

Project Coordinate: Increasing Coordinated Use of Evidence-based Practices for Improving Word Study in an RTI Framework for Teams of 4th Grade Teachers

NCSER Goal 2: Development and Innovation; Topic 7: Reading, Writing, and Language

In this Goal 2 study, we propose to develop and pilot test Project Coordinate with teams of 4th grade general and special education teachers in two large, Northeast Florida School Districts. Teachers in these schools work within a Response to Intervention (RTI) framework to provide reading instruction across three instructional tiers to student populations that are diverse in terms of socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and disability. Project Coordinate's design assumes that teachers who learn to collaboratively design and enact coordinated, evidence-based core and increasingly intensive supplemental instruction will improve reading achievement for students with reading disabilities (RD) and other struggling readers. Project Coordinate is a professional development (PD) innovation that incorporates a lesson study approach where grade level teams of general and special education teachers collaboratively plan and receive virtual support through online content modules (OCMs). OCMs are designed to deepen teachers' content knowledge, instructional skill, and knowledge of student assessment in areas that often pose challenges for fourth grade teachers and students: multisyllabic word decoding, morphological awareness, contextual analysis, and summarization. Mastering these skills should ultimately improve their students' ability to engage in close analytic reading of text, and improve students' success in achieving College and Career Ready Standards. The lesson study process (LSP) which involves collaborative planning, implementing, observing, and evaluating tiered instruction, supports teams of general and special education teachers in using content and pedagogical knowledge acquired through OCMs to implement coordinated, evidence-based tiered reading instruction.

Working with different schools each year of the project, we will examine the development of Project Coordinate, determine its feasibility, and test the significance of the innovation on teacher and student outcomes. During the year 1 development study, we will identify two 4th grade teams ($n = 6$ teachers) and their students receiving tier 2 and 3 instruction. The Development Study examines the usability of Project Coordinate. Teacher teams will also collaborate with Project Coordinate staff to refine the LSP approach. The Feasibility Study will occur during year 2 and will include three 4th grade teams ($n = 9$ teachers). This study is designed to determine whether teachers can implement Project Coordinate components within the anticipated time frame and with fidelity. During year 3, Project Coordinate's impact will be assessed using a school-level randomized design. This study involves eight teams of treatment teachers and eight teams of control teachers ($n = 48$) assigned randomly at the school level.

Three types of measures will be used to ensure Project Coordinate is developed, implemented as intended, and demonstrates promise for improving teacher and student outcomes. Process and implementation measures will be used to ensure that Project Coordinate is developed so that it can be feasibly implemented with fidelity. Promise measures will be used to assess the project's impact on teachers' knowledge and practice (e.g., coordinated, effective use of evidence-based practices between tiers), and on student outcomes (e.g., morphological awareness, decoding, vocabulary and comprehension). Process and promise measures will be developed in year 1 and field tested in year 2 to provide evidence of validity and reliability. During the year 3 pilot study, we will use multi-level, multivariate models to assess the project's impacts on teacher and student outcomes. We will also use a multi-level mediation analysis to assess the project's indirect effects on student outcomes.