

# THE READING LEADER

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INITIATIVE

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## 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.

## Literacy Lessons from the Class of 2016



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?

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE

### IN THIS ISSUE:

CLASS OF 2016 TEACHES  
CAN-DO LITERACY LESSONS 1

GOLD STAR CMT PROGRESS 2

IF CONNECTICUT THIRD  
GRADERS WERE A CLASS  
OF 100 3

FROM MISSION IMPOSSIBLE  
TO LITERACY LIFTOFF 4

RTI PROMOTES PREVENTION 6

THE HONOR GOES TO  
DR. DILLON 6

JOIN HASKINS LITERACY  
INITIATIVE 8

LEADING FROM IN-BETWEEN 8

**THE READING LEADER**

**EDITOR**  
Lesley Schurmann

**DESIGN & PRODUCTION**  
Gary J. Moss

**HLI PROJECT DIRECTOR**  
Margie B. Gillis, Ed.D.,  
Haskins Senior Scientist

**RESEARCH**  
Susan Brady, Ph.D.,  
Haskins Senior Scientist

**HLI STAFF**  
Elke Blanchard  
Caitlin Dillon, Ph.D.  
Kimberly Herard  
Katherine Kuckens  
Mary Ellen Lavalette  
Linda Liss-Bronstein  
Teresa López-Lebrón  
Evie Lowe  
Margaret Marinelli  
Wendy North  
Pam Nuzzo  
Evelyn Russo, Ph.D.  
T. Diane Wilder

**HASKINS LITERACY INITIATIVE** works with schools in towns throughout Connecticut, including Cromwell, East Hartford, Hamden, Hartford, Stamford, and Waterbury. Among HLI's other partners are the Connecticut State Department of Education and Achievement First.

**THE READING LEADER** is published quarterly by Haskins Literacy Initiative. We welcome feedback from fellow Reading Leaders!

**HASKINS LABORATORIES**  
300 George Street, Suite 900  
New Haven, CT 06511  
www.haskins.yale.edu/hli  
203 865-6163 voice  
203 865-8963 fax

**Literacy Lessons from the Class of 2016** CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

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 GAIN 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 GAIN 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?

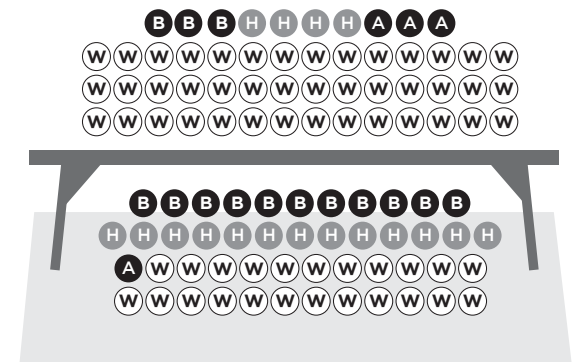
By third grade, students are expected to move from *learning to read* to *reading to learn*. No matter how we look at the picture, almost half of the students in the Class of 2016 are *not* reaching this goal. Reading failure cuts across all segments of the population.

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

**THE PICTURE THROUGH THE LENS OF ETHNICITY**

**+ ON THE READING BENCH:** students "at or above goal"  
**B** = 3 Black      **W** = 42 White  
**A** = 3 Asian      **H** = 4 Hispanic American  
**TOTAL: 52**

**- BELOW THE READING BENCH:** students "below goal"  
**B** = 11 Black      **W** = 23 White  
**A** = 1 Asian      **H** = 13 Hispanic American  
**TOTAL: 48**

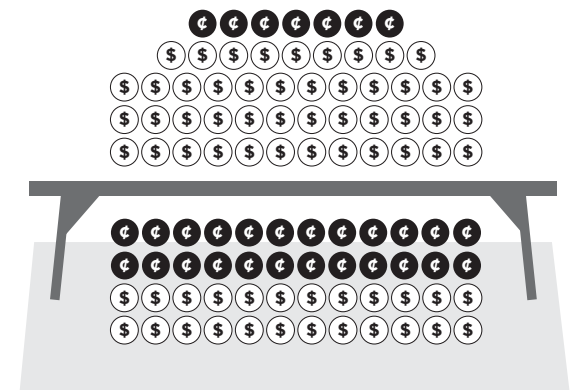


Kids below the Grade 3 reading goal bench come from every economic sector.

**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**



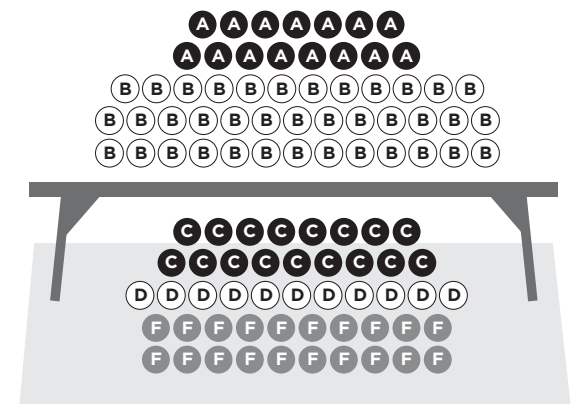
The majority of kids below the Grade 3 reading goal bench have a long way to grow.

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 way behind.

**UP-CLOSE FOCUS ON LEVEL OF READING SKILLS**

**+ STANDING ON THE READING BENCH:**  
**A** = 15 advanced  
**SITTING ON THE READING BENCH:**  
**B** = 38 at-goal  
**TOTAL: 53\***

**- STANDING ON THE FLOOR:**  
**C** = 17 proficient  
**SITTING ON THE FLOOR:**  
**D** = 11 basic  
**SPRAWLED ON THE FLOOR:**  
**F** = 20 below basic  
**TOTAL: 48\***



\*Numbers rounded, do not add to 100.

## HLI IN ACTION

Teaching Reading /s  
Rocket Science

## 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
- 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

## FAILURE TO LAUNCH!



**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 carry out 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.

## HLI IN ACTION

Haskins Literacy Initiative  
Is a Launch Pad

## 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
- 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!



**HLI BRIDGES THE GAP BETWEEN RESEARCH AND CLASS-**room 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.* ■

## RESPONSE TO INSTRUCTION

## Prevention Is the First Line of Defense for Improving

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

**RESPONSE TO INSTRUCTION, ALSO KNOWN AS**

Response to Intervention, or RTI, 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.

Close to half of the 6.2 million children in special education today are identified as learning disabled (LD); 80-90% of those have reading disabilities. Improved reading instruction prevents or reduces learning disabilities so that special education classes are reserved for a much smaller group of children—those who do not respond to quality instruction and, therefore, are the most difficult to teach. In 2004, Congress legislated changes to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to stem the tide of unsuitable special ed placements. Currently, RTI is not mandated, however states are encouraged to implement Response to Instruction models as an alternative mode of LD identification. Additionally, students cannot be identified for special education without documentation that low achievement is not due to lack of appropriate instruction.

Another key aspect of IDEA 2004 is that states cannot require districts to use IQ tests to identify students as learning disabled. Research has shown that longstanding approaches to special education placement, including IQ-discrepancy or low achievement models, are based on faulty or incomplete assumptions. “Wait to fail” increases instructional casualties among students ↗

## Dr. Caitlin Dillon Receives First Jeanne S. Chall Research Grant

**WERE SHE ALIVE TODAY, JEANNE S. CHALL WOULD**

be smiling at the news that Haskins mentor Caitlin M. Dillon, Ph.D. has been named as the first recipient of a research grant honoring Chall’s contributions as an educational researcher, advocate and visionary. Like Chall, Dillon is passionate about translating research evidence into practice—in classroom literacy instruction, to influence teacher education curricula and credentialing standards, and to shape public policy and awareness.

Thanks to the award, Dillon will gain access to the Jeanne S. Chall Collection on the Teaching of Reading at the Harvard Graduate School of Education (GSE), including more than 10,000 of Chall’s own books.

Dillon aims to describe the results of Haskins’ two-year Mastering Reading Instruction (MRIn) study in the historical context of well-founded ideas about how children learn to read. MRIn focused on improving teacher knowledge, practice, and student outcomes through imbedded professional development, much of which developed from the work of Jeanne Chall

herself or her trainees (including Louisa Moats and Elfrieda Hiebert).

Chall was the first to describe the stages of reading development and helped create a readability formula to match texts to readers. She advocated the science of teaching reading—basing instruction on research evidence about how children learn to decode and understand text, rather than passing fads. According to Jerome T. Murphy, who was GSE Dean at the time of Chall’s death in 1999, “Her work included examinations of schooling and instruction, of the relationship of poverty and disability to reading difficulties and school achievement, and of the interdisciplinary nature of learning to read.” Her legacy lives on in the Jeanne Chall Reading Lab at Harvard Graduate School of Education and the continued commitment of those who investigate, observe, document and implement ways to improve literacy instruction for every child. ■

## Reading Achievement

who would have benefited from the preventive medicine of early, high quality instruction. Assessing cognitive processes wastes time and money since it does not lead to enhanced outcomes or effective intervention. Students must be given appropriate, reliable assessments—repeatedly—to uncover underlying causation, monitor response to instruction, inform custom-tailored interventions, and weed out those whose problems are not LD-related.

Evidence also supports the malleability of the brain. Good instruction and early, intense intervention geared to the specific needs of the child not only improves reading success, it “normalizes” the brain. Research has shown that with appropriate intervention, children with severe dyslexia develop “typical” brain pathways for reading, rather than cobbling together less efficient compensatory neural routes. Early, intense and appropriate intervention also fosters maintenance of reading skills beyond the intervention period. Fletcher referenced a study in which 40% of students exited special education; the average leave rate is 5%.

But perhaps the most clarion call for RTI-based reform is that special education placement sometimes stabilizes low achievement, but rarely remediates it.

Studies have shown that special education reading support—in or out of the general classroom—does not accelerate growth for the majority of students. 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. ■

## HLI STAFF AT THE END OF AN INSPIRING DAY



Left to right: Katherine Kuckens, Elke Blanchard, T. Diane Wilder, Pam Nuzzo, Caitlin Dillon, Evie Lowe, Deborah Speece (guest speaker), Susan Brady, Lesley Schurmann, Margie Gillis, Wendy North, Kim Herard, Mary Ellen Lavalette. Not pictured: Linda Liss-Bronstein, Margaret Marinelli, Evelyn Russo. PHOTO: JOSHUA KUCKENS

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*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

**Haskins Literacy Initiative**  
THE SCIENCE OF TEACHING READING

**Haskins Laboratories**  
THE SCIENCE OF THE SPOKEN AND WRITTEN WORD



Haskins Laboratories  
300 George Street, Suite 900  
New Haven, Connecticut 06511

