



School Level Self Assessment Tool

September 2007

Self Assessment Tools for Teachers, Schools and Districts

The School Level Self Assessment Tool is part of a set of three instruments intended to be used together to begin a process for planning to sustain evidence-based reading initiatives at the local level. Used as a needs assessment, the material will (1) promote reflection on current areas of strength in implementing and sustaining scientifically based reading instruction, (2) spark conversations among staff, and (3) facilitate identification of areas that are important for sustainability.

Background

Throughout the self assessment, many references are made to “scientifically-based research” and “research-based” reading practices. The Reading First initiative is based on the findings of research, in particular the five elements of effective reading instruction identified in 2000 by the National Reading Panel—phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. If the users of this self assessment feel the need for a brief refresher on the research findings on effective reading instruction, the *Guidance for the Reading First Program* (<http://www.ed.gov/programs/readingfirst/guidance.pdf>) document, especially the “Components of an Effective Reading Program” section found on page 3, will help put all of the indicator statements describing effective Reading First implementation in proper context and perspective. A complete description of the elements of effective reading instruction can be found in the Reading First legislation (<http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/pg4.html>).

Understanding and Using the Self Assessment

The quality indicator statements in the self assessment were drawn from the findings of research and literature on effective sustainability practices, where sustainability is defined as the ability of a program to operate on its core beliefs and values (its reading culture) and use them to guide essential and inevitable program adaptations over time while maintaining improved outcomes (adapted from Century and Levy, 2002).

The statements are organized around three functions that the school reading team performs as it develops and implements research-based reading instruction. Those functions are:

- Nurture the school reading culture;
- Lead the learning; and
- Use data to lead and guide decisions.

The School Level Self Assessment, and its companion pieces, the Classroom and District Self Assessments, may be used in a variety of ways, depending on local context. However there are two common factors that you will want to incorporate into your use of the local self assessment tool set.

First, the ratings in the instrument should be based on evidence and not

perceptions alone. Each item in the instrument has suggested sources of evidence and reflection questions to guide you on this path.

Second, the use of the instruments should include a combination of individual thought and group discussion and consensus. For example, you may want to ask individuals to complete the rating form and synthesize their conclusions on what's working that will support sustainability and what needs to be developed to support sustainability on the first "Begin to Plan" Worksheet at the end of the self assessment tool. Appropriate individuals to engage in this exercise might include:

- Teachers complete the classroom self assessment;
- School level reading teams complete the school assessment; and
- District staff with a stake in reading achievement complete the district self assessment.

Then, you may want to convene group meetings to combine conclusions from all three of the local instruments: classroom self assessment, school self assessment and district self assessment. The second Begin to Plan Worksheet is suggested as a place to capture consensus from group discussions.

Next Steps

With your needs assessment completed, you will be ready to move into developing and implementing a sustainability plan. The Sustain Reading First Website contains additional resources to assist you, including practical guidance on sustaining elements of evidence based reading programs, how to cover recurring resource needs, and training opportunities or workshop materials.

School leaders...

A. Nurture the school reading culture, by:

1. Taking action to ensure continued implementation of the essential elements of scientifically based reading instruction.

Implementation Progress			
4	3	2	1

Possible Sources of Evidence

- School literacy plan;
- action plan or school improvement plan; and
- teacher interviews.

Guiding Questions

- What actions have the principal and other school leaders taken to continue promoting implementation of Reading First elements?
- Do teachers report that the principal actively promotes continued implementation of the elements of effective reading instruction?
- In what ways does the principal and other school leaders support direct explicit instruction? the 90-minute reading block? application of the three-tiered approach to intervention?

2. Establishing and communicating high expectations for all staff related to student achievement.

Implementation Progress			
4	3	2	1

Possible Sources of Evidence

- Written expectations for students and for staff;
- teacher interviews;
- written belief statements, guiding principles and descriptions of common evidence-based practices; and
- staff reports.

Guiding Questions

- Can you identify written communications which convey high expectations for teachers around teaching and learning? Name specific instances when teachers reported that the principal communicates high expectations in writing and in conversation (meetings, informal conversation).
- How do the principal and staff work to reach consensus on values, norms and beliefs regarding reading practices and student outcomes?
- When has staff articulated what the values, norms and common practices are?

To rate your program, circle the rating that best describes your program's implementation progress for each item.

- 4 = Already in Place**
- 3 = Partially in Place, Under Development**
- 2 = Area to Develop**
- 1 = Important, But Not Feasible Now**

<p>3. Creating a plan with clearly defined roles, responsibilities, and goals for the school to guide teaching and learning in reading.</p> <p><u>Possible Sources of Evidence</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written reading action plan; • literacy plan; • reading goals and strategies in school improvement plan; and • teacher interviews. <p><u>Guiding Questions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which of the documents cited as possible sources of evidence exist, and do they convey roles, goals, expectations and strategies for improving student outcomes in reading? Do staff members often articulate the goals and strategies? • How do staff share the responsibility and hold each other accountable for improving student reading achievement? Can you identify specific written communications or reports from staff verifying that this guiding principal of shared responsibility is communicated and that staff understand its implications for their work? 	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <th colspan="4">Implementation Progress</th> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 25%;">4</td> <td style="width: 25%;">3</td> <td style="width: 25%;">2</td> <td style="width: 25%;">1</td> </tr> </table>	Implementation Progress				4	3	2	1
Implementation Progress									
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<p>4. Cultivating a strong Reading First identity in the community and sharing results and successes with all major stakeholders.</p> <p><u>Possible Sources of Evidence</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews with key parents and community members; and • parent / district / community reports of results. <p><u>Guiding Questions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In what ways do interviews with parents and key community members indicate that they are aware of the Reading First program and have they received reports of results? Are sample reports available? • What other indications of community awareness of the reading culture can you identify? 	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <th colspan="4">Implementation Progress</th> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 25%;">4</td> <td style="width: 25%;">3</td> <td style="width: 25%;">2</td> <td style="width: 25%;">1</td> </tr> </table>	Implementation Progress				4	3	2	1
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<p>5. Developing school capacities, such as policies, programs, standards, professional development, hiring practices and promotion procedures; and promoting their effective implementation.</p> <p><u>Possible Sources of Evidence</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written evidence of school capacity; and • written policies and procedures regarding school reading practices. <p><u>Guiding Questions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What documents of those identified as possible sources of evidence exist? How are they used to guide staff implementation of the program? How does the principal and/or leadership team use these documents in working with teachers on implementation of the program? 	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <th colspan="4">Implementation Progress</th> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 25%;">4</td> <td style="width: 25%;">3</td> <td style="width: 25%;">2</td> <td style="width: 25%;">1</td> </tr> </table>	Implementation Progress				4	3	2	1
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<p>To rate your program, circle the rating that best describes your program's implementation progress for each item.</p>	<p>4 = Already in Place 3 = Partially in Place, Under Development 2 = Area to Develop 1 = Important, But Not Feasible Now</p>
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6. Scheduling appropriate time on a regular basis for teachers to collaborate and share collective knowledge and effective practices in reading.	Implementation Progress			
	4	3	2	1
<u>Possible Sources of Evidence</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Written schedules for staff training, meetings, and collaboration; and teacher interviews. 	<u>Guiding Questions</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do schedules, meeting notes or other records of collaboration exist? In what ways do teachers work collaboratively on a regular basis to strengthen reading instruction? 			

School leaders...

B. Lead the learning, by:

7. Scheduling adequate instructional time for all students while protecting the 90-minute block.	Implementation Progress			
	4	3	2	1
<u>Possible Sources of Evidence</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> School schedule; and interviews with staff. 	<u>Guiding Questions</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the school's schedule allow adequate instructional time for all students while protecting the 90-minute block? If not, what steps will be taken to establish a schedule that does provide adequate time? When are support services- i.e., speech & language, ESL, occupational therapy, physical therapy-currently scheduled? How can these services be scheduled so they do not interfere with the 90-minute block? 			

8. Actively promoting the implementation of research-based strategies, while supporting the efforts of the reading coach to help teachers daily in applying promising reading strategies.	Implementation Progress			
	4	3	2	1
<u>Possible Sources of Evidence</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff meeting agendas, principal written communications, coaching plans and follow-up; and interviews with teachers. 	<u>Guiding Questions</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What evidence is there to indicate that the principal and school leaders promote these strategies? Do staff report this? In what ways do coaching plans reflect coach efforts to help teachers implement such strategies in the classroom? 			

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<p>9. Making frequent informal visits to classrooms to observe reading instruction and engaging staff in reflective dialogue on teaching reading as a regular practice to develop staff skills around student learning.</p> <p><u>Possible Sources of Evidence</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Notes from principal walkthroughs; and teacher interviews. <p><u>Guiding Questions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do teachers and the principal report that the principal visits the classroom regularly during reading time? What do they report is discussed in follow-up conversations focused on teaching and learning in reading? 	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <th colspan="4">Implementation Progress</th> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 25%;">4</td> <td style="width: 25%;">3</td> <td style="width: 25%;">2</td> <td style="width: 25%;">1</td> </tr> </table>	Implementation Progress				4	3	2	1
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<p>10. Establishing student focused grade level reading teams and assuring the productive functioning of these groups and implementation of the resulting actions.</p> <p><u>Possible Sources of Evidence</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grade level team membership list, meeting schedules, agendas and notes of meetings; and interviews with staff. <p><u>Guiding Questions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What documentation exists that reflects active teams which meet regularly with coach and principal involvement? Do coach and principal report briefings take place when one of them is unable to attend a meeting? Do meeting notes and staff reports indicate that coach and principal follow-up to assure that plans developed at the meeting are implemented? Do meeting notes indicate coach and principal attendance? Does staff report that the coach and principal attend these meetings? 	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <th colspan="4">Implementation Progress</th> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 25%;">4</td> <td style="width: 25%;">3</td> <td style="width: 25%;">2</td> <td style="width: 25%;">1</td> </tr> </table>	Implementation Progress				4	3	2	1
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<p>11. Hiring new staff that support and complement the reading vision.</p> <p><u>Possible Sources of Evidence</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Written hiring guidelines; and interviews with recently hired staff. <p><u>Guiding Questions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do hiring guidelines exist? How are leadership team members involved in the hiring process for teachers, coaches or principals? What steps are taken to ensure that new staff come with the orientation and some of the knowledge needed to implement scientifically based reading instruction? 	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <th colspan="4">Implementation Progress</th> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 25%;">4</td> <td style="width: 25%;">3</td> <td style="width: 25%;">2</td> <td style="width: 25%;">1</td> </tr> </table>	Implementation Progress				4	3	2	1
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<p>12. Providing opportunities for staff to grow as building leaders in reading and encouraging strong reading leaders to consider working toward positions as coach or principal.</p>	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <th colspan="4">Implementation Progress</th> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">4</td> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">3</td> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">2</td> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">1</td> </tr> </table>	Implementation Progress				4	3	2	1
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<p><u>Possible Sources of Evidence</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership and grade level team meeting notes; documents listing job openings and candidates; and staff interviews. 	<p><u>Guiding Questions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do staff report opportunities to participate in leadership roles? Do meeting notes reflect change in membership over time? Can you identify times when new members were rotated onto the building reading leadership team? How has the facilitation of grade level team meetings been shared by different team members? Have staff been encouraged to make presentations to colleagues at staff meetings? Do staff report receiving encouragement to grow as leaders and consider openings in leadership positions? 								

School leaders...

C. Use data to lead and guide decisions, by:

<p>13. Using data regularly to monitor outcomes, assure continuous progress, guide change, implement needed interventions, and determining adequacy of progress toward the mission and vision.</p>	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <th colspan="4">Implementation Progress</th> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">4</td> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">3</td> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">2</td> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">1</td> </tr> </table>	Implementation Progress				4	3	2	1
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<p><u>Possible Sources of Evidence</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Records of data review sessions (action plans, team meeting agendas, etc.); and principal and coach interviews. 	<p><u>Guiding Questions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do the principal and coach report having data discussions regularly? Do interviews with teachers indicate satisfaction with the results of the discussions? In what specific ways do action plans reflect roles for both principal and coach in following up on data suggesting action? 								
<p>14. Recognizing and affirming teachers regularly, and celebrating the schools success, based on data indicating that collective efforts have resulted in increased student achievement.</p>	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <th colspan="4">Implementation Progress</th> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">4</td> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">3</td> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">2</td> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">1</td> </tr> </table>	Implementation Progress				4	3	2	1
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<p><u>Possible Sources of Evidence</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Records of staff recognition; and teacher interviews. 	<p><u>Guiding Questions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do interviewed teachers report receiving acknowledgement or recognition for their students' progress? How does the school celebrate its successes? How are parents and the community involved? 								
<p>15. Establishing a building reading leadership team that shares the responsibilities of reviewing data and guiding the continuous improvement of the reading program.</p>	<table border="1" style="margin: auto;"> <tr> <th colspan="4">Implementation Progress</th> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 25%;">4</td> <td style="width: 25%;">3</td> <td style="width: 25%;">2</td> <td style="width: 25%;">1</td> </tr> </table>	Implementation Progress				4	3	2	1
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<p><u>Possible Sources of Evidence</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Membership of building reading team; agendas and notes from reading leadership team meetings and professional development sessions; schedules for grade level team meetings; and interviews with staff. 	<p><u>Guiding Questions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do reviewed records indicate an active, productive leadership team is in place and that the principal and coach are actively involved in it? Do staff interviews indicate that the principal regularly attends meetings of this group to review data and make recommendations? How does the principal engage this group in program audits and planning for improvement, including staff development planning? 								
<p>16. Anticipating, influencing, and effectively responding to the changes in priorities that might undermine the evidence based reading program in the school.</p>	<table border="1" style="margin: auto;"> <tr> <th colspan="4">Implementation Progress</th> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 25%;">4</td> <td style="width: 25%;">3</td> <td style="width: 25%;">2</td> <td style="width: 25%;">1</td> </tr> </table>	Implementation Progress				4	3	2	1
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<p><u>Possible Sources of Evidence</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Written notes from staff meetings; written notes/recommendations from district and/or state meetings; and staff interviews. 	<p><u>Guiding Questions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In what ways do written communications or reports from staff indicate that pressures to change priorities are addressed effectively so that a focus can remain on the reading initiative? Does staff report that the principal and school leaders are effective in maintaining the focus on student achievement in reading? 								
<p>17. Recruiting resources and support for the school's reading program and revising the allocation of recurring resources to most closely align with the reading priority.</p>	<table border="1" style="margin: auto;"> <tr> <th colspan="4">Implementation Progress</th> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 25%;">4</td> <td style="width: 25%;">3</td> <td style="width: 25%;">2</td> <td style="width: 25%;">1</td> </tr> </table>	Implementation Progress				4	3	2	1
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<p><u>Possible Sources of Evidence</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> School budget documents; budget presentation documents; and staff interviews. 	<p><u>Guiding Questions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does the principal communicate results and convey needs for the school reading program? At what times did the school leadership team review and analyze the allocation of the recurring resources that are received each year? What resources were reallocated to support needs identified by student reading results? 								

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Begin to Plan at the School Level: Synthesize Your Own Thoughts		
Leadership Function	What's in Place and Working?	Areas to Develop
A. Nurture the school reading culture.		
B. Lead the learning.		
C. Use data to lead and guide decisions.		

**Begin to Plan at the School Level:
Meet with Others and Reach Consensus**

Based on group discussion, identify the top priority Areas to Develop.

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Based on group discussion, what general strategies are needed to address the listed priorities?

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Based on group discussion, what general challenges do you anticipate?

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RMC Research Corporation
1501 Wilson Boulevard, Suite 1250
Arlington, VA 22209

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