Enhancing Professional Development: What types of coaching and feedback are most effective?

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BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

○ During a 15-year period, Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) has been evaluated using quasi-experimental designs, yielding positive outcomes for students with learning disabilities, students at risk for reading difficulties, average- and high-achieving students (e.g., Bryant et al., 2000; Klingner, Vaughn, & Schumm, 1998; Vaughn et al., 2000), and English language learners (ELLs; Klingner & Vaughn, 1996).

○ This project uses randomized controlled trials to more rigorously assess the efficacy of CSR with adolescent struggling readers.

○ Thus, **high quality implementation of CSR** is a critical component of our larger study.

INFLUENCES ON TEACHER CHANGE DURING PD

- PD should be content focused, intensive, sustained, and well-implemented (e.g., Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, & Shapley, 2007).

- PD content must be aligned with curricula and provide effective instructional methods (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Boardman & Woodruff, 2004).

- Teachers' beliefs, feelings of self-efficacy, attitudes, and perceptions influence how teachers implement and sustain new ideas (Artiles, 1996; Borko, 2004; Sparks & Hirsh, 1997).

- A collaborative community of teachers and researchers can support teachers as they move to improve practice (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000).

- Implementation is increased when teachers adapt new ideas to fit their needs, have opportunities to make information more relevant to their classrooms, and develop a sense of ownership of the new practices (Datnow, McHugh, Stringfield, & Hacker, 1998).

- Concrete examples of how a theory relates to teachers' current practice facilitates integration (Englert & Tarrant, 1995).

RESEARCH DESIGN AND QUESTIONS

IMPLEMENTATION DURING YEAR 1:

- 7th and 8th grade reading and language arts teachers taught typical (business as usual) and CSR (intervention) classes.

- Teachers were asked to teach CSR 2x each week for 24 weeks throughout the school year (2008-2009).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

1. What types of support and feedback do teachers perceive to be the most effective?

2. What types of support and feedback do coaches perceive to be the most effective?

3. How can we enhance teacher quality through the use of effective, yet efficient coaching practices.

THE INTERVENTION:
COLLABORATIVE STRATEGIC READING (CSR)

BEFORE READING

Preview

1. **BRAINSTORM:** What do we already know about the topic?

2. **PREDICT:** What do we predict we will learn about the topic when we read the passage?

DURING READING

Click and Clunk

1. Were there any parts that were hard to understand (clunks)?
2. How can we fix the clunks?
3. Use fix-up strategies:
   a. Reread the sentence and look for key ideas to help you understand.
   b. Reread the sentences before and after looking for clues.
   c. Look for a prefix, root word, or suffix in the word.
   d. Break the word apart and look for smaller words.

AFTER READING

Wrap-up

1. **ASK QUESTIONS:** What questions check whether we understand the most important information in the passage? Can we answer the questions?

2. **REVIEW:** What are the most important ideas?

Get the Gist

1. What is the most important person, place, or thing?
2. What is the most important idea about the person, place, or thing?

SCHOOL PARTICIPANTS

Teachers

- N = 17
- Teaching experience
  - Range = 1-35 years
  - Mean = 9.5
  - Median = 8.5
- 11 teachers hold multiple certifications.

Students

- N = 782 7th and 8th graders
- 61 classes
- CSR average age: 13.9
- TP average age: 13.7

RESEARCH SUPPORT TEAM PARTICIPANTS

- 4 coaches (2 TX and 2 CO).
- Expanded to 6 coaches in year 2 (2 TX and 4 CO).
  - 2 Coaches were experts in CSR instruction and professional development.
  - 2 Coaches were expert teachers and coaches who were relatively new to CSR.

- Coaching activities with research team:
  - Standardization of coaching procedures (how to coach, types of activities, how often, format of feedback).
  - Problem solving meetings (weekly at each site, monthly entire team).
  - Video conferences (vignettes; share problems and successes; refine coaching procedures).

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: GROUP SUPPORT ACTIVITIES

2 1/2 Days
- Before school year begins
- Modeling and practicing CSR
- Using CSR to support curriculum

Booster 1
- Fall Semester
- Address early implementation needs

Booster 2
- Fall Semester
- Move CSR to full implementation

Booster 3
- Spring Semester
- Fine tune implementation for best outcomes

Research Support (Coaching): Individual Support Activities

Weeks 1-12
- Biweekly Support

Week 13 on
- Monthly Support

- In-class observation with feedback.
- In-class model lessons.
- Co-teach/float/work with students.
  - Extended time with students allows coach to provide feedback to teacher about how students are using strategies in their groups.
- Meet with teacher outside of class time.
- Answer questions via email posed by teacher.
- Provide suggestions related to non-CSR instructional needs (e.g., class management).
- Provide materials/help identify readings.

DATA SOURCES

- Teacher completed:
  - Interviews
  - Reflections
  - PD and research support survey

- Researcher completed:
  - Observation Field notes
  - Classroom Observation Measure (IVC)
  - Observation feedback (coaches)
  - Contact Logs (coaches)
  - Research Support Surveys (coaches)

RESULTS: TEACHERS

- Teachers reported positive views of the professional development and classroom support:
    - Question: The support that the research team provided me with was…(4 – very helpful; 3-somewhat helpful; 2-not very helpful; 1 unhelpful)
    - 15 teachers rated "very helpful" and 2 rated the support "somewhat helpful."
- Teachers found the following support activities helpful (in order of frequency reported):
    - Materials (help finding readings for students; model lesson binders, student materials, background articles on CSR.)
    - In-class support (model lessons, co-teaching).
        - Teacher: "I had her do the whole thing, so I could see where my weaknesses were, and what I needed to teach differently, and I learned what I had not taught properly."
    - Feedback notes provided after class visits.
    - Ease and frequency of communication (quick response to emails, answer questions, provide reminders).
    - Coaches' willingness to help (positive nature of researchers, encouragement, lending an "ear").
    - Up front PD and booster sessions.

RESULTS: COACHES (RESEARCHER SUPPORT)

- Teachers varied in both the quality and frequency of CSR implementation.
- The focus of coaching during year one was helping teachers learn to teach the CSR strategies.
  - Coaches helped with basic implementation and clarified misconceptions.
- Coaches agreed that teachers were *receptive* to feedback and positive about CSR and the support they received. In almost all cases coaches and teachers were friendly and worked well together.
- There are many cases of changes in teacher practice that resulted from coaching support.
- YET, researchers saw that it took a long time for most teachers to implement CSR effectively.
- And while teachers appreciated the feedback, suggestions did not always make there way into the classroom.
- In a few cases, coaches felt that teachers were not responsive to feedback.
  - In these cases the coach presence increased CSR implementation, but not quality.
  - One teacher became overly reliant on coach modeling and attempted to let the coach be the exclusive CSR teacher.

TEACHER IMPLEMENTATION PROFILES

- We analyzed notes, coach surveys, coaching meeting topics, contact logs, and existing literature on PD and coaching to identify teacher features that seemed to support or inhibit high quality implementation.

- After compiling the list of features, we identified how they were exhibited by the individual teachers in our study.

- During the first year of CSR implementation, features could be grouped into profiles that represented teacher change. Many of these features were sensitive to coaching (coaches could provide support in these areas).

- We used this information to refine our coaching efforts during the second year of implementation.

- Profiles and suggestions for coaching are summarized on the following slides.

COMMITTED TO PRE-EXISTING PRACTICE

- Teachers in this category did not seem motivated to change their existing practice. They had low levels of implementation of CSR and often had low fidelity to the intervention components. Teachers cited such elements as external pressures (district, school), required curriculum, test preparation, and other activities that took precedence over the new strategies. These teachers did not make themselves easily available for coaching activities and accepted only a minimal amount of support – observation with feedback, but generally did not incorporate suggestions into their classroom practice.

- **Suggestions for support:** These teachers appeared to have not fully bought into the practices. They benefited from activities that raised their awareness of the potential positive outcomes of the strategies and ways to incorporate implementation into current practice. For example, helpful activities included reviewing curriculum maps that were highlighted with the intervention strategies. Connections to required state standards were also helpful to teachers who worried about curriculum demands. Further, these teachers benefited from support focused on incorporating strategies into existing practice. They also benefited from what might be called pre-coaching, or activities that raised awareness, acceptance, and prepared them to try the new strategies. These teachers were especially protective of their time. Efficiency was a key factor in how well teachers accepted support from coaches.

COMMITTED TO CSR BUT STRUGGLING

- The teachers who fell into this profile often lacked knowledge about teaching reading. In addition, these teachers usually had competing factors that challenged their efforts to implement the new strategies. In some cases classroom management impeded attempts to implement the intervention. Implementation was inconsistent for teachers who struggled. Some teachers persisted while others implemented the strategies infrequently. In all cases, struggling teachers had difficulty implementing strategies with high quality.

- **Suggestions for support**: Teachers who struggled to implement new strategies required the most classroom support. These teachers benefited greatly from seeing models of instruction and working side by side with support person. Teachers not yet comfortable with in-class support required additional trust building with the support team. These teachers also benefited from problem solving that went beyond the specifics of the intervention to support classroom management or other instructional needs. It was important for support persons to manage their time and resources in order to maximize support for teachers in this profile.

COMMITTED TO CSR BUT PLATEAU

- These teachers implemented new teaching strategies but tended not to hone the implementation of those strategies. Reasons varied by teacher. A) Some teachers may have seen their new practice as vastly different than it was prior to the professional development and thus felt they were implementing with high fidelity. B) Still others may have been adhering to perceived expectations for practice, but were not yet striving for high quality instruction. These teachers generally reported satisfaction with the new strategies. Most of the teachers in this category began as high implementers, but their quality was insufficient. Communication between teachers and support persons was comfortable and frequent, yet coaches felt interactions did not yield the level of teacher change that was expected.

- **Suggestions for support**: Teachers in the plateau category did not always accurately assess their own implementation quality. For this reason, support was the most successful when it focused on classroom data and specific examples. For instance, research support persons worked with teachers in the plateau category to review student work and to identify student proficiency at using each strategy. Many of these teachers responded to direct and specific feedback that was grounded in student data. Support persons may need to determine if classroom visits are in place simply to ensure that the teacher implements the intervention. In these cases, support persons may need to decrease activities that could be overly supportive (such as modeling) to encourage the teacher to develop his/her own practice.

COMMITTED TO CSR AND EXCELLING

○ These teachers most often delivered high quality instruction and had high levels of knowledge in reading prior to professional development. Teachers linked the new strategies to positive outcomes for students. These teachers found it easy to integrate the new strategies into existing practice. Some teachers asked for support while others did not. In most cases, suggestions entailed small tweaks or adjustments. Subsequent visits revealed that most or all of the suggestions had been incorporated into instruction.

○ **Suggestions for support**: Teachers took ideas and ran with them. They required the least amount of support time yet still benefited from the collaborative interactions. Support activities could vary depending on teacher preference with positive outcomes from most activities. Teachers in this category appreciated respect for their knowledge and level of expertise. Providing examples from their classrooms, providing forums for them to share their knowledge with other teachers, and allowing other teachers to observe their practice were well-received.

Conclusions

- Teachers appreciated coaching efforts. They felt well supported.
- The quality of coach-teacher relationships was cultivated – We consider R.E.S.P.E.C.T to be a critical component of coaching success.
- While many positive changes were observed, often implementation quality was lower than expected.
- Coaching notes, feedback, and discussions revealed that teachers' coaching needs varied.
- Teacher profiles were dynamic and could change during the study. Coaches responded to these changes by altering coaching activities.

Lessons Learned

- Coaches should work quickly to understand teachers' contexts, beliefs, knowledge, and implementation quality so they can respond appropriately.
- Gear coaching to individual needs (it is okay for coaching to look different from teacher to teacher).
- When resources are limited (and when aren't they?) focus on the most needy teachers.
- Coaches should support teachers, not replace them (teaches need models, but don't overdo it.)
- Efficiency is important – minimize out of class time requirements for busy teachers.
- Just as we do with our students, if teachers are not improving in their practice, alter coaching activities to better meet their needs.