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School-Wide Failure Rate Reduced by 58% at Norris Middle School

About two years ago, Irving ISD hosted a team of educators from Omaha Public Schools to look at the highly effective reading program being used in Irving to serve struggling Tier 3 readers. Paula Dugger, Reading Coordinator for the District, reported that 70% of Irving's Tier 3 readers in 3rd, 4th and 5th grades were passing the TAKS after being tutored with a new program called Read Right®. Irving has implemented Read Right in all of its 20 elementary schools as well as its secondary schools.

The Omaha visitors, impressed by Irving's team of educators and the results being achieved, returned to Omaha and implemented the same Read Right program in 18 elementary schools and 6 secondary schools. Omaha principals report very rapid improvement in reading skills and a ripple effect through other subject areas. One of these principals is Anita Harkins, Principal of Norris Middle School.

The Norris Middle School Solution: Read Right

When Principal Anita Harkins started her tenure as principal at Norris Middle School (NMS) two years ago, it had one of the highest student failure rates and one of the highest drop-out rates in Omaha Public Schools (more than 47,000 students). Something powerful was needed to turn things around *fast*.

"We knew the key to changing all of this was reading because you have to be able to read to do well in any subject," Principal Harkins told an audience of educators at The National Drop-Out Prevention Center's Effective Strategies Conference in Florida earlier this year. "I begged our district to let us be the first school to pilot Read Right."

Norris Middle School Demographics and Reading Challenges:

89% qualified for free- and reduced-price school lunch

70% minority

20% English Language Learners

21% qualified for special education services

86% of all students read below grade level

80% of struggling 7th and 8th graders were reading 3 to 5 years below grade level

Norris Makes a Fast Turn-Around

In less than one year, 75 students--10% of Norris Middle School's student body--have graduated from the Read Right program, having attained the status of "excellent readers." Testing has shown that they can read at or above grade level with full comprehension, proper intonation and pacing, and have the ability to apply critical and analytical thinking. Most of the students started the *Read Right* program reading 3 to 5 years below grade level, as documented by the *California Achievement Test* and other district criteria. Presently, NMS's program serves more than 200 students.

"What I've seen my kids do is amazing," Principal Harkins exclaimed. "My school is not the same school it was one year ago."

How is NMS different in just 1 year?

--Read Right is the school's "Intervention Class" and students enjoy attending.

--Because Read Right is effective for regular education, special education, and English Language Learners, every major category of students is served with this highly structured and individualized program that fosters rapid improvement in reading.

--Hundreds of NMS students each year are becoming excellent readers.

--Discipline problems are declining sharply because significant numbers of students feel more successful in school.

--The number of classes that students are failing has dropped by 58%--because students now have the foundational skill necessary to be successful in school: *the ability to read*.

Omaha Planning to Start Eight New Read Right Elementary School Projects in the Fall and Implement a Comprehensive Control Group Study to scientifically verify the success they are experiencing remediating secondary students.

The Key to Reading Success

Read Right has demonstrated remarkable effectiveness for tens of thousands of struggling students in urban, suburban, and rural elementary, middle, and high schools in 28 states. Read Right empowers them to succeed in their classes and to fully participate in the life of the school.

But How Do We Fund It?

When schools hear of the rapid gains consistently experienced with Read Right—even with the most challenged students—they are eager to bring the innovative intervention model to their students, but where will they get the funds?

Read Right Is An Excellent Candidate For Stimulus Funding.

Read Right meets all of the requirements set forth for the funds now being made available for Title I and Special Education programs:

(1) Saving and Creating Jobs: A Read Right project employs tutors to implement the methodology with students. Tutors can be paraprofessionals, certified staff, or a combination of the two. A standard project in a single school trains four tutors who will serve 120 students every day to improve their reading skills. Stimulus Funding can allow you to “double up” initially, and fund twice as many tutors! Imagine what your school would be like if hundreds of your students could significantly improve their reading abilities.

(2) Ensuring Transparency, Reporting, and Accountability: A Read Right project provides the client school with an MP3 System that includes application software designed to systematically track individual student progress and monitor the health of the project as a whole. Clients upload data to Read Right Systems on a monthly basis, and the raw data is used to generate reports, which are provided for the client school. The software can be related to existing student data collection systems of schools and districts, enabling a student’s progress in improving his or her reading skills to become part of a larger data set.

(3) Minimizing the Funding Cliff: With stimulus funding, you can pay for all of the start-up costs for a Read Right project, train a core and permanent team to become excellent intervention tutors, and employ and train extra tutors to serve the backlog of students in need of reading improvement in your school. Read Right eliminates or significantly improves reading problems quickly. Longitudinal studies

show that students who graduate from Read Right do not need future assistance in reading. This means that as your backlog is eliminated, you can reduce the size of your Read Right program over time. The extra tutors paid for by the Stimulus money will no longer be needed.

(4) Improve Student Achievement through School Improvement and Reform: Eliminating reading problems or significantly improving reading abilities is the most direct way of improving student achievement in all content areas. Until now, this universal goal has not been attainable in any consistent, reliable way. With *Read Right* schools are realizing this goal for even their most challenging students! Now you can specifically and successfully specifically target Special Ed, Tier 3, and struggling ELL students plus those most at risk of dropping out. We are happy to provide a list of urban, suburban, and rural schools as references.

If you would like to learn more about Read Right, a school information packet may be requested by contacting Maureen Mortlock at Read Right Systems. The packet includes details about research, theory and methodology, implementation, investment, and a referral list of teachers and educators with first-hand experiences. Contact Maureen at 360-427-9440 or by email: maureenm@readright.com. Additional information can be found at www.readright.com.