

FOREWARD
to
October 2000 Revision

This resource document contains a modest number of revisions to the June 1999 document.

The Utah Testing and Accountability Law is now House Bill 177. This replaces and expands on H.B. 33. H.B. 177 became effective July 2000.

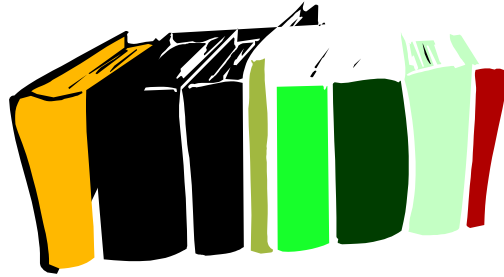
*The research resource document by Dr. Reid Lyon is still the document that best links the research with educators and parents. Recent national reading research reports all confirm the practitioner priorities set by Dr. Lyon. For those interested in the most recent national research reports, see the *Beginning Reading Resources* at www.usu.edu/teachall.*

As I spent time in school districts from New York to Seattle, there was little doubt that the clients of public schools are clear and direct: We must look to objective data on the change in students to systematically and progressively refine instructional practices.

The days of fads and bandwagons are over. My appreciation for the professionalism of instructional leaders in our school districts has grown. There was no interest in avoiding accountability. Instead, the priority questions revolved around how to meet the needs of all learners.

To all those teachers, principals, and superintendents who gave of their valuable time to converse on the issues addressed in this document, Thanks, I have learned and used your counsel and questions to, hopefully, increase the practical value of this document.

Alan Hofmeister



Utah Accountability and Testing:

Leadership Checklist

and

Resources

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Overview: Accountability and Testing Systems

State accountability mandates
require that instructional

programs be systematically enhanced

through procedures that use testing

information. Test information is used at

the student level, the teacher level, the

building level, the district level, and the

state level, to systematically and

progressively improve the quality of

instruction.

Sources of Achievement Information

All accountability systems use some measures of student change. Achievement testing is an important component of such measurement of student change. District and state testing programs include at least three types of testing systems.

1. One type is the nationally standardized test that provides normative information on how individuals and groups compare with other districts, states, and the nation.

2. State-specific standardized achievement tests are a second type of test. These are sometimes called criterion-referenced tests in that the tests are designed to assess competence against state criteria, namely, the goals and objectives of the state core curriculum.

3. The third type of test is the curriculum-embedded testing system built into the instructional programs adopted by the state, district, or school. These curriculum-embedded tests are most closely linked to the specific instructional programs adopted in the local school or district.

Immediate Instructional Adjustments

Many states have adopted plans and policies that require immediate instructional adjustments based on measures of individual student progress. Because the national standardized tests and the state criterion-referenced tests are typically administered once a year, the curriculum-embedded testing system is the only testing system to support the teacher in making immediate instructional adjustments. These tests are a critical component of any accountability system based on student needs.

Frame of Reference

The following frame of reference was used in preparing this leadership checklist:

- a. While adopting a reading program validated by the research is important, the data documenting the changes in student achievement will always be important, regardless of the program selection decision.**

 - b. Adopting the best available reading program will have value only if the program is implemented appropriately. Many districts have massive variability in the quality of program implementations from student to student, from teacher to teacher, and from building to building.**

 - c. An accountability system that links the curriculum-embedded student monitoring information in the selected reading program with the state-required testing data provides the central decision-making information to assess and progressively improve the effectiveness of program implementation.**
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Area 1. Alignment Between the Reading Program and Accountability Measures

Question: What is the relationship between individual student progress, as measured by the curriculum-embedded testing in the school's reading program, and the standardized tests used for statewide accountability testing?

Instructional Leadership Standard. A reasonable statistical correlation would be .8 or more for a diverse group of 30-50 students. Such a relationship would indicate a practical instructional alignment between the reading program and statewide measures of accountability.

***Area 2. Alignment Between
the Reading Program and the Research on
Effective Instructional Programs in Reading***

Question: What is the relationship between the selected reading programs in the building, and research on the cost effectiveness of specific replicable reading programs?

Instructional Leadership Standard. The selected programs should be validated by major credible comparative studies and/or by strong performance on state measures of accountability. One requirement for strong performance is the elimination of reading failure for virtually all students entering third grade. In addition to indicators that provide objective evidence on the prevention and treatment of reading failure, the general statistical information should support claims of instructional effectiveness for all students. If the trends over the past three years were positive, the 70th percentile for each of the K-3 classrooms would be a reasonable expectation for a school with a free lunch count of 50% and average levels of student transfers.

Area 3. Alignment Between the Reading Program Implementation and Personnel Selection and Retention Practices

The following standards in Areas 3 and 4 require that the standards in Areas 1 and 2 have been met:

Question: To what extent are professional staff selected and retained based on demonstrated competency in, and commitment to, the present or proposed reading programs?

Instructional Leadership Standard. The advertising and selection procedures for new positions should identify the competencies needed for implementation of the reading program. Staff who cannot support their peers in the competent and enthusiastic implementation of the reading program selected for the building should be provided transfers with dignity.

Area 4. Alignment Between the Reading Program, Staff Support, and Evaluation Practices

Question: To what extent do formal and informal staff-support practices ensure that the reading program is systematically and progressively improved based on the individual changes in students reading achievement?

Instructional Leadership Standard.

The information from criterion-referenced and normative measures of individual reading performance shall provide the focus of teacher support and teacher evaluation practices.

Resources

These resources were developed based on questions raised by instructional leaders during discussions of the leadership checklist questions.

- 1. What is an Instructional Program?**
- 2. Instructional Programs That Work: Generational Progress**
- 3. Criteria for Judging Instructional Program Effectiveness**
- 4. Utah House Bills 33 and 177**
- 5. State Laws on Accountability and Professional Practices in Education.**
- 6. Achievement and Affective Domains.**
- 7. Feel Good Programs**
- 8. All Means All! : Observations by Barbara Foorman, et al.**
- 9. Teachers Unite!: Observations by Barbara Foorman, et al.**

What is an Instructional Program?

The term, instructional program, refers to a replicable instructional activity that is designed and implemented to achieve an instructional goal, namely, some clearly defined change or changes in a selected group of learners. The primary criteria for determining the success or the effectiveness of an instructional program are these measures of changes in the selected group of learners. These changes can be affective, academic, social, or physical.

Every instructional program combines a curriculum component (what we teach), and a teaching procedure (how we teach). An instructional program can be as small as a social skills lesson to teach a child to say thank you at appropriate times and in appropriate contexts. An instructional program can be as large as a two-semester algebra sequence, or the complete K-6 elementary reading program.

Whether small or large, an instructional program will have a curriculum component that defines the goal or goals we have for the learners and a set of teaching procedures (the pedagogy) which we plan to use to achieve the curriculum goal.

In each instructional program, the essence of instructional accountability, e.g., program effectiveness, resides in the relationship between the curriculum component and the teaching component. If curriculum goals have been carefully and appropriately set for each learner, then teaching procedures must be progressively adjusted and revised based on the extent to which the curriculum goals have been achieved. The determination of goal achievement is based on measures of changes in the learner.

If, after exhausting the possible teaching procedure alternatives, we fail to achieve the curriculum goals, then we must revisit the assumptions that led us to believe the curriculum goal as appropriate for the learner. In many cases, we will find that the reason a curriculum goal was inappropriate was our failure to ensure that the learner had the prerequisite knowledge, skills, or attitudes needed for success in the selected instructional program.

Instructional Programs That Work: Generational Progress

Slavin, (1989) noted the tendency for education practices to swing from one fad to another. He stated:

If education is ever to make serious generational progress, educators must somehow stop the pendulum by focusing their efforts to improve education on programs that are effective, rather than on those are merely new or sound good (p. 758).

Central to Slavin's concern is the notion of generational progress. To have generational progress we must have a system in place that ensures that the next generation of instructional efforts represents an improvement over the previous generation. Generational progress can occur in a number of instructional contexts. A school district can examine the test data from year to year, and use that information to make adjustments that ensure that the most effective practices are retained and that the less effective practices are replaced with more effective practices.

Generational progress is difficult to achieve if we are not clear about what we are teaching and why we are teaching it. Additionally, we must be clear about the instructionally relevant characteristics of our learners, particularly the prerequisites needed for success in each instructional program. If our instructional programs are not clear and replicable, then generational progress is not possible, except by accident. We need to know how and why one generation of instructional effort differs from the previous generation.

Generational progress is difficult if our reference points are not learner-centered. The most important information for making generational adjustments is the data we have on learner changes.

Decisions on effectiveness are not one-shot decisions. First, we use the best information available to select an instructional program. Second, we monitor the implementation of a program to verify that program goals, particularly the projected impact on all learners, are indeed being achieved.

Criteria for Judging Instructional Program Effectiveness

Question 1. Is the Instructional Program Clearly Defined?

- " Are there clear, practical descriptions of what instructors and learners will do?
- " Are there tools that allow instructors to assess how well their activities are consistent with the requirements of the instructional program? Teacher checklists would be an example.
- " Are there tools that allow teachers, learners, and parents to determine the impact of the instructional program on each student? Curriculum-embedded assessment instructions that would provide weekly measures of progress would be ideal.

Question 2. What Evidence Exists That the Program is Effective?

- " Does the evidence involve measures of student impact, or is it limited to expert opinion?
- " Are student gains in learning modest in regard to costs in time, training, and materials?
- " Does the evidence include comparisons with other practical, but less costly, alternatives?
- " Is the evidence tied to an individual, or has the program worked well with different teachers?

Question 3. Is An Accountability Process Built Into the Program?

- " Will learner and teacher measures provide useful program implementation information?
- " Are resources available for teachers who wish to refine the implementation of the program?
- " Will learner monitoring procedures ensure timely instructional adjustments to prevent learner failures?
- " Will monitoring tools allow for determinations of alignment with district curricula and associated measures of student outcomes?

Question 4. Is the Program Sustainable?

- " Will the needed staff development be available to ensure uniformly high teacher success?
- " Will teachers receive consistent long-term administrative support and recognition?
- " Are resources committed for needed release time for planning and staff development?
- " Will teachers be pressured with competing alternatives that dilute program resources?

Question 5. Is the Program Equitable?

- " Will the program impede the progress of any group of students?
 - " Has evidence on program effectiveness been analyzed for adverse effects on different learners groups?
 - " Equity does not mean the same instructional presentation for all. Does the program have the flexibility to successfully address needs of diverse learners?
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House Bills 33 and 177:

Enhancing Academic Achievement

in Public Schools

Introduction

Utah House Bill 33, Enhancing Academic Achievement in Public Schools, became effective July 1, 1999. Most of the requirements in H.B. 33 were then included and expanded upon in Utah House Bill 177, which became effective July 1, 2000. In the following overview, the specific references and quotes refer to the current state law, Utah House Bill 177 (H.B. 177), Assessing, Reporting, and Evaluating Student Performance.

Implications for Instructional Leadership in Utah Schools

1. H.B. 177 is not just a revision of previous state testing requirements; this is an accountability bill that requires LEAs to use the testing to assure educational opportunities for all students and to improve existing programs.

2. In addition to testing and accountability practices, the Bill mandates several specific curriculum skills. The LEA requirements include specific instructional practices in the K-6 reading program, e.g., . . . early and explicit teaching of phonetic decoding skills. The law has a strong accountability and basic skills emphasis. For example: It is the intent of the Legislature . . . to determine the effectiveness of school districts and schools in assisting students to master the fundamental educational skills toward which instruction is directed.

3. As a part of LEA instructional improvement requirements, districts must also use testing data to drive a remedial reading program in *Grades 1 through 6*; e.g., If . . . the school finds the student seriously deficient in one or more of these basic skills, it shall provide remedial assistance to help the student overcome the deficiency and attain reading proficiency appropriate to the student's age and ability. Identification of at risk students and successful remediation is a building level requirement for *Grades 1 through 12* in all basic skill areas.

4. H.B. 177 adds Grade 3 to present statewide Stanford testing for Grades 5, 8, and 11. This addition appears directed at the State policy of Every child a reader by the end of Grade 3. Building level planning will use this additional test data to evaluate and improve the total beginning reading program. The third grade Stanford test data on reading achievement should be the most watched information by school boards, parents, and the community in general. Building instructional leaders should be aware that the Stanford Grade 3 testing is a measure of the K-2 program, and, for practical purposes, restates the policy as: Every child a reader by the end of Grade 2.

5. The remediation intervention in H.B. 177 requires that parents be supported as instructional partners. Many present general parent involvement recommendations to, Read to your child, or similar literacy suggestions, will be insufficient under H.B. 177. The Bill states:

The remediation program shall include a plan to bring the student up to the appropriate reading level and an opportunity for parents to receive materials and guidance so that they will be able to assist in the remediation process and support their students progress toward literacy.

6. There are a number of other requirements in H.B. 177, including a tenth-grade basic skills test linked to high school diplomas. This requirement provides for a remediation program that addresses these tenth-grade basic skills.

7. Another requirement that will impact the testing program is the reference to federal regulations that call for the inclusion of most special students in all district and state testing programs. These federal regulations require special education students to be included in all state and district assessments.

8. H.B. 177 states: Each board shall provide for district evaluation of test results, and use the evaluations in setting goals and establishing programs for the district and schools within the district. The Bill also states: The Legislature recognizes the need for the State Board of Education to develop and implement standards and assessment processes to ensure that student progress is measured and that school boards and school personnel are accountable.

9. The reporting of norm-referenced and criterion-referenced data to the public is required. Parents must have individual student data, school boards must have the data at the class, grade, school, and district levels. The general public must have the information in a timely manner at grade, school, and district levels. Where possible, the achievement data must be linked to systematic, long-term efforts to improve instruction. Trend data, at least up to four years, will be required in reports.

Conclusion

While there is specific reference to remediation based on test results, the overall effect of House Bill 177 should be an increased emphasis on effective, preventive, instructional practices, particularly in beginning reading. There is extensive research to support the availability of preventive instructional practices that are neither exotic nor expensive. Clearly, reducing the need for remediation is the most humane and cost-effective approach. Such effective preventive instruction is very consistent with the spirit of professional accountability that pervades H.B. 177.

State Laws on Accountability and Professional Practice in Education

1. Policy and practice. In public education, policy is set by elected representatives of the public namely, the legislature, state, and district school-board members. Professional educators have a responsibility to implement policy. If educators disagree with policy requirements, particularly one expressed as a state law or regulation, they have the same resource as any other citizen no more, and no less. They may seek to change the law through elected representatives. They cannot chose to ignore or circumvent their contractual obligations to the rule of law.

2. Accountability and professionalism. When state laws on accountability in education are discussed, the issue of deprofessionalism of teachers is sometimes raised. The use and dissemination of prescribed student progress measures is central to most accountability policies. This focus on these prescribed measures of student progress may be perceived as a threat to the autonomy of teachers. Some educators would suggest that it is the teacher in the classroom who is best placed to determine which measures of student change are most appropriate.

In most professions, there is considerable overlap between accountability requirements and the requirements of professional practices. Professional codes rarely place the central emphasis on the autonomy of the professional. Rather, the central emphasis is on the needs of clients. The American Bar Association (February 1998) identified six critical attributes of professionalism. Two of these attributes were competent service to clients and obligations to the rule of law.

Achievement and Affective Domains

One commonly expressed concern suggests that accountability systems that emphasize tests of student achievement in academic domains de-emphasize other important goals, particularly affective domains, such as the student's self-concept. This concern suggests that academic and affective domains are discrete rather than overlapping domains.

The question of the causal relationship between attitude to an academic domain and competence in the domain is a longstanding *chicken and egg* discussion. Does the development of a positive attitude lead to competence in the domain, or does the development of competence lead to a positive attitude to the domain? The predominance of evidence suggests the latter. Providing consistent demonstrations of success in a domain, and the recognition of this success by persons the student values, increases positive attitudes to the domain.

Feel Good Programs

Investments in what have become known as *feel good* programs that focus on attitudes to self and school, with modest attention to academic competence, have been disappointing. The concerns with these programs include the long-term lack of improvement in the affective variables and the use of valuable, limited instructional time with students who are clearly at risk of failing.

Efforts to assess self-concept as a general variable have also proved disappointing. Many researchers suggest we have specific self-concepts rather than a general self-concept, e.g., a reading self-concept, a math self-concept, and physical expertise self-concept. These more specific self-concepts may have modest relationships with each other.

Observations from the research on this issue include:

Structured instructional programs that emphasize knowledge and skill acquisition produce greater gains in achievement and self-worth measures than do programs designed to focus efforts upon enhancing self-worth. The basic assumption that enhancing pupils' self-worth will lead to increased academic achievement is not supported. Rather, the research to date backs the position that improved self-worth is a product of increased competence in successfully completing academic tasks . . . The message from this research is reasonably clear. Teachers can have a powerful, positive influence upon pupils' feelings of self-worth about their accomplishments by helping them successfully complete school-related tasks. So apparently achievement does precede adjustment. And who can better help pupils achieve than teachers (Whelan, Mendez de Saman, & Fortmeyer, p. 309).

All Means All!

The biggest challenge of all may be to confront the bias that these are not all our children. How many times have we heard the comment, But these approaches work only for learning disabled (LD), at-risk (Title 1) or English-as-a Second-Language (ESL) students. Conceptually sound and empirically-based instructional approaches work for all children. However, some children will need more opportunity to practice what they are taught. All pre-readers will benefit from attending to and manipulating sound units in oral language and then writing down graphic representations for these sound units, through phonetic spellings. All beginning readers will benefit from decodable and believable text, along with other books that may be narratives or expository text, poetry, or fairy tales. All beginning writers will benefit from information about the orthographic principles of English **spelling** (Foorman, et al., 1998).

Teachers Unite!

Teachers of regular education and teachers of special education, Title 1, and ESL need to unite forces and work towards preventing reading difficulties. Reading skills fall on a continuum, and where categorical slices are made in the distribution for the purpose of identification for special services, is arbitrary. Reading problems after age 8 are [resistant] to treatment. The time to assist children is before they accumulate sufficient failure to qualify for special services or retention. This is every teacher s job indeed, every educator s job (Foorman,

et al., 1998).

Research-based
Leadership Strategies



for the Prevention of Reading Failure

We will not accept failure as final for any student.

Utah State Public Education Plan
1992

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Reading Independence for All Learners: Strategies for the Elementary School

Why read this document?

1. The document provides eight specific strategies to effectively ensure that a policy of Every child an independent reader by the end of Grade 3" can be implemented and achieved;
2. The document identifies practices that prevent reading failures.
3. The document suggest staff priorities.
4. The document suggests grade level priorities and milestones.



Reading Independence for All Learners: Strategies for the Elementary School

Strategy 1: Start with Proven, Cost-Effective Programs

Strategy 2: Select Instructionally Relevant Assessment Practices

Strategy 3: Design the Beginning Reading Program As an Early, Effective, Two-year Experience

Strategy 4: Grade 2 Should Provide the Safety Net and the Application Experiences

Strategy 5: Grade 3 Should Ensure That Reading Opens the Door to the Total Core Curriculum

Strategy 6: Regular Education, Resource Professionals, and Paraeducators Should Form a Single Instructional Team With a Single Curriculum

Strategy 7: Use Achievement Information to Systematically and Progressively Improve Instructional Quality

Strategy 8: Instructionally Link the School with All Community Resources



Reading Independence for All Learners: Strategies for the Elementary School

Policy and Research Frame of Reference

The eight strategies that follow are designed to directly and effectively ensure that a policy of *Every child an independent reader by the end of Grade 3* can be implemented and achieved with existing personnel and fiscal resources. To implement this policy, we must be mindful of the following lessons from the research.

First, the instructional system must recognize the reality. Where possible, no child should enter third grade as a reading failure. The cost to the child and the system are far too high. The research concludes that 80% of the students failing reading in third grade never catch up to their peers. The beginning reading program must be viewed as a two-year, K-1 program, and the second grade must serve as the final critical safety net for those at risk of reading failure. Viewing and designing the beginning reading program as a K-1 program provides practical recognition of the rather somber news from the research on students failing in reading in Grade 3.

Second, designing a beginning reading program as a two-year, K-1 experience has extensive research support. The largest most credible longitudinal study on the issue concluded:

The major finding of this study, briefly stated, is: Students who learned to read in kindergarten were found to be superior in reading skills and all other educational indicators measured as seniors in high school. Further, this finding held up across districts and schools as well as ethnic, gender, and social class groups. Also, there was absolutely no evidence of any negative effects from learning to read in kindergarten. Collectively, the results provide full support for the policy of teaching reading in kindergarten. Thus, any district with a policy that does not support kindergarten reading should be ready to present new and compelling reasons to explain why not beyond the old and now refuted myth that it has long-term, adverse effects on students' reading skills, and attitudes, and behaviors (Hanson & Farrell, 1995, p. 929).

Third, while the research on the comparative effectiveness of many beginning reading programs available to schools provides little evidence to support their cost effectiveness, particularly with learners at risk of failure, there is substantial research evidence to suggest that the following eight strategies can be applied with available resources and with confidence, Robert Slavin (p. 5, 1994), in reviewing the research, stated:

The conclusion we draw from this evidence is unequivocal: *Virtually every child can be successful in the early grades.* The success of every child can be ensured by using programs that are now available and that can (with care) be replicated on a wide scale.

Slavin further notes in his discussion of cost-effective, available alternatives, that:

The programs and practices that, either alone or in combination, have the strongest evidence of effectiveness for preventing school failure for virtually all students, are currently available and replicable. None of them is exotic or radical. At the policy level, one can choose to eradicate school failure or one can choose to allow it to continue. It is irresponsible to pretend that there are no choices (p. 207).

Strategy 1: Start with Proven, Cost-Effective Programs

Select only instructional programs that are valid, cost effective, and sustainable with available resources. Programs should not be selected if there is a lack of information on the impact of the program on all members of the learner community, or if there is a lack of information on the costs of acquisition, implementation, and maintenance (see guidelines: *Selecting and Implementing Effective Instructional Programs For All Students*).

Strategy 2: Select Instructionally Relevant Assessment Practices

Select instructional programs that have instructionally relevant assessment procedures that provide (a) the close monitoring of individual student progress to support teachers in making immediate needed instructional adjustments, (b) the support of professional cooperation within and across different instructional components, e.g., regular classroom grades, Title 1, and Special Education, and (c) the tools for community communication that ensure that families are involved as effective instructional partners, and that other community services, e.g., libraries and media sources, can be effectively involved.

Strategy 3: Design the Beginning Reading Program As an Early, Effective, Two-Year Experience

Plan the beginning reading instructional program as a two-year, K-1 program. The goals of this continuous two-year program should ensure that students acquire the needed phonic, word attack, and comprehension skills that support confident, independent, meaningful applications, particularly in recreational reading experiences. The K-1 program should be designed as highly preventative. All students in the program should be placed within an instructional continuum that delivers consistent demonstrations of success for learners at all levels within the instructional continuum. The availability of decodable readers, matched with the student's skills, will be important vehicles for ensuring consistent success in reading.

Strategy 4: Grade 2 Should Provide the Safety Net and the Application Experiences

The Grade 2 instructional program should provide an effective safety net for all second grade students at risk of reading failure. The second grade will have responsibility for ensuring that the skills, strategies, and attitudes acquired in the K-1 program are applied with confidence, fluency, and independence to a wide range of interesting reading applications. Independent, enjoyable, recreational reading should be an important outcome of the second grade experiences for all learners.

Strategy 5: Grade 3 Should Ensure That Reading Opens the Door to the Total Core Curriculum

The Grade 3 instructional program should continue the application goals of the second grade. A high priority for Grade 3 will be the application of reading to the academic content areas. These applications skills should address all aspects of the reading task, including meaningful participation in textbooks, resource, research materials, and test taking competencies associated with successful participation in the core curriculum. The Grade 3 instructional services should have the resources to address at-risk students in a highly targeted, intense, effective intervention that ensures that all students are competent, independent, and well motivated readers by the end of Grade 3. Each Grade 3 student failing in reading will require a massive, focused investment by the student, the instructional system, and the family.

Strategy 6: Regular Education, Resource Professionals, and Paraeducators Should Form A Single Instructional Team With a Single Curriculum

Building-level resource staff, such as Title 1, Special Education, Communicative Disorders, and Instructional Media personnel, should support regular classroom teachers in the effective implementation of the general curriculum in reading with all learners. The total building-level instructional team should implement a program that emphasizes the prevention of reading failure and ensures the prompt identification and treatment of any student considered at risk of reading failure. Resource programs associated with Grades 4 and 5 should be aligned, where possible, with the K-3 instructional program.

Resource personnel have a responsibility to support the regular classroom teacher in effectively implementing the general curriculum with all students. The regular education community has a responsibility to ensure that the instructional programs delivering the core curriculum have been validated for the range of learner diversity present in the regular classroom.

Strategy 7: Use Achievement Information to Systematically and Progressively Improve Instructional Quality

Every aspect of the building level assessment system should ensure that information on the achievements of every individual serves to systematically and progressively improve the quality of building-level instruction over time. Additionally, clear, valid, individual assessments should be conducted to ensure that parents have timely, quality information on the progress of their child within the district s general curriculum in reading. Any changes to the instructional program in reading should be heavily dependent on the best research and data available.

Strategy 8: Instructionally Link the School With All Community Resources

The instructional program selected within a school should allow for a wide range of parent involvement. Parents should be viewed as important, contributing members of the instructional team. Parents should be recognized as the first teachers of each child. Schools

should recognize and support meaningful, informed participation in the most important instructional experiences, particularly beginning reading. The experiences provided to parents should reflect the fact that important, meaningful inclusion in the child's early school experiences largely determine the extent to which parents will cooperate with and support the child and the schools for the remainder of the child's education. The instructional program in schools needs to provide functional links to all community resources, such as libraries and media sources. These cooperative ventures should ensure that non-school time, including evenings and summer, are enjoyable and instructionally meaningful experiences that continue and enhance the literacy growth initiated in schools.

*Included in:
The Utah State Improvement Plan for Special Education
February 1, 1999*

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Research Observations:
Leadership Guidelines

Research Observation 1: Prevalence and Severity

Unfortunately, it appears that for about 60% of our nation's children, learning to read is a much more formidable challenge, and for at least 20% to 30% of these youngsters, reading is one of the most difficult tasks that they will have to master throughout their schooling.

By the end of the first grade, we begin to notice substantial decreases in the children's self-esteem, self-concept, and motivation to learn to read if they have not been able to master reading skills and keep up with their age-mates.

Instructional Leadership Checklist

- a. How should the K-1 staff be selected?**
- b. Will the hiring criteria address competence in the diagnosis and timely, effective intervention of at-risk students?**
- c. What student behaviors should the diagnostic efforts focus on: general development or specific reading tasks?**
- d. If the problems are this pervasive, will pull out programs have preventive value by improving the effectiveness of the regular classroom?**

Research Observation 2: Causal Factors

Moreover, 49% of the fourth grade children in California who were reading below basic levels were from homes where the parents had graduated from college. . . . These data underscore the fact that reading failure is a serious National problem and can not simply be attributed to poverty, immigration, or the learning of English as a second language.

Instructional Leadership Checklist

- a. Could state and district leadership decisions be linked to changes in the effectiveness of reading instruction?**
- b. Could changes in the teacher education program be linked to changes in the effectiveness of reading instruction.**
- c. Could an emphasis on other curricula (e.g., math and science) reduce the time and instructional resources available for reading?**

Research Observation 3: Decodable Text

Although the initial stages of reading for many students require the learning of phoneme awareness and phonics principles, substantial practice of those skills, and continual application of those skills in text, fluency, and automaticity in decoding and word recognition must be acquired as well.

Instructional Leadership Checklist

- a. How is access to high-success applications, such as decodable text, ensured?**
- b. Research has noted that extensive access to decodable text is a more powerful variable than the teacher's preferred reading method. What implications does this finding have for staff development on general methods versus implementing decodable text activities appropriately?**
- c. If there is considerable variability in the quality of instructors, will access to decodable text increase in importance?**

Research Observation 4: Teaching Specific Comprehension Skills

The development of reading comprehension skills, like the development of phoneme awareness, phonics, and fluency, needs to be fostered by highly trained teachers. Recent research shows that the teacher must arrange for opportunities for students to discuss the highlights of what they have read and difficulties they have had when reading.

Instructional Leadership Checklist

- a. Should the content of the text, the present interests of students, or the specific needs of students drive the instructional decisions?**
- b. Should direct instruction be limited to decoding skills or expanded to include specific comprehension skills?**

Research Observation 5: Program Deficits

Recent research has been able to identify and replicate findings which point to at least four factors that hinder reading development among children, irrespective of their socioeconomic level and ethnicity. These four factors include deficits in phoneme awareness and the development of the alphabetic principle (and the accurate and fluent application of these skills to textual reading), deficits in acquiring reading comprehension strategies and applying them to the reading of text, the development and maintenance of motivation to learn to read, and the inadequate preparation of teachers.

Instructional Leadership Checklist

- a. Are the above-listed factors addressed directly and substantively in the present reading program adoption and implementation practices?**
- b. Are the above-listed factors addressed at the most appropriate time and in the most appropriate setting?**
- c. Will an emphasis on correlations with a core curriculum be sufficient, or will issues, such as pedagogy and proven effectiveness with low achievers, need consideration in district adoption decisions?**

Research Observation 6: First Things First

In essence, children who have difficulties learning to read can be readily observed. The signs of such difficulties are: A labored approach to decoding or sounding unknown or unfamiliar words, and repeated misidentification of known words.

If asked about the meaning of what has been read, the child frequently has little to say. Not because he or she is not smart enough; in fact, many youngsters who have difficulty learning to read are bright and motivated to learn to read at least initially. Their poor comprehension occurs because they take far too long to read the words, leaving little energy for remembering and understanding what they have read.

In fact, difficulties in decoding and word recognition are at the core of most reading difficulties. To be sure, there are some children who can read words accurately and quickly, yet do have difficulties comprehending, but they constitute a small portion of those with reading problems.

Instructional Leadership Checklist

- a. If frantic, irrational guessing is one of the most destructive habits evident in reading failure, how appropriate is the use of instructional approaches that encourage guessing in the early grades?**
- b. If difficulties in decoding are at the core of most reading difficulties, how appropriate is it to emphasize a balanced approach in which the emphasis is evenly divided between decoding and comprehension in the early grades?**

Research Observation 7: Timely Prevention

Phonemic awareness skills assessed in kindergarten and first grade serve as potent predictors of difficulties learning to read. . . over the past decade we have refined these tasks so that we can predict with approximately 80% to 90% accuracy who will become good readers and who will have difficulties learning to read.

Instructional Leadership Checklist

- a. Do teachers have the tools and training to identify and treat students at risk before long-term, harmful attitudes develop in the last half of Grade 1?**

Research Observation 8: Fluency

A child must integrate phonemic skills into the learning of phonics principles, must practice reading so that word recognition becomes rapid and accurate, and must learn how to actively use comprehension strategies to enhance meaning.

Instructional Leadership Checklist

- a. Does the curriculum-embedded student assessment system reflect a clear sequence in which mastery is achieved before moving to more advanced tasks?**
- b. How and when are the fluency and automaticity milestones assessed, and what reteaching resources are available to ensure that milestones are met in a timely manner?**

Research Observation 9: Gender Issues

We have learned that just as many girls as boys have difficulties learning to read. Until five years ago, the conventional wisdom was that many more boys than girls had such difficulties.

Instructional Leadership Checklist

- a. Should assessments be driven by individual referrals, where behavior problems are important, or by the systematic screening of all students performance on critical prerequisite reading tasks?**
- b. Are all at risk students identified?**

Research Observation 10: Humane, Cost-effective Solutions

We have learned that for 90% to 95% of poor readers, prevention and early intervention programs that combine instruction in phoneme awareness, phonics, fluency development, and reading comprehension strategies, provided by well-trained teachers, can increase reading skills to average reading levels. Logic inference: *Most reading failure is preventable using the resources available to schools.*

We have also learned that if we delay intervention until nine-years-of-age (the time that most children with reading difficulties receive services), approximately 75% of the children will continue to have difficulties learning to read throughout high school. To be clear, while older children and adults can be taught to read, the time and expense of doing so is enormous.

Instructional Leadership Checklist

- a. The typical remedial program focuses on students in Grades 3 and 4. Should the emphasis be in Kindergarten, Grades 1, or 2?**
- b. Should summer break between Kindergarten and Grade 1 be the focus of summer investments for preventive interventions?**

Research Observation 11: Comprehension

In a more specific vein, deficits in reading comprehension are related to: (a) inadequate understanding of the words used in the text; (b) inadequate background knowledge about the domains represented in the text; (c) a lack of familiarity with the semantic and syntactic structures that can help to predict the relationships between words; (d) a lack of knowledge about different writing conventions that are used to achieve different purposes via text (humor, explanation, dialogue, etc.); (e) verbal reasoning ability which enables the reader to read between the lines, and (f) the ability to remember verbal information.

Instructional Leadership Checklist

- a. To what extent is reading comprehension dependent on fluency with prerequisites?**
- b. What are the prerequisites?**
- c. What are the implications for curriculum-embedded assessment as they relate to tasks and allowable error rates?**

Research Observation 12: Competency and Attitudes

In the primary grades, reading activities constitute the major portion of academic activities undertaken in classrooms, and children who struggle with reading are quickly noticed by peers and teachers. Although most children enter formal schooling with positive attitudes and expectations for success, those who encounter difficulties learning to read clearly attempt to avoid engaging in reading behavior as early as the middle of the first year.

To counter these highly predictable declines in the motivation to learn to read, prevention and early intervention programs are critical.

Instructional Leadership Checklist

- a. Beginning reading programs are often conceptualized as two-year, Grades 1 and 2 programs. How appropriate is this approach if reading failure is to be prevented?**
- b. Are positive attitudes best developed by consistent demonstrations of success?**

Research Observation 13: Teacher Education

Surveys of teachers taking [preservice] courses indicate: (a) teachers rarely have the opportunity to observe professors demonstrating instructional reading methods with children; (b) coursework is superficial and typically unrelated to teaching practice, and (c) the supervision of student teacher and practicum experiences is fragmentary and inconsistent. At present, motivated teachers are often left to obtain specific skills in teaching phonemic awareness, phonics, reading fluency, and comprehension on their own.

More alarming is the fact that both university and state departments of education requirements for the teaching of reading may not reflect, in any way, the type and depth of knowledge that teachers must have to ensure literacy for all.

Instructional Leadership Checklist

- a. If there is considerable variability of the quality of teachers college graduates, how and who will train the beginning teacher?**
- b. Should staff hiring practices address building- and district-specific requirements that add to basic certification requirements?**
- c. How do districts impact the practices of teachers colleges to ensure that all students have access to quality teachers?**
- d. Do building leaders have the commitment and technical skills to provide the needed teacher training, particularly with beginning teachers?**

Research Observation 14: Teaching All!

For some children, our research demonstrates that explicit, systematic instruction is crucial in helping them to understand and apply critical phonemic, phonics, fluency, and reading comprehension skills. Even for children who seem to grasp reading concepts easily, learning to read is not a natural process reading instruction must be thoughtful, planned, and must incorporate the teaching of all the critical reading skills.

Instructional Leadership Checklist

- a. Would programs that lack an emphasis on explicit, systematic instruction discriminate against low achievers?**
- b. Would programs that emphasize explicit, systematic instruction discriminate against high achievers?**

Read by Grade 3

Reading and Reading Disabilities:

Overview of Reading and Literacy Initiatives

Statement by

**Dr. G. Reid Lyon, Chief
Child Development and Behavior Branch
NICHD/NIH**

**To Access Read by Grade 3
By Dr. G. Reid Lyon
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Preventing Reading Failure

Why read this document?

1. The document provides an executive summary of commonly asked questions on the prevention and treatment of reading failure.
2. The document provides awareness of the reality *The research on how children learn to read has been largely ignored or misapplied by developers of commercial curriculum programs.*
3. The document provides documentation that *conceptually sound and empirically-based instructional approaches work for ALL children. However, some children will need more opportunity to practice what they are taught.*

To Access:

Preventing Reading Failure by Ensuring Effective Reading Instruction

By Barbara R. Foorman, Jack M. Fletcher, David J. Francis

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