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An Evaluation of *Texas Reading First* Activities, Materials and Providers

Final Report to the Texas Education Agency

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Reading First is the cornerstone of the *No Child Left Behind* legislation. The goal of this program is that every child in America will read at grade level by the end of grade 3. The state of Texas submitted an ambitious application to *Reading First* in 2003 and was awarded approximately $532.5 million for a six-year period. Integral to the receipt of this money was a promise of accountability. *Texas Reading First* has instituted multiple accountability measures and has gone beyond federal accountability guidelines to require an evaluation of the *Texas Reading First* leadership. This report, prepared by Hezel Associates, LLC, provides the results of such an evaluation and focuses upon *Reading First* activities, materials and providers in the state of Texas predominantly in school year 2005-2006.

Major findings of this report include:

- In May, 2005, a Manager of *Reading First* Grants and Partnerships was appointed. This Manager has provided exceptional leadership to *Reading First* and has been a strong source of support to the leadership partnership (which consists of the *Center for Academic Reading and Skills*, the *Vaughn Gross Center*, the *University of Texas System*, and the *Texas Institute for Measurement, Evaluation and Statistics*).
- The qualifications of all *Reading First* personnel currently at the Texas Education Agency and the partner organizations are strong and a good fit for their respective positions.
- Organizations in the *Texas Reading First* leadership partnership fulfilled most of their obligations for 2005-2006, but some reported being hindered in specific instances by receipt of partner funding from TEA later in the year than expected, and by difficulties in obtaining student data. Partner funding issues have largely been resolved in 2006-2007, and *Texas Reading First* is working to resolve the problems with obtaining student data.
- During 2005-2006, the Texas Education Agency and partner organizations communicated well with one another.
- High quality and timely training was given by the Partners to the *Reading First* Reading Technical Assistants. Reading Technical Assistants are those charged with training local campus coaches in the 714 *Texas Reading First* campuses in scientifically-based reading methods.
- The partner organizations were responsive to the evolving needs of the Reading Technical Assistant Specialists.
- All professional development products developed for *Reading First* by two of the leadership organizations (the Center for Academic Reading and Skills, and the Vaughn Gross Center) and evaluated for this study are of the highest quality.
- *Reading First* requires a state-wide evaluation of student achievement data by an external evaluator. The quality of this evaluation has been compromised by many factors, some not in the control of the evaluator.

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The State of Texas applied in April, 2003 for *Reading First* (RF) funding and was awarded approximately $532.5 million over a period of six years to implement and evaluate RF across Texas. Written into this original application was a plan to evaluate RF activities, materials and providers at the level of the *Texas Reading First* leadership. In August of 2006, Hezel Associates, LLC was awarded a contract to carry out the evaluation. This report presents the results of our evaluation. The evaluation covers and reports upon school year 2005-2006 except in specific instances at which time we make clear that the discussion pertains to a different but important time period.

This evaluation was driven by the seven research questions posed within the original 2003 application to *Reading First* (p. 143-4) and repeated within the Request for Proposals. The questions were:

1. To what extent have all components of the State's *Reading First* initiative been implemented, and to what extent have proposed timelines been met? What timelines have not been met, and to what extent are the reasons outside the control of the personnel responsible for meeting the deadline?

2. To what extent do the professional development materials for Kindergarten – Grade 3 reading curriculum and the scientific basis for reading instruction meet the highest standards for quality of professional development materials?

3. What are the qualifications of individuals and organizations providing services under *Reading First*, including the TEA, the Center for Academic and Reading Skills at the University of Texas Health Science Center – Houston (CARS), the Vaughn Gross Center at University of Texas Austin (VGC) and the Texas Institute for Measurement, Evaluations and Statistics (TIMES)?

4. How have the Texas Education Agency and its various *Reading First* partners functioned individually and collectively to provide leadership to the State in implementing *Reading First* and to ensure the goals of *Reading First* are met? What procedures and mechanisms have been put in place to facilitate communication amongst these parties and enhance leadership across the State? Where has leadership been lacking and what steps need to be taken to improve it?

5. What quality control procedures are being used by the program's External Evaluator in meeting their respective charge under *Reading First*? For example, what is the reliability and validity of instruments used for data collection, the reproducibility of any data collection procedures, and the steps for ensuring accurate data and reports?

6. To what extent is training provided to Reading Technical Assistant Specialists (RTAs) of high quality and timely?

7. To what extent do RTAs feel that they are being provided with the amount and quality of training, materials, leadership, and technical assistance required to be successful? To what extent have the Texas Education Agency and its *Reading First* partners been responsive to RTAs?

METHODS

Hezel Associates conducted eight research activities which in total served to answer the seven questions posed by the TEA:

- Reviewed the State's original application to *Reading First* (RF) and other key *Texas Reading First* documents.

- Examined charts of partner responsibilities and deliverables. (See Appendix A for tables of Partner Deliverables.)

- Conducted interviews with key staff members from the Texas Education Agency and from the *Reading First* partner organizations, and, where necessary, conducted follow-up interviews (see Table 1).

    In total twenty-one interviews were conducted with 19 interviewees; some interviewees were interviewed more than once. To determine who should be interviewed, each partner organization was asked to select the three-four persons who could together best comment upon the depth and breadth of the work of their organization in 2005-2006. Then, the TEA program evaluation team in concert with the Manager of *Reading First* Grants and Partnerships provided guidance as to who could most fully comment upon the work of the TEA. All interviewees were presented with a semi-structured interview protocol prior to their interviews. (See Appendix B for interview protocol.) With each interviewee's permission, each interview was audio-recorded and then transcribed.

Table 1. Interviewees and their partner affiliations

Partner	Interviewee Title
Texas Education Agency (TEA)	Manager of *Reading First* Grants and Partnerships
Texas Education Agency (TEA)	Associate Commissioner for Standards and Programs
Texas Education Agency (TEA)	Associate Commissioner for Standards and Alignment
Texas Education Agency (TEA)	Discretionary Grants Division Director
Texas Education Agency (TEA)	*Reading First* Grants Manager
Texas Education Agency (TEA)	Discretionary Grants Administrator for Institutes of Higher Education
Center for Academic and Reading Skills (CARS)	*Reading First* Program Director
Center for Academic and Reading Skills (CARS)	Statewide Coordinator
Center for Academic and Reading Skills (CARS)	Statewide Coordinator
Texas Institute for Evaluations and Statistics (TIMES)	Director
Texas Institute for Evaluations and Statistics (TIMES)	Associate Director
Texas Institute for Evaluations and Statistics (TIMES)	Research Associate
University of Texas System (UTS)	Executive Director of the Institute for Public School Initiatives
University of Texas System (UTS)	Project Manager
University of Texas System (UTS)	Database Administrator
Vaughn Gross Center (VGC)	Project Director
Vaughn Gross Center (VGC)	Project Manager
Vaughn Gross Center (VGC)	Project Manager
Vaughn Gross Center (VGC)	Project Manager

- Examined ten professional development products to determine if they met the highest standards for quality professional development materials.

  To provide structure for our analysis of professional development materials from both agencies (VGC and CARS), the Hezel team created an evaluation tool. (See Appendix C for professional development evaluation tool.) This tool focuses on the general type of materials, the target audience, and five major strands, consistent with the goals of *Texas Reading First*. Three of the five major strands include: the level of support teachers receive in the five components of Scientifically Based Reading Research, direct and explicit reading instruction, and data-driven instruction. The other two strands focus on the professional development

process (from an administrative standpoint), and the organizational and presentational quality of the materials.

The Hezel team analyzed each and every product (ten in total), summarized in chart form in "Evaluation Activity 2: Professional Development Materials," using a 0-4 rating scale (page 15). The team determined that strands 1-3, concerned as they are about the five components of learning to read, direct and explicit instruction, and data-driven instruction, should receive greater weight since they are most integral to good pedagogy. Strands 4 and 5, concerned as they are about the professional development process for teachers and the organization and presentation of the professional development materials, were deemed to be less urgent and were therefore given less weight. The team then averaged these weighted scores, product-by-product, to determine a final "grade." Those products that received *a majority* of scores in the "excellent" category (with, in some cases a few scores in the "fair amount" category) were noted as "high" in each of the charts. In this analysis, we relied heavily on the professional development expertise of team member Dr. Julie Wood's subjective analyses, given her extensive experience in developing educational materials for teachers for major publishing houses.

- Compared partner staff resumes to job descriptions and made professional judgments about their fit.

- Reviewed the activities of the *Reading First* program's external evaluator, the Texas Institute for Measurement, Evaluation and Statistics (TIMES).

- Examined survey data to determine the quality of training and support for the Reading Technical Assistants (RTAs).

- Sent clarifying follow-up emails and made follow-up telephone calls, where necessary.

All data were analyzed by teams of Hezel researchers. Emergent data trends were sought and were investigated further through additional data collection. As standard research practice would prescribe, only triangulated data and concomitant findings are here reported.

EVALUATION ACTIVITY 1: PARTNER DELIVERABLES

For this part of the evaluation, Hezel Associates responded to the question: To what extent have all components of the State's *Reading First* initiative been implemented, and to what extent have proposed timelines been met? What timelines have not been met, and to what extent are the reasons outside the control of the personnel responsible for meeting the deadline?

A. ACROSS- PARTNER FINDINGS

Overall, many components of *Reading First* (RF) were completed on time. One partner (CARS) completed all deliverables on time; three partners (TIMES, UTS, and VGC) completed most deliverables on time.

An in-depth analysis across partner organizations revealed two dominant factors which impeded the timely delivery of RF tasks. These were:
- Difficulty in obtaining accurate, timely data from multiple sources
- Delays in partner funding from the TEA

All partners reported difficulty in obtaining accurate and/or timely data at times from sources, including campuses, vendors, test publishers, TEA, and TIMES. Data procurement problems were sometimes related to "turnaround times," sometimes to privacy issues, and sometimes to compliance issues on the part of campuses, vendors and test publishers. In 2006-2007, *Texas Reading First* is working to alleviate these problems by (1) across-Partner discussion of what reasonable turnaround time for specific data may look like; (2) across-partner discussion of the privacy issues related to data, (3) insistence on compliance on the part of campuses, vendors and publishers with data reporting requirements.

Staff from all RF partner organizations discussed the late receipt of funding from TEA. This was reported by some partners to have affected their ability to complete deliverables in a timely manner in 2005-2006. In 2006-2007, three out of four partners applied for and received their funding on time. The fourth partner submitted their grant application late and, in turn, received funding late. The TEA, the Manager of *Reading First* Projects, and the Discretionary Grants Division are to be congratulated for streamlining and making more workable this complicated process.

B. WITHIN-PARTNER FINDINGS

Findings for each of the *Reading First* partners are identified below. For a table of goals and deliverables, please see Appendix A.

1. The Center for Academic and Reading Skills (CARS)

In year 2005-2006, CARS was charged with 44 activities leading up to deliverables in 11 areas. Staff members from CARS reported:

- 44 (100%) activities were completed on time

In addition to providing all deliverables in a timely manner, Hezel also notes that CARS delivered at least two reports in addition to what was expected of them. These were (1) a critical elements analyses for "Success for All," and (2) a critical elements analyses for "Reading Mastery." These are two of the most frequently used reading programs in Texas schools.

2. The Texas Institute for Measurement Evaluation and Statistics (TIMES)

In year 2005-2006, TIMES was charged with 46 activities leading to deliverables in 5 areas. Staff members from TIMES reported:

- 29 (63%) activities were completed on time
- 16 (34%) activities were completed but later than originally scheduled
- One (2%) activity is ongoing (2.10)

Sixteen of 46 TIMES activities (34%) were completed, but not by the original due date agreed upon with the Manager of *Reading First* Grants and Partnerships. According to explanations provided by TIMES, ten activities (1.1, 1.3, 1.8, 1.11, 1.12, 1.13, 1.14, 1.15, 3.1 & 4.2) were late due to campuses, vendors and test publishers returning data (assessments and surveys) to TIMES later than was scheduled. The Manager of *Reading First* Grants and Partnerships and TIMES have since worked to alleviate this problem. The resolution is as follows: If a campus, vendor or test publisher does not turn in agreed-upon data by deadline, TIMES makes contact with the campus, vendor or test publisher, discusses the reason the data is late, and sets a new due date. If the data is not turned in by the new due date, this information is given to the Manager of *Reading First* Grants and Partnerships. The matter may then be treated as a non-compliance issue.

Activity (1.4) was completed, but not by its original due date. According to the annotation of TIMES' activity spreadsheet, the online survey for teachers, local campus coaches, principals and reading technical assistants was completed three to four months later than originally scheduled because of a lack of funding.

Deliverable 1.6, the collection of "rostering" information for funded and non-funded campuses was late , according to TIMES respondents, because staff members at TIMES were unable to obtain the type of electronic rosters necessary with the type of data necessary from the LCCs. TIMES did find a method to secure this information and provided this rostering information in their 2005-2006 final evaluation report.

Deliverable 2.9, the provision of assessment summary reports to RF Partners and LEAs at the conclusion of each assessment cycle for BOY, MOY and EOY, was not fully completed. Summary reports were submitted to the partners in June 2006 (MOY) and to all LEA leadership teams, RTAs and PMs at the Superintendents' Summit in September 2006 (MOY and EOY). Prior to 2005-2006, the collection of BOY data was not a requirement in the state of Texas. Not all LCCs knew and were prepared to respond to the new 2005-2006 requirement that BOY assessment be completed. As such, TIMES was not able to collect BOY data for 2005-2006. This matter has since been resolved in *Reading First* schools: LCCs are conducting BOY assessments and TIMES is collecting this data on time.

Three other activities (5.1, 5.2 & 5.3) were also completed but not by their original due date. According to TIMES, activities related to evaluation and placement of Early Reading Assessments on the Commissioner's List were late because the TEA's call for submissions to this list did not result in many submissions. As a result of this, TEA extended the deadline for publishers' submissions by six weeks, and the original due date for the TIMES activities was also then extended.

With respect to the aforementioned issue of delayed funding, TIMES interview data suggests that overall delays in funding from TEA have been problematic for their organization. While not assigning blame, TIMES has suggested that issues with clarity and timing of deliverables have been difficult to negotiate with the TEA, and that the length of time spent in these negotiations has resulted in late funding. To address clarity and timing of deliverables for 2006-2007, the Manager of *Reading First* Grants and the Discretionary Grants Division at TEA suggest that they have worked even more closely with TIMES than in the past. Interviewees from TIMES confirm this process and suggest further that clarity of expectations between the TEA and TIMES has improved greatly in 2006-2007. Nonetheless, we understand that TIMES' *memorandum of understanding* was still submitted later than TEA anticipated and funding solidification and agreement for TIMES therefore occurred later than for other Partners (September 30, 2006).

To continue to improve communication with the TEA further still, TIMES has expressed a desire to meet alone more frequently with TEA so that TIMES-specific issues could be addressed. To this end, TIMES-TEA bi-weekly meetings have been added to the calendar for 2006-2007.

3. The University of Texas System (UTS)

Management at UTS changed from 2005-2006 to 2006-2007. During Hezel Associate's interview with the new Executive Director of the Institute for Public School Initiatives at UTS during the fall of 2006, the new Executive Director and other interviewees spoke generally about successes and challenges related to 2005-2006 deliverables and spoke more specifically about the UTS 2006-2007 response to problems of the past.

In year 2005-2006, UTS was charged with seven major deliverables (with many sub-activities leading up to each of these seven major deliverables), each intended to help RTAs deploy trainings to the districts they serve:

The new Executive Director of UTS identified the purpose of the list of deliverables as helping the RTAs deploy the trainings conducted by CARS and VGC to the school districts they serve. She estimated that in 2005-2006:

- Approximately 70% of the trainings were completed and delivered on time.

For 2005-2006, UTS was to submit a monthly report to TEA documenting the time RTAs spent at the schools and any significant accomplishments and/or challenges they encounter. This was not accomplished because the reporting format was not considered appropriate by staff working at UTS in the 2005-2006 year. To alleviate this concern, a different reporting format has been developed for 2006-2007.

Also for 2005-2006, UTS required RTAs to spend time on-site, and the RTAs targeted approximately 60-70 percent of time to be spent on-site. Although RTAs did spend time on-site, they did not reach the targeted level due to the extensive travel time required of some of the RTAs who had responsibility for large territories. Expectations of time on campus are being revised, because it is nearly impossible for RTAs to spend a great deal of time on remote campuses that require three hours of driving time to reach them. Adjustments have been made to Wireless Generation, software (developed by staff at UTS) so that the RTAs can log their accomplishments. UTS staff members believe these adjustments will help improve the accuracy of the reporting by separating travel time from on-campus time.

In a related vein, UTS raised the point that for the year 2005-2006, the Wireless Generation program which RTAs use to log their activity only tracked quantitative information such as how long a RTA spent in a school. UTS suggested that it was important to also be able to enter qualitative information such as what was done during a school visit. UTS has responded to this issue, and Hezel Associates notes that the November 2006 report of RTA activity now includes qualitative information obtained from Wireless generation about how the RTAs were spending their time. To gain further insight still into what RTAs do in the schools, two UTS staff members plan to spend time with the RTAs at the schools on a regular basis during 2006-2007.

An additional deliverable goal for UTS during 2006-2007 will be to support the districts and campuses in the implementation of the trainings. In the past, some RTAs have considered delivering professional development as their sole responsibility. Staff members at UTS are working to expand the role of the RTAs by providing them with more tools (e.g., training in communication skills) to expand their role at the schools. In this new capacity they will work with both RTAs and principals. It is hoped that this

will help with the implementation of the principles of *Reading First* throughout all classrooms.

Finally, to give the best professional development possible to the RTAs, UTS suggests that it needs timely achievement data from TIMES. While this is not always possible due to both the practical matter of how long it takes to "turnaround" most data (two months) and privacy concerns, it is recommended that UTS, TIMES and VGC collaborate on this issue to best satisfy the data needs of all.

4. The Vaughn Gross Center (VGC)

In year 2005-2006, VGC was charged with 122 activities leading up to deliverables in 42 areas. Staff members from VGC reported:

- 34 (29%) activities were completed on time
- 23 (19%) activities were completed but later than originally scheduled
- 44 (36%) activities are ongoing as was planned
- 19 (15 %) activities have not been completed (4.5, 4.6, 10.2, 16.3, 17.1, 17.2, 27.3, 27.4, 31, 31.1, 31.2, 32.2, 32.3, 32.4, 32.5, 32.6, 32.7, 32.8, 32.9 – Please note that because 31 was not completed, all subsequent activities with a 31 or 32 at the beginning of the activity number could not be completed.)
- One (1%) activity was completed by a Partner (18.1)
- Hezel has no information on the progress and completion of one other activity (39.1).

VGC reported that 19 (15%) activities for 2005-2006 have not been completed. Of these activities, 11 are related to the development and testing of an online taxonomer. Because the taxonomer was not completed and tested (activity 31), ten subsequent activities (31, 31.1, 31.2, 32.2, 32.3, 32.4, 32.5, 32.6, 32.7, 32.8, 32.9) could not be completed. The development and testing of the taxonomer has been added to VGC's workplan for 2006-2007.

VGC reported that technology issues stood in the way of completion of other activities. CDs needed to be reversioned before certain professional development activities (4.5 & 4.6) could be carried out. Dissemination of other professional development CDs (27.3 & 27.4) was not completed because of the need for an application licensing update. The conversion of professional development CDs to an internet-based delivery system for 1-OTRA (26.1) and 2-OTRA (26.2) was not completed.

Other not-completed activities were attributed to (1) a TEA decision not to conduct a Superintendent Needs Survey (17.1 & 17.2); (2) activities (8.2 & 10.2) not fully articulated in VGC's grant from *Texas Reading First*, and (3) lack of sufficient and appropriate data to provide professional development to RTAs on conducting a campus implementation check (16.3).

In explaining late and incomplete activities and deliverables, one major explanatory factor offered by VGC was delayed funding. In 2005-2006, VGC did not receive its grant until mid-December. As a result, VGC had to slow down on all activities and had to fund already-in place *Reading First* personnel from the end of September until December out of indirect funds. Moreover, they were not able to hire a technology team until December. VGC suggests that this slowed down their technology projects significantly. Hezel Associates is aware, however, that VGC (as well as UTS and CARS) was funded on time for 2006-2007, so this should alleviate this problem.

Finally, delays were also attributed to changes in plans by one or more of the *Reading First* partner organizations. For example, at the request of UTS, professional development sessions using Online Teacher Reading Academies Study Guides were conducted face-to-face, as opposed to a webcast (2.2 & 2.3). Because of the scheduling inherent in in-person training, these sessions were conducted two months later than planned. Further, the *Reading First* partners decided to cancel the November professional development webcast as well (3). To Hezel Associates, the delays articulated in this paragraph seem well within what may be expected in a project such as this. With a project as large as *Texas Reading First*, as long as the Partners and the Manager of *Reading First* Grants and Partnerships are in agreement about the necessity of such changes for the good of the project as a whole, these may be viewed as necessary and useful mid-course corrections.

EVALUATION ACTIVITY 2: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT MATERIALS

This portion of the evaluation responds to the question: To what extent do the professional development materials for Kindergarten through Grade 3 reading curriculum and the scientific basis for reading instruction meet the highest standards for quality of professional development materials?

To answer this question Hezel Associates evaluated five sets of professional development materials from each of two *Texas Reading First* partners: The Vaughn Gross Center for Reading and Language Arts (VGC), and The Center for Academic & Reading Skills (CARS). The professional development materials were ones that each of these agencies supplied in response to our request that five representative sets of professional development support materials be provided for our evaluation––materials that would best provide us with an understanding of how each partner supports professional development initiatives for teachers, coaches, principals, and RTAs.

Based on our evaluation, all ten products were judged to meet the highest standards for quality of professional development materials. In the next section we offer a description of each product and a discussion of its strengths and suggestions for the next iteration.

A. ESTABLISHING CRITERIA FOR OUR ANALYSIS

To establish criteria for our evaluation of *Texas Reading First* professional development materials, we drew from the bedrock literacy goals for reading instruction on which the *Texas Reading First* Initiative is based (State of *Texas Reading First* Application, April 2003). After careful analysis of the stated goals, we established five categories of criteria for evaluating the materials described below. We then used these criteria to guide our analysis and discussion of all ten products reviewed in this paper. (See Appendix C for greater elaboration of these criteria.)

Criterion 1: Evaluating the extent to which the professional development materials support instruction in the five components of Scientifically Based Reading Research (SBRR).[1]
- Phonemic awareness
- Phonics
- Fluency

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[1] Armbruster, B. & J. Osborn (2001). *Put reading first: The research building blocks for teaching children to read*. Publication developed for the Center for the Improvement of Early Reading
http://www.nifl.gov/partnershipforreading/publications/reading_first1.html

- Vocabulary Development
- Text Comprehension

Criterion 2: Evaluating the extent to which the professional development materials support teachers in applying the 3-Tier Reading Model to differentiate instruction[2] and provide intervention support for students struggling with reading concepts.[3]

- Tier 1: Effective core instruction, assessment and progress monitoring for all students.
- Tier 2: Supplemental instruction and intervention
- Tier 3: Tertiary Intervention: Intensive support

Criterion 3: Evaluating the extent to which the professional development materials support teachers in *explicit* and *systematic* reading instruction.

- Techniques presented to support explicit instruction
- Techniques presented to support systematic instruction

Criterion 4: Evaluating the extent to which the materials support the professional development *process*, from an administrative standpoint.
- Encourage collaboration and the sharing of knowledge among teachers, coaches, principals, on-site coordinators, and so on?
- Support coaches and administrators in assuming a leadership role?
- Demonstrate how to teach, and then discuss, a model lesson?
- Demonstrate how to use test data to inform reading instruction?
- Conduct ongoing, focused meetings with teachers and principals to discss how best to meet specific *Texas Reading First* objectives?
- Refer teachers to additional resources that promote further professional growth and renewal?
- Address the needs of educators at various stages of their careers––from novice to veteran teacher?

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[2] Differentiated instruction, according to expert Carol Ann Tomlinson is ". . . teaching with student variance in mind. It means starting where the kids are rather than adopting a standardized approach to teaching that seems to presume that all learners of a given age or grade are essentially alike. Differentiated instruction is 'responsive teaching' rather than 'one-size-fits-all' teaching" (in J. M. Cooper, (Ed.) (2003). *Classroom teaching skills.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin, p. 151).

[3] An overview of the 3-Tier Reading Model is as follows (State of *Texas Reading First* Application, 2003, pp. 66-67):

    Tier 1: Effective core instruction, assessment and progress monitoring for all students.
    Tier 2: Supplemental instruction and intervention.
    Tier 3: Tertiary intervention for 5-7 percent of students who continue to struggle with reading concepts following supplemental instruction.

Criterion 5: Evaluating the *quality* of professional development materials for reading instruction.

- Clarity of Presentation
- Pedagogy
- Professionalism
- Aesthetics/Appeal

B. EVALUATION OF VAUGHN GROSS CENTER FOR READING & LANGUAGE ARTS (VGC) PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT MATERIALS

Hezel Associates evaluated five different professional development products developed by the Vaughn Gross Center. In what follows, we provide first a chart that shows the name of each product and our judgment of their quality. Then we focus on each product, describing and discussing each one in turn.

Table 2. Vaughn Gross Center Professional Development Products and their Adherence to TX RF Goals

Title of Professional Development Product	Intended Audience (inferred)	Brief Description	Quality of Product
A. "Implementing the 3-Tier Reading Model: Participant Guide—Notes Pages" (2nd Ed.) And its companion product: B. "Implementing the 3-Tier Reading Model: Participant guide—Handouts" (2nd Ed.)	Teachers, coaches, and principals.	2 spiral-bound notebooks which include: a PowerPoint presentation	High
"Three-Tier Decision Making: Simulation"	Teachers, coaches, and principals.	The spiral-bound notebook has 2 parts: *Part 1* sets up a situation in which participants work with hypothetical campus team members to implement a 3-Tier model; *Part 2* guides the decision making process based on realistic examples.	High
"Intervention Instruction" and its companion product "Intervention Instruction: Handouts"	Teachers, grade K-3	Two spiral-bound notebooks (one of which has a DVD in its back pocket; the DVD has 4 segments)	High
"Intervention Instruction" And its companion product: "Intervention Instruction: Handouts"	Teachers, grades K-3	Two spiral-bound notebooks (one of which has a DVD in its back pocket); the DVD has 4 video segments	High
The TX RF Higher Education Collaborative, Seminar Agendas & Materials, 2004-2005; 2005-2006.	Faculty members of Texas colleges and universities	Large loose-leaf notebook organized by seminars that have been presented over the past two years.	High

What follows is a product-by-product description of the five sets of professional development materials produced by VGC along with points for further discussion. For each product we examined, we used the protocol included in Appendix C as a guide for each of the five criteria described in section A, above. We have focused heavily on the most important aspects of each product, specifically those that relate to pedagogy (*i.e.*, criteria 1-3: support for the five components of SBRR; the 3-tier instructional model; and explicit and systematic reading instruction). We anticipate that later iterations of the materials will address issues of teacher professional development and aesthetics and therefore weighted these categories less heavily. In the interest of brevity, we used the

word "high" in each of the summary charts for VGC and CARS to capture the overall alignment of the products with the goals of TX RF.

In addition to using the protocol, we drew heavily on the publishing experience of one of our evaluators, Dr. Wood, who has over a dozen years of editorial experience in creating literacy materials for large educational publishers (*e.g.,* Houghton Mifflin, Addison-Wesley Longman, and Scholastic).

1. **VGC Product 1: "Implementing the 3-Tier Reading Model: Participant Guide—Notes Pages (2nd Ed.)" and its companion product "Implementing the 3-Tier Reading Model: Participant Guide—Handouts" (2nd Ed.)"**

The focus of these complementary spiral-bound notebooks is, true to the title, to demonstrate to teachers, coaches, and principals how to implement the 3-Tier Model.

a) Description

These two notebooks, as a whole, offer a wealth of examples for how to address issues that are inherent in implementing the 3-Tier instructional model in the primary classroom. Designed to be part lecture, part activity-based, the products provide a mix of pedagogy with how-to, while encouraging teachers to bear in mind their particular students, related assessment data, and other contextualizing factors.

The first guide, *"Implementing the 3-Tier Reading Model: Participant Guide––Notes Pages,"* is divided into several sections. The first section shows slides from a PowerPoint presentation called "Implementing the 3-Tier Reading Model: Reducing Reading Difficulties for Kindergarten through Third Grade Students." This presentation, which appears to be designed to kick off a workshop event, establishes a framework for the activities that follow. The stated workshop objectives are:

- To help teachers better understand the 3-Tier Reading Model;
- To review school decisions for 3-Tier instructional guidelines; and
- To provide opportunities to practice using assessment data to make informed decisions about students' needs, 3-Tier instruction and intervention, reading programs, and professional development.

Section two of the guide offers slides from a second PowerPoint presentation entitled, "Tier I: Core Classroom Reading Instruction." The focus is on reviewing the five components of literacy instruction, assessments, and so forth, ending with this caveat: "Remember: the 3-Tier reading model goes beyond giving assessments." Later the presentation outlines the benefits of assessing students such as how the data allow teachers to make decisions about grouping students, planning instruction, monitoring student progress, and scaffolding instruction.

The next four sections of the guide elaborate upon the points presented previously, discussing steps for implementation and "daily intensive intervention." The guide concludes with a list of references.

The companion guide, *"Implementing the 3-Tier Reading Model: Participant Guide–– Handouts,"* offers a wealth of handouts for participants in the workshop discussed above. The topics they address are too numerous to do justice to. Highlights include: grouping practice for effective instruction, a K-W-L template for 3-Tier instruction, and sample lessons for the five strands of reading. One of the most elaborate sections provides an activity for teacher participants: how to analyze data using sample classroom data.

To gain greater insight into authorship and delivery of their PowerPoint presentations, we contacted Theresa Clarke, Statewide Coordinator at VGC (November 16, 2006). Ms. Clarke stated that VGC develops its own materials, with many staff members collaborating on the final product. In many cases VGC Directors Dr. Sharon Vaughn or Dr. Pam Bell Morris has final approval, with input from external reviewers (*e.g.*, Dr. David Francis, Director of the Texas Institute for Measurement, Evaluation, and Statistics, or TIMES). The conference presenters are drawn from the VGC staff according to the particular expertise that is required for a given topic.

b) Discussion

Our analysis shows these guides to be closely aligned with *Texas Reading First* guidelines. One of their strengths is that they offer workshop leaders a considerable amount of content to use in getting across an in-depth understanding of the 3-Tier Model. In addition to a PowerPoint presentation, the product offers relevant activities, lesson plans, and hands-on data analysis activity.

2. VGC Product 2. Three-Tier Decision Making: Simulation

a) Description

This simulation, in the form of a spiral-bound notebook, is designed to support teachers, coaches, and principals, who are planning to implement the 3-Tier Reading Model on their campuses. The simulation aims to shed light on the decision making progress and the underlying pedagogical rationales for choosing among several options.

The simulation has two parts:
- In part 1, educators work with hypothetical campus team members who are in the first year of implementing the 3-Tier Model; and
- In part 2, educators help their colleagues come to grips with evaluating the pros and cons of the reading instruction they are providing, and the effects of each on their students' proficiency as readers.

Both parts 1 and 2 pose questions that encourage analytical thinking, such as, how to analyze student progress data by combining two different data sets: one set of observations made by the reading coach and a second set of observations made by the principal.

b) Discussion

The simulation, which is closely aligned with *Texas Reading First* Guidelines, offers educators a clear, step-by-step analysis, followed by a "what's next?" section and changes to be made based on their findings (p. 3.33). Sample data are provided for the activity. The data are professionally formatted and color-coded, which greatly enhances their readability.

The simulation format adds variety to the traditional presentation formula. It also strives for authenticity in its acknowledgement of real-world complications when implementing such a plan, specifically, students who qualified for Tier 2 but were only receiving Tier 1 instruction due to lack of space (p. 3.5).

To support educators in applying what they've learned, the "What to Do Next?" worksheet helps teachers develop an action plan that has the potential to directly affect classroom practice.

Future directions for this product, even if these topics are covered elsewhere, might include deepening educators' understanding of assessment by demonstrating:

- How to select and administer assessment tools that are designed to screen children when they first begin to struggle in reading; and
- How to select and administer assessment tools that are designed to diagnose students' strengths and weaknesses as readers.

3. VGC Product 3. Implementing the 3-Tier Reading Model, Presenter Guide (2nd Ed.) (2005)

a) Description

This companion piece for the 3-Tier Model product (described in item 2 above) zeros in on Tiers 1 and 2. The notebook is designed for presenters who will be leading a workshop for teachers in grades kindergarten through three.

The materials are packaged in a three-ring loose-leaf binder and include five separate elements:
- Two disks inside plastic pockets: One disk is a CD-rom entitled "for the printer" that contains digital versions of the documents that are in the notebook; the second disk is a DVD that has four videos (discussed below).

- Tabbed sections present notes for the presenter on these topics: Overview, Tier I, Tier I Follow-up, Tier II, Tier II Follow-Up, and Ongoing Professional Development;
- Handouts, including references;
- Participant materials, including a guide that contains snapshots of the presentation slides with space for taking notes and handouts, references, and
- A CD-rom with material for the Online Teacher Reading Academy, an Internet-enabled CD product. (We did not review this material since we were not able to access the course without a password, and we determined this course to be beyond the scope of this report.)

b) Discussion

The most compelling aspect of this product is the DVD, which contains four video segments. Each segment not only adheres closely to the *Texas Reading First* initiative, but also brings to life the research-based practices that serve as the foundation of the program. Specifically, each segment features a narrator who guides the viewer through several classroom vignettes, providing context and reinforcing the principles of *Reading First*. As the narrator speaks, the video cuts to actual classroom footage to illustrate a particular point.

In sum, four video segments focus on the following range of *Reading First* instruction topics:

- *Overview of the 3-Tier Model*

Dr. Sharon Vaughn, Director of VGC, guides the viewer through the research base that is foundational to the 3-Tier Model of instruction. Dr. Vaughn also discusses the five components of literacy, how they are integral to the No Child Left Behind legislation, and a tier-by-tier discussion of hallmarks of good practice. As Dr. Vaughn speaks, the video illustrates each point by cutting to classroom footage that depicts several different teachers working with children in various contexts. The video concludes with Dr. Vaughn recapping the pedagogical underpinnings for the design and implementation of the 3-Tier Model.

- *Content of Effective Reading Instruction*

This video takes the viewer inside the classroom to illustrate systematic, explicit instruction as practiced by exemplary teachers. The video covers all components of reading. Through narration, the importance of systematic targeted instruction is emphasized. We also see how to pair children, with a stronger reader working with a less proficient reader to practice fluency. Woven throughout the segment are reminders about research findings focused on good literacy practice.

- *Tier-1 Instruction: What It Is and Which Kids It's Used For*

Benchmark assessments, and how they help teachers determine students' needs for supplemental instruction, serve as the focus of this video. Internal billboards, (text

banners) reinforce the point of each lesson. One lesson, for example, focuses on a teacher giving explicit instructions on how to summarize text; we then see children practicing this skill independently.

- *Effective Reading Interventions*
This video zeroes in on the importance of assessing each child to inform decisions about grouping students. We also see how a teacher carries out carefully targeted instruction within a small group setting; the vignette illustrates the importance of dedicating extra time and attention to teaching children with individual needs.

The materials are clearly organized with bright orange tabs to separate topics, helpful guidelines for presenters, notes to help elaborate on the PowerPoint slides, and so on. All of the information presented is firmly rooted in the tenets of the *Reading First* Initiative.

4. VGC Product 4: "Intervention Instruction" and its companion product "Intervention Instruction: Handouts" (including a DVD)

a) Description
These two products, in the form of spiral-bound notebooks (one of which has a DVD in its back pocket), are designed for teachers, coaches, and principals. The notebooks address these key points:

- The importance of intervention programs with students;
- When and how to intervene;
- How to use assessment data to inform your intervention program; and
- How to monitor your teaching interventions.

As stated in the introduction to this product, "[the term] intervention refers to additional high-quality, intensive, targeted reading instruction provided to struggling readers to help them achieve grade-level objectives. This instructional time takes place outside of the core reading time and usually occurs in a small group (*e.g.,* 1 to 5 students). During the intervention, students receive explicit, systematic instruction with adequate scaffolding, multiple opportunities to practice, and corrective feedback" (p. 1.3).

Following the introduction, the "Intervention Instruction" materials drill down into the specifics of what a high-quality intervention looks like according to the *Texas Reading First* mandate. For example, the hallmarks of high-quality instruction the authors cite include modeling and systematic scaffolding.

In section 2, each core component of reading is discussed in turn by grade level, with each of their sub-skills broken down (e.g., decoding in kindergarten involves blending

letter sounds in 1-syllable words, p. 2.3). An accompanying spreadsheet amplifies this information. (NOTE: according to a footnote, some of the materials were adapted from resources developed by the Institute for the Development of Educational Achievement, 2002-2004: Big Ideas in Beginning Reading.)

Section 3 offers a summary sheet of key ideas, an intervention checklist, and references.

Snapshots of slides from a PowerPoint presentation entitled "Intervention Instruction" set the tone for "Intervention Instruction: Handouts (including a DVD)." Consistent with *Texas Reading First*, the presentation focuses on intervention within the larger context of the five components of literacy instruction. The slides often ask educators to refer to handouts designed to amplify the information on the slide (as in, "Take out Handout 5 and Handout 6," on p. 25). The handouts are eminently practical, offering lesson plans, planning sheets (for asking good questions during a comprehension lesson), graphic organizers, and so on.

The concluding section consists of a PowerPoint presentation entitled "Observing and Supporting Intervention and Instruction." Adhering tightly to *Texas Reading First* guidelines, the presentation offers concrete tools for administrators to help pinpoint "teacher strengths and needs" (p. 5), in particular a checklist with a 0-3 scale for evaluating an intervention.

b) Discussion
The materials in the two notebooks, if presented well, have the potential to encourage the type of problem-solving skills that can help educators fine-tune their practice.

While the video offers a concrete example of a phonics lesson on short *i* and making predictions about a book (one teacher with two children), the segment would have benefited from an introduction that stated the age of the children and the goals for the lesson. For example, the teacher could have spoken "to camera" to introduce the video. Technically speaking, the audio track was of poor quality, at least on our computer (Macintosh G-5).

Future development would benefit from additional vignettes that illustrate other everyday dilemmas teachers encounter, such as how to dovetail the instructional ideas presented in this workshop with the core basal reading program.

5. VGC Product 5: The *Texas Reading First* Higher Education Collaborative, Seminar Agendas & Materials, 2004-2005; 2005-2006

a) Description
This set of materials, organized in a large loose-leaf notebook, fulfills a different mission from the four other VGC products discussed previously. They were developed by the Higher Education Collaborative, directed by Dr. Sylvia Linan-Thompson, which is "a

forum that the Texas Education Agency first funded in 2000 to engage faculty members from Texas colleges and universities to actively support efforts to improve the reading achievement of Texas students" (HEC Annual Report, 2004-2005, p. 6). In 2003 the HEC was incorporated into the *Texas Reading First* Initiative directed by the Texas Education Agency.

The notebook we examined contains materials that embody the goals set forth by the HEC. Specifically, the HEC aims to educate teacher educators and administrators in SBRR practice, to provide materials based on SBRR for K-12 and school administrators, and to establish a collegial group of educators who support each other in retooling their instruction and teaching materials in light of the *Texas Reading First* Initiative (HEC Annual Report, 2004-2005, p. 6).

The materials fulfill HEC's stated goals in several ways. First, the notebook is divided into several sections according to particular seminars that took place between October 2004 and May 2006. Each seminar section typically consists of a PowerPoint presentation on topics such as SBRR and fluency, along with handouts that offer practical information on topics such as grouping students and morphemic analysis mapping.

The guest speakers for the seminars include experts in the literacy field such as Jan Hasbrouck, a nationally recognized expert in fluency development; Dr. Timothy Shanahan, a highly regarded expert in early literacy acquisition; and Marilyn Jager Adams, a cognitive psychologist, and author of the seminal book, *Beginning to Read* (MIT Press, 1994).

In conducting a meta-analysis of the seminar content, we were struck by the comprehensiveness of the information presented as well as by the tight alignment with the principles of *Texas Reading First*. On an aesthetic level, the text on many slides is enhanced by graphics. Some are merely decorative, but others which convey substantive information via charts, bar graphs, sample data, graphic organizers, and so on. Occasionally Internet resources are provided, as in the March 2005 workshop entitled "Triple AAA, Strategies for ELL Students," by Dr. Javier Ayala. These resources include URLs for ESF Storybooks, a video about Learning English as a Second Language, and "English-to-go: Instant Lessons."

Beyond SBRR instruction in the five components of reading, the seminars also address assessment issues quite thoroughly, with experts focusing on topics such as how to administer DIBELS and TPRI. In addition, in May, 2005, Dr. Jack Fletcher discussed the biological structure of the brain. He pointed out that recent brain research allows us to better understand learning disabilities and the types of interventions that can scaffold learners, such as "Phonografix" and "Lindamood-Bell" (p. 15).

Finally, a glance at the agendas for each session reveals that participants are given several take-away materials. For example, educators who attended the October, 2005 session received ten different products including a series of videos, "Put *Reading First* Parent Information Brochures" in English and Spanish, and the "First Grade Texas Teacher Reading Academies": Presenter Guides, a CD, and videos.

b) Discussion

While the professional development materials created for high-level HEC conferences are impressive in regard to their scope and the expertise of the presenters, it is difficult to evaluate their impact at the campus, let alone the classroom level. In regard to future development of the HEC, it would be interesting to see a blueprint demonstrating how the knowledge gleaned at these conferences is disseminated to educators who have more direct contact with children. While this mechanism is probably well understood by participants of HEC, it may remains somewhat opaque to the outsider.

Next we reviewed five products developed by the Center for Academic & Reading Skills in Houston. The products, each one encased in a clearly labeled plastic portfolio, are summarized on the following chart.

C. EVALUATION OF CENTER FOR ACADEMIC & READING SKILLS (CARS) PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT MATERIALS

Hezel Associates evaluated five different professional development products developed by the Center for Academic Study & Reading Skills. In what follows, we provide first a chart which shows the name of each product and our judgment of their quality. Then we focus on each product, describing and discussing each one in turn.

Table 3. Center for Academic Reading Skills Professional Development Products and their Adherence to TX RF Goals

Professional Development Product	Intended Audience (here we've made some assumptions)	Brief Description	Quality of Product
"TX RF Advanced Coaching Institute"	Teachers, Coaches, and Principals	PowerPoint Presentations on effective coaching, 4 DVDs, one of which contains related video segments, a brochure about future Coaching institutes, and a program summarizing upcoming events.	High
"Training of Trainers Reading Assessment and Reading Instruction: General Education and Special Education Working Together"	Coaches and On-site coordinators	PowerPoint presentation, CD-rom containing 4 variations of the presentation	High
"Managing and Making Differentiated Instructional Activities for English and Spanish Learners"	Teachers, coaches, and on-site coordinators	Vignette of classroom practice on this topic; video clip of an exemplary teacher using a literacy learning center.	High
"Explaining the Superintendent Summit Data Or, Identify a Growth Measure for Both PM & Outcome TRF Measures"	Teachers, coaches, and principals	PowerPoint presentation, handouts, worksheets, and a cheat sheet.	High
"*Texas Reading First*: Campus Implementation Review 'DRAFT'"	Coaches, on-site coordinators, and administrators.	Survey, evaluation, criteria, and a PowerPoint presentation.	High

What follows is a product-by-product description and discussion of the five sets of professional development materials produced by CARS along with points for further discussion. Similar to the VGC evaluation, our scoring method was based on the set of criteria included in the index.

1. CARS Product 1: *Texas Reading First* Advanced Coaching Institute

a) Description

The coaching instructional collection of materials is comprised of four parts:

- Four DVDs: one DVD offers a wealth of video footage, while the remaining three serve as a digital method for archiving relevant files;
- A spiral-bound notebook entitled "*Texas Reading First* Advanced Coaching Institute: Houston" (May 9-10, 2006), which contains PowerPoint presentations focused on effective coaching practices;
- A brochure entitled "Classroom Coaching: A Closer Look," mainly promotional literature about coaching seminars; and
- A program summarizing the Institute's upcoming events entitled "Professional Development Opportunities."

The DVD component with its video segments greatly enhances the print materials. Through video footage, participants can view model lessons interspersed with footage of children actively engaged in reading activities. In general, the videos target the coaching process and exemplary reading instruction by depicting:

- Teachers in action;
- Coaches in action;
- Children engaged in reading activities; and
- Native Spanish speakers receiving reading instruction by a skilled teacher.

One of the strengths of the videos is that they depict real world problems. For example, in one segment the viewer sees how a local campus coach facilitates discussions and offers a colleagues advice, suggests next steps for teachers, models a demonstration lesson, and so forth. In another segment the viewer sees a local campus coach engage in an informal debriefing session with the school principal. Ultimately, the coaches walk the viewer through all aspects of the coaching cycle.

Consistently, the tone of the demonstration lessons and conferences is collegial. In one segment, a coach demonstrates how to highlight important parts of the lesson, gather the necessary resources, and engage children in a comprehension conversation. As with other segments in the series, the coach is portrayed as personable and approachable. She connects all parts of teaching—preparation, teaching, and next steps—into a coherent whole that helps advance the goals of *Reading First*.

Beyond the classroom/teacher/coach segments, the end of the DVD offers a Question and Answer section to address common concerns of teachers, such as how best to meet the needs of the struggling reader. (Curiously this Q&A section did not appear when we accessed the DVD via computer, rather than using a television monitor.)

The production values are consistent with industry standards for educational videos that the Hezel researchers have been involved with as performers and consultants.

The two print products, the two brochures, are focused on upcoming seminars and events for coaches. The topics such as "TPRI K-3 Overview" and "Critical Elements

Analysis for English and Spanish Core Reading Programs" certainly address hot-button issues that concern coaches (pp. 14 and 16 of "A Closer Look").

To gain greater insight into the authorship and delivery of *all* of the CARS PowerPoint presentations, we spoke with Dr. Waynel Sexton on November 9, 2006. Dr. Sexton is a consultant for CARS as well as a *Reading First* Program Manager. Regarding the development of the PowerPoint presentations, Dr. Sexton explained that staff members of CARS typically serve as presenters, as opposed to bringing in others from outside. That said, the CARS staff have often invited a close colleague to be a guest speaker: Dr. Marcia L. Kosanovich-Grek, Co-Director of the Florida Center for Reading Research. In addition, CARS has also collaborated with Carolyn Schneider, a senior consultant in literacy, who has extensive experience in bridging theory and practice.

A positive aspect of this particular CARS PowerPoint presentation is that the presenter is offered not one static presentation to deliver, but rather several variations on a theme. In this way the presenter can choose the talk that is the best match for the audience and time frame.

Another strong point is that the presentation incorporates graphics to help convey information, display data, and so on. Further, most presentations have a clear structure, moving from introduction, to exposition, to conclusion, to extras such as "do's and don'ts." The handouts are practical, offering practice opportunities and classroom observation checklists.

b) Discussion

While the printed materials are definitely consistent with *Texas Reading First* Guidelines, the standout component in this collection is the set of videos, with their skillful portrayal of how real teachers, coaches, principals, and children communicate with each other within a literacy context. In moving forward, the series would greatly benefit from adding segments in which coaches model other lessons that focus on complex topics such as bilingual education, learning disabilities, and special education.

Another suggestion for future development relates to the fact that most of the reading instruction portrayed in the videos was conducted with the whole class at once. Teachers would surely appreciate greater emphasis on a variety of models for instruction, particularly group work and the inherent classroom management challenges that this method presents.

2. CARS Product 2: Training of Trainers --Reading Assessment and Reading Instruction: General Education and Special Education Working Together

a) Description

This set of materials consists of a PowerPoint presentation and a CD-rom that offers four variations of the presentation to accommodate the needs of various presenters.

Rather than simply presenting information lecture-style, the presenter occasionally encourages audience participation. For example, one activity invites educators to volunteer what they *already know* about *Reading First* and No Child Left Behind (NCLB), what people *want to know* about this topic, and what they *learned*.

As with the first CARS product, the structural underpinnings of the presentations make for a coherent discussion of substantial amounts of information. Typically,

- The first slides outline the problem, specifically that "approximately 60 percent of students with reading difficulties are identified too late to derive full benefit from any intervention" (p. 2 of printout).
- Subsequent slides provide an overview of NCLB and situate *Reading First* within that context. Public Law 94-142 (1975) is also discussed in a section called "The Progression of Special Education," as part of the legal framework for Tier 3 instruction.
- After explicating the problems associated with early identification of students with individual needs, a solution is proposed: "Adoption of a universal screening and multi-tier instructional/intervention strategy to enable early identification and intervention for children at risk for reading problems" (Denton et al., 2003). (Handout p. 7)
- There follows a description of the Response to Instruction model and how it is a *prevention model,* not a *program*. The idea is to determine special education eligibility by evaluating and monitoring how well the student is responding to high quality instruction.
- Next, careful delineation of the steps needed to achieve a "high quality RtI Model" are enumerated (*e.g.,* administrative leadership, using data to make decisions about individual students and classrooms).
- The presentation concludes with a description of school support and other ways in which the infrastructure must be well established if we are to meet the needs of Tier 3 students.

b) Discussion

An understanding of the relationship between reading assessment and reading instruction as it specifically relates to issues in special education is vital to successful implementation of *Reading First*. In this professional development product, CARS takes on this topic in a coherent manner, and provides, we feel, a solid introduction to the topic. Moreover, the developers of this professional development product should be commended for offering the first consumers of this product, the RTAs, four different ways to present this content to teachers. During our interviews with CARS, it became apparent that RTAs had shared their viewpoint that the professional development products developed by CARS would be most helpful to RTAs if they were packaged so that the same content could be presented with different timeframes (e.g. within 2 hours, within a half-day workshop or within a full-day workshop) and audiences in mind (e.g. experienced teachers or new-to-Reading-First teachers). CARS has obviously

responded to this request, and we believe that RTAs and the *Reading First* teachers in the field will be better served as a result.

3. Cars Product 3: Managing and Making Differentiated Instructional Activities for English and Spanish Learners

a) Description

This set of materials, designed for a grade K-3 teacher audience, includes a video, handouts, a PowerPoint presentation, "Make-N-Take Kits" (in English and Spanish), and a CD-rom.

The goal of this set of products is to offer teachers a vignette of classroom practice. Thus the video shows how an exemplary teacher orchestrates a reading center approach with her students, many of whom are English Language Learners. The video is followed up with a "Make-N-Take" workshop designed to help teachers create their own learning centers.

Although the video, "Independent Work Time: Grade 2," was developed in 2002, as Dr. Sexton pointed out via phone, all the footage, with the exception of the segment on process writing, is applicable to the *Texas Reading First* Initiative. The video focuses on a primary-level teacher who demonstrates how to establish a workshop model over the course of several weeks. The viewer sees how the teacher directs students to engage in "must do" versus "can do" activities that become increasingly complex over the course of several weeks. Children, both native English and Spanish speakers, are shown enacting the new steps that the teacher has presented, such as practicing reading fluently.

Three handouts are included in this packet:
- "Planner for Phasing in Small Group Instruction";
- "Managing and Making Differentiate Instructional Activities for English and Spanish Learners"; and
- "Presenter Preparation for Small-Group Instruction: Getting Started: Your First 21 Days."

A PowerPoint presentation, entitled "Managing and Making Differentiated Instructional Activities for English and Spanish Learners," covers several topics:
- The benefits of small-group instruction;
- How to effectively phase in small-group instruction; and
- Ideas for independent activities that teachers can assign most students while he or she works with a small group.

Each topic is elaborated upon in turn with an emphasis on instructional goals. For example, a discussion called "Getting Started: Teacher models and reinforces self-

regulating skills," centers on a scenario that demonstrates how to talk to students about working independently. A script is offered, which begins, "Boys and girls I am going to show you how I expect you to work on your own. First, it is important that you listen carefully to all directions. When you have a question you will use the *Ask-Three-Before-Me* procedure," (p. 6, slide 3).

The Make-N-Take kits consist of clear plastic bags containing directions (in English and Spanish) and manipulative materials––silver disks and a magnetic tape, and so on. Teachers are given directions for making an activity called "Do You Know Your Syllables?"

The CD-rom
The CD-rom is an archive of all of the material that is in the packet, in the form of Word or PowerPoint documents.

b) Discussion
Small group instruction is a vital part of the *Reading First* instructional model. This professional development product would serve teachers who are new to a small-group approach or who need further professional development in this important area. The video of exemplary teachers would, we feel, be especially helpful to teachers learning about and refining this method of teaching. The handouts and PowerPoint presentation would be strong adjuncts to the video in helping RTAs lead teachers through professional development on this topic.

4. CARS Product 4: Explaining the Superintendent Summit Data, or Identify a Growth Measure for Both PM & Outcome TRF Measures

a) Description
This product consists of several print documents:
- A PowerPoint Presentation entitled "Explaining the Superintendent Summit Data"
- Two worksheets called Using Assessment Data, State Level: Example, and Analyzing Student Assessment Data to Support Action Plans
- A "Cheat Sheet" for using assessment data

The topics covered in the PowerPoint presentation include:
- A definition of "proficiency";
- How to read outcome graphs and tables;
- Comparing performance using the "outcome across years" graphs and outcomes by demographics;
- End of year (EOY) data across years by domain;
- Additional graphical aspects of the "TPRI/TJL domain across years";
- Examples of data from Year 3 of *Texas Reading First*; and
- A final section called "Linking task to domain performance."

As near as we can tell, the data analysis in the presentation is an accurate take on how to read data from examining pictographs and bar graphs. But we're not 100 percent certain because our printout shows the slides greatly reduced with poor resolution.

As noted previously, the two sets of worksheets, designed to illustrate the themes presented, add much-needed real-world context to the experience. Audience members, for example, can learn how to use a table of information about children's reading from K-3 to answer questions such as: "*From 2004-05 to 2005-06, did the percentage of students 'still developing' ('SD') decrease (--), increase (+), or stay the same (SS) within each domain?*" (p. 5).

Toward the end of the packet (p. 9), is a one-page synthesis of all the data. This information serves as an answer key for the exercises.

The packet concludes with a handout called "Analyzing Student Assessment Data to Support Action Plan" that strives to pinpoint "areas of need" by grade level. This model concludes with a template for educators to use in creating their own action plans. Such plans should include: "priorities for addressing need," "initial steps to take," and "areas of action plan to address need" (*e.g.,* leadership, assessment, core reading program).

Last, the portfolio includes a "Cheat Sheet" for using assessment data, which educators will surely appreciate.

b) Discussion

Building capacity in this weighty subject must be a prime concern of all *Reading First* programs. Understanding student achievement data and its relationship to school-based action is an essential tenet of most school reform programs including *Reading First*; yet, Schools of Education have only recently begun to teach about this topic. The newness of this approach to school reform makes it critical that states such as Texas provide solid professional development on this topic, and it is our opinion that this professional development session will go some distance to improving educational leaders' knowledge of assessment data and how to utilize this data in instructional decision making.

In addition to noting the important intent of this professional development product, we also make note of the coherence of the product which we believe would provide step-by-step support in understanding this topic. And, as noted previously, we believe that the two sets of worksheets, designed to illustrate and further probe the topic of assessment data would add excellent real-world context to the experience.

5. CARS Product 5: *Texas Reading First*: Campus Implementation Review 'DRAFT'

a) Description

The "Campus Implementation Review" product, also packaged in a clear plastic portfolio, contains these materials:

- A survey focused on implementation of *Reading First* at the campus level;
- A set of rating criteria for campus implementation review, both a draft version and a finalized document (Spring, 2006); and
- Printouts of a PowerPoint presentation (May, 2006) in two different formats (i.e., 6 slides per page versus one slide per page with speaker notes included).

Consistent with *Reading First* guidelines, the RTAs are asked to review by way of a survey the effectiveness of the program's implementation on specific campuses across the following dimensions:

- *Leadership (e.g.,* visibility of principal, the qualifications of the instructional staff);
- *Assessment* (using data in making instructional decisions for students);
- *Core reading program (e.g.,* whether a 90 minute block of uninterrupted time has been blocked out for reading instruction); and
- *Instructional framework (e.g.,* evidence that key aspects of the three-tier model have been implemented; entry and exit criteria for speakers of English and Spanish).

The PowerPoint presentation introduces step-by-step "Guidelines for Completing the Campus Implementation Review." The additional notes printed on the page (in the second set noted above), offer critical information about the material contained in each slide. Eminently practical, the notes offer additional context for topics such as: how to use the rubric effectively by starting with the highest level of implementation, next considering the potential match, and then working backwards until the reviewer has calibrated the situation at hand.

In addition, administrators are cautioned against taking their evaluations as a be-all-end-all; instead, they should be viewed merely as a "point in time." The evaluation process is estimated to take between 15 and 45 minutes. Evaluators are also instructed not to engage in discussion with campus or district personnel in completing the survey, or provide access to the instrument (p. 13).

A highlight of the presentation is the mini scenarios that are offered based on real-world situations. This link to actual practice should help educators calibrate themselves as examiners before they set out to measure the depths of a *Reading First* implementation.

b) Discussion

The product fully demonstrates what we have come to understand as an absolute strength of CARS: the capacity to understand what teachers need to most effectively and efficiently perform their jobs. This product is well organized, coherent, and thoughtful in the presentation supports it offers the RTAs.

D. SUMMARY

This evaluation activity focused on the extent to which the professional development materials (grades K-3) reading curriculum meet the highest standards for professional development materials in relation to the goals of *Texas Reading First*. To answer this question we devised a set of criteria to guide our examination of ten products, produced by VGC and CARS, across the following dimensions:

- The five components of learning to read
- Differentiated instruction
- The provision for explicit and systematic instruction
- The extent to which the materials support the professional development process
- The organization and presentation quality of the materials

Overall, there is an apparent deep commitment to the *Texas Reading First* Initiative guidelines—a commitment that is clearly reflected in this collection of professional development materials. All of goals bulleted above have clearly been met in the form of presentations with accompanying data or graphic organizers, "Make-N-Take" workshops, a simulation, and video footage of exemplary practice involving coaches, teachers, and of course, children. Often SBRR discussions are used as a way to motivate the audience to retool their practice. That is, once teachers become well-versed in the research base that shows the efficacy of a particular practice, say, for developing students' vocabulary, they will be more motivated to add it to their teaching repertoire.

In sum, both partners should be applauded for having created professional development materials that address the ever-present challenge of developing knowledge of SBRR and then bridging SBRR with practice.

EVALUATION ACTIVITY 3: QUALIFICATIONS OF *READING FIRST* PERSONNEL AT THE TEA AND PARTNERSHIP ORGANIZATIONS

For this part of the evaluation, Hezel Associates responded to the question: What are the qualifications of individuals and organizations providing services under *Reading First*, including the TEA, the Center for Academic and Reading Skills at the University of Texas Health Science Center (CARS), the University of Texas System (UTS), the Vaughn Gross Center (VGC), and the Texas Institute for Measurement, Evaluations and Statistics (TIMES)?

To answer this question, we collected resumes and job descriptions for all key individuals within all *Reading First* Partners. We collected information on academic degrees, referred and non-referred publications, academic and non-academic presentations, and work experience including experience with work similar to what is being done for *Texas Reading First*. Where necessary, we supplemented this with clarifying telephone interviews of personnel. Based on our professional opinions, we then determined an overall fit between each person as represented by his or her resume and the given job description.

A. FINDINGS

Without exception, the qualifications for all *Reading First* personnel at the TEA and the partner organizations are strong and aligned well with their respective job descriptions.

EVALUATION ACTIVITY 4: LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNICATION

For this part of the evaluation, Hezel Associates responded to the question: How have the Texas Education Agency and its various *Reading First* partners functioned individually and collectively to provide leadership to the State in implementing *Reading First* and to ensure the goals of *Reading First* are met? What procedures and mechanisms have been put in place to facilitate communication amongst these parties and enhance leadership across the State? Where has leadership been lacking, and what steps need to be taken to improve it?

A. FINDINGS

1. Providing leadership to the State in implementing *Reading First* and ensuring the goals of *Reading First* are met

Leadership and support were provided in several ways according to the partners Hezel Associates interviewed. First, the Manager of *Reading First* Grants and Partnerships provided structure and guidance to the partners and local education agencies. Second, *Reading First* partners each bring a unique skill set and perspective to the partnership that they shared with each other.

a) Providing Leadership and Support: The Role of TEA

The current Manager of *Reading First* Grants and Partnerships at TEA has provided substantial structure and guidance for the partners, and, by extension, to the local agencies since she started in this position in May, 2005.

First, the Manager has provided superb support and guidance for the *Reading First* partners. The Partners suggest she has

- provided tremendous leadership
- provided great focus while at the same time was flexible in her thinking
- been exacting in her demands
- been a strong advocate for the Partners
- been very positive and focused upon people's strengths
- been solution oriented
- emphasized collaboration and consensus

The Manager has provided further support and guidance to the Partners as she restructured the *Reading First* program in Texas geographically. Prior to this time, the program had been divided by state region (i.e., Regions 1-10 and Regions 11-20). This organization was problematic because schools in Regions 1-10 had access to *Reading First* staff members assigned to that portion of the state only, and sometimes the expertise of those particular staff members did not meet the schools' needs. Another act of restructuring was to reorganize partners to fill gaps and to avoid duplication of services.

As of 2006-2007, the Program Manager is also attempting to structure and provide guidance for a system of local accountability which would serve to make the responsibilities of all partner organizations easier to accomplish. On the issue on non-compliance to the tenets of *Reading First*, the Manager suggests that this is where she needs to focus her efforts. In 2006-2007, the Manager is building in more accountability for compliance to grant requirements.

b) Providing Support to Each Other: The Partner Role

All partners bring tremendous expertise in their areas to the partnership. In addition, each of the *Reading First* partner organizations has provided leadership through unique contributions to the project. Partners have been generally supportive of one another and through 2005-2006 have collaborated to determine what is in the best interest of *Reading First*.

Among other great strengths, CARS specializes in the art of teaching reading; CARS brings a practitioner's perspective to the partnership. CARS also has great expertise in using data to drive instruction. CARS organizational skills and prowess with managing large professional development events was noted by all other partners.

TIMES brings tremendous knowledge of the field of educational evaluation. TIMES also has a unique vantage point in the *Reading First* project in which they are able to "see the whole picture" as opposed to pieces.

The more recent version of UTS with the new Executive Director brings tremendous business and management acumen to the partnership. We also see UTS as leading the partnership in the resolution of "sticky" personnel issues.

VGC brings terrific knowledge about the science of teaching reading to the Partnership. This core understanding of reading research in general and *Reading First* specifically is essential to the work of the partnership. VGC also brings substantial knowledge of online professional development.

c) Supporting a Sustainable System

Partners are concerned about the funding and re-authorization of *Reading First*. They agree that sustainability of the program is dependent on the participation of the Education Service Centers (ESCs), therefore, 2006-2007 brings focus on involving ESCs in a more active role in *Reading First*.

Partners also suggest that sustainability rests with colleges and universities as well. UTS and VGC's Higher Education Collaborative have worked hard to actively involve Texas college and university professors in RF trainings and discussions.

2. Procedures and mechanisms to facilitate communication among TEA and the *Reading First* partners

Officially, TEA and the *Reading First* partners meet once per month for an all-day session that lasts until all agenda items have been addressed. Agenda items must be submitted in advance, so that the meetings can stay focused. Each *Reading First* partner organization decides who among its staff will attend the monthly meetings. Typically, two staff members from each organization attend. All meetings emphasize consensus and collaboration.

In addition to the monthly partner meetings, quarterly meetings are held for director-level staff. These are seen as excellent opportunities for program directors to communicate. In addition, end-of-year meetings are held to review yearly progress.

A great deal of communication, in person, via conference calls, and via e-mail, occurs in between the monthly meetings. In addition, a partner website has been created to further strengthen the communication.

To enhance partner solidarity, TEA and the *Reading First* partners participate in an annual retreat, during which they arrive at common goals for the program. The first retreat was held in June, 2005, and Partners agree this annual retreat serves to enhance the work of parts of RF.

3. Procedures and mechanisms to facilitate communication within TEA and the *Reading First* partner organizations

Hezel Associates conducted numerous interviews with TEA personnel. All were very positive about the work of *Texas Reading First* and all had the utmost confidence in the Manager of *Reading First* Grants and Projects. The Manager stated that she had the utmost support from her supervisors and feels that she has full access to them on all RF issues.

The CARS Project Director leads weekly staff meetings using "her famous checklist." The checklist allows the meeting to stay on-topic and address many important details. The Director aims to make it "really clear who's responsible for things." CARS respondents described their Project Director as "collaborative," and as having an "open door." The Director describes herself as "very hands-on." Respondents reported feeling supported in terms of career growth. Yearly formal reviews are conducted with CARS employees, and based on the discussions during the meetings software and training have been provided to meet employees' needs.

TIMES staff members try to meet on a weekly basis, although many travel regularly. The meetings follow an agenda and include action items. Also, the two TIMES Project Managers meet regularly. The leadership of the TIMES research division was described

as "open-door and collaborative." Staff members are evaluated on an annual basis using the University of Houston protocol.

The *Reading First* project at VGC is divided into three teams: 1) Online; 2) the Higher Education Collaborative, and 3) the Technical Assistance/Professional Development team. Full staff meetings occur approximately every month. In addition, each team has its own meetings. The Online team meets once per week or every two weeks depending on their timelines. The Higher Education Collaborative team, because it is quite small, meets less frequently. The Technical Assistance/Professional Development team meets approximately every three weeks; this may increase to every two weeks. The meetings are usually agenda-driven. E-mail is used frequently to stay in touch, in particular with the Technical Assistance/Professional Development team members who are often in the field. Team members send reports to the VGC Director after each campus visit, allowing her to share information with TEA or the other *Reading First* partners. The Project Manager of the Higher Education Collaborative communicates with the VGC Director by sending meeting reports or by inviting her to the meetings. The VGC Director is invited to the Online Team meetings as well. At the time of interviewing, the VGC Director had not completed staff evaluations yet, as she has been in the position for four months. However, she reported that she will follow the University of Texas policy for evaluating employees.

UTS staff members have agenda-driven staff meetings each Monday as during the remainder of the week many staff members are in the field. Information from *Reading First* Partner meetings is shared with all staff during these meetings. Issues from the field and organizational issues are also discussed. Email and the *Wireless Generation* software developed by UTS help to keep UTS staff members in contact as they travel through the large state of Texas. Staff evaluations are conducted on a yearly basis by the Executive Director.

4. Where leadership could be improved

Three themes emerged regarding areas where *Reading First* leadership could be improved in 2006-2007. Frequently mentioned by TEA and *Reading First* partner were funding issues, problems involving the Reading Technical Assistants, and a desire for greater communication between the Manager and the *Reading First* Partners. The reader will note that the resolution of these issues is well underway for 2006-2007.

a) Funding

Prior to 2006-2007, as has been described, there were delays in Partner funding. Partners agree that the funding situation has drastically improved since the arrival of the new TEA Manager.

b) Reading Technical Assistants

At times during 2005-2006, additional leadership would have been helpful with the Reading Technical Assistants. For example, the RTAs were not trained in the important

task of understanding, interpreting, and using assessment data. Other leadership-related difficulties involving the Reading Technical Assistants were mentioned as well. Basically, because the 67 RTAs are spread across the state, it was difficult to manage them. Originally there were three Project Managers to oversee the Reading Technical Assistants; now there are five to provide additional leadership. It will be determined in 2006-2007 if this level of leadership is sufficient.

c) Communication between Partners and the Manager

Partners reported that they would like more access to the Manager. The Partners see the Manager as doing an incredible job with RF but being too busy. We note that for 2006-2007, one more staff person has been added to the RF office at TEA. This should help alleviate this concern.

For this part of the evaluation, Hezel Associates reviewed the research methodology employed by the program's external evaluator, the Texas Institute for Measurement, Evaluation, and Statistics (TIMES) for student outcomes assessment. The following sources of data were used for these evaluation activities:

- TIMES' 2005-2006 Description of Services (evaluation plan)
- TIMES' 2005-2006 Summary Evaluation Report (draft)
- Recorded interview with TIMES' director and staff

A. FINDINGS

The quality of the external evaluation of the Reading First program has been compromised by many factors, some not in the control of the evaluator. The evaluation of a large and ever-changing program such as *Texas Reading First* (or other states' *Reading First* programs) presents challenges by its very nature. Cycles of funding and implementation operate against straightforward assessment of program impact. In the case of *Texas Reading First*, a number of additional factors have compromised the quality of the evaluation. In many of the reported analyses for 2005-2006, findings are equivocal (and are often stated as such). In this section we summarize the key factors hindering meaningful assessment of program impact, and suggest where actions might be taken to remedy the situation. It appears that some of these actions are already planned, which bodes well for future evaluation efforts and for a clearer understanding of whether and under what conditions the *Texas Reading First* program is meeting its goals.

It should first be noted that the evaluation plan (here, the plan for 2005-2006) is appropriate. Data on key variables are to be collected from program targets, including students, teachers, coaches, principals, RTAs, and parents. Knowledge, practice, and perceptions (of things such as leadership, campus climate, etc.) are gathered from program implementers, and performance data is gathered from students. Parents' perceptions are also collected. All of these are appropriate. The sections below address those factors that have hindered the meaningful collection or analysis of this data.

1. Problems with the comparison sample
The written plan for constructing a comparison group of schools comparable to the RF schools called for selecting schools that were eligible for, but not recipient of, RF funds, and matching these schools to RF schools based on school demographic and achievement data. This plan could not be carried out, in large part, it appears, due to the dynamic and expanding nature of the RF treatment group over time. In other words, many schools chosen for the comparison group became treatment schools (i.e., received RF funding) in subsequent funding cycles. Ultimately the comparison group

became a sample of convenience, with diminished capability to serve as meaningful basis of comparison to the *Reading First* schools.

Although this situation appears to have been well beyond the control of the program evaluators, it is unclear from the 2005-2006 draft report just how comparable the treatment and comparison groups ultimately were in terms of demographics and student performance. The report does indicate that prior academic performance was not taken into account, and that this will be done in the upcoming longitudinal study. The report also states that the groups were generally comparable at the end of the 2004-2005 year, but with no substantiating data. No data is given to indicate the comparability of the comparison schools to RF schools in terms of demographics. Such data would have been useful to give some context to the reported statistical analyses. Finally, the evaluation report makes no mention of problems in constructing the comparison group. (The information about problems with the comparison group was learned in a telephone interview with TIMES staff.)

Other problems included a very low rate of return on surveys in the comparison group, as well as many teachers not providing student achievement data. For instance, the comparison sample sizes for the teacher survey of self-reported instructional practices are as follows (see also page 21 of the 2005-2006 Summary Evaluation Report draft):

    K   6
    Gr 1   8
    Gr 2   4
    Gr 3   3

Putting aside the issue of the representativeness of these teachers, such small samples are too small for meaningful statistical analyses, particularly when they are done by grade level, as they were in this instance (see page 23 of the 2005-2006 Summary Evaluation Report draft). A similar example from the leadership survey analysis is the sample size of only eight principals from comparison schools.

The implication of these problems with the comparison group is that many of the reported analyses for 2005-2006 are un-interpretable. Apparent advantages for the *Reading First* group may be spurious, and the few instances of apparent advantage for the comparison group schools may also be spurious. Since comparison schools were not able to be matched to *Reading First* schools as planned, it would have been useful to control statistically for school demographics and prior performance and for respondent (teacher, coach, principal, etc.) characteristics. Presumably this is planned in the three-year longitudinal analysis. Alternatively, for cross-sectional data as gathered for the 2005-2006 report, the data might better be reported descriptively rather than to attempt an inferential analysis.

2. Matching teachers with students and matching teacher data sources

A key problem specific to the student outcome analysis is the inability to match teachers with their students. As TIMES pointed out, no roster information was available in 2005-2006 to enable this. As a result, for the outcomes analysis, students were nested within campuses, when the statistically appropriate solution would be for students to be nested within teachers, and teachers nested within campuses. This leads to a couple of problems in the analysis. One is that all the possible variability in teacher demographics, knowledge and practice is lost as an explanatory influence on student achievement. A second problem is that the clustering effect of students within teachers is not accounted for in the statistical model, leading to possible misestimates of program effects as well as a greater likelihood of Type I errors (finding spurious statistical significance).

The correlations of teacher knowledge and practice to student achievement within *Reading First* schools is also adversely affected by the inability to match teachers with their students, as the TIMES' 2005-2006 Summary Evaluation Report draft points out. Both the teacher measures and the student measures were of necessity aggregated to the campus level. Variability at both levels was lost, and with it the likelihood of seeing relationships if they existed. It is crucial to have the ability to match teachers with students, as apparently will be possible in 2006-2007. Similarly, the inability to match teacher survey data with observational data on teachers precluded a meaningful analysis of the relationship between the two. Evaluators were again left with campus-level aggregations with which to conduct statistical tests, with the problems already described.

3. Other issues

A few additional issues surfaced in the document review and interview with TIMES staff. One is the late approval from TEA to conduct implementation visits. These were supposed to have taken place in the fall and spring, but ended up taking place in December and late spring. As a result, some schools were lost, as well as the timing that would permit true baseline data to be collected for comparison purposes. Whether this situation was avoidable or not, the result is weaker data with which to make judgments about the impact of the program.

In terms of the draft report, more explicit information would be useful in the report body on the original number of items on questionnaire scales as well as the number dropped as a result of factor analysis. For instance, for the environmental checklist, one has to work backwards to determine that the scale began with 16 items and that three were dropped. For the other scales, it appears that none were dropped from the original number, but this is not made explicit.

Perhaps also some explanation would be useful for stakeholders about the purposes of factor analysis and what is gained and lost by dropping items and developing factor (or

factor-based) scales for analysis. For independent judgment, presenting tables of factor loadings for all items would also be helpful, as well as explaining what decision rules were used about the needed size of an item's factor loading to justify its retention in the scale. For instance, it appears that only one item was dropped from any scale due to a small factor loading (classroom environmental checklist), but the item is not identified, nor is the size of its factor loading. On the other hand, the 72 items composing the teacher knowledge test were all retained, and said to measure one general knowledge factor. Again, it would be useful to see a table of factor loadings for this measure, as there must have been considerable variation among the items in their loadings on that factor, and decisions to make about retaining items as well as about including/not including additional factors. Understanding that this is an evaluation report, this sort of information, with decision rules, could be included in an appendix.

4. Summary

Taken together, the convenience sample of comparison schools, the inability to match teachers with their students, and the lack of statistical controls on school demographics and prior performance render the reported cross-sectional analyses of student outcomes in the 2005-2006 year wholly un-interpretable. No meaningful inferences about the *Reading First* program's impact on students can be gained from the reported analyses. As noted above, the first two of these problems may not have been under the evaluator's control. On the other hand, statistical control of school demographics and prior performance (which could mitigate the problems with a convenience sample of comparison schools) could have been undertaken; however, given the problem of teachers unmatched with their students, it's not clear that much confidence could be placed in the results of even this level of analysis. Finally, the extremely poor rate of survey return from the comparison schools renders a number of other reported analyses meaningless, as noted above.

The planned longitudinal analysis covering three years of data, assuming the ability to match teachers with their students, will provide the first meaningful analysis of the impact of the program on student outcomes. Other analyses involving comparison teachers, coaches, principals, etc., will continue to be problematic unless the survey return rate is substantially improved.

EVALUATION ACTIVITIES 6 AND 7: HIGH QUALITY, TIMELY AND RESPONSIVE TRAINING TO THE READING TECHNICAL ASSISTANTS

In this part of our evaluation, Hezel Associates responded to two related sets of questions:

First, to what extent is training provided to the Reading Technical Assistants (RTAs) of high quality and timely?

Second, to what extent have the TEA and its partners been responsive to the needs of RTAs? On this topic and from the standpoint of the TEA and its partners (the *Reading First* Leadership), what have been the strengths and weaknesses of the *Reading First* Leadership in dealing with the needs of the RTAs?

A. FINDINGS

1. Evaluation of professional development

To assess the quality of the professional development conducted by the *Reading First* partners, TIMES administered evaluation surveys at each of the trainings conducted during 2005-2006. Attendees at the 45 trainings (i.e., 1,659 RTAs and other professionals) were asked to complete questionnaires regarding the sessions. The surveys focused on participants' perceptions of the quality and usefulness of the professional development. TIMES provided survey results, summarized into six training categories (3 Tier, Assessment, Coaching, English Language Learners, Instruction, and Special Education), to Hezel Associates for the current evaluation. An overview of these results is presented below.

Survey responses revealed high degrees of satisfaction with the quality and usefulness of the professional development training sessions with approval responses well above 90% and disapproval responses typically below 5%. Overall, it can be said that the trainings were well received by the RTAs and other professionals who attended.

a) Quality of professional development sessions

The vast majority of respondents agreed that the professional development sessions attended were high quality. Well over 90% of respondents across all six training categories, endorsed items such as:
- "This training was developed using scientifically based reading research"
- "I fully understand the goals of this training"
- "I am satisfied with this training"
- "The training was clear and easy to follow"

b) Usefulness of professional development sessions

Similarly, most all of the RTAs and other professionals who attended the professional development sessions responded that the training was useful to them. In most cases, well over 90% agreed with the following statements:

- "This training is an effective approach to teaching students at any grade level"
- "The students will benefit from the school's use of this training"
- "I am confident that I can implement this training in the manner intended"
- "Using this training will increase teachers' ability to effectively teach students to read"

Exceptions included 85 percent of respondents at English Language Learner trainings who agreed that they were confident that that they could implement the training in the manner intended, and 89 percent of Special Education training participants who agreed that using the training would increase teachers' ability to effectively teach students to read. Respondents were less positive regarding the time it takes to teach the new material. Only 80 percent agreed to the item "It is easy to allot the time required to teach reading when using this training."

2. Responsiveness to RTA needs by *Texas Reading First* leadership

Overall, according to the *Reading First* partners interviewed, the partner organizations worked hard to provide the RTAs with the tools necessary to do their work during 2005-2006 and were proud of the professional development provided. Still, RTA's needs arose throughout the year, and the partners addressed them in a variety of ways.

a) Determining RTA Needs

The *Reading First* partners used various means to determine the needs of the RTAs. CARS reported learning about RTA needs by "getting out in the field with them," a practice initiated at CARS at the end of 2005. UTS Project Managers are also in the field with the RTAs as many as four days per week. Other staff members at UTS who have not traditionally spent time with the RTAs plan to visit the schools with them once or twice a month during 2006-2007. Also during 2006-2007, the Higher Education Collaborative will begin an initiative called the "*Reading First* Liaison," in which selected professors will participate in VGC professional development and visit RTAs in the field with the same purpose in mind: understanding the work of the RTAs better by knowing more about what goes on in the field.

Anecdotal information regarding RTA needs is obtained on an ongoing basis as the RTAs ask the partners for support. For example, in response to problems in the field, RTAs requested that VGC staff members visit to provide technical assistance. While on these visits, VGC staff members learned that some aspects of the *Reading First* implementation were not going as well as planned: The level of dissemination of *Reading First* knowledge from RTAs to teachers was not as great as what was assumed

by VGC. In response to this finding, VGC staff decided to initiate proactive visits during which they provided the RTAs with assistance requested in advance.

To determine whether the professional development sessions provided by the *Reading First* partners meet the needs of the RTAs, the RTAs are asked to evaluate each of the trainings they attend.

In addition, information about the RTAs' field experiences is collected, as previously discussed, using *Wireless Generation*, a personal digital assistant application developed by staff at UTS. The RTAs input data after each school visit. Program Managers typically receive weekly reports generated by the application that include by RTA, the amount of time they spent on-site, contacts on the sites, their phone and e-mail contacts, and the amount of time they spend planning the work that they do in the schools." Total time spent at the school and descriptions of any problems encountered are also included. Collecting such information has helped UTS to see, for example, the need to factor in such issues as extensive travel time for RTAs as they travel around the large state of Texas. Currently, a UTS staff member is revising the program to disaggregate travel time to and from the site from time spent at the schools as well as to include qualitative information about what RTAs do while at schools. Part of the reason for gathering this information is so that UTS and the partners can better serve the needs of the RTAs.

Finally, starting in 2006-2007, RTAs will be required to use a standard evaluation form every time they deliver professional development. The forms will be returned for scanning, and the data will be included in the performance evaluations of the RTAs. Presumably this information will help UTS and the other partners determine the professional development needs of the RTAs as a group and will further help UTS Program Managers determine the needs of individual RTAs.

b) Addressing RTA Needs

The *Reading First* partners identified and addressed other RTA needs during 2005-2006. RTA evaluations of *Reading First* partner-sponsored professional development revealed that some RTAs needed more time to digest the information presented during the trainings. In response to this, staff members at CARS started using a "reflective agenda" in which at natural break points, the reflective question would be posed: What action steps will you take as a result of this?

Also in response to RTA feedback, CARS determined that the RTAs had unforeseen questions after taking their professional development into the field. CARS staff therefore initiated a monthly follow-up webcast to their professional developments. The RTAs were able to e-mail or phone in questions prior to each webcast. The webcasts allowed these questions and concerns to be addressed.

Another problem RTAs reported was that some of the trainings they received were simply too long to take into the field practically. The RTAs may have had a two- or three-day training on a topic but would not receive equivalent time in the schools to provide similar professional development for the teachers. In response, CARS helpfully "repackaged" professional development presentations into various lengths, for example, a 45 minute presentation, an hour presentation or a half-day presentation.

During 2005-2006, anecdotal reports from UTS Project Managers revealed that a small number of RTAs were not taking their jobs as seriously as was expected. To address this issue, a fifth Project Manager was added to provide additional supervision of the RTAs. In addition, six RTAs were fired for non-performance. At the same time, UTS worked strategically to hire highly-skilled and competent replacements.

For 2006-2007, RTAs are being asked to re-focus their efforts somewhat, and the *Reading First* partners are working to ensure they have adequate training to do so. First, the RTAs are being tasked with customizing their technical assistance to the needs of particular campuses on the basis of assessment results. To prepare the RTAs for this task, the *Reading First* partners agreed to emphasize training on data usage. In addition, staff at UTS are working to get assessment data for the RTAs so that they can target campuses in need. Staff members at UTS believe that, ideally, the RTAs in the field would have benchmark data available, by school, to help them target needy campuses.

In addition, the RTAs are being asked to spend more time supporting campus and district staff members in implementing *Reading First*. Previous to 2006-2007, the primary responsibility of the RTAs was to deliver professional development. Now, the RTAs are being asked to perform more like consultants in that they will be expected to support the more specialized needs of principals and other people on campuses. Training on topics such as "how to have a difficult conversation" and other communication skills is being offered to the RTAs.

CONCLUSION

In August of 2006, Hezel Associates, LLC was charged with the evaluation of *Texas Reading First* activities, materials and providers for school year 2005-2006. To conduct this evaluation, a wide variety and volume of documents were examined and multiple interviews were conducted. From this research, a number of major findings emerged.

In May, 2005, a Manager of *Reading First* Grants and Partnerships was appointed. This Manager has provided exceptional leadership to *Reading First* and has been a strong source of support to the leadership partnership. The qualifications of all *Reading First* personnel currently at the Texas Education Agency and the other partner organizations are strong and a good fit for their respective positions and, during 2005-2006, all members of the leadership partnership communicated well with one another.

Organizations in the *Texas Reading First* leadership partnership completed most of their required deliverables for 2005-2006 on time. All professional development products developed for *Reading First* by two the leadership organizations (the Center for Academic Reading and Skills, and the Vaughn Gross Center) and evaluated for this study are of the highest quality. In addition, high quality and timely training was given by the partners to the *Reading First* Reading Technical Assistants (RTAs) and the partner organizations were responsive to their evolving needs.

For some deliverables, partners reported being hindered in specific instances in 2005-2006 by receipt of partner funding from TEA later in the year than expected, and by difficulties in obtaining student data. Partner funding issues have largely been resolved in 2006-2007, and *Texas Reading First* is working to resolve the problems with obtaining student data.

Regarding the required state-wide evaluation of student achievement data, the quality of this evaluation has been compromised by many factors, some not in the control of the evaluator. The planned longitudinal analysis covering three years of data will provide a more meaningful analysis of the impact of the program on student outcomes.

In sum, the activities, materials and providers for *Texas Reading First* during school year 2005-2006 were in their majority of the highest quality. Where problems have been noted, the Manager of *Reading First* Grants and Partnerships is already working to resolve these issues. Hezel Associate's has full confidence that full and positive resolution will be achieved.

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Appendices

Appendix A:
Tables of Partner Deliverables

Below are tables of partner deliverables as submitted by the partners. The reader will note differences among partner reports of deliverables. In particular, UTS has selected to submit partner goals. TIMES has submitted due dates and reasons for not meeting deadlines, if applicable.

Table 1. CARS' Deliverables

Activity	Due	Actual deliverable date
Provide PD on activities and management strategies for small group instruction		
1. Conduct a Training of Trainers (TOT) session on Kindergarten/First Grade Workstations: Independent Student Centers	09/05	09/05
1.1. Deliverable – CD with Power Point	09/05	09/05
1.2. Deliverable – Hard copies of all documents (as appropriate)	09/05	09/05
1.3. Deliverable – Demonstration and samples of activities (as appropriate)	09/05	09/05
1.4. Deliverable – Flexible presentation plan that outlines various training options for the TOT (e.g. 2 hour presentation, 45 minute presentation, ½ hour presentation)	09/05	09/05
1.5. Index with all materials in the TOT package	09/05	09/05
2. Conduct a TOT session on TPRI/Tejas LEE Intervention Activity Guide	10/05	10/05
2.1 Deliverable – CD with Power Point	10/05	10/05
2.2 Deliverable – Hard copies of all documents (as appropriate)	10/05	10/05
2.3 Deliverable – Demonstration and samples of activities (as appropriate)	10/05	10/05
2.4. Deliverable – Flexible presentation plan that outlines various training options for the TOT (e.g. 2 hour presentation, 45 minute presentation, ½ hour presentation)	10/05	10/05
2.5. Deliverable – Index with all materials in the TOT package	10/05	10/05
Provide PD on effective administration and use of early reading assessment data to identify Tier 2 and 3 students and to provide targeted instruction to all students		
3. Conduct a TOT session on Assessment in TRF for Special Educators	12/05	12/05
3.1. Deliverable – CD with Power Point, and other presentation documents in a flexible format that can be manipulated by the RTAs	12/05	12/05
3.2. Deliverable – Hard copies of all documents (as appropriate)	12/05	12/05
3.3. Deliverable – Demonstration and samples of activities (as appropriate)	12/05	12/05
3.4. Deliverable – Flexible presentation plan that outlines various training options for the TOT (e.g. 2 hour presentation, 45 minute presentation, ½ hour presentation)	12/05	12/05
3.5 Deliverable – Index with all materials in the TOT package	12/05	12/05
4. Conduct a TOT session on TPRI Updates on the administration, interpretation, and use of TPRI data to inform instruction	Spring 06	Spring 06
4.1. Deliverable – CD with Power Point, and other presentation documents in a flexible format that can be manipulated by the RTAs	Spring 06	Spring 06
4.2. Deliverable – Hard copies of all documents (as appropriate)	Spring 06	Spring 06
4.3. Deliverable – Demonstration and samples of activities (as	Spring 06	Spring 06

Activity	Due	Actual deliverable date
appropriate)		
4.4. Deliverable – Flexible presentation plan that outlines various training options for the TOT (e.g. 2 hour presentation, 45 minute presentation, ½ hour presentation)	Spring 06	Spring 06
4.5 Deliverable – Index with all materials in the TOT package	Spring 06	Spring 06
5. Conduct a TOT session on Progress Monitoring with TPRI Fluency Probes	Spring 06	Spring 06
5.1. Deliverable – CD with Power Point, and other presentation documents in a flexible format that can be manipulated by the RTAs	Spring 06	Spring 06
5.2. Deliverable – Hard copies of all documents (as appropriate)	Spring 06	Spring 06
5.3. Deliverable – Demonstration and samples of activities (as appropriate)	Spring 06	Spring 06
5.4. Deliverable – Flexible presentation plan that outlines various training options for the TOT (e.g. 2 hour presentation, 45 minute presentation, ½ hour presentation)	Spring 06	Spring 06
5.5 Deliverable – Index with all materials in the TOT package	Spring 06	Spring 06
Provide PD on the identification and implementation of empirically validated curricula in the classroom and on the identification of the weaknesses in the adopted core reading program		
6. Conduct a TOT session on Small Group Critical Elements Analysis (CEA)	10/05	10/05
6.1. Deliverable – CD with Power Point, and other presentation documents in a flexible format that can be manipulated by the RTAs	10/05	10/05
6.2. Deliverable – Hard copies of all documents (as appropriate)	10/05	10/05
6.3. Deliverable – Demonstration and samples of activities (as appropriate)	10/05	10/05
6.4. Deliverable – Flexible presentation plan that outlines various training options for the TOT (e.g. 2 hour presentation, 45 minute presentation, ½ hour presentation)	10/05	10/05
6.5 Deliverable – Index with all materials in the TOT package	10/05	
7. Conduct a TOT session on effective Core Program Delivery Modules for all English/Spanish Core Reading Programs	Spring 06	Spring 06
7.1. Deliverable – CD with Power Point, and other presentation documents in a flexible format that can be manipulated by the RTAs	Spring 06	Spring 06
7.2. Deliverable – Hard copies of all documents (as appropriate)	Spring 06	Spring 06
7.3. Deliverable – Demonstration and samples of activities (as appropriate)	Spring 06	Spring 06
7.4. Deliverable – Flexible presentation plan that outlines various training options for the TOT (e.g. 2 hour presentation, 45 minute presentation, ½ hour presentation)	Spring 06	Spring 06
7.5 Deliverable – Index with all materials in the TOT package	Spring 06	Spring 06
8. Conduct an Informational session on Guided Reading Considerations and Modifications	12/06	12/06
8.1. Deliverable – Power Point Presentation	12/06	12/06
9. Create a Video Module – Coaching: A Closer Look	Spring 06	Spring 06
9.1. Deliverable – 713 DVDs/ one for every LCC	Spring 06	Spring 06
9.2. Deliverable – CD with Power Point, and other presentation documents in a flexible format that can be manipulated by the RTAs	Spring 06	Spring 06
9.3. Deliverable – Hard copies of all documents (as appropriate)	Spring 06	Spring 06

Activity	Due	Actual deliverable date
9.4 Deliverable – Demonstration and samples of activities (as appropriate)	Spring 06	Spring 06
9.5 Deliverable – Flexible presentation plan that outlines various training options for the TOT (e.g. 2 hour presentation, 45 minute presentation, ½ hour presentation)	Spring 06	Spring 06
9.6 Deliverable – Index with all materials in the TOT package	Spring 06	Spring 06
10. Assist Partner in conducting the 2006 Summer Coaching Institute	Summer 06	Summer 06
10.1. Deliverable – TOT Package	Summer 06	Summer 06
11. Assist Partners in conducting the 2006 Leadership Conference	Summer 06	Summer 06
11.1. Deliverable – All conference materials	Summer 06	Summer 06

Table 2.   TIMES' Deliverables

Activity	Due Date	If due date not met, why not? Reasons given by TIMES
Planning, Administration and Evaluation: Overall Evaluation of the Reading First Initiative		
1.1 Identification of all instruments being used in comparison schools at each grade level	On August 26, all forms were due to TIMES from Campuses. **COMPLETED***	All data submitted by submission due date were received and included in the database. TIMES continued to receive data submitted late throughout the fall. These have also been included in the database.
1.2 Hiring/scheduling/ coordinating and training classroom implementation observation staff	**COMPLETED**	
1.3 TIMES receipt of BOY assessment data	On November 4, all BOY data due to TIMES from Campuses and vendors. **COMPLETED***	All data submitted by submission due date was received and included in our database. We continued to receive data after November 4. All late data has been included in database.
1.4 Online Surveys for Teachers, LCC, Principals and RTAs	Scheduled for completion August-September/ Completed November-December **COMPLETED***	Completed later in the fall due to lack of funding.
1.5 Collection of comparison sample contact information, scheduling of data collection efforts	October – December **COMPLETED**	

Activity	Due Date	If due date not met, why not? Reasons given by TIMES
1.6 Collection of rostering information from funded and non-funded campuses	**COMPLETED***	
1.7 Collection of beginning of year classroom observation data in Comparison schools	October-December **COMPLETED**	
1.8 TIMES receipt of MOY assessment data from campuses and vendors	Originally, all MOY data was due in January, but this deadline was changed to February 10 **COMPLETED***	TIMES began receiving some data in January, but the MOY assessment was not completed at most campuses until the end of January. The February submission date gave time for campuses and vendors to collect data to be sent to TIMES. All data submitted by submission due date was received and included in the database. We continued to receive date submitted late throughout the year and are still receiving outstanding data from vendors through the fall of 2006. All late data have been included in the database.
1.9 Spring 2006 assessment for all comparison campuses	**COMPLETED**	
1.10 Collection of end-of-year professional development training data in comparison schools	May – June **COMPLETED**	
1.11 Online Surveys for Teachers, LCC, Principals, and RTAs	April – May **COMPLETED***	All surveys completed by due date were received and included in database.
1.12 Collection of parent surveys at all selected funded and control schools	April-May **COMPLETED***	Collection began in April and forms were received back from campuses through the end of June.
1.13 Completion of TPRI/TJL data collection from all Evaluation/Comparison; all EOY collected from campuses and vendors	June 9 **COMPLETED***	We began receiving some data in May, but most campuses did not complete the TPRI/TJL until the end of June. All data submitted by submission due date was received and included in the database. We continued to receive date submitted late throughout the year and are still receiving outstanding data from vendors through the fall of 2006. All data received has been included in the database.
1.14 Collection of 2006 TAKS data from TEA for all Evaluation/Comparison schools	**COMPLETED***	Administration 1 and 2 received in July. TEA sent 3rd administration to TIMES in late August. Some campuses were missing and have since been re-requested.
1.15 TIMES receipt of EOY assessment data and reports and outcome data from campuses and vendors	June 9 **COMPLETED***	Began receiving some data in June. Majority of data received by the end of August. All received data was included in student assessment database. We are continuing to collect late data during the

Activity	Due Date	If due date not met, why not? Reasons given by TIMES
		fall of 2006.
1.16 Inclusion of Comparison school observation data in analyses for full evaluation report and preparation of reports for TEA and USDOE	October 30 **COMPLETED**	
1.17 Analysis of 2005-2006 evaluation data, and preparation of reports for TEA and USDOE	October 30 **COMPLETED**	
Technical Assistance: Reading Assessments		
2.1 Collection of implementation monitoring data at all funded and control campuses	December – January **COMPLETED**	
2.2 Work with RF Partner Centers to Develop Technical Assistance Materials for Tejas LEE, including tools for grouping students, mapping test results to curriculum materials, and tools to assist in administering, interpreting, and reporting results of Tejas LEE	January – August **COMPLETED**	
2.3 Collection of all training materials targeting assessment that are being used by UT-CARS, cont. - VGCRLA and UT-System in 2005-2006	October – August **COMPLETED**	
2.4 Consulting with UT-CARS, VGCRLA and UT-System on the development and refinement of professional development content	**COMPLETED**	
2.5 Work with CARS, VGCRLA and UT-System to develop new guidelines on assessment use as necessary	**COMPLETED**	
2.6 Provide written and verbal technical assistance to schools, CARS, VGCRLA, and TXRF RTAs on assessment use as needed	October – August **COMPLETED**	
2.7 Provide training to Texas service centers, RF Partner Centers, and RTAs on appropriate use, interpretation, and reporting of Tejas LEE, including training in the use of resource materials	October – August **COMPLETED**	

Activity	Due Date	If due date not met, why not? Reasons given by TIMES
2.8 Review feedback from training sessions and modify and update training, as necessary, to meet the needs of Texas teachers and schools, and the RF Partners who are working to assist them	October – August **COMPLETED**	
2.9 Provide assessment summary reports to RF Partners and LEAs at the conclusion of each assessment cycle (BOY, MOY, EOY)	October – August **COMPLETED***	
2.10 Develop summary of technical assistance activities and guidelines for assessment use for incorporation into TXRF Evaluation report	October – August **ONGOING**	To be included in Year 3 Report
2.11 Assist TEA in updating the SEDL database with information collected from Campus Information Forms and Implementation Monitoring Visits	October-August **COMPLETED**	
2.12 Collection of implementation monitoring data at all funded and control campuses	April – May **COMPLETED**	
Professional Development Activities		
3.1 Updating information on assessment instruments being used in TXRF funded schools at each grade level	August 26 all forms were due to TIMES from Campuses. **COMPLETED***	All data submitted by submission due date were received and included in the database. TIMES continued to receive date submitted late throughout the fall of 2006. These data have also been included in the database.
3.2 Hiring/scheduling/ coordinating and training classroom implementation observation staff	August-September **COMPLETED**	
3.3 Identification of TXRF Cycle 3 Evaluation Sample, collection of Sample contact information, scheduling of data collection efforts with schools	October -December **COMPLETED**	
3.4 Train site coordinators in on-line data collection procedures	October – December **COMPLETED**	
3.5 Collection of pre-professional development training data on Cycle 1, Cycle 2 and Cycle 3 TXRF Evaluation Samples	October – December **COMPLETED**	

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Activity	Due Date	If due date not met, why not? Reasons given by TIMES
3.6 Collection of all training materials being used by UT-CARS, VGCRLA and UT-System during 2005-2006	October – August **COMPLETED**	
3.7 Update all professional development evaluation surveys, implementation observation protocols, and feedback measures as necessary	October – August **COMPLETED**	
3.8 Coordinate collection of training session survey data with UT-CARS, VGCRLA and UT-System	October – August **COMPLETED**	
3.9 Collection of all training feedback survey data; surveys will roll out at the beginning of each type of professional development training and will follow the schedules outlined by CARS, VGCRLA and UT-System	October – August **COMPLETED**	Partner decision not to have surveys collect training-specific knowledge as the information was not available in time to create forms. A further Partner decision was made to make training specific-knowledge testing the responsibility of the individuals providing training, if the trainers so desired.
3.10 Collection of end of year professional development training data on Cycle 1, Cycle 2 and Cycle 3 TXRF Evaluation Samples	October – August **COMPLETED**	Partner decision not to have surveys collect training-specific knowledge as the information was not available in time to create forms. A further Partner decision was made to make training specific-knowledge testing the responsibility of the individuals providing training, if the trainers so desired.
3.11 Data analyses and report writing (to go to RF Partners) on all trainings and implementation observations from August 2005 to May 2006	May – June **COMPLETED**	
3.12 Inclusion of data and analyses of current year professional development activities in full evaluation report, and preparation of reports on Professional Development for TEA and USDOE	July-September; new due date was October 30 **COMPLETED**	
LEA Reading First Funds: Student Assessments		
4.1 Orders for all outcome assessments processed for all funded LEAs.	December **COMPLETED**	

Activity	Due Date	If due date not met, why not? Reasons given by TIMES
4.2 TIMES receipt of Spring assessment data and reports from test publishers.	June; completed in August **COMPLETED***	Data not received until June and throughout July and August. Last data received on August 15. Reports generated throughout August and final reports generated on Sept 2 for Superintendent Summit.
Non-Reading First Funded Activities		
5.1 TIMES will send TEA the detailed lists of the contents of each box submitted that are attached to the packing slip as stated in the Call for Early Reading Instruments posted in the Texas Register December 30, 2005.	December; completed April 17 **COMPLETED***	Due to the small response to the first posting by TEA, TEA reposted in January then sent out a listserv message. The publisher submission date was extended by TEA until March 27. The deadline was then also moved to provide TIMES the time needed to complete inventories.
5.2 Conduct reviews of submitted Early Reading Assessments	April – June **COMPLETED***	Due to the extended deadline by TEA for publishers' submissions, the TIMES deadline was moved forward by 6 weeks.
5.3 Submission of final report written by TIMES documenting its review and recommendations of early Reading Assessments for consideration by the Commissioner. TEA will publish and/or distribute the Commissioner's List and/or direct TIMES to do so via distribution to the Reading First Partners and RTAs.	June 20 **COMPLETED***	TIMES deadline moved forward because of extended deadline by TEA for publishers' submissions.

Completed* = completed but later than original due date

Table 3. UTS Deliverables

	Goals
A.	Success of TRF is contingent upon implementing a robust PD program that provides funded LEAs with focused and specific support to meet their district and campus reading improvement goals. UT System provides overall leadership among RTAs and their professional development. This year all decisions will be based on data for planning and deployment of PD. Changes this year: * From 65 to 66 RTAs * 1 new PM * 1 contracted data person to work/train sites/RTAs on using data effectively to drive instruction Measurement of infrastructure effectiveness: Lower Project Manager to RTA ratio to improve internal communication processes and provide more consistent oversight for RTA PD deployment efforts to funded LEAs. Evidence of success will be demonstrated through monthly PLOG reports. For contracted data services, evidence of success will be demonstrated through established consultant reports.
B.	Major responsibilities of RTAs for 05/06: assist districts/campuses in building capacity to sustain training delivered thus far, customize training based on the LEA's K-3 student achievement data, and build capacity in LEAs to sustain reading improvement efforts beyond grant period. Measurement of RTA effectiveness: Based on LEA student achievement results, focused deployment of required professional development to district administrators and Local Campus Coaches. Evidence of success will be demonstrated through data collected in the UT System PLOG platform.
C.	Resource Management: In an attempt to maximize use of grant funds, UT System utilizes the following: * PM to RTA ratio and a RTA to campus ratio * State contracts for purchasing and travel * Program imposed restrictions on travel reimbursements * Multi-level review/approval process for all purchases requests * Use of established UT System departments/offices for internal functions which are not funded by grant Measurement of effectiveness: Decrease in number of centralized RTA training days, increased use of alternative methods for PD deployment to RTAS (webcast, teleconferencing, web-based conferencing opportunities, etc.), and increased time spent in direct service to funded LEAs.
D.	UT System will work collaboratively with CARS and VGCRLA to ensure the appropriate and efficient dissemination of training materials in conjunction with the implementation of a program of PD. Measurement of effectiveness: Decreased number of centralized RTA training days, established critical training sessions based on LACIR model, increased use of alternative methods for PD deployment to RTAS (webcast, teleconferencing, web-based conferencing opportunities, etc.), and increased time spent in direct service to funded LEAs.

E.	UT System will oversee and manage PDA-based activity log to document PD support in order to track progress of PD activities and identify related needs. Measurement of LOG effectiveness: Monthly PLOG reports prepared for TEA to disseminate to appropriate TRFI Partners.
F.	LEA and campus student achievement data from outcome measures, BOY, MOY, EOY diagnostic assessment results, the TEA Risk Analysis Tool, and UT System LOG information regarding ongoing challenges will be used to monitor and inform professional development efforts. UT System project staff, including RTAs will work onsite in funded LEAs to improve student achievement outcomes. When data management reporting issues are revealed, consultative PD will be utilized to assist LEAs in complying with TRF and TEA reporting requirements: Measurement of effectiveness:
G.	Major PD Activities among Partners – General topics include Core Programs CEAs, Workstations, Assessment Updates, ELL Strategies, Intervention Instruction, Implementation Checks, Special Education Issues, and Leadership Training.
1.	Provide expanded and enhanced *Texas Reading First* training to Local Campus Coaches
	1.1. Deliverable: Monthly PLOG reports
	1.2. Deliverable: Session Evaluations
2.	Provide data-driven leadership training to superintendents, district Reading First Directors, Curriculum Coordinators and campus administrators
	2.1. Deliverable: Monthly PLOG reports
	2.2. Deliverable: Session Evaluations
3.	Provide updated training on proper use of classroom assessment tools for screening, diagnostic, progress monitoring and outcome assessment measures
	3.1. Deliverable: Monthly PLOG reports
	3.2. Deliverable: Session Evaluations
4.	Provide expanded and enhanced training and support at the campus level for 3-Tier Reading Model implementation
	4.1. Deliverable: Monthly PLOG reports
	4.2. Deliverable: Session Evaluations
5.	Provide updated training on how to use TRFI assessment data to establish instructional priorities and flexibly group students for 3-Tier instruction
	5.1. Deliverable: Monthly PLOG reports
	5.2. Deliverable: Session Evaluations
6.	Provide training on how to use TRFI assessment data to establish district and campus professional development and budgetary priorities
	6.1. Deliverable: Monthly PLOG reports
	6.2. Deliverable: Session Evaluations
7.	Provide ongoing training and support for the effective implementation of SBRR core reading programs
	7.1. Deliverable: Monthly PLOG reports
	7.2. Deliverable: Session Evaluations

Table 4. VGC's Deliverables

Activity	Due	Actual deliverable date	If date not met, why not? Responses provided by VGC
1.1 Fall 2005 PD Calendar	9/20/05	completed	
1.2 Spring 2006 Calendar	11/15/05	12/13/05 completed*	November partners' meeting dedicated to identifying LEAs needing targeted TA.
1.3 Summer 2006 Calendar	3/15/06	completed	
2.1 Using the K Grade OTRA Study Guide (webcast)	11/11/05	12/16/05 completed*	
2.2 Using the Second Grade OTRA Study Guide (webcast)	2/05	4/26/06 completed*	Per UT System request, this was conducted as a face-to-face PD.
2.3 Using the Third Grade OTRA Study Guide (webcast)	3/05	4/26/06 completed*	Per UT System request, this was conducted as a face-to-face PD.
3. Conduct monthly web cast sessions. Agendas to vary; Produce a DVD for each as archive. 9/23/05, 10/28/05, 11/11/05,12/16/05, 1/06-8/06 TBD	9/05-8/06	9/05-9/06 completed*	11/11/05 webcast was cancelled by partners at 9/19/05 meeting.
4.1 Conduct professional development on Elementary CD (webcast)	12/16/05	2/8/06 completed*	12/16 webcast needed for K OTRA Study Guide training.
4.2 Disseminate SERP Elementary CDs to RF schools via RTAs	1/06	6/06 completed*	
4.3 Disseminate SERP Elementary CDs through VGC Online Store (monthly reports)	12/06	10/06 completed	CDs were placed in the store but were immediately withdrawn when VGC was notified that the applications on them had been updated and must be used. CDs were reworked and available in store 10-16-06.
4.4 Provide online expert trainers and tech support to SERP Elementary Users (monthly user reports after 2/06)	12/06	6/06-present ongoing	Monthly user reports are not being done.
4.5 Conduct professional development on SERP Secondary CD (webcast)	1/06	Not completed (Need to add to webcast calendar 06-07)	CDs had to be reversioned; not available until 10/06.
4.6 Disseminate SERP Secondary CDs to RF schools via RTAs	1/06	Not completed (Can be done after webcast in 06-07)	CDs had to be reversioned; not available until 10/06.
4.7 Disseminate SERP Secondary CDs through VGC Online Store (monthly reports)	1/06	10/06 completed*	
4.8 Provide online expert trainers and tech support to SERP Secondary users	1/06	10/06 completed*	

Activity	Due	Actual deliverable date	If date not met, why not? Responses provided by VGC
5. Introduce the online resource taxonomer and provide updates as new resources are added to it (webcasts)	12/16/05 3/05, 6/05	4/26/06 10/13/06 **completed***	
6. Conduct PD session on incorporating 5 Components into Learning Centers	Spring 06	1/24/06 **completed**	
7. Conduct PD session on components across OTRAs (one component across grade levels)	TBD	TBD (maybe 2/20/07) **ongoing**	Taxonomer not completed. Activity added to 06-07 grant as a pilot mini-course.
8. Conduct PD sessions (including regional) for RTAs serving bilingual schools	TBD	6/06-present **ongoing**	
8.1 ESL Strategies (Maria Elena Arguelles)	12/8/05	12/8/05 **completed**	
8.2 3-Tier Decision-making: Bilingual MOY (NOT SPELLED OUT IN GRANT)	Spring	**Not completed**	Partners did not include in RTA 05-06 PD calendar.
8.3 Provide session on New Light on Literacy (Spanish intervention)	Spring	1/24/06 **completed**	
9. Build capacity by partnering with UTS Project Managers and RTAs in delivering RF PD to LEAs (as needed/regionally)	Ongoing	6/06-present **ongoing**	
10. Develop and conduct RTA/ESC PD sessions using simulated school data to inform 3-Tier model implementation	No info given	8/31/05 2/24/06 **completed**	
10.1 Conduct RTA/ESC PD session on using MOY school data to inform 3-Tier model implementation	Spring	2/24/06 **completed**	
10.2 Conduct RTA/ESC follow-up session on technical assistance questions for 3-Tier Model (Part 2) (NOT SPELLED OUT IN GRANT)	Spring	**Not completed**	Partners did not include in RTA 05-06 PD calendar. VG began providing more direct technical assistance related to the 3-Tier Model to schools through RTA TA requests instead.
10.3 Conduct RTA/ESC PD session on simulated school data using DIBELS to monitor student progress	Spring	2/24/06 **completed**	
10.4 Assist CARS by conducting PD session on administering/using DIBELS	TBD	7/12-7/13/06 7/27/06 8/26/06 **completed**	CARS did not need our assistance for 7/12-13/06 PD, but one VG team member did help in one district with PD sessions on 7/27& 8/26
11. Develop and conduct RTA/ESC PD using simulated MOY data to help principals and coaches monitor progress toward school goals.	Spring 06	3/8/06 **completed**	
12. Produce a video that captures schools successfully implementing	Summer 06	8/06 **completed**	

Activity	Due	Actual deliverable date	If date not met, why not? Responses provided by VGC
elements of the 3-Tier Reading Model			
12.1 Identify schools using data and RTA "nominations" 11/05 Scout out schools Identify video producer 12/05 Collaborate with producer 12/05-3/06 Provide drafts for TEA approval (4/06) Feature video at summer TRF conference (6/06)		1/06-8/06 **completed***	
13. Develop and conduct RTA/ESC PD session using simulated school data to design a PD plan for 3-Tier Model implementation	Spring	3/8/06 **completed**	
14. Develop and provide information to the RTAs on adapting instruction to meet the needs of at-risk students	No info given	11/17/05 **completed**	Also, SERP CDs provide this information.
15. Develop and provide PD on effective intervention instruction: targeting students' needs, features of effective intervention instruction, identifying and modeling effective strategies.	No info given	11/17/05 **completed**	
15.1 Conduct RTA/ESC session "How to Differentiate Instruction for Intervention"	11/17/05	1/24/06 **completed***	
16. Develop and provide PD on a tool to help RTAs monitor the performance of their campuses in implementing their grant (note wording change)	No info given	Meetings to discuss and develop CIR: 7/15/05, 8/23/05, 9/19/05, 9/20/05 **completed**	
16.1 Collaborate with Partners to develop Campus Implementation Review	10/1/05	10/13/05 **completed***	
16.2 Provide PD to RTAs on using the CIR	Fall 05	10/14/05 **completed**	
16.3 Provide PD to RTAs on conducting an implementation check (Partner TA visit info)	11/18/05	**Not completed**	Was originally scheduled for 11/18/05. Cancelled with UT System input, due to lack of sufficient and appropriate data.
17. Collaborate with TRFI Partners to evaluate school administrator's data from the 2006 Fall TRFI Superintendents' Summit and identify campus administrators' needs.	No info given	9/28/06 **completed**	
17.1 Compare Summit's administrator needs survey to LEA RF performance data	10/20/06	**Not completed**	Summit needs survey not conducted; TEA decision
17.2 Make list of administrator needs and share with Partners to inform PD development	11/1/05	**Not completed**	Summit needs survey not conducted; TEA decision
18. Develop information and tools that target administrators' needs and facilitate	Ongoing	6/06-present **ongoing**	

Activity	Due	Actual deliverable date	If date not met, why not? Responses provided by VGC
RTAs assistance to campus administrators.			
18.1 Develop "next steps" process for Campus Planning Tool and CIR	12/05	Done by UTS	CIR revised – but done by UT-S. UT-S took this information and worked with RTAs without VG involvement.
19. Present information to administrators at professional development venues	Ongoing	6/06-present **ongoing**	
20. Presentation on setting campus goals to improve reading performance, TEPSA Other presentations as requested, including Midwinter	11/04	11/05-present **ongoing**	
20.1 Collaborate with TRF Partners to begin identifying campuses that are making substantial progress in achieving goals.	No info given	2/06 **completed**	Part of process for selecting schools to film for 3-Tier video. Will continue in 06-07 through TRF newsletter
21. Assist Partners in conducting 2006 Leadership Conference		9/06 **completed**	
21.1 Secure facilities	11/05	5/06 **completed***	
21.2 Work with conference committee to develop process chart	11/05	3/06 **completed***	
21.3 Report progress to Partners at monthly meetings	11/05-8/06	2/06-8/06 **completed**	
22. Provide PD sessions to LEAs in regional meetings to meet identified needs		6/06-present **ongoing**	
22.1 Conduct sessions for LEAs related to RF needs, as identified by RTAs and or TEA	Ongoing as needed	6/06-present **ongoing**	
23. Disseminate K-3 OTRA CDs free to Texas teachers, including K-12 Special educators via the texasreading.org online store	Ongoing	9/05-present **ongoing**	
23.1 Monthly reports from order fulfillment company	Ongoing	9/05-present **ongoing**	
24. Provide technology support to users, award online CEUs to teachers for OTRA completion, and provide progress monitoring information to principals and teachers	Ongoing	9/05-present **ongoing**	
24.1 Technology help requests and status logs	Ongoing	9/05-present **ongoing**	
24.2 Reports of OTRA CEUs earned	Monthly	9/05-present **ongoing**	
25. Provide online trainers to answer participant questions within 48 hours	Ongoing	9/05-present **ongoing**	
25.1 Answers archived on server for each grade of OTRA	Ongoing	9/05-present **ongoing**	
25.2 OTRA trainers' discussion in online	Ongoing	1/06-present	

Activity	Due	Actual deliverable date	If date not met, why not? Responses provided by VGC
collaborative community (CLOC)		**ongoing**	
26. Using as much existing KLS technology as feasible, convert the CDs to an Internet based delivery system.		9/05-present **ongoing**	Order was reversed: KOTRA & 3OTRA done; 1OTRA & 2OTRA underway. Target date is 11/1/06 for Searchlight pilot of knowledge learning system.
26.1 1-OTRA	6/06	**Not completed**	
26.2 2-OTRA	8/31/06	**Not completed**	
26.3 3-OTRA and K-OTRA (as many additional OTRAs as possible)	TBD	9/06 **completed**	
27. Launch dissemination of the SERP CDs to teachers, including K-12 special educators, and make them available to non-RF campuses via the VGC Online Store.	No info given	6/06 **completed**	Elementary CDs disseminated; Secondary CDs completed but had to be reversioned due to licensing requirement – will be in store 11/06 for dissemination.
27.1 Provide CDs to RTAs for delivery to Elementary SERP CDs to elementary RF campuses	12/05	10/06 **completed***	
27.2 Disseminate to non-RF campuses via Online Store	12/05 & ongoing	10/06 **Completed***	
27.3 Mailout Secondary SERP CDs to secondary RF campuses	2/06	**Not completed**	Dissemination delayed due to changes needed at release date (application licensing update)
27.4 Disseminate to non-RF campuses via Online Store	2/06 and ongoing	**Not completed**	
27.5 Hire and provide training to online experts	11/05	6/06-present **ongoing**	
28. Provide technology support to users, award CEUs to teachers for completion, and provide progress monitoring information to principals & teachers.	No info given	6/06-present **ongoing**	
28.1 Technology help request status logs	Ongoing	6/06-present **ongoing**	
28.2 Monthly reports of CEUs awarded	Ongoing	6/06-present **ongoing**	
29. Provide online experts to answer participant questions within 48 hours	No info given	6/06-present **ongoing**	
29.1 Answers to participant questions on server for participant viewing	Ongoing	6/06-present **ongoing**	
29.2 Online experts' discussions in online collaborative community	Ongoing	6/06-present **ongoing**	
30. Develop a web site like that developed for the 4-OTRA CD for the legacy CDs	8/31/06	9/30/06 10/13/06 11/1/06 **completed***	Beta version shown in webcast. Pilot to be done 11/1/06-1/31/07.
31. Complete and test online taxonomer tool	8/31/06	Begins 11/1/06 **Not completed**	
31.1 Complete usability testing on prototype	10/10/05	Begins 11/1/06 **Not completed**	
31.2 Develop specifications for	11/01/05	Begins 11/1/06	

Activity	Due	Actual deliverable date	If date not met, why not? Responses provided by VGC
taxonomer improvement		**Not completed**	
31.3 Secure resources for taxonomer development (contract)	12/01/05	3/06 **completed***	
31.4 Continue disaggregating and classifying OTRA and VGC materials	Ongoing	9/05-present **ongoing**	
32. Add 1-OTRA and 2-OTRA information to assist educators in searching VGC online reading resources and in compiling topic-related PD or instructional packets. (CHANGE "1OTRA & 2OTRA" TO "KOTRA & 3OTRA")	No info given	Begun **ongoing**	
32.1Conduct acceptance testing on Taxonomer with KOTRA & 3OTRA	2/06	9/15/06 **Completed***	
32.2 Revise taxonomer to fix "bugs"	3/01/06	3/06-present **Not completed**	
32.3 Conduct acceptance testing on release version	3/15/06	**Not completed**	
32.4 Release taxonomer version with 1-OTRA	4/1/06	**Not completed**	
32.5 Add 2-OTRA	6/1/06	Begun **Not completed**	
32.6 Conduct acceptance testing and develop report	6/15/06	**Not completed**	
32.7 Revise taxonomer	7/3/06	3/06-present **Not completed**	Started with KOTRA & 3OTRA. By 11/1/06, added 1 & 2OTRAs so pilot of Searchlight learning component has all 4 OTRAs.
32.8Conduct acceptance testing on version with 2-OTRA and develop report	7/21/06	**Not completed**	
32.9 Release taxonomer version with 2-OTRA	8/15/06	**Not completed**	
33. Update website to include links to Texas RF websites and resources	Ongoing	9/05-present **ongoing**	
34. Improve, maintain and facilitate CLOC as a virtual technical assistance tool for RTAs to communicate with each other and with other Statewide Coordinators in password-protected communities.		9/05-present **ongoing**	
34.1 Reorganize data in CLOC to make website more user friendly and easier to locate information, including posting FAQs in Library	10/15/05	10/1/05 **completed***	
34.2 Conduct an RTA focus group to identify ways that CLOC can be improved to promote knowledge sharing and develop report	10/30/05	11/16/05 **completed***	
34.3 Develop features to meet user needs, including notification feature	Ongoing	12/1/05 **ongoing**	
34.4 Facilitate the RTA community and respond to specific technical assistance requests	Ongoing	9/05-present **ongoing**	
34.5 Provide training to Partners in posting documents to CLOC	10/30/05	10/14/05 **completed**	

Activity	Due	Actual deliverable date	If date not met, why not? Responses provided by VGC
35. Support RTAs who elect to facilitate CLOC communities for school leaders from their assigned campuses.	No info given	11/05-present **ongoing**	
35.1 Conduct facilitator training for volunteer RTAs	1/06	11/05 **completed**	
35.2 Monitor RTAs' communities and answer requests for assistance (Statewide Coordinator responses in CLOC)	Ongoing	11/05-present **ongoing**	
35.2 Recognize RTAs who facilitate communities and promote them as mentors for new RTA volunteers to build capacity within UTS	5/06 & Ongoing	11/05-present **ongoing**	Mentoring process has not been formalized.
36. Evaluate the use of CLOC in providing technical assistance information	No info given	9/05-present **ongoing**	
36.1 Identify the type of collaborations/information shared on CLOC	7/31/06	7/06 **completed**	
36.2 Report on CLOC usage, including enhancements to website	Monthly	7/06 **completed**	
36.2 Develop report describing effective strategies for promoting information sharing	7/31/06	7/06 **completed**	
36.3 Develop report of OTRA Experts' uses of CLOC to inform responses to OTRA participant requests	7/31/06	7/06 **completed**	
37. Prepare teachers in all the essential components of reading instruction that include information on instructional materials, programs, strategies, and approaches based on SBRR, including early intervention and reading remediation materials, programs and approaches.	No info given	9/05-present **ongoing**	
37.1.b. Seminar on ELL with RTAs and ESCs (Tim Shanahanm Diane August)	2/23	5/23-24 **completed***	
37.1.c. Seminar on Research in Reading (Marilyn Adams, Joe Torgenson	5/23-5/24	**completed**	
37.2 Maintain a list of SBRR materials and resources disseminated to HEC faculty members for incorporation into their courses	Updated each seminar	10/05-5/06 **completed**	
37.3 Provide HEC participants with an online collaborative (HEC-Online) to promote sharing ideas for including SBRR in preservice courses	Ongoing	9/05-present **ongoing**	
37.4 Provide instruction on the use of screening, diagnostic, and classroom-based instructional reading assessments and other scientifically based procedures that effectively identify students who may be at risk for reading failure or who are having difficulty reading. Breakout	5/23-24/05	5/23-24/05 **completed**	

Activity	Due	Actual deliverable date	If date not met, why not? Responses provided by VGC
sessions on Tejas LEE and TPRI at May seminar			
38. Ensure that professional development is provided by eligible PD providers/Maintain vita for presenters	Ongoing	9/05-present **ongoing**	
39. Review revised syllabi for HEC members courses to identify integration of SBRR information	Ongoing	9/05-present **ongoing**	
39.1 Develop a report describing changes made in members' syllabi	8/31/06	**No info given**	
39.2 Maintain file of revised syllabi submitted (requirement for participation in HEC)	Ongoing	9/05-present **ongoing**	
39.3 Maintain file of institutions invited to participate, and contact information for 05-06 participants.	Ongoing	9/05-present **ongoing**	
40. Follow up reviews of syllabi with recommendations to ensure that institutions offer courses that meet the highest standards	No info given	9/05-present **ongoing**	
40.1 Provide recommendations to faculty to enhance the integrations of SBRR into reading courses	Ongoing	9/05-present **ongoing**	
40.2 Provide opportunities for faculty to collaborate in syllabi development through HEC Online and at seminars. Post syllabi in HEC Online.	Ongoing	9/05-present **ongoing**	
40.3 Prepare a report on the results of syllabi reviews and submit to the Partners	No info given	10/06 **completed**	
42. Review K-3 state certification and report recommendations to Partners	No info given	7/06 **completed**	

Completed* = completed but later than original due date

Appendix B:
Interview Protocol

Interviewer: _____

Interviewee: _____   **Position:** _____

Date:_____

Top Line Notes: *(Use this space to record key words, impressions, phrases, insights, etc.,* *immediately after the interview):* _____

_____.

(In addition, space is provided throughout the protocol for jotting down rough notes *during the interview.)*

EVALUATON OF READING FIRST ACTIVITIES, MATERIALS, AND PROVIDERS IN TEXAS

HEZEL ASSOCIATES, LLC

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW GUIDELINE

I. INTRODUCTION OF INTERVIEWER

- Review the nature and objectives of the study: That our evaluation is being conducted under a TEA requirement; we are seeking to provide information back to the program developers and managers that will help improve the program. *(Reminder: Our focus is on evaluating the activities that were accomplished during 3 key academic years: Mid-2003-04, 2004-2005 and 2005-2006).*

- Explain that we seek the interviewee's insights about the program: its management and its effectiveness.

- Point out that in our reports we do not attribute comments or statements about the program to any one individual.

- Ask permission to tape record the interview. Point out that the tape recorder is way to assist our note taking. If at any time the interviewee would like to make a comment off the record, you will turn off the tape recorder and then turn it back on to resume the interview.

II. RESPONDENT INTRODUCTION AND POSITION WITHIN ORGANIZATION

- Can you briefly tell me what your position is at your organization? How long have you held this position?

- How would you describe your main responsibilities?

- How do your responsibilities relate to the stated goals of *Texas Reading First*?

III. EVALUATING THE EXTENT TO WHICH ALL COMPONENTS OF THE *TEXAS READING FIRST* INITIATIVE HAVE BEEN IMPLEMENTED AND IN WHAT TIME FRAME

- Let's discuss the deliverables that your organization is responsible for. The broad categories are as follows:

- Which of the deliverable goals *have* been met?

- Were these deliverable goals consistent with the original timeline?

  o If not, why not?

- Now let's talk about the deliverables goals that *have not* been met.

- Which specific deliverable goals *have not* been met at all?
  o Why *haven't* these goals been met?

  o What would you say are the main contributing factors?

IV. ASSESSING TEXAS FIRST'S LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNICATION AMONG THESE LEADERS
- Can you tell me about how your organization functions?
  o Structure for meetings?

  o Conferences?

  o Management style? (*e.g., top down: hierarchical, or collaborative*)

  o Built-in accountability?
    - What structures are in place to help members of your organization meet their goals?

- What are some of the obstacles that members of your organization sometimes have to overcome to achieve their goals?

- What's your analysis of the strengths of your organization's leadership team?

- In your opinion, in what ways is the overall organization leadership lacking?

- Can you talk about the communication between your organization and *Texas Reading First* Leadership?

  o Does the *Texas Reading First* Leadership Team invite your participation? Does it invite your input?

  o If so, how (*e.g.*, meetings, events)?

  o If not, why not?

- Do you feel that your organization has influence on the *Texas Reading First* Partnership?
  o If so, in what way?

  o If not, why not?

V. IMPROVING TEXAS FIRST'S LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNICATION
- Moving forward, how could the *Texas Reading First* Partnership strengthen its *leadership*?

- How could the Partnership strengthen its *communication*?

- How do you think your organization could play a leadership role in implementing these improvements?

VI. FINAL THOUGHTS
- Is there anything else about the deliverable goals assigned to your organization, and which have and haven't been met in a timely way that you'd like to tell me?

- Is there anything else about *Texas Reading First* Partnership that would give me a better sense of what's going on?

- Of everything we've discussed, what is the most important message about your organization's deliverables and the *Texas Reading First* Partnership that you'd like me to include in my report?

Thank you very much for your time.

Appendix C:
Evaluation of *Texas Reading First* Professional Development Materials

Agency that Produced the Materials _____

Title of Materials _____

General Type of Materials _____

Target Audience _____

Criterion I. Evaluating the extent to which the professional development materials support instruction in the five components of Scientifically Based Reading Research (SBRR)

Phonemic awareness (PA)[4]

Are teachers provided with adequate support in the following aspects of phonemic awareness:

- teaching children to manipulate phonemes by using the letters of the alphabet?

_____ *0, not at all*   _____ *1, somewhat*   _____ *2, a fair amount* _____ *3, excellent*

- focusing on only one or two types of phoneme manipulation, rather than several types?

_____ *0, not at all*   _____ *1, somewhat*   _____ *2, a fair amount* _____ *3, excellent*

- being explicit in teaching children about the connection between PA skills and reading?

_____ *0, not at all*   _____ *1, somewhat*   _____ *2, a fair amount* _____ *3, excellent*

---

[4] According to the National Reading Panel ("Reports of the Subgroups," 2000), "Phonemes are the smallest units constituting spoken language. English consists of about 41 phonemes. . . Phonemic awareness refers to the ability to focus on and manipulate phonemes in spoken words," p. 2-1.

Phonics

Are teachers provided with adequate support in teaching the following aspects of phonics:

- explicit and systematic instruction in how to relate lettes and sounds, how to break spoken words into sounds, and how to blend sounds to form words?

_____ *0, not at all*   _____ *1, somewhat*   _____ *2, a fair amount*   _____ *3, excellent*

- helping students understand why they are learning the relationships between letters and sounds?

_____ *0, not at all*   _____ *1, somewhat*   _____ *2, a fair amount*   _____ *3, excellent*

- helping students apply their knowledge of phonics as they read words, sentences, and text?

_____ *0, not at all*   _____ *1, somewhat*   _____ *2, a fair amount*   _____ *3, excellent*

- helping students apply what tey learn about sounds and letters to their own writing?

_____ *0, not at all*   _____ *1, somewhat*   _____ *2, a fair amount*   _____ *3, excellent*

- Adapting phonics instruction to the needs of individual students, based on assessment?

_____ *0, not at all*   _____ *1, somewhat*   _____ *2, a fair amount*   _____ *3, excellent*

- including instruction in alphabetic knowledge, phonemic awareness, vocabulary development, and the reading of text?

_____ *0, not at all*   _____ *1, somewhat*   _____ *2, a fair amount*   _____ *3, excellent*

Fluency

Are teachers provided with adequate support in the following aspects of fluency:

- having students engage in repeated and monitored oral reading?

_____ *0, not at all*   _____ *1, somewhat*   _____ *2, a fair amount*   _____ *3, excellent*

- modeling fluent reading?
____ 0, not at all ____ 1, somewhat ____ 2, a fair amount ____ 3, excellent

Vocabulary Development

Are teachers provided with adequate support in the following aspects of vocabulary development:

- helping students learn unfamiliar words indirectly (such as by reading books)?

____ 0, not at all ____ 1, somewhat ____ 2, a fair amount ____ 3, excellent

- providing direct instruction for some vocabulary words?

____ 0, not at all ____ 1, somewhat ____ 2, a fair amount ____ 3, excellent

- providing extended and active engagement with vocabulary?

____ 0, not at all ____ 1, somewhat ____ 2, a fair amount ____ 3, excellent

- fostering word consciousness among students?

____ 0, not at all ____ 1, somewhat ____ 2, a fair amount ____ 3, excellent

Text Comprehension

Are teachers provided with adequate support in the following aspects of text comprehension:

- teaching students how to use specific comprehension strategies, such as: monitoring comprehension; using graphic and semantic organizers; recognizing story structure; question-answer strategies; and summarizing?

____ 0, not at all ____ 1, somewhat ____ 2, a fair amount ____ 3, excellent

- using the following techniques to teach the strategies mentioned above: direct explanation; modeling; guided practice; and application?

____ 0, not at all ____ 1, somewhat ____ 2, a fair amount ____ 3, excellent

- showing students how to be flexible and use a combination of strategies?

_____ *0, not at all* _____ *1, somewhat* _____ *2, a fair amount* _____ *3, excellent*

- using cooperative learning strategies to help students understand texts?

_____ *0, not at all* _____ *1, somewhat* _____ *2, a fair amount* _____ *3, excellent*

Total instructional design points for Section I: _____

Criterion II. Evaluating the extent to which the professional development materials support teachers in applying the 3-Tier Reading Model to differentiate instruction[5] and provide intervention support for students struggling with reading concepts[6]

A. Tier 1: Effective core instruction, assessment and progress monitoring for all students.

Are teachers provided with adequate support in the following aspects of Tier 1:

- how to select and administer assessment tools that are designed to screen children when they first begin to struggle in reading?

_____ 0, not at all _____ 1, somewhat _____ 2, a fair amount _____ 3, excellent

- how to select and administer assessment tools that are designed to diagnose students' strengths and weaknesses as readers?

_____ *0, not at all* _____ *1, somewhat* _____ *2, a fair amount* _____ *3, excellent*

- how to interpret the results of assessment data derived from various instruments?

_____ *0, not at all* _____ *1, somewhat* _____ *2, a fair amount* _____ *3, excellent*

---

[5] Differentiated instruction, according to expert Carol Ann Tomlinson is ". . . teaching with student variance in mind. It means starting where the kids are rather than adopting a standardized approach to teaching that seems to presume that all learners of a given age or grade are essentially alike. Differentiated instruction is 'responsive teaching' rather than 'one-size-fits-all' teaching" (in Cooper, J. M. (Ed.) (2003). *Classroom teaching skills.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin, p. 151).

[6] An overview of the **3-Tier Reading Model** is as follows (State of *Texas Reading First* Application, 2003, pp. 66-67):

> **Tier 1:** Effective core instruction, assessment and progress monitoring for all students.
> **Tier 2:** Supplemental instruction and intervention.
> **Tier 3:** Tertiary intervention for 5-7 percent of student who continue to struggle with reading concepts following supplemental instruction.

- how to integrate the findings from individual student assessments into daily instruction?

_____ *0, not at all* _____ *1, somewhat* _____ *2, a fair amount* _____ *3, excellent*

- how to monitor the progress of struggling readers?

_____ *0, not at all* _____ *1, somewhat* _____ *2, a fair amount* _____ *3, excellent*

- how to ensure that students maintain an adequate rate of growth in all the critical skills and knowledge necessary for grade level performance in reading?

_____ *0, not at all* _____ *1, somewhat* _____ *2, a fair amount* _____ *3, excellent*

B. Tier 2: Supplemental instruction and intervention

Are teachers provided with adequate support in the following aspects of Tier 3:

- how to provide additional instructional time for intervention support within class, during, before and after school hours for students identified as at risk for reading difficulties (as indicated by early assessment data)?

_____ *0, not at all* _____ *1, somewhat* _____ *2, a fair amount* _____ *3, excellent*

- how to coordinate a student's intervention with core reading instruction, without replacing the core program?

_____ *0, not at all* _____ *1, somewhat* _____ *2, a fair amount* _____ *3, excellent*

- how to design and implement interventions that provide children with explicit and systematic support, taught by highly trained educators within a small group setting (3-5 students)?

_____ *0, not at all* _____ *1, somewhat* _____ *2, a fair amount* _____ *3, excellent*

C. Tier 3: Tertiary Intervention: Intensive support

Are teachers provided with adequate support in the following aspects of Tier 3:

- how to ensure that children with individual needs are provided with intensive intervention support on an on-going basis?

_____ *0, not at all* _____ *1, somewhat* _____ *2, a fair amount* _____ *3, excellent*

- how to ensure that students involved in such programs are making adequate progress?

_____ *0, not at all* _____ *1, somewhat* _____ *2, a fair amount* _____ *3, excellent*

- how to adapt curriculum for students who are experiencing extreme difficulty in learning to read?

_____ *0, not at all* _____ *1, somewhat* _____ *2, a fair amount* _____ *3, excellent*

Total instructional design points for Section II: _____

III. Criterion 3: Evaluating the extent to which the professional development materials support teachers in explicit and systematic reading instruction.

Techniques presented for explicit instruction (Examples)

	(1) Example of Explicit Instruction Support	Location (e.g., page)

Techniques presented for systematic instruction (Examples)

	(a) Example of Systematic Instruction Support	Location (e.g., page)

Total instructional design points for Section III: _____

IV. To what extent do the materials support the professional development process, from an administrative standpoint?

How effectively do the materials:

- encourage collaboration and the sharing of knowledge among teachers, coaches, principals, on-site coordinators, and so on?

  _____ *0, not at all*   _____ *1, somewhat*   _____ *2, a fair amount*   _____ *3, excellent*

- Support coaches and administrators in assuming a leadership role?

  _____ *0, not at all*   _____ *1, somewhat*   _____ *2, a fair amount*   _____ *3, excellent*

- deomonstrate how to teach, and then discuss, a model lesson?

  _____ *0, not at all*   _____ *1, somewhat*   _____ *2, a fair amount*   _____ *3, excellent*

- demonstrate how to use test data to inform reading instruction?

  _____ *0, not at all*   _____ *1, somewhat*   _____ *2, a fair amount*   _____ *3, excellent*

- conduct ongoing, focused meetings with teachers and principals to discss how best to meet specific *Texas Reading First* objectives?

  _____ *0, not at all*   _____ *1, somewhat*   _____ *2, a fair amount*   _____ *3, excellent*

- refer teachers to additional resources that promote further professional growth and renewal?

  _____ *0, not at all*   _____ *1, somewhat*   _____ *2, a fair amount*   _____ *3, excellent*

- address the needs of educators at various stages of their careers––from novice to veteran teacher?

  _____ *0, not at all*   _____ *1, somewhat*   _____ *2, a fair amount*   _____ *3, excellent*

Total instructional design points for Section IV: _____

V. Evaluating the *quality* of professional development materials for reading instruction.

A. Clarity of Presentation

To what extent do the materials:

- describe an idea or strategy clearly and explicitly?

  _____ *0, not at all* _____ *1, somewhat* _____ *2, a fair amount* _____ *3, excellent*

- offer concrete instructional examples?

  _____ *0, not at all* _____ *1, somewhat* _____ *2, a fair amount* _____ *3, excellent*

- provide additional teaching tips or strategies?

  _____ *0, not at all* _____ *1, somewhat* _____ *2, a fair amount* _____ *3, excellent*

- lend themselves to straightforward and efficient (*i.e.,* next day) implementation?

  _____ *0, not at all* _____ *1, somewhat* _____ *2, a fair amount* _____ *3, excellent*

B. Pedagogy

To what extent do the materials:

- integrate sound pedagogy consistently and coherently throughout the prouct?

  _____ *0, not at all* _____ *1, somewhat* _____ *2, a fair amount* _____ *3, excellent*

- align with *Texas Reading First* instructional goals, specifically *differentiated instruction*?

  _____ *0, not at all* _____ *1, somewhat* _____ *2, a fair amount* _____ *3, excellent*

- align with *Texas Reading First* instructional goals, specifically *systematic, direct instruction*?

  _____ *0, not at all* _____ *1, somewhat* _____ *2, a fair amount* _____ *3, excellent*

- help teachers rise to the challenge of teaching every child in their classroom to read?

_____ *0, not at all* _____ *1, somewhat* _____ *2, a fair amount* _____ *3, excellent*

C. **Aesthetics/appeal of the materials**

- How professionally produced are the materials?

_____ *0, not at all* _____ *1, somewhat* _____ *2, a fair amount* _____ *3, excellent*

- How would you rate the production values, or the look and feel of the professional development products?

_____ *0, not at all* _____ *1, somewhat* _____ *2, a fair amount* _____ *3, excellent*

Total instructional design points for Section V: _____