

Minnesota Reading First
 “Sustainability”/ Follow-Up Study
 Findings from Three Years of
 Follow-up Interviews

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Acknowledgements

Educators in our Participating Schools

This learning and sharing was made possible only through the gracious participation of the principals and teachers in the six participating schools.

We thank our participants for their openness, flexibility, thoughtfulness and hospitality. We were inspired by their commitment to learning -- their own learning and, most importantly, the learning of their students.

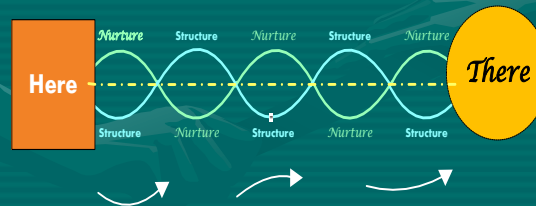
Minnesota Center for Reading Research

For inviting us to conduct this study and for providing personnel and fiscal resources, in addition your continued enthusiasm and value of this work.

Preview of Findings

- When instructional practices are transformed and a sense of efficacy is established, there is no going back. ... getting there requires persistence through cycles of discomfort and excitement ... no going back for the people who made the shift
- Leadership matters and it must be shared.
 - Principals are key. They create the “space” (opportunities, development, encouragement, support) for others to step into the territory of individual, team and organizational influence.
 - Teachers influence the daily practice and cultures of their peers, formally (leadership structures and roles) and informally (networks).

Leadership as
 structure & nurture ... from here to there
 ... around an organizing force



Systems are either
 growing



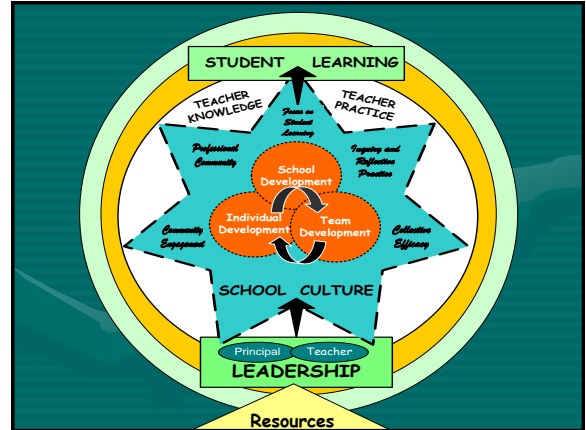
or dying.

About the term “Sustainability”

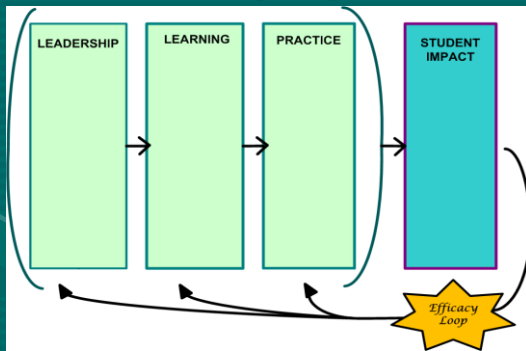
- What are we after ?
 - ... “sustainability” ? OR
 - ... “continuous improvement” ? OR
 - ... ??
- And... sustainability OR continuous improvement of what?
 - Leadership
 - Professional learning
 - Instructional practice
 - Student learning

Sustainability Study Overview

- **Why?**
To understand more about what happens to school leadership, learning, teacher practice and student learning after withdrawal of significant external support
- **What?**
Research-based framework guided the inquiry



Learning System



Sustainability Study Overview

(continued)

- **Who?**
 - Sample: 6 of the original 27 RF schools
 - Strong implementation of RF
 - Same principal and teacher leader (mostly)
 - Collective profile of sample schools
 - Geographic location
 - 2 urban (1 charter, 1 regular public)
 - 1 first ring suburban
 - 3 greater MN (1 medium city, 1 small city, 1 rural/small town)
 - Demographic range
 - FRL: 46% - 96%
 - Special education: 6% - 22%
 - English Language Learners: 0% - 69%
 - Grades in schools
 - K-4 (1 school); K-5 (2 schools); K-6 (2 school); K-8 (2 schools)
 - Average student enrollment across 3 years of follow-up
 - 234 - 824

- **How?**

On-site data collection once/year (spring) for 3 years post RF in each of the 6 participating schools

Survey - Schoolwide

All licensed professionals, school-wide through grades 5 or 6

Interviews - Semi-structured (open)

5 per school per year

- 2 individual interviews: principal, literacy coord/teacher leader
- 3 small group interviews: teachers (primary, intermediate, special services)

MCAs: reading in grades 3 and 5

Classroom observations: Y3 only; very few

Today's Findings

Interviews Only

- Perceptual data only
- Participant selection...role and representation
- Over 90 semi-structured interviews (open vs. "test"); 1800+ transcript pages
- Over 500+ hours qualitative data analysis
- Particularities across sites

Without a doubt...

there are exceptions for each “finding”.

Much of the intrigue and also the challenge of this work is the “particularity” of each place and its people.

Descriptive & Reflective Summary
with considerations for future practice

Data Analysis Framework

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Across Years
School A				
-Leadership				
-Learning/Dev				
-Teaching Practice				
-Student Learning				
-Summary Statements				
School B				
School C				
School D				
School E				
School F				
	Across Schools	Across Schools	Across Schools	Across Years and Schools

Organizing Questions

1. What stayed after Reading First left?
Yes... and (but)
2. What grew or shifted after Reading First left?
3. What threatens sustainability/continuous improvement?

Key Dimensions of Reading First

School Level ~ Primary only (K-3)

Leadership

- Internal (school): principal, literacy coordinator, literacy team
- External (U of M): “Barbara”, external facilitator, observers

Learning

- Development sessions at the U (quarterly)
- Weekly study groups (X-grade, res-based, video, SW, protocols)
- Classroom observations (3 times/year, one hour, data summary)

Teacher Practice (C-I-A)

- Literacy block (whole, small groups, individual)
- Informative assessments
- Leveled texts, libraries (emphasis on non-fiction)

Reflection Question

What are some “findings” that have particular relevance to your school or practice?

Listen for what makes sense to you

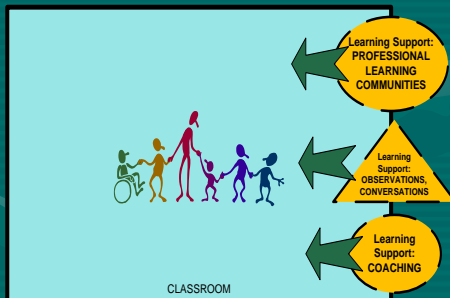
1. What stayed after RF left?

Principal Leadership

- Vision ~ Direction ~ Forward Looking
- High responsibility for improvement and decision-making
- Partnership with teacher leader ~ complementary roles
 - Recognized ground level leadership by teachers as powerful leverage for continuous improvement
 - Strong principal respect and support of teacher leader.
 - Strong principal ~ teacher leader partnerships, although variation in the nature of the complementary roles within partnership
- Focused on data... respected and relied on data, no excuses
- Good listeners!!!!
- Resources always on the radar!
 - Strategic use of existing resources, continual search for more
- Strategic positioning
 - Within the district (e.g., central office, school board)
 - External to the district (e.g., prof assoc, regional ed groups)

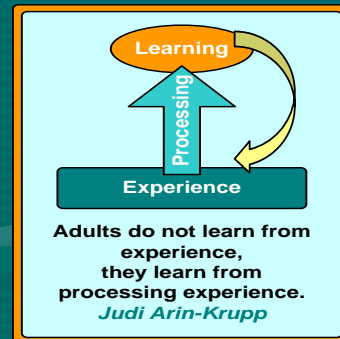
Learning Support

close to classroom practice



Reflective Practice

to foster continuous learning



1. What stayed after RF left?

Teacher Leader

- Valued enormously by principal and, essentially, all teachers (most evident among primary staff)
- Viewed as knowledgeable, instructionally credible, supportive ("whatever we need") and trusted ("safe")
- Sampling of "roles":
 - Mentor new teachers
 - Prepare for and, sometimes facilitate, S&Cs/PLCs
 - Prepare for and facilitate data meetings
 - Maintain leveled texts and library resources
 - Lead /organize classroom PD (model, observe, "particularize")
 - Conduct student assessments and coordinate testing
 - Connect with external environment
- Amount of time decreased in almost all schools
- Scope of responsibilities increased in all schools

Teacher leaders were instrumental in creating, sustaining and advancing

linkages among development "chunks"

Leadership

→ Professional learning

→ Teacher Practice

→ Student Engagement/Learning

- principal instructional leadership by supporting understanding, engagement, partnership
- connections among people within the school - horizontal and vertical relationships (structures and networks)
- a force for school-wide coherence

1. What stayed after RF left?

Teacher Leadership Team

- Developing leadership capacity
 - fostering big picture view of school - its people, practices, needs, development, student learning
- Building knowledge
 - about instruction
 - about continuous teacher learning / PD
 - about student engagement and learning
 - about data
- Creating ownership for the work
 - being included and informed
 - being invited to share one's perspective
 - providing input for decision-making
- Note: Instructional and professional learning leadership was typically led by its own "team"; separate from site leadership

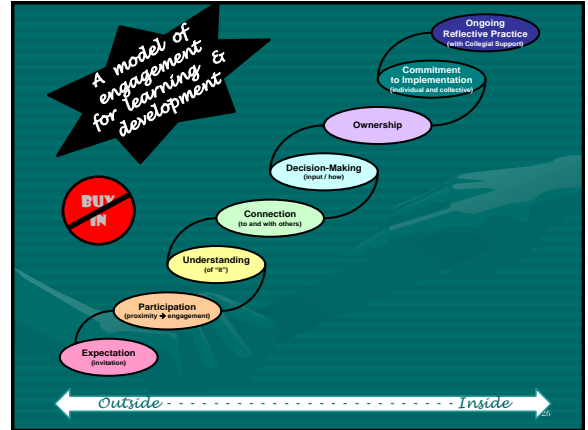
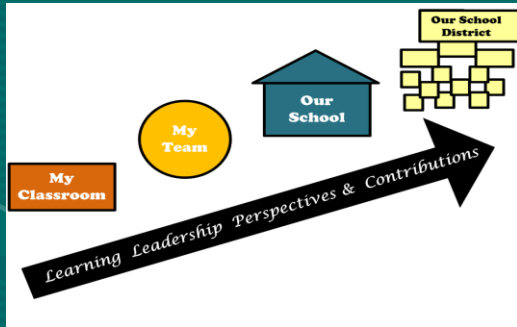
Teacher leadership

as ground level nuanced support of individual teachers and groups of teachers,

as well as

a connecting presence that supports coherence throughout the school and the nudging forward of practice everywhere.

Moving to Organizational View

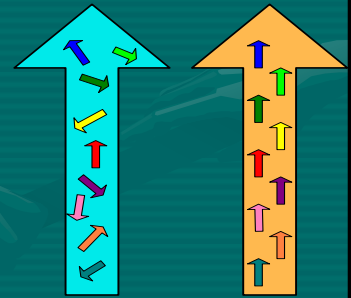


1. What stayed after RF left? Professional Learning

- Strong appreciation for Study Groups / PLCs, but...
 - SGs/PLCs Tension loose /casual vs. intense & depth
 - Participants expressed missing the intensity and depth (of RF)
 - Less frequent (typically 1 or 2xs/month)
 - Less assuredly research-based ("less depth")
 - Less tightly linked to immediate practice
 - Less focused conversations
 - Recognized value of video-sharing... but only a few continued use
- New teacher support more variable, less intense
 - (NTS was not explicit part of RF but RF strong induction for NTs)
- Continuing challenge to schedule collaboration / learning
 - Continuing challenge to schedule both within and across grade teacher learning / collaboration
 - Continuing challenge to collaborate with support services teachers
 - External learning opportunities, but not considered as powerful

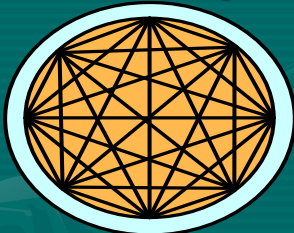
Professional Learning to foster coherence in the school

Aligning energy
and resources for
teaching and
learning.



Source of the arrow diagram:
Peter Senge, 1990.
The Fifth Discipline,
page 235.

Professional Learning to foster a web of relationships and resources for teaching and learning



"The Learning Infrastructure"

1. What stayed after RF left? Teaching Practices

- Greatest detail provided in Year 1 interviews
- Teaching practices: once transformed, "no going back"
 - 120 minutes of reading (most places, but sometimes broken up)
 - small group instruction based on student needs (data)
 - data meetings (2-3/year, some more frequent)
 - common language and routines (helps teachers and kids, coherence)
 - leveled texts and libraries
 - being clear about purpose
 - higher order questions
 - explicit strategy instruction
 - for many, student centered instruction and student responsibility still emphasized
- Some push-in (largely Title, some ELL, little/no SPED)

1. What stayed after RF left? Student Engagement & Learning

- Greatest detail provided in Year 1
- Reported impact on students
 - Teachers: "They [students] love to read"
 - Students to one another: "Use your strategies"
 - Teachers identify specific strategies demonstrated by students: inferring, paraphrasing, predicting, summarizing, organizing, etc.
 - "Students know LOTS of terminology, language of strategies, love books, much more polite in instructional conversations, confidence to say what they think, summarizing, use of graphic organizers, vocabulary rich in speaking and writing."
- Observed (informally) in classrooms
 - Kids reading in hallways and standing in line
 - Kids excited to get book boxes
 - Kids coaching one another when stuck
 - Self-directed learning in classrooms

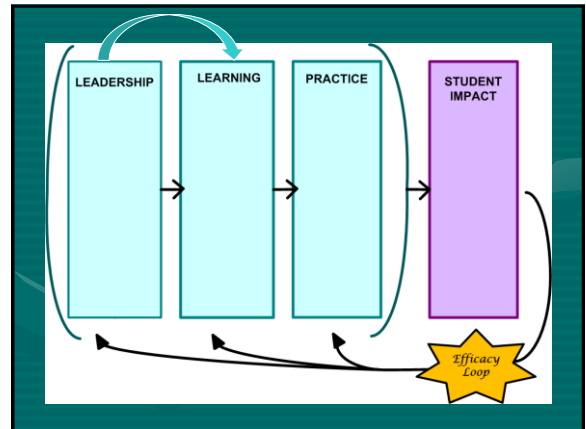
2. What grew or shifted after RF left?

- Expansion to include upper grades (inclusive, school-wide development... some repair work to be done)
- Shift of development focus to other curricular areas (e.g., math)
- Recognition (by many) that strategies taught and used for literacy apply elsewhere
- In some schools, an increased focus on ways for general education and special services to collaborate more substantively (e.g., grade level assignments of SST, co-teaching)
- Language of "RtI"
- More district level involvement/leadership in schools

3. What seemed to threaten "Sustainability"?

(many of these are inter-connected)

- Insufficient resources to retain flexible use of teacher leader and to provide professional learning blocks for teachers
 - Teacher leader with flexibility to support professional learning (school-wide, team, individual)
 - Time blocks to meet regularly and in varied compositions (within and across grades, GE and support teachers)
- Lack of development focus, coherence, "organizing force"
- Turnover
 - Loss of people whose practices and thinking were transformed (e.g., teachers and principals)
 - Newcomers who lack knowledge and experience with "RF-like" instructional practices and staff learning processes (Note: teachers new to the field mostly did not arrive with "RF" skill set)
- Loss of external connections, partnerships
- District involvement ~ could be a blessing or a curse



As you reflected on these findings...

What were some ideas that held particular relevance to your school or practice?

Some Preliminary Implications

for fostering a culture of continuous learning and improvement

- Develop strong instructional partnerships between principals and designated teacher leader/s. Establish clear, complementary roles.
- Build leadership capacity among teachers in the school. One example: instructional leadership team with teachers, supporting them to understand organizational, not just individual or team level work.
- Ensure ongoing opportunities for teacher learning that is focused and coherent, instructionally relevant, collaborative, job-embedded and scaffolded to ensure success. Intentional aim toward teacher efficacy.
- Focus on learning and reflection vs. tasking and filling out forms. Use of structure and inquiry to guide reflection.
- Use ground level data to inform decision making about overarching school or team goals AND ALSO student-specific learning targets

