

**We could teach every
child to read**

Richard L Allington, PhD
University of Tennessee

- Much evidence indicates that some teachers literally teach every child to read while others are far less successful.
- Stuhlman & Pianta (2009) report that approximately 20% of 1st grade teachers offer high-quality reading lessons and 20% offer very low quality lessons.

Classroom lessons matter...

- Gates (2011) notes that the difference between the most and least effective teachers in a building are twice as large the the difference between the most and least effective schools in the nation.
- He suggests parents search for effective teachers rather than effective schools.

- Scanlon, et al (2010) and McGill-Franzen, et al (1999;2010) both report 30-60 hours of professional development is powerful in changing reading lessons and reading outcomes.
- Scanlon, et al found PD more effective than expert 1 to 1 tutoring at addressing the needs of struggling readers.
- McGill-Franzen found PD developed K teachers who brought students to grade level reading skills in high-poverty schools.

Teachers matter...

- Improving the quality of early literacy instruction is the best way to improve student outcomes.
- And early student reading outcomes must be improved!

- 90% of children reading on grade level by the end of 3rd grade graduate high school on time.
- This regardless of the SES, neighborhood, or parents of the child.
- Children from low-income families who are not reading on grade level by the end of 3rd grade are 13 times as likely to drop out as those children who do read on grade level.

Annie Casey Foundation...

- Schools have, then, 4 years (K-3) to teach all children to read proficiently.
- 4 years is actually a lot of time, same number of years as high school (grades 9-12).
- What do schools need to do then?

- Schools need to begin attributing difficulties with learning to read to the school's failure to provide extensive, intensive, and expert reading instruction.
- Not all children find learning to read an easy task and it is these children who need the extensive, intensive, and expert reading instruction.

- *“There is now considerable evidence, from recent intervention studies, that reading difficulties in most beginning readers may not be caused by biologically based cognitive deficits intrinsic to the child, but may in fact be related to the opportunities provided for children learning to read.” p. 378*

Vellutino, F. R., & Fletcher, J. M. (2005). Developmental dyslexia. In M. S. C. Hulme (Ed.), *The science of reading: A handbook* (pp 362-378). Malden, MA: Blackwell

- Beliefs about vulnerable pupils may limit our efforts.
- It is primarily children from low-income homes who struggle in school.
- Not all of them but far too many.
- We provide those kids with reading lessons very different from the reading lessons our kids get (e.g., Valli & Chambliss, 2010).

The problem may be us...

- More oral reading, less silent reading.
- More worksheets, less composition.
- More low level questions, less literate conversation.
- More hard reading, less high-success reading.
- More skills work, less reading activity.
- More testing, less reading activity.

What vulnerable children are more likely to get...

- What kids do during reading lessons predicts what kids learn during reading lessons.
- Let's try a simple but research-based design.

Redesigning reading lessons...

- **Will read something they have selected.**
- **Will read something accurately.**
- **Will read something they understand.**
- **Will write something that is meaningful.**
- **Will talk to peers about their reading and writing.**
- **Will listen to a fluent adult read aloud.**

Every day every child...

- Eliminate all those activities that research indicates are largely a waste of time.
 - Worksheets
 - Test prep
 - Low-level interrogations
 - Isolated skills lessons and tests
 - Unit tests

Where to find the time...

- In too many classrooms such activities make up the bulk of work done during the school day.
- Eliminating wasteful activities provides hours each day for productive activities.
- It also provides a source for funding what we need to change (\$200,000-\$250,000 every year)

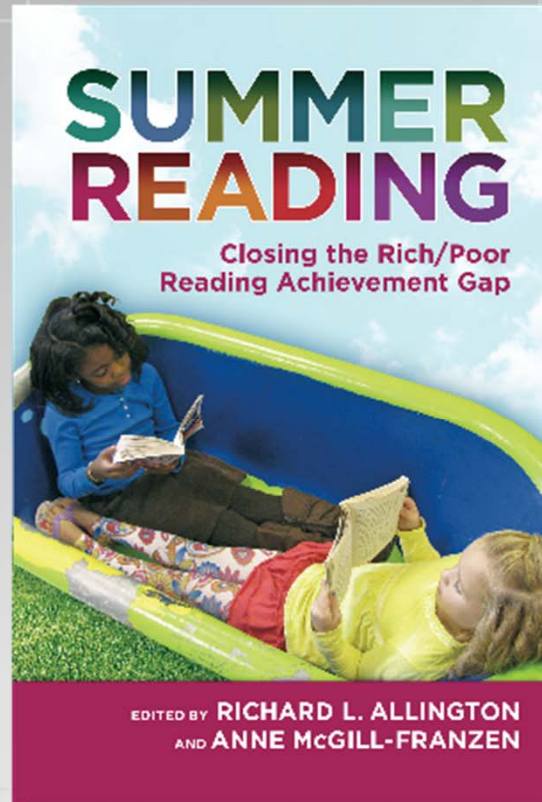
It's not that we don't have the money...

- It is the design of lessons where changes need to be made.
- It is teacher beliefs that need to change.
- It is the nature of the work that needs improvement.
- WE can make these changes, kids cannot.

It isn't time that is the problem...

- 80% of the three-year reading achievement gap at 9th grade comes from summer reading loss (Alexander, et al, 2009)
- Small annual losses accumulate over time.
- Giving vulnerable children books they can read and want to read was effective as summer school (and a lot less expensive).

Don't neglect the summer...



ingtonPostcard.indd 1

10/4/12 4:16 PM

Our new book...

- **Are we up to it?**
- **The students are waiting.**

We could, but will we?