

# Reading First Supplemental Survey Report

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By

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# Reading First Supplemental Survey Report

This report presents analysis of a survey required by the 2007-08 Budget Bill Language (BBL) contained in Senate Bill (SB) 77, Section 6110-126-0890-06 (hereafter Provision 6) regarding reasons eligible school districts, known as Local Educational Agencies (LEAs), chose to participate in the federal Reading First (RF) program. In addition to the survey results, this report includes a comparison of California Standards Test (CST) scale scores (English/language arts component) between Reading First Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and non-Reading First LEAs, and also between Reading First schools and non-Reading First schools. Several themes emerged from the supplemental survey and from an analysis of achievement data, informed by survey results from the California Reading First Year 5 Evaluation Report (*Year 5 Report*).<sup>1</sup>

**Theme #1: Eligible non-Reading First (non-RF) LEAs fear too many requirements.** LEAs that did not apply for Reading First funding were most concerned about the possibility of Reading First being “overly prescriptive” and imposing too many requirements that would curtail their curricular flexibility and choice of program, as well as take up too many administrative resources. LEAs that did apply, on the other hand, *welcomed* the requirements of Reading First and saw the program as an opportunity to improve student achievement through increased funding for professional development and coaching and through a more focused, “coherent” approach.

**Theme #2: Approximately 50% - 60% of eligible non-RF LEAs use the Houghton-Mifflin reading program; the remainder use a wide variety of non-State Board adopted materials.** Very few of the eligible non-RF LEAs use the Open Court program, whereas RF LEAs use the Houghton-Mifflin and Open Court programs in roughly equal numbers. One corollary is that, despite the wider variety of programs in non-RF LEAs, roughly half are using the same reading program that is one of the two required by Reading First. Thus there is substantial overlap between the RF and eligible non-RF use of curricular materials.

**Theme #3: Teachers in eligible non-RF LEAs receive less professional development than those in RF LEAs.** Based on data from the *Year 5 Report*, approximately 80% of K-3 teachers in Reading First schools receive professional development. While it is difficult to draw direct comparisons without comparable data, much lower percentages of teachers in eligible non-RF LEAs are receiving commensurate levels of professional development.

**Theme #4: Reading coaches are valued by both types of LEAs, but they are less available and under-utilized in eligible non-RF LEAs.** 34% of eligible non-RF LEAs reported that 100% of their teachers have access to a reading coach; only 3% reported that 100% of their teachers actually use the coaches. While direct comparisons with RF LEAs are difficult, the *Year 5 Report* suggests much greater involvement of reading coaches in RF LEAs; 53% of the RF teachers reported that the coach was “usually available”, and 35% indicated “the coach seeks me out to assure that I have the support I need.”

**Theme #5: Perceptions of the Reading First program by RF LEAs range from “moderately positive” to “extremely positive” on a variety of factors.** As regards student achievement and the funding that LEAs receive for curricular materials, professional development, and coaching, RF LEAs have extremely positive perceptions of the effects of the Reading First program. They like the instructional and institutional “coherence” required by the program. Similar positive perceptions extend to the effect of Reading First on

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<sup>1</sup> Haager, D., Dhar R., Moulton, M., McMillan S. (2008). *The California Reading First Year 5 Evaluation Report*. Fifth annual external evaluation of the California Reading First program, Educational Data Systems, Morgan Hill, California. Available at [www.eddata.com/resources/publications/](http://www.eddata.com/resources/publications/).

English learners and on teachers and students in special education. There were no significant negative perceptions.

**Theme #6: Reading First schools and LEAs show higher growth than Non-RF schools and LEAs on the CSTs for English Language Arts.** Analysis of grade 2 CST ELA scale scores show that Reading First schools are scoring 25 points higher than they did in 2002, and they have grown an average of 5 scale score points more than eligible non-Reading First schools over the same 5-year period. Similar patterns are found with the grade 3 CST scores for ELA.

## **SURVEY DEVELOPMENT AND ADMINISTRATION**

The parameters of the survey to be administered and analyzed were developed in response to the scope of work required by SB 77, Provision 6, which included a new task in the six-year evaluation of the Reading First program. Provision 6 requests a survey of LEAs eligible for the Reading First program to obtain information on the following:

- Why eligible LEAs chose either to participate or not participate in the program
- The professional development and reading intervention programs in place in non-participating LEAs
- The greatest benefits of the RF program for pupils in participating LEAs
- Types of instructional strategies non-participating LEAs think would be most effective at improving reading in K-3 pupils
- Changes that participating and non-participating LEAs think would improve the RF program
- Information specific to programs for special education pupils and their teachers
- A comparison of reading scores on state standardized assessments for participating and non-participating LEAs

In addition to the topics addressed by Provision 6, the California Department of Education (CDE) slightly expanded the scope of the survey to gather information that would make it possible to compare the RF and non-RF LEAs more directly as regards instructional practices and programs, professional development, reading assessments, and coaching. Such information can shed light on the degree to which RF and non-RF LEAs may be implementing similar educational elements at the level of the classroom.

Surveying LEAs was mandated by the BBL, a requirement which logically is derived from several elements: the contractual nature of the Reading First grant, which is a LEA legal agreement with the CDE, and the need for LEAs to coordinate implementation of Reading First in its schools. While logical, the strategy of surveying LEAs presents unique challenges in gathering valid and reliable information for comparison purposes. Due to the site-based nature of RF implementation, a survey directed to LEAs might conceivably miss either complete quantitative or qualitative data. The requirement to ask both participating and non-participating LEAs about program improvements was inherently challenging for survey development since it required non-RF LEAs to comment on changes to the RF program, a program with which non-RF LEAs might have limited familiarity due to non-involvement.

In order to meet these requirements and answer the questions posed in Provision 6, two surveys – one for participating RF LEAs, one for non-participating LEAs – were developed in an iterative fashion. An item

development team composed of Educational Data Systems personnel, with input from CDE personnel and other knowledgeable persons, generated sets of items targeted toward providing answers for the questions outlined in the scope of work. Members of the item development team critiqued those items and used insights gained from each critique for the next round of item development. As each new version was approved, the development team employed a systematic review and check procedure to make sure the new iteration was compatible with previous sections and that information would answer BBL requirements and fulfill the scope of work of the survey. Two surveys were completed in final versions on January 22, 2008. The first was targeted at RF LEAs, the second to eligible non-RF LEAs.

The RF LEA survey gathered information in the following areas:

- Background information. Respondents were asked about their employment position in the LEA.
- Considerations in deciding whether or not to participate in Reading First. Respondents were asked to rate how positively or negatively the LEA viewed a set of Reading First characteristics when making its decision.
- Reading First perceptions. Respondents were asked to rate Reading First on the same set of characteristics that were used to decide whether or not to participate in the program, in light of their experience since joining Reading First.

The eligible non-RF LEA survey contained questions that overlapped with the RF survey to some degree, but also went well beyond it:

- Background information. This was the same as the RF LEA survey.
- Considerations in deciding whether or not to participate in Reading First. This was the same as the RF LEA survey.
- Reading programs. This section addressed the degree to which eligible non-RF LEAs use the same Open Court and Houghton-Mifflin reading programs that are required in RF LEAs and asked them to list any other reading programs they might be using.
- Professional development. Respondents reported on the percentage of teachers who receive various forms of professional development.
- Providers of professional development. Respondents were asked about their LEA's providers of professional development.
- Coaching. Respondents were asked about the role of reading coaches, if any, in their LEAs.
- Reading assessments. Respondents were asked about which reading assessments their LEAs use.
- Instructional strategies and interventions. Respondents were asked to list the instructional strategies and interventions that their LEAs believe are most effective.
- Reading First. Respondents were asked to list changes that they would make to the Reading First program, from the perspective of a non-participating LEA.

The surveys were administered to LEAs that were eligible for Round 4 of RF funding.<sup>2</sup> 2006-07 The list of LEAs and their superintendents (with contact information) was acquired from the CDE on January 24, 2008. The list was comprised of 120 RF LEAs, and 100 Round 4 non-funded but RF eligible LEAs (LEAs eligible for RF that chose not to participate). A letter to the LEAs from the CDE was released on January 28, 2008. An email was sent to these LEAs the next day on January 29, 2008, to distribute the survey instructions.

The surveys were administered online; each LEA received a password that could only be used once, and the instructions stipulated that the respondent ought to be a person knowledgeable about the RF decision process. Survey counts were checked multiple times to track LEA participation. Multiple email reminders were given to LEA superintendents and RF coordinators, and participation was directly encouraged by phone calls to all RF and non-RF LEAs on the list from the CDE. The survey was closed on March 4, 2008, and a survey data file generated and analyzed between March 7 and March 14, 2008.

Out of the total of 220 LEAs (120 RF LEAs and 100 non-RF but eligible LEAs), 137 responded to the survey. Of the 137 responses, 132 were usable for analysis, of which 100 were RF LEAs and 32 were non-RF but eligible LEAs. The response rate was therefore 83% for RF LEAs and 32% for non-RF but eligible LEAs. The RF response rate is considered adequate, but the non-RF response rate is less than adequate for deriving statistical generalizations and conclusions. This consideration places an interpretive context on the non-RF responses which should be kept in mind; namely, that the non-RF responses, in spite of systematic attempts to gain data, must be considered anecdotal evidence. Nonetheless, it is hoped that this anecdotal evidence will serve at least some of the evaluative purposes of the study and prove helpful in determining improvements in services to LEAs eligible for RF.

## **SURVEY RESULTS**

The Appendix presents the entire survey with responses for each item. In this section we summarize the results, including open-ended items, and analyze any trends or possible conclusions, keeping in mind the anecdotal nature of some of the evidence as noted above.

### **RESPONDENT BACKGROUND**

A variety of professional positions were indicated for the RF and non-RF LEAs completing the surveys, ranging from the LEA Superintendent to Curriculum Coordinators, Deputy Superintendents, Directors, and also positions from the site level (Principal, Reading Coach). In Reading First LEAs, most surveys were completed by the LEA Reading First Coordinator. It appears that attempts were made by LEA superintendents to elicit responses from individuals working in or with Reading First or reading instruction, whether those individuals were coordinating programs at the LEA level or administering or supporting implementation at the site level.

### **CONSIDERATIONS IN DECIDING WHETHER TO PARTICIPATE IN READING FIRST**

Most respondents (61%) indicated that they were “very involved” in the Local Educational Agency’s (LEA’s) decision to apply or not to apply to the Reading First program. In order to answer the question of why LEAs chose to participate or not in the program, both surveys asked a series of the same questions regarding how different factors were viewed in the decision making process. The question was, “How positively or negatively were the following factors viewed when your LEA was considering whether or not to apply for Reading First funding?”

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<sup>2</sup> Round 4 funding was disbursed in 2006-07. LEA eligibility is based on the number of students in grades 2-3 scoring Below Basic or Far Below Basic on the ELA CSTs and on whether the LEA is below a specified poverty level or identified for School Improvement as defined by Title I Part A, or has jurisdiction over an area designated as an empowerment zone or an enterprise community. See <http://www.cde.ca.gov/nclb/sr/rf/documents/crfexh9.pdf>.



Responses were solicited on a 5-point rating scale: Extremely Positive, Moderately Positive, Did Not Play a Significant Role, Moderately Negative, Extremely Negative. In addition, there were options for “Don’t Know” and “Did Not Respond.” To summarize the results, the rating scale categories were converted into integers ranging from 1 (extremely negative) to 5 (extremely positive). These were weighted by the percentage of responses in each category to yield a statistic, or “mean,” ranging continuously from 1 to 5, signifying the overall “positivity” with which a given factor was viewed when the LEA was deciding whether or not to apply for Reading First. None of the items was reverse-coded. The “Don’t Know” and “Did Not Respond” categories were excluded from this analysis. Table 1 presents each mean, along with its average “spread” or standard deviation (S.D.) and the count (N) of responses to each question. Table 1 is sorted by the means of the eligible non-RF LEAs.

**Table 1: How Positively Each Factor Was Viewed When Deciding Whether to Apply for RF Funding**

(Sorted Low to High by the Eligible Non-RF LEA Mean, 1 = Extremely Negative, 2 = Moderately Negative, 3 = Did Not Play a Significant Role, 4 = Moderately Positive, 5 = Extremely Positive)<sup>3</sup>

| LEA Type   | RF LEAs |    |      | Eligible non-RF LEAs |    |      | All Respondent LEAs |     |      |
|--|---------|----|------|----------------------|----|------|---------------------|-----|------|
|  | Mean    | N  | S.D. | Mean                 | N  | S.D. | Mean                | N   | S.D. |
| Perceiving the Reading First program as being overly prescriptive                            | 2.8     | 91 | 0.9  | 2.0                  | 25 | 1.3  | 2.7                 | 116 | 1.1  |
| Using the state-required 6 - 8 week skills assessments                                       | 4.1     | 93 | 1.0  | 2.4                  | 26 | 1.2  | 3.7                 | 119 | 1.2  |
| Requiring replacement of the existing reading program  | 3.3     | 92 | 0.9  | 2.5                  | 24 | 1.2  | 3.2                 | 116 | 1.1  |
| Perceiving reduced curricular flexibility due to exclusive use of adopted core programs      | 3.2     | 92 | 1.1  | 2.6                  | 26 | 1.3  | 3.1                 | 118 | 1.2  |
| Responding to opinions of teachers in your LEA regarding Reading First                       | 3.5     | 90 | 0.9  | 3.0                  | 25 | 1.1  | 3.4                 | 115 | 1.0  |
| Requiring a minimal amount of daily instructional time to implement the adopted core program | 4.1     | 93 | 1.0  | 3.1                  | 26 | 1.1  | 3.9                 | 119 | 1.1  |
| Requiring annual professional development for all K-3 teachers                               | 4.4     | 93 | 1.0  | 3.2                  | 25 | 1.3  | 4.1                 | 118 | 1.2  |
| Requiring teachers to use a pacing schedule for coverage of the adopted program content      | 4.0     | 93 | 1.0  | 3.2                  | 26 | 1.3  | 3.8                 | 119 | 1.1  |
| Responding to opinions of parents in your LEA regarding Reading First                        | 3.5     | 84 | 0.8  | 3.3                  | 22 | 0.8  | 3.4                 | 106 | 0.8  |
| Funding to purchase curricular materials for a state-approved reading program                | 4.2     | 92 | 0.9  | 3.6                  | 26 | 1.2  | 4.1                 | 118 | 1.0  |
| Requiring time for teachers to plan lessons and review assessment results collaboratively    | 4.3     | 94 | 0.9  | 3.6                  | 26 | 1.1  | 4.2                 | 120 | 1.0  |
| Anticipating the effects of reclassification of English learners as FEP                      | 4.2     | 94 | 1.0  | 3.6                  | 26 | 1.1  | 4.1                 | 120 | 1.0  |
| Assisting teachers through professional development to use test data to guide instruction    | 4.5     | 92 | 0.7  | 3.7                  | 26 | 1.1  | 4.3                 | 118 | 0.9  |

<sup>3</sup> The interpretation of these “means” in terms of rating scale categories is imprecise due to the nonlinear nature of the scale, which cannot go below 1.0 or above 5.0. However, as a rule of thumb the rating scale categories may be thought of as falling at approximate 0.8 intervals along the scale: 1.0 to 1.8 is Extremely Negative; 1.8 to 2.6 is Moderately Negative; 2.6 to 3.4 is Did Not Play a Significant Role; 3.4 to 4.2 is Moderately Positive; 4.2 to 5.0 is Extremely Positive.

| LEA Type   | RF LEAs |    |      | Eligible non-RF LEAs |    |      | All Respondent LEAs |     |      |
|--|---------|----|------|----------------------|----|------|---------------------|-----|------|
|  | Mean    | N  | S.D. | Mean                 | N  | S.D. | Mean                | N   | S.D. |
| Improving school performance on the state API and AYP measures                       | 4.7     | 93 | 0.6  | 3.7                  | 25 | 1.0  | 4.5                 | 118 | 0.8  |
| Funding for professional development   | 4.8     | 94 | 0.4  | 3.7                  | 26 | 1.0  | 4.6                 | 120 | 0.7  |
| Anticipating the effects on achievement of students in special education             | 4.2     | 94 | 0.9  | 3.7                  | 26 | 1.1  | 4.1                 | 120 | 0.9  |
| Anticipating reduction in the number of students being referred to special education | 4.2     | 93 | 0.9  | 3.8                  | 26 | 1.0  | 4.2                 | 119 | 0.9  |
| Anticipating the effects of improved English learner achievement                     | 4.6     | 94 | 0.8  | 3.8                  | 25 | 1.1  | 4.4                 | 119 | 0.9  |
| Anticipating the effects of improved student achievement                             | 4.8     | 94 | 0.5  | 3.9                  | 25 | 1.0  | 4.6                 | 119 | 0.7  |
| Funding to support a reading coach   | 4.9     | 94 | 0.5  | 4.0                  | 26 | 1.3  | 4.7                 | 120 | 0.8  |
| Average  | 4.1     | 92 | 0.8  | 3.3                  | 25 | 1.1  | 3.9                 | 118 | 1.0  |

A comparison of the RF and eligible non-RF columns reveals notable differences in the educational priorities of the two types of LEAs and how they view Reading First. The perception of Reading First as “overly prescriptive” was the most negative consideration for both types of LEAs, but much more so for the eligible non-RF LEAs, which gave this consideration a low score of 2.0, whereas the RF LEAs gave it a score of 2.7, closer to “did not play a significant role.” Note that this question only addresses the *perception* of Reading First as “overly prescriptive.”

Similarly noteworthy is the response to “Using the state-required 6-8 week skills assessments.” RF LEAs viewed this component of Reading First as a definite positive (4.1) whereas eligible non-RF LEAs viewed it as a definite negative (2.4).

The requirement that participating LEAs use only Reading First approved instructional materials was viewed as a definite negative by the non-participating LEAs (2.5), but was viewed indifferently by participating LEAs (3.3). The same pattern holds for “reduced curricular flexibility.”

At the other end of the scale, both types of LEAs rated “funding to support a reading coach” as a strong positive when considering Reading First, but the mean was higher for RF LEAs (4.9) than for non-RF LEAs (4.0). “Funding for professional development” also scored relatively high with both LEA types (4.8 for RF LEAs), but the non-RF mean (3.7) reflects less enthusiasm toward the professional development component of the program. “Funding to purchase curricular materials” received a 4.2 from RF schools versus 3.6 from non-RF schools.

RF and eligible non-RF LEAs differ in how they responded to questions relating to student achievement and performance on the Academic Performance Index (API) and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). RF LEAs reported that the anticipated effects of Reading First on student performance and API/AYP were viewed as extreme positives (4.8 and 4.7, respectively). Eligible non-RF LEAs viewed these factors more negatively, giving ratings of 3.9 and 3.7. It seems reasonable to assume that the lower scores are not the result of eligible non-RF LEAs being less interested in student achievement than RF LEAs, but being more skeptical regarding the likely efficacy of the Reading First program in bringing about achievement gains.

For RF LEAs, the anticipated effect of Reading First on achievement carried over to students in special education (4.2)<sup>4</sup>, English learners (4.6) and, re-designation of English learners to Fluent English Proficient (FEP) (4.2). Non-RF LEAs, while scoring these factors relatively high in their importance, appear to have been skeptical of the efficacy of Reading First in these areas.

RF LEAs had very positive reactions to the *requirements* posed by Reading First. Requirements pertaining to the use of a pacing schedule, annual professional development for all K-3 teachers, and time allocated for instruction, lesson planning, and collaboration were all assigned at least a 4.0 by RF LEAs, but less than a 4.0 by non-RF LEAs.

The opinions of teachers and parents did not play a significant role when deciding whether or not to adopt the program for either the RF or eligible non-RF LEAs.

In general, as would be expected, Reading First was viewed much more positively (overall average of 4.1) by LEAs that applied for the program than by those who opted not to apply (overall average of 3.3). A rudimentary profile of the eligible non-RF LEA emerges. The eligible non-RF LEA resists “prescriptive” programs, prefers its own reading programs, does not want to be saddled with state-required 6-8 week assessments, does not like to be “required” to do things, is skeptical of the ability of Reading First to improve student achievement for students in general, as well as special education students and English learners, and is in general not moved by the funding providing by Reading First in the areas of professional development, curricular materials, and assessments. The only Reading First element seen as a positive is the funding of reading coaches.

## **ELIGIBLE NON-RF LEAS**

As mentioned, eligible non-RF LEAs received a unique set of questions intended to solicit information regarding their selection of reading programs, professional development, coaching, and assessments. These results are now presented and contrasted, where possible, with the RF LEAs.

### READING PROGRAMS

Non-RF LEAs indicated a strong preference for Houghton-Mifflin’s *Reading: A Legacy of Literacy* (hereafter HMR) over SRA-/McGraw-Hill’s *Open Court Reading* (hereafter OCR), including the Spanish alternative versions of both programs (*Lectura* and *Foro Abierto* respectively). These two instructional reading programs are those adopted by the California State Board of Education for K-3 instruction, regardless of whether a LEA participates in RF. The *Year 5 Report*<sup>5</sup> includes results of a 2006-2007 teacher-level survey for the RF schools. When RF teachers were asked, “Which of the following is the reading/language arts program that you are currently teaching in your classroom?” 49% responded OCR, 2% indicated *Foro Abierto*, 42% responded HMR; and 7% chose *Lectura* (Appendix A, p. A-2). Thus, eligible non-RF LEAs strongly favor the Houghton-Mifflin program while the RF LEAs are split evenly between the two programs.

Non-RF LEAs are using more supplemental materials, since only 53.1% of the respondents indicated that all of the schools in their LEAs used the state-adopted programs. A great variety of non-State Board of Education adopted reading instructional programs and/or supplemental programs were indicated as part of the curriculum of non-RF schools (see Appendix table C6). A few responses indicated the use of State Board-adopted intensive intervention reading programs such as REACH or High Point, which have been

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<sup>4</sup> Note that Reading First does not have a special education component as such, opting to focus on providing sufficient after-class instruction to make a special education classification unnecessary.

<sup>5</sup> Haager, D., Dhar R., Moulton, M., McMillan S. (2008). *The California Reading First Year 5 Evaluation Report*. Fifth annual external evaluation of the California Reading First program, Educational Data Systems, Morgan Hill, California. Available at [www.eddata.com/resources/publications/](http://www.eddata.com/resources/publications/).

approved as appropriate beginning with grade 4. Other responses indicated university or college programs, programs in support of English-language Development (ELD), support for special education students, and several ELD instructional programs. Also indicated were literacy programs and resource teacher “small group tutoring.” The complete set of responses is contained in the Appendix, and reflects a wide spectrum of curricula in non-RF schools as opposed to the focus in RF schools on State Board-adopted curricula.

Despite the widespread use of materials not adopted by the State Board of Education, it is important to reflect that more than half of eligible non-RF LEAs reported “100%” of their schools using the Open Court and Houghton-Mifflin programs *exclusively*. Almost 60% of LEAs use these programs exclusively in at least 67% of their schools. Therefore, the instructional materials and practices actually used in most eligible non-RF classrooms is likely to closely mirror those used in Reading First classrooms. This leads us to expect a substantial degree of similarity in the achievement trends of the two types of LEAs, an expectation that is largely upheld in the *Year 5 Report* and in the achievement results below, which show that both types of LEAs have shown substantial growth in the past 5 years, but Reading First LEAs more so.

#### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Professional development in non-RF LEAs for K-3 teachers indicated low frequencies of participation in State Board-approved SB 472/AB 466 training (Mathematics and Reading Professional Development Program) in support of the Board-adopted reading instructional programs (Table 2). Only 28.1% of non-RF LEAs reported at least 2/3<sup>rd</sup>s of their teachers attending the 40-hour institute, a first-year requirement in Reading First. Only 12.5 percent of LEAs reported at least 2/3<sup>rd</sup>s participating in the 80-hour follow-up, also a Reading First requirement. The Advanced Institute was yet more sparsely attended, whether focused on HMR, *Lectura*, OCR, or *Foro Abierto*. Only 31.3% of LEAs reported having at least 2/3<sup>rd</sup>s of their teachers receive *any* of these forms of professional development in the last five years. What professional development occurred tended to be in support of differentiation of reading instruction and support for intensive reading intervention.

**Table 2: Use of Professional Development Opportunities**

| Type of Professional Development  | % of LEAs with at least 2/3 of teachers having received professional development |
|---|--|
| Support for differentiation of reading instruction  | 31.3   |
| Support for intensive reading intervention  | 31.3   |
| SB 472/AB466 40-hour institute  | 28.1   |
| SB 472/AB466 80-hour follow-up practicum  | 12.5   |
| 40-hour institute for English learners  | 12.5   |
| 40-hour Advanced Institute focused on HM <i>Reading</i> or <i>Lectura</i>                             | 6.3  |
| 4[0]-hour <sup>6</sup> Advanced Institute focused on Open Court <i>Reading</i> or <i>Foro Abierto</i> | 3.1  |
| 40-hour institute focused on special education instruction  | 3.1  |
| Average   | 16.0   |

These survey responses suggest a difference between RF and non-RF LEAs, since RF LEAs are required to enroll teachers in SB 472/AB 466 training (both the 40-hour institute and 80-hour follow-up practicum) the first year, and professional development in Advanced Institutes is an ongoing, year-by-year component of the

<sup>6</sup> Due to a typographical error, the survey erroneously referred to a “4-hour Advanced Institute...” for this question.

program. Again, although the survey items are not directly comparable, the 2006-2007 teacher survey conducted for the *Year 5 Report* provides some contrast with the responses of the non-RF LEAs. Item B1 of the teacher survey asked, “What type of 5-day Reading Professional Development Institute did you complete most recently this academic year, if any?” 17% reported completing AB 466, Year 1; 24% reported completing Advanced, Year 2; 35% reported Advanced or mastery, Year 3; 2% reported coach training; and 21% checked none of the above (Appendix A, p. A-3).

Thus, approximately 80% of Reading First teachers received professional development in just 2006-2007 compared with much smaller percentages of teachers in the eligible non-RF LEAs across the preceding five years. This represents a substantial and important difference between the two LEA types.

#### PROVIDERS OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Non-RF LEAs indicated that they received professional development from a wide variety of sources, ranging from Reading Implementation Centers (RICs) at County Offices of Education, to LEAs, private or external providers, school sites (site-based training), and universities (see Appendix, Section E). Training ranged from support for specific instructional programs and ELD training to training in reading instructional models such as Reading Recovery.

The providers most commonly cited were the LEAs, private or external providers, and schools sites (site-based training). Only 16% of LEAs reported at least 2/3<sup>rd</sup>s of their teachers receiving training from the RICs.

#### COACHING

Coaching support in non-RF LEAs was not highly indicated. Although 11 LEAs (34% of respondents) reported that all of their K-3 teachers had access to a reading coach, only 1 LEA (3%) estimated that all of its teachers actually used a reading coach. 37% of the LEAs indicated that all of their special education teachers had access to a coach, but only 2 LEAs (6%) indicated that all of their special education teachers actually used the reading coach.

Coaching support is a key component of the RF program and both required and funded for RF schools. The 2006-2007 teacher survey (*Year 5 Report*, Appendix A, section E) provides some insight into teacher access to and use of coaches in RF schools. 53% of the teachers reported that the coach was “usually available”, and 35% indicated “the coach seeks me out to assure that I have the support I need” (item E1, Appendix A, p. A-31). Most teachers (66%) agreed that the coach gave “specific, detailed answers that I can use (item E2, Appendix A, p. A31). Further, 87% of the teachers reported that the coach provided adequate support or more than adequate support for the LEA’s reading/language arts program (Item E8, Appendix A, p. A-32).

Thus, the degree to which coaches are a regular part of reading instruction appears to be another important distinction between the two LEA types.

#### ASSESSMENTS

Non-RF schools indicated a lower use of Reading Lions/SCOE (Sacramento County Office of Education) 6-8 Week Skills Assessments (most schools were not indicated as using them in K-3). Indeed, 0% of LEAs reported at least 2/3<sup>rd</sup>s of their schools using these assessments. This is perhaps not surprising in light of what we reported above in which these assessments were actually viewed as a negative of participation in Reading First. Higher use was indicated for publisher curriculum-embedded assessments (53.1% of respondents indicated “all of our schools in K-3”) and teacher-created assessments (50% indicated “all” as above). However, standards-based benchmark assessments received the highest indication (65.5% indicated “all”). These assessments are typically used to gauge student mastery of standards, particularly in adjusting instruction to maximize student achievement and increase proficiency as measured by the CSTs. A variety of

other assessments were also indicated (see Appendix table G5), ranging from the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) to the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) and others.

To understand what assessments teachers in RF schools use, the Teacher Survey for the *Year 5 Report* asked, “If you assess your students in reading every six to eight weeks, which assessments do you use? (select all that apply)”. Only 3% of the teachers reported not using any 6-8 week assessments, 20% used teacher-developed assessments, 42% used publisher assessments, 77% used the [Reading Lions/SCOE] 6-8 week skill assessments, 30% used LEA-developed assessments, and 14% used something other than the assessments included in this list (Item F6, Appendix A, p. A-33).

Thus, we see a much higher use of the Reading Lions/SCOE 6-8 week skill assessments in RF LEAs than in non-RF LEAs, though direct comparisons are difficult.

#### INSTRUCTION AND INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

Non-RF LEAs were asked, “What types of instructional approaches and early intervention strategies do you think would be most effective at improving the reading achievement of K-3 and special education pupils?” A total of 66 different responses (22 respondents) were received, all included in the Appendix, Table H1. Responses included:

- Pullout with a Reading Specialist and similar small group instruction models
- Flexible grouping
- Extended day support
- Use of instructional strategies such as Direct Instruction (DI) and Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE)
- Intervention strategies
- Differentiated instruction for strategic support
- Professional development and coaching models (including observation and demonstration)
- Front-loading and reteaching (based on assessment)
- Numerous supplemental programs
- Early intervention and home support models
- Strengthening teacher education programs
- Use of data and an emphasis on standards-based instruction

Some, but not all, of these suggestions could be included within the scope of RF (e.g., Direct Instruction, coaching support, professional development); some might be considered outside the scope or even in conflict with the program itself (e.g., the pullout model).

#### **PERCEPTIONS OF THE READING FIRST PROGRAM**

Respondents for RF LEAs were asked to estimate the general perception of the RF program in their LEA across several areas in K-3 RF schools. Many of the questions duplicate those reported in Table 1 regarding the positive or negative aspects of participation in Reading First. As described in our discussion above (“Considerations in Deciding Whether to Participate in Reading First”), respondents were asked to rate, on a five point scale ranging from “Extremely Negative” to “Extremely Positive,” how the various elements of Reading First are perceived in their LEAs based on their experience with the program. These ratings are

converted into an expected value, or mean, on a continuous scale ranging from 1 to 5. Table 3 presents these means, together with the number of respondents and the standard deviation, or average spread, of the responses.

**Table 3: How Positively Aspects of Reading First are Perceived in RF LEAs**

(Sorted Low to High by the Mean, 1 = Extremely Negative, 2 = Moderately Negative, 3 = Not Much of an Effect, 4 = Moderately Positive, 5 = Extremely Positive)<sup>7</sup>

| Aspects of Reading First  | Mean | N  | S.D. |
|---|------|----|------|
| Perceiving the Reading First program as being overly prescriptive   | 2.9  | 99 | 1.0  |
| The effect of reducing curricular flexibility due to the exclusive use of adopted core programs                   | 3.1  | 99 | 1.2  |
| The effect of requiring replacement of the existing reading program   | 3.5  | 98 | 0.9  |
| Requiring teachers to teach the same content at approximately the same time                                       | 3.6  | 99 | 1.1  |
| The effect of the Reading First program on student writing  | 3.7  | 98 | 1.0  |
| The opinion of parents in your LEA regarding Reading First  | 3.7  | 98 | 1.1  |
| The opinion of teachers in your LEA regarding Reading First   | 3.8  | 98 | 1.0  |
| The effect of the Reading First program on reclassifying English learners as FEP                                  | 3.8  | 98 | 1.0  |
| The effect of the Reading First program on reducing the number of students being referred to special education    | 3.9  | 99 | 0.9  |
| Requiring a minimal amount of daily instructional time to implement the adopted core program                      | 3.9  | 99 | 0.9  |
| The effect of the Reading First program on improving achievement for students in special education                | 3.9  | 99 | 0.9  |
| Using the state-required 6 - 8 week skills assessments  | 3.9  | 99 | 1.1  |
| The effect of the Reading First program on student engagement with a reduction in the number of behavioral issues | 4.0  | 99 | 0.9  |
| The effect of the Reading First program on spelling   | 4.2  | 99 | 0.8  |
| Requiring annual professional development for all K-3 teachers  | 4.2  | 99 | 0.8  |
| The effect of the Reading First program on mastery of vocabulary  | 4.2  | 97 | 0.7  |
| The effect of the Reading First program on improving achievement for English learners                             | 4.3  | 99 | 0.8  |
| The consistency of the curriculum for students who move within the LEA to another RF school                       | 4.3  | 99 | 0.9  |
| The effect of the Reading First program on reading comprehension  | 4.3  | 97 | 0.7  |
| Funding to purchase curricular materials for a state-approved reading program                                     | 4.4  | 98 | 0.8  |
| Assisting teachers through professional development to use test data to guide instruction                         | 4.4  | 99 | 0.7  |
| The effect of the Reading First program on improving student achievement  | 4.5  | 98 | 0.7  |
| The effect of the Reading First program on reading fluency  | 4.5  | 99 | 0.6  |
| Improving school performance on the state API and AYP measures  | 4.5  | 99 | 0.7  |

<sup>7</sup> The interpretation of these “means” in terms of rating scale categories is imprecise due to the nonlinear nature of the scale, which cannot go below 1.0 or above 5.0. However, as a rule of thumb the rating scale categories may be thought of as falling at approximate 0.8 intervals along the scale: 1.0 to 1.8 is Extremely Negative; 1.8 to 2.6 is Moderately Negative; 2.6 to 3.4 is Did Not Play a Significant Role; 3.4 to 4.2 is Moderately Positive; 4.2 to 5.0 is Extremely Positive.

| <b>Aspects of Reading First</b>   | <b>Mean</b> | <b>N</b> | <b>S.D.</b> |
|---|-------------|----------|-------------|
| Requiring time for teachers to plan lessons and review assessment results collaboratively | 4.5         | 98       | 0.7         |
| Funding for professional development  | 4.7         | 99       | 0.6         |
| Funding to support a reading coach  | 4.8         | 98       | 0.5         |
| Average   | 4.1         | 99       | 0.8         |

The least positive perception of Reading First involves its “overly prescriptive” characterization, for which it receives a 2.9. What is important is that the 2.9 score is very near the central region of the scale which can be characterized as “does not have much of an effect.” The next two items, addressing the effect of reducing curricular flexibility and the effect of replacing the existing reading program, are in a similar “prescriptive” vein and may be said to “not have much of an effect.” It should be noted that these items were written explicitly to probe for a negative perception of Reading First. It would be odd for them to receive strong positive ratings. By rating Reading First at the middle of the scale on these “prescriptive” items, our respondents are saying, in effect, that these negative things are not much of a problem in Reading First.

Of more concern is the perception of the Reading First effect on writing (3.7). While 3.7 may be said to fall somewhere within the “moderately positive” region of the scale, its relatively low position suggests that Reading First is not seen to do well in developing writing skills. The opinions of teachers and parents are seen to fall in this “moderately positive” region as well.

The next batch of “moderately positive” items concern the effect of Reading First on helping English learners be reclassified as FEPs, reducing the number of students referred to special education, improving the achievement of special education students (though this is not a Reading First function), and improving student engagement, with a reduction in behavioral problems. This moderately positive zone thus comprises the perception of how Reading First performs with “special” populations of students.

Also within this region of the scale are the 6-8 week skills assessments (3.9), a score that is perhaps lower than one would expect given the high expectations for these assessments in Table 1. However, a related item, “Assisting teachers through professional development to use test data to guide instruction,” received an extremely positive score (4.4). This suggests that there is a general desire to use test data more effectively, but that the 6-8 week skills assessments are for some reason falling short.

The next zone of items, at 4.2 and above, may be labeled the “extremely positive” zone. These comprise the achievement items – achievement in spelling, vocabulary, reading comprehension, and oral fluency, achievement in the English learners population, achievement for students overall, achievement for schools on the API and AYP. It is clear that Reading First is viewed as a very effective program in terms of the achievement metrics established in California.

Also in the “extremely positive” zone are two items that pertain to what is sometimes called “coherence,” a general alignment of curricula, programs, pacing schedules, and collaborative review of student results. “Requiring time for teachers to plan lessons and review assessment results collaboratively” received a 4.5. “The consistency of the curriculum for students who move within the LEA to another RF school” received a 4.3. However, a third “coherence” item, “Requiring teachers to teach the same content at approximately the same time,” receives the relatively low score of 3.6, suggesting that it is viewed more as an “overly prescriptive” item.

Finally, the “extremely positive” zone comprises the “funding” items -- funding to purchase curricular materials (4.4), funding for professional development (4.7), funding to support a reading coach (4.8). These



funds are viewed as extremely positive by the LEA-level respondents who took this survey. Re-stating themes noted above, reading coaches appear to be viewed as perhaps the most important element in the Reading First program.

#### “GREATEST BENEFIT” OF READING FIRST

RF LEAs were asked to state the “greatest benefit of the Reading First program for pupils”, and the 94 respondents provided 251 answers (see Appendix table I28). These responses were highly varied and often do not specifically refer to specific benefits for the pupils; however, certain common themes were noticeable. Instructional coherence and consistency was a recurring theme in the responses. Benefits to student academic achievement were also noted. Funding was also noted as a benefit.

- Many of the responses focused on the various components included in the RF “assurances,” which are required elements of implementation. These include:
- Professional development and coaching support
- Support for teacher collaboration and use of data to guide instruction
- Support for implementation of specific elements of the reading program (e.g., use of Sound Spelling cards and implementation of Universal Access)
- Including application of instructional strategies such as DI
- Technical assistance from County Offices, the RIC, the RTAC (Regional Technical Assistance Center) and the CDE
- Use of formative assessments
- Use of a data collection system (e.g., Online Assessment and Reporting System or OARS)
- Regional meetings

Articulation between special and regular education was also noted as a benefit. Consistency of implementation and funded support for implementation, including professional development and coaching, were dominant themes throughout this section.

Here are several indicative quotations:

“The greatest benefit of the Reading First program for pupils is the full implementation of a research-based reading program that creates consistency for all students within and across grades (in some cases across schools and LEAs.)”

“The greatest benefit to the RF program is that ALL students receive the same curriculum and instruction. Previously teachers were using the materials in any way they saw fit. Students who moved within the school or LEA missed skills/concepts due to inconsistency between classrooms. The requirement to have fidelity to the program has helped quell issues of wanting to bring in "other" materials that would have supplanted the core curriculum.”

“In addition to funds for regular professional development activities the teachers have said that the time they have to collaborate on analyzing assessment data identifying student needs and planning Universal Access/differentiated small group instruction that meets student needs has had the greatest impact on student achievement.”

“[The greatest benefit is] Literacy Coaches who provide on-going support, meeting facilitation, analysis of data, and support for improved teacher instructional strategies. The effect of coaches has been significant in implementing effective school practices.”

“As the Assurances were fully implemented and became everyday instructional practices, we began to notice a change in our LEA. We were able to train teachers, follow up that training with coaching, use the same curriculum at all sites, follow a LEA pacing schedule and use on-going assessment to guide instruction. Expectations were raised for all stakeholders, from the superintendent to the students and everyone in-between! Student achievement improved which is the ultimate benefit of the Reading First Program.”

“Teachers now have a much greater understanding of how students learn to read. They are now able to strategize and pinpoint problems students are having [and] know how to help rectify the situation. Teachers know we expect them to use the adopted program. They are not at liberty to bring in materials that they 'feel' will help the kids. All teachers are held accountable for keeping up the pace for the language arts and reading instruction. The 'Reading First' program is the best program I've ever seen and this is my 30th year as an educator and my 20th year as an administrator. The money will go away but not the level of instruction my teachers will be able to give as a result of the training and coaching they have had.”

#### IMPROVING READING FIRST, RF LEAS

RF LEAs were also asked “What changes do you think would improve the Reading First Program?” As in the previous section, a large number of responses were collected (171 responses, 87 respondents) although not as numerous as in the section indicating benefits (251 responses, 94 respondents).

A high number of responses indicated that few if any changes should be made and used this section to commend the program. Others recommended expanding the program to include more grade levels, and desired to extend funding to continue full program implementation. Some responses indicated varying suggestions for “flexibility,” including greater use of supplemental materials. Others indicated varying suggestions to focus on support for English learners.

More coaching support was indicated in some instances, and there were suggestions for diagnostic testing, comprehension testing, or changes to existing assessments, including improvements to the 6-8 week skills assessments. More networking or Reading First inter-school collaboration was suggested, and a few commented on a desire to improve the instructional materials. Finally, Response to Intervention (RTI) should be integrated into Reading First, according to one suggestion. Here are some examples.

“Allow Highly Qualified Teachers to teach reading standards through literature studies, research projects, and content area texts. In Reading First, students spend their day in skills- based practice. There is no connection to meaningful learning (reading and writing with purpose) or content areas (very few HM stories are expository). Reading First stifles the ability of teachers to teach cross-curricular based on content based themes. Brain research has shown that students learn through Integrated Thematic Instruction. Houghton Mifflin is not a perfect program. Highly Qualified Teachers deserve to have the ability to think critically about how to best meet the needs of their

students, they deserve to be passionate about their subject matter. (It's difficult to be passionate about endless practice pages, there are many more engaging activities than worksheets.)

“A definite factor that will impact the Reading First Program this coming fiscal year is the dramatic cut in funding. Our LEA, as well as most with whom we speak, identifies the coaching model and Reading First, in general, as one of the most important components in increasing student achievement. Continuity and the ability to sustain the program at a high level of implementation which fosters success would be an important matter for the State to take into consideration during the current fiscal crisis.”

“...there should have been a mandatory in-service for [the] superintendent or whomever is the evaluator of the principals. If the principal is not held accountable for implementation or never learns to monitor, the coach coordinator is little more than a disseminator of information. Overall, the principals felt the program was having a positive impact on achievement, but the assistant superintendent decided to refuse funding due to all the resistance from the principals. One principal expressed that she wished we would have kept the program. I agree. I have never been a part of a program that provided such great support for all levels, from teachers to coaches to administrators. I was a first grade teacher, and I have learned so much about reading instruction and curriculum implementation through my work with Reading First. It was probably the most difficult two years of my career, but I truly benefitted on a professional level and am grateful for the opportunity!”

“Assessment needs to be revamp[ed]. The 6-8 Week measures were not always helpful. Consider having more choices for selecting a 6-8 week assessment system.”

“If more teacher institutes were offered in our area, it would better enable our teachers to attend. If the other resources that are available in Sacramento area were available to rural areas.”

“Most important, a better approach and instructional strategies for English Learners. It was assumed that just teaching them to read in English would provide students with academic English and this is not true. We have had to develop our own lessons to supplement the adopted texts.”

“Five years into Reading First we can appreciate the cohesiveness, planning, pacing, staff development and the tools at our disposal for implementation but in the beginning the teachers were ready to revolt over the rigidity. How can we avoid the negative start up issues long enough so they can appreciate the end results?”

#### IMPROVING READING FIRST, ELIGIBLE NON-RF LEAS

Finally, non-RF LEAs were also asked “What changes do you think would improve the Reading First Program?” As stated earlier, this question, while specifically addressing the BBL, is inherently problematic, since LEAs not participating in a program (RF) are being asked to comment on that program meaningfully. Nonetheless, 24 responded. Several responses stated that the question was “not applicable” since the LEA was not using Reading First (or similar comments). However, some suggestions were made by respondents. Several suggestions addressed easing the requirements or prescriptive nature of RF, asking for flexibility in implementation. A few related responses complained about the monitoring of the program and the consequent effect on teacher morale. Some comments addressed generally the issue of English learner support. Some comments affirmed the program as it exists and one asked that it be mandated for Program Improvement LEAs without approval of the local bargaining unit or union. Here are some quotations:

“Allow schools who wish to participate to select their own materials and assessments that are appropriate for the students they serve. We are a dual language program following the 90:10 model.

Reading First does not take into consideration the requirements and values of our program, which is highly successful.”

“More flexibility to improve the perception of "do this this way, or else..." You folks are helping to beat up our staffs precisely at the time when they are already down... The process smacks of "the beatings will continue until the morale improves..." I would like to know if anyone really has read and analyzed my responses?”

“We are a mid-sized LEA of about 1900 students and we simply do not have the staff to administer and manage all of the elements of the program and paperwork that goes along with a grant of this size. Great idea, but we would also like to see a little more flexibility (quite possibly we don't fully understand the flexibility available).”

“I am not interested in Reading First in any configuration. For a small LEA, the paper chase is far too cumbersome and demanding, and I don't have the staff to generate the supporting documents. Our LEA already performs items B2-B21 admirably without the Reading First money. This program is not for us, it is for large LEAs with a strong special interest lobby. I don't have time to contend with that. Thank you for asking though. And thank you for performing this survey. It allows other opinions to surface and be discussed, most admirable indeed!”

## ACHIEVEMENT COMPARISONS

The budget bill language requires the evaluator to “...compare reading scores on state standardized assessments for participating and nonparticipating LEAs.” The Reading First program is implemented from kindergarten through third grade, and there are no standardized assessments for all of those grade levels. In this report we use mean scale scores from the English language arts section of the California Standards Test (CST) for students in grades 2 and 3.

The California Standards Test (CST) is administered to all California students in grades 2 and 3 toward the end of the school year. Scale scores on the exam typically range between 200 and 500, and their placement on an equal interval scale facilitates valid comparisons. Because they average the scores of *all* examinees for a given grade and content, they are more informative in measuring change than the widely used “percent Proficient” metric, which captures change for only those examinees that happen to be in the neighborhood of the Proficient cut-point, set at 350.

Tables 4 and 5 track the progress from 2002 to 2007 of three types of schools:

- All Reading First Schools. These are schools that have been implementing the Reading First program from 2003 to 2007.
- Eligible Non-RF Schools. These are schools that are in LEAs that were deemed to be eligible for Reading First funding as of the Round 4 funding cycle, but that have not become Reading First schools
- All Non-Eligible California Schools. These are the rest of the elementary schools in California, those that are not eligible for participation in the Reading First program.

Table 4 presents results in terms of grade 2 CST scale scores – the average CST scale score in 2002 (the year before Reading First was first implemented), the average in 2007, and the difference between them. Table 5 presents the same information in terms of grade 3 CST scale scores.

Note that the “Change Since Starting Year” may not always exactly equal the apparent difference between the 2002 and 2007 statistics due to rounding error in the reported means.

**Table 4: School-level Grade 2 CST Scale Scores, 2002-2007**

| <b>Years in Program: 5<br/>Grade: 2</b> | <b>All Reading First<br/>Schools</b> | <b>All Eligible Non-RF<br/>Schools</b> | <b>All Non-Eligible<br/>Elementary Schools</b> |
|---|--------------------------------------|--|--|
| Number of Schools                       | 259                                  | 297                                    | 1025   |
| Mean Scale Score                        |                                      |  |  |
| 2002                                    | 299.8                                | 300.5                                  | 329  |
| 2007                                    | 324.7                                | 320.2                                  | 347.8  |
| Change Since Starting Year              | 25.0 <sup>ab</sup>                   | 19.7                                   | 18.8   |

<sup>a</sup> Significantly different ( $p < .05$ ) from all non-eligible schools

<sup>b</sup> Significantly different ( $p < .05$ ) from all eligible non-Reading First schools.

**Table 5: School-level Grade 3 CST Scale Scores, 2002-2007**

| <b>Years in Program: 5<br/>Grade: 3</b> | <b>All Reading First<br/>Schools</b> | <b>All Eligible Non-RF<br/>Schools</b> | <b>All Non-Eligible<br/>Elementary Schools</b> |
|---|--------------------------------------|--|--|
| Number of Schools                       | 259                                  | 298                                    | 1023   |
| Mean Scale Score                        |                                      |  |  |
| 2002                                    | 294.5                                | 297.4                                  | 327.2  |
| 2007                                    | 307.4                                | 306.9                                  | 330.7  |
| Change Since Starting Year              | 12.9 <sup>ab</sup>                   | 9.5 <sup>a</sup>                       | 3.4  |

<sup>a</sup> Significantly different ( $p < .05$ ) from all non-eligible schools

<sup>b</sup> Significantly different ( $p < .05$ ) from all eligible non-Reading First schools.

Table 4 shows that grade 2 students in Reading First schools are, as of 2007, scoring 25 scale score points higher than their counterparts in 2002. Given that the “Basic” performance level cut-point is set at 300 and the “Proficient” cut-point is set at 350, we find that the “average student” has traversed half a performance level in five years. In other words, schools are able to move the students that enter them in Kindergarten a full 25 scale score points further up the scale by grade 2 than they were able to in 2002. Elementary schools are getting significantly better. At the existing rate, at current levels of Reading First implementation, students in Reading First elementary schools can be expected, on average, to score “Proficient” by 2012.

The eligible non-RF schools show a 19.7 scale score gain over the same 5-year period, while the non-eligible schools in the state have shown an 18.8 point gain over the same period. Thus, while they also have shown significant growth, they lag the Reading First schools by 5-6 scale score points.

In a relative sense, Table 5 tells a similar story for the grade 3 CST scale scores. Reading First schools grew 12.9 scale score points from 2002 to 2007 while eligible non-RF schools grew 9.5 scale score points and the remaining non-eligible schools grew only 3.4 scale score points over the same period. As explained in the *Year 5 Report*, the grade 3 CST ELA scores behave quite differently from those of other grades (e.g., grades 2 and 4) and assessments, its averages and trend-lines being more depressed for all schools, and less linear. The reason for this is not known. However, conclusions based only on the absolute size of the grade 3 means and gains should be approached with considerable caution and in the context of school performance in the rest of

the State, and for other grades and assessments, especially grades 2 and 4. That context is provided in detail in the *Year 5 Report*.

Tables 6 and 7 repeat the findings of Tables 4 and 5, except that they define Reading First schools in terms of whether or not they reside in a Reading First LEA, i.e., a LEA that received Reading First funding (funding being disbursed at the LEA level, not the school level). These statistics thus represent an average across LEAs, where each LEA's statistics are an average across all of its member schools. Since funding occurs at the LEA level, it is natural to compare Reading First LEAs and eligible non-Reading First LEAs. However, such comparisons are analytically unsound as a way to assess the efficacy of Reading First. A certain unknown percentage of schools in every Reading First LEA do not in fact implement the Reading First program. In fact, LEAs are not legally allowed to allocate Reading First funds to all of their schools. Therefore, Tables 6 and 7 are included to fulfill the requirements of the budget bill language.

**Table 6: LEA-level Grade 2 CST Scale Scores, 2002-2007**

| <b>Years in Program: 5<br/>Grade: 2</b> | <b>All Schools in Round<br/>1 RF LEAs</b> | <b>All Schools in Eligible<br/>Non-RF LEAs</b> | <b>All Schools in Non-<br/>Eligible LEAs</b> |
|---|---|--|--|
| Number of Schools                       | 704                                       | 770  | 2255   |
| Mean Scale Score                        |   |  |  |
| 2002                                    | 315.6                                     | 318.3  | 340.6  |
| 2007                                    | 338.9                                     | 336.2  | 357.4  |
| Change Since Starting Year              | 23.3 <sup>ab</sup>                        | 17.9   | 16.8   |

<sup>a</sup> Significantly different ( $p < .05$ ) from all non-eligible schools

<sup>b</sup> Significantly different ( $p < .05$ ) from all eligible non-Reading First schools.

**Table 7: LEA-level Grade 3 CST Scale Scores, 2002-2007**

| <b>Years in Program: 5<br/>Grade: 3</b> | <b>All Schools in Round<br/>1 RF LEAs</b> | <b>All Schools in Eligible<br/>Non-RF LEAs</b> | <b>All Schools in Non-<br/>Eligible LEAs</b> |
|---|---|--|--|
| Number of Schools                       | 704                                       | 775  | 2247   |
| Mean Scale Score                        |   |  |  |
| 2002                                    | 312.1                                     | 316.3  | 343.0  |
| 2007                                    | 320.1                                     | 321.2  | 343.8  |
| Change Since Starting Year              | 8.0 <sup>ab</sup>                         | 5.0 <sup>a</sup>                               | 0.8  |

<sup>a</sup> Significantly different ( $p < .05$ ) from all non-eligible schools

<sup>b</sup> Significantly different ( $p < .05$ ) from all eligible non-Reading First schools.

## CONCLUSION

In light of the positive ratings associated with elements of the Reading First program as reflected in our survey results, the strong relative growth rates evident in Tables 3 and 4 are perhaps not surprising. Certainly, they are consistent with the findings of the *Year 3 Report*, the *Year 4 Report*, and the *Year 5 Report* in the ongoing Reading First evaluation.<sup>8</sup> Of greater interest is why the eligible non-RF schools, and indeed the rest of the elementary schools in the State, also show positive growth trends since 2002, though not as strong as the Reading First growth trends. This supplemental survey sheds a little extra light on that question.

While we have documented substantial differences between the Reading First LEAs and the eligible non-Reading First LEAs, we have also found important areas of overlap. In particular, we find that 50-60% of eligible non-Reading First LEAs exclusively use the same Houghton-Mifflin *Reading: A Legacy of Literacy* program that is one of the two programs required by Reading First. We also find that while the coaching and professional development components of Reading First are not consistently implemented in non-RF LEAs, both components show up to lesser and varying degrees.

Therefore, there is no defensible basis for dismissing evidence of growth in Reading First schools simply because non-Reading First schools show growth (though less dramatic) over the same time-period. It is impossible to ignore the possibility that the achievement growth of the non-Reading First schools is driven in part by their adoption of Reading First program elements, such as the Houghton-Mifflin reading program.

Thus, a reasonable hypothesis for future research is that a significant portion of the growth experienced by eligible non-RF LEAs since 2002 is the result of implementing the same or similar program elements as those that happen to be required by Reading First. While the supplemental survey is not sufficient to prove or disprove this hypothesis, its finding of significant program overlap between the two types of LEAs provides evidence to support it. If so, we are led to an observation that California LEAs may, in a variety of ways and in differing degrees, be assimilating a common body of pedagogical tools and instructional practices that happen to be present in a more concentrated form in Reading First. And these tools and practices appear to be improving elementary school student reading skills to an appreciable degree, in proportion to the degree they are implemented.

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<sup>8</sup> The California Reading First Evaluation Reports can be accessed online at [www.eddata.com/resources/publications/](http://www.eddata.com/resources/publications/).