First Steps Professional Development: Its Effects on Teachers’ Ability to Understand and to Implement First Steps in their Classrooms

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FIRST STEPS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: ITS EFFECTS ON TEACHERS' ABILITY TO UNDERSTAND AND TO IMPLEMENT FIRST STEPS IN THEIR CLASSROOMS

THESIS

Submitted to the Graduate Committee of the Department of Curriculum and Instruction Faculty of Education State University of New York College at Brockport in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Science in Education

by

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to document and to determine how *First Steps* professional development was helpful to teachers in their understanding of *First Steps*. This study also examined how *First Steps* professional development has impacted the ability of teachers to implement *First Steps* in their classrooms and incorporate *First Steps* strategies in their teaching. Furthermore, this study provided suggestions for how to further support teachers in their understanding and ability to implement *First Steps*.

The subjects of this study included a variety of teachers from grade levels ranging from kindergarten through fifth grade. The subjects also included special education teachers, reading resource teachers and an administrator from a suburban elementary school in upstate New York. There were thirty teachers who could have participated and fifteen handed back the questionnaire.

The instrument used to gather the data was a researcher-designed questionnaire. The purpose of this study was discussed and the research questions were clarified. Then, a questionnaire was drafted for teachers to address the research questions. The draft instruments were refined until they asked the research questions in a clear concise manner in which they would be understood by the teachers using them. A group of 29 in-service graduate students provided feedback and helped to refine the questionnaire.

Due to a poor response, twenty more questionnaires were made available on two separate occasions. They were again made available to faculty members following an oral presentation by the investigator at a faculty meeting. Finally, they were placed in a central location with a reminder note, thanking those who had replied and urging those who had not to send in their completed questionnaire.

Responses to the questions about the effectiveness of *First Steps* staff development training in teachers ability to implement and understand *First Steps* and other resulting data were analyzed and then described in this report. The responses to the
questions were listed separately and then analyzed for similarities. Similar responses were
categorized and grouped together. The results were compiled for the district and the
building principal to use in their decisions relating to First Steps and future staff
development needs.

The data were obtained by questionnaire and interview, of which thirty were
distributed and fifteen were returned. Responses were collected, categorized, and
analyzed for similarities.

Limitations of this study were pointed out. Suggestions for school applications
and implications for further research were discussed.
CHAPTER I
Statement of the Problem

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to document and to determine how the professional development provided by *First Steps* tutors was helpful to teachers in their understanding of *First Steps*. This study also examined how *First Steps* professional development has impacted the ability of teachers to implement *First Steps* in their classrooms and incorporate *First Steps* strategies in their teaching. Furthermore, this study provided suggestions for how to continue to support teachers in their understanding and ability to implement *First Steps*.

Research Questions

(1&2) How was the professional development provided by *First Steps* tutors helpful to teachers in their understanding of *First Steps* and their ability to implement *First Steps*?

(3&4) What were some of the problems with the professional development offered by *First Steps* that prevented the teachers' understanding of *First Steps* and their ability to implement *First Steps*?

(5) What else could be done to support a better understanding of *First Steps* and support their ability to implement *First Steps*?
Need for the Study

School improvement and professional development have become the focus of many school districts as they prepare to meet higher standards for students. There are many types of professional development opportunities available to districts. One such opportunity is a professional development program called First Steps.

The decision to become involved with First Steps professional development requires a serious commitment of time, money, resources and materials. Support and training of teachers are the key factors in the successful implementation and maintenance of First Steps.

The district in this study chose to adopt and implement the First Steps program to meet literacy goals in their elementary schools. One of the core beliefs of First Steps is that what teachers do in the classroom translates into student achievement. Effective teaching practices are linked to student success. Therefore, one of the most critical components of First Steps is quality professional development.

Each building has two teachers who were trained to as First Steps tutors to instruct the remaining staff. This provides for ongoing professional development and flexibility at each building. All staff were trained in techniques to link student assessment to instructional practices. They critically observed student work using a developmental approach. Teachers were then able to document student performance based on performance indicators. Every child in the school was
placed on developmental continua. The continua are updated at least two time each year and are kept in a language arts file. Implementation of First Steps has been an on-going process. This district has already implemented the writing and reading components and will eventually phase in the spelling and oral language.

This study was designed to examine the effectiveness of the professional development provided by First Steps tutors. This study was also designed to examine how First Steps professional development has impacted the ability of teachers to understand and implement First Steps in their classrooms and incorporate First Steps strategies in their teaching. Furthermore, this study was designed to gather feedback from teachers on how to continue to support their understanding and ability to implement First Steps through professional development opportunities.

Definition of Terms

(For elaboration see Appendix A)

First Steps

First Steps is a resource that helps individual classroom teachers, schools and educational districts achieve targeted literacy outcomes for their students.

Developmental Continuum

The developmental continuum is a document that maps the development of a student at different phases of their literacy learning. The continuum contains an ordered series of descriptive statements that represent milestones which map the literacy development.
Stages
The continua outline developmental learning in stages. These stages are linked to developmentally appropriate teaching methods.

Indicators
Indicators are identified on the continua. These indicators are the basis for monitoring the child's development. They give teachers a way of identifying what the child can and can not do.

Key Indicators
These are indicators that have been judged to be more important than other indicators.

Phases
Phases are clusters of literacy behaviors used with the developmental continuum.

Limitations
The entire school district is involved with First Steps. However, this study takes an in depth look at First Steps in only one building.
Summary

Professional development can take on many forms and have many purposes. As school districts are facing higher standards for students and higher standards for teachers, they are forced to look at their professional development plans and effective practices in professional development.

This study was designed to examine the effectiveness of First Steps professional development and the ability of teachers to understand and to implement First Steps as a result of the professional development.
CHAPTER II

Review of the Literature

First Steps Philosophy

First Steps is a philosophy, incorporating basic principles and theoretical assumptions about how children learn language. It is based on the belief that all children can be successful, active learners, who learn through solving problems as they strive to achieve goals. Children learn effectively as they interact with adults, peers and their environment.

First Steps shows that while each child is a unique individual, an overall pattern of growth and development can be traced. It is within these patterns of development that individual differences can be accommodated. First Steps uses indicators for charting and measuring language and literacy development, much like milestones or indicators of physical growth can be charted. Children make steady progress when strategies and activities are used which are appropriate to their level of development. (First Steps working documents)

First Steps indicators and suggested activities have been based on several theoretical assumptions. First, language learning takes place through interactions in meaningful events, rather than through isolated language activities. Next, language learning is seen as holistic and each mode of language supports and enhances the overall language development. Language develops in relation to the context in which it is used. It develops according to the situation, the topic under discussion, and the relationship between the participants.
**What is *First Steps***?

According to *First Steps* resource guides and *First Steps* draft documents, *First Steps* is a resource that helps classroom teachers, schools, and districts to achieve targeted literacy outcomes for all students. *First Steps* is based on the philosophy of developmental learning and caters to the needs of all students regardless of their age or range of abilities. *First Steps* provides the link between assessment of students’ literacy to developmentally appropriate learning activities.

*First Steps* consists of three essential components: professional development, follow up support, and resource materials. The professional development provided by *First Steps* trains teachers in the use of *First Steps* materials and resources. Heinemann Professional Development offers two levels of *First Steps* Training for educators.

The first level of training is The *First Steps* Tutor Training Course. Participants in this course are trained as users of all *First Steps* resources and obtain certification to conduct school based courses for other teachers within their district. Tutors also receive training in how to provide follow-up support to teachers as they begin to implement *First Steps*. This tutor course is aimed toward school based educators and runs for eight days.

The tutor training course explores ways of helping teachers to understand developmental learning, with a particular focus on literacy and language development. This course also examines the content, structure and effective use of the Developmental Continuum. The Developmental Continuum is used for assessing, monitoring and reporting on students’ literacy development. It is also used to select appropriate teaching strategies and learning activities. The training
course discusses how to provide follow up support for classroom teachers in implementing *First Steps*. The tutors are also taught how to involve parents in *First Steps*.

The second type of training is The *First Steps* School- based training course. This is where teachers become trained in techniques to link student assessment to instructional practice. These training courses are run by building based *First Steps* Tutors who have completed the *First Steps* Tutor Training Course. One of the core beliefs of *First Steps* is to provide quality professional development. Having these tutors right in the building and on staff provide for flexibility and on-going instruction. (*First Steps* Documents)

**Current Research Summaries in First Steps**

The *First Steps* project has been criticized for not having objective data to demonstrate the outcome of *First Steps* methods on children. The *First Steps* team is presently gathering data which will attempt to provide more of an empirical or measurement base of the effectiveness of using *First Steps* procedures on student achievement. (Deschamp, 1995)

There is, however, a wide range of survey and case study data commenting on how teachers view the effectiveness of *First Steps*. The Australian Council for Educational Research has conducted several research projects relating to *First Steps*. The seven reports described below analyze the technical integrity of aspects of the *First Steps* Continua or gather people’s opinions about *First Steps*. (Dechamp, 1995)

**The ACER evaluations**
a) The evaluation of the Validity of the *First Steps* Writing and Spelling Continua (1992)

This study showed that teachers in Grades 1-3 understood the *First Steps* Indicators and that the Writing and Spelling continua validly depict the development of children's competencies.

b) The Impact of *First Steps* on the Reading and Writing Ability of Grade Five Students (1992)

The findings claimed that, if students from old *First Steps* schools had lower average levels of reading comprehension ability than students in new or non-*First Steps* schools before *First Steps* was introduced, then it is likely that *First Steps* has lead to an improvement in the reading and writing ability of those students involved with *First Steps*.

c) The Impact of *First Steps* on Schools and Teachers (1992)

The findings concluded that the general feeling in schools toward *First Steps* is positive. In particular, the ideas, teaching strategies, and materials related to *First Steps* were very well received. There was also some evidence that the professional development provided by *First Steps* and the use of the continua caused a decline of the enthusiasm of the teachers in some schools.

d) Analyzing Teacher Judgment with the Rasch Model (1992)

This report found that there was clear improvement in the Spelling Developmental Continuum. This study came out of the 1992 validation study that stated that the spread of difficulty of the indicators in the Preliminary Phase was rather long and
the Independent Phase was somewhat short. The modifications made to the Spelling Continuum have led to a clearer and more precise depiction of the order of behaviors children exhibit as they develop their spelling skills.


This report supported the concepts and developmental sequence of the spelling continua, however some Indicators were causing teachers concern. Also, some teachers had a problem with some of the negatively worded Indicators. As a result, some of the Indicators were reworded or adapted. The Spelling continuum was later revalidated.

f) The Empirical Validation of the First Steps Reading Continuum (1993)

The main findings included that there is a high level of understanding of the indicators from the First Steps Reading Developmental Continuum by several teachers from grades 1, 3, 5, and 7. This study also found that the reading developmental continuum, in general, validly depicts the order of the development of children’s reading abilities.

g) Focus Teachers (1994)

The aim of this report was to explore the impact Focus Teachers have in schools and the reasons for their impact. The evidence states that the focus teacher seems to be important in assisting in the use of the developmental continua. They also provide assistance with teaching strategies and helping to report student progress.
to parents. Classroom teachers did not identify any major problems in their experience of the role of focus teacher.

**Evolution of Professional Development**

Historically, teachers have been isolated from each other and have learned to work alone. Seldom is a teacher asked or given the opportunity to work with colleagues. Principals usually have not been asked to support teamwork, and typically leadership has been linked only to formal roles. Professional development has traditionally been delivered using a deficit model in which an "expert" imparts knowledge to teachers. The deficit model implies that teachers are assumed to be deficient and in need of outside experts to teach them new ways of working with students (Little, 1987). These types of professional development models are not sufficient in preparing teachers to meet the current educational needs and demands.

"The traditional view of teachers’ work is governed by the idea that time with students is of singular value, that teachers are primarily deliverers of content, that curriculum planning and decision making rest at higher levels of authority, and that professional development is unrelated to improving instruction" (Castle and Watts, 1992, p.2). This narrow perspective on teachers and teaching does not provide or allow adequate opportunities for teachers to participate in curriculum development, learn new methods of instruction, share their current methods, or discuss successful strategies for implementing standards.

Professional development must move away from past models where it took place only on in-service days, weekends, and summers. The new model for
professional development should embed professional development opportunities into the everyday lives of teachers. Researchers have begun to examine the process of professional development in the context of systematic reform. These needed changes and necessary reform cannot happen without professional development opportunities, and certainly cannot happen with outdated models of professional development.

**Reform in Professional Development**

Cuban (1992) describes the two types of school reform efforts. The first type is incremental change, which aims to improve the existing school structures. The second type is fundamental change, which aims to transform and permanently alter the existing school structures. Both of which require significant professional development opportunities.

“The dominant ‘training’ model of teachers’ professional development -- a model focused primarily on expanding an individual repertoire of well defined and skillful classroom practice -- is not adequate to the ambitious visions of teaching and schooling embedded in present reform initiatives” (Little, 1994, p.1).

Reforms in subject matter, curriculum, and pedagogy all point toward raising student outcomes. Among the reforms are the shift to a whole language and literature based approach to language arts, the new mathematics standards, and proposals for integrated science and social studies curricula. Among them, too, are conceptions of “authentic achievement and assessment” that require a fundamental change in the nature of students’ intellectual tasks and teacher-student relations (Newmann, 1990).
This shift requires a shift from traditional views of curriculum and textbook centered learning. All of these changes require a significant change from teachers’ previous experience, beliefs and current practice.

The results of school reform efforts depend primarily on the opportunities teachers have to learn the new instructional practices, teaching roles, and organizational roles.

**The Need for Professional Development**

The 21st century brings new challenges, expectations, and an ever evolving responsibility of schools and teachers to improve student learning. As school districts move into the various stages of reform, one factor that remains constant is the need for professional development. Teachers need to improve their content knowledge and master new methods of teaching. They need to collaborate with colleagues to critically examine the new standards, and to revise the current curriculum (Joyce, 1990).

Professional development provides opportunities for teachers to try out new roles, create new instructional techniques, refine their teaching, and improve themselves as educators. It is important that educators, parents, and the community understand the new expectations of teachers, the new teacher roles and responsibilities, and current definitions of professional development. (Darling-Hammond, 1990).
Finding Time For Professional Development

Reform demands new roles and methods of teaching which forces teachers to look closely at their own practices. The problem is, how do teachers find time for change in their already busy schedules and curriculum? Unfortunately, “the demands posed by daily teaching and other aspects of the reform continue to absorb the bulk of teachers’ energy, thought, and attention” (McDiarmid, 1995, p.2).

McDiarmid (1995) states that there is a connection between the new expectations of teachers and the element of time. He states that the changes being made require more than learning new techniques. The changes go to the core of what it means to teach. Because these changes are so dramatic and large, teachers will require a considerable amount of time to achieve them.

The reality is that teachers will require far more of their work time for professional development, learning, and collaboration if they are going to be able to meet the changing and increasing demands of implementing new reforms and standards. The National Education Association (1994) recommends that 50 percent of teachers’ time be given to professional development. This goal seems unachievable, but school districts need to strive toward this goal by looking at creative ways to revamp the working conditions of teachers to allow teachers the time and support necessary to plan and implement changes and reform.

While finding time for professional development is important, it is equally important to examine and critical to find the most efficient ways to use whatever time is available. There has been an increase in the use of technology for this very
issue. "Technologies can support and broaden professional learning communities and help teachers make better use of their time. Through a range of technologies, eg., the Internet and video- and audio conferencing, teachers can access both instructional resources and collegial networks" (Fine, 1994, p.5-6). These options sometimes allow teachers to participate when it is convenient for them. Through the use of electronic mail and bulletin boards, teachers can share information and ideas, solve problems with colleagues, and communicate at any time. Video conferencing enables teachers to connect to different sites without spending time and money on travel expenses.

**Creating a Professional Development Plan**

According to the Part 100 of the Commissioner's Regulations Draft (1999), the purpose of a Professional Development Plan is to improve the quality of teaching and learning by assuring that all teachers participate in substantial professional development to ensure that they remain current with their profession and meet the learning needs of their students.

This plan requires that on June 1, 2000, and each year thereafter, each public school district board of education and each board of cooperation educational services must develop and adopt a professional development plan. This plan must fit a certain format set up by the Commissioner to meet certain guidelines. This plan would provide all teachers from the district or BOCES with extensive professional development programs that relate directly to the student learning needs in each school. These student learning needs will be identified through the School District or BOCES Report Card, other data sources, and the
needs of the teachers. It will be effective on September 1, 2000 and every September thereafter unless modified or disapproved by the Commissioner.

Included in these plans are opportunities to meet the professional development needs of teachers. Teachers will be required to maintain a professional certificate based on completing 175 hours of professional development every five years. This requirement is specified in the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education.

The contents of a Professional Development Plan will describe how the selected professional development is aligned with New York State standards and assessments and student needs across grade levels. It will also describe how professional development is continuous and designed to improve student performance. A district must also include how it will measure the impact of the professional development on both student achievement and teachers' practices. Finally, the plan would include both how the teachers will participate and the average number of hours each teacher will participate in professional development each year.

This proposed regulation states that professional development plans will include a needs analysis, goals, objectives, activities, strategies and evaluation standards. All of these would be developed in collaboration with teachers and administrators and others selected by the board of education or BOCES, such as parents, community members, and representatives from higher education institutions. (Draft, 1999)
Summary

The research conducted on professional development is both extensive and on-going. There are also many different interpretations of what works and what does not work when it comes to professional development. Many of the reports and summaries can leave the researcher confused as to what research model is best and what approach is most effective.

For example, some researchers suggest that professional development efforts must be practitioner specific and focus on day to day activities at the classroom level (McLaughlin, 1990). The opposing view suggests that an emphasis on individuals hinders progress and more systematic approaches are necessary (Tye and Tye, 1984).

Many experts suggest that reform in professional development must be initiated and carried out by individual teachers and school based personnel (Joyce, McNair, Diaz, & McKibbin, 1976). Others argue that the most successful programs are those guided by a clear vision that sees beyond the walls of the classroom. Many argue that teachers and school -based staff lack the capacity to implement worthwhile improvements on their own (Barth, 1991).

These are only a few of the opposing viewpoints related to delivering effective professional development programs. The critical issues seem clear, however the best road to positive solutions remains unclear. There seems to be many ways to address the needs of a very diverse population of educators with varying professional development needs (Guskey & Sparks, 1991).
CHAPTER III

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to document and to determine how *First Steps* professional development was helpful to teachers in their understanding of *First Steps*. This study also examined how *First Steps* professional development has impacted the ability of teachers to implement *First Steps* in their classrooms and to incorporate *First Steps* strategies in their teaching. Furthermore, this study provided suggestions for how to further support teachers in their understanding and ability to implement *First Steps*.

Research Questions

(1&2) How was the professional development provided by *First Steps* tutors helpful to teachers in their understanding of *First Steps* and their ability to implement *First Steps*?

(3&4) What were some of the problems with the professional development offered by *First Steps* that prevented the teachers understanding of *First Steps* and their ability to implement *First Steps*?

(5) What else could be done to support a better understanding of *First Steps* and support their ability to implement *First Steps*?
Methodology

Subjects

The subjects of this study included a variety of teachers from grade levels ranging from kindergarten through fifth grade. The subjects also included special education teachers, reading resource teachers and an administrator from a suburban elementary school in Monroe County. There were thirty teachers who could have participated and fifteen handed back the questionnaire.

The teaching style, philosophies, and years of classroom experience varied. All subjects had been trained in First Steps and had participated in several First Steps workshops.

Instrument

The instrument used to gather the data was a questionnaire (see Appendix B). The purpose of this study was discussed and the research questions were clarified. Then, a questionnaire was drafted for teachers to address the research questions. The draft instruments were refined until they asked the research questions in a clear concise manner in which they would be understood by the teachers using them. A group of 29 in-service graduate students provided feedback and helped to refine the questionnaire.

The questionnaire was designed to obtain the following information:

1. Which professional development courses the respondent has attended;
2. How the respondents found the *First Steps* professional development helpful in their understanding and ability to implement *First Steps*;

3. What were some of the problems that the respondents encountered that prevented their understanding and impacted their ability to implement *First Steps*;

4. What else could be done to further support the respondent in both their understanding and their ability to implement *First Steps*;

5. Any additional comments regarding *First Steps*.

A set of cover letters (see Appendix B) was prepared to explain and to describe the research project and to encourage people to respond and participate.

**Procedure**

The questionnaire and cover letters were printed and distributed to the faculty mailboxes at one suburban elementary school. There were thirty questionnaires distributed on the same day. Responses to the questionnaire were requested to be returned to an envelope in the researcher’s mailbox.

Due to a poor response, twenty more questionnaires were made available on two separate occasions. They were again made available to faculty members following an oral presentation by the investigator at a faculty meeting. Finally, they were placed in a central location with a reminder note, thanking those who had replied and urging those who had not to send in their completed questionnaire.

A face to face interview was also an option for anyone who preferred this method of response. Three teachers scheduled to meet with the investigator to discuss the questions in an interview.
Analysis of Data

Responses to the questions about the effectiveness of *First Steps* staff development training in teachers' ability to implement and understand *First Steps* and other resulting data were analyzed and then described in this report. The responses to the questions were listed separately and then analyzed for similarities. Similar responses were categorized and grouped together.

Summary

The purpose of the study was to document and to determine the impact of the First Steps professional development on the understanding of *First Steps*. This study also examined how *First Steps* has affected the ability of teachers to implement *First Steps* in their classrooms and to incorporate *First Steps* strategies in their teaching. The results were compiled for the district and the building principal to use in their decisions relating to *First Steps* and future staff development needs.

The data were obtained by questionnaire and interview, of which thirty were distributed and fifteen were returned. Responses were collected, categorized, and analyzed for similarities.
CHAPTER IV

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to document and determine how First Steps training sessions were helpful to teachers in their understanding of First Steps. This study also examined how First Steps training sessions have impacted the ability of teachers to implement First Steps in their classrooms and incorporate First Steps strategies in their teaching. Furthermore, this study provided suggestions for how to further support teachers in their understanding and ability to implement First Steps.

Analysis of Data

Questions 1 & 2

The professional development provided by First Steps tutors was helpful to teachers in their understanding of First Steps and their ability to implement First Steps. The following responses were categorized into three groups. The first group measures responses regarding First Steps materials and their use as a resource. The second group measures the implications for instruction and planning as a result of First Steps. The third group of responses measured the effectiveness of the First Steps presentations.

Category 1
First Steps materials as a resource:

• *It was very helpful. The books provide a framework and many activities. The outline is all there. There is a ton of information.*
• Working through continuum in structured step by step approach helped in initial use of document.

• It’s easy to follow and do. I like that it is easy to plot kids and plan for instruction.

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• The resource and developmental continuum books are full of ideas.

• I was given a “push” to go over the material to see where I was strong and where I still needed more thought.

• After the training I felt more knowledgeable about the program and how to use the materials in the resource guide.

• The continuum was very user friendly. It is concise and easy to use. the continuum is also easy to pull out and share with parents.

• The resource books are very helpful and have ideas that are fairly easy to implement.

• Whether we were using the resource books or completing the continuum, we learned The First Steps Program refining and extending our understanding.

Category 2

Implications for instruction and planning

• It launched the program for me. It gave me an understanding of how the indicators need to be followed and the mastery of the components before moving on to the next phase.
• Going through the continuum gave me a better handle on where my children were and what strategies I still needed to emphasize.

• They provided opportunities for planning and implementing some of the strategies. Examples were given which helped to clarify the skills.

• I am impressed with the content and the specific points that have been made about the teaching of children.

• The sharing has allowed staff to receive the necessary support, yet take risks in their own growth and development.

• Interaction by the teachers gives everybody a chance to discuss ideas, build on each other's expertise, use each other as sounding boards, and work creatively as a community of learners.

• I have used graphic organizers more effectively since the program.

• Continuum and categories help to follow kids; you know where they are and where they need to be and base instruction on that.

• Training helped me to focus on the key indicators for students at my level, which in turn led to more concise lesson planning.

• Many ideas were presented to stimulate the use of writing techniques to teach the various forms of writing.

• It was very helpful once I plotted kids on the continuum. I can now plan lessons according to the overall class needs. I was able to write goals for each child based on their writing.

• We had completed several student activities which helped me to "own" them.

• It correlates with other district initiatives.

I agree with the developmental philosophy.
Category 3

Effectiveness of presentations

- The presentations have provided staff with opportunities to link assessment to their teaching through the developmental continua, teaching strategies, and the developmental learning process.
- The First Steps meetings, support groups, and planning sessions are very helpful.
- There were opportunities to plan with a colleague and review the resources.
- The very interactive teaching approach was helpful. Using actual techniques and ideas from the resource book during training was great.
- There were several opportunities to revisit First Steps in order to help energize us to use it in the classroom.
- I liked meeting with staff to share ideas. It was also very helpful to meet with specific grade levels only.
- It provided me with the opportunity to interact with adults. Particularly, planning, exploring, problem solving, questioning and sharing ideas.
- The workshops gave us time for reflection; time for experimentation and “having a go”. Time for sharing with colleagues builds confidence and comfort with the strategies that we are implementing.
- It was helpful to get together to reflect on our teaching practices, celebrate our successes and consider the goals that we are working towards.
- It was presented with a variety of techniques in an orderly way.
- There were demonstrations of techniques and goals with us experiencing the tasks.
• There were videos of teachers in action.
• Stages were explained clearly through explanation, demonstrations, and many examples.
• Sessions gave us a jump start.
• Movement from stage to stage was clearly defined.
• The whole premise behind the program was developed. A very developmental approach was introduced.
• It put teachers in the position of students- opportunity to learn “how to” by doing activities.
• Opportunity to see classroom examples of student work helped.
• The professional development built on my prior knowledge and experiences.
• “Trainers” gave specific, helpful hints.
• It explained and defined different phases as well as the philosophy of developmental learning.
• The professional sharing associated with the First Steps professional development has been outstanding.

Questions 3 & 4

There were some problems with the First Steps professional development that prevented the teachers from understanding First Steps and impacted their ability to implement First Steps. The following responses were categorized into six groups. The first group of responses related to the lack of correlation of First Steps with report cards and assessments. The next group of responses measured the lack of parental involvement with First Steps. The third group of responses looked at the scheduling and lack of monitoring of First Steps. The fourth group
was the largest response which looked at the issue of time to use First Steps. Group number five dealt with the problem of an overwhelming amount of material connected to First Steps. The sixth group of responses were all comments showing no problems with First Steps.

Category 1

Correlation with report card and assessments

- Lack of correlation with our current report card and assessments can’t grade developmental progress....
- We need to correlate First Steps with the new language arts tests.
- Report cards have no correlation or connection to the continuum yet there seems to be no district push to revise the report card to correlate yet.

Category 2

Parental Involvement

- Parents lack understanding of the developmental process, they want to know how their child compares to other children.
- Nothing is sent home or reported on First Steps and children’s development in this area.

Category 3

Scheduling/Monitoring

- You need to “raise the level of concern” nobody is checking up on us so many don’t do it.
- Scheduling of training...the session in the summer was not as effective because we didn’t have kids in classrooms to relate it to.
Category 4

Time

- *Time, Time Time we need more of it!*

- *Time- it takes time to get through it all. I just use what I need for the moment.*
  
  I'd like to be ahead in planning.

- *Time to read the resource books, time to do the activities, time to plan, time to meet with kids.*

- *Time to maintain the continuum and peruse the resources effectively.*

- *There is never enough time to plan for the best implementation of any program.*

- *Not enough time to work as grade levels to actually implement the program.*

- *The planning time was valuable, but didn’t translate realistically into classroom practice. The plan I developed was never taught the way I set it up because of time restrictions.*

- *Lack of time!!!!*

- *Not enough planning time.*

- *The biggest issue is time to plan, to coordinate, to integrate, to reflect, to meet, to discuss, to implement, to evaluate.*

- *If First Steps is a priority then we all need to continue to make time for the program and the professional development associated with it.*
Category 5

Amount of material

- I was just beginning to understand Writing Bands and we dumped that for First Steps.
- It was a bit overwhelming, but not difficult to understand.
- The forms were very time consuming
- It is very difficult to implement all the new curriculum, state guidelines for all of the subjects.
- Continuums provide helpful information, but not always my #1 priority.

Category 6

Totally satisfied / No problem

- Nothing that I can think of.
- I didn't have any problems understanding the program - The presentations were well thought out and thorough.
- None, I felt that the presenters did a wonderful job of explaining the strategies and resources.
- Nothing. Presenters were excellent!!
- Nothing
- No problems with the understanding.
- None!

Question 5

Suggestions were given as to what else could be done to support a better understanding of First Steps and help with their ability to implement First Steps. The suggestions were categorized into four groups. The first group
suggested a need for more planning time. The second group of suggestions were focused on more time to share and meet as a “support” group. The third group of suggestions asked for more modeling of First Steps and First Steps materials. The last group of suggestions were other points of concern that did not fit into any other category.

Category 1

Planning time

- *We need a whole day to work with the resources and plan with no distractions.*
- *Time to plan, refer and implement the program.*
- *Plan grade level experiences for teachers in which we create and share plans which would reinforce the appropriate skills. Perhaps a half day or after school session would be helpful.*
- *Release time to fill out the continua in its initial phase would be helpful.*
- *Provide more time for teachers to plan and react together.*
- *We need time to work on the reading continuum and program development like we had for writing.*
- *The more it gets used the better the understanding will be.*
- *It would be helpful to sit with grade level or alone released paid time to plan and use First Steps in my own units.*
- *On grading day give time to also do First Steps continua*
- *Time is the key factor... we need more of it for planning and more time with our students in our classrooms!*


Category 2
Sharing time / Support groups

- *We need to continue sharing our classroom activities, teaching strategies, and understandings with each other.*
- *Support groups for reading would be helpful.*
- *We need to gather again to share hands on ideas of what is being done in other classrooms.*
- *It would be beneficial having some sharing sessions where ideas that worked were shared.*
- *Second grade teachers talking to third grade teachers about what they are doing and so on. This would give each grade level a better perspective about what is being done.*
- *Continued grade level meetings and sharing ideas.*
- *More opportunities to share experiences in a course setting, although the support groups are a good idea. A more mandatory setting would give me the push I need.*
- *We need group planning and opportunities to utilize the resource books.*
- *More support meetings, more collaborations, more planning sessions are needed.*
- *We need to continue our periodic First Steps meetings and workshops. Support groups should be available with a specific focus.*

Category 3
Modeling / examples

- *Possible grade level meetings with a facilitator.*
• Modeling of lessons in our classrooms by trainers.
• More examples of people using First Steps on video etc.
• Have someone come in and teach a lesson using First Steps and show us how to integrate it into our plans.
• Grade level meetings- have trainers go in with a focus and present to each level.
• We need to continue to observe models and exemplars so that we know that we are on the right track.

Category 4

Other
• Do not place “goals” on grade levels that students will reach next phase by June etc. remember that it is developmental.
• Let’s not explore too many programs, let’s stick to First Steps.
• We need to include the parents in our First Steps programs as well. They need to be informed!
• Our assessments and report cards need to reflect the developmental model.

Summary

The purpose of the study was to document and to determine the impact of the First Steps professional development on the understanding of First Steps. This study also examined how First Steps has affected the ability of teachers to implement First Steps in their classrooms and to incorporate First Steps strategies in their teaching. The results were compiled for the district and the building
principal to use in their decisions relating to *First Steps* and future staff
development needs.

The data were obtained by questionnaire and interview, of which thirty
were distributed and fifteen were returned. Responses were collected,
categorized, and analyzed for similarities.
CHAPTER V

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to document and to determine how First Steps training sessions were helpful to teachers in their understanding of First Steps. This study also examined how First Steps training sessions have impacted the ability of teachers to implement First Steps in their classrooms and to incorporate First Steps strategies in their teaching. Furthermore, this study provided suggestions as to how to further support teachers in their understanding and ability to implement First Steps.

Research Questions

(1&2) How was the professional development provided by First Steps tutors helpful to teachers in their understanding of First Steps and their ability to implement First Steps?

(3&4) What were some of the problems with the professional development offered by First Steps that prevented the teachers’ understanding of First Steps and their ability to implement First Steps?

(5) What else could be done to support a better understanding of First Steps and support their ability to implement First Steps?
Results

The first and second questions examined how the professional development provided by First Steps tutors was helpful to teachers in their understanding of First Steps and their ability to implement First Steps. The First Steps resources, materials, and professional development had a significant impact on the understanding and implementation of First Steps in this building. Teachers reported agreement with the developmental philosophy, instructional techniques, and use of the continuum. They reported that the materials associated with First Steps were user friendly and helpful.

The teachers also found significant implications for instruction and planning. Several teachers commented on the sharing and how the interaction of teachers allowed them to work creatively as a community of learners. Many teachers noted that First Steps training led them to more concise lesson planning and a more developmental focus.

Teachers commented on the effectiveness of the presentations. First Steps tutors and professional development sessions were regarded as very helpful, outstanding, and interactive. From the data, it was clear to see that teachers liked collaborative hands on workshops where they felt included and energized. The opportunities to review the resources, fill out continua, reflect on our practices, and share ideas with colleagues were highly valued in the professional development provided by First Steps.

Although First Steps was generally regarded as helpful, there were still widespread concerns about amount of material, time, scheduling and monitoring, parental involvement, and correlation with report cards and assessments. The
majority of the concerns raised centered on the issue of time. The teachers need time to plan using the resources, time to meet with and observe children, time to integrate, and time to reflect on our teaching. As one respondent said, “If First Steps is a priority then we all need to continue to make time for the program and the professional development associated with it.”

Several comments reflected on the fact that even though teachers may be involved with First Steps, they are not held accountable for it. As one respondent said, “You need to raise the level of concern...nobody is checking on us so many do not do it.” Many felt that if it correlated with our standards, assessments, and report cards than more teachers would be more enthusiastic and more involved with First Steps. Some stated it was not a number one priority, it was time consuming, and difficult to implement all new curriculum and state standards for all subjects.

**Implications for the Schools**

The data gathered provide a school with a broad base from which to consider the continuous First Steps professional development opportunities. As indicated from the survey, there are still some problems with the implementation and continuation of First Steps. One issue that seems unresolved for teachers is assessment. It is necessary for our school district to change our report card and better align our standards in order to reflect the developmental continua. Perhaps if First Steps were aligned with report cards and assessments there would be more active participation and involvement.

Time was the overwhelming problem related to First Steps implementation. Conference days or release time would be helpful for teachers to place students on
the continua and to work collaboratively to plan effective, collaborative lessons. Teachers also expressed the need for more time to absorb all of the information related to First Steps. They expressed feeling overwhelmed about the materials and presentations. Some felt that there was not enough time to manage the system of First Steps and did not make it a top priority. They felt it was difficult to carefully place children on the continuum and then base their instruction on the represented phases in their classrooms due to lack of adequate time.

Another suggestion and major implication for the school is to provide teachers with more support groups and sharing time. Grade levels need to talk to other grade levels to get a better perspective about what is being done. It would also be helpful to hold support groups or grade level meetings with a specific focus or topic. Someone suggested a more mandatory setting would give them a “push.” This school would also benefit from trainers modeling lessons in classrooms and helping teachers to integrate First Steps into their teaching.

Another implication for this school is to revise the current report card. There is no place on the current report card that gives any space for reporting First Steps stages or a child’s developmental progress. If teachers need to teach developmentally, they should be assessing and reporting progress developmentally as well. This could only happen if parents were brought into First Steps. They would need to understand the philosophy of it as well as the reporting system (continua) of First Steps.

Finally, this school, as well as the district, needs to look closely at the programs that teachers are using. The teachers do not want to start one program and have that one dropped for the next flashy program that comes along. If this
school is going to be committed to First Steps, then it must convey that message to their teachers. That is the only way to get the teachers invested in this program.

**Implications for Further Research**

First Steps was implemented in the entire district over three years ago. This study examined only one building and its perceptions of First Steps. There are five other elementary buildings currently trained in First Steps. There are various levels of participation at each building. It would be a valuable study to measure the effectiveness of the training at another building and compare the data with the building in this study.

It would also be interesting to survey other stakeholders in the First Steps program. Parents, students, and administrators could provide their perspective on First Steps. Finally, it would be worthwhile to start tracking student improvement in literacy as a result of the implementation of First Steps.

In summary, this study validated several of the positive effects of the First Steps professional development, highlighted some of the drawbacks or problems with the First Steps professional development, and offered helpful feedback as to how one might support teachers in their professional development using First Steps. The information gathered should prove useful for the building and district involved in the study.
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Education Department of Western Australia (1994). *A survey of the implementation of the literacy component of the first steps project in Western Australia*. Australia: Precision Information Pty Ltd.

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## ASE 1: Role Play Writing

### Content, Organisation and Contextual Understandings
- Assigns a message to own symbols
- Understands that writing and drawing are different, e.g. points to words while ‘reading’
- Is aware that print carries a message
- Orally recounts own experiences
- Knows some favourite parts of stories, rhymes, jingles or songs
- Reads text from memory or invents meaning (the meaning may change each time)
- Writes and asks others to assign meaning to what has been written
- Talks about own drawing and writing
- Tells adults what to write, e.g. ‘This is my cat’
- Role plays writing message for purpose, e.g. telephone messages
- States purpose for own ‘writing’, e.g. ‘This is my shopping list’
- Recognises own name (or part of it) in print, e.g. ‘My name starts with that’
- Attempts to write own name
- Thinks own ‘writing’ can be read by others

### Concepts and Conventions
- Uses known letters or approximations of letters to represent written language
- Shows beginning awareness of directionality: i.e. points to where print begins
- Draws symbols consisting of straight, curved or intersecting lines that simulate letters
- Produces aimless or circular scribble
- Makes horizontal or linear scribble with some breaks
- Places letters randomly on page
- Writes random strings of letters
- Mixes letters, numerals and invented letter shapes
- Flips or reverses letters
- Makes organisational decisions about writing, e.g. ‘I’ll start here so it will fit’
- Copies layout of some text forms, e.g. letters, lists

### Strategies
- Experiments with upper and lower case letters. May show a preference for upper case
- Repeats a few known alphabet symbols frequently using letters from own name
- Copies print from environment

### Attitude
- Enjoys stories and asks for them to be retold or reread
- Listens attentively to the telling or reading of stories and other texts
- ‘Writes’ spontaneously for self rather than for an audience

---

## PHASE 2: Experimental Writing

### Content, Organisation and Contextual Understandings
- Reads back own writing
- Attempts familiar forms of writing, e.g. lists, letters, recounts, stories, messages
- Writes using simplified oral language structures, e.g. ‘I brr loles’
- Uses writing to convey meaning
- Voices thoughts while writing
- Writes to communicate messages, direct experiences or feelings
- Assumes that reader shares the context so may not give sufficient background information, e.g. may tell ‘who’ but not ‘when’
- Often begins sentence with ‘I’ or ‘We’
- Is beginning to use written language structures. Has a sense of sentence, i.e. writes complete sentences with or without punctuation
- Repeats familiar words when writing, e.g. cat, cat, cat
- Generates writing by repeating the same beginning patterns, e.g. ‘I like cats, I like dogs, I like birds . . .’
- Recognises some words and letters in context
- Recognises that people use writing to convey meaning

### Concepts and Conventions
- Realises that print contains a constant message
- Uses left to right and top to bottom orientation of print
- Demonstrates one-to-one correspondence between written and spoken word
- Uses upper and lower case letters indiscriminately
- Distinguishes between numerals and letters
- Leaves a space between word-like clusters of letters
- Dictates slowly so teacher can ‘keep up’ while scribing

---

### Year: _____ Teacher: ________ Year: _____ Teacher: ________ Year: _____ Teacher: ________
**Individual Student Profile**

**Developmental Continuum**

The child is exhibiting all the key indicators of that phase. They display indicators from other phases.

### PHASE 3: Early Writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content, Organisation and Contextual Understandings</th>
<th>Editing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• uses a small range of familiar text forms</td>
<td>• begins to develop editing skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• chooses topics that are personally significant</td>
<td>• deletes words to clarify meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• uses basic sentence structures and varies sentence beginnings</td>
<td>• adds words to clarify meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• can explain in context, some of the purposes of using writing, e.g. shopping list or telephone messages as a memory aid</td>
<td>• begins to proofread for spelling errors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Language Conventions**

| • attempts to use some punctuation | • responds to requests for clarification |
| • sometimes uses full stops | • attempts the use of a proofreading guide constructed jointly by students and teacher |
| • sometimes uses a capital letter to start a sentence | |
| • uses capital letters for names | |
| • attempts use of question marks | |
| • attempts use of exclamation marks | |
| • sometimes uses apostrophes for contractions | |
| • overgeneralises use of print conventions, e.g. overuse of apostrophes, full stops, dashes and commas | |
| • often writes in the first person | |
| • attempts writing in both first and third person | |
| • usually uses appropriate subject/verb agreements | |
| • usually maintains consistent tense | |
| • writes a title which reflects content | |

**Strategies**

| • talks with others to plan and revise own writing | |
| • re-reads own writing to maintain word sequence | |
| • attempts to transfer knowledge of text structure to writing, e.g. imitates form of a familiar big book | |
| • shares ideas for writing with peers or teacher | |
| • participates in group brainstorming activities to elicit ideas and information before writing | |
| • in consultation with teacher, sets personal goals for writing development | |
| • discusses proofreading strategies with peers and teacher and attempts to use them in context | |

**Word Usage**

| • experiments with words drawn from language experience activities, literature, media and oral language of peers and others | • perseveres to complete writing tasks |
| • discusses word formations and meanings; noticing similarities and differences | |
| • transfers words encountered in talk, or reading, to writing | |
| • highlights words for emphasis, e.g. BIG | |

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**Teacher:**

**Teacher:**
**Indicators For Writing D**

Teachers can identify a child’s phase of development by observing their writing. It should be noted however, that most children in this stage...

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**SE 4: Conventional Writing**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text and Organisation and Textual Understandings</th>
<th>Language Coherence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>uses text forms to suit purpose and audience</td>
<td>uses a range of strategies for planning, revising and publishing own written texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>can explain why some text forms may be more appropriate than others to achieve a specific purpose</td>
<td>selects relevant information from a variety of sources before writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>writes a range of text forms including stories, reports, procedures and expositions</td>
<td>can transfer information from reading to writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uses a variety of simple, compound and extended sentences</td>
<td>organises paragraphs logically to form a cohesive text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>groups sentences containing related information into paragraphs</td>
<td>uses a variety of simple, compound and complex sentences appropriate to text form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>takes account of some aspects of context, purpose and audience</td>
<td>considers the needs of audience and includes background information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>demonstrates the ability to develop a topic</td>
<td>demonstrates the structure of writing more effectively, e.g. uses headings, subheadings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>demonstrates knowledge of differences between narrative and informational text, when writing</td>
<td>can write from another’s point of view</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organises the structure of writing more effectively, e.g. uses headings, subheadings</td>
<td>shows evidence of personal voice (where appropriate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>can write from another’s point of view</td>
<td>is developing a personal style of writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shows evidence of personal voice (where appropriate)</td>
<td>establishes place, time and situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is developing a personal style of writing</td>
<td>often includes dialogue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>establishes place, time and situation</td>
<td>uses dialogue to enhance character development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>often includes dialogue</td>
<td>shows evidence of the transfer of literary language from reading to writing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Word Usage**

- is beginning to select vocabulary according to the demands of audience and purpose, e.g. uses subject-specific vocabulary
- uses some similes or metaphors in an attempt to enhance meaning
- varies vocabulary for interest
- includes specific vocabulary to explain or describe, e.g. appropriate adjectives
- uses adverbs and adjectives to enhance meaning
- uses simple colloquialisms and cliches

**Editing**

- uses proofreading guide or checklist to edit own or peers' writing
- edits and proofreads own writing after composing
- reconstrains text to clarify meaning, e.g. moves words, phrases and clauses
- reconstrains words to clarify meaning
- attempts to correct punctuation
- recognises most misspelled words and attempts corrections

**Language Conventions**

- punctuates simple sentences correctly
- uses capital letters for proper nouns
- uses capital letters to start sentences
- uses capital letters for titles
- uses full stops to end sentences
- uses question marks correctly
- sometimes uses commas
- uses apostrophes for possession
- uses apostrophes for contractions
- writes effectively in both first and third person
- uses appropriate subject-verb agreements
- uses appropriate noun-pronoun agreements
- maintains appropriate tense throughout text

**Strategies**

- uses a range of strategies for planning, revising and publishing own written texts
- selects relevant information from a variety of sources before writing
- can transfer information from reading to writing, e.g. takes notes for project
- brainstorms to elicit ideas and information before writing
- attempts to organise ideas before writing
- plans writing using notes, lists or diagrams or other relevant information
- sets and monitors goals for writing
- uses knowledge of other texts as models for writing
- rereads and revises while composing

**Attitude**

- writes for enjoyment
- writes to get things done
- conducts research effectively in order to select appropriate information to fulfill task demands
- demonstrates success in writing a wide range of forms, e.g. stories, poems, reports, arguments
- demonstrates ability to view writing from a reader’s perspective
- expresses a well reasoned point of view in writing
- can justify a decision in writing
- can write about the same topic from different points of view
- writes a complete, succinct orientation and develops relevant ideas and events
- uses complex sentences with embedded clauses or phrases, e.g. 'My friend Jane, who lives next door, ...'
- discusses and uses a range of linking words, e.g. thus, furthermore, in addition
- signals cause and effect using e.g. 'because, since, result in, brings about, hence, consequently, subsequently
- signals comparisons using e.g. 'like, different from, however, resembles, whereas, similar
- signals alternatives using on the other hand, otherwise, conversely, either, instead of, whether

**PHASE 5: Proficient Writing**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content, Organisation and Contextual Understandings</th>
<th>Language Coherence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>selects text forms to suit purpose and audience, demonstrating control over most essential elements</td>
<td>uses a variety of simple, compound and complex sentences appropriate to text form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>can explain the goals in writing a text and indicate the extent to which they were achieved</td>
<td>considers the needs of audience and includes background information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>writes to define, clarify and develop ideas and express creativity, e.g. stories, poems, reports, arguments</td>
<td>demonstrates the structure of writing more effectively, e.g. uses headings, subheadings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>writes a topic sentence and includes relevant information to develop a cohesive paragraph</td>
<td>can transfer information from reading to writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organises paragraphs logically to form a cohesive text</td>
<td>organises the structure of writing more effectively, e.g. uses headings, subheadings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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It should be noted however, that most child...
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PHASE 6: Advanced Writing</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Content, Organisation and Contextual Understandings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- controls effectively the language and structural features of a large repertoire of text forms</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- controls and manipulates the linguistic and structural components of writing to enhance clarity and impact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- generates, explores and develops topics and ideas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- may choose to manipulate or abandon conventional text forms to achieve impact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- maintains stylistic features throughout texts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- makes critical choices of tone and point of view to suit different purposes and to influence audiences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- writes exploring and developing abstract ideas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- makes informed choices about the linguistic features, organisation and development of ideas and information according to audience and purpose</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- deliberately structures sentences to enhance a text and according to audience and purpose</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- develops ideas and information clearly, sustaining coherence throughout complex texts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- conceals personal bias where appropriate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word Usage</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- selects and manipulates words, phrases or clauses, for their shades of meaning and impact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- successfully involved the reader by the use of literary devices such as metaphor, simile, onomatopoeia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- uses abstract and technical terms appropriately in context</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Editing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- modifies and restructures phrases, clauses, paragraphs or whole texts to clarify and achieve precise meaning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Conventions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- controls the conventions of writing but may make a deliberate choice to break them to enhance meaning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- takes responsibility for planning, revising and proof reading to ensure that writing achieves its purpose</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- reflects on, and critically evaluates own writing to ensure that content and organisation suit the purpose for writing and the audience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- evaluates and synthesises information from a variety of sources to support view</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dear Colleagues,

I need your help! I am working on my thesis this year entitled "The Impact of First Steps Professional Development Training on Teachers". I know this is a very busy time of the year, but I would greatly appreciate your participation in this survey.

I am not investigating the effectiveness of the First Steps program, but rather, the effectiveness of the training. Have these training programs and workshops impacted the ability of teachers to implement First Steps? I am not looking at what you have done in relation to First Steps, but what you now feel comfortable doing as a result of the First Steps Training.

When you have completed the survey, please place it in my mailbox. I will be collecting them through January 19, 1999. If you would prefer to discuss the questions face to face as opposed to writing them down, please let me know. Thank you in advance for helping me to gain more knowledge in an area of great interest to me. I will share the results of my research with you upon completion of this project. Thanks again.

Sincerely,

Amy Kleemann
• If you would prefer a face to face interview, please indicate this below.
Name ____________________________
Best times to meet ____________

Please complete this survey and return it no later than January 19, 1999. Feel free to use a separate sheet of paper if needed.

• Circle which First Steps Professional Development Courses you have attended.

  The Writing Component

  Writing planning session (half day)

  District Workshop with Jeff Mountjoy

  The Reading Component and Comprehension

  Faculty Meeting Presentations

  After school Support Groups

  Other ____________________________

• Briefly, describe how the Professional Development provided by First Steps was helpful to you in your understanding of the First Steps Program.
• Briefly, describe how the Professional Development provided by First Steps was helpful to you in your **ability to implement** the First Steps Program.

• Briefly, what were some of the problems with the Professional Development offered by First Steps that prevented your **understanding** of the First Steps Program?
• Briefly, what were some of the problems with the Professional Development offered by First Steps that impacted your ability to implement the First Steps Program?

• What else could be done to support your understanding of the First Steps Program?
• What else could be done to support your ability to implement the First Steps Program in your classroom?

• Please feel free to add any additional comments regarding The First Steps Program below.