

APS Reading First: Year One Evaluation 2003-2004

Debra Heath

Research, Development &
Accountability

The background of the slide is a solid blue color. In the lower right quadrant, there are several faint, concentric circles that resemble ripples in water, creating a decorative pattern.

Evaluation Questions

1. What activities were accomplished?
2. Was there evidence of changes in instructional practice?
3. Was there evidence of effective & sustainable leadership & management systems?
4. Did RF improve students' reading skills?
Reduce special education referrals?
5. What factors helped or hindered the implementation & effectiveness of APS RF?

Methods

- Teacher Survey
- IC questionnaire & group interview
- Cadre leader group interview
- CCT teacher survey
- Assessments (TPRI, KDPR, DIBELS, Terra Nova)
- Special education referrals
- Event & participation logs

Limitations

- Only 1 year of implementation
- Only 1 year of data.
- Assessments are not designed to answer outcome evaluation questions.
- Self-report biases inherent in teacher surveys.
- This report doesn't include OEL results.

1. What activities were accomplished?

District-level:

- 21 assessment trainings (DIBELS, TPRI).
- 9 Six Components trainings for IC's.
- 12 OEL events for 4 schools (technical assistance, training, observations).
- Ongoing coordination with IC's, cadre leaders, schools, district, PED.
- Ongoing assessment assistance to schools.

1. What activities were accomplished (cont'd)?

Instructional Coaches:

- Spent over 30 hours per week, on average, on RF-related activities.
- Most regular support to teachers was in technology use and data use.
- Also provided support re: explicit instruction, differentiated instruction, educator team facilitation, palm use, materials acquisition.

2. Was there evidence of changes in instructional practice?

Dimensions:

- a. Use of data to plan instruction & interventions.
- b. Explicit instruction in the 6 components.
- c. Use of small group differentiated instruction to address targeted needs.
- d. Use of appropriate instructional materials.

2a. Use of data to plan instruction & interventions.

Gap between teachers' perceptions of own practice & experts' perceptions:

- Teachers rated selves very high.
 - 96% said they used formative assessments for ongoing instructional decision-making.
- IC's and cadre leaders reported that teachers were good at *giving* assessments but not as skilled at *interpreting & using* results.

2a. Use of data to plan instruction & interventions (cont'd)

Staff reported that assessments made teachers:

- More *aware* of students' risk areas.
- More likely to employ interventions to address reading deficiencies. [quote]

2a. Use of data to plan instruction & interventions (cont'd)

“Before if teachers had a low reader, they’d say, ‘well I taught it.’ Teachers tend to go back and teach the same thing if it didn’t work the first time. But a lot of times kids need an entirely new strategy. With the TPRI and the trainings they feel they have a pocketful of strategies to try.” “Which they didn’t have before.” -- Instructional Coach

2a. Use of data to plan instruction & interventions (cont'd).

Aggregate reports & grade-level discussions of assessment results:

- Allowed teacher to identify & discuss successful instructional strategies.
- Motivated teachers to learn new techniques & curricula.
- Increased teachers' sense of accountability.
- Helped teachers become comfortable with public discussions about their instructional practices & deficiencies.

2b. Explicit instruction in the 6 components.

The amount of time teachers spent on reading instruction varied:

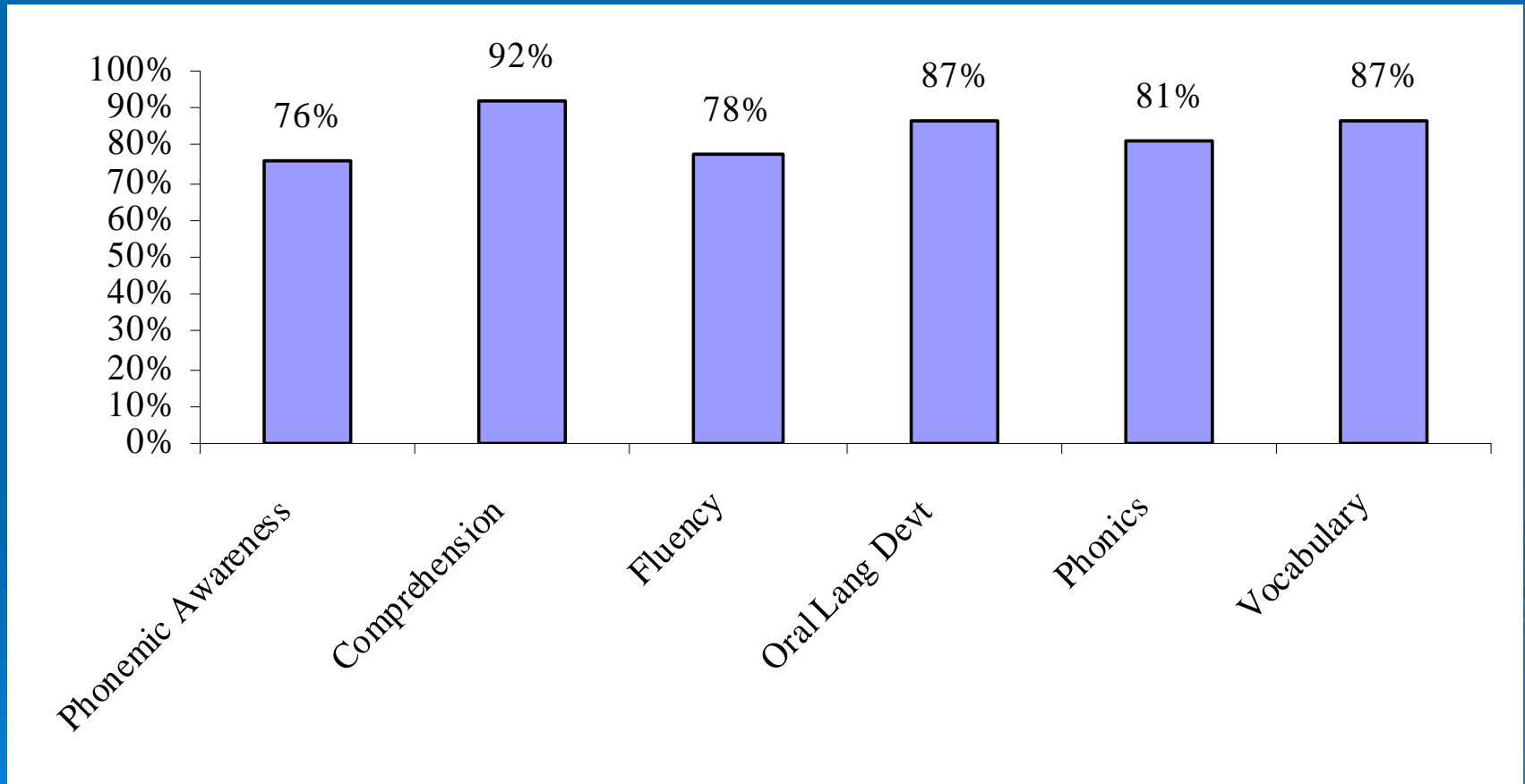
- 46.8% said they spent more time on reading instruction in 2003-04 than they did in 2002-03.
- The frequency with which teachers used collaboration time to discuss reading instruction and the 6 essential components varied from once a month to 4 or 5 times per month.

2b. Explicit instruction in the 6 components (cont'd).

Gap between teachers' perceptions of own practice and experts' perceptions of their practice.

- Most teachers reported high levels of integration of the 6 essential components into their reading practice [Figure 1].
- 89%-99% reported practicing explicit instruction in essential components [Table 1].

Figure 1. Percent Teachers Reporting Integration of Essential Components into Reading Instruction “A Lot” or “Completely.”



2b. Explicit instruction in the 6 components (cont'd)

IC's more conservative about teacher practice:

- Teachers acquired knowledge, awareness and understanding of the 6 components but most did not fully implement them.
- Teachers had not yet developed “automaticity” in their practice of the essential components.
- Teachers may have practiced skills but not yet practiced them *well*.

2b. Explicit instruction in the 6 components (cont'd).

IC's reported that:

- Teachers were aware of own limitations (what they didn't know and needed to learn) and therefore were more likely to request resources and/or help in specific areas of reading and writing.
- Teachers showed interest and took action to deepen knowledge, skills and practice.

2c. Use of Small Group Differentiated Instruction

Increased awareness among teachers that:

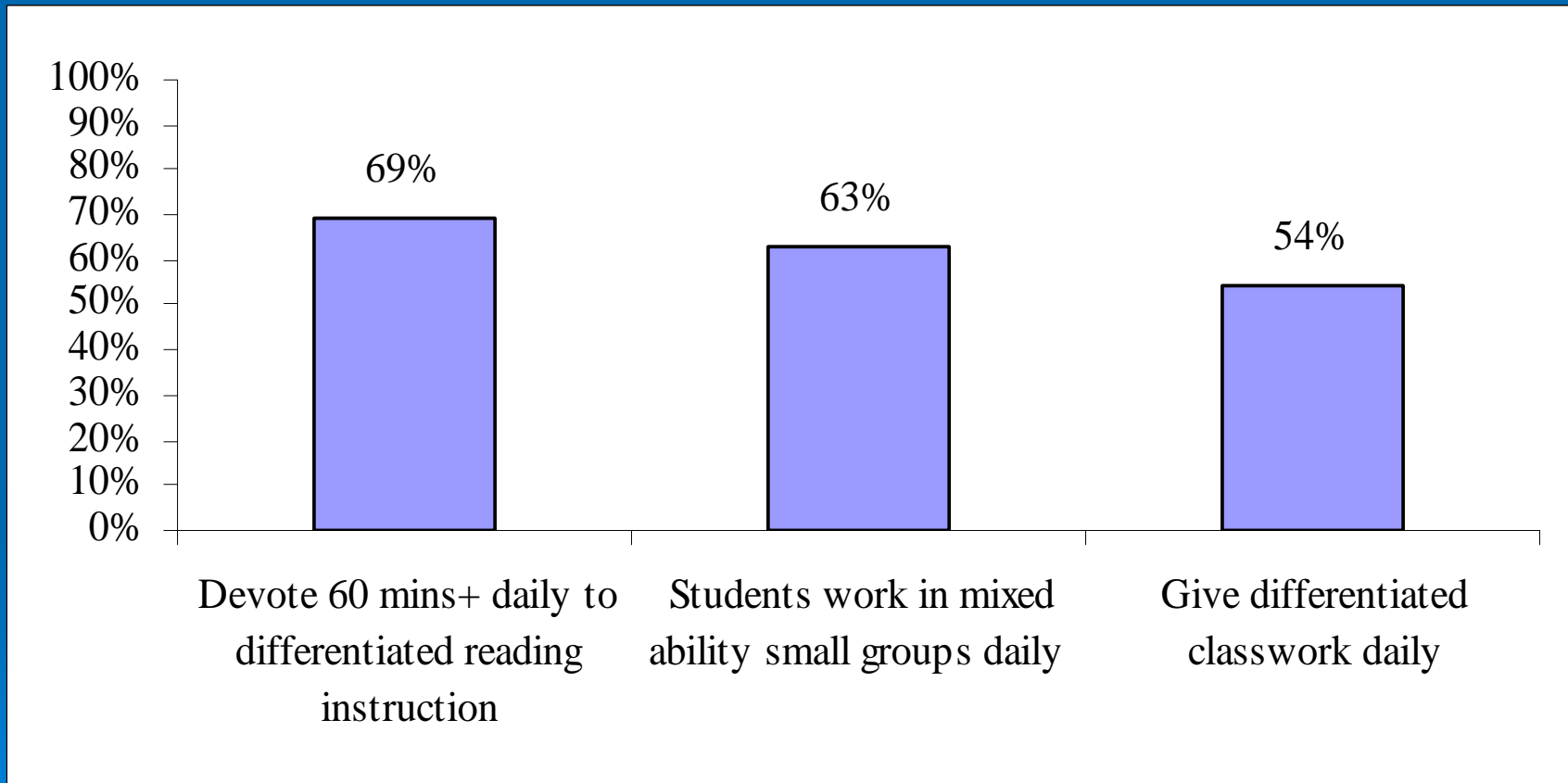
- Student groupings should be fluid over the course of the year.
- Assessment results can help them group students appropriately and change groupings as students' needs change.

2c. Use of Small Group Differentiated Instruction (cont'd)

- Over two-thirds of teachers reported devoting 60 minutes or more daily to differentiated reading instruction.
- Almost two-thirds said they had students work in heterogeneous (mixed ability) small groups daily.
- Just over half said they provided students with differentiated class work on a daily basis.

[Figure 2]

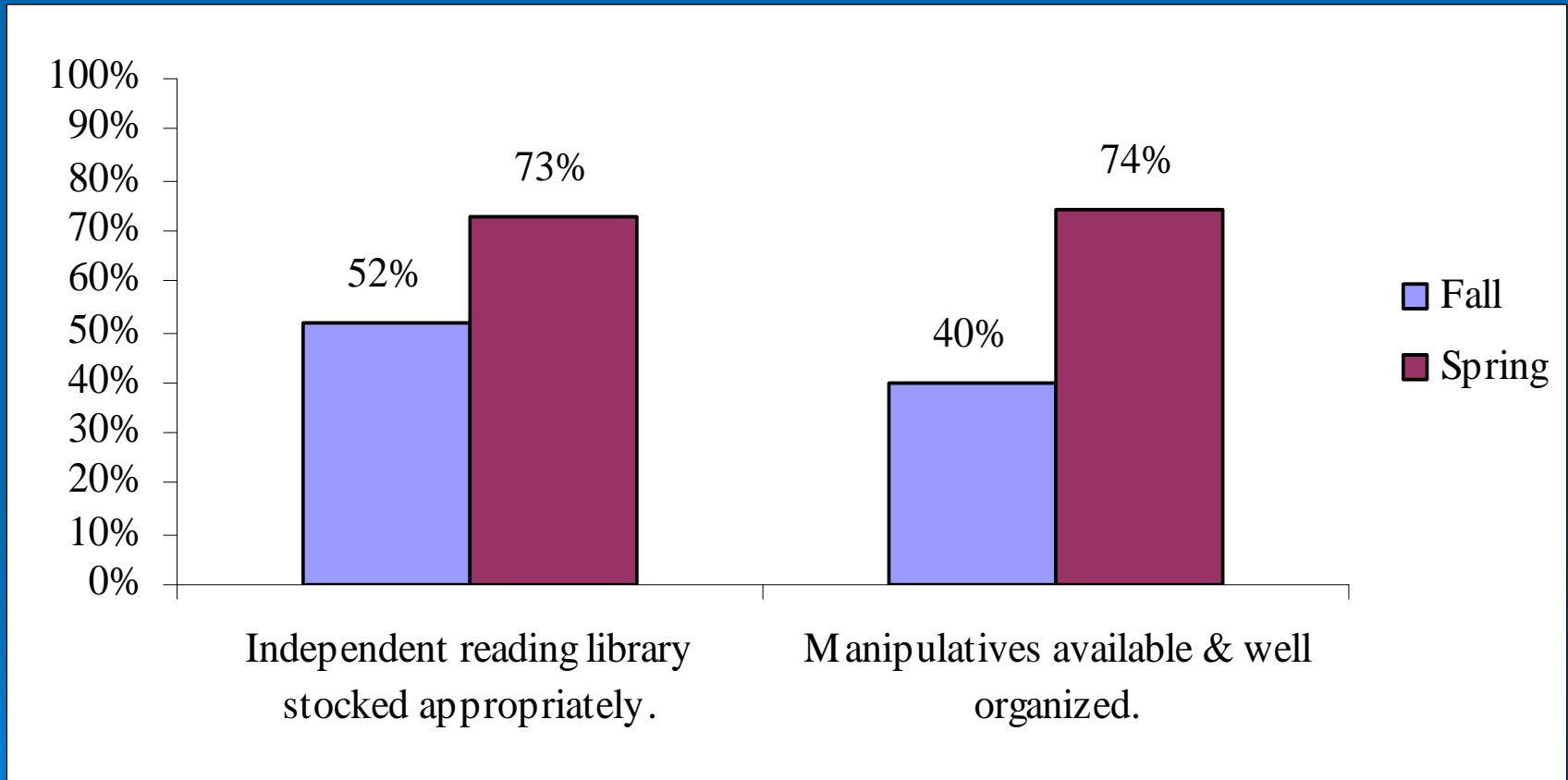
2c. Percent Teachers Reporting Small Group Differentiated Instruction



2d. Use of Appropriate Instructional Materials

- IC's played an important role in securing instructional materials and other resources for teachers.
- RF funds allowed schools to purchase new instructional materials.
- Teachers indicated improvements in the availability of instructional materials at their schools and in their classrooms [Figure 3].

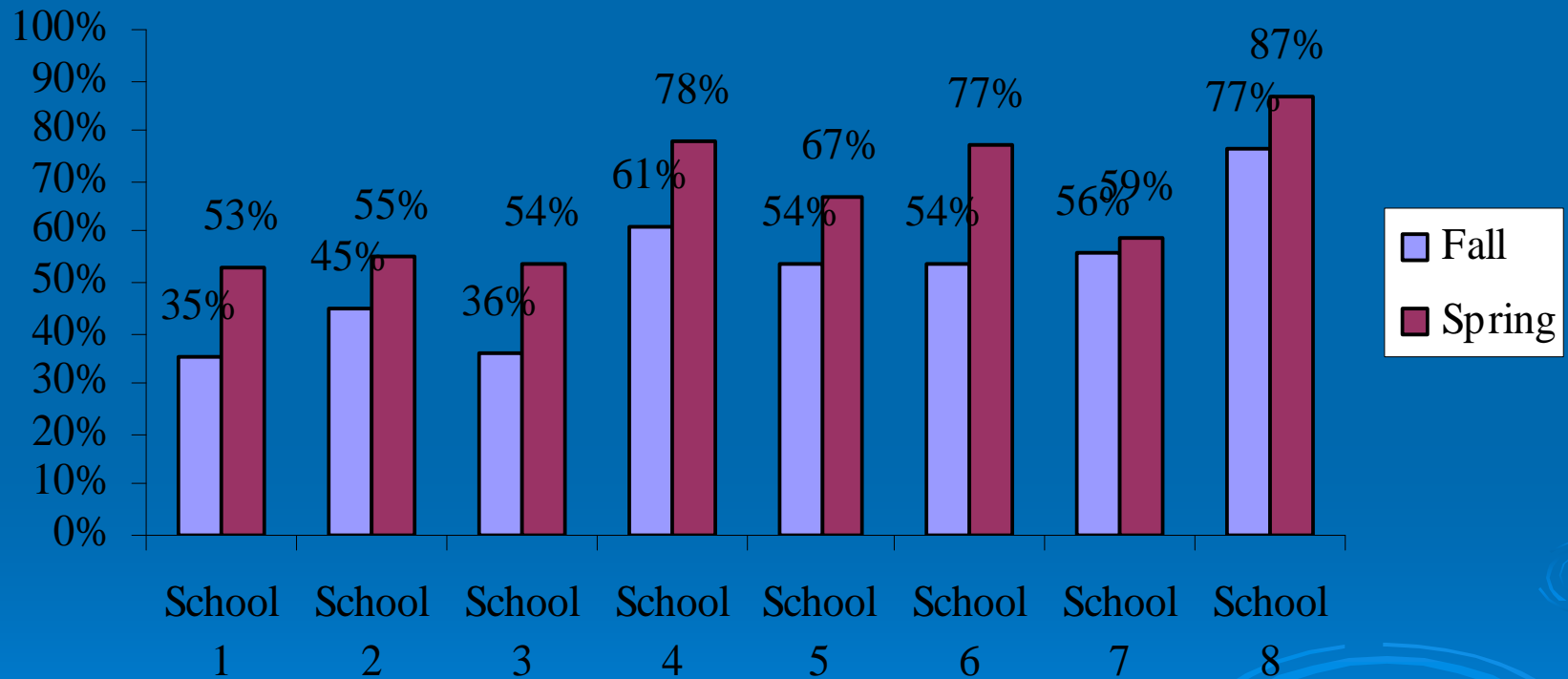
Figure 3. Percent Teachers Reporting Adequate Instructional Materials



3. Was there evidence of effective & sustainable leadership & management systems?

- According to teacher reports, time for reading instruction increased at all 8 schools [Figure 4].
- By spring, at least half the teachers at all 8 schools reported having at least 90 minutes for reading instruction, with minimal or no interruptions.

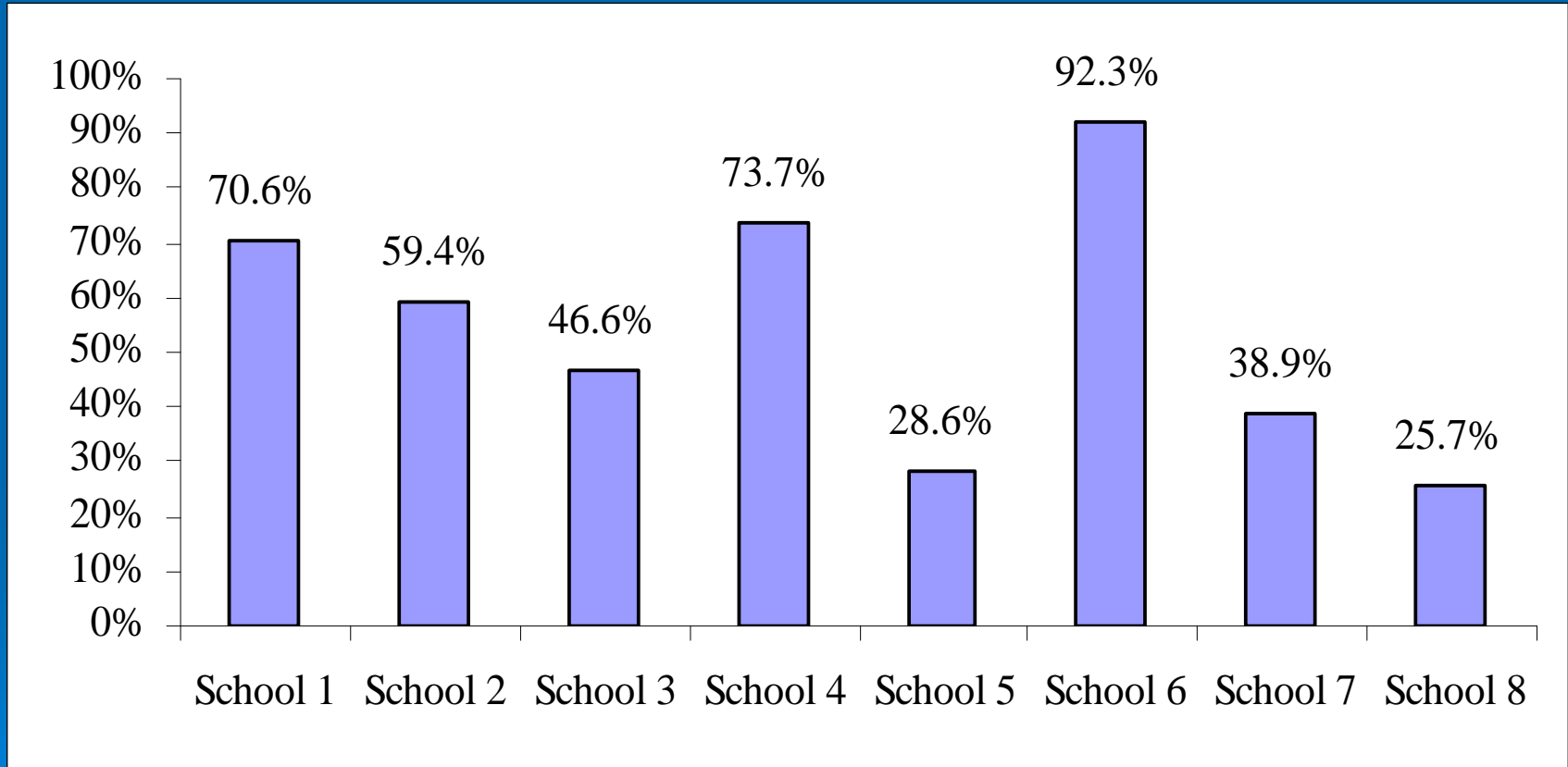
Figure 4. Percent Teachers Reporting 90 Minutes + for Reading Instruction



3. Was there evidence of effective & sustainable leadership & management systems?

- Principals at 4 schools discussed effective reading instruction with staff 2 times or fewer all year [Figure 5].
- Almost half of teachers at one school (42%) reported that their principal had *never* participated in discussions about effective reading instruction with them.

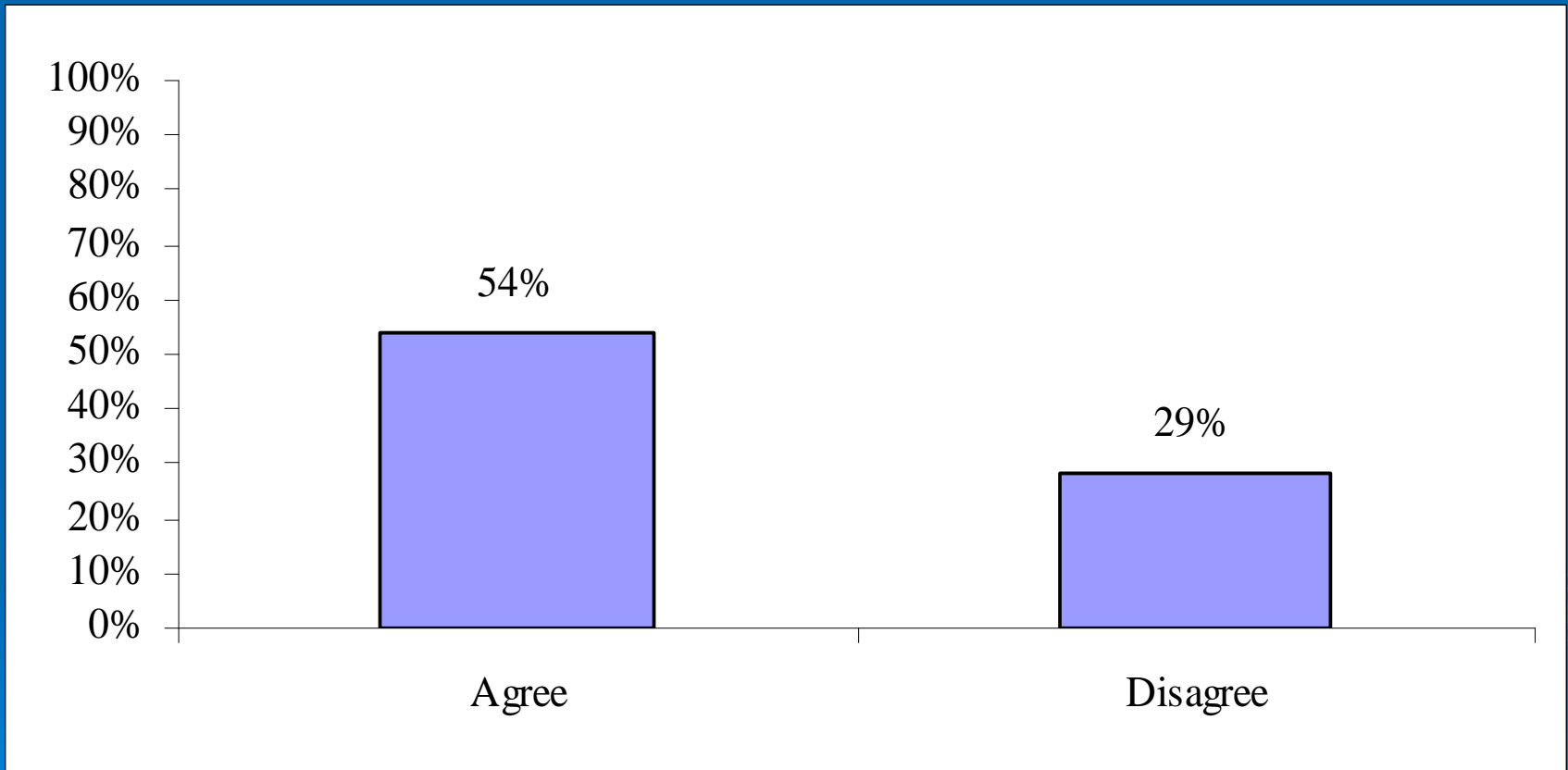
Figure 5. Percent teachers reporting that their principal discussed effective reading instruction with them 2 times or fewer.



3. Was there evidence of effective & sustainable leadership & management systems?

- Just over half (54%) of teachers surveyed said their schools provided the support they needed to employ instructional strategies for helping at-risk students.
- Over one-quarter (29%) said their schools did not [Figure 6].

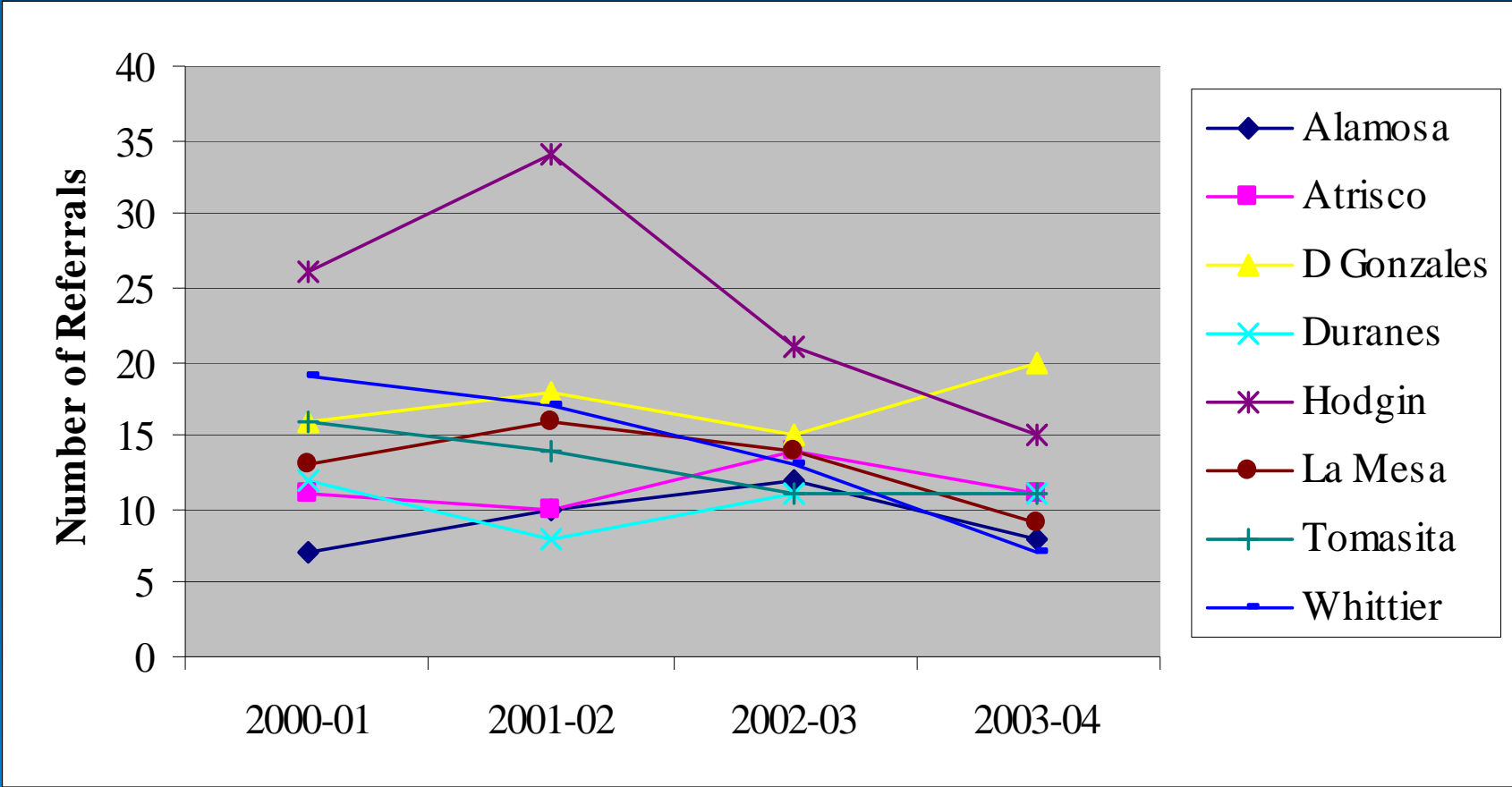
Figure 6. Percent Teachers Reporting Adequate School Support for Employing Strategies for At-Risk Students.



4. Did RF reduce special education referrals?

- 5 out of 8 schools (63%) showed a decrease in the number of K – 3rd grade special education referrals (for testing) compared to the 3 preceding years [Figure 7].
- 30% of teachers surveyed said they referred fewer students to Special Education for testing.

Figure 7. Special Education Referrals (K-3) by School & Year

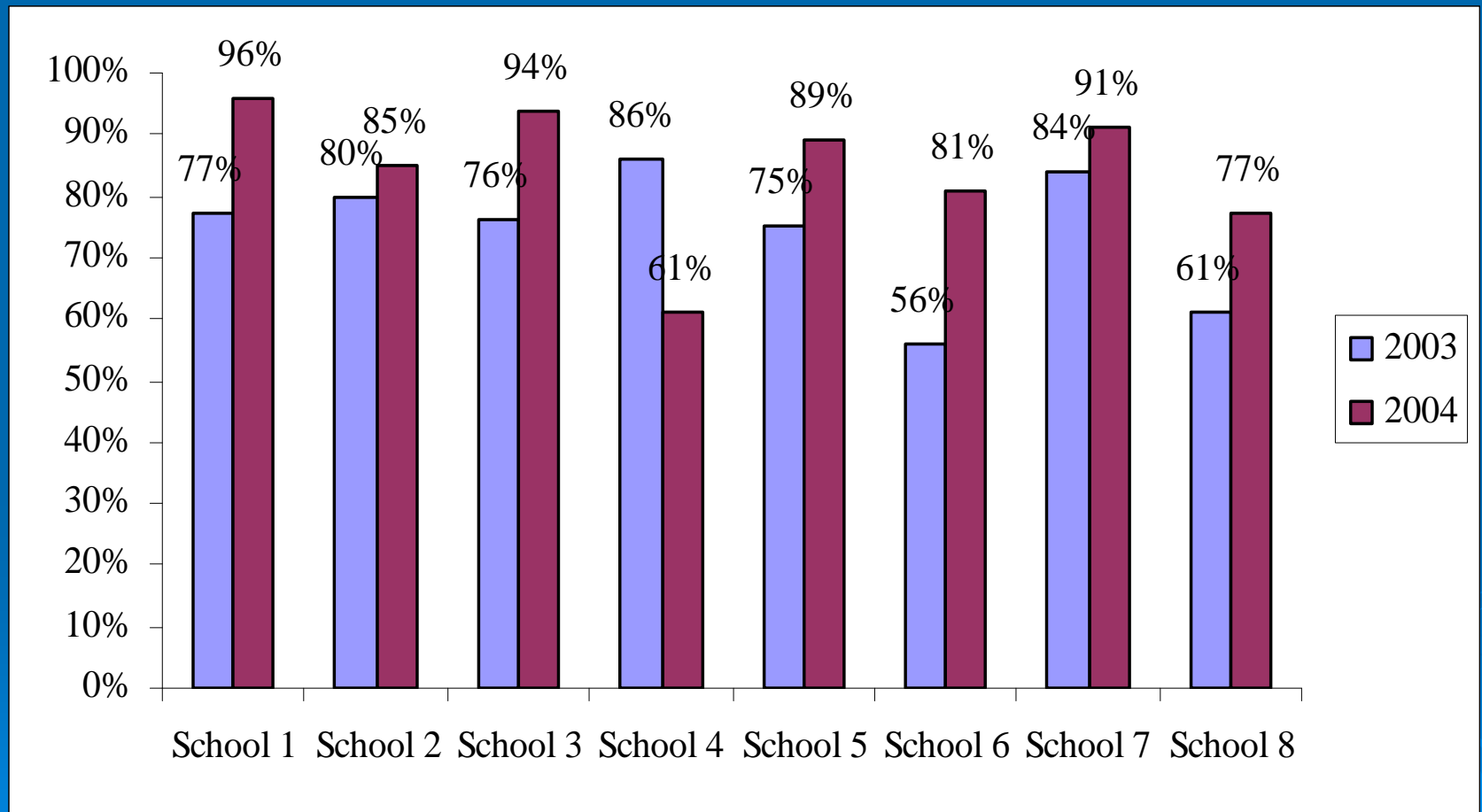


4. Did RF improve students' reading skills?

KDPR -- Kindergarten

- 7 out of 8 schools increased the proportion of kindergarten students achieving proficiency (compared to 2002-03) [Figure 8].

Figure 8. KDPR Percent Proficient by School: 2002-03 Compared to 2003-04



4. Did RF improve students' reading skills?

DIBELS

- Half of the 8 schools decreased the proportion of kindergarten students “at risk” for future reading failure due to **Letter Naming Fluency**.
- All schools decreased the proportion of students “at risk” due to **Nonsense Word Fluency** in at least 1 of 2 grade levels.

4. Did RF improve students' reading skills?

DIBELS (cont'd)

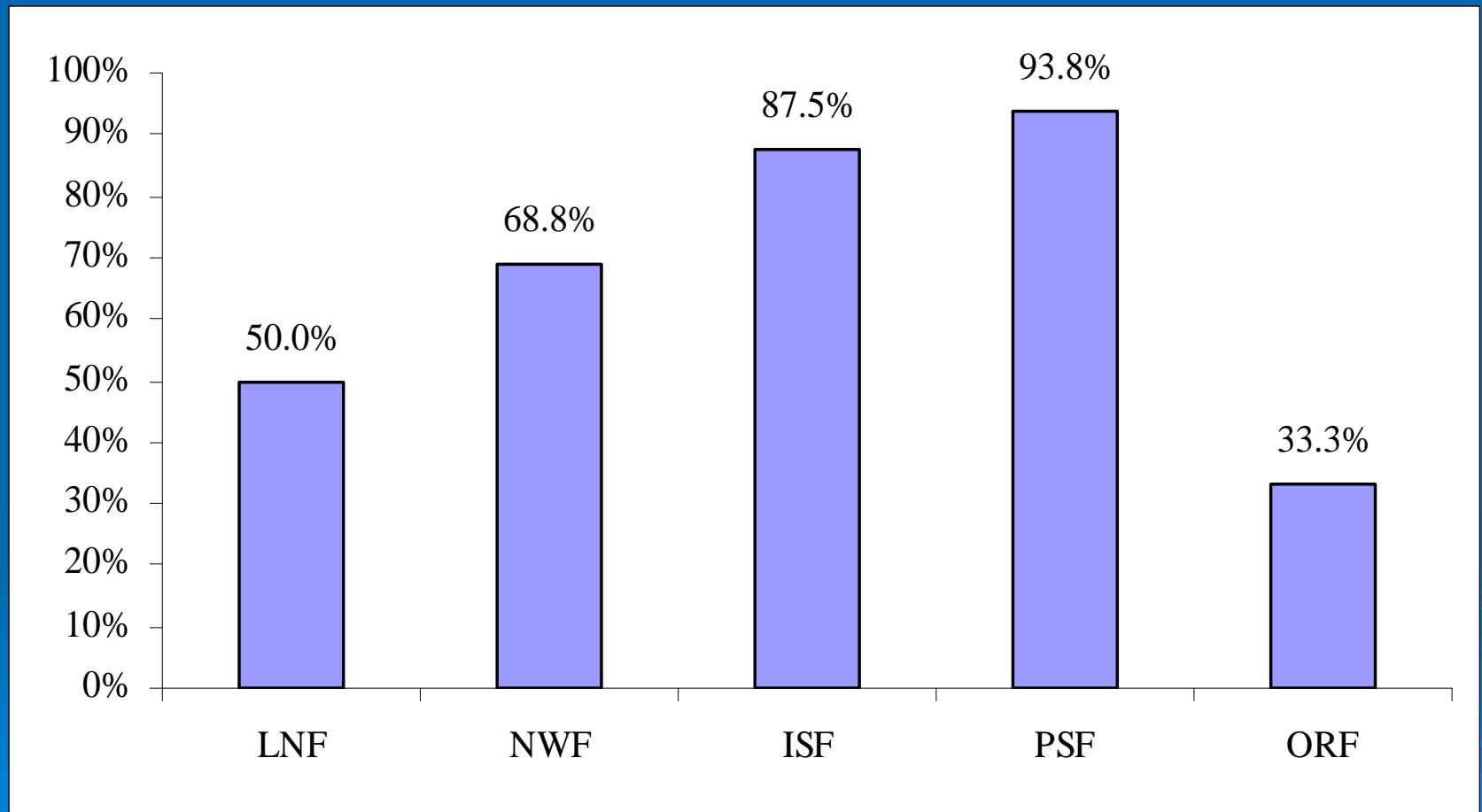
- 7 out of 8 schools decreased the proportion “at risk” due to **Initial Sound Fluency**.
- All schools decreased the proportion “at risk” due to **Phoneme Segmentation Fluency** in both K and 1st grade (except one which did so only in 1st grade).

4. Did RF improve students' reading skills?

DIBELS (cont'd)

- Schools had the hardest time decreasing the proportion “at risk” due to **Oral Reading Fluency**.

Figure 9. Proportion of Pre-Post DIBELS Administrations Showing Decrease in % “At Risk” for Future Reading Failure.



4. Did RF improve students' reading skills?

TPRI/Tejas-LEE – 1st and 2nd Grades

- Administered for the first time to all 1st & 2nd grade RF students in 2003-04.
- Test provides excellent diagnostic information for instructional decision-making.
- RDA and teachers collaborated to develop grade-level cut-scores so that proficiency levels similar to ARI could be calculated.
- One year of results does not allow evaluative analyses. Future years will permit comparisons.

4. Did RF improve students' reading skills?

TerraNova – 3rd Grade

- Terra Nova scores from 2003-04, 2002-03 and 2001-02 show no consistent pattern of improvement or lack of improvement in 3rd grade reading skills.

5. What factors **helped** the implementation & effectiveness of RF?

- Essential Components trainings for IC's
- Monthly IC and cadre leader meetings at TLS
- RDA technical assistance and training
- District-level staff (RF project coordinator, assessment coordinator, technical support coordinator, OEL coordinator)
- Training by grade level.

5. What factors **helped** the implementation & effectiveness of RF?

- Funding to purchase instructional materials and computer supplies and to pay for RFET stipends.
- Making reading the one area of a school's focus. Need clear & specific commitments from principal.
- Palm pilots, Mclass
- DIBELS progress monitoring

5. What factors hindered the implementation & effectiveness of RF?

- Principal lack of commitment to complete RF vision and/or lack of understanding about RF
- School commitments to many different initiatives.
- SINOI school pressure, finger pointing, negativity.
- Some school schedules constrained time for teacher collaboration.
- Lack of accountability regarding how principals used RF funds. Concern about supplanting.

5. What factors hindered the implementation & effectiveness of RF?

- SINOI schools have to do PD without leaving the school.
- Lack of consensus/clarity about cadre leader role.
- IC's sometimes diverted to coordinate data collections, data entry, etc. away from coaching.
- Lack of collaboration from technology staff (at one school).
- Teacher turnover (significant at one school).

Conclusions

- Teacher knowledge of explicit reading instruction in 6 components improved.
- Practice of explicit instruction is emerging.
- 1st year assessment results indicate RF holds promise for improving students' reading skills.
- 1st year results indicate RF holds promise for decreasing referrals to special education.

Conclusions (cont'd)

- District supports are essential to successful implementation.
- Principals hold key to RF implementation and outcomes.
- Great variation in principal leadership & involvement in RF
- APS RF focused activities at the levels of teachers & IC's. Not as much at level of school administration and systems.

Recommendations

- More/continued PD in interpreting data results and selecting interventions.
- Set and reinforce expectation for strong Educator Teams, within which decisions are made about budget & other issues, and whose members take care of data entry & other key tasks.
- Pay stipends to Educator Team members.

Recommendations

- Create formal signed contracts with school principals delineating expectations & responsibilities.
- Review contracts & school-level implementation regularly.