

**Picard Center**

FOR CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND LIFELONG LEARNING  
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## **Ensuring Literacy for All Research Study**

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## 1. Introduction

The Louisiana Department of Education (LDE) created the *Ensuring Literacy for All Initiative*, a reading enhancement program for prekindergarten through fourth grade, and published it in September 2008. In the 2008-09 school year, the LDE began the program in 19 school districts and in 43 schools. This report describes the implementation progress of 12 representative schools in 10 districts during the 2008-09 school year.

The *Ensuring Literacy for All Initiative* aligns with the Louisiana Literacy Plan for kindergarten through twelfth grade and the Reading First (RF) instructional model for kindergarten through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade both currently utilized in Louisiana. The *Ensuring Literacy for All Initiative* contains the major components of RF and the Literacy Plan including:

- Explicit and systematic literacy instruction currently used in Louisiana
- School-wide implementation with substantial support from the district
- Frequent assessment of student performance and progress for early identification of struggling students
- Intensive interventions targeted at student weaknesses
- Extensive professional development and support for teachers, reinforced and revisited in job-embedded sessions facilitated by school-based literacy coaches
- Effective leadership teams in schools and districts

These components are intended to yield a school-wide system with a three-tiered instructional model, based on scientific reading research that employs ongoing assessments and extended time for reading instruction by high-quality teachers.

This report will present information on implementation level and the fidelity of intervention. The report will present the data only in aggregate and in order to direct additional support toward enhanced implementation.

## 2. Evaluation Design

The evaluation design primarily assesses program-wide implementation and instructional practices in the twelve representative schools. As part of the on-going research study, the Cecil J. Picard Center for Child Development and Lifelong Learning conducted one-day school site visits at each of the selected *Ensuring Literacy for All* schools to obtain an understanding of the implementation process within those schools aggregated at the state level. The one-day visits included:

- K-4th grade core reading classroom observations at ten minute intervals
- Pre-K observations of room arrangement and child-related displays
- Interviews with the principal, literacy coach, and pre-k teachers
- Tier II and III intervention through thirty minute observations

### 2.1. Program-wide Implementation

This set of data reveals the pointed observation results concerning recommended instructional practices derived from the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) Quick Check for Teachers following Louisiana guidelines. The *Room Arrangement & Child-Related Display (Space*

*and Furnishings*) section of ECERS was selected to appraise the pre-k classroom learning environment. The grade specific Reading Walk Through (RWT) was decided on for grades K-4 utilizing ten minute snapshots. The Intervention Observation Tool (IOT) was employed for Tier II and III thirty- minute interventions.

## **2.2. Recommended Instructional Practices**

To assess instructional practices and reading-related facilities, the evaluators used formal observations. All classroom observations were based on the ECERS Quick Check for Teachers following Louisiana guidelines *Room Arrangement & Child-Related Display* to appraise the pre-k classroom learning environment and the grade specific RWT for grades K-4 utilizing ten minute snapshots. The Florida RWT was created in collaboration with the Florida Center for Reading Research and the Center on Instruction to provide a structure for school administrators for regular viewing of the indicators of effective classroom reading instruction through brief classroom visits. The Florida RWT provides a framework for organizing and analyzing data to facilitate reflective, focused dialogue about the teaching and learning of reading, with the goal of improved student learning and achievement. The RWT tool is available at the *Just Read, Florida* website. The ECERS tool can be obtained through [www.brookespublishing.com](http://www.brookespublishing.com). The Intervention Observation Tool, which focuses on the early grades, was employed for Tier II and III intervention observations. The IOT was developed by the Center for Research in Educational Policy (CREP) at the University of Memphis. CREP provided training regarding the use of this tool.

## **3. Findings**

The findings provide detailed results about recommended instructional practices, using the ECERS Quick Check for Teachers following Louisiana guidelines *Room Arrangement & Child-Related Display*, Reading Walk Through, and Intervention Observational Tool.

### **3.1. Instructional Practices: Classroom Observations**

Formal observations assessed the recommended instructional practices, and evaluators employed a trio of tools. The Florida RWT developed for grades K-12 (site visit emphasis on grades K - 4), the IOT were utilized to assess instructional interventions for struggling readers and ECERS Quick Check for Teachers following Louisiana guidelines *Room Arrangement & Child-Related Display* to appraise the pre-k classroom learning environment. With the RWT, an observer can focus on an entire core period utilizing 14 specific guidelines, or for a 10-minute period on identifying key instructional practices that *Ensuring Literacy for All* encourages. The IOT is quite different in that it consists of observation of the complete intervention, not just a 10-minute sample. A substantial number of observations result in a finding of “not observed.” The RWT’s 10-minute windows of observation may not be long enough to identify certain practices. For example, it is entirely possible that a classroom observation would fail to see explicit comprehension instruction, especially in kindergarten or first grade, where students spend more time on phonics and phonemic awareness. (Of course in later elementary grades one would expect more comprehension instruction.) For purposes of this study, 10-minute observations enabled observers to obtain information on teachers’ classroom implementation within and across schools utilizing various core programs. Classroom observations did not occur in particular instances in four schools due to students taking the GRADE assessment in second and third grade, attending a field trip, and district-mandated LEAP remediation.

### 3.1.1. ECERS, RWT, and IOT Results

The Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale Quick Check for Teachers following Louisiana guidelines *Room Arrangement & Child-Related Display* pre-k results are displayed in the table below. Thirty-four ten minute pre-k classroom snapshots took place during the twelve school visits.

**Table 1: Observation Results for Space & Furnishings in Pre-K Research Schools**

<b>ROOM ARRANGEMENT &amp; CHILD-RELATED DISPLAY (SPACE &amp; FURNISH.) Pre-K Classrooms Observed</b>	<b>34 Total Classrooms</b>
At least three interest centers defined and conveniently equipped	32/94%
Room is neat and free of clutter	30/88%
Room is arranged to allow for supervision of all centers	30/88%
Room is arranged so that quiet centers and noisy centers do not interfere with one another	27/79%
Cozy area available (Library can be made cozy)	25/74%
Private area must be available for one or two children at a time; "no interruption rule must be enforced" and a special activity (ex. computer program) must be set up	25/74%
Child-Related Display: much of display relates to current activities and children in group	14/41%
Accessible for students with disabilities	10/29%

This pre-k component was chosen in order to determine the early literacy foundation that students receive within classrooms. Thirty-two or ninety-four percent of the classrooms observed are designed to facilitate appropriate center structure with at least three interest centers that are and conveniently equipped. Also, thirty or eighty-eight percent of the rooms are neat free of clutter and arranged to allow for supervision of all centers. Room arrangement (quiet and noisy centers not interfering with one another) was observed in twenty-seven or seventy-nine percent of the classrooms. Also, emerging in twenty-five or seventy-four percent of the classrooms studied are cozy library areas and private areas. In classrooms viewed, fourteen or forty-one percent display child-created current work both individually and as a group. Ten classrooms or twenty-nine percent exhibit accessibility for students with disabilities. Although thirty-four classrooms (representative sample) were observed, current IDEA legislation calls for inclusion of all students and provides early intervention to *Ensure Literacy for All* is in progress.

The Reading Walk Through (RWT) results aggregate kindergarten, first, second, third, and fourth grades. One hundred and seventy-two ten- minute classroom snapshots took place during the twelve school visits. The following tables depict sets of all observed classroom components, which are considered indicators of the fidelity of implementation and hence critical aspects of the K-4 ELFA program.

**Table 2: Observation Results for Classroom Structure in K-4 Research Schools**

<b>CLASSROOM STRUCTURE</b>	<b>K (40)</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> (41)</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> (28)</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> (30)</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup> (33)</b>	<b>Total of 172 Classrooms</b>
<b>Learning Objectives</b>						
Learning objectives event	19	20	20	18	24	<b>101/59%</b>
Learning objectives on target for grade-level standards	36	36	25	30	30	<b>157/91%</b>
<b>Identify grouping format</b>						
Small	5	7	6	11	9	<b>38/22%</b>
Whole	37	34	23	19	25	<b>138/80%</b>
<b>Determine levels of class engagement</b>						
Highly engaged	4	6	0	3	2	<b>15/9%</b>
Well managed	30	30	16	27	30	<b>138/81%</b>
<b>CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT</b>						
Behavior management system - positive learning environment	38	38	21	29	27	<b>153/89%</b>
Classroom arrangement conducive (whole group and reading centers)	38	36	26	28	28	<b>156/91%</b>
Daily class schedule posted (90 minutes and additional time for Tier II)	19	13	12	8	7	<b>59/34%</b>
Classroom displays	18	11	8	15	10	<b>62/36%</b>
Teacher's Interactions	37	33	21	29	25	<b>145/84%</b>
<b>INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS</b>						
Program materials are accessible and organized	39	39	22	30	26	<b>156/91%</b>
Variety of resources	38	39	21	24	25	<b>147/85%</b>

All classroom structure basics were observed at various grade levels. Three basics most frequently observed include: learning objectives on target for grade-level standards, classroom arrangement (which is conducive to whole-group instruction and reading centers), and teacher and student program materials (which are accessible and organized, e.g., teachers' guides, big books, letter-sound cards, pre-decodable and decodable books, vocabulary word lists, charts, and student readers). Also noted was a classroom behavior management system (which effectively creates a positive learning environment) and teacher's interaction with students (which reflect warmth, encouragement, and enthusiasm). Small group instruction and highly engaged (most students are authentically engaged) were least observed.

**Table 3: Observation Results for Teacher Instruction in K-4 Research Schools**

<b>TEACHER INSTRUCTION</b>	<b>K (40)</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> (41)</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> (28)</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> (30)</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup> (33)</b>	<b>Total of 172 Classrooms</b>
Clear instruction for all students including students at risk	29	31	10	19	14	<b>103/60%</b>
Program components with fidelity	29	35	20	26	23	<b>133/79%</b>
Differentiates instruction	5	2	3	8	3	<b>21/12%</b>
Explicit instruction	29	25	16	22	19	<b>111/65%</b>
Scaffolds instruction	21	12	12	20	20	<b>85/49%</b>
Provides ample opportunities for students	34	31	18	26	24	<b>133/77%</b>
Pacing	30	32	21	26	27	<b>136/79%</b>
Transitions	15	16	13	18	13	<b>75/44%</b>
Routines and procedure familiar to the students	22	32	19	23	22	<b>118/69%</b>
Active student engagement and motivation	26	34	17	24	26	<b>127/74%</b>

Teacher instruction essentials were observed at all grade levels. Two regularly observed essentials include the implementation of the core program components by the teacher with fidelity and pacing is appropriate during whole-group and at the teacher-led center. The teacher provides ample opportunities for students to practice and receive corrective and positive feedback and students remain academically engaged during student centers and independent work, as observed by the evaluators followed. Least observed was differentiated instruction (according to student needs based on assessment).

**Table 4: Observation Results for Reading Center Instruction in K-4 Research Schools**

<b>READING CENTERS</b>	<b>K (40)</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> (41)</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> (28)</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> (30)</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup> (33)</b>	<b>Total of 172 Classrooms</b>
A Center management system	7	10	9	15	17	<b>58/33%</b>
Clearly designed, labeled, and defined	8	8	8	7	11	<b>42/24%</b>
Teacher-led center	6	3	8	6	9	<b>32/19%</b>
Student centers activities build reading skills	10	12	7	14	11	<b>54/31%</b>
Academically engaged during student centers	8	10	6	10	10	<b>44/26%</b>

Although reading centers were observed at all grade levels, this component was seldom observed. A center management system indicating flexible student placement and group size was the most observed element. Students are working on activities that directly build reading skills were also noted at student centers. At the teacher-led center, reading instruction (differentiated teaching) based on student assessment was least observed.

**Table 5: Observation Results for Concepts of Print Instruction in Kindergarten Research Schools**

<b>CONCEPTS OF PRINT - Kindergarten Skill</b>	<b>K (40)</b>					<b>Total of 40 Classrooms</b>
Parts of a book (print on a page)	11	0	0	0	0	<b>11/28%</b>
Print matches a speech	3	0	0	0	0	<b>3/8%</b>
Simple punctuation	3	0	0	0	0	<b>3/8%</b>

Mastery of concepts of print should occur at the end of kindergarten. The most frequently occurring strategy observed was identification of parts of a book by the teacher. The strategies of the teacher demonstrating how print matches speech, how written words are separated by spaces, and simple punctuation rules (first-letter capitalization, ending punctuation) were observed less frequently.

**Table 6: Observation Results for Phonemic Awareness Instruction in K-1<sup>st</sup> in Research Schools**

<b>PHONOLOGICAL/PHONEMIC AWARENESS - (K-1st Skill)</b>	<b>K (40)</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> (41)</b>				<b>Total of 81 Classrooms</b>
Rhyming, word play and manipulation – <b>Kindergarten</b>	14	0	0	0	0	<b>14/56%</b>
Oral activities - segmenting, blending, manipulation - <b>First</b>	0	9	0	0	0	<b>9/22%</b>
Engaging activities and materials	18	12	0	0	0	<b>30/37%</b>
Clearly and accurately pronounces	23	14	0	0	0	<b>37/46%</b>

Phonological/phonemic awareness is a skill which should be mastered by the end of first grade. The strategy of clearly and accurately pronouncing individual sounds as the focus of the lesson, with enough volume for students to hear, was most regularly observed. The teacher using engaging activities and materials to support instruction (e.g. hand motion, clapping, puppets, Elkonin boxes, and other manipulatives to represent sounds) followed. Less viewed were oral activities (segmenting, blending, and manipulation of sounds in words) critical to fluent reading.

**Table 7: Observation Results for Phonics Instruction in K-4 Research Schools**

<b>PHONICS</b>	<b>K (40)</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> (41)</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> (28)</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> (30)</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup> (33)</b>	<b>Total of 172 Classrooms</b>
Manipulatives - (K-1st Skill)	9	5	0	0	0	<b>14/17%</b>
Visual aids	12	11	4	7	0	<b>34/20%</b>
Explicit decoding strategy to sound and blending (K-1st Skill)	8	13	0	0	0	<b>21/26%</b>
Common irregular words (K-3rd Skill)	1	6	1	0	0	<b>3/6%</b>
Letter/sound knowledge in reading and writing (1st-2nd Skill)	0	11	1	0	0	<b>12/17%</b>
Advanced phonics/word analysis (2nd-4th Skill)	0	0	3	7	0	<b>10/11%</b>
Advanced phonic elements (3rd-4th Skill)	0	0	0	5	0	<b>5/8%</b>

Most phonics strategies were observed at various grade levels. The teacher using visual aids (e.g., letter-sound cards, prefix-suffix charts) as designed by the program was the most frequently observed strategy. The teacher introducing an explicit decoding strategy to sound and blend simple words followed, which should be mastered by the end of first grade. The strategy of students applying letter/sound knowledge in reading and writing activities was noted only once during second-grade observations.

**Table 8: Observation Results for Fluency Instruction in K-4 Research Schools**

<b>FLUENCY</b>	<b>K (40)</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> (41)</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> (28)</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> (30)</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup> (33)</b>	<b>Total of 172 Classrooms</b>
Fluent reading (speed, accuracy, and prosody)	15	6	2	4	2	<b>29/17%</b>
Shared reading	13	6	5	1	4	<b>29/17%</b>
Pre-reading - scaffold feedback (Kindergarten Skill)	2	0	0	0	0	<b>2/5%</b>
Oral reading - scaffold feedback (1st-4th Skill)	0	7	6	7	10	<b>30/23%</b>
Reading Orally (1st-4th Skill)	0	9	6	6	12	<b>33/25%</b>

All fluency strategies were observed at various grade levels. The most regularly observed strategy was students reading orally (e.g., choral reading, partner reading, repeated reading). Oral reading taking place in whole group (the teacher provides immediate scaffold feedback) followed. The teacher modeling fluent reading (i.e., speed, accuracy, and prosody) during read-aloud and shared readings, and the teacher and students are academically engaging in shared reading activities (e.g. choral reading, charts, and poems) were more evident strategies observed in grades kindergarten and first grades.

**Table 9: Observation Results for Vocabulary Instruction in K-4 Research Schools**

<b>VOCABULARY</b>	<b>K (40)</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> (41)</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> (28)</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> (30)</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup> (33)</b>	<b>Total of 172 Classrooms</b>
Contextualizes unfamiliar words - student-friendly explanations	10	10	4	6	9	<b>39/23%</b>
Vocabulary instruction	13	7	4	6	8	<b>38/22%</b>
Categories key vocabulary	9	6	5	3	8	<b>31/18%</b>
Word part meaning instruction (3 <sup>rd</sup> - 4 <sup>th</sup> Skill)	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0/0%</b>
Dictionary, thesaurus, and digital tools (4th Skill)	0	0	0	0	4	<b>4/12%</b>
Prior Knowledge, questioning & other instructional activities	13	4	5	7	9	<b>38/22%</b>
Actively involved & using words in multiple contexts (K-2nd Skill)	13	4	4	0	0	<b>21/19%</b>

Most vocabulary strategies were observed at various grade levels. The teacher contextualizing unfamiliar words in stories read by using student-friendly explanations was most frequently observed. The two strategies that followed were explicit vocabulary instruction (purposeful and



ongoing as evidenced by lists of vocabulary words, graphic organizers, word walls, word sorts, etc.) and the teacher relating new vocabulary to prior knowledge (through questioning or other instructional activities). The teacher providing instruction on word- part meanings (e.g., root words, prefixes, suffixes) to determine meanings of words was not observed. Understanding word -part meanings is crucial to fluent reading.

**Table 10: Observation Results for Comprehension Instruction in K-4 Research Schools**

<b>COMPREHENSION</b>	<b>K (40)</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> (41)</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> (28)</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> (30)</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup> (33)</b>	<b>Total of 172 Classrooms</b>
Makes predictions about text	11	10	5	2	2	<b>30/17%</b>
Use prior knowledge and supporting details to make connections	13	7	3	2	5	<b>30/17%</b>
Main idea, supporting details, & sequence	14	10	2	7	2	<b>35/20%</b>
Author's purpose	3	2	5	1	0	<b>8/4%</b>
Graphic and semantic organizers (1st-4th Skill)	0	0	0	9	8	<b>17/13%</b>
Self-monitor comprehension(1st -4th Skill)	0	2	1	1	2	<b>6/5%</b>
Story grammar (1st-4th Skill)	0	2	1	0	1	<b>4/3%</b>
Discussing answers to higher-level questions (1st-4th Skill)	0	13	2	2	3	<b>20/15%</b>
Inferences from text - drawing conclusions (2nd-4th Skill)	0	0	4	6	7	<b>17/19%</b>

All comprehension strategies were observed at various grade levels. Teacher modeling and encouraging students to identify the main idea, supporting details, and sequencing was the most frequently observed strategy. Also noted at all grade levels were teacher modeling and encouragement of students to make predictions about text, and the use of prior knowledge and supporting details to make connections. Students -teacher discussions of answers to higher-level questions followed, with more emphasis being placed on this strategy in first grade. The essential strategy of self-monitoring and the use of appropriate fix-up strategies (e.g., rereading, summarizing, questioning, and clarifying, context clues) were rarely viewed at any grade level.

Research has shown that the majority of students should be successful with Tier I (core classroom instruction). The purpose of intervention is to assist those students who are in need of additional support beyond core instruction. The Intervention Observation Tool (IOT) results aggregate kindergarten, first, second, third, and fourth grade. Fourteen of either Tier II or III intervention lessons were observed during the twelve school visits utilizing twenty supplemental programs. The following table depicts a set of all observed intervention components, which are considered indicators of the fidelity of implementation and hence critical aspects of the K-4 ELFA program.

**Table 11: Observation Results for Tier II & III Intervention in K-4 Research Schools**

INTERVENTION OBSERVATIONAL MATRIX	14 Total Interventions Observed
Students actively engaged	14/ 100%
Classroom environment conducive to learning	12/86%
Interventionist & workspace well organized	13/87%
Lesson objectives clearly stated	13/87%
Evidence of explicit, systematic instruction	13/87%
Efficient use of time	13/87%
Opportunities for students to respond	14/100%
Ongoing guidance & academic feedback	14/100%
Appropriate pacing	14/100%
Student expectations	14/100%
Able to perform tasks	13/87%
Opportunities to practice	14/100%
Opportunities to read text	13/87%
Target instruction (student needs)	13/87%
Program implementation fidelity	14/100%

Based on intervention plans submitted prior to the school site visits, supplemental programs were implemented with fidelity during the intervention process. Students were actively engaged and were provided opportunities to respond and practice with the interventionist, providing ongoing guidance and academic feedback founded on student expectations. Although pacing was appropriate throughout the each session, in some situations scheduling or monitoring of the intervention schedule were problematic issues. Students were late for pull-out intervention. Also, in one instance, the Tier II classroom intervention was not initiated in a timely manner. In addition, in some instances the classroom environment for intervention was not conducive to learning, with two or more groups of five to seven kindergarten students being instructed in phonological awareness confined in a limited space, causing student distraction. It appeared that within some supplemental programs there was a need for more hands-on manipulation. Lots of the activities observed consisted of paper and pencil.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Based on the first year of implementation in 12 representative schools in 10 districts during the 2008-09 school year, there is evidence through observations that key components of the *Louisiana Literacy Plan* have changed teaching practices and that districts are focused on utilizing resources to improve student learning.

## 5. Considerations:

1. Expect all school principals to participate in grade-level and study group meetings regularly so they are able to assist and monitor staff in analyzing assessment data to design and adjust instruction.
2. Provide all school staff with professional development on administering the DIBELS assessment and the use of the instrument, as well as the use of different data sources (data triangulation) to better enable them to make better decisions about student learning needs.
3. Address fidelity implementation issues with core and intervention programs. Emphasize the importance of adhering to the intervention schedule.
4. Develop and extend teachers' understanding of differentiated instruction. Provide professional development to help teachers plan and implement differentiated instruction.
5. Recognize teachers' individual needs and provide them with targeted professional development opportunities that addresses their particular weakness.
6. Ensure that all literacy coaches have a clear job description and that the faculty is aware that 80% of the coach's time should be spent in the classroom assisting teachers.

## References

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