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Adolescent Literacy Challenges in a Large Urban District:

Wichita State University Educational Leadership
Doctoral Program

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The background features a dark blue gradient with several interlocking gears of various sizes and colors (brown, purple, blue). A prominent gear in the top-left corner is a bright yellow sun-like gear.

Research Problem

An increasing number of students are entering middle and high school with insufficient literacy skills, prompting districts to provide interventions for struggling adolescent readers. Although top-down approaches are less effective for changing instructional practices, districts tend to mandate interventions because they feel pressured by NCLB to show improvement.

Research Questions

- How do large urban districts facilitate change in adolescent literacy instruction?
- What are perceptions of the adolescent literacy intervention program from
 - District and Non-teaching building personnel?
 - Teachers?
 - Students?

Review of the Literature

- *Critical Components of Change: Professional Development, Collaboration, and Leadership*
- *School Structures that Impede Change: The Master Schedule*
- *District's Role in Leading Change*
- *Research on Adolescent Literacy*
- *Multi-tier System of Support (MTSS)*

Research Design

- Multi-site Qualitative Case Study
- One Middle School and One High School in an urban school district
- Focus groups, interviews, observations, and document analysis were utilized

Findings

- District personnel believes in the program and believes they are providing adequate resources and support for proper implementation.
 - Program is research based
 - Literacy Coordinators
 - Materials and resources
 - Professional development

Findings

- Non-teaching building personnel have limited knowledge of the intervention program.
 - Believe in intent of program
 - Lack knowledge of components
 - Unsure of teacher collaboration time
 - Unclear about placement criteria

Findings

- Teachers believe in the need for the program but expressed frustrations about implementation.
 - Perception of insufficient district support
 - Training inadequate for implementation
 - Students often improperly placed
 - Schedule inhibits implementation with fidelity

Conclusions

- **Multiple Meanings were Constructed about Extreme Literacy**
- **Teachers Construct Identities as Language Arts and English Teachers**

Sensemaking - Weick

- Language Arts teachers did not see themselves as reading teachers
- Teachers perceived certain aspects of the program as junevile, particularly the classroom management piece.
- Believe effective reading instruction is not strategy driven, but time driven. "They just need to read more."
- Constructed multiple meanings of the purpose for the adolscent literacy program resulted in inconsistent implementation

Conclusions

- **Bureaucratic Barriers are Impediments to Implementation**
- **Training Does Not Meet Teachers' Needs**

Organizational Learning - Argyris Espoused Theories vs. Theories in Use

We Say	We Do
Time is variable, learning is constant	Force things into the master schedule
Literacy instruction is everyone's responsibility	Place it on Language Arts Teachers
We say reading is important	Put reading intervention courses during activity periods
We believe in quality ongoing professional development	Purpose and technique not practical to instructors in the classroom

Cooperative Activity

Based on the findings and conclusions of this research, how would you go about implementing a district-wide reading intervention program?

Recommendations

- **Share overall goal of intervention program with teachers and encourage dialogue between all stakeholders**
- **Encourage on-going professional development for application across the curriculum**
- **Prioritize intervention strategies and place in School Improvement Plan for school-wide use**
- **Consider scheduling options that prioritize intervention course**

Recommendations

- Differentiate training by teacher needs, teacher experience
- Consider how the intervention program might progress from year to year and differentiate by student need
- Provide opportunity for teachers to collaborate in order to plan, observe, and reflect



Questions ?

WSU Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership

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