The Reading First Implementation Study: First-Year Findings

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Evaluation Questions

• How is the Reading First program implemented in districts and schools?

• How does reading instruction differ between Reading First schools and non-RF Title I schools?

• How does reading instruction differ between Reading First schools and non-RF Title I schools as RF schools’ implementation efforts mature over time?

• Does student reading achievement improve in schools with Reading First funds?

• Is there any relationship between how schools implement Reading First and changes in reading achievement?
Key Features of the Study Design

- **Five year evaluation**: quasi-experimental design

- **Samples**: Nationally representative samples of Reading First and non-RF Title I schools
  - 1,100 RF schools
    - 550 newly funded schools
    - 550 mature schools
  - 550 Title I SWP schools

- **Measures**:
  - Mail surveys of teachers, principals and reading coaches
  - Telephone interviews with Reading First state coordinators
### Summary of Data Collection, Samples and Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Collection Method</th>
<th>Number of Schools</th>
<th>Estimated Number of Respondents</th>
<th>Schedule</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Principal and Teacher Mail Survey</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Newly funded Reading First schools</td>
<td>550</td>
<td><strong>2,200</strong> teachers</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>550 principals up to 550 reading coaches</td>
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<td></td>
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<td><strong>✓</strong></td>
<td><strong>✓</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mature Reading First schools</td>
<td>550</td>
<td><strong>2,200</strong> teachers</td>
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<td>550 principals up to 550 reading coaches</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-RF Title I schools</td>
<td>550</td>
<td><strong>2,200</strong> teachers</td>
<td></td>
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<td>550 principals up to 550 reading coaches</td>
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<td><strong>✓</strong></td>
<td><strong>✓</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>RF State Coordinator Telephone Interview</strong></td>
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<td>53 state coordinators</td>
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### Response Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Response Rates</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RF</td>
<td>Title I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>1,092</td>
<td>541</td>
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<tr>
<td>Principals</td>
<td>1,057</td>
<td>517</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>4,158</td>
<td>2,027</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading Coaches</td>
<td>1,045</td>
<td>272</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Survey data collection, spring 2005
Composition of Study Sample

• Reading First schools, on average, were larger than Title I schools (513 versus 465).

• Reading First schools were more likely to be in urban areas than Title I schools (46 versus 39 percent).

• Teachers in RF and Title I schools are equally experienced, with about 13 years of teaching experience on average.

• Reading First and Title I schools had similar mobility rates (18 and 16 percent) and attendance rates (94 and 95 percent).

• Schools reported equal number of students receiving special education services (8 percent). More students in RF schools receive ESL instruction than in Title I schools (20 versus 11 percent).
Composition of Study Sample

Student Reading Levels and Participation In Interventions for Struggling Readers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Reading at or Above Grade Level</th>
<th>Participating in Interventions for Struggling Readers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RF Students</td>
<td>Title I Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Mean Percent of Students
Overview of Presentation Topics

• Distribution of funds

• Reading instruction
  – Time for reading instruction
  – Materials and strategies used to teach reading

• Interventions for struggling readers

• Assessment

• Role of reading coaches

• Professional development
Key Study Findings

- Reading First schools appear to be implementing the *major elements* of the program as intended by the legislation, including:
  - Adequate time for reading instruction,
  - Scientifically based materials and reading instruction,
  - Interventions for struggling readers, and
  - Assessment data to inform reading instruction.
  - Reading-related professional development
Key Finding:

• The Reading First program specified that states and districts were to award funds in amounts sizable enough to expect that schools would be able to affect real change in their reading programs.

• The median award across RF schools was $138,000

• The awards ranged from $2,000 to $854,000
Amount of RF Funds Awarded to Schools

- $2k - $100k: 29%
- $100k - $200k: 46%
- $200k - $300k: 18%
- over $300k: 7%
**Key Finding:**

More RF schools have scheduled reading blocks across grades than Title I schools.
Key Finding:

Further, in grades 1-3, teachers in RF schools spend significantly more time teaching reading than their Title I counterparts.
One goal of RF is to ensure that teachers use core reading programs and other materials that align with SBRR. Toward this end, many state and district plans involved adopting new programs and materials.

**Key Finding:**

- RF schools were significantly more likely to report changes in reading programs and materials than their Title I counterparts.
Reading Instruction: Instructional Materials

Changes to Reading Program Materials

- Adopted a new core reading program
- Added a new intervention program
- Added new supplementary materials
- Added new materials for ELLs
- Adopted new reading assessments

Reading First
Title I

* Statistically significant differences
Across grades, RF teachers reported that more strategies that align with SBRR were central to their teaching than Title I teachers.

**Alignment of Instruction with SBRR**

- Kindergarten
- First Grade
- Second Grade
- Third Grade

Reading First: *
Title I: *
Interventions for Struggling Readers

Key Finding:

• There is evidence of increased attention to struggling readers across both RF and Title I schools
  - Using test data to identify students as struggling readers
  - Provision of services follows identification of the need for intervention
Interventions for Struggling Readers

Key Finding: Methods used to meet students’ needs

• The method used most often by teachers in both types of schools was *extra practice*.
  
  – RF 3rd grade teachers were more likely than Title I teachers to provide extra practice in phonemic awareness, decoding and fluency

• RF K and 3rd grade teachers were more likely to use materials that *supplement* the core reading program.

• RF K, 2nd and 3rd grade teachers were more likely to place their struggling readers in intervention programs.
Interventions for Struggling Readers

Key Finding: Meeting the needs of struggling readers remains a challenge

• In both RF and Title I schools, few teachers in any grade report that time is set aside to coordinate instructional activities with ELL or special education staff.

• The majority of teachers in both types of schools (78 and 64 percent) report receiving PD in how to teach struggling readers, but many report needing more.
Use of Assessments

Key Finding: The vast majority of teachers in both RF and Title I schools named an assessment they found useful for each of the three assessment purposes.

• Placement or grouping of students (90%)
• Determining student mastery of skills (89%)
• Identifying core deficits (85%)
Use of Assessments

Assessments Teachers Find Useful

- Tests from Core Reading Program
- Informal Reading Assessments
- Standardized Assessments

Legend:
- Reading First
- Title I

* indicates significant difference
Key Finding:

• Teachers in RF schools report having more time set aside to use assessment data to inform instruction than Title I teachers.

• More RF teachers report using assessment data to:
  – Organize instructional groups (83% vs 73%)
  – Determine progress on skills (85% vs 78%)
  – Identify students who need reading intervention services (75% vs 65%)
The Role of Reading Coaches

Key Findings:

• RF schools are more likely to have a reading coach to support their teachers in the implementation of their reading programs than Title I schools.

• Coaches in RF schools were more likely to provide teachers with supports for their reading *instruction* than were coaches in Title I schools.

• 29% of RF coaches report that providing direct instruction to students is absolutely central to their work, compared to 53% of reading coaches in Title I SWP schools.
Role of Reading Coaches

- Providing PD: 96 (Reading First), 87 (Title I)
- Coaching Staff: 92 (Reading First), 83 (Title I)
- Organizing PD: 67 (Reading First), 47 (Title I)
- Facilitating Grade-Level Meetings: 67 (Reading First), 47 (Title I)
Key Finding:

- RF staff report receiving more professional development in the prior year than did Title I staff.
  - 94% vs. 81% of teachers report attending PD related to reading.
  - On average, RF teachers report attending 40 hours and Title I teachers report attended 24 hours of PD in the prior year.
Key Finding:

- RF teachers were more likely to report having received PD in the prior year in the five dimensions of reading instruction than Title I teachers.
  - Phonemic Awareness 85% vs. 62%
  - Decoding 86% vs. 63%
  - Vocabulary 74% vs. 52%
  - Comprehension 87% vs. 75%
  - Fluency 86% vs. 69%

Survey data collection, spring 2005
Key Finding:

- RF teachers were more likely to report having attended PD with attributes conducive to a successful PD experience than were Title I teachers. Attributes included:
  - An incentive (e.g., stipend or release time) (Corcoran, 1995)
  - PD was conducted by well-established, experienced trainers (as reported by teachers) (Reading First Guidance)
  - A team-based approach (Garet et al., 1999)
Limitations

• It is important to note that this is not an impact study; our comparison group is for illustrative purposes only and does not allow us to make causal conclusions.

• The data come from self-reports. As is the case with all survey research, what people report they do may be different from what they actually do.
Conclusions

• The findings suggest that:
  – Reading First schools are carrying out the objectives of the Reading First legislation.
  – Reading First is having some effect on schools and teachers as they provide reading instruction to their students.
Next Steps

• A second round of data collection was conducted in the spring of 2007.

• Analyses will examine how the implementation of RF changes over time, and whether student achievement patterns differ across RF and Title I schools.

• Final report including these data due out later this year.