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CHANGING SCHOOL CULTURE: A PRIMARY LITERACY INITIATIVE

ALL HANDS ON DECK

by  
Veronica Boone-Gbesi

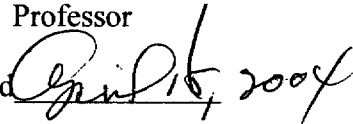
A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the  
Master of Arts Degree  
Of  
The Graduate School  
At  
Rowan University  
(April 15, 2004)

Approved by:

Professor

Date Approved

  
April 15, 2004

## ABSTRACT

Veronica Boone Gbesi

Changing School Culture: A Primary Literacy Initiative

2004

Dr. Ted Johnson

Supervision and Curriculum Development

The purpose of this study was to implement the balanced literacy approach to reading instruction for two-hundred sixteen kindergarten through third graders, as a means of increasing student achievement, focusing instruction school wide, and creating a collaborative instructional culture. Data to evaluate the study took the forms of teacher surveys and reflective essays, screening and progress monitoring assessments and standardized test results. Teacher surveys and reflections were collected and analyzed for consistent patterns, professional development needs, and/or areas of growth. The teacher responses were used to direct professional development workshops, and as a diagnostic tool to ascertain the need for large group or grade level meetings. Data was collected and interpreted for each assessment. The teachers and literacy coach analyzed the data for patterns, growth, knowledge gaps, and resource needs amongst the student population. Student data was analyzed for each student, for classroom and for each grade level. Teaching strategies, student activities and flexible grouping were modified regularly to meet academic needs. Based on the current data, 32% of the students are reading below grade level.

## Acknowledgements

Aunt Nettie for her vision.

My husband and children for being my anchor.

My university mentor for so much encouragement.

My heavenly father who pushes me onward.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

#### Focus of the Study

Reading First sprang from the No Child Left Behind initiative. This is statewide initiative by Governor McGreevey. The focus of Reading First is primary literacy. That is literacy for every child by the time s/he reaches third grade. This is a challenging if not daunting task, especially in urban and rural settings where many children often start school with medical, social and economic factors acting negatively in their lives with such an impact that they are already behind when they reach kindergarten. As primary educators, our main purpose is to teach all students to read fluently by the end of third grade. When this purpose is not met the student is often well on the path to academic failure at the worst and extreme limitations at the least. If this occurs, the students' full potential can not be realized in a society that relies heavily on ability to read and comprehend print.

This study seeks to change and redirect the school culture by implementing a school-wide program that will narrow the school's focus to that of literacy. This study also seeks to implement the balanced literacy approach as the focus for all instructional choices in the primary grades. This study will take the form of a case study of one school's attempt to narrow the focus of the primary school day to that of literacy.

### Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to discover how to change a school culture, redirect instructional energy and maintain the momentum of a new initiative. Through the implementation of the balanced literacy approach this study will seek to improved test scores and instructional practices, as well as determine professional development needs for the following school year. The intern will determine the effectiveness of prioritizing literacy instruction for kindergarten through third grade students in enhancing their levels of literacy so that there will be a measurable increase in the state and national standardized reading assessment scores and overall academic performance.

### Definitions

The following terminology will be used throughout this study. “All Hands On Deck” refers to the thirty minute block of daily instructional time set aside for the teaching of phonemic awareness and phonics. It is during this part of the day that additional teachers will collaborate and teach with the regular classroom teachers to deliver explicit, systematic instruction to small groups of students. “Explicit, systematic instruction” refers to an orderly, step by step approach to teaching skills to students. “Balanced Literacy” refers to the components of literacy instruction that combine the best research that attests to their combined effectiveness. These components are alphabetics (phonemic awareness instruction and phonics instruction), fluency and comprehension (vocabulary instruction and text comprehension instruction). “Phonological awareness” refers to the



awareness of the spoken sounds of words and letters. “Phonemic awareness” refers to the manipulation of these spoken sounds. “Phonics” refers to sound/letter recognition, association and manipulation. “ESL” refers to students who have been identified as needing additional instructional support in acquiring English as a second language. “African-American and Latino” refer to the cultural groups of the students. It must be noted that it is often difficult to categorize the children in either group by using racial backgrounds and/or skin color. Often there are children of African descent who identify themselves as Latino due to their most recent cultural background and current language. There are also Latino children who are of Spanish, Native American, and African descent who do not speak Spanish or have a connection to their recent cultural background yet identify themselves as Latino. The exact opposite is true of both of these statements and there several variations. Therefore, the placement of students in racial, cultural, and/or ethnic groups can only be an approximation in this study.

#### Limitations of the Study

This project took place in an urban charter school wherein teachers are not unionized. There were ten primary classroom teachers. Of the ten, two have more than five years of teaching experience, two have exactly five years of teaching experience, one has four years of experience, two are brand new to our school and urban education, two are in their tenure year, and one has one full year of teaching experience. Approximately 30% of the

teachers who teach grades k through third are considered novice (3 or less years of teaching experience). Most teachers in this school have less than six years of experience. The primary teachers expressed great concern about their ability to teach reading adequately. The 2003 CTBS Terra NOVA scores attests to their need with 71% of the primary students scoring below the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile in literacy. Due to our large population of inexperienced teachers, we must have a tremendous amount of professional development to fill their knowledge gaps. There must also be continual monitoring to ensure that new behaviors are maintained, more time is spent on instructional tasks and that students are learning. Each teacher has to be willing to commit themselves to the time and energy this will take. The greatest obstacles were maintaining a positive momentum, enhancing teaching reading skills, getting teachers to be accountable to their students, and to conduct themselves accordingly.

#### Setting of the study

This primary literacy initiative was developed and implemented at Najuma Charter school in Camden, New Jersey. Najuma Charter school serves predominately low socioeconomic urban students. Camden city, which is also the county seat, has been ranked as the second poorest city in the nation. Forty eight percent of the people under the age of eighteen live in poverty. Fifty percent of the houses in a substantial part of the city are vacant. This is a city in which there has been frequent turnover and

mismanagement in the city government and board of education. Fifty one percent of the students who start school graduate, compared to 80.4 percent nationally. Of the fifty one percent 5.4% go on to higher education. As reported in the 2000 demographic profiles, 34.9% (between the ages of 21 and 64 years) of the inhabitants of this city are disabled. The median family income is \$24,612, compared to \$50,046 nationally. Each of these factors impact on student readiness for the educational process. Najuma Charter is an independent entity from the educational system of the city. It has a separate governing body and adheres to in-house directives in areas of curriculum, instruction and governance. Najuma serves the same population as the local school district. The student population is approximately 49% African American and 51% Latino. In grades k through third, Najuma Charter has two hundred & sixteen students. Of this population, 4% have been identified as ESL (students who require additional support in acquiring English as a second language). There is also a special needs population of nine percent. According to the 2003 CTBS Terra Nova scores 28% of the k through 3rd graders scored in the 25th percentile or below.

#### Organization of the Study

This study took place throughout the school day. We started with restructuring the day wherein the primary grades (kindergarten through third grade) are given first priority to an uninterrupted 120 minute literacy block in the morning. The schedule has also been

changed to allow for a eighty minute common planning period each day. This enabled teachers to meet and plan for instruction, participate in ongoing workshops, and receive pertinent information. Another benefit of having common planning time is that it allows for collaboration amongst the classroom teachers and their co-teachers. Our librarian, ESL teacher, Special Education teacher, and Basic Skills teacher participated in literacy instruction and acted as co-teachers in the morning literacy block. This block of time, referred to as “All Hands On Deck”, allowed each primary teacher to have another teacher in his or her classroom for small group instruction in phonemic awareness and phonics, which are the cornerstones of developing primary literacy. Student progress was assessed several times throughout the year. The assessments were used to review instructional practices and helped us modify instruction to meet the needs of our students. All children were given a pretest to determine their starting point for instruction. The entire systematic approach helped to build a climate of accountability for all teachers and students. Parents were encouraged to become a part of the support system for this initiative. They were invited to “Literacy Events” throughout the school year, wherein they saw their children’s progress and learned more about creating a “literate” environment in their homes. The success of this study was measured by the growth of the students in classroom performance, ongoing assessments, and the results of the CTBS TERRA NOVA will be administered in April of 2004.

The students who were impacted by this study started school with major deficits in experiences, nutrition, and educational expectations. The environment in which they spent their earliest years is one of poverty. Poverty impacts a student's readiness for formal education. Since Najuma Charter School is located in a high poverty area and serves the children and families of this area, it is vital that there is a strong, relevant curriculum that matches their educational needs. The curriculum and school-wide focus must be maintained to make up for any deficits that the students may have and to allow for enriching, meaningful experiences that the students will value. The first step is to ensure that there is a collective mindset on how to teach reading.

## Chapter 2

### Review of the Literature

#### Introduction

There continues to be an ongoing discussion on how to best address the falling levels of literacy in the United States. Psychologists, linguists, politicians, government agencies, teachers, school boards, unions, and others have all lent their voices to this debate. Each entity has attempted to answer the question of raising reading test scores amongst school aged children. Each offers a different perspective to the discussion. Extremes in approach have arisen. An “either/or” attitude has prevailed in some instances. The answer to the debate is extremely important for urban and rural children. Urban and rural learners are often those that score the lowest on reading tests, have scant exposure to print prior to formal schooling and often lack support for literacy development outside of the school’s environment. This is for these students. How can we raise test scores and achievement in literacy amongst the most “at risk” students? What proves beneficial for the majority of them may dictate what is beneficial for most school aged learners. The literature review showed the complexity of this debate. Most of which centered around the importance and usage of phonics to teach reading. Another theme that was reoccurring in the literature was the need for school aged learners to be able to read and write in supportive learning environments.

### Review of the Problem

At the Najuma Charter School we have 71% of our K-3 graders scoring below the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile in reading on the CTBS TERRA NOVA of 2003. Najuma Charter School is an urban public charter school. There are two hundred and sixteen students in kindergarten through third grade. Fifty-one percent of the student population is Latino and 49% is African American. Of this population, 4% are enrolled in ESL classes. Prior to this study a school wide philosophy of how literacy should be taught was not developed. The teachers referred to the publishing company of the reading series they used when asked “how” reading was taught. Fifty percent of the K-3rd grade teachers have less than three years of teaching experience. The demanding population, minimal teaching experience and frequent administrative turnover have been contributing factors in producing an environment wherein focused attention is not given to literacy. This study refocused this area by allowing the teachers to explore and use techniques that work and by allowing a school wide philosophy about literacy to emerge.

### Review of Major Concepts

The literature has shown that a balanced approach to literacy will bring about improvement in literacy achievement. The balanced approach includes phonemic awareness, explicit and systematic phonics instruction, as well as daily opportunities for fluency instruction, vocabulary instruction and instruction in text comprehension. Most

of the debate concerning literacy instruction surrounds the usage of phonics as a means of teaching reading. The whole language approach which seems to reduce the importance of phonics has swept the country and caused many to rethink teaching the alphabetic principle. Students are instead immersed in literature and led to “discover” word meaning and to memorize large vocabulary lists. Research shows that “struggling readers become more attracted to literacy when they can use books that are of high personal interest because these texts are easier for them to comprehend (Reading Teacher, 1997).

However, all readers need the skills to decode and understand the text. The “All Hands On Deck” approach, wherein students are divided into the small instructional groups, helps struggling learners because it provides them with personalized support for some portion of every literacy class. This is important because the use of phonemic awareness and phonics instruction is recommended daily for acquiring proficiency in reading. “We have seen, that all else being equal, programs that include phonics instruction tend to produce better word reading skills than those that do not (Adams, 1990). In addition, we have seen that basic letter knowledge and phonemic awareness are the best predictors of early reading achievement (Adams, 1990). Phonics instruction is very important for urban learners and other learners with limited exposure to letter/sound connections. Therefore, for these populations, phonemic awareness and phonics are essential elements in learning to read sound/symbol text. If this ability is not gained, to an adequate degree, prior to the



onset of school it then becomes paramount that it is taught explicitly and systematically in the school setting. In 1999, The National Reading Panel studied such topics as phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency and comprehension and reported the results in 2000.

Overall, the findings show that teaching children to manipulated phonemes in words was highly effective under a variety of teaching conditions, with a variety of learners across a range of grade and age levels. Teaching phonemic awareness to children significantly improves their reading more than instruction that lacks attention to phonemic awareness.

The large number of struggling readers in America attest to the fact that phonemic awareness and phonics have not been systematically taught in schools. The call for a more balanced approach to literacy is a call to attend to the various components in order to remediate an impoverished literacy background and to eradicate inadequate instruction at the primary level. "Experts agree that a child who has been exposed, from the earliest years, to print in various settings (at home, at the library, with the family, with the day care provider, etc.) stands the greatest chance of successfully learning to read. (Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998). There needs to be an emphasis on print rich environments outside of the school. In 2000, The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) found that on average, seven students in every classroom were struggling readers. These students more than ever need a concerted school wide balanced effort in literacy. Reading instruction should include phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, and

vocabulary & text comprehension. It should also encompass a substantial part of the school day. Struggling readers should receive at least 90 minutes of instruction in literacy each day (Block,1993).

The most effective reading instruction uses a balanced and comprehensive approach that includes the explicit, systematic teaching of phonemic awareness and phonics as well as an abundance of rich and varied literature and writing practice (Adams, 1990; National Reading Panel, 1998; Snow, Burns, and Griffith, 1998). The research by leading experts has shown that it not an either/or question. It is a combination of these approaches that will enable children to learn to read. The goal of any early reading program should be to enable all students to read fluently and understand grade appropriate material, read a large number of books, magazines, and informational text, reach high levels of comprehension ability, enjoy and be able to learn from reading. This goal can be accomplished only if they can decode and are able to read beginning books by mid-first grade ( Honig, 2001).

The balanced literacy program includes explicit, systematic instruction in phonemic awareness and phonics as well as direct instruction in guided reading and writing. Children do not learn to read naturally. In a comprehensive review, two top researchers David Share and Keith Stanovich (1995), surveyed the vast scientific and educational literature and concluded that these assumptions have been conclusively refuted: guessing

from context is not an effective way of learning to read and reading is not acquired naturally. Many students can not learn to read without organized, explicit skills instruction. This was also to be the case with English language learners. Students in high-poverty areas are remaining in effect non readers, and significantly more than 50% of students in these areas are not becoming fluent readers of grade appropriate material (Torgesen, 1994). This causes them to struggle with written grade level material in subsequent years and fall further and further behind. Respected educator, Lisa Delpet (1995) has noted repeatedly that children from lower socioeconomic families, primarily clustered in urban areas, are especially harmed by the absence of a structured phonics and skills program. It makes sense to provide all students with direct instruction in the alphabetic system. In order for phonics to be salient it must be taught explicitly and it must be embedded in the context of reading. Students need phonetic readers to practice their newly acquired skills. In the past the stories children were expected to read contained few words with letter/sound correspondences they had been taught during the phonics lesson and few words that were decodable, based on what they had been taught in previous lessons (Stein, Johnson, and Gutlohn, 1999). The balanced literacy approach subscribes to providing opportunities for students to practice and build on the particular skills they are learning. Phonics also contributes to a student's ability to spell correctly. According to a report published by the U.S. Office of Education; (Hanna, Hanna, Hodges

and Rudolf, 1966) at least 20 English phonemes have spellings that are over 90% predictable, and ten others are predictable more than 80% of the time. The study also found that approximately 50% of all English words are completely regular (Honig, 2001). The consensus of the reading experts is that an effective literacy programs for all children must include both a multitude of print and oral language-rich activities, such as reading to children, discussing stories, writing frequently and explicit, organized, systematic skills development.

First students must have the tools to break the code of the English language. They learn the code through phonics instruction. This instruction should take the form of being able to hear and manipulate the sounds in spoken words, visually recognize letters, connect letter patterns and apply all of this knowledge when they encounter a new word. These skills must be taught explicitly and directly in an active, thinking, problem solving way.

Prior to the milestones children must meet at mid-first grade there are many factors that contribute to emergent literacy. The home environment, the preschool and kindergarten experience contribute to early literacy skill acquisition. In a literacy-nurturing home environment, there is rich family conversation, ready availability of a variety of reading and writing materials and tools (such as plastic letters), and parents who hold a high positive regard for literacy for themselves and their children. Such

parents read to their children and books are all over the home. Trips to the library and book stores are often and television is limited (Honig, 2002). Another strong foundation in research is that one of the best predictors of first grade reading ability is the fast and accurate skill of naming and recognizing the shapes of letters (Adams, 1990). This is a critical first step to reading. Children should first learn the names of letters through devices such as the alphabet song and listening to ABC books read aloud. Phonological awareness is later helped by rhyme and rhythm and pitch. Songs are particularly effective way of learning. Adam (1990) cites research that also shows that knowing letter names is strongly correlated with both the ability to remember the forms of written words and the tendency to treat them as ordered sequences of letters rather than holistic patterns.

Phonological and phonemic awareness involve spoken language. Phonics involves the relationship between the sounds of spoken English and their written symbols. According to the latest research, the best predictor of reading success is whether the child has developed basic phonemic awareness-the ability to consciously pick out, blend and manipulate from spoken words the smallest sound chunks that make up those words (Adams, 1990). Most children need help in developing phonemic awareness before they can map letters and letter combinations to spoken words and map language onto the printed page. Those students who are at risk for impaired phonemic awareness development are those with speech impairments, phonological processing problems,

learning English as a second language, and come from a literacy deprived environment (Honig, 2001). These students need phonological awareness and phonics tasks and exercises daily in the beginning years of school.

### Conclusion

According to the overwhelming consensus of the best practitioners and top researchers, an effective reading program should be integrated with the other components of language arts, such as writing, speaking and listening. There must be a balanced approach to the acquisition of literacy skills. High-quality early literacy programs should encourage language-rich environments through reading aloud to students & discussing literature and nonfiction books with them.

These instructional strategies, by themselves, are not enough to teach many children to read well. Specific skills development components must be included, such as print concepts, alphabet recognition, phonemic awareness, phonics, word structure, word attack and self-monitoring skills. These skills must be taught in an organized and systematic manner at the beginning of any reading program if all children are going to learn to read. Students must be taught these skills in an active, problem solving manner that offers adequate opportunities to practice the skills in real reading and writing situations.

## Chapter 3

### Design of the Study

#### Introduction

The purpose of this case study was to implement a systematic approach to instruction by establishing a literacy program and developing a school wide focus that prioritizes literacy in the primary grades. The teachers have been introduced to the balanced literacy approach to teaching reading. Since September to the present, the primary teachers have been involved in ongoing professional development in the area of language arts literacy. They have studied the components of the balanced literacy program and have collaboratively worked to implement the balanced literacy approach. A major change in this effort was scheduling kindergarten through third grade students so that they have an uninterrupted 2-hour literacy block each morning. During this time the teachers, students and support staff focus on literacy instruction. During this 2-hour period an additional teacher assists with small group phonemic awareness and phonics instruction. Thus allowing for daily small group instruction for a portion of the literacy block. This thirty minute period is referred to as “All Hands On Deck”. This is just one aspect of the balanced literacy program. Balanced literacy encompasses phonemic awareness & phonics, vocabulary development, writing, reading comprehension & fluency. Each of these components are developed during the 2-hour writing block. Thirty minutes is used

for phonemic awareness and phonics, thirty minutes is used for writing, grammar and mechanics, sixty minutes is used for reading comprehension, fluency and vocabulary development. Students experience all components of balanced literacy each day (Appendix A).

### Research Design

The research design was a case study. The intern developed a scope and sequence of professional development and training (Appendix B), as well as, an implementation plan for the teachers in grades K-3. This training occurred during the 80 minute preparation periods, two to three times a month, and for an additional full day at the end of each month. The success of the implementation is determined by the comparative analysis of skill development in the DIBELS, monthly assessments, quarterly assessment and the CTBS Terra Nova and NJASK3 results for the 2002-2003 & 2003-2004 school year.

### Research Instruments

The following instruments will be used to determine the effectiveness of the implementation. A twenty question survey was given to the teachers to determine their comfort level with the implementation of balanced literacy and their knowledge based acquired on this topic (Appendix C). The results of the survey/questionnaire were used to structure further professional development and to address any concerns that had arisen at the mid-point of implementation. Checklists were used to determine teachers level of



compliance (in developing print rich environments) and expertise in the implementation of teaching phonics, reading and writing (Appendix D). Each teacher was given a rubric score of their progress on at least two occasions. The expertise of the classroom teacher is vital to the proper implementation of the balanced literacy program. Student knowledge gains will be assessed at the end of the year using the CTBS Terra Nova and the NJASK3. However, benchmark assessments were also used. All students were given the DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills) in the fall, winter and spring (Appendix E). This test is grade level specific and assesses skills such as: phoneme segmentation fluency, letter naming fluency, nonsense word fluency, oral reading fluency, retelling fluency, and word use fluency. The initial assessment was to determine what students were at risk. These students were grouped for more intensive instruction to increase proficiency. These students were given progress monitoring assessments every three to eight weeks to determine if sufficient progress had been made. The second assessment (winter) was given to all students again, at risk students were identified and the process continued. The final assessment is given in the spring. At that time all students should be performing at level. Students in kindergarten and first grade were also given a test of Phonological Awareness. This assessment gave feedback concerning the effectiveness the “All Hands On Deck” instructional period and it informed further instructional choices. Students in grades first through third were given a monthly reading

comprehension and writing test. The purpose of this assessment was to determine how well the students are reading and responding to grade level text. An item analysis was completed by the teacher to determine areas of instructional weaknesses and strengths and this information was used to inform further instruction. Each of these assessments were used to monitor student progress, to decide on how effectively the program components are being implemented and to inform instruction to increase student progress.

#### Sampling and Sampling Techniques

The population of this school was a mere fifty-four students per grade level. Which is a total of two hundred and sixteen students for this study. Due to this fact each student's CTBS Terra Nova scores will be reviewed. The results were reviewed and compiled as follows. The intern will complete a comparative of individual students to ascertain individual growth. The scores will be compared by grade level to the scores of last school year. The scores will also be compared across classrooms to ascertain possible teacher development needs. For the purpose of determining the success of this program the intern will ascertain if there is an overall increase in students who scored above the 50th percentile in the CTBS Terra Nova and achieved proficiency in the NJASK3 as compared to the scores for the 2002-2003 school year. These scores will not be available until June 2004.

### Data Collection Approach

Data was collected on an ongoing basis in several ways. The DIBELS data was collected from the teachers at the appropriate times and entered into a data base that has been set up to give instant feedback on the results of the assessment. This data base also provides the teacher with information about the appropriate performance for a child on the given grade level. The Phonological Awareness and Reading assessment results were collected from the teachers. The teachers scored the tests and completed an item analysis. This was given to the intern along with the individual student scores and class average. The teacher and the intern met to interpret the scores and plan instruction to increase proficiency in any areas where there was a need. The results were monitored closely. The results of these assessments were entered into a data base designed for this purpose. The writing assessments were scored during grade level and k-3 meetings. The results were used to inform instruction.

### Data Analysis

Each student has been given a code. This code is their current teacher's name student initials, and a number. This way the results could be interpreted with anonymity. For the purposes of this study, the intern needed to also know how individual students were performing. This coding allowed for the data to be viewed both ways. The data was analyzed in four ways. First, to determine individual student growth. Secondly, to

determine grade level achievement. Third, to determine class achievement. Lastly, to determine how the students in grades in k-3 performed on the CTBS Terra Nova and the NJASK3, when compared to the 2002-2003 results. Each analysis informed professional development.

## Chapter four

### Presentation of Research Findings

When refocusing the instructional energies of an organization many factors must be considered. The study sought to change and redirect the school culture and energy towards implementing a school wide program that would narrow the school focus to that of literacy. The vehicle for this task was the implementation of the balanced literacy approach in grades k-3. This study was successful in redirecting the school's energy. The teachers in grade k-3 have participated in intensive professional development throughout the school year. The professional development focused on the components of balanced literacy, the implementation into classroom behaviors, and assessment analysis.

The primary factor for consideration may well be the organizations availability of resources to support and sustain change. I would like to preface the findings of this study by first discussing the unforeseen limitations of the implementation of the study.

The first limitation, and the most significant, was the inadequate instructional materials for the K-3 students and teachers. In order to effectively create literacy based environments, the teacher and students must have adequate classroom libraries, teaching tools, and other resources. The teachers did not receive the textbooks, guided reading

books, or other resources in September, as expected. The lack of supplies and resources, be it human or other wise, impacted the implementation of the initiative. The teachers, however, proved to be the best resources during the implementation of the balanced literacy approach. Through professional development, the teachers have gained the knowledge necessary to teach the various components of balanced literacy.

Instructional resources are only one component of changing school culture. This study strongly indicates that consistent, focused and driven instructional leadership are paramount to successfully implementing and sustaining cultural change. With each possible hindrance, the teachers continued to look toward the intern for support and commitment. When implementing change the leader or change agent must be fully committed to the proposed change. This commitment and belief is transmitted to the teachers and students through what is said, how it is said, and what is actually done. This has shown the intern the importance of strong interpersonal skills, sensitivity to student and adult learners, and wise decision making in leadership. It has also shown the intern the enormous responsibility of an instructional leader. Throughout the implementation of the balanced literacy approach there were roadblocks, set backs, and false starts. When approaching each challenge the intern had to maintain composure and focus.

The biggest challenge occurred when there was a need to redirect behaviors that were not conducive to success in this initiative. The intern found that by revisiting the purpose of

the initiative, regularly restating the expectations, and holding individuals accountable, teachers were able to move toward the desired goal of full implementation of balanced literacy and academic success for all students.

The intern found that much attention had to be given to developing a shared belief system. This objective was achieved through professional development workshops, general meetings, collaborative planning sessions, impromptu discussions, and the celebration of individual and group successes. The belief that all students can learn to read and write and that a balanced literacy approach provided such an opportunity was our starting point. Developing a belief system that supports a cultural change is a difficult process. It is a day to day endeavor wherein the rewards are hard earned and growth may be slow. However, the intern has been able to measure attitude and perception changes over time.

Initially, the teachers felt overwhelmed, ill-prepared and fearful of the impending instructional changes. The intern addressed each of these areas through bi-monthly meetings, professional development workshops, grade level and individual meetings, consistent communication, positive recognition and redirection, when needed. Based on the teachers' mid year reflections, they now feel confident, knowledgeable, empowered and prepared for the next stage of implementation (Appendix F).

The other stakeholders involved in this initiative were students, school community

(parents), school instructional leadership (principal & instructional leaders), and district leadership (superintendent, board). Their initial level of “perceived” commitment and current level of “perceived” commitment shows growing commitment in most areas (Appendix G). The students were eager to learn to read and readily engaged in the literacy activities and events presented to them. The teachers were initially intimidated by the new approach, yet in time gained a greater commitment . The school community (parents) were virtually non-existent in their commitment. They initially took a passive stance to ensuring that their children developed literacy. Over time a greater awareness has developed amongst the parents. This has to be further developed during the remainder of the year and given high priority during the 2004-2005 school year. The school instructional leadership team showed various levels of support, dependent upon their proximity to the initiative. The school instructional leadership team has recently taken an active interest and has collectively acted to support and maintain the goals achieved. The systemic leadership has been focused on outcome measures, such as standardized tests results. The results of the k-3 literacy standardized assessments may be the catalyst that initiates greater systemic leadership support for this initiative. The systemic leadership will be able to show their support by increasing their commitment levels beyond the current status (Appendix H). In order to create greater systemic change all the stake holders must show adequate and continuous buy-in.



The most important data in any initiative that asserts that it will positively impact student achievement is student achievement data. The students were evaluated in three ways. The students were given the test called the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS). DIBELS is a brief but powerful measures of the critical skills that underlie early reading success. These simple assessments predict how well children are likely to be doing in reading comprehension by the end of third grade. Once the results were reviewed, students who were “at-risk” were given intensive reading instruction with the classroom teacher, basic skills teacher and /or reading specialist. Initially, 128 students out of 216 (or 60%) were identified as “at-risk”. Midyear testing has shown that 70 students are still “at-risk”. However, this is a reduction of 58 students. The DIBELS indicates that 68% of the K-3 grade students are no longer at risk for reading failure (Appendix I). The students were also given monthly assessments in reading comprehension. The scores of the third grade students have shown continuous improvement in this area. Classroom averages have risen each month, indicating that graded level proficiency in reading comprehension is being achieved. Quarterly assessments are given at the end of each marking period. By the end of the second quarter 75% of the K through third grade students were meeting grade level requirements in literacy based on teacher made quarterly assessments (Appendix J).

The results of these tests show an increase in student achievement and literacy

development from the beginning of the school year. We can attribute these initial findings of growth to the implementation of a balanced literacy program. Another indicator of success will be the standardized tests results. This will be a strong indicator because the data can be compared to data obtained prior to implementation. Results for the CTBS Terra Nova and NJASK3 will provide comparative data to develop a complete analysis of the balanced literacy approach (Appendix K).

### Conclusion

Initial results indicate that the balanced literacy approach is working. Students in grades k-3 are making gains in ongoing assessments. However, it is difficult to ascertain if the gains made are due to the use of the balanced literacy approach without year to year comparative data of the ongoing assessments. This is the first year data has been collected and analyzed from these assessments. It is important to note that this type of analysis has also created a greater awareness amongst the teachers of the effectiveness of a particular instructional strategy. The dialogue and collaboration that has occurred has been beneficial. Teachers are actively striving to find the best instructional practices that lead to student achievement. What has occurred is the beginnings of a cultural shift. Teachers are now more aware of how they should approach teaching students to read. A foundation has been developed for teachers and leadership to build upon. As with any initiative this may be the most valuable development for the first year. Though the initiative has been a

success, we can not become complacent. The reality is that thirty-two percent of our students are still performing below grade level. Continued study, diagnostic and prescriptive data analysis and teacher education are critical if we are to reach our goal of 100% grade level literacy.

## Chapter five

### Conclusions, Implications and Further Study

#### Conclusions

The intern has come to several conclusions during this research project. Changing paradigms amongst adults is difficult and at times can be perceived as threatening. The initial challenge for the intern was educating the teachers on the validity of the proposed changes in instructional methodology. Though the teachers initially agreed that changes needed to be made in the area of literacy they resisted the change upon initial implementation. The intern found it difficult to quickly move teachers to buy into the changes. The components of balanced literacy had to be taught. There was a variety of learning styles, motivation and prior knowledge amongst the primary teachers. As teachers of k-3, the intern expected that there would be a greater knowledge base than was evident. The teachers were taught about balanced literacy in a spiraling fashion wherein topics were continually revisited. The intern met with the all k-3 teachers approximately three times a month and with grade level teams at least once a week. These meetings served two purposes. The k-3 team meetings were conducted to provide professional development and ongoing support & training and the grade level meetings were to address specific instructional concerns and initiate collaboration. This continual interaction proved beneficial in developing a team approach.

### Implications

The intern found that leadership takes several forms. The leader of an initiative must be willing to empower others in order for full ownership to occur. The purpose and direction of the “work” must be continually revisited and clarified and each member of the team must be valued. Conducting surveys, asking for reflections and continual dialogue were the tools the intern used to include all teachers actively in the process. This approach worked with the majority of the teachers and paraprofessionals involved in the implementation of balanced literacy. Most of the teachers expressed confidence and showed an increase in knowledge by mid-year. The paraprofessionals also discussed their gains as professionals and felt better equipped to help the classroom teacher and students. This was an added benefit of the initiative.

The greatest challenge for the intern was maintaining the focus on literacy for k-3. The initiative came during changes in school leadership and school infrastructure. Last year the school was once divided into teams of multi-grade teachers, these teams were headed by experienced teachers who had regular access to the administrative staff and were charged with helping implement and reinforce the expectations of the administration. This format would have made the initiative easier to implement and maintain.

The student and teacher materials for the initiative were dependant upon a grant which was not approved by the onset of the school year. The actually materials for balanced

literacy were not received until April. This was eight months into the school year and after all standardized testing. The impact of these factors is significant. However, the intern met this challenge by changing her approach. The intern used the initial “wait time” for additional resources as an opportunity to increase the knowledge base of the teachers. The teachers were taught all of the components, assigned additional reading to build background knowledge, and participated in “how to” workshops several times a month. We found that most of the literacy block could be taught with alternative resources, with the exception of guided reading. Students were continually assessed and teachers were taught to analyze assessments to further inform instruction. With alternative resources and inexperienced teachers we did sacrifice quality. This was not the desired approach, though necessary for the circumstances. Fortunately, the schedule that was developed to increase common planning time for k-3 teachers was maintained. The schedule allowed the intern the opportunity to bring teachers together to share resources and ideas for guided reading and other aspects of literacy. Despite the limited resources, or perhaps because of it, the teachers were creative in their use of materials to teach literacy.

Initial changes have occurred in instruction. The challenge will be in maintaining and building upon these changes over time. Positive results are evident in the effective and affective domains. The focused effort of the intern, the teachers and rising student

achievement, has led the administration to reconsider the instructional approach to literacy in grades 5-8. Discussion has begun concerning the implementation of balanced literacy into the intermediate grades. This signifies the beginnings of a cultural shift for the school. The intern has learned the value of a focused, productive and unrelenting effort. In order for an initiative to come to fruition the leader(s) of the initiative must fully believe it will benefit children, keep the lines of communication open, involve the stakeholders at all levels, and maintain an unwavering pursuit of excellence.

There is now a greater clarity of expectations even though full implementation has not occurred. The intern has learned that leadership does not mean being all powerful or all-knowing. It means being straightforward, purposeful in your actions, positive, sensitive, and driven. The intern found that the teachers modeled her "we can do it" attitude. The intern knew her responses to set backs were being watched and considered by the teachers and was careful to express her disappointments privately.

Though there were many challenges the intern has seen favorable result amongst the teachers and students. The students have become more productive. The teacher's discussions about literacy are more focused and they have a greater awareness of their student's achievement and/or instructional needs. This was not so prior to implementation.

The intern would like to see a more concerted effort as plans are made for the next school

year. This would greatly benefit the students and teachers. Positive results seen in the DIBELS pre and post test results, monthly assessments and quarterly assessments are encouraging and validating. The teachers are confident about the results of the NJASK3 and CTBS Terra Nova.

#### Implication of Study on Leadership Skills

This study has afforded me the opportunity implement several of the ISSLC standards. Upon implementing a balanced literacy approach to reading instruction, I found standards one, two, four, and five to be applicable. ISSLC one states that ...“A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community.” This project gave me the opportunity to actively develop, define articulate and drive the implementation of a instructional vision. This project could not have been successful if I had not recognize the need to engage the entire school community as well as consider the adult learners who would implement the new literacy approach. ISSLC two states, “A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional development.” The challenge of meeting this standard was learning how to teach adults without using language or mannerisms that are commonly used with



children. It was crucial for me to develop my workshops and meetings in a way that would honor the intelligence and prior knowledge of the adult learners. This became particularly challenging when my expectations were not met or I perceived that total buy-in had not occurred. It was at these times that I had to remain patient and look for the underlying reasons for any behaviors that I perceived as negative. This was a learning experience for me.

ISSLC standard four states, “A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.” This project did have a component for galvanizing the community and parents around literacy. I was not able to actively develop a program for this project. This was due to the separate “Parent Engagement” council who develops all parenting involvement programs. As I reflect on this, I now realize that I took the easy way out by sharing my idea with the council and walking away. As a leader, it was my responsibility to work with the council to ensure that the parents and community were fully informed about our new focus in literacy. This aspect of the project was a disappointment for me. I have decided to focus on informing parents about literacy for the remainder of the school year.

### Implication of Study on Organizational Change

The initial findings indicate that the following organizational changes would prove beneficial. I suggest an incorporation of grade four into the k-3 balanced literacy model. Thus developing the same schedule to allow for collaboration and professional development to occur between grades k-4. Fourth grade is a transitional grade and would benefit from the structure and support of the primary balanced literacy approach. Many of our teachers move from third to fourth grade with their students and this instructional model would serve them well in both grades. Consideration should also be given to developing and implementing a balanced approach to literacy in grades 5-8. With a few modifications this approach is beneficial for all learners. This initiative should be supported by school wide professional development wherein reading strategies would be taught across content areas. Additional human resources are needed to sustain this initiative. There should be full time literacy coaches for grades k-4 and 5-8. This would allow for a more consistent, hands-on approach to literacy and provide teachers with access to a specialist. Additional funds for extra-curricular activities would be an added bonus. Funding for trips, visitors, or school wide learning celebrations would enhance the literacy program. This would further help create a culture of learning that is consistent and school wide. And lastly, the instructional leadership of the school has to make a concerted decision to focus on literacy instruction. The question that should be asked

prior to making any instructional decision is, “How does this impact instruction in general and literacy instruction in particular?”

### Further Study

For future implementation and expansion, further study must occur. First of all, there is a need to increase our knowledge base of research and best practices in literacy instruction. Each primary teacher should have the skills and knowledge of a reading specialist. We can begin developing the teachers (and administrators) by conducting study groups on topics such as beginning reading. This could take the form of reading and discussing articles or a formal study group wherein teachers, assistants and administrators are grouped, expected to read books on a given topic and participate in scholarly discussions. This can be incorporated into the professional development plan, also.

Secondly, further study must take the form of continual assessment analysis. The strength of the implementation has been the attention to the assessment data for the students in grades k-3. This should continue. Program changes should be made only after considering the data. A long range plan must be developed to take the teachers and students from initial implementation to full implementation. After three years of consistent implementation we should see substantial results, wherein most students are reading at or above grade level. This will take strong and purposefully driven leadership.

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**Appendix A**  
**Literacy Schedule**

**Literacy Block Components**

The literacy block is an organizational tool for classroom teachers to engage students in a variety of literacy experiences. During our 120 minute literacy block, students will participate in whole group, small group, centers and individualized learning activities. The learning activities in this block reflect the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards. Instruction is based on scientifically based reading research (SBRR) practices that are outline in the expectations for balanced literacy. The primary literacy block is from 8:30 to 10:30 am daily.

<b>Time</b>	<b>Instructional focus</b>	<b>Components of balanced literacy addressed</b>
8:30-9:00	Phonemic Awareness & Phonics (All Hands On Deck)	Phonemic awareness; phonics, vocabulary development
9:00-10:00	Guided & Independent Reading	Vocabulary development, fluency, text
10:00-10:30	Writing & Writer's Process	Vocabulary development, grammar and mechanics, text comprehension and writing fluency

Ample opportunity will be made for author, illustrator & genre studies. Students will also have opportunities to participate as audience and performers to increase listening and speaking skills.

**Activities and instructional strategies to be incorporated into the 120 minute block**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Instructional focus</b>	<b>Additional activities and instructional</b>
8:30-9:00	Phonemic Awareness & Phonics (All Hands On Deck)	Oral p.a. activities, phonetic readers, hands-on activities, centers, mini lessons, word wall activities, etc.
9:00-10:00	Guided & Independent Reading	Mini lessons, paired reading, guided reading, read aloud, book talks (lit. circles), independent reading, centers, author , genre and illustrator studies, vocabulary development, cross discipline and thematic study, shared reading, etc.
10:00-10:30	Writing & Writer's Process	Mini lessons, journaling, writing prompt responses, literature responses, centers, shared writing, genre studies, peer and teacher conferencing, author's chair, author's tea, grammar and mechanic study, spelling workshop, etc.

**Students will participate in a variety of assessment activities**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Instructional focus</b>	<b>Assessment</b>
8:30-9:00	Phonemic Awareness & Phonics (All Hands On Deck)	DIBELS, Phonemic Awareness assessment, Phonics test, oral assessment, etc.
9:00-10:00	Guided & Independent Reading	DIBELS. Monthly reading comprehension assessments, end of story, end of book assessments, book reports, reading response logs, vocabulary exams, running records, checklists, etc.
10:00-10:30	Writing & Writer's Process	Portfolio assessment, conferencing, grammar/mechanics test, presentation of written work, open ended responses, checklists, spelling tests, etc.

**Appendix B**  
**Professional Development Plan**

### Professional Development Plan for K-3 teachers

LEAP Academy will provide high quality professional development that is ongoing and addresses the primary goals of Reading First. Intensive and sustained professional development is the key to teacher quality in our school. Our teachers participate in once a month, full day, on site professional development. They also participate in professional development throughout the month that supports our monthly focus. The various needs of our teaching body (novice, experienced and teacher leader) is also addressed in our professional development plan. Since professional development is a major focus of the Reading First initiative, concentrated time and effort has been devoted to K-3 literacy in our professional development plan.

Professional Development Scope and Sequence- The Professional Development plan for K-3 will focus on providing teachers with the knowledge, skills and framework for providing a systematic balanced literacy program to ensure that all students reach reading fluency by the end of third grade.

August 2003

Session one-Focusing on our Goals

Goal: What is the Balanced Literacy Program? How is it implemented?

Objectives: What are the 5 components of the Balanced Literacy Program?

-Phonemic Awareness

-Systematic Phonics

-Fluency

-Vocabulary

-Text Comprehension

What are some strategies for teaching each component?

How do I plan for effective literacy instruction?

What are the grade level Indicators of the LAL CCC Standards?

How does the Four Blocks plan framework support balanced literacy?

What does a literature rich classroom look like?

*Interim Training- Mentors-Roles and Responsibilities of a Mentor.*

*All K-3 teachers-Teachers will receive an initial in-service in all aspects of the selected reading series. Gbesi or Harcourt Representative*

September 2003 (beginning of Sept)

Session two-Setting up and assessing

Goal: What types of assessment and management strategies support literacy based instruction?

Objectives: How to I motivate learners?

How do I organize my classroom to maximize instruction?

-Flexible grouping

-Stations

-Centers

What types of assessments can I use to ascertain my student's level of instruction?

How do I administer and interpret data from informal tests( Informal reading assessments, running records, checklists, inventories, rubric scored assessments, etc.)?

*Interim Training-Building effective and high performing teams.*

*Study sessions-understanding the standards and balanced literacy.*

September.2003( end of Sept.)

Session three-Diagnostic and Prescriptive Teaching

Goal: How do I use assessment to diagnose student's needs and prescribe appropriate learning activities?

Objective: How do I administer and interpret data from informal tests?

How do I use pre and post tests to inform instruction?



What grouping strategies work best for primary literacy instruction?

*Interim Training- Conducting peer evaluations/classroom visits to support implementation.*

October 2003

Session four-Instructional Methods and Pedagogy

Goal: What is differentiated instruction?

Objective: How do I use differentiated instruction to maximize learning for all learners?

*Interim Training- Kindergarten through third grade consultation with the Reading Specialist and Reading Coach.*

*\*State of affairs staff meeting with teachers and reading coach to review reading research topics and give an overview of collective student progress as indicated by 8-week checkpoint assessment.*

November 2003

Session five-Instructional Methods and Pedagogy

Goal: What are some strategies and skills for teaching writing to primary students? How do I teach reading in Social Studies and Science?

Objectives: What is the "Writing Process"?

How can S.S. and Sci. be incorporated into the components of Balanced Literacy?

*Interim Training-Grade level meetings with the reading specialist.  
Demonstration lessons by peers, reading specialist and reading coach.*

*December \*State of affairs staff meeting.....*

January 2004

Session six-Integrated Learning

Goal: How can the arts (drama, media, art and music) be incorporated into literacy instruction?

Objective: How can the use of drama, media, art and music enrich literacy for primary students?

*Interim Training (December and January)- Intensive training and intervention strategies with the reading specialist.*

February 2004

Session seven-Reflecting on Assessment

Goal: What does the assessment data tell us about the progress of our students toward literacy?

Objectives: How does the data compare on grade level, across grade, level and as a whole k-3?

What are our strengths and areas of growth?

What is our plan for maintaining our strong areas and strengthening our areas of growth?

*\*State of affairs staff meeting....*

*Interim Training- Each team will have a whole day intensive work session to review practices and assessment data with reading specialist and reading coach. (substitutes provided).*

March 2004

Session eight-Test taking Strategies

Goal: What strategies and behaviors lead to high performance on standardized test?

Objective: What are the test taking tips students need to have?

What test specifications do we need to focus on?

How do we motivate students to perform well on high stakes tests?

How do we reduce test stress and anxiety in ourselves and students?

*Interim Training- Kindergarten through 3 -Whole day intensive work session to learn additional strategies of incorporating technology into daily literacy. (substitutes provided).*

*April \* State of affairs meeting....*

May 2004

Session nine-Reflecting on the program

Goal: What adjustments to our program do we need to make for the next school year?

Objectives: What are our successes?

What have we learned?

What do we need?

How do we get it?

*Interim Training-K-3(entire team) Full day work session to incorporate new knowledge into our curriculum.*

June 2004

Session ten-Team building

Goal: How do we rejuvenate and strengthen ourselves as individuals and members of a team?

What leadership skills do we need to lead our class and /or teams?

What makes a high performing team?

How do we reward our accomplishments as a team?

*Interim Training- National or local conference attendance on primary literacy topics.*

*School Leaders will attend special training on managing teams to become HIGH PERFORMING TEAMS.*

*\* State of affairs meeting....*

July 2004

Session eleven-Professional Development Planning

**Appendix C**  
**Teacher Survey**

Level of Implementation Survey/Questionnaire

Grade Level taught \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

1. What is phonemic awareness?
2. What is phonics?
3. How are they the same and how are they different?
4. How many workshops have you attended on the topics of phonemic awareness and phonics?
5. How have these workshops helped you implement phonemic awareness and phonics into your daily instruction?
6. What has been your biggest challenge in implementing the "All Hands On Deck" phonics block?
7. What do you need to be more successful in teaching phonemic awareness and phonics?
8. What is guided reading?
9. How is guided reading different from reading from a basal?
10. Do you have enough developmentally appropriate books to meet the needs of your students?
11. How many workshops have you attended on implementing guided reading?
12. Is your classroom environment currently conducive to small group instruction? Does it have centers? Are areas clearly identified?
13. What do you need to fully implement guided reading?
14. Have you provide the following for your students: work folders, assessment to determine reading levels, organized reading material, posted the guided reading schedule, set up a sequence to take anecdotal or running records? (Please elaborate in your answer).
15. Have you demonstrated effective classroom management?
16. What do you need to increase your effectiveness?
17. What is the writing process?
18. How do you teach grammar and mechanics skills using the writing process? (explain fully)
19. How do you assess student work and plan for further instruction?
20. What do you need to further implement the writing block?

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**Appendix D**  
**Sample Implementation Checklist**

**Initial Implementation of Balanced Literacy**  
**Checklist**

Score: 1= beginning to implement (see literacy coach)  
2= partial implementation (literacy coach will visit in two weeks)  
3= progress has been made, almost full implementation  
4=full implementation (you will be asked to collaborate with teachers who scored 1 or 2)

**Phonemic Awareness/ Phonics (AHOD)**

**Notes:**

- Small groups
- Phonemic Awareness Activities Daily
- Hands-on Activities
- Assessment activity

**Score**

**Guided Reading/independent reading**

**Notes:**

- Guided reading groups are clearly identified
- Centers are easily assessable and standards based
- Teacher assesses students on an ongoing basis
- Teacher meets with reading groups daily

**Score**

**Writer's Workshop**

**Notes:**

- Teacher conducts skill based mini-lessons
- Students write daily
- Teacher conferences with students daily
- Students portfolio are accessible & up to date

**Score**

**Overall average: \_\_\_\_\_**

***Additional notes and comments:***

**Appendix E**  
**DIBELS Assessment Instrument Cover Page**

# DIBELS

## Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills™ 6<sup>th</sup> Edition

*Administration and Scoring Guide*

*Overview*  
by *Louisa C. Moats*

*Roland H. Good III • Ruth A. Kaminski*  
University of Oregon

DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency

DIBELS Retell Fluency

DIBELS Nonsense Word Fluency

DIBELS Phoneme Segmentation Fluency

DIBELS Letter Naming Fluency

DIBELS Initial Sound Fluency

DIBELS Word Use Fluency

Beg Mid End  
Preschool

Beg Mid End  
Kindergarten

Beg Mid End  
First Grade

Beg Mid End  
Second Grade

Beg Mid End  
Third Grade



**Appendix F**  
**Sample Teacher Reflection**

## Reflection on the Four Instructional Blocks of Balanced Literacy

### Word Works

This is my favorite block. The children also enjoy this time because we make it very active. I introduce the new words, display the word cards, and tape them onto the whiteboard. Each day the children repeat the words, and spell the words. I then use each word in a sentence, print it on the board, and the children read it. The students are responsible for 5 words each week. By the end of the week, the students themselves are dictating their own sentences using the vocabulary words. The sentences are then printed on the board, read, and the Word Wall words are identified and underlined by the students. They love this active participation. Their vocabulary and letter sound awareness are developed further each week. I am delighted to see the children referring to the Word Wall when it comes time to do a picture prompt or to write a response to a story.

### Self-Selected Reading

I have a collection of my “yard sale “ books in the classroom. I also have a well-established children’s literacy library. I have, from the very beginning of the school year, encouraged the children to “read” their favorite storybook. During the Self-Selected Reading time, the children choose a comfortable place in the room to read their favorite book. I encourage them to find the words that are on the Word Wall, to use what they already know about letter sound relationships to sound out new words, and to use picture as well context clue to make sense out of their reading. I take this time to have the children, one on one, read to me. Whether it is a picture reading of the story, or an actual content reading, the children enjoy this quiet attention with me.

### Guided Reading

I begin the guided reading session with the entire class. At this time I introduce the words that will be found in the text that might be unfamiliar to

the children. I also set up the purpose for the reading. I then meet with small groups and continue the lesson. The children are grouped by ability. However, I find that they move from one group to another as the skill level changes. I think this flexibility makes for a better-balanced class. Children do not get labeled as to being “smart” or “slow”.

### Writing Process

This piece has most recently been introduced into my class. I honestly had reservations about the Kinder’s writing. However I have been pleasantly surprised with their writing. I have been using picture prompts. The children respond to them on a whole very positively. I still have a few that are uncertain about the process. I am sure it will just take more time for their confidence to build. I have found that I am more comfortable with the writing block. I believe this is so because of the success of the other three blocks I have in place in my class.

**Appendix G**  
**Stakeholder's Commitment**

**Stakeholders' Initial Commitment to Literacy Learning**

<b>Stakeholder</b>	<b>Perceived Level of Commitment</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Students</b>	high	They try to meet the standards and expectations of the teacher.
<b>Teachers</b>	low	See the need for better literacy acquisition, however, feel overwhelmed and "blamed" for student past failure.
<b>School Community</b>	low	Has a strong desire for students to do well. Does not have the tools, skills or knowledge to make it happen.
<b>School Instructional Team</b>	low	Major changes in instructional leadership. Literacy is not given initial priority.
<b>District/System Leadership</b>	low	Focus is primarily on outcomes of standardized testing due to state mandates, possible sanctions and repercussions for failure to meet AYP.

**Stakeholders' Ending Commitment to Literacy Learning**

<b>Stakeholder</b>	<b>Perceived Level of Commitment</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Students</b>	high	They try to meet the standards and expectations of the teacher.
<b>Teachers</b>	medium	Teachers feel more empowered and knowledgeable about the initiative. They are seeing positive results. They have expressed the benefits of collaboration.
<b>School Community</b>	low	A great deal of attention must be given to this area.
<b>School Instructional Team</b>	medium	Discussion is occurring about the feasibility of extending the balanced literacy approach to the intermediate grades. Consideration is given to the needs of the primary teachers in relationship to the initiative.
<b>District/System Leadership</b>	low	Focus is primarily on outcomes of standardized testing due to state mandates, possible sanctions and repercussions for failure to meet AYP.

**Appendix H:  
Resource Commitment**

## Resource Commitment to Literacy

### Commitment Level

<u>Resources</u>	<u>Current Status</u>	<u>Level Desired</u>
<u>Financial/budget</u>	Dependant upon Reading First-grant	\$ beyond Reading First for consumable supplies and Professional Development Resources
<u>Personnel</u>	Literacy Coordinator Literacy Coach Reading Specialist  Many novice teachers in grades k-3	<i>Full time</i> Literacy Coach for the 2004-2005 School year  An additional Basic Skills teacher is needed  Place the most talented teachers in grades k-3 in order to build a good literacy foundation
<u>Professional Development</u>	Currently 90% of professional development has been provided by the Literacy Coach  90% or more of the training has been during planning periods	\$ needed to bring in outside experts  A commitment to literacy that is reflected in the school-wide professional development plan  \$ for onsite training overhead (supplies)
<u>Learning Tools</u>	Resource room with scant resources	The development of a fully operational resource room/training center
<u>Learning Space</u>	Limited small group instructional space	Develop and maintain a section of the library that can be used for small group instruction  Reduce class size to 18 to allow for more space in the classrooms  Instruct teachers on how to use space wisely to maximize room usage
<u>Learning time</u>	Learning Time is more than adequate 120 minutes a day for literacy	Prioritize the k-3 scheduling needs for next year to maintain the 120 uninterrupted minutes used for literacy



**Appendix I**  
**DIBELS results**

**DIBELS Pre and Mid year benchmark assessments**

<b>Teacher/ Grade</b>	<b># of students at risk in September 2003</b>	<b># of students at risk in January 2004</b>	<b># of students at risk May 2004</b>	<b>Intervention(s) As of 1/04</b>
.../Kinder	18	3		*
... Kinder	17	15		^*
.../Kinder	2	1		*
.../first	8	4		@*
... First	10	3		@#*
.../First	12	6		@*
.../Second	19	6		^#*
.../Second	16	12		^#*
.../Second	3	5		*
.../Third	8	5		*
.../third	11	6		*
.../third	14	4		*
<b>Total</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>70</b>		

\*small group instruction (AHOD)  
 ^ reading specialist in class instruction  
 @pull out with reading specialist  
 # pull out with basic skills teacher

compiled by Veronica Gbesi 3/04

**Appendix J**  
**Quarterly Assessments Results**

**First Quarterly Assessments Results:  
Kinder through Fourth Grades  
Literacy and Mathematics**

The Following packet contains the results of the first quarterly assessments administered by the classroom teachers.

**Literacy Data:**

Grade	# of students tested	# of students who passed (70% and above)	Percentage of passing students	# of students who did not pass (69% and below)	Percentage of students who did not pass
Kinder	54	46	85%	8	14%
First	54	44	81%	10	18%
Second	54	33	61%	21	38%
Third	54	39	72%	15	28%
Fourth	54	22	40%	32	59%

**Mathematics Data:**

Grade	# of students tested	# of students who passed (70% and above)	Percentage of passing students	# of students who did not pass (69% and below)	Percentage of students who did not pass
Kinder	54	47	87%	7	12%
First	54	46	85%	8	14%
Second	54	49	91%	5	9%
Third	54	46	85%	8	15%
Fourth	54	28	51%	26	48%

**Second Quarterly Assessments Results:  
Kindergarten through third grades  
Literacy and Mathematics**

The following tables reflect the results of the second quarter assessments in grades K through 3.

**Literacy Data:**

<b>Grade</b>	<b># of students tested</b>	<b># of students who scored 70% and above</b>	<b>Percentage of students passing</b>	<b># of students who scored below 70%</b>	<b>Percentage of students not passing</b>
<b>Kindergarten</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>89%</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>11%</b>
<b>First</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>17%</b>
<b>Second*</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>44%</b>
<b>Third</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>26%</b>

**Mathematics Data:**

<b>Grade</b>	<b># of student s tested</b>	<b># of students who scored 70% and above</b>	<b>Percentage of students passing</b>	<b># of students who scored below 70%</b>	<b>Percentage of students not passing</b>
<b>Kindergarten</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>First</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>17%</b>
<b>Second*</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>26%</b>
<b>Third</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>20%</b>

\*Immediate remediation and teacher training has begun to address the deficit in grade two.

Appendix K  
2003 CTBS Terra Nova Results

**CTBS Terra Nova Results for the 2002-2003 school year  
Language Arts Literacy**

Current third graders (second grade TERRA NOVA)

<b>Students</b>	<b>Reading</b>	<b>Language</b>
Chiamaka	84	67
Tiana	63	30
Aaliyah	25	49
Amira	79	59
Rajjhan	48	86
Matthew	74	43
Angel	73	90
TaQuan	15	22
Jaime	39	85
Alexsand	41	15
Dion	31	64
Isaiah	50	22
Munir	28	42
Giovanni	56	41
Samira	44	30
Isaias	51	80
Joshua	18	11
Mecca	50	64
Eric	52	22
Amanda	31	41
Jahlil	n/s	n/s
Chris	61	57
Syann	19	17
Brianna	79	69
Karl	16	14
Marquis	42	67
Gia	48	67
Karla	17	47
Michelle	31	46
Kevin	68	73
Samantha	7	20
Montel	37	44
Kenneth	74	57
Deanna	36	44
Adaysia	33	39
Yanira	28	62
Tatiana	26	49
Karina	35	41
Victor	40	99
Levoid	8	10
Mariah	5	7

**Achievement percentages**

	<b>Reading Comprehension</b>	<b>Language</b>
<b>Below Average</b>	<b>8/20%</b>	<b>10/25%</b>
<b>Average</b>	<b>29/73%</b>	<b>25/63%</b>
<b>Above Average</b>	<b>3/07%</b>	<b>5/12%</b>

**Below average 0-24**

**Average 25-75**

**Above Average 76-99**

## Biographical Data

Name	Veronica Boone-Gbesi
High School	Camden High School Camden, New Jersey
Undergraduate	Bachelor of Arts English Rutgers University Camden, New Jersey
Graduate	Master of Arts School Administration Rowan University Glassboro, New Jersey
Current Occupation	Acting Instructional Supervisor LEAP Academy Camden, New Jersey



