

San Francisco 2002

Gateway to Global Understanding

SYMPOSIUM 11

Trails to Literacy

**School wide staff
development to
accelerate reading
performance in
diverse, high poverty
urban schools.**



Symposium 11

IRA San Francisco 2002

“TRAILS TO LITERACY”

Schoolwide staff development to accelerate reading performance in diverse, high-poverty urban schools.

Intended for classroom teachers, administrators, principals, curriculum and special program coordinators, reading specialists, and teacher trainers, grades K—5.

Chairing: Leanna Traill, Literacy Learning NZ Ltd., Auckland, New Zealand

“Trails to Literacy” Schoolwide Professional Development Model for Reading

Speaker: Leanna Traill

“Trails to Literacy” Theoretical Foundation: Research, Theory, and Best Practices

Speaker: Ashton Newth, Literacy Learning NZ Ltd., Auckland, New Zealand

Redefining the Role and Discovering New Challenges as Instructional Leader

Speaker: Vonnie Condon, Woodmere School, Portland, Oregon

Changing Views: Teachers as Learners, Mentors, and Coaches in *“Trails”* Schools

Speakers: Rose Hurner, Primary Teacher, Arleta School, Portland, Oregon

Claudia Person, Intermediate Teacher, Woodmere School, Portland Oregon

Quantitative and Qualitative Improvements in *“Trails to Literacy”* Schools

Speaker: Carolyn Moilanen, Portland Public Schools, Oregon

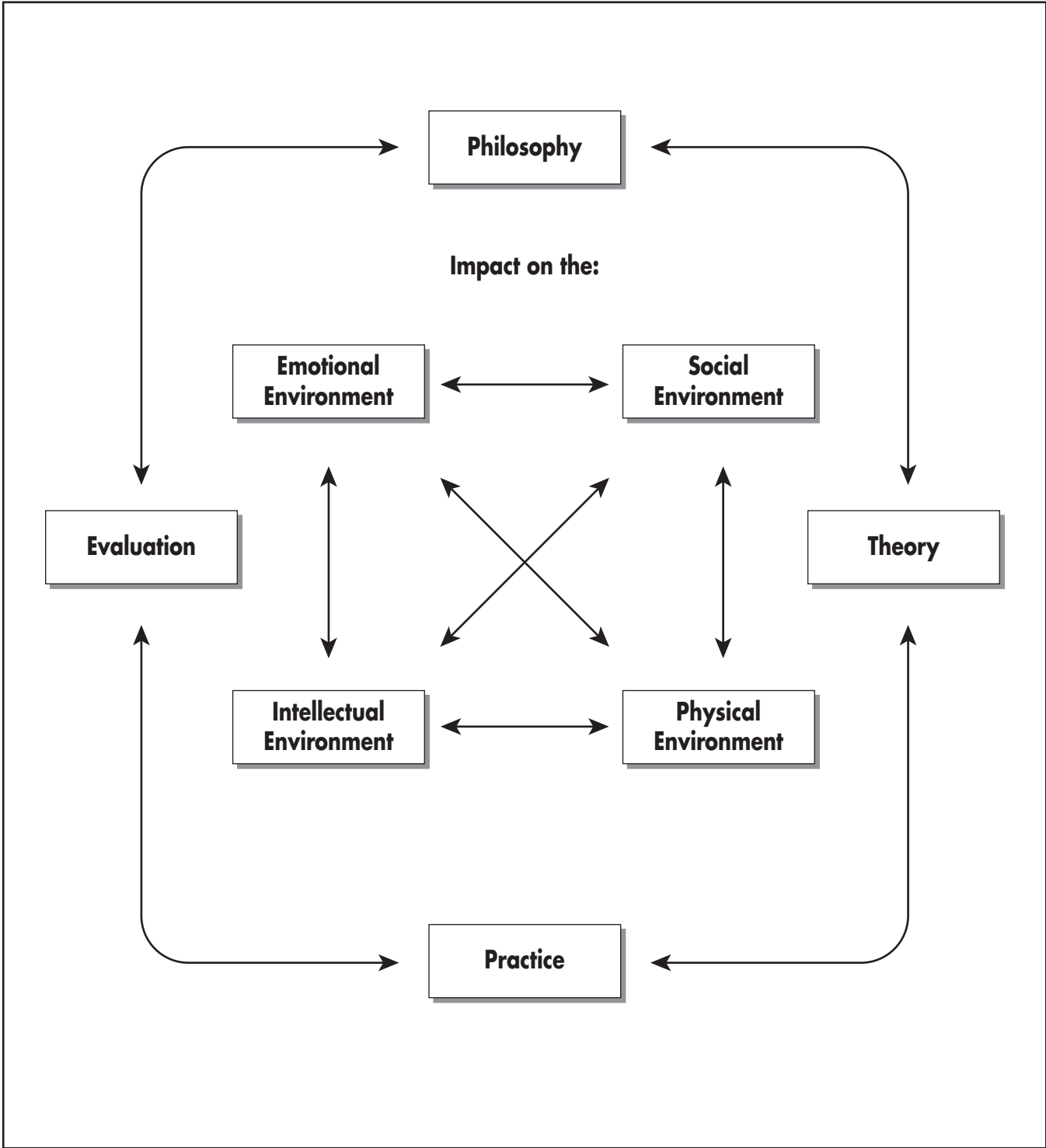
Strategic Planning: Long, Medium, and Short Term— Schoolwide Is the Key

Summary: Leanna Traill



Core values of comprehensive school reform

What happens in schools must be child-centered, meaning-centered, developmental and experience-based.



School research on change and school improvement

Research findings

Application in Portland project schools

Sustained administrative support provides material, resources and training

(Mc Greal, Huberman & Miles)

- Principal ensures there is moral and resource support and release time for staff

Collaboration

(Lieberman & Miller; Bierly & Berliner)

- Sharing is encouraged between participating schools, during in-school workshops, meetings, institutes and within project teams; (staff, principal and TTL consultants)

Context affects school improvement process

(Griffin)

- Site-based project allows for customized program to meet individual school needs

Need for written but flexible plan

(Miller & Sellar)

- Each school in conjunction with TTL consultants, prepares a written development plan

Focus on institutionalization

- Program incorporated into budget and school policy

The importance of the principal as change agent and curriculum leader

(Perky & Smith, Berman, Greenwood, McLaughlin & Prince)

- Principal is involved in training with staff and receives additional training to enhance this role
- *Trails to Literacy* Curriculum Leadership Training

Importance of a lieutenant

(Hall & Hord)

- In-school facilitators are identified and supported to assist with development and 'maintaining momentum' of program

Importance of common vision

(Peters & Waterman, Huberman & Miles)

- Principals and teachers develop a school vision for literacy and learn how to materialize this school-wide

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Research findings on professional development

Research findings

Application in Portland project schools

Must be ongoing

(Fullan, Guskey)

- Cumulative over a number of years

Must be individualized

(Sprintball & Theis-Sprintball)

- Site based approach
- Targeted teachers, individually and collectively

Should be an incremental program

(Sparks, Little)

- Step by step, building over an extended period
- Building on existing and new practices

Objectives must be clearly specified

(Miller & Seller)

- Specified development objectives continually reviewed and addressed

Must be grounded in practical reality of participants

(Doyle & Ponder)

- Based on individual needs of teachers with ongoing monitoring to make adjustment as appropriate

Must ensure new concepts and skills are applied in practical situations

(Guskey)

- Training is based on theoretical and proven practices with the major focus on individual teacher's classroom practices

Must provide feedback to classroom practitioners as they attempt to implement an innovation

(Seller, Howey & Vaughan)

- Feedback given to teachers during in-school workshops, planning sessions, after teacher observations in classrooms/videos and to whole school staff

Must acknowledge the importance of facilitators in staff development

(Guskey)

- In-school facilitators, especially the principals, are encouraged to take a curriculum leadership role

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Nau te rourou matauranga
Naku te rourou matauranga
Ka ora nga tamariki katoa.

*With your baskets of knowledge
And with our baskets of knowledge
All of our children will be well*

NZ Maori saying

Defining Trails

***Trails to Literacy* is not a program** or a supplement to a regular reading program. It is a theory-based pedagogy that, when infused within a regular program, prepares teachers to make sound instructional decisions about curriculum planning, key teaching approaches, classroom organization and management and monitoring and assessment procedures.

Trails to Literacy prepares teachers to make sound instructional decisions about all available materials, and to use them flexibly and effectively, according to group and individual learning needs. Informed selection and use of regular program materials is based on the strengths and needs of learners in such a way that they will accelerate comprehension and fluency and strengthen development in phonics and phonemic awareness.

Overview

***Trails to Literacy* is:-**

- A comprehensive, long term, school-based model of professional development designed to facilitate increased effectiveness in the teaching of reading, with an emphasis on improving overall literacy acquisition and achievement across the elementary school.
- An approach to professional development which is embedded in a team and peer coaching philosophy that simultaneously targets teaching and learning development at three levels - the individual teacher level, the same or cross-grade team level and the school-wide level.
- A unique model of school improvement that goes beyond standard instructional procedures. *Trails to Literacy* acknowledges that the learning potential of individual students is influenced and affected by emotional, physical, social and intellectual contexts of home and school.

Beliefs

The *Trails to Literacy* model of school improvement is built on the following beliefs:-

- Every child is a learner and a teacher.
Every teacher is a teacher and learner.
- Children learn in different ways.
Teachers teach in different ways.
- Children learn best when they learn with others.
Teachers teach best when they teach with others.
- Learning potentials and dispositions to learn are influenced by environmental contexts at home and at school.
Teaching potentials and dispositions to teach are influenced by environmental contexts at school.
- Learning to read, learning to write, and learning to spell are complex developmental language processes.
- Learning potentials are enhanced when there is cohesion, consistency, collaboration and cooperation in all modes of curriculum delivery, across all grades, school-wide.
- Learning and teaching are strengthened when families are involved, informed, supported, included and educated in ways to support their children at home.
- Learning and teaching are most effective when there is strong leadership and support for a school-wide vision, with commitment, collaboration, demonstration, coaching, practice, responsive feedback, reflective analysis, high expectations, trust and satisfaction.

Major goals

To improve reading instruction and achievement through a comprehensive, balanced, school-wide approach to literacy instruction.

The approach is characterized by enhanced conditions of learning that are implemented by teachers in every classroom, grade to grade, year to year.

To implement a collaborative system for self, peer, and team appraisal of literacy teaching and learning for the entire school.

This system requires consistent and on-going assessment integrated within the curriculum plan for reading to ensure that students are moving toward clearly defined objectives, and that teachers and teams are moving toward clearly defined improvement goals. The appraisal system calls for stock-taking at regular intervals to evaluate the extent to which the school is making a difference in moving students toward the standards and expected levels of achievement.

Theory/research foundation

Trails to Literacy is a professional development program based on Brian Cambourne's "Conditions of Learning" theory about language learning. The conditions of learning framework is presented in Cambourne's *The Whole Story: Natural Learning and the Acquisition of Literacy in the Classroom* (1998).

The Conditions of Learning (*Immersion, Demonstration, Engagement, Expectation, Responsibility, Approximation, Use, Response*) underpin a theoretical framework that explains how language is acquired, how learning to read is

To develop and maintain a clearly defined school curriculum plan for literacy with an emphasis on reading and writing.

Such a plan supports cohesive and strategic school-wide curriculum and instructional planning procedures that enhance literacy teaching and learning.

- Planning is collaborative, strategic and for the long term, medium term and short-term.
- Planning is school-wide to ensure that standards and district curriculum syllabi are being covered with attention to balance, differentiation and repeated exposure to conceptual understandings that endure over time.
- Planning ensures that achievement expectations relate to, and can be assessed against, State goals and interim benchmarks so that students move steadily forward, towards expected outcomes.

supported, how skilled readers' learning is extended, and how specified instructional approaches help children who are struggling to learn to read and write.

Each of Cambourne's conditions is supported by a sub-set of research findings that elucidate why and how the conditions and related instructional practices contribute to student achievement in reading (Holdaway, 1979; Smith, 1982; Cambourne, 1987, 1988; Allen & Mason, 1989; Pressley et al, 1999).

Professional development

- The professional development of *Trails to Literacy* is job-embedded, intensive, includes training in both theory and practice, and provides ongoing follow-up and classroom support for continuing improvement,
- *Trails* emphasizes individual teacher growth and whole school improvement with an intensive coaching model that involves staff in observations, demonstrations and reflective conversations.
- The professional development is purposefully structured to pay less attention to “targeting children” and more attention to “targeting classroom conditions for learning.” This allows a results-focused and culturally sensitive approach to teaching reading and writing.
- *Trails’* consultants are on-site for approximately 15 consultant days during the regular school year. Rotating substitutes release teachers to participate in individual and small-group job-embedded professional development within their own classrooms and with their own students.
- These elements - theory explanation, defining teaching approaches, demonstrations, observations, practice with responsive feedback and coaching comprise the professional development component of *Trails to Literacy*.

Curriculum planning

Rationale: - *Trails to Literacy* facilitates strategic, long, mid and short range planning school-wide because it:-

- Clarifies collective responsibilities across all grade levels for ensuring that children meet and exceed bench marks.
- Ensures identification of children needing acceleration, and ensures that they receive more targeted, specific and direct small group or individualized instruction.
- Encourages shared ideas and expertise among colleagues.
- Informs and strengthens roles of support staff.
- Informs families in advance and retrospectively.
- Ensures assessment is on-going, relevant and instructionally informative,
- Is a strategic approach to ensuring curriculum coverage, consistency of contextualized and differentiated instruction and cumulative conceptual development year by year.

Key teaching approaches

Reading and writing are complex systems of comprehending and expressing meaning in print. Successful reading and writing have several features which students must be able to demonstrate across multiple text types. It requires:

- self motivation to read and to write,
- sufficient background information and vocabulary to foster reading comprehension,
- skills and knowledge to understand how phonemes, or units of sound in speech, are related and connected to letters and clusters of letters in print,
- ability to use this knowledge to decode, and encode unfamiliar words,
- ability to read fluently with expression,

- development of an appropriate range of strategies for problem-solving meaning in print.

Trails instructional focus includes: language experience, shared reading, guided reading, independent reading, all integrated with regular writing, speaking and listening.

Within each approach, *comprehension* (literal, inferential, analytical), *accuracy* (comprehension and decoding) and *fluency*, (notion of speed, and competency to decode words at 95% accuracy) with explicit attention to problem solving strategies including phonics and phonemic awareness are coached.

Trails involves coaching teachers in understanding how, when, why and with whom to use a range of strategies flexibly, to be maximally effective.

Assessment

Trails to Literacy guides teachers to embed assessment within their regular classroom instruction as an integral and continuous process.

Trails sets out a range of assessment procedures for identifying students' strengths and needs for instruction in each reading program component.

Trails coaches teachers in skills for close observation of learning behavior, data collection and summary and analysis of data to inform short and long-term instructional decisions.

Trails emphasizes a consistent approach to assessment and guides schools to;

- develop diagnostic and formative assessments integral to planning and teaching;
- develop effective school-wide systems for recording and summarizing progress and achievement between benchmark measures;
- use assessment information to shape instructional decisions and provide regular feedback to teachers, students and parents.

Appraisal

The main objectives of the appraisal component of Trails to Literacy are to:

- Improve learning outcomes for students in literacy by improving the quality of teaching and learning.
- Integrate the policies, practices, standards and procedures with the strategic goals and objectives of the school.
- Set agreed performance expectations and development objectives with each teacher, with teams, and with the principal that contribute to the school's literacy objectives.
- Focus teacher appraisal on a clearly defined set of professional standards that are collaboratively developed in line with the school-wide literacy objectives.

Teaching and learning - Summer Institutes

The Institutes are **annual Summer** events that are intensive five day professional development courses for enhancing literacy teaching and learning in Elementary and Middle Schools. Literacy Learning NZ Ltd offers four Institutes, anyone of which is available to be bought to school districts by arrangement directly with Leanna Traill at leanna@literacy.co.nz

Over the past eight years, principals and teachers from participating *Trails to Literacy* schools have found that attendance at one or more of the Institutes greatly accelerated the process of achieving schoolwide reform.

Each day:

- A general session will set the theoretical theme.
- In-depth strand sessions will take theory into grade appropriate classroom application.
- Specialized afternoon workshops will refine teaching techniques.
- And reflection and discussion time will help clarify new directions.

Additional and critical component

Attendance by principals and teams from participating and other schools. The focus is on all elements of a comprehensive balanced approach to literacy instruction Pre K - 6.

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Outcomes in the classroom

Teachers will be:-

- demonstrating that they believe all students can learn and be successful.
- demonstrating that they have high but not unrealistic expectations of students' learning abilities.
- regularly demonstrating the processes and strategies for using a range of genres in a range of learning activities.
- reinforcing learning behaviors as well as learned behavior by providing objective, constructive and positive feedback to students both informally and formally in day to day teaching.
- planning for individual and group needs based on diagnostic information which identifies students' strengths, instructional needs, and monitors levels of achievement

Classrooms will:-

- reflect the voices, theories, questions, ideas and interests of the students.
- become increasingly language rich - both physically and verbally.
- be organized to ensure maximum engagement in learning activities by students.
- have a wide range of materials available and accessible to students.
- increase displays of published students' work.
- show routines are in place and students are taking responsibility for self management with confidence.

Students will be:-

- given, and be taking, more responsibility for their own learning and for managing and developing the classroom environment.
- confidently engaging in literacy activities and integrating the modes of language effectively and appropriately.
- confident to take risks in language usage, and learning to learn from their own approximations..
- motivated, largely on-task and receiving and giving feedback on their own learning processes, and those of their peers, in a constructive manner.

***Trails to Literacy* differs from many typical reading programs in that it is a unique form of long term, site based, professional development for improving overall literacy teaching and learning, thereby raising levels of achievement for every child. This model is successful in bringing about enduring and cultural changes in schools because it;**

- **Is coordinated**, organized, systematic and dynamic,
- **Is not supplementary** or additional but infusive, job embedded, accessible and enduring,
- **Challenges educational thinking** and involves close examination of reading research and current teaching practices,
- **Is responsive** to cultural and individual differences among teachers and students,
- **Involves classroom observations**, lesson demonstrations, coaching, practice and responsive feedback,
- **Is not reliant on prescribed materials** or limited by prescriptive programs,
- **Is action research driven**,
- **Expects team and school-wide commitment** to provide consistency,
- **Encourages team and peer coaching**, school-wide and inter-school,
- **Establishes systems** for strategic long and mid range planning to include: the State and District requirements for balanced curriculum delivery, on-going assessments that shape instructional decisions,
- **Supports principals and teachers** in establishing school-wide systems and ultimately to take control of their own long term training needs.

Quantitative improvements

Trails to Literacy is near completion of its fifth year with three flagship schools, and currently, thirteen schools are participating in the project. While extensive data is not yet available, the following information taken from the 1999 Summary and Review of Progress documents achievements to date.

It is exciting to note that student achievement is increasing as early as the second year of the project. Woodmere featured in a Metro North West article as one of eleven schools in the Portland metro area that showed the largest gains in third grade reading in the 1998-1999 school year. We are also buoyed by the two following reports from Woodmere and Arleta Schools.

From the Woodmere survey of Fall -Winter 1998 scores summary: "The Literacy scores provide evidence of considerable student growth over the past three months. Assessment demonstrates:

- 76% of first graders are at grade level or above
- 77% of second graders are at grade level or above
- 77% of third graders are at grade level or above
- 62% of fourth graders are at grade level or above
- 63% of fifth graders are at grade level or above"

Arleta - 09/99 "Our test results, as one indicator, have clearly reflected our movement in teaching and learning. All children gained between 3-15 percentile points in math and reading".

Quotes from the 2001 Literacy Program Evaluation of the Portland Research, Evaluation and Assessment Department:

"Teachers in the *Trails* schools reported a great deal of confidence in their ability to identify students' individual instructional needs (mean 4.2 out of 5). Teachers cited the benefit of this model to build consistency in reading instruction within the building as a particular strength in development reading achievement..." p.18

"Teachers view *Trails* as having the greatest impact on their on-going assessment of reading, students' reading comprehension and concepts about print." p.19

Qualitative improvements

In just two years participating schools find that the qualitative improvements are significant and become the key to improving performance and accelerating growth in **quantitative** achievement for students individually, across grade levels, and the school as a whole.

There is:

- **Less isolation** of teachers and a huge leap in confidence to share ideas and teaching strategies.
- **Greater interaction** between teachers at grade level, and throughout the school, as a result of team planning, class visits and targeted professional development at all levels - individual, team, school and inter-school.
- **A high level of teacher motivation,** confidence and skills to improve literacy teaching and student achievement.
- **A significant attitudinal change** in the way teachers view literacy.
- **The development of strategic long-term curriculum planning school-wide** with medium-term (units of work) being developed by inter-grade level teams, to support the year long plans.
- **Recognition of importance of Cambourne's conditions** of learning and the application of these in their day to day teaching.

- **Higher teacher expectations** of students in learning and literacy acquisition.
- **A greater emphasis on flexible group teaching** and a more interactive, student centered approach to teaching and learning.

- **Increased awareness of the collective responsibility** all teachers have for improving achievement for all students across all grade levels in the school.

What the teachers are saying

“Woodmere’s School Improvement Plan and Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Project are built upon the success experienced during our work with *Trails to Literacy*. Our experience has magnified the importance of a building based professional development model which forms the foundations for true change over time. Recognizing our own strengths and building upon them has provided the acknowledgment and feedback necessary for all staff to be involved. The success of our students in literacy, and our staff in teaching, keeps us all going in a positive direction with a clear focus. Thank you! **We are all on the trail**”.

Vonnie Haley-Condon, Principal, Woodmere School

“*Trails to Literacy* helps all types of students to learn. My classroom has a variety of learners and trying to teach any unit that reaches the whole class is very difficult. *Trails* has taught me the skills to reach all of my students and help every student learn. I would recommend this program to any teacher who is trying to be the master teacher that schools deserve.”

Samantha Christensen, Third Grade Teacher, W.L. Henry Elementary

“I’ve learned that I need to observe children more to help me understand why they act or think the way they do.”

Rosa Tavera, Assistant, W.L. Henry Elementary

“Through working with *Trails* our staff has become much more united in speaking the same literacy language. One of the greatest successes has been the involvement of our large number of Title I and ESL Instructional Assistants. *Trails’* consultants have enabled them to become more confident and effective literacy instructors.”

Connie Bettencourt, Title One Coordinator

“Leanna and the *Trails* team have helped to improve our school-wide literacy program immensely. They have also assisted our grade level teams in coordinating extensive year-long curriculum plans, focusing on the bench marks students need to achieve.”

Nicole Kish, W.L. Henry Elementary

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ConnectED Article - March 2000

Special programs focus on literacy

Portland School District's focus on literacy includes three grant-funded programs that are helping more children learn to read and write. *Trails to Literacy*, Success for All (SFA) and CORE (Consortium on Reading Excellence) all focus on literacy teaching and learning. This month, ConnectED looks at *Trails to Literacy*, a New Zealand based teacher training program.

Arleta, Woodmere and Sunnyside elementaries are in the final year of a three year grant to bring *Trails to Literacy* to their classrooms. Four more schools - Alameda, Sitton, Lewis and Hollyrood began working with the program this year.

Teaching strategies emphasized

"We've embraced *Trails to Literacy* because it's a philosophy that focuses on process and strategies, rather than a 'canned' approach," says Lynn Shlom-Ferguson, principal at Arleta Elementary. Leanna Traill and her team visits schools three times a year to work directly with classroom teachers. They advise on all aspects of teaching - taking a schoolwide view, observing individual teachers in their classrooms and meeting with grade-level teams. They also hold a summer institute for teachers from any school. "Leanna puts theory into practice" says Patty Braunger, Literacy Resource Team member. "Teachers watch her teach their students and they also observe other teachers in their classrooms. They use feedback, team building and peer coaching - lots of shared 'teacher talk'," she says. "The process shows teachers what their teaching really looks like in the classroom, and helps build consistency in the building."

Program is articulated

Shlom-Ferguson describes that consistency as "teachers speaking the same language." Because the program is articulated from grade to grade, a kindergarten teacher can talk to a fifth-grade teacher - a teacher from another school - using the same terminology. And since literacy is interwoven through all other content areas, the *Trails to Literacy* approach helps define conditions for learning throughout the curriculum.

Traill also facilitates a collective visit in which the collaborating schools share strategies and best practices. Between visits, project schools work on recommendations and ideas that come out of the sessions, share long-range planning and visit classrooms in other project schools. "The integrated, holistic approach really empowers teachers," Shlom-Ferguson says "I strongly believe this is the right approach to reading."

Trails history

Literacy Learning (NZ) Ltd was established by Leanna Traill in 1992 and facilitators have provided extensive educational consultancy services throughout the United States of America.

Trails to Literacy - A School-wide Approach was developed by Leanna Traill in collaboration with Ash Newth a New Zealand Ministry of Education Administrator/Consultant experienced in the design and implementation of school-wide improvement models in over six hundred schools in New Zealand, and in schools internationally.

Thirteen elementary schools within the Portland area have joined *Trails to Literacy* between 1997 and 2002.

Leanna Traill



Leanna Traill is first and foremost a teacher. She is a well known educator who has conducted workshops and seminars in the United States and internationally for the past fifteen years. During her 27 years in education Leanna has taught in both regular and special education classrooms. She is a trained Reading Recovery teacher and has held positions of Assistant Principal, Principal of an elementary school, Advisor to Junior Classes and Inspector of Schools with the Department of Education in New Zealand.

She played an integral role in developing in-service courses for staff development, programs for curriculum development, policy implementation and assessment and evaluation in the New Zealand educational system.

Leanna has consulted extensively throughout forty five States of the United States of America and is a frequent guest

keynote and featured speaker, institute and workshop presenter at world, National, State and District conferences. These include I.R.A., Reading Recovery, Bi-Lingual Ed, Migrant Ed, Chapter 1, Special Ed, Early Childhood, Head Start, Principal/Administrator Associations and Parent Education conferences.

She has written, developed and presented professional videos including:

- The Wobbly Tooth - Guided Reading - Learning to Read
- Learning Running Records
- Using Running Records
- What to Do With the Others
- Art to Dye For
- Aa to Zz of AlphaPlus
- A fifteen hour video Graduate Course on Early Literacy.

Leanna is author of seven little books for children, the Guided Reading Teachers' Resource Books for Celebration Press, USA and Highlight my Strengths - Rigby, USA.

Leanna is a bi-cultural, bilingual Maori-Pakeha New Zealander, whose love of children of all ages and cultures forms the basis for all her presentations and especially for her book, *"Highlight My Strengths", Assessment and Evaluation of Literacy Teaching and Learning.*

Other facilitators

Trails to Literacy facilitators bring extensive experience and expertise in literacy education. All have an uncompromising commitment to teachers, children and learning.

NZ facilitators are experienced highly effective classroom teachers, and departmental and/or school administrators. Each has participated in many local and national curriculum

development and implementation initiatives, and have taken leadership roles in professional development programs and training for teachers in New Zealand and in the USA.

USA facilitators receive on-going training and support, to extend and provide leadership density at each site.

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Contact us

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