

SECONDARY SCHOOL LEADERS' ACTIONS TO INFUSE
RESEARCH-BASED READING STRATEGIES
ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

By

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To Jeff, who sat beside me in my first education class and has remained beside me
ever since with encouragement, patience, and love.
Also to Heath, Brianne, and Garrett—I love being your mom.

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LIST OF TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Case study	Intensive study of an individual, institution, organization, or some bounded group, place, or process over time
Coding	The process of analyzing data, which can include breaking down an interview transcript into manageable segments, usually organized by themes or concepts, and attaching keywords to each segment to permit later retrieval and analysis
Coding memos	Reflective comments (sometimes referred to as field notes) that researchers write for themselves during the process of gathering and analyzing data
CAR-PD	Content Area Reading-Professional Development. A program from <i>Just Read, Florida!</i> that enables subject area teachers to deliver reading strategies in their classes
CRISS	Creating Independence through Student-owned Strategies. A set of reading strategies developed by Cris Tovani to assist students to become independent readers
FCAT	Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test. A series of criterion-referenced tests administered to Florida students in grades 3-11 to measure selected benchmarks in mathematics, reading, science, and writing
FPLS	Florida Principal Leadership Standards. Competencies in instructional leadership, operational leadership, and school leadership, identified by the Florida Department of Education as necessary skills for school leaders to enable their effective performance of designated tasks
FRI	Florida Reading Initiative. A research-based schoolwide reform effort committed to providing the professional development and follow-up support necessary for schools to improve student achievement in reading
Focus group	A group interview that draws upon communication between research participants as a means to generate data
Gatekeeper	An individual who helps the researcher identify study participants and who provides entry to the research site
<i>Just Read, Florida!</i>	A comprehensive and coordinated reading initiative that has guided the State of Florida's reading program since 2001

Literacy	A broad term that, for the purpose of this study, refers to the ability to read for knowledge, write coherently, and think critically about printed material
Literacy leaders	School administrators and teachers who demonstrate superior leadership qualities and who advance policies to foster excellence in literacy education
Member checking	A process of presenting the interview transcripts and researcher's interpretations to the interviewees to check for accuracy
NRP	National Reading Panel. A panel convened by Congress in 1997 to review research-based knowledge on reading instruction. Their findings were published in 2000 in <i>The Report of the National Reading Panel: Teaching Children to Read</i>
NCLB	No Child Left Behind Act. NCLB was passed by Congress in 2002; the act requires that all children be assessed each year to determine whether they show adequate yearly progress in reading and mathematics
Peer review	A process by which other researchers review the primary researcher's interpretations to examine their validity
Pilot test	In a qualitative study, a pilot test refers to the presenting of interview questions to individuals for the purpose of receiving their feedback on the questions prior to the start of the study. Based on their feedback, if necessary, the researcher will clarify or modify the questions
Probe	Sub-questions related to the main interview questions that are used by the interviewer to elicit more information (e.g., "Tell me more about . . .," "What made you feel that way?")
Professional development for reading	A comprehensive, systematic plan for creating and implementing a program to train educators in scientifically based reading strategies that includes the principles of effective reading instruction
PLC	Professional learning community. Sometimes known as a collaborative learning community (CLC), a PLC is a team of teachers who collaborate and engage in collective inquiry. Typically, the PLC will examine data about their school and/or district and use the data to set goals and to determine instructional practice

Purposeful sampling	A process of deliberately selecting interviewees who will yield information-rich interviews
Reading	A complex and purposeful sociocultural, cognitive, and linguistic process in which readers simultaneously use their knowledge of spoken and written language, their knowledge of the topic of the text, and their knowledge of their culture to construct meaning from the text (National Council for Teachers of English, 2011)
Reciprocal teaching	An instructional activity that occurs as a dialogue between teachers and students in regard to segments of text. The dialogue is structured by the use of four strategies: summarizing, question generating, clarifying, and predicting. The teacher and students take turns assuming the role of teacher in leading this dialogue
Scientifically-based reading strategies	Strategies developed through rigorous, systematic, and empirical research methods that meet the criteria of the National Reading Panel
STEM	An educational focus on the fields of study of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics
Struggling readers	Those who exhibit one, all, or a combination of the following: difficulty in decoding words, difficulty in decoding text, difficulty in comprehending, poor oral reading fluency, or poor vocabulary skills
Taxonomy	A classification scheme of the themes, categories, and subcategories suggested by the interview data

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A double case study was conducted in two high schools in a small district in northeast Florida to determine how the school leaders ensure that research-based reading strategies are implemented across the curriculum. Nine individual qualitative interviews and two focus group interviews of principals, assistant principals, reading coaches, and teacher leaders were conducted to address the following research questions: (a) How does the school leadership promote the use of research-based reading strategies across the school curriculum? (b) What factors facilitate and/or impede the infusion of research-based reading instruction at the school? and (c) How does the school leadership hold teachers accountable for infusing research-based reading strategies into instruction?

An analysis of the interviews found that differentiated leadership is needed to promote high school reading programs. To focus on literacy, one school, with a history of low reading achievement scores, instituted professional learning communities that used data-based decisions to determine which research-based reading strategies would

be utilized in every classroom as a means of improving reading achievement. This school demonstrated large gains in reading scores that they were able to sustain.

The second school, which had consistently above-average reading scores, piloted a new STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) academy, necessitating a focus on science and math. This new focus resulted in the school's drifting away from continuous, explicit reinforcement of research-based reading strategies. Nevertheless this school maintained its above-average reading scores, and, moreover, their math achievement greatly improved. Both schools encouraged teacher accountability through administrators' active presence in classrooms.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

The 21st century has witnessed a wave of accountability that focuses on student achievement. The *No Child Left Behind* Act (NCLB) and Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) have placed an emphasis on school performance, particularly in math and reading. As a result, principals are expected to ensure high-quality instruction in all areas, but in math and reading, in particular.

Traditionally, reading instruction has been viewed as the reading teacher's responsibility. However, for schools to cultivate a culture of literacy, all staff members, including content area teachers and school administrators, must take responsibility for improving the reading level of all students. Teachers are not the only educators responsible for students' reading. Administrators also play a vital role. "If teachers are going to empower students to take command of their reading, administrators need to share control with teachers" (Guthrie, 2008, p. 48). The primacy of effective reading instruction cannot be overestimated. According to the Florida Department of Education (2006):

Research strongly indicates that failure to learn to read is the most compelling reason that children are retained, assigned to special education, or given long-term intervention services. The goal of quality reading instruction must be to ensure that all children learn to read well and that they become successful readers. (p. 2)

As instructional leaders, principals are charged with ensuring that students make adequate progress in reading. They must provide teachers with essential resources and the materials necessary to be successful in the classroom, continuously update their knowledge of the latest developments in reading education research, and collaborate

with teachers to incorporate best practices into instruction (Alvermann, 2004; Blase & Blase, 2004; Fisher, Frey, & Williams, 2008; Guthrie, 2008; Hock & Deshler, 2003; Hoy & Hoy, 2006; Irvin, Meltzer, & Dukes, 2007; Mullen & Hutinger, 2008; National Association of Secondary School Principals [NASSP], 2001; Phillips, 2005).

Most of the literature on principals' roles in reading programs concerns elementary school principals. With the emergence of secondary school reading programs, however, an investigation of high school principals' and other secondary school leaders' roles in reading programs is warranted. Statistics also support the need for this inquiry. In 2009, 71% of Florida's 3rd graders were reading at or above grade level, but only 37% of 10th graders were reading at or above grade level (Florida Department of Education, 2009). Further, over the past decade, the percentage of 3rd graders who were considered proficient readers rose from 57% to 71%, but, again, 10th graders lagged behind, showing no such growth. Since 1999, the percentage of 10th graders who read at or above grade level has hovered at about 37% (Florida Department of Education, 2009). Clearly the drop-off between 3rd and 10th grade, coupled with the failure of 10th graders to make progress over a decade, is troubling. The factors that contribute to this drop-off warrant investigation.

High school students who struggle with reading need "intensive, focused, sustained instruction to help them catch up with their peers" (Hock & Deshler, 2003, p. 51). Moreover, whereas most elementary school principals were probably elementary school teachers at one time and, as such, experienced in teaching reading, most high school principals taught in diverse subject areas. Many have little or no experience teaching reading (Irvin et al., 2007). As Shanahan (2004) stated, "Principals have little

preparation in reading; it is almost never a part of their credentialing and few have much practical experience in teaching it, especially given that so few high school teachers have taught literacy” (p. 48).

Regardless of their background or teaching experience, principals remain responsible for improving reading achievement at their schools. Relatively little is known, however, about how secondary principals ensure that their schools provide effective instruction for struggling readers or how they rally their faculties to commit to reading initiatives. The Florida Principal Leadership Standards hold that, “High Performing Leaders promote a positive learning culture, provide an effective instructional program, and apply best practices to student learning, especially in the area of reading and other foundational skills” (Florida School Leaders, 2006, para. 2). The effective schools framework also notes that the principal should be the instructional leader of the school (Association for Effective Schools, 2007), which, by extension, makes the principal the literacy leader as well.

On September 7, 2001, then-Florida Governor Jeb Bush signed Executive Order 01-260 which launched *Just Read, Florida!*, a comprehensive and coordinated reading initiative. Reading program specifications were developed that put forth administrators’ and other school leaders’ roles in implementing and maintaining school literacy plans. For example, Specification Two states, “An effective reading program is sustained through the effective practices of the school and district administrators that support high quality reading instruction throughout the school year for all students” (Florida Department of Education, 2002, p. 6). Thus, school leaders in Florida need to be

prepared to take action to improve their schools' reading programs and cannot think of reading instruction as a challenge for reading teachers alone.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to understand and describe selected school leaders' actions in promoting teachers' implementation of research-based reading strategies. By examining the actions taken by school leaders to promote the use of research-based reading strategies at their schools, possible deficiencies can be identified and successes can be shared with other school leaders. The study examined the following research questions:

Research Questions

1. How does the school leadership (i.e., principal or designee, assistant principals, reading coach) promote the use of research-based reading strategies across the school curriculum?
2. What factors facilitate and/or impede the infusion of research-based reading strategies into instruction at the school?
3. How does the school leadership hold teachers accountable for infusing research-based reading strategies into their instruction?

Limitations of the Study

This study was limited to a single school district comprised of two high schools. The data collected reflect only the experiences and perceptions of the participants in these schools and are not representative of or applicable to other districts. The principals of the two schools studied were gatekeepers to the other participants. Therefore, those interviewed were chosen by the principals to participate, which possibly posed a threat to trustworthiness. Further, the purpose of the research was to explore the perceptions only of school leaders. Parents, students, and teachers not

directly involved in their schools' reading programs, all of whom may have different perceptions, were not included in the scope of this study.

Significance of the Study

School districts invest substantial amounts of time and money into professional development initiatives. Many of these initiatives have focused on improving school reading scores. Additionally, NCLB has placed a new focus on reading achievement that centers on reading instruction and achievement in the lower grades. There is little research about how secondary leaders have been responding to the mandate or how they have been ensuring that classroom teachers use scientifically based reading strategies during instruction. This study investigated the extent to which secondary school leaders ensured the implementation of researched-based reading strategies and how they held themselves and their staffs accountable for improving the reading program at their schools. The results of the study may assist in clarifying the roles of high school leadership promoting reading instruction across the curriculum. The findings are likely to encourage self-reflection among the individuals, schools, and district in this study and may prompt leaders from other districts to examine their own processes for supporting reading instruction.

CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter presents a review the literature pertinent to this study. The research reviewed focuses on research-based reading strategies, the importance of secondary school reading programs, the importance of school leaders in secondary reading programs, and recommendations for secondary school reading programs.

Research-Based Reading Strategies

Although educators agree that reading needs to be emphasized at all levels, historically, there has been little agreement on the best way to improve reading skills (Allington, 2005a). Phonics versus whole-language approaches, the role of technology in reading instruction, and the importance of fluency are some of the issues about which researchers have differing beliefs.

In 1997, the debate over what constituted good reading instruction culminated in the formation of the National Reading Panel (NRP), charged by Congress with the task of scientifically evaluating reading strategies. Existing studies on reading strategies, from 1961 through 1997, were analyzed by NRP. The criteria for inclusion in this analysis were empirical findings, replicability, and generalizability (Shanahan & Neuman, 1997). The findings of NRP, published in 2000, were the basis of scientific research-based reading instruction during the following decade (Cassidy, Valadez, & Garrett, 2010; Ontario Principals' Council, 2009). From this review, the “five pillars of reading instruction” were identified as phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (NRP, 2000).

The state of Florida used the research of NRP as the basis of their *Just Read, Florida!* initiative (Florida Department of Education, 2002). The panel advocated the

approach of “balanced literacy”, concluding that all aspects of literacy instruction should be systematically integrated into a school’s reading program without favoring one approach over another (Cassidy et al., 2010; NRP, 2000; Ontario Principals’ Council, 2009).

Many education professionals questioned the NRP panel’s findings and the methodology used in their analysis (Allington, 2004; Allington, 2005b; Cunningham, 2001; International Reading Association, 2002). Some disagreed with the panel’s strict criteria for inclusion, noting that valid studies had been overlooked because they did not meet the criteria (Allington, 2005b; Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; Cunningham, 2001). Some researchers voiced their concern that rigidly following the recommendations of NRP would lead to a “one-size-fits-all” curriculum that would disregard the individual needs of students (Allington, 2005b; Hock & Deshler, 2003; Parris & Block, 2007). Allington (2004) argued that misinterpretation of the NRP’s research caused the federal government, through NCLB mandates, to hold schools to impossible standards.

In 2006, the Alliance for Excellent Education made recommendations for adolescent reading instruction that included 15 “key elements of effective adolescent programs” (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006). The key elements included direct explicit instruction, instruction imbedded in content, motivation and self-directed learning, collaborative learning, strategic tutoring, diverse texts, intensive writing, technology components, ongoing formative assessment, extended time for reading instruction, professional development, ongoing summative assessment of students and programs, teacher teams, leadership, and a comprehensive and coordinated literacy program (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006). Unlike NRP, the Alliance for Excellent Education arrived at

these key elements by considering components of reading instruction that had “a substantial base in research *and/or professional opinion* (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006, p. 12, emphasis added). Vogt and Shearer (2003) took a more sociocultural view of reading research and made four assertions: (a) literacy practices are shaped by the cultural values of the school and community; (b) collaboration should be at the center of reading instruction; (c) self-efficacy and motivation should be cornerstones of a reading program; and (d) teachers should emphasize the modeling of reading strategies rather than just the teaching of them.

Although not all researchers agree on what constitutes the most effective reading instruction strategies, most educators agree that teacher training in reading methods is crucial to students’ becoming successful readers (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; Carnegie Corporation, 2009; Cassidy et al., 2010; International Reading Association, 2002; Radencich, Beers, & Schumm, 1997; Vogt & Shearer, 2003).

The Importance of Secondary Reading Programs

There is a great deal of research on elementary school reading programs, but there is much less on high school reading programs (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; Biancarosa, Deshler, Nair, & Palinscar, 2007; Conley, Friedhoff, Sherry, & Tuckey, 2008; Irvin et al., 2007; Jetton & Dole, 2004). Further, as Biancarosa and Snow stated, “Many excellent third grade readers will falter or fail in later-grade academic tasks if the teaching of reading is neglected in the middle and secondary grades” (p. 1). Research also indicates that literacy instruction is more difficult for secondary students because the demands of high school content reading are more complex and subject specific, and the motivation to read appears to wane as students go on to the upper grades (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; Carnegie Corporation, 2009; Stevens & Bean, 2003).

Moreover, Jetton and Alexander (2004) found that teachers give less reading support to high school students at the very time when their textbooks become more sophisticated, complex, and in-depth.

Pressley (2004), Irvin et al. (2007), and Jetton and Dole (2004) noted the difficult readability of many high school textbooks. Other researchers found a cultural dissonance between high school students and their textbooks (Armbruster & Osborn, 2002; Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; Hinchman, Alvermann, Boyd, Brozo, & Vacca, 2004). In addition, difficulties with reading have been linked to apathy toward school and classes as well as frustration that can lead to disruptive behavior and students' dropping out (Alvermann, 2004; Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; Carnegie Corporation, 2009). There continues to be a reading proficiency deficit between white students and minorities, those with high versus low socioeconomic status, and English language learners versus native English-speaking students (Hinchman et al., 2004; Phillips, 2005).

Afflerbach (2008) described the importance of reading success in high school:

Failure in reading contributes to low self-esteem and poor self-concept which lead to decreased motivation . . . avoidance of reading which leads to fewer opportunities for students to practice their reading or to make the determination that some forms of reading are good. Struggling adolescent readers, in effect, must unlearn some of the lessons of their prior schooling: that reading is boring . . . an exercise in futility. . . [and] never worth the effort. They must learn that, although many of their prior efforts to read were not rewarded, this state of affairs is not necessarily permanent. (p. 6)

Exacerbating the problem is that many high school students are not motivated to read, and the curriculum does not engage them. "The proportion of students who are not engaged or motivated by their school experiences grows at every grade level and reaches epidemic proportions in high school" (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006, p. 9). This lack of engagement and motivation could explain why students who show proficiency in

reading and writing during the earlier grades fail to continue to make progress in high school.

Notably, 60% of high school seniors read below grade level (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006). Further, among high school graduates, 32% are insufficiently prepared to handle the reading demands of college coursework. As a result, community colleges and four-year institutions find it necessary to offer remedial reading and writing courses for students whose reading skills are deficient (Biancarosa et al., 2007; Carnegie Corporation, 2009).

Torgesen, Houston, and Rissman (2007) stated their goals for a high school reading program to: (a) improve the overall levels of reading proficiency, (b) ensure that all students make at least expected yearly growth in reading ability each school year, and (c) accelerate struggling readers' development. The third goal underscores that, to leave high school as proficient readers, those who enter as struggling readers must "produce substantially more than one year's growth in reading ability for each year of instruction" (p. 3). Struggling readers need to make accelerated progress and, therefore, need intensive, dynamic instruction to close the gap between them and more proficient readers.

Carnine and Grossen (2007) explained the challenges of high school reading programs. They noted that turning struggling readers into proficient readers takes much more effort than it takes to teach a beginner to read; however, they believe that this is achievable. Helping each student to acquire the skills to read is the most important function of education, and schools must be willing to devote considerable "time, energy,

and focus” to turn struggling readers into proficient ones (Carnine & Grossen, 2007, p. 200).

Clearly, high school administrators in Florida need to make reading achievement a priority when developing their instructional programs. In Florida, secondary school students are deemed “at risk” if they score at Level 1 or Level 2 on the Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test (FCAT) and, in response, are put into intensive reading classes. However, even those students who tested at Level 3 or higher may need instructional support to strengthen their reading skills and to ensure that they are able to read increasingly difficult texts. To accomplish this, content area teachers need to know research-based reading strategies and infuse them into their subject-area instruction (Florida Department of Education, 2005a). This embedded method requires teachers to explicitly teach their students about reading strategies that aid in decoding text. Instructionally, teachers need to “explain how to use the strategy, model its use, and then require students to use the strategy in relation to their content assignments” (Hock & Deshler, 2003, p. 53).

NASSP (2001) contended that high school teachers “do not need to be reading teachers to help their students become more proficient in this fundamental skill” (p. 57). They did state, however, “Principals can help by providing resources and time for teachers to build their skills, discuss what works, and collaborate in a schoolwide effort to improve all students’ reading and comprehension” (p. 57). Reading research has shown that content area teachers need to be involved in the schoolwide reading improvement effort (Allington, 2005a; Carnegie Corporation, 2009; Deshler, Schumaker, & Woodruff, 2004; Florida Department of Education, 2005a; Hock & Deshler, 2003;

NASSP, 2001; Parris & Block, 2007; Stevens & Bean, 2003; Torgesen et al., 2007; Tovani, 2000, 2004). Further, there needs to be consistency between how the school's reading teachers and how the content area teachers use reading strategies within their classrooms. Torgesen et al. (2007) stated:

While it is clear that content area teachers cannot be expected to teach struggling readers basic reading skills, they can teach strategies, use appropriate instructional routines, lead and facilitate discussions, raise standards, and create engaging learning environments that help students improve their ability to comprehend text. (p. 11)

In keeping with this, the Florida Department of Education (2005a) stated, "Content area teachers must be taught and encouraged to provide instruction and reinforcement in the same reading strategies as are taught in the intensive reading classes" (p. 5). By incorporating research-based practices into subject area instruction, content area teachers can help students achieve the highest level of literacy and provide them with the opportunity to apply their reading skills in authentic ways that will carry over from their intensive reading classes into their academic and pleasure reading (Armbruster & Osborn, 2002; Irvin et al., 2007; Stevens & Bean, 2003).

Unfortunately, many high school content area teachers resist integrating reading strategies into their lessons (Alger, 2007; Bean, 2008; Deshler et al., 2004; Irvin et al., 2007; Lenski & Lewis, 2008; Torgesen et al., 2007; Tovani, 2004; Vogt & Shearer, 2003). Factors which contribute to this resistance include high school teachers' lack of pre-service exposure to instructional methods in reading, the high number of students whom they see daily, and reading coaches who may not be attuned to the demands of different subject areas (Bean, 2008). Additionally, the demand placed on subject area teachers to cover large amounts of content often leaves little time for them to teach

literacy skills (Deshler et al., 2007). Staff development, teacher leaders who model positive behaviors, and providing teacher support can go a long way toward overcoming these attitudes (Deshler et al., 2007; Irvin et al., 2007; Vogt & Shearer, 2003).

School administrators can encourage cooperation among content area teachers by helping them learn how to successfully incorporate literacy strategies into their lessons. With support, teachers can realize that they “do not work alone but are part of a team committed to every student’s achievement” (Irvin et al., 2007, p. 193). However, school leaders must ensure that staff development is relevant and cohesive. Staff development often consists of unrelated workshops with no follow-up and no opportunities for teachers to implement what was learned or to practice their new skills (NASSP, 2001; Zepeda, 2008). NASSP recommended that principals ensure that content area instructors have plenty of time and support to incorporate reading strategies after each staff development session. Zepeda advocated job-embedded learning so that teachers can integrate newly learned techniques into their everyday practice. In this way, teachers can “learn by doing, reflect on the experience, and make modifications based on the experience, the talk, and the action of doing” (p. 73). The entire culture of the school can be transformed when teachers see that professional development is responsive to their daily needs rather than presenting an additional duty.

The Importance of School Leaders in Secondary Reading Programs

Secondary school leaders must demonstrate the importance of reading achievement to other school leaders, teachers, students and parents. “An administrator’s commitment to reading as a schoolwide priority is vital to the reading success of the entire school. The principal needs to establish effective communication

networks regarding reading to all stakeholders” (Florida Department of Education, 2002, p. 7).

Although there is little research on how principal behavior affects student achievement, it is clear that the principal sets the overall educational tone of the school (Hallinger, Bickman, & Davis, 1996). The effect of high school principals, however, is difficult to quantify. The effect of elementary school principals is easier to measure than that of high school principals because elementary school principals have more direct contact with the students in their schools.

An effective principal might have a relatively greater effect in an elementary school, but only because there is less competition from other potential leaders, and the effects are more quickly seen there because elementary schools are usually smaller. Nevertheless, leadership—whether embodied in the principal, an administrative team of principals, or a corps of department heads—has a big impact on student success. (Shanahan, 2006, p. 45)

The Ontario Principals’ Council (2009) suggested what principals should be doing in “literate schools.” The council concluded that principals who want to promote literacy within their schools should:

- Be seen leading and challenging staff and students to grow
- Provide resources, both material and human
- Demonstrate a commitment to literacy
- Visit classrooms, looking for reading instruction
- Create release time for teachers and teams of teachers
- Facilitate collegial decision making
- Attend staff development sessions with staff
- Incorporate staff development into faculty meetings
- Create schedules for uninterrupted literacy instruction

- Provide opportunities for inexperienced teachers to observe master teachers' classrooms
- Maintain communication with reading coaches

Principals are responsible for staff development within their schools and are charged with ensuring that teachers are provided with the latest research-based reading practices as part of this staff development (Carnegie Corporation, 2009; Carnine & Grossen, 2008; Florida Department of Education, 2002; Phillips, 2005; Shanahan, 2004; Torgesen et al., 2007). In this regard, the Florida Reading Program Specifications state:

The knowledge base of the administration within a school and district is vital to its effectiveness . . . Florida administrators need to attain basic knowledge of scientifically based reading research that functions as the foundation for instruction. . . They must attain an understanding of the essential reading components, the reading process, and a variety of instructional assessments . . . to effectively allocate resources for reading. (Florida Department of Education, 2002, p. 7)

To ensure that the most relevant staff development is made available, the principal must work with the faculty to determine the school's needs, use data to drive professional development decisions, and be well informed about current reading research. The principal must "provide constructive support" and "obtain the resources and materials necessary to be successful in the classroom" (Hoy & Hoy, 2006, p. 3). Further, the principal must update his or her knowledge of the latest developments in educational research and collaborate with the faculty in incorporating best practices into instruction (Carnine & Grossen, 2008; Florida Department of Education, 2002; Hallinger et al., 1995; Irvin et al., 2007; Mullen & Hutinger, 2008).

Principal participation is a key component to a successful reading staff development initiative (Irvin et al., 2007; Torgesen et al., 2007; Zepeda, 2008). Moreover, after training is completed, the principal and other leaders must follow up by

visiting classrooms and helping teachers incorporate the new reading strategies into instruction (Florida Department of Education, 2002; Torgesen et al., 2007; Zepeda, 2008). As Zepeda, (2008) advised, “Professional development cannot be the end but rather the beginning of the journey toward learning” (p. 61). Some administrators use evaluation instruments to assess how well teachers are infusing strategies learned in professional development sessions into their lessons. *Just Read, Florida!* (Florida Department of Education, 2005a) provides “Walk Through for Grades 6-12: Content Area Intervention Classes” and “Walk Through for Grades 6-12: Reading Intervention Classes” checklists to assist administrators to evaluate reading instruction during their classroom visits. These checklists include a list of what literacy practices to look for when observing lessons, such as research-based reading strategies, instructional materials, and student grouping.

Principals, assistant principals, and others who evaluate teacher instruction can do their part by encouraging teachers to incorporate reading strategies into their instruction (Shanahan, 2004). By helping teachers identify areas in which to improve and by providing resources, follow-up training, and peer support, evaluators can assist teachers to infuse best practices into their instruction. Administrators must show by their words, attitudes, and actions that reading is a schoolwide priority (Carnegie Corporation, 2009; Florida Department of Education, 2002; Irvin et al., 2007; O’Donnell & White, 2005; Phillips, 2005). By demonstrating these and other behaviors, principals can ultimately “improve the teaching and learning process through more focused instruction, improved teaching skills, and clearer expectations” (O’Donnell & White, 2005, p. 65).

Torgesen et al. (2007) presented three notions that secondary school principals should keep in mind when developing a reading instructional program for at-risk readers. First, past reading interventions were not effective enough for the students to stay on grade level. Second, these students typically have negative attitudes about reading and do not read often. Third, struggling readers are a diverse group, and the reasons for their lack of reading progress are varied. Therefore, principals should design an intensive reading program for those not reading on grade level that is more engaging and supportive than previous programs (Biancarosa et al., 2007; Fisher et al., 2008; Torgesen et al., 2007). When developing reading intervention programs, instruction needs to meet the needs of students at different levels of deficiency. “Making a difference means making it different” (Fisher et al., 2008, p. 148).

Principals must involve and empower teachers in a professional development process of learning how to infuse scientifically based reading strategies. One way many principals are accomplishing this is through professional learning communities (PLCs). Through PLCs, principals foster learning environments in which professionals strive for improvement and increased self-efficacy. To promote teacher collaboration, these communities must be spearheaded and scaffolded by the principal (Carnegie Corporation, 2009; Florida Department of Education, 2002; Mullen & Hutingger, 2008; Zepeda, 2008). Principals should work with teachers to develop a school reading mission. Further, leaders should articulate the expectation that all students can read (Florida Department of Education, 2002) as they participate in the school PLC, providing collegial support, and promoting continuous reflection and inquiry (Zepeda, 2008).

With the input of the faculty, it is the principal's job to prioritize professional development and to ensure that teachers receive training opportunities to improve teaching and learning at the school. Principals must be knowledgeable about the latest research and learn alongside teachers or ahead of them so they can determine which professional learning activities are most appropriate and valuable for their school (Fisher et al., 2007; Florida Department of Education, 2002; Mullen & Hutingler, 2008; Phillips, 2005). By becoming experts on current research-based instructional literature and strategies, principals ensure that teachers have access to the most up-to-date practices (Florida Department of Education, 2002). Principals or their designees should be capable of interpreting and communicating data, identifying and obtaining scientific-based curricula, providing relevant staff development experiences, allocating time and resources to raise the reading performance of students who are performing below grade level, implementing a schoolwide positive behavior support system, and monitoring student progress (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; Carnegie Corporation, 2009; Carnine & Grossen, 2008).

Unfortunately, some principals equate raising school achievement to drilling students in standardized test-like exercises rather than utilizing research-based practices to guide instruction (Shanahan, 2006). To avoid the practice of drilling students, principals must know the demands of tests such as the FCAT and the research-based practices that lead to improving reading skills as well as have the "expert power" which will give them credibility as instructional leaders (Hoy & Miskel, 2008). Shanahan (2006) noted that some principals concentrate on test results so intensely that the result is skill-and-drill rather than quality reading instruction. Shanahan

recommended that principals familiarize themselves with the work of NRP to avoid this pitfall.

The principal must be involved in all stages of the reading program including, staff development sessions. When principals are actively participating, teachers will see their commitment, and this is likely to foster teacher teamwork and confidence in the program's success (Taylor, 2004). Researchers recommend that teacher involvement in staff development planning, frequent classroom visitations, and a leadership commitment to funding the purchase of high-quality materials also will enhance high school reading programs (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; Carnine & Grossen, 2008; Hock & Deshler, 2003; Hoy & Hoy, 2006; Jetton & Dole, 2004; O'Donnell & White, 2005; Shanahan, 2004; Torgesen et al., 2007). Principals dedicated to enhancing reading programs and who are familiar with the latest literacy literature are generally able to motivate their faculties to do the same.

Besides actively leading instructional development, the principal must foster dialogue among all faculty members (Blase & Blase, 2004; Florida Department of Education, 2002; Hoy & Hoy, 2006; Phillips, 2005). Further, literacy leaders must convey a comprehensive vision to teachers as well as to students. That vision should express confidence that all students can be successful readers. Equally important are the leaders' actions demonstrating that this belief is crucial to the success of the literacy program (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; Shanahan, 2004).

Currently, there is no reading requirement in Florida principal preparation programs, and research on high school reading programs is scarce. Until this is remedied, principals need to identify secondary schools that have successful reading

programs as a means to see what works (Hock & Deshler, 2003; Parris & Block, 2007). Current practices that are successful in improving high school literacy skills throughout the country should be recognized so that other high schools may emulate them. In this regard, Hock and Deshler (2003) present three recommendations. First, demonstration sites that showcase the programs and practices that produce significant outcomes for struggling high school readers should be established. Second, professional development programs that teach administrators and teachers how to implement scientifically based practices should be established. Third, college teacher preparation and perhaps principal training programs should include increased attention to reading instruction.

In high school reading programs, principals' roles include staffing, scheduling, and budgeting. To ensure that the school has appropriate staffing, principals must take literacy qualifications into consideration (Carnegie Corporation, 2009; Shanahan, 2004; Torgesen et al., 2007). For example, one of the most important hires that a principal can make is the school's reading coach. The reading coach must have good interpersonal skills, good rapport with the teaching staff, the ability to analyze data as a means to make instructional decisions, familiarity with a variety of materials, and both literacy and subject area knowledge (Roller, 2008). In Florida, in particular, principals should look for candidates who either have the Florida Reading Endorsement or who participate in *Just Read, Florida's* Content Area Reading-Professional Development (CAR-PD) program (Florida Department of Education, 2005a).

Working together, the principal and the school literacy leadership team need to craft the school's master schedule with consideration of the school's reading

instructional needs. Principals must plan for after-school tutoring sessions, summer programs, and other interventions such as book clubs or reading activities during lunchtime (Carnegie Corporation, 2009; Ontario Principals' Council, 2009; Phillips, 2005; Torgesen et al., 2007).

Principals also must designate enough of the budget to purchase appropriate literacy materials (Armbruster & Osborn, 2002; Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; Carnegie Corporation, 2009; Florida Department of Education, 2002; International Reading Association, 2002; Radencich et al., 1993; Stevens & Bean, 2003; Vogt & Shearer, 2003). According to the Florida Department of Education (2002):

To ensure positive reading outcomes, school and district administrators must provide funding and other resources required for an effective reading program to equip the teachers with both the knowledge and the resources to deliver reading instruction that effectively builds the reading process for all. (p. 8)

Purchases must include more than just basal readers. Making quality, high-interest fiction and non-fiction available for intensive reading and content area classrooms at multiple reading levels can help students read with confidence and without frustration. Care must be taken to choose materials from a wide array of interests and cultures (International Reading Association, 2002; Radencich et al., 1992; Smith & Wilhelm, 2002). To supplement reading instruction, computer programs can be purchased. A wide variety of commercial reading intervention programs are available, such as Read 180 (a computer-based reading program) and TeenBiz 3000. Content area teachers also need supplemental literacy materials such as trade books to meet the demands of their subject (Armbruster & Osborn, 2002; Florida Department of Education, 2005b; Ontario Principals' Council, 2009). Additionally, principals must ensure the availability of materials for the school's professional library that will assist teachers in infusing reading

strategies into their instruction and aid professional study groups, book circles, and other staff development activities (Torgesen et al., 2007).

To improve the high school literacy program, principals need to recognize the effort and successes of the staff and the students. “Fundamental to good leadership is providing positive feedback and encouragement, giving reassurance and credit to all” (Carnine & Grossen, 2008, p. 199). School literacy leaders need to acknowledge accomplishments and celebrate achievement in order to build upon success and foster continued improvement.

When school leaders know the connection between research-based practices, achievement, and motivation, they can support the necessary changes to make their schools centers for literacy and learning (Irvin et al., 2007). As Phillips (2005) stated, “Like a coach or conductor, the principal must skillfully pull the elements together in order to accomplish the ultimate goal—increased student achievement through improved literacy opportunities” (p. 7).

Recommendations for Secondary Reading Programs

Much of the literature supports the formation of high school literacy leadership teams (Cobb, 2005; Irvin et al., 2007; Phillips, 2005; Ontario Principals’ Council, 2009; Torgesen et al., 2007; Vogt & Shearer, 2003). These teams can become a mechanism for the principal both to model literacy leadership and empower teachers to become leaders in a schoolwide reading movement. A leadership literacy team should consist of the reading coach and a representative from each department, each grade level, the media center, and any other professional stakeholders at the school, including the principal, who “work together, plan together, and lead together” (Torgesen et al., 2007, p. 9).

Although the formation of a literacy team must be a collaborative effort between administrators and teachers, and classroom teachers must feel empowered to take leadership roles within the literacy team, ultimately it is the principal who has the most impact on the team's success. Schools with dynamic literacy teams led by strong instructional leaders have a positive effect on their schools' reading programs (Phillips, 2005). Even if the principal designates a curriculum specialist or reading coach to have the daily responsibility of the literacy team, the principal sets the tone and conveys that the team is important. Under the guidance of the principal or the principal's designee, the team should analyze data and input from teachers in regard to instructional needs relative to the test data and formulate a staff development plan, based on research-based methods, to meet those needs.

Once teacher leaders buy into the idea of a literacy initiative, they can encourage other faculty members to embrace the goals of the literacy leadership team and make changes that will contribute to the schoolwide effort (Irvin et al., 2007). Under the principal's (or the designee's) guidance, the literacy leadership team should share professional knowledge with faculty, examine the school schedule, ensure that enough time is allotted to literacy activities, develop and monitor the school's literacy program, plan staff development activities, consider interventions for at-risk students, share successful practices with other schools, and review and interpret achievement data (Irvin et al., 2007; Ontario Principals' Council, 2009; Phillips, 2005; Vogt & Shearer, 2003).

Many students who read below grade level do not have a clear idea of what makes a "good reader." They believe that "good reading" is simply decoding the words

or reading very fast, and they do not realize that the very core of reading is deriving meaning from the text. Principals and other literacy leaders need to emphasize to their struggling readers that reading needs to be viewed as an active transaction of meaning between the author and the reader, not a passive activity, as many teenagers who are reading below grade level believe (Tovani, 2000, 2004; Wilhelm, 2008).

Sturtevant et al. (2006) identified eight principles that support reading improvement. Adolescents should be provided with opportunities to:

- Participate in active learning environments that offer clear and facilitative literacy instruction.
- Participate in respectful environments characterized by high expectations, trust and care.
- Engage with print and non-print texts for a variety of purposes.
- Generate and express rich understandings of ideas and concepts. This principle of adolescent literacy focuses on the importance of reading as a social activity.
- Demonstrate enthusiasm for reading and learning in order to become actively engaged.
- Assess their own literacy and learning competencies and direct their future growth.
- Connect reading with their life and their learning inside and outside of school.
- Develop critical perspectives toward what they read, view and hear. (p. 142)

Sturtevant et al. (2006) concluded, “School leaders provide the guidance that is needed to initiate and sustain certain practices throughout schools” (p. 143). The literacy team leader should communicate regularly with the faculty in regard to the status of the reading initiative, participate in reading staff development sessions with the faculty, regularly review data to revise their professional development plan, talk with the staff often about concerns and successes with literacy practices, and continuously

update knowledge on reading research (Blase & Blase, 2004; Carnine & Grossen, 2008; Ontario Principals' Council, 2009; Sturtevant et al., 2006).

Summary

Most of the research on reading instruction for struggling students focuses on the primary grades. There is scarce reading research that concerns secondary students. Further, school leaders' roles (i.e., principals, assistant principals, teacher leaders such as department heads, and reading coaches) have not received as much attention as the classroom reading teachers' roles. Given that high school principals are held responsible for reading achievement at their schools, an examination of their perceptions and knowledge of and involvement in their schools' reading programs is needed.

Strong leadership is indispensable to proper staff development, scheduling, budgeting, and a receptive school culture. Reading instruction for struggling adolescents requires specialized programs. Thus, principals must develop programs that offer struggling readers intensive reading instruction that is not just "more of the same." They must be prepared to meet the needs of both struggling readers and those who are proficient but who need continuous growth to keep up with the demands of higher education or employment. For this to happen, principals must increase their own understanding of research-based reading instruction. They also must empower teachers to take ownership of the schoolwide goal of reading improvement and develop ways to ensure that content area teachers incorporate reading strategies into their instruction. One way to accomplish this is through a literacy leadership team.

The principal or the principal's designee should actively participate in and articulate a vision for the school's literacy program. Central to the success of the literacy

leadership team is the ability to interpret data, to make reading a priority when building the school schedule, and to provide enrichment such as book clubs. Communicating with the entire faculty and articulating a clear mission are other responsibilities of the literacy leadership team. Finally, secondary school leaders must familiarize themselves with the existing adolescent reading research and follow new developments in scientifically based practices so that they can provide students with the high-quality educational experience that they deserve.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of how high school leaders promote the reading programs in their schools, the factors that facilitate or impede the infusion of research-based reading strategies, and how leaders hold teachers accountable for the infusion of these strategies. The research examined how the leadership teams at two different high schools in the same district oversee their reading programs. Using qualitative inquiry, specifically individual interviews and focus groups, the following research questions were addressed:

1. How does the school leadership (principal or designee, reading coach, department chairs) promote the use of research-based reading strategies across the school curriculum?
2. What factors facilitate and/or impede the infusion of research-based reading strategies into instruction at the school?
3. How does the school leadership hold teachers accountable for infusing research-based reading strategies into their instruction?

Setting

The setting of this study was Swan County Schools, a small district in northeast Florida, comprised of only two high schools. The researcher sought to determine school leaders' involvement in the schools' reading programs through their participation in individual interviews and focus groups.

One of the sites, Fremantle High School (a pseudonym), has an enrollment of 2,343 students, comprised of 63% White, 21% Black, 8% Hispanic, 2% Asian, 0.3% American Indian, and 5% multiracial students. Of the students, 58% are categorized as economically disadvantaged, and 1.7% are English Language Learners. The graduation

rate, excluding special diploma students, is 80%. The school has been open for 35 years.

Maylands High School (a pseudonym) is located in a more affluent area of the district and opened six years ago. Student enrollment is 1,485, and the population is comprised of 70% White, 12% Black, 10% Hispanic, 4% Asian, 0.3% American Indian, and 4% multiracial students. Of the students, 40% are categorized as economically disadvantaged, and 1.3% are English Language Learners. The graduation rate, excluding special diploma recipients, is 80%.

According to the Florida Department of Education (2011), Fremantle High School received a “D” from the state in 2008-2009, rose to a “B” in 2009-2010, and maintained the “B” grade in the 2010-2011 school year. The most recent FCAT data show that 48% of Fremantle students were classified as “Meeting High Standards in Reading,” and 51% of the students made gains in reading, while 42% of the lowest quartile students made gains.

Maylands High School was rated a “B” school in 2008-2009 and remained a “B” school for the 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 school years. Of the students, 52% were described as “Meeting High Standards in Reading” on the FCAT, and 52% of all students showed improvement in reading. Of those in the lowest quartile the previous year, 40% showed improvement.

Participants

Fremantle High School and Maylands High School principals were contacted by the researcher and agreed to participate in this study. These principals served as gatekeepers who recommended other administrators and teacher leaders as study participants.

The criteria for inclusion in this purposeful sample of educators were (a) membership on the school leadership team or identification as a “teacher leader” or “literacy leader” (b) involvement in the school reading program, and (c) a minimum of 40 hours of researched-based reading training in the past three years. All educators contacted by the researcher agreed to be interviewed.

Four individual interviews were conducted at Fremantle High School and an additional interview conducted via telephone. A follow-up focus group interview included four of the five original interviewees (Participant 9 was unable to attend the focus group interview). The demographic information for Fremantle High participants appears in Table 3-1.

Table 3-1. Fremantle High School participants

Participant	Age	Gender	Years in education/ Years in current position	Current Job/Position	Degree(s) held	Approximate hours of research based reading training in past 3 years
1	30	F	9/6	Reading Coach	B.S. English Education M.S. Reading	300
2	47	F	23/1	Ass't. Principal for Curriculum	B.S. Elementary Ed. M.S. Ed. Leadership	120
3	37	M	12/2	Principal	B.S. Elementary Ed. M.Ed. Leadership	40
4	27	F	6/6	Reading teacher	BS Except. Student Ed. M.S. Except. Student Ed.	100
9	53	F	26/6	CAR-PD History teacher	B.A. Elementary Ed. M.A. Secondary Social Sciences	60
Average (rounded to nearest whole number)	39		15/4			124

Three individual interviews were conducted at Maylands High School, and an additional interview was conducted via telephone. All four Maylands participants

present at the follow-up focus group interview at the school. The demographic information for Maylands High participants appears in Table 3-2.

Table 3-2. Maylands High School participants

Participant	Age	Gender	Years in education/ Years in current position	Current Job/Position	Degree(s) held	Approximate hours of research based reading training in past 3 years
5	51	M	20/6	Principal	B.A. Biology; M.A. Education; Ed.S. Ed. Leadership; Ph.D. Education	40
6	45	F	20/5	Reading Coach	B.A. English	146
7	56	F	34/6	Ass't. Principal for Curriculum	M.S. Juridical Studies M.S. English; M.A. Political Science, Ed.S. Leadership	150
8	27	F	5/5	English CAR-PD teacher	B.A. English M.A. Secondary Education	60
Average (rounded to nearest whole number)	45		20/6			99

Methods

Qualitative research was best suited for the goal of this study. School principals, assistant principals, reading coaches, and teacher leaders were individually interviewed, and focus groups were used to gather more in-depth information and clarification. The focus groups also served the purpose of member checking. Throughout the interview and analysis process, the researcher kept a reflective journal, making note of questions that emerged during the process, recording suggestions, writing memos for follow-up, and noting other thoughts relevant to the study.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research, also referred to as naturalistic inquiry, emphasizes the central role of the participant's view and "stress[es] the setting or context in which the

participants expressed the views, and highlight[s] the meaning people personally hold about educational issues” (Creswell, 2005, p. 43). Characteristics of qualitative research include the researcher’s use of data that consists of words to describe participants’ experiences and the researcher’s asking of open-ended questions and collecting data in places where people live and work. Rather than the random sampling and random assignment techniques used by quantitative researchers, purposeful sampling, a method choosing people who can best help them understand the phenomenon, was used for this study (Patton, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 2004). Generally, qualitative researchers collect in-depth information from a small number of individuals or sites. Data analysis consists of the determination of codes and categories, followed by the development of themes that are later interpreted in relationship to the central phenomenon that is being studied (Creswell, 2005).

Qualitative Interviews

In qualitative interviews, the researchers collect data through general and emergent questions and probes that encourage the participants to generate responses. Such interviews have been described as a series of “friendly conversations” into which the researcher slowly introduces new elements to elicit information. Rubin and Rubin (2004) used the metaphor of night-vision goggles to describe these interviews and claim that this process allows researchers to examine things that are usually imperceptible and might otherwise be overlooked. The researcher becomes the instrument through which nuanced accounts of the interviewee’s world are elicited. During the interview, the researcher encourages the interviewee to give rich, detailed descriptions and to explain as thoroughly as possible all aspects of the phenomenon that is being examined. Having elicited these responses, the interviewer formulates the “implicit message,

send[s] it back to the subject, and obtain[s] an immediate confirmation or disconfirmation of the interpretation of what the interviewee is saying” (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009, p. 30).

A careful balance between congeniality and structure must be maintained so that the interview does not feel like a formal interrogation and rapport with the interviewee(s) is maintained. Because the interview needs purpose and a direction, the interviewer “gradually takes more control of the talking, directing it in those channels that lead to discovering the knowledge of the informant” (Spradley, 1979, p. 59). Probes are utilized to draw out richer responses and to allow the interviewee to elaborate on the kind of information desired by the interviewer (Creswell, 2005; Glesne, 2006; Rubin & Rubin, 2004; Spradley, 1979). Pilot testing the interview protocol and, as needed, revising the questions helps to elicit information that focuses on the topic.

Focus Groups

According to Creswell (2005), focus groups are useful when interaction among the interviewees will elicit in-depth information. Patton (2002) noted that the focus group is an interview, not a discussion, a decision-making group, or a problem-solving session. Focus group interviews involve open-ended questions asked of a group of five to eight people who get to:

hear each other’s responses and to make additional comments beyond their original responses as they hear what the other people have to say . . . The object is to get high-quality data in a social context where people can consider their own views in the context of the views of others. (p. 343)

Focus groups provide a more comfortable and natural environment than do individual interviews because, just as in real life, the participants are reacting to what others have to say as well as having their own comments reacted to (Krueger & Casey, 2000).

Focus groups allow for efficiency, the saving of time, concentrating on the most important issues in the program, and hearing participants' viewpoints simultaneously. The group setting also provides an opportunity to conduct member checking. The disadvantages of focus groups, as compared to an individual interview, include less time with each participant, fewer questions asked, and the challenges of group management, keeping control of the interview, scheduling interviewees to meet at the same time, and observing and keeping notes when so many people are involved (Krueger & Casey, 2000; Patton, 2002).

Analysis

The researcher analyzed interview transcripts through a coding process in which the researcher developed categories and themes and interpreted them in relation to each other and to the research questions. The results produced rich, thick descriptions of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2005). Qualitative researchers sometimes unintentionally bring their own experiences into the interpretation and conclusions. The personal, reflexive nature of qualitative research raises the concern that bias and subjectivity will obscure the truth. However, as Patton (2002) stated, "A search for TRUTH suggests a single right answer. Qualitative methods, however, assume multiple perspectives and multiple 'truths' depending on different points of view . . . Numbers do not protect against bias; they sometimes merely disguise it" (p. 544).

Glesne (2006) recommended keeping a reflective field log and/or writing coding memos during the interviewing process as a means to continuously focus and develop the study. By developing tentative codes or categories, researchers become familiar not only with what they are finding but also with what they are missing (Glesne, 2006).

Procedures

A purposeful sampling of school leaders involved in their reading programs was used, and participants were chosen to provide information about the reading practices of the school (Patton, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 2004). Those who agreed to be interviewed were asked to complete a demographic information questionnaire via e-mail. Initially, the interview schedule was submitted to the doctoral dissertation committee, and their changes were incorporated into the final questions. Next, the interview questions were pilot tested with educators in similar positions to those of the study participants. The interview questions were framed in such a way as to offset any preconceptions and were checked by the pilot group participants to ensure that they were not leading the interviewees to answer in a particular way. The University of Florida Institutional Review Board approved the interview protocol (Appendix A).

Informed consent forms were signed by each of the nine participants (Appendix B). Seven of the nine interviews took place in person at the participants' schools, with each interview lasting approximately 45 minutes. During the analysis process it became apparent that interviews with teachers participating in the Content Area Reading Professional Development (CAR-PD) program would be beneficial and two more interviews via telephone were conducted with a CAR-PD teacher from each school. Five post-interview e-mails were sent to various participants for clarification.

All interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder. Approximately 7.75 hours of recordings were transcribed, yielding 128 pages of transcripts. The transcripts of each interview were sent to each interviewee to check for accuracy and to provide for the opportunity for additions, clarifications, and/or corrections. The voice recordings,

transcribed interviews, and code sheets were maintained in a secure location to protect the privacy of each participant.

After coding each interview, the researcher coded the transcripts for each school for overlapping themes and categories. A taxonomy for each school was developed to depict how themes related to the research questions. All of the data were presented to a peer debriefer, another doctoral candidate at the University of Florida who was trained in qualitative techniques. After scrutinizing the data, the peer debriefer concurred with the emergent themes developed by the researcher.

The taxonomies were presented to the participants at focus group interviews conducted at each school approximately seven months after the initial interviews took place. These focus groups consisted of the original interviewees and served as an opportunity for participants to comment on the themes that emerged from the interviews and served as a form of member-checking. Additional questions that emerged during the analysis also were asked at the focus group meetings (Appendix C). Each of the two focus group interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes. Focus group sessions were recorded and transcribed by the researcher. Transcripts were sent to participants to provide them with the opportunity to clarify or amend their responses.

Using the taxonomies developed, the researcher prepared the research report, which contained a description of the themes that emerged from the data, their relationship to one another, and their relationship to the leaders' involvement in their reading programs. To ensure the confidentiality of all participants, the researcher used pseudonyms for the names of the district, schools, and all educators quoted in this research.

Researcher Bias

Qualitative research is presented through the lens of the researcher; therefore, qualitative researchers must be mindful of their own predispositions or biases. Rubin and Rubin (2004) reported that personal bias can cause researchers to distort what they are hearing. For example, researchers may not follow up on leads that are dissimilar to their preconceptions, thereby missing out on details and nuances that might provide evidence contrary to the researcher's beliefs (Rubin & Rubin, 2004). Self-monitoring can limit researchers' expectations or experiences from unduly influencing their interpretation of the findings. Toward this end, researchers often use memoing. In this study, the researcher used memoing and a reflective journal to lessen her preconceived perception that school leaders are not actively involved in their schools' reading programs as well as to continually check on the credibility, plausibility, and trustworthiness of the emergent findings. Additionally, because the researcher is a conduit for participants' voices, it was essential that she describe her authority and expertise to conduct the study and her positionality relative to the inquiry. With reference to authority and expertise, the researcher was trained in qualitative research methods while earning her specialist and doctoral degrees at the University of Florida. To help ensure neutrality, the researcher chose to do her research in a district and in schools with which she is unfamiliar.

In regard to the researcher's positionality, she is a high school history teacher. She works in a district and a school that is much larger than the district and schools in this study. In addition to teaching history, the researcher holds a master's degree in reading education and serves as a reading specialist, responsible for helping social studies teachers integrate research-based reading strategies into their lessons. In this capacity,

the researcher has worked with a number of teachers who were eager to learn and employ reading strategies as well as those who resisted doing so. In addition, the researcher participated in *Just Read, Florida!*'s CAR-PD program. Tenth grade students who scored a "1" or "2" on the reading portion of the FCAT are assigned to the researcher's history classes for extra reading monitoring and support. The researcher has observed that, although school leaders want to improve the reading program, they generally do not actively contribute to the process. Instead, they tend to rely on the reading and English teachers and the reading coach. Although training in reading strategies is provided, there is very little accountability to ensure that teachers are implementing training into practice. The researcher's interest in this study developed from a desire to explore leaders' perceptions of what impediments (such as lack of training in reading instruction in Florida principal preparation programs) might hinder improvement in high school reading programs or what enhancements (such as classroom observations and observation instruments geared toward reading instruction) might foster improvement in high school reading programs.

By exploring leaders' perceptions in depth, the researcher's goal was to discover the extent to which leaders are responsible for involving themselves in the reading program of their schools, to illuminate the ways that successful principals become active literacy leaders, and to shed light on any gaps in the leadership chain from principal to assistant principal to reading coach to classroom teacher as well as, of course, to the students.

CHAPTER 4 RESULTS

This chapter presents the findings that emerged from individual and focus group interviews at the two schools studied. Quotes taken from the interview protocols are used to support the results and are identified numerically as interview number/page/line; e.g., 4/17/34 indicates interview 4/page 17/line 34.

Fremantle High School

Research Question 1: How does the school leadership promote the use of research-based reading strategies across the school curriculum?

The actions executed by the Fremantle High School (FHS) leadership team were influenced by their beliefs, their reaction to a poor grade from the state, and data-driven decisions. Each of these areas is discussed below.

Leadership beliefs

Interviews revealed that leadership beliefs, as well as leaders' preparation and background, played a fundamental role in their actions to improve the reading program. Previously, Greg Alleto, the principal at FHS, was an elementary school teacher and principal with extensive experience in reading education. FHS's assistant principal for curriculum, another participant, previously served as the district's reading contact person. The FHS leadership team seemed well-prepared to provide literacy leadership.

Mr. Alleto is a strong proponent of professional collaboration. As stated in his interview, "Why would anyone teach in isolation and plan on their own when you can do it together? To me [collaborating] just makes more sense" (Interview 3/5/5). He also has a positive view of his faculty and of their commitment to excellence in education. He holds high expectations of his teachers' accountability and cooperation, as evidenced by the following: "I don't believe there's a teacher in this school who wants to be a bad

teacher. I don't think people come into this profession because they don't want to do what's best for kids" (Interview 3/5/17); and "If you really don't want to be a good teacher, you wouldn't be here; and I believe that wholeheartedly" (Interview 3/5/21).

Additionally, Mr. Alleto believes in "walking the walk" and stated, "I guess the key is you have to have credibility with the teachers. So if we're not talking about what we want to see and we're not consistent about it, then we're not going to have that credibility" (Interview 3/8/25). He believes that the school leadership team has to be a visible force and has to model the collaborative and instructional behaviors that he expects: "I need to be in the buildings. I need to be with the students. I need to talk to teachers. You have to be the face of the school" (Interview 3/12/12).

Interviews with teachers indicated that Mr. Alleto puts his beliefs into action. One teacher stated:

If you ask any teacher whether or not the administrators are informed in reading they would tell you "yes," and I think that's a really big thing, the fact that they know what it means to be a good teacher and [that] reading strategies [are] key. If we had somebody who was in charge of just the managerial things on staff, they wouldn't really see that. But because our administrators have a good focus and have a vision of where we want to go with the school, I think that everyone else does a good job. (Interview 1/10/10)

Another teacher added, "I know that . . . the faculty thinks that the administration thinks that [reading strategies] are important" (Interview 4/8/5). Clearly, the FHS leadership has demonstrated to the faculty that reading improvement is a priority at the school.

Reaction to "D" grade from the state

Mr. Alleto was brought to FHS by the district in response to a "D" grade from the state, in part because he successfully led a PLC initiative at the elementary school for

which he was previously principal. The district expected him to recreate this success at FHS.

Upon his tenure at FHS, Mr. Alleto piloted a PLC group consisting of the school's language arts teachers. As he explained, "When we found out we were a "D" [school], we knew we had to do something different" (Interview 3/3/25). His goal for FHS teachers was for them to engage in a collaborative examination of the data, make decisions, and set goals for reading improvement based on what the data revealed. As one member of the leadership team commented, "Look, [the school leadership] can come in and tell [teachers] what to do, but people don't buy into that. So we're going to come in—we did the team building piece first—and lay the data out, and we're going to decide [together] what it is we need to do" (Interview 2/17/38).

Data-based decisions

The interviewees frequently referred to data-based decision making. An examination of the school data allowed teachers to analyze the students' reading needs and, in turn, focus on the strategies that would best serve their needs. For example, when the language arts teachers analyzed data from reading assessments, they observed an area of weakness was summarizing strategies. Accordingly, the PLC group developed lessons that included research-based summarizing strategies and common assessments that would serve as progress monitoring tools. After these lessons and common assessments were implemented, the PLC met again to reexamine the data and to reassess their action plan: "OK, this worked. We need to do this. What's our tweak for moving forward?" (Interview 2/10/28).

This teacher-based approach was apparent throughout all the interviews. Mr. Alleto, a strong advocate of his faculty, stated:

The magic of a powerful teacher in front of a room is awesome, and we have teachers here that are at such a different level that I just sit there and watch them in amazement, and I think, “How did you get so good?” That’s the hard part to figure out. (Interview 3/7/15)

His faith in the FHS educators evidenced his belief that, once armed with the necessary information, the teachers would employ shared decision making to improve reading performance at the school, both in reading intervention classes and in content area classes.

This year we were able to bring into play our Professional Learning Communities, where we met on a regular basis with our content area; and it gave [the faculty] protected time . . . to come together, and we would look at student data, we would look at professional practices. [The faculty] began to focus on, “This is what really works with my students, and this is how I utilized it.” And that has brought even more focus on what’s happening in those content classes. (Interview 2/3/44)

The PLCs examined not only the data provided from FCAT and other state assessments but also generated their own data by developing common assessments in each discipline and analyzing the trends revealed from the results of these assessments. The reading coach and leadership team members circulated in each PLC group to provide expertise, guidance, and encouragement.

Evidence of the role of data in FHS’s decision making was apparent. The walls of the principal’s conference room, where most of the interviews for this study took place, were covered with posters and graphs that presented the data on reading components, e.g., comprehension and vocabulary, broken down by departments.

The interviewees shared that the PLCs were extremely successful. Every participant made reference to PLCs as the most important means by which reading strategies were reinforced. After the pilot year, the school’s original PLC, which consisted of only the language arts teachers, was expanded to include several PLCs in

subject area departments such as social studies, science, and foreign language.

Instead of encountering resistance to the new program, the reverse seemed to be true.

Departments that were not yet designated for PLCs began clamoring for “their turn.” A

response from the assistant principal for curriculum was typical:

We started with a pilot group of language arts, and we focused it on the freshman and sophomore teachers because Fremantle High was coming off a “D” grade at that point. So we were performing triage! And we got such huge results out of that, and [the faculty] was so excited about it that we expanded it to three other departments this year. (Interview 2/8/45)

A teacher stated, “Other teachers, now they’re asking why they can’t [have PLC days], so you can see the culture change in the school for professional development. I’m really excited about it” (Interview 1/8/43). Concurring, Mr. Alleto stated:

It was kind of interesting because I have other teachers now saying, “Hey, when is it going to be our turn to meet and plan? We want to be a part of this.” And it’s like a whole culture shift in the school because we started with that core and bloomed out to where teachers are asking for it because they see the power of it, and their colleagues are talking about it and how much better it is. (Interview 3/5/35)

Another example of the FHS leadership team responding to data occurred when test results revealed the underperformance of African American male students. As part of their literacy team activities, the media specialist and reading coach instituted “Literary Luncheons” for this underperforming group. Mr. Alleto designated funds to purchase novels that would appeal to young black males, and also provided lunches for all participants. Business leaders from the local African American community were invited to share in lunch with the students and discuss the books. All interviewees reported the popularity of this program, as approximately 30 African American males participated in the last luncheon. FHS also sponsored literary luncheons for the general school population, and over 150 students participated in the last one held.

Having a strong background in reading education, a belief in professional collaboration, and commitment to model the importance of reading, as well as follow-through with professional development to ensure the growth and later sustainability of the reading initiative, were among the characteristics that contributed to the leadership's actions.

Actions by Leadership

Initiating PLCs was FHS's primary action to improve the reading program. The implementation of the PLCs was a major undertaking that involved an allocation of time, expertise, and financial resources. Once the leadership team decided to implement the PLCs they determined that they would be most effective having full-day, regularly scheduled meetings rather than short, after-school meetings. This posed a scheduling problem. Fortuitously, FHS had just been designated a Title I school. As a result, Mr. Alleto made the decision to allocate Title I funds to provide substitutes, which would free up teachers to devote at least four days a year to PLC activities. An administrator explained:

That PLC provides such a great setting . . . I know that in some schools it'll be meeting every two weeks for an hour. We don't do that. We set aside a full day, a minimum of once a quarter, to come together, so you've got some quality time. And a lot of what the literacy team ended up producing this year comes out of those times together. (Interview 2/7/45)

The leadership reported a belief that full-day PLC sessions promoted more quality results than what might be produced by sessions that are scheduled an hour here or there. In this regard, Mr. Alleto stated:

I think [the full day sessions are] really key to the implementation because we really value teacher time, and we don't want to waste their time. If we made them stay after school or on extra time, they wouldn't really buy in, so we provided them with subs for the day and treat them like professionals; they were more willing. (Interview 3/4/35)

The administration's commitment demonstrated to the faculty that PLCs were important and that expectations were high. The teacher-directed (as opposed to administrator-directed) PLCs added to the participants' positive attitudes. Teachers were given something they never had enough of, time to be with peers. As a result, their negativity quickly shifted.

The PLCs featured prominently in interviews with both administrators and teachers. When asked whether there were any drawbacks to the PLCs, the respondents replied that the only negative was the loss of classroom time, as the PLCs required hiring substitutes for the participating teachers. However, as the assistant principal for curriculum noted, the teachers quickly realized that the instructional time sacrificed was worth it:

Our philosophy is, we want teachers in classes teaching. Nobody wants to lose instructional time. . . I'm going to equate to if I'm on the road with my husband and we're lost and he doesn't ask for directions (laugh). You know I can save a whole lot of time and be a whole lot more effective if I can take that 15 minutes to pull over and ask for directions rather than continue down this path of the wrong direction or ineffectiveness for—"Yeah that was an additional four days in my classroom but if I wasn't getting the bang for my buck and those four days I pulled out put me in a more effective position"—how valuable is that? (Interview 2/9/24)

She added that the teachers quickly recognized the value of the PLC days and realized that they resulted in more effective instruction:

What that has evolved into is they're asking for *more* time. . . . It's the first time I've seen curriculum maps actually used, and I have been handed curriculum maps for 20-some years. And now we've got the teachers from other departments saying, "When do we get to be a part of this? We're hearing such great things come out of it." And so they quickly moved out of it. Very quickly. It was the quickest transition I've seen in 20-some years of people buying into a concept. (Interview 2/9/9)

The leadership stood behind their decision to designate a good deal of time and resources to PLCs, and the teachers interviewed had nothing but positive remarks

about them. However, Mr. Alleto acknowledged that his school's focus on reading probably meant that other areas were neglected: "Whatever we focus on and pay the most attention to improves, but then we lack somewhere else" (Interview 3/2/10).

Professional development

Five years ago, prior to the present principal's tenure, the FHS faculty went through intensive reading intervention training through the Florida Reading Initiative (FRI). When Mr. Alleto became principal, the school was "re-FRI'd" (given additional FRI training). Interviews revealed much about how Mr. Alleto ensured that the FRI strategies were implemented at his school.

The PLCs were the prime opportunities through which the FRI strategies were reinforced on a regular basis with the faculty. Rather than providing the initial instruction and then leaving teachers to "go at it" with no follow-up or continued training, time was set aside for refresher training on each PLC day. This retraining included analysis of data in order to select specific reading strategies to meet the students' learning needs. The reading coach conducted the follow-up sessions by tailoring the delivery to each subject area PLC group. This form of differentiated professional development allowed each PLC to apply the training in ways that best suited their content.

Further, FHS participates in Florida's CAR-PD program. Understanding that certain reading strategies are more suited to certain content areas, some members of subject area departments at FHS participated in CAR-PD training, and a few became trainers themselves. Through the training, researched-based reading strategies learned in intensive reading classes were reinforced in students' content area classes. Those students not enrolled in intensive reading class still had the advantage of learning content through the evidence-based reading strategies. CAR-PD resulted in the

increased use of reading strategies across the curriculum. One reading teacher stated, “I feel like all the reading and language arts teachers [definitely use the FRI strategies] and [content area classes] are jumping on board because we have many CAR-PD classes now” (Interview 4/3/45).

Perhaps even more important than the CAR-PD training was that the school leadership made it clear to content area teachers that reading instruction is a shared responsibility. As Mr. Alleto noted, “Reading is the core of all subjects, so it doesn’t matter what your content is” (Interview 3/6/38). The teachers echoed this sentiment. “Our biggest concern is making sure that [students] can comprehend through content areas” (Interview 4/1/7).

One of the CAR-PD teachers commented that the school leadership demonstrated their belief in the importance of incorporating reading strategies in all curriculum areas. For example, the leadership team was always present at reading strategy training sessions and at the PLCs, and sometimes conducted the training themselves. This teacher also noted that the FHS faculty was visibly “committed to reading instruction. The faculty at this school recognizes that these strategies help them teach their content and see their value” (Interview 9/2/10).

Although the initial FRI training was conducted at this school several years ago, the interviews indicated that, as a result of retrainings and reinforcement, the FRI strategies are still a part of the everyday conversations and processes across the school curriculum. Often, when a schoolwide training is implemented, the impact of the program diminishes over time as the initial enthusiasm wanes and faculty turnover results in new teachers who do not have the benefit of the training. The leadership at

FHS took steps to avert this drop-off. New teacher induction included sessions with the reading coach and FRI training. In this way, teachers new to the school learned about FHS expectations for instruction and the FRI strategies. The assistant principal for curriculum explained:

We have systems in place to make sure when we have new hires come in. We have a training we put new teachers through so we make sure we have the same common vocabulary, the same background and understanding that, at this school, reading is expected to be a part of all content areas.
(Interview 2/3/11)

Although the training for new teachers was not the two-week extensive training and subsequent retraining that the whole school went through under the auspices of the FRI grant, it did help sustain the initiative. Additionally, to ensure accessibility of reading strategies to those teachers without extensive reading backgrounds, the literacy team chose their “essential six” strategies from the FRI strategies. These six strategies are activating prior knowledge, the use of concept maps, utilizing column notes, question/answer relationship, reciprocal teaching, and employing summary frames. Posters with the “essential six” appear in every classroom, office, and even the hallways of the school. New teachers were given training on these strategies during their induction period. The reading coach reported that emphasizing these strategies gave content teachers, whose area of expertise may be other than literacy, “something to hang on to” and added that the leadership team used “common vocabulary” throughout the school so that the faculty knew to infuse those strategies into the classroom
(Interview 1/3/16).

Since the current leadership team’s tenure at FHS the faculty has been “re-FRI’d”. The continuous retraining and reinforcement of the FRI strategies on PLC days, and the

efforts to include FRI orientation during new teacher induction ensured that FRI strategies remain a cornerstone of instruction at FHS.

Money allocated for professional development was limited by budget cuts. Becoming a Title I school alleviated some of the financial constraints on FHS; however, the money to bring in outside trainers dried up over the past two years. The leadership dealt with these cutbacks by encouraging in-house professional development. Key members of each department were chosen to attend out-of-district training to become trainers and to bring their expertise back to the school to share with their peers.

Faculty book studies were encouraged, sometimes in response to teacher deficiencies perceived by school leaders as they spent time in classrooms doing teacher evaluations. The reading coach discussed her experiences in leading a book study using Janet Allen's *Words Words Words: Teaching Vocabulary in Grades 4-12*. She remarked that some of the book study participants were there at the suggestion of the administration, while others simply wanted to increase their instructional repertoire of vocabulary and graphic organizer strategies.

Also, the administrators at FHS often lead professional development sessions themselves. Mr. Alleto stated that his team is highly qualified to do so. As previously reported, the assistant principal for curriculum is a reading specialist and the former district reading contact person. Other administrators are certified to conduct workshops in areas of staff development such as integrating technology and cooperative learning.

With a leadership team prepared to lead professional development, Mr. Alleto utilized Survey Monkey to conduct needs assessment at the beginning of each school year and survey results were used to put together the staff development program for the

year. Being responsive to the unique needs of his faculty and students was one of the foundations of Mr. Alleto's professional development vision. Breaking away from district mandates, FHS was able to differentiate professional development for teachers by giving them choices. Planning responsive staff training produced an effective professional development program at FHS.

Finally, teacher development at FHS often took the form of one-on-one mentoring. Teachers were given release time to observe the reading coach or other master teachers' model lessons with imbedded reading strategies. Alternatively, at times, the reading coach or one of the reading teachers came into content classrooms to facilitate the infusion of reading strategies into the teacher's existing lessons. Both of these activities required the principal to grant release time and provide substitutes for the teachers who were observing, and both administrators and teachers reported that this was a common occurrence at FHS. If an administrator conducting an evaluation of a content teacher noted that teacher was failing to effectively infuse research-based reading strategies into instruction, then that teacher was referred to the reading coach for assistance and support.

The leadership team at FHS believes that individualized professional development is key to improving instruction at the school and accordingly built an effective peer mentoring system. The assistant principal stated that she believed that "when you're looking at overall, fundamental, imbedded change, build your people" and that building people can best be accomplished by dealing with them one on one (Interview 2/13/7).

Classroom observations

Upon taking the principalship at FHS, Mr. Alleto made it a priority that the school's leadership team members spend a good deal of time in classrooms observing teachers,

an activity known as walk-throughs. Walk-throughs were mentioned in every interview, as were the terms look-fors and ask-fors, activities from the Learning Focused training that the district recently implemented. Together, the leadership and faculty developed a list of features that administrators would look for when they observed each classroom, as well as things they would ask for during these observations. The look-fors included the use of imbedded FRI strategies during instruction and word walls to encourage vocabulary acquisition. Research-based reading strategies might be part of the ask-fors. For example, an administrator observing a classroom might ask the teacher or a student about which pre-reading strategies were used, or whether summary frames were utilized after reading.

Professional conversations

The terms “collaboration”, “professional conversations”, and “dialogues” were mentioned repeatedly in the interviews. These terms evidenced teacher empowerment, respect between administration and faculty, and the collaborative culture of the school. Participants indicated their belief that their collaborative culture was a byproduct of the PLCs. When discussing PLCs, one teacher shared, “[PLCs] helped me align my planning with other teachers, so I feel that when we work together more students are getting that quality curriculum and lesson planning because we’re working together” (Interview 4/9/1).

The difference between congeniality versus collegiality was also discussed more than once in the course of the interviews. The leadership recognized that the faculty was congenial but felt that collegiality had to be developed to facilitate the PLCs’ optimal performance. An assistant principal explained how providing a presentation on team-building was essential to the ultimate success of the PLCs:

What we did with each group as they began their PLC journey [was] a whole lesson on the dynamics of a team and the effective practices of a team and kind of the steps you go through as you evolve into a truly collegial team, and [the principal] does that training and he does it fabulously. (Interview 2/6/35)

In regard to the transformative nature of the PLC initiative, Mr. Alleto stated, “When we started really getting into the data and showing teachers scores and what it was we needed to do, the conversations and the dialogues that evolved from that were very powerful” (Interview 3/5/14).

One of the main benefits of professional dialogues was that the faculty developed a common vocabulary for reading intervention. The reading coach pointed out that most of the faculty had acquired the same terminology, and Mr. Alleto noted, “One of our goals was to have a common vocabulary because there’s an acronym for everything and there’s 50 different ways to call one thing and it can be very confusing” (Interview 3/14/43).

The faculty, the administration, and the students as well, became aware of the research-based reading strategies that were expected to be used throughout the curriculum. When a CAR-PD social studies teacher was asked whether her students recognized the FRI strategies when she applied them in her history classes, she responded, “Absolutely! And they correct me if I do it wrong!” (Interview 9/2/12). Mr. Alleto stated, “That’s why I go back to the PLCs. When we put those people in a room to work together, it helps develop that common language” (Interview 3/15/39). The teachers know what the administrators look for when they do walk-throughs in their classrooms, and the students know, for example, that the same summary frame strategy that they learned in their language arts class will be used in their history or science classes.

Providing diverse programs to meet the needs of students

The leadership at FHS concentrated on identifying the various student groups that needed help and providing diverse programs to meet their varied needs. Mr. Alleto explained that identifying struggling students and making sure they are in the right programs was a priority and described their reading program as “tiered” or “leveled” interventions.

Depending on their reading needs, students were placed in intensive reading classes with a reading teacher or a Read 180 class, or double-blocked into a reading class teamed with a CAR-PD history or English class. Some students who were currently performing at an acceptable level but were showing signs of being at-risk were not necessarily given a special reading class, but might have been assigned to a CAR-PD teacher for extra monitoring and support.

In four of the five interviews, the “bottom quartile” was discussed extensively. When the school received the “D” grade from the state, it was largely due to their lowest quartile students’ failing to make learning gains. One administrator reported, “They were upset about that grade, and it was a bottom-quartile issue. They had 38% of their bottom quartile making learning gains that year” (Interview 2/19/18). The administrator added that, after the change in leadership, the school jumped to 50% of that same group making learning gains, and she commented that this significant jump motivated the faculty.

The leadership was aware that lack of progress in bottom-quartile students affected the long-term academic success of these students. When questioned about the special reading needs of certain students, Mr. Alleto responded, “Well, we target a lot of our resources and energy toward students in the lowest quartile. And, actually, if you

count the bubble kids, we really look at the bottom third” (Interview 3/1/15). But, as most interviewees were quick to point out, the focus on the lowest achieving students has more to do with helping the students and ensuring their success than with their earning a certain grade. One reading teacher explained:

[The students] can’t graduate if they can’t meet these simple skills. That’s been a huge thing for me. I had 20 kids who didn’t make the cut some way or the other and I started out with 100, and it’s great—80% passed. . . . But there’s 20 kids [who failed] right there!” So, it’s hurting. It’s not just our school grade; it’s that kids don’t have a diploma. (Interview 4/8/10)

A common theme throughout the interviews was focusing on student achievement and ensuring that students could comprehend text and carry strategies learned into their real-life reading. While the participants acknowledged that the school grade was a motivating factor, they also wanted the students to have authentic learning experiences which would help them be successful both in and out of school.

The leadership team at FHS has been very active in ensuring that research based reading strategies are infused into instruction at the school. Strong beliefs about the importance of reading instruction, concern for the school grade, and the practice of making data based decisions has led to a strong culture of literacy. The principal and his team have taken actions which include instituting PLCs, encouraging professional conversations, spending time in classrooms, expanding CAR-PD training, and providing differentiated professional development and diverse programs for struggling readers. These actions promoted a school culture in which teachers share responsibility for reading achievement. The relationship between leadership beliefs, actions, and the resultant culture of the school is illustrated in Figure 4-1.

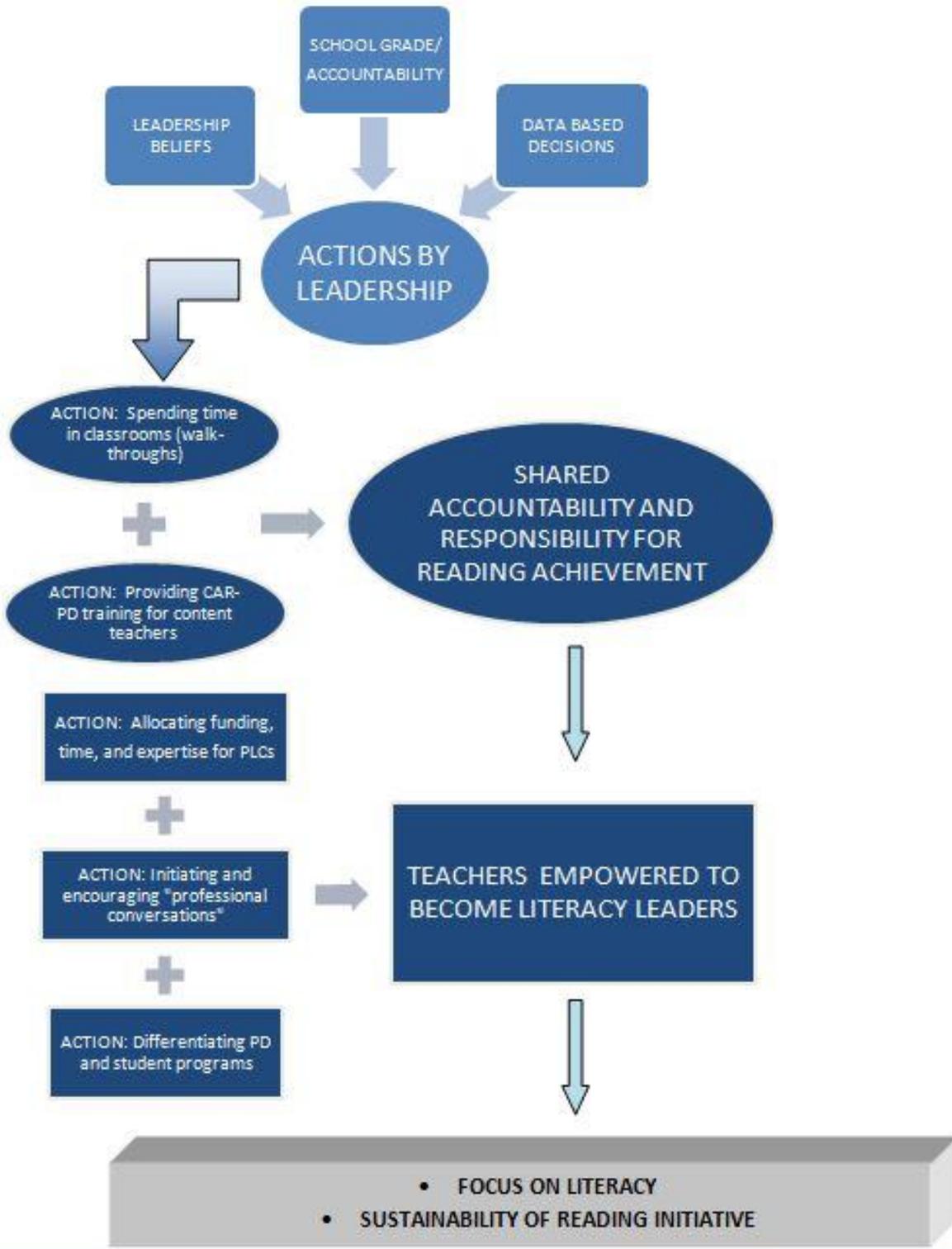


Figure 4-1. Fremantle High School: How leaders' actions promoted research-based reading instruction

Research Question 2: What factors facilitate and/or impede the infusion of research-based reading strategies into instruction at the school?

Facilitating Factors

When asked about factors at the school that facilitated the infusion of research-based reading strategies, FHS's responses generally fell into three themes: leadership, professional development, and money.

Leadership

The participants described how leadership made a significant difference in reading achievement at FHS. The principal and assistant principal for curriculum were brought to the school in response to a "D" grade from the state. These two, along with other school leaders, cultivated a school culture that values and promotes reading across the curriculum. The principal's degree in elementary education and years spent teaching at the elementary level provided him with a solid foundation in reading instruction. The assistant principal for curriculum's previous role as a reading coach and, most recently, the reading contact for the district also was an asset. Further, the other administration members' training in literacy strategies qualified them to lead professional development sessions in reading. The teachers interviewed expressed confidence in the administration's expertise in literacy education.

The principal made it a priority for members of the leadership team to be present at all staff development sessions. Mr. Alleto pointed out the importance of solidarity between teachers and administrators:

If the assistant principal isn't presenting, they're in there working side by side; and they need to be an active participant because otherwise they're going to have a strong conversation from me . . . we have to model what we expect. (Interview 3/10/25)

School leaders' visibility in reading professional development activities modeled the importance of reading instruction. The leaders emphasized reading instruction by looking for the infusion of reading strategies during classroom walk-throughs and asking teachers about reading strategies during post-observation conferences.

The FHS leadership created a culture with a continuous focus on reading strategies and high expectations. As previously discussed, FRI strategies were reinforced at every PLC session, and the "essential six" reading strategies were posted in every room in the school. All of the teachers indicated that having a common vocabulary was a catalyst for infusing research-based reading strategies. Knowing that all of the subject areas were using the strategies and that the students were familiar with them was a major facilitator for teachers' implementation of FRI strategies.

The administrators at FHS shared the school's leadership decisions with the faculty. Feedback was often solicited, and the teachers expressed an appreciation for being treated as professionals and having an active role in determining the school's course. Since PLCs were implemented, a new spirit of collaboration blossomed. Interviewees referred to this spirit as a force that smoothed the progress of implementing reading strategies across the curriculum.

Teachers' use of FRI strategies was supported by release time to observe peers, the reading coach's modeling and/or co-teaching some lessons, and additional professional development. Another leadership decision that contributed to reading improvement was the use of motivational activities planned by the literacy team. These activities included "Literacy Week," with contests and other fun events for the students,

the Literary Luncheons, and extrinsic motivators for reading improvement such as gift cards and celebrations.

In the first year of Mr. Alleto's principalship FHS went from a "D" to a "B" grade and is currently maintaining that level of achievement. FHS teachers credit the school's leadership for the change. One of the teachers summed up the makeover of FHS's culture by stating, "There's definitely a difference between people being in charge of the school and people really loving the school and wanting to take it to a different level. Leadership has a big role" (Focus Group 1/7/12). The interviews revealed that FHS had a leadership team with high expectations that could articulate their literacy plan for the school, and teachers who were confident about the administrators' dedication to reading improvement.

Professional development

Professional development was frequently mentioned as a factor which facilitated improved reading instruction. The participants also noted that school leaders constantly reinforced the strategies learned on professional development days. According to Mr.

Alleto:

Fidelity within any professional development is tough because there's so much of it. And that's where we go back to our professional development days. You bring it up, you reteach it, you talk about it. Those teachable moments, those walk-throughs. You talk about those things. (Interview 3/13/42)

Reinforcement was practiced through PLC days, during new teacher induction, "Re-FRI" training, informal conversations, and additional workshops. Extra reinforcement was provided through book studies, in-house staff development sessions, and district CAR-PD training.

In addition to participating in the CAR-PD training, three faculty members and one administrator were recently sent to the International Reading Conference in Orlando and returned with the latest reading research to share with the faculty.

Teacher input was solicited when professional development was planned, and faculty members were encouraged to share their own expertise by leading professional development activities, which promoted teacher empowerment.

The leadership team at FHS decided to remain focused on FRI to sustain the use of the initiative's strategies. Mr. Alleto and his team limited new professional development projects in favor of constant reinforcement of the research-based reading strategies learned through FRI. When asked about this, the principal explained:

We're going to run a professional development plan, but we don't want to take on anything new. We want to keep doing what we're doing and do it better . . . and we're going to sustain it so we can see continuous improvement. And I think the teachers appreciate it because they get sick and tired of "OK, what's the flavor of the month this month?" And you can't keep doing that because it makes it confusing. (Interview 3/14/3)

Remaining focused on FRI promoted consistency in the school's professional development program and allowed teachers to increase their comfort and skill in implementing the FRI strategies.

Money

Money was frequently mentioned as a factor that facilitated the infusion of research-based reading strategies, primarily because of the school's recently attained Title I status. Mr. Alleto and his staff credited Title I funds with their ability to implement the PLCs. The focus of a large percentage of their Title I dollars was on substitutes to allow teachers to attend professional development sessions.

District financial support also was cited as beneficial to improving reading instruction. The district financed the original FRI training and funneled Title II dollars toward the PLC program. Mr. Alleto was quick to give the district credit, commenting, “Our [district] curriculum office is very supportive of what we’re trying to do. As a matter of fact, they actually used some of their Title II dollars to cover what we can’t cover with our Title I dollars” (Interview 3/17/26).

Although the budget reduction was occasionally referred to as a challenge, interviewees indicated that the school leadership was committed to designating as many resources as possible toward reading improvement.

With Mr. Alleto’s approval, the media center used a substantial part of their budget to support the Literary Luncheons by purchasing books and food for the students involved. Additionally, the school administration devoted funds to motivational programs for the students, such as buying gift cards for those who demonstrated reading gains and sponsoring special reading games, contests, and events during “Literacy Week.” Students who used strategies appropriately in class or exhibited other positive reading behaviors had their names put into a drawing for prizes. These positive rewards were funded by the leadership team. Mr. Alleto reported that “You’d be surprised where you can find money if there’s something you need to do to help kids succeed” (Focus Group 1/8/11).

Factors which facilitated the infusion of research based reading strategies at FHS included leadership factors, professional development activities, and the availability of Title I and District monies. These factors are found in Figure 4- 2.

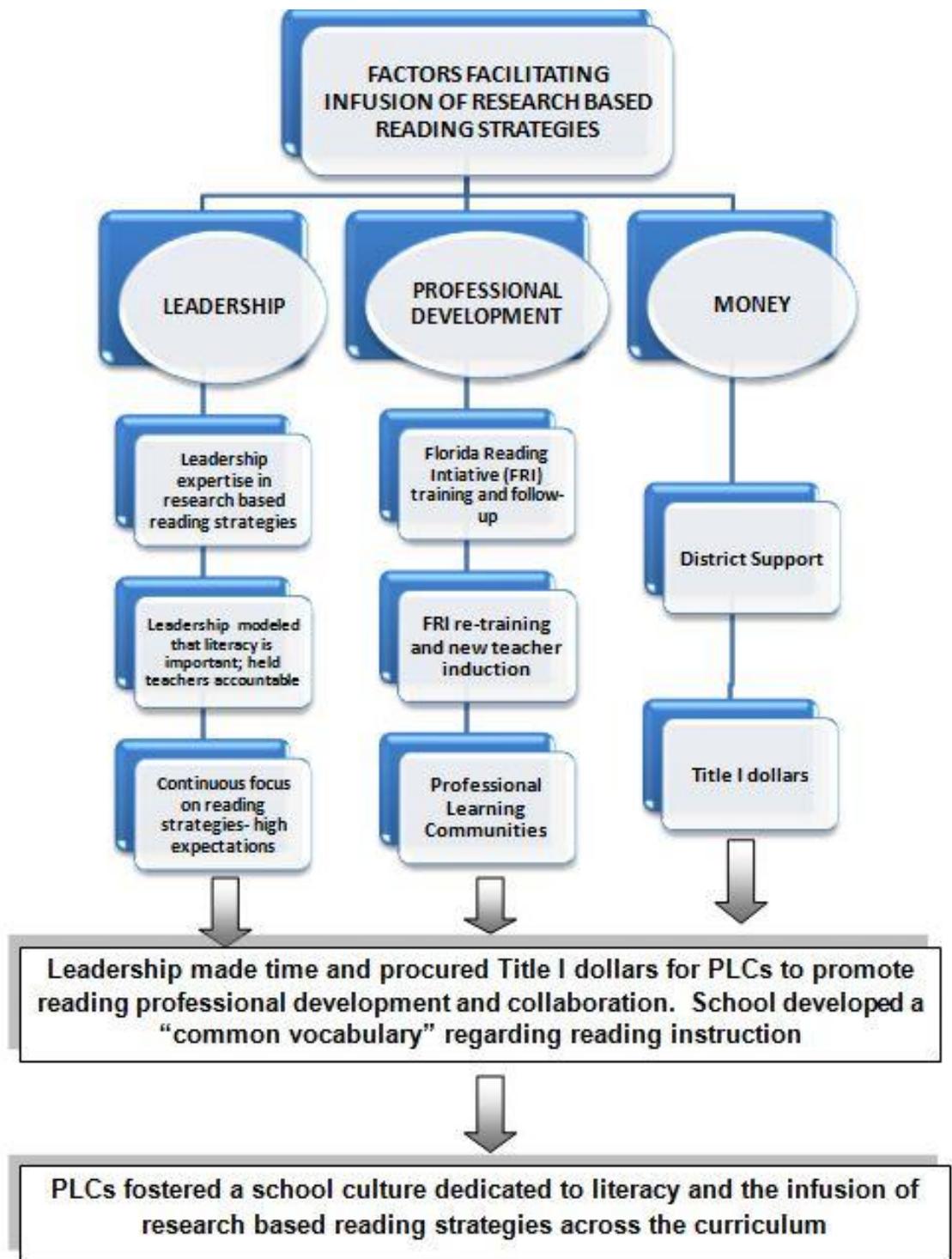


Figure 4-2. Fremantle High School factors that facilitated the infusion of research-based reading strategies

Impeding Factors

When asked about factors that impede the infusion of research-based reading strategies across the curriculum the most common reaction from FHS staff was, “There really aren’t any.” Once probed, however, the interviewees revealed that the faculty and administration overcame many of the factors that otherwise would have been hindrances.

Impeding factors for which solutions were found

The educators at FHS displayed an attitude of efficacy that surmounted most challenges. For example, as noted, financial impediments were overcome by collecting the data and going through the steps to become a Title I school as well as by writing grants for district fiscal support.

The interviewees indicated that time was considered an impediment until the school administrators made the decision to hire substitutes for PLC days so that four full days a year (and more, if warranted) could be devoted to staff development. Additionally, the school changed from staggered planning periods for teachers to a common planning block before school, further facilitating teacher collaboration.

Teacher buy-in to the reading initiative could have been a problem; FHS is a large school and changing the culture was a challenging task. However, interviews with both administrators and teachers showed that teachers felt empowered once PLCs were initiated which increased their participation. One teacher observed that, at the beginning of the FRI initiative, the faculty was struggling to implement the strategies in isolation. When PLCs were instituted, personal relationships were enhanced, collaboration was cultivated and the resultant positive culture change was salient. As a result of being able to provide input and having decision-making power, teachers reported an increased

sense of ownership and positive attitude about improving reading achievement at their school. In this regard, the assistant principal suggested that providing opportunities and resources for teachers to come back together each quarter exemplified the administration's respect for them. She emphasized that teachers "are the professionals, and we need to give them this opportunity; and so [we sat] down and [the leadership made sure]. . . that [we] remained focused in these PLCs." (Interview 2/17/4)

The size of the school also was a stumbling block to conducting classroom walk-throughs. The logistics of a large, sprawling school made spending significant time in many classrooms difficult. By reassigning evaluators and teachers, and by developing a streamlined plan based on proximity, the administrators ensured that the time they could spend in each teacher's classroom was maximized.

Because scheduling struggling students into intensive reading courses was a challenge, the faculty, administration, and guidance department worked together to double-block the neediest students into reading classes. In addition, CAR-PD teachers were increasingly used to assist the "bubble" students, those who needed support but whose scores did not warrant placement in intensive reading.

Another potential impediment discussed was student resistance. Many struggling readers had a negative attitude toward reading and balked when reading strategies were introduced into their subject area classes. A social studies teacher reported that a typical response from her students when she used reading strategies to teach her content was "This isn't reading class!" (Interview 9/2/7). Student resistance was reduced by motivating activities such as the Literary Luncheons, a reward system for improvement, and positive behavioral supports.

Content area teachers' lack a solid background in reading instruction could have impeded the infusion of reading strategies into instruction; however, pedagogical deficiencies were lessened by PLCs, CAR-PD training, and continued professional development.

Impeding factors still to be faced

Although the leaders at FHS overcame many of the challenges seen in a large school, some factors have been more difficult to surmount. The most common factor cited was high-stakes testing. Most administrators and teachers believed that the current emphasis on high-stakes testing detracted from instructional time, and hampered efforts to focus on authentic reading and to help the students become critical readers. The interviewees reported that, despite state mandates, they continued to seek a balance between providing individualized, authentic, diversified instruction and compliance.

The changing demographics of the school presented a continuous challenge as new groups of students with limited English proficiency enrolled at the school. The economic downturn affected Swan District more severely than others, resulting in increasing numbers of low socio-economic status students. These students presented the faculty and leadership with another set of unique needs related to reading instruction.

As with all schools, Fremantle was faced with factors that both promoted and hindered instruction. Notably, this school was able to prevail over most of their challenges while acknowledging that some are still to be faced. The leaders interviewed had positive, proactive attitudes and tended to look beyond hurdles. The factors

impeding the infusion of research-based reading strategies into instruction and the factors for which solutions have been found are presented in Figure 4-3.

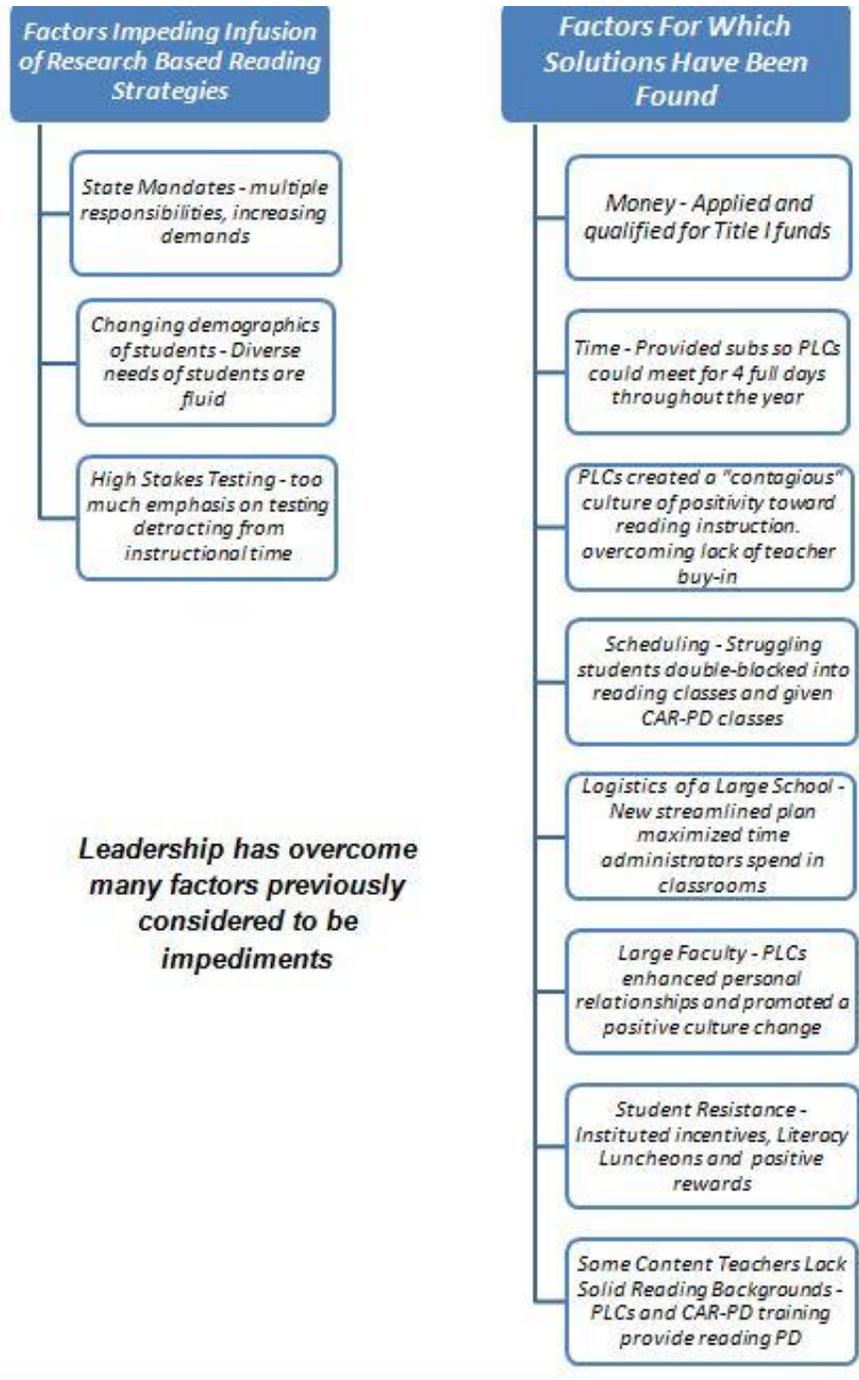


Figure 4-3. Fremantle High School factors that impeded infusion of research-based reading strategies

The can-do attitude with which the FHS faculty dealt with the impediments that occasionally surfaced showed that they had a culture of efficacy. The teachers and administrators looked for solutions and shared the responsibility for improving reading achievement.

Research Question 3: How does the school leadership hold teachers accountable for infusing research-based reading strategies into their instruction?

Providing training in research-based reading strategies was only the beginning of a commitment to literacy achievement. Accountability continued to be essential to sustained improvement.

Accountability at Fremantle High School

The main component of accountability at FHS was classroom walk-throughs. As part of the Learning Focused training required by the district, classroom walk-throughs, as practiced at FHS, consisted of look-fors and ask-fors. To ensure that research-based reading strategies were being used across the curriculum, FHS administrators looked for such things as the “essential six” reading strategies posted in each room and evidence that they were being utilized. Administrators asked the teachers whom they visited to explain how they were focusing on vocabulary strategies (an area of weakness that the school was targeting) and asked students if they were using identified strategies before reading, during reading, and after reading. Mr. Alleto explained that this was done in every class taught at the school, “whether it be content, vocational, fine arts. When we design our lesson plans, what are those activities that are going to promote active reading and the comprehension that goes along with that?” (Interview 3/2/36).

Both faculty and administrators remarked that the walk-throughs were a more effective means of accountability than were checking lesson plans because the walk-throughs enabled school leaders to see the strategies in action. As the reading coach stated, “[The administrators] do enough walk-throughs where they really don’t need [to see lesson plans] because, honestly, anybody can write a good lesson plan. It’s whether or not they really are doing it in the classroom” (Interview 1/12/18).

When asked, teachers responded that they welcomed the walk-throughs as they were non-threatening, and they felt that the principal observations helped them to improve instruction. The reading coach stated that walk-throughs encouraged professional development fidelity, keeping the use of the strategies from slacking off: “Through the walk-throughs, look-fors, and ask-fors from the administrators, if the teachers know it’s something that’s going to be asked of them, they’re really going to hang on to it longer” (Interview 1/11/37). One teacher commented, “I have people in my classroom all the time and that’s okay. I’m happy to show them what I’m doing, and I like that they’re going around. It makes me stay on top of things, and I’m sure it makes other teachers stay on top of things, as well” (Interview 4/5/38).

The administrators also felt that the walk-throughs, though time-consuming and demanding, were essential to the school’s goals for reading instruction. The principal remarked that this process validated what teachers were doing. Moreover, he pointed out that teachers welcomed administrators’ presence and wanted feedback. While it took a while for teachers to accept these visits as normative, they came to appreciate the administrators’ presence:

People want to be encouraged and they want to be thanked and they want to be appreciated. They want to know that [somebody cares about] what

they're doing. And if you're in there giving bang-up lessons every day and nobody knows about it, after a while you start saying, "Why am I doing this?" (Interview 3/13/33)

Of course, not every teacher observed gives a "bang-up lesson". FHS implemented procedures to support teachers who may not be adequately infusing reading strategies into their instruction. In these cases, the reading coach's involvement was invaluable. Once the evaluating administrator noticed a problem, the reading coach was brought in to lend assistance to the teacher in the form of retraining, modeling lessons, co-teaching, and whatever else the administrator prescribed. The assistant principal explained:

We will identify classrooms where the teacher needs more support and ask the reading coach to be in the classroom, to model lessons, to do some side-by-side teaching, and I consider that to be professional development of the best kind—the one-on-one mentoring/coaching relationship. (Interview 2/4/4)

Other remedies, such as participation in a book study, taking online courses, or attending additional staff development sessions, also might be recommended. However, as Mr. Alleto noted, the occasions when these steps were necessary were rare. He observed that the FHS teachers were commendable in their efforts to learn and utilize research-based methods.

The interviews indicated that FHS's leadership was dedicated to ensuring that research-based reading strategies were infused across the curriculum. This was primarily accomplished through classroom walk-throughs and formal observations. Continuous professional development and revisiting the FRI strategies, along with extra support prescribed for teachers who were struggling to implement the strategies were also important components of accountability. The result was a positive, supportive atmosphere of shared responsibility.

Maylands High School

Research Question 1: How does the school leadership promote the use of research-based reading strategies across the school curriculum?

Like FHS, the Maylands High School (MHS) faculty and administrators went through intensive training on FRI strategies five years ago. MHS reading scores have been at or above the district and state levels since it opened in the 2005-2006 school year. The interviewees indicated, however, that the school has drifted from the use of the FRI strategies.

MHS has a dedicated and resourceful reading coach. The school's reading teachers receive ongoing training in research-based reading strategies. However, reading across the curriculum is not emphasized as strongly as it is at FHS, and the school does not have a functioning literacy team. The reading coach reported that she and the media specialist tried some literacy activities a few years ago but that they were discontinued because they did not have a wide impact. Since MHS is ineligible for Title I funds, the personnel interviewed at MHS indicated that limited time and funding kept their school from intensely focusing on reading strategies. Moreover, the administration's goal to concentrate on math and science as well as reading limited the focus on reading professional development. Finally, leadership beliefs and educational background affected the path of reading instruction at MHS.

Leadership beliefs

Dr. Phillip Richards has served as the principal at MHS since it opened six years ago. A former biology teacher, he also has a strong reading background, having been a CRISS trainer and reading consultant. Dr. Richards is a strong advocate of reading across the curriculum, but believes that math and science need equal attention, stating,

“I know you’re focused on reading, but I can’t just focus on that. I’ve got many things I have to focus on” (Interview 5/10/45). At the time of this study, Dr. Richards’ main endeavor was the piloting of a STEM academy at MHS. The STEM academy is a cross-curricular magnet program that includes coordination between science, technology, engineering and math disciplines. Piloted for incoming 9th graders, the program is expanding to a different grade level each year. As the program grows, it will incorporate language arts skills.

MHS administrators did not, however, disregard the importance of reading. The assistant principal stated, “Essentially, our opinion is that all teachers can benefit from reading strategies.” She explained that the reading coach and reading teachers worked with different academic departments to assist them with content-specific reading instructional techniques (Interview 7/4/27).

Dr. Richards believes in differentiated professional development and, thus, scheduled most of the ongoing teacher training through subject area departments in small groups. To facilitate this, in the MHS master schedule, he gave each department a common planning period and allowed them to collaborate and schedule training pertinent to their discipline during that time. He explained, “We’ve had common planning here for several years . . . where teachers do get together and write curriculum together” (Interview 5/8/1).

The assistant principal for curriculum concurred that departmental common planning and professional development geared toward each subject area was important: “Professional development for the ESE department can’t look like one for the math department, which can’t look like one for the performing arts department.

Professional development is not one size fits all” (Interview 7/5/24). Later, the assistant principal added, “Professional development has to be multi-faceted, and it’s going to take a little creativity to figure out what best suits each department, each group, so that they’re each getting something out of it” (Interview 7/5/44). Based on this, the school planned to implement PLCs in the coming year to allow departments to identify their own professional development needs and to adopt the instructional strategies best suited to their subjects. Dr. Richards offered this perspective: “You differentiate instruction for students. Why not differentiate instruction for teachers? On our professional development days we’ve swung from whole district things, to whole school things, to individualized things” (Interview 5/6/22).

The school leaders interviewed also expressed a strong belief in the power of peer learning. Accordingly, they tailored much of their professional development around peer observations, mentoring by the reading coach, and a co-teaching structure that teamed a subject area teacher with a reading teacher. The reading teacher modeled research-based reading strategies within the subject area teacher’s classroom lessons. Dr. Richards explained, “[Teachers] have to see teachers doing it, and you have to provide them with the opportunity to see that. So one of the things I do is get substitutes for my teachers in order to do walk-throughs with us” (Interview 5/8/31). He added that, by taking teachers into the classrooms of other teachers who were successfully incorporating research-based reading strategies and other exemplary instructional practices into their lessons, he was able to give authentic, concrete examples of quality teaching.

Dr. Richards' perspective, combined with recent budget cuts, caused MHS to use their own in-house experts to carry out much of their professional development. One administrator shared:

I'm not a fan of bringing in outside experts. We have plenty of experts right here on our own staff, and it's generally better received if it comes from somebody who understands what your schedule's like, what your kids are like, what your day-to-day challenges are like. (Interview 7/6/1)

Need to focus on other areas

Dr. Richards reported that MHS's data indicated a need to focus more on math and science achievement. Accordingly, he introduced a "lesson study" program to improve instruction in those areas, piloted in MHS biology classes. Lesson study consists of a team of teachers who collaborate to create a lesson, then observe the lesson as it is taught, reflecting on its merits and making changes to improve it. The cycle of reflection and improvement is repeated as often as necessary, and, once perfected, the teacher team shares the lesson with other educators. Dr. Richards reported that this program has promoted teacher collaboration and reflective practice. Along with the introduction of lesson study, MHS has launched the STEM academy. The principal acknowledged that an increased focus on math and science, combined with limited time and resources, has resulted in a decrease of attention to reading strategies. He explained:

You want to know about reading, but we need to improve math and science. We've got end-of-course exams in math and science now, so we will [continue with lesson study] in the math and biology department. So that's the kind of professional development we've been doing. (Interview 5/9/45)

Additionally, the district required both MHS and FHS to go through the Learning Focused training, which became the heart of MHS's professional development efforts

over the past two years. Finally, the district installed Macintosh computers at MHS this year, and required the faculty to attend training sessions so that they could learn about the new technology. These activities diminished available time for professional development in reading.

Limited time and money

As previously stated, MHS did not have access to the Title I funds that FHS used to support its professional development program. Budget cuts also affected the school, leading the MHS administrators to seek ways to accomplish the most with the limited time and financial resources available. Changing schedules from a 4 x 4 block to a seven-period day impinged on planning time, and the district cut back one of the teacher in-service days. This affected the actions taken by the leadership team in regard to research-based reading instruction across the curriculum. This will be discussed in more detail under Research Question 2.

Actions by Leadership

Most research-based reading instruction was infused into the MHS faculty's lessons through the reading coach. Dr. Richards delegated day-to-day responsibility of the reading program to the coach and described her as the literacy leader of the school. In this capacity, the most far-reaching action that she implemented was training every single freshman English class in the reciprocal teaching strategy. As one component of the FRI initiative, reciprocal teaching is one FRI strategy still regularly used at the school. Recently, the reading coach expanded the reciprocal teaching training to freshman biology classes, further supporting the use of strategy. In this regard, Dr. Richards commented:

We see really good value in [reciprocal teaching] because each of its four pieces can stand alone, but they also work really well together. So she teaches the first part, and then adds in the other parts in subsequent lessons spread out over a month. It's really a multi-year thing to get teachers up and working on it because, unless they know it well, they're not really going to use it. (Interview 5/17/15)

Every teacher was also expected to use a vocabulary word wall, which administrators looked for when doing classroom observations.

As noted, the MHS schedule provided each department a common planning period to facilitate collaboration and peer learning. In the coming year, the entire staff will move to a common planning time before the students arrive in the morning. This schedule is projected to further encourage collaboration; participants expressed the hope that it would allow time for the FRI strategies to be reemphasized.

CAR-PD was used at MHS to support Level 2 readers not assigned to an intensive reading class. The reading coach reported that students in CAR-PD classes "statistically have every bit as good a passing rate as the students in the intensive reading classes" (Interview 6/8/1). Additionally, the reading coach and, occasionally, another reading teacher visited the CAR-PD classes to provide strategy reinforcement in the weeks prior to FCAT testing. In this regard, the assistant principal stated:

It's not just the burden of the reading and the English teacher for the kids to do better, it's kind of a share-the-wealth thing. It can't all be on the shoulders of the reading teachers because there's too much at stake; and it's not generally a piece of literature that the kids are reading on the FCAT, it's a piece of science or social studies text. (Interview 7/3/28)

The reading coach or a reading teacher visited social studies and science classes which did not have CAR-PD trained teachers to demonstrate how to break down a block of text, analyze its components, and decode the vocabulary. MHS referred to this as their co-teach model. Interviewees identified this model as the most common way that

the school improves achievement in reading across the curriculum. The reading coach stated that teachers were open to the co-teach model and frequently requested that she or another reading teacher visit their classrooms. She added that teachers regularly consulted her about reading issues with which their students might be struggling and will request assistance.

Similar to FHS, MHS relied heavily upon walk-throughs, look-fors, and ask-fors to monitor teaching strategies used at the school. Dr. Richards reported that these walk-throughs, as well as formal observations and follow-up conversations, were used to encourage use of research-based reading strategies. He also acknowledged, however, that the only elements looked for during classroom visits specific to reading were word walls and reciprocal teaching and added that the new teachers on staff have not received formal training in the FRI strategies.

Regarding his new hires, however, Dr. Richards expressed confidence that they are top-notch educators. He made it a priority to seek out, recruit, and hire outstanding teachers. The relative newness of MHS has afforded Dr. Richards the luxury of choosing every teacher on staff. Commenting on the high caliber of the faculty, he said:

We've got a pretty positive [culture]. . . I feel that the vast majority of my teachers will do anything I ask them to because they trust me, they know that I'm a teacher, and I know what they're going through. (Interview 5/10/12)

Dr. Richards and his team cultivated a culture of high expectations. The result was a high-performing school where the faculty shared responsibility for reading instruction.

MHS's leadership actions were largely affected by their belief that, though reading is a key ingredient to school success, other areas need to be emphasized as well.

Limited time and funding also affected leadership actions. Figure 4-4 shows the factors that contributed to the actions taken by MHS leaders.

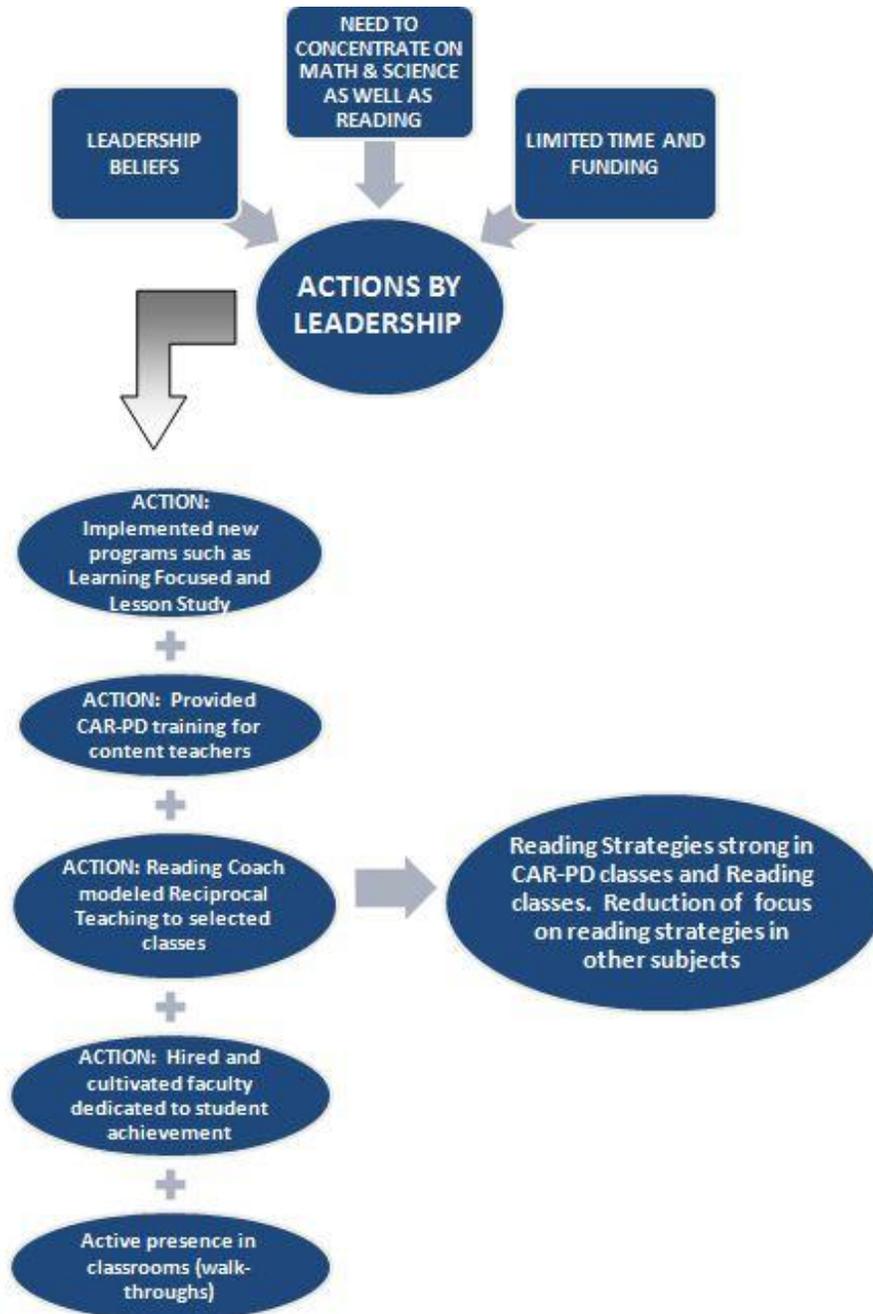


Figure 4-4. Maylands High School: How leaders' actions promoted research-based reading instruction

Research Question 2: What factors facilitate and/or impede the infusion of research-based reading strategies into instruction at the school?

Facilitating Factors

The factors at MHS that facilitated the infusion of research-based reading strategies into instruction included leadership and faculty characteristics. Many interviewees also felt that being a new school with a “younger faculty” promoted the use of these strategies.

Leadership

As discussed above, the leadership at MHS has a strong background in reading education. The principal was formerly a CRISS trainer and reading strategy consultant, and the assistant principal for curriculum was formerly an English teacher. However, the responsibility for most of the reading professional development at the school was delegated to the extremely knowledgeable and enthusiastic reading coach. Her sessions with every freshman English class in reciprocal teaching were recently expanded to freshman biology classes, and she conducted one-on-one mentoring with content area teachers.

The school leaders interviewed had a clear idea of the reading needs of their students. Although, historically, MHS students achieved above the state average, there was a lack of adequate progress among the lowest quartile readers. The leaders interviewed stated their concern for these students, and the interviews made it clear that leadership meetings included discussions of this concern.

Teaching students to analyze works of non-fiction and to interpret data from graphs and charts also were seen as areas critical to student success. One administrator commented that one of their most crucial needs was to “have the students

read, simultaneously, less interesting and more difficult pieces of text” (Interview 7/1/15).

The leadership team dedicated as much time as possible to visiting classrooms. Although full-scale retraining in the FRI strategies had not taken place, administrators used what they observed during classroom visits to prescribe professional development to individual teachers not demonstrating proficiency in literacy teaching techniques. The most frequently prescribed training was the use of online tutorials or videos provided by the district, or consultation with the reading coach. When asked how infusing research-based reading strategies into instruction was promoted at the school, the assistant principal for curriculum replied

We provide them with those research-based strategies. We don't make it a guessing game. We say to teachers, “This works; try it . . . We're going to do this book study. Please read the chapters. Dr. Richards will buy the book; please attend.” (Interview 7/11/39)

Teachers were open to the walk-throughs and expected them. One CAR-PD teacher commented, “Our administration is really good about letting us know what the expectations are. So whenever they walk through it's known what they are looking for” (Interview 8/5/8). She acknowledged, however, that, specific strategies were not among the look-fors; administrators were looking for reading instruction in general.

The school administration gave teachers release time to observe peers who excelled in reading instruction and provided substitutes for reading teachers who modeled lessons and co-taught with faculty members who needed support. The principal stated that he often took new teachers with him on walk-throughs so that they could see exemplary teachers and discuss their observations afterwards. This demonstrated considerable effort on the part of the principal, as substitutes were

provided for the new teachers who accompanied him on walk-throughs, and this activity typically took a half day of his own time.

Dr. Richards used the walk-throughs as a learning experience. He asked the new teachers what they saw during the lessons and then provided his own feedback:

I take the teachers back and say, "Okay, here are the things I look for as I go through because we as a school have decided we're going to look for vocabulary strategies, we're going to look for essential questions, and we're going to look for the environment being conducive to learning." I show them examples and non-examples and . . . we talk about what we saw. (Interview 5/8/44)

Although formal, administrator-driven PLCs were not yet instituted at MHS, the principal set up the master schedule to allow each department a common planning period, which paved the way for collaboration and strategy sharing. The MHS faculty demonstrated commendable collegiality in initiating peer interaction and learning. Some teachers informally began their own PLCs, and plans were being made to formally institute structured PLCs.

Finally, the leadership dealt with students' lack of motivation to read. Although funding was limited in the past few years, the administration made room in their budget to buy a class a set of iPads which teachers could check out. Electronic books and applications to appeal to reluctant readers were downloaded on the iPads for classroom use. The leadership also provided incentives, such as gift cards for demonstrating a year's reading growth and drawings for prizes for students who exhibited reading gains. There were even extrinsic rewards such as gift certificates for teachers who successfully integrated reading strategies into their curriculum.

Faculty

When asked to describe facilitating factors for reading instruction, the most common response among the interviewees was the high caliber of the faculty. Dr. Richards stated:

We have a really good staff here who I've honed over the years. And if they're not doing good things for here then they're not here anymore. I've brought in some really good people here, and try to get rid of not-so-good people. (Interview 5/11/11)

Many teachers voluntarily enrolled in the CAR-PD training or earned the reading endorsement from the state. Reading teachers and the reading coach often spent time in their colleagues' classrooms, modeling lessons. Both teachers and administrators spoke at length about teachers' eagerness to learn and their openness to being coached. The presence of administrators and the reading coach in the classrooms were seen as a positive incentive to use the reading strategies rather than a threat. When asked about the attitude of content area teachers' having reading teachers come into their classrooms, one administrator stated:

They're fine with it because, if kids are given better reading strategies, it helps not only with the reading FCAT but it helps them comprehend the textbook material. . . If they walk into a chapter in social studies or science better prepared to analyze the chapter, figure out what the main ideas were, scan the text, look at the vocabulary, at the sub-topics . . . it's a win-win situation. (Interview 7/5/4)

The reading coach also praised the faculty's willingness to participate in peer mentoring. She commented positively about faculty enthusiasm for improving their instructional skills in the area of reading, "That's one thing I've been very lucky about. I've never had a problem with getting teachers to buy in if we just had the time to do the professional development" (Interview 6/6/6).

She added that, when she conducted staff development sessions, the vast majority of teachers attended, whether or not the sessions were mandatory. She expressed that the teachers were receptive to her workshops because they realized that the strategies taught helped them to present their content. She described teacher resistance to being coached in reading strategies as “absolutely zero” (Interview 6/11/23), but noted that time constraints kept her from having many trainings. She commented that she was looking forward to the new schedule in the coming year, in which the whole staff would have a common planning period, anticipating that this would allow more opportunity for reading staff development, and commended Dr. Richards for adjusting the master schedule in ways which would be more conducive to collaborating and training.

The high caliber and expertise of the faculty, along with budget cuts, increasingly led MHS to use in-house professional development. All interviewees, both teachers and administrators, seemed to prefer this arrangement, with one teacher stating,

I’m the type of person where I like to think inside the box before I go stepping out of the box, and I feel we have some really brilliant minds at our school. . . The people I work with are great. They know what they’re talking about. If I have a question, I can go to someone and it will be answered. . . As far as professional development is concerned, we probably could use some here and there from the outside, but we’re finally starting to utilize what we have here. (Interview 8/6/38)

New school

MHS, a relatively new school, opened six years ago and has had the same principal since opening. Three of the four interviewees cited this as a facilitating factor, commenting that a “younger faculty” were not so set in their ways that they would resist sharing responsibility for reading improvement.

Dr. Richards spoke about the benefits of starting out with a new school, the advantages of hiring a new staff, and “getting the right people on board,” stating,

If I were the principal at [an older school] right now, it would be much more difficult because schools are like really giant barges, and it takes a lot of energy to move a barge because it has a lot of inertia. [An older school] is a barge with a lot of veteran teachers who are staid . . . [and have] seen principal after principal after principal come, and they just hunker down and [expect] that principal will be gone. (Interview 5/11/30)

He expressed that many principals inherit a faculty, but that he had the advantage of hand-picking each teacher at MHS and that he questioned each candidate about their commitment to literacy during the interview process. He elaborated on the degree of cooperation he experienced since open the school, stating that he never had difficulty getting teachers to volunteer to pilot a new program or to become involved in an initiative.

The reading coach stated that she thought that it wasn't so much the age of the teachers but the fact that they hadn't been ingrained in their ways at the school, which left them more open to new strategies: “We didn't have that entrenched ‘I've been teaching here 25 years and you're not going to tell me what to do' kind of thing” (Interview 6/6/26). In her opinion, the MHS faculty believed that reading is a shared responsibility to a degree that faculties at other schools do not match.

Factors facilitating research-based reading instruction at MHS included a knowledgeable team of proactive administrators, a faculty willing to do their part, and the adaptable culture of a new school. Figure 4-5 presents the ways these factors have impacted the reading program at MHS.

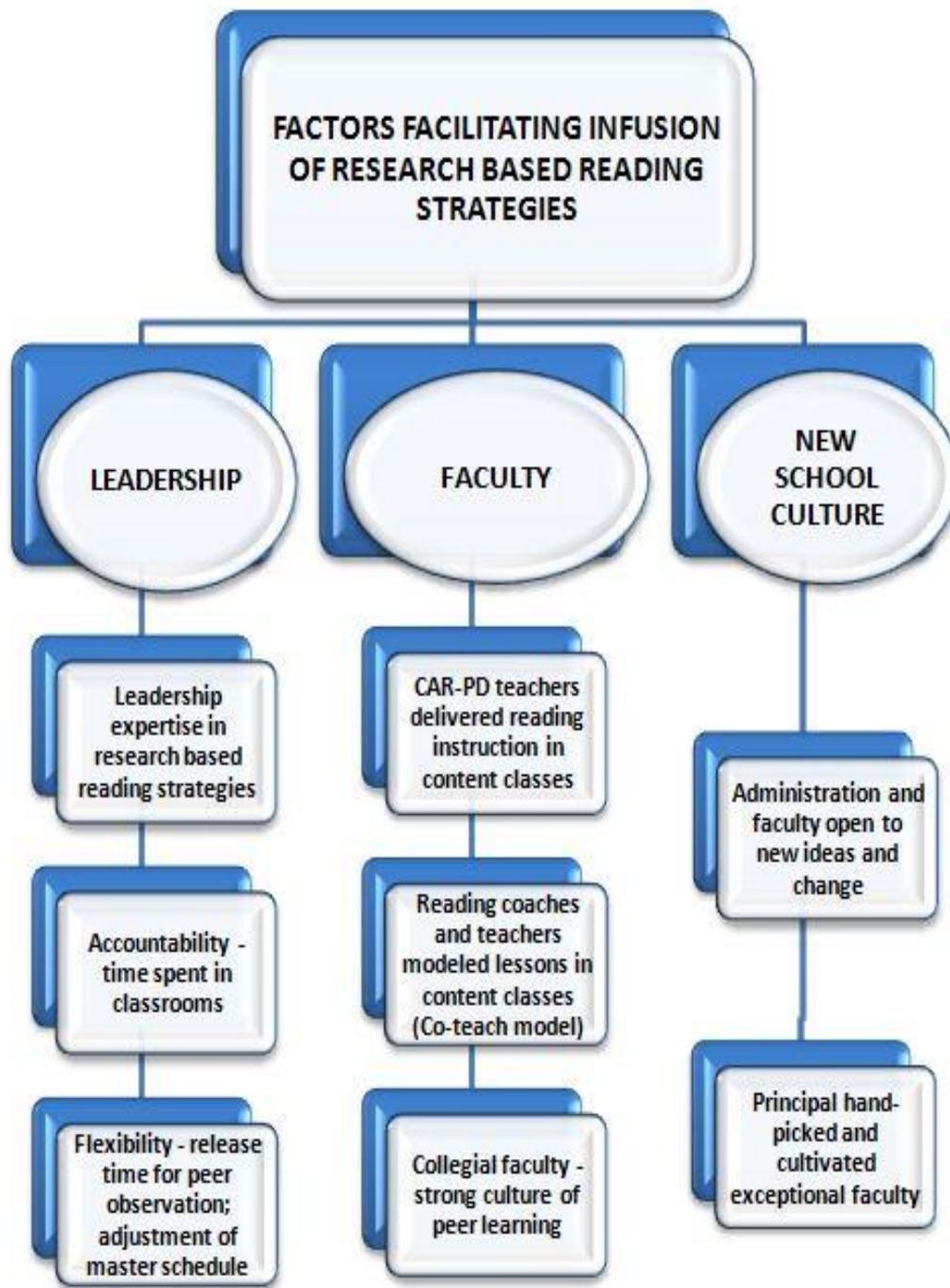


Figure 4-5. Maylands High School factors that facilitated the infusion of research-based reading strategies

Impeding Factors

When asked about factors that impeded the infusion of research-based reading strategies into instruction across the curriculum, the staff of MHS was much more vocal than the staff at FHS. The factors cited included time, money, faculty turnover, focus on new programs, and state mandates.

Time

Dr. Richards acknowledged that MHS had no formal professional development for reading in the past year, citing time as a factor. In fact, every interviewee at MHS named time as a major impediment to reading professional development and implementation of FRI strategies. Further, Dr. Richards reported that one of their few paid professional development days was cut from the calendar for the upcoming year.

The reading coach stated that, when she first started at MHS several years ago, the school's assistant principal for curriculum and the district's reading curriculum coordinator worked very closely with her to plan professional development around the FRI strategies, with workshops that featured one of the strategies each month. She added, however, that, "Then we changed our schedule and it got crazy, and it didn't work out to have the continuous [reading] professional development after that" (Interview 6/3/8) and that, "lately, we haven't had that FRI focus" (Interview 6/4/35).

Regarding time, the CAR-PD teacher stated, "Everyone's biggest complaint is the time because there are so many "have-tos" that we never have enough time to step out into creativity and make it more fun and make it authentic" (Interview 8/6/23).

She reported that many teachers just wished they had more time to do research and plan so that they could do better for their students. She also expressed the expectation, as had the assistant principal and the reading coach, that next year's

schedule, with common planning for all teachers, would allow for reading to be reemphasized on a regular basis.

The reading coach also mentioned that union issues kept her from scheduling mandatory after-school or lunchtime sessions. As a result, she felt that the strategies taught in reading classes were not carried over into content classes as frequently as they were three or four years prior. However, the coach and other interviewees were quick to point out that, despite straying from the FRI strategies, the school's reading scores remained at or above the district and state levels.

Money

Without Title I funds, MHS could not afford additional reading professional development. Even with in-house experts who were willing to give workshops on research-based reading strategies, it was difficult to finance substitutes to allow teachers time to attend these workshops. She stated, "The money is just not there" (Interview 6/7/27). This echoed the assistant principal's comment: "The professional development budget has been decimated" (Interview 7/13/41).

In the focus group interview, however, Dr. Richards stated that he was willing and able to seek out additional funds when necessary, and the group concurred that, on occasion, substitutes were provided so that CAR-PD teachers could attend regional reading workshops. "If it's something that will be essential and proven to be an effective tool for reading progress, I'm not going to turn it down" (Focus Group 2/5/32).

Several interviewees referred to the fact that the other district school, FHS, had become a Title I school, providing them with benefits that their school could not afford. Dr. Richards said, "Right now we're just trying to survive because of the [budget] cuts, so reading strategies right now are not foremost on my mind, it's keeping as many

teachers working as I can” (Interview 5/4/20). He added that he previously used School Advisory Council funds for trainings and incentives but that even these were scheduled to be further cut in the coming year.

Faculty turnover

The entire faculty of MHS underwent intensive training in the FRI strategies approximately five years ago. Unfortunately, a large number of those trained no longer teach at MHS. The reading coach stated, “The biggest issue is we’ve had a ton of new faculty because we were a new school and we’ve grown exponentially; and, to my knowledge, the FRI training hasn’t really been kept up with the new people” (Interview 6/2/25). Dr. Richards also noted that new teachers had not received training on the FRI strategies and that “probably 50% of our faculty has changed since we were FRI trained” (Interview 5/2/17). MHS has not been “re-FRI’d”.

Adding to this, many of the new faculty members were beginning teachers who were in “survival mode” and too overwhelmed “to have something new thrown in their laps” (Interview 7/5/36). At the time of the interviews, the reading coach was trying to set up half-day workshops for content teachers who were not FRI trained to provide them with essential strategies to assist in their instruction, but had not yet found the time to accomplish this.

Focus on new programs

Most of MHS’s professional development during the two years prior to this study centered on the Learning Focused program and instruction in the new Macintosh computers. In every interview, when asked about reading strategies, each respondent ended up talking about the new district-mandated Learning Focused initiative. For example, when one CAR-PD teacher was asked about the emphasis of reading

strategies in the classroom, she responded that it had decreased over the past three years.

However, over the past two years, we've done a new initiative, which is the Learning Focused model, so with that we might draw [reading emphasis] back in. (Interview 8/1/32)

The reading coach's statement was similar:

This year the emphasis has been on Learning Focused, so [administrators] are looking for the essential questions and for the acquisition lesson plan for the Learning Focused; but when we went through the FRI training that was their focus, and that was one of the things they were looking for. (Interview 6/9/5)

Many responses referred to the hope that, when whole-staff common planning was instituted, and when the Learning Focused and Mac computer training was over, the school would be "bringing back the [FRI] initiative" (Interview 8/2/1).

The focus group interviews also revealed that the new STEM academy, which superseded much of the FRI focus in the previous year, was successfully launched and that the school's most recent math scores "were fabulous" (Focus Group 2/1/18). The group felt that, having the first year of the STEM academy behind them, they would have more time to rededicate to reading improvement.

State mandates

Many participants mentioned state and district mandates, especially unfunded ones, as an impediment to improving reading instruction, citing the time spent on tests as one reason for insufficient time for reading professional development. The new emphasis on testing, according to one interviewee, did not take into consideration student factors such as home lives, parents, and health, all of which can affect reading achievement.

The reading coach described how she was affected by the increasing demands of testing, stating that she was so tied up with Florida Assessments for Instruction in Reading (FAIR) testing and with other mandated tests throughout the year that she could not fulfill her functions as reading coach. Proctoring FAIR tests, which must be taken in a computer lab, was so time consuming that, by the time that she completed the first round of testing, it was almost time to begin the second round. Constant proctoring kept her from mentoring content teachers, monitoring reading teachers, interpreting data, or holding professional development trainings. She reported spending 68 of her 184 work days proctoring tests and described the process as a “nightmare” (Interview 6/10/7). She added that, fortunately, the school leadership was able to develop a more efficient schedule and was now helping her with the administration of the tests, freeing up more of her time to fulfill her other duties.

The reading coach and the assistant principal for curriculum expressed their doubts that the high-stakes testing environment in Florida was in the best interests of the students. Other interviewees referenced “the large amount of expectations that keep you doing other things” instead of focusing on improving reading instruction (Interview 8/7/9). Clearly, time spent on mandated testing and other expectations from the district and state affected the amount of time that teachers could devote to literacy activities, restricting both professional development and instructional time.

The factors that impeded the infusion of research-based reading strategies into instruction at MHS are presented in Figure 4-6. Among the impeding factors cited are lack of time, a shortage of money, focus on new programs, which reduced the emphasis on reading professional development, and state mandates.

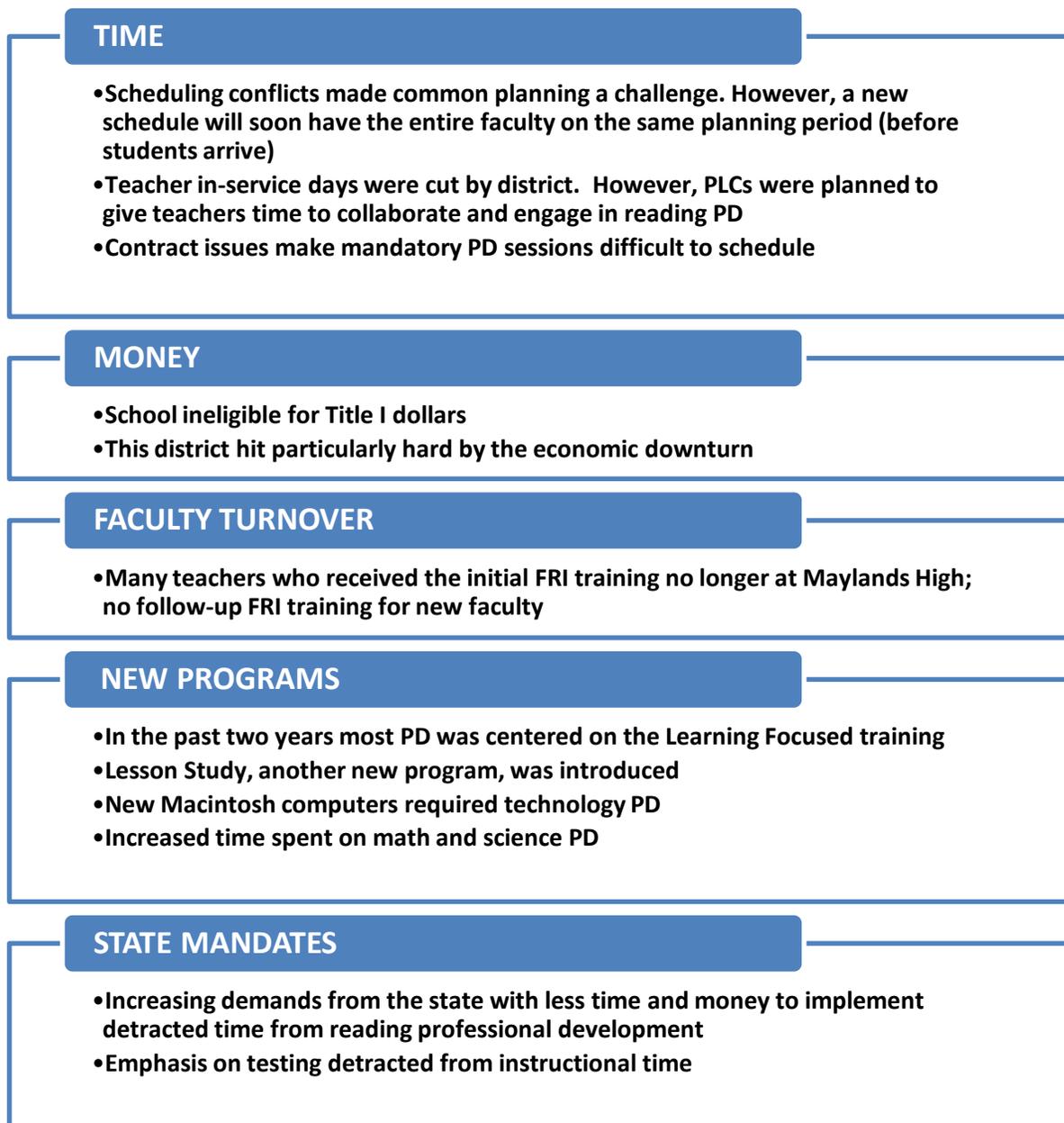


Figure 4-6. Maylands High School factors that impeded the infusion of research-based reading strategies

Research Question 3: How does the school leadership hold teachers accountable for infusing research-based reading strategies into their instruction?

Accountability at Maylands High School

Since adopting the Learning Focused model, the administrators at MHS have spent a good deal of time in classrooms observing instruction, the chief means by which accountability was ensured. Dr. Richards asked teachers to include “vocabulary strategies” in their lessons, which is something that he and his assistant principals looked for as they carried out classroom walk-throughs. The use of a word wall, however, was the only vocabulary activity specifically referenced by the interviewees.

It was clear from the interviews that the administrators at MHS spent a great deal of time in classrooms. The assistant principal estimated that a member of the administration was in each teacher’s classroom at least four times a week. The general consensus was that this frequency of observation, combined with the knowledge of what the evaluators were expecting to see, helped keep the faculty accountable.

Referring to observing reading strategies, the assistant principal for curriculum stated:

We let the teachers know that this is not something we want you to forget about by virtue of the fact that, when we’re in your classroom, we expect to see it . . . we want to see the kinds of things we’ve spoken about. (Interview 7/11/39)

The principal also delegated to this administrator the responsibility of spot checking lesson plan books as an added measure of accountability.

When asked about mandatory participation in professional development, the response from the interviewees was that, while the Learning Focused and Macintosh computer trainings had been mandatory, the few reading sessions that had taken place over the past few years were not. Alluding to an optional book study in which some of the teachers had recently participated, the assistant principal stated:

Can I make you read a book? No. Is it obvious when you haven't? Yes. And, if somebody buys me a book and asks me to read it, I'm probably going to read it if it's my boss. More important, if it'll make me a better teacher, if it's something that's going to improve my practice, I'm going to read it. And we have a very, very good staff. (Interview 7/12/29)

The principal described the process by which he counseled teachers who may not have included vocabulary strategies in their lessons. He explained that, first, he would drop the teacher a note that asked, "Where are your strategies?" If no improvement were demonstrated, he would prescribe professional development, usually in the form of mentoring from the reading coach, district videos, or online tutorials. The next step would be to place the teacher on a success plan, and the final step would be termination (Interview 5/5/15). He expressed the belief, however, that positive encouragement and example setting are more effective means of ensuring accountability. He used the proposed PLCs as an example:

I'm not going to force teachers to do this. We'll get volunteers to do this. As a principal, you're on an island, and your job is not to get everybody on the island; your job is to get as many people on the island as possible. You're still going to have people out there who will never join you, and that's okay. If they're doing good things for kids then you leave them alone (Interview 5/10/21).

Dr. Richards expressed confidence that his faculty would eventually demonstrate a near-complete buy-in of the PLC movement because of the rapport and trust established with the faculty. He stated, "You don't need everybody, you just need a critical mass, and once you reach critical mass then things start to happen" (Interview 5/11/16).

MHS, though maintaining good reading scores, has drifted from ensuring that research-based reading strategies are infused to instruction at the school. The principal and his staff cited factors which have resulted in a lessening of reading professional

development in the past three years, notably a lack of time due to increasing demands of other programs such as their new STEM academy. All participants, however, expressed the goal of reintroducing the FRI strategies once their new schedule is put into action. Additionally, their plan to implement PLCs is expected to focus more attention on the literacy needs of the school. In the meantime, mentoring by the reading coach, a co-teach model, and CAR-PD teachers are the main means of improving reading instruction across the curriculum.

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION

The purpose of this research was to explore the involvement of secondary school leaders in improving the reading programs at their schools. The investigation was accomplished through interviews of principals, assistant principals, reading coaches, and teacher leaders about reading instruction across the curriculum at their school. The interview data were used to address research questions about leadership actions, facilitating and impeding factors, and accountability.

This chapter presents a summary of the findings, their relationship to previous research, implications of the findings, and suggestions for further research. The chapter ends with the conclusions of the study.

Summary of the Findings

Two high schools in the same district were the focus of this study. Both participated in FRI and received training in intensive research-based reading strategies approximately five years prior to this research. One school, FHS, had received subsequent retraining in FRI and was still actively utilizing the strategies. The new leadership at FHS, brought in as a response to a school grade of “D” by the state, developed a culture of shared accountability for the reading program by providing subject area teachers with CAR-PD training and by holding content teachers responsible for infusing their instruction with research-based reading strategies. Allocating time, funding, and expertise for PLCs, encouraging teacher empowerment and professional conversations through these PLCs, and differentiating both teacher professional development and programs for at-risk readers created a schoolwide focus on literacy and sustainability of the reading initiative.

Factors found to facilitate infusion of research-based reading instruction at FHS were (a) the expertise, attitude, and focus of the leadership team; (b) PLCs and continued FRI training, especially as new teachers were hired; and (c) financial support in the form of district and Title I funds. The teachers and administrators at FHS stated that very little impeded their efforts to infuse reading strategies into their curricula, as they had found solutions to the previous difficulties of money, time, teacher buy-in, scheduling, logistics of a large campus and faculty, student resistance, and lack of teacher background in reading. However, a few impediments remained, including state mandates, changing demographics of students, and the demands of high-stakes testing. Teacher accountability at FHS was generally ensured through administrator walk-throughs and participation in the PLCs.

The second school, MHS, had drifted from the use of FRI strategies and had not engaged in further formal reading professional development. Nonetheless, the leadership at MHS still strongly believed in the importance of reading instruction across the curriculum. Administrators encouraged content teachers to get CAR-PD certification. The leadership team was a constant and supportive force in classrooms. For example, the reading coach modeled reciprocal teaching and other strategies in classes, and the principal hired a strong faculty dedicated to student achievement.

The level of expertise of the leadership team, their understanding of student needs, a schedule with common planning periods for each department, and the flexibility granted to teachers to observe other teachers were among the factors that promoted infusion of reading strategies at MHS. Additionally, the number of CAR-PD teachers trained in reading strategies and the co-teach model, as well as the strong

culture of peer learning at MHS contributed to improvement in reading instruction. The fact that MHS is a newer school added to the cooperative and collegial nature of the faculty. The administrators and teachers interviewed cited time, money, faculty turnover, the introduction of new programs, and state mandates as impediments to infusing research-based reading programs at MHS. Accountability was primarily ensured by classroom walk-throughs, although lesson plans were sometimes checked.

Reading was considered to be just one aspect of a school's instructional program. The scope of this study was narrowed to leaders' actions to improve the reading program at their schools and did not document the efforts that leaders put into other important areas of the curriculum. The interviews provided evidence that FHS continued to utilize the reading strategies from FRI, whereas MHS's use of the strategies decreased over time, especially because of the introduction of the district-mandated Learning Focused program, the establishment of the lesson study program piloted in the science department, and the STEM academy. The advent of end-of-course exams in math also affected the time spent on reading strategies in those classes. However, reading scores at MHS remained high.

Leadership Actions

Common themes spanning both schools were a strong and active leadership presence, a culture of peer learning, the development of a common discourse, and a culture of shared responsibility for reading success.

An element of the Learning Focused model, which Swan District required both schools to adopt, was frequent administrator presence in the classroom, and the findings indicate that leaders at both schools excelled at this. Both schools looked for and asked for reading strategies during classroom walk-throughs and held teachers

accountable for including reading strategies in their lessons. However, other than reciprocal teaching and word walls, the leadership at MHS did not specify strategies to look for, whereas FHS's leadership was very specific about the "essential six" strategies that they would be checking for when observing teachers. The interviews indicated that FHS provided teachers with ongoing training in the strategies for which they are held accountable. In contrast, MHS held teachers accountable in general for reading instruction but did not provide explicit training in specific strategies.

Common leadership actions for both schools included encouraging teacher participation in the CAR-PD program and having teachers become certified to train other teachers in CAR-PD, as well as hiring exemplary reading coaches who modeled reading lessons for subject area teachers. Because of the four full days set aside for PLCs, the FHS coach was able to do more direct instruction in the strategies and to assist teachers more in applying specific strategies in response to data analysis than the MHS coach, who primarily supported content teachers by modeling lessons in their classrooms.

Also due to PLCs, there were frequent professional conversations between the leadership and the faculty at FHS, along with a larger degree of teacher empowerment. At MHS, decisions about the reading program appeared to be more top-down. As an indication of teacher initiative, the MHS reading coach reported that content area teachers frequently asked her for assistance with their instructional strategies.

A conspicuous dissimilarity between the interviews at FHS and MHS was apparent when interviewees were asked about factors that impeded the infusion of research-based reading instruction. The respondents at FHS had difficulty answering

the question, and some replied that they could not think of any impediments, responding only after continued probes. In contrast, the respondents at MHS had no trouble answering the question and spoke at length about the factors that impeded the infusion of research-based reading instruction at their school. This difference could possibly be attributed to the implementation of PLCs at FHS and the fact that Title I funds financed reading staff development. The staff at FHS noted that PLCs made all the difference in improving their reading program. Thus far, MHS has not emulated FHS's PLC success, although plans were made to initiate PLCs in the future.

Both schools had motivational programs in the form of extrinsic rewards for reading improvement. FHS launched a popular "Literary Luncheon" program whereby high-interest books are given to students, especially those in at-risk groups, and the books are discussed over a luncheon paid for by the principal. MHS fostered motivation to read by downloading books on i-Pads. FHS had a functioning literacy team that planned the Literary Luncheons, whereas MHS did not have such a team.

The observations reported in this study are not a criticism of the overall instructional program at MHS. As previously stated, MHS scored at or above the state and district averages in reading and consistently earned high grades from the state. This scope of this study was narrowed to explore leadership practices as they pertain to reading improvement. The administrative team at MHS recognized that other areas, such as math and science, were in need of attention and, accordingly, introduced programs to that end. The investment in this area reaped benefits, as the school's most recent math scores were outstanding. However, an unintended consequence of

concentrating on STEM subjects was a diminishment of the focus on implementing reading strategies.

FHS's position as a "D" school with subpar reading scores dictated its focusing most of its time and energy on reading. Duke (2010) stated that differentiated leadership means taking different steps according to the variety of challenges that different schools face. He explained, "The leadership needed to turn around a low-performing school frequently entails a laser-like focus on literacy" (p. 90). FHS's Mr. Alleto did not have the luxury to initiate a science or any other kind of new program because the school was performing a self-described "triage" to improve reading achievement. Mr. Alleto acknowledged that his school's focus on reading probably meant that other areas were neglected. In the world of education today, with its increasing demands and decreasing budgets, finding the proper balance for all areas of instruction will continue to become more difficult for school leaders.

Relationship to Prior Research

Schools cannot become effective unless high-quality reading instruction takes place in every classroom. Second-rate schools do not become high-performing simply by adding an excellent reading remediation class; reading instruction must be infused in every classroom (Allington, 2005a). Accordingly, the principals of FHS and MHS had the responsibility to raise the level of reading instruction across the curriculum, in every teacher's classroom. Both Mr. Alleto at FHS and Dr. Richards at MHS had a solid background in teaching reading skills, giving them the "expert power" that Hoy & Miskel (2008) contend is necessary to be credible instructional leaders of literacy.

School leaders must demonstrate to the faculty that reading is a schoolwide priority (Carnegie Corporation, 2009; Dukes, 2007; Florida Department of Education,

2002; Irvin et al., 2007; O'Donnell & White, 2005; Phillips, 2005; Taylor, 2004), and principals must continually update their knowledge of current reading research (Carmine & Grossen, 2008; Hallinger et al., 1995; Mullen & Hutingler, 2008; Zepeda, 2008). Both principals have done this, and the interviews revealed their high level of expertise in literacy issues.

Managing Challenges

Both schools faced challenges such as time constraints, budgetary cutbacks, the sustainability of professional development, lack of motivation from students, and, to some extent, teacher buy-in.

NASSP (2001) concluded that all teachers need to be prepared to assist their students to become better readers. Both schools in this study had active CAR-PD programs, which gave students the opportunity to use research-based reading strategies when reading their content area texts. Allington (2005a) stressed that subject area teachers make their content more accessible by ensuring that students are equipped with reading strategies to make their texts understandable. The Florida Department of Education (2005a) favors an “embedded method” that teaches students strategies to decode content text. The CAR-PD model employed at both high schools follows this recommendation; participating history and science teachers teach the reading strategy, model its use, and then require the students to use the strategy in their assignments (Hock & Deshler, 2003). In fact, both FHS and MHS required that all content area teachers (not just CAR-PD trained ones) implement reading strategies into their lessons, as is recommended in the research (Carnegie Corporation, 2009; Deshler et al., 2004; Duke, 2010; NASSP, 2001; Parris & Block, 2007; Stevens & Bean, 2003; Torgesen et al., 2007; Tovani, 2000). In this way, students had the opportunity to apply

the reading skills learned in intensive reading classes in authentic ways that would carry over into academic and pleasure reading (Armbruster & Osborn, 2002; Irvin et al., 2007; Stevens & Bean, 2003; Weinstein, 2002).

Time for professional development and instruction is often limited by day-to-day managerial affairs, district and state mandates, and a host of other demands. Both schools were up against increasing mandates from the state, especially the multitude of tests required, which reduced the time available for professional development and, through their high-stakes nature, detracted from authentic learning experiences (Weinstein, 2002). School leaders need to be mindful of current research on these challenges and be prepared to take action. According to Weinstein, “Principal vision and leadership are key. The principal must set priorities and free time from external demands for [crucial] processes of resource development and monitoring [classroom instruction]” (p. 255). Both principals took action to make use of their limited time, spent time in classrooms and developed new programs for their schools.

Experts advocate book studies as a good alternative to traditional “talking head” or “drive-by” professional development trainings (Allington, 2005a; Zepeda, 2008). Both MHS and FHS initiated active, although optional, book study groups. Other commonalities between the two schools included flexibility on the part of leadership and creative scheduling to meet the needs of both the students and the teachers (Allington, 2005a; Carnegie Corporation, 2009; Duke, 2010; Ontario Principals’ Council, 2009; Phillips, 2005; Torgesen et al., 2007; Weinstein, 2008; Zepeda, 2008). FHS exhibited flexibility by hiring substitutes as a means to devote four full days to PLCs and by double-blocking at-risk students into reading intervention classes. Similarly, MHS

adjusted their schedule to give subject area departments common planning time to foster collaboration.

Both schools were flexible in granting release time to teachers so that they could observe their peers. In fact, there was a culture of peer learning at both schools, particularly at MHS. The MHS reading coach, assisted by intensive reading teachers, modeled the reciprocal teaching strategy in all 9th grade language arts and biology classes in a series of lessons that built upon each other. Collaboration, self-efficacy, and motivation should be the foundations of high school reading instruction, and modeling reading strategies (as opposed to simply teaching them) is a recommended practice (Vogt & Shearer, 2003; Zepeda, 2008).

Differentiated Leadership

The two principals in this study presided over two different schools with diverse backgrounds and student demographics; therefore, differentiated leadership was called for.

One of the significant differences between the two schools was the relative newness of MHS. Whereas FHS's Mr. Alleto inherited a faculty and had the task of changing an ingrained school culture, Dr. Richards started from scratch in hiring teachers. Both principals took into account teachers' ability and willingness to embrace literacy when hiring. One of their most important hires was that of the reading coach (Carnegie Corporation, 2009; Roller, 2008; Shanahan, 2004; Torgesen et al., 2007). Both schools have active and dedicated reading coaches who work closely with the faculty.

At MHS, Dr. Richards was building a faculty committed to school improvement, and the challenges that he faced were different from those at a more established

school. Duke (2010) discussed the unique undertakings and broad-based support needed to shape a new school, describing it as “not an event but a process. This process will require continued adjustments and fine tuning” (p. 116). Dr. Richards’ intention to eventually reintroduce the FRI initiative was part of these continued adjustments. He already established broad-based support through crafting a school culture conducive to change. In the meantime, he supplemented his school’s established success in reading by focusing on STEM subjects. Duke (2010) pointed out that building a school’s capacity for sustained success requires a different set of leadership goals, including “increasing the range of options available to students to ensure their continued growth” (p. 86), which, of course, is what Dr. Richards accomplished when he added the STEM academy to what MHS has to offer its students. Moreover, the lesson study program piloted in the biology department gave science faculty the opportunity to plan together, collaborate, and reflect upon their professional practice (West-Olatunji, Behar-Horenstein, & Rant, 2008; West-Olatunji, Behar-Horenstein, Rant, & Phillips, 2008).

In comparison, when Mr. Alleto arrived as FHS’s new principal, he was faced with a school that was struggling to succeed under the Florida Department of Education’s standards and a faculty who was entrenched in its ways. FHS did not have a culture of collaboration and did not use data to guide school decisions. The school was in need of a change in both culture and practice. Duke (2010) discussed schools teetering on the brink of failure, noting that a crucial aspect of turning around a school in decline is recognizing the signs of decline soon enough to begin to effect improvement. Duke put forward the symptoms of schools in danger of failing and included lack of focus,

ineffective instruction, lack of data, lack of teamwork, and ineffective staff development. Fortunately, Swan District did recognize the signs of potential failure at FHS and installed a new principal who was aware that sweeping measures were needed. All the symptoms listed above were addressed and, to a great extent, were resolved with the implementation of PLCs. The data-based decision making of FHS's PLCs is supported by the literature (Duke, 2010; Florida Department of Education, 2002; Hoy & Hoy, 2006; Weinstein, 2002; Zepeda, 2008).

Weinstein (2002) found that

The reframing of belief, action, and policy is far less likely when teachers work apart from each other, when administrators remove themselves from the instructional life of schools, when the work of schools is disconnected from research advanced in the field, and when school staff members do not know how every one of their students is progressing. (p. 202)

Mr. Alleto's actions and the school's results illustrate the truth of this statement. In the FHS PLCs, teachers and administrators worked side by side to analyze student data and collaboratively decide which research-based strategies they would employ in response to their analysis, as is recommended by the research (Duke, 2010; Hoy & Hoy, 2006; Weinstein, 2002; Zepeda, 2008). The research on the effectiveness of PLCs such as those introduced at FHS is substantial and growing (Carnegie Corporation, 2009; Florida Department of Education, 2002; Mullen & Hutinger, 2008; Zepeda, 2008). This transformational leadership made a difference to the school, which went from a "D" to a "B" grade in one school year. FHS is currently maintaining that level of achievement and FHS teachers credit the school's leadership for the improvement.

Prior research also indicates that a high degree of instructional dialogue among all faculty members promotes increased achievement (Blase & Blase, 2004; Florida Department of Education, 2002; Hoy & Hoy, 2006; Phillips, 2005; Zepeda, 2008).

Although the PLCs paved the way for instructional dialogues among FHS's faculty, the study revealed that the faculty at MHS also maintained a strong culture of peer learning and engaged in informal instructional dialogue to a high degree. Without the structured setting of a PLC for these dialogues, however, MHS teachers had to initiate them independently and in smaller peer groups.

A striking distinction between the actions of the leadership teams at the two schools was related to the Learning Focused initiative. At MHS, implementation of Learning Focused superseded professional development in research-based reading strategies. The faculty centered their professional development time on Learning Focused and let the FRI emphasis lapse, forgoing continuous reinforcement of the strategies and of the training of new hires. Conversely, the new leadership at FHS, seeking to remedy the school's poor reading scores, used the Learning Focused program to reemphasize reading instruction, integrating use of the FRI strategies into the Learning Focused model. This was largely accomplished by launching PLCs which were financed by Title I funds for which MHS does not qualify.

Funding

FHS PLCs were financed through Title I funding. FHS had not previously been designated a Title I school, but the leadership team went through the steps of gathering the requisite information and filling out the paperwork to gain Title I status. Duke (2010) recommended that low-performing schools seek such funding, as Title I provides funds for reading professional development. Duke added that, when finances are limited, it is necessary for leaders to select the areas for improvement. "Without a focused mission and limited set of specific improvement targets, it is difficult for school leaders to know how to allocate scarce resources and to determine if their efforts are producing desired

results” (Duke, 2010, p. 50). Swan District Schools are in a Florida county with a higher-than-average unemployment rate. Both principals will continue to be challenged to find funds for reading professional development and for high-quality materials that will challenge and engage students (Armbruster & Osborn, 2002; Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; Carnegie Corporation, 2009; Duke, 2010; Florida Department of Education, 2002; Stevens & Bean, 2003, Vogt & Shearer, 2003).

Sustainability and Accountability

Sustaining a schoolwide professional development initiative is difficult. Typically, trainings lack follow-up and the opportunity to practice, reflect, and fine-tune (Duke, 2010, NASSP, 2001; Weinstein, 2004; Zepeda, 2008). When school staffs are not given sufficient time or credit to collaborate, they cannot nurture or sustain school change. Duke (2010) asserts that training in literacy instruction must be provided on a continuing basis to reinforce key concepts and to get newly hired teachers on board. Clearly, this study demonstrated how an initiative can be sustained, as seen in FHS’s continuous follow-up, and how an initiative can be diluted through lack of follow-up, as seen at MHS.

The continual presence in classrooms of administrators at both schools is in keeping with recommendations in the literature. To support a focus on best practices, administrators must monitor instruction (Duke, 2010; Torgesen et al., 2007). A culture of high expectations utilizes walk-throughs to routinely gather information about what is working and what is not working at all levels as well as principals who are a visible force in their schools and who convey the message that expectations are high and teachers are held accountable (Weinstein, 2008). As practiced at FHS and MHS, classroom walk-throughs by the principals were perceived as supportive structures to help

teachers incorporate strategies learned in professional development sessions. As Torgesen et al. (2007) stated, “If you expect it, then you must inspect it” (p. 12).

Motivation

Even the highest quality professional development will be useless if students are not motivated to become better readers. The administrators and teachers at both schools discussed the problems of expecting adolescents to read increasingly more difficult and less interesting text. In response, actions taken by the administrators of these schools included purchasing high-interest fiction at a variety of students’ independent reading levels, as recommended by Allington (2005a), the International Reading Association (2002), and Smith and Wilhelm (2002). FHS’s Literary Lunches fulfilled both Allington’s (2005a) recommendation that teenagers have the opportunity to participate in voluntary reading and book discussions with their peers and Duke’s (2010) advocacy of providing positive role models for students from underserved populations, especially in schools in need of turnaround. MHS’s use of technology, through providing books on i-Pads, was in keeping with the creative use of technology endorsed by Biancarosa and Snow (2006) and Irvin et al. (2007).

Both schools instituted rewards programs to provide extrinsic motivation to students, such as gift cards for improvement and celebrations of achievement (Carnine & Grossen, 2008; Weinstein, 2002). Research shows that a literacy team can be key to the advancement of a school’s reading program (Cobb, 2005; Irvin et al., 2007; Ontario Principals’ Council, 2009; Phillips, 2005; Torgesen et al., 2007; Vogt & Shearer, 2003). FHS supported an active literacy team that coordinated the Literary Luncheons, celebrations, and rewards.

Teacher Buy-in

All faculty members, no matter the subject area, should be engaged in teaching reading. Literacy is a shared responsibility, not just the responsibility of the reading and English teachers (Duke 2010; Weinstein, 2002).

The research suggests that many content area teachers resist integrating reading strategies into their lessons (Alger, 2007; Allington, 2005a; Bean, 2008, Deshler et al., 2004; Irvin et al., 2007; Lenski & Lewis, 2008, Torgesen et al., 2007; Vogt & Shearer, 2003). However, the interviews indicated that there was very little resistance on the part of subject area teachers at MHS, and what little might have existed at FHS was virtually eliminated with the advent of PLCs.

By providing staff development, modeling positive behaviors, and providing support for teachers, teacher resistance can be reduced (Deshler et al., 2007; Irvin et al., 2007; Tovani, 2004; Vogt & Shearer, 2003). The PLCs at FHS provided these elements and more. PLCs have been shown to support improved reading instruction and self-efficacy of teachers (Carnegie Corporation, 2009; Duke, 2010; Florida Department of Education, 2002; Mullen & Hutinger, 2008; Weinstein, 2002; Zepeda, 2008). Allington (2005a) also praised PLCs as a way to foster professional conversations and as an avenue toward decentralized decision making. This effect was certainly evident at FHS, with professional conversations and teacher empowerment being hallmarks of the interviews conducted there. As Irvin et al. (2007) concluded, with a support system such as PLCs, teachers can realize that they are not teaching in isolation, but are part of a team dedicated to the success of each student.

Both principals expressed that, to achieve teacher buy-in at their respective schools, they avoided coercion. Starting with a “coalition of the willing” was believed to

be a more effective way to induce more reluctant teachers to embrace the goals of a literacy initiative and to contribute to the schoolwide effort (Irvin et al., 2007). This is certainly what happened with FHS's PLCs, which began with a small pilot group that grew to encompass almost every department at the school. Dr. Richards expressed his plan to follow the same pattern when he implements PLCs at MHS. Both principals also discussed the importance of recruiting and hiring the right personnel and, when all attempts at professional growth fail, replacing those who are unable or unwilling to contribute to the instructional goals of the school (Duke, 2010).

The fact that the principal and many of the assistant principals at FHS lead their professional development sessions is commendable. Attending literacy workshops and becoming literacy leaders by learning alongside the teachers, or ahead of them for those principals who are conducting the workshop, are vital responsibilities of high school administrators (Fisher et al., 2007; Florida Department of Education, 2002; Mullen & Hutinger, 2008; Phillips, 2005).

The Ontario Principals' Council (2009) studied schools with high literacy achievement and determined that the principals of those schools provided material and human resources, visited classrooms looking for reading instruction, allowed release time for teachers to observe master teachers, created schedules for maximized literacy instruction, and facilitated collegial decision making. The principals of both FHS and MHS hired talented reading coaches and purchased necessary materials, included reading strategies in their classroom walk-throughs, gave generous release time for peer observations, and crafted schedules that allowed the most time possible for

literacy activities. Additionally, FHS facilitated the collegial decision making advocated by the council by implementing PLCs that focus on reading data and instruction.

Implications of the Findings

The results of this study indicate the importance of fidelity in professional development. The time and money spent to train two entire high school faculties in the FRI strategies was wasted if those strategies fail to become imbedded into instruction. School administrators need to have processes in place to continuously reinforce professional development, reteaching it when necessary, and ensure that new personnel are given the opportunity to be trained so that the initiative will be sustained.

While FHS largely accomplished this, the leadership at MHS allowed the use of the strategies to fade over time. As discussed, MHS had high reading scores, and its leadership did not have as clear a mandate for reading improvement as did FHS's leadership. Additionally, MHS's sustained success in reading achievement caused the leaders there to expand their capacity for success by adding the STEM academy. Because this academy is new, it is only natural that it should currently have the leadership's uppermost attention. Duke (2010) discussed the differentiated leadership that sometimes necessitates one program's taking precedence over another: "If everything is a high priority then nothing is a high priority" (p. 123). The leadership's attention to STEM paid dividends in improved math achievement at MHS and the lesson study initiative encouraged teacher collaboration and reflection.

Nonetheless, it is an undesirable, though unintended, consequence that such an intensive training as FRI go by the wayside. School leaders need be mindful to prevent professional development, and subsequently time and money, to be wasted. Time is increasingly scarce, but time for follow-up sessions throughout the school year must be

found to ensure implementation of the skills learned in training. Further, principals and other school leaders should be aware that allowing one initiative to fade away will be remembered by faculty, making it more difficult to enact future initiatives. Teachers will be wary of investing themselves in an initiative if they feel it is not going to stand the test of time.

Moreover, although MHS maintained high reading scores despite the lack of focus on reading strategies, it would bode well for the leadership there and at other high-performing schools to carefully monitor their data to ensure that these scores do not begin to slip. Duke (2010) cautioned against complacency in schools that have become used to success.

Another item of attention could be accountability. MHS's school leadership is exemplary in spending time in classrooms to encourage accountability. However, although they clearly convey their expectations that reading strategies will be infused into instruction, approximately 50% of the faculty did not experience FRI training. Lack of specificity in expectations could eventually lead to a lack of execution in the classroom. Without training in the research-based reading strategies, administrators must be vigilant to ensure that the strategies are actually being utilized.

Studying FHS provides many practical implications, as it is a case study in the turnaround process. School culture can be changed. Older schools that are at risk for failure can take steps to effect a turnaround by examining data, implementing strategies to meet the needs of the students, and following up with accountability measures. Leadership is vital to taking these steps. School leaders should look at schools such as FHS that successfully implemented PLCs as exemplars for achievement.

FHS's story also offers practical implications when it comes to fidelity in professional development. An initiative, even one that was launched five years ago, can continue to be a vital force in the school if continuously and effectively reinforced. The posters with the "essential six" strategies that appear in the classrooms and hallways of FHS, the use of PLCs to target FRI strategies to meet the needs revealed by the data, the periodic retraining, and the fusion of the Learning Focused model to assist in the ongoing FRI initiative are all ways that this initiative was sustained. Other school leaders should take note of how FHS managed to maintain its focus on the FRI strategies.

Perhaps the most important implication of this study of two schools is that leadership must be differentiated. Good leadership for an older school in decline is not the same as good leadership for a newer, high-performing school. Both principals in this study took prudent and appropriate measures in response to their school's needs, and school leaders should be mindful that they need to carefully assess their schools' conditions before enacting a leadership plan. As Duke (2010) recommends, "It is important for those charged with preparing, selecting, evaluating, and studying school leaders to recognize the value of differentiating leadership" (p. 135). Not only must principals be prepared to vary their management according to the situation, but those who prepare them also must include this in their education programs, and those who hire them must ensure that differentiated leadership is part of the job description.

Suggestions for Future Research

This study represented two schools in a single district. Suggestions for future research would include a larger sampling of schools as a means to analyze a broader range of experiences in terms of literacy leadership in high schools. Both schools had undergone intensive FRI training. An examination of leadership teams at schools

without the advantage of participating in FRI might yield a wider range of leadership practices.

Middle schools are the crucial bridge between elementary schools, which teach foundational reading skills, and high schools, where texts are increasingly technical and difficult. Another suggested area for future research is to determine which leadership practices are taking place in middle schools.

A longitudinal study is called for to study the long-term effects of the leadership's actions and their schools' subsequent reading achievement. Thus far, FHS improved from a D school to a B, and it would be useful to determine whether they maintain or even surpass this growth. MHS has kept its high reading achievement despite losing focus on research-based strategies. It would be useful to see whether they maintain this achievement. A study that spans 3 to 5 years would provide such information. Finally, because this study was completely qualitative in nature, adding quantitative data in the form of student test scores, hours spent in professional development, and other metrics is warranted.

Limitations of the Study

This qualitative study had only nine participants and examined only two schools in one district. The interviewees expressed their own perceptions and the results did not represent the experiences of the entire faculty or other stakeholders. Further, the findings of this study were temporal, representing the participants' views in a particular point in time. The findings of the study are not generalizable to other districts, high schools, or school leaders.

Conclusion of the Research Study

This double case study did much to illuminate diverse leadership practices in high school reading programs. Both schools had high-quality, knowledgeable, and effective leaders who made deliberate decisions about the direction of their schools' instructional programs. The principal at FHS was purposefully brought into the school to effect change. A school on the brink of failure, FHS needed transformational leadership and a sharp focus on data and basic literacy skills. Conversely, MHS needed to expand its capacity for growth. Already performing above average in literacy, the MHS leadership made a decision to expand its offerings and focus on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics to enhance the school's effectiveness. This decision had the unintended consequence of a waning focus in reading instruction.

Thus far, both schools have demonstrated success in these decisions. FHS's reading scores, and, consequently, its overall school grade, improved substantially. MHS experienced a surge in its math scores, while its reading scores remained consistently good.

Notably, diverse schools require differentiated leadership. Principal preparation programs must produce leaders who have the tools to evaluate their schools' needs and the knowledge and ability to carry out programs that will meet those needs. High school reading programs must be a priority of these leaders.

APPENDIX A
INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. Please describe the reading needs of the students at your school. Which student groups need to improve their reading skills? Which reading strategies are needed to promote improvement?
2. How do you plan to go about improving reading achievement at your school?
3. Please tell me about the professional development activities you experienced for reading improvement at your school during the past year. What is planned for the coming year?
 - a. What percentage of the school leadership personnel (e.g., reading coach, principal, or designee) have attended these reading staff development sessions?
 - b. How has the school leadership promoted the use of research-based reading strategies across the school curriculum?
4. Please describe the factors that facilitate the infusion of research-based reading instruction at your school.
5. Please describe the factors that impede the infusion of research-based reading instruction at your school.

APPENDIX B
UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IRB INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Informed Consent
Protocol Title: Leadership in Secondary School Reading Programs

Purpose of the research study:

The purpose of this study is to describe school leaders' perceptions of research-based reading strategies, including their knowledge of and perceived role in implementing these strategies.

What you will be asked to do in this study:

After completing a brief demographic survey via e-mail, you will be asked to participate in an interview lasting no longer than 45 minutes. The interview protocol is attached to this informed consent form. Your interview will be conducted at your school at your convenience, after I have received your signed consent.

Time required:

One 45-minute initial interview and one 45-minute focus group discussion with other interviewees. There will possibly be brief follow-up via phone or e-mail if clarification is needed.

Risks and benefits:

There are no anticipated risks to you as a participant in this interview, nor will there be any direct benefits to you.

Compensation:

There will be no compensation for participation in this study.

Confidentiality:

Your identity will be kept confidential to the extent provided by law. With your permission, I will tape the interview using a digital voice recorder. Only the researcher will have access to the recording, which she will personally transcribe, removing any identifiers during transcription. The recording will then be erased. The transcription of your interview will be sent to you for your approval, giving you the opportunity to clarify and/or revise your responses in writing. Your identity will not be revealed in the final report.

Voluntary participation:

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You are free to withdraw your consent to participate and may discontinue your participation in the interview at any time without consequence.

Whom to contact if you have any questions about this study:

Sarah Altier (Researcher)

Dr. Linda Behar-Horenstein (Faculty supervisor)
Distinguished Teaching Scholar and Professor
Department of Educational Administration and Policy
University of Florida

Whom to contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant in this study:

IRB02 Office
Box 112250
University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611-2250

Agreement:

I have read the procedure described above. I voluntarily agree to participate in the procedure and I have received a copy of this description.

Participant: _____ Date: _____

Researcher: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX C
FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. Please comment on the effects that you believe the implementation of professional learning communities have had in promoting reading instruction across the curriculum at your school.
2. What are your plans for future reading professional development?
3. Has participation in this study revealed aspects of your reading program (e.g., strengths, weaknesses, attitudes of colleagues) that were not previously apparent?
4. a. Please describe to me the amount and nature of the communication and collaboration that takes place between the reading teachers, the reading coach, and the CAR-PD teachers.

b. How does the school leadership facilitate this communication and collaboration?
5. (for School B only) Without Title I dollars, how has the school leadership funded professional learning communities and professional development for reading?

APPENDIX D
SAMPLE CODE SHEETS

School A - Research Question 1: How does the school leadership (i.e., principal or designee, assistant principals, reading coach) promote the use of research-based reading strategies into instruction at the school?

Interview #/page/line	THEME: Leadership promotes reading strategies through CONTENT AREA READING	Memo
3/1/39	QUOTE: Well, I think schoolwide we've really started to look at content area reading. We've done some work with CAR-PD – the content area reading professional development	MEMO: emphasis on content area reading and CAR-PD
3/2/36	whether it be content, vocational, fine arts, when we design our essential questions and we design our lesson plans, what are those activities that are going to promote active reading and comprehension that correlates along with that	Keep reading in mind when planning content lessons
3/5/12	so we started with 9 th and 10 th grade English I and English II – Language Arts – and our intensive reading classes and we formed our first PLC	Subject area PLCs
3/5/26	and I was like “Wow, next year we've got to expand this – and I think we included math, English III and IV, some of the social studies – I want to say World History and American History.	PLCs expand to other subjects/content
3/6/38	reading is the core of all subjects. So it doesn't matter what your content is	Reading is essential to learning content
3/17/24	I don't care what class you're teaching, you're covering content. There isn't a class in this building that doesn't cover some sort of content. So when we're covering content we've got to use those strategies.	Reading strategies in content learning
4/1/7	our biggest concern is making sure that they can comprehend through content areas	Comprehension of content
4/3/35	they infuse reading strategies to the other content areas as well.	Reading strategies in content
4/3/45	I feel like all the reading and language arts teachers definitely [use the FRI strategies], and social studies is jumping on board because we have many CAR-PD classes now and we have one science CAR-PD.	CAR-PD helps content teachers infuse reading strategies
4/7/20	it's my context clue strategies that's going to help them on FCAT. Because I don't know what vocabulary is going to be on FCAT, but I want to give them strategies so that they can figure out what those words mean. And so if I can use	Good reading strategies encompass vocabulary across the curriculum

	their [the content teachers'] words to teach those skills then they're learning their words and I'm teaching the skill.	
1/3/12	So we have quite a few teachers who have the Content Reading Professional Development certification, so we do have that and it is incorporated into our history classes right now and also into one of our science classes for 9 th grade	CAR-PD
1/3/40	. We do it with every subject area and anyone who is a new teacher	Orientation in reading strategies for new teachers to the school
1/4/8	I'm actually going to CAR-PD training in July with a reading teacher so we can try to train more teachers so we're going to become trainers to train people	CAR-PD
1/9/32	We are going to the Content Reading so we can train more people because - I don't necessarily feel like CAR-PD should supersede the intensive reading class, I feel like if everybody has CAR-PD and learns ways they can really, really infuse it into their classroom and everything is just really geared to just that subject – they're going to see better results	CAR-pD will help reading AND subject area teaching
1/9/37	when they went through FRI it might be like, "Oh, so this is a science example, and I'm a history teacher so I wasn't necessarily thinking of ways that I can adapt it" – that kind of thing. But for the most part, they do a really good job. I think the staff does a really good job.	Content teachers do a good job
2/1/29	then we also have a few sections of students who are receiving intervention in the content area and the teacher has been through the training CAR-PD	CAR-PD
2/1/36	What we've tried to do and what is actually more effective is we try to double up the kids in a reading intervention and a CAR-PD class.	CAR-PD and Intensive reading together
From follow-up email with FHS reading coach	The teachers must have taken the CARPD training to be CARPD teachers. The teachers at our school were offered the training. Teachers tend to take it because it makes them more marketable.	Teachers take the CARPD training voluntarily
2/3/44	This year we were able to bring into play our Professional Learning Communities where we met on a regular basis with our content area and that really allowed – because it gave them protected time as professionals to come together and we would look at student data, we would look at professional practices. When <i>they</i>	PLCs help common content teachers share effective strategies

had time to come together you began to see a focus on, you know, “This is what really works with my students, and this is how I utilized it.” And that has brought even more focus on what’s happening in those content classes.

PRINCIPAL/LEADERSHIP BELIEFS affect leadership’s actions to promote reading strategies throughout the school

Interview #/ Page/Line	QUOTE:	MEMO:
3/7/14	. Good teaching is good teaching. And it doesn’t matter what grade level you’re at – the magic of a powerful teacher in front of a room is awesome and we have teachers here that are at such a different level that I just sit there and watch them in amazement and I think, “How did you get so good?” That’s the hard part to figure out.	In the power of a good teacher
3/3/11	I think most of our teachers are doing a pretty good job with the pre-reading, activating prior knowledge	Believes most teachers are doing prereading activities
3/5/5	Why would anyone teach in isolationism and plan on their own when you can do it together? To me, it just makes more sense.	Believes in collaboration
3/5/17	, I don’t believe there’s a teacher in this school that wants to be a bad teacher. I don’t think people come into that profession because they don’t want to do what’s best for kids.	Believes in his teachers
3/5/21	if you really don’t want to be a good teacher you wouldn’t be here and I believe that wholeheartedly.	Believes in teachers
3/4/41	And if you had told me, especially when we came here five or six years ago, that we would have common assessments in our core classes in 9 th and 10 th grade pretty much across the curriculum, I would never have believed you but that’s where we are, and we’re using them as our progress monitor and aligning them with the standards and I’m not going to tell you that we’re 100% there but we’re moving in the right direction and that’s the goal.	Believes school is heading in the right direction
3/8/25	I guess the key is you have to have credibility with the teachers – so if we’re not talking about what we want to see and we’re not consistent about it then we’re not going to have that credibility.	Believes principal must have credibility with teachers
3/9/44	And ,if they still balk at it then maybe you’re not the right fit for what we’re looking at. I mean, this is	Believes there are some non-

	what our school is going to be about. There are some non-negotiables. Implementing Learning Focused is a non-negotiable. There's things we can negotiate, there's things we have to do to run efficiently, and that's what we have to do.	negotiables
3/10/13	My goal is to kind of break away from what they [the district] mandate because we want to do what we want to do – because every school has its own needs, in my opinion. I mean, one of the things we tell teachers is we have to differentiate instruction, but then we don't differentiate professional development for teachers and so . . .	Believes in differentiated leadership*** use quote
3/11/38	it's kind of funny when you look at the role of a principal and I guess there's two ways to go. You're either a manager of day-to-day operations or you're a leader of instruction. It's very hard to work both hats	Believes it's hard for a principal two "work both hats"***
3/12/12	I need to be in the buildings, I need to be with the students, I need to talk to teachers. You have to be the face of the school.	Believes a principal has to be with the teachers and students
3/13/25	people want to be encouraged and they want to be thanked and they want to be appreciated. They want to know that what they're doing somebody cares about. And if you're in there giving bang-up lessons every day and nobody knows about it, after a while you start saying, "Why am I doing this?"	Believes people want to be actively appreciated
3/13/29	To me, it validates what they're doing and the teachers want us to be in their rooms. They really want us to give them feedback and let them know what we're seeing. It took us awhile to get there but now they get it and they appreciate it. So if I'm not able to do that it kind of slows the momentum down. So it has to be a priority.	Believes being in classrooms validates what teachers are doing
3/14	the bottom line is, all of our conversations go back to "What is high quality teaching?" I don't care what professional development you put in front of me. All that stuff is rooted in Vygotsky and Piaget and how do you – you know, what strategies are we teaching kids to be able to take information from short term memory to long term memory and back? What are those encoding and retrieval skills? Back and forth.	Believes "what is high quality teaching" is the central question
3/17/24	, bottom line is we don't have 100% of our kids at grade level. It's that simple, and until we do we've got to do something.	
1/10/10	, if you ask any teacher whether or not the administrators are informed in reading	Teachers believe that leaders are

	they would tell you “yes” – and I think that’s a really big thing, the fact that they know what it means to be a good teacher and also reading strategies is key.	informed and behind the reading program
1/10/14	If we just had somebody who was in charge of just the managerial things on staff, they wouldn’t really see that. But because our administrators have a good focus and have a vision of where we want to go with the school I think that everyone else does a good job.	Good quote** leaders model the instructional values of the school
4/8/5	. I know that we talk about it in group meetings like, “We need to be pushing these things [reading strategies]” I know that they think it’s important – the faculty thinks that the administration thinks it’s important.	Leaders model the instructional values of the school
2/4/37	And receiving training on it and seeing it become imbedded into daily instructional practice are two different ball games.	Believes that training needs to be actively followed up on
2/9/24	We sat down at the beginning of the year and looked at our calendars for the year and planned those dates – when they were going to be so we could schedule around FCAT and of course exams, finals, mid-terms, progress reports ... We did a good job, I think there was one date that we ended up changing because it was conflicting with something. But when they will come to me and say, “Gosh, we’re really needing more time and sometimes there will be a sub-group out of there. For example, American History might come to me out of the Social Studies department and say, “Oh my gosh, can we have half a day?” and I’ll say, “Yes, you tell me when is a good time for you.” And our philosophy is, we want teachers in classes teaching. Nobody wants to lose instructional time. What we kind of talked about as a group in the beginning was, I’m going to equate it to if I’m on the road with my husband and we’re lost and he doesn’t want to stop for directions (laughs)...You know I can save a whole lot more time and be a whole lot more effective if I can take that 15 minutes to pull over and ask for directions rather than continue down this path of the wrong direction or ineffectiveness for – “Yeah, that was an additional four days in my classroom but if I wasn’t getting the bang for my buck and those three or four days that I pulled out put me in a more effective position – how valuable is that?”	Making the time for professional development/PLCs
2/13/7	I’m a huge believer that you build your people. You deliver – you know I’ve	Principal beliefs. **** “build your

	sat through hundreds of professional developments as a teacher. And, I'm open to it. I always think you can learn something – I don't care if I've been through this training before, I will learn something new that I can use. But when you're looking at overall, fundamental, imbedded change -build your people. And so, I think it's dealing with them one-on-one.	people”
2/16/5	That high schools tend to be a lot like shopping malls – people come in and the most with the most resources are the ones who are able to be the most savvy consumers. And then there are a whole lot of people just hanging out, and how do we address that? How do we deal with our consumers who are just hanging out and get them to be productive consumers?	This was quoted from the AP who got it from the principal... Look up the original
2/20/45	[on the topic of teachers who are skeptical about the next “big thing” in education]: I don't perceive that as being negative, I perceive that as being wise. Our time is very limited and don't ask any educator to spend their time on something that's not validated. I think that comes back to what we talked about when you said tell me about strategies; well, strategies are just the tool. What's our focus? So if you build your people, and if you build your people to build our students into critical thinkers then that's where you're going to get your bang for your buck.....	Believes in respecting teacher time and building your people. “won't ask any educator to spend their time on something that's not validated”
9/2/5	The administration values our input and wants us to be an active part of making the decisions at the school. By giving us PLC days to look at the data Mr. Alleto shows that he believes we can make the decisions and I think that shows he respects us as professionals.	
FOCUS Group 1/7/12	“There's definitely a difference between people being in charge of the school and people really loving the school and wanting to take it to a different level. Leadership has a big role”	

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Sarah Ann (Booker) Altier was born in Winter Park, Florida, and is a fifth-generation resident of DeLand, Florida. She earned both her Bachelor of Arts in History and Master of Education in Reading from Stetson University and then continued on to earn a Specialist degree and a Doctorate in Educational Leadership from the University of Florida.

Sarah married her husband, Jeff, when they were still undergraduates at Stetson, and they have three children. She teaches history and is a reading specialist at the same school from which she graduated, DeLand High School. Her most fulfilling teaching assignment, however, was her work in Namibia, Africa, where she taught reading and AIDS awareness to children as well as conducted staff development training with the teachers at a rural village school. Sarah has traveled to over 40 countries, including to Thailand and Vietnam for a Fulbright-Hays fellowship and to Australia, where she lived and worked for two years.