SOUTH CAROLINA READING FIRST INITIATIVE

EVALUATION REPORT

2006-2007

Volume I: Narrative

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Executive Summary

The University of South Carolina's Office of Program Evaluation (OPE) and South Carolina Educational Policy Center (SCEPC) collaborate to evaluate the South Carolina Reading First (SCRF) Initiative. This report presents the evaluation methods, findings, and recommendations for SCRF from the 2006-2007 school year and from activities conducted during the summer of 2007. The 2006-2007 school year was the third year of implementation of the SCRF Initiative. The report is divided into sections by the types of data reported including achievement results, participant group surveys, professional development evaluation results, and evaluation of the School Leadership Team (SLT) meetings. Each section contains information about the data collection and analysis methods used as well as the key findings. Recommendations based on these findings are located at the end of the report.

Summary of Key Findings

- ❖ Students performed better on the Stanford Reading First assessment in the 2006-2007 school year as compared with the 2005-2006 school year.
- ❖ Similar to the previous years' results, students' scores on the Stanford Reading First assessment improved from fall 2006 to spring 2007. The largest gains were made by students in grade 1 and the lowest gains occurred in grade 2 in 2006-2007, which is also consistent with the last two years.
- ❖ Participation in SCRF professional development activities remained high, and participants found these activities helpful. However, all groups reported a decrease in their need for professional development about the program and use of assessments.
- ❖ Participants have a better understanding of the goals of the initiative in the third year compared with the second year.
- ❖ Levels of trust, respect, and collaboration remain high among SCRF participants.
- ❖ Reported benefits included the resources, valuable professional development, positive impact on student performance and staff collaborative work, and the increased focus on assessment.
- ❖ Participant groups would like to see changes related to study groups and assessments as well as an increased emphasis on student writing.

> *"The program has improved students' ability to read fluently, read for comprehension, increase vocabulary, and properly use phonics and phonemic awareness to figure out words that they are not familiar with. As a result of this, students' scores on standardized test have improved tremendously."*
> (Teacher)

- 2007 SCRF Summer School Observation and debriefing was found to be beneficial, although workshop participants would like to observe multiple classrooms and multiple grade levels.
- Teachers participating in Fall Professional Development Workshops on the five components emphasized by Reading First found them to be beneficial.
- Participants in the 2006-2007 SLT workshops found the presentations and information shared between schools at the SLT meetings beneficial. However, they are still seeking help in specific areas of implementing the grant requirements.

> *"The SCRF initiative has helped us become a community of learners while putting the needs of children first."*
> (Literacy Coach)

- The effectiveness ratings remained the same as last year with over 80% of each participant group rating the initiative either *effective* or *very effective*.

Summary of Recommendations

- Over the last three years, Stanford Reading First (SRF) achievement results for students in grade 2 show considerably smaller gains between fall and spring semesters compared with students in grades 1 and 3. The assessment administered to students in the spring of grade 2 contains more and longer paragraphs for students to read and then respond to than the test administered in the fall of grade 2. Professional development providers should discuss potential strategies for providing more time for sustained reading for students in grade 2 to improve students' reading comprehension skills and to prepare them for more extensive text reading expectations.

- All groups responded that they needed more professional development on effective instructional strategies to use with students performing below grade level. Additional strategies for working with students below grade level should be shared with SCRF participants.

- A large number of participants recommended changes to the study groups. Discussions among professional development providers should consider the issues raised by study group participants.

- Summer School Observation survey results reveal that teachers found professional development through classroom observation to be very helpful. More opportunities for should be provided for observing multiple classrooms and grade levels.

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SOUTH CAROLINA READING FIRST INITIATIVE EVALUATION REPORT 2006-2007

Introduction

The Office of Program Evaluation (OPE) and the South Carolina Educational Policy Center (SCEPC) in the College of Education at the University of South Carolina are evaluating the South Carolina Reading First (SCRF) Initiative. The OPE and SCEPC are working collaboratively with the South Carolina Department of Education (SDE) to assess the effectiveness of the SCRF Initiative. This on-going joint effort involves regular meetings and communication where project implementation and evaluation activities are planned and results shared. Numerous reports and presentations related to the SCRF Initiative have been completed during 2006-2007 and provided to a variety of audiences. Evaluation results were presented at meetings with SCRF project staff, professional development providers, school leadership teams, and regional literacy coaches, who then shared the results at the school level.

Highlights of the evaluation findings, including Stanford Reading First (SRF) achievement data, evaluation surveys, professional development evaluation results, and an evaluation of the School Leadership Team meetings, are provided in the following sections of this report (Volume I). This volume features the highlights of the SCRF Initiative evaluation for the 2006-2007 school year. Examples of completed reports, surveys, and other supporting documentation can be found in Appendices A – M in Volume II of this report.

Overview of the Initiative

Reading First, part of the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, is a nationwide effort to provide states and school districts with support to establish research-based reading programs for students in kindergarten through third grade. The South Carolina Reading First (SCRF) Initiative began providing program services during the 2004-2005 school year to approximately 12,000 students in 52 schools from 24 districts in the state. The 2005-2006 program served approximately 11,000 students in 51 schools from 23 districts in the state. Chester Park Elementary participated in the first year of SCRF, but dropped out in the summer before the second year. The 2006-2007 program served 10,500 students in 48 schools in 23 districts. Whale Branch Elementary, Carver-Lyon Elementary and Z. L. Madden Elementary participated in the first and second years of SCRF, but did not remain in the program for 2006-2007. One school, Port Royal Elementary, was added in 2006-2007 as a replacement for a school that left the initiative.

The goal of the SCRF Initiative is *to improve reading achievement in grades K-3 so that all children are reading at the appropriate grade level.* To achieve this goal, SCRF has three objectives:

• Enable and motivate teachers to understand and confidently implement scientifically-based reading research (SBRR) reading programs, strategies, skills, and assessments in their classrooms.

• Support the change process from the "bottom up" by supporting collaboration and conversation at various levels to ensure the sustainability of this initiative.

• Establish and expand an increasing pool of teachers and administrators who are knowledgeable about, committed to using, and successful in teaching a comprehensive reading program based upon scientific research.

The teachers in SCRF schools are required to attend professional development sessions focusing on strategies to teach key reading components. The five components of reading instruction that "all K-3 teachers should explicitly and systematically teach include phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension" (Reading First Grant Proposal, 2002, p. 5). Phonemic awareness is defined as "the ability to hear, identify, and manipulate individual sounds (phonemes) in spoken words" (p. 5). Phonics includes "the letter sound relationship used to read and spell words" (p. 5). Fluency is defined as "the ability to read a text accurately and quickly" (p. 5). Vocabulary includes "the words we must know to communicate effectively" (p. 5). Comprehension includes "the ability to read and construct meaning from text" (p. 5).

In addition, literacy coaches are assigned to each school to assist teachers with implementing the strategies learned in the professional development sessions. Through professional development and support from literacy coaches, the intent is for teachers to be well prepared to provide appropriate instruction that will lead to improved reading achievement for all of their students.

Student Achievement Results

To measure achievement, students enrolled in SCRF schools in grades 1-3 completed the Stanford Reading First assessment in the fall and spring of each academic school year. The Stanford Reading First assessment is a version of the Stanford 10 that was developed specifically for the national Reading First Initiative by Harcourt Educational Measurement. The total score for a student on this assessment is composed of the score on a multiple choice section and the score on a teacher-administered, oral fluency section. Five components are assessed on the multiple choice section: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, reading fluency, and reading comprehension strategies. Two components are assessed on the oral fluency section: speaking vocabulary and oral reading fluency. Information on the total score as well as the individual components are presented in this report.

Scores are reported in three categories: *at grade level* (AGL), *needs additional intervention* (NAI) and *needs substantial intervention* (NSI). In the next sections, results from analysis of absolute performance levels will be presented followed by results of a matched analysis of student achievement which utilized normal curve equivalent scores. These two types of analyses are described below.

Performance Level Analysis

The summary information in this section is based on all students in SCRF schools who took the Stanford Reading First Assessment in each of the six test administrations. The evaluation report to the United States Department of Education (US DOE) requires reporting for all students who take the assessment in each administration rather than for the group of students who have taken the assessment in all test administrations. The number of students in grades 1-3 who took the assessment in each test administration are shown in Table 1. These numbers are reported for schools that participated in SCRF during all three years of implementation. The total number of students tested varies across semesters due to individual students entering or leaving the program.

Table 1

Students Who Took the Stanford Reading First Assessment by Grade Level

| Grade level | Number of Students Tested | | | | | |
	Fall 2004	Spring 2005	Fall 2005	Spring 2006	Fall 2006	Spring 2007
Grade 1	3,132	3,111	3,095	3,087	3,100	3,088
Grade 2	2,852	2,870	2,950	2,931	2,826	2,807
Grade 3	2,774	2,785	2,696	2,606	2,728	2,774
Total	8,758	8,766	8,741	8,624	8,654	8,669

Note. The numbers for fall 2004 to spring 2006 differ from those in the previous two years' evaluation reports because four schools left the SCRF Initiative prior to year 3 and one school was added in year 3. Chester Park Elementary left the initiative in 2005-2006, and Whale Branch Elementary, Carver-Lyon Elementary and Z. L. Madden Elementary did not participate in 2006-2007. One school, Port Royal Elementary, was added in the 2006-2007 program year.

Scores from the Stanford Reading First achievement test classify a student's performance into one of three proficiency levels. The performance levels are *at grade level* (AGL), *needs additional intervention* (NAI), and *needs substantial intervention* (NSI). Students in the AGL category scored at or above the 40th percentile, students in the NAI category scored between the 20th and the 39th percentiles, and students in the NSI category scored below the 20th percentile.

The percentage of students who scored AGL and NSI in the fall and spring semesters on the Stanford Reading First achievement test for the past three years of program implementation are presented in Figure 1 – Figure 4, respectively
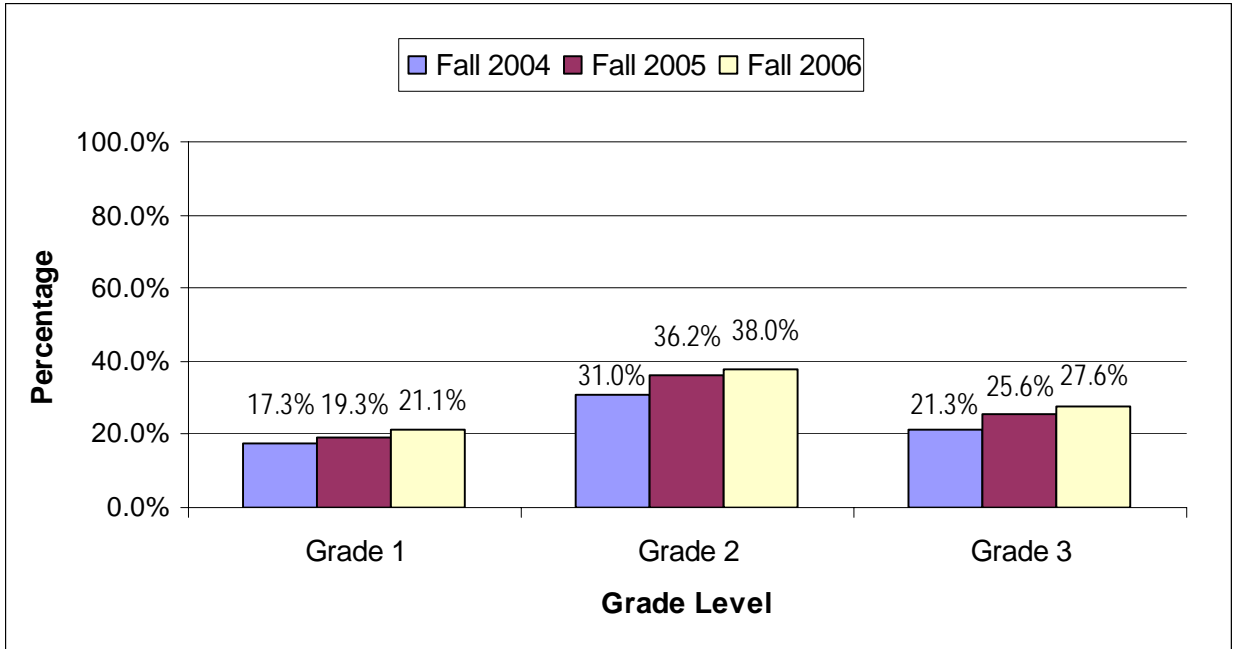
Figure 1. Fall results for at grade level (AGL) by grade level.
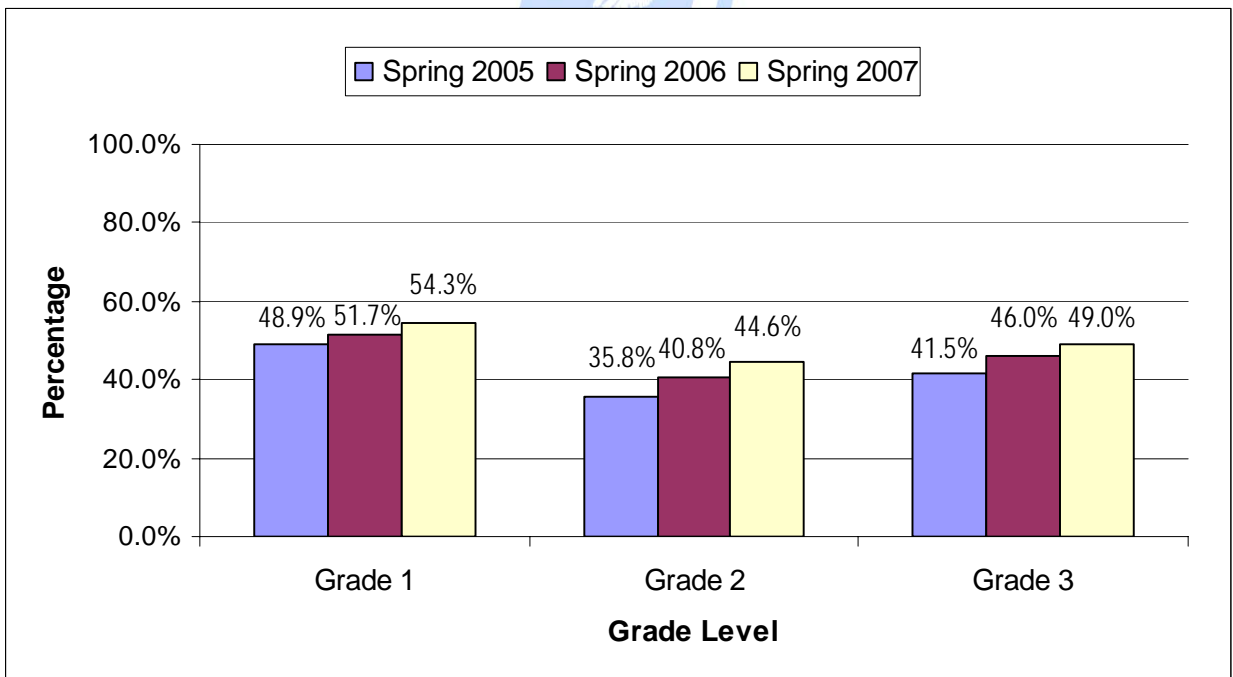
Figure 2. Spring results for at grade level (AGL) by grade level.
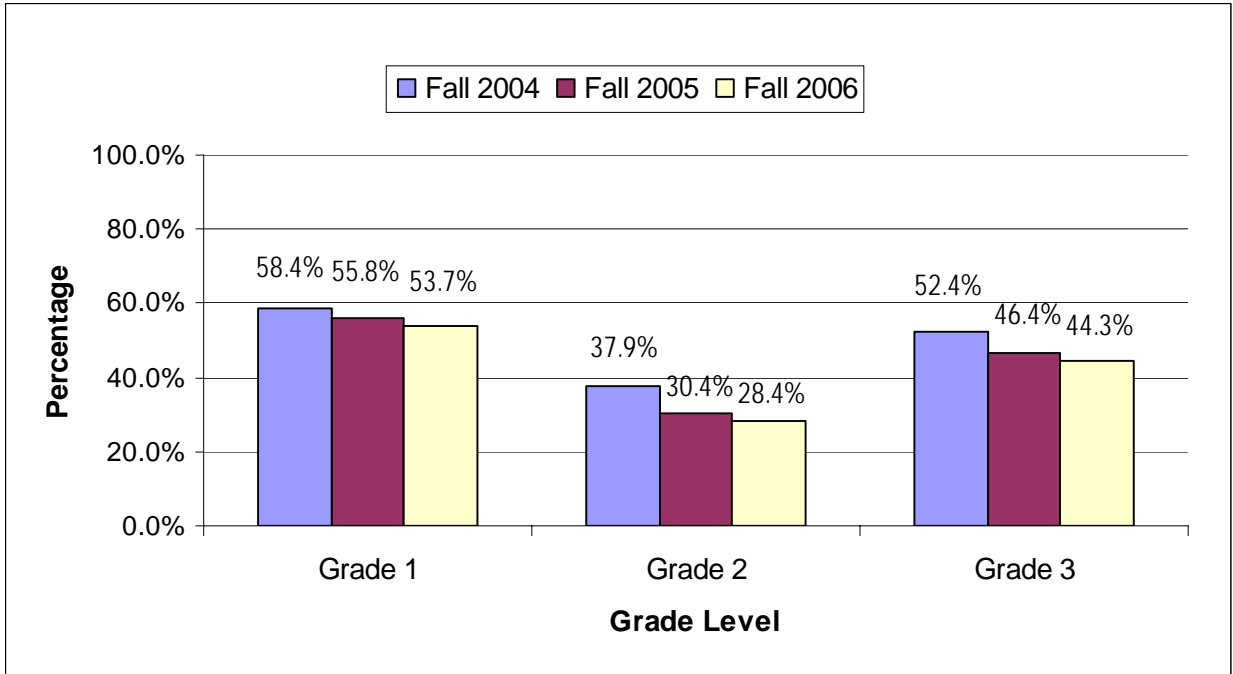
Figure 3. Fall results for needs substantial intervention (NSI) by grade level.
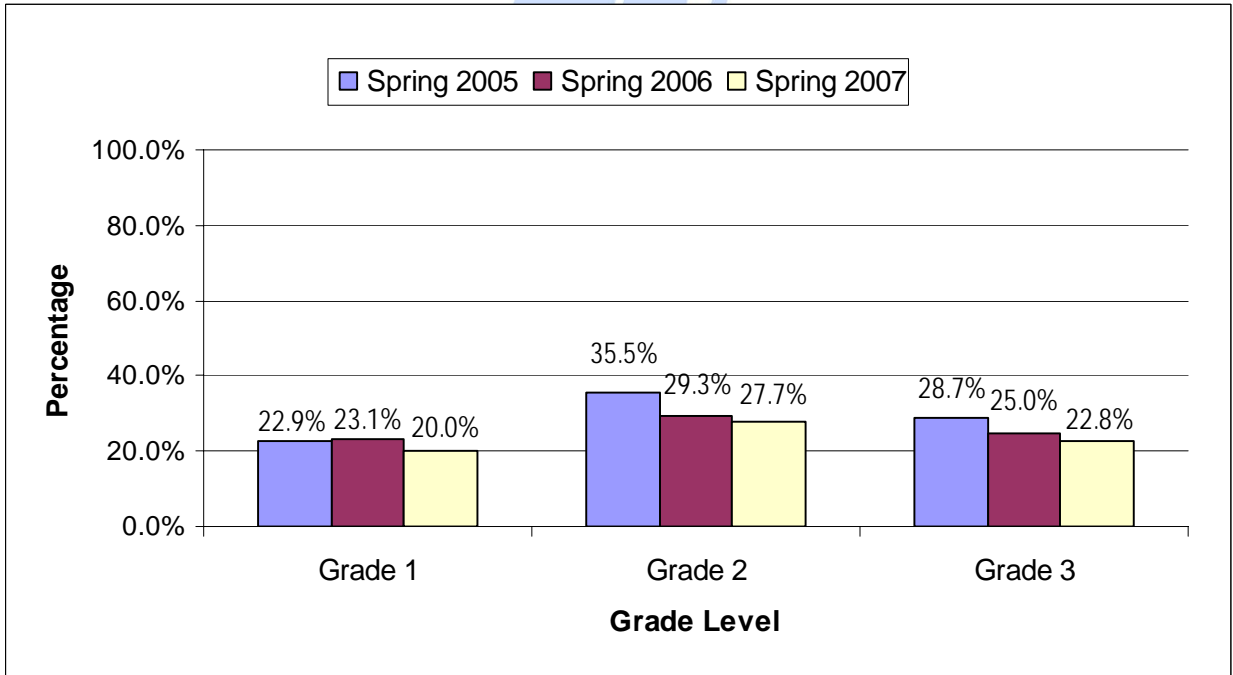
Figure 4. Spring results for needs substantial intervention (NSI) by grade level.

The results for all students indicate that the percentage of students scoring AGL increased across the semesters for both fall and spring, while the percentage of students scoring NSI decreased across the semesters for both fall and spring. This indicates that

students in the third year of the SCRF Initiative are starting at a higher level and ending at a higher level on the Stanford RF assessment than previous years. Additionally, grade 2 students consistently had the highest percentage in the AGL category for all the three fall administrations, indicating that grade 2 students begin second grade with higher levels of relative reading proficiency than students in grades 1 or 3. Percentages in AGL also increased between the fall and spring of each year while the percentage of students scoring NSI declined between fall and spring semesters.

Grade 1 students made the largest gains in the percentage of students scoring AGL across the semesters with a 33.2% increase from fall to spring each year. This trend occurred for all three years of program implementation. Grade 3 students also showed large increases in the percentage of students scoring AGL with a 21.4% increase from fall to spring each year. Grade 1 and grade 3 also showed the largest declines in the percentage of students categorized as NSI between fall and spring in all three years. The percentage of students scoring NSI declined by 33.7% for grade 1 students. The percentage of students in the NSI category in grade 3 declined from fall to spring by over 21.5%. Grade 2 had the smallest increase in percentage AGL (6.6%) and the smallest decrease in percentage NSI (0.7%) from fall to spring each year among the three grade levels. These trends have been observed for all three years of program implementation. This outcome may be due to the test used in the spring of second grade having greater reading demands than the test used in the fall. Specifically, the reading comprehension section on the grade 2 assessment appears to be more challenging in the spring as compared to the fall. The items in the spring are entirely based on reading passages, where the items in the fall are a mix of short sentence reading and passage-based items. The passages in the spring are also considerably longer on the spring assessment.

Component Analysis

The total score on the Stanford Reading First assessment provides a measure of how students perform overall. An analysis was also conducted to determine how students performed on each of the five multiple choice components and the two oral fluency components. Tables 2 and 3 contain the results for all three grades combined for each test administration for all schools participating in the SCRF Initiative during all the three years of program implementation.

Table 2

Performance Levels for Fall 2004, 2005, and 2006 for All Grades Combined

	Test Semester		
	Fall 04	**Fall 05**	**Fall 06**
Phonemic Awareness			
At Grade Level	65.1%	66.6%	67.0%
Needs Additional Intervention	17.1%	15.2%	15.2%
Needs Substantial Intervention	17.8%	18.2%	17.9%
Phonics			
At Grade Level	15.1%	14.9%	16.2%
Needs Additional Intervention	33.2%	34.3%	34.5%
Needs Substantial Intervention	51.6%	50.8%	49.2%
Vocabulary Development			
At Grade Level	36.0%	35.5%	36.2%
Needs Additional Intervention	31.6%	31.5%	32.1%
Needs Substantial Intervention	32.4%	33.0%	31.7%
Reading Fluency			
At Grade Level	33.5%	33.2%	33.9%
Needs Additional Intervention	21.4%	22.4%	22.5%
Needs Substantial Intervention	45.1%	44.4%	43.6%
Reading Comprehension Strategies			
At Grade Level	29.8%	31.9%	33.0%
Needs Additional Intervention	26.4%	25.1%	24.9%
Needs Substantial Intervention	43.8%	43.0%	42.1%
Speaking Vocabulary			
At Grade Level	34.4%	45.1%	48.1%
Needs Additional Intervention	26.4%	24.2%	24.3%
Needs Substantial Intervention	39.3%	30.7%	27.6%
Oral Reading Fluency			
At Grade Level	28.2%	34.6%	36.3%
Needs Additional Intervention	22.0%	22.6%	23.0%
Needs Substantial Intervention	49.8%	42.8%	40.8%

Table 3

Performance Levels for Spring 2005, 2006, and 2007 for All Grades Combined

	Test Semester		
	Spring 05	Spring 06	Spring 07
Phonemic Awareness			
At Grade Level	77.3%	79.0%	78.2%
Needs Additional Intervention	11.6%	10.8%	11.5%
Needs Substantial Intervention	11.1%	10.2%	10.4%
Phonics			
At Grade Level	23.0%	25.1%	27.0%
Needs Additional Intervention	21.7%	22.3%	22.1%
Needs Substantial Intervention	55.3%	52.5%	50.8%
Vocabulary Development			
At Grade Level	36.5%	38.9%	40.3%
Needs Additional Intervention	23.3%	22.5%	23.5%
Needs Substantial Intervention	40.2%	38.5%	36.2%
Reading Fluency			
At Grade Level	43.4%	44.9%	45.7%
Needs Additional Intervention	22.9%	23.4%	23.1%
Needs Substantial Intervention	33.7%	31.7%	31.1%
Reading Comprehension Strategies			
At Grade Level	44.4%	46.3%	46.7%
Needs Additional Intervention	24.3%	24.3%	24.3%
Needs Substantial Intervention	31.3%	29.4%	29.0%
Speaking Vocabulary			
At Grade Level	56.6%	63.7%	68.8%
Needs Additional Intervention	26.4%	22.8%	21.0%
Needs Substantial Intervention	17.1%	13.4%	10.1%
Oral Reading Fluency			
At Grade Level	51.4%	55.7%	60.7%
Needs Additional Intervention	21.2%	19.8%	17.8%
Needs Substantial Intervention	27.3%	24.5%	21.5%

Table 2 shows the performance levels for fall 2004, 2005, and 2006 by component. The percentage of students performing AGL was higher in fall 2006 than fall 2005 for all components assessed in the Stanford Reading First exam. The largest gains in the percentage scoring AGL

between fall 2004 and fall 2006 were in speaking vocabulary (13.7%), oral reading fluency (8.1%) and reading comprehension strategies (3.2%). The smallest gains observed occurred for vocabulary development (0.2%) and reading fluency (0.4%).

The percentage of students scoring NSI decreased on all components across all the fall semesters. The largest declines in the percentage of students needing substantial intervention was observed for the speaking vocabulary and the oral reading fluency components. A decrease of 11.7% in the percentage of students classified as NSI on speaking vocabulary was observed between fall 2004 and fall 2006. The percentage of students classified as NSI on oral reading fluency in fall 2006 was 9.0% less than in fall 2004.

Table 3 shows the performance level for spring semesters by component. The largest increases in the percentage of students scoring AGL between spring 2005 and spring 2007 were observed for speaking vocabulary (12.2%), oral reading fluency (9.3%), phonics (4.0%), and vocabulary development (3.8%). Smaller increases were observed for reading fluency (2.3%), reading comprehension strategies (2.3%) and phonemic awareness (0.9%). The percentage of students scoring NSI decreased between spring 2005 and spring 2007 for all components. The largest declines between spring 2005 and 2007 were observed for speaking vocabulary (7.0% decrease) and oral fluency (5.8% decrease).

The percentage of students categorized as AGL for each component was also examined by grade level for the 2006-2007 school year. The results of this analysis are presented in Appendix A. The percentage of students categorized as AGL generally increased from fall 2006 to spring 2007. A marked gain was observed for grade 3 phonics (31.7%) from fall to spring 2007. Exceptions to the gains were grade 1 phonics (decrease of 6.5%), grade 2 reading comprehension strategies (decrease of 30.0%), and grade 3 phonemic awareness (decrease of 13.8%) and vocabulary development (decrease of 10.5%). This suggests components that each grade level should consider in planning instructional strategies to improve achievement scores in subsequent years.

Matched Normal Curve Equivalent Analysis

In addition to the analyses of absolute performance levels (i.e., proficiency levels), an analysis of normal curve equivalent (NCE) scores on the Stanford Reading First assessment was conducted after matching students who completed the six test administrations of the Stanford Reading First achievement test. The matched analysis provides a meaningful measure of growth in reading achievement for students who participated in the SCRF program for all three school years. Student scores were matched across the years only if the students participated in the Reading First program throughout all three years of implementation and were promoted from grade 1 in 2004-2005, to grade 2 in 2005-2006, and to grade 3 in 2006-2007. The entire group of SCRF students matched from grades 1 through 3 consisted of 1,616 students.

NCE scores (NCEs) were computed based on the total test score on the Stanford Reading First achievement test. NCEs are converted from percentile ranks, but have an advantage over percentile ranks in that NCEs provide an equal-interval scale and permit valid reporting of averages. NCEs range from 1 to 99 and have an average of 50. Therefore, if a student has an NCE of 50, this means he/she is performing average as compared with a norm reference group. Results are provided for the fall and spring of each school year.

Figure 5 displays the average NCE scores for all the groups (grades 1 to 3) for all six test administrations. On average, students showed gains between each fall and spring semester. There is also a decline of 7.2 in average NCE scores between each spring and fall, which is expected due to lack of instruction during the summer months for most schools. Students made the largest growth in grade 1 with an average increase of 16.7 NCEs. The next largest gain was made during grade 3 with an average increase of 11.2 NCEs. Relatively small gains were made in grade 2 with an average increase of 1.2 NCEs. However, since NCE scores are used in the analysis, growth is expected to be flat if students perform similarly to the group on which the assessment was normed. The fact that all gains are positive suggests that SCRF students made more progress than expected. Further, the substantially large increases in grades 1 and 3 indicate much greater growth than expected. The results of this analysis provide further evidence of the effectiveness of the SCRF Initiative in improving reading achievement.
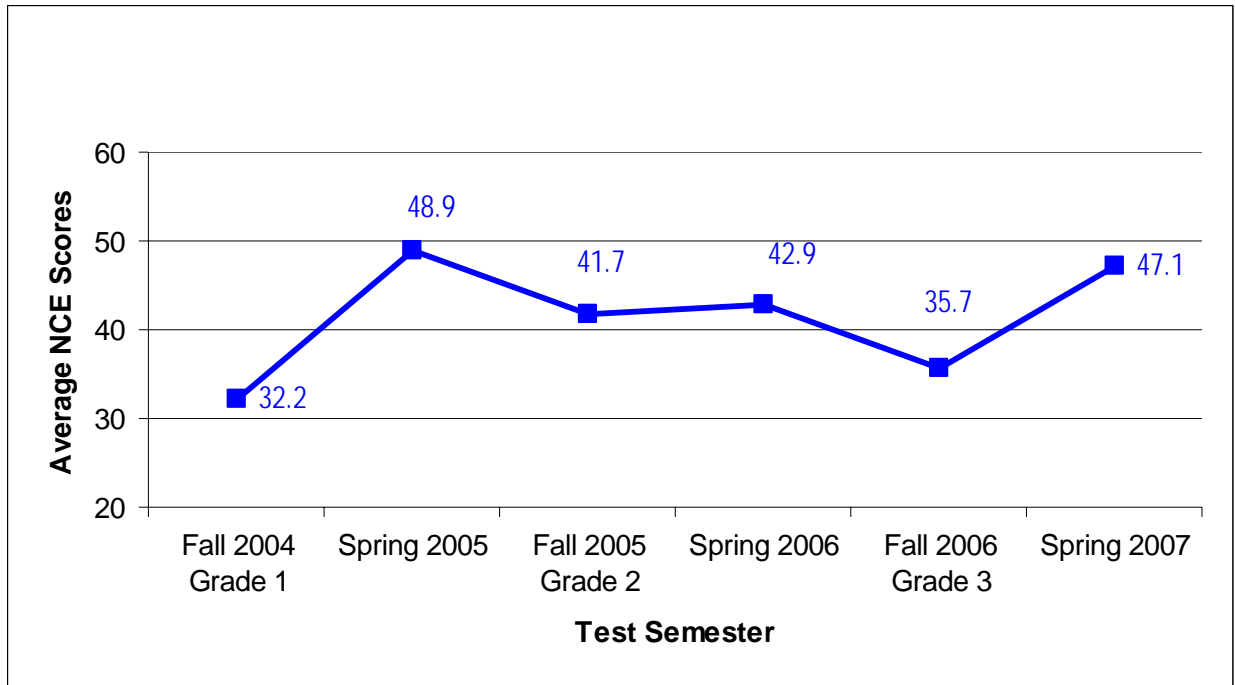
Figure 5. Average normal curve equivalent (NCE) scores for matched students in all three years.

Ranked Gains Across Districts and Schools

Gains in achievement based on the percentage of students scoring AGL on the Stanford Reading First assessment were calculated at the school and district level for 48 schools and 23 districts. Students who completed the assessment in spring 2006, fall 2006, and spring 2007 were included in the ranked gains analysis. The differences in the percentage of students scoring AGL were calculated using two points of reference: (1) between fall 2006 and spring 2007 and (2) between spring 2006 and spring 2007. The fall 2006 to spring 2007 results provide evidence of growth during the third year of SCRF. The spring 2006 to spring 2007 results reveal the districts and schools that showed the most growth in student achievement from the second to third year of implementation of the SCRF Initiative.

Ranked Gains From Fall 2006 to Spring 2007

All districts demonstrated gains between fall 2006 and spring 2007. The five districts with the largest gains include:

- ❖ Dillon 2 with two SCRF schools (31.5%)
- ❖ Marion 7 with two SCRF schools (30.0%)
- ❖ Marion 2 with two SCRF schools (27.7%)

- ❖ Aiken with two SCRF schools (27.1%)
- ❖ Laurens 56 with two SCRF schools (26.2%)

All schools demonstrated gains between fall 2006 and spring 2007 as well. The five schools with the largest gains include:

- ❖ D. P. Cooper Elementary in Williamsburg (37.0%)
- ❖ Thornwell School for the Arts in Darlington (35.7%)
- ❖ Stewart Heights Elementary in Dillon 2 (32.6%)
- ❖ Britton's Neck Elementary in Marion 7 (31.5%)
- ❖ St. James-Santee Elementary School in Charleston (30.1%)

Two districts, Marion 7 and Dillon 2, were among the districts with the largest annual gains (fall to spring) for all three years of SCRF implementation. D. P. Cooper Elementary School in Williamsburg made remarkably large annual gains in all three years.

Ranked Gains From Spring 2006 to Spring 2007

When examining gains between spring 2006 and spring 2007, 17 out of 23 districts demonstrated gains in the percentage of students testing AGL. The districts demonstrating the largest gains include:

- ❖ Beaufort with two SCRF schools (15.4%)[1]
- ❖ Lee with one SCRF school (10.5%)
- ❖ Florence 1 with two SCRF schools (9.9%)
- ❖ Fairfield with two SCRF schools (9.3%)
- ❖ Darlington with three SCRF schools (7.4%)

Individual schools also demonstrated gains between the subsequent spring semesters, with 33 out of 47 schools demonstrating increases in the percentage of students at grade level. The schools with the largest gains include:

- ❖ Thornwell School for the Arts in Darlington (17.3%)
- ❖ Rosenwald/St. David's Elementary in Darlington (16.4%)
- ❖ Britton's Neck Elementary in Marion 7(14.7%)
- ❖ Geiger Elementary in Fairfield (11.3%)
- ❖ Mclaurin Elementary in Florence 1 (10.6%)
- ❖ West Lee Elementary in Lee (10.5%)

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[1] There were two schools in both calculations. Spring 2006 included Whale Branch Elementary, which dropped out after year 2. Spring 2007 included Port Royal Elementary as the replacement school. James J. Davis Elementary was in both years' calculations.

Different districts and schools made the largest gains from spring 2006 to spring 2007 than those that made the largest gains from spring 2005 to spring 2006.

Section Summary

In summary, students performed better on the Stanford Reading First assessment in the 2006-2007 school year compared with the 2004-2005 and the 2005-2006 school years. Similar to the previous years' results, students' scores on the Stanford Reading First assessment improved from fall 2006 to spring 2007. In addition, the largest gains were made by students in grade 1 and the lowest gains occurred in grade 2 which is consistent with previously reported trends.

Participant Groups Survey Results

The OPE and SCEPC administered surveys to SCRF participants in spring 2007. Principals, school literacy coaches, interventionists, and classroom teachers in kindergarten through grade 3 completed the surveys and returned them to the OPE. The purpose of collecting survey data was to obtain feedback regarding the implementation, support, roles and responsibilities, professional development needs, and overall effectiveness of the initiative. Both open- and closed-ended questions were included on the surveys. Participant group responses to each survey item are available in Appendices B-F. Table 4 shows the response rates by group, ranging from 91.8% to 100.0%.

Table 4

Participant Response Rates for Spring 2007 SCRF Surveys

	Surveys Provided	**Surveys Collected**	**Response Rate**
Literacy Coaches	50	49	98.0%
Principals	49	45	91.8%
Teachers	723	705	97.5%
Interventionists	84	84	100.0%

In order to evaluate changes over time in participant beliefs about the initiative and SCRF related practices, 2007 survey data were matched by identification number and compared with the 2006 results. Only survey items that were identical for both years were included in this analysis. The responses of 398 teachers, 51 interventionists, 43 literacy coaches, and 33 principals were matched. Complete year-to-year comparison results can be found in Appendices H-K.

Preparation and Professional Development

The first section of the surveys asked participants to provide reactions to various SCRF preparation and professional development activities, future professional development, and the helpfulness of the Dominie and Stanford Reading First assessments. The Dominie Reading and Writing Assessment Portfolio is a diagnostic tool used to assess reading, writing, spelling, and phonics (DeFord, 2000). It is designed for assessing students in kindergarten through grade 8 and aids teachers in documenting growth and making instructional decisions (Pearson Learning Group, 2004). The Dominie is administered to students in SCRF schools multiple times during the year and is used by SCRF personnel for progress monitoring. The Stanford Reading First assessment is used to document the reading progress of children in first grade to third grade

(Harcourt Assessment, Inc., 2007). The Stanford Reading First assessment is administered to SCRF students in grade 1 through 3 in the fall and spring of each school year for program evaluation purposes and federal reporting requirements. The survey results related to preparation and professional development are reported in the following four sections.

Participation in SCRF Preparation and Professional Development Activities

Each of the groups reported high participation rates in SCRF activities and workshops. Participation in meetings and information sessions was high for most groups. For example, 100% of interventionists, literacy coaches, and principals and 99.7% of teachers reported participating in study groups. Respondents also received assistance from literacy coaches and interventionists. One hundred percent of principals, 97.8% of literacy coaches, and 86.4% of teachers indicated they received assistance from the regional literacy coach. Additionally, 97.6% of principals and 91.3% of interventionists received assistance from the regional intervention coach.

As part of the professional development activities, principals (100.0%), literacy coaches (95.7%), and interventionists (65.4%) observed in SCRF classrooms. Sixty-one percent of teachers observed in other SCRF classrooms. Nearly four out of five literacy coaches (83.0%) and interventionists (78.0%) observed in other SCRF schools. However, only 38.0% of teachers and 21.0% of principals observed in other SCRF schools.

Impact of SCRF Preparation and Professional Development Activities

Respondents were asked to rate the helpfulness of SCRF activities. More than 90% of literacy coaches and 80% of interventionists, teachers, and principals rated these activities as *helpful* or *very helpful*. Observation in SCRF classrooms was the most helpful activity for literacy coaches and principals, while teachers and interventionists indicated that observing in other SCRF schools was the most helpful SCRF activity. Principals also reported that study groups were as helpful as observing in SCRF classrooms. After observation activities, interventionists viewed assistance from regional intervention literacy coaches as the next most helpful activity. Similarly, literacy coaches identified assistance from regional literacy coaches as the next most helpful SCRF activity. Teachers rated study groups as the activity that was most helpful following the observations. Figure 6 shows the percentage of respondents, by group, who found the SCRF activities helpful or very helpful.
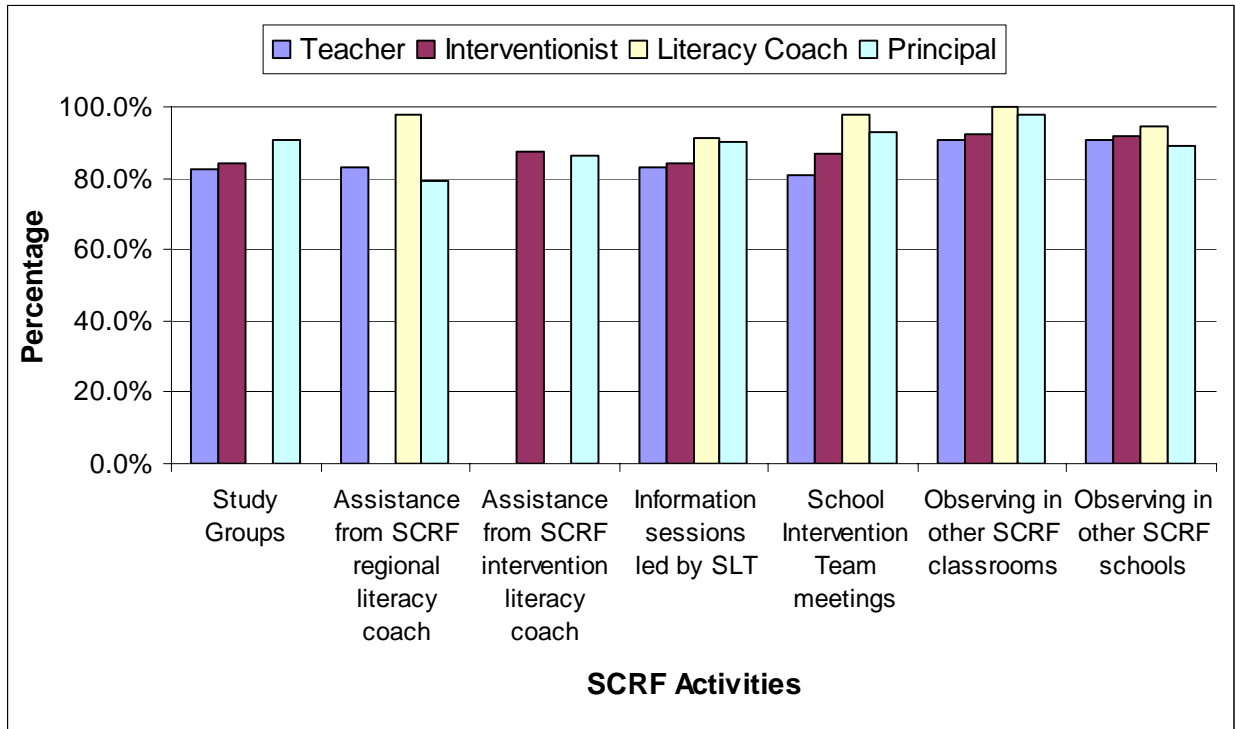
Figure 6. Perceived helpfulness of the SCRF activities.

Note. Some activities are only offered to specific participant groups. Therefore, some groups were not asked to report about their participation or perceived helpfulness of those activities as indicated by the absence of a bar.

Professional Development Needs

Survey results included areas where respondents indicated that more professional development is necessary. As shown in Figure 7, all groups expressed that some professional development is needed. Of the five components of reading instruction, a high percentage of teachers, interventionists, and literacy coaches indicated that they need more professional development in comprehension. Literacy coaches, teachers and principals also noted a need for additional training in vocabulary. Additionally, interventionists and teachers indicated they need more professional development in fluency.
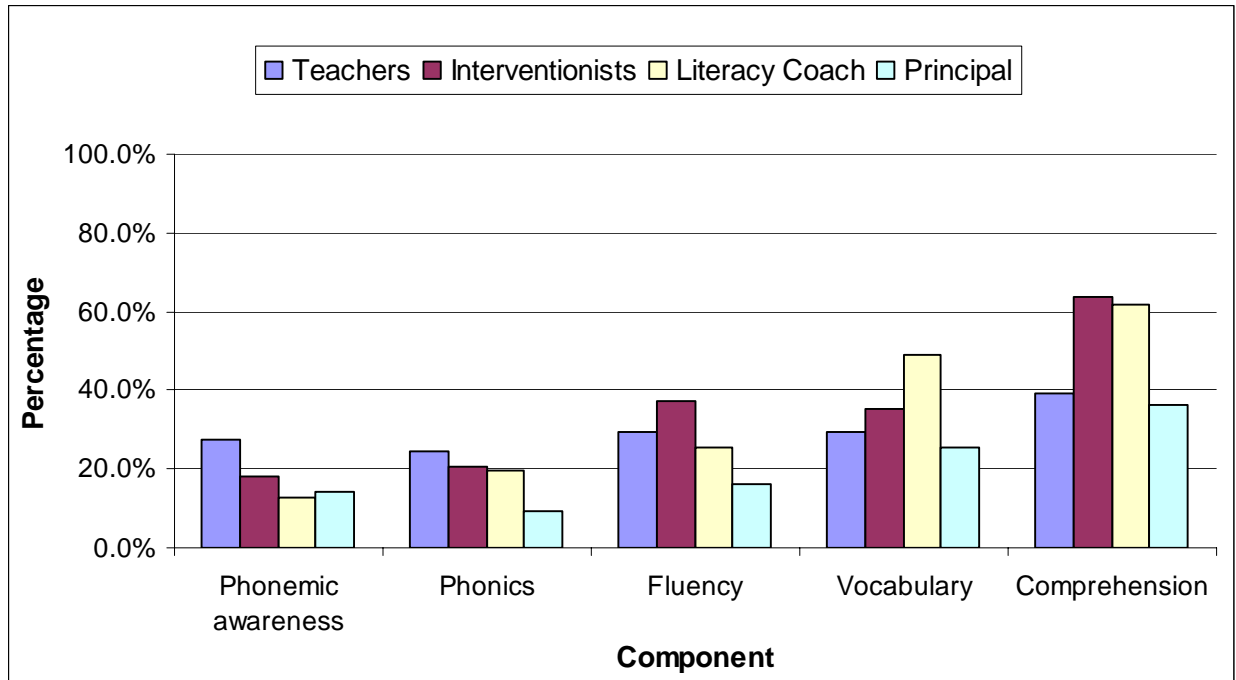
Figure 7. Professional development needs on the five components of reading instruction.

Respondents also reported professional development needs in other areas. For example, as Figure 8 shows, the area of professional development that was most commonly cited by all groups was "effective instructional strategies to use for students below grade level." More than half of teachers, interventionists, and literacy coaches also indicated they need more professional development in small group instruction. The next highest professional development need was "interpreting Stanford Reading First score reports".
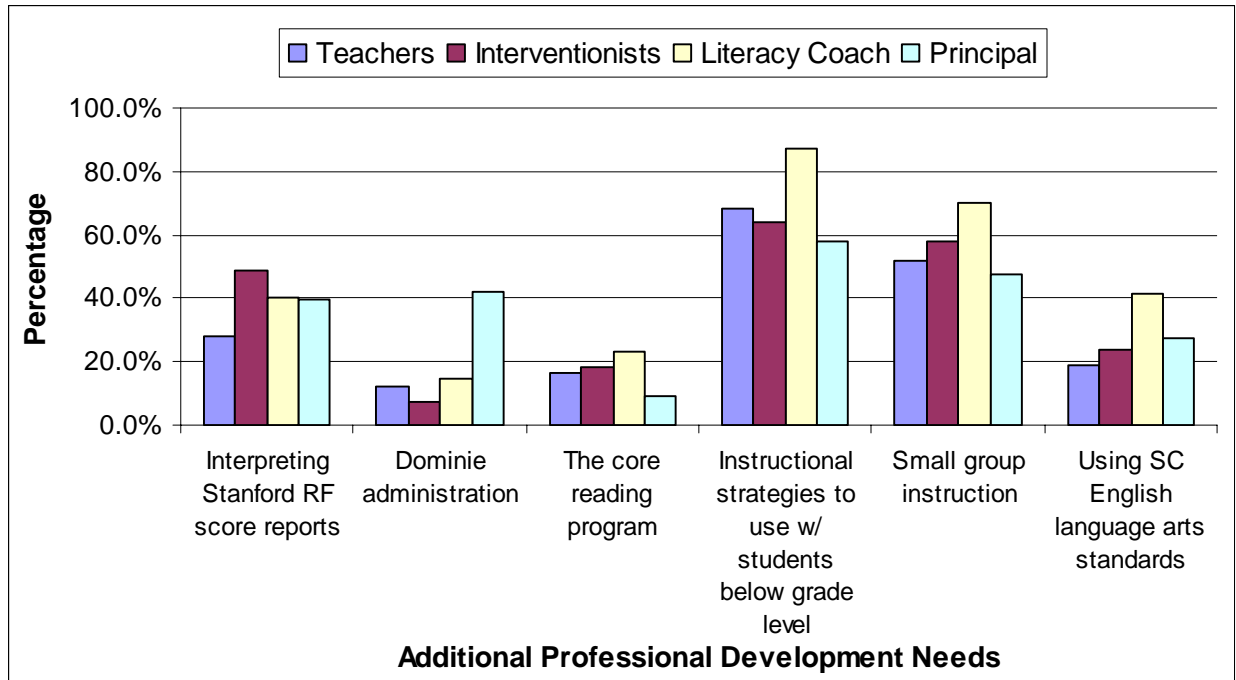
Figure 8. Additional professional development needs.

Respondents were also asked to identify specific Dominie assessment areas in which they need more professional development. More than 40% of teachers, interventionists, and literacy coaches responded that they need more professional development in the use of the Dominie for diagnosing specific needs of individual students. Over half of principals said they would like more professional development in the Dominie to help teachers make classroom instructional decisions.

Assessments for Monitoring Progress

All literacy coaches and almost all teachers, interventionists, and principals reported that assessments like Dominie helped them screen for students' instructional needs, diagnose specific needs of individual students, monitor students' progress, and make instructional decisions. Less than 3% of interventionists and teachers did not agree that Dominie was helpful.

The majority of respondents also agreed that Stanford Reading First was helpful. At least 69% of all respondents *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that the Stanford Reading First assessment helped them screen for students' instructional needs and make instructional decisions. Similar results were found for the use of Stanford Reading First to review students' progress, with 98% of interventionists and 100% of principals agreeing the assessment tool was helpful.

In addition, literacy coaches reported which assessments they encourage teachers to use. All respondents stated that they encouraged anecdotal notes, conferencing with students, and the Dominie assessment. Other methods promoted by literacy coaches were kidwatching/observation (98.0%), running records (98.0%), writing samples (98.0%), and rubrics (87.8%).

Based on the matched analysis of 2005-2006 with 2006-2007 survey data, participant groups maintained about the same level of participation in most SCRF activities, such as study groups, assistance from coaches, and school/classroom observation, and still found the activities to be helpful. There was less principal participation in observing in other SCRF schools (decrease of 10.0%). However, more teachers (23.8%) and interventionists (47.9%) increased their participation in observing in other SCRF schools. Also 17.9% more teachers and 20.4% more interventionists were able to observe in other SCRF classrooms.

Many principals, teachers, literacy coaches and interventionists showed a decrease in their need for professional development about the program and the use of assessments. However, there was an increase in the percentage of principals' who need professional development in vocabulary (6.2%) and the percentage of literacy coaches' who need professional development in diagnosing the specific needs of individual students (7.2%). An increased amount of interventionists (12%) also expressed a need for more professional development in comprehension.

Context and Implementation

This section of the survey collected information on the perceptions of principals, teachers, literacy coaches, and interventionists related to the culture and climate for implementation. Specifically, respondents reported (1) their level of support for the initiative, (2) their understanding of each others' roles and responsibilities, (3) collaboration, (4) support between participants, (4) coaching activities, and (5) services provided to students.

Support for the Initiative

Previous research has indicated that teacher support is fundamental in ensuring full program implementation and sustainability of reform initiatives. As Berends (2000) explains, without teacher support, "no reform can be enacted, no matter how effective it is" (p.66).

In general, each participant group reported high levels of support for the SCRF Initiative. Buy-in was high with 100% of literacy coaches and principals *agreeing* or *strongly agreeing* that they support the SCRF Initiative. Support for the initiative was also high among interventionists (96.5%) and teachers (92.3%). Perceived support from the principals was high among

interventionists (86.8%) and teachers (87.2%). Nearly 80% of literacy coaches *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that their principal supported the SCRF Initiative.

On average, the support for the SCRF Initiative remained relatively stable from 2005-2006 to 2006-2007 with the largest mean change on a six point scale being for the principals (decrease of 0.06). The average change in participants' understanding the goals of the initiative increased slightly for all participants from the previous year, with the greatest mean change on a six point scale occurring for interventionists (0.16) and literacy coaches (0.14).

Understanding Roles and Responsibilities

Previous research indicates that when school personnel do not clearly understand their roles in reform efforts, it hinders their performance (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2004). One hundred percent of literacy coaches and principals understood the goals of the SCRF Initiative as well as their roles and responsibilities. However, fewer respondents reported understanding the roles and responsibilities of other participants. For example, only 70% of teachers reported understanding the roles and responsibilities of regional intervention coaches and the School Leadership Teams.

Compared with the previous year, literacy coaches reported understanding more of the roles and responsibilities of all SCRF participants with the mean increase on a six point scale ranging from 0.11 to 0.24. Somewhat more principals understood the roles and responsibilities of the interventionists (0.13), but slightly less understood the roles and responsibilities of the intervention literacy coach (average decrease of 0.17). More interventionists (0.15) and teachers (0.13) understood the roles and responsibilities of the School Leadership Team in 2006-2007 than in 2005-2006.

Collaboration

Previous research has shown that collaboration is a crucial factor in school reform efforts. Collaboration has the potential to reduce the alienation that teachers experience, provide opportunities for sharing successful strategies, empower teachers, and increase teacher efficacy among other outcomes (Friend & Cook, 1990; Clark & Astuto, 1994; & Gitlin & Margonis, 1995).

Relationships between participants were examined in the areas of trust, respect, and collaboration. Overall, respect for the literacy coaches was high with over 94% of teachers, principals, and interventionists reporting that they respect their SCRF literacy coach. Confirming these responses, more than 90% of literacy coaches *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that their teachers and principals treat them with respect. A majority of interventionists also reported that

principals, teachers, and literacy coaches treated them with respect. Similarly, literacy coaches reported that they respect the teachers they coached (100.0%) and their school's principal (93.9%).

Respondents rated collaboration with other participants as high. Interventionists indicated that they collaborated with teachers (85.7% *agreed* or *strongly agreed*) and SCRF literacy coaches (95.2% *agreed* or *strongly agreed*). Almost all literacy coaches reported working with the regional literacy coach on professional development activities. Literacy coaches also indicated that there was a high level of collaboration with teachers when addressing student needs (89.8% *agreed or strongly agreed*) and that they shared similar views with teachers on how to teach reading (75.5% *agreed* or *strongly agreed*). A majority of teachers (87.3%) and principals (93.1%) *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that the SCRF literacy coach helps teachers work together as a team. Literacy coaches worked collaboratively with the principal to provide school level professional development opportunities (with 73.4% of literacy coaches *agreeing* or *strongly agreeing* with this statement). Literacy coaches also indicated that their principal communicates with them on a regular basis about the SCRF Initiative (71.4%). A greater number of principals (95.5%) *agreed or strongly* agreed that they shared similar views with literacy coaches on how to teach reading.

From matched participant survey analysis, when comparing the levels of trust, respect, and collaboration experienced this year with the previous year, principals showed little changes with mean increases ranging from 0.03 to 0.09 on a six point scale. The interventionists reported a mean decrease of 0.22 on a six point scale; yet, the agreement rating was still high. The literacy coaches reported mean increases in all of these areas with the exception of their interactions with the principal. The largest mean decrease of 0.14 on a six point scale was for literacy coaches collaborating with the principal to provide school level professional development opportunities for teachers in reading. The average level of agreement from teachers about the trust, respect, and collaboration decreased slightly, ranging between 0.07 to 0.16 points on a six point scale. Even though various participant groups showed mean decreases in the level of agreement with trust, respect, and collaboration, most participants responded positively in these areas.

Support between participants

Support was defined as responding to requests for consultation, providing professional development consistent with needs, and providing feedback about performance. Respondents'

perceptions were examined to determine if their designated support person had sufficient knowledge about content and assessment to meet their needs.

Interventionists (95.2% *agreed* or *strongly agreed*) indicated that they receive support from their SCRF literacy coaches and teachers. Almost 9 out of 10 interventionists *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that SCRF teachers support their intervention methods. Approximately 93% of interventionists stated that their intervention literacy coach gives them feedback about their teaching. While most interventionists (88.1%) *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that the SCRF teachers support their intervention methods, slightly fewer interventionists (77.4%) responded that teachers incorporate intervention strategies into their classroom instruction. Ninety-two percent of teachers indicated that they use the instructional strategies learned from their SCRF literacy coach and 89.0% stated the literacy coach responded to requests for assistance. Nearly 81% of literacy coaches indicated that their support was well received by the teachers.

Nearly 98% of principals *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that school-based literacy coaches, regional literacy coaches, and intervention literacy coaches responded to their requests for consultation. All principals and 91.0% of teachers reported that their SCRF literacy coach had enough content and assessment knowledge to help teachers. Approximately 96% of principals also indicated that the regional and intervention literacy coaches had the content knowledge necessary to help teachers and interventionists.

Classroom teachers (85.0%) *agreed or strongly agreed* that the professional development provided by the literacy coach met their needs. Approximately 94% of literacy coaches indicated that their regional literacy coach:

- o had enough knowledge about assessment and content to help them,
- o responded to requests for assistance,
- o provided feedback about coaching and study group facilitation,
- o and worked collaboratively to ensure that professional development needs were met.

Based on survey results for matched participants, over the past two years, interventionists perceived the support received from literacy coaches and teachers to be about the same with small changes between the two years (the largest mean decline was 0.10 on a six point scale). Teachers overwhelmingly *agreed or strongly agreed* (90.2%) that they receive support from the literacy coaches, though there was a small mean decrease of 0.20 on a six point scale.

Coaching Activities

The SCRF model calls for a full-time, school-based literacy coach to facilitate after-school study groups and work with teachers individually to improve their use of SBRR instructional practices. Literacy coaches and teachers provided information about the frequency of these coaching activities as shown in Table 5.

Similar to the 2005-2006 report, teachers and literacy coaches had different perceptions about the frequency of coaching activities. These variations may stem from differences in job perspectives among teachers and literacy coaches. For example, literacy coaches will view their job requirements in terms of working with the entire school, whereas teachers will few these coaching activities in terms of their own classrooms.

Literacy coaches reported high levels of involvement across the range of possible coaching activities. The frequency of teachers participating in these coaching activities was highest for sharing or demonstrating scientifically based reading strategies, helping analyze student assessment results, and using assessment results to improve instruction.

Table 5

Perception of Frequency of Coaching Activities Between Literacy Coaches and Teachers

Activities	Literacy Coaches[a]	Classroom Teachers[a]
Incorporating SC English language arts standards within lessons	73.5%	62.7%
Using the core reading program	75.0%	62.3%
Sharing or demonstrating scientifically based reading strategies for instruction	100.0%	84.9%
Helping develop classroom assessments for reading	71.4%	52.9%
Helping analyze student assessment results	100.0%	81.5%
Helping use student assessment data to improve teaching	100.0%	78.7%
Providing meaningful feedback	97.9%	72.0%
Selecting supplemental activities for students who need additional help in reading	98.0%	71.0%
Demonstrating or modeling lessons	93.9%	63.8%
Helping plan or develop lesson plans	91.9%	59.7%
Helping with classroom organization	91.8%	59.2%
Observing teaching	100.0%	64.4%
Team teaching	65.3%	27.4%
Helping with classroom management	100.0%	41.4%

[a]Percentage of respondents in the group who believed the activity occurred sometimes or often.

Teachers and literacy coaches also identified areas of interest for future activities. Helping plan or develop lesson plans, demonstrating or modeling lessons, and selecting

supplemental activities for students who need additional help in reading were the areas in which teachers and literacy coaches expressed the most interest.

Services Provided to Students

Activities and strategies targeting students are the key areas of implementation through which the SCRF Initiative is able to accomplish its goal of increasing students' reading abilities. Activities include intervention services, instructional services based on the five components, supplemental reading activities, and additional services to enhance student growth.

Intervention Services Provided to Students

Interventionists responded to items about the structure of their services to students, the number and grade level of students they serve, the frequency and length of time they spend serving students, and their pattern of reporting student progress to teachers. The majority of interventionists provided services through the use of small group instruction (92.9%) and Reading Recovery® (88.1%).[2] Some also provided one-to-one tutoring (14.3%). These services were primarily provided to students in first, second, and third grade. Twenty-five percent of interventionists provided services to kindergarten students. An average of eight students were served by each interventionist in one-to-one services, with students served being predominately in the first grade. All other grades had an average of less than one student for one-to-one services. Eighty-eight percent of interventionists reported working with four students on a one-to-one basis each day.

The average small group size was five students. Nearly two-thirds (65.9%) lasted 31-40 minutes, and 28% lasted more than 40 minutes. Approximately 74% of interventionists reported working with three small groups of students each day. They reported to classroom teachers on students' progress *often* (63.1%), which was described as several times a month, or weekly; or *sometimes* (35.7%), which was described as several times a grading period. Only 1.2% of interventionists indicated reporting to teachers only once or twice a year.

From the matched survey analysis, during the 2006-2007 school year, 23.5% more interventionists than last year reported student progress to teachers several times a grading period rather than several times a month or weekly. It should be noted, however, that the categories differed between the 2005-2006 survey and the 2006-2007 survey. A change was made to provide better clarification in 2006-2007. The shift in percentages between the two years may be attributed to the change in scale rather than a true change in practice. Also, the

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[2] The total percentage reported exceeds 100% for interventionists because they often provided more than one type of service.

interventionists served more students across all grades. The only decline in the average number of students served was in the small group service category for third graders (a decrease of 0.32). In addition to the interventionists serving more students, more interventionists also reported spending 31-40 minutes with each small group every day.

Instructional Services Provided to Students

Interventionists and teachers provided instructional services to students based on the five components of reading instruction (comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, phonics, and phonemic awareness) using myriad instructional strategies (see Appendices B and E for percentages of interventionists and teachers using specific strategies). More than 90% of classroom teachers integrated fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension into reading instruction 4-5 days per week. Slightly fewer classroom teachers integrated phonics (86.4%) and phonemic awareness (84.0%) 4-5 days per week. More than 91% of interventionists incorporated all five components into their reading instruction 4-5 days per week.

During the 2006-2007 school year teachers used several instructional methods *often* or *very often* in the classroom including one-to-one instructional sessions (87.1%), whole group instruction (89.1%), and small group instruction (94.4%). Additionally, more than 92% of teachers reported providing 120 minutes or more of uninterrupted English language arts instruction.

Supplemental reading activities

Classroom teachers provided supplemental reading activities, which included additional reading instruction (82.1%), computer-assisted instruction (60.4%), and peer tutoring (66.2%). Other groups also provided supplemental reading activities to students. Nearly half of all teachers taught students who received targeted support services from other professionals (48.4%), paraprofessionals (34.4%), and volunteers (27.9%) who work with students on reading.

Additional services to enhance student growth

Principals responded to questions about the additional services provided by the school to enhance student growth. As Table 6 shows, after-school programs (82.2%), computer-assisted instruction (75.6%), and summer school programs (73.3%) were the most frequently reported services provided by the school.

Table 6

Additional Services to Enhance Student Growth

Additional Services	Percentage[a]
After-school programs	82.2%
Computer-assisted instruction	75.6%
Summer school programs	73.3%
Tutoring	60.0%
Family literacy	44.4%
Homework centers	40.0%
Mentoring programs	37.8%
Before-school programs	24.4%

[a]Percentages exceed 100% since participants were asked to select all that apply.

Reactions to SCRF Initiative

More than 77% of teachers, principals, interventionists, and literacy coaches *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that implementation has gone smoothly this year. At least 62% of each participant group reported the climate for implementation was positive, and 65% *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that the program should continue next year.

When compared with last year in the matched participant survey analysis, fewer participants would choose to continue the initiative in their school next year if given the opportunity to make a decision. Principals showed the greatest mean decline of 0.57 on a six point scale in the area of continuing the initiative, while literacy coaches showed the least mean decline of 0.16 on a six point scale. The mean score for *The climate for implementation of the SCRF Initiative is positive in my school* also decreased for all participants. Interventionists had largest mean decrease of 0.43 on a six point scale for climate for implementation, while literacy coaches showed the least amount of decrease with a mean decrease of 0.14 on a six point scale. These results may reflect the fact that 19 schools were being discontinued for the 2007-2008 school year. Overall, these mean changes were relatively small decreases, because participants still agree the support for the initiative and climate for implementation are positive.

Effectiveness

Participants were asked to rate the effectiveness of the SCRF Initiative at their school. They responded on a scale of 1 (*not effective*) to 4 (*very effective*). As illustrated in Figure 9, the vast majority of the ratings were positive (*effective* or *very effective* ratings ranging from 83.1% to 90.9%). While most participants rated the SCRF Initiative *effective or very effective*, 2.9% of teachers and 2.0% of literacy coaches rated it *not effective*.
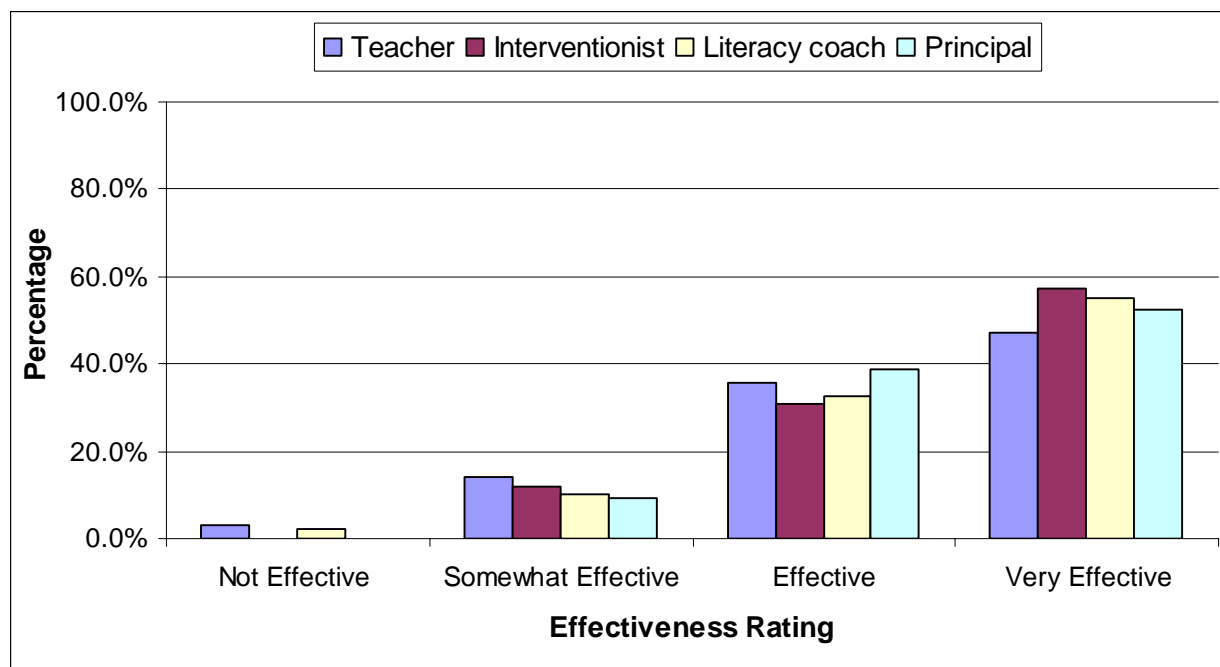
Figure 9. Participant ratings of the effectiveness of the SCRF Initiative.

Benefits of the SCRF Initiative

Survey participants were asked to respond to an open-ended question by indicating *one beneficial aspect of the SCRF Initiative*. Answers were provided by 44 (97.8%) principals, 48 (98.0%) literacy coaches, 83 (89.8%) interventionists, and 659 (93.3%) teachers. Figure 10 provides information on benefits reported by all participant groups. Results and exemplary quotes describing reported benefits in further detail for each participant group can be found in the unabridged qualitative tables in Appendices B-E.

All participant groups indicated that the SCRF program increased the amount of available resources. All groups also reported that the SCRF Initiative enhanced the focus on assessment. An additional benefit reported was the valuable professional development opportunities provided by the SCRF Initiative and study groups. In addition, participants in all groups noted that student academic performance has improved as a result of the SCRF program. Several principals, interventionists, and teachers cited the focus on reading as important, and wrote that they value the beneficial effects of the uninterrupted reading block. Moreover, the initiative contributed to increasing collaboration and a sense of community according to many participants.

Other benefits were mentioned by individual participant groups. Several teachers indicated that the SCRF is a positive program overall, which helped them grow professionally,

improve instruction, and become more confident and motivated. Another positive aspect of the SCRF Initiative was the provision of support staff. Both teachers and literacy coaches noted that the support provided by literacy coaches or by interventionists was beneficial.
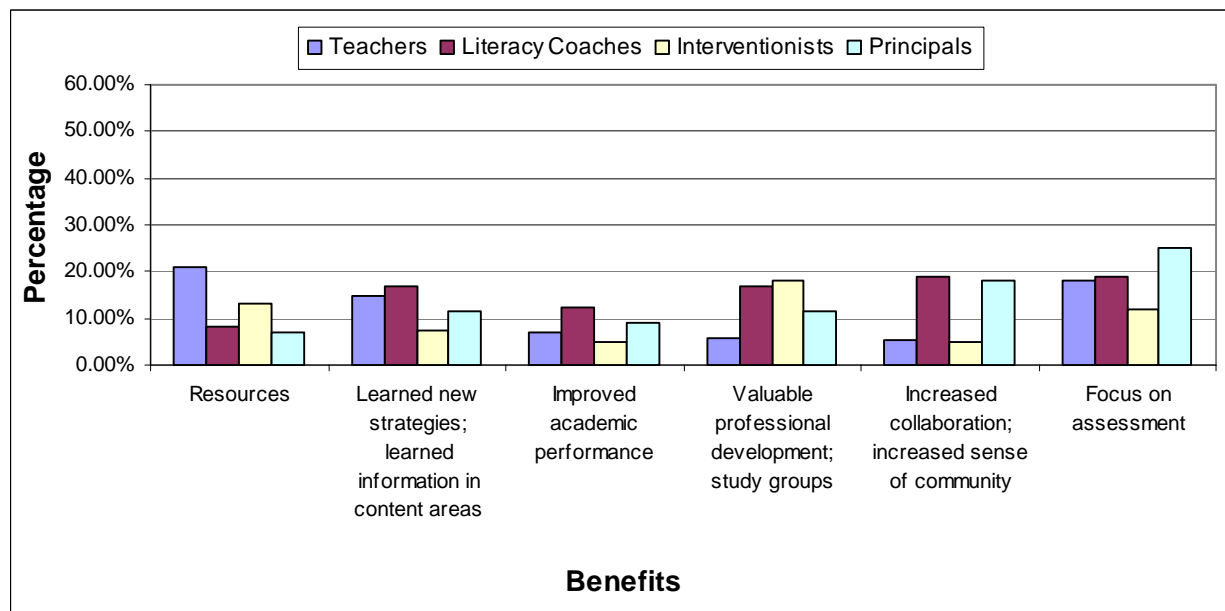

Figure 10. Identified benefits of the SCRF Initiative.

Areas for Improvement

Survey participants were also asked to indicate *one aspect of the SCRF Initiative that they would like to see changed*, and the majority of teachers (n=567), interventionists (n=68) literacy coaches (n=43), and principals (n=37) provided recommendations for improvement as shown in Figure 11. Further details on suggested areas for improvement for each participant group can be found in the unabridged qualitative tables in Appendices B-E.

Making changes to the study groups was the most common recommendation suggested by all participant groups. Requested changes tended to focus on reducing the number or length of study group meetings, reducing the assigned work or making study groups optional. All groups also recommended improvements related to assessment. Reductions in testing activities, receiving assistance with testing and changing specific aspects of the assessments were among the suggestions made. Participant groups also suggested increasing student writing emphasis. Additionally, principals, literacy coaches, and teachers would like to have more flexibility and suggested modifications to the 120 minutes block.

Individual groups of participants made additional suggestions for needed improvements. A small group of teachers and literacy coaches indicated the necessity of

accommodating the needs of specific grade levels or groups of students, as well as the need to add more coaches and modify the role and performance of literacy coaches. Similarly, interventionists suggested changes in their responsibilities and requested more autonomy in decision making while performing job duties.

Some interventionists and teachers indicated the need to modify the allocation of funds and resources. A few principals also suggested reducing the number or amount of traveling required for regional meetings and providing funds to sustain the initiative beyond the grant period. Teachers also noted the need to reduce the amount of paperwork required, to improve professional development activities, and to make various changes in the emphasis of SCRF.
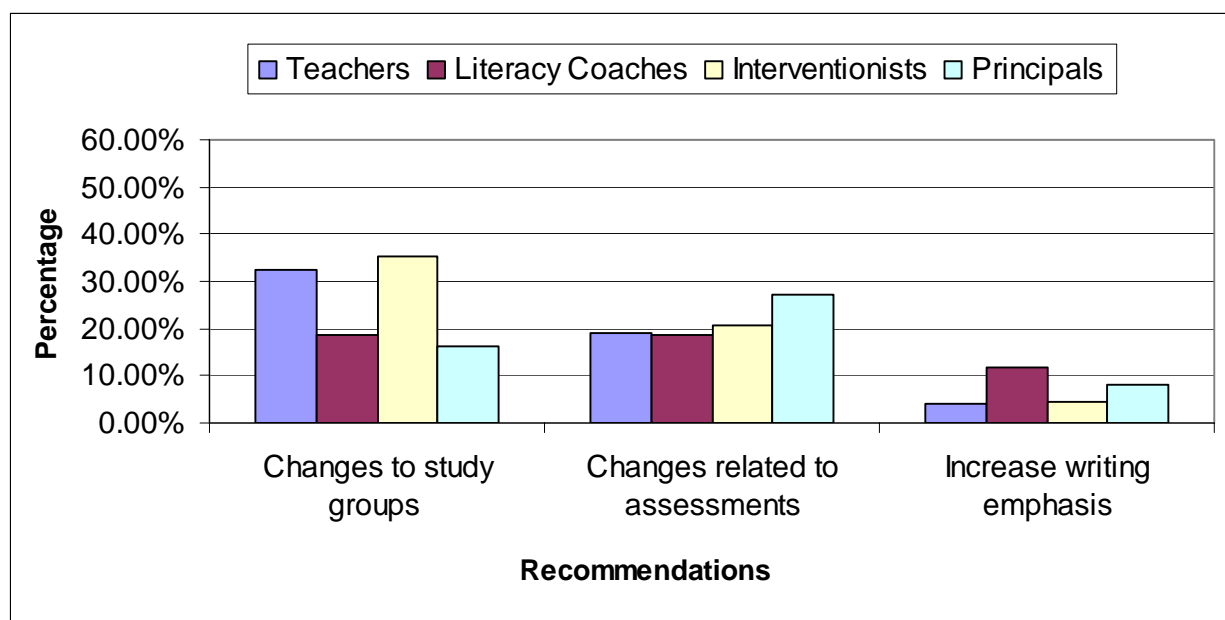

Figure 11. Recommended changes for the SCRF Initiative.

Section Summary

The 2006-2007 survey results revealed many strengths of the SCRF Initiative. Participation in professional development activities and workshops was high for all groups, and the majority of respondents found these activities to be helpful. Likewise, participants found the assessments helpful. Overall, the participant groups highly support the initiative, understand the program's goals and their own roles and responsibilities, and feel high levels of trust, respect, collaboration, and support. In addition, services provided to students remain high. The most commonly reported benefits included the resources, valuable professional development,

positive impact on student performance and staff collaborative work, and the increased focus on assessment.

Areas for program improvement include the need for professional development for all groups on effective instructional strategies to use for students performing below grade level, as well as an increased need to clarify the roles and responsibilities of other participants. Overall, the levels of support were high; however, there were mean declines in the percentage choosing to continue the initiative. The climate for implementation also showed small declines; however, the planned discontinuation of 19 schools may have affected these results. Participant groups suggested changes related to study groups and assessments, as well as an increased emphasis on student writing.

South Carolina
Reading First

School Leadership Team Meeting Evaluation

During the 2006-2007 academic year, the South Carolina Department of Education sponsored monthly School Leadership Team (SLT) meetings for participants of the SCRF. The structure of the meetings was similar to that of previous years. Participants of the meetings held on April 25th, 2007 and April 26th, 2007 were asked to complete a summative evaluation of the SLT meetings held during the 2006-2007 school year. The content of the two meetings held on April 25th and April 26th was identical; however, the participants represented different school districts and/or schools. The evaluation form provided to participants consisted of three demographic items, 15 Likert-type items on a six point scale ranging from *Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree*, one dichotomous item (Yes or No) regarding sharing of information with school faculty, and three open-ended questions regarding the impact of the SLT meetings. The survey instrument with results is included in Appendix G. On April 25th, 91 participants completed and returned the SLT survey. On April 26th, 100 participants completed and returned the SLT survey. In total, 191 SCRF SLT Meeting Evaluation forms were collected and analyzed. The following information reflects the demographics and perceptions of those participants who returned evaluation forms.

Participant Descriptive Information

Forty-two schools in South Carolina were represented by respondents at the two days of SLT meetings. These participants represented 22 school districts within the state. As Figure 12 displays, of the 191 respondents, the positions most often identified include school literacy coach (18.9%), classroom teacher (17.4%), interventionist (16.3%), media specialist (13.2%), special education teacher (11.1%), and principal (10.5%). Four respondents selected *other* as their position. Those respondents subsequently identified themselves as lead teachers (n=2), teacher coach (n=1), and speech language pathologist (n=1).
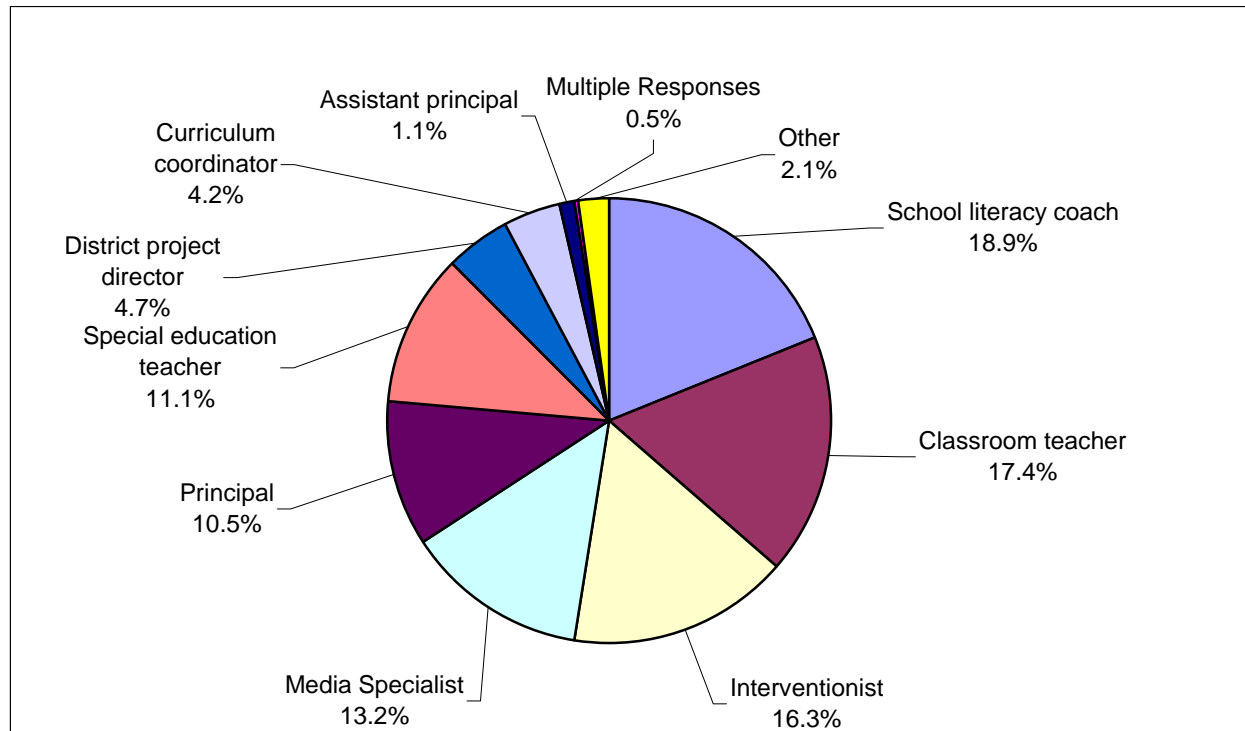
Figure 12. Percentage of respondents by identified position.

Presenters and Presentations

Survey items 3 through 17 asked participants to rate their satisfaction with various components of SLT meetings in 2006-2007 on a six point scale ranging from *Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree*. The means for all of these items were over 5.0, indicating that participants agreed that the meetings were beneficial and important. As Table 7 shows, the items with the highest means (mean=5.51 to 5.59) included items 11, 14, 13, 15 and 9. Item 5, *I have learned new leadership strategies in the meetings this year*, had the lowest mean (mean=5.11).

Table 7

Presenters and Presentation Items with the Highest Means

Number	Item	Mean
11	The presenters were well prepared.	5.59
14	The presenters provided sufficient opportunities for the participants to share and discuss information within their school teams.	5.55
13	The presenters were able to answer questions from the participants.	5.52
15	The handouts were clear and complete.	5.52
9	The presenters kept the discussion focused.	5.51

Open-Response Items

The final section of the survey used open-ended questions to gain an understanding of the perspective of the SCRF SLT meeting participants on topics which included the procedures used for routinely sharing information, what they valued most about participating in the meetings, and information or topics they would like to see presented in future SLT meetings.

Procedures for Routinely Sharing Information

In the first open-ended question, the participants were asked to provide an answer to two parts of the question. Part one asked the participants if their team *has a procedure for routinely sharing information*. Part two asked the participants to comment on their response to part one by *describing the procedures used* or *explaining why they responded no*. The majority of respondents (90.6%) agreed that their SLT has such a system in place. However, 17 participants identified that their school's SLT did not have a method by which they routinely share information with faculty about the SCRF initiative.

Procedures Routinely Used to Share Information

The responses analyzed for the second part are only those that wrote a comment for the question. In their comments, most of the respondents listed multiple procedures for sharing information (See Figure 13). In order to gather an exhaustive list of the procedures used, each of the distinct procedures listed was included in the analysis. This resulted in a large number of responses (n=338) that exceeded the number of respondents to this question (n=180).

Most responses (82.5%) indicating that there was a procedure for sharing information stated it was routinely shared through meetings. Some responses that stated meetings were routinely used to share information gave details about the types of meetings that were held. The type of meetings commonly listed were study groups (33.7%) and faculty/teacher meetings (29.4%). One respondent stated:

> *"We do this through study groups. The info always qualifies for study group as we always use data to guide our conversations, discussions, and decisions."*
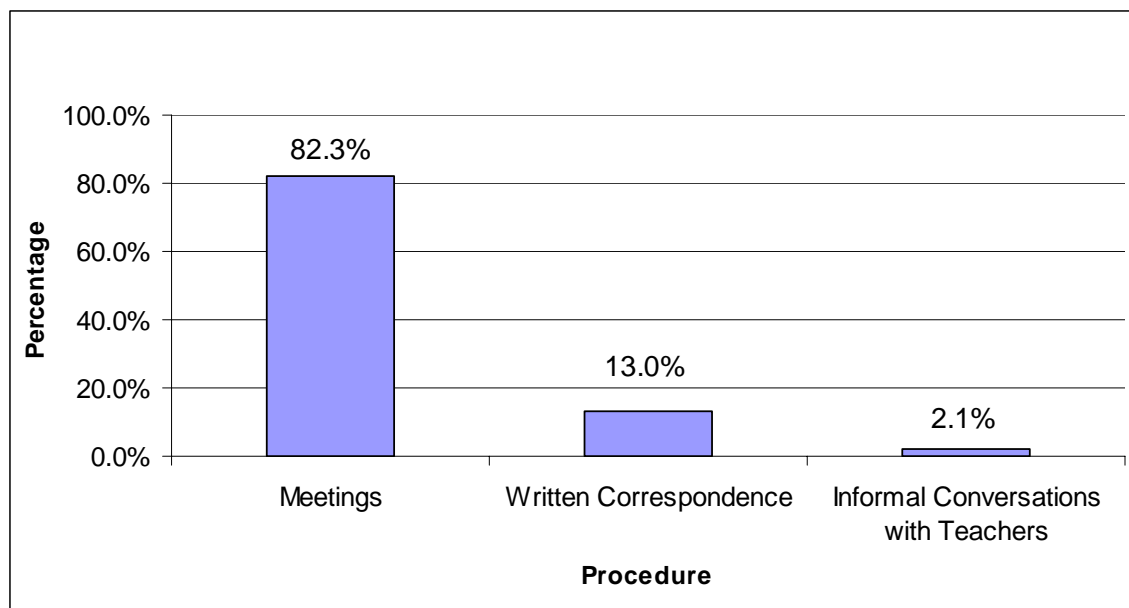
Figure 13. Procedures routinely used to share information.

Note. The percentages do not add up to 100.0% due to the non-responsive comment category being excluded from the figure. Please see Appendix G for full results.

The second most common way of sharing information was through written correspondence (13.0%). The formats used for sharing information from SLT meetings via written correspondence fell into two categories: non-electronic correspondence (54.5%) and electronic mail (45.5%). The non-electronic correspondence included items such as newsletters, memos, teacher boxes, announcements on boards in the lounge, and handouts. Respondents of the category stated:

> *"We have a 'share' item on our agenda where we mention items discussed or upcoming things such as utilizing the Observational Tool, etc."*

> *"When teachers need info from SLT, we print it in the Monday memo."*

> *"Minutes are emailed out to teachers."*

Most Valuable Aspect about Participating in SCRF SLT Meetings

Respondents were also asked *what have you found to be the most valuable about participating in SCRF SLT meetings* (See Figure 14). There were a wide variety of responses with knowledge acquisition, teamwork, and direct access to State Department of Education personnel being the most common responses.
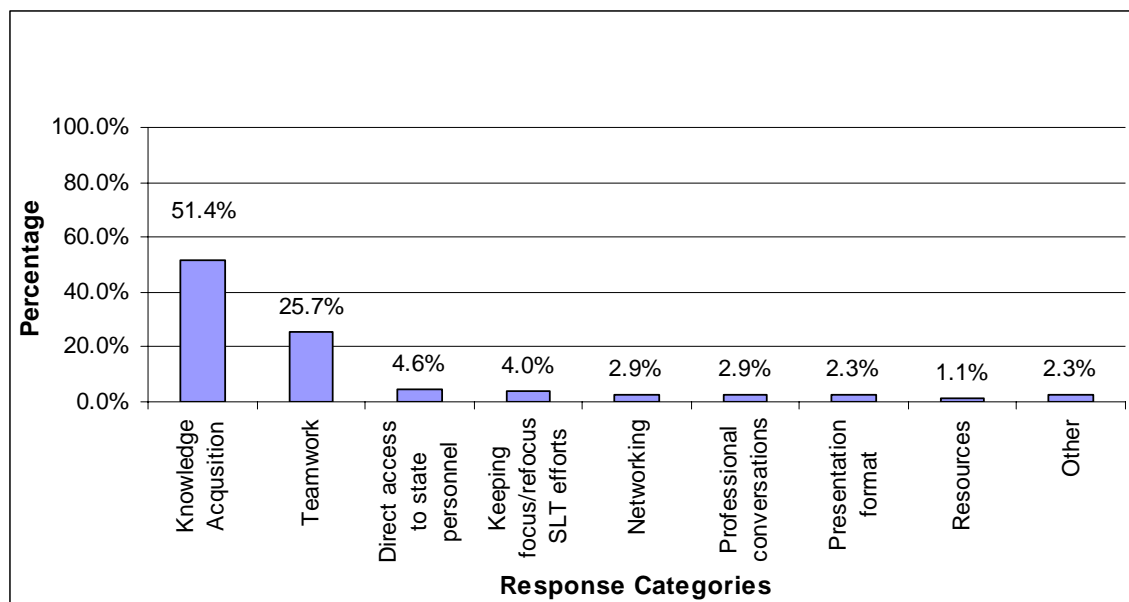
Figure 14. Most valuable aspect about participation.

Note. The percentages do not add up to 100.0% due to the non-responsive comment category being excluded from the figure. Please see Appendix G for full results.

The most frequent response was some type of knowledge acquisition (51.4%). This included the opportunity to share information and gain knowledge (42.2%); having other schools and districts share success stories and ideas (33.3%); being able to understand the big picture (14.4%); and understanding the roles and responsibilities (10.0%) within SCRF. Some participants commented:

> *"The knowledge of all the presenters have been graciously shared throughout our meetings. We as a team have been valued as leaders, decision makers, and facilitators to keep the growth and collaboration growing within our school. We have kept a focus on our school goals and are working intently to achieve these goals."*

> *"I have enjoyed other schools/teachers sharing what goes on at other schools. I always get new ideas to take back with me."*

Teamwork (25.7%) was also considered a valuable aspect of participation. As part of teamwork, respondents appreciated the collaboration within their school (82.2%), team building and team support (11.1%), and the emphasis on team reflection/team examination (6.7%). As one participant revealed, it is valuable:

> *"Having the time to talk w[ith] team members w[ithout] distractions or interruptions that occur at the school."*

A few respondents (4.6%) also mentioned appreciating the opportunity to learn first-hand the SCRF grant requirements and updates through direct access with SC State Department of Education personnel. One participant valued:

> *"Being able to get information first hand and being able to discuss this info with each other."*

Other helpful aspects of meeting participation included having a chance to focus or refocus on SLT efforts and receiving implementation support (4.0%), networking (2.5%), the opportunity for professional conversations or communication (2.5%), the presentation format (i.e. videos, presentations) (2.3%), and resources (1.1%).

Suggested Topics for Future SLT Meetings

The final open-ended question asked participants *what information or topics they would like to be presented in future SLT meetings.* As Figure 15 reveals, the most common response categories from the participants related to implementation, the opportunity to learn from each other, instructional strategies, and curriculum.
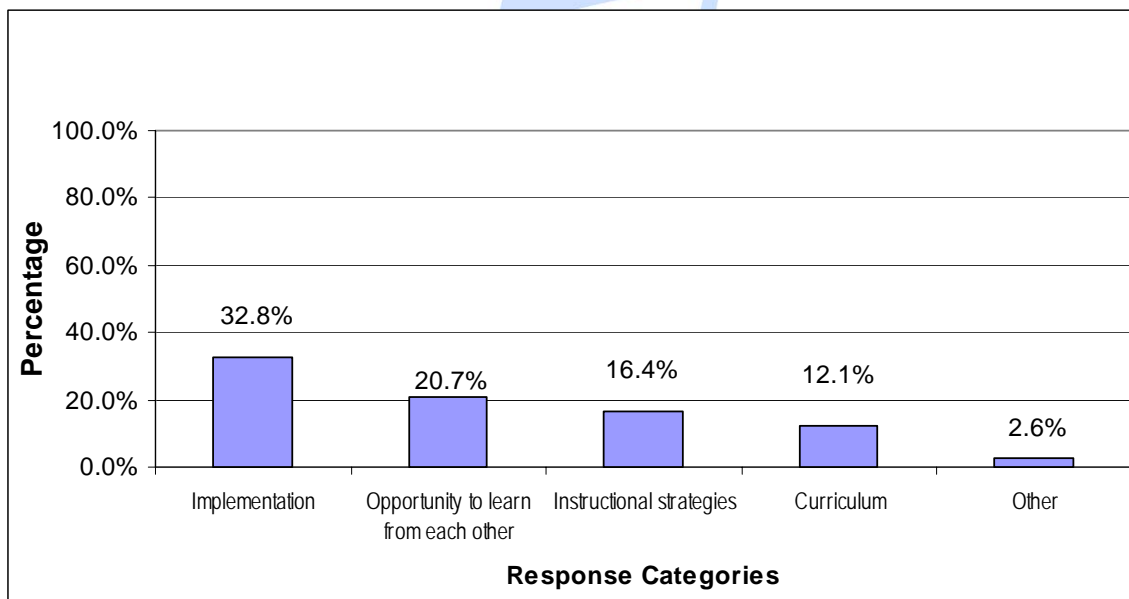

Figure 15. Information or topics to be addressed at future SLT meetings.

Note. The percentages do not add up to 100.0% due to two categories being excluded from the figure. Please see Appendix G for full results.

Implementation was the most prevalent response (32.8%). SLT members would like additional information on various aspects of implementing the grant requirements at the school-level, especially understanding the roles and responsibilities of the participants. The next most common response category was having the opportunity to learn from one another (20.7%) This included learning through sharing experiences and strategies and gaining knowledge on how to work as a team and build collaboration. Participants would also like to continue receiving information about instructional strategies (16.4%) specifically related to small group and reading comprehension. Additional professional development related to curriculum was also mentioned as an important topic for future SLT meetings. Three respondents had other ideas about future topics (2.6%), which are detailed in Appendix G.

Section Summary

Overall the responses from the participants in the 2006-2007 SLT workshops were positive. Most of the respondents felt the presenters and presentations were helpful. The respondents also felt the information shared between schools at the SLT meetings was beneficial. Respondents are still seeking help in specific areas of implementing the grant requirements, but they feel confident they are doing well. In general, the SLT workshops were positively received by the participants.

Professional Development Surveys

Reading First Workshop Evaluation Narrative

In October 2006, 218 Reading First participants attended a Reading First Workshop which introduced the five components of reading instruction that all teachers should systematically and explicitly teach (National Reading Panel, 2000). The workshop participants were new to the SCRF schools since initial implementation in 2004-2005 and had not previously received training in the five components. Participants completed a workshop evaluation form (which can be seen in the full workshop report included as Appendix L). The workshop was two days in length and was held on two occasions; October 16th and 17th (Workshop 1) and October 19th and 20th (Workshop 2).

The evaluation form included 18 Likert scale items (measured on a six point scale where 1= *strongly disagree* and 6= *strongly agree*) which invited participants to evaluate the content and value of the workshop, as well as the effectiveness of workshop presenters. Overall, responses tended to be high indicating agreement with the statements and evidence that the workshops were beneficial for participants. The items that received the strongest level of support measured the presenter's knowledge and preparation and participant's belief that the strategies presented were important and that they intended to use them in their instruction. Results from independent samples t-tests indicated that mean item ratings were significantly higher following the second workshop as compared with the first workshop (for all but three comparisons). It was hypothesized that this may be due to a problem with the facility's technology which occurred during the first workshop. The full results document can be seen in Appendix L.

Summer School Professional Development Evaluation

Background

As a professional development opportunity, SCRF educators were invited to observe instruction during the second SCRF summer school which took place in July 2007. The program was implemented in nine SCRF elementary schools in South Carolina. Each attendee participated in the summer school professional development opportunity for three days, during which "participants observed how to (1) effectively integrate the five components of reading into the 120-minute uninterrupted block of instruction, (2) use literacy centers, and (3) use assessment to guide daily instruction" (Sesso-Dahlke et. al, 2006). Each daily session began with observation of an SCRF classroom followed by a debriefing session in which observers could ask the teacher and literacy coach specific questions. A paper-and-pencil survey was

utilized to determine the effectiveness of SCRF summer school in promoting the professional development of participants. It contained 20 Likert scale items, two open-ended items, and four demographic items. The 20 Likert scale items measured knowledge gained about SCRF and assessment from observation and the value of participating in the debriefing sessions. Open-ended items provided participants with an opportunity to discuss what they perceived as the most helpful aspect of participation, as well as provide a recommendation for improving SCRF summer school.

Results

In total across all nine summer school sites, 269 participants completed the survey instrument, the majority of whom (70.9%) were classroom teachers. All quantitative data including the number of participants responding to each item, the frequency of each response, and the mean for each item can be seen in Appendix M. Mean ratings for the ten Likert scale items measuring knowledge gained in specific targeted areas were very high indicating that participants found the professional development to be helpful. Over 90% of participants *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that their knowledge increased in 8 of the 10 areas. The highest level of agreement was found for *The classroom observation has increased my understanding of planning for the 120-minute block* (95.9%). Items that received lower levels of agreement were *The classroom observation has increased my understanding of how to integrate the five components of reading in the classroom* (87.3%) and *The classroom observation has increased my understanding of how to use of the SCRF Observation Tool* (80.8%).

Participants also evaluated the knowledge they gained about assessment using three Likert scale items. Participants rated these items somewhat lower than items which measured knowledge gained in targeted areas. The item that received the highest level of support was *I have a better understanding of how to use informal student assessments to plan* (84.4%). The item which received the lowest level of support was *I have a better understanding of how to use Dominie to plan instruction* (69%).

In addition, participants were asked to evaluate the value of the debriefing sessions in which they participated and the preparation and skillfulness of the individuals who led the debriefing sessions using six Likert scale items. Participants expressed strong levels of agreement to all items in this section (percentages ranged from 94.8% to 97.1%). Thus, participants viewed the debriefing sessions as highly valuable, contributing to their overall understanding, and indicating that the leaders of the debriefing sessions were highly knowledgeable and skilled discussion facilitators.

Using an open-ended format, participants were also asked to identify the most helpful aspect of participating in summer school and provide one recommendation for improvement. The most commonly cited helpful aspect was observing instruction (66.2%). Other helpful aspects included interacting with others (17.3%), observing interactions (6.4%), all aspects of the program (2.3%), and knowledge impacted of the five components and SCRF (1.9%).

In response to the second open-ended item that requested a recommendation for improvement, the most commonly cited changes included allowing participants to observe in multiple classrooms and grade levels (15.2%), modifying the structure of SCRF summer school observation including the schedule of activities and the length of observation (27.3%), and modifying the SCRF professional development to include more time and information (10.8%). Helpful aspects and recommendations for improvement which were less commonly cited by participants can be seen in Appendix M along with participants' original quotes which exemplify each category.

Section Summary

Participant responses indicated that overall they perceived SCRF summer school 2007 observation and debriefing to be beneficial. Most participants indicated that they gained valuable knowledge in targeted areas and specific knowledge about assessment. Many participants recommended changes to improve the summer school observation experience. The most commonly cited recommendations focused on being able to observe multiple classrooms and multiple grade levels. The full results document is included in Appendix M.
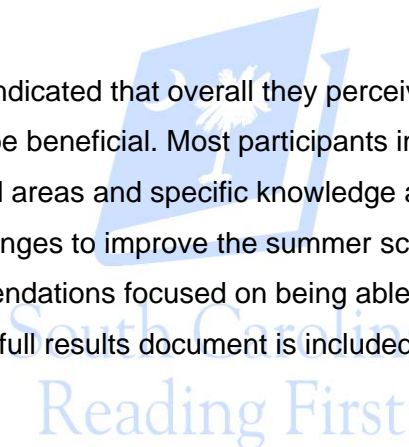
2006-2007 Recommendations for SCRF

The following section contains recommendations based on the findings presented in this report. Please note that the following recommendations are provided from the perspective of the external evaluation team and are meant to serve as topics for further discussion with SDE administrators. Factors such as resources, capacities, political context, and organizational context will affect the extent to which these recommendations can and should be implemented. However, the recommendations should provide guidance for interpreting and using the data collected during the 2006-2007 school year.

❖ **Student Achievement:** Over the last three years, Stanford Reading First (SRF) achievement results for students in second grade have shown considerably smaller gains between fall and spring semesters compared with students in grades 1 and 3. The assessment administered to students in the spring of grade 2 contains more and longer paragraphs for students to read and then respond to than the test administered in the fall of grade 2. The professional development providers should discuss potential strategies for transitioning grade 2 students to more sustained reading experiences with accompanying comprehension assessments.

In addition to analyzing changes in total scores on the Stanford Reading First assessment across grade levels, the percentage of students categorized as AGL for each component of the total score on the SRF assessment tool was also examined for the 2006-2007 school year. The percentage of students categorized as AGL increased from fall 2006 to spring 2007 for all components except grade 1 phonics (decrease of 6.5%), grade 2 reading comprehension strategies (decrease of 30.0%), and grade 3 phonemic awareness (decrease of 13.8%) and vocabulary development (decrease of 10.5%). These components should be considered in planning additional professional development to improve achievement scores in subsequent years.

❖ **Study Groups:** Changes to the study groups was the most common recommendation suggested by teachers (32.5%), interventionists (35.3%), literacy coaches (18.6%), and principals (16.2%). Discussions among the professional development providers should consider the issues raised by the SCRF participants related to study groups.

❖ **Professional development:** Overall, survey results show that participants value the professional development opportunities they are provided as a part of the SCRF Initiative. However, participants did identify areas where additional professional

development is needed and ways to improve current professional development offerings. All groups responded that they need more professional development on effective instructional strategies to use for students below grade level. In addition to offering tools for working with students below grade level, this topic could be the focus of an upcoming Reading First Workshop so that participants may gain a more in-depth understanding of the topic.

❖ **Summer school:** Participants who attended the Summer School Observation and debriefing sessions identified ways to improve the offering in the future. While Summer School Observation survey results reveal that teachers found professional development through classroom observation to be very helpful, teachers believe this opportunity could be improved by providing more opportunities for observing multiple classrooms and grade levels.

2006-2007 SCRF Highlights

Students performed better on the Stanford Reading First assessment in the 2006-2007 school year compared with the 2004-2005 and the 2005-2006 school years. Similar to the previous years' results, students' scores on the Stanford Reading First assessment improved from fall 2006 to spring 2007. Results from surveys administered to program participants indicated that they have a better understanding of program goals compared with the previous year. Additionally, participant groups report a high rate of participation in professional development activities, and they find those activities helpful. Effectiveness ratings remained the same from the second to the third year of the program, with over 80% of each participant group rating the initiative as either *effective* or *very effective*. According to survey data, the following items were identified as benefits of the SCRF program: plentiful resources, valuable professional development, positive impact on student performance and staff collaborative work, and the increased focus on assessment.

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