ON THE COVER: Special Feature

Balloons participating in the Bluff International Balloon Festival rise over the southeastern Utah landscape. Students from Bluff Elementary School, San Juan School District, learned about balloons through experiences with art, creative writing and science.

Call For Articles & Artwork

The Utah Special Educator accepts manuscripts, artwork and photographs on topics related to improving educational outcomes for school-age individuals with disabilities and learning challenges.

Submission guidelines and checklists for contributors are available online at http://www.updc.org/specialeducator/index.html. The editorial staff is dedicated to assisting contributors in the successful completion of manuscripts.

Please contact either Michael Herbert, Editor, michaelh@updc.org, or Ginny Eggen, Co-Editor ginnye@updc.org for consultation and assistance.

Phone 801-272-3431, or 800-662-6624 (in Utah)

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The purpose of The Utah Special Educator is to serve as a medium for the dissemination of information, promising practices and other dimensions in the provision of a Comprehensive System of Personnel Development. The Utah Special Educator is also available online. All views and opinions expressed represent the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of the Utah Personnel Development Center, the Utah Special Education Consortium, or the Utah State Office of Education. The Utah Personnel Development Center is a project funded through the Utah State Office of Education to the Utah Special Education Consortium for a Comprehensive System of Personnel Development.
LATE BREAKING NEWS!

Just in: the Utah State Office of Education has announced the appointment of Peggy Milligan as Special Education Coordinator to fill the position recently vacated by Nan Gray. Peggy will join the USOE as of June 5.

Ms. Milligan comes to the USOE from Murray School District, where she has served as At Risk Coordinator since 1996.
“Why did I become a teacher in the first place? What do I stand for as a teacher? What are the gifts I bring to my work? What do I want my legacy to be? What can I do to “keep track of myself”—to remember my own heart?” (Palmer, 1998)

Many years ago, I taught for one semester in Guadalajara, the second largest city in Mexico. I traveled everywhere by bus, partly because I had no personal transportation and little money to hire a cab. I was living with a family and it was the birthday of the Senõra, the lady of the house. I wanted to contribute to the celebration and purchased a large number of cut flowers at the Mercado. I knew I was in trouble getting them home the moment I queued up for the bus trip home. There was not a “line” as there might be here in the US, but more like a mob that rushed the door before the bus even stopped. Waiting for the next bus would be no better, so I pushed on. Packed in this sea of humanity, trying to protect my precious flowers was not easy and it was to be a long ride home. Another passenger asked what I was doing in the city and I mentioned that I was a teacher, and that the flowers were for my special Abuéla. Moments later, a very elderly white-haired woman with many packages sitting nearby called to me, “Profe, Profe (teacher, teacher)” and insisted that I take her seat. I refused, again and again, but to no avail. She was genuinely pleased to honor a teacher, and give something back. I almost cried, I was so touched. I was then, and continue to be humbled by individuals who value teachers and teaching.

We will never have enough money, we will never have enough resources, we will never have enough time, may never have the parents or students we wish we had, and may never be honored for the true contributions we make as educators. Contribute anyway. With every issue of the Educator, we honor teachers for the creative and effective programs and strategies that insure better outcomes for the children, adolescents and families that we serve. This special Celebration issue is no exception. Let us honor our peers and perhaps derive inspiration from honest teachers conducting their lives with work that matters. Honor your peers and read a story or two, and if possible, learn and replicate something to try in your own practice. Teaching is hard work; sometimes akin to running a marathon. By this time in the traditional school year, we teachers begin to feel the distance of the race, and focus on the “finish line.” As you may view the end in sight, take a moment to reflect on your own courage to teach, and on your courage to continue. Take some quality time to reflect and celebrate your accomplishments, large and small. It is true that some individuals may be the best in the world in something; teachers are the best FOR the world. This distinction is not insignificant.

“Education is the transmission of civilization.” –Will Durant

“Teaching is not a lost art, but the regard for it is a lost tradition.”
–Jacques Barzun

“Modern cynics and skeptics... see no harm in paying those to whom they entrust the minds of their children a smaller wage than is paid to those to whom they entrust the care of their plumbing.”
–John F. Kennedy

“If a doctor, lawyer, or dentist had 40 people in his office at one time, all of whom had different needs, and some of whom didn’t want to be there and were causing trouble, and the doctor, lawyer, or dentist, without assistance, had to treat them all with professional excellence for nine months, then he might have some conception of the classroom teacher’s job.” –Donald D. Quinn

“I like a teacher who gives you something to take home to think about besides homework.” –Lily Tomlin as “Edith Ann”

“The dream begins with a teacher who believes in you, who tugs and pushes and leads you to the next plateau, sometimes poking you with a sharp stick called “truth.” –Dan Rather

“I wish I could persuade every teacher to be proud of his occupation—not conceited or pompous, but proud. People who introduce themselves with the shame remark that they are, “just teachers,” gives me despair in my heart. Did you ever hear a lawyer say depreciatingly that he was only a patent attorney? Did you ever hear a physician say, “I am just a brain surgeon?” I beg of you to stop apologizing for being a member of the most important profession in the world. Draw yourself up to your full height, look at anybody squarely in the eye and say, “I am a Teacher.” –William Garr
One of the favorite videos that people in our office like to use in training is National Geographic’s “Everyday Creativity.” One of the essential points it makes is that being successful in a task requires a balance of passion for the work and cultivating the discipline of the craft through training and experience. As I work with educators throughout the state, I am amazed at countless educators who demonstrate this combination in their work of helping students.

Developing our Celebration Issue for the Utah Special Educator each year allows us to highlight individuals and programs that exemplify everyday creativity in action. We are delighted to share the efforts the staff and community at Bluff Elementary in San Juan School District have made to improve student outcomes. They generate enthusiasm for learning by making connections for students with the Bluff Balloon Festival.

In this issue Jane Golightly writes about two creative programs that Wasatch District teachers have developed to meet the needs of students. High school English Language Learners have been trained as peer tutors to assist elementary students in learning English in one, and junior high students have been guided in creating a business making cookies for teachers in the other. Both projects are examples of people meeting pressing needs with hard work and ingenuity.

In these times of increased accountability pressure there are concerns about how instruction in the arts will suffer. Several articles were submitted for this issue that demonstrate how important the arts can be for the well-being and intellectual development of students. We believe it is imperative that educators seek to maintain a balance between providing effective instruction in the 3 R’s and ensuring opportunities for learning in other areas such as art, social studies, science, music and physical education. This issue is dedicated to honoring people who are dedicated, energetic and creative about the business of education. We celebrate those who continue to develop both their expertise and passion.
Americans are generally supportive of “special education.” Educating disabled children so that they can live independent and satisfying lives appeals to our sense of fairness and responsibility.

But too often, special education inflicts harm by keeping children from reaching their potential. Instead of giving these students an extra hand, the special-education bureaucracy unnecessarily segregates them while passing them from one grade level to the next, irrespective of how well they’ve mastered material. The result is a system that creates in these students a crippling sense of helplessness and entitlement. This is certainly the case for the least well-defined subgroup of special-ed students, those designated learning disabled (LD).

Though the LD label is used for a wide array of learning problems, there is a thread that ties these diagnoses together: flawed “basic psychological processes,” which are required for spoken or written language. In other words, students who don’t listen, think, speak, or read on grade level are often labeled LD. Any number of disorders can cause a breakdown in listening, reading, or writing. Some, such as acute brain injury, are legitimate medical conditions that require special attention. Too frequently, however, the only problem a child has is that he or she never learned to read and write effectively in the lower grades. (The primary culprit here is trendy, “progressive” teaching methods.)
A child with poor reading skills finds learning increasingly difficult beginning in third or fourth grade, when school shifts from learning basic skills to acquiring knowledge in various content areas. Struggling readers hit a performance wall over the next few grades and experience failure in class after class. Significantly, many of these students become disruptive and disinterested (especially boys), and/or they withdraw (especially girls). These behaviors, and the poor performance driving them, most often appear at ages 10-12, when children are tested for LD.

Unfortunately, the tests used to diagnose LD aren’t designed to recognize reading deficiencies. Many of them are built on the “discrepancy model,” which measures individual intellectual ability and achievement to determine if a “severe” gap exists between the student’s ability and achievement. In short, before a reading problem is diagnosed, students must establish a record of “low achievement” (i.e., failing) before anyone bothers to ask why they are not learning.

In 2002, the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (NJCLD) recommended abandoning the ability-achievement-discrepancy classification method because of the problematic measurement and conceptual problems surrounding it. Nevertheless, it’s still the basis for LD classification in most educational jurisdictions. The latest version of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) made some progress on this front, allowing (though not requiring) states to move away from the discrepancy model and supporting early identification and intervention. Unfortunately, the U.S. Department of Education has failed to complete the law’s regulations, so the old, flawed method marches on.

The co-occurrence of serious reading difficulties with LD classification raises a fundamental question: What is the root cause of these students’ difficulties? In a very real way, classifying as LD a struggling reader who has fallen behind in academic performance (using the discrepancy model described earlier) is little more than an institutionalized way to escape the fundamental question: Is the student legitimately handicapped, or just incapable of reading well? In addition, because special education places no meaningful emphasis on remediation, but rather on “accommodation” to help students progress to subsequent grades, a high proportion of LD students never acquires effective reading skills.

Interventions for struggling readers that produce significant and comparable performance-improvement results for both “disabled” students (classified as LD) and general-education students are readily available. A growing body of research on these interventions clearly locates the cause of reading difficulties (and consequent academic underperformance) in the child’s educational experiences, and not in something deficient in the child. In other words, the child’s capacity to learn to read is not the problem.

This is not an indictment of special-ed teachers (I’m one of them, after all), who work under oftentimes outrageous institutional constraints imposed by public education. Instead, it’s an indictment of a system that has refused to measure and test students adequately.

NCLB is helping. Special education students are now required to participate in statewide testing to determine whether schools are making “adequate” progress and performing effectively. The system is far from perfect. But the test has administrators demanding that special education teachers immediately address (and solve) the academic performance shortfall of their students. Rather than resisting the expectation that students must be measured against the same standards, educators might more productively argue that because many special ed students have been left behind, school officials should be prepared to accept responsibility for working with these students to meet the standards, but on an appropriately modified timetable.

A clear-eyed assessment of special education shows that it is bedeviled by the same cultural and institutional constraints that explain the inadequate performance of public education in general. Special education is an extreme example of the shortcomings of public education as a whole. Resources are squandered because of a general lack of accountability, a preoccupation with process rather than results, and a hostility to change and innovation. These shortcomings reduce the chances for millions of children to complete public school with the skills and capabilities to live independent, productive lives.

Jim Williams is a former business executive turned special education teacher, now teaching in northern Virginia.
The editorial team of the Utah Special Educator is dedicated to offering the best of WHAT WORKS, in both breadth and depth. This month, we take great pride in “going deep” and presenting this special feature on Zig Engelmann to our readers. No single instructional approach or program has been as extensively researched and written about as Direct Instruction. Use the phrase “Direct Instruction” or “DI” in the midst of veteran teachers and you are sure to get strong and immediate reactions. Those who know it best and use it love it; many who do not use it hate it; but few are ambivalent and without an opinion. Just what is this DI thing anyway, and why should educators care? The real question should be, “Are we serious about helping ALL kids?” If the answer is an honest YES, and if we adopt the WHATEVER IT TAKES approach, then we need to know about this seminal work and the man behind it. Any discussion of Responsiveness to Intervention (RtI), requiring the application of “scientifically-evidenced, research-based instruction” is incomplete without the background knowledge and research of DI and the work of its main author. From an unpublished manuscript, Zig Engelmann talks about the humanistic philosophy behind his work.

“Here’s to the crazy ones, the misfits, the rebels, the troublemakers, the round pegs in square holes, the ones that see things differently. They are not fond of rules, and they have no respect for the status quo. You can quote them, disagree with them, glorify them or vilify them. About the only thing you can’t do is ignore them, because they change things. They push the human race forward. And while some may see them as the crazy ones, we see genius. Because the people who are crazy enough to think that they can change the world...are the ones who do.”

(Excerpt from an Apple commercial)
In Zig Engelmann’s words:

After we lay out a series of activities for teaching the subject, we have a choice. We can either say, “We’re done. The program is completed, and it will work,” or we can try out our rough-draft product in the classroom. We’ll choose the latter alternative because we have some concern for the kids, and we’re not arrogant enough to assume that the sequence we created in the sterile confines of our office will automatically translate into lively, effective instruction in the classroom.

If we are humanists, we begin with the obvious fact that the children we work with are perfectly capable of learning anything that we have to teach. We further recognize that we should be able to engineer the learning so that it is reinforcing—perhaps not “fun,” but challenging and engaging. We then proceed to do it—not to continue talking about it. We try to control these variables that are potentially within our control so that they facilitate learning. We train the teacher, design the program, work out a reasonable daily schedule, and leave NOTHING TO CHANCE. We monitor and we respond quickly to problems. We respond quickly and effectively because we consider the problems moral and we conceive of ourselves as providing a uniquely important function—particularly for those children who would most certainly fail without our concerted help. We function as advocates for the children, with the understanding that if we fail, the children will be seriously pre-empted from doing things with their lives, such as having important career options and achieving some potential values for society. We should respond to inadequate teaching as we would to problems of physical abuse. Just as our sense of humanity would not permit us to allow child abuse in the physical sense, we should not tolerate it in the cognitive setting. We should be intolerant because we know what can be achieved if children are taught appropriately. We know that the intellectual crippling of children is caused overwhelmingly by faulty instruction—not by faulty children.

Because of these convictions, we have little tolerance for traditional educational establishments. We feel that they must be changed so they achieve the goals of actually helping all children.

This call for humanity can be expressed on two levels. On that of society: Let’s stop wasting incredible human potential through unenlightened practices and theories.

On the level of children: Let’s recognize the incredible potential for being intelligent and creative possessed by even the least impressive children, and with unyielding passion. Let’s pursue the goal of assuring that this potential becomes reality.

Readers are highly encouraged to read a longer contribution from Zig, entitled “Education’s Disregard for At Risk Students,” as a special additional feature to this issue of the Utah Special Educator, available online at: www.updc.org/library/speducator/index.html

Enjoy!
A Time of Change

The mid-1960s was a time of deep national unrest. The War on Poverty and the concern for the war in Vietnam were two examples. There were other national concerns. In 1966, Burton Blatt published a photographic essay: Christmas in Purgatory. This provided a searing portrait of life in a mental institution and brought national attention to the abuse of people with mental retardation who were committed to America’s institutions. Nationally, a “deinstitutionalization” effort had begun, and parents and service agencies were developing programs to support persons with mental disabilities in local communities. The ten years from 1965 to 1975 were the “Wild West” years of community-based services for persons with mental disabilities. This was a time when the institutionalization option was questioned—but before the federal and state laws of 1976 mandated that public education accept instructional program responsibilities for children and young adults considered “handicapped.”

In the late 1960s the University of Oregon and the Pearl Buck Center in Eugene, Oregon, initiated a model program to provide educational and vocational services for teenagers and young adults considered “mentally disabled.” The Pearl Buck Center was founded for children with disabilities by a holocaust refugee, Elizabeth Waechter, in 1953. While serving as the first program coordinator for teenage and adult services in 1968, I realized that many clients had spent their lives in a state institution, receiving no academic or vocational instruction. Those with an IQ of 25 to 50 were considered “non-educable” or “trainable.” For the person classified as “trainable,” the possibility of achieving any level of

Zig Engelmann:
A Passion for “What Works”
vocational or recreational literacy was rarely suggested by educational leaders of the period. One teacher textbook printed in 1965 included the following very explicit statement to new special education teachers:

“Do not attempt to teach trainable children to read by means of phonics. It is a waste of time and effort. The concept and application of phonics requires a greater amount of intellectual capacity than these youngsters possess. It is entirely too abstract to grasp. One might as well teach them the theory of numbers. It can’t be done.”

**It Can’t Be Done: Reality or Challenge?**

In 1968, with some financial support for instructional materials from the University of Oregon’s Northwest Regional Special Education Instructional Materials Center, a reading program was initiated for teenage and young adult Pearl Buck clients. Two reading programs were available to us. One was a Project Follow Through program, known then as DISTAR (Direct Instruction System for Teaching and Remediation). The reading instruction component of DISTAR is now known as Reading Mastery, and is published by SRA. We acquired a well-worn set of purple ditto copies that provided an instructional script. At that time, my only knowledge of Zig Engelmann was that of the senior author, employed at the University of Illinois. The other program, The Sullivan Reading Program, was then published by Behavioral Research Laboratories of Palo Alto. The DISTAR program used intensive, direct, oral instruction in small groups. Many of the Pearl Buck Center clients lacked the expressive oral language, and other behaviors needed to participate in any systematic group instruction, or other individual seated activities. The selected reading intervention was a combination of the two programs:

The Sullivan student materials served as extra practice materials and a measure of the degree to which the DISTAR program would generalize. The DISTAR curriculum sequence and teaching procedures provided the core of the program. We were not concerned with finding the best reading program. The research question was: “Can we teach reading to this population with ANY instructional program?” An initial formative test of the prototype program was conducted with five clients. Contrary to the prevailing professional predictions of the time, there was clear evidence of client progress.

The reading instruction was then expanded to 22 teenage and young adult clients of the Pearl Buck Center. This group had IQ scores ranging from 25 to 47. The question of instructional concern was: “What are the academic and social prerequisites needed to participate in the selected instructional program?” Of all the prerequisite skills, the most important were the academic skills involved in “sound-symbol” relationships. For all practical purposes, the client who could learn the letter names or sounds for the letter symbols could succeed in the reading program. After four weeks, 11 of the 22 students mastered basic sound-symbol skills and required less reteaching as they progressed through the program. The IQ scores which had initially condemned this population to lifelong institutionalization had no significant relationship to reading success. Indeed, the correlation between reading success and I.Q. was slightly negative at -0.11. In contrast, one available measure of sound-symbol skills, the “letter-naming” subtest on the Wide Range Reading and Arithmetic Test (WRAT), showed a very practical relationship of 0.78. Client success continued, and several of the group became avid recreational readers.

For the clients, their parents, and those of us involved in designing and delivering the reading instruction, the implications were positive and lifelong. Contrary to the predictions of the experts, there WAS much that could be done. To break through the ceiling set by IQ scores and “expert opinions,” teachers were needed who cared enough to acquire technical competence, and who had access to a reading program developed by someone who successfully applied the science of instructional design. For us, that “someone” was Sigfried Engelmann. “Zig” resolved the confusion between the traditional psychological assessments of the time, and the science of instruction. For me, I was totally amazed by the fact that not only were the clients achieving vocational and recreational literacy skills, but the further most clients advanced in the reading program, the less reteaching was required to achieve the curriculum-embedded milestones. That finding was a major tribute to the instructional designer—Zig.

When I accepted employment at Utah State University (USU) in the summer of 1969, I found the same confusion between traditional psychological assessment and the science of effective, valid instruction. This confusion led to invalid and pessimistic client treatments and instructional projections based on psychological tests and labels such as “trainable.” To give a valid instructional identity to USU’s Special Education Department, the faculty turned to Zig Engelmann for guidance in the design of theoretical and practicum experiences. We found, in Zig, a rare and special blend of passion for serving the most vulnerable students and a deep respect for the science of instruction.

I can think of so many valuable lessons I learned from the “Zig” experience that helped shape my work and increased my expectations of students and teachers. In his own words, Zig shared the following about Direct Instruction:

“The philosophy behind the program is basically simple. We say in effect, “Kid, it doesn’t matter how miserably your environment has failed to teach you the basic concepts that the average five-year-old has long since mastered. We’re not going to fail you. We’re not going to discriminate against you, or give up on you, regardless of how unready you may be according to traditional standards. We are not going to label you with a handle, such as dyslexic or brain-damaged, and feel that we have now exonerated ourselves from the responsibility of teaching you. We’re not going to punish you by requiring you to do things you can’t do. We’re not going to talk about your difficulties to learn. Rather, we will take you where you are, and we’ll teach you. And the extent to which we fail is our failure, not yours. We will not cop out by saying, “He can’t learn.” Rather, we will say, “I failed to teach him. So I better take a good look at what I did and try to figure out a better way.” (Zig Engelmann, unpublished)

On behalf of the many teachers and students who benefited over the past 36 years—Thanks, Zig. If the ten-year period from 1965 to 1975 was the “Wild West” of special education services, then Zig was our “Wyatt Earp!”
My first exposure to Direct Instruction was during a required “reading” class (from another department) for special education certification in graduate school. Students were required to examine and report on different reading curricula, and I was assigned to review SRA reading materials. We were given a rubric to aid in our work, a series of questions like: Program name, publisher name and contact information, brief description of curriculum, who/what population(s), grades was the curriculum recommended for, cost of materials, durability of materials and program advantages and disadvantages.

This was easy. I completed this assignment with little difficulty by obtaining an SRA catalogue and filling in the blanks in the assignment rubric. I recall listing advantages such as cost, durability of materials, comprehensive teacher and student materials and high engagement of students. For disadvantages, I asked experienced teachers and University faculty for input. Teachers commented that they were somewhat familiar with the SRA materials, but felt that the program was “too scripted,” and that they felt “stifled” or “constrained” and “bored” in keeping to such a rigid script. One of my faculty mentors told me that Direct Instruction might help struggling readers to learn in their first weeks of remediation, but that the learning curves of students using DI fell off sharply after the initial positive period. Neither the students nor the professor challenged my report or inquired in any way about the effectiveness of the curriculum or instructional approach. Research regarding program effectiveness was never mentioned. So much for my graduate level, scientifically evidenced, pre-service training in how to teach reading.

My next exposure to DI was a short time later, in my first year of teaching while completing certification courses. I inherited very little in the way of reading curriculum; actually only those ancient materials that the previous special education teacher never used and left in the classroom. I immediately realized that I needed curriculum help and was invited to help myself to what was available from the district storeroom. What I found, and what I took was SRA reading and math materials. There was a lot to choose from, as it was explained to me that “these used to be popular, but many teachers do not use them anymore.” Although I had the curriculum, I lacked the research base, the WHY of Direct Instruction, and no training for teaching or using it was available. I recall using the SRA materials, but I am sure not in the systematic, explicit way that they were designed. So much for on-the-job training in how to teach reading and math.

It has been said that we regret more of what we did not do, and less of what we did. From what I now know, I regret not asking for more direct help that first year, and for not expecting more from myself and from students. My self-critique for my first year of teaching: diagnosis=dysteachia. I did not know what I did not know. What I needed to know, and what would have made more of a difference in outcomes for students was the bigger picture and the research on WHAT WORKS.

The Search for Best Practice, Round One

In 1967, the federal government commissioned the largest and most scientific study of instructional methodology ever. The purpose was to identify instructional programs that would significantly reduce the discrepancy between high and low performing students, and help break the cycle of poverty prevalent in students from families living in poverty. Project Follow Through (PFT) followed 700,000 students in 170 socio-economically disadvantaged communities for nearly eighteen years, and cost one billion dollars. In the first ten years, PFT worked with 180 different and diverse school sites with rich and poor, urban and rural, English proficient students and English Language Learners.

The reading portion of PFT involved 15,000 students and examined three education methods within three major categories; 1. Basic Skills, 2. Cognitive/Conceptual, and 3. Affective. Option 1: Basic Skills emphasized Behavior Reinforcement, Direct Instruction and Language
Development. Option 2: emphasized Cognitively-Oriented Curriculum, Parent Education, and Self-Directed Literature. The Affective Skills Model, Option 3: advocated for the Learning Center Approach, Open Education, and Self-Esteem Building. Two independent organizations analyzed the results. Each of the models was compared to its local control group and to the combined control groups of the three models. Figure 1. Illustrates the results of Project Follow Through. One of the Project Follow Through reviewers commenting on the results stated:

“Educational reformers search for programs that produce superior outcomes with at-risk children, that are replicable and can therefore be implemented reliably in given settings, and that can be used as a basis for a whole school implementation that involves all students in a single program sequence, and that result in students feeling good about themselves. The Follow Through data confirms that Direct Instruction has these features. The program works across various sites and types of children (urban blacks, rural populations, and non-English speaking students). It produces positive achievement benefits in all subject areas—reading, language, math, and spelling. It produces superior results for basic skills and for higher-order cognitive skills in reading and math. It produces the strongest positive self-esteem of the Follow Through programs.”

**Best Practice or Malpractice?**

As you examine figure 2, imagine for a moment that the figure represents the results of a longitudinal study of medical interventions for the treatment of cancer. Imagine that the instructional models listed on the left axis of the figure represent medical treatments, such as chemotherapy, radiation, surgery, etc. Some interventions evidence strong positive results, some neutral and some evidence negative results. If considering which intervention to pursue for a loved one, which might you consider? If your personal physician advocated for one of the treatments near the bottom (negative treatment), would you proceed blindly or pursue a second opinion? What role might research play in your decision? Is the educational well being of a loved one, a son or daughter, any less important to a parent than physical health?

**Best Practice, Round Two**

In 1999, the American Institutes for Research (co-sponsor of the What Works Clearinghouse) published the results of a comprehensive study that compared twenty-five curricula often associated with comprehensive school reform efforts. The National Education Association (NEA), and the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) commissioned this study jointly. Results were based on review of studies, articles, books and material published regarding each approach. Part of the official guide and review of the findings offered the following:

“This guide is about separating real solutions—or at least programs with a track record for improving student achievement—from solutions that might work. Only three of the approaches examined: 1. Direct Instruction, 2. High Schools That Work, and 3. Success for All provide strong evidence that they positively impact student achievement. For many of the approaches, surprisingly, there’s little evidence one way or another on whether they help students achieve. Others haven’t done so even though they’ve been used by schools for years.”

**Best Practice, Round Three**

What Works In Schools; Translating Research Into Action (Marzano, 2003) examined and published an extensive meta-analysis of educational research studies published in the past thirty-five years. Marzano’s analyses confirmed findings of the two research studies mentioned. For example, it found little correlation between achievement potential and low socioeconomic status. It correlated data and reported scientifically researched conclusions in three areas: 1. School level factors, 2. Student level factors, and 3. Teacher level related factors. All were significant, but of the three, teacher related factors had the single, greatest impact on student achievement. In plain language, it found that TEACHERS MATTER MOST! Most effective teachers were characterized by Marzano as being very proficient in: 1. Instructional strategies, 2. Classroom management, and 3. Classroom curriculum design. All other variables remaining constant, the cumulative effects over three years between students with least effective verses most effective teachers is as follows:

- Average school, average student, least effective teacher = 29 % gain over three years
- Average school, average student, most effective teacher = 83 % gain over three years.

Haycock (1998) commented that:

“Differences of this magnitude—50 percentile points—are stunning. As all of us know only too well, they can represent the differences between a "remedial" label and placement in the “accelerated” or even “gifted” track. And the difference between entry into a selective college and a lifetime at McDonald’s (p.4).”

Continued on page 14

**Figure 1**

**PERCENTILE SCORES**

Across nine Follow Through models

- **Reading**
- **Math**
- **Spelling**
- **Language**

Source: Educational Achievement Systems

**Figure 1**
For a moment, take off your educator hat and put on your parent hat. Which teacher would you want for YOUR child? When students fail, is it more likely due to curriculum casualty (poor curriculum), dysteachia or a combination of both? Direct Instruction incorporates all significant research identified factors associated with high student achievement, and has the positive numbers from over forty years to substantiate this claim.

If educators agree with anything, it is that improved educational outcomes enrich the lives of the students and families that we serve. The challenge for special education personnel is to teach the hardest to teach, hardest to reach kids twice as much in half the time. For some reason, our field periodically attempts to reinvent what works in education based on intuition and models conceptualized by “experts.” We teachers complain that we have little time to do all that we are asked (true enough), yet, perhaps, many of our practices within our control do not maximize teacher/student learning opportunities. Are we getting the most bang for our teaching buck, and if not, why? Why is it that many of the same voices that loudly complain about low achievement test scores place even more emphasis (and funding) on even more testing and less on teacher training and effective practices? Is education incapable of learning from its own history?

“Insanity is doing the same thing in the same way & expecting a different outcome” (Chinese proverb)
After principal Eric Mahmoud introduced a new curriculum at Harvest Preparatory, a Minneapolis elementary school that serves many children from poor families, test scores shot up. Kindergartners, whose reading results had been at about the national average, were now in the 89th percentile.

The new curriculum that proved so effective at Harvest Prep was actually a venerable program with a remarkable record of success. It is called Direct Instruction, and if you haven’t heard about it, the reason may be that the nation’s education schools don’t want you to. In their view, Direct Instruction is pedagogically incorrect. Direct Instruction teachers, operating from detailed scripts, tell kids what they need to know, rather than letting them discover it for themselves, as ed schools advise. Direct Instruction teachers drill students on lessons (a method education professors sneeringly call “drill and kill”). They reward right answers and immediately correct wrong ones, flying in the face of ed-school dogma downplaying the importance of accuracy.

How well Direct Instruction works first became evident in 1977, when the results of Project Follow Through, a huge educational experiment undertaken by the federal government, were made public. Kindergartners through third-graders who were taught by Direct Instruction scored higher in reading and math than children in any other instructional model. The Direct Instruction children not only proved superior at academics, but also scored higher on “affective” measures like self-esteem than did children in most other programs—several of which were specifically directed toward making children feel good about themselves.

The acolytes of John Dewey and Jean Piaget immediately went on the attack. Spurred on by the Ford Foundation, one group declared in the Harvard Educational Review that it simply wasn’t fair to judge a program according to how well it taught children to read and calculate. After all, the program might have other goals, such as developing “a repertoire of abilities for building a broad and varied experiential base.” An education professor from the University of Illinois weighed in with an essay condemning the Follow Through evaluation as too scientific. “Teachers do not heed the statistical findings of experiments when deciding how best to educate children,” he wrote, nor should they be influenced by what “the rationality of science has to say about a given educational approach.”

The attacks were effective. Instead of highlighting Direct Instruction’s success, the Office of Education (predecessor of the Department of Education) disseminated data on other models as well, including some that had resulted in students having lower scores than control groups. At the University of Oregon, the only education school willing to give Direct Instruction a home, the developer of the program, Siegfried Engelmann, and his colleagues continued to refine their approach and gather evidence of how well it worked. But in 1998, there were only 150 Direct Instruction schools in the U.S.

A major hindrance has been that colleges of education do not teach future teachers and administrators about Direct Instruction; they have learned about it through happenstance. Thaddeus Lott, the principal of Wesley Elementary School in Houston, was searching for a program for the kids at his school, located in one of the city’s poorest neighborhoods, when he chanced upon a book by Mr. Engelmann. Mr. Lott instituted Direct Instruction at Wesley, and for more than two decades his students have been distinguishing themselves, producing test scores that put Wesley in the top ranks. Mr. Mahmoud happened to hear of Mr. Lott’s success at Wesley—to the benefit of hundreds of Minneapolis children.

And still the ed schools continue their not-so-benign neglect. In recently reviewing dozens of textbooks used to teach future teachers, I found exactly one mention of Direct Instruction, a reference a few sentences long that described it as “prescriptive.” A teacher at Mr. Lott’s school, Brandi Scott, a recent graduate of the University of Houston, told me that her request to practice-teach at Wesley was initially refused by the college of education. Only after her father, a prominent Houston attorney, got involved was a plan worked out that let her do half her practice teaching at the school.

A recent report by the American Institutes for Research offers hope to those who think that ed-school silence on Direct Instruction should end. The report found that Direct Instruction was one of only two educational approaches with strong evidence of positive effect, a conclusion hard to ignore. Equally important, one of the report’s sponsors was the National Education Association. If an organization as notoriously intransigent as the NEA can help bring recognition to Direct Instruction, perhaps at long last there is the possibility of persuading ed schools to give it the attention it deserves.

Lynne V. Cheney is a fellow at the American Enterprise Institute. This commentary first appeared in the Wall Street Journal, May 12, 1999.
We wrote this article to recognize Siegfried Engelmann and his contributions towards improving the academic success of all students. These reading progress results of students in most Bureau of Indian Affairs’ Reading First schools are built on Zig’s theories and programs. We felt the best way to honor Zig would be to show what the impact of his contributions mean to students and teachers, and the communities in which they live.

Linda Carnine, Carnine & Associates & Catherine Callow-Heusser, EndVision Research & Evaluation

Recent national reports present dismal reading outcomes for many Native American students. Findings from the 2003 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP; NCES, 2005) indicate that only 18% of Native American 4th graders read at or above proficient levels compared to 39% of all 4th grade students assessed in the U.S. Eighteen percent of Native American students read at or above proficient in 8th grade, while nationally, 35% of all 8th graders scored at or above proficient levels on NAEP assessments.

Yet, during the Follow Through project of the late 60’s and 70’s, successful implementations of Direct Instruction (DI) programs in reading, language and mathematics brought Native American students to grade level by the end of third grade as measured by standardized tests. In Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and Tribally managed schools in impoverished areas of North Carolina and South Dakota, DI implementations demonstrated that children continued to perform almost as well as their middle class peers if they began appropriate academic instruction in kindergarten. Native American students in Cherokee, North Carolina, developed critical early literacy skills in kindergarten and first grade and transferred these decoding skills to new and difficult words while maintaining over 97% accuracy in reading contextual passages. Additionally, these students continued to develop both fluency and accuracy as they gradually gained skill in using contextual cues in reading passages to figure out new and difficult words (Carnine, 1984).

Research in reading over the last 30 years has verified these early literacy skills as the cornerstones for early literacy development (McCardle & Chiabra, 2004; NICHD, 2000) and the basis of the Reading First tenets: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension. More than three decades ago, Engelmann (Adams & Engelmann, 1996) identified these tenets in his analysis of the elements required for students to succeed in learning to read. Engelmann’s early DI reading and language programs incorporated these five critical components in systematic and explicit instruction. Recently the American Institute for Research (2005) found Direct Instruction reading to be one of the two programs with substantial evidence of effectiveness for teaching reading. And once again, DI reading and language programs are producing powerful results in BIA Reading First schools. This time the power of these programs, which are revised versions of the same DI programs that were used in the 70’s, is evident in Nay Ah Shing, Minnesota; Cibecue and Chinle, Arizona; and Alamo Navajo, New Mexico, as well as many other BIA Reading First schools using the DI Reading Mastery and Language programs with their most intensive students.

Starting with some of the highest needs in the BIA system, these BIA Reading First schools made substantial reading progress. The Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy (DIBELS) scores for entering kindergarteners indicated that these schools had high relative risk factors compared to most schools, because most kindergartners entered needing intensive intervention. Children knew few if any letter names and demonstrated weak language skills. Additionally, they showed poor phonemic awareness, e.g., the ability to manipulate sounds in speech, which is a skill necessary for early literacy development. Many of these students lived in impoverished communities that were geographically isolated and entered school learning English as a second language, placing them at even higher risk for reading failure.

These four BIA Reading First schools adopted Reading Mastery as either their core program, or as with Alamo Navajo, the primary program for most of their children. Their decision to adopt DI Reading Mastery and Language programs was a bold one. These schools recognized they had a large number of students with intensive needs and chose curriculum materials that more closely aligned with these needs. On the other hand, most BIA Reading First schools chose reading curriculum materials more like what they had been using, namely more traditional core reading programs designed for grade level students.

Given the low performance of these schools prior to Reading First, and the many factors that have historically impeded students’ success, let’s take a closer look at the extraordinary effects of a successful “beat-the-odds” implementation. Nay Ah Shing School, located in central Minnesota, is Tribally operated by the Mille Lacs Band of the Ojibwe. Most students are bussed to school with some traveling great distances. Like many BIA schools throughout the country, Nay Ah Shing has a small student population in Reading First grades, i.e., 78 students in kindergarten through third grade. Nay Ah Shing School had one of the highest proportions of at-risk children entering kindergarten for the 2004-2005 school year, as shown in Figure 1. In this most challenging of contexts, over 55% of the kindergarteners enrolled in the school performed poorly on the DIBELS beginning-of-year benchmark assessments.

Yet, Nay Ah Shing School had all four pillars identified for Reading First in place: (a) strong leadership and effective reading coaching from a local teacher hired for the coach position, (b) strong professional development with additional technical assistance provided regularly through external consultants, (c) scientifically-based reading programs, with Reading Mastery as the core reading program and Reading for All
Success: Using Reading Mastery in Bureau of Indian Affairs’ Reading First Schools

Learners as a supplemental program, and (d) consistent use of progress monitoring data to guide instructional decision making. Nay Ah Shing added double- and triple-dosing time to provide additional intervention for those children who were significantly below grade level. By the end of the 2004-2005 school year, 70% of the students at Nay Ah Shing made progress (based on a matched sample of students who were assessed at both the beginning and end of year). Students who made progress (a) were reading at Benchmark on the DIBELS assessments at the end of the school year, or (b) started the year with DIBELS scores indicating they needed intensive intervention and moved to Strategic by the end of the year. (In comparison an average of 45% of the BIA Reading First students made progress during this year.) Additionally, 85% of Nay Ah Shing’s kindergartners made progress—with three fourths reading on grade level (see Figure 2 on page 19).

Alamo Navajo had the highest number of at risk children in the entire BIA system on test results gathered the year prior to beginning the Reading First implementation, with 68% of the students significantly below grade level at the beginning of the 2004-2005 school year. Additionally, students’ scores on the 2003-2004 SAT-10 placed only one of 69 first, second and third grade students at grade level. At Chinle Boarding School, approximately 49% of the K-3 students were significantly below grade level based on the DIBELS beginning-of-year benchmark scores. While only 36% of the students at Cibecue Community School entered at high risk, their beginning-of-year assessments occurred after students had been in school for nearly two months, and even at that time, fewer than 10% of kindergartners performed at grade level with nearly 40% needing intensive intervention. If the pre-testing had occurred during the first weeks of school, it is likely that a much higher proportion of the entering kindergarteners would have fallen into the “intensive needs” category.

Although schools at Cibecue, Alamo Navajo, and Chinle did not perform as well as Nay Ah Shing during the initial year of Reading First implementation, improvements in factors related to the four pillars of Reading First increased students’ success in the first half of the 2005-2006 school year. Chinle Boarding School began the first year without strong instructional leadership in place. The principal was not able to be on site for a substantial number of days during the year, and the reading coach took medical leave the second month of school and remained on leave most of the year. Additionally, class sizes at Chinle are among the

Continued on page 18
largest of all BIA Reading First schools, and with few aides, the result was a high student-to-adult ratio. Part way through the 2004-2005 school year, this school received excellent technical assistance from Thaddeus Lott’s company, Keys to Learning, but too much instructional time had been lost. Only 33% of the K-3 students made progress during the 2004-2005 school year. However, this year the leadership component evolved and improved, Reading Mastery was implemented in all K-3 classrooms, and continued technical assistance has been provided through Keys to Learning. Mid year progress on the DIBELS benchmark assessments (Winter, 2006) showed nearly 60% of Chinle’s students making adequate progress. Clearly, more involved instructional leadership and implementation in all classrooms provided a foundation for Reading Mastery to help students succeed.

During 2001-2002, Fort Apache Agency which includes Cibecue Community Schools was considered the least effective of the 23 BIA agencies in terms of instruction. No students read at grade level, and the typical high school graduate left school five grade levels below the national average-if they graduated at all. Teenage suicide rates were three times the national average, and community unemployment was nearly 70%.

In 2002, Superintendent Kevin Skenandore worked with Dr. Alan Hofmeister from Utah State University (USU) to begin implementing the Reading for All Learners program in kindergarten and first grade at Cibecue. When the Reading First grant opportunity arose, they added Reading Mastery as the core reading program for kindergarten through third grades. Although Cibecue has also experienced changes in leadership (i.e., both principal and reading coach) under Reading First, they have built on continued support from powerful outside technical assistance provided through USU and Cache School District staff. Additionally, paraprofessionals from the community were trained to implement Reading Mastery, which helped decrease the size of instructional groups and increased capacity for employment within the community. Cibecue Community School within the Fort Apache Agency also experienced dramatic increases in reading achievement, particularly during the first half of the 2005-2006 school year, with 70% of K-3 students making progress.

With a new principal and reading coach, Alamo Navajo implemented a more traditional core reading program under Reading First during the 2004-2005 school year. Alamo Navajo Community School began the school year with the highest relative risk factor based on 68% of their K-3 students needing intensive intervention. After 2/3 of a year of instruction with a traditional basal program, the DIBELS mid-year benchmark schools indicated that the number of students needing intensive intervention had increased to nearly 75%! By March, Alamo Navajo implemented Reading Mastery with students in most classrooms, leaving only three months in the school year to “catch up” with teachers who had not previously taught with Reading Mastery. Alamo Navajo ended the school year with only 26% percent of their K-3 students making progress. Prior to the 2005-2006 school year, five of the nine K-3 teachers at Alamo Navajo were replaced, K-12 reading goals were aligned, and reading was established as a priority in the community. Consistent instructional leadership, strong technical assistance, regular progress monitoring using the DIBELS assessments, and teachers who adjusted instruction to ensure success through regular review of the DIBELS data resulted in strong implementation of Reading Mastery. These efforts changed students’ trajectories and over 47% of students made progress based on the middle-of-year DIBELS benchmark assessment. Since then, progress monitoring data indicate that Alamo Navajo will end this school year with even greater success.

Increases in student success at these schools were related to the fidelity of implementation of the reading program and use of effective teaching practices. Aggregate ratings for these measures based on classroom observations conducted by EndVision Research and Evaluation in Logan, Utah, were calculated, and of the 24 BIA Reading First schools, Nay Ah Shing’s averages were the highest of the schools on fidelity of implementation and second highest on use of effective teaching practices. Additionally, almost 50% of the variance in school-level student progress at Nay Ah Shing was associated with the ratings of implementation and effective teaching. Using the percent student progress as the dependent variable, and average implementation and effective teaching ratings for each school as the independent variables, regression analysis showed that the amount of variance explained in student progress by these two ratings was 0.49 (adjusted R2, F = 10.061, p < .001).

Another way to look at Nay Ah Shing’s success is through relative risk and odds ratios statistics, which give an indication of effect size. Nay Ah Shing’s odds ratio for changes in the DIBELS instructional recommendation from the beginning to the end of the 2004-2005 school year was 4.5. This means that a child pulled randomly from the sample was 4.5 times more likely to be at Benchmark at the end of the school year than at the beginning. Additionally, the relative risk for a child ending the year at Benchmark was greater than 2.1, indicating that the number of students completing the year at Benchmark was greater than two times the number starting at Benchmark. The following table shows the grade level values for the odds ratio and relative risk statistics.

**Table 1:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall K-3</th>
<th>Odds Ratio</th>
<th>Relative Risk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alamo Navajo</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinle</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cibecue</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Similar analyses will be conducted for all BIA Reading First schools, but a cursory analysis indicated that at these four schools, ratings of effective teaching improved as fidelity of implementation of Reading Mastery increased (i.e., on a 5-point scale, aggregate ratings of effective teaching changed from 2.5 to 3.9 at Alamo Navajo while fidelity of implementation increased from poor to fair/high). Clearly, implementations of Reading Mastery affected teacher quality, as measured by increased frequency of teacher-student interaction and use of questioning strategies, better modeling of concepts, improved academic feedback, increased student engagement, and greater use of specific positive feedback to manage student behavior, among other indicators of effective teaching. Relative risk and odds ratios for Alamo Navajo, Chinle, and Cibecue schools are displayed in table 2.

**Table 2:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Odds Ratio</th>
<th>Relative Risk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nay Ah Shing K-3</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>24.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First grade</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second grade</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third grade</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings from teacher interviews and surveys indicate that teachers attribute their successful implementation and increases in teacher quality to the Reading Mastery program. As one teacher said, “Reading Mastery has taught me how to teach and given me confidence! Now, I know how to model for students, pace lessons, keep students engaged and actively participating, and give praise. I know how to teach reading, and I can use these same skills when I teach math and other subjects.” If the goals of Reading First are to be sustained beyond funding, building teaching capacity is crucial. Teachers at these schools have attained skills through Reading First that will remain long after the funding ends.

What makes student success at these schools noteworthy is what might be called “value-added achievement,” or achievement with the hardest-to-teach students who arrive at school with intensive academic needs. Implementations of Reading Mastery within the Reading First programs at Nay Ah Shing, Cibecue, Chinle, and Alamo Navajo schools have notably improved student outcomes in reading, improved teaching quality, and increased capacity within these Native American communities. As stated earlier, we can identify four pillars of effective Reading First implementations: administrative leadership and support; a qualified reading coach; assessment, including well-articulated goals and data-driven instructional decision-making; and strong, effective reading curricular materials with professional development in instructional strategies. This blueprint can be followed in any challenging context; these pillars and elements are replicable and the results worth celebrating. The efforts in these schools and their resulting successes in helping students to read on grade level have followed Engelmann’s recommendations (Engelmann, 2001):

There is a formula for consistently transforming a lower-performing school into a much higher-performing school. Here’s the formula: Do what it takes to be accountable for maximum acceleration in the performance of all students. For a school to achieve this transformation, it will adopt new priorities, drop many of its current practices, change many details of the classroom interactions, build an infrastructure that works and can be maintained, and generally redefine its role so that the school serves as an advocate for the academic performance of the students. If the formula is followed, the result would be that every teacher in the school and the principal would be able to look every parent in the eye and say with honesty, “We’ve not only given your child our best shot; we have provided the best instruction possible.”

Figure 1.
Comparative Risk and Percent Progress in BIA Reading First Schools

Figure 2: 2004-2005 School Year Changes in Reading Ability at Nay Ah Shing School as Measured by the DIBELS Benchmark Assessments
It has been said that today’s schools aren’t the same as they used to be. Schools are populated with a different mixture of students characterized by greater diversity in academic skills, family structure, economics, and ethnic backgrounds. Today’s classrooms also contain a mixture of educators ranging from those whose only experience is based upon the foundations and accountability of No Child Left Behind to those who built careers in the isolation of their own classrooms. Finally, most of the instructional materials utilized today differ greatly both in appearance and content from days gone by. With the many changes and challenges facing today’s schools, how can we as educators look to the past and know what, if any, of past educational practices and content should be maintained?

One way Cache School District has dealt with current educational challenges is to identify programs that have withstood the test of time while proving their worth in addressing the needs of diverse learners. Under the direction of Director Julie Landeen, special education led the way by identifying and adopting research-based, scientifically evidenced programs and curricula authored by Zig Engelmann and others. Over time, many of these programs and practices have been adopted and now are universally used for all populations in Cache district. Corrective Reading, Reading Mastery, Language for Learning and Corrective Spelling are some of the programs developed by Zig and still in use today in our district. These programs were developed and validated with highly diverse, poverty impacted learners. The foundation of explicit and systematic instruction allows quality teaching to be delivered by trained professionals as well as paraprofessionals. Additionally, the longevity of the programs has provided a solid base of scientifically based research to meet today’s educational requirements.

Selecting a valid program is not sufficient; educators must ensure a valid implementation. The mastery of the low achievers must be carefully monitored. This is accomplished through use of the well designed, embedded assessments along with comparison to other district benchmark measures that allow educators to more conclusively ascertain each student’s mastery of crucial literacy skills. The goal for effective implementation is determined one class, one teacher, and one student at a time.
To assess the impact of these efforts, you are invited to analyze Cache District’s 2005 Fourth Grade Language Arts CRT results. (Comparable results were achieved at other grade levels and are available upon request from the authors.) Fourth grade was selected for presentation as it has historically been known for the “Fourth Grade Slump;” the point when many learners fail to meet higher educational standards.

Presented on the Poverty and Proficiency Compared: Grade 4 Chart is the poverty index, Free and Reduced Lunch percentages, for each of Cache District’s schools. Additionally, the percentage of students Proficient and Not Proficient is provided. While we are not satisfied when a student scores below proficiency, we are pleased that the percentage of students scoring below proficiency has been significantly reduced.

Of particular significance is the fact that the effects of poverty are masked when proficiency achievement is analyzed. The traditional indicator of achievement, a school’s poverty level, cannot be used to predict the achievement of students in Cache County School District. These data positively reflect the efforts of teachers and paraprofessionals coupled with programs developed by Engelmann.

Over the years, monitoring has provided insight into the preventive qualities of Engelmann’s instructional programs. Teachers who adjust the instruction for low achievers are also meeting the needs of all achievers more effectively.

It is through the use of the programs designed by Zig Engelmann that Cache District has been able to avoid the distractions caused as the educational pendulum swings. It is through use of the programs designed by Zig Engelmann that Cache District has been able to maintain a focus on effective instruction. These days we hear about the necessity of maintaining a “laser-like” focus on student achievement. No one exemplifies this like Zig Engelmann.
One of the most vigorous continuing debates in elementary education is over which teaching method produces the best results. Is it teacher-directed learning, where the teacher conveys knowledge to his or her students? Or is it student-directed learning, where the teacher encourages students to construct meaning from their own individual learning experiences?

Although a considerable body of research shows student-directed learning is ineffective, the debate rages on because many educators—and especially teachers of educators—choose to ignore the research. Siegfried Engelmann has been one of the key participants in this debate over the years, and a major contributor to its resolution. He first became interested in how children acquire knowledge when he was research director for an advertising agency trying to understand more about the learning process.

Pursuing this interest, Engelmann quit the advertising business in 1964 and became senior educational specialist at the Institute for Research on Exceptional Children at the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana. There, his research into the effectiveness of different teaching methods in the education of underprivileged children led him to develop the Direct Instruction method of teaching.

The Direct Instruction method involves teaching from a tightly scripted curriculum delivered via direct instruction to the class; i.e., giving children small pieces of information and immediately asking them questions based on that information. While Direct Instruction is teacher-directed instruction, it does not encompass all the possible varieties of teacher-directed instruction, including the common situation where a teacher delivers a content-rich curriculum to students but decides exactly “what” will be taught.

Engelmann’s research in the 1960s into the effectiveness of different teaching methods was subsequently confirmed by the massive federal Follow Through project in the 1970s and 1980s. In 1999, the American Institute of Research looked at 24 education reform programs and concluded Direct Instruction was one of only two that had solid research vouching for its effectiveness. But despite all the research findings, Direct Instruction is used at only 150 of the nation’s more than 114,000 schools.

After developing the Direct Instruction method, Engelmann became a professor of special education at the University of Oregon, in Eugene, Oregon, where he established the National Institute for Direct Instruction. He recently spoke with School Reform News Managing Editor George Clowes.

**CLOWES:** What approach did you first take to understanding the mechanics of the learning process?

**ENGELMANN:** I studied philosophy when I was in college, and I was much influenced by the British analytical approach that required very careful parceling out of what caused what, and also what kind of conclusions you could draw from what kind of premises. That had a big impact on how I viewed this process initially, particularly the notion that we are responsible for whatever children learn. We can’t just take credit for what they did learn; we have to take credit for what they didn’t learn, or mislearned, also.
We assumed that children were logical, reasonable beings in terms of how they responded to our teaching, and that their behavior was the ultimate judge of the effectiveness of whatever went into our teaching. If the way we taught didn’t induce the desired learning, we hadn’t taught it. But if children learned stuff that was wrong, we were responsible for that, too, and it meant we had to revise what we were doing and try it out again. That’s the formula we used from the beginning.

Just because you covered the material doesn’t mean the children learned the material. That tells about what you did. It doesn’t tell about what you taught. If you want to know what you taught, you have to look at what the children learned.

CLOWES: Which means you have to test the children.

ENGELMANN: It means you would not wait to test the children. You would design the instruction so that you were testing them all the time. You would design the instruction so that you received feedback on what they were learning at a very high rate. You would present instructions so that the children’s responses carried implications for what they were learning. And you would design the instruction to be efficient, so that you’re not working with just one child.

All of this means that, for young children, you would use procedures involving oral responses where the children can respond together, and you get information about what they’re learning from their responses. That’s the test.

For very simple responses, the paradigm that we use is: Model, Lead, and Test. You first show them what the task is and how they’re supposed to respond to it. Then you test to see if they can respond properly. It all happens very quickly.

It’s something like, “My turn: What am I doing? Standing up. Your turn: What am I doing?” It’s a model and then a test. But if they can’t produce the response, then you do a model and lead the test. For example, “My turn: What am I doing? Standing up. Your turn: What am I doing? ‘Standing up.’ Say it with me: ‘Standing up.’ Once more: ‘Standing up.’ Your turn: What am I doing?” So “your turn” is the test.

CLOWES: When did you decide to develop this into an instructional package for beginning learners?

ENGELMANN: Initially, we took programs people were using or were being talked about and evaluated them according to our criterion: If the children aren’t learning, we’re not teaching.

For the most part, the children we were working with were disadvantaged preschoolers. They represented a particular challenge because they didn’t come in with very high levels of knowledge and they didn’t learn things very well. Their performance on the programs that were available led to the conclusion these programs just didn’t work—the language experience program, the sight-word approach—none of them worked. They were horrible.

The sight-word, or look-say, approach is particularly bad because there is no method for correcting mistakes. If a child reads a word incorrectly, what do you tell them with the sight-word approach? “Look at the unique shape of the word,” or “Look at the beginning letter and ask yourself what that word could be.” That’s it. They’re not taught that the word is a function of the arrangement of specific letters. It’s like taking average people off the street and trying to teach them calculus by showing them different curves with different answers. “What’s this one? .03. And this one? .05. Good.” It’s that stupid.

With sight-word, children develop all kinds of misconceptions about what reading really is. They think reading means looking at pictures and guessing what the words are, because that’s what they’ve learned to do. The misconceptions are induced because the children are given highly predictable text for reading practice, which then reinforces for guessing on the basis of context. But when they’re given text that’s not predictable, they can’t make out what the words on the paper say because they really don’t know how to read.

The only programs that showed any promise were the ones based on the International Teaching Alphabet, where you taught children to read using the phonetic pronunciation. You could teach disadvantaged kids to read that way, but then you had a terrible time transitioning them out because they were absolutely unprepared to deal with the high rate of irregular pronunciations among the most common words. The reading strategies they had developed with the phonetic alphabet weren’t any help to them and a great deal of re-teaching was necessary.

But what they had learned was a function of what we had taught. We were responsible for so seriously misteaching these children that they could not easily transition and learn the irregular side of the reading game. So that meant we had to a) introduce some version of irregulars very early, so that children get the idea not everything is

Continued on page 24
perfectly regular, and b) keep the sounding out, but treat it more as a sop for spelling the word. You don’t want them to spell the word for initial reading. You want them to be able to sound out the word. But if you do it rigorously, they can easily understand that a particular sound means a particular letter.

The notion that you somehow recognize the word as a lump has been thoroughly discredited by research. When words are presented on a screen at the rate of about four or five hundred words a minute, experienced readers still can identify misspelled words. They can’t do that without understanding the arrangement of letters in the word, and that each word is composed of a unique arrangement of letters. They’re not looking at the shape of words.

CLOWES: When did you decide to publish your findings?

ENGELMANN: When we were working with the children, our objective was to teach them reading, math, and language. We wanted to make sure we taught them well, and so we made up sequences that compensated for what was lacking in other programs. Pretty soon we had prototype versions of the reading program, the math program, and the language program. Our rule was that we would not submit anything for publication until we were sure that if the script was followed and presented as specified, it would work. We never submitted anything for publication that was not absolutely finished.

Also, the publisher was not allowed to edit any of our material. The publisher would say, “There’s a better way to phrase it.” No, there isn’t! We’ve tried different ways. This way is efficient and it ties in with things we’re going to do later on.

Another thing that happened was the federal government’s Project Follow Through, which came out of President Johnson’s War on Poverty and was aimed at evaluating programs that provided compensatory early education to disadvantaged children. We were one of 13 major sponsors, with the others representing the full spectrum of philosophies about instruction: developmental, Piagetian, the British open classroom, natural learning processes, and so on.

The results showed those other programs don’t work in any subject. Direct Instruction beat them in all subjects. We beat them in language, in math, in science, in reading, and in spelling. And our students were the highest in self-image. And although Follow Through went only through third grade, additional follow-up showed an advantage through eighth grade and a statistically significant increase in college enrollment.

We also have some more direct information from places we worked with in Utah, where the Direct Instruction sequence goes through sixth grade. For example, when the children in Gunnison Elementary School entered junior high, they skipped seventh grade math and went directly into Algebra I, which was scheduled for eighth grade. At the end of the year, the children from our program were first, second, fourth, fifth, and sixth in performance in Algebra I.

CLOWES: So Project Follow Through confirmed what you had already found about the ineffectiveness of those other programs. Yet those programs still are being promoted in teacher colleges and they still are widely used, while Direct Instruction is not. Why?

ENGELMANN: The answer is really simple, but it’s very difficult for most people to accept: Outcomes have never been a priori in public education, from its inception. That’s the way the public education system is. The system is more concerned with the experience of the child: “Let the child explore,” “Let the child be his or her self,” “Don’t interfere with the natural learning process,” and so on.

The rhetoric is wonderful, but the test is: Does it work? Quite clearly, it doesn’t. The ones who are victimized the most by this are children from poor families.

But anyone who does not view the child in this way is portrayed as some kind of redneck Republican with no real human concern.

CLOWES: What about Advantage Schools? I understand they’re using your approach, too.

ENGELMANN: They’re doing some pretty good things, but I think they’re probably a little light on initial training. Part of that is because they’re installing a school from scratch, and so you have to teach the teachers and the administrators a lot more than you would if you were just moving into an extant school. That’s a tough job. It takes months to get the routines down.

CLOWES: Do you have any recommendations for state policy-makers who want to raise the quality of U.S. K-12 education?

ENGELMANN: My first recommendation would be to use only data-based material; that is, material that has a track record and can demonstrate it works. My second recommendation would be to evaluate test results skeptically. Don’t rely on state tests and the like to give you an indication of what’s really going on. To produce quality, you have to have quality control. That means having random samples, just as you would in a business.

You would go into a school and randomly test one out of five students in randomly chosen classrooms. In reading, you would give each student a passage to read and then ask them some questions about it. You could get the information you need out of a classroom very quickly—I’d guess no more than 10 minutes. If you sampled six classrooms, that would give you a pretty good idea of what is going on in that school. Then you would compare the performance of the students you had sampled with their achievement test scores and note any discrepancies.

In many cases, you will discover great discrepancies—where the children performed well on the test and yet when sampled they can’t do math or they can’t read. Schools can do all kinds of things to make their scores look better than they really are, so they need to be evaluated skeptically, preferably with this quality control approach.

Reprinted from the Heartland Institute: http://www.heartland.org
Zig’s Contributions to Teacher Education

Thanks Zig!

While this note is short, Zig’s contributions to what to teach teachers and how they should be prepared are enormous. Zig taught us that there are two essential elements for teacher effectiveness—well-designed validated curriculum and instructional management through effective teacher/student interaction. Both are essential. A curriculum in which new knowledge is introduced clearly and in a thoughtful, considerate sequence reduces student errors and promotes student success. The curriculum must include judicious review and build an ever expanding mastered body of knowledge. He also taught us that effective teachers are highly skilled “technicians.” In classrooms with effective technicians the presentations are fast paced, students respond frequently and produce a high percentage of correct responses. When students make errors, teachers correct students quickly using research-based strategies and then provide them additional practice. Importantly these classrooms are characterized by high rates of teacher praise and the children in these classrooms feel confident with their academic work.

Thank you Zig for providing curricula that promotes effective teacher/student interactions.

At USU, preservice special education teachers begin with a “Zig” curriculum—Reading Mastery, Corrective Reading, Horizons, or Language for Learning to name a few. We know that if our preservice teachers use a validated curriculum then we can focus on building their student interaction skills. We know that if all our preservice teachers (teachers of students with mild moderate disabilities and teachers of students with severe disabilities) are good “technicians” then their students will learn because the curriculum makes it easy for students to learn. And so we put into place an important cycle—reinforce teachers with student learning and the teachers will repeat the behaviors that produced that learning with other curricula, in other classrooms and with other students.

Thank you Zig for giving us the tools we need to send effective teachers into the field.

Zig taught us that good instruction and good curriculum analysis requires attention to the details of instruction. He taught us how to apply a practical, empirically-based “Theory of Instruction.” If teaching is not effective then the implication is that the curricular sequences are poorly designed. The solution does not involve “abusing” students—having students do more homework or asking students with a history of failure to persist until they get it right. Rather, the solution involves a specific detailed analysis to identify where the instructional sequences fail. This analysis involves understanding the elements of an instructional trial (such things as stimulus prompts and response prompts) and how these elements are put together to make a task easier or harder for a learner. This analysis involves understanding the “juxtaposition principles” that describe how to sequence examples and provide a basis for analyzing “failed instruction.” This analysis involves understanding how to cumulatively build knowledge so similar concepts are separated in time and student knowledge is built incrementally.

Thank you Zig for teaching me a diagnostic approach to instruction and giving me the skills to pass your legacy on to hundreds of teachers in my classes.

Thank you Zig for spending your life supporting teachers and those students who are most in need.
Flashback:
Utah Connection to Direct Instruction

The Accelerated Student Achievement Project (ASAP) was a joint effort between the Utah State Office of Education, Utah State University, University of Oregon, and three Utah school districts. The goal of the program was to accelerate and document the performance of children in the elementary grades and replicate this across different settings. Districts that participated included South Sanpete, Sevier and Weber. Project ASAP ran for five years and components in some schools are still evident. For an example of outcomes for students, see the flashback article and data below.

Headline 1998

Valley View Elementary Wins Honors in Reading

Roy school gets national award for direction instruction method

Kelly Kennedy Bogdanowicz, Standard-Examiner Staff, August 7, 1998

“Literally, no one’s behind when they leave kindergarten,” Principal Maureen Newton said. “It’s very powerful, but it’s a very different way to teach.”

Last week, Valley View teachers traveled to Eugene, Ore., to receive a “School of the Year” award from the Association for Direct Instruction. Only two schools in the nation received it and the other was Wesley Elementary School in Houston, which was recently profiled on “60 Minutes” for its direct-instruction program.

Valley View began the direct instruction program on an experimental basis with three other Utah schools five years ago. Utah State University professors work with each school and study the programs to see how well it works.
So far, after three years of Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests, all four schools have come out ahead of the control schools.

Valley View was chosen for the program because of its demographics and because it always scored lowest in the Weber School District on standardized tests.

Though the research-based program has been around for 25 years, it’s difficult for teachers to get used to at first because it’s script-based, and that’s where much of the criticism comes in.

First, teachers and students can sound automated when reciting the lesson—like they’re just reciting it rather than learning it. But Newton said the automation wears off as everyone gets used to the program.

And second, teachers fear that because they have a script, they can’t use imaginative lessons.

“Out teachers were very wary at first,” Newton said. “At first, it’s stifling, but then it sets you free. You don’t have to think. ‘How am I going to get this concept across.’ It’s all there for you. There’s a firm foundation, but you can add to it.”

The teachers now see the program as the best thing since recess.

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**How They Scored**

Valley View Elementary students and three Utah counterparts top the charts in reading and reading comprehension on the Woodcock Reading Master Test.

Kindergartners in Accelerated Student Achievement Project schools

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Standard-Examiner
Frances B Bessellieu, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools and Martin A Kozloff, John S Rice Watson School of Education University of North Carolina at Wilmington

Introduction

Direct Instruction is a series of curricula in language, reading, math, and science published by Science Research Associates, a division of McGraw-Hill. Thirty years of research shows that Direct Instruction—one type of focused instruction—fosters rapid and reliable achievement in students regardless of ethnicity, “race,” family background, or socioeconomic status. For example, both large scale and smaller scale experimental research comparing the outcomes of different forms of instruction show that:

1. Children who are taught math, spelling, reading, and remedial reading with Direct Instruction curricula—such as Reading Mastery (Engelmann & Brunner, 1995), Connecting Math Concepts (Engelmann & Carnine, 1992), Corrective Reading (Engelmann, Carnine & Johnson, 1999), and Spelling Mastery (Dixon & Engelmann, 1999)—generally out-perform (both academically and with respect to self-esteem) children taught with other forms of instruction, such as whole language and “inquiry” methods (Adams & Engelmann, 1996; Becker & Carnine, 1981; Bock, Stebbins, & Proper, 1977; Tarver & Jung, 1995; Vitale, Medland, & Romance, 1993; Watkins, 1997).

2. The early gains of children who were taught some subjects with Direct Instruction are sustained in later grades. For example, Meyer (1984) followed children (predominantly Black or Hispanic) in the Ocean Hill-Brownsville section of Brooklyn who had been taught reading and math using Direct Instruction in elementary school. At the end of the 9th grade, these students were still one year ahead of children who had been in control (nonDirect Instruction) schools in reading, and 7 months ahead of control children in math. Similar results were found by Gersten, Keating and Becker (1988). Former Direct Instruction students continued to out-perform children who had received traditional instruction. In addition, in contrast to comparison groups of children who had not received Direct Instruction in earlier years, former Direct Instruction students had higher rates of graduating from high school on time, lower rates of dropping out, and higher rates of applying and being accepted into college (Darch, Gersten, & Taylor, 1987; Meyer, Gersten, & Gutkin, 1983).

Despite the long history of extensive evaluation research that supports the effectiveness of Direct Instruction curricula, Direct Instruction has not been accepted in American education as either a method of choice or even as an equal partner amongst other curricula, such as whole language and other “discovery” approaches. Part of the reason is that curriculum decisions at school and district levels frequently rest on the extent to which a curriculum or method of instruction connotes feelings, “philosophies,” and value orientations that are consistent with those of education professors, district curriculum coordinators, and local teachers and principals, rather than on experimental data on effectiveness (Ellis & Fouts, 1993; Grossen, 1997; Stone & Clements, 1998). A second, and closely associated reason is that many educators have an inaccurate perception of Direct Instruction, borne perhaps of a lack of direct experience with the materials and their classroom applications. For example, many educators believe that Direct Instruction:

1. Is “only for certain children”; e.g., children with special needs or children who are economically disadvantaged. In fact, Direct Instruction works well with all children.

2. Is “drill and kill”; i.e., involves massed practice. In fact, Direct Instruction involves carefully planned distributed practice.

3. Thwarts teacher creativity because teacher-student interaction is guided by scripts in the Teacher Presentation books. In fact, Direct Instruction requires a great deal of teacher creativity in attending to the needs and progress of all students and in designing expansion activities.

4. Focuses only on basic or rote skills. On the contrary, Direct Instruction curricula quickly move from foundational skills to very high level concepts and cognitive strategies. This is evident, for example, in levels III-VI of Reading Mastery, in Reasoning and Writing, in Connecting Math Concepts, in Corrective Reading: Comprehension, and even in the pre-K-2 curriculum called Language for Learning.


The purpose of this paper is to correct some of the myths about Direct Instruction by providing first-hand information on how teachers who are using Direct Instruction actually perceive it. It is hoped that this sort of information will help educators to make more informed curricular decisions.
The Study

Data were collected from all teachers (83) who were using Direct Instruction Curricula (Language for Learning, Reading Mastery, and/or Corrective Reading) in two situations during 1999-2000.

1. Twenty-four teachers from two affluent schools in New Hanover County whose populations served both white children and minority children, many of whom were from economically disadvantaged families. In these two schools there was a large discrepancy in reading achievement on state end-of-grade tests. The two schools adopted Direct Instruction curricula on a small-scale pilot basis in some classes to see how well it worked overall and with respect to closing the achievement gap. Many teachers, used to whole language as the overarching approach to reading, and to Reading Recovery as the predominant approach to remedial reading, were reluctant to use Direct Instruction and voiced many of the common myths and reservations. However, these teachers volunteered (were not ordered by their principals) to try the DI curricula.

2. Summer school classes for at-risk children or for children who needed remedial instruction in 20 elementary schools in New Hanover. Summer school was one month in duration and involved 486 students and 59 teachers.

At the end of the summer school program and at the end of the school year, all of the DI teachers filled out an instrument entitled, “Teachers’ Self-Assessment of Direct Instruction Teaching.” In addition to rating themselves on instructional skills (such as pacing and error corrections), teachers answered three open-ended questions: (1) How has using DI been beneficial for your students? (2) How has using DI been beneficial to you? (3) Can you see yourself using DI in the future? If so, why? If not, why not? Teachers understood that their responses would help to determine whether or the extent to which DI would continue to be used in their schools; e.g., whether after summer school, it would be adopted for classes during the academic year, or whether, in the two affluent schools, it should be used school-wide. Therefore, teachers understood that they were welcome to give negative evaluations. Following are all of the responses of the 83 teachers.

How has using DI been beneficial for your students?

“I feel I am really helping those children that already seem predestined to be ‘below level’ and ‘at risk’.”

“I’ve also noticed my children using the skills they learned when reading other materials.”

“My students appreciate the improvement in their phonemic awareness, word recognition and fluency. They also work better together as a group as a result of DI.”

“I think it helps the children mentally because they feel successful and are reading more text; physically because they are moving to and from a group; and emotionally because they are successful with a group of children and not isolated.”

“It has vastly improved their phonics knowledge—and transference.”

“It not only has helped the children in reading, but their writing in their journals has been great!!”

“It is a good tool for students with attention problems. The material in the comprehension book had many lessons that complemented our classroom curriculum.”

“I feel that DI has been beneficial to my students, because some of my non-readers are starting to gain the skills necessary to become readers. The students have expressed to me how good it feels to be able to read words. They truly look forward to their DI group time.”

“Better listening skills, can follow directions much better, reading skills improved, writing skills much improved, better group skills, and better recall of materials and ideas learned.”

“DI has allowed my students to read!!! They can sound out words and have the confidence to even try. I see a major difference in the DI students from this year and students reading in previous years without DI.”

“They understand now that all are expected to learn and to participate.”

“DI has helped my at-risk-reading students immensely. Each one of the DI students in my class was at least on level 16 running record level by the end of the year. Level 16 is the at-grade-level point for first grade, so every child in my class can read at grade level going into second grade!”

Continued on page 30
Most of the children have improved their reading level. The children have a lot more confidence in themselves.

The students and teacher bonded during our direct instruction. The methods of instruction can be incorporated throughout the instructional periods during the school day.

How has using DI been beneficial to you?

It has kept me very organized and helps make a more accurate assessment of the students. Provided me familiarity with the program. Daily interaction with students in an instructional rather than administrative role.

DI is the program I’ve been waiting for over my entire career of 27 years! I have always believed that repetition and high child involvement were keys for reading, especially for children having difficulty, but DI is the most efficient method I’ve seen.

DI has been beneficial to me because all the materials that I need for planning are in the presentation books. Also, the goals/objectives are located in TG., which makes it easier to write my IEP’s.

I loved the reading series presented with DI. I am better at keeping group attention and recognizing specific problems our children had. My skills as educator improved, especially my listening skills and presenting skills. Not only for DI but other subjects as well.

If my children benefit, I benefit! It has helped me make certain that every individual child is held accountable.

DI has been helpful in discriminating between at-risk learners who needed something different and those who need something different and much more (i.e., specifically designed instruction!).

DI has accomplished what I could never have done on my own—convinced teachers that effective research based reading practices (those that DI is based on) work!

It had given another way to approach how to teach reading. All children don’t learn the same way nor need the same approach. This is an easy to learn program to teach with some great strategies for producing strategic readers.

It has helped me to understand the need for structure in groups. It has also given me the chance to work with low achieving groups and to better understand their needs.

Can you see yourself using DI in the future? If so, why? If not, why not?

I loved it!! I saw more growth and felt as if I accomplished something every day!

I am excited about using the program in my regular classroom situation. I have seen the progress that my children made in summer school in a matter of 18 days.

Already I catch myself using some of the structure of DI in other subjects. It really works out well.

Yes, yes, yes!! The students were successful, confident, and proud!!!!

Definitely! It is a great way to present skills in a sequential manner that does not assume skills are already present.

Yes. I think the Reading Mastery program helps the children get a better understanding for reading. I like to use the signals and verbal usage to get kids on task.

Comments Suggesting Difficulties

Out of all of the comments, only five comments suggested difficulties. For example:

I found the children had a hard time waiting for the signal...They had to develop listening and watching skills...

I feel their attention spans are too limited for this.

Children complained about so much repetition.

These comments reflect improper placement. The children referred to in the first two comments had been placed at too high a level; they did not yet have the skills needed for effective participation. Students referred to in the third comment had been placed at too low a level. They did not need the repetition. Ordinarily, these misplacements would be caught early in a school year and corrected. However, given the short duration of summer school, these misplacements could not be detected until summer school was nearly completed.

References available upon request from the Utah Personnel Development Center
Vicky Caughman

Reading Mastery is a research-based reading program that uses a direct instruction teaching method that works!

As a resource teacher, I have used Reading Mastery with many struggling students. I have used the Reading Mastery program with all my students regardless of their challenges, and have seen great student success with this program. Students build a solid reading foundation and learn to blend sounds to decode words that strengthen their phonics skills. Reading Mastery also helps build their comprehension skills and the students love reading the stories. In addition, Reading Mastery works on fluency that assists students in developing comprehension skills as well. As long as I am teaching I will always use Reading Mastery to help struggling students master the skills of reading. I am grateful to Zig Engelmann for developing this program.

Kara Anderson Hale

As a new teacher I have relied upon data driven curriculum to teach my students. I was trained to effectively use the Reading Mastery program in my undergraduate work, and I have used this program over the past three years. I have repeatedly seen my students make tremendous gains in reading. One example is a boy I started teaching in second grade. At the end of second grade this student was reading a pre-primer passage at a rate of 41 words per minute. In the middle of fourth grade, less than two years later, he was able to read a third grade passage at a rate of 109 words per minute. This is just one student’s progress, but I could list many others. I love teaching kids, and the strong curriculum of Reading Mastery allows me to focus my energies and talents exactly where I want to...on my students.

Zig Engelmann

The philosophy behind the program is basically simple. We say in effect, “Kid, it doesn’t matter how miserably your environment has failed to teach you the basic concepts that the average five-year-old has long since mastered. We’re not going to fail you. We’re not going to discriminate against you, or give up on you, regardless of how unready you may be according to traditional standards. We are not going to label you with a handle, such as dyslexic or brain-damaged. and feel that we have now exonerated ourselves from the responsibility of teaching you. We’re not going to punish you by requiring you to do things you can’t do. We’re not going to talk about your difficulties to learn. Rather, we will take you where you are, and we’ll teach you. And the extent to which we fail is our failure, not yours. We will not cop out by saying, “He can’t learn.” Rather, we wil say, “I failed to teach him. So I better take a good look at what I did and try to figure out a better way.”

—Zig Engelmann (Unpublished)
No Child Left Behind: The Football Version

If no child gets ahead, then no child will be left behind.

All teams must make the state playoffs, and all must win the championship. If a team does not win the championship, they will be on probation until they are the champions, and coaches will be held accountable. If after two years they have not won the championship, their footballs and equipment will be taken away UNTIL they do win the championship.

All kids will be expected to have the same football skills at the same time and in the same conditions. No exceptions will be made for lack of interest in football, a desire to perform athletically, or genetic abilities or disabilities of themselves or of their parents. ALL KIDS WILL PLAY FOOTBALL AT A PROFICIENT LEVEL.

Talented players will be asked to work out on their own without instruction. Coaches will use all their instructional time with the athletes who aren’t interested in football, have limited athletic ability or whose parents don’t like football.

All coaches will be proficient in all aspects of football, or they will be released.

Games will be played year round, but statistics will only be kept in the 4th, 8th and 11th games.

This will create a New Age of sports where every school is expected to have the same level of talent and all teams will reach the same minimal goals.

If no child gets ahead, then no child will be left behind.

If parents do not like this new law, they are encouraged to vote for vouchers and support private schools that can screen out the non-athletes and prevent their children from having to go to school with bad football players.

Author Unknown
Annabelle Davis finished her bachelor’s degree in early childhood education about 12 years ago. But after substituting in special education classrooms, she had a change of career plans.

She decided she was meant to work with disabled students. “I think it was the part where you can see that you really make a difference,” Davis said. “The progress is slow sometimes, and it’s small, but it makes a difference.”

On Saturday, Davis was honored as the Utah Teacher of the Year by the Council for Exceptional Children. She spends her days in a Provo High classroom with 10 teenagers who have multiple, severe disabilities, and she said the No. 1 quality required for the job is simply the will to do the work. “It definitely does take some patience, but probably the biggest thing is just the want to be there, the desire to be there,” Davis said.

Ted Kelly, director of special education for the Provo City School District, called Davis “a guardian angel.” But teachers like Davis are getting harder for districts to come by. “We have seen over the years that our veteran teachers are retiring, and as our new teachers come in, they just don’t stay in the profession very long,” Kelly said. He said he usually needs to fill four or five special education positions every year, but next year he projects he’ll have 10 spots to fill.

Paperwork, federal requirements and stress can make the job frustrating, Kelly said. It requires “an internal quality that I think people have that are tolerant and caring and that kind of thing—balancing that between the education and the skills to really individualize for students’ needs, along with handling a great deal of stress.”

The federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act makes for more paperwork than teachers are expecting, Kelly said. “You go into the profession to work with kids, and so much of your work is in meeting the demands of IDEA,” Kelly said.

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One of the major requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind Act is the emphasis on highly qualified teachers. States and districts must ensure that the teachers working in the public classrooms are highly qualified based upon the federal definition. Highly qualified status may be obtained by achieving a specified number on a paper test, or by completing a transcript review to determine if the teacher in question has university credits correlated to a major content teaching area. This highly qualified paper chase results in predictable scenarios—teachers may be highly qualified but not highly valued. Or, in the worst-case scenario, the teacher may be highly valued but not highly qualified. In such a demoralizing atmosphere, what should principals do to create and maintain Highly Valued Teachers Status?

Many years ago, in an Educational Administration class for principal “wanna bes,” I heard an outstanding principal say publicly what I had thought privately but never had the courage to repeat. What he said to the assembled group of aspiring principals was: “I’m not here for the students; I’m here for the teachers.” This startling and courageous statement had at its core the recognition that the most important element in quality education is the teacher. These are the people on the front lines doing the hard work of the school and district, shouldering the responsibility for student learning, keeping the parents informed about student progress, maintaining appropriate student behavior, interacting with teammates and colleagues, learning new methods and materials, recognizing student improvement,
wiping noses, etc. etc. Since they are the ones closest to the action, the principal’s role should be supporting the teachers so they can do their job. The principal helps the teachers, the teachers help the kids, and everybody wins.

There are hundreds of ways to demonstrate Highly Valued Teacher Status. Here are a few of my favorites:

1. Honor the teachers’ opinions. Engage them in the important discussions occurring within the school. Gather their feedback about what’s working and not working. Honor them by asking them.

2. Praise them publicly and often. Never miss an opportunity to let a parent or patron know how much you value the teachers in the school.

3. Recognize them as the experts and authorities regarding their classrooms and the students in them. No one spends as much time in the classroom as the teacher does. They arrive before the students do and leave school after they’re gone. They observe students working as individuals, working in teams and small groups, and as part of a whole group. The teacher must be viewed as the undisputed authority regarding what’s happening in the classroom.

4. Spend the money. Provide them with the best materials and supplies available. Spend the money early so they can use the new stuff all year.

5. Give them your time. Teachers know your time is valuable. Giving them some of it demonstrates their value.

6. Avoid shiny doorknobs. When conducting school tours, avoid the tendency to always visit the same classrooms. Every teacher should know that you consider him or her to be “tour worthy.”

7. Deal with the bad apples. In every school there may be one teacher who needs correction and guidance. You demonstrate that you value the teachers by refusing to allow one teacher to hurt the reputation of the entire faculty. Avoid idiot compassion.

8. Be organized and clear. You demonstrate their value by not wasting their time. The teachers have important things to do—you know it and they know it. Be efficient.

9. Laugh together. The teachers’ job description is to teach the students no one else can teach twice as much in half the time. This is exhausting work. Make it easier by having a chuckle occasionally.

10. Share leadership. Creating a school climate where shared leadership is encouraged communicates to the faculty that you recognize their potential in other areas.

In this issue of the Utah Special Educator you’ll find a certificate (suitable for framing) that identifies a teacher as a Highly Valued Educator. If you’re an administrator, tear it out (or download it), sign it, frame it, and present it to a teacher. If you’re a teacher, it’s time to reward yourself with Highly Valued Educator Status. Display it prominently in your classroom and remind yourself frequently that you’re valued. We can’t provide high quality education without teachers who are highly qualified, and highly valued.

Note: a downloadable copy of this certificate is available in electronic format at: http://www.updc.org/library/speducator/index.html
The Context

Today marks the only day of the year that I hate to read the morning paper. On the second page of the front section, every public school in our area is listed, followed by three numbers. These numbers represent the percentage of students who have scored above a state norm in reading and math. Represented here is a full year of good work, in a pure human event, reduced to three high-stakes, objective numbers. My mind races through a list of explanations that should be considered, most of these every teacher I know is, experientially and intellectually, well aware of.

There is a famous line from *Man of La Mancha*: “Facts are the enemy of truth,” or the well-established statistic, that the strongest correlation with high-stakes test scores is wealth. These two ideas require a long explanation, so I will start with the classic ground using “Descartes’ error”—dualism. In our case, this idea is to eliminate the complex, subjective elements that are indefinable, to reach objectivity, the ideal of science. This works very well with oil, coal and copper, but not with our children’s schooling. Yet, somehow, we have created this absurd extension of the Cartesian error by national law. This error is a common negative theme in literature, poetry, songs and religion. Still, the fourth estate, an essential pillar of our democracy, prints these raw statistics with a very weak, elementary discussion and no deep background. This provides, of course, an easy answer for people that do not want to know any more than a number.
The cost of Descartes’ error is substantial. The annual pressure for improved test scores creates a continuous ratcheting down of curriculum to testable lists. And, it turns out, that the more testable a curriculum is, the more forgettable it becomes. Measurable facts very seldom represent lasting and valuable knowledge. In addition, there is a considerable erosion of an essential resource—faculty spirit.

The Praxis—Thought-to-Action

Teachers do not choose to be teachers to get rich; teachers believe that preparing students for a satisfying life in our culture is a valuable and moral use of their energy. Teaching is the essence of social morality, giving of self for others. Satisfaction for teachers comes through student success.

To teach in our public schools is, fundamentally, the democratic art of creating the greatest good for the greatest number. The goal is more students doing better school work. This is accomplished through interrelated sets of multiple relationships. Relationships, especially multiple relationships, are the most complex events in human existence.

There are many important relationships that influence the success of a school. Some are external, that is—national and state politics, local boards, district office personnel and parents. Others are internal—custodians, nurses, librarians, support services and aides. As important as these are, I will leave them for another time. Presently, they are a reminder of the complex culture of a public school.

The two interrelated sets of relationships that dominate the success of a school are the teacher-pupil relationships and the teacher-team relationships. As a note, I consider the school principal an active and supportive member of all working teacher-teams. It is in these two crucial domains that the art of teaching comes to fruition.

These relationships and their development are very personal and direct. Interpersonal relationships require frequent, long-term, face-to-face communication. I define interpersonal communication as the gentle art of creating mutual meaning that enables mutual action. I include the action taken to differentiate true, focused dialogue from communication without an action, which is an abstraction. At best it can make us feel better, or at worst, create an intentional avoidance to act. In essence, as we have all learned, interpersonal communication is also a very complex art form. In fact, interpersonal communication and interpersonal relationships, in real life, are inseparable—they are one.

Teachers really need to know their students and their colleagues. The upside of these two infinitely complex, immeasurable, indefinable, unscripted, unpredictable and dominant functions of every teacher’s existence is that they are all very good at creating these crucial relationships. The important requirements are that teachers need to be in a school where they feel safe to tell their truth; where they know they will be helped and not judged; and where they feel supported in their efforts to get more students to do better school work.

It may seem surprising, but this ideal is not that difficult to create. After all, teachers are morally driven professionals and strong relationships and open communication are what they really want. The two specifics required are (1) regularly available, trusted feedback (not just test scores that teachers have developed a tendency to mistrust, but real, explicit teacher opinion of how students are responding to classroom instruction), and (2) frequent opportunities for working teacher-teams to communicate. This communication creates true, focused dialog about their students, teachers talk to each other and do something about what they talk about.

Teachers do not need to be “trained” to do what they are good at and want to do, something that is really just good-old sharing and caring. When teachers are given the opportunity and encouragement to gather their own trusted information and the time to talk to each other, they will go through three phases. Unfortunately, there are no shortcuts:

1. School Committee phase where behavior is formal and focused on a “leader” and an agenda, i.e. a “school work session.” This phase represents a set of long-term, institutionalized habits.

2. A conversational phase where membership is created and maintained. Though personal issues are not on the agenda, they are welcomed. The focus slowly shifts to mutual help and support.

3. The true dialog phase where the team “jells” and the real agenda emerges. Work is assigned and projects are designed and executed. The team bonds around their mutual support and their accomplishments. There is a general sense of spirit, personal satisfaction and good work.

Continued on page 38
I have never seen this process fail, if the support is maintained and the process is truly performed. This process cannot be done quickly. The true, focused dialog phase often takes several years to become fully integrated as standard operational practice. But, when teachers stick with it, this process is the first step toward becoming a true, sustainable community of artist/scholars - self-governing and self-improving.

A few tips from the field

Eliot Eisner, an eminent proponent of teaching as an art form, said in a speech he gave in San Jose this year that when, “we are interested in deepening meaning and in providing occasions for the excitement and satisfaction that schools can engender, ironically we look at test scores when we should be looking at the degree of engagement students display in the classroom...” (my added emphasis).

Eisner raises a crucial question. How can a teacher most accurately perceive how their students are responding to their classroom instruction? This is the most important feedback needed to give focus to teacher-team dialog. Like all artists, teachers need first to gain a perception of the whole class response, then look for the intimate relationships and critical details.

A little history may be helpful from over thirty years of watching and participating with teacher-teams approaching this task of gathering trusted teacher opinion. Our first attempt to identify the basic coping styles of students was an attempt to see students in relation to teacher expectations; the student was deemed - above, okay, below, resists. This design quickly became what we called “consent levels” with a rather elaborate set of teacher-created descriptors. We therefore gave each category a number: 1’s, 2’s, 3’s, 4’s. The problem in the past few years is that numbers have gained a negative connotation. We are presently experimenting with new titles and criteria for each coping style, or consent level, such as:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fully Engaged</th>
<th>Engaged</th>
<th>Invisible</th>
<th>Resists</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self motivated</td>
<td>Externally motivated</td>
<td>Struggles</td>
<td>Distractible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focused</td>
<td>Good intentions</td>
<td>Sporadic</td>
<td>Off task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountable</td>
<td>Not focused</td>
<td>Avoiding</td>
<td>Avoiding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard worker</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lethargic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Acceptable consent levels    Low consent levels

With these headings on a form, teachers can very quickly record their perceptions of how each student in their class is responding. In the beginning these lists will be tentative, without many details. As teachers use this information to focus their team dialog, however, their shared opinions and detailed assistance
give this subjective, teacher opinion accumulative validity. Here teachers begin to explore their great wealth of experiential wisdom accumulated over many years of teaching. They soon find how helpful this shared experience can be.

Again, as artists are always aware of relationships, teachers soon become aware of the group effect on a class of students. The first and most important lesson occurs when a teacher can identify an invisible student, and then encourage that student to do some school work. This enhances the work of all the students in the class. Teachers often refer to this practice as “shining their light on the invisible students.” When these non-workers start to work they tend to push every student above them. Students don’t change places. This is the best place to start to get more students to do their school work. Invisible students are very susceptible to teacher attention because most of their energy has gone into not being seen. The reason this phenomenon is true is the following rubric: Productivity in any human event is always a function of those doing the least. When the least productive worker goes to work it pushes everyone. This creates a very efficient way for teachers to conserve their finite energy. When teachers become aware of this inside their own classroom, it is very exciting.

When we see more students working, we can begin to expand the art of perception, to encourage those fully engaged students to try to do things they did not know they could do. Because there are no secrets in a classroom, when a student does outstanding work, everyone is aware. This, technically, is called modeling. There is no more powerful curriculum than a good model. When students choose to do a task they tend to do it the way they have seen that task done best. This modeling process tends to pull the class. Now we are on our way toward more students doing better school work.

Our own art

Well, there are a few ideas that can help get you started. Quite frankly, none of these will be of much help until you experience these ideas in your own classroom and team. As we learn to create our own paths, these ideas will become part of our own “stuff,” our own art.

Then there is the fun part, where like all artists, teachers begin to look very closely at the intimate details of their work; where teachers share their “best stuff,” focusing on one student at a time. Relationships bond through mutual success. We have learned the greatest social art there is: helping each other and doing the best we can with what we have. A school cannot be a good place for students if it is not a good place for teachers. So, teachers can learn to relax and enjoy life, and so can students. Yet, there will be more and better work done.

In summary, it is important to think of this complex social art form of teaching in its real, political context. The error in the use of objective numbers in human events is that there will always be a subjective set of functions in the derivation of these numbers that will create a legitimate questioning of their validity. We can do little about this political reality. But, we can account for the complex wholeness in our unified pursuit of our art—More students doing better school work.

Dr. De Lay currently lives in Woodstock, Vermont, and can be reached at: delay@sover.net

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On March 20 Governor Jon Huntsman signed House Joint Resolution 15, entitled *Raising Public Awareness of Vital Role of Paraeducators*. It was definitely a crowning moment of the 2006 legislative session. The chief sponsor of the legislation was Representative Ronda Menlove and the Senate Sponsor was Senator Ed Mayne, making it a bipartisan effort urging the citizens of Utah to increase their awareness of the contributions made by the state’s more than seven thousand paraeducators to the quality of children’s experiences in the public schools. The Resolution recognizes the increasingly complex and demanding work of paraeducators and the invaluable services and support they provide. It also highlights the professionalism and qualifications paraeducators possess. Finally, HJR 15 emphasizes that the services paraeducators provide to students are a key element in the success of Utah’s education efforts.

A copy of HJR 15 will be sent to each of Utah’s school districts, charter schools, the National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals, members
of the Utah Education Coalition and education community, the Utah Parent Teacher Association, the State Board of Education and the Utah State Office of Education. A complete text of the resolution can be found at: http://www.le.state.ut.us/~2006/bills/hbillenr/hjr015.htm

Our hats are off to all of Utah’s fine paraeducators. Thanks to their work and dedication Utah’s students are better supported, more closely monitored, and more individually educated. HJR 15 is timely, well-deserved and an appropriate step in recognizing the importance of the work of paraeducators to students in all regions of our state.
Wasatch School District has discovered a previously untapped source of excellent elementary school paraeducators, our high school English Language Learners (ELL). No Child Left Behind requires that teachers reach and teach students including those who are ELL. With an unprecedented growth in the population of ELL students, Wasatch elementary schools are overwhelmed in trying to provide adequate services. In implementing a program, modeled after a program in Provo School District but adjusted to fit our smaller district, we have achieved some surprising, yet excellent outcomes.

With support from Superintendent Terry Shoemaker and Wasatch High School Principal Vicci Gappmeyer, a class was established at the high school to first train students and then to transport them to elementary schools where they could use the skills they had learned. Elementary school principals and ELL teachers were also highly involved in the program. Not only did they have to help the high school students become familiar with elementary school procedures and school layout, they had to find teachers willing to participate as supervising teachers. Teachers had to “buy in” to a program that they really had never heard of or experienced before. After just a short period of time, it was obvious that having the opportunity to plan and interact with older ELL students gave elementary teachers the opportunity to increase their understanding of ELL student learning styles. In addition, teachers developed a better understanding of cultural differences that influenced their own teaching style. One teacher said, “I love my student paraprofessional. She is really great. She takes an interest, follows directions, and the other high school kids have to practically drag her out of my room!” Another added, “Please tell the students that help me with tutoring thanks! They are doing such great work for me. I just wish I had them here for my other classes. I’m really overwhelmed with keeping up, and they have really helped me. They have been very responsible, and have great attitudes.”

How did elementary students respond to their new paraeducators? One of our younger students asked his new high school teacher, “Are you a Mexican?” When the answer was “yes” the younger student replied, “Wow! I’ve never been taught by a Mexican before.” It had such an impact on the mentor that he recorded the conversation in his journal. The elementary student began working much harder for the paraeducator and for his regular teacher. In this program, younger kids have the opportunity to follow the lead provided by older role models. It helps them realize that they can be successful and that they can eventually complete high school.

During the training period, students were taught instructional strategies for working with students in small groups and one-on-one situations. In addition, they were given strategies to handle discipline issues. A journal entry by one of the high school paraeducators indicates the strength of the training. He said, “One time we were reading together and two kids got into an argument but before it got worse I cut in and talked to them. I followed everything I could remember from the notes we took in class of how to handle a situation. I worked and they apologized.” This is one example of how seriously the students feel about their “jobs.” High school students have had the opportunity to develop job skills, increase self-esteem and self-confidence. They have become more visible in the community and find themselves valued as teachers and as
educational partners with the classroom teacher. The following journal entries are just a sample of thoughts expressed by students. “I like to teach because it’s fun and exciting. The kids can be cool. I like kids and I want to be a teacher.” “The kids are improving. One student that struggled with times tables, was practicing and improved. He knows them all now. I want to keep doing this in the future.” “This week I got to read to the kids. I feel more confident and I feel like I’m doing a great job.” “I think this program is the best thing that happened to me and I finally think I’m doing something right. For example teaching the little kids how to read and write and spell out the words.” “To tell you the truth, I never thought I would be so happy doing this...I am impressed at how responsible I’m becoming.”

One 5th grade teacher decided to use her paraeducator as a Spanish teacher. She had been worried about the animosity between the Hispanics and the other students in her class. She indicated that there were arguments, name-calling, and teasing about not being able to speak English. Fernando was then assigned to her class as a paraeducator. She has expressed her admiration for him by saying, “As the English speakers began to try to learn Spanish, they came to understand how difficult it is to learn a new language and a great deal of respect began to develop for the Hispanic kids that can speak two languages. Fernando was fun and played recess with the kids, teased the kids, and earned their respect. All the kids have come to love him and look forward to him coming every week. They have come to better understand the Hispanic culture and people. It has been an opportunity for the Hispanic kids in my class to shine, be the experts, and help the English speaking kids as they have struggled to learn Spanish. There is no longer any animosity between Hispanics and the other students. They get along well and are good friends and respect each other. I credit Fernando with the change.”

We are thrilled with the outcomes of using our high school ELL students as paraeducators in elementary schools. Outcomes have far exceeded our expectations. Everyone involved is eager to exclaim, “IT WORKS!”
McDonald’s pays Rio Grande High School senior Christian Gabaldon 50 cents extra per hour for speaking English and Spanish to her South Valley customers.

That 50 cents could surely multiply for students who leave high school with a diploma that notes their bilingual abilities, said Gordon Douglas, Rio Grande’s bilingual program director.

At Rio Grande, the number of students seeking a bilingual seal on their diplomas is growing. Historically, Rio Grande has had the largest number of seal recipients citywide. This year, 65 Rio Grande students, including Gabaldon, are applying.

To qualify, they must pass an interview, a reading comprehension test and write essays, all in Spanish and English. The process begins this week with the interviews before a panel of teachers.

Gabaldon, a native Spanish speaker educated in Chihuahua, Mexico until this year, has been learning English at Rio Grande.

The fact she’s new to the language won’t stop her from seeking the seal.

Gabaldon said she came to Albuquerque with her family specifically to study English. She plans to study medicine at the University of New Mexico.

“We’re confident she can do it,” Douglas said.

Typically, 90 percent of Rio Grande’s applicants pass the interviews. Of the 58 students who applied last year for a seal, 48 got seals, Douglas said.
Across the district, 142 seniors graduated in 2004 with a bilingual seal from the six high schools that offer it. Information from last year was not available.

“There’s a little bit of pressure,” said Rio Grande senior Jesus Oaxaca, 17, who says getting the seal is “one of my top priorities right now.”

The pressure is there because “they are analyzing and grading you” during the bilingual testing, he said.

He wants the seal because it is a ticket to better jobs and wages, he said.

In a Sunday newspaper classified ad section, Douglas said he identified 37 professional job openings asking for bilingual applicants.

“I know for sure the medical field needs bilingual people,” said Oaxaca. “It’s in demand.”

He will answer the call and be a pre-med major at the University of New Mexico.

Terri Cole, Greater Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce president, said while some employers pay their bilingual employees more, others don’t.

“We don’t believe there is a trend,” she said.

Rio Grande’s bilingual seal is a 2-inch gold medallion with a black raven (the school’s mascot) over a globe. The seal is attached to the student’s diploma and embossed on the transcript.

The seal says “Global Citizens” and, in Spanish, “Ciudadanos del Mundo.” Each high school in the city designs its own seal.

Of the 65 Rio Grande applicants, 20 are the top scholars at the high school, including valedictorian Kevin Paiz-Ramirez.

Paiz-Ramirez said being bilingual gave him an edge in his college search. He has received more than $130,000 in scholarship offers.

Recently, he took a trip to a California college that was impressed with his bilingualism.

“Occidental College really stressed being bilingual,” he said.

In the admissions process, he found a comfort level because he could speak two languages.

“Being bilingual, you get to better yourself completely,” Paiz-Ramirez said.

Bilingual Seals

Public high schools awarding bilingual seals on diplomas: Albuquerque, Highland, Manzano, Rio Grande, Valley, West Mesa
The mission of Timpanogos Elementary is to provide a safe and secure environment in which all students can learn, and maximize their potential to become productive citizens who contribute to their community. To accomplish our mission we have found that collaboration is not only necessary but essential. Collaboration has helped us to see that the experts are among us.

Timpanogos Elementary, in the Provo School District has a school-wide Title One program, and is one of Utah’s highly impacted schools. Timpanogos has a Spanish dual immersion strand in kindergarten through sixth grades. Students are taught literacy, numeracy and content areas in Spanish and English. We use a fifty-fifty model. Every other week instruction switches between Spanish and English. This is just one of the ways we meet the learning needs of our diverse population.

Timpanogos is a Professional Learning Community (PLC) in which each grade level team meets regularly to address the needs of their students. Teams meet to plan curriculum, create common assessments and share teaching strategies. They continually review the questions: “What is it we want all students to learn?” “How will we know when they know it?” “What will we do when they don’t know it” and “What will we do if they know it?” The questions are taken from the book, Whatever It Takes by Richard and Rebecca DeFour, Robert Eaker, and Gayle Karhanek. As grade level teams answer these questions, students are identified who need additional interventions.

Another group that meets weekly to collaborate is our school At-Risk Team. This team includes special education teachers, the Principal, Special Education Lead Coordinator, School Psychologist, Speech/Language Pathologist, Title One Coordinator, ESL Coordinator, Instructional Facilitator, and a student’s general education teacher as needed.

In this team meeting, we discuss students who are struggling academically, their progress, student behavior problems, testing results, and find students outside of our individual daily realm that may need interventions. Once a month our school social worker and district truancy tracker meet with us in another collaborative effort to meet student needs.

Our Title One program helps us identify students who may need extra support in their education. A “One to One” tutor may find that a student is not progressing in reading or math. The tutor alerts the Title one coordinator who talks with the classroom teachers to see if they notice the same patterns happening in the classroom. Then either the Title One Coordinator or the child’s teacher brings up the child’s name to be put on the agenda for the At-Risk Team meeting.

Teachers are one of our greatest assets for identifying students who are in need of additional academic, behavioral, or speech/language support.
Initially the teacher shares concerns with parents and then one of the team members, usually the lead coordinator or psychologist. The teacher is given a pre-referral form to provide more in-depth information about the student. The student’s name is put on the agenda to be discussed in the next At-Risk meeting. The child’s general education teacher is invited to the meeting to further discuss concerns they have about their student. The teacher shares his/her concerns and the team discusses options for the student. These may include one-to-one reading, one-to-one math, after school assistance, ESL and flexible tutors. Flexible tutors work on specific skills identified by the classroom teacher. They work with several different students and grade levels each day in the regular classroom.

If the child is not already receiving one of these interventions, we decide which program(s) could benefit him/her and arrange for the child to receive the services. When a student is already being served in one or more of the interventions provided, we discuss how they are progressing. If sufficient progress is not being made, the team makes a referral for special education evaluation and coordinates which tests are to be given, and by whom.

Whenever a student is brought to our attention in the At-Risk meeting, we are able to utilize all the different resources represented. Title One is able to give us testing information (state core results, reading inventories, math scores) and what services a student may be currently receiving. ESL is able to give us student and family background information, language proficiency scores, services provided and how the student is advancing in language acquisition.

Our At-Risk Team is composed of a number of professionals and highly qualified staff who share insights and brainstorm ideas to help each child. Working together so closely has brought a greater appreciation for each other’s expertise. We are able to work well with one another because we see the care and concern each team member has for meeting the needs of the students at Timpanogos. Our team’s focus is on student needs, and because of the respect we have for one another’s professional abilities, we are able to coordinate and share services.

Quoting James Surowiecki, “A successful face-to-face team is more than just collectively intelligent. It makes everyone work harder, think smarter and reach better conclusions than they would have on their own.” Timpanogos is truly focusing on meeting student needs and with so many people collaborating together; we are more aware of and able to meet the individual needs of our students.
Bluff Elementary is a small school in San Juan County, serving seventy-five children in preschool through fifth grade. Each week students experience routine mornings of reading and afternoons filled with science and mathematics, all in a tiny two-hallway building amid rock formations that give the town its name. Yet, every January, a magical time comes to the town of Bluff and its elementary school.

The Bluff International Balloon Festival attracts hundreds of visitors, with balloonists coming from as close as New Mexico and as far away as the United Kingdom. This year’s event took place from January 20 to 22, 2006, on a chilly and sometimes gray weekend interspersed with splashes of rainbow colors from giant floating spheres. While the balloonists have enjoyed their traditional favorites since the festival’s inception, such as the Coyote and Hare Race, and dawn flights over the town, they have also developed their own traditions with Bluff Elementary. Every January, the balloonists have made tissue paper balloons with the fourth and fifth graders, enjoyed a Navajo Taco dinner hosted by the fifth grade, and given balloon rides to contest winners.

Again this year, the students prepared for the festival by participating in an art and essay writing contest. The third graders drew their own renditions of hot air balloons, depicting their colorful palettes. The fourth and fifth graders wrote essays about what they would show tourists in Bluff if they owned their own hot air balloon company. The eleven winners in all three grades won early morning flights that would signal the start of the Balloon Festival. Before these actual flights, the fourth and fifth graders got a taste of ballooning by flying their own self-designed balloons.

Several pilots visited the school to make balloons with Mary Platero’s fourth and fifth grade class, and to teach them a little about ballooning. As lunch was ending, the students excitedly watched as their cafeteria floor was covered with bright pieces of red, green, blue, and yellow tissue paper. Assembling their balloons with simple scotch tape and odd-shaped pieces of this paper, the students twirled around the cafeteria, seeing how inflated their balloons could become. They then gathered outside on the schoolyard to learn about wind patterns and to guess which directions their balloons would fly by releasing a helium-filled balloon. Once their predictions were made, the professional pilots filled the balloons with hot air and let the amateurs run after their balloons and try to catch them before they landed. Some of the running was in vain, as Mrs. Platero’s class set record flights, their balloons floating across the main highway into nearby backyards and even reaching the San Juan River that flows through town.

The following day the contest winners were to receive their chance to actually ride in the hot air balloons. Unfortunately, the occasional grayness of the Balloon Festival weekend made its greatest appearance on that Thursday morning and they were unable to fly. Like they have in previous years; however, the balloonists came through for Bluff Elementary. Two flight teams tethered their balloons to trucks and allowed every student to float feet off the ground and experience the
The sensation and awe of seeing the earth from the air. The clouds of that day dissipated in the shining faces of all the students.

On Friday, the children were able to share some of their own expertise with the town’s visitors. At the fifth grade Navajo Taco Fundraiser at the school, the balloonists were able to enjoy a traditional Navajo meal. The school’s Yei Bei Chei dancers performed and sang traditional songs. On that night, the students were able to give back to the balloonists what they had given to them, a new experience.

The winning essays illustrate what the Balloon Festival brings to the students at Bluff Elementary. It is not just an opportunity to catch a ride in a balloon, but also an opportunity to share with others what is important to them. Fernando Cly, a fifth grader, didn’t follow the prompt when he was writing his essay, but did convey what he values. His essay starts, “When Coyote made the hot air balloon he went on. But Rabbit wanted to come with him.” The story continues with a struggle between Coyote and Rabbit on the balloon, eventually ending with a reconciliation and friendship. Because of his creativity in showing that the Navajo culture is what he sees as an important part of Bluff, he was chosen as one of the winners. He was able to mesh Navajo tradition with a Bluff tradition.

Willson Mustache, a fourth grader, showed that a balloon ride wasn’t all that he wanted. In his essay, he stated that his hot air balloon “job would be helpful too, because I could take the children of the Hurricane Katrina and give the children an opportunity to fly all around down south.” If he were to win, Willson knew he would be given a great opportunity. He wanted to share that chance with children just like him, who may have never experienced ballooning or the southwest like he would.

Perhaps that is the best thing that the Balloon Festival brings to the students of Bluff Elementary. It expands their horizons on so many fronts. They are not only given a chance to fly in a balloon, but they are also given a chance to experience science first hand and to demonstrate their creativity through art and writing. They are able to share their culture with the visitors to Bluff that weekend, and if they happen to be some of the few lucky ones who do get to ride in a balloon untethered, they are given the chance to see their environment like they have never seen it before. As Melveda Redhorse, a fifth grader, wrote in her essay, “When I did not fly the balloon I thought there was not so many things to do in Bluff, because it was such a little town, but I was wrong about that. Just when I flew in the air, I was just amazed about Bluff.”
Cookies: Food for Fun, Food for Learning
Kids love cookies! At Wasatch Mountain Junior High (WMJH) in Wasatch School District we have learned that cookies are a food for fun, but cookies are also a food for learning. Students working under the direction of special education teacher, Ellen Savko, have developed a working business that provides extensive learning experiences using cookies as the base product.

Beginning with mini-grant funding from the Council for Exceptional Children, an industrial mixer was purchased along with heavy duty cookie sheets, cooling racks and ingredients for the first “cookie batch.” Using the Wasatch School District transition college facilities (an apartment-like classroom used by more severely handicapped junior high and high school students to develop independent living skills), students began by making sample batches of cookies in order to refine the quality and taste. They wanted to ensure that their product would be acceptable to sell to the intended consumers, the teachers at WMJH. Once the right recipe was determined, the hard work began.

Many lessons were developed in order that students could really “own” the cookie project. Math skills were taught through purchasing of ingredients, measuring ingredients (fractions), mixing the ingredients, taking orders from teachers, counting out cookies to fill the orders, making change when delivering the cookies, counting the total money collected and making deposits into the “cookie account”.

In addition to math skills, students increased writing skills by creating flyers and posters for advertising. They also published recipes to share with families and teachers who requested them.

Class lessons were also taught by the school nurse, Sheryl Wood and by the occupational therapist, Heidi Hanley on appropriate hygiene and handwashing techniques. The students worked hard to scrub until they were clean. The kitchen was also kept appropriately clean after lessons on cooking cleanliness.

Perhaps the most significant area of learning was in social skills development. Katie Kane, our speech clinician, worked along with Ellen Savko to teach appropriate skills. Students had to approach and talk to teachers in order to distribute flyers, pick-up orders, and deliver cookies. For autistic students, this was an extremely difficult task, but the reward of “the sale” was very reinforcing and a great motivator, which advanced their development more than anticipated before the project began. Students began to become more confident in their abilities and conversations with teachers became more socially appropriate.

Of particular significance is the response by teachers at WMJH. The general response indicated to Ms. Savko described how great it has been to get to know the students better. Teachers have been extremely pleased to work with the students in encouraging improved conversation experiences. They also asked how they could best work with the students in the future, in order to make the project a more meaningful learning experience.

The cookie business is now thriving! With each batch, money is generated to produce the next. Yes—we truly believe, cookies really are for learning!
“SALT LAKE CITY - It’s a Saturday morning in the exhibit hall of the Salt Palace during the National Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) Conference. A dance company from American Fork, Utah, is about to perform. It looks like any other performance; excited dancers running on stage, rhythmical music pulsing through the air, and contagious enthusiasm spreading across the audience. However, each of these dancers, ages 3 to 25, is a person with Down syndrome.

The troupe is SPARKLY PALS. “PALS” stands for Play and Leisure Skills, a national program that focuses on providing social and physical activities to people with Down syndrome. “They try really hard to learn things and they are really proud of themselves when they do anything well”, says Janalyn Holman Hyde, who co-directs the company with her sister, JaLeah Holman (Twitchell, 2006).

PALS began about twenty years ago in California with Marion Tannie Peters and Mark Shipley, who later moved to Utah and began teaching in Orem. JaLeah and Janalyn have two siblings with Down syndrome who participated in PALS (Holman, 2006).

Five years ago, these sisters decided because of their performing experience, JaLeah’s dance training, and their experience with people with Down syndrome that they would start Sparkly PALS. Janalyn emphasizes, “We thought that it was important to look as professional as possible. So, we got everyone a red sparkly jacket, hence the name SPARKLY.” JaLeah adds, “We wanted opportunities for the dancers that other dance companies have all the time. We worked really hard in teaching them how to have a smooth show.” It’s a family commitment: Mom, Pam Holman, helps out; brother, Jarron, 25; and sister Jazzy, 13, perform in the group (Twitchell, 2006).

Sparkly PALS has performed at Utah Jazz games, Disneyland, National Down Syndrome Congress Convention in California, Especially for Youth (EFY), and locally. They’ve been featured on the front page of the Salt Lake Tribune, the Deseret Morning News, and have been spotlighted on KSL 5 News.

During rehearsals and performances, the dancers are excited and work very hard to make their teachers and parents proud. Some dancers work on solos for a year to be ready to perform. Many joined because they like to dance, love their teachers, and stay because they have made so many friends. Ask Jazzy Holman, 13, if she’s a good dancer. “I’m good!” she replies confidently (Twitchell, 2006).

These co-directors may appear exhausted by the end of rehearsals; however, there’s nowhere else they’d rather be (Twitchell, 2006). Janalyn explains, “Even if you’re having a bad day before, you’re going to leave happy because the kids are so happy to be here.” JaLeah considers the dancers her “best friends,” and adds, “They think they’re sparkly little divas and I love each one of them more than I can say” (Twitchell, 2006).

Sparkly PALS started out with 10 students and now there are more than 40 from around the Wasatch Front. Janalyn and JaLeah have advice for those who want to start a performing group and involve students with disabilities. “Plan, advertise, and then just start it. It has been an amazing experience and we are so lucky to be a part of it” (Holman, 2006).

Want to know more? E-mail Janalyn at: janiholman@msn.com. Or JaLeah at: luvsdance5678@msn.com

Suraj Syal, Program Specialist, Utah Personnel Development Center
My Daughter and Standardized Tests

I would much prefer my daughter have a teacher who helps her develop a broad range of problem-solving skills than a teacher who teaches her how to improve her score on state tests.

High-stakes standardized tests are often a centerpiece of the appealingly named No Child Left Behind Act. These tests, mandated for all children in grades three through eight, present unique challenges for deaf children—and I feel that the testing policies that have resulted are inappropriate, poorly conceived, and counterproductive.

I don’t write this as an educator, but as the mother of a deaf child. My daughter, Laura, was first tested in compliance with the federal education policy three years ago when she was 8 years old. I was shocked at the results. The battery of tests showed Laura to be barely average in some categories and in the bottom 20th percentile in other categories.

This is a child who, all her life, impressed people with her intelligence. Again and again, Laura has demonstrated an ability to think critically and deeply, an amazing memory, and a general analytical ability. She is alert and curious about all areas of life, knows everything publicly available about the latest pop stars and other figures from popular culture, and is a speed-user of instant messaging.

As I looked at the test results, I wondered: Is this not the child we have known since infancy? How do I reconcile my daughter with the portrait her test scores suggest? Even with my intellectual understanding that tests are often biased and always problematic for some children, I was jolted.
Concerned with what use her school would make of these test scores, I made an appointment with the school’s education director. There I learned that some states provide accommodations for deaf children in the testing environment, such as signing the instructions. Under the federal No Child Left Behind law, the standards are the same for every child in each grade, except those who are the most seriously delayed. The educator said that only 10 percent of the deaf children in the school would excel in state tests.

Laura currently reads almost on grade level. We adopted her from Colombia when she was a baby. Her sisters—our daughters, then 11 and 13 years old—were thrilled. At four months old, Laura was developmentally on target.

As she began to grow, she did not talk as quickly as they did, but she was smart and responded to us as any infant would. We would say, “Give Daddy the ball,” and she would do it. I think now that was maybe because parents gesture a lot when talking with babies. When she was a year and a half old, Laura still was not talking, not even babbling, and we took her to get her hearing tested. There was nothing else it could have been.

Once Laura was diagnosed, I immediately read everything I could find on deaf education. Laura immediately enrolled in special education programs. She went to the Austine School for the Deaf in Vermont, and then to the Learning Center for Deaf Children in Framingham, Massachusetts. Now she is a student at the American School for the Deaf in Hartford, Connecticut.

I have a close relationship and excellent communication with Laura. My husband and I continue to learn American Sign Language and we can communicate with deaf people one-on-one when we converse. My older daughters learned sign language and became fluent.

There may be many reasons for deaf students doing poorly on standardized tests. These tests present a variety of linguistic and experiential nuance that is not part of the everyday world for most deaf students—as it is for most of their hearing peers. For example, a recent essay question on the Connecticut Mastery Test asked children to describe how music made them feel. Then there is the subtle barrier comprised of confusing usages of English, especially English idioms. Arithmetic testing uses words with multiple meanings in the word problems, confusing many deaf students.

The problem, of course, is compounded for deaf children who come from different countries or who arrive at school with few language skills. It is also especially difficult for children who have little or no communication in the home and children whose parents do not have sufficient interest, time, or energy to support intellectual exploration through library or computer work.

Unless the deaf children come from a deaf family, even parents who try hard to include deaf children find that there are always gaps in family communication. The deaf children do not hear their parents or their siblings talking with each other. They inevitably miss discussions of current events, money, religion, family gossip, planning of summer vacations, and so many other subjects. Many hearing parents, including some who struggle for years to learn American Sign Language, never become fluent signers.

I studied sign language for years, as did my husband. Yet Laura, unlike my other daughters, has never loved having her father or me read to her. With her fluent sisters, it was different. I could see Laura’s pleasure as her sisters or other fluent signers read or told her a story. Despite my desire to learn sign language, my intense effort, and my love for my daughter and reading, I could never achieve this.

I thank my daughter’s school daily for helping her to become literate. I am also grateful for the information and guidance her school provides in areas from social interaction, to body development, to current affairs. Strong reading skills are the best gift we can give our deaf kids. Standardized tests have no role in measuring the reading skills of many deaf kids and no test ever helped a child learn to love reading. During a recent family gathering at my daughter’s school, two mothers of children with special needs spoke. One described her daughter crying through the entire test. Another told me that her daughter did not understand anything about the test she was sitting through—not why she was taking it, not any of the questions. What meaning can a test carry when the content intimidates, upsets, or excludes children? How does this exercise benefit the children? The school? The state?

Education derives from sound teaching, hard work, high expectations, and solid financial resources. The essence of education is to create an environment where all children are learning and achieving. I would much prefer my daughter have a teacher who helps her develop a broad range of problem-solving skills than a teacher who teaches her how to improve her score on state tests. As parents, we need to be part of a movement with educators that explores how we can promote the very best in education and assessment for our children.

Nancy Braus and her family live in Brattleboro, Vermont, where they own a bookstore.
hom would you least expect to like classical music? A teenage boy, right? How about tough, adjudicated Youth-in-Custody males, ages 12 to 19? A minor miracle recently took place in our Day Treatment Program in Ogden. Okay, maybe more like a major miracle.

For the past few years in my music classes, we have studied the different periods in music history and their composers as part of the curriculum. We would read about them, complete worksheets and listen to their music. When it came time to identify which composers wrote certain pieces, some of the boys had difficulty differentiating between them and struggled on the final test. One day last spring I was home ill with a fever, pondering what I could do to help the boys better learn the material, when I remembered one of my students saying to me that he knew who Mozart was, because he had sung the name—Mo-mo-mo-mo-mo-mo-Mozart—to Mozart’s “Eine Kleine Nachtmusik.” It was then that the idea came to me to put lyrics about the composers’ lives to the actual music that they wrote. So instead of singing “mo-mo-mo...,” the lyrics would be “Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart...was an early master of his art...” and so on.

I approached my brother-in-law, Rulon Christiansen (a nationally-acclaimed organist and composer), with my idea, and we decided to team up. He arranged melodies from each composer into vocal pieces; then I put singable lyrics, based on historical facts, to the music.

At the beginning of the quarter, I gave all of the boys a multiple-choice pretest. No one scored more than three correct, with the exception of one student who scored nine. At the end of the quarter I was surprised when a boy with Asperger’s Syndrome, who rarely gets more than a few answers right on any kind of test, answered 52% of the questions correctly on the posttest. A sixth grader, who came in weeks after the quarter began, scored 75%. The boy who scored 9% on the pretest scored
97% on the post. The only three questions he missed were on composers whose music we didn’t have time to actually sing.

The real test, though, came when the boys learned the songs. I was amazed at how easily they connected the lyrics to the composers’ melodies and that they actually enjoyed singing the songs. Instead of trying to memorize that the short-short-long first notes of Beethoven’s symphony were his Fifth Symphony, the boys simply sang it: “Beethoven’s Fifth...Beethoven’s Fifth...is the most famous symphony in history...’Fate knocking at the door,’ said Ludwig is its theme...,” etc. Or to the music of Beethoven’s “Fur Elise,” made famous by a McDonald’s commercial, the boys sang:

Ludwig van Beethoven was a short and stocky man,
with bushy hair.
From Germany, Vienna became home; most of his life was spent right there.
Born in 1770, he lived for 57 years;
At one time contemplated suicide when he realized he couldn’t hear.
For he went deaf, 1813,
He heard no sound, heartbreakingly.
But he did not give up so easily. He heard the music in his head,
And from that he wrote compositions still, with quill and paper to be read.

Over the course of a quarter, I was amazed at how much the boys were able to retain. It amazed me even more when they would come into class begging, “Can we please sing Vivaldi today?” During English they asked if they could listen to the music while doing their work. They also mentioned that they couldn’t get the tunes out of their heads (which was my experience, too, often in the middle of the night, and transfer was often evident). They would tell me that they heard the melodies on different television programs (the Simpsons, the Olympics, movies, commercials etc.).

We recently presented a musical program at our school, where the boys were able to perform the pieces they had learned. Not once did I hear a complaint that they were singing “classical” music. Some songs were difficult (have you ever tried to “sing” Chopin or Liszt?); and yet the boys, many of whom were special education students were equal to the task. Singing lyrics to Rossini’s “William Tell Overture” (the Lone Ranger Theme) left them breathless, but it was one of their favorites. I told them over and over again how smart they were becoming and that they have learned things that many adults in college don’t even know.

Dan Litchford, a Weber State University marketing professor, is known for putting facts he wants to remember to music. He says that people recall 10% of what they read and 60% if a visual is added. Add rhythm and rhyme, and our memories retain 90%. Add music, and the recall is 100%-especially if part of what you’re trying to recall is the music itself!

We have compiled the songs of thirty composers, along with fact sheets, pictures, games and teacher helps, into a book which we are calling Classical Cool. It covers six musical periods, beginning with Gregorian Chants and ending with the Impressionists. Each period is printed on different colors to further help students associate the music with the different times in history (green for Medieval, yellow to represent the light of the Renaissance, blue for Baroque, gold for Classical, pink for the Romantic Period, purple for Impressionistic). A CD with accompaniment is also included.

We are currently working on a second volume which will feature music from the Contemporary Period—the American composers and those born after 1900. This volume will be called Contemporary Cool. Did I hear someone say, “Can we please sing John Phillip Sousa?”

Debbie J. Rowe, Educator, Ogden School District
On November 17, 2005 our principal, Cami Alexander, Linda Anderson, our counselor, and I, a resource teacher, began our three day intensive training to become authorized providers of The Listening Program. “The Listening Program (TLP) is a Music-Based Auditory Stimulation method. It is a safe, effective, drug-free approach that helps improve brain function, reduce stress, and trains the brain in the auditory skills needed to effectively listen, learn, and communicate. The primary purpose of The Listening Program is to bring the auditory system into balance. It consists of an extensive series of high-quality audio CDs that integrate specially produced acoustic music, primarily classical, with innovative sound processing techniques that exercise the brain and auditory pathways (Doman, G. A., The Listening Program Provider Training Manual, November, 2005, pg. 2, Advanced Brain Technologies).” The program is designed for use at home, in schools, hospitals, other health care and clinical facilities, and for people from about age two on up using a CD player and a set of approved headphones. The Listening Program was developed from key concepts of the clinical work and experience of the late Alfred Tomatis, M.D. He did extraordinary work in the field of auditory intervention. Our intent was to begin providing this program to selected students at Club Heights Elementary School in Weber District as a trial with hopes of implementing the program school-wide the following year.

We currently have three target groups in different stages of the program. The first group consists of seven students selected from different grades, teachers, and for different reasons. They started their 16 week program in November and are on a second cycle.

Two of the students from this group have been diagnosed within the autism spectrum disorder. One boy, in fifth grade, is mild; the other boy, in fourth grade, is more severe. Both boys have difficulty with communication and working in any kind of group situation.

One fourth grade boy and a sixth grade boy have been diagnosed with ADHD. A kindergarten boy and a first grade boy have been working on anger issues and have displayed defiance in the classroom. The final participant in this group is a fourth grade boy who is language and communication disordered.
To track behavioral changes, an Achenbach Behavior Inventory was given to the students’ teachers prior to and after completing the first 16 week program. The table below shows the decrease, sameness, or increase in T-scores for the largest difference from the pre- and post-testing for six out of the original seven students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anxious/depressed</th>
<th>Withdrawn/depressed</th>
<th>Social problems</th>
<th>Attention Problems</th>
<th>Aggressive Behavior</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decrease -4</td>
<td>Decrease -11</td>
<td>Decrease -2</td>
<td>Decrease -4</td>
<td>Decrease -17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 out of 6</td>
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<td>1 out of 6</td>
<td>4 out of 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same 2 out of 6</td>
<td>Same 1 out of 6</td>
<td>Same 2 out of 6</td>
<td>Same 2 out of 6</td>
<td>Same 2 out of 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase +8</td>
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<td>Increase +3</td>
<td>Increase 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 out of 6</td>
<td>1 out of 6</td>
<td>2 out of 6</td>
<td>3 out of 6</td>
<td>0 out of 6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Anecdotal information from the teachers and parents of the boys with autism and ADHD indicate they have noticed a decrease in aggressive behavior and an increase in communication skills. The teacher of the first grade boy no longer considers him a problem in her classroom and his peer relationships have improved markedly.

The second group consists of four resource students of which two are in the fourth grade, one in the fifth, and the other is in the sixth grade. All four students are classified as having learning disabilities and were chosen for their reading difficulties, poor penmanship, task completion, and attention problems. They are currently half way through The Listening Program. Academic samples were taken and an observation checklist that comes with the program was given to their teachers prior to beginning the program. The observation checklist was recently rated again for the purposes of this article to report any improvements thus far.

The four areas of performance on this checklist are: 1) social/emotional, 2) language/reading, 3) physical/motor, and 4) attention/organization. Three out of the four students are showing improvements in the social/emotional category. All four are improving in the language/reading areas with improvements in sight word recognition, reading comprehension, and reading aloud. Only one student is showing a slight improvement in the physical/motor section. The other three were rated as seeing no change at this point. In the last area of attention/organization, three are showing improvements and one is at no change.

Anecdotal comments include: being more socially appropriate, better eye contact, showing more willingness to participate, responding more positively, overall improvement in paying attention, and controlling impulses. This group will be done with the program by the end of school.

Our third group started at the end of January. This is our first effort at using it class-wide. This group consists of sixteen kindergarteners that are listening twice a day versus once a day. The only pre-program data collected on this group was the observation checklist for five targeted students. Due to the circumstances of the teacher, we only have anecdotal data to report at this time. She stated that overall, the whole class has improved in their letter, sound, and sight word recognition. The five that we have earmarked have nearly doubled their performance assessment scores. She feels that the class is much more calm and attentive since starting The Listening Program.

We are excited with the overall results of seeing improvements in our students’ social and emotional behaviors and in the areas of listening, communicating, and academics. We are planning on using this treatment program school-wide next year. Every little bit helps, and The Listening Program appears to be having a positive impact on our students.

Contact Information

Laurie Smith  lsmith@weber.k12.ut.us
Linda Anderson  landerson@weber.k12.ut.us
Cami Alexander  calexander@weber.k12.ut.us

Advanced Brain Technologies
5748 South Adams Ave. Parkway
Ogden, Utah  84404 • 1-801-622-5676 • 1-888-228-1798
info@advancedbrain.com  •  www.advancedbrain.com
Individual creativity is something all students enjoy, but for students who attend 4th grade at West Elementary, it means having the opportunity a number of times throughout the year to create art projects with clay. They anxiously anticipate their turns working with this media because their older brothers, sisters, cousins, friends and neighbors have been doing it since 1992. This is when I first started teaching at West and the 4th grade began collaborating on the curriculum as a team. All four of our 4th grades rotate through my art class on a weekly basis.

I’ve always felt strongly about including the arts in cross-curriculum instruction. Learning becomes reinforced more strongly when kids can actually touch and create in three dimension, concepts that have been taught and discussed in a variety of subjects, such as reading, writing, science and social studies.

In early October the students decided to place an entry as a class in the local Pumpkin Walk festival at the historic Benson Grist Mill. The theme this year was “Pumpkins and Pioneers” and before any creating with clay could even begin, they had to research a “human interest” type story to go along with their clay pumpkin faces. I was aware that possibly some of the students (myself included) wouldn’t be able to claim a Utah pioneer heritage, so the challenge was to write about when, how, and why the first person in their family came to live in the area. The kids and their families really got into it and did quite a bit of family history research. Some of the stories were hilarious! One child spoke of Grandma So-and-So who came to the United States from Germany in 1957 and hopped on a Greyhound Bus bound for Salt Lake City. The best thing about the whole endeavor was every child participated. The biographies were written and, like the talk bubbles in cartoons, each bright and shiny pumpkin face made of clay spoke its story on a gigantic background shaped as the state of Utah. With great excitement and pride, a large number of the kids and their families went to the Pumpkin Walk just to check out the exhibit of which they were a part.

The month of May in art class means we’ll be making replicas of the clay figures made by the Fremont Indians. These figures are made of red terra cotta clay and are fired but left unglazed, like the authentic artifacts. It’s a great activity for helping the students identify with some of Utah’s Paleo Indians...and to use up clay left over from the Mother’s Day plaques. Kids love to use the brilliant colored glazes, but they know their clay figures wouldn’t be as realistic as those of the Fremont culture.
Whether using clay to reinforce learning or just for pure creative enjoyment, the positive effects make it all worthwhile. Students get to interpret what they’ve studied and mold the learning into the way they picture it to be in their minds. Even the “less recognizable” finished projects are beautiful and amazing when covered with a glossy bright coat of glaze. Each time I go to remove the finished objects from the kiln, I’m reminded of what it must be like for a pirate lifting the lid of a treasure chest. I carefully open the kiln, standing back as some of the remaining heat escapes upward, and from there I get my first glimpse of the brilliant shimmering treasures within just waiting to be discovered. I know from past experience how excited and proud each child is going to be to take their art home to share with their families.

Working with clay also allows a lot of interaction and development of social skills. The students are sharing equipment, ideas, and individual talent with each other. They admire, help and encourage each other, but most importantly, they’re all on equal standing. Students who struggle with reading or math, especially with remembering and following a series of steps or directions, often don’t remember the directions for assembling their clay projects or the differences between painting and glazing. In other words, they break all the rules...and end up with totally uninhibited, fantastically creative genuine works of art. It doesn’t matter to them that they didn’t remember that glazes are not to be painted on top of each other. They do it anyway, and the final product is exquisite! No one complains that they “can’t make a horse.” They create what they visualize as a horse. When it’s done they love it, and so do I. I love the freedom of expression that appears in art for all students, not just the gifted ones. Every child experiences success, and has fun while doing it.

I don’t want to spoil their fun by suggesting that they actually learned something. I’ll just continue searching for opportunities that allow every child to feel equal in their sense of accomplishments when compared to the rest of the class. In the meantime, each new school year sees an increasing number of homes in Tooele displaying “fine art” in their living rooms as reminders of their 4th grade year at West Elementary.
Children, birth to three years of age with visual impairments, have a broad range of unique needs that require attention from a teacher of the visually impaired. As teachers work with these children and their families, it quickly becomes apparent there is no specific assessment or curriculum that covers all the areas vision impacts during the development of the child. There are multiple assessments and curricula for each of the various needs of a child with vision loss, including prebraille, orientation and mobility, social skills, daily living skills, adaptive skills for the loss of vision and the list goes on and on.

A brand new programming guide compiled and distributed by the Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind is now available to both a national and international market. The ViSioN Program—ViSioN Skills in the Natural Environment is a comprehensive, yet consolidated guide to skill development, accompanied by parent lessons and suggestions for implementation of skills into natural routines. The ViSioN Program is ideal for all teachers of visually impaired children birth to three: new teachers, the “seasoned” teacher, as well as those teaching in other countries and to other cultures will derive benefit from this publication.

In our supervisory roles with the Parent Infant Program at the Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind, we saw new staff members snowed under by volumes of assessment/curriculum materials to master. They experienced difficulty sorting out the important goals for an upcoming IFSP (Individualized Family Service Plan) meeting. Stacking may be listed as a goal, and be a definite need for the child, but we worried about what was being missed in the many other unique concepts and skills that must be taught to a young child with vision concerns. No one checklist or assessment included a comprehensive listing of all these unique adaptive skills which must be mastered. We saw the necessity for a program addressing these specific needs in a consolidated and concise manner, suggesting ways to incorporate the teaching of vision skills into the natural environment. The ViSioN Program—ViSioN Skills in the Natural Environment is the result of our efforts to address these issues. This early intervention guide assists teachers of the visually impaired in assuring that all components of the infant/toddler’s development are considered when providing services to the child and family in the natural environment.

In analysis of children with visual impairments and the available assessments and programming tools, four distinct scenarios emerged:

- Scenario #1: Children with no vision
- Scenario #2: Children with low vision
- Scenario #3: Children with vision loss and mild to moderate disabilities
- Scenario #4: Children with vision loss and severe multiple disabilities

The ViSioN Program identifies a comprehensive, consolidated list of developmental skills for each scenario based on a review of assessments and curricula, breaking the skills into four developmental areas:

- **ViSioN Skills:**
  - **Sensory** - includes vision, taction, and audition
  - **Literacy and Readiness** - includes cognition, communication/language, and pre-literacy (including braille readiness)
  - **Visual Motor** - includes fine motor and gross motor (including orientation and mobility)
  - **Independence** - includes social-emotional and self-help
Skills are divided into increments of six months for scenarios #1 and #2 for ease with working with IFSP’s that occur at six month intervals. Scenarios #3 and #4 were broken into three month increments due to the addition of multiple disabilities. The teacher has the flexibility to combine scenarios to address the needs of an individual child who may be progressing more rapidly in some developmental areas than others.

The ViSiON Skills are listed in two separate formats: Abbreviated Form and Expanded Form. The Abbreviated Form includes only the comprehensive list of skills divided into the four scenarios and the four developmental areas by age. These Abbreviated Forms are laminated and placed in a separate pocket for intended use when developing goals and other collaborative team efforts. The Expanded Form includes additional sections helpful in programming and selection of resource information to meet the individual child and family needs. These sections include: Information for Families, Routines in the Natural Environment, Parent Lessons, and ViSiON Transition Checklists.

We saw the necessity for a program addressing these specific needs in a consolidated and concise manner, suggesting ways to incorporate the teaching of vision skills into the natural environment.

- **Information for Families**: A listing of pamphlets and videos which address the unique needs of children with visual impairments is provided, with suggested age group for use.

- **Routines in the Natural Environment**: Daily routines are identified which are ideal to incorporate practice of skills, through the suggested activities, during the first three years of life (example: bath time, mealtime, etc.).

- **Parent Lessons**: Over fifty parent lessons are included with activities to assist parents in teaching specific skills unique to the needs of children with blindness or visual impairment (example: spatial skills, environmental cues, etc.).

- **ViSiON Transition Checklists**: Checklists are provided to assess skills that children in the different scenarios are developing for use in the preschool setting.

The ViSiON Program was peer reviewed by both national and international personnel working within the field of vision impairment. Suggestions from this review have been implemented into the program. Various parts of the ViSiON Program have been used at Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind in the Parent Infant Program during the last three years while the development of the program has been completed. This 300 page intervention guide, with accompanying CD for reproducible items, is now available for purchase through Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind. For more information, contact judn@usdb.org or call 801-629-4743.
It was called the “The 200 Club” and to be a member was simple: All you had to do was graduate at the bottom of your class. There were about 40 of us in this self-appointed, self-denigrating group in May 1964. I remember worrying that we would be called up to graduate in order of class rank. D’s in geometry and algebra had landed me in this club, not my homeroom teacher’s public prediction that I would never reach college—and if “miraculously” I did, I would flunk out in a semester. There were no MCAS (Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System) exams in 1964. But there was, of course, labeling. Winners and losers. Doers and dreamers. Kids who were headed somewhere and kids who were barely scraping by. For the first six years of school, I had been one of the kids who was headed somewhere. Top of the class. Straight A’s. Gold stars on all my papers.
And then in seventh grade I entered a new school in a new town. And there I was, alone at the blackboard, unable to diagram a sentence or parse a verb or understand the simple rule that factor times factor equals product. Humiliation came daily, along with the underlying message that I lacked the essential knowledge of every other kid in my class. I didn’t get gold stars anymore. My parents said it didn’t matter. I knew it did. One voice, one test, one label can destroy a child. Only half of Massachusetts fourth-graders were deemed “proficient or above” on the MCAS English exam this year. Only 39 percent of eighth-graders scored proficient or above in math. MCAS scores are broadcast on the news, headlined in the papers, highlighted and discussed from one school year to the next. When kids fail, their teachers, their parents, their schools, and their communities are all judged to be lacking. Each MCAS report brings back those teenage memories. Each year, more children and towns are labeled losers.

On report cards, a teacher can write, “Kate is a joy to have in class. Danny gets along well with his peers. Megan is a great artist. Sarah is good at sharing.” And a child and his parents get not just encouragement from this. But truth. Because some of the most important things—patience, kindness, loyalty, curiosity, dependability, steadfastness, grit, wonder—cannot be measured on an exam. People have long looked for predictors to success. Score well and you’ll do well. Study hard, go the best schools, and you’ll have a good life. But what exactly is a good life? Is knowledge really everything? I know, therefore I am better than someone who doesn’t know? I came home recently after a bad day and there was a gift at my door. The giver never went to college. Never won an academic award. Doesn’t have her name on a corporate door. She is like most of us. She does what she can. She sees a need and fills it. She goes out of her way to help a friend. “I wanted to put a smile on your face,” she said when I called to thank her. “I knew you needed to smile.” We are measuring the wrong things in our children because all of us are far more than the sum of our test scores.

A teacher told me I wouldn’t get into college. But I did. And I didn’t flunk out. I graduated. Taught school. Got a master’s degree. And started to write. I wanted to write long before I began. But I had a college professor who gave me E’s and scrawled “trite” on all my essays. And my essays were trite and they deserved E’s. But here’s the thing. E’s and F’s and “This is bad. This is terrible.” don’t help anyone. What helps is, “Let me show you what you did wrong.” Millie Potter, an editor at the Patriot Ledger, said this to me. And changed my life. Encouragement is vital. And patience. And practice. Practice may not make perfect but if you practice anything enough you get better. Today’s teachers and kids practice all year for MCAS. Is this really the best use of their time? Shouldn’t the primary goal of public education be educating children to want to learn, not to ace an exam? They call it assessment, but it’s judgment. They call it reform but it isn’t. To me, with four-decade-old memories still fresh, the MCAS pigeonholes children, teachers, and entire communities. And to me, there is nothing new—or productive—about this.

Beverly Beckham is a columnist for the Boston Globe. This Viewpoint was reprinted from the Boston Globe, 9/2005.
Knowing which children are more likely to be at risk for reading problems allows for early intervention to prevent the majority of these problems from developing. Learn what group and individual factors make certain children at risk.

In this article
1. Children who attend a chronically low-achieving school
2. Children with low English proficiency
3. Children unfamiliar with standard English dialect
4. Children living in communities in poverty
5. Children with cognitive, hearing, and language impairment
6. Children whose parents have a history of reading difficulty

Children who attend a chronically low-achieving school

In a school that produces large numbers of children who cannot read at grade level, year after year, it is not necessary to assess children individually. We already know that children who attend this school are being placed at risk for reading difficulties. In these cases, teachers and principals should probably consider addressing the problem with system-wide restructuring and change, rather than invest in a costly child-by-child remediation process. Good teaching and a good classroom reading program can bring most students up to or near grade level during the primary grades. But sustaining this accomplishment is difficult when a large percentage of a school’s students are failing.

Central to this restructuring is the need for effective reading instruction. A large number of students, who should be capable of reading ably given adequate instruction, are not doing so, suggesting that the instruction available is not appropriate.

If the instruction provided by the school is ineffective or insufficient, many children will have difficulty learning to read (unless additional instruction is provided in the home or elsewhere). Children whose reading difficulties arise when the design of regular classroom curriculum, or its delivery, is flawed are sometimes termed curriculum casualties.

Children with low English proficiency

Hispanic students in the United States are at especially high risk. Despite progress over the past 15 to 20 years, they are about twice as likely as non-Hispanic whites to read well below average for their age. Many of these children also have parents who are poorly educated, come from low-income families, live in low-income communities, and attend low-achieving schools.

With multiple risk factors in place, we can predict that, without excellent instruction, large numbers of these children will be at risk for reading difficulties.

Despite various controversies, considerable evidence suggests that limited or non-English-speaking language learners are generally more likely to become better readers of English when they receive initial instruction in their native language.

Spoken language must come before written language; it is extremely hard to read a language that still is incomprehensible to the ear. Some language-minority children arrive at school with no proficiency in English, but speaking a different language for which there are instructional guides, learning materials, and locally available proficient teachers.

These children should be taught the basics of reading in their native language while acquiring oral proficiency in English, and they should be subsequently taught to extend their first language literary skills to reading in English.

Other language-minority children will arrive at school with no proficiency in English and speak a language for which the above conditions cannot be met—and for which there are insufficient numbers of children to justify the development of the local capacity to meet such conditions.

In this case, the initial instructional priority should be developing the children’s oral proficiency in English. Print materials may be used to support the development of English language skills. But formal reading instructions in English should be postponed until an adequate level of oral proficiency in English has been achieved. Ensuring this proficiency will require extremely rich and well-adapted oral language environments.
In general, non-English speakers in the United States are highly motivated to learn English, but they still require an adequate amount of time and exposure to well-structured input from native speakers to do so.

Children unfamiliar with standard English dialect

Differences between the dialect children speak at home and the dialect taught at school may contribute to difficulties in learning to read. In the United States, some teachers, administrators, and policy makers view dialect differences not as regional variations, but as incorrect English. Some teachers develop low expectations for these students. Under these conditions, children are being placed at risk because of their unfamiliarity with standard English dialect.

Developing children’s awareness of the sounds of words—their phonemic awareness—is a critical step toward helping them learn to read. However, what they need more specifically is an appreciation of the phonemes or sounds of words that are presumed in how the words are spelled.

This is especially hard for dialect-speaking children. A teacher pointing out the “d” sound in the words sold or find can befuddle the African American child who pronounces these words sol and fine. A child who pronounces the words deaf and death in the same way is likely to be confused if the teacher uses these words in a lesson on contrasting final consonants.

However, these kinds of confusions in phonemic awareness and reading instruction can largely be avoided by making teachers more aware of dialect differences. A teacher who is sufficiently knowledgeable and sensitive about dialect will prepare materials and lessons that are consistent with the phonology, syntax, and vocabulary of the children’s dialect.

Children living in communities in poverty

Poverty undeniably poses numerous threats to children’s educational prospects. Children in low-income families tend to have uneducated parents, lack adequate nutrition, live in poor communities, and attend substandard schools. All of these factors can be detrimental to reading.

However, all else being equal, coming from a low-income family, in and of itself, does not greatly increase a child’s risk for learning to read, provided they are given the instruction and support they need. Therefore, poverty in individual families should not be used exclusively as an identifier for children at risk. Continued on page 68
It is more effective to identify children who come from families with low-income status and attend a school with large numbers of poor students.

Schools with kindergartners who are poorly prepared in language and literacy skills must have programs that are better than or at least equivalent to the programs found in schools with well-prepared kindergartners.

In order to provide such reading programs, schools with underprepared students need extra funding. To be effective, the extra funding should be used for methods with previously established success, and should be coupled with smaller student-teacher ratios, capable, experienced teachers and specialists, and a sufficient quantity of high-quality books and other materials.

**Children with cognitive, hearing, and language impairment**

Because they are one of the few professionals in contact with very young children, pediatricians, nurses, and other health care practitioners are in the best position to detect problems at routine checkups from infancy through preschool years. Day care and preschool settings also offer an important opportunity for early identification of the following kinds of risk:

**Severe cognitive deficits**

Within the normal range, IQ is moderately associated with future reading ability. But severe cognitive deficits are usually associated with very low, if any, reading achievement.

**Hearing impairment**

It has been well documented that children with hearing impairments are at risk of future reading difficulties. Although hard-of-hearing children tend to do better than deaf children, they are still at risk, even if they have good speaking abilities.

**Early language impairment**

Children acquire language at tremendously variable rates during the first four years of life. Yet some children are clearly behind by age two or three. This is an important signal. Delayed language development can be the first warning of a pervasive developmental disability, hearing impairment, or neurological problem. Any of these conditions puts a child at risk of future reading difficulties.

Often an evaluation by a speech-language professional reveals that these children have early language impairment. About 40 to 75 percent of preschoolers with such an impairment develop reading difficulties later—often along with other academic problems.

**Expressive and receptive language delays**

Children’s development of language during preschool years is strongly related to how well they will later learn to read. An infant’s achievement of “expressive” language milestones appears to have a particularly strong link to later reading achievement. Assessment of these milestones is part of regular well-baby visits and can be used to identify children at risk.

**Children whose parents have a history of reading difficulty**

A child whose parents had trouble learning to read is not destined to failure. But such children face a substantially greater risk of reading problems. Once a child is having reading difficulties in school, pediatricians or educators often discover that someone else in the family has reading difficulties.

It is wise for pediatricians to ask the parents of young children whether they had difficulty learning to read and, if so, to encourage them to lend extra enthusiasm to books and reading from the start—and to pay extra attention to signs of difficulty.

Utah Motheread/Fatheread
Helps Children and Parents Read

Overview

Motheread/Fatheread works to build parents’ skills in both reading and parenting, using reading and discussion of children’s literature. The program has grown in Utah so that more than 300 professional staff members and volunteers are reaching nearly 6,000 children and about 3,000 families each year. Motheread/Fatheread classes are now held in 28 of Utah’s 29 counties.

How the program works

Motheread/Fatheread works with both adults and children to raise early childhood literacy levels. Motheread/Fatheread builds parenting, critical thinking and literacy skills, improves family communication, and promotes reading and story sharing in the home. Families read and discuss high-quality, multicultural children’s books. Also, parents are encouraged to use their imaginations to connect universal themes, values, and ideas to their own lives and families.

Motheread/Fatheread has societal benefits because it works with families of at-risk children through Head Start and Even Start programs. Nationally, independent evaluations have shown that program participants have an average gain of one grade level in reading. The Utah Humanities Council administers the program, which is based on an award-winning program developed in North Carolina.

PacifiCorp Foundation and partner support has:

• expanded the program to all Head Start and Even Start programs in Utah
• reached 1,000 families
• established program administration, training and participants follow-up
• purchased needed books, curriculum and materials
• helped train 100 new facilitators to expand the program

PacifiCorp Foundation for Learning Initiative

Motheread/Fatheread is one of five literacy initiatives supported by the PacifiCorp Foundation for Learning. The Foundation is providing $1 million over three years to improve early childhood literacy rates in communities served by Utah Power and Pacific Power in Idaho, Utah, Oregon, Washington and Wyoming. Motheread/Fatheread is in the third year of its $300,000 funding.

Partners


“Motheread/Fatheread is unique because it works with both adults and children. Its value lies in the fact that it raises early childhood literacy levels.”

–Pippa Keene, Program Director

Information about this program can be found online at: http://www.pacificorpfoundation.org/index.htm
Celebrating A 3-Tier Model That Works

In the past three years, our teachers have noticed a marked decrease in the reading ability of our students. Teachers in all subject areas were approaching the English teachers, asking them to “teach these kids how to read!” We were inundated by the needs of second language learners and an increase in students that qualify for free and reduced lunch, we all agreed we needed to revamp the current system to address these issues (see Figure 1). To find out just what help was needed, we assessed the reading ability of our entire student body. When this process was completed, we found that 60 percent of our student population was reading two or more grades below grade level. While no one was surprised there were reading issues, no one expected this huge of a percentage to have a problem! It was clear to our school that things had to change and many teachers celebrated the necessary overhaul in our literacy program. The changes we instituted have been exhausting, but the results have been worth the hard work. This article will take you through our journey of change and explain our cause for celebration.

To allow us to make the necessary changes in class structure and instruction, we wanted as much information about our students and their reading needs as possible. Using the screening and diagnostic results from AIMS, Dibels, QRI, NSSI, and the STAR Reader assessments, we learned we needed different classes for students with intensive decoding/fluency needs, moderate decoding/fluency needs, modest decoding/fluency needs, and no significant decoding/fluency needs. We pondered and researched how we could effectively meet the needs of the different levels. It was clear to us and verified by the test results that some students needed more reading instruction than others. At the onset, it appeared to be a logistical nightmare; however, with immense support from the administration, the counseling center, and UPDC, we implemented a 3-Tiered Literacy model. Using this model helped us transform our data into useful, research based classroom instruction. By creating flexibly scheduled classes, students were placed into classes according to their fluency, decoding, and comprehension needs, but are able to change classes as their abilities improve and their needs change.

After analyzing the data, we decided to recreate the reading classes to meet the specific needs represented in the assessments. As a result, students reading below grade level are required to take a needs-specific reading class in addition to their Language Arts class. Brief descriptions of our tiers follow. (See Figure 1)

| Tier 1 | Curriculum is mandated by Language Arts State Core Curriculum and managed by Taylorsville Network Vertical Team collaboration among the local high school and its feeder junior highs. All students (Regular Ed, ELL and Resource) are included in this tier. Aides assist Tier 3 students in classroom activities. All teachers have been SIOP trained to help serve ELL students. Additionally, biannually we are trained on making accommodations for students with learning disabilities. Since 2001, all Professional Development has focused on content area literacy and 6+1 Traits Writing. |
| Tier 2 | All seventh grade students reading on grade level or one grade level below are required to take a semester-long Developmental Reading class. This class focuses on Word Study, Fluency, and Comprehension/Metacognition strategies; text structures are the emphasis. |

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Figure 1. Eisenhower Junior High
Tier 3 B Regular Education

Select eighth, select ninth, and all seventh grade students reading two or more grades below grade level are required to take a year long Fundamentals of Reading class. This class focuses on Phonics/Word Study, Fluency, and Comprehension/Metacognition strategy development. Each class has no more than 25 students and at least two adult aides assisting the teacher and students. Curriculum is highly differentiated due to the various reading abilities in each class, but the basic class format is as follow:

20 Minutes: break into oral reading groups to promote fluency (based on reading level as distinguished by AIMS test)

20 Minutes: break into work study groups (based on results from Words Their Way spelling test) practice week’s words (words found in Words Their Way)

20 Minutes: guided reading to practice comprehension strategies

Tier 3 B Special Education

All seventh, eighth, and ninth grade students qualifying for special education in reading are required to take a year long Resource Reading class each year, with the exception of a few students who are being served in the regular education Fundamentals of Reading class. This class focuses on Phonics/Word Study, Fluency, and Comprehension strategy development. Each class has approximately 12 students. Seventh grade students are divided into three classes depending on their reading level and are taught separately from the eighth and ninth grade students. Eighth and ninth grade students are also divided into four classes depending on their reading level. The curriculum in each class is differentiated due to the various reading abilities in each class.

Tier 3 B English Language Learners

All A, B, and C ELL students are placed on an ESL teacher’s team. A team consists of three core subjects: Science, English, and Social Studies. Students rotate among these three subjects. Each of these core classes is supported by a bilingual paraprofessional whose job is to assist the teacher with class instruction, behavior management, and accommodations. Each paraprofessional is fluent in Spanish. These aides report directly to the ALP Lead. Specifically, their job is to help with accommodating the ESL students. These accommodations include: translating content information and general directions, reading tests, clarifying and providing additional support on class assignments, helping students finish assignments, and tracking assignments and grades for the ALP Lead. Depending on individual need, in addition to their team classes, A and B ESL students attend an Oral and Reading and Writing class.

As you can see, our literacy reconstruction is working! With instruction backed by solid research, we have seen significant growth in all students that qualified for a remedial reading or resource reading class (see figure 2). In addition, with extra knowledge about content area literacy provided by school-wide professional development, many non-English teachers have had success with academic reading in their content classes. Also, attendance rates for chronically truant students tutored in the Next Steps reading program have increased dramatically. The best news for us is that our toughest students are motivated to work in reading class because they see the improvement in their scores and this motivation has effortlessly carried over to their content classes (see student testimonials). Since our data shows such incredible growth, next year we are planning to add more interventions for more students. We need to extend the remedial reading program to all eighth and ninth graders reading two or more grades below grade level. Additionally, we would like to implement more intensive reading intervention programs for students that do not qualify for special education, yet are reading several grades below grade level. Currently, we are brainstorming ways to fund the significantly lowering of all reading class loads and to hire reading paraprofessionals to assist with small group instruction. We firmly believe a reading class is most successful if it is small and the students are able to work directly with an adult, either a teacher or paraprofessional. Yet we are relieved because finally, the hard work is done; the structure is in place. Now our goal is to obtain the resources to sustain the formation.

As we celebrate our successes, we have had opportunities as being a model UPDC 3-Tiered Reading Site, to help others set up a literacy model that works in their schools. We have been visited by five schools that have the same literacy struggles as Eisenhower, and they have requested assistance as they embark upon their journey. Assisting other educators has been as rewarding as helping our students. As we prepare for our CEC visit, we hope to further our message—GOOD READING INSTRUCTION WORKS! Just know what your students need and be willing to plan and change accordingly.

Student Testimonials:

• This class is helpful because it helps me with my reading because I was at a second grade reading level and now I am at a 5th reading level.
• This class has been helpful because I can read better in other classes and can spell better.
• This class has been helpful because it has 4 teachers to help you with your work and your reading and the classes are smaller so we get more one-on-one help.
• I think that this class has really helped me because I can read faster and I can say words that are harder for me by sounding them out. I know that this class will help me in the other ones, like it has been doing.
• This class has been helpful because I can read better and I am getting better grades.
• I think this class has been helpful because it helped me read more comfortably to people and it also helped me read faster. Now I can picture the story that I’m reading in my head. Thanks!

Figure 2

Benchmark 7th Graders

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Jill Baillie, Reading/Language Arts Teacher and ESL Coordinator, Eisenhower Junior High, Granite School District
The guiding standard that opens the gates to remedial and support services in schools across the nation, the “discrepancy formula,” has undermined the ability of teachers to provide timely and effective assistance for students with learning disabilities who are struggling in school. It virtually requires that students “crash and burn” academically before they can gain access to special education services and it reinforces failure, ultimately making remediation much more difficult.

Why must children wait to get help?

It may be that general educators are often unprepared and unwilling to say that students need more intensive instruction than they can give, more individualized instruction, or a different pedagogical approach. Parents may not be ready to have their child “classified” as having special education needs. They may doubt that their child will benefit from special services and see no reason why the general education faculty and administration cannot provide the necessary instruction and support to make the problem (also known as the “reason for referral”) go away.

In so many cases, access to services is denied until the damage is so apparent, the struggle so pronounced, so visible, so overwhelming, and so destructive to the student’s self-image that it is virtually impossible for teachers and parents to provide comfort and assistance.

What does the discrepancy formula do to enhance a teacher’s ability to serve a student with learning disabilities?

Does the discrepancy formula insure that children will get help before they become caught in a cycle of failure? NO.

Does the discrepancy formula insure that children will get help once they are in a cycle of failure? NO.

Does eligibility for services, as determined by the aptitude/achievement discrepancy, help inform a teacher about what needs to be taught? NO.

Does documentation of a discrepancy provide a clear sense of how a student learns best and what skills need reteaching, fine-tuning or just reviewing? NO.

The Discrepancy Formula:

How the Aptitude-Achievement Formula Keeps Educators from Doing Their Jobs

Parents may not be ready to have their child “classified” as having special education needs. They may doubt that their child will benefit from special services and see no reason why the general education faculty and administration cannot provide the necessary instruction and support to make the problem (also known as the “reason for referral”) go away.

In so many cases, access to services is denied until the damage is so apparent, the struggle so pronounced, so visible, so overwhelming, and so destructive to the student’s self-image that it is virtually impossible for teachers and parents to provide comfort and assistance.

What does the discrepancy formula do to enhance a teacher’s ability to serve a student with learning disabilities?

Does this eligibility process assist in determining for how long intervention might be needed, the preferred frequency (or intensity) of intervention, and the tools and procedures that might work best to address the areas of academic need? NO.

So, why do we continue to rely on an aptitude/achievement discrepancy if it holds so little value to teachers? The answer has everything to do with access to services. The discrepancy formula gives students a ticket to ride, a way to access the system of special education support.

It is important to note that while the education community recognizes unexpected poor performance as the hallmark of learning disabilities, the methods of measurement used to...
determine eligibility for services are disparate at best. Determinations of eligibility can be based on:

- informal estimates and judgments, which allow for great flexibility, even overriding formula-driven decisions.

- approaches that determine grade-level expectancies and the extent to which a child deviates from those levels. This method uses a constant level of deviation, such as one or two years below grade placement, but does not take into account the number of years a child has been in school or the fact that a two-year delay for an eleventh grader is not the same as a two-year delay for a fourth grader.

- a graduated deviation system where a one-year discrepancy might be used for a child in grades one through three, one-and-a-half years for a child in grades four through six, and so forth.

- mathematical formulae to quantify discrepancy in the form of expected achievement levels, calling upon IQ or reading scores, or mental age as the underlying standard.

- standard score discrepancies (z scores) which convert achievement and IQ scores into standard scores with the same mean and standard deviation, allowing for comparison of scores across tests, subtests, ages, grades, etc.

- regression models which avoid the over-identification of children with IQ scores above 100 as well as the under-identification of children with IQ scores below 100.

If we ran a really nice study, plugging in test scores for the same children, but using these different approaches to identification, we’d likely find students qualifying for services using some approaches and not qualifying using others. So, why do we continue to rely on the concept and practice of an aptitude/achievement discrepancy? Is it just because we have nothing better to put in its place?

It would be a mistake to simply abandon current models and the laws and regulations that drive current decision-making in special education. Children, parents, teachers, and hard-working school personnel would be victims of this break from the status quo. It would, however, be a tragedy if we, having lived with our flawed system for so long, did not act upon the realization that we can revisit our options, propose alternatives and re-engineer our systems to reflect decisions driven by consensus, experience, and data.

**About the author:** Dr. Horowitz is Director Of Professional Services at the National Center for Learning Disabilities, Inc. This article has been adapted from Dr. Horowitz’s presentation at the 49th Annual Conference of The International Dyslexia Association.
Successful International Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) Conference

On April 5-8, 2006, Utah played host to the annual CEC Convention, the world’s largest convention devoted to special and gifted education. Snow and rain failed to dampen the spirits of over 4,500 participants from around the world. In fact, it was so wet one day that it rained inside some sessions inside the Salt Palace! Hundreds of sessions, poster presentations and meetings were held during the day with additional social events and dinners in the evening. Utah supported this effort by providing a sea of 478 yellow-shirted volunteers, students, and educators representing the Utah Mentor Teacher Academy. A big thanks goes out to Debbie Ballard, Chairperson of Local Arrangements Committee, for her outstanding contributions in coordinating all our local efforts. Hats off to all who aided in this effort, and especially to our very own Terri Mitchell, Program Specialist of the Utah Personnel Development Center (UPDC), who organized and led the volunteer effort; and Suraj Syal (UPDC) for organizing the many performing groups at the convention.
Jeanette Misaka, Ph.D.
Receives CEC-Pioneer Division Outstanding Contributor Award

The Pioneer Division was proud to honor Jeanette Misaka of Utah for her long time contributions to Special Education. During the Pioneer Division Showcase Session at the International Council for Exceptional Children Conference held in Salt Lake City, she received the Outstanding Contributor Award. Colleagues and past students from her career at the University of Utah shared stories and anecdotes during the session. A common thread was the tremendous impact Jeanette has provided, not only on an individual level, but also at the state and national levels through her work in special education. Jeanette took an opportunity to address the session and shared vignettes from her childhood years growing up in the Japanese Internment Camps during World War II. Jeanette is an emeritus clinical associate professor of special education at the University of Utah and an education specialist in the Education Equity Section at Utah Office of Education. She has served with numerous professional organizations (such as several leadership positions with the American Association of University Women) and worked on University committees, including several task forces on areas of diversity. She is a current member and past president of Delta Kappa Gamma, Mu Chapter, and is on the Salt Lake Community College Advisory Committee.

Katrina Christensen-Trade and Technical Education Sterling Scholar

It’s time to celebrate the high school years of Katrina Christensen. On April 4, Katrina became our region’s Trade and Technical Education Sterling Scholar. She was judged on her own merits without special privileges. Motivation, determination, and hard work were the vehicles that brought her to this junction.

She has worked hard in high school. She has been willing to enroll in difficult classes such as: Algebra I, Algebra II, and Geometry. Even with these hard classes, she has been on the High Honor Roll for seven semesters and was inducted into the National Honor Society as a sophomore.

Katrina passed the Utah Basic Competency Skills Test the first time it was given, without accommodations or modifications.

Special Education provided support, but Katrina’s success, as exemplified by her achievements in high school, is all her own.

Sylvia Butterfield, Special Education Department Head, North Sanpete High School
Educator of the Year Awarded

2006 Learning Disabilities Association of America Educator of the Year Award Goes to Utah Teacher–Michelle Griner

For the first time ever a Utah teacher has won the prestigious Sam Kirk National Educator of the Year Award. Michelle Griner, Resource Teacher at Willow Canyon Elementary School in Sandy, Utah was honored recently at the LDA National Conference in Florida for her accomplishments. Michelle received her BS and a Master’s Degree in Communicative Habilitation from BYU. She also holds National Board Certification in the area of Exceptional Needs Specialist/Early Childhood Through Young Adulthood. She was the first special educator in Utah to achieve National Board Certification. She has received many teaching honors including receiving the Jordan School District Five Star Award in 2005 (this award is based on exceptional contributions made to the District helping the Board of Education to further its vision to provide a quality education to all students.) and the Family Links Teacher of the Year award in 2004. Congratulations to Michelle most of all for all she has done for students.

Remembering a Special Friend

Saying Goodbye to a Friend to Special Education in Utah–Eva Jean Pickering

Dr. Eva Jean Pickering passed away suddenly on January 19, 2006 as the result of an automobile accident.

Eva Jean was the co-director of the SEPS Learning Center and gave much service in the special education field over the years. She served for many years on the state and national boards of the Learning Disabilities Association and in numerous professional service organizations and was a friend to students with all kinds of disabilities, encouraging them to reach their potential. Eva’s passing is a great loss to the special education community.
Augumentative and Alternative Communication
Summer Training Opportunity
University of Utah, Department of Special Education
WHAT: Augmentative and Alternative Communication
Instructional Strategies
WHEN: June 12-16, 8:30 am -4:30 pm
• Electronic Communication Aids (June 19-23, 8:30 am to 4:30 pm)
• All trainings in SLC at the University of Utah
INFORMATION: Susan Johnston at 801-581-5187 or Johnst_S@ed.utah.edu
• Call Now - Class Size Limited

Family Links North Conference; Utah Parent Center
WHEN: Friday and Saturday, June 16 - 17, 2006
WHERE: Murray High School, Murray, Utah (Salt Lake County)
WHAT: Keynote Speaker: Kim and Fran Peek (Kim is the inspiration behind the 1988 Tom Cruise/Dustin Hoffman
Oscar-winning motion picture “Rain Man”)• This conference will feature breakout sessions, disability-specific
tracks, exhibitor fairs, networking opportunities, and much more!
Visit: www.utahparentcenter.org for more information and updates!

Building Networks-Planning for the Future
Implementing a Three-Tier Model
WHERE: Provo Marriott Hotel
WHEN: June 12-14, 2006
WHO: School teams: see overview flyer online at: www.updc.org
COST: Free to qualified Utah school teams
INFO?: janetgibbs@schools.utah.gov, (801) 538-7716; OR
amberl@updc.org, (801) 272-3431
TO REGISTER: online registration only at: www.updc.org

Dr. Richard Lavoie to visit Utah
Dr. Richard Lavoie, author of the new book, It’s So Much Work to Be
Your Friend, Helping the Child with Learning Disabilities Find Social
Success, will be presenting at the Learning Disabilities Association of
Utah Conference on January 19, 2007 in the Salt Lake Area. The presenta-
tion will be held in the evening from 5:00 to 9:00, and licensure points
will be available. “Rick examines the special social issues surrounding a wide variety of learning
disabilities, including ADD and other attentional disorders, anxiety, paralinguistics, visual-spatial
disorders, and executive functioning.” This presentation will be beneficial to professionals
as well as family members.

Fourth Annual Utah Conference on Effective Practices in Special Education
& Rehabilitation:
Interventions Across the Lifespan
This statewide conference is known for high quality presenters, engaging
breakout sessions, and a relaxed yet professional environment.
WHAT: Four professional development strands over 4 days.
Nationally recognized keynote speakers, and excellent regional
and local presenters each day, 9:00-10:15
6/19-Dr. David Chard, Literacy
6/20-Dr. Malachy Bishop, Post-secondary services
6/21-Dr. George Sugai, Positive behavior supports
6/22-Dixie Jordan, Parents and families
WHERE: Utah State University campus
WHEN: June 19-22, 2006, 8:30-4:30 daily
More information and to register: http://sped.usu.edu/EPC/2006.html

Call for Posters—Effective Practices Conference:
Intervention Across the Life Span
Proposals must be submitted online (go to http://sped.usu.edu/EPC/ and
follow the POSTER SUBMISSION link) and no hard copies of propos-
als are required or accepted. Submission deadline for all proposals is
May 1, 2006—late proposals will not be accepted. Confirmation that
your proposal has been received will be sent by return email.

E-ssential Guide:
A Parent’s Guide to Transitioning to Adulthood
If your child has LD and/or AD/HD, it may be overwhelming
for you (and him) to consider life beyond middle school or high school.
But, as this guide explains, planning for the future in a
realistic and thoughtful way can help your child transition to
adulthood with greater confidence and success.
Here’s what you’ll find between the covers of this guide:
• An introduction to the process of helping teens plan for a smooth
transition to college, career, and life on their own.
• Loring Brinckerhoff, Ph.D. outlines the differences between high school
and college, and offers information to help teens make an informed
decision about postsecondary education.
• Paul Gerber, Ph.D. provides guidance for teens as they prepare and
plan for future employment.
• Arlyn Roffman, Ph.D. presents an overview of the risks and realities
teens often face when learning daily living skills—and advice for
parents to help train them in these essential skills.
• Recommended Resources: Books, articles, and websites
To download this FREE guide in PDF format, go to:
http://www.schwablearning.org/articles.asp?r=1097
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Special Education Services

- Nan Gray • Director of Special Education.............................................................538-7757 • nan.gray@schools.utah.gov
- Peggy Milligan • Coordinator of Special Education...........................................538-7587 • peggy.milligan@schools.utah.gov
- Bruce Schroeder • Specialist, Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) ..........................................................................................................................538-7580 • bruce.schroeder@schools.utah.gov
- Carol Anderson • Specialist, Emotional Disturbance/Mental Health.............538-7727 • carol.anderson@schools.utah.gov
- Lisa Arbogast • Coordinator, Federal and State Compliance Officer ..........538-7568 • lisa.arbogast@schools.utah.gov
- Wendy Carver • Specialist, Assessment and Accountability ....................538-7639 • wendy.carver@schools.utah.gov
- Glenna Gallo • Specialist, Monitoring & UPIPS ...................................................538-7898 • glenna.gallo@schools.utah.gov
- Janet Gibbs, Specialist, Literacy, SLD, Access to the General Curriculum ....538-7716 • janet.gibbs@schools.utah.gov
- Susan Loving • Specialist, Transition, OT/PT Services......................................538-7645 • susan.loving@schools.utah.gov
- Cal Newbold • Specialist, Fiscal and Data Issues .............................................538-7724 • cal.newbold@schools.utah.gov
- Connie Nink • Specialist, Preschool, Developmental Delay .........................272-3431 • connie.nink@schools.utah.gov
- Jocelyn Taylor • Specialist, TBI, Autism, Communication Disorders ..........538-7726 • jocelyn.taylor@schools.utah.gov
- Christine Timothy • Specialist, Severe Disabilities, Vision Impaired and Hearing Impaired.................................................................538-7576 • chris.timothy@schools.utah.gov

Utah Personnel Development Center

2290 East 4500 South, #220 Salt Lake City, Utah 84117 • 272-3431 or 800-662-6624
- Ginny Eggen Ext. 210 ..........................................................................................ginnye@updc.org
- Kit Giddings Ext. 209 ..........................................................................................kitg@updc.org
- Michael Herbert Ext. 207 .................................................................................michaelh@updc.org
- Loydene Hubbard Berg Ext. 217 ......................................................................loydeneb@updc.org
- Tom Johnson Ext. 243 .......................................................................................tomj@updc.org
- Terri Mitchell Ext. 204 .......................................................................................terrim@updc.org
- Julie Mootz Ext. 208 ..........................................................................................juliemo@updc.org
- Connie Nink Ext. 223 ........................................................................................connien@updc.org
- Hollie Pettersson Ext. 218 .................................................................................holliep@updc.org
- Mark Riding, Team Leader Ext. 206 .................................................................markrj@updc.org
- Amber Roderick-Landward Ext. 205 .................................................................amberl@updc.org
- Suraj Syal Ext. 247 ............................................................................................surajs@updc.org

Utah State Improvement Grant

2290 East 4500 South #260, Salt Lake City, Utah 84117 • 272-3431 or 800-662-6624
- Bruce Schroeder, Project Director, Ext. 212 ......................................................bruces@utahsignal.org
- Dan Morgan, Ext. 216 .......................................................................................danm@utahsignal.org

Utah Parent Center

2290 East 4500 South, #110, Salt Lake City, Utah 84117 • 272-1051
- Helen Post, Director ..........................................................................................helenpo@provo.edu