

## Rapid Response—Alternate Reading Core Curriculum for Students With Disabilities (K–3)

- Date:** January 31, 2008 (amended 2/4/08)
- Number:** 00058
- Request:** Are states using an alternate reading core curriculum to teach students with disabilities in kindergarten through third grade (K–3)? Include any research on efficacy, if possible, specifically with reference to the southeastern United States.
- Summary:** In response to this request, the Southeast Comprehensive Center (SECC) queried several organizations that focus on education issues by e-mail and telephone. The SECC also searched various Web sites for information on alternate or replacement reading core curriculum for K–3 students with disabilities. The first section of the response contains a synopsis of the findings on the topic. Resources and references that offer additional information on alternate or replacement reading core curriculum follow it.

### READING INTERVENTION AND CORE REPLACEMENT

The reauthorized Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 2004) and the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) share the same goal of promoting equal opportunities for children to receive high-quality education while also raising expectations for the educational performance of students. These two statutes “converge with respect to expectations for the educational performance of students with disabilities: IDEA 2004 requires that students with disabilities have access to the same curriculum (according to their individual needs) as students without disabilities so that they can meet the educational standards that apply to all children; NCLB establishes the expectation that students with disabilities can meet the same standards as students without disabilities.” (Karger, 2005, p. 11). If it is determined that the grade-level general curriculum is not meeting the needs of individual students with disabilities, then IDEA 2004 obligates school districts to provide greater justification for not including students with disabilities in regular classes.

Reading First is an initiative of the U.S. Department of Education that provides support to the states to ensure that every child is a proficient reader by the end of third grade. The program provides funding to state education agencies (SEAs) to apply scientifically based reading research (SBRR) and the proven tools and assessments that are consistent with this research.

To meet the reading proficiency goal of NCLB (which established Reading First), states must implement with fidelity approved core reading programs. “A core reading program is the primary instructional tool that teachers use to teach children to learn to read and ensure they reach reading levels that meet or exceed grade-level standards.” (University of Oregon, Institute for the Development of Educational Achievement, <http://reading.uoregon.edu>). Core comprehensive reading programs should consist of text materials that have been shown to

include SBRR, in a reading block that includes a minimum of 90 minutes of uninterrupted reading instruction for all students in K–3. This must include systematic and explicit teaching in the five essential components of reading instruction that are identified by the National Reading Panel (NRP) as phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (NRP, 2000). In addition, the states must conduct periodic assessments of student reading proficiency. Based on analysis of assessment data and classroom observation, the states must also implement intervention plans and progress monitor their effectiveness in order to address the needs of students who are struggling with reading and those who have not reached their grade-level benchmarks.

Dr. Joe Torgesen, Director, Florida Center for Reading Research (FCRR), explained that states provide students with mild disabilities (e.g., learning disabilities) with instruction in the reading core curriculum. However, it is certainly a possibility for a state to use alternate reading core curriculum to teach students with mild to severe mental retardation. Many students with disabilities require intensive interventions if they are to maintain growth and progress in reading, so states find various ways to provide interventions for students in K–3. Some states use an “intervention core” to address the needs of students who significantly lag two to three grade levels behind their peers that much of the grade-level core is beyond them. Intensive interventions can be administered in small groups during part of the regular 90-minute reading block, outside of the 90-minute reading block, or in intervention classrooms at each grade level (FCRR, 2006). Torgesen noted that the typical approach is to have struggling readers with disabilities stay in the reading core curriculum for the group work in vocabulary and comprehension and then receive additional instruction in word level skills (phonics and fluency) in groups based on ability.

Evidence of states choosing to use an alternate or “replacement core” exists; however, the SECC has not been able to locate any SBRR on efficacy.

The information collected for this request indicates that several states are using a three-tier reading model for implementation of Reading First as well as addressing the needs of students with disabilities. In most states, the instructional time and level of intensity is increased based on the instructional needs of the students. This may include small group or one-on-one instruction, emphasis on weak skills, re-teaching of material, extra individual monitoring, additional error correction, and more opportunities to respond. In addition, the states vary on the length of time that a student should receive a comprehensive core program before considering a replacement core. Information about interventions, materials, and programs that are used by the states is provided below.

## **Colorado**

Colorado provides criteria for replacement core programs and intensive intervention materials. To qualify as a replacement core, the program must address all five literacy components. In addition, Colorado allows its schools to determine whether or not a replacement core should be used based on the assessment data and the students’ specific needs.

The Colorado Reading First (CRF) policy brief (2005) defines the term “replacement core” as an intensive intervention program that is used to accelerate student progress and bring students to grade-level reading achievement. Such programs are characterized by instruction that is carefully structured for clarity, a realistic rate for the child’s instructional level, daily practice opportunities, and systematic review. The policy brief also makes the following initial instructional placement recommendations for students in grades K–3 (it does not identify only students with disabilities) who are significantly below grade level as shown in Tables 1 and 2.

<b>Table 1. CRF–Grades K–1 Initial Instructional Placement Recommendations</b>	
<b>Time</b>	<b>Materials</b>
Ninety minutes minimum on Reading First focus areas.	Core program may be appropriate. Monitor early and intensively. Analyze data and problem solve. Use replacement core as soon as students show consistent lack of adequate progress.
Each student receives at least 30 minutes of additional support designed for his individual needs.*	Core program and supplemental instruction/materials or if a replacement core is used during the first 90 minutes, use double dose of the same program. Students may need additional language instruction.
* Note: Implementation of support is dependent upon site resources.	

<b>Table 2. CRF–Grades 2–3 Initial Instructional Placement Recommendations</b>	
<b>Time</b>	<b>Materials</b>
Minimum of 90 minutes on Reading First focus areas.	Replacement core program with emphasis on phonemic awareness, phonics, and fluency. May receive oral comprehension and vocabulary from replacement, supplemental, or core program.
Each student receives at least 30–60 minutes of additional instructional support designed for his individual needs.*	Core program and supplemental instruction/materials or if a replacement core is used during the first 90 minutes, use double dose of the same program. Students may need additional language instruction.
* Note: Implementation of support is dependent upon site resources.	

### **Florida**

In response to a question regarding materials for third-grade students who are not successful with the Comprehensive Core Reading Program, the Florida Center for Reading Research (FCRR) Curriculum Review Team suggested that Comprehensive Intervention Reading Programs (CIRP) replace the core. CIRPs are designed to include more intensive, explicit, systematic, and motivating instruction than students previously received; however, the committee stipulated that when such programs are used as a replacement, the CIRP must be taught by a highly knowledgeable teacher with a relatively small group of students (FCRR, 2006). The FCRR provides a summary table of Comprehensive Intervention Reading Programs on its Web site. This table includes information on the type of program, grade reviewed, and reading components addressed (see Figure 1 below for a sample from the table). To view the entire summary table, visit the center’s curriculum and instruction Web page at: <http://www.fcrr.org/FCRRReports/CReportsCS.aspx?rep=supp>

### Comprehensive Intervention Reading Programs

**Comprehensive Intervention Reading Programs (CIRP)** guide more intensive instruction in all five of the essential components of reading instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. These programs are intended for students who are reading one or more years below grade level and who are experiencing difficulty with a broad range of reading skills. The instruction provided through these programs should accelerate growth in reading with the goal of moving students to grade level proficiency. CIRPs also provide more frequent assessments of student progress and more systematic review in order to ensure proper pacing of instruction and mastery of all instructional components.

Program	Type of Program	Grade Reviewed	Reading Component					Notes
			PA	P	F	V	C	
Academy of Reading	2, 3, 5	3-12	++	++	++	+	+	a, b, d
Accelerated Literacy Learning (A.L.L.)	2	1	+++	+++	+++	+++	+++	a, d, l, m
Breakthrough to Literacy	2, 3	K-3	++	++	+	++	++	c, l, m, n
Corrective Reading	2, 5	4-12	+++	+++	+++	+++	+++	a, b, c, d
Destination Reading	2, 3	K-3	+++	+++	+++	+++	+++	a, b, c, d
Early Success	2	1-2	++	++	+++	+++	+++	m
Earobics	2, 3	K-3	+++	+++	+++	+++	+++	a, b, c, d
Essential Learning Systems	2, 3	2-12+	+	+	+	+	+	e
Fast Track Reading	2, 5	4-8	+	+	+++	++	++	a, b, c
First Grade Peer-Assisted Literacy Strategies	2, 4	1	+++	+++	+++	+	++	a, b, c, d
FOCUS Reading and Language Program	2, 3	K-3	+++	+++	+++	+++	+	a, b, c, d
Fundations	2	K-3	+++	+++	+++	+++	++	a, b, c, d
Funnix Reading Programs	2, 3, 4	K-2	+++	+++	+++	++	+	a, b, c, d
Harcourt Trophies First Grade Intervention Kit	2	1	+	+	+	+	+	a, c, d
Headsprout Early Reading	2, 3, 4	K-2	++	+++	+++	+++	+++	a, b, c, d

#### Key

##### Type of Program

- 1 = Comprehensive Core Reading Program
- 2 = Supplemental Intervention Reading Program or Comprehensive Intervention Reading Program
- 3 = Technology-Based Program
- 4 = Program that may be implemented by a tutor or mentor
- 5 = Supplemental Intervention Reading Program or Comprehensive Intervention Reading Program for students above third grade
- 6 = Professional Development Program
- 7 = Pre-Kindergarten Program

##### Reading Component (PA = Phonemic Awareness, P = Phonics, F = Fluency, V = Vocabulary, C = Comprehension)

- + = few aspects of this component taught and/or practiced
- ++ = most aspects of this component taught and/or practiced
- +++ = all aspects of this component taught and/or practiced
- n/a = Not Addressed in this program and/or not a goal of this program.

##### Notes

- a. explicit
- b. systematic
- c. student materials aligned
- d. ample practice opportunities provided
- e. practice only
- f. oral language only
- g. phonemic awareness and phonics program
- h. phonics program
- i. fluency program
- j. vocabulary program
- k. comprehension program
- l. extensive professional development required
- m. expertise required to make informed curriculum decisions
- n. extensive organization of materials required
- o. school-wide implementation required

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**Figure 1. Sample From FCRR Summary Table of Comprehensive Intervention Reading Programs.**

\*Important Note: FCRR Reports are prepared in response to requests from Florida school districts for review of specific reading programs. The reports are intended to be a source of information about programs that will help teachers, principals, and district personnel in their choice of materials that can be used by skilled teachers to provide effective instruction. In addition to describing programs and their use, these reports provide information on the extent to which their content, organization, and instructional strategies are consistent with scientifically based research in reading. Whether or not a program has been reviewed does not constitute endorsement or lack of endorsement by the FCRR. The programs for which reports are available do not constitute an approved or required list, since many potentially useful programs have not yet been reviewed. The FCRR encourages schools to use the table above very carefully. It is meant only as an initial indicator of the extent to which specific areas of instruction are explicitly included in programs that have been reviewed. The best strategy is always to consider the specific needs of the students with whom the program will be used, and then pick a program that will meet those needs. For example, if many students in your school need extra support or interventions in the area of reading fluency, then the extent to which a program provides powerful instruction in that area would be an important consideration. Programs that provide coverage across all possible areas of reading development may be an excellent choice for students who need extra or more explicit instruction in all areas of reading development, but a comprehensive program may not provide as powerful instruction in a single important area (i.e., phonics, vocabulary, fluency, or reading comprehension) as one that is primarily focused on that area and might be more difficult to use in providing focused instructional support in a given area. It is very important to read the FCRR Report for every program that you are considering. The reports provide specific details that the FCRR is unable to convey in the summary table.

## Idaho

Idaho's Reading First classrooms provide a comprehensive reading program (CRP) with a 90-minute instruction block as well as extra instructional time for students who require it to reach their grade-level performance standards. Students who require extra instructional time may receive the following:

- Thirty-plus minutes of differentiated instruction in the CRP
- Thirty-plus minutes of additional instructional support (CRP, supplemental, or intervention materials used)
- Thirty-plus minutes of Language Arts instruction (basal or other materials used)

Idaho's three-tier implementation model includes a minimum of 2.5–3 hours of reading instruction (Center for School Improvement and Policy Studies, Boise State University).

## Louisiana

Louisiana uses a core reading program to address the instructional needs of all its students but allows teachers to use supplemental and intervention materials that align with the CRP to meet the needs of students with disabilities and those who are performing below grade level.

Louisiana's Reading First teachers are required to identify students who are at risk of reading disabilities or delay. All K–3 students are screened with measures that correspond to the five effective components of reading instruction literacy behaviors: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. The state uses the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Literacy Skills (DIBELS), sixth edition, as its single source for screening, progress monitoring, and outcome measures for reading instruction. Generally, progress is monitored at 3-week intervals unless student performance indicates the need for more frequent monitoring (Louisiana SDE, 2008).

**Montana**

Special education students can be removed from the 90-minute reading block based on the student’s individual education program (IEP). The decision to use a replacement core reading program for students with disabilities who are not in a Reading First school is made by the IEP team; however, such a decision for students with disabilities who are in a Reading First school is usually made by the reading leadership or a grade-level team with the recommendation that the decision be based on careful assessment and analysis of the goals outlined in the student’s IEP. Prior to recommendation of a replacement core reading program (RCRP), a comprehensive intervention program is established for intensive students. The intervention program provides additional instruction outside the core program to accelerate reading progress and close achievement gaps. After the intervention program has been in place for a 6-week period and the student does not make adequate progress, a replacement core may be recommended (Montana Office of Public Instruction, 2006).

**Nevada**

Nevada implements its Reading First program as shown in Table 3. Each of its local education agencies (LEAs) must establish a comprehensive assessment system that includes screening, progress monitoring, and outcome assessments.

<b>Table 3. Nevada Reading First Implementation—Three-Tier Reading Model</b>			
<b>Program</b>	<b>Student Group</b>	<b>Provided By</b>	<b>Instructional Time</b>
Core Program (Tier 1)	All students	Classroom teachers	Ninety minutes of uninterrupted time in core program
Intervention (Tier 2)	Struggling students	Classroom teachers and support staff	Thirty minutes of instruction in addition to 90 minutes in core (takes place in the regular classroom)
Intensive Intervention (Tier 3)	Students who are significantly behind	Reading specialists, special education teachers, tutors, and classroom teachers	Thirty-plus minutes of intensive instruction in addition to 90 minutes in core
(Nevada Department of Education, 2007)			

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## RESOURCES

- 1) Center for School Improvement and Policy Studies, Boise State University. *Idaho Reading First*. Retrieved January 28, 2008, from [http://csi.boisestate.edu/readingfirst/Idaho%20Reading%20First/IdahoReadingFirst-Structure\(ParentPresentation\).pdf](http://csi.boisestate.edu/readingfirst/Idaho%20Reading%20First/IdahoReadingFirst-Structure(ParentPresentation).pdf)
  
- 2) Colorado Department of Education. (2007). *Colorado Reading First frequently asked questions*. Retrieved January 28, 2008, from <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdecomp/CRF/downloads/Resources/FAQ.pdf>
  
- 3) Colorado Department of Education. (2005). *Colorado Reading First policy brief: 90+ minute reading block*. Retrieved January 28, 2008, from [http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdecomp/CRF/downloads/PolicyBriefs/RB\\_PolicyBrief.pdf](http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdecomp/CRF/downloads/PolicyBriefs/RB_PolicyBrief.pdf)
  
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10) Torgesen, J. K. (2005). *Building a community of reading experts: A principal's guide to intensive reading interventions for struggling readers in Reading First schools*. Tallahassee, FL: Eastern Regional Reading First Technical Assistance Center and RMC Research Corporation. Retrieved January 28, 2008, from <http://www.fcr.org/Interventions/pdf/APrincipalsGuide.pdf>

11) University of Oregon, Institute for the Development of Educational Achievement (IDEA). *Oregon Reading First Center: Review of supplemental and intervention reading programs*. Retrieved January 28, 2008, from [http://reading.uoregon.edu/curricula/or\\_rfc\\_review\\_si.php](http://reading.uoregon.edu/curricula/or_rfc_review_si.php)

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