

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Reading First: 2003-04**

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Robert L. MendroDescription and Purpose

The Reading First Grant was funded through Title I: Part B, Subpart 1 of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act*, as amended by the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* CFDA# 84.357. This was a 6.9 million-dollar-a-year grant, which is renewable each year for five years. The State of Texas received an allocation of these federal funds to distribute through the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to eligible applicants. TEA distributed the monies through a competitive grant process with the criteria that the local education agency (LEA) 2002 *Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS)* Reading failing rate be above the State average (13.6%) and the LEA have at least one low-performing campus identified under Title I, Part A or at least 15% of its student population (or more than 6,500 students) counted for allocations under Title I, Part A.

The two chief purposes of this grant were to ensure each student was reading on or above grade level by the end of third grade, and to implement a comprehensive Scientifically Based Reading Research (SBRR) program with direct, explicit instruction that included phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary development, and text comprehension. The grant funding was targeted to provide professional development and technical assistance to the district for implementing effective instructional strategies, materials and programs. In addition to training district staff and teachers on the most effective ways of instruction, the grant also targeted the implementation of a valid and reliable systematic assessment program, which included screening, diagnostic, progress monitoring and outcome measures. These assessments were to be integrated into the instructional model in a way that informed teachers of their students' progress and indicated where intervention was necessary to ultimately reach the overall goal of reading fluently by the end of Grade 3.

The purpose and scope of the evaluation was to provide program managers with context, process, and outcome information for program improvement and strategic planning. Specifically, this report examines four major areas: context of the program, budget, implementation of the program, and student outcomes.

Context of Reading FirstProgram Structure

- Thirty schools were funded through the Reading First grant, which had a budget of \$6,898,909 in 2003-2004. Grades K-3 were the primary constituents of the grant, although all special education students and teachers in these schools were to receive service. The district was funded in Round 2 of the first cycle of funding. The grant was awarded in December, and staff began to be hired in March. Due to the late start, the decision was made to direct resources toward a full implementation in 2004-2005. Thus, implementation was limited in 2003-2004.
- The Reading First program contained several layers of sub-programs and methods focusing on improving student reading achievement. These included an intervention model for students, a focus on the essential components of reading, an integrated assessment model

which could truly inform instruction, in-depth professional development for teachers, and the creation of an pyramidal organization for Reading First schools in the district to provide incentive and measures of growth at the school level.

- A 3-Tiered student intervention model was instituted, where all students began with a Tier I designation. Tier I students receive 90 minutes of the district's core Scientifically Based Reading Research (SBRR) curriculum. After 3 months of Tier I intervention, students who are assessed as having reading difficulty are categorized as Tier II. These students receive 30-45 minutes of additional reading instruction during the school day for 10 to 12 weeks. This instruction is supplementary to the standard 90 minutes of reading instruction from Tier I and cannot replace it. Students are re-assessed at the end of the intervention to determine if they still need additional help. Students can receive two treatments of Tier II intervention. If they are still assessed as reading below grade level, they are placed into Tier III intervention, which adds an additional 30 to 45 minutes of specific reading instruction to be conducted after the school day. Tier III instruction does not supersede, but is in addition to, both Tier I and Tier II instruction. Thus, a Tier III student receives the regular 90 minutes of instruction in the classroom, 30-45 minutes of extra instruction during the school day and 30 to 45 minutes of instruction after school for a cumulative total of 150 to 180 minutes of reading instruction per day. Only Tier I intervention was implemented this year.
- A requirement of the Reading First program was that the curricula focus on the five essential components of reading as identified by the National Reading Council (2000):
  - Phonemic awareness – The understanding that words are composed of phonemes, which are the sounds that make up words.
  - Phonics – The understanding that there is a relationship between graphic representation of language and the verbal production of language.
  - Fluency -- The ability to recognize words quickly and accurately.
  - Comprehension -- The drawing of meaning from what has been read or heard.
  - Vocabulary -- The databank of words that the student can understand and command in various language tasks.
- The Reading First program incorporated four types of assessment aimed at improving teachers' understanding of students' current reading abilities. First, all students were to be assessed using a screening instrument at the beginning of the school year. Second, students were to undergo a diagnostic assessment early in the school year to help the teacher determine areas in which students are succeeding and areas in which they require intervention. The district used the *Texas Primary Reading Inventory (TPRI)* and the *El Inventario de Lectura en Espanol de Tejas (Tejas LEE)* both for screening and diagnostic purposes. Third, progress monitoring assessment was to be regularly given throughout the school year to track student progress or lack of progress. This assessment was to be timely, easy to administer and focused on particular reading skills in order to help inform instruction. The district used the *TPRI* and *Tejas LEE* for progress monitoring this year, and is adding the *DIBELS* next year. Fourth, outcome assessments were to be given to measure student achievement. These outcome assessments were to be reliable and provide an accurate picture of the student achievement level. The district used the *Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS)*, *Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS)* and *Logramos* as outcome assessments this year.
- One of the most important elements of the Reading First program was the creation of an in-depth professional development program for the K-3 teachers in the targeted schools.

Most of the instruction was to be delivered through a training-of-trainers model. This model creates an expert on each campus who can work with the teachers in situ. The major focus of the training for this year was in four key areas: 1) an introduction to the theory and practice of a Reading First program and the various roles that participants will play in implementation of the program, 2) an in-depth focus on the core reading programs already taught in the schools with an emphasis on a greater profundity of understanding of these curricula, 3) training on basic findings in reading research and the five essential components of reading, and 4) the administration and interpretation of assessment as an instructional tool. Other topics were covered as well, including training specific to particular program materials. Only the Campus Coaches (who were to serve as trainers next year) were trained this year.

- Schools were grouped in 1 of 3 categories based on a nautical theme. Twenty-three schools formed the Ensign group. Schools in this group had the lowest 2002 TAAS scores and a high percentage of economically disadvantaged students. Six schools made up the Navigator group. These sites tended to have slightly higher 2002 TAAS scores and some previous training on SBRR materials. One school made up the Admiral group, which had higher 2002 TAAS scores than the other schools, although still below the State average. These groupings were designed to create an organizational system in which successful implementation of the program was rewarded with a higher designation. Admiral and Navigator sites were expected to serve as models to schools in lower groupings. Schools are expected to increase their student achievement and work their way to the Navigator level. Ensign sites that displayed a 10% increase in TAKS passing rates could be promoted to Navigator status. To gain Admiral rank, schools must reach or exceed the State average on the TAKS.

#### Reading First Staff

- The administrative element of the Dallas Reading First program comprised of a director, who headed the program, a coordinator, three reading interventional specialists and one full-time staff consultant. In addition, in each Reading First school, a campus coach was hired to coordinate the implementation of the grant on that particular campus. The campus coach was to provide much of the teacher training at their school. In June, the original grant director left the program, and a new director was hired in July.

#### Implementation of Reading First

#### Characteristics of Staff and Students In Reading First Schools

- Campus coaches were predominately female (96.6%), White (41.4%) or Black (37.9%), and generally had six years or more working in the district (65.4%). Most (72.4%) had not attained a post-graduate degree.
- The 30 Dallas Reading First schools deployed 725 teachers in Grades K-3 and Special Education. The overwhelming majority of teachers were female (85.2%). Teachers were primarily Hispanic (35.2%), White (34.8%) and Black (26.6%). Across all grades, a majority (70.9%) of teachers had five years or fewer experience in the district. Only 15% of the teachers were certified through alternative certification. A fifth of the teachers had earned a graduate degree (Masters, 20.0%; Doctorate, 0.8%). The rest of the teachers (79.2%) had earned bachelor's degrees.
- By the end of the 2003-2004 school year, the 30 Reading First schools served 12,912 students in Grades K-3. Barely more than half (6,609; 51.2%) of the Reading First students were male (Table 1). Hispanics (9,545; 73.9%) made up the majority of the Reading First population. Blacks (2,847; 22.0%), Whites (251, 1.9%), Asians (238, 1.8%) and American Indians (31, 0.2%) were also represented in the Reading First population. Most of the students were economically disadvantaged (11,600; 89.8%). Just over 5% (5.3%; 681) of the students were considered special education students. Over half (7,139; 55.3%) were categorized as limited English proficient.

Table 1

## Demographic Characteristics of Grades K-3 Students Who Were Served in Tier I

Characteristic	Grade K		Grade 1		Grade 2		Grade 3		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Gender										
Female	1,640	49.6	1,637	49.0	1,560	49.2	1,466	47.4	6,303	48.8
Male	1,664	50.4	1,703	51.0	1,612	50.8	1,630	52.6	6,609	51.2
Ethnicity										
Black	689	20.9	717	21.5	723	22.8	718	23.2	2,847	22.0
Asian	67	2.0	51	1.5	53	1.7	67	2.2	238	1.8
Hispanic	2,477	75.0	2,493	74.6	2,330	73.5	2,245	72.5	9,545	73.9
American Indian	8	.2	8	.2	7	.2	8	.3	31	.2
White	63	1.9	71	2.1	59	1.9	58	1.9	251	1.9
Economically Disadvantaged										
Advantaged	352	10.7	334	10.0	335	10.6	291	9.4	1,312	10.2
Disadvantaged	2,952	89.3	3,006	90.0	2,837	89.4	2,805	90.6	11,600	89.8
Special Education										
Non-Special Ed.	3,211	97.2	3,181	95.2	2,996	94.5	2,843	91.8	12,231	94.7
Special Ed.	93	2.8	159	4.8	176	5.5	253	8.2	681	5.3
Limited English										
Non-LEP	1,528	46.2	1,359	40.7	1,269	40.0	1,617	52.2	5,773	44.7
LEP	1,776	53.8	1,981	59.3	1,903	60.0	1,479	47.8	7,139	55.3
Total	3,304	100.0	3,340	100.0	3,172	100.0	3,096	100.0	12,912	100.0

- A total of 2,404 students from Dallas Reading First schools attended summer school. Kindergarten (433, 18%) students were less likely to attend summer school than students in Grades 1-3 (Grade 1 – 619, 25.7%; Grade 2 – 638, 26.5%; Grade 3 – 714, 29.7%).

Results of Campus Coach Surveys

- Campus coaches were surveyed concerning their experiences in the Reading First trainings. For the most part, campus coaches thought the Reading First trainings were sufficient for passing on information in a manner that could be used to teach others. However, further trainings, especially in using a Personal Desk Assistant, *DIBELS* and general computer training, were clearly desired. In general, campus coaches felt they will be supported in executing the program, with some reservations about the extent to which the teachers will help in the implementation. Campus coaches were clearly comfortable working with all Reading First staff. Overall, the campus coaches appeared to be very enthusiastic about the program with some minor concerns about the implementation of the program in their schools. They also voiced some concern about consistency of information and consistency of scheduling for training. In addition, more processing time for the trainings was requested.

Examination of Previous TAKS Results

- As a part of the process of developing new approaches to reading intervention, a longitudinal study was conducted examining students who passed the 2003 Grade 3 *TAKS* and their subsequent performance on the 2004 Grade 4 *TAKS*. Only district students who had a *TAKS* Reading score for Grade 3 in 2003 and a *TAKS* Reading score for Grade 4 in 2004 were included in the study. Third grade students whose score was just enough to pass – they answered the number of correct items needed to pass or one or two above of the correct number – were examined to see how they fared the following year on the fourth grade *TAKS*. District-wide, of the students that correctly answered 20, 21 or 22 questions on the English Grade 3 *TAKS* (20 was passing), 52.8% did not pass the English Grade 4 *TAKS* the following year (Figure 1). For students taking the Spanish Grade 3 *TAKS*, 71.6% failed the English

Grade 4 TAKS. These data demonstrate that students that barely met the passing mark on the Grade 3 TAKS are still at risk of reading failure.

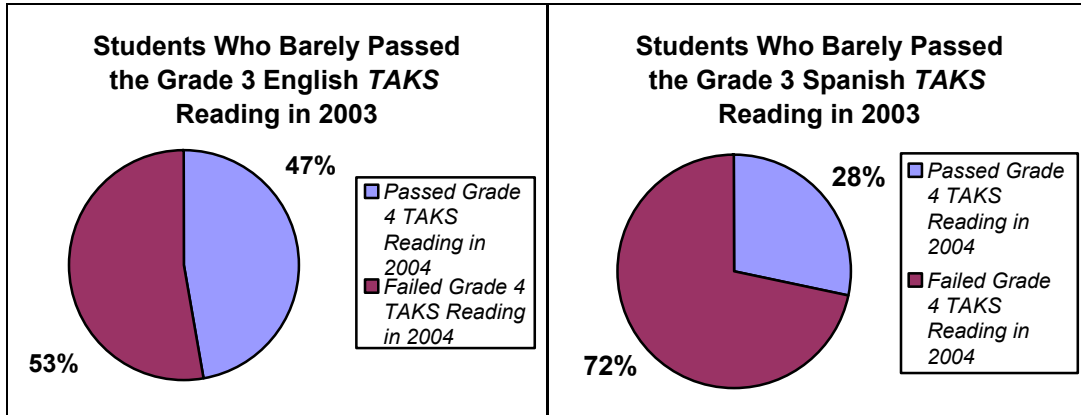


Figure 1. Grade 4 English TAKS Reading passing rates for students who barely passed (scored the number of correct answers needed to pass or one or two above the passing mark) the Grade 3 English and Spanish TAKS Reading.

- An intermediate TAKS Reading passing rate was developed which predicts near a 75% passing rate on the Grade 4 TAKS Reading. For students taking the English Grade 3 TAKS Reading, a score of 7 above the passing mark predicts a 75% passing rate on the next year's test. For Spanish Grade 3 TAKS Reading, the mastery score (15 above the passing mark) predicts a 74% passing rate on the Grade 4 TAKS Reading.

#### Baseline Outcomes

- Due to the decision to withhold implementation of the campus based training until the 2004-2005 school year, these following outcome results are not a reflection of the success of the program, but instead a baseline by which future progress can be measured. Therefore, the outcome results are descriptive in nature and do not examine the program *per se*, but the state of affairs prior to the implementation of the program.
- Kindergarten students had the highest percentage (83.8%) of students that were on grade-level when tested with the *TPRI* or *Tejas LEE* (Table 2). Only 68.2% of Grade 1 students tested on grade-level. For Grade 2, this percentage increased to 78.7%. Overall, 69.6% of Grade 3 students were considered on grade-level using the *TPRI* as a measure.

Table 2

Number of Reading First Student On Grade-Level Using the *TPRI* or *Tejas LEE* by Grade

Grade	PA		GK		LC <sup>a</sup> /RC		Phonics <sup>a</sup> /Fluency		District On Grade-Level		Not Tested	Total
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
K <sup>a</sup>	2,943	89.1	2,914	88.2	2,017	61.0	2,768	83.8	2,769	83.8	94	3,304
1	2,743	82.1	2,783	83.3	2,279	68.2	1,126	33.7	2,279	68.2	106	3,340
2			2,155	67.9	2,496	78.7	1,498	47.2	2,496	78.7	80	3,172
3			2,119	72.2	2,043	69.6	1,838	62.6	2,043	69.6	160	3,096

Note. <sup>a</sup>Kindergarten students were measured on Listening Comprehension and Phonics. Percentages based on number tested. PA = Phonemic Awareness. GK = Graphophonemic Knowledge. RC = Reading Comprehension. LC = Listening Comprehension.

- The number of students reading on grade-level can be examined using the *ITBS* percentile scores (Table 3). Overall, 59.0% of the K-3 students who took the *ITBS* in the Reading First schools were above the 40<sup>th</sup> percentile mark. Most (91.1%) Kindergarten students were reading on grade-level or above. This percentage decreased in Grade 1 (64.6%) and Grade 2 (49.3%). For Grade 3, only 43.7% of students were on grade-level using the *ITBS* 40<sup>th</sup> percentile mark as the criterion.
- Overall, 77.8% of K-3 students who took the *Logramos* scored on grade level. Similar to *ITBS*, most (83.9%) Kindergarten students tested on the *Logramos* were reading on grade-level or above. Grade 1 (83.8%) and Grade 2 (88.0%) had over 80% of students above the 40<sup>th</sup> percentile. For Grade 3, 79.2% of students were on grade-level using the *Logramos* 40<sup>th</sup> percentile mark as the criterion. In Grade 3, only 24 students were assessed with the Spanish language test.

Table 3

Number of Students Above and Below the 40<sup>th</sup> Percentile on the *ITBS* and *Logramos* by Grade

Grade	<i>ITBS</i>				<i>Logramos</i>			
	40 <sup>th</sup> Percentile or Greater		Below 40 <sup>th</sup> Percentile		40 <sup>th</sup> Percentile or Greater		Below 40 <sup>th</sup> Percentile	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
K	1,602	91.1	156	8.9	845	75.1	280	24.9
1	1,218	64.6	668	35.4	725	77.8	207	22.2
2	1,176	49.3	1,208	50.7	343	85.8	57	14.3
3	1,244	43.7	1,605	56.3	16	66.7	8	33.3
Total	5,240	59.0	3,637	41.0	1,929	77.8	552	22.2

- The Reading First schools had an average passing rate of 90.7% on the *TAKS*. The passing rates spread from 77.4% to a perfect 100%. The range was 22.6 percentage points. Of the 30 schools, 18 had passing rates of 90% or above, 11 had passing rates between 80% to 90% and only one school was below 80%.
- The *TAKS* scores were also examined using the proposed intermediate rate predicting a 75% passing rate on Grade 4 Reading. The average intermediate rate for the Reading First schools was 52.5% on the *TAKS*. The intermediate rates ranged from 33.0% to 81.1%. The range of the intermediate rates was 48.1 percentage points. This large range demonstrates that schools varied widely on how successful they hit this intermediate goal. Two schools had mastery rates above 70%, 7 schools had rates between 60% and 70%, 8 had rates between 50% and 60%, 7 had rates between 40% and 50% and 6 had rates below 40%.