Introduction

We will never teach all of our students to read if we do not teach our students who have the greatest difficulties to read. Another way to say this is: Getting to 100% requires going through the bottom 20%.

—Torgesen (2006, p. 1)

Teaching all students to read is both easier *and* more difficult now than it was when the first edition of *Teach Them ALL to Read* was published in 2002. First— the good news. The goal of literacy for all students as spelled out in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB, 2002) is more readily attainable for two reasons. First, there is a growing body of experimental research to show educators what works. Second, there are large numbers of successful schools against which to benchmark leadership behaviors, curricula, instructional approaches, grouping practices, and assessments (American Institutes for Research, 2008; Chenoweth, 2007; Denton, Foorman, & Mathes, 2003; Fielding et al., 2007; Foorman & Moats, 2004; Luce & Thompson, 2005; McEwan, 2009; Waits et al., 2006).

However, there is also discouraging news—the achievement target keeps moving. Bringing students to reading and writing proficiency today is more challenging than it was even one or two years ago as expectations continue to rise on high-stakes tests. If you and your colleagues want to bring all of your students to grade-level reading proficiency, *regardless of their readiness to read* when they enroll in your school, take these steps: (1) Consider the paradigms that impact reading achievement and be prepared to challenge and ultimately change the prevailing beliefs that are interfering with all students learning to read; (2) become knowledgeable about research regarding the role that each of the reading puzzle pieces play in facilitating high literacy levels; and (3) utilize your unique leadership and instructional expertise to raise literacy levels in your classroom, school, or district.

We begin with Step 1 by examining how certain assumptions, beliefs, and values (paradigms) affect your success in teaching all of your students to read.

SHIFT YOUR PARADIGMS ■

The solution to the problem [of teaching them all to read] is like most significant breakthroughs in human history—it comes from a fundamental break with old ways of thinking.

—Covey (2004, p. 10)

Philosopher Thomas Kuhn (1962/1996) coined the phrase *paradigm shift* to describe a fundamental change in approach or underlying assumptions that govern the behavior

of an individual, group, organization, or society. Teaching all students to read requires that everyone involved in the process (teachers, administrators, support personnel, school board members, students, and parents) share a basic set of assumptions and then act in accordance with those assumptions. For some educators, that means making a break with the past and starting over with a new set of beliefs and behaviors. Figure I.1 enumerates the eight paradigms that impact reading achievement, and just ahead we'll examine each one in detail.

Figure I.1   Paradigms That Impact Reading Achievement

Problem or Issue	Former Way of Thinking	New Way of Thinking
1. Determinant of students' academic destiny	Demographics	Opportunities to learn
2. Solutions for struggling readers	Wait and see	Intervention and prevention
3. How students learn to read	Reading is natural	Reading is rocket science
4. The best way to teach reading	Whole-group instruction	Whole group instruction *and* differentiation
5. Basis for selection of materials and instructional methods	Teacher autonomy	Scientifically based reading research (SBRR)
6. Accountability	Unaccountable	Accountable
7. Causes of student failure	Inalterable variables	Alterable variables
8. School culture	Competitive	Collaborative

Paradigm 1: *Demographics* Versus *Opportunities to Learn*

Reading failure is not, as once believed, the product of poor mothering, low IQ, or lack of motivation. Most scientists agree that reading is an unnatural acquired language skill that requires mastery of a written cipher or code through which speech and language are accessed. Spelling and writing require the inverse of that process and are even more demanding than reading. . . . Thus, the teacher's challenge is to defy the predictions based on incoming levels of reading ability.

—Moats (2006, p. 31)

The question of whether schools as institutions have the power to make a positive impact upon the academic achievement and future success of their students, irrespective of their demographic characteristics—such as socioeconomic levels, family characteristics, language and culture, or minority status—has been debated for

more than 40 years. In one of the first school effects studies, James Coleman and his colleagues (1966) concluded that students' demographics largely determine their academic destinies: "The inequalities imposed on children by their home, neighborhood, and peer environment are carried along to become the inequalities with which they confront adult life" (p. 325).

Although we cannot change the demographic variables of our students, we do have the power to teach them all to read by providing research-based and differentiated opportunities to learn. Only a small percentage of students (6%, according to Torgesen, 2002) will have bona fide reading difficulties when the paradigm shifts from offering excuses and placing blame to providing sufficient opportunities for all students to learn to read (Fielding et al., 2007; McEwan, 2009). The next paradigm describes the nature of these new opportunities in more detail.

Paradigm 2: *Wait and See* Versus *Intervention and Prevention*

The difficulty of playing catch up may develop into one of the most powerful arguments for investment in preventive instruction with children who are at risk for the development of reading disabilities.

—Torgesen (2002, p. 102)

The second paradigm relates to how educators respond to students who come to school at risk of reading failure. Experienced kindergarten teachers are skilled at identifying these students. The question is, Do they wait and see or intervene? The wait-and-see paradigm believes that many children are not developmentally ready for the rigors of reading and therefore need time to mature or "bloom," like *Leo, the Late Bloomer* (Lionni, 1971). The wait-and-see paradigm hypothesizes that a lack of readiness for reading instruction will eventually be remediated by maturity. The fallback position when advancing age fails to result in readiness is usually a remedial program like Reading Recovery or Title I. The fallback to the failure of remedial programs is special education, a solution that inevitably comes too late to teach them all to read (Klinger, Vaughn, Hughes, Schumm, & Elbaum, 1998; Zigmond & Baker, 1996). One anonymous contributor suggested that our efforts over the years have been akin to letting students fall off a cliff and then sending ambulances to pick them up, rather than preventing their precipitous descent in the first place.

I was a principal in the 1980s, and I still remember the kindergarten students who failed to bloom in my school. Their teacher reassured me on many occasions, "They're not ready yet." At the time, I believed her. I didn't know any better. Historically, after years of special education or remedial reading, we sent these so-called late bloomers on to middle school severely limited in what they could accomplish academically. Often there were students who seemed certain to be candidates for special education services at some later date but for whom we could offer no systematic help immediately. As each child fell through the proverbial cracks, we stood helplessly by, waiting for the school psychologist to document a discrepancy between their achievement and ability.

The prevention paradigm focuses on the early identification of reading difficulties that are immediately and prescriptively treated by intensive interventions (Scammacca, Vaughn, Roberts, Wanzek, & Torgesen, 2007; Torgesen, 2006). Ideally, if we envision a kindergarten class beginning school together and enrolling no new students, we can safely say that 94% or possibly more of those students can achieve grade-level literacy by the end of third grade (Torgesen, 2002).

Paradigm 3: *Reading Is Natural* Versus *Reading Is Rocket Science*

Programmatic research over the past 35 years has not supported the view that reading development reflects a natural process—that children learn to read as they learn to speak, through natural exposure to a literate environment.

—Lyon (1998, p. 3)

The third paradigm is related to what educators believe about the kind of instruction most children need in order to acquire grade-level literacy skills. The former version of the paradigm assumes that children learn to read naturally, the same way they learn to talk, and that teachers are meant to function as guides and facilitators to the world of reading rather than as explicit and systematic teachers of the alphabetic principle, fluency, and cognitive strategies.

The ease with which a very few children acquire reading proficiency and the effortless way in which skilled readers construct meaning and gain understanding from what they read have led some to theorize that learning to read and the teaching of reading are relatively easy things to do (Goodman, 1986, 1996; Smith, 1971). This seductive notion has been an appealing one to educators and for obvious reasons. Facilitating the development of literacy by immersing children in outstanding literature is both a loftier sounding goal and a far less demanding task than to directly and systematically teach the skills and knowledge at-risk students need in order to succeed academically. Although some children do learn to read effortlessly, the majority of students need a highly skilled and knowledgeable reading teacher.

The "reading is natural" paradigm was once widely known as *whole language.* Its chief theorists are Ken Goodman (1986, 1996) and Frank Smith (1994), while its major apologists are Fountas and Pinnell (1996), Routman (1988), and Weaver (1994). The whole-language approach to teaching reading may work in communities like Lake Wobegon where all of the children are above average.[1] Above-average students flourish in settings that are meaning focused, with less teacher-directed instruction and more opportunities for students to manage their own learning (Connor, Morrison, & Katch, 2004). However, there is a problem in many Lake Wobegon districts that is only discussed by parents of students who are reading disabled and who attend their schools: whole language doesn't work for students with serious reading disabilities. These students need explicit, systematic, scientifically based reading instruction. Stanovich (1994) summarizes it: "That direct instruction in alphabetic coding facilitates early reading acquisition is one of the most well established conclusions in all of behavioral science. . . . The idea that learning to read is just like learning to speak is accepted by no responsible linguist, psychologist, or cognitive scientist in the research community" (pp. 285–286).

Louisa Moats (1999) has said that "teaching reading is rocket science," and I submit that for many beginning readers, assembling the pieces of the reading puzzle is also akin to rocket science. Figure I.2 contrasts the instructional beliefs and practices of the *reading is natural* paradigm with the *reading is rocket science* paradigm.

Paradigm 4: *Whole-Group Instruction* Versus *Whole-Group Instruction and Differentiation*

Life on many levels would be simpler if one flavor, size, or approach worked for everyone. In the real world, however, whether it's coffee, shoes, or learning to

Figure I.2 *Reading Is Natural* Versus *Reading Is Rocket Science*

Reading Is Natural	Reading Is Rocket Science
Reading is thought to be a natural process that is acquired through a child's immersion in literature guided by an enthusiastic teacher who is sensitive to the developmental needs and readiness of each child.	Reading is a complex multilinguistic process. Reading is challenging to teach, requiring a vast repertoire of knowledge and skills and for all but a few students is a challenging skill to acquire.
Word identification is taught through memorization, picture cues, and contextual guessing using an approach called the *three cueing system*, which has no research to substantiate its effectiveness.	Word identification is taught using five different linguistic systems: phonological, orthographic, morphological, semantic, and mental orthographic images.
Phonemic awareness and phonics are taught implicitly in the context of reading literature.	Phonemic awareness and phonics are taught in an explicit, systematic, and supportive way.
Reading materials for beginning readers include predictable books, which are generally memorized and leveled trade books with uncontrolled text that is often too difficult for students to read independently. Colorful illustrations give too many picture cues and often distract struggling readers.	Reading materials for beginning readers include decodable text in which at least 95% of the words can be independently decoded based on prior instruction.
Students are encouraged to memorize whole words.	Students are taught to pay close attention to individual letters, word parts, and word patterns and to reread words multiple times until they have established mental orthographic images that can be automatically retrieved during the reading process.
Teachers frequently read aloud to students as they follow along in their own books before students have any opportunity to use their independent reading skills.	Students orally read independently so teachers can closely monitor their developing abilities to identify words automatically and accurately.
Teachers rarely teach skills to mastery, believing that students will eventually catch on to reading.	Teachers, especially those teaching intervention groups for struggling readers, teach phonemic awareness and phonics to mastery.
Most of the reading materials for students have colorful illustrations, removing the need for students to visualize as they read, an important skill to develop in anticipation of moving to chapter books.	Pictures are sometimes included in small, decodable books, but they are simple line drawings. Students are encouraged to focus on identifying the words and making mental pictures to illustrate what they are reading.

read—no one flavor, size, or approach meets everyone's needs. The notion that one teacher can teach all students to read in a whole group without also providing differentiated opportunities to learn is a paradigm that does not work. Individual students or small groups need different amounts of time, kinds of teaching, and curricula. Teaching to the whole class is undeniably an important part of every school day, but there are periods of the reading block where instruction must be skillfully differentiated to meet the needs of all students, whether at risk or gifted.

Skillfully managing a differentiation model in the classroom requires close attention to the following variables: (a) the amount of time spent, (b) the content of the lesson, and (c) who manages the instruction (teacher or student). Differentiation takes structure, organization, and exceptional time management, but the results are worth the effort. Classrooms in which teachers differentiate instruction based on students' documented needs produce higher overall reading growth for both the students who need more explicit teacher-managed instruction as well as for those who can work more independently and manage their own learning (Connor, Schatschneider, Fishman, & Morrison, 2008).

Paradigm 5: *Teacher Autonomy* Versus *Scientifically Based Reading Research*

Paradigm 5 speaks to the issue of teacher autonomy with regard to what is taught and how instruction is delivered. I call the kind of teacher autonomy that thrives in many schools and districts the Julie Andrews syndrome. Remember her sweetly singing, "These are a few of my favorite things," in *The Sound of Music.* At issue is the reality that teachers may or may not get results with their favorite things. The former paradigm based on the positive emotional feelings of teachers for their materials and methods is dramatically shifting to using materials, methods, and assessments that are grounded in scientifically based reading research (SBRR).

One elementary school principal explained the problem this way: "We tend to move from one fad to another in order to demonstrate that we are 'state of the art' even though most of the activities have little impact. There is big money in selling education programs, and consultants use 'research says' to sell programs that purportedly can fix just about anything. Most . . . teachers and administrators can't differentiate viable research from poor research" (Walker, 1996, p. 41).

There are two reasons for taking the time to understand and use the research: (1) "Research is the most powerful instrument to improve student achievement—if only we would try it in a serious and sustained manner" (National Educational Research and Priorities Board, 2000, p. 1) and (2) it's the law (NCLB, 2002).[2]

Those teachers who are willing to give research a chance are thrilled with the results. Charlotte,* a kindergarten teacher, believed that implementing phonemic awareness instruction along with tiered interventions in her classroom would take the fun out of teaching. Her favorite things were units, play time, creative writing, and centers; she excelled at generating fun for her students. Charlotte was an excellent teacher and in high demand by parents in the community, so it wasn't pretty when the principal told her the letter people had to be put away in the store room and she could no longer read predictable stories, such as *Brown Bear, Brown Bear* (Martin, 1967) during the reading block. They were not research based.[3]

Charlotte's paradigm shifted seismically midyear. Her reading coach reported, "Charlotte came to me with tears in her eyes and said, 'I am so sorry that I have been so difficult. I am eating crow. Will you forgive me? All of my students are reading. Not as a group, but individually. I was so afraid that I was going to be robbing them of their childhood. Then I realized that I had been robbing them of being able to read.'" Charlotte was so proud of her students and their accomplishments that she spread the word throughout the community about the power of scientifically based reading instruction and materials.

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* Pseudonym

Paradigm 6: *Unaccountable* Versus *Accountable*

Paradigm 6 is about accountability. Teaching them all to read requires a shift from feeling no responsibility for student mastery of content standards to suddenly feeling *and being* accountable for what students ultimately know and can do. It is a heavy responsibility and requires that educators have a high degree of efficacy, a belief that they can teach all students to read.

In workshops, I use an activity called Agree or Disagree. I put a slide up on the screen with the title, Agree or Disagree? Underneath the title is this statement: *Student performance is a measure of teacher performance.* Before the workshop I put up signs in each of the corners of the room: Agree, Strongly Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. I ask the participants to read the statement and then go to the corner that aligns most closely with their belief. Some individuals stand up and quickly walk to a corner. There's no doubt in their minds what they believe. Then there are the individuals who want to put a foot in a couple of corners, leaving some wiggle room for excuses or special cases. When everyone has made a decision, I ask each group to talk about why they chose the corner they did and then to select a reporter who can make the group's case to the rest of the participants. I have never been disappointed by the discussion that follows. But I have been disappointed on occasions when a crowd gathered in the Strongly Disagree corner, indicating the necessity for some major paradigm shifting.

Paradigm 7: *Inalterable Variables* Versus *Alterable Variables*

This paradigm relates to what educators believe are the causes of student failure. When I assumed the principalship of a suburban Chicago elementary school in the early 1980s, reading achievement was at an all-time low—the 20th percentile for Grades 2 through 6 on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. I was brand new to administration and knew nothing about raising test scores. All of my teaching experience had been in communities similar to humorist Garrison Keillor's (1985) imaginary Lake Wobegon, Minnesota, where all of the students are above average. At the first faculty meeting, I asked teachers why *they* thought achievement was so low. They had plenty of reasons for the dismal state of affairs: the students, the parents, and the school board, to name just a few. Too many students were on free lunch, too many parents didn't speak English, and the school board didn't particularly care. The teachers didn't mention any role they might have personally played in the test results, but their reactions were not unlike those of most teachers faced with failing students. In retrospect, my staff fit the following description to a T: "We say we believe that all children can learn, but few of us really believe it" (Delpit, 1995, p. 172). Faced with what may appear to be insurmountable obstacles, teachers often feel powerless to make a difference, and unfortunately, they frequently communicate their low expectations to each other and their students.

I decided that what my staff needed was a good dose of Benjamin Bloom. At the time, Bloom (1980) identified what he called "alterable variables" and scolded his readers for whining about things over which they had no control (e.g., characteristics of students and their parents). He urged them to focus their energies and creativity on the alterable context and environmental variables that affect student learning (Weinstein & Hume, 1998, p. 101). As we brainstormed what those variables might be at Lincoln School, the list began to grow and so did our excitement and motivation to change the way we conducted the business of schooling. During the eight years we

worked together as a team, reading achievement climbed to between the 70th and 80th percentiles. There were few individuals on the staff, in the student body, or among our parent community who were not profoundly changed by the process. We discovered that we were all capable of achieving far more than we imagined. We stopped making excuses and started changing what we had the power to change. We stopped acting defensive, argumentative, and hopeless. Instead, we became focused, optimistic, and empowered. And together, as educators, parents, and students, we celebrated our successes. Figure I.3 describes 9 categories of variables that when changed in research-based ways, have the power to increase literacy levels in your school or district.

Figure I.3   How to Alter Contextual, Instructional, and Environmental Variables to Increase Literacy Levels

Alterable Variables	How to Change the Variables
Paradigms	
Change your beliefs and behaviors.	In order to teach them all to read, educators need to change their beliefs and behaviors. In the real world where students are failing and accountability is upon us, behaviors must change in advance of beliefs. Usually, however, when teachers achieve results, their beliefs begin to change. Using research-based programs where results are likely to occur is critical to maintain credibility and facilitate paradigm change.
Goals and Focus	
Change your focus.	Rather than trying to do everything, determine the one or two most important things that must be accomplished (all students learning to read and write on grade level by third grade) and zoom in on those specific goals with a laserlike focus, refusing to become distracted by the next new thing. *"The litmus test for a good school is not its innovations but rather the solid, purposeful, enduring results it . . . obtain[s] for its students"* (Glickman, 1993, p. 50).
Change how goals are set, stated, and evaluated.	Write goals that are concise, meaningful, and measurable. Daily, weekly, and monthly progress (no matter how small) for every child will lead to solid schoolwide achievement gains (Schmoker, 1999). Beware of mistaking activity for achievement (Wooden, 1997).
Content, Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment	
Change what is taught.	Align content standards with curriculum and instruction. Teach the content standards mandated by your district, state, or both.
Change the program or curriculum.	Choose materials that are research based and have been shown to get results, particularly with students at risk of reading failure. Don't make decisions based on glitzy sales presentations, the recommendation of a consultant, or the fact that a neighboring district is doing it. Find out if the program actually works with students like yours.
Change how teachers teach.	Ensure that teachers have focused lessons, outstanding classroom management, use time wisely, keep students on task, and can differentiate their instruction to meet the needs of varied students.
Change how teachers assess.	Use daily formative assessment to determine lesson effectiveness and plan for the next lesson. Use regular benchmark assessments to form instructional groups and set short-term goals.

Alterable Variables	How to Change the Variables
Implementation	
Change how implementation is monitored and supervised.	In order for goals to be reached, one or more administrators with evaluative power must be monitoring (doing classroom walk-throughs daily to determine if teachers and students are focused on the goal). In cases where individuals have lost their focus, the individuals with e-power (administrators) must supervise, provide resources and assistance to teachers who can't, and conduct assertive interventions with teachers who won't (McEwan, 2004a).
Change to data-based progress monitoring.	Collect data to track the effectiveness of the implementation. Give tests according to an assessment schedule that helps teachers to make midcourse corrections and develop interventions for students who are struggling.
Time	
Change the amount of time allocated for reading instruction.	If most students are failing to succeed, consider changing the amount of time allocated for reading instruction. "The primary and immediate strategy for catch-up growth is proportional increases in direct instruction time" (Fielding, Kerr, & Rosier, 2004, pp. 52–53).
Change the amount of time students practice.	When individual students are struggling or have not yet achieved mastery, they may need more practice. Practice beyond mastery is essential for students to achieve the kind of automaticity that is needed to leave the working memory free for problem solving and creative endeavors. Practice is essential for three types of learning: (1) the core skills and knowledge that will be used again and again, (2) the type of knowledge that students need to know well in the short term to enable long-term retention of key concepts, and (3) the type of knowledge we believe is important enough that students should remember it later in life (Willingham, 2004).
Change the amount of interactive teacher time.	For struggling students, there is no substitute for teacher-directed instruction focused on skills and strategies needed to become fluent readers.
Change the amount of time that is wasted.	Reduce wasted time by teaching routines, rubrics, and rules to students during the first three weeks of the school year, thereby reclaiming thousands of minutes of previously wasted time for interactive instruction with a trained teacher (McEwan, 2006).
Change the amount of time spent on actual reading in classrooms.	Audit the amount of oral reading at a student's independent reading level in Grades K–2 until fluency is established, and monitor silent reading in Grades 2–6 with accountability requirements, such as writing in response to reading.
Grouping	
Change how students are grouped for instruction.	If students are struggling in whole-group instruction, place them in small intervention groups. In contrast, when working on comprehension strategies or engaging in critical discussion of text, it is essential that students who are struggling observe as the teacher and more advanced students model comprehension strategies.

(Continued)

Figure I.3   (Continued)

Alterable Variables	How to Change the Variables
Professional Development and Planning	
Change how professional development is delivered.	Professional development is most effective when it is embedded in the specific goals of the school. Build instructional capacity by identifying teachers who can become teacher leaders and tap their expertise to become professional developers in the school. Recommended practices include (a) giving teachers a chance to observe a model in action, (b) offering ample opportunities to practice the new behavior in a safe context, and (c) trying out the behavior with peer support in the classroom (Learning First Alliance, 2000, p. 8).
Change how planning time is used.	Use planning time for collaborative (not individual) planning. Collaborative planning is essential to teaching them all to read.
Alignment	
Change the vertical alignment.	Ensure that assessment, curriculum, content standards, and instruction are closely aligned as students move from kindergarten through the upper grades. Without a tight linkage, students will fall through the cracks. Children who come to school poorly prepared to learn to read are totally dependent on their teachers to gradually build their knowledge and skills in a systematic and sequential fashion. This requires K–3 teachers in particular to share a vision of the strategies and knowledge they expect their students to master.
Change the horizontal alignment.	When all of the teachers of one grade level are planning collaboratively, using similar pacing guides, assessing on the same time line, and forming intervention groups to meet the needs of struggling or fast-paced readers, achievement will move steadily upward. When teachers are acting as independent contractors, students will fall through the cracks.
Expectations	
Change expectations for teachers.	Expect all teachers to be growing and improving through personal professional growth plans. Expect all teachers to work collaboratively, implement programs with fidelity, and teach all students to read.
Change expectations for students.	Expect all students to set personal goals, work hard at school, ask questions when they are confused, and learn cooperatively with their classmates.
Change expectations for parents.	Expect all parents to do everything they can, to the extent they are able, and to ask for help in supporting their children in learning to read when it is needed.

Source: McEwan (1998, 2002a, 2002b, 2006, 2007, 2009).

Paradigm 8: *Competitive* Versus *Collaborative*

Paradigm 8 is focused on the degree to which educators in a school collaborate to improve instruction and achievement. When I began my teaching career, my colleagues and I were like independent contractors with complete curricular and instructional autonomy. We were collegial and friendly, but we rarely worked together.

There was even a measure of competition that existed between teachers for the most elaborate bulletin boards or the best end-of-the-year parent program. The only thing the other fifth-grade teacher and I shared was a set of ancient *World Book* encyclopedias on a rolling cart.

A lone teacher, even a highly effective one, cannot achieve the goal of on-grade-level reading single-handedly. Reaching this goal requires a collaborative school culture in which educators have a collective sense of accountability for all students. Collaboration is the only way a diverse faculty with diverse students can hope to achieve the alignment of content standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessment that is needed to raise the achievement bar for all students.

The beliefs that you and your colleagues share regarding these eight paradigms will impact the degree to which you can collectively teach them all to read. When fewer than 80% of staff members, including administrators, do not believe that teaching them all to read is possible, the goal will be difficult, if not impossible, to attain.

PUT TOGETHER THE READING PUZZLE ■

The second step to teaching them all to read is learning all you can about reading instruction. There are a variety of perspectives, theories, stages, and models advanced by theorists and researchers that describe how individuals learn to read (Chall, 1983; Perfetti, 1989; Pressley, 1998). I have chosen a simple nine-piece jigsaw puzzle to illustrate the critical components of teaching all students to read.

Everyone has assembled a jigsaw puzzle at least once and knows that if even one piece of the puzzle is missing or out of place, the final product will be incomplete. Those who are putting the puzzle together get frustrated by the missing piece or pieces, much like students get upset when they sense they are missing key pieces of the reading puzzle. Figure I.4 displays the nine reading puzzle pieces paired with their definitions, and Figure I.5 shows the grade levels at which the various pieces are taught. We will assemble the puzzle one piece at a time in Chapters 1–9, but in classrooms and schools where literacy is a priority, many of the pieces are so tightly woven into the fabric of the school day, they are scarcely indistinguishable from each other. According to Mehta, Foorman, Branum-Martin, and Taylor (2005), literacy is "a multifaceted phenomenon that includes numerous dynamically evolving components including phonological [phonemic] awareness, word recognition [phonics], spelling, reading comprehension, and writing" (p. 88).

BECOME AN INSTRUCTIONAL LEADER ■

The final step in teaching all students to read is to embrace a leadership role in your school or district. Whether you are a teacher or an administrator, your contribution to building leadership capacity in your school or district is essential to the goal of literacy for all. Principals are powerless to make a difference without the support and collaborative energy of teacher leaders. Conversely, teachers need highly effective principals to provide resources; protect their time for teaching; and facilitate problem solving, decision making, and collaborative planning and teaching. Teachers and principals need central office administrators and support professionals—like speech pathologists, psychologists, and behavior management specialists, to name a few— who bring courageous leadership skills to their job roles. A leader is a "person who is in a position to influence others to act and who has, as well, the moral, intellectual,

Figure I.4   Reading Puzzle Definitions

Puzzle Piece	Definition
Phonemic awareness	The ability to identify and manipulate the sounds letters represent, including blending sounds to make words, creating rhyming patterns, and counting phonemes (individual sounds)
Phonics	An understanding of the alphabetic principle (that letters either singly or in combination represent various sounds) and the ability to apply this knowledge in the decoding of unfamiliar words
Spelling	Recognizing, recalling, reproducing, or obtaining orally or in written form the correct sequence of letters in words
Fluency	The ability to read so effortlessly and automatically that working memory is available for the ultimate purpose of reading—extracting and constructing meaning from the text. Fluency can be observed in accurate, automatic, and expressive oral reading and makes silent reading comprehension possible (Adapted from Harris & Hodges, 1995, p. 85, and Pikulski & Chard, 2005, p. 510)
Word and world knowledge	Knowing the meanings of words, knowing about the relationships between words (word schema), and having linguistic knowledge about words; world knowledge is having an understanding (background knowledge) of many different subjects and disciplines (domains) and how they relate to one another
Comprehension	The extraction and construction of meaning from text using the seven cognitive strategies of highly skilled readers, as appropriate
Reading a lot	The mindful and engaged reading of a large volume of text both in and out of school, at increasing levels of difficulty, with personalized accountability
Writing	The ability to communicate through various written formats, such as graphic organizers, short answers, essays, and reports; writing employs the skills of handwriting or keyboarding, spelling, and punctuation; it draws on knowledge of vocabulary, syntax, and textual conventions and requires an understanding of the audience and purpose for writing
A reading culture	The collective attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of all of the stakeholders in a school regarding any and all of the activities associated with enabling all students to read at the highest level of attainment possible for both their academic and personal gain

and social skills required to take advantage of that position" (Schlechty, 1990, p. xix). Schools, especially traditionally low- and under-performing ones, need strong leaders who perceive the moral imperative of teaching all students to read, regardless of their demographics or lack of readiness. Effective teacher leaders have an important role to play.

Effective Teacher Leaders

Traditionally, educators think of principals as leaders and teachers as teachers. However, "in good schools the image is one of teachers with voice and vision. Teachers [leaders] are knowledgeable and discerning school actors who are the

Figure I.5   The Reading Puzzle Across the Grades

Grade	Phonemic Awareness	Phonics	Spelling	Fluency	Word and World Knowledge	Comprehension	Writing About Reading	Reading a Lot
PreK	×				×	×		×
K	×	×	×		×	×	×	×
1	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×
2		×	×	×	×	×	×	×
3			×	×	×	×	×	×
4			×	×	×	×	×	×
5			×	×	×	×	×	×

primary shapers of the educational community" (Lightfoot, 1983, p. 24). If you want to be part of a school or district where demographics don't determine the destiny of your students, where colleagues collaborate to find solutions for the most challenging academic problems, and where people are focused on results, not excuses, I urge you to become a part of the leadership team. Use and enhance your instructional and leadership expertise to raise literacy levels in your district, school, or classroom. Take what you learn from reading this book and put it into practice. Here are some ways that you can lead your colleagues in the creation of a reading culture in your school:

- Mentor and coach novice teachers.
- Collaborate with all staff members, regardless of personal affiliation or preference.
- Learn and grow with a view to bringing scientifically based reading instruction to your classroom and school.
- Polish your writing and presentation skills to share knowledge with others.
- Lead a book study to build common vocabulary and values among faculty.
- Engage in creative problem solving and decision making with increased student learning as a goal.
- Create a buzz about something new and exciting that is going on in the classrooms of your school.
- Be willing to take risks by inviting colleagues into your classroom to observe and talk about your lessons.
- Be willing to share ideas, opinions, and evaluative judgments confidently with the principal. (Adapted from McEwan, 2003)

Strong Instructional Leaders

Strong principal leaders execute essential management functions through skilled delegation while at the same time focusing intently on teaching and learning. Strong instructional leaders have high expectations for themselves and inspire the same kind of work ethic in their staff and students. They refuse to blame students for their

inability to learn and hold themselves and teachers accountable for student achievement. They realize the importance of using every minute of every day and are dedicated to protecting classroom time for teaching and learning. Strong instructional leaders always have their doors open, but in reality, they are seldom sitting behind their desks. They seem to be everywhere at once—hallways, auditorium, bus stop, cafeteria—but they spend most of their time in classrooms and meeting with teachers in small groups or individually. They go to bat for their staff at central office, running interference for them so they can concentrate on teaching. They are somehow able to find the money to release teachers for collaborative work or to hire an instructional specialist for a team that needs assistance with developing supplementary materials. Although other schools in town have fewer challenging students with whom to work, the test scores at schools with strong instructional leaders are comparable and in some grade levels higher—a strong indicator that this is a highly effective school led by a strong instructional leader.

The following seven steps to effective instructional leadership are drawn from a qualitative study of strong instructional leaders as identified by their staff members and peers (McEwan, 2003). These leaders

1. Establish, implement, and achieve academic standards.

2 Are instructional resources for staff members.

3. Create school cultures and climates conducive to learning.

4. Communicate the vision and mission of their schools.

5. Set high expectations for staff as well as for themselves.

6. Develop teacher leaders.

7. Develop and maintain positive attitudes with students, staff, and parents.

■ SUMMARIZING THE INTRODUCTION

The best way to summarize this Introduction is to ask yourself these four questions before reading Chapter 1:

1. Do I have any beliefs that may be standing in the way of my students achieving literacy? Are there any paradigms that I need to shift?

2. Am I doing all that I can in my classroom, school, or district to ensure that all students reach expected or higher levels of literacy?

3. Am I conversant with the critical components of the reading puzzle that need to be in place to achieve the goal of teaching them all to read?

4. In what ways can I enhance my leadership skills to advance the goal of teaching them all to read?

■ NOTES

1. I use the term *Lake Wobegon,* the mythical Minnesota community featured in Garrison Keillor's (1985) work, as a metaphor for affluent districts and communities where test scores

are high but where many students are falling through the cracks because teachers are doing no regular reading assessments and there are no interventions to support struggling readers.

 2. *Scientifically based research,* as defined in NCLB (2002),

> (a) Means research that involves the application of rigorous, systematic, and objective procedures to obtain reliable and valid knowledge relevant to education activities and programs; and (b) Includes research that (1) Employs systematic, empirical methods that draw on observation or experiment; (2) Involves rigorous data analyses that are adequate to test the stated hypotheses and justify the general conclusions drawn; (3) Relies on measurements or observational methods that provide reliable and valid data across evaluators and observers, across multiple measurements and observations, and across studies by the same or different investigators; (4) Is evaluated using experimental or quasi-experimental designs in which individuals, entities, programs, or activities are assigned to different conditions and with appropriate controls to evaluate the effects of the condition of interest, with a preference for random-assignment experiments, or other designs to the extent that those designs contain within-condition or across-condition controls; (5) Ensures that experimental studies are presented in sufficient detail and clarity to allow for replication or, at a minimum, offer the opportunity to build systematically on their findings; and (6) Has been accepted by a peer-reviewed journal or approved by a panel of independent experts through a comparably rigorous, objective, and scientific review. (NCLB, 2002, Section 9101 [37])

 3. Research shows that teaching the letters in alphabetical order without a phonemic component that stresses the ability to identify and manipulate sounds is not effective. In addition, predictable text can easily be memorized, which is an entirely different cognitive process than independently decoding text (Adams, 1990, 1998).