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Changing the Face of Reading Instruction: Recommendations of Six National Reading Reports

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In the past several years, a number of reading research reports have been published in an effort to bring an end to the "reading wars" and to inform teachers and administrators about the essential aspects of effective, comprehensive reading instruction. This study analyzes, summarizes, categorizes, and compares the instructional recommendations for providing effective, comprehensive reading instruction from six widely disseminated and influential national reading research reports. It provides a comprehensive listing, identification of themes, and areas of common ground among the more than 231 separate reading instructional recommendations found within the six national reading research reports analyzed.

FRUSTRATION AND CONCERN OVER a widening achievement gap has resulted in an unprecedented national focus on and funding of efforts to improve the efficacy of classroom reading instruction (Neuman, 2001; National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2000; Rayner, Foorman, Perfetti, Pesetsky, and Seidenberg, 2001, 2002). At no time since the 1960s, when it was asserted that *Johnny Can't Read* (Flesch, 1955), has so much national political attention and funding been focused on reading research, reading teacher development, and reading instructional practices.

Over the last decade, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP, 2000): *The National Report Card* has shown no substantial gains in fourth-grade reading levels. To make matters worse, the gap in reading achievement between the highest and lowest achievers has continued to widen especially for children of poverty and of minority communities (NAEP, 2000). In *America's Reading Challenge* (U.S. Department of Education, 1997), former President Clinton declared, "Forty percent of all children are now reading below basic levels on national reading assessments. Children who cannot read early and well are hampered at the very start of their lives. This will be truer as we move into the 21st Century. To participate in American's high-skill workplaces, to cruise – much less use – the Internet, all children need to read better than ever before."

The economic cost of reading failure to society and to individuals is high (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983; Task Force on Education for Economic Growth, 1983). The U.S. Bureau of Labor, in a report issued to the nation's governors, indicated that 85 percent of future employment (after the year 2000) would likely require skilled or professional levels of training - which also would require the ability to read well (U.S. Bureau of Labor, 1995). For many years, researchers have shown a high correlation between poor early reading and later failure in school (Juel, 1988; Torgesen, Wagner, Rashotte, Alexander, & Conroy, 1997). Evidence is also mounting that reading achievement is strongly linked to adolescent/young adult substance abuse as well as criminal behavior (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000b). Further, there is a clear link between early school reading performance and later incarceration as well as inappropriate behavior while incarcerated (Downing, 1990; Newman,

1996; Pray, 1983). Fielding, Kerr, & Rosier (1998) assert, "Poverty, incarceration, crime, and violence all have a common denominator in our society. That commonality is exclusion. Most of these children grew into adulthood unable to read in an information society... The most expensive burden we place on our society is those students we have failed to teach to read well. The silent army of low readers who move through our schools, siphoning off the lion's share of administrative resources, emerge into society as adults still lacking the single prerequisite for managing their lives and acquiring additional training. They are chronically unemployed, underemployed, or unemployable. They form the single largest identifiable group of those whom we incarcerate, and to whom we provide assistance, housing, medical care, and other social services. They perpetuate and enlarge the problem by creating another generation of poor readers" (p. 5-7). It is clear the current public and political concern over the perceived failure of U. S. reading instruction is reflected in a deeper anxiety about the nation's future economic prosperity.

Failing to Learn to Read: Wars and Rumors of Wars

Simultaneous to the emergence of economic and public political issues surrounding reading failure, the professional reading and literacy education community plunged into a "Reading War" pitting polemic philosophical positions against one another. Advocates of holistic and natural approaches did battle with those favoring more structured, sequential, explicit instructional approaches (Flippo, 1997, 1998; Rasinski & Padak, 1998; Reutzel, 1999 a,b). Flippo (1998) characterized the context of the "Reading War" when she wrote, "A spirit of divisiveness about reading instruction now exists that is causing a tangle of problems.... This divisiveness has led to misunderstandings of the issues, discrediting of teachers and schools, misinformation disseminated to parents and families, searches for simplistic solutions, and not the least, to the media and politicians 'stepping in' to exploit these concerns" (p. 30).

Reading Research Reports: Reaching for Rapprochement

In an effort to bring order out of chaos and put an end to the seemingly inexorable squabbles over what constitutes effective reading

instruction, a virtual plethora of recent reading research studies and reports has been disseminated recommending how and what is needed to provide effective, comprehensive reading instruction for all children. The federal government commissioned some of these reports. Others were the products of learned societies and research centers. Still others were the work of professional individuals, groups and organizations. These national reading research reports describe scores of research studies, offer multiple conclusions, and paint a complex and comprehensive web of recommendations for educators, parents, and policy makers to sift through and make sense of.

The impetus for this study occurred one day following a morning of professional development workshops on research-based best practices in reading instruction. We were seated around the lunch table talking about several of the national reading research reports with a group of colleagues who were genuinely interested in understanding and making efforts to implement research-based instructional recommendations into classroom practice. One colleague questioned, "How are we to keep up with all these reports?" Another commented, "We really want to know what they say in these reports, but we just don't have the time to read through mountains of reports with everything else we have to do!"

In response, we decided to conduct a content analysis of the recommendations of the most influential national reading research reports to summarize, condense, and share the findings of these reports with our colleagues and the many other teachers and administrators who do not have the time to "read mountains of reports." We sought to answer several questions. What do these reports, as a group, recommend about how to provide effective, comprehensive reading instruction? Are there major themes that characterize the recommendations found in these national reading research reports? Is there common ground, some level of consensus among the reports' recommendations that can help us better understand and implement best practices into classroom reading instruction? The study reported in this article provides teachers, administrators, parents, and policy makers with a comprehensive analysis, summary, and comparison of the recommendations for effective, comprehensive reading instruction found in several selected national reading research reports that are "changing the face of reading instruction."

The Study: Analyzing the Recommendations of Six National Reading Research Reports

To begin the study, we selected from recently released reading research reports a group of six nationally disseminated and influential reading research reports for analysis. We selected the following reports:

- *Every child a reader: Applying reading research in the classroom.* (1998). Ann Arbor, MI: Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement. (ECR)
- *Report of the National Reading Panel: Teaching children to read.* (2000a). Washington, DC: National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. (NRP)
- *Report of the National Education Association's Task Force on Reading 2000.* Washington, DC: National Education Association. (NEA)
- *Teaching Reading is rocket science: What expert teachers of reading should know and be able to do.* (Moates, 1999). (AFT)
- *Preventing reading difficulties in young children. Chapter 10: Recommendations for practice and research. In C. E. Snow, M. S. Burns, and P. Griffin (1998), Preventing reading failure in young children (pp. 313-334) Washington, DC: National Academy Press.* (PRDYC)
- *Points of agreement: A display of professional unity in our field.* (Flippo, 1998). *The Reading Teacher*, 52(1), 30-40. (POA)

We used content analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) methods to locate, record, sort, summarize, compare and contrast reading instructional recommendations in the six reports selected for analysis. We limited our analysis to recommendations focused on reading instruction and did not analyze, record, or compare recommendations suggesting future research. We read each of the six selected reading research reports five separate times. During the first reading, we

reviewed each report, its contents and recommendations. During the second reading, we individually highlighted each recommendation offered in the reports for providing effective, comprehensive reading instruction. After a third reading to double check the highlighted recommendations, we created a single comprehensive list of discrete, individual recommendations from all six reports. Once a first draft comprehensive listing was completed, we reviewed the list for individual recommendations that were similar or overlapping. When there was disagreement about the inclusion or exclusion of a recommendation on the list, we resolved any disagreements through conferencing. The first draft list was carefully reviewed for duplicate recommendations that were eliminated from the list.

Next, we re-read each of the six national reading research reports a fourth time. When a specific reading research report made a discrete recommendation, we noted it on our first draft list with an "x" under the title of the research report in which the recommendation was made. After the comprehensive listing was reviewed and checked, recommendations were read and reread to determine major themes. Initially, individual recommendations within the comprehensive list were coded into open categories to discover emerging themes (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Next, we re-examined our open categories to determine if individual recommendations were appropriately coded under the emerging themes and whether or not the themes identified were appropriately titled. This effort resulted in collapsing ten initial categories into eight final themes.

Next, we reviewed individual items within themes to create groupings. We reread all six national reading reports a fifth time to conduct an audit of the separate recommendations as they were recorded in our data tables under each of the eight themes. In fairness to those groups and organizations producing these six reports, it is important to note here that not all of the six national reading research reports were of the same scope and nature. Consequently, some national reading research reports offered fewer recommendations about changing the face of reading instruction than did other reports by their very nature and intended scope.

The Findings: Themes and Recommendations

From the content analysis as described previously, we located and recorded a total of 231 discrete recommendations for providing effective, comprehensive reading instruction across the six national reading research reports. Eight themes emerged from our content analysis: 1) Assessment, 2) Best Practices, 3) Goals and Declarations, 4) Home-School-Community Partnerships, 5) Reading Programs, 6) Necessary Resources and Support, 7) Standards, and 8) Teacher Competence. To reduce the complex web of recommendations found in these six national reports, we created separate theme-related figures (See Figures 1-8). Each recommendation offered within any of the six national reading research reports was recorded with a "a" mark in the column under the abbreviated title of the report. A key for the abbreviated report titles in Figures 1-8 follows: **ECR** – *Every Child a Reader*, **NRP** – *Report of the National Reading Panel*, **NEA** – *Report of the National Education Association's Task Force on Reading 2000*, **AFT** – *Teaching Reading is Rocket Science*, **PRDYC** – *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children*, **POA** – *Points of Agreement: A Display of Professional Unity in Our Field*.

When at least three or 50 percent of the six reports suggested the same recommendations, we took this as evidence of a convergence or agreement. We used a gray band to visually highlight areas of convergence or agreement in Figures 1-8. Out of the 231 total recommendations in the six reports, half of the six national reading research reports converged on a total of 78 of the total individual recommendations or approximately a 34 percent agreement. We discuss the findings of the content analysis of the six national reading research reports by theme, beginning with the theme of *assessment*.

Theme I: Assessment

Within the theme of *assessment*, we recorded twenty individual recommendations within four groupings. We found that six of the twenty recommendations focused on how to conduct or apply various reading assessments. We noted seven more recommendations focused on requisite teacher knowledge about assessment; four more recommendations about what

ought to be assessed; and three recommendations about when assessment should occur. We found that four of the national reading research reports converged on a single recommendation or about a 5 percent agreement within the assessment theme.

Figure 1. Recommendations of National Reading Reports: Assessment Theme

Groupings	ECR	NRP	NEA	AFT	PRDYC	POA
<i>How to Do and Use Assessment</i>						
1. Establish shared assessment processes and instruments within schools	<input type="checkbox"/>					
2. Assessment should address various purposes			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
3. Assessment should not replace instruction			<input type="checkbox"/>			
4. Assessment should align with standards			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
5. Multiple indicators, NOT single indicators, should be used to make decisions			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
6. Assessment should shape and inform instruction				<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<i>Teacher Knowledge of Assessment</i>						
1. Train teachers to use valid, reliable instruments and processes for assessing				<input type="checkbox"/>		
2. Understand validity, reliability, and normative comparisons in assessment				<input type="checkbox"/>		
3. Be able to interpret reports of normative assessment outcomes				<input type="checkbox"/>		
4. Teachers to learn how to administer several kinds of valid assessments				<input type="checkbox"/>		
5. Teachers to be able to interpret student performance against standards				<input type="checkbox"/>		
6. Assessment approaches should be research-based					<input type="checkbox"/>	
7. A variety of assessment tools			<input type="checkbox"/>			
<i>What to Assess</i>						
1. Assess students' background knowledge for comprehension instruction	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>		

Groupings	ECR	NRP	NEA	AFT	PRDYC	POA
2. Assess the quality of published phonics programs		<input type="checkbox"/>				
3. Assess students' accuracy and fluency				<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
4. Assess students' comprehension strategy use					<input type="checkbox"/>	
<i>When to Assess Category</i>						
1. On-going Assessment and Monitoring of Student Progress/Achievement	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2. Assessment should occur only after some instruction has taken place			<input type="checkbox"/>			
3. At-risk preschoolers should be assessed, identified, and served early					<input type="checkbox"/>	

Gray band indicates 50 % convergence of the six reports on a recommendation.

Theme II: Best Practices

Within the theme of *Best Practices*, we recorded 104 individual recommendations in eleven groupings shown in Figure 2. Half or more of the six reading research reports converged on 37 of the 104 total best practices recommendations representing a 36 percent agreement. The 37 converging recommendations were distributed across eight of the eleven groupings shown in Figure 2. We found no convergence among the six national reports for the best practice recommendations about grouping strategies, teaching struggling readers, and using technology to teach reading.

Figure 2. Best Practices Theme: Comprehension Instruction

Groupings	ECR	NRP	NEA	AFT	PRDYC	POA
<i>What to Teach in Comprehension</i>						
1. Integrate and extend students' background knowledge to improve comprehension	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>		
2. Teach children story structure to improve comprehension	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		
3. Teach children to self-monitor and regulate to improve comprehension	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Teach children to predict to improve comprehension	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Groupings	ECR	NRP	NEA	AFT	PRDYC	POA
5. Teach children to infer to improve comprehension	<input type="checkbox"/>				<input type="checkbox"/>	
6. Teach children how to clarify misunderstandings to improve comprehension	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		
7. Teach children to summarize to improve comprehension	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Teach children how to identify the main idea to improve comprehension					<input type="checkbox"/>	
9. Teach children text structures to improve comprehension	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>	
10. Teach children how to self question and answer questions of differing types	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Teach children to use imagery to improve comprehension	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		
How to Teach Comprehension						
1. Teach comprehension strategies explicitly and directly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Teach Comprehension Using a Multiple Strategy Model, TSI, RT, ISL, SAIL	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
3. Use Graphic and Semantic Organizers to teach vocabulary and comprehension		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		
4. Comprehension instruction should not be neglected in the primary grades	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
5. Teachers should use think alouds to model comprehension processes				<input type="checkbox"/>		
6. Ask high level questions as well as knowledge level questions	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>		
7. Respond to stories using drama, drawing, retellings, etc.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
When to Teach Comprehension						
Comprehension instruction should not be neglected in the primary grades	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Groupings	ECR	NRP	NEA	AFT	PRDYC	POA
<i>Early Reading Instruction</i>						
<i>Concepts About Print</i>						
1. Children to have opportunity to see and talk about print	<input type="checkbox"/>				<input type="checkbox"/>	
2. Teach young children the concepts of print	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
3. Reading activities should highlight speech print relations					<input type="checkbox"/>	
<i>Alphabet Letter Knowledge</i>						
1. Children to learn to recognize letters and letter names	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2. Children to learn to produce alphabet letters – upper & lower case	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<i>Developing Oral Language</i>						
1. Use interactive read alouds to promote oral language development	<input type="checkbox"/>					
2. Consciously attend to systematically developing children's oral language	<input type="checkbox"/>				<input type="checkbox"/>	
<i>Phonemic Awareness Instruction</i>						
1. Teach Phonemic Awareness explicitly and directly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2. With younger children, use playful activities to develop phonemic awareness	<input type="checkbox"/>				<input type="checkbox"/>	
3. Small groups are best for teaching phonemic awareness		<input type="checkbox"/>				
4. Teach one or two skills in phonemic awareness at a time for best results		<input type="checkbox"/>				
5. Phonemic awareness instruction can be accomplished in 5-18 hours		<input type="checkbox"/>				
6. Teach children letters simultaneously with phonemic awareness		<input type="checkbox"/>				
<i>Phonics Instruction</i>						
1. Insist that children apply word identification skills while reading texts	<input type="checkbox"/>					

Groupings	ECR	NRP	NEA	AFT	PRDYC	POA
2. Teach children to use onsets and rimes to decode unfamiliar words	<input type="checkbox"/>					
3. Phonics instruction should vary in intensity with the needs of the child		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		
4. Teach phonics explicitly, directly, and systematically	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
5. All types of phonics instruction are better than No phonics instruction		<input type="checkbox"/>				
6. Phonics instruction should begin in Kindergarten through 1st-Grade		<input type="checkbox"/>				
<i>Methods and Materials for Teaching Young Children</i>						
1. Teachers provide opportunity to handle and discuss books	<input type="checkbox"/>					
2. Use morning message, class sign in, to teach young children about print	<input type="checkbox"/>					
3. Children to listen to read alouds	<input type="checkbox"/>					
4. Use shared reading to teach young children	<input type="checkbox"/>				<input type="checkbox"/>	
<i>Word Work</i>						
1. Teach common spelling patterns using onset and rimes	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2. Teach children to recognize high frequency sight words	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
3. Use environmental print and print in the environment to teach reading	<input type="checkbox"/>					
4. Teachers should provide systematic, explicit word study	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
5. Use games, sorts, matching, making words, dictation etc., for word work	<input type="checkbox"/>					
6. Display various collections of words for different purposes on word walls	<input type="checkbox"/>					

Groupings	ECR	NRP	NEA	AFT	PRDYC	POA
<i>ESL and Bilingual Instruction</i>						
1. Teach LEP students to read/write in first language if possible	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
2. Use cognates (similar word bases) to teach LEP students	<input type="checkbox"/>					
3. Teach children oral English if teaching reading in native language not possible					<input type="checkbox"/>	
<i>Book Reading and Literature Study</i>						
1. Use book clubs, grand conversations & discussions to talk about books	<input type="checkbox"/>				<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Provide charts to show how to use decoding and comprehension strategies	<input type="checkbox"/>					
3. Children need to read a large volume of print to achieve in reading	<input type="checkbox"/>					
4. Teach reading using multi-cultural and multi-language texts	<input type="checkbox"/>					
5. Read a variety of text types, genre, structures	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Provide practice and time with books				<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Provide frequent occasions and times for independent reading	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Establish a "print rich" classroom literacy environment	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Promote out-of-school reading programs	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
10. Use silent reading whenever possible and appropriate						<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Provide summer activities such as reading lists	<input type="checkbox"/>				<input type="checkbox"/>	
<i>Grouping Strategies</i>						
1. Use small and one-to-one group instruction	<input type="checkbox"/>					

Groupings	ECR	NRP	NEA	AFT	PRDYC	POA
2. Use cooperative learning groups in reading instruction		<input type="checkbox"/>				
<i>Quality Instruction for All Grades</i>						
1. Instruction should be consistent, well-designed, and focused	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		
2. Provide strategy lessons for all children including young children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Talk with students about strategy selection and use	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>		
4. Provide students regular organized reading/writing practice				<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
5. Teach reading using direct, explicit instruction	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Teach the purposes of reading and writing	<input type="checkbox"/>				<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Make reading functional						<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Make reading fun and authentic						<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Teachers should read aloud at school	<input type="checkbox"/>				<input type="checkbox"/>	
10. Use guided reading to teach young children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
11. Provide students oral reading feedback on meaning, decoding and fluency	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
12. Use Volunteer Tutors to support reading practice and motivation	<input type="checkbox"/>				<input type="checkbox"/>	
<i>Vocabulary Instruction</i>						
1. Explicit vocabulary instruction in content domains/conceptual relationships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2. Multiple repetitions/exposures needed in vocabulary instruction		<input type="checkbox"/>				
3. Vocabulary can be acquired through wide reading, incidental		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		
4. No one vocabulary instruction method is best - multi methods best		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		

Groupings	ECR	NRP	NEA	AFT	PRDYC	POA
5. Preteach vocabulary		<input type="checkbox"/>				
<i>Teaching Struggling Readers</i>						
1. Restructure reading and writing tasks for struggling readers		<input type="checkbox"/>				
2. Synthetic phonics instruction helps struggling readers		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		
3. Teach sight words using multi sensory methods				<input type="checkbox"/>		
4. Volunteers not to provide remedial or primary reading instruction					<input type="checkbox"/>	
<i>Using Technology to Teach Reading</i>						
1. Computers can be used to teach vocabulary		<input type="checkbox"/>				
2. Computer can be used to teach phonemic awareness		<input type="checkbox"/>				
3. Computer instruction can benefit some students		<input type="checkbox"/>				
<i>Writing Instruction</i>						
1. Encourage children to write messages	<input type="checkbox"/>					
2. Use guided writing to teach young children to write	<input type="checkbox"/>				<input type="checkbox"/>	
3. Encourage children to write stories	<input type="checkbox"/>				<input type="checkbox"/>	
4. Encourage children to keep journals	<input type="checkbox"/>				<input type="checkbox"/>	
5. Use interactive writing to teach children to write and spell	<input type="checkbox"/>					
6. Allow and encourage the use of invented spellings in early writing	<input type="checkbox"/>				<input type="checkbox"/>	
7. Extend invented spelling to conventional spelling	<input type="checkbox"/>				<input type="checkbox"/>	
8. Use the Writer's Workshop to offer writing instruction	<input type="checkbox"/>					
9. Provide frequent occasions for writing extended texts	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Groupings	ECR	NRP	NEA	AFT	PRDYC	POA
10. Encourage children to write more than journals				<input type="checkbox"/>		
11. Teach children grammar, handwriting, spelling and conventions	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
12. Use the writing process to teach children to write	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>		
13. Publish children's writing to celebrate their accomplishments	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
14. Engage young children in writing research papers on topics as well as older	<input type="checkbox"/>					<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Fluency Instruction</i>						
1. Develop students' reading fluency	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2. Use oral reading practice- choral, buddy, assisted, repeated, reader's theater	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Gray band indicates 50% convergence of the six reports on a recommendation

Theme III: Goals and Declarations

Within the theme of *goals and declarations*, we found six individual recommendations divided into two distinct groupings. Two of the six recommendations focused on goals and four of the six recommendations focused on declarations. The reports analyzed converged on two of the six total recommendations representing a 33 percent agreement.

Figure 3. Recommendations of National Reading Reports: Goals and Declarations Theme

Groupings	ECR	NRP	NEA	AFT	PRDYC	POA
<i>Categories:</i>						
<i>Goals</i>						
1. National Reading Goal – All children will read on grade level by third-grade	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>	
2. Achievement goals should be stated clearly and disseminated widely	<input type="checkbox"/>					

Groupings	ECR	NRP	NEA	AFT	PRDYC	POA
Declarations						
1. Public understanding of the complexity of reading needs to be promoted					<input type="checkbox"/>	
2. There is no one best way to teach reading to every child			<input type="checkbox"/>			
3. The teacher's competence makes the difference, NOT the method			<input type="checkbox"/>			
4. Study of a variety of reading instructional topic recommended	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Gray band indicates 50% convergence of the six reports on a recommendation.

Theme IV: Home-School-Community Partnerships

Within the theme of *home-school-community partnerships*, we located thirteen individual recommendations distributed across four groupings as found in Figure 4. Half or more of the six national reading research reports converged on four of these thirteen recommendations representing a 31 percent agreement.

Figure 4. Recommendations of National Reading Reports: Home-School-Community Partnership Theme

Groupings	ECR	NRP	NEA	AFT	PRDYC	POA
Declaration						
1. Community partnerships should be established to improve children's reading	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
2. Provide quality preschools for children without home support	<input type="checkbox"/>					
3. School-Home partnerships are essential for children's reading success	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Collaboration						
1. Teachers need community and policy support to succeed	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
2. Reading programs should be developed with community input	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	

Groupings	ECR	NRP	NEA	AFT	PRDYC	POA
<i>School Responsibilities</i>						
1. Schools should share literacy resources with families	<input type="checkbox"/>					
2. Professional service providers should communicate and collaborate with others	<input type="checkbox"/>				<input type="checkbox"/>	
3. Schools should collaborate and communicate with stakeholders	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>			
4. Plan and implement Family Literacy Nights to promote reading partnerships	<input type="checkbox"/>				<input type="checkbox"/>	
<i>Home Responsibilities</i>						
1. Parents or caregivers should monitor homework assignments	<input type="checkbox"/>					
2. Parents or caregivers should read aloud to their children at home	<input type="checkbox"/>				<input type="checkbox"/>	
3. Parents or caregivers should model the love of reading at home	<input type="checkbox"/>					
4. Parents or caregivers should monitor time spent viewing TV	<input type="checkbox"/>					

Gray band indicates 50% convergence of the six reports on a recommendation

Theme V: Reading Programs

We recorded twelve individual recommendations in three different groupings within the *reading programs* theme as found in Figure 5. The reading research reports converged on three of the twelve recommendations representing a 25 percent agreement.

Figure 5. Recommendations of National Reading Reports: Reading Programs Theme

Groupings	ECR	NRP	NEA	AFT	PRDYC	POA
<i>School Wide Emphasis</i>						
1. Develop school wide reading programs	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
2. When performance is poor in a school, restructure school wide					<input type="checkbox"/>	

Groupings	ECR	NRP	NEA	AFT	PRDYC	POA
3. Reading is a priority at the building level	<input type="checkbox"/>					
<i>Characteristics of Effective Programs</i>						
1. Reading program should be flexible			<input type="checkbox"/>			
2. Reading programs connect reading and content area instruction			<input type="checkbox"/>			
3. Programs should reflect research findings, assessment, teacher knowledge			<input type="checkbox"/>			
4. Teachers agree on the core components of the program	<input type="checkbox"/>					
5. Programs should be complete or comprehensive		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
6. Programs should integrate the language arts	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Align programs with standards			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
<i>Struggling Readers</i>						
1. Struggling readers' program interventions connect to classroom instruction	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
2. Reading programs should provide timely intervention for struggling readers	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>			

Gray band indicates 50% convergence of the six reports on a recommendation

Theme VI: Necessary Resources and Support

Within the theme of *necessary resources and support*, we registered twenty-one total recommendations in four separate groupings. The distribution of the twenty-one recommendations across the four separate groupings is shown in Figure 6. Half or more of the six national reading research reports converged on seven of the twenty-one recommendations representing a 33 percent agreement figure.

Figure 6. Recommendations of National Reading Reports: Necessary Resources and Support Theme

Groupings	ECR	NRP	NEA	AFT	PRDYC	POA
<i>Statements of Need</i>						
1. Teachers need adequate resources to provide for learning		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
2. Class sizes need to be kept manageable	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
<i>Professional Development</i>						
1. Teacher support is especially important during induction to the profession			<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
2. Guidance needed for selecting and evaluating reading instructional materials			<input type="checkbox"/>			
3. Provide professional development to create and support literacy leaders			<input type="checkbox"/>			
4. Provide professional development for school principals in literacy			<input type="checkbox"/>			
5. Provide professional development for special educators in literacy			<input type="checkbox"/>			
6. Provide on-going professional development for inservice teachers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
7. All teachers need time to plan and learn		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
8. Preservice teachers need extensive support		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
9. Create professional development institutes for professor and master teachers	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
<i>Reading Instructional Materials</i>						
1. Classroom and school libraries need to be adequately stocked	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
2. School reading materials should be interesting, engaging, and of high quality	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Groupings	ECR	NRP	NEA	AFT	PRDYC	POA
3. Teachers and students need leveled reading materials for different purposes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
4. Insist that publishers improve the quality and content of school textbooks				<input type="checkbox"/>		
<i>Support for Struggling Readers</i>						
1. Extend time for instruction among struggling readers	<input type="checkbox"/>				<input type="checkbox"/>	
2. Additional instructional services in first grade for struggling readers	<input type="checkbox"/>				<input type="checkbox"/>	
3. Instruction by a well qualified reading specialist for struggling readers	<input type="checkbox"/>				<input type="checkbox"/>	
4. Additional resources needed for struggling readers	<input type="checkbox"/>				<input type="checkbox"/>	
5. Specialists available to each school					<input type="checkbox"/>	
6. Struggling readers need equal quality and quantity environment and resources	<input type="checkbox"/>				<input type="checkbox"/>	

Gray band indicates 50% convergence of the six reports on a recommendation

Theme VII: Standards

We recorded seven individual recommendations in four groupings within the *standards* theme. The distribution of these recommendations by groupings is found in Figure 7. Half or more of the six national reading research reports converged on two of the seven recommendations representing a 29 percent agreement figure.

Figure 7. Recommendations of National Reading Reports: Standards Theme

Groupings	ECR	NRP	NEA	AFT	PRDYC	POA
<i>Contents</i>						
Reflect researcher, teacher, and community knowledge	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Groupings	ECR	NRP	NEA	AFT	PRDYC	POA
<i>Publishers</i>						
1. Press publishers to improve teacher education textbooks				<input type="checkbox"/>		
2. Publishers should be required to show data/evidence about their products					<input type="checkbox"/>	
<i>Schools</i>						
1. Standards should clearly delineate content and performance goals	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>			
2. Standards should be age, ability or group level appropriate	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
<i>Teacher Professional Development</i>						
1. Standards should require supervised clinical experiences for new teachers				<input type="checkbox"/>		
2. Standards for inservice/ professional development should be established			<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	

Gray band indicates 50% convergence of the six reports on a recommendation

Theme VIII: Teacher Competence

Within the final theme, *teacher competence*, we documented fifty-one individual recommendations in five separate groupings as shown in Figure 8. Half or more of the six reading research reports converged on 21 of the 48 total recommendations within the *teacher competence* theme representing a 44 percent agreement. The 21 converging recommendations were distributed across all five groupings shown in Figure 8.

Figure 8. Recommendations of National Reading Reports: Teacher Competence Theme

Groupings	ECR	NRP	NEA	AFT	PRDYC	POA
<i>Teaching Skill</i>						
1. Know how to effectively teach language and thinking skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		

Groupings	ECR	NRP	NEA	AFT	PRDYC	POA
2. Know how to effectively teach phonemic awareness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
3. Know how to effectively teach phonics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
4. Know how to effectively teach decoding strategies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Know how to effectively teach word recognition	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
6. Know how to effectively teach comprehension	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
7. Know how to effectively promote motivation (Habits, Attitudes, Etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Know how to effectively teach students to identify and use text structure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
9. Know how to effectively teach vocabulary	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
10. Know how to effectively provide culturally sensitive instruction	<input type="checkbox"/>				<input type="checkbox"/>	
11. Know how to use a wide range of media and technology			<input type="checkbox"/>			
12. Model reading and writing behaviors and dispositions as a teacher						<input type="checkbox"/>
13. Understand the design and requirements of the reading curriculum	<input type="checkbox"/>				<input type="checkbox"/>	
14. ECED know how to provide rich conceptual experiences to promote vocabulary					<input type="checkbox"/>	
15. ECED know how to develop reasoning from naming to relational/abstract					<input type="checkbox"/>	
16. ECED know how to develop listening comprehension skills					<input type="checkbox"/>	

Groupings	ECR	NRP	NEA	AFT	PRDYC	POA
17. Know how to work with parents	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
Teacher Knowledge						
1. Know and understand the development of reading, writing, and spelling	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2. Know and understand language content and structure	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
3. Know and understand phonetics	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
4. Know and understand phonology	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
5. Know and understand morphology	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
6. Know and understand orthography	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
7. Know and understand semantics	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>		
8. Know and understand syntax	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
9. Teachers should participate in contributing to the research base of reading					<input type="checkbox"/>	
10. ECED know fine motor development					<input type="checkbox"/>	
11. Know and understand eye movements and text scanning				<input type="checkbox"/>		
Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners						
1. Know how to teach to address diverse learner needs	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2. Know the characteristics of good and poor readers	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>		
3. Understand Environmental, Socioeconomic and Physiological Factors	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>		
4. Set High Expectations						<input type="checkbox"/>

Groupings	ECR	NRP	NEA	AFT	PRDYC	POA
5. Provide access to ECE environments that promote literacy growth					<input type="checkbox"/>	
6. Provide access to ECE environments that address reading risk factors					<input type="checkbox"/>	
7. Understand bilingual literacy development					<input type="checkbox"/>	
8. Understand how to teach English as a Second Language	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
<i>Understanding Instructional Programs</i>						
1. Teachers should know of a variety of early literacy interventions			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
2. Teachers should know about intermediate/middle level reading interventions				<input type="checkbox"/>		
3. Teachers should know a variety of struggling reader interventions	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>		
4. Teachers should know a variety of tutorial interventions				<input type="checkbox"/>		
5. Know how to teach reading in academic content fields			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
6. Know how to implement a complete, comprehensive reading program	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<i>Teacher Education Programs</i>						
1. Graduate programs should extend and refine teacher skills and knowledge			<input type="checkbox"/>			
2. Teacher preparation programs should be based on standards				<input type="checkbox"/>		
3. New teacher knowledge should be assessed to receive a teaching license				<input type="checkbox"/>		

Groupings	ECR	NRP	NEA	AFT	PRDYC	POA
4. Teacher preparation should reflect research				<input type="checkbox"/>		
5. Teacher preparation/education needs attention and improvement	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
6. Increased emphasis in Teacher Ed on comprehension instruction		<input type="checkbox"/>				

Gray band indicates 50% convergence of the six reports on a recommendation

We have summarized the percentages of convergence or agreement among the six reports across all eight themes in Figure 9. It is interesting to note that the highest percentages of agreement were in the two themes, *best practices* and *teacher competence*, with the largest number of recommendations.

Figure 9. Percent of Convergence by Theme on Recommendations for Reading Instruction in Six National Reading Research Reports

Theme	% of Convergence/Agreement
Assessment	5%
Best Practices	36%
Goals and Declarations	33%
Home-School- Community Partnerships	31%
Reading Programs	25%
Necessary Resources and Support	33%
Standards	29%
Teacher Competence	44%

Discussion

We began this study with three questions. First, what do these reports, as a group, recommend about how to provide effective, comprehensive reading instruction? We found that taken as a group these six national reading research reports offer a wide-ranging list of 231 individual recommendations for providing effective and comprehensive classroom reading instruction. Second, we asked if there were major themes connecting the individual recommendations in these national

reading research reports? Eight themes emerged from our content analysis of the six national reading research reports: 1) Assessment, 2) Best Practices, 3) Goals and Declarations, 4) Home-School-Community Partnerships, 5) Reading Programs, 6) Necessary Resources and Support, 7) Standards, and 8) Teacher Competence. Third, we asked if there is common ground or some level of consensus among the reports' instructional recommendations that can help us better understand and implement effective, comprehensive reading instruction? To answer the third research question, we discuss points of convergence among the six reports within each of the eight themes.

Within the *Assessment Theme*, we found one point of agreement across all six reports - *assessment should be ongoing* in order to provide for constant, consistent monitoring of student progress. For many years, teachers viewed assessment as a task to be completed and reported to outside constituencies. As the nature and purposes of assessment have evolved over the past decade or so, teachers are increasingly gaining valuable insights into children's reading processes through assessment. As such, assessment now is seen as a vital, integral, even crucial part of planning and providing quality, effective reading instruction that addresses the needs of all children.

The *Best Practices Theme* generated the largest number of recommendations across the six national reading research reports - a total of 104. As we analyzed the 104 recommendations, there was 100 percent agreement on one of the 104 recommendations - *teachers should teach reading directly, systematically, and explicitly*. This unanimous recommendation stands in stark contrast to the recommendations against such instruction just a few years ago during the whole language era (Goodman, 1986). Five of the six reports converged on the importance of independent reading time. Although the Report of the *National Reading Panel* stated that the current research evidence was insufficient to recommend independent reading as "ready for classroom" implementation, the NRP also did not recommend the cessation of independent reading programs. Rather, the NRP called for much needed reading research to explore the value of independent reading. Finally, it is also interesting to note that the greatest number of convergences within the *best practices* theme was distributed among three of the

eleven groupings: 1) comprehension instruction, 2) book reading and literature study, and 3) fluency development.

Because of the sheer number of converging recommendations within the *Best Practices* theme, we developed a summary shown in Figure 10.

Figure 10. Summary of Converging Recommendations within the *Best Practices* Theme

Explicit, Direct, Systematic Instruction

- Comprehension
- Phonemic Awareness
- Phonics
- Word Study
- Vocabulary

Comprehension Instruction

- Story Structure
- Self-Monitoring
- Prediction
- Clarifying
- Summarizing
- Text Structures
- Questioning (Self, Author, Differing Types)
- Imagery

Early Reading Instruction

- Concepts of Print
- Letter Recognition and Production
- Phonemic Awareness
- Phonics
- Common Spelling Patterns
- High Frequency Sight Words

ESL & Bilingual Instruction

- If resources are available teach reading in the first language

Book Reading and Literature Study

- Use Discussion Groups, i.e., Book Clubs, Literature Circles, etc.
- Read a variety of text types and genres
- Provide time and practice reading books
- Provide an independent reading program
- Establish a "print rich" classroom
- Promote out-of-school reading programs

Quality Reading Instruction for All Grades

- Teach strategy lessons
- Design consistent, focused, and cohesive instruction
- Teach the purposes of reading and writing
- Read aloud to students
- Use guided reading, especially for younger children
- Give students oral feedback on decoding, meaning, and fluency of their reading

Writing Instruction

- Provide time for writing extended texts
- Teach children grammar, handwriting, spelling, and conventions
- Publish children's writing

We noted as we reviewed the elements found in Figure 10 a very useful, and yet somewhat finite set of best practices associated with providing effective and comprehensive reading instruction. Although helpful as a core set of practices, we do not wish for anyone to infer that Figure 10 represents a complete "do and don't do" list of best practices. It is intended to represent where at least half of the national reading reports converged on recommendations for best practices. Teachers, parents, and administrators can consider using these converging recommendations as anchors for discussing, evaluating, and refining the quality and content of reading instruction in schools and classrooms.

Within the *Goals and Declarations Theme*, we noted two important recommendations. First, the reports acknowledge the complexity of learning to read and teaching reading. All six reports, to the one, asserted that there is still a great deal to be learned about effective reading instruction through future research. And second, several of the reports affirmed President Clinton's *America's Reading Challenge* (U.S. Department of Education, 1997), this carried forward into the Bush Administration – *All children will read on grade level by third-grade*.

With respect to the *Home-School-Community Partnership Theme*, we found broad conceptual support in these six reports for establishing partnerships among homes, schools, and communities to foster children's reading success. Unfortunately, we also found that these reports offered little in the way of research-based recommendations on how to establish, maintain, and refine such partnerships. This is particularly disappointing

given the richness of recent work documenting effective and not so effective practices for establishing home-school-community partnerships (Morrow, 1995; Edwards, 1999).

Several areas of agreement emerged from our analysis of the *Reading Programs Theme*. The reports converged on recommendations that quality reading programs will: 1) integrate the language arts, and 2) be implemented school wide. With respect to programs for struggling readers, the reports recommended that special needs reading instruction be connected to and extend high quality classroom reading instructional programs.

Within the *Necessary Resources and Support Theme*, the reports converged on several recommendations. First, teachers need to be given adequate resources to teach. Second, class sizes need to be kept manageable. Third, school and classroom libraries need to be stocked with adequate quantities of interesting, engaging, and high quality reading materials on a variety of reading levels. Fourth, teachers need professional development to help them make continuous improvement and remain current. Fifth, struggling readers need additional supports such as extended learning time, additional instructional services provided by reading specialists, and an equitable environment stocked with adequate reading materials and resources.

Within the *Standards Theme*, we found two major areas of agreement: 1) that standards should be developed to reflect researcher, teacher, and community knowledge, and 2) that standards should be age, ability, and group level appropriate. For the most part, recommendations within this theme were wide ranging. The reports suggested standards ranging from addressing teacher preparation and professional development to standards for publishers and schools. Although standards are recommended, the nature, scope, and content of standards were not well developed or described in the six reports.

The final theme, *Teacher Competence*, generated the second largest number of recommendations, 48 total. We found exceptionally high levels of convergence among the six reports on the elements of teacher knowledge and skill. With respect to teacher knowledge, the reports converged on teachers knowing or understanding the following:

Developmental aspects of reading, writing, and spelling
Language content and structure including
Phonetics
Phonology
Morphology
Orthography
Syntax

With respect to teaching skills, the reports converged on the necessity for teachers to know how to:

Teach Language and thinking skills
Teach Phonemic awareness
Teach Phonics
Teach Decoding Strategies
Teach Word Recognition
Teach Comprehension
Promote Motivation and Engagement
Identify and Use Text Structure to Teach Comprehension
Teach Vocabulary
Work with Parents
Meet the needs of Diverse Students
Knowing How to Teach English as Second Language

These converging recommendations form a minimum, common core of teaching competencies that should inform both teacher preparation and professional development programs. Finally, the six national reading reports note that the quality of teacher preparation programs needs improvement in order to adequately prepare new teachers and help experienced teachers to effectively teach all children to read.

Putting It Together: Conclusions and Applications

The findings presented in this study represent the collective wisdom, national knowledge base, and current research about reading instruction. Teachers and administrators may consider using the findings of this study in several ways. First, the findings may be used as guidelines for reviewing, evaluating, and revising the content, scope, and

instructional practices used in a school reading program. Second, teachers and administrators may use these findings to provide parents and policy makers with a comprehensive review and ready guide to "what the research says and doesn't say" about effective reading instruction. Third, teachers can use these findings to self-evaluate the status of their own knowledge base, teaching skill, and implementation of best practices. Fourth, school administrators may wish to convert information in this study into a survey to be given to classroom teachers to determine topics for professional development. And fifth, teachers in special education settings can likewise use this information to determine the effectiveness of their efforts in connecting with and supporting effective classroom reading instruction.

The findings of this study should not be used to develop "do" and "don't do" checklists but should be used as a guide for dialog, discussion, and decision-making. We noted with satisfaction that there was considerable agreement among the six national reading research reports on themes and general recommendations. As Flippo (1998) said so well a few years ago, "We are not nearly as divided as some like the public to believe" (p. 39). The reports converged on one-third of the 231 total recommendations offered within the six national reports studied. The importance of these points of agreement on ongoing assessment, best instructional practices, goals, partnerships, standards, resource needs, reading programs, and teacher competence should not be devalued in our continued dialog and healthy disagreements. Also, this study points out the fact that there yet remains a great deal to be learned about effective reading instruction. Although the reports converged upon *what* effective reading instruction looks like, they were much less helpful in describing *how* to teach the elements of effective reading instruction. Since the original publication of these reports, the National Research Council (1999) has published, *Starting Out Right: A Guide to Promoting Children's Reading Success* (Burns, Griffin, & Snow, 1999), the Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (2001) has published *Teaching Every Child to Read: Frequently Asked Questions*, and the U. S. Department of Education (2001) has published, *Putting Reading First: The Research Building Blocks for Teaching Children to Read* (Armbruster, Lehr, & Osborn, 2001), to offer greater guidance to

teachers, administrators, and parents on *how* to teach the elements of effective, balanced, and comprehensive reading instruction.

Decisions about reading instruction are complex and require that the voices of all stakeholders be heard and valued. On the other hand, it is the classroom teacher working in partnership with homes and communities who are in the best position to know what is appropriate at any given time to help a child learn to read successfully. We conclude by quoting the late Jeanne S. Chall along with her colleagues Jacobs & Baldwin (1990) to emphasize the importance of using reading research to inform the quality of reading instruction:

"It is common today, as in the past, to look elsewhere than to educational research for an understanding of the literacy problems of low-income children and for ways of solving these problems. Currently, cultural and political theories are offered as reasons for the low achievement of poor children and for the lag between mainstream and at-risk children. Although cultural and political explanations may help us understand the broader picture, in the end they must be translated, in practical terms, into what can be done in schools and in homes. Such translation ought to consider the historical [and current] educational research – that good teaching improves achievement and thereby can empower all children and especially those at risk" (p. xi).

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