

Successful Reading Programs

Success for All

Overview. The philosophy of the Success for All program is based on research which links the academic problems of children in their formative years, particularly retention or poorly developed reading skills, to being at subsequent risk of dropping out. Success for All is designed to ensure that children do not experience this initial failure and are able to reach the third grade with adequate basic skills. Success for All is currently operating in 450 schools through out the U.S. in 31 states.

Instructional Procedures. To fully implement Success for All, the sponsors recommend having a full day preschool and kindergarten. These programs emphasize language development, readiness, and self-concept. The children use the Peabody Language Development Kits and a program called Story Telling and Retelling (STaR). In grades pre-k through 6, trained teacher tutors work with students who are failing to keep up with their classmates in reading. The tutors are certified teachers and work one-on-one with children for 20 minute periods outside of the regular reading program. Priority for tutoring is given to first graders.

In addition to tutoring, daily 90-minute reading sessions are held with small homogeneous ability groups. These sessions are conducted by a teacher trained in the use of the Success for All materials. The kindergarten and first grade program emphasizes language skills, providing children with phonetically regular mini-books which they read to each other in pairs. In the second through sixth grade, students use basal readers, novels or anthologies but not workbooks. In these grades, the reading program emphasizes cooperative learning activities built around partner reading, identification of characters, settings, problems, and problem solutions in narratives. At all levels, students are required to read books of their own choice for 20 minutes at home each evening. Students are assessed every eight weeks to determine if alternative teaching strategies, changes in reading group placement, or need for tutoring services is required.

Teachers are required to follow detailed manuals for most activities and receive three days of instructional training in reading at the beginning of each school year. Further in-service sessions are provided throughout the year to help teachers with classroom management, instructional pace, and cooperative learning techniques. In addition, all preschool and kindergarten teachers receive training in using the STaR and Peabody programs.

The two other major components of the program include the Family Support Team and the Success for All facilitator. The Family Support Team is made up of a parent liaison, a counselor, and the vice-principal who assists parents in ways they can aid in the success of their children in school. The Facilitator works with the teachers in each school to help them implement the program.

Evaluation. Success for All has been evaluated in 23 sites in nine districts and eight states. In all cases, the program has proven successful in improving students reading skills; in every district, Success for All students learned significantly more than did matched control students. Spanish forms are also available and have been successfully evaluated.

Costs. Program costs include materials, and extensive staff development. Staff development costs include three full days of staff development for classroom teachers and 20 person days for program staff to provide follow-up assistance to staff. These costs are estimated to be approximately \$45,000. The program also requires a facilitator and teacher tutors. The facilitator and teacher tutors are usually drawn from existing teaching staff.

Sites Using the Program.

El Vista Elementary School
450 El Vista Avenue
Modesto, CA 95355
(209) 575-4665
Principal: Jennifer Schindler;

Lackland City Elementary School
101 Dumont
San Antonio, TX 78236
(210) 678-2946
Principal: Jerry Allen

P.S 159
2781 Pitkin Ave.
Brooklyn, NY
(718) 277-4828
Principal: Kathy Garibaldi

Poinciana Park Elementary School
6745 NW 23rd Avenue
Miami, FL. 33127
(305) 691-5640
Principal: Cynthia Clarke

Family Math

Family Math was developed by Equals, which has worked since 1977 to increase access and equity in mathematics for students in traditionally under-represented groups. Based at the University of California-Berkeley, the goal of Family Math is to involve parents and other family members in their children's mathematics education in a positive way. The program focuses on specific populations, and helps the student and adult family member develop greater self-confidence as they think mathematically.

A Family Math course lasts approximately 6 weeks. At every session, children come with their parents to a supportive agency in their community, including schools, churches, community centers, and libraries. A typical group is approximately 25 people, counting both parents and children. Groups are led by leaders who are often teachers or community members trained by one of the certified Family Math training centers in every state. The groups learn some educational games that the families can play at home. Usually, there are about four games to begin the session as families arrive, and then three or four other family games, taking a total of about 90 minutes.

The program uses hands-on, cooperative, group, family and student-centered learning. The teaching package is now available in English, Spanish, Swedish and Chinese.

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First Level Mathematics

First Level Mathematics is a comprehensive program that uses concrete objects and actual physical operations to teach the fundamentals of mathematics to children in their first year of mathematics instruction. It provides a continuum of learning and a management system that insures the mathematics concept development of participating children. The program provides special math emphasis in the earliest grades and increases the number of teachers with a substantive background in mathematics.

The curriculum is based on knowledge of child development and cognitive growth. The learning objectives and the experiences used to reach them follow a hierarchy which begins with simple concrete classification based on physical properties. It then progresses through a series of 90 learning objectives to the higher level skills of addition, subtraction, and the use of symbols involved in arithmetic concepts.

Teachers are trained to assess the various development levels of their students using a curriculum-based assessment that is part of the program. The results of these assessments provide the basis for teachers to determine the next appropriate, developmental sequence. Understanding takes place through assimilation and the use of concrete objects, rather than abstractions and rote memorization.

Objectives are organized around miniature lesson plans, complete with materials, methods and evaluation strategies. Instruction takes place in small groups or individually. The program is appropriate for children in their first year of mathematics instruction, i.e., kindergarten or first grade, depending on local and state objectives. It is available in Spanish. The program has been designed to be used by both regular and special education teachers.

First Level Math was implemented in several school districts in West Virginia, Philadelphia and Mississippi during the 1991-92 school year. Nine kindergarten classes participated in the program, while four additional classes served as no-treatment comparisons. All 13 classes completed the Circus Test "How Much and How Many" scale, developed by the Educational Testing Service. In every comparison, students who received First Level Math instruction substantially outperformed their comparison cohorts. Treatment group students increased their percentile ranks from 6 to 22 points, with a median increase across the three groups of 19 percentile ranks. In contrast, the comparison group students lost one percentile rank at each of the three evaluation sites.

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The Core-Plus Mathematics Project

The Core-Plus Mathematics Project is developing an integrated high school mathematics curriculum. The curriculum relies on themes to integrate four major strands of mathematics: algebra and functions, geometry and trigonometry, probability and statistics, and discrete mathematics. It is designed to enable all students to access the core content at different levels of abstraction and depth, according to interest and ability. Students engage in active learning through conjecturing, verifying, evaluating, and communicating their ideas and findings. Each grade level of the curriculum consists of seven units and a culminating project. Each unit involves a series of multi-day lessons in which students develop understanding through investigations and applied problems. The final project, typically lasting two weeks, requires students to pull together and apply key concepts from the unit. Core-Plus also includes a series of out-of-class activities that allow students to Model, Organize, Reflect, and Extend (MORE) their knowledge. Materials for the first three years were piloted in 19 Michigan schools, and the revised curriculum for the first two years have been field-tested nationally. Everyday Learning/Janson Publications is disseminating the materials.

At this time, evaluation data is available only from the Course 1 field test. Preliminary findings from a survey of participating students found that their beliefs about mathematics moved away from math as number or symbol manipulation and toward math as reasoning and problem solving. Participating ninth graders exceeded national norms and significantly outperformed a control group of algebra students on a subtest of the Iowa Test of Educational Development, and on a project-developed test of open-ended items designed to measure their mastery of Core-Plus objectives.

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Across Grade Level Projects

The University of Chicago School Mathematics Projects (UCSMP)

The UCSMP officially began in 1983 when the University received a grant from the Amoco Foundation for a multifaceted project to improve mathematics education for the vast majority of students in grades K-12. Essential to this work was the participation of school administrators and teachers. Further activities were supported by grants from the Amoco Foundation, the National Science Foundation, Ford Motor Company, Carnegie Corporation of New York, General Electric Foundation, GTE Corporation, Citicorp/Citibank, Exxon Education Foundation, and UCSMP Secondary Curriculum Royalties.

The most fundamental feature of UCSMP is its focus on upgrading the mathematics experience of the average student. The UCSMP's *Everyday Mathematics* curriculum encourages teachers and students to investigate, informally but systematically, the basics of data gathering and analysis, probability, geometry, and algebra, while taking advantage of the young child's ability and desire to explore and learn. The curriculum establishes a framework for conversation about mathematics between teachers and children, and among children themselves. Thinking with mathematics becomes as natural as thinking with language. Calculators are an integral part of the program as an aid to concept development and applications. Estimation and a variety of strategies for problem-solving are emphasized throughout. Every child has a slate, a calculator, measuring tools and drawing tools. Each teacher has a classroom set of manipulatives.

Kindergarten Everyday Mathematics emphasizes playful, verbal interactions and manipulative activities while laying the groundwork for symbolic understanding. The activities encompass a variety of mathematics' strands, including simple and complex counting, numeration, operations, measurement, geometry, clock and calendar use, graphs, patterns, attributes, and function ideas. The package includes Home Links, a series of booklets in English and Spanish that are sent home with many suggestions for playful activities related to the curriculum that parents can do with their children.

Everyday Mathematics for Grades 1 - 3 progressively increases attention to mental and symbolic arithmetic, measurement, geometry, the collection and use of data, and the beginnings of algebra. Strong emphasis is placed on formulating and solving number stories with information from day-to-day life, science, geography, and other curriculum areas.

Everyday Mathematics for Grades 4-6 emphasizes mathematical modeling of situations from everyday life and other school subjects. It blends mathematical strands (numeration, operations, geometry, measurement, data, and so on) with themes such as science, geography, sports and architecture. Calculators, manipulatives, and other tools are an integral part of the curriculum.

The UCSMP Secondary Component curriculum transforms high school mathematics into a mathematical sciences curriculum, covering a much greater range of material important for life in a technological society while maintaining consistency with recent developments in college-level

mathematics. Extensive testing verifies that the average to above-average student can begin this curriculum in the seventh grade and proceed with one course each year through the twelfth grade.

Professional development activities for teachers include institutes, workshops and conferences. Publishers of UCSAP materials include: Everyday Learning Corporation, Chicago, Illinois; Scott Foresman/Addison Wesley, Glenview, Illinois; National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, Reston, Virginia; UMI Dissertation Services, Ann Arbor, Michigan; and, the American Mathematical Society, Providence, Rhode Island.

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The Connected Mathematics Project (CMP)

The Connected Mathematics Project (CMP) is a mathematics curriculum development effort funded by the National Science Foundation and based at Michigan State University. The curriculum, which is still under development, consists of eight units in each of the four middle grades (5-8). Each unit addresses a major mathematical concept, or cluster of related concepts, using several "investigations" that the students solve. Instruction in basic math skills is embedded in the context of solving problems. The instructional process for each unit consists of three phases:

- **Launch**--The teacher introduces the problem and the key concepts that it addresses, and reviews past material that students will need to apply to solve the problem.
- **Explore**--Students congregate in small groups to brainstorm ideas and solutions to the problem.
- **Summarize**--Students reassemble as a full class, with each small group presenting its understanding of the problem and proposed solution strategies.

The curricular units strive to draw connections among various strands of mathematics, between math and other disciplines, and between the conceptual and applied characteristics of mathematics. Student assessment includes traditional tests and quizzes as well as journals, projects, and student self-assessments. The Dale Seymour publishing company handles the large-scale production of CMP materials.

During the first year of pilot testing, participating students' performance on a subtest of the Iowa Test of Basic Skills did not decline and equaled the performance of a control group. However, participating students significantly outperformed the control group on a project-designed assessment that used open-ended items to measure their ability to reason and solve problems.

In 1991, the Louis Armstrong Middle School in Queens, New York, was selected to serve as one of the field-test sites for the Connected Mathematics Project. Louis Armstrong teachers received both on-site and off-site instruction to learn about the Connected Mathematics Project. The school sent the teachers to Michigan State University over the summer for intensive training. Relying on its collaboration, the school also enlisted mathematics education professors from Queens College to serve as mathematics specialists who would visit classrooms and work with teachers as they implemented the project.

The results of the Louis Armstrong Middle School project have been positive. The California Achievement Test (CAT-5), New York City version, was administered to all eighth-grade students at Louis Armstrong in the spring of 1996. The 30 Connected Mathematics Project students' scored between the 46th and the 99th percentile, with the median score in the 78th percentile. The 123 students in non-Connected Mathematics Project classes' scored between the 16th and 98th percentile, with the median score in the 62nd percentile.

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Success Understanding Mathematics (SUM)

Success Understanding Mathematics (SUM) is a national professional development program that focuses on increasing the mathematical achievement of elementary students by training teachers to employ such practices as questioning, the use of manipulatives, and the analysis of real-world problems.

The program's methods match the recommendations of the NCTM Standards. Program characteristics include:

- A problem-solving approach
- Emphasis on reasoning, number sense, and operation sense
- Use of manipulatives by students to make connections between math concepts, language, and written symbols
- The role of students to investigate, guess, check, reason, and discuss
- The role of teachers to pose real-world problems, and to guide student learning by questioning

The program, which consists of two to three days of pre-implementation training and follow-up training, presents teaching methods of investigation that can be used with any textbook. As teachers themselves use manipulatives to explore and model problems, they become more alert to possible variations in student thinking. Long before they are able to perform related computations young children can join and separate sets of objects and share them fairly. They invent strategies to answer their own questions.

Pretest and posttest data on a variety of mathematics achievement tests between 1987 and 1990 upheld validation studies done in 1980 and 1985. After one year of SUM instruction, students scored at significantly higher levels than would be expected by the test norms. Supplementary evidence included teacher questionnaires which showed that the SUM Program training was effective in influencing teachers to make the instructional changes recommended by the NCTM Standards. Student attitude surveys showed that students demonstrated positive attitudes toward mathematics.

Program components include teaching methods that can be used with any textbook, management materials, and support for teachers. Publications include two strategy books with suggested lessons and questions for teachers to use with their students, assessment inventories and inservice materials.

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Reading Recovery

Overview. Reading Recovery is an intensive early intervention program for first grade children having difficulty with beginning reading. It was based on years of research in New Zealand. The program is designed to promote good reading by teaching reading strategies before a pattern of failure develops. The program includes procedures for teaching reading, a staff development program directed by a specifically prepared "teacher leader," and a set of administrative systems that work together for quality control. Currently Reading Recovery programs can be found in 47 states in the U.S.

Reading Recovery is not a packaged program; it relies heavily on training teachers to deliver highly focused lessons in which students learn to monitor and correct their own reading and to use many kinds of information (background experience, knowledge of language, letter-sound correspondence) as they read.

To fully implement Reading Recovery, the district or school must have a person designated as teacher leader. The responsibilities of the teacher leader are to design and implement the teacher training at each site. To become a teacher leader requires a teacher to spend a full year being trained at one of the Reading Recovery Training sites--in the United States, Ohio State University is a designated training site. The teacher leader then trains Reading Recovery Teachers.

Instructional Procedures. In most cases, Reading Recovery teachers select the lowest achieving students in the first grade to provide intensive one-on-one tutoring for 30 minutes each day. This tutoring is in addition to regular classroom reading instruction. It includes both reading and writing activities as well as strategies to develop children's thinking and reasoning skills. When the Reading Recovery teacher considers the child has become a proficient independent reader, the treatment is discontinued. This normally takes around 16 weeks. The success of individual programs is often measured by the discontinuing rate.

Evaluation. Ohio State University collects and analyzes data from Reading Recovery sites nationwide. The program is successful with most of its students. In 1995-96, 83 percent of the students (59,266) in the program were "discontinued" from the program after 60 days. Students are "discontinued" when they are judged to be independent readers. Eighty-six percent of the children scored at or above average on reading tests at the end of the school year.

Costs. The primary costs are for the training required by the teacher leader (1 full academic year). Additional costs include the periodic in-service that is required.

Sites Using the Program

Sutter School
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Successful Math Programs

Elementary School Projects

The Comprehensive School Mathematics Program (CSMP)

The Comprehensive School Mathematics Program (CSMP) is a complete, K-6 curriculum that makes mathematics accessible, understandable, and enjoyable. The program works well for all types of learners, including students who are at risk, bilingual, gifted and talented, and children with special needs.

The approach underscores that students' mathematical understanding is developed out of problem-solving contexts. CSMP's unique feature is the use of nonverbal languages that give children immediate access to the mathematical ideas and methods that are necessary to solve problems and to continually expand students' understanding of mathematical concepts. Through these languages, the curriculum engages children immediately and naturally with mathematics and its applications without cumbersome linguistic prerequisites. Tools such as the Papy Minicomputer, the hand-held calculator, and various geometry tools are used extensively throughout the curriculum to pose problems, explore concepts, develop skills, and define new ideas. The curriculum emphasizes opportunities for students to use mathematics in a connected way. For example, relationships and patterns are shown in number theory as well as in geometry, probability, and logical reasoning.

Evaluations of CSMP show that CSMP students are better able than comparable non-CSMP students to apply mathematics to new problem situations, specifically in the areas of number patterns and representations, relational thinking, estimation, prediction, large numbers, fractions, work problems, and mental arithmetic. CSMP students show a higher level of enthusiasm and interest in math than do comparable students in more traditional programs.

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Secondary School Projects

The College Preparatory Mathematics Program

The College Preparatory Mathematics Program at the University of Illinois at Chicago is a cooperative learning mathematics program developed through school-university collaborations. The program helps potentially successful but under-represented (minority and female) and at-risk students to succeed in precollege mathematics. Small-group work, the primary mode of learning, is incorporated into a comprehensive program of teacher enhancement, student instruction, and a team approach that utilizes in-school counselors and school-university collaboration. Participants in the program perform better on standardized algebra tests than non-participating peers. Many of the beginning freshmen enroll in a third or fourth year of mathematics in their junior year.

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Schools Using Results for Improvement

Cabello Elementary School New Haven Unified School District Union City, CA

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Cabello Elementary School, located near the east coast of the San Francisco Bay, serves a diverse student population in grades K-4, which includes children of Filipino, African American, Asian, European, Hispanic and West Asian (Afghan and Indian) backgrounds. The school adopted a comprehensive planning process four years ago when teachers began evaluating student work samples and discovered that there was almost as much variability in skill levels within a given class as between classes. Since then, staff have researched and designed a comprehensive student assessment and reporting system, which includes clear descriptions of seven different performance levels (from pre-readiness through independent). Tied to the performance levels is a system of authentic assessment, parent reporting and school wide data analysis through a database for all 884 students. Results have pointed to the need for a different type of instruction that is more accessible to a wider range of students. The Cabello system is now being piloted at all elementary schools in the district.

Hueco Elementary School Socorro Independent School District El Paso, TX

Elida Gutierrez, Principal
(915) 860-3780

Located on the U.S.—Mexico border, Hueco Elementary School serves 3-year old through 5th grade students. Ninety-one percent of Hueco's students receive free- or reduced-price lunch and over half are limited English proficient. Data, based primarily on annual results on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS), inform the campus improvement plan developed by the elected School Improvement Team (SIT). Also informed by attendance rates and data on parent involvement, the SIT sets objectives for performance on the TAAS as well as objectives for attendance, parent involvement, and professional development. Teachers whose students are not achieving in a particular area, for example, are supported in obtaining additional training. Most recently, through the TAAS, classrooms having most difficulty in understanding word problems were identified for additional support. While the school barely missed reaching the highest designation based on gains on the TAAS, all students have achieved a passing score of 70 percent or higher. High attendance rates and no teacher transfers over the last 3 years are additional indicators of success.

Equity 2000

Equity 2000 is a research-based, field-developed, district wide K-12 reforms initiative intended to close the gap in college attendance and success rates between minority and white students, and between advantaged and disadvantaged students. The project is in the sixth year of its pilot phase. One of the project's major goals is that all students will enroll in freshman algebra, and all sophomores will enroll in geometry. The project also hopes to eliminate tracking.

Equity 2000 districts begin by focusing on a school district's mathematics' curriculum and enrollment policies. These changes then lead to changes in schools' overall policies regarding the preparation of students to attend college. Equity 2000's six key components include: district-wide policy changes to alter teaching and guidance; ongoing professional development; academic safety nets to support students' academic development; increased parental involvement; school-community partnerships; and the use of student data to implement reform. The model helps districts raise expectations and performance by increasing the academic content in key subject areas, designing support systems for students, and training counselors, teachers, and administrative staff. During the past six years, more than 700 schools and half a million students across 14 school districts have participated in Equity 2000.

Data from an evaluation of Equity 2000 shows that sites' average enrollment in algebra has increased by about 44 percent since the program began in 1991, with 87 percent of all students taking the course, on average. Sites report higher algebra passing rates, and increased numbers of students taking the PSAT/NMSQT and AP exams. Minority test-takers have more than doubled in these districts, with a 91 percent increase in AP exams taken by African-Americans. Equity 2000 is currently moving into the dissemination phase of its tenure.

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Albert Wicker Elementary School

New Orleans, Louisiana

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Albert Wicker serves 700 students in prekindergarten through fifth grade. Ninety-seven percent of students are eligible for free and reduced lunch. Through Louisiana's Accelerated Schools project, Wicker established several schoolwide programs, including:

- A prekindergarten program for 40 children and a home instruction program for pre-school children who cannot attend the in-school program because of limited space
- An extended schoolday that makes one extra hour of assistance available to every student, based on teacher referral or parental request
- Computer-assisted instruction that enriches regular instruction in every classroom, and a Writing to Read Computer Lab that gives daily instruction to every kindergarten student as well as phonics and reading recognition skills
- Peer coaching among teachers to build computer proficiency
- "Math Every Day Counts," which provides 15 minutes of additional math support

Annual schoolwide activities include: essay contests, a Black History Quiz Bowl, Spelling Super Bowl, Career Day, academic games, and instrumental and vocal music instruction. Social studies and science units culminate in field trips to places such as the John C. Stennis Space Center and the Audubon Zoological Gardens.

Staff development is a key component in Wicker's restructuring efforts. The Accelerated School process ensures that staff receive weekly professional development opportunities, and the entire staff spent 10 days training to use computer-assisted technology before the schoolwide program began.

Community involvement is also important. Several groups mentor students, and parents log more than 4,500 hours a year at the school and its parent center. Every week staff, parents and community members meet for sessions on such topics as site-based management, teaming for success, interdisciplinary instruction, multicultural infusion and test taking.

These changes have increased attendance and test scores. Third-grade students' scores on the LEAP test in mathematics improved from the 66th percentile in 1992-93 to the 88th percentile in 1994-95. Wicker students consistently perform above the percentile gains made by Title I students in the rest of the district. The school rewards success in many ways; for example honor roll students receive discounts at local businesses.

Webster Elementary School

Dayton, Ohio

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Sixty-five percent of the students at Webster are African American, and 35 percent are Anglo. Approximately two-thirds of Webster's students enter kindergarten with seriously lagging language skills, ultimately leading to high percentages of referrals for special education and Title I programs in later grades. To address this problem, the school initiated a school improvement plan in 1992-93 that has produced large gains in student progress.

Webster's plan emphasized solid academic foundations for primary-grade students by creating an "extended readiness" classroom for repeaters still having difficulty in second grade. Webster shifted its Title I approach from a pull-out model to in-class instruction with an inclusive special education model that gives students more unified team instruction. Teachers bring gifted students together across grade levels and encourage their participation in Math Olympics, a young authors' program, science fairs, and use of the Internet and technology to create books and video projects.

The school's curriculum also includes scientific experiment kits, economic concept kits to build consumer decision-making, an emphasis on problem-solving strategies in mathematics, and computer-based writing programs.

Monthly Family Nights bring parents and community members to the school for recreation and presentations by community speakers. Employees of the state lottery commission volunteer as tutors, accompany field trips, and judge academic competitions. Local artists, storytellers, puppeteers, and professionals volunteer at the school as speakers on drug prevention, peer influence, violence, and self-esteem.

Webster's staff has vigorously pursued professional development opportunities in team building, developing a school focus, mastery learning, conflict resolution, assessment techniques, multiculturalism, teaching minority children, and computer technology. Teachers share planning time and discuss current best practices during regular monthly staff meetings.

Staff are eager to begin a schoolwide Title I program in 1996-97. The principal believes that the schoolwide budget will enable the school to develop new programs to meet students' language deficit and improve the use of Title I teachers across grade levels. Webster plans to hire a Reading Recovery teacher to support language development and foster a building-wide focus on parent involvement by making the computer lab available to parents.

Webster has recorded NCE gains in all grade levels. In the performance of fourth-grade students on the 1994-95 Ohio Proficiency Test, Webster ranked second in the district, exceeding district averages in all categories. Webster's scores were twice as high as the district averages despite having one of the highest percentages of low income students. Webster exceeded state averages in math and citizenship and recorded large gains in student attendance.

Samuel W. Mason Elementary School

Boston, Massachusetts

Joaquim Baptista
Title I Coordinator
(617) 635-9000

Mason Elementary School has 296 students, of whom 43 percent are African American, 23 percent are Cape Verdian, 14 percent are Latino, 13 percent are Anglo, 3 percent are Asian American, and 2 percent are Native American. Twenty-four percent of students' families do not speak English.

In 1990, the Boston Herald called Mason Elementary School "the least-chosen elementary school in the city" under a new controlled-choice plan. The school responded by joining the National Accelerated Schools Network and seeking partnerships with the City of Boston, local businesses and universities, a health center, and community organizations. Mason has used the flexibility afforded by its schoolwide Title I program to support these efforts.

Title I reaches all students and doubles the time devoted to reading instruction. Teachers pay special attention to learning styles, emphasizing accelerated reading instruction and problem-solving activities. For example, a program for first and second grade includes two hours a day of work in phonics, whole language/literature, and writing. Special education, bilingual, and remedial learners are fully included in all classes. Other programs include an after-school program every weekday; a six-week, full-day summer program; counseling and therapy programs; parent education; portfolio assessment; and extensive professional development.

Reading Recovery and resource teachers work in teams with grade-level clusters to reduce class size from 26 to 13 students during part of the school day. During the rest of the day, the teams help kindergarten and early childhood teachers work with small groups of students in an early literacy program.

Specialists conduct workshops with mentor classroom teachers and join them for weekly planning. All teachers receive technology training through the Center for Applied Special Technology, and each classroom has three computers. Every Mason teacher has had more than 50 hours of additional professional development, including training in Phonics That Work, Math Their Way, pre-algebra, technology, and team building; teachers regularly visit other school's exemplary programs for benchmarking. The number of teachers holding masters' degrees has doubled since 1992.

By changing its focus from remediation to acceleration, combining resources, and requiring teamwork, Mason has steadily increased student achievement, and there is a waiting list for new students. Participation in parent conferences has grown from 6 percent to 92 percent, and parent volunteer hours increased from 40 to 600 a year. In 1995, an evaluation by the Boston College's Urban District Assessment Consortium Project showed that Mason students exceeded the average score for the City of Boston and for the other 11 urban school systems in the project. In 1994 and 1995, the Mason School won the City of Boston Management Excellence Award, the first Boston public school ever to achieve that distinction. Also in 1995, the school was recognized by the U.S. Department of Education for its Exemplary Schoolwide Title One Program, received the Boston Plan for Excellence Award, and was named one of the 100 nationwide semifinalists in the Innovations in American Government Awards Program sponsored by the Ford Foundation and the John F. Kennedy School of Government.

William Anderson School

Lawndale, California

Evelyn Mae Chidsey
Principal
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William Anderson serves 943 students in grades K-6. Almost half of the students are Hispanic, nearly 18 percent are Asian, 17 percent are African American, 13 percent are Anglo, and 2 percent are Filipino. Forty-six percent of students have limited English proficiency; 93 percent qualify for free or reduced-price lunch.

Several programs stimulate student participation and academic achievement at Anderson. The Different Ways of Knowing Program (DWoK) helps students integrate language and the arts and demonstrate what they have learned; students transformed one classroom into an interactive geography museum with oceans, mountains, forests, and deserts. Students have also produced video presentations, participated in drama and dance, created quilts, written to pen pals in Indonesia, and produced an impressive talent show.

The instruction time devoted to literacy has increased from 40 percent to 90 percent of the day, and staff team-teach to provide the additional instructional time. The use of teacher assistants has reduced class size.

Staff development consists of weekly sessions for teachers, pupil-free days for extended training, and summer institutes. A grant from the Ahmanson Foundation enabled 19 of 31 teachers to receive training for the DWoK program. Staff also received training in literacy programs, and mentor teachers and specialists provide workshops in content areas, Spanish language instruction, technology, peer coaching, and science. Eighteen teachers at Anderson hold CLAD or BCLAD credentials, and 24 have or are pursuing master's degrees.

Title VII grants have supported projects at Anderson that help Spanish and Vietnamese students reach English proficiency through extra instruction in their own language and English. A schoolwide tutoring program gives at-risk students private tutoring sessions for eight weeks, with an emphasis on reading and writing. To provide early intervention, Anderson also established bilingual pre-school classes.

An after-school enrichment program offers dance, drama, athletics, drill team, computers, carpentry, and photography. These programs have reduced behavior problems and increased student attendance from the lowest in the district to the second-highest.

In every academic measure, Anderson's NCE gains are greater than state and national gains. Family involvement has increased at special events to as many as 225, and parents have become involved in the school's Program Quality Review team.

Kenton Elementary School

Portland, Oregon

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(503) 331-3447

Kenton's curriculum emphasizes interactive writing, vocabulary development, Math Their Way, Every Day Counts, and Visual Math. Teachers use cooperative learning and peer tutoring to help students grow toward proficient and advanced levels, and students are encouraged to analyze, evaluate, and interpret information.

Kenton and 12 other schools in the region jointly hired a math consultant and a reading consultant. During the 1995-96 school year, the consultants held full-day, weekly workshops on best teaching practices identified by the school principals. The principals developed a regional Title I plan and, with the help of the consultants, have all staff working together to implement the plan. Title I staff instructed regular classroom teachers in new strategies, and Kenton staff agreed to use Title I benchmarks and assessments for all students. All staff meet monthly to share progress on benchmarks and to design intervention plans for students in need. The principals' ownership of the program generates support and constructive evaluation.

Kenton teachers regularly meet with small groups of students outside of class to give extra help in math, reading, or writing. Teachers also train the school's many volunteers to support the benchmarks while working with students. Volunteers who are trained in the school's goals and plans read with underachieving students twice a week.

Students' families and the community support Kenton. The Oregon Children's Foundation treated some students to a one-week summer camp where they learned computer skills; other programs create parent compacts that involve parents in helping students complete homework. The University of Portland sends student teachers to Kenton and conducts classroom observations. The Touchstone Model helps Kenton families identify goals and build on their strengths.

Assessments between 1992 and 1996 proficiency in reading has increased; in mathematics, the percentage of third-graders scoring in the advanced category increased from 15 percent to 35 percent.

Highland Elementary School Columbus, Ohio

James A. Huber

Supervisor of State and Federal Programs

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This historic school, built in 1895, serves 500 students. Forty-nine percent are African American, 44 percent are Anglo, and 7 percent are Asian; 87 percent receive free or reduced-price lunch. Many of the student's parents, grandparents, and other family members attended the school and have remained part of the community.

Highland's Title I Schoolwide Project focuses on technology, parent involvement, and student incentives. The schoolwide approach enables Highland to work with before- and after-school latchkey programs offering academic assistance to students, and block scheduling of language arts provides the flexibility needed to use cooperative learning and problem-solving approaches.

Staff on Highland's technology committee attend workshops at Ohio University and joined other schools in developing a SchoolNet partnership. Soon, Highland will be using the Internet to share math and science resources among students, staff, and parents. Teachers are excited about being able to access the Eisenhower Clearinghouse for Math and Science, which enables them to communicate with other teachers and participate in video conferences.

Highland's professional development plans center on (1) using parent involvement to create a climate conducive to learning and (2) maintaining high expectations for all students. Grade-level teams address issues and strategies involved in self-directed learning, collaborative peer observations, and peer coaching. Teachers take many courses at the Ohio State University involving Reading Recovery and early literacy strategies. In addition, the county supervisor for an early learning literacy initiative often brings visitors to Highland to observe and discuss Highland's staff development program. At parent advisory meetings, teachers share these strategies and model methods that parents can use to build their children's skills.

Highland's Title I NCE gains for 1995-1996 are impressive. Students gained more than 12 points in reading and 11 points in mathematics. Some of this progress was due to the incentives offered for achievement; every nine weeks, Highland holds a party for students who make the honor or "effort" rolls or win special performance awards.

Gompers Secondary School Center for Science, Mathematics, and Computer Technology San Diego, California

Robert Raines
Consolidated Programs Services Specialist
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Located in a neighborhood disrupted by gangs and crime, Gompers serves almost 1,600 African-American, Latino, and Laotian students in grades 7-12. Ninety-seven percent of graduates continue their education at two- and four-year colleges.

Gompers holds iron-clad high expectations for discipline and academic achievement on the part of students, faculty, and parents. Curriculum requirements for graduation exceed national, state, and local requirements; tutoring is available before and after school and during lunch. Integration of all subjects has social studies teachers emphasizing vocabulary and math teachers encouraging research on the history of math.

Parents are required to sign and return policy statements detailing parent, student, and school responsibilities in academic subjects and discipline—even the school newsletter contains a sign-and-return form, and teachers give doughnuts to the class with the highest return rates.

Gompers' staff development team leads an extensive professional development program. New faculty are assigned to mentor teachers and receive funds for supplies, substitute teachers, and release time so they can observe other teachers, and training sessions on efficient classroom management, ESL strategies, and practices for reaching difficult students. All teachers participate in at least seven professional activities every year on topics including technology, standards, and assessments.

Every academic area has its own workshops for teachers that support school participation in the science and math competitions and in NASA's KidSat program, in which students at Gompers and two other schools in the United States collaborated with astronauts on Atlantis experiments. Course offerings include political science, medical biology, FORTRAN and PASCAL, digital electronics, and six foreign languages.

A six-week summer camp for incoming seventh-grade students ensures a solid grounding in thinking and study skills, reading, writing, computer use, math, scientific experiments, and organizational skills. Because Gompers staff view the first year as crucial in developing an ethic for success for the remainder of high school, an integrated seventh-grade program delivered by an eight-member teaching team continues the camp's emphasis on study skills and literacy throughout the year.

The school provides child care for parents who attend classes in language arts, math, computers, parenting skills, writing, tutoring children at home, and developing leadership.

Gomper's students scored higher than the district average on the SAT in both verbal and math areas. On mathematics applications assessments, Title I students scored 9 percent higher than the district average. Students able to successfully exit the Title I program score 8 percent higher than the district average.

Annie Fisher Elementary School Hartford, Connecticut

Alice Dickens
Assistant Superintendent
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Annie Fisher Elementary School, which serves students in grades K-6, uses an integrated approach that develops literacy in all content areas. Several programs and partnerships support this goal: The Bushnell Partners in the Arts Program integrates arts across the curriculum in first through third grades. The Reading is Power Program challenges students to read 20 minutes each night and write a summary of each completed book. A cross-age, cross-grade mentoring program and reading club links students with middle, high school, and college tutors. In conjunction with the Connecticut Humanities Council, students learn about Native Americans, migrations and seven major world cities (including Hartford) from primary documents, journals, passports, diaries, household and property inventories. Two computer labs, annual spelling bees, science fairs, instrumental music instruction, and a special writing program for kindergarten students offer additional learning opportunities.

Annie Fisher has established relationships with schools from suburban towns for multicultural activities, field trips, topical studies, and pen-pal relationships. A local high school supports Annie Fisher students with sessions on nutrition, poetry, peer mediation training, cheerleading, and a homework club for first graders. Educational Main Street, a joint effort with the University of Hartford, helped Annie Fisher obtain a grant for a summer school program for students in danger of retention.

Staff development emphasizes interdisciplinary curriculum, with frequent inservice workshops on dimensions of learning, multiple intelligences theory, and CMT teams. A two-summer program for teachers focuses on integrating math and science education. Visits to United Technologies Corporation and Pfizer Pharmaceutical encourage teachers to help students explore careers in math, science and technology. Staff also participated in two intensive workshops on neurodevelopmental approach to thinking.

The TARGET program enables a team of professionals to consult with teachers and parents on ways to better meet students' needs and to avoid unnecessary remedial or special education placement.

These programs, along with efforts to build parenting skills and better home-school communication, have resulted in continuous academic growth. The percentage of students performing at or above the state standards has increased in math, reading and writing. For example, the percentage of students scoring at or above the state goal for writing on the Connecticut Mastery Test rose from 8 percent in 1993 to 21 percent in 1995.

Elias Howe School

Bridgeport, Connecticut

Henry R. Kelly

Director of Federal and State Programs

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The 107-year-old Elias Howe School, which serves 700 students in grades K-6, is located in a violent, crime-ridden neighborhood of Bridgeport's inner city. Although students represent more than 20 ethnic and language groups, more than 80 percent are Puerto Rican. Families are highly mobile; only 40 percent of fourth-graders remain in the school through sixth grade.

The school building is inadequate for the size and needs of the population; physical education, music, art, and lunch all take place in overcrowded classrooms, and assemblies are held in hallways or on the playground. In spite of the unstable environment, Howe has used Title I support to become a safe, stimulating environment where children enjoy learning.

Howe's multicultural staff (40 percent of whom attended the school) maintain a family atmosphere. Teachers constantly encourage children's self-esteem and creativity. Parents and other family members are invited to visit at any time, and an average of 40 parents come to the school each day. PTA meetings are consistently well-attended. The student attendance rate—more than 94 percent—is among the highest in the district.

Title I supports Howe's Intervention Team, which consists of two remedial reading teachers (one of them bilingual), two bilingual remedial paraprofessionals, three bilingual resource paraprofessionals, one remedial math teacher, one ESL teacher, and the school principal. The team follows a comprehensive plan of assessment; small-group and individualized remedial, basic, and enrichment instruction; monitoring; and extensive follow-up support. An additional STEP Program focuses on helping Title I bilingual children in the often-difficult transition to mainstream classes.

Staff have won so much financial support from local businesses that the students enjoy a rich variety of stimulating learning opportunities, including high-tech science programs; after-school art, music, dance, and crafts clubs; a mock "Mission to Mars" space project; and a Puerto Rican/Spanish Heritage celebratory program. Regular "Drop Everything and Read/Write!" periods and surprise "Math and Reading Mad Minutes" supplement the curriculum, with prizes.

Test scores reflect the staff's hard work: Although Howe began in the lowest percentile levels in reading comprehension, the Title I students have demonstrated the greatest gains of all area schools since 1992 students increased 30 percentile points in math during a period in which the district's overall math scores declined 2 percentile points.

To raise literate kids, plant seeds of reading early

By Beth Ashley
USA TODAY

Nothing prepares a kid better for reading than being read to, experts say.

"The single most important thing a parent can do to help a child learn to read is to read to the child early and often — and I mean early, a few months old," says Banita Somerfield of the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy.

Finding time to read may be tough, but parents across America are doing their best: Shari Thompson of St. Paul Park, Minn., says she read to her child, Jessica, even before Jessica was born. "I was told that even in utero a baby can hear your voice."

A Yankelovich Partners study in November said that 80% of parents believe reading to their children enhances educational development. Half said they read to their children daily, if only for 20 minutes.

"Parents are doing a pretty good job," says reading expert Linda Gambrell of the University of Maryland.

The Yankelovich survey also found that single parents tend to read to their children more often than two-parent households. "A single mother spends time with her children that she would otherwise spend with her spouse," Thompson says.

Ruth Graves of Reading Is Fundamental (RIF), which serves 3.8 million children nationwide, says parents need support from "the whole village" if children are to learn to read. She praises companies like UGI Corp. in Pennsylvania, which sponsors RIF programs in schools, and Nestlé in California, which has "adopted" 100 RIF schools. Employees of both volunteer to read to kids.

"It would be helpful if more businesses recognized that employees have lives outside their employment, and that being family-friendly is not only good for the country but good for the company."

Three times a year, RIF lets kids in schools, libraries, hospitals, day care centers and Head Start programs pick out a book to take home and keep, no strings attached.

Gambrell says "children should have lots of books. The way we increase the time children read is if they have books at home."

Having books, magazines and newspapers at hand is a big factor in

getting kids to read, Somerfield says. And "parents who read at home are models for their children. 'If Mommy or Daddy reads, this must be a good thing to do.'"

"You walk into my house, everyone has a book," says Marie Knight, 34, of Detroit, single mother of three. "I keep a book in my purse."

A reader since childhood — "you can live in another country with a book" — Knight reads to her children every day. "I just make the time, because it's something I like to do." Her youngest daughter has been able to read since preschool.

Lynn Melchior, also of St. Paul Park, says reading aloud doesn't always guarantee children will become good readers: Two of hers read avidly, the middle one "struggles every day." If kids flounder, she says, parents should take charge. "We are working with a reading specialist. If you're a poor reader, it af-

fects everything."

If families are too busy for reading time, "it's important to turn off the TV," Melchior says. "Even if the kids aren't reading, they can find something else to do besides TV, which is the worst thing that ever happened to reading."

Susan Neuman of Temple University says two to four hours a day of TV help with literacy — "a television set is a word machine" — but more is detrimental, "symbolic of a lack of other activities in the household."

Paul Andrews, an Austin, Texas, bookkeeper, not only reads to his two children but finds time (often vacation time) to read in schools where most of the kids are poor.

To lure them to read, he and other volunteers read snips of books, portray a story character or get (for example) a firefighter to explain how important it is to do well in reading.

At the Boston Medical Center, the

Reach Out and Read program began when pediatricians wanted some way to help poor children who had few, if any, books at home. Now the pediatricians prescribe parental reading as part of their treatment of the children and send a book home each time a child comes in.

"The doctors realized that kids in poverty lag way behind developmentally in their ability to listen to stories, to sequence what happens and even to learn to turn pages," says medical director Perri Klass.

Sometimes parents themselves can't read, Klass says, but pediatricians encourage them to "look at the book with their child and make up a story to fit it."

To learn to read, "you have to like books," Klass says. "You have to see them as places to go for pleasure as well as information. If not, when you get to school, books will have no point!"

more...

seeds of reading continued...

A checklist for skills

To help parents understand children's reading progress, the Council for Educational Development and Research (CEDAR) has outlined checkpoints. They are not an item-specific recipe for every child but highlight skills that develop naturally. The child:

In kindergarten

- Knows print carries meaning by turning pages in a storybook to find out what happens next.

- Knows what written language looks like by recognizing that words are combinations of letters and identifying specific letters in unfamiliar words.

- Identifies and names letters of the alphabet by saying the alphabet and pointing out letters of the alphabet in a text.

- Knows how books work by holding them right side up, reading from left to right and top to bottom and beginning at the front and moving to the back.

In third grade

- Improves comprehension while reading a variety of simple texts by thinking about what is known and asking and answering questions while reading.

- Applies word-analysis skills while reading by using phonics and simple context clues to figure out unknown words and using word parts — root words, prefixes, suffixes and similar words.

- Understands elements of literature — author, main character, setting — by coming to a conclusion about events, characters and settings in stories.

- Understands the characteristics of various simple genres — fables, realistic fiction, folk tales, poetry and humorous stories.

- Uses correct and appropriate language conventions when responding to text by correctly spelling common words, using capital letters and punctuation correctly, using appropriate and varied word choice and using complete sentences.

In sixth grade

- Uses strategies to figure out

unfamiliar words by sounding out new words when reading aloud, using context such as looking at the whole sentence and surrounding sentences, using phonics and using reference materials.

- Reads a variety of texts, such as social studies, math and science, as well as the local newspaper and popular magazines.

- Summarizes information from what has been read by explaining what happened in a book or story, what makes the main character tick and the author's reason for writing it.

- Understands how the elements and characteristics of literature interact by distinguishing whether an author is writing in the first or third person.

In ninth grade

- Uses decoding and comprehension strategies to get information from a wide range of materials — textbooks, classic novels such as *Great Expectations* and *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and magazines such as *Time* and *Psychology Today*.

- Demonstrates reading comprehension by explaining a character's traits, motivation and actions in the story, the theme and message or moral of a book.

In 12th grade

- Reads a variety of texts on a number of subjects to build knowledge and skills, conducting research on issues of personal interest, asking questions as the student ponders the issues, and making connections between new information and personal experiences.

- Demonstrates aesthetic appreciation of reading materials by commenting on the language, including the rhythm and rhyme of the text, critically evaluating texts in regard to their plots, themes, character traits, motives and the effect of the setting on the characters and the plot.

Free copies are available from CEDAR, 2000 L St. N.W., Suite 601, Washington, D.C. 20036, 202-223-1593.

Writing new rules on reading

Educators use federal mandate to try innovative approaches

The push is on to ensure literacy by third grade

By Tamara Henry
and Beth Ashley
USA TODAY

Two years ago, Vicky Velasquez was a fourth-grader who couldn't read.

Frustrated with constant schoolwork failures, Vicky had become a withdrawn 10-year-old. That was before Diane Crawford, principal at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas, tested Vicky and found she was an "extremely kinetic learner" — that is, she learned best through motion.

The solution: The youngster was taught pep-squad cheers that gave each letter of the alphabet a body movement.

"Somehow or another it clicked in her mind," Crawford says. "So when taking spelling tests, she pictures herself outside, making the moves."

Vicky is now a "solid" sixth-grader. The strategy, though unconventional, was successful. And that's what matters to Crawford. When it comes to reading, she says, "we really work with the child until we find something that works."

Across the nation, more and more educators

and community activists are trying to find "something that works," conventional or otherwise, to teach children to read.

The ability to read is a fundamental skill. Yet nearly half of the 44 million kindergarten-12th grade public school children can't read well.

The nation's Reading Report Card showed that in 1994, 41% of fourth-graders were reading below grade level, as were 31% of eighth-graders and 25% of high school seniors.

Experts say it's a crisis that can't be ignored. Richard Long of the International Reading Association considers below-grade-level reading as being functionally illiterate in today's high-tech, global economy. He says such reading skills were adequate in the 1970s but are not in the 21st century if the nation is to maintain its economic edge or high standard of living.

Alarmed by the statistics, President Clinton last August announced America Reads, a \$2.75 billion, five-year initiative designed to ensure that all children are literate by the third grade. Clinton proposed to offer federal funds to state,

local and national programs that would teach parents to help children read.

The initiative also would finance individual tutoring for children in kindergarten-third grade. Volunteer tutors are being recruited from all areas, including college students involved in the federal work-study program to finance their education.

The goal, says Carol Rasco, whom Clinton appointed to oversee America Reads, is for children to read "well and independently" at grade level.

On Friday, Houston will be the first city to launch its own America Reads program. Education Secretary Richard Riley will join Mayor Bob Lanier in Houston for a celebration that includes visits to elementary schools and literacy programs.

Other cities will follow, Rasco predicts, as will "some

states that will decide to do it as a statewide emphasis."

Other groups across the nation have major efforts to attack illiteracy. Among them:

► New York City's YMCA on Tuesday kicked off an extended school day program with literacy as the theme. YMCA of Greater New York president Paula Gavin says the \$5.5 million "Virtual Y" program will be opened in 200 schools over a two-year period, targeting

10,000 students in grades two-four. The program is considered the largest privately funded initiative in the Y's history and is an offshoot to both Clinton's program and an initiative of school chancellor Rudolph Crew.

"The estimates here in New York City are that only 40% of young people at the third grade are reading at grade level," Gavin says. "We're trying to take the best of what the Y has always done ... and add a real

focus on literacy."

► An 8-year-old program at the Boston Medical Center, now being replicated at clinics nationwide, has pediatricians "prescribing" parental reading sessions for children and sending a book home each time a child visits. The Reach Out and Read program began when pediatricians noticed that poor kids wanted to take books from clinic waiting rooms because they had none in their homes.

"On every single patient, we spend 10 minutes of the visit explaining how important it is to read," says Ilan Schwartz.

Kids at the clinic not only get gift books with each visit, but they also hear stories read by volunteers in the waiting room.

Schwartz says the children's progress is evaluated every six months during periodic check-ups. Children ages 4 and 5 "tell us how good the book was, and you can see how the moms spent some time with them."

More...

new rules on reading

continued...

Schwartz, a native of Mexico who is a resident at the center, says Latino patients "are very, very grateful" for the program. He explains that many are recent immigrants who have not yet had the time to find day care centers or early childhood programs for their youngsters. Also, he says, many have lived in countries that do not offer library services.

► The Reading Styles Institute in Syosset, N.Y., proposes a number of reading strategies at the 10 model schools it operates and the five new schools targeted to implement its program. Institute trainers work with 200 school districts a year and estimate it has trained 100,000 teachers in its 12-year history. Teachers are taught to identify a child's strength and teach reading using those strengths, whether it's using phonics, whole language, a combination of the two, recorded books or choral reading.

Marie Carbo, executive director of the institute, says third-graders are the targeted group for school literacy programs because this is the age when a shift begins in schools. She says teachers start to place more demands on students with homework, book reports and other activities that require reading comprehension and analysis. A child who cannot read at the expected level in the third grade suddenly is at a great disadvantage in all other subjects and will quickly fall behind his or her peers.

Robb Elementary School, where Vicky Velasquez attended the fourth grade, formed a partnership with the institute in 1993, and many of the institute's strategies have been adopted as part of the curriculum throughout the entire Uvalde school district. Vicky was among the first group of students to benefit from the institute's program.

Crawford, Robb's principal, also tells of Richard Trevino, who had difficulty reading in the fourth grade, too, but now is a reader. Tests showed he had "scoptic sensitivity," in which black letters on white paper produced a glare. Crawford says that help for Richard was "as simple as running his work off on color paper. It wasn't glaring any more, he could really read it."

Farm families make up most of Uvalde; 20% are migrant farmers.

Seventy-eight percent of the students are Hispanic, many have limited proficiency in English, and 75% come from families considered economically disadvantaged.

When the school district first used the strategies in 1993, only 21% of the students at some grade levels had correctly answered 70% or more of questions on a reading test — the level that indicates mastery of

the material. By last May, says assistant superintendent Barbara Skipper, nearly 70% of the students were passing the test with a score above 70.

Skipper says the success of the Reading Styles Institute program has now made Uvalde teachers believe that all children can learn to read by the third grade.

But to accomplish that goal, she says, "you have to be very focused on reading and very committed. ... That means that we sometimes teach reading more than once during the day. We sometimes keep the kids after school and work on reading. We work with them in the summer on reading."

It's a goal worth the effort, she says.

"If they can't read, they can't do science or social studies or math. If we want kids to be productive in the future, they are going to have to be able to read."

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Coalition reaches out to urban minorities

By Lori Sharn
USA TODAY

The Christian Coalition unveils a plan today to raise \$10 million for African-American and Hispanic churches in the inner cities.

It's part of an 8-point plan called the Samaritan Project that aims to "combat poverty and restore hope." The coalition is made up largely of white, conservative evangelicals.

"We have a special responsibility to create compassionate, faith-based alternatives to the tragedy of the welfare state," says Executive Director Ralph Reed.

Critics are skeptical. They say many coalition goals hurt minorities, immigrants and the disadvantaged.

The agenda is "a ploy to put a kinder, gentler face on very punitive programs that do nothing to help the poor," says Jill Hanauer, executive director of the Interfaith Alliance, which was formed to counter politically active Christian conservatives.

The Christian Coalition supported legislation, signed by President Clinton last year, to give states control over welfare money. The legislation cuts off benefits to many legal immigrants and reduces aid to unwed mothers who have more children.

Reed says new solutions are needed now that welfare is no longer a federal guarantee.

Cash grants would go to 1,000 urban churches working with young people, particularly "at risk" youth.

Reed says he plans to raise \$1 million in 1997, and the rest by the year 2000.

The coalition already has raised \$750,000 for black and white churches burned by arsonists.

The Samaritan Project includes several proposals that already have sparked fights in Congress:

► Vouchers for low-income children to attend private schools. A demonstration project would pay for 1,000 to 2,000 scholarships in 100 cities. Total cost: \$250 to \$500 million.

► A \$500 tax credit to people who both give money and volunteer time to organizations that help the poor. Total cost: \$1 billion-\$5 billion.

► Allow states to pay for faith-based drug treatment programs.