



EVALUATION BRIEF

Schultz Center for Teaching and Leadership | September 2011

Reading Endorsement Program Evaluation

Duval County Public Schools implements a program leading to the K-12 Reading Endorsement for teachers.

The current program of *Reading Endorsement* courses has been delivered since school year 2007-08, primarily in the form of face-to-face sessions offered at the *Schultz Center for Teaching and Leadership*. This series of courses consists of the skills and knowledge thought to be necessary for content area teachers to better assist students struggling to meet the literacy standards in district classrooms. The enrollment in these courses has fluctuated yearly and ranged annually from a low of around 600 enrollees to approximately 1,100 over that period of time. This evaluation included 1,590 teachers who completed one or more reading competency courses leading to the *K-12 Florida Reading Endorsement* within the period of July 2008 through December 2010.

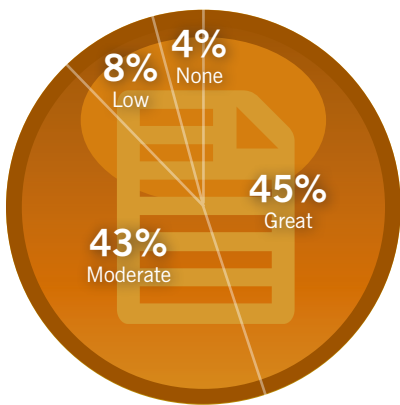
The purpose of this evaluation was to provide the district school board and administration with information about whether, and to what extent, participation at increasing levels of Reading Endorsement courses produced a positive impact on student reading achievement. The study also examined beliefs and attitudes of teachers completing these courses as to the quality and relevance of content included and the skill and facility demonstrated by instructors in the delivery of these courses. The evaluation utilized a mixed-methods approach in order to include both quantitative and qualitative forms of data to provide direct feedback from participants and instructors, and hard data in the form of course completion statistics and student achievement outcomes.

Significant findings were that:

- Teachers were generally very positive about the quality of content of reading competency courses with 83% of participants registering strong approval
- Teachers were also complimentary of the quality of facilitators and course delivery with 80% registering high levels of satisfaction
- 88% of teachers reported that their knowledge of course topics increased greatly (45%) or moderately (43%) See *Figure 1*
- Achievement levels of students did not reflect significant increases across all grade levels when groups of teachers were compared by low, moderate, or high levels of completion
- There were statistically significant increases seen, however, at certain grade levels (4,7,8 and 9) and particularly, for teachers completing reading competencies one and two in combination



Figure 1: Increase of teacher knowledge of Reading Competency course topics



“Let us think of education as the means of developing our greatest abilities, because in each of us there is a private hope and dream which, fulfilled, can benefit the nation.”

JOHN F. KENNEDY

Implications from this year’s evaluation suggest the need for taking formal steps to improve methods by which the implementation of teacher practices taught in reading competency courses can be validated in classrooms following completion of professional development. Including methods for evaluating the quality of practices taught as key features in these courses will increase greatly the rigor and relevance of evaluation methods previously utilized in this area. This step will also provide support and reinforcement for classroom practices which are endorsed as part of the district’s accepted model for high quality classroom instruction.

Background

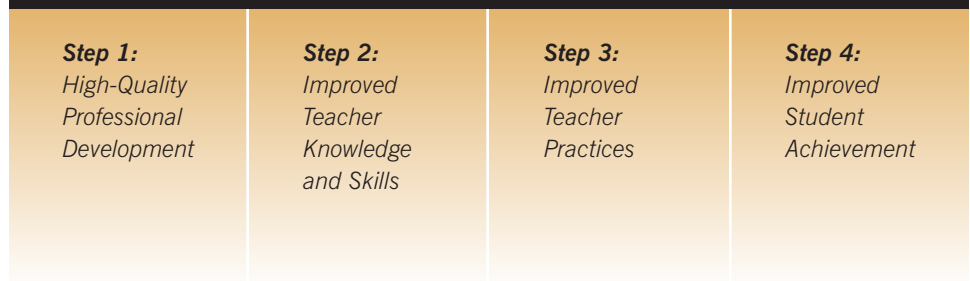
The goal of the K-12 Reading Endorsement program was to ensure that highly qualified teachers would be available to all students, and in particular, that teachers tasked with the responsibility for reading instruction in secondary schools would be prepared to meet this challenge. The average number of teachers completing courses in the program annually ranged from 600 to 1,100 teachers over the past several years with the most dramatic reduction in number occurring from 1,059 in 2008-09 to 590 in 2009-10. This drop in enrollment was due primarily to two factors: the substantial reduction in availability of school-based discretionary use of TDE (Temporary Duty Elsewhere) days to send teachers for necessary professional development training, and a concerted effort to offer more of these courses online to allow teachers greater flexibility in scheduling (at the same time diminishing demands on schools to provide release time of teachers).

All grade levels of teachers (K-12) across the school district have participated in the DCPS Add-on Program based on the Florida statute requirement stating that “any teacher teaching a reading course at the secondary level will be required to have either the K-12 reading endorsement or K-12 reading certification”. The expectation was that teachers who obtain the endorsement by completing required courses would acquire the skills necessary to identify reading problems and raise the skill levels of all district content area teachers to better assist students struggling to meet literacy standards.

The content of the program was based on specialization requirements for endorsement in Reading as stated in 6A-4.0292, FAC. The program curriculum includes coursework and associated experiences in the foundations of reading instruction, the diagnosis of reading disabilities, techniques of corrective or remedial reading, and the differentiation of reading instruction. The coursework was presented in direct instructor-participant mode, online courses, and distance learning classes.

This evaluation set out to assess whether, and to what extent, participation in the DCPS Add-on Program for K-12 Reading Endorsement course was received positively by teachers and produced a positive impact on student reading achievement in 2009-10 school year. The study also examined opinions, beliefs, and attitudes expressed by participating teachers in relation to their stated levels of knowledge and practices gained through course completion, and the degree to which program completers reported the implementation of ‘best practices’ in their classrooms. The Schultz Center and Duval County Public Schools have adopted a joint vision for how to design and deliver high quality professional development to teachers (Figure 2). Documenting the presence of ‘best practices’ in step three (below) is essential for further improvement of this program.

Figure 2: Professional Development Theory of Action



ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Katherine Divine, Ph.D. is an experienced assessment and evaluation specialist currently serving in a shared position with Duval County Public Schools as Executive Director for Research Design and Evaluation at the Schultz Center. Her past experience includes tenure as a Research Associate at the University of North Florida (Florida Institute of Education); Director of Research, Evaluation and Accountability for the District School Board of Pasco County; and Director of Research, Communications, and Student Services for Portsmouth Public Schools in Virginia. For more information about how programs are evaluated for effectiveness, or for other reports and publications, feel free to contact us or visit www.schultzcenter.org.