



Center for School Success Services

Professional Development

At CSS, we design professional development based on a school's/district's specific goals, objectives and intended outcomes. CSS incorporates a school's strengths, resources and existing initiatives into its professional development services. CSS promotes sustainability by providing the time and opportunity for teachers to make a shift in thinking at their own pace; in turn, a shift in thinking allows for changes in practice. The CSS approach to teaching and learning enhances the effectiveness of any program by helping teachers account for the neurodevelopmental demands of a given academic subject or lesson. The CSS approach helps teachers integrate their understanding of variations in learning with accurate identification of students' strengths that can be leveraged to overcome areas of weakness.

Case Study: Hartland Elementary School Reading Initiative

The Situation: CSS had a contract with Hartland Elementary School(HES) in Hartland, Vermont for the 2005-2007 school years to support the literacy skills of their K-8 student population with specific focus on teaching both the teachers and the students about the skills proficient readers use.

What CSS Did: Weekly consultation activities were designed to support three priority skill areas identified by HES staff prior to the start of the *Reading Initiative* and concentrated on the role of attention in reading. In particular, activities addressed how attention assists a reader in being able to: determine importance; maintain focus; and process information deeply enough to understand and remember what has been read.

HES *Reading Initiative* activities included:

- Staff workshops/parent presentations
- Regular staff meetings which provided a forum to discuss: the link between attention and reading; the elements of the consulting model; response of teachers to the model; and student progress
- Weekly lessons with grades 3-8 taught by the CSS consultant to make explicit for students and teachers how attention skills are relevant to reading comprehension, regardless of grade level or subject being taught
- School newsletter articles
- Evaluation component

Outcome: By the end of the second year of the HES *Reading Initiative*, norm-referenced test results and classroom observation by the CSS consultant showed an increased awareness by HES staff of the actual reading ability of students, as well as an increased understanding of the necessity for on-going K-8 reading instruction. Students and staff used a new, shared language with which to discuss reading comprehension strategies and attention's role in reading. In addition, a number of changes in classroom practice were observed:

- Teachers *regularly identified* the purpose for reading assignments
- Teachers *explicitly taught* reading comprehension strategies
- Teachers *spoke directly* to students regarding the students' reading habits
- Teachers *encouraged students to employ* reading comprehension strategies
- Note-taking *strategies* (determining importance) were *explicitly taught*
- Reading comprehension *strategies were posted* around the classroom
- Teachers were beginning to take more "ownership" of the *Reading Initiative* by the end of the first year; by the second year, *teachers were implementing strategies* learned during the *Initiative*. The *students*, in turn, *demonstrated* that they had also learned and internalized the *strategies*.



Conclusion: Results from the *Initiative* suggest that the embedded professional development model provided by CSS, allowed HES staff the time they needed to work together toward a school-wide goal of improved student reading comprehension. The outcomes also suggest that a facilitated professional development model, such as the HES *Reading Initiative*, can lead to a shift in thinking and the beginning of a change in practice, which in turn, can positively affect student performance.