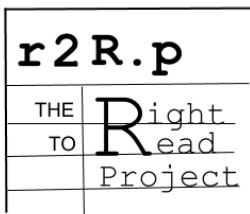


Teacher #1

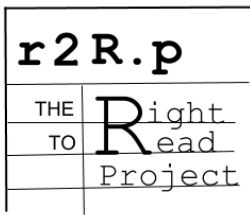
We had to sit through all these trainings that didn't teach us anything to do in the classroom. The trainers just went on and on about theory and research but they didn't tell us why we need to know about that stuff or what to teach our students. I realized that the trainings were a waste of time, so I started tuning out. I used that time to grade papers.



Teacher #2

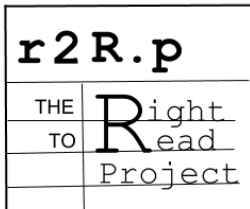
We were given this curriculum that was totally scripted and we were told to just follow the script. We had to say everything in the manual, just as it was written, regardless of the students in front of us. For a while, we tried to make the curriculum our own, but then they started to do these "walk-throughs" where administrators in suits, carrying clipboards, would pop into our class to check to see if we were on the right page number at the right time. If we were off-script, we'd get written up.

I got really good at teaching with the door closed and then, if someone came into my classroom, I'd give the kids a signal and we'd all pull out the basal. We worked together, the kids and I, to give the visitors what they were looking for. And then, when the visitors left, we'd go back to *real* teaching and learning.



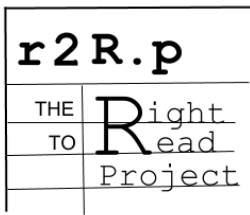
Teacher #3

I quit teaching after the second year of the initiative. I feel like once the scripted curriculum came in, there wasn't any time to do the things that had brought me into teaching. We had no time for art, or science, or reading books just for the joy of reading them. In bringing in these teacher-proof programs, they drove the real teachers away. I miss the kids, but I wasn't getting to do what I wanted to do for them anyway.



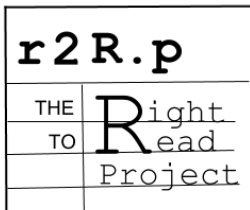
Principal #1

There is already enough to do as a principal in order to make a whole school function. This initiative just piled on a bunch of deliverables, meetings, and paperwork. I'd run around during the day at school, taking care of all the stuff you need to do as a principal, and then I'd stay up late at night to do the things necessary to show compliance with the initiative. We needed the funding for my school, but it required a whole lot of busywork to keep it. I was pretty relieved when they called things off. It was just more work than it was worth.



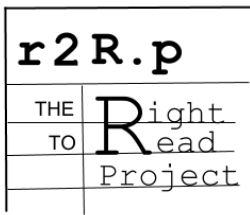
Principal #2

I actually really tried to make the initiative stick at my school site. I know we need to do a better job of teaching kids to read and I believe in the science of reading. But I have some super veteran teachers at my school who just really didn't buy-in and there was nothing I could really do about it. Sure, they would get low marks after a walk-through, but then there was no follow up and they knew that. They have tenure and so they just waited for the whole initiative to blow over.



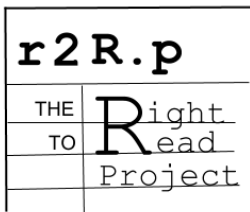
Principal #3

I went to all the trainings with my teachers and I tried to understand the instructional shifts that needed to happen. At first it was just me trying to manage things, and there was no way I could do everything that needed to be done for this initiative and run the school. So then I hired a literacy coach, but the teachers just really didn't like or respect her and so they'd come to me and complain. It was a relief when the whole thing ended because we could all go back to getting along.



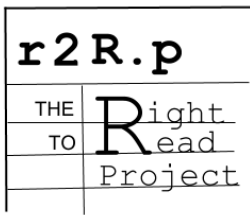
District Leader #1

At first, we were really excited about things. We were finally going to have the money to do all the professional development we've been wanting to do. But then, it turned out that there was all this red-tape and so, in order to secure the grant we had to get the PD and materials and stuff from an approved list of providers. It was all so expensive. So expensive. We were never really able to do all the things we wanted.



District Leader #2

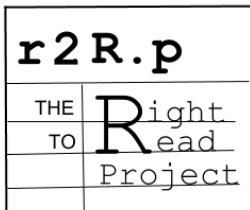
I put my all into this grant. I worked so hard to try and get everything lined up for teachers and principals, to make sure everyone had the materials and trainings they needed. I really felt like I was setting schools up for success, but then when we'd actually go to sites and walk through the classrooms, we could tell that people weren't really following through on their end of things. Teachers would do this dog and pony show, but we could tell that the instructional routines were just not there. And the principals would just shrug and be like, "What do you expect me to do about it?" The whole thing was very disheartening.



District Leader #3

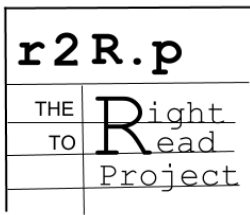
Things didn't go as well as we wanted them to, but some instruction really did change for kids and we saw that in the data. The gains weren't as fast as we wanted, so some people lost hope too soon. It's like they expected a sudden flip in the data— red to green for all kids— and didn't realize that the slow creep upwards was a sign things were headed in the right direction.

I think that, in the excitement to sell the initiative to teachers and principals, some promises were made about 95% proficiency, and it set some unrealistic expectations. It would have been better to set more realistic goals so that people could feel a sense of accomplishment for passing those hurdles instead of feeling like failures for not hitting 95% mark from the very beginning.



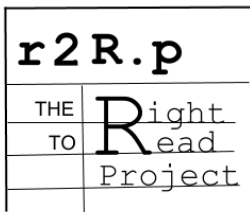
Parent #1

I was opposed to the program from the start. I just knew that all this focus on foundational reading skills, something that a lot of kids come to school already having, would just narrow the curriculum for all kids. I learned to read without any phonics instruction and so did my kids. School should really focus on social-emotional learning, getting along with other kids, and to learn about science and social studies. All this focus on low-level skills really took away the joy of learning and you could just see it in the teachers; they lost their spark and passion.



Parent #2

I didn't really follow all the arguing about that reading initiative. I just dropped my kids off every morning, picked them up from afterschool care in the evening. My middle child, he got put in some reading intervention when he was in kindergarten and first grade, but he turned out all right. He loves to read now so I don't know what all that was about. My youngest, she started school after the initiative ended. They say that she's doing fine. Just a little late to catch on to reading.



Parent #3

Dyslexia runs in our family, so we knew that our kindergartener was at risk for reading difficulties. I was super excited about the initiative because it meant that we wouldn't need to pay for private tutoring for reading. She got reading intervention in kindergarten and first grade at school, so we could use that money we set aside for tutoring to pay for fun stuff, like afterschool enrichment. And we were also happy for other families, ones who never could have paid for tutoring. They could trust that their kids would learn to read at school. But a lot of privileged families don't understand that— they don't feel like it's the job of the school to teach reading— and so disagreements at the Board meetings got ugly. It really became a battle. The families who need their kids to learn to read in school on one side and the families who didn't have that urgency over reading instruction on the other.