

Lit Scan

Facts & Figures from the Colorado Literacy Research Initiative

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Teacher Outreach to Parents of Low-Achieving Students Outranks Other Practices in Impact on Reading Achievement

In a recent assessment of Title I Schools for the U.S. Department of Education, Westat, Inc. and Policy Studies Associates weighed the effects of three school and classroom practices on reading achievement. These practices included:

- outreach to parents of low-achieving students,
- teacher ratings of their own professional development, and
- emphasis placed by teachers on basic instruction in upper elementary grades.

HIGHLIGHT

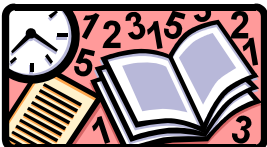
Teacher outreach to parents of low-achieving students generates greater test score gains between grades three and five than either teacher ratings of their own professional development or emphasis on basic instruction methods.

Key Concepts

Outreach to low-achievers' parents refers to steps taken by teachers to communicate with parents of low-achieving students. Such steps might include meeting with parents face-to-face, sending home materials on ways to help their child, contacting parents when their child has problems, and, more routinely, when there are no problems.

Rating of professional development refers to teachers' opinions of the quality of their professional development in reading content and instructional strategies. This factor also covered their attitudes about how well such training supported their school's or department's plans to change practice; reform efforts in their school; state or district standards or curriculum frameworks; state or district assessments; use of new pedagogical approaches; and improving their ability to adapt their teaching to state requirements.

Basic Instruction in Upper Elementary School Grades refers to how much time students spend reading aloud, completing workbooks or skill-sheet assignments, practicing phonics, and practicing word attack.



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Other Practices in Impact on Reading Achievement

Effects on Reading Achievement

Of these three practices, outreach to low-achievers' parents demonstrated the strongest relationship with gains in reading scores on the Stanford Achievement Tests, Ninth Edition (SAT-9). (Note: The SAT-9 correlates strongly with scores on state assessments, such as Colorado's CSAP.) For students who experienced average conditions on these three factors, test scores rose 38.3 points between grades three and five.

- When third grade teachers were very active in outreach to low-achievers' parents, students gained 46.6 points—8.3 points more than students whose teachers made average outreach efforts.
- When teachers rated highly their own professional development, students gained 41.4 points—3.1 points more than students whose teachers rated their training as average.
- When teachers of upper elementary grades emphasized basic instruction methods, students gained 36.4 points—1.9 points less than students whose teachers did not favor such methods.

Thus, of the three school and classroom practices assessed for their relative impact on reading achievement, teacher outreach to low-achieving students ranked highest.

SOURCES

- **The Longitudinal Evaluation of School Change and Performance (LESCP) in Title I Schools. Final Report, Volume I: Executive Summary.** Full text available at <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OUS/PES/eval.html>.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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