



Here's How

Local Sustainability Strategies

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- Oregon Reading First's Schoolwide Reading Model: *Elements of a Healthy System Checklist*.
- University of Oregon *Implementation Calendar for Principals and District Leaders*
- *Implementation Checklists for Principals and District Leaders*

Implementation Walkthroughs: Inspect What You Expect

Maintaining Fidelity of Implementation with Walkthroughs

Managers in many types of work use “rounds” to determine whether the results being obtained are those which have been envisioned. The concept of “inspecting what you expect” to assure that “you get what you want” is a core concept of any effort to create a quality product. If education improvement initiatives, such as Reading First, are to be successful and to be sustained, educational leaders must use the same strategy. Principals and other supervisors must actively monitor the implementation of plans and the results produced along the way to assure that important goals are achieved and that progress is sustained over time. Just as the components of an initiative must be well implemented to be effective, they must continue to be implemented effectively to be sustained. When the principal or other supervisor is visible in classrooms and is actively engaged in activities related to the initiative, improved outcomes and sustained practice are more likely.

Defining the Implementation Walkthrough

All Reading First grantees are familiar with instructional walkthroughs, and the role principals have played in conducting them. For purposes of our discussion, we will distinguish the implementation walkthrough from the instructional walkthrough. The *instructional walkthrough* is a defined process which focuses on a specific component (instruction) of the schoolwide reading model. The *implementation walkthrough* is a broader process which includes observing instruction, but also involves monitoring trainings, and planning meetings, engaging in focused discussions and reviewing formative data—all activities which allow a leader to draw conclusions about the state of the implementation while “walking about” the school, actively engaging with people and the processes which make the initiative work.

Implementation walkthroughs should take leaders to each instructional group on a regular basis (classroom reading instruction in each grade level, special education classes, and instruction provided by reading interventionists, Title I, and Title III staff). In addition, walkthroughs should include grade level team meetings, professional development sessions, and conversations with teachers, specialists, classified staff, parents and students. When put together, these activities should provide a broad overview of the status of the implementation throughout grades K-3 and whether it is having its intended effect.

Fidelity of implementation has been a focus since the inception of Reading First. As part of the Institute on Beginning Reading, the University of Oregon developed an

[implementation calendar](#) for principals and district leaders for grant years one, two, and three. These materials were further developed into [checklists](#) by role to inform the field of what principals and district leaders should look for each month. In addition, some states developed customized implementation checklist to fit the specifics of their own grants. While on-going implementation support has been important throughout the life of the Reading First grant, it is especially prominent as schoolwide reading models seek to sustain themselves as it provides a means to (1) identify and address any implementation issues that remain and (2) place the principal squarely in the role of reinforcing the reading program structures and culture through word and action on an on-going basis.

Who should conduct the implementation walkthrough?

Most implementation walkthroughs will be carried out by the principal. However, other leaders of the improvement initiative should also participate in these activities from time-to-time.

The reading coach should accompany the principal on a regularly scheduled basis. This collaboration will allow for better communication and more consistent follow-up on the needs that are noted during the process.

In addition, the district Reading First coordinator, federal programs coordinator, special education director, elementary education director (or any others with responsibility for student reading achievement at the elementary level) will benefit from periodic walkthroughs with the principal.

Implementation Walkthroughs: What to Look For

There are a number of key things that principals and other leaders should look for when conducting an implementation walkthrough. These indicators provide evidence that (a) the initiative is strongly in place and the results are improving, or (b) there are weak spots in the implementation that need to be addressed.

The walkthrough can be “focused,” using an implementation checklist to gather information, or “informal,” relying on casual observation and conversation to form impressions. For implementation walkthroughs, important “look-for”s include the items listed below.

Implementation Walkthrough Checklist

If conducting a focused implementation walkthrough, indicate an (a) if the initiative is strongly in place and the results are improving, or (b) there are weak spots in the implementation that need to be addressed.

- **Strategic use of curriculum, strong instructional practices, good student management**

Is the curriculum being implemented in a manner consistent with the training provided? _____

Is curriculum pacing on track to cover essential content and meet established standards? _____

Do instructional practices reflect training and action plans? _____

- **Adherence to schedules; efficient use of time; management of interruptions and transitions**

Are schedules being followed as written? _____

Is instructional time being used efficiently? Are students well engaged? _____

Are at-risk students in an adult-led group most of the time? (seatwork time is minimized) _____

Are interruptions and transitions managed effectively to preserve instructional time? _____

- **Availability and use of data; evidence of staff collaboration**

Are data available quickly following completion of assessments? _____

Are data used regularly to determine progress and to guide instruction? _____

Are data team meetings (grade level; school wide) held regularly to plan instruction? _____

Are action plans for identified students developed and implemented as needed and followed up on regularly? _____

- **Evidence that training content is being implemented in classrooms**

Is there evidence in classes of knowledge and skills on which training has been provided? _____

Does the coach follow-up regularly and in a timely way on recent workshop training? _____

Is recent training having the desired effect on student learning? _____

- **Evidence of the presence of a strong reading culture**

Can staff articulate the mission and vision of the school? _____

Do the conversations and actions of the staff match talk about improving? _____

Do staff avoid blaming outside influences for student failure and accept responsibility for their success? _____

How Do We Get Started?

Steps to Begin Your Implementation Walkthroughs

Below are several steps that can help principals and other administrators plan and initiate the start of your implementation walkthroughs. Share this list with relevant stakeholders and plan how best to use it to plan and monitor your progress.

Steps to Beginning the Implementation Walkthroughs

1. Identify or develop useful implementation checklists or other tools.
2. Talk with staff before beginning the process to convey the purpose, share tools that you will use, clarify expectations and offer support; follow-up with individual conversations as needed.
3. Schedule time weekly (or at least bi-weekly) to do implementation walkthroughs; include the coach and other leaders on a periodic basis.
4. Make strong implementation a priority for the building reading team (implementation team) and within the school culture:
 - Set high expectations for staff to implement the program at a high level.
 - Repeatedly offer staff support and encouragement for improving implementation.
 - “Talk up” the importance of a strong implementation, the urgency of improving students’ skills now, and the common elements of the school’s reading culture (purpose, vision, beliefs, practices, expectations, etc.).
 - Set implementation goals and provide feedback on how the staff is doing as a group in implementing
 - Provide acknowledgement, recognition, thanks and appreciation for staff efforts to improve implementation and for the resulting improvement in student achievement.

How is follow-up provided?

At regularly scheduled meetings of the school reading team (implementation team), the principal and coach should share their perceptions about the status of the implementation and generally discuss any actions needed or being taken to strengthen the initiative.

When problems of weak implementation (on any element) are apparent with an individual staff member, the principal or coach should address those needs individually and confidentially. When an element needs to be strengthened across a grade level or school wide, it can be addressed at a grade level or whole staff meeting. A weakness showing up across several staff members likely indicates the need for additional training. In all efforts to improve implementation, support should be differentiated as needed to improve staff members’ skills, and encouragement should be provided to build their confidence.



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