

Preface

When the first edition of *Teach Them ALL to Read* was published in 2002, many educators were skeptical about the likelihood of teaching all, or even the majority, of their students to read on grade level, particularly if those students were at risk of reading failure. However, the grade-level achievement of students at risk in hundreds of schools around the country is dramatic evidence that it can be done. Educators in these schools have shifted their paradigm from waiting for students to bloom, like Leo, the winsome Leo Lionni (1971) character, to preventing reading failure—catching students *before* they fall through the cracks.

Dawn DeTurk, a Reading First coach, describes the change in her school:

As we look back, we realize that we did not have the knowledge we have today regarding what works for kids. We were doing a hodgepodge of things. We've become more scientific about using our data. Our expectations for students have changed dramatically. We never pushed them before. Now we know that they can and should be reading, often even in preschool. We've immersed teachers in professional development, teaching them how to teach all students to read. And we've followed up with mentoring, coaching, and instructional support. We've become students of time management in our classrooms. We did a lot of fluff before, and now we realize how precious time is. We used to give every student the same amount of instructional time and refer those students who didn't make it to remedial reading or special education programs. Now we tailor the time and the interventions to students' needs. We are constantly monitoring students' progress and we do everything we can to prevent reading failure.

More than 25 years ago, effective schools guru Ron Edmonds (1981) said,

We can, whenever and wherever we choose, successfully teach all students whose schooling is of interest to us. We already know more than we need to do that. Whether or not we do it must finally depend on how we feel about the fact that we haven't done it so far. (p. 53)

Although Edmonds (1981) was writing in a broad sense about student achievement, his statement could well be paraphrased to describe the current status of reading instruction: *We can, whenever and wherever we choose, successfully teach all children to read. We already know more than we need to do that. Whether or not we do it must finally depend on how we feel about the fact that we haven't so far.*

Today, more educators than ever before are feeling empowered to teach all children to read. They are working collaboratively to build collective efficacy and

instructional capacity in their schools. They have moved beyond personal feelings of doubt to become energized by the success of their students.

■ THE STORY BEHIND THIS BOOK

This edition of *Teach Them ALL to Read* is informed by my personal experiences as a parent, grandparent, teacher, media specialist, principal, assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction, and more than 10 years of consulting and writing. When I wrote *The Principal's Guide to Raising Reading Achievement* (1998) based on raising reading achievement in my formerly low-performing school, I also developed a workshop for the National Association of Elementary School Principals. There were always several middle and high school principals in the workshops looking for ways to increase literacy levels in their schools. To respond to their unique needs, I developed a training program for secondary educators and wrote *Raising Reading Achievement in Middle and High Schools: Five Simple-to-Follow Strategies* (2001), now in its second edition (2007).

Although my workshops were primarily intended for principals, many administrators brought teams of teachers or invited me to present to their staff members. I discovered that educators knew very little about scientifically based reading research instruction and realized that a book was needed to communicate that information in an accessible way. The first edition of *Teach Them ALL to Read: Catching the Kids Who Fall Through the Cracks* (2002) was written to meet that need.

As I continued to work with educators, I discovered that even when K–3 teachers taught their students how to read, there were frequently declines in comprehension scores beginning in fourth grade. My review of the cognitive research resulted in a book about how to teach comprehension: *The Seven Strategies of Highly Effective Readers: Using Cognitive Research to Boost K–8 Achievement* (2004). I then became aware of the huge numbers of struggling readers in secondary content classes who were unable to read their textbooks. To help teachers make content standards more accessible to students, I wrote *40 Ways to Support Struggling Readers in Content Classrooms, Grades 6–12* (2007).

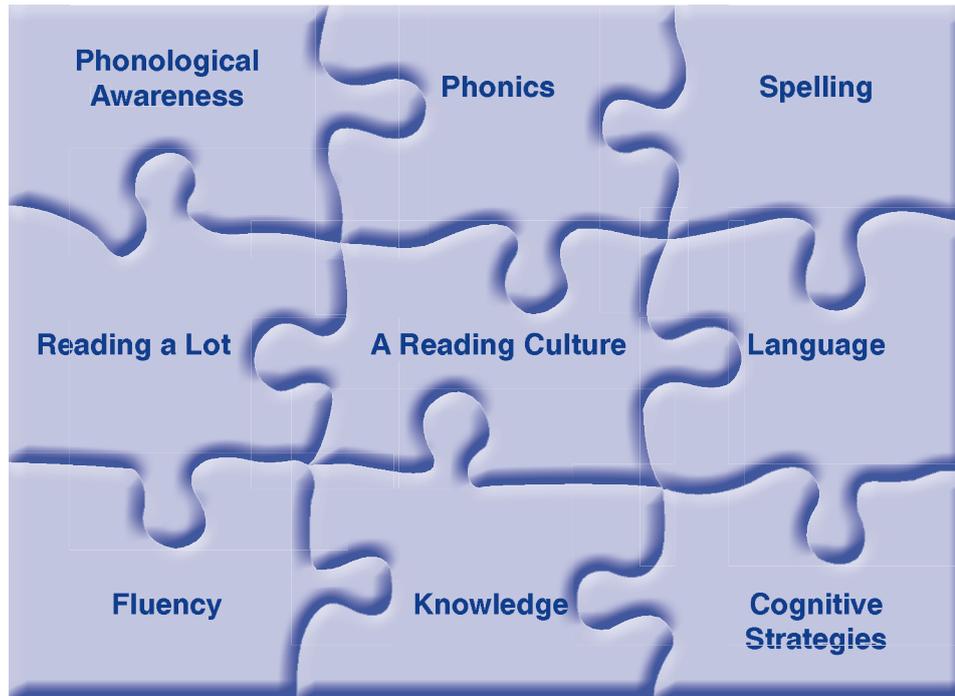
During 2006–2007, I worked with a group of creative educators whose practical experiences in the classroom are featured in a 10-book series of K–8 classroom books: *The Reading Puzzle Series* (2008). This experience motivated me to take a fresh look at the reading puzzle and resulted in the puzzle changes I will shortly describe.

Last, I undertook a two-year study of the effective schools research and examined schools that were beating their demographic odds in terms of student achievement. My efforts culminated in the writing of *Ten Traits of Highly Effective Schools: Raising the Achievement Bar for All Students* (2008). This endeavor revealed several critical attributes of effective schools that are particularly germane to the topic of building a school culture in which literacy can flourish. This new edition of *Teach Them ALL to Read* summarizes the most up-to-date research on reading, instructional practices, and leadership to help educators teach them all to read.

■ HOW THE READING PUZZLE HAS CHANGED

In the first edition, I constructed the jigsaw puzzle shown in Figure P.1. Many teachers and principals have attested to its power in keeping them focused on the essentials as they designed and executed their reading programs.

Figure P.1 The Original Reading Puzzle



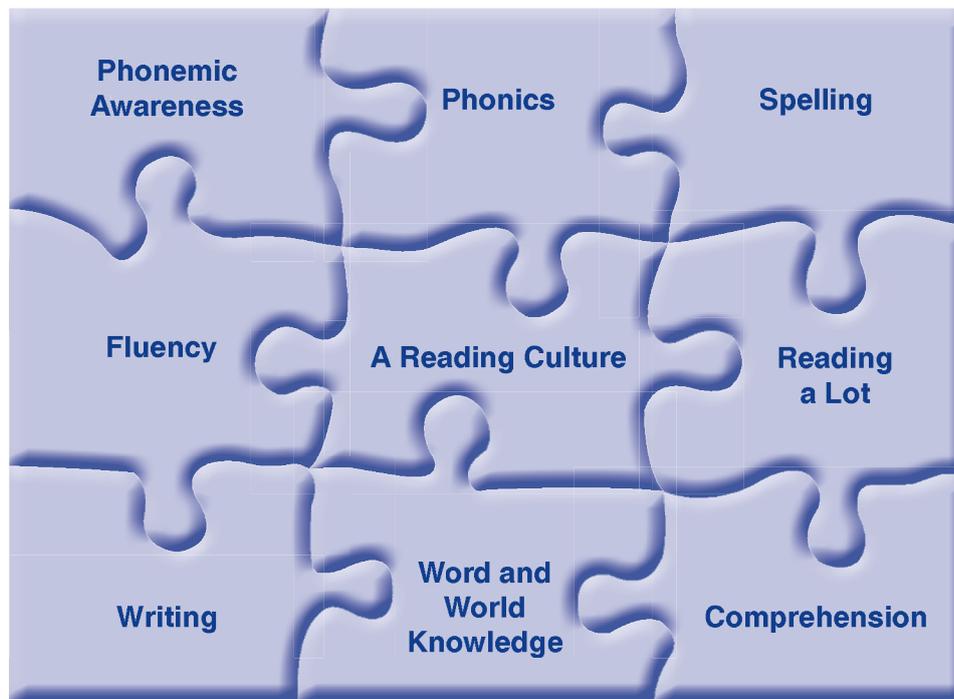
Source: McEwan (2002a).

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Based on the input of practitioners and a review of the current research, I have made some changes to the original puzzle to make it more relevant. The revised puzzle is shown in Figure P.2.

- *Phonological Awareness* has been changed to *Phonemic Awareness* since it is the term most commonly used by educators. Phonological awareness is an umbrella term that encompasses a broader range of abilities, of which phonemic awareness is the most critical.
- The *Language* and *Knowledge* pieces have been combined to become *Word and World Knowledge*.
- *Cognitive Strategies* has been renamed *Comprehension*. Although cognitive strategies are essential to comprehension and are the focus of that chapter, the term *comprehension* is more familiar to educators.
- A brand-new piece, *Writing*, has been added to the Reading Puzzle. There is a growing body of research describing the power of writing before, during, and after reading as an essential aid to comprehension and retention. Furthermore, most state assessments require that students write in response to a passage they have read as a part of the reading test.

Figure P.2 The New Reading Puzzle



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■ THE MEANING OF ALL

In this edition of *Teach Them ALL to Read*, the meaning of the word *all* in the title requires clarification. Some practitioners are so overwhelmed by the goal of getting all students on grade level in reading by a particular point in time, they are reluctant to even commit to what is arguably a more achievable goal, getting 95% of their students on grade level (Fielding, Kerr, & Rosier, 2007). A solid body of experimental intervention research over the past 20 years has shown that while “intensive preventive instruction can bring the average word-reading skills of children at risk for reading disabilities solidly into the average range, even under the best-known instructional conditions, a substantial proportion of children (6%) will remain relatively impaired in word-level reading skills at the conclusion of the intervention” (Torgesen, 2002, p. 96). Since educators cannot know with certainty which students will have serious reading difficulties until they actually intervene, they have a moral imperative to teach all children using research-based instructional materials and methods while firmly believing that they all will learn to read. That is what “teaching them all to read” means in the context of this book. It means believing that all children will learn to read, until there are solid data documenting an individual child’s failure to respond to well-conceived and research-based intensive interventions delivered in the general education classroom. This approach to teaching reading is similar to the measures

taken by the best physicians when they are confronted with seriously ill patients. Dedicated doctors do not give up until they have exhausted all of their treatment options. We can do no less with our students at risk.

THE GOALS OF THIS BOOK ■

The goals of this revised edition are as follows:

- To update educators on the most current reading research so they can make informed decisions regarding curriculum and instruction
- To illustrate with vignettes and examples precisely how educators in successful schools are teaching them all to read
- To reiterate with more fervor than ever that learning to read is only the first step; students must also develop fluency, acquire cognitive strategies, and continue to read a lot to deepen their word and world knowledge
- To focus attention on the variables at work in classrooms, schools, and districts that can be altered to create a reading culture and raise the achievement bar for all students
- To close the gap that exists between what is known about the most effective ways to teach all students to read and what educators are currently doing in their classrooms and schools
- To motivate educators to accept the leadership challenge and teach them all to read

WHO THIS BOOK IS FOR ■

This book has been written for a broad audience. There are few, if any, educators today who are not deeply concerned with literacy levels in their schools. From superintendents to the most recently hired teachers, everyone is feeling the relentless pressure of high-stakes tests. This book is intended for the following groups:

- Teachers of all kinds and levels—regular classroom, special education, bilingual education, and remedial reading—who are looking for ways to teach all students to read
- Literacy coaches, interventionists, speech pathologists, and other educational specialists who are designing interventions and teaching individual students and intervention groups in the regular classroom
- Special education, bilingual, and Title I administrators who need assistance in evaluating current programs and providing a district framework for response to intervention (RTI) and early intervening services (EIS)
- Superintendents and principals who need up-to-date and research-based information about how to raise reading achievement in their districts and schools
- Central office administrators (e.g., those responsible for school improvement, grant writing, professional development, and curriculum selection) who need a quick-reading and practical compendium of the best practices in reading instruction
- College and university professors who are looking for a beginning-level, comprehensive book on reading instruction

■ OVERVIEW OF THE CONTENTS

The Introduction enumerates and describes in detail three simple-to-follow steps for teaching them all to read: (1) Consider the various paradigms that impact reading achievement and be prepared to challenge and ultimately change any beliefs that are interfering with all students learning to read, (2) become knowledgeable about the research supporting the role that each piece of the reading puzzle plays in facilitating high literacy levels, and (3) tap into all available leadership and instructional expertise to raise literacy levels in your classroom, school, or district.

Chapters 1 through 8 provide in-depth discussions of each of the curricular puzzle pieces organized in the following format:

- A brief definition and description of the puzzle piece and how students acquire it
- The role the piece plays in skilled reading
- The scientific evidence related to the piece
- Effective instructional practices and strategies
- Sample instructional activities
- Suggestions for structuring classroom interventions

Knowledge about how to teach all students to read is essential, but only to a point. The goal of this book is to help readers make the transition from knowing to doing—implementing research-based instruction and curricula in their classrooms, schools, and districts. Chapter 9 is the “doing” chapter. It features the story of how one district has created a reading culture. You hear the story from teachers, coaches, principals, central office administrators, and parents.

■ PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS

In the first edition of *Teach Them ALL to Read*, I reviewed a number of reading programs. The task at that time was simple: there were few programs and interventions that met the stringent research-based criteria. Today, there are dozens of programs and interventions designed for a variety of purposes and students. Specific reading programs are only cited as they occur in the various examples and case studies throughout the book.

■ SPECIAL FEATURES OF THE SECOND EDITION

The following special features can be found throughout the book:

- Brief vignettes that illustrate important ideas and concepts
- Links in the form of visual sticky notes that connect to other discussions in the book, relevant Web sites, or bits of information to help you understand and remember the text
- Graphic organizers that summarize key concepts and vocabulary
- The most up-to-date research on what works in reading instruction