

# Spotlight on the Reading First Teacher Education Network Initiative

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As a participant in the first RFTEN seminar for faculty, it was obvious to me that this initiative is an excellent project for positively impacting the reading teacher education programs at historically black institutions. Excitement abounded as reading faculty from the various institutions nationwide participated in activities for building a RFTEN learning community. During the two-day session, participants engaged in activities related to integrating scientifically-based reading research (SBRR) strategies in their reading curricula. Furthermore, state, national and program standards were also presented as agents for change in reading programs. Other content presented for affecting change included the organizational model of assessing, educating, coaching, and collaborating. All topics were extremely timely for understanding the components that will make this project a success.

Although reading faculty at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) have a wealth of knowledge and expertise in teaching reading, my impression was that participating faculty felt this initiative would broaden their knowledge base in three ways: (1) it would review the present scientifically-based reading research

strategies that must be the driving force for teacher candidates and in-service teachers, (2) it would allow faculty to network and share ideas with an outstanding HBCU reading faculty learning community and the national RFTEN consultants, and (3) it would provide excellent resources such as the Online Teacher Reading Academy which is intended to make a major difference in practices for teaching reading.

I believe the greatest challenge for implementing the project is time constraints. Because of faculty teaching responsibilities, committee work, research projects, student advising and others, it will mean focusing on the integration of SBRR to the extent that it holds equal importance.

I view the Reading First Teacher Education Network as a vehicle for evaluating and upgrading current practices for preparing pre-service teachers for teaching reading. Reading is the most important subject because of its implications across the curriculum and its implications for children's success. Consequently, the goal of the RFTEN project is to assist the College of Education's Reading Programs with the long-term objective of helping schools with requirements mandated by "No Child Left Behind" legislation.

*Congratulations to the RFTEN project staff!*

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