

# **Randomized Field Trials in Education: Implementation and Implications**



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# How do urban districts perceive RFT's generally and the push for scientifically based research initiatives specifically?

- **Hundreds of mentions of SBR in NCLB 2001**
- **More Than Rhetoric?**
- **Conversation with research directors in July 2003**
- **Textbook publishers and program developers have always claimed scientifically-based**



# Most Programs/Strategies/Textbooks Fall Short

**Reading 34 years of Converging Research**

***Little On...***

**ELLs -- New Language & Acquiring Skills**

**Older non-readers**

**Mathematics**

**Accelerating Growth**

**Consistently educating Large Numbers of Poor Students**

**Programs do not go to scale**



# Favorable Components of RFT

## Treatment Group

- Size
- Demographics
- Age/Grade

## Control Group

## Independent Assessment

- Different from on-going assessment
- Different from program's management system



# Favorable Components of RFT

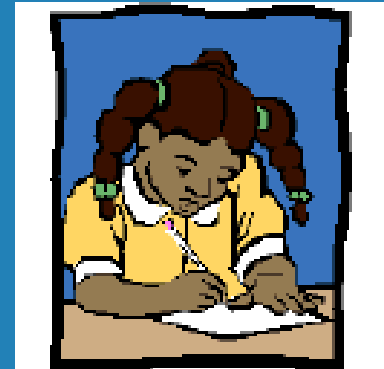
## Significant Rate of Progress

- More than 10 months growth in school year

## Longitudinal/Trend Data

## Cohort Analyses

## Sustain Effects



# Favorable Components of RFT

**Qualitative & Quantitative Data**

**Conducted by Independent Third  
Party**

**Disaggregated Data**



# Randomized Experimental Design

## When Is It “Best”?

- **Differences in Preschool Programs**

**Verses**

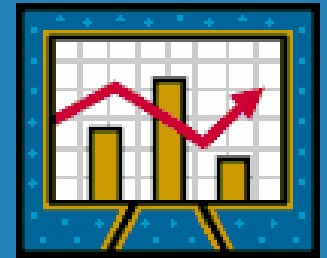
- **Preschool & Non-Preschool**



# What are the benefits of the trend towards more RFTs?

## Benefits

- ✓ **More effective programs & textbooks**
- ✓ **Improved student achievement**



# What are the drawbacks of the trend towards more RFTs?

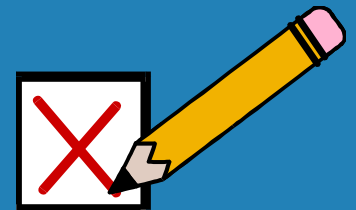
## Drawbacks

- ✓ Time taken away from instruction, particularly in the mist of NCLB
- ✓ Same districts (schools) approached
- ✓ Researchers not skilled in working in urban centers
- ✓ Focus often on issues not of interest to districts
- ✓ Staff often spend considerable time assisting researchers



# What kinds of capacity are required for urban districts?

- **Staff with research knowledge**
  - **To review & interpret the preliminary findings**
  - **To determine if the topic is a good “fit”**
  - **To determine if research can be replicated**
  - **Identify program design challenges**
- **Staff assigned to research**
  - **Assist with data collection**
  - **Assist with entry to schools**



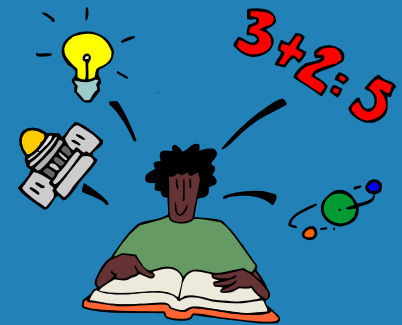
# What kinds of capacity are required for researchers?

- **Ability to work in urban centers**
- **Mutually agreed upon topic**
- **Favorable preliminary research**
- **Racially diverse team**
- **Ability to take a project to scale**
- **Show improvements on state assessments**



# Incentives

- **Financial???**
  - Grant to district?
  - Grant to school?
  - Grant to teachers
  - Central office staff
- **Co-authorship, Joint Presentations**
- **Free materials, books, intervention, etc if study favorable**
- **On-going communication with senior staff and board**



# Cautions & Concerns

- **Looking for “Silver Bullet”**
- **Faithful replication of the model**
  - **Program components**
  - **Contextual variables**
- **School-based verses district-based**
- **Going to scale**
- **Good work going on in districts**

