Improving Content Literacy in Social Studies Classrooms: Teachers' Voices Within Comprehensive School Reform

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The increased demands for access to and accountability for mastery of social studies curriculum by all students, including students with disabilities (SWDs) and diverse learning needs, is a current reality within secondary schools. Research has suggested classroom implementation of evidence-based instructional practices to improve content literacy. However, the lack of descriptive data related to classroom implementation of instructional practices seems to be an area of concern, especially following professional development (Correnti & Rowan, 2007). Research related to the context and conditions of classroom implementation is needed. This manuscript describes a district-wide professional development initiative within secondary social studies classrooms, outlines qualitative research, reports findings related to teacher perceptions of classroom implementation, and describes the considerations and implications related to implementation of professional development as part of comprehensive school reform.

Introduction

In classrooms and schools across the United States, recent reauthorization of two important and related federal legislation — Title 1 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2002) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA, 2004) — establishes the framework for much of the current standards-based reform, especially as related to students with disabilities. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 1997) has played a major role in this evolution with one of the most important components being the requirement that students with disabilities have access to the general education curriculum. The reauthorization of the IDEA legislation (2004) has maintained the focus on access to the general education curriculum, while at the same time introducing a number of changes, several of which were intended to align IDEA with NCLB.

In 2002, Congress passed the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) as a compromise bill to address issues identified through a number of education reform proposals. The law intended to hold school districts accountable for the learning of all students (NCLB, 2002). To achieve this outcome, the legislation focused on two interrelated components: accountability standards for student learning and the quality of teachers. The demands for accountability of NCLB include participation by all students in assessment programs to ensure that every subgroup of children, including students with disabilities (SWDs), improve with every successive year with the ultimate goal of every child reaching proficiency (Pascopella, 2003). Towards that end, NCLB requires the establishment of a system of accountability to measure whether schools and districts are making adequate yearly progress (AYP) to assure that all students, including students with disabilities, meet or exceed the proficiency level on the state assessments within twelve years. The goal is to guarantee improved student achievement for all students. Therefore, more students with disabilities are being held to the same standards as their general education peers, resulting in increased accountability on high-stakes tests (Fullan et al., 2004; Little & Houston, 2003b; McLaughlin & Thurlow, 2003). Despite the legislated mandates, especially related to the practices of
including students in general education classrooms (Lenz & Deshler, 2004; McLeskey et al., 2004; USDOE, 2000), a “full description of the instructional context of inclusive secondary general education programming is still lacking” (Bulgren et al., 2006, p. 40).

Whenever educational changes are mandated, a critical examination of instructional strategies for content literacy (Deshler, 2006; Swanson et al., 1999), fidelity of implementation (Berends et al., 2002), and instructional context (Bulgren et al., 2006) underscore the research framework. Clearly, improving content literacy for all students at the secondary level, including struggling readers and students with disabilities, can be achieved (Deshler & Hock, 2006). It is critical, however, to focus attention on the identification and implementation of evidence-based instructional practices and metacognitive strategies within classrooms to meet the goals (Gersten et al., 2001). Content Enhancement Routines (CERs), based upon effective learning principles, use a variety of teaching methods to facilitate the application and generalization of knowledge that may involve inference, prediction, deep inquiry, evaluation, and problem-solving skills (Bulgren, 2006). Given that these educational tasks are common across many content areas, grade levels, subjects, and domains (Bulgren, 2006) and initial scale-up implementation has been reported (Deshler & Tollefson, 2006), implementation research of CERs within the context of a large school district will add to the body of research related to inclusive secondary education.

Over the years, a number of factors have been suggested to promote professional learning and classroom implementation as well as to increase the rates of high fidelity implementation to address the concerns related to achievement outcomes. However, the lack of descriptive data about curricula and instructional practices is an area of concern, especially as related to explaining the variability in student achievement outcomes across programs (Correnti & Rowan, 2007). In a recent meta-analysis, Borman et al. (2003) sought to explain this variation but found most programs lacking a highly prescribed, common curriculum as a constant. Specifically, within a particular curriculum area, clearly defined goals, features, resources, and specific implementation plans must be described (Elmore & Burney, 1997; Martin, 2005; Nunnery, 1998). Once program parameters are established, collaboration among program designers, facilitators, and administrators demand and facilitate fidelity to these planned changes in instructional changes (Huberman & Miles, 1984; Little, 2006; Little & Houston, 2003a; Stringfield & Datnow, 1998).

To meet the reading goals for secondary students, comprehensive planning for content mastery and literacy, using clearly-defined, researched, instructional methods in reading in multiple sites is necessary, albeit complex and difficult to achieve (Cuban, 1993; Fullan, 1999; Little, 2001). Support to assure high-fidelity implementation of instructional practices must be a focus of implementation during large scale use of validated instructional practices (Borko et al., 2003; Deshler & Tollefson, 2006). Therefore, given the reform agenda to meet the learning needs for all students, especially students with disabilities within the context of inclusive settings at the secondary level, descriptive research related to high-fidelity implementation of instructional methods and student achievement is needed.

**Purpose of Study**

This study examines social studies teachers’ perceptions of their knowledge and implementation of a common curriculum focus — Content Enhancement Routines (CER) (Bulgren & Lenz, 1996; Deshler & Lenz, 2004) — during large scale implementation within all secondary inclusive classrooms in social studies through a comprehensive, district-wide plan. The research questions addressed include the following: a) What are teachers’ knowledge and perceptions of CERs after
initial professional development? and 2) What factors and conditions contributed to the variance in teachers implementing CER?

**Description of the Setting**

A large school district in south Florida (163 schools) participated in this professional development and research study. There were approximately 177,000 students enrolled in fiscal year 2005-2006 with about 27,000 or 14.7% receiving services from programs in exceptional education. This school district employs about 11,600 teachers of whom 404 are National Board Certified. The average class size is 22 students in middle school and 25 students in high school.

A stated goal of the school district was to address the federal mandate to provide increased access to the general education curriculum for students with disabilities. Under a recent school district plan, all district schools would include students with disabilities in their academic programs by 2009. Currently, about half of the students with high incidence disabilities (e.g., learning disabilities) spend most of their day in general education classrooms. The new plan would increase the numbers of students with disabilities access to the general education curriculum to 75% over the next few years. To accomplish this goal, the school district incorporated changes in schedules, budgets, personnel assignments, and professional development. Within the secondary social studies curriculum program area, professional development in Content Enhancement Routines was required for all social studies teachers as part of the school district plan to accomplish the goal of increased access to the general education curriculum in that content area for students with disabilities. The following sections detail the program development for this comprehensive professional development and resulting research.

**Description of Professional Development**

**Content.** Content Enhancement Routines are instructional methods that rely on using teaching devices to organize and explicitly present curriculum content, using a standard set of instructional procedures that have been validated through intensive classroom research. The secondary social studies curriculum utilizing Content Enhancement Routines (Course Organizer, Unit Organizer, and FRAMING Routines) was designed to increase student achievement by strengthening literacy skills and social studies content knowledge through classroom implementation of evidence-based instructional practices and routines by secondary social studies teachers. These instructional routines were designed to meet the educational needs of a diverse population of students through explicit, researched resources implemented with high fidelity by classroom teachers. Three Content Enhancement Routines (CERs) were introduced district-wide to enhance the core curriculum and resulting program development for the secondary social studies curriculum.

First, the Course Organizer Routine (Lenz, Deshler, Schumaker, & Bulgren, 1998) was selected and implemented to align and enhance the secondary social studies course curriculum. A sub-committee of curriculum specialists, teachers, and administrators met to discuss, align, and develop content and mastery targets, timelines, and assessments using the Course Organizer Routine. Subsequently, the teachers used the routine to introduce the course, standards, classroom procedures, learning rituals, and performance options to be used throughout each course. Researchers have shown that implementation of the Course Organizer Routine assists students in identifying and mastering the critical concepts by focusing their attention on understanding important relationships within the content and by actively engaging the students in their learning and subsequently improving student learning (Lenz, Deshler, & Schumaker, 1993).
Second, the Unit Organizer Routine (Lenz et al., 1994) was selected to assist the teachers, introduce and maintain the critical components (big ideas) in the curriculum, and show the relationships of the standards, critical information, and concepts of the content as interrelated units of study. Researchers have found that understanding and retaining content information by low-achieving students, students with learning disabilities, and average-achieving students improved substantially over baseline as reflected in unit test scores and in scores on unit content maps and explanations of these maps (Bulgren & Lenz, 1996; Lenz & Bulgren, 1994).

Finally, the FRAMING Routine (Ellis, 1998) was introduced to the social studies teachers. Researchers have consistently demonstrated that the FRAMING Routine effectively facilitated subject-matter learning, as well as the development of literacy and thinking skills, by transforming abstract main ideas and key topics of the social studies content into a concrete representation that helps students think, identify, talk, and write about key topics (main idea) and essential related information (supporting details). Important concepts in social studies are graphically depicted in a visual organizer and presented by the teacher to enhance schema development to improve learning by students (Lenz et al., 1993).

Implementation. During the summer, secondary social studies teachers reviewed and revised the secondary social studies core-curriculum using Content Enhancement Routines (Course Organizer and Unit Organizer Routines). The social studies teachers received initial professional development in the social studies curriculum alignment, research-based instructional methods and routines, and related resources at the beginning of the school year. Throughout the year, additional professional development and resources in Content Enhancement Routines were offered to all social studies teachers according to the comprehensive professional development plan. Additionally, the secondary social studies teachers received professional development in the FRAMING Routine, and ninety teachers received other selected Content Enhancement Routines, specifically Recall Routine and Question Exploration.

With the goal of high-quality implementation of the evidence-based instructional practices of the Content Enhancement Routines (CERs), all secondary social studies teachers were expected to implement the CERs when teaching in the following seven core courses in social studies (grades 6-12) curriculum: World Cultures, Civics, United States History, World History, American History, Government and Economics. To facilitate implementation, identical CER professional development was provided to district administrators, select secondary reading coaches, and school principals. Observations were conducted by district administrators who were knowledgeable in the Content Enhancement Routines to supply feedback regarding implementation.

Method

Participants. Participants in this research were a random sample of the secondary social studies teachers included in the social studies curriculum development and resulting professional development, as outlined previously. Of the approximately 600 social studies teachers who received initial professional development in the social studies curriculum alignment, research-based instructional methods and routines, and related resources at the beginning of the school year, a random sample of 60 secondary teachers was selected to participate in this research. The participants were all employed as teachers in social studies education with the school district, predominantly female (n = 48), and certified in social studies curriculum (n = 52). The range of years of teaching experience varied from one to twenty-seven years of teaching, mostly at the secondary level. Each of the participants in this
research participated in the comprehensive professional development activities and initial program evaluation as previously described.

**Data Collection.** The 60 randomly selected social studies teachers were assigned into four focus groups according to grade levels (two groups each of middle school and high school teachers). The focus groups were scheduled within four, one-hour time frames. At the outset of each focus group session, an explanation of the research, researcher’s role, and purposes were provided. Consent forms were distributed to each of the teachers, requesting their informed consent to participate in this research study. Consent was received from each participant. A copy of the focus group questions was distributed with verbal instructions for participants to provide any written feedback to any of the questions on the print copy of the interview protocol, as needed. All interviews during each of the four focus groups were audio taped and transcribed for analysis. In addition, data were written publicly in each of the focus group sessions to record and clarify the data and triangulate all data from each of the sources (e.g., verbal, as recorded on charts and on audiotapes, and written data from interview protocols). No school district program administrators or professional developers were in attendance during the focus groups.

**Measures.** Four focus group interviews, with the identified 60 participants, were held during the allotted time in group settings to encourage face-to-face interactions during discussions. The group setting for the focus group interviews enabled the participants to exchange ideas and elaborate on them through discussions (Stewart & Shamdasni, 1990). Procedures for focus groups as described by Vaughn, Schumm, and Sinagub (1996) were followed. Participants were guided by the questions on the interview protocol that assisted the researcher/moderator in directing the focus group interviews, using a semi-structured interview format (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The focus groups were guided by questions related to perceptions, implementation, and suggestions for improvement of the professional development in CERs in their classrooms (e.g., Describe the quality of professional development. Why did you attend this professional development? Describe the changes in your teaching and student learning. What suggestions would you make related to your continued use and expansion of these instructional strategies?). Participants were encouraged to share their perceptions and insights, using a conversational style. Member checks were completed for each question before asking subsequent questions.

**Data Analysis.** Verification strategies for assuring reliability and validity of the findings were employed during the data analyses processes as established prior to initiating this research (Morse et al., 2002). Data collected from each of the four focus groups were analyzed using guidelines suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994) for data analysis and reduction. Using the transcription from each of the focus groups, categories for analysis were generated and defined by the researcher who independently examined the data. For each issue/question, the responses were reviewed for common ideas and themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), which were used to develop an initial list of categories. An independent researcher then reviewed the data from the sets of data of the four focus groups to analyze and define themes from the data. The researchers then met to negotiate a mutual set of categories with examples for each and to assure content validity of generated themes and categories.

The data were coded using coder-determined chunks of discourse from the focus groups (transcribed and written). After coding sub-samples of data sets using the defined categories, the researchers conferred to compare responses, further revise, and resolve differences in coding. The second stage of analysis included the development of data summaries. Using matrices, the researchers summarized key findings for each of the topics/questions generated by the researchers.
Lastly, conclusions from the data analyses were developed and verified. Conclusions were drawn over time and reported as they were found to be explicit and grounded (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Verification was conducted through the group process, as well as was reviewed by the participants of the study who volunteered to validate the conclusions.

Results

In this section, the results of the data analyses from the focus groups will be reported. There are multiple constructs that were assessed using the questions from the focus groups, and each will be reported. The data are reported by major themes that were evidenced according to specific interview prompts.

Data analyzed from the focus groups showed that participants reported basic knowledge of the types and uses of the various Content Enhancement Routines. Comments such as “visual representations” and “graphic organizers” commonly described the knowledge by the participants of the CERs. Participants described uses for the Content Enhancement Routines to organize, teach, or review content for lessons and units in a clear and comprehensive way for both students and teachers. As one participant stated, “They are a great organizational tool for planning and teaching lessons.”

When describing the rationale for attending the professional development on CERs, there was consensus and a major theme that emerged from the data from each of the focus groups. Participants clearly stated that the professional development is required (“It is mandated” HS 1.2) by both state and school district policies. Much of the subsequent analyzed data evidenced several major themes beyond the mandate, however. The need to teach students reading in the content area, to become certified in reading, and to keep their teaching positions were themes as to additional rationale for this mandate. Another theme emerged from the continued conversations about the rationale, that being the concerns expressed were outside of the social studies curriculum area (e.g., policy mandates, state certification, student needs, etc.) with none of the responses or themes directly related to their department or immediate supervisors. There was much concern about their future roles as teachers of social studies, with much discussion about the purposes of teaching reading in a social studies class.

The organization, materials supplied, and overall content were common themes related to the quality of the professional development as suggested by the participants in the statement that “The professional development is organized so that I am able to incorporate at least one new strategy after each professional development session.” A related theme from the data was the modeling of the strategy at the professional development as stated: “The hands-on practice with the actual materials helps me understand what to do.” Each of the participants reported that the professional development sessions were effective, well organized, and inclusive of all of the necessary resources and materials to implement CERs within their classrooms.

The subsequent interview prompt related to the perceived changes in their teaching and student learning. When asked directly if the participants were using any of the CERs, most replied that they had tried to implement at least one of the CERs in their classrooms. The responses from the implementers provided insight regarding rationale. Teachers who reported implementation described continued support (other faculty or administrators) or observed changes in student behaviors and learning. A major theme emerged regarding the continued support during implementation in social studies classrooms. Implementation increases since the examples in social studies and opportunities for sharing were available, as stated, “I steal lots of ideas from my team, as we are all implementing. It is a great source of learning and support.” By implementing Content Enhancement Routines, the partici-
pants reported that they learned about the process of teaching in a much more organized and focused way and its impact on student learning. A clearly articulated, major theme emerged from the data: Teachers could see the connection between teaching and student learning, as one participant responded, “It seems to increase interest and engagement in learning.” Another participant explained that “I learned that it is important to check and see if what you are doing is actually working,” and most reported that they now realized that they were more organized in their teaching as one stated, “I am more alert to where we are in content, materials, assignments and time.” Several commented that results are motivating to both the teachers and the students. Each of the participants who reported implementation also reported an increased level of participation and learning from their students in their classrooms. As one high school teacher reported, “I learned that my students can and want to take an active part in their learning. They want to do well and the learn how to be a better student.”

When considering the impact on their students in their classrooms, participating teachers expressed a major theme involving their students who also wanted to be involved in the learning process and participated at increased levels during this process. The themes expressed by most who verbally responded to this question described the increased engagement in learning by their students when using the CERs; one teacher explained, “A change in the students is that they are more engaged because they are tapping into their own creativity.” Students and teachers are more focused on the main ideas and organization of the curriculum and content. There were several individual comments about increasing learning and assignment completion rates by several of the respondents, but these were not common themes evidenced from the data. However, there was much less information regarding the impact of implementation from the participants. Many of the participants admitted that they were not implementing and therefore could not comment about student leaning. Reasons for not implementing included lack of time, resources, or support during implementation as articulated by one participant: “I tried to use this organizer, but I forgot one of the sections. It was easier to do when I knew how to do it.”

When considering the question regarding the continued support to expand the implementation of CERs in the classroom and school by other social studies teachers, most reported that they believed that they (if currently not implementing fully) and other teachers would use this process, if it was fully explained with examples and was related to their teaching. Most also commented that once they showed others what they were doing, along with the results and reactions of their students, other teachers were much more interested in the process. Several commented that the professional development sessions were not frequent enough to address their implementation questions, as one teacher explained, “When I couldn’t figure out what to do next, I just stopped. Then I would forget by the time the next session would be held.” A common theme expressed, especially by the middle school teachers, was the need for curriculum sharing sessions for continued professional development, especially as one teacher emphasized: “The professional development should break us into grade levels or subject areas. Model it on an overhead, then work from the book, so all go home with units and chapters to use.” The use of technology for demonstrating or sharing examples by the teachers was a common theme to support the use and expansion of the CERs in classrooms. Lastly, participants described the need for additional opportunities for planning collaboratively, sharing teacher resources developed and used, and sharing student successes among grade level or content area teachers as one teacher shared, “It is important to share and refine ideas in our professional development sessions. That is how we learn!” and another respondent replied,
“Once teachers experience the positive effect it (Content Enhancement Routines) has on student learning and the information it gives over their ability to plan and organize for teaching, they (the teachers) will use them.”

**Discussion**

The purposes of the research study were to address the following research questions through focus group methodology: 1) What are teachers’ knowledge and perceptions of CERs after initial professional development? 2) What factors and conditions contributed to the variance in teachers implementing CER? Overall, themes identified about the initial professional development included that necessary resources, examples, and support were provided at the professional development. It appeared to be during implementation that issues of support made a difference among teachers who implemented and observed changes both in their teaching behaviors and their students’ learning. Collaboration among content teachers occurred in some secondary school sites, and these participants clearly described continued and expanded implementation. Grade level and content teachers who were implementing with others in their school or team described increased implementation and satisfaction rates with the use of CERs in their classrooms. Many self-disclosed implementers described multiple sessions of “sharing” or “stealing” ideas and teacher-developed materials related to implementing the CERs in classrooms. This theme was common across grade levels (middle or high school), years of teaching (one to twenty-nine), and content of professional development (specific CER). This theme was also irrespective of the fact that the social studies teachers clearly stated that they believed that this professional development initiative was mandated, as well. The common theme for implementation was the quality and quantity of support through the process of classroom implementation.

In a related theme, teachers who reported implementing the CERs in their classrooms described the observed behaviors of their students’ interactions with and achievement from the use of the Content Enhancement Routines. Although less than half of the teachers who were interviewed in the four focus groups, the teachers who were implementing clearly described the changes in their teaching behaviors (e.g., more organized, simplified, meeting the needs for more students, etc.) and the resulting academic and behavioral changes with their students (e.g., more engaged, more organized, increased affect, increased ownership, etc.). This finding supports related program evaluation completed regarding teacher beliefs and implementation (Little and Hahs-Vaughn, in press). The current research provides insight to the needs of teachers during this process of implementation of instructional practices. As with any new learning, scaffold and contextual support (Little, 2006) is necessary to facilitate initial implementation, as well as continued, explicit support is necessary to assure high-quality implementation. This support, during the critical phases of classroom implementation through modeling, demonstration teaching, and additional professional development, enhances the use and quality of the instructional strategy by classroom teachers. There was also evidence to support a relationship between teacher perceptions of implementation of CERs and the classroom observations of the instructional practices (Little & Hahs-Vaughn, 2006) as reported.

To assure the continued implementation and expansion of the Content Enhancement Routines within social studies classrooms, themes from the data analyses center on the collaboration focused on implementation. Although observations during implementation by district administrators were mandated, additional feedback, resources, and observations both within the grade level and content teams, are needed to scaffold new learning from professional development and to problem
solve issues related to classroom implementation. Participants provided explicit examples in their responses (e.g., meet as grade level teams, provide time for discussions during the professional development and/or designated collaborative meetings, etc.). Lastly, there was much discussion about the opportunities to continue to learn and to share teacher-created materials, lessons, and student successes. Given this finding of the necessary support and collaboration during the critical initial phases of classroom implementation, themes evidenced through this research support the characteristics for quality professional development as published though the National Staff Development Council (NSDC, 2000).

This study adds to the body of research focused on teacher’s implementation of evidenced-based instructional practices as a result of professional development. These findings add support to existing studies on the knowledge and implementation of evidenced-based instructional practices on teacher perceptions and implementation (Bulgren et al., 2006; Little & Houston, 2003a). When considering the necessary instructional practices related to revised content standards and changes needed to meet the needs of all students, including students with disabilities at the secondary level, a collaborative and shared vision, knowledge of the instructional practices, and contextualized and continuous support during implementation increases the percentage and quality of implementation. This research adds to the theoretical construct of cognitive apprenticeship, especially for secondary learners (Hock et al., 1999). These supportive and continuous professional development systems of learning communities enhance the instructional knowledge and skills during implementation of the evidenced-based instructional practice. In addition, these supportive environments appeared to increase the positive perceptions and expectations of teachers necessary for successful inclusion of students with disabilities (McLeskey & Waldron, 2002), as federal and state mandates were acknowledged by participants in this study but were not described as a perceived barrier to instructional implementation or continued program development.

In addition, data regarding the comprehensiveness of these integrated professional development system supported initial validation research (Bulgren et al., 2006). The selected evidenced-based Content Enhancement Routines were purposefully aligned and supported within the curricular and contextual demands of the state and district standards and mandates. Specific goals for professional development were determined and aligned also with state and district requirements for teachers’ professional development, certification, and learning goals. Necessary resources for initial professional development were provided, demonstrated, and implemented. Materials to implement were also demonstrated and provided for the participants. The current research describes the components added by implementing teachers to assure continued implementation within classrooms. Although neither planned nor included in the initial comprehensive professional development plan for school reform, implementing CER teachers found the necessary contextual supports through this process.

For further studies, it will be important to provide additional time, resources, contextualized support, and collaboration for secondary content teachers during implementation to research teachers’ perceptions, implementation, and resulting student impact. One consideration is to structure the professional development to ensure that teachers who are participating in the professional development have opportunities to share instructional products and student results with teacher colleagues and school administrators. Promoting collaboration and integration of professional development with current mandates and policies increases the knowledge and confidence of the teachers for increased implementation (Deshler et al., 2001). The results of this study support this premise and offer insights to
encourage a district-wide system of integrated professional development in evidenced-based instruction (in this research, CER) as a more efficient, positive way to “communicate and collaborate on learning needs and supports” (Bulgren, 2006, p. 6) to meet the instructional needs for all students.

**Implications for Practice**

Teachers who receive professional development in instructional methods are more likely to see the relationship between implementation of the strategies and improved student performance with continued support during classroom implementation. However, the level of implementation within classrooms must be considered and support for both implementing and non-implementing teachers provided in order that students fully benefit from the evidence-based instructional practice. This research supports current standards for effective professional development related to student outcomes (NSDC, 2002). Given the complexity of scale-up for evidence-based instructional practices within school districts, continued and supported professional development to assure implementation is essential in order to make a difference with teachers and their students. The results presented here show that instructional changes and resulting student outcomes can be produced in schools. However, for such reforms to affect instruction in powerful ways, the instructional practices and professional development of school reforms must carefully address a core set of characteristics (see previous review) and consistently provide the varying degrees of supports for teacher learning and implementation to impact student learning.

This research supports and adds conclusions that urge continued research into the impact of innovative programs related to the conditions and context of classroom implementation (Bulgren, 2006; Correnti & Rowan, 2007). Studying factors related to the differences among the teachers (e.g., beliefs, knowledge, rates of faithful program implementation, etc.) will continue to inform why some programs have more effects on student achievement than other programs. The programmatic considerations and research of student achievement related to evidence-based instructional methods, when including students with disabilities in general education programs and classes, should focus on the knowledge, skills, and continued professional development of the teachers.

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About the Author

Mary E. Little, Ph.D. is currently an associate professor in Exceptional Education at the University of Central Florida. She has taught students at the university level and within school districts as a teacher at the secondary level for over thirty years. Her passion for teaching and learning motivates her current initiatives in research, teaching, and service. In addition, within that tenure, Dr. Little’s passion for teaching at the university continues to extend to teachers in the school districts also through the professional development and research grants she has authored and received from both state and federal agencies. Her research interest of bridging the research-to-practice gap in education underlies most of her current external funding proposals.

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Using a within-teacher randomized design, the study was conducted in 41 classes (23 treatment classes) with 14 teachers providing the treatment. Students in the treatment condition performed significantly better than students in the typical instruction comparison condition on a measure of content acquisition at posttest (ES = 0.36), as well as 4 (ES = .22) and 12 (ES = .24) weeks following treatment. This study investigated the effects of Promoting Adolescent Comprehension Through Text (PACT), a content knowledge and comprehension treatment for English learner and non-English learner students with disabilities who were provided instruction in general education social studies classrooms. How to improve digital literacy in your school. With limited time and increasingly squeezed budgets, getting your school's SMT to commit to developing digital literacy can be challenging. So, what advice and support can you give to your SMT to help them get on board while promoting your reputation as a digital leader? Collaborate with colleagues. Teachers are time poor, so many schools are avoiding their responsibilities to educate students about digital literacy due to anxieties about their own staffs technical abilities. Engage with teachers early on in the process to find out what they need to teach digital literacy. This could be bite-sized guides, case studies, videos, training, or regular drop-in sessions. Ensuring buy-in is vital to your school's overall success. Engage your pupils. Schools that acknowledge the diversity of their student population understand the importance of promoting cultural awareness. Spread the love. Being a teacher is a tough job. So much so, many new teachers end up leaving the field within their first three years. To ensure that the next generation is equipped with the skills needed to succeed in the digital age, it's crucial to promote digital literacy in classrooms. With the passage of No Child Left Behind, all schools are under pressure to improve the achievement of all students. At the same time, policymakers, researchers, and practitioners increasingly recognize that improving student outcomes is dependent on improving instruction: the day-to-day interactions between teachers and students. For the past five years, we and our colleagues at the Study of Instructional Interactions between teachers and students; model classrooms where teachers can observe live instruction; and, increasingly, videos showing teachers and students working together.