

HELPING NON-READERS

GRADES 4-12

INTRODUCTION: OPTIONS FOR READING PROGRAMS

With increasing concern for workforce readiness in our information-driven society, reading has moved to the top of the domestic agenda. From the national Reading Excellence Act to the newly funded Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (CIERA), significant new research and resources are being channeled toward programs to teach the youngest students, between kindergarten and third grade, how to read.

But what about the years after third grade? The latest National Association of Educational Progress (NAEP) report shows that 39 percent of fourth graders fall below a basic reading level; by twelfth grade that figure is still 23 percent. Early intervention initiatives should impact those figures in the future, but they will not eliminate the segment of students who have significant difficulty acquiring basic reading skills, generally estimated at 20 percent (Foorman, Francis, Beeler, Winikates, & Fletcher, 1997).

Given the realities of education funding, middle-grade and secondary reading programs tend to be reduced as emerging readers win a greater share of the education dollar. In many middle and high schools, reading specialists are becoming rare luxuries, and the number of students they can serve is dropping.

To fill the gap, there is an increasing emphasis on reading in the content areas. Many effective questioning and organizational strategies have been developed to help students comprehend more of what they read. But content area reading strategies can only exist with existing reading skills: they don't teach students how to read. Content area teachers cannot be expected to make their students literate on top of teaching them the required subject matter.

THE CHALLENGES OF NON-READERS IN THE LATER GRADES

Students with very weak reading skills have serious academic problems, which can develop into social problems as they reach the middle and high school years. Through years of failure and labeling, they often develop hard shells of resistance to reading. They compensate with strong auditory and observational skills, generally trying to avoid notice. Feeling helpless and hopeless, they may be vulnerable to anti-social behavior (Johnston & Winograd, 1985).

Stanovich (1994) describes a "Matthew effect," the downward spiral of students who start out having trouble acquiring alphabetic coding skills and recognizing words. With these barriers, they cannot read for meaning, and find reading increasingly unrewarding. They practice less and have more negative experiences around reading. Increasingly, they avoid reading or merely

tolerate it, without really engaging in what's being read. Emotional side effects begin to be associated with school, and the entire school experience is impacted.

To escape from this spiral, students need an instructional environment that fosters the optimism that they can improve. Motivation must be as important a focus as skills development. Effective programs provide students access to interesting reading materials at their own levels, opportunities to share reading experiences, activities they choose and direct, interspersed with more prescriptive lessons . . . but above all, effective programs provide instructors who convey a message of faith in the student's capability to achieve success.

DESIGNING READING PROGRAMS THAT WORK

To rescue non-readers, we need programs that teach them to read well enough to profit from their education. The research in this realm is voluminous — and highly controversial. Although most would agree that non-readers need explicit phonics instruction and practice in the beginning phases of reading acquisition, there is serious disagreement about how, when, and to what degree to integrate contextual reading. Research on which types of classroom programs have the greatest benefits for non-readers, and why specific remediation approaches do and don't produce results, are not generally accepted. According to researchers G. Reid Lyons and Louise Moats of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, "Clearly, the scientific guidelines we seek for teaching practices will take more time and funding and will not be easily accomplished."

Practitioners cannot wait for consensus from the research front. They must develop approaches based on selected research, balancing theories with direct experience to meet the pressing needs of their students. By continuous monitoring and adjustment, drawing from the wide realm of commercially available products, and tapping outside expertise as resources are available, schools can create programs that make readers of all students. The only prerequisites are leadership, commitment, and support.

In the following pages, we have described a sampling of reading programs that appear to be working for older non-readers. These programs were identified by personal referrals, rather than methodical research, so many effective models are not represented. The results reported in each summary have not been verified and should not be used as a basis for comparing the programs.

This document is intended as an initial resource for Oregon school administrators and educators, to give you a sense of the range of reading programs you can offer. We hope the testimonials and contact names will give you extra insight into programs you may be considering, and will open new avenues for researching your choice of approaches. Oregon schools have an obligation to help every student achieve academic standards. As the gateway to all other academic learning, fluent reading must be a first priority.

You will find Options 1, 2 and 3 on this website.

READING RESOURCES, BOOKS

Sources of Books for Low-Ability Readers

Kids In Between
(800) 481-2799

<http://www.kidsinbetween.com>

Consumable workbooks and reproducible units for all content areas. Written at about a 4.0 reading level, for students who can handle difficult concepts but need extra help with reading.

Steck-Vaughn <http://www.steck-vaughn.com/>

A searchable database of more than 100 high-interest, low-level reading books

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OPTION 1: Adopt a Structured Curriculum

Structured curricula offer schools a way to completely redesign their reading programs, by adopting a comprehensive package of well-tested training and materials. Schools that adopt these curricula have gone through serious analyses of their needs and resources, and are ready to commit to dramatic changes not only in what they teach but in the way they teach.

The three programs described in the following pages are different in many ways, but they are similar in how they were developed and how they must be delivered for maximum effectiveness. As research-based programs, they were all designed around well-documented theories on how students learn, and have been implemented with careful study.

The most significant shared characteristic of these three programs is a highly structured approach to teaching, with explicitly planned lessons that must be delivered sequentially, in a controlled environment, and with a specific teacher-student communication style.

Content is developmental and comprehensive, with various language arts strands strategically integrated throughout the curriculum. Lessons are carefully planned around a very specific knowledge base and a well-defined set of skills. Readings, exercises, and techniques are appropriate to the age of the learner.

Communications between teachers and students are defined so there is little room for misinterpretation. Teachers know what to say and what to ask in order to engage their

students and to reveal their understanding of the subject matter. This requires extensive

professional development, training, and in-class coaching.

Instruction depends on strong teacher guidance, close supervision and coaching, not only during lessons but also when students are working alone or in small groups. Gradually throughout the course of the program, scaffolding is removed and a more student-guided approach takes over.

Organization is by ability groups, as determined by sophisticated diagnostic testing. Instruction is tailored to the identified strengths and needs of the students.

Monitoring and assessments are geared to provide feedback quickly and very regularly.

Some teachers welcome the opportunity to teach under a highly structured system, where their lesson plans and student activities are prepared for them each day. Others consider this an infringement on their professionalism. Reports from schools that have adopted these programs suggest that once staff members have committed, their response is increasingly positive as they see dramatic results in their students. But it's a very personal process: political pressures, staff resources, and the urgency of the need will all impact a school's or district's choice to invest in a structured program.

FOWLER MIDDLE SCHOOL

A Corrective Reading Pull-out Model

CONTACT

Janet Kadel, Teacher

Thomas R. Fowler Middle School
Tigard-Tualatin School District
(503) 684-2244

Bryan Wickman

Association for Direct Instruction
(541) 683-7543

POPULATION

Sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade students
Currently serving a total of 145 students
The program does not serve all students who are below grade level: the number of students who can participate in the program is limited by staffing.

BACKGROUND

Corrective Reading is one curricular element of the Direct Instruction model, a comprehensive school reform program. Direct Instruction was developed from work on teacher-directed instruction begun by Siegfried Engelmann at the University of Illinois in the late 1960s and continued at the University of Oregon. It has a very strong research base, and is being used in more than 150 schools nationwide. The Corrective Reading curriculum can be implemented independently of the full Direct Instruction program.

DIAGNOSIS

All sixth-grade students are screened in the fall, using two one-minute fluency tests. These curriculum-based tests, developed by University of Oregon Corrective Reading consultants, are based on grade-level social studies and literature passages. If fluency is low, students take a placement test to see if they qualify for the Corrective Reading program. Seventh- and

eighth-grade students take the fluency test if they are new to the school or if their teachers refer them to the program. The same fluency test is applied at the end of the year to assess progress.

PROGRAM

Fowler is in the third year of its Corrective Reading program. In daily, full-period classes, students move through four levels of decoding and comprehension lessons. Corrective Reading materials cover primer-level to eighth grade. Lessons are highly scripted and include daily fluency tests. A daily lesson includes word attack skills, group story reading with oral comprehension questions, workbook comprehension questions, and timed reading “checkouts” or fluency tests.

“That first year, four or five months into the program, my assistant and I took a few minutes to go around the room and ask the kids how they felt about the reading program. Their answers had us both in tears. You can see the self-esteem growing in these kids, just by their body language. You hear it from other teachers. I truly believe in this program.” JK

Nine staff members are trained to provide the program: five certified teachers, and four instructional assistants. They provide a total of 15 classes, each with three to 15 students. The classes mix IEP and other students.

Currently, Corrective Reading students are pulled out

from their language arts classes. But next year, the school is changing to a flex schedule with totally integrated classes. Since language arts will be taught as part of a four-class block, students will have to be pulled from their electives or fitness classes instead.

Teachers who are not directly involved in the program but whose students are pulled out of their classes are asked to be supportive in their interactions with students and parents. They don't require students to make up the work they miss. They try to schedule their classes so that Corrective Reading students don't miss all the "fun stuff," and encourage students in the progress they are making.

Some parents don't want their children involved in Corrective Reading because of a general social stigma around pull-out programs. Fowler requires that parents sign waivers to document that they have refused to participate, and that they understand their refusal could impact their student's ability to meet the benchmarks. Program administrators believe this helps parents see the importance placed on the program, and protects the school legally.

MOTIVATION

Students' motivation comes in part from the fact that they know what to expect every day. Subliminally, that gives them a lot of confidence. The program emphasizes

socialization and team-work, which is especially powerful at the middle-grade level Daily fluency checks (done by peers) are highly motivating.

RESULTS

Fowler reports a "phenomenal increase" in student reading ability. While most new programs take two or three years to establish, the Corrective Reading program showed impressive results after the first year. These gains are measurable in fluency test scores.

"We're hearing from teachers in every subject area that these kids are just generally doing better." JK

Kadel also counts these indicators of success:

- Teachers reported that students who had never voluntarily read aloud were volunteering to read in class.
- Students and parents reported that students taking the Corrective Reading class were finding other subject area classes easier and their grades improving.
- Students told teachers they could read! They wrote notes thanking the teachers.
- Parents thanked them for teaching their children to read.

| | 1996-1997 Fluency Gain (Mean; Excludes ESL Students) | 1997-1998 Fluency Gain (Average; Excludes ESL Students) |
|--|---|--|
| Students <u>not</u> in Corrective Reading Program | 15.8 wpm | 23.0 wpm |
| Students <u>in</u> Corrective Reading Program | 32.5 wpm | 25.2 wpm |

IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation began with a day-long workshop for all staff. The consultant followed up with two or three observation visits. Since then, Kadel has been training other staff to provide the Corrective Reading program.

COSTS

Grant monies paid for the implementation of Fowler's Corrective Reading program in 1996-97. The grant enabled the school to buy materials and train teachers to teach the program. (See Woodburn Middle School summary for Corrective Reading implementation costs.)

Since then, the school has been using its own funds for the program. Expenses include:

- consumable workbooks — about \$13 each
- teachers' guides (2 for each level) — about \$120 each
- student books — about \$15-22 each

"It can be a difficult program for teachers because it can get very mundane. But it's worth it, because it really works. For kids, that predictability — knowing what to expect — is great for building confidence. And teachers really can add some creative elements to keep things interesting and motivating."

JK

OTHER USERS

Anna Lee James, Teacher
Waldo Middle School
Salem-Keizer School District
(503) 399-3215

Waldo provides Corrective Reading for all students below reading grade level in grades six, seven, and eight. Because of costs, only the sixth-grade students are using the comprehension component of the program, but administrators are hoping to start using it in the other grades next year.

"To receive the full effect, a teacher needs to commit completely to teaching the program by the book. Mixing it with other programs confuses the students and dilutes the scope and sequence which has been so thoughtfully constructed."

"Yes, the program motivates non-readers to read. The scripted lessons, sound reinforcement, dictation, point system, daily oral reading, reading checkouts with partners, timed readings for accuracy, fluency, and rate all are organized to give poor readers confidence in their skills. "

"Block teachers are telling me that many students who previously never volunteered to read are doing so now. I've noticed increased fluency in seventh and eighth grade as well. I only have two sixth graders not being successful with the program, and both have severe attendance problems."

WOODBURN SCHOOL DISTRICT

All school staff trained to teach Corrective Reading

CONTACT

Brenda Layton,
Executive Director, Instructional Services
Woodburn School District
(503) 981-9555

POPULATION

Sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade students

A diverse, multi-lingual population (55 percent Hispanic, 20 percent Russian)

DIAGNOSIS

Early in the implementation process, the Corrective Reading consultant trained a cadre of assessment providers. This team went into the feeder elementary schools at the end of last year to do a one-on-one assessment with every fifth-grade student. Through this assessment, incoming middle school children were placed in appropriate Corrective Reading groups before the school year started, so they were ready to take off as soon as they arrived in the fall.

All older middle school students, including newcomers, are also assessed and placed in either Corrective Reading groups or the Junior Great Books program.

PROGRAM

The Corrective Reading program was established in two Woodburn middle schools for the 1998/99 school year. In both schools, the program revolves around a 45-minute school-wide reading period. This period does not replace language arts classes for any students.

During the reading period, students who are below grade level take Corrective Reading classes; other students take reading classes based on the Junior Great Books program. All

school staff are trained in both methods, so they can teach the programs interchangeably. Having every educator act as a reading instructor for this one period of the day allows Woodburn to keep the Corrective Reading groups small, as the program requires. A .5 FTE reading coordinator manages program logistics.

Corrective Reading demands a strict behavioral code, and strong consequences for breaking that code.

Nothing is allowed to interfere with reading time. Woodburn teachers say they have seen much improved behavior and better attendance since the program has been in place.

“We had 100 percent buy-in from staff to start using this program. Some of them were hesitant because it seemed so strict. But they were so frustrated over our students’ inability to decode, they were willing to try something dramatically different. Now, the feedback I’m getting from them is nothing but positive — even the ones who weren’t too interested to begin with.” BL

Corrective Reading is touted as an effective means of teaching ESL students, providing them a forum for developing English language skills. However, Woodburn found the program wasn’t working for some English as a Second Language students with

very low skills. With the help of the Corrective Reading consultant, the schools have converted to using Horizons, another SRA program, with those students.

Currently, Woodburn middle schools are using only the decoding component of the Corrective Reading program. Both schools are considering adopting the comprehension component in the next year or two.

RESULTS

Woodburn has no formal results yet: the program is in its first year and post-testing will be done after this document goes to press. But Layton says anecdotal evidence is very promising, and they expect to see dramatic improvements in students' reading achievement.

IMPLEMENTATION

After considerable research, Woodburn decided to model its program on that of Harriet Tubman Middle School in Portland. The same Corrective Reading consultant, Gary Johnson, helped to develop both programs.

Initially, Johnson provided a two-and-a-half-day basic-level training for all Woodburn middle school staff. Key staff received one additional day of advanced training.

A key component of the Corrective Reading programs is ongoing oversight by the Corrective Reading consultant. In this start-up year, he visits every couple of weeks, sitting in on classes to make sure the teacher is presenting the course correctly. Periodically, he meets with staff to discuss student progress. He maintains a database detailing the progress each student is making, and uses it to help staff identify and address students who need special attention.

COSTS

Woodburn has funded its Corrective Reading program by pooling statewide planning funds and consolidated grants. The district spent approximately \$8,000 for the consulting contract for one year, plus materials. (See Fowler Middle School summary for materials costs.) Bryan Wickman of the Association for Direct.

Instruction stresses that every school and every program is different; costs vary considerably depending on how the program is implemented.

“We’re very excited and hopeful. The teachers have told me they really believe the results are going to be great.” BL

LANGUAGE!

A comprehensive, integrated language arts curriculum

CONTACT

Angelee Eames, Trainer
208-394-9455
aeames@micron.net

POPULATION

Language! is designed for elementary, middle, and high school students with delays in the acquisition of reading, writing, and spelling. The curriculum is appropriate for use in regular education, special education, resource, Title 1, ESL, and other at-risk populations.

BACKGROUND

The Language! curriculum was piloted with research funding assistance from the National Center for Learning Disabilities from 1994 to 1995. It is currently being used in school districts around the country.

DIAGNOSIS

Teachers begin by administering a simple placement test that measures encoding (spelling) mastery for each unit's phonology strand. Then students are placed in an appropriate unit, based on placement test results, writing samples, and teacher judgment.

PROGRAM

The curriculum is composed of 54 sequential, cumulative units of study, divided into three major levels. Each level reflects about a year's study, although older students and those in longer blocks may move considerably faster. Each of the units includes several different language arts strands — such as grammar, composition, comprehension, and usage — integrated into the reading, writing, and spelling curricula. The program is comprehensive: no additional English, spelling, vocabulary, or language arts texts are required.

Language! is structured: teachers directly teach each unit's concepts sequentially and cumulatively. But within the structured format are many aspects of whole language: reading aloud, student involvement in writing and editing their own work, and exercises to develop spoken language abilities and higher-level thinking skills.

Wide supplementary reading is an integral part of the curriculum. Curriculum units are coded by readability. Computer software, accessing 10,000 titles in 15 different interest categories, allows teachers to print out lists of books that match their students' curriculum level.

Language! is generally implemented on a whole-district basis, with participation by targeted teachers who are willing to depart from their traditional curricula and teaching methods. The whole-district approach allows consistency from school to school. As the student changes buildings, his needs are already documented and his plan is in place. He can pick up the program exactly where he left off.

Program research shows it to be highly effective for non-English speakers, even those who are non-literate in their own languages.

"I talked to one student who was a junior and had started at the very beginning level. He said 'I'm just afraid I'm not going to get through the whole program before I'm out of school! I really don't want to quit till I'm done.'" AE

MOTIVATION

Eames says three factors motivate students to succeed in the Language! curriculum:

- The goal is attractive — They desperately want to learn to read and write.
- The effort is realistic — They start out at their own level, where they can do what you're asking them to do. And they're working in groups, without the tedium of a workbook-centered program.
- The goal is attainable — They see themselves working along a continuum, and they don't want to quit till they get to the end.

RESULTS

The pilot study behind the Language! program showed middle school and high school students who participated for an average of one semester (20 weeks) averaged gains of more than three years in reading, writing, and spelling. (Green, 1996)

Language! program literature reports that similar results are being documented in middle and high schools currently using the program, while elementary students are making gains of approximately two years during one academic year.

IMPLEMENTATION

Teachers learn how to assess and teach the Language! curriculum through a five-day training course. The course includes a review of research in reading delay as well as intense preparation for teaching all of the linguistic aspects of reading, spelling, writing, and language. Modifications to fit different conditions are also addressed.

Another course, only two days long, is available for administrators, support staff, content area teachers, and others who will not be directly responsible for students in the program.

The district and Language! trainer develop a five-year plan that includes regular site visits and training of local coaches to provide ongoing service within their own schools.

COSTS

- 5-day training: \$7,500 per district (50-70 people) plus trainer's travel expenses
- Initial training kit: \$350 per teacher includes Instructor Manual, one set of nine Student Books, one set of Language Readers, one set of phoneme awareness materials, one set of Sounds and Letters Cards, and other materials
- Student Books: \$5.25/book. Most students need three books/year.
- Language Readers: \$49/set. Teachers need about five sets to have small group reading.
- Follow-up consulting: \$1,500/day plus trainer's travel expenses

LINKS

A free video which overviews the curriculum is available from publisher Sopris West (800) 547-6747 or at www.sopriswest.com.

A thorough overview of the Language! program is available at www.nice-usa.com.

"You're able to train secondary teachers to teach reading from the beginning, and they've never had that. They can start with students who have never learned the first principles of reading, and take them up through ninth-grade literacy." AE

USER'S COMMENTS

Kevin Lancaster, Superintendent

Bliss School District, Idaho

(208) 324-8137

The Bliss School District began using Language! this year in its elementary, middle, and high schools. About 33 percent of its students speak Spanish as their first language.

“We trained all our teachers so that everyone started with the same mindset. Everyone’s using the same terminology, and the fifth-grade teacher will pick up right where the fourth-grade teacher left off. We used to have six elementary teachers all working hard but in different directions. We’ve learned that if we’re all on the same boat, we’ll go a lot further.”

“It’s unbelievable what these kids have done. I don’t think there are five kids out of a hundred who haven’t made two- to three-year’s progress since they started this fall. We’re excited — we’re beyond excited! I feel like there’s nobody we can’t teach to read.”

“Not long ago, I had a teacher sitting in my office with tears in her eyes telling me that for the first time since she started teaching seven years ago, she really feels like she has delivered something these kids can build on. She said, ‘I just want to thank you for putting this tool in my hand.’”

“Everyone’s bought in. The parents are giving us all kinds of encouragement, the board has become very generous with the funds we need. Nothing helps build support like success.”

Other Users

Lynne Tafoya, Principal

Fern Bacon Middle School

Sacramento City Unified School District, California

(916) 433-5000

Janet Howell

Jerome High School

Jerome Jt School District, Idaho

(208) 324-8137

BOYS TOWN

Four 16-week courses, leading from letters and sounds to information integration

CONTACT

Dr. Mary E. Curtis,
Reading Center Director

Dr. Ann Marie Longo,
Associate Director
Boys Town, Nebraska
(402) 498-1111

POPULATION

Middle school and high school students

BACKGROUND

The FAME reading curriculum was developed by two former Harvard Reading Laboratory researchers at the Boys Town Reading Center. It was designed to serve the full range of low-ability readers who come to Boys Town, generally from two years to six years below grade level. It also had to give results in a short period of time, to reflect the average 18-22 months stay of students placed (mostly through courts and social service agencies) at Boys Town.

The program has been in use since 1992, and has been adopted by 32 sites in 17 states. Some of those sites are individual schools, and some are school districts composed of many schools.

DIAGNOSIS

FAME does not include special diagnostic tools. Decisions about where to place students in the curriculum can be made with any existing data, including standardized test results and curriculum-based measures. Boys Town's own program uses the Diagnostic Assessments of Reading Test (Roswell and Chall, 1992).

PROGRAM

The curriculum consists of four courses:

- **Foundations of reading** for students reading below the fourth-grade level. Teaches the relationships between the most common letter combinations and sounds.
- **Adventures in reading** for students reading between the fourth- and sixth-grade levels. Emphasizes the ability to quickly recognize words and their meanings.
- **Mastery of meaning** for students reading between the sixth- and eighth-grade levels. Focuses on improving knowledge of word meanings.
- **Explorations** for students reading at the eighth-grade level. Teaches ability to integrate information in text.

Each of these courses is about 16 weeks long. In each course, students meet for about 45 minutes a day, five days a week. The assumption is that these courses will be taken as electives, without interfering with the student's regular program.

Curriculum materials and techniques are designed to appeal to adolescents. Each of the courses includes time for computer and other games that support the curriculum. Students work in small groups, interacting with the teacher and peers as they read aloud and discuss their reading. Novels and informational text are chosen for readability and interest.

“These kids have been through lots of reading programs where they weren’t successful, where people tried to make them appear successful by making the curriculum easier. But they know better — they know they still can’t read. You have to show them that first week that they can make progress. Show them the results other kids have experienced, and say, ‘I can’t guarantee it will be the same for you, but if you really stick with it, you can do it too.’”
AML

MOTIVATION

Motivation is a major focus for FAME. The program encourages pre-testing every Monday and post-testing every Friday, to show students how quickly they are learning. “We teach them something the very first week,” says Longo. “That’s how you hook them.” Emphasis is on individual improvement, with success defined in terms of how much the student has learned, rather than how he performs. The program also relies on high-interest reading materials and computer games to keep students motivated.

RESULTS

Boys Town has compiled results from 70 replications of the FAME program in sites across the country. Based on a variety of norm-referenced, standardized tests, the results show:

- Foundations students average one or more years of growth in one semester;
- Adventures students average one and a half or more years of growth in one semester;
- Mastery students average about one year of growth for one semester of instruction;

- Explorations students average about six months of growth for 18 weeks of instruction.

As one of the services provided to FAME users, Boys Town will take a school’s raw numbers from pre- and post-tests, and summarize and interpret them in graph form.

IMPLEMENTATION

Boys Town provides training on site, and also at its own Reading Center in Nebraska. Generally, schools need one day of training for each of the four courses they plan to adopt. Boys Town also recommends at least one follow-up consultation visit once implementation has begun. Follow-up consultations include observing and providing feedback for classroom teachers.

“It’s great, especially for kids who need structure. They love it because it’s not at all condescending.” SJ

COSTS

The cost of the training is based on the number of trainers and the number of training/consultation days. A trainer is \$700/day plus expenses.

At this time, curriculum materials are included with the follow-up consultation. However, that will change soon: the materials are scheduled to be published, after which they will be sold separately.

The program requires several commercial CDs, available for about \$35 each. Students also need reading materials: three or four novels each for the Foundation and Adventures courses, a series of informational text for the Mastery course, and good resource materials, like encyclopedias, for the Explorations course.

USERS' ADVICE

Marvin Haiman, Principal
Torrington Middle School
Goshen County School District 1, Wyoming
(307) 532-7014

Torrington Middle School uses Boys Town's Foundations, Adventure, and Mastery programs for seventh- and eighth-grade students. Students are identified mid-year in sixth grade, based on a Northwest Evaluation Association reading comprehension test and the Diagnostic Assessment of Reading Test.

"The service is phenomenal. Staff are extremely knowledgeable. They're clearly experienced with working with real live schools, and have a good feel for the realities of a public school district. We have gone through three trainings in the last three years, and they've all been excellent."

"You have to honor the concepts and content of the program. Sometimes as experienced educators, we take programs and modify them to fit our time schedules or our staffing or other special constraints. We've found that really doesn't serve the best interests of our students."

Sharon Johnson, Secondary Special Education Coordinator

Granite School District
Salt Lake City, Utah
(801) 268-8547

In the Granite School District, 30 teachers are currently using the FAME program in 10 high schools and junior highs. John says the results are dramatic when teachers follow the curriculum and teach the course according to instructions. But with so many schools and teachers, it's hard to get consistency in how teachers apply the program.

She recommends starting small, training just a few teachers to get the model well established before bringing on more classes. She also suggests that large districts assign a local manager to oversee the program.

"I can see from the data exactly which teachers are doing it the way it's written, and which ones are tweaking it. When they teach it the way it's designed to be taught, we're seeing kids make two to three years' progress in a year."

"In the first two courses, there's not much of a comprehension emphasis. Teachers struggle with that; they're so used to getting kids to respond to questions. But that's exactly what the curriculum developers intended: teach them how to read first. Also, teachers complain that those first two courses have minimal writing. Again, it's part of the overall plan. They'll get writing in the next course. And teachers don't like the limited number of kids in a group (10). They think, 'Funding is tight, why can't I put five more in here and help them too?' But the data shows that 10 is really the maximum you can serve — after that, you diminish the results for everyone."

Helping Non-Readers 4th Grade and Beyond

OPTION 2:

Establish Individualized Tutoring

One-on-one instruction is a powerful tool for helping fluent readers. It gives slower students an opportunity to engage in reading materials and the reading process, concentrating their efforts in a way that's not possible in the full classroom. Immediate, individualized feedback helps them pinpoint and remedy their areas of weakness. Concepts can be delivered at the right moment, and repeated as frequently as needed. And tutoring provides the foundation for a relationship that builds confidence and social growth.

The programs that follow represent a sampling of the many tutoring models used to teach reading on an individualized basis. Some of these programs depend on adult volunteers, while others engage older students in tutoring younger ones. Their commonalities are in the following areas:

STRONG STRUCTURAL BASE

The tutoring program is built on a well-researched instructional philosophy. It is thoroughly planned for smooth implementation and continuous evaluation and improvement.

Volunteers work under the supervision of a reading specialist or another experienced staff member. Tutoring sessions follow a regular format, that coordinates predictably with activities for days the students aren't tutored. The program is provided consistently over a long period of time.

PREPARATION OF TUTORS

Tutors receiving training appropriate to the program. Generally, programs that are highly scripted require less training, and those that

rely on the informed judgment of the tutor require more.

The same tutor works with the student for every session. Tutors are selected carefully, with consideration for their approach and attitude toward less-skilled readers. In their orientation, tutors develop a sense of empathy for their students and learn how to provide positive, constructive feedback. They are encouraged to bond with their students and to support them with verbal and nonverbal reinforcement.

APPROPRIATE INSTRUCTION

The tutor uses a scaffolding approach, enabling the student to complete tasks he couldn't otherwise do by providing just enough information or breaking the task into smaller, manageable pieces. But the tutor is only an active participant, with the student providing at least an equal share of the interaction.

Tutors explicitly model reading and reading strategies. They make reading more accessible and less mysterious by explaining their own thought processes as they encounter reading challenges. They read with skill and enthusiasm.

REGULAR MONITORING AND EVALUATION

A system is in place for tutors or students to track their progress. The coordinator monitors this system and intervenes as necessary.

CLEVELAND HIGH SCHOOL

Tutors who model how to read, understand, and enjoy text

CONTACT

Peter Thacker, Teacher
Cleveland High School
Portland School District
(503) 916-5120

POPULATION

Students in grades nine through 12 who have not passed the district reading comprehension test (Portland Achievement Levels Test). This test is generally passable by the average fifth-grade student. Some students also come through teacher referral or by their own choice. Anyone below the CIM standard is eligible.

About 50 percent are English as a Second Language students.

BACKGROUND

Cleveland's reading program has had tutoring as its backbone for 16 years.

DIAGNOSIS

Thacker tests students at the beginning of the year using an Informal Reading Inventory developed by Colin Dunkeld at Portland State. This IRI differs from traditional ones in that its comprehension questions are open-ended. Oral fluency is balanced by students' comprehension scores. The test is employed more to get a sense of students' strengths than to assign a particular benchmark level to their reading.

PROGRAM

Cleveland's tutoring program is based on an implicit modeling of reading and comprehension. Struggling readers are matched up with peers, college practicum students, parents, and other community volunteers. As tutors read and listen to there

students reading, they model fluent reading, thinking processes to draw meaning from a story or text, and sincere reading enjoyment. Tutor and reader establish a natural relationship, discussing and appreciating the story together.

Tutoring classes all meet daily for fifty-minute periods. Classes are limited to about 15 students. Cleveland has had as many as six classes at a time, and as few as three. Students are tutored four days a week, and work as a full class the fifth day. On Mondays, the teacher tells a story from his own experience, and students respond in their journals, writing about related experiences or feelings.

"There's tremendous excitement when a kid starts to really get inside a story. That happens when good reading is modeled by an adult or another student who loves to read."

PT

On tutoring days, students can read a book they have chosen themselves, or use their tutor for guided study for other classes. Work for other classes must be reading/writing-related, and at an appropriate level for their tutors' abilities. When their tutors are not available, students practice reading by themselves. The teacher and instructional assistant move around the room to help, but for the most part, students are able to sustain 45 minutes of concentrated reading on their own.

Thacker maintains a 1000-book library with a wide variety of materials, from children’s classics to romance, suspense, and science fiction. Tutors and students take turns reading aloud from these books. When the reader stumbles with a word, the tutor reads it instead of making the reader decode it. “The important thing is to concentrate on what’s going on in the story, and enjoy reading for the sake of reading,” says Thacker. “The tutor’s fluency has a very rapid effect on the student’s fluency.”

Peer tutors come into Thacker’s classroom every day, while adult tutors come in for one to four hours a week. Adults go through a one-and-a-half-hour orientation where Thacker explains the philosophy and general methodology of the program. “We provide structure, but unless there’s some kind of problem, we leave them alone. Everyone has her own way of doing things.”

“When they start asking questions about the text, you know you’ve got them hooked. They know what they know and don’t know. They finally understand the idea of reading for purpose, and caring about what they’re reading.” PT

There is an intuitive aspect to matching tutors with readers, but it helps to start by asking the reader for preferences. Do you want to be with someone your age? Someone older? Is it important whether it’s a male or a female? Sometimes readers have to compromise, but usually they find someone with whom they are comfortable.

To improve reading across the curriculum, all Cleveland teachers are encouraged to model reading and comprehension processes. Science teachers talk about what they’re reading in their spare time. Social studies teachers tell how they’ve struggled with a difficult text. They bring up questions as they read, link their current reading to what they’ve read in the past, and “think aloud” about the many ways they attack text.

Reading in the classrooms — silently and out loud, individually and in groups — is a priority in all classes. Teachers bring out questions from the text, and model how to process them: “What is the main point the author is trying to make here?” “What other things have I read that might help me understand this?”

MOTIVATION

Thacker says a good group of peer tutors makes all the difference to students’ motivation. There is some stigma in being in the reading class, but the impact is lessened as students get to know each other and get used to working together. For the student who has always been at the bottom, it’s nice to be connected with successful students — people who are hooked into the school. To have those people on their side and pulling for them is the primary draw for the program.

Another motivating factor is the classroom environment. It’s a safe, focused space, and that feels good to students coming in from complicated, high-stimulation conditions.

RESULTS

Students take the district achievement test at the end of the year (though they can make arrangements to take it earlier if they feel they are ready). On average, over 80 percent pass and move out of the class. Thacker says he doesn’t hold students back if they really don’t want to be in the class for a second year, but

that rarely happens. For the most part, students see the reading class as something that will help them. Once they pass, they have the skills to negotiate the rest of their high school experience without further intervention.

IMPLEMENTATION

This kind of program works best for teachers who like a lot of interaction with other adults. Thacker says it's not easy to start a tutoring program alone. His program was started with the help of an aide. "It's easy to burn out without extra support. The first month or so is pretty intense. But once you're established, the biggest problem is keeping yourself from getting bored! The teacher can feel kind of useless when everyone is with a tutor and things are running smoothly."

Thacker acknowledges the advantage of programs like HOSTS, which help schools build their tutoring programs and maintain a network of users to act as supportive community for new programs. He welcomes teachers and administrators to visit his program and learn from his experience.

COSTS

The only significant cost is staffing. Thacker recommends one teacher and one aide. It's helpful to have start-up money for a classroom library, and several hundred dollars a year to replenish lost and damaged books.

GILHAM ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Rebuilding neural pathways to eliminate reading problems

CONTACT

Paula Wilkes, Ph.D, Teacher
Gilham Elementary School
Eugene School District
(541) 687-3466

Jill Schwimmer, Ph.D
Reading World, Eugene
(541) 687-8077

POPULATION

375 of Gilham's 500 students are involved in the program, either as tutors or as readers.

Tutors are third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade students. Every fourth- and fifth-grade student is in the lab as either a tutor or a reader.

BACKGROUND

The Gilham literacy uses techniques developed by Jill Schwimmer, a researcher and practitioner in reading and writing literacy. During the past six years Schwimmer has been developing a system based on reading theory and brain research, which she has applied in school and workplace literacy programs. She has worked with hundreds of students — children and adults — to eliminate their reading barriers, and now helps teachers learn and apply her methods.

Schwimmer says the process works for many different kinds of reading barriers including dyslexia and Attention Deficit Disorder. It does not work for students with brain damage, Downs syndrome or fetal alcohol syndrome.

DIAGNOSIS

Wilkes listens to every one of Gilham's 500 students read at the beginning of the school

year. "It doesn't take too long to listen to a paragraph," she says, "and you can often tell by the end of one sentence whether the student has a reading problem. You don't have to make him read more and experience that frustration."

For diagnosis, she uses grade-level material such as comprehension cards or a trade book. Depending on the kind of words the students don't know, she tries them on easier material. Usually, a child with severe learning problems will have trouble with any level material.

"I've gone through a great deal of education, all the way through getting a doctorate, and I've never learned anything like this. I'm so sold on this program. It's unbelievable how much it's helping."
PW

Wilkes says she can tell by listening what the student's problems are. When she introduces the reader to the tutor, she tells the tutor what kind of problem they'll be working on. Reading problems break down into three main categories:

Disfluency — the student reads with strange pausing, not like fluent speech

No reading conscience — the student makes mistakes and doesn't realize it. He skips words and sentences, reading as if the text were a horizontal list of words. The text makes no sense to him.

Over-pronunciation — the student is too focused on pronouncing every phonic segment.

PROGRAM

In the Gilham Elementary School literacy lab, peer tutoring is making dramatic improvements in students' reading abilities. Using Jill Schwimmer's technique for building and rebuilding neural pathways, struggling readers are turned into "wonderful readers," often in a matter of months.

"The power is that you can train kids to apply the program. The theoretical assumptions are very complex, but the application is simple. Once you train teachers to understand the theory, they can monitor the tutors to make sure they're following the rules."
JS

Paula Wilkes has been using a literacy lab format for five years, but it's just within the last two years that she has been using Schwimmer's tutoring process. She explains Schwimmer's technique as a means of helping students build the correct mix of 1) knowledge of the world, 2) basic vocabulary, 3) phonics,

and 4) language structure. Students with reading problems don't have the right mix, and need tutors to intervene with modeling and feedback.

"One half of their training is learning to read fluently. The other half is developing a reading conscience, so they know when they've made a mistake. Each session spirals between those two. They experience wonderful reading by the tutor, then they read and the tutor acts as their reading conscience. They learn what it feels like for reading to be nice and smooth. "At the beginning of the school year, Wilkes models the tutoring process to train the tutors, and pairs them up with emerging or struggling readers. In three years, she's only had to remove three tutors from the program.

The pairs spend half an hour twice a week in the lab. IEP students come into the lab four days a week, spending two days with tutors and two days with the lab's collection of books on tape. Although the tapes lack the effects of personal feedback, Wilkes says they are a great motivator for students to learn to read.

The program does not require special reading material, but it's important to have the student read at a level that's appropriate to his abilities. Otherwise, the child is focused on the vocabulary or information that he doesn't understand, and can't improve fluency. Wilkes uses non-fiction trade books and comprehension cards (any publisher's will do) with three to four paragraphs of non-fiction information.

Many students change from being readers to being tutors in the course of the school year. The tutor tells Wilkes when the reader is ready to make the transition. Wilkes sits next to the student and has him read something he

has never read before, at a grade level beyond his own. If the reading is smooth and without mistakes, the student is done being tutored.

Each year, the program gets easier to run, as a cadre of experienced tutors moves up through the grades. Wilkes speculates that the program would be especially successful in an area with a elementary school and middle school, or a middle school and high school close together, so older tutors could move between buildings.

RESULTS

For tracking progress, Wilkes primarily uses the computerized STAR component of the Accelerated Reader program. It tests comprehension using a CLOZE sentence completion system. She finds that STAR has a high correlation to state assessment tests. She does a STAR assessment of every reader at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year.

She also examines the results of the state achievement tests for third- and fifth-grade students, and the Metropolitan Achievement Tests for second- and fourth-grade students. These indicators show students in her program make more than one year's growth in one year's time. With few exceptions, disabled readers become competent readers in the course of a year.

For emerging readers, Wilkes says the progress is much more rapid. "The learning curve goes up incredibly fast. They can read anything!"

Schwimmer does not maintain complete data from schools using her program. However, she says, "for every 12 hours of instruction, the reader improves by one grade level on a standardized reading test. Most of the time,

the program can eliminate any reading problem within a year."

"I'm interested in eliminating reading problems — not getting kids to do a little better so they can manage the text. I want to make the problem totally gone."
JS

IMPLEMENTATION

Schwimmer usually starts by providing a one-and-a-half- day training program for a large group of people interested in the program. The group might include administrators, teachers, aides, parents, etc. Then she does a one-week workshop with the person or people who will be leading the program. That workshop combines instruction and working with students.

Schwimmer comes back on site a month later to check the program, and is available for regular telephone consultations.

Wilkes welcomes other teachers to observe her lab before setting up their own programs. She recommends starting a small-scale program before going to a whole-school program like her own. To implement her program, she followed these steps:

- listen to readers to determine who are the readers and who are tutors
- train the tutors in the basic model:
- four half-hour sessions with the tutors to help them memorize the steps they will go through with their readers

COSTS

Implementation costs vary considerably, depending of the program the school wants to develop. Most schools spend between

\$5,000 and \$10,000. That includes the one-and-a-half-day training, five-day workshop, and consulting fees for the first year. As an alternative to the comprehensive training, Schwimmer provides a one-day introduction to the program for about \$1,000.

Materials requirements are minimal, assuming the school has a good supply of trade books at different reading levels. Wilkes recommends having two copies of any books used for tutoring. Comprehension cards should cost less than \$100. Gilham Elementary School charges a fee of \$25 per person per half day to work with Wilkes in the lab.

“In remedial reading programs, students spend a lot of time listening to poor readers. What they really need is to listen to wonderful reading. People who watch this process say they can’t believe how easy it is. It’s very empowering for kids to see how they can make a difference for someone who’s struggling to read.” PW

OTHER USERS

Barbara Gornick

Baker Senior High School
Baker School District
(541) 523-6336

Baker City’s Tutors for Readers program is built on Jill Schwimmer’s model. Gornick reports that students in the program are reading more, and are happier about reading. “The kids who are being tutors build self-esteem. The kids who are being taught are basically delighted to be reading better. They know they need to read to survive.”

Twelfth-grade student Don White is a tutor the Baker Senior High School program. “Some people don’t want to do it at first. Having other kids do the teaching — it can make them feel stupid. But after a while they get into it. There’s a girl I’ve been working with and I can really see her want to read more and more. Every time, we get to hook on more sentences. You can really see her brain stretching.”

Carol Fitzpatrick

Kennedy Elementary School
Medford School District
(541) 776-8891

Fitzpatrick has seen “tremendous results” from using Schwimmer’s techniques for her Buddy Reader program. She is compiling a report that will be available in the fall.

Carol Newton

Guy Lee Elementary School
Springfield School District
(541) 744-6391

Cathy Ellis

South Eugene High School
(541) 687-3201

MAY ROBERTS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Using the HOSTS program in the classroom

CONTACTS

Carol Collins, Julie Bainbridge, Teachers
May Roberts Elementary School
Ontario School District
(541) 889-5379

Bill Gibbons, Chairman
HOSTS (Helping One Student to Succeed)
1 (800)833-4678
www.hosts.com

POPULATION

The HOSTS program is appropriate for kindergarten through twelfth-grade students. The May Roberts Elementary HOSTS program serves students in first grade through fifth grade.

BACKGROUND

The HOSTS program began in Vancouver, Washington in 1971, founded by teacher Bill Gibbons. The program expanded and became an independent organization in 1977. Today, HOSTS has served more than 150,000 students and involved more than 100,000 mentors in 400 programs around the country.

May Roberts has been using the program for six years. The Ontario program has undergone many modifications to meet changing conditions, including rapid population growth from the new correctional center, school overcrowding, and an influx of new teachers.

DIAGNOSIS

HOSTS includes a developmental diagnostic system to assess students, identify their needs, and monitor their progress. Reading diagnostic assessments are criterion-referenced management system for word analysis, vocabulary, and comprehension. Informal assessment tools are also provided. State, district, and classroom tests can be easily

aligned with the prescriptive component of HOSTS.

May Roberts' adaptation of the diagnostic system includes feeding results from the Oregon Assessment Tests, Oregon Plus, and a district-designed test into a computer at the Education Service District. A statistician turns those numbers into a rank-order list for the school, identifying students who have the highest needs.

PROGRAM

HOSTS is a structured program that engages volunteers as reading mentors and tutors. It is designed to reinforce existing teaching staff and reduce workload. HOSTS is adaptable to any curriculum, assessment system, and philosophy. The program software and database allow teachers to align their curricula and resources to state and local objectives while creating customized learning plans for their students.

In the recommended program design, volunteers meet with one or a small number of students for a half hour every day to practice specifically prescribed reading skills and boost students' self-esteem and attitudes toward reading. A computer-based management system helps teachers diagnose which skills need attention and cross-references materials that tutors use to teach students specific skills.

Mentoring sessions are structured, based on a personalized lesson plan addressing the instructional and developmental level learning style, and learning objectives for a specific student or group. Students are regularly reassessed and given additional practice or new objectives as needed.

Instruction is designed and monitored by the teacher.

HOSTS is designed as a pull-out program, but at May Roberts Elementary, a strong belief in inclusion has led the school to develop the program for in-class delivery. TAG, Special Education, Title 1, migrant program, and regular classroom teachers were all involved in creating the model.

Every year, program coordinators work with each teacher to identify a 30-minute HOST time period that can be set aside on a regular basis. Until this year, HOST time has occurred twice a week; this year this program operates four times a week. HOST coordinators and mentors arrive at the classroom at the appointed time, pushing a wagon full of folders with students' individual plans and assignments.

TAG students have their own mentors and folders just like the others. IEP students do too. The remaining students who are not in the HOSTS program work with the classroom teacher on a literature unit.

May Roberts uses the Accelerated Reader program, and those books are incorporated into the HOSTS program. That way, everyone is working on the same kind of materials at the same time. Teaching time is not splintered, and everyone is engaged.

Currently, about 60 adults from the community are mentors at May Roberts. But because it is a high-poverty school, with many high-needs children, even that large volunteer corps is not enough. This year, the program started using top fourth- and fifth-grade students from the classroom teacher's group to tutor second-grade students.

MOTIVATION

Students and tutors form a strong bond through working together in the course of the year. Students thrive on the individual attention and positive reinforcement they get from their tutors, and work hard to make them proud.

RESULTS

HOSTS says the typical accelerated learning rate for a student in the language arts program is two years gained in eight months of program participation.

The May Roberts experience has been somewhat less dramatic, which may be due to the large percentage of special education and English as a Second Language students. This year, with the HOST program being offered four times a week, the average yearly gain for the entire group of HOST students, including special education and ESL students, was about one year. Some students made as much as a year and eight months' gain, and Collins says she doesn't have any students who didn't make some measurable growth in the course of the year. When the program was only being offered two times a week, the average yearly gain was smaller, between six months and a year.

IMPLEMENTATION

To start up the program, a HOSTS trainer provides a two-day workshop for up to four people per site. This workshop covers such topics as Organizing and Setting Up a HOSTS Center, Student Selection, and Mentor Strategies. Every year afterwards, the trainer comes back to train new staff and introduce the upgraded computer program. Collins says the trainer is very responsive by telephone, and makes site visits as needed to solve any problems that come up.

“It’s a wonderful thing to see — you really have to come into the school to believe it. A lot of these kids are from homes where they don’t get a lot of attention or positive reinforcement.

They are so needy, and the people who come in to volunteer give them so much warmth and caring. The kids really look forward to that half hour every day. Working with the same person all year, they form a terrific bond.

It’s very fulfilling for the tutors too. A lot of them are seniors, and they say to me, ‘This program has really given me a purpose in life. I know I really matter to somebody.’”

COSTS

Total first-year costs for HOSTS are about \$40,000.

That includes all training, follow-up, and the computer database. It also includes an \$8,000 allowance for

computers and materials, which some schools many not

need if they already have them.

Second-year costs are \$9,900, and subsequent years are

\$5,900. These include software upgrades, training and

support as needed.

OTHER PROGRAM MODELS

Tom Pickett

Portsmouth Middle School
Portland School District
(503) 916-5666

Stephanie Vickers

Richmond Elementary
Portland School District
(503) 916-6220

Robert Batty

Grant County ESD
(541) 575-1349

WALDO MIDDLE SCHOOL

Using the Laubach adult-tutoring system for middle school students

CONTACT

Pat Dusenbery,
Learning Resource Center Teacher
Waldo Middle School
Salem-Keizer School District
(503) 399-3215
Laubach Literacy
(888) 528-2224
www.laubach.org

BACKGROUND

The Laubach system was developed by literacy pioneer Frank C. Laubach in 1955. Since then, the non-profit Laubach educational corporation has grown to sponsor more than 1,000 programs in the United States and 71 partner programs in other countries. It creates more than 150,000 new readers per year through a network of 78,000 volunteer trainers.

DIAGNOSIS

Laubach offers a placement tool to determine where students should start the program. But Dusenbery starts all of her students in Book 1, to make sure they know all the sounds they need to progress through learning to read. Some students go through the first six lessons in one session, but she feels it's important they make that progression so they can sound out all the words they encounter in the rest of the curriculum.

PROGRAM

Laubach is an adult-oriented literacy program. As a rule, Oregon Literacy, Inc., Laubach's representative program in this state, does not develop programs for minors: background-checking volunteers is too big a liability. However, a few local chapter have adapted the Laubach system for use in

summer reading programs. At Waldo Middle School, Pat Dusenbery has been using Laubach's Way to Reading program for her special education classes since the middle of the 97/98 school year, and has found it very effective.

Way to Reading is a phonetically based program, taking students through reading levels zero to four through 260 sequenced skills. Four teaching books and four accompanying workbooks form the basis of the program. Teachers manuals for each of the books provide step-by-step instructions for presenting and reinforcing each lesson. Correlated readers and other supplemental material are available. Although Laubach is generally associated with individualized tutoring, the materials can be used for small classes.

Laubach also has a newer reading series called Voyager. Voyager also starts at reading level zero, but takes the student through level eight. It mixes authentic reading selections and writing assignments, with more emphasis on engaging and motivating students. Early books combine phonics with reading comprehension. Later books emphasize comprehension at the literal, inferential, and applied levels.

"My junior high kids love it because it's written for adults. Finally, they have a program with controlled vocabulary that's not baby stuff."
PD

What Dusenbery most appreciates about the Laubach program is its completeness. “The format is really nice. Everything is there — I don’t have to go hunting all over for different pieces to teach different skills. If I were going to write a reading program, this would be it.”

During each class period, Dusenbery works with two or three individuals while the others work independently. She finds the program really encourages students to stay on task. “I tell them there are 440 minutes in a school day. I’m asking them to focus for 30 minutes of those. I don’t think some of them have ever been asked to do that before, and they’ve really taken it on.”

She tried several different ways to configure the class, but found that students working individually made the most progress. “Groups were just not very effective. If there’s more than one student working on it, they tend to rely too much on each other.”

MOTIVATION

Dusenbery says some of her students complain the program is boring, but they keep at it because of the progress they are making.

“I had a parent of a sixth grader tell me this was the first year her child was able to write sentences and read on his own. Laubach unlocks the reading process for some of these kids who have never before had the key.” PD

IMPLEMENTATION

Laubach trainings are offered for free or at a very low cost by chapters of Oregon Literacy, Inc. Dusenbery attended one evening of training before beginning using the Laubach system.

RESULTS

Based on pre- and post- testing, using Dolch vocabulary lists, an Independent Reading Inventory, and other assessment tools, Dusenbery says students are gaining two to three years of reading ability in the course of one school year.

COSTS

A starter kit with teachers manuals and skill books for each of the four levels costs \$45. Additional skill books for each of the four levels cost between \$6 and \$9, depending on the number purchased. Workbooks cost between \$5 and \$7.

LINKS

A wide range of Laubach material is available through New Readers Press at 1-800-448-8878, or www.laubach.org/NRP/mrp.htm

A four-book Voyager preview kit is available for \$25 by calling Laubach at 1-888-528-2224.

“There’s one student I thought of last year as a non-reader. This year he can read anything I throw at him. I keep asking myself, ‘Is this the same kid?’” PD

OPTION 3: DESIGN EFFECTIVE GROUP INSTRUCTION

To address the problem of middle-grade non-readers, schools have adopted a wide range of commercially available and locally developed approaches. Often, teachers integrate two or more “packaged” programs, using their experience and an understanding of the specific group they are teaching to create an effective blend.

The programs described in the following pages reflect the variety of effective approaches to balancing reading skills instruction with meaningful contextual applications. These programs share the following features:

The program is thoughtfully planned and structured.

The curriculum is aligned with state standards and assessment. Instruction follows an orderly progression, accommodating learner differences within the context of a clear, consistent framework. Learners know ahead of time what they will be asked to do, and that help will be available when they need it. This makes them secure and encourages risk-taking.

Instruction is appropriate to the group.

The curriculum and activities are designed to match students’ reading development levels. Materials are age-appropriate and are not condescending.

There is ongoing documentation and monitoring of learning. Progress data is used to determine which skills should be addressed and how much they should be emphasized. Intensive instruction is based on need: students who have achieved their objectives don’t have to endure repeated instruction. Success is measured by how much has been learned, and students are continually challenged to increase their learning.

Teachers are well prepared.

Teachers understand the goals and principles of what they are teaching. They also understand the reading abilities of their students.

The classroom atmosphere is positive.

The program makes sense to students and gives them hope. They understand why they have been placed in this course, and what they will be able to do when they finish.

DAVIS HIGH SCHOOL, YAKIMA

An all-day reading immersion program

CONTACT

Larry Scholl, Retired Teacher
Davis High School
Yakima School District, Washington
(509) 966-0801

POPULATION

Ninth-grade students reading at the second- to fifth-grade level.

The program does not serve self-contained special education students or Level 1 or 2 ESL students. It does serve mainstreamed IEP students.

BACKGROUND

Four years ago, as Larry Scholl was preparing to retire from teaching at Davis High School in Yakima, Washington, the district superintendent asked if he would join a team helping to find a program to solve the urgent problem of ninth-grade students coming to high school without essential reading skills. The team spent about a year researching programs around the country before deciding that no existing program could meet Yakima's needs. Scholl spent the next year creating and testing a reading immersion program for the high school level.

Davis High School has piloted two versions of the immersion program: a three-week, every day program, and a 12-week, alternating day program. In both programs, students spend the whole day building reading skills. Schools in Washington and South Dakota have adopted versions of Scholl's immersion program.

DIAGNOSIS

Students are selected for the program based on their eighth-grade California Test of Basic

Skills or Gates McGinitie scores. Ninth-grade students take a written knowledge and skills test within the first three days of school to assess reading skills.

PROGRAM

Yakima uses a rotating 100-minute block schedule. Students attend three of their six classes every day. The reading immersion program is provided as a block of English, social studies and a reading elective. Three out of four teachers for the alternating day program are from the Davis social studies department; the fourth teacher has training as a reading instructor.

The reading immersion program includes these major curriculum components:

- Silent reading of student-chosen books
- Partner readings with retells
- Reading to teacher, with individualized instruction on phonetic analysis, vocabulary development, and comprehension
- Content area reading, with an emphasis on using a textbook or information retrieval
- Vocabulary development
- Corrected writing
- Teacher modeling of oral reading
- Daily silent reading at home

"We take time at the end of the day to celebrate how much they accomplished. A lot of these kids have it fixed in their minds that they just can't do anything, they can never finish a project. With a whole day in front of them, they have the time they never had before when faster kids were setting the pace. When we look back at the progress they've made, every day and every week, they are amazed at what they can do." LS

MOTIVATION

The immersion program serves students who have had years of failure. By the time they hit ninth grade, they're pretty desperate. The academic pressure is a lot higher, and they know that either they learn how to read or they're not going to make it through high school.

"At first the kids were apprehensive, but as the program went on, they loved it. They really didn't want to leave when it was over." LS

Scholl works on convincing them they're just as capable of reading as any other student — they just don't learn at the same rate. By giving them time and practice, he creates an environment where they can actually accomplish the kind of work they had given up on.

RESULTS

Forty-two students in three pilot studies of the everyday program made an average gain of two years in the three-week period. They entered the program with an average reading score of 4.5 and exited after approximately 90 hours with an average score of 6.6. The individual student gain ranged from six months to five years.

Eighty-four students in the alternating day program made approximately the same gains in 12 weeks. They entered the program with an average reading score of 5.0 and exited after approximately 170 hours with an average score of 6.81. The individual student gain ranged from 0 to 7 years.

For about half the students, this meant getting to the point where they could carry on with benchmark-level reading after the course.

The other half needed continuing remediation.

IMPLEMENTATION

Scholl offers a one-and-a-half-hour workshop on implementing a reading immersion program. He discusses what works well and what to avoid. He also recommends curricula and publishers. A "minute by minute" description of the Yakima program day illustrates the variety of activities needed to keep students focused and motivated during the long day.

First time programs should choose their target population carefully, Scholl says. It's important to start with a group of students who have a lot of progress to make, but are willing to learn. Selecting those who have a good chance of success for the program's first year helps to build a reputation that encourages participation in subsequent years.

COSTS

An on-site workshop costs about \$350, including expenses.

Materials costs depend on what the school already has on hand. The program is adaptable to existing material and curricula. Generally, all that's needed is a good supply of high-interest books.

"We found that almost all of these kids could survive academically if only they had the time. They could all read somewhat — they just needed more time and practice." LS

KENNEDY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Teaching at-risk students to be reading tutors

CONTACT

Carol Fitzpatrick, Teacher
Kennedy Elementary School
Medford School District
(541) 776-8891

POPULATION

Non-readers in the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades
This year, the Kennedy Elementary program started out with 23 fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade students. One participant had to leave the program because he “couldn’t handle it,” but the others have stayed with it.

BACKGROUND

The Companion Reading program is a structured tutoring program for emerging readers, developed by Dr. Grant V. Harrison of Brigham Young University. Although most of the material is aimed at first- through third-grade students, one component of the program is designed to help fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade non-readers. It has been validated over the last five years in schools around Utah.

Carol Fitzpatrick runs the reading lab at Kennedy Elementary School. The vast majority of her students participate in a program based on Jill Schwimmer’s peer tutoring model. She began using the Companion Reading Program this year for those students who are severely at-risk due to emotional and learning problems.

DIAGNOSIS

The program includes a diagnostic system for determining where the group should begin.

PROGRAM

Companion Reading teaches older elementary students how to read by preparing them to tutor younger students.

As part of an elite team, recognized throughout the school for the important job they have to do, students are driven to get beyond their own barriers to reading.

“Most remedial programs make kids despondent,” says Harrison. “This model gives them stature and a sense of prestige in being part of this select group. In the process, it teaches them how to read.”

The Companion Reading curriculum is a rigorous eight-unit program emphasizing phonetic skills, sight words, reading aloud, and reading for meaning. It is taught in small groups of eight to 12 students. The groups should not contain students from more than two consecutive grades, i.e.: fourth and fifth, or fifth and sixth. Harrison recommends that classes be taught by a teacher plus an aide. Kennedy’s program is run by two aides working six hours per day.

“You say to these kids, ‘There are a bunch of first graders who are really struggling with reading. You know what they’re going through,’ and of course they really do know what they’re going through, and they want to do whatever they can to help.” CF

The program is built around milestones celebrating the students’ achievement. At the eight-week mark, there’s a big ceremony to certify that students are ready to begin

tutoring kindergartners. To achieve this certification, they have learned how to read a fairy tale at the sixth-grade level. “It’s difficult — for some it’s very difficult,” says Fitzpatrick. “They have to practice and practice to get the story ready to read.” Another milestone marks when the students are ready to work with first-grade students. As tutors for the first-grade students, they are actively teaching them remedial phonics.

“The program can be boring, but they keep at it because of the motivation to get good enough to help others. Their attitudes have changed so much. They’re not loser anymore!” CF

Harrison says every effort should be made to build the tutors’ self-esteem. Schools that have tried the remediation program without the tutoring/motivational element have had poor results. Providing special vests or tee-shirts to wear during tutoring, and recognizing students over the public address system have a dramatic impact on the role these students assume with their peers. A program in Boise, Idaho has recorded significant positive effects in students with repeated behavioral problems through their participation in the Companion Reading program.

The program requires pulling Companion Reading students out of class for one hour per day. Kennedy has decided not to take them out of reading, because they need all the reading practice they can get. To take the time away from other classes causes a serious interruption in the students’ day. For that reason, Kennedy only offers this program to students who are the

most at-risk, and who clearly would not succeed without some dramatic intervention.

MOTIVATION

Students can relate to struggling beginning readers, and are highly motivated to help them. Once they get the first level of certification and begin tutoring kindergartners, they make outstanding progress.

RESULTS

Kennedy uses the STAR assessment program from the Accelerated Reader series to assess students at the beginning of the year and midway through the third marking period. Students averaged a two-year grade-level gain in five months of the program. Every student gained at least a year, and several gained more than three years.

A 1997 BYU study looked at 83 fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade students participating in the program in four Utah elementary schools. That study, based on pre- and post-tests using the Slossen Oral Reading Test (SORT-R), found that students gained an average of one year, three months and two weeks of grade-equivalent reading ability in 13 weeks of the program. Harrison says the program succeeds in remediating 80 percent of students who participate.

IMPLEMENTATION

Fitzpatrick started her program without on-site consulting or training. She says the written program information offers plenty of guidance to put the program in place.

Harrison is willing to provide on-site training or an audio tape overview, but he agrees it’s really not necessary. The components are straightforward and the material is complete. “We’ve gone to great pains to make it exportable,” he says. An important part of implementation is assuring the cooperation of kindergarten and

first-grade teachers. The program depends on their agreement to allow their students to spend two periods a week reading with the tutors.

COSTS

A kit for a class of 12 students costs \$425. That includes a teacher's guide, six Companion Study exercise booklets, 12 Reading for Meaning booklets, tutoring manuals, an reproducible for work sheets, pre- and post-tests, and a reading log.

“It’s not a really slick package, but it’s very effective.” CF

LINKS

Additional Contact:
Mel Cook
Boise School District
(208) 338-3406
The Companion Reading Program is available by contacting:
Metra Publishing
800-232-3168

READ NATURALLY

Developing reading fluency through modeling, repetition, and daily progress checks

CONTACT

Jo Masonhall

Liberty Elementary School
Greater Albany School District
(541) 967-4578

Candyce and Tom Ihnot

Read Naturally
(800) 788-4085
READAPT@aol.com

POPULATION

Read Naturally was designed for students in the late primary grades, but is also used for middle and high school students. Ihnot says the program is for any students, including adults, who read below a seventh-grade level and have problems with fluency.

BACKGROUND

A reading teacher in the Minneapolis area, Candyce Ihnot developed Read Naturally in 1991. Since then, more than 16,000 teachers have attended her trainings.

DIAGNOSIS

A placement packet shows teachers how to determine the initial level of reading material and to set reading rate goals for each student. Placement is based on a one-minute fluency test.

PROGRAM

Read Naturally is based on improving reading fluency through teacher modeling, repeated reading, and daily progress monitoring. Students read along while listening to a tape recording of a high-interest story.

Then they practice reading the story over and over until they can read it at a predetermined

rate. Students graph the number of words read correctly before practicing, and then again after practicing. This progress graph motivates them to keep working to improve themselves.

The program can be used in a variety of settings — reading lab or classroom, with one or more teachers. Students must make three or fewer errors, read with correct phrasing, and be able to answer questions before moving from one story to the next. Generally, this takes one 30- to 45- minute session.

Students can work independently most of the time. This allows students at different levels to participate in the program at the same time. Each of the seven levels takes about six weeks to complete.

Jo Masonhall uses Read Naturally in her reading lab at Liberty Elementary. She runs the program with two-and-a-half assistants. Each instructor has several groups of four or five students.

After three years, Masonhall has made a number of modifications to the program. For example, she doesn't let students conduct their own pre-tests. She finds they appreciate as much one-on-one time with adults as possible; adult monitoring of the pre-test serves that purpose while adding reliability to the testing process.

“The biggest surprise is what it’s doing for our ESL kids. We have a bunch of Hispanic boys who just don’t want to leave the lab! The biggest factor is the drive to raise their scores. We chart the pre-test in royal blue, and the post-test in red. It’s so bold and colorful, and when you put a couple of weeks next to each other, you have a tremendous progress statement.” JM

She has also done considerable experimentation to find the best balance of Read Naturally time with direct instruction for each benchmark. Her younger students get just two Read Naturally days a week, while her older students get three.

MOTIVATION

The key motivational factor is that students experience success every day. At the end of a session, they have one piece of material that they can read well. They see that progress on the daily bar graph. Also, with repetition of sight words, they find that after two or three months, they have the tools to read a lot more than they’ve ever read before. Because they work independently, students feel responsible for their own success.

In Masonhall’s program, when a student finishes on box of graded stories, the whole class applauds and celebrates the reader. She finds the short, achievable segments create a sense of individual accomplishment that is highly motivating.

RESULTS

During a six-year test cycle in Ihnot’s own Minneapolis classroom, second- and third-grade Title 1 student increased their California Achievement Test (CAT)

scores an average of 18 points per year. Each year, an average of 50 percent of these students graduated out of Title 1 by scoring above the 40th percentile on the comprehension portion of the CAT.

“This is clearly the best program to accelerate reading that I’ve found in 11 years of teaching.” JM

IMPLEMENTATION

Read Naturally presents informational workshops at conferences around the country. Teachers who attend those sessions can purchase a 45-day trial package, or hire Ihnot to do a full-day, on-site training seminar. The program can also be established without training, using the printed and video materials that come with the package. Some teachers start the program themselves and take the training after it is well established.

COSTS

Each set of reading materials, including stories, audio cassettes and reproducible forms, costs \$99. There are 20 sets covering reading levels .8 to 7.0.

Candyce Ihnot offers full-day trainings for \$900 plus expenses. This training includes hands-on activities, problem-solving and management strategies. Ihnot is also available for shorter training sessions.

MACLAREN SCHOOL FOR BOYS

Intensive phonics comes first, fluency and comprehension later

CONTACT

Leslie Gertner

MacLaren School, William P. Lord High
School
Woodburn
(503) 981-2545

POPULATION

Gertner's students range from 14 to 19 years old. Most are at a first- or second-grade level for reading, but have a good oral vocabulary.

DIAGNOSIS

When students first enter MacLaren, Gertner participates in their orientation. Each student writes a 100-word essay in response to a picture. Gertner uses a modification of the Correct Word Sequence assessment tool designed by the University of Oregon to quickly assess their writing skills; those who have very low writing abilities are likely to need reading remediation.

Some students also take the Northwest Education Association's CAT test. Listening to individuals read different levels of material helps to place them at the appropriate level of the phonics program.

PROGRAM

Gertner uses Kraig Phonics Reading, an intensive phonics program developed in Oregon. The program is designed for non-readers from third grade through adult. During the eight-week, daily program, students develop the basic skills to read at a fourth-grade level. From then on, Gertner works with them to develop fluency in reading short passages, eventually moving toward literal comprehension of high-interest material.

The Kraig program uses a sequential series of drills to teaching reading in the shortest time possible. Using an oral approach to reading, the program aims to improve the student's speaking as well as reading and spelling ability. Instructional tapes are included, but Gertner prefers to teach the material herself.

Kraig Phonics was designed for individual instruction, but can be used with small or large groups. Gertner has used it both ways: if she has a group of similar-ability students, she teaches them as a group, but if the students are at different levels, she uses peer tutors to teach the program individually. The key with tutors is to monitor them very carefully, she says, to make sure they're giving the right information and doing it with a positive, encouraging attitude.

"Many of these kids who are 16, 17 years old are tired of being poor readers. I just capitalize on that. I tell them 'I can teach you to read fluently — are you interested? Just give me good attention and patience, and I can do it, no matter how many other times people have tried and given up.' Believing that really helps the student. It goes a long way toward counteracting negative attitudes. When they see their progress, when they hear themselves reading more fluently, it inspires them to keep going. It may sound like I'm painting a pretty rosy picture, but it really has helped a lot of kids." LG

Gertner's tutors are the oldest students on the McLaren campus, the 18- to 20-year-olds. It's a volunteer position, but if students do a good job as tutors, Gertner gives them an excellent reference. "I've had about six outstanding tutors over the years, and I'd gladly recommend them for a career in teaching."

RESULTS

In pre- and post-tests, Gertner says students show an average grade-level gain of two years in the six- to seven-week program.

MOTIVATION

Gertner says students see her reading program as a last chance to get the reading skills they need to survive. Because they make visible progress so

quickly, it's easy to keep them going. She says she has never had a student refuse to participate in her reading program.

IMPLEMENTATION

The Kraig program is easy to implement without special training. A teacher instructional booklet explains the program.

LINKS

Kraig Phonics is available from Ken Craig at (503) 981- 6851

NORTH ALBANY MIDDLE SCHOOL

A reading block/literature block split

CONTACT

Bonnie Anderson, Teacher
North Albany Middle School
Greater Albany Public School District
(541) 967-4541

POPULATION

Sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade students

BACKGROUND

North Albany used its Goals 2000 grant to redesign its language arts program. Based on the fact that about 20 percent of incoming sixth-grade students did not have fluent reading skills, the school began assigning lower-skilled readers to a reading block, and higher-level readers to a literature block. After three years and many modifications of the program structure, teachers feel this approach is highly beneficial, both for students in reading and in literature.

DIAGNOSIS

Students are chosen for the reading class based on a combination of fifth-grade teachers' recommendations, fifth-grade assessment tests, and pre-testing as they come into sixth grade. North Albany has begun using the Northwest Evaluation Association testing program, which allows the selection of different test items at different levels to give a picture of individual students' progress.

PROGRAM

All North Albany sixth-grade students take a three-period block of composition and social studies with either reading or literature. Seventh- and eighth-grade students take a two-period block of composition with either reading or literature. The language arts staff has divided up the reading groups so that no one teaches more than one.

In the reading blocks, teachers integrate a wide variety of reading fluency and comprehension-building strategies with content area instruction. Teachers model reading of select passages, and have students repeat the passages — silently, to partners, aloud together and independently. All reading is more teacher-directed than is possible in a mixed-ability group.

“These kids know they’re not good readers. They appreciate it when we’re honest about where they are. In a group with other kids like themselves, they become amazingly connected and supportive of each other. Suddenly, they love to read out loud and share.”

BA

For content area reading, teachers supplement textbooks with trade books and other material at lower reading levels. Before reading, they discuss difficult vocabulary, and have students use visual clues to predict the content and talk over what they already know of the subject. As students read short passages, they pull out the main ideas and develop them with graphic organizers. Questioning and retelling activities help students retain what they have read.

The school has made it a priority to acquire appropriate material for lower-level middle school readers. A new section in the school

library offers high-interest short novels and books on tape. The librarian gives book talks on easy books, making it more acceptable to choose them. Students read these books in place of some of the more difficult literature used in the other block.

With about 20 students per class, the reading block provides a safe environment where struggling readers experience success and build self-esteem. Anger management, character education, and discussions on making good choices are integrated into the curriculum. Anderson says she's found that personal problems can be a major obstacle to students' reading and test-taking success. Making problem-solving an element of the reading block helps students fit reading and writing into their lives.

"There's a real difference between teaching reading and literature. These students really need reading instruction. If they don't have it, they'll be consistently failing for the rest of their years in school." BA

The literature blocks each have 32 students. But teachers say despite large class sizes, the literature students are thriving. "You have a group where everyone can read, everyone knows what a paragraph is, everyone can edit his own work. Even though it's such a big group, we can teach at a much higher level."

RESULTS

Students were tested in the fall and spring of 1998/99. In Anderson's sixth-grade reading block, the class fluency average (based on a fourth-grade level passage) went from 86 words per minutes (wpm) to 101 wpm. The average gain was 15 wpm.

RIT scores improved by 9 points, from an average 196 in the fall to 205 in the spring.

IMPLEMENTATION

Changing the structure of the reading program required full department buy-in and regular planning meetings.

Several outside trainers were brought in to contribute strategies for the reading block.

COSTS

To make reading improvement a priority, North Albany focused a year of staff development funds, along with its Goals 2000 grant and Title I funds, on preparing teachers in the reading/literature blocks. Now that the program is well established, training is back to a more even distribution.

"It is magic to see the kind of progress they make in a year. They are successful, and so their self-esteem goes way up. At least in this one class, they have a chance to be among the best students in the group."
BA
