

**South Carolina Reading First Initiative  
Highlights of the 2004-2005 Evaluation Results**

**Annual Performance Report  
November 2005  
Volume I**

**Dr. Tammiee S. Dickenson  
Patricia L. McGuinness  
Dr. Diane M. Monrad  
Dr. Robert L. Johnson  
Sarah J. Gareau  
Joanna A. Gilmore  
Sara C. McCorkendale  
John R. Payne**

**Office of Program Evaluation  
South Carolina Educational Policy Center  
College of Education  
University of South Carolina**

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# **South Carolina Reading First Initiative**

## **Highlights of the 2004-2005 Evaluation Results**

### **Introduction**

Reading First, part of the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, is a nationwide effort to provide states and school districts with support to establish research-based reading programs for students in kindergarten through third grade. The South Carolina Reading First (SCRF) Initiative began providing program services during the 2004-2005 school year to approximately 12,000 students in 52 schools from 24 districts in the state. The goal of the SCRF Initiative is to improve reading achievement in grades K-3 so that all children are reading at the appropriate grade level. To achieve this goal, SCRF has three objectives:

- Enable and motivate teachers to understand and confidently implement scientifically based reading research (SBRR) reading programs, strategies, skills, and assessments in their classrooms.
- Support the change process from the "bottom up" by supporting collaboration and conversation at various levels to ensure the sustainability of this initiative.
- Establish and expand an increasing pool of teachers and administrators who are knowledgeable about, committed to using, and successful in teaching a comprehensive reading program based upon scientific research.

The teachers in SCRF schools are required to attend professional development sessions focusing on strategies to teach key reading components. The five components of reading instruction that "all K-3 teachers should explicitly and systematically teach include phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension" (Reading First Grant Proposal, 2002, p. 5). Phonemic awareness is defined as "the ability to hear, identify, and manipulate individual sounds (phonemes) in spoken words" (p. 5). Phonics includes "the letter sound relationship used to read and spell words" (p. 5). Fluency is defined as "the ability to read a text accurately and quickly" (p. 5). Vocabulary includes "the words we must know to communicate effectively" (p. 5). Comprehension includes "the ability to read and construct meaning from text" (p. 5).

In addition, literacy coaches are assigned to various schools to assist teachers with implementing the strategies learned in the professional development sessions. Through professional development and support from literacy coaches, the teachers should be well

prepared to provide appropriate instruction that will lead to improved reading achievement for all of their students.

Staff from the Office of Program Evaluation (OPE) and the South Carolina Educational Policy Center (SCEPC) are evaluating the SCRF Initiative in collaboration with the State Department of Education (SDE) in order to assess the effectiveness of the SCRF Initiative. This on-going collaborative effort involves regular meetings and communication where project implementation and evaluation activities are planned and results shared. Numerous presentations and reports related to the SCRF Initiative have been completed during 2004-2005 and provided to a variety of audiences. Evaluation results were presented at meetings with SCRF project staff, professional development providers, school leadership teams, University of South Carolina teaching faculty, and regional literacy coaches, who then shared the results at the school level.

Highlights of the evaluation findings, including Stanford Reading First achievement data, evaluation surveys, and professional development evaluation results, are provided in the following sections of this report (Volume I). This segment features the highlights of the SCRF Initiative evaluation for the 2004-2005 school year. In addition, examples of completed reports and various forms of data presentation can be found in Attachments A-W in Volume II of this report.

## **Section I: Student Achievement**

### **South Carolina Reading First Student Achievement Data Report for 2004-2005**

To measure achievement, students enrolled in SCRF schools in grades 1-3 completed the Stanford Reading First assessment in the fall of 2004 and in the spring of 2005. The Stanford Reading First assessment was developed specifically for the national Reading First Initiative by Harcourt Educational Measurement and is an edition of Stanford 10. The test is composed of two sections: a multiple choice section and a teacher administered oral fluency section. The multiple choice section assesses five components: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, reading fluency, and reading comprehension strategies. The oral fluency section assesses two components: speaking vocabulary and oral reading fluency. Three types of scores are reported for each grade level: the total score (combining the two sections), the multiple choice section alone, and the oral fluency section alone. Information on the total score as well as the individual components are presented in this report.

### ***Performance Level Analysis***

The summary information presented in this report is based on all students in SCRF schools who took the Stanford Reading First assessment in the fall of 2004 and in the spring of 2005. The evaluation report submitted to the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) annually requires reporting for all students who take each assessment rather than for the group of students who have taken the assessments in both the fall and the spring. The total number of students who took the assessment in the fall and the spring differ due to individual students entering or leaving the program during the year. The specific number of students in grades 1-3 who took the assessment in the fall and the spring are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

*Number of Students Who Took the Stanford Reading First Assessment by Grade Level*

Grade level	Number of Students	
	Fall	Spring
Grade 1	3,216	3,202
Grade 2	2,926	2,943
Grade 3	2,857	2,853
Total	8,999	8,998

The percentage of students who scored in each of the three proficiency levels on the Stanford Reading First achievement test for the fall and the spring are shown in Figure 1 for grade 1, Figure 2 for grade 2, and Figure 3 for grade 3. The performance levels are at grade level (AGL), needs additional intervention (NAI), and needs substantial intervention (NSI). Students in the AGL category scored at or above the 40<sup>th</sup> percentile, students in the NAI category scored from the 20<sup>th</sup> to 39<sup>th</sup> percentiles, and students in the NSI category scored below the 20<sup>th</sup> percentile. If students in the Reading First schools are improving in reading achievement, as measured by the Stanford Reading First assessment, then the percentage of students in the AGL category should increase from fall to spring.

Students in grade 1 made substantial progress in their reading achievement. As shown in Figure 1, the percentage of students in the AGL category increased by 31.3% from fall to spring, and the percentage of students in the NSI category decreased by 35.5%. Compared with grades 2 and 3, grade 1 had the highest percentage in the NSI category and the lowest percentage in the AGL category in the fall. However, in the spring, grade 1 had the lowest percentage in the NSI category and the highest percentage in the AGL category with almost 50% of the students at grade level. Grade 2 students made a small increase (4.6%) in the AGL

category and a very small decrease (1.5%) in the NSI category from fall to spring as detailed in Figure 2. Similar to grade 1, grade 3 students had a large increase of 20.4% in the AGL category from fall to spring, and a substantial decrease of 23.6% in the NSI category as well (see Figure 3). These findings suggest that SCRF students in grade 1 and 3 increased their reading achievement substantially, while students in grade 2 made smaller gains to increase their reading achievement. Attachment A presents more details of the performance level analyses.

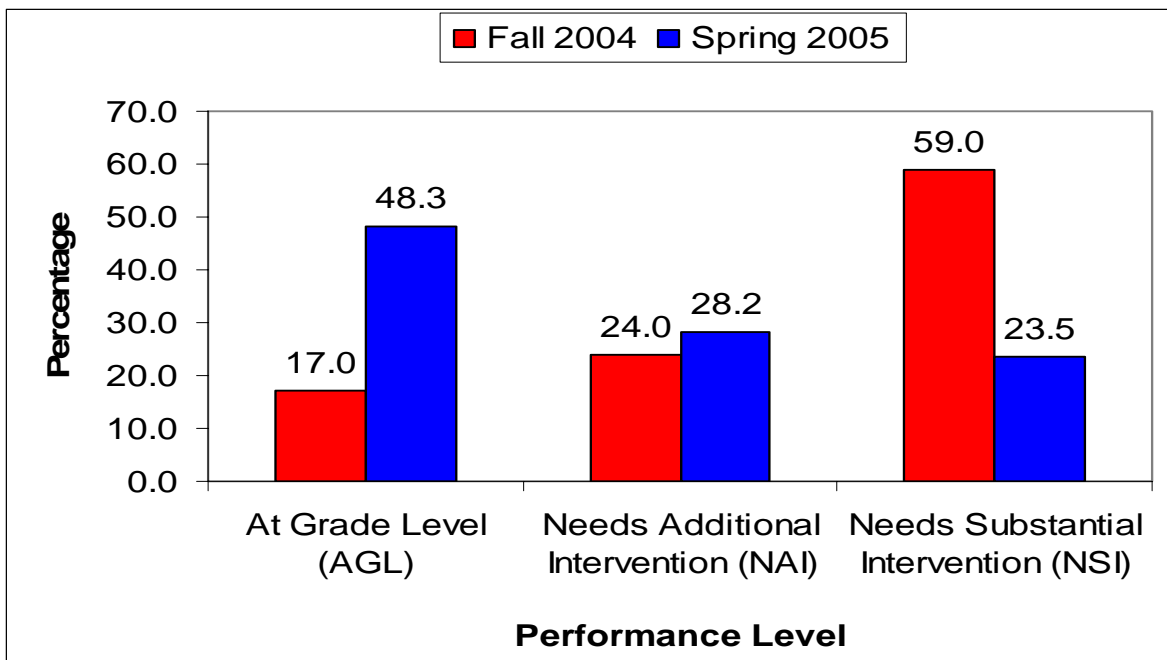


Figure 1. Performance level percentages for grade 1.

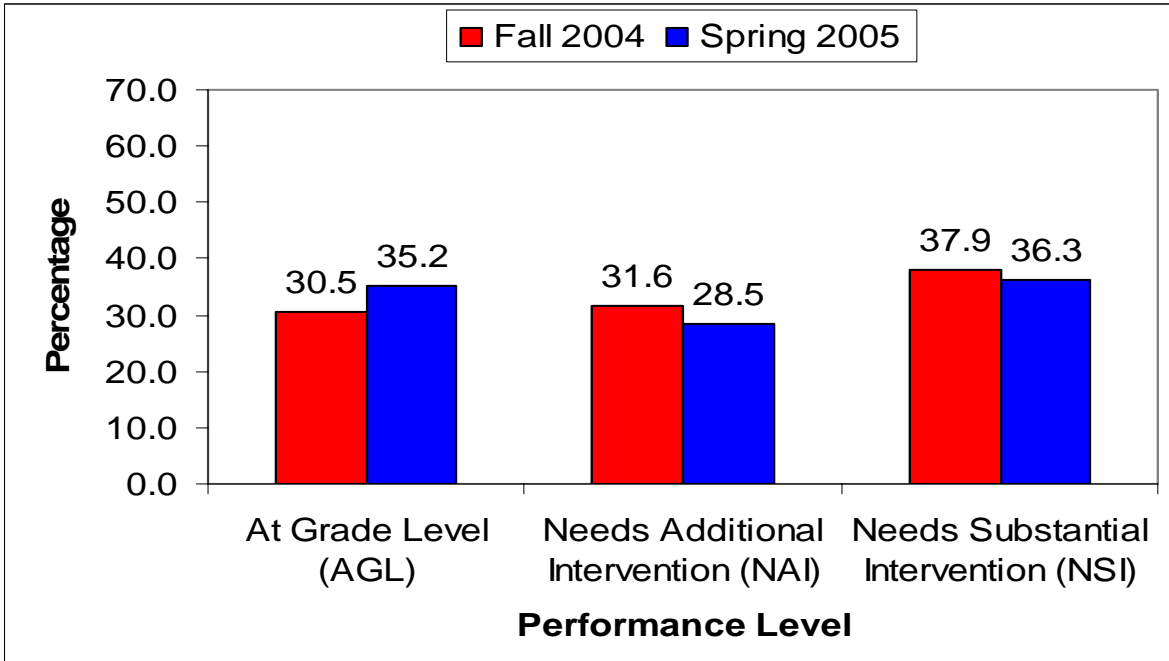


Figure 2. Performance level percentages for grade 2.

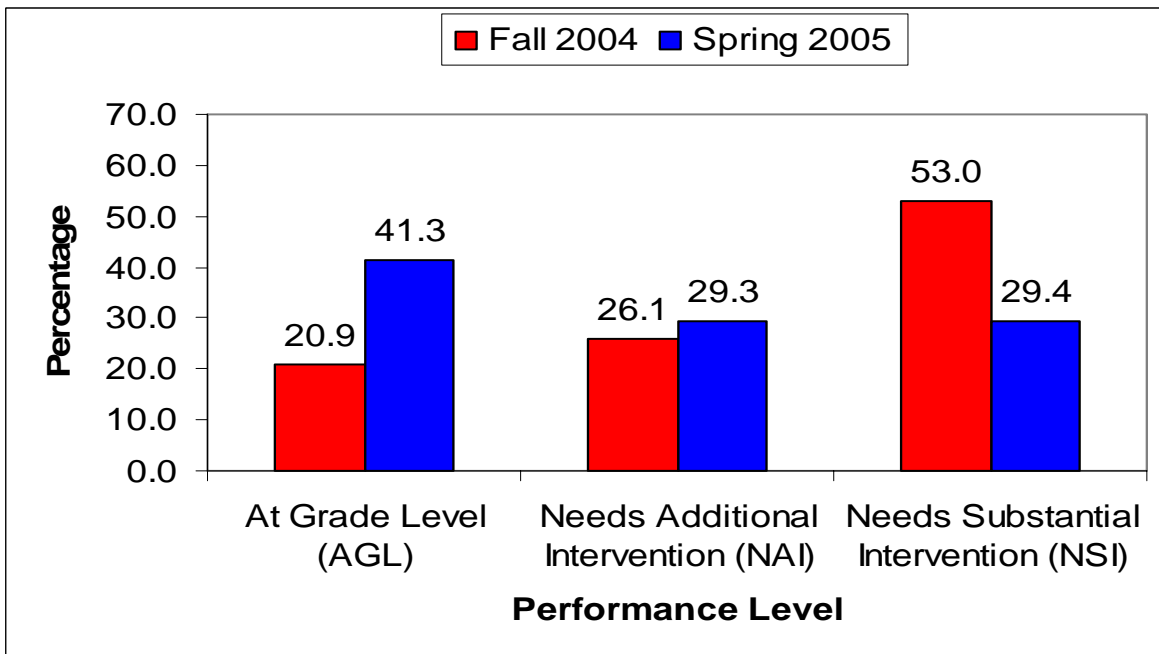


Figure 3. Performance level percentages for grade 3.

### Component Analysis

The total score on the Stanford Reading First assessment provides a measure of how students are performing overall. An analysis was also conducted to determine how students performed on each of the five multiple choice components and the two oral fluency components.

This information, which is presented in detail in Attachment A, is being used by the professional development providers working with the SDE on the SCRF Initiative to guide program planning for the 2005-2006 school year. Table 2 displays the results for all three grades combined for all schools participating in the SCRF Initiative in the 2004-2005 school year.

Table 2

*Performance Levels for Components for All Students in SCF*

Component	Performance Level	Fall 2004 %	Spring 2005%	Difference
Phonemic Awareness	At Grade Level	64.2	76.9	12.7
	Needs Add. Intervention	17.7	11.7	-6.0
	Needs Subst. Intervention	18.2	11.5	-6.7
Phonics	At Grade Level	14.8	23.0	8.2
	Needs Add. Intervention	32.7	21.7	-11.1
	Needs Subst. Intervention	52.5	55.3	2.8
Vocabulary Development	At Grade Level	35.2	36.2	1.0
	Needs Add. Intervention	31.5	23.3	-8.2
	Needs Subst. Intervention	33.3	40.5	7.2
Reading Fluency	At Grade Level	32.9	42.7	9.8
	Needs Add. Intervention	21.3	23.1	1.8
	Needs Subst. Intervention	45.8	34.2	-11.6
Reading Comp Strategies	At Grade Level	29.6	43.8	14.2
	Needs Add. Intervention	26.1	24.3	-1.8
	Needs Subst. Intervention	44.3	31.9	-12.4
Speaking Vocabulary	At Grade Level	35.2	56.5	21.3
	Needs Add. Intervention	26.3	26.5	0.2
	Needs Subst. Intervention	38.5	17.0	-21.5
Oral Reading Fluency	At Grade Level	27.7	50.5	22.8
	Needs Add. Intervention	22.2	21.7	-0.5
	Needs Subst. Intervention	50.2	27.7	-22.5

Overall, students performed the best on the phonemic awareness component. This component had the highest percentage in the AGL category and the lowest percentage in the NSI category in both the fall and the spring. The AGL percentage increased from 64.2% in the fall to 76.9% in the spring. The phonics component had the lowest percentage in the AGL category in both the fall and spring. The AGL percentage did increase from 14.8% in the fall to 23.0% in the spring. However, the percentage in the NSI category also increased by 2.8% from the fall to the spring. The vocabulary development component had a small increase of 1.0% in the AGL category from the fall to the spring, while the percentage in the NSI category increased by 7.2% from the fall to the spring. Students made notable progress on the reading fluency and the reading comprehension strategies components. For the reading fluency component, there

was an 11.6% decrease in the NSI category and a 9.8% increase in the AGL category from the fall to the spring. For the reading comprehension strategies component, there was a 12.4% decrease in the NSI category and a 14.2% increase in the AGL category from the fall to the spring. Students showed the most progress on the two oral fluency components with each component having over a 20% decrease in the NSI category and over a 20% increase in the AGL category from fall to spring.

Among the components tested on the Stanford Reading First assessment, South Carolina students performed best on phonemic awareness. They also improved their performance on reading fluency, reading comprehension strategies, speaking vocabulary, and oral reading fluency between the fall and spring. Phonics and vocabulary development seem to be the components in greatest need of improvement.

An analysis was also conducted by grade level and showed similar patterns to the results for all grades combined. One exception was for reading comprehension strategies for grade 2. This component had a decrease in the AGL category and an increase in the NSI category from fall to spring for grade 2. These results indicate that students in grade 2 tended to perform worse in the spring compared to the fall on reading comprehension strategies. In addition, grade 2 tended to make lower gains for all components from fall to spring compared to grades 1 and 3.

### ***Matched Normal Curve Equivalent Analysis***

Additional analyses were done to examine the achievement of students who had participated in the Reading First program all year. The summary information contained in Figure 4 is based on a matched group of students who were enrolled in a Reading First school in both fall 2004 and spring 2005.<sup>1</sup> The matched students in grades 1, 2, and 3 took the Stanford Reading First assessment in both the fall and the spring. Thus, the analyses examine the spring 2005 scores of students in grades 1–3 in relation to their fall 2004 scores. The matched analysis provides a meaningful measure of growth in reading achievement for students who participated in the Reading First program for the entire school year. The district and school level results for grades 1-3, which were provided to each school's representatives and the SCRF Director at school leadership team meetings on September 20 and 21, were reported based on the schools in which the students were enrolled in spring 2005.

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<sup>1</sup> The analysis includes students who changed schools from the fall to the spring but remained in a Reading First school.

This analysis is based on the normal curve equivalent (NCE) scores, which are converted from percentile ranks. The advantage of NCEs over percentile ranks is that NCEs provide an equal-interval scale and permit valid reporting of averages. NCEs range from 1 to 99 and have an average of 50. Therefore, if a student has an NCE of 50, this means he/she is performing average as compared to a norm reference group. The entire group of matched SCRF students consisted of 8,163 students with 2,896 in grade 1, 2,643 in grade 2, and 2,624 in grade 3.

The average student NCEs for the total score on the Stanford Reading First assessment are shown in Figure 4 for all three grade levels. Grade 1 students had the lowest average NCE among all grades in the fall and made the most improvement from fall to spring. The difference between average NCEs from fall to spring was 16.1 NCEs for grade 1 students. The students in grade 2 had the highest average NCE among all grades in the fall, but had the lowest average increase of 1.4 NCEs from fall to spring. The grade 3 students' scores in reading achievement showed an average NCE gain from fall to spring of 10.9 NCEs. Attachment B presents further details of the NCE analysis.

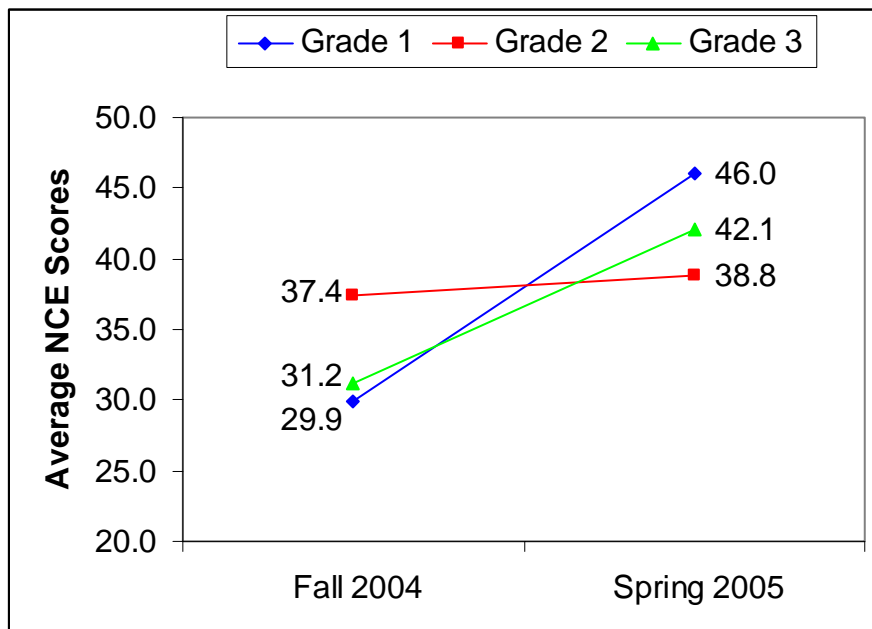


Figure 4. Average total NCE scores in fall 2004 and spring 2005.

In summary, the analysis of students' fall 2004 and spring 2005 scores on the Stanford Reading First assessment showed gains for grades 1-3. The largest gains were made by students in grade 1 and the lowest gains occurred in grade 2.

## Section II: Surveys of SCRF Participant Groups

### South Carolina Reading First Evaluation Survey Results

Part of the OPE, SCEPC, and SDE collaboration resulted in the development of several survey instruments which were administered throughout the first year of implementation. The purpose of the surveys was to offer SCRF participants an opportunity to provide feedback about various aspects of the Initiative including implementation, support, roles, responsibilities, professional development needs, and overall effectiveness. The surveys were comprised of a series of closed and open-ended questions. Some items were common across all of the surveys, and some were unique to certain groups.

Groups that completed surveys were K-3 classroom teachers, interventionists, school literacy coaches, principals, district project directors, and superintendents. The surveys were conducted in the spring of 2005 for each group. Additional surveys were administered to participants in various professional development workshops, as well as school leadership team (SLT) meetings throughout the year. The purpose of these surveys was to measure the effectiveness and usefulness of the professional development activities provided to participants in SCRF, as well as to elicit what further professional development needs of the participants.

### ***Quantitative and Qualitative Results***

This section presents highlights of the first year survey results for each of the six participant groups. Results showed generally positive attitudes toward the SCRF Initiative after the first year of implementation. Please see Attachments C-H for full results of each survey. It is important to note that the number of participants in each group ranges from 24 superintendents to slightly more than 700 classroom teachers. Therefore, the number of responses for a particular question varies greatly by group. Though the percentages appear similar between the groups, some percentages may reflect a smaller number of responses to a given question. The survey completion rates for each participant group are shown in Table 3.

Table 3

*Survey Completion Rates for SCRF Participant Groups*

Participant group	# of completed surveys	Total # in group	Percentage rate of completion
Teachers	677	712	95.1%
Interventionists	62	76	81.6%
Literacy coaches	53	56	94.6%
Principals	50	52	96.2%
Project Directors	23	24	95.8%
Superintendents	13	24	54.2%

The first section of all the participant surveys included questions about attendance and participation in SCRF activities. Each of the groups reported high attendance rates at various SCRF activities, workshops, and meetings. They also indicated that, overall, they found these activities to be helpful or very helpful. Attendance rates tended to be lower for groups that were not necessarily involved in the SCRF Initiative on a daily basis, such as superintendents. The respondents were also asked to provide information about their future professional development needs. The areas which were identified as needing further professional development were fairly consistent among the groups. The category in which most respondents requested additional training was effective instructional strategies for students performing below grade level. Although many participants indicated that they would like more training in the five essential components of reading instruction, this category was identified by the fewest people as an area of need. Figure 5 presents the primary professional development needs expressed by each group.

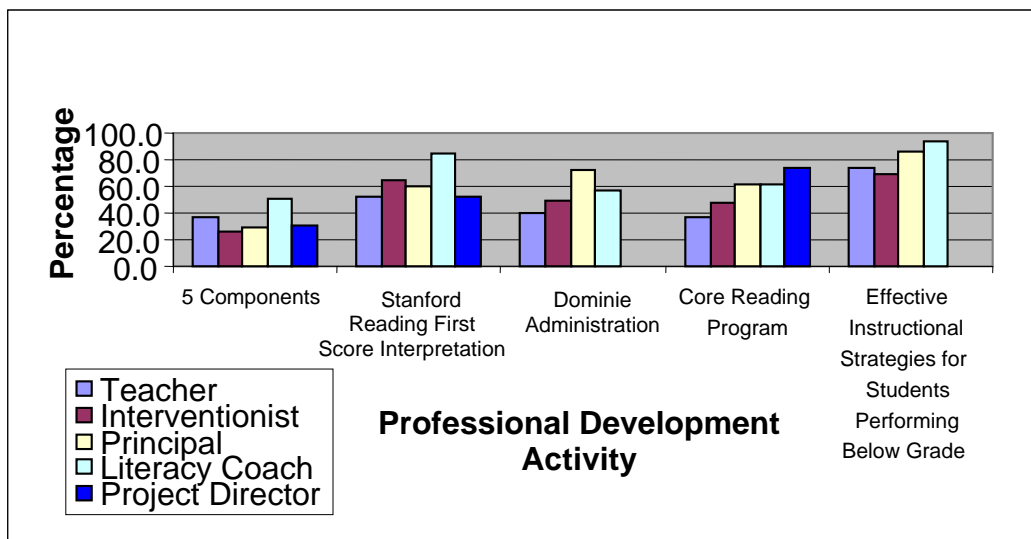


Figure 5. Future professional development needs.

The participants were asked for their opinions about various aspects of SCRF implementation in their school or district. At least 90% of the participants in each group agreed or strongly agreed that they supported the SCRF Initiative. More than 90% of respondents, with the exception of teachers, also indicated that if it were up to them, the SCRF Initiative would continue in their school or district next year. Teachers expressed a slightly lower level of agreement, with 85% expressing support for the continuation of SCRF. Approximately 90% of the principals, project directors, and superintendents affirmed that the implementation of SCRF went smoothly in their school or district. The percentage of literacy coaches indicating smooth implementation was slightly lower at 80%. In contrast, about 67% of the teachers and

interventionists thought that the first year of SCRF implementation went smoothly in their school. Also, 11% of interventionists and about 14% of teachers disagreed with this item. One item to which the participants expressed the most disagreement was that they have sufficient time to carry out their SCRF responsibilities. The two groups that disagreed with this statement the most were interventionists (43.6%) and teachers (35.7%). The disagreement with this question was reaffirmed in the open-ended question which asked for suggested changes to the program. Many respondents indicated the need for more time to perform their duties as a suggested change they would make to the program.

A major focus of the SCRF Initiative is the importance of assessment and the different ways assessment can be used. As a means of gauging the value placed on assessment, several of the participant groups were asked to indicate their beliefs about the value of using assessments such as Dominie and Stanford Reading First to screen for students' instructional needs, diagnose specific needs of individual students, monitor students' progress, and make instructional decisions. There were differences in the respondents' beliefs about the two assessments being used for the SCRF Initiative. This disparity may reflect the slightly higher need for more training on the Stanford assessment as expressed previously in Figure 5. Literacy coaches did not agree as strongly as other groups that the Stanford Reading First assessment corresponds with the specific tasks related to assessing students. The percentages of each group that agreed or strongly agreed that assessment can assist in these tasks are presented in Figures 6 and 7.

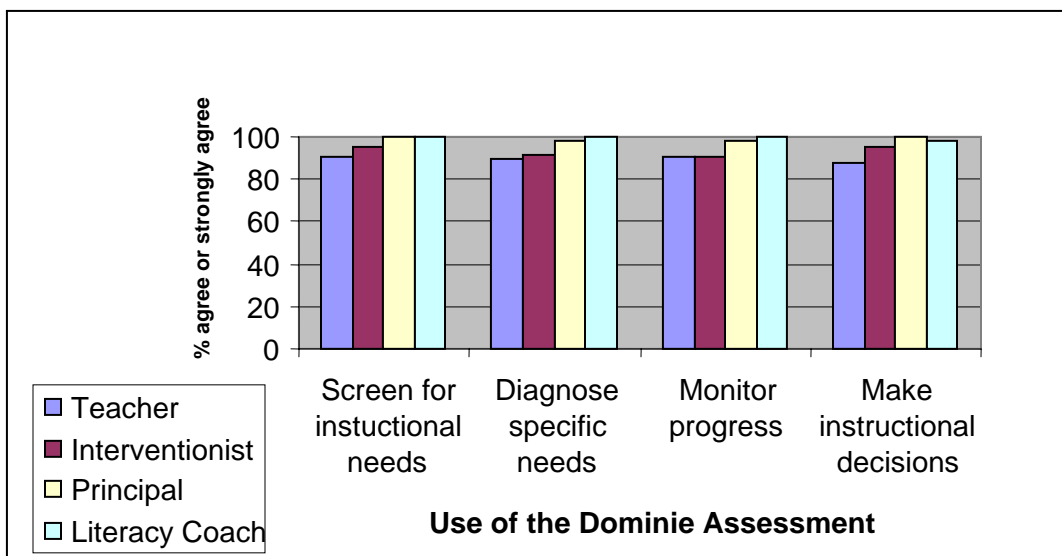


Figure 6. Participants' beliefs about the value of using the Dominie assessment for classroom tasks.

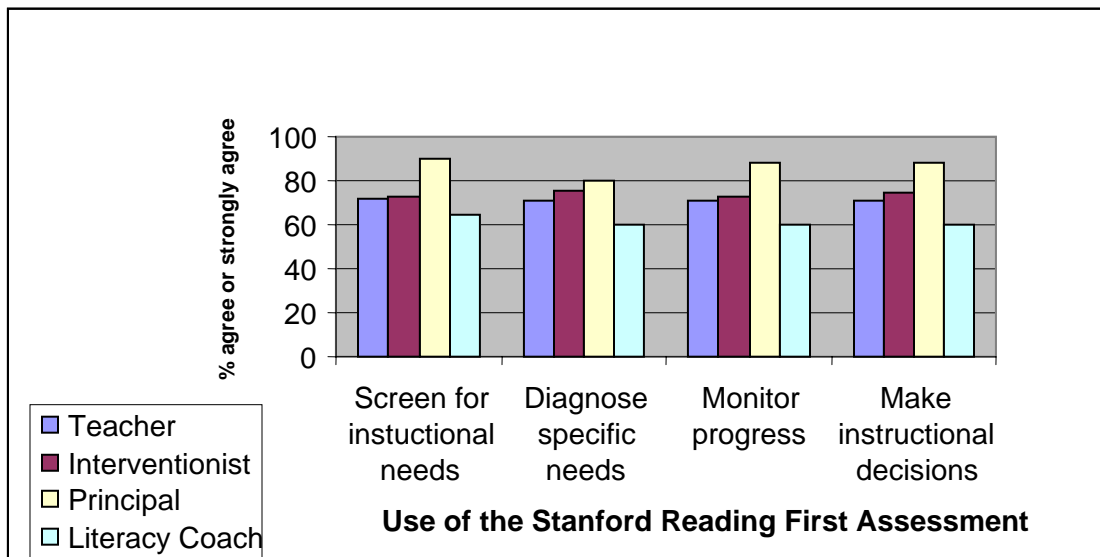


Figure 7. Participants' beliefs about the value of using the Stanford Reading First assessment for classroom tasks.

In addition, project directors were asked to indicate their beliefs about assessment in relation to helping teachers to make instructional decisions about students. Every member of this group, or 100% of the respondents, agreed or strongly agreed that the Dominie can provide valuable information to assist teachers in making instructional decisions. A slightly lower percentage of this group (91.3%) believed that Stanford Reading First can assist teachers in this process.

The final section of the SCRF surveys asked three open-ended questions about participants' views on the benefits, needed changes, and effectiveness of the SCRF Initiative. The responses to each of these questions are described in the following sections.

The first open-ended question asked participants to *Please describe one benefit of the SCRF Initiative*. Figure 8 shows the percentages of commonly noted benefits by all participant groups. The most frequently indicated benefit of the SCRF Initiative was *professional development*. Specifically, participants mentioned the greater emphasis on scientifically based reading research and best practices as valuable, as well as the initiation of study groups and on-going training on the five components. *Collaboration*, another benefit, was also described as important in the development of common goals, support, and a sense of community. *Improved assessment*, through kid-watching and Dominie, was seen as beneficial in assisting participants to better understand their students' instructional needs. For teachers ( $n = 172$ , 26.4%), *resource development*, including materials and funding, was the most frequently mentioned benefit. Likewise, *improved instruction* was seen as a positive benefit of the program. This

included the introduction of read aloud and small group methods as well as more creative instruction based on student needs and the five components. *Intervention/Reading Recovery* was also mentioned as valuable by teachers ( $n = 8, 1.2\%$ ) and interventionists ( $n = 4, 6.9\%$ ). According to the respondents, these benefits helped participants better *meet the needs of students* resulting in increased test scores and grades, students' desire to read, and knowledge of students' strengths and weaknesses.

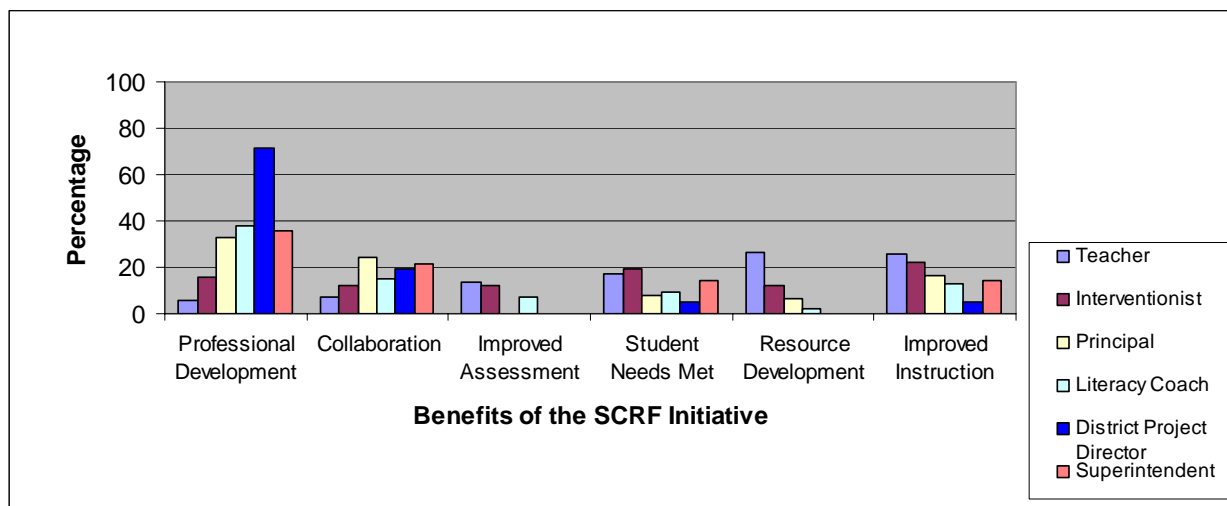


Figure 8. Summary of benefits of the SCRF Initiative.

Participants were also asked to *Please describe one feature of the SCRF Initiative that you would like to see changed*. A number of respondents expressed concerns with *assessment* including the need for additional training, more time for test administration, and a desire for changes to *Dominie* and the *Stanford Reading First* assessments (see Figure 9). The overall *program demands and time* investment of the program was also a key concern. Respondents suggested needs for additional time for planning, reflection, and collaboration, changes to the 120-minute uninterrupted block of English language arts instruction, more flexibility, and less paperwork. Some individuals felt that *expanding services* to include additional grades or subjects (i.e., writing) and increasing *resources* such as staffing, funding, and materials would also be a beneficial change. Although professional development was the greatest program benefit, there were some specific changes requested, such as changing the focus of the training to include other areas such as assessment. In hopes of decreasing time away from the classroom, participants suggested fewer training sessions or sessions that could be held locally. Others also desired that study groups be voluntary or that a wider range of incentives be offered for participating teachers who may not need the graduate credits. Many respondents mentioned that they *would not make any changes* to the Initiative at this time. In terms of specific groups,

the need for *better communication* of program information/roles and responsibilities was a concern for some teachers ( $n = 10$ , 1.7%) and literacy coaches ( $n = 3$ , 6.8%). Principals ( $n = 6$ , 12.5%) and teachers ( $n = 21$ , 3.6%) also requested more *collaboration*, and literacy coaches ( $n = 4$ , 9.1%) noted that a change to the school leadership teams would be beneficial.

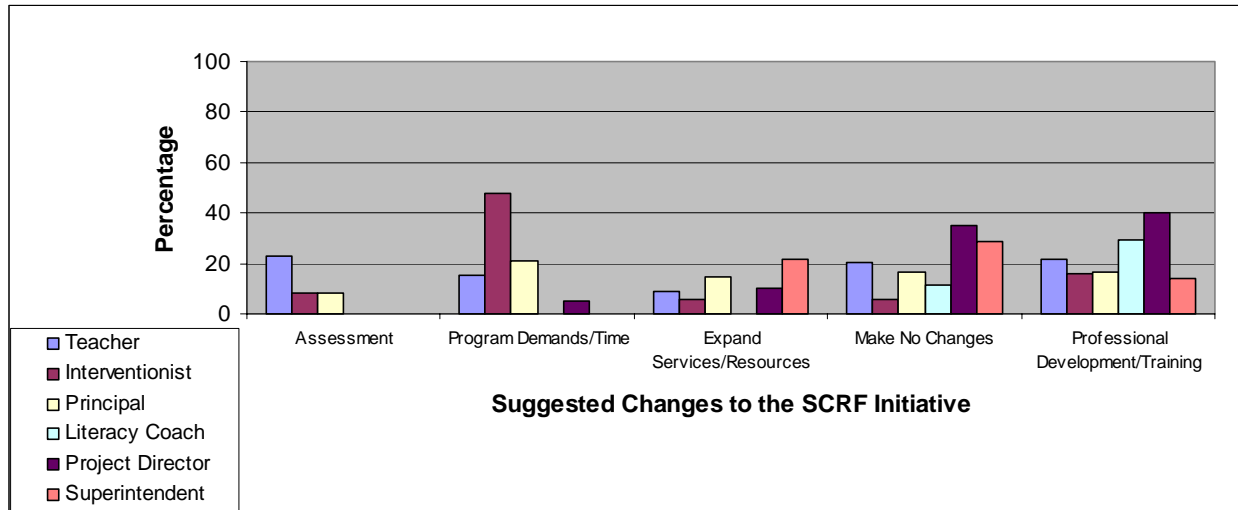


Figure 9. Summary of suggested changes to the SCRF Initiative.

All participant groups were asked to rate the effectiveness of the SCRF Initiative in their school or district. The ratings were provided on a scale from 1 (not effective) to 4 (very effective). Overall, the Initiative received positive ratings. As shown in Figure 10, the majority of the participants rated SCRF as “very effective” or “effective.” The only group to have any respondents assign a rating of “not effective” to the Initiative was teachers (1.0%). A follow up open-ended question asked for the reason behind the rating assigned. Many of the participants who assigned lower ratings indicated that it was too early in the implementation process to assign a higher rating.

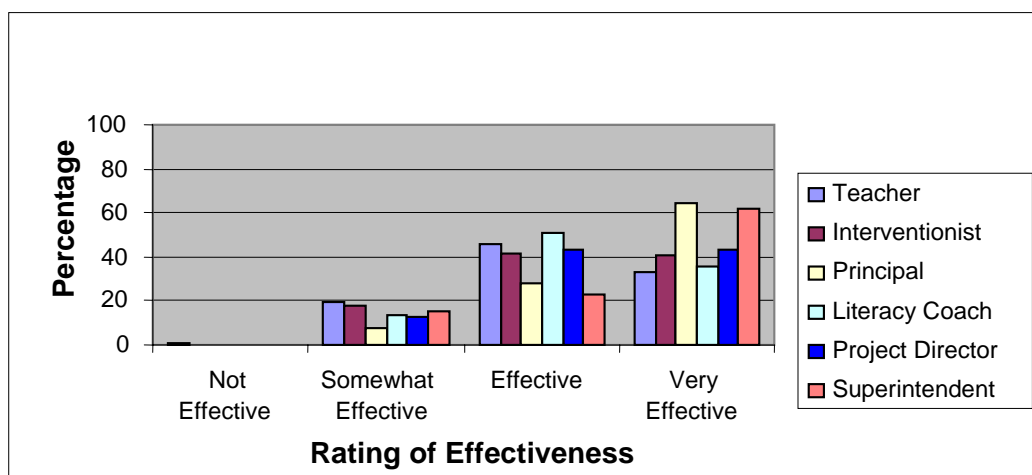


Figure 10. Participant ratings of the effectiveness of the SCRF Initiative.

The most common reason for giving a rating of 4 was *student progress/achievement*. Participants felt that students improved their reading and writing ability and were more interested in reading. Specifically, they reported progress in the classroom and improvement on assessments. Figure 11 presents the most commonly reported reasons for rating SCRF as “very effective.” *Teacher progress* was another common reason for rating the program “very effective.” Participants stated that teachers experienced professional growth as indicated by collaboration with other teachers, excitement about teaching, and evaluation of their current teaching methods. For some, the combination of both *students and teachers benefiting* from the SCRF Initiative was a reason for this rating. Others identified the program as “very effective” due to *resource development*. This included funding for classroom supplies and additional tools supporting reading development, such as training materials, resources, and books. *Collaboration*, which led to a belief in the SCRF Initiative and a dedication to improved reading, was another reason mentioned. *Improved instruction* was given as a rationale by interventionists ( $n = 10, 41.7\%$ ) and teachers ( $n = 21, 9.6\%$ ). Some teachers also mentioned that the assistance of *literacy coaches* and *interventionists* made a difference to them. Improved assessment and the use of evidence-based research were given as explanations by principals ( $n = 2, 6.3\%$  and  $n = 1, 3.1\%$ ) and teachers ( $n = 4, 1.8\%$  and  $n = 2, .9\%$ ).

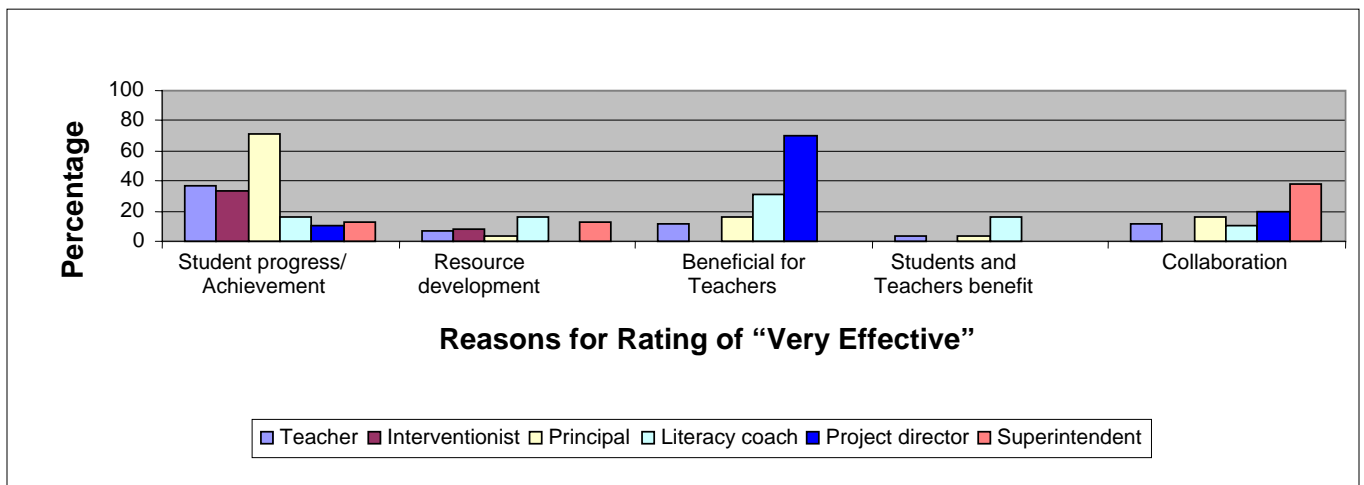


Figure 11. Summary of reasons for rating the SCRF Initiative “very effective” (4).

Participants most often rated the program “effective” (Rating = 3, Figure 12) when they felt the SCRF Initiative was still in its *implementation phase or still had room to grow*. Many saw the progress and benefits of the program, but felt that more time was needed to see results, train staff, or implement program components. Respondents remarked that *level of commitment/ collaboration* was important in giving a rating of “effective.” Several participants observed everyone working well together, showing support for the program, and giving their best effort to implement the program, whereas others saw the need for more collaboration and

reluctance by some teachers to buy into the initiative. *Improved instruction* through the use of new strategies, collaborative efforts, and assessment led to *student progress/achievement*, therefore rendering “effective” ratings. Teachers also noted their own *knowledge/growth* ( $n = 29, 10.0\%$ ), *assessment* ( $n = 21, 7.2\%$ ), and *resource development* ( $n = 12, 4.2\%$ ) as key aspects of the SCRF Initiative’s effectiveness.

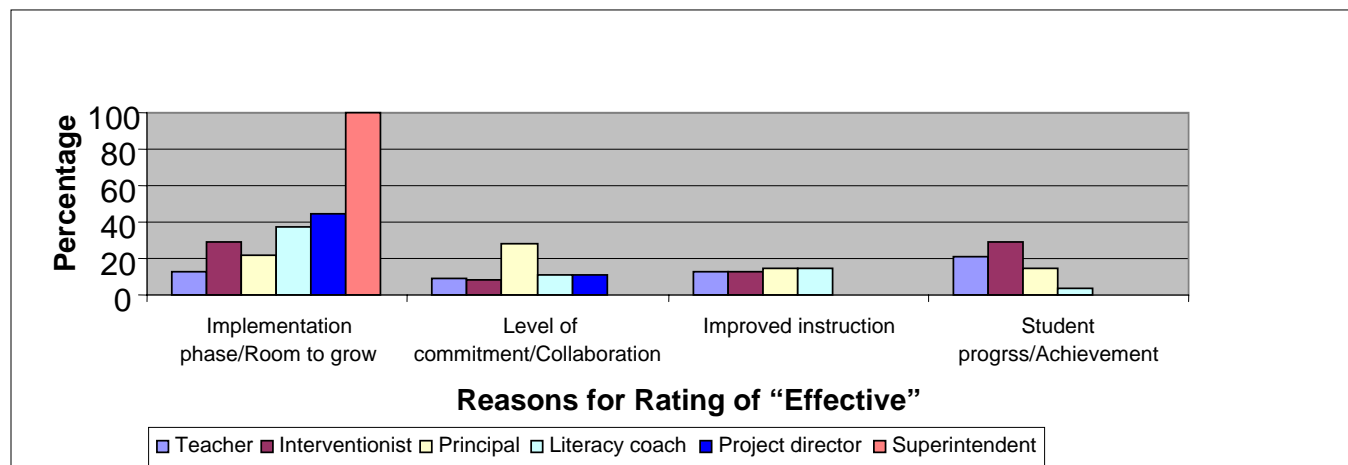


Figure 12. Summary of reasons for rating the SCRF Initiative “effective” (3).

Almost all participants rating the program “somewhat effective” (Rating = 2) did so because the program was still in its *implementation phase*, since it was the first year. Some literacy coaches also saw a *lack of understanding/support* of SCRF Initiative goals, roles, and responsibilities. Teachers provided more varied reasons. They had concerns with *training* ( $n = 15, 11.8\%$ ), lack of *teacher commitment* ( $n = 15, 11.7\%$ ), and the *amount of work* required by SCRF ( $n = 10, 7.9\%$ ). Other reasons given included *student progress* ( $n = 11, 8.7\%$ ), *programmatic concerns* ( $n = 8, 6.3\%$ ), *assessment* ( $n = 7, 5.5\%$ ), and *scheduling/time problems* ( $n = 7, 5.5\%$ ).

Seven teachers (1.1%) gave a rating of 1, “not effective.” Reasons included teachers feeling overwhelmed, not having time for implementation/assessment, lower MAP test scores, duplication of services, and insufficient results to give a rating. As stated previously, teachers were the only group in which respondents rated SCRF as “not effective.”

In summary, the participant groups expressed generally positive attitudes toward, and satisfaction with the first year of the SCRF Initiative. Participants indicated that the training provided thus far has been helpful and informative, but continued training and professional development in a variety of areas is needed. Overall, participants indicated that they have found the professional development beneficial and influential in improving assessment, instruction, and student progress. Respondents suggested that some features of the Initiative could be changed, such as program flexibility, expanded services, and modifications to professional development opportunities. In conclusion, the majority of participants rated the

SCRF Initiative “very effective” or “effective”, citing student progress and teacher benefits as positive program outcomes. Complete results for each survey are provided in Attachments C-H.

### **Section III: Professional Development Surveys**

#### **Professional Development Workshop Evaluation Summary**

This section of the report highlights evaluation results for the SCRF Initiative Professional Development Workshops and School Leadership Team Meetings held during the 2004–2005 school year. As a component of the on-going evaluation of SCRF, the Office of Program Evaluation (OPE) and the South Carolina Policy Center (SCEPC) at the University of South Carolina compiled the data from the meetings held during 2004–2005 to generate this summative report. SCRF Initiative staff at the SDE received individual workshop reports throughout the year and reviewed the data to make any necessary improvements to the professional development activities.

#### ***Overview and Purpose of SCRF Professional Development Workshops***

The SDE has offered 50 professional development workshops on the five components of reading instruction promoted by the SCRF Initiative. The workshops were led by national and state experts who introduced participants to one of the five components of scientifically based reading instruction. Ten workshops each for comprehension, fluency, phonemic awareness, phonics, and vocabulary have been offered since January, 2004. See Attachment I for a complete list of workshop offerings and corresponding dates.

#### ***Overview of Survey Instrument Administered to SCRF Workshop Participants***

Following the workshops, participants completed an evaluation instrument. Initially the survey included three open-ended items. The section, “Summary of Qualitative Findings from Spring and Summer 2004” highlights feedback provided by participants in response to the open-ended items. Staff at the OPE and the SCEPC compiled and analyzed responses to the open-ended items in order to develop additional closed-ended survey items. The OPE and the SCEPC staff revised the survey instrument at the end of summer 2004 based on feedback from workshop participants. Attachment J contains the original survey instrument; Attachment K presents the revised survey instrument.

The revised survey included a new demographic item, “are you in a Reading First school?” Prior to fall 2004 the professional development workshops were only offered to educators who were participating in the SCRF Initiative. As other educators were invited to attend workshops, evaluators needed to discern how many SCRF participants were attending

the workshops. Analyses comparing the responses of SCRF and non-SCRF participants were conducted for workshops in which 10% or more of the participants were non-SCRF educators. These analyses, along with information about the districts in which participants work and the grade levels educators teach can be seen in Attachments M – Q, which are organized by workshop topic and subsequently by workshop date.

A second change to the evaluation form was the inclusion of a “not applicable” option for the item “I teach the following grade(s).” This option provided an appropriate response category for educators who work with students at various levels, and other educators such as administrators and school literacy coaches. A third change to the evaluation form included the category “interventionists” for the item asking participants to identify their current position. Additionally, several new Likert-scaled items were added to the survey including, “the demonstrations of strategies were useful,” “the handouts were clear and complete,” “the visual aids were easy to read,” “I already use most of these strategies presented today,” “the workshop has deepened my understanding of the instructional strategies presented today,” “I plan to use the instructional strategies presented today in my classroom,” “the workshop has deepened my understanding of using assessment to inform instruction,” and “overall this was a good workshop.” On the revised survey, the response continuum was changed from a 4-point scale to a 6-point scale.

**Summary of Quantitative Findings from all Workshops**

This section of the report presents aggregated quantitative data for all workshops. For information about participants and their responses with respect to a particular workshop please refer to Attachments L - Q, which are organized by workshop topic then chronologically by workshop date. In total, 6,641 surveys were received from all workshops. The numbers of surveys returned by workshop topic are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

*Number of Returned Surveys by Workshop Topic*

	Workshop				
	Comprehension	Fluency	Phonemic Awareness	Phonics	Vocabulary
# of returned surveys	1,345	1,346	1,347	1,287	1,316

The evaluation form asked participants to identify their current role. Figure 13 shows the percentage of workshop participants by current position. Of the participants who attended professional development workshops, 6,606 identified their current position. Attachment L provides more detailed information about the number and percentage of participants by position

and workshop topic. Classroom teachers represented 63.2% of the total participants of the SCRF professional development workshops. Special education teachers represented 9.9% of workshop participants. The survey allowed participants who identified their position as “other,” which represented 9.6% of participants, to specify their current position. Responses included, but were not limited to, speech language pathologist, assistant principal, curriculum coordinator, instructional specialist, and curriculum specialist.

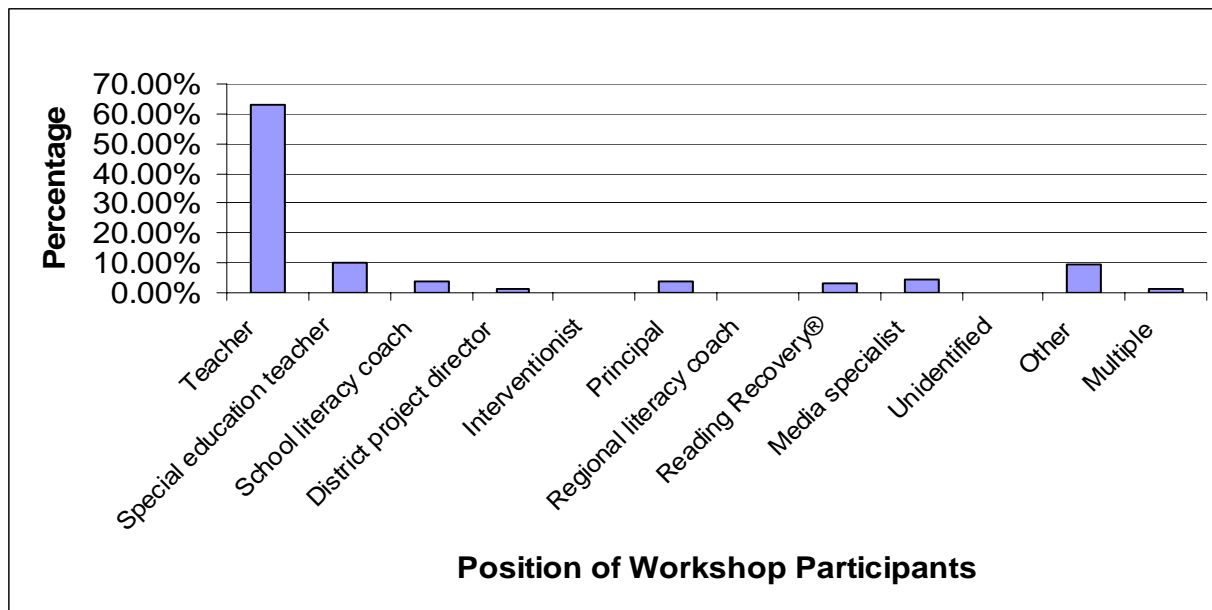


Figure 13. Percentage of workshop participants by current position.

For the purposes of this report, four survey items were analyzed across all workshops. These items were selected because they were most reflective of program goals. The items selected include, “*The content of this workshop will be useful to me,*” “*The workshop has deepened my understanding of using assessment to inform instruction,*” “*I plan to use the instructional strategies presented today in my classroom,*” and “*I have learned new instructional strategies in this workshop.*” Two of these items were common across all workshop evaluation forms. Those include, “*The content of this workshop will be useful to me,*” and “*I have learned new instructional strategies in this workshop.*” The other two items, “*the workshop has deepened my understanding of using assessment to inform instruction*” and “*I plan to use the instructional strategies presented today in my classroom,*” were included only in the revised evaluation form which was administered beginning in Fall 2004.

Table 5 presents the mean responses for the four survey items analyzed. As discussed previously, the response scale changed from a 4-point scale to a 6-point scale at the end of summer 2004. Participants generally rated these items highly. Specifically participants rated the items “*I plan to use the instructional strategies presented today in my classroom*” and “*the content of this workshop will be useful to me*” the highest. The item, “*The workshop has*

*deepened my understanding of using assessment to inform instruction,”* had a lower mean of 4.8 in comparison to the other three highlighted items. A mean of 4.8, however, still indicates agreement with the statement. Thus most respondents are receiving sufficient information on how to use assessment to inform instruction. However, it may be helpful for presenters to incorporate more information about how assessment can inform instruction in future workshops.

Table 5

*Mean Response for Selected Survey Items*

Workshop Topic	The content of this workshop will be useful to me.		The workshop has deepened my understanding of using assessment to inform instruction.		I plan to use the instructional strategies presented today in my classroom.		I have learned new instructional strategies in this workshop.	
	4-pt scale	6-pt scale	4-pt scale	6-pt scale	4-pt scale	6-pt scale	4-pt scale	6-pt scale
Comprehension	3.4	5.1	NA	4.6	NA	5.2	3.1	4.7
Fluency	3.4	5.2	NA	4.9	NA	5.3	3.2	5.0
Phonics	3.3	5.4	NA	5.0	NA	5.4	3.2	5.2
Phonemic Awareness	3.4	5.1	NA	4.8	NA	5.2	3.3	4.9
Vocabulary	3.4	5.1	NA	4.6	NA	5.2	3.3	5.0
Mean	3.4	5.2	NA	4.8	NA	5.3	3.2	5.0

Note: NA represents “Not Applicable”

### **Summary of Qualitative Findings from Spring and Summer 2004**

This section summarizes qualitative data collected, analyzed, and reported for the 2004-2005 SCRF professional development workshops. Due to revisions made to the evaluation survey, workshops that were provided subsequent to summer 2004 did include any open-ended items. Qualitative data were collected and analyzed for comprehension, fluency, phonemic awareness, phonics, and vocabulary workshops conducted in Spring and Summer 2004. See Appendix I for a list of workshop dates.

During these workshops, participants responded to three open-ended items on the workshop evaluation survey.

- Describe one aspect of the workshop that you find particularly useful,
- Describe one strength of this workshop, and
- Describe one way to improve the workshop.

The survey data were then analyzed and reported by topic. The qualitative analysis employed used a coding schematic, in which a theme was identified and then coded for each participant’s open-ended response. For full details of the analysis, please consult the full reports found in the Attachments R–V. Completion rates varied for each topic, but were

comparative across topics, ranging from 56% up to 85%. Table 6 summarizes the response rate by topic for the open-ended items.

Table 6

*Participants' Completion Rate for Open-Ended Items by Topic*

Reading First Topic	Describe one aspect of the workshop you found useful	Describe one strength of the workshop.	Describe one way to improve the workshop.
	Percent Response		
Comprehension	84%	82%	65%
Fluency	84%	84%	61%
Phonemic awareness	85%	85%	57%
Phonics	76%	75%	56%
Vocabulary	80%	74%	81%

Looking across SCRF workshops and topics, saliency among themes became evident. Table 7 shows, first by open-ended item, then by workshop topic, how certain themes were salient across the topics and workshops. For example, the theme most identified for the item, "Describe one aspect of the workshop you found useful," was "strategies," across all five topic areas.

Table 7

*Commonalities and Frequencies of Themes across Workshop Areas*

Open Ended Item	Workshop Topic	Most Mentioned Theme	Second-Most Mentioned Theme	Third-Most Mentioned Theme
Describe one aspect of the workshop you found useful	Comprehension	Strategies	Demonstrations	Handouts
	Fluency	Strategies	Demonstrations	Better understanding
	Phonemic Awareness	Strategies	Demonstrations	Better understanding
	Phonics	Strategies	Demonstrations	Audience participation
	Vocabulary	Strategies	Handouts/visuals	Participation
Describe one strength of the workshop	Comprehension	Presentation	Demonstrations	Strategies
	Fluency	Presentations	Strategies	Demonstrations
	Phonemic Awareness	Presentations	Demonstrations	Participation
	Phonics	Participation	Presentations	Demonstrations
	Vocabulary	Presentations	Participation	Strategies
Describe one way to improve the workshop	Comprehension	Logistics	Presentations	Handouts
	Fluency	Logistics	Presentations	Handouts
	Phonemic Awareness	Presentation	Logistics	Organization
	Phonics	Logistics	Organization	Presentation
	Vocabulary	Logistics	Presentation	Organization

For the open-ended item, “*Describe one aspect of the workshop you found useful,*” the most frequently mentioned theme across all workshops was “strategies.” Responses for these items across surveys ranged from general strategies, such as *teaching comprehension*, to specific ones, such as using “*ABC charts.*” The second most frequent theme for this item was *demonstrations*, which was ranked second in four of the five workshops. Participants noted “*participation*” and “*better understanding of the material*” as the third most frequent themes.

When asked to name a strength of the workshop, most participants across workshops mentioned some aspect of the presentation, including *participation* and *demonstrations*. Examples of these include noting the *organization of the presenters*, the *knowledge of the presenters*, and the *usefulness of the demonstrations the presenters employed*.

When asked to suggest an improvement, most participants in the workshops mentioned some logistical issue. The second most frequent theme identified related to some aspect of the presentation. Examples of these responses show some participants felt *the material was repetitive*, or wanted to have *more demonstrations of strategies*.

Overall, participants’ responses to open-ended questions suggest satisfaction with the materials presented. For full details on the qualitative findings found in each report, please consult the full reports in Attachments R-V.

### ***Highlights of School Leadership Team Report***

The school leadership teams (SLT) consist of the district contact, principal, literacy coach, curriculum coordinator, representative K-3 teachers, representative special education teachers, and the library/media specialist. The role of the SLT is to develop the schools’ plan for implementing scientifically based reading research and instruction and to support teachers in their efforts to raise reading achievement. (Reading First Grant Proposal, 2002, p. 5)

The SDE held five meetings of the SLTs during 2004-2005. At the final meeting of the school year, participants completed a summative evaluation of all of the SLT meetings held throughout year. The evaluation form consisted of demographic information, 14 Likert-scaled items with responses ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree), and four open-ended questions regarding the impact of the SLT meetings. Two hundred-seventeen evaluations were completed by participants representing twenty-three school districts. Complete report details can be found in Attachment W.

The largest group of participants was school literacy coaches (19.4%), whereas assistant principals (0.9%) had the lowest representation. Classroom teachers, media specialists, and principals comprised approximately 14-15% of participants. Curriculum

coordinators, district project directors, interventionists and special education teachers also attended. Only a small percentage of participants indicated an “*other*” position.

Participants generally responded positively to the closed-response items. The number of responses ranged from 214 to 217. The highest endorsed statement (mean = 5.64) was, “*The presenters provided opportunities for the participants to ask questions.*” Of the participants responding to this item, approximately 98% ( $n = 212$ ) agreed or strongly agreed that they were provided the opportunity to ask questions. The least endorsed statement (mean = 5.28) was, “*The visual aids were easy to read.*” About 97% ( $n = 211$ ) of respondents for this item agreed at some level that the visual aids were easy to read. About 2.8% ( $n = 6$ ) disagreed or slightly disagreed with this statement regarding visual aids, which was the largest percentage of disagreement expressed by respondents. Overall, the levels of disagreement were less than 3% for each closed-response item.

The response rates for the four open-ended questions ranged from 47.5% to 68.7%. Question 1 asked participants, “*How has your team grown as a result of participating in SCRF SLT meetings?*” The most noted theme was *teamwork/sense of community/developed relationships*. Examples of other identified themes included having more effective communication, having focus or direction, and having a broader knowledge base.

Participants were then asked, “*What have you found to be most valuable about participating in SCRF SLT meetings?*” The three themes that participants indicated most frequently as being valuable were an *opportunity to communicate with team, teamwork/planning/decision-making/building community*, and *methods of effective communication*. Other themes included *understanding, studying, and learning the pedagogy associated with SCRF, following rules/understanding requirements*, and *opportunities to plan the implementation process as a team*.

Question 3 asked, “*What specific plans or actions are results of your team’s participation?*” The three themes most frequently identified were *goals/plans, changes to instructional practices*, and *communication with school*. Other themes included *improved SCRF evaluation methods*, and those that addressed the *administration and implementation of the SCRF program within their schools*.

Question 4 asked, “*In terms of SCRF implementation, what topic(s) would you like to be presented in future SLT meetings?*” The three categories most frequently listed as topics for future SLT meetings were *instruction, data and assessment*, and *a change in meeting structure*. Other themes expressed the need for assistance in the area of *intervention*. Finally, participants reported they would like to know more about how to *effectively communicate with school faculty, staff, and parents*, and clarification about their *roles as a school-based SLT*.

Complete details of the qualitative themes identified (as well as sub-themes), coupled with exemplars can be found in the full report, located in Attachment W. Overall, as indicated in the preceding sections, participants' responses to workshop surveys were generally very positive. Participants ranked closed-ended items highly, and provided positive open-ended responses when asked.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the evaluation results were positive regarding the first year of SCRF implementation. The analysis of students' fall 2004 and spring 2005 scores on the Stanford Reading First assessment showed gains for grades 1-3. Participant groups including teachers, interventionists, school literacy coaches, principals, district project directors, and superintendents expressed overall satisfaction with the implementation during this first year. The training and professional development were noted as beneficial in helping the participants work toward achieving the goals of SCRF. In general, the various evaluations elicited positive responses from participants, and also obtained helpful feedback for future program planning and improvements.