

Communication Link

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Project Read

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SAN MARCOS, TX

San Marcos Schools Partner with Foundation to Fund Project Read

"All of our teachers at DeZavala Elementary School including general education teachers, resource teachers, and Title 1 teachers are trained and use all four components of Project Read. The program provides direct, systematic, multisensory reading and writing instruction within the regular classroom, and in small group instruction delivered by reading specialists. All of our children are achieving grade level standards or higher because of Project Read strategies and our implementation plan.

For the past three years our school has received an Exemplary Rating, the highest rating given by the State, due to our academic achievement. DeZavala Elementary School has just been named a Texas Blue Ribbon School and is headed to the National Awards. These successes can be attributed to the excellent training our teachers have received.

Training teachers in Project Read is an expense that I would not be able to assume in my regular budget if it were not for the grants that the San Marcos Civic Foundation has provided to the district. These grant



DeZavala's Principal, Yolanda Almendarez

funds have allowed many of my staff to become experts in reading. Grant funds enable me to attend national conferences such as the International Dyslexia Association Conference where I continue to stay current with the latest research in helping struggling readers." — Yolanda Almendarez, Principal

Editor's Note: San Marcos Civic Foundation is "committed to serving the needs of dyslexic students in central Texas."

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PLACENTIA-YORBA LINDA, CA

Students Given Tools For Reading

Positive Results for Placentia–Yorba Linda



Finger scissors clip consonant sounds.

They clench their fist like a hammer as they come to a word they can't read. They aren't angry or frustrated, they are using attack skills to read new words. As you watch them closely you will notice they tap their fist-hammer as they identify each sound in the word. Then they tap and sweep under sounds as they say the word. The students sit with a smile as they realize they have just read a word. They are developing the word attack skills to learn to read. They now possess one of the tools the Project Read Phonology program provides for reading instruction.

CREATING A PLAN

The Placentia–Yorba Linda Unified School District in California is on its third year of implementation of Project Read. A district committee of teachers reviewed many programs to develop the important reading tools necessary to build a strong foundation in reading for the students of the district. The district committee selected Project Read because it has effective strategies of direct instruction, a multisensory approach, sequential presentation of concepts and skills, and most importantly, they were impressed with the methods used to develop phonetic skills.

Project Read training has been conducted for all kindergarten, first, and second grade teachers in the district.

The results have been impressive showing continuous growth. As the district tracks the progress of the Project Read instruction through the grade levels, reading test scores have improved. The teachers are noticing the difference in their students' ability and confidence to read.

GRANT FUNDS EXTENSIVE PROJECT READ TRAINING

This year the district received a grant to train the third grade teachers in Project Read. Already the third grade teachers are impressed with the word attack skills the students have developed in prior grades. The district has selected six premier teachers to be Project Read trainers. These trainers have participated in extensive training in the skills of teaching Project Read. They are looking forward to training the third grade teachers in the district. Trainers Jill Nesbit, Kathy Malone, Patti Davidson, Mary Wilson, Ann Jones, and Peggy Faure have been working hard to coordinate and develop the Project Read training with the curriculum specialist, Laurie Smith and grant director, Pauline Ferris. They will conduct their first training for the teachers in October.

The teachers, administrators, and community are pleased with the results of the Project Read instruction. They look forward to the training of the third grade teachers to strengthen an already strong reading program. Since the kindergarten, first, and second grade teachers have been trained in "Project Read Phonology" and "Framing Your Thoughts" they feel they are properly equipped with the tools to teach the necessary reading and writing skills for their students.

A small group of students sit with their teacher placing two of their fingers to their mouth. They open and close their fingers like scissors. They are not playing rock, paper, scissors, but using a word attack skill they learned in Project Read. They are clipping their consonant sounds. The results from developing the reading attack skills of Project Read are positive for the students. Each student is given the tools necessary to learn to read. The district looks forward to the extension of the effects of the Project Read program through the training of the third grade teachers and the expansion of Phonology through grade 3.

Editor's Note: An RGK Foundation grant is funding grade 3 teacher training.

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WAYNESBURG, KY

Principal Coordinates Several Funding Sources



Spelling Non-phonetic Red Words on the Arm

Waynesburg Elementary School is in its second year of implementation of the Project Read model. The teaching staff is at the refinement level of professional development with Phonology and Report Form having taught from these Project Read components for a year. After summer training, teachers are at the preparation and implementation levels with the Linguistics and Story Form components.

Several sources of funding have been coordinated to provide the support services to help implement the Project Read program in our school. The Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence in Kentucky provides training for parental involvement through the Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership. Becky Burton, a parent of a Waynesburg Elementary School student, attended the 1998 summer institute and wrote a proposal for \$500 to purchase Project Read Phonology material.

Early test results, observations and student/parent feedback were positive after having used the Project Read Phonology reading strategies. We applied for and received funding through the Kentucky Early Reading Incentive Grant to train teachers, assistants and parents in the four components of Project Read. This award was for approximately \$43,000 and funded professional development and teacher/student materials.

Our school is a Title I school which means we receive federal monies to support programs to address identified school needs which included reading process. A portion of these monies are used to fund a supervised trained instructional assistant who coordinates the Project Read program in our school. The coordinator is involved in grouping students and providing the intense one-on-one assistance to those K-6 students identified with the greatest need.

Waynesburg Elementary School received School Improvement funds during 1999-2000 due to our scores from the Kentucky Core Content Test (KCCT). This allowed us to provide teachers with follow-up training by Language Circle consultants in our classrooms with our students. Also, some supplementary reading materials were purchased.

Goals 2000 Grant money was awarded to support reading instructional assistants during the daily primary and intermediate reading blocks. These assistants are supervised by classroom teachers and have been trained by the Project Read coordinator and/or Language Circle consultants. The assistants help the teacher manage groups during the 90-

minute daily reading block and work with students one-on-one and/or in small groups to provide more intense instruction.

The Extended School Services (ESS) Program also serves the children in a three-day per week after school tutoring program. Certified trained personnel work with children in Phonology and/or Linguistics as needed.

Workshops and seminars on reading strategies have been conducted for parents and volunteers. Refreshments for these meetings have been furnished by P.T.O. and the District Parent Involvement/Volunteer Program.

Waynesburg Elementary School has worked diligently to use resources in a wise manner to assist our students in developing good reading skills.



Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership Project Coordinator Kerry Zach, parent Becky Burton, and Prichard Committee member Bige Towery, Jr.

Contact: *Mary Jo Gibson, Principal
Waynesburg Elementary School
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SAN MARCOS, TX

Every student counts: No exceptions and no excuses!

For a low-wealth district such as San Marcos Consolidated Independent School District, grant funds are vital to our progress and continued growth, especially in the area of staff development. Private foundations such as the San Marcos Civic Foundation have enabled the SMCISD staff to attend training in all areas of reading and writing as well as conferences such as the International Dyslexia Association Conference. Our district seeks funding from private foundations as well as competitive state and federal grants. With these grant funds and our local budget, we are able to provide the students of SMCISD with the quality education that allows them to excel. Our district motto is “Every student counts: No exceptions and no excuses!” — Hector Montenegro, Superintendent



The graphs in this article show our district's TAAS (Texas Assessment of Academic Skills) data. TAAS is a criterion-referenced assessment over the TEKS (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills), the State mandated objects. San Marcos Consolidated Independent School District has been using all three strands of Project Read (Reading Comprehension, Phonology, and Written Expression) for the past eight years. Every teacher and most teacher assistants are trained. We have over 7600 students in our district.

Sixty-seven percent of the students are minority (this includes 61% Hispanic, 5% Black, and 1% other). Over 65 percent of our students are identified as economically disadvantaged. We are a low-wealth district with four housing projects located in the city limits. All four of our elementary campuses qualify as school-wide Title 1 campuses.

We originally brought Project Read to our district for our Dyslexia Program. The teachers saw how valuable it was and asked to use it for all students, so it became the foundation of our reading and writing programs. Students who are identified at-risk (Title 1, Special Education, Dyslexia, etc.) receive Project Read teaching ahead of the general education program. As a matter of fact, many times they outshine the general education students. With students receiving the same information in the general education classroom and in their Title 1 or Special Education classroom, they acquire and transfer the information more efficiently. Every teacher speaks the same language.

The four elementary campuses are identical in ethnicity, number of students, economic disadvantage numbers, etc. Each campus has approximately 725 students. The State goal on the TAAS is that 90% of the students will pass each exam. A score of 70 is passing and is considered on grade level. A score of 80 is considered one grade level above, with 90

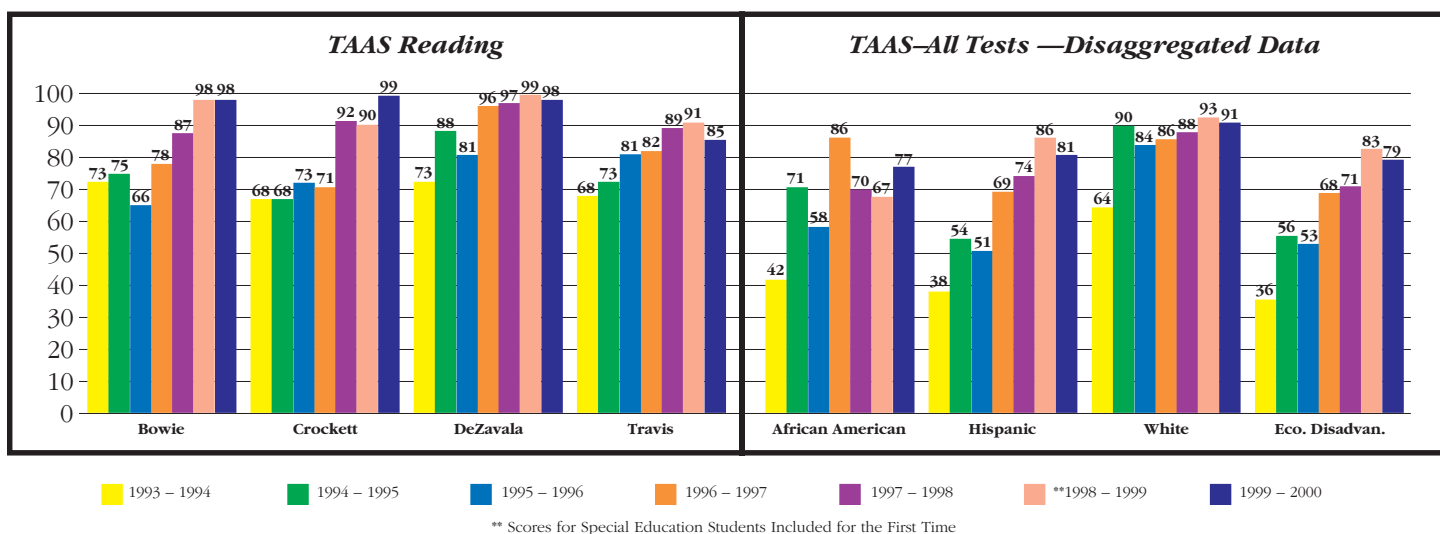
being approximately 2 grade levels above. Scores for Special Education students have been included since the 1998-99 school year. As you can see, scores for special education students did not reduce the campus scores.

Third grade is the first time students take the TAAS, and it is not a basic skills test. Third graders take the reading and mathematics tests, while fourth graders take reading, mathematics, and writing tests. The reading test is based on reading 8–10 different passages and then answering comprehension questions concerning inference, sequencing, summarization, supporting ideas, fact and opinion, etc. The mathematics test is a multiple step word problem test. Fourth graders also take a writing test that includes mechanics questions plus they must respond to a writing prompt selected from four types: persuasive, how to, classificatory, and narrative. Students must be able to determine the type of prompt before responding to it.

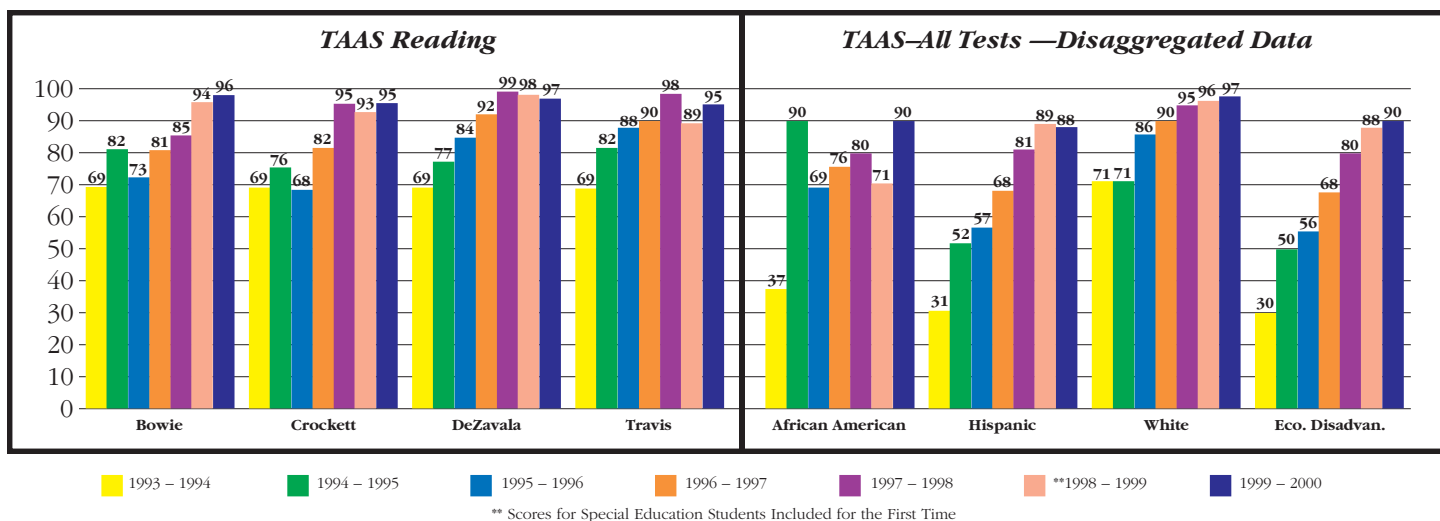
The 3rd grade campus comparisons show the four elementary campuses at or above 90%. DeZavala Elementary has consistently been our highest with 98% of their 3rd graders passing the reading test. Every teacher, counselor, teacher assistant, and administrator at DeZavala is trained in Project Read. They use no other reading programs. This consistency campus-wide has paid off from the very beginning.

The 4th grade campus comparisons are illustrated graphically. On the disaggregated scores for 4th grade, please note that the Hispanic population and Economically Disadvantaged students have both soared at or over 60 percentage points in eight short years. We are proud of our growth as we have closed the gap between minority, at-risk, and white students!

San Marcos Consolidated Independent School District THIRD GRADE TAAS READING CAMPUS COMPARISONS



San Marcos Consolidated Independent School District FOURTH GRADE TAAS READING CAMPUS COMPARISONS



DeZavala was the first campus in our district to be identified by the State of Texas as an Exemplary Campus for having at least 90% of their students pass each portion of the TAAS. DeZavala has been an Exemplary Campus for the past three school years. That means that at least 90% of their students passes the reading, writing, and mathematics portions of the TAAS. The State looks at the campus as a whole and at each ethnicity and economically disadvantaged grouping. Bowie has now joined DeZavala as an Exemplary Campus. The SMCISD district motto is, "Every student counts: No exceptions, no excuses."

Contact:
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Ask Tori

Honing Your Teaching Skills



*Tori Greene,
Co-author
of Project Read*

Q WHAT IS THE CORRECT SYLLABICATION OF THE WORD ‘CASSEROLE’?

According to the dictionary, casserole is divided: cas se role. However, in **Project Read syllabication is a tool to assist students to unlock the word for decoding.** The more natural, first division would be: cas ser ole. The schwa sound will usually be adjusted when the word is blended together.

If there continues to be a question about pronunciation, have the students look it up in the dictionary. Remember, when teaching syllabication, you are also teaching dictionary skills. Syllabication should be a tool that assists. Do not make it a burden by being overly concerned with matching the dictionary.

Q HOW DO WE IMPLEMENT PHONOLOGY WITH THEIR BASAL READERS IF THE BASAL COVERS A SKILL THAT ISN'T TAUGHT IN PROJECT READ UNTIL LATER? DO WE JUMP AHEAD AND TEACH THE SKILL OUT OF SEQUENCE? EXAMPLE: MAGIC E, DIPHTHONGS, AND CONSONANT LE IS USED IN THE BASAL VERY EARLY BUT MUCH LATER IN THE PHONOLOGY GUIDE.

The Project Read sequence of concepts and skills is ordered to assure that the students understand the sounds and the symbol or symbols that represent the sound.

The **students need to understand WHY a skill is being taught and how to apply the skill in reading and spelling.** As an example: The sound / s / represented by c is conditional. It must be followed by an i, e, or y. Therefore, it is introduced after those vowels are understood, and the sound / s / has been matched to the symbol it most frequently represents.

Some sounds are much too close in pronunciation and need to be introduced far apart from each other.

When teaching the skill of magic final e, it must be attached to the **concept**—“the conditions that cause a vowel to be long.” Remember, Project Read is concept driven, and most skills cannot be taught until the students have enough prior knowledge to understand why the vowel is representing the vowel or why the consonant-le is a syllable. The sequence is based on the concepts arranged in their dependent order. The dependent concepts are called the “logic links” of our language. The skills are embodied in the concepts.

These concepts and skills are classified and ordered in the sound-symbol chart according to frequency of use.

Q CAN WE HAVE MORE THAN ONE MEMORY BOX PER GROUP OR CLASSROOM? WE WOULD LIKE TO HAVE MANY CHILDREN PRACTICING AT THE SAME TIME.

There should be only one memory box. It should only be used when carefully monitored by the teacher.

The **initial teaching is indelible.** It is crucial to provide a visual image for students to trace while locking in sound and symbol. The teacher also needs to be sure the students draw the letters correctly. The memory box is not for practice. It is to check memory for sound-symbol relationship and correct directionality when drawing letters.

Q HOW CAN WE IMPROVE AUTOMATICITY? WE DON'T WANT TO HAVE TO RELY ON WORD BUILDING FOR EVERY WORD.

Automaticity is achieved by **oral reading.** Students must do text reading every day. Flashing the **Jewel Box Words** and the **Treasure Chest Sentence Strips** will also assist reading fluency. The tools of tapping out sounds and applying syllabication are applied only when needed. **Word building with phoneme grapheme cards** is used only when modeling in the early part of the lesson. The teacher can assist during a lesson automaticity with the following technique:

- ✓ Hold up a word or sentence.
- ✓ Have the students silently sweep their eyes across the word or words while the teacher says “think” and sweeps her fingers under the word or sentence. The speed of the teacher’s finger sweep sets the students’ pace.
- ✓ The teacher then says “read” and the students read the word or sentence orally.

Fluency is aided by understanding voice inflection, therefore, **daily sentence dictation** is important strategy for achieving automaticity.

WE ARE GRATEFUL TO PAT EDWARDS FOR SUBMITTING THESE QUESTIONS FROM TEACHERS IN ULYSSES, PA.

Commentary

Mary Lee Enfield, Ph.D.

The National Reading Panel was commissioned by Congress in 1997 for the purpose of investigating the scientific research pertaining to the teaching of reading and to identify specific areas of reading instruction essential to the teaching of reading.

After three years of investigation into reading research which met very rigorous, scientific standards, a report was submitted to the public. "For the first time, we now have guidance based on evidence from sound scientific research on how best to teach children to read." said Duane Alexander, M.D., Director of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.¹

The panel determined that effective teaching of reading must include the following components:

- phonemic awareness (breaking apart and manipulating sounds in words)
- phonics instruction (sounds in our oral language are represented by symbols/letters of the alphabet which can be blended together to make words)
- guided oral reading (practice what they learn in decoding words by reading aloud with guidance and feedback)
- direct instruction in the strategies of reading comprehension

More specifically the panel found "teaching phonemic awareness to children significantly improves their reading more than instruction that lacks any attention to phonemic awareness."²

"Meta-analysis revealed that systematic phonics instruction produces significant benefits for students in kindergarten through 6th grade and for children having difficulty learning to read."²



Mary Lee Enfield, Ph.D.
Co-author of Project Read

Guided oral reading "monitored by teachers, peers, or parents had a significant and positive impact on word recognition, fluency, and comprehension across grade levels."² They also found that encouraging students to read more, in itself, did not result in improved reading skills.

Children need to be directly taught strategies in acquiring good reading comprehension skills and that reading is a complex cognitive process which includes ability to employ higher level thinking skills.

The panel concluded that more effective pre-service and in-service in which teachers are trained specifically in the essential components of reading is imperative in order to implement an effective reading program for all children.

They also explored the role of technology in the teaching of reading and thought it to have a promising role in the future but research is inconclusive at this time.

As I read this report, I was struck with how Project Read includes all of the recommendations of the report including teacher in-service and the exploration of technology to assist/enhance program implementation. Project Read has exemplified these recommendations for many years. It is encouraging to find a rigorous, comprehensive, intensive, scientific investigation of reading research supporting our years of work with teachers and students in the field of reading research supporting our years of work with teachers and students in the field of reading. Project Read has been a researched based program from its inception. It now has the added support of an entirely independent study conducted at the national level by acknowledged experts in the field of reading.

A complete copy of the National Reading Panels report can be obtained on the following website: <http://www.nichd.nih.gov/publications/nrppubskey.cfm>

¹ ALC Newsletter printed from National Institutes of Health

² National Reading Panel Report: An Evidence-Based Assessment of the Scientific Research Literature on Reading and Its Implications for Reading Instruction

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The Joy of Giving; The Joy of Receiving

Obtaining funding for your Project Read program can be as easy as contacting a local service club, or it can be as daunting as writing a federal grant. To get started:

- * Search for organizations giving to education, literacy, reading, dyslexia, etc.
- * Contact a prospective organization, explain your program, and ask for their grant guidelines.
- * Follow the guidelines to a “T”.
- * Document and report your Project Read data. Dr. Mary Lee Enfield is especially helpful in this area.
- * **Thank the grantors. Invite them to experience Project Read in action in your classroom.**

Finally, enjoy working with your new partners in education—grantors!



Above: Principal Beth Bebnke accepts a donation from Sertoma Club member Dick Hora at Consolidated Catholic School in Faribault, Minnesota.

Below: Mr. Hora observes first graders and their teacher Ruth Knotz during a Project Read lesson.



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