

RESEARCH PROPOSAL

TITLE: Using READ180 to Fidelity in Middle and High Schools

SUBMITTED TO: Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools
Nashville, TN

SUBMITTED BY: Crysti Jones, M.Ed in Special Education Candidate
Dr. Dan Reschly, Faculty Advisor
328 Peabody, Vanderbilt University

INTRODUCTION: Nearly 40 percent of American high school graduates lack the literacy skills that employers are seeking (Achieve, Inc., 2005). A majority of current research and school-level interventions are targeted at the early grades with little research targeting the secondary level (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008). As a result, NAEP scores for the last ten years show that while primary students are making gains, those gains begin to disappear by 8th grade and continue to diminish through the rest of high school (Perle et al., 2005). According to the Tennessee Score report (2012), reading gains have been made on the TCAP in all grades except 8th grade. These findings indicate a need for continued literacy support through middle and high school. In order to address the needs of its struggling middle and high school students, many schools in Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools (MNPS) have begun using READ180. READ180 has over 30 years of research supporting its effectiveness on student growth when implemented as prescribed (Scholastic Research, 2010). READ180 research emphasizes that the greatest gains are made in the classrooms that have the highest fidelity of implementation; however, few studies have directly investigated this relationship or identified how to help teachers improve implementation fidelity (AIR, 2010; CCSD, 2006; RDA, 2012; WCER, 2009). A review of the literature indicates that READ180 teachers often feel that they lack sufficient training, access to adequate time for instruction, resources, and support in interpreting data (CCSD, 2006; RDA, 2012; WCER, 2009). Another major concern expressed in the research is that students who are not properly placed in READ180 often see negative growth (AIR, 2010). READ180 has a Lexile floor of 400, for 5th and 6th grade, or 600, for 7th through 12th grade. System 44 is designed for students whose Lexiles fall below these floors. As such, it is essential that students are placed in the correct program. The goal of this study is to address these issues and to improve student outcomes through these efforts.

PURPOSE:

A majority of READ180 studies have focused on identifying if the program leads to gains in student growth, the extent of gains that can be made, and if the program is still effective when not used in the way it was prescribed (i.e. summer school). The questions I seek to answer are: (a) Does fidelity correlate to student growth? and (b) Does fidelity vary across implementation conditions? If there is a correlation between fidelity and student growth, then it is important to identify ways to improve fidelity in order to optimize student growth. Coaching and checklists have been shown to help teachers and other professionals improve fidelity (Gresham, 2009;

Kretlow & Bartholomew, 2010). Using these two components, I will identify methods for helping schools and teachers effectively implement READ180. For the purpose of this proposal, the term “packaged” means whatever package of services and training MNPS purchases from Scholastic. The three conditions for this study are: (a) packaged implementation of READ180 will be the control group, (b) packaged implementation plus teacher completion of weekly checklists, and (c) packaged implementation of READ180, fidelity checklists, and weekly coaching, ensuring as near 100% fidelity as possible. Condition (a) will be referred to as the “business as usual” or control condition; condition (b) will be referred to as the teacher checklist; condition (c) will be referred to as the checklist+coaching condition.

STRATEGIC TARGET AND ACTION STEPS:

Our goal is to optimize student growth in reading by helping MNPS Schools identify (1) to what degree fidelity of implementation of READ180 correlates with student growth scores and (2) identify levels of support that increase implementation fidelity of READ180 in middle and high school classrooms.

SAMPLE:

I will contact all of the principals of middle and high schools using READ180 to receive permission to meet with READ180 teachers at their schools (see attached). Teachers using READ180 at consenting schools will then be told the purpose and conditions of the study during READ180 training or at a time that is most convenient for them. All teachers who agree to participate will be consented using the IRB consent form that matches their implementation condition (see attached). I expect at least 12 teachers to agree to participate in our study.

All data will be collected from teachers and the Scholastic databases.

PROCEDURE:

Teachers will be placed in conditions as follows. Schools in the checklist+coaching condition will be selected by the READ180 account executive and READ180 MNPS coordinator. These schools will be selected based on their commitment to allotting school time and resources to ensure, as near as possible, that they are implementing READ180 to 100% fidelity. Once these schools have been identified, I will contact the principals by letter to explain the checklist+coaching condition, purpose of this study, and get consent to contact their teachers regarding participation in these conditions. During READ180 training, teachers will be given the opportunity to opt into the teacher checklist condition. The number of teachers in the teacher checklist and control conditions will be determined by the number of teachers who agree to participate. If more than half of the teachers agree to participate in the teacher checklist condition, then I will randomly assign them to the teacher checklist or control condition to ensure an equal distribution between conditions.

Teachers in the coaching condition will receive assistance in setting up their classrooms, placing students in the appropriate program (READ180 or System 44), and creating their instructional groups. Throughout the semester these teachers will meet weekly with their coach to receive feedback and support for any questions they may have regarding implementation of READ180. Coaches will be Master’s of Education students who are trained on the implementation of READ180. These meetings will be scheduled with the teacher at a time that is most convenient for the teacher. Meetings will not exceed 30 minutes without the teacher’s

consent. During this time, the coaches will complete the Coaching Implementation Worksheet (CIW, see attached). This worksheet was modified from a Scholastic coaching worksheet to meet the needs of this study. It is my goal to ensure that teachers are not overwhelmed by the coaching component, but instead that it serves to meet the needs of the teacher.

Teachers in the checklist+coaching and teacher checklist conditions will receive a set of checklists to be completed as prescribed (see attached). These checklists are modified from the READ180 indicators of prescribed implementation and Scholastic training materials. Teachers do not have to do anything more than check whether or not they implemented the components on the checklist. The checklists should take no more than 10 minutes. As Scholastic's database only collects data from computer-related tasks, both the CIW and teacher checklist will serve to help me collect implementation data related to time spent on non-computer related instruction and attendance.

Teachers in all conditions will receive bi-weekly observations. These observations are a chance for me to check what components of READ180 are being implemented. Teacher schedules will be collected and days and periods available for observation will be noted. Observation days will be assigned randomly at the start of the study. Both the teacher and principal will be given at least two days' notice of the observation day and time. If there is a conflict, the research assistant will work with the teacher to identify a day and time during the week that works for the teacher. During the observation visits, the research assistant will complete the Classroom Implementation Observation Form (CIOF, see attached). This form is modified from Scholastic's Classroom Implementation Review. The teacher's study number will be the only identifying information on the form. All collected data sheets and observations will be de-identified, using only a randomly assigned teacher number, stored in our research database, and will not be shared. It will only be used for data analysis purposes in order to create a teacher average fidelity score.

As this is a non-funded study, I will not be able to provide monetary compensation for participation. Teachers in the teacher checklist and checklist+coaching conditions will receive added instructional support that should take minimal effort on their part. At the end of the study, all teachers will receive a resource handbook of all of the materials (i.e. checklists, observation forms) that were created for all conditions of this study. An executive summary of the study will be provided to any principal and teacher who requests it.

The study will last from the initial READ180 training, until the 3rd Scholastic Reading Inventory is given in January.

MEASURES:

For student growth scores, I will be using the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) to establish a pre-, mid-, and post- intervention score. Measures will be administered the first week of school, after approximately 9 weeks of implementation, and in January (this follows Scholastic's guidelines). The SRI is a computer-based assessment that takes 20 minutes to complete and is self-scoring. The goal is to use assessments that are already in place so as not to interrupt the school day. Student scores are collected and averaged per teacher by Scholastic and stored by MNPS. These teacher averages will be used in this study and thus no student information will be accessed.

In order to collect information on implementation fidelity I will be completing bi-weekly observations and collecting inter-observer agreement on 20% of all observations. The CIOF scores will be averaged across all observations to create a teacher fidelity average. Scores will be averaged across all observations to create a teacher fidelity average. All collected data will be double scored to ensure accuracy.

For the first goal, I will use a regression model with student growth as the outcome, attendance as the covariate, and teacher fidelity as the independent variable of interest. For the second goal, I will compare implementation conditions using t-tests with follow-up calculations of effect size (i.e. Cohen's d) due to low statistical power as the result of small sample size.

References

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