

Key Elements of Researched-Based Interventions

- **The best evidence available indicates that addressing the needs of struggling readers requires a comprehensive and sustained reform effort.**

1) Improving classroom instruction

“The most powerful feature of schools, in terms of developing children as readers and writers, is the quality of classroom instruction. Effective schools are simply schools in which there are more classrooms where high-quality reading and writing instruction is regularly available. **No school with mediocre classroom instruction ever became effective just by adding a high-quality remedial or resource room program, by adding an after-school or summer school program, or by purchasing a new reading series.**

We have added more support programs, more instructional aides, more specialist teachers, and more computers and software programs, while ignoring the **powerful evidence on the importance of high-quality classroom teaching** (Allington & Johnston, 2002; Bembrey et al., 1998; Ferguson, 1991; Nye, Konstantopoulos & Hedges, 2004; Pressley et al., 2001).”

A) TEACHER GROWTH

- Need systematic plan for professional development—situated, ongoing, tied to practice
- Teacher Inquiry Projects are powerful engines for teacher growth
- The number and quality of professional conversations available predicted teacher development (Johnston et al., 1998)

B) CLASS SIZE

- Good evidence that smaller class sizes in elementary grades make better teaching possible.
- But small classes with more expert teachers in better organized schools produce higher achievement than smaller classes with less expert teachers in schools that are poorly managed.

C) ACCESS TO APPROPRIATE INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

- All students need books in their hands across the day that they can read, accurately, fluently, and with comprehension.
- No evidence that having all children working in same book all day, all week ever produced high achievement.
- If using a common, single text for whole class, use for no more than 20% of time and be sure to adapt instruction so that text is accessible to all students.

- Overall value of multi-level and multi-source lessons and of teachers matching students with “just right” books.

D) HONORING INSTRUCTIONAL TIME

- The school schedule may need adjustment so as to capture as much of the academic time as possible.
- Blocks of uninterrupted teaching allow for deep and sustained cognitive engagement in reading and writing.

2) Enhancing access to intensive, expert instruction

“The purpose of support programs offering intensive, expert instruction should be to meet the needs of those children who will need more than effective classroom teaching in order to learn to read well.

If ineffective classroom instruction is contributing to the problem of low achievement, fix that problem directly. Support programs should not be viewed as a way of bypassing the problem of ineffective classroom teaching.

Struggling readers need good instruction all day long.

But even with effective classroom instruction, some students will need more expert and more intensive instruction than we can expect classroom teachers to provide.”

A) INTENSITY (in terms of **teacher-pupil ration, scheduling, and pacing)**

- Evidence indicates that both tutoring and very small-group (2-3 students) instructional support is more commonly effective than traditional larger group (4-7 students) remediation.
- A meta-analysis of 36 studies of Reading Recovery found that this tutoring program brought struggling readers up to the reading level of their classmates in a short period of time.
- Lessons that are paced to take advantage of every minute—rather than those that doodle along—are more effective.
- Schedule for intensity (e.g., offer 300 minutes weekly for a semester rather than 30 minutes daily all year)

B) EXPERTNESS

- Some students need more expert and more intensive instruction in order for their learning to keep pace with that of other children.
- Every school needs teachers who are more expert on some topics than most teachers.
- Common finding: experts “fix” struggling readers’ issues and return them back to classroom that lacks appropriately adapted instruction, so intervention ultimately has little impact on struggling readers’ achievement.

- Think carefully about role of paraprofessional and make plans for specific training to support the role they play.
- Assist classroom teachers in locating appropriately leveled texts for entire curriculum and in devising appropriate instructional adaptations.

3) Expanding available instructional time

“A third type of intervention plans focus on expanding available instructional time. There are three variations—adding a second daily lesson during the regular school day, developing an extended day program (e.g., before or after school programs), and creating extended week/extended school year plans (e.g., summer school programs).

The idea here is that some children simply need larger quantities of instruction and greater opportunities to practice reading. There is good research that such added instruction can foster accelerated reading development but again, the most powerful extended time interventions provide more intensive, expert instruction during the added time.”

A) ADDING A SECOND DAILY LESSON

- ✓ The additional daily instruction might be offered in the classroom by the classroom teacher, for example, while other students are engaged in self-selected reading. This seems to be a good time for students who seem unable or unwilling to read independently. But, be careful: volume of reading is important, so if second lesson limits or even eliminates opportunity to read, then the effort is misguided. (Cunningham & Allington, 2003; Taylor et al., 1992)
- ✓ However, a second guided reading session has been shown to be useful, especially in the early grades when independent reading is more difficult because of limited reading proficiencies.
- ✓ It is possible to design interventions whereby classroom teacher or specialist teacher provides a second daily reading lesson for struggling readers during the school day. This, however, requires making a decision about just what classroom instruction will be replaced by remedial or special education intervention.
- ✓ For the second daily lesson to be most effective, it cannot replace part of the classroom reading instruction.
- ✓ “After lunch bunch” second reading lesson occurs while most children engaged in independent reading (Cunningham & Allington, 2003). Here a second guided reading lesson is offered, and the lesson must be more powerful than just reading. Also, it’s ideal if the bunch varies on daily basis with not every struggling reader attending and some not-struggling readers involved.
- ✓ Early Intervention in Reading (EIR)—a second daily 20 minute lesson was proven successful in raising reading achievement of primary grade students (Taylor et al., 1992)

c. Allington, R.L. (2006). What really matters for struggling readers: Designing research-based programs. Second edition. Boston, MA: Pearson Education, Inc.