

## About PCL

The Partnerships in Comprehensive Literacy (PCL) model began in 1998 at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock with the training of literacy coaches in seven high poverty schools in Arkansas (Dorn & Soffos, 2001; Dorn & Soffos, 2002). The model, which was originally called the Arkansas Comprehensive Literacy Model, was developed to redesign struggling schools by increasing student achievement. In 2006, the PCL model had been implemented in over 150 schools in ten states. The effectiveness of the model has been documented in numerous university reports. A study of 21 Arkansas sites (Dorn, Soffos, & Copes, 2002) revealed that reading achievement of first, second, and third grade students increased 20 percent or higher over previous years. From a total of 988 first graders, 80 percent were exceeding, meeting, or approaching the standard in reading during the 2000-2001 school year. By second grade, these same students had continued to make gains, increasing to 87 percent at or above proficient reading levels. For three continuous years, all sample schools, where the average poverty rate was 80%, had 84% of their first grade children exceeding or meeting proficiency levels in reading. An analysis of individual districts revealed that one district with a 99% poverty level had 100% of first graders scoring at proficiency on the district's standardized reading assessment (Dorn, Soffos, & Copes, 2002). Based on these findings, the Arkansas Reading First grant utilized many of the components of the PCL model in the state's Reading First application (Simon, 2002). In 2005, Dorn and colleagues conducted a follow-up study with second to fourth grade students from model classrooms in 40 PCL schools in four states. Model classrooms were purposely selected because they represented literacy demonstration sites where the PCL model was fully implemented. The participating schools ranged in poverty levels from 33% to 98%. The students' scores were classified according to four levels of competency: below basic, basic, proficient and advanced. The results revealed that 83% of second graders, 88% of third graders, and 84% of fourth graders scored at proficiency or above reading levels on district assessments. These findings suggest that the students in model classrooms are maintaining their gains over the years (Dorn, Soffos, & Behrend, 2005).

Two important concepts of the PCL model are replicability and sustainability. Toward this goal, all PCL sites are required to conduct annual evaluations that include studies of student achievement over time, including performance of subgroups on district and state assessments. During the past six years, over 300 individual school reports have documented the effectiveness of the PCL model for increasing student achievement. Many of the evaluations have examined sustained gains during implementation periods that ranged from two to six years. One important study was conducted in a Michigan district where the PCL model had been implemented for six years. From 2000-2006, Lower followed the progress of students from model classrooms as compared to a random sample of students from non-model classrooms. She used the reading data from the Michigan Education Assessment Profile (MEAP) to examine the sustainability of fifth grade students who began the program in first grade and remained in model classrooms each year. Although achievement growth was shown for both model and non-model classrooms in reading, 96% of the model classroom students were meeting or exceeding the standard as compared to 70% from the non-model classrooms. Furthermore, none of the students from model classrooms scored below the basic level on the state's assessment. The researcher reported similar results for the Michigan writing assessment, with students from model classrooms significantly outperforming students from non-model classrooms. A district evaluation from a California PCL site examined the reading achievement of English Language Acquisition (ELA) learners who had participated in model classrooms versus a random sample of students from non-model classrooms. The researchers found that the model classrooms had a significant influence on the reading achievement of ELA students. These diverse studies provide evidence of the effectiveness of the Partnerships in Comprehensive Literacy model as an effective school reform model.

The PCL model is based on seven principles of apprenticeship learning as originally described in *Apprenticeship in Literacy* (Dorn, French, & Jones, 1998). These principles include: 1) observation and responsive teaching; 2) modeling and coaching; 3) clear and relevant language for problem-solving; 4) adjustable and self-destructing scaffolds; 5) structured routines; 6) assisted and independent work; and 7) transfer of knowledge, skills, and strategies across changing contexts.

The seven principles of apprenticeship learning are aligned with the ten features of the PCL model. The features are interrelated and dynamic; allowing schools to use them as a tool for managing and coordinating comprehensive literacy changes. The ten features were first explained in *Results that Last: A Model for School Change* (Dorn & Soffos, 2003) and *Shaping Literate Minds: The Development of Self-Regulated Learners* (Dorn & Soffos, 2003); and they are described on the PCL website. The strength of the model resides in the school's ability to coordinate these features systematically, thus enabling continuous school improvement.

Feature 1: A Framework for Literacy uses a workshop approach for meeting the needs of all students, including an

integrated curriculum, inquiry-based learning, and differentiated instruction. Students acquire problem-solving strategies for working on tasks that increase in complexity and difficulty.

Feature 2: Coaching and Mentoring uses scaffolding techniques to assist teacher in taking on new learning, including a gradual release model for assuming responsibility (Dorn & Soffos, 2006).

Feature 3: Model Classrooms are transformed from traditional approaches of instruction into literacy labs that become settings for observing the model in action.

Feature 4: High Standards are based on state, national, and professional standards with benchmarks along the way to ensure that all children reach their highest potential.

Feature 5: Accountability includes a school-wide, seamless assessment system with multiple measures for evaluating success, such as formative and summative assessments, student portfolios, assessment walls, and school reports.

Feature 6: Interventions are targeted to meet the needs of diverse readers, including Reading Recovery for the lowest students in first grade and K-5 intervention groups for other needy students.

Feature 7: Professional Development is embedded into the school climate, including literacy team meetings, professional learning communities, teacher book clubs, peer observations, cluster visits, teacher conferences, and demonstration levels.

Feature 8: Well-Designed Literacy Plan is created for continuous improvement, including short and long-term goals as related to literacy with a benchmark of three years with a monitoring system.

Feature 9: Technology is used for communications, presentations, data collection, publications, and networking opportunities.

Feature 10: Spotighting and Advocacy are techniques for disseminating information on the model, including news releases, research articles, and presentations by school teams, and schools site visits.