

Commissioner's Secondary Reading Advisory Panel Recommendations for Consideration

Reading Instruction

- Maintain a strong state focus on prevention of reading difficulties in K-3.
- Be sure that we have a very strong program of remediation and support available in 4th and 5th grades.
- Provide intensive reading classes that are targeted to the knowledge and skill deficits of students at Levels 1 and 2.
- Each "intensive" classroom should have robust classroom libraries and a process to ensure that students read often with a short comprehension check/process to support generalization of thinking as they read.
- Our research on the use of instructional time within secondary setting (e.g., Schumaker, Deshler, Bulgren, Davis & Lenz, 2002) indicates that a large percentage of class periods are spent in non-instructional activities. Even during instructional activities, many of the teaching behaviors used by teachers are not conducive to promoting the greatest amounts of change in student outcomes. Hence, it will be important to develop observational systems that supervisors, coaches and administrators can use to ensure fidelity of implementation of interventions and judicious use of the limited time available for instructional activities.

Content Area Teachers

- Content area teachers must be taught and encouraged to provide instruction and reinforcement in the same reading strategies as are taught in the intensive reading classes. Without this, struggling readers are less likely to generalize what they learn in their intensive classes to reading outside these classes.
- Content area teachers must be taught and encouraged to use procedures like the "content enhancement routines" developed at the University of Kansas to focus on critical content in a way that all students will be able to master the essential concepts. Focused and systematic vocabulary instruction should be part of all content area classes.
- Each middle school should have a **reading coach** who works with content area teachers to develop their skills in comprehension strategy instruction and teaching essential content.

Assessment

- Administer a quick screening instrument at the beginning of the year to identify Levels 1 and 2 students who struggle with basic word analysis skills and reading fluency problems, for proper placement in intensive reading classes.
- Administer a progress monitoring measure for all Levels 1 and 2 students four times a year. The progress monitoring measure should assess both fluency and comprehension processes.

Professional Development

- Have a skillful coach that supports instruction and decision making for student placement and progress within and across the intensive reading classes.
- Consider a slightly different support structure for reading coaches.
 - The work of Gallimore and his colleagues (e.g., Goldenberg, Saunders, & Gallimore, 2004) has demonstrated that low-performing schools can be transformed into high-performing schools when they (1) distribute leadership responsibilities throughout the school; and (2) establish regular grade-level meetings that used a seven-step process of (a) identifying common student needs, (b) formulating clear instructional objectives around those needs, (c) identifying research-based practices aligned with those needs, (d) plan instruction, (e) implement the targeted intervention, (f) analyze student outcomes, and (g) reassess, make modifications and repeat the process. The potential merit of grade-level (or reading teacher) teams is that leadership is more broadly distributed (beyond a single coach or administrator) and mechanisms are put in place that support constructive and ongoing instructional conversations among all instructional staff charged with achieving certain academic outcomes (in this case, improving reading performance of struggling adolescent readers). While a coaching model can work, there are several areas of potential vulnerability: the personality of the coach may not be a good match for those with whom he/she needs to work, the skill set of the coach may not be sufficiently strong to enable him/her to, indeed, provide meaningful coaching and support, and if the coach becomes ill or quits or is assigned other duties, the entire support structure within the school collapses. A model based on several teams within a building may be more robust and impervious to these threats.
- Develop systematic state level training materials for teachers who will teach intensive classes. This product could contain models for how to distribute time within intensive reading classes, how to provide effective instruction in the areas that need to improve, how to make instructional decisions about allocation of time for individual students, etc. These training materials could also describe how to fit already available intervention programs into an overall, comprehensive reading instructional experience for Levels 1 and 2 readers.
- Work to significantly expand training in a select group of reading and vocabulary strategies, as well as content enhancement routines throughout the state. We might also think of providing funds for Don Deshler's group to come to Florida and work with a small number of demonstration sites using their comprehensive school reform model in literacy. It's important to emphasize that what they are now doing is different than simply providing strategy and content enhancement training to content area teachers. Rather, they analyze schools as a whole, see what they are currently doing well and poorly, and develop a comprehensive 3-5 year plan for change.
- We should develop a systematic, staged, *multi-year plan* for state level professional development and support of schools. In this way schools would have a vision and clear support for implementing what is a multi-faceted approach to improving outcomes. We

should develop strong state-level capacity to provide this training and support so that it could be an ongoing effort that is continuously refined and improved.

Systems

- Schedule reading classes in a range of intensity for 1 to 3 hours a day depending on need.
- In order to ensure that the limited instructional time available to teachers can be optimally used, attention should be given to implementing school-wide and classroom-wide behavioral support systems that help create a positive work culture within the school and classroom. The recent report entitled “Teaching Interrupted”(www.publicagenda.org) underscores that disruptive behavior from adolescents is a major problem in many secondary schools and a major deterrent to teachers being able to offer high quality academic instruction.
- One of the key differences between elementary and middle schools is the need to have adolescents feel a sense of ownership in their academic program. Our research has shown that (Hock, Deshler, & Schumaker, in press; VanReusen, Deshler, & Schumaker, 1988) that engaging students in specific goal setting activities around key academic tasks can have a significant impact on the degree to which students meaningfully participate in work assignments. It is important that they see a direct connection between career and personal goals and what they are being required to do academically.
- Maintain sufficient flexibility in class requirements and scheduling so that schools have the option to schedule large amounts of remedial instruction for students that are performing below grade level in reading.
- Provide training for district and school level staff in sources of funds and budgeting for intensive reading classes
- Develop an implementation plan that presents and lays out the priorities from among the pool of middle school recommendations.