



Here's How

Local Sustainability Strategies

Recognizing Success

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Recognizing Success as a Catalyst for Continuous Improvement

Sustaining the school-wide reading model established through Reading First funds in your school or district is about nurturing the reading culture and practices that have helped your students become proficient readers. Reading culture includes ongoing awareness of, and appreciation for, the small steps taken every day that add up to a difference in student reading achievement. Including regular recognition of student and staff accomplishments builds momentum and helps individuals reach for even more as the school-wide model is sustained.

Why recognize success?

All good Reading First practitioners understand the value of specific feedback to students in promoting their mastery of reading skills. Similarly, the adults in schools also need a way to understand their progress across time in implementing their school-wide reading model.

Recognizing success can let teachers, coaches and principals know that their accomplishments are noticed and valued.

It also reminds everyone involved of the bottom-line of the im-

provement effort – namely, student learning and achievement in reading.

Recognizing success can help with highlighting for everyone the need to implement well the evidenced based practices that are contributing to the improved reading performance.

Finally, it makes the case for sustaining the evidence-based practices that have been implemented as a result of Reading First to school/district leaders and other stakeholders.

Worthy of Recognition

- *student mastery of particular skills*
- *parents who have effectively supported their children in learning to read*
- *teacher who has expanded their professional practice*
- *support coaches have provided*
- *support principals have provided*
- *what schools have accomplished*

Recognition and Organizational Functioning

The importance of recognizing student accomplishments is not news to any teacher using an evidence-based reading program. The value of this practice does not apply only to the classroom. It is a concept that has also been broadly applied in the literature on adult performance in organizations. Healthy, effective organizations make recognition and celebration part of their

everyday functioning—it's just the way they do things. The business literature on pursuit of excellence and best practices in employee reward and retention provides food for thought. Here are some key ideas for you to consider as you think about recognition and celebration in your school-wide reading model:

- Recognition has tremendous power to reinforce specific be-

haviors and actions that are most likely to contribute to the achievement of organizational goals.

- This power is underutilized in most organizations.

Organizations should pursue an appropriate balance of embedded and spontaneous recognition of accomplishments with more formal celebrations of success.

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

What kinds of accomplishments should be recognized?

Supporting reading achievement is a team effort, and the work of everyone involved is worthy of reinforcement and recognition. Some specific ways to recognize accomplishments can include recognizing (1) student mastery of particular skills, (2) parents who have effectively supported their children in learning to read, (3) a teacher who has expanded his/her professional practice, (4) the support provided by coaches and principals, (5) what schools have accomplished.

Imagine this kind of recognition in your school. Can you see how this would play a role in reinforcing effective behaviors, honing understanding of valued outcomes, or just simply making people feel good about the contributions they are making?

What it Looks Like: Samples of Spontaneous Recognition

A student's mastery of particular skills: *"You have correctly identified the main idea of this paragraph and 3 ways that detail is used to support it. This skill will help you with the social studies project we'll be working on later today. Here's how..."*

The parents who have effectively supported their children in learning to read: *"I can tell you worked on the letter naming task I sent home last week because in a quick assessment today your child correctly named 9 of 10 letters. It shows how much difference extra practice at home can make..."*

A teacher who has expanded their professional practice: *"I could have cheered today when I saw you realize that Juan was missing some key vocabulary to participate in the lesson. You quickly backed up to demonstrate the meaning of the words and as a result he was able to..."*

The support coaches have provided: *"I just wanted to let you know that the suggestion you made on ... turned on a light bulb for me. Yesterday I And it worked!"*

The support principals have provided: *"Thanks for doing what it takes to get the assessment data to us on immediate turnaround. I couldn't do my best teaching without that information..."*

What schools have accomplished: *"Data from the evaluation of our district strategic plan have just come in. I wanted to call you personally to let you know your school has exceeded the reading achievement target by 10%. We've got to get the word out—or bottle what you're doing there...let's make an appointment for you and your key staff to put our heads together on how."*

More Formal Celebrations of Success

<p>Student</p>	<p>Put on student showcases that allow children to show off their reading skills and articulate why what they have learned is important. This kind of showcase can be put together for a parent audience and captured on videotape for posting on the school website or including child voices in other presentations—or used as print testimonials in newsletters, etc.</p> <p>Provide an opportunity for students to read to the principal, coach, or other staff member or to another class.</p>
<p>Staff</p>	<p>Describe staff accomplishments in coaches’ or principals’ remarks to Reading First staff, at faculty meetings, grade level meetings, at subject matter meetings, at school improvement work sessions.</p> <p>Engage staff in using their creativity to prepare presentations based on most recent reading data on the state test. Use a 3-2-1 technique: point to 3 things in the data that are worth celebrating; 2 reasons for the accomplishment; and 1 goal to work toward in the next year.</p>
<p>School</p>	<p>“Report up”[®] to present the story of the school or district’s journey to the local board of education. Consider submitting the presentation to national conferences.</p> <p>Encourage principals to apply for state or federal award programs.</p> <p>Contact the local press or radio stations to explore newspaper articles[®] about your school-wide reading model and what you have achieved. This is a good way to let the entire community know that their tax dollars are well spent.</p>

References

- Marzano, R.J., Pickering, D.J., Pollock, J.E. (2001). *Classroom Instruction That Works: Research-based Strategies for Increasing Student Achievement*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD. (Note: Chapter 8 *Setting Goals and Providing Feedback* describes the research supporting the effects of feedback.)
- Schmoker, M. (2006). *Results Now: How Can We Achieve Unprecedented Improvements in Teaching and Learning?* Alexandria VA: ASCD. (Note: See Chapter 14 *Reward, Recognition, and Celebration: No Longer an Option* and Chapter 15 *Barriers to Praise*.)



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