

2017  
BLCTSI  
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University

# Reading Specialist

The Role of A Reading Specialist  
in Supporting Struggling Readers



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Building Leadership for Change Through School Immersion

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# INTRODUCTION

Reading is a key to success in school for students of all ages. Reading is an extremely essential skill that equips individuals with the ability to interact with written texts. Students who are good readers find it easier to do well in other subjects, because so much of learning depends on the ability to learn. From history to science to geography to math word problems, reading is an important part of learning in every school subjects.

In my proposal, there is considerable focus on the development of struggling students in terms of literacy and reading skills in Saudi Arabia. Facilitating fluency and comprehension, there are numerous skills for students to learn and for teachers to teach. This development intends to highlight pertinent questions concerning development of reading and literacy among the students in Saudi Arabia.

What if the students are still struggling in reading or writing skills in middle and even high school? What if the regular teacher isn't fully qualified in teaching reading skills to follow up on the student learning in reading proficiency?

What if the student continues bearing this academic gap along with him or her in the next following grade? These incentive questions would be a key to help resolve this academic gap among the students. In the beginning of 2016, the National Transformation Program 2020 was started with Ministry of Education's participation in country's sectors. The challenges faced by education were compiled, general objectives of education were stated, and also educational realization initiatives were developed and carried out towards achieving the Vision 2030.

One of these initiatives is the professional development program targeting educators to be trained in the best world universities. Saint Louis University in United States of America is one of the best universities that I have been trained and immersed in the American public schools under the program of BLCTSI (Building Leadership for Change Through School Immersion) with the aim of transforming the best educational practices applied throughout the American learning environment to our education in Saudi Arabia. One of the best practices I have found and learned is targeting the struggling students in reading at all grade levels with intensity in Elementary and Middle Schools.





## The Background of the Problem




It is essential to note that the teachers should be proficient when it comes to teaching about reading strategies and the students to master the reading skills to comprehend the assigned reading text. This is a required task that can only be made possible through matching the needs of students with appropriate learning instruction. However, comprehension strategies are essential when it comes to enhancing reading progress.

Studies on the efficient teaching of reading skills have, in recent times, dwelt on the use of computers (MacGregor, 1988; Knaack, 2003; Johnson, Perry & Shamir, 2010) or considered the role of information technology, such as the Internet (Laborda, 2007). This proposal deals with the impact of instructional design on the development of students' reading skills. It intends to conduct a formative or internal evaluation of the instructional designs or strategies for teaching reading skills to Saudi Arabian students. Another purpose of this proposal is to enable teachers to monitor the progress of the targeted students when it comes to learning to read. This will also play a vital role in helping teachers to assess the suitability of their preferred teaching strategies.



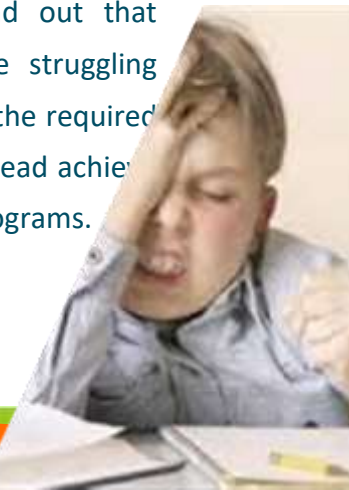
## The Problem Statement

The students who are below level and still struggling with the reading skills in the current grade level may continue struggling with the weaknesses and to great extent they bear the same weaknesses with the next school year without effective intervention and a comprehensive remedial plan due to the possible reasons:

-  Ineffective and inadequate remedial plan which is limited only to the teacher
-  Not fully qualified teachers in teaching the reading skills.
-  The large number of students in the class make the teacher hardly focus on each student's need.



In the American school Immersion, I found out that intensive remedial reading program target the struggling readers to help them move forward and acquire the required skills so that they avoid late intervention and instead achieve prevention through applying multiple effective programs. (prevent poor learning outcomes).





**PROBLEM-  
BASED  
SURVEY  
2017**

**A Survey Based on the Reading Difficulties Among School Students  
Conducted by BLCTSI Cohort and Other Educators from Public  
Schools in Saudi Arabic.**





The intervention therefore needs to be developed for the struggling readers through answering the following questions:



### The Primary Goal

To help struggling students develop proficient reading skills by receiving extra reading classes that will contribute to their academic growth and guide them from struggling to the advanced level through a remedial reading program by specially trained teachers called Reading Specialists.



Supporting Goals: the Role of The Reading Specialist in three specific areas;



### Instruction

Work extensively with students to help them improve specific reading skills such as decoding, fluency, comprehension strategies or even writing skills, either

individually or in a small groups.



### Assessment

Evaluate, assess, and follow up the students until they reach

the required or advanced level.



### Leadership

Help teachers diagnose reading strengths and weaknesses and match these skills with appropriate techniques and materials through Leading PLC (Professional Learning Community) to provide PD (Professional Development).

Keep the parents informed to the purposes and progress of the reading program.

# MAIN OBJECTIVES BASED ON THREE

1. **Academic and Instruction Leadership**
2. **School Management and Technical Leadership**
3. **Stakeholders Relations and Leadership**

★ **THE ACTION  
PLAN OF THE  
OBJECTIVES  
ATTACHED IN  
THE END OF  
THE BOOKLET**

★ **THE PROPOSED  
TIMELINE:  
(2018 : 2023)  
FIVE YEARS**

## PLAN DESCRIPTION BASED ON THE THREE STRANDS

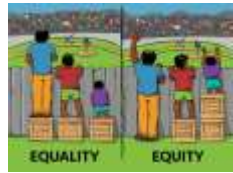
### 1 Leadership . Academic and Instructional

Academic and instructional leadership has been addressed effectively in the school buildings I have visited through immersion phase which promotes quality and equity in learning instruction. In my school Immersion, I have learned that all grade students from K-12 are exposed to reading comprehension assessments three times a year in



order to determine below level readers who are then given extra and intensive reading programs focusing on decoding, fluency, and comprehension reading skills. Since in my country some students are still struggling in reading, they more likely bear with the weaknesses all way with them to the next grades.

In my immersion at Holman Middle School, the school adopted a comprehensive reading program called Reading Plus which is



designed specifically for struggling readers. It is a program managed by special teachers named Reading Specialists. They give the specific instruction to a particular student and work directly with struggling readers, either individually or in small groups. From one of the educational seminars provided at Saint Louis University by Dr. Jaime Welborn, the American schools apply a program called RTI (Response to Intervention). It is a process used to identify students at risk of failing in all core subjects and provide targeted teaching and instruction to help them improve based on three tiers. This is a part of a bigger process called Multi-Tier System of Supports (MTSS). According to my final proposal, Reading Specialists play a central role in RTI as kids move through the three tiers of support so they can determine which students would benefit from intervention. This kind of system enhance one of the outcomes, quality learning and instruction at the center of every student's attention as well as diversity that serve equity in addition to quality learning.

Teacher background knowledge is a key component to successful reading intervention. Targeted teachers should have in-depth knowledge about teaching reading skills to be qualified as Reading Specialists through special training program obtained from pertinent universities in U.S.A. as MD master degree in Reading Specialization. They thereby can provide leadership as a resource to other educators, parents and the community and focus on providing professional development for teachers by providing them with the additional support needed to implement various instructional programs and practices. This emphasizes the professional development which is one

of the strand outcome that serves as PLC (professional learning communities) in their school by ongoing professional development and job-embedded learning. Upon returning Saudi Arabia, I will propose the key role of Reading Specialists in supporting struggling readers effectively especially in Elementary and Middle schools to take the necessary initiative to implement the plan to achieve the academic and instructional leadership.



The Action Plan of the strand attached in the end of the the booklet.



## 2. School Management and Technical Leadership

School management and technology is the second important leadership addressed effectively in the school observation and immersion phase. Through immersion, building observations, and interviews with staff utilizing technology, I came to the conclusion that the effective use of technology vastly support the management of the school's educational data, instructional library and media center system. In terms of my goal of supporting the struggling readers, a particular technical system called (Reading Plus), which is an enormous online reading program designed to improve students' abilities to read faster, comprehend better, and learn new vocabulary. It is applied at Holman Middle School which enables Reading Specialists easily and effectively to determine the weaknesses and strengths for each targeted student as well as enhancing the instructional assessment and evaluation. It can easily follow each struggling student's progress and achievement and push them to the advanced level of reading.

Likewise, in Robinson Elementary School a digital library application called Epic, through which all students assigned to read, offers a brilliant way to harness the enthusiasm of young readers with lots of great books that they can explore their interests and learn with instant, unlimited access to 25,000 high-quality ebooks, audiobooks, learning videos, and quizzes enhancing the reading skills. Drummond Elementary School applies a program called Reading Online Blitz. Blitz is designed

specifically for students who read less accurately than expected because they lack key foundational skills. This technical program helps engage students of all ages with its fun, interactive lessons and reading support due to technology-integrated learning. Moreover, technology also plays a vital role in the independent reading in the school library through the Accelerated Reader program which is a computerized program that tests reading comprehension. Students select books on their reading level, read independently, and take an independent comprehension test on the computer. Technology also plays a complementary role in strengthening the comprehension reading in the school library through a computational system. It provides each student with his/her own code number to facilitate the process of checking in and out any book of from the library. From the seminar titled "Integration of Technology Education" held at Pattonville School District, I have learned that the more technology is integrated into teaching and learning the better the students become enthusiastic and motivated to learn and read.



The Action Plan of the strand attached in the end of the booklet

## 3. Stakeholders Relations and



Stakeholders Relations and Leadership is defined as networking and communicating in alignment with the two program outcomes; school-to-school networks to speed up diffusion of innovation and engaging students ' families effectively and strengthening partnerships with the school community, including the private sector.

From the seminar held at the University named Community and Family Partnerships with six types of investment ensures the significant impact of engaging students families and community partnership on students learning performance that appeared clearly in the school Immersion. Holding a continuous monthly meeting to promote relationships between parents and teachers through PTO (Parent-Teacher Organization) results in discussion and feedback from parents that help teachers innovate instructions to students' needs. For teachers, the relationship is beneficial to work with the parents for planning purposes to ensure the PTO group complements the mission of the school and classroom while being involved in your child's school life is critically important. As for parents, being part of PTO is a great way to stay informed and involved via (emails, website, social media, flyers, etc.) and through Weekly Home Newsletter as well. It is an

electronic flyer goes to parents to highlight different student and teacher work and provide features ongoing .



One of illustrations of the parents involvement in reading is to encourage parents to fill the reading kit in which the parents sit with their children at the minimum of ten minutes to read together and have discussion on what they have read. Moreover, strengthening partnerships with school community is a complementary role in enhancing students' reading achievement. Invite one of the most popular bookstore such as Jarir Library to establish reading sessions by either volunteers or paid proficient readers to elementary students in the hall of



library twice a week. This would build effective communication for children to build a good habit of reading on regular basis beyond the school walls.



The Action Plan of the strand attached in the end of the booklet

## SUSTAINABILITY AND ASSESSMENT

Sustainable development can be seen as an unending process to be defined not only by fixed goals or the specific means of achieving the main goal but also by an approach to create change through continuous learning and adaptation. From the seminar lectured by the professor Karen Tichy titled (Evaluating Educational Program), I have learned how the proposal

can be evaluated five years from now in relation to predetermined goals through answering main questions below:

- ★ What is the need the proposal addresses?
- ★ What are activities constitute the program design?
- ★ What does implementation look like?
- ★ What results does the program seek to achieve?
- ★ What is the level of results at which the program is worth the cost in resources?
- ★ **Resources include; people, facilities, funding, and time.**

### The Indicators for my Proposal Success:

Decrease the ratio of the struggling readers to not more than 5 per cent

Implement the plan close to the proposed timeline of five years.

Gain positive feedback collected from reading specialists, students, parents and other participants team on the struggling readers performance

- ★ Host more student attendees to read independently in the school library
- ★ Assess consistently the data on the struggling readers performance
- ★ Participate in the Arab Reading Challenge to showcase the character, culture and personality achieved by mastering reading skills.
- ★ Evaluate the outcomes annually by conducting a questionnaire and survey from different group of people to update the program to the stated criterions.

“Prevention  
is better  
than  
curing “



VISION رؤية  
2030

## Conclusion



As being said in a proverb “ preventing the problem is better than curing it”, preventing the likely rise of struggling readers is the implementation of early intervention. The main objective of the proposal is to support the struggling students to read, be educated, and open-minded generation of citizens. Reading Specialists, who present an essential role in

achieving the goal through the proposed actionable plans, is considered one of the basic <sup>The Action Plan</sup> initiatives to ensure educated, self-confident, critical thinking citizens that guide the nation to the ambition of vision 2030 in Saudi Arabia.



**Building Leadership for Change Through School Immersion  
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