

The Case for Flexibility in Schoolwide Evidence-based Literacy Practices: Navigating Negotiables and Non-Negotiables

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2023 OSEP LEADERSHIP AND PROJECT DIRECTORS' CONFERENCE





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Agenda

- Background and Project Context
 - The State of Adolescent Literacy
 - Creating schoolwide literacy models to increase dosage of literacy instruction
 - AIM Coaching + SW-PACT
- The Challenge: Tensions in Fidelity of Implementation of SW-PACT
 - The need for fidelity
 - Allowing for customization to encourage implementation with fidelity
- How this played out in our Project: Customizing Delivery of SW-PACT Across Diverse Classroom Contexts
- Lessons Learned: Next Steps & Reflections

Project Context: AIM Coaching for School-Wide Literacy



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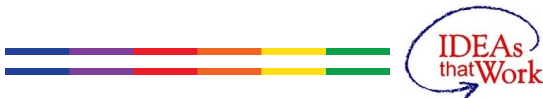
The Need for School-Wide Literacy Models at the Middle School Level

Many Middle School Students Struggle with Reading Informational Text

Rigorous Standards

Dense Content

Provide students access to content through text reading across the content areas.



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School-Wide Literacy Models Provide for Struggling Readers in an Efficient Way



| | | |
|---|----------------|--|
| 1 | Science |  |
| 1 | Social Studies |  |
| 1 | ELA |  |
| 5 | Other | |



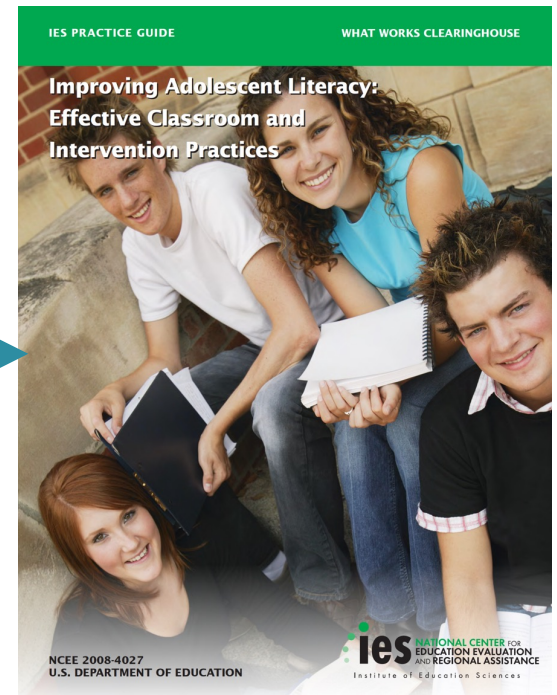
Guidance from the Institute of Education Sciences (2008)

U.S. Department of Education

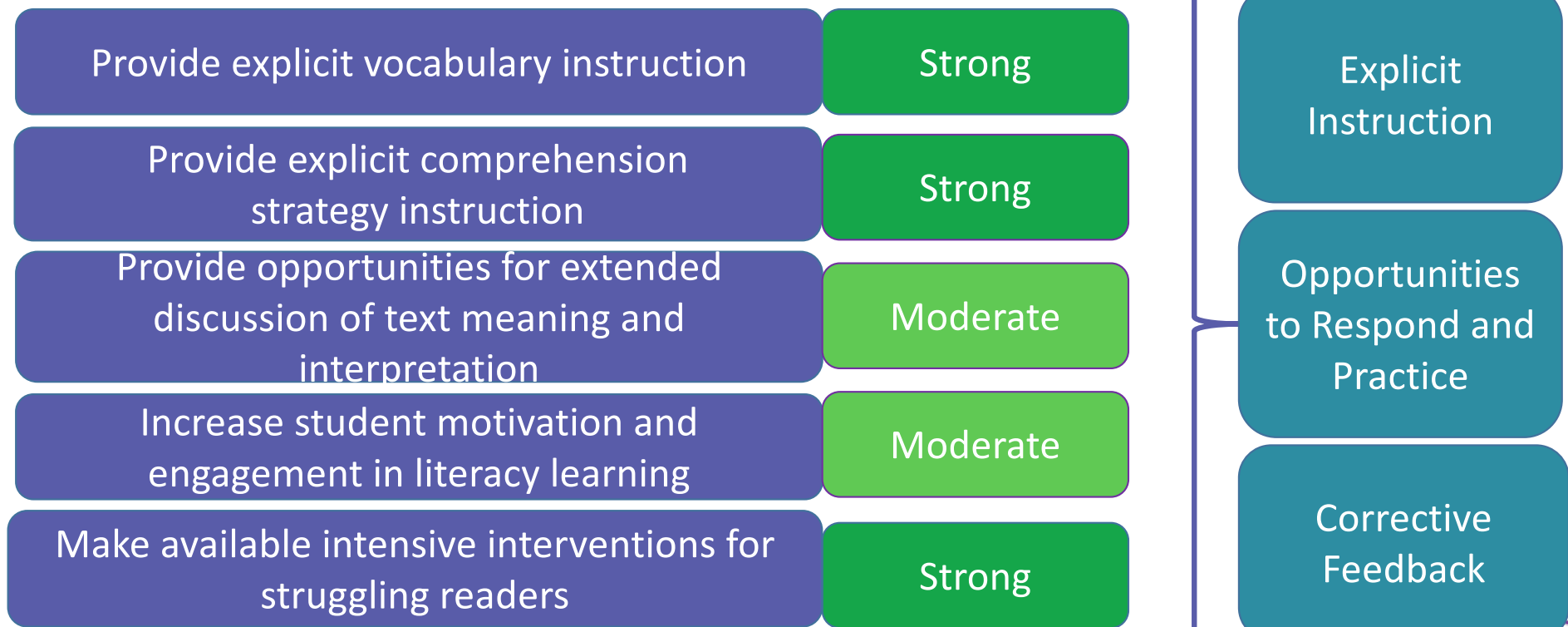
Research arm of the U.S. DOE

Independent and Non-Partisan

Mission: Provide scientific evidence on which to ground education practice.

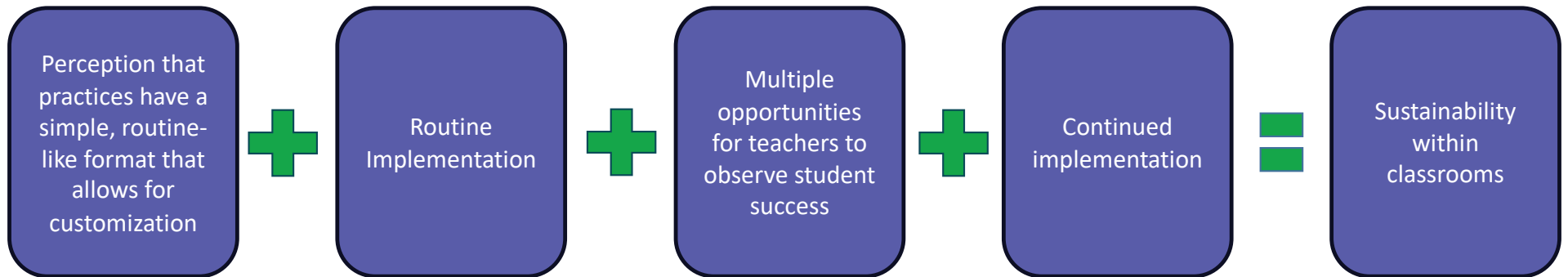


IES Recommendations Based on Strong or Moderate Scientific Evidence



School-Level Supports

School-Level Supports: Prioritization of Practices and Ensuring Effectiveness



PACT Plus



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The Challenge: A Research-Practice Gap

- “**Despite scientific advances** that have informed our understanding of reading acquisition and development, **a profound gap exists** between empirical findings and the implementation of evidence-based practices in the assessment and instruction of reading in school settings.”

Solari et al., p. 347 2020

Why?

Lack of teacher preparation

Lack of dissemination efforts to stakeholders

Policies and curricular decisions

Lack of in-service PD



AIM Coaching OSEP

To increase knowledge about the implementation, efficacy, and sustainability of PACT + AIM Coaching when it is implemented under routine conditions

Year 1 (2021-2022): Observation + documentation of typical practices;

Year 2 (2022-2023): AIM Coaching implementation with intensive support

Year 3 (2023-2024): AIM Coaching implementation with responsive support

Year 4 (2024-2025): Sustainability of AIM Coaching implementation



AIM Coaching Focal Practices: SW-PACT

Comprehension Canopy 5 minutes

- Building Background knowledge

Essential Words 5 minutes

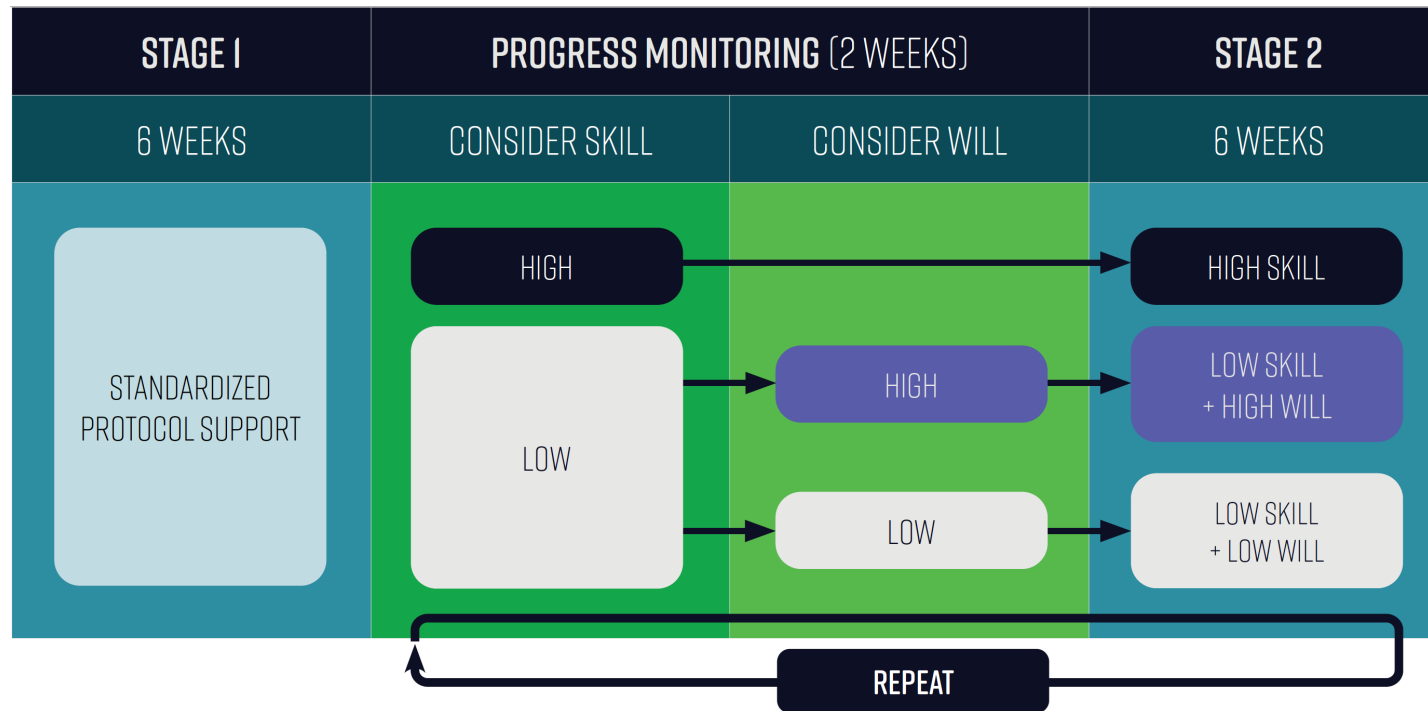
- Building vocabulary knowledge

Critical Reading 30 minutes

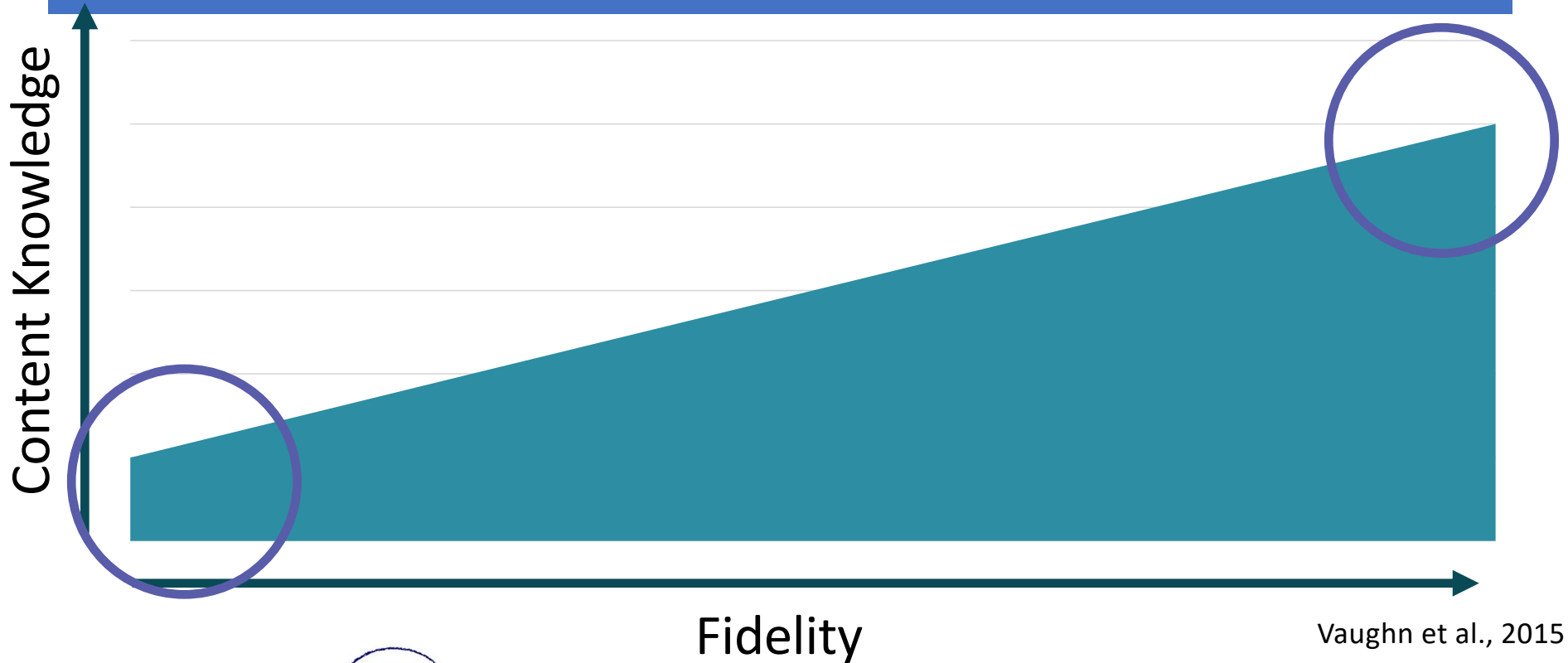
- Facilitating text comprehension



AIM Coaching



Fidelity Matters: PACT Study



Vaughn et al., 2015



Tension Between Fidelity and Students' Needs

Fidelity

Students'
Needs



EDUCATION OPINION

Why Is Fidelity Always Seen as the New Four-Letter Word?

By George Toman — January 05, 2020 ⌚ 6 min read

Cli



Fidelity in Teaching Young Children: Two Stories of Professional Integrity

Daniel J. Castner 2021



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Fidelity Accounting for Students' Needs

Fidelity

Fidelity
and
Students'
Needs

Students'
Needs



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SW-PACT Flexibility

| Practice | Non-Negotiables | Negotiables – when appropriate |
|----------------------|--|---|
| Comprehension Canopy | Provide background information necessary to comprehend the text; keep it short | Use a variety of formats; Facilitate turn and talk with small groups vs pairs |



Exploring Customization of the SW-PACT Practices within the AIM Coaching Project Context

- We invited all teachers who had taught PACT lessons during the 2022-2023 school year to participate in brief interviews at the end of the year regarding their experiences with AIM coaching and implementation of the PACT practices.
- In total, 17 teachers participated in interviews. The following analysis focuses on teachers' responses to the semi-structured interview question: *How did you adapt the PACT practices to best support your students?*



Findings: Adapting SW-PACT Across Diverse Classroom Contexts



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Three Key Findings



1: Teachers engaged in iterative and varied adaptations to PACT in order to better support their specific students and to address challenges specific to their own classrooms.



2: Teachers viewed their implementation decisions as impacted by both school-wide factors and their own individual experiences and expertise.



3: “Getting it right” (e.g., implementing with fidelity) felt important to both teachers and students.



1: Teachers engaged in iterative and varied adaptations to PACT in order to better support their specific students and to address challenges specific to their own contexts.

| Common Challenges | Examples of Teacher Adaptation |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| scaffolding | Returning to teacher models and we-do as much as needed, using PACT as a first or second read of the text depending on the student needs |
| pacing | Utilizing text already in the curriculum, using shorter texts |
| multiple languages | Providing pictures, providing dictionaries or word bubbles, allowing students to practice reading comprehension in other languages |
| oversaturation | Trying to align lesson schedules across content areas, using a variety of types of readings, not always naming it as “PACT” |
| post-pandemic social anxiety | Flexible grouping structures for partner reading, providing students with the text the night before, read-alouds |



Adaptation example 1: Selective use of practices

- *“You don't have to spend a whole lesson on one an article. You could do one or 2 paragraphs, or we could do one paragraph and have them try and review it...”*
- *“We are using some of [the PACT practices], like the essential word and sometimes comprehension canopy, even if we're not doing a full-fledged pact lesson.”*



Adaptation example 2: Adjusting pacing

- *“...don't think within the 45 min or the 2 days, just make a PACT lesson a week-long activity...pick a week to do a PACT lesson that's just strictly on the PACT lesson.”*
- *...instead of doing a turn and talk, maybe just do one turn and talk and then the other a quick share out, and also depending on the energy level of the class, sometimes to turn and talk and doing a share on afterwards...*



Adaptation example 3: Text length and type

- *“The first time I did it I picked something way too long. And and then when I realized that I was okay, I should have something that's like Max 3 paragraphs. Once you... figure out how to fit it in, you're like, okay, we'll keep this part short and then flows better.”*
- *“We'd almost had to start with a question first like, what do we want them to get out of this like main idea, and then build our our reading from that. “*



Adaptation example 4: Experimenting with lesson enhancements

- *“We added in a slide where you write the gist statements up on the slide for the students, or like the big points of the gist statement. And then the students can use that to answer their culminating questions.”*
- *“...We took off the the who and the what. and we only had a question after each section and then the box, and they had to respond...”*



Adaptation example 5: Changing response expectations

- *“I challenged students to use the vocabulary word as part of their gist statement.”*
- *“I realized that our kids do very well when they have the chance to talk about something before they write about it.”*



2: Impact of school-wide factors and teachers' individual experiences and expertise

| School-Wide Factor | Example |
|--|--|
| School-wide systems and logistics | <p>When school leaders and coaches had clear messaging and organizational systems in place, teachers found it easier to implement PACT.</p> <p>Teacher 1: <i>“They’re really helpful with sending the calendar invitations when they are coming to our cohort planning, and also, for the fidelity checks, the calendar reminders are super helpful.”</i></p> |
| Challenging working conditions | <p>Many of the teachers found it challenging to find time to implement a new practice due to staffing shortages that cut into their planning time and increased their professional burdens.</p> <p>Teacher 6: <i>“Oh my gosh that's the answer to everything, more time!!”</i></p> |
| Initiative fatigue & messaging from leadership | <p>PACT/AIM was just one of many concurrent initiatives at several of the schools, so teachers had to triage resources across a variety of projects, especially at the beginning of the year.</p> <p>Teacher 10: <i>“The beginning of school is crazy town, and teachers are going to be like, Oh, my God, one more thing Are you kidding me?”</i></p> |



2: Impact of school-wide factors and teachers' individual experiences and expertise cont.

| Experiences /expertise | Example |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Prior professional experience | <p>Teacher 17: <i>"PACT is so similar to instructional methods completed in elementary, I felt I was well versed with it.....for people who have never taught reading or who have only taught middle school....you're not used to doing this."</i></p> <p>Teacher 13: <i>"This year was new to me. So like it's all kind of a blur like everything that I that I learned."</i></p> |
| Orientation to feedback/ learning | <p>Teacher 9: <i>"I've been teaching for 24 years and I've had, you know, co-teaching experiences, but not really an actual coaching experience. And so for me, I I really liked it because I felt like it gave me support..."</i></p> <p>Teacher 3: <i>"I just, I think that we probably really don't need coaching. You've got teachers that kind of know what they're doing, and you just do the training You don't really need the coaching. I found I like peer visits the most."</i></p> |



3: “Getting it right” (e.g. implementing with fidelity) felt important to both teachers and students

| Adherence | Example |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Willingness to try and reflect | <p>Teacher 12: “...It doesn’t have to be perfect...I just had to try...just adopt into my teaching practices...reflect and if it doesn’t work, ask, ‘What am I going to do next time’...”</p> <p>Teacher 17: “You reflect on yourself and say, hey, am I doing something different? Or is because it's the third time around you are able to express it differently better, you know..”</p> |
| Finding the right rhythm | <p>Teacher 1: “I kind of get them into it...Push them along...I didn't want to get too caught up in the formula at times in the beginning. I think towards the end, I would sometimes to try to get them to the essential question. I think I had to kind of speed up the pace, if you.”</p> <p>Teacher 9: “I had to reach out to my coaches and actually have one of them come in and sit with kids because I had one student who as I modeled the the lessons, he kept saying this isn’t how my other teachers are doing it.”</p> |



Lessons Learned: Next Steps & Researcher Reflections



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Fidelity Matters. But What is It Exactly?

- Fidelity ensures the effectiveness of interventions (Fixen et al., 2005).
- However, interventions are often implemented in a limited or modified way (Boardman et al., 2005; Moir, 2018).
- How practitioners perceive and implement an intervention provides valuable insight into its potential acceptability, feasibility, usability, and sustainability (Harn, et al., 2013; Rademaker, et al., 2021).
- Some adaptations may even increase the efficacy of the intervention (Castro, Barrera, & Martinez, 2004; Webster-Stratton et al., 2011).



Conclusions

- While the research team identified the empirically validated literacy practices that coaches would support, the researchers soon saw the need to allow for customization of the practices to encourage adoption and sustained implementation.
- Through an iterative process, literacy coaches and teachers provided insights into the possibility that some of the components of the evidence-based practices could be adapted to fit the local curriculum and target the needs of students in the local context.
- Our work exemplifies the need to match interventions to the contextual variables that exist in the educational environment as a key factor to ensuring evidence-based practices are successfully implemented and sustained (e.g., Durlak, 2010; Van Hippel, 2005).



Resource Spotlight

- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) website
 - Brings together IDEA information and resources from the Department and its grantees.
 - <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/>
- IDEAS That Work
 - For information from research to practice initiatives funded by OSEP that address the provisions of IDEA and ESSA. This website includes resources, links, and other important information relevant to OSEP's research to practice efforts.
 - <https://osepideasthatwork.org/>





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