catching
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AN ACTION GUIDE TO SCHOOLWIDE READING IMPROVEMENT

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The People Factor

Launching the Meetings and Collaboration

T he most compelling school leaders need good old-fashioned day-to-day plans to affect change. As we know from listening to politicians on the campaign trail, rousing words and lofty goals for student achievement aren't enough. The School Change in Reading (SCR) process (Taylor et al. 2003, 2005) is effective because it details the "dailyness" upon which improvement is built. In this chapter, I share next steps for the who, what, when, where, and why of meetings and professional development activities you'll need to plan. You will discover that it is a *process* you can emulate. It has been years in the making and refining—it works because it respects the local decision making teachers and other staffers need to make in order to develop a reading program that reflects your unique school.

First Step: Share the Vision at a Springtime Presentation to Staff

The ideal season to present a long-term reform initiative is in the spring so there is time to plan to begin the process in the next school year. The principal or literacy leader can share with teachers the general philosophy guiding the approach and help them understand the process. It is important that teachers be introduced to the big ideas underlying effective reading instruction (see Chapters 2 and 3) and the characteristics conducive to effective school improvement (see Chapter 4). Participant roles in the SCR process are listed in Figure 5–1. Copies can be handed out to the teachers attending the meeting at which the reform initiative is initially discussed.

SCR Participant Roles

K–6 Teachers: Responsibilities

Group Work	Work with Specialist	Individual Work	My Notes on the Process
Meet two (or three) times a month in study groups: one to two main topics in reading, and one to two support topics (four to five months each main topic). (See Chapter 7.)	Learn to collect and refine use of progress monitoring data, including running record data and classroom-based comprehension data, to adjust instruction to meet individual students' needs. (See Chapter 6.)	Apply new or refined teaching strategies (from study groups) on a regular basis, take notes on this teaching to share in study groups. Prepare and preview videos of your teaching of new or refined techniques and bring to study groups to share. Collect data (e.g., student work, reading scores) or take notes (reflections/self-evaluation of your teaching) relevant to study group topics.	
Meet three times a year in data retreats to identify students who are above, at, or below grade level and to consider their progress in reading as well as changes in instruction that need to be made to better meet their needs. (See Chapter 6.)	Work with a literacy coordinator, colleague, or outside consultant to become more incisive about evaluating data from your teaching (e.g., observational notes, videos). (See Chapter 6.)	In addition to completing specific Try It Out activities generated by the study groups, continually reflect on how the professional development is changing you as a teacher. What interests you most so far? What do you consider your greatest strengths? Weaknesses? Where else might you go to strengthen your understanding of the study group topics? Other readings? Web resources?	
Meet monthly in grade levels to look at pupil data or work samples and get suggestions from colleagues on how to maximize individuals' or groups' progress. (See Chapter 6.)		Celebrate what you and colleagues are learning and recognize that everyone is being pushed out of their comfort zone. How can you support colleagues? What do you find to be the most effective way of seeing your reading instruction? Feedback from colleagues? Watching videos of your teaching and taking notes?	
	Set up a schedule for the literacy coach to model in your classroom. Have her or him watch you teach in your room and engage in a coaching conversation with him or her later in the day or week (see Chapter 8). By year 2 or 3, when you are familiar with coaching, you may feel ready to peer coach with a grade-level colleague. (See Chapter 8.)	Becoming a more effective reading teacher requires you to understand content and pedagogy and to really know your students as readers and learners. Work at using student data—informal observations as well as formal assessments—and reflect on your teaching to best meet their needs.	
Meet once a month as an entire staff to share findings from study groups, to share data on pupil progress, and to deliberate on schoolwide issues pertaining to school objectives. (More on this in Chapter 5.)			

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Figure 5–1a SCR Participant Roles

SCR Participant Roles, *continued*

Leadership Team: Responsibilities

Principal, Literacy Coordinator, Teachers, External Partners	Additional Roles for Principals	Additional Roles for Literacy Coordinator and External Consultants
Develop an initial plan for deciding upon study group topics and getting people into study groups.	Participate in, be a champion for, and monitor the quality of the SCR process.	Visit classrooms to monitor implementation of new instructional techniques, provide support, and do demonstration teaching.
Keep study groups moving forward. Meet once a month to monitor study group activities, solve problems, and provide guidance to study groups.	Work toward implementing collaborative leadership.	Direct teachers or study groups to relevant resources.
Meet monthly to plan for large group meetings, decide on external partner/expert needs for professional learning sessions or school visits to provide feedback, participate in professional learning activities for leadership team members, and monitor and plan for ongoing SCR activities.	Meet regularly with the literacy coach/coordinator.	Provide feedback on study group action plans, meeting notes, etc. Help teachers reflect on observation data.
Meet as a leadership team to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of your school's current involvement with parents.		Provide oversight to the collection of assessment data on students and to the activities at data retreats in which grade-level teams look at student data and reflect on needed instructional changes.
Devise, implement, and evaluate a plan to develop or improve partnerships with parents.		Work with the staff to determine the extent to which classrooms and the school have balanced, research-based literacy programs and in which curriculum and standards are aligned. Also determine the extent to which the school devotes sufficient blocks of time to reading instruction and has conducive learning environments for students and for teachers.
Beginning in year 2, devise a plan to gradually take over the literacy coordinator's responsibilities, especially if there will be limited, or no, funding for such a position.		Work with the staff to determine the extent to which: • School provides best practices for ELLs. • School has interventions for struggling readers in the earliest grades and for students in other grades as needed.

Figure 5–1b SCR Participant Roles, continued

Shortly after this initial meeting (and after teachers' questions have been answered), ask teachers to vote (by ballot) on whether to take on the change process. There should be buy-in by at least 75 percent of the teachers in the school. Without this kind of support, a school is probably not ready to go ahead. If the vote is to move forward, new staff members hired over the summer need to know that by accepting a position at the school they agree to participate in the reading improvement process. For additional readings on schoolwide reading improvement, see the list at end of the chapter.

Key Support Systems

▶ *Study group (PLC) meetings two times a month.* Teachers who teach reading participate in hour-long study groups about two times a month. Some topics are best suited to teachers of one or two specific grades (e.g., phonemic awareness). Other topics work well with teachers at a number of grade levels (e.g., high-level talk and writing about text) and foster cross-grade relationships. Within study groups, teachers learn about and implement research-based reading practices and reflect on and strengthen their reading instruction. Roles for participants in study groups, including rotating leaders, are discussed in Chapter 7.

▶ *Data sharing and data retreats.* Grade-level teachers examine data on students' reading abilities once every four to six weeks and discuss instructional changes that will enhance students' reading growth. Three times a year grade-level teams have half-day data retreats at which they look at growth in students' reading abilities and again talk about instruction, including interventions and supplemental learning activities, that will meet students' needs and challenge and motivate them all. (See Chapter 6 for more about this.)

▶ *Once-a-month whole-group meetings.* In a whole-group meeting, teachers at all grade levels share and discuss data on students' reading abilities, data on reading instruction, and data on school leadership and collaboration as they pertain to their reading program. These data are used to help teachers make changes in their reading instruction and to assess the success of these changes. (See Chapter 6.) They also discuss issues related to the schoolwide delivery of reading instruction, such as the blocks of time devoted to reading instruction and the delivery models used at different grade levels. Examples of activities for whole-group meetings are provided in Chapter 5.

▶ *Teachers, as individuals,* examine data on their students' reading abilities and on their own reading instruction.

▶ *Modeling and coaching.* This begins with support from a literacy coordinator or coach. Over time, teachers learn how to become effective peer coaches and support one another in the use of effective teaching practices. (See Chapter 8.)

▶ *Intervention plans.* Children in grades K–6 who are struggling with reading need extra support. School staff need to consider what interventions are in place and if they are meeting students' needs. Ongoing assessments to help teachers decide which students need reading interventions are discussed in Chapter 6.

▶ *A parent partnership plan.* Successful schools foster partnerships with parents, respect cultural differences, and promote community involvement (Scribner, Young, and Pedroza 1999; Taylor, Pearson, Clark, and Walpole 2000). Schools need to consider how they communicate with parents, discover parents' concerns about their children's education, and decide how they will make parents feel welcome in the school. (See Figure 5–2.) Plans for

Improving Parent Partnerships Plan

Getting Started

a. Meet as a leadership team to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of your school's current involvement with parents. Keep in mind that what is important is the concept of parent partnerships, not simply parent involvement. Survey parents and assess what parents need in order to become more involved in their children's schooling.

b. Devise a plan to develop or improve partnerships with parents. This plan should include ways to communicate regularly with parents, to find out what parents' concerns and needs are for their children, to develop successful at-home reading partnerships in which parents receive support in how to help their students with reading at home in ways they will feel comfortable helping, and to make parents feel welcome in the school.

Maintaining Momentum

c. Ask parents and teachers to evaluate the degree to which the plan for improving partnerships with parents has been successful.

d. Study data from parent feedback or attendance at scheduled events to determine which aspects of the program have been successful and which have not.

Resources on Building Parent Partnerships

Barrera, R., and R. Jimenez. 2002. "Bilingual Teachers Speak About Their Literacy Instruction." In *Teaching Reading: Effective Schools, Accomplished Teachers,* ed. B. M Taylor and P. D. Pearson, 335–60. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Christenson, S. L., and S. M. Sheridan. 2001. *Schools and Families: Creating Essential Connections for Learning.* New York: Guilford.

Edwards, P. A. 2004. *Children's Literacy Development: Making It Happen Through School, Family, and Community Involvement.* Boston: Pearson/Allyn & Bacon.

Epstein, J. L., M. G. Sanders, B. S. Simon, K. C. Salinas, N.R. Jansorn, and F. L. van Voorhis. 2002. *School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action.* 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Goddard, R. D., M. Tschannen-Moran, and W.K. Hoy. 2001. "A Multilevel Examination of the Distribution and Effects of Teacher Trust in Students and Parents in Urban Elementary Schools." *The Elementary School Journal* 102: 3–19.

Scribner, J. D., M. D. Young, and A. Pedroza. 1999. "Building Collaborative Relationships with Parents." In *Lessons from high-performing Hispanic schools,* ed. P. Reyes, J. D. Scribner, and A. P. Scribner, 33–60. New York: Teachers College Press.

Taylor, B. M., P. D. Pearson, K. Clark, and S. Walpole. 2000. "Effective Schools and Accomplished Teachers: Lessons about Primary-Grade Reading Instruction in Low-Income Schools." *Elementary School Journal* 101: 121–65.

Figure 5–2 Improving Parent Partnerships Plan

parent involvement that are one-sided (e.g., what can you as a parent do to help us at school?) won't seem like a partnership to parents.

▶ *Staff.* Each school needs to have:

   ▶ A full-time (or at least a half-time) *literacy coordinator* who also serves as a coach.

   ▶ A *leadership team* (suggested make-up follows in the next section).

   ▶ An *external partner/consultant,* if possible, to bring outside expertise and another pair of eyes into the process.

ON TEACHERS' EVOLVING OWNERSHIP

The professional learning sessions from our external partner have been of high quality and very helpful, but now in the third year most of the staff development is internal. We work extraordinarily well together. We are sharing with one another, discussing what we've read, and talking about what we are doing. I've never heard so much discussion about how we're teaching and what we're noticing about the children's learning as I have these past three years. I'm really proud of our staff."

—MATTHEW THOMPSON, LINCOLN ELEMENTARY TEACHER

Next Step: Put Together a Leadership Team

The leadership team members should rotate from year to year, but an initial group needs to get the SCR effort started. In most SCR schools, the leadership team is made up of the principal, a lead teacher/literacy coordinator, and three to five other teacher leaders representing different grade levels and resource teacher groups such as special education, ELL, and Title I. As many teachers as possible should feel they have a representative on the leadership team, but the number of members will vary depending on the size of the school.

Because many things require oversight by the leadership team, subgroups may need to deliberate on topics, such as working with new teachers and developing parent partnerships, and report back to the larger group.

The Team's Purposes and Duties

In this section, logistics and roles of the leadership team are discussed. As you will see, the leadership team is a vital group with many responsibilities to get the reform effort up and running as well as moving forward over time in a productive way.

Logistics and Overview

◗ Meet for 45 to 60 minutes, twice a month, during the first year (in subsequent years, once a month is usually sufficient).

◗ Look at data on students, reading instruction, and school climate to plan for whole-group meetings, study groups, and data retreats.

◗ Plan whole-group meetings.

◗ Get study groups started and decide how to help study groups succeed.

◗ Plan for coaching and peer coaching.

◗ Plan data retreats.

◗ Decide how to work with new teachers.

◗ Discuss strategies for developing partnerships with parents.

◗ Reflect on what is working within the school as well as what needs attention in the reform effort (more follows about this).

Roles and Goals

Look at data. The leadership team needs to bring existing school data to the teaching staff so the entire group can set priorities for whole-group meetings and study group sessions. (We'll discuss the tools for assessment more in Chapter 6.) Sources of data important to consider include:

◗ *Student data.* School data, district-mandated data, and state-mandated data on students' reading abilities need to be considered. In addition, teachers need to share their thoughts about particularly problematic areas for their students. (See an example in Figure 5–3. Student data is covered in detail in Chapter 6.)

◗ *Data on teaching.* Before embarking on professional learning in study groups related to effective reading instruction, teachers may want to reflect on their teaching. How to use data on teaching is covered in Chapter 6. The descriptions of instruction in Chapter 6 (Figure 6–2) and the checklists of effective teaching practices (Figures 6–3 and 6–4) will help teachers identify strengths and weaknesses in their classroom reading instruction. Figure 5–4 shows samples of these assessment tools.

◗ *Data on schoolwide collaboration and school climate.* In the SCR process, schools collect data on the degree to which collaboration among all staff members and a positive school climate are developing in the building. The self-study survey (see Figure 6–5) was designed to collect this information. Schools also can use a rubric (see Figure 6–6) to look at the degree to which the SCR process is moving forward effectively.

The form in Figure 5–3 has been used to collect data on students' reading abilities and to help schools take a look at the match between assessment data, core instruction, and interventions and/or supplemental instruction provided to students.

List under regular instruction the programs or materials used and the most important areas of reading being covered by these programs (e.g., list fluency for Read Naturally, a program designed to develop students' fluency). List interventions

Matching Instruction to Data (MINTODA)

Grade _____   Instruction

Regular instruction for all	
Changes to regular instruction and dates	

Grade _____   Indicators of Student's Reading Ability and Interventions/Supplemental Instruction to be Listed Below

	In Need of Reading Intervention	Making Adequate Progress	Performing Above Average
Fall benchmark scores			
Fall interventions/ supplemental instruction			
Students for fall interventions/ supplemental instruction			
Winter benchmark scores			
Winter/spring interventions/ supplemental instruction			
Students for winter/spring interventions/ supplemental instruction			
Spring benchmark scores			
Students at each level in spring			

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Figure 5–3 Matching Instruction to Data (MINTODA)

Rubric to Describe Classroom Reading Instruction

NOTE: Select the number (1, 2, or 3) that best describes a particular component of your reading instruction in a typical week.

1 Balance in Word Recognition and Comprehension Skill/Strategy Instruction (Taylor 2008; Taylor et al. 2003)

1	2	3
Most of the comprehension and word recognition work that is observed is focusing on the teaching of a skill (e.g., understanding a concept such as main idea, learning a sound that goes with a letter, learning a word meaning). Little or no strategy instruction is observed.	Much of the comprehension and word recognition work that is observed is focusing on the teaching of a skill, but there is some mention of strategy use of a skill as a strategy.	Much of the comprehension and word recognition work that is observed is focusing on the teaching of a strategy (e.g., talk and/or practice about how to use a set of procedures when reading independently to read more successfully). Some skill instruction is observed as well.

Comments:

2 Balance Between Low-Level Questioning/High-Level Questioning (Taylor 2008; Taylor et al. 2003)

1	2	3
Most questions that the teacher is posing or that students are generating are at a lower level of thinking (e.g., students do not have to think very hard to come up with the answer, and there tends to be "one right answer").	Many questions that the teacher is posing or that students are generating are at a lower level of thinking, but some are at a higher level.	Many of the questions that the teacher is posing or that students are generating are at a higher level of thinking (e.g., students do have to think for a while before they come up with the answer, and there tends to be "more than one right answer"). The teacher spends at least as much time or more of time on higher level as lower level questions.

Comments:

3 Teacher Actions: Directed Stance/Student Support Stance (Taylor 2008; Taylor et al. 2003)

1	2	3
Most teacher actions are from a teacher-directed stance (e.g., telling, leading a recitation).	Many teacher actions are from a teacher-directed stance but there is some evidence of a student support stance being used as well.	The teacher has a good balance between using a teacher-directed stance (e.g., telling, leading a recitation) and student support stance (e.g., modeling, coaching, listening, watching, and giving feedback).

Comments:

Motivational Elementary Reading Instruction Checklist
(influenced by Pressley et al. 2003)

Part 1

Teachers who provide motivational instruction engage in the practices that follow. (This list is not exhaustive. See Pressley et al. [2003] for similar and additional research-based examples of motivational practices as well as practices that undermine motivation.) Reflect on your instruction in general and put a check mark by strengths and select two or more unchecked items as goals for the year. Discuss this checklist with your literacy coach/coordinator or external partner. (This checklist could be tied to reflections on observations or videos prepared for study groups.)

Physical Environment

▶ There are many interesting books in the room and they are easily accessible.

▶ A great deal of student work is displayed in the room.

Classroom Atmosphere

▶ There is a positive, inviting atmosphere in the room; the teacher regularly interacts with her students in a positive manner.

▶ The teacher has high expectations for students and provides regular encouragement for students to meet these high expectations.

▶ The teacher fosters cooperative learning, student independence, and student persistence, and she provides for student choice when possible.

▶ The teacher is interested in and enthusiastic about learning and fosters this interest and enthusiasm in her students.

▶ The teacher values and enjoys her students, and this is apparent to her students.

Classroom Reading Instruction

▶ The teacher focuses on academic work and the value of education.

▶ The teacher provides worthwhile, well-planned, well-organized, and well-taught challenging lessons.

▶ The teacher focuses on students' understanding of and reflection on their learning.

▶ The teacher diligently monitors students' engagement in, understanding of, and behavior related to learning activities.

▶ The teacher structures learning activities that are not too hard or too easy for students and differentiates instruction as needed.

▶ The teacher provides ample opportunities for high-level thinking, including interpretive, critical, and creative thinking; strategy use; and active pupil involvement in learning activities.

▶ The teacher provides effective feedback.

▶ The teacher regularly makes relevant home connections.

Classroom Management

▶ The teacher along with her students establishes, revisits, and expects accountability to classroom rules, routines, procedures, and she fosters students' self-regulation in use of these rules, routines, and procedures.

▶ The teacher makes use of intrinsic rewards that stimulate students.

▶ Teacher praises specific accomplishments.

Observation Recording Form for Elements of Practice for Classroom Reading Instruction

Number of Observation Segments _____

Put an X for each 5-minute segment in which a variable is observed and add comments	Variable (code)	Description
	Whole Class or Large Group (lg)	All of the children in the class (except for one or two or individuals working with someone else), or a group of more than ten children. If there are ten or less in the room, code this as a small group.
	Small Group (sg)	Children are working in two or more groups. If there are more than ten children in a group, call this whole group.
	Phonemic Awareness Instruction (pa)	Students are identifying the sounds in words or blending sounds together (an oral activity). The purpose is to develop phonemic awareness, not letter–sound knowledge.
	Phonics Instruction (phon)	Students are focusing on symbol/sound correspondences, or letter-by-letter decoding, or decoding by onset and rime or analogy, or decoding multisyllabic words. However, this is not tied to decoding of words while reading.
	Word-Recognition Strategies (wrs)	Students are focusing on use of one or more strategies to figure out words while reading, typically prompted by the teacher.
	Lower-Level Text Comprehension (talk or writing about text) (llq)	Students are engaged in talk (m1) or writing (m2) about the meaning of text that is at a lower level of thinking. The writing may be a journal entry about the text requiring a lower level of thinking or may be a fill-in-the-blank worksheet that is on the text meaning (rather than on comprehension skill or vocabulary words).
	Higher-Level Text Comprehension (talk or writing about text) (hlq)	Students are involved in talk (m3) or writing (m4) about the meaning of text that is engaging them in higher-level thinking. This is talk or writing about text that is challenging to the children and is at either a high level of text interpretation or goes beyond the text: generalization, application, evaluation, aesthetic response. Needless to say, a child must go beyond a yes or no answer (e.g., in the case of an opinion or aesthetic response).
	Comprehension Skill Instruction (cskl)	Students are engaged in a comprehension activity (other than a comprehension strategy) which is at a lower level of thinking (e.g., traditional skill work such as identifying main idea, cause-effect, fact-opinion).

Figure 5–4 *Tools to Use to Reflect on Instruction*

being used with students who are struggling with word recognition and/or fluency. Also, list supplemental instruction being provided to all students in the areas of comprehension and/or vocabulary.

Use the existing school improvement plan. Typically, there is no need to start a school-based reading improvement effort from scratch. If you have already put considerable effort into developing a school improvement plan, weave in aspects of it here. For example, your school improvement plan may include a mandate to improve students' reading scores. You may already have made in-roads on improving students' fluency based on professional development received the previous year, but you are still worried about students' comprehension. This would suggest that a good topic for professional development in the upcoming year would be comprehension strategies instruction or instruction focusing on students' high-level talk and writing about texts.

Schedule and plan large-group meetings. A proposed yearlong schedule for monthly whole-group meetings needs to be presented at an early fall meeting. Monthly whole-group meetings are an important part of a school's reading improvement effort and the professional learning process. These meetings are also important in fostering a collaborative work environment across the school. During whole-group meetings, individual study groups can share what they are learning, a teacher might model a new skill or strategy related to effective reading instruction, teachers can look at or share data, and the entire group can celebrate the successes they are experiencing as a school.

Early on, processes used in the SCR model can be introduced and practiced at whole-group meetings. Processes include learning how to:

▶ collect, record, and use data on a common set of pupil assessments (Chapter 6)

▶ participate in effective data retreats (Chapter 6)

▶ engage in video sharing (Chapter 7)

▶ use the protocol for looking at student work (Chapter 7)

▶ participate in coaching and peer coaching sessions (Chapter 8)

▶ use the protocol for visiting another teacher's classroom (Chapter 8)

▶ use other school improvement processes as the need for them arises

These meetings are also excellent forums for discussing schoolwide issues related to reading instruction. A group may want to react to the work of a subgroup charged with aligning standards, curriculum, and assessments. Or teachers might adjust the school reading program based on schoolwide data. For example, toward the end of a school year, the group might debate ways to restructure time and human resources related to reading instruction to maximize students' success the following year. Figure 5–5 includes topics for whole-group meetings.

Whole-Group Meeting Conversations

Possible Conversations About the School's Current Reading Program

▶ Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of different delivery models and consider possible changes to the delivery models used at different grade levels. (See Figures 5–6 and 5–7.)

▶ Discuss blocks of time and amounts of time for reading instruction at different grade levels and make changes as needed, (See Figures 5–6 and 5–7.)

▶ Establish common planning times for classroom teachers and special teachers of reading who work together to deliver reading instruction to students.

▶ Consider the effectiveness of interventions in place for struggling readers, the research behind these interventions, and possible new interventions to put in place to better meet students' needs.

▶ Consider the recommendations of work groups focusing on curriculum/instruction/assessment coherence in the school reading program (e.g., school, district, and state standards and assessments, Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts led by the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association; also see Resnick and Hampton 2009; Hampton and Resnick 2009).

▶ Consider the recommendations of a work group on developing parent partnerships.

Possible Conversations About Deliberate Use of Data
(Also see Chapter 6.)

▶ Agree on times for and activities to engage in during data retreats. (Discussed later. Also see Figure 5–3.)

▶ Three times a year share whole-school data on students' reading progress.

▶ Share data on classroom reading instruction, including changes in practice, that have had a positive impact.

▶ Share data on school-level collaboration and climate and decide how to deal with problem areas.

Possible Conversations About Effective Reading Instruction
(See Chapters 2 and 3 for relevant summaries.)

▶ Share research-based ideas and successes from study groups as well as practical classroom applications.

▶ Learn about a common aspect of reading instruction in a whole-group meeting and agree to apply this in the classroom (e.g., classroom-based assessments in reading, delivering motivating instruction, making good instructional choices from teacher manuals). Additional examples of professional learning activities well suited to whole-group meetings related to effective instruction are provided in Chapter 7).

▶ Share effective independent activities for students while the teacher is working with reading groups.

▶ View and discuss a video of an effective teacher of reading.

▶ Discuss a common support topic that one or more study groups are focusing on (e.g., working effectively with ELLs, techniques for differentiating instruction). Often, all study groups within a school decide to focus on the same support topic for a half-year or full year. More examples of support topics that schools have found to be useful are in Figure 5–8.

Possible Conversations About the Hallmarks of Effective Schools
(Also see Chapter 4.)

▶ View and discuss a video of an effective school. (Principles in Action is one such video; go to www.mcrel.org to order it.)

▶ Discuss an article related to effective schools or effective school improvement (e.g., collective efficacy). (See a list of these articles at the end of the chapter.)

Figure 5–5 Whole-Group Meeting Conversations

Examples of Whole-Group Activities Focusing on the Schoolwide Reading Program

(Activity 1, Examining Literacy Block Delivery Models and Activity 2, Time Spent on Reading Instruction)

Before engaging in Activities 1 and/or 2, teachers should complete the form in Figure 5–7 (also found on DVD) on time spent on reading and delivery model and bring it to the meeting or turn it in to the literacy coordinator prior to the meeting. The form asks teachers to list their daily literacy schedule to get at the amount of time they spend on reading and other aspects of literacy in a day. The form also asks teachers to describe their delivery model (e.g., the way in which they work with resource teachers) and to list the programs/materials they use for reading instruction.

Activity 1: Examining Literacy Block Delivery Models

In a study on schools beating the odds study (Taylor, Pearson, Clark, and Walpole 2000), the most effective schools used a collaborative model for reading instruction in which resource teachers came into the classroom or in one case, students went out of the classroom for an intervention. In the most effective schools, children spent 60 minutes a day in small-group reading instruction, 30 minutes a day in whole-class reading instruction, 30 minutes a day in independent reading, and 15 minutes a day in writing in response to reading.

In Year 1 of the Minnesota REA Project, researchers found further support for this "push-in" delivery model (Taylor and Peterson 2003). In contrast, a "combination" delivery model was found to be negatively related to students' reading growth. Delivery models studied included the following:

▶ Delivery Model 1—In-Class Model with Pull-Out Additional Instruction: Most students received most of their reading instruction from the classroom teacher. Some students went out to a resources teacher for additional instruction.

▶ Delivery Model 2—In-Class Model with Push-In Additional Instruction: Most students received most of their reading instruction from the classroom teacher. Another classroom teacher or resources teachers came in to the class to work with some students.

▶ Delivery Model 3—Pull-Out, Ability-Grouped Model: Students switched classrooms for a majority of their reading instruction based on ability groups.

▶ Delivery Model 4—Combination Model: Students received at least 50 percent of their reading instruction from the classroom teacher (usually whole-class instruction), but almost all students also left the classroom for ability-grouped instruction (usually for 30–55 minutes).

Specifically, in grade 1, Delivery Model 2 (In-Class Model with Push-In Additional Instruction) was positively related to students' growth in reading comprehension (Gates)*, decoding (Gates), and fluency. Delivery Model 4 (Combination Model) was negatively related to students' growth in comprehension (Gates) and decoding (Gates).

In grades 2 and 3, Delivery Model 2 (In-Class Model with Push-In Additional Instruction) was positively related to students' growth in reading comprehension (Gates). Delivery Model 4 (Combination Model) was negatively related to students' growth in comprehension (Gates), vocabulary, and fluency. Delivery Model 3 (Pull-Out, Ability-Grouped Model) was negatively related to students' growth in comprehension as measured by the maze test. Additionally, more time spent on reading instruction was positively related to growth in vocabulary.

These findings do not tell us that all schools should use Delivery Model 2. However, we do think that schools should reflect on the delivery model(s) they are using and consider whether a different delivery model would serve their children better than the model(s) currently in use. Also, all models have strengths and

continues

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* Gates-MacGinitie Reading Texts

Figure 5–6a Examples of Whole-Group Activities Focusing on the Schoolwide Reading Program

weaknesses, and the weaknesses of any model should be addressed.

Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of Delivery Model 4. Also discuss the strengths and weaknesses of Delivery Model 2. How can the challenges of Delivery Model 2 be overcome?

Potential Strengths and Weaknesses

Delivery Model 1. Most students receive most of their reading instruction from the classroom teacher. Some students go out to a resource teacher for additional instruction.

Strengths: _____

Weaknesses:

▶ Students lose instructional time traveling to and from the resource room. This means struggling students spend less time reading than their more advanced peers.

▶ Communication and collaboration between the classroom teacher and the specialist may not occur.

▶ Instruction may be disconnected or unrelated to the topics, vocabulary, and concepts being worked on in the grade-level classroom.

▶ Skills taught in one location may not be connected to meaningful reading and writing in the other location, making transfer difficult for the students.

▶ Other _____

Delivery Model 2. Most students receive most of their reading instruction from the classroom teacher. One or more resource teachers come in to the class to work with some students:

Strengths: _____

Weaknesses:

▶ Some adults in the classroom may not be working directly with students. (For example, one adult does whole-group instruction while the other adult in the room works with 0–2 students.)

▶ A plan may be selected in which each adult does the same 20-minute lesson with three groups of students rotating among teachers who cover different topics such as reading texts, phonics, comprehension or vocabulary skill sheets, leading to disjointed instruction. Teachers may not differentiate their lesson for the various needs and abilities of the students.

▶ Children may not be reading or writing enough if they are doing isolated word work or phonics only in some of the small groups.

▶ Other _____

Delivery Model 3. Students switch classrooms for a majority of their reading instruction based on ability groups:

Strengths: _____

Weaknesses:

▶ Students lose instructional time traveling to and from their reading groups.

▶ Grade-level, classroom teachers (homeroom teachers) may not see their students for large portions of the school day. This makes it hard to develop a sense of community within the classroom and to integrate the other subject areas into the reading curriculum.

▶ Homeroom teachers may feel that they are not adequately informed on their students' progress in reading, which makes it difficult to communicate to parents during conferences, etc.

▶ Ability groups may be quite large so teachers do whole-group instruction instead of using small groups.

▶ Other _____

continues

Figure 5–6b Examples of Whole-Group Activities Focusing on the Schoolwide Reading Program, continued

Examples of Whole-Group Activities Focusing
on the Schoolwide Reading Program, *continued*

Delivery Model 4. Students receive a portion of their reading instruction from the classroom teacher (usually whole-class instruction), but almost all students also leave the classroom for ability-grouped instruction.

Strengths: _____

Weaknesses:

▶ Students lose instructional time traveling to and from their reading groups.

▶ Communication and collaboration between the home-room teacher and the reading teacher may not occur.

▶ Ability groups may be quite large so teachers do more whole group instruction instead of using small groups.

▶ Instruction for most students by two teachers in two different locations may be disjointed.

▶ Other _____

Activity 2: Time Spent on Reading Instruction

In a study of schools beating the odds (Taylor, Pearson, Clark, and Walpole 2000), researchers found that teachers in grades 1 through 3 in successful schools spent 134 minutes per day on reading instruction, exclusive of writing, spelling, or the teacher reading aloud to students for literature appreciation. Children in these schools averaged 28 minutes a day on independent reading. In contrast, teachers in less successful schools spent 113 minutes a day on reading and children spent 19 minutes a day in independent reading. Sufficient time spent on reading alone does not guarantee that students will all learn to read well. However, it is an important component of effective reading instruction.

Questions for Reflection

1. How much time are you spending on literacy instruction? Is it enough? If not, what can be done about it? Is it uninterrupted time?

2. Do you notice that you are spending more time or less time on some aspects of literacy instruction than others? Is this too much time? Too little time? What can be done to increase time on aspects of reading that need more attention?

3. As an example of the concern of possibly spending too much time for some students on some components of reading, Taylor et al. (2005) found that in grade 2 through 5 classrooms in which relatively high levels of phonics instruction and practice were observed, children on average showed less growth in reading. The National Reading Panel Report (2000) stated:

The conclusion drawn is that systematic phonics instruction produces the biggest impact on growth in reading when it begins in kindergarten or 1st grade before children have learned to read independently. . . . However, phonics instruction failed to exert a significant impact on the reading performance of low-achieving readers in 2nd through 6th grades. . . . Programs that focus too much on the teaching of letter–sounds relations and not enough on putting them to use are unlikely to be very effective. In implementing systematic phonics instruction, educators must keep the end in mind and ensure that children understand the purpose of learning letter-sounds and are able to apply their skills in their daily reading and writing abilities (2-133, 2-135).

Given these research findings, how much phonics instruction and practice are you providing? Is it all needed in grades 2 and 3 or above?

References

Taylor, B. M., P. D. Pearson, K. Clark., and S. Walpole. 2000. "Effective Schools and Accomplished Teachers: Lessons About Primary Grade Reading Instruction in Low-Income Schools." Elementary School Journal 101(2): 121–66.

Taylor, B. M., and D. S. Peterson. 2003. Year 3 Report of the CIERA School Change Project. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, Minnesota Center for Reading Research.

Figure 5–6c Examples of Whole-Group Activities Focusing on the Schoolwide Reading Program, continued

Questions on Reading Instruction by Grade Level

Teacher _____ Grade _____

List your general literacy schedule (approximate across classrooms). For example, 9:00–9:30—whole-class reading, 9:30–10:30—guided reading, 10:30–11:00—writer's workshop

*Time Spent on Reading—The average amount of time spent on reading instruction, exclusive of language arts instruction, at a grade level within a school.

**Time Spent on Language Arts—The average amount of time spent on language arts instruction (e.g., writer's workshop, spelling, grammar, handwriting), exclusive of reading instruction, at a grade level within a school.

Indicate which of the following best describes the approach to delivery of reading instruction in your classroom (pick only one).

___ **Delivery Model 1** *In-Class Model with Pull-Out Additional Instruction*

Most students received most of their reading instruction from the classroom teacher. Some students went out to a resources teacher for additional instruction.

___ **Delivery Model 2** *In-Class Model with Push-In Additional Instruction*

Most students received most of their reading instruction from the classroom teacher. Another classroom teacher or resources teacher(s) came in to the class to work with some students.

___ **Delivery Model 3** *Pull-Out, Ability-Grouped Model*

Students switched classrooms for a majority of their reading instruction based on ability groups.

___ **Delivery Model 4** *Combination Model*

Students received at least 50 percent of their reading instruction from the classroom teacher (usually whole-class instruction), but almost all students also left the classroom for ability-grouped instruction (usually for 30–55 minutes).

___ **Other.** Please describe: _____

_____ _

_____

List major programs/materials used for reading instruction for grade level in question.

Program/Material   **Used with whom**

Figure 5–7 Questions on Reading Instruction by Grade Level

Get study groups underway. A proposed yearlong schedule for study group sessions, along with proposed study group topics, should also be presented at an early fall whole-group meeting. Therefore, during the summer before the first year of the project or at the very beginning of the school year, the leadership team needs to develop an initial plan for study groups for the upcoming school year. After studying various sources of data, as previously described, the leadership team should generate and circulate a list of possible study group topics to all teachers. At a whole-group meeting, teachers should review the study group plan, look at and discuss data, and add overlooked items to the list of possible study group topics. People should then select their first, second, and third choices for the study groups in which they would like to participate.

Study groups need to focus on substantive topics for extended periods of time (four, five, or six months, or perhaps longer). Teachers need sufficient opportunities to research and discuss selected topics, implement new techniques in their classrooms, and evaluate the impact of these changes over time. (Read the sidebars on this page and Figure 5–8.)

EXCELLENT TOPICS FOR TEACHER STUDY GROUPS

Choose topics carefully! Teachers will talk about and try out instructional ideas for four to six months, so you need to select a topic that is complex and that clearly leads to better reading instruction. In our research (Taylor et al. 2003, 2005, 2007), my colleagues and I found these techniques to be especially helpful in affecting change:

- Learning to ask students high-level questions about what they have read.

- Coaching children to use word recognition strategies as they are reading (e.g., helping students apply phonics to text).

- Teaching comprehension strategies in addition to comprehension skills.

TYPES OF TOPICS THAT ARE LIKELY TO STALL OUT

- **Reading-center activities.** While this is a good topic to cover over lunch or at a grade-level meeting, it isn't rich enough to be sustained over several months, nor is it likely to lead to important changes in reading instruction and in turn to significant gains in students' reading achievement.

- **Leveling trade books in the classroom library.** At first glance this seems sufficiently central to students' reading achievement and complex enough to warrant study over time. Pursuing it in a study group would no doubt improve teachers' ability to match young readers to just-right books, but it would do little to help teachers make substantive changes in the crucial aspects of reading—the "what" and "how" covered in Chapters 2 and 3. Leveling books is perhaps something to work on over the summer, if resources are available.

Possible Study Group Topics and Questions for Evaluating a Potential Topic to Be Studied Over Time in a Study Group

Main Reading Topics

◗ Comprehension Strategies (e.g., comprehension strategy routines, improving inferential comprehension, connecting reading comprehension strategy assessment and instruction)

◗ Comprehension Questioning (e.g., promoting high-level thinking through discussions and writing about text, connecting reading comprehension assessment and instruction focused on high-level thinking)

◗ Vocabulary (e.g., teaching word meanings during and after reading, teaching strategies to learn word meanings, developing students' word consciousness)

◗ Emergent Literacy (e.g., balancing phonemic awareness instruction, phonics instruction, and literature/comprehension instruction, and vocabulary development in kindergarten)

◗ Word Recognition (e.g., balancing explicit phonics instruction and word recognition coaching during reading)

◗ Fluency (e.g., providing varied approaches to fluency instruction in Grades 1–2, deciding who needs explicit fluency practice)

Support Topics (secondary focus during study group work)

◗ Providing motivating instruction
◗ Teaching ELL students effectively
◗ Teaching struggling readers effectively
◗ Conducting useful classroom-based assessments
◗ Developing parent partnerships

Questions for Evaluating the Usefulness of a Potential Study Group Topic

1. Does the technique have research citations? (Also consult the IRA publication, *What Is Evidenced-Based Reading Instruction?*, www.reading.org.)

   a. Yes.

   b. No. Check reference citations very carefully before deciding on whether to study this technique.

2. Check the research support for the actual technique. Is the technique based on research or directly supported by research?

   a. Is the reference citation a research journal article? Yes.

   b. Is the reference citation a textbook or non-research-based journal article? Yes. In this case, this may not be a research-based technique or a directly supported-by-research-based technique. Consult reference citation(s) for further information before deciding on whether to study this technique, or choose another technique to study.

   c. If neither a nor b is selected, you may need to come up with another topic as the one selected may not be a substantial, research-based topic.

3. If the technique is research-based or directly supported by research, is it likely to significantly improve your students' reading ability? Is it worth studying for multiple sessions?

   a. Yes.

   b. No.

   You should either have "yes" for question 1 or have determined in question 2 that the technique is based on or directly supported by research. You should have "yes" for question 3. If you have a "no" for question 3, you may wish to consider the topic at a single study group meeting along with a major instructional technique. But first and foremost, you should be studying a substantive technique in a study group that continues for multiple study group sessions.

Figure 5–8 Possible Study Group Topics and Questions for Evaluating a Potential Topic to Be Studied Over Time in a Study Group

Help study groups succeed. If every study group includes a leadership team member as a participant, study groups that are struggling can be readily identified. Steps to maximize the success of study groups can be discussed and plans to support study groups can be agreed on. Leadership team members should be on the lookout for four types of problems: (1) teachers are not studying major, research-validated topics; (2) teachers are not sticking with topics for a half year or longer; (3) study groups are primarily grade level rather than cross grade; and (4) study group members are not moving beyond discussion to concrete reflection (e.g., sharing videos of their teaching or looking at student work) and action to modify their teaching. (Study groups and ways to maximize their effectiveness are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 7.)

Support new teachers. Leadership team members will need to present an overview of the SCR process (see Chapter 4) and an overview of effective reading instruction (see Chapters 2 and 3) to teachers new to the school. These teachers should understand the process for school-based reading improvement that the school is using and the vision of effective instruction that teachers are working toward. Leadership team members might encourage new teachers to visit classrooms to where research-based instructional techniques are in use.

Develop parent partnerships. Successful schools foster partnerships with parents, respect cultural differences, and promote community involvement (Taylor 2002). To increase parent participation, teachers and administrators need to make parents feel like welcome partners in their children's education. Researched-based books by Christenson and Sheridan (2001), Edwards (2004), and Epstein and colleagues (2002) contain excellent suggestions for developing strong parent partnerships within schools. (Refer back to Figure 5–2.)

Reflect on the school-based reading improvement process. Periodically, the leadership team needs to make sure teachers feel the program for change is worthwhile, intellectually challenging, and impacting classroom instruction. Teachers should be asked what they think is going well and indicate what needs attention to make study groups, whole-group meetings, data retreats, and the improvement effort in general more effective. Figure 5–9 shows a sample feedback form. The rubric shown in Figure 5–10, which can be used to evaluate the extent to which the important components of the improvement process, is discussed further in Chapter 6.

In addition to taking the concrete action steps set out here, leadership team members need to be cheerleaders for the school-based improvement process. They should be the first to step up to the plate and try new reform-related processes such as sharing videos of their teaching, being coached by the literacy coordinator, or coaching their colleagues. They also need to keep conversations related to the reading improvement process positive. *Leadership and Sustainability: System Thinkers in Action,* by Michael Fullan (2005), is a useful resource to help leadership team members better understand their roles as school leaders. With positive language and discussions, a group can move forward. With negative language, it is too easy for a group to get mired in the status quo.

Example of a Feedback Form to Evaluate the Strengths and Challenges of the SCR Improvement Effort

Whole-Group Meetings

What things are going well?

What things are not going well?

What suggestions do you have to make whole-group meetings more effective?

Study Group Meetings

What things are going well?

What things are not going well?

What suggestions do you have to make study group meetings more effective?

Classroom Visits by Peers and Coaching Opportunities

What things are going well?

What things are not going well?

What suggestions do you have to make classroom visits and coaching opportunities more effective?

Data Retreats (three times a year)

What things are going well?

What things are not going well?

What suggestions do you have to make data retreats more effective?

Common Grade-Level Planning Sessions and Data Meetings

What things are going well?

What things are not going well?

What suggestions do you have to make planning sessions and data sharing meetings more effective?

Leadership Team

What things are going well?

What things are not going well?

What suggestions do you have to help make the leadership team more effective?

Other Comments

Figure 5–9 Example of a Feedback Form to Evaluate the Strengths and Challenges of the SCR Improvement Effort

Additional Responsibilities of the Principal

In addition to serving on the leadership team, the principal needs to participate in whole-group meetings, study groups, and data retreats related to the SCR process. Teachers feel more supported and more positive about the reform effort when their principal is in the thick of it. As Westside Elementary's Angelina Ipson explains, "Our principal, Carla, is very supportive and leads by example. She participates in study groups and even brings a video of herself teaching a group of students. I've never seen a principal open herself to others like that."

Principals need to visit all classrooms regularly. Tricia Calhoun, the principal at Edgewood Elementary, describes her role as an instructional leader thus: "I think principals need to be aware of the instruction that's going on in their schools. I get into classrooms on a regular basis. I know what is happening in our school based on walk-throughs, longer classroom visits, scheduled observations, and formal and informal discussions with teachers."

As principals learn more about effective instruction, they become more comfortable with their role as instructional leaders. Janet Jones, the principal of Lincoln Elementary, says, "I see myself as the instructional leader and manager of daily operations, but with the ultimate responsibility of making sure we provide the best educational programs possible to ensure student success. . . . [The SCR process] has been a really wonderful experience for the staff and for me personally. I now understand what good reading instruction is and how to make it happen."

There will be reluctant teachers in any reform effort, and the responsibility typically falls to the principal to help these teachers become more engaged in the process or at least keep their negative feelings from impacting the positive ideas and work of others. Teacher leaders on the leadership team may also be able to increase reluctant teachers' participation by talking with them about successes they see at the school as a result of the change efforts that are taking place.

Another responsibility of the principal is to build collaborative leadership (Fullan 2005). The literacy coordinator and leadership team members need to feel they share responsibility for the school change effort and the school reading program, not simply taking directions from the principal on the work that needs to get done.

Finally, principals should take advantage of every opportunity to participate in ongoing professional development related to reading instruction and the SCR process. They should meet with other principals who are leading their schools in similar reform efforts. By networking with other administrators, principals can share successes and get ideas about how to solve problems that will most certainly arise during the ups and downs of a multiyear school-based reading improvement effort. Edgewood Elementary Principal Tricia Calhoun comments, "University leadership sessions and

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School Change in Reading Reform Effort Rubric

Please Note: For most of the reform effort variables, a school receives 1 point if the item is fulfilled at least 80 percent of the time (unless other criteria are specified). The school receives 0 points if the item is fulfilled less than the specified criteria. Put a check mark by each item that is fulfilled, and count up the number of check marks for a total score. In recent SCR schools in Minnesota (n = 23), the mean reform effort score was 7 in year 1 of the SCR process, and 9 in years 2 and 3.

Reform Effort Variables

1. Study group meetings are conducted for 1 hour each week during the school year.

2. Study groups are composed of teachers and specialists across several grade levels.

3. Study group activities cause teachers to reflect on their own instructional practices, and evaluate student work and engagement. (Look for reflection on teaching through video sharing and examining student work on study group meeting notes forms.)

4. Study groups use current research to inform their discussions of instructional methods and practices. ("Using current research" was defined as using research articles and books with substantial numbers of research citations. Additional resources can be counted as "research" if they met the criteria described in the IRA position statement "What Is Evidence-Based Reading Instruction?")

5. Study groups develop action plans that cause teachers to reflect on their own instruction and examine student assessment data. The action plans show that each study group is discussing a substantive topic over time.

6. Study groups have chosen substantive topics that are based on student assessment data and current research on best practices, and they maintain these topics over many months.

7. Schools hold whole-group meetings once a month to look at assessment data, deal with schoolwide issues related to reform, and share across study groups.

8. Schools have specific schoolwide plans for involving parents as partners.

9. Schools have external facilitators who are actively involved with the reform process (i.e., Meet regularly with the internal leadership team to provide expertise and support. Visit classrooms to model lessons, observe, and give feedback).

10. Schools have internal leadership teams that meet for at least 1 hour once a month and play an active role in leadership.

Figure 5–10 School Change in Reading Reform Effort Rubric

teacher institutes have given us a lot of important new information to consider and perhaps try out in our reading lessons. I have also appreciated the time to talk with other principals, get ideas, and hear that others have been facing some of the same challenges I have had."

Coaching and Additional Responsibilities of the Literacy Coordinator

The role of taking the lead and managing the school-based reading improvement process falls to the literacy coordinator. The principal will have many other administrative duties, and leadership team members typically have full-time classroom responsibilities that prevent them from taking on the coordinator's role. Thus, a full- or half-time literacy coordinator is essential to keep whole-group meetings, study group sessions, leadership team meetings, and data retreats not only scheduled and functioning, but moving forward.

At least two-thirds of the literacy coordinator's time should be spent modeling and coaching in classrooms. However, Bean and Zigmond (2006) found that this often doesn't happen. They reported that coordinators in 161 Reading First schools in Pennsylvania spent only five hours a week observing in classrooms, modeling in classrooms, and engaging in coaching conversations with teachers. To be effective at coaching, literacy coordinators need to continually refine their learning related to effective reading instruction and engage in ongoing learning related to coaching and leadership (see Chapter 8).

The literacy coordinator should, in weekly meetings, keep the principal up-to-date on the school's successes and challenges related to the school-based reading improvement process. If the school is able to hire a part-time external consultant to work alongside the literacy coordinator, this person should attend these weekly meetings as well. An external consultant is a valuable colleague with whom the literacy coordinator can brainstorm, plan, and problem solve.

Implementation tips from SCR literacy coordinators and external consultants are presented in Figure 5–11. More support can be subscribed to by going to the School Change in Reading website at www.earlyinterventioninreading.com. Roles of the literacy coordinator related to professional learning through coaching and to changes in teaching are discussed in Chapter 8. (For additional sources of external support, see www.earlyinterventioninreading.com.)

Summary

The SCR process is hard work. But as seen from participant comments, it can be a rewarding experience. Janet Jones, the principal at Lincoln Elementary, exclaims, "I'm almost grieving that [the project is over]. . . . If people put their hearts and souls into something, good things will follow. . . . We're basically going to replicate every piece of the process and continue with the systems we've learned. We are also going to be a demonstration school for other schools in the district so they can learn and we can share with reality and honesty. The project changed the way staff thinks about instruction; it changed relationships in a good way; and it gave everyone confidence, pride, and satisfaction in their work."

Tips for Literacy Coordinators and External Consultants in Schools Using the SCR Process

The following tips are from former literacy coordinators and external consultants who helped the SCR process move forward effectively.

Getting Staff on Board

▷ At a staff meeting early in the school year, ask staff to brainstorm about all the concerns that they have, record this information, and categorize the concerns. Use this information to help address concerns and set priorities for the year. (The self-study survey found in Chapter 6 will give you this information, too.)

▷ Make sure the staff has adequate time to make informed decisions. Allow staff time to talk informally about their commitment to the project.

▷ You need to share specific information about *why* the school is doing this (school needs based on data). Share positive feedback often about what is being done and what is going well. Start with baby steps.

▷ Always begin with need, based on student performance and the self-study survey responses.

▷ Establish trust and rapport by persistently making yourself available to teachers.

▷ Always follow through when you make a promise or commitment to someone. (If you forget a time or two, you will not earn their trust and confidence.)

▷ Begin by building rapport with teachers. Describe your role in the school to the staff—you (the literacy coordinator) are there as a resource and a support, *not* as an evaluator.

▷ Be positive and let teachers know you are there to support them. Remember that change can be scary and is often viewed with fear or anxiety.

▷ "I was in a situation where even though teachers may have had some information about the framework prior to its implementation, their roles in the process were not clear. I'm not even sure that the leadership of the school knew exactly what this was all about or how it would work. It took a long time this year to build trust and understanding."

Establishing a Leadership Team

▷ Try to include representatives from each grade level and the specialists.

▷ Give the leadership team members roles and responsibilities that will allow them to evolve into teacher leaders.

▷ Have each member of the leadership team in a different study group so they can help the groups stay focused and productive.

Setting Priorities

▷ Be aware of your context and players. Know the district's focus areas, the principal's goals, students' needs (as seen in the data), and teachers' practices. Connect these needs with research recommendations.

▷ Provide lots of chocolate!

▷ Use the self-study survey to narrow the focus of our efforts in year 1.

Planning for Large Group Meetings

▷ Carefully plan each session. Have a clear agenda and distribute it to the teachers ahead of time. Keep teachers active. Build in time to reflect. Provide handouts so everyone can focus on the presentation. Review what has been accomplished.

▷ Structure the meeting to allow for maximum interaction. Allow some choice. Make sure all research presented is grounded in the practical. Be sure there is one thing teachers can take with them and try out in their classrooms.

▷ Take time to celebrate! The progress may be small, but a celebration can help to double the growth.

continues

Figure 5–11a Tips for Literacy Coordinators and External Consultants in Schools Using the SCR Process

Tips for Literacy Coordinators and External Consultants in Schools Using the SCR Process , *continued*

▶ At the first several whole-group meetings cover the following:

- Protocols for video sharing and sharing student work

- Roles and responsibilities/expectations of study group members

- A sample study group agenda

- Model how to write an action plan and fill in meeting note forms

- Explain to the staff the role of the Leadership Team, Literacy Coordinator, External Consultant (if you have one)

▶ Assign a study group (or ask them to volunteer) to report at each monthly whole-group meeting and have the group members share/model the strategies they have been implementing over time. Promote creativity in the sharing of study group activities. Study groups can share through brief presentations with handouts, poster sessions, and so on. Give them three guiding questions to help them as they plan their presentation:

1. What does the research say about your topic?

2. What examples of this strategy or best practice are you going to share with the whole group?

3. What would be useful for the rest of the staff to know about this topic?

Looking at Data as a School

▶ Reviewing data as a school can really make first efforts at a study topic successful. Choosing a topic that is measurable can give a study group a baseline and a benchmark. Using the data in a graphic form to show change over time is a powerful means to help teachers reflect on the progress their groups made.

▶ Data retreats must be scheduled regularly. At whole-group meetings, encourage teachers to look at data across grades and talk about moving forward as a school.

▶ Ensure that this activity is an ongoing and regular component of action research. Questions to ask:

1. What does it say to us about student performance?

2. What does it say to us about instructional need?

3. Based on the data, what strategies would most significantly impact growth?

4. What professional development is needed in order for teachers to be proficient with these practices?

▶ Use a form to analyze the data looking at four areas:

1. What do you notice about the data?

2. What questions do you have related to this data?

3. What implications does this have for the students and/or teachers?

4. What implications does this data have for the school?

Other Tips

▶ Don't layer this initiative with other major thrusts. When there are too many initiatives in place, progress is slow.

▶ Try to "market" yourself to district personnel. Let them know about the progress the school is making.

Figure 5–11b Tips for Literacy Coordinators and External Consultants in Schools Using the SCR Process, continued

Judy Hunter, the principal at Madina Elementary, comments, "I think this has been an opportunity of a lifetime. I thank the people who selected our school to participate and to learn and grow together. I look forward to sustaining our changes and maintaining our momentum for effective instruction in future years." Melissa Norris, a kindergarten teacher at Madina, says, "Involvement in the SCR process has been a very positive thing for us. It has made us step outside of our comfort zone and take some risks. We have all grown through all aspects of the reform process. I know we can see the growth in our students."

By working together on a school-based reading improvement process over several years, teachers develop a greater sense of collective efficacy in their ability to provide excellent reading instruction to their students. Teachers also develop a greater sense of self-efficacy as teachers of reading who successfully meet individual students' needs and challenge them all. As Lincoln Elementary's Kathy Little comments, "I can say that my personal teaching skills are completely different, in a good way, than what they were five years ago. [As a school], we have seen our staff grow in a way that is outstanding. We have collaboration and dedication and it has been fantastic to grow with one another. I only hope we can keep growing and do so with efforts from everyone."

❞❞ talk About it

* The School Change in Reading framework focuses on three major goals in which teachers and administrators (a) improve the schoolwide delivery of reading instruction based on local needs and data; (b) work collaboratively to teach reading and reflect on and improve reading instruction through school-based, ongoing professional development; and (c) use research-based knowledge on effective teaching practices, school reform, effective schools, and effective teachers to guide their efforts. Discuss the challenges and benefits of working toward each of these goals.

* Does your school have the necessary administrative and teacher leadership capacity and would you have sufficient teacher buy-in to succeed with a significant schoolwide reading improvement effort such as the one outlined in this chapter?

* Do teachers at your school feel energized by the concept of collaborative, school-based, intellectually stimulating, reflective professional development? Why or why not? If not, what are the barriers?

* Does your school have the "right stuff" to begin on such a reading improvement effort as described in this chapter? What else do people need to know to decide?

Recommended Readings for Implementing a Schoolwide Plan for Reading Improvement

Leadership and School Change

Allington, R. L., and S. A. Walmsley, eds. 2007. *No Quick Fix: Rethinking Literacy Programs in America's Elementary Schools* (RTI ed.). New York: Teachers College Press.

Fullan, M. 2005. *Leadership and Sustainability: Systems Thinkers in Action.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Goddard, R. D., W. K. Hoy, and A. W. Hoy. 2004. "Collective Efficacy Beliefs: Theoretical Development, Empirical Evidence, and Future Directions." *Educational Researcher 33*(3): 3–13.

Hasbrouck, J., and C. Denton. 2005. *The Reading Coach: A How-To Manual for Success.* Boston: Sopris West.

Hawley, W. D., and D. L. Rollie, eds. 2007. *The Keys to Effective Schools: Educational Reform as Continuous Improvement.* 2nd ed. Washington, DC: National Education Association.

Taylor, B. M., D. P. Pearson, D.S. Peterson, and M. C. Rodriguez. 2005. "The CIERA School Change Framework: An Evidence-Based Approach to Professional Development and School Reading Improvement." *Reading Research Quarterly* 40(1): 40–69.

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Professional Learning

Hasbrouck, J., and C. Denton. 2005. *The Reading Coach: A How-To Manual for Success.* Boston: Sopris West.

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