



Social Sciences and Humanities  
Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en  
sciences humaines du Canada

Canada

# Challenges Incurred Enacting Multi-Tiered Models of Literacy Coaching and Professional Learning Projects



Dr. Tiffany Gallagher  
Dr. Arlene Grierson  
Rachel St Hilaire, MEd(c)

# BACKGROUND

- For late middle and high school teachers, the value of collaborating to support the needs of their struggling readers is well established (Schnellert, Butler & Higginson, 2008)
- Collegial collaboration can enhance teachers' pedagogical knowledge through engaging in critical reflection and goal-directed, self-regulated learning (Stephens & Heidi, 2014; Toll, 2007; Walpole & McKenna, 2012)
- Previous studies document the importance of building on teachers' existing professional knowledge and how coaches at different levels can work collaboratively to support teachers' self-directed professional growth (Penuel, Phillips, & Harris, 2014; Stover, Kissel, Haag, & Shoniker, 2011)

A decorative border of teal 'x' marks surrounds the entire slide content.

# RESEARCH QUESTION

A teal wavy line is positioned below the title.

What are the benefits and challenges of enacting multi-tiered models of literacy coaching for the professional learning of teachers of adolescent struggling readers?



# METHODS



# PARTICIPANTS

- ▷ 1 Southern Ontario school district
- ▷ 21 high school teachers & four Literacy Coaches

YEAR 1

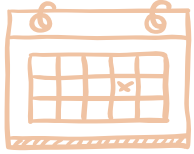
- 6 high school teacher participants
- 2 district Literacy Coaches
- 2 Provincial Literacy Facilitators

YEAR 2

- 15 high school teacher participants
- 2 district Literacy Coaches
- 2 Provincial Literacy Facilitators



# STUDY CONTEXT



18-month long  
professional learning  
project



- ▷ There were 9 half-day and 6 full day professional learning meetings co-facilitated by the Coaches, which were opportunities for all participants to come together to share new strategies, reflect, and discuss their practices



Teachers were coached on how  
and why to implement guided  
reading and small group  
instruction



- ▷ The teacher participants worked in pairs
- ▷ With the support of Literacy Coaches, teachers co-planned and co-taught lessons focused on reading fluency, comprehension, and word study instruction

# DATA COLLECTION



## Interviews

- ▷ Teacher and coach participants were interviewed
- ▷ Interviews were audio—recorded and transcribed prior to data analysis



## Fieldnotes

- ▷ Researchers typed fieldnotes on their devices during coaching interactions and large-group sessions

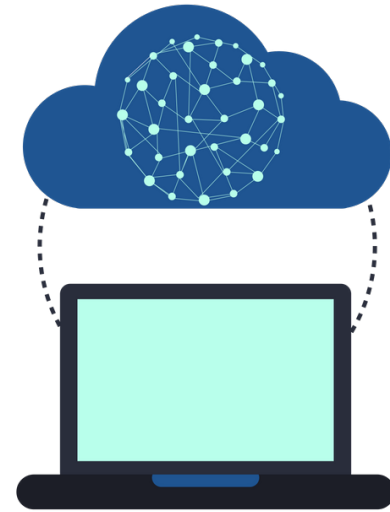


## Artifacts

- ▷ Artifacts were gathered such as instructional resources and links to shared reflections on Google Drive

# DATA ANALYSIS

- 1 Qualitative software (NVivo) was used to import all field notes and interview transcripts
- 2 Data were read and coded
- 3 Nodes were created and run through software program to find common themes
- 4 The findings were clustered into categories to find larger themes
- 5 Quotes were extracted from the raw data to illustrate each theme







# FINDINGS



# FINDINGS

## Assessment to Instruction

- ▷ Teachers appreciated that citing success criteria aligned with learning goals and formative feedback during a lesson; this was helpful for students' reading improvement
- ▷ Realization that reading and writing skills do not go hand and hand in English assessment
- ▷ Learn how to implement independent and guided reading pedagogies, while matching tasks and texts to learners' needs

“

The literacy coach explains that when we assess reading, we assess through the medium of writing, which then is also assessing writing. Therefore, having oral responses is more valuable...Another teacher agrees and adds that conferencing is a better way to assess reading

~Fieldnotes, November 2, 2017

”

# FINDINGS

## Students' Metacognition

- ▷ Teachers came to appreciate that if their students lacked prior knowledge, they needed to scaffold them to build it and help them become active learners
- ▷ Struggling students began to use metacognitive language and demonstrate an awareness of how they were inferring meaning from text
- ▷ Students were more engaged in tasks, returning to texts for answers, and asking questions about the texts

“

[The teacher] is more comfortable with metacognition and how to get students to reflect on their learning. They are asking questions when they are reading with him that demonstrate whether they are inferring or making connections...[the teacher] is more aware of how to teach it explicitly now and he really has slowed his teaching down.

~Literacy Coach, January 18 2017

”

# FINDINGS

## Teachers' Reflection

- ▷ Meaningful teacher reflection occurred, promoted by probing questions from the coaches
- ▷ Teachers discussed strategies for grouping students and encouraging self-regulation
- ▷ Facilitators encouraged teachers to articulate their changes in practice and intentions to spread and build school capacity

“I think Coach 1 and Coach 2 listen and then they give. They sort out what I've said, and they then lead me in a direction, and I think...they always can guide me to a series of options. “What do you think about this?” ‘Here are some things you could do.’ They never tell me what you do. They kind of just say this is one direction to take or this is another direction. Here is a resource here. How could I support you with this, right?”

~Teacher Interview, May 25, 2018

# FINDINGS

## Teacher Engagement

- ▷ Facilitators fortified an environment of safety and trust
- ▷ All teachers were supportive of one another as they engaged in the professional learning process
- ▷ Teachers evaluated their investment in the process and concluded it was a productive as they were enhancing their practices by implementing effective strategies

“

That was really valuable because it made me realize how much I don't know about actually teaching reading or doing an analysis of where a student or a struggling reader is at... to me that was like drinking from a fire hose, but I found it so interesting. It was amazing.

~Teacher Interview, June 7 2018

”

# FINDINGS

## Professional Learning Facilitators

- ▷ The Provincial Literacy Leads (Coaches) were skilled in:
  - eliciting responses
  - keeping teacher participants on task
  - asking questions to prompt critical thinking
  - encouraging teachers to ground their practices in their students' needs and interests

“

This discussion was well moderated by the Provincial Literacy Lead. She listened to the two participants who are both very knowledgeable in their roles as facilitators. She does offer good ‘in the moment’ stories and anecdotes that provide illustrations for the issues they are talking about.

~Fieldnotes, January 30, 2018

”

# FINDINGS

## Alignment with Policy

- ▷ Ministry initiatives and resources were explicitly presented during district whole group and one-on-one coaching
- ▷ This 'messaging' included references to professional readings where research-based instructional strategies were featured
- ▷ There was a distinct attempt to make these connections among sources of information at different levels of expertise

“

Coach 1 and Coach 2 are attempting to carry forward the professional learning that they engaged in in the Webinar series with the Ministry of Education – excellent alignment!

~Fieldnotes, January 9, 2018

”

# FINDINGS

## Focus of Sessions

- ▷ Participating teachers needed to be engaged in their learning and recognize cohesion in the messaging in order for it to make an impact on their practice
- ▷ Teachers expressed that from professional learning sessions that they needed the same type of clarity in the goals, activities and follow through that they provide for their students

“

I have to be able to apply [professional learning]. To me it has to be real... like listening to the tape of this girl struggling to read and then applying it to me, that was real. You know, that's not just telling me that this is a good idea because, I wrote a book about it or I'm from the ministry. But I can see the little girl, then to me it's real. If it's not real then I don't want to do it

~Teacher Interview, June 7, 2018

”



# FINDINGS

## Coaching the Literacy Coaches

- ▷ The Coaches at the school district level adopted coaching skills that they had been introduced to and seen modelled during sessions with their Provincial Literacy Leads
- ▷ These included posing provocative discussion questions to teachers in large group sessions to create dissonance and advance reflection on their practices
- ▷ Literacy Coaches scaffolded teachers' professional learning in a manner that was similar to teachers scaffolding students

“

PLL refers to Vinton book and developing student vocabulary with a strategy often used of asking students to identify words and find and write out the definitions

~Fieldnotes, January 11, 2018

seeeeeee

[The coach] notes the Vinton book that they have been using. She cites one of the science teachers having a shift in practice about reading in science. Understanding concepts in text and focus on inquiry related to this was an effective change. She saw what some of the students could now extract from science text.

~Fieldnotes, May 9 2018

”

# FINDINGS

## Multi-Tiered Coaching

- ▷ There was an organic emergence of a middle tier of coaching self-initiated by a high school English Department Head
- ▷ She began to take leadership at her school supporting her colleagues through challenges of practice
- ▷ Teacher participants looked to her as an authentic leader
- ▷ Coaches saw the value in building and sustaining capacity at the school level

“

So my role this year at school has been different. I've been a co-chair in the department focusing on literacy needs for the whole school. I've been trying to use what we've been discussing with Resilient Readers project for the entire school and trying to implement different strategies to help readers and all classes.

~Teacher Interview, May 25, 2018

”

# FINDINGS

## Administrative Boundaries

- ▷ The design of the professional learning project included less: whole group sessions to clarify goals and debrief; active coaching by the facilitators and opportunities for teachers to collaborate with each other
- ▷ Teachers expressed the need for structure as a function of formalized professional learning opportunities
- ▷ When left to self-direct their learning, the teachers strayed from goals

“

[In Year 2] I didn't have any outside support. Whatever we talked in the sessions I would try to implement some new strategies to the classroom. So at the time [colleague' name] and I were teaching similar things so I would let her know, oh I'm trying this and how it went and so on and so forth. At the end of last semester, we had a pretty frank discussion about what our classes need

~Teacher Interview, May 25, 2018

”

A hand-drawn decorative border in white, consisting of a series of small, connected loops or 'u' shapes, framing the entire image.

EDUCATIONAL IMPORTANCE

A small, white, hand-drawn wavy line positioned directly beneath the text "EDUCATIONAL IMPORTANCE".

# EDUCATIONAL IMPORTANCE

Researchers might consider how multi-tiered coaching bridges the gap between practitioners, theory and policy, provided that administrators prioritize this work by coaching the coaches and dedicating release time to the teachers

It is important to consider the interdependent roles of professional learning facilitators with varying degrees of expertise and different backgrounds

School districts might consider how Literacy Coaches might be coached to in turn support teachers in the transfer of elementary reading pedagogies into high school English classes

## Overall...

this research demonstrates the positive impact of transferring elementary reading pedagogies into secondary school English teachers' practices to support the learning needs of struggling readers, systematic links to policy, and the impact of multi-tiered coaching



QUESTIONS?



Social Sciences and Humanities  
Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en  
sciences humaines du Canada

Canada

# REFERENCES

- Penuel, W. R., Phillips, R. S., & Harris, C. J. (2014). Analysing teachers' curriculum implementation from integrity and actor-oriented perspectives. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 46(6), 751-777.
- Schnellert, L. M, Butler, D. L., & Higginson, S. K. (2008). Co-constructors of data, co-constructors of meaning: Teacher professional development in an age of accountability. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 24, 725–750.
- Stephens, D., & Heidi, M. (2014). Coaching as inquiry: The South Carolina reading initiative. *Reading and Writing Quarterly*, 30(3), 190-206.
- Stover, K., Kissel, B., Haag, K., & Shoniker, R. (2011). Differentiated coaching: Fostering reflection with teachers. *Reading Teacher*, 64(7), 498-509.
- Toll, C. A. (2007). *Lenses on literacy coaching: Conceptualizations, functions, and outcomes*. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon Publishers.
- Walpole, S., & McKenna, M. C. (2012). *The literacy coach's handbook: A guide to research-based practice*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

# CREDITS

- Presentation template & Design by SlidesCarnival
- Icons by Microsoft PowerPoint & SlidesCarnival