

Examination of Professional Development on Perceived Importance of, Frequency of Use of, Familiarity with, and Confidence Level for Research Based Middle School Literacy Instruction

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ABSTRACT

The Reading and Writing Institute (RWI) provided an opportunity for practicing teachers to review, renew, and research literacy strategies for assessment, diagnosis, and remediation of third- through seventh-grade students. Each morning teachers spent three hours in professional development sessions exploring research based literacy strategies. They implemented new knowledge in three hour afternoon sessions with a client as they assessed and diagnosed students' literacy skills and created and implemented an individualized intervention plan. At the end of the institute, teachers reassessed and recommended future interventions for the clients.

Project evaluation occurred through informal participant interviews that were coded and analyzed for qualitative themes as well as quantitative analysis of a pre- and post-test measure, The Modified Pennycuff-Reed Confidential Professional Development Survey. Pre-test and post-test scores were analyzed in a paired samples t-test. It was performed on the subjects' perceived implementation of Reading and Writing Institute concepts, using familiarity with, frequency of use of, and importance of reading and writing concepts as well as their reported confidence levels in teaching reading and teaching writing. Highly significant effects ($p=0.0001$) were discovered for pre-test versus post-test scores on familiarity with reading concepts; for perceived importance of use of reading strategies; for frequency of use of reading strategies; for frequency of use of writing strategies; and for reported confidence level for teaching reading. In addition, there were significant effects for familiarity with writing strategies ($p=0.036$); for importance of writing strategies ($p=0.041$); and for confidence in teaching writing concepts ($p=0.007$). Substantiating these results is a quote from a 6-8th grade reading teacher who exclaimed, "I am changed! I'll never go back to teaching the way I used to. This has been great!"

INTRODUCTION

In response to the Improving Teacher Quality State Grants from the Tennessee Higher Education Commission, Tennessee Technological University's Reading and Writing Institute was formed to meet the need for high quality, scientifically based reading and writing instruction for third- through seventh- grade students of the Upper Cumberland. This isolated area of Tennessee is historically attributed with undervaluing education. Eighty percent of the Tennessee counties with low graduation rates and low educational funding are located in this area. Children of low literacy parents are less likely to complete high school or earn a GED. The negative effects of low adult literacy may be

particularly detrimental in Tennessee, where 53 percent of the population performs at the second lowest literacy level or below (Rural Cumberland Resources 2002).

Highly trained and well-qualified teachers are a significant factor in determining student achievement (Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development 1995; Darling-Hammond 1997; Ogle 2003). “Research indicates that the effects of well-prepared teachers on student achievement can be stronger than the influences of student background factors such as poverty, language background, and minority status” (Darling-Hammond, 1999, p. 39). According to Jones (1998), capital spent on staff development will have a greater impact on student learning than funds spent on any other area of education. Students will become more successful learners as their instructors become better teachers (Starkey, Yates, Meyer, Hall, Taylor, Stevens, and Toia 2009). The impact of in-service training is obvious. As stated by Borko (2004), “teachers’ professional development is essential to efforts to improve our schools” (p. 3).

Four critical components for assisting teachers in learning and implementing new strategies include staging of theory, exhibition of strategies and skills to be learned, initial practice in the professional development setting, and timely response regarding their teaching performance (Anders & Richardson 1991; Darling-Hammond 1997; Darling-Hammond 1999; Desimone 2009; Gersten, Chard, & Baker 2000;

Fullan 1994; Garmston 1991; Guskey 1998; Hemphill 1990; Hirsch & Ponder 1991; IASA 1996; Joyce & Showers 1988; Showers, Joyce, & Bennett 1987; Sparks 1983; Sparks & Hirsch 1997). Each component of the model for effective professional development, including theory, demonstration, practice, feedback, coaching, and follow-up, is significant to the process of teacher training (Learning First Alliance 2000).

Teachers must realize the essential justification for the new instructional strategies presented and must actively participate in implementation (Bayar 2014; Duke 1992; Renyi 1998; Tibbetts 1990; Willis 2002). Effective professional development provides opportunities for observing a model of expectations followed by immediate occasions for practicing what has been demonstrated and receiving instantaneous reaction (Au & Carroll 1997; Crowther 1998; Darling-Hammond 1997; Darling-Hammond, 1999; Desimone 2009; Duke 1992; Gersten, Chard,

& Baker 2000; IASA 1996; Joyce & Showers 1988;

Ogle 2003; Showers, Joyce, & Bennett 1987; Sparks 1983; Sparks & Hirsch 1997; Willis 2002). The coaching and follow-up phase ensures that the classroom teacher will add the strategy or skills to his or her teaching repertoire by internalizing relevant concepts and relating new information to existing schemata (Brown 2002; Cairns 1990; Crowther 1998; Cutler & Ruopp 1993; Desimone 2009; Guskey 1998; Joyce & Showers 1988; Murphy 2000; Ogle 2003; Pennell & Firestone 1998; Scherer 1998; Showers & Joyce 1996; Tibbetts 1990).

The application of professional development components is most effective when the training includes the model of theory, demonstration, practice with feedback, and coaching with follow-up (Desimone 2009; Guskey 1998; Guskey & Sparks 1991; Joyce & Showers 1988; Magestro & Stanford-Blair 2000; Sikula, Buttery, & Guyton 1996; Tibbetts 1990; Vaughan, Wang, & Dytman 1987). The Reading and Writing Institute project implemented the concepts of effective professional development through a unique delivery format based on the Starkey et al. (2009) principle of providing appropriate opportunities for guided practice. Each morning participants learned scientifically based reading and writing practices for assessment, diagnosis, and remediation through a course experience as instructors used lecturing, modeling, demonstrating, and active participation strategies to explore content and pedagogy. Each afternoon, new knowledge was applied through a practicum experience as the participant worked with a struggling third through seventh grade student to assess, diagnose, and remediate individual reading and writing difficulties. Project instructors used the afternoon practicum sessions to observe, provide feedback, and coach participants on principles learned in the morning course sessions.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Does professional development as defined by the TTU Reading and Writing Institute impact teacher's perceived

- importance of,
- frequency of use of,
- familiarity with, and
- confidence level for research based middle school literacy instruction

as measured by the Modified Pennycuff-Reed Professional Development Survey?

HYPOTHESES

Examination of the impact of professional development on perceived importance of, frequency of use of, familiarity with, and confidence level required both pre- and post-investigations of participants' perceptions. Ordinal data from the Modified Pennycuff-Reed Professional Development Survey were compiled to determine scores for the concepts of familiarity, importance, frequency of use, and confidence level. The following null hypotheses were established and tested using t-tests at the .05 level of confidence.

- There will be no significant difference between participants' pre-test and post-test concept familiarity scores.
- There will be no significant difference between participants' pre-test and post-test concept importance scores.
- There will be no significant difference between participants' pre-test and post-test concept frequency scores.
- There will be no significant difference between participants' pre-test and post-test confidence levels.

INSTRUMENTATION

The Modified Pennycuff-Reed Confidential Professional Development Surveys were distributed to all participants prior to the Reading and Writing Institute project using a matched pairs confidential numbering system. At the conclusion of the project, the Modified Pennycuff-Reed Confidential Professional Development Survey was administered participants after completion of the prescribed modules of training. The post-test data were compiled for statistical and qualitative analysis.

The Modified Pennycuff-Reed Confidential Professional Development Survey is a questionnaire that addresses the material in the Reading and Writing Institute modules of training with open-ended questions and Likert-scale items. Measuring perceived importance of, frequency of use of, and familiarity with key concept areas, the instrument corresponds to Kagan's idea of "the most direct technique for assessing teacher belief" (Kagan, 1990, p. 424). It was used as a pre- and post-test measure. Included were a variety of open-ended and closed-ended questions about emergent literacy instructional techniques and strategies, participation in professional development and reading, and the collaboration of professionals. Demographic information was also collected as a part of the survey process. The Modified Pennycuff-Reed Confidential Professional Development Survey was evaluated for content and verified by the

Tennessee State Department of Education, as well as all project staff.

RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY OF METHODS

Reliability and validity of methods were evaluated in conjunction with recommendations of the literature and were established through use of a peer committee of Reading and Writing Institute staff. Although much of the literature demonstrates a lack of empirical data on the topic of professional development, careful consideration was made to include a broad perspective of studies to counteract the more opinionated scope. Support for the researchers' chosen methodology exists in the literature. Guskey & Sparks (1991; 1996) advocated for evaluation of professional development that begins in the planning stages and continues through all stages of implementation. They also argued for the inclusion of all stakeholders, including school administration. Others promoted the use of participant outcomes, such as knowledge, skills, and dispositions, and changes in responsibilities or classroom climate (Guskey n.d.; Guskey & Sparks 1991; Guskey & Sparks 1996; Sparks & Richardson 1997). Evaluation of professional development should also include multiple sources of data from both quantitative and qualitative methodologies (Guskey n.d.; Guskey & Sparks 1991; Guskey & Sparks 1996). Anders & Richardson (1991), Bickel & Hatrup (1995), and Hamilton & Richardson (1995) used a similar methodology by implementing observations, interviews, and debriefings. Mather, Bos, and Babur (2001) also assessed change in teachers' beliefs, perceptions, and knowledge using a pre-test/post-test survey after professional development.

RELIABILITY

Reliability of methodology was assessed across time, across different forms of measures, and across items (Whitley 2002). Consistency across time was assessed using test-retest reliability. Consistency among items was used as an indicator of internal reliability of measures, with a reliability coefficient of .96. Results from statistical analysis were also used to assess Cronbach's alpha for the Modified Penucuff-Reed Confidential Professional Development Survey. Items measuring familiarity of reading and writing concepts were obtained with a reliability coefficient of $\alpha=.91$; those measuring importance of reading and writing concepts received a reliability coefficient of $\alpha=.94$; and those measuring frequency of use of reading and writing concepts were determined to have a reliability coefficient of $\alpha=.94$.

VALIDITY

Validity of methodology was increased as content evidence (Whitley 2002) was evident. Instrumentation and methodology were both relevant and representative of Reading and Writing

Institute module concepts, thus demonstrating content-related evidence of validity. Content validity was established through the committee of peers and faculty evaluation, as well as responses from teachers receiving treatment.

PARTICIPANTS

The Reading and Writing Institute recruited and selected participants from the underserved area of the Upper Cumberland in the state of Tennessee. Because of geographic isolation, this region has historically relied on Caucasian, female educators for high poverty schools with little opportunity for quality professional development. The project defined minorities as those who were not of Caucasian descent and who were male. Recruitment for the project occurred at the TTU Fall Mini-Workshops, the TTU School Law Seminar, TTU Council of the International Reading Association meetings, and at the Tennessee Reading Association annual conference. In addition, mass recruitment emails were sent to all schools in the Upper Cumberland area, to three Metro Nashville schools that the researcher worked with, and to all Tennessee Reading Association members. Brochures were distributed to all schools via the Upper Cumberland Directors' Study Council and the Upper Cumberland Supervisors of Instruction Study Council. All potential candidates for the project were asked to complete the Application for Selection form and because of low response, the deadline was extended twice. Preference was given to existing third through seventh grade teachers in the Upper Cumberland who had been out of college for several years, who were male, and who were not of Caucasian descent. Twenty submissions were received, and all twenty were selected. Two participants were unable to attend due to last minute course conflicts and a family emergency. Eighteen participants finished the project. Seventeen self-identified as Caucasian and one was self-identified as Hispanic, which is reflective of the geographic area of the Upper Cumberland. Seventeen were female and one was male. The participants ranged in age from 50-59 to 20-29 years with a mean age of 34 years ($SD = 0.874$). Years of teaching experience ranged from 21-30 years to fewer than five years with an average of 9 years ($SD = 1.941$). A variety of highest educational attainment was also present with all participants holding a bachelor's degree or higher degree. The majority of participants had some hours past a bachelor's degree but no master's degree ($SD = 1.437$).

FINDINGS

For purposes of analysis, all subgroupings of items relating to specific criteria of familiarity with, frequency of use of, and perceived importance of reading and writing concepts were assessed as grouped by the Modified Pennycuff-Reed Professional Development Survey. Survey items Ia

through Icc were categorized as familiarity, frequency, and importance of reading concepts. Survey items Idd through Ikk were categorized as familiarity, frequency, and importance of writing concepts. Survey items II a and II b were also analyzed for perceived confidence in teaching reading and perceived confidence in teaching writing. Likert-scale scores were tabulated and averaged for each category. Means and standard deviations of scores relating to pre-test and post-test familiarity with, frequency of use of, and importance of reading and writing concepts by category are reported in Table 1.

Table 1 Perception of Reading and Writing Institute Concepts

Criteria	RWI Participants		
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	n
Pre-Familiarity Reading	86.353	18.534	17
Post-Familiarity Reading	100.588	14.067	17
Pre-Importance Reading	90.412	15.808	17
Post-Importance Reading	103.941	9.072	17
Pre-Frequency Reading	72.059	22.512	17
Post-Frequency Reading	95.235	12.352	17
Pre-Confidence Reading	2.625	0.957	16
Post-Confidence Reading	3.125	0.957	16
Pre-Familiarity Writing	22.882	10.043	17
Post-Familiarity Writing	28.176	4.503	17
Pre-Importance Writing	23.706	6.971	17
Post-Importance Writing	28.000	7.826	17
Pre-Frequency Writing	17.412	7.714	17
Post-Frequency Writing	27.824	3.957	17
Pre-Confidence Writing	2.176	0.809	17
Post-Confidence Writing	2.875	0.806	16

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

Pre-test and post-test familiarity, frequency, and importance scores were analyzed in a paired samples t-test. It was performed on the subjects' perceived implementation of Reading and Writing Institute concepts, using familiarity with, frequency of use of, and importance of reading and writing concepts as well as their reported confidence levels in teaching reading and teaching writing. There was a highly significant effect for pre-test versus post-test scores on familiarity with reading concepts (M=14.235, SD=12.508, t(17)=4.693, p=0.0001). The treatment effect for perceived importance of use of reading strategies presented in the Reading and Writing Institute was highly significant (M=13.529, SD=10.308, t(17)=5.411, p=0.0001). The treatment effect for frequency of use of

reading strategies presented in the Reading and Writing Institute was also highly significant ($M=23.176$, $SD=16.916$, $t(17)=5.649$, $p=0.0001$). This reveals that we can be 95% confident producing the same results by chance in 1 in every 10,000 trials with reading familiarity, perceived importance of, and frequency of use of reading concepts.

In addition, there was a significant effect for familiarity with writing strategies ($M=5.294$, $SD=9.551$, $t(17)=2.285$, $p=0.036$). We can be 95% confident of producing the same results by chance in 36 of every 1,000 trials. A significant effect for importance of writing strategies was also discovered ($M=4.294$, $SD=7.951$, $t(17)=2.227$, $p=0.041$) meaning we can be 95% confident in producing the same results by chance in 41 of every 1,000 trials. A highly significant effect for frequency of use of writing strategies was detected ($M=10.412$, $SD=8.740$, $t(17)=4.912$, $p=0.0001$) indicating we can be 95% confident producing the same results by chance in 1 in every 10,000 trials with frequency of use of writing concepts.

Reported confidence levels of teaching reading and writing were also analyzed. There was a highly significant effect for reported confidence level for teaching reading ($M=0.600$, $SD=0.507$, $t(15)=4.583$, $p=0.0001$). This signifies we can be 95% confident producing the same results by chance in 1 in every 10,000 trials with reported confidence in teaching reading concepts. A significant effect for reported level of confidence for teaching writing concepts was discovered ($M=0.625$, $SD=0.806$, $t(16)=3.101$, $p=0.007$) revealing that we can be 95% confident of producing the same results by chance in 7 of every 1,000 trials.

CORRELATIONS

Pearson Product Moment Correlations were conducted. As anticipated, pre-test scores indicate a high correlation between familiarity of reading concepts and perceived importance of reading concepts (0.894), reading frequency of use of concepts and familiarity (0.848), and reading frequency of use of concepts and perceived importance of reading concepts (0.638). Reasonable correlations were discovered between pre-test scores of writing familiarity and reading familiarity (0.577) and familiarity of writing concepts and frequency of use of reading concepts (0.503). Pre-test scores of reported confidence level in teaching reading were correlated with familiarity of reading strategies (0.691), frequency of use of reading strategies (0.693), and familiarity of writing strategies (0.651). Pre-test scores of reported confidence in writing scores were reasonably correlated with familiarity of writing strategies (0.473) and with confidence in teaching reading (0.559).

Post-test scores on familiarity of reading concepts indicated a high degree of correlation with pre-test reading familiarity scores (0.765), pre-test perceived importance of reading concepts scores (0.634), pre-test reading frequency of use of reading concepts scores (0.728), and pre-test confidence of teaching reading scores (0.722). Post-test scores on perceived importance of reading concepts scores showed a high correlation with pre-test reading familiarity of reading concepts scores (0.764), pre-test reading importance scores (0.807), and post-test familiarity of reading concepts scores (0.725). There was a reasonable correlation between post-test perceived importance of reading concepts scores and pre-test frequency of use of reading concepts scores (0.489). Measures of post-test scores on frequency of use of reading concepts were highly correlated with pre-test measures of familiarity of reading strategies (0.736), perceived importance of (0.728), frequency of use of reading concepts (0.657), and reported confidence of teaching reading (0.695). Post-test frequency of use of reading concepts scores was also highly correlated with post-test familiarity scores (0.603) and post-test perceived importance of reading concepts scores (0.705). Analysis of post-test writing familiarity scores revealed reasonable correlations with pre-test reading familiarity scores (0.535), frequency of use of reading concepts scores (0.504) and reported confidence of teaching reading scores (0.668). Post-test writing familiarity scores were highly correlated with post-test measures of reading familiarity (0.892) and perceived importance of reading concepts (0.609). Post-test confidence in teaching reading scores were correlated with pre-test reading familiarity scores (0.540), reading frequency of use of reading concept scores (0.574), writing familiarity (0.730), confidence in teaching reading scores (0.857), and confidence of teaching writing scores (0.536). Post-test confidence in teaching reading scores was also correlated with post-test reading familiarity scores (0.627) and writing familiarity scores (0.527). Post-test confidence in teaching writing scores was correlated with pre-test writing familiarity scores (0.586), confidence in teaching reading scores (0.665), and confidence in teaching writing scores (0.495). Post-test confidence in teaching writing scores were highly correlated with post-test teaching of reading scores (0.816). Significant Pearson product moment correlations are reported in Table 2.

Table 2 Significant Pearson Product Moment Correlation Matrix

	READFSUM	READISUM	READFRSU	WRITEFSU	CONREAD
READFSUM	1.000				
READISUM	0.894	1.000			
READFRSUM	0.848	0.638	1.000		

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WRITEFSUM	0.577		0.503	1.000	
CONREAD	0.691		0.693	0.651	1.000
CONWRITE				0.473	0.559
PREADFSUM	0.765	0.634	0.728		0.722
PREADISUM	0.764	0.807	0.489		
PREADFRSUM	0.736	0.728	0.657		0.695
PWRFSUM	0.535		0.504		0.668
PWRFRSUM	-0.106	0.044	-0.192	0.115	0.183
PCONREAD	0.540		0.574	0.730	0.857
PCONWRITE	0.249			0.586	0.665
EDLEVEL					-0.504

	CONWRITE	PREADFSU	PREADISU	PREADFRS	PWRFSUM
CONWRITE	1.000				
PREADISUM		0.725	1.000		
PREADFRSUM		0.603	0.705	1.000	
PWRFSUM		0.892	0.609		1.000
PCONREAD	0.536	0.627		0.485	0.527
PCONWRITE	0.495				

	PCONREAD	PCONWRIT
PCONREAD	1.000	
PCONWRITE	0.816	1.000
EDLEVEL	-0.546	-0.462

SUPPORTING DATA

Throughout the study, systematic inquiry of interviews, field notes, and other documentation were continuously performed for qualitative analysis. Common themes developed as data were collected, using open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. Open coding provided the impetus for examining, comparing, and categorizing data. Axial coding made connections between categories, and selective coding related information to help validate relationships and establish triangulation (Strauss and Corbin 1990).

Impact of the Instructors

Both the U.S. Department of Education (2002) and Bayar (2014) have documented the impact of the instructor on the impact of professional development. Many of the participants commented on the level of energy and expertise each instructor brought to the professional development sessions. Eighteen of eighteen respondents on the Reading Writing Institute Project Evaluation Form indicated that they agreed that the instructors were informative and enthusiastic. Seventeen participants agreed that they would participate in another Reading and Writing Institute project, with one participant omitting the question. All five instructors reported a high level of collaboration and genuine joy at working together, which participants also noticed. As one participant stated, “You guys are great together! I’ve learned so much!”

Participant Buy-In

Teacher participants also were contributors to the project's success. As Meister (2010) noted, when participants felt safe to explore self-development and understanding as well as taking risks, their learning increased. All were willing to learn new strategies and to apply them with tutoring clients. Many planned to transfer newly acquired knowledge into classroom practice. In response to the Modified Pennycuff-Reed Professional Development Survey, teachers were asked to respond to a series of open ended questions, including "What changes do you anticipate as a result of the RWI project?" Some responses included:

"I feel better prepared to teach now. I have learned many new and useful ideas that I am excited to put into use!"

"I have gained so many ideas for both reading and writing, especially for content areas. I definitely want to utilize anticipation guides and vocabulary development strategies in pre-reading. I also like the ideas presented on helping students discover topics for their writing."

"I intend to focus on reading and writing more. I have learned some really great strategies that I am excited about using in the classroom!"

Two of the researchers' favorite quote came from a 6-8th grade reading teacher who exclaimed after a morning session, "I am changed! I'll never go back to teaching the way I used to. This has been great!"

Project Design

The unusual design of the Reading and Writing Institute also contributed to the success of the project. The ineffectiveness of traditional "sit and get" workshops have been well documented (Birman et al. 2000; Boyle, While, and Boyle, 2004; Collinson 2000; Corcoran 1995; Easton 2008; Hirsh 2001; and Kelleher 2003). Each day teachers spent three hours in morning professional development sessions learning new strategies for assessment, diagnosis, and correction of reading and writing difficulties. After lunch, teachers devoted three hours to applying new strategies with a client in 3rd through 7th grades that had been identified by his/her classroom teacher as a struggling reader or writer. Participants reported that the format helped them to see an immediate, authentic connection with the real-world of teaching. One teacher said that the format contributed to her statement "This was the best PD [professional development] in which I have participated in a long time."

LIMITATIONS

Although the Reading and Writing Institute project was a success from all standpoints, the researchers realized that some areas could be improved upon for future implementation. One concern was the duration of the program. Because the project occurred for only two weeks in the summer,

classroom changes were not monitored or measured. Teachers did report intentions to change existing practices, but the researchers had no way to confirm this intention. Another concern was that student participants were receiving only 30 hours of intervention, which is the minimal amount needed for positive change. The small number of participants with minimal diversity is also an area of concern.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The purpose of the research was to determine if professional development, as defined by the TTU Reading and Writing Institute impacted teacher's perceived importance of, frequency of use of, familiarity with, and confidence level for research based middle school literacy instruction as measured by the Modified Pennycuff-Reed Professional Development Survey. Using both qualitative and quantitative analysis, grant participants were surveyed, observed, and interviewed to establish triangulation. Data analysis was facilitated by both parametric statistics and Strauss and Corbin's (1990) qualitative analysis techniques.

Statistical analysis revealed that professional development from the Reading and Writing Institute did positively impact teachers' perceptions of reading and writing concepts. Highly significant effects were present for concepts of familiarity with reading concepts, perceived importance of reading concepts, and frequency of use of reading concepts. In addition, highly significant effects were present for concepts of frequency of use of writing strategies and perceived confidence in teaching reading. Significant effects were determined for familiarity with writing concepts, the perceived importance of writing concepts, and perceived confidence of teaching writing. Results were substantiated by documentation from observations, interviews, and surveys.

CONCLUSIONS

Along with the existing body of literature, the present data demonstrate that professional development of teachers does positively affect knowledge, skills, and confidence (Anders and Richardson 1991, Bayar 2014, Borko 2004, Darling-Hammond 1997, Darling-Hammond 1999, Desimone, 2009; Goldenberg and Gallimore 1991, Guskey 1986, Hamilton and Richardson 1995, Hirsch and Ponder 1991, Learning First Alliance 2000, Mesmer and Karchmer 2003, Renyi 1998). The data confirms that professional development, as defined by the RWI, does significantly influence familiarity, frequency, importance, and confidence in teaching middle school literacy concepts. Relevant and sustainable professional development empowers teachers to be successful (Cameron 1996; Darling-Hammond 1996; Desimone, 2009; Jones 1998, Sykes 1996). Yesterday's mass "sit

and get” workshops are no longer appropriate (Banner 1986, Bayar 2014, Birman and others 2000, Boyle, While, and Boyle, 2004, Burden 1989, Cameron 1996, Darling-Hammond 1996; Goldenberg and Gallimore 1991; Guskey and Huberman 1995, Lieberman 1995, McNergney and Carrier 1981). The TTU Reading and Writing Institute designed professional development sessions that encouraged immediate application of concepts related to middle school literacy, with opportunities for coaching and feedback to practitioners. The unusual format for professional development promoted assimilation and maintenance and is thought to contribute to transfer in future teaching scenarios (Birman and others 2000, Desimone, 2009; Goldenberg and Gallimore 1991, Lieberman 1995, Stein, Smith, and Silver 1999). It is imperative for all professional educators to actively participate in professional development experiences, such as promoted by the RWI, that encourage growth in learning for both teachers and students.

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