

On November 21, 2011, Dr. Robinson requested additional information regarding PS 1 Professional Services Agreement with The Reading and Writing Project Network LLC at Rosenwald Elementary. The following response was prepared by Dr. Janis Andrews, Assistant Superintendent, Curriculum and Learning Support.

REQUEST:

1. How many schools have completed this staff development each year over the past few years?
2. Do we have any objective data to show the acceleration of reading and writing skills in our schools whose staff has completed this staff development.
3. I know that the philosophy and practice makes perfect sense. Who is responsible for making sure that it is implemented with fidelity?
4. When are we going to have the capacity to do this staff development in-house?

RESPONSE:

1. How many schools have completed this staff development each year over the past few years?

Two schools initiated Teachers College professional development in FY07, funded by the Pew Education Fund, emphasizing the area of writing. Since then, other schools have developed a relationship with Teachers College, most frequently through funding from the Pew Education Fund. Over time, these schools have added the reading model and have begun training to support the approach in reading and writing. To date, (14) fourteen of the 109 elementary schools have worked directly with Teachers College, with some of those fourteen schools implementing Teachers College professional development for the first time in FY12.

Two middle schools are also working with Teachers College for their second year. Of the schools mentioned, (9) nine elementary schools and (2) two middle schools have been able to maintain the support of the Pew Education Fund to continue the relationship with Teachers College, others have only had one year of this relationship due to available funding provided by one-time grants.

Since this is an approach to reading instruction, rather than a reading program, the professional development is an ongoing process and builds on previous training and the current level of implementation.

2. Do we have any objective data to show the acceleration of reading and writing skills in our schools whose staff has completed this staff development?

The district approach for writing is the workshop approach. Last year only two elementary schools failed to increase their writing scores over the previous year's score on the FCAT writing test.

Schools have only recently added reading workshop, with training beginning in the primary grades. Thus there is not significant FCAT data available at this time.

3. I know that the philosophy and practice makes perfect sense. Who is responsible for making sure that it is implemented with fidelity?

The school principal is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the reading and writing workshop model within their school. In addition, district personnel support the implementation through visits to classrooms, modeling, and professional development to support the training provided by Teachers College. When Teachers College personnel visit a school, the principal is directly involved in the professional development to assure that everyone is on the same page.

4. When are we going to have the capacity to do this staff development in-house?

Members of the K-12 Curriculum elementary writing team have been receiving training from Teachers College and must provide support for teachers in all 109 elementary schools. The number of available personnel limits the number of times visits can be made to a school to provide that support.

The workshop model is the primary model of instruction for writing in all elementary schools, although the materials vary between those provided for the school directly working with the Lucy Calkins, Teachers College materials and those using other district provided lessons.

The specific support from Teachers College provides for several days in a row of professional development, on site, at the school repeated three times a year. This level of service cannot be provided to schools using only K-12 staff. The majority of the training attended at Teachers College by the K-12 staff has been funded by the Pew Education Fund.

Members of the K-12 Curriculum elementary reading team will be attending their first training session at Teachers College later this year. There is only one member of the K-12 team who has received training from Teachers College and that person serves 20 schools. The additional support provided to schools through Teachers College provides onsite support and professional development to support fidelity of implementation of the model.

While the district has been building capacity in the area of writing workshop, the reading workshop model is in its earliest stage of development and staff will need extensive training before they are able to support the model at the level of experienced Teachers College trainers.

A large portion of the expense for Teachers College professional development for administrators and teachers over the past several years has been funded by the Pew Education Fund and not district dollars.