



CONVENING AND ORGANIZING YOUR STUDY GROUP

Convening Your Study Group

The *READ 180* study group should include representatives of key stakeholder groups and, to the extent possible, people who will have direct responsibility for at least some of the study tasks.

Consider inviting the following individuals to join your study group:

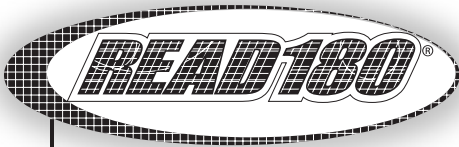
- Director or senior member of the staff in the district research office
- Central office staff who are familiar with the operation and use of the district's student information system
- Deputy superintendent or assistant superintendent for instruction
- Directors of reading and literacy programs, along with reading and literacy resource teachers, and especially individuals with direct responsibility for overseeing implementation and use of *READ 180*
- Principals from schools that are using *READ 180*
- *READ 180* teachers

In addition to these individuals, parents whose children are participating in *READ 180* also have the potential to be strong members of your study group. Representation from the local teacher union may also be helpful, particularly in building support for the study and facilitating your access to teachers. Finally, if your district has a Scholastic representative located reasonably close by, you may want to invite this person to join the study group, at least as a resource. Ideally, your group should have no more than 10–12 members, with invitations to join, coming from the district superintendent or another district leader who has actively supported the implementation of *READ 180*.

The *READ 180* study group will most likely need to meet several times to work out a plan for your study. One way to organize these sessions is around the four topics discussed below.

1. Orienting Members

Unless your district has been using *READ 180* for several years in a large number of classrooms, it is likely that at least some of the members of the study group will not have a complete understanding of the program. Therefore, you may want to schedule the first meeting of the study group in a *READ 180* classroom and provide a short, hands-on demonstration of the program. You should also review the logic model included in the guide at this time. Conclude the session with a brief report or overview of the current status of *READ 180* in the district. How many teachers use the program? How many students participate? What grade levels are served? What challenges have teachers faced in using the program and how have the challenges been overcome? What does your district already know about the results?



2. Deciding What to Study

We have posed six study questions in *READ 180 Research Protocol and Tools* to illustrate the kinds of questions you might want to ask about *READ 180*. As members of the study group become more familiar with the program and its use in the district, they will almost certainly have questions of their own that they would like the study to address. Several considerations should guide the discussion at this point.

- All questions and interests should be on the table for discussion
- The list of questions should be pared to a manageable number
- The district's and schools' short-term and long-term information needs should guide discussion
- As the questions grow more complicated and numerous, the study becomes more complicated, requires more time, and costs go up
- Answering some basic questions early can generate interest and set the stage for answering more questions later

Note that if information on the use of *READ 180* in your district is not available for your overview report during the orientation meeting discussed above, you have an obvious starting point for your study.

3. Preparing a Study Design and Work Plan

Once the study group has agreed on the questions that the study will address, it will be necessary to develop a study design and a work plan, including a schedule. The study design will specify:

- The questions that will be addressed, possibly accompanied by a brief explanation of why the group chose to address these questions
- The kinds of data to be collected to answer the study questions and who will be responsible for collecting and/or organizing the data
- How the data will be analyzed and by whom
- A time line and outline of individual responsibilities

When reviewing the study design, it is not too early to begin thinking about how you will report the results of your study. Who is the intended audience? What kinds of things will they want to know? Will the report guide further support for *READ 180* teachers? Determine whether to expand *READ 180* in the district? Be used to plan reading and literacy programs and activities for students after they leave *READ 180*?



As a matter of process, it probably makes sense to assign the preparation of the design and work plan to a small subcommittee of the study group. Staff from the research office and others who are acquainted with the district's data system are ideal candidates for this task. A reading or literacy specialist who has an understanding of *READ 180* and other reading and literacy programs in the district can complement the skills of the research and information system staff in the design work.

4. Identifying Resources for the Study

Your district's student information system is one of your most important resources for this study. The study group will want to spend some time learning about the kinds of information that are in the data system, how they are organized, and the kinds of reports that the system can generate. An important piece of this information is whether the data system does or can track student participation in *READ 180*. Staff from the district research office and staff who work with the data system should be able to answer these questions.

If you discover that the district data system does not track participation in *READ 180*, your study group may want to explore the advantages and options for adding this information to the data system. Including records of individual student participation in *READ 180* in the district data system can reduce school-level record-keeping and facilitate tracking *READ 180* students' progress and comparing that progress to that of other students. Indeed, if there are several different reading programs in place in your district, your group may want to recommend including all of them in the data system.

A second resource for the study group to consider is other ongoing research. For example, if there is another study of reading programs going on in your district, are there data collection activities or data that can be incorporated into your study? As you discuss borrowing from other studies, keep in mind that people who are working on those projects will also want to know what your study group can share with them.

The third critical resource is staff and staff time. Who will be available to work on your study? Do they have the skills that they need to complete the various tasks? Depending on the availability of staff for data collection and analysis, you may want to consider hiring a consultant to advise the study group or to carry out some of the tasks such as data analysis.

The data you will collect depend on the questions that you want to answer and the design of your study. The questions listed at the beginning of this guide suggest a number of options for study design. These options, along with guidance on data analysis follows. There are a number of options available to you. As your study group considers the research questions and design options, it may make sense to combine at least some of the questions and some of the design options into a single design.