

# Communication Link

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Project Read

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BEDFORD, NH

## *Two for the Price of One: Reading Instruction for Children and Teachers*

*by Ann Remus and Chip McGee*

The *Project Read* Phonology, Written Expression and Reading Comprehension strands have been a successful part of the Bedford, New Hampshire School District's language arts program for over a decade. But as a highly trained veteran staff retires, we are experiencing the dual challenges of providing effective professional development for new teachers while continuing to provide effective instruction to struggling young readers.

In the spring of 2002, we decided to attack both challenges in one program. We developed a summer reading program, primarily for children finishing grades one and two. Teachers and reading specialists identify children at risk for reading. Parents

of those children are asked to commit to sending their child for all twelve days of a three-week clinic, held on Mondays through Thursdays in July.

While we hoped that the clinic would be a "shot in the arm" to the students, it was designed to provide professional development to the teachers as well. Teachers are required to have previously participated in the *Project Read* Phonology course and to have expressed an interest in increasing their skill in delivering the curriculum. The clinic directors are veteran educators with expertise in teaching reading. They review lesson plans, observe lessons, and meet daily with the teachers to discuss lesson delivery. Acknowledging

*Two for the Price of One continued on page 2*



*Pictured above (L to R): Chip McGee, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Assessment; Marilu Wilson, Reading Specialist; Sue Astone, Reading Specialist; Ann Remus, Superintendent of Schools; Lisa Vincent, Resource Teacher; Kathy Effenberger, Grade 2 Teacher; and Bonnie Bell, Reading Specialist.*

## *Two for the Price of One* continued from page 1

the considerable planning and reflection required, the district pays the teachers for two hours daily outside of the teaching time, and acknowledging the learning involved, provides twenty clock hours towards recertification for a teacher's first summer in the clinic.

Our budget provides for a maximum of 48 students: eight teachers work with two students at a time in one of three 50-minute sessions each day. The sessions are highly structured tutorials, using the *Project Read* Phonology strand at a place and pace appropriate for each pair of students. Bedford reading specialist Bonnie Bell and former Bedford reading specialist Joyce Goldweitz, both *Project Read* national trainer consultants, schedule their Bedford summer Project Read Phonology course so that course participants can visit and observe the clinic in action. This allows approximately fifty additional teachers from various school districts to see children actually being taught the curriculum.

While the summer clinic seemed like a good idea, we needed evidence of significant growth on the part of the students to justify repeating it. The clinic curriculum concentrates on decoding skills, but the goal, of course, is increasing both decoding and comprehension. We used the Gates-MacGinite Reading Tests, administered each May, as a measure. Extracting scores from the district's data warehouse, we looked at Normal Curve Equivalents (NCE) on the May 2002 administration for the children in the summer 2002 clinic. We then looked at the same students' scores on the May 2003 administration to compute NCE gains or losses. Those gains were compared to the gains of all students at the same grade levels who were not in the clinic (see table below). The average change in NCE score for all students included in the study (n=588) was 0.3. Removing the scores of students in the clinic, the average change was 0.1. The average change in NCE's for those students who participated in the summer reading clinic and for whom we have both 2002 and 2003 scores (n=25) was 4.9. Using a one-tailed t-test, we found the difference between the change in NCE's for the "Yes" students (in the clinic) and the "No" students (not in the clinic) to be significant at the 95% confidence level. Thus the reading clinic appears to have played a statistically significant role in increasing students' reading achievement.

In addition to analyzing test data, we surveyed satisfaction levels of teachers, students, and parents. All three groups expressed approval. On an end-of-clinic survey, 95% of the students (40 out of 42) agreed with the statement, "The work I did helped me learn to read better." Parent complaints included wishing to be notified earlier in the spring so that they would avoid making conflicting vacation plans; wanting more choice in the time of day their child would attend the clinic, and for some, wishing that the clinic was more than three weeks long. Parents otherwise praised the program with comments such as,

*What a wonderful difference this made!...[it] allowed teacher and student to work on precisely what E. needed help with, at the pace appropriate for her, with homework, feedback, etc. tailored just for her. The result was that E. was finally able to leap over her stumbling block in reading, apply what she had learned, and for the first time, enjoy reading!*

While the majority of parents brought their child to all twelve sessions, teachers expressed the wish that in the future the proportion would approach 100%. Teachers registered appreciation for specific aspects of the organization of the clinic: A paraprofessional brought students from parent cars into the tutoring session and back out, thereby reducing lost tutoring time, and the clinic directors were highly organized and had materials readily available. On several occasions as we visited the clinic, teachers stopped us with comments such as, "Being able to work at exactly the point of learning for each child and to see daily improvement is teaching at its most satisfying."

For over a decade, the *Project Read* curricula have helped students in Bedford who need a direct, systematic approach to language arts instruction. Using data and survey feedback, Bedford continues to improve the summer Phonology reading clinic model for teaching and learning.

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### Change in NCE Score on Gates Test (School Year 2001-2002 vs 2002-2003)

Results	Did the student participate in the Summer Reading Clinic?		
	No	Yes	Combined
Number of Students	556	25	581
Average of Change in NCE	0.1	4.9	0.3
Standard deviation	11.7	15.4	11.9

Using a one-tailed t-test, the difference between the change in NCE for the "Yes" students (4.9 points) compared to that for the "No" students (0.1) is significant at the 95% confidence level.

# *Bedford School District Reading Program K-5*

## Research Basis

A meta-analysis of reading research through the past thirty years led to the following early reading instruction recommendations<sup>1</sup> by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD):

- Begin teaching phonemic awareness directly at an early age (kindergarten.)
- Teach each sound-spelling correspondence explicitly.
- Teach frequent, highly regular sound-spelling relationships systematically.
- Show children exactly how to sound out words.
- Use connected, decodable text for children to practice the sound-spelling relationships they learn. Decodable text is composed of words that use the sound-spelling correspondences the children have learned to that point and a limited number of sight words that have been systematically taught. The inferiority of teaching sound-spelling relationships (decoding) through embedded phonics has been demonstrated in several studies.
- Use interesting literature to develop language comprehension.

## Application of the Research in Bedford

The NICHD research validates Bedford's Reading Program K-5, which has been in place for over a decade. All of the recommendations above are followed in the district's balanced, comprehensive reading program. The program includes:

1. A strong literature language comprehension program that includes a balance of oral and written language.
2. An organized, explicit skill program that includes phonemic awareness, phonics and decoding skills.
3. On-going diagnosis that informs teaching and assessment that ensures accountability.
4. Early intervention program for at-risk students.

In addition to these components, Bedford's program aligns with the New Hampshire State Frameworks.

## Structure of the Bedford Reading Program

All classes are heterogeneous in ability/achievement; therefore, so is the teaching of reading. The district uses a literature-based, language arts oriented reading program as an instructional base for the majority of the population and the Project Read model for about one-fourth to one-third of the population. The literature-based students benefit from strategies used in the Project Read program such as the multi-sensory teaching of letters, sounds, syllables, and sentence structure. The Project Read students are included in literature-based lessons that enrich their vocabularies, knowledge of language and appreciation of good literature. All children benefit from the "best of both worlds" reading approach.

In order to meet the individual needs of all learners, each classroom should provide a balance of grouping types. The Bedford Reading Program K-5 has been designed to provide this balance. Students are organized in whole groups, small groups, pairs, or individually for reading instruction. In addition to planning student programs carefully, Bedford understands the importance of flexible grouping in the teaching of reading. It is not efficient or effective for teachers to teach reading across the span of skill levels represented in an entire class of students.

<sup>1</sup> Grossen, Bonita, "A Synthesis of Research on Reading from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development," NEBIDA Newsletter. (Winter, 2001.)

*District Reading Program continued on page 4*

***District Reading Program*** continued from page 3**Instructional Components of the Bedford Reading Program**

- I. Alphabetics
- II. Phonemic Awareness
- III. Systematic Explicit Phonics
- IV. Fluency
- V. Vocabulary Development
- VI. Comprehension
- VII. Higher Order Thinking

**Diagnosis/Assessment**

<u>Standardized Tests</u>	<u>Grade</u>
Metropolitan Readiness Tests*	1
Gates MacGinitie Reading Tests*	1, 2, 3, and 5
California Achievement Test*	4
NHIEAP**	3

<u>Informal Assessments</u>	<u>Grade</u>
Reading Skills Inventory	K and 1
Unit Tests from Literature Series	3-5
Teacher Developed Diagnostic Inventories	1-5
Observational Checklists	K-5
Oral Reading Samples	1-5

\* Norm-referenced

\*\* Criterion referenced

**Intervention**

Bedford has chosen *Project Read* as the intervention model. *Project Read* is a direct, systematic, multi-sensory, structured language approach. It was developed as a regular classroom-based alternative to teach children with language learning problems who were not learning in other reading programs. Project Read is a preventative program when instituted in the early grades as Bedford has done. Studies have demonstrated its success as a total reading/language arts program. It has three interwoven components – phonology, comprehension, and written expression. All district support programs utilize *Project Read* as a preventative/remedial program. Therefore, the classroom teachers, Title I teachers, Reading Support teachers, Team Instruction Resource teachers, paraprofessionals, and Reading Specialists work together to effectively deliver the Project Read program. A student who is having difficulty can move from classroom instruction, to Reading Support, to Team Instruction support with continuity. All programs follow the same sequence of skills, utilize the same techniques, and use the same “language”. All the teachers involved are able to share materials and instructional ideas. The difference is the amount of instructional support time the individual student receives as well as varying the emphasis of each component depending on student needs.

BEDFORD, NH

## *Long Range Professional Development Plan: Project Read Strands 2002-2005*

2002-2003	Summer	Fall	Winter	Spring
Project Read Comprehension Grades 1,2 & 3 Grades 4 & 5	Day 1 Literature Connection Report Form June 14th and 17th	Day 2 Teachers Workshop Day November 5th	Demo lessons and Round Table discussion groups in each building led by consultants/reading specialists	Continuing reading specialist support
Project Read Phonology Grades K-5	4 day workshop July 23rd - 26th	Demonstration lessons and Round Table discussion. Groups led by Reading Specialist in each building	Demonstration lessons and Round Table discussion. Groups led by Reading Specialist in each building	
New Teacher Induction Program K-6	District Reading Philosophy August 21st 1 1/2 hours	Induction Reading Seminar November 12th 1 1/2 hours	Model lessons by reading specialists	Model lessons by reading specialists

2003-2004	Summer	Fall	Winter	Spring
Project Read Focus Written Expression Grades 3 - 5 Grade 2		Day 1 - Teacher Workshop Day September Day 2 - Teacher Workshop Day October	Day 3	Day 4 - March Teacher Workshop Day Reading specialist support
Project Read Phonology Grades K-5	4 day workshop July	Demonstration lessons and Round Table discussion. Groups led by Reading Specialist in each building	Demonstration lessons and Round Table discussion. Groups led by Reading Specialist in each building	Reading specialist support
New Teacher Induction Program K-6	District Reading Philosophy August 1 1/2 hours	Reading Seminar November 1 1/2 hours	Model lessons by reading specialists	Model lessons by reading specialists

2004-2005	Summer	Fall	Winter	Spring
Project Read Focus Comprehension Grades 1, 2, & 3 Grades 4 & 5	Day 1 Literature Connection Report Form June	Day 2 Teacher Workshop September	Demo lessons and Round Table discussion groups in each building	Continuing reading specialist support
Project Read Phonology Grades K-5	4 day workshop July	Demonstration lessons and Round Table discussion. Groups led by Reading Specialist in each building	Demonstration lessons and Round Table discussion. Groups led by Reading Specialist in each building	
New Teacher Induction Program K-6	District Reading Philosophy August 1 1/2 hours	Reading Seminar November 1 1/2 hours		Model lessons by reading specialists

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CENTRAL, SC

# Project Read Teacher Reports

by Nancy Linvill

**Editor's Note:** Nancy Linvill and Anne Whitten, both teachers of Project Read, were two of the finalists for the South Carolina Exceptional Educator of the Year Award. It is awarded to the top Special Education Teacher. Nancy won the award this year. See the Spring 2002 "Communication Link" for another article by Nancy Linvill, "Grassroots Project Read Program Grows".

Ask Project Read students what they remember from their earliest days in the program, and you are likely to hear them describing symbols and syllables, memory aids and hand signals. "It was something different," says honors student Beth DeWitt. "Mrs. Linvill was always open to different kinds of learning."

**Katie Cooley**, who graduated from Daniel High School in Clemson, South Carolina has similarly strong recollections of her early days with Mrs. Linvill. Another memory from the past has shaped who Cooley is today – the memory of life before Project Read. "I had no self confidence," says Cooley.

A hard thing to imagine when one meets her today. Kind brown eyes and an easy grin belie the focus which marks her ambition – to become fluent in American Sign Language and to work with the deaf. "Because of my learning disability I am able to understand people. Because I struggled, I understand their struggles." Coach Christine Lightsey, who taught Cooley, concurs. "I feel that because Katie has had to struggle for her success, it has caused her to be an empathetic, compassionate person."

What a success she has been. In addition to a Professional Women's Association Scholarship, she is the recipient of the Governor's Good Citizen Award, which was given to her after she deeply impressed the four judges who presided over the grading of the senior projects. She received a score of "four" from each judge, bettering the marks achieved by the class valedictorian. She was even offered a job by one of the judges.

It was this senior class project on the deaf that made Cooley an easy choice to receive the Governor's Good Citizen Award. With family ties to Camp Sertoma, Cooley "grew up at the camp." Throughout the years she became acquainted with many different kinds of hardship. Children who suffered abuse, financial difficulties and others made their way through Camp Sertoma, but "I fell in love with the deaf children," says Cooley.

In preparation for her senior class project, Cooley worked with a Clemson University program dealing with the deaf and attended a Silent Dinner, where she was able to exercise her budding ability to speak with her hands in the elegant language

of the deaf. As she describes the beauty of American Sign Language, one can't help but wonder if the influence on hand signals in Project Read may have been part of the foundation of her dream to communicate within that silent world.

When it comes to Project Read's benefits, Cooley is expansive. "Everything in Project Read has helped me so much," she says, adding, "I have confidence now."

*"Before Project Read, I walked through the balls with my head down. After Project Read, I walked with my head up."*

—Katie



*Katie Cooley*

# Student Success

**Beth DeWitt**, who began Project Read in the first grade, has far fewer memories of her time before joining the program than Cooley. She does recall having memorized a children's book after listening to one reading by her mother. She took the book to school and recited it to her kindergarten teacher, who made mention of what a good reader she was to Becky DeWitt, her mother. Mrs. DeWitt wasn't so easily deceived, and saw to it that her daughter joined Mrs. Linvill's Project Read classroom.

With the tools provided by Project Read, DeWitt feels that she has not only learned to deal with her learning difference, but has nearly conquered it. "I have very few symptoms of my dyslexia," she says. She gives an analogy of cubbies to describe the dyslexic mind. The normal brain places information in ordered cubbies. Dyslexics' cubbies are disorganized – when they go to retrieve information, they can't find what cubby they left it in. "I retrained my mind to put the cubbies in the right order."

Research lead by Sally Shaywitz, a professor of pediatrics at Yale School of Medicine, backs DeWitt's statement. With the use of magnetic-resonance imaging of the brain, Shaywitz was able to reveal how Project Read ignites the areas of the brain utilized by normal readers.

A student who participates in both the Gifted and Talented program at her school as well as in special education, DeWitt nearly won a Spelling Bee in her GT class. A success she correctly deems "amazing." As is the essay she wrote in order to win a scholarship to a horse riding camp, which is perhaps where her future lies. "Since I love horses, am one of the shortest in my class, and enjoy challenges, I am considering being a jockey." DeWitt currently competes in a wide spectrum of equestrian events with her Appaloosa mare, Frosty. The other profession that has caught her fancy? Writing. "I love to read," she says, "Books are so interesting to me. I devote most of my summer days to reading."

The idea of life without Project Read brings an immediate and strong reaction from DeWitt. "I really don't want to know what my grades would be right now without Project Read. It has helped me so much." She adds, "I truly hope Project Read can continue to give kids with learning differences the same chance I had, to have the one thing so many people take for granted – the chance to be themselves."



*Beth DeWitt*

*"I truly hope Project Read can continue to give kids with learning differences the same chance I had, to have the one thing people take for granted – the chance to be themselves."*

—Beth

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