



STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
LANSING



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GOVERNOR

MICHAEL P. FLANAGAN
SUPERINTENDENT OF
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

February 25, 2008

MEMORANDUM

TO: State Board of Education

FROM: Michael P. Flanagan, Chairman

SUBJECT: Reading First Presentation

Ensuring all Michigan children read by the end of third grade is critical to student achievement and is a key priority of Governor Jennifer Granholm, the State Board of Education, and the Michigan Department of Education.

Reading First, part of the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, is a focused nationwide effort to provide states and school districts with support to establish research-based reading programs for students in kindergarten through third grade. Funds support a significant increase in professional development to ensure teachers have the skills they need to teach reading programs effectively. Additionally, the program provides assistance to states and districts to prepare classroom teachers to screen, identify, and eliminate reading barriers facing students.

The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) was one of the first state education departments to be awarded and to implement Reading First programs in the nation.

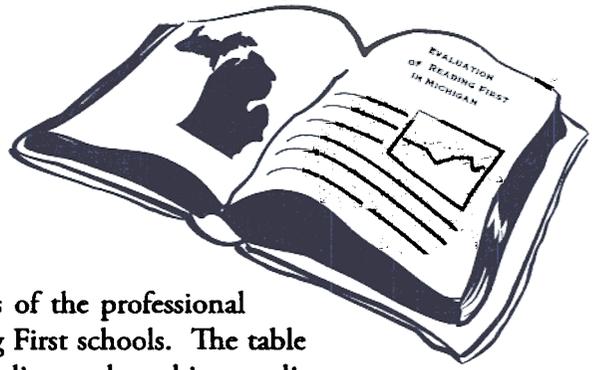
The Michigan Department of Education's Office of School Improvement developed criteria and grant programs to support the development of reading programs. Staff will present the results and outcomes of the Reading First Program.

Attachments

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In the spring of 2007, we asked teachers to express their views of the professional development they have received as part of their work in Reading First schools. The table below shows that most teachers gained understanding about reading and teaching reading through their professional development. However, many indicated that more time to think about and integrate new ideas would be valuable (see table to the right).

PROVIDED ENOUGH TIME TO THINK CAREFULLY ABOUT AND TRY OUT NEW IDEAS /METHODS	26	74
DEEPENED MY UNDERSTANDING OF READING AND WRITING	8	92
HELPED ME TO BETTER UNDERSTAND MY STUDENTS' READING PROBLEMS	14	86
INCLUDED OPPORTUNITIES TO WORK PRODUCTIVELY WITH COLLEAGUES IN MY SCHOOL	18	82
LED ME TO MAKE CHANGES IN MY TEACHING OF READING	9	91

We also asked teachers what they would like to learn about through professional development opportunities, providing them with a list so that they could check topics on their "wish list".

The table shows the topics that were checked most often. Teachers' responses to this survey suggest to us the potential value of providing teachers with a "menu" of professional development opportunities to choose amongst (see the table on the left).

METHODS TO TEACH STUDENTS WITH LEARNING OR READING DISABILITIES	62
PROGRAMS FOR TEACHING WRITING	54
METHODS FOR ADDRESSING GAPS IN CHILDREN'S LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT	
METHODS FOR USING TECHNOLOGY IN LITERACY INSTRUCTION	41
METHODS FOR TEACHING READING COMPREHENSION	40
SYSTEMS FOR CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES	25
METHODS TO TEACH STUDENTS WHO ARE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS	23

If you have any questions, please contact RFEval@isr.umich.edu. Michigan's Reading First website has been updated. For those of you who are interested in checking out the new look, the web address is:

On the Web site are numerous sources of information, including our Reading First newsletters.

Reading First provides teachers with a comprehensive program that they can use as the core of their reading instruction. We wondered how often teachers made changes in the activities or materials that are provided by the comprehensive program used in their school—and how often they used materials that they or a group of teachers developed themselves. The following table shows the teachers’ responses to these options. (The numbers show the percent of teachers responding to the different options.) As you can see, teachers do teach lessons that are not part of the comprehensive program once in a while. Most teachers adapt the comprehensive program materials and activities in some way every

day. The results suggest that the teachers are not just rigidly adhering to guidelines for instruction in the comprehensive program; most are using their professional judgment to adapt materials and activities, presumably to meet their students’ needs.

TEACH LESSONS THAT ARE NOT PART OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAM?	17	40	23	20
USE MATERIALS OR ACTIVITIES THAT YOU DEVELOPED YOURSELF?	5	25	38	32
USE MATERIALS OR ACTIVITIES THAT INVOLVE ADAPTING THE COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAM?	4	16	29	51
USE MATERIALS OR ACTIVITIES DEVELOPED BY A GROUP OF TEACHERS AT YOUR SCHOOL?	18	40	28	14



This winter we are placing Vaenka (Vi) Littles in the spotlight. Vi is a Reading First facilitator who has taken on a special job. She is working to create a Reading First library of videotaped reading lessons that can be used for professional development. According to Vi, “the goal is to be able to provide teachers with video clips of lessons that would be available on the web.” She emphasizes that unlike other videos, where the lessons appear to be staged, these videos will “reflect the real classroom environment...providing teachers with video clips of real classrooms with real teaching occurring with real students.” Several teachers have already agreed to participate, and the first videotaping event took place this week in a classroom in Pontiac.

The video library is one way that Vi hopes to ensure that when the Reading First grant ends, “the work that has been accomplished will continue to grow.” To that end, Vi has been working on other materials that will be housed on the newly revised Reading First website. Once completed, this site will house a variety of resources available for teachers. Vi also provides assistance for the Reading First program coordinators in various areas of technology.

Vi brings a rich background of experiences to her work as a Reading First facilitator. She started out as an elementary school teacher in the Detroit Public Schools. Then, after her school became a Comer school, she left elementary school teaching to become a Comer School facilitator. That experience with school reform prepared her for work with the Michigan Department of Education, first as a Partner Educator with the Partnership for Success, later as part of the Grade Level Content Expectations Dissemination team, and now as a Reading First facilitator.

While Vi misses working with children, she has found working with adults to be rewarding “because you meet so many interesting people and have an opportunity to work with such great educators.” She describes the other Reading First facilitators as a “phenomenal group” who exhibit an amazing degree of “teamwork... knowledge... enthusiasm and motivation.” In addition to visiting schools, Vi admits she also loves the other aspects of her job including the solitude of working on her computer to design documents, analyze data, and create Power Point presentations. When asked what she likes about her job, without hesitation, Vi responded, “My goodness, all of it. It’s extremely exciting and rewarding.”

