HASKINS LITERACY INITIATIVE

HLI promotes the science of teaching reading — through comprehensive professional development, coaching and classroom support to make teachers “method-proof” masters of literacy practices — by designing and conducting research — by engaging in advocacy to inform public policy and improve reading achievement for every child. HLI is affiliated with Haskins Laboratories, a private non-profit research institute, founded in 1935, with a primary focus on speech and language and their biological basis. Since 1965, Haskins has also been involved with reading research, quickly becoming a world leader.

The Class of 2016—currently filling fourth grade classrooms throughout the state—has sent Connecticut two clear messages. It’s possible to improve reading achievement. Will you commit to leading us there?

TEACHERS AND STUDENTS CAN WORK WITH “IMPOSSIBLE” LITERACY obstacles, such as poor academic readiness, challenging physical, emotional or behavioral needs, the turbulence of transiency. With the right tools, training and support, teachers can move more children onto the achievement bench of reading on or above grade level. Teachers can launch more children toward literate futures.

Easy, no. Possible, yes, if we heed the voices of evidence and experience. The substantial voice of evidence says that by translating reading research into comprehensive, systematic and explicit classroom practice, teachers can move students. It tells us that teachers aren’t receiving this information at the optimal time and place—during their pre-service education. It suggests that we raise our expectations. But evidence also supports the promise, progress and payoff of quality, evidence-based professional development and coaching like that provided by Haskins Literacy Initiative.

BACK IN 2004-2005 WHEN THE CLASS OF 2016 WAS IN FIRST GRADE, some of their Grade 1 teachers were receiving the first of two years of Haskins imbedded professional development and coaching. (Year 1 covered phonemic awareness, phonics instruction and fluency; Year 2: vocabulary and text comprehension.) Eight Haskins professional development schools posted Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) reading gains; three were in the top 16 of 575 schools tested—moving 17-28% more students up on to the Grade 3 reading goal bench. Perfect, no. Progress, yes—especially when compared with the state average of 2% fewer third grade students reaching the reading goal bench than in 2006. We anticipate that 2008 Grade 3 CMT reading scores will continue to climb in these Haskins PD schools. Why?
Literacy Lessons from the Class of 2016

This projection is based on improved Grade 1 literacy instruction, delivered by teachers who were comprehensively trained in all five strands of the evidence-based Haskins model.

Since 2000, HASKINS LITERACY INITIATIVE HAS BEEN BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN research and practice in the classroom, by training and empowering hundreds of elementary, pre-K, special education, speech and language, and ELL teachers in more than 75 public and private schools throughout the state. We know that by the time a student leaves third grade, s/he is expected to move from “learning to read” to “reading to learn.” Nearly half of Connecticut’s third graders are not reading to learn. How, then, will they someday run our country, better our world, and carry on our legacy?

EXPERIENCE HAS TAUGHT US THAT TEACHERS CAN’T GO IT ALONE. ATTITUDE, knowledge, practice, and coaching are insufficient, without commitment and administrative support for change. The Class of 2016 cries out for our leadership. We’re listening. Are you?

Progress Reports from the Field

Church Street School, Hamden

2007 CMT Grade 3 Reading: 38.1% within goal range
2006-2007 Gain: +27.9% within goal range

RANK OF RANK STATEWIDE:
3/575

We are so proud of our students’ accomplishments and are optimistic about CMT scores. Our partnership with Haskins has led to a rewarding relationship where teachers actually look forward to professional development. Dr. Evelyn Russo has created a professional learning environment where teachers’ and students’ successes are supported and celebrated.

Joyce Kossman, Principal

International School at Rogers Magnet, Stamford

2007 CMT Grade 3 Reading: 49% within goal range
2006-2007 Gain: +17.1% within goal range

RANK OF RANK STATEWIDE:
16/575

The International School at Rogers Magnet has partnered with Haskins for three years. During that time, the scores on both the Diagnostic Reading Assessment and CMT have shown significant and sustained improvement. Our teachers have gained confidence and strategies in implementing the Connecticut Blueprint for Reading Achievement including code instruction and reading comprehension. In 2007, our school made Annual Yearly Progress with gains of at least 10% in every No Child Left Behind subgroup. DRA scores showed an average improvement of 15%.

The International School at Rogers Magnet was one of five schools in Fairfield County nominated for the Lone Pine Foundation Award, which acknowledges elementary schools that have made the greatest academic gains.

Cathleen A. Cummings, Principal

How Have Our Third Graders Grown?

Class of 2016 Snapshots of the 2007 CMT Grade 3 Reading Scores

If we could describe all of Connecticut’s third graders as a public school class of 100, what would snapshots of their Connecticut Mastery Tests (CMT) reading scores reveal?

By third grade, students are expected to move from “learning to read” to “reading to learn.” No matter how we look at the picture, almost half of the students in the Class of 2016 are not reaching this goal. Reading failure cuts across all segments of the population.

- Kids below the Grade 3 reading goal bench are White, Black, Hispanic, and Asian American.

- The majority of kids below the Grade 3 reading goal bench have a long way to grow.

- Look closely at the numbers of those sitting or sprawled on the floor at the ‘basic’ and ‘below basic’ achievement levels. We are leaving almost 1/3 of the Class of 2016 behind.

THE PICTURE THROUGH THE LENS OF ETHNICITY

ON THE READING BENCH: students “at or above goal”
3 White 5 Hispanic = 1 Black 3 Asian 4 Hispanic American TOTAL 52

BELOW THE READING BENCH: students “below goal”
11 Black 13 White 1 Asian 13 Hispanic American TOTAL 48

THE PICTURE THROUGH THE SOCIOECONOMIC LENS

ON THE READING BENCH: students “at or above goal”
7 eligible for free or reduced-cost meals 45 not eligible TOTAL 52

BELOW THE READING BENCH: students “below goal”
24 eligible for free or reduced-cost meals 24 not eligible TOTAL 48

UP-CLOSE FOCUS ON LEVEL OF READING SKILLS

STANDING ON THE READING BENCH: 15 advanced
SITTING ON THE READING BENCH: 38 at-goal TOTAL 53*

STANDING ON THE FLOOR: 11 basic
SITTING ON THE FLOOR: 20 below basic TOTAL 48*

*Numbers rounded, do not add to 100
To quote our colleague, Louisa Moats, teaching reading is rocket science. To reach the literate universe of unlimited possibilities, every would-be reader must undertake a daunting journey. First, s/he must attain “phonemic awareness” (PA), a groundbreaking concept discovered at Haskins Laboratories in the 1970s. Phonemic awareness is the essential, but abstract idea that each word has its own unique sequence of individual speech sounds. This skill is highly predictive of future reading achievement. Following PA “lift off,” would-be readers must apply this concept to master phonics (to “decode” words), develop reading fluency (reading text automatically and with intonation), increase vocabulary knowledge (knowing what words mean), and develop text comprehension (constructing meaning by connecting text with prior knowledge). Other essential literacy skills such as handwriting, spelling and writing must also be mastered. It took NASA to send a man to the moon. What do teachers need to propel students towards literate, successful futures? Science. Science must be the foundation of the big-picture understanding, explicit knowledge, schematics, sequencing, and flight simulations required to effectively chart and carryout an important, complex educational mission of such magnitude. Science must elevate standards and facilitate feedback—assessments, data collection and accountability. Science must shape, guide and pilot new research explorations and apply enhanced understanding.

Haskins Literacy Initiative Is a Launch Pad

MISSION IMPOSSIBLE

- Teachers lack knowledge about effective, evidence-based approaches to reading instruction that isn’t delivered in pre-service education
- Teachers have minimal administrative support and school-wide commitment
- Low expectations for students
- Educational philosophies not supported by research

MISSION POSSIBLE

+ Teachers knowledgeable about evidence-based approaches to reading instruction
+ Strong administrative support of team on all levels—scheduling, materials, observation, involvement
+ High, but realistic, expectations for all students
+ Educational philosophies supported by research

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Haskins Literacy Initiative Is a Launch Pad

MISSION IMPOSSIBLE

- Funding inadequate for quality professional development and materials
- School-wide behavioral models non-existent or ineffective
- Reliance on reading programs and products that promise quick-fix solutions
- Beliefs and attitudes that don’t support possibility of change
- Assessment viewed as a necessary evil
- Business as usual

MISSION POSSIBLE

+ Intentional funding allocations to support achievement outcomes
+ Effective school-wide behavioral models
+ Persistence, time and provision of seamless reading instruction across grades (Pre-K to Grade 3)
+ Beliefs and attitudes that support change
+ Appropriate use of assessment to monitor progress and differentiate instruction
+ Student achievement is valued above all

AND WE HAVE LIFTOFF!

Haskins Literacy Initiative bridges the gap between research and classroom practice. Two translational research projects—Early Reading Success and Mastering Reading Instruction—have served as learning laboratories for putting science into practice and effectively coaching adult learners—that is, the teachers—who transfer this knowledge to their students. Like any good instructor, HLI mentors continually apply classroom experiences, incorporate the latest quality research, and monitor success to deliver comprehensive, sequential, state-of-the-art professional development in all areas of literacy instruction described previously.

HLI speaks with the voice of experience. We understand how adults learn and know it is important to go beyond merely introducing concepts. Through classroom support, modeling and coaching, we help teachers master how to teach all five core components of reading. We have learned that our most successful teachers are completely supported by principals who do whatever is necessary to schedule professional development time, attend meetings, understand what HLI is all about, learn firsthand how things are going in the classroom, and find the funds to purchase recommended materials and supplies. We seek to partner with leaders who understand there are no quick fixes, but are committed to the belief that no child will be left behind only when no teacher is left behind.
Prevention Is the First Line of Defense for Improving Reading Outcomes

How can we enhance reading outcomes for all students, whether typically developing, learning disabled, or difficult to teach?

Response to Intervention (RTI), also known as Response to Intervention, proposes models to prevent learning disabilities by guaranteeing that each child has a foundation of quality, research-based classroom instruction. The promise of RTI for all students, especially those most at risk for reading difficulties, rests on early intervention, effective instruction, and intentional monitoring to appropriately move students in and out of three (or more) levels of increasingly intense instruction.

Jack Fletcher, Ph.D., set the stage at the RTI Summer Institute cosponsored by Haskins Literacy Initiative and the Connecticut Branch of the International Dyslexia Association, by immediately dispelling two myths about Response to Instruction. According to the keynote speaker, RTI is not new or untested, but a model developed over nearly three decades that has been shown to increase test scores and decrease special education referrals in school districts around the country. Further, a solid research base supports the need to shift towards an RTI mindset.

Further, a solid research base supports the need to shift towards an RTI mindset. The flat-line failure of traditional special education approaches is all the more striking when compared with the considerable gains of early, RTI-style prevention and intervention. Prevention studies by Fletcher and others commonly show that 70-90% of Kindergarten-Grade 2 students most at risk for reading difficulties can learn to read in the average range. Fletcher cautioned that successful RTI implementation "is not simple and will not happen unless all of the players are at the table. It's about breaking down general education and special education silos to create school-wide reform that will benefit all students." Decisions about screening, progress monitoring, and response criteria necessitate new problem solving approaches and good data management systems. But there is a wealth of effective, evidence-based instructional strategies for all levels of RTI. And, there is quality professional development like that provided by Haskins Literacy Initiative, to help teachers deliver effective, evidence-based reading instruction to every child when s/he needs it most—at the start of the road to reading.

Response to Instruction

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JOIN US

Be a Reading Leader
In the Know

Receive news about professional development opportunities, conferences and seminars, exciting research findings, and important legislative actions aimed at improving reading achievement for every child.

VISIT OUR WEBSITE TODAY—WWW.HASKINS.YALE.EDU/HLI

Leaders are called to stand in that lonely place between the no longer and the not yet and intentionally make decisions that will bind, forge, move and create history.

We are not called to be popular, we are not called to be safe, we are not called to follow.

We are the ones called to take risks, we are the ones called to change attitudes, to risk displeasures.

We are the ones called to gamble our lives for a better world.

Mary Lou Anderson
April 1970