Standards-based Reform in Long Beach Unified: Progress in Reading Development
Final Evaluation Report

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Introduction

Education Matters' evaluation of Middle School standards-based reform in Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD) began in 1995. Since those early days the district has made many strides in developing content standards aligned with state standards, performance assessments in all core content areas, and a coherent professional development system for new teachers. Strong collaboration with California State University, Long Beach (CSULB) and Long Beach City College (LBCC) through the Seamless Education Initiative has strengthened the local teacher preparation program and increased articulation between the K-12 system and higher education. During this period the research office has steadily increased its ability to provide schools with student data to inform program decisions. Individual student profiles, which are comprehensive records of each student's achievement on a range of assessments, as well as the interventions used to support student growth, have provided a valuable tool for communicating with parents. In 1997 the district identified reading comprehension as the top instructional priority for improving student achievement. The evaluation team followed the evolution of Reading Development from the beginning because of our concentration on supports for the lowest achieving students. Then, in 2000, LBUSD asked the evaluation team to focus on the Reading Development Program for the final two years of the evaluation of the grant from the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation.

We begin with a brief historical summary of the major developments of the reading program to set the context for this report. The Reading Development program in LBUSD began to evolve during the 1997-98 school year, when two middle school reading institutes were developed, MSRI (Middle School Reading Institute) and MSCAT (Middle School Content Area Teaching) to strengthen teachers' ability to teach and support reading, particularly for students who were reading significantly below grade level[1]. These institutes also introduced a new approach to professional development, constituting a course of study over an extended period of time. Six days of instruction took place over several weeks. Although this training did not include follow up classroom support, teachers were assigned "homework" to try out strategies introduced in the institute, and then come back and discuss their experiences with their peers. Teachers were given professional books and given time within the course to read and discuss these texts. Moreover, the instructors modeled the strategies teachers were learning to use with their students.

1998-99 was designated as a voluntary pilot year for implementing reading development classes. A course outline was provided by the district, but each school developed their own curriculum. Most of the middle schools did offer some kind of reading support that year, although the quality of the course varied across schools. The district made literacy

[1] LBUSD's literacy efforts are not limited to Reading Development, the focus of this report. There is also a significant effort to support reading comprehension and writing skills in all of the content areas, in addition to language arts classes, where literature and writing are taught.

the focus of the summer program and required all teachers who wanted to teach summer school to attend one of the middle school reading institutes, thus increasing the number of teachers participating in the training.

A course description for Middle Grades Reading Development was approved by the school board in April of 1999. Although there was no developed curriculum, the course outline delineated a comprehensive reading program aligned to the Language Arts standards, which included: flexible decoding strategies, comprehension strategies, vocabulary development, and metacognitive strategies for comprehension and fluency. It recommended the use of a variety of instructional methods and strategies for whole group, small group, and individualized instruction using read-alouds, shared reading, guided reading, visualization and verbalization, literature circles, reading workshop, and a home reading program. Reading Development classes were required for all 6th grade students scoring below the 25th percentile on the reading portion of the SAT-9, during the 1999-2000 school year. Many schools chose to also provide a reading class for seventh and eighth graders with low reading scores.

Over the summer (1999) teachers worked to design the new Reading Development Course. Many of the teachers identified to teach the course had taken the districts' middle school reading institutes where they learned the strategies called for in the new course description. Unfortunately, there were not enough teachers who had been trained in reading to staff all the sections of reading development that were needed. At several schools, reading teachers reported that while teaching a new course for the first time is always a challenge, they were excited about the way students were responding to the class. Two and a half months into the school year, reading development teachers were told they were to begin teaching a new program, Breaking the Code, as of the first week of December. Breaking the Code is a phonics program, which focuses mainly on phonemic awareness and decoding skills.2 It is a highly scripted program and teachers were directed to implement Breaking the Code "exactly as it was designed."[3] The late start contributed to a number of issues that resulted in the program being poorly implemented, including a lack of training, a top-down mandate that contradicted teachers' beliefs about good instruction, and the lack of assessment to ensure that students actually lacked the skills that were the focus of the class.

The introduction of Breaking the Code was a radical shift from the direction initiated by the former reading coordinators who developed the two middle school reading institutes based on a balanced literacy approach. The scripted nature of the course assumed a "one size fits all" method of instruction and included almost no reading. Our observations, and those of many teachers we interviewed, raised serious concerns about the appropriateness of the course for the majority of middle school students.

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2 Although the curriculum contains some introductory reading comprehension and writing skills, and small group instruction, in the first year these components were seldom used by most teachers.

[3] Breaking the Code, Fact Sheet for Middle School, a district handout for implementing Breaking the Code.

The sudden introduction of Breaking the Code was a decision that the superintendent at the time admitted was a reactive "quick fix" strategy to raise test scores quickly. The heightened accountability measures instituted by the state were the motivation for this change in direction. Acknowledging that there were many problems with the first year's implementation, district administrators indicated that the choice to continue and ultimately expand the use of scripted curricula was to provide support to teachers who did not have a background in reading.

In the fall of 2000, the district added a second scripted curriculum, Soar to Success, to the reading development program. This course utilizes the four strategies of Reciprocal Teaching to teach reading comprehension. Once again, the training for teaching the new course was limited, and the instructional materials were not available during the training. There was also no training in how to orchestrate a class that required small group instruction. Nor was there any training in "suggested" strategies the district recommended to support reading comprehension, such as read-alouds, shared reading, guided reading, or literature circles. These professional development issues resulted in poor implementation of the course in most schools.

The district's focus on reading continued to grow with the establishment of a reading department in 2000. The reading development continuum of courses was modified and expanded as gaps in the adopted curriculum were identified. One district administrator explained the rationale for offering a number of different reading development courses:

> *We're finding when you look at the data on kids, there is no one picture for a middle school child. There's a variety of different reasons an older reader is a struggling reader. That's why we went into the reading development concept, because we do feel that if you want to accelerate the progress of kids, you need to look at what each individual child is telling you about his struggles with reading and his strengths in reading. And then place that child in an appropriate course.* [Administrator A]

In fall 2001, two new courses were added to the reading development continuum, and existing courses were revised. Missing components, such as independent reading and vocabulary development were added and a number of assessments were introduced to inform placement and to monitor student progress. The emphasis on reading districtwide has sent a strong message that reading is important—a message that was welcomed by reading teachers and supported by principals. One experienced reading teacher observed the change:

> *I've seen it evolve to where reading in the middle school setting is starting to take focus as being a valid and necessary curriculum area to be taught and I think that is extremely exciting and extremely important. And I think the fact that we are coming from elementary where a lot of reading teachers and a lot of reading specialists exist, the middle school is now starting to see that it's necessary to have people who only teach reading and who want to teach reading and who have a passion for teaching*

reading and experience in teaching reading. That's a strong evolution. We now have reading as a department which is a strong development. [Teacher A]

During our spring 2001 visit, the evaluation team found that while the district was attempting to put into place a structured continuum of courses to meet the reading needs of all students, there was very little consistency in the course content from one classroom to the next, even if the course was the same. Variation from one school to the next was also considerable.

We did, however, find a few consistent themes across the schools in our sample:

1) The placement of students in appropriate classes was problematic. SAT-9 scores were used almost exclusively to place students in reading classes—a test that does not provide diagnostic information about students' reading difficulties. In addition, too often students who were behavior problems were assigned to lower level reading classes, whether they had reading problems or not. Very few students were moved, even when teachers recognized that they were misplaced, due to scheduling difficulties.

2) There was general frustration with the brevity of professional development for the courses teachers were assigned to teach, and with the lack of follow through or ongoing support. The professional development experiences that teachers found most helpful were the Middle School Reading Institute (MSRI) and individual coaching, which was available at a few schools.

3) A significant amount of the professional development during the 2000-2001 school year focused on reading assessments. Teachers had multiple opportunities to learn to do running records, CBM (Curriculum Based Measure—a fluency test), and Benchmark tests. All of the training helped teachers understand how to do the assessments, but they did not learn how to interpret the results to inform instruction. Interpreting and applying assessment results are skills that require extensive practice and coaching support to become proficient. Teachers complained that the training was not done early enough in the year to be useful, was too repetitious, lacked depth, and required too much time out of class. The general consensus was that "the amount of work it took [to do the assessments] did not equal the amount of usefulness," and that all of the "testing interfered with instruction."

Experienced teachers found running records to be the most useful tool because it allowed them to identify individual needs. However, most inexperienced teachers did not develop sufficient skill in conducting the assessment for it to be useful. Due to the pressure to meet deadlines, very few reading teachers did their own testing. Only three of the 19 teachers interviewed did either the CBM or the Benchmark tests themselves.

Due to the wide variation we observed in classroom instruction during the spring visit, we began to question how generalizable our observations of five middle schools were to the rest of the district. To address this concern, for the final visit of the Education

Matters' evaluation team to Long Beach Unified we decided to visit every middle school. During November and early December 2001, we visited all but one middle school—a total of thirteen. Due to time limitations, we did not visit K-8 schools. During summer 2001, we interviewed the district's middle level reading team: Debbie DeDen, Shelley Gustafson, Stacey Casanove, and Chris Domingues. Then, in the fall at each school we interviewed the principal and reading department head, and conducted a walk-through of reading classes. In a few schools, where schedules permitted, we also had the opportunity to get input from a small number of reading teachers. This report integrates findings from our spring 2001 data collection, which included interviews with principals and reading teachers at five schools, as well as observations of reading classes, with the evidence and observations collected in the fall of 2001.

With this brief history of the reading development program as context, we turn now to a description of the reading development program we observed in middle schools in the fall of 2001 in terms of the courses offered, course content, and instructional practices. The report then turns to a number of issues that influence the implementation of the reading development program: assessment and student placement, professional development for reading teachers, and principal professional development. The conclusion summarizes the successes and challenges that effect the quality of reading instruction.

Reading Development Program at the school sites[4]

At the time of our final visit in December 2001, new courses had been added to the reading development program, and the original courses were revised to make them more comprehensive to address a wider range of students' reading issues. For example, a vocabulary component was added to every course. The following chart lists the original course titles and the revised course offerings that made up the Reading Development Program at the middle schools we visited.[5]

Original Course	Revised Course (Fall 2001)
LiPS	Phonemic Awareness
Breaking the Code	DWAFV (Decoding, Word Analysis, Fluency, Vocabulary)
Soar to Success	Comprehension Focus 1
Read 180	Integrated 1
	Comprehension Focus 2 –Academic Reading (new course)
	Comprehension Focus 3 – Advanced Academic Reading (new course)

[4] Although there were both male and female principals and teachers in our sample, in an effort to preserve anonymity, throughout this report I use feminine pronouns. Coaches and staff developers are included in the teacher sample.

[5] There are other courses in the reading development program, although these are the only courses that we observed at any of the schools in our sample. Some schools have implemented programs that do not follow the district's curriculum. Two schools use Reading Works, a program designed by Long Beach teachers that integrates a number of instructional approaches into a single course.

For the 2001-2002 school year most schools reported that for the first time they were serving almost 100% of the students who scored below the 25% in reading—every school had increased the number of students in some kind of reading class. Many principals and teachers believed that serving more students was the main factor in the improvements in test scores that they saw in 2001.

We observed a number of significant developments across the schools. Nine schools of the thirteen schools we visited had identified "reading teachers"—teachers who are able to specialize by teaching reading exclusively. Three schools added reading instruction to the assignments of teachers who taught language arts or a humanities block, while one school had a mixture of the two models. As there continues to be a shortage of middle school teachers who have expertise in reading, several schools have teachers with little training teaching reading classes. Even so, we found that the ability to focus on teaching reading allowed those teachers to devote greater energy to learning about reading and brought greater coherence to the reading department. When teachers had multiple assignments, it made it difficult for teachers to attend department meetings or participate in reading professional development. The situation described by two department heads was a common problem:

> *Within our department, there are 9 of us, but they all belong to other departments as well, except for the 3 of us who belong just in reading. So it's a very big juggling and balancing act to keep everybody focused.* [Teacher A]

> *All these other teachers also have one or two other department affiliations, so they're required to go to those meetings. So any time when you are using a department meeting to do training, a lot of people miss it.* [Teacher B]

To provide additional support, a few of the schools have hired a literacy coach/staff developer to work with the reading department. In a few cases, the principal gave the department head an additional conference period to assist other teachers. Additional support and a single subject focus appeared to make a significant difference. Another factor that contributed to a strong program at a few schools was the decision to have their most experienced reading teachers assigned to the most struggling readers. Although this was not always the case, some felt strongly that expertise was critical for effective instruction for the students with the greatest needs. One teacher argued passionately for this policy:

> *You do not give new teachers the lowest level readers. It really is experienced teachers who can make professional decisions. I have been disappointed that that hasn't happened across the board. Your best well-trained professional teachers are going to teach these classes. I think that if you're really serious about literacy across the curriculum, it has to be mandated.* [Teacher C]

Another trend we observed was that most schools have eliminated DWAFV from their program. A few schools still have one or two classrooms (3 schools), while one school still teaches a significant number of sections of DWAFV. DWAFV seemed to be more common in special education classes. The explanations we heard for eliminating DWAFV were that many students had already had the course in 4th or 5th grade and that it did not address the needs of their students. Many believed it was bad curriculum that turned students off to reading. In two schools that had only one class of DWAFV, we found that the students were clearly misplaced—in one case, the teacher indicated that at least half the class did not need the course; in the other, our observations and conversations with students suggested that students already knew the material, which might explain why they were not engaged.

In all but one of the other schools that still taught DWAFV, teachers were supplementing the curriculum with so many different types of lessons that the course was no longer the scripted curriculum the district adopted. This development was encouraging as teachers were trying to adapt to the specific learning needs of their students. However, it also created significant variation from one class to the next, and raises questions about the district's use of course codes to measure the effectiveness of each of the courses in the reading development curriculum.

In the one school where DWAFV was still taught mostly "by the book," teachers expressed concerns about the rigor of the class, recognizing that students were capable of doing much more challenging work. Furthermore, the course has been stretched to a year-long course, when it was intended to be only a semester class. The district has provided supplementary materials for the course in addition to the scripted curriculum. Some teachers utilized the extra time to bring in a great deal more reading instruction than is included in the program. But another teacher noted that reading is still mainly homework and not a central part of the course. As a result, the instructor found that it was difficult to help students learn to like reading:

> *I feel like this is a reading class but I don't feel like I do a lot of reading, and it's a shame. [I'm not seeing] a lot of love for reading, it's a shame. I just really want for them to start loving reading, but they don't.* [Teacher D]

Comprehension Focus 1 was the most common course offered across all schools, although schools that have the READ 180 program tend to have fewer sections of Focus 1. On this visit we found more frequent use of small group instruction in this course than we had seen on previous visits. The introduction of vocabulary workbooks seemed to make the management of centers easier for some teachers. However, we still saw a significant amount of whole class instruction. A consistent observation across courses was that teachers with more experience and background in reading, were not only able to manage group work more effectively, but were also able to supplement the curriculum, address individual needs, and expose students to a wider range of literature than offered in the curriculum.

Five of the schools offered Comprehension Focus 2 classes, which concentrates on comprehension strategies for non-fiction text to help students make meaning from their texts in other content areas. Only two schools had instituted Focus 3 classes, although most principals reported plans to add this course the following year. Having only briefly observed one Focus 3 class at each school, we have too limited data to offer any generalizations. At one school, the teacher with the most experience and expertise in reading taught the Focus 3 course. In this class the instruction was highly engaging and varied. The small portion we saw did not utilize any of the district curriculum materials. At the other school, a strong, but inexperienced teacher taught the course, and did whole class instruction with the vocabulary workbook.

We observed similar variability across classrooms and schools for all of the reading development courses. Some Focus II classes were taught at a much lower level than some Focus I classes. The determining factor consistently was the experience and expertise of the teacher. In the classrooms of teachers who have a strong reading background, the teachers were able to draw on their knowledge base to supplement the curriculum and modify lessons to address students' needs. In classrooms where teachers have limited background in reading, the lessons tended to stick closely to the curriculum materials, and the lessons tended to have very low level objectives regardless of which course they were teaching. The issue of expertise continued to come up over and over again as teachers' reactions and interpretation of the district's reading program varied consistently depending on the background of the teacher. For example, the reading department has developed a pacing chart for each of the classes, which they suggest should be used as a guide. Many believed that pacing charts provided some support to inexperienced reading teachers who need guidance in structuring lessons. Experienced teachers tended to find them restrictive. One experienced department chair made an effort to follow the pacing chart, but found it difficult. She explained:

> *I think most of the teachers want to do what is expected and they want to do well. I think that is the bottom line. I think the teachers do want to do what is best. I think everybody's trying to do that, it can be hard. I'm an experienced teacher, I've done this for a long time and then it's like follow the pacing chart - the only way I can describe it is like I've taught summer school and we're using Soar and I've talked to another experienced teacher on our staff who's teaching summer school too - we would take the books and go through and try to work on it but after you've done this a long time, it's like working in such opposition brain-wise to what we have been doing, it was really hard. He just explained to me, he goes, 'it's like unnatural!' I'm not criticizing having the guide, I think they are helpful and you can work with them, it's just sometimes when you've been doing this a really long time and we've been through all kind of different things because I have to say in the past Long Beach Unified has been great about providing training for their teachers - if I express any concern about, it was in the sense like I do think there aren't too many of us around who've been doing this for so long who can say 'yes, this is what my students need*.' [Teacher E]

A new addition to all of the Reading Development classes was a vocabulary component. In addition to the vocabulary cards that teachers learned about from Kate Kinsella, the district purchased vocabulary workbooks, a different book for each class. Most often we found that these workbooks were being used as seatwork, with very little instruction, such as this teacher described in the Focus 1 class:

> *World of Vocabulary is now part of the pacing chart and part of the scripted curriculum where the kids do lessons. It's still a three group rotation. One group is doing Soar to Success in a teacher directed fashion. A second group is doing SSR. And a third group is doing the World of Vocabulary unit.* [Teacher F]

One teacher understood the purpose of the workbooks to be, "to keep the kids busy while we do assessments." We were surprised to find that students said they enjoyed doing the workbooks, even though they were very repetitious and rather low-level tasks, such as alphabetizing words and matching words to definitions. The consistent format of the workbooks provided students with lots of structure and lots of practice, as one teacher described:

> *It starts off with, they read a high interest short story and then they have some activities. Right away a couple of comprehension questions over the story. And then key vocabulary from the story, and those vocabulary words are in bold print in the story. And then that key vocabulary is used in like four or five different types of activities where the kids are either using the words in alphabetical order or they're finding the word and trying to put in context, or a definition to the word. I like that because they're using the same words over and over again. They're being exposed to a lot more words….They're not going to retain it all, but they're going to retain something. You know. It's repetition that makes these kids learn. And so when we're using the vocabulary books, there's an awful lot of repetition. And each book is basically the same but higher level words*. [Teacher G]

In the same way that curriculum materials provide structure for student learning, the curriculum provides structure for teachers who are just learning to teach reading. For experienced reading teachers, the curriculum materials did not drive the instruction. The approaches that reading specialists tend to use were based on their knowledge and experience of what supports students need to meet standards. For example, one department head explained that new courses didn't really change her teaching:

> *It's still based on content standards 1 and 2 and that's what's supposed to be provided. So I think it's just there are more materials now…Like with some of the things like the pacing charts, I think that's been an attempt to help new teachers—I don't think the content has changed dramatically for me*. [Teacher E]

Assessments and Student Placement

Using multiple assessments has allowed schools to do a better job of placing students in reading classes, far better than using just the SAT-9. However, not all schools use other data sources, and several schools indicated that there is still much room for improvement. In contrast to the previous year, most schools used a variety of assessments to determine the appropriate placement for students. And as with reading instruction, greater experience and expertise gave teachers the ability to integrate multiple measures to assess students' reading ability:

> *The more experience a person has, the more you can [use assessments to guide instruction.] If you worked with kids for a while, you can listen to them read and get a really good feel if they're faking it or whatever. They have the informal reading inventory, they have some things for - they can do retells, we have benchmarks, we have SAT-9's - oh, we have a lot more and that's what's better. I like people to look at several of those things before we make a decision, particularly with your second language students. They can do a lot better on benchmarks or running records or an IRI than they can the SAT-9 because of the time involved and that's a factor too that you really have to look at.* [Principal A]

The point raised by this principal about timed tests is an important factor that has not been taken into consideration when using SAT-9 scores as the criteria for placement in reading development. While standardized tests are likely to remain the dominant measure of school improvement in the district and the state, it is not necessarily a good indicator of students' instructional needs. The district does recommend using multiple measures plus teacher recommendations, however, some school rely almost exclusively on the SAT-9 still. As a result, many schools still struggle with the appropriate placement of students in reading classes.

A few schools that have a large percentage of their students in reading classes found it easy to move students if they found that they were misplaced because they offered most reading classes every period. One school just planned their curriculum around the anticipated need to do some shuffling of students during the first two weeks of school:

> *One of the things that we did differently this year that really seemed to work well is the reading teachers got together during the summer. And they planned for the first four weeks of school, where they would be doing basically the same type of lesson no matter what reading class the kids were in. Just to make sure if kids were misplaced and we had to shuffle kids, then they wouldn't have lost out on any instruction. It was very similar. And it took about two weeks to get the kids reshuffled.* [Principal B]

And yet, some schools still relied almost exclusively on SAT-9 scores, or broad indicators like grade level, rather than the diagnostic information that is available from the running record and comprehension parts of the benchmark test:

> *In August when we got all the SAT-9 scores, we went through and every student who was below the 40th percentile in total reading is in a reading class. So starting at the very bottom, like the 0 to 10th percentile, those kids were slotted for LIPS. And then 11-15, those kids were slotted for DWAFV, and then like 16-25 is SOAR, or comprehension focused 1…After we put those kids into those classes, we also use teacher recommendations and their Benchmark reading tests that they did last year. So in the benchmarks, the kids in LIPS were benchmarking like between 1st and 3rd grade. And then the DWAFV kids were end of 3rd up to end of 4th …* [Principal C]

This system suggests that there is still a lack of understanding of reading assessments and reading needs. Students who are benchmarking at end of 3rd grade probably do not need either phonemic awareness or decoding. If teachers understand how to interpret these assessments, the running record portion of the benchmark test would indicate the reading difficulty students' experience, whether it is decoding, comprehension, vocabulary, or fluency. The placement of students based on such broad measures suggests that there is a need for greater understanding of the information the assessments can provide.

Principals and reading department heads agreed that the district was getting much better in assessing students' reading ability and placing students in classes, but that there was still much work to do. Principals were still concerned that they didn't get the assessment data (SAT-9 or benchmark) early enough to make scheduling and staffing decisions. SAT-9 scores are used to determine who is placed in reading development, but it provides little information about a student's instructional needs. One principal noted the limitations of using SAT-9 scores, even as a general criterion for placement:

> *It's really interesting because the SAT 9, if you look at my data that the teachers have been giving, it's really not a very good indicator often. And here we do place them by that score so when we see kids that are just excelling otherwise, we do move them out and we're very flexible here about that*. [Principal D]

At other schools, department heads were frustrated by the lack of flexibility in moving students if the course is not meeting their needs due to the length of some of the courses. This was especially true when students were repeating the same course they had the previous year:

> *I think they could be semester classes. And we could get kids moving through a little bit quicker. I don't know, but it's something we need to talk about*. [Teacher G]

Currently, the placement decisions and the curriculum are not always aligned, as one teacher explained:

> *[The district training] was very clear that students in Breaking the Code would have problems with phonics and decoding. And I bristled real quick, because I haven't really found that to be the case. They can decode but they struggle with comprehension strategies.* [Teacher H]

One principal indicated that having benchmark data has helped with better placement of students in classes, and believed that as teachers develop greater understanding of reading issues, teacher recommendations would play a stronger role in the future. The majority of principals noted that having trained reading teachers was the most important factor. Our observations support this belief. Experienced reading teachers were able to supplement the curriculum and address individual needs, regardless of the course they were teaching. One teacher described her experiences and the need to adapt the curriculum to the needs of the students:

> *I'm teaching the lowest level of readers, the DWAFV class. And sometimes in my class I've been utterly disturbed by the knowledge that they're not getting what they need. I feel like in some ways they've done a great job of breaking out different classes, but in other ways we've gone backwards—in terms of treating the teacher as the professional. You're going to do an assessment, and based on the assessment produce a program that will help the students. So I'm working at Cal State Long Beach in their reading specialist credential, and I did some case studies this year. And I had one student in particular who was very perplexing. I had to really explore a lot of different resources. Sight words and phonics, and Words their Way. And I think I've hit upon a really good program for him. He's in a DWAFV class. It's like, well, this DWAFV is going to look really different, because I have several students who need something completely different than what they're getting right now. So I am finding that when we have all these real stratified programs, that's one of the problems, is that you need to give more, either trust the professionally-developed teachers to make the decisions, especially about the lowest achieving children....They need really good structured instruction. I feel like we're going to lose a lot of kids in the cracks if we don't have good professionals who can analyze and figure out what they need.* [Teacher C]

A great deal of time was spent doing assessments during the 2000-2001 school year. Most principals and department heads indicated that Running Records and the Benchmark test, which includes a running record, were the most useful assessments for identifying student reading needs. Although there were concerns that the passages used for running records in the Jerry Johns were not consistent with the level of the benchmark passages. In addition, the district's experiment with using the CBM to test for fluency created a great deal of frustration, because it was time intensive, and little useful information was produced. It did not help inform teachers' instruction, in fact, most schools trained aides to do the testing so that it would not infringe on instructional time.

One principal felt that the rushed nature of the training and the mandate was not productive for building capacity among the reading teachers:

> *I did hire people to come in and do it, and the buy in wasn't there. First of all, the kids didn't know the tester. But the teachers were frantic. I was reacting to their frantic pleas for support. And I think assessment is supposed to be done to help the teacher guide next steps. And that didn't happen. We were just trying to figure out how to test all the kids.* [Principal E]

Several commented that the CBM did, however, show teachers that as far as decoding was concerned, "that our kids don't struggle with that," and that the decoding course was not needed. They also found that there was very little observable correlation between students' performance on the CBM, and the SAT-9 or the benchmark tests.

Experienced reading teachers agreed that a number of assessments need to be taken into consideration when placing students in classes. In addition to the formal assessment, teachers need to know their students as readers:

> *As long as we give something besides the running record, but the time to work with the child and actually talk to them a little bit is critical. Because part of the assessment comes through conferences: what are you reading, things they're trying to do as independent readers or should be doing as independent readers too.* [Teacher E]

However, teachers also complained about excessive testing, without a real understanding of the purpose. Most teachers felt that, "our life is just one wave of testing after another." And yet, because many teachers didn't do their own testing, one department head felt that the assessments weren't serving their purpose:

> *We've got teachers who haven't heard their kids read yet and it's May… We've got lots of teachers who aren't doing small group instruction, making certain that they're changing instruction based on what their students' needs are. So if you're not doing any of that, then you'd better be doing your own testing so you know how your kids are doing. You better know what level they're at*. [Teacher B]

One of the instructional coaches observed a similar lack of understanding of the connection between assessment and instruction:

> *I think that teachers do a lot of assessment that is district mandated—principal mandated. We do the OEMs and the OEWs and OE whatever. But I don't think we really look at many of them. We don't really look at the data and use that to guide planning for the next step. Whether it's re-teaching or moving forward or differentiating in groups. It's more like, 'oh well, I taught it. I had six 6's and twenty-two 4's or whatever. OK,*

Let's go on to the next OE whatever we're going to do.' In terms of their individual classroom assessments, whether they do multiple choice, fill in the blank, or however good or bad they are, I still don't have the sense in listening to conversations that our new teachers in particular and some of our veterans, really look at the data and say, 'aha! X number of my kids passed the test, and that means they know such and such.' Because it goes back to being able to construct assessments that assess the standards as opposed to assessing stuff. And so if they're not assessing the standards, they're not looking at whether the kids are meeting the standards. They're not even looking at whether the kids understand the stuff they taught. And what does that stuff represent? To say that a kid got 83 percent on a hundred point test, what does that mean the kid knows or can do besides it's a B+. So I think we're still not even close to having those conversations. And I think the teachers would tell you they're overwhelmed with assessments. All we do is assess. When do I teach? And you want to say, well—Let's think about it. There's a role for assessment. It ought to help you know what you have to teach. And I don't think they see the connection right now between assessment and helping them to plan their teaching. It's not coming from the site level or even from the district level. At the district level you have to do these things and I want information on it. And they don't see the why or how it's beneficial. They see themselves on this treadmill…'We've just got to get it done.' [Teacher I]

To date, reading assessment is as much an art as it is a science and requires substantial training and practice to learn to do well. The value of any assessment is limited by teachers' ability to administer, interpret, and use the information to plan instruction. Our conversations revealed that knowledgeable and experienced reading teachers were able to utilize some assessments for that purpose. Most teachers new to reading were not, even though each had participated in district training for all the reading assessments. Experienced department heads suggested that much more in-depth professional development and ongoing coaching was needed to enable these teachers to develop the skills necessary to use assessment data as an instructional tool.

Professional Development to support the implementation of Reading Development

The introduction of reading development at the middle school level presented the district with tremendous professional development challenges. Few middle school teachers were trained to teach reading. Depending on the size and achievement levels of the middle school, the number of reading teachers per school ranged from 3 to 18. Furthermore, with the continuum of courses designed to address different reading issues, the professional development needs presumably vary depending on the course. During our 2000-2001 school visits, we heard consistent complaints about the lack of training for specific courses. To address teachers' concerns, for the 2001-2002 school year, the professional development for each course was expanded to three days.

Once again, teachers' experience level seemed to determine their assessment of the district training. According to all accounts, the three days focused mainly on the procedural management of the courses—the materials to use, the pacing chart, and course codes for record keeping. Many new teachers found these guidelines to be helpful, but insufficient to prepare them to teach the course. A novice reading teacher felt the training helped her to know what she was supposed to teach. When asked about the training for Comprehension Focus I, a department chair explained:

> *A lot of what we did was, 'these are the materials and this is what you do with these materials.'* [Teacher J]

In contrast experienced teachers complained about the lack of attention to the instructional content of the course. They found their three days to be superficial and not an effective use of their time. For example, the report on the DWAFV training was the following:

> *The training for Breaking the Code [DWAFV] was like a mini-lesson. For people who had already done Breaking the Code it was a waste of time. And for people who were going to be new at it, it wasn't very helpful. There was a real big thing about materials.* [Teacher H]

The report on Focus 2 training was that:

> *It was mostly about course numbers….They didn't have a copy of the book.* [Teacher E]

Another department head found the training helpful with administration, but not with instruction:

> *The trainings this summer helped us figure out what we didn't have that we needed [in terms of materials]. Pretty much the training as to how to teach, no it wasn't beneficial. But getting the supply list for all three classes and deciding how we were going to divide it up between the three levels, that was good.* [Teacher K]

We heard many experienced reading teachers voice similar concerns about the professional development provided by the district:

> *I'm not sure how well we're being trained to use the materials we're given. We have lots of materials—lots of resources. But this summer when I went to the training I walked away and I said, 'If I didn't already teach Breaking the Code, I would have no idea what to do. So I wasn't pleased with that section of the training. When I went to department head meetings last year, what was very difficult was that I was learning something for the first time and then I needed to turn around and teach it to four other people immediately before I had a chance to practice it. …*

> *The trainings are more of an overview of the district's philosophy, and the district perspective, and not so much time spent on what's happening in the actual classroom. How are you doing to do the program? ...And if you're not an experienced teacher then you're going to have no idea how to do that.* [Teacher L]

In addition, department heads expressed the need for much more extensive follow-up and support for reading teachers:

> *I do think when a district training is given, and I think this is true in almost anything, doing it once - when you come back and apply it, you need support. And one thing I've been able to do is go into the rooms of the new teachers when they were doing running records and work with them, sit with them and do a running record with them and then talk to them about it afterwards, what does this indicate to you, how would you go about helping. Do I think there needs to be more of it? Always!* [Teacher A]

A great deal of the professional development for reading teachers during the 2000-2001 school year focused on assessments: running records, CBM testing, and benchmark tests. In regards to Running Records, several department heads indicated that while everyone had been exposed to the concept, very few felt proficient in their ability to conduct them consistently and efficiently. Although some believed that they understood how to interpret the results, coach/staff developers found that very few teachers actually knew how to analyze the results to inform instruction. Even after multiple trainings, one staff developer found that detailed analysis was new to many teachers, and that teachers needed much additional coaching to help them understand the process:

> *I did a running record and I took the student and I taped the student reading and then we took the tape to the meeting and the teacher actually on an overhead did a running record, and we had everybody do a running record with the tape....In fact it took a lot of time for us to sit and talk. We needed to have that discussion and modeling. And then while [one teacher] was doing the fluency, we would stop the tape and with the think-aloud method, talk about why she thought the student missed that word and that was insightful too.* [Teacher M]

It was only at the schools where they had knowledgeable coaches or staff developers that that kind of in-depth training occurred. Department heads rarely have the time.

Experienced teachers also longed for greater differentiation in the training. Even with the wide variation in teachers' experience and expertise, everyone was required to attend the same mandatory training:

> *What they do is they give everyone the same stuff. So I must have gone to four meetings, and each meeting covered running records. Even though it wasn't supposed to. Even this summer. At those meetings this summer for the different focuses. The second and third day were going to be running*

records, benchmarking, some other. I said, I've already done it. I said, I am not going to do this one more time. So I left. [Teacher K]

At schools where there was no support for reading teachers, there was no opportunity to go beyond the district's introduction. One inexperienced department chair explained that the training last year was helpful, but even after several workshops, she still felt unsure of herself:

You don't really learn it until you actually sit down with your kids and do it. And part of our training last year that I did, I attended the middle school reading institute again last year. For the second time. When I first came to the district I attended it, and I felt, now that I'm teaching reading all day, I felt it would be beneficial to go again. And they had us practice with our students. A part of our homework was to come back and practice them with our students. And then study them. But I still have difficulty doing them just with whatever text they're reading. [Teacher J]

One department head felt that the challenge was also to find the time to follow up after any district training to support ongoing learning:

I know we get these things in our training but we need to continue to have study groups, to look closely at these things that have been proven to be successful, what can we do or what are we doing. Because the other thing is it seems like people are doing great things and we don't have enough time to talk about, well, this was successful because—or for us to reflect. I need to change this, this needs to go, I need to add this, and I think that's one of the biggest challenges of the time we have with the kids and then having the best for them and then making sure that what we're doing is the most appropriate. [Teacher E]

Teachers struggled to fulfill the assessment demands when the district began requiring a series of reading assessments (running records, CBMs and Benchmarks), all of which require one-on-one testing, before they had begun any training on implementing the structures and independent activities that would be needed to allow the teacher to do individual assessments in class. The observations of one principal indicated that reading teachers needed much more training and support to become proficient:

They're very nervous. They're very tentative. There's not a lot of confidence there. They're still worried about the basics—what do I do with the other kids? How do I organize this? When do I find the time? So they're way down at this level. They're not asking how to use them, as feedback for next steps. [Principal E]

The adoption of vocabulary workbooks helped inexperienced reading teachers to do the testing because the rest of the class could work independently in the workbooks, allowing the teacher to work one-on-one with students. Even though experienced teachers usually had systems in place that enabled them to complete these assessments within the course of their instruction, everyone agreed that the number of assessments was excessive and interfered with teaching.

The new assessment introduced for 2001-2002 was retelling, an extremely valuable tool. As with running records, department heads with considerable experience in this area worried that the district training lacked depth:

> *My concern here is because the training that I received from the district department meeting in retelling wasn't near what I knew teachers needed to know to be able to teach it. I had been in that unique position because I had been on the committee back in elementary that tried the great experiment to train all the teachers in doing retelling. I'm just concerned on a district level, I think we're talking about much less numbers because they're only reading development classes so it could be doable, but I was very disappointed with the kind of training that I received at the district level.* [Teacher N]

One of the developments that was most promising for teachers' professional development was that many principals were exerting strong leadership at their school sites by hiring reading specialists as coaches or staff developers to provide additional training and support beyond the district professional development. When budgets prohibited additional support staff, some principals provided additional release time for their reading department head to be able to spend more time working with reading teachers. In the schools where principals utilized specialists, the model varied depending on their resources, schedules and staff needs, but these were the schools where instruction seemed the most focused. There were still differences in the quality of instruction, as one would expect, based on the teachers' experience and expertise in reading, but where there was additional on-site support, inexperienced teachers seem to have a stronger command of reading instruction. Moreover, principals and a staff developer could work together to build coherence in the instructional program across the school:

> *We use every possibility to make connections for teachers, like connecting those to the English language arts content standards from the state which are going to parallel with our assessment program so they see that literary analysis is right there in the content standards and then we make the connection that what we're talking about is modeling a strategy that allows kids to analyze literature on a deep level. So I think making those connections for teachers is helpful, I think it's part of our big role is to get people to see how all this lines up. That it's not something we're just doing because it's literacy innovation de jour.* [Principal I]

How schools used reading specialists varied considerably. At one school, with minimal additional resources, the administrative team worked with the reading department head to create additional learning opportunities:

> *That's one of the things for having [the Department head] released is to get her to go in the coaching capacity and the reading teachers have had release days to get some sharing of ideas too because I think sometimes that helps. So there's the district training and then I'm trying to work more with them to have [the Department head] work with them individually, going into their room, having them come in and observe her.* [Principal A]

Other schools have brought in a full-time literacy staff developer. For example at one school, first the reading teachers went through the district training for the classes they were teaching. Then the staff developer provides in-class support to support implementation in the classroom. She also does repeat trainings of district workshops,

incorporating a lot of additional practice to ensure that teachers are able to implement the curriculum. The reading teachers also have common planning time so that all the reading teachers can meet with the department head on a regular basis. (Almost all of their reading teachers taught reading full time.) The staff developer also did running records, or benchmark assessments with students with no previous record to ensure that students were placed in the appropriate classes.

In another site-based professional development model, the staff developer provided in-class support and coaching to reading teachers, as explained in this example:

> *So I'm working with 4 teachers right now but I'm also working on staff development as far as read-aloud….We started with 8 teachers, we did some professional reading and I coached those teachers, I modeled for them the read-aloud and we connected it with read-aloud/think-aloud. And so modeling and then the teachers went back to their classrooms and they worked in their classrooms and we teamed them up and they went in and I covered classes so they could observe and give feedback to each other.* [Teacher M]

Overall, expertise in reading is growing across the district middle schools. Many principals recruited elementary teachers and reading specialists to strengthen their reading department. We encountered a few enthusiastic reading teachers who were going back to school to deepen the knowledge by participating in CSULB's new middle school reading specialist credential program. Another positive step was that the district office had increased the amount of training offered for reading teachers, however, according to most reports, the district's professional development was not yet meeting teachers' needs. For novice reading teachers the workshops did not teach instructional practices or provide sufficient guided practice to become proficient. For experienced teachers, the training did not go deep enough to increase their knowledge. Much more training is needed in major approaches to reading: read-alouds, shared reading, independent reading, and guided reading to help teachers develop expertise. To address this need, many principals found ways to use reading specialists on-site to provide the additional differentiated support needed to further teachers' development as reading teachers.

Although the focus of our visits was on the reading development program, eight of the principals attributed much of their progress to the district's refocus on Essential Elements of Effective Instruction (EEEI).

EEEI

All of the principals felt that the additional training and emphasis on EEEI was the most productive schoolwide intervention for improving instruction, and that it created the "common thread" that supported literacy instruction across the curriculum. Administrators indicated that teachers were getting more proficient in writing objectives, while at the same time acknowledging that teachers still tended to identify activities rather than the learning objective for students. Several said that they were pleased that EEEI had been revived, because, as one principal put it, "good instruction is timeless." Monitoring the implementation of EEEI practices also helped to get principals into classrooms more often. One principal felt that the impact of EEEI had been profound:

> *The single most productive thing that I've done with respect to advancing a higher quality of instruction is the implementations, to as great a degree*

as possible, with my newest teachers of essential elements instruction. That to me is the thing as far as strategy. [Principal F]

Our observations of the lesson objectives in reading classes varied fairly consistently by the experience level of the teacher. Inexperienced teachers tended to have very low level objectives, and instruction was very teacher-centered and failed to engage students in active learning. For example, a typical objective in an inexperienced teacher's classroom read, "Students will follow directions for steps 1 and 2 in the World of Vocabulary book," or activities such as, "Complete lesson five in the vocabulary book." While the essential question in an experienced teacher's classroom was, "how does my KWL chart enhance my comprehension?" The objective for the lesson was to consciously use the metacognitive skill of accessing prior knowledge to help make sense of the text. Many principals identified the rigor of objectives and the need to focus on what students are learning as areas for improvement. The district's current focus on principal professional development in literacy is an important step toward helping all principals develop greater expertise in guiding instructional improvement.

Principal Professional Development

We found almost unanimous agreement that the school visits and walkthroughs that have become an integral part of the principal and cohort meetings have been valuable. Principals have learned from each other about the practices employed at different schools. One principal noted that although some of the feedback "didn't feel real good at the time," after reflecting on the observations, she realized that her colleagues were right, and it gave her a focus to target their improvement efforts. One administrator found the collegial learning that visitations to other sites stimulated to be most valuable:

I really liked walking through the other schools and seeing what other people are doing because it's just kind of a gauge, maybe I could try this here or I could try that. Just sort of an assessment of comparing how we're doing related to other schools. I really enjoyed Janet Allen, we went to a Janet Allen institute this summer, I really enjoyed going to Corpus and to San Diego and talking to the principals in other schools and seeing what they're doing. I really have been convinced that going to San Diego last year and going to Janet Allen have been the best learning experiences for me. [Principal D]

We also found that the responsibility of hosting principal meetings or walkthroughs stimulated strong motivation to focus school-based professional development. Principals were eager to showcase the good work happening in their school and paid particular attention to working with teachers on implementing the strategies that would be the focus of the walkthrough. This created accountability that produced both the pressure and support needed to help teachers improve their practice.

Many principals have replicated the walkthrough process with teachers at their school to keep a focus on instructional improvement. One principal described the process at her school:

The purpose of the walkthrough is to get a general sense of a department and what the department's doing and what the department's next steps are

so when I do the walkthroughs with these folks, it's not by individual teacher. We just take notes, we sit down, we talk about what we saw and then we say what are the next steps for the department and the department chair says well, you know, I'm concerned about pacing, we should have seen more writing. So it's a little more general in that sense but we always tie it back to reading and writing. [Principal H]

A few principals were dissatisfied with the depth of training at principal meetings and wanted more opportunities to learn from literacy experts. In addition, some principals felt that their cohort pairings were not as helpful as some because schools were in different stages of development. However, the new addition of principal coaches provided principals with resource people to assist them. And the principal meetings did provide opportunities to see other schools. As all principals have more opportunities to learn from colleagues and expert consultants, these collegial visits and conversations may deepen, and provide the rich learning experiences that they are intended to be.

Conclusions: An Assessment of the Impact of the Reading Program—Successes and Challenges for the Future

As this report has documented, LBUSD has made continual improvements in the reading development program since 1997, when the district first identified reading comprehension as a district priority. Each year the program has expanded to serve more students, and a number of new courses were developed to address specific reading issues. The district has established a reading department, and increasingly middle schools have identified "reading teachers" who focus exclusively on reading. Although there are still many reading teachers who have little background in reading, the district has expanded the professional development offerings available to reading teachers and collaborated with CSULB to design a new middle school reading specialists credential program. The district has also introduced new reading assessments and training for administering them in an effort to improve the placement of students in reading classes and to monitor their progress. At the same time, the middle school office has launched a literacy professional development effort for principals.

As with most new initiatives, these new developments have also presented significant challenges to be addressed. The need to build capacity in reading instruction is urgent, but developing expertise takes a significant amount of time. While the district has assigned instructional coaches to assist each school, the amount of time they spend in any one school is too limited to provide the ongoing mentoring needed. Many of these coaches are content specialists and lack the expertise in reading needed to guide reading instruction. We were pleased to see that the district has established a relationship with an external literacy consultant, Dr. Kate Kinsella. Her expertise will be valuable in helping the district design ways to provide ongoing in-depth professional development for reading teachers. The schools that have hired literacy coaches or staff developers have made significant progress toward this goal already.

An ongoing concern is that most schools lack the resources to provide a literacy rich instructional program. Although the district provided the curriculum materials for each

reading development course, in general classroom libraries in reading classes were extremely limited. With the exception of some of the most experienced reading teachers' classrooms, the classroom libraries did not provide many high-interest choices across the range of students' independent reading levels. One principal indicated that her top priority for improving reading was ensuring that reading teachers had the appropriate materials:

> *So the kids can read a book—high interest, that allows them to grow. And it's okay to go back and say 'wow, I've assessed my student as reading at third grade level. I've got to get some materials at a high third grade so that we can start. And then I need the materials for the next early fourth. And break those things down into ten, twelve levels instead of one. That would be a powerful thing. And then just making it a focus to make sure that some of your best people, if not the best people are in there. Because it drives everything else. The best teachers should be in the quote hardest schools to teach at. And the best teachers should be teaching reading.* [Principal G]

Many principals made buying books a priority because of the need to build classroom libraries to expose students to good books:

> *Personally, I think it's connecting them to books and doing independent reading. All the research is showing that also, it's just hooking them to books. And then getting them to read on their - I think that's what makes a difference, and I know there's a lot of research that supports that. That's the whole idea behind the chapter books, you have a book and you feel excited about it, and you will see kids around this school you do see kids who are really hooked on their books! The Harry Potter books by the tree, he read all the Harry Potter books sitting under the tree at lunch.* [Principal D]

Another significant development is that schools spend significant amounts of time analyzing student data, mostly SAT-9 scores, but there is also increasing use of curriculum embedded assessments in math, writing, history, and science. Retelling is now used to monitor reading comprehension. Each year the research department has increased its capacity to provide schools with data. Everywhere we went SAT-9 was the top priority. Most schools devoted a considerable amount of time to test preparation—some even spend instructional time year round on test prep skills. Given the state's high stakes accountability system, this attention to test preparation is understandable. However, if the same amount of care was given to analyzing diagnostic reading assessments, it could potentially have a greater impact on the quality of instruction and student achievement. Recent research by Dr. Sheila Valencia and her colleagues looked at the reasons why students failed the 4th grade state reading assessment. The researchers administered an extensive battery of reading assessments and found several different reasons for the students' poor performance, with some unusual combination of issues regarding decoding, comprehension, and fluency. Interestingly, they found that with English language learners, even if their scores were very low, the problem was rarely a

decoding problem. These students struggled with comprehension due to their limited English vocabulary. These findings have clear indications for reading instruction.

Although LBUSD has improved the efforts to assess reading in recent years, we found that few teachers in Long Beach have learned to use assessments to identify specific reading difficulties. As a result, students are still misplaced. Too many students are still placed in a decoding class just because their reading scores are low, when they need instruction in comprehension strategies and vocabulary development. These placement issues should be resolved as teachers' ability to use discriminating assessments to inform their instruction increases.

The reading department has worked hard to provide support to reading teachers, both in terms of training and materials. The choice of scripted curricula was an effort to provide structure and guidance to inexperienced teachers. There is some research to support this move. Grossman, et al. (2000) found that prescriptive curriculum materials could provide instructional scaffolds for beginning teachers. The only large scale study of prescriptive programs to date, however, found that while teachers used the scripted curriculum for support, it did not help them learn to "teach real reading" (Eldridge, D., Fine, J., & Bryant-Shanklin, M., 2001). They found that these teachers had not been educated in how to teach; rather they had been trained to use a specific program. The researchers concluded that if teacher learning implies:

> [T]aking personal control over knowledge and making judgments about when, where and how to apply it, then these prescriptive reading programs were not "sites" for teacher learning at all. (p. 31)

Moreover, scaffolding of novice reading teachers' instruction would also imply a gradual release of responsibility from the prescriptive program to the teacher's own judgment, the approach the reading department advocates for supporting student learning. But they found that teachers who learned to teach through a scripted program often did not progress beyond the boundaries of the curriculum. Furthermore, those teachers who were beyond needing a scripted program to scaffold their teaching, felt constrained by a curriculum that conflicted with their professional knowledge.

These findings have implications for the reading department staff as they develop a strategic plan to provide the professional learning opportunities for reading teachers that will help them move beyond the limitations of scripted curriculum materials. Teachers enrolled in the reading specialist program at LBUSD appear to be learning how to be discriminating reading teachers who can make instructional decisions based on students' needs. Coaches/staff developers at a few schools are helping to build this capacity. To become skilled reading teachers, Long Beach teachers will need much more in-depth training in reading than is currently available through the district's professional development.

As described in this report, our evaluation team found a surprising amount of variation in reading development courses, even within the highly structured courses. When

adaptations were made by knowledgeable teachers the students benefited. The inability of many reading teachers to make informed judgments about students' instructional needs limits the teachers' effectiveness, regardless of the curricular materials used. We have seen significant improvements in instruction since the introduction of the first reading development course, in large part because of teachers who are trained to teach reading.

The district's reading development program is gradually moving back toward the balanced literacy approach that was originally advocated by the creators of the Middle School Reading Institute back in 1998. The district's diversion into scripted curricula that are inconsistent with this approach has slowed progress. Now as the reading department is moving back toward its original approach, instruction in reading is becoming more comprehensive. The challenge that remains is resolving some of the inherent contradictions between the curricula and a balanced literacy approach. As teachers increase their expertise, these conflicts may be resolved. Because reading is a foundational skill that affects achievement in all content areas, the district's continued investment in developing and sustaining skilled reading teachers will be critical for helping all students achieve at high levels.