First Grade
Implementation Plan Questions to Consider When Constructing Action Plans
Suggestions Based Upon Practices Handbook

Note: This document is not a complete checklist. The items do indicate requirements.

Materials and Instruction
A.1. USING THE GRADE LEVEL COMPREHENSIVE READING PROGRAM (A.1.a-e)

Sufficient Teaching of Critical Skills.
π Is there daily teaching of critical skills related to reading words?
  o Critical skills related to reading words include: letter-sound correspondences, oral blending and segmenting, reading regular and irregular words and text reading in decodable text aligned with comprehensive reading program’s phonics sequence.

Systematic Introduction and Review.
π Is there systematic introduction, practice and review of critical content?
  o Instruction on new content is sufficient to foster student success in initial learning.
  o Review is cumulative with review including previously-taught content along with new content in practice exercises.
  o New content is reviewed sufficiently to facilitate mastery of the skill and then reviewed intermittently to facilitate retention and development of needed fluency.

Explicit Teaching.
π Is the teaching delivered with sufficient explicitness?
  o Teacher explanations use only words students know.
  o Teacher models clearly how to perform new tasks.
  o Teacher provides guided practice in applying new skills.

Interactive Teaching to Facilitate Mastery.
π Is the teaching delivered in a manner to foster high levels of student engagement and correct responding?
  o Unison responding and strategic use of individual turns is incorporated into tasks in which there is just one correct response for a question.
  o Text reading is done in first grade in a manner to foster high level of student engagement and accuracy and provide immediate correction.
  o Teachers monitor students’ performance and provide immediate corrections on phonemic awareness, phonics and text reading exercises and other exercises when appropriate.

Pacing Guides.
π Is a pacing guide prepared and distributed to staff that sets goals to facilitate completion of first grade level by end of school year?
  o Goals for progressing through the lesson materials are planned so that students will finish first grade level of comprehensive reading program by the end of school year.
  o Clear guidance is given to teachers regarding how students should be performing in order to consider a lesson having been adequately taught.
Preteaching/Reteaching.

- Is there specific guidance to teachers regarding which children are to receive extra small-group teaching on grade-level content and what content to include during these sessions?
  - The extra teaching is systematic and explicit and focuses on critical content that needs extra work. The extra work is sufficient to enable the students to master the content.
  - Extra small-group work on accurately reading decodable text aligned with the comprehensive reading program’s phonics sequence is often needed.

A.4. INTERVENTION INSTRUCTION AND MATERIALS FOR STUDENTS IN GRADE LEVEL COMPREHENSIVE READING PROGRAM (A.4.a-e)

Intervention Materials: Phonics and Phonemic Awareness

Note: For students who enter first grade with little knowledge of letter-sound correspondences and little ability to read phonetically regular words, some schools rely on highly systematic intervention materials to teach critical phonics and phonemic awareness skills that should have been mastered in kindergarten. This is in addition to teaching the first grade level comprehensive reading program. These intervention materials are often used when school staff other than classroom teachers are available to help do the extra teaching. The use of the intervention materials should not replace preteaching/reteaching of skills taught in the comprehensive reading program.

Factors to consider if a phonics or phonemic awareness intervention materials are used:

- If phonemic awareness is taught in an intervention program, is there a priority on blending and segmenting and are these skills taught highly explicitly and systematically?
- If phonics is taught, is the teaching of letter-sound correspondence and word reading highly explicit and systematic?
- Is a pacing guide prepared and distributed to staff to set goals to facilitate completion of kindergarten level materials in an accelerated manner?
- Is there clear guidance to teachers regarding how students should be performing in order to consider a lesson having been adequately taught?

Intervention Materials - Language and Vocabulary

Note: For students who enter first grade with very low language development, some schools rely on highly systematic intervention programs to teach critical foundational language and vocabulary skills in addition to the grade level comprehensive reading program.

Factors to consider if a language intervention materials are used:

- If foundational language skills are taught with intervention materials, is there a priority on language content that students need to understand classroom directions and teacher explanations during instruction?
- Is the teaching highly explicit, systematic and highly interactive?
- Is a pacing guide prepared and distributed to staff to set goals to facilitate completion of first-grade level by end of the year?
- Is there clear guidance to teachers regarding how students should be performing in order to consider a lesson having been adequately taught?
USE OF AN INTERVENTION CORE PROGRAM (A.4.d)

Note: For students who enter first grade with very low literacy skills (know few letter sound relationships and cannot blend sounds to read words) and very low language development, some schools rely on highly systematic intervention core programs instead of the grade level comprehensive reading program. Some schools use an intervention core program in addition to the comprehensive reading program in first grade.

Considerations if an intervention core program is used:

π Is sufficient time for teaching the intervention core provided to complete the first grade level?
  o Use of an intervention core will most likely to bring first grade children to grade level performance if its use begins early in the school year.
  o At least two daily 30- to 45-minute periods are likely to be needed to complete the first grade level.
  o If use of the program begins later in the school year, extra daily instruction, in addition to the two periods, is likely to be needed to complete the first-grade level.
  o If two or more periods a day are scheduled, there is clear guidance regarding what is to be done during each period. For example, if a group is performing strongly, a new lesson might be taught during each period; if a group is struggling, the second daily period might be devoted to reteaching the same lesson as was taught in first period. Guidance needs to be clearly communicated to each person teaching the group.

π Is comprehension and vocabulary instruction provided?
  o Most intervention core programs include comprehension and vocabulary.
  o If the students have sufficient language skills to benefit, the comprehension and vocabulary from the comprehensive reading program can continue to be taught.

π Is the overall implementation sufficiently supported to provide for success?
  o The factors include: sufficient time allocation, training for teachers, coordination between staff members teaching the program, careful grouping and placement, administration of program specific assessments, weekly meetings to review data and making grouping or firming adjustments.

π Is a pacing guide prepared and distributed to staff that sets goals to facilitate completion of the first grade level by end of first grade?

π Is there clear guidance to teachers regarding how students should be performing in order to consider a lesson having been adequately taught?

B. TIME AND GROUPING

B.1. TIME AND GROUPING FOR TEACHING GRADE LEVEL COMPREHENSIVE READING PROGRAM
Time for Initial Presentation of Grade Level Comprehensive Reading Program.

- Is sufficient time allowed for initial presentation of grade level content and for needed extra work for struggling students on the important content from grade level lessons?
  - Generally, about 90 minutes are needed for the initial presentation of content from the grade level comprehensive reading program. For classes in which many children are struggling, a good deal of small group instruction will be needed. Time for the needed instruction can be provided by scheduling significantly more than a 90-minute total period and/or providing extra staff to present small group instruction. The fewer staff available to provide small group instruction, the longer the overall initial instructional period.

Grouping – Small Group Initial Instruction Using Grade Level Comprehensive Reading Program.

- Is sufficient small group instruction allotted?
  - If a first grade class contains children who are not attentive in whole class instructional setting, approximately 30 minutes will need to be allotted for initial teaching of phonics and phonemic awareness and text-reading for each of these students in small group. Note that there may need to be several small groups if there are many students who are not likely to learn well in whole class instruction.
  - An additional period of at least 15-30 minutes daily for preteaching/reteaching small-group teaching of skills to all students who are struggling can help students be more successful during lessons and progress at the needed rate to reach end-of-year goals. The content taught and time provided is dependent on student performance. Groups with children who struggle more receive more instruction. There may be a need for several small groups if there are numerous children struggling.
  - The number of children in a small group is dependent on the children and the teacher’s skill level. Groups can vary from 3-8 students.

TIME AND GROUPING - INTERVENTION MATERIALS (B.2 and B.3)

Time: Intervention Materials. (B.2)

- Is sufficient time provided for students to make needed progress in the intervention materials?
  - If intervention materials are teaching kindergarten level skills, the time provided needs to be sufficient to significantly accelerate progress through the kindergarten level.
  - If intervention materials are teaching first grade level skills, the time provided needs to be sufficient to ensure that students are taught all first grade level skills by the end of first grade.

Grouping: Intervention Materials. (B.4)

- Are students grouped for intervention materials in small flexible groups?
  - Students are grouped for instruction in intervention materials using designated placement procedures.
  - Number of students in a group is based on program recommendations.
  - Procedures are in place to regroup students in a timely manner based on their performance.
TIME AND GROUPING FOR STUDENTS IN INTERVENTION CORE PROGRAM (B.2)

Time: Intervention Core Program.

Is sufficient time allotted for students to complete the first grade level?
- At least two 30- to 45-minute periods daily are needed for instruction in the intervention core.
- The earlier students begin the intervention core program, the more likely to finish the first grade level.
- For more at risk students, a daily firm up of 15-30 minutes is often needed to make needed progress.
- If students begin the program later in the school year, a third full daily period is likely to be needed so that first grade students can finish the program.

Grouping: Intervention Core as Replacement Program B.3

Are students grouped for intervention programs in small flexible groups?
- Students are grouped homogeneously for instruction in intervention core program.
- Number of students in a group is consistent with recommendations for grouping in manual for program.
- Procedures are in place to regroup students in a timely manner based on their performance.
- Procedures are in place to ensure that timely adjustments occur when students are not at their instructional level.

C. ASSESSMENT AND DATA UTILIZATION

Beginning-of-Year Assessment (C.2)

Are assessments administered to identify at risk students very early in school year (first week)?
- Administer RF screening assessments during the first days of school to identify children who are below desired level for their grade.
- If the RF screener does not test reading words, administer a phonics screener that tests phonics elements from kindergarten (letter-sound correspondences for individual letters and ability to read phonetically regular CVC words).
- Make an informal assessment to determine if students know irregular words that were taught in kindergarten level.
- Students who know little of content taught in kindergarten will need highly intensive and systematic instruction on skills from kindergarten as well as new skills from first grade.

Progress-Monitoring During the School Year (C.3)

Reading First Progress Monitoring Assessment.

Are RF assessments administered frequently enough?
- Benchmark testing is conducted at least three times a year for all students.
- More frequent assessment is in place for students at some risk and at high risk. Students scoring at high risk ideally are monitored weekly or each second week. Students scoring at bottom of some risk category can be monitored with same frequency as students at high risk. Students scoring at some risk are assessed each two weeks. Low benchmark performance can be monitored at same frequency as students at some risk.
- Coordination with program-specific assessment is done to ensure that there is not excessive time spent on progress monitoring assessments.
Grade-Level Comprehensive Reading Program - Program Specific Assessments.

\( \pi \) Is there an assessment plan to determine if students are learning content taught in comprehensive core program?

- Assessments in first grade need to clearly indicate if students are learning critical skills related to word reading (letter-sound correspondence, reading regular and irregular words and reading text accurately and, later in the year, fluency).
- If the assessments in comprehensive reading program do not provide clear assessments on critical skills, school staffs may need to construct informal tests. When constructing an assessment, include the skills taught to the point in the program students are currently working.
- Include text reading for accuracy. Have students read an excerpt from recently read decodable text to determine if students can read with high accuracy level.

Intervention Materials – Intervention Specific Assessments.

\( \pi \) Is there an assessment plan to determine if students are learning content taught in the intervention materials?

- Assessments incorporated into the intervention materials are reliably administered.
- Remedies specified in the intervention materials are being implemented.
- If there are no assessments in the intervention materials, informal assessments are constructed to determine if students are mastering the content.

Intervention Core Program - Program Specific Assessments.

\( \pi \) Is there an assessment plan to determine if students are learning content taught in the intervention core program?

- Assessments incorporated into the intervention program are being reliably administered.
- Remedies specified in the program are being implemented.

DATA UTILIZATION PRACTICES (D.1-4)

Grade Level Meetings.

\( \pi \) Is there a grade-level team meeting process that is likely to result in timely and effective adjustments in instructional plans when students are not making adequate progress?

- Grade level meetings are held frequently to examine data and make adjustments, ideally at least each second week early in school year.
- Informal meetings are held weekly between the coach and teachers to monitor performance and progress of high-risk students.
- Grade level meeting begins with examination of progress monitoring assessments to identify individuals and groups that are not making adequate gains in performance on critical skills.
- Program specific assessment reports and content coverage reports in all programs are examined to determine causes of inadequate student performance. A system is in place to identify groups that are not making adequate content coverage progress and groups in which too many children are struggling.
- A procedure is in place to make written plans to remedy problems for groups and individuals.
- A system in place to follow up on effectiveness of plans.
E. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (E.1-3)

Inservice Training.
π Is there a professional development plan that will result in all teaching staff receiving sufficient training to become highly prepared to deliver instruction with all materials?
 o There is an initial inservice at the beginning of the school year that fully prepares staff to present the comprehensive core programs effectively. Several days inservice with sessions arranged by grade level are presented by persons knowledgeable of how to teach the program.
 o There are ongoing professional development sessions throughout the school year to prepare staff for upcoming lessons, particularly on more difficult content to teach.
 o In-depth professional development is provided for any staff member who is teaching an intervention program, including non-classroom certified staff and non-certified staff.
 o If a consultant is used, a check is made to ensure that the consultant has worked successfully in schools similar to the school.

In-Class Coaching.
π Is there a plan that is likely to result in all teaching staff receiving the needed in-class coaching to become very effective in delivering instruction with all materials they are using?
 o The person(s) providing in-class coaching is highly familiar with the particular program and able to demonstrate with children.
 o On-going coaching over a period of days is available to help teaches learn new behaviors and correct problems.
 o In-class coaching is provided for all staff members on all programs, including the comprehensive reading program and intervention materials and programs.
 o In-class coaching is particularly important with intervention materials and intervention core programs because these are being taught to children functioning below grade level.
 o Paraprofessionals as well as teachers need to receive coaching.
 o Teachers having difficulty receive extra help very early in school year. Help is intensive and continuous.

F. SCHOOLWIDE ORGANIZATION AND SUPPORT

Staff Allocation. (F.1.)
π Is there a plan to utilize staff resources to adequately support Reading First?
 o Use of staff time is prioritized to ensure that all students needing small group instruction receive adequate amounts of instruction to produce needed results.
 o Title I staff, reading specialists, special education staff, ELL staff, and bilingual staff are part of RF plan.
 o Special education staff teaches groups that contain special education and non-special education students when the latter are performing at the same level as special education students. (Dependent on state policy)

Maximizing Time Available For Reading Instruction. (F.3.)
π Is there a plan for maximizing time available for reading instruction over the school year?
 o Use of comprehensive reading program and intervention materials/programs begins during first week of school.
 o Reading instruction occurs on all available school days.
 o Substitutes trained in programs are available for teachers and aides.
Special Education Students. (F.5)

Does the implementation plan provide instruction aligned with Reading First, and is the plan capable of making accelerated progress for special education students?

- Special education students receive reading instruction aligned with the Reading First program in all reading periods throughout the day.
- Students receive sufficient instruction in RF intervention materials and/or intervention core programs to make adequate progress.

English Language Learners. (F.5)

Does the implementation plan provide instruction aligned with Reading First, and is the plan capable of making accelerated progress for English Language Learners?

- English Language Learners receive reading instruction aligned with the Reading First program.
- English Language Learners receive additional highly systematic and explicit instruction in English language skills.