what students will need to be able to do. Beyond that, many staff members have continued learning about the standards, have made changes in curriculum and instruction to align with these higher learning goals, and have begun to use what they have learned in workshops to help students prepare for the new, more rigorous assessments. They are realizing that there needs to be a coherent K–12 effort to assess and monitor student progress and that this will require teachers to have deeper content knowledge. Regional efforts to increase teacher expertise and instructional effectiveness have broadened the base for ideas and knowledge.

Teachers and building and district-level administrators are involved in the selection and design of professional development activities. For example, when "Reading Recovery" was selected as the program to ensure that all students can read, the process involved initial screening by the assistant superintendent which was followed by teachers' reviewing several other research-based and validated successful programs.

Specifically, "Reading Recovery" was chosen over "Success for All" (another validated program) for several reasons. It matched the sense of autonomy and efficacy that teachers had, it fit the community, and there was powerful data to show that it worked. When the district hired a full time "Reading Recovery" teacher trainer, it became a recognized regional training center for that program. This allows us to train not only Geneva teachers but other teachers in the region. What makes Geneva exceptional is that this training is extended to teacher aides, college students who volunteer to work with nonreaders, and teaching assistants who work in the district, as well as regular classroom teachers, in this way, all involved can work together in a focused, aligned, and congruent way. Teachers also selected a software program compatible with our philosophy of the development of literacy. The "Foundations in Reading" program is an individualized, continuous progress software package which is coordinated with all of what we do with children in the development of literacy. It enables teachers to monitor individuals, provides opportunity for additional practice, and enhances teachers' efforts.

Structures and resources are in place to support continued professional development. Building committees of parents, teachers, and other staff consider requests for conferences and workshops against criteria they have developed. There is district support for ongoing commitments to organizations and opportunities to present at conferences. From regional course offerings that the district pays for, teachers select staff development opportunities in areas in which they are concerned about student learning. There are competitive grants available within the district from district funds. There are also grants from private corporations that fund special projects.

The school community is aware of and understands the importance of staff development through regular communication. That includes a radio program showcasing district happenings, quarterly mailings to all residents of the community, and monthly newsletters from all buildings to the parents and guardians of the children attending. When the state department of education pushed for higher standards for all students, a community forum with all stakeholder groups represented met to establish exit outcomes for Geneva City Schools. Drafts of the document were mailed to constituents, meetings and discussions were held, revisions were made, and finally the outcomes were adopted by the Geneva City Schools Board of Education. Presentations at building PTSO meetings often showcase various programs that are being used in the district. The community knows that professional development is needed for teachers to help all students meet higher standards and valued outcomes.

The Geneva Middle School is evolving into an exemplary school. In September of 1995, a nationally-known consultant for middle-level education was hired by the school district to help resolve issues surfacing in the middle school. A needs assessment was administered to teachers and community members. Meetings were held with groups and individuals to determine the most serious issues. The major areas of concern were identified and agreed upon by teachers, parents, and community members. The inflexibility of the master schedule and lack of academic rigor were considered the major issues that needed immediate attention.

Over the last two years, those issues have been resolved. A new schedule has been developed. Teachers have been empowered to have control of instructional time and placement of children. Class sizes have been decreased in grades seven and eight to 16–17 per class. Curriculum has been aligned with new state standards, which are much more academically rigorous. Student participation in the accelerated math program has doubled. Sixth-grade reading scores have increased five percent. Enrichment classes have been made available to eighth grade students. Eighty-five percent of the core teachers are participating in "Frameworks" (a semester course focusing on language and literacy). Teachers meet daily with their team members to discuss instruction, students, and their progress. Interdisciplinary units that include authentic assessment and immersion experiences have been designed and developed to raise achievement. Building administration is monitoring the assessments and their results.

Site Visit Documentation

Geneva City School District's success was recorded based on a site visit conducted by the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development in 1997.

Criteria	Evidence
There is clear evidence of the infrastructure, content, and process components of	Much greater elaboration as to the content of programs, processes of selection, evaluation measures, and infrastructure was provided in interviews with a key contact

professional development.	person, and through document review.
There are clear professional development goals based on needs assessment and focused on improving ALL students' learning.	No formal, district-level needs assessment has been conducted. There is evidence that ongoing needs assessment is performed at the school level and is focused on improved student learning.
The professional development goals are part of a long-term school improvement plan.	District achievement targets serve as guides to professional development selection and presentation. School councils and central office administrators help to determine professional development needs.
There are processes for documenting and monitoring the alignment of school improvement plans, professional development activities, teacher and student outcomes.	School principals monitor lesson plans regularly. Through data analysis, the district central administration can monitor student performance in the Computer Curriculum Corporation's instructional program in math and reading. School councils also assist in monitoring the alignment between school goals and professional development activities undertaken.

Costs and Funding

Experts have stated that raising achievement standards for all students will require an increase in the amount of learning time available to those students who need it. After examining our student population, their achievement, and the resources available, a decision was made to provide more learning time. In the summer of 1995, we decided to create a permanent line item in the budget for summer school at all levels. It is structured for students who have failed a course or whose achievement scores have been less than satisfactory. The elementary summer school runs five weeks. There is an emphasis on reading, writing, and math. Teachers were selected and employed based on their ability to use the strategies learned in professional development opportunities —particularly "Learning Styles," "Math Their Way," and the writing process.

Approximately 2 percent of the district budget is used for staff development. The district has employed full- and part-time staff developers to work cooperatively with each other and with teachers, providing support and coordinating efforts.

Contact Information

Edward Wright

Director of Curriculum and Instruction
Geneva City School District
649 South Exchange Street
Geneva, NY 14456
Telephone: (315) 781-0494
Fax: (315) 781-4128
pokey@ipix.net

Rating Criteria

Geneva City School District, Geneva, New York (suburban) was selected as a winner of the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development, 1997-8.

What is the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development?

As part of a continuing effort to honor excellence in education, the U.S. Department of Education sponsors the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development. This program recognizes schools and school districts with exemplary professional development programs and disseminates information about high-quality professional development efforts that provide evidence of student learning and increased teacher effectiveness. Since the focus of this competition is on professional development for teachers and other educators in pre-kindergarten through grade-12 settings, only individual schools (public or private) or school districts may apply. Schools or districts may, however, submit applications that describe their partnerships with other entities, in particular institutions of higher education. Recognition under this awards program is based on how well applicants demonstrate, using identified selection criteria, that their professional development program results in increased student outcomes. Criteria for selection* include:

Background and Overview of Professional Development

The applicant provides a brief explanation of why they consider professional development in their schools or districts exemplary by describing the program's key components and relating those to the U.S. Department of Education's Mission and Principles of Professional Development. This description must provide evidence that the professional development activities are not narrowly focused on one subgroup of students or staff within the school or district.

Goals and Outcomes

The applicant describes the professional development goals, including how they: (1) are developed; (2) relate to school improvement; (3) are based on a needs assessment; and (4) address the achievement of all students regardless of gender, socio-economic level or disadvantaged status, race, ethnic or cultural background, exceptional abilities or disabilities, or limited-English proficiency. Applicants also must address the changes in teaching and student learning that are expected to result from professional development, and must describe how professional development goals and outcomes promote teaching and learning to high standards.

Professional Development Design and Implementation

The applicant provides evidence that professional development reflects research and best practice; includes comprehensive evaluation; includes organizational structures (e.g., administrative and policy support) and resources (e.g., use of time, expertise, funds) that support it; promotes continuous inquiry and improvement; and ensures that the larger school community understands its importance to school improvement.

Objective Evidence of Success

The applicant clearly demonstrates that teacher effectiveness and student learning have improved as a direct result of the implemented professional development activities. Data that indicate this connection must be provided and discussed. The focus of this criterion is objective evidence, and a compelling argument must be made for how professional development positively affects outcomes for all teachers and all students, and must emphasize areas where any achievement gaps between groups (e.g., gender, socio-economic status, ethnicity) have been addressed and narrowed.

Implications for the Field

The applicant describes the lessons learned as the professional development activities have matured.

*These criteria are derived from the Mission and Principles of Professional Development prepared by the U.S. Department of Education in 1995, in consultation with numerous educational organizations, and have been previously published for public comment.

Information about the current award cycle for the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development can be found at <http://www.ed.gov/inits/TeachersWeb/>.

This story exemplifies the following practices:

Professional development should incorporate evaluation of multiple sources of information on (a) outcomes for students and (b) the instruction and other processes that are involved in implementing the lessons learned.

Professional development should be connected to a comprehensive change process focused on improving student learning.

Wilton School District

Wilton School District,

Wilton, CT

School Type: Public

**School
Setting:** Suburban

Level: K–12

**School
Design:** Traditional

Content Presented By:

National Awards Program for Model
Professional Development



This story is available only as a Short Summary.

Demographics

The Wilton, Connecticut (PreK–12) School District serves a predominately professional/managerial community with a high percentage of commuters to nearby New York City. This affluent suburban area has a high concentration of college-educated residents; there are high community expectations for education, together with a strong local support for the continuing professional development of teachers. The district comprises five schools with an enrollment of 3,100 students.

Student Ethnic/Racial Composition:

94% White (not Hispanic)
3% Asian or Pacific Islander
1% African American
1% Hispanic

Limited English Proficient Students (2 languages): 0.2%

Qualify for free/reduced lunch: 0.5%

Receive special education services: 13%

Background

- A district professional development plan was developed beginning in 1990 that aligned a series of district-sponsored activities to district goals. Math and science were the areas of initial emphasis.
- Wilton schools serve a community with very high expectations for education. As a consequence, both standards and rewards reflect the competitive nature of the surrounding communities. The district fosters an ethic of continuous personal improvement. Teaching positions in the Wilton schools are highly contested. There were more than 800 applicants last year.

- A lengthened workweek, moving from 37.5 to 40 hours, reflects a commitment to the importance of ongoing professional development. It also creates a means to sustain professional development activities across the school year.

Design & Implementation

School Planning Teams (comprising teachers, administrators and parents) develop school improvement plans that are driven by four factors: district goals, curricular needs, student assessment data and teacher performance needs. Two or three initiatives usually receive attention for two or three years, resulting in a series of specific in-house workshops focused on improving teacher effectiveness. In addition, a District Professional Development Committee (comprising teachers, administrators and parents, and chaired by a full-time teacher holding the title "Instructional Leader for Professional Development") develops the district-sponsored activities based on a district needs assessment survey and discussions concerning best practice. This district committee plans the Professional Development Day, held in August each year. (Topics in 2000 included technology, reading and writing across the curriculum, school climate, inclusion, student assessment, and learning styles to motivate students.) It also plans a series of high interest strands addressed throughout the year. A bimonthly newsletter, distributed by the district administrator for professional development, lists all the conference and workshop opportunities available in the state and beyond.

Time for these activities is created by banking hours in designated months for professional development. No school or district meetings are scheduled during the months of October, January and April. Consequently, the district has been able to schedule multiple workshops each week during these three months. Professional development has included the training of new teachers in current programs, workshops for teachers in new curriculum, and the opportunity for individual schools to explore those areas of greatest importance to them.

The district supports a trainer of trainers approach to capacity building: instructional leadership is encouraged in the district. More than 40 teachers currently hold instructional leader roles (e.g., grade-level or cross-grade team leaders, curriculum coordinators and special program directors) in addition to their regular teaching positions. Also, nearly 60 teachers have completed the state-sponsored BEST program which qualifies them to be mentors of new teachers. New teachers are required to successfully complete this program in order to receive a provisional certificate. The BEST program involves the veteran and new teacher in the areas of peer coaching, team teaching, and using instructional resources. All teachers in the district are required to report back to their peers the connection between the school/district improvement plan and what they learned from each professional development activity they attend. This includes sponsored activities such as sabbaticals, mini-sabbaticals, conferences, workshops and TI-IN distance learning (any or all of which might be used towards Continuing Educational Units).

An analysis of test data has been the primary catalyst for professional development activities. Three questions have been asked concerning both state and national tests:

- How does the district compare nationally with similar suburban districts and independent private schools?
- What are the district's strengths and weaknesses in each grade level as they reflect on curriculum?
- What is the growth of each individual in each subject area?

Math emerged as an area of concern, and after much discussion the district adopted the Chicago Math program. Following extensive professional development, including sending a team to work for a week

at the University of Chicago with the program developers, the program has been introduced through the grades. Last year the high school SAT math scores were the highest in Connecticut, and eighth grade math students ranked first in the state on the Connecticut Mastery Test. A similar strategy has been used with writing ever since it surfaced as an area of concern. All teachers received a series of workshops focused on the elements of good writing and a common rubric was developed for Grades 3 through 12. Significant gains have subsequently been recorded on the Connecticut State Mastery Test in writing.

The district plans to focus attention on several "high priority" issues next year: reading K-5, assessment, technology and special needs students. The Professional Development Day in August is used to frame these issues for the schools who will then plan to connect these issues to their own priorities. Focusing attention and support on a few clearly defined improvement activities is an important cornerstone of the Wilton professional development model.

NOTE: For tips on how this design can be replicated, select "Replication Details" from the menu.

Results

Test scores offer a quantitative means of evaluation. The need for improved writing instruction and performance has driven professional development over the last couple of years. When third grade writing test scores were examined, discussion ensued with those staff whose students consistently scored high on writing prompts. Certain common best practices emerged. As a consequence, these best practices were formalized and shared with fellow teachers through the writing of curriculum and professional development. Through an end-of-the-year survey conducted by the Administrator for Elementary Curriculum, third grade staff repeatedly stated that the work they had shared improved their effectiveness in enhancing student learning. A post writing prompt test in the spring of 1996 indicated a substantial growth in third grade student scores. 55% of students in fourth grade achieved mastery in the Connecticut State Mastery Tests in 1995-1996. This is the highest percentage of fourth grade students who have achieved this goal in writing since the inception of the test in 1986. 71% of our eighth grade achieved mastery in writing. Only 26.4% of this same class in fourth grade achieved mastery. As sixth graders, 58% of them achieved this goal. This is a reflection of the extensive and on-going professional development offered to the entire staff on reading and writing across the curriculum. Reading test scores and teacher input indicated a need for a consistent core reading program K - 5. Staff training is being offered on their Professional Development Day for all appropriate staff members.

Professional development in technology has revolutionized the way some teachers give instruction. For example, the high school physics program is now technology based and the teacher is a coach and facilitator of student learning instead of a lecturer. The result is a more advanced curriculum. In the middle school, a science teacher who works with students on career choice is utilizing his technology expertise gained through professional development to link students with mentors via e-mail. Some examples of mentoring relationships include matching a young lady with a female astronaut from N.A.S.A., and connecting another student with a theoretical particle physicist/cosmologist at the College of William and Mary. According to the quantitative analysis of the effectiveness of technology training included in the final Professional Development Report for the Board of Education, all technology workshops except for desktop publishing were rated as superior by staff. The impact on student learning was in the 3.4 - 4.6 range on the scale of 1-5 with 5 being the highest.

Informal teacher observations of students provide an important means in the assessment of our professional development programs. For example, teachers trained in the Junior Great Books Program

at the middle school level have observed the students' ability to refer to the text independently. This further demonstrates the effectiveness of both the process and the program in place for professional development.

Replication Details

NOTE: If you have not already read the "Design and Implementation" section, selecting that from the menu before reading further will provide a context for the replication details below.

Notes from the school district...

According to the Wilton School District; "Other school systems could easily adapt the process by which we develop and evaluate professional development opportunities for staff." The following summarizes the program framework presently in place:

1. Professional Development Planning grid identifying strands, district and school priorities, curriculum priorities, and summer curriculum work
2. Needs assessment surveys for staff and administrators
3. Evaluation forms rating effectiveness of programs on student learning based upon a data rating scale
4. Evaluation forms for Professional Development Day, district programs, and TI-IN broadcasts
5. Mini-grant Request and evaluation forms
6. Year-end Board of Education Report as an effective summarizing document
7. Staff Development bi-monthly newsletter as a means of communication
8. A philosophy which supports the training of staff to be trainers in the school system
9. A structure in place involving staff in the decision-making process

Wilton School District also provides time in the summer for staff to work on curriculum projects. This is oftentimes related to professional development. Some examples:

- We have provided professional development in writing, in particular using a standard rubric and criteria, grades 3 – 12. As a result, staff have worked during the summer, building and extending curriculum to integrate the learning which took place as part of the professional development training.
- All staff are trained in the University of Chicago Mathematics Project. This past summer staff K – 8 (high school people were not available) rewrote the Common Core for math.
- Professional development time was given to middle school staff to work with their counterparts in Norwalk to develop and subsequently use the curriculum based on Long Island Sound for seventh graders. They won the Award for Excellence for this program. This is taught at the Maritime Magnet School.
- All staff K – 5 will have received training in the CRISS strategies by the end of January. These are now incorporated as part of the writing/literacy programs in K – 5. This was a program introduced over a year ago. The staff who attended were very enthusiastic and recommended to the Superintendent that ALL staff should have this training so all students could use these strategies to provide consistency. We have offered this training on three different occasions, including during the summer.
- All middle school staff receive Junior Great Books Training. These strategies are integrated into the Reading/Writing Team curriculum at Middlebrook School (grades 6 – 8).
- Other curriculum includes assessment, based on attendance at State workshops. One is writing and the other English, both at the high school level.
- FAPA (our fine arts program) have written curriculum based on their attendance at

workshops. These incorporate the national standards.

- Technology is a major priority in our school system and several curricula have been written. One is a mathematics project based on Hyperstudio™ which is now being taught as part of the Chicago Math Program in grades 4/5. This was written and developed by staff.

Notes from outside reviewers...

In the estimation of reviewers* who visited the Wilton School District in 1996, the professional development program is transferable to other sites. There are several identified components that need to be in place for this to happen.

- There needs to be unfaltering support from central administration, the school board, the teachers, and the community to pay for the program.
- Varied opportunities for professional development need to be available.
- Opportunities for exterior funding need to be sought.
- Teachers need to be empowered at the grass roots level to be key players in the decisions about professional development.
- Opportunities need to be afforded to teachers to serve as presenters both in-house and outside.
- Teacher union support needs to be in place to maximize the benefit to be gained. In this case, a new contract was negotiated that increased the teacher work week from 37.5 to 40 hours to increase time available for professional development.
- Decisions need to be aligned with district goals, curricular needs, student assessment results, and individual teacher performance needs.
- The district needs to be willing to provide food for the teachers and other participants when professional development runs over a meal time (provision of food is an inexpensive motivator).
- An element of trust needs to be established with the teachers by the board, administration and community that supports their ability to make independent and joint decisions.

*The National Awards Program for Model Professional Development conducted site visits in 1996.

Costs and Funding

[no data currently available]

Contact Information

Joyce Parker
Administrator for Elementary Curriculum and Professional Development
Wilton Public Schools
395 Danbury Road
Wilton, Connecticut 06897
Telephone: 203-762-3381
Fax: 203-762-2177

Rating Criteria

Wilton School District was selected as a winner of the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development, 1996–7.

What is the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development?

As part of a continuing effort to honor excellence in education, the U.S. Department of Education sponsors the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development. This program recognizes schools and school districts with exemplary professional development programs and disseminates information about high-quality professional development efforts that provide evidence of student learning and increased teacher effectiveness. Since the focus of this competition is on professional development for teachers and other educators in pre-kindergarten through grade 12 settings, only individual schools (public or private) or school districts may apply. Schools or districts may, however, submit applications that describe their partnerships with other entities, in particular, institutions of higher education. Recognition under this awards program is based on how well applicants demonstrate the success of their programs, using identified selection criteria that their professional development program results in increased student outcomes. Criteria for selection* include:

Background and Overview of Professional Development

The applicant provides a brief explanation of why the representatives consider professional development in their schools or districts exemplary by describing the program's key components and relating those to the U.S. Department of Education's Mission and Principles of Professional Development. This description must provide evidence that the professional development activities are not narrowly focused on one subgroup of students or staff within the school or district.

Goals and Outcomes

The applicant describes the professional development goals, including how they: (1) are developed; (2) relate to school improvement; (3) are based on a needs assessment; and (4) address the achievement of all students regardless of gender, socio-economic level or disadvantaged status, race, ethnic or cultural background, exceptional abilities or disabilities, or limited-English proficiency. Applicants must also address the changes in teaching and student learning that are expected to result from professional development. They must describe how professional development goals and outcomes promote teaching and learning to high standards.

Professional Development Design and Implementation

The applicant provides evidence that professional development reflects research and best practice; includes comprehensive evaluation; includes organizational structures (e.g., administrative and policy support) and resources (e.g., use of time, expertise, funds) that support it; promotes continuous inquiry and improvement; and ensures that the larger school community understands its importance to school improvement.

Objective Evidence of Success

The applicant clearly demonstrates that teacher effectiveness and student learning have improved as a direct result of the implemented professional development activities. Data that reflect this connection must be provided and discussed. The focus of this criterion is objective

evidence, and a compelling argument must be made for the way in which professional development positively affects outcomes for all teachers and all students. This argument must emphasize areas where any achievement gaps between groups (e.g., gender, socio-economic status, ethnicity) have been addressed and narrowed.

Implications for the Field

The applicant describes the lessons learned as the professional development activities have matured.

*These criteria are derived from the Mission and Principles of Professional Development prepared by the U.S. Department of Education in 1995, in consultation with numerous educational organizations, and have been previously published for public comment.

Information about the current award cycle for the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development can be found at <http://www.ed.gov/inits/TeachersWeb/>.

This story exemplifies the following practices:

Professional development should be connected to a comprehensive change process focused on improving student learning.

Norman Public Schools

Norman Public Schools

Norman, OK

School Type: Public

**School
Setting:** Suburban

Level: K–12

**School
Design:** Traditional

Content Presented By:

National Awards Program for Model
Professional Development



The fifteen years since Elaine Hale became the Director of Staff Development in Norman, Oklahoma, have been filled with lessons learned. "Professional development permeates every level, area, and program of the Norman Public Schools. It has been the catalyst for our success in teaching and learning, and for the excellence we have achieved as an educational community where each person is valued for their contributions to continued professional growth that, in turn, supports and encourages students to higher levels of achievement." Her first lesson taught her that she needed to go slowly, because jumping ahead was usually followed by backing up.

Over the last several years, while the student population has become increasingly more diverse, Norman Public Schools' student achievement has increased. For example, district assessments in fifth grade writing increased from 87% of the students passing in 1995 to 95% of the students passing in 1998. In mathematics, student scores increased from 87% in 1995 to 93% in 1995. Eighth grade students had similar gains. Their scores in math increased from 78% passing in 1995 to 83% passing in 1998. Eleventh grade students also increased in mathematics from 66% in 1995 to 74% in 1998. Similar gains occurred in science and reading.

"We spent a lot of time making staff development the norm and creating a climate that supported learning," says Hale. Today that norm is firmly in place in this district of 12,720 students. The culture of accepting and honoring teachers and principals has evolved over time. One of the lessons learned for Hale is that it takes time and that all have to participate in the decisions about how to improve schools. "Everyone has to participate for progress to occur and the district has to create a climate where everyone will participate."

The key to this success was establishing processes, procedures, programs, and products to focus the district's staff development program. The district framework for professional development, Decisions for Excellence, serves as the unifying force for the staff development program. Within it are the critical components of Norman Public Schools' success.

The processes outlined in Decision for Excellence focus on helping all staff members acquire the skills that effect change and that support planning and implementation of school improvement efforts. The procedures included in Decisions for Excellence ensure that participatory decision making occurs at all levels of the district and with all employee groups and community stakeholders. The program component of the framework has two major elements, the professional skills and continuity of curriculum. Professional skills are what teachers should know and be able to do to plan, teach, and

assess students. Continuity of curriculum focuses on integrating the content areas, thinking skills, and application of learning. Lastly, the product is student achievement. All the district's professional development efforts and resources are directed toward ensuring that students learn.

The one-page model of professional development was an instrumental tool in helping the district integrate professional skills, curriculum, and monitoring so that they all worked toward improving student learning. The model provides a big picture of the whole professional development program and keeps everyone focused on the results it strives to achieve. The annual evaluation of professional development provides data for strengthening and improving the program.

The district's Professional Resource Opportunities (PRO), a cadre of up to eight teachers from each school, provides support to each school. This cadre of teacher leaders together with their principal serve as instructional leaders within their schools. To meet this expectation, the PRO cadre participates in intensive preparation to develop specialized skills in professional development, change theory, adult learning theory, models of professional development, research in effective professional development. These resource people participate in annual retreats and ongoing training to hone their skills in effective professional development as well as in a specific area related to learning. For example, cadres of PRO are well-versed in brain-based research and learning theory, multiple intelligences, technology integration, application of learning, and assessment. Cadre members provide learning opportunities to schools throughout the district.

Other lessons Hale learned in the last fifteen year were patience and the art of knowing "when": when to push, pause, deliver new learning, practice, reflect, and process. Over the years the beliefs and values that were the foundation of the district's professional development plan have helped the district stay on track.

Another lesson learned was that the district staff's role was more that of facilitators and encouragers. The district staff has to model support and encouragement in hopes that principals will support and encourage their teachers, and teachers will do the same for their students.

Professional development in Norman Public Schools is pivotal to all change and improvement efforts. All staff participate in decisions which directly affect them and, as a result, seek opportunities to grow and learn as professionals.

Demographics

Student Racial/Ethnic Composition:

1.7% Hispanic
6.0% African American
6.6% American Indian
2.6% Asian
81.4% White

Number of students: 12,511
Free or reduced lunch: 23.5%
Gifted population: 21%
Special education: 13%
Limited English Proficiency: 2.9%

Background

Professional development in Oklahoma in the early 1980s was evolving from the traditional, isolated in-service into meaningful staff development that addressed effective methods of instruction. The district began to actively involve its teachers and administrators in pursuing quality professional development, emphasizing all phases of the education process. This early effort led to the creation of *Decisions for Excellence*, the district's superstructure for professional development. The structure was developed as a base to help educators enhance their knowledge and expand their repertoire of skills in order to make effective decisions about teaching and learning. Developed in 1985, *Decisions for Excellence* has been updated through revisions in 1989, 1991, 1992, 1994 and 1998. Each revision has focused on translating current research into effective practices, providing the critical base for all phases of professional development.

All professional development in the Norman Public Schools is targeted toward improving academic achievement for all students. Toward that end, the district has set two long-range goals. One is to "provide educational experiences in the basic skills that prepare students to function effectively in contemporary society." The second is to "maintain comprehensive continuous progress in all subject areas with equity and comparability among all attendance areas." The district also follows a set of six professional development goals to fulfill its program goals of continuity of curriculum and professional skills.

Design & Implementation

- Comprehensive Local Education Plan. Approved by the Board of Education and supported with district funds, the plan includes long-range goals; program and curriculum mission statements, goals, and action plans; site improvement plans; and professional development guidelines. *Decisions for Excellence*, the professional development framework, is embedded in the plan.
- Decisions for Excellence. This comprises the district framework for professional development, targeted toward improved teaching and learning. It has four components: "Processes" for effecting change; "Procedures" for participatory decision-making; "Program" for improving instruction; and the "Product" of student learning. Professional development activities carried out through the program reflect a continuing attention to evolving education research.
- Professional Development Activities. Ongoing professional development includes participation in workshops and conferences, comprehensive training programs, study groups, peer coaching, program development, curriculum development, and staff development presentations. Other activities include authoring articles and books for publication, observing instruction, demonstrating teaching, and individual study.
- Professional Resource Opportunities. This "training of trainers" program is designed to develop teachers as instructional leaders and staff developers. Teachers, selected by peers, receive 40 hours of comprehensive training in research-based information on adult learning, group process skills, effective staff development strategies, and team building. They get an additional minimum 20 hours in instructional strategies that affect learning across the curriculum for all students. Teachers completing this training work with principals as staff developers and resource teachers at their sites and serve as leaders on site school improvement teams.

- **School Profiling.** School staff reviews student achievement at each school, for each grade level, and in each curriculum area to determine where students are, where they need to be, and how to get there. Reviewers look at data on curriculum and instruction, assessment, student developmental levels, attendance, discipline, parent involvement, and other factors. The process allows complete participation by staff, with opportunities for parent involvement, and results in a consensus on the annual goals for each school.

Results

Numerous types of evidence of the positive impact of the professional development program in Norman Public Schools exist. Evaluations of programs, student achievement results, anecdotal records, participation records, and satisfaction surveys indicate a positive relationship between professional development and student learning.

Fourth and fifth grade teachers received intensive professional development in the writing process, holistic scoring, and instructional strategies to improve student writing. Student scores on the state writing assessments increased from 87% in 1995 to 95% in 1998. Teachers also received extensive professional development in math. The table below demonstrates gains in student achievement across several grade levels.

State Mathematics Assessment			
Ê	1995	1998	CHANGE
5th Grade	87%	95%	+8%
8th Grade	78%	83%	+5%
11th Grade	66%	74%	+8%

During the same time frame, science teachers participated in training and curriculum development. Student test scores in science indicate a positive relationship between student and teacher learning.

State Science Assessment			
Ê	1995	1998	CHANGE
5th Grade	87%	93%	+6%
8th Grade	79%	86%	+7%
11th Grade	73%	81%	+8%

State Reading Assessment			
Ê	1995	1998	CHANGE

5th Grade	87%	88%	+1%
8th Grade	77%	87%	+10%
11th Grade	79%	76%	-3%

The district has adopted a three-prong American College Testing (ACT) program. In eighth grade, students take the Explore test. Tenth graders complete the second component of the program and approximately 60 percent of the seniors take the ACT. The composite score has increased from 21.7 in 1992-93 to 22.8 in 1997-98.

The Professional Resource Opportunities Program has been evaluated and found to increase teachers' skills in working with other teachers, enhance teaching performance, and increase student involvement in learning. PRO teachers have provided hundreds of hours of training in technology, assessment, multiple intelligences, brain-research, learning styles, and transfer of learning.

During the 1997-98 school year a total of 1,023 in-district professional development programs totaling 19,315 registrations. Over 537 individual registrations or professional development events outside the district were processed. Educators in Norman Public Schools are not hesitating to learn.

Site Visit Documentation

Criteria	Evidence
The data collected provide evidence that the professional development activities lead to improved teaching.	As a result of the numerous professional development experiences, teachers are more reflective and aware of instructional techniques they are using. They use more inquiry-based approaches, multiple assessment strategies, and a variety of instructional strategies.
The data collected provide evidence that the professional development activities lead to improved student learning.	Teachers report that students ask better questions and that discussions are broader and deeper. Student work on display in classrooms and hallways shows the high quality of student performance. Teachers in interviews mentioned improvements over past years in student work in both quality and quantity.
The data collected provide evidence that the professional development	Assessment test data are being disaggregated this year and will be used to inform decisions about professional development.

activities lead to a narrowing of exiting achievement gaps.	
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During the past year,

- 42 district employees received state or national awards for excellence in teaching, leadership, and educational service
- 42 certified staff members served in leadership roles in state and national educational organizations
- 68 staff members made 97 presentations at state and national conferences
- three teachers authored articles published in educational journals
- three teachers received National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certification

The accomplishments of these staff members are further evidence of the successful professional development initiatives in the Norman Public Schools.

Replication Details

The district's long history of success in professional development gives it a strong foundation for future success. The long-standing *Decisions for Excellence*, a district framework for professional development, was created in 1985 to improve teaching and learning and now serves as the blueprint for all decisions related to professional development. Together with the strategic plan, these documents keep the focus of professional development in Norman Public Schools squarely directed at student performance.

Collaborative teams provide input to the District Professional Development Committee. This committee is composed of mostly district-elected teachers with others appointed to represent principals, curriculum, alternative education, special education, counseling, parents, and higher education. The District Professional Development Committee is responsible for developing and monitoring a district-wide plan to support district goals, encourage high standards, and ensure professional development opportunities for all employee groups.

The Norman Public Schools benefit from a high degree of commitment to and collaboration around professional growth.

Costs and Funding

No information on costs and funding is available for the Norman Public Schools.

Contact Information

Elaine Fulton Hale, Director of Staff Development
Norman Public Schools
Professional Development Center
207 East Gray Street
Norman, OK 73069

Rating Criteria

The Norman Public Schools, Norman, Oklahoma, were selected as a winner of the 1998–1999 National Awards Program for Model Professional Development.

What is the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development?

As part of a continuing effort to honor excellence in education, the U.S. Department of Education sponsors the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development. This program recognizes schools and school districts with exemplary professional development programs and disseminates information about high-quality professional development efforts that provide evidence of student learning and increased teacher effectiveness. Since the focus of this competition is on professional development for teachers and other educators in pre-kindergarten through grade 12 settings, only individual schools (public or private) or school districts may apply. Schools or districts may, however, submit applications that describe their partnerships with other entities, in particular, institutions of higher education. Recognition under this awards program is based on how well applicants demonstrate, using identified selection criteria that their professional development program results in increased student outcomes. Criteria for selection* include:

Background and Overview of Professional Development

The applicant provides a brief explanation of why they consider professional development in their schools or districts exemplary by describing the program's key components and relating those to the U.S. Department of Education's Mission and Principles of Professional Development. This description must provide evidence that the professional development activities are not narrowly focused on one subgroup of students or staff within the school or district.

Goals and Outcomes

The applicant describes the professional development goals, including how they: (1) are developed; (2) relate to school improvement; (3) are based on a needs assessment; and (4) address the achievement of all students regardless of gender, socio-economic level or disadvantaged status, race, ethnic or cultural background, exceptional abilities or disabilities, or limited-English proficiency. Applicants also must address the changes in teaching and student learning that are expected to result from professional development, and must describe how professional development goals and outcomes promote teaching and learning to high standards.

Professional Development Design and Implementation

The applicant provides evidence that professional development reflects research and best practice; includes comprehensive evaluation; includes organizational structures (e.g., administrative and policy support) and resources (e.g., use of time, expertise, funds) that support it; promotes continuous inquiry and improvement; and ensures that the larger school community understands its importance to school improvement.

Objective Evidence of Success

The applicant clearly demonstrates that teacher effectiveness and student learning have improved as a direct result of the implemented professional development activities. Data that indicate this connection must be provided and discussed. The focus of this criterion is objective evidence, and a compelling argument must be made for how professional

development positively affects outcomes for all teachers and all students, and must emphasize areas where any achievement gaps between groups (e.g., gender, socio-economic status, ethnicity) have been addressed and narrowed.

Implications for the Field

The applicant describes the lessons learned as the professional development activities have matured.

*These criteria are derived from the Mission and Principles of Professional Development prepared by the U.S. Department of Education in 1995, in consultation with numerous educational organizations, and have been previously published for public comment.

Information about the current award cycle for the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development can be found at <http://www.ed.gov/inits/TeachersWeb/>.

This story exemplifies the following practices:

Professional development should be connected to a comprehensive change process focused on improving student learning.

Olathe School District

Olathe School District

Olathe, KS

School Type: Public

**School
Setting:** Suburban

Level: K–12

**School
Design:** Traditional

Content Presented By:

National Awards Program for Model
Professional Development



"We have changed over time," says Alison Banikowski, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction for the Olathe District Schools in Olathe, Kansas. "Our plans were yearly based--we set a goal for one year. Now, we're much more into long term cycles, five-year cycles. That has helped us. We establish staff development that aligns with the building improvement plan. At the central level, we look at the needs and provide staff development from there. There is a lot of overlap between what happens at the district and what happens at the school level."

The Olathe District professional development system is exemplary for a number of reasons. First is the tight alignment between district and school improvement goals and professional development. Second is the wide variety of learning structures available to teachers to support their learning. Third is the assessment system that provides continuous data about progress. And last are the processes used to develop and monitor improvement.

The district strategic plan identifies the goals for the entire school district. Building improvement plans, designed by teams of teachers, parents, and administrators at each school, mirror the district plan and specify what each building will do to contribute to the district goals and to achieve its own goals based on student achievement needs. Individual staff members have their own professional development plans that identify what they will learn to support the building and district goals. These professional development plans are used both as a part of the personnel evaluation system and as a guide for the individual growth of each teacher. Everyone is working toward improving student success in Olathe. The district's beliefs about and outcomes for staff development underscore the importance of continuous improvement.

Teachers have a number of opportunities for learning in Olathe:

- Eight hours of paid training outside the workday
- Six and one-half inservice days each school year
- Release time during the school day
- After school learning experiences such as curriculum revision, content-specific training, or instructional strategies training
- Summer institutes and workshops
- Out-of-district conferences
- Stipends for Saturday training

In addition, teachers receive graduate credit and points for recertification and advancement on the district salary schedule for participating in staff development.

Instructional Resource Teachers (IRT) and curriculum coordinators provide staff development and onsite support to teachers. The district has invested in the training and development of the IRTs, who are master teachers. They are released from their classrooms to mentor new teachers, provide demonstration lessons, and offer coaching and feedback to teachers, as they apply new learning in their classrooms. Banikowski says the board of education has made it a high priority to fund these positions and to extend their contracts so they work a longer school year than other teachers do. Overall, the district's budget for staff development has increased substantially in the last few years and continues to increase to support these extensive opportunities for staff development throughout the district. The district has also benefited from a number of grants to support professional development especially in technology.

Continuous monitoring, evidence of implementation, and evidence of results help to keep individual teachers, schools, and the district informed about progress toward the goals. Teachers complete self-analyses about their acquisition of knowledge and skills. Student data is gathered and disaggregated frequently to assess growth. Surveys are completed at the end of staff development experiences to assess the reactions of participants. Building improvement plans and staff development plans are evaluated annually by teams of internal and external reviewers. The district conducts comprehensive evaluations of large-scale professional development initiatives.

The state accreditation process in Kansas supports the structure and processes used to improve student learning in the Olathe district. Building leadership teams of approximately eight to 14 people representing the staff and administration are elected for three-year terms at each school. Their role is to analyze student data and set the course for improvement and professional development. Olathe invested in building capacity by providing training to the entire team rather than just to principals. According to Banikowski, it takes more than one messenger to get the faculty into the boat and rowing. Leadership team members receive training in systems thinking, the change process, group process, and effective professional development. These teams know how to analyze student achievement data, develop school profiles, conduct research on best practices, and lead staff members in the design of professional development.

In addition to training with leadership team members, district leadership involves the teacher association as partners in the design of the district's staff development program. "It was key for us," says Banikowski. "We make sure all the players are at the table when we start something. We could not do what we are doing in staff development without our partnership with the teacher association and the board of education."

Professional development is an integral part of the culture in Olathe Schools. It is "our way of doing business when others aren't watching," according to their application for the Model Professional Development Award. Professional development is worth fighting for, because in Olathe District Schools, there is substantial evidence that professional development has indeed led to improved student achievement.

Demographics

The total enrollment in the Olathe School District is 20,225 students.

Student Racial and Ethnic composition:

0.6% American Indian or Alaska Native
2.8% Asian or Pacific Islander
5.2% African American, not of Hispanic origin
3.5% Hispanic
87.8% White, not of Hispanic origin

Limited English Proficient: 1.15%

Different Languages: 27

Students Qualifying for Free or Reduced Priced Lunch: 10.7%

Students Receiving Special Education Services: 13.6%

Background

In the mid-1980s, staff development in the district was sporadic, focused primarily at the elementary level, and mainly voluntary. Today, Olathe District Schools operate under a long-term, integrated plan that guides staff development efforts in which all members participate and to which substantial time and resources are allocated. Continuous inquiry and improvement are imbedded in the district's culture. Life-long learning is the expectation for all. The professional development focus progresses from "learning to doing." The expectation is implementation, and the ultimate goal is improved student learning.

During the past several years, the Olathe School District has experienced continual growth. The district welcomed 628 new students to area school communities during the 1998-99 school year. As a result, 185 new teachers were hired to accommodate the influx of students. A new elementary school opened in August, 1999.

Design & Implementation

- Guiding Principles. The district's guiding principles for staff denote the importance it places on continuous learning and improvement: Children First, Respect for All, Teamwork, Excellence and Quality, and Commitment to Individual Needs.
- Action Plans. The district's improvement/professional development process is embodied in five-year action plans. The process requires the district and individual schools to evaluate current status and baseline data, establish goals, and develop school improvement and building staff development plans to achieve desired outcomes. Plans include anticipated outcomes, research-based strategies, necessary resources, documentation of improvement, and other elements.
- Current Research. Current knowledge and research is continually used to design and develop quality professional learning activities. The information is acquired, discussed, spread, and folded into practice in various ways, including newsletters, the Internet, staff-written research briefs, and training sessions. Ongoing discussion groups are set up to explore new ideas. Funding is provided to support ideas that can be integrated into the program.
- Evaluation. Evaluation plans are in place for large-scale district training programs, building staff development plans, and individual teacher-growth plans. The Teacher Appraisal Process uses an Individual Development Plan and annual Job Targets. Each method allows individual teachers to customize their own learning based on professional needs.

- **Professional Growth Structures.** The district supplies a wide array of support activities, such as eight hours of paid training outside the contract day, release time for during-the-day training, six and one-half inservice days, after-school learning opportunities, summer training, stipends for Saturday, professional development points tied to state re-licensure, and graduate credit from local university partners.
- **Resources.** The District Distance Learning Lab links staff seeking English as a Second Language certification to university coursework. The Instructional Materials Center features a technology training lab, staff development training facilities, and a large resource center with up-to-date instructional materials and professional resources.

Results

As a result of the extensive and well-organized staff development available to teachers in Olathe School District, students are succeeding. In the last few years, scores on the state tests, the norm-referenced achievement test and the ACT, are steadily increasing. In addition, the gap between lower and higher SES status groups is narrowing. The tables below tell the story of student success as a result of staff development in Olathe.

In 1997, more than 83% of the teachers reported that staff development helped them implement school improvement. 80% of the respondents reported that training provided during the school day was beneficial. 70% reported that training provided after school was beneficial. 74% appreciated the opportunity to receive college credit and staff development points for staff development experiences.

The following table compares the 1994-95 baseline data with 1997-98 data, regarding staff members' implementation of reading and math strategies. Numbers represent the percentage of the staff reporting each level of professional development in regard to the new reading and math strategies taught as a part of the staff development program.

	Elementary		Secondary	
Reading	94-95	97-98	94-95	97-98
Level 1- Non-Use	2	2	5	0
Level 2- Awareness	21	11	12	6
Level 3- Demonstration	51	38	58	33
Level 4- Integration	23	42	22	47
Level 5- Mastery / Resource	3	7	3	14

	Elementary		Secondary	
Math	94-95	97-98	94-95	97-98
Level 1- Non-Use	3	2	10	0
Level 2- Awareness	19	15	10	4
Level 3- Demonstration	51	42	59	21
Level 4- Integration	23	35	19	65

Level 5– Mastery / Resource	4	6	2	10
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The Kansas reading data demonstrate the link between staff development and student achievement. Scores in reading increased by 5% district-wide between 1994–95 and 1997–98. 5 of the 28 schools in Olathe met the state's rigorous Standard of Excellence.

Statewide, the gap in scores between students in the high and low SES groups continued to widen. However, in Olathe the gap narrowed substantially. Training in specific research-based reading instructional strategies and an early intervention program helped improve student performance in reading.

	1994–95	1997–98
Narrative Reading	9% gap between lower and higher SES groups	3% gap between lower and higher SES groups
Expository Reading	7.5% gap between lower and higher SES groups	4% gap between lower and higher SES groups

Replication Details

Olathe School District is successful because it has a strong infrastructure to support staff development. Key elements in this infrastructure are clear goals, guiding principles, and a strong link between school improvement efforts and staff development. The guiding principles are:

- Children first
- Respect for all
- Teamwork
- Excellence and Quality
- Commitment to Individual Needs

These guiding principles influence decisions made about staff development.

The state's accountability system requires schools to have five-year plans focused on improving student achievement. Frequent data analysis and alignment among the district teams that design and support the district and school improvement plans and the schools improvement and staff development plan help keep the district and schools on a steady course toward improvement.

The district has invested in resources to support staff development. A voter-approved resource to the Instructional Materials Center helped the district expand its training facilities, add a distance learning lab, computer training labs, and additional training rooms. The center houses instructional materials, videotapes, sets of books for study groups to use, and other support resources.

The district, as a result of a grant from the National Foundation for Innovations in Education (NFIE),

is strengthening the link among appraisal, school improvement, and staff development. This effort has allowed the district to develop future teachers clubs, four professional development schools, an induction program for new employees, promotion of National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certification for experienced teachers, and support for teachers in need.

Costs and Funding

The district enjoys the support of its teachers' union and the community for staff development. The budget for staff development has risen from \$10,000 in 1993 to \$350,000 in 1998. The district has received approximately two million dollars in grants in the 1998–99 school year, as a result of aggressive proposal writing. Additional staff members have been added to provide support in staff development. Instructional Resource Teachers and subject area coordinators are available to support teachers and schools.

Contact Information

Alison Banikowski, Assistant Superintendent
Curriculum and Instruction
Olathe District Schools
14160 Black Bob Road
Olathe, KS 66063–2000
Telephone: (919) 780–8028
Fax: (913) 780–8007
banikowski@mail.olathe.k12.ks.us

Rating Criteria

The Olathe School District, Olathe, Kansas, was selected as a winner of the 1998–1999 National Awards Program for Model Professional Development.

What is the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development?

As part of a continuing effort to honor excellence in education, the U.S. Department of Education sponsors the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development. This program recognizes schools and school districts with exemplary professional development programs and disseminates information about high-quality professional development efforts that provide evidence of student learning and increased teacher effectiveness. Since the focus of this competition is on professional development for teachers and other educators in pre-kindergarten through grade 12 settings, only individual schools (public or private) or school districts may apply. Schools or districts may, however, submit applications that describe their partnerships with other entities, in particular, institutions of higher education. Recognition under this awards program is based on how well applicants demonstrate the success of their programs, using identified selection criteria that their professional development program results in increased student outcomes. Criteria for selection* include:

Background and Overview of Professional Development

The applicant provides a brief explanation of why the representatives consider professional development in their schools or districts exemplary by describing the program's key components and relating those to the U.S. Department of Education's Mission and Principles of Professional Development. This description must provide evidence that the professional

development activities are not narrowly focused on one subgroup of students or staff within the school or district.

Goals and Outcomes

The applicant describes the professional development goals, including how they: (1) are developed; (2) relate to school improvement; (3) are based on a needs assessment; and (4) address the achievement of all students regardless of gender, socio-economic level or disadvantaged status, race, ethnic or cultural background, exceptional abilities or disabilities, or limited-English proficiency. Applicants must also address the changes in teaching and student learning that are expected to result from professional development. They must describe how professional development goals and outcomes promote teaching and learning to high standards.

Professional Development Design and Implementation

The applicant provides evidence that professional development reflects research and best practice; includes comprehensive evaluation; includes organizational structures (e.g., administrative and policy support) and resources (e.g., use of time, expertise, funds) that support it; promotes continuous inquiry and improvement; and ensures that the larger school community understands its importance to school improvement.

Objective Evidence of Success

The applicant clearly demonstrates that teacher effectiveness and student learning have improved as a direct result of the implemented professional development activities. Data that reflect this connection must be provided and discussed. The focus of this criterion is objective evidence, and a compelling argument must be made for the way in which professional development positively affects outcomes for all teachers and all students. This argument must emphasize areas where any achievement gaps between groups (e.g., gender, socio-economic status, ethnicity) have been addressed and narrowed.

Implications for the Field

The applicant describes the lessons learned as the professional development activities have matured.

*These criteria are derived from the Mission and Principles of Professional Development prepared by the U.S. Department of Education in 1995, in consultation with numerous educational organizations, and have been previously published for public comment.

Information about the current award cycle for the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development can be found at <http://www.ed.gov/inits/TeachersWeb/>.

This story exemplifies the following practices:

Professional development should be connected to a comprehensive change process focused on improving student learning.

Sprayberry High School

Sprayberry High School

Marietta, GA

School Type: Public

School

Setting: Suburban

Level: High

School

Design: Traditional

Content Presented By:

National Awards Program for Model
Professional Development



When Athena Vachtsevanos thought about what made Sprayberry High School in Marietta, Georgia, so successful, she paused, but not for long. "Learning is in everything we do now. But it wasn't always like that. We had to work up to it. First, we took care of creature comforts, such as providing duty-free lunch, and then we were able to talk about how the testing was not going well."

The story of Sprayberry is similar to that of other schools. Starting out with a focus on building collaboration skills and developing trust, the school adopted site-based management. Becoming equal partners with the administration empowered teachers to take control of their areas of responsibility and assume leadership roles. The results were remarkable. Even though the student population is changing, Sprayberry students maintain extremely high scores on state and national tests.

Learning is a part of everything that occurs at Sprayberry. No meetings are held without setting a learning goal. This is one secret to the way in which Vachtsevanos promotes learning in the school. "Every encounter we have is a sort of growth opportunity to increase student achievement," says Vachtsevanos. Meetings with the administrative team, division chairs, departments, and various committees become opportunities for learning. Sprayberry has extensive teacher learning opportunities including "lunch and learns" (brown bag sessions where teachers gather to learn together), mentoring, training provided by division chairs, after-school courses taught by teachers in the school, and district courses. Teachers engage in common planning sessions, summer institutes, and action research. "We are a research playground," says Vachtsevanos. Teachers are constantly reading, writing grants, and working collaboratively.

Staff members at Sprayberry are involved in a number of in-house professional development experiences. They adopted Larry Lezotte's Learning for All program and mission statement: Learning for all, whatever it takes. Dr. Lezotte personally mentors the school. Both the school and the entire state has now adopted Hanson, Silver, and Strong's critical thinking model and teachers participate in training related to the critical thinking models. Teachers engage in study groups about Eric Jensen's Brain-Based Learning. They participate in a 30-hour course on Howard Gardner's and David Lazear's multiple intelligences. Two 30-hour courses on Robert Slavin's model of cooperative learning are available for staff members.

Integrating technology is the focus of a number of other learning experiences for teachers. Every five years, teachers in Georgia must earn 100 hours of professional development, 50 of which must be in technology. Mini-sessions, after school courses, and in-classroom support are ways in which

teachers can earn the 50 hours of training they need in technology every five years.

Another secret to success at Sprayberry is success itself. "Success breeds success," says Vachtsevanos. Celebrating success focuses attention on what teachers and students are accomplishing. Every success no matter how large or small is celebrated with the entire faculty. Keeping people's spirits high and focusing on the end results are a part of the culture of Sprayberry. There is much to celebrate at Sprayberry. The school enjoys consistently high student performance results, a steady stream of grants, and a number of state and national awards.

Perhaps the most significant contribution to student success at Sprayberry is the focus on student achievement. Each student receives personalized attention. Teachers, counselors, and administrators keep in close contact with parents. Every student has a faculty mentor who communicates frequently with the student's home. "Building a bond between school and home is important for student success. We help parents know the importance of education," reports Vachtsevanos. With a student population of 2300, this type of personalized attention requires a tremendous commitment from the entire school staff.

An important part of the Sprayberry success is the addition of new positions. A Learning Support Strategist (LSS) was hired to assist teachers in the investigation of research-based teaching strategies and to conduct training and provide support as teachers update their instructional skills. Staff members recognized the complexity and vast amount of information students are required to process and realized that their current instructional strategies are out-dated. The LSS also works with teachers to develop specific instructional strategies for students who are experiencing learning difficulties.

In addition to the LSS, a project manager was hired to assist the faculty with integrating technology into their classrooms. The project manager supports the staff in the installation, research, maintenance, and everyday use of technology. An assistant principal for curriculum and instruction was added to help analyze student needs and to work closely with departments to develop courses to meet these needs.

Student performance scores on state and national tests demonstrate that the emphasis on learning for all, including the adults, has paid huge dividends in terms of student success, national and state awards, and grants.

Demographics

Sprayberry High School is a large high school of 2,079 students located in Marietta, Georgia, a suburb of Atlanta. The school opened in 1952 to serve a principally rural community; however, the school population is now drawn from more suburban neighborhoods. The past six years have seen a sizeable influx of ethnically diverse families, many of whom speak English as a second language.

Student Racial/Ethnic Composition:

- 0.1% American Indian (Navajo)
- 5.3% Asian or Pacific Islander
- 10.6% African American, not of Hispanic origin
- 3.1% Hispanic
- 79.5% White (not of Hispanic origin)

Limited English Proficiency: 1%

Qualify for Free/Reduced Price Lunch: 2%

Receive Special Education Services: 11%

Background

Over the past seven years, Sprayberry High School has been transformed from an average school to a school of excellence. The basic vehicle for change at Sprayberry has been the adoption of site-based management that made teachers and the administration equal partners in school improvement.

Sprayberry High School's teachers are now empowered to assume leadership roles in designing their own professional development. Sprayberry has set goals and created a staff plan articulating the four elements of the School Improvement Action Plan (SIAP):

1. Disaggregation of data to identify areas of need
2. Investigation of current educational studies to select research-based strategies for improving instruction
3. Designing staff development programs to train teachers in best practices for improving student performance
4. On-going review of progress

Design & Implementation

- Learning for All. By attending numerous seminars with Dr. Larry Lazotte and participating in study groups related to Lazotte's book, "Learning for All," Sprayberry's administrators and a core of teachers became immersed in Lazotte's mission statement: "Learning for all, whatever it takes." When Sprayberry was selected to participate in their county's "Learning for All" program, its entire faculty bought into the Lazotte philosophy. Dr. Lazotte himself became a mentor for Sprayberry and conferenced regularly with the principal and other faculty members. Much of the staff development focus has resulted from Sprayberry's belief that every student has the potential to learn, provided his teachers are sufficiently equipped with the right strategies.
- Critical Thinking Skills. Sprayberry's model for critical thinking skills came from Hanson, Silver, and Strong and Associates, Inc., a consortium of educators who have developed over 500 strategies conveying information, inspiring creativity, and infusing lessons with activities which demand critical thinking. The Georgia Department of Education later adopted this model as the standard for teaching critical thinking, thus validating the choice. Richard Strong and Harvey Silver trained the Assistant Principal for Curriculum and the principal. The Learner Support Strategist conducted inservices and courses for the faculty based on the critical thinking strategies developed by the consortium.
- Brain-Based Learning. Realizing that the emerging field of brain research and the cognitive sciences was a vital source for developing teaching strategies, everyone in the Sprayberry faculty read "Brain-Based Learning" by Eric Jensen and met in study groups by subject area to dissect the information and select those components which would most impact their particular disciplines. Again, collegial study, assimilation and application of the material proved to be the best model for teachers taking ownership of the information and applying it to the development of critical thinking in their classrooms.
- Multiple Intelligences. Sprayberry combined the work of Howard Gardner and David Lazear to develop its own approach to identifying intelligences and adjusting instruction to the

different intelligences possessed by students. Creating assignments that focus on a variety of intelligences provided students with the opportunity to work on their own area of strength, while at the same time allowing them exposure to other intelligences that they needed to strengthen. The Learner Support Strategist, as well as a number of related inservices, taught a 30-hour staff development course. Teachers incorporated multiple intelligences into their unit lesson planning and shared plans with other members of their respective departments.

- **Cooperative Learning.** Recognizing a need for an instructional approach which would enable lower-level students to work with and learn from more advanced students, they selected the cooperative learning model of Robert E. Slavin. Two 30-hour staff development courses were presented in cooperative learning, as well as a one-day seminar for the math department that narrowed the focus of cooperative learning to its application in applied math courses.
- **Technology.** Dovetailing the critical thinking skills emphasis, Sprayberry saw a need to present technology training as part of its staff development program since the Internet offers a richer information base for student assignments.

Results

A number of indicators point to the success of the model adopted by Sprayberry High School:

- More students are admitted to college.
- The number of students receiving academic scholarships has increased.
- The school has been recognized by Georgia's Governor's Honors Program.
- SAT scores are rising.

Perhaps a more accurate reflection of the increase in achievement at Sprayberry are the results of the Georgia High School Exit Exam, which tests every student, including special needs and ESOL students. The tests measure retention of content in the core curricular areas and critical thinking and expression in writing. Despite changes in the student demographics, Sprayberry has increased or maintained very high performance in these areas.

Georgia High School Exit Exam					
Ê	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
English	97	97	96	96	99
Math	95	96	95	96	97
Science	Ê	Ê	Ê	93	87
Writing	98	96	97	98	98
Soc. Studies	Ê	Ê	95	91	92

Changes in Demographics (Sprayberry High School)		
Ê	1992	1998

White, not Hispanic	91.0%	79.4%
Black, not Hispanic	5.2%	10.7%
Hispanic	1.3%	3.1%
Asian or Pacific Islander	2.3%	5.3%
American Indian / Alaskan	.1%	.1%
Multiracial	Ê	1.3%

SAT scores steadily increased each year, except during 1995. This drop provided a wake-up call to provide professional development to help teachers challenge students to think critically and achieve at higher levels. Sprayberry's SAT scores increased despite the increased number of students taking the test and exceeded the national norm of 1013 in 1998.

Scholastic Aptitude Test							
Ê	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Verbal	514	505	510	509	515	516	515
Math	490	492	503	496	500	502	510
Total	1004	997	1013	1005	1015	1018	1025

Site Visit Report

Criteria	Evidence
The data collected provide evidence that the professional development activities lead to improved teaching.	Classroom observations, reports of student success, and interviews with staff provide support to improved student achievement beyond the testing program. Teacher reports success of the new strategies being implemented. Students report that their teachers care for them.
The data collected provide evidence that the professional development	Student behavior, attendance, and demeanor provide positive evidence in

activities lead to improved student learning.	addition to the more traditional measures of achievement.
The data collected provide evidence that the professional development activities lead to a narrowing of exiting achievement gaps.	Counselors have implemented a program to support minority students. Special needs students are included in regular classes when appropriate. Teachers of special needs students have high expectations for student learning. Students work with peers and faculty to form a learning community.

Replication Details

Georgia's requirements for teacher recertification make it mandatory for each teacher to complete 100 hours of staff development every five years with a minimum of 50 hours in technology. To support student achievement and teacher development, an assistant principal of Curriculum and Instruction was added to the administrative staff. A Learning Support Strategist was added to the staff to investigate research-based teaching strategies and conduct intensive teacher training on instructional strategies. The LSS works with individual teachers and whole departments to plan instruction to accommodate the needs of individual students.

A project manager was also added to the faculty to support research, installation, maintenance, and utilization of technology. The manager provides subject-specific training to help teachers integrate technology into their classrooms.

Since Sprayberry is using Lezotte's "Learning for All" model of school improvement, the school is benefiting from personal coaching and support provided by Dr. Lezotte. Other support is available to Sprayberry from a wide range of partnerships the school has developed nationally and within its own community.

These efforts have earned Sprayberry High School state and national recognition, including:

- Awarded \$240,000 in the Governor's Pay for Performance program
- Recognized as a Georgia School of Excellence
- Recognized as a National School of Excellence
- Listed by Redbook Magazine as the best high school in Georgia
- Selected as a winner of the 1998–1999 National Awards Program for Model Professional Development

Costs and Funding

As a result of numerous grants totaling over \$7 million dollars, teachers at Sprayberry have enjoyed extensive professional development opportunities and support.

Contact Information

Athena Vachtsevanos, Principal
Sprayberry High School
2525 Sandy Plains Road
Marietta, Georgia 30062
Telephone: (770) 509-6111
Fax: (770) 509-6114
vat10765@cobbk12.org

Rating Criteria

Sprayberry High School, Marietta, Georgia, was selected as a winner of the 1998-1999 National Awards Program for Model Professional Development.

What is the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development?

As part of a continuing effort to honor excellence in education, the U.S. Department of Education sponsors the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development. This program recognizes schools and school districts with exemplary professional development programs and disseminates information about high-quality professional development efforts that provide evidence of student learning and increased teacher effectiveness. Since the focus of this competition is on professional development for teachers and other educators in pre-kindergarten through grade 12 settings, only individual schools (public or private) or school districts may apply. Schools or districts may, however, submit applications that describe their partnerships with other entities, in particular, institutions of higher education. Recognition under this awards program is based on how well applicants demonstrate the success of their programs, using identified selection criteria that their professional development program results in increased student outcomes. Criteria for selection* include:

Background and Overview of Professional Development

The applicant provides a brief explanation of why the representatives consider professional development in their schools or districts exemplary by describing the program's key components and relating those to the U.S. Department of Education's Mission and Principles of Professional Development. This description must provide evidence that the professional development activities are not narrowly focused on one subgroup of students or staff within the school or district.

Goals and Outcomes

The applicant describes the professional development goals, including how they: (1) are developed; (2) relate to school improvement; (3) are based on a needs assessment; and (4) address the achievement of all students regardless of gender, socio-economic level or disadvantaged status, race, ethnic or cultural background, exceptional abilities or disabilities, or limited-English proficiency. Applicants must also address the changes in teaching and student learning that are expected to result from professional development. They must describe how professional development goals and outcomes promote teaching and learning to high standards.

Professional Development Design and Implementation

The applicant provides evidence that professional development reflects research and best practice; includes comprehensive evaluation; includes organizational structures (e.g., administrative and policy support) and resources (e.g., use of time, expertise, funds) that support it; promotes continuous inquiry and improvement; and ensures that the larger school community understands its importance to school improvement.

Objective Evidence of Success

The applicant clearly demonstrates that teacher effectiveness and student learning have improved as a direct result of the implemented professional development activities. Data that reflect this connection must be provided and discussed. The focus of this criterion is objective evidence, and a compelling argument must be made for the way in which professional development positively affects outcomes for all teachers and all students. This argument must emphasize areas where any achievement gaps between groups (e.g., gender, socio-economic status, ethnicity) have been addressed and narrowed.

Implications for the Field

The applicant describes the lessons learned as the professional development activities have matured.

*These criteria are derived from the Mission and Principles of Professional Development prepared by the U.S. Department of Education in 1995, in consultation with numerous educational organizations, and have been previously published for public comment.

Information about the current award cycle for the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development can be found at <http://www.ed.gov/inits/TeachersWeb/>.

This story exemplifies the following practices:

Professional development should be primarily school-based and built into the day-to-day work of teaching.

Professional development should provide learning opportunities that relate to individual needs but are, for the most part, organized around collaborative problem solving.

Spring Woods High School

Spring Woods High School

Houston, TX

School Type: Public

School

Setting: Urban

Level: High

School

Design: Traditional

Content Presented By:

National Awards Program for Model
Professional Development



Situated in Houston, near one of the wealthiest neighborhoods in the city, Spring Woods High School faced what many other schools face: an increasing discrepancy in the performance of their disadvantaged and minority students. While being one of the richest districts in terms of property wealth, the district also had the highest level of illiteracy among the recent immigrants in the Houston area. The discrepancy in student achievement and the changing student population underscored the need for action at Spring Woods.

"After exploring a number of programs and theories," says Eloise Hambright-Brown, director of Accelerated and Compensatory Education at the school, "we needed a backdrop to bring it all together. That is why we were interested in culturally responsive learning." The staff worked with the culturally responsive teaching and learning program developed by consultant Margery Ginsberg and co-author of *Diversity and Motivation: Culturally Responsive Teaching*. The staff has eagerly embraced the unique characteristics of their students and has learned to enhance instructional strategies to meet the needs of all students.

The program began, when Schoolwide Leadership Cadre, an inquiry-oriented group of key stakeholders (including the principal, assistant principal, teachers, parents, community members, and central office staff) decided to explore issues underlying student success. This team was responsible for planning, implementing, and strengthening the schoolwide program. The cadre participated in an intensive training in the four features of the culturally responsive framework. Their enthusiasm was contagious. The cadre became in-house staff developers, in addition to their regular teaching responsibilities. They learned to refine their strategies and provide training to their colleagues on staff development.

The cadre has release time every other month to provide training and support to their colleagues. Title I funds, district staff development days, staff meeting time, and conference time are all pooled together to provide the resources to support their release time. The district provides five staff development days within the school year for all staff members to engage in learning.

To promote implementation, teachers identify a partner or buddy teacher with whom they agree to work to refine their use of the framework. Partners are required to work with each other six times during the school year. As partners learn strategies, they try them out, and dialogue with their partners about what they are doing and learning. A partnership rubric was developed to guide the observations and partner dialogues resulting from the observations. With these partnerships among staff members,

there are many strategies that teachers learn from one another, according to Hambright–Brown.

Collaboration among teachers is one key to success at Spring Woods. The partnership has led to other ways teachers learn from each other, as well. Teachers are examining student work together and discussing how their work with students is being impacted by what they are learning. The annual poster session on "best practices" highlights successful lesson plans and student work. Evidence collected from observations is being collected to share across the school.

Now that teachers understand the academic needs of culturally and economically diverse students, their focus for staff development efforts at Spring Woods is shifting to literacy. The cadre is taking what it learned about culturally responsive teaching and learning and applying it to literacy. After a retreat, cadre members are planning to build literacy across the curriculum using a motivational framework. Professional learning teams will focus on instruction, examine student work, and conduct peer coaching to focus more on literacy.

The school's administrators are intimately involved in every step of the process. They participate in training, serve as members of the cadre, deliver training, observe teachers, and offer support. Their involvement emphasizes the importance of the changes underway and conveys a message of support.

Over the last few years, data suggest that teachers' efforts are paying huge dividends. Student behavior, motivation, and attitudes are improving. Teachers are implementing more culturally appropriate instructional strategies and student achievement is improving. Scores have increased dramatically (22.2 % to 77.3 % in math; 23.1% to 86.1% in reading; 10.9% to 85.2% in writing). Even the passing rates of low performing students are steadily increasing on the state tests. Through careful analysis of student performance data and schoolwide planning, positive changes are occurring for teachers and students at Spring Woods.

Demographics

Spring Woods Senior High School is a large, urban high school in Houston, Texas. In the past few years, the student population has greatly diversified and changed the instructional and professional development needs of the school.

Student Racial/Ethnic Composition:

- 0.25% American Indian (Navajo)
- 8% Asian or Pacific Islander
- 11% African American, not of Hispanic origin
- 48% Hispanic
- 32% White (not of Hispanic origin)

Limited English Proficiency (16 languages spoken): 14%

Qualify for Free/Reduced Price Lunch: 50%

Receive Special Education Services: 9%

Background

Spring Woods staff reviewed campus data and surveyed students and parents to determine how to meet the unique instructional and motivational needs of their culturally diverse student population. They established a "schoolwide leadership cadre" comprised of parents, administrators, and teachers

from all disciplines and grade levels to study whole school change.

The cadre spent a year working with an external consultant to build their capacity to lead ongoing comprehensive reform that would support culturally responsive teaching. The resulting professional development plan established these three goals:

1. More inclusive, relevant, and challenging approach to instructional practices
2. Collaborative, job-embedded learning and enhanced communication among adults
3. Parent involvement that encourages diverse representation and participation in meaningful decisions and activities

Design & Implementation

- Schoolwide Leadership Cadre. The goal of the schoolwide leadership cadre was to create an alternative to dependence on external "experts" for planning and implementing reform and to make sure that the program became a well integrated part of school life. The schoolwide cadre served (and continues to serve) as teacher-leaders who are site-based developers, mentors of instructional improvement, and advocates of continuous meaningful school improvement. Throughout the initial year of learning about whole school change, the cadre regularly shared ideas with their departmental teams and, in addition, co-facilitated three schoolwide institutes on the topics of culturally responsive teaching, supporting the intrinsic motivation of all students, finding and using time for collegial learning and planning, and the complexity of ambitious school change/reform processes. The second year, the cadre doubled in size to include two representatives from each department. This has fostered dialogue across subject areas and has avoided marginalizing any individual or department.
- Diversity and Motivation: Culturally Responsive Teaching. The schoolwide leadership cadre has helped to create a professional development initiative based on a motivational framework for culturally responsive teaching and learning. The framework provides a template for highly motivating instructional practices across cultures and disciplines. While the framework includes new teaching strategies for each condition, it also serves as a template for recognizing existing strengths in an educator's instructional practice and providing clues for developing those strengths. With the understanding that motivation is inseparable from culture, the framework provides four basic conditions that, when consistently present in learning, elicit the motivation of all adults and students. The four conditions include:
 1. Establishing inclusion
 2. Developing a positive attitude
 3. Enhancing meaning by offering challenging and engaging learning
 4. Engendering competence
- The Process of the Professional Development Design. Initially, the process included: an institute where the cadre examined the framework; an opportunity for the cadre to develop collaborative inquiry projects; and, school-based institutes for faculty and staff to engage in using the framework. The professional development plan continues to use classroom observations and dialogue between the cadre and faculty; work sessions for the cadre to share experiences and deepen leadership skills; and, collaborative professional learning communities that meet regularly to investigate research, plan collaborative lessons, examine student work, and document key learning. In addition, school administrators meet regularly to strengthen their own understanding of culturally responsive teaching.

Results

Descriptive data collected from classroom observations, sample lesson plans, interviews, and feedback from institutes suggest that professional development has:

1. Increased teacher knowledge about culturally responsive teaching practices
2. Increased used of culturally responsive instructional strategies, skills, and behaviors in classrooms
3. Improved student behavior and attitude
4. Improved student learning

Teachers are setting goals that demonstrate ownership in strengthening instructional practices to improve the performance of all students. The staff at Spring Woods is developing shared instructional vocabulary. Data about best practices are being collected in a school-wide process-folio to share across the entire faculty.

The school is collecting climate survey data and information about drop-out rates, attendance, and discipline referrals to assess the learning climate at Spring Woods and to develop a school-wide plan for continued improvement.

Results of the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills tests (given annually) demonstrate increased student achievement. Student scores in math increased from 22.2 percent of the students passing to 77.3 percent of the students passing over several years. Reading scores increased from 23.1 to 86.1 of the students passing. Writing scores also increased from 10.9 to 85.2. Scores of Hispanic and economically disadvantaged students have risen steadily during the last several years. These dramatic increases led to Spring Woods being named one of the top five performing schools in Texas in mathematics among schools with similar demographics.

Site Visit Report

Criteria	Evidence
The data collected provide evidence that the professional development activities lead to improved teaching.	The motivational framework has made teachers think about what they teach and how they teach. This extends to what they do in the classroom with students. The structure of the professional development plan supports for learning and trying culturally responsive instructional strategies, skills, and behaviors that influence student achievement. Teachers record the processes and the outcomes in their lesson plans and notebooks.

The data collected provide evidence that the professional development activities lead to improved student learning.	Scores on the state assessments increased dramatically in five year. Classroom observations indicate that students are engaged in learning in the classroom. Surveys indicate that students are more engaged and have improved attitudes.
The data collected provide evidence that the professional development activities lead to a narrowing of exiting achievement gaps.	Scores for minority and low SES students have increased. Special education students' scores have also increased. Spring Woods is making a difference in achievement for its diverse student population.

Replication Details

Spring Woods has worked extensively with consultant, Margery Ginsberg. Her program is based on the book she co-authored, "A Motivational Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching." The framework is being used to develop curriculum and instructional units to improve literacy achievement of students.

One key to success at Spring Woods is the development of the schoolwide leadership cadre. This inquiry-oriented team includes the principal, assistant principal, teachers, parent and community representatives, and central office personnel. The team provides leadership in programmatic and professional development decisions, as well as training and development experiences for the staff.

Staff members have one and one-half hours each week for professional development. Each week the time is used for a different purpose. The first Wednesday is used for learning time, the second for planning collaborative lessons, the third for examining student work, and the last is for reflection.

Costs and Funding

Information on costs and funding for professional development at Spring Woods High School is not available.

Contact Information

Eloise Hambright-Brown, Ed.D.
 Director, Accelerated and Compensatory Education
 Spring Woods Senior High School
 9000 Westview, Room S104
 Houston, TX 77055
 Telephone: (713) 365-5585
 Fax: (713) 365-5597

hambrige@spring-branch.isd.tenet.edu

Rating Criteria

Spring Woods High School, Houston, Texas, was selected as a winner of the 1998–1999 National Awards Program for Model Professional Development.

What is the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development?

As part of a continuing effort to honor excellence in education, the U.S. Department of Education sponsors the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development. This program recognizes schools and school districts with exemplary professional development programs and disseminates information about high-quality professional development efforts that provide evidence of student learning and increased teacher effectiveness. Since the focus of this competition is on professional development for teachers and other educators in pre-kindergarten through grade 12 settings, only individual schools (public or private) or school districts may apply. Schools or districts may, however, submit applications that describe their partnerships with other entities, in particular, institutions of higher education. Recognition under this awards program is based on how well applicants demonstrate, using identified selection criteria that their professional development program results in increased student outcomes. Criteria for selection* include:

Background and Overview of Professional Development

The applicant provides a brief explanation of why they consider professional development in their schools or districts exemplary by describing the program's key components and relating those to the U.S. Department of Education's Mission and Principles of Professional Development. This description must provide evidence that the professional development activities are not narrowly focused on one subgroup of students or staff within the school or district.

Goals and Outcomes

The applicant describes the professional development goals, including how they: (1) are developed; (2) relate to school improvement; (3) are based on a needs assessment; and (4) address the achievement of all students regardless of gender, socio-economic level or disadvantaged status, race, ethnic or cultural background, exceptional abilities or disabilities, or limited-English proficiency. Applicants also must address the changes in teaching and student learning that are expected to result from professional development, and must describe how professional development goals and outcomes promote teaching and learning to high standards.

Professional Development Design and Implementation

The applicant provides evidence that professional development reflects research and best practice; includes comprehensive evaluation; includes organizational structures (e.g., administrative and policy support) and resources (e.g., use of time, expertise, funds) that support it; promotes continuous inquiry and improvement; and ensures that the larger school community understands its importance to school improvement.

Objective Evidence of Success

The applicant clearly demonstrates that teacher effectiveness and student learning have improved as a direct result of the implemented professional development activities. Data that indicate this connection must be provided and discussed. The focus of this criterion is objective evidence, and a compelling argument must be made for how professional development positively affects outcomes for all teachers and all students, and must emphasize areas where any achievement gaps between groups (e.g., gender, socio-economic status, ethnicity) have been addressed and narrowed.

Implications for the Field

The applicant describes the lessons learned as the professional development activities have matured.

*These criteria are derived from the Mission and Principles of Professional Development prepared by the U.S. Department of Education in 1995, in consultation with numerous educational organizations, and have been previously published for public comment.

Information about the current award cycle for the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development can be found at <http://www.ed.gov/inits/TeachersWeb/>.

This story exemplifies the following practices:

Professional development should be primarily school-based and built into the day-to-day work of teaching.

Wherry Elementary School

Wherry Elementary School

Albuquerque, NM

School Type: Public

**School
Setting:** Urban

Level: Elementary

**School
Design:** Traditional

Content Presented By:

National Awards Program for Model
Professional Development



Wherry Elementary School in Albuquerque, New Mexico, has it all together. School improvement plan, professional development, teacher evaluation, school governance, curriculum, and student assessment are all focused on one goal at Wherry: improving the literacy skills of students. When every aspect of school life is mustered together to improve students' reading and writing, dramatic changes in student performance occur.

Wherry's story emphasizes that, when teachers are given shared responsibility to solve problems and have the support of a strong visionary leader, students will benefit. No single strategy emerges as the secret weapon at Wherry. It is the combination of solid strategies that contributes to the remarkable success at this school.

In the last few years (1994–1998) alone, students' literacy scores have increased from 38% to 56% and the composite score has increased from 33% to 57% on state assessments. Student writing scores have increased from 2.02 to 2.96 on the six-point state assessment scale. These increases are significant given the context of the school. Wherry has a diverse student population and is located on Kirtland Air Force Base near Albuquerque, NM. Two-thirds of the student population commutes to school from residences outside of the base. This presents a unique problem for many parents, who are not able to visit the school due to lack of transportation or the necessary documentation to be permitted access to the base.

The School Restructuring Council, established by state law in New Mexico schools, provided the first impetus for change. This leadership team of elected members meets frequently to focus on improving student performance through professional development. At Wherry, the need to improve students' literacy skills ranked as the first priority.

The staff selected the New Zealand Model for Balanced Literacy and Six-Trait Writing as the content of their professional development program. With four years of focus on reading and just one year's focus on writing, the school is beginning to see improvement in student performance. Teachers are involved in training, coaching, dialogue groups, and supervision through their evaluation system to support their learning and application of learning in the classroom. Teachers attend mini-sessions and study groups, and they receive individual consultation from a literacy consultant who supports Wherry's implementation of the New Zealand Model for Balanced Literacy.

Margaret Clark, Wherry's principal, says that the individual professional development plan gives teachers an opportunity to select areas they want to focus on. She says, "This is the action part. We ask each teacher: 'What will you do to focus on our school goal?'" These individual plans could last up to three years and are approved by the principal. In order to strengthen the faculty's learning skills, the principal requested that each teacher observe others engaged in literacy instruction twice during the school year. Clark covers teachers during their observations. In addition, the principal observes each teacher as he or she is learning to do something new. This approach encourages practice and the application of training that teachers receive. It also underscores the fact that changing the practice of teaching takes time.

Frequent student assessment helps teachers see visible signs of their students' progress. The assessment process at Wherry focuses on answering three questions:

- How do we know that all students are learning?
- What evidence do we have of this?
- What are we doing with the data in order to improve instruction for all students?

This frequent assessment data not only helps teachers improve their daily instruction, but it also helps identify the areas on which teachers need further professional development. At the end of each year, teachers also write reflections about each student's strengths and needs. Teams of grade level teachers discuss these needs and use them to identify their needs for the following school year.

Other structures provide opportunities for teachers to engage in professional development and to create strong collaboration in the school. A group of teachers participates in the Rockefeller Learning Community project. They meet every other week with their colleagues to read and discuss research in the area of literacy. These teachers cover each other's classes so they have 90 minutes of time every other week for these dialogue sessions. The student support team, designed to provide early intervention for students, gives teachers a chance to meet with colleagues, to talk about a particular student's learning needs, and to receive suggestions from a cross-grade level support team.

Clark knows that giving teachers the skills to excel leads to positive results for the students. She says, "Often principals feel like they should be instructional leaders. They really don't have to be, if teachers have something to focus on. Teachers will take it and run. They can't get enough. The principal just has to orchestrate it happening."

Demographics

Wherry Elementary is a K–5 public school in Albuquerque, New Mexico, situated on Kirtland Air Force Base, but drawing two-thirds of its 645 students from outside of the base.

Student Racial/Ethnic Composition:

- 4 % American Indian (Navajo)
- 3% Asian or Pacific Islander
- 8% African American, not of Hispanic origin
- 34% Hispanic
- 50% White (not of Hispanic origin)

Limited English Proficiency: 15%

Qualify for Free/Reduced Price Lunch: 66%

Receive Special Education Services: 15%

Background

The district mandated the creation of school-based management/shared decision-making teams called School Restructuring Councils (SRC). The SRC is the leadership team that has instructional improvement as its stated purpose and directs and evaluates the school's professional development process and results. Within this new structure, Wherry teachers examined their students' low achievement on standardized measures in literacy and decided that they needed to focus their professional improvement in this area. Their plan is based on the belief that teacher expertise is the single most important factor in impacting student achievements. A literacy specialist offered her consultant services to assist with Wherry's professional development, completing the team.

The broad goals for professional development at Wherry are to improve student achievement in reading and writing, facilitate and encourage changes in classroom practice to better meet the needs of all students, and allow time and support for change to take place.

Design & Implementation

- Content. The content for all professional development is determined through the analysis of student achievement data. It focuses on research/theory pertaining to literacy development, assessments that guide instruction, and proven teaching strategies. Presently, the professional development is centered on the improvement of students' reading and writing skills. It has specifically focused on the New Zealand Model for Balanced Literacy and Six Trait Writing.
- Literacy Consultant. The literacy consultant plays a key role in facilitating professional development activities and is funded through Title I, Bilingual, University of New Mexico, Learning Community Network, Re:Learning, and PTA moneys.
- Time. Time is generated (four full day inservices) through the voluntary 10-minute lengthening of each school day by the faculty. Time is built-in for the staff to share what they are learning and implementing, to talk about concerns, and to solve problems.
- Additional Support. Study groups, monthly mini inservices, and individual consultations with the literacy specialist are available.
- Individual Professional Development Plans and Observations of Peers. Teacher preparation of individual professional development plans and observations of peers are part of the evaluation.
- Determining Next Steps. Student data is reviewed and teacher needs assessments are conducted continually to determine next learning steps.

Results

Test scores at Wherry have increased over the last four years up to 2000. This time frame coincides with intensive professional development on instructional strategies for literacy. Teachers are eager to share how the new instructional strategies have improved their teaching. Their use of the new instructional strategies is high as reported in an anonymous survey. Furthermore, they feel comfortable being observed by colleagues, are eager to take the next steps in their learning process, and willingly give up preparation time to fund professional development.

Student results on standardized tests have increased in the years from 1996 to 2000.

4th and 5th Grades	Iowa Test of Basic Skills 1994	New Mexico Achievement Assessment
Reading Total	38%	56%
Vocabulary	37%	60%
Spelling	39%	47%
Language Total	35%	54%
Math Total	38%	49%
Science	52%	56%
Social Studies	38%	59%
Composite Total	33%	57%

New Mexico Writing Assessment (Six point holistic scale)		
ÊÊ	1994	1998
4th Grade	2.02	2.96

Wherry received the New Mexico Quality Education Award for Improving Literacy Achievement in December 1998.

The achievement of non- or limited-English speakers improved as a result of professional development in balanced literacy. These results include 22 percent LEP students.

ITBS and NM Achievement Assessment		
Ê	1997 3rd Grade	1994 4th Grade
Reading Total	17%	47%
Language Total	22%	38%
Math Total	26%	37%
Science	24%	49%
Social Studies	28%	54%
Composite Total	20%	39%

Site Visit Report

Criteria	Evidence
The data collected provide evidence that the professional development activities lead to improved teaching.	Teachers have confidence that professional development has impacted their teaching and their students' learning, especially in reading and writing. All teachers have been trained to give a diagnostic test and use the results to know their students' needs and to better meet those needs.
The data collected provide evidence that the professional development activities lead to improved student learning.	All formal and classroom-based indicators of student achievement have shown a rise. Teachers appreciated the support of the behavior consultant who has helped improve the learning climate in their classrooms.
The data collected provide evidence that the professional development activities lead to a narrowing of exiting achievement gaps.	Multiage classrooms meet the needs of diverse student population. Staff is engaged in a multiyear professional development program to address limited English proficient students.

Replication Details

At Wherry, the entire school is committed to a curriculum focus driven by students' strengths and needs. The principal is instrumental in supporting teacher learning. The adoption of the New Zealand Literacy Program has supported the dramatic changes in instruction and student learning.

The school hired a literacy consultant to provide professional development and classroom support to teachers so they could learn new instructional strategies. The staff consistently rates the consultant as a top budgetary priority and finds the guidance provided to be invaluable. Although most teachers prefer to participate in professional development at their own school, the staff is "transitioning out" of its heavy reliance on the consultant and resorting to district resource teachers to engage in various learning activities and workshops.

The state's accountability system requires each school to develop annual school improvement plans and monitor student progress. These requirements help keep the focus on literacy. Frequent assessments of student progress provide data to determine specific areas of needs and to gather data on student progress.

Costs and Funding

Wherry enjoys the support of the parents and community. Parents have provided funding to hire a literacy consultant and provide materials to support the balanced literacy program. Sandia National Labs in conjunction with the United Way provided a three-year, \$150,000 grant and over 50 volunteer tutors to develop a volunteer literacy tutoring program.

Contact Information

Rita Martinez, Principal
Wherry Elementary School
Building 25000
Kirtland Air Force Base
Albuquerque, NM 87116
Telephone: (505) 266-0093
Fax: (505) 266-0093
Martinez_ri@aps.edu

Rating Criteria

Wherry Elementary School, Albuquerque, New Mexico, was selected as a winner of the 1998–1999 National Awards Program for Model Professional Development.

What is the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development?

As part of a continuing effort to honor excellence in education, the U.S. Department of Education sponsors the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development. This program recognizes schools and school districts with exemplary professional development programs and disseminates information about high-quality professional development efforts that provide evidence of student learning and increased teacher effectiveness. Since the focus of this competition is on professional development for teachers and other educators in pre-kindergarten through grade 12 settings, only individual schools (public or private) or school districts may apply. Schools or districts may, however, submit applications that describe their partnerships with other entities, in particular, institutions of higher education. Recognition under this awards program is based on how well applicants demonstrate the success of their programs, using identified selection criteria that their professional development program results in increased student outcomes. Criteria for selection* include:

Background and Overview of Professional Development

The applicant provides a brief explanation of why the representatives consider professional development in their schools or districts exemplary by describing the program's key components and relating those to the U.S. Department of Education's Mission and Principles of Professional Development. This description must provide evidence that the professional development activities are not narrowly focused on one subgroup of students or staff within the school or district.

Goals and Outcomes

The applicant describes the professional development goals, including how they: (1) are developed; (2) relate to school improvement; (3) are based on a needs assessment; and (4)

address the achievement of all students regardless of gender, socio-economic level or disadvantaged status, race, ethnic or cultural background, exceptional abilities or disabilities, or limited-English proficiency. Applicants must also address the changes in teaching and student learning that are expected to result from professional development. They must describe how professional development goals and outcomes promote teaching and learning to high standards.

Professional Development Design and Implementation

The applicant provides evidence that professional development reflects research and best practice; includes comprehensive evaluation; includes organizational structures (e.g., administrative and policy support) and resources (e.g., use of time, expertise, funds) that support it; promotes continuous inquiry and improvement; and ensures that the larger school community understands its importance to school improvement.

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The applicant clearly demonstrates that teacher effectiveness and student learning have improved as a direct result of the implemented professional development activities. Data that reflect this connection must be provided and discussed. The focus of this criterion is objective evidence, and a compelling argument must be made for the way in which professional development positively affects outcomes for all teachers and all students. This argument must emphasize areas where any achievement gaps between groups (e.g., gender, socio-economic status, ethnicity) have been addressed and narrowed.

Implications for the Field

The applicant describes the lessons learned as the professional development activities have matured.

*These criteria are derived from the Mission and Principles of Professional Development prepared by the U.S. Department of Education in 1995, in consultation with numerous educational organizations, and have been previously published for public comment.

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This story exemplifies the following practices:

Professional development should involve teachers in the identification of what they need to learn and in the development of the learning experiences in which they will be involved.

Samuel Mason Elementary School

Samuel Mason Elementary School

Roxbury, MA

School Type: Public

**School
Setting:** Urban

Level: Elementary

**School
Design:** Traditional

Content Presented By:

National Awards Program for Model
Professional Development



At the Samuel Mason Elementary School, situated in an old warehouse district in Boston, the students aren't the only ones learning more than ever before.

From secretary to teacher to principal, every staff member here is required to formulate a personal development plan each September. Although all of the teachers by now have obtained dual certification in regular and special education, they are still expected to continuously identify what they don't yet know and to structure their learning accordingly. Summer and release-day time is set aside for school-wide work, and creative scheduling throughout the year enables grade-level teams and study groups to meet once a week during the normal school day to discuss upcoming efforts. Lead teachers in each subject area are available to assist others with incorporating new practices.

If all this sounds like a radical approach to system-wide professional development, it should--if only because drastic situations call for such measures. A controlled-choice public school in the Roxbury neighborhood of the city--a predominately African American enclave--the Samuel Mason faced the threat of closure in the 1980s due to poor performance. It ranked as the school least-chosen by parents in Boston, at the bottom of a list of 79. It was only when Principal Mary Russo took the helm in 1990, bringing with her a comprehensive professional development plan which turned the school upside down, that the Samuel Mason began to undergo a dramatic shift in student performance and public perceptions.

"We asked ourselves, 'What do kids who are excellent readers and writers look like, and where are people doing the best job of teaching kids to read and write well?'" says Russo. "And then we designed together the best way to make those things happen here, and the best way to get people here trained to be able to do those things."

Russo's emphasis on continuous needs assessment and her willingness to build in time for individual and team efforts have yielded stark results: an improvement in student achievement in reading and writing that has surpassed that of the Boston schools as a whole and an enrollment that has more than doubled, from 133 to 296. Today, the Samuel Mason is the 12th most-selected school in the city. Parents are drawn to the "Bright Start" program for kindergartners, the increased use of technology for learning, and the literacy program that enables students to read to community members and business professionals.

"For us, it was a powerful turnaround story, because our school had been a school that traditionally had failed children," says Russo. "About a third of the kids were not reading on grade level at any other time in the history of the school. And we reversed those statistics."

Still, the process has not been an easy one, and some teachers chose to leave at the outset. At a K–5 school that draws students from several nearby housing projects, where 74 percent of the pupils qualify for free or reduced–priced lunch and 26 percent receive special education services, faculty members here already faced a challenging set of circumstances. But to Russo, this meant only that training efforts would need to make it possible for every teacher to become equipped to support the students before them.

At the beginning of every school year, the designated Professional Development Team, comprised of teachers, parents, and Russo, prepares the yearly school improvement plan that aligns professional development activities with the goals for student achievement. Grade–level teams select a set of strategies to learn and then use weekly meetings to study and apply them. Teachers compile student achievement data each month in order to assess impacts and identify trouble spots.

Other components of the plan include whole–school training events, school–based and external workshops, study groups, coaching, mentoring, model classrooms, summer externships, grant–funded release days, and the creation of a Family Center for parents. Teachers are also working with local colleges to develop a Samuel Mason reading curriculum, and outside consultants are used along with school staff who have special expertise. As Russo sees it, teachers who are given the time and the tools hold the power to veritably transform their own schools.

"The word that comes to mind when I think of professional development is 'reciprocity,'" she explains. "If you're asking people to change their teaching practice, to do the work that it takes to do that, the reciprocal part is that you need to give them the supports and the time that they need. But we have to awaken to the notion that we can create what we need and that we don't have to have other people telling us what to do, although we do need their support. At this point there's a real expertise that got built up in the school, and that's not going to evaporate. That's going to continue to be strong."

Demographics

Samuel Mason is a controlled choice school in the Boston Public Schools. The school sits in an old warehouse district and draws students from several nearby housing projects. A large proportion of students are of Cape Verdean decent, and there is a high percentage of parents who are unemployed. Mason is a K–5 school with 296 students.

Student Racial/Ethnic Composition:

- 71% African American
- 14% White (not Hispanic)
- 11% Hispanic
- 2% Asian or Pacific Islander
- 2% Native American or Native Alaskan

Limited English Proficient Students (5 languages spoken): 23%

Qualify for free/reduced lunch: 74%

Receive special education services: 26%

Background

1. The appointment of a new principal in 1990 saved the school from closure. This principal had a vision that incorporated a belief in site-based management and concern for all the students in the building. Mason was a controlled choice school. Under this new leadership, in five years (1991–96), Mason went from the least chosen (79th) to the 12th most selected school in Boston, while more than doubling its enrollment from 133 to 296 students. The groundwork for the professional development model was begun in 1990 with the creation of the School-Based Management/Shared Decision-Making Team. The initial focus for this group was school improvement in instruction, curriculum, and assessment.
2. The threat of closure served as a catalyst to rethink "business as usual" at Mason. The conversation focused on how better to serve the students in the building. Issues concerning reading, writing, and problem solving, as well as parental involvement in schooling, emerged as primary concerns.
3. The commitment of the teachers at Mason to raising the achievement of all students proved to be an important factor in the subsequent development of a professional development model that is grounded in analyzing student achievement data and using research on best practices to reform instruction.

Design & Implementation

The Professional Development Team (comprising teachers, principal, and parents) prepares the yearly school improvement plan that aligns professional development activities with the goals for student achievement. All the staff in the school, including the school secretary and the principal, are required to complete personal professional development plans. Several blocks of time are used at Mason to address the professional development needs of teachers:

1. Summer and release-day time is used for schoolwide work. Mason has embraced much of the Accelerated Schools model for school improvement (schoolwide work has included a focus on the principles of accelerated learning, project-based learning, technology as a learning tool, and alternative assessment strategies).
2. Creative scheduling is used to enable both grade-level teams and study groups to meet once a week during the school day; typically, a single issue is investigated across the school year. In addition, teachers frequently meet both before and after school to incorporate readings, discussion, and the use of consultants into their problem-solving.
3. Lead teachers in each subject area are available to assist other teachers in incorporating new practices into their classrooms. These lead teachers engage in direct instruction, team-teaching, mentoring/consultation, and participation in common planning.
4. Time is created for teachers to visit each other's classrooms (for observation and peer coaching), as well other exemplary classrooms within and outside the Boston Public School system. Finally, teachers are supported to make professional presentations at both regional and national meetings.

Several programmatic initiatives designed to raise student achievement provide teachers additional opportunities to engage in professional development: student teachers and interns from local universities work with teachers to develop best practices to enhance student learning; teachers mentor a ten-member team of young adults (sponsored by a partnership with City Year) who spend a year assisting in classrooms; and teachers work with a large number of parent volunteers.

NOTE: For tips on how this design can be replicated, select "Replication Details" from the menu.

Results

Evaluation of the impact of professional development activities is a high priority at Mason. This is noteworthy, because the school has adopted a policy of including children with mild, moderate, and severe disabilities in all classrooms. Approximately a quarter of the students are classified as Limited English Proficient, so a number of different indicators are used to measure success.

Not surprisingly, reading and writing receive the major emphasis. Data from the Metropolitan Achievement Test in Reading Comprehension (a standardized test) show that Mason's average three year gain for Grades 2–5 surpassed that of the City of Boston. Also, data from a Grade 4 writing test developed by the Center for the Study of Testing, Evaluation and Educational Policy at Boston College show that in each of four subtests, Mason students exceeded the average score for the City of Boston and other urban school systems involved in the UDAC project. In addition to these measures, work–sampling assessment, portfolios, and twice–yearly exhibits of student's work in writing, art, and science show growth.

To connect these data with professional development activities, grade–level teams monitor these data on a four–week cycle. Adjustments are made to the content of the professional development program based on these periodic assessments.

An emphasis on measurement, data collection, and analysis has enabled the Mason School to document important outcomes in the areas of student achievement, student enrollment, increased parent choice of the school under Boston's controlled–choice student assignment plan, lower than average student loss due to transfers out, increased parent involvement, use of portfolio assessment, inclusion of students with special needs, increase in teachers' and parents' participation in professional development activities, increase in teacher–developed grants and presentations, increase in reporting on student outcomes. Consistent with the design of the Mason School's professional development model that aims at schoolwide improvement, evidence to support the effectiveness of the model is presented by multiple measures of data. For example:

1. A standardized test administered to students in Grades 2–5 at the Mason School
[See Results]
2. A test of student achievement in reading administered to all Grade 4 students at the Mason School developed by Boston College's Center for the Study of Testing, Evaluation, and Educational Policy. The test consists of open–ended and performance items in reading comprehension that are approximations of the reading levels designated by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).
[See Results]
3. A test of student achievement in writing administered to all Grade 4 students at the Mason School developed by Boston College's Center for the Study of Testing, Evaluation, and Educational Policy. The test consists of open–ended and performance items in writing that are approximations of the writing categories designated by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).
[See Results]
4. In addition to reading and writing scores, other outcomes were noted.
[See Results]

Reading – Standardized Test Results Grades 2–5

The Table below shows the Pre and Post-test NCE mean gains of students in grades 2–5 at the Mason School on the Metropolitan Achievement Test in Reading Comprehension – Advanced Skills, 1986 edition administered on a Spring–Spring testing schedule to the entire school system.

Tests were administered according to directions in the publisher's manual and scored by the Boston Public Schools Office of Information Systems. The Table presents NCE gains in reading comprehension over a three year period 1993 – 1995 aggregated across grades 2–5.

The Mason School's average three-year gain surpassed that of the City of Boston.

NCE Reading Comprehension Gains					
	Year	MASON SCHOOL Pretest NCE Mean	MASON SCHOOL Posttest NCE Mean	MASON SCHOOL School Mean NCE Gain	BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS Mean NCE Gain
Reading Comprehension Advanced Skills	5/3–5/11/93	–1.34	2.49	3.83	3.47
	5/2–5/10/94	2.49	14.24	11.95	2.14
	5/1–5/9/95	14.24	15.08	.84	3.03
Ê	Average 3-year gain	Ê	Ê	5.54	2.88

Source of data: Boston Public Schools Performance and Achievement Report 1993, 1994, 1995

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Reading – Achievement Test Results Grade 4

In the Table below, the reading comprehension scores of all Grade 4 students enrolled at the Mason School on a test developed by Boston College's Center for the Study of Testing, Evaluation, and Educational Policy were compared to scores of Grade 4 students in the Boston Public Schools and in 11 other urban school systems involved in the Center's Urban District Assessment Consortium (UDAC) Project.

The test consisted of a complete 'block' of National Association of Educational Progress (NAEP) items. The levels indicated are approximations of the levels designated by the NAEP. Tests were administered by staff from the Center for Testing in June 1993, June 1994, and in June 1995 and scored by teams of scorers from UDAC.

The Table presents the average percentage of items answered correctly in reading comprehension from 1993 to 1995 and illustrate how the Mason School's Grade 4 students compared to the Boston Public Schools' sample of fourth graders and those in other urban areas.

On all three levels of the test, the Mason School's gains increased from 1993 to 1995 and surpassed the 1994 and 1995 results for the City of Boston and other urban school systems involved in the UDAC project.

READING GRADE 4						
NAEP Level	Urban 1995	Boston 1995	Mason 1995	Urban 1994	Boston 1994	Mason 1994
200	53%	55%	81%	50%	53%	76%
250	47%	50%	65%	46%	49%	63%
300	40%	42%	52%	43%	46%	16%
350	It is not appropriate to test fourth graders at this level.					

Source of data: Report for the Spring 1994 and Spring 1995 Assessment Results – Boston College Center for the Study of Testing, Evaluation, and Educational Policy – Urban District Assessment Consortium Project, October 1994 and October 1995.

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Writing – Achievement Test Results Grade 4

The Table below presents the writing scores of all Grade 4 students at the Mason School as compared to scores of Grade 4 students in the Boston Public Schools' sample and in other urban schools systems involved in the UDAC project. Results indicate the percentage of students demonstrating proficiency in that category.

The test, developed by the Center for the Study of Testing, Evaluation, and Educational Policy at Boston College, consists of writing prompts that are approximations of the writing categories designated by NAEP. The test was administered in Spring 1994 and in Spring 1995 was rated by a team of raters from the Center.

The Mason School's results in all four levels exceeded the average score for the City of Boston sample and for other urban school systems involved in the UDAC project.

WRITING GRADE 4						
NAEP LEVEL	Urban 1995	Boston 1995	Mason 1995	Urban 1994	Boston 1994	Mason 1994
Informative	46%	51%	62%	44%	51%	60%
Creative	35%	57%	62%	38%	58%	61%
Narrative	64%	15%	73%	60%	7%	73%
Persuasive	43%	50%	62%	40%	50%	56%

Source of data: Report for the Spring 1994 and 1995 Assessment Results – Boston College Center for the Study of Testing, Evaluation, and Educational Policy – Urban District Assessment Consortium Project, October 1994 and October 1995.

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Other Outcomes	1991	1996
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City rank in number of parents of all races selecting school as number 1 choice	79th in city	12th in city
Increase in student enrollment	133 students	296 students
Decrease in student transfers out	39 (21%)	21 (7%)
Increase in parent involvement • turnout at parent conferences • annual volunteer hours • percent participating in 3 training activities	6% 40 hours 3%	92% 600 hours 60%
Use of portfolio assessment	0%	100%
Inclusion of students with special needs	33%	100%
Increase in participation in professional development activities (average number of hours per teacher)	6 hours	50 hours
Increase in teacher-developed grants/presentations	0 per year	10 per year
Increase in monitoring of progress • Mid-Year Reports • End-of-Year Reports	0 0	6 6

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Replication Details

NOTE: If you have not already read the 'Design and Implementation' section, selecting that from the menu before reading further will provide a context for the replication details below.



Mary Russo, Principal 1990-6

Hear Mary Russo comment on getting started. (transcript)

A mapping process was used to assess phases, reforms, and points of reference:

Summary of Mapping Exercise					
1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995-6
Major Phases					
Preparation	Putting structure in place	Deeper structural development	Change in ways of doing business	Control of resources	Consolidation and future planning

Development/Reforms					
Reflection on status	Team development	Schoolwide	Locus of control	Recognition	Future orientation
Scouting reform	Taking stock	Program development	Training	Staff development	Learning
Training	Vision	Inclusion	Inquiry/evaluation	Use of talent	
New leadership	Expectations	Teaching & learning	Outcomes	Inclusion	
	Customer focus	Partnerships	Teacher teams	Technology	
			Teaching & learning		
Key Events/Points of Reference					
X becomes Principal	School-based management	Became Title I Schoolwide Program	John Hancock/TQM training	Wheelock reading program	Bright Start program
Choice is implemented in Boston schools	Accelerated Schools training implemented early childhood program	Inclusion in early childhood program	Teacher reports/plans	25–50 hours staff development	Teacher study groups
Basal-driven reading curriculum	Teams (curriculum, teacher, school climate)	Whole language	program evaluation	Began winning awards	Focus on core academic mission
		Portfolios		Computers in classes	Student motivation/learning increasing
				Dual-certification of teachers	

Site Visit Documentation

Samuel Mason Elementary School's success was recorded based on a site visit conducted by the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development in 1996:

Criteria	Evidence
There is a connection between professional development and school/district improvement plans (needs assessment). If goals and mission have changed over	1. From 1991–1996, Mason School's professional development plan has been based on continuous needs assessment of what should be done to achieve goals in the school plan. This connection is evident at individual, grade, and organizational levels.

time, there is a rationale for change.	2. Goals are adjusted as needs change; for example, early needs -- as determined by teachers, parents, and the principal -- were recruitment of students, establishment of an after-school program, and increased reading achievement for all students. The last is being accomplished through inclusion of all special education students in regular classrooms. Other early goals were to increase enrollment (it went from 133 to 296), and to provide an after-school program (which now has a waiting list). Needs being addressed today include more effective teaching of reading and mathematics and appropriate integration of technology into the curriculum.
There is a connection to student achievement (including the process of how professional development is connected to student outcomes).	1. The connection is strong. For example, as part of their professional development interests a groups of teachers conducted action research that involved surveying students and parents to determine if curricular and other changes were effective and valued. Due to student and parent dissatisfaction with the health (the school has no gymnasium for an active PE-Health program) and reading curricula, staff changed both. Students now have swimming lessons at a local pool and creation of a new reading curriculum was undertaken. 2. All teachers have obtained dual certification in regular and special education in order to better serve students who are included in all regular classrooms. A consultant from Wheelock College attends the school regularly to help with inclusion. In turn, the school provides year-long internships for students seeking master's degrees in special education from the

	college.
There is evidence of the extent to which distinct professional development experiences are connected and ongoing and linked to goals.	1. Staff first draw on strengths among staff before seeking outside help, thus, teacher talents are fully used. All teachers have developed their own areas of expertise to help and guide other staff, and teachers offer their support to and rely on the support of other teachers on an ongoing basis. 2. When expertise from outside is needed, teachers interview and select consultants. For example, during 1995–1996, a consultant has trained teachers first to use technologies and then to integrate technology into their curriculum. A lead teacher at the school has now undertaken the technology leadership role.
There is evidence of teacher change (teacher outcomes).	1. There is an abundance of evidence. Based on specific professional development activities, teachers evidence considerable growth in understanding new assessment and instructional strategies. 2. During 1991–1996, the entire staff has become dual certified in regular and special education. There is higher staff satisfaction and leadership; participation in professional development has increased from 6 hours in 1991 to 50 hours in 1996. Improved school climate is directly attributable to staff development.
There is evidence of desired student outcomes. There are ways for the school/district to show that professional development activities lead to desired teacher and	1. Student attendance improved from 87.9% to 95.2% for kindergarten and from 89.8% to 92.4% for grades 1–5. 2. Throughout 1993–1996, second through fifth graders have shown a greater gain on the Metropolitan Achievement Test in reading and mathematics than second through

student outcomes.	fifth graders in the Boston Public School System at large.
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Costs and Funding

Mason staff have been particularly resourceful in locating funding to support this range of professional development activities. The budget draws revenue from the City of Boston General School Purposes Fund, Massachusetts Department of Education's Education Reform and Restructuring Network, Federal Title I, and grant writing. A partnership with John Hancock also provides an invaluable in-kind support for summer externships that team teachers with parents. Two important components of the program supported because of this resourcefulness are the involvement of parents in programming (e.g., monthly parent workshops and the school-based Family Center, offering weekly meetings to integrate all those adults who have an impact on student learning), and the after-school and Mason Summer Camp initiatives, which extend the learning opportunities for students.

Sources of funding for Samuel Mason School's professional development 1996:

1. City of Boston General School Purposes	\$5,000
2. Title I	\$2,000
3. Massachusetts Department of Education	\$2,000
4. Harcourt General Cinema Foundation	\$4,000
5. John Hancock Financial Services	In-kind
(summer externship)	\$2,000
6. Parents United for Child Care (parent training)	\$15,000*

* The cost is approximately \$600 per teacher and pays for consultants, stipends for the lead teachers, and substitute teacher coverage.

Contact Information

Samuel W. Mason Elementary School, Roxbury MA
 Mary L. Russo
 Former Principal, 1990–1996, of Samuel W. Mason Elementary School
 Current Principal of Richard J. Murphy Elementary School
 1 Worrell Street
 Boston, Massachusetts 02122
 Telephone: 617–635–8781
 Fax: 617–635–8787
russo@meol.mass.edu

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Carroll Independent School District

Carroll Independent School District

Southlake, TX

School Type: Public

**School
Setting:** Suburban

Level: K–12

**School
Design:** Traditional

Content Presented By:

National Awards Program for Model
Professional Development



"One of the best things we did," says Alice Miller, former director of staff and program development, in Carroll Independent School District, Southlake, Texas, "was develop a staff development advisory committee made up of two representatives from each campus. That's a strategy I would recommend to any district. It has become a favorite committee to be on. They felt like they actually accomplished a lot. We designed all the staff development and we became a study group for staff development. I would give them lots of articles to educate them on what staff development was all about. I would highly recommend this strategy."

This was only one of the many strategies in place that designated the Carroll Independent School District's professional development program as exemplary. In this district of almost 6,000 students north of Dallas, Texas, learning has become a part of what every employee does and is an expectation of all employees. In fact, new employees sign statements that indicate their commitments to continued growth and development.

The organizing force behind Carroll's professional development program is the STAR Model. This model provides the umbrella within which decisions are made. Each of the five points on the star represent one of the groups that comprise the learning community including novice teachers, veteran teachers, administrators, university faculty, and other partners throughout the community and specifies what each will contribute to the community. The lines that connect the points represent the communication network that occurs.

The content of the STAR Model is discourse about teaching and learning to improve student learning and on integrating technology into the classroom. The processes used are workshops with classroom applications, mentoring and coaching, study groups, demonstration teaching, discussion, and reflection. The model reinforces that collaboration is essential among all the members of the learning community.

Mentoring of new teachers is another strong feature of the model. According to Miller, Carroll's mentoring program grew over several years and far exceeded the Texas mandate for mentoring. The mentoring program became an exemplary model within the state, because it provided a seamless transition for preservice teachers into their initial years of teaching, while providing professional development for experienced teachers as well. The professional development school program established in conjunction with the University of North Texas expanded and incorporated more teachers each year. A steering committee of mentor teachers, new teachers, university faculty, student

teachers, parents, and administrators coordinates the program's operation.

One particularly strong feature of Carroll's professional development program is the use of data. Data about student achievement are analyzed to establish school improvement goals. Teams of teachers from each school come together annually to examine state test results and other data. These teacher leaders return to their schools and train other teachers in analyzing data. According to Miller, "Schools use the data to help them decide where they need to focus." These areas then became a part of the schools' improvement plans.

The integration of technology into the classroom is another focal area for Carroll's professional development program. The district designed technology competencies that each teacher is required to demonstrate during the first year of employment. The district provides training and support to assist teachers in acquiring skills. Teachers are able to demonstrate competency of the skills or receive "just-in-time" support from school-based technology coordinators.

Carroll ISD's professional development program uses ongoing evaluation to sharpen its focus. A variety of evaluation methods are used to improve training sessions and monitor the status of curriculum and instruction throughout the district, such as:

- Participant feedback following each training session
- Application activities that provide evidence of what participants apply, as a result of their training
- Reflection on what participants have learned
- Changes in practice as demonstrated by lesson plans, teacher demonstrations, and teacher and student products

Data are gathered through surveys, quarterly grant reports, group reflections, and e-mail communications.

Individual professional development plans link professional development and student outcomes. Each employee sets three goals: one professional, one cognitive, and one student achievement. Supervisors approve individual plans and ensure they are aligned with the district and school goals. Teachers collect evidence such as lesson plans, student work, and teacher work to demonstrate accomplishment of the goals. Approximately half of the teachers and almost all administrators participate in an alternative method of evaluation using cognitive coaching. Those who choose this alternative participate in extensive training and work with a partner.

Recent professional development projects have resulted in strong evidence that links professional development and student achievement. In one year, as a result of training and implementation of new teaching strategies, passing rates on the Algebra End-of-Course exam increased from 61% to 81%. Reading scores increased in one year, as the result of implementation of Reading Recovery. Writing scores in fourth, eighth, and tenth grade writing scores increased, as a result of training and the implementation of the New Jersey Writing Project. Specifically, focused professional development targeting areas of need helped improve student performance in Carroll ISD.

Demographics

Carroll Independent School District (ISD) is a small but rapidly growing suburban district with an annual growth rate of about 15% in the years 1998–2000. The district serves 5,850 students in grades kindergarten through twelve.

Student Demographics:

.2% American Indian (Navajo)
1.3% Asian or Pacific Islander
1.2% African American, not of Hispanic origin
2% Hispanic
95.3% White (not of Hispanic origin)

1% Limited English Proficiency
2% Qualify for Free/Reduced Price Lunch
8.1% Receive Special Education Services

Background

While Carroll ISD may not be as ethnically diverse as other districts, its academic diversity presents challenges of differentiating instruction for various levels of performance and needs. A recent evaluation of Carroll ISD revealed another challenge: the need for teachers and administrators to attain a better understanding of how to integrate technology into the curriculum. Understanding these challenges, Carroll ISD's professional development model, STAR, focuses on two issues: (1) to enhance instruction to include high, average, and low performing students as well as other students who receive special education services, and (2) to integrate technology into teaching and learning.

Five participant groups including university faculty, novice teachers, veteran teachers, administrators, and other partners in the learning community (parents, businesses, support personnel, etc.) collaborate on objectives of the program, ensuring that differentiating instruction and integrating technology remain at the center of all planning and implementation.

The broad goals of the participant groups are:

1. to work collaboratively with university partners to improve teacher preparation and induction;
2. to provide support for novice teachers at the preservice and induction-year levels;
3. to enhance the mentoring skills and content knowledge of veteran teachers;
4. to support administrators in their efforts as instructional leaders and facilitators of change;
5. to include parents, community members, businesses, and support personnel as partners in their learning community.

Design & Implementation

- University Partner. As a site for a professional development school, Carroll ISD works with its partners at the University of North Texas to improve the teacher preparation and induction program. A steering committee, consisting of mentor teachers, administrators, university personnel, student teachers, and parents, helps design and evaluate coursework, training activities, and mentoring and supervision processes. The professional development school's goal is to provide the best training ground for novice teachers to integrate technology and meet the needs of all learners in the classroom.
- Support for First Year Teachers. STAR offers an orientation/induction program to provide training and support for new teachers throughout their first year. Two days of district and campus orientation are provided at the beginning of each school year, with three to five follow-up sessions throughout the year. All employees are required to pass certain

technology competencies within their first year of employment. Campus technology coordinators provide assistance to new staff and all induction-year teachers are provided with a trained mentor teacher. Mentors and teachers participate in on-line mentoring activities and special training sessions where they explore real classroom issues.

- Support for New Administrators in Their Roles as Instructional Leaders. STAR provides training for new administrators to help them become more knowledgeable in facilitation, cognitive coaching skills, site-based team training, conflict resolution, and the use of technology.
- Support for and from the Community. STAR includes Regional Service Centers, businesses, community members, parents, and other support personnel as partners in the learning community. These partners are encouraged to bring real-world experiences into the classroom via technology, to share knowledge and perspectives with others, and to become active members in the extended learning community. For example, community members serve on a number of district committees to provide input on standards for the future. The city's Parks and Recreation Department, in cooperation with the district, provides training for parents and community members on a variety of topics.
- Support for and from Veteran Teachers. Veteran teachers are expected to improve their mentoring skills, share best practices, learn to integrate technology in the classroom, stay abreast of content and methods, and reflect on teaching and learning to improve student performance. Extensive training is provided for all teachers and administrators who want to implement the Cognitive Coaching process. This process includes developing three goals each year (one professional, one cognitive, and one student achievement), and then working with one's supervisor and coaching partner to reflect on practice and self-assess the accomplishments of their goal. Training for this process includes regular follow-up sessions for renewal.

Results

Frequent data collection helps keep the focus on student achievement in the Carroll Independent School District. All professional development activities are evaluated using formative and summative measures focused on both process and product. Teachers collect evidence that they are implementing what they are learning in their professional development programs and share it with their supervisors at the end of each year. Evidence typically includes lesson plans, student and teacher products, test data, or other documentation.

Solid evidence of the success of the professional development program lies in the continuous increases in student achievement, as measured by the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS), SAT, and ACT.

In addition, the number of students taking advanced placement courses has increased, as have the scores of special needs students on the TAAS. The annual evaluation of the Reading Recovery program has shown a rising dismissal rate up from 68% to 70% in one year. Students who are dismissed from the program, because they have made substantial gains, are continuing to perform well in the regular classroom.

Following the implementation of an intensive staff development program to improve teachers' content knowledge and pedagogy related to algebra, student performance dramatically improved on the end-of-course exam. The percentage of students passing the end-of-course exam rose dramatically

in the year the new instructional strategies were implemented.

Algebra End-of-Course	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98
8th and 9th Grades	61%	61%	81%

The district conducted an evaluation to determine if students whose teachers who had training in the New Jersey Writing Project performed better on the assessment than those students who had untrained teachers. Two years' worth of data indicated that the results favored students whose teachers were trained. As a result of the training and improved student performance in writing, the district has experienced an increase in the number of students passing the TAAS written composition test.

Grade	1996	1998	Change
4th	72%	78%	+6%
8th	45%	70%	+25%
10th	66%	75%	+9%

During the 1998-99 school year, the district included special needs students in the TAAS testing and their scores increased. The district had a 100% exit score in language arts/reading. All teachers at the high school level had training in advanced placement strategies. Teachers report that this raised expectations for all students.

Site Visit Documentation

Criteria	Evidence
Collected data provided evidence that the professional development activities lead to improved teaching.	Teachers demonstrate through evidence what they learn in their professional development rather than count "seat time". Cognitive coaching provides continued support to improve teaching, promotes collegiality, and focuses on continuous inquiry. Teachers are allowed to make decisions about their own areas of growth. Teachers, principals, school and district administrators articulate the link among

	professional development, teacher growth, and student achievement.
Collected data provided evidence that the professional development activities lead to improved student learning.	Students dismissed from Reading Recovery are continuing to be successful. Additional math and science professional development provided by the new math/science coordinator has resulted in an increase of the percentage of students passing the state competency test from 81% to 97%.
Collected data provided evidence that the professional development activities lead to a narrowing of existing achievement gaps.	When special needs students were included in the state testing, scores continued to increase. The district had 100% TAAS exit scores in language arts/reading. The district experienced an 11-point gain in algebra exit test scores, as a result of more professional development available for teachers.

Replication Details

Carroll Independent School District has a well-defined professional development program based on the STAR Model that was developed to ensure a seamless model of professional development for all educators and serves as a communication network within the learning community. The model addresses both the process and content components of professional development.

Strong collaboration, integration of technology, and broad-based support make the Carroll professional development program successful. The district has financial and human support through school and the district budget, the local Education Foundation, and a partnership with the city. Eleven days are allocated annually for professional development. Two grants from the state to support the implementation of the model have added resources to the district.

School and district staff development advisory committees serve as study groups of best practices in staff development and key decision makers about staff development activities. The district enjoys a strong partnership with the University of North Texas, which has established a professional development school in the district.

Regional Service Centers, businesses, community members, parents, and support personnel work as partners in the learning community. These partners serve on district committees and support student and teacher learning. The state's strong accountability system provides guidance and accountability for planning, implementation, and evaluation of programs. The state's teacher proficiencies provide

guidance about the content of professional development programs.

Costs and Funding

The district has received a number of grants to support its efforts particularly in technology. Approximately \$329,000 in grants has assisted the district in reaching its goal to integrate technology within the classroom. Teachers have benefited from extensive training and support in technology applications.

Contact Information

Nancy Rindone, Director of Staff and Program Development
Carroll Independent School District
1201 North Carroll Avenue
Southlake, TX 76092
Telephone: (817) 329-2934
Fax: (817) 251-5064

Rating Criteria

The Carroll Independent School District, Southlake, Texas, was selected as a winner of the 1998-1999 National Awards Program for Model Professional Development.

What is the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development?

As part of a continuing effort to honor excellence in education, the U.S. Department of Education sponsors the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development. This program recognizes schools and school districts with exemplary professional development programs and disseminates information about high-quality professional development efforts that provide evidence of student learning and increased teacher effectiveness. Since the focus of this competition is on professional development for teachers and other educators in pre-kindergarten through grade 12 settings, only individual schools (public or private) or school districts may apply. Schools or districts may, however, submit applications that describe their partnerships with other entities, in particular, institutions of higher education. Recognition under this awards program is based on how well applicants demonstrate the success of their programs, using identified selection criteria that their professional development program results in increased student outcomes. Criteria for selection* include:

Background and Overview of Professional Development

The applicant provides a brief explanation of why the representatives consider professional development in their schools or districts exemplary by describing the program's key components and relating those to the U.S. Department of Education's Mission and Principles of Professional Development. This description must provide evidence that the professional development activities are not narrowly focused on one subgroup of students or staff within the school or district.

Goals and Outcomes

The applicant describes the professional development goals, including how they: (1) are developed; (2) relate to school improvement; (3) are based on a needs assessment; and (4) address the achievement of all students regardless of gender, socio-economic level or disadvantaged status, race, ethnic or cultural background, exceptional abilities or disabilities, or limited-English proficiency. Applicants must also address the changes in teaching and student learning that are expected to result from professional development. They must describe how professional development goals and outcomes promote teaching and learning to high standards.

Professional Development Design and Implementation

The applicant provides evidence that professional development reflects research and best practice; includes comprehensive evaluation; includes organizational structures (e.g., administrative and policy support) and resources (e.g., use of time, expertise, funds) that support it; promotes continuous inquiry and improvement; and ensures that the larger school community understands its importance to school improvement.

Objective Evidence of Success

The applicant clearly demonstrates that teacher effectiveness and student learning have improved as a direct result of the implemented professional development activities. Data that reflect this connection must be provided and discussed. The focus of this criterion is objective evidence, and a compelling argument must be made for the way in which professional development positively affects outcomes for all teachers and all students. This argument must emphasize areas where any achievement gaps between groups (e.g., gender, socio-economic status, ethnicity) have been addressed and narrowed.

Implications for the Field

The applicant describes the lessons learned as the professional development activities have matured.

*These criteria are derived from the Mission and Principles of Professional Development prepared by the U.S. Department of Education in 1995, in consultation with numerous educational organizations, and have been previously published for public comment.

Information about the current award cycle for the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development can be found at <http://www.ed.gov/inits/TeachersWeb/>.

This story exemplifies the following practices:

Professional development should incorporate evaluation of multiple sources of information on (a) outcomes for students and (b) the instruction and other processes that are involved in implementing the lessons learned.

Woodrow Wilson Elementary School

Woodrow Wilson Elementary School

Manhattan, KS

School Type: Public

**School
Setting:** Rural

Level: Elementary

**School
Design:** Traditional

Content Presented By:

National Awards Program for Model
Professional Development



For a feature story on this school, please visit the WestEd website at
http://www.wested.org/wested/pubs/online/modelPD/49_app_a8.shtml.

Demographics

Woodrow Wilson is one of 13 district schools in Manhattan, Kansas, a small university town (Kansas State University) surrounded by rural communities. Woodrow Wilson is a K–6 school with 320 students.

Student Racial/Ethnic Composition:

80% White (not Hispanic origin)
3% Asian or Pacific Islander
1% Native American or Native Alaskan
15% African American
1% Hispanic

Limited English Proficient Students (2 languages spoken): 1%

Qualify for free/reduced lunch: 44%

Receive special education services: 30%

Background

The Quality Performance Accreditation (QPA) initiative adopted by the State Board of Education holds schools accountable for demonstrating student progress and mandates both site-based councils and school improvement plans. The QPA also requires a professional development component that connects these activities with instructional strategies. This state initiative served to facilitate site-based decision making and focus thinking on individual school improvement strategies.

Three teachers focused the faculty on the meaning and subsequent improvement of low student scores in fourth grade math and science. Following a Summer Magnet School for mathematics and problem solving (involving voluntary participation by students and teachers), teachers in all grades embarked on a year-long study of ways to implement the National Council of Teachers' of Mathematics

(NCTM) standards throughout the school.

In the Spring semester of 1989, Kansas State University (KSU) conducted a needs assessment survey among student teachers, teachers, and parents in the Manhattan school district. Mathematics, science, and technology ranked lowest in terms of confidence and experience. Results of these surveys made clear the need to take an aggressive leadership role in addressing the needs of students, teachers, and administrators. Teachers must be willing to reexamine the way everything is used--personnel, space, money, time, research, and technology. "We must creatively build a different kind of school and preparation program that bridges the gap between what is learned to what people need to understand and be able to do in order to be productive in the future (Richardson, 1994)."

During the Fall semester of 1990, Wilson was invited by KSU to become a Professional Development School (PDS). This initiative involved a number of components that served to focus the Wilson faculty on developing a plan for professional development and raising questions about the ways to improve student performance in the targeted areas: a Wilson teacher was appointed a Clinical Instructor, with KSU supporting her half time out of the classroom; KSU faculty worked alongside several Wilson teachers with pre-service and inservice teachers; KSU students, working alongside Wilson teachers, sponsored after-school clubs focused on math and science which extended the learning time for students.

Design & Implementation

The content of the school improvement plan is developed by teachers after analysis of student achievement data and a survey requesting teachers' priorities for professional development. Summer study groups and action research projects fuel this discussion and planning. Teachers use a combination of two 90-minute blocks of time each month. The time is recovered for professional development by reducing monthly faculty meetings from four to two. They also make creative use of Kansas State University (KSU) students and selective use of substitute teachers to craft opportunities for professional development activities. An important time for teachers to practice instructional innovations and to do peer observations is created by the after-school clubs designed around math and problem solving. This is a volunteer activity for teachers and KSU students.

The Clinical Instructor (CI) has a key role in this professional development plan. Released half time from the classroom (with funding from the KSU Professional Development School initiative), the CI facilitates math and science problem solving activities. In addition, the CI has coordinated field experiences in the school, has taught university seminars and math and science methods courses, and has mentored pre-service and inservice teachers. In particular, the Wilson faculty has focused on math problem solving, hands-on science, collaboration and networking, and raising expectations for student performance.

The professional development activities developed by the Professional Development Committee at Wilson are forwarded yearly to the District Professional Development Council, comprised of teacher representatives from each school, administrators and central office personnel. School plans are assessed for their incorporation of district and state goals and for their efficient use of professional development funds. The District Staff Development Office offers support primarily in the areas of evaluation and assessment, and "capacity building" (performance assessment, integrated curriculum, collaborative teaching, and development learner outcomes). A trainer of trainers model is used. The Manhattan District is an active member in the KAW Valley Inservice Consortium, and in the "writing and performance assessment consortiums" of KWAC and KPAC.

NOTE: For tips on how this design can be replicated, select "Replication Details" from the menu.

Results

Wilson has used a combination of Kansas's assessment tests, curriculum tests, and performance-based tests to monitor the impact of Wilson's professional development on student achievement. They have posted large gains on the Kansas math tests -- especially for girls -- and now plan to use the same professional development strategies to focus on reading and social studies.

Since being established as a professional development school, students at Woodrow Wilson continue to demonstrate high degree of accomplishment in the areas of math, science, and writing. Scores have increased each year and recently averaged above state averages. The 1998 goal in mathematics was for students to exceed state standard of excellence. The next goal was to conduct action research in the areas of reading and social studies and to propose programs to enhance performance of our students in these areas.

Implementing the PDS concept as a community of learners has enhanced our University pre-service and inservice teaching preparation programs. Student teachers now begin teaching as effective educators. They understand how to teach concepts and use inquiry, and actually augment the teaching of full-time faculty to the extent that many have received local, state, and national awards for teaching. This recognition, of course, comes only from the enriched science and math learning opportunities for children, who also have collected many awards in local, regional, and state science and math contests. Finally, the PDS concept has established strong collaborative relationships among Kansas State University, our school district, and the local community.

Through our professional development efforts, hundreds of students, many traditionally underserved in science and mathematics, discover fun, excitement, and more importantly, success in their educational endeavors. Our students discover new problem-solving strategies, and learn more about the world around them, and know what it means to "do science and mathematics".

Involvement and quality of science experiments by girls as well as boys has improved drastically over the past six years. Unfortunately, we did not record actual counts of girls participating in after-school clubs, science fairs, and physics contests, but we do know that the number has increased sharply during the past six years. Last year, all but one of our eight students who entered the regional science fair placed first. The other student was awarded second place. Projects were complex experiments complete with statements of hypotheses, controlled variables during collection of data, and graphs and figures for reporting of results. These projects contrasted sharply with the 'show and tell' projects entered the first year of our science fair. Additionally, in 1995 and 1996, our fifth grade students placed first in a multi-state physics contest. They were competing against more than one thousand fifth through ninth grade students, and winners last year were girls! Needless to say, we are very encouraged by the balance emerging gender for student achievement in the sciences.

Wilson conducted a fourth grade level action research project after analyzing the results of the 1995 Kansas Math Assessment. There was a need to improve student scores, particularly in the area of open-ended problem solving. A possible reason for the low student scores was that teachers lacked knowledge of how to prepare students for open-ended problems. The researchers felt that if all teachers (grades K-6) were knowledgeable about what students are expected to do on the assessment and were trained in techniques for teaching and assessing open-ended problems, the students would score higher over time.

Through a partnership with Kansas State University and Wilson's professional development status, Wilson was given resources to use for training teachers and for release time to write a plan of action.

Training began in October of 1995 and continued throughout the school year. Results are as follows:

1. In 1995, the mathematics scores of Woodrow Wilson fourth graders were only slightly higher than the district average, ranging from 0.1 to 2.4 points higher than the district means. After a year of teacher training, the scores of students at Woodrow Wilson increased by 7 to 9 points above the average (scored on a 100 point basis).
2. In 1995, performance assessment scores for Woodrow Wilson fourth graders for problem solving (overall understanding, choosing a strategy, implementing, and conclusion) were 0.3 to 0.8 lower than the district averages. After a year of teacher training, scores increased to 0.7 to 1.2 points greater than district averages (scored on a 1 to 5 basis).
3. When assessing fourth graders one year after teacher training on the performance items (overall understanding, choosing a strategy, implementing, and conclusion), student scores increased from an average of 1.9 in year one to 3.3 in year two for those same students.

These are just a few examples of Wilson's successes. The outcomes of the systematic reforms in our schools are improved teacher effectiveness and student learning. Perhaps most importantly, our results suggest that teacher training, and preparation, collaboratively planned and implemented by university and school faculty, can provide students with the tools needed to succeed in the 21st century, and teachers with the capacity to become the educators our society so urgently needs.

Site Visit Documentation

Woodrow Wilson Elementary School's success was recorded based on a site visit conducted by the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development in 1996:

Criteria	Evidence
Connection to student achievement (including the process of how PD is connected to student outcomes)	Improvement in student achievement could be attributable to this program. In the problem-solving area, test scores on the Kansas Mathematics Assessment Test, disaggregated by gender, were 49.6 (female) and 53.55 (male) in 1993, but 70.17 (female) and 55.37 (male) in 1996. There was a slight decrease in male scores in 1994.
Evidence of teacher change (teacher outcomes).	Anecdotal reports provide evidence that teachers are using more active, hands-on instructional activities. Professional development activities have clarified expectations for students, and teachers are able to address expectations with consistency across grade levels to build on and prepare for state assessments.

Evidence of desired student outcomes. There are ways for the school/district to show that PD activities lead to desired teacher and student outcomes.	Student work displayed and reviewed indicates that students at all grade levels are learning the problem-solving process. Test scores also document these student outcomes. Interviews and review of student work is being transferred as students move from one grade to another. Information gathered from interviews indicates that teachers are beginning to use the problem solving process in other subjects such as social studies.
Connection to research and best practices.	Teachers display a knowledge of research and are involved in action research and publishing with Kansas State University.
There is evidence that the PD content has direct application for teaching.	Student work, displayed and reviewed, indicate that the problem-solving process is being used at all grade levels. Student portfolios include artifacts of problem-solving tasks.
PD program is institutionalized rather than dependent on specific resources or personalities.	There is currently a strong leadership team in place for the school. Other teachers are also interested in assuming leadership roles. Teacher-initiated changes in the pre-service program at Kansas State have become institutionalized as a part of the Kansas State pre-service program.

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Replication Details

NOTE: If you have not already read the "Design and Implementation" section, selecting that from the menu before reading further will provide a context for the replication details below.

Site Visit Documentation

Woodrow Wilson Elementary School's success was recorded based on a site visit conducted by the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development in 1996:

Criteria	Evidence
Connection between PD and school/district improvement plans (needs assessment). Have goals and mission changed over time and rationale for change?	Wilson no longer uses school improvement plans. The district requires certain components of a staff development action plan and allows schools the freedom to organize its own information. A staff development planning team surveys teachers annually to determine goals. An action plan is developed accordingly. The school is shifting its focus to reading.
Extent to which distinct PD experiences are connected and ongoing and linked to goals.	Study groups provide on-going opportunities to link professional development experiences to goals and student outcomes. Study groups meet for 1.5 hours at least twice a month.
Diversity in types of PD experiences.	Teachers participate in school, district, state, and national professional development activities and often initiate their own learning activities and professional development.
Percent of staff/schools involved (planning,	100% of teachers participate in annual surveys and at least four days of professional development

evaluating, participating in the full range of activities).	each year. Approximately 93% of the teachers also participate in study groups.
Strategies for supporting ongoing PD (time for PD and how it is embedded).	Staff is willing to give up personal time to attend at least two afternoons per month and attend such activities as Family Math Night. The presence of student teachers from Kansas State University allows time during the day for professional development activities.
Methods for evaluating the PD initiative (collection of appropriate data and use of data).	The school uses a district-wide evaluation form for professional development activities. They also use annual surveys and feedback forms to evaluate activities.

Costs and Funding

Budget items included:

- Kansas State University
 - ◆ 50% of clinical instructors' salaries
 - ◆ Conference registration
 - ◆ Release days
 - ◆ Stipend for summer institutes on Action Research
 - ◆ Miscellaneous materials / After-school clubs
 - ◆ Community funds from family math classes and after-school clubs
- USD #383
 - ◆ 50% of clinical instructors' salaries
 - ◆ Substitutes for release time for planning, etc.
 - ◆ Materials for staff development

Funding was subsidized by grants written by KSU, USD #383, and individual teachers.

Contact Information

Melisa J. Hancock
 5th Grade Teacher
 Woodrow Wilson Elementary School
 312 N. Juliette Avenue
 Manhattan, Kansas 66502
 Telephone: 913-587-2170
 Fax: 913-539-8024

Rating Criteria

Woodrow Wilson Elementary School, Manhattan, Kansas was selected as a winner of the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development, 1996–7.

What is the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development?

As part of a continuing effort to honor excellence in education, the U.S. Department of Education sponsors the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development. This program recognizes schools and school districts with exemplary professional development programs and disseminates information about high-quality professional development efforts that provide evidence of student learning and increased teacher effectiveness. Since the focus of this competition is on professional development for teachers and other educators in pre-kindergarten through grade 12 settings, only individual schools (public or private) or school districts may apply. Schools or districts may, however, submit applications that describe their partnerships with other entities, in particular, institutions of higher education. Recognition under this awards program is based on how well applicants demonstrate, using identified selection criteria that their professional development program results in increased student outcomes. Criteria for selection* include:

Background and Overview of Professional Development

- The applicant provides a brief explanation of why they consider professional development in their schools or districts exemplary by describing the program's key components and relating those to the U.S. Department of Education's Mission and Principles of Professional Development. This description must provide evidence that the professional development activities are not narrowly focused on one subgroup of students or staff within the school or district.

Goals and Outcomes

- The applicant describes the professional development goals, including how they: (1) are developed; (2) relate to school improvement; (3) are based on a needs assessment; and (4) address the achievement of all students regardless of gender, socio-economic level or disadvantaged status, race, ethnic or cultural background, exceptional abilities or disabilities, or limited-English proficiency. Applicants also must address the changes in teaching and student learning that are expected to result from professional development, and must describe how professional development goals and outcomes promote teaching and learning to high standards.

Professional Development Design and Implementation

- The applicant provides evidence that professional development reflects research and best practice; includes comprehensive evaluation; includes organizational structures e.g., administrative and policy support and resources (e.g., use of time, expertise, funds) that support it; promotes continuous inquiry and improvement; and ensures that the larger school community understands its importance to school improvement.

Objective Evidence of Success

- The applicant clearly demonstrates that teacher effectiveness and student learning have improved as a direct result of the implemented professional development activities. Data that indicate this connection must be provided and discussed. The focus of this criterion is objective evidence, and a compelling argument must be made for how professional development positively affects outcomes for all teachers and all students, and must emphasize areas where any achievement gaps between groups (e.g., gender, socio-economic status, ethnicity) have been addressed and narrowed.

Implications for the Field

- The applicant describes the lessons learned as the professional development activities have matured.

*These criteria are derived from the Mission and Principles of Professional Development prepared by the U.S. Department of Education in 1995, in consultation with numerous educational organizations, and have been previously published for public comment.

Information about the current award cycle for the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development can be found at <http://www.ed.gov/inits/TeachersWeb/>.

This story exemplifies the following practices:

Professional development should be based on analyses of the differences between (a) actual student performance and (b) goals and standards for student learning.

Professional development should be primarily school-based and built into the day-to-day work of teaching.

Alton Elementary School

Alton Elementary School,

Memphis, TN

School Type: Public

School Setting: Urban

Level: Elementary

School Design: Title 1

Content Presented By:

Co-nect, Inc.



This story is available only as a Short Summary.

Demographics

Alton Elementary School is a neighborhood "choice" school in the Memphis City Schools. Located in an older neighborhood of primarily single-family homes, one can reach Alton from the downtown area by way of Beale Street, Home of the Blues. The neighborhood is primarily working-class, and many parents and some grandparents of students attended this school as children themselves. Approximately 90% of the parents are high-school graduates, but only about 15% have completed college.

Student Statistics:

Total Number of Students: 690

Racial/Ethnic Composition: 100% African American

Qualify for Free and Reduced Lunch: 87%

Background

In 1995 Dr. Gerry House (National Superintendent of the Year, 1998) introduced a process and funding incentives for all "low-performing" Memphis City Schools. The intent was to engage in a process of comprehensive school reform for the purpose of raising student achievement. With only 6% of students achieving a score of "proficient" or higher on the state writing test, Alton Elementary School was among the schools eligible for reform funding.

Alton could have elected to design their own approach. However, the faculty members realized that developing a "home-grown" model would require conducting their own research into proven methodologies, deciding on the right combination of best practices to support student learning needs, determining their professional development needs, and establishing a process for evaluating their progress ? all in addition to their normal teaching load. It seemed to make better sense to seek outside assistance. With this in mind, teachers from the school attended a "design fair" organized jointly by MCS and New American Schools, a national network of reform models. A site-based management team from Alton, made up of both faculty and parents, attended this fair and met with representatives of the various New American Schools "design teams."

After reviewing the available options, the Alton team decided that Co-nect, a national school assistance organization based in Cambridge, Massachusetts, had the model most closely aligned with the school's own goals and educational philosophy. Co-nect's emphasis on the "sensible" use of technology was another important factor. The previous year, Alton had joined a cohort of 25 Memphis City schools selected to participate in the state's "Twenty-first Century Schools" program. The program had been used to fund the purchase of new computers and other technology resources. The faculty now hoped that Co-nect staff would be able to help them make better use of these new resources in the classroom. For these and other reasons, more 90% of faculty voted to adopt the Co-nect model and work with Co-nect staff for at least a three-year period.

Design & Implementation

The Co-nect design is based on a set of five benchmarks derived from best practices in some of the most effective schools in the United States.

- High expectations for all students and community accountability for results
- Schoolwide emphasis on project-based learning ? practical application of academic knowledge to authentic problems and projects, including projects that build on two-way relationships with parents and the surrounding community
- Use of multiple forms of assessments that measure actual student and school performance and promote community accountability
- Organization of the school into small learning communities, designed to strengthen relationships among students, teachers, and families for sustained periods
- Sensible use of the best available technology for everyone.

The Co-nect benchmarking process helps schools set targets for improvement in all aspects of schooling, including student results, teaching and learning, assessment, school organization, and technology. Within this basic structure, schools set their own goals and identify indicators of progress. In most cases, the school improvement plan and the plan for implementation of the Co-nect design are the same document. The benchmarks represent substantial changes from the way most schools operate and are therefore not easy to implement. However, because they involve deep changes in school culture, once they are in place, they tend to be self-sustaining.

During the course of a three-year implementation process, Co-nect staff help school faculty members implement the model using a combination of on-site, online, and off-site resources.

When Alton implemented the model, professional development got underway during a week-long summer seminar for the entire staff. Throughout the year, additional workshops took place. All workshops dealt with project-based learning, performance assessment, and technology integration. A Co-nect staff member (site director) met with teachers during their planning time to develop projects tied to state standards and district curriculum. The site director also met with the school's instructional leadership team (design team) to discuss schoolwide issues affecting progress toward the Co-nect design benchmarks.

With help from Co-nect staff, Alton teachers organized themselves into multi-age clusters, meeting two hours each week to develop interdisciplinary curriculum projects. Teachers also began to work together to develop a common set of rubrics for evaluating the quality student work in relationship to state and district standards. Every year three members of the Alton staff traveled to other Co-nect schools throughout the country to participate in Co-nect's national "Critical Friends" program. These visits provided opportunities for teachers and administrators to see how the model was being implemented in other schools, to share ideas with colleagues from around the country, and to assist in

the preparation of implementation reports for the host schools. Each year, the school also hosted a Critical Friends visit from other practitioners and received its own report highlighting the "strengths and challenges" identified by the visiting teachers. In addition, each year Alton sent three of their faculty to Co-nect's Technology Conference, during which they visited other Co-nect schools and attended workshops on various issues related to the school reform process.

As an "alumni" school, Alton continues to subscribe to the Co-nect Exchange, a Web-based service for Co-nect teachers that provides access to a library of exemplary curriculum projects and tools to assist in the development of new projects. Alton recently sent a faculty member to an intensive two-week training for Co-nect school facilitators.

NOTE: For tips on how this design can be replicated, select "Replication Details" from the menu.

Results

As the result of an intense, school-wide focus on improving writing, Alton Elementary School has seen steady increases on the state writing assessment. During 1994–1995, the academic year before Alton began to work with Co-NECT, only 6% of students received a score of "proficient" on the writing test. By 1998, student scores increased to 45% proficient, surpassing the district average by 5 percentage points.

Alton Elementary also turned in a strong performance on the reading section of the new state test. Third graders received a median percentile score of 50, up 6 points from the score of 44 they had received as second-graders the year before, and 11 points above the district average.

The gains at Alton have been especially impressive given that scores dropped across the board at both the state and district levels.

Replication Details

NOTE: If you have not already read the 'Design and Implementation' section, selecting that from the menu before reading further will provide a context for the replication details below.

Alton adopted Co-nect, a model for whole-school change developed with the support from New American Schools Corporation.

The original intent of New American Schools was to create models that could be replicated in many schools under a range of conditions. In keeping with this intention, an integral aspect of the Co-nect model is the degree to which the model itself, with a focus on teamwork, full-faculty involvement and distributed expertise, is designed to increase the capacity of a school to sustain the reform process beyond the initial three-year period of intensive external support. Alton Elementary is an example of a school that has been successful in maintaining a strong degree commitment to the design in spite of relatively high staff turnover. Some of the key factors that may help to explain Alton's success follow:

1. A committed staff that believes that all students can succeed at much higher levels of academic achievement.
2. A building principal who serves as a visionary instructional leader in the school as well as a powerful advocate within the district.
3. Adequate technology infrastructure throughout the school.

4. A supportive district, willing to support policy changes and furnish resources that remove impediments to successful school reform.
5. Strong parental support.

Costs and Funding

Costs of implementing Co-nect in an average school (faculty in 25 – 50 range) follow:

- \$65,000 per year for three years
- Travel and substitute allowance to support principal's training, facilitator's training, participation in the Critical Friends program and the national technology conference
- Supplemental travel for fly-in site director model (isolated schools)

Staff from Co-nect are available to meet with schools researching this model.

Contact Information

Virginia McNeil, Principal
2020 Alton Avenue
Memphis, TN 38106
901 775-7430
mcneil@co-nect.memphis-schools.k12.tn.us

Diana Nunnaley, Director of National Programs
Co-nect Schools
10 Fawcett Street
Cambridge, MA
877 726-6328
dnunnaley@co-nect.net
<http://www.co-nect.net>

Rating Criteria

According to an independent study recently released by researchers at the University of Memphis and the University of Tennessee (Knoxville), Alton Elementary, along with three other Co-nect schools in Memphis, has shown stronger achievement gains across all subject areas over a period of two years on Tennessee's Valued-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) than a set of control schools. The Co-nect schools' mean value-added score of 125.7 was significantly superior to the control mean of 107.5, meaning that the schools gained almost 26% more than the national norm means for the subjects and grades tested.

On the basis of their student achievement results, Alton Elementary School earned an "Achievement Award" for most improved elementary school at the 1998 Co-nect Schools Technology Conference held in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida in November 1998.

This story exemplifies the following practices:

Professional development should be continuous and on-going, involving follow-up and support for further learning, including support from sources external to the school that can provide necessary resources and new perspectives.

H.D. Hilley Elementary School

H.D. Hilley Elementary School

El Paso, TX

School Type: Public

**School
Setting:** Rural

Level: Elementary

**School
Design:** Traditional

Content Presented By:

National Awards Program for Model
Professional Development



For a feature story on this school, please visit the WestEd website at
http://www.wested.org/wested/pubs/online/modelPD/49_app_a2.shtml.

Demographics

H.D. Hilley Elementary serves 687 K–5 students in Socorro Independent School District. Socorro ISD is one of the fastest growing school districts in the state, with a student population that has increased 40% in the years between 1994 and 1999. H.D. Hilley has a higher student/teacher ratio and lower per pupil expenditure than the district or state averages.

Student Racial/Ethnic Composition:

88% Hispanic
11% White (not of Hispanic origin)
1% African American (not of Hispanic origin)

LEP Students: 24%

Qualify for Free/Reduced Price Lunch: 70%

Receive Special Education Services: 9%

Background

Located in rural Western Texas, H.D. Hilley Elementary wanted to discredit the stereotypical notions concerning the limited learning potential of students from minority and economically disadvantaged homes.

Design & Implementation

- Coordination with District. Socorro ISD not only sponsors professional development activities at the district level, with follow-up mentoring tailored to individual campus needs, but also allows H.D. Hilley's school improvement team (comprised of teachers, parents, community members, and administrators) to determine school improvement goals and to

decide how to spend its allocated professional development funds (\$400 per teacher per year).

- **Teacher Organizational Structures.** Teachers at H.D. Hilley participate in horizontal (grade level) and vertical (subject) teams. Grade-level teams meet weekly and have common lunch periods. These frequent conversational groups encourage teachers to share ideas and visit each other's classrooms. Cross-grade teams (Communications, Mathematics and Science, Fine Arts, and Technology) meet monthly to structure and monitor the progress of the school-wide initiatives, as well as to coordinate curriculum goals into the K-5 instructional programs. Each team implements and assesses the professional development related to its area.

NOTE: For tips on how this design can be replicated, select "Replication Details" from the menu.

Results

Student outcomes are primarily measured by the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS). Between 1996 and 1997, the percentage of students at H.D. Hilley passing the reading component increased seven percentage points to 80.6%, and between 1995 and 1997, the percentage of third graders mastering all objectives on the test increased by eighteen percentage points, to 48%.

The Socorro ISD administers the annual Texas Assessment of Academic Skills test, which measures a degree of student performance. It was determined that this information, although valuable, would not readily lend itself to assessment of professional development activities and should not be considered the only evaluation criterion of success.

Taking into account limited resources and time constraints, it became obvious that the strategies developed and adopted by the Socorro ISD would have to be designed in such a fashion as to provide immediate feedback from participants and verification of value and benefit. In this instance, the Socorro ISD was able to rely on its partnership with the College of Education at the University of Texas at El Paso for the development of effective assessment and reflection strategies.

During the 1996-97 school year, the College of Education evaluation team assigned to the Challenge Grant in Technology program conducted an evaluation of program results and directions. The findings of the evaluation, conducted through survey and interview techniques, indicated that respondents reported a significant increase in their own levels of confidence in integrating technology into their daily teaching activities. Additionally, evaluation respondents indicated that course work had also broadened their own perspectives on the potential uses of technology into their curriculums of which they had previously been unaware. The evaluation process also requested that respondents provide insight on the actual impact of the course to their own students at the public schools. Again, respondents overwhelmingly indicated a positive impact on their respective students, using terms such as "confidence", "enthusiasm", "pride", and "eagerness" to describe the attitudes of their public school students.

In December of 1997, H.D. Hilley Elementary was awarded the Texas Successful School Award, which is awarded to schools that demonstrate the highest levels of sustained success and the greatest improvement in achieving academic goals. H.D. Hilley Elementary school has been awarded, for two years in a row, Recognized Status from the Texas Education Agency based on the reading and math components of the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills Test results from the students in the third through fifth grades. For the previous school year, the El Paso Collaborative for Academic Excellence awarded H.D. Hilley the Socorro ISD Award for academic gains and school-wide technology applications.

Site Visit Documentation

H.D. Hilley Elementary School's success was recorded based on a site visit conducted by the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development in 1997:

Criteria	Evidence
Expected changes in teaching and student learning that will result from participation in professional development are stated.	The budget justification for expenditure of professional development funds states the objectives for the activities in teacher and student terms. For example, one outcome for teachers is that they will use effective strategies for teaching content. An outcome for students is that they will improve their academic performance in subject areas.
The professional development goals and outcomes focus on increasing teachers' expertise in teaching to high standards.	Statements in the budget justification for expenditure of PD funds explain that the purpose of the activity is to strengthen teachers' knowledge base in the following areas: two-way dual language strategies, integration of technology in the classroom, math/science/language arts teaching strategies, gifted and talented strategies, special education strategies, and classroom organization and discipline strategies. These are linked to the campus goals that reflect high standards in the content areas.
There is a credible rationale for believing that given the attainment of the expected teacher outcomes, student outcomes will be achieved.	The district level and university programs as well as the building-level activities are based on research and best practice. The nature, content, and frequency of the school's PD activities make it reasonable to believe that the expected teacher outcomes will lead to achievement of student outcomes.
There is a continuous process for ensuring that the school community understands how the professional	The teams' involvement in planning, delivering, and evaluating PD ensures that they understand how all the components fit together. The TAAS, as a driving force, also makes the focus

development components fit together and connect to the overall school or district improvement plan.	clear. The presence of parents and community members on the school improvement team, as volunteers, and as participants in parent-centered activities helps the whole school community to understand the school's goals and what teachers need to learn to achieve those goals.
The data collected provide evidence that the professional development activities lead to improved teaching and student learning.	Anecdotal reports from teachers about their increased understanding and use of effective teaching strategies (particularly cooperative learning, learning styles, questioning techniques, hands-on learning), their increased confidence in the use of technology, and improved test scores provide evidence of success. Further evidence is seen in displays of student work and teacher reports of increased class participation, enthusiasm, quality of work, and improved school climate.
The data collected provide evidence that the professional development activities lead to a narrowing of existing achievement gaps.	The school is 98% Hispanic and 96% free or reduced lunch. Even though data is disaggregated, there are so few White or African American students that it is difficult to make meaningful statements about gaps based on ethnic, racial, or socio-economic status. Gaps remain between LEP and non-LEP students and special education and non-special education students, but progress is being made and PD to address the needs of these students is ongoing.

Replication Details

NOTE: If you have not already read the "Design and Implementation" section, selecting that from the menu before reading further will provide a context for the replication details below.

A major component of the school's professional development activities is the infrastructure provided through the numerous working and collaborative agreements that it has developed with other key participants interested in the quality of education delivered to our students. The El Paso Collaborative for Academic Excellence, the College of Education at the University of Texas at El Paso, the National Science Foundation funded Urban Systemic Initiative (science and math) Mentors Program, and the Socorro Teachers Academy, are all major elements of the professional development and continuing

education of the school's teachers and administrators.

All of the campuses in the Socorro ISD are supported by a core of professionals in the district's Education Center. A major role of the Education Center staff is to facilitate the attainment of the academic goals and objectives of the individual campuses through the development of mutually beneficial agreements and affiliations with education-related organizations and institutions in the region and across the state. The Socorro ISD administration has established working relationships with the El Paso Collaborative for Academic Excellence, the National Science Foundation funded Urban Systemic Initiative Mentors (Science & Math), the University of Texas at El Paso, College of Education and Center for Professional Development in Teaching. The alliances established with these organizations represent a predominant portion of the district's effort in teacher professional development.

Site Visit Documentation

Hilley Elementary School's success was recorded based on a site visit conducted by the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development in 1997:

Criteria	Evidence
There is clear evidence of the infrastructure, content, and process components of professional development.	Infrastructure includes district-level support through policies, programs and partnerships and building-level, grade-level, and vertical teams; school improvement teams; and a parent center. Process elements include study groups, within school-day PD, participatory activities that are tied to the real work of teachers (curriculum, instruction, assessment). Content includes subject-specific content and instructional strategies, discipline and classroom management strategies, team-building, and technology.
The professional development is comprehensive and long-term and not narrowly focused on one subgroup of students or staff.	All teachers are involved in PD through their teams and through the mandatory staff-development days. The activities are planned to help teachers and students achieve the campus improvement goals and address all content areas, technology, and instructional strategies for all students (including bilingual and special education). The nature and regularity of team activities (centered on instructional issues) and follow-up provided by

	mentors and formal and informal peer coaching provide evidence of a long-term approach to PD.
There are clear professional development goals based on needs assessment and focused on improving ALL students' learning.	Building level teams (cross-grade, grade-level, and school improvement) analyze TAAS data and other indicators to determine needs and set goals. District-level mentors are available to help school teams analyze data. TAAS affects all students and therefore all students' learning becomes the focus of the needs assessment.
The professional development goals and plan were developed through an inclusionary process.	Planning for professional development occurs within the teams. Since all teachers are members of a team, all teachers are included in planning. Administrators, parents, and community are included on the school improvement team.
The professional development goals are part of a long-term school improvement plan.	The building develops improvement goals each year that are linked to the district's priorities. The overarching goal is to help all students aim for the highest levels on the TAAS and other academic measures. The staff knows that this is a long-term goal that can only be reached if they make progress each year.
Professional development is integral to the school culture and promotes continuous inquiry and improvement.	Grade-level teams meet weekly and have common lunch periods. This regularity and frequent interchange encourages even more informal conversations about instructional issues. Teachers feel free to visit each other's classrooms, to seek advice, and to try out new ideas and share how their innovation worked or didn't work. There is an atmosphere of caring and trust that encourages continuous inquiry and improvement.
The professional development activities reflect the	Research and best practice are reflected in the structures (horizontal and vertical teams) that

best available research and practice in teaching, learning, and leadership.	have been established for teachers to work together, the frequency of meetings, and the focus of the team work (instructional issues including curriculum alignment, teaching strategies, assessment). The range of activities (workshops, small study groups, action research, course work, mentoring, peer coaching, curriculum work, etc.) and the opportunities to develop leadership skills in the teams and as mentors also reflect the application of research and best practice. The content of the PD activities is also based on research and best practice.
The specific content, instructional strategies, and learning activities are designed to reach the professional development goals.	Professional development content is directly linked to the goals. Teachers get to practice the instructional strategies they learn during the PD activities, and they have opportunities to reflect and share results with a mentor or their colleagues on their horizontal and vertical teams.
There are processes for documenting and monitoring the alignment of school improvement plans, professional development activities, teacher and student outcomes.	The documenting and monitoring of alignment of school improvement plans, PD activities, and outcomes occurs as part of vertical team work. Each vertical team is responsible for monitoring and evaluating the progress of the initiatives under its assigned goals. The campus plan includes ways in which the progress is evaluated. Horizontal teams also informally monitor student work, class behavior, and participation to determine if their newly-learned strategies are making a difference for students.
Organizational structures support the implementation of professional development activities on the individual, collegial,	Site-based management is one key to the success of PD in the school, because the school improvement team, with input from the horizontal and vertical teams, is able to make decisions about professional development needs

and organizational levels.	and expenditure of funds. The mentoring support provided by the district and the university partnership also contributes to the strength of the professional development program. The team structures provide effective mechanisms for planning, delivering, and assessing professional development.
The professional development design includes a comprehensive evaluation.	Much of the evaluation is narrowly defined in terms of improvement on the TAAS. The university evaluates its technology program and preservice program in the school using qualitative and quantitative means that include surveys, interviews, and classroom observations. The USI also evaluates its activities in math, science, and technology using surveys, activity evaluation forms, and observations. Vertical teams have similar qualitative and quantitative ways of evaluating their initiatives. Another method of evaluating PD is through the appraisal system. As part of that system, teachers state what they have been able to use from their professional development that has positively impacted students.
The data collected are used to make appropriate programmatic adjustments to professional development.	Vertical teams monitor the progress of their initiatives and make adjustments as needed. Grade-level teams also assess the PD by reflecting on its usefulness in the classroom. The administration and district mentors also monitor the effects of PD and make suggestions for changes.
There is adequate description of the infrastructure, content, and process components to understand and draw lessons from the professional	The vertical and horizontal team structures and functions are easily described. There is documentation that shows the intended outcomes of PD, the types of PD activities, and how PD is linked to building goals and district goals. The content of PD is documented (the

development plan.	USI program, the university program, the parent center, vertical team meetings, topics for mandatory PD days).
The lessons learned are useful for other schools or districts.	Hilley's parent center is a model for other schools in and outside the district. Other schools and districts would benefit from learning about the team structures and functions at Hilley. The multi-faceted relationship with the university is also a model for others. Hilley welcomes visitors and enjoys sharing their successful strategies for working with economically disadvantaged students.

Costs and Funding

Sustained resources (human, fiscal, and technological) are committed to support the professional development plan.

The district provides funds to each building (\$400 per teacher per year) in addition to offering district level PD at no cost to the building. This PD includes mentors who work with the building to plan and deliver follow up. The district also cultivates partnerships (e.g., the Urban Systemic Initiative) that provide other PD opportunities. Hilley benefits not only from technology hardware and PD available through the district, but also from its partnership with the university. Through the partnership, Hilley teachers have access to a technology mentor and are able to purchase equipment for classrooms and for parent use. Parents can check out laptop computers from the parent center.

Contact Information

Ms. Ivonne Durant, M.Ed.
Principal, H.D. Hilley Elementary School
693 N. Rio Vista Road
El Paso, TX 79927
Telephone: (915) 860-3770
Fax: (915) 860-3778
idurant@socorro.k12.tx.us

Rating Criteria

H.D. Hilley Elementary School, El Paso, Texas was selected as a winner of the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development, 1997-8.

What is the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development?

As part of a continuing effort to honor excellence in education, the U.S. Department of Education sponsors the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development. This program recognizes schools and school districts with exemplary professional development programs and

disseminates information about high-quality professional development efforts that provide evidence of student learning and increased teacher effectiveness. Since the focus of this competition is on professional development for teachers and other educators in pre-kindergarten through grade 12 settings, only individual schools (public or private) or school districts may apply. Schools or districts may, however, submit applications that describe their partnerships with other entities, in particular, institutions of higher education. Recognition under this awards program is based on the relative success of the applicants' models, using identified selection criteria that their professional development program results in increased student outcomes. Criteria for selection* include:

Background and Overview of Professional Development

The applicant provides a brief explanation of why he/she considers professional development in his/her school or district exemplary by describing the program's key components and relating those to the U.S. Department of Education's Mission and Principles of Professional Development. This description must provide evidence that the professional development activities are not narrowly focused on one subgroup of students or staff within the school or district.

Goals and Outcomes

The applicant describes the professional development goals, including how they: (1) are developed; (2) relate to school improvement; (3) are based on a needs assessment; and (4) address the achievement of all students regardless of gender, socio-economic level or disadvantaged status, race, ethnic or cultural background, exceptional abilities or disabilities, or limited-English proficiency. Applicants also must address the changes in teaching and student learning that are expected to result from professional development, and must describe how professional development goals and outcomes promote teaching and learning to high standards.

Professional Development Design and Implementation

The applicant provides evidence that professional development reflects research and best practice; includes comprehensive evaluation; includes organizational structures (e.g., administrative and policy support) and resources (e.g., use of time, expertise, funds) that support it; promotes continuous inquiry and improvement; and ensures that the larger school community understands its importance to school improvement.

Objective Evidence of Success

The applicant clearly demonstrates that teacher effectiveness and student learning have improved as a direct result of the implemented professional development activities. Data that indicate this connection must be provided and discussed. The focus of this criterion is objective evidence. A compelling argument must include an explanation of how professional development positively affects outcomes for all teachers and students involved. It must also emphasize areas where any achievement gaps between groups (e.g., gender, socio-economic status, ethnicity) have been addressed and narrowed.

Implications for the Field

The applicant describes the lessons learned as the professional development activities have matured.

*These criteria are derived from the Mission and Principles of Professional Development prepared by the U.S. Department of Education in 1995, in consultation with numerous educational organizations, and have been previously published for public comment.

Information about the current award cycle for the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development can be found at <http://www.ed.gov/inits/TeachersWeb/>.

This story exemplifies the following practices:

Professional development should involve teachers in the identification of what they need to learn and in the development of the learning experiences in which they will be involved.

Professional development should provide learning opportunities that relate to individual needs but are, for the most part, organized around collaborative problem solving.

P.S. 721R Hungerford School

P.S. 721R Hungerford School,

Staten Island, NY

School Type: Public

**School
Setting:** Suburban

Level: K–12

**School
Design:** Alternative

Content Presented By:

National Awards Program for Model
Professional Development



For a feature story on this school, please visit the WestEd website at
http://www.wested.org/wested/pubs/online/modelPD/49_app_a3.shtml.

Demographics

Hungerford School serves a special needs population of approximately 250 students ages twelve to twenty-one that includes students classified as medically fragile, and as severely and profoundly retarded.

Student Racial/Ethnic Composition:

59% White (not of Hispanic origin)
20% African American (not of Hispanic origin)
15% Hispanic
6% Asian or Pacific Islander

LEP Students: 14%

Qualify for Free/Reduced Price Lunch: 67%

Receive Special Education Services: 100%

Background

The teaching staff and administration at Hungerford wanted to move from a model based on limited expectations for special education students to one that actively supports students' transitions to the community and workforce.

Design & Implementation

- Coordinated Efforts Among Teachers. Within Hungerford, different curriculum committees, functioning as professional development teams, set standards for student achievement and evaluate the faculty's progress based on student progress. Teachers have opportunities to learn specific skills through teams, study groups, and peer coaching. Hungerford and the district's

improvement plans identify the same areas for improvement, and the district calendar supports the school's efforts for improvement in those areas.

- Professional Development Laboratory Site. Hungerford has been designated by the district as a Professional Development Laboratory (PDL). As a PDL site, the school hosts "visiting" teachers from elsewhere in the district, who spend extended weekly sessions in a "resident" teacher's classroom. The PDL model provides an opportunity for successful teachers to exchange ideas with colleagues from other schools during the school day.

NOTE: For tips on how this design can be replicated, select "Replication Details" from the menu.

Results

Due to the nature of their disabilities, 98% of the students at Hungerford are exempt from district and state standardized tests. Therefore, the staff uses other measures to assess the progress of their students. The number of students participating in general education inclusion has increased by 18%, and the number of students placed at community-based work sites has increased by 30%. Additionally, the staff continues to revise IEP goals toward higher expectations as student achievement increases.

The special needs population at Hungerford includes students classified as medically fragile, severely and profoundly retarded, and emotionally disturbed. The nature of this student population requires a different approach to considerations of evidence of success. However, as the site visit confirmed, the school's professional development program is grounded in student success and guided by data that provides evidence of progress toward improved student performance. Although most of the students at Hungerford are exempt from district and state standardized tests, their success can be documented through a number of other measures, including for 1997:

- an 18% increase in the number of students participating in general education inclusion
- 80% of students achieving their IEP goals
- a 30% increase in the number of students placed at community-based work sites

Additionally, the school set goals and monitored their achievement.

School Goals:

- Expand the use of technology in instruction.
- Arrange teacher schedules for meetings with colleagues.
- Arrange schedules for classroom staff to plan collaboratively to meet classroom goals.

Success was demonstrated by comparing the 1996 with the 1997 school year data. The following increases were noted:

- Percentage of classrooms with computers increased by 80%.
- Number of students who use technology to communicate or augment communication increased by 45%.
- Number of students who utilize adaptations to access computer technology increased by 85%.
- Percentage of staff who meet with colleagues at least weekly for professional discussion/development increased by 80%.
- Percentage of staff who meet with colleagues at least monthly for professional discussion/development increased by 40%.
- Percentage of classroom teams (teachers, paraprofessionals, and related service providers)

who meet at least weekly increased by 82%.

- Percentage of classroom teams (teachers, paraprofessionals, and related service providers) who meet at least monthly increased by 100%.
- Percentage of student portfolios reflecting technology integrated into the curriculum increased to 98%.

School Goals:

- Provide school-based student support systems to benefit student achievement.
- Develop community-based instructional activities that reflect post-school outcomes.
- Develop an effective school-to-work program.

Success was demonstrated by:

- 30% increase in the number of students participating in community-based vocational training.
- 25% increase in the number of community-based vocational training sites.
- 100% of graduating, transitioning students are linked to adult service agencies, supported employment, sheltered workshops, competitive employment, or day habilitation programs.
- Student portfolios and alternative methods of assessment were used by 100% of teachers to assess and plan instruction.
- Alternate performance indicators appropriate to students' abilities and needs were developed by 100% of our teachers to measure student achievement.
- Staff members, in conjunction with District 75, have been working with other agencies, systems, and organizations to share information regarding the issue of standards and students with severe disabilities.
- During the 1997–1998 school year, the number of our students to participate in general education inclusion increased by 18%.
- 80% of our students achieved their individual educational plan goals.

Site Visit Documentation

P.S. 721R, Hungerford School's success was recorded based on a site visit conducted by the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development in 1997:

Criteria	Evidence
Expected changes in teaching and student learning that will result from participation in professional development are stated.	PD has contributed to changing the entire mission, vision, and focus of the school and has led to completely revised expectations for the students.
There is a credible rationale for believing that given the attainment of the expected teacher outcomes, student	Evidence of staff commitment, of parent support and involvement, and of the ability to meet goals and then set new, higher expectations.

outcomes will be achieved.	
There is a continuous process for ensuring that the school community understands how the professional development components fit together and connect to the overall school or district improvement plan.	Parents are actively involved through PTA nights, parent workshops, and the site council. In addition, paraprofessionals attend workshops during parent conference time. Students, parents, professionals, and paraprofessionals all attend staff transition meetings. Finally, there is extensive involvement by students in community through school-based businesses that provide services to the community.
The data collected provide evidence that the professional development activities lead to improved teaching and student learning.	Multiple data sources indicate a continuous improvement in teaching and student outcomes including work-site placements, increased after-school use computers, student and teacher portfolios, teachers reporting changes in teaching practice, and constant revisions of IEP goals
The data collected provide evidence that the professional development activities lead to a narrowing of existing achievement gaps.	The increased use of adaptive technologies is moving more students to an inclusionary environment. Also, new assessment tools provide more accurate evaluations of student abilities.

Replication Details

NOTE: If you have not already read the "Design and Implementation" section, selecting that from the menu before reading further will provide a context for the replication details below.

Professional development brings together teachers, paraprofessionals, specialists (speech, occupational and physical therapists), administrators, and parents in their efforts to provide optimum learning opportunities for students. At Hungerford, all instruction is focused on a common goal: "to guide students to their maximum potential and functional level by supporting their development of essential social, emotional, and academic skills." Over the past decade, the school has moved from a model based on limited expectations for special education students to one that actively supports students' transitions to the community and workforce. This common vision and purpose guide all professional development, teaching and learning activities.

Professional development planning is facilitated by annual needs assessments (in place since 1990). A continuous improvement model provides opportunities for individuals to identify and pursue professional development activities necessary to acquire the knowledge, skills, and abilities that will

ensure desired student outcomes.

In order to sponsor professional development workshops without neglecting the special needs of students, the district employs full-time "replacement teachers". A staff member at the school is responsible for coordinating and scheduling the replacement teachers and other substitutes as needed, to allow teachers to take advantage of a variety of professional development experiences. When the professional development experience requires the teacher to be away from the school for more than a few days, the replacement teacher spends time in the classroom both before and after the teachers' absence to facilitate the transition.

There is strong union support for the school's professional development program and goals. The union representative and principal each independently confirmed the highly collaborative nature of the union/school relationship. Teachers' contracts provide for one professional development period each day.

A successful grant writing infrastructure has been established at the school to ensure access to additional outside resources. Two staff members have responsibilities for monitoring and responding to grant opportunities. Their efforts are supported by regularly-scheduled release time from classroom duties.

The Hungerford School works in partnership with the district, District 75, the Unified Federation of Teachers, community businesses and organizations, local colleges and universities. District 75 supports the school by identifying resources to promote professional knowledge focusing on high expectations, literacy, assessment, team-building, parent-involvement, conflict-resolution, positive behavior supports, and the use of technology.

Union supported Teacher Centers provide systematic ongoing professional education services to the teachers in our school. Staff members participate in Center activities to build collaboration, participate in training, share innovative teaching practices, and maintain high standards of accountability.

The school developed a school-based management planning team consisting of representatives from all constituencies in the school community. In forming the team, strong consideration was given to parent representation reflecting the student population.

This team:

- Developed partnerships with community agencies and businesses to develop vocational programs to prepare students for the transition from school to work. Eight community work sites are a result of this collaboration.
- Involved students in community service projects. These projects enable students to feel good when they see themselves as genuinely useful. Helping others is therapeutic. Community service also yields opportunities for learning.
- Initiated the use of curriculum-based measurement and portfolios as assessment methods.
- Supported thematic curriculum planning and cooperative learning.
- Developed mechanisms to coordinate existing information and databases for the purpose of linking resources and disseminating data for program development.
- Coordinated resources and service provided by public and private agencies and community based organizations.
- Increased opportunities for employment options and successful job placement for each student.

A Professional Development Needs Assessment was conducted with the entire staff through the use of surveys/questionnaires, interviews/discussions, self reports, and records of activities. A School Comprehensive Education Plan was developed to address the professional development needs of staff and parents, and the instructional needs of students.

Staff self-assessment also provided information about implementation of instructional programs and the quality of instruction. District 75 developed rubrics that were used by our staff in self-assessment of three program practices: "Literacy Development", "Individualized Educational Plan Development", and "Use of Student Learning Assessments".

During 1997–1998, a priority for the school was comprehensive and sustained professional development for the instructional and support staff. A major focus of staff development for the 1996–1997 school year was literacy improvement. As a result of professional development opportunities in literacy skills development, staff set the following goals: integrating literacy with the arts, technology, school-to-work skills, identifying appropriate performance standards, increasing parent involvement, and formalizing collaboration of resources with regard to literacy. Based upon these goals, the school developed professional training programs in technological skills, arts education, and alternative assessment.

Site Visit Documentation

P.S. 721R, Hungerford School's success was recorded based on a site visit conducted by the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development in 1997:

Criteria	Evidence
The professional development is comprehensive and long-term and not narrowly focused on one subgroup of students or staff.	• grant writing team in place, established successful record securing additional funds • district structure supports school's pd plan (release time, substitutes, strong union support for pd) • clear and extensive evidence that pd is for all staff and aimed at goals for all students
There are clear professional development goals based on needs assessment and focused on improving ALL students' learning.	• needs assessment conducted every year since 1990 • documents, interviews, and observations indicate clear vision among all staff of goals for all students
The professional development goals and plan were developed through an inclusionary process.	• team found evidence of extensive staff involvement (teachers, paraprofessionals, specialists) and active parents

The professional development goals are part of a long-term school improvement plan.	• both district and school comprehensive plans identify 5 areas for improvement – all pd is focused on these 5 areas
Professional development is integral to the school culture and promotes continuous inquiry and improvement.	• formal and informal meetings • contract provisions for daily pd time • district-supported pd lab and mentoring opportunities
The professional development activities reflect the best available research and practice in teaching, learning, and leadership.	• pd is ongoing and integrated into daily life of staff • focuses on clearly articulated, common goal/vision for all students
The specific content, instructional strategies, and learning activities are designed to reach the professional development goals.	• emphasis on changing school culture and student outcomes • multi-faceted activities all focused on common goal
There are processes for documenting and monitoring the alignment of school improvement plans, professional development activities, teacher and student outcomes.	• annual school evaluation by site council • longitudinal data collection processes • annual review of school improvement plans that inform pd activities
Sustained resources (human, fiscal, and technological) are committed to support the professional development plan.	• team found evidence of numerous structures that are in place to facilitate mentoring, individualized pd opportunities
The professional development design includes a comprehensive evaluation.	• teacher portfolios, paraprofessional portfolios • pre & post needs assessments • provisions for annual data collection and analysis
The data collected are used to make	• site council addresses this at three different meetings each

appropriate programmatic adjustments to professional development.	year • open communication between administration and staff also facilitates adjustments
There is adequate description of the infrastructure, content, and process components to understand and draw lessons from the professional development plan.	• although this site is a special education school, pd lessons applicable to any school context
The lessons learned are useful for other schools or districts.	• staff now training site for others in district • union uses school as example • school is "community of learners" concept in action

Costs and Funding

Professional Development is supported through grants from the following:

- Chase Manhattan Bank
- Citi Tech
- DeWitt-Wallace Reader's Digest Fund
- Lynne Steinman Foundation
- Council for Supervisors and Administrators
- Artsgenesis
- New York City Council
- New York State Incentive Grant

Contact Information

Mary Longo/Linsey Miller (Teachers)
P.S. 721R Hungerford School
155 Tompkins Avenue
Staten Island, NY 10304
Telephone: (718) 273-8622
Fax: (718) 727-6994

Rating Criteria

P.S. 721R, Hungerford School, Staten Island, New York was selected as a winner of the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development, 1997-8.

What is the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development?

As part of a continuing effort to honor excellence in education, the U.S. Department of Education sponsors the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development. This program recognizes schools and school districts with exemplary professional development programs and disseminates information about high-quality professional development efforts that provide evidence of student learning and increased teacher effectiveness. Since the focus of this competition is on professional development for teachers and other educators in pre-kindergarten through grade 12 settings, only individual schools (public or private) or school districts may apply. Schools or districts may, however, submit applications that describe their partnerships with other entities, in particular, institutions of higher education. Recognition under this awards program is based on how well applicants demonstrate the success of their programs, using identified selection criteria that their professional development program results in increased student outcomes. Criteria for selection* include:

Background and Overview of Professional Development

The applicant provides a brief explanation of why they consider professional development in their schools or districts exemplary by describing the program's key components and relating those to the U.S. Department of Education's Mission and Principles of Professional Development. This description must provide evidence that the professional development activities are not narrowly focused on one subgroup of students or staff within the school or district.

Goals and Outcomes

The applicant describes the professional development goals, including how they: (1) are developed; (2) relate to school improvement; (3) are based on a needs assessment; and (4) address the achievement of all students regardless of gender, socio-economic level or disadvantaged status, race, ethnic or cultural background, exceptional abilities or disabilities, or limited-English proficiency. Applicants also must address the changes in teaching and student learning that are expected to result from professional development, and must describe how professional development goals and outcomes promote teaching and learning to high standards.

Professional Development Design and Implementation

The applicant provides evidence that professional development reflects research and best practice; includes comprehensive evaluation; includes organizational structures (e.g., administrative and policy support) and resources (e.g., use of time, expertise, funds) that support it; promotes continuous inquiry and improvement; and ensures that the larger school community understands its importance to school improvement.

Objective Evidence of Success

The applicant clearly demonstrates that teacher effectiveness and student learning have improved as a direct result of the implemented professional development activities. Data that indicate this connection must be provided and discussed. The focus of this criterion is objective evidence, and a compelling argument must be made for how professional development positively affects outcomes for all teachers and all students. It must also emphasize areas where any achievement gaps between groups (e.g., gender, socio-economic

status, ethnicity) have been addressed and narrowed.

Implications for the Field

The applicant describes the lessons learned as the professional development activities have matured.

*These criteria are derived from the Mission and Principles of Professional Development prepared by the U.S. Department of Education in 1995, in consultation with numerous educational organizations, and have been previously published for public comment.

Information about the current award cycle for the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development can be found at <http://www.ed.gov/inits/TeachersWeb/>.

This story exemplifies the following practices:

Professional development should provide learning opportunities that relate to individual needs but are, for the most part, organized around collaborative problem solving.

Professional development should incorporate evaluation of multiple sources of information on (a) outcomes for students and (b) the instruction and other processes that are involved in implementing the lessons learned.

Accelerated Learning Laboratory (ALL School)

Accelerated Learning Laboratory (ALL School)

Worcester, MA

School

Type: Public

School Setting: Urban

Level: Elementary

School Design: CSRD/Other
Non-Traditional

Content Presented By:

Co-nect, Inc.



This story is available only as a Short Summary.

Demographics

School Population:

1998–99 enrollment: 560 students

1999–00 enrollment: 850 students projected

Staff: 65

Student Ethnic/Racial Composition:

32% Hispanic

10% African–American

6% Asian

52% Anglo (with a significant number of students from Albania)

Qualify for Free/Reduced Price Lunch: 86%

The goal of this city's de-isolation plan was to significantly reduce the isolation of minorities in many of the city's neighborhoods. In 1990, this school's student body was 78% minority. By 1996 this number had gone to 44%, and the school now has a considerable waiting list of families from every neighborhood in the city eager to enroll their children. Parent participation has grown from approximately 20 parents to over 180 parents regularly participating in the life of the school.

Background

No data available at this time.

Design & Implementation

The ALL School adopted the Co-nect design for comprehensive school reform in 1992. The Co-nect design is based on a set of five benchmarks derived from best practices in some of the most effective schools in the United States.

The benchmarks include:

- High expectations for all students and community accountability for results.
- Schoolwide emphasis on project-based learning?practical application of academic knowledge to authentic problems and projects, including projects that build on two-way relationships with parents and the surrounding community.
- Use of multiple forms of assessments that measure actual student and school performance and promote community accountability.
- Organization of the school into small learning communities, designed to strengthen relationships among students, teachers, and families for sustained periods.
- Sensible use of the best available technology for everyone.

The Co-nect benchmarking process helps schools set targets for improvement in all aspects of schooling including student results, teaching and learning, assessment, school organization, and technology. Within this basic structure, schools set their own goals and identify indicators of progress. In most cases, the school improvement plan and the plan for implementation of the Co-nect design are the same document.

The benchmarks represent substantial changes from the way most schools operate and are therefore not easy to implement. However, because they involve deep changes in school culture, once they are in place, they tend to be self-sustaining.

The ALL School enjoys a special status within the Co-nect network of schools in that it was a founding partner during the early phases of model development and thus qualifies as an "early adopter." The basic components of the model, many of which had been pioneered elsewhere, were first tested in combination at the school. These components included a project-based curriculum, "clustering" (small learning communities), schoolwide portfolio assessment, and widespread use of computers and other new technologies in support of learning. Although the faculty was originally reluctant to try out another innovative practice, multiage grouping, the practice was eventually adopted and has since become one of the most salient and successful features of the school. The use of a faculty "design team" as a central leadership group with decision-making responsibility for schoolwide instructional matters was also first adopted at the ALL School.

Because of its special status, the ALL School has been more of a partner in Co-nect's national reform effort than a client school, and has therefore not received the kind of intense professional development and staff support that the more recent adopters are receiving. Nevertheless, under the leadership of a strong and visionary principal with a tenacious commitment to the founding vision, the school has prospered and become a major demonstration site, with hundreds of visitors every year. Many of the schools that have joined the network in recent years have based their decision largely on positive reactions of staff visits to the ALL School.

NOTE: For tips on how this design can be replicated, select "Replication Details" from the menu.

Results

Because of the ALL School's prominent position within the district as the only school working with the New American Schools comprehensive school reform design, the reform effort was under intense scrutiny, with close attention paid to test scores.

Fortunately, after beginning to work with the Co-nect design in 1992, the school achieved test score improvements in all subject areas (both 4th and 8th grade) on the state assessment (MEAP). Some of

the most dramatic gains occurred in reading and mathematics at the elementary school level. For example, the number of 4th graders scoring at the "proficient" level or higher on the reading test rose from only 5% in 1994 to 25% in 1996 (the test was given every two years). Gains in mathematics were even more striking?from 4% to 26% proficient, outstripping both district and state averages.

Replication Details

NOTE: If you have not already read the 'Design and Implementation' section, selecting that from the menu before reading further will provide a context for the replication details below.

The ALL School adopted Co-nect, a model for whole school change developed with support from New American Schools Corporation. The original intent of the New American Schools funding for creation of the designs was to create models which could be replicated in many schools under a range of conditions. An integral aspect of the Co-nect model is the degree to which the model itself, with a focus on teamwork and distributed expertise, is designed to increase the capacity of a school to sustain progress--indeed, to continue to push the limits--after the initial 3-year period of intensive involvement is completed. The professional development, in combination with the Web-based resources, enables a staff to support and train new faculty and to continue to develop their own expertise.

However, seven years of practice in schools has also identified the following essential ingredients to successful replication of this model.

1. A committed staff who believes that all students can succeed at much higher levels of academic achievement. (Or a staff willing to try different strategies in order to prove for themselves that their children can be successful.)
2. A strong, skillful administrative leader adept at supporting staff through a change process. (Continuity of leadership is also a necessary ingredient.)
3. Adequate technology infrastructure throughout the school.
4. A supportive district, willing to support through policy changes, furnishing resources that remove impediments to a successful implementation Example: In one urban district, all teachers from Title I schools were required to participate in a series of professional development sessions offered by the district. When it was determined that teachers in Co-nect schools were already receiving essentially the same training but more connected to the process in their own school, the district waived the requirement for Co-nect teachers. (Continuity of district leadership is another key aspect of successful replications. Changes in leadership at the superintendent's level as well as in the school board can have a negative impact on a three year process.)

Staff from Co-nect are available to meet with schools researching this model. (See Contact information.)

Costs and Funding

Costs of implementing Co-nect in an average school (faculty in 25-50 range) follow:

- \$65,000 per year for three years
- Travel and substitute allowance to support principal's training, facilitator's training, participation in Critical Friends and the national technology conference
- Supplemental travel for fly-in site director model (isolated schools)

Contact Information

Carol Shilinsky, Principal
Accelerated Learning Laboratory (ALL)
15 Claremont Street
Worcester, Massachusetts
Telephone: 508 799-3077
Shilinsk@nis.accel.worc.k12.ma.us

Rating Criteria

The ALL School was designated one of six exemplary middle schools in New England by the New England League of Middle Schools during 1994-95.

In 1998 the ALL School was awarded its first accreditation by the Commission on Public Secondary Schools of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges following a lengthy year of self-study and evaluation by an outside team from the commission.

This story exemplifies the following practices:

Professional development should incorporate evaluation of multiple sources of information on (a) outcomes for students and (b) the instruction and other processes that are involved in implementing the lessons learned.

Lawrence Public School District

Lawrence Public School District

Lawrence, KS

School Type: Public

**School
Setting:** Urban

Level: K–12

**School
Design:** Traditional

Content Presented By:

National Awards Program for Model
Professional Development



This story is available only as a Short Summary.

Demographics

The Lawrence, Kansas (PreK–12) School District serves a university community (University of Kansas) in a moderately urban, mid–size city setting. Rapid growth (thirty percent in the population in the last decade), and high community expectations for education set the environmental context. The district comprises 24 schools with an enrollment of 9,872 students.

Student Racial/Ethnic Composition:

81% White (not Hispanic)
9% African American
4% Native American or Native Alaskan
3% Asian or Pacific Islander
2% Hispanic

Limited English Proficient Students (36 languages spoken): 3%

Qualify for free/reduced lunch: 28%

Receive special education services: 20%

Background

- The Quality Performance Accreditation (QPA) Initiative adopted by the State Board of Education holds schools accountable for demonstrating student progress, and mandates both site–based councils and school improvement plans. The state also requires that professional development initiatives connect activities with impact on instructional strategies and student achievement. Lawrence volunteered to pilot this accreditation model and has added more schools each year. Thus, the idea of student–focused, data–driven professional development has been institutionalized in the district for several years.
- A central office staff (currently comprised of a director of evaluation and standards, two instructional skills coordinators, and several curriculum specialists) has developed a strong

theoretical base for integrating instructional improvement, curriculum development, and professional development. Several methods have been developed to support teachers and other district personnel as they engage in reflection and planning for change. The emphasis is on sustaining a program that is ongoing, comprehensive, and job-embedded.

- Building on their experience with the pilot for the QPA, all schools are now required to craft a school improvement plan each year that details the connection between professional development and student achievement. Three different data sources are used: norm-referenced CTBS; state assessments in writing, math, science, and social studies; and local assessments in math and reading. A local School Inservice Council that is comprised of teachers, principals, parents, and community representatives develops the plan and then forwards it for review to the Local (district) Inservice Council (LIC) which is comprised of teachers from each school, administrators, curriculum coordinators, and early childhood specialists. The 32 member LIC meets monthly and provides an opportunity for both oversight and cross-school sharing/collaboration. It is here that an assessment is made concerning the inclusion of state and district goals, as well as approvals secured concerning travel, and so on. Each school must detail plans to use the six half days set aside by the district for professional development; the district staff will plan for two or three additional days. In addition to school plans, teachers submit individual professional development plans that require support beyond that provided in the school plan.

Design & Implementation

Four components are key to the success of the district's professional development model. First, all teachers new to the district must complete a New Staff Instructional Skills Program within their first two years. This program is directed by an instructional skills coordinator and involves the teachers in six (released) days of intensive work designed to introduce them to the district and develop a common language about effective instruction. Teachers prepare a series of videos and action plans focused on instruction. Second, BLIS (Building Level Instructional Skills) groups can be formed at the building level to explore self-identified issues that are connected to the school improvement plan. Typically six teachers and the principal engage with an instructional skills coordinator for six half days (released). Third, a professional development library of mixed media is housed at the central office. The library contains an extensive collection of books, periodicals, tapes, video material, and CD-ROMs. Schools are encouraged to use this material and/or to order additional items. Finally, central office staff is available for consultation with schools. The emphasis is on in-district capacity building through a trainer of trainers approach. Several cadres of trainers are sustained in the district (e.g., direct instruction, action research, curriculum assessment/development and evaluation).

Schools use a variety of methods to create time for professional development. Several schools use a weekly early-dismissal plan, other schools use creative block scheduling to create common planning time, while others create "buddy classes" to permit primary and intermediate grade teachers to share work time. In all cases this work is student-focused and driven by analysis of data concerning student achievement. At the end of the year each school must make a presentation to the Local (district) Inservice Council detailing the effectiveness of the plan for that year. This "results-based" planning and evaluation focuses attention both on student achievement data and on levels of implementation by teachers of strategies detailed in the school improvement plans.

NOTE: For tips on how this design can be replicated, select "Replication Details" from the menu.

Results

The district's best linkage to student achievement progress comes from the state quality performance

accreditation process and the reports that are written for the state board of education. To utilize resources most wisely, the district has cycled schools into the process with a few schools starting each year, beginning in 1991. So far seven schools have gone through the first cycle and have been recommended for full accreditation to the state board of education, three in 1995 and four in 1996. During the four year cycle, all seven schools showed student achievement gains for one or more of their targets. As stated in Prairie Park's report last year, "...improvement gains were made on three separate measures. ...Collaboration and curriculum redesign were employed to improve mastery of mathematical principles and complex thinking skills. Further, the school's improvement plan focused on staff development and was coordinated with staff in-service, time management, and student performance." From Quail Run's report, another school accredited in 1995, "School leaders and staff collaboratively and systematically align staff development plans with the mission, academic focus and outcomes established by the school and district. Continuous school improvement processes and products and emerging student performance data are used in a manner that impact classroom practice." From Cordley's report, "The visiting team concludes that given the comprehensive view of the data collected and analyzed and the strategies implemented to date, student improvement is happening at Cordley. The team also recognizes the staffs' efforts to link assessment with learning and instruction." Woodlawn School's report included the following, "The improvement in writing is commendable and is a reflection of the level of staff development and the high implementation rate of strategies by the teachers." We look for continuation of full accreditation in 1997 as five more schools complete the first four-year cycle.

The Lawrence district assembles a district profile each year for the district improvement team and the Board of Education to be shared with the public at large. Student achievement highlights from the 1996 profile indicate the following:

- CTBS ? Reading is an identified area of strength at all 4 grade levels where the test is given (4,6,9, and 11). The trend has been strong over the past four years. Nearly 75 percent of the students scored in the top half of the national distribution.
- CTBS ? Language/Total Battery – 64 percent or more scored in the top half of the national distribution.
- CTBS ? Math Over 66 percent of the students scored in the top half of the national distribution.
- CTBS ? Total battery – All grade levels scored above an NCE score of 62 (72nd percentile). Over 70 percent scored in the top half.
- CTBS ? there are no identified areas of weakness at any grade level.
- On the Beginning Reading Inventory given at the start of grade 1 – The percentage of students showing mastery of concepts of print increased. In 1995 it was 91.9 percent. Phonemic awareness mastery increased ten percentage points from the 1993 to 59.2 percent.
- Kansas Reading ? The average percent correct in expository reading decreased for grade 3, increased for grade 7 and stayed the same for grade 10. This is an area we have targeted because we are not happy with our results.
- Kansas Writing ? Writing scores increase at grades 6 and 9 and showed increases in all but two traits at the high school level. In the area of "voice" the district average at all 3 levels is at the state standard of excellence.
- Kansas Math ? The average percent correct on all three subparts (problem solving, reasoning, and communication) as well as for the standardized "power score" showed increases from 1995 to 1996. 1995–96 was the second year to give our local assessments in reading and math and there have been minor changes as we improve them each year so it is not possible yet to make year to year comparisons.

Site Visit Documentation

Lawrence Public School District's success was recorded based on a site visit conducted by the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development in 1996:

Criteria	Evidence
Evidence of desired student outcomes. There are ways for the school/district to show that p.d. activities lead to desired teacher and student outcomes.	Students are the direct beneficiaries of professional development experiences. There has been district-wide focus on math and writing instruction, and these efforts are reflected in improved test scores. Instructional strategies to increase participation were observed along with graphic organizers in grades as low as kindergarten. Samples of Grade 4–6 portfolios indicated individual improvement in writing, and are in alignment with the district-created writing goals. All junior high and high school students in the district use weekly planners (calendars) to improve organizational skills.
There is evidence that the p.d. content has direct application for teaching.	There is strong evidence of direct applicability for teaching as demonstrated by teachers' development of individual action plans, demonstration videos with follow-up coaching, and overall emphasis on increased student participation.

Other Outcomes

The district conducts end-of-year evaluations of our various district-wide efforts such as instructional skills to determine impact on teacher behavior and attitude. The following types of benefits are reported for participants of Instructional Skills classes:

- Opportunity to form professional relationships across the district
- Support and feedback to principals and new staff, before tenured
- Assist in setting expectations for continuous growth
- Learn about resources and support staff they will use throughout employment
- Provide a common awareness of what district's view is of effective teaching

The following types of benefits are reported for participants of Building Level Instructional Skills groups:

- Peer coaching gets staff into each other's classes
- Choice of topic leads to tailor-made staff development for the building
- Repeated, non-threatening opportunities to practice and process are provided

- Principals have opportunity to build collegiality and model lifelong learning with staff ? sends a message they are valued

Benefits for participants of either Instructional Skills or building-level groups:

- Provide connections/support for QPA and continuous improvement goals
- Foster increased range of teaching options when dealing with problems
- Allow time for collaborative planning across grade levels
- Bring teacher knowledge to a conscious level
- Help prepare teachers to deal with diverse student needs in classroom
- Break down isolation of teachers

Year-end building summaries also provide an array of impact information. Schools often report progress with student achievement data as well as increased levels of implementation for their staff in successfully using new strategies identified in their school improvement plans. Additionally, staff are more focused on the target areas and discussing student progress on a regular basis. Schools also report reduced incidents of students being sent to the office and increased attendance rates as evidence of moving toward their school improvement outcomes.

Although the district realizes that the above successes may be attributed to a combination of factors, it believes professional development has been a heavy contributor.

Replication Details

NOTE: If you have not already read the "Design and Implementation" section, selecting that from the menu before reading further will provide a context for the replication details below.

The district is proud of its professional development program and knows it has made an impact on staff and students in the Lawrence Public Schools, but it also acknowledges that it is still evolving and will continue to be refined. There are educators who visit the district to get ideas or who attend sessions that some of our staff members present at various state and regional conferences. There is a results-based staff-development training team that has provided several workshops in northeast Kansas. There are pockets of the various components in districts across Kansas due to the in-service plan and the networking that goes on within the state.

There are several components that can be adopted or adapted by other districts. These include: the use of results-based staff development action plans that are aligned with the school improvement plans, the discussion of professional development standards by our local in-service council in order to improve practice, an instructional skills program to establish a common language and definition about effective instructional practices, the building of level study groups which utilize peer coaching, and the implementation of aligned curriculum and performance assessment development and training.

In the spring of 1997 the district included as one of six examples in *Strategies for School System Leaders on District-Level Change*, "Getting Serious about Professional Development," published by the Panasonic Foundation in collaboration with AASA.

Site Visit Documentation

Lawrence Public School District's success was recorded based on a site visit conducted by the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development in 1996:

Criteria	Evidence
Connection between p.d. and school/district improvement plans (needs assessment). Have goals and mission changed over time and rationale for change?	There is a strong connection between professional development and school and district improvement plans. All professional development plans are monitored and approved by the "Local Inservice Council" (LIC), which represents all schools in the district to ensure alignment between district goals and professional development activities. Since the formation of the professional development plan eleven years ago, district staff have incorporated a developmental model that has been transformed from a mandatory participation plan with limited staff development to a multi-faceted program that is filled to capacity voluntarily. Lawrence's broad goals have remained soundly intact for the past eight years: (1) continuous improvement at the building level, directly tied to student achievement targets; (2) improved instructional skills for all staff; and (3) aligned, articulated curriculum and assessment practices.
Connection to student achievement (including the process of how p.d. is connected to student outcomes).	There is a direct connection between professional development and student achievement goals. School site councils review student assessment data, proficiency tests, and portfolios to determine areas of strength and weaknesses. Goals are written and professional development is planned to support the goals. These goals are then reviewed by the Local Inservice Council, which has representation from all schools and the district office.
Extent to which distinct p.d. experiences are connected and	There is a process in place to insure that professional development is connected to individual, school, and district

ongoing and linked to goals.	goals. This includes the approval of the site representative and principal of each school, as well as the Instructional Skills Committee (of the Local Inservice Council). Most requests are approved.
Evidence of teacher change (teacher outcomes).	Teachers write an Action Plan following each professional development experience, which outlines how they are going to apply what they learned to the classroom and their curriculum. These plans are monitored by the principal and the instructional strategies / curriculum coordinators. Teachers are videotaped before and after they learn a particular instructional technique, to monitor development of skills. Journals and portfolios are also used by teachers, and areas of strengths and growth are identified.
Connection to research and best practices.	A constructivist approach to staff development is based on research by Bruce Joyce and Beverly Showers, the principles of adult learners, and theories of teacher development. The district's program has also been influenced by the works of B. Bennett, M. Fullen, and numerous others. Principles of brain-based learning, and multiple intelligences are evident in the professional development approach utilized.
Diversity in types of p.d. experiences.	There is a wide range of p.d. activities available to the district's educators. Activities include study groups which follow staff development experiences, as well as peer coaching, BLISS (Building Level Instructional Skills) groups, action research, self reflection, and a growing staff development center, where any staff person in the district can borrow resources (books, videos, etc.) aimed at professional development.

Percent of staff/schools involved (planning, evaluating, participating in the full range of activities).	All schools in the district are involved in the district's staff development program. All schools are represented on the Local Inservice Council and involved in the implementation of their site plans. Teachers may be involved in many leadership roles including, Language Arts cadre, teacher leaders, math liaisons, science leaders, and team leaders. Teachers receive training in peer coaching. Substitute teachers are made available to provide class coverage so that teachers can readily participate in these activities. They also support the program by providing class coverage for each other.
Strategies for supporting ongoing p.d. (time for p.d. and how it is embedded).	Several schools have instituted schedules that include weekly early-release days to provide teachers a half day each week for professional development. BLISS groups are facilitated by principals, district coordinators that meet weekly, and a cadre of substitute teachers take over classes for the teachers involved. There are 4.5 development days on the district's master calendar, and half-day fall and spring assessment conferences. Continuous funds are available for release time, stipends, and workshop fees.
Methods for evaluating the p.d. initiative (collection of appropriate data and use of data).	The evaluation of the professional development initiative occurs on an on-going basis by the Local Inservice Council, and includes teacher response surveys, teacher journals, and assessments by training and curriculum staff. Staff implementation is monitored using CBAM (Concerned Based Adoption Model).
Communication with staff about p.d. activities.	Teachers are surveyed after all professional development activities and at the end of the school year, regarding concerns and feedback

	about p.d. activities. Each building has representatives on the LIC, who serve as communications liaisons between each school and the council and district planners. In addition, the LIC provides meeting minutes to all district staff. Teachers may also contact their site LIC representative regarding professional development.
P.D. program is institutionalized rather than dependent on specific resources or personalities.	The professional development program is institutionalized and systemic. The Local Inservice Council is composed of representative teachers and/or principals at each school building, who are selected by their colleagues. This council makes decisions regarding how professional development will be carried out at the district and at the school and individual levels. Each school has a professional development plan.

Costs and Funding

The district has been able to protect the funding for professional development activities even during those times when bond issues have been difficult to pass. Professional development has a high priority in the district. Current funding comes from a number of sources: State Excellence Grants, fifty percent match from State Professional Development Funds, Title II (math and science), and business partnerships.

A strong professional development program requires creative use of time and resources, both human and monetary. The district is fortunate that it spends enough in staff development programs and have enough people on approved individual development plans to receive full reimbursement from the state, which is currently at about 50%. Funding for professional growth is sometimes difficult to maintain when a district undergoes budget cuts. It is often easy to say, "let's cut what doesn't directly affect the students." The district was able to reinstate professional development cuts made between 1993 and 1996. They are fortunate to have additional revenue from several sources, including money from the federal government for work in science and math (Title II), from three state excellence grants, and monetary support from district business partnerships. Individual schools in the district have been given scholarships to help staff attend summer workshops.

Many people in the district provide leadership for staff development. A director oversees school improvement/accreditation and staff development and two instructional coordinators provide training and facilitate building-level study groups. They oversee the library and assist all staff in connecting with the right people or information. Curriculum coordinators provide leadership and training for their specific subject areas. Principals, along with their building staff-development committees, plan and implement the specific action plans for their school with the help of people from the district or

outsiders when needed. Teacher leaders are used and paid accordingly when they are the logical choice for presenting/facilitating. The district allocates travel and stipend money as well as a number of substitute days that schools can use for release time. There are five to six half days built into the school calendar for building-level staff development. As mentioned earlier, schools use creative ways to create time for collaboration, planning, and learning. Because the staff-development plans are ongoing, the staff of various schools find ways to build in time for peer observation/coaching, planning, discussions, and reflection. District allocations are used for substitutes as well as for district activities like instructional skills and curriculum and assessment work, teacher stipends for work done outside their contract time, outside consultants, materials, and ongoing subscriptions. Even though resources are limited and the amount spent on professional development is less than 1.3% of the total district operating budget, the district feels it makes effective use of time, people, and money.

Sources of funding for Lawrence Public Schools' professional development 1996:

	\$290,000
1. Total Inservice Fund	
2. 3 Enhancement Grants	
• Assessment	\$66,000
• Quail Run Technology	\$42,095
• Internet Exploration	\$20,000
3. Title II – Math/Science	
4. General Fund	\$33,298
5. Scholarships from various business partnerships	\$212,000
6. District business partnership	
• funding for "poet in residence"	\$3,000
• (5 year commitment to this annual amount)	\$40,000
	\$706,393

Contact Information

Sandee Crowther
 Division Director of Evaluation and Standards
 Lawrence Public Schools
 3705 Clinton Parkway
 Lawrence, Kansas 66047
 Telephone: 913-832-5000
 Fax: 913-832-5016

Rating Criteria

Lawrence, Kansas School District was selected as a winner of the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development, 1996-7.

What is the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development?

As part of a continuing effort to honor excellence in education, the U.S. Department of Education sponsors the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development. This program recognizes schools and school districts with exemplary professional development programs and

disseminates information about high-quality professional development efforts that provide evidence of student learning and increased teacher effectiveness. Since the focus of this competition is on professional development for teachers and other educators in pre-kindergarten through grade 12 settings, only individual schools (public or private) or school districts may apply. Schools or districts may, however, submit applications that describe their partnerships with other entities, in particular, institutions of higher education. Recognition under this awards program is based on how well applicants demonstrate, using identified selection criteria that their professional development program results in increased student outcomes. Criteria for selection* include:

Background and Overview of Professional Development

The applicant provides a brief explanation of why he/she considers professional development in his/her school or district exemplary by describing the program's key components and relating those to the U.S. Department of Education's Mission and Principles of Professional Development. This description must provide evidence that the professional development activities are not narrowly focused on one subgroup of students or staff within the school or district.

Goals and Outcomes

The applicant describes the professional development goals, including how they: (1) are developed; (2) relate to school improvement; (3) are based on a needs assessment; and (4) address the achievement of all students regardless of gender, socio-economic level or disadvantaged status, race, ethnic or cultural background, exceptional abilities or disabilities, or limited-English proficiency. Applicants must also address the changes in teaching and student learning that are expected to result from professional development, and must describe how professional development goals and outcomes promote teaching and learning to high standards.

Professional Development Design and Implementation

The applicant provides evidence that professional development reflects research and best practice; includes comprehensive evaluation; includes organizational structures (e.g., administrative and policy support) and resources (e.g., use of time, expertise, funds) that support it; promotes continuous inquiry and improvement; and ensures that the larger school community understands its importance to school improvement.

Objective Evidence of Success

The applicant clearly demonstrates that teacher effectiveness and student learning have improved as a direct result of the implemented professional development activities. Data that indicate this connection must be provided and discussed. The focus of this criterion is objective evidence. A compelling argument must include an explanation of how professional development positively affects outcomes for all students and teachers involved. It must also emphasize areas where any achievement gaps between groups (e.g., gender, socio-economic status, ethnicity) have been addressed and narrowed.

Implications for the Field

The applicant describes the lessons learned as the professional development activities have matured.

*These criteria are derived from the Mission and Principles of Professional Development prepared by the U.S. Department of Education in 1995, in consultation with numerous educational organizations, and have been previously published for public comment.

Information about the current award cycle for the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development can be found at <http://www.ed.gov/inits/TeachersWeb/>.

This story exemplifies the following practices:

Professional development should incorporate evaluation of multiple sources of information on (a) outcomes for students and (b) the instruction and other processes that are involved in implementing the lessons learned.

Lewisville Independent School District

Lewisville Independent School District,

Lewisville, TX

School Type: Public

**School
Setting:** Suburban

Level: K–12

**School
Design:** Traditional

Content Presented By:

National Awards Program for Model
Professional Development



This story is available only as a Short Summary.

Demographics

Lewisville Independent School District (LISD) serves approximately 32,600 students in a highly populated portion of suburban north Texas, within thirty miles of downtown Dallas or Ft. Worth. In Texas, LISD ranks 31st in size and is the fastest growing district in the state. During the last ten years, enrollment has increased an average of 1100 students per year.

Student Racial/Ethnic Composition:

82% White (not of Hispanic origin)
9% Hispanic
5% African American (not of Hispanic origin)
3% Asian or Pacific Islander

LEP Students: 11%

Number of Languages: 57

Qualify for Free/Reduced Price Lunch: 10%

Receive Special Education Services: 13%

Background

Recognizing that the number of students enrolled was increasing and would continue to do so, the school district wanted to institute long-term professional development structures. The district adopted a cyclical model of inservice and reflection that would accommodate the new teachers in the district, and would create enduring programs that could be amended to respond to student needs.

Design & Implementation

- Deliberate, Incremental Implementation. To create a complete infrastructure for professional development, the program would be instituted in stages. A district committee of

administrators and teachers identified critical areas for professional development to improve student learning and drafted recommendations for programs. Eventually, the development programs shifted from district-initiated and campus-implemented training to campus-initiated and campus-implemented training. School teams replicate the collaborative decision-making processes modeled at the district level.

- Accommodation of Multiple Levels of Teacher-Learners. Because every teacher has different needs, the professional development plan has six strands and allows teachers to enter any strand at one of four levels of expertise. Most principals also participate in district-level and building-level professional development with their teachers so that they can assist with any teacher development needs. Pre/post evaluation, simulation activities, self-evaluation, and mentoring programs are also used. Rather than bringing in outside experts, the district allows exemplary teachers to assume leadership roles among their peers.
 - District Support of Building Initiatives. The district provides each school with at least \$2000 specifically earmarked for school-level professional development activities. District coordinators help plan and evaluate professional development by collecting input from school-level teams, by monitoring classroom use of strategies, by seeking out and coordinating research-based professional development offerings, and by providing resources.
 - Network of Teacher-Specialists. Through the district-initiated projects, cadres of teachers become specialized and serve as resources for teachers in their own schools and across the district.
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NOTE: For tips on how this design can be replicated, select "Replication Details" from the menu.

Results

Investment in professional development has resulted in improvements in student test scores. None of the district's 38 schools is ranked as low performing. In fact, 19 are exemplary, 13 recognized, and 6 acceptable. Between 1996 and 1997, 12 campuses improved their rating level (6 moved to the recognized category and another 6 to the exemplary category). It should be noted that during this time the passing standard for each category was raised.

Between 1995 and 1997, scores improved on the reading, mathematics, and writing tests at all grade levels. The percentage students meeting minimum expectations increased significantly in reading: from 87% to 95% of eighth graders and from 84% to 95% of tenth graders. All grade levels made significant improvements in mathematics, ranging from 6 percentage points at grade 3 to 19 percentage points at grade 10.

While achievement gaps do exist between Hispanic, African American and White students, those gaps are narrowing. For example, 50% of the sixth grade African American students in one school passed the reading test in 1996, and 64% passed in 1997. Similarly, the percentage of Hispanic students passing increased from 36% to 74% and white students from 80% to 90%. Results for seventh and eighth grade reading were similar.

Since implementing a systematic approach to career-long staff development, LISD has experienced significant gains in assessment measures. Scores on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills, TAAS, continually improved and consistently exceeded state averages. LISD's average third-grade TAAS scores rose from 75 in 1994 to 92 in 1997. Average seventh-grade scores rose from 75 in 1994 to 91 in 1997.

FORMAL ASSESSMENT EVIDENCE

The Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS), a criterion-referenced test, assesses student achievement in reading, writing, and mathematics. At all grade levels LISD scores exceed state averages, and show continual gains. In all grades from the third through the eighth, more LISD students passed all portions of TAAS in 1997 than in 1994, and 99.5% of LISD seniors passed the Exit Level TAAS. Disaggregated data demonstrate similar gains across demographic lines. LISD also increased the number of special education students taking TAAS.

Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) is a state mandated accountability system based on composite and disaggregated data from TAAS scores, attendance and dropout rates, AP performance, and college admission performance. Four accountability levels include:

1. **Exemplary:** at least 90% passing TAAS and 1% or less dropout rate
2. **Recognized:** at least 70% passing TAAS and dropout less than 3.5%
3. **Academically Acceptable:** at least 30% passing and dropout less than 6%
4. **Academically Unacceptable / Low Performing:** less than 30% passing TAAS or dropout rate greater than 6%

Of the 18 comparable urban districts in north Texas, LISD was the only district to achieve Recognized Status. 84% of LISD campuses were recognized or exemplary (19 exemplary, 13 recognized, and 6 acceptable).

College Entrance Scores and National Merit: District SAT and ACT scores consistently surpass state and national averages. In 1996, LISD's average SAT score was 1066, compared to 995 for Texas and 1013 for the US. The number of LISD National Merit Scholars has steadily increased (19 scholars for the 1996–97 school year). Moreover, at the state level only 65% took the SAT compared to 80.3% for LISD, and the percentage of LISD African-American students taking the SAT (80.6%) exceeded that of white students (79.5%). In 1996, 63 LISD students scored in the top 50,000 on the PSAT, and 19 were named National Merit Scholars. In 1996, 148 LISD seventh graders took the SAT in the Duke Talent Search: 50 received State Recognition (verbal or math score of 500+), 3 achieved Grand Level for a score 620+, 21 had composites of 1,000 or higher. The average ACT score exceed state and national averages, with an LISD composite of 21.4. During the 1996–1997 school year, 68% of LISD students taking AP tests scored 3 or greater, compared to 59% for Texas. Other data-based processes used for assessment include AEIS-IT, Data Trail by Patti Wooten, PEIMS Accounting system, End of Course exams.

Awards representative of district excellence:

1. 5 LISD campuses named National Blue Ribbon School
2. 3 LISD campuses identified for Texas Mentor School Network and one campus for Texas Inclusion Project
3. 2 LISD teachers selected as Sallie Mae First Year Teacher, 1 Texas Teacher of the Year
4. 77 state and 11 national qualifiers for vocational competitions
5. 12 students from 1 LISD high school received Air Force Academy appointments, the largest single enrollment from any school nationally

Site Visit Documentation

Lewisville Independent School District's success was documented during a site visit conducted by the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development in 1997:

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Criteria	Evidence
Expected changes in teaching and student learning that will result from participation in professional development are stated.	PD for teachers is designed to help them acquire the skills and knowledge they need to help students achieve high standards. Expectations for students include improved thinking skills and improved academic performance. Teachers are expected to learn and use strategies to deliver and assess content effectively. They also are expected to be aware of student differences and to address those that affect learning.
The professional development goals and outcomes focus on increasing teachers' expertise in teaching to high standards.	LISD's professional development that helps teachers understand the requirements of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills in various subject areas has such a focus. Other examples from the curriculum strand of the plan include reading and writing strategies, hands-on science, and active strategies for teaching history. There is also extensive training in technology and its use in the curriculum.
There is a credible rationale for believing that given the attainment of the expected teacher outcomes, student outcomes will be achieved.	The plan and the offerings within it are based on research and best practices. The activities are purposefully and thoughtfully designed so that teachers will acquire the skills and knowledge they need to help students achieve. Developers/researchers/well-known presenters provide the introduction to new ideas. A pilot approach is taken to be sure there is a fit between the chosen program and district's needs.
There is a continuous process for ensuring that the school community understands how the professional development components fit together and connect to the overall school or district	The comprehensive plan provides a clear framework for all members of the school community to understand how the components fit together. The inclusive planning process, team structures, and PD offerings for all members of the school community also help build understanding. The district has a web site that tells about its programs, and individual buildings communicate frequently with parents through newsletters,

improvement plan.	activities at the schools, and parent organizations.
The data collected provide evidence that the professional development activities lead to improved teaching and student learning.	District TAAS scores have risen over the last several years, the number of National Merit Scholars has increased greatly, SAT and ACT scores are up, drop out rates are down. The quality of student work has improved. Students participate more and seem to be more interested and responsible for their learning. Teacher ask better questions, are more tolerant of different learning styles, use a variety of strategies, interact more with colleagues, and feel more confident in their ability to use technology and address the needs of diverse students.
The data collected provide evidence that the professional development activities lead to a narrowing of existing achievement gaps.	TAAS data are disaggregated in several ways. Scores for all student groups are improving and gaps are narrowing. Teachers are learning how to use TAAS strategy software to help pinpoint students' difficulties and match strategies to student needs to narrow gaps further.

Replication Details

NOTE: If you have not already read the "Design and Implementation" section, selecting that from the menu before reading further will provide a context for the replication details below.

Through its mentoring program for new teachers, flexibility of its professional development plan, and teacher leadership at the building level, the district is able to adjust to the rapid growth it is experiencing (about 7% per year increase in number of students). All staff members must attend eight designated professional development days. Many other options for professional development are available at the district and building levels. Professional development occurs during the school day as much as possible. A focus on teaching and learning is evident in the formal and informal interactions that teachers have with each other.

The district infrastructure also supports professional development by having a staff development coordinator, subject area coordinators, a technology coordinator, and special program coordinators. These individuals help plan and evaluate professional development by collecting input from building level teams, monitoring classroom use of strategies, seeking out and coordinating research-based professional development offerings, and providing resources such as books and manipulatives.

Infrastructure and Processes in an Exemplary Program

The replicable LISD professional development continuum shifts the focus of professional development from the individual teacher to the teacher within the whole school organization and

builds toward a learner-centered system. LISD realized that schools cannot be improved by quick-and-easy solutions, and that effective school change takes at least three to five years of committed teamwork by faculty, administrators, parents, and community who function collaboratively as a community of learners. Thus, the plan includes two five-year phases, with a one-year bridging component to integrate the tandem model. Each phase followed a district model, 'Needs-based Improvement Planning'. Phase I, Project LIST, is the foundation and pivot point for revision and expansion into Phase II, a 'Planned Community of Learners'. Project LEARN bridged the two phases. The center point of all phases is consistently student achievement, although emphasis changed as the model was broadened and refined.

Congruence with USDE Mission and Professional Development Principles

Design and purposes of the LISD model align with high standards for student learning and teacher effectiveness, utilizing a partnership approach. District staff development personnel are active members of National Staff Development Council, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, and related organizations. Project personnel conducted comprehensive literature review and completed extensive training, such as "Dimensions of Learning" by Debra Pickering, "Discipline with Dignity" by Richard Curwin, "Brain Compatible Learning" by Robert Sylwester, "How to Build Campus-level Staff Development" by Pam Robbins, "Total Quality Management" by Edward Deming, "4MAT" by Bernice McCarthy, and "7 Habits of Highly Effective People" by Steven Covey.

Goals and Outcomes

LISD sought to develop a model staff development based on seven influencing conditions found in schools which demonstrate significant achievement gains within all student subgroups:

1. A clear and focused school mission
2. A safe and orderly environment
3. Effective instructional leadership
4. High expectations
5. Opportunity to learn and student time on task
6. Frequent monitoring of student progress
7. Home/school partnership

Organizational Structure

In order to provide maximum efficiency and to promote replicability, the model was designed to function within a school district organizational structure. District administrators form 'vertical management lines', implementing and monitoring activities in keeping with timelines, objectives, and budget. Associate Superintendent for Instruction guides the development of the Five Year Priority Plan and annual updates. The Staff Development Coordinator has overall responsibility for the Comprehensive Staff Development Continuum model, monitoring and aligning with district goals and priorities. District subject matter coordinators plan staff development in their respective areas through the Staff Development Coordinator. 'Horizontal management lines' help guide project design, implementation, evaluation, and long range planning. District advisory committees facilitate initial plan development and revision.

Parents participate in staff development initiatives. Programs for continuation, expansion, or addition include parent university, trained bureaus of parent advocates, and an array of parent education classes. Other means are printed summary reports, open public forums, presentations, press releases, campus newsletters, posting of campus mission statements, campus handbooks, campus celebrations,

campus adopter activities, open houses, dedicated bulletin boards, and others as identified.

Site Visit Documentation

Lewisville Independent School District's success was recorded based on a site visit conducted by the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development in 1997:

Criteria	Evidence
The professional development is comprehensive and long-term and not narrowly focused on one subgroup of students or staff.	The current 5 year phase builds on Phase I and the transition. The continuum approach of the plan is designed to take a new teacher from the induction year through four levels over a 6–10 year period. Inservice teachers may enter the various strands of the model at the point most appropriate for them based on their experience. The model reflects skills and knowledge in all subject areas in addition to leadership, team work, and technology. It is intended for all teachers.
There are clear professional development goals based on needs assessment and focused on improving ALL students' learning.	Each year, the district and building analyze test results and adjust goals accordingly. The overarching goal is to improve student achievement. The particular emphasis needed to accomplish that goal, however, may change from year to year. Goals are clearly stated in the district and building level plans.
The professional development goals and plan were developed through an inclusionary process.	District level goals are set by a group that includes parents, teachers, administrators, business, and community members. Building level goal setting teams are also inclusive.
Professional development is comprehensive and applicable across students and teachers at all grade levels and in all subject areas.	The comprehensive plan addresses all phases of teaching, from working with colleagues and parents to planning, delivering, and evaluating instruction and the teacher's own learning.
Professional development is	The philosophy that underlies the district's planning process and

integral to the school culture and promotes continuous inquiry and improvement.	hence its PD plan is continuous improvement. In addition to the specific offerings on total quality management in the PD plan, there is a strong desire among teachers and administrators to seek out and try new strategies to help all students succeed. Strong team structures within the buildings and across the district provide a forum for conversations about improvement and a mechanism for carrying out efforts to improve.
The professional development activities reflect the best available research and practice in teaching, learning, and leadership.	District coordinators seek out research-based and best practice ideas which are then reflected in the PD offerings and the nature of PD in the district. The district's PD uses a teacher leadership model; provides opportunities for practice, coaching and reflection; and offers activities that teachers perceive as useful.
The specific content, instructional strategies, and learning activities are designed to reach the professional development goals.	The 14-step planning process at the district and building levels sets very clear goals. All professional development is designed to address these goals. Content, strategies, and activities are purposefully chosen to model what teachers are to do in their classrooms. Evaluation and monitoring of activities check for the accomplishment of goals as a result of PD.
There are processes for documenting and monitoring the alignment of school improvement plans, professional development activities, teacher and student outcomes.	Campus level plans are reviewed and monitored at the district level at the beginning of each year, mid year, and end of the year to check for alignment between district and building goals and progress toward the goals.
Organizational structures support the implementation of professional development	Organizational structures that support professional development include district level coordinators, building level horizontal and vertical teams, district level

activities on the individual, collegial, and organizational levels.	vertical teams, study groups, money for each building to support PD activities, induction year program, teacher leader cadres, and the Lewisville Education Foundation.
The professional development design includes a comprehensive evaluation.	Specific activities are evaluated with regard to their organization and delivery and how they addressed the teachers' needs. Suggestions for improvements are sought through evaluation. Student work, teacher reports, and informal observations are also part of the evaluation plan.
The data collected are used to make appropriate programmatic adjustments to professional development.	Since PD is designed to help teachers improve student achievement, results from TAAS and other indicators are analyzed each year for evidence of improvement. This analysis determines areas for further study or adjustments to goals and PD. The staff development coordinator also monitors feedback from activities and makes adjustments.
The lessons learned are useful for other schools or districts.	Four district schools are designated as Texas mentor schools and serve as models for others in the state. Many districts visit to observe Lewisville's programs in action. The district partners with other districts, universities, and regional service centers to participate in or deliver PD based on what they want to learn or have learned. They have much to share and are willing to share it.

Costs and Funding

Sustained resources (human, fiscal, and technological) are committed to supporting the professional development plan.

There are funds for substitutes in the district instructional budget to support teachers' participation in professional development activities during the school day. The various district level coordinators and grant writer are other resources invested in PD. There is a strong technology plan that includes PD and money for acquiring hardware and software and providing technology specialists for on-going support in the buildings. In addition, each building receives at least \$2000 from the district

specifically earmarked for building-level professional development activities. Other funds are available through the Lewisville Education Foundation and building-level fundraising activities.

LISD not only made a significant commitment in personnel and budget to support the program but also capitalizes on a combination of staff development consortiums, grant funding sources, Educational Service Centers, a cadre of Teacher Leaders and certified trainers, and the LISD wide area network to sustain ongoing staff development. Two LISD middle schools are designated as Texas Mentor Campuses. Other mentor schools in the immediate area pool resources to provide teacher leader with presenters.

Contact Information

Karen Dower
Staff Development Coordinator
Lewisville Independent School District
400 W. Main Street
Lewisville, TX 75057
Telephone: (972) 353-4964
Fax: (972) 436-8802
dowerks@lisd.net

Rating Criteria

Lewisville Independent School District, Lewisville, Texas was selected as a winner of the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development, 1997-8.

What is the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development?

As part of a continuing effort to honor excellence in education, the U.S. Department of Education sponsors the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development. This program recognizes schools and school districts with exemplary professional development programs and disseminates information about high-quality professional development efforts that provide evidence of student learning and increased teacher effectiveness. Since the focus of this competition is on professional development for teachers and other educators in pre-kindergarten through grade 12 settings, only individual schools (public or private) or school districts may apply. Schools or districts may, however, submit applications that describe their partnerships with other entities, in particular, institutions of higher education. Recognition under this awards program is based on how well applicants demonstrate the success of their programs, using identified selection criteria that their professional development program results in increased student outcomes. Criteria for selection* include:

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The applicant provides a brief explanation of why the representatives consider professional development in their schools or districts exemplary by describing the program's key components and relating those to the U.S. Department of Education's Mission and Principles of Professional Development. This description must provide evidence that the professional development activities are not narrowly focused on one subgroup of students or staff within the school or district.

Goals and Outcomes

The applicant describes the professional development goals, including how they: (1) are developed; (2) relate to school improvement; (3) are based on a needs assessment; and (4) address the achievement of all students regardless of gender, socio-economic level or disadvantaged status, race, ethnic or cultural background, exceptional abilities or disabilities, or limited-English proficiency. Applicants must also address the changes in teaching and student learning that are expected to result from professional development. They must describe how professional development goals and outcomes promote teaching and learning to high standards.

Professional Development Design and Implementation

The applicant provides evidence that professional development reflects research and best practice; includes comprehensive evaluation; includes organizational structures (e.g., administrative and policy support) and resources (e.g., use of time, expertise, funds) that support it; promotes continuous inquiry and improvement; and ensures that the larger school community understands its importance to school improvement.

Objective Evidence of Success

The applicant clearly demonstrates that teacher effectiveness and student learning have improved as a direct result of the implemented professional development activities. Data that reflect this connection must be provided and discussed. The focus of this criterion is objective evidence, and a compelling argument must be made for the way in which professional development positively affects outcomes for all teachers and all students. This argument must emphasize areas where any achievement gaps between groups (e.g., gender, socio-economic status, ethnicity) have been addressed and narrowed.

Implications for the Field

The applicant describes the lessons learned as the professional development activities have matured.

*These criteria are derived from the Mission and Principles of Professional Development prepared by the U.S. Department of Education in 1995, in consultation with numerous educational organizations, and have been previously published for public comment.

Information about the current award cycle for the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development can be found at <http://www.ed.gov/inits/TeachersWeb/>.

This story exemplifies the following practices:

Professional development should be connected to a comprehensive change process focused on improving student learning.

Jolane Roy's 7th grade class, An Wang School; and Deborah Romeo's 8th grade class, Edith N. Rogers School

Jolane Roy's 7th grade class, An Wang School; and Deborah Romeo's 8th grade class, Edith N. Rogers School

Lowell, MA

School Type: Public

School Setting: Urban

Level: Middle

School Design: Traditional

Content Presented By:

The following story of a researcher–practitioner partnership is a composite drawn from two sources, one written by researchers Nancy Clair and Carolyn Temple Adger and the other by Deborah Romeo and Jolane Roy, two teachers who participated in the project.

Lowell, Massachusetts, home to approximately 105,000 residents, is a historically significant, linguistically and culturally diverse mill city north of Boston. Of the city's roughly 16,000 public school students, about 65% are English language learners. Between 50% and 80% of the student population is eligible for free or reduced–price lunches.

As in many urban districts, high linguistic diversity and poverty coincide with low standardized test scores, and students in Lowell have scored below the state average on all measures of the statewide assessment program. In 1996, the Northeast and Islands Regional Educational Laboratory at Brown University (LAB) and the Lowell Public School District began a joint project on the implementation of learning standards with English language learners. It was a three–year collaboration among the researchers and ESL, bilingual, and content area teachers in four linguistically and culturally diverse middle schools.

Partnering with LAB staff, the teachers began exploring standards implementation that is mindfully inclusive of English language learners (ELLs). They built knowledge and experience with standards and education reform as well as with second language acquisition. An essential aspect of the work involved four teacher–centered professional development strategies: standards analysis, analyzing student work, discussing professional literature, and peer visitation. Practitioners contributed both to planning the project and to analyzing what was being learned. This made it possible for the project to remain directly related to the needs of those involved.

Year 1 of the project brought teachers together to begin an exploration of standards implementation with ELLs, to build foundational knowledge and relationships, and to establish a critical perspective for the work. Teachers read and discussed articles, identified and critiqued instructional strategies that are appropriate for middle school students (e.g., graphic organizers, cooperative learning tasks, group and individual work), and wrote reflections in their journals.

The researchers visited each school monthly to learn about the day–to–day realities and provide an opportunity for teachers to discuss any aspect of classroom life. Classroom visits individualized professional development for the teachers and provided researchers with opportunities to understand

the educational setting in detail.

As teachers Romeo and Roy describe it:

"In discussions following researcher visits to classrooms, researchers had validated teachers and their practices, while modeling reflection on teaching. As a result, we, as teachers, had learned how to evaluate ourselves and our instructional practices in light of our current student population....This soul-searching process led many of the participants in the first year of the project to believe that we could be better teachers. This realization—which may appear basic—was so powerful that it fundamentally changed our self-perception and increased our commitment to the success of ALL of our students."

During Year 2, the project added opportunities for teachers to be more active in the design and facilitation of professional development. Using a template called the Curriculum Planner, the researchers guided teachers through a process of analyzing standards. Peer visitation was put in place, with all parties agreeing that teachers had much to learn from one another. One teacher reported that she had never been to another school when it was in session. Another said she saw a teacher adapt a familiar vocabulary learning strategy that she would try. The result was teachers' increased confidence regarding standards and ELLs, with many teachers participating in the professional development planning process in their schools.

During the third and final year of the project, Romeo and Roy explain: "We were willing to take the risk of being videotaped because we were committed to the group and the goals of the project. The group quickly became cohesive and trusting, defined by concern for kids and teaching. We expected more from each other, and each of us became a role model for the others. We grew more vocal about our beliefs and classroom practices. We began to believe that we didn't have to apologize for our successes."

Teachers' increased reflection, combined with new research-based knowledge, has resulted in instructional strategies matched to the needs of the current student population in Lowell. Though the project was technically complete after the third year, participants continued their professional growth. They made presentations at conferences, led study groups in their own schools, continued to take graduate classes, taught college classes, achieved National Board Certification, became involved with developing the MCAS test, and contributed to the production of the videos. Several even formed a new study group to continue to do professional reading together. As researchers Clair and Adger put it, "We were there to support the teachers, but the work was theirs."

Demographics

Lowell, MA is a culturally diverse, urban school district that serves approximately 16,000 students, 65% of whom are English language learners. Between 50% and 80% of the student population is eligible for free or reduced-price lunches. Asian American students represent 27.9% of the total district population, and Latinos represent 21%. The district provides bilingual education in five languages. ESL instruction is provided to many of the students who speak one of 13 low-incidence languages.

Student Population:

English language learners (ELL) 65%

Transitional Bilingual Education Program 23%

Qualify for Free/Reduced Price Lunch 50–80%

Background

The project began at the request of the school district, which had begun a standards development effort that would lead to improved classroom practice. Students had scored below the state average on all measures of the statewide assessment program. According to district educators, many ELLs who had been exited from bilingual or ESL programs were having academic difficulties in mainstream classes.

Design & Implementation

From November 1996 to June 1997, researchers met monthly with two cohorts of teachers. Sessions focused on discussing and critiquing standards-based reform in the national and local context, the state standards for English language arts and their connection to practice, the educational needs and strengths of ELLs, and instructional practices that are aligned with standards and promote ELLs' academic achievement.

Teachers read and discussed articles, identified and critiqued instructional strategies that are appropriate for middle school students (e.g., graphic organizers, cooperative learning tasks, group and individual work), and wrote reflections in their journals. In school and cross-school groups, they raised questions about implementing standards and explored ways that familiar instructional practices could be aligned with them.

In addition to facilitating these full-day professional development sessions during the school year, researchers visited each school monthly to learn about the day-to-day realities and provide an opportunity for teachers to discuss any aspect of classroom life. Classroom visits were intended to individualize professional development for the teachers and provide researchers with opportunities to understand the educational setting in detail. The classroom visits were optional, and only a few teachers declined. The majority of the teachers were able to shape the visits to meet their individual needs. At the end of that year, teachers from the four schools met together to reflect critically on the year's professional development and to plan for the following year's activities. Teachers opted to work at their schools, as opposed to meeting in two groups at the district office, and they decided that meetings would occur after school as opposed to during the school day. In school-based teams, they planned ways of continuing the standards implementation work while responding to their own schools' priorities, schedules, and experience with standards and ELLs. Three school teams agreed to begin the following year's work by selecting a standard, trying classroom strategies that are aligned with the standard, and examining evidence of standards implementation. One team opted to explore standards implementation through action research. All four teams decided to expand the work beyond the English language arts and invite teachers from other disciplines to join the group. They discussed ways in which veteran project teachers could serve as resources to the new teachers. They concluded that participation should be voluntary. Finally, the teachers requested that researchers continue classroom visits and suggested ways for developing a peer visitation process. Many teachers expressed an interest in seeing their colleagues teach.

Year 2 (1997–1998) activities included 35 new teacher participants, with 28 teachers continuing from the first year. From October 1997 to June 1998, teachers met in school-based teams for 2 hours each month to continue their exploration of standards implementation with ELLs. The cornerstone of the work was the practice of four teacher-centered, sustainable professional development strategies that are related to understanding standards implementation at the classroom level: standards alignment, examining student work, discussing professional literature, and peer visitation. For details on the sustainable strategies see, Clair, N & Adger, C.T. (2000).

During the final year, teachers continued the exploration of standards implementation with English language learners in a study group using teacher-centered professional development strategies. The

teachers were videotaped and developed a sense of mutual responsibility. Because core participants were ready to take on leadership roles, teachers began to share what they had learned with other colleagues in their schools.

Clair, N. & Adger, C.T. (2000). Sustainable strategies for professional development in education reform. In K. Johnson, Ed., *Teacher Education*, pp. 29–50. Case Studies in TESOL Practice Series. Alexandria, VA: TESOL.

Results

As a result of participation, project teachers have found themselves increasingly committed to the "risk-filled" process of school reform. They are advocating for the students they teach, determining what is needed to meet the needs of their students, and seeking outside assistance to augment help from colleagues. A critical result is that teachers are now utilizing instructional strategies better matched to the needs of the current student population in Lowell.

Other notable changes are the creation of an independent reading program, including sustained silent reading; the increased use of cooperative learning in both English and the native language; and the inclusion of students in their own assessment.

Project teachers have continued their professional growth. They have made presentations at conferences, led study groups in their own schools, continued to take graduate classes, taught college classes, achieved National Board Certification, become involved with developing the MCAS test, and contributed to the production of project videos. Several have even formed a new study group to continue to do professional reading together.

Replication Details

The fact that participants were chosen initially by the administration according to their teaching assignments presented a challenge for both the researchers and the participants. Researchers were asking teachers to reflect critically and converse about their own instructional practices and beliefs about education; they even posed questions to which there were no answers. Teachers, whose participation had been mandated, felt uncomfortable and at risk in this imposed structure. Resistance to this new approach was evident. It contrasted starkly with previous professional development experiences which had purported to provide answers. Instead, teachers were asked to look at themselves and their instructional practices first, rather than at what was the matter with the students.

Also, the number of contact hours in this project exceeds traditional professional development structures, which may be characterized by short-term experiences. First-year project teachers (1996–1997) participated in 48 hours of professional development, with additional time to discuss classroom visits with researchers. Second-year participants (1997–1998) experienced 16 hours of professional development, with additional time for classroom visits by researchers and peer observations. In the third year (1998–1999), participants engaged in 36 hours of professional development.

Costs and Funding

The district provided space for the professional development sessions, payment for participants to meet outside of school hours, and payment for teacher substitutes so that teachers could participate in professional development during the school day. The researchers were affiliated with the LAB, a federally funded organization.

Contact Information

Carolyn Temple Adger
Center for Applied Linguistics
Telephone: 202-362-0700
Fax: 202-362-3740
E-mail: carolyn@cal.org

Rating Criteria**This story exemplifies the following practices:**

Professional development should be continuous and on-going, involving follow-up and support for further learning, including support from sources external to the school that can provide necessary resources and new perspectives.

Professional development should involve teachers in the identification of what they need to learn and in the development of the learning experiences in which they will be involved.

RI Statewide Professional Development I-Plans

RI Statewide Professional Development I-Plans

Providence, RI

School Type: Public

School Setting:

Level: K-12

School Design:

Content Presented By:

The Education Alliance at Brown University



In a Rhode Island high school, an English teacher and a Physical Education teacher decide to contribute to a school debate on a new form of block scheduling by organizing a year-long study group to research its effectiveness in other schools. In a Rhode Island middle school, a math teacher who suspects that differentiated instruction might allow her to reach more of her students attends courses and workshops on this approach and gradually incorporates it into her teaching. In a Rhode Island elementary school, a second grade teacher is concerned that a state School Accountability for Learning and Teaching report has identified the need for improved reading instruction at her school. She trains with a reading specialist to implement the 4-Block reading model in her class, co-writes a teacher resource manual on the strategies she has tested for improving early literacy, and leads workshops around the state on what she has learned. In the busy lives of educators, following through on projects like the ones described above is often difficult. Other, more pressing concerns -- grading a pile of papers or planning for tomorrow's class -- usually take precedence. In the state of Rhode Island, however, a new approach to re-certification is providing more and more educators with the motivation and the time to engage in the long-term, job-embedded professional development activities that meet their schools' and students' needs as well as their own professional goals.

For years, professional development for most Rhode Island teachers and administrators meant either one-shot workshops led by outside experts or expensive graduate courses that sometimes had little relevance to their specific professional needs. Educators received no credit or validation for the school-based professional development so essential to improving teaching and learning for their students. In 1999, however, the Rhode Island Department of Education introduced a new approach to re-certification that is revolutionizing the way educators improve their practice: the I-Plan. Designed by a team of Rhode Island teachers, administrators, union leaders, university education professors, and Department of Education personnel, the I-Plan program, now in a pilot phase, allows educators to direct their own professional development, identifying specific goals for growth and meeting them through an ongoing process that includes a wide variety of activities.

Under the I-Plan model, educators seeking to renew their certificates first examine their aspirations, their students' learning, their school's or district's improvement plan, and professional teaching or leadership standards -- including the Rhode Island Beginning Teachers Standards (BTS), the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC), and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) -- to identify two to four goals for their own professional development. They then select a series of activities to help them meet these goals. Professional development activities approved by the I-Plan program include not only the traditional fare of graduate coursework and workshops, but also curriculum development; participation in ongoing

education-related groups, such as school improvement teams; applied studies with colleagues, including action research and mentoring; publications and conference presentations; and individual learning activities, such as educational travel or externships with content area specialists.

The wide variety of professional development options available through the I-Plan has been a boon to teachers involved in the pilot program. Anna Ledoux, a science teacher at Chariho Middle School in southwestern Rhode Island, was tired of taking courses for re-certification; they took up valuable time and money, and most of them "really did not apply to what I did in the classroom." When she learned that the I-Plan program would allow her goals to drive her professional development choices, she was eager to participate. After three years in the program, she is delighted with its flexibility and has taken full advantage of the range of activities it allows. Her schedule now includes work on her school's Improvement Team and Professional Development Committee, mentoring of new teachers, supervision of student teachers, and participation in workshops on standards and classes on technology. Remarkably, however, Ledoux no longer regards professional development as a drain on her resources. "I actually have more time to be involved with my students, in my school, and in activities that are related to what I do in the classroom because I not only receive credit for these activities, but I also receive validation for their importance."

Before submitting an I-Plan, educators are guided through an intensive self-study process that helps them to identify appropriate goals and develop their long-term plans for professional development activities accordingly. I-Plan Fellows and coaches conduct information sessions and workshops on the program at schools or regional sites and provide face-to-face feedback for educators constructing their plans. The Fellows also facilitate workshops on newer forms of job-embedded professional development such as collegial study groups, mentoring, cognitive coaching, and action research to help educators envision alternative ways of meeting their professional development goals. After receiving their initial coaching, educators submit completed I-Plans to a three-member team of peers who serve on a review panel. Panelists reviewing a particular plan are chosen for their relevant experience; thus, elementary school teachers from urban areas review other urban elementary school teachers' plans, and administrators from rural high schools review other rural high school administrators' plans. Using a rubric created by the I-Plan design team, these panel members either approve the plan or return it to the educator for modifications.

Just as I-Plans are designed to promote ongoing professional development, the I-Plan review process is designed to promote ongoing support. Although each I-Plan spans a three to five year renewal period, the review panel remains involved throughout the entire period. I-Plan participants must submit annual portfolios to the panel with evidence of their progress. A culminating portfolio of reflections and artifacts must also be submitted at the end of the renewal cycle; it is evaluated by the review panel to help determine how well each professional development goal was met -- and what the overall impact was on teaching and learning.

In addition to the challenge of supporting ongoing, job-embedded professional development, the I-Plan Fellows, former teachers Lucille Andolfo and Karen Lepore, have had to face the task of making their program sustainable throughout Rhode Island. It was not easy to design a unique system for re-certification that is capable of growing quickly and maintaining its high quality throughout the state, but the key to the process, according to Andolfo, was "much developmental work during the pilot and many revisions based on continuous 360 degree feedback." For example, in the first year of the pilot, the I-Plan consisted of an 11-page proposal, with multiple pages of sometimes redundant writing. After hearing from I-Plan participants and other stakeholders, including union leaders, who voiced concern about the form of the plan, Andolfo and Lepore streamlined it, simplifying the paperwork of I-Plan participants and reviewers while maintaining the core elements of the program. By soliciting the wisdom of educators trying out the I-Plan and making adjustments as necessary, the

I-Plan Fellows have sought to create a program that learns from its mistakes and grows better as it grows bigger.

As the coordinators move toward their goal of statewide I-Plan implementation, they are laying the groundwork for a self-sustaining program. Not only are they soliciting and using the feedback of new I-Planners, but they are also training these educators to take on leadership roles in the program. From the beginnings of the pilot phase in 1999, educators who create successful I-Plans have been recruited to serve as review panelists, I-Plan coaches, or district point people -- local liaisons with the I-Plan coordinators -- providing a foundation of high-quality support and sustainability for the program. In addition to this growing network of personal support for I-Planners, the I-Plan coordinators are developing a "tool kit" of documents and a series of training modules to help make I-Planning accessible and helpful for every Rhode Island educator.

Another source of support for the I-Plan program is its series of partnerships with other key educational programs and organizations in Rhode Island. These partnerships were slow to materialize, but they bring the promise of greater staying power for the program. Some districts are integrating the I-Plan into the structure of their mentoring programs. Local union affiliates of both the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the National Education Association (NEA) are espousing the I-Plan program and incorporating contract language around this model of professional development. Some districts are moving to parallel evaluation systems so that an educator's I-Plan can serve as part of the professional development plan for evaluation. Teacher training institutions including Rhode Island College, Roger Williams University, and the University of Rhode Island are beginning to incorporate the I-Plan into their curriculum. Even educators in private schools are showing interest in the I-Plan model, as some Rhode Island private schools require that their faculty be state certified.

I-Plan supporters hope that the program will soon expand beyond its pilot phase and the state Board of Regents will adopt it as the re-certification policy for all Rhode Island educators. If all goes as planned, the sometimes irrelevant coursework and one-shot workshops of the past will be replaced throughout the state by carefully chosen, job-embedded activities that help educators to grow and in turn help students to learn.

Demographics

The state of Rhode Island serves about 160,000 public elementary and secondary school students in 316 schools. Approximately 11,000 teachers are employed at 38 different districts.

Student Data

- Students enrolled in public school (2001): 86%
- Students' ethnic backgrounds (2001): 74% White, 8% Black, 14% Hispanic, *.5% Asian or Pacific Islander
- Students eligible for subsidized lunch programs (2001): 34%
- Students receiving ESL or bilingual education (2001): 6.5%
- Students enrolled in special education programs (2001): 20%

Educator Data

- Average teacher salary (1999): \$45,650
- Secondary school teachers with a degree in the subject they teach (2000): 76%
- Number of teachers certified by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (2001): 62

- Educators engaged in active I-Planning (2002): 370
- Educators serving on the I-Plan review panel (2002): 107

Background

In 1997, the Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education voted to eliminate the life teaching certificate for all educators who earned their initial certificates after May of 1997. They reasoned that improving student achievement was impossible without also improving teacher quality. They viewed ongoing professional development as one critical means of ensuring that educators continued to grow in their craft.

Public forums were held to hear what educators in the field had to say about this change in the certification process. While not philosophically opposed to ongoing professional development, many educators voiced concern over the idea of taking prescribed courses over the life of their careers. Their concerns about the current requirements for re-certification focused on the following:

- Lack of relevance of prescribed courses to what they need to do their jobs
- High cost of graduate courses
- Lack of time and flexibility
- Unavailability of needed/prescribed courses
- No validation or credit for school-based professional development done to help improve the teaching and learning in their schools

This initial feedback from Rhode Island educators sparked the creation of the I-Plan. Knowing that eventually all educators in Rhode Island public schools would be responsible for renewing their certification throughout their careers, the Rhode Island Department of Education was concerned that the re-certification process provide a pathway to genuine professional growth. The Department convened a design team of educators representative of all stakeholder groups -- Rhode Island teachers, administrators, union leaders, university education professors, and Department of Education personnel -- to study the process of teacher re-certification in other states and to come up with a distinct Rhode Island model. Subsequently, a Title II Teacher Quality grant was received to help finance the design and development work of this new re-certification process. The I-Plan project is now entering its 4th year as a pilot, with hopes of soon being fully recognized and implemented as a change to public policy.

Design & Implementation

- Overview of the I-Plan
- Implementation Timeline
- Design Process
- I-Plan Resources

Overview of the I-Plan

Each eligible educator wanting to renew a three-year provisional certificate or a five-year professional certificate may write an individual professional development plan. This plan is goals-driven and informed by a self-study process. The self-study process asks the educator to examine four focus areas:

- His or her own personal and professional aspirations
- His or her students' learning

- The school and/or district's improvement/strategic plan (aligned with the state's process for SALT -- "School Accountability for Teaching and Learning")
- Professional standards such as the Rhode Island Beginning Teacher Standards, ISLLC Leadership Standards, National Board Certification standards, etc.)

Once completed, the self-study helps to focus the educator on two to four goals that will direct the kinds of professional development selected over the 3–5 year renewal period. The professional development can be any professional growth opportunity that matches the 10 categories of Qualifying Professional Development Activities in the document generated by the original design team.

The plan is reviewed for approval by a three-member team of peers who are part of a Statewide Review Panel. At the end of each year, the educator submits a portfolio of verification documents to this review panel. A culminating portfolio at the end of the renewal cycle must also include reflections and artifacts attesting to the impact on teaching and learning from professional development for each goal.

Implementation Timeline

In the first year of the pilot, 1999–2000, the Rhode Island Department of Education assigned an education specialist to the I-Plan and hired a Regents Fellow (a teacher on loan to the Department from a school district, on a teacher's schedule) to coordinate the program with her. Sixteen (16) educators comprised the original cohort of I-Planners, and 16 educators also served on the Statewide Review Panel. Some of these review panelists were also I-Planners in the original cohort, having dual roles in the pilot.

In year two, 2000–2001, a second I-Plan Regents Fellow was hired. A support member of the team was added who was critical in the management of the program. Six members of the year-one cohort of I-Planners/review panelists were invited to become coaches for the project to build capacity via the "train the trainer" model. The numbers grew to approximately 100 I-Planners and 45 review panelists. In addition, 10 mini-grants of up to \$10,000 were awarded by the Rhode Island Department of Education to districts or partnerships to recruit I-Planners. The grants also funded training in job-embedded professional development activities -- mentoring, collegial study groups, action research, and cognitive coaching -- that had been identified as areas of interest by I-Planners.

Since the third year of the pilot program, 2001–2002, the I-Plan Fellows have added to the strong base of I-Planners, review panelists, coaches, and local point people who support the process at the district level. The I-Plan Fellows are also combining efforts with a Mentor Fellow to fully integrate the I-Plan with district mentoring programs for new teachers.

The I-Plan has also gained the support of union leaders in both American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and National Education Association (NEA) districts. Local union affiliates are espousing the I-Plan model and incorporating contract language around this model of PD, particularly those districts that have an internal professional development academy or institute that is jointly sponsored by the district and the union. Some districts are moving to parallel teacher evaluation systems so that an educator's I-Plan could serve as part of the professional development plan for evaluation.

Design Process

The design process started with the I-Plan design team -- a group of teachers, administrators, union leaders, university education professors, and state Department of Education personnel -- who came together to study re-certification programs in other states and propose a unique program for Rhode

Island. Based on the recommendations of this team, Ann Abeille, from the education resource program Learning Innovations, introduced a preliminary model of the I-Plan, which was implemented and refined by Becky Wright, a Rhode Island Department of Education specialist assigned to the project, and Lucille Andolfo, the original I-Plan Regents Fellow. Initial feedback from I-Planners and reviewers led them to abbreviate and refine the tools for writing a plan. By the end of Year One, instead of being faced with an 11-page document to fill out, I-Planners were given a 3-page document with supporting tools.

However, this document -- the I-Plan itself -- was only one piece of the puzzle. Next, Andolfo and Wright had to design the process for review of the plans. They attended a session of the state's Writing Assessment scoring process and adopted a number of techniques from this process: the use of multiple readers to evaluate each product, anchor papers to train for inter-reader reliability, and calibration at the beginning of each review process to ensure fair evaluation. Essential to the review process was the I-Plan scoring rubric, which Andolfo and Lepore, a new I-Plan Regents Fellow, were careful to align with the I-Plan proposal form. They adapted the rubric multiple times, based on feedback from I-Plan participants.

In addition to the proposal form and rubric, this team also developed a number of supporting documents and training modules:

- one for I-Planners learning the process of self-study and plan development,
- one for review panelists on writing a plan and how to review,
- one on the RI Beginning Teacher Standards,
- one on portfolios (annual and final),
- one on job-embedded PD such as collegial study groups and action research, and
- several tools and "train the trainer" models for coaches.

Much of the I-Plan team's development work is still in process, as they respond to the feedback they receive from participants in the program. However, in only a few years they have already created a system that works, a growing capacity that points toward sustainability, and a foundation of support and acceptance.

Click "I-Plan Resources" in left navigation menu to see the I-Plan web page provided by the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and to view some of the documents used by I-Planners.

Results

As part of an ongoing feedback process, the I-Plan Fellows have sent out surveys to the 370 current I-Planners to evaluate the impact of the program. They are awaiting data analysis before they can report the results, although anecdotal feedback from I-Planners like Anna Ledoux suggests that educators find it an excellent method of re-certification. Ledoux used to regard professional development as a drain on her resources, but she reports that completing her re-certification through the I-Plan provides her with "more time to be involved with my students, in my school, and in activities that are related to what I do in the classroom because I not only receive credit for these activities, but I also receive validation for their importance." We will report soon on how well the quantitative and qualitative data from the surveys support this feedback.

Replication Details

The I-Plan coordinators offer the following tips to educators or policy makers seeking to implement a

professional development model similar to the I–Plan program:

- Embed into the system the financial resources to pay the review panelists. These educators spend a minimum of two hours per review session for a fee of up to \$500 per year. The I–Plan coordinators anticipate requiring a full complement of 250 review panelists to be able to have capacity for 11,000 certifications in the system.
- Get union officials, higher education, and district administration at the discussion table at every step in the design process. It won't fly without their support and advocacy.

Costs and Funding

Contact Information

Lucille Andolfo, Regents Fellows for the I–Plan
222–4600, x.2270
biofem@ride.ri.net

Karen Lepore, Regents Fellows for the I–Plan
222–4600, x. 2217
rid21597@ride.ri.net

Cheryl Kachadourian, I–Plan Assistant
222–4600, x.2215
rid23945@ride.ri.net

Rating Criteria

This story exemplifies the following practices:

Professional development should be continuous and on–going, involving follow–up and support for further learning, including support from sources external to the school that can provide necessary resources and new perspectives.

Professional development should involve teachers in the identification of what they need to learn and in the development of the learning experiences in which they will be involved.

The New York City Lab School for Collaborative Studies

The New York City Lab School for Collaborative Studies

New York, NY

School Type: Public

School Setting: Urban

Level: 7–12

School

Design: Alternative

Content Presented By:

The Education Alliance at Brown University



Ask Sheila Breslaw and Rob Menken the directors of the New York City Lab School for Collaborative Studies what their recipe for success is, and they'll tell you, "Everything is collaborative." During after-school meetings once or twice a week, staff members discuss issues of concern. They collaborate on decisions about school priorities and even decide which new teachers to hire sometimes overriding the school directors' own preferences. In 90-minute weekly team meetings, smaller groups of teachers discuss their struggling students and create plans to help them succeed. They also engage in cross-curricular planning, sharing lessons and designing interdisciplinary projects to build bridges among content areas. For students, collaboration is not only an integral part of classroom work with peers but also a means of shaping the direction of the larger school community. In addition to student government, clubs, and sports teams, Lab School students have a voice on the School Leadership Team, alongside teachers and parents. According to Menken, "every class and meeting at the school is set up to encourage and facilitate collaboration."

While collaboration has always been a central principle of the Lab School philosophy, it also proved to be a key element in the school's recent improvement efforts. Menken and Breslaw founded the school in 1987 after a successful experience working with low-performing students in another New York City district. They were recruited by the District Two superintendent to create a school for gifted seventh- and eighth-grade students a school using the same collaborative strategies for learning and leadership that they had developed at their previous school. Initially their small school was a success, but as it grew from a staff of seven to 40 teachers, the cohesion of the staff began to show strains. With the addition of new staff and the development of a high school, the school's vision was becoming blurry, and students were not being served well academically or emotionally. Breslaw and Menken decided to embark on a course of collaborative professional development activities to address these issues. (See the Design & Implementation section for a detailed description of these activities.)

With the help of outside facilitators funded by the district, the directors set out to create a "culture of excellence" at the Lab School. They wanted to raise teachers' self-awareness about their practices and help them to develop a regular means of refining these practices. They also wanted to create an environment where student voices were consistently valued and where high expectations for students were balanced with compassion; according to Menken, they sought to "fight against the tide of competitive edge" at the school and "make sure that no one's left in the dust."

Collaboration proved to be essential to meeting both of these goals. During a five-year professional development process, teachers examined their own work and the work of their colleagues. They scrutinized and critiqued curriculum plans and rubrics, observed each other's classrooms, identified qualities of excellence in teaching, and determined how to change their practices to better reflect these qualities. The staff also read and discussed texts such as James Stigler and James Hiebert's *The Teaching Gap: Best Ideas from the World's Teachers for Improving Education in the Classroom* and Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe's *Understanding by Design*, but their professional development process was informed largely by their own insights and experiences.

For example, during the second year of the process, the staff focused on answering the questions "What do we value?" and "Are we stating this clearly to students and assessing what we are saying?" To address these questions, teachers brought samples of assessment practices from their classrooms; examined these artifacts in collaborative groups; recorded the values they saw reflected in them; and chose "observation buddies" to visit each other's classrooms, where they noted which values were evident, collected student comments, and made other observations. They met at the end of the first semester to compare the values they noted in the classroom with the ones they had inferred from the samples of assessment practices. Each teacher was then asked to answer the question, "How might I better reflect what I value in my curriculum and assess it more congruently?"

Activities like these can be uncomfortable; to be effective, they require teachers to be straightforward with each other in pointing out shortcomings and inconsistencies. Even at the Lab School, where a collaborative environment already existed, Menken admits that in the first two years of the professional development initiative teachers were reluctant to speak critically to each other about their work. However, a "culture of brutal honesty" gradually took shape at the school, he says. "This sometimes leads to bruised egos, but it keeps the school alive."

According to Breslaw, this new culture of openness has improved teachers' self-awareness about their practice. In grade-team meetings, where teachers used to spend their time venting frustrations about student behavior, now the focus is on collaborative curriculum planning and strategies for approaching student problems. "The dialogue has shifted," Breslaw says, "from 'These kids are no good' to 'Let's plan curriculum' and 'How do you get so-and-so to do homework?' 'Maybe I should do that.'" Menken notes that the process of establishing norms for constructive criticism has changed the climate of the school and the willingness of teachers to discuss and change their practice. "Once teachers feel that dialogue is for the general good and not an attack, they're able to get away from that 'siege mentality' and take it as something that could be beneficial for them."

Today, the new patterns of communication and inquiry that were established during the professional development initiative are firmly rooted at the Lab School. In addition to observing each other's classes and providing regular feedback on what they see, teachers plan their courses collaboratively, interweaving themes and content to help students see connections and explore concepts from multiple perspectives. For example, 11th graders learn in history class about the social and political context of novels they're reading in English class, while topics raised in eighth-grade health class, such as peer pressure, are further explored through related reading and writing assignments in eighth-grade English. Some teachers further integrate their courses by reconfiguring into double periods and team teaching. Although weekly team meetings provide a regular venue for within-grade collaboration, Lab School teachers also share their curriculum plans across grades to ensure a more cohesive and coherent curriculum. According to one teacher, "If we are aware of what is happening in other grades, we can more effectively build on student knowledge to create more sophisticated strategies for students to use as they get older." These different forms of curricular collaboration have the added benefit of keeping teachers on their toes. As Breslaw points out, "It's hard to be a 'do-nothing' teacher when your curriculum is public."

Although curricular collaboration is now embedded in the Lab School culture, the curriculum itself and the extra-curricular offerings remain flexible enough to adapt to new student interests and needs. During the school's five-year professional development initiative, the staff surveyed students to determine their own priorities for improving the school. The response from students was clear: they wanted a more compassionate school environment and more varied course offerings. Through a combination of student and staff efforts, these goals are being met.

One upperclassman, concerned that seventh graders needed a stronger social support system at the school, developed a program with parents and teachers on the School Leadership Team to address this problem. The Peer Alliance and Leadership (PAL) program now selects and trains junior and senior peer leaders to lead weekly advisory meetings for seventh graders. At these meetings, the younger students can air their concerns and engage in a process of community-building through a series of lessons developed by the peer leaders and their faculty advisors. In another program initiated by Lab School students, eighth and ninth graders are grouped into small book clubs with teachers who share their taste in reading. Both of these programs along with regular homeroom and advisory meetings have helped to build a stronger sense of community at the school.

Another group of students was frustrated by the school's limited course offerings. Because of its relatively small faculty, the Lab School, like most small schools, had difficulty providing a wide variety of courses; students in each grade had identical or very similar schedules. However, through a joint student-faculty effort, the school managed to meet the demand for a new computer programming course and a number of new AP courses. A student revamped the scheduling system so that students in the same grade could choose among a few different classes, and a number of teachers volunteered to take on extra preps and sometimes extra teaching periods to ensure that student interests were met. This extraordinary faculty commitment has been critical to the school's success. "If our school went by the contract," Menken says, "it would be a disaster."

In addition to these major changes in the Lab School curriculum, teachers are constantly adapting existing courses, both to reflect current events and issues and to better fit their students' needs and interests. Students fill out surveys for each course they complete, giving feedback on what readings and assignments they found most meaningful or enlightening, what aspects of the course they struggled with and why, and what changes they might suggest. Teachers consider this input carefully when revising and updating their courses, and students can tell. "When we can take off in a direction that interests us," one Lab School student says, "it makes it easier to get excited about schoolwork."

Student interests are also at the heart of two Lab School graduation requirements: the junior internship and the senior thesis. The internship program, which was strengthened during the professional development initiative, allows juniors to spend two afternoons each week at a job site relevant to their career interests; internship sites, often provided by Lab School parents, have included a day care center, a hospital, an architectural firm, and a judge's office. Once a month these students also participate in a structured seminar to discuss the issues they encounter in the work world and to hone resume writing and interviewing skills. The senior thesis, another requirement for all Lab School students, can take a variety of forms. Past products have included a graphic novel about boxing, a full production of Edward Albee's *American Dream*, and an in-depth exploration of one of Shakespeare's villains. With the help of a faculty advisor and a class on writing and research skills, seniors develop a product that reflects what they've learned through their research but also expresses their own point of view. For students interested in in-depth exploration of a topic before their senior year, Lab School teachers have volunteered to supervise independent studies. The opportunities for students to shape their own learning experiences in collaboration with a workplace supervisor or a faculty member are numerous at the Lab School.

At the New York City Lab School for Collaborative Studies, the staff and the students have worked together to sharpen the school's vision, improve the quality of teaching and learning, and create an environment where student interests matter and student needs are met. The school's collaborative approach to learning, leadership, curriculum planning, and professional growth is the key to its success. "Collaboration is riskier, messier, and more time-consuming," says Menken, but in the end "it raises the bar for everyone."

Demographics

The New York City Lab School for Collaborative Studies is a public school for students in grades 6 – 12.

- Enrollment: 740
- Staff: 42
- Admissions: screened, but with a special education inclusion program
- Graduation rate: 100%
- Ethnicity: 50% white, 13% African American, 11% Latino, 26% Asian American
- Students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch: 12%

Background

Founded in 1987 as a small middle school using collaborative learning strategies, the New York City Lab School for Collaborative Studies was experiencing growing pains as it transformed into a larger middle and high school. Without a system in place for faculty and students to communicate about their values and expectations, the school lacked a clear vision and no longer provided the social and emotional support that its students needed. Concerned about these changes, the school's co-directors, Sheila Breslaw and Rob Menken, enlisted the help of outside facilitators in a long-term project to create a culture of excellence at the school a culture founded on staff, student, and parent collaboration to foster personalized teaching.

Design & Implementation

At the New York City Lab School for Collaborative Studies, the staff embarked on a long-term professional development initiative to create a culture of excellence where student voices were consistently valued. Although consultants from Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound (ELOB) provided Lab School educators with a structure for examining and improving their school culture and teaching practice, the educators themselves collaborated to identify appropriate directions for improvement. Once they had come to a consensus about their primary goals for the Lab School, educators began the long process of realizing these goals.

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

- **Year One:** Staff members identify the school's collective vision of excellence by examining each other's curriculum plans and rubrics, observing and conferring about each other's classes, creating a collage of their impressions, and soliciting students' perspectives on what excellence means. They examine the degree of congruence between their own views of excellence and those of their students, sharing their conclusions with a team drafting the school's statement of philosophy. Parents also provide input on the mission statement.
- **Year Two:** School staff members collaborate to determine what they value in the classroom

and how clearly they are conveying these values to their students. After mapping their curriculums, they identify the core ideas and best pedagogical practices of their subject areas and submit this information to the School Leadership Team for inclusion in a book entitled *Theories and Practices*. Weekly "Portfolio Lunch" workshops begin; teachers examine student work together in collaborative assessment conferences and also critique each other's curriculum plans.

- **Year Three:** School directors organize a series of staff discussions around James Stigler and James Hiebert's *The Teaching Gap*. Teachers examine different models of assessment and continue to revise their practice. Portfolio Lunches and the compilation of *Theories and Practices* continue.
- **Year Four:** Grade teams and departments continue to collaborate, with curriculums becoming more integrated and coherent. Portfolio Lunch program continues, and staff choose another shared text for regular discussion: Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe's *Understanding by Design*. In the second semester, staff discussions focus on adolescent literacy.
- **Year Five:** School staff members replace ELOB facilitators as leaders of Portfolio Lunches and other workshops on teacher practice. In weekly grade team and departmental meetings, teachers plan curriculum and discuss strategies for helping struggling students. Observation pairs also visit each other's classes regularly and provide feedback about particular areas of concern. Working from the vantage point of *Understanding by Design*, the staff reshapes their course overviews with the Lab School Philosophy Statement as a centerpiece. All curriculum designs consider elements of collaboration, diversity and pluralism, academic rigor, and compassion.

Results

Founded in 1987 as a small middle school using collaborative learning strategies, the New York City Lab School for Collaborative Studies was experiencing growing pains as it transformed into a larger middle and high school. Without a system in place for faculty and students to communicate about their values and expectations, the school lacked a clear vision and no longer provided the social and emotional support that its students needed. Concerned about these changes, the school's co-directors, Sheila Breslaw and Rob Menken, enlisted the help of outside facilitators in a long-term project to create a "culture of excellence" at the school—a culture founded on staff, student, and parent collaboration to foster personalized teaching.

This initiative has had a major impact on Lab School teachers. According to Breslaw, the most significant change has been the growth in teachers' self-awareness about their practice. In grade-team meetings, where teachers used to spend their time venting frustrations about student behavior, now the focus is on collaborative curriculum planning and strategies for approaching student problems. "The dialogue has shifted," Breslaw says, "from 'These kids are no good' to 'Let's plan curriculum' and 'How do you get so—and-so to do homework?' 'Maybe I should do that.'" Menken notes that the process of establishing norms for constructive criticism has changed the climate of the school and the willingness of teachers to discuss and change their practice. "Once teachers feel that dialogue is for the general good and not an attack, they're able to get away from that 'siege mentality' and take it as something that could be beneficial for them."

Students have also benefited from the Lab School's more open lines of communication. Through surveys during and after the professional development initiative and through their representatives in student government and the School Leadership Team (a team that also includes school staff and parents), students have helped to make the school a more compassionate place where their interests are always valued. Students were the driving force behind a Peer Alliance and Leadership (PAL) program that trains high school juniors and seniors to run advisory workshops for seventh graders. They also pushed for the addition of a number of new courses to the curriculum and the creation of teacher–student book clubs to build stronger relationships between eighth and ninth graders and introduce them to a large number of adults in the building.

The collaborative approach to schooling seems to work quite well for students at the Lab School. Its graduation and attendance rates are both close to 100%, and almost all of its students attend four–year institutions.

Replication Details

- If you expect teachers and students to work collaboratively with each other, you need to model the collaborative process in your encounters with them.
- A collaborative leadership structure is about taking risks and giving up control; only through taking these risks can you continue to raise the bar for teacher and student performance.
- Collaborative school leadership requires a major increase in the number of meetings with individual staff members, teaching teams, parents, and students. However, you can streamline the process by asking different bodies to appoint representatives charged with voicing their interests. At the Lab School, the co–directors meet as requested with parent representatives from each class and grade so that teachers aren't overwhelmed by individual parent concerns and are freed up to take risks in the classroom.
- Interdisciplinary planning can create a dialogue among teachers that leads to increased competence. Making curricula public keeps teachers on their toes.
- Helping teachers to improve their practice is not about forcing them into a pre–conceived template for excellence. It's about watching them work, helping them to identify what's good in their practice and what they want to be doing but aren't yet able to; dialogue is the key.
- Bring everyone in. Listen to your students' and parents' concerns and encourage them to conceive of solutions. They can be a very helpful resource for school leadership.

Costs and Funding

The New York City Lab School for Collaborative Studies received district funding for the facilitation of its four–year professional development initiative.

Contact Information

Dale Worsley, Breaking Ranks Facilitator
61 Eastern Parkway, 3C
Brooklyn, NY 11238
Ph: (718)789.3640
Fax: (718)789.6200
E-mail: cdw1@columbia.edu

Sheila Breslaw, Co-Director
New York City Lab School for Collaborative Studies
333 West 17th Street
New York, NY 10011
Phone: (212) 691-6119
Fax: (212) 691-6219
e-mail: chistams@aol.com

Rob Menken, Co-Director
New York City Lab School for Collaborative Studies
333 West 17th Street
New York, NY 10011
Phone: (212) 691-6119
Fax: (212) 691-6219
e-mail: phairnuf@aol.com

Rating Criteria

This story exemplifies the following practices:

Professional development should be primarily school-based and built into the day-to-day work of teaching.

Professional development should be continuous and on-going, involving follow-up and support for further learning, including support from sources external to the school that can provide necessary resources and new perspectives.

Professional development should provide learning opportunities that relate to individual needs but are, for the most part, organized around collaborative problem solving.

Louisiana's America2000 Technology Innovation Program

Louisiana's America2000 Technology Innovation Program

Macon Ridge, LA

School Type: Public

**School
Setting:** Rural

Level: K-12

**School
Design:** Traditional

Content Presented By:

NEIRTEC, Northeast & Islands
Regional Technology in Education
Consortium



Demographics

Macon Ridge, Louisiana is a rural area spread out over 150 square miles in the northeast corner of the state. The region is home to five of Louisiana's poorest counties—or parishes, as they are known locally: Catahoula, Concordia, Franklin, Morehouse, and Tensas. The United States Department of Education (USDE) has designated Macon Ridge as a high-poverty area.

Poverty, school dropout, and teen pregnancy rates are among the highest in the state. Unemployment for the five districts typically hovers at 10% or more, with much of the employment opportunities being seasonal and related to agriculture or the oil industry. Cotton, corn, and lumber are the dominant industries.

Of the 16,200 students, 71.3% qualify for the free/reduced-price lunch program, 54.6% are African American, and 45.2% are white.

Background

Beginning in 1994, members of the Concordia Parish school staff, including Personnel Director Leinda Peterman, won grant money that enabled them to purchase limited computer equipment and install 56K lines for high-speed Internet access in selected schools in Macon Ridge, Louisiana.

Excited about the potential for technology to provide access to resources that were otherwise unavailable in their rural system, the staff wanted to find additional ways to wire classrooms, provide broadband access, and train teachers. Libraries were limited or non-existent in many of the schools, and wiring the buildings was a way to break down barriers.

Looking for ways to enhance professional development in technology, Peterman sought out other districts with similar characteristics and needs in Macon Ridge. She found an opportunity to expand an existing partnership between Catahoula and Concordia Parish (County) School Systems. Those two districts asked three other districts to join them in applying for the America 2000 Technology Innovation Challenge Grant, a multi-million dollar grant offered through the United States

Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement. Online professional development (OPD) was a key part of the proposal. The Macon Ridge group received the grant in 1998.

Today Peterman heads the America2000 Technology Innovation Challenge Grant for the five parishes that comprise Macon Ridge, and the grant is in its fifth year. The project has been approved for a sixth year but with no additional funding.

America2000's online professional development program evolved into a national training model that is now used in other districts. The new program, known as EdTech Leaders Online (ETLO) is implemented by the Education Development Center (EDC) in Massachusetts and funded in part by the ATTFoundation. EDC cites Macon Ridge as a success story precisely because it integrates the online work into a complete professional development plan.

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Design & Implementation

In Macon Ridge, Louisiana, the America2000 grant supported online professional development for teachers through the EdTech Leaders Online (ETLO) program, which is implemented by the Education Development Center (EDC).

1. The EdTech Leaders Online (ETLO) program is a train-the-trainer, capacity-building program for teams of local participants from school districts, regional service providers, state departments of education, or teacher-training institutions.
2. The teams are trained in semester-long online courses to facilitate online workshops, developed by EDC, on integrating technology into the curriculum (Facilitating and Implementing OPD), or to develop their own online workshops for teachers or high school students (Online Course Design Program).
3. Teams can range in size from a minimum of three participants from a single school or small district, trained in a cohort with four to six teams from other educational organizations, to a full cohort of 24 participants from a single, large organization such as a big city, a consortium of school districts, a state department of education, or a university.
4. The EDC online workshops are project- and standards-based and include six sessions of one to two weeks. Some of the workshops are focused on specific grade levels and subject areas, such as Using Technology to Support Literacy Development in Primary-Level Classrooms, and others address the needs of teachers and administrators across grade levels and curricular areas, such as Approaches and Tools for Developing Web-Enhanced Lessons.
5. Participating teams facilitate the EDC workshops or the workshops they have designed for teachers, administrators, or students in their schools or educational organizations. These workshops begin in the year following the training program.
6. EDC works closely with each participating team to develop and manage their local online programs and provide ongoing support, in online specialist forums, to the trained facilitators and course developers.
7. These national forums foster ongoing, collaborative communities of trained online professional development (OPD) specialists. One important lesson learned from this work is that OPD works best when it is integrated carefully into ongoing local programs and combined with face-to-face opportunities.

The following equipment was provided to each teacher in Macon Ridge, Louisiana:

- A multimedia PC for the classroom
- Printer
- Updated software, including MS Office
- TV with computer capability
- VCR/Camcorder
- Digital camera
- High-intensity overhead projector
- Internet connections provided by A2K

The following equipment was provided to each school in Macon Ridge, Louisiana:

- Internet connections (provided by A2K)
- 5 multimedia PCs in a project room for content-area teachers? use with students
- TV with computer capability
- High-intensity overhead projector
- VCR
- Printer(s)
- Video-editing equipment

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Results

During the 2002–03 academic year in Macon Ridge, Louisiana, online professional development was delivered to 310 teachers, with 14 workshops offered through the EdTech Leaders Online (ETLO) program by the Education Development Center (EDC).

Now in the fifth year of the program, the original group of Macon Ridge teachers is taking over the facilitation of the courses altogether. They are also working with EDC's Center for Online Professional Education (COPE) to expand the range of online course offerings. The clear goal is local capacity building, as district staff grow into online professional development specialists who serve as resources for their own communities.

Positive results can be seen in evaluations of classes taught by teachers who participated in online workshops through ETLO. Classroom observations by external evaluators are conducted annually to determine implementation levels. The purpose is to determine technology applications and student and teacher skill and comfort in using techniques learned during professional development. A pre-/post-project comparison study is underway.

Evaluators visited 61 classrooms in 1999–00 and an additional 60 in 2000–01. Of the 61 classes observed, 36, or 59% of the lessons, were rated as satisfactory on the 45 attributes assessed during the teaching/ learning process. Fifteen, or 24.6% of the lessons, were found to exhibit satisfactory and/or exemplary performance, while 10, or 16.4% of the classes, exhibited the need for achievement of certain indicators assessed within the lesson.

Replication Details

In Macon Ridge, Louisiana, the America2000 grant supported online professional development for teachers through the EdTech Leaders Online (ETLO) program, which is implemented by the Education Development Center (EDC).

To those who wish to develop an online professional development program (OPD), EDC recommends the following:

- Assess local professional development needs and develop an OPD plan based on these needs.
- Connect OPD with other ongoing, face-to-face professional development activities.
- Carefully select and train OPD-specialist team members.
- Build a strong local team.
- Develop incentives.
- Publicize the OPD program and involve local stakeholders.
- Provide readily available and reliable access to technology and support.
- Foster a rich, interactive online learning community.
- Integrate online workshops with face-to-face meetings.

Online professional development (OPD) generally includes several main components, including Web-based learning opportunities, courses, workshops, and online interactions with instructors, mentors, and colleagues. For educators, the best model tends to be the community model of OPD. This model, which combines readings, activities, and facilitated, peer-to-peer collaborative discussions, is at the core of the EdTech Leaders Online (ETLO) program.

1. In this model, participants access their course materials on the Web and complete a sequence of Web-based readings and activities during each course session.
2. Activities may include exploring a Web site or a computer-based simulation, experimenting with a new technology tool or piece of software, viewing an online video clip.
3. The focal point of the session is the online discussion, where learners participate asynchronously to share their reflections, ideas, comments, and questions in response to a focused discussion prompt posed by the facilitator.
4. Because participants and facilitators are able to take time to prepare comments and responses, online discussions can be more reflective than synchronous discussions or face-to-face workshops; they also provide all participants ample opportunity to contribute to the discussion.
5. A record of each online discussion is kept automatically, so participants and facilitators can always review previous discussions to build on them in later discussions; this contributes to the depth and inclusiveness made possible by the learning community model.

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Costs and Funding

To succeed with an online professional development program like ETLO, the only prerequisites are Internet and e-mail access, computers, and a goal of bringing professional development in technology to the district. Even if a district doesn't have money available for such a program, the ETLO Web site

offers guidance for grant-writing. A number of districts have also incorporated the ETLO program into grant proposals for professional development funding.

Some districts, including some in Los Angeles and Philadelphia, have secured funding for the program from the ATTFoundation, which supports their participation as part of its agenda to help address the digital divide.

America2000 is funded by a five-year \$7.3 million Technology Innovation Challenge Grant from the U.S. Department of Education. This grant program is focused on professional development for teachers about integrating technology into the curriculum.

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Contact Information

America2000:

Leinda Peterman, Director
America2000 TICC
508 John Dale Drive
Vidalia, LA 71373
lpete@nls.k12.la.us
leinda@bellsouth.net
Tel. (318) 336-2026
<http://america2000challenge.org>

EdTech Leaders Online at EDC:

Barbara Treacy, Director
btreacy@edc.org
EdTech Leaders Online (ETLO)
Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC)
55 Chapel Street Newton, Massachusetts 02458-1060
Tel: (800) 225-4276 ext. 2550
Fax: (617) 969-1580
<http://www.edtechleaders.org>

Northeast & Islands Regional Technology in Education Consortium (NEIRTEC):
Jill Weber, NEIRTEC Project Manager
jweber@edc.org
Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC)
55 Chapel Street Newton, Massachusetts 02458-1060
Tel: (800) 225-4276

Rating Criteria**This story exemplifies the following practices:**

Professional development should be continuous and on-going, involving follow-up and support for further learning, including support from sources external to the school that can provide necessary resources and new perspectives.

Mexico Academy and Central School District

Mexico Academy and Central School District

Mexico, NY

School Type: Public

**School
Setting:** Rural

Level: Elementary

**School
Design:** Traditional

Content Presented By:

NEIRTEC, Northeast & Islands
Regional Technology in Education
Consortium



A group of elementary students from the Mexico (NY) Academy and Central Schools studies a *Peanuts* cartoon by Charles Schulz. The cartoon's story is set in a movie theater, and the students—in keeping with New York State English language arts standards—must find a way to demonstrate their understanding of the elements of the story. How can they gather their thoughts, arrange the information they've gathered, and display their understanding? Enter the tools of technology.

The students in this particular class used software, including Kidspiration and Inspiration, to map out the concepts of the story and organize their ideas about the reading. The software also allowed the children to use pictures to get their points across.

"They may not have been able to spell *theater*," says Amy Spath, the technology integration specialist from the Oswego County Board of Cooperative Educational Services, "but they knew how to pick out a picture of a reel or a video camera."

The use of technology as a teaching and learning tool has become a hot topic in New York State. The state learning standards even incorporate the expectation that students will learn to "access, generate, process, and transfer information using appropriate technologies" and apply the knowledge gained through technology use to address real-world problems (www.nysatl.nysed.gov/standards.html). But many teachers, including those in the Mexico district, shy away from integrating the use of technology into their lesson plans.

"Most concerns that teachers share with me are centered on their comfort level of using technology and that they are hesitant to use it with students since they 'don't know everything' about the software," says Spath.

To counter this lack of confidence and encourage more teachers to take advantage of the benefits of using technology in the classroom, Spath decided to participate in an online Designing for Technology Integration (DTI) workshop sponsored by The Northeast and Islands Regional Technology Consortium (NEIRTEC). This experience provided her with some thoughts about how best to get the teachers to use technology as an everyday teaching and learning tool. She incorporated these ideas into a professional development plan for elementary teachers in her district, which would guide them through the process of effectively integrating technology into lessons that students had trouble understanding in the past.

Following the course, Spath immediately presented her workshop idea to the director of technology at Mexico Academy and Central Schools and the district's Technology Training Initiative Team. She understood that the teachers involved would have various levels of teaching experience and technology expertise. Many of the previous technology staff development offerings were optional to teachers, and staff developers did not usually model integrated lessons at these sessions. Developers had mentioned tips and suggestions for using software in the classroom, but the teachers wanted more detailed information about what was available to them. They had continually requested more software and lists of useful Web sites for kids—especially math sites.

Spath decided that the best way to begin was to have the teachers meet with her, by grade level, while a substitute teacher taught their classes. They would meet by building, by grade level, in groups of approximately four teachers. One of the benefits to working with such small groups was the ability to work with each teacher at his or her own technology comfort level. "Amy [Spath] instructs at each and every person's individual level," says one of the teachers who attended the first round of workshops. "She is gifted in recognizing where each student is in ability."

The goal of the professional development experience was for the individual teachers to be able to technologically enhance a lesson that had posed some problems for students in the past and to be able to present their lesson to their class with support from Spath. The experience consisted of two partial days. The first half-day focused on teacher learning, and the second partial day involved the presentation, with feedback from Spath. During the first half-day session, Spath modeled a lesson, appropriate to the grade level, with technology embedded in the lesson.

Teachers then discussed the ways in which technology enhanced the teaching and learning process. The teachers briefly shared stories about using technology in their past lessons and also described the lessons that they hoped to enhance. As a group, the teachers brainstormed ways to incorporate technology into each lesson in order to enhance instruction and student comprehension. Because most of the teachers have special education inclusion students in their classrooms, the teachers discussed using technology as a way to differentiate instruction for those students. They then broke up into pairs to work on the logistics of incorporating technology into their lessons. "I chose to have the teachers work in pairs to share ideas and successes with technology integration, since they seem to be more honest and comfortable working in small groups," says Spath.

Working in pairs also helped the teachers assess the information they already had in the lesson and what they needed to add or adjust. The teachers kept an eye on the New York State learning standards, including ways in which they could use Web sites or software to help students read, write, listen, and speak for understanding, artistic creation, self-expression, and critical analysis. Spath says the Kidspiration software specifically helped teachers incorporate mapping and brainstorming into their lesson plans. The teachers' new lessons expected students to listen, map out what they were hearing, gather more information if necessary, and then go on to writing and demonstration of knowledge.

When teachers were ready to present the new lessons to their students, Spath helped them set up, team-taught the lessons with them, and met with each teacher after his/her lesson to discuss how the teacher felt the lesson went. In several cases, Spath found that she could not even differentiate the special education students from others in the classroom. In fact, after completing a lesson in one classroom, she asked the teacher if there were any inclusion students in her classroom. The teacher replied, "One third of my students are special education students. They were some of your keenest participants!"

According to Spath, the flexibility inherent in certain software and learning Web sites makes

technology-based lessons perfect for integrated classrooms. Technological tools that allow students to use pictures, glossaries, and interactive features help students express themselves easily and teachers understand the viewpoints and learning styles of their students.

"One of the nice things about using this software is that students can be free to try different things," says Spath. "They're not constrained to doing things this way or that way."

In developing the lessons, the teachers also took into account whether to use technology as a teaching tool with the whole group of students or break the students up into pairs and groups to complete an assignment. Spath thought the group work was important because students who were more experienced with the software or the Internet helped those with less expertise.

"If one needed help, they were close to each other," says Spath. "They were also sharing work, which helped them think of new ways to gather or present information."

Immediately following the presentation of the new lessons to their students, teachers expressed their pleasure about the high levels of student engagement they observed. When designing her workshop, Spath had incorporated this reflection time as an informal assessment of the teachers' progress. Because she wanted the teachers to feel secure throughout the process, she also built in time for teachers to share with one another and ask others for suggestions. In this way, the teachers could learn from the assessment mechanisms without feeling threatened.

Spath also asked the teachers to complete a follow-up survey a few weeks after the experience. The surveys highlighted the positive results of the workshop experience. One specific lesson using the Web site www.edheads.org drew rave reviews from the students and the presenting third-grade teacher. The lesson encouraged exploration of simple machines around the home, including a faucet, a flagpole, and an alarm clock, and students were able to access a glossary of terms to enhance their understanding. The students commented that the lesson kept them interested because "we were learning at the same time we were playing" and because "the animation was cool." The teacher wrote that at least a quarter of her students had shared the Web site with their families.

Fourth-grade teachers also noted that the Kidspiration and Inspiration software helped them address the elements of the fourth-grade state English language exam with ease. Students became comfortable with the use of graphic organizers and the task of identifying story elements. One teacher even wrote that the experience inspired her to try follow-up technology sessions with her students that went very well.

"This issue is always time," says another participant teacher. "Having the workshop forced me to make the time to integrate the technology...the kids enjoyed it and they demonstrated learning. That makes me want to keep trying to do this more. It helped ease my own uncertainty."

Now that Spath has completed her first round of the professional development experience, she is gearing up to work with more of the elementary teachers in the district. She hopes to inspire others to step out of their "comfort zones" and reap the benefits of integrating appropriate technology tools into their lessons.

"This is a little step for the teachers," she says. "They need that little step. I show them just what they need to know to show the kids what they need to know. Now their confidence level is up there."

Demographics

The Mexico Academy and Central School District is located in Mexico, New York, approximately 40 miles north of Syracuse. The population of this rural community is predominantly white and middle class. There are five buildings: three elementary schools, a middle school, and a high school in this district. There are 2760 students with 195 teachers. Approximately 830 students participate in the free and reduced-price lunch program. There are 410 special education inclusion students in kindergarten through 12th grade. There are no English language learners (ELLs) in the Mexico Academy and Central Schools. Each elementary classroom has five computers with Internet access. Each elementary school has two projectors available for teachers' use.

Background

The Mexico (NY) Academy and Central School District has had a technology integration specialist for the past four years. Amy Spath works three days a week at Mexico Academy and Central Schools. She splits her time among the three elementary buildings, the middle school, and the high school. Her main focus is to provide teachers with basic technology training and technology integration training. She also offers personalized trainings for individual teachers.

The elementary teachers in the Mexico district have various levels of teaching experience and technology expertise. Many of them have attended training for the software installed on the school computers, such as Max's Sandbox (an early childhood interface for Microsoft Office), Microsoft Office Suite, Inspiration, and Kidspiration. They are familiar with basic usage of the software and can help their students with minor problems; however, they have differing levels of confidence when it comes to integrating technology into their lesson plans.

To improve her ability to guide teachers through the process of integration, Spath enrolled in the online Designing for Technology Integration course offered by TERC and the Northeast and Islands Regional Technology Education Consortium (NEIRTEC). She was particularly interested in finding new ways to get elementary teachers in the Mexico district excited about integrating technology into their curriculum. During the course, Spath created a professional development experience that would help her elementary teachers improve student engagement and understanding through technology integration.

When Spath presented her professional development experience to the director of technology and the elementary principals in Mexico, they loved the idea and wanted to know how to get started. To begin, each elementary building principal selected grade levels to participate first in the experience, with the knowledge that teachers in the remaining grade levels would experience the same sessions at a later date in the school year. One school focused on second- and third-grade teachers, while the other two buildings involved the third- and fourth-grade teachers. The fourth-grade students were preparing for the Fourth Grade New York State English Language Arts exam.

Design & Implementation

At each of the three elementary schools at Mexico (NY) Academy and Central School District, Amy Spath, the technology integration specialist for the district, collaborated with teachers from three elementary school grade levels to integrate technology into standards-based lessons that were already taught in the classroom without the use of special software or the Internet. The half-day professional development session consisted of the following activities:

- Participating in a model lesson, demonstrated by Amy Spath, with integrated technology
- Reviewing Web sites or software relevant to the topic of the lesson
- Determining which technologies best fit into their own lessons. Teachers considered software,

such as Inspiration and Max's Sandbox, use of the Internet, and whether to use a projector for whole-class instruction or bring their students to the library, in their building, to use the computers in pairs for the lesson.

- Developing assessment strategies
- Scheduling class periods, library times, and use of the school's projection systems

On the follow-up dates, the teachers presented their technology-enhanced lessons to their students with help from Spath.

Results

At each of the three elementary schools at Mexico (NY) Academy and Central School District, Amy Spath, the technology integration specialist for the district, collaborated with teachers from three elementary school grade levels to integrate technology into standards-based lessons that were already taught in the classroom without the use of special software or the Internet. The preliminary results of this collaboration--and of the new lessons it produced--are promising.

Immediately following the presentation of the new lessons to their students, teachers expressed their pleasure about the high levels of student engagement they observed. Spath also asked the teachers to complete a follow-up survey a few weeks after the experience. The surveys highlighted the positive results of the workshop experience. One specific lesson using the Web site www.edheads.org drew rave reviews from the students and the presenting third-grade teacher. The lesson encouraged exploration of simple machines around the home, including a faucet, a flagpole, and an alarm clock, and students were able to access a glossary of terms to enhance their understanding. The students commented that the lesson kept them interested because "we were learning at the same time we were playing" and because "the animation was cool." The teacher wrote that at least a quarter of her students had shared the Web site with their families.

Fourth-grade teachers also noted that the Kidspiration and Inspiration software helped them address the elements of the fourth-grade state English language exam with ease. Students became comfortable with the use of graphic organizers and the task of identifying story elements. One teacher even wrote that the experience inspired her to try follow-up technology sessions with her students that went very well.

"This issue is always time," says another participant teacher. "Having the workshop forced me to make the time to integrate the technology...the kids enjoyed it and they demonstrated learning. That makes me want to keep trying to do this more. It helped ease my own uncertainty."

Now that Spath has completed her first round of the professional development experience, she is gearing up to work with more of the elementary teachers in the district. She hopes to inspire others to step out of their "comfort zones" and reap the benefits of integrating appropriate technology tools into their lessons.

Replication Details

Not Available

Costs and Funding

The schools used funds from Title IID to pay for substitute teachers so that teachers could meet for the half-day professional development experience.

Contact Information

Rating Criteria

This story exemplifies the following practices:

Professional development should be primarily school-based and built into the day-to-day work of teaching.

Related Web Resources

This is an annotated list of resources found on other Web sites that relate to this spotlight topic on The Knowledge Loom. We encourage you to access them from the links provided on The Knowledge Loom. To do this, go to the Web address noted in the header. Then click on the Related Resources link.

For an overview of additional content presented on The Knowledge Loom Web site that may not have been selected for this print document, see the Spotlight Overview located earlier in the document.

1) Building Bridges: The Mission and Principles of Professional Development from the U.S.
Department of Education Professional Development Team
<http://www.ed.gov/G2K/bridge.html>

This web site describes the essential role that professional development plays in successful education reform. Professional development is described as the bridge between where prospective and experienced educators are now and where they will need to be to meet the new challenges required to guide all students to achieve higher standards of learning and development.

2) Teacher Quality
<http://www.ed.gov/teacherquality/>

This web page is a part of the U.S. Department of Education's extensive online resources. Designed to respond to the goal for a quality teacher in every classroom, this site provides suggested resources for preservice, novice, and experienced educators. It includes suggested resources for developing teachers' knowledge and skills related to standards, rigorous assessment, and site-based management. Practical tips, examples, and research reports make this site useful to teachers, principals, and curriculum specialists, and staff development coordinators.

3) Peer-Assisted Leadership (PAL) Program
<http://www.ed.gov/pubs/triedandtrue/peer.html>

Non-judgmental, inquiry-based approach to leadership development in which principals form partnerships to help each other reflect on their practice. PAL partners work together over a period of 4 to 8 months, shadowing and interviewing each other to collect data and analyze their leadership activities in context. Participants also meet regularly as a group, learning and practicing various inquiry skills (e.g., shadowing, interviewing, theme identification), as well as sharing and processing their partnership experiences. These meetings, together with the partnerships, provide a supportive forum for professional dialog that reduces isolation, deepens understanding, and supports change.

4) Focus on Standards
<http://www.pulliamgroup.com/Standards/Standards.htm>

The Pulliam Group provides a computer-based product that helps schools improve academic achievement through a focus upon standards. The program uses collected assessment data to adjust instruction as necessary through a standards-based instructional plan.

5) Creating Clusters: Study Groups for Professional Learning
<http://www.ufttc.org/publications/specialedition14/spedhome14.html>

(Select Creating Clusters from pull-down menu.)

Article in UFT's Special Edition, Volume 14 about study group work as primary vehicles for professional development in the Teacher Center at Theodore Roosevelt High School, the Bronx, NY. specific examples given about what they do.

6) Action Research Update: Constructing Knowledge
<http://www.ufttc.org/publications/specialedition14/spedhome14.html>

(Select Action Research from pull-down menu.)

Article in UFT's Special Edition, Volume 14 about Constructing Knowledge: Building Communities of Learners through Job-Embedded Professional Development (CK), an action research project

conducted during the 2000–2001 school year by the Northeast and Islands Regional Educational Lab at Brown University (LAB). Action research was the vehicle used to engage participants in a quest to develop habits of mind for collaboration and inquiry. The goals were to build growing communities of learners to work with local evidence and ultimately to alter their practices based on findings resulting from their inquiry. Article includes outline of project design and case studies for several sites.

7) Professional Development From Reports to Reality, Part 2

<http://www.edtechleaders.org/Resources/articles/reality2.htm>

This article from Ed Tech Leaders Online features Professional development leaders from three school districts: Concordia parish, LA; Hanau, Germany; and San Francisco, CA. They describe how they are helping educators use new technologies effectively in the classroom.

8) EduHound

<http://www.eduhound.com/>

Visiting EduHound is like walking into a wonderful store filled with resources for teachers of all subjects and all levels. This collection of links developed by leaders from the THE Journal.

9) What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future

<http://www.tc.columbia.edu/~teachcomm/what.htm>

The National Commission on Teaching & America's Future offers this report as a blueprint for recruiting, preparing, and supporting excellent teachers in all of America's schools.

10) Appropriating Conceptual and Pedagogical Tools for Teaching English: A Conceptual Framework for Studying Professional Development (1999)

<http://cela.albany.edu/tools/index.html>

The authors of this article from the ERIC Center for English Learning and Achievement propose using perspectives developed in a framework of activity theory to inform our understanding of teacher development. They explore the dimensions of appropriation of the tools teachers use to guide and implement classroom practice and reflect on activity theory's value as a context in which to assess learning-to-teach processes.

11) Middle Web: Exploring Middle School Reform

<http://middleweb.com/index.html>

MiddleWeb: Exploring Middle School Reform is a Web site produced by the Focused Reporting Project with financial support from the Program for Student Achievement of the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation. MiddleWeb provides a wealth of resources for schools, districts, educators, parents, and public school advocates working to raise achievement for all students in the middle grades. In addition to MiddleWeb's large collection of reform-oriented materials, this site includes hundreds of articles and links about curriculum, teaching strategies, teacher professional development, parent involvement, classroom assessment, and much more.

12) IMPACT

<http://projects.terc.edu/impact/>

IMPACT is a five-year project striving to accelerate the implementation of standards-based instructional materials throughout New England. The Center for Advancement of Science and

Mathematics Education plans to build on existing regional structures to provide the information, resources and support for districts and their teachers in this next step in educational reform. The site describes this reform plan.

13) Professional Development for Teachers in Culturally Diverse Schools

http://www.ed.gov/databases/ERIC_Digests/ed435185.html

This digest by Nancy Clair and Carolyn Temple Adger focuses on professional development for teachers in culturally diverse schools. It summarizes what is known about effective professional development and the conditions that allow it to succeed. It provides three examples of professional development that are grounded in the academic achievement of English language learners as a fundamental ingredient to overall school success.

14) Education Week Special Issue of Professional Development

<http://www.edweek.org/context/topics/issuespage.cfm?id=16>

Summarizes current issues related to professional development and includes links to Ed Week articles on professional development and related organizations.

15) Blue Ribbon Schools

<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OERI/BlueRibbonSchools/>

An online brochure provides basic information about the purpose of the program, the nomination process, and how schools are chosen.

16) Synergy Learning

<http://www.synergylearning.org>

Synergy Learning is a comprehensive site covering math, science, and design technology for Grades K–8. Many computer–using educators will be familiar with its magazine *Connect*. Archives from the magazine, information on inquiry learning, a sample magazine issue, and resources for science labs are available on the site. Synergy Learning offers support materials through free online information, summer institutes and workshops, and magazine subscriptions.

17) By Request: High Quality Professional Development

<http://www.nwrel.org/request/june98/>

This booklet is the seventh in a series of "hot topic" reports produced by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. These reports briefly address current educational concerns and issues as indicated by requests for information that come to the Laboratory from the Northwest region and beyond. Each booklet contains an explanation of the topic importance, a sampling of how Northwest schools are addressing the issue, suggestions for adapting these ideas to schools, selected references, and contact information.

18) Professional Development: Staff Learning for Student Results

<http://www.ncrel.org/pd/>

Here you will find a full range of information geared to help you make professional development a bedrock of excellence in your school or district. This site is designed for school and district–level teachers, administrators, and others interested in improving professional development.

19) Professional Competency Continuum: On-Line Assessment Tool
<http://www.milkenexchange.org/welcome.html>

This online assessment tool, which is a companion to the Professional Competency Continuum document, has been designed to provide educators with an opportunity to assess their status within the skill and knowledge areas described in that continuum.

20) Professional Learning Communities: Communities of Continuous Inquiry and Improvement
<http://www.sedl.org/siss/plc/plc.html>

"Professional Learning Communities" includes stories and reports of research on how professional staff in schools--teachers and principals--organize as a learning community. It summarizes what professional learning communities look like and how they operate. It identifies the outcomes for staff and students when educators organize a learning community within a school.

21) Tried and True: Tested Ideas for Teaching and Learning from the Regional Educational Laboratories
<http://www.ed.gov/pubs/triedandtrue/index.html>

Online book of sixteen tested programs and practices for improving teaching and learning developed by (and available from) the Regional Educational Laboratories. Five chapters are devoted to teacher professional development.

22) Designing Effective Professional Development: Lessons from the Eisenhower Professional Development Program
<http://www.ed.gov/inits/teachers/eisenhower/>

This is the second publication from the congressionally mandated National Evaluation of the Eisenhower Professional Program that is being conducted under contract by the American Institutes for Research (AIR).

23) National Staff Development Council Website
<http://www.nsdc.org/>

The National Staff Development Council's website provides information about staff development and the Council's efforts to improve the quality of staff development available to educators. Information about the Council's activities, publications, programs, and services are available through the website.

The site is designed for use by both educators and non-educators and offers two different areas of information. Within the educators' site are articles for recent publications, research summaries, and other useful information. The members-only section includes a fully searchable library of all NSDC publications. In the non-educator area, there are resources of interest to parents, school board members, community members, and policy makers.

Questions about the site should be directed to: Joan Richardson, Director of Publications, National Staff Development Council, 1128 Nottingham Road, Grosse Pointe Farms, MI 48230, telephone: 313-824-5061, fax: 313-824-5062, NSDCJoan@aol.com

24) Islands of Hope in a Sea of Dreams: A Research Report on the Model Professional Development

Award Winning Schools

<http://www.wested.org/wested/pubs/online/PDawards/welcome.shtml>

This research report highlights the findings of an intensive study of eight schools that won the U.S. Department of Education's Model Professional Development Award. The study examined how teacher learning occurred in these schools and what support structures helped promote increased student achievement through increased teacher learning.

The study highlights the importance of and describes the structure of job-embedded, informal learning experiences available to each teacher within these schools. It provides information about the critical role of the school principal in supporting teacher learning. It describes the support systems available in each school to promote teacher learning and the application of new learning practices. And, it examines the culture of these schools that makes learning a necessary part of the daily life of each staff member.

25) Professional Development: Learning from the Best

<http://www.ncrel.org/pd/toolkit.htm>

This is a gold mine for those who need to design, implement and evaluate a staff development plan. It stands as a complete resource guide to assist staff development decision makers. A wealth of appendices and over 14 tools are packed into this practical resource.

26) Multicultural Staff Development

<http://www.mcreview.com/>

One of the articles featured in the September 1999 issue of "Multicultural Review" is "Supporting Teachers in Becoming Multicultural Educators: A Model Staff Development Program" (volume 8[3]: 30-40). The article, written by Penelope L. Lisi and William A. Howe, discusses challenges and approaches to training multicultural educators, and includes the authors' four-step model for developing a multicultural curriculum: (1) Awareness, (2) Knowledge, (3) Skills, and (4) Action Plans. Lisi and Howe discuss their model within the context of a four-year project to implement multicultural education across the Unified School District II (USD II) of the Connecticut Department of Children and Families. The USD II project instituted a number of district-wide changes, including the creation of a multicultural library/media center, and policy that tied multicultural lesson planning to professional development plans and teacher evaluation. Results from the project showed an increase in staff awareness of multicultural education and ability to view topics from multiple perspectives.

Information on subscribing to "Multicultural Review" is online at: <http://www.mcreview.com/>

27) Classroom Management Tech Tips

<http://www.techlearning.com/pdq/index.jhtml;jsessionid=BI3KTYELZNCMMQSNDBCKKHQ>

Technology and Learning Magazine offers these PDQ (Professional Development QuickTips) targeting classroom management of technology resources. The tips should be valuable for teachers starting to integrate technology into their curriculum.

28) American Federation of Teachers: Professional Development

<http://www.aft.org/Edissues/teacherquality/prodev.htm>

What are the characteristics of good professional development programs? How much do they cost?

Who pays for them? These and other issues are discussed and exemplary programs highlighted.

29) Embed Technology Use in Content Specific Professional Development

<http://www.techlearning.com/edge/?jsessionid=J3CT4GUPHK5DAQSNDBCSKHY>

This tech tip from Technology & Learning magazine encourages those teaching teachers to use technology to do so within the context of the subject each teacher is teaching. Teachers must see how technology fits into their content areas.

30) From Black and White to Color: Technology, Professional Development and Changing Practice

<http://www.thejournal.com/magazine/vault/A4070.cfm>

Even after technology training by their district, many of the teachers followed in this multi-part article in the THE Journal, were not using technologies efficiently in their classrooms. After helping the teachers with classroom management, constructivist techniques, and showing them how to use technologies with what they were teaching, significant improvement was observed.

31) PDS Partnership Development: A Listserv for PDS Educators

The National Institute for Community Innovations and its partners have created an online forum focusing on issues related to developing professional development school partnerships and to strengthening existing partnerships. Topics for discussion, exploration, and exchange include: characteristics of successful partnerships; obstacles to collaboration and how to overcome them; stages of partnership development; expanding participation in partnership initiatives; structures and strategies used by successful partnerships; methods for evaluating the effectiveness of partnerships; renewing and revitalizing partnerships.

To subscribe, send an e-mail message to majordomo@nici-mc2.org and leave the subject line blank. In the body of the message, type "subscribe pds-devel." Do not attach a signature file. Once you have been added to the list, send your messages with questions, comments, and information about helpful resources to pds-devel@nici-mc2.org

Any questions about the forum should be directed to:

Robert McLaughlin, Executive Director, NICI
235 Main Street, Montpelier, VT 05602
Telephone: 802-223-0463, Fax: 802-229-2013
mclaughlinb@nici-mc2.org

32) Ideas that Work: Professional Development Series

<http://enc.org/reform/iindex.htm>

These publications from the Eisenhower National Clearinghouse highlight 15 strategies for effective professional development for teachers. Each strategy is illustrated with a real-life example, and the publication also includes longer descriptions of existing programs that combine these strategies.

33) The National Clearinghouse for Comprehensive School Reform

<http://www.goodschools.gwu.edu/>

The National Clearinghouse for Comprehensive School Reform publishes a monthly newsletter on issues related to school reform. The February 2000 issue was devoted to staff development, available at <http://www.goodschools.gwu.edu/bookFeb.htm>

Subscribe to the free newsletter at <http://www.goodschools.gwu.edu>

34) Questioning and Understanding to Improve Learning and Thinking (QUILT)

<http://www.ed.gov/pubs/triedandtrue/quest.html>

Staff development program designed to increase students' true thinking time by helping teachers improve their classroom questioning techniques. Three major components are provided in the program: (1) Induction training: Teachers learn about effective questioning techniques during a 3-day (18-hour) introductory training period conducted by members of a local facilitation team; (2) Collegiums: Participants meet in seven 90-minute seminars throughout the school year to learn, share, and interact about particular questioning behaviors targeted for practice and improvement; and (3) Partnering: Teachers observe and are observed by partners six times during the year.

35) Strategic Teaching and Reading Project (STRP)

<http://www.ed.gov/pubs/triedandtrue/strat.html>

Focus on professional development based on the premise that teachers must receive training and support in strategic teaching in order to help students become strategic readers and learners themselves. STRP, developed by the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL), emphasizes the team approach, which spreads the demands of instructional leadership among team members, builds on areas of expertise, fosters collaboration, and reduces threats to the continuity of the project that can come from staff turnover.

36) Using Case Studies to Inform Professional Development

<http://www.ed.gov/pubs/triedandtrue/teach.html>

Describes the Mathematics Case Methods project that references a collection of cases for use by primary teachers and another for classroom discussion by students with teachers serving as facilitators. The cases portray real-life teaching dilemmas that build teacher capacity through the careful process of reflection and inquiry generated by facilitated discussions with other teachers. They assist teachers in developing deep pedagogical content knowledge, the ability to see the subject through the eyes of the student, and to know what instructional experiences can be used to capitalize on that child's thinking. Whether cases are content specific or deal with broader teaching issues, case discussants examine different approaches to teaching and learning, considering the benefits and drawbacks of each.

37) Teachers Take Charge of Their Learning: Transforming Professional Development for Student Success

http://nfie.org/publications/takecharge_full.htm

NFIE's report, "Teachers Take Charge of Their Learning: Transforming Professional Development for Student Success," asserts that continuous teacher learning is the key to helping students achieve high standards and that the profession itself must take responsibility for weaving continuous learning into the fabric of the teaching job. Features many schools/programs (<http://www.nfie.org/course.htm>) across the nation that have increased student learning by focusing on the professional development of teachers.

38) A Change of Course

<http://www.nfie.org/course.htm>

"A Change of Course" is the National Foundation for the Improvement of Education's (NFIE)

program to improve the quality and availability of professional development for public school teachers, education support personnel, and higher education faculty and staff.

39) National Partnership for Excellence and Accountability in Teaching
<http://www.npeat.org/>

NPEAT engages in research-based collaborative action to ensure teaching excellence and provides ongoing information in three areas: Teacher Education and Recruitment, Professional Development and Induction, and Standards and Assessments.

40) Promising Practices: Improving Professional Development Practices
<http://www.ed.gov/pubs/PromPractice/chapter6.html>

Book chapter (also available in pdf) that addresses seven practices nominated as promising practices by regional education laboratories, reviews of research literature, and researchers for the national commission.

41) Profiles of Successful Schoolwide Programs
http://www.ed.gov/pubs/idea_profiles

"Profiles of Successful Schoolwide Programs" (December, 1998) describes 8 successful schoolwide programs, including 6 elementary schools, a middle school, and a secondary (grades 7–12) school. This booklet (Volume 2 of "Implementing Schoolwide Programs") is designed to help schools plan, operate, and improve their schoolwide programs.

42) The "Hope for Urban Education" study of nine high-performing, high poverty urban elementary schools.
<http://www.ed.gov/pubs/urbanhope/>

This report is about nine urban elementary schools that served children of color in poor communities & achieved impressive academic results. These schools have attained higher levels of achievement than most schools in their states or most schools in the nation. They have achieved results in reading & mathematics beyond that achieved in some suburban schools. This report tells the stories of these schools & attempts to explain how these schools changed themselves into high-achieving schools.

43) What Works in the Middle: Results-based Staff Development
<http://www.nsd.org/midbook/>

This is a consumer's guide, based on a two-year study by the National Staff Development Council, to 26 staff development programs that boost student learning in the middle grades in the core content areas of language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies by increasing teachers' knowledge and skills. The guide includes a description of the staff development programs, guidelines for selecting and/or designing initiatives to improve student achievement, strategies for evaluating staff development, and more information about how these programs were selected.

44) Model Professional Development Award Program
<http://www.ed.gov/inits/TeachersWeb/guidelines.html#criteria>

The purpose of the Mission and Principles of Professional Development is to promote excellence in teaching and learning. Applicants must adequately document improved student learning resulting from a professional development design that exemplifies these principles.

45) Online Poetry Classroom

<http://www.onlinepoetryclassroom.org/>

This website, sponsored by the Academy of American Poets, provides access to curriculum units and lesson plans created by teacher participants in Online Poetry Classroom workshops. These workshops bring middle school and high school teachers together with practicing poets and technology experts to develop new strategies for teaching poetry. The site also contains a searchable database of poets and poems, interactive teacher forums, and a teacher resource center full of relevant links.

Content Providers

This is an annotated list of organizations that provided content for this topic on The Knowledge Loom.

1) The Education Alliance at Brown University

The Education Alliance, a department at Brown University, has been working to effect real change in education for more than 25 years. The organization helps schools and school districts provide equitable opportunities for all students to succeed. It applies research findings and develops solutions to problems in such areas as school change, secondary school restructuring, professional development, first and second language acquisition, educational leadership, and cultural and linguistic diversity.

2) National Partnership for Excellence & Accountability in Teaching

Begun in fall, 1997, NPEAT was a voluntary association of 29 national organizations and several major research universities dedicated to research-based action that results in teaching excellence to raise student performance. Primary funding for the original project was from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), U. S. Department of Education. The University of Maryland served as the primary contractor.

3) Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL)

4) National Staff Development Council

The National Staff Development Council (NSDC), founded in 1969, is the largest non-profit professional association committed to ensuring success for all students through staff development and school improvement. The Council's fundamental purpose is to address the issues confronted by all participants in the reform process. NSDC's publications and projects are presented in a time-saving, "how-to" format, offering a variety of effective, step-by-step models developed by practitioners who base their methods on research and real-world experiences.

5) National Awards Program for Model Professional Development

The National Awards Program for Model Professional Development is an annual initiative funded by the U.S. Department of Education. The goal of this program is to recognize public and private (pre K-12) schools and school districts that engage their staffs in high-quality, professional development activities that exemplify the Department's mission and principles of professional development.

6) NEIRTEC, Northeast & Islands Regional Technology in Education Consortium

NEIRTEC, a collaboration of Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC), TERC, Learning Innovations at WestEd, and the Education Alliance at Brown University, is one of the ten regional technology in education consortia funded by the U.S. Department of Education. NEIRTEC serves the six New England States, New York, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. NEIRTEC focuses on helping educational leaders at the state, district, and school levels address the many challenges involved in putting technology to effective use, with a particular emphasis on the needs of schools in

underserved urban and rural communities.

7) Edvantia

Edvantia is a nonprofit education research and development corporation, founded in 1966, that partners with practitioners, education agencies, publishers, and service providers to improve learning and advance student success. Edvantia provides clients with a range of services, including research, evaluation, professional development, and consulting. Edvantia was founded in 1966 as the Appalachia Educational Laboratory, Inc. (AEL); on September 1, 2005, AEL became Edvantia, Inc. The Regional Educational Laboratory for the Appalachian region is known as the Appalachia Educational Laboratory at Edvantia.