Critical Actors

- Haan Foundation for Children
  - Organized overall effort
- Florida State University
  - Overall study direction for intervention and evaluation
- Mathematica Policy Research
  - Leading the impact study and data collection
- American Institutes for Research
  - Leading implementation study
- Allegheny Intermediate Unit
  - Involved in all phases, particularly intervention component
Points to Cover

- Context and Research Questions
- Study Design
- Challenges
  - Evaluator’s perspective
  - Participant’s Perspective
Context and Questions

- About 40% of the nation’s 4th graders have not reached their appropriate reading level.
- 30% of elementary, middle, and high school students have reading problems that limit their ultimate educational attainment.
- Reading First will probably help some of these children, but not all of them.
- Recent research, conducted in clinical settings, has shown that intensive and well implemented instruction can accelerate reading skills of children.
Can remedial reading interventions make a substantial impact on the reading achievement of children?

Can the interventions affect all critical reading skills (e.g., accuracy, comprehension, fluency)?

Do some students benefit more than other students?

What intervention approaches make the most difference and for whom?
Context and Questions (cont.)

- Interventions
  - Selection of interventions
  - Pull-out program
  - Three students per teacher
  - Five days a week for about 1 hour per day
  - Average of 100 hours of instruction
  - Reading instruction emphasis
    - Phonemic word-level interventions
      - Establishing phonemic awareness, decoding skills, and reading fluency
    - Word-level plus comprehension
      - Balance between building word-level skills and vocabulary and comprehension strategies
P4K Design

- Recruitment of schools
  - Intervention
  - Evaluation
  - On-site coordinator

- Experimental design
  - 40 school units randomly assigned to one of four treatment conditions
  - Eligible students within schools randomly assigned to T and C conditions
Educational Service Agency (ESA)

- 600 in 41 States
- Different names – serve clusters of school districts
  - I.U., B.O.C.E.S, ESD, E.S.C., County Offices
- Serve 81% of all students
- 79% of all K-12 education staff are in schools served by E.S.A.’s
Challenges for the Evaluator

- Interaction between the intervention and the evaluation
  - Approval of school boards
  - Recruitment of teachers for instruction
  - Need for quick RA for teachers to be instructed in the delivery of specific interventions
- Limited information about how many eligible students we could expect in each school
  - Construction of instructional groups
    - Ideal is 6 students per group and 4 controls
    - Issues around other combinations (e.g., 7 students)
    - Siblings – both to T or C, or split them up
Challenges for the Participants

- Climate and culture of school/district
- Overcoming philosophical differences
  - Ensuring commitment to scientific based research
  - “Local Control” issues
Challenges for the Participants

- Accessing decision makers within a district --
  Communication between superintendents, curriculum coordinators, principals and others
  - Issues of timing
  - Who really makes the decision?
  - Board approval
Challenges for the Participants

- Union Issues in teacher selection and placement
  - Teacher assessments
  - Seniority vs. best candidate in teacher nominations
  - Posting of positions
  - 42 different union contracts

- Responsibility of school districts to students in the control group
  - Ethical “withholding” interventions
Challenges for the Participants

- Delivery of services through a “pull-out” program
  - Scheduling students
  - Missing instruction
  - Screening and assessing of students
    - time commitment and scheduling conflicts; allowing
      “outsiders” student access