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ABSTRACT

The role and importance of national reform network participation in the implementation of one of the most successful U.S. whole-school reform efforts--Success for ALL (SFA)--is profiled here. The paper explores this educational network beyond professional development and examines the relationship between participation in SFA's national reform network activities and the quality of program implementation. Part 1 briefly describes the SFA model for school change and its major components. Then, after presenting a theoretical framework for understanding educational networks and how they can be used in supporting whole-school change, the analysis turns to how network activities are used to facilitate quality implementation of SFA. Two types of network activities are explored: (1) participation in a national conference; and (2) participation in local support network activities. The findings illuminate key connections between network participation and the quality implementation of whole-school change. It is suggested that national reform network activities play a key role in the development and expansion of whole-school change models. Appended is a list of the variables explored under the headings outcome measures, program structure, and reading curriculum/strategies. (Contains 18 references.) (RJM)

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Success for All: Improving the Quality of Implementation of Whole-School Change Through The Use Of A National Reform Network[1]

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The call for educational reform has resounded loudly throughout the last decade and educators, policymakers, and researchers have all responded to this call. The call for reform has resulted in the emergence of a large number of reform initiatives among which are several whole-school reform efforts, such as: Comer's School Development Project (Comer, et al, 1996), Levin's Accelerated Schools (Hopfenberg & Levin, 1993), Sizer's Coalition of Essential Schools (Sizer, 1996), and Success for All (Slavin et al., 1996). Embedded within the policies and practices of these current innovations is the belief that student outcomes are positively affected when traditional notions of teaching and learning are reconceptualized. Research suggests that educational practices resulting from such reconceptualizations obligate schools to retool and retrain their educators (Fullan, 1991; Peterson, McCarthy, & Elmore, 1996). In this era of extraordinary choice in school reform strategies and programs, alternative models of staff development are being sought. Educational professionals must fundamentally change the organization, curriculum, and delivery of instruction in ways that are called for in the latest round of reform. However, the use of traditional inservice training and staff development models by themselves have proven to be inadequate in accomplishing these ambitious reforms. One alternative model of professional development that has attracted a great deal of attention is the use of educational networks (Firestone & Pennell, 1997; Lieberman & McLaughlin, 1992; Little, 1993).

The term educational network implies the coming together of professional educators who have similar interest to share information and resources. While the concept of networking is not new to the field of education, the strategy to formalize relationships between educators, not only for professional development, but also to reform various aspects of the schooling process, is a more recent phenomenon. Educational networks vary in structure, purpose, and design, yet their commonality is

the goal of building partnerships among educator to improve the nation's educational system.

Research on educational networks is limited, and thus, we know relatively little about the variations among them in operation, organization, and participation (Pennell & Firestone, 1996; Firestone & Pennell, 1997). This article examines the role and importance of national reform network participation in the implementation of one of the nation's most successful whole-school reform efforts, Success for All (SFA). Furthermore, it explores this educational network beyond professional development and examines the relationship between participation in SFA's national reform network activities and the quality of program implementation. The first section of the paper briefly describes the SFA model for school change and its major components. Then, after presenting a theoretical framework for understanding educational networks and how they can be used in supporting whole-school change, the paper examines how network activities are used to facilitate quality implementation of SFA.

Using a mixed method analysis, two types of national reform network activities are explored: participation in a national conference and participation in local support network activities. The findings from this study illuminate key connections between network participation and the quality implementation of whole-school change.

Success for All

Success for All (Slavin et al., 1992, 1994, 1996) is a program designed to comprehensively restructure elementary schools which serve children at risk of school failure. The program, for students in grade pre-K to five, organizes resources to ensure that virtually every student will reach the third grade on time with adequate basic skills. Building on this basis throughout the elementary grades, SFA is determined that no student will "fall between the cracks." The main elements of the program are as follows:

1. *Tutors.* In grades 1-3, specially trained certified teachers work one-to-one with any students who fail to keep up with their classmates in reading. Tutorial instruction is closely coordinated with regular classroom instruction and takes place 20 minutes daily during times outside of the reading periods.

2. *A School-Wide Curriculum.* During reading periods, students are regrouped across age lines so that each class contains students on the same reading level. Use of tutors as reading teachers during reading time reduces the size of most classes to about 20 students. In grades K- 1, the program emphasizes language and comprehension skills, sound blending, and use of shared stories that students read to one another in pairs. The shared stories combine teacher-read material with phonetically regular student material to help with the student's decoding and comprehension in the context of meaningful, engaging stories. In grades 2-5, students use novels or basals to further their reading skills. This program emphasizes cooperative learning activities built around partner reading, identification of characters, settings, problems, and problem solutions in narratives. At all levels, students are required to read books of their own choice for twenty minutes at home each evening. Classroom libraries of trade books are provided for this purpose. Extensive professional development is provided to enable all teachers to use these approaches with skill.

3. *Eight-Week Assessments.* Students in grades K-3 are assessed every eight weeks to determine whether they are making adequate progress in reading. This information is used to suggest alternate teaching strategies in the regular classroom, changes in reading group placement, or provision of tutoring services.

4. *Preschool and Kindergarten.* Success for All's preschools and kindergartens emphasize language development, readiness, and self-concept. Preschools and kindergartens use thematic units, Peabody Language Development Kits, and a program called Story Telling and Retelling (STaR). The goal is to provide early intervention and avoid remediation.

5. *Family Support Team.* A family support team works in each school to help support parents in ensuring the success of their children. It focuses on parent education, parent involvement, attendance, and classroom management. This team is composed of existing or additional staff such as parent liaisons, social workers, counselors, and vice principals.

6. *Facilitator.* A program facilitator helps teachers implement the reading program, manages the eight week assessments, assists the family support team, makes sure that all staff members are communicating with each other, and assists the staff as a whole in ensuring that every child is making adequate progress.

7. *Buy-in.* Success for All only works in schools in which at least 80% of staff have voted by secret ballot to adopt the program. When this decision is made, all school staff are expected to implement the program from the outset.

Theoretical Framework: Changing Conceptual Lenses

Previous research on educational networks has primarily focused on teachers and the use of networks as a tool for professional development (Lieberman & Grolnick, 1986; Pennell & Firestone, 1996). In the case of SFA, the concept of educational network is inclusive of, yet broader than, informal meetings of educators sharing stories about the challenges within the profession. Embedded in the concept are notions of collaboration, skill development, problem solving, collegiality, empowerment, community, motivation, information dissemination, and opportunities for retooling. SFA is a whole-school change model guided by a conceptual paradigm that attempts to broaden the use of networks in the school reform process. SFA encourages reform-minded educators to form partnerships across districts and across states.

In order to understand the important role educational networks play in the implementation of whole-school change, networks must be viewed as multi-dimensional and serving a broad audience through a variety of activities. Lieberman and McLaughlin argue that a shift in our thinking about the role of these networks within the education profession requires a shift in our conceptual lenses. They contend that we can no longer view networks solely from an organizational framework in which issues of management and control are paramount. Instead, we should view them through occupational lenses (Lieberman & McLaughlin, 1992). Building on the work of Lieberman and McLaughlin, we suggest that in order to understand the role of educational networks in whole-school change, multiple conceptual lenses must be employed. Multiple lenses provide a more comprehensive picture of the structures, strategies, practices, and relationships that are key in the creation and maintenance of educational networks.

Four conceptual lenses are particularly helpful in this line of research: three of these, the technical,

normative, and political lenses, build on the work of Oakes (1992). The fourth, the socio-cultural lens, was added to better understand the influence of socio-cultural factors on school reform (See Cooper et al, 1997). Of these four lenses, the technical lens is the most concrete. This lens focuses on the ways that network participation helps facilitate changes in school structures, strategies, and practices. The normative lens exposes the values, ethos, and attitudes that drive how schools are organized and operate. This lens gives insight into the ideological barriers that schools encounter in the process of implementation and when seeking assistance from network contacts. The political lens focuses the redistribution of decision making power that often occurs with the implementation of reform. The notion of power, as it relates to educational networks, centers on how, when, and which individuals participate in network activities. Given the fact that the implementation of SFA often alters relationships among educators and administrators, this lens is particularly important in our research. It helps researchers discern how network participation contributes to the schools' building of flexibility and capacity to make their structures serve both normative and technical goals. Finally, the socio-cultural lens focuses on the social, cultural, and environmental factors that affect the implementation of SFA, as well as participation in the network. Adding this socio-cultural lens to our analysis gives us greater insight into the resource constraints and challenges faced by many urban school communities. It also aids in our observation of how colleagues across districts and across the country address very similar problems. As Oakes suggests, "Viewing schools from technical, normative, political [and we would add, socio-cultural] lenses allows traditional school practices [such as educational networks] to be examined in the context of the beliefs, values, relationships, and power allocations that keep them in place" (Oakes, 1992, pg. 15). We recognize that neither school reform nor educational reform networks divide neatly into these four dimensions; however, these four conceptual lenses allow us to systematically investigate the actors and activities

involved in educational networks and in the school reform process.

Current research suggests that regardless of how networks operate and are organized, they share several important features, and these commonalities serve as a starting point for determining the role that educational networks can play in school reform (Lieberman & McLaughlin, 1992). Lieberman and McLaughlin contend that one of the key commonalities among successful networks is that they provide their members with opportunities for discourse. While the topic of discussion varies according to the focus or concerns of the groups, participants are more often than not encouraged to engage in open and honest dialogue. Successful networks deliberately create time and space for discussion and feedback. Furthermore, effective networks are not generic, but rather are clearly focused, targeting specific issues and concerns.

A second important feature shared by successful networks, according to Lieberman and McLaughlin, is the ability to blend rather than differentiate between the personal and professional life of its members. Effective blending sustains interest in and commitment to network activities. A balanced agenda of activities allows individuals to establish a sense of collective identity through the pursuit of activities relating to their common professional interests and objectives, while having at the same time, a positive personal experience. Social activities in which participants are encouraged to relax and get to know one another in personal, rather then professional capacities are important in establishing a climate of trust and support.

Lieberman and McLaughlin contend that another common feature of successful networks is increased leadership opportunities for educational professionals. Networks make substantial contributions to the profession by expanding the pool of educators who are capable of providing leadership in diverse school settings. Educators who participate in networks often return to their schools with new ideas and practices as well as a willingness to experiment. In addition, many

network participants demonstrate their newly acquired or honed leadership skills by teaching and re-teaching others on their staffs. In the context of Success for All, this aspect is especially important for facilitators who are usually new to a leadership role and thus, can profit from modeling and advice from facilitators in other schools.

Finally, network participation provides schools with identification with a high-status, similar-minded support group that transcends district boundaries. This helps schools weather the inevitable disruptions in district leadership, funding, and other conditions that often doom innovations limited to a single district.

METHODS

Data Collection and Sample

In order to examine the relationship between participation in SFA's national reform network activities and the quality of program implementation, both quantitative and qualitative research was conducted. A survey was initially mailed to principals and facilitators at approximately 375 schools. Data for this paper come from a sample of over 225 SFA schools across the country at which either the principal or the facilitator responded to the survey. A variety of data collection strategies were used in addition to the survey, including one-on-one and group interviews and school site observations. An in-depth description of the data collection strategies used can be found in Cooper, & Slavin, (1997).

The survey consisted of a 100-item questionnaire designed to assess the effects of national reform network participation on the implementation of Success for All. In an effort to place the respondents' answers in a broad context, the survey was designed to capture information regarding the following issues: community, district, school, SFA implementation, SFA activities, assessment of student performance and test scores, and ongoing staff development. Survey questions also

explored how the school learned about SFA and who were the key players in its implementation. Additionally, the survey explored some of the obstacles that schools faced in establishing SFA and some of the difficulties in sustaining the reform.

The survey was sent out to school site facilitators and principals in June of 1996. One hundred and ninety school site facilitators and 180 principals returned the surveys. The completed surveys represent a response rate for facilitators and principals of 51% and 48%, respectively. The 370 responses represent over 225 elementary schools across the United States.

Participation in the national reform network was assessed by several measures: participation in the national conference and participation in local support network activities. Conference participation was determined by the number of national conferences that the respondent reported attending. In order to assess involvement in local support network activities, we created a composite variable. To reduce the items on the questionnaire specifically targeted at local support network activity into a smaller set of internally consistent dimensions, we conducted an exploratory factor analyses. Table 1 presents the initial set of variables with means and standard deviations. Using a principle component analysis with a varimax rotation, one scale was extracted. Only those items that had a relatively high loading were included in the scale. Constructing this scale provided a stronger, more accurate measure of local network participation than a single dichotomous variable. A Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficient was conducted for the scale. The results indicated an alpha coefficient of .68 for principals and .63 for facilitators. This final scale combined 5 questions. Each educator was asked whether or not he or she engaged in five specific activities associated with participation in a local support network: phone calls to other SFA schools; meetings with other SFA schools; visits to other SFA schools; sharing of resources, materials, or supplies with other SFA schools; and meeting with other SFA schools prior to adoption of the program. The

responses were coded dichotomously: yes=1 and no=0.

Aproximately 20 SFA schools were selected for intensive case study, using three dimensions of stratification: percent minority status of the student body, years of SFA implementation, and quality of implementation. This sample afforded rich analytical description of the implementation of SFA and the multiplicity of factors affecting implementation across various social contexts. The primary methodological strategies used to gather the qualitative data were interviews and observations conducted with site facilitators, principals, and appropriate district officials. Although scheduling conflicts necessitated some group interviews, most interviews were conducted one-on-one. Each interview was recorded and transcribed. Additionally, interview notes were taken. The notes consisted primarily of words, ideas, and key phrases that captured the language and emotion of the individual interviewed. The rich descriptive details that were collected from the case studies augment and enhance the information gathered from the surveys.

TABLE 1
Means and Standard Deviations of
Local Support Network Activities

	Principal (n=180)		Facilitator (n=190)	
Local Support Network Activities	M	SD	M	SD
Telephoning other SFA schools*	.77	.42	.67	.47
Meeting with other SFA schools*	.57	.50	.49	.50
Social gathering	.09	.29	.08	.28
Visit other SFA schools prior to adoption of the program*	.69	.46	.71	.46
Visits between schools after becoming a SFA school*	.62	.49	.55	.50
Attend local SFA conferences	.22	.42	.18	.40
Share resources, materials, and supplies with other SFA schools*	.52	.50	.52	.50

* Included in final score

Data Analysis

To explore the connection between network participation and quality of program implementation, the sample was divided into four groups based on reported level of involvement in

national reform network activities: little to no involvement, moderate involvement, high involvement, and extremely high involvement. Using these four groups as a basis for comparison, a series of one-way analyses of variance (ANOVA) were conducted. The mean difference between eight program structure variables and eight curriculum related variables were explored. Variables explored were selected based upon their strong relationship to overall program quality. Also, four outcome measures, which are critical to the success of SFA, were investigated (see Appendix A for a list of specific variables explored).

RESULTS

Descriptive Analysis

The principals and school site facilitators in our sample were geographically representative of SFA schools across the country. Although the 370 educators in our sample represented more than 225 elementary schools in diverse racial, economic, and social contexts, the vast majority of educators worked in medium-sized urban schools in high poverty areas. In the sample, length of SFA implementation varied from 1 to 8 years. The mean was slightly over 2 years. Fifty-four percent of the educators in the sample worked in SFA schools with total student enrollments between 500 and 700. Eighty-five percent were in schools with more than 50% of their students receiving free or reduced lunch. The mean number of years of principal service in this sample was 5.9, with a range of one to 24 years of service. For facilitators, the mean number of years of service as a classroom teacher was 16.9 and ranged from 1 to 35 years. Many of the principals and facilitators surveyed indicated that they were experienced educators who had negotiated, organized, managed, and lived through several cycles of school reform.

Principals and facilitators reported having encountered many challenges in their implementation effort of SFA, but nonetheless, remained relentless in their pursuit. Whether the challenge to high quality implementation was space limitations, budget difficulties, high transience rates, or inadequate teacher training, both principals and facilitators at SFA schools reported working in collaboration with colleagues around the corner and across the state or region to resolve their difficulties. As indicated in Table 2, the vast majority of SFA principals and facilitators participated in SFA national reform network activities. Almost 76% of principals and 88.7% of school site facilitators reported that they attended at least one national conference. Approximately half or more of both principals and facilitators reported engaging in local network support activities: telephoning, meeting, sharing resources, and visiting other SFA schools.

Table 2
National Reform Network Activities

Participation in National Reform Network Activities	Principals (n=180)	Facilitators (n=190)
Participation in at least one national conference	75.9%	88.7%
Telephoning other SFA schools	76.6%	67.2%
Meets with other SFA schools	56.6%	48.6%
Visits other SFA schools after becoming and SFA school	61.7%	54.8%
Shares resources, materials, & supplies with other SFA schools	52.0%	52.0%
Visited other SFA schools prior to adoption of the program	69.5%	70.9%

Analysis of Variance

In order to better understand the relationship between participation in national reform network activities and quality of program implementation the respondents were divided into four groups. Group assignment was based upon self-reported levels of participation in national network activities. To examine the differences in quality of program implementation across the four groups a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was performed. A statistically significant difference existed on the variables being explored, $F = 4.12$, $p<.001$ for principals and $F=2.78$, $p<.001$ for facilitators. Subsequent analysis of the differences across the four groups using a series of one-way

analyses of variance (ANOVAs) revealed that principals who reported a high degree of participation in the network reported a higher quality of implementation on 7 of the 8 structural components of the program investigated. Univariate tests revealed significant differences in reported implementation quality of SFA based on the degree of participation in SFA's national reform network. As indicated in Table 3, principals who reported a high degree of participation in the network reported a higher quality of implementation on 7 of the 8 structural components of the program investigated: student assessment, $F=3.249$, $p<.05$; family support teams, $F=3.808$, $p<05$; Raising Readers (the home reading program), $F=3.367$, $p<.05$; attendance programs, $F=5.040$, $p<.001$; parental involvement programs, $F=7.770$, $p<.001$; grade level meetings, $F=4.009$, $p<.05$ and ninety minute reading periods, $F=5.001$, $p<.01$. The pattern was similar for three of the five outcome measures explored: reduction of special education placement, $F= 4.313$, $p<.01$; reduction of disciplinary referrals, $F=5.272$, $p<.05$ and increased parental involvement, $F=3.299$, $p<.01$. Of the remaining measures, quality of implementation as rated by the JHU facilitator and principals' self-reported quality of implementation correlation were not significant, but in all cases the direction of the trend favored schools with higher network participation.

TABLE 3
Mean Comparisons of Quality of Implementation for Principals

	Little to no Involvement (n=45)		Moderate Involvement (n=44)		High Involvement (n=46)		Extremely High Involvement (n=29)		F Statistic (n=164)
Quality of Implementation	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	
Outcome Measures									
Externally determined quality of implementation	3.21	1.19	3.73	1.12	3.41	.77	3.49	1.03	.84
Self-reported quality of implementation	3.84	.95	4.12	.85	4.03	.83	4.24	.83	1.25
Reduction of special education placement	3.26	.96	3.45	.97	3.98	.90	3.66	1.01	**4.31****
Reduction of disciplinary referrals	3.33	1.00	3.86	.93	3.86	.86	4.21	1.01	**5.27****
Program Structure									
Increased parental involvement	3.43	.97	3.76	.76	3.95	.96	4.00	.89	**3.30****
Cross grade regrouping	3.42	.69	3.32	.82	3.58	.54	3.61	.70	1.48
8 or 9 week assessments	3.29	.82	3.63	.49	3.60	.50	3.62	.50	**3.25***
Family Support Team	2.53	.88	3.00	.87	3.02	.78	3.10	.82	**3.81***
Raising Readers	1.88	.94	2.00	1.08	2.03	1.05	2.64	1.10	**3.37***
Attendance program	2.47	.97	2.84	1.00	3.18	.81	3.04	.80	**5.04****
Parent involvement program	2.47	.79	2.83	.74	3.12	.66	3.17	.76	**7.77*****
Grade level meetings	2.96	.82	3.41	.63	3.18	.72	3.41	.50	**4.01****
Ninety minute reading period	3.44	1.03	3.71	.64	3.91	.29	3.97	.69	**5.00****

Notes: ***p < .05.** ****p < .01.** *****p < .001.**

For facilitators, the results were slightly different. As shown in Table 4, only one structural component of the program was reported to have higher quality implementation in schools with higher conference participation: the parental involvement program, $F=4.281$, $p<.01$. However, the data revealed that facilitators who had high levels of involvement in network activities reported an overall higher quality program implementation. Moreover, the data suggest that facilitators reporting high levels of involvement in the SFA network perceived the implementation of their reading curriculum and strategies to be stronger than those of their counterparts in three areas: Writing from the Heart (the grade 1-2 writing program), $F=2.830$, $p<.05$; CIRC (the upper elementary reading program), $F=2.999$, $p<.05$ and; Reading Roots (the grade K-1 reading program), $F=3.309$, $p<.05$. Additionally, reported reductions of disciplinary referrals differed significantly; $F=4.403$, $p<.01$.

TABLE 4
Mean Comparisons of Quality of Implementation for School Site Facilitators

	Little to no Involvement (n=23)		Moderate Involvement (n=38)		High Involvement (n=61)		Extremely High Involvement (n=42)		F Statistic (n=164)
Quality of Implementation	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	
Outcome Measures									
Externally determined quality of implementation (JHU)	3.33	.82	3.56	1.04	3.43	.96	3.53	.900	.15
Self-reported quality of implementation	3.32	.72	3.69	.82	3.93	.84	3.70	.853	**2.09***
Reduction of special education placement	3.38	.97	3.35	.95	3.60	1.00	3.34	1.042	.70
Reduction of disciplinary referrals	3.09	1.06	3.64	.93	3.91	.99	3.88	.87	**4.40****
Program Structure									
Increased parental involvement	3.50	1.01	3.76	.95	3.81	.95	4.00	.74	1.50
Cross grade regrouping	3.36	.73	3.06	1.03	3.32	.88	3.52	.74	1.72
8 or 9 week assessments	3.59	.60	3.45	.62	3.47	.71	3.61	.62	.57
Family Support Team	2.45	.97	2.69	.86	2.70	.89	2.90	.82	1.24
Raising Readers	1.81	.87	1.61	.84	2.04	1.05	2.03	1.21	1.36
Attendance program	2.41	.96	2.61	.99	2.55	1.01	2.75	1.03	.60
Parent involvement program	2.55	.77	2.60	.78	2.63	.93	3.15	.79	**4.28****
Grade level meetings	3.10	.79	2.95	.85	3.14	.78	3.19	.80	.57
Ninety minute reading period	3.68	.78	3.66	.75	3.62	.80	3.79	.65	.42
Reading Curriculum / Strategies									
StaR	2.64	.90	2.52	.87	2.68	.80	2.63	.62	.42
Peabody language development	2.14	.89	2.25	.80	2.47	.99	2.24	.77	.31
Cooperative learning	1.86	.71	2.15	.71	2.35	.69	2.10	.72	1.09
Writing from the Heart	4.00	1.45	4.11	1.42	3.82	1.44	3.77	1.69	**2.83***
CIRC Writing	3.60	1.35	3.83	1.54	3.44	1.41	3.21	1.54	**3.00***
Individual tutoring	2.29	.85	2.71	.82	2.79	.59	2.51	.64	1.06
Beginning reading program (Reading Roots)	2.50	.60	2.50	.68	2.78	.69	2.53	.56	**3.31***
Beyond the Basics (Reading Wings)	2.50	.86	2.31	.82	2.65	.78	2.15	.58	2.22

Notes: ***p < .05.** ****p < .01.**

DISCUSSION

The data from this study suggest that participation in national and local network activities can impact the quality of implementation of whole-school change. In the case of Success for All, there are three types of networking activities, which support its implementation, two of which were explored quantitatively in this study: participation in the national conference and participation in local support activities. The third type of activity, networking with the researched based university

partnership between the schools and Johns Hopkins University, is not explored in this article.

The national conference serves as the primary vehicle to disseminate research-based information regarding the continual development of SFA. At the conference, school communities reconfirm their commitments and enhance their technical knowledge regarding whole-school change. The purpose of these activities is new content and policy dissemination.

By contrast, local support networking actives are more narrowly focused. The purpose of these activities is capacity building. School officials use these networking opportunities to gain information that will help build their schools' capacities to implement reform. Most activities focus on helping schools discover solutions to context-specific technical issues and concerns. Participation in these activities serves as a source of empowerment, motivation, and collegial collaboration. Local support networks are essential in helping school site facilitators deal with the ambiguity of being neither teacher nor administrator. The goal of the university research-based partnership is to develop instructional proficiency in the fundamental components of the SFA model. The primary function of these activities is to support the policies of SFA in individual schools. It is through this partnership that schools understand the SFA model and find alternative ways to negotiate the political culture of their districts to assure high quality implementation.

While the three different types of network activities have slightly differing purposes, to the extent that the focus of their activities center on disseminating policy, supporting policy, or building capacity to implement policy, the data suggest that they complement each other to strengthen the implementation of whole-school reform. Thus, two important questions emerge: How does participation enhance program implementation? What are the linkages between network activities and the implementation of whole-school change?

When asked to identify important factors in the implementation of SFA as an example of

whole-school change, principals and facilitators gave diverse responses. The responses, however, did cluster in three major areas: the school's commitment to reform, the structure of the reform program, and professional development. Using the theoretical framework outlined earlier in this paper, the linkages between network activities and these factors in implementation are explored.

Creating the Vision for Change

Identifying school commitment to reform as one of the paramount issues in the implementation of school change suggests that support for reform must be both from the bottom up and from the top down. All stakeholders must have a shared vision for change. Fifty seven percent of principals and 60% of facilitators reported that district-level personnel must be involved in reform. Districts must be involved because they establish the climate for change and in many cases secure the financial, human, and other resources to put the wheels of change in motion. While the idea for reform need not start at this level, district-level support is a prerequisite to sustaining fundamental change in schools. Additionally, 80% of principals and facilitators report teachers as important to implementing reform. Furthermore, 85% of the facilitators indicated that principals are vital to the success of reform efforts.

In the qualitative research, several school officials spoke about establishing a commitment to reform through staff discussion, review of research, and visits to other schools implementing the program. Open and honest discussion regarding the pros and cons of implementing SFA helped schools determine goals and establish consensus on a collective vision for change. Almost without exception, officials at SFA schools agree that fundamental change in schools requires collective buy-in. One principal in Florida commented that genuine "buy-in" on the part of her staff made the difference in the quality of their program. She stated that if SFA were to have failed at her school, it would have done so because of a lack of commitment on the part of her staff. Regarding reform in

general, she said, "If you're not committed to it, it won't happen."

In order to help schools create buy-in, SFA provides a clear vision for change. The SFA model requires substantial change in structure, organization, and curriculum. Educators often meet changes of this kind with great resistance because they confront the normative culture of schools. Embedded within the structure and organization of SFA are a set of norms for what constitutes a strong reading program and a strong elementary school which often changes the way in which schools function. Schools are transformed into institutions of collaboration and partnership in which all children are given the opportunity to be successful. Because of the norms, which have historically guided policy and practice in schools, many children are not thought of as capable of success. One facilitator explained how these norms and attitudes impacted school improvement efforts. She said,

> A lot of people believe that the kids are so far behind that they'll never catch up. You know, they'll never make any gains. They have a negative attitude about the kids. And that's a tremendous barrier, you know, that will stop the kids in their tracks immediately. Right? Why bother? They say the kids are three years behind, or they are two years behind, and what difference am I going to make?

As long as the norms of schools maintain that some children can never be successful, then many will remain at risk of school failure. Because the norms and ethos of many school cultures have been developed overtime by individuals who remain at the institution, change can be difficult. Thus, SFA seeks to establish a normative climate that holds that all children can succeed.

The national conference is one of the most important vehicles for disseminating the vision for change. The conference is one of the primary opportunities school officials have to learn about the research that guides the practices and policies of the program. Furthermore, participants see the enthusiasm and commitment of other schools and hear many success stories from schools like their own. These experiences reinforce the belief that change is possible and all children can learn.

Adoption of SFA requires changes in schedules, organization, relationships, assessment, and

pedagogy. Principals reported that several specific program components are associated with the overall quality of implementation of their programs: effective tutoring (52%), regrouping (81%), reduced class size (50%), and cooperative learning (50%). One principal in a Florida school stated that the structure of the program benefits not only students but also teachers. She said,

> ...there's one nice thing about this Roots (beginning reading) part of it, any [individual], all they have to do is read this, you know. I've said to many people that come visit, 'I'll tell you one thing, if you have non-reading teachers when you start Roots, you will have reading teachers when you end.' Any school who gets a teacher who transfers out, and Roots is in the new school, is going get a dynamite reading teacher if they get nothing else.

Echoing that sentiment, a principal from Arizona stated,

> ...[preparation] was an issue for some people who had been used to flying by the seat of their pants. How they felt determined how prepared they were. I think this way there is no question that you have to be prepared. There is no leniency in the schedule. You need to be prepared for every activity that is going on in the classroom that day. And I think it's made a big difference.

As Tables 3 and 4 indicate, those educators who participated in network activities, which included national conferences, reported a higher degree of implementation on several key structural components of the program: 8 or 9 week assessments, Family Support Team, Raising Readers program, Attendance program, parent involvement program, grade level meetings, and ninety minute reading periods. These components serve as the infrastructure of the program. In isolation, the structural changes required by the adoption of SFA have little meaning. However, in the context of a larger vision, these changes build upon one another to create opportunities for unprecedented learning for students at risk of school failure.

The national conference not only addresses some of the normative concerns of implementing whole-school change, but also technical aspects. The annual conference produces opportunities for educators to develop, hone, and reshape the skills necessary to pursue their vision of change. In addition to philosophical discussions regarding research that drives SFA, the conference also offers a

series of workshops on the technical day-to-day realities of engaging in whole-school reform. Consultants and trainers facilitate problem-solving sessions to assist schools encountering difficulties with program implementation. Participation at the national conference has come to be associated with increased quality implementation of several program components. These components are the foundation of the curriculum changes, which in turn, complement structural changes.

Meeting the Needs of the Local Context

The second factor that principals and facilitators considered important in assuring quality implementation was the specific components upon which the program is built. Program components of SFA are not new innovative technologies, but rather a collection of effective teaching strategies. Strategies that are effective with diverse student populations. The components that make up these strategies are research-based and are documented as effective educational practices. Seventy-one percent of the principals and facilitators indicated that the quality and combination of these components assisted in their implementation. While these strategies are documented to be effective, enormous professional development time is required to train educators in their proper use. Additionally, significant professional time is also required to assure that the components that make up the SFA model are used in ways, which are sensitive to the socio-cultural context as well.

According to one school site facilitator in Florida, the highly prescriptive nature of the program was initially met with a great deal of resistance on the part of many teachers. She indicated that despite an 80% vote of support for the program by the faculty at her school, many teachers resented the additional daily preparation time required. She said,

> It's a lot of work. Roots and Wings both are a lot of work, a lot of preparation....It's not fluff, you have to be prepared, and you have to work...You just can't go in and do it off the cuff, and a lot of people resent that...I mean, they resent the amount of work, and the amount of

grading, entering, and producing, a lot of people don't like it.

Despite initial resistance, many educators quickly see the results of the program and are encouraged to maintain fidelity to the SFA model. Many facilitators have commented that over time, the greatest resisters to the program become some of the program's biggest advocates.

Facilitators comment that program resisters can make the job of facilitator "tough" and "demanding." The position is described as tough because facilitators are neither teachers nor administrators. School site facilitators, in accordance with the program design, are not responsible for delivering instruction. While they have day-to-day management responsibility for the program, they have no authority over the individuals responsible for its implementation. The tensions resulting from the dynamics inherent in the position has caused many school site facilitators to seek out others in similar situations. As a result facilitators in SFA schools all over the country have established local support networks, some formal and others informal. The focus and activities of these networks vary. These networks often do a good job of blending the personal lives and the professional lives of the facilitators. Many benefits result from participating in these networks; however, two seem to be most salient: access to information and the support of a group that understands the struggles of implementing the program.

Professionally, these networks serve as capacity-building opportunities. Facilitators meet with colleagues to discuss technical issues related to implementation of the program. More often than not, others in the network have experienced similar problems or concerns. Such issues range from how to implement specific program components to how to address conflicting district polices regarding assessment. Participants in these networks tend to be close in proximity, from the same district or neighboring districts. The agenda at these network meetings is flexible and usually set by the participants. The only exception involves those networks in districts with a large number of SFA

schools in which the network is organized at the district level. However, regardless of size or structure of these networks, the primary focus is on problem solving. Table 4 presents data that suggest that local support networks provide facilitators the context specific technical assistance needed to ensure quality implementation.

Facilitators report that the personal meetings with others in their position not only strengthens the implementation of their program but also helps them deal emotionally with the stress of the position. One facilitator commenting on how network participation helps her to cope with the difficulties of the job, stated,

> We meet once a month with all of the facilitators in our area. And that has been very, very powerful because we all have a lot of the same stories. What happens in this role is, we become separate from the staff. But we're really not administration. So it's kind of a lonely spot a lot of times. So, I think, just preparing us for some of that. That there are going to be difficult days. That there are going to be times when you're going to have to deal with teachers on issues that are not easy. And there are times when the answer is no...I've talked to other people in the field, everybody experienced this, but none of us knew that we were going to experience it. A lot of times it is difficult because the teachers are supposed to see me in two roles: as a peer and then their advocate and their helper, but when there's a problem, how do you go in and say, 'You really need to do this.' Sometimes they resent that because I'm their peer.

This statement is reflective of many of the comments shared by school site facilitators. The importance of networking in implementing school change cannot be overstated.

Negotiating Change

The third area deemed important by the principals in implementing change in schools is professional development. Over 70% of the principals and facilitators reported that training is an essential component of successful implementation of the program. Data suggest that small training sessions tailored to the individual needs of the school seemed to work best and helped teachers to retain more information. The primary tool used in SFA for professional development is the JHU consultant/trainer who provides on-site visits to help school-site facilitators refine their program's

implementation process. Site visits consist of classroom observations, feedback sessions with teachers, and various meetings. Since the on-site facilitator monitors the quality of implementation, the goal of the visit from the JHU trainer is to strengthen the skills of the facilitator and of his or her staff. The JHU consultant/trainer models ways of giving feedback to teachers and of giving advice on solving problems, sharing perspectives on strengths and weaknesses of the program and on determining goals and next steps (Slavin & Madden, 1996).

Many SFA schools find this approach to professional development effective. Perhaps the most attractive feature is the construction of "expert knowledge." In most local networks, educators view each other as colleagues, and activities are interactive and collaborative. Therefore, local support networks are very constructivists in their development of knowledge. "Experts" from the outside are rarely brought in to share insights with the group. Furthermore, leadership within these support networks is entirely self-initiated. The only exception to this is found in those school districts where district-level personnel take the initiative to organize a network. In such cases, it is not always clear whose agenda is being followed. However, the goals of the group often coincide with those of the district, and even in the cases where the district's leadership is present, school site facilitators and principals find both time and space for discussions regarding the program's implementation.

In contrast, participation in the national network is far less interactive. In a conference setting, knowledge is primarily delivered. Both the Los Angeles and Baltimore annual SFA conferences share common goals, objectives, and formats. The three-day conferences offer participants the opportunity to choose from a variety of predetermined topics that address broad concerns of the program. The conference is broken into four sessions per day and each session is conducted by one of the JHU facilitators. Topics for these sessions range from first year

implementation issues to second language issues to family support. Participants are actively engaged in these sessions, but topics are predetermined. The themes of these conferences reflect the overarching theme of the SFA program - remaining relentless until every child can read.

In the partnership between JHU and the schools, the construction of knowledge is slightly different. Knowledge and expertise is delivered and constructed, as well as shared. While SFA consultants/trainers have expertise in the program's model (most were SFA teachers or facilitators before becoming trainers), they are very open to identifying ways to refine the model. Limited political, social, and economic resources require some schools to develop innovative strategies in order to implement the full model. In many schools, maintaining fidelity to the model creates strong and often unprecedented levels of collaboration between teachers and administrators. Thus, new methods of accomplishing old tasks are generated.

While assisting educators in building the flexibility and capacity that enables the school's program to serve its normative and technical goals, JHU consultants work within the assumption that the process takes place in a highly political environment. A number of JHU consultants have commented on the stress and difficulty of negotiating within the political climate that surrounds SFA's implementation. Not only must the JHU consultant assess the political climate of the district and the school, but in many cases, they must also assess the political climate within the schools' faculties. The qualitative data gathering in this study indicate that one of the most salient political issues that influences the successful implementation of the program is school-wide buy-in. Our qualitative data suggests that a "yes" vote for adoption does not always translate into a "yes" vote for implementation.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

A number of lessons can be learned from exploring the role and importance of national

reform network activities in the implementation of SFA as a whole-school change design. Educators in this study reported that networking, in a variety of forms, is integral to quality implementation of SFA. Despite limited resources and stringent time constraints, educators proved willing and eager to be involved in activities that make a difference in the lives of their students. This research suggests that educators and policymakers seeking ways to facilitate school change should not overlook the role that networking plays among educational professionals. In this study, networking activities -- defined by participation in a national conference, participation in local support network activities, phone calling, meetings, sharing resources and information with other SFA schools, and frequent contact with the JHU consultant --were positively associated with the quality of program implementation.

National reform network activities play a key role in the development and expansion of whole-school change models. These activities serve several important purposes: sharing a vision for change, disseminating technical assistance and new developments, providing opportunities for educators to share experiences, triumphs, and struggles, encouraging and creating opportunities for learning, and serving as an organizing vehicle to acquaint educators from different districts, states, and in some cases, countries who share a common vision of educational change. The ultimate purpose of networking is to equip educators with a vision, the tools, and the support to make fundamental changes in their schools and, ultimately, in the lives of their students.

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APPENDEX A
Variables Explored

Outcome Measures	
Externally determined program implementation quality	An implementation score given by Johns Hopkins SFA trainers/consultants based on site visits during the 1995-1996 academic year.
Reduction in special education placement	A reduction in the number of students identified as learning disabled.
Reduction in disciplinary referrals	A reduction in the number of students referred to the office because of behavior related incidences (during the 90 minute reading block).
Parental involvement	Increase the number and frequency of parents taking an active role in the life of the school.
Program Structure	
Cross grade regrouping	Grouping of students into homogeneous reading groups across grade levels.
8 or 9 week assessments	At 8 or 9-week intervals, reading teachers assess student progress through the reading program.
Family Support Team	The team of educators at each school responsible to work with families to make them feel comfortable and welcomed in the schools and become active supporter in their child's education.
Raising Readers	Raising Readers consists of a series o workshops in pre-kindergarten (pre-k) through second grade designed to familiarize families with the SFA reading program and provide training so parents can support identified reading skills at home.
Attendance program	A monitoring system that ensures that that all students arrive safely at school and are accounted for early in the day.
Parent involvement program	Various activities to increase parental involvement in the school.
Grade level meetings	Teacher meetings by grade level.
Ninety minute reading period	An uninterrupted ninety-minute block dedicated to the implementation of SFA.
Reading Curriculum / Strategies	
STaR	The kindergarten and first grade program which emphasizes development of basic skills with the use of Story Telling and Retelling (STaR). Star involves students listening to, retelling,

	and dramatizing children's literature.
Peabody Language Development	The Peabody is used to provide additional models for language use and expression. It contains lessons on such concepts as shapes, colors, classification, neighborhoods, foods and clothing.
Cooperative Learning	Simple peer practice routines that require students to work cooperatively with other students. These activities increase the amount of time each students can be actively engaged with text rather than simple passive participation.
Writing from the Heart	The wiring/language arts program used in grades 1 through 2.
CIRC Writing	The writing/language arts program used in the upper grades.
Individual tutoring	One-to-one tutoring with students who have difficulties keeping up with their reading groups. The tutoring occurs in 20-minute sessions during times other than reading or math.
Reading Roots Beginning reading program	Reading Roots is a K-1 beginning reading program which uses as its base a series of phonetically regular but meaningful and interesting minibooks and emphasizes repeated oral reading to partners as well as to the teacher.
Reading Wings Beyond the Basics	The primer reading level program. Reading Wings uses cooperative learning activities built around story structure, prediction, summarization, vocabulary building, decoding practice, and story-related writing.

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