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ABSTRACT

Action research in the Cobb County (Georgia) school district is described. This research is being conducted in the district under three main approaches: (1) co-researcher projects addressing central level issues; (2) district-wide projects; and (3) school-focused action research, including minigrants to teachers. The first three subsections--effects on students, data collection and utilization, and technical assistance--primarily address school-focused action-research projects. This information and the application procedures provided in Appendix B are specific enough to permit school-focused action-research replication in other districts. The remaining two subsections--effects of action research on the culture of the organization and advice for beginning action researchers--characterize action research in a broad district-wide context. The final section provides the authors' reflections about establishing action research in a large (78,000 students in 88 schools) suburban district. Given the size of the district and the number of students, it is fair to say that the impact of action research has been small, but worthwhile. Appendix A tells what teachers and teams studied and presents sample reports of effects on students (two tables), and Appendix B contains a technical assistance packet. (Contains 5 references.) (SLD)

INDIVIDUAL AND COLLABORATIVE ACTION RESEARCH IN A LARGE SCHOOL DISTRICT

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A paper presented to the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association

New Orleans, April, 1994

INTRODUCTION

The popularity of action research continues to grow as evidenced by the frequency of action research conference sessions and increases in the number of published articles. Richard Sagor (1992, p.6) defines ***collaborative*** action research as a process that ***"enables teachers*** to ***improve*** the ***teaching-learning*** process while also contributing to the ***development*** of their ***own profession."*** "Action research is conducted by people who want to ***improve their own situation***" (p.7). Cole and Knowles (1993, p. 478) note that in traditional research, "teachers usually assume a largely passive role, their involvement often limited to their consent to participate and provide essential data." "In contrast, new forms of ***partnership research*** are based on fundamental assumptions about the importance of ***mutuality of purpose, interpretation, reporting, and about the potency of multiple perspectives.***" Carol Reed and Richard C. Williams (1993, p.8) "recognize the importance of using action research to ***nurture*** the ***creativity*** and ***energy*** of ***teachers*** who ***work together*** to ***solve problems*** that ***most directly affect them.***"

In addition to the dimensions highlighted above, the action research initiative being utilized in the Cobb County Public Schools can be characterized by more informed decision-making, accessing and adding value to information, teacher/team reflection, and focus on school improvement. Meaningful action research is being conducted in Cobb County under three main approaches: (1) co-researcher projects that address central level issues such as the effects of applied versus "regular" algebra, multi-age grouping and four versus five period day in middle school; (2) districtwide projects

such as at-risk, school-focused staff development and test utilization planning workshops; and (3) school-focused action research including mini grants to teachers.

This paper is presented from a narrow/broad perspective and is organized by the questions that frame this symposium. The first three subsections - effects on students, data collection and utilization, technical assistance - address primarily school-focused action research projects. This information and the application procedures provided as part of Appendix B are specific enough to permit school-focused action research replication in other districts. The remaining two subsections - effects of action research on the culture of the organization and advice for beginning action researchers - characterize action research in a broad districtwide context. The final section provides the authors' reflections about establishing action research in a large (78,000 students in 88 schools), growing (about 3,000 more students annually) suburban district.

FRAMING QUESTIONS

EFFECTS ON STUDENTS

The 1993-94 school year yielded 145 school-focused action research applications. Table 1 (Appendix A) presents a listing of the 91 funded projects for 1993-94. Projects were approved for funding in amounts not to exceed $400. The funds are being used to purchase materials which constitute the independent variable and/or instruments designed to measure treatment effects. Additionally, Table 1 indicates that typically teams of teachers and other certified school staff members use experimental research techniques to study the effects of a wide variety of strategies

on student achievement, behavior and/or self-esteem. Table 2 (Appendix A) further summarizes the 1993-94 approved projects by position, level, district initiative, and subject area.

School-focused action research is used to give emphasis and support to district initiatives/priorities. Hence, 60 of the 91 approved projects address the needs of students at-risk. Although interventions varied among schools, the most typical treatment can be characterized as personalized individual support. This support is most frequently being provided by teachers and other school staff members, but is also given by other students, parents, senior citizens, partners from business, and other adults from the communities.

The effects of the 1993-94 school-focused action research projects will be reported during May, 1994. However, selected observations from the 1992-93 project are listed below.

1. Self-esteem and reading achievement improved in second grade at-risk students through the use of age appropriate literature selections.

2. Reference skills improved more among elementary students who used a computer based CD-ROM program to research topics than control students who used the traditional print method.

3. Math achievement and attitudes toward math were enhanced when remedial elementary students were paired with "on level" students. Triads were not successful. The remedial student allowed the other two students to interact and complete the assignment.

4. On-task classroom behavior increased and office referrals for behavior problems decreased as results of an intensive middle school supervision program.

5. AP Calculus scores improved relative to prior years and a control group through the use of AP Calculus Solution Manuals.

Finally, reports from three teachers are provided in Appendix A. The individual reports are analyzed, aggregated and summarized by topic. These summaries form a "patchwork" of valuable information. Consistent findings across time and/or at various locations have support for external validity at the district level.

DATA COLLECTION AND UTILIZATION

This is the third year of school-focused action research in Cobb County. The sophistication of data collection and analyses procedures has substantially improved. The dependent measures vary greatly in support for reliability and validity. However, the technical adequacy of criterion measures has also improved over the years. School-focused action researchers are encouraged to utilize multiple sources of information. It is also recommended that action research teams meet on a regular basis to reflect and share information regarding the interventions' impact. Inspection of Table 1 (Appendix A) suggests that most data are analyzed in experimental designs. Historically, the school-focused designs have been limited to pretest-posttest, experimental-control group and comparing alternative treatments. However, the Director of Research has performed more complex statistical procedures upon request by the action researchers.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR ACTION RESEARCHERS

Technical assistance is enhanced by linking the school-focused action research project with other district initiatives (e.g., at-risk, school-focused staff development,

school improvement, elementary school restructuring). Linking increases available staff time by enlisting the support and energies of other district leaders. For example, a document entitled "Program Evaluation Guide: At-Risk Students," was developed as part of the charge of the districtwide At-Risk Steering Committee. The guide is available at all schools. This year it was used as an action research teaching tool during two series of training sessions.

Technical assistance is provided throughout the year via telephone calls and site visitations. Action researchers are strongly encouraged to call the Department of Research for assistance. Site visits and requests for assistance are far too infrequent. The most beneficial technical support is provided by the Director and Consultant for Research as they make followup telephone calls during the application process. See Appendix B. Applicants receive specific recommendations regarding research design, methodology and instrumentation. Support is also provided by a concrete example in the application packet. Finally, an Action Research Celebration is held annually as a forum for sharing results and networking among action researchers with similar interests.

EFFECTS ON THE CULTURE OF THE ORGANIZATION

The challenge of changing the culture in a large school district is daunting. Movement toward such a change in the Cobb County School District requires multiple strategies. The push for school-focused action research was only one strategy directed toward this needed change in the culture of the organization. Along with the

inception of the action research program, the district also began focusing on school-based staff development, an expansion of instructional strategies, program evaluation for more informed decision-making, professional growth for administrators, and strategic planning to integrate the many improvement efforts and to build a consensus "to make change take hold" (Deal and Kennedy, 1982, p. 166).

A conversation that occurred in one of the Superintendent's cabinet meetings before the push for greater use of research is indicative of the culture at that time. The Superintendent asked about the success of an elementary writing program undergoing a trial run in some of the schools. A staff member responded with the assurance that the program was going well--"the teachers and the parents seemed to like it." When a new member on the cabinet inquired about the availability of any systematic evaluation of this project, in particular, and the capacity for action research at the district, school and classroom levels, in general, it was apparent that an emphasis on research was simply not part of the norm.

The culture however began changing. The use of key cultural attributes such as the three identified by Deal and Kennedy (1982)--heroes, values and rituals--was critical to developing a culture that valued action research and that could be positively affected by it. First, the Superintendent provided consistent, visible support for the two "heroes" who led the charge. The Associate Superintendent and the newly hired Director of Research served as the advocates for the action research initiative and developed a variety of structured devices to focus attention on the new thrust.

Second, new values and behavior patterns began to emerge as school and system level training activities helped to build and extend the knowledge, understanding and application of factors related to school improvement. One indicator of new values within the culture appeared in the development of a shared vision which described the future school district as a "community with a passion for learning." Administrators from the district level and from all schools participated in the development of this vision. Additionally, conversations and formal agendas at the school and district levels gradually provided evidence of an increased focus on learning and problem-solving processes to improve performance.

A greater emphasis on learning was also reflected in an increase in the number and quality of applications for action research grants. As the research projects were implemented, many teachers and administrators engaged in behavior patterns that were new to their professional lives. A change in attitudes and behaviors was especially evident when a group of Cobb County teachers presented at a session of the 1993 meeting of the Georgia Educational Research Association. They described a new sense of professionalism that resulted from the activities in which they had been engaged. They also described with pride what they had learned from their studies and what the effects were on their students.

A third cultural attribute that played a part in promoting successful change through action research could be described by Deal's concept of transition rituals. These rituals in Cobb County included the involvement of many individuals and ad hoc groups in the collection and use of data. Even the sharing of reports from the action

research projects around the district became a celebration as well as a learning experience. Rituals were pivotal ingredients in the change process especially in conjunction with structural changes such as the formation of a new department of research, a restructured leadership team and a new at-risk steering committee. These structural changes and the rituals were tangible symbols of the new direction.

ADVICE FOR BEGINNING ACTION RESEARCHERS

Strong advocates are needed for the initiation of a districtwide action research program as well as for coordination and ushering along the way. These advocates at the district level in Cobb County were instrumental in garnering support for the program by linking the efforts to other district projects. For example, programs to address the needs of students who are at-risk were enhanced by an emphasis on measuring and reporting results. School level teams who designed and implemented these programs were provided technical assistance and encouragement through voluntary workshops on how to evaluate program effectiveness. At-risk Steering Committee members provided additional midyear nudging and nurturing by calling each of the contact persons in the 88 schools to discuss their progress.

Informal conversations about school initiatives also provided ripe opportunities to suggest the use of disciplined inquiry. For example, middle school teachers excited about determining their students' learning styles and linking that information to an expansion of their teaching strategies were encouraged to collect data about the implementation and the results. The addition of a research dimension to their efforts

improved the quality of their project, and hence their teaching, and engendered an excitement about action research.

Although the Cobb County action research program began as a top-down initiative, the strategies to secure bottom-up involvement were a vital part of the effort. There was no master plan that included all the strategies that would help move people into a mode of inquiry. Rather there were some structured plans such as the mini grant program and many less structured opportunities integrated into other projects. According to Fullan and Miles "all large-scale change is implemented locally" but they said "we should not assume that only the local level counts and hand everything over to the school" (1992, p 752). A tremendous amount of support and flexibility from the district level combined with a growing interest and some peer pressure at the local level togetner served to increase districtwide participation and investment in action research.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Given the size of the school district, the number of students and the number of teachers, it is fair to say that the magnitude of impact of the action research initiative in the Cobb County School District has been small. However, for individual students in individual classrooms within the district there is evidence that teaching and learning have improved. Likewise for individual teachers and groups of teachers and administrators within the district there is evidence that the sense of efficacy and professionalism has increased. For district level administrators there is still a struggle to sustain an emphasis on continuous improvement through data-based decision-

making. At both school and district levels, difficulties in allocating time for research and reflection and in maintaining staff and funding to support these efforts impinge upon the efforts to improve practice. Maintaining a focus on the structured part of the action research program such as the mini grants, technical support and sharing sessions might institutionalize a process that can be used as a vehicle for broader impact on the organizational culture and student learning.

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APPENDIX A

What Teachers and Teams Studied

- *Table 1 Action Research Applicants 1993-94*
- *Table 2 Approved Action Research Summary: 1993-94*

Effects on Students/Three Sample Reports

- *Spelling Instruction and Learning Styles*
- *Study Skills*
- *Effects of CNN Week in Review on Knowledge of Global Affairs*

Table I
Action Research Applicants
1993-94

Position	Level	Target Group	Dist. Initiative	Research Design	Subject Area	Dependent Variable	Team
Counselor	3rd	Elementary	At-Risk	Experimental	Read/Math	Ach	2
Teacher	5th	Elementary	At-Risk	Experimental	Social Studies	Ach	6
LSS	3-4	Elementary	At-Risk/HOT	Experimental	LA/Spell	Ach	10
Teacher	3-5	Elementary	At-Risk	Experimental	Reading	Ach	1
Counselor	K-5	Elementary	At-Risk	Experimental	Conflict Resolution	Ach/Beh	4
Teacher	9th	High School	At-Risk	Needs Assessment	Social Studies	Ach	7
Administrator	9-12	High School		Needs Assessment			8
Principal/LSS	6-8	Middle School	Restructuring	Needs Assessment			1
Teacher	4th	Elementary	At-Risk	Experimental	Read/LA	Ach/Att	1
Teacher	8th	Middle School	HOT	Experimental	Science	Ach	1
Teacher	3rd	Elementary	At-Risk	Experimental	Math/Sci/S.S.	Ach	6
Teacher	1st	Elementary	At-Risk/HOT	Experimental	Math	Ach	1
Teacher	2-3	Elementary	At-Risk	Experimental	Read/LA/Spell	Ach	1
Teacher	1-5	Elementary	Incl/At-Risk	Experimental	Read/LA/Spell	Ach	2
Teacher	6-8	Middle School	Incl/At-Risk	Experimental	Sp.Ed.	Ach/Beh	8
Teacher	9-12	High School	At-Risk	Experimental	Social Studies	Ach	1
Teacher	3rd	Elementary	At-Risk	Experimental	Science	Ach	4
Teacher	1-2	Elementary	At-Risk	Experimental	Reading	Ach	14
AP	8th	Middle School	At-Risk				11
AP	8th	Middle School	At-Risk				1
Counselor	2-4	Elementary	At-Risk	Experimental	Conflict Resolution	Att/Beh	1
Teacher	K	Elementary	Family Gp	Needs Assessment	ABC Inventory		1
Teacher	K-3	Elementary	Family Gp	Experimental	Read/LA/Spell	Ach	4
Teacher	K	Elementary	At-Risk	Experimental	LA/Spell	Ach	5
Teacher		Elementary	At-Risk	Experimental	Positive Discipline	Att/Beh	3
Counselor	K	Elementary	At-Risk	Experimental	Parenting Skills	Beh	1
Teacher		High School	At-Risk	Experimental	Social Studies	Ach	2
Counselor	K-5	Elementary	At-Risk	Experimental	Rainbows	Ach/Att/Beh	13
Teacher	2nd	Elementary	At-Risk	Experimental	Read/Sci/SS	Ach/Self-esteem	2
LSS	4th	Elementary	At-Risk	Experimental	Learning Styles	Ach	3
LSS	5th	Elementary	Restructuring	Experimental	Science	Ach	6
Teacher	4th	Elementary	Incl/At-Risk	Experimental	Spelling	Ach	5
Teacher	K	Elementary	At-Risk	Experimental	Science	Ach	3
Teacher	9-12	High School		Needs Assessment			1
LSS	4th	Elementary	HOT	Experimental	Read/Math	Ach	2
Teacher	K	Elementary	At-Risk	Experimental	Read/Math	Ach	5
Teacher	2nd	Elementary	At-Risk	Experimental	Math	Ach	4
Teacher	2-3	Elementary	At-Risk	Experimental	LA/Spell	Ach	3
Teacher	1st	Elementary	At-Risk/HOT	Experimental	Social Studies	Ach	1
LSS	7th	Middle School	At-Risk	Experimental	Social Studies	Ach/Att	3
Administrator	Adult	High School	At-Risk	Experimental	Learning Styles	Ach/Att	4
Counselor	K-5	Elementary	At-Risk	Experimental	Positive Discipline	Att/Beh/Self-esteem	2
LSS	2nd	Elementary	At-Risk	Experimental	Read	Ach	3

Table I
Action Research Applicants
1993-94

Position	Level	Target Group	Disc. Initiative	Research Design	Subject Area	Dependent Variable	Team
LSS	K-5	Elementary	At-Risk	Experimental	Conflict Res.	Att/Beh	5
Teacher	4th	Elementary	At-Risk/HOT	Experimental	Math	Ach	2
Teacher	4th	Elementary	At-Risk	Experimental	Science	Ach	1
Psychologist/LSS	1-5	Elementary	At-Risk	Experimental	Peer Tutoring	Ach/Att/Beh	2
Social Worker	K-5	Elementary	At-Risk	Experimental	Tutoring/mentor	Ach/Beh/Self-esteem	3
Counselor/Psychologist	K-5	Elementary	At-Risk	Experimental	Parenting Prog.	Att/Beh/Self-esteem	2
Teacher	3rd	Elementary	At-Risk/HOT	Experimental	Social Studies	Ach	5
Counselor	7th	Middle School	At-Risk	Experimental	Peer Tutoring	Ach	3
Teacher		Elementary	At-Risk	Experimental	Read/LA/Spell	Ach	2
Teacher		High School	At-Risk	Experimental	Social Studies	Ach	1
Counselor	K-5	Elementary	At-Risk	Experimental	Conflict Res.	Att/Beh	2
LSS	9th	High School	At-Risk	Experimental	Learning Styles	Ach/Self-esteem	1
Teacher	6th	Middle School	At-Risk/HOT	Experimental	Math	Ach	1
Teacher	3rd	Elementary	At-Risk	Experimental	Social Studies	Ach/Att	6
Administrator	3rd	Elementary	At-Risk	Experimental	Learning Styles	Ach	1
LSS	3-4	Elementary	At-Risk/HOT	Experimental	Math	Ach	5
Teacher	11-12	High School	HOT	Experimental	Math	Ach	2
Teacher	3rd	Elementary	At-Risk/Fam Gp	Experimental	Problem Solv	Ach	4
Teachers	3rd	Elementary	At-Risk/Incl	Experimental	Spell	Ach	3
Counselor	6-8	Middle School	At-Risk/HOT	Experimental	Study Skills	Ach/Att/Self-esteem	3
Teachers	8th	Middle School	HOT	Experimental	Math/Science	Ach	2
Teacher	6-8	Middle School	At-Risk/Incl	Experimental	Tutoring	Ach/Self-esteem	2
Teacher	7th	Middle School	At-Risk	Experimental	Math	Ach	3
Counselor	9-12	High School	At-Risk/Tech	Experimental	SAT Prep	Ach	1
Administrator	5th	Elementary	At-Risk	Experimental	Peer Ambassador	Att/Beh/Self/esteem	1
Teachers	K	Elementary	At-Risk	Experimental	Multi-Cultural	Att/Beh	5
Teacher	7th	Middle School	HOT	Experimental	Critical Thinking	Ach	3
SIA	K-1	Elementary	At-Risk	Experimental	Instruct. Strat.	Beh	3
LSS	Adults	Elementary		Experimental	Positive Discipline	Beh	1
Counselor	K-5	Elemlentary	At-Risk	Experimental	Care Kits	Peh	1
Teachers	3rd	Elementary	At-Risk	Experimental	Read	Ach	2
LSS	2nd	Elementary	At-Risk	Experimental	Reading	Ach	4
Teacher	8th	Middle School	At-risk/Incl	Experimental	LA	Ach	8
Teacher	5th	Elementary	HOT	Experimental	Science	Ach	5
LSS	4-5	Elementary	At-Risk	Experimental	Read	Ach/Self-esteem	2
Teacher	2nd	Elementary	At-Risk	Experimental	Math	Ach	3
LSS	4-5	Elementary	At-Risk	Experimental	Spell	Ach	10
Teacher	1-5	Elementary	At-Risk	Experimental	Writing	Ach	5
Teacher	2nd	Elementary	HOT	Experimental	Science	Ach	2
Teacher	2nd	Elementary	At-Risk	Experimental	Read/Writing	Ach	4
LSS	K-5	Elementary	At-Risk	Experimental	Spell	Ach	4
Counselor	2nd	Elementary	At-Risk	Experimental	Social Studies	Beh	2
Teacher	8th	Middle School	At-Risk	Experimental	Study Skills		4

Table 1
Action Research Applicants
1993-94

Position	Level	Target Group	Dist. Initiative	Research Design	Subject Area	Dependent Variable	Team
Teacher	K-5	Elementary	At-Risk	Experimental	Art	Beh/Self-esteem	2
Teacher	4th	Elementary	At-Risk	Experimental	Social Studies	Ach	1
Teacher	10-12	High School	Tech/At-Risk	Experimental	Science	Ach	1
SIA	K-5	Elementary	At-Risk/Multi	Experimental	Read	Ach	2
Teacher	9-12	High School	At-Risk	Experimental	P.E.	Ach	4

TABLE 2

APPROVED ACTION RESEARCH SUMMARY: 1993-94

Frequency by Position (N = 91)

Teachers:	53
LSS:	14
Counselors:	13
Administrators:	7
SIA:	2
Psychologist:	1
Social Worker:	1

Frequency by Level (N = 91)

Elementary:	64
Middle:	15
High:	12

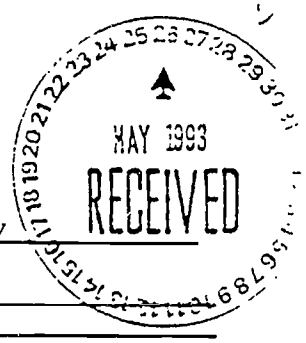
Frequency by District Initiative (N = 91)

At-Risk:	60
HOTS:	7
At-Risk/HOTS:	7
Inclusion/At-Risk:	6
Family Gp.	2
Restructuring:	2
At-Risk/Tech.	2
No District Initiative:	2
At-Risk/Family Gp.	1
At-Risk/Multi-age:	1
Other:	1

Subject Areas Addressed by Two or More Studies

Social Studies	10
Science:	8
Math:	8
Read:	7
Spell:	4
Read/LA/Spell:	4
Learning Styles:	4
Conflict Resolution:	4
LA/Spell:	4
Peer Tutor:	4
Read/Math:	3
Positive Discipline:	3
Read/LA:	3
Study Skills:	2
Parenting:	2
Critical Thinking/ Problem Solving:	2

REPORT OF SCHOOL-FOCUSED ACTION RESEARCH



NAME: Denise Lester SCHOOL: Birney Elementary

1. Study Title: Spelling Instruction and Learning Styles

2. Purpose(s) of the Study: The purpose of this study is to utilize knowledge of student learning styles to improve student spelling ability. It also allowed the utilization of new teaching strategies related to spelling instruction.

3. Description of Your Action Research Project:
   - Number of Students Served: 82
   - Duration of Action Research Project: 18 Weeks
   - Procedures Used: Students were pre-tested on the WRAT-R to determine spelling levels. Each teacher then introduced her students to new spelling strategies that would compliment the strategies already used in the classroom and available in the textbook. These were chosen to round out the program and insure that spelling instruction was being delivered in all four learning styles. Students were then post-tested to determine growth.

4. Results of the Study: Post-test scores indicate that the average growth per child was .9 years. The most growth shown by a child was 3 years. Four students actually showed negative growth and eight students did not show any growth. Of those who showed growth, 54 students showed more than the expected amount of growth for the period of time. See attached charts for specific changes in students by grade level abilities.

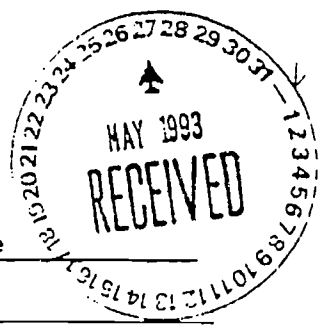
   In addition to the growth actually shown on the post test, we were most pleased with the change in attitude of students about spelling. Student enthusiasm for the subject was greatly increased as well as pertinence of the subject.

5. Decision for Ensuing School Year (CHECK ONE):

   ? Uncertain at this time.
   _____ Expand Project
   _____ Modify and Continue Project
   _____ Terminate Project

6. Comments: We would perhaps like to try this project with a different grade level next year. That will be determined by willingness of the teachers to participate. We feel like this was a very successful project and would be interested in modifying it perhaps.

PLEASE RETURN THE COMPLETED FORM TO THE DEPARTMENT OF RESEARCH, EVALUATION AND STUDENT ASSESSMENT BY MAY 28, 1993.



REPORT OF SCHOOL-FOCUSED ACTION RESEARCH

NAME: Beth Johnston, LSS SCHOOL: East Cobb Middle

1. Study Title: Study Skills

2. Purpose(s) of the Study: To help academically at-risk students identify strengths and weaknesses in their study skills and habits.

3. Description of Your Action Research Project:
   - Number of Students Served: 80
   - Duration of Action Research Project: 15 Weeks
   - Procedures Used: (1) Academically at-risk students were identified based on Fall quarter grades. (2) Parents were notified of the school's tutoring program. (3) Students in the before and after-school tutoring program were administered the study skills inventory. (4) Results were shared with the students. (5) Tutors planned instruction around the skills. (6) Grades were checked at the middle of Spring quarter.

4. Results of the Study: (1) Students gained a better understanding of study skills. (2) Students had the opportunity to improve skills in a small group setting (class size ranged from two to nine). (3) Students tended to develop a more positive attitude toward school. (4) Students tended to develop a close relationship with the tutor. (5) Overall, grades were better in one or more subjects.

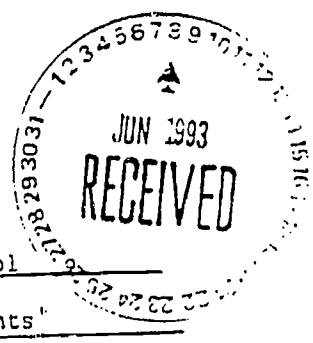
5. Decision for Ensuing School Year (CHECK ONE):

   _____ Expand Project
   _x_ Modify and Continue Project
   _____ Terminate Project

6. Comments: The students who came on a regular basis seemed to be interested in improving their skills. Additional resources for teachers were purchased through other funds (mini-grant and at-risk account). Tutors would benefit from a workshop on teaching study skills.

PLEASE RETURN THE COMPLETED FORM TO THE DEPARTMENT OF RESEARCH, EVALUATION AND STUDENT ASSESSMENT BY MAY 28, 1993.

Instruct. Strategies



REPORT OF SCHOOL-FOCUSED ACTION RESEARCH

NAME: Ms. Barbara Hopper SCHOOL: Walton High School

1. Study Title: Effects of CNN Week in Review show on students' knowledge of global affairs

2. Purpose(s) of the Study: The purpose of this study was to expand the knowledge of high school students about political events and global affairs.

3. Description of Your Action Research Project:
   - Number of Students Served: 73 (4 classes)
   - Duration of Action Research Project: 18 Weeks
   - Procedures Used: A pretest was given at the beginning of the semester covering world countries, leaders, and major world events. A posttest on the same information was given at the end of the semester. Almost every week, students watched the Week in Review. Discussion and study of each area of the world was done throughout the semester. Five other teachers in the Social Studies Department also used the CNN videos with their classes, but did not do the pretest and posttest procedure.

4. Results of the Study: The averaged pretest scores for the Geography classes varied from 17 to 24 correct out of 50 questions. Posttest scores on the same test varied from 38 to 41 correct. Scores increased an average of 20 points. The class with the lowest pretest score of 17 correct also showed the highest increase on the posttest score (21 points higher). Posttest interest surveys completed by the students indicated a very favorable and positive response to the program and they thought it should be continued.

5. Decision for Ensuing School Year (CHECK ONE):

   _____ Expand Project
   _X_ Modify and Continue Project
   _____ Terminate Project

6. Comments: The Social Studies Department plans to continue the program next year. My Geography classes will also continue to see the program on a modified schedule (more on world events, limiting domestic coverage because of time factor).

PLEASE RETURN THE COMPLETED FORM TO THE DEPARTMENT OF RESEARCH, EVALUATION AND STUDENT ASSESSMENT BY MAY 28, 1993.

APPENDIX B

Technical Assistance

- ***School-Focused Action Research Application Packet***

SCHOOL-FOCUSED ACTION RESEARCH PLAN

VISION: ***THE VISION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF RESEARCH, STUDENT ASSESSMENT AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT IS TO SUPPORT OPTIMUM DECISION-MAKING BY PROVIDING INFORMATION THAT FACILITATES TEACHING AND LEARNING THROUGH A DYNAMIC, INTEGRATED PROCESS THAT PROMOTES ACCOUNTABILITY AND ENHANCES PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL GROWTH.***

FOCUS: Action research is one vehicle to access timely and credible information to facilitate optimum decision-making.

To foster research at the local school level the Research, Student Assessment and Staff Development Department is making funds available for you to conduct action research studies. When possible, applicants are encouraged to link Action Research with the school's educational/improvement plan, test utilization plan and school-focused staff development.

WHO SHOULD APPLY: Teams of certified personnel or individual teachers are encouraged to to apply. All applications must be supported and approved by the building principal.

CRITERIA: The applications will be primarily evaluated in light of instructional initiatives as they relate to students at risk, uses of instructional technology, increasing higher order thinking skills, inclusion and multi-age and family groupings. Instructional initiatives are as follows:

- ***PROMOTE QUALITY TEACHING (INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES)***
- ***ADDRESS DIVERSE STUDENT NEEDS***
- ***INCREASE PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING***
- ***STRENGTHEN INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP***

Other important considerations include: (1) transportability of the project; (2) number of students affected; (3) team participation; (4) potential long range effects; and (5) success potential.

USES OF FUNDS: If approved, available funds may be used for the purchase of research, evaluation and assessment materials or scoring. Funds <u>cannot</u> be used for contracted services, equipment, or software. The maximum amount of funds that can be approved is $400.00 (including shipping and handling) per application. The materials will be the property of the school.

REVIEW PROCESS: A review team will be established by the Director of Research, Student Assessment and Staff Development.

RESPONSIBILITY: Upon approval of the application, school staff will generate purchase orders/warehouse supply requisition forms and submit them via the principal to the Department of Research, Student Assessment and Staff Development for processing. Any purchase of more than $100. will require 3 bid prices. All "Single Source Vendors" must be supported by a memorandum signed by the principal, stating why the item can be purchased from only one vendor. Other financial record keeping procedures will be forwarded to the school along with a letter of project approval. Following the completion of the research (i.e., no later than May of the current school year), the applicant(s) will submit a one page project summary to the Department of Research, Student Assessment and Staff Development. A summary format will be provided. The summaries will be compiled and disseminated.

TIMELINE:

Forward Applications to Schools	August 31, 1993
Application Procedures Made Available to Teams of Certified Personnel and Individual Teachers	September, 1993
Deadline for Receipt of Applications	September 24, 1993
Review Applications	October 8, 1993
Communicate Review Team Decisions to Principals and Applicant	October 15, 1993
Upon Approval, Schools Submit all Purchase Orders to the Department of Research, Student Assessment and Staff Development	October 29, 1993
Applicant Submit One Page Research Summary	May 27, 1994
Celebrate!!!	May, 1994
Disseminate Action Research Findings Findings	August, 1994

APPLICATION FOR ACTION RESEARCH

CONTACT PERSON Ms. Matty Lou Butler **SCHOOL:** Belle Elementary

POSITION: Grade Level Chair (Fourth Grade) **PHONE:** 426-3551

APPROPRIATE TIME TO CALL: 2:30 p.m.

PURPOSE OF STUDY:

The main purpose of this study is to gather information that will help us decide whether to use computer simulations or manipulatives in teaching force related concepts. Both science process and content information will be considered.

PROCEDURES TO BE USED: Briefly state what you propose to do and include a description of the roles of those involved with the project, the target population (e.g., At-Risk), and the number of students affected by the project.

All five fourth grade teachers and 140 students will participate in this project. Each teacher will randomly assign half of his/her students to a computer simulation group and half to a manipulatives group. Students assigned to the manipulatives group will have equal computer time in other content areas. Only the five force lessons from the regular curriculum will be taught. Observation notes, grades and pretest/posttest information will be used in decision making.

INSTRUCTIONAL INITIATIVE(S) ADDRESSED BY THIS STUDY: CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.

- x **Promote Quality Teaching (Instructional Strategies)**
- ____ **Address Diverse Student Needs**
- ____ **Increase Participation in Decision-Making**
- ____ **Strengthen Instructional Leadership**

POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF THE STUDY:

A review of the ITBS School Performance Profile suggested weaknesses in science, specifically related to higher order thinking (science processes) and the elementary school physics content area. Also, our principal has asked us for recommendations regarding uses of PTA money. The results will help with instructional and fiscal decisions.

(OVER)

RESEARCH, STUDENT ASSESSMENT AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT
MATERIALS NEEDED FOR STUDY

Item	Cost
Erie Science Process Test	$ 126.00
Elementary Physics Inventory	100.00
Shipping and Handling	18.08
Total Cost	$ 244.08

_____ _____
Signature of Contact Person Date

Other Team Members

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____
Principal's Signature **Date**

REQUEST DUE TO DR. DAVID J. HARMON, DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH, STUDENT ASSESSMENT AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT BY _____.