

Sustaining Online Facilitator Knowledge and Skills

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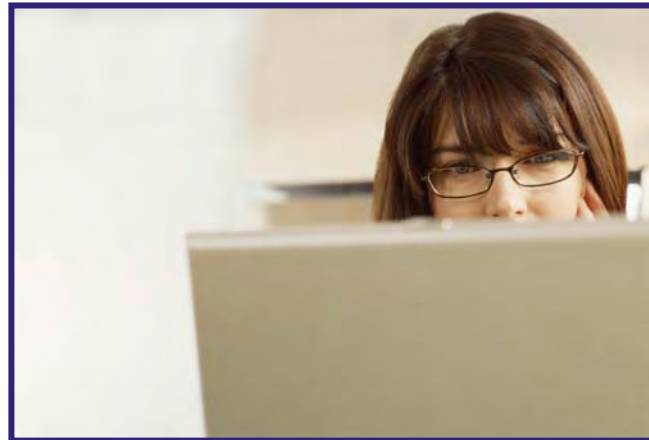


Advanced Organizer

- FOR-PD Background
- Facilitator Division Overview
 - Initial Facilitator Training
 - Sustaining Facilitators' Skills
- Facilitator Support
- Evaluation Tools
- Successes, Challenges, Lessons Learned
- Discussion

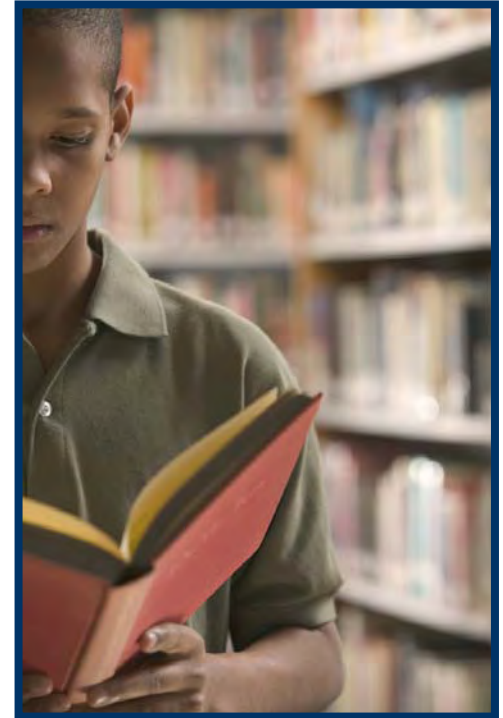


FOR-PD Background



Background

- ❑ Was developed originally as a vehicle for about 50,000 of Florida's teachers to meet Competency 2 of the add-on reading endorsement: *Foundations of Research-Based Practices* see <http://justreadflorida.com/endorsement>
- ❑ Teachers need FOR-PD or its equivalent to be considered highly qualified according to No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

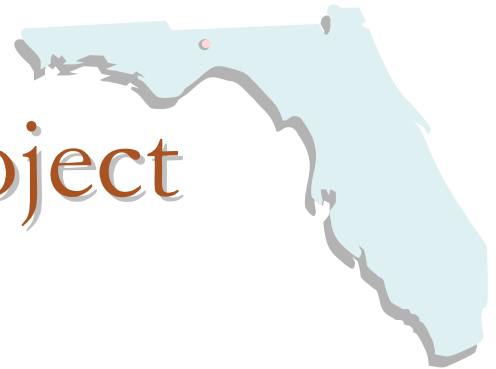


Background

- The project was developed by literacy and technology experts and is housed at the University of Central Florida (UCF)
- Funded by the Florida DOE Just Read, Florida! Initiative and launched in January, 2003.
- The **free** 14-week online course is facilitated by reading specialists and other well-qualified educators.
- The project is a highly-collaborative endeavor. FOR-PD works with **67** Florida districts, **5** universities, and more recently, **6** Community College Educator Preparation Institutes (EPIs).



FOR-PD is Florida's First Large Scale Online PD Project



To date (5 yrs) FOR-PD has served over
31,414 educators in Florida.

*Most recently, for fall 2007,
FOR-PD enrollment was at 2,300*



FOR-PD Serves a Large and Diverse Group of Participants

- ❑ Over 2000 participants enroll each semester
- ❑ 55% first time taking an online course (was at 90%)
- ❑ Diverse backgrounds
 - 21% transitioning into teaching from other fields and the rest (79%) are working on the Florida Reading Endorsement;
 - 42% Language Arts or Reading Teachers, 16% ESE, 16% general ed, 9% ESOL, 6% math/social studies/science/ 8% other;
 - 35% high school, 43% middle, 14% elementary, and 8% other.



Selected Demographics

- Facilitators (for Fall 05-Summer06)

- 131 facilitators facilitated 295 sections of FOR-PD
- 88% first time teaching an online course (when they started with FOR-PD)
- 66% of FOR-PD facilitators designate themselves as *other educational professional*;
- 20% teach at the middle- or high-school level and the other 20% teach at the elementary level.
- Almost all (98%) have taught at the K-12 level.



Facilitator Division Overview



Facilitator Division Major Tasks

- Facilitator Training Course Development
- Recruit Facilitators
- Provide Initial Training
- Offer Ongoing Professional Development
- Monitor Facilitator Performance
- Provide Additional Support (phone, email, discussion board, chats, Facilitator Manuals)



Facilitator Division

- The **FOR-PD Facilitator Support Specialist** works collaboratively with other key staff including the..
 - ❑ Principal Investigator
 - ❑ Project Director
 - ❑ Reading Specialist/Participant Support
 - ❑ Technical Department
 - ❑ Computer Specialist
 - ❑ Quality Assurance Control
 - ❑ Evaluation Team
 - ❑ Facilitator Leaders



Facilitator Support Specialist

■ Qualifications

- ❑ M.A. Instructional Systems Design with experience developing online learning
- ❑ B.S. Elementary Ed/Early Childhood with 20+ years classroom teaching experience
- ❑ Holds both a Florida Professional Teaching Certificate and National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Certificate



Facilitator Support Specialist

- Sample Responsibilities

- Supervises facilitators
- Provides professional development
- Monitors progress
- Provides support
- Motivates facilitators
- Evaluates facilitator performance



Facilitator Application

- Successful completion of the FOR-PD course
- A minimum of 3-years teaching experience
- Advanced knowledge of research-based reading strategies
- Ability to provide explicit instruction in the following elements of reading as they apply to appropriate grades: *phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension*
- Ability to systematically use effective reading strategies that have been tested and have a record of success
- Identified by school or district as a reading/literacy leader
- Any of the following:
 - Master's degree in reading or other related areas
 - Bachelor's degree plus completion of the Reading Endorsement
 - Holds a position as a Reading Coach or Curriculum Coach



Facilitator Training & Certification Course



- A 7-week course
- Facilitated by a successful FOR-PD facilitator
- Monitored by facilitator support specialist and an external evaluator.



Facilitator Training and Certification Course, cont.

- Designed to prepare facilitators with the basic skills needed to be successful:
 - Basics of Online Staff Development
 - Facilitator's Role
 - Online Facilitation Best Practices
 - Working in the WebCT Environment
 - Tools and Support Available
 - Practical work with FOR-PD Lessons



Sustaining Skills Through Ongoing PD

- Book clubs
- Assigned readings
- Self-contained facilitated courses on topics key to online facilitation
- Online asynchronous chats
- Monthly resources
- Guest speakers



Sustaining Skills Through Ongoing PD

- In depth training on elements critical to online facilitation:
 - Teaching Presence & Building Community
 - Facilitating Content
 - Managing Time
 - Personalizing Courses
- Other PD topics driven by evaluation results



Facilitator Support



Sources of Ongoing Facilitator Support

- Facilitator Support Specialist
- Reading Specialist
- Help Desk available for technical issues (day, evening, weekend)
- Quality Assurance Checks
- Monthly Facilitation Newsletter and Resources
- Facilitator Only Discussion Boards
- Monthly Facilitator Chats
 - Specific topics based on need (policy, training, etc.)
 - Guest experts
 - Professional development follow up



Evaluation Tools



Evaluation Tools

- Facilitator Web-based surveys
 - End-of-course survey
 - Training course survey
 - Professional development course survey
- Quality Assurance Checks (QAC) survey
- Focus groups at annual meetings
- Telephone interviews



- completion rates/evaluation of student performance
- survey results
- interview results
- focus groups

PLAN

- facilitator PD
- navigation/content revisions
- new items for instruments

REFLECT

QAC PROCESS

IMPLEMENT

REVIEW

- # lagging
- # dropped
- communications (facilitator to participant)
- focus groups/interviews/surveys

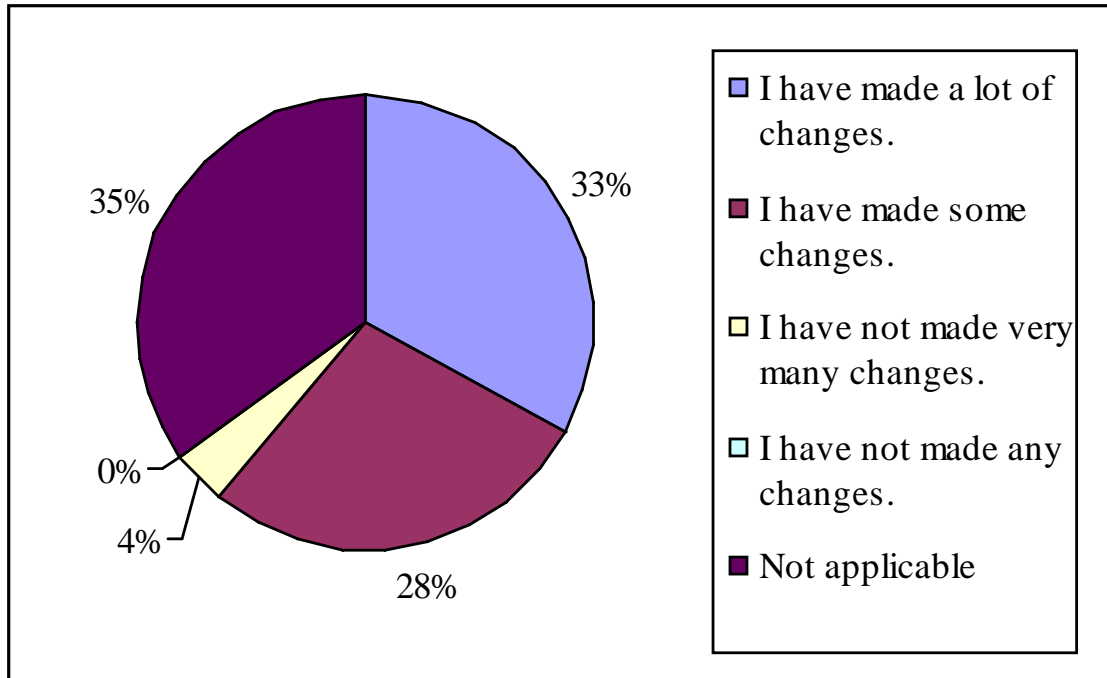
- new policies/procedures
- refined content/framework
- refined facilitation

Successes, Challenges, Lessons Learned

Maintaining a Core of Effective Facilitators



Successes



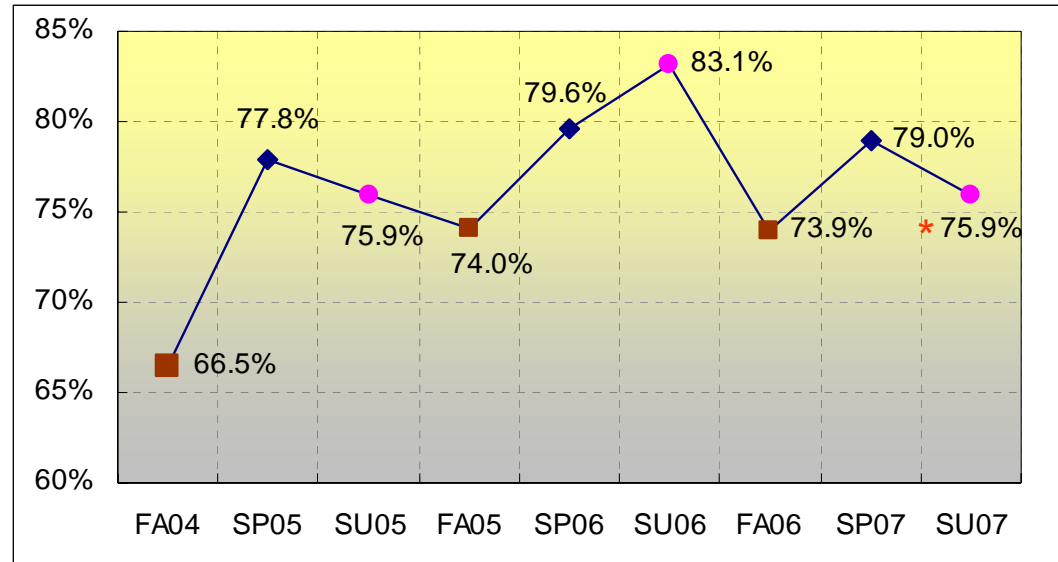
Facilitator Responses to Changes Made to Classroom Instruction in School (K-12) as a Result of Their Involvement with FOR-PD

Note. Data were obtained from Phase IV Facilitator End-of-Course Survey where 75% of spring 2006 facilitators responded (n= 93).



Successes - Completion Rates

- Completion rates for online professional development are an important issue in evaluating a program's overall effectiveness.
- Average completion rates rose from 66.5% in Fall04 to 75.9% in Summer07.



FOR-PD Average Completion Rates by Semester (Fall04 to Summer07*)

Note. Data were obtained from Phase III and Phase IV Evaluation Reports. Completion rates are calculated based on the number enrolled who started the course and the number who complete it. (total number of starters for Phase IV and V combined = 9,918).



FOR-PD Facilitators

Results from End-of-course Surveys

Factor	Percent
Income	30%
Prestige	15%
Improve my own teaching practice as a reading teacher	60%
Improve or explore teaching an online course	46%
District incentives	2%
District requested	19%
I enjoyed taking the course myself.	51%

Facilitator Responses to Rating Factors to Becoming a Facilitator

Note. Data were obtained from Phase IV Facilitator End-of-Course Survey where 75% of spring 2006 facilitators responded (n = 93). The respondents were able to choose more than one item, so the total will be over 100%.



FOR-PD Facilitators

Results from End-of-course Surveys

Scale Tool	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Not Applicable
FFF (facilitator newsletter)	51%	20%	2%	12%	15%
Facilitator chats	18%	28%	33%	13%	8%
Facilitator discussion board postings	35%	22%	19%	11%	13%
Quality Assurance Checks	49%	15%	11%	15%	10%
Average	38%	21%	16%	13%	12%

Facilitator Responses to Rating Facilitator Community Building Tools

Note. Data were obtained from Phase IV Facilitator End-of-Course Survey where 75% of spring 2006 facilitators responded (n = 93).



Ongoing Challenges

- Learning to facilitate adult learning online
- Communication Skills
- Technology Skills
- Implementation frustrations (e.g. motivating participants)
- Paradigm shift regarding the role, online community, and online learning



Lessons Learned

- Online facilitation requires knowledge about online learning, technology, content, and andragogy.
- Online facilitators need a comprehensive system of support and a strong learning community.
- Investing in facilitators' sustainability of knowledge and skills will bring about positive results on participant and project success.



Lessons Learned, cont.

- The role of the facilitator is key to participant success.
- Facilitators need to realize (and be taught) their role and the role of the participant in an online environment.
- Obtaining a balance between technology knowledge and content knowledge.



Lessons Learned, cont.



- The importance of creating a safe environment for adults to communicate, collaborate, and learn together.
- Ongoing and relevant professional development is a must for sustaining facilitator knowledge and skills.
- QACs play an important role in maintaining conformance to requirements.



References



- Swan, B., Huh, J., Ramos, R., Barbato, S., Chen, C. (2007). *Florida Online Reading Professional Development (FOR-PD) Phase V Evaluation Results of Surveys*. Orlando FL: University of Central Florida.





Florida Online Reading Professional Development

For more information, please visit the FOR-PD website at:

<http://forpd.ucf.edu>