Chapter 8
Implications and Transferability
to Other School Contexts

Marleen F. Westerveld, Rebecca M. Armstrong, Georgina M. Barton, and Jennifer Peach

Abstract This chapter starts by outlining what we have learned from the Reading Success project. Based on a summary of the main findings from the Reading Success project, we then consider ways in which the Reading Success project findings and practices shared in this book may be transferable to other contexts. We offer recommendations for best practice for schools wanting to investigate their current practices in the identification of, and support for, students experiencing difficulties in learning to read. We also describe some strategies that can be used by schools when striving for scalability. To finish, we provide recommendations on how the approach taken in this study might be adapted and adopted within other school contexts.

Keywords Scalability · Transferability · Educational implications

8.1 Introduction

It is undisputable that the teaching of reading is high stakes for all schools. Students’ educational success relies on their ability to read fluently and to comprehend a range of complex texts. To implement the proposed interdisciplinary assessment and monitoring framework to assist in the identification of students experiencing difficulties in reading may require some schools to change their practice. Change is very much a constant in education, and it is important that these practices can be sustainable over time (Mioduser, Nachmias, Forkosh-Baruch, & Tubin, 2004). Pendergast, Main, Barton, Kanasa, Geelan, & Dowden (2015) discussed educational reform that targets improvement in student outcomes, and argued that educational change becomes increasingly more complex due to the different federal, state, and local systemic expectations. We understand that schools already have mandated literacy progress monitoring practices in place, such as NAPLAN at the federal level, and specific reading assessments at the regional level (see Chap. 2). One major challenge identified in the literature in relation to sustaining best practice is that schools are different to each other (i.e. no one size fits all) and that schools can rapidly change themselves. As suggested by Barton and Woolley (2017), to plan for change, the importance of an in-depth context analysis should not be underestimated (see also Thomson, 2010). In the next few sections, we will first provide an overview of...
our take-home messages from the project, before briefly considering scalability and sustainability of our proposed framework.

8.2 Take-Home Messages From the Reading Success Project

The overall aim of the Reading Success project was to implement within the target school, a systematic process for identifying reading difficulties across the primary school years, using an evidence-based multidisciplinary approach. We believed that the introduction of an assessment and monitoring framework that was firmly based on the Simple View of Reading (Gough & Tunmer, 1986) would not only facilitate the early identification of reading difficulties, but would also enable timely and targeted intervention to address these challenges in reading. Moreover, creating speech-to-print profiles (see Table 1.2) for students who demonstrated challenges in reading served different purposes: (a) to highlight the underlying spoken language skills that are needed for written language (Gillon, 2018), (b) to encourage interdisciplinary collaborative practice in collecting assessment data, and (c) to ensure consistent language was used across the school.

The vision of the Department of Education is that every student in Queensland state schools receives the support they need to belong to the school community, engages purposefully in learning, and experiences academic and social success. Students experience inclusive education when they can access and fully participate in learning alongside their similar-aged peers, supported by reasonable adjustments and teaching strategies tailored to meet their individual needs. As highlighted in Chap. 7, it was clear that the school staff were highly committed to improving literacy learning outcomes for all students. It was evident that over the past three years or so the school had made great progress due to a number of strategies implemented around positive behaviour and reading. The school staff were extremely happy to be working at this school and commented on the nature of the school and students positively. This is of credit to all staff and the families at the school. Results from the interview data were overwhelmingly positive with also room for improvement.

The results from our project showed that the implementation of this assessment model was possible within a school context and successful in highlighting which students would benefit from more intensive reading interventions within a response-to-intervention framework (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006). However, several issues came to light which may affect scalability, including time and resources, communication, and the need for professional development.
8.2 Take-Home Messages From the Reading Success Project

8.2.1 Time and Resources

Choice of Assessments

To meet the learning needs of all students, the Department has a commitment to a whole-school approach to quality teaching and improving student achievement. A whole-school approach directs support to different levels of need in response to student achievement data and is based on the premise that every student can learn and should have the opportunity to demonstrate progress on an ongoing basis. Implementation of a whole-school approach requires gathering and analysis of data that reflects departmental, regional, and school priorities and demonstrates the integral link between curriculum, interventions, and student outcomes.

At the differentiated level within a whole-school approach, cohort mapping provides the information teachers require to adequately differentiate reading instruction to meet the learning needs of all students within the curriculum. Teachers in schools have a range of cohort mapping tools available to them, such as Early Start for Prep—Year 2, and the National Literacy Learning Progression tool from Prep–Year 10 (www.australiancurriculum.edu.au) and it is up to the school team involved in the teaching of reading to decide which tools best suit their school’s needs and are sensitive to early difficulties in reading performance. For young school-age students, these tools should relate to the development of the following six elements as discussed in Chap. 1 (see also Fig. 1.2): phonological awareness, phonics and phonemic awareness, oral language, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (Hempenstall, 2016; Konza, 2014).

To more accurately gather information about a student’s learning rate and level of achievement, both individually and in comparison with a peer group, a combination of cohort mapping and progress monitoring is recommended. Progress monitoring ensures that all students, including high-achieving students are appropriately engaged, challenged, and extended, by designing class activities to meet students’ learning needs, levels of readiness, interest, and motivation. Progress monitoring is used at a differentiated level to monitor response-to-intervention and may involve re-administering the cohort mapping tool or the use of curriculum-based measures. Progress monitoring is also used at focused and intensive levels but may be administered more frequently and will usually reflect the varying types of intervention individual students are receiving.

It became clear during the Reading Success Project that the school staff administered a wide range of assessments on a routine basis, for reporting, as well as progress monitoring purposes. Administering the York Assessment of Reading for Comprehension on a routine basis may be too time consuming. However, the results from this assessment greatly assisted in the early identification of students with different profiles of reading strengths and challenges. To determine if administering this specific test on a routine basis was needed within the school context, we conducted some comparisons with routinely used reading assessment tasks. Our results (Chap. 3) showed high correlations between student performance on the PM Benchmark Reading Assessments (Smith, Nelly, & Croft, 2009) and the YARC reading
comprehension subtest during the early years of schooling, with excellent specificity and sensitivity data (i.e. > 80% of students were correctly identified). Our results also suggest that using a higher cut-off score on the PM Benchmark combined with a reading fluency task (e.g. TOWRE-2; Torgesen, Wagner, & Rashotte, 2012) may improve the sensitivity of this assessment.

A different picture emerged when comparing student performance on the Progressive Achievement Tests in Reading (PAT-R; Australian Council for Educational Research, 2018) to their performance on the YARC. About 20% of students were missed when using the PAT-R as a benchmark for reading competency, with these students showing very different reading profiles, despite adequate performance on the PAT-R. Therefore, use of the PAT-R on a routine basis may not only misidentify some students as competent readers, the results of the PAT-R will not help guide further assessment nor suggest which specific skills to address in intervention (see case studies in Chap. 6 for more information).

Taken together, our results show the importance of careful consideration of the routine assessments that are used to identify strengths and weaknesses in reading performance. As time is a precious resource, we recommend only administering high-quality assessments that are sensitive to ability and progress and will inform intervention.

A Team Approach to Differential Diagnosis

The importance of detailed diagnostic assessments to pinpoint individual students’ strengths and weaknesses in reading comprehension is clear. It goes beyond the scope of this book to delve deeper into the potential underlying causal factors that may contribute to individual students’ reading difficulties. While phonological processing deficits may be a primary cause of dyslexia or specific word recognition difficulties (see Table 1.2 speech-to-print profile), other cognitive skills such as attention and working memory may also play an important role (Catts, McIlbraith, Bridges, & Nielsen, 2017; see also Gray, Fox, Green, Alt, Hogan, Petscher, & Cowan, 2019). It is therefore important to carefully monitor progress in response-to-intervention and involve other members of the school-based interdisciplinary team (class teachers, speech pathologists, literacy support teachers, and guidance officers) in further assessment if students’ progress is slower than expected. In some cases, an educational psychologist may be able to assist in providing a better understanding of each student’s individual cognitive functioning, including their working memory profiles.

In summary, diagnostic assessments may be required to carefully describe individual students’ strengths and weaknesses in reading comprehension in order to help target instruction and intervention appropriately. Differential diagnosis is time consuming and should only be used with those students who despite quality teaching and focused interventions are not meeting age- or year-level expectations. We recommend the use of increasingly diagnostic tools within a whole-school approach for students identified with reading difficulties, as per the process undertaken in the Reading Success project.
8.2.2 Communication

Positive outcomes of reform are possible if the whole school is committed to making a change in practice happen. In order to do this, effective and ongoing communication is necessary. As became clear in Chap. 7, the lack of direct communication between the research team and the teachers affected the teachers’ feelings towards the project. During the course of the project, we mainly interacted with the leadership team through regular meetings, although several small-scale professional development and information-sharing events were held. Often in schools, leadership teams that include principals, deputy principals, and lead literacy or master teachers, make the decisions on what approaches to the teaching of reading are used in all classrooms. Known as a top-down model, this approach frequently results in teachers taking up mandated approaches rather than have a voice in change, with an increased chance of failure (Hargreaves & Ainscow, 2015).

Based on the teachers’ feedback, we suggest that schools which consider adopting the evidence-based reading assessment and monitoring approach presented in this book develop a comprehensive communication plan across the whole school. This should include sharing and celebrating the results from projects, such as the Reading Success project, as well as other professional learning and development activities that have impacted positively on teachers’ practices. In addition, we acknowledge the importance of taking a ‘leading from the middle’ approach (Hargreaves & Ainscow, 2015) that involves schools in an entire district, including the community. As Hargreaves and Ainscow argued when such an approach is taken schools will be better able: (1) to respond to local needs and diversities; (2) take collective responsibility for all students’ and each other’s success; (3) exercise initiative rather than implementing other people’s initiatives; (4) integrate their own efforts with broad system priorities; and (5) establish transparency of participation and results (p. 44).

8.2.3 Professional Learning

One of the key elements in implementation of any new innovation is high-quality professional learning. This was an important theme that came out of the teachers’ interviews (see Chap. 7). Graner and Deshler (2012) identified three key features of high-quality and effective professional learning. These are:

- Active participation of adult learners;
- Coaching, modelling, and instructional feedback; and
- Assessment of adult learning, implementation, and impact on student learning.

A large body of literature suggests that coaching, that is, individual teaching interactions between an experienced mentor and learner, enhances teachers’ capacity to make changes in their practice, and that coaching within classrooms is a high yield
strategy in delivering better literacy outcomes for students (see https://www.aitsl.edu.au for more information). Quality professional learning also has great potential to raise teachers’ self-efficacy and sense of agency in relation to the teaching of literacy (Ryan & Barton, 2019). One way to support teachers’ work in this area is to administer pre- and post-large-scale self-efficacy measures. (e.g. Tschannen-Moran & Johnson, 2011). In relation to the teaching of reading specifically, continued professional development as well as evidence-based approaches to supporting students’ learning is needed. Given the highly politicised and public scrutiny of teachers’ practices in classrooms greater support of, and trust in, teachers’ professional judgment is recommended.

In the Reading Success project, coaching played a major role in the successful and sustainable implementation of Robust Vocabulary Instruction and Read It Again—FoundationQ! We suggest establishing an inclusive approach to mentoring or coaching in the classroom. Given each unique school context, it is advised the whole of staff discuss what this may look like but one approach would be to buddy up teachers with a partner and that time is allocated in the timetable for teachers to visit each other’s classroom more regularly. These teachers then share their own practices with each other and then with another pair.

We recommend that all staff, including teaching staff, speech pathologists, teacher aides, and school leaders, engage in ongoing professional development on the teaching of reading within the Australian Curriculum. This professional development should consider diagnosis, support, and intervention at all levels within a whole-school approach with a focus on the ‘big six’ in reading instruction as outlined above. Further, whole-school professional development and training should be ongoing and involve a range of strategies such as intensive full-day professional development, formal and informal discussion amongst staff, coaching, demonstration, and inclusion of all stakeholders such as speech pathologists and other support staff.

It became clear from the teacher interviews that although a common language was used, not all reading practices were based on the most up to date evidence. For example, teachers’ grouping practices play an important role in facilitating effective implementation of both reading instruction and inclusion of students with challenges in educational achievements. Flexible grouping allows students to move in and out of a variety of groups across learning areas and to benefit from collaboration with a wide range of peers. Flexible grouping is considered an effective practice for enhancing the knowledge and skills of students without the negative social consequences associated with more permanent groups (Tiernan, Casserly, & Maguire, 2018). With respect to reading skills, students can, for example, be grouped on the basis of interests and readiness, rather than ability. Research in inclusive education supports the practice of flexible grouping (e.g. Hanushek, Kain, Markman, & Rivkin, 2003; Justice, Logan, Lin, & Kaderavek 2014; Tiernan, Casserly, & Maguire, 2018). These studies consistently demonstrate that students’ growth in various dimensions of achievement is influenced by the skill levels of their classmates, that these peer effects tend to be positive, and that these effects are largest amongst the least-skilled students.
8.3 Scalability

To promote adoption of the evidence-based interdisciplinary assessment framework described in this book, we now consider what steps are needed for transferability to a different setting. Scalability looks at whether a practice or an initiative can be implemented with similar or better results in other settings or with other groups. Scalability helps us understand when larger-scale implementation is appropriate and when it is not. Successful implementation of evidence-based interventions into education environments requires a systematic exploration of implementation strategies, to determine what works under what conditions. The following three strategies are important early in the process during initial implementation:

- Exploration strategies such as conducting a school-based needs analysis, determining stakeholder readiness or buy-in for innovation, and identifying specific barriers and facilitators of successful implementation.
- Education strategies to address material development and preparation, building educator capacity, professional learning, and methods of monitoring learning and performance.
- Financing strategies which focus on developing incentives to use innovations, providing support for professional learning and assessing the economic value of implementing an innovation (Fixsen, Blase, Naoom, & Wallace, 2009).

Additional strategies are needed when moving beyond the implementation in a single setting to multiple settings and may address staffing mix, professional roles, and physical and organisational structure to support innovation. A major challenge in scaling up new practices or models is to identify the policy that facilitates implementation of evidence-based practice, minimises barriers to implementation, and promotes the innovations at a state-wide or national level (Fixsen, Blase, Metz, & van Dyke, 2013).

8.4 Concluding Thoughts

In all classrooms, teachers are expected to provide differentiated instruction. Differentiated instruction involves active planning for student differences to ensure that every student is engaged and learning successfully (Tomlinson, Brimijoin, & Narvaez, 2008). Differentiated teaching means effective inclusion of all students in high-quality first teaching, scaffolding for all students, and standard adjustments that teachers can make to meet the learning needs of all students. As shown throughout this book, reading is a complex process and no two readers may demonstrate the same speech-to-print profile. Considering the importance of targeted intervention based on each student’s reading profile, supporting students with reading difficulties in the classroom may thus be challenging. In our opinion, using an interdisciplinary and evidence-based approach to the timely identification of students at risk for or
experiencing difficulties in reading at all stages of their reading development is a crucial first step when striving for reading success.

There are several key factors that enabled innovation and scalability in the Reading Success project. First of all, an education department with a strong commitment to evidence-based practice and an educational region that values and supports innovation and actively supports sharing of practice. Second, a leadership team in the school who recognised the integral link between spoken language and literacy and made the decision to allocate resources, both human and financial to ensure that all stakeholders were engaged and that programmes including Read It Again—Foundation and Robust Vocabulary Instruction were delivered with fidelity. At the point of delivery, there were class teachers and speech pathologists who were open and brave enough to adopt an integrated service delivery model bringing together and enhancing the unique skills of each to create language-rich teaching and learning environments to support the educational outcomes for all students.

Although there are different philosophies around the teaching of reading, we worked collaboratively towards our common goal which was simple: Reading Success for all children. Ultimately, literacy is a basic human right.

References

Australian Council for Educational Research. (2018). Progressive achievement tests in reading (PAT-R). Australia: Author.
Barton, G., & Woolley, G. (2017). Developing literacy in the secondary classroom. UK: Sage.
Catts, H. W., McIlraith, A., Bridges, M. S., & Nielsen, D. C. (2017). Viewing a phonological deficit within a multifactorial model of dyslexia. Reading and Writing, 30, 613–629. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11145-016-9692-2.
Fixsen, D., Blase, K., Metz, A., & Van Dyke, M. (2013). Statewide implementation of evidence based programs. Exceptional Children, 79(3), 213–230.
Fixsen, D. L., Blase, K. A., Naoom, S. F., & Wallace, F. (2009). Core implementation components. Research on Social Work Practice, 19(5), 531–540.
Fuchs, D., & Fuchs, L. S. (2006). Introduction to Response to Intervention: What, why, and how valid is it? Reading Research Quarterly, 41(1), 93–99. https://doi.org/10.1598/RRQ.41.1.4.
Gillon, G. T. (2018). Phonological awareness: From research to practice (2nd ed.). New York: The Guilford Press.
Gough, P. B., & Tunner, W. E. (1986). Decoding, reading, and reading disability. Remedial and Special Education, 7(1), 6–10. https://doi.org/10.1177/074193258600700104.
Graner, P. S., & Deshler, D. D. (2012). Improving outcomes for adolescents with learning disabilities. In B. Wong & D. L. Butler (Eds.), Learning about learning disabilities (4th ed., pp. 299–323). US: Academic Press.
Gray, S., Fox, A. B., Green, S., Alt, M., Hogan, T. P., Petscher, Y., et al. (2019). Working memory profiles of children with dyslexia, developmental language disorder, or both. Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research, 62(6), 1839–1858. https://doi.org/10.1044/2019_JSLHR-L-18-0148.
Hanushek, E. A., Kain, J. F., Markman, J. M., & Rivkin, S. G. (2003). Does peer ability affect student achievement? Journal of Applied Psychometrics, 18, 527–544.
Hargreaves, A., & Ainscow, M. (2015). The top and bottom of leadership and change. Phi Delta Kappan, 97(3), 42–48.
Hempenstall, K. (2016). Read about it: Scientific evidence for effective teaching of reading CIS research report. Australia: Centre for Independent Studies.

Justice, L. M., Logan, J. A., Lin, T. J., & Kaderavek, J. N. (2014). Peer effects in early childhood education: Testing the assumptions of special-education inclusion. Psychological Science, 25(9), 1722–1729.

Konza, D. (2014). Teaching reading: Why the Fab five should be the Big six. Australian Journal of Teacher Education (Online), 39(12), 153–169.

Mioduser, D., Nachmias, R., Forkosh-Baruch, A., & Tubin, D. (2004). Sustainability, scalability and transferability of ICT-based pedagogical innovations in Israeli schools. Education, Communication & Information, 4(1), 71–82.

Pendergast, D., Main, K., Barton, G., Kanasa, H., Geelan, D., & Dowden, T. (2015). The education change model as a vehicle for reform: Shifting year 7 and implementing junior secondary in Queensland. Australian Journal of Middle Schooling, 15(2), 4–18.

Ryan, M., & Barton, G. (2019). Literacy teachers as reflexive agents? Enablers and constraints. The Australian Educational Researcher. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13384-019-00349-9.

Smith, A., Nelley, E., & Croft, D. (2009). PM benchmark reading assessment resources (AU/NZ). Melbourne: Cengage Learning Australia.

Snowling, M. J., Stothard, S. E., Clarke, P., Bowyer-Crane, C., Harrington, A., Truelove, E., & Hulme, C. (2012). York assessment of reading for comprehension (YARC), (Australian ed.). London: GL Assessment.

Thomson, P. (2010). Whole School Change: A literature review. Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Creativity, Culture and Education.

Tiernan, B., Casserly, A. M., & Maguire, G. (2018). Towards inclusive education: instructional practices to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs in multi-grade settings. International Journal of Inclusive Education, 1–21, 01. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2018.1483438.

Tomlinson, C., Brimijoin, K., & Narvaez, L. (2008). The differentiated school: Making revolutionary changes in teaching and learning. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Torgesen, J. K., Wagner, R. K., & Rashotte, C. A. (2012). Text of word reading efficiency 2 (TOWRE-2). Austin, TX: Pro-Ed.

Tschannen-Moran, M., & Johnson, D. (2011). Exploring literacy teachers’ self-efficacy beliefs: Potential sources at play. Teaching and Teacher Education, 27, 751–761. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2010.12.005.

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/), which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter’s Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter’s Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.