

Title: The Change Process in a School District: Impact of a Balanced Literacy Program and Teacher Perceptions of their Professional Growth and Student Achievement

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This study determined the effectiveness of a balanced literacy approach to reading instruction in the primary grades of the Punxsutawney Area School District by evaluating the impact of change upon teachers' professional growth and students' academic progress. The program's effectiveness was assessed through three research tools: the Stages of Concern questionnaire (Hall, 1979), teacher interviews, and student reading scores. The SoC questionnaire determined how the program impacted teachers' perceptions after two years. Interviews revealed whether teacher instructional practices had changed. The Marilyn Adams Phonemic Awareness Assessment, Developmental Reading Assessment, and CTB McGraw-Hill's TerraNova standardized achievement test determined student reading achievement.

The following questions were addressed: Are teachers moving forward in the change process as the balanced literacy approach to reading instruction is implemented? What are the teacher's perceptions about the balanced literacy approach? Has there been sufficient and appropriate professional development to help teachers acquire the necessary techniques for implementing the program? Have primary reading scores significantly improved as a result of the program?

It was determined that all teachers have moved forward in the implementation of the reading program though at a different pace. Sufficient professional development was provided but the timetable for program implementation was too aggressive. The administratively driven program

design may have caused a delay in the acceptance of the program by a portion of the faculty. Additional professional development must be tailored to teachers' needs to sustain growth

Children are meeting greater success with the balanced literacy approach to reading instruction. The Marilyn Adams Phonemic Awareness Curriculum increased the proficiency levels of students 24 percent in kindergarten and 44 percent in first grade over baseline data. The Developmental Spelling Assessment showed an additional 52 percent of kindergarten students and 31 percent of first grade students were able to meet grade level benchmarks for phonics.

A balanced literacy approach to reading takes time and effort to learn and apply new strategies. The effort expended brought about great rewards for teachers and students. Despite the trials and tribulations, no one involved would revert back to their previous teaching practice of using a basal series for reading instruction.