

Effective Professional Development: Which Factors Matter in Implementation?

by

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## **Dedication**

To my family and friends who have stood by me during this journey. You know who you are. I love you all!

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## Abstract

Effective professional development is designed to produce sustainable changes in instructional methods that extend teachers' skills and strategies to meet the needs of all the learners in their classrooms. In this case study, the researcher identified school, district and teacher factors that affected the implementation of the professional development content in participating teachers' classrooms and found that teachers identified the support they received from instructional coaches and resource teachers as a primary factor that affected their implementation. Teachers also identified the alignment between the district's existing literacy curriculum and functional grammar as another factor that affected their implementation of the functional grammar content. The most important factor, however, was the effects they saw on their students as a result of the functional grammar lessons. Elementary teachers increasingly need to adapt their instruction for teaching reading to English Language Learners (ELLs) and at-risk students for whom academic English is a second or even a third language. Professors from a local university designed and provided professional development workshops in several schools in a single school district to assist teachers with skills and strategies to address the needs of these struggling students. The workshops were based in the functional grammar approach to give teachers language to explore the syntax and semantics found in written texts with their students. The functional grammar workshops incorporated the features of effective professional development that have been identified in the research. Recommendations about designing professional development that will result in sustainable implementation within existing classroom practices are provided.

*Keywords:* professional development, competing literacy initiatives, fit with existing district initiatives, changes in instructional practices, teaching ELL students

## Effective Professional Development: Which Factors Matter in Implementation?

### **Chapter 1 - Introduction**

Teachers participate in professional development at every juncture in their careers. From the time they enter their pre-service schools of education until they retire, teachers continue to attend workshops, faculty meetings, book studies, meet in professional learning communities, and enroll in classes designed to provide them with information to increase their knowledge so they can more effectively teach students and improve student achievement. As the demographics of schools change to include more students from diverse backgrounds, teachers need to learn new methods for instructing students who enter school without having been exposed to English academic language. English language learners (ELLs) and children of poverty are particularly likely to be unfamiliar with the vocabulary and language structures in reading anthologies, trade books and textbooks (Gersten, Baker, Linan-Thompson, Collins, & Scarcella, 2007). Conversational and everyday English differs from the written language of texts. Even classic children's storybooks and literature have more complicated text structures than the conversations of college-educated adults (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998). As the focus of reading instruction moves from learning to decode to making meaning and acquiring knowledge, children who struggle with academic language increasingly struggle with reading comprehension and writing activities. Traditional reading programs that teach comprehension through the learning and practice of comprehension strategies do not provide students with support in understanding the

grammatical structures that obscure meaning for those not familiar with the conventions of English (Gersten, Baker, Linan-Thompson, Collins, & Scarcella, 2007).

Systemic functional linguistics, or functional grammar, is an approach for directly teaching the structures of text. When a student analyzes the patterns of academic English through specially-designed activities and interactions, comprehension and writing are enhanced (Schleppegrell & Go, 2007). Teachers can be taught how to design these activities and provide interactions among students through critical analysis of the texts themselves (Gersten et al., 2007). Providing professional development in functional grammar allows teachers to engage in this process and develop the tools they need to create meaningful language experiences in their classrooms.

### **Motivation for the Study**

My first introduction to functional grammar came when I was a reading consultant for the state Department of Education. My position was funded through Reading First, as part of the No Child Left Behind Act. As a part of the Reading First initiative, I provided professional development and support to the funded districts in teaching the five components of reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension, as defined by the report of the National Reading Panel in 2000. In addition to providing and supporting professional development on these components, I was assigned as a facilitator to a local school district, Daly Public Schools<sup>1</sup>, in which this study took place. Daly has a high concentration of students for whom English, and particularly academic English, is a second language. The Daly teachers became fairly proficient in teaching decoding but it was apparent that many students still struggled in comprehension, particularly when reading grade-level texts.

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<sup>1</sup> Pseudonyms are used for the names of all people, places and institutions in this study.

Functional grammar provides a language and structure for teachers to use to talk to their students about written language. It helps teachers devise lessons and activities to use with students to examine the patterns and structures of academic English so that students can understand the meanings and purposes in the texts they read. One of the foremost experts in functional grammar is a professor at a nearby university and through my association with her and her work, I came to believe that functional grammar could be an answer to helping teachers develop lessons to improve their students' comprehension. Through Reading First funds, we were able to develop workshops for the Daly teachers in this work.

After the end of the Reading First grant, the work continued through the Functional Grammar project, an externally funded development grant. Soon thereafter, I became an elementary principal in the Daly school district and joined the Functional Grammar project with several of my classroom teachers, my Instructional Coach (IC) and my Resource Teacher (RT). I remain very interested in the functional grammar work and designed this study to examine the features and factors that affected its implementation in the Daly school district.

The functional grammar content had been delivered piecemeal as funding sources came and went for several years in the Daly Schools and implementation was inconsistent as teachers and principals moved to other assignments in different schools. The Functional Grammar project was a three-year federally funded development grant that I believed could lead to higher levels of implementation in the schools that participated. However, it became apparent that while individual pockets of implementers existed in the district, other factors were affecting implementation on a more even scale. I designed this study to identify those factors.

**Statement of the Problem**

Professional development workshops by themselves do not always produce needed changes in classroom practices. Despite attending even well-developed professional development, some teachers struggle with implementing the new content into existing curriculum and methods of instruction (Dozier, 2006). This is particularly true when the content of the professional development is complex and/or unfamiliar to teachers (Fullan & Pomfret, 1977). A flaw in much of teacher professional development may be the lack of follow up after the workshop, once a teacher returns to her classroom (Richardson, 1994). Teachers may have good intentions about implementing what they have learned in workshops and may become distracted by multiple responsibilities once they return to their schools. Even more often, district and school factors may interfere with the implementation of the professional development content in classrooms. In a study of comprehensive school reform, Datnow (2002) found that district and school level mandates and the professional climate within schools were critical to changes occurring in classroom teaching practices. Identifying these factors may assist professional developers in creating more effective teacher professional learning opportunities.

The Daly Public Schools implemented an instructional coaching model to provide a bridge between professional training and implementation. Instructional coaching can take many forms and the coach may be a peer teacher, a resource teacher, an experienced teacher specifically designated as an instructional coach, or even an administrator. Just as the coach herself may take many different forms, so may the actual coaching that happens. Coaching support may take the form of professional conversations and goal-setting, adapting lessons and material selection, modeling and/or co-teaching. The interactions between principals, instructional coaches, and the classroom teachers in elementary schools before, during and after

workshops in functional grammar provided information about the coaching support that was provided

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the district, school and teacher level factors that influenced the implementation of activities that elementary teachers incorporated into their classroom literacy practices after attending professional development workshops in functional grammar. This study also explored the interactions between the factors that contributed to the changes in classroom instruction. This study differs from previous work in that it examined the implementation of lessons and activities into existing literacy instruction that occurred after professional development workshops from the points of view of teachers, instructional coaches and principals. This study is significant as it adds to the body of research which supports a sustained approach to developing a professional development model that leads to changes in classroom instruction.

### **Research Questions**

Teachers and other educators within their schools were asked about their implementation of professional development lessons and activities in their classrooms. The purpose of the study was to examine the implementation of the professional development activities teachers incorporated into their classroom literacy instruction and to explore the factors that may have affected the implementation. The study examined the interactions between the principal, coach, teachers and researchers within the specific social and cultural environment of the school itself to explain the process/es that educators engaged in that influenced self-reported implementation of lessons and activities.

The research questions that were explored in this study were:

1. How were the features of effective professional development incorporated into the functional grammar workshops and activities? How did they affect the implementation of the functional grammar lessons and activities?
2. What district, school and teacher factors affected the implementation of professional development activities in elementary classrooms after teachers attended workshops in functional grammar?

These research questions served as a guide for developing the structures (questionnaire and interviews) for the study, but flexibility for examining the factors with the participants was maintained. As expected, many of the factors identified, and while separated for discussion in this dissertation, are actually intertwined as they describe the implementation of functional grammar in the classrooms of teachers who participated in this study. An additional category for discussion of the interactions between the identified factors was developed to explore their interrelatedness and its effects on implementation.

## **Chapter 2 - Literature Review**

Teachers participate in professional development workshops throughout their careers, either by choice or on a path to teaching certificate renewal or additional degrees. Schools, districts, states and the federal government, along with teachers themselves, agree on the importance of improving teachers' knowledge and skills, but the truth is that many professional development opportunities do not produce the changes in classroom practices that are supported by best practices in education today. The process of teacher change has been extensively documented in research and will be briefly explored in this review of the literature.

This chapter begins with the larger theoretical perspectives of change theory and sociolinguistics that provide a framework for this study. The review of literature continues with research on teacher change, including the roles of teacher knowledge and belief systems, instructional coaches and principals, and the importance of context in the change process. Finally, the research on the features of effective professional development is discussed.

### **Theoretical Perspectives**

There are two broad theories that form a basis for this study. Both change theory and sociolinguistic theory are underlying theoretical frameworks for examining the implementation of professional development learning that leads to instructional changes in classroom literacy instruction. Although this study was focused on professional development and the outcomes associated with it, the professional development itself was based in systemic functional linguistics, or functional grammar. It is important to acknowledge the influence of both perspectives on this study.

**Change theory.** There are many change theories that seek to answer questions about how successful change happens. Most of these theories come from the field of organizational behavior in the mid-twentieth century. Lewin (1951) developed a three-stage model of change upon which many later change theories have been based. In Lewin's model, the first step in the process of changing behavior is to unfreeze the existing situation or status quo. The status quo is considered the equilibrium state. The second step in the process of changing behavior is movement. In this step, it is necessary to move the target system to a new level of equilibrium. The third step of the three-step change model is refreezing. This step needs to take place after the change has been implemented in order for it to be sustained or "stick" over time. It is highly likely that the change will be short lived if this step is not taken. Therefore, this model illustrates the effects of forces that either promote or inhibit change. Change will occur when the combined strength of one force is greater than the combined strength of the opposing set of forces (Robbins, 2003). In examining changes that result from professional development workshops, refreezing may occur from added support in implementing different classroom activities from administrators, instructional coaches or peers.

Fullan (2008) built upon previous work with his identification of the three phases of the change process in educational organizations as adoption, implementation and institutionalization. Fullan links the first step of adoption to the nature of the innovation being adopted. The strategies used to introduce the innovations in professional development workshops may also affect its adoption as an innovation. In-service training, resource support, feedback mechanisms and the participation of administrators and instructional coaches in the innovation as well as teachers will influence its success as an innovation. Fullan (2008) identified four factors related to the innovation that will affect its eventual implementation: the characteristics of the

innovation, the strategies used to introduce the innovation, the characteristics of the adopting unit, and the characteristics of the macro political unit surrounding the innovation. The characteristics of the innovation include both the explicitness and the complexity of the innovation. The success of the adoption of new teaching strategies from professional development activities will require that they be explicitly defined during the initial training phase.

The second stage of Fullan's change theory is implementation. Implementation is defined as "the actual use of an innovation or what an innovation consists of in practice" (Fullan & Pomfret, 1977, p. 336). Implementation requires changes in both behaviors and beliefs of the implementers. Behaviors, or skills and competencies, can be changed during the adoption stage of an innovation, but real change requires changes in beliefs (Fullan, 2008). Spillane (2004) found that "teachers' motivation to learn and change involved developing and sustaining teachers' identities as experts and learners with one another" (p. 61). Close interaction and support from both other teachers and instructional coaches and administrators are necessary for the implementation of new professional learning to occur.

The final phase of change according to Fullan's model is institutionalization. Innovations that are implemented, but not institutionalized will not be sustained over time. Institutionalization involves a multilevel process of embedding an innovation in the structure and norms of the organization (Datnow, 2005). The organizational climate of the adopting unit (in this case a school) and the larger macro units of the district, state and federal educational agencies are also associated with whether or not the innovation is adopted and institutionalized. Changes in classroom practices are influenced by what is going on outside the individual classroom. In a study of comprehensive school reform, Datnow (2002) found that the state,

district and even school level leadership was critical to sustained changes in classroom teaching practices. Unfortunately, most innovations do not become institutionalized and are not sustained (Anderson & Stiegelbauer, 1994). Change theory is integral to this study because it provides a framework for understanding the complexities of changing teachers' classroom practices.

**Sociolinguistic theory.** Linguistic theory, particularly sociolinguistics, provides an underlying theoretical perspective for this study. Sociolinguistic theory is the study of language within the context of society. Sociolinguistics is a field of study within linguistics that is distinguished by its emphasis on language as a primarily social act rather than a purely syntactical analysis (Coupland, 1998). This study is rooted in sociolinguistic theory because the professional development in functional grammar examined the relationships between the language of texts and the choices authors make to communicate with their readers (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). This study explored the role of communication between the principal, coach, teachers and researchers within the specific social and cultural environment of each individual school.

The functional linguistics perspective uses the concept of linguistic registers to study the relationship between linguistic choices an author makes and the social context of the language itself (Schleppegrell, 2004). Syntactical patterns of language are studied in functional linguistics, but as different vehicles for the conveyance of meaning in sentences (Van de Koppelle, 1996). Halliday (1978) developed a systemic functional linguistics approach to analyzing written language called functional grammar. In functional grammar, the meanings in language are the primary focus of study.

Professional development in functional grammar provided the situated learning for the teachers in this study. The implementation of functional grammar activities would be identified

as a complex innovation according to Fullan (2008) because of the degree of change they represent from current classroom instruction. The interplay of understandings of effective professional development with the knowledge and experiences in functional grammar form the basis for studying the factors that influenced teachers' implementation of the professional learning they received.

This study explores the application of the research on the features of effective professional development within a specific district and school context of extended professional learning in functional grammar. Given the complexity of the learning, it is important to identify the factors that influenced whether teachers were able to incorporate their learning into their classroom literacy practices. Studying the interactions between the features of professional development and the factors that teachers identified that supported their implementation is an extension of the professional development literature.

### **Teacher Change**

Richardson and Placier (2001) reviewed both individual and organizational change literature and found the research on each is separate, yet complementary. They used the distinctions of Chin and Benne (1969) to frame studies as based on an empirical-rational approach or a normative-reeducative approach to change. According to the empirical-rational approach, teachers will make appropriate changes if they are shown new practices they believe are good. Most of the professional development that was categorized as empirical-rational was short-term, without follow-up activities, and could only produce change if they matched with existing teacher beliefs (Richardson & Placier, 2001). Activities which were classified as normative-reeducative were collaborative in nature and were based on concepts of personal growth and development. Richardson and Placier (2001) cited the Cognitively Guided

Instruction (CGI) project at the University of Wisconsin as an example of a normative-reeducative professional development project which produced some success in changing teachers' mathematics instruction from a facts-based based to a more constructivist approach.

Professional development may not produce the changes expected because of the complexity of the change involved. A review (Knight, 2011) of more than 55 clinical studies identified six stages in the change process

1. Precontemplation, when we are unaware of our need for change
2. Contemplation, when we weigh the advantages and disadvantages of changing to a new way of doing something
3. Preparation, when we prepare to implement a change
4. Action, when we implement a change
5. Maintenance, when we sustain our implementation plan
6. Termination, when we are no longer changing because we have completed the change process. (p. 21)

Spillane (2004) found that teachers who made changes in their instructional practices interacted with other teachers and administrators in sustained conversations and that deep conceptual changes take long amounts of time. He also noted that these learning opportunities depended heavily on the leadership at the school level. An examination of the roles of the school-level leadership and how these can influence the professional learning of teachers through effective professional development opportunities and scaffolded support throughout the process to change practices is an important understanding for the development of a learning cycle that produces the desired change.

**Teacher knowledge and beliefs.** The development of teacher knowledge is a tricky business, yet it remains the primary stated purpose of professional development. Teachers need deep knowledge of content but must also master teaching strategies and understand the learning process itself. Munby, Russell, and Martin (2001) discuss the tension between “the work on teaching and the work of teaching” (p. 878) that exists in the research on teacher knowledge. Researchers debate understandings behind what we call teacher knowledge, as well as how it develops throughout the course of a teacher’s career in education. Shulman (1987) defined seven categories of teaching knowledge: content knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge, curriculum knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, knowledge of learners and their characteristics, knowledge of educational contexts, and knowledge of educational ends, purposes and values. Teachers inherently understand that there is more to their knowledge than knowing the subject matter to be taught, yet researchers disagree about the importance and roles of experience, coursework, and other professional development opportunities in the enhancement and development of teacher knowledge and understanding (Munby, Russell, & Martin, 2001). The complexities of teacher knowledge have led to different theories that underlie the philosophies of professional teacher education, both pre-service and in-service, and research on the knowledge base necessary for effective teaching continues to be a major tool for understanding how to increase teacher knowledge through professional development opportunities.

The complex theories of knowledge development are further influenced by teacher beliefs and attitudes. In fact, research on teachers’ knowledge can be as much about beliefs as knowledge itself (Richardson, 1996). She argues that teacher beliefs are so ingrained that they may be difficult to change within traditional teacher education programs and calls for research to

further explain the differences in teacher knowledge and beliefs. Richardson's (1996) views on the integral relationship between the development of teacher knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes directly influenced the development of the model for teacher learning in a 2003 study conducted by Fishman, Marx, Best, and Tal. Changes in teacher beliefs can be directly influenced by changes in teacher knowledge, but the inverse is also true: teacher acquisition of knowledge can also be affected by teacher belief systems. As such, "a chief objective of professional development should be to foster changes in teachers' knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, because these components of teacher cognition show a strong correlation to teachers' classroom practices" (Fishman et al., 2003, p. 645).

For Richardson and Placier (2001), it remains a question as to which comes first, changes in beliefs or changes in practices. Richardson (1994) found in a study of reading comprehension that changes in beliefs occurred before changes in practices. Other researchers have found changes in practices occur prior to changes in beliefs, especially in more traditional designs in which implementation of new strategies or programs is strongly suggested or even mandated (Guskey, 1986; Prawat, 1992; Sparks, 1988).

**The role of instructional coaches in teacher change.** Much emphasis has been placed on the role of instructional coaches, or other teacher leaders, in leading educational change in elementary and secondary schools today. Teacher leaders may be responsible for curriculum implementation, literacy or math instruction, new teacher mentoring, or a combination of these functions (Gabriel, 2005). There are several different perspectives that have focused on coaching as an integral part of professional development for teachers, including peer coaching, cognitive coaching, literacy coaching, data coaching and instructional coaching. The term, instructional coaches (IC) serves as a descriptor for the overarching role a teacher leader might

play in professional learning. Teacher leaders who function as ICs are most often responsible for improving instructional outcomes by working with teachers to improve their skills, but may also work with students or even paraprofessionals and parents to increase academic achievement (Knight, 2007). Teacher leaders as ICs may be formally designated leaders within the school environment but rarely have the position power (Yukl, 1998) that is reserved for administrators, including evaluation of teachers and other staff. Without position power, the development of relationships and expertise that increase their personal power is crucial to becoming effective leaders and producing increased student achievement outcomes (Sweeney, 2003).

***The partnership process in coaching.*** Effective ICs bridge professional learning with classroom implementation through a partnership process that has six distinct steps: enroll, identify, explain, model, observe, and explore (Knight, 2011). There is no coaching unless coaches are able to enroll teachers in the coaching process. ICs may use methods such as presentations, principal referrals, workshops and informal conversations to establish coaching partnerships, but ultimately the success of each of these strategies depends on the credibility of the coach and their authentic respect for the profession of teaching (Knight, 2007).

Once a partnership is established, the coach and teacher need to identify the targeted practice or skills to implement. Sometimes, teachers know exactly what they want to work on with a coach; other times, they need help identifying their common work. ICs can assist in this process through reflective conversations, observation and the use of videotaping classroom instruction. Developing a high level of trust is crucial to identifying and defining goals for coaching (Hasbrouck & Denton, 2005). Effective listening skills, as well as the skillful use of probing questions are necessary to move the coaching conversation (Gabriel, 2005). ICs explain new practices, research methods, problem-solve and often model in teachers' classrooms. ICs

are multi-faceted and are able to help teachers modify new teaching practices to fit their individual classroom and students' needs. To ensure that the teacher knows what the new teaching practice looks and sounds like when it is employed effectively, effective ICs may teach demonstration lessons while the teacher watches and takes notes. After providing a model lesson, ICs may observe the teacher using the new practice to gather accurate data on the effectiveness of a teaching practice as a method for achieving the goal set earlier in the partnership (Knight, 2011).

Finally, partnership coaching involves exploring with the teacher what went well during the practice attempt and what adjustments need to be made. Ongoing support should be provided to ensure teachers both maintain the use of and integrate the new practice into their teaching repertoire. Effective ICs provide sufficient support to allow teachers to gain a deep understanding of the practice so that they can sustain its use (Knight, 2011).

*Attributes of effective coaches.* What are the attributes of effective coaches? As seen in the above description of the coaching partnership process, successful ICs have a deep knowledge of effective teaching practices. Because new curricula and methods are introduced frequently, ICs should adopt a learning approach for themselves to stay current and relevant as new practices become available. Effective ICs do not rely only on their many years of teaching – they need to stay abreast of current trends and research in education. ICs need to be good listeners and good questioners. They need to develop collaboration skills that allow them to remain positive and upbeat (Knight, 2007).

The coaching process is a partnership embodied by the trustworthiness of the coach. For ICs to be effective they must act in ways that engender trust. Coaches depend on their personal

powers, including expertise, relationships and integrity to accomplish their work. In the words of one coach:

The moment we start asking people to rethink or change their current instructional practices, we have to recognize that we may be asking them to move beyond their comfort zones. In virtually every situation, I am not the first (or only) person advocating for educational changes. Buildings have histories, teachers have histories, districts have histories, and bandwagons have come and gone. When I am working with teachers, I work to keep this at the forefront of my thinking. (Dozier, 2006, pp. 141-142)

Dozier (2006) goes on to discuss her thinking about framing teacher change in terms of its positive effects on the teacher:

When we ask people to change, we have to consider why we are asking them to make changes and highlight how engaging in the change process benefits them. As a coach, I frame my recommendations as possibilities, rather than as absolutes. I want to encourage a community of inquiry, rather than a community where some teachers are positioned as knowers and “right,” and others feel left out and silenced. If I am not mindful of this dynamic, I can promote defensiveness – and that’s a problem. It becomes much harder to inquire, explore, rethink, and reconsider together. (p. 142)

Teacher leaders typically do not hold position power. Although they perform essential leadership roles within schools, they do not control rewards and punishments and have only limited influence over information or the organization of work. Teacher leaders most often are identified, by themselves and others, primarily as teachers and only secondarily as leaders (Gabriel, 2005). As such, they must depend on other types of power in their attempts to influence the direction of their organizations.

**The role of principals in teacher change.** Kouzes and Posner (2007) identify five exemplary practices of leadership that are critical for coaches and principals in implementing change. These practices incorporate traits, skills, styles, and behaviors that are cited across multiple leadership theories as being indicative of effective leaders. The first is that leaders need to model the way. Leaders who are explicit about sharing their beliefs with others and then acting on those beliefs are showing followers that they have integrity and can be trusted to lead. The second exemplary practice is to inspire a shared vision for the organization. Leaders should be more than just managers; followers depend on leaders to move organizations forward. Without a shared vision that is communicated to all followers, an organization may not be able to adapt to changing circumstances and be successful. Leaders who develop a shared vision with their followers are able to use the power of multiple minds and are showing the self-confidence of sharing their power with others.

The third exemplary practice is to challenge the process. Leaders who take risks, who recognize good ideas, who seek out new and better ways of doing things, are showing their constituents that change is okay and that it's acceptable to venture out. The fourth and fifth exemplary practices are enabling others to act and encouraging the heart. Both of these practices recognize that relationships are at the center of being an effective leader. Leaders who are able to help others grow into leadership roles and can stand back while others receive the credit, while also encouraging and nurturing fledgling new leaders are exemplifying effective leadership practices (Kouzes & Posner, 2007).

***Collaboration between principals and coaches.*** Collaboration between instructional coaches and administrators may be the key to implementing changes in practice in schools. Leadership is not just the job of the principal. A smart principal knows that the key to success is

offering leadership opportunities to the right people (Sweeney, 2003). Building a team of committed, connected people to lead school improvement is a way to transform and magnify the position power of the administrator. The amount of power that a leader needs to have is directly related to what needs to be accomplished and depends on a leader's skill in using what power is available to him (Yukl, 1998).

One way that ensures that principals and coaches are on the same page is to schedule weekly meetings to discuss concerns and issues and to problem-solve solutions (Hasbrouck & Denton, 2005). As Knight (2007) states:

The IC should be the right-hand person of the principal when it comes to instructional leadership in schools, but the principal must remain the instructional leader. No matter how effective an IC is, the principal's voice is ultimately the voice that is most important to teachers. For that reason, coaches need to understand fully what their principal's vision is for school improvement, and principals must understand fully the interventions that their coach has to offer. (p. 190)

***Combination of position and personal power.*** The combination of position and personal power in the school administrator can lead to school improvement when a principal partners with an instructional coach to produce needed reforms. A principal who is skilled at finding respectful and validating ways to encourage teachers to work with the coach, while making sure that they felt the decision was theirs, can ensure that the coach's labor in her role as an informal leader will bring about increased academic improvement in students. Principals and instructional coaches serve very different leadership roles in schools. Yet they need each other and their interdependence can improve student achievement in ways that neither of them could alone (Knight, 2007).

**The role of context in teacher change.** Teachers do not engage in professional development without bringing their prior knowledge and beliefs, as well as their individual school and classroom philosophies, priorities, and other competing factors for attention (Penuel et al., 2007). For professional development to effect instructional changes, it needs to be adaptable to the local contexts of teachers and students. Putnam and Borko (2000) used a situative perspective, in which learning is tied to a specific situation or context, to identify three conceptual themes in the research that are central to cognition: cognition is situated in particular physical and social contexts; cognition is social in nature; and cognition is distributed across the individual, other people, and tools.

Putnam and Borko's (2000) examination of professional development for practicing teachers and for preservice education practices for prospective teachers provides recommendations for applying the situative perspective on learning to make teacher learning opportunities more productive and leads to questions about where teachers' and prospective teachers' learning should take place. Situated learning can occur within the classroom, but there are often valid reasons for learning experiences that happen outside the classroom setting, such as teachers' abilities to focus more fully on the content presented.

**Cognition.** Cognition as a social process underscores the importance of establishing discourse communities for teachers. Discourse communities offer teachers, both practicing and prospective, opportunities to "draw upon and incorporate each other's expertise to create rich conversations and new insights into teaching and learning" (Putnam & Borko, 2000, p. 8). Cognition is distributed among persons and tools and teacher learning should be a negotiation between the content to be learned and the current thinking of the participant.

Putnam and Borko (2000) make a strong case for an application of situated cognition in professional development programs. Themes of situated cognition and the proposal of authentic opportunities for discourse within and outside the classroom as well as the emphasis on the importance of negotiating content to be taught with the current knowledge of students are well developed in the research of effective teaching practices. Applying these practices to learning experiences for teachers and prospective teachers provides an important frame of reference for effective teacher professional development that will support teacher learning and classroom application.

***Two dimensions of teacher learning.*** Huebner (2009) tells us that teacher learning occurs in at least two dimensions: the individual and the interpersonal. The features of effective professional development for optimal teacher learning have been developed by additional researchers. Fishman, et al. (2003) developed an analytic framework for professional opportunities for teachers based on four elements: content, strategies, site, and media. They argued that professional developers use a combination of these elements in their design of professional experience and used teacher surveys and observations, as well as collected student performance data to create a framework for linking effective professional development with student learning. Their research took place within a multi-year professional learning experience based on a science curriculum and, while small in scope, illustrated the impact targeted professional development can have on student outcomes.

***The functional grammar context.*** The functional grammar approach to reading instruction develops a language for talking about language that teachers and students use to deconstruct text for meaning (Schleppegrell, 2004). Through authentic discussions about texts in elementary classrooms, students develop critical understandings of what they are reading (Chinn

& Anderson, 1998). Teachers' beliefs about their roles in fostering and guiding instruction are crucial to implementing changes that support functional grammar activities in the classroom.

Changes in classroom literacy practices as a result of professional development in functional grammar may require that teachers adopt instructional methods that differ from traditional ways of teaching reading. Elementary reading instruction has traditionally focused on teaching students how to read. Phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension were the five main components identified by the National Reading Panel (2000) for inclusion in research-based reading instruction, but researchers are identifying reading comprehension as the component with which many students struggle, even those who can apparently decode the words. This is especially true of students of poverty, special education students and ELLs (Carlisle, Cortina, & Zeng, 2010). A study by Nystrand, Wu, Gamoran, Zeiser, and Long (2001) found that these are the students who are least likely to be in classrooms where teacher beliefs about their instructional roles lead to effective instructional practices. Incorporating functional grammar strategies into classroom instruction may be a way to increase reading comprehension among at-risk learners.

### **Effective Professional Development**

Two of the largest recent large-scale studies of professional development for teachers are Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman and Yoon (2001) and Desimone, Porter, Garet, Yoon, & Birman, 2002). These studies were based in math and science content and they defined the features of professional development that provided the focus for continuing research in this area throughout the first decade of the twenty-first century. Garet, et al. (2001) used a national sample of over 1000 math and science teachers in the first large-scale empirical study to compare the effects of different characteristics of professional development on teacher learning. Garet

and his team created a set of scales and coding that were designed to identify characteristics defined in previous small studies that could be linked to effective professional development. Desimone et al. (2002) carried out a longitudinal study designed to build on the findings of Garet, et al. (2001) by documenting changes in practice before and after teachers engaged in professional development activities. Desimone's et al. (2002) study used the same measures as Garet et al. (2001), but used a sampling method for obtaining data from teachers before, during and after their engagement in the activities.

Both Garet et al. (2001) and Desimone et al. (2002) based their work within a national evaluation of Title II of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), also known as the Eisenhower Professional Development Program. Both studies used survey methodology, basing their results on teacher-reported learning and changes to practice. Despite the limitations of survey research acknowledged by the researchers, their findings produced a useful model for a discussion of the features of effective professional development.

**Key features.** Six key features were identified as indicators of high quality professional development from the work of Garet et al. (2001) and Desimone et al. (2002). These features, while certainly neither conclusively nor exclusively explain all aspects of professional development that translates into changes in classroom practices, provide a useful framework for developing successful opportunities for improving teacher knowledge and student outcomes. The first three features, reform type, collective participation and duration, are described as structural features and the final three, content knowledge, opportunities for active learning and coherence, as core features. Table 2.1 summarizes these features. Desimone et al. (2002) found

Table 2.1

*Features of Effective Professional Development<sup>2</sup>*

Features	Type	Description
Reform vs. traditional	Structural	Reform types include mentoring and coaching Traditional types are workshops and courses
Collective participation	Structural	Participation by groups of teachers from the same school or grade level
Duration	Structural	The amount of time over which the activities occur
Content knowledge	Core	The focus is on increasing teacher knowledge rather than improving teacher skills
Opportunities for active learning	Core	Teachers become actively engaged in meaningful analysis of teaching and learning
Coherence	Core	How closely the content aligns with teachers' goals for their own learning, as well as their students' learning

that the core features were most often incorporated within the structural features; that is, professional development activities in a reform-type format, with a longer duration and collective participation tended to have a focus on content knowledge, opportunities for active learning and were perceived as coherent by teachers, thus increasing the changes in practice

<sup>2</sup> Developed from the research of Garet, et al., 2001 and Desimone, et al., 2002

sought for successful professional development. These features produce changes in instruction and hence, student learning, by increasing teacher knowledge and skills, as well as changes in attitudes and beliefs.

***Reform model versus traditional type.*** Several studies have found that the type, or organization, of the professional development activity contributes to its effectiveness (Desimone, et al. 2002; Garet, et al. 2001; Penuel, W. R., Fishman, B. J., Yamaguchi, R., & Gallagher, L. P. (2007). Typically, activities such as study groups, mentoring, coaching and professional learning communities are referred to as reform types of professional development, while workshops, college courses and district in-service opportunities are categorized as traditional types of professional development (Garet et al., 2001). Desimone et al. (2002) described the type of professional development as a structural feature and found a positive effect for reform-aligned professional development activities in a longitudinal study of the effectiveness of professional development on teachers' instruction.

***Collective participation.*** Participation is another structural feature of effective professional development defined by Desimone et al. (2002) as “the degree to which the activity emphasizes the collective participation of groups of teachers from the same school, department, or grade level, as opposed to the participation of individual teachers from many schools” (p. 83). They found that professional development was more likely to produce changes in classroom practices when teachers participated in professional development activities with others with whom they worked than when they attended separately. Penuel et al. (2007) refer to participation of teachers within a school community as social capital and attribute its effects to the support teachers receive from each other as they implement new techniques in their classrooms.

***Duration.*** Duration of professional development refers to the amount of time over which the activities occur. It may include the length (as in number of hours) as well as the breadth (months or years) during which activities take place. Intuitively, longer duration would be positively related to greater effectiveness and transfer to practice, but research has yet to conclusively establish this link (Garet et al., 2001). As a structural feature of effective professional development, increased duration may provide opportunities for other key features, such as active learning and enabling a content focus to evolve (Desimone et al., 2002).

***Content knowledge.*** Professional development which focuses on increasing teachers' content knowledge, rather than only improving teaching skills, is more effective at changing classroom practices emerged from both the Garet et al. (2001) and Desimone et al. (2002) studies. Although this research referenced the science and mathematics content areas, both studies found that professional development that featured an emphasis on content knowledge led to a higher incidence of changes in teaching practices, as measured by teacher surveys (Desimone et al., 2002).

***Opportunities for active learning.*** Another core feature which emerged from the research is active learning. Desimone et al. (2002) defined active learning as “opportunities for teachers to become actively engaged in the meaningful analysis of teaching and learning, for example, by reviewing student work or obtaining feedback on their teaching” (p. 83). Professional development with a longer duration, such as reform type activities of professional learning communities, study groups and others are more readily structured to provide these active learning opportunities (Garet et al., 2001).

***Coherence.*** Coherence is the final core feature identified through the research of Garet et al. (2001) and Desimone et al. (2002). Coherence refers to how closely the professional

development aligns with teachers' expectations and goals for their own learning, as well as their goals for their students. Several studies which have looked at teacher change, including Datnow (2005), have found that changes in practice involve a multilevel process of embedding the new learning in the structure and norms of the organizing unit or classroom. As teachers struggle with multiple demands for classroom time, the more closely they perceive the new learning as a match with what they are already doing, the greater the likelihood that it will result in changes in practice (Penuel et al., 2007).

**Phases of professional development.** Borko (2004) took a different approach to reviewing the literature on professional development and made recommendations for a future research agenda. Her analysis found that most professional development provided for teachers today is “fragmented, intellectually superficial, and [does] not take into account what we know about how teachers learn” (p. 3). She used phases to group different types of professional development activities. Borko defined Phase one activities as research activities that take place at a single site and found evidence of studies that showed that intensive professional development can expand teacher knowledge and produce changes in classroom instruction if it takes place in teacher learning communities in which teachers worked together to improve their practice. Borko (2004) also found in her analysis of Phase one research activities that teachers who used classroom artifacts such as videotaped lessons, student work, and lesson plans to examine their practice in community with other teachers both increased their own knowledge and made changes in their classroom practices. Phase two professional development activities were defined by Borko (2004) as those that take place at multiple sites, with multiple facilitators, but consist of a single program, such as those that are based on a specific curriculum. She did not find evidence to support the integrity of such programs in the existing research, but noted

that several programs were in progress that might yield additional information. A key to the successful implementation of scaled-up professional development such as occurs in Phase two may be the idea of mutual adaptation (Berman & McLaughlin, 1978), which provides for an innovation to be adapted to meet local needs while still maintaining the integrity of the program. Borko (2004) did not find any evidence of Phase three research activities, which she defines as comparative studies between the effects and resources of multiple professional development programs. Her review of professional development studies led her to call for a national research agenda that would include Phase three research activities. Such an agenda would require enormous resources to conduct but would provide meaningful information for the development of professional development programs that increase teacher knowledge and improve student achievement.

The development of teacher knowledge is complicated. Effective professional development incorporates the research on teacher change into its design and focuses on building the key features into the plan for workshops and support for implementation. This study examined the design of the specific professional development provided to the teachers in the functional grammar workshops, as well as the factors that affected the implementation of the learning in classrooms. It will add to the research on building professional opportunities for teachers that will improve outcomes for students and schools.

### **Chapter 3 - Methodology**

This study used a case study design (Marshall & Rossman, 2011) to investigate two research questions about the implementation of lessons and activities into existing instructional literacy practices following professional development in functional grammar. The research questions were:

1. How were the features of effective professional development incorporated into the functional grammar workshops and activities? How did they affect the implementation of the functional grammar lessons and activities?
2. What district, school and teacher factors affected the implementation of professional development activities in elementary classrooms after teachers attended workshops in functional grammar?

This study was conducted in two phases. Phase One was a pilot study, consisting of a questionnaire and interviews of classroom teachers, RTs and ICs who participated in the second year of the Functional Grammar project. The information received in Phase One was primarily used to guide the design of the Phase Two study. Data received in Phase One are reported in Chapter Four, but participants cannot be matched between the two phases. Some participants and one site changed from Phase One to Phase Two. Phase Two should be considered as the primary portion of this study. It consisted of a series of interviews and observations of classroom teachers, RTs, ICs, administrators and the university team members who participated in the third year of the Functional Grammar project.

**Phase One**

Phase One of the study was conducted in the spring of 2012. The major purpose was to pilot the questionnaire and interview questions for Phase Two of the study. Consent was obtained from all participants (Appendix A). Eighteen second, third, fourth and fifth grade teachers, RTs and ICs were administered a questionnaire (Appendix B) at a Functional Grammar workshop in May 2012. The questionnaire asked teachers and ICs to self-report changes in their instructional literacy practices, as well as to identify factors that led to those changes. Additionally, principals from the five schools and the ICs participated in separate interviews (Appendices C and D) about the instructional changes they had observed in the classrooms in their schools after participation in the professional development and the factors that they believed led to those changes. The interviews took place in schools in late May and early June of 2012, just after the final workshop of the school year. Four ICs and three principals participated in the interviews.

The findings achieved through both Phase One and Phase Two of the study were merged and are included in Chapter Four. Data collection was modified for Phase Two of the study by discontinuing the questionnaire due to the need for more targeted data that could be better obtained through interviews. The interview protocols were redesigned for Phase Two to obtain the data elicited from the questionnaire in Phase One of the study.

**Phase Two**

Participants in Phase Two of the study were the classroom teachers, resource teachers, instructional coaches, and principals whose schools were selected as the primary sites for a three-year externally funded project to develop professional development modules and activities in the functional grammar (FG) approach. It is important to note that the Functional Grammar project

was not a district-initiated professional development series. Schools, teachers and other educators voluntarily took part in the project with the permission of the district.

The Functional Grammar project consisted of multiple workshops over the course of the three years. Phase Two was conducted during the third year of the project. The workshops were developed and led by a team from a university campus other than mine with two principal investigators and four graduate students. Participating classroom teachers, resource teachers, and instructional coaches attended the workshops and received training in systemic functional grammar concepts and vocabulary. The educators were introduced to activities and texts that they were asked to implement in their classrooms and completed logs documenting their implementation. Follow-up sessions included site visits to the participating schools, along with voluntary video recordings of the classroom instruction of these activities. None of these materials, other than the workshops and related printed texts and activities, were a part of this study and I did not have access to the implementation logs or video recordings. The Functional Grammar project provided the situated learning for the educators, but was otherwise unrelated to this study.

**Sites.** Four of the five K-5 elementary schools in the Daly Public Schools which were participating in the third year of the Functional Grammar project were the primary research sites for Phase Two of this study. The fifth school was excluded because I am the administrator and wanted to avoid any appearance of conflict of interests. The Daly Public Schools are located within a Midwest metropolitan area. The four Daly schools that were included in the study had

Table 3.1

*Classroom Teachers who participated in Study*

Name	School	Grade	Years in Grade	Total Years Teaching	Years of Participation in FG project	Previous experience with FG
Barbara	Bailey	3	1	1	1	no
Beth	Bailey	5	1	14	2	yes
Maggie	Bailey	4	1	1	1	no
Colleen	Fitzgerald	3	14	20	2	no
Jamie	Fitzgerald	3	2	4	2	no
Jan	Fitzgerald	4	8	15	1	no
Jane	Fitzgerald	3	1	12	2	no
Terri	Fitzgerald	4	2	13	1	no
Lisbeth	Martin	4	7	13	1	yes
Sophie	Martin	3	2	10	1	no
Alina	Walters	2	2	6	1	no
Beverly	Walters	2	1	1	1	no
Judy	Walters	3	2	6	2	no

an average of 82% of their students classified as limited in English language proficiency, as defined by their scores on a state English language proficiency test.

**Participants.** All workshop participants from the four schools were invited to join the study to provide data from school staff in different roles. Participation was voluntary and

Table 3.2

*Instructional Coaches (ICs) who participated in Study*

Name	School	Grade(s) Supported	Years of participation in FG project	Previous Experience with FG
Cindy	Bailey	3 <sup>rd</sup> , 4 <sup>th</sup>	3	yes
Diane	Fitzgerald	4 <sup>th</sup>	2	yes
Sarah	Martin	4 <sup>th</sup>	2	no
Tina	Martin	3 <sup>rd</sup>	1	no
Karen	Walters	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3	yes

pseudonyms for all participants and schools were assigned. Written consent was obtained from all study participants by including a permission form outlining the participants' rights. There were no risks associated with participation with the questionnaire and interviews. The consent form is included in Appendix E.

***Classroom teachers.*** Thirteen classroom teachers from four schools participated in Phase Two of this study. Two teachers taught second grade, six taught third grade, four taught fourth grade and one taught fifth grade. Years of teaching experience ranged from one to twenty. For three teachers, this was their first year of classroom experience, other than during their preservice experiences. Years of teaching experience in the current grade varied from one to fourteen, with ten teachers having one to two years of experience at the current grade level. Eight teachers were in their first year in the Functional Grammar project and five were in their second year of participation. Two teachers had previous experience with functional grammar, outside of the

Table 3.3

*Resource Teachers (RTs) who participated in Study*

Name	School	Grade(s) Supported	Years of participation in FG project	Previous Experience with FG
Emily	Bailey	2 <sup>nd</sup> , 3 <sup>rd</sup>	3	yes
Ashley	Fitzgerald	3 <sup>rd</sup>	1	no
Laurie	Fitzgerald	3 <sup>rd</sup>	1	no
Anne	Walters	3 <sup>rd</sup> , 4 <sup>th</sup> , 5 <sup>th</sup>	3	no
Nicole	Walters	2 <sup>nd</sup> , 3 <sup>rd</sup>	2	yes
Tamara	Walters	2 <sup>nd</sup>	2	no

Functional Grammar project, but with several of the same university professors and graduate students. Table 3.1 shows the names of the classrooms teachers who participated in the study.

***Instructional coaches (ICs).*** Five ICs participated in this study. They were all assigned by the district to work in specific elementary schools to work with teachers and students to improve reading instruction and achievement. The work of the ICs is tightly governed by the district rather than the building principal. Table 3.2 shows the names of the ICs who participated in the study.

***Resource teachers (RTs).*** Six RTs participated in this study. The RTs in the Daly district are funded by either Title I or Title III and their funding source determines the parameters of their work with teachers and students. But in contrast to the ICs, the building principal

Table 3.4

*Administrators who participated in Study*

Name	School	Years at school	Years of Participation in FG project	Previous Experience with FG
Mike	Bailey	1	1	no
Jeanne	Fitzgerald	1	1	no
Murray	Martin	1	2	yes
Pam	Walters	1	3	yes
Nancy	Central Office	NA	NA	yes

assigns the work that is to be accomplished in the school within these looser guidelines. Table 3.3 shows the names of the RTs who participated in the study.

***Administrators.*** Four elementary school principals and one district-level administrator participated in this study. All four principals were in their first year as the administrator in their current schools, although two had been principals at other schools involved in the study immediately prior to their reassignment. Two of the principals were first time principals. Table 3.4 shows the names of the administrators who participated in the study.

***University team.*** Two professors of education and four graduate students from the university participated in this study. The two professors were the principal investigators of the Functional Grammar Study. One of the professors, an expert in functional grammar and two of the graduate students had been previously involved with several of the schools in functional grammar workshops prior to the Functional Grammar project. Table 3.5 shows the names of the

Table 3.5

*University Team Members who participated in Study*

Name	Role	Years in FG project	Previous Involvement in FG workshops
Amy	Principal Investigator	3	no
Joanne	Principal Investigator	3	yes
Becky	Graduate Student	3	yes
Mark	Graduate Student	3	yes
Shannon	Graduate Student	3	no
Sophie	Graduate Student	3	no

university team members who participated in the study.

### **Data Collection**

Data for this study were collected between May 1, 2012, and April 30, 2013. The data collected was from questionnaires, interviews of participants, and observations of the professional development workshops. The timeline for the data collection is shown in Table 3.6.

**Questionnaires.** Eighteen second, third, fourth and fifth grade teachers, RTs and ICs were administered a questionnaire at a Functional Grammar workshop in May 2012 as part of Phase One of the study. The questionnaire asked teachers and ICs to self-report changes in their instructional literacy practices, as well as to identify factors that led to those changes.

**Interviews.** Interviews were conducted for Phase One of the study between May 1 and June 12, 2012. Interviews for the Phase Two were conducted between November 1, 2012, and

May 22, 2013. All interviews were conducted by the researcher in a one-to-one format. Settings for the interviews were primarily in the schools involved, usually in the teachers' and principals' classrooms or office spaces. The university research team members were interviewed in offices on their university campus. The Associate Superintendent was interviewed in her office within the school administration building. Protocols were used for all interviews conducted in this study, with separate protocols developed for use with the Associate Superintendent for Elementary Education, the classroom teachers, the resource teachers and instructional coaches (ICs) and the university professors and graduate student team. The interview protocols (Appendices F, G, H, I, J) were redesigned for the primary study to obtain the data elicited from the questionnaire in the pilot study. All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed. Field notes were also recorded during the interviews.

The interviews consisted of four to six open-ended questions with probes and lasted approximately 20-45 minutes each. The purpose of the interviews with the classroom teachers, ICs, RTs and principals was to gain more information about the implementation of the workshop activities and lessons that had occurred, as well as to understand the planning processes that occurred in schools between the workshops and the literacy instruction that followed. The purpose of interviewing the university design team was to determine how the workshops, lessons and activities were created, as well as to understand the role the university team members played in supporting the implementation of the lessons and activities in the schools and classrooms. The Associate Superintendent's interview was to explore the district context in which the professional development was taking place.

Table 3.6

*Timeline for Research*


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	Beginning Date	Ending Date
Phase One (Questionnaires & Interviews)	May 1, 2012	June 12, 2012
Phase Two (Interviews)	November 1, 2012	May 22, 2013
Phase Two (Observations)	February 1, 2013	April 12, 2013

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**Observations.** Observations of interactions between the university team and participants were conducted at two of the workshops held at a local campus of the university. Those workshops were held during the school day on February 1 and April 12, 2013. Field notes were taken during these interactions. These observations provided contextual information about the nature of the interactions between the university staff and the teachers and principals involved in the study. The six elements of effective professional development from the work of Garet et al. (2001) and Desimone et al. (2002) were also noted in the field notes if observed. These included reform vs. traditional activity, collective participation, duration, content knowledge, opportunities for active learning and coherence.

**Role of the Researcher**

My role as a researcher in this study was neither as complete participant nor as complete observer, but between the two extremes. I had been involved with the coaches, teachers and administrators in the schools as a professional development and reading facilitator before assuming my present role as the principal of an elementary school in this district. My role was

informal and I was able to interact with the coaches and other administrators as they worked with individual teachers and in individual interviews. I attended many of the functional grammar workshops. I am the administrator of a school involved in the Functional Grammar project. Several teachers and the literacy coach from my building were participating in the functional grammar workshops and were implementing the strategies in their classrooms. As an administrator of one of the schools involved in the functional grammar workshops, I separated my role as a researcher from my role as an evaluator and did not interview the instructional coach, resource teacher or classroom teachers from my school. I have a high level of interest in both the topics of functional grammar and instructional coaching and had ready access to the coaches, teachers and principals involved in this study.

### **Data Coding and Analysis**

**Initial coding.** Transcriptions of audio recordings, field notes of all observations, and the questionnaires were coded and analyzed to look for emerging themes and patterns. Constant comparative analysis was used to analyze the data collected in this study. Triangulation of data was achieved by examining the data from the questionnaires, interviews from different categories of participants (i.e., classroom teachers, ICs, RTs, administrators and the university development team members) and observation field notes. Theoretical sensitivity was observed throughout the data collection process as additional probes were used during the interviews to refine the understanding of data obtained. Thick rich descriptions of context developed through workshop interactions and interviews were also used throughout the study.

Transcriptions of interviews were uploaded using NVivo qualitative software and an open coding method was applied to all questionnaire and interview responses. All data were explored holistically based on what emerged from an initial general focus on the participants'

responses to questions about the professional development workshops and the lessons that were subsequently taught in classrooms into nodes (codes) in NVivo. The nodes were developed from words and phrases in both the data collected and the research into effective professional development. Evidence of themes began to emerge from the data as nodes were further grouped into meaningful categories. Using phrases and sentences contained in the initial nodes, categories were assigned to group ideas as described, below, to facilitate interpretation and analysis.

***Teacher factors.*** Coded teacher factors included teacher knowledge, experiences, classroom management practices, beliefs about teaching English Language Learners (ELL) students, and preparation for teaching lessons. These were identified as teacher factors because they are primarily within the control of the individual teacher. Because the ICs and RTs are also teachers, information from interviews related to the above factors was also coded as a teacher factor.

***District factors.*** Factors that were primarily determined by the school district were coded as district factors. These included issues related to curriculum and content pacing guides, common assessments and district-level support for the implementation of the content of the workshops.

***School factors.*** Schools determine planning periods and other schedules, so time was primarily a school-level factor. Principal support and length of participation were also coded as school-level factors.

***Professional development factors.*** All interview data related to the workshop content, lessons, organization or support from the university team were coded as a professional development factors. Field note data related to observations of the workshop were also coded as

professional development factors. These included notes about the six features of effective professional development from the work of Garet et al. (2001) and Desimone et al. (2002): reform vs. traditional type of activity, collective participation, duration, content knowledge, opportunities for active learning and coherence.

**Subsequent coding and development of themes.** In subsequent rounds of data analysis, both focused and axial coding were used to develop themes. The goal of the subsequent levels of coding was to achieve saturation of the data (Saldaña, 2009). Focused coding provided information about the frequency of ideas contained in the participants' responses. Axial coding was used to analyze and connect ideas contained in the data across categorical groupings. Axial coding provided a framework for reviewing the interconnectedness of the participants' responses to the questionnaire and interview questions and led to the development of several themes in this study:

- Theme One: Teachers received support from other professionals as they attempted to implement the functional grammar lessons and activities in their classroom. These supports took a variety of forms at the teacher, school and district levels.
- Theme Two: The functional grammar workshops took place within the context of other district literacy initiatives and may not have been a good fit with those initiatives.
- Theme Three: Teachers' experiences with the functional grammar lessons in their classrooms varied, as did their perceived effects of the activities on their students. This affected their understandings of the functional grammar concepts and their willingness to apply the concepts in other texts.

These factors interacted in ways that offer some insights into how teachers make decisions about the application of knowledge in their classroom literacy practices. These themes, along with the ways they interacted, are discussed at length in the following chapter. The features of effective professional development, as applied in the Functional Grammar project, will also be discussed.

## Chapter 4 – Findings

This study relied on a case study design (Marshall & Rossman, 2011) to investigate two research questions about the implementation of lessons and activities into existing literacy instructional practices following professional development. The research questions were:

1. How were the features of effective professional development incorporated into the functional grammar workshops and activities? How did they affect the implementation of the functional grammar lessons and activities?
2. What district, school and teacher factors affected the implementation of professional development activities in elementary classrooms after teachers attended workshops in functional grammar?

In addition to findings related to these two research questions, a third category of findings emerged from this study. While individual factors of support, fit and classroom experiences were identified by teachers as affecting their implementation of the functional grammar lessons and activities, these factors also interacted to produce teachers' applications of the concepts in additional narrative and informational texts in their classroom instruction. These three salient categories are discussed in this chapter.

### Features of Effective Professional Development

Observations were done of portions of the Functional Grammar workshops on February 1 and April 12, 2013. According to the field notes, all members of the university development team attended the workshops and interacted with the participants both one-on-one and in small

group discussions. During my observations on both dates, the workshops were structured to provide a review of previous content, feedback from the participants about the implementation of the lessons and activities based on the previously introduced content and the introduction of new content and lessons. At the February workshop, the participants had an opportunity to practice teaching the lesson and participating in the suggested activities.

Elements of effective professional development from the research were observed and documented in my field notes: the type of activity, collective participation, duration, content knowledge, opportunities for active learning and coherence (Garet et al., 2001; Desimone et al., 2002). Some notes were made directly from the observations of the workshops and others were made based on observations of the interactions of the university team and the participants. All four schools had teams of four to eight teaching professionals attending the workshops. In addition, I observed that the principals of Bailey and Martin elementary schools attended only portions of the workshop on April 12, 2013.

**Type of activity.** The Functional Grammar project was designed in a reform model format. The scope of the professional development included both coaching and professional community building components. In the Functional Grammar project, both classroom teachers and non-classroom teachers (RTs and ICs) were invited to and participated in the workshops. The RTs and the ICs learned the functional grammar content, lessons and activities alongside the classroom teachers, but served as coaches for the implementation of the lessons and activities in their schools by co-teaching, co-planning and assisting in modifying activities to meet student needs. The university design team also functioned as coaches and mentors. Teachers at all four schools related instances of support from team members, which included both email and on-site support. The university team was perceived by teachers, coaches and principals as being

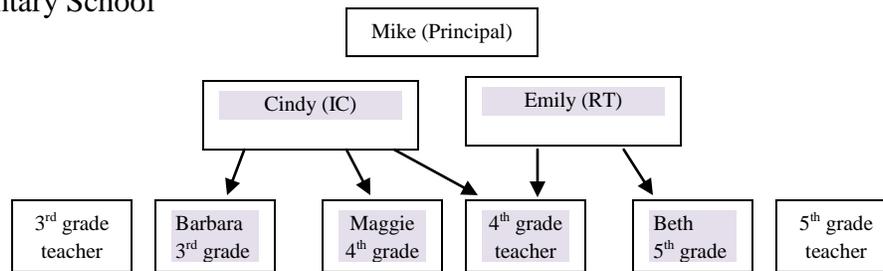
responsive to suggestions from participants, easily accessible by e-mail and willing to model complicated lessons in individual classrooms.

**Collective participation.** The feature of participation refers to the collective participation of groups of teachers from the same school. As shown in Figure 4.1, the participation of professional staff, including classroom teachers, ICs and RTs varied widely among the four participating schools. At two schools, Bailey and Fitzgerald, most or all of the teachers at a grade level participated in the Functional Grammar project. At the other two schools, Martin and Walters, only one in four teachers at a grade level participated. ICs, but not the classroom teachers, expressed frustration with the low level of participation as they felt it impacted the discussions of literacy instruction and common pacing at grade level meetings. Karen, the IC at Walters said “We’ve been saying all along we’re building a foundation. What we don’t have in our grade levels is consistency because we only have a handful of teachers, it’s not building wide.”

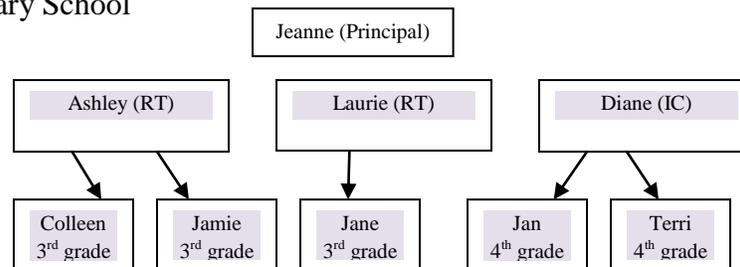
**Duration.** The duration of the project was three years. This was determined by the grant funding of the Functional Grammar project. The first year of the project (2010-2011) included only teachers and coaches at Bailey. The second year of the Functional Grammar project (2011-2012) included teachers and coaches from Bailey, Fitzgerald, and Walters schools. Martin Elementary joined in the third year (2012-2013). Nine full days of workshops were held during the second year of the project and six full days were held during the third year of the project.

Figure 4.1. Patterns of Support and Implementation of Functional Grammar within Schools

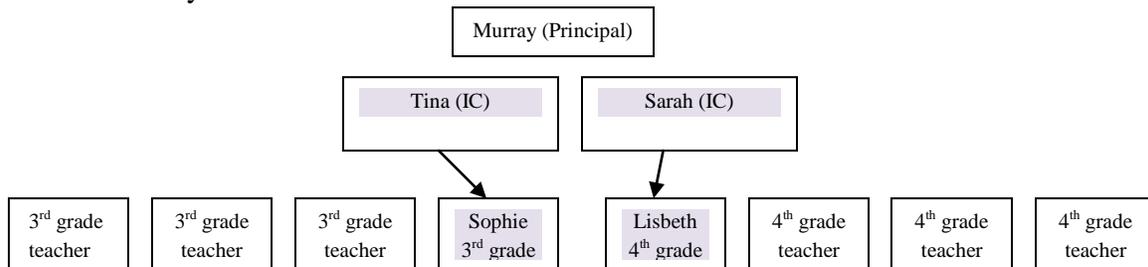
## Bailey Elementary School



## Fitzgerald Elementary School



## Martin Elementary School



## Walters Elementary School

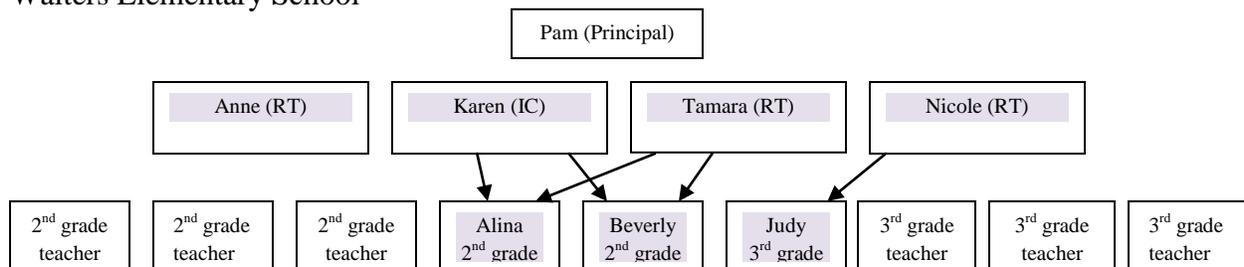


Figure 4.1. Patterns of support and implementation of functional grammar within each school. The shaded boxes represent attendance at functional grammar workshops during the 2012-2013 school year.

Table 4.1

*Years of Participation of Classroom Teachers*


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Name	School	Grade	Years of Participation in Functional Grammar project
Barbara	Bailey	3 <sup>rd</sup>	1
Beth	Bailey	5 <sup>th</sup>	2
Maggie	Bailey	4 <sup>th</sup>	1
Colleen	Fitzgerald	3 <sup>rd</sup>	2
Jamie	Fitzgerald	3 <sup>rd</sup>	2
Jan	Fitzgerald	4 <sup>th</sup>	1
Jane	Fitzgerald	3 <sup>rd</sup>	2
Terri	Fitzgerald	4 <sup>th</sup>	1
Lisbeth	Martin	4 <sup>th</sup>	1
Sophie	Martin	3 <sup>rd</sup>	1
Alina	Walters	2 <sup>nd</sup>	1
Beverly	Walters	2 <sup>nd</sup>	1
Judy	Walters	3 <sup>rd</sup>	2

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The workshops were spread out over the school year during both the second and third years.

Teachers were given lessons and activities to use with their students in the weeks between the

Table 4.2

*Years of Participation of ICs and RTs*

Name	School	Role	Years of participation in FG Workshops
Cindy	Bailey	IC	3
Emily	Bailey	RT	3
Ashley	Fitzgerald	RT	1
Diane	Fitzgerald	IC	2
Laurie	Fitzgerald	RT	1
Sarah	Martin	IC	2
Tina	Martin	IC	1
Anne	Walters	RT	2
Karen	Walters	IC	2
Nicole	Walters	RT	2
Tamara	Walters	RT	2

workshops. While that appears to be a significant duration to qualify as a feature of effective professional development, Table 4.1 shows that a majority of the classroom teachers attended the workshops in only one year. Eight of the thirteen classroom teachers attended the workshops for one year and five attended for two years. Bailey Elementary School participated in all three years of the project, yet no classroom teachers participated in all three years of the project.

More years of participation were seen in the ICs and RTs. Table 4.2 shows that eight of the eleven ICs and RTs participated in the workshops and implementation of the functional grammar lessons and activities for two or more years. The IC and RT at Bailey participated for all three years of the project. The RTs at Fitzgerald and one of the ICs at Martin participated only in the last year of the project. The duration of the project was three years, but it was affected by the limited years of participation on the part of the classroom teachers who were expected to implement the functional grammar lessons and activities. The ICs and RTs who provided coaching support for the implementation participated for a longer period of time, more than half an extra year, on average, than the classroom teachers in the study.

**Content knowledge.** Another feature of effective professional development is the content of the training sessions. Professional development which focuses on increasing teachers' content knowledge, rather than on improving teaching skills is more effective at changing classroom practices emerged from research studies. The Functional Grammar project focused very specifically on building teacher knowledge in functional grammar, as well as giving the teachers prepared lesson plans and activities to use in their classrooms. While I did not observe that there was any type of formal check of teacher knowledge, Amy, one of the principal investigators said,

There's . . . new information to strengthen the teacher's content knowledge, so that comes first. We're very mindful of sort of flipping in and out between addressing the teachers as learners and addressing them as classroom teachers.

Most of the teachers found that they needed to modify the plans to meet the needs of their individual students, and eleven of the thirteen classroom teachers commented on how much easier that became once they understood the larger concepts that were the goals of the lessons.

The field notes show that a portion of both workshops focused on the systemic functional linguistics theory behind the lessons and activities that were subsequently introduced and reviewed with the goal of classroom implementation in the participating schools. I also noted that the Functional Grammar project workshops were designed and led by content experts in the field of functional grammar.

**Opportunities for active learning.** Qualities of active learning were observed during both workshops, as the field notes indicate that teachers had opportunities to discuss and plan in different groups, both school and grade-level, as well as participate in whole group learning. The participants interviewed for this study, including classroom teachers, ICs, RTs and administrators, commented positively on the responsiveness of the university design team to their feedback and suggestions. Besides the active participation opportunities built into the Functional Grammar workshops, the participants in the study felt that they had an active role in the direction of the project. Several participants expressed the many adjustments to timing and complexity of the lesson plans that were made between the second and third years of the project. They indicated that they felt listened to and that their comments had made a real difference in the implementation of the functional grammar activities.

Beth, a fifth grade teacher at Bailey said,

What helped this year is the fact that they were like prompting you what to say and what to ask the kids. That helped a lot. Whereas in previous years they gave you the information and you were on your own. So how you stated the processes and how you started the connectors and all that stuff you were on your own. Now this year I think they've managed it a little bit better.

The field notes show that the university team members were observed to serve in a variety of roles within the workshops. Three team members provided whole group lectures on the theory of systemic functional linguistics. This included both university professors and the lead graduate student. When the participants went into small group discussions, all university team members joined groups to facilitate discussion, answer questions and introduce new activities. The participants appeared to know and have familiar interactions with all the university team members. The field notes indicate that university team members asked teachers, ICs and RTs about specific classroom situations. The participants asked many questions and several times asked for clarification about an activity and suggested improvements.

**Coherence.** Coherence refers to how closely the professional development aligns with teachers' expectations and goals for their own learning, as well as their goals for their students. Since I made formal observations of only two of the workshops, I did not collect any evidence of methods the university development team may have used to identify participant expectations. However, Amy, one of the PIs of the project discussed how they designed the workshops agenda:

Several times actually we've tried the headline activity, which I think is a commonly used feature of professional development where the teachers are asked to identify something that really stood out, was noteworthy for them about the instruction that they engaged in with the previous unit. But we've also shared student work and where it's possible to do that, that would be our preference because we think that it's very powerful for teachers to sit together at grade, by grade level, study children's work and what it is that that work helps them to notice about children's learning or the challenges that children, children have, or how they're responding to functional grammar.

The university team was also cognizant of providing some alignment between the district curricula objectives with the functional grammar lessons. According to my field notes, approximately 40 minutes of discussion during the workshop on February 1 centered on how to fit the lessons and activities into the district pacing guidelines and it was noted that the university team had reviewed and planned for coherent content within the district science curriculum. Ten of the thirteen teachers and nine of the eleven ICs and RTs expressed frustration with fitting the lessons and activities into the existing district structures and pacing guides for reading and writing instruction, however. Only one of the principals saw this as a major concern. Some of the frustrated teachers and coaches grasped the relevance of the concepts, but struggled with the timing. Others worried about how the new terms (i.e., participant instead of noun, process instead of verb) might impact student scores on high stakes assessments.

### **Factors that Affected Implementation**

Three themes emerged from the data that addressed the second research question about the district, school and teacher factors that the participants believed affected the implementation of the lessons and activities in classrooms in the four schools after professional development. One theme was the varied support that classroom teachers received from others in their schools both during and after the professional development. This support, or lack thereof, may have come from other classroom teachers, educators who served as coaches, and school and district administrators, as well as from members of the university development team. Another theme was the perceived fit with the district's literacy initiatives. All categories of participants reported that this was an issue with the content and implementation of the professional development in functional grammar, although participants differed in the extent that they believed this mattered and how they accommodated the differences in their classrooms and schools. The third theme

identified through the research was the teachers' experiences with the implementation of the functional grammar content, which along with their perceptions of the effects of the lessons and activities on their students, affected their knowledge of the content and their beliefs about the application of the concepts to other texts used in their classroom instruction.

These three factors emerged as the themes from all participant groups. The specific findings from the data, other than the questionnaire data, are reported here by school, since individual schools had varying levels of participation in the workshops and provided support for implementation of the workshop content in different ways. These differences may also have influenced the perceived fit with other district literacy initiatives and teachers' experiences with the functional grammar concepts. The data from the questionnaire are reported as district-wide data.

**Supports in schools.** Teachers received support from other school professionals as they attempted to implement the functional grammar lessons and activities in their classroom. These supports took a variety of forms at the teacher, school and district levels, including other classroom teachers, an IC, RT, administrator, and sometimes a member of the university planning team. Administrators, classroom and resource teachers, and instructional coaches reported varying support systems within their schools. These patterns were consistently reported by all staff interviewed within a school. Principals were able to articulate the purposes of the professional development and knew who was attending and how the support staff was working with the classroom teachers. In every school, a least one RT and one IC attended the workshops, along with at least one classroom teacher from two different grade levels.

The support of the principals with the functional grammar workshops was also important. Joanne, the university PI said:

It's very clear that the leadership of the principal is a huge factor for us on this, even though we're not in touch with them all the time. So I think you're, you're hitting here on like the key stakeholders; the district people have an impact more back in the backroom. Definitely, principals are really aware of what they want and teachers then too.

Of the eighteen teachers who completed the questionnaire as a part of Phase One of this study, eleven were classroom teachers, four were Instructional Coaches (ICs) and three were Resource Teachers (RTs). All eighteen indicated that they had implemented functional grammar activities in elementary classrooms in their schools. Of the eleven classroom teachers, two taught second grade, six taught third grade, one taught fourth grade and two indicated they taught fourth and fifth grades. The classroom teachers reported that although they had attended four or more sessions of functional grammar workshops during the 2011-2012 school year, nine had not attended any workshops in previous years. Of the ICs and RTs, however, five reported that they had attended functional grammar workshops previous to the current school year's workshops.

The importance of planning and co-teaching with other teachers and ICs was rated on a five-point scale on the survey and the results are reported in Table 4.3. The small number of participants in the survey precludes any of the differences in the mean numbers being significant, but it is interesting to note that teachers (classroom and resource) rated the importance of planning and co-teaching with another teacher as more important than planning or co-teaching with the IC. The mean of the importance rating for "support from my administrator" was 4.13 out of 5.0 across all survey participants, although four did not respond to that item.

The teachers, ICs and RTs who took part in this study indicated that collaboration was a necessary part of the implementation process. In the comments made to the last question of the

Table 4.3

*Importance of Factors in Implementing Functional Grammar Activities*

	Planning with another teacher	Planning with the IC or RT	Opportunity to teach with another teacher	Opportunity to teach with the IC or RT
Classroom Teachers (n = 11)	4.73	4.00	4.45	4.36
Instructional Coaches (ICs) (n = 4)	4.75	5.00	4.75	5.00
Resource Teachers (RTs) (n = 3)	5.00	4.50	4.67	4.50

*Note:* 5 = very important, 0 = not at all important

questionnaire, “What additional factors or support do you feel would help you implement functional grammar activities in your classroom?” classroom teachers, RTs, and ICs responded with the need for additional planning time together. Suggestions such as “more time to plan and discuss lessons prior to implementation,” “we need more planning time as a team,” and “teaching with another teacher” were given for improvement.

Collaboration with others and common planning time were the most important factors identified in the questionnaire responses in Phase One and were explored more thoroughly in the subsequent interviews. The questionnaire findings are reported here as overall for the district. The factors that emerged from the study interviews in Phase Two are reported by school because there were differences in how individual schools supported and implemented the functional

Figure 4.2. Support and Implementation – Bailey Elementary School

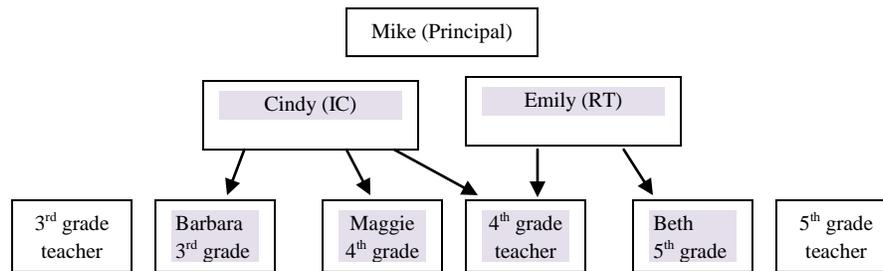


Figure 4.2. Support and implementation are shown within the school. The shaded boxes represent attendance at functional grammar workshops during the 2012-2013 school year.

grammar professional development. As Joanne, one of the university PIs said, “There’s definitely a culture of a school. We’ve really seen that.” The variation of the implementation and support also affected the factors of teachers’ experiences and the perceived effects of the functional grammar strategies and lessons, as well as their fit within their existing literacy curriculum.

**Bailey Elementary School.** Bailey Elementary School is one of the smallest elementary schools in the Daly School district. It is a kindergarten through fifth grade school, with about 289 students. The ELL population in 2012-2013 was 78% and the poverty rate (defined by free and reduced lunch statistics) was 85%. Bailey had two kindergarten teachers, two first grade teachers, two second grade teachers, two third grade teachers, two fourth grade teachers and two fifth grade teachers during the 2012-2013 school year. One third grade teacher, both fourth grade teachers and one fifth grade teacher participated in the Functional Grammar workshops. Only one of the fourth grade teachers who participated in the workshops was available to be interviewed for this study, and that teacher reported that they collaborated on occasion as they planned to implement the functional grammar lessons, “Me [sic] and [the other fourth grade

teacher] today we sat and we just like went over the lessons and we were talking about what we were planning on doing with it.”

The third and fifth grade teachers reported that they planned and implemented with the support of the IC and RT, but missed the interaction with their grade level peers. The third grade teacher said, “My partner’s not actually doing it so I can’t really talk to her. But Cindy (IC) has helped me out with it, I’ve talked to her one on one. And um my sister is actually in, she works at Walters, so she’s doing it.”

All three classroom teachers at Bailey who participated in the study described the support they received from the IC and RT in modeling and co-teaching, but also discussed the time they spent planning for the implementation of the lessons with other teachers. Maggie said, “Actually me [sic] and Rebecca today we sat and we just like went over the lessons and we were talking about what we were planning on doing with it.” A third grade teacher reported that she also planned with other teachers, “once we get them I review them, and they are kind of confusing the way the lessons are written out. So I get them and then I actually talk with the other teachers a little bit on what they do and how they implement them in their class.”

At Bailey Elementary School, the IC and the Title I RT attended the Functional Grammar workshops. The IC worked with the third grade teacher and both of the fourth grade teachers who attended the workshops. The RT also supported one of those fourth grade teachers, along with the fifth grade teacher who participated. The IC, Cindy, described her philosophy of support of teachers through this process as “I can’t be in there for all of it so the idea is once I modeled it and we co-taught it, you’re comfortable enough to then try it yourself.” On the other hand, while the RT (Emily) also provided modeling support for teachers, “sometimes you know I just say you know it’s in my head, let me do it and I’ll show you,” she also described situations

when, “I just gave it [the lesson] to the teacher, she looked at it, she made the copies, and today you know we started with a different . . . [story].”

Teachers at Bailey described the support process in their school as very informal, often occurring by email or short discussions. The principal of Bailey commented on this, as well,

“And often times the conversations in lunchrooms are over you know the frustrations, that lesson took forever, you know or I didn’t understand this. So there’s a lot of communication.” Maggie, a fourth grade teacher, spoke of the difficulty in meeting to prepare,

Yeah and you know especially with Cindy and Emily because their schedules are, I know everybody else’s schedules, their schedules are . . . I go on my preps but sometimes it’s not their prep. So then I’ll have to go after school or you know email them or something like that because it’s a little bit hard to you know accommodate for everybody’s schedule.

The Bailey teachers all mentioned the support they had received from the university research team, including support from the principal investigators and the graduate students.

Susan, a first-year teacher described how one of the primary investigators, Amy, and a graduate student, Mark, helped her get started, “they’ve taught the other two [units] in my class. They’ve used my class as a pilot. I taught the other ones.” Maggie, a fourth grade teacher at Bailey described her interactions with the university team, outside of the structured workshops:

One of the dissertation students, they’re the PhD candidates, I email with Mark all the time, and Shannon. They, they actually came in one time to help me to just help clarify a bunch of things because I just was not understanding the, the topic. It was the last unit that we were working on.

Cindy, the IC said:

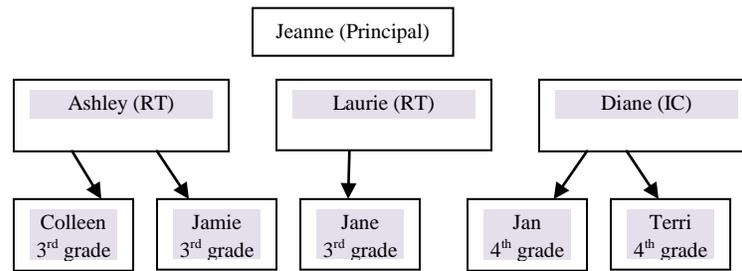
I mean they [university team] gave PD to our second through fifth grade and sometimes to the whole staff [in previous years], and they were very visible. And so my teachers are very comfortable, they come and observe all the time, videotape, they don't think anything of it. It's, you know it's not a burden.

Emily had multiple years of experience with both the functional grammar concepts and the university development team and she interacted with one of the graduate students, Mark, to adjust the lessons to meet her classroom goals:

So what Mark and I, this is, was after we left the workshop. When I went home and really looked at it and you know. So I emailed Mark and said this is not going to work for me, we have to simplify the text. So he started playing around with it, and he would send me different versions and take out words and add words, simplify. You know what I mean? Just so that we can, we try to make the kids understand it in simpler form so we can actually get to the writing otherwise I'd be spending weeks at just trying to dissect the text and seeing what's happening and never get to the writing. And kids get so bored when I'm dealing with the same text again and again and again and again. Um so we had to do that. So what I have is now probably different that, what everybody else has. But I felt like I had to do it cause you know my kids there's no way they would've been, and after all the purpose of the lesson is to write a, you know a piece.

***Fitzgerald Elementary School.*** Fitzgerald Elementary School is slightly larger than Bailey. It is a kindergarten through fifth grade school, with about 339 students. The ELL population in 2012-2013 was 84% and the poverty rate (defined by free and reduced lunch statistics) was 89%. There were two kindergarten teachers, two first grade teachers, two second grade teachers, three third grade teachers, two fourth grade teachers and two fifth grade teachers

Figure 4.3. Support and Implementation – Fitzgerald Elementary School



*Figure 4.3.* Support and implementation are shown within the school. The shaded boxes represent attendance at functional grammar workshops during the 2012-2013 school year.

at Fitzgerald Elementary during the 2012-2013 school year. All three of the third grade teachers and both fourth grade teachers, along with the IC and two RTs participated in the workshops.

Colleen, a third grade teacher reported that she worked closely with her grade level peers: “Oh yeah we have a really tight team. We work with the team a lot.” She went on to describe how they worked together to modify a lesson to meet the needs of the students at Fitzgerald:

I’ll give you one really good example is that one of my teammates is Jamie and she’s a big fan of those like flip books, you know like of organizers that the kids can create to help them learn things. So when we were first struggling and talking about how we were struggling with the participant [functional grammar term] and the process [functional grammar term] and that we created these little flip books. So that was her idea. So she said well this is what I’m doing with my kids, and so then we all the team made the flip books. And then we could have the kids, if you’re not sure if it’s a participant or what type of participant you can look in your little book. And now this time, for this activity we’re using this, a similar thing for the parts of an argument. So that’s one of the things.

And then we take each other's, we check in with each other; where are you at, what was hard, what did the kids struggle with, what, you know just feedback.

The fourth grade teachers also reported that while they depended more heavily on the IC since they were new to the Functional Grammar workshops, they also supported one another as they planned to implement the lessons. Jan, a fourth grade teacher said, "I read over the material, I might discuss it with my partner if we're not understanding."

At Fitzgerald Elementary School, two resource teachers (RTs) and the Instructional Coach (IC) attended the Functional Grammar workshops, along with three third grade and two fourth grade teachers. When asked to describe the support provided at the school, the principal said, "I have one [IC] and then I have two resource teachers that go in and support them and coach them through the process." She described the support provided for the Functional Grammar workshops as different from the support otherwise provided for teachers within the school, "I think it's more team teaching with the functional grammar. Because it's like still a very, there's a big learning curve still for them, especially my fourth grade teachers who are brand new to it this year. One RT supported the lesson implementation of two third grade teachers. One part-time RT supported the other third grade teacher and the IC supported both of the fourth grade teachers as they implemented the functional grammar lessons. The IC related how the support decision was made:

This year what's happened is the teachers that started last year are still on board but then we got the fourth grade and two teachers new to functional grammar. So we felt like I would, it would be better for me to go with the new teachers since I have a little bit more experience with functional grammar. And then we have two new resource teachers who are attending our meetings now, and so they're working with the third grade.

The support provided by the IC consisted primarily of modeling the functional grammar lessons. The IC described her support of classroom teachers:

I'll go into certain classrooms from the two that I'm working with and the teacher's not prepared, not sure what she has to do or how she does it. And so that's when she'll, they'll ask; oh do you mind modeling. And that's where the modeling comes in. And it just makes me stop and think if I wasn't there would this be taught? You know what, how, how would, and so in a way I kind of feel like it's good that I'm in there because I know like once I start teaching it. And then, and then that teacher will you know chime in or get a little bit more confident. And a lot of them are not confident with the workshop [content] because it's difficult. And they're not sure how to approach it or they don't even understand it.

The RTs at Fitzgerald saw their role as gathering extra materials and modifying the lessons to support the needs of the students in the classrooms. One RT described how she and the teacher changed the lessons to meet student needs by adding opportunities for movement:

We go through the lessons during the time when we have to, you know when we go to the workshop, there's definitely preparation where you have to go back reread the lessons. You have to go back and based on our students a lot of times we have to modify things. Make it more hands on; because we have a lot of kids [whose] attention span is very short. So you have to get them moving.

Molly, another RT described the process of supplementing the lesson materials:

When you look at the lessons on paper they look great and when they're talking to us about the lessons during the PD's they sound like oh they'll flow really well, but in all actuality you come to the classroom a different group of kids, you do have to make

modifications or adaptations. A lot of our kids don't have the background knowledge or the vocabulary so we've had to front load some of that.

Some classroom teacher teachers at Fitzgerald depended more heavily on the support provided by the IC or RTs than others. Colleen, a third grade teacher described the support she received as she implemented the functional grammar lessons as inconsistent. However, another of the third grade teachers who had participated in the previous school year said, "I'm co-teaching with the resource teacher. In the past units I felt like she was more of a resource. But yeah she's been there every step of the way." Another teacher (fourth grade) depended on her fellow teacher for support during the lesson implementation, "I read over the material, I might discuss it with my partner if we're not understanding." Yet another teacher, Jane, reported how she meets with her RT:

We meet in the morning three days a week. Prior to teaching the lesson she comes in from nine to nine thirty-five. Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday's. She and I meet for about fifteen, twenty minutes prior to the start of the lesson. But she and, she and I separately try to modify the lesson, and we kind of compare notes . . . .

***Martin Elementary School.*** Martin Elementary School is a much larger school. It is a kindergarten through fifth grade school, with about 567 students during the 2012-2013 school year. The ELL population in 2012-2013 was 81% and the poverty rate (defined by free and reduced lunch statistics) was 84%. There were four kindergarten teachers, four first grade teachers, four second grade teachers, four third grade teachers, four fourth grade teachers and four fifth grade teachers at Martin Elementary during the 2012-2013 school year, Only one third grade teacher and one fourth grade teacher attended the workshops along with the two ICs. Lisbeth, especially would have preferred more grade level support from her peers: "although

Figure 4.4. Support and Implementation – Martin Elementary School

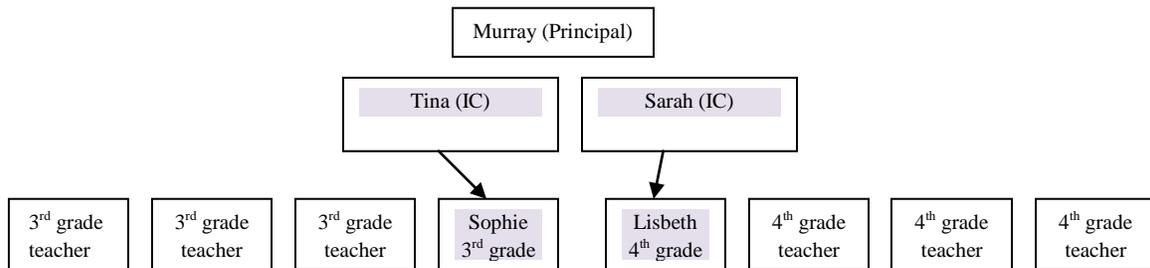


Figure 4.4. Support and implementation are shown within the school. The shaded boxes represent attendance at functional grammar workshops during the 2012-2013 school year.

working on my own is fine, I think [it] will benefit all the students across the grade level if we spread it more and we become unified.” Sophie, the third grade teacher reported that she and Lisbeth had found an opportunity to collaborate when they discovered that the third and fourth grade lessons were similar. “I’ve pretty much been doing it myself. This next coming unit is the same exact lesson for third and fourth grade so Lisbeth and I will probably at some point discuss the, the lessons. I haven’t even decided yet when I’m going to start them.”

Martin Elementary School sent the smallest group of educators to the Functional Grammar workshops. Martin was assigned one fulltime and one halftime IC during the 2012-2013 school year and both attended at least some of the workshops. Tina was the fulltime IC and Sarah was the halftime IC. Each IC was assigned to support one teacher who was attending the workshops. One was a third grade teacher and one was a second grade teacher. No RTs from Martin attended or participated in the functional grammar lessons. The principal of Martin Elementary, Murray, described the support that was provided: “The classroom teachers have the coaches go in with them and help them with planning and brainstorming and starting the implementation.”

The ICs described their support during the implementation as modeling and adapting lessons. However, neither teacher reported receiving much support from their assigned IC except at the beginning of the implementation period. Sarah, the IC who worked with the fourth grade teacher said,

The one particular classroom I'm in I'm usually just there to co-teach. She is more familiar with functional grammar and has done functional grammar in the past. So we meet together and really she teaches 70%, and I'm like you know 30%. And we discuss the plans and if there's changes cause she has a high ELL population.

The teacher, Lisbeth, that Sarah worked with disagreed, "No, this year I worked on my own except with the first one we had the chance to work with a literacy coach. And then as you know the politics, they have to go to another teacher." Lisbeth described her preparation process for teaching the lessons at length, including more about the subjects that formed the content of the lessons:

Actually it does take a lot of preparation, not regarding the activities; it takes me to prepare to understand what is the concept behind it. And to put myself in my student's position and see from what angle I'm going to target a specific concept. How much I need to prepare before I start my lesson. . . . How can I get selections that are a bit more defined than what I'm going present to the students? You stand there, you scaffold, you explain, you stop at a phrase or a statement, but there is a lot of background knowledge that's needed in such selection in informational text. So most of my preparation is before I attack the unit; building prior knowledge.

Lisbeth was an experienced teacher who had participated in other functional grammar activities prior to the year studied. In fact, she had much more experience than the IC to whom she was assigned.

Tina, the other IC at Martin, worked more closely with the classroom teacher to which she was assigned. She said,

My role is supporting the teacher however she needs it. Be it planning, be it modeling, co teaching, we do all of it. Depending on where she is with the lesson and what her struggles are. Sometimes it's heavier in the planning part that she needs me, and then she doesn't need me as much in the modeling. Other times she just needs to see it to wrap her head around it, so the modeling might be heavier.

However, her assigned teacher disagreed, "The first, well the first unit I did work with Tina, my literacy coach. But since then no, I've pretty much been doing it myself." Sophie, a third grade teacher, was new to functional grammar and said she struggled to implement the lessons in her bilingual classroom, "I've had to take days, lessons that were supposed to take one session, turn them two, sometimes three. And yeah kind of just, just adjust it to my classes needs."

**Walters Elementary School.** Walters Elementary School is also a large school. It is a kindergarten through fifth grade (K-5) school, with about 659 students during the 2012-2013 school year. The ELL population in 2012-2013 was 84% and the poverty rate (defined by free and reduced lunch statistics) was 86%. There were four or five classrooms at every grade level, kindergarten through fifth grade. Two second grade teachers, out of five second grade classrooms, and one third grade teacher, out of four third grade classrooms, participated in the Functional Grammar workshops, in addition to the IC and three RTs. Both of the second grade

Figure 4.5. Support and Implementation – Walters Elementary School

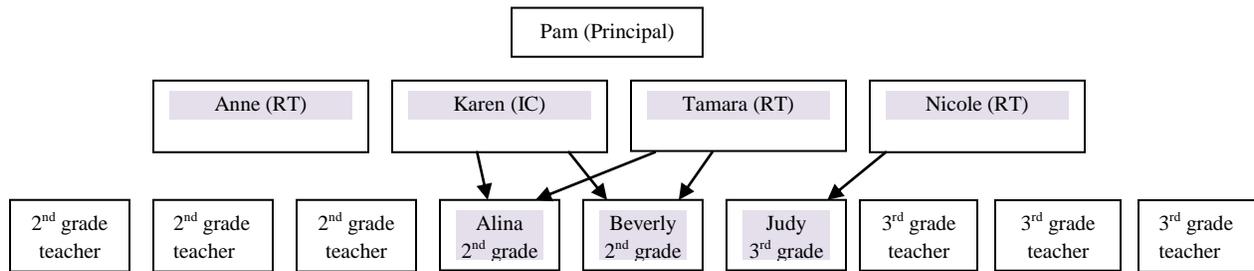


Figure 4.5. Support and implementation are shown within the school. The shaded boxes represent attendance at functional grammar workshops during the 2012-2013 school year.

teachers reported that they worked in their classrooms with the RT, they also met regularly with their grade level peer. Beverly said,

Okay, well what we usually do, because there's only two second grades [participating], so I guess in the whole functional grammar [project]. Usually when we get the lessons at the workshop we try and work out how we're going to do the lesson, how we're going to split it. And then I just communicate with my other teacher during lunch time.

The third grade teacher who participated in the workshops had a unique situation. She acknowledged working with the RT, but also shared that she was assisting another third grade teacher who had not attended the workshops but was attempting to implement the lessons in her classroom: “[I’m] kind of helping her out and you know feeding off of each other. At Walters Elementary School, more non-classroom teachers attended than did classroom teachers. The IC and three RTs attended the workshops. The IC provided nominal support for the two second grade teachers who were implementing functional grammar, but was backed up by one of the RTs who also supported those classrooms.

One RT supported the third grade teacher who attended. The third RT attended the workshop but described her role as,

What I actually do is I look at the components of functional grammar and see how I can integrate it into what they're [non-participating teachers] already doing without giving them the names of like processes [functional grammar term] and um you know participants [functional grammar term]. Just into their daily activities and their lessons, how I can integrate functional grammar without actually telling them its functional grammar because they're not getting the actual training.

This RT, Anne, was responsible for introducing the functional grammar lessons and concepts in classrooms in which the teachers were not participating in the workshops. The IC also attended all of the workshops but admitted that “my time unfortunately has not been fully focused on functional grammar” and that her principal had directed her to spend her time working with other grade level classrooms in ways which were unrelated to functional grammar.

The RTs who did support the classroom teachers did it differently. One reported, “whatever questions they have they'll come and ask and we'll sit together and just um you know give them suggestions, whatever they need help with.” She did not provide any support with the implementation of the lessons in the classrooms. However, the other RT, Fran, did model and co-teach in the classrooms, “I plan with them. We plan before school, after school, and sometimes over the phone. Um I go in there and I co-teach and I model for some of the, like the newer teachers I modeled in the beginning of the school year.”

The teachers at Walters reported feeling frustrated with implementing the lessons in their classrooms and getting most of their support from the graduate students from the university

professional development team. A second grade teacher shared her feelings about implementing the lessons:

Going in I didn't have no [sic] idea what to expect. So it was like well here's the lesson plan, here's what you say, here's what they say, you know what I mean. So it kind of didn't feel natural to me. And I didn't feel like I was connecting with the students because I wasn't understanding everything that was going on. So after that I was like; I'm just going to you know do my own thing, this is what they want me to teach, I'm just going to teach it.

She described her experience during a lesson that was being video recorded by one of the university graduate students, "And um there's been days where poor Becky's [graduate student] been here like video recording me, I'm like: Becky, we're done, sorry. I have to stop, the kids are done, I'm done." Another teacher, while frustrated, was satisfied with the support she received from the RT,

She helps out a lot with it. And then when we get back to class we work on; okay when are you going to start, how are we going to do this? So it's, it's a daily basis that we just keep reflecting back on the lesson, are we doing it right? You know because sometimes the lesson does not work with our kids. So either have to modify or sometimes skip it, if it does not work.

**Summary of support.** Even though all four schools used ICs and RTs as coaches for the implementation of the functional grammar content in classrooms, the support that was provided was inconsistent across the schools. Table 4.4 shows that the ICs and RTs performed a range of functions to support the teachers, including planning, modeling and co-teaching. Both ICs and

Table 4.4

*Coaching Support Provided in Schools*

Name	School	Role	Support provided	Grade (s) Supported	Years of Participation
Cindy	Bailey	IC	modeling, co-teaching, observing and giving feedback	3 <sup>rd</sup> , 4 <sup>th</sup> (3 teachers)	3+
Emily	Bailey	RT	Teaching lessons to other 2 <sup>nd</sup> and 3 <sup>rd</sup> grade students, modeling	2 <sup>nd</sup> , 3 <sup>rd</sup> grade (2 teachers)	3+
Diane	Fitzgerald	IC	planning, modeling, co-teaching	4 <sup>th</sup> grade (2 teachers)	2+
Ashley	Fitzgerald	RT	help with activities, second person in classroom	3 <sup>rd</sup> grade (2 teachers)	1
Laurie	Fitzgerald	RT	Preparing, adapting lessons, co-teaching	3 <sup>rd</sup> grade (1 teacher)	1
Sarah	Martin	IC	co-teaching, adapting lessons	4 <sup>th</sup> grade (1 teacher)	2
Tina	Martin	IC	planning, modeling, co-teaching	3 <sup>rd</sup> grade (1 teacher)	1
Anne	Walters	RT	Integrate components of FG into other classrooms, modeling, co-teaching	3 <sup>rd</sup> , 4 <sup>th</sup> , 5 <sup>th</sup> (0 teachers)	3
Karen	Walters	IC	planning, problem-solving	2 <sup>nd</sup> grade (2 teachers)	3+
Nicole	Walters	RT	Suggestions, questions	2 <sup>nd</sup> , 3 <sup>rd</sup> grades (0 teachers)	2+
Tamara	Walters	RT	co-teaching, modeling, planning	2 <sup>nd</sup> grade (1 teacher)	2

RTs functioned as coaches for teachers who were implementing the functional grammar lessons and activities. The coaches' roles varied, depending on their schools and the teachers they worked with, but they reported that they often explained the new activities, problem-solved and co-taught or modeled in the teachers' classrooms. They were often called on to help teachers modify the lessons and activities to fit the needs of the students in the individual classrooms.

According to the design of the Functional Grammar project, the coaches were learners alongside the classroom teachers in the workshops. Yet, because there was more stability in their participation, they attended more workshops, on average, than the teachers with whom they worked. Three of the ICs and two of the RTs had participated in functional grammar workshops prior to their participation in the Functional Grammar project and felt that they had developed a deeper expertise with the content (designated by a plus sign in the years of participation in Tables 4.4).

Seven of the 13 classroom teachers who participated in this study indicated that they had co-taught functional grammar lessons with their assigned support person. This aligned with the three ICs and four RTs who reported that they had provided co-teaching support in classrooms, as seen in Table 4.1. Overall, the RTs provided more of the hands-on support in classrooms than the ICs. This may have been because the school administrators had greater latitude in assigning the work of the RTs. The district more tightly controlled the duties and responsibilities of the ICs.

In addition to support from the ICs and RTs who functioned as coaches in this project, teachers also received support from other classroom teachers who were familiar with functional grammar. At Bailey, the project had been in place for three years and although some teachers were no longer attending the workshops, they still had knowledge and experience with

implementing the concepts in their classrooms. Participation at Fitzgerald included all teachers at the third and fourth grade levels, so teachers could expect to receive support from other teachers in their building. However, it does not appear that many of them took advantage of this as the teachers primarily identified support they received from an IC or RT as a factor in their implementation. Teachers at Martin and Walters were much more isolated at their grade levels and received all of their support from an IC. Members of the university team also provided support by answering questions and occasionally modeling a lesson, but that support was not pervasive and was more a feature of the professional development than an ongoing support in the schools.

The individual interviews conducted with the ICs and RTs revealed that they defined their role in supporting teachers' implementation of functional grammar in their classrooms as assisting with planning and in some cases, co-teaching the lessons. All of the ICs indicated that the opportunity to work with teachers to implement the functional grammar activities changed their role as a coach to provide more focus for their coaching. One IC spoke of the amount of time the support of functional grammar took and suggested that spending so much time with the workshop teachers might have reduced her effectiveness with other teachers who were not a part of functional grammar. ICs and RTs reported that they had seen changes in classroom instructional practices that they believed were directly related to the professional development sessions, including: more small-group work and teamwork among students, more cognitively demanding teacher expectations for students' conversations and writing and additional teacher modeling of interactions with texts. One IC reported a shift from "my students can't do that" to "how can I help them do that?"

The interviews conducted with the principals supported the definition of the role the ICs and RTs played in supporting functional grammar implementation in the schools. The principals acknowledged the support the ICs and RTs had played with teachers throughout the school year by planning, modeling and co-teaching the lessons and activities. Although none of the principals reported attending any of the workshops in their entirety, all saw their role as providing flexibility in scheduling, encouraging and most of all, providing extended time for planning and adapting activities. The principals also commented on the instructional changes they had seen in teachers' classrooms, including the use of more complex sentence structure in student and teacher dialogue and higher expectations for student writing. Two principals brought up the need for an in-depth review of the reading and writing data to determine if these instructional changes were producing increased student literacy achievement.

Interviews with ICs and principals also revealed a plea for additional planning and collaboration time for preparing lessons and activities. Both ICs and principals responded to the question, "What further steps do you believe are necessary for changes in instructional practices to occur in all classrooms?" with the need for additional release time for planning as well as the continuation of support from the university training team in lesson content and adapting activities for specific classrooms and students. ICs also expressed a need for more principal leadership, especially in "setting expectations about the implementation of lessons right away after the workshops."

**Fit with other district literacy initiatives.** The functional grammar workshops took place within the context of other district literacy initiatives and may not have been a good fit with those initiatives. During the study, the Daly School District made changes to the requirements for elementary literacy instruction. It adopted a reading framework for instruction

called the *Daily 5* (Boushey & Moser, 2006) that required short mini-lessons in comprehension, accuracy, fluency and expanding vocabulary (*CAFE*) (Boushey & Moser, 2009) of teacher-led instruction, followed by independent reading work time for students in leveled reading material. The district also had written and mandated a writing framework that included lessons in identified genres. These changes were a departure from past practices of school-adopted reading and writing curricula. Allotments of time to be spent within all curricular areas were given to administrators and teachers at district meetings. Again, this was a change from a suggested guideline to expected practice. Nancy, a central office administrator, said:

The district plan for literacy for elementary teachers is to help them understand what the literacy framework is. In Daly, there's a combination of utilization of *Daily 5* and *CAFE*, the Daly writing framework, or language activities, which include *SIOP* [Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol] (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2012) as well as language and literacy activities, and help teachers develop proficiency in delivering instruction through Readers and Writers Workshop. From Readers Workshop, which would be more the *Daily 5* and *CAFE* to Writers Workshop, which is the Daly writing framework, and then the type of language strategies that teachers can use to facilitate student acquisition of a number of different literacy skills.

The functional grammar activities were based in a common grade level text and required larger blocks of time than the mini-lesson format adopted by the district (field notes from observations). From the beginning, one of the Principal Investigators (PI) of the Functional Grammar project, Joanne, was concerned about the fit:

And so initially it was the *Daily 5* that started exactly at the same time as our project started. And we were concerned about that at first because it, it's a very different model

of instruction than the one that we're promoting. It's much more teacher as facilitator, have children make their own choices, have them work alone or in pairs. And one of the core tenets of our project was the idea that children and teachers together can talk about language in ways that give them a common experience and knowledge. And that building on a common base of everybody reading the same text, everybody reading the same story that we know English learners need that, they need a shared experience to talk about, engage with and develop in order to build vocabulary, in order to, to build their understanding. And so we, we worried that that was going to be problematic.

Still, Nancy believed that "the functional grammar fits into this plan as a set of strategies or procedures that will help you know children understand the structure of text so that their comprehension is increased."

***Bailey Elementary School.*** The principal at Bailey Elementary School, Mike, was in his first year in that position in the school. Although he had held the assistant principal position at Walters Elementary School the previous year, he had not attended any workshops. During the 2012-2013 school year, he said he "made an appearance at a couple of the workshops." Despite that, Mike was supportive of the functional grammar learning and its alignment with the district curriculum:

And you know initially I thought oh, my gosh, another thing pulling the time. But I think it's integrated so well and you know some of the lessons are lengthy but I think the skills are really relevant for what we expect, but then I think it fits nicely in with *Daily 5*. Our Writers Workshop, I think it just does fit in nicely.

The classroom teachers at Bailey reported that that they primarily incorporated the functional grammar lessons into their daily writing instructional period. All indicated that they

had to cut short their science or social studies lessons to accommodate the length and complexity of the functional grammar lessons. Beth said:

I don't have a lot of time to fit, because again you're fitting it in plus on top of everything else that you have to do. So you feel like you can't do this 60 minute lesson and still get to your regular reading groups and your regular math and science and social studies and language arts you need for the district. So you have to start modifying.

*Fitzgerald Elementary School.* Some of the teachers at Fitzgerald struggled with how to make these lessons work in their classrooms, "Trying to find a time to teach it is has been the most challenging." (Jamie, third grade) Colleen, another third grade teacher at Fitzgerald relayed her fears about it,

I feel a lot of pressure to keep up with pacing guide. And this particular activity can take an hour a day. Well, an hour a day is my entire allotment for science and half the allotment for social studies. So the end of the marking period comes and I go to do grades and I'm like oh my God I have hardly, I haven't covered the material for the science or social studies. And I'm in a real panic about that.

Jamie, another third grade teacher, agreed with Colleen. She said:

I find that my lessons run into whatever I'm teaching after functional grammar. So yes, it interferes a lot with keeping up with the pacing guides, keeping up with your math because you have the common assessments. Trying to find a time to teach it is the, has been the most challenging. I, I can deal with modifying and tweaking it and helping the kids really get it, but if I don't have the time I really can't do that. It's just so overwhelming.

Terri commented positively on the alignment between the functional grammar lessons and the fourth grade science curriculum:

I thought they really tied it into our science curriculum. I think they're getting better at tying it in. And if you can take this and tie it into what we're teaching it would be great. Because I saw it in the third unit, we did um, it was science. And it was using nonfiction text. And it correlated right with our science that we were teaching - electricity. And the kids just grasped it, they were like in awe. And I think they got double the knowledge, you know like from two lessons. And they really did great with that lesson.

Terri also saw the connections between the reading program and the functional grammar lessons:

I started doing the [lessons] in my mini lessons for *Daily 5*, like the text features. Like character traits, a lot of it was stuff that we do deal with in the *CAFE* and stuff. So I mean we do some it. The hardest part I think was getting used to the terms; participant, circumstance, process, connectors. Cause I'm not used to those terms.

***Martin Elementary School.*** Lisbeth, who teaches fourth grade at Martin, was frustrated by what she saw as a duplication of teaching reading strategies:

The challenge is trying to insert always *Daily 5* into functional grammar. The strategies are the same, but different naming. I have no problem when I'm teaching functional grammar to refer to a strategy and embed this, make it embedded between them. The challenge is creating the separation of time that is we are forced to do. Well functional grammar is teaching reading and comprehension and all of that. Why do I need to separate . . . the time, allocate another an hour and a half just for *Daily 5* strategies? That's the challenge I'm facing.

Sophie teaches third grade at Martin. She found that she could incorporate the functional grammar activities into her writing instruction:

I'm fitting it in to writing. Actually the last unit was pretty good because I made it science/writing, because we had been learning about the earth layers and the earth.

Because if you follow the *Daily 5*, and mini lessons, you can't go, go for an hour.

Murray, the principal at Martin, agreed:

The focus became clearer to them what to do with, especially with writing now. And it seems like they have a sense of direction. [There was] a time when we struggled with writing in the district, as a whole district you know where to go, the teachers who are attending the functional grammar felt like they had a purpose, they know what to do.

***Walters Elementary School.*** Pam, a principal experienced in functional grammar implementation, said of her willingness to try whatever approach best worked at her school:

The focus is literacy, we want to develop oral language skills; we want to develop students reading and writing skills. And it all fits together under this umbrella that's called best practice; just strategies that work. So whatever they are, and um teachers have the, the freedom in their classroom to try different things. We're also trying project based learning, you know in some classroom that's the emphasis is project based learning. In some classrooms, it's functional grammar.

Beverly, a second grade teacher, admitted she had struggled with the timing of the lessons and fitting them into the structure of the *Daily 5* and its mini-lesson format:

My only problem was when do you fit it in? So that was a struggle, like do I put it in Writers Workshop, or *Daily 5*, which takes most of our time. You try and do mini

lessons but you cannot do mini lessons with such lessons like functional grammar because it's a very continuous lesson. So that was my only struggle.

Judy, a third grade teacher, indicated that the lessons connected to what her class had been studying.

So for instance this last one they were working on was science-related text. And it was about earthquakes and erosion. It was totally aligned with what we were doing. And I felt like it became more successful because the kids were, they felt like they [were] already were involved.

**Summary of fit with district literacy initiatives.** Only one district-level administrator was interviewed for this study, Nancy, the Associate Superintendent for Elementary Education. Nancy had some knowledge about functional grammar and the scope and goals of the project. She had, in fact, attended a workshop in functional grammar in a previous role before becoming the Associate Superintendent for the Daly Schools. She commented positively on seeing the student work posted in schools as a result of some of the lessons and activities, but did not attend any of the workshops herself. Nancy was deeply committed to the implementation of the district's reading program and the new writing framework and thought that "the functional grammar fits into this plan as a set of strategies or procedures that will help children understand the structure of text so that their comprehension is increased." She expressed no deep commitment on the part of the district to supporting the implementation of functional grammar in elementary classrooms. Most of the teachers expressed frustration with so many district literacy initiatives and, as functional grammar was not a district mandate, it was unclear where she stood on its implementation.

Principals spoke more highly of the functional grammar initiative than the district administrator. All four of the principals were in their first year at their respective schools. Two of the four principals were newly assigned to their schools during the 2012-2013 school year and inherited their schools' participation in the Functional Grammar project. The other two principals had initiated their original schools' participation but had been transferred to other schools in the 2012-2013 school year. In fact, Murray had opted his school, Walters Elementary, into the Functional Grammar program, been transferred to Martin Elementary, and then worked with the university team to have two of the Martin teachers and both ICs attend the workshops during the 2012-2013 school year. Table 4.5 illustrates the movement of the principals during this time period.

Despite their vocal support of the Functional Grammar project, none of the four principals participated in the workshops beyond briefly dropping in in some instances (field notes). Principals viewed their role as facilitating the participation of classroom teachers and coaches in the project, by allowing them attend the workshops and work together to implement the lessons and activities. Nevertheless, the teachers and coaches knew their principals supported the work and did not see their lack of involvement as a factor in the implementation. However, the principals at Bailey and Fitzgerald were new administrators and new to functional grammar. Their articulation of the fit of functional grammar within the district literacy framework was not as clearly stated as was that of the principals of Martin and Walters, who while new to their buildings, were experienced administrators and had been involved in the professional development for multiple years previous to this study.

**Teachers' experiences and perceptions.** Teachers' experiences with the functional grammar concepts, lessons and activities varied, as did the perceived effects of the activities on

Table 4.5

*Assignment of Administrators in Participating Schools*

Administrator	2012-2013	Prior to 2012-2013
Mike	Bailey	Walters (Assistant Principal)
Jeanne	Fitzgerald	NA
Murray	Martin	Walters
Pam	Walters	Bailey

their students. Classroom teachers reported that their knowledge and understanding of functional grammar increased as they attended the workshops, but some continued to struggle with the relevance and complexity of the concepts. Joanne, the university PI, said:

I guess we've also learned that teachers are really enjoying doing this work when they're able to do it with confidence. That it, it helps them engage their students in new ways and interaction and talk in the classroom. And they get a talk and writing from the kids that surprises them with how elaborated or deep or it shows them new things about the children by being able to have them talk about the language and how it's working.

Teachers related similar experiences. The five teachers who had participated in the workshops for more than one year identified themselves as more comfortable teaching the lessons.

***Bailey Elementary School.*** Maggie was a fourth grade teacher in her first year with her own classroom. She admitted feeling “just so lost with the lessons” sometimes. She found the solution to be “to follow as much as I can by the lesson plans. I feel like I have to in order to you

know for me to understand it the best that I can.” She looked forward to a time “when I build more experience in the field so you know, the students will understand more.” Yet despite her feelings of insecurity about the lessons, Maggie reported that her students seemed to be applying some of the content and vocabulary previous lessons:

My students will actually be the ones to bring that up or you know they’ll make that connection. Or sometimes I’ll make that connection for them and then they’ll sort of like spring off of that. So I mean it does come up.

Barbara was also a first year third grade classroom teacher who found the lessons to be “kind of confusing.” A member of the university design team had used her classroom to pilot the first few lessons. Barbara was responsible for implementing the next one and found that she needed to provide additional background lessons “because my students at least this year, I feel like they need extra help when you’re explaining things to them.” Barbara explained, “I’m not worried about if they understand the, the language of functional grammar, it’s do they understand the concept? Are they, are they actually learning what I’m trying to teach them?”

Beth reported seeing her students engaging with the text in exciting ways:

We always tend to want to control the class whether we realize it or not, but if you give them that freedom. And, and I’ve kind of what I’ve seen in functional grammar how they’ve always loved, you know can we work in groups cause in fourth grade we did groups and so on so forth. So now all of the sudden they have the independence, they have the responsibility, they feel like you know I’m going to contribute something to the learning environment of this classroom. And it does wonders you know.

***Fitzgerald Elementary School.*** Colleen, a third grade teacher, was in her second year of participation in the Functional Grammar workshops. She felt that “we didn’t always understand

the first year what the main objective was, they [university team] have helped this year a lot to clarify that for us.” Her understanding led her to know when to “obsess about supporting [students more deeply] and when to let go,” allowing her more control over the timing and implementation of the functional grammar lessons.

Jan, a fourth grade teacher was in her first year of participation in the Functional Grammar project but was already beginning to see the benefits. She said:

I have to tell you I was really against it at the beginning of the year with everything that they’re were trying to implement with the pacing guides and how we had to follow the structure. I thought when am I going to fit this in. Well, actually I was really surprised because I mean especially the informational [lessons] followed our science so you could you know cross curriculum through that. The writing and the writing workshop really followed the common core standards in what I was teaching. So it really helped me become a better writing instructor. But I’m like you know what I sort of get it, and I see that a lot of my students are getting it. And I’m implementing it in other areas of my curriculum.

There were several teachers who specifically mentioned that they felt that the lessons were too difficult for their students who were just learning English. This was particularly true of the teachers who worked with the students with the most limited English. These teachers heavily modified the lessons to meet the needs of their students. Jamie said:

I think this is not geared towards ELL [students] to be honest. It is way over their heads and the, just the planning like I said, and the preparation for each lesson takes a lot of work. And we have so much on our plates.

Jane agreed. “It’s above their heads, like I’m sorry we don’t talk about claim, evidence and counter arguments, and things like that in third grade. It’s above what they’re capable of.” She went on,

I think as far as language and things in our district, our kids seemed to respond better to *SIOP* strategies. We’ve been trained it till we’re, you know, blue in the face, and we get it. But I think those strategies that I use in my classroom they seem to grasp onto better than these.

Colleen, however, connected the improvements she saw in students’ writing directly to the functional grammar lessons:

We don’t really assess how much they apply what they do or don’t know, but I have to tell you my kids’ opinion piece for the district third marking period was I would say, and I’ve been doing this a long time, two or three times higher.

***Martin Elementary School.*** Lisbeth made a statement about her own learning in the workshops:

The biggest factor for me to implement those lessons, the whole concept of functional grammar, the workshops help me a lot, helped me as a teacher. If you look at, this is my own interpretation. Functional grammar to me is not a set of activities, take and go ahead implement. Functional grammar helped me tackle the, the unit. So I am the, the one who mostly benefited from functional grammar because I am carrying those what they taught me in all subject areas. So I don’t see the activity as much as much I am noticing the growth in my knowledge.

Sophie also spoke positively about the functional grammar implementation:

I like the fact that there's actually set goals; okay this is what we're going to learn and this is how you can use this in other texts. I thought the functional grammar was a good experience. I felt like they [the students] learned a lot this year.

**Walters Elementary School.** Alina, a second grade teacher, identified the most important factor in implementing the functional grammar activities in her classroom as “understanding it.” She spoke of the difficulties in changing the names of grammatical terms and her perspective on teaching literacy:

. . . changing your thinking, like processes, turning up, turning down, kind of getting use to the new vocabulary words. You know it's a claim; I still want to call it an opinion. I know I should not, but I still want to, that's just like 30 years of me learning opinion. You know it's hard just understanding it yourself and then trying to implement it and teach it to somebody else. Because if you don't understand yourself it's going to be so hard to go ahead.

Beverly was pleased with her students' responses to the functional grammar activities: I think the kids truly benefit from it. You know they just seen, they started looking outside the box. So they were noticing more things about the authors, about the characters, rather just the story line. So it was, it goes more in depth.

Beverly was confident enough about her implementation of the functional grammar lessons that she used one of the lessons for her evaluation observation. But, as she also admitted, “Pam [principal] is really for functional grammar. It was very interactive, the kids got the concept. So it was, it was pretty good.”

Judy, a third grade teacher, also spoke positively of the functional grammar lessons, “some of the lessons you know absolutely love and the kids you know are really interested in

them.” It was her second year of participation in the Functional Grammar workshops, but she had changed grades, moving from teaching second to third grade. Judy appeared confident in her knowledge and skills in functional grammar, but admitted that for her:

Personally, trial and error is really important. It would’ve been really cool if I had taught second grade again this year to use what I had done last year and apply it this year. But I was bumped to third so like that for me is important because I learn through my own practice.

**Summary of teachers’ experiences and perceptions.** Overall, most of the teachers had a positive experience with the professional development in functional grammar. The teachers at Bailey, Martin and Walters spoke more confidently about their understanding of and experiences with the functional grammar concepts than did the teachers at Fitzgerald. Although, for all but two of them this was their first year of participation in the project, they projected a positive attitude about their developing knowledge and were excited about the learning they saw in their students. At Bailey, functional grammar had been in place for three years, so even teachers in their first year of participation had the advantage of others in their school who had participated previously. At Martin and Walters, the principals had previously participated in the workshops and implementation. The teachers at Fitzgerald did not have either of these two advantages in place and spoke more negatively about the difficulty in implementing the lessons and the effects they saw in their students.

### **Interaction of Factors**

The findings from this study indicate that the factors that affected the implementation of the functional grammar activities in the classrooms of the Daly teachers interacted to produce changes in how the teachers designed activities in other texts beyond those that they were given

in the workshops. Since all of the classroom teachers interviewed for this study indicated that they had implemented the lessons given to them during the professional development workshops in their classrooms, the primary indicator of whether the functional grammar concepts were actually integrated into classroom instruction was the teachers' responses to the interview question, "Have you used the functional grammar activities with texts other than those that you were given in the workshops?" Ten of the thirteen classroom teachers interviewed for this study answered yes to this question and described how they had done so. Most teachers related instances of using the FG terms and concepts in other narrative texts, including Beverly, a second grade teacher at Walters, who said:

Yes I have, like now a lot of times the kids when they're saying, like when we talk about the authors point of view, they will say; oh he's telling us he's showing us, like it's a process. So it's really rewarding when you see them say that because you know that oh they still have that concept. And then they really enjoyed the attitude line.

Lisbeth described how she used the concepts and terms in other subject areas, including science and math:

There is [sic] a lot of pronouns used in science. And in science also I did tell the students; let's look at the participants as characters, just like any other character. But I tweaked it a little bit, I said now who is doing the work and who is receiving the work? In math I have used it, it became more and more like my daily interactive with them to use those vocabulary and let's, let's pay attention to this work. Today I have noticed another progress, I have the connector sheet by my desk, and I have one by the board so I can always uh look at it and cheat a little bit. And a child mentioned when as a connector today. And I said right it is a connector, but let's not just say it's a name; a connector,

Table 4.6

*Interaction of Factors in Implementing FG Concepts*

Name	School	Years of Participation in FG workshops	Previous experience with FG	Worked with another teacher	Support	Fit with literacy initiatives	Saw positive effects on students	Applied FG to other texts
Beth	Bailey	2	yes	no	Co-teaching	yes	yes	yes
Maggie	Bailey	1	no	yes	Co-teaching	NA	yes	yes
Barbara	Bailey	1	no	no	planning	no	no	no
Colleen	Fitzgerald	2	no	yes	planning	no	yes	yes
Jane	Fitzgerald	2	no	no	Co-teaching	no	yes	yes
Jan	Fitzgerald	1	no	yes	Co-teaching	yes	yes	yes
Terri	Fitzgerald	1	no	no	Co-teaching	yes	yes	yes
Jamie	Fitzgerald	2	no	no	Co-teaching	NA	no	no
Lisbeth	Martin	1	yes	no	none	no	yes	yes
Sophie	Martin	1	no	no	none	no	yes	yes
Alina	Walters	1	no	yes	planning	no	no	no
Beverly	Walters	1	no	yes	Co-teaching	NA	yes	yes
Judy	Walters	2	no	yes	planning	NA	yes	yes

let's look; what does it mean here? Is it a condition? Is it a time? What does it tell me? So it's progressing.

An analysis of the responses (Table 4.6) shows that the single most important factor that determined whether a teacher applied the functional grammar concepts in other texts used in the classroom was her identification of positive effects on the learning of the students in her class. Every teacher who was interviewed who related positive learning experiences among her students also answered positively to the question about using FG concepts in other texts. Colleen said:

I have to tell you my kids opinion piece for the district third marking period was I would say, and I've been doing this a long time, two or three times, like the percent, like when you get 20% that's pretty good, I'd say I had as many as 60, 70% of the kids papers that I felt have really strong structure. And I attribute it to this because we had done the Yasmeen piece and they, I don't know if they consciously or unconsciously, but in their writing they connected what they'd learned in that piece to the district prompt. And I had a lot of threes and fours [on a 4-point rubric], which I would not have anticipated.

Another factor that appeared to influence teachers' application of FG concepts in other texts was the type of support they received from an IC or RT in their schools. All but one of the teachers who indicated that they had used the concepts in other texts, had received support in the form of co-teaching with a support person (IC or RT). Only one of the teachers who replied in the negative had received co-teaching support. Jamie, a third grade teacher at Fitzgerald, replied:

That informational nonfiction part of the functional grammar, it's very difficult for them. The vocabulary is very difficult for them. A lot of the functional grammar lessons are based on that they have all this prior and background knowledge, and they don't.

All three of the teachers who answered that they had not applied the FG concepts and terms to other texts they were teaching in their classrooms did not see the FG workshop content

to be a good fit with the other literacy initiatives in the district. Four of the ten teachers who self-reported that they had extended the concepts also did not see the FG content as fitting well with the current district literacy initiatives. Four teachers did see the content meshing well into their literacy instruction and two did not directly address that topic. Joanne, one of the university PIs for the Functional Grammar Project said the university team knew that

The work really needs to be situated in service of goals the teacher and district already have. That if you're going to come in with something that doesn't connect in any way with what they see as their own plan and program you're not going to be successful. So that's been our number one core thing. And so for example using the curricular materials of the district, looking at the district guidelines for what the topics are supposed to be in science before we chose and develop materials. Looking at what the writing expectations are for the district across the year and adjusting our assignments and materials to be supportive of, of achieving those things.

I think in almost [all the workshops] we've motivated [teachers by] what we're asking them to do by connecting it in some way with some higher goal, whether it's the common core or the district standards, the writing standards. And that's been prompted by the teachers and coaches who've said to us you know this really needs to, here's what we have to do this year and this needs to fit. And we've been really explicit about showing how we're trying to do that. So I think that is the number one thing; make it work in service of what teachers already want to do.

Although teachers reported positively on the opportunities to work with other classroom teachers at their schools, it did not appear to be a factor in whether or not they implemented FG concepts in other texts. Two of the three teachers who reported that they did not extend the

concepts beyond the lessons they were given at the workshops did not work with other teachers at their buildings; one of these did have that opportunity. Of the ten teachers who responded extending the concepts into other texts, five reported working with at least one other teacher and the other five did not.

The data obtained in this study shows that while the Functional Grammar project incorporated most of the features of effective professional development into the design of the workshops and implementation, there were factors outside the control of the university team that affected the implementation of the content. These factors resulted from decisions made at the the district and school level, as well as individual choices made by teachers according to the cohesion of the new learning in functional grammar with their existing knowledge and beliefs about teaching literacy. Ultimately, it was teachers' experiences with the functional grammar strategies and lessons and the effects they saw on the students in their classrooms that encouraged them to incorporate functional grammar into their classroom literacy practices.

## **Chapter 5 – Discussion and Analysis**

The professional development in functional grammar incorporated many of the features of effective professional development, as defined by the research (Desimone et al. 2002; Garet et al. 2001). Yet, despite the effectiveness of the design, the implementation at the Daly schools was uneven and inconsistent. This research study highlights many of the reasons underlying this finding. There was inconsistent support at schools, including support by coaches, other teachers and administrators. In some cases, this lack of support led teachers to misunderstandings or inability to see where the functional grammar concepts fit into their existing literacy instruction. The revolving-door of participants, especially among classroom teachers, and the lack of true involvement of the principals and district administrators did not help teachers align their learning with the reality of instruction in their classrooms. Yet, ten of the thirteen teachers involved in the study reported that they had applied their knowledge of functional grammar to additional narrative and informational texts used in their instruction for reading, science and social studies. These ten teachers found value in the professional development and found ways to continue the application of their learning beyond the requirements of the university development team.

### **Professional Development Features with Significant Impact**

My observations of the Functional Grammar workshops, as well as interviews with the participants and the university team members revealed that the professional development that was provided during this study incorporated many of the features of effective professional development identified in the research. Collective participation, duration and coherence were the

features that had the most impact on the implementation of the functional grammar content. Attempts were made by the university design team to include these features, but decisions made at the district and school levels sometimes impeded the development of these features. At only one school, Fitzpatrick Elementary, did entire grade level teams participate in the functional grammar workshops. Teachers at the other three schools were the only participants at their grade level, with the exception of two second grade teachers at Walters Elementary.

### **Lack of Fit with District Literacy Initiatives**

Daly teachers had to navigate multiple competing literacy initiatives as they implemented the functional grammar lessons and activities. A lack of vision on the part of the district and schools about the Functional Grammar project and their failure to communicate how this content could be integrated into existing literacy structures and mandates produced confusion among the teachers and coaches who participated. Some of this can be attributed to the project not being a district-initiated activity. Some teachers were overwhelmed by what they were already being asked to accomplish in their limited time for classroom instruction.

Coherence, as a feature of professional development, appeared in the lack of fit with the other district literacy initiatives. Just as Penuel et al. (2007) found, the closer that professional development content matches what teachers are already doing, the greater the likelihood that it will be implemented. While the university team addressed and responded to teachers' needs for their own learning into the Functional Grammar workshops, many of the classroom teachers, ICs, and RTs expressed frustration with fitting the lessons and activities into the existing district structures and mandated pacing guides for reading and writing instruction. Only one of the principals identified this as a major concern, but this could indicate their lack of involvement at the level of classroom implementation. Some of the frustrated teachers and coaches grasped the

relevance of the concepts, but struggled with the timing. Others worried about how the new terms (i.e., participant instead of noun, process instead of verb) might impact student scores on high stakes assessments. The university team may have established teacher expectations with the participants early in the workshops, but not during my observations so that data is not contained in my field notes.

The teachers who participated in the Functional Grammar project struggled with the multiple demands for classroom time due to the new pacing charts for reading and writing instruction. The more closely they perceived the new learning in functional grammar as a match with what they are already doing, the greater the likelihood that they would incorporate their new learning into classroom practices.

### **Coaching and Administrator Support**

The support that was provided in the schools, despite including coaches in the form of ICs and RTs, was uneven. Some coaches provided modeling and co-teaching of the functional grammar lessons, while others merely answered questions. Teachers were also isolated in some schools, by being the only teacher participating at a grade level. In some cases, teachers sought support from external sources, including from members of the university development team and, in one case, a teacher in another school, for assistance with incorporating the functional grammar lessons into their instruction. Some coaches engaged the teachers they supported in conversations about the implementation of the functional grammar lessons and activities. Teachers commented on this support and acknowledged it as helpful. Therefore, the most important role some coaches may have played may have been to continue the functional grammar discussions established in the workshop environment with the teachers in their schools as they applied the functional grammar learning in their classrooms. The continued discussions

offered teachers, both classroom and non-classroom, opportunities for rich conversation and collaborative discussion about implementing the functional grammar lessons and activities within the specific classrooms in the schools, as described in the research on discourse communities by Putnam & Borko (2000). Knowledge of functional grammar was distributed among persons in different roles, classroom teacher, IC and RT. In some schools, coaches were critical to supporting this process of integrating the new knowledge with the existing instructional practices of the teachers in their schools.

Research has established that district and school level leadership are critical to changes in classroom teaching practices (Datnow, 2005). There was little involvement of the school and district administrators in the Functional Grammar Project in the Daly schools. In interviews, almost all of the teachers mentioned the issue of cohesion in regards to the fit of the functional grammar work with the district literacy initiatives. Further support of district and school-level administrators may have eased this concern. Teachers, ICs and RTs assumed responsibility for the implementation of the project activities and its continued implementation when they saw the positive effects on student learning.

### **Complexity of Learning**

Functional grammar and its associated lessons and activities are a complex innovation because of the degree of change they represent from current classroom instruction. Functional grammar theory and terms are not taught in undergraduate or graduate teacher education programs. Unless a teacher has a background in linguistics, functional grammar is entirely new learning. Implementation of the functional grammar lessons required deep knowledge, along with changes in the behaviors of the teachers. Skills and competencies can be changed during professional development, but real change requires changes in beliefs (Richardson, 1996). It is

unclear whether the Functional Grammar project changed teacher beliefs. However, as teachers gained confidence in teaching the strategies, they were more likely to incorporate functional grammar into their classroom practices. Close interaction and support from both other teachers and instructional coaches and administrators were necessary for the implementation of new professional learning to occur. As this was not a district initiative, but rather one that individual schools engaged in voluntarily, this alignment with district goals was not always possible.

Teacher perceptions of the effects of the lessons on students also influenced their willingness to incorporate the functional grammar strategies into their instructional practices. As teachers saw their students responding to the lessons and interacting with the texts in new ways, many began to see the value in implementing the functional grammar lessons. Several teachers noted that their students were the ones who began to apply the previously taught terms and activities in subsequent texts, even without being prompted.

### **Teachers' Perceptions about Student Learning**

The findings from this study indicate that the features of effective professional development and the self-reported factors that affected the implementation of the functional grammar activities in the classrooms of the Daly teachers interacted to produce changes in how the teachers designed activities in other texts. Since all of the classroom teachers interviewed for this study indicated that they had implemented the lessons given to them during the professional development workshops in their classrooms as requested by the university development team, the primary indicator of whether the functional grammar concepts were actually integrated into classroom instruction was the teachers' responses to a question about the application of functional grammar concepts in other texts. This question was a crude proxy for the idea of changes to classroom literacy instruction but served as a vehicle for teachers to reveal their

internalization of the concepts and their ability to apply them to new texts. It also gave information about how teachers valued the use of functional grammar in their classrooms. Since teachers were given the lessons and activities to use by the university team, the only opportunity to determine whether or not teachers could apply their potential new knowledge was through this question.

Desimone et al. (2002) defined coherence as how closely the professional development aligns with teachers' expectations and goals for their own learning, as well as their goals for their students. In this study, the willingness to apply the functional grammar concepts to other texts was most often supported by a teacher's perceptions about how beneficial they were to student learning. All ten of the thirteen classroom teachers who reported a positive effect of the functional grammar strategies on their students' learning also reported that they were applying the new learning to additional texts in reading, science and/or social studies in their classrooms. Teachers changed their instructional practices when they implemented the functional grammar lessons and activities and the practices were continued when teachers saw they were beneficial to their students' learning. This is consistent with research that often changes in practices occur prior to changes in beliefs (Richardson, 1994), especially in more traditional designs in which implementation of new strategies or programs is strongly suggested or even mandated, as they were in the Functional Grammar project. While it is impossible to determine conclusively, it appears that the changes in teacher practices to include the functional grammar lessons and activities might have produced changes in teacher beliefs about the value of these concepts when they saw their students' responses to the activities.

**Limitations**

The study used a purposive sampling method that relied solely on self-reported accounts of implementation. All classroom teachers, resource teachers, instructional coaches, and district and school administrators, along with all members of the university design team were invited to be a part of the study. No attempts were made to conduct observations of the implementation of the functional grammar lessons and activities in classrooms, or to evaluate the level of implementation.

There was no attempt to match the participant questionnaire responses with the responses to the interview questions, so the opportunity to triangulate that data was lost. The questionnaires were designed only as a pilot instrument and were not coded in a way that allowed matching with the interview data.

**Future Research**

A study to include follow-up conversations with the participants in this study to discuss whether they have continued to use the concepts, lessons and activities in their classrooms would be useful for determining the sustainability of the application of the professional learning in functional grammar. As an administrator in a school participating in the project, I have anecdotal knowledge that some teachers are continuing to apply the functional grammar concepts in lessons a year after the conclusion of this study. Since all teachers claimed to have implemented the functional grammar lessons and activities they were given at the workshops, I used the proxy of application to other texts to define the integration of the activities into classroom practices. Future research into how the teachers applied the functional grammar concepts to other texts they used to instruct students would determine if this was an appropriate proxy.

The school district and schools that were the sites for this study were in a period of change regarding the newly-imposed mandatory adoption of pacing guides for reading and writing instruction. Teachers were also still learning to fully implement the reading structures of *Daily 5* and *CAFE* and the newly-developed writing program. Future research is needed to determine the impact of competing literacy initiatives on the implementation of new learning from professional development workshops.

It was clear from the results of this study that most teachers, coaches and administrators saw the value of the functional grammar work with their students. Teachers shared stories about the excitement they saw as their students interacted with texts and the deeper understandings that resulted. However, only the teachers' anecdotal data exists about the value of the implementation of the concepts on improving student achievement in reading and writing. For functional grammar to become a part of literacy instruction in a much expanded form, as well as included in teacher reading preparation programs, a quantitative research study is needed to examine its effects on student achievement.

### **Significance**

This study adds to the body of research on effective professional development and teacher change by identifying factors that affected the implementation of the content in the classrooms of the participating teachers. The factors identified include the competing initiatives in the Daly Public schools, the supports that were available to teachers as they worked to integrate the content into their classroom practices, the lack of collective participation, or isolation of the teachers at some schools and the teachers' perceptions of the effects of the functional grammar strategies on their students' reading comprehension and writing performance. Cohesion was found to be especially impactful, both as a negative factor in the

lack of fit with the other district initiatives and as a positive factor, in the perceptions teachers had of the effects of the implementation on their students' learning. Teachers' expectations for their students' learning was integral to the continued application of the functional grammar lessons in other texts in teachers' classrooms. Although Garet et al. (2001) and Desimone et al. (2002) did not assign weight to the features of professional development to show added significance, this study found that coherence was a factor in teachers' implementation of the professional development content.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

This study provided an in-depth look at the implementation of professional development content in elementary literacy instruction in four schools in one school district. It offers some lessons that districts and developers of professional development may want reflect on as they design effective learning opportunities for teachers, especially those that will lead to changes in classroom practices. Three recommendations for designing professional development can be made from this study:

**Recommendation I.** A deep understanding of the content of the professional development and a firm commitment need to be obtained at the district and school levels when districts engage teachers in professional learning. Permission to conduct the workshops is not the same as commitment. An understanding of how the content fits into the existing curricula structure needs to be developed and articulated at the district and school levels prior to the professional development sessions. Frequent and ongoing discussions may lead to improved communication about the expectations for implementation of the professional development content into classroom practices that will maximize its effectiveness and provide guidance for teachers of where and how to fit it into their existing instruction.

**Recommendation II.** District and school administrators show they value the content of the professional development by consistently attending and participating in professional development workshops. This allows schools and districts to gain an understanding of the professional development concepts that will help them support their teachers in their implementation of the content. More active involvement with the professional developers provides additional opportunities for communication regarding the selection of teachers and other staff for participation in the professional development activities.

**Recommendation III.** Decisions about the collective participation of grade level teams and classroom teachers within schools are critical for ensuring that teachers are not isolated in their attempts to implement professional development content. School-wide, or at least grade-wide, inclusion in the professional development improves implementation because teachers are able to count on peer support, in addition to other support provided in their schools. Coaching support may be an integral part of the implementation of any effective professional development, but peer support should not be discounted as an important element.

These three recommendations point to the need for jointly developing a vision for the outcomes of effective professional development between a school district and/or schools and their professional development partners. Complex learning takes time and the support of district and school level leadership to become established practice. The professional development in functional grammar provided by the university was valued by teachers and contributed to teachers' knowledge of reading instruction, but its sustainability in classroom instruction may be in jeopardy as schools move on to the next best thing in education.

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## **Appendix A – Phase One (Pilot Study)**

### **Consent to Participate in a Research Study**

#### **“Implementation of Functional Grammar Strategies in Elementary Classrooms”**

**Principal Investigator:** Martha Adler, Ph. D., University of Michigan-Dearborn

**Co-Investigator:** Ross Groover, Doctoral Student, University of Michigan-Dearborn

#### **Study Invitation and Goals**

My name is Ross Groover and I am a doctoral student at the University of Michigan-Dearborn. I invite you to participate in a research study exploring the implementation of functional grammar strategies in elementary classrooms in Daly Public Schools. This study will look at both the implementation of the strategies and the factors that influence the implementation of the strategies in classrooms.

#### **Description of Participant Involvement**

Participants will be recruited from the schools that are currently involved in professional development in Functional Grammar with [. . .] (identifying information removed). Participants may include teachers, literacy coaches and principals from these schools. If you agree to be a part of the study, you will be asked to complete a survey, participate in an interview, or both.

#### **Benefits**

Although you may not directly benefit from being in this study, others may benefit because your participation may help us understand what factors influence the implementation of strategies introduced in professional development workshops.

#### **Risks and Discomforts**

There are no risks associated with this study. Research participants may discontinue their involvement at any time.

#### **Confidentiality**

We plan to publish the results of this study, but will not include any information that would identify you. There are some reasons why people other than the researchers may need to see information you provided as part of the study. This includes organizations responsible for

making sure the research is done safely and properly, including the University of Michigan Institutional Review Board.

### **Storage and Future Use of Data**

To keep your information safe, data will be kept in a locked University file cabinet. All data will be destroyed three years after the conclusion of the study.

### **Voluntary Nature of the Study**

Participating in this study is completely voluntary. Even if you decide to participate now, you may change your mind and stop at any time. If you decide to withdraw from the study, only the data you have given us before you decide to stop will be used in the study.

### **Contact Information**

If you have questions about this research, including questions about scheduling or findings of this study, please contact:

Ross Groover, EdD student

Martha Adler, PhD

rgroover@umd.umich.edu

madler@umd.umich.edu

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**Should you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or wish to obtain information, ask questions or discuss any concerns about this study with someone other than the researchers, please contact Debra Schneider in the IRB Administration Office, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, 1055 Administration Building, The University of Michigan-Dearborn, Evergreen Road, Dearborn, MI 48128-2406, 313-593-5468, email: [irb-dearborn@umd.umich.edu](mailto:irb-dearborn@umd.umich.edu)**

### **Consent**

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in the study. You will be given a copy of this document for your records and one copy will be kept with the study records. Be sure that questions you have about the study have been answered and that you understand what you are being asked to do. You may contact the researchers if you think of a question later.

I agree to participate in the study.

\_\_\_\_\_ Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_ Signature

\_\_\_\_\_ Principal Investigator

**Appendix B – Phase One (Pilot Study)**

## Questionnaire

1. Please indicate your professional role during the 2011-2012 school year:  
 Classroom Teacher       Resource Teacher       Interventionist/Coach (IC)  
 Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. If you checked Classroom Teacher, above, please indicate the grade you teach. If you teach multiple grades, please check all grades that you teach.  
 Kindergarten       1<sup>st</sup>    2<sup>nd</sup>    3<sup>rd</sup>    4<sup>th</sup>    5<sup>th</sup>
  
3. Please indicate the years of experience you have teaching this grade level, not including this year.  
 This is my first year at this grade level  
 1-2 years  
 3-4 years  
 More than 5 years
  
4. How many of the functional grammar workshops with the University of Michigan trainers have you attended THIS school year?

None       1       2       3       4 or more

5. Please indicate the number of functional grammar workshops with the University of Michigan team you have attended in previous years:

None       1       2       3       4 or more

6. Please indicate any other previous experience you have had with functional grammar activities BEFORE attending the workshops during THIS school year (check all that apply):

Observed activities in other classrooms

Overheard discussions of functional grammar at meetings or in the schools

Attended workshops about functional grammar facilitated by someone other than the University of Michigan team

Read a book, research articles, or other information about functional grammar

Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

7. Have you implemented or assisted with the implementation of any of the activities presented at the Functional Grammar workshops THIS school year in a classroom or classrooms at your school?

Yes (Please continue on to Question 7)

No (Thank you for completing this survey. You should not answer further questions.)

8. What was your role in implementing functional grammar activities? (please check all that apply)

Taught one or more lessons by myself

Taught one or more lessons with another teacher

Taught one or more lessons with the interventionist/coach

Taught one or more lessons with another educator (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

9. How did you prepare to implement the activities? (please check all that apply)

Planned with another teacher

Planned with the Interventionist/Coach

Planned alone

Planned with someone else (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

10. How important were the following factors in whether you were able to implement the activities? (Circle using a scale where 1= “not at all important” and 5= “very important.”)

	Not at all <span style="float: right;">Very</span> important <span style="float: right;">important</span>				
	1	2	3	4	5
a) Planning with another teacher	1	2	3	4	5
b) Planning with the Interventionist/Coach	1	2	3	4	5
c) Opportunity to teach with another teacher	1	2	3	4	5
d) Opportunity to teach with the Interventionist/Coach	1	2	3	4	5
e) Support from my administrator	1	2	3	4	5

11. Please select which was the most important factor in whether you were able to implement the functional grammar activities. (Choose ONE)

- Planning with another teacher
- Planning with the Interventionist/Coach
- Opportunity to teach with another teacher
- Opportunity to teach with the Interventionist/Coach
- Support from my administrator

12. What additional factors or support do you feel would help you implement functional grammar activities in your classroom?

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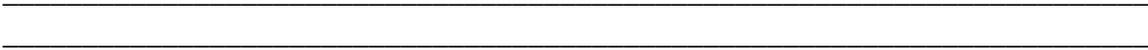
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THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE!

**Appendix C – Phase One (Pilot Study)**  
**Interview Questions – Coaches**

*(Interviewer reads bolded script.)*

**As an instructional coach, you work with classroom teachers every day to improve instruction to meet the needs of all learners. I would like to ask you some questions about the changes in literacy practices you may have seen as a result of the professional development workshops that you and the teachers from your school have attended in functional grammar.**

**I'll be audio-recording and taking notes during today's session so that I don't miss anything that you say. Do you have any objections?** (If yes, then proceed. If no, then you'll need to honor the request.)

**Please think about the classrooms in which you work when you respond to these questions.**

1. What is your role in supporting teachers' implementation of functional grammar activities in the classroom?
  - a. Have the professional development workshops in functional grammar affected your role as a literacy coach? In what ways?
  
2. Tell me about any changes in instructional practices you have observed that you believe result from the professional development workshops teachers have attended in functional grammar?
  - a. When did you observe the changes?

- b. Can you directly relate them to the functional grammar professional development?
  - c. How often have you observed the instructional changes?
  - d. Which portions of the functional grammar workshops do you believe contributed most to the changes you have observed?
3. If you have not observed any changes, why do you think they have not occurred?
  - a. Did you expect changes?
  - b. What types of changes did you expect?
4. What further steps do you believe are necessary for changes in instructional practices to occur in all classrooms?

*(Interviewer)* **Thank you for allowing me to interview you today. Your answers will help us determine how teachers are implementing functional grammar activities in their classrooms, as well as give us additional information about your role as a factor that influences classroom implementation of the strategies you and the teachers learned in the functional grammar workshops.**

**Appendix D – Phase One (Pilot Study)****Interview Questions – Principals**

*(Interviewer reads bolded script.)*

**As an elementary principal, you have the opportunity to observe classroom teachers every day as they develop and implement instruction to meet the needs of all learners. I would like to ask you some questions about the changes in literacy practices you may have seen as a result of the professional development workshops that your coach and some teachers from your school have attended in functional grammar.**

**I'll be audio-recording and taking notes during today's session so that I don't miss anything that you say. Do you have any objections?** (If yes, then proceed. If no, then you'll need to honor the request.)

**Please think about the classrooms in your school when you respond to these questions.**

1. Have you attended any of the functional grammar workshops during the 2011-2012 school year? If so, how many? Have you attended any functional grammar workshops in previous school years?
2. What is your role in supporting teachers' implementation of functional grammar activities in the classroom?
3. How has your literacy coach supported the implementation of functional grammar strategies in the classrooms at your school?

4. Tell me about any changes in instructional practices you have observed that you believe result from the professional development workshops teachers have attended in functional grammar?
  - a. When did you observe the changes?
  - b. Can you directly relate them to the functional grammar professional development?
  - c. How often have you observed the instructional changes?
  - d. Which portions of the functional grammar workshops do you believe contributed most to the changes you have observed?
  
5. If you have not observed any changes, why do you think they have not occurred?
  - a. Did you expect changes?
  - b. What types of changes did you expect?
  
6. What further steps do you believe are necessary for changes in instructional practices to occur in all classrooms?

*(Interviewer)*

**Thank you for allowing me to interview you today. Your answers will help us determine how teachers are implementing functional grammar activities in their classrooms, as well as give us additional information about your role as a factor that influences classroom implementation of the strategies teachers learned in the functional grammar workshops.**

**Appendix E – Phase Two****The University of Michigan-Dearborn****INFORMED CONSENT**

Dear Educators,

You are invited to participate in a research study exploring the changes in literacy practices in elementary classrooms in Daly Public Schools. This study will look at both the implementation of strategies and activities presented in the functional grammar workshops and the factors that influence the implementation in classrooms.

Eligible participants are teachers, instructional coaches, resource teachers and principals and district administrators from the schools that are currently involved in professional development in Functional Grammar with [...] (identifying information removed), as well as the University presenters and team development members. If you agree to be a part of the study, you will be asked to participate in an interview or observation, or both. Your participation in this study is expected to take no more than four hours. No one activity is expected to last more than one hour.

At any time in the study, you may refuse to participate and discontinue your involvement. Your non-participation will have no effect on your participation in the workshops.

Only the principal investigator will have access to the data, which will be kept in a locked file cabinet during the entire time the study is being conducted. Individual identification is not required and no data will be directly linked to any one individual. You are welcomed and encouraged to ask the principal investigator questions about the research project at any time.

If you agree to participate in this study, please sign your name in the space provided; you will be given a copy of this consent form for you to keep. If you would like to learn the findings of this study, please email me at [rgroover@umd.umich.edu](mailto:rgroover@umd.umich.edu) and I will be happy to forward that information to you. Thank you for your participation in this study.

Ross C. Groover, Doctoral Candidate

University of Michigan-Dearborn

School of Education

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rgroover@umd.umich.edu

I, \_\_\_\_\_ verify that this study has been explained to me and that I voluntarily agree to participate. I understand that if I have any hesitation I reserve the right to discontinue my participation in the project at any time and may request that all information that has been provided be destroyed.

\_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

## Appendix F – Phase Two

### Interview Questions – Classroom Teachers

*(Interviewer reads bolded script.)*

**As a classroom teacher, you design literacy instruction to meet the needs of all learners. I would like to ask you some questions about your implementation of the functional grammar activities you may have tried as a result of the professional development workshops that you have attended in functional grammar.**

**I'll be audio-recording and taking notes during today's session so that I don't miss anything that you say. Do you have any objections?** (If yes, then proceed. If no, then you'll need to honor the request.)

1. What grade do you currently teach?
2. How many years of experience do you have as an elementary teacher?
3. How many Functional Grammar workshops have you attended in the 2012-2013 school year?
4. Have you attended any Functional Grammar workshops in previous school years?
5. Please describe any other previous experience with Functional Grammar activities before attending the workshops (i.e., observed activities in other classrooms, overheard discussions of Functional Grammar at meetings or in the schools, attended mini-workshops about Functional Grammar workshops).
6. Have you implemented any of the activities presented at the Functional Grammar workshops in your classroom? Which ones?

7. If you have implemented any of the activities, please indicate how you prepared for implementation?
8. Did you work with anyone else to implement any of the activities? Who?
9. What was the most important factor in whether you were able to implement the activities?
10. Have you used the Functional Grammar activities with texts other than those that you were given in the workshops?
11. What additional information or opportunities do you feel would help you implement functional grammar activities with additional texts in your classroom?

*(Interviewer)* **Thank you for allowing me to interview you today. Your answers will help us determine how teachers are implementing functional grammar activities in their classrooms, as well as give us additional information about your role as a factor that influences classroom implementation of the strategies you and the teachers learned in the functional grammar workshops.**

**Appendix G – Phase Two****Interview Questions – Coaches/Resource Teachers**

*(Interviewer reads bolded script.)*

**As an instructional coach or resource teacher, you work with classroom teachers every day to improve instruction to meet the needs of all learners. I would like to ask you some questions about the changes in literacy practices you may have seen as a result of the professional development workshops that you and the teachers from your school have attended in functional grammar.**

**I'll be audio-recording and taking notes during today's session so that I don't miss anything that you say. Do you have any objections?** (If yes, then proceed. If no, then you'll need to honor the request.)

**Please think about the classrooms in which you work when you respond to these questions.**

7. What has been your role in supporting teachers' implementation of functional grammar activities in the classroom?
8. Have the professional development workshops in functional grammar affected your role as a literacy coach? In what ways?
9. Tell me what you see teachers doing differently in their literacy practices that you believe result from the professional development workshops teachers have attended in functional grammar?
  - a. When did you observe the changes?
  - b. Can you directly relate them to the functional grammar professional development?

- c. How often have you observed the instructional changes?
  - d. Which portions of the functional grammar workshops do you believe contributed most to the changes you have observed?
10. What further steps do you believe are necessary for changes in instructional practices to occur in all classrooms?

*(Interviewer)* **Thank you for allowing me to interview you today. Your answers will help us determine how teachers are implementing functional grammar activities in their classrooms, as well as give us additional information about your role as a factor that influences classroom implementation of the strategies you and the teachers learned in the functional grammar workshops.**

**Appendix H – Phase Two**  
**Interview Questions – Principals**

*(Interviewer reads bolded script.)*

**As an elementary principal, you have the opportunity to observe classroom teachers every day as they develop and implement instruction to meet the needs of all learners. I would like to ask you some questions about the changes in literacy practices you may have seen as a result of the professional development workshops that your coach and some teachers from your school have attended in functional grammar.**

**I'll be audio-recording and taking notes during today's session so that I don't miss anything that you say. Do you have any objections?** (If yes, then proceed. If no, then you'll need to honor the request.)

**Please think about the classrooms in your school when you respond to these questions.**

1. Have you attended any of the functional grammar workshops during the 2012-2013 school year? If so, how many? Have you attended any functional grammar workshops in previous school years?
2. What supports are available for the teachers at your school who are participating in the functional grammar activities?
3. Tell me about what you see teachers doing differently in their classroom literacy practices that you believe result from the professional development workshops teachers have attended in functional grammar?
  - a. When did you observe the changes?
  - b. Can you directly relate them to the functional grammar professional development?

- c. How often have you observed the instructional changes?
  - d. Which portions of the functional grammar workshops do you believe contributed most to the changes you have observed?
4. Where do the functional grammar workshops and activities fit into your expectations of teachers' classroom literacy instruction?

*(Interviewer)*

**Thank you for allowing me to interview you today. Your answers will help us determine how teachers are implementing functional grammar activities in their classrooms, as well as give us additional information about your role as a factor that influences classroom implementation of the strategies teachers learned in the functional grammar workshops.**

**Appendix I – Phase Two****Interview Questions – Associate Superintendent**

*(Interviewer reads bolded script.)*

**As a district administrator you often have the opportunity to observe classroom teachers as they develop and implement instruction to meet the needs of all learners. I would like to ask you some questions about the district literacy initiatives that teachers may be involved in, as well as questions about your involvement in the functional grammar workshops and activities.**

**I'll be audio-recording and taking notes during today's session so that I don't miss anything that you say. Do you have any objections?** (If yes, then proceed. If no, then you'll need to honor the request.)

1. Have you attended any of the functional grammar workshops during the 2012-2013 school year? If so, how many? Have you attended any functional grammar workshops in previous school years?
2. Tell me about your understandings of the purposes and organization of the functional grammar workshops and activities.
3. Please describe the district's plan for professional development in literacy for elementary teachers? What is your role in developing the professional development teachers receive in literacy instruction?
4. Where does the functional grammar initiative fit into this plan?

5. What supports do you believe are available for the teachers, instructional coaches and principals at the schools which are participating in the functional grammar activities?
  
6. Have you observed any of the functional grammar activities taking place in schools? If so, please describe what you have seen.
  
7. What is the future of the functional grammar work in this district?

*(Interviewer)*

**Thank you for allowing me to interview you today. Your answers will help us determine how teachers are implementing functional grammar activities in their classrooms, as well as give us additional information about your role as a factor that influences classroom implementation of the strategies teachers learned in the functional grammar workshops.**

**Appendix J – Phase Two****Interview Questions – University Development Team**

*(Interviewer reads bolded script.)*

**As a member of the university development team you often have the opportunity to observe classroom teachers as they develop and implement instruction to meet the needs of all learners. I would like to ask you some questions about the development of the workshops and activities, as well as about your observations of what you see teachers and schools doing to implement the activities.**

**I'll be audio-recording and taking notes during today's session so that I don't miss anything that you say. Do you have any objections?** (If yes, then proceed. If no, then you'll need to honor the request.)

1. What has been your role in the development and presentation of the functional grammar workshops and activities during the 2010-2011, 2011-2012, and 2012-2013 school years?
2. Tell me about your understandings of the purposes and organization of the functional grammar workshops and activities. Have you met with any district level administrators about this work?
3. Have you had the opportunity to observe any implementation of the activities in elementary classrooms? If so, please describe what you have observed?
4. Have you had the opportunity to meet with any teachers, instructional coaches, and or principals to discuss classroom implementation of activities outside of the scheduled workshops? If so, please describe those meetings, including when, where and what was discussed.

5. What supports do you believe are available for the teachers, instructional coaches and principals at the schools which are participating in the functional grammar activities?
  
6. What is the future of the functional grammar work in this district?

*(Interviewer)*

**Thank you for allowing me to interview you today. Your answers will help us determine how teachers are implementing functional grammar activities in their classrooms, as well as give us additional information about your role as a factor that influences classroom implementation of the strategies teachers learned in the functional grammar workshops.**