SUSTAINING READING FIRST

Here's How
Local Sustainability Strategies

District Policy

Upholding Your Evidence-based Reading Program in District Policy

One way to ensure that districts maintain their focus on evidence-based reading practices is the adoption of supportive board policies and administrative procedures. As defined by the National School Board Association, policies "establish direction for the district, set goals and assign authority." With regard to reading, policies can establish criteria for practices associated with evidence-based reading programs. District administrative procedures further define the policy and provide guidelines for its implementation. A key feature of administrative procedures is that they can be adjusted in response to new evidence on effective practices without going through the process of formal board adoption.

Elements of SBRR to Incorporate into District Policy

School districts can reference their Reading First application for key areas associated with evidence-based practices to include in policy. For example, policies can identify SBRR practices for instruction and assessment, high quality processional development and administrative practices that support evidence-based reading.

Some areas that have been defined in district policy include the following:

- Assessment Practices

- Instructional Time

- Instructional Grouping and Scheduling

- Instructional Materials

- Classroom Practices

- Professional Development

- Administrative Practices

Ongoing Review and Revision

School board policies and especially administrative procedures should be reviewed on a regular schedule to determine that they are still aligned with evidence-based practices.

Administrative procedures provide more specific guidance and should reflect current knowledge on effective instructional practices. By keeping administrative procedures current and adaptable to new knowledge, it will help ensure effective instruction that is sustainable over time.

How do we get started?

The Bethel School District Policies and Procedures were developed by school board members, district officials and school staff to provide continued direction and sustainability to a highly successful K-3 reading program. The school district had experienced the swinging pendulum of educational reform and wanted to ensure that the evidence-based practices that had led to high student success were clearly defined and sustained.

The process began by providing school board members with student achievement data and descriptions of the evidence-based reading practices that led to increased reading achievement. School board and community support for the policies and procedures was achieved by the principles outlined below.

Principles for Incorporating Reading Practices into District Policy

- *Share your data, both the successes and challenges that need the support of evidence-based practices.*

- *Share the vision on how to achieve reading success for all children with board and community members.*

- *Demonstrate to the board and community the role of policies in sustaining effective practices.*

- *Involve teaching staff in the development of administrative procedures that will affect their classroom activities.*

Case Study: Bethel School District

The Bethel School District in Eugene Oregon has developed policies and procedures to help sustain effective practices and provide continued guidance to schools in areas critical to evidence-based reading programs. Bethel School Board policy identifies eight important areas associated with evidenced –based reading programs. The policy identifies the area and directs the establishment of procedures to provide specific information to help guide school personnel in implementing the components of an evidence-based reading program.

Example Policies: Bethel School District

The following policies show how the Bethel School District in Eugene, Oregon has integrated elements of SBRR into their district-wide policies.

District Policy	*Procedures*
Assessment Guidelines	• Reliable and valid assessment measures will be administered K-3 in the fall, winter, and spring. Students' instructional needs will be identified by the following categories: Intensive, Strategic , and Benchmark. • Kindergarten children will be screened for phonological processing skills. • Fluency rates will be obtained biweekly for all children defined as having "intensive needs."
Instructional Time	• A daily minimum of 90 minutes of total instructional time in the core program is allocated to reading instruction in grades 1-3.
Instructional Grouping and Scheduling	• Reading instruction occurs in small groups with students grouped by similar needs, and groups are flexible to accommodate and reflect student performance. • Group size differentiated according to the level of reading performance; that is, students with the greatest needs are placed in the smallest groups. • Students are placed, maintained, and monitored at an appropriate level. • Flexible, homogeneous skill groups and additional interventions are employed when appropriate.
Instructional Materials and Programs	• Research validated materials are to be identified and used. A validation process is used to select instructional materials that promote high levels of achievement or new programs that are highly correlated to effective reading research.
Classroom Instructional Practices	• Classrooms are highly interactive and provide instruction, constructive feedback, and high levels of engagement on appropriate materials. • Students receive immediate and constructive feedback on written work. • Teachers monitor daily student progress and take action according to how quickly students move through instructional lessons/perform on curriculum.
Professional Development	• Teachers receive frequent, well-designed professional development based on warranted research, and involves valid instructional materials. • Staff development resources and goals are linked to school-building reading objectives and student performance. • Staff development is recognized as a long-term investment and instructional innovation is linked to student performance.
Administrative Practices	• School improvement goals prioritize reading in the early grades. Administrative policies support teachers and students in their implementation of effective reading and literacy programs, strategies, and activities. • Administrators facilitate targeted gains, take action to ensure goals are met. • Resources, including staff time, will allocate high priority teaching areas to ensure students read at grade level by the end of 3rd grade.