Hill Learning Center, an education nonprofit serving K-12 educators and students, helps students with learning differences and attention challenges become confident, independent learners. In the fall of 2016, Hill Learning Center (Hill) launched the East Durham Learning Collaborative (EDLC) to inform the development of the Hill Learning System and HillRAP Digital (app delivery of HillRAP) as a platform to help meet the literacy needs of students in high poverty schools and to explore new delivery models within the Hill Reading Achievement Program (HillRAP). HillRAP is a copyrighted, structured reading intervention program delivered on a 4:1 basis by HillRAP tutors, school-based teachers, or Teacher’s Assistants (TAs) who have received extensive training from Hill Learning Center in multisensory structured language development. HillRAP provides teachers with leveled support, monitoring, and coaching from Hill reading specialists throughout the school year. While a previous evaluation of HillRAP implementation within Durham Public Schools did demonstrate student growth, schools found it difficult to implement HillRAP with fidelity and to sustain the program over time, due in part to high teacher and administrator turnover, as well as inconsistent student attendance and participation.

This case study seeks to better understand how HillRAP implementation varies in high-poverty elementary schools, as well as to identify the school-based factors that are important for successful HillRAP implementation. Coker-Wimberly Elementary School in Battleboro, North Carolina along with Global Scholars Academy, Maureen Joy Elementary School, and Eastway Elementary School all in Durham, North Carolina participated in this case study.

HillRAP Program
The HillRAP program is a structured and systematic intervention that also provides teachers room to make instructional decisions and schools flexibility in how it is implemented. Hill Learning Center acknowledges that the HillRAP program needs to be adaptable to the individual needs of the school. Many schools do not have a 45 minute block of time to allow for intervention. In this case, it is recommended to shorten lessons to 30 minutes and teach the first four components of HillRAP. The first four components are required to address the needs and deficits of the students (Oral Drill, Phonological Awareness, Word Attack, and Fluency). HillRAP assesses students to find appropriate placement to meet their instructional needs and then moves students forward along a continuum as skills become mastered and instruction begins to fill in any gaps they may have. These skills are taught to mastery.

HillRAP Digital
HillRAP Digital leverages technology (software, iPads, wireless connectivity) to strengthen the program by providing:

- real-time data, goal-setting, and progress monitoring at teacher and students’ fingertips;
- embedded assessment and auto-generated questions and word lists to make individualization easy (while still allowing for teacher judgment and flexibility);
- hundreds of aligned, controlled, decodable texts with corresponding comprehension questions;
- online resources, videos, and coaching to support instruction.
There are six public schools administering the HillRAP program via HillRAP Digital in Durham and Edgecombe Counties (and over 300 teachers and 3,000 students using HillRAP across NC and other states). Four schools, Coker-Wimberly Elementary School, Maureen Joy Charter School, Eastway Elementary School, and Global Scholars Academy participated in this case study to identify commonalities and differences among the schools’ approaches to HillRAP. Each of these four schools have administered the HillRAP program for at least two years. Each has a high level of commitment to the HillRAP program, and has worked through many of the challenges that are common in the first years of implementing a new program. During the course of site visits to each of these four schools, we looked at the unique ways each individual school varied in its implementation of the HillRAP program. While some schools have certified HillRAP teachers, other schools utilize HillRAP tutors, and a few schools use a hybrid approach. These differences in implementation, combined with the school’s overall commitment to the HillRAP program and training, appear to result in varied experiences for students and teachers, as well as for the school overall. Several common themes emerged during the site visits to the case study schools that can provide lessons-learned for other current and future schools implementing HillRAP, as well as for Hill Learning Center in considering the support that schools need.

**CASE STUDY THEMES**

- **Leadership, Culture, and Whole School Commitment to HillRAP**
- **Professional Learning and Training/Connection with Hill Learning Center**
- **Fidelity of HillRAP Implementation/Flexibility of Implementation that Honors Teachers Judgment**
- **Data Tracking/Use of Data**

**HillRAP Components**

**Oral Drill**
- 5 minutes
- Auditory component
- Students gain automatic recall of letter sounds, patterns, rules, vocabulary, etc.

**Phonological Awareness**
- 5-10 minutes
- Auditory component
- Students gain foundation that words are made up of syllables and phonemes
- Word - syllable - phoneme

**Word Attack**
- 10-15 minutes
- Students learn and apply phonics rules to decode words
- Six types of syllables are taught through controlled lists
- Fry’s High Frequency Words

**Fluency**
- 5-15 minutes
- Students increase automaticity, accuracy, and prosody in reading from lists and texts

**Vocabulary**
- 5-15 minutes
- Tier II words are taught directly and indirectly to expand the student’s lexicon

**Comprehension**
- 10-30 minutes
- Students learn strategies and reading techniques to develop comprehension skills
- Decodable and non-controlled texts are used

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**Coker-Wimberly Elementary School**
Coker-Wimberly Elementary School is a pre-K through 5th Grade school serving 368 students located in Battleboro, North Carolina, part of the Edgecombe County Public School System. Edgecombe County started using HillRAP in 2014. During the 2017-18 school year, one dedicated HillRAP teacher (an instructional coach) and one HillRAP tutor served 143 students on HillRAP Digital, deepening the partnership between Edgecombe County and Hill Learning Center.

Principal Katelin Row, who finished her second year as Coker-Wimberly principal in the spring of 2018, selected a 16-member cohort from a range of Coker-Wimberly educators and staff members to be trained by Hill in phonics, phonemic awareness and strategies for reading and writing, with the goal of improving literacy instruction and the understanding of quality strategies and interventions across the entire school. When the Edgecombe School District originally implemented HillRAP, the district targeted 3rd-5th grade students who struggled in their End-of-Grade tests. At the end of the 2016-2017 school year, the first year they used the HillRAP program, Ms. Row and her teachers determined that intervening in the 3rd-5th grades was too late in the schooling process for most of their students. Wanting more time with HillRAP as an intervention strategy for her students, Ms. Row decided to focus on 1st-2nd grades during the 2017-2018 school year, while continuing to serve the older students who had participated in HillRAP in the first year. Ms. Row is a strong believer in the HillRAP program when it is implemented with fidelity.

**STATS**

Student – Teacher Ratio: 14:1

- Minority Enrollment: 91%
  - 66% Black
  - 24% Hispanic
  - 9% White
  - 1% Mixed Race

- Free/Reduced Lunch: 95.9%

- Passing rate for all areas of EOGs: 30%

"It works for kids who are intervention resistant. It’s explicit and systematic and direct in nature – specific, bite-sized, and differentiated."

-- Katelin Row

**Eastway Elementary School**

Eastway Elementary School is located in Durham, North Carolina, serving 610 students. Shayla B. Holeman, principal of Eastway Elementary School, also believes strongly in the HillRAP program. During the 2016-2017 school year, Eastway used a combination of HillRAP tutors and Eastway staff to administer the HillRAP classes. This combination of instructors demonstrated the difficulties in implementing the program successfully. While the tutors’ time was protected and they could administer HillRAP according to a schedule set out by the school, the staff members—ELL teachers and Teacher’s Assistants (TA) who were teaching HillRAP—often got pulled away for other coverage. Understanding this problem and looking for a way to protect HillRAP time, Eastway shifted to almost exclusively using HillRAP tutors for the entire 2017-2018 school year. These three tutors were hired and trained by Hill and worked at Eastway four days each week. In addition to these tutors, two staff members – a TA and the school’s literacy coach – received HillRAP training. These staff members met with HillRAP groups in the afternoons because it was thought that during those afternoon periods, they would be less likely to be called away for other duties. However, these staff members were still not able to implement the HillRAP program with consistency.
Global Scholars Academy

Global Scholars Academy is a charter elementary school located in Durham, North Carolina, serving 162 students. HillRAP was implemented at Global Scholars Academy before Jason Jowers took over as Head of School in 2016. When he arrived at Global Scholars Academy, Mr. Jowers sensed that HillRAP hadn’t been fully integrated into the school’s culture. He set out to change that during the 2017-2018 school year by building the school schedule around HillRAP. He designated five teachers to conduct two HillRAP classes comprised of four students each, four days a week and he made a commitment to keeping to that schedule. Mr. Jowers believes that “kids need consistency” in order to make this program a success. A big part of that mindset is predictability. Students are able to focus on the information being taught because they know they can count on meeting with their HillRAP instructor according to a clearly articulated, predictable schedule.

Maureen Joy Elementary School

Maureen Joy is a charter school located in Durham, North Carolina, serving 488 students. When Mark Bailey became principal of Maureen Joy Elementary School in 2015, he quickly decided that he wanted to bring HillRAP to the school after hearing about and researching the program. Maureen Joy began implementing the HillRAP program with the goal of building capacity and expanding the impact of the program. Mr. Bailey was able to train five teachers the first year, and eight more the second year. While the school experienced some commonplace attrition, by 2017-18 he was able to build a team of two EC teachers, two reading interventionists, and five instructional coaches trained to implement HillRAP.

“What works well for my students is knowing that HillRAP is part of their day. Students need a certain mindset for HillRAP.”

–Jason Jowers
Instructional coaches for each grade K-4 participated in reading instruction and coaching students. With the high number of HillRAP trained staff, Maureen Joy was able to implement the HillRAP intervention program with more students than the other schools visited for this case study.

**STATS**

- **Student – Teacher Ratio**: 13:1
- **Minority Enrollment**: 91%
  - 50.1% Black
  - 46.8% Hispanic
  - 1.6% White
  - 1.3% Mixed Race
  - 0.2% Asian
- **Free/Reduced Lunch**: 81.8%
- **Passing rate for all areas of EOGs**: 66.3%

**Themes**

During the site visits some common themes emerged that speak more broadly to the issue of successful implementation of the HillRAP program.

**Leadership, Culture, and Whole School Commitment to HillRAP**

Strong leadership is a key to the successful implementation of any program or initiative in a school setting. Leaders who are knowledgeable and enthusiastic are strong advocates for the changes in culture that new programs require. Looking across the schools involved with this case study, it was evident that schools with leaders who were strong advocates for the HillRAP program and who effectively integrated HillRAP into the school culture, the school schedule, and into the curriculum and instructional plans found more success. Those schools where HillRAP was not as embedded and all school leaders and teachers weren’t as knowledgeable about the program seemed to struggle more with implementation and data use.

Coker-Wimberly Elementary School has a dedicated, energetic HillRAP teacher whose enthusiasm and commitment to HillRAP is evident in her classroom and throughout the school. She is seemingly the driving force behind much of the success of HillRAP in her school. After 24 years of classroom teaching and three years of instructional coaching, Zina Pittman has dedicated herself to both HillRAP and her students. She conducts eight, 45-minute HillRAP sessions each day, with each student benefiting from her high expectations and consistent engagement. She manages her group with intensity, making constant eye contact with them.

**Best Practice**

Schools with leaders who are trained in HillRAP, dedicated and enthusiastic about the HillRAP program, and who have successfully integrated HillRAP into the school culture seem to be able to administer the program with more fidelity.
across the horseshoe-shaped table, giving practical instructions and reminders. “It’s Monday,” she reminded the students during the early morning session, “and you know on Monday we get new word lists.” She dispenses practical optimism. “You’ve got nonsense words, which are a little bit tough, but we know how to decode them.” She talks the students through each part of the lesson. “We’re changing the medial phoneme today. That’s our skill for the day. That means you’re changing the middle sound. Can you see it in your head?” She challenges the students, encourages them to support and cheer for one another, and she rewards them for their hard work and accomplishments.

Because of Mrs. Pittman’s level of engagement and enthusiasm, the students in her fourth grade HillRAP class are genuinely excited about the program. Travonte likes how the program allows him to set concrete goals and meet them. “I feel like I’m getting better,” he said with confidence. He’s also able to see his progress in real time on the iPad. Jaden feels that the skills he learned from HillRAP carry over to his other classes. All of the students in the HillRAP class have learned from Mrs. Pittman to support and cheer on each other’s progress. The four students who are in a class together – Travonte, Jaden, Miguel, and Marlivia - are enthusiastic about each other’s successes. They expressed a desire to spend more time engaged in the HillRAP program each day, because it’s a smaller class where they get more attention from an experienced, truly extraordinary teacher-leader.

“**When I see the words in another class, I can say the words like I learned to say them in here.**

–Jaden (Student)

Eastway Elementary School’s implementation of HillRAP illustrates a different approach from that of Coker-Wimberly. During the first year of HillRAP implementation at Eastway two years ago, the school utilized Hill tutors and only a few staff members for the program. The staff members struggled to protect their HillRAP time and were often pulled away for other coverage. Some friction arose between the HillRAP tutors and some of the Eastway classroom teachers. The source of this friction appeared to be that the classroom teachers lacked an understanding of the HillRAP program and they were frustrated that their students were pulled from their classes without a clear understanding of why. Despite this friction between teachers and HillRAP tutors, Ms. Holeman felt that the HillRAP tutors did phenomenal work with the Eastway students. The tutors formed meaningful, trusting relationships with the students, and they took a strong interest in their students’ success. A strong partnership eventually emerged between the classroom teachers and the HillRAP tutors. The tutors sat down with the teachers and provided them with an overview of HillRAP, which, according to Lanette Fain, a Literacy Coach at Eastway, strengthened the teacher-tutor relationship and changed the dynamic by the end of the 2016-2017 school year. During the 2017-2018 school year, the tutors and teachers were in sync, collaborating, sharing data, offering background and updates about the students, and more. It’s clear from looking at the implementation process that tutors need to be embedded in the culture of every HillRAP school and strong communication between teachers and tutors needs to be cultivated.

In contrast to Coker-Wimberly and Eastway, Principal Bailey created a systemic culture at Maureen Joy that fully supports the HillRAP program. HillRAP appears to be carefully and consistently implemented by well-trained staff. HillRAP is one of the tools used by the interventionists at Maureen Joy and an important one. All teachers are aware of the HillRAP program and how it’s used. Danielle Linville, a classroom teacher at Maureen Joy, says she has “a lot of trust” in the HillRAP teachers. She doesn’t feel like she has to worry or micromanage the HillRAP teachers. “I feel a weight off of me because the students are being taken care of with their specific needs, especially the low readers.” Ms. Linville teaches the lowest reading group, and she always questions whether or not she’s hitting everything she needs to in her instruction. “With the students who are pulled, I’m sure those students are getting what they need, until they demonstrate progress.” Maureen Joy administrators, HillRAP instructors and classroom teachers are all confident that HillRAP is being administered competently and thoroughly and there is a trust throughout the building that HillRAP is being utilized effectively.
Professional Learning, Training, and Support from HillRAP

When any new program is brought into a school, finding the time and energy to train teachers and staff can be challenging. Hill Learning Center offers a combination of in-person and online training for HillRAP, and the schools implementing HillRAP require different levels of training for their staff. In order to be considered a HillRAP instructor, an individual must complete extensive training in Hill Methodology. This training takes place in a blended setting, with two days of face-to-face training at Hill Learning Center supported by online pre-work in the technology, pedagogy, and content components of the program. Hill training is strong and comprehensive.

Ms. Fain, a first-year Literacy Coach at Eastway Elementary School and a fourth-year teacher, was impressed with the HillRAP training. “The online portion of the training was very thorough and the information I learned through the training was instructive.” She estimated that she spent about 18 hours in total on the online portion of the training, which is a considerable amount of time for a busy teacher. In the course of the training, she discovered that it wasn’t possible to skip any content by demonstrated existing knowledge of the content. It was not competency-based, requiring all trainees to engage with the content in a similar manner. Given this, Ms. Fain suggested that the online portion of the training be more individualized, focusing on an initial pre-assessment and basing the delivery of the content on the results of this assessment. This type of differentiation might result in a more productive 18 hours of time. We strongly agree with Ms. Fain’s recommendation to differentiate the training and will expand upon this—as well as an additional recommendation for personalizing the face-to-face training—in our “Recommendations” section below.

Mr. Jowers, of Global Scholars Academy, personally identified teachers to train and implement HillRAP at his school. He looked for teachers or assistant teachers who were capable, who could add their personalized touches to HillRAP without changing it, and who could take HillRAP further than the 45 minutes of class. Mr. Jowers chose several teacher assistants to attend the HillRAP training and to implement the program, along with classroom teachers. Mr. Jowers feels the training offered by Hill is solid and the data they are gathering is very useful, yet they have faced challenges in implementing HillRAP at the school. One Global Scholars Academy teacher found that his students grew increasingly frustrated with the program when he was forced to redo an entire comprehension section after getting just one of four questions correct. This teacher also felt that the iPad could be a distraction for the students. The teacher wasn’t clear about how to set the iPad controls so the students didn’t have access to some of these distracting functions. This particular teacher did not proactively seek out a HillRAP mentor on a regular basis and because of that, the questions he had about the app usage were not answered. It seems as though some of these challenges could potentially be alleviated with more extensive and prescribed follow-up and mentor support.

Mrs. Pittman at Coker-Wimberly loves the HillRAP program and was quite positive about the training she received for it, as well as for the support she has received from Hill Learning Center, both through email and text messaging. She proactively reached out to her mentor, and she felt Hill has been very responsive to her questions.

The prevailing sentiment among most of the teachers and administrators with whom we spoke was that while there are areas to improve in both the training and follow-up support, there is little doubt that teachers and tutors are well-prepared to deliver the program to their students.
Balancing Fidelity and Adaptability

The carefully constructed HillRAP program is designed to be implemented in a structured and systematic manner. It’s a mastery-based program intended to be delivered in a consistent and concentrated dose. Much of the success of HillRAP can be attributed to that program structure. Within the HillRAP program, teachers have flexibility built in to meet students’ learning needs and preferences. Teachers have choice in word lists, pacing, and comprehension passages. One of the biggest challenges schools face in implementing the HillRAP program, is finding consistent, dedicated time to administer it. The program offers HillRAP teachers and schools some adaptability in implementation in order to meet the realities of their school schedules. For example, if a teacher has a period of time shorter than the optimal 45 minutes to one hour prescribed by HillRAP to work with a group of students, they are encouraged to use their professional judgment to determine which parts of the program should be sacrificed. Some schools decide not to implement the “add-on” comprehension piece of HillRAP because they know that their students will have whole group comprehension instruction at another point in the school day. For schools, finding a balance between fidelity to the HillRAP model and the necessary adaptations to make the program fit into their schedule can be challenging.

At Global Scholars Academy, Mr. Jowers expressed some concerns about using the HillRAP program that center on this challenge of balancing fidelity and adaptability. His primary concern was the length of time of the HillRAP sessions. “Forty-five minutes is a long time to tie up a teacher for three or four kids,” he pointed out. And he was concerned about possible overload for his students. For example, all the second graders at Global Scholars Academy participate in a program called Letterland, a phonics-based reading, writing and spelling program. Mr. Jowers wondered if participating in both programs was too much. Are the students confused by the two different approaches? Do the programs complement each other? Are they overlooked? He and his team have tried to work through these challenging questions.

The adaptations to HillRAP at Global Scholars Academy seemed less intentional and more reactive to daily situations than in the other schools. One teacher delivered HillRAP instruction in the music room instead of the usual place in the library. Students and the teacher sat on chairs with iPads on their laps, with no table. The students were engaged during the delivery of the instruction and there was a lot of positive energy during the class. Another teacher delivered HillRAP to two students in a small work room set-up with a white board and a table for instruction. The teacher sat behind the students who sat at the table and did not maintain consistent eye contact with them. Another teacher came into the room during the HillRAP session to recharge her iPads, so she spent time plugging them in, and she left and came back in order to quiet the students who were in the library next door. These adaptations to the realities of a school environment demonstrate the difficulties of maintaining fidelity to the HillRAP model on a daily basis.

The amount of time given to HillRAP can be tough on the teachers, who feel stretched thin already. Mr. Brown at Global Scholars Academy sees his HillRAP students five days as week, as well as meets with his ESL classes and fulfills his other duties as a translator. Ms. Jackson, another Global Scholars Academy HillRAP instructor, works until 6:30 each day, which has prevented her from getting more HillRAP training, which she’d like. She feels uncertain about her skill at delivering some aspects of the HillRAP curriculum. She’d like to have a face-to-face meeting with a HillRAP trainer to ask her questions on a regular basis, but is unable to fit it into her already hectic schedule. This is the challenge of this type of intervention program: there is a baseline set of conditions that are required for successful implementation, and it is clear that adequate time and preparation are among those necessities. In this case, the school might need to invest more of its resources, if they are available, to secure Hill tutors.
At Coker-Wimberly, Mrs. Pittman’s time is “maxed out.” She can fit no more HillRAP groups in her day. As a result, they have brought on a second teacher, Mr. Barlow, who is working primarily with the first and second grade students. But scheduling all the students who could benefit from HillRAP remains a problem. And when students are pulled out of class for HillRAP instruction, they are often missing core instruction. Ms. Row feels that HillRAP really should be an addition to what’s already being done in the classroom. “The challenge is human capital,” Ms. Row said. Mrs. Pittman does all the testing for the school, so when she’s involved in testing, she can’t administer HillRAP instruction for the students.

Ms. Holeman, at Eastway Elementary, also concedes that giving HillRAP the designated 45-minute period it requires every day can be very tough on a school schedule. That often means that in a two-hour reading block, students who receive HillRAP instruction miss more than 45 minutes of whole group instruction – instruction they could benefit from significantly. Ms. Holeman feels that 35 minutes is the sweet spot for daily HillRAP instruction for her students. She’d like to see the HillRAP instructors work with students through the phonics part of the lesson each day and have the comprehension piece of HillRAP pushed into the classroom. This is another example of the trend of comprehension being the first component of the program to be jettisoned.

Mr. Bailey admitted that one of the biggest challenges with the HillRAP program is committing to the time needed for implementation. Hill recommends a 45-50 minute HillRAP session, but Maureen Joy’s intervention block is only 40 minutes. After giving students time to transition between classrooms, the HillRAP session is effectively 30 minutes and teachers often leave the reading comprehension piece of the program incomplete. While comprehension gets addressed in other parts of the school day, teachers are forced by time constraints to make adjustments and the HillRAP program doesn’t get implemented with fidelity. Julia Sweeney is in her first year as a HillRAP instructor at Maureen Joy. She finds the implementation of HillRAP a challenge because she follows IEP service minutes, and she sees some students for 55 minutes and others for 30 minutes. She enjoys the systematic nature of the instruction and she’s using that structure for math instruction as well. Ms. Sweeney feels that the HillRAP program keeps students from falling through the cracks because it forces them to go through every part of the program each day. She feels that student confidence has definitely increased with students who participate in HillRAP. She gives the example of one student who was terrified to read aloud who is now reading aloud with confidence. “Students are much more comfortable with what they’re working on. They’re much more comfortable because they know where they are and what they’re working on. This increases agency.”

Experienced instructors who have engaged with Hill coaching learn how to balance fidelity to the HillRAP model while adapting to school contexts and schedules. Preliminary quantitative research from Duke Center for Child and Family Policy shows that student growth is more strongly correlated to the experience of the HillRAP instructor than session length. Ongoing quantitative research will allow Hill and schools to better understand the ideal implementation approach.
Data Tracking/Use of Data
The HillRAP program has the ability to generate an enormous amount of data about each student as well as the overall program itself. Effective use of data is integral to the program’s success and is a key vehicle for enabling meaningful personalization of instruction. The schools involved in this case study differed widely in their use of reports and data available from HillRAP. Teachers who didn’t administer HillRAP sometimes didn’t understand the data offered in the reports, which can be reflective of our first theme of ingraining HillRAP systemically into the school’s culture.

Ms. Holeman, of Eastway Elementary, points out that the enormous amount of student data can be a double-edged sword: while it can provide valuable insight into a student’s strengths and weaknesses, it can also prove frustrating to those teachers who have not been taught how to interpret it, potentially exacerbating a divide between HillRAP tutors and other classroom teachers. In these cases, tutors might provide data to classroom teachers who are unable to use it effectively, and as a result might grow more frustrated with the program. These individuals are extraordinarily busy, and scores of reports without appropriate context for interpretation are not beneficial to them. It would benefit classroom teachers to have some basic training in interpreting HillRAP data. This training would not be as extensive as the HillRAP trained teachers would be expected to experience, but enough so that they are able to understand what the data they’re looking at and to try to leverage the data effectively in their classrooms.

At Maureen Joy, Mr. Bailey has emphasized the importance of data with all of his staff, whether they are HillRAP teachers or not. He likes the data they get. “The data collection is unmatched!” Maureen Joy has seen that kids who’ve been connected to the HillRAP program consistently and with fidelity have shown growth in reading levels. During the 2016-2017 school year, their proficiency numbers took a small dip after having shown consistent increases. Yet their growth score was the eighth highest among charter schools across the state. “While proficiency dipped, the lowest performing kids had higher growth than predicted, mostly because of HillRAP,” said Mr. Bailey.

Maureen Joy makes their HillRAP data available on their Google drive and classroom teachers can look at the information to update RTI plans. Danielle Linville, a first grade teacher, explained how Maureen Joy students are tapped for participation in the HillRAP program. Kindergarten assessments are used based upon teacher input. Students can test out of HillRAP using the HillRAP assessments. Ms. Linville feels that RTI and HillRAP work well together. Accessing data and using data to inform decisions is expected at Maureen Joy.

Best Practice
The HillRAP program is designed to generate actionable data for the students involved. Schools seem to achieve greater success when they understand, access and use HillRAP data.

It’s good to have the HillRAP assessment data right away and not have to wait six months.

–Ms. Linville
Future Directions and Recommendations

Looking at each of the four schools participating in this case study, it’s apparent that while HillRAP is a structured and systematic program, no two schools implement it in exactly the same way. Each school has adapted the program to fit the needs of their schedules and students. Hill Learning Center designed the HillRAP program to have a degree of flexibility in implementation, giving teachers the ability to use their professional judgment about which skills/parts of the program not to include in a particular session. Flexibility with implementation is important, but fidelity to the HillRAP model with as little adaptation as possible is essential to the success of the program. It became clear during the site visits that a broad array of school staff knowledge about HillRAP coupled with teachers who understand the HillRAP program and how it’s implemented are essential to the program’s success. HillRAP data should be understood and utilized by the classroom teachers as well as HillRAP teachers, with the implementation of the program being improved due to the closeness of this relationship. Support and mentorship from Hill is also an essential part of the program’s success. Teachers who feel they can ask questions about HillRAP or about a particular student involved with HillRAP or about using the HillRAP app felt more secure in implementing the model, and that security and confidence trickled down to the students themselves.

Recommendations for Hill Learning Center and HillRAP Schools

1. Include principal or school leadership in the HillRAP training. A deeply connected and committed lead person plays an essential role in developing a culture in which HillRAP is not only accepted but embraced. As HillRAP is established as a program in the school, we would encourage other leaders to step forward. It is essential that school leadership prioritize the program, and it is essential that they are familiar with the program in order to do so. This level of familiarity can help make HillRAP a priority for teachers, rather than seen as an additional or disconnected program. This level of involvement at the leadership level can also help HillRAP become better understood by other stakeholders, including parents and community members. Leadership can partner with key staff to share HillRAP at open houses and other school events.

2. Engage everyone in the building. It’s important to ensure that all teachers implementing HillRAP are trained, but also that all teachers who have students in HillRAP understand what the data means, the language being used, and how students progress. Schools should consider school-wide trainings as an introduction to HillRAP to facilitate an understanding of the program. Schools could develop PLC Guides or PLCs for all teachers whether they are HillRAP teachers or not. For example, YE Smith Elementary has found success by pushing HillRAP teachers into the classroom, which resulted in classroom teachers gaining a better understanding of the HillRAP program and HillRAP teachers gaining a better understanding of the classroom environment. Most important, however, are the potential benefits that would accrue to the students as a result of this inclusive structure. At Coker-Wimberly, a cohort of teachers - including the PE teacher - was provided with additional training in the strategies used in the program. We would like to see these types of ideas built out and shared systemically. And because HillRAP is one intervention of many likely being used in a school, each school should have an intentional plan of how HillRAP teachers communicate with classroom teachers.

3. Move towards a competency-based training program. While HillRAP training was valued by participants, we feel that they would benefit from a more extended process to ensure fidelity of implementation. We recommend a more graduated process where participants would get temporary certification for a specific period of time and then gain their full certification by meeting specific qualifications. These qualifications might include multiple observations, reflections, and/or the successful completion of a micro-credential. Hill Learning Center developed five stacks of micro-credentials around the pillars of reading instruction, and we recommend developing a stack that is associated with the training. This would allow the training to be more personalized, with participants “placing out” of certain components if they’ve demonstrated that they are able to complete them successfully. This same concept would apply to the implementation itself. Hill would establish a clear set of indicators for successful implementation, and the HillRAP teachers would have to demonstrate that they met these indicators. For example, one micro-credential (or part of a micro-credential) could be an artifact that the teacher provides showing how they shared data about a student with a non-HillRAP teacher in a clear and productive manner. There are numerous possibilities to integrate this type of competency-based training and follow-up to ensure the quality of preparation and the fidelity of implementation.
Emphasize the importance of consistent coaching. HillRAP teachers and tutors implementing the program for the first time need systematic and differentiated coaching. This should not be “as needed” or just when a teacher reaches out with a question or asks for help. Hill offers a structured, internationally-accredited approach to coaching and certifying instructors that includes additional training, 90 hours of implementation, five observations and coaching sessions with a mentor, and a case study. Teachers develop a close relationship with their mentor through this approach. This model was implemented at Coker-Wimberly and with one teacher at Maureen Joy. EDLC schools varied in how they used coaches. Hill provided all EDLC HillRAP teachers and TAs with three formal coaching observations, but many of them did not take advantage of their coach as a resource beyond that. Even if not pursuing full certification, a coaching plan could be designed to ensure periodic support for the teachers and tutors, with regular check-ins to ensure teachers are implementing the program with fidelity and are feeling confident in their delivery. Hill can work with schools to develop a coaching plan tailored to each school or teacher, emphasizing the unique needs of each school and incorporating the individual needs of the teachers. This approach will help ensure successful implementation of the program.
### Appendix A: EDLC HillRAP Implementation SY1617-SY1819

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* In SY1617 Coker-Wimberly delivered HillRAP via paper and pencil, not via HillRAP digital, so there is not data for the number of sessions delivered.

**Maureen Joy paid for Hill tutors to cover for a maternity leave (2016-17) and address mid-year attrition of HillRAP teachers (2017-18). Low average session numbers are not indicative of inconsistent or less than planned implementation.