There is an urgent need to improve our K-12 system. How to implement and sustain educational change, however, is a challenge facing the K-12 arena. This qualitative case study was intended to examine a six-year educational change initiative in one alternative secondary school. The study helped us gain knowledge on implementing and sustaining educational change by addressing the following three research questions: (1) What were the staff members’ descriptions of disciplinary issues before and after the RTP intervention? (2) Based on staff descriptions, what were the factors associated with the successful implementation of the RTP program? (3) Based on staff descriptions, what were the factors associated with the successful sustainability of the RTP program?

Two interview protocols were used to collect data from 12 educators who represented two different groups of participants. Data were then analyzed via an a priori framework of six implementation and six sustainability factors. The analysis revealed a strong affirmation of the six factors associated with successful implementation, as well the six factors associated with successful sustainability of a program. The six factors for effective implementation included: (1) resources, (2) professional development, (3) local vs. state/federal, (4) self-analysis (i.e., data reviews), (5) technical know-how, and (6)
district and school leadership commitments, while the six factors for achieving sustainability included: (1) resources, (2) consistency of effort, (3) commitment to excellence, (4) self-analysis (i.e., data reviews), (5) coaching, and (6) conviction.

The findings of this study provide an image of what is possible for the successful implementation and sustainability of educational change. In particular, the findings point to the importance of a systematic approach to implementing and sustaining educational change, with attention to multiple factors. The findings of this study also suggest the reform model currently popular in educational change may be based on a fallacy, and advocate for the renewal model instead.