

Marketing Reading Recovery to  
Decision Makers

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2010 National RR and  
Literacy Conference  
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Marketing RR to  
Decision Makers

- *"All children need a little help, a little hope and someone to believe in them."*  
- Magic Johnson



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Marketing RR to  
Decision Makers

- We have some really **GOOD NEWS** about Reading



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Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- We have some really **GOOD NEWS** about Reading Recovery and some really **BAD NEWS** about Reading Recovery



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Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- Personal Background
  - Served as Director, Assistant Superintendent and Superintendent
  - Administrator in four Ohio districts-- rural, suburban, urban
  - Districts ranging from 800 to 5000+ students
  - Background in literacy, but never trained in RR



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Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- Survey of Participants
  - Central Office administrators (superintendents, directors)
  - Building principals
  - Teachers
  - College instructors
  - Board members
  - From which states



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### Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- I have worked with RR for 25 years
- In that time I have had to "market" RR to a wide range of groups
  - Teachers
  - Principals
  - Central Office Administrators
  - Board Members
  - ODE Staff
  - Legislators



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### Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- This session is really about **POLITICS**
  - Not the dirty word used to describe machinations in Columbus or DC
  - What does the word "politics" mean?



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### Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- This session is really about **POLITICS**
  - The word "Politics" comes from a prefix "poly" meaning *many*



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### Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- This session is really about **POLITICS**
  - The word “Politics” comes from a prefix “poly” meaning *many*
  - And “tics” meaning *blood-sucking insects*



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### Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- This session is really about **POLITICS**
  - But rather as *“politics is defined as the competition for scarce resources”*



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### Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- As a veteran educational administrator, I used to believe—
  - *If you base your decision-making on what’s best for kids, then everything else will work itself out.*



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Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- Through some hard experiences, I learned—
  - *Unless you attend to the political realities, these considerations will swamp everything else—including what's best for kids*



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Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- Essential Point #1:  
*You need to recognize the critical beliefs of each group and use arguments that will resonate with them*



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Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- Essential Point #1
  - For example teachers often care more about the fate of individual students and can also be resentful of school staff not tied to classroom
  - Legislators have very limited knowledge (and sometimes interest) in education in general



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Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- Essential Point #2:  
*The tremendous research behind RR will NOT be sufficient argument for most groups*



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Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- Essential Point #2
  - The research supporting RR is unmatched by any other school reform model or intervention strategy
  - Many advocates assume that this should be sufficient, but it is not
  - Teachers will not trust research over their own experience, especially if they find it counterintuitive



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Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- Essential Point #3:  
*Most individuals in each group do NOT understand the actual, long term costs of many aspects of school programming*



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Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- Essential Point #3
  - Few school people recognize long term costs of decisions
  - Almost all decisions made about school funding are driven by immediate demands and issues



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Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- Essential Point #4:  
*The current financial crisis in school funding will alter the power of some arguments*



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Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- Essential Point #4
  - The squeeze of funding constraints may cause some individuals to diminish their support for RR
  - This may be especially true for districts where funding problems are a fairly recent problem



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### Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- Teachers as Possible Decision Makers



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### Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- Teachers as Possible Decision Makers

– *“It’s too bad that the people who really know how to run the country are busy teaching school.”*



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### Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- Teachers as Possible Decision Makers
  - Sometimes teachers contribute disproportionately to school staffing/expenditures decisions



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## Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- Teachers as Possible Decision Makers
  - In some schools, there has been "distance" between RR teachers and classroom teachers



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## Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- Teachers
  - Classroom teachers need to see the benefit of RR to kids in their classroom
  - It may be necessary to use "real kid" data to sell RR value
  - When we have this collaboration, classroom teachers become the greatest advocates for RR



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## Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- Teachers
  - It is critical to recognize this central perception of many classroom teachers
    - *Those individuals who have fewer classroom/grading responsibilities have "an easier job"*



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### Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- Teachers
  - Without this understanding and these partnerships, classroom teachers are likely to look at RR in terms of what they are NOT getting
    - More help for more kids now
    - More of their "problem" kids out of their hair



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### Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- Teachers
  - Most teachers are focused on the here and now
  - Long term arguments will likely hold little sway with them



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### Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- Building Principals as Decision Makers



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### Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- *"If kids come to us from strong, healthy, functioning families, it makes our job easier. If they do not come to us from strong, healthy, functioning families, it makes our job more important."*  
--Barbara Coloroso



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### Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- **Building Principals as Decision Makers**
  - Many buildings decisions are site-based
  - It is not safe to assume that principals are up on school research
  - In most school staffs/budgets RR competes with other programs to fill more needs than available resources



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### Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- **Building Principals as Decision Makers**
  - It is important that RR teachers keep up dialogue with their principal
  - Some principals only become aware of problems
    - Between RR teachers and classroom teachers
    - With RR student's problems
    - With parent with questions



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### Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- Building Principals as Decision Makers
  - Some principals recognize that RR teachers add value to the building through professional development
  - This is only possible with a positive, collaborative partnership with classroom teachers and the principal



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### Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- Building Principals as Decision Makers
  - It would be helpful for RR teachers to share student data with principals on a regular basis
  - The more transparent this is (positive and negative data), the greater the chance of principal commitment



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### Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- Building Principals as Decision Makers
  - Because successful RR students become "absorbed" into the regular classroom, principals can be forgiven for not always recognizing the transformation that may have occurred in these struggling students



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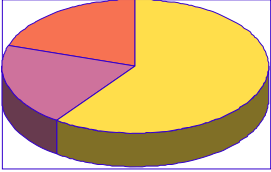
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### Marketing RR to Decision Makers

Breakdown of RR Students



- Average
- Near Avg
- Referred



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### Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- And this impact is on the lowest 20% of first grade students!



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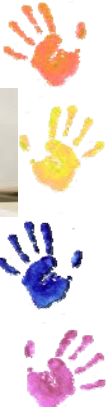

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### Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- **Long Term Impact of Reading Recovery**
  - 60%-80% reach average and remain in average band
  - 20-40% need small group support short term to remain in average band
  - 1% in special education



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### Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- Building Principals as Decision Makers
  - Principals tend to be focused on the immediate
    - Test results for last year/this year
    - The expanding needs of the existing student population
    - The immediate demands/requests of the current staff
    - The limits of the staff/budget



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### Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- Building Principals as Decision Makers
  - Principals tend to be focused on the immediate
    - It may be necessary to demonstrate the research/data showing the long-term effect of RR on students/budgets
    - It will be valuable to show how RR data can contribute to growth or "value-added" data



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### Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- The Legacy of NCLB
  - Although the federal program was riddled with conflicts and shortcomings
    - It did help to highlight the plight of struggling students, especially in districts where they are in the significant minority



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## Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- The Legacy of NCLB
  - The lowest first graders are often from these struggling groups
  - Since the focus on these groups is not likely to relent, RR needs to be marketed as addressing this core problem of underachievement



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## Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- Building Principals as Decision Makers
  - It will be helpful to share the data that demonstrates the long term impact of RR
    - Especially for the short duration of the intervention (12-20 weeks)
    - "Value Added" data can help demonstrate this growth



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## Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- Central Office as Decision Makers
  - Superintendents
  - Assistant Superintendents
  - Curriculum Directors
  - Directors of Federal Programs



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### Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- Central Office as Decision Makers
  - *"I see the mind of the five-year-old as a volcano with two vents: destructiveness and creativeness."*-- Sylvia Ashton-Warner



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### Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- Central Office as Decision Makers
  - Generally these positions have less knowledge of specific classroom realities
  - These positions are more driven by outside requirements (e.g., federal and state regulations federal funding) and financial limitations



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### Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- Central Office as Decision Makers
  - Generally individuals at this level are (or should be) more attentive to the research
  - These administrators will often have a better grasp of the larger picture
    - Funding
    - Staff
    - Resources



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### Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- Central Office as Decision Makers
  - Many may be receptive to arguments regarding ROI (Return On Investment)





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### Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- Central Office as Decision Makers
  - You need to be candid about the difference between immediate costs and long term savings
  - You need to well versed in the long term benefits of RR


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### Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools 1998 -99 cost per student

Inter-vention	Annual Cost per student	Average years in program	Total cost per student
Retention	\$5,336	1 year	\$5,336
Special Education	\$4,232**	6 years*	\$25,392*
Reading Recovery	\$2,438	12-20 weeks	\$2,438

\* Cited from ERS Spectrum, vol 10, no.1 \*\*calculated by Sp Ed Dept, MPNS




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### Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- Central Office as Decision Makers
  - Why then is retention the most common "strategy" used with failing students?



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### Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- Central Office as Decision Makers
  - Most Central administrators are painfully aware of the continually exploding costs of special education
  - As a result the "ROI" argument for RR may be most cogent in diminishing the special ed costs



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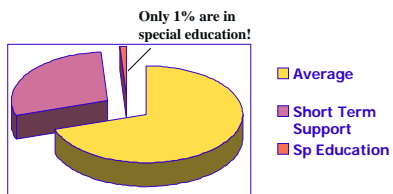
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### Marketing RR to Decision Makers

#### Long Term Impact of RR



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### Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- And this impact is on the lowest 20% of first grade students!



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### Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- Central Office as Decision Makers
  - It might be helpful to clarify the expanded impact of RR beyond the one-on-one tutoring
    - Other teaching responsibilities enhanced by new knowledge
    - PD resources available to the building/district



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### Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- Board Members as Decision Makers



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### Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- Board Members as Decision Makers

– *“In the first place God made idiots. This was for practice. Then He made school boards.”*-- Mark Twain



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### Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- *“There is a brilliant child locked inside every student.”*-- Marva Collins



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### Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- Board Members as Decision Makers
- Although educational programming is not supposed to be a Board responsibility (at least in Ohio), many Boards do get involved in these decisions



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## Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- Board Members as Decision Makers
  - Most board members will likely be receptive about the goal of reaching all students
  - They are "untainted" by the realities of the classroom or school
  - RR can be marketed as one means to reach all students



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## Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- Board Members as Decision Makers
  - Most board members are better at looking at the long term costs
  - Arguments demonstrating long term efficiency of RR can be effective



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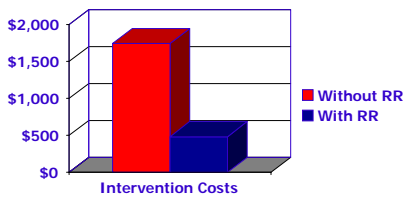
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## Marketing RR to Decision Makers

Cost Comparison--Falls River, MA  
1995



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Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- The research is clear: Early intervention is almost always more effective
- These students will only fall further behind, draining needed resources



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Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- Board Members as Decision Makers
  - Most Bd members are influenced by financial considerations, BUT
  - They are most often persuaded by "people" arguments (impact on students, parents and teachers)



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Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- Legislators as Decision Makers



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### Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- Legislators as Decision Makers
  - *"When truth stands in your way, you are headed in the wrong direction."*



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### Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- Legislators as Decision Makers
  - The possible role in targeting State funding this precisely is different in many states
  - Legislators are notoriously uninformed about education issues—including those on education committees
    - Mini lesson: how many legislators make decisions on issues



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### Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- Legislators as Decision Makers
  - Legislators are more receptive to arguments from constituents
  - Marketing efforts need to be more educational and informative
    - "informed so they can make the best decision"
  - Also, these efforts may often need to be more "solicitous"



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## Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- Legislators as Decision Makers
  - These may be better able to recognize the "big picture"
  - Legislators responsible for budgeting may be impacted by ROI arguments





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## Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- Legislators as Decision Makers
  - ROI arguments
    - Schools/the system/the State can pay now

or pay much more later!





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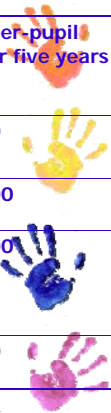
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Inter-vention	Additional per pupil cost/year	Average time in program	Total per-pupil cost for five years
Retention	\$9,500	1 year	\$9,500
Title 1	\$2,000	5 years	\$10,000
Special Education	\$4,500 + \$1,000 initial evaluation	5 years	\$23,000
Reading Recovery	\$3,480	12 to 20 weeks	\$3,480

*Schmitt et al, 2005, Changing Futures, pg 223, RRCNA*




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Marketing RR to Decision Makers



"Why is there never enough money to do it right the first time, but always enough money to do it over again."



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Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- Legislators as Decision Makers
  - This is the group most receptive to the argument of leveraging other resources
    - Demonstrate how RR leverages other resources (PD) and other opportunities for these struggling students
    - Investment in RR will free up more dollars that can be invested for other school needs



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Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- *"Nothing we do for children is ever wasted."* –Garrison Keilor



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Marketing RR to  
Decision Makers

- **Personal Information**  
O. Randolph Overbeck, Ph.D.  
Assistant Superintendent  
Xenia Community Schools  
578 E. Market St.  
Xenia, OH 45385  
937-376-2961  
Xen\_roversbec@mveca.org



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Marketing RR to  
Decision Makers

- **Xenia's Story**



578 E. Market St., Xenia, Ohio 45385  
Phone: 937-376-2961 Fax: 937-372-4701



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Marketing RR to  
Decision Makers

- From 1996 to 2008 Xenia Schools moved from "ACADEMIC EMERGENCY" to "EXCELLENT" status



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### Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- In 1997 the district invested in providing Reading Recovery teachers in all seven elementary buildings
- Within four years Xenia moved
  - from Academic Emergency to Academic Watch, then
  - From Academic Watch to Continuous Improvement



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### Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- In the past 12 years Reading Recovery has been a valuable safety net for our most needy students



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### Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- Reading Recovery has been one critical piece of the district's improvement process over the past 13 years



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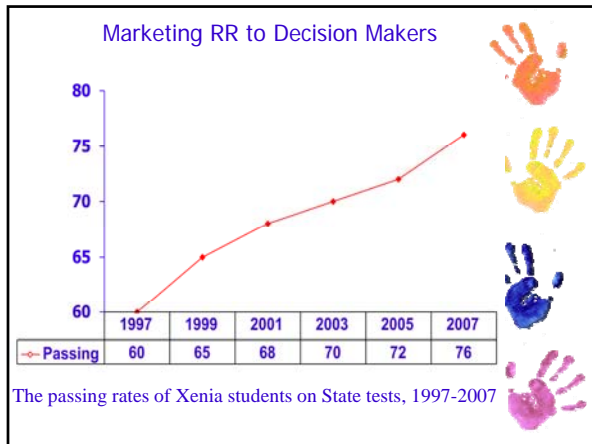
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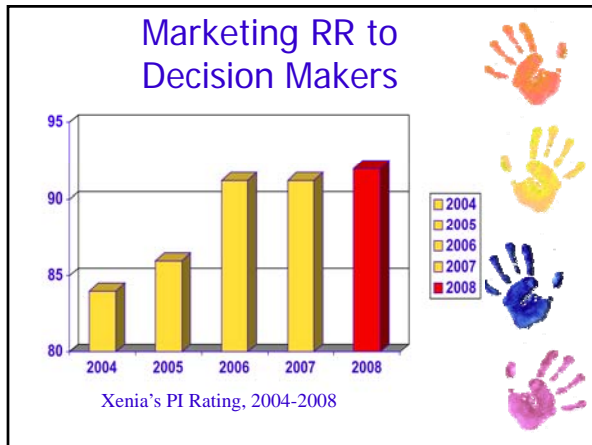
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### Marketing RR to Decision Makers

- 2008 and 2009--Xenia Community Schools--a **District of Excellence**

**XENIA COMMUNITY SCHOOLS**  
*Striving for Excellence*

578 E. Market St., Xenia, Ohio 45385  
Phone: 937-376-2961 Fax: 937-372-4701

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## Marketing RR to Decision Makers

### References

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- ERS Spectrum, vol 10, no.1 (calculated by Sp Ed Dept, MPNS)
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## Marketing RR to Decision Makers

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- What Works Clearinghouse Intervention Report: Reading Recovery. (2007, March 19) U. S. Dept of Education, Institute of Education Sciences



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