What Is Project READ?

California's Project READ for Middle Schools is an intensive five-year program dedicated to increasing the reading and English Language Arts (ELA) proficiency and outcomes of all students—including students with disabilities, English learners, and socioeconomically disadvantaged students—in a competitively selected group of California middle schools.

Project READ Focus Areas

To accomplish these goals Project READ focuses on training teachers to incorporate reading strategies and skills in their content area instruction; supporting schoolwide Site Implementation Teams (SITs) and leaders in guiding and facilitating this systems change process; providing ongoing coaching and an online learning community for collaboratively building skills and capacity; and involving parents and family members in their students' reading achievement; all guided by current implementation science and adult learning principles.

What follows briefly describes the major focus areas of Project READ and the main activities in each of these focus areas. Further details can be found on the Project READ website: www.caspdg.org.

Training in Teaching Reading Strategies

- Aligning Instruction to California's Common Core State Standards (CA CCSS)
- Teaching Reading in the Content Areas—IRIS Course
- Scholastic Reading Programs and Technology

Middle school presents a critical opportunity to build student reading fluency, academic vocabulary and comprehension skills that are foundational to learning in all the content areas, and for college and career readiness. Many middle school teachers have not received training in teaching reading strategies and skills, and yet are daily instructing students who may not grasp the content due to reading difficulties.

Project READ's IRIS Course provides training and coaching in specific reading strategies that can be used by teachers and their students in the content areas. In Project READ schools, ELA, History/Social Studies, Science, Special Education, and English Learner teachers are trained on use of the same reading strategies. Thus, students become deeply familiar with the use of these strategies as they are reinforced from one classroom to the next.

In addition, each school site receives resources toward the purchase and use of Scholastic reading programs and technology for identifying and addressing the specific needs of struggling readers (such as the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI), Scholastic Phonics Inventory (SPI), READ 180 Next Generation, System 44, and English 3D). And, sites conduct meetings to review resources to ensure instruction is aligned to the CA CCSS.

Over the course of five years of training and coaching, Project READ brings the language, foundational elements, and strategies for teaching reading across the middle school curriculum into each school's culture and faculty. Project READ is ultimately an effort to help bring about a schoolwide focus on teaching reading strategies and skills through a variety of approaches that impact student learning, while introducing the concepts and practices of need-based, rather than label-based intervention and instruction.

Engaged Implementation Teams

- Schoolwide Site Implementation Teams (SITs)
- Leadership Academy for Lead Administrators and Key Teachers
- State Leadership Team
- Project READ Implementation Team

Implementing this change in how reading instruction and intervention occurs at the school is a process of systems and culture change that unfolds over the course of the five years of Project READ, proceeding in stages from exploration and installation to initial implementation and eventually sustainable implementation.

SITs, comprised of teachers and administrators guide and facilitate implementation, which looks different at each school site. Tools, such as the Fidelity of Implementation Rubric (FIR), and coaching are provided to support the SITs. In addition, Leadership Academy Webinars and regional meetings provide training in facilitating systems change as well as specific content for implementing reading strategies and intervention programs.

A representative State Leadership Team advises Project READ, while the Project READ Implementation Team is responsible for the development and day-to-day operation of Project READ. Thus, teams at every level are involved in communicating with one another to address what is needed for Project READ to be successfully implemented at the school sites.

Ongoing Learning

- Online Learning Community and Resource Library

- Ongoing Coaching for SITs, Lead Administrators, and Teachers

- Exemplar Sites and Regional Institutes

- An Integrated Evaluation Approach

To facilitate ongoing learning to collaboratively build skills and capacity, there is a Project READ Online Learning Community, which includes discussion forums, a resource library, and events calendar. This community is open to all Project READ participants. In addition, there's a Coaches' Corner online group where Project READ Site Coaches share resources, ask questions, and have live chats with each other.

Each Project READ school site is provided a Site Coach who offers ongoing support over five years to teachers, administrators, and the SIT in implementing the key elements of Project READ. Site Coaches are reading instruction experts, who also work collaboratively with teams.

In the final two years of Project READ, comes the selection of Exemplar Sites, who participate in sharing their learning and approach with other interested California middle schools through speaking on Webinars, hosting site visits, and presenting at regional meetings. The regional meetings are open to both existing Project READ sites and sites interested in learning more about implementing Project READ.

Evaluation activities are integrated into the implementation of Project READ to provide continuous feedback for program improvement. Every effort is made to ensure that the checklists, data reports, and tools used in the field serve both the evaluation needs and the sites and coaches in the ongoing implementation process.

Student Reading Progress Monitoring

- Student Reading Progress Monitoring Maps

- Scholastic Achievement Manager (SAM) Reports

- Collaborative Data Review

Each Project READ site maps out the criteria, tools, and processes used by their school in student reading progress monitoring, including: universal screening; specific skill assessments; targeted delivery of interventions and instruction; progress monitoring meetings; and adjusting supports as needed.

Included in the data reviewed are a range of reports at the student, teacher, and schoolwide levels that can be generated by SAM. These reports, along with teacher comments, grades, and the like are included in regular collaborative data reviews to inform student support, teacher support, and the identification of school needs.

Family Involvement

- Family Workshops at School Sites
- Administrator Participation in Family Workshops

Twice each year, Family Workshops are conducted at each school site, led by Parent Training and Information Center (PTI) presenters. Parents and family members in attendance learn about the importance of reading, academic vocabulary, comprehension, how to support their students' reading achievement, using Project READ strategies, Scholastic reading programs, and the new CA CCSS.

Site administrators participate in at least one of these workshops each year to share what their site is doing, meet the families, and answer questions. They also provide feedback on the presentation content and delivery.

Implementation Science

- Implementation Drivers
- Stages of Implementation
- Evidence-based Personnel Development Practices

Project READ activities address key factors that drive successful implementation, including: selection, training, coaching, systems intervention, facilitative administration, decision support systems, and leadership, all critical to implementation with fidelity and achieving student benefits.

Implementation of new practices at a school site is a change process that happens over many years, with overall implementation and the implementation of each practice unfolding in stages. These stages range from exploration and consideration of change, to preparation for and installation of a practice, to learning how to implement a practice, to fully and sustainably implementing a practice. Project READ builds in training and support for each stage of implementation, for each focus area.

Evidence-based personnel development practices inform Project READ training and coaching: in planning how to introduce and illustrate a practice, in applying and evaluating use of the practice, and toward deep understanding through reflection and mastery of a practice.