

# STRIVING READERS GRANT WRITER'S GUIDE

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Great Source Education Group, a division of Houghton Mifflin Company, has prepared this packet to help eligible districts compete more effectively for funds available through the U.S. Department of Education's Striving Readers Grant. This Guide provides grant writers with sample narrative for *Reading Advantage*, the Great Source program that is the best match to this grant opportunity. Please contact your local Great Source representative for budget and additional product information.

## Grant Focus

Striving Readers is part of the Department of Education's initiative to help states ensure that all students graduate with the skills needed to succeed in college and in a globally competitive workforce. It requires a strict evaluation design conducted by an independent evaluator, school-level strategies, and supplemental intervention to build a strong research base around reading strategies that improve the reading achievement of struggling adolescent readers, reading two or more years below grade level.

## Amount Available

Approximately \$24 million has been allocated for Striving Readers starting in the 2006 school year. This grant is available only as a national competition, with individual grants varying between \$1,000,000 and \$5,000,000 per year, with the average grant being \$3,000,000 in its first year.

## More Information

<http://www.ed.gov/programs/strivingreaders/index.html>

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## Striving Readers Overview

Striving Readers is a new discretionary grant program and part of the U.S. Department of Education's initiative to help states ensure that all students graduate with the skills needed to succeed in college and in a globally competitive workforce. It is designed to encourage a strict evaluation design to build a strong research base around reading strategies that improve the reading achievement of struggling adolescent readers, reading two or more years behind grade level.

Districts eligible to receive Title I funds may apply for Striving Readers, either alone or in partnership with state or intermediate service agencies, institutions of higher education, or organizations with expertise in adolescent literacy or evaluation research. State education agencies may also apply on behalf of schools and may partner with the institutions and organizations above. Striving Readers grants are multi-year grants that must include each of three key components:

- **School-level strategies designed to increase reading achievement for students by improving the quality of literacy instruction across the curriculum** including, at a minimum, a needs assessment, professional development, and a process for monitoring student performance. The school-level strategies must focus on improving literacy for the entire school population in grades 6–12 that are included at the school during each year of the project period beginning no later than the start of the 2006-2007 school year.
- **Intensive, targeted intervention for struggling readers (i.e., students who read at least two years below grade level, including limited English proficient students and students with disabilities)** – The intervention must include, at a minimum, assessments to identify struggling readers, a supplementary literacy intervention designed to accelerate the development of literacy skills for these readers, professional development for their teachers, and a process for monitoring student progress that includes the administration of student assessments. The intensive, targeted intervention must be for some or all struggling readers in one or more grades, 6–12, during each year of the project period beginning no later than the start of the 2006-2007 school year.
- **A project evaluation that includes:**
  - a.) a rigorous experimental research evaluation of the intensive, targeted intervention for struggling readers. The evaluation of the intensive, targeted intervention must be conducted by an independent evaluator and must include a randomized control trial.
  - b.) a rigorous evaluation of the school-level strategies designed to increase reading achievement for students by integrating enhanced literacy instruction throughout the curriculum and the school. The evaluation of the school-level strategies also must be conducted by an independent

evaluator and may, but need not, include a randomized control trial.

### **Great Source Education Group**

Great Source Education Group is a leading publisher of supplemental materials that are pedagogically sound, affordable, and engaging for students. Many Great Source programs are specifically designed to target the needs of struggling adolescent readers and support their teachers through professional development. Great Source's test preparation materials, handbooks, and resources for reading and writing improvement are used as part of Title I programs nationwide.

# WRITING YOUR GRANT: TIPS FOR SUCCESS

## The Basics of Grant Writing

Because of its robust requirements for quality research design, writing a successful Striving Reader grant requires careful preparation, effective collaboration, and sufficient time to write a quality application. Here are six simple steps to get started:

- 1) **Download the Striving Reader application (RFP)** – Familiarize yourself with the background research, eligibility requirements, submission guidelines, budget restrictions, and scoring rubric. Read all federal forms and disclosures, and understand what information will be required by each of them. If you have specific questions about the application, contact the Striving Reader program office by e-mail at: [StrivingReaders@ed.gov](mailto:StrivingReaders@ed.gov) or by phone at (202) 205-6272.
- 2) **Review school district data** – Whether you are an eligible school district writing on behalf of your own schools or a state or regional partner, take time to collect school district demographic data, poverty rates, test scores in reading (specifically grades 6-12), and information on the special needs population, including limited English proficient students.
- 3) **Develop a project design** – Based on your review of the grant goals, define objectives tied to each of the three required Striving Reader components (school-level strategies, targeted interventions, and rigorous evaluation). Create a timeline for the completion of each portion of the grant. Creating a successful Striving Reader grant application should take between 40-80 hours to draft.
- 4) **Select your partners** – Preparing a successful Striving Readers proposal requires the selection of effective partners, both private and non-profit. The RFP requires applicants to describe the qualifications of the Project Evaluator, as well as all project consultants and subcontractors. Great Source Education Group is prepared to act as a partner to provide curriculum materials and professional development targeted to the needs of students and teachers in eligible schools. Consider carefully what other organizations might contribute to your success in order to develop a well-rounded proposal.
- 5) **Choose proven, effective programs** – Carefully select research-based supplemental interventions such as *Reading Advantage* that will fit the criteria of the grant RFP. Programs funded under Striving Reader must: a) be based on objective data establishing the need for a given program, b) provide direct, explicit instruction consistent with the National Reading Panel recommendations, and c) be correlated to relevant research (such as Reading Next) to meet the needs of struggling adolescent readers two or more years below grade level.

Great Source recommends the use of *Reading Advantage* in your grant application. *Reading Advantage* is specifically designed to provide engaging, cross-curricular reading content combined with explicit practice in phonics/word study, vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency. Student progress is monitored through periodic assessments and observation, and student journals and CD-ROM software allow for practice and application of targeted skills. *Reading Advantage* is based in research and meets national standards set for Striving Readers [See page 8 for more documentation].

- 6) **Build a budget** – Contact your Great Source representative to begin building a budget that matches your needs and the objectives of the grant. Your Great Source contact can be a helpful resource for intervention activities in grade levels 6-12. We can work with you to select materials and professional development that are connected to the overall objectives of Striving Readers.

## How to Use the Sample Narrative

Great Source is committed to our partners' success. The enclosed Sample Narrative is designed to “jump start” the writing process for Grant Writers by providing a ready-made outline that fulfills the general criteria of the Striving Reader application.

[Throughout the narrative you will find areas in blue text. These provide additional grant-writing tips or recommendation of additional material that might help strengthen your grant narrative.]

**Position Reading Advantage strategically.** The sample narrative positions *Reading Advantage* curriculum materials and professional development as a tool for students and teachers for school-wide improvement and as a supplemental intervention for targeted struggling students. This implementation builds safety nets into classroom instruction and provides daily, individualized instruction for every student. While the sample narrative specifically names *Reading Advantage* on numerous occasions, you should minimize vendor presence by limiting your use of trade names. Focus primarily on describing the instructional model. For your reference, the primary and supporting descriptions of the *Reading Advantage* are found in the following sections:

- Scientific Research Base – Page 13
- Program Components – Page 18
- Professional Development – Page 22
- Correlation to Reading Next – Appendix A (page 36)

**Customize your project and application.** The Guide's sample narrative is a resource, not a final product. The more you customize your project to fit the requirements for effective reading intervention, the more convincing your application will be. In particular, you should try to connect your project to current district initiatives—this will show an integrated planning effort and strongly aligned project.

- Side-notes and italicized text throughout this packet provide additional support.
- You can download general information on the grant from the U.S. Department of Education Website:

### Striving Reader Grant:

<http://www.ed.gov/programs/strivingreaders/index.html>

You should take time to review the program RFP as you develop and plan your project. It will help you better understand strategic responses to each of the application requirements. Also, be sure to follow the formatting guidelines exactly as outlined in the federal application.

If you have any questions, please direct them to your local Great Source representative or our corporate office:

Great Source Education Group  
181 Ballardvale Street  
Wilmington, MA 01887  
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[www.greatsource.com](http://www.greatsource.com)

# SAMPLE GRANT APPLICATION NARRATIVE

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Our Striving Readers proposal, entitled “*Title*,” will improve student achievement among adolescent readers in grades 6-12 by improving the quality of literacy instruction across the curriculum by using a research-based supplemental literacy intervention to address the needs of struggling readers identified as reading two or more years below grade level.

The following goals establish the major area of focus for “*Title*” and directly reflect our district’s plan to meet the needs of these students through more effective intervention:

- **Institute a comprehensive and coordinated school literacy program** in targeted schools, extended time for literacy instruction (2-4 hours a day), professional development, interdepartmental leadership teams, and ongoing formal assessment to measure students’ reading levels.
- **Implement a research-based literacy intervention for struggling readers:** a program that includes motivating, high-interest text and multimedia tied directly to the student’s reading level, collaborative learning, intensive writing, and formative assessment.
- **Initiate a robust randomized trial to measure program impact** using systematic, empirical methods consistent with a rigorous experimental design.

**Additional Objectives.** *Provide details on each of your key project objectives.*

*[Starting the Grant Application. Provide a summary of your project’s objectives. Be as specific as you can and focus on outcomes that can be measured, and those recommended by research and the Reading Next report – See Appendix A and earlier pages]*

## DESCRIPTION OF NEED

Recent data published by the Alliance for Excellent Education highlights the needs of struggling middle school and high school readers. There are nearly eight million “struggling readers” in grades 4-12 in U.S. schools (NCES, 2003). In the 1998 NAEP testing, almost 70 percent of eighth graders and 60 percent of twelfth graders tested “below proficient” in reading, and thus were considered “below grade level” (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004). This percentage was even higher in urban areas and among African-American and Latino students, where an estimated 80 percent of ninth grade students were reading below grade level (Greene, 2002).

Meeting the needs of struggling readers in middle and high school poses a wide range of challenges both nationally and within our district. Some younger students struggle with

reading words accurately, while older students can decode words, but fail to read with fluency and comprehension. Many struggling adolescent readers lack explicit strategies to comprehend text in context and in specific subject areas such as math, science, or history. These problems are all exacerbated when English is not the student's first language (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004). Students who struggle with reading often feel that it is something they just can't do; therefore, they avoid doing it, further perpetuating their difficulties with reading (O'Brien & Dillon, 2002; Rubin & Patterson, 2002). According to the Alliance for Excellent Education, more than three thousand students drop out of high school every day, most because they simply do not have the literacy skills to keep up with a standard high school curriculum (Kamil, 2003; Snow & Biancarosa, 2003).

A student's need for strong reading skills as a tool for success in life has never been greater. Between 1996 and 2006, the average literacy level required for all American occupations was projected to rise by 14%. The twenty-five fastest growing professions have far greater than average literacy demands, while the twenty-five fastest declining professions have lower than average literacy demands (Barton, 2000). Even in less-skilled blue collar, service, and related professions, the percentage of workers who are high school dropouts has fallen by nearly half in the past twenty years, while the percentage of workers with some college or a college degree tripled (Carnevale, 2001). It is imperative that today's children not be left behind because they lack in essential literacy skills needed to survive in today's economy.

### **Recommendations from Research**

The need to identify effective interventions and curriculum materials for struggling adolescent readers has led to significant research and meta-analyses, with conclusions guiding what scholars believe is most relevant to reading acquisition and growth. These studies include the report of the National Reading Panel (2000), the report of the RAND Reading Study Group (RAND Reading Study Group (2002). *Reading for understanding: Toward a research and development program in reading comprehension*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation.), and the recent Alliance for Excellence in Education report, *Adolescent literacy and the achievement gap: What do we know and where do we go from here?* (Snow & Biancarosa, 2003). The recent *Reading Next: A vision for action and research in middle and high school literacy* (Biancarosa, G. & Snow, C.E. (2004) New York: Carnegie Corporation) suggests that effective intervention address fifteen key elements of both instruction and infrastructure. Appendix A provides documentation of the correlation of Reading Advantage to both instructional and institutional improvements recommended by the Reading Next report.

### **Critical Needs**

In planning "Title," District conducted a thorough needs assessment, analyzing data and results relative to student achievement in reading, demographic statistics, and data on high school drop-out rates. Our findings indicate that each project site has # critical need that can be addressed through this project. These needs are described below.

[*Do Your Research.* Take the time to gather appropriate data for this part of the grant application. Check NCLB data and check the State Department of Education Website for up-to-date statistics on your city or county.]

- **Impact of Poverty on Academic Achievement.** *District* has an average family poverty rate of \_\_\_% (40% is required by the Application). As a rural (urban, etc., add adjectives) district in \_\_\_\_\_ (state), *District* serves a predominantly at-risk 6-12 student population. Steady shifts in demographic data, including a \_\_\_% increase in low-income (customize) population over the last ten years, have contributed to low test scores and growing achievement gaps. In the 2004-2005 state testing, \_\_\_% of eighth grade students did not meet the standard in reading; and nearly \_\_\_% of students starting high school drop out before graduation.

- **Impact of Diverse Language Groups.** District have an average of \_\_\_% English language learners in the middle and high school population. These students currently represent \_\_\_% of the students referred for remediation and special services.

[*Summarize Needs.* Don't assume your reader "gets it." End with a final paragraph that summarizes and explicitly lists your most critical needs. Tie everything else in the grant back to these needs for a coherent and convincing grant design.]

**Schools to be Served**

In planning "*Title*," *District* conducted a thorough Needs Assessment, gathering and analyzing data and results relative to student achievement, demographic statistics, staff development, existing instructional programs and materials, and community involvement. Based on this analysis, "*Title*" targets those # schools that meet the Striving Reader eligibility criteria and have the highest needs. Empowerment Zones and demographic data reveal many of our greatest challenges, especially in considering the dramatic differences between each school and state averages.

[*Summary Chart:* Modify this chart to reflect your district's information and number of schools to be served. Consider listing selection justification and capacity indicators as noted in the RFP]

	State Avg.	District Avg.	School #1	School #2
% of students "reading below grade level" on 2004-05 Grade 8 ELA				
Title I				
Empowerment Zone/ Enterprise Community				
Free/Reduced Lunch				
Minority				
Special Needs				
English Language Learner				

**School #1.** With \_\_\_% of students receiving free and reduced price meals, *Name of School* serves the district’s highest concentration of low income students. While *Name of School* students have shown an upward trend over the past # years, they have historically scored well below state averages on English language arts/reading assessments, with \_\_\_% of eighth grade students scoring below proficiency. This school has a staff that is relatively well-trained, with an average of \_\_\_ years teaching. They have recently implemented \_\_\_ as their core reading curriculum.

**School #2.** *[Continue descriptions. Also, for schools that do not fit the data-based parameters for being a “best candidate,” build a strong case by highlighting statistically supported trends showing rapidly increasing needs (like growing populations of at-risk students and consistent drop in test scores). Also, highlighting the school’s exemplary preparation for this grant, like strategic planning, professional development efforts, and consensus building activities, will help you build your case.]*

### **Selection Criteria**

In addition to demographic needs, *District* has carefully considered each school’s commitment and capacity to make the major systemic changes necessary for improved student reading achievement. As a precondition to participation, each of the schools described above has already begun the process of intense planning, professional development, and consensus-building necessary to successfully develop and implement a comprehensive plan for reading reform in support of the Striving Reader program. Other criteria upon which our decision was based included:

- Class-size and student/teacher/paraprofessional ratio
- School size
- School leadership training in scientifically based reading research
- Low rate of teacher turnover
- Pupil and teacher attendance rates
- Faculty support of daily schedule of increased literacy time

### **District Capacity to Manage and Support Selected Schools**

*District* realizes that Striving Readers is a comprehensive program requiring systemic support and evaluation above and beyond standard programs. Therefore, based on our needs assessment, *District* has chosen schools that not only demonstrate the greatest needs, but that also have commitment to the goals of Striving Readers. The number of schools selected to participate in “*Title*” is consistent with the district’s ability to adequately support them. This will ensure that each school receives adequate funding and support to make significant progress toward increasing student achievement in reading.

### **Instructional Assessments**

Creating an appropriate continuum of reading assessments school wide is central to our vision for school improvement in “*Title*.” Linking assessment with instruction is the key feature of “*Title*”—positioning it within a school wide intervention model coordinates “the timely, strategic fit of the measures (what to assess), the targets of reading

improvement (what to teach), and the intervention that has a high probability of improving reading (how to teach)” (Sugai et al., 1998, p. 13).

### **Student Data System – Assessments to be implemented**

“*Title*” will establish a comprehensive Student Data System that will link continuous assessments with instructional modifications and student intervention. In planning the Student Data System, the District Design Team considered several main issues, discussed below:

- Ensuring assessments’ validity and reliability
- Ensuring a plan of action for the use of assessments to inform instruction and make instructional decisions
- Creating an assessment schedule to ensure appropriate use of assessments
- Developing a clear data collection procedure
- Establishing provisions for intervention and program modifications
- Designating personnel for collecting and analyzing data
- Designating leadership responsibility for the Student Data System
- Creating a plan for annual outcome data submission and review

### **Evidence of assessments’ validity and reliability**

After much discussion and research, the LEA Design Team, in collaboration with site leadership and teacher representatives, chose the following assessment measures to be used as screening, diagnostic, progress monitoring, and outcome measures throughout Striving Readers classrooms. Each of these assessment measures was chosen based on its proven validity, reliability, and alignment with our instructional program.

*[Description of Assessments. Describe your chosen screening, diagnostic, and outcome assessments in detail. Show how it is valid, reliable, and based on SBRR]*

### **Using assessments to make effective educational decisions**

Assessments are valuable only if they are used conscientiously to place students in learning environments that will be most beneficial to them (Francis, Fuchs, Good, O’Connor, Kame’enui, Simmons, Tindal & Torgesen, 2002). Unfortunately, a recent study indicated a tendency in schools across the nation to assess student abilities and then neglect to use the test results to improve instruction (Murray, 2002). *District* will avoid this pitfall by providing extensive professional development for each teacher, administrator, and reading specialist so that they will be prepared to collect, interpret, and modify instruction based on student data.

#### **1. Screening assessments**

Following each screening assessment, scores will be analyzed according to individual, class, and grade. This data will be used to monitor student achievement levels according to state standards and the five components of reading. Students scoring below grade level on screening assessments will be identified as in need of additional intervention. Teachers will analyze class data to determine trends in learning strengths and weaknesses. Groups of teachers in each grade level will meet together to discuss

assessment results by grade. Based on the results of screening assessments, teachers will identify students most at risk for reading failure and design their initial instructional plans accordingly. These students will be tagged for additional intervention and placement in flexible instructional groups.

*[Elaborate on how you will use screening assessment results to guide instruction and inform decisions about appropriate interventions]*

## **2. Diagnostic assessments**

Diagnostic data will be used to determine the nature of difficulties of children not having reading success. The Reading First Academy Assessment Committee emphasizes that assessment results must be used to guide instruction if systemic reading reform is to take place. The committee recommends five key questions for educators to ask themselves as they analyze student diagnostic data (Francis et al., 2002):

- On which of the key skill areas are students on track, and on which do they need additional intervention?
- Which specific literacy skills has the student mastered or not yet mastered?
- How much instructional intervention are students likely to need?
- Which intervention programs are most likely to be effective?
- Which students have similar instructional needs and can be placed in the same group for instruction?

Using the results of the diagnostic assessment, teachers will determine the appropriate instructional approach for each student. Small-group instruction or one-on-one tutoring will be used with students requiring intervention. Because students in a typical classroom are at very different points in their reading development, small groups of students can be used effectively for group instruction, for peer tutoring, and to motivate learning (Learning First Alliance, 1998). Assignment to groups will be flexible using consistent classroom assessments.

## **3. Progress-monitoring assessments**

Progress-monitoring assessments will serve as a “teacher’s map” (Francis et al., 2002) to help instructors determine when students get off track and what must be done to get them headed again towards the goal of reading success. According to the National Research Council, “classroom teachers and tutors are in need of a richer and more serviceable inventory of assessment tools and strategies for day-to-day use” (1998). Therefore, in addition to established diagnostic assessments from the state assessment list, teachers in Striving Reader schools will utilize a supplemental and specialized skill assessments provided by the supplemental curriculum to pinpoint instructional needs more effectively.

## **4. Outcome assessments**

Outcome assessments will provide a bottom-line evaluation of the effectiveness of “Title” and Striving Reader. All too often, schools across the nation tend to assess student abilities and then neglect to use the test results to improve instruction (Murray, 2002). District and School will analyze outcome achievement data to inform classroom

instruction as well as to evaluate overall classroom and school performance. *Describe in greater detail how you will use outcome assessments to guide instruction.*

### Timeline for Assessment

The following chart illustrates how each assessment will be used appropriately for the skills and goals of particular grades. The chart also offers a clear schedule for administration of all assessments, based on the requirements of Striving Reader.

*[Complete a chart that shows your assessment schedule]*

Striving Reader – School/District Testing							
Name	Purpose	Month	Skills Tested				
			Phonemic Awareness	Phonics	Fluency	Vocabulary	Comprehension
Assessment #1	Screening	Insert dates					
Assessment #2	Diagnostic	Insert dates					
<b>Reading Advantage</b>	Progress Monitoring	Insert dates		<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
Assessment #4	Summative	Insert dates					

### Plan for data collection, organization, dissemination and submission

It is important that assessment results not be merely “put on the shelf,” but be used actively to place students in learning environments that will be most beneficial to them. Through extensive professional development described previously, *District* will ensure that each teacher, administrator, and reading coach is prepared to collect, interpret, and modify instruction based on student data.

*Name of person* will be responsible for collecting and coordinating reports using student data. Quarterly reports will be submitted to the Project Director and a summative data analysis will be submitted to the U.S. Department of Education. After assessment results have been tabulated, we will share the data with district and school staff, as well as parents. *District* personnel will receive updates on results through staff meetings. Teachers will be kept apprised of individual subtest scores through cross-disciplinary meetings. *Continue to describe how you will share assessment results.*

### Provisions for intervention and program modifications

One of *District’s* main goals is to enable every child to reach his or her literacy potential. To do this effectively, *District* must first be able to identify struggling students, diagnose their individual strengths and weaknesses, modify instructional strategies accordingly, monitor their progress towards becoming successful readers, and measure the overall effectiveness of reading reforms.

### Progress monitoring for students performing below grade level

According to the National Research Council, “classroom teachers and tutors are in need of a richer and more serviceable inventory of assessment tools and strategies for day-to-day use” (1998). Therefore, in addition to diagnostic assessments, teachers in Striving Reader schools will utilize a supplemental and specialized assessment tool to pinpoint

instructional needs more effectively. Teachers can use these tests to guide their instruction at virtually every level: whole class, small groups, and individual students.

### **Designation of LEA personnel for collecting and analyzing data**

Because linking assessment with instruction is a central feature of this project, “*Title*” will establish a comprehensive system of data collection and analysis. *District’s* Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Assessment will oversee the student data system and interpretation of assessment data.

*[Describe Assessment Administrator’s expertise, background knowledge, certification]*

### **Leadership responsibility for Student Data at building levels**

Building principals and reading coaches will be responsible for the collection of student data at the school level. Together, they will ensure teachers receive adequate training in assessment administration, interpretation and application of test results, as well as on instructional intervention strategies and materials. To ensure that data from screening, diagnostic, and progress-monitoring assessments are used to make instructional decisions, *District* will require teachers to meet together at least once a month to discuss data-driven decision-making. With the reading specialist as a guide, teachers will use real samples of assessment results to discuss how to evaluate student progress and design specific interventions for students identified as struggling.

The assessment administrator will work closely with site-based leadership to determine how “*Title*” should be modified in response to assessment results.

### **Annual outcome data submission and review**

The assessment administrator will prepare quarterly reports on assessment results to submit to the district. This administrator will also annually provide an outcome data report to the U.S. Department of Education and “*Title*” leadership to guide their support and oversight at project sites. *Describe processes or procedures of annual outcome data submission and review.*

## **PROJECT DESIGN**

To increase reading achievement in our targeted schools, *District* has selected *Reading Advantage* as the basis for our integrated supplementary literacy intervention for teachers working with students in grades 6-12 who are performing significantly below grade level. Its model is based on current scientific research and provides students with engaging materials and software, giving teachers helpful materials and training, and encouraging individual and small group instruction to develop students’ fluency and comprehension while targeting specific skills.

## Research Base

### Motivation and Behavior

Motivating older struggling readers is a key component of effective reading instruction. Students who struggle with reading often feel that it is something they just can't do; therefore, they avoid doing it, further perpetuating their difficulties with reading (O'Brien & Dillon, 2002; Rubin & Patterson, 2002). Students who believe that reading success is something over which they have control are more motivated. Students who read two or more years below grade level are routinely given text to read that is far too difficult for them, resulting in feelings of low self-esteem. When students are given engaging reading material at their appropriate instructional level and are taught to apply reading strategies that help them gain control of text, they are more likely to feel successful and become motivated to read.

Opportunity to read and choice in what students read is also critical for motivated, independent reading (Fuhler, 2003; Ivey & Broaddus, 2001; Turner & Paris, 1995; Worthy, 1998, 2000). Students' growth in reading ability is enhanced when they have access to books they actually can read (Allington, 2001); that is, materials at their independent or instructional reading levels (Betts, 1946). Therefore, providing reading materials accessible to struggling adolescent readers is critical, as is accommodating their varying reading tastes and interests (Hill, 1998; Manning & Manning, 1979; Moore, Bean, Birdyshaw, & Rycik, 1999; Moore, Alvermann, & Hinchman, 2000; Worthy, Moorman, & Turner, 1999).

To address students' need for engaging text, *Reading Advantage* provides students with text at their instructional level and instruction in strategies that will help them become successful readers. High-interest, readability controlled magazines are the core reading materials for students. The magazines are theme-based in order to build concepts and vocabulary and are designed to look sophisticated enough to appeal to middle and high school students. Because extra reading is one of the keys to progress, *Reading Advantage* includes leveled paperback books for independent reading at each level. In addition, additional resources are listed in the Teacher's Edition for each theme. The *eZine* articles on CD-ROM build on and extend the themes and concepts of the magazines. Student Journals provide supported practice in vocabulary, comprehension, and writing.

### Advanced Phonics and Decoding

Word study, based on phonics and word structure, allows students to examine the sounds, patterns and meanings that are represented in print and make generalizations that help them read a larger repertoire of words. Through the use of compare-contrast activities (sorting words), students are able to understand the similarities and differences between features in words. (Features include spelling patterns, prefixes, and suffixes.)

The main vehicle for students to examine words is through word sorting, a process that involves physically moving word cards into categories while explaining their choices. Word study allows for repeated examination of words so that patterns and other phonetic features become automatic. This type of classification encourages students to think

critically about words. This will eventually help students as they attempt to decode unfamiliar words encountered in print and increase their speed as they read.

Research shows that students follow a developmental continuum when learning to spell (Henderson, 1990; Bear, Invernizzi, Templeton, & Johnston, 2003). Even learning-disabled children negotiate words in approximately the same sequence (Worthy & Invernizzi, 1989). The continuum ranges all the way from building a foundation of literacy (pretend reading, making the speech to print match, and experimenting with writing) to the highest level of literacy (using roots and affixes to unlock the meaning of unfamiliar words). Each stage is defined by particular characteristics and can be linked to an approximate reading level.

Because of its importance, word study activity is provided for each of the lessons in the *Reading Advantage Teacher's Edition*. The activities proceed in a systematic fashion based on the understanding that most students using *Reading Advantage* will be in at the Word Pattern or Syllable Juncture stages. Links are made from the activity to words in the magazine selection. The Word Study book provides embedded professional development that will help teachers improve students' understanding of phonics, word patterns, and spelling.

### **Fluency**

Fluent reading is dependent on learning and being able to use a wide range of skills, including the ability to decode and recognize words automatically and accurately; to read quickly, smoothly, and with the right intonation and expression; and, most important, to comprehend what is read. Fluent reading goes beyond simply decoding words correctly. Fluency involves the reader's ability to read quickly, smoothly, and with the right intonation and expression. Reading researchers have found that repeated readings is an effective way of improving word recognition, speed, and phrasal reading, and that the benefits can transfer to new texts (Chomsky, 1978; National Reading Panel, 2000; Rasinski, 2003; Samuels, 1994).

Repeated reading can be accomplished in a number of ways, but all variations should include explanation of why fluent reading is important, expert models of reading so that students hear what fluent reading sounds like (this can be the teacher, a more skilled peer, or a tape recording), guidance and feedback during instruction and practice, independent practice, a focus on meaning or comprehension, and attention to students' interests.

Fluency activities in *Reading Advantage* include partner reading, practice in reading orally with expression, and silent reading. In addition, each magazine includes one or more readers theater or radio reading scripts, which give students a meaningful and motivating context in which to practice fluent reading for an audience. Students are also able to hear the texts they read aloud on the *eZine* CD-ROM, which provides them with a model of fluent reading and helps scaffold their understanding of the text as they simultaneously activate their listening and reading comprehension.

## **Vocabulary**

Students need to be taught strategies to help them become more skilled word learners, including using word parts to structurally analyze words, using phonics, and using context clues (Allen, 2003; Hill 1998; Johnson, 2001). *Reading Advantage* teaches students all of these strategies to handle unknown words. During their work with vocabulary, students are asked to use context clues, break words into their meaningful parts to derive meaning, link words by meaning and concepts, and classify words to examine their attributes. These activities support the student in learning the meanings and spellings of new words by requiring them to be actively involved with the words (Stahl, 1986).

Students also benefit from direct instruction in new vocabulary (Graves & Watts-Taffe, 2002; Johnson, 2001; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). This occurs when a child is taught specific words to read a story or during a unit of study. *Reading Advantage* provides the teacher with a list of important vocabulary words for each story. The lessons on the *eZine* CD-ROMs also allow students to build their vocabulary by clicking on an unfamiliar word and immediately seeing the definition.

## **Comprehension**

Successful readers use a variety of strategies to understand text (Pearson, Roehler, Dole, & Duffy, 1992; National Reading Panel, 2000; U.S. Department of Education, 2001). Struggling readers either lack a knowledge of or ability to use these strategies, not knowing when or how to apply them (Vacca & Vacca, 2002). These students are not thinking about their own reading strategies, nor are they metacognitively aware of the strategies they can use to help them comprehend text (Bennett, 2003; Keene & Zimmerman, 1997). When struggling readers are taught to read strategically, their comprehension improves (e.g., National Reading Panel, 2000; Pressley, 2000). *Reading Advantage* includes extensive instruction in comprehension strategies to give students the tools and strategies they need to improve their comprehension.

*Reading Advantage* teaches these strategies using an important three-part teaching sequence. First the teacher begins by explaining what each strategy is to the students and how to utilize each one. Then the teacher models the strategies for the students by doing a “Think Aloud” that further demonstrates the strategy. Modeling strategies is an important and successful method for teaching comprehension (Davey, 1983; Fuhler, 2003; Hill, 1998; Wallis, 1998). Finally, *Reading Advantage* provides many opportunities for students to practice the strategies and moves students towards independently utilizing each strategy. Strategy instruction is included in every lesson, with extra support provided for use with students as necessary. Model strategy lessons that can be used any time allow teachers to teach in response to students’ needs. The featured comprehension strategies in *Reading Advantage* are monitoring understanding, understanding text structure, engaging with a text, summarizing, and reading critically. The more strategies students have for comprehending a text the better they will be able to understand and remember a text (Pressley, Johnson, Symons, McGoldrick, & Kurita, 1989; Wallis, 1998).

## **Metacognition**

Good readers monitor their understanding to determine if comprehension is occurring. Students can be taught to monitor their own understanding through explicit instruction (Collins & Collins, 2001; Pressley et al., 1989; Zimmerman & Hutchins, 2003). They should also be able to take corrective action or engage in a “fix-up” strategy if they see a breakdown in comprehension (Baker & Brown, 1984; Keene & Zimmerman, 1997; Paris, Wasik, & Turner, 1991). *Reading Advantage* provides ways for students to become more aware of their own comprehension. The lessons include discussions for monitoring understanding and different “fix-up” strategies students can use such as rereading, visualizing, and looking for context clues.

When students engage with a text they use their prior knowledge, self-question, make connections, and comprehend and appreciate what they read. *Reading Advantage* includes instruction in how to be actively engaged with text. This means students activate their prior knowledge (Anderson & Pearson, 1984), predict (Hansen & Pearson, 1983), ask questions (Rosenshine, Meister, & Chapman, 1996), and make connections (Langer, 1995) while reading. Students should activate their prior knowledge of a topic before reading so they are better prepared to add new knowledge to their understanding (Feathers, 1998; Fuhler, 2003). Predicting, or making informed guesses, is another method for staying engaged with a text because it requires a reader to look for clues in a text to form a good prediction.

Asking questions while reading is another way for students to improve their understanding by clarifying ideas (Keene & Zimmerman, 1997; Zimmerman & Hutchins, 2003). It is important to encourage students to ask questions that lead to higher level thinking such as synthesizing and evaluating (Van Gorder, 2003).

Making connections with a text is another important component of active engagement with a text (Fuhler, 2003; Keene & Zimmerman, 1997; Zimmerman & Hutchins, 2003). These connections can be to a personal experience or another text. *Reading Advantage* encourages students to make connections with the text through discussions and written activities. These discussions contribute to students’ understanding of the text by giving them a forum to respond to the text (Probst, 1998).

Critical reading occurs when students evaluate and analyze the information in a text determining why and how authors write and use ideas (Alvermann & Hagood, 2000; Carr, 1989; Ennis, 1987; Tierney, Sofer, O’Flavahan, & McGinley, 1989; Zintz & Maggart, 1984). Critical reading is the ability of a reader to analyze an author’s purpose, point of view, and use of language. It is also using what the author tells the reader to draw conclusions and make inferences to understand the author’s message. The ability to analyze these components can be taught (Barron & Sternberg, 1987; Commeyras, 1993; Nickerson, 1988) and will enhance students’ understanding of text. In *Reading Advantage* students are asked to think critically about the texts they read in the program and analyze the choices authors make.

## **Technology**

Enhanced electronic text support benefits a wide variety of at-risk readers (Boone & Higgins, 2003; Mac Arthur & Haynes, 1995; Matthews, 2000). Students need to be self-motivated and engaged in a text to increase the benefits of enhanced electronic text support (Mac Arthur, Ferretti, Okolo, & Cavalier, 2001; Reinking, 1988; Reinking & Schreiner, 1985). *Reading Advantage* encourages students to engage actively with the text through guided lessons and independent practice. The lessons and practice in Reading Advantage help students develop the unique skills necessary to work with the *eZines* independently with maximum benefits to their reading abilities.

*Reading Advantage* provides unique content delivered only on e-Zines, multiple interactive articles based on concepts that extend from the print magazines to help create additional background knowledge of the subjects covered. Each CD-ROM enhances and develops students' understanding of the subject matter, provides additional vocabulary practice, and includes prompts to practice key reading strategies. Additional support built into the software allows students to increase the font size, hear the text read aloud, follow the text via moving highlighting, and hearing individual words pronounced and defined. Instruction before each selection and follow-up questions after each selection support the students in applying the strategies learned in *Reading Advantage*. The technology tracks students answers and provides a report of the day's work for the teacher.

## **Writing**

Reading and writing are closely connected components of language. It is important for students to see the connections between reading and writing (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001). Writing is also an important tool used to improve reading that should not be underestimated because it provides insight into students' understanding of a text (Rief, 2003). Writing about text gives the students the opportunity to create more personal and complex responses to literature than a class discussion does (Probst, 1998).

*Reading Advantage* provides many opportunities for students to respond in writing to both fictional and informational text. The Student Journal gives the students support in creating the thoughtful and meaningful written responses that improve student understanding. Each lesson contains additional writing activities that promote literacy skills such as point of view, sequencing, making inferences, and responding to literature. Writing Advantage, a component of *Reading Advantage* supports students by scaffolding the writing instruction. Students are shown how to plan their writing, and then they write in order to improve their understanding of their reading.

## **Program Components**

### **Student Materials**

*Reading Advantage* consists of four complete kits of high-interest reading materials for middle and high school students with reading levels between grade 2 and grade 8.

**Full color high-interest theme magazines**—Each leveled kit contains six copies each of four different 64-page magazines, each containing 12-15 engaging selections, on topics such as countries of the world, political science, geography, and technology. Layout and graphic design of each magazine is age-appropriate, with text designed to increase gradually in difficulty across the magazines within a level. Lexile measures have been assigned to each magazine.

**Student Journal** – Each student receives an individual journal containing phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, and writing skill practice drawn from each *Reading Advantage* lesson, typically providing four activities per lesson.

**Paperback books** – Each level of *Reading Advantage* provides students with twelve chapter books for independent reading practice with high-interest science and social studies topics such as extreme sports, mythology, and mysteries. Each book also has a Lexile measure.

**E-Zines** – Interactive, differentiated content is provided for each theme magazine through individual CD-Roms. Additional articles are provided, along with activities that reinforce strategies and skill practice for vocabulary, comprehension, and test-taking.

### **Teacher Materials**

Each classroom kit offers up to a full year’s instruction, however, teachers are also provided with assessment tools to help them monitor student progress and progress towards grade level as quickly as possible.

**Teacher’s Edition** - Each classroom kit includes a Teacher’s Edition with step-by-step lesson plans for use in tutorials, small group, or whole group instruction. Teacher’s Think Alouds within the instruction provide explicit modeling of strategies. In front of the Teacher’s Edition, embedded professional development includes definitions of and research support for each instructional strategy. The structured lesson format provides a model of the reading process: how to approach a selection before reading, during reading, and after reading.

*Before Reading* – activities to build background knowledge, engage the reader and preview vocabulary through discussion, writing and/or graphic organizers

*During Reading* – instructional ideas make comprehension strategies explicit, and reinforce specific strategies and prompts.

*After Reading* – discussion questions to review reading and allow teachers to check comprehension. Additional pages are provided with phonics, vocabulary, writing, fluency activities, as well as enrichment activities are bound in the back of student books.

*Extra Support* – provided for students who need deeper instruction and/or a different approach to strategy or skill, such as English Language Learners.

**Word Study Manual** – The Word Study Manual is a rich teacher resource for systematic in-depth word study, phonics, and vocabulary activities. A Phonics/Word Study activity

is provided for each lesson in the Teacher’s Edition, and copymasters are provided in the manual.

### **Assessment Components**

Teachers determine students’ reading levels and monitor their improvement through placement tests, mid-magazine tests, and end-of-magazine tests. Ongoing assessment is offered in the form of checklists and observation notes that support responsive teaching by helping teachers adjust their lessons based on students’ progress.

**Placement Tests** – Both Group Reading Inventory and Individual Reading Inventories (IRI) are included to measure the best starting point for students in *Reading Advantage* .

**Assessments** – Each level includes two types of assessments to support instruction: a) formal assessments such as Mid-Magazine and Magazine Tests, and b) informal tools such as Reading Surveys and Observational Checklists that guide teachers in making and recording observations of student’s reading behaviors.

### **Implementation Models**

“*Title*” will provide students in tutorial sessions, small group, or large group instruction a minimum of 225 minutes of literacy instruction per week. Below is a description of three effective scenarios for implementation of the supplemental curriculum:

- A. Regular Classroom Instruction – Daily for 45 minutes per day
- B. Regular Classroom Instruction – 90 minutes, 3 Times a Week
- C. Self-Contained Special Education Classroom

### **Option A. Regular Classroom Instruction – Daily for 45 minutes**

This schedule is designed for a 45-minute reading class that meets five days a week. For schools teaching reading, writing, spelling, and grammar in a 45-minute period, teachers will teach reading over a four-day cycle (Monday, Wednesday, Friday, Monday). On Tuesdays and Thursdays, the teacher can focus on other areas of language arts. Each instructional period includes several effective elements:

#### **Teacher Read Aloud**

Each daily session begins with oral reading with the students. This activity develops listening capacity, builds background knowledge, develops vocabulary, and enlarges knowledge of literary language and syntax, attuning their ears to the language of different genres. If time is an issue, teachers may choose short selections, such as poems, short stories and folk tales, or passages from nonfiction texts.

#### **Strategic Read Aloud**

Teachers use strategic read aloud time as a way to focus student’s attention on reading issues (instructional or otherwise) that affect everyone. The teacher takes time to give tips to the whole class to explicitly teach the thinking of a good reader.

Daily Class Gatherings

This time is used to present an overview of the day’s learning events. Teachers explain the directions for the independent work, and activity work schedule. Depending on the time commitment selected, groups may be slightly different, but meeting times and rotations will remain the same. In schools where a reading specialist can push in to the class during reading instruction, both teachers can work with groups simultaneously. The example below illustrates a possible rotation for four groups, two needing *Reading Advantage* (RA Group 1, 2), one group on grade level (GL Group 3), and one group above grade level (AGL Group 4):

<p>Session 1: Monday</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher Read-Aloud – 5 min</li> <li>• Class Gathering – 3 min</li> <li>• Strategic Think Aloud or mini-lesson – 5 min</li> <li>• RA Group 1 – 15 min</li> <li>• RA Group 2 – 15 min</li> <li>• Wrap-Up/Homework – 2 min</li> </ul>	<p>Session 4: Thursday</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher Read Aloud – 5 min</li> <li>• Class Gathering – 3 min</li> <li>• Strategic Think Aloud – 5 min</li> <li>• Writing, Spelling, Grammar – 30 min</li> <li>• Wrap-Up/Homework – 2 min</li> </ul>
<p>Session 2: Tuesday</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher Read Aloud – 5 min</li> <li>• Class Gathering – 3 min</li> <li>• Mini-Lesson – 5 min</li> <li>• Writing, Spelling, Grammar - 30 min</li> <li>• Wrap-Up/Homework – 2 min</li> </ul>	<p>Session 5: Friday</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher Read Aloud – 5 min</li> <li>• Class Gathering – 3 min</li> <li>• Strategic Think Aloud – 5 min</li> <li>• RA Group 1 – 15 min</li> <li>• RA Group 2 – 15 min</li> <li>• Wrap-Up/Homework – 2 min</li> </ul>
<p>Session 3: Wednesday</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher Read Aloud – 5 min</li> <li>• Class Gathering – 3 min</li> <li>• Strategic Think Aloud – 5 min</li> <li>• GL Group 3 – 15 min</li> <li>• AGL Group 4 – 15 min</li> <li>• Wrap-Up/Homework – 2 min</li> </ul>	<p>Session 6: Monday</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher Read Aloud – 5 min</li> <li>• Class Gathering – 3 min</li> <li>• Strategic Think Aloud – 5 min</li> <li>• GL Group 3 – 15 min</li> <li>• GL Group 4 – 15 min</li> <li>• Wrap-Up/Homework – 2 min</li> </ul>

**Option B. Regular Classroom Instruction – 90 minutes, 3 Times a Week**

This schedule accommodates four groups: two Reading Advantage groups and two groups at or above grade level. The schedule permits you to meet with each reading group twice in a four-day cycle. With the longer class period, both language arts and reading can be addressed each time the class meets.

<p>Session 1: Monday</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher Read-Aloud – 8 min</li> <li>• Class Gathering – 2 min</li> <li>• Strategic Think Aloud – 8 min</li> <li>• RA Group 1 – 20 min</li> <li>• RA Group 2 – 20 min</li> <li>• Writing, Spelling, Grammar-30 min.</li> <li>• Wrap-Up/Homework – 2 min</li> </ul>	<p>Session 4: Friday</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher Read-Aloud – 8 min</li> <li>• Class Gathering – 2 min</li> <li>• Strategic Think Aloud – 8 min</li> <li>• RA Group 1 – 20 min</li> <li>• RA Group 2 – 20 min</li> <li>• Writing, Spelling, Grammar-30 min.</li> <li>• Wrap-Up/Homework – 2 min</li> </ul>
<p>Session 2: Wednesday</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher Read-Aloud – 8 min</li> <li>• Class Gathering – 2 min</li> <li>• Strategic Think Aloud – 8 min</li> <li>• GL Group 3 – 20 min</li> </ul>	<p>Session 5: Monday</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher Read-Aloud – 8 min</li> <li>• Class Gathering – 2 min</li> <li>• Strategic Think Aloud – 8 min</li> <li>• GL Group 3 – 20 min</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AGL Group 4 – 20 min</li> <li>• Writing, Spelling, Grammar-30 min.</li> <li>• Wrap-Up and Homework – 2 min</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AGL Group 4 – 20 min</li> <li>• Writing, Spelling, Grammar-30 min.</li> <li>• Wrap-Up and Homework – 2 min</li> </ul>
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**Option C. Self-Contained Special Education Classroom – Rotation**

When teachers have students for most of the school day, flexibility and support for learners are at their optimum level. This sample schedule is designed to accommodate three Reading Advantage groups and allows teachers to meet with all three groups each day. As teachers meet with each group, other groups complete independent tasks. Each day repeats Monday’s schedule. Depending on your students’ needs, you can repeat this schedule every day of the week, or you can spend some days emphasizing writing and other areas of language arts.

<p>Session 1: Monday</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read Aloud – 8 min.</li> <li>• Class Gathering – 5 min</li> <li>• RA Group 1 – 20 min</li> <li>• RA Group 2 – 20 min</li> <li>• RA Group 3 – 20 min</li> </ul>
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**Professional Development**

All major research syntheses (Burns, Griffin & Snow, 1999; NRP, 2000; National Research Council, 1998; U.S. Department of Education, 1999) emphasize the supreme importance of continuous professional development for improving student achievement. The reading research synthesis by the National Reading Panel reports that “NAEP [National Assessment of Educational Progress] analyses found that teachers who had had more professional training were more likely to use teaching practices that are associated with higher reading achievement on the NAEP tests” (National Reading Panel, 2000, pp. 5-3, citing Darling-Hammond, 2000). Thus, the development of excellent teachers must be a primary focus of any research-based reading reform effort. All grade 6-12 and special education teachers will be involved in “*Title’s*” professional development activities.

**Assessing specific professional development needs**

Prior to crafting the professional development (PD) plan for “*Title*,” the LEA Striving Reader team conducted a scientific needs assessment to gather information relative to student learning and professional development needs. As a guide, the design team used a needs assessment plan implemented in many award-winning school-based professional development programs (Hassel, 1999). This plan specifies that student learning gaps must be used to determine needed staff skills. The process of this needs assessment can best be explained through the following illustrations:

Student Educational Goals	+	Actual Student Performance	=	Student Learning Gaps
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Multiple sources of data were used to analyze student learning gaps, including standardized tests, activity logs, teacher surveys, portfolios, and student self-reports.



Staff skills were analyzed with supervisor observation, peer review, teacher surveys, and focus groups.

During the last three years, every middle and high school teacher has participated in some form of staff development. These opportunities included some of the following: [list professional development activities](#). Despite the broad scope of these efforts, *District's* Staff Survey results and needs assessment revealed the following weaknesses:

- Because staff development has not included on-site follow-up and support for classroom implementation, teacher knowledge and confidence levels regarding Scientifically Based Reading Research (SBRR) knowledge remains low.
- Staff development opportunities have not been evaluated in terms of their impact on teacher learning and student achievement.
- There is insufficient time to disseminate new learning among staff.
- Selection of staff development opportunities is not driven by assessment of student needs, state standards, or needs of ELL learners.
- Literacy instructional leadership is poor because schools lack an on-site Reading Specialist or Team Leader.

Taking all of the needs assessment results into account, *District* designed a comprehensive professional development plan focused on a powerful **context** for professional development which, when combined with effective professional development **processes** informed by scientifically-based reading research **content**, will support long-term reading reform. This context, process, and content drives the following discussion of *District's* professional development plan.

### **Training in instructional programs and materials**

All instructional leaders and grade 6-12 and Special Education staff will participate in training specific to the instructional programs and materials used in "[Title](#)." *Describe the leadership training that will be provided for your core program.* The principal, reading specialist and grade 6-12 teachers will also attend program-specific training for the supplemental program used in the classrooms. These trainings, conducted by professional trainers, will help leaders better understand how to use the student materials and assessment tools included in this program to provide research-based, systematic, and balanced reading instruction.

### **Ongoing training**

Ongoing professional development focused on early intervention, best teaching practices, and scientifically-based reading research is the primary vehicle for all the action steps and programs of this project. The professional development planning process will incorporate a varied assortment of PD activities, including grade level team meetings, across grade level meetings, online courses, study groups, college courses, and in-class coaching and teaching. Ongoing site-based PD will include:

- Creation of peer coaching study teams
- Demonstration teaching and modeling
- Mentoring (teacher leaders mentoring other teachers; internal or external experts mentoring staff)
- Peer and/or supervisor observation with feedback
- Action research (forming and testing a hypothesis in the classroom)

### **Daily, embedded professional development activities**

The National Staff Development Council recommends that school systems “embed opportunities for professional learning and collaborating with colleagues in the daily schedule of teachers” (Sparks & Hirsh, 2000), advocating that at least 25% of teachers’ time be devoted to their own learning. Our plan for professional development creates an effective structure for sustained professional development that links instructional supervision, teacher evaluation, curriculum implementation, and student outcomes, while focusing on substantive and research-based content and systemic follow-up training for all primary grade teachers (National Research Council, 1998). Much of *District’s* professional development will be directly embedded in the school day, organized and facilitated by the reading team leader.

### **Professional development process**

The Striving Reader professional development plan is designed to help teachers transfer learning to instructional practice. As a first step, teachers must learn to understand the theory and rationale for the new content and instruction (Learning First Alliance, 2000).

### **Use of Highly Knowledgeable Providers**

To ensure strong instructional leadership and expert support, *District* reviewed the credentials of numerous professional development providers. Based on this extensive review, we have selected Great Source Education Group, an organization with experience in the area of adolescent reading and writing intervention. Having been involved in reading and language arts professional development for more than 20 years, Great Source has successfully implemented scientifically-based reading in Title I districts with schools comparable to those in *District*.

*[Go into greater detail regarding how you identified and secured your professional development providers.]*

### **Involvement of Reading Team Leader**

At the foundation of our professional development plan will be our reading team leader. As described previously in the Leadership section, each school’s team leader will be required to be highly knowledgeable of reading instruction and experienced in working collaboratively with other teachers.

This leader will attend all program-mandated professional development activities and will be only assigned duties within the school and district that are aligned with the intentions of this grant. In addition, the Team Leader will be protected from taking over duties that

might take him or her away unnecessarily from his or her Striving Reader duties at *School*.

### **Professional development content**

The content of professional development provided in “*Title*” will address identified teacher needs in the following three areas:

- **Essential components of reading instruction**

For lasting reading reform to take place, educators must continually receive standards-based training and become competent in systematically and explicitly teaching all of the components of effective, research-supported reading instruction, including phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension. *District* will focus professional development for these teachers on the core basic reading elements, with added emphasis on their individual stages of development. All Grade 6-12 and K-12 special education teachers will participate in supplemental program workshops to receive in-depth training on scientifically-based reading research and systematic instruction.

- **Scientifically based instructional materials, programs, and strategies**

Teachers and administrators will participate in program-specific training for the comprehensive program, as well as key technology-based reading and intervention programs used in our 6-12 classrooms. As discussed previously, *District* will provide # days for additional training on the comprehensive core program to ensure that all teachers fully understand the core program.

*[Describe training in comprehensive program. Integrate use of core programs across content areas with supplemental program training.]*

- **Classroom follow-up**

In the learning process, every person needs time to consider and adopt new concepts. Teachers are no different from students in this matter. This professional development plan is designed to help teachers transfer learning to instructional practice. *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children* concludes that ongoing support from specialists and colleagues is a critical component of development of excellent teachers (National Research Council, 1998).

This Striving Reader project will ensure all Grade 6-12 teachers have adequate time and training to digest the foundational knowledge of struggling adolescent readers so they are able to flexibly adapt to individual student needs (Sparks & Hirsh, 2000). As a first step, teachers must learn to understand the theory and rationale for the new content and instruction (Learning First Alliance, 2000). Next, they practice it in a safe context within a cross-departmental team. Then, teachers implement the idea in the classroom with feedback from the on-site Reading Team Leader. From this research-based model for adult learning, the Leader will work

individually with teachers who need additional assistance with skills and strategies for improving reading instruction.

### **Evidence of Effectiveness**

Published for the first time in the summer of 2004, *Reading Advantage* documentation of its effectiveness from studies conducted using an experimental research design.

### **Research Study Conducted by an Independent Evaluator**

Great Source contracted with an independent evaluator to design and implement a study of the effectiveness of the *Reading Advantage* program with struggling adolescent readers during the 2004-2005 school year. The study used a quasi-experimental research design in which schools were matched by important characteristics, such as percentage of student on free/reduced price lunch, number of English language learners, and student performance on the state assessment, and then randomly assigned to treatment or comparison condition.

Fourteen (14) middle schools in a large Northeastern city participated in the study, with seven schools in the *Reading Advantage* group and seven schools in the comparison group. All schools were Title I schools with a high percentage of students from disadvantaged backgrounds. The students came from diverse backgrounds, including students who were English language learners. All students were scheduled to attend an extra reading period as an intervention because these students were reading below grade level as determined by a state assessment given in the spring of 2004, Degrees of Reading Power (DRP) and assessed twice during the year with the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) 4-8 to track growth.

Approximately 550 sixth graders participated in the study. *Reading Advantage* teachers received inservice to implement materials to ensure consistency across treatment sites.

### **Student Demographics**

Variables	Comparison Students	<i>Reading Advantage</i> Students
ELL	5.3%	6.8%
Ethnicity		
African American	55.8%	65.2%
Hispanic	28.3%	26.7%
Other*	15.9%	8.1%
Gender		
Female	54.9%	44.1%
Male	45.1%	55.9%
Special Education	1.8%	5.0%

\*Includes Caucasian, Asian, and mixed.

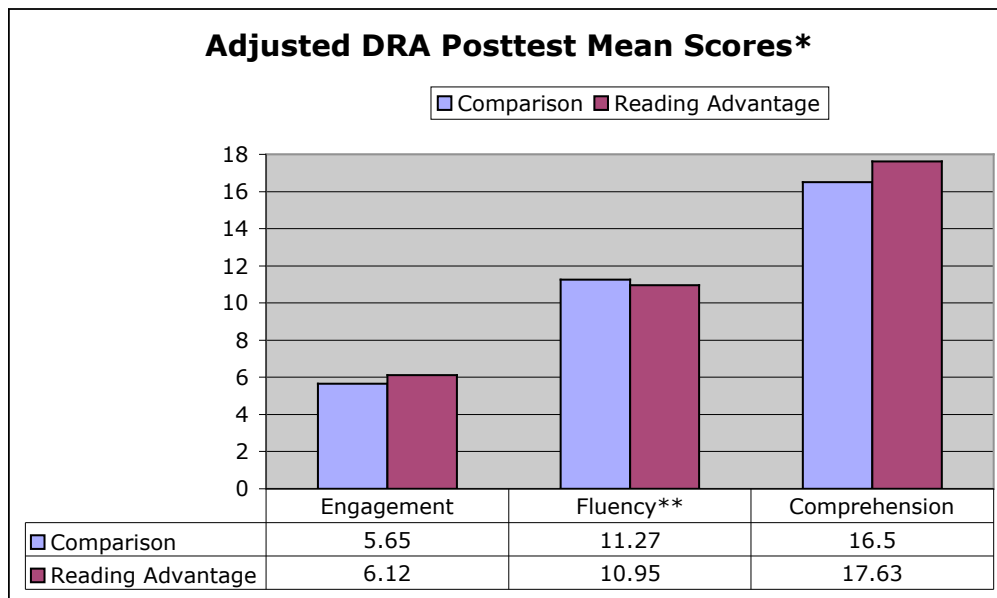
## Teacher Characteristics

Variables	Comparison Teachers	<i>Reading Advantage</i> Teachers
	Mean	Mean
Number of years teaching.	8.75	10.40
Number of years teaching reading.	6.33	4.60
Highest degree		
BA/BS	8.3%	33.3%
MA/MS	91.7%	66.7%

The Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) 4-8 was used as the pretest and posttest to measure growth in reading competency. Three types of reading scores were obtained from the DRA 4-8: engagement, oral reading fluency, and comprehension skills and strategies. The assessment is conducted during a one-on-one reading conference with each student reading specially selected texts. The texts are typical of the materials students read both in and out of school. Fifty percent (50%) of the students from each class (both *Reading Advantage* and comparison) were randomly selected to be tested. The testers scored the individual assessments as they conducted them. Pre-testing began late November and was completed in mid-December. Post-testing began in May 2005 and was completed in June 2005.

### Results

For the DRA engagement scores, there was a significant treatment effect. There was also a significant treatment effect on DRA comprehension scores. The significant main effects indicate that after controlling for pretest differences, students using *Reading Advantage* significantly outperformed students in the comparison group in engagement and comprehension at the end of the school year. The main treatment effect for fluency was not statistically significant. See below.



\*Adjusted for pretest difference.

\*\*Not statistically significant.

In addition to student scores for engagement, fluency, and comprehension, grade level and DRA stage scores were also recorded for student performance at pretest and posttest. The grade level scores measure whether students are performing below, slightly below, at, or above grade level (4 levels) and the DRA stage scores have 7 levels:

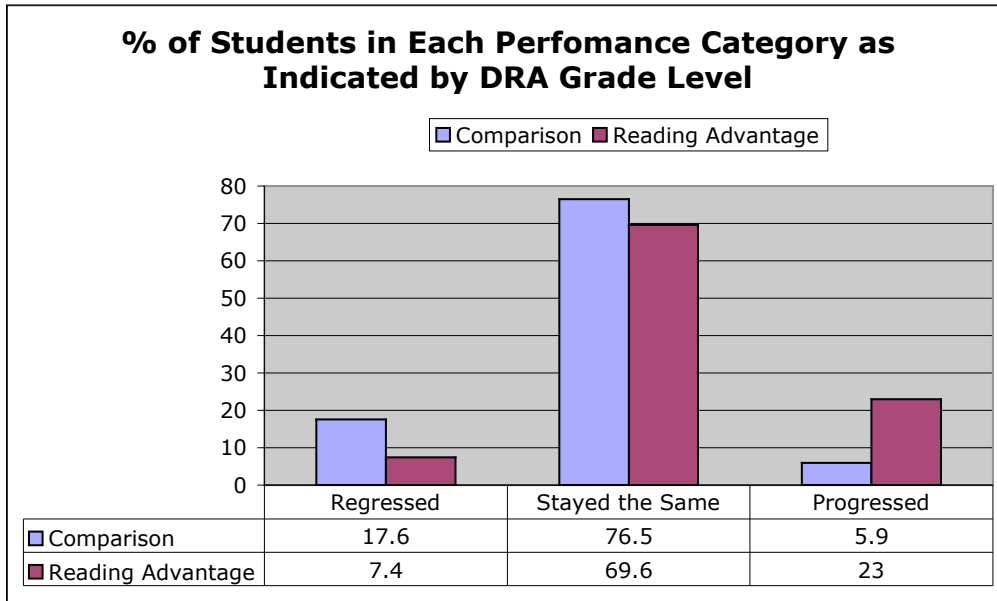
**DRA STAGE SCORES**

Stage	Level
1	Transitional
2	Extending
3	Intermediate
4	Advancing Intermediate
5	Middle School
6	Extending Middle School
7	Independent Middle School

These scores were recalculated to reflect whether students regressed (went down), stayed the same, or progressed at posttest compared to their performance on the pretest. The charts below shows the percentage of students who regressed, stayed the same, or progressed as indicated by DRA Stage and Grade Level scores.

For DRA Stage scores there was a significant main effect. The results indicate that the *Reading Advantage* group had a lower percentage of students who regressed (12.8% *Reading Advantage* group vs. 36.3% Comparison group) and a higher percentage of students who progressed (49.3% *Reading Advantage* group vs. 14.7% Comparison group). See chart below.

For grade level, there was also a significant treatment effect. The results indicate that the *Reading Advantage* group had a lower percentage of students who regressed (7.4% *Reading Advantage* group vs. 17.6% Comparison group) and a higher percentage of students who progressed (23.0% *Reading Advantage* group vs. 5.9% Comparison group). See chart on page 31.



## Conclusions

The results from the student data indicate that students in the *Reading Advantage* condition significantly outperformed students in the comparison group as indicated by DRA engagement and comprehension scores. In addition, the results also indicate that a significantly greater proportion of students in the *Reading Advantage* group progressed at the posttest than the comparison group, as shown by the grade level and the DRA stage scores.

## PROJECT PERSONNEL

The LEA “*Title*” Coordinator will collaborate with Striving Reader principals and reading team leaders to set appropriate goals and benchmarks for individual schools. The coordinator will also attend the quarterly meetings of Striving Reader principals to network and share feedback on the projects.

The Coordinator will then act as a liaison between the principals and the team leaders to make program improvements in the classroom and teacher study groups. The LEA “*Title*” Coordinator will help plan the internal program evaluation and coordinate the data collection with school and district staff.

The assessment administrator will work with the reading team leaders and principals to assist in the selection of classroom assessments and train on the use of these assessments. The assessment administrator will also review ongoing assessment results and provide technical assistance in planning future programs and activities.

## Building-Level Technical Assistance

Principals and Reading Team Leaders will be responsible for carrying out the day-to-day objectives of Striving Readers. Under the overall direction of the LEA “*Title*” Coordinator, they will work closely with all other levels of technical assistance support.

These individuals will hone their leadership capabilities through the numerous professional development and leadership activities described previously.

“*Title*” principals will meet quarterly to network and share feedback on the progress of this Striving Reader project. *Continue to describe specific ways the building-level leadership will provide technical assistance.*

*[Resumes of Key Personnel. This section should contain brief resumes of those who will act as Project Directors for the Striving Reader grant. Include qualifications relevant to the project described]*

## **MANAGEMENT PLAN**

Following an inventory of needs and available community resources, we chose several partners who share our vision for improving the student achievement and building a strong community. The following list demonstrates the roles to be played by each of our partners, describing the major expectations, key roles, special contributions, and critical responsibilities of each.

**Great Source Education Group.** Materials published by Great Source Education Group, a division of Houghton Mifflin and one of the nation’s foremost providers of research-based supplemental programs will be purchased for this program. Great Source will also provide training to support “*Title*” during each school year. This professional development will be designed to help teachers better utilize the instructional and assessment tools included in each targeted package.

*[Continue listing your project partners, your expectations for them, their key roles, special contributions, and critical responsibilities (see RFP, p. 2).]*

## **ADEQUACY OF RESOURCES**

“*Title*” represents a powerful coordination of district, federal, state, community, and Striving Reader grant resources to support project goals. It is a historic effort to combine competitive funds targeted to adolescent readers in conjunction with formula funds to build a significant body of research about what approaches generate significant reading improvement.

*[Give a brief but detailed summary of how you will use federal formula funds such as Title 1 or federal competitive funds such as Smaller Learning Communities to support project implementation and monitoring. If applicable, reference plans from your long-range strategic educational technology plan.]*

## **Involvement of Partners**

Each of our primary partners listed above will make contributions to the success of “*Title*”. *Name of project leader* will report to representatives from each partnership # times during the year. Further, our “*Title*” Website will describe our project model, document project activities, and report student outcomes so partners can be up-to-date on

a daily basis. *Continue to describe how you will communicate with partners and involve them in the implementation of the project.*

### **Great Source Education Group**

Great Source is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Houghton Mifflin, a major institution in K-12, college, assessment and trade publishing. Houghton Mifflin has been in business for over 150 years, with sales exceeding \$1 billion dollars, annually. The K-12 organization includes some of the finest publishers in the industry, including the School Division; McDougal Littell; Great Source, a leading supplemental publisher; and Riverside, one of the preeminent testing and assessment developers in the industry.

All divisions have a successful history of developing and implementing curriculum in districts and classrooms throughout the United States and Internationally. All divisions of Houghton Mifflin have an excellent record in providing outstanding curriculum according to the rules, ordinances and schedules contained in local RFP's and state adoptions.

Functionally, Great Source has a strong publishing team with some of the nation's leading experts in reading and language arts. Professional development is a dedicated department, with a mission of providing teachers a strong linkage between best teaching practices and use of the Great Source products. Great Source employs over fifty local representatives, organized into five regions. An equal number of per diems and consultants ensure excellent levels of professional development, in-services, and post-sales support.

### **EVALUATION PLAN**

Project evaluation must include:

- Rigorous experimental research evaluation of the targeted intervention for struggling readers, including randomized control trial.
- Rigorous evaluation of school-level strategies by an independent evaluator. A list of independent evaluators is available at:  
[www.whatworks.ed.gov/technicalassistance/evlsearch.asp](http://www.whatworks.ed.gov/technicalassistance/evlsearch.asp)

### **Disaggregating achievement data**

Schools will be supported in disaggregating data by socio-economic status, major racial/ethnic groups, limited-English proficient students, special education and gender. The Reading Team Leader will review this data throughout the length of "*Title*" to determine necessary intervention strategies for individual students at risk of reading failure. This information will also help the Assessment Administrator, Team Leaders and Building Principals determine project areas that need additional technical assistance or professional development support.

Specifically, these individuals will answer the following questions as they analyze subgroup achievement levels for achievement gaps.

- Is there a significant difference between the achievement of minority/low-income/ELL/special education students compared with students who are not in those groups?
- Is the gap wider or narrower at certain grade levels?
- If so, what are the implications of these findings for instructional and intervention needs?
- How do these findings compare with previous assessment results and disaggregated analysis?
- Have we made progress in closing the gap?
- Is there any data to indicate what specific aspects of reading these groups are struggling with the most?
- Can we use that data to design more effective intervention for these groups district-wide?

*[Continue to describe procedures for disaggregating achievement data, as well as steps you will take to report disaggregated data]*

### **Interventions with schools not meeting progress indicators**

District will submit quarterly reports from both control and treatment sites to the Regional School Support Centers on the progress of “Title.” Any Striving Reader school that does not meet the projected achievement standard will be identified. District representatives will meet with the U.S. Department of Education will provide intensive onsite technical assistance to determine program modifications during the project.

*[Describe specific ways the District will intervene and support low-performing schools. This important section needs clear planning from district-level leaders]*

### **SIGNIFICANCE**

By implementing curriculum and professional development aligned with the conclusions of Reading Next, “Title” presents a unique opportunity to test these conclusions in a real-life school environment. If successful, this program also is likely to develop a new body of research regarding best practices and effective strategies in the field of adolescent literacy that could be disseminated nationwide.

*[Describe plans to disseminate results locally to other schools and districts state-wide and to educators nationwide in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Education]*

## **BUDGET**

*[Budget Narrative Your Great Source Representative will assist you in developing a budget for your Striving Reader grant. This budget must typically be presented in the form of a narrative, as well as on forms required by the RFP.]*

## APPENDIX A

### Reading Next - Elements of An Effective Adolescent Literacy Program

*Correlation to Reading Advantage – Great Source Education Group*

#### 1. Instructional Improvements

Recommended Element	How it Appears in the Curriculum
<p><b>1. Direct, explicit comprehension instruction</b> - instruction in the strategies that proficient readers use to understand what they read</p>	<p><i>Reading Advantage</i> encourages the use of five high-utility reading strategies: a) monitoring understanding, b) summarizing, c) understanding text structure, d) engaging the student, and e) critical reading</p>
<p><b>2. Effective instructional principles embedded in content</b> - content-area texts and content-area teachers providing instruction and practice in reading and writing skills specific to their subject area</p>	<p><i>Reading Advantage</i> uses age-level appropriate magazines, books, and software with reading and writing instruction that includes multiple content areas, especially science and social studies.</p>
<p><b>3. Motivation and self-directed learning</b> - providing students with the instruction and supports needed for independent learning tasks, and the motivation to accomplish them</p>	<p>Visually-rich magazines and software included in <i>Reading Advantage</i>, based on high-interest themes offering non-fiction and fiction choices. Both the design and the text contribute to accessibility and motivation to read.</p>
<p><b>4. Text-based collaborative learning</b> - students interacting with each other around a variety of texts</p>	<p>Post-selection discussion questions and extension activities provide opportunities for students in <i>Reading Advantage</i> classrooms to talk and work together.</p>
<p><b>5. Strategic tutoring</b> - intense individualized reading, writing, and content instruction as needed</p>	<p>Extra Support for key comprehension and vocabulary skills appear in every lesson of the <i>Teacher’s Edition</i>. Each occurrence provides an individualized and scaffolded approach for students who have not yet mastered the skill.</p>
<p><b>6. Diverse texts</b> - including texts at a variety of difficulty levels and on a variety of topics</p>	<p><i>Reading Advantage</i> supplies each classroom with content and materials covering a variety of genres: photo essay, interview, guidebook, article, realistic fiction, historical fiction, science fiction, radio play, poem, journal, memoir, myth, and biographical sketch. Each kit offers reading selections that increase in difficulty as students progress through each theme.</p>

<p><b>7. Intensive writing</b> - instruction connected to the kinds of writing tasks the students will have to perform in high school and beyond</p>	<p><i>Reading Advantage</i> requires students to write to deepen their knowledge of vocabulary and comprehension through a variety of forms such as letters, diary entries, and well-constructed paragraphs (opinion, information, descriptive, compare-contrast). Students learn to use graphic organizers to help them organize their thoughts before they draft a completed piece of writing.</p>
<p><b>8. A technology component</b> - including technology as a tool and topic of literacy discussion</p>	<p><i>EZines</i> CD-ROMs are designed to reinforce the skills and strategies taught in <i>Reading Advantage</i> through additional theme-based content that offers text highlighting, voice-over audio, embedded strategy activities, and end-of-article assessments and reports.</p>
<p><b>9. Ongoing formative assessment</b>— informal, daily assessment of how students are progressing under current instructional practices</p>	<p><i>Reading Advantage</i> student surveys and checklists encourage teacher observation and support instructional decision-making. Questions at point-of-use in Self-Reflection part of every lesson prompt frequent, informal checks on how well students comprehend the material and the strategies and prompt discussion between teacher and student.</p>

## 2. Infrastructure Improvements

<p><b>10. Extended time for literacy</b> - approximately 2-4 hours of literacy instruction and practice in language arts and content-area classes per day.</p>	<p><i>Reading Advantage</i> is recommended for use a minimum of 225 minutes of literacy instruction per week, integrated into 40, 60, or 90 minute class periods</p>
<p><b>11. Professional Development</b> - teacher training both long-term and ongoing</p>	<p>Initial training is recommended for 3-5 days, followed by on-site visits to observe/discuss progress. Districts who purchase a professional development contract receive monthly follow-up via phone or email, with scheduled on-site visits every other month or as required to address any specific instructional needs.</p>

<p><b>12. On-going summative assessment of students and programs</b>— more formal data gathering to provide accountability and gather data for research purposes</p>	<p>Initially, teachers will use the <i>Reading Advantage</i> Group Reading Inventory and/or the Individual Reading Inventory to help place students at the most appropriate level for instruction. For ongoing assessment, teachers can use a Mid-magazine Test and a Magazine Test at each level, which includes read aloud, Q &amp; A, and selection vocabulary. Observation checklists offer a way to monitor progress more informally. Test items are written to measure the reading strategies and skills taught in the program.</p>
<p><b>13. Teacher teams</b>— interdisciplinary teams that meet regularly to discuss students and align instruction</p>	<p><i>Reading Advantage</i> teacher teams will be identified early in the process and given specific guidelines for ongoing support and instruction.</p>
<p><b>14. Leadership administrators</b> - who have a solid understanding of how to teach reading and writing to a full array of students present in schools;</p>	<p>Administrators also receive support for <i>Reading Advantage</i> through local consultants and representatives who monitor implementation through phone, email, and face-to-face contact, guidance materials and on-going instructional support.</p>
<p><b>15. A comprehensive and coordinated literacy program</b> – interdisciplinary and interdepartmental intervention that may coordinate with out-of-school organizations and the local community</p>	<p>Great Source combines a quality, research-based program, <i>Reading Advantage</i> with the guidance and support of highly qualified training consultants to ensure success.</p>

## APPENDIX B

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