

Overview of Texas Reading First

A central piece of the Texas Reading First Initiative (TRFI) has been focused on district- and campus-level administrators developing the expertise to be true *instructional* leaders. Such expertise begins with an understanding of how to analyze and use different types of data. Before TRFI, most administrators possessed knowledge related to using outcome assessments such as the *Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills* (TAKS); however, many administrators had not utilized screening and diagnostic assessments or progress monitoring assessments to a great extent. Much of the professional development and technical assistance provided to districts and campuses through TRFI have centered around supporting administrators' understanding of these instructional tools and using the data gathered from them to support coaches and teachers in their work.

To help administrators connect such data to instruction occurring in their districts or on their campuses, a framework that incorporates all aspects of Reading First was created. After examining data collected from student assessments, teacher needs assessments, and other tools, district- and campus-level administrators are expected to relate these data to the different areas of the framework, including:

Leadership

Within the framework, leadership includes superintendents, principals, coaches, teachers, and others who are in charge of improving student achievement. Often, data point to professional development or accountability efforts that require coordination by an instructional leader. Superintendents and principals are looked to as the persons ultimately responsible for seeing these efforts come to fruition in their districts or on their campuses.

Assessments

Within Reading First, principals, coaches, and teachers are expected to understand and use many different types of student assessments to inform instruction. The data collected from such instruments must be combined with other data, such as observational and teacher needs assessment data, to differentiate the instruction in which students participate and the professional development in which teachers participate.

Core Reading Block

Ensuring core reading instruction is as effective as possible is key to improving students' reading. Utilizing materials that are scientifically research-based, providing instruction through flexible grouping, and differentiating to meet students' needs are essential to effective core instruction. To support such instruction, professional development, including the modeling of lessons and collaboration with fellow educators, must be based on continuing data analysis and focused on enhancing teachers' instructional knowledge and skills.

Instructional Framework

Through the TRFI, campuses have begun to implement a response to intervention (RtI) framework (e.g., 3-Tier Model) to meet the needs of their students. Such a framework includes different levels, or tiers, of instruction to meet varying student needs. Central to RtI are the use of scientifically research-based instructional strategies, ongoing analysis of progress monitoring data, and the provisions of ongoing professional development to support teachers.

Reporting and Accountability

All districts are responsible for managing their data and reporting such data to the state in a timely fashion. Without effective reporting and accountability practices, evaluation of Reading First implementation would be impossible.

Sustainability

Looking beyond the time period designated for Reading First implementation is key to sustaining instructional practices that districts and campuses have found to be successful for their teachers and students. For such sustainability to occur successfully, all other aspects of the framework must be in place and planning for future funding, personnel, and resources must occur at every level – from the classroom to the district office.

Utilization of this framework has been instrumental in several facets of the Texas Reading First Initiative, including the district- and campus-level action plans/sustainability plans that instructional leaders are required to write and revisit throughout the year. Additionally, state-level partners utilize this framework when providing technical assistance to Reading First districts.