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# R&D ALERT



*timely knowledge for education and human development*

02

# Cracking the Code for Academic Literacy

**Like many high school teachers, Gayle Cribb had grown accustomed to "teaching around the text" in her history classes. What started as a way to accommodate students' variable reading skills, including those of many students who were English language learners, spiraled into a pattern of "delivering the content without requiring much reading." As a result, struggling students continued falling behind, and many fluent readers failed to grasp the specific strategies historians use to build and deconstruct their subject.**

"There was a lack of rigor," acknowledges Cribb, who has worked at Dixon High School in northern California since 1979. "I sensed there was something missing, but I couldn't figure out what it was. It was text. You can't nail things down as firmly without text to provide common reference points."

Cribb credits Reading Apprenticeship (RA) for showing her how to crack the code. RA, a model of academic literacy developed by WestEd's Strategic Literacy Initiative, helps teachers use and explain the reading comprehension strategies distinctive to each content area. Whether historians interpret events through cause and effect, or scientists analyze experiments using controls and variables, all subject specialists read, write, and think using different lenses and academic vocabulary. RA instructs teachers how to make those processes understandable to students.

## BUILDING LITERACY SKILLS TO MEET HIGHER ACADEMIC STANDARDS

"Many students, even those in honors classes and otherwise doing well in school, invest a lot of energy in hiding their lack of understanding of complex texts and of the reading processes that help make sense of them. They ask, 'What am I supposed to be doing when I'm reading?'" explains Cynthia L. Greenleaf, Co-Director of the Strategic Literacy Initiative. "Students don't really know, because these content-specific ways of thinking and writing are invisible."

By demystifying the techniques of close reading in each content area, the RA approach not only helps students do better in school, it also makes it possible for them to succeed in college and careers. In higher education and the workplace, people need to know how to comprehend various kinds of text in order to engage in higher-order thinking — making inferences, synthesizing information, analyzing arguments, verifying credibility of sources, and understanding and following complex directions.

As more states adopt the new Common Core Standards, which require students to develop advanced literacy skills in all subjects, RA's rigorously researched model of learning could be a catalyst for changing the way reading is taught in high school. Over the next four years, the RA model will be the focus of a major scale-up initiative called Reading Apprenticeship Improving Secondary Education (RAISE), which will involve more than 400,000 students and 2,800 teachers in five states (California, Indiana, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Utah). As part of the initiative, nine teachers at each participating school will each receive 10 days of targeted professional development and ongoing support from

By creating a safe environment for sharing confusion as well as breakthroughs, teachers signal that reading is a way of reasoning with text that everyone can learn and practice.

WestEd specialists during the first two years of implementation. Those teachers, in turn, will work with their colleagues and WestEd staff to spread the recommended practices across the schools.

The timing is crucial if schools hope to meet the higher learning goals established by the Common Core Standards. These new benchmarks require students to "read and make sense of a variety of texts in ways that more closely resemble the disciplinary ways," Greenleaf says. "It's a much higher, more advanced description of what literacy entails."

RA starts by asking teachers to think about how they comprehend text within their subject specialties. For many teachers, the process of making meaning with disciplinary texts has become so automatic that they may not consider that others don't know how to do it. And because teachers rarely collaborate across disciplines, they may not understand both the distinctive and overlapping skills necessary to read knowledgeably in different fields. Deconstructing and sharing those techniques with one another is the first step in learning how to make them clear to students. "There are text features and discourse features, things we need to pay attention to in every subject," says Ruth S. Schoenbach, Co-Director of the Strategic Literacy Initiative.

## GUIDING STUDENTS TO ENGAGE WITH TEXT

Students need to grasp the purpose of reading various texts, Schoenbach says, as well as the specific skills involved. For example, reading a novel for pleasure is different from analyzing a poem to identify literary techniques. Reading a newspaper article about global warming is different from reading a scientific abstract. A good reader might ask, "Will I need a basic summary of information to confidently discuss the topic in class?" or "Will I need precise data to use in a research paper?" RA shows teachers how to make those metacognitive processes explicit for themselves and then for their students.

Through such techniques as thinking aloud about text, modeling the mental processes required to understand it, and providing explicit instruction about the ways print and images convey meaning, teachers can make close reading an integrated part of content instruction. Using a range of whole-class and small-group conversations, they plant the seeds of inquiry, asking probing questions and encouraging students to do the same.

Teachers can also share their own struggles with reading, particularly with texts outside their fields. Dixon High School English teacher Lisa Krebs says students are amazed and empowered "when a teacher is willing to stand up and say, 'This is really difficult for me,' or 'When I was 20 I didn't get it, but at 30 I really understood it, and at 50 I'll understand it even more.' When they see comprehending literature isn't a piece of cake, you're on the same team."

Similarly, teachers discover how students' background knowledge and misconceptions can enrich or impede their understanding of text. At the beginning of a unit, the RA model recommends that teachers find out what students know — or think they know — about various topics. By creating a safe environment for sharing confusion as well as breakthroughs, teachers signal that reading is a way of reasoning with text that everyone can learn and practice.

One of the unique features of RA is the value it places on the social and personal dimensions of reading for understanding. Students spend a lot of time reading and discussing text together, learning to value one another's experiences and insights, look beyond superficial answers, and change their beliefs based on evidence. Such conversations often elevate the status of students previously considered marginal learners because, regardless of their formal academic skills, these students help classmates gain a deeper understanding of ideas in the text, based on their knowledge and experience.

Cribb says this shift became clear to her when her Mexican immigrant students shared sophisticated insights about Depression-era economics and politics. They had intimate connections to the personal and social dynamics of scarcity and migration, she says, making rich connections to text that their classmates couldn't.

A colleague told Cribb how these exchanges had created bonds between different groups of students. One day, the colleague said, a special education student was absent from class. During the ensuing reading discussion, one of the high-achieving students looked around to the vacant desk and said, "Where is Charlie today? We need him."

"That's such an important contradiction," Cribb says, to the way students typically experience reading in high school.

## INTEGRATING RA INTO SCHOOLWIDE IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS

Research indicates that RA has benefits for teachers as well as students. Three separate, multiyear studies showed that the RA model strengthened teacher practices and substantially improved students' literacy skills and content knowledge. Moreover, gains were most significant for students who were English language learners. Since inception in 1995, the RA model has spread to 34 states, with more than 77,000 teachers participating in related professional development.

Key lessons from those experiences include the importance of integrating the model with subject area texts and units of study in professional development, as well as providing ongoing support for teachers and encouraging cross-disciplinary ties. The RA model works best when it's part of a schoolwide community-building effort focused on literacy. That's why the focus of the multistate scale-up initiative will be spreading the RA model across all departments in the participating high schools. High school students in the RAISE initiative will have the opportunity to learn from multiple RA-trained subject area teachers across several grade levels, experiencing a web of support for academic literacy learning over their high school career.

In addition, WestEd plans to develop a web portal to provide interactive exchanges and share resources and tools among all schools in the RA network; build capacity for supportive leadership within the schools and at the district level, including support for literacy teams to share effective practices and provide professional development, in order to sustain the scale-up; and encourage new faculty members and administrators to come on board.

"Often, so many different reforms are taking place in schools that it's hard for faculty to focus their efforts," Greenleaf says. Teacher leaders and administrators

# Factoring Principals into School Improvement

**When policymakers search for ways to improve public education, rarely do they focus on the role of the school principal. Yet research shows that, next to the teacher, the principal has the strongest influence on student learning, particularly in high-poverty schools.**

Over the past decade, principals have been publicly called upon to take the lead in school improvement and turnaround — often with little policy support or guidance. And few research studies have been conducted to determine what kind of training and support makes such leadership possible.

"When we talk about improving schools and education, principals must be part of the equation," says Karen Kearney, Director of Leadership Initiatives and Senior Program Associate for the California Comprehensive Center at WestEd. "It's 'teachers, *plus* principals, *plus* superintendents, equals school improvement.' An 'either-or' formula will not work."

As a former building principal, Kearney recognizes the consequences of assuming that effective school leadership will "just happen." That's why she has played a pivotal role in shaping and sustaining California's Integrated Leadership Development Initiative (ILDI), an unusual collaboration of public and private agencies whose purpose is to upgrade the preparation, licensure, and career development of principals. Bringing together state agencies with organizations such as universities, professional associations, and county education offices, ILDI is forging new alliances to serve the long-term objective of developing effective leaders for every school in the state.

"Collaborative efforts such as ILDI are much-needed vehicles," says Fred Tempes, Director of the California Comprehensive Center at WestEd, which convened the groups that in 2005 became ILDI. "They get important work done that might otherwise be impossible to accomplish."

While ILDI work focuses on California, it also contributes to broader efforts to define standards and practices for highly effective principals nationwide and to support professional development for all stages of their careers. In 2010, several years of work came to fruition with the publication of ILDI's *Effective Principals for California Schools: Building a Coherent Leadership Development System*, which synthesizes the research to date on developing highly skilled principals and recommends changes in existing policies and practices to support each stage of an administrator's tenure.

The report describes a "coherent system" of leadership development, Kearney emphasizes, because, to be effective, all the elements must work together: research-based performance standards, clearly defined practices that exemplify the standards, and professional development support that enables principals to master the practices. When there are disconnects between a district's standards,

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best practices, and supports — as there often are — the system breaks down. A leadership development system, the report points out, also needs to be flexible enough to be used in a wide range of school and district contexts.

The *Effective Principals* report asserts that principals, like teachers, develop their professional skills in stages over the course of their careers, and ILDI defines common problems and ways to improve at each stage:

» **Aspiring Principal** – The identification and recruitment of principals should be active and dynamic, seeking outstanding teachers with demonstrated leadership skills, rather than passively accepting anyone with the required credentials.

» **Principal Candidate** – Policies affecting the preparation and licensing of principals are often misaligned with actual job responsibilities, especially in schools serving high-poverty areas. A crucial improvement over the current status quo would be to give "principal candidates the opportunity to apply knowledge and skills in real situations, with the support of a mentor or coach," the report says.

» **Novice Principal** – Induction programs, a shared responsibility of preparation programs and districts, must become more deliberate and consistent to ensure that new principals not only develop on-the-job skills but also apply them and improve their effectiveness.

» **Developing Principal** – Principals must participate in ongoing professional development to increase their skills. The report says that in California, unlike in some other states, "professional development for principals has rarely been coordinated or part of systemwide learning." The report suggests a range of changes, such as establishing a best-practices clearinghouse and defining and setting criteria for effective professional development.

» **Expert Principal** – Providing guidelines, recognition, and incentives for accomplished practice could sustain and retain the most skilled school leaders.

The *Effective Principals* report encapsulates a steady, 25-year effort by small groups of agencies and organizations to keep principal development on California's education policy agenda. During much of that time, and through several policy shifts, Kearney says, many of the same individuals worked together on small projects as a way to use limited resources to address important school leadership issues.

Partly as a result of this shared history, the *Effective Principals* report represents a consensus for action by key California agencies and organizations that develop policy, research, and professional practice related to improving school leadership standards. And that consensus carries some clout: Together, ILDI member organizations guide or assist every K–12 administrator in California.

Linda Wisher served as Director of Educational Services for the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) until her recent retirement, and has been an active ILDI member for five years. "ILDI's current focus on school leadership development is especially timely," she says, "given the large number of projected principal retirements and the growing student population in California over the next ten years. We've established a research base for promising practices and set into motion approaches for recruiting and developing the highly effective school leaders that our state will need in coming decades."

## COMPILING THE RESEARCH BASE FOR PRINCIPAL EVALUATION

To secure federal funding for school improvement, states and districts are required to use research-based, standards-based, valid, and reliable approaches to improve educator effectiveness. That, in turn, necessitates principal evaluation instruments and systems that are valid, reliable, and research-based, to measure changes in educator performance over time. To set the foundation for such evaluation, in 2011, ILDI released *The Policies and Practices of Principal Evaluation: A Review of the Literature*, a comprehensive review that collected and analyzed the small set of available research on principal evaluation systems. It also identifies additional research needed to link principal support and evaluation practices to improving principal effectiveness.

Adding information from expert interviews and guidance from the personnel evaluation standards to the limited empirical data, ILDI researchers were able to identify 12 features of comprehensive principal evaluation systems. These include:

- Close alignment of principal evaluation with state and district mission, goals, and professional standards, with an emphasis on instructional leadership;
- Effective strategies for implementing evaluation, including evaluator training and follow-up; and
- Ongoing review of the technical qualities and effects of the evaluation model and instruments.

These 12 features were published in a companion piece to the literature review, *Key Features of a Comprehensive Principal Evaluation System*. Validated through focus groups with key stakeholders, including superintendents, human resources administrators, principals, and professors of education, and reviewed against the *Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation Framework 2009*, the *Key Features* are intended for use by practitioners, researchers, and policymakers designing or monitoring principal evaluation systems.

"This is a particularly exciting stage of ILDI's work," Kearney says. "These recently published reports incorporate all the hard work on the issue to date: the research base, state and national leadership standards, and input from people in the field. Now we can roll these into practical guidance to move the work forward."

Kearney acknowledges that focusing attention on principals during a period of fiscal restraint will challenge efforts to implement ILDI's agenda. But the collaboration has already solidified partnerships that should bolster support for school leaders. Next steps are to further implement some of the recommendations in the *Effective Principals* report, appropriately identify how principal performance contributes to student achievement, and track the results. Sharing successful practices and developing a robust body of research on effective school leadership and principal evaluation could help make principals a priority instead of an afterthought.

**For more information about the Integrated Leadership Development Initiative, contact Karen Kearney at 415.615.3185 or kkearne@WestEd.org.**

# A Family-Centered Approach to Early Intervention

**Emily, a child with Down syndrome, was just four weeks old when her parents began looking for support services for her, and their search led them to Mosey Mezaros and her colleagues at the First Steps Infant Program. "Because her parents got engaged with intervention services so early," says Mezaros, a veteran early childhood special education teacher in California's Yolo County, "we were able to help ensure Emily's developmental challenges were well supported right from the start."**

Early intervention capitalizes on infants' and toddlers' rapid brain development and increases the likelihood that a child's educational achievement, ability to live independently, and quality of life will be higher. "Emily was able to start very early with speech therapy, feeding therapy, and other targeted intervention services," Mezaros reports. "She's now five years old, and she and her parents have a very active life together."

Emily is among tens of thousands of children served each year by California Early Start, a statewide system that provides intervention services to infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families. The system was created nearly two decades ago to comply with the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and its services are reaching more children and families than ever. In 2009, the Early Start system supported 2.3 percent — or about 38,000 — of the state's infants and toddlers, up from 32,000 in 2005.

Funded by state and federal monies, Early Start provides families with free intervention services through a statewide network of family resource centers, regional centers, and local education agencies. To support early intervention professionals in effectively delivering these services, WestEd's Center for Prevention and Early Intervention developed and coordinated Early Start's distinctive system of personnel development, which emphasizes comprehensive, relationship-based care for very young children with disabilities.

## PUTTING FAMILIES AT THE CENTER OF CARE

"Our personnel development takes a different approach to early intervention than other training models," says Angela McGuire, Senior Program Associate with WestEd's Center for Prevention and Early Intervention. "We take a relationship-based approach, stressing the importance of a strong partnership between the family and the service provider in supporting the development of the child."

In this relationship-based approach, the early intervention provider collaborates closely with the family to develop a shared view of the child and his or her strengths and needs. Together, the interventionist and the family identify naturally occurring learning opportunities for the child within the family's *everyday routines, relationships, activities, places, and partnerships* (known in Early Start as ERRAPP). Rather than prescribing a standard set of activities solely based on a child's challenges, this approach takes into consideration each family's priorities and preferences in order to integrate intervention strategies into daily family activities. The collaborative method also helps ensure

that families are empowered to support the specific developmental needs of their children.

"Relationships are key to successful early intervention work," says Mezaros, who has been involved in several of WestEd's Early Start trainings. "As providers, my colleagues and I got to know Emily's family, and we really encouraged them to engage in activities that were important to them and their daughter. Horseback riding is a big part of this family's life, and early on, Emily learned to sign the word 'horse' when she wanted her parents to take her for a ride with their horse. They also love swimming, so Emily and her parents got involved in a community swim class. These activities have been great for Emily's development."

Along with this collaborative, relationship-based approach, WestEd's Early Start trainings emphasize the need to provide intervention services in the context of everyday environments — anywhere that children and their families typically find themselves, such as the home, neighborhood park, grocery store, or homes of friends and family. McGuire notes that situating intervention services in dynamic everyday environments is particularly important because children tend to learn best in their own, familiar settings. For example, children learn about water when taking a bath, getting a drink of water, or going to a neighborhood pool — all of which offer a range of developmental learning opportunities.

McGuire says that another practical advantage of focusing on everyday environments is sustainability — families need to be able to support their children's development with the resources they already have. So, while it can be helpful for a child to go to a specialized clinic with access to new, state-of-the-art supports, McGuire notes that this often causes a disconnect once the child returns home and no longer has access to those same resources. Focusing on the families' naturally occurring routines and activities helps ensure a smooth, sustainable transition by allowing meaningful learning opportunities to occur even when the service provider is not present.

"I often hear that families don't know what they'll do to support their child once their service provider is gone," says Marie Pierre, an Early Start Program Coordinator in California's Santa Clarita Valley and a participant in several of WestEd's Early Start trainings. "One mother we work with initially felt very dependent on our help. However, after we worked closely with her to help her integrate developmental learning opportunities into her child's daily routines, she's become more willing and able to participate in her child's intervention activities. It's great because since she's become more actively involved, I can see a huge difference in the progress of her child."

## BUILDING TEAMS OF SPECIALIZED PROFESSIONALS

Providing these services requires highly specialized care, often from a number of different medical and therapeutic professionals. Because so many different fields of expertise must come together in early intervention — including occupational therapy, physical therapy, psychology, psychiatry, medicine, nursing, and family support — WestEd continually collaborates with experts across all these areas to deliver a comprehensive, interdisciplinary training program.

We take a relationship-based approach, stressing the importance of a strong partnership between the family and the service provider to support the development of the child.

"Infants and toddlers with developmental disabilities are a very complex population to work with," says McGuire. "Even a highly skilled occupational therapist who treats typically developing children will need to acquire new knowledge and skills to work effectively with infants and toddlers with developmental disabilities. WestEd's early intervention trainings help professionals bridge these gaps in knowledge and experience."

To ensure consistent, high-quality training for early intervention service providers, WestEd worked with the California Department of Developmental Services to develop a set of core competencies and created a three-tiered set of training institutes based on this core framework:

- **Early Start Essentials Institute:** Provides foundational information targeted toward Early Start service coordinators and early interventionists new to the field. This institute provides the knowledge base that all personnel involved in early intervention are expected to have in common.
- **Family Resource and Support Institute:** Provides training specifically for personnel working in Early Start family resource centers, which are staffed by parents who have children with special needs and offer parent-to-parent support.
- **Advanced Practice Institute:** Provides timely and critical information targeted toward deepening the skills of more experienced Early Start managers, supervisors, service coordinators, family support personnel, and service providers.

And, to reinforce how integral parents are to successful early intervention work, parents are featured presenters at a majority of the institutes.

Despite budget cuts over the last few years, these trainings continue to reach a growing number of professionals. In 2009, WestEd coordinated nine institutes throughout California, training more than 700 personnel — a 26 percent increase in participation over the previous fiscal year. And, as the demand for early intervention services grows, the need for knowledgeable service providers is as critical as ever.

"Many families have told me that when they first have a child with a disability or any kind of medical or developmental concern, they feel very isolated and uncertain," Mezaros says. "They just don't know where to turn. Connecting families to supportive early intervention service providers helps them feel less isolated. We help teach them not just to advocate for their children, but to dream for them."

**For further information on WestEd's Early Start Comprehensive System of Personnel Development, contact Virginia Reynolds at 916.492.4017 or vreynol@WestEd.org.**

# *Fast-Tracking* the paperwork for Federal Programs

**Sylvie Hale has photographs of school district storerooms where the paperwork required to monitor federal and state education programs fills rows and rows of file boxes, stacked floor to ceiling.**

"Federal and state programs, such as Title III for English language acquisition, address important equity goals in public schools," says Hale, who is Director of Program Development and Strategic Planning for the Comprehensive School Assistance Program (CSAP) at WestEd. "But, our team once estimated that just *reviewing* the compliance paperwork for one large urban school district's 20-plus federal and state programs required 11 state education agency staff members, working full-time for 20 days, and, with travel expenses, cost about $100,000."

Confident that technology could contribute to a more efficient, cost-effective way to do things, Hale and her development team created a web-based data and information management system called the WestEd Tracker. In just four days, "Tracker," as the system is known for short, can complete the kind of review that previously took four weeks.

Tracker is currently used in state and local education agencies in Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah and is undergoing pilot-testing in Washington State. Its efficiency is freeing up resources for strategic planning and better implementation of federal programs — activities that directly affect school improvement efforts. Tracker is even improving the way state education agencies (SEAs) and local education agencies (LEAs) operate and interact with one another.

## STREAMLINING COMPLIANCE MONITORING AND REPORTING

Using Tracker helps agencies meet the legal requirements that come along with federal and state funding, primarily the monitoring and reporting of how each dollar is spent to improve student achievement. "Simply on the basis of the savings it offers — in staff time, money, and paper — the system's compliance monitoring-and-reporting function 'sells itself' to states and districts," says Hale.

Basic arithmetic partly explains its appeal. It's not unusual for a school or LEA to receive funding for up to 20 different federal and state categorical programs. Typically, monitoring these programs requires completing separate reports for each program, maintaining specific records and documentation, and tracking program activities for compliance. The quantity of paperwork can quickly jump to thousands of pages. As a result, preparing and maintaining documentation for compliance reviews creates a heavy burden on already stretched resources. With staff reductions, paperwork can back up and report deadlines can slip. With that much paper to deal with, documentation is easily misplaced and sometimes goes missing. Trying to share paper across various offices and mail systems can be a logistical nightmare, Hale says, and LEAs are often asked to resend materials they have already mailed, in some cases a half a dozen times.

By contrast, Tracker users have access to all documents online. A messaging feature facilitates two-way

before Tracker

after Tracker

WestEd Tracker

Hi Michael! Logout Help Setup & Maintenance

LEA Overview | Monitoring | Plan | File Cabinet

2009-2010 School Year

School Year 2011 - 2012

## LEA Overview LEA Settings

### New Haven Unified School District - 3

### Monitoring

**Instruments (20)**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| ARRA Title I Appli... | 5/12/2011 | Accepted |
| Career Technical... | 5/12/2011 | In Progress |
| Event Start Applic... | 5/17/2011 | Needs Further Acti |
| Migrant Education | 6/30/2011 | In Progress |
| Onsite Indicators | 7/3/2011 | In Progress |
| SASA Monitoring | 7/10/2011 | In Progress |
| Title I Annual | 7/28/2011 | In Progress |
| Title III Annual | 8/1/2011 | In Progress |
| Title III Needs As... | 8/2/2011 | In Progress |
| Uniform Complai... | 8/5/2011 | In Progress |

### LEA Plan

**LEA Plan Overview**

**Last Updated:** John Smith 10/03/2011 9:55AM
**Status:** In Progress
**Progress:** 20%

**Goals (10)**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Reading/Language... | Origin 1 | Accepted |
| Mathematics Profi... | Origin 2 | In Progress |
| Proficiency in Eng... | Origin 3 | Needs Further Acti |
| College and Caree... | Origin 4 | In Progress |
| Parent Involvement | Origin 5 | In Progress |
| High School Gradu... | Origin 6 | In Progress |
| Highly Qualified Te... | Origin 7 | In Progress |

### Custom Fields

Title I Improvement Status: Year 2 Improvement
Primary Program: Special Education
Migrant Region: Region 5
Title III Improvement Status: Year 4 Improvement

### School Plans (5) Show 2 Retired

**School Plans (10)**

- Adams Elementary School
- Jefferson Elementary School
- McKinley Elementary School
- Roosevelt Elementary School
- Washington Elementary School
- Eisenhower Middle School
- Lincoln Middle School

### Onsites

Schedule Onsite

**Onsites (10)**

| | |
|---|---|
| Title 1 Monitoring Visit | 03/19/12 – 03/21/12 |

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For questions related to WestEd Tracker, please contact WestEd.

communication among staff at the state, district, and school levels, keeping all participants advised of upcoming deadlines; updated guidance and resources; and progress toward compliance resolution. These project management functions also support transparency and mutual accountability.

Historically, the complex compliance and reporting process has demanded a great deal of SEA and LEA staff time, Hale says, and consequently has shaped agency job descriptions and organization. The focus on legal aspects is understandable, given that funding depends on them, she acknowledges. "Our job is to encourage staff to take a step back and realize that the legal requirements are, in fact, very straightforward and can be reliably addressed using Tracker." To persuade program directors that they are not jeopardizing funding by converting to web-based formats and functions, Hale and her colleagues have walked people through various forms and review instruments, item by item, detailing how each legal requirement could be most efficiently addressed using Tracker.

## SHIFTING THE EMPHASIS TO PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

Promoting the benefits of Tracker to SEAs and LEAs as a planning tool is often more difficult than convincing them of its value for compliance reporting, Hale says. Nothing in the design of Tracker compels agencies to use its planning functions. Yet the benefits of doing so often become apparent as agencies begin using Tracker for monitoring — largely because it starts to break down the walls between separately managed categorical programs. As a common repository for information, to which all federal programs have access, Tracker begins to make each program more "visible" to the others in ways they have not historically been. It is not unusual for each program within a state or local agency to be headed by a different director, located in a separate office, and implemented completely independently of the others. For example, the Title I (disadvantaged students) director may have no contact with the Title III (English language learner students) director and know nothing about Title III goals and activities, and vice versa. Furthermore, as a result of this compartmentalization, the Title I plan may have a reading goal that is different from the Title III plan's reading goal. If an LEA is in improvement status, there may be an additional layer of reading goals associated with that. Yet all of these goals may be set for the same students.

As part of its technical assistance, CSAP encourages agencies to take advantage of the opportunity Tracker offers for a more effective approach to planning. What's most challenging to a state's or district's school improvement efforts — but, ultimately, most beneficial — is bringing staff together from the various programs to develop a single, integrated plan that articulates common learning goals for students based on academic standards. This requires staff to set aside traditional, program-centric approaches to learning goals — defined by compliance requirements and federal forms — and take a more student-centered approach. "They have to agree, for example," says Hale, "that a reading goal is just a reading goal — it's about students and learning, not about where the funding comes from." Once an overarching reading goal is established for all students, specific instructional strategies can be outlined, as needed, for

> Our job is to encourage staff to take a step back and realize that the legal requirements are, in fact, very straightforward and can be reliably addressed using Tracker.

students from migrant worker families, students learning English, students receiving special education services, and other subgroups.

Arizona, one of six states that have adopted Tracker, has taken several steps toward consolidating program goals. "We have incorporated School Improvement, Title II, Title III, and Educational Technology programs, along with Title I, in our plans," says Nancy Konitzer, Title I Director for the Arizona Department of Education (ADE). "We are breaking down the silos in the state department by consolidating programs, setting a model that LEAs can follow."

Over the six years ADE has used Tracker, the agency has institutionalized some of the organizational changes prompted by the system. "We've learned that we need a formal structure that has representation from all of the federal programs involved, so we have a steering committee that meets regularly," Konitzer says. "We have added district representatives as well. The steering committee's charge is to assist with the implementation of the Tracker among programs with consistency, to prioritize Tracker development needs, and to jointly solve problems that arise."

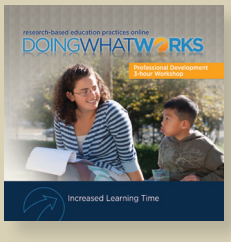
## BUILDING CAPACITY THROUGH ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Its many strengths notwithstanding, Hale is quick to caution that Tracker is by no means a "plug-and-play" technical solution. "Although it may sound odd, Tracker is not principally about the technology," she says. "Tracker is delivered with a great deal of technical assistance, in order to adapt it to an SEA's or LEA's particular systems and needs. But more importantly, we've learned that the software is most effective when state and local education agencies are committed to the organizational development — changes in staff roles and responsibilities, procedures, and sometimes policies — that build capacity to improve planning, implementation, and monitoring of state and federal programs."

SEAs in the six states using Tracker have taken capacity building to the regional level by forming a cross-state learning community through which they can share Tracker ideas, challenges, and solutions with one another. "We facilitate a lot of conversations among program and IT people in each state so that they can use Tracker in their agencies more effectively," says Paul Koehler, Director of the Southwest Comprehensive Center at WestEd, which provides resources and technical assistance to help states meet federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (No Child Left Behind) requirements. "For the past five years, we've brought all the states together as a region each year to talk about how they've been using Tracker and what's been most effective." One result of those meetings is a list of ideas that goes back to the development team working on Tracker to continue to enhance and improve the system. "Ongoing development of Tracker," Koehler says, "is now being shaped by the states that are using it."

**For further information about the WestEd® Tracker™ system, contact Sylvie Hale at 415.652.3188, or shale@WestEd.org.**

# Featured Resources



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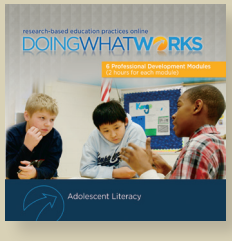

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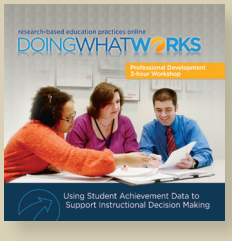

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## Doing What Works® Professional Development Products

Based on research presented in Practice Guides produced by the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences, these multimedia products provide all the material required to conduct professional development workshops on a variety of topics at the school or district level. WestEd's Innovation Studies program led the development of the Doing What Works website, on whose content and approach these learning modules are based. For more detailed descriptions of products, go to http://www.wested.org/dwwresources

### (1) Increased Learning Time: Beyond the Regular School Day

This "one-stop" package contains all the materials you need to conduct a professional development session on increased learning time to improve student academic achievement. This professional development session is appropriate for a range of audiences — teacher leaders or coaches, classroom teachers, and administrators.

Format: Multimedia | Publisher: U.S. Department of Education, 2011
Product #: IN-11-03R | Free online at http://www.WestEd.org/cs/we/view/rs/1111

### (2) Adolescent Literacy

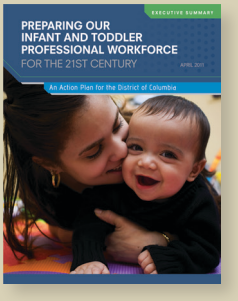
Conduct six two-hour professional development sessions on improving student literacy in middle and high school. You can conduct each module as a standalone workshop or presentation, or combine two modules for a longer session.

Format: Multimedia | Publisher: U.S. Department of Education, 2011
Product #: IN-11-02R | Free online at http://www.WestEd.org/cs/we/view/rs/1110

### (3) Using Student Achievement Data to Support Instructional Decision Making

This unique professional development package features everything you need to facilitate a three-hour presentation on using student achievement data to support instructional decision making.

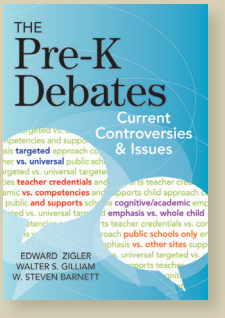
Format: DVD (180 Minutes) | Publisher: U.S. Department of Education, 2011
Product #: IN-11-01R | Free online at http://www.WestEd.org/cs/we/view/rs/1095




### Preparing Our Infant and Toddler Professional Workforce for the 21st Century: An Action Plan for the District of Columbia

This report, coproduced by WestEd, presents an action plan for preparing the Washington, D.C. infant and toddler professional workforce for the 21st century.

Produced by: Great Start DC, Dan Bellm, WestEd
Publisher: Great Start DC, 2011
Pages: 28
Free online at
http://www.WestEd.org/cs/we/view/rs/1089

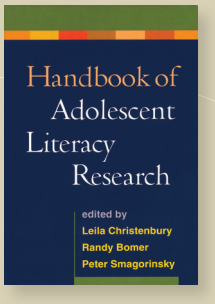



### The Pre–K Debates: Current Controversies and Issues

Edited by a founder of Head Start and two other highly respected experts, this volume spotlights today's most urgent pre-K debates, explores each one from all sides, and paves the way for sound, educated decision making.

Editors: Edward Zigler, Walter Gilliam, Steven Barnett
Publisher: Brookes Publishing, 2011
Pages: 264 / Price: $36.95
Product #: CCFS-11-02R
ISBN: 978-1-59857-183-7

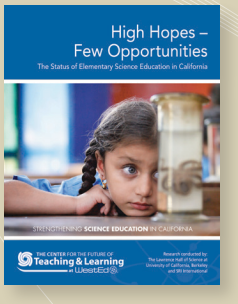
**for more products > WestEd.org/bookstore**




### Handbook of Adolescent Literacy Research

The first comprehensive research handbook of its kind, this volume showcases innovative approaches to understanding adolescent literacy learning in a variety of settings. WestEd's Ruth Schoenbach and Cynthia Greenleaf wrote a key chapter, "Fostering Adolescents' Engaged Academic Literacy."

Editors: Leila Christenbury, Randy Bomer, Peter Smagorinsky
Publisher: Guilford Press, 2010
Pages: 452 / Price: $45.00
Product #: RE-10-02R
ISBN: 978-1-60623-993-3




### High Hopes – Few Opportunities: The Status of Elementary Science Education in California

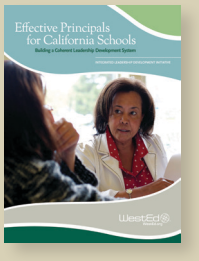
Intense pressure to meet accountability goals in mathematics and English has left limited time for science. Furthermore, teachers and schools do not have the infrastructure support needed to consistently provide students with high-quality science learning opportunities. A summary of the report is also available.

Publisher: The Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning at WestEd, 2011
Pages: 76 / Price: $24.95
Product #: CFTL-11-02R
Free online at http://www.WestEd.org/cs/we/view/rs/1187

## Systems for Developing and Evaluating Principals

An effective principal is essential to school success. Produced by the Integrated Leadership Development Initiative (ILDI), these resources provide research, policy snapshots, promising practices, and examples to help school districts plan and implement principal development and evaluation systems.

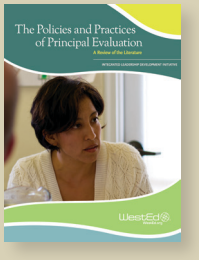
### Effective Principals for California Schools: Building a Coherent Leadership Development System




Written by the director of WestEd's Leadership Initiative, this report suggests an organizing frame for principal development. The frame — a continuum of distinct, but interrelated career stages, with descriptions of relevant system support — recognizes that principals develop their capacity to successfully lead schools over the entire course of their career.

Author: Karen Kearney | Publisher: WestEd, 2010 | Pages: 48
Free online at http://www.WestEd.org/cs/we/view/rs/1020

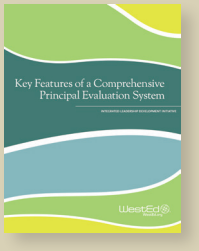
### The Policies and Practices of Principal Evaluation: A Review of the Literature




This comprehensive literature review provides insights into how best to evaluate school principals, as derived from a set of primary and secondary sources from reputable publications. All of the reviewed sources are listed in the references section.

Authors: Stephen H. Davis, Karen Kearney, Nancy M. Sanders | Publisher: WestEd, 2011
Pages: 44 | Free online at http://www.WestEd.org/cs/we/view/rs/1104

### Key Features of a Comprehensive Principal Evaluation System




This publication draws from an in-depth review of research and professional literature on principal evaluation and personnel evaluation standards to present 12 key features identified as critical in establishing a comprehensive principal evaluation system.

Authors: Nancy M. Sanders, Karen Kearney | Publisher: WestEd, 2011 | Pages: 44
Free online at http://www.WestEd.org/cs/we/view/rs/1107

# R&D ALERT

*R&D Alert* covers issues affecting schools, communities, and human development professionals throughout the United States. Current and previous issues are available at WestEd.org/R&DAlert. Your comments are welcomed. Please address them to Linda Broatch at lbroatc@WestEd.org.



WestEd — a national nonpartisan, nonprofit research, development, and service agency — works with education and other communities to promote excellence, achieve equity, and improve learning for children, youth, and adults. WestEd has 17 offices nationwide, from Washington and Boston to Arizona and California, with its headquarters in San Francisco. For more information about WestEd, visit WestEd.org; call 415.565.3000 or, toll-free, (877) 4-WestEd; or write: WestEd / 730 Harrison Street / San Francisco, CA 94107-1242.

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**continued from page 5**

"need an understanding of how RA fits into other reforms, such as adopting the Common Core Standards. It's a means to an end." Importantly, the end goal of RA is a higher set of expectations for teaching and learning and a new vision of student capability.

"I think going through the (RA) training taught me how to teach better than any teacher education class I had in college," says Krebs, who has taught at Dixon for 14 years and used RA for the past 10. "I understand my goals as a teacher, my purpose. My purpose is to inspire a learner, not just have them memorize Shakespeare. It's helping kids get a vision for themselves through reading and thinking and participating in the greater conversation."

**For more information about the Reading Apprenticeship approach and the research documenting its effectiveness, contact Cynthia Greenleaf at 510.302.4222 or cgreenl@WestEd.org, or Ruth Schoenbach at 510.302.4255 or rschoen@WestEd.org.**