



RESEARCH YOU CAN USE NOW!

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GOOD LUCK

If you decide to implement this program, please let the Georgia Center know. If you are interested in this program, but feel you need additional advice or support, please contact Dr. Charles Reavis at the Georgia Center for Educational Renewal at careavis@georgiasouthern.edu or call 912-681-5719

Personal Note – I have attended the first two GPS training sessions for principals. I also attended the TAAS training sessions for principals while I was in Texas. I can tell you from personal experience that the GPS sessions are far superior to those in Texas. However, I have come to believe that not much of it will be realized in practice. The research in this report suggests reasons for my belief and means of increasing the likelihood that more of the training will enter practice in Georgia schools. Further Note – to be sure, in Texas the appearance of implementation was in evidence, but genuine implementation was rare.

Research: A four year study reported in the book, The Knowing-Doing Gap by Stanford University researchers Jeffrey Pfeffer and Robert Sutton, explores the reasons for the widely acknowledged fact that most training, no matter how soundly developed and how well delivered, is rarely implemented. They pose the question, "Why it is that at the end of so many books and seminars, leaders report being enlightened and wiser, but not much happens in their organizations?" They wonder how it is that while superior management practices are reasonably well known, implementation proceeds slowly and backsliding is common. They wonder how it is that two plants in the same company can exhibit differing management practices with comparable differences in effectiveness? (You would think that within the same company, effective practices would be widely adopted).

Findings: – Regarding the misconceptions about implementation, they found the following: (1) if leaders just know what to do, then they will do it, (2) if we adopt mission statements, strategic plans, make decisions, prepare reports (accreditation, for example), then it will be implemented, (3) if leaders are using the terminology, then they must understand it and be able to implement it. They also identified organizational practices that discouraged implementation: (1) organizational preference for conventional wisdom and consistency, (2) organizational use of fear and distrust (either explicit or implicit) to encourage implementation, (3) organizational emphasis on short-term outcome measures, rather than in-process measures. With regard to practices that support implementation, they found the following: (1) develop and emphasize an organizational philosophy that states key organizational values, (2) support learning by doing and then teaching others, (3) take action; it counts far more than elegant plans and models, (4) permit, even praise mistakes as opportunities to learn, (5) eliminate fear, especially fear of in-process measurement, (6) emphasize the simple; avoid the complex.

Implications for implementation of GPS – (1) develop and articulate a philosophy of practice – a generic one, not merely focused on the GPS, (2) boil down the GPS training to a few key behaviors, (3) encourage and support the leadership to put these few behaviors into practice with the expectation that they will make mistakes, but learn in the doing, (4) develop in-process measures for these few behaviors – short surveys of teachers, for example, (5) form a study group within your district to read, discuss, and implement the suggestions in the book (I could lead such a study group if you wish). The book contains several instruments and surveys that are also available from the Georgia Center for Educational Renewal.