EFFECTIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENT LITERACY STRATEGIES
by Laura Bornfreund

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Stand for Children Leadership Center

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Introduction

Literacy—defined as the ability to write, speak, listen, think, and read effectively—is a crucial developmental step that enables young children, adolescents, and adults to communicate clearly.

The development of literacy skills begins at birth, with language development. Parents and caregivers play a critical role in building infants’ and young children’s vocabularies. Researchers have found that children from middle-income families begin kindergarten with a vocabulary of approximately 20,000 to 30,000 words, whereas children from lower-income families start school with about 5,000 words. In other words, literacy gaps appear well before children step foot in a classroom.1

The early elementary-school years are a critical time for children’s literacy development. Through the end of third grade, children are “learning to read,” before making the transition to “reading to learn” in the later elementary grades. But fewer than half of all American schoolchildren successfully make this transition. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress, 66 percent of fourth-graders read below the proficient level and 34 percent read below the basic level. And despite substantial improvement over the past decade, fourth-grade reading performance did not change in the most recent NAEP. This is a good indicator that too many children are not learning to become confident readers in the early elementary grades. Further, large achievement gaps persist between white and black or Hispanic students, as well as between middle- or high-income and low-income students.2

Failure to obtain necessary literacy skills in the early grades undermines children’s ability to succeed in school and in life, as they move into the later grades and experience difficulty understanding and achieving in the content areas.3 Middle and high school students’ reading scores are a major predictor of whether they will graduate. Students who perform poorly on reading achievement tests are 20 times more likely to drop out than those who perform well.4

Fortunately, a wealth of research has been conducted on literacy, including numerous high-quality evaluations, enabling policymakers and practitioners to identify and focus resources on effective policies and strategies. This research has identified strategies to support early literacy development (birth through third grade), build literacy skills for early adolescents (fourth to sixth grade) and older adolescents (seventh to 12th grade), and help struggling readers. While gaps in research remain, experts are confident that some literacy tools work well with certain type of struggling readers. They are less confident about how best to coordinate and combine these tools to create an effective overall literacy strategy for young and adolescent learners.5
Early-Literacy Strategies

Literacy development begins well before a child enters kindergarten; it begins at birth, as babies hear language used around them. The successful development of language and literacy skills during the early childhood years (birth through age 8) is critical to future literacy achievement.

For many years, efforts to improve early literacy were embroiled in a debate about which of two strategies for teaching reading—phonics or whole language—produced better results. The cumulative body of research, however, suggests a blended approach.

The 2000 National Reading Panel report, which analyzed the full body of K–12 literacy research and expresses the consensus of experts in the field, identified five “pillars” of good early reading instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. The federal Reading First program, created as part of the No Child Left Behind Act, was based on these five pillars, and provided grants to states and districts that implemented K–3 reading strategies that included the following components:

1. reading curricula and materials that focused on the five pillars;
2. professional development and coaching for teachers on how to use proven research practices and work with struggling students; and
3. diagnosis and prevention of early reading difficulties.

The 2008 final Reading First Impact Study examined the effectiveness of the program in 248 schools in 13 states. Although Reading First was not found to have an impact on student reading comprehension in the early grades, it did have a positive and statistically significant effect on first-graders’ decoding skills—a predictor of literacy achievement in later grades. Reading First schools that added more instructional time for reading—at least seven to 10 minutes more each day—saw improvements in reading comprehension as well. These tended to be schools that were serving children from low-income families, that had already been using more scientifically based methods of reading instruction, and that received relatively large grants.

Reading First also increased the amount of instructional time in the pillars identified by the NRP, and spurred producers of reading textbooks and resources to align with the NRP findings.

Congress eliminated federal funding for the Reading First program in 2009, but some states and districts have sustained reading initiatives begun with Reading First funds. Several states’ evaluations of their own Reading First efforts found increases in the percentages of students reading on grade level. In Oregon, the percentage of students reading on grade level at schools participating in Reading First increased each year of implementation. In New Jersey, participating schools increased the percentage of students meeting reading benchmarks over
time, and fourth-grade teachers reported having better-prepared readers. The percentage of Florida students reading on grade level in the early grades also increased. A common element of these state Reading First programs was that they required at least 90 minutes of reading instruction each day that focused on the five pillars.

When developing literacy policy, states should fund initiatives that incorporate the five pillars of good early reading instruction as identified by the National Reading Panel. States should also ensure that teacher-preparation requirements for early elementary and reading teachers are aligned with the five pillars. Research by the National Council on Teacher Quality has found that many teacher-preparation programs lack instruction in each of these pillars.

The National Early Literacy Panel focuses on effective strategies for promoting young children’s literacy development (birth through age 5). The panel has identified 11 early-literacy skills and abilities that predict children’s later literacy success, as measured by student reading outcomes at the end of kindergarten or beginning of first grade. These skills and abilities predict future reading success regardless of cognitive ability or socioeconomic status. Six skills were highly predictive: (1) alphabet knowledge; (2) phonological awareness; (3) rapid naming of letters or digits; (4) rapid naming of sets of pictures of objects or colors; (5) writing letters or name; and (6) phonological memory. (See Chart A for definitions of these terms.) The other five predictive skills were: (1) knowledge of print conventions and concepts; (2) print knowledge—a combination of alphabet knowledge, an understanding of print, and early decoding; (3) reading readiness—including alphabet knowledge, an understanding of print, vocabulary, memory, and phonological awareness; (4) oral language; and (5) the ability to distinguish visually presented symbols.

**Chart A: Literacy Terminology**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tr>
<td>Alphabet Knowledge</td>
<td>The ability to name the letters of the alphabet and recognize the letter symbols in print.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Early Decoding</td>
<td>The ability to recognize the basic sounds and sound blends (phonemes) that make up a word.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fluency</td>
<td>The ability to read with speed, accuracy, and proper expression.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oral Language Skills</td>
<td>Refers to fluency in speaking and listening. Includes vocabulary, grammatical knowledge, and narrative-discourse skills.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phonemic Awareness</td>
<td>The ability to focus on and manipulate individual sounds in spoken words.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phonics</td>
<td>The ability to understand that there is a relationship between the sounds of spoken language, and the symbols and spellings that represent those sounds.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phonological Awareness</td>
<td>The understanding that words are made up of sounds and ability to recognize the initial sound of a word, the ending part of a word, patterns among words, elements of a sentence, and syllables.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phonological Memory</td>
<td>The ability to remember a sequence of unfamiliar sounds.</td>
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</table>
The ability to understand printed letters, words, and books.

The ability to understand the content of a text.

The panel also identified instructional strategies and practices that evidence indicated effectively develop literacy skills:

- **Code-focused interventions**, which provide explicit instruction in phonological awareness, have strong positive effects on later reading and writing abilities across diverse populations of children. Effective code-focused interventions should engage children in the analysis of words at both the syllable and phoneme level and should include instructors working with small groups of children.²¹

- **Shared-reading interventions** (also called dialogic reading)²² have moderately positive effects on children’s oral language skills and print knowledge. Shared reading is not an effective strategy alone, however, especially for children who are weak in multiple predictive skills. For the most positive impact, share-reading interventions should be delivered frequently and interactively, either one-on-one or to small groups of children.

- **Language-enhancement interventions**—such as engaging children in conversations about stories, or using the Five Ws (who, what, where, when, why, and how) in structured play and story time—are effective in improving the language skills of children younger than 3, but are less effective with older children (ages 3 to 5).

The National Early Literacy Panel also looked at parent and home programs and pre-kindergarten programs. Pre-K and kindergarten programs help determine school readiness, but the existing research on these programs did not provide any evidence on the effectiveness of specific early-literacy strategies.²³,²⁴

Research indicates that state and local early-childhood policies should support early-literacy strategies that build young children’s alphabet recognition; ability to analyze, identify, and manipulate words at both the syllable and phoneme level; understanding of the relationship between sounds and words (phonemic awareness, phonological awareness, and phonic); decoding abilities (recognition of the sounds and blends that make up words); oral language, including vocabulary; and fluency and comprehension. Strategies that combine all these components appear to yield the most positive outcomes, setting young children on the track to become proficient readers by the end of third grade.

The federally funded What Works Clearinghouse has evaluated numerous literacy tools, curricula, and programs.²⁵ The box below highlights examples of early-literacy programs found...
to have positive or potentially positive effects on early literacy. State and local policymakers can use the clearinghouse to evaluate literacy curricula, programs, and tools in use in their jurisdictions, or to inform curriculum decisions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples of Literacy Tools and Strategies That Support Early-Literacy Development</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies (PALS):</strong> Children work in pairs on activities to build phonemic awareness, phonics, and fluency. PALS was found to have potentially positive effects on overall reading achievement. The cost of materials ranges from $15 to $35 per classroom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Success for All:</strong> A K–5 reading curriculum that focuses on phonemic awareness, phonics, comprehension, and vocabulary. It uses cooperative learning and tutoring for struggling readers. SFA was found to have positive effects on alphabet knowledge and potentially positive effects on overall reading achievement. The cost is approximately $220,000 for a school of 500 students.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Literacy Express:</strong> A preschool curriculum structured around oral language, emergent literacy, and other areas. It includes daily individual, small-group, and large-group activities. LE was found to have positive effects on print knowledge, oral language, and phonological awareness. The cost for the complete classroom package is approximately $2,300, plus professional development for teachers. This curriculum has been implemented in preschools in California, Florida, Massachusetts, New Mexico, and Texas.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Reading Recovery:</strong> A one-on-one teacher tutoring program provided (in addition to regular reading instruction) to the lowest-achieving first-grade readers (lowest 20 percent). RR was found to have positive effects on alphabet knowledge and potentially positive effects on fluency and comprehension. The cost varies greatly depending on implementation.</td>
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**The Critical Importance of Third-Grade Literacy**

Beginning in fourth grade, students encounter more-challenging reading material and are expected to “read to learn” in the content areas of history, geography, science, and even math. Students who are still struggling with literacy skills after third grade will likely struggle to excel in the content areas. Efforts like the Grade Level Reading Campaign, a collaboration of funders across the nation, have brought attention to this salient point in children’s learning.

In response, some states, including Arizona, Florida, Texas, and Tennessee, have passed or attempted to pass laws to end social promotion, requiring children who do not score at proficient level on third-grade reading assessments to be retained. The research on retention is mixed, and little research has been conducted specifically on state-level social-promotion bans. A 2004 study of Florida’s law found positive effects in reading, with retained third-graders scoring 4 percentage points better on the state’s standardized reading assessment than similar students who
were not retained. But the study did not look at the potential long-term impacts of retention. Some research suggests that over the long term, the negative impacts of retention may outweigh the short-term gains. One study on Chicago’s retention policy found increased high-school-drop-out rates, particularly among low-performing students. A second study found no evidence that retention in third grade leads to increased academic achievement.

It’s important to note that students in the latter study did not receive interventions during their retained year, but only repeated the content. This suggests that states considering bans on social promotion in the third grade should provide funding and guidance for remediation during the repeated year, rather than leaving this solely up to schools and districts. Policymakers must also take into account the costs of in-grade retention programs, which require the state to fund an additional year of schooling, as well as additional remediation or supports for students. Without additional research on whether students benefit in the long term from remediation and retention, it is impossible to know if such efforts are a worthwhile investment. Focusing on early identification, intervention, and high-quality literacy instruction leading up to third grade and beyond is likely to be a more cost-effective approach, with fewer potential downsides, than in-grade retention.

**Early-Adolescent and Adolescent Strategies**

To help middle- and high-school students maintain and continue to build strong reading skills, literacy experts have called for more high-level reading instruction in the middle- and high-school content areas, as well as for professional development to help content-area teachers deliver reading instruction. Most secondary schools provide little in the way of explicitly literacy-focused instruction, even though students still need such instruction to develop the higher-level literacy skills that will carry them through high school, college, and career. Some secondary teachers, however, don’t see literacy instruction as their responsibility. Researchers have found that some teachers simply adjust their assignments or instruction so students don’t have to read challenging texts. Secondary teachers typically don’t have the proper training to develop students’ advanced literacy skills, making literacy professional development for content teachers a critical component to improving students’ abilities.

Two major syntheses of research on effective adolescent-literacy strategies identify school and teacher practices that can improve the skills of struggling adolescent readers. Three strategies have particularly strong evidence of effectiveness.

- **Explicit vocabulary instruction** means overtly teaching students new words. This is especially important in content areas with jargon, specialized word usage, or other words that are not commonly a part of a student’s oral vocabulary. Suggested practices for
teachers include dedicating a portion of class for vocabulary instruction, providing opportunities to use new vocabulary multiple times and in a variety of contexts, and helping students develop strategies to learn vocabulary on their own. Developing vocabulary is a key component of building comprehension skills.

- **Direct and explicit comprehension-strategy instruction** teaches students strategies and processes for understanding what they read. Effective comprehension strategies include asking students to summarize main ideas both within paragraphs and across the text, paraphrase what they have read, make inferences that are based on text information and prior knowledge, and answer questions about the text. Teachers much carefully consider the texts they use to teach comprehension strategies and take time to show students how to apply them to different types of texts.

- **Intensive and individualized interventions** are necessary for struggling readers. Evidence indicates that these students often need more support than a regular education teacher can provide. Depending on students’ literacy weaknesses, they can benefit from intensive instruction delivered by a specialist, which may involve strategies such as repeated reading, scaffolding, and questioning for understanding. Adolescents who need more than additional classroom instruction can also benefit from supplemental interventions and learning aids in their regular classes, such as graphic organizers and other similar tools.

Other instructional strategies are effective as well.

- **Extended discussion of text meaning and interpretation** provides opportunities for increased student engagement. High-quality discussions give secondary students an opportunity to express their opinions about the reading, have those opinions challenged, defend their opinions, and listen to other viewpoints.

- **Motivation and engagement** strategies can help foster students’ literacy improvement and confidence. Teachers should provide useful feedback to students, establish a positive environment where mistakes are viewed as learned opportunities, and make literacy learning relevant to students’ interests as well as to current events.

- **Embedding literacy instruction in content**, in both language arts and the content areas, is essential to enable students to use literacy skills across the content areas. Language-arts teachers should not rely on literature alone when teaching literacy skills. Examples from other content areas are essential to help students transfer key literacy skills to other subject areas. Content-area teachers in history, science, and math should reinforce key skills by providing literacy instruction and practice in their respective subject areas.
• **Diverse texts** provide students with reading materials on a wide range of topics at different reading levels. Texts should be below students’ frustration level, meaning they can decode them, and of high interest. Teachers should have a range of additional reading materials available that reflect the cultural, linguistic, and demographic background of their students.

• **Intensive writing** is instruction connected to the kinds of writing tasks that students must perform well in high school. Strengthening students’ writing abilities can also reinforce reading comprehension. Good writing instruction provides clear expectations and challenges all students to write about different types of academic content, demonstrating their ability to critically think and reason.

• **Ongoing formative assessment** refers to informal, regular assessment of how students are progressing. Formative assessment could occur on a daily basis, at the end of each lesson, as a way to determine which students fully understand what was taught, which students need some additional guidance, and which students need to learn the concept in a different way. This is the purpose of formative assessment: to inform, and sometimes differentiate, instruction, making adjustments when necessary to ensure that all students are advancing.

To support the instructional strategies outline above, states and districts should establish policies that ensure these key infrastructure elements are in place:

• **Extended time for literacy.** Experts suggest that the effective implementation of the literacy strategies above requires approximately two to four hours a day of literacy instruction and practice in language-arts and content-area classes.

• **Professional development**, particularly for content-area teachers. This includes long-term and ongoing professional development to effectively implement the above strategies and integrate them into content-area coursework.

• **Ongoing summative assessment** provides data about both students and programs. These data should be used for accountability and research purposes.

• **Teacher teams** are interdisciplinary teams that meet regularly to discuss students’ progress and literacy strategies, and to plan for consistent literacy instruction across subject areas.
• **Leadership** is highly important. Principals and teachers need a solid understanding of how to teach reading and writing to a diverse student population. Without strong leadership and support, a literacy program will likely not succeed.

• **A comprehensive and coordinated literacy program** includes interdisciplinary and interdepartmental coordination within the school and district to ensure that, from a literacy perspective, important strategies and concepts are reinforced. Ideally the program also coordinates with stakeholders in the local community to support student success.

While an individual school’s or district’s literacy program might not include all of these elements, three are essential and should be reflected in local policy decisions: professional development for teachers and principals, ongoing formative assessment, and summative assessment of student progress to evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies adopted and make changes as needed.37

Adolescent students are expected to understand more sophisticated and varied text, and as a result, gauging their literacy levels becomes more difficult. Measures other than standardized reading tests are necessary to determine students’ ability to read in diverse content areas, understand ideas often presented in disparate ways, comprehend diverse reading material, and share and defend ideas. Researchers have not established causal links between improvements on reading assessments and increases in course grades and scores on subject-based tests.

Local and state literacy policies must recognize that direct literacy instruction cannot end with third grade. The basic literacy skills that students develop in early elementary school do not automatically evolve into the higher-level literacy skills needed to achieve in middle school, high school, and beyond. English language-arts teachers must provide instruction on vocabulary and comprehension strategies, and content-area teachers must embed the teaching of effective literacy strategies in their courses. This means setting aside class time for explicit vocabulary and comprehension instruction to help students develop higher-level literacy skills and providing students with feedback on their progress. Content-area teachers need targeted, ongoing professional development to understand their role and build their expertise in teaching literacy skills. Struggling readers need more intensive and individualized interventions to help them read at grade level.

Effective adolescent-literacy strategies require sufficient resources for high-quality implementation. Failure to provide or plan for all the resources necessary for success is one of the most common reasons that adolescent-literacy initiatives fail. A 2010 report from the Carnegie Corporation exploring costs of implementation for three popular adolescent literacy initiatives—Read 180, Questioning the Author, and Reading Apprenticeship—found that implementation costs vary greatly, not only among different literacy interventions, but also among different sites implementing the same intervention. Professional development and
curricula designed to enable general-classroom teachers to implement strategies to improve literacy for all students can cost less than $100 per student, while intensive interventions targeted to individual students can cost $1,000 or more per student. The authors conclude: “How a given reform is implemented determines its probability of success or failure, as well as its overall cost. Careful planning and analysis prior to launching a reform will likely provide both better implementation and better cost management. Such planning offers schools and districts ways to break out of the endless cycle of hope, effort, and disappointment that unfortunately has afflicted so many attempts at improving students’ literacy.”

State Literacy Initiatives

The research cited above pinpoints the features of effective literacy instruction that enable students to read on grade level. School- and district-level efforts to improve literacy must reflect these characteristics of effective programs/interventions. State policies that seek to improve literacy must ensure that schools and districts are implementing approaches that reflect research-based practices. Less clear evidence exists, though, to indicate which state policies are most effective in accomplishing this. Alabama and Florida are each implementing comprehensive statewide literacy interventions, with encouraging results. Both programs begin in kindergarten and continue through high school, with particularly focused efforts and resources in the early elementary grades. They share other common elements, including research-based comprehension strategies, ongoing assessment, data analysis, and schoolwide interventions that include targeted instruction for struggling readers.

Alabama

The Alabama Reading Initiative was designed to:

- ensure that kindergarteners and first-graders learn to read;
- build students’ reading fluency and comprehension levels across grades two through 12; and
- provide struggling readers, K–12, with intensive interventions.

To participate in ARI, schools must commit to the goal of 100 percent student literacy, to extensive teacher training, and to ongoing program evaluation. Educators received training on how to identify struggling readers and on research-based reading and writing instruction. ARI provides on-site literacy coaches with expertise and training in effective literacy strategies. In 2010, the state funded the initiative at $60 million. More than 1,000 schools, K–12, currently participate in ARI.
ARI has been evaluated annually since its inception in 1998. Based on a variety of measures, ARI schools have made greater gains, compared with non-ARI schools, in reading for both minority students and students from high-poverty families. The evaluations point to several factors that led to higher achievement among participating schools:

- a full-time reading specialist;
- teachers’ integration of comprehension strategies into all content areas for all students;
- the principal’s strong commitment to ARI; and
- embedded professional development on an ongoing basis, specifically on data-driven instruction, small-group instructional strategies, and differentiated instruction to meet students’ specific needs.

Florida

In 2001, the Florida Board of Education established Just Read, Florida!, a comprehensive K–12 reading program to reach the goal of getting all children reading on grade level or higher by 2012. The initiative includes several components: research-based standards; improved teacher preparation and professional development (including integration of online professional development); reading course requirements for middle- and high-school students who are below grade level; and effective intervention strategies for struggling readers. As a part of the initiative, Florida in 2002 began offering a reading endorsement for teachers to increase the number of teachers highly qualified to teach reading.

Florida based the initiative’s framework on the essential components of the federal Reading First program (including coaches, professional development, and additional resources) and extended them beyond grades K–3 to create a comprehensive plan for addressing elementary-, middle-, and high school literacy. Schools must include four components: professional development, administrative support for reading, high-quality instruction and assessment, and comprehensive reading texts and resources.

At the elementary level, districts must include 90 minutes of dedicated daily reading instruction, integrate reading instruction into all subject areas, and connect literacy assessment to instruction. For middle and high schools, district plans must include interventions for students scoring at the lowest two levels on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT), incorporate reading strategy and writing in all classes, and provide intervention programs before and after school and during the summer. In 2010, Florida funded the statewide program at $101 million.

Although no formal evaluation results are available, experts cite Just Read, Florida! as a factor that made Florida one of only five states to significantly narrow the achievement gap between white and African American students between 2003 and 2007 in fourth-grade reading, as measured by the National Assessment of Education Progress.
gaining state in eighth-grade reading, increasing two points. Florida’s fourth-graders outperformed their peers nationally on the 2011 NAEP reading assessment, but scores for eighth-graders still lag behind the national average.48

Conclusion

Building key literacy skills in the early years will yield the best long-term results for children. But too many students fail to read confidently by the end of third grade, and adolescent readers need support to continue developing their literacy skills. All adolescents can benefit from embedding literacy instruction within the content areas. For those students who struggle to read and write effectively, strategies that focus on explicit vocabulary and comprehension instruction are important. Additionally, some adolescents may be deficient in conventional literacy skills: decoding, oral reading fluency, comprehension, writing, and spelling. In these cases, more intensive and individualized interventions may be required.

To enable all students to succeed in literacy, schools, districts, and states must select curricula and interventions that are based in research and have solid evidence of effectiveness, and they must put in place the resources and infrastructure to implement them effectively. Doing this requires both careful planning and resources, but the costs of equipping children with the literacy skills they need to succeed are far less than those of failing to do so.

Helpful Internet resources

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<tr>
<td>National Dropout Prevention Center Model Early Literacy Development Programs</td>
<td><a href="http://www.dropoutprevention.org/modelprograms">http://www.dropoutprevention.org/modelprograms</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reach Out and Read</td>
<td><a href="http://www.reachoutandread.org/index.aspx">http://www.reachoutandread.org/index.aspx</a></td>
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</table>
2 While there was slight improvement in eighth-grade NAEP scores—five points—66 percent of eighth-graders are below proficient and 24 percent are below a basic reading level. This means that only about 30 percent of eighth-graders are reading well enough to perform at grade level in high school.


6 “Phonics” involves teaching how to connect sounds with letters or groups of letters and how to blend the sounds of letters together to produce approximate pronunciations of unknown words. “Whole language” means teaching how to recognize words as whole pieces of language.
9 In 1997, Congress asked the director of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, at the National Institutes of Health, in consultation with the secretary of education, to convene a national panel to assess the effectiveness of different approaches used to teach children to read.
10 Reading First was included in the No Child Left Behind legislation. It focused on putting research-proved methods of early reading instruction in classrooms. It provided funds to states and districts to establish scientifically based reading programs in kindergarten through third-grade classrooms. It also supported professional development for teachers and the use of screening tools and assessments.

18 The National Early Literacy Panel was convened in 2002 to conduct a synthesis of the scientific research on the development of early-literacy skills in children up to 5 years of age. The National Institute for Literacy funded the panel’s work in consultation with the National Institute for Child Health and Human Development, the U.S. Department of Education, and the Office of Head Start in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
19 “Developing Early Literacy.”
20 Conventional literacy skills include decoding, oral-reading fluency, comprehension, writing, and spelling.
21 This refers to the initial consonant sound and the vowel and consonants that follow, respectively.

22 Shared-reading is also referred to as dialogic reading. It is an interactive method of reading picture books with young children. According to the What Works Clearinghouse, the strategy has positive effects on children’s oral-language development.

23 The other two categories of studies reviewed were “parent and home programs” and “preschool and kindergarten programs.” The former included studies that used parents to deliver the intervention and the latter reviewed studies evaluating any aspect of preschool or kindergarten programs. Almost a third of those studies reviewed the Abecedarian Project, which included infants through 5-year-olds. The largest impact of the preschool and kindergarten programs was on the composite measure of readiness, indicating that these programs were highly effective in preparing children for school entry. These studies, however, did not drill down to look at the effectiveness of specific early-literacy strategies.

24 The NELP report calls for future research to determine whether enhanced early instruction to improve specific skills (such as AK, concepts of print, or oral-language development) would consistently lead to higher later literacy achievement. It also called for longitudinal studies of more complex interventions and research studies that report data separately for children in different demographic categories.

25 “Literacy” (What Works Clearinghouse) accessed November 9, 2011, http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/topic.aspx?sid=8. What Works Clearinghouse requirement for a “Positive Effects” rating: Strong evidence of a positive effect for an intervention. This occurs when two or more studies show statistically significant positive effects, at least one of which meets WWC evidence standards for a strong design, and when no studies show statistically significant or substantively important negative effects. WWC requirement for “Potentially Positive Effects” rating: Evidence of a positive effect for an intervention. This occurs when at least one study shows a statistically significant or substantively important positive effect, and when no studies show statistically significant or substantively important negative effects, and fewer or the same number of studies show indeterminate effects than show statistically significant or substantively important positive effects.

26 Institute for Education Sciences, “Improving Adolescent Literacy.”

27 Grade Level Reading Campaign, http://www.gradelvelreading.net/.


32 Ibid.
33 Institute for Education Sciences, “Improving Adolescent Literacy.”

34 “Reading Next.”
35 Institute for Education Sciences, “Improving Adolescent Literacy.”
36 “Reading Next.”
37 Ibid.
40 Ibid.
41 In 2006, the State Board of Education appointed a reading panel to develop a statewide literacy initiative.
42 Funds were also used to support summer programs for the lowest-performing schools and for state overhead costs such as administration and evaluation.
43 The state used Stanford 9 and 10, the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills, surveys, school visits, and focus groups as measures.
45 National Association of State Boards of Education, “Reading at Risk.”
46 Ibid.
47 Ibid.
ABOUT LAURA BORNFEUNDD

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ABOUT STAND FOR CHILDREN LEADERSHIP CENTER

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- Advocate for effective local, state and national education policies and investments.

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