

## Intermediate and Adolescent Literacy: The State of Research and Practice

*Meeting held at Carnegie Corporation of New York, September 26, 2002  
(A participant list is at the end of the article)*

### OVERVIEW

Catherine E. Snow, Harvard Graduate School of Education

The meeting on adolescent literacy started with a brief description of the many factors involved in successful literacy performances among middle and secondary school students (presented by Snow, based on the 2002 RAND report *Reading for Understanding: Toward an R&D Program in Reading Comprehension*). The second presentation, by James McPartland, grounded highly convergent ideas in efforts closer to practice, by describing one set of efforts made to improve comprehension instruction in urban schools and documenting the factors militating against the success of those efforts—poorly prepared teachers, conflicts with traditional modes of instruction, and inadequate teaching tools. The recitation of challenges continued, with a description of the problems second language readers face from August and the range of factors depressing outcomes that are associated with race from Dorothy Strickland.

After lunch, though, the assembled group was treated to a series of presentations that gave greater basis for optimism: descriptions of programs focused on adolescent literacy outcomes that seemed to be making a difference, at least in teacher attitude and behavior, if not yet demonstrably in student outcomes. Perhaps the most striking and impressive conclusion to be drawn from the several presentations about real programs being implemented in real schools was the several dimensions of similarity across the various sites. It is heartening to realize that programs that have been effectively implemented and that seem to be being effective all look alike in certain ways. Those dimensions of similarity are summarized in Table 1; though none are ubiquitous, most appear in two or more of the programs identified.

**Table 1. Six programs and 12 elements of improved programs: their cross-classification.**

Curricular innovation	San Diego	Boston	Providence	Union City	WestEd school	McPartland schools
Teacher coaching	X	x	x			
Collaborative student learning						X
Domain-specific literacy			x			
Technology use				X		
Book clubs	X	X			X	X
Literature guides						X
Workshops for reading and writing		X				

Literature logs		X				
Curriculum maps			x			
Support for teacher change	X	X	X	X	X	X
Specific, traveling instructional tools						X
Respect-building rituals and routines	X					X

The various innovations that have been implemented fall into a couple of superordinate categories—those designed to improve the interactive milieu within which instruction takes place, those designed to heighten interest and motivation for reading, those designed to generate active involvement with text, and those designed to help teachers teach in new ways. Each of the programs had some strategies to meet each of these goals.

Yet each of these various programs (and no doubt others not represented here) invented its own set of innovations to meet these various needs, and furthermore none has yet introduced the full array. In part, this reflects the limited time and energy available at any of these sites—the reforms are being led by a small number of people who are working very hard. In part it reflects the sense in each of the programs that some of the principles or domains of action are more important than the others. Nonetheless the current situation seems less than optimal in a number of ways—wasteful of time and energy, but also likely delivering programs that in all cases could be improved.

A second, equally important point that emerged from all the talks that described programmatic innovations was that each of them had developed some knowledge about how to make change happen—resources for launching change in the form of principles and practices that schools need to learn about. All these various teams, working in relative isolation in their far-flung cities and districts, discovered the need to:

- Reflect on current goals and activities
- Identify targeted instructional changes
- Provide support for both teachers and administrators trying to embrace change
- Develop ways to understand variations in practice (e.g., by comparing a single lesson across classrooms)
- Generate evidence about how instructional changes relate to changes in standards and assessments
- Provide incentives for teachers and administrators to engage in professional development and to pursue change
- Articulate the innovative instructional practices across the elementary, middle-school and high-school levels

The various teams had also developed some practical and usable knowledge related to actually implementing these changes. Various (but not all of them) have developed for themselves:

- Information about how to incorporate English-language-learners (ELLs) and students receiving special education services into their reformed systems
- Examples of the kinds of institutional change (e.g., rescheduling, rebudgeting, redesigning incentives) that are instrumental in making the changes work
- Strategies for recognizing and rewarding teacher development

Yet, just as was the case for the instructional innovations, these innovations in the domain of administrative procedures, district- and school-level policies, and institutional requisites were isolated, recreated independently in the various programs, and not part of a shared knowledge base.

## **THE MEETING**

The Carnegie Intermediate and Adolescent Literacy Meeting took place on September 26, 2002, from 9am until 4:30pm, at Carnegie Corporation of New York. Just over fifty participants listened to presentations throughout the day about the state of research and practice in improving literacy outcomes among middle and high school students in America. The day consisted of three presentations. The first, given by Catherine Snow and James McPartland served as an overview of the state of research and practice. The other two presentation sessions were panels. The first consisted of Patricia Alexander, Diane August and Dorothy Strickland speaking on the multiple dimensions of literacy. The second involved Ellen Guiney, Melody Johnson, and Staci Monreal reporting on current promising practice in the schools of Boston, Providence, and San Diego respectively. This last session was followed by brief formal responses from AnneMarie Palincsar and Ruth Schoenbach. Each presentation session was followed by a question-and-answer period. The rest of this report briefly summarizes the content of the presentations and discussion sessions in the order they occurred with particular attention paid to suggestions for Carnegie's role in improving literacy outcomes in this area.

### **Catherine Snow**

Dr. Catherine Snow summarized the RAND Reading Study Group report that was commissioned by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) to define the next major agenda for reading research. Reading comprehension was defined as the most important topic for future research for three reasons:

1. Research on reading in the primary grades was fairly well convergent and established and yet did not guarantee reading for comprehension in later grades or solve the achievement gap problem.
2. Although comprehension should be a focus for all grades, there was a glaring lack of support and direction for teachers in the middle and high school grades.
3. Approaches to teaching comprehension before grade 4 and to teaching reading in general after grade 3 were underdeveloped.

Dr. Snow noted the group's definition of reading comprehension—the “process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language”—envisioned comprehension as a process rather than an end-state, that went far beyond simply reading words, although doing so with fluency clearly figured into it. She then explained four clear sources of variability in comprehension— the reader, the text, the

activity, and the context—and pointed out that the “action” in comprehension was not necessarily the domain of each area separately but rather in their intersection. Dr. Snow concluded by summing up the three areas of reading comprehension research that the group felt were most in need of development. Classroom instruction was the first and the specific need here was to move researched methods into classrooms and simultaneously to research the existing methods of effective teachers. The second need for research was for effective means of teacher education, both pre-service and in-service, in teaching reading comprehension. Finally, assessment of reading comprehension was identified as an area of research need because few, if any, existing assessments currently available are sensitive to the range and sources of variability in comprehension.

## **James McPartland**

Dr. McPartland presented the challenges of improving reading comprehension from a practice perspective. He saw these challenges as falling into four main categories. The first challenge was that of defining the problem in operational terms. He stressed that the real problems in adolescent literacy were not in word attack skills, which publishers tend to continually stress, but rather in fluency and comprehension. He attributed the former to a lack of vocabulary and, relatedly, to a lack of practice on the part of struggling adolescent readers. He attributed the latter to the lack of fluency and a lack of active interaction with the text and author. The second challenge Dr. McPartland identified was creating activities focused on fluency and comprehension. He stressed that while some of the solutions are readily apparent, they come with their own intrinsic challenges. For instance, a clear solution to part of the problem would be to give children more opportunities to read a wider range of engaging and readable texts, however teachers and schools are limited by the texts that are actually available and their budgets for purchasing books. Similarly, modeling of active interaction while reading can promote children enacting the same approach, but modeling this process is not easy or natural. The challenges embedded within these solutions imply the third major area of challenge to improving reading comprehension instruction, supporting teachers’ implementation of instructional improvements. Dr. McPartland stressed that professional development efforts must move beyond simple workshops and involve modeling, give teachers opportunities to participate and test out methods, supply manuals and aids for implementation, and provide expert in-class support. Dr. McPartland identified evaluating student outcomes as the final area of challenge to improving reading comprehension. He attributed part of the problem to the appropriateness of assessments, but also noted other sources for this challenge. For one, children often disengage as soon as they are put in a testing situation. When a child does this at some points and not at others, the results can end up looking like the child experienced a three-year gain or loss, when in reality he or she was simply trying at one testing and not at the other. McPartland also noted that evaluation of improvement efforts at the level of the child tend to overlook that quality of implementation varies from teacher to teacher.

## **First Question-and-Answer Session**

The question-and-answer session following the Snow and McPartland raised a few important points.

Donna Alverman noted that the literacy practices of children outside of school environment often reveal more ability and interest than the school environment often inspires, and that teachers and researchers would do well to recognize and attempt to tap that.

Another audience member brought up that point that comprehension tests like the Stanford-9 may be tapping the persistence of readers as much as, or perhaps more so than comprehension. Catherine Snow also noted that it is well known that it is possible to get a decent score on such tests by simply reading and answering the questions without reading the passages and that this was part of the reason the RAND group targeted assessment as an area of great need.

Neil Grabois asked if there are any international sources of information on the reading comprehension problem. Snow noted that there is more agreement in some cultures about what reading comprehension is and how to measure it, and also pointed out that the children in those countries who do so well on standardized assessments tend to be able to read for multiple and applied purposes as well. Lauren Resnick remarked that Finland is particularly successful in its efforts in large part because of a cultural engagement in literacy in that country, as witnessed by the proliferation of public libraries.

Resnick's comments lead to a theme that would recur throughout the day, that part of the agenda in improving reading comprehension outcomes had to be creating a more literate environment for children, that teaching them better alone was not enough. While educators and researchers cannot immediately or directly change society, effective efforts at improving reading comprehension outcomes will at the very least require school-wide support for a literate environment. Carol Lee later echoed this theme later in this session when she commented on a number of issues in the larger context that color our characterizations of struggling readers. She stressed that it is crucial to conceptualize the reading comprehension problem as not located solely in the child, but as also located in the larger context of the classroom, the school, the district, the state, and the country. Because of the decentralized nature of the American education system, factors at each of these levels affects how children perform.

The final topic of this session was technology and its role in fostering, hindering and assessing comprehension. While the emphasis in the past has been on its motivational force and the effects of word processing, future research should address the impact of the internet and other advanced technologies on comprehension and spelling because that is more and more where teenagers in particular are experiencing and practicing their literacy. Fred Carrigg briefly described the literacy initiative in the Union City Schools, where 88% of children now pass their achievement tests. In addition to a strong effort at creating a literate environment, with about 500 books in each classroom and 120 minutes of reading curriculum, technology and research play an important of the content of the literacy period. Derrick Griffith of Classrooms, Inc., also commented on his company's efforts to create literacy learning software that simulates real world problems, such as diagnosing a patient. Griffith also recounted that the children refused to test at the end of the program, presumably due to the lack of authenticity that tests tend to present.

## **Patricia Alexander**

Patricia Alexander described reading comprehension development as occurring not simply in the child, but in the child nested within a domain nested within society. The domain we consider can radically alter how well a child comprehends what he or she reads. Dr. Alexander further argued that because of the rapidly changing nature of today's society, educators and researchers often do not understand how society is currently shaping children. In essence, she claimed we are educating today's children for yesterday's world, with little

appreciation or preparation for the world children will operate in after their schooling is completed.

Dr. Alexander went on to explain how education is subject to three types of trends: stationary, iterative, and incremental. The stationary trends tend not to change dramatically, if at all, over time, and include the basic capacities of the human mind. The iterative trends are the all-too-familiar oscillation between phonics and literature-based instruction, efferent and aesthetic reading, collaborative and independent instruction, and diffuse and direct instruction. The incremental trends are those in which change has proceeded nearly exponentially. Dr. Alexander gave the ever-increasing flood of information that bombards children in today's society and the increase in diversity and sheer numbers of the population as some examples.

Pulling together these two strands of thought, Dr. Alexander explained that in order to reach today's youth, literacy educators have demonstrate the usefulness and relevancy of reading and school-gained information, otherwise children will revert to their adaptive stance of apathy in order to cope with the flood of dispensable information. The latter is what Dr. Alexander felt leads to the temporary and superficial learning endemic in schools. Only when the instruction is meaningful to children will they make the switch from situational motivation to individual motivation to learn and thus from surface processing strategies to the deep-processing strategies educators and researchers know are the key to good reading comprehension.

## **Diane August**

Diane August reported on the issue of English Language Learners (ELLs) in reading comprehension research and instruction. She noted that those whose first language is not English are the fastest growing demographic group in the U.S. While some come to America with strong academic backgrounds, others come with little or no literacy experience. Dr. August then summarized three areas that affect policy, practice and research in the reading comprehension of ELLs.

The first of these is the relationship between first and second languages in the literacy learner. Dr. August explained that there is now considerable evidence that literacy gained in the first language transfers to the second language, and that there is also evidence that transfer may well be b-directional. While there is also evidence that first language literacy learning can interfere with second language literacy learning, the evidence points toward this being a temporary effect.

The second important area affecting the reading comprehension of ELLs is the relationship between English oral language proficiency and English language literacy. The two are strongly related, specifically in ELLs aptitude for grammatical complexity and correctness, informativeness, and comprehension. Despite the clear, positive relationship between the two, controversy arises over the implications for instruction, especially around when to begin English literacy instruction. Should ELLs begin learning literacy skills in English before, during, or after mastery of English oral language skills and before, during, or after literacy instruction in the first language?

The final important topic in discussing the reading comprehension of ELLs is what constitutes optimal instruction for them. Dr. August reported the results of three studies and reviewed their implications. The Vocabulary Improvement Project has shown that in classrooms that contain both ELLs and English monolinguals, intensive literature-based instruction aimed at improving the depth and breadth of vocabulary knowledge improves children's knowledge of the words taught, analysis of new words, and comprehension. The more challenging the curriculum

and the longer it was implemented, the better the results. Another study involving instructional conversations and literature logs in transitional classrooms also showed promise for improving the comprehension of ELLs. Results showed that using these two instructional tools in concert (rather than in isolation) reaped the most benefits for ELLs, improving both their comprehension and their essay writing. The final study utilized the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol to enhance comprehension and writing and found that the SIOP model produced better improvements in ELLs' narrative and expository writing than other methods of sheltered instruction.

Dr. August concluded her presentation by briefly discussing two types of programs designed to build bi-literacy. She described the evaluation of one Dual Immersion program in Texas and how nearly 100% of its students met standards for reading in *both* languages. She also related how Newcomer Programs, which develop skills in the first language and give children an academic orientation before entry into school, have culled promising results; one such program in New York reported a drop-out rate of only 1.7% as compared to the 16% rate in regular high schools.

### **Dorothy Strickland**

Dorothy Strickland shared her notes and thoughts from an informal review of literature on the achievement gap. She defined the gap as the disparity in White and Black students' achievement and in richer and poorer students' achievement. Despite the longstanding federal agenda to reduce this disparity, it has remained largely unchanged.

In her review of the literature, Dr. Strickland noted that racially based differences and racist discourse remain ingrained in schools and that students' self-perceptions continue to be shaped negatively by these demeaning factors. Furthermore, racial and cultural diversity is only increasing. At the same time, there are studies that show that while race matters in educational outcomes, it does not have to determine them. Yet Dr. Strickland notes that by reporting NAEP results by racial groups, the bias that race determines educational outcomes is continually reinforced.

Dr. Strickland noted that despite wide acknowledgement that racial differences tend to be confounded with socio-economic differences among children, the two tend to be treated as separate issues. She noted also that income, rather than race, is the strongest predictor of low achievement and suggested that the racial gap in achievement would be better addressed by remedying the poverty gap. In the meantime, the gap between what is rich and what is poor continues to widen with the most negative impact on non-Whites, resulting in a default resegregation of the population. Moreover the effects of poverty linger such that the children of more recently wealthy families tend to underperform those of more established wealthy families. Yet, the effect of poverty, Dr. Strickland pointed out, is not one that is restricted to individuals because schools with more than 25% children on free or reduced lunch consistently do worse than schools with fewer poor children.

Dr. Strickland further noted that the reporting of the achievement gaps between races and socioeconomic classes is confounded by environmental factors. For instance, urban districts are much less likely to have certified and experienced teachers, and the problem is only worse in the inner cities. These stressors make efforts at improvement through professional development that much harder to implement. Even when one only compares students with certified teachers, performance is correlated with how students' teachers did on their certification exams. Within group variation tends not to be addressed and yet clearly exists.

Dr. Strickland concluded by reviewing some promising practices and noting that her review was by no means as extensive or methodical as it could have been. The practices she reviewed emphasized the importance of high expectations and demands as evoking better performance from students regardless of race or socioeconomic background.

## **Second Question-and-Answer Session**

Carol Lee suggested that if the studies Strickland reviewed were examined for a correlation between opportunities to learn and achievement (rather than race and achievement) that the results might dispel the racial myth. In general, she argued for shifting the focus on achievement gaps off of race and onto opportunities to learn.

Another participant argued that each of the presentations had tremendous implications for structural reorganization of schools and professional development. The latter in particular would prove a challenge because high school teachers do not see themselves as reading teachers, but rather as content teachers. This latter point also became a recurring theme throughout the rest of the day.

Judith Langer commented on the contributions of the professional environment in schools to reading comprehension achievement. Her five-year study found profound differences in how administrators and teachers lived their professional lives. In some cases, a lack of administrative support only strengthened the solidarity and resourcefulness of teachers seeking improvements.

Echoing Carol Lee's concerns, Michele Cahill noted that so much of the research on race, poverty, and ELLs has led to low expectations for these students and that what would be more useful is research focused on what can be applied in the classroom. At the same time, she stressed that research has not acknowledged how different schools are from one another and hence what a difference there is between implementing a reform in a school where teachers see themselves as part of a professional community versus a school where teachers see the school mainly as a custodial institution. "Injecting" promising practices into these two very different environments will necessarily have different outcomes that have little to do with the practices themselves. Cahill concluded by noting that the effort to improve reading comprehension achievement should be a two-pronged one that addresses not only classroom instruction, but also school and larger societal factors.

Michelle Feist brought up the question of family involvement and what parents can do to most effectively support their children's literacy achievement. Strickland emphasized that while her own background is strongest in elementary education, it is undeniable that time is a crucial component. "We used to talk about quality time, but really it's just shared time" engaged in learning, reading, and talking that will make a difference. Parents can support any version of children's concepts of themselves as learners, but parents may not realize that and that their actions and words can have unintended consequences. Dr. August noted that one of the most tragic pieces of advice parents of ELLs often get is to read and talk to their children in English rather than their first language, despite the fact that the first language is usually the better developed.

Diana Lam asked Dr. August whether research indicated we should give up on transitional language programs. August responded emphatically in the negative and explained that the aversion to them in the U.S. has little empirical basis. In fact, Spanish speaking ELLs instructed first in Spanish outperform those instructed first in English. Lam followed up with a question about which type of program would be ideal for older adolescent ELLs who first enter the school system in high school. August responded that by agreeing that the system has an

ethical responsibility to teach these students to read and write in English, but that the Newcomer Programs she described are programs that manage to do so without complete immersion in English instruction. Although the situation is a bit less clear for ELLs whose language utilizes a different orthography from English, the evidence is that for those whose orthography is similar, first language learning is most effective.

## **Ellen Guiney**

Ellen Guiney of the Boston Plan for Excellence presented on Boston's Reading and Writing Workshop model. This model attempts to remedy the low reading scores, low engagement, and high alienation that characterize middle and high school children in Boston Public Schools (BPS) by improving classroom instruction and organization through comprehensive school reform. The spring 2002 MCAS, Massachusetts's criterion-based test of student achievement, results revealed that 61 percent of Boston tenth graders failed the English language arts measure, while the failure rate among tenth graders in comprehensive high schools ranged from 64 percent to 88 percent.

Despite the lack of encouragement of these early results, Guiney stressed the promise of the model, which relies on small schools and small classrooms. Students work in small groups of about 4 to 6 and discuss books through a book club approach. As the children become accustomed to expectations for both behavior and learning, the teacher relinquishes control of the groups' conversations. The workshop model thus enables teachers to observe students individually and target instruction according to these observations, supporting direct and integrated instruction. The model furthermore matches the collaborative coaching and learning professional development model of the BPS through its use of collaboration between literacy coach and classroom teacher. Guiney cited time, ownership, response, and community as keys to the success of the model.

Guiney then showed a brief video demonstrating the model in action. Students in the video were clearly engaged and on task. The teacher and coach discussed pedagogical decisions in a critical but supportive manner, and generally found themselves surprised by how smoothly the model worked. Even the most disaffected children came to take ownership of their "book club." Guiney noted that although the video showed only 2 or 3 classrooms taught by one teacher in one high school this model and how well it worked had been replicated in every high school served. Guiney also noted that the video had served as an important tool to gaining commitment and faith from principals and others unfamiliar with the model.

Guiney concluded by enumerating areas of ambition and challenge for the initiative. The ambitions included promoting higher standards for student work, using higher level literature (Shakespeare rather than Walter Dean Myers), fostering the teacher network within and across schools necessary for promoting the model, and implementing it in every school. The challenges included dealing with teachers' different concepts about norms of classroom control, teachers' viewing themselves as teachers of literature rather than teachers of students, and a lack of proof that this model works for all students. As a closing note of caution, Guiney explained that good ideas don't travel because they're good, but because their implementation is supported on a structural level.

## **Melody Johnson**

Melody Johnson, the superintendent of the Providence School Department, gave her presentation "Disciplinary literacy: A tool for reform in the Providence schools." Providence,

RI, is historically a severely challenged urban school system. When Johnson began her job, only 10 children in the entire system performed at a proficient level upon entry into high school. The district also suffered from a lack of consistent curriculum and textbooks. To improve achievement, the system undertook a radical change in its philosophy and implementation of learning. Johnson attributes the success of the changeover to sharing with teachers the two theories that serve as the initiative's foundation: Principles of Learning and Disciplinary Literacy.

The Principles of Learning are a nationally recognized research-based knowledge development theory and best practices, whose overarching principle is that “effort creates ability.” Johnson explained that at the heart of this approach to learning is the belief that it is lack of access and opportunity to learn, rather than intrinsic ability, that is at the root of achievement gaps. The principles themselves are:

- Organizing for effort
- Clear expectations
- Fair and credible evaluations
- Recognition of accomplishment
- Academic rigor in a thinking curriculum
- Accountable talk
- Socializing intelligence
- Self-management of learning
- Learning as apprenticeship.

The initiative strives to inspire these habits of mind in teachers as well as students.

Disciplinary literacy operates under the idea that each student will learn to “inquire, investigate, problem solve, think, read, write, talk and learn *as a* mathematician, scientist, historian, literary critic, etc. *about* the big ideas and driving questions in each of these disciplines.” The teacher takes on the role of master, while the students take on the role of apprentices. Students learn by doing and are encouraged to ask questions. It is the close alignment between the theory of Principles of Learning and the curricular approach of Disciplinary Literacy that Johnson emphasizes as important to her initiative's success. Without the link between theory and practice, teachers tend to see professional development and curricular reforms as “just another thing to tack on” to existing instructional practice.

A key aspect to this initiative is that students serve as apprenticeship in metacognition, which the teacher models for students. Each grade has four required texts and teachers are supplied with curricular guides that go beyond guiding principles and expectations for student work to concrete suggestions for implementation and a clear guide to what teachers must actively teach for each book.

Johnson concluded by stressing that this kind of initiative is a long-term process and one that will not necessarily work for every student. At the same time, teachers in her district were “hungry for direction” and welcomed the chance and support to improve their instruction. Johnson argued that we cannot hold teachers accountable if we do not give them the supports to achieve.

## **Staci Monreal**

Staci Monreal reported on the reform efforts in middle and high schools in San Diego, CA. Emphasizing her background and choice to move from elementary education to intermediate and secondary education, Monreal explained that she felt that high schools across

the country, but particularly in urban areas, suffered from the same problems: principals who had lost sight of their primary role of promoting teaching and learning in the classroom and teachers who saw themselves as teachers of content or curriculum rather than as teachers of students. She described San Diego's curriculum as a cross between Boston's workshop model and Providence's apprenticeship model.

Monreal reviewed the causes of the failure of earlier attempts at reform in San Diego. One was the major protest by teachers and their principals that teachers ought to control the curriculum and organization of their own classrooms. Another was that teachers were asked to change their practice based on limited support, such as a summer professional development workshop. Even attempts to increase support by placing literacy coaches in each high school to work with the English and ESL teachers was not effective enough. Ultimately Monreal attributed the success of San Diego's initiative to sustained professional development, where coaches acted not as experts, but as colleagues in the implementation of the model. Principals were provided with professional development and support as well.

The other key change behind the success of San Diego initiative was increasing the time teachers had to teach and students to learn. The city moved from a 47 minute per period schedule to double periods for literacy. This scheduling gave teachers and students more time. It further allowed them to develop better relationships because it not only gave them more time together but also assigned a teacher half as many students total as before.

The last key support that Monreal stressed was the implementation of a department model. Whereas vice principals were supposed to oversee curriculum in the schools before, each department now has its own administrator who acts as a credentialed supervisor. Teachers initially felt threatened by this position because they had never been supervised so directly before, but now back the position because of the increased support they receive.

The lesson that Monreal asked those present to take from her tale was that we need to organize a support system in order to effect change in instruction and student achievement.

## **AnneMarie Palincsar**

AnneMarie Palincsar responded to the presentations by Guiney, Johnson, and Monreal by discussing the implications for professional development. She argued that effective professional development:

- Presents teachers with the conceptual frameworks and deep principles behind instructional innovations
- Provides specific practices and metascripts to help teachers translate theory into practice because most effective reading comprehension instructional innovations are difficult to implement
- Acknowledges that the principles of effective instruction are as true for teachers of professional development as for teachers of children, and thus should be reflected in professional development sessions

Palincsar detailed what effective teaching looked like in a professional development context. It would require teachers to reflect on current goals and activities and to identify their own desired instructional changes. It should also present an instructional model orienting teachers to its theoretical underpinnings before giving further details. It should further demonstrate what the instructional method looks like in practice through videos, transcripts, role-plays, and coaching and allow opportunities for further reflection and discussion on practice as

teachers begin to implement the method themselves. All in all, the supports offered teachers should be varied, plentiful and ongoing.

Palincsar concluded by noting administrative supports principals and districts could offer their teachers to further improve the effectiveness of professional development. Primary among these was aligning assessment practices with instructional objectives. Palincsar also suggested providing incentives besides time to promote professional development. Simply recognizing and acknowledging teacher efforts could go a long way to promoting effective, lasting change in the classroom.

## **Ruth Schoenbach**

Ruth Schoenbach also responded to the presentations by Guiney, Johnson, and Monreal by discussing the implications for professional development. She particularly emphasized the parallel between good comprehension teaching for students and good professional development for teachers.

Schoenbach argued that the key issues in each case are engagement, ownership, and connection. Just as students must be engaged in order to take ownership of their own learning through reading, teachers must be engaged in order to take ownership of their own professional development.

Key to achieving this engagement is making the connection between the learning (or professional development) and the learner's life clear to the learner. The challenge to engagement for children arises from the disconnect between children's lives and the sequential phonics and other forms of decontextualized instruction of the classroom. Effective literacy instruction will promote engagement by bridging to children's lives in meaningful ways. The challenge to engagement for teachers arises from the way professional development tends to be approached in isolation from actual classroom practice. Effective professional development creates a professional community for teachers where they can examine, challenge, and improve their own teaching in a supportive atmosphere.

Even after engagement has been achieved in either the student or teacher, fostering ownership requires effective scaffolding and support and a gradual release of control. Supports for teachers include access to effective materials and metascripts. Essentially Schoenbach argued that to improve reading comprehension, researchers and practitioners needed to subscribe to a vision that recognizes the complexity of both literacy and teaching and the capacity of both students and teachers without diminishing the needs of both.

## **Third Question-and-Answer Session**

This session was rather brief. Lauren Resnick noted that while research has been able to tell us much about the problems, it has not informed us very much as to the solutions for the reading comprehension problems of our older readers. The problem with most research-based innovational instruction is that it has not been tested at "scale," whereas practice-based innovational instruction begins at scale and seems effective but lacks the data to prove its effectiveness.

Constancia Warren asked whether the innovations just presented were used for ELLs as well and if so how effective they were. Johnson responded that the Providence initiative was used for all students and that the same standards and implementation was used for all. Diane August asked what evidence the three programs had that their approaches worked for all students, but especially ELLs. Monreal explained that although ESL was in dire shape

originally, but that there are indications that their immersion approach is working. Guiney described how Boston was using formative, internal assessments in the form of a cold, writing prompt, and that it showed improvement by the third assessment. The Boston children had also met all the SRI benchmarks and those who had failed the MCAS before felt much more confident that they would pass next time.

## **Small Group Recommendations for Carnegie Corporation and Other Foundations**

Each table discussed recommendations for Carnegie Corporation and other foundations in small group fashion. The tables then reported their recommendations aloud to the larger group. Recommendations varied in their focus and specificity and thus are summarized in three ways below. First, a few overall themes running through each table's comments are drawn from the recommendations. Second, recommendations are grouped and summarized by topic. Third, in order to accurately reflect each table's recommendations in sum, the recommendations are presented in outline form by table.

The recommendations session had some noteworthy themes resounding through it, which in many ways reflected the question-and-answer sessions. The most striking of these was that in order to improve literacy outcomes at the intermediate and high school levels, an ecological approach was necessary. For programs, interventions, support, research, and evaluation to be more effective, they should take the ecology of literacy into account, from students' literacy practices and attitudes outside of school to the federal, state, and district policies shaping literacy practices in the school. A second theme was the general lack of and need for professional support. Many tables reflected in the recommendations the belief that schools operate mostly in isolation from one another, which forces them to waste time rediscovering what they might have learned from a network or compendium of effective practices in promoting improved literacy. Participants had an array of suggestions for how such support might be accomplished, but a crosscutting theme was that support was needed at all levels: classroom, building, and district. Finally, although not as immediately apparent as the other themes, participants' recommendations demonstrated their lack of faith in short-term or targeted reforms in that they recommended systemic changes rather than simple adjustments to current practices. This seemed to reflect participants' belief that improving intermediate and high school literacy is not an easy task and requires thorough planning and support in order to be effective.

The tables that follow summarize recommendations by topic. The columns indicating what each table had to say about each topic should allow the reader to maintain a sense of continuity with the outline that follows. Topics that had more specific recommendations or a great number of recommendations are presented first. Note that the most popular topics were providing professional development and support for successful implementation of literacy models in schools. Indeed, the second main topic, "Creating a Network," could be interpreted as an extension of that topic with very specific ideas about how support might be provided. The idea of identifying best practices across programs was also a popular one, but was in general less specific about how to accomplish this aim. One table suggested funding a research project wherein an independent observer might visit programs across the country and compile a formal report about practices and their differential success. The remaining topics were mentioned by half or fewer of the small groups in their recommendations.

Table

Topic	1	2	3	4	5	6
Professional Preparation, Development and Support	Supporting teachers in reflecting on student practices and their own language and practices; and work with administrators in this; cross-district sharing and reflection	Administrators' need to attend multiple meetings with multiple foundations, especially on holidays and weekends, is a serious challenge to effective implementation; would be truly supportive to have Foundations coordinate their meetings	Research across projects what is working and not working and why (even if projects are in different phases), although there is an inherent difficulty in determining best practices from naturally occurring practice itself	Teachers need to become more informed and intimate with research	Need research that examines connections between Professional development and student performance	Address the mismatch between teacher preparation and research
	How can we develop in schools the kind of communities that then take on a life of their own as professional communities do (i.e. create a culture of professionalism, rather than a short-term fix)?		A great opportunity for cooperation between research and practice			Support leadership development especially in how to get and use research
			Carnegie could then invest in the models that work			

Topic	1	2	Table 3	4	5	6
Creating a Network		Value in superintendents coordinating what they've learned in the reform efforts and share with network; need a mechanism for this; regarding scheduling, budgeting, resource allocation, etc.				Problem: wealth of practical experience. How to value and disseminate? Study of dimensions and wisdom of best practice and change
		The IRA (or a website) could be used as a convening organization for focused information exchange about tools or mechanisms that had been developed and might "travel" to other schools and districts, (not to impress, but so as not to continually reinvent the wheel). For example, programs might share their materials (such as the book guides from Jim McPartland's program), their learning about what works in professional development workshops, and even examples of how these look when implemented (Jim might provide a video of a teacher using the book guide; someone else might provide a video or transcript of a training session, etc.).				

Topic	1	2	3	4	5	6
Identifying Best (and worst) Current Practices	Short-term, multi-day version of today looking more deeply at current practice across a district and studying data and then publish it	Need a “circuit-rider” to pick up best practices across districts and report them		Researchers and practitioners together to document practices	Need for research that looks at school and districts as systems and how to develop as communities	Problem: wealth of practical experience. How to value and disseminate? Study of dimensions and wisdom of best practice and change
	Identifying what weak practice looks like and publish as “Do not enter”					
ELLs & Special Populations	Identifying practices with good cross-over potential for ELLS		Need to document what is currently being done with these populations in the area of reading comprehension	Develop information regarding what’s needed to support these students		
	Need to identify what is working for these populations					
	Programs seem to be adapted for special populations rather than developed for them					

Topic	1	2	3	Table 4	5	6
Impacting Policy and Public Opinion/ Agenda	Policy research on what it will take to leverage more support and progress			Current system of education needs to be looked at in depth, in terms of finances and other impact, entire ecology (federal, state, district), because not all policies are evil. Find out what works and how.		Raise national awareness that like child students, adults need opportunities and time to develop and learn professionally and that they're far more eager and amenable to it
				No Child Left Behind research and implications for intermediate and high school literacy		
				Info campaign to find real examples of disciplinary education and make available to teachers, students, and parents		
				Disseminate information on benefit of smaller schools		

Table

Topic	1	2	3	4	5	6
Measures	Instrument development, invest in developing different kinds of instruments to enable multiple and more reliable measures				Development of assessment tools that capture greater range of comprehension skills than currently	
					Develop tools at high school literacy level that better assess disciplinary literacy	
Evaluation	Longer term, fund third party evaluations of practice to support more systematic data collection	Support for obtaining evidence that these models work: first descriptions, then full-scale evaluation				
Materials	High readability and interest materials				Importance of academic information being available in multiple languages	

Topic	1	2	3	Table 4	5	6
General Research				NRP report pointed to the lack of vocabulary and comprehension studies below 3 <sup>rd</sup> or 4 <sup>th</sup> grades; we need to know about these early grades because of their impact on reading and learning in later grades		Fund studies to support research on mismatch between federal and state policies and current best practices and research
Connecting to Other Sources of Knowledge	Pull in other literacy development sectors' knowledge: community colleges, adult education and literacy systems, etc					
Parents	What would it take to support parents' to help their children learn literacy (and how schools can accomplish it)					
Bridges between in and out of school literacy			Find out what is practiced and valued in community literacy practices			
			Involve community: churches, Boys and Girls Clubs, etc.			
			Build on strengths			

Below is the outline of recommendations, organized by table.

- 1) Table #1
  - a) Identifying practices with good cross-over potential for ELLS
  - b) Policy research on what it will take to leverage more support and progress
  - c) Short-term, multi-day version of today looking more deeply at current practice across a district and studying data and then publish it
  - d) Longer term, fund third party evaluations of practice to support more systematic data collection
  - e) Instrument development, invest in developing different kinds of instruments to enable multiple and more reliable measures
  - f) Identifying what weak practice looks like and publish as “Do not enter”
  - g) High readability and interest materials
  - h) Pull in other literacy development sectors’ knowledge: community colleges, adult education and literacy systems, etc.
  - i) What would it take to support parents’ to help their children learn literacy (and how schools can accomplish it)
  - j) Supporting teachers in reflecting on student practices and their own language and practices; and work with administrators in this; cross-district sharing and reflection; next step: how can we develop in schools the kind of communities that then take on a life of their own as professional communities do (i.e. create a culture of professionalism, rather than a short-term fix)?
  
- 2) Table #2
  - a) Value in superintendents coordinating what they’ve learned in the reform efforts and share with network; need a mechanism for this; regarding scheduling, budgeting, resource allocation, etc.
  - b) IRA (or a website) could be used as a convening organization for focused information exchange about tools or mechanisms that had been developed and might “travel” to other schools and districts, (not to impress, but so as not to continually reinvent the wheel) e.g.:
    - i) Share your book guides and materials
    - ii) Share your lessons around workshops
    - iii) Along with images, videos of how these are well-used
  - c) Multiple meetings with multiple foundations, especially on holidays and weekends; would be truly supportive to have Foundations coordinate their meetings
  - d) Need a circuit-rider to pick up best practices across districts and report them
  - e) Support for obtaining evidence that these models work: first descriptions, then full-scale evaluation
  
- 3) Table #3
  - a) Professional Development
    - i) Research: Why is it *not* working?
    - ii) Research: Across projects what *is* working? (even if projects are in different phases)
    - iii) As a great opportunity for cooperation between research and practice

- iv) Difficulty in determining best practices from naturally occurring practice itself
  - v) Carnegie should invest in the models that work
  - b) ELLs and special populations
    - i) Need to document what is currently being done with these populations in the area of reading comprehension
    - ii) Need to identify what is working for these populations
    - iii) Programs seem to be adapted for special populations rather than developed for them
  - c) Bridges between in and out of school literacy
    - i) Find out what is practiced and valued in community literacy practices
    - ii) Involve community: churches, Boys and Girls Clubs, etc.
    - iii) Build on strengths
- 4) Table #4
- a) Current system of education needs to be looked at in depth, in terms of finances and other impact, entire ecology (federal, state, district), because not all policies are evil. Find out what works and how.
  - b) No Child Left Behind research and implications for intermediate and high school literacy
  - c) Researchers and practitioners together to document practices
  - d) Info campaign to find real examples of disciplinary education and make available to teachers, students, and parents
  - e) Teachers need to become more informed and intimate with research
  - f) Disseminate Info on benefit of Smaller schools
  - g) Importance of academic information being available in multiple languages
  - h) NRP report pointed to the lack of vocabulary and comprehension studies below 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> grades; we need to know about these early grades because of their impact on reading and learning in later grades
  - i) ELLs: info regarding what's need to support these students
- 5) Table #5
- a) Development of assessment tools that capture greater range of comprehension skills than currently
  - b) Need for research that looks at school and districts as systems and how to develop as communities
  - c) Need research that examines connections between Professional development and student performance
  - d) Develop tools at high school literacy level that better assess disciplinary literacy
- 6) Table #6
- a) Address the mismatch between teacher preparation and research
  - b) Raise national awareness that like child students, adults need opportunities and time to develop and learn professionally and that they're far more eager and amenable to it
  - c) Fund studies to support research on mismatch between federal and state policies and current best practices and research
  - d) Problem: wealth of practical experience. How to value and disseminate? Study of dimensions and wisdom of best practice and change
  - e) Support leadership development especially in how to get and use research

Intermediate and Adolescent Literacy  
The State of Research and Practice

Participants List

**September 26, 2002, 8:30AM-4:30PM**

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