

# Turning the Page: Refocusing Massachusetts for Reading Success

## Study Summary

**Overview:** Strategies for Children, Inc. has commissioned Nonie Lesaux, Marie and Max Kargman Associate Professor in Human Development and Urban Education Advancement at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, to examine the status and development of literacy skills among Massachusetts young children through fourth grade. Of key interest is improving understanding of external and in-school factors that may help explain the lack of progress on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) third grade reading exam dating back to 2001. This work ultimately seeks to identify and expand understanding of barriers to achieving reading proficiency in Massachusetts for the purpose of crafting recommendations to inform state and local education policy and practice. Recommendations will address the full range of factors that influence children's early literacy development, including school, early childhood, family, and community.

**Methodology:** Research will be based on a comprehensive document review, including reports and evaluations produced by the U.S. Department of Education and the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, and the analysis of existing and available data on children's literacy development through fourth grade. Depending on the quality of available data, advanced statistical methods (e.g. regression analysis) may be used to control for multiple factors associated with child performance outcomes to better explain gains (or the lack thereof) in reading proficiency.

**Desired Outcomes:** While there is documented evidence that reading proficiency rates are at unacceptably low levels in Massachusetts, especially among low-income students, and have remained stagnant, there is not research-based consensus regarding why there has been such limited progress. This project will produce recommendations to inform policymaking for the purpose of improving practice and child outcomes at the state and local levels. Findings and recommendations will be presented in a formal report to be issued to policymakers, practitioners and the public, as well as through appropriate forums to galvanize advocacy around improving reading proficiency.

**Advisory Committee:** An Advisory Committee of individuals with significant knowledge in education policy and practice will be formed to guide our research design and final recommendations. The committee will be chaired by Richard Weissbourd, Lecturer on Education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and SFC Board member. The Committee will meet twice: in February, to provide input/guidance into the approach and strategy, and in April, to provide feedback on proposed recommendations.

### Timeline:

December 2009	Finalize scope of services agreement with Principal Investigator Nonie Lesaux Begin literature review and data analysis
January 2010	Submit data requests to ESE and other appropriate agencies
February 23, 2010	Hold first meeting with Advisory Committee
March 2010	Complete literature review and data analysis
April 15 & 16, 2010	Complete draft recommendations and submit to Advisory Committee
May 2010	Complete final report with findings and recommendations
June 2010	Hold two public forums (in the Boston area and in the Springfield area) to present findings