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Nebraska Reading First Evaluation Newsletter

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Nebraska Reading First Evaluation Newsletter

VOLUME III, ISSUE I

10/15/2007

Fall Newsletter

Hello Everyone—

Welcome to the fourth year of Reading First in Nebraska! Although many of you are familiar with the Reading First Evaluation Team, there are some new faces this year.

Dr. Guy Trainin continues as the head of the evaluation team. He is a professor in the Teaching, Learning and Teacher Education Department at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Guy has 10 years of teaching experience in general and special education settings. His research focuses on early reading acquisition.

Emily Hayden, new to the team this year, is the team coor-

dinator. She will be observing classrooms in Reading First schools. Emily taught for 17 years in classroom, resource, Reading Recovery, and administrative settings. She is a doctoral student in reading and literacy studies

Dr. Malinda Murphy is an evaluator on the team. She conducts observations of Reading First classrooms, and is a post doctoral fellow at the Great Plains Institute of Reading and Writing. Malinda taught for 9 years as a resource and Reading Recovery teacher.

Kristin Javorsky is our communications coordinator. She is responsible for maintaining contact with individual Reading First schools regarding data collection and site

visits. Kristin has worked in business and mass communications for 17 years and is pursuing her masters degree in education.

We look forward to working with all of our Reading First Schools this year. Please feel free to contact us if you have questions or concerns, and with any ideas you may have to help this process be more effective and efficient.

E.H.

Guy Trainin can be reached at (402) 472-3391 or by email: gtrainin2@unl.edu

Kristin Javorsky can be reached at 402 472-0730 or by email: javorsky@bigred.unl.edu

A message from Oren Yagil

Dear Nebraska Reading First Schools' coaches, principles, superintendents, and teachers:

I wanted to take this final opportunity to say goodbye to each of you. I already miss the e-mails, the phone conversations, and the school visits. I am nearing the end of my doctoral studies and am looking at this coming December for graduation. I am currently working as a graduate assistant to the Dean at the College of Public Health at the University Medical Center in Omaha, through my department at UNL. I am involved in great projects, some of which I hope you will hear about soon. I am enjoying the devotion all in the College have for improving the community's health and general enhancement of Nebraska's well-being.

Lynette, Alice, and so many of you have continually impressed me with the work you do and your devotion to improve reading achievement of students attending Nebraska Reading First schools. Thank you for the experience and for the wonderful work you do everyday. Best of luck and I do hope to meet again in our future.

With warmest regards,

Oren (The old Kristin)

We wish you well, Oren!

All Reading First reports may be viewed online at:

<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cehspirw/> and also at eric.ed.gov and on our website: readingfirst.unl.edu/index.php

Teachers lead students to great gains in 2006-07

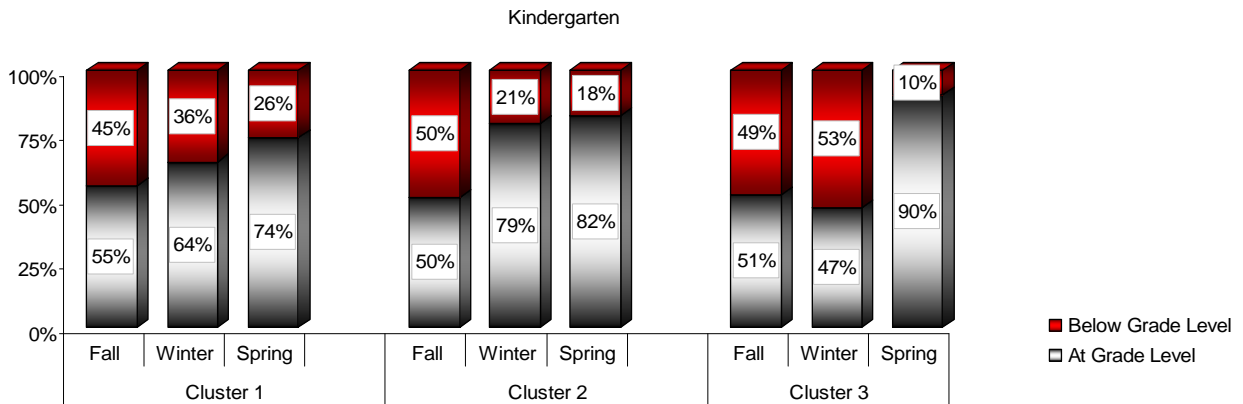
Kindergarteners make great strides

During the 2006-2007 school year more K-3 students were able to achieve and read at grade level. Teachers have led their students to impressive growth, through focused and reflective instruction. Coaches and administrators have played vital roles in their students' improvements as well.

To compare the achievement gains to a meaningful comparison group we grouped schools together into 3 clusters based on similarities in school size, student ethnicity, English language learners and special education populations, and the percentage of students qualified for free and reduced

lunch. Cluster 1 includes the smallest schools, where approximately 55% of students are eligible for free/reduced lunch, 23% belong to minority populations, 7% are ELL students, and 16% qualify for special education services. Cluster 2 consists of slightly larger schools with fewer students qualifying for free/reduced lunch and with slightly smaller percentages of minority, ELL, and special education students. Cluster 3 has the largest schools, which have much higher percentages of minority students (89%) and more students qualifying for free/reduced lunch (73%). In this cluster 14% of students qualify for ELL services and 7% qualify for special education.

In the grade level graphs below, achievement gains are shown for Kindergarten and 2nd grade, separated for each of the clusters. Using Letter Naming Fluency as a benchmark, kindergartners in all 3 clusters made impressive growth from Fall to Spring 2006-2007. The red bar shows the percentage of students below grade level at each measurement period of the year. In every cluster the number of students performing below grade level decreased dramatically as the school year progressed. Clearly, kindergarten teachers in all clusters were providing the kind of instruction that really makes a difference in their students' reading skills.

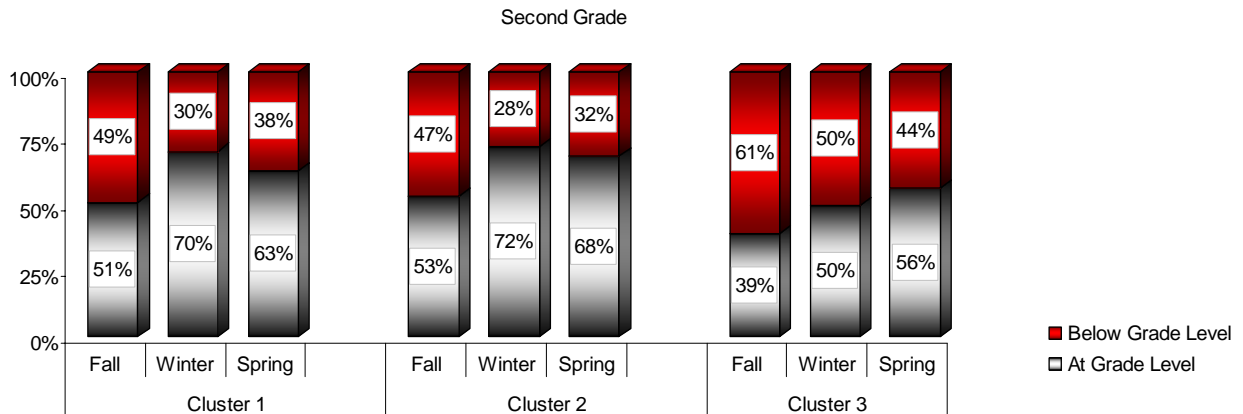


Teachers inspire in 2nd grade

Half of all 2nd grade students were below grade level in oral reading fluency at the beginning of the year. This percentage reduced in all 3 clusters during 2006-07. These reductions, while smaller than those

in kindergarten, reflect the important growth happening in 2nd grade, and the challenges teachers face as they help their students move from reading skill acquisition to higher level strategy use. Having acquired basic reading skills, students in 2nd grade and beyond move on to orches-

trating their skill knowledge fluently during oral reading. Teachers provided focused and attentive instruction to this strategy development. Students responded with inspiring growth. **To see the full report for all grades visit our website: readingfirst.unl.edu/index.php** E.H.



3 years of Reading First change Special Education

A core belief for all of us involved with Reading First is that over time, the proportion of students identified with mild disabilities will decrease. This is because Reading First has incorporated features of successful intervention into its approach, such as frequent assessments that guide focused, essential instruction. These are critical to the success of students with mild disabilities.

To measure the impact of 3 years of Reading First on special education we analyzed the changes in the number of students receiving special education services by grade level during each year. The numbers included in the graph below are from a group of schools that have supplied consistent information about special education placement across all 3 years.

Kindergarten

In kindergarten the number of students receiving special education services in-

creased during the second year of Reading First. Although there was a drop from year 2 to year 3 the number remains higher than in the first year. It seems likely that the regular assessment on essential skills that happens in Reading First classrooms makes identification of students who are truly struggling happen more quickly.

1st grade

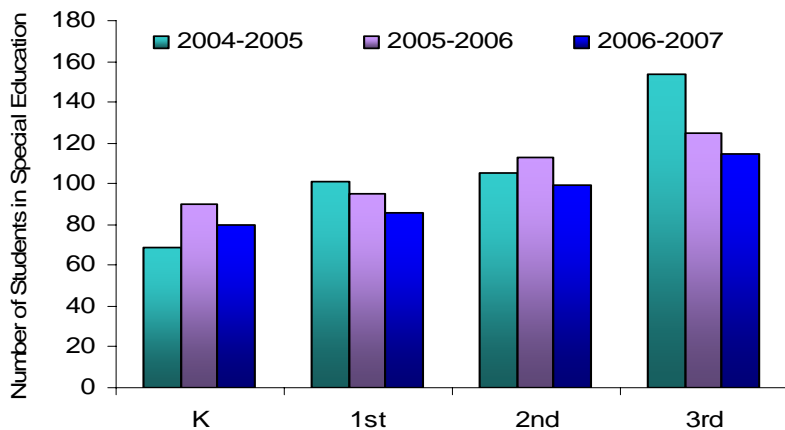
There has been a steady decrease in the number of 1st grade students who qualified for special education services. This is the result of the consistent instruction in balanced literacy practices that 1st grade teachers are providing. Classroom observations and teacher logs bear this out.

2nd and 3rd grade

In 2nd grade there was a slight increase in the number of students qualifying for special education services during 2005-

2006. However, in 2006-2007 the number of 2nd grade students receiving special education services was lower than in the first year of implementation. Finally, the number of 3rd grade students receiving special education services has dropped each year since 2004-2005.

These results are perhaps the best representation of the positive impact of early intervention through Reading First. A solid foundation in essential reading skills sets the stage for strategy development and reading achievement as students grow. It also helps us identify students with true learning disabilities in a more timely manner, providing them with intervention more quickly. Reading First intervention and instruction gives students the tools they need to be successful beyond the primary school years. E.H.



At your request . . .

The evaluation team can compile individual PowerPoint presentations with results specific to your school or district. Contact Kristen Javorsky if you would like to make use of this service. A separate fee will be assessed.

Kristin Javorsky can be reached at 402 472-0730 or by email: javorsky@bigred.unl.edu

Reading First Evaluation Team Observations

Site visits have been a part of the Reading First Evaluation plan since its beginning, and they are quite common in Reading First schools across the country.

The Evaluation team member conducting the observation will be looking for evidence of:

- a 90 minute reading block as defined by the grant
- research based reading practices adapted to learners needs (as defined by Reading First grant and professional development efforts- e.g. direct teaching)

- a consistent approach to instruction (core curriculum, modifications for learner needs)
- teachers using assessment results to inform instruction
- instruction in vocabulary and comprehension strategies

The observations are reported only as an aggregate for the whole state: all first grade, second grade, etc. The information is not released at the individual or school level in any report, verbal or written.

All school visits will be coordinated through Kristin Javorsky, the communication coordinator for the team. Arrangements will be made to conduct observations at each Reading First school. Whenever possible, a range of dates for observations will be provided to individual schools. M.M.



The Great Plains Institute
of Reading & Writing
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