



## Here's How

Local Sustainability Strategies

### Local Data Systems

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## Institutionalizing Continuous Improvement with Comprehensive Data Management Systems

Valid and reliable assessment results are the life blood that nurtures and sustains successful evidence-based reading programs. Timely assessments inform educators about which students are falling behind in critical reading skills so that more intensive instruction can be provided. Assessment data guide teachers and administrators as they monitor program effectiveness, determine professional development needs, and allocate resources. A comprehensive data system that makes it easy to regularly assess students' reading progress is a key infrastructure that makes sustaining increased reading outcomes possible.

### *The Components of a Comprehensive Data System*

High performing school districts have developed and implemented a variety of structures, resources, and tools that comprise a comprehensive data management system. What do successful schools typically do with regard to data use?

First, they use valid and reliable assessments to measure student reading achievement. Districts should begin by analyzing the reading assessments administered in their schools to determine their validity, reliability, and whether or not the assessments measure the skills students are learning. Reading First schools use data from a multitude of sources—screening, progressing monitoring, diagnostic, and outcome assessments to measure student reading achievement regularly. Even informal sources such as student work samples, principal walkthrough forms, and coaching records can be used to assess instructional or programmatic effectiveness. Also, when districts use the same reading assessments in all of their schools, they are able to get a more accurate picture of student reading achievement district wide.

Second, successful schools have a strong data management system. The most effective data management systems contain the elements

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Third, successful schools form grade level teams and hold regular data meetings. Meetings can occur during the day, in which case substitutes may be hired or a schedule of rotation can be developed so that individual teachers can meet with their colleagues. These meetings can also take place during a teacher's planning period. Some schools have found creative ways to conduct data meetings that work effectively for their school. Regardless of the meeting format, all of the data meetings should include the following key characteristics. Data meetings should (1) be held on a regular basis (bi-weekly or monthly), (2) have a consistent process for the meeting structure and use forms for recording information, (3) examine data from multiple sources, (4) address school-level decisions and actions steps toward change, and (5) include some form of follow-up (Crawford & Torgesen, 2007). Data meetings will run efficiently if tools are provided for ease in data analysis. Examples of resources that can support this process are notebooks, recording forms, decision-making charts, and student work samples.

Fourth, a key member of the literacy team is the principal, who provides leadership for data-based decision making. During the data meetings, the principal has the authority to institute the immediate changes that arise from decisions made by data team members. Some principals have found that information shared at data meetings can help in decisions regarding the master schedule, student placement, and allocating human and fiscal resources for the following year.

Finally, once successful school based literacy teams are established, a district should consider forming a district literacy team. The team would be comprised of the reading stakeholders in the district and would have the ability to make decisions that would impact evidence based reading instruction district-wide.

*Sustainability is 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*

#### Learn More

📖 *A Comprehensive K-3 Reading Assessment Plan: Guidance for School Leaders* (Center on Instruction)

#### References

Crawford, E. & Torgeson, J. (2007). *Teaching All Students to Read: Practices from Reading First Schools with Strong Intervention Outcomes*. Tallahassee, FL.: Florida Center for Reading Research.

## **The Role of Data in School Reading Culture**

In the Florida Center for Reading Research Report *Teaching All Students to Read: Practices from Reading First Schools with Strong Intervention Outcomes* (Crawford & Torgeson, 2007), one of the common traits observed in successful schools was a concerted effort to utilize and analyze data. Furthermore, data utilization and analysis was the single most significant difference between the successful and non-successful schools studied. These schools not only could pinpoint the strengths and weaknesses of their students, but used the information to plan precise instruction to accelerate their learning. Schools and districts that keep data central to their decision making process develop a strong culture of data use.

A strong culture of data use will (1) rely on multiple assessment measures to form a complete picture of reading achievement, (2) utilize a variety of data resources that are effective for their context, and (3) include data results and their instructional implications as a regular topic of student learning discussions. Finally, when there is consistency across the district in the types of assessments and resources used, districts are able to obtain a more accurate portrait of what student reading achievement looks like across schools. It is only then that district literacy leaders can use the data results to build district organizational structures, policies, and procedures that will directly affect student reading outcomes over the long term.

### **Effective Data Management Systems**

**An effective data management system is one that:**

- allows various data sources to be entered quickly and efficiently;
- can generate meaningful reports for a variety of users;
- has effective safety measures in place to protect the data;
- has a master testing schedule that specifies which students will be assessed, when assessments will be administered, and which personnel will be administering the assessments;
- outlines how training and/or review of administration procedures for personnel administering the assessments will be developed;
- designates who will be responsible for collecting, entering, and summarizing the test data; and
- includes a format for tracking students📖 receiving supplementary and/or intervention services, when and where the support is taking place, how frequently, and who is providing the instruction.