

The 5 systems every school needs to improve literacy outcomes - with Pati Montgomery

Triple R Teaching Podcast #187

For the past three weeks, I've shared interviews with teachers from the school district of Cudahy, Wisconsin. We've talked about how they have embraced structured literacy and the science of reading and helped improve reading outcomes for their students, something they continue to work on.

Today I'm interviewing Pati Montgomery. She is the founder of Schools Cubed. This group has worked with the school district of Cudahy and many other school districts and schools to help improve reading outcomes. I know you're going to enjoy my conversation with Pati. Here we go!

Anna Geiger:

Welcome, Pati.

Pati Montgomery:

Hi! Thank you for having me.

Anna Geiger:

This is coming at the end of a series of episodes that I've been doing with people at a school in Cudahy, Wisconsin that your organization helped to make major improvements to reach all the readers in their school. You are the founder of an organization called Schools Cubed, and we're going to talk about that.

I know that before Schools Cubed, you were in education for a very long time. Can you talk to us about your experiences as a teacher and administrator, and what led you to Schools Cubed?

Pati Montgomery:

Yes. When you say very long time, you're absolutely correct. This could take a while.

I was a teacher, a fifth grade teacher. I started in Washington, D.C., actually, and then my husband and I moved to Colorado and I had my first son. While he was growing up, while he was little, I thought that I would go back to school and get my masters. I got my masters in special education and got the research bug.

Not only did I get the research bug, but I also had two reading classes that were as opposite as possible. One was based on language experience, which was a precursor to whole language. That's how old I am. The other one was a phonics based approach from a visiting professor with a scope and sequence. I listened intently to both of them, but when I went to become a teacher, I could see that the one with the scope and sequence and a systematic approach to how we teach kids to read made a lot more sense.

I actually, in my first teaching experience, found decodable text, Primary Phonics. They were available back then. I got out that scope and sequence, and that's how I taught kids to read. The teachers came to me and said, "Oh my gosh, these kids are learning to read!"

That was how I began to understand that there was a system to how we teach reading. I didn't have a lot of experience other than that, but I could see that there was a system.

My career proceeded, I became a special ed administrator, and then I became a principal.

In the meantime, my son was growing up and he had a reading difficulty, as luck would have it, when he started school. So I started doing more research on how children learn to read and came upon two people, Barbara Forman and Louisa Moats. I read all of their research on what they were doing at NICH at the time, Louisa in Washington, D.C. and Barbara in Texas.

I knew that there was a systematic way that we should be teaching reading, so I started incorporating as many of those things into my elementary school as a principal that I could.

Well, as luck would have it again, Louisa Moats and I had a common friend. Louisa was in Colorado working with the State Department, because Colorado was putting together their Reading First grant, and she was an advisor. So this common friend hooked us up, and Louisa came out to my school. We became fast believers in the same thing.

Louisa trained all of my teachers in what she was working on at the time, which was LETRS. If you go back and look at the first edition of LETRS, you will see that the fourth module is dedicated to my staff at Eiber Elementary many, many years ago.

Anna Geiger:

Wow.

Pati Montgomery:

I went on, we turned that school around, and I became a principal at a middle school. We turned that school around and several other schools. I wrote a grant to be able to turn the other schools around. I ended up writing a book, the first LETRS administrators training for principals. Then I went to the Department of Ed here in Colorado, and they were rolling out the first literacy legislation in the country that was based on the science of reading. I led that for two years, and then I finally retired from public education.

All of the while I could see that there was a way to get this work done. If you put in specific systems and structures and the principals had some knowledge about the science of reading, you could really change schools. So I decided along the way that I was going to start a consulting group that did exactly that, which is how Schools Cubed came to be. That was in 2015.

Anna Geiger:

Okay, so am I right that your experience with Louise Moats would have been in the '90s?

Pati Montgomery:

It was 2000, 2001.

Anna Geiger:

Okay, right about that time.

Pati Montgomery:

Yeah.

Anna Geiger:

So it sounds like you, unlike many of the teachers I talk to, did not really have a background in balanced literacy. You studied the research from the beginning and you understood that you needed a systematic structured approach?

Pati Montgomery:

100%, yes. I gobbled up everything I could find.

Anna Geiger:

Well, the first time I heard about you, and I didn't realize I was hearing about Schools Cubed, was a few years ago when Angie Hanlin spoke at the Wisconsin Reading League event. She was the last one of the day, and it was about using systems to improve reading outcomes. She talked about her situation, and you can talk about this later too, but remind me what state she was in?

Pati Montgomery:

Missouri.

Anna Geiger:

Missouri, okay, and the school had very low scores, and they basically turned everything around. She talked about systems the whole time. This was a few years ago when I was still learning a lot of this, and I wanted her to say what program, what program, what program. But she never said the program, she just talked about systems. At the time I didn't really understand what that was all about. What were these systems that had to change for the school?

I would love to talk to you today about how your organization gets started with a school and then, what is all this about systems? What specific systems are there? What structures need to be in place? Because we know it's so much more than a single teacher having an epiphany and making changes for it to be successful for everyone.

Pati Montgomery:

In fact, that's kind of my bugaboo about this whole thing. We've put it on the backs of teachers. Let's give everybody PD in the science of reading, which obviously wholeheartedly I believe in, but that's just one snippet of what needs to be done.

There are so many other things. It's the systems that go along with that. When you change from a balanced literacy approach to a science of reading approach, you are also changing the systems. We don't look at data in the same way in a balanced literacy approach as you do in a science of reading approach. Honestly, that's been the hardest thing for people to understand, I think.

And not only that, but the importance of the leader. I can tell you, no school that we've ever been in has been a success unless the principal gets on board and understands what he or she is to do.

Anna Geiger:

Well, another thing too, something we are at risk of seeing happen is if schools implement a "science of reading" curriculum or program and then they don't have the success they were hoping for, then we blame "the science of reading" without realizing so much more has to go into it, right? Versus, the program is only part of the big picture.

Pati Montgomery:

Oh, yes. I go into this whole thing about how education IS a pendulum, and it's going to swing back if we don't get this right. Because they'll say, "We've tried that and that didn't work." So we've got to get this right.

Anna Geiger:

Let's start with the big picture. A school reaches out to you, you make an agreement to work together. What happens first?

Pati Montgomery:

Well, so we do what we call an audit using our literacy evaluation tool. It actually measures all of the systems that are required. I'm sure we'll get into this later, but the systems quickly are universal instruction, intervention, assessments, data-based decision making, collaboration, and professional development. Those are the systems that we have found have to be in place in order for a school to really turn around literacy instruction.

Anna Geiger:

So after you've given this assessment, then what's next?

Pati Montgomery:

Then we determine where they need to start. There is a score on the audit, but the score is not a reflection of the school. The score is a reflection of what is your lowest point, and what's going to give you a big bang for your buck.

Almost always it's universal instruction and intervention, and there's a specific reason that you want to do universal instruction and intervention. That is, if you start with universal instruction, all kids stay up. We're not losing kids if teachers are teaching well. Then at the same time, we want to have highly effective intervention programs so that we're boosting students up from the bottom. When you do both of those things simultaneously, you start to see big changes quite rapidly, actually.

Anna Geiger:

So how does this often look different from what schools were doing before you came in, the universal instruction and the intervention piece?

Pati Montgomery:

Yeah, really good question. First of all, when you move from a balanced literacy approach, which is very group oriented, not a lot of whole group instruction, teachers think that they're teaching explicitly. But actually, one of the most difficult things for teachers to do is to learn what is the layout of a good literacy block and how do I explicitly teach so that students will learn? We put a lot of effort into explicit instruction just to begin with.

The other thing regarding interventions, how it's different, is we have a very systematic approach. What we find in schools typically is that there are quite a few different interventions going on. Instead, we hone in on specifically one or two interventions. Then as a school gets more sophisticated, they can add more interventions. But initially we want as few interventions that meet the needs of students as possible, so that we can learn those really well and teach them with fidelity.

Anna Geiger:

Can you give an example of what those might look like?

Pati Montgomery:

Yes. We happen to love SIPPS, I will tell you, and there's a reason we love SIPPS. Number one, paraprofessionals can use it, and teachers can use it. It's a very scripted program and it gives excellent results.

The other reason we like it is because most students ... In fact, we have worked with schools and recently we looked at our data, and we have helped schools test over 2,000 students that are typically in the most intensive range. 96% of children have a phonological processing issue. The thing that we like about SIPPS is that it varies in how severe is your phonological processing issue?

So once we know that they have an intensive intervention need, we give them a SIPPS screener placement to see where in the range do they fit. So we need to learn one thing instead of 20 different things.

Then a principal and an instructional coach can go in and see, are they following the script? Teachers get much better much quicker, and so do kids. So that is our preferred intervention.

Anna Geiger:

Okay. So when you say different types of intervention, you mean a singular program that teachers learn and learn well?

Pati Montgomery:

A singular program. Now, obviously we are going to have kids with just fluency issues and comprehension issues and all of those things.

Anna Geiger:

Sure.

Pati Montgomery:

But when 96% of your struggling readers have a phonological processing issue, we work on fixing that first.

Anna Geiger:

Yeah. So when you come into schools, are you often right away implementing the use of a universal screener? Are many schools already doing that, not knowing what to do with it? Talk to us about that.

Pati Montgomery:

I would say in the majority of schools, they do have a screener, but they just don't know what to do with it. The other issue that we see is they don't progress monitor like they need to. Screeners are sometimes randomly used. Sometimes the special ed department is using one screener and the interventionists are using another screener. We need to hone in on that and make that much clearer, one screener that we all agree to.

Anna Geiger:

Then when you first come in, I'm sure sometimes you have to get rid of programs that aren't aligned with the science of reading. Does that happen a lot? Then how do the schools choose what programs they're going to use? Is this something with a lot of input from you, or do they get some PD first? How does that work?

Pati Montgomery:

Yeah. In our typical schools, they do have a program. Not always, but they do have a program. I will tell you that there have been times where they didn't want to change a program, and we have said, "We're not the ones for you." We believe strongly that programs like Fountas and Pinnell don't work, so we're just not the consulting firm for them.

We do work with schools to make sure that they can select a high quality core reading program. Or again, oftentimes they have a good core reading program, they just don't know what to do with it.

Here's an example. If they have Wonders or Journeys or anything like that, we help them weed out the things that aren't good. Publishers want to please everyone, so they throw in leveled text. You can make many programs either a science of reading program or a balanced literacy program. We have lesson plan templates, not that are completed, but that show a teacher, "Here's where you're going to find your oral language. Here's where you're going to find your phonemic awareness piece. Here's how that fits in with your phonics piece."

So we help the teachers and the principal and the instructional coach learn how to plan from big box programs. It doesn't have to be a specific program at all. We do like those that are more focused on science of reading and make it easier for a teacher, quite frankly.

Anna Geiger:

Right. And of course we know that the way teachers can figure out what to use from a big, bloated basal is by having a good understanding of the science of reading. How does the education of teachers work when you step into working with a school?

Pati Montgomery:

They don't always have training in the science of reading. If you know what to teach out of a good big box program, and if you know how to teach, you don't necessarily have to have professional development in the science of reading.

However, it is much better if they have had previous teaching. Then you say, "Here's the lesson plan template that you should use."

They instantly go, "Oh, that makes sense! It makes sense. I didn't know where I was supposed to put these leveled readers." So obviously it makes it much quicker and a much faster turnaround if they already understand.

Anna Geiger:

Yeah. So if you're in a situation where teachers maybe... I don't know if this happens, do you get very heavily balanced literacy schools that reach out to you? Because maybe they don't want to change? Or do you have schools that are typically on the way to the science of reading but aren't sure how to implement?

Pati Montgomery:

Typically, they're on the way to the science of reading.

Anna Geiger:

Okay.

Pati Montgomery:

Even schools that are doing Lucy Calkins or Fountas and Pinnell, as I said, we have had them reach out. They still want to do what's best and are trying to do that. It's such a heavy lift to go from one to the other, but that's why we typically don't work with schools like that.

Anna Geiger:

Right. So do you have required PD that they attend as a staff when you're getting started with them? And how does that look?

Pati Montgomery:

Yes, and it depends on what we found in our audit to begin with.

We typically provide professional development in explicit instruction. That's a big barrier.

We also typically provide, what does a good literacy block look like? Because again, we've gone from a balanced literacy approach, and even if I've taken good PD, it doesn't necessarily outline what does the literacy block look like. We give professional development in that.

The rest of our professional development is totally geared towards the principal, district leaders, and instructional coaches. Because the rest of our professional development is about the systems that you need to put in place.

Anna Geiger:

What are they?

Pati Montgomery:

Well, we're back to universal instruction, intervention, assessment, data-based decision making, collaboration, and professional development.

Anna Geiger:

Let's talk about data-based decision making, because I know you said this, and this is a real problem, but it is not an easy thing to figure out what to do with the results of a universal screener. I think it was Pam Snow when I talked to her, she said that balanced literacy was easier. It really was! You really don't even know what you don't know, so as long as they're making their way through the levels, I don't have to worry about all these numbers over here.

Pati Montgomery:

100%.

Anna Geiger:

So how do you get started with that? How do you help teachers apply that information?

Pati Montgomery:

Yep. We have specific protocols. We have a protocol for beginning, middle, and end of year. But as I said, we believe that particularly for a struggling reader, progress monitoring data is more important than benchmark data.

We have what we call a data tracker, where the teachers input the data of students and then they can rapidly see if a student isn't continuing to climb. It's not based on the trajectory, not based on the aimline, but it is based on whether or not we're making gains. That's actually just a huge game changer.

One of the previous ways of doing things in a balanced literacy approach is, and you can download these, but when you go to a PLC, often teachers are encouraged to bring who are the five children that aren't doing it or aren't making the gains that you need them to. Then the teachers pick.

Well, not in our system. That's a waste of time and we're not always ... Often it's where the teacher picks the kids that they like, that they want to see getting higher, and they think that the lowest kids aren't going to get anywhere, and that isn't true.

We go on facts. What does our data tell us? Who are the children that we should be worried about? Our system clearly outlines it, and it has built-in alarms to go, "Yikes, we need to worry about these children." Consequently, it saves time. We can get through data meetings in easily 45 minutes.

Anna Geiger:

Let's talk about that looks a little more in detail. In the beginning of the year, they give a universal screener. By the way, do you recommend a particular one, or do you have schools using all different universal screeners?

Pati Montgomery:

Of course there's some that we like. We like Acadience and DIBELS 8, those are our favorites. I like AIMSweb, but their reporting system is a bit clunky.

Anna Geiger:

Okay.

Pati Montgomery:

Those are the top ones that we hope to use.

Anna Geiger:

Those are the two I'm most familiar with, Acadience and DIBELS 8. So they give the screener. Now, do you have the teachers do it for their students, or do you have someone else? Then what are they doing with the rest of their students while they're administering this at the beginning of the year?

Pati Montgomery:

Yeah, really good question. Schools do it in a variety of ways. One of the things that we strongly believe in Schools Cubed is that we'll meet you where you are, and let's just make your system a little bit better. In many schools, they have paraprofessionals helping out teachers, doing one or two kids at a time while other students are doing other things. There's a variety of ways to get that done. Some of our schools have assessment teams that do that. It really just depends.

Anna Geiger:

But what's really important is that the teachers are aware of the data versus someone else, right? They really need to be, even if they're not necessarily giving every assessment. They're aware of that overall aggregate data and they know what to do with that.

Pati Montgomery:

100%. Teachers have got to know. Even in some situations, there will be special ed students that are also in regular ed. We encourage that one week the special ed teacher does the progress monitoring and another week the regular ed teacher does it, so that we all know how all of our children are doing, and it's not, "Those are your kids."

Anna Geiger:

What about when you're starting out with a school, like I know the school in Missouri with Angie Hanlin was very low when they started. When you have a huge percentage of kids in the red, and you can't possibly design interventions for all those students, how does that work? If the numbers are a high percentage of red, do you do interventions at first or do you just focus on Tier 1?

Pati Montgomery:

Yeah, it depends. It depends on the percentage. If a school is more than, we say between 20% and 50% below grade level, then no, we can't provide interventions, or we can't always provide the regular core program. Although we really, really encourage the use of the regular core program because we do not want students to get ... They need to at least be exposed to the language, the vocabulary, all of those things.

I'm thinking back to when Angie started, 15% of her kids were proficient, I believe, it might have even been lower than that. She did have a core reading program, but the regular classroom teacher also provided intensive intervention when it was that time, but she did the language and the vocabulary and read the story of the core program, so that they were getting grade level content.

Again, it just depends upon the percentage of students who are well below, and we just design it differently based on those numbers.

Anna Geiger:

Is the professional development provided throughout the year? What about when teachers hit roadblocks or they're confused? How do they get help and support in answering their day to day questions?

Pati Montgomery:

Yes. We work alongside the principal. In a typical, what we call an implementation model, we are there two days, seven times a year. We don't go in December because schools are crazy in December. We don't usually go when they are receiving their state summative assessment.

We work with the principal to be able to answer those questions and know what to do. We work with the principal and the instructional coach on how do you give feedback. We do it in small bits.

As I said, in the first year, if it's about universal instruction and interventions, everyone's working on universal instruction and interventions. It isn't where this teacher has to get better in that, this teacher has to get better in that.

Even if you go to universal instruction, typically one of our first things that we recommend is, is everyone teaching to the objective? Does everyone have an objective? Because an objective is the cornerstone of what I'm teaching. Even just thinking about what your objective is helps the teachers teach more explicitly.

So teachers don't take it offensively, and we get a lot more traction if we look for trends and we work on that. In our first year, everybody's working on the same thing. That's how that works.

Anna Geiger:

How many years do you typically work with a school?

Pati Montgomery:

Three to five is typical. That's one of the things that is frustrating to us, is this doesn't turn around in a year, and people have to be patient. Not only does it not turn around in a year, we'll kill teachers if we give them so much to do.

Anna Geiger:

Yeah.

Pati Montgomery:

And not only that, we need to do things well, so we've got to take it a little bit at a time. Go as fast as we can, but as slow as we have to.

Anna Geiger:

Yeah, and in talking to the teachers from Cudahy, I got the impression that there was a lot at once. So you're not really doing it very slowly. It was like a fire hose at first, but they could see the changes that were happening.

I talked to a reading specialist who talked about how she was the one who went into the classrooms and talked to the teachers. It sounds like a lot of what you're doing is equipping the leaders in the school to support and teach the staff because you're not going to be there forever, and that's where they should be looking for guidance.

Pati Montgomery:

Yeah, 100%. Not only that, but we don't have a relationship with the teachers.

Anna Geiger:

Exactly, yeah.

Pati Montgomery:

Who is this lady that just walked in and is gone again? So yes, it's very important to us.

I will tell you that the concept of it being like a fire hose is because typically they have to make pretty big changes. But I would say after they start to get the rhythm, it feels okay.

Anna Geiger:

So teachers have their own ideas, and many of us, myself included, from the balanced literacy world, really felt that our teaching decisions should be based on intuition. They should be based on my knowledge as a teacher versus someone telling me to use a particular program. Do you find a lot of resistance? How does that work, and how do you handle that?

Pati Montgomery:

Yeah, we do find some resistance. But again, I think we minimize the resistance by everybody working on the same thing. If everyone is working on the same thing, it doesn't feel personal. It doesn't feel like, "Oh, I have to do this differently." And it doesn't come from us, it comes from the instructional coach and the principal. Again, they're the ones that have the relationship, and so we hope that they work with them so that they're not resistant.

But I would be in fantasy land if I pretended to say, "Well, everybody's in." They're not. There is some resistance, but I don't think it's as horrible as... Cudahy is a perfect example. They were ready to throw in the towel as soon as they heard we were coming. Two or three months later they said, "We're fine. We like this." They could see the results.

Teachers want to do well. Once teachers could see the success, "Give me more," is often what they say.

Anna Geiger:

Have you had any feedback from teachers in terms of specific surprises or things they hadn't tried before and they're amazed at how well it works? Or just shifts in their understanding about how to teach reading through the work with Schools Cubed?

Pati Montgomery:

Oh, that's a really good question. I'm back to explicit instruction. Almost everybody thinks, "Oh, I'm teaching explicitly." But when you really teach them how to teach explicitly, they go, "Oh man, I didn't have a clue." That's a really big one.

I would say the other really big aha is progress monitoring data. When you teach them, "Okay, what does this tell you about now that you need to do in small group or differentiated instruction?"

Again, they go, "Whoa, I didn't know."

Another big one is decodable text, how to use decodable text and what a difference that makes for kids.

There's so many, honestly, and it depends on the teacher. But there are many aha moments of, "Oh, that so makes sense."

Anna Geiger:

When Angie Hanlin gave her a presentation... And I know you two are writing a book, I pre-ordered it, I can't wait to see it. Maybe it's already written and you're just waiting for it to get finished with the publisher.

Pati Montgomery:

Maybe we can talk about it before we ...

Anna Geiger:

Definitely! We'll talk about that at the end for sure.

But her story was fascinating. Are you able to share any of that or any other case studies to help us understand what this looks like and how numbers shift over time?

Pati Montgomery:

Oh, 100%. Yeah, I'll talk about Angie's whole district, because that's pretty amazing.

When Angie got to her school, of course no one told her she was a focus school. She didn't have a clue. I think she found out three weeks in, and it might not have even been that long, that she found out it was one of the lowest performing in the state. 15% was the low, or 10%, I can't remember.

Anyway, so we worked with Angie's school to turn that around, and the new superintendent to the district, who also was facing a huge money deficit because the factory in town had closed. The district is 100% free and reduced lunch. He could see how quickly Angie's school was turning around. The whole district was in the lowest 10% or whatever in Missouri schools.

So I started to work with all of them, and at the end of maybe four years, they had gone in growth from the lowest 10% to the top 10%, just working on literacy in elementary and middle schools and at the high school. That's one example. There are endless examples.

One of the schools in Cudahy went from, I think they were 21% proficient on their state summative assessment, and in the third year their average was 60% to 70%.

We could go on and on like that. The only places where it doesn't happen is if the principal doesn't take our advice.

Anna Geiger:

Yeah, and why would that be? Why would a principal decide not to do as you're suggesting?

Pati Montgomery:

Yeah, that's another great question. I can tell you, accountability. I feel that we have a huge problem in our country with principals being able to hold teachers accountable. They talk a lot about, "Well, I'm creating a collaborative culture here," which I understand, but often that's code word for, "I'm not going to step on anyone's toes. I'm not going to push anyone."

But what the research tells us is that teachers feel the best about a culture when it's a productive culture, and a productive culture requires holding people accountable. So this hiding behind a collaborative culture is only partially true, that they don't have the research right. Teachers want to belong to a place that's productive and students are being successful.

Anna Geiger:

Yeah, that's very interesting. I know when I was a teacher, I was in small parochial schools, and my principals were very kind to me, and so were my school boards. They let me do what I wanted, which was, it turns out, not a good thing because what I was doing was not based on research. I was just very confident, and it seemed to work for some kids, so nobody asked. But it would have been much better if the principals, first of all, had an understanding of how learning to read works, because I'm guessing many principals do not.

Pati Montgomery:

Absolutely, yeah.

Anna Geiger:

I don't think mine did. I think they just trusted that I knew. Then also, like you said, this accountability for teachers, if done in a positive way, is a very good thing for everyone because you can see the progress you're actually making.

Pati Montgomery:

100%, yes.

Anna Geiger:

Yeah. Very interesting.

Pati Montgomery:

Yeah, and only five states in the country currently have any required professional development for principals in the science of reading.

Anna Geiger:

Yeah, that's got to change. Because if they don't know what they're looking for, then those classroom visits aren't really worth very much, are they?

Pati Montgomery:

Yeah, and not only that, that's just in the science of reading. That's just understanding how children learn to read. That has nothing to do with the systems and structures that need to be in place, which as we talked about earlier, is the significant change that needs to be made in schools.

Anna Geiger:

Right.

So we talked about how you help your schools implement that universal screener, or if they're already using it, to figure out what to do with it. You show them how to look at those results and figure out what interventions are needed.

You also work with them in making sure their universal instruction, their Tier 1, is strong and they're explicitly teaching.

Then when they are providing those interventions, you show them how to do progress monitoring so they can actually keep track of whether or not what they're doing is working.

Then we had talked about the data-based decision making, using that universal screener to make decisions for whole group and small group and interventions.

Then finally, there's professional development that's included in all of that.

What about for somebody who understands that it does take a village for this to happen, but they're kind of on their own boat in their school and no one else is really interested at the time, but they want to make changes? What kind of hope can you give to a teacher like that?

Pati Montgomery:

I would try to inform the principal, bring the principal along. I can't tell you how strongly I believe that no initiative is going to work unless the principal is on board, so educate the principal as much as you possibly can. Educate your fellow teachers as much as you possibly can, and show them the data.

We have to be gracious when we are doing that. We certainly don't want to say, "Hey, look at how grand my scores are," but just simply, "Wow, I tried this and look what happened." That might bring other people along as well.

Anna Geiger:

Yeah, and talking about the principal too, I know I've talked to other people saying to invite the principal to watch your lessons. Prepare something so they can see the difference and show them how it's working.

Pati Montgomery:

Absolutely. Yeah.

Anna Geiger:

Thank you so much for sharing all that you do with Schools Cubed. Let's talk about the book that's coming out called "It's Possible!" right?

Pati Montgomery:

"It's Possible!"

Anna Geiger:

Tell us about that.

Pati Montgomery:

Yes, it's a book that actually talks about all of the systems and structures and how to implement them. It's really a manual for principals on how to get this job done. Angie does the scenarios that lead into the chapter of what this looked like in a real school. Then I describe, "Here's how you do data-based decision making. Here's how you do collaboration. Here's how you design good professional development for your teachers." It's very much a hands-on manual for district leaders and principals.

Anna Geiger:

Well, I can't wait to get it. That's very exciting. Anything else you'd like to share before we end our interview?

Pati Montgomery:

It is possible. It really is possible, but we've got to do more for our principals, our leadership. Putting this on the backs of teachers isn't going to get us anywhere. As you said earlier, it will all go back if we don't make sure.

Anna Geiger:

Yeah, thanks for that encouragement to include the leadership of the school, the administrators, because they're the ones that have the power, you might say, to actually implement this school wide.

Pati Montgomery:

100%. Yep.

Anna Geiger:

Well, thank you. It was very nice to meet you, Pati!

Pati Montgomery:

Yes, you too, Anna!

Anna Geiger:

I hope you've enjoyed this four-part series in which I looked at the changes that a district is making to align their teaching and instruction with the science of reading and what we know from the science of learning.

I also hope you enjoyed this conversation with Pati Montgomery as you learned what it looks like to tackle this challenge from a systems perspective. It's not just about the program, it's about how everything comes together.

You can learn more about Schools Cubed with the link found in the show notes. And of course, I recommend that you pre-order Angie Hanlin and Pati Montgomery's book, "It's Possible!" You can find the show notes at themeasuredmom.com/episode187. Talk to you next time!

Closing:

That's all for this episode of Triple R Teaching. For more educational resources, visit Anna at her home base, themeasuredmom.com, and join our teaching community. We look forward to helping you reflect, refine, and recharge on the next episode of Triple R Teaching.