### Statewide Professional Development Network for ELA- November 2015

### What Really Matters for Struggling Readers- Richard Allington

*Good News-* Research base supports that virtually every child could be reading by the end of first grade.

*Bad News-* Not much of what has become common practice will get us there.

Key Points

* A focus on decoding improved decoding skills, but didn’t necessarily impact later reading comprehension. Focus needed on meaning and critical/inferential thinking.
* Children do need systematic phonics instruction, but there is no one best way to teach phonics. Teachers must be experts in several approaches to decoding instruction to find what works for each child.
* Phonemic awareness is important, but needs to be used in conjunction with inventive writing.
* Reading Recovery is the only commercial core reading series that had “strong evidence” that it improved reading achievement. Goal = developing effective teachers, not fidelity to a core program.
* Often, struggling readers work with paraprofessionals, but certifications of these individuals in reading is limited. Struggling readers need our most expert teachers. Teachers need PD and intense training to support struggling readers.
* All kindergarten students who don’t know their letters by Halloween should receive additional 1:1 or very small group instruction.
* Struggling readers need more time with texts that they can read with high levels of accuracy (98% or higher) in order to become independent readers.
* Students need to be given the opportunity to self-select books for independent reading.
* Struggling readers should be reading ***more*** than their more proficiently reading peers, but they are often reading less and instead engaged in worksheets, isolated skill practice or round robin reading. We have to design lessons that provide struggling readers with opportunities to actually ***read.*** Exemplary teachers have kids reading 3-5 times more than most classrooms.

Recommendations

* Eliminate worksheets, workbooks, Round Robin Reading, isolated test prep
* Eliminate paraprofessionals from providing interventions, increase expert teachers working with small groups
* Invest in developing effective teachers over computer-based instructional programs or core reading programs
* Increase time spent reading and writing for struggling readers
* Invest in a rich supply of books and provide opportunities for independent reading of self-selected texts
* Increase purposeful student talk (teacher/student, student/student), reduce teacher talk
* Invest in expert teachers to provide very small group reading instruction to kindergarten and first grade students
* Focus on meta-cognition and meaning making

Questions to Consider

* Do we expect our struggling readers to read and write ***more*** every day than our achieving readers?
* Have we ensured that every intervention for our struggling readers is taught only by our most effective and most expert teachers?
* Have we designed our reading lessons such that struggling readers spend at least two-thirds of every lesson engaged in the actual reading of texts?
* Do we ensure that the texts we provide struggling readers across the full school day are texts that they can read with at least 98% word recognition accuracy and 90% comprehension?
* Does every struggling reader leave the building each day with a least one book they ***can*** read and that they also ***want*** to read?

Reflections:

Next Steps: