

Title: “The Role of Mentoring in Promoting Use of Research-Based Practices in Reading”

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Synopsis: (Abstract) This study explored two aspects of expanding the use of research-based practices in schools: a) the extent to which mentor teachers could effectively teach a fellow teacher an instructional practice they had learned the previous year, and b) the extent to which the target practice would be implemented effectively by the partner after instruction from the mentor. Twelve teachers (11 third-grade, 1 second-grade) from two schools participated in this study. Six teachers who acquired the target strategy the previous year served as mentors. Mentors were asked to teach, coach, model, and provide feedback to their fellow teachers on the target practice. Results demonstrated that mentors and most of their partners implemented the target strategies effectively and that all teachers reported high levels of satisfaction with the practice—much higher than with traditional professional development.

(Further Detail) Professional development today is implemented in two ways:

- (1) traditional in-service presentations; or
- (2) interactive teacher-researcher study groups and ongoing interactions.

The second is considered more likely to be effective, although it requires a big commitment in time and effort and often involves a small number of teachers. Essential to good professional development is to provide demonstration, practice, and feedback on new strategies, and coaching from an expert peer. The best training may include a combination of theory-demonstration-practice-feedback along with on-site coaching (Bennett, 1987).

In the study, teachers working as mentors helped other teachers to implement either Partner Reading (Arreaga-Mayer, et al., 1998; Delquadri, et al., 1986), a method of fluency training, or Collaborative Strategic Reading (Klingner & Vaughn, 1996), in which students are taught the reading strategies of previewing, click and clunk, get the gist, and wrap-up.

Quote(s): “Case studies as well as large-scale surveys have identified several features associated with effective professional development (Richardson, 1994). These features include: conducting professional development over time, collective participation of teachers from the same grade or content area, content focus, active learning, and coherence with school policies and teachers’ experiences (Birman, Desimone, Porter, & Garet, 2000; Showers, Joyce, & Bennett, 1987).” (p. 3)

“This evidence would suggest that teachers who are knowledgeable about the use of an instructional practice can serve as mentors to their fellow teachers to assure the ‘spread’ of this practice.” (p. 30)