

## At a Glance

The major goal of the Reading First grant was to ensure each student was reading on or above grade-level by the end of third grade. Across the five years of the grant this was to be accomplished by the implementation of: (a) a comprehensive Scientifically Based Reading Research (SBRR) program with direct, explicit instruction, (b) a professional development program for all K-3 teachers and administrators, (c) a screening, diagnostic, progress monitoring and outcome measurement assessment battery designed to identify students who need additional reading intervention and (d) a three-tier classification system for identifying students in need of increasingly intense reading intervention. The Reading First program was evaluated to provide context, implementation, and outcome data for decision-making purposes. This evaluation was designed to act both as a record of program implementation and as a resource for future program planning.

### Demographics

The Reading First program was implemented in 40 schools, mobilizing 942 teachers and serving 18,354 students. Targeted students tended to be Hispanic (70.2%) and economically disadvantaged (89.7%). Approximately half were limited English proficient (LEP) (51.4%).

The overwhelming majority of teachers were female (80.9%). Teachers were primarily Hispanic (41.0%), Black (29.8%) and White (27.1%). Across all grades a majority (61.5%) of teachers had five years or fewer experience in the district. A large percentage (18.5%) of the teachers was certified through alternative certification. Over a fifth of the teachers had earned a graduate degree (Masters, 21.7%; Doctorate, 1.0%).

Grades K-3 were the primary constituents of the grant, although special education students and teachers in all grades in these schools were to receive service.

### Implementation of Reading First

In the previous year, the district implemented the Reading First program in 30 schools (Cohort 1). In 2005-2006, ten more schools were added to the implementation (Cohort 2).

The district had been using approved SBRR core programs, Open Court and McGraw-Hill, prior to the commencement of the Reading First grant. However, the implementation of the curriculum is still a concern. Teacher surveys indicated that only 67.6% of teachers gave a 90-minute reading lesson at least four times a week. Classroom observations indicated that teachers were using the core curricula in their lessons.

Reading First teachers received, on average, 42.5 hours of training beyond the regular district training. Campus coaches, hired for each school to help implement the program and train staff, conducted most of the training. A majority (61%) of the training was on instructional topics such as the fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, graphophonemic knowledge or phonemic awareness. Other training topics were on mechanical elements of implementing the program (18%), Tier II materials (6%), and data analysis to drive instruction (10%). Teacher, principal and campus coach surveys indicated teachers have begun to apply their training to a moderate extent.

For Grades K-3, the screening and diagnostic assessment of *Texas Primary Reading Inventory (TPRI)* and the *El Inventario de Lectura en Español de Tejas (Tejas LEE)* were administered three times in the year. The English language progress monitoring assessments *Vital Indicators of Progress (VIP)* were administered to Grades K-3. The Spanish language *Tejas LEE Fluency Probes (TLFP)* were administered in Grades 1-3. There were no approved Spanish language progress monitoring assessments available for Kindergarten. Teacher-made assessments

were used for this grade. The *TPRI*, *Tejas LEE*, *VIP* and *TLFP* were all administered using an electronic personal desk assistant. Teachers, principals and campus coaches all indicated this was a superior form of testing. All grades were also administered outcome measures in the form of the *Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS)* and the *Logramos*. In Grade 3, students took the *Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS)* and the *Spanish TAKS* as well.

Students were served in two of three potential tiers of student intervention. All 18,354 students received Tier I intervention, which consisted of 90 minutes a day of reading using an SBRR curriculum. Of these 14,018 (76.4%) also received Tier II intervention, which consisted of an extra 30 minutes of intervention during the school day. A total of 4,336 (23.6%) received Tier III intervention, in which students received an additional 30 minutes of after-school reading instruction. Tier III was only implemented in the Cohort 1 schools.

### Classroom Observations

This year observations were conducted mostly in classrooms with teachers who had been identified as highly effective (20 classrooms). A set of teachers identified as ineffective were also observed to form a contrast group for the effective teachers (10 classrooms). Teachers were identified as effective or ineffective using a three year aggregate of the Classroom Effectiveness Index (CEI).

For both high and low CEI classrooms, most had strong, positive ratings for physical classroom elements. Students were actively engaged and enthusiastic about the lesson. Reading First classrooms tended to operate on the lower spectrum of Bloom's Taxonomy, with some instances of higher order thinking. These classrooms tended to be one of whole group, guided practice instruction. One-fifth of the instructional time was taken up by transitions between activities. Graphophonemic Knowledge activities were prevalent in all grades with the highest incidence in second grade. Emphasis on comprehension was observed in all grades.

High CEI classrooms were more likely to be seen as effective by the observers. There were significant differences found in teacher's level of confidence, demonstrating clear

expectations of student success and presenting a lesson that engaged and encouraged active participation.

### Reading First Outcomes

Outcomes reflect the first year of school-level implementation. Overall, 57.7% of the K-3 students who took the *ITBS* were above the 40<sup>th</sup> percentile mark. Over half (68.2%) Kindergarten students were reading on grade-level or above. This percentage decreased in Grade 1 (65.8%) and Grade 2 (50.3%). For Grade 3, 51.4% of students were on grade-level using the *ITBS* 40<sup>th</sup> percentile mark as the criterion. Overall, 79.2% of K-3 students who took the *Logramos* scored on grade-level. Most (72.7%) Kindergarten students tested on the *Logramos* were reading on grade-level or above. Grade 1 (83.0%), Grade 2 (87.2%) and Grade 3 (81.9%) had over 80% of students above the 40<sup>th</sup> percentile.

Overall, the Reading First schools had an average Grade 3 *TAKS* Reading passing rate of 88.6%. This represented an increase of 2.3 percentage points from the previous year. The Grade 3 *TAKS* Reading mastery rate was 24.2%, an increase of 7.0 percentage points from the 2004-2005 rate. In an attempt to focus on success rather than simply passing, an intermediate rate was examined using a cutoff score of 6 above the passing rate on the English language Grade 3 *TAKS* Reading and the mastery score for the Spanish language Grade 3 *TAKS* Reading. Almost half (49.4%) of the Reading First Grade 3 students met the intermediate rate.

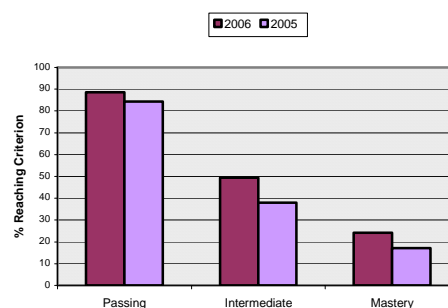


Figure 1. Reading First TAKS passing, intermediate and mastery rates for 2005 and 2006.