


**Improving the Usefulness of External Evaluations in Schools:
An Analysis of Multiple Perspectives in Reading First Ohio**

AMERICAN EVALUATION
ASSOCIATION ANNUAL MEETING
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Reading First - Ohio

- K-3 literacy
- Technical Assistance System
- Evaluation Processes

District Evaluation Goals

- Evaluate extent to which proposed plan implemented with fidelity,
- Discuss conditions under which plan was implemented,
- Evaluate consistency and coherence of implementation,
- Evaluate the impact on student achievement, and
- Describe lessons learned in regards to sustainability

Clay, Salzman, Brown, Mzozoyana, & Spann, 2007

District Evaluation Guidelines

- Statement of purpose;
- Summary of district activities;
- Description of district's adopted reading program;
- Description of district's supplemental and intervention programs;
- Faculty demographic data;
- Detailed descriptions of key evaluation activities and methods;
- Evaluation of program-specific professional development activities;
- Copies of data collection instruments;
- Disaggregated data on reading progress by income, racial/ethnic group, LEP, and special education status; and
- Comparisons of outcomes of students in Reading First and non-Reading First schools

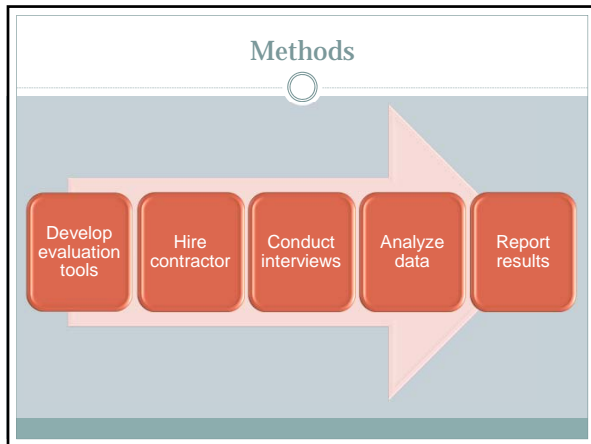
Clay, Salzman, Brown, Mzozoyana, & Spann, 2007

Technical Assistance to Improve Evaluation
Clarity and Quality

- Guidelines for evaluation
- Review of external evaluation reports near the end of the 2004-2005 school year (Kruse, 2005)
- Evaluator and District Coordinator meeting September of 2005

Reading First -Ohio Center Meta-Evaluation

- Anecdotal information suggested variability in the quality of evaluations
- Goal of meta-evaluation
 - examine planning, implementation, and outcomes of the district-level evaluations
 - provide suggestions for improving district-level evaluation in future programs
- Study areas
 - relationships between evaluators and district personnel
 - quality of conducted evaluations,
 - value of information
 - factors that facilitated usefulness of evaluation



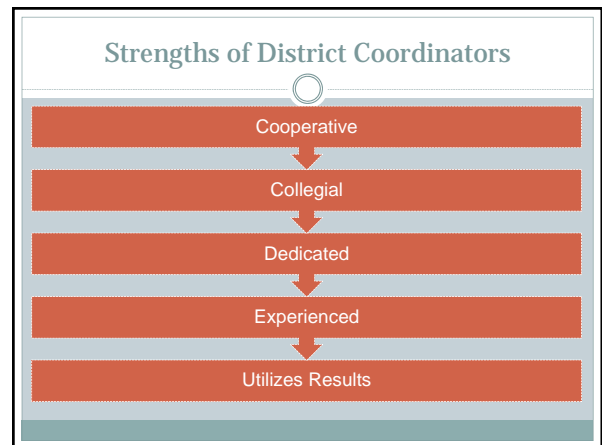
Results

- **Hiring Evaluator**
 - Recommendation of another Reading First District Coordinator (N=6)
 - somebody with whom they had previously worked (N=3)
 - recommended by a local service center (N=1)
 - through "word of mouth" (N = 1)
 - Did not know how the evaluator was selected (N=4)
- **Additional Evaluation Questions**
 - 12 districts investigated non-required evaluation questions
 - fidelity of implementation, interventions by reading tutors and retired teachers, use of district pacing guide, differences in achievement, use of reading centers, gender differences, sustained effects, principal involvement, value of grade-level planning, effectiveness of intervention

District Coordinator Involvement in Evaluation

(Total N=15)

	Evaluator	District Coordinator
Did you handle your organization's evaluation responsibilities?	NA	93%
Were you a key decision maker?	88%	80%
Did you approve evaluation invoices/interim status reports?	NA	80%
Did you participate in interpreting results or writing recommendations resulting from the evaluation?	88%	80%
Did you provide input into the evaluation plan?	94%	67%
Were you the day-to-day point of contact??	69%	67%
Did you read or comment on the final evaluation report?	NA	53%
Were you involved in selecting the evaluator?	NA	47%
Did you make all of the major decisions on the evaluation?	75%	NA
Did you write the final report without review from Coordinator?	56%	NA



Strengths of Evaluators

- Personality Traits**
 - Thorough/perfectionists, personable, organized, cares about quality of work
- Evaluation Traits**
 - Usable information, listens to educators, good recommendations, knowledgeable, about tests, provided critical observations
- Education Traits**
 - Concerned about and understands education, knowledgeable about state and federal projects

Ohio Department of Education Involvement in Reading First District Evaluations

- Neither feedback to the evaluator nor to the District Coordinator about the evaluation reports
- Little time between availability of assessment data and report due date
- Guidelines published too close to report due dates
- No requirement for local evaluation in sustainability funding
- Evaluators wanted to learn about and to have District Coordinators learn about exemplary evaluations within the group of evaluations to understand the expectations of the ODE and also to judge the quality of their own work
- Concern regarding the numerous evaluation efforts surrounding *Reading First*

Lessons Learned/Conclusions

- “You like me. You really like me.”
- Positive relationships are a necessary but not sufficient condition to making evaluations useful and used
- Common framework allows for meta-evaluation, though it may be seen as constrictive by both evaluators and district personnel
- Funders need to make clear evaluation requirements at the beginning of funding cycle and make plans for changes in leadership or revising/modifying of requirements as a program evolves
- Evaluators and funders will both be better served by making education of stakeholders and decision-makers a seamless part of their work