

Evaluating the Effectiveness of Reading First Coaches in an Urban District

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Introduction

Setting

- Urban
- Diverse
- Wide range of socioeconomic status
- 37 Reading First schools
- \$3,000,000+ in federal funding
- 26 Year 1 schools
- 11 Year 2 schools

Purpose of the Study

- To determine the *Return on Investment (ROI) in the targeted district.
 - ROI is the analysis of data to determine the tangible and intangible benefits of investing in a particular organizational practice or training.
- To provide information to school and district leaders in hiring reading coaches.

*Phillips, J. J., & Stone, R. D. (2002). *How to measure training results*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Problem Statement

- In the targeted district, there were limited data to determine the effects of Reading First coaches because the school district was operating in its second year at the time of the study.
- There was a need to explore the effects coaches had on teacher practice, and ultimately, student achievement.

Research Questions

1. How has the instructional practice changed in teachers since Reading First implementation?
2. How do teachers perceive the impact of coaches on their instructional practice?
3. What are the patterns in student achievement data at 3rd grade FCAT?
4. What are the patterns in student achievement data on SAT 10 at 1st and 2nd grades?
5. What are the patterns in the fundamental skills assessments (DIBELS & PPVT-III)?
6. What are the challenges faced by the coaches?

Expected Outcomes

- Positive effects on teacher practice.
- Positive patterns in student achievement data.
- Present unbiased information to school and district leaders.

Literature Review

The Educational Leadership Challenge

- Keeping good teachers
- Providing well-designed mentoring systems (Darling-Hammond, 2003)
- Giving up command-and-control (Sparks, 2002)
- Managers vs. Instructional Leaders (Lashway, 2002).
- Continuous improvement of coaching models (Neufeld, 2002).

*Reading First Requirements

- 90-minute reading block
- 5 + 3 + ii + iii = NCLB
- Big 5 Areas (National Reading Panel, 2000)
 - Phonemic Awareness
 - Phonics
 - Vocabulary
 - Fluency
 - Comprehension
- Outcome measures

* Just Read, Florida! (2005). *K-3 reading academy participant guide*. Tallahassee, FL: Author.

Reading Pedagogy

- National Reading Panel (2000) report
- Fluency (Rasinski, 2003)
- Vocabulary (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002; Brand, 2004)
- Comprehension (Miller, 2002; Marriott, 2002)
- Differentiated Instruction (Tomlinson, 2003).
- Guided Reading (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).

The Instructional Coach

- Coaches help teachers apply research to practice (Killion, 2004)
- Knight (2005) defined instructional coach as one who teaches educators how to use proven teaching methods
- Coaches facilitate teachers helping each other (Gottesman, 2002)

The Instructional Coach

- Coaching as mentoring (Robbins, 2004)
- On-site consultant (Kaplan & Owings, 2002)
- 3 levels of coaching (International Reading Association, 2004):
 - Informal (conversations, gathering materials, assist with assessment)
 - Somewhat formal (co-planning, team meetings, analyzing student work)
 - Formal (model and discuss lessons, visit classrooms, analyze entire lessons)
- Have many quality experiences to share with teachers (Hasbrouck & Denton, 2005)
- Create a rapport-building environment (Lyons & Pinnell, 2001)

Professional Development

- Meaningful and occurring in classrooms (Easton, 2004)
- Critical component in teaching profession (Darling-Hammond, 2005)
- Effective when teachers involved in reflective practice (Ferraro, 2000)

Effects of Coaching

- Provide teacher support (Coskie, Robinson, Buly & Egawa, 2005)
- Successful under strong instructional leadership (Even-Ascencio, 2002)
- Managing schedules, personality of coaches, principal as instructional leader (Steckel, 2003)
- Increase in student achievement (Georgia State Department of Education, 2001)
- Support from school administration (O'Connor & Ertmer, 2003)

Coaching Challenges

- Many are new to current research (Heathman, 2004)
- Required to know large quantity of research-based practices and could not see the big picture (Neufeld, 2002)
- Skeptical teachers (Cavanaugh, 2005)
- Size of a school (Klonsky, 2002)

Research Design

- Evaluation research can be specific to education because it encompasses collecting and reporting the effectiveness of an initiative (Charles & Mertler, 2002)
- Evaluation renders judgment on worth of a program and assists policy makers (Worthen, Sanders, & Fitzpatrick, 2003)
- Mixed-methods approach can evaluate a program, including interviews, surveys, and a variety of data collection (Phillips & Stone, 2002)

Methodology

Procedures

- Distributed surveys to coaches to determine change in instructional practice (33/37 returned).
- Distributed questionnaires to coaches to determine challenges they faced (33/37 returned).
- Distributed teacher questionnaires to coaches to give to teachers to determine how teachers felt coaches impacted their instructional practice (226/800 returned [28% return rate]).

Procedures

- Collected FCAT data to determine Level 1 and Level 3+ achievement at 3rd grade per school.
- Collected SAT 10 data from district to determine on-grade-level and below-grade-level achievement at 1st and 2nd grades per school.
- Collected DIBELS and PPVT-III data from district to determine on-grade-level and below-grade-level achievement at kindergarten per school.

Data Collection & Analysis

- SPSS 14.0 to analyze quantitative survey data.
- NVIVO 7 to analyze qualitative data.
- Microsoft Excel to analyze aggregated data means for student achievement.

Assumptions

- Reading First coaches answered survey questions from an objective point of view.
- Review of literature was extensive in the areas of coaching and mentoring at the time of the study.
- Reading First coaches distributed teacher questionnaires to every teacher, including those with whom they did not work closely.

Limitations

- Data collected on changed instructional practice was a perspective of an entire school year on one day.
- Teachers were given questionnaires during the last few weeks of the school year when large amount of assessment and paperwork is required.

Coach Survey

Survey of Instructional Practice at Reading First Schools

- Developed by the researcher
- Focus group of 10 coaching/reading professionals reviewed the survey prior to instrumentation
- Reliability analysis yielded .928
Chronbach's alpha

Survey of Instructional Practice at Reading First Schools

- Demographics
 - Role
 - Gender
 - Ethnicity
 - Years of Experience
 - Highest Degree Earned
 - Teacher Experience at School

Survey of Instructional Practice at Reading First Schools

- Scale used to estimate the number of teachers:
 - All
 - Almost All
 - Some
 - Few
 - None

Survey of Instructional Practice at Reading First Schools

- Since Reading First implementation...
 - Teachers have improved the practice of teaching reading (#15)
 - Teachers have improved in the area of planning and organization (#16)
 - Teachers have gained knowledge in teaching phonemic awareness (#25)
 - Teachers have gained knowledge in phonics instruction (#26)

Survey of Instructional Practice at Reading First Schools

- Since Reading First implementation...
 - Teachers have gained knowledge in vocabulary instruction (#27)
 - Teachers have gained knowledge in fluency instruction (#28)
 - Teachers have gained knowledge in teaching comprehension strategies (#29)
 - Teachers are reflective about their craft (#35)
 - Teachers engage in professional dialogue about their teaching skills (#40)
 - Teachers are receptive to learning (#41)
 - Teachers are resistant to learning (#42)

Results

Reading First Coach Survey/Questionnaire Demographics

Respondents

- 33 respondents
- 9 Year 1 schools
- 24 Year 2 schools
- All female
- 21 Caucasian
- 8 Black
- 3 Hispanic
- 1 Indian

Coaches' Years of Experience

- 0-3 Years: 1 coach
 - 4-8 Years: 7 coaches
 - 9-15 Years: 8 coaches
 - 16-20 Years: 6 coaches
 - 20-25 Years: 5 coaches
 - 25+ Years: 6 coaches
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- Majority of coaches 15+ years of experience in education.
 - Nearly 1/3 of the coaches had 20+ years of experience in education.

Highest Earned Degree

- Bachelor's Degree: 19 coaches
- Master's Degree: 12 coaches
- Specialist Degree: 1 coach
- Doctorate Degree: 1 coach
- Majority of coaches had Bachelor's degree

Teacher Experience

- Mostly Inexperienced: 13 coaches
- Mostly Experienced: 12 coaches
- Both Inexperienced and Experienced: 8 coaches
- Year 1 Schools:
 - Inexperienced: 1 coach
 - Experienced: 6 coaches
 - Both inexperienced and experienced: 2 coaches
- Year 2 Schools:
 - Inexperienced: 12 coaches
 - Experienced: 6 coaches
 - Both inexperienced and experienced: 6 coaches

Research Question 1

How has instructional practice changed since Reading First implementation?

Improved in Teaching Reading (#15)

All: 12 (36.4%)

Almost All: 14 (42.4%)

Some: 7 (21.2%)

Few: 0

None: 0

Year 1 Schools:

All: 3 (33.3%)

Almost All: 4 (44.4%)

Some: 2 (22.2%)

Few: 0

None: 0

Year 2 Schools:

All: 9 (37.5%)

Almost All: 10 (41.7%)

Some: 5 (20.8%)

Few: 0

None: 0

Nearly 79% of the Reading First coaches said that “All” or “Almost All” teachers improved in teaching reading since Reading First implementation.

Improved in Planning and Organization (#16)

All: 6 (18.2%)

Almost All: 16 (48.5%)

Some: 11 (33.3%)

Few: 0

None: 0

Year 1 Schools:

All: 1 (11.1%)

Almost All: 6 (66.7%)

Some: 2 (22.2%)

Few: 0

None: 0

Year 2 Schools:

All: 5 (20.8%)

Almost All: 10 (41.7%)

Some: 9 (37.5%)

Few: 0

None: 0

Nearly 67% of the Reading First coaches estimated that “All” or “Almost All” teachers had improved in planning and organization since Reading First implementation.

Gained Knowledge in Teaching Phonemic Awareness (#25)

All: 10 (30.3%)
Almost All: 13 (39.4%)
Some: 7 (21.2%)
Few: 3 (9.1%)
None: 0

Year 1 Schools:

All: 1 (11.1%)
Almost All: 3 (33.3%)
Some: 3 (33.3%)
Few: 2 (22.2%)
None: 0

Year 2 Schools:

All: 9 (37.5%)
Almost All: 10 (41.7%)
Some: 4 (16.7%)
Few: 1 (4.1%)
None: 0

Nearly 70% of Reading First coaches estimated that “All” or “Almost All” teachers had gained knowledge in phonemic awareness instruction since Reading First implementation.

Gained Knowledge in Phonics Instruction (#26)

All: 1 (11.1%)
 Almost All: 5 (55.5%)
 Some: 2 (22.2%)
 Few: 1 (11.1%)
 None: 0

<u>Year 1 Schools:</u>	<u>Year 2 Schools:</u>
All: 1 (11.1%)	All: 9 (37.5%)
Almost All: 5 (55.5%)	Almost All: 11 (45.8%)
Some: 2 (22.2%)	Some: 4 (16.7%)
Few: 1 (11.1%)	Few: 0
None: 0	None: 0

Nearly 67% of Reading First coaches estimated that “All” or “Almost All” teachers had gained knowledge in phonics instruction since Reading First implementation.

Gained Knowledge in Vocabulary Instruction (#27)

All: 10 (30.3%)
 Almost All: 16 (48.5%)
 Some: 6 (18.2%)
 Few: 2 (6.1%)
 None: 0

<u>Year 1 Schools:</u>	<u>Year 2 Schools:</u>
All: 1 (11.1%)	All: 9 (37.5%)
Almost All: 3 (33.3%)	Almost All: 8 (33.3%)
Some: 4 (44.4%)	Some: 6 (25.0%)
Few: 1 (11.1%)	Few: 1 (4.2%)
None: 0	None: 0

Nearly 79% of the Reading First coaches estimated that “All” or “Almost All” teachers had gained knowledge in vocabulary instruction since Reading First implementation.

Gained Knowledge in Fluency Instruction (#28)

All: 10 (30.3%)

Almost All: 16 (48.5%)

Some: 7 (21.2%)

Few: 0

None: 0

Year 1 Schools:

All: 0

Almost All: 7 (77.7%)

Some: 2 (22.2%)

Few: 0

None: 0

Year 2 Schools:

All: 10 (41.7%)

Almost All: 9 (37.5%)

Some: 5 (20.8%)

Few: 0

None: 0

Nearly 79% of the Reading First coaches estimated that “All” or “Almost All” teachers had gained knowledge in fluency instruction since Reading First implementation.

Gained Knowledge in Comprehension Instruction (#29)

All: 7 (21.2%)

Almost All: 11 (33.3%)

Some: 14 (42.4%)

Few: 1 (3.0%)

None: 0

Year 1 Schools:

All: 0

Almost All: 3 (33.3%)

Some: 5 (55.5%)

Few: 1 (11.1%)

None: 0

Year 2 Schools:

All: 7 (29.2%)

Almost All: 8 (33.3%)

Some: 9 (37.5%)

Few: 0

None: 0

Nearly 55% of the Reading First coaches estimated that “All” or “Almost All” teachers had gained knowledge in comprehension instruction since Reading First implementation.

Teachers Reflective About Their Craft (#35)

All: 1 (3.0%)

Almost All: 8 (24.2%)

Some: 21 (63.6%)

Few: 3 (9.1%)

None: 0

Nearly 27% of the Reading First coaches estimated that “All” or “Almost All” teachers were reflective about their craft.

Nearly 73% of the Reading First coaches estimated that “Some” or “Few” were reflective about their craft.

Teachers engage in professional dialogue (#40)

All: 4 (12.1%)

Almost All: 10 (30.3%)

Some: 17 (51.5%)

Few: 2 (6.1%)

None: 0

Nearly 42% of the Reading First coaches estimated that “All” or “Almost All” teachers engaged in professional dialogue.

Nearly 58% of the Reading First coaches estimated that “Some” or “Few” teachers engaged in professional dialogue.

Teachers are receptive to learning (#41)

All: 4 (12.1%)

Almost All: 15 (45.5%)

Some: 13 (39.4%)

Few: 1 (3.0%)

None: 0

Nearly 58% of the Reading First coaches estimated that “All” or “Almost All” teachers were receptive to learning.

Nearly 42% of the Reading First coaches estimated that “Some” or “Few” teachers were receptive to learning.

Teachers are resistant to learning (#42)

All: 1 (3.0%)

Almost All: 2 (6.1%)

Some: 14 (42.4%)

Few: 13 (39.4%)

None: 3 (9.1%)

Nearly 91% of the Reading First coaches estimated that only “Some,” “Few,” or “None” were resistant to learning.

Research Question 2

How do teachers believe the Reading First coach has impacted their instructional practice?

98% Positive Feedback

Nearly 98% of the teachers who returned the questionnaires eluded to positive remarks.

Qualitative Patterns

- Coach provided supplemental materials to support instruction.
- Coach assisted in analyzing student data (especially DIBELS).
- Coach served as mentor to beginning teachers.
- Coach helped with centers.
- Coach helped interpret and implement Reading First requirements.
- Guided reading.
- Coach provided strategies and feedback.

Research Question 3

What are the patterns in third grade student achievement data on FCAT reading?

On-Grade-Level/Below-Grade-Level Achievement

■ Year 1 Schools:

- 9/11 (82%) improved in OGL performance.
- 10/11 (91%) improved in BGL performance.

■ Year 2 Schools:

- 21/26 (81%) improved in OGL performance.
- 20/26 improved in BGL performance (77%).

On-Grade-Level Means

■ Year 1 Schools:

- (2005) 50.2
- (2006) 57.5
- +7.3 change

■ Year 2 Schools:

- (2005) 52.1
- (2006) 60.5
- +8.4 change

Below-Grade-Level Means

■ Year 1 Schools:

- (2005) 34.8
- (2006) 25.3
- -9.5 change

■ Year 2 Schools:

- (2005) 30.5
- (2006) 23.1
- -7.4 change

On-Grade-Level Means One Year Prior to RF/One Year After RF

■ Year 1 Schools:

- OYP 50.2
- OYA 57.5
- +7.3 change

■ Year 2 Schools:

- OYP 50.3
- OYA 52.1
- +1.8 change

Below-Grade-Level Means One Year Prior to RF/One Year After RF

■ Year 1 Schools:

- OYP 34.8
- OYA 25.3
- -9.5 change

■ Year 2 Schools:

- OYP 33.3
- OYA 30.5
- -2.8 change

Research Question 4

What are patterns in SAT 10 data
in 1st and 2nd grades?

* Year 2 schools only

*On-Grade-Level Means

■ 1st Grade:

- (2005) 48.0
- (2006) 49.5
- +1.5 change

■ 2nd Grade:

- (2005) 50.0
- (2006) 51.1
- +1.1 change

*Below-Grade-Level Means

■ 1st Grade:

- (2005) 25.0
- (2006) 24.5
- -0.5 change

■ 2nd Grade:

- (2005) 22.0
- (2006) 22.1
- +0.1 change

On-Grade-Level Means After One Year of RF

■ Year 1 Schools:

- 1st Grade: 50.2
- 2nd Grade: 46.9

■ Year 2 Schools:

- 1st Grade: 48.0
- 2nd Grade: 50.0

Below-Grade-Level Means After One Year of RF

■ Year 1 Schools:

- 1st Grade: 24.0
- 2nd Grade: 26.7

■ Year 2 Schools:

- 1st Grade: 25.0
- 2nd Grade: 22.0

Research Question 5

What are the patterns in DIBELS and PPVT-3 data in kindergarten?

On-Grade-Level Means After One Year of RF

■ Year 1 Schools:

- PPVT-3: 45.5
- DIBELS: 67.5

■ Year 2 Schools:

- PPVT-3: 46.0
- DIBELS: 58.0

Below-Grade-Level Means After One Year of RF

■ Year 1 Schools:

- PPVT-3: 25.0
- DIBELS: 17.6

■ Year 2 Schools:

- PPVT-3: 26.0
- DIBELS: 21.0

Research Question 6

What are the challenges faced by the Reading First coaches?

Qualitative Data Patterns

- Mostly related to how they spent their time:
 - Duties outside of coaching
 - Administering testing requirements
 - Time spent out of school at meetings
 - Number of new teachers
 - Teacher turnover

Discussion

Implications of the Findings

- Supports to the Literature Review:
 - Coaches' perceptions of improvement in reading instruction.
 - Teachers' perceptions of coaching/mentoring positively affecting instructional practice.
 - Three levels of coaching:
 - Most of the coaches and/or teachers reported informal or somewhat formal coaching.
 - Very few reported formal coaching (highest level, IRA, 2004)

Implications of the Findings

- FCAT data improved in Year 1 and Year 2 schools.
- SAT 10 data showed no significant change.
- DIBELS/PPVT-3 data showed inconsistent patterns.
- Coaches perceived teachers to understand vocabulary and fluency instruction better than the other 5 components of reading.

Implications of the Findings

- According to teacher/coach questionnaires, teachers had little time for reflection
 - Outside duties
 - Teacher turnover
 - Beginning teachers
 - Depth of coaching

Conclusions

- Literature review points to positive effects of coaching/mentoring
 - Reflective practice
 - Professional dialogue
 - Improved teaching strategies
 - Improved student achievement data
- Student achievement data improved consistently on FCAT
- Coaches/teachers seemed to have positive working relationships.
 - Lack of depth due to time constraints and other duties.

Conclusions

- Coaches do have a positive impact on teachers.
- Time on administering assessments and being pulled away from coaching duties may cause a barrier in the potential for deep coaching and mentoring.
- Teachers appreciated the help of the coaches.
 - Qualitative data yielded reference to vocabulary and DIBELS (fluency).
- There is a need to investigate further after more time of RF implementation.

Recommendations

- District leaders support funding onsite coaches at the schools.
- Principals and district leaders support the role of the coach as a mentor and peer.
- Darling-Hammond (2003) wrote it is the charge of a principal to keep good teachers, especially in the present era of growing teacher shortage. Mentoring systems that are well-designed improve teacher attitudes, teaching proficiency, and feelings of effectiveness.