



TOUCHING BASE

FEBRUARY 4, 2009

PUTTING PROVEN METHODS OF READING RESEARCH IN THE CLASSROOM
TO INCREASE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT ACROSS COLORADO

BEATING THE ODDS

Pike Elementary, in Colorado Springs, is making a practice of beating the odds. According to Colorado Springs District 11, Pike Elementary has 130 students and a poverty rate of 73 percent. Pike Elementary is one of two schools statewide to receive a Title I Distinguished School Award, which consists of a banner, a glass plaque for display, and \$10,000 (and some considerable bragging rights).

Manuel Ramsey, principal of Pike Elementary, took a few minutes out of his schedule to speak with Colorado Reading First regarding his school, his students, their accomplishments, and of course, Reading First.

CRF- Do you believe that Reading First helped you achieve your award as a Title I Distinguished School?

Ramsey- I believe that being in Reading First has helped us win this award. It

has helped us to strengthen our reading program, to make it much more effective and efficient. Classroom instruction is now data driven. Also, because we have a successful program now, the overall attitude of our teachers is different. They buy in to a systematic approach, that every minute counts, interventions can't be missed, and the core program must be followed. Those ideals have helped us strengthen other core instructional areas in the school.

CRF- Do you believe that the Reading First structure and design helped in the other curriculum areas?

Ramsey- The strength of Colorado Reading First is that it is so systematic. They explain exactly what you need to do, then they give you money for a

(reading) coach and the training to do it. There is a lot of follow up. All of this enables implementation to a very high level. When you do that, whether it is reading, writing, or math, you are going to get results.

As a testament to Mr. Ramsey's approach, the numbers systematically add up. In April of 2006, 40% of Pike's students were reading at benchmark on DIBELS. In April of 2008, 78% of students were reading at benchmark, nearly doubling the children operating at a proficient reading level.

(Continued on Page 3)

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- Pike Elementary: Beating the Odds
- Developing Early Literacy
- Teaching Chapter Books



NATIONAL EARLY LITERACY PANEL

The National Early Literacy Panel (NELP) was convened in 2002 with the express purpose of summarizing scientific evidence on early literacy development and home and family influences on that development. The panel's primary purpose was to synthesize research to contribute to decisions in educational policy and practice that affect early literacy development and to determine how teachers and families can support language and literacy development in young children.

NELP's 2008 report re-

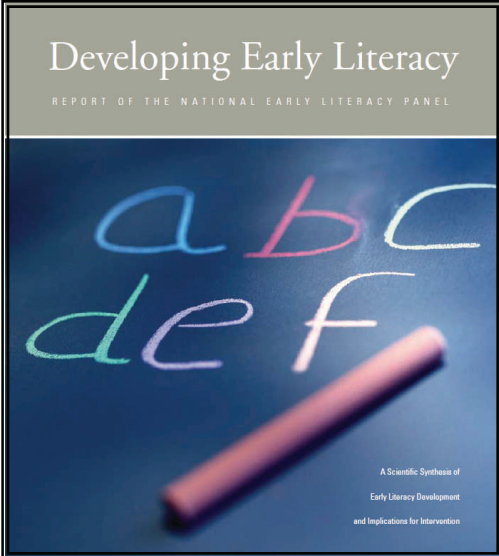
vealed that 37 percent of U.S. fourth graders fail to achieve basic levels of reading achievement. The incidence of reading failure is even higher within low-income families, ethnic minority groups, and English language learners. Large scale studies have shown that young children – those entering kindergarten and first grade – vary greatly in their attainment of the early precursor skills that provide the launching pad for later literacy learning (West, Denton, & Germino-Hausken, 2000; West, Denton, Reaney, 2000). To view the complete Developing Early Literacy Report please visit: [National Early Literacy Panel](#)

The executive summary lists 11 variables that consistently predict later literacy achievement for both pre-

schoolers and kindergartners. The executive summary can be found on pages v – xii. Please visit the following link to view the executive summary:

http://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy/crf/downloads/resources/touching_base/2009/02-09/NELPRE-PORT09_ExecSum.pdf

Colorado Reading First would like to encourage dissemination of this report and its findings, with a focus on kindergartens, preschools, and Head Start programs in your area. This report explains that early literacy can be heavily influenced in kindergarten and pre-schools and should be considered an important avenue for reaching children.



“STUDENTS REMEMBER AND COMPREHEND NARRATIVE TEXT STRUCTURE MORE EASILY THAN THEY DO EXPOSITORY TEXT STRUCTURE”
~ ZABRUCKY & RATNER, (1992)

February 2009 Events	March 2009 Events
Feb. 2: Leveraging Resources 2nd Session Pueblo: Marriott 719.586.3281	Mar. 09: Leveraging Resources 3rd Session Pueblo: Marriott 719.586.3281
Feb. 3: Leveraging Resources 2nd Session Denver: Sheraton Four Points 866.837.4182	Mar. 10: Leveraging Resources 3rd Session Denver: Sheraton Four Points 866.837.4182
Feb. 4: ELL Training 3rd Session Denver: Doubletree 303.321.3333	
Feb. 5: ELL Training 3rd Session Pueblo: Marriott 719.586.3281	April 2009 Events
Feb. 6: SPED Training 3rd Session Colorado Springs: Doubletree 719.576.8900	Apr. 08: CRF Spring Leadership Conference CO Springs: Antlers Hilton 719.955.5600
Feb. 18: CRF Webinar—1:00 p.m. Denver: 1560 Broadway, Suite 1450	Apr. 09: CRF Spring Conference CO Springs: Antlers Hilton 719.955.5600
Feb. 19: New Staff Training 3rd Session Denver: Doubletree 303.321.3333	
Feb. 20: New Staff Training 3rd Session Pueblo: Marriott 719.586.3281	

BEATING THE ODDS (CONT. FROM PAGE 1)

“I HAPPEN
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WHITE HOUSE. I
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HAS.”

~ ABRAHAM
LINCOLN, (1864)

CRF- Which aspects of Reading First have you found to be most helpful to children?

Ramsey- It has been very helpful to have a systematic approach to reading from kindergarten through fifth grade. In all classrooms, core is taught for 90 minutes. There is also an additional hour of interventions. Finally, we coordinate school-wide on every third Monday on “data day” to make sure that data is being used to guide interventions and students’ needs are being met.

“Data day” existed at Pike Elementary prior to Colorado Reading First. Having a pre-planned, frequent, consistent, and organized day for data is something that has dovetailed seamlessly with Reading First. True data-driven instruction requires that the data be frequently monitored in order to best focus resources. “Data day” has provided an ideal setting for this.

At Pike, “data day” consists of the principal, the coaches, and the interventionist meeting with each individual teacher for at least an hour. Student data is presented, and

lesson plans are created for the intervention groups for the following three weeks. These meetings are held K-5 to better implement a school-wide vision. Pike also has a “data room” dedicated for “data day”, providing a space and a consistent set of tools with which to work.

Ramsey- We learned that you have to include all the interventionists, coaches, and teachers. So not only do you want to get the time scheduled correctly, but you want to make sure that if an interventionist needs to deliver a fluency lesson, it is clearly communicated to a person. More information and follow-up can be provided to ensure quality instruction.

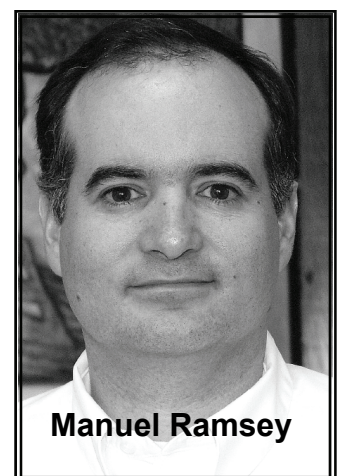
When Mr. Ramsey was asked what aspect of Reading First was the most difficult, he explained that asking teachers to do things differently proved to be the biggest challenge. Mr. Ramsey provided the example that at the beginning of Reading First implementation in 2006, he had to go so far as to

ask teachers to rearrange their rooms. Re-setting their physical environment was far simpler than asking teachers to rethink the methods with which they taught. With consistency, patience, and clear vision of the future, Mr. Ramsey and Pike were able to work through the difficulties presented by significant change in the workings of an elementary school.

Mr. Ramsey credits his teachers to the highest degree.

Ramsey- One of the major components that you have to have is very high-quality teachers. They have to be capable, committed, and coachable. Those are the three Cs

(Continued on Page 4)



Manuel Ramsey

BEATING THE ODDS (CONT. FROM PAGE 3)

that I look for. Capable because you have to know what you are doing. Committed because it takes a lot of time and effort. Coachable because our teachers and Reading First teachers must be able to adjust, learn, and grow.

CRF- *Since the implementation of Reading First how has your data changed?*

Ramsey- *Our average CSAP score for third grade readers in 2004, 2005 and 2006 was about 58%. Our average CSAP score for third grade readers in 2007 and 2008 was 90%. It was 100% in 2007, and with a very difficult group of children in 2008, 85%. Our predictors indicate that this is sustainable, as we are projecting near 100% proficient scores on the CSAP this year. 76% of our children have free or reduced lunch and a 37% mobility rate, and our scores are still holding.*

Consistency and follow-up are the tenets with which Mr. Ramsey operates his school. One thing that Mr. Ramsey wanted to point out was that his team always follows up on interventions. Interventions are scheduled on "data day". Mr. Ramsey tracks their completion and reports an 85% completion rate of intervention groups scheduled.

CRF- *Are Reading First practices being implemented in fourth and fifth grade?*

Ramsey- *As much as possible... without funding, but we try and share as much as possible with our fourth and fifth grade teachers. We have made the commitment that we are a Reading First school K-5, even though we are funded through Reading First K-3. This makes it easier because everyone is working together and everyone is on the same page.*

CRF- *Leadership is a critical component of Reading First. It seems that you are a very positive leadership force in your school. How do you believe leadership plays into Pike's success, and how have you played your role in this as well?*

Ramsey- *Everybody says that leadership is important. I think that the most important thing that I do as a leader is hire really capable, committed, and coachable teachers. If teachers are not, if they fail in any of those areas, then those teachers do not stay with us. As a leader you have to make some difficult decisions, but I have seen firsthand what an average teacher looks like compared to*

what an excellent teacher looks like and the difference is extraordinary. Sometimes being a leader requires making difficult decisions as an administrator. It also requires keeping a clear vision, focusing on a single goal. Ours has been alignment, accountability, and attitude. Everything needs to be systematic. It needs to be aligned—no wasting time.

When asked for parting words for the Reading First community, Mr. Ramsey quoted the famed Chuck Noll, former coach of the Pittsburgh Steelers, "Champions are champions not because they do anything extraordinary, but because they do the ordinary things better than anybody else." Mr. Ramsey likened Reading First to this, stating that Reading First does not ask you to do the impossible, it asks you to do simple things very well.



USING CHAPTER BOOKS IN THE CLASSROOM

The reading of chapter books is a great motivator to increase time in text when used as an extension of the core program. Reading chapter books also promotes fluency and vocabulary development.

Simple chapter books can be used with 1st graders when students have reached 40 wpm or higher on ORF and are high benchmark on NWF. 1st grade students scoring less than 40 wpm on ORF still need extensive practice with skill building and decodable text.

Appropriate chapter books can be used with 2nd and 3rd grade students who are able to decode and have basic phonics skills.

Placement tests used with programs such as Accelerated Reader, Reading Counts, and Read Naturally, along with the “five finger rule”, are useful for selecting appropriate text levels.

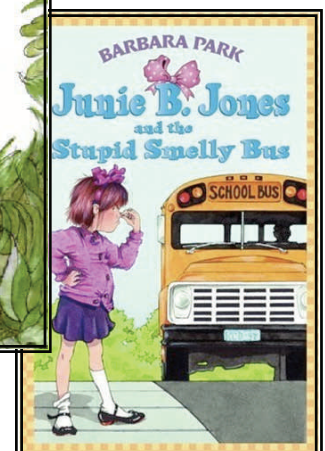
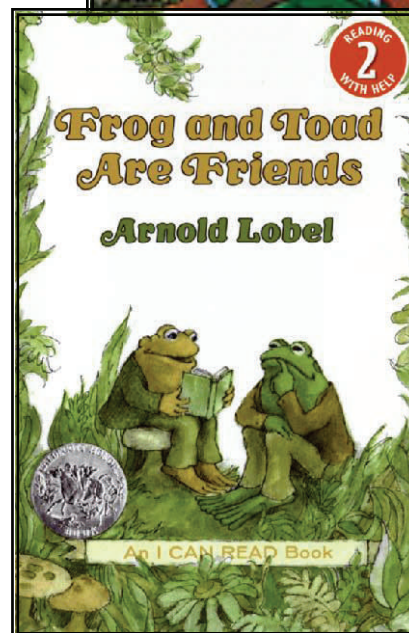
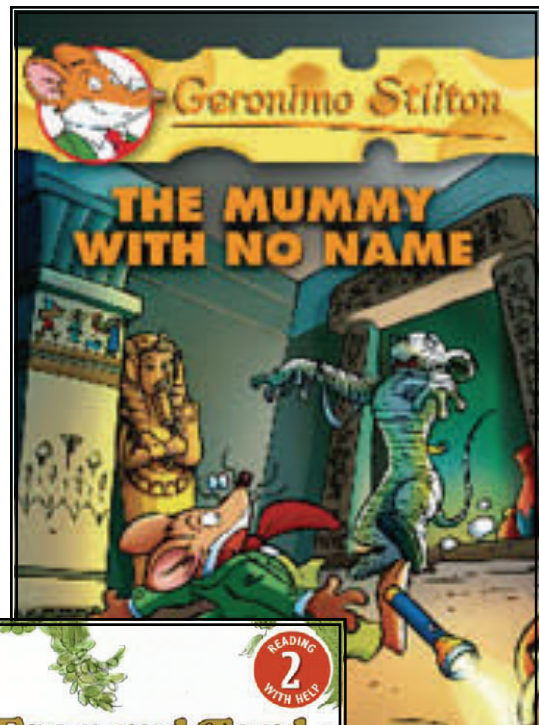
Students reading chapter books as an extension of the core must still receive core instruction. Chapter books should be used during small group instruction and students should always have a purpose for reading chapter books. The core comprehension skills and strategies need to be aligned with the small group instruction of chapter books.

Before, during and after reading strategies suggested by Anita Archer also provide a purpose for reading.

One effective teaching strategy for keeping students focused is the use of post-it notes. For example, students can mark unfamiliar vocabulary words, where connections are made, where predictions are validated, and where text needs to be clarified.

Teachers should pre-read the text to set the purpose for reading. Post-it notes can be used to mark places where the comprehension skill and strategy will be applied. The use of thinking aides, graphic organizers, study guides, and evidencing the text (fluency reread) help to keep students focused on the purpose for reading.

On the following page you will find a small group reading plan for chapter books developed by Jane Burk, Regional Consultant. Jane used the Teach, Model, Practice, Apply strategy when creating the following small group reading plan.



CHAPTER BOOKS—SAMPLE SMALL GROUP READING PLAN

The following sample small group reading plan was created by Jane Burk.

Teaching Notes in Red

The following is a scripted sample comprehension lesson. For this comprehension lesson, we will be using the chapter book, *Little to the Rescue*. While planning for your lesson, place notes (post-it notes work best) where needed.

Sample Small Group Plan

Warm Up: Students reread pages 13—14 in a “whisper read” in focus text.

Objective: *The reading strategy we’re working on this week is the strategy of **Inferring**. What strategy everyone? “**Inferring**”*

Definition: ***Inferring means** when we use the evidence in the story with what we know, to come to a conclusion. (plan ahead what your gestures will be) We have to ask ourselves, MMMmmmm! (gesture with a finger pointing to the head) What do I think is going on here in the story? What do we ask ourselves everyone? (prompt with response gesture) “What is going on in the story?”*

Stating Strategy: *Yes, good. We ask ourselves, what is going on in the story? We use the text clues along with our background knowledge to **infer** what is going on. Doing this helps us to better understand what we are reading.*

Modeling – Think Aloud: *We know the Littles are small people who secretly live in the same house with regular people. As I reread page 14, I was thinking, why does Aunt Lily want to live in a house with just Dr. Zigger, instead of living with the other Littles?*

Connecting Strategy: *If you have a headache at school, who helps you feel better? 1’s turn and tell your partner. (signal for students to return to you) At school, who helps you feel better? (unison oral response signal) “**School Nurse**” Yes, it is the school nurse. 2’s turn and tell your partner a different reason for going to the school nurse. (signal for students to*

Student Response in Blue

return to you) (call on several 1’s to state their partners’ responses)

Last week I went to the nurse’s office to get a flu shot. I know the nurse is the only person in the school who knows how to give flu shots. So I’m thinking that is a special skill no one else in the school can do. The school nurse must have learned how to give flu shots by going to a nursing school.

By using my background knowledge and experiences of going to the school nurse like; (repeat student responses), to get my eyes checked, having a bloody nose or an upset stomach, I’m thinking (gesture with finger pointing to head) if Aunt Lily wants to be a nurse, she would need to learn how to take care of people.

*Let’s reread page 14 together. Keep with my voice. When I stop reading, you stop reading. “**Dr. Zigger’s office was in his home. Aunt Lily learned how to be a nurse by reading the old medical books Dr. Zigger kept in the attic.**”*

Hmmmm! (gesture with finger pointing to head) What do I think is going on here in the story? I’m using my background knowledge of going to the school nurse when I need a flu shot and then rereading in the text that Aunt Lily learned how to be a nurse by reading Dr. Zigger’s old medical books.

*The author doesn’t tell me this, but I **infer** Aunt Lily isn’t living with the other Littles, so that she can learn how to be a nurse.*

Thumbs up if you agree.

Remember when we infer, we use our background knowledge and text clues.

Prompts in Green



**COLORADO DEPARTMENT
OF EDUCATION
COLORADO READING FIRST**

Literacy Grants and Initiatives
Colorado Reading First
201 East Colfax Avenue, Room 307
Denver, CO 80203
Dr. Debora L. Scheffel—Director
Sandra Nance—Reading First Coordinator

Phone: 303.866.6756

Fax: 303.866.3294

E-mail: Heiney_J@cde.state.co.us

WE ARE ON THE WEB!

[HTTP://WWW.CDE.STATE.CO.US/
COLORADOLITERACY/CRF/INDEX.HTM](http://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy/crf/index.htm)

PUT READING 1ST!

Colorado Reading First New Website

Colorado Reading First has a new home on the World Wide Web.

More content is being added weekly.

The current website hosts all CRF professional developments, webinars, and much, much more.

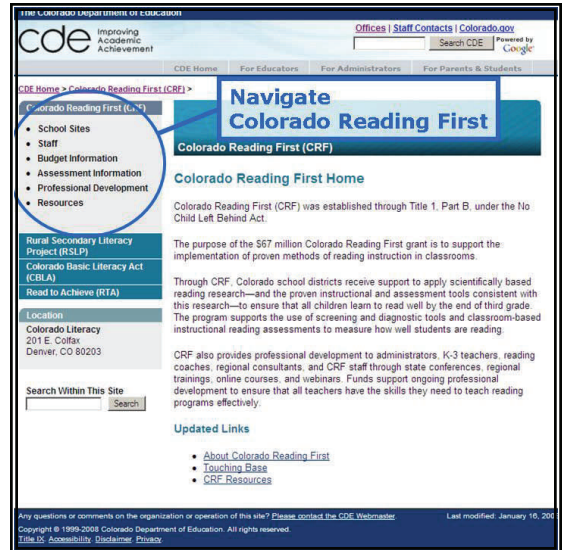
CRF intends for the new website to be both relevant and useful to CRF teachers, principals, coaches, and LEAs.

Please visit:

[http://www.cde.state.co.us/
coloradoliteracy/crf/
index.htm](http://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy/crf/index.htm)

We always welcome feedback. If you have questions, comments, concerns or complaints, please contact Jacob Heiney:

Heiney_J@cde.state.co.us



CRF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CALENDAR

February 2009



MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	S/SU
26	27	28	29	30	31/1
2 Leveraging Resources 2nd Session, Pueblo, CO	3 Leveraging Resources 2nd Session, Denver, CO	4 ELL 3rd Session, Denver, CO	5 ELL 3rd Session, Pueblo, CO	6 SPED 3rd Session, Colorado Springs, CO	7/8
9	10	11	12	13	14/15
16 President's Day	17	18 CRF Webinar, Denver, CO	19 New Staff Training, Denver, CO	20 New Staff Training, Pueblo, CO	21/22
23	24	25	26	27	28/1
2	3	4	5	6	7/8

CDE will be closed on February 16, 2009

President's Day