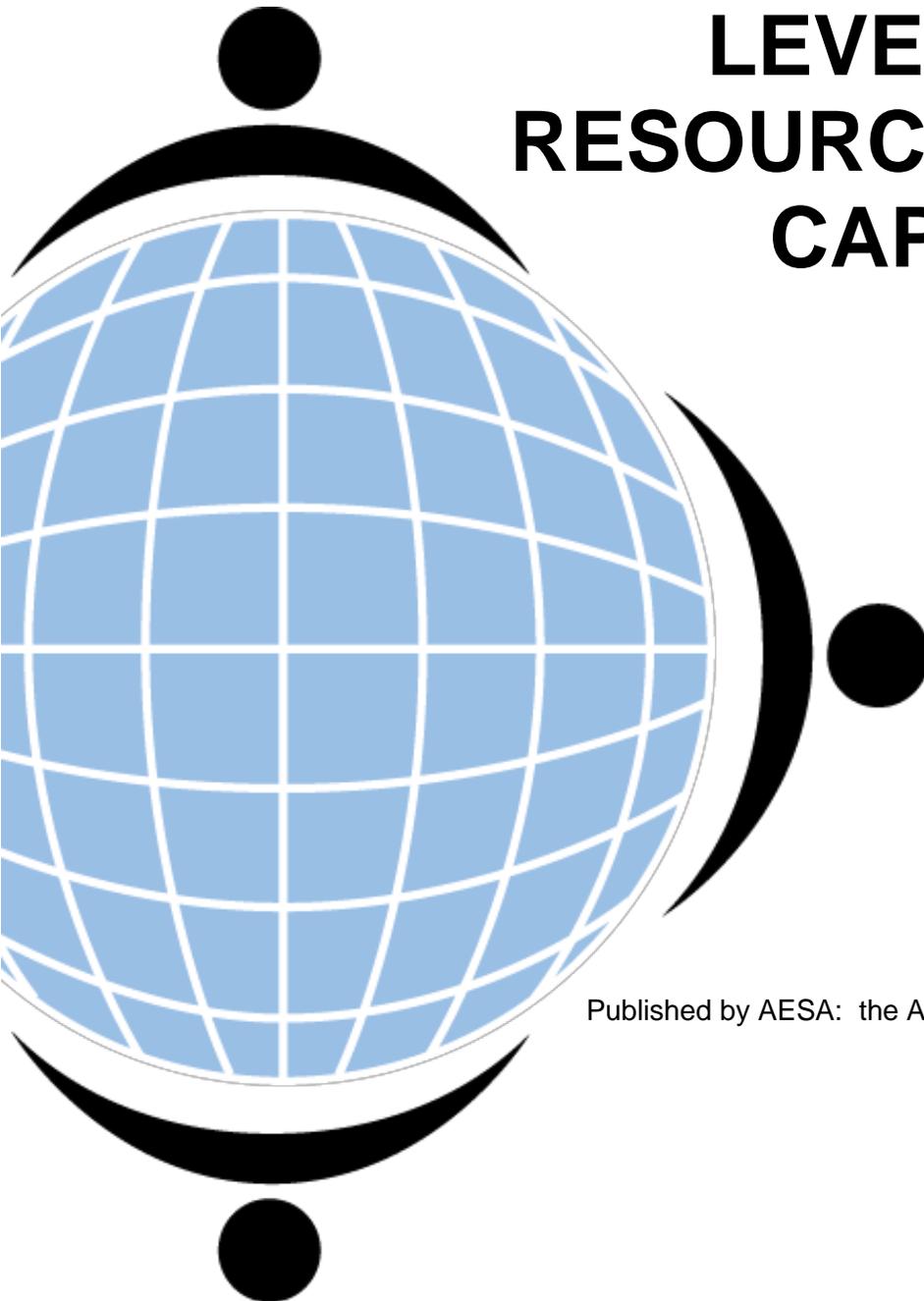

Perspectives

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LEVERAGING RESOURCES TO BUILD CAPACITY



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The Impact of a Teacher Leader Model of Professional Development for Common Core State
Standards Implementation on Student Achievement

by

Ronald J. Iarussi

Karen H. Larwin

The Impact of a Teacher Leader Model of Professional Development for Common Core State Standards Implementation on Student Achievement

On February 17, 2009, President Barack Obama signed into law the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), designed to stimulate a suffering economy (ED, 2009). The ARRA laid the foundation for education reform by supporting innovative strategies that lead to long term positive effects (ED, 2009). A competitive Race to the Top (RTTT) grant process provided \$4.35 billion through which states would be eligible based on applications that included specific conditions for reform (ED, 2009). States' applications would be judged based on the following reform areas: (a) adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace and to compete in the global economy; (b) building data systems that measure student growth and success, inform teachers and principals about how they can improve instruction; (c) recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most; and (d) a plan that would turn around our lowest achieving schools.

The key point in the RTTT is the criteria for application that included the adoption of Common Core State Standards and assessments. States would not be eligible for RTTT dollars if they did not include in their application a timeline for adoption and transition to Common Core State Standards in math, language arts, science, and social studies (ED, 2009). Secretary Duncan also commented on the need for states to take responsibility for implementing national standards without fear of federal over-reaching. "Education is a state and local issue. You pay 90 percent of the tab, and our job is to support leaders like you" (ED, 2009, p. 4). Duncan made his case for

the reason standards are necessary. “Today, our standards are too low and the results on international tests show it. Worse yet, we see the signals in the international economy as more and more engineers, doctors, and science and math Ph. Ds come from abroad” (ED,2010, p. 5).

Phase I of the RTTT grant began in January 2010. Tennessee and Delaware were the only states awarded at that time. Winners of Phase II were announced in August of 2010. Ohio was awarded along with nine other states and the District of Columbia (ED, 2010). A total of 46 states applied for funds in phases I and II. All 46 states had to include adoption of Common Core State Standards in their applications in order to qualify for review (ED, 2010). The Ohio award initiated the process of the implementation of Common Core State Standards and assessments and the eventual implementation of the teacher-leader model as the professional development implementation model. A requirement of RTTT is every educator in Ohio was expected to be teaching to the State’s enhanced standards and have the necessary supports and resources to do so effectively. All Ohio educators will utilize multiple forms of assessments, including summative and formative, to monitor student progress and to personalize instruction. The combination of rigorous standards and high-quality assessments will inform instruction, professional development, and policy. By the end of the 2013-2014 school year, every teacher was expected to have accessed newly revised standards and associated curriculum online supports as well as participate in at least one standards awareness or professional development program (ODE, 2013).

Teacher-Leader Model

There are many methods of professional development that can be used to help schools implement a program or method of teaching. Educational professional development is defined as “a career-long process in which educators fine-tune their teaching to meet student needs”

(Maggioli, 2004, p.2). Professional development can be accessed or delivered in many forms such as online courses, traditional direct graduate coursework or through local and regional entities. “What attracts teachers to professional development is their belief that it will expand their knowledge and skills, contribute to their growth, and enhance their effectiveness with students” (Guskey, 2002, p. 382). Professional development programs based on the assumption that change in attitudes and beliefs comes first are typically designed to gain acceptance, commitment, and enthusiasm from teachers and school administrators before the implementation of new practices or strategies (Guskey, 2002). In general, though, reviews of professional development research consistently point out the ineffectiveness of most professional development programs (Cohen, 1998).

The majority of professional development falls short because they do not take into account what motivates educators to engage in professional development and the process by which change typically occurs (Guskey, 2002).

The teacher-leader model of professional development is based on trained or experienced teachers “coaching” other teachers on a particular method or program designed to change student outcomes (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2001). There is substantial research that shows a positive effect when the teacher-leader model is used in many capacities. However, there is a paucity of research that demonstrates the effect of the train-the-trainer model of professional development on student achievement. Much of the existing research focuses on professional development as having a direct impact on collaboration, community, and professionalism are present in the culture of the educational process, while the impact of student achievement is only surmised (Hickey, 2005).

Historically, overall responsibility for the schools’ operation has fallen to a single

individual: the principal - a role that through much of the last century has been largely vested in managerial expertise (Alejano, Knapp, Marzoff, & Portin, 2006). Reformers believe that the teacher's role in instructional leadership is important because of the greater demands on principals and that in order for true reform initiatives to take place, it must have the teacher as the leader in implementation (Institute of Educational Leadership, [IEL], 2001). According to the IEL, the rationale behind using teachers as more than "funneling information into schoolchildren" is that there is infinite potential for teachers to share their "hard earned knowledge and wisdom with players in education's decision-making circles.

The concept that leadership makes a difference in schools is also a key component in determining whether the teacher-leader model might be an effective model for increasing student achievement. There is an abundance of research that shows a connection between instructional leadership and learning outcomes (Alejano et al., 2006). Similarly, there is an abundance of research that demonstrates that the most important variable in determining student success is the classroom teacher (Shelton, 2009).

There are many roles for teachers as leaders.. How schools use their teachers and in what capacity vary greatly (Shelton, 2009). The need for teachers to assume different roles other than the traditional roles is related to the workload and responsibilities that have been placed on building principals (Alejano et al., 2006). The leadership roles and responsibilities of principals have evolved over the last three decades (Murphy, 2002). In the 1980s, the leadership roles began to transform because of the influence of *A Nation at Risk*.

In the 1990s, reform laws such as *Goals 2000* shifted groundwork for principals to become more involved with outcomes in the classroom. In the 2000s, the principal's role has taken on accountability for student performance (Alejano et al., 2006). The shift from a focus on

the individual titular leaders and individual behavior to a focus on the valued ends of the systems that leaders lead has helped to redirect attention from “management” of schools to “leadership” (Murphy, 2002). A new leadership agenda that includes guiding and improving the school implies a new set of roles and responsibilities and the attendant authority to diagnose complex modern challenges and doggedly focus the attention of the school and its community on the aim of powerful and equitable learning opportunities (Alejano et al., 2006).

Research exists that demonstrates that school leaders affect students’ learning (Alejano et al., 2006). The teacher-leader model was chosen for the current investigation because research suggests that there is an impact of the teacher-leader on how students perform. Leaders’ effects on learning appear to involve more than just student learning. In this broader conception, leadership practice relates, in principle, to a broad learning improvement agenda in the school around three learning tenets: (1) Student learning – framed in broad terms to include more than achievement on single measures such as test scores; (2) Professional learning – including the array of skills, knowledge, and values that teachers and administrators gain from practice itself, formal attempts to develop their professional capacities while on the job, and from initial preparation for their professional positions; and (3) System learning – conceived of as “insight into the functioning of the system as a whole to develop and evaluate new policies, practices and structures that enhance its performance.” (Knapp, 2003, p.11)

It is clear that initial preparation for school leadership can never teach aspiring leaders all they need to know to assume the kind of school leadership roles envisioned in the concept of the teacher-leader model for professional development (Davis et al., 2005). New practices and strategies have been developed by school systems to redefine leadership roles, responsibilities, and authority allocations (Alejano et al., 2006). One such practice involves developing new

models of leadership based on distributing leadership practices across the school organization (Alejano et al., 2006). Included among those leadership practices are the creation of instructional specialists or “coaching” roles, the formalizing of teacher-leadership roles focused on instructional improvement, the fostering of professional learning communities, and the redesigning and differentiating administrative roles.

The teacher-leader model for professional development utilized in the current investigation was developed out of these concepts. Rather than create wholly new instructional leadership positions, as in the coaching arrangements, this system seeks to designate teachers in formal roles of “teacher-leader” or “mentor” which places the teacher at the center of instructional improvement (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). An example of the model is Connecticut’s Beginning Educator Support and Training (BEST) program, which provides new teachers with an induction support team of veteran teachers (Murphy, 2002). Accomplished teachers attaining National Board Certification are also being used in some jurisdictions to support instructional practice of their colleagues (Berry, Johnson, & Montgomery, 2005).

Current Investigation

The train-the-trainer model is being used by some states to implement Common Core State Standards (Kavanaugh, 2012). In Tennessee and Ohio for example, the state selects exemplary educators to serve as core coaches who facilitate training sessions across the state (Kavanaugh, 2012). As stated earlier, there is a lack of research that directly links the achievement levels of students to specific common core professional development that utilizes teacher-leader model. There is also limited research that links student achievement to the train-the-trainer-model for any professional development. There is also little known about the other types of professional development and the methods used to deliver Common Core State

Standards in each of the states that have participated (Center, 2013). A preponderance of the existing research on the impact of a train-the-trainer type of professional development is related to some qualitative evidence that links an increase in school culture variables such as collaboration and professionalism. An example of this type of research has been conducted is a study in rural Texas. The district conducted surveys of both the teachers who conducted the professional development as well as those who were active participants. The results showed that peer-led professional development is strongly perceived by the presenters as increasing faculty togetherness or community (Hickey, 2005). As is the case in much of the current research, no additional investigation examined impact on student achievement to research increased student achievement in the district for those teachers that expressed an increase in professionalism and collaboration as a result of the professional development they received using the train-the-trainer model.

Pollnow (2012) conducted a study in Arizona, using a mixed method design, examining the use of the train-the-trainer professional development model, using the incorporation of student formative assessments in an effort to measure the impact. The training that was provided was collaborative, job-embedded, ongoing, and adaptable in order to meet the requirements of a School Improvement Grant. The research findings indicate that the professional development was perceived as effective by the trainers but not as effective by the teachers (Pollnow, 2102). The number of formative assessments did increase significantly more for those teachers who participated in the professional development as opposed to those who did not participate. However, as with other research, no specific analysis was conducted to measure student achievement as a result of the professional development. In the absence of research it can only be assumed that a more efficient use of variables such as the use of formative assessments,

increased learning goals, and teacher professionalism are all contributing variables to increased student achievement.

The current investigation will add to the paucity of existing research examining the impact of the teacher-leader model of professional development using measures of student achievement. As stated, there is no known research that has directly measured the effects of teacher-leaders on student achievement. This investigation will provide school leadership with a model of how to use available empirical evidence to help make informed decisions about programs that will affect the achievement, culture, and overall success of school. The current investigation can provide a model of how data can be used to show the worth and value of programs, as well as provide information for program improvement.

METHODS

Participants

The participants in the current investigation included fourth through eighth grade teachers from school districts in a Northeast Ohio, specifically the an area identified as the Mahoning Valley. The subject areas investigated included math and language arts. Teachers from four of the districts were considered to be members of the control group, in that they were not involved in receiving the professional development. Teachers from thirteen districts participated in at least one of the professional development offerings.

Districts that participated in the teacher-leader model were assigned values ranging from T1 through T13. The districts that did not participate were assigned values ranging from C1-C4. Descriptions of the districts used in this study are included in the table. Districts are classified by type, (rural, suburban or urban, treatment or control indicated with a “T” or “C”), enrollment (number of total students grades k-12), disadvantaged pupil population (the number of students

who qualify for free lunch), mobility (the percentage of students in the district for less than one year), and race (the percentage of non-Hispanic White students). This information is provided in

Table 1.

Table 1. District Information

District	Type	Enrollment	Disadvantaged	Mobility	Race
T1	Suburban	5285	47%	6.7%	82%
T2	Urban	1211	82%	14.6%	40%
T3	Suburban	2804	14%	3.1%	93%
T4	Suburban/Rural	1036	37%	6.8%	94%
T5	Suburban/Rural	850	47%	6.1%	97%
T6	Suburban	607	43%	2.6%	91%
T7	Suburban	2163	1%	3.6%	95%
T8	Suburban/Rural	584	62%	12.8%	95%
T9	Suburban/Rural	1214	26%	4.4%	98%
T10	Suburban/Rural	1093	35%	5.6%	97%
T11	Suburban/Urban	1973	61%	8.4%	84%
T12	Suburban/Rural	2206	37%	7.0%	97%
T13	Rural	718	28%	5.4%	97%
C1	Rural	1953	41%	7.7%	97%
C2	Suburban	4530	42%	8.3%	77%
C3	Suburban/Urban	1735	59%	6.9%	84%
C4	Urban	5239	99%	21.1%	15%

Student data in those districts were derived from those fourth through eighth graders who had taken the Ohio Achievement Assessments in reading and math during the 2013 administration. Data collection was limited to these grades because these are the grade levels in Ohio which participate in the Ohio Achievement Assessments as well as receive Value-Added scores.

Instrumentation

The professional development was delivered to treatment group teachers by grade level bands/subject areas as follows: (1) 4-5 grade language arts/ teacher-leaders; (2) 4-5 math/ teacher-leaders; (3) 6-8 language arts/ teacher-leaders; and (4) 6-8 math/ teacher-leaders.

The professional development began in December 2011 through January 2014. The assessments used for elementary student test scores were the Ohio Achievement Tests given in spring 2013.

The scores used as measures of student achievement included: (1) 4th grade reading and math; (2) 5th grade reading and math; (3) 6th grade reading and math; (4) 7th grade reading and math; and (5) 8th grade reading and math. Traditionally, data from these assessments are collected and used to measure student achievement at that grade level and for that particular subject.

Accountability measures for the school and district are also measured based on the results from these tests.

Value-added data is also part of the accountability measures currently used to measure the effectiveness of the classroom teacher and grade level as a whole. Value-added analysis is a statistical method that helps educators measure the impact schools and teachers have on a student's academic progress rates from year to year. Each district receives a score for each grade based on a calculation that measures each student's growth. Value-added scores are used in Ohio's new teacher evaluation system and is an integral part of the accountability system in Ohio. The value-added scores that were used in this study were retrieved from each district's

local report card. The report cards provide value-added ratings for each grade level.

Value-added psychometric information is relatively guarded information by the Ohio Department of Education. Investigation into possible models used in generating value-added numbers reveals that there are multiple models used (Wright, 2010). In general, all forms of the value-added models take one of two forms: the Multivariate Response Model (MRM) or the Univariate Response Models (URM). The MRM is a multivariate repeated measures ANOVA model. The URM is a traditional ANOVA model. The data provided can be used to predict scores on tests the students have yet to take (Wright, 2010). Currently, in Ohio, math and reading value-added scores are calculated using the MRM method which compares the average growth of students in the most recent year to the average growth of students in 2010, which is the state's baseline year. The growth expectation is defined as maintaining placement in the distribution of normal core equivalency (NCE) scores from one year to the next (Meade, 2013). NCE is similar to a percentile rank in that scores are derived from scaled scores and ranked based upon performance and is an equal interval scale, different from a percentile rank (Meade, 2013).

Value-added scores used at each grade level are calculated by using a multi-year average composite of up to three years. The score is calculated by dividing the mean gain by the standard error at each grade level. A growth index is calculated by dividing the estimated gain by the associated standard error, and a letter grade is given to each grade level based upon the gain index (Meade, 2013). There is currently debate at the state level as to whether the information should be used to evaluate teachers or be used solely to predict student achievement and inform instructional practice.

Procedures

Identified teacher-leader candidates committed to three days of professional development

involving in-depth standards as well as strategies for working with colleagues on implementation of the standards. Additionally, these educators committed to developing a plan with building or district administration for implementation of the standards. The teacher-leaders received professional development opportunities, resources to assist with implementation, and the ability to participate as part of the Teacher-Leader Endorsement cohort. Instructional consultants from the local Educational Services Center (ESC) received training in Common Core State Standards for each subject area and by grade level from the ODE. The Ohio Standards for Professional Development were employed to deliver the professional development to the teacher-leaders.

There are six standards that are considered best practice:

1. Purposeful, structured, and continuous process that occurs over time;
2. Informed by multiple sources of data;
3. Collaborative;
4. Varied learning experiences that accommodate individual skills;
5. Evaluated by short term and long term impact on student achievement; and
6. Results in acquisition, enhancement, or refinement of skills and knowledge. (ODE, 2007)

Teacher-leaders were selected from each school district, from each grade level, and subject to participate in the ESC teacher-leader model of professional development for Common Core State Standards for math and language arts. The purpose of the model is to build capacity for implementation of the Common Core State Standards. The teachers chosen to participate in the leader portion of the professional development demonstrated skill in evidence-based principles of effective leadership and teacher learning; promoted the use of data-based decisions and evidence-based practice; facilitated a collaborative learning culture; participated in developing and supporting a shared vision and clear goals for their schools; and promoted and modeled

ongoing professional learning and improved practice within a learning community. Additional considerations included longevity, willingness to attend and participate in scheduled meetings, and willingness to communicate with ESC consultants. The control participants included those teachers and students from districts that did not participate in the professional development.

The instructional consultants worked in teams of two to provide the professional development which consisted of three separate days for Math and four separate days for Reading lasting from 8:30am to 3:00 pm each day. There was also a professional development opportunity for principals of all district buildings involved in the implementation process and suggestions for efficient and effective professional development to allow the teacher-leaders to train other staff.

The control group participants received professional development typically through limited group time that was spent doing gap analysis between the Ohio standards and the new Common Core State Standards. Control group schools indicated that this generally occurred during teacher planning periods. Districts in the treatment group used various methods for the teacher-leaders to train teachers in their respective districts. As stated earlier ,principals engaged in discussions about effective methods used by the teacher-leaders. The consensus among principals and teacher-leaders was that the leaders were given release time on different occasions throughout the school year to train staff. Grade level and subject area meetings were held. Districts also held professional development waiver days, granted by the ODE, to allow leaders to train other staff. Teacher-leaders were also given the opportunity to provide 15 hours of professional development for Common Core State Standards outside of the school day. Although the delivery of the professional development by each teacher-leader took place in a variety of forms, this varied delivery potentially enhances the external validity of this investigation.

Data Collection and Organization

Data were collected from each district by accessing the statewide test site located on the webpage of the ODE. The data are public record and readily available; however, all district leaders were informed of the research and the methods for collection of data were approved. Usernames and passwords to access district data on the statewide test site were made available. Student level data were available for both reading and mathematics achievement across both the treatment and control groups. However, only grade level data were available for reading and mathematics value-added data across both the treatment and control groups.

RESULTS

Demographics

The data analysis process began by looking at aggregate values for the treatment and control group across the mathematics achievement scores. Scores were drawn from $n = 4850$ students attending the control group schools, and $n = 8541$ students from the treatment group schools. The aggregate mathematics scores are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 *Student Achievement Mathematics Data by Group*

Group	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Control	418.92	36.3	0.244	0.118
Treatment	429.71	33.63	0.21	0.465

As seen in Table 2, aggregate scores from the treatment group are higher than the aggregate

scores from the control group. A similar analysis for reading scores is presented in Table 3.

Table 3 *Student Achievement Reading Data by Group*

Group	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Control	418.92	28.70	-0.33	0.34
Treatment	428.13	24.95	-0.21	0.46

As seen in Table 3, aggregate scores from the treatment group are higher than the aggregate scores from the control group. Further examination of the scores examined the reading and math scores' values by grade level, across the two groups. The mathematics aggregate data are presented in Table 4.

Table 4 *Student Math and Reading Achievement by Grade*

Grade	Group	Math		Reading	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
4 th	Control	426.10	34.20	426.67	24.61
	Treatment	431.29	32.10	432.41	21.43
5 th	Control	417.99	36.25	412.31	27.82
	Treatment	421.98	34.69	418.90	25.36
6 th	Control	422.25	41.46	419.52	28.68
	Treatment	437.46	38.76	429.05	24.65
7 th	Control	409.83	32.20	413.05	27.77
	Treatment	427.82	31.24	425.26	23.90
8 th	Control	417.80	33.49	422.46	31.25
	Treatment	429.96	29.02	434.98	25.86

As seen in Table 4, treatment group scores in mathematics are higher than their control group counterparts when examining student level data by grade. Additionally, treatment group scores in reading are higher than their control group counterparts when examining student level data by grade. A graphical depiction of these results is provided in Figures 1 and 2.

Figure 1. Graphical Image of Mean Mathematics Scores (vertical axis) Across Treatment and Control Groups by Grade Level (horizontal axis)

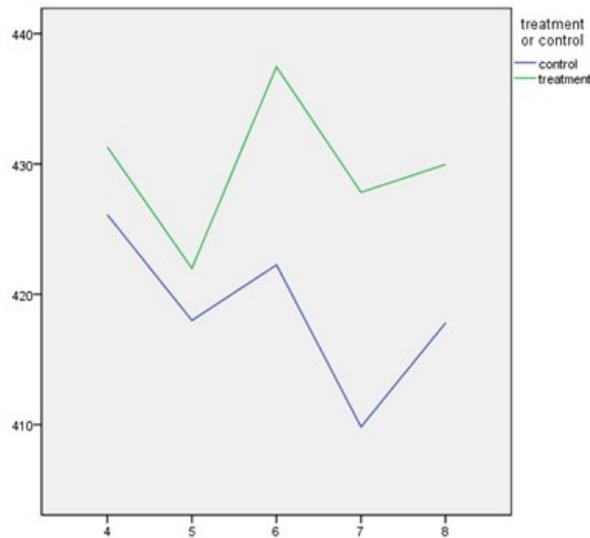
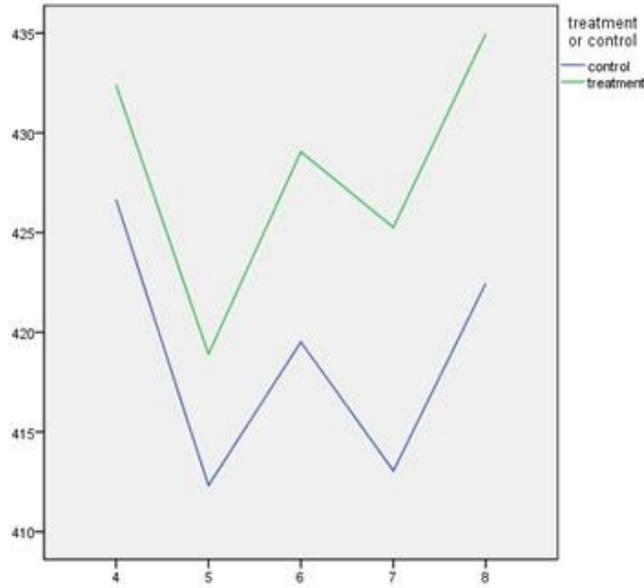


Figure 2. Graphical Image of Mean Reading Scores (vertical axis) Across Treatment and Control Groups by Grade Level (horizontal axis)



Value-added Results

Value-added data are presented for the control group relative to the treatment group in Table 5.

Table 5. Overall Value-Added Score by Group

Group	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Control	-.73	5.75	.45	.51
Treatment	1.28	4.91	.47	-.72

As seen in Table 5, value-added scores are higher for the treatment group than the control group overall. Table 6 depicts reading value-added scores separated by grade level and group.

Table 6. Value-Added Aggregates for Math and Reading by grade level

Grade	Group	Math		Reading	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
4th	Control	.22	4.77	2.74	1.6
	Treatment	-.76	4.06	.72	2.47

5th	Control	-3.38	7.73	-2.23	.94
	Treatment	.51	4.06	.24	1.40
6th	Control	-3.09	7.73	-1.55	5.03
	Treatment	.23	7.04	.16	1.86
7th	Control	.43	.85	-2.28	3.2
	Treatment	1.51	4.23	-1.79	2.58
8th	Control	7.06	8.70	.29	3.36
	Treatment	2.57	5.40	.33	2.37

As seen in Table 6, reading value-added scores are fairly consistent among grade levels. The treatment group scores are higher for fifth through eighth grade. Math value-added scores by group reflect much the same as reading scores. The treatment group scores reveal higher mean scores in the fifth through eighth grades, with fourth grade being the exception. Likelihood analyses were conducted and provide evidence that the treatment scores are significantly higher than control group scores for the overall value-added data, $p = .06$, at $\alpha = .10$.

Preliminary Analysis

Zero-order correlations were analyzed across all potential dependent variables in order to assess the relationship between them. The dependent variables for the current investigation include reading value-added scores, mathematics value-added scores, reading achievement aggregate scores, and mathematics achievement aggregate scores. Independent variables include socio-economically disadvantaged, mobility rates, and race.

Table 7 *Zero-Order Correlations of Independent and Dependent Variables*

Variables	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
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Overall Value-Added	1	.275*	.370**	.204	.297**	-.018	-.365**	-.168	.204
READ VA	2	1	.366**	.325**	.249*	-.143	-.105	-.102	.115
Math VA	3		1	.178	.261*	.070	-.141	-.055	.065
Read AG	4			1	.823**	-.216*	-.710**	-.707**	.632**
Math AG	5				1	-.146	-.745**	-.713**	.649**
Enrollment	6					1	.193	.315**	-.473**
Disadvantage	7						1	.876**	-.790**
Mobility	8							1	-.853**
Race	9								1

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As indicated in Table 7, large significant correlation exists between aggregate math achievement scores and reading achievement scores, with moderate correlations presenting between the other potential dependent variables. The large significant correlation between the math and reading scores potentially creates a multicollinearity issue. Additionally, large significant correlations exist between disadvantage, mobility, and race. Notably, the correlations between the value-added dependent variables and the independent variables are predominantly small and negative, while correlations between the achievement scores and the independent variables are predominantly large, negative, and significant.

An independent samples *t* test was used to examine group differences across math achievement and reading achievement with student level data. These analyses reveal significant differences across groups for both mathematic achievement, $t(9450.33) = -17.31, p < .001, CI_{95}[-12.035, -9.541]$, and reading achievement, $t(8943.18) = -18.76, p < .001, CI_{95}[-10.29, -8.29]$. These results suggest student achievement in the treatment group is significantly higher for both reading and math relative to control group achievement.

DISCUSSION

Summary of Findings

As stated earlier, most of the research conducted regarding the teacher-leader model is related to qualitative evidence that links increased student achievement to improved culture created by peer-led professional development. One Arizona study used results from student formative assessments to measure impact. In this case, a mixed method design was used to measure quantitative and qualitative results. The research questions were similar to this research (Pollnow, 2012). In the Arizona study, the number of formative assessments increased for those teachers who participated in the teacher- leader professional development (Pollnow, 2012). There is no specific research on the correlation between formative assessments and increased achievement although it can be easily assumed that increased formative assessments would be beneficial in allowing teachers to provide more informed and individualized instruction resulting in higher achievement.

The current investigation examined student achievement and value-added scores in reading and math for grades four through eight in 17 districts throughout Mahoning, Columbiana, and Trumbull counties. Thirteen districts were used in the treatment group and the remaining four districts were included in the control group. The treatment group consisted of districts that participated in the professional development provided by the local ESC using the teacher-leader model of delivery. The control group included the districts that did not participate. The dependent variables of student achievement scores and value-added scores were the measures of the effects. The overall student sample size was $n = 13,391$, from $n = 17$ schools. Scores were drawn from those students in both reading and math. The results reveal that there is a significant increase in mean scores in reading and math among the treatment group compared to the mean scores of the control group. However, when math and reading scores are examined

by grade level, district, and group, results reveal that there are no significant pattern differences in scores for both reading and math across both groups.

Research does suggest that use of the teacher-leader model, which increases the positive achievement variables such as culture and self-efficacy, does impact student achievement (Pollnow, 2012). This is the first known study that specifically demonstrates the impact that professional development through the teacher-leader model is associated with higher achievement. The results of this investigation support Pollnow's conclusions. In this investigation, a positive and significant correlation exists between math and reading achievement scores. Research exists that explains correlations between math and reading scores. Most research suggests a correlation exists (Larwin, 2010). There is research that suggests the correlations are not as significant as one might assume (Villa, 2008).

Value-added scores yield similar results to achievement scores. Overall value-added scores are higher for the treatment group compared to the control group. Results depicted by grade level show higher value-added scores in grades five through eight in reading and math for the treatment group. The fourth grade results are different in reading and math where the treatment scores are slightly lower than the control group. Possibilities for these results include, but are not limited to, the significance of the recent implementation of the third grade reading guarantee. Schools are now required to implement interventions at the third grade level for those students who are low achieving. If the control group scores are lower than the treatment group scores, this may reflect that more interventions were in place for that group resulting in higher value-added scores as evident with control group C4. The eighth grade math results are also higher for the control group. A possible explanation for this result is that two schools in the control group had abnormally high calculated value-added scores, significantly impacting the

average results. Unlike achievement scores, value-added math scores are not as highly correlated to reading value-added scores. The correlation of math to reading value-added scores in this investigation is moderate, positive, and significant.

There is considerable research regarding correlations between math and reading achievement and other independent variables that may have an effect on achievement (Konstantopoulos, 2013). Independent variables such as income, mobility, and race are highly correlated to achievement. This study also indicates that math and reading achievement scores are correlated to those same independent variables, however the effect is relatively large, negative, and significant. The same correlations do not exist for value-added scores and the independent variables. Those correlations are predominantly small and negative. Research has determined that correlations exist between reading achievement and math achievement (Larwin, 2010). Usually poor reading ability automatically undermines a student's likelihood of success in math achievement. (Larwin, 2010). One suggestion for the correlation is that many of the math problems today are structured as word problems in which children must read a scenario and determine the proper procedure for solving, as opposed to a traditional numerical problem such as long division or multiplication tables. In the case of word problems, there are more reading skills that need to be utilized than mathematical skills, thus creating the correlation. Other research, such as the study conducted in Indiana, found a correlation between improved reading and math scores after teachers implemented a new system of interim assessments (Konstantopoulos, 2013). The study showed when increases in reading were shown after treatment, they usually occurred in math as well (Konstantopoulos, 2013).

Limitations

Many contributing variables influence the outcomes of achievement testing. To say that

one variable is the sole cause of an outcome is not defensible. Current research suggests that there are many variables that affect achievement (Lewis et al., 2010). For example, efficacy of the classroom teacher and teacher-leaders can positively affect achievement while poverty and mobility can negatively affect achievement. Macro level factors such as economic instability or political influences can also impact achievement. For this reason, directly linking achievement scores to any independent variable has its limitations. The goal of current investigation is to examine impact, if any, of an ongoing teacher-leader model of professional development that focuses specifically on Common Core State Standards. As such, this investigation simply utilized existing student data from school districts that participated in the intervention. Additionally, matching control group schools were incorporated. No manipulation of the data or selection of the participants occurred. Therefore, the results reflect the differences seen for those who received the intervention as opposed to those districts that did not participate. In this investigation, the independent variables that may have confounded results were relatively balanced across both the control and treatment groups.

Second, there are limitations to using test scores as a measurement of an indirect intervention, such as events that occur outside the classroom that might impact one aspect of the educational process. Additionally, while test scores are not the best measure of student achievement, currently, it is generally accepted for accountability and measurement (Bell, Wilson, Higgins, & McCoach, 2010). According to Thomas (2013), it is rare to connect student achievement to interventions that are not directly delivered to students. However, the current investigation was, in fact, able to demonstrate a link between an indirect intervention and differences in student achievement via test results.

Similarly, the impact of this professional development delivery system on student

achievement at this time may have been mitigated by the educational climate with favorable results. Over the past two years an educational reform initiative in Ohio known as the Ohio Teacher Evaluation System (OTES) was implemented and mandatorily included in each teacher's evaluation. Because OTES uses student achievement as an indicator of effectiveness, it is in the teacher's best interest to implement any strategy that would positively influence the achievement of students. Subsequently, teachers were more likely motivated to implement the Common Core State Standards, the focus of the intervention provided by the MCECSC, in an effort to raise achievement.

Potential Contributions

The teacher-leader model is the most cost effective and the most efficient means, educationally, to deliver the professional development. There is limited research about the effect of the teacher-leader model directly related to student achievement. This investigation is the first of its kind. The contribution of this research will benefit educational entities that are in the decision making process as to which model of professional development would be most effective in relation to raising student achievement. Timely, ongoing, and effective professional development will be instrumental in implementing the standards (Center, 2013).

Based on the results of this investigation, the local ESC was effective in providing professional development for the school districts that participated. Also based on the results, there are opportunities for the ESC to improve the model and add components to provide a better investigation and evaluation such as a qualitative type of feedback from teachers who participated regarding the model and the implementation within the school districts. That type of information would allow for more in depth analysis of other independent variables that might

have an effect on the outcomes and would provide the evidence needed to most effectively improve the ongoing professional development delivery.

The Race to the Top Initiative and the movement to implement new Common Core State Standards has been in effect for three years. There is little known on a national level about the aspects of professional development related to the CCSS, including which entities are responsible for providing it, what kinds of professional development are being offered, how many teachers and principals have received training to date, and what challenges states are confronting as they try and meet this need (Center 2013). The Center on Education Policy (CEP) at the George Washington University releases surveys to state superintendents and their deputies regarding the professional development used in the implementation of the CCSS (Center, 2013).

The CEP conducted three surveys since 2010 when the CCSS were first introduced. The findings of the surveys were as follows: More than half of the states surveyed, a majority of K-12 teachers of math and ELA, have participated in at least some CCSS related professional development but fewer states report that a very large proportion of their educators have been served; states, school districts, and other entities are providing CCSS-related professional development services for teachers and school principals; states are providing various types of professional development on the CCSS; and the majority of states reported major challenges in providing CCSS-related professional development (Center, 2013). As seen by studies, many states are facing challenges in the implementation of CCSS and as assessments are continually introduced and more accountability is related to the outcomes, it is paramount that the services delivered for professional development are of high quality (Center, 2013). Investigations such as this will be helpful in ensuring entities of that quality.

Conclusion

Continual research and evaluation into the effects of programs on student achievement is paramount particularly in this era of persistent educational reform. Public scrutiny regarding education has increased rapidly over the years. Initiatives like NCLB, RTTT, and CCSS are meant to increase student achievement for all students to help our nation compete in an increasingly interconnected global society. The true measures of effectiveness are conducted using scientific research. Stakeholders in education need to be able to evaluate programs, initiatives, and the effectiveness of schools in general to be able to make good decisions that will positively affect student outcomes.

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Authors

Dr. Ronald J. Iarussi, Superintendent, Mahoning County Educational Service Center/Mahoning County Career and Technical Center. He can be reached by phone at 330-965-7828 and by email at r.iarussi@mahoningesc.org

Dr. Karen Larwin, Professor, Youngstown State University. She can be reached at 330-941-1436 and email at khlarwin@ysu.edu

Does Mentoring Make a Difference? An Investigation of a Mentoring Program's Impact on First Year Building Principal's Practices and Self-Efficacy

by

Marva K. Jones

Karen H. Larwin

Introduction

Decades of research have suggested that the initial years of the principalship are critically important. Existing research has suggested that mentors are key to providing knowledge, time, and commitment to support educational leaders who are transitioning from classroom teachers to leaders of change. The current investigation examines the impact of a yearlong mentoring program developed and delivered through the Educational Services Center of Cuyahoga County, through grant funds provided by the State of Ohio Department of Education. Specifically, the data examines the impact of the programming on first year principal's practices, as measured with the Kouzes and Posner Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI), and first year principal's self-efficacy using the Ohio Leadership Advisory Council (OLAC) inventory. In addition to the pre- and post-administration of these measures, participants provided an open-ended personal reflection at the end of the yearlong program. Results of this investigation reveal significant increases in both areas of self-efficacy and leadership practices. Qualitative responses support the programs positive impact on first-year principal's performance and experiences. Suggestions are provided for maximizing the effects of similar future programming.

The Impact of Mentoring on First Year Building Principal's Practices and Self-Efficacy

Leadership is one of the most difficult terms to define in education today, but much emphasis is relegated to it in terms of instructional leadership's critical importance in raising student achievement. Katzenbach and Smith (1992) stated that "leadership has traditionally been synonymous with authority and authority has traditionally been understood as the ability to command others, control subordinates and make all the truly important decisions yourself" (p. 129). So, we have become enamored with the traits, characteristics, behaviors, roles, styles, and abilities of leaders who have obtained leadership positions and we continue to know little else about the term. Rost (1991) analyzed a total of 587 works that referred to leadership in the titles, yet found that roughly half of the works failed to define leadership. While there is a plethora of instructional leadership research, there is little agreement on a concise definition of instructional leadership (Higginson, 2011). To add to this dilemma, it appears that while there remains an absence of a solid definition for the leadership in education, the meaning is changing, and in an attempt to shift to a new paradigm, while the old paradigm has never been truly understood.

In an article titled *How Can We Train Leaders If We Do Not Know What Leadership Is?* Barker (1997) maintains that "knowledges [sic], skills, abilities and traits of the leader which are presumed to be the most successful in getting followers to do what the leader wants them to do" best fits the definition of leadership in the field of education (Barker, 1997, p. 344). Barker indicated that the word leadership could be used to indicate an ability, skill, or relationship. When focused upon as abilities or traits, he intuitively felt that leadership "serves two important social functions: hope for salvation and blame for failure" (p. 348). The result is a cycle of leaders that do not have the time, the energy, or support necessary to effect the change and sustain the effort, drive, and vision that can positively impact student outcomes.

Principles of Principals

Although many elements can factor into the improvement of student achievement, some factors are external and are not within the sphere of what the teacher is able to manipulate. This parallels with the role of the principal and those factors that are not within their sphere of having an effect upon the teacher. According to Tubbs & Garner's (2008) research on the impact of school climate, leadership was considered to be "essential for developing and retaining a quality work environment, and ... faculty and staff consistently rank leadership as the most important factor affecting their work environment at school" (p. 25). In a similar vein, Andrews and Soder (1987) found that there was a positive relationship between quality of leadership and student performance. Specifically, student achievement data revealed that the gain scores of students in strong-leader schools were significantly greater in both reading and mathematics than those of students in schools with average or weak leadership. Andrews and Soder concluded that "the principal is the key to facilitating decisions that affect not only the working conditions of the school, but also those professionals who work in it" (p.49). Merely by "increasing teacher's [*sic*] perceptions of administrative support" in order to "increase administrator's' [*sic*] knowledge" of the standards so they can be applied consistently has been shown to make a significant difference to teachers (Tickle, Chang, & Kim, 2011, p. 34) resulting in a significant difference for the students. If the impact of what positively influences teachers in the classroom can be assessed and related to the principal's behavior, the principal can directly impact student achievement through exhibiting those skills.

Instructional Leadership

"Leadership is second only to classroom instruction as an influence on student learning."
(Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010, p. 3). Leadership and student achievement

are associated, but due to their position, principals inherently influence achievement most directly through the work of teachers. Assessments for how principals impact student test scores and how their performance leads to student achievement and growth (leadership practices, school improvement plans, teacher retention, etc.) are the focus of current evaluation systems. Research has revealed that there is not a “single case of a school improving its student achievement record in the absence of talented leadership” (Wallace Foundation, 2012, p. 1). By taking a proactive stance through principal preparation through early supervising, supporting, and mentoring, the impact of first-year principal’s on student achievement can be accelerated.

Principals’ Mentoring Program

There are standout programs that are heavily involved in supporting principals through high-quality, sustained mentoring and professional development. In some arenas, mentoring is provided during pre-service training and into the first years of the principalship (Corcoran, Schwartz, & Weinstein, 2012). The activities are embedded into the district culture and may include several days of collaborative learning with national experts, receiving up to two years of mentoring by highly trained retired district principals, completion of a self-assessment, role playing and simulations mimicking the realities of an actual principalship and providing seminars or group exercises (Corcoran, et al., 2012).

Through these types of activities, the principals gain an understanding of the district tools and practices. The New York City mentoring program seeks to develop a set of personal qualities and behaviors typically associated with leadership effectiveness that are organized into nine competency areas: personal behavior resilience, communication and the context of learning, focus on student performance, situational problem solving, learning, supervision, management and technology (Corcoran et al., 2012). It is subsequently evidenced through research that the

“quickest way to change the effectiveness of a school, for better or worse is to change the principal” (Mendro, 1998, pp. 263-264). The evaluation of principals must be based upon standards, which are linked to student results (Stronge, 2013). According to Stronge, certain behaviors, when implemented effectively, will result in improving student progress (student achievement). The actions include building and sustaining a robust school vision of learning, sharing leadership with teachers, leading a learning community and monitoring and supporting high-quality curriculum and instruction. “Leadership with a purpose” is central to raising student achievement (Stewart, 2013, p. 49).

The Study

This current investigation examines the impact of the Beginning Principals’ Mentorship Program (BPMP, 2013) develop to reflect existing knowledge on effective mentoring of new principals. The BPMP began as an outgrowth of Principals’ Discovery Network in in Northeast Ohio. The Principals’ Discovery Network was a pilot for 10 principals that was initiated at the beginning of the 2012/2013 academic year. The planning process aimed to develop a program that would capitalize on principal expertise, leadership theory, and the mandated practices from the state level. The goal of the programming was to extend what was already in place in existing principal preparation programs. The intention was to form a professional learning community that would expose new administrators to development activities to improve their leadership skills.

The BPMP program delivery was through a coaching model in which trained mentors would focus on the beginning principals’ individual needs, provide feedback on performance, and offer technical assistance in such areas as communication, team building, instructional leadership, family engagement, time management, and the use of data to improve student achievement. Each

first-year principal was assigned to a mentor, and mentors and the beginning principals had specific responsibilities that they were to carry out to completion of the program, including but not limited to ongoing communication, meetings, assigned readings, and feedback on inventories and surveys.

The purpose of the current investigation was to examine the effects of mentoring on beginning principals. The study design is best described as a mixed- methods investigation incorporating an abductive reasoning approach through a multi-phase data collection process. The research questions for the study were: (a) What are the benefits of a mentorship program for beginning principals?; (b) What activities are necessary to provide effective mentoring for beginning principals?; (c) Has the mentoring provided the participants with the support needed to navigate their first year experience?; and (d) Is there an impact on the participants' leadership perspectives as measured by Kouzes and Posner Leadership Practices Inventory?

Methodology

Participants

The selection of participants was made through contact with all 31 counties that were members of the Greater Cuyahoga County Administrators Association (GCCAA), the Ohio Association of Elementary School Administrators (OAESA), and the Ohio Association of Secondary School Administrators (OASSA). All of these organizations were informed of the BPMP program for any beginning principal or assistant principal who wanted to participate.

The participants who volunteered included eight female participants and 11 male participants. Nine were employed as high school principals, five were employed at the middle school, and five were employed at the elementary school. Five were hired as assistant principals, of which, three were at a high school level and two were at a middle school level.

There were two Black participants, one male, and one female. The ages ranged from mid-20s to mid-40s. The majority of the districts were suburban, with two that were rural, and one that was urban/suburban. For the purposes of this investigation, the participants' involvement in the program activities was accomplished via typical case purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is used when a specific group of individuals is sought out for participation (Trochim, 2000).

Instrumentation

The current investigation will also include responses from a pre/post administration of the Ohio Leadership Advisory Council Self-Assessment modules (OLAC, 2012) and the Kouzes and Posner Leadership Practices Inventory (2000) and an open-ended questionnaire developed to understand participant's perception of the program activities. The Ohio Leadership Advisory Council Self-Assessment module (OLAC, 2012) is used to help individuals determine their level of self-efficacy useful for school improvement. At the completion of the self-assessment, individuals receive a recommendation regarding which OLAC modules can help address the areas that indicate the least confidence. The self-assessment can be taken more than once in order to improve the score as the individual develops in these specific areas, through on the job training and resources available through OLAC, and, in this case, mentoring. This assessment was administered at the beginning and end of the program.

The Kouzes and Posner Leadership Practices Inventory (Self) (2000) consists of actions selected from the five exemplary practices of effective leadership. The Kouzes and Posner Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) was selected to gather additional information beyond what was required by the original grant program deliverables. In the 30-question survey, the practices are translated into behavioral statements. Although there is an observer-based tool for

leaders and managers, a separate 360° tool that can be used separately during the mentor evaluation phase of the program, it will not be utilized in this phase of the project. The five practices in the LPI (Fullan, 2007) are: (a) Model The Way; (b) Inspire a Shared Vision- Leaders ; (c) Challenge the Process; (d) Enable Others to Act; and, (e) Encourage the Heart - Leaders (Fullan, 2007). The LPI survey was selected to measure the impact of mentoring beginning principals to improve their instructional leadership skills. Reliability estimates for the LPI (Self) have been found to range from $\alpha. = .75$ to $.87$ in a number of studies including roughly 350,000 participants (Posner & Kouzes, 2012). This assessment was administered at the beginning and end of the program.

In addition, to allow participants an opportunity to expand or react to specific topics, qualitative, open-ended questions were utilized. These questions were developed in cooperation with the grant stakeholders and were piloted with stakeholders for appropriateness and relevance to the programs goals and the focus of the current research. The goal of this additional questioning is to provide participants with the opportunity to inform how well this mentoring program met their needs, as well as what else might be added to improve the program. They were administered electronically mid-way through the program and included the following items: What mentoring program activities helped you become a more effective principal this year? What are the top three benefits that made this a successful mentoring experience? In your experience, what activities are necessary to provide effective mentoring for beginning principals? What components of the mentoring program do you perceive as beneficial? In your opinion, has the mentoring program provided the beginning principals with the support needed to navigate the first year experience? (If yes, how so? If no, why not?) What activities and/or program components would you include to make the experience highly

successful? What activities and/or program components would you exclude to improve it?

Lastly, on a scale of 1-10, with one indicating not much and ten indicating greatly, how have you benefitted from the program?

Program Delivery Procedures

Mentees were selected based upon the requirement that they are a first year principal or assistant principal. Upon completion of the program, participants are paid a stipend of \$500 for their sustained involvement in this program. The mentors selected were paid a \$1000 stipend for their participation and meeting the hourly requirement (weekly contact of an hour) in meeting with the principals outside of the formal program hours.

During the initial meeting, the beginning principals were expected to share their ideas for personal goals they hope to accomplish during the program as well as specific program goals that they want to have included in the program. Five face-to-face coaching sessions were facilitated by two co-facilitators, the grant coordinator and an assessment coordinator, both of whom are a part of the leadership team to provide the professional development (PD). This PD takes place at the County Educational Service Center. During the months that the group does not meet face-to-face, the mentors communicate with the beginning principals via the phone, email, social media, or face-to-face. Trained mentors focus on the beginning principals' individual needs, provide feedback on their performance of duties, and offer technical assistance in a variety of areas that are aligned to the Ohio Principal Standards.

Activities include content to ensure there is a clear understanding of the challenges of a beginning principal and activities that promote a deeper understanding of the standards for principals and teachers. Mid-way through the program, the mentors meet separately from the beginning principals to collaboratively discuss their mentoring experiences and challenges. At

each of the face-to-face group meetings, mentees are afforded the opportunities of in-basket challenges, case studies, and other activities, with time allowed for discussion around management skills concerning time management/organization, career planning, and implementing Board of Education policies/procedures and handbooks.

Mentors were required to read *Blended Coaching: Skills and Strategies to Support Principal Development* by Bloom, Castagna, Moir, and Warren (2011), and beginning principals read *What Great Principals Do Differently* by Todd Whitaker (2011). One session was dedicated to modeling and discussion to support development in the four primary elements of OPES: (a) goal setting, (b) formative assessment, (c) performance on principal standards, and (d) the development of student growth measures. Mentors were selected and approved by a superintendent, unless they are retired, then other references must be made available. Mentors develop (individually or jointly) a principal resource toolbox that includes strategies and/or current topics such as Student Learning Objectives (SLO). Full details of program activities are available upon request.

Results

Demographics

The response rate for the data collection was 76.3%. Participants included 19 first-year principals from Northeast Ohio. These participants included n = 11 males (57%) and, n = 8 females (42%), with 2 participants identified as Black (10%), 15 participants identified as White (80%) and 2 participants identified as Other (10%). Respondents were asked to give their role assignment according to whether they were housed in a high school, middle school, or elementary school, and if they were head principal or assistant principal. Table 1 represents the role assignments of each of the participants.

Table 1 *Role Assignments of Principals*

Assignment	# in BPMP	Percent
High School Head	3	16%
High School Asst.	4	21%
Middle School Head	3	16%
Middle School Asst.	2	11%
Elementary Head	5	26%

Additionally, participants indicated that 3 (16%) were working for a rural school, 11 (58%) were working for a suburban district, 3 (16%) were working for an urban district, and 2 (10%) were did not identify their district’s topology.

Reliability of Responses

Each subscale of the LPI instrument was analyzed for reliability, independently and globally.

As indicated on Table 2, reliability estimates are presented for all pre-measures, post-measures, and the latent variable measures of the sentence LPI.

Table 2 *Pre-, Post-, and Latent Variable Measures of the Leadership Practices Inventory*

Factor	Pre	Post
Model	.77	.77
Inspire	.77	.86
Challenge	.71	.79
Enable	.57	.75
Encourage	.85	.90

Cronbach’s alpha indicated acceptable reliability on many of the sub-constructs, however, the pre-test of the Enable factor ($\alpha = .57$) demonstrated weak reliability estimates (Field, 2009; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Specifically, Cronbach’s alpha that approximate $\alpha = .70$ are deemed ideal, with lower levels indicating potential reliability issues (Tinsley & Weiss, 2000).

However, reliability estimates are strongly influenced by sample size, and, it is expected that

the limited sample of responses is impacting these values (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Data were checked for any outliers and mis-entries, and the values do reflect the responses of the participants.

Analysis of Pre- to Post- Changes

T-test results for the LPI pre- to post-testing are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. *Paired Samples Test Data on LPI*

Factors	Paired Mean Differences	<i>t</i>	CI
Model	-2.55	-4.37*	-3.78, -1.33
Inspire	-4.34	-5.86*	-5.89, -2.78
Challenge	-4.31	-6.70*	-5.67, -2.96
Enable	-1.86	-3.93*	-2.86, -0.86
Encourage	-1.12	-1.31	-2.91, 0.66

Note: * indicates significance at the $\alpha \leq .01$

The greatest pre- to post-test differences are found with the *Inspire* factor and the *Challenge* factor, followed by the *Model* factor. Significant differences are found from pre- to post- for all of the LPI factors, with the exception of the *Encourage* factor (when evaluated at an $\alpha = .01$ level). Additional dependent sample *t*-tests were conducted to assess changes from pre- to post-test on the OLAC Inventory. These results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. *Paired Samples Test Data on OLAC*

Factors	Paired Mean	<i>t</i>	CI
Data Based Educational Reform	-0.22	-7.54*	-.28, -.15
Leadership	-0.22	-4.69*	-.33, -.12
Collaboration	-0.30	-7.56*	-.39, -.21
Teaching & Assessment	-0.21	-3.66*	-.34, -.08
Curriculum	-0.17	-5.48*	-.24, -.10
Differentiation	-0.23	-6.41*	-.31, -.15
Technology	-0.17	-2.94*	-.30, -.04
Community Engagement	-0.18	-2.49*	-.34, -.02
Resource Allocation	-0.26	-5.29*	-.36, -.15

Note: * indicates significance at the $\alpha \leq .01$

As indicated in Table 4, the greatest pre- to post-test differences are found with the factors of

Collaboration, Resource Allocation, and the Differentiation factor. Significant differences (when evaluated at an $\alpha = .01$ level) are found from pre- to post- for all of the OLAC factors, with the exception of the Community and Engagement factors.

Qualitative Feedback

Participants responded to survey questions mid-way through the intervention, which were directly linked to the research questions of the current investigation. The responses to these questions can be provided up request. These responses were aggregated into the final analysis of the data. In addition, at the conclusion of the program activities, many participants provided written reflections regarding their program experiences. A number of themes were identified from these post program reflections, including the mentor/beginning principal relationship, support through communication, and the networking opportunities.

Relationships

The relationships built throughout the course of the program were important as one principal shared, “Having a ‘point person’ to address concerns with was highly valuable this year. It was helpful when meeting with my mentor and sharing my concerns, successes, and failures, to hear from a veteran that I am normal, that my experiences are normal, and that I am working in the right directions.” Another principal stated that following a veteran principal of nine years was difficult, but his reflection about his mentor was that, “He gave me guidance on multiple occasions, gave me direction in dealing with staff members and their issues, and gave me material I could use to deal with the issues I was addressing.”

More than one principal described the program as providing a “safety net” and one went on to say that the “safety net relieved some anxiety for me in my first year. My mentor definitely was!” In looking to the future, another emphasized the importance by saying “I should say [he]

is a great mentor because the relationship will not end any time soon.” Throughout the feedback and surveys, one outlier was clearly not benefitting from the program. I presume this was the same individual, who commented, “Aligning a mentor and mentee appropriately is critical.” This same participant went on to strongly highlight the importance of having actively employed mentors. “Eventually, when you hear ‘I never had to deal with that much at the elementary level’ – you give up on going out of your way to make the call – because you have no more information that [sic] you started with to solve the problem that is in front of you and just killed and hour of your time.”

All other principals said many positives about their experience with their mentor. As one participant shared about her mentor, “she was extremely approachable and understanding when I would ask questions that were so ‘first year.’” It is important to note that there were other comments about the importance of actively employed mentors, but the other benefits of the program outweighed that drawback for the other participants.

Support Through Communication

The support provided to the beginning principals was evident through their comments and was interesting because, clearly, the need for reinforcement was needed. One participant said, “I have continually called on (mentor name) experiences, being able to bounce my ideas for specific situations. This is done with the assurance [sic] we are speaking in confidence and I can continue to develop my leadership style.”

The approach of the mentor taking the lead and jumping in to assist was evident through the words of one participant who stated that his mentor would always ask, “What do you need? What issues are you having? It was this type of conversation that allowed him to diagnose some things that I might need without knowing and he would provide guidance, resources, or both.”

A lack of communication was also evident for one participant who highlighted the absence of the interaction between the meetings. It was stated, “I would have liked to have a group email going with a group of five or six principals throughout the entire program. This would be a great way to ensure dialogue and support.” The comment of one participant who stated, “...having connections like that to call when a challenge arises is comforting!” This indicates the importance of the regularity of the meetings and/or interaction with the mentors through phone calls, emails, texts or in person meetings to sustain the relationship between the mentor and beginning principal.

Networking

Networking was the third theme that stood out as vital as a sustainer for the participants more than the program. As one participant shared, “The establishment of a network of other beginning administrators is highly valuable as we face challenges typical of entry year administrators.” One noted that just being with people outside of district proved especially enlightening, “This allowed me to hear fresh perspective on the content taught in college. This widening of perspective was one of the highlight [sic] for me of this mentorship program.” Others stated that “I also was able to network and form new relationships with other administrators”; “the large group meeting allowed for new principals to not only create a social network, but helped us in creating an outlet for issues” and finally the gratitude that they were able to “network with so many talented, knowledgeable professionals.” To sum it all up, one participant said, “If I had to choose only one benefit of the BEGINNING PRINCIPAL MENTORSHIP PROGRAM, it is that the program exposed me to a support system that includes other ‘rookie’ administrators being led by seasoned veterans who are thriving and surviving in the profession.” It is evident that many of these participants will continue reaching

out to one another and networking due to the implementation of this program.

Mentor Feedback

Mentors also provided a self-reflection about the program. Most mentors indicated the benefit of being a mentor. Several statements addressed this mutual benefit from the mentors' point of view, as they indicated:

- *Worthwhile endeavor for both the mentors and mentees;*
- *these opportunities were beneficial for both of us;*
- *I had the opportunity to ask how he handled some of the things I had questions about;*
- *I learned many new strategies....the networking is invaluable;*
- *I hope that we can continue our relationship;*
- *I believe that I grew as a building principal....a new perspective...to grow as a leader;*
- *It allowed me to reflect on my practices....learned a few new ideas; and,*
- *The discussions and sharing of information benefitted all members of the program.*

This feedback from the mentors provided evidence of an unexpected consequence of their program participation. Their reports that mentoring was both a positive and reciprocal experience may facilitate the acquisition of new mentors in the future.

Discussion

The general purpose of the current investigation was to examine the effects of mentoring on beginning principals. The year-long investigation examined the impact of a mentoring program for beginning principals. Data indicates a number of benefits of the mentorship program for the beginning principals. Participants indicated the greatest pre- to post-test difference in the area of collaboration on the Ohio Leadership Advisory Council (OLAC, 2012). On the Leadership Practices Inventory, the greatest pre- to post-test difference was in

the Inspire a Shared Vision factor. This factor is exhibited by a leader who shows passion about making a difference and inspires everyone about the possibilities for the future. Every participant indicated that communication, including collaboration and group discussion, was beneficial on the open-ended questions. Additionally, the participants stated that having an actively involved, currently employed mentor was important. These results are consistent with the findings of Hipp and Bredeson (1995) when they reviewed items that indicated those that could influence a difference within the classroom. Some of those influential items were communication, which was highly rated on the OLAC as well as the open-ended questions when combining collaboration and communication. Another influential item was empowering staff, which is similar to the LPI factor, Enable Others to Act. This factor is exhibited by a leader who fosters collaborations and builds spirited teams. A third item that Hipp and Bredeson indicated was inspiring group purpose, which has the same characteristics as the Inspire a Shared Vision factor.

These researchers also noted that modeling instructional expectations (similar to the LPI's Model the Way factor) resonated with participants. When leaders Model the Way, they model the way goals should be pursued and how people should be treated. They went on to say that the principal could be "the key to facilitating decisions that affect not only the working conditions of the school, but also those professionals who work in it" (p. 49). Herein lies a connection between principal actions and teacher application.

Walker and Slear (2011) also denoted the importance of communication and collaboration as key for principals to retain teachers as well as keeping them satisfied. Finally, Marzano (2012) cited cooperation and collaboration as one of five domains for principal actions and behaviors. Several respondents indicated that networking with other beginning principals was

vitaly important and beneficial to the mentoring experience and beyond. This is contrary to previous research as indicated by Davis and Hensley (1999) who reported on the politics of the principals' evaluation. They focused upon the importance of principals developing interpersonal relationships with school stakeholders, negating the importance of collegial networking. Unlike other notable mentoring programs previously mentioned, the Beginning Principal Mentoring Program was funded with plans and a program for only one year. Therefore, certainly the beginning principals would believe that the support of the mentors and the networking of other colleagues would purportedly end when the program ended. They articulated the importance of this networking so that perhaps it would continue formally versus informally. While no plans were in place to ensure that participants and mentors continued to maintain their communication and network, building in this mechanism could be a recommendation for future mentoring programs. The format of this would serve the members of each cohort specifically.

Notably, the only LPI factor not shown to be statistically significant was Encourage the Heart. When leaders Encourage the Heart they accomplish extraordinary things by keeping hope and determination alive and people feel good about themselves. It appears, based upon participants' post-survey responses that this is not as important, which contradicts the findings of Goodnight (2004). Goodnight suggested that a democratic leader acknowledges that each person has worth and esteem, open communication should be fostered, and the environment is highly positive and motivation-oriented. Similarly, Depaul (2006) stated that communication is the foundation to an evaluation system that will aid the principal in the development of those skills that are necessary to lead a school. Principals are more focused upon raising test scores and sometimes forget to reward members of the team for their efforts and to celebrate the good

things that are done that test scores don't show.

Beneficial Activities

This research sought to understand what activities are necessary to provide effective mentoring for beginning principals. Participants indicated that the activities that were necessary were a meaningful agenda, an actively employed mentor, on-site observations, face-to-face meetings, and, above all, collaboration/communication. In addition, they enjoyed sharing and listening, guest speakers, and discussion. Activities are not just miniscule components of a principal's dossier as Davis and Hensley (1999) noted. The importance of composing and documenting professional activities within the portfolio of a principal's evaluation is critical. These activities are professional in scope to improve leadership capabilities, not just a series of fun and games. These types of activities are consistent in programs researched by Corcoran, et al., (2012), where mentoring is provided during pre-service training and into the first years of the principalship so that they are embedded into the district culture and the activities. These standout program activities could include completion of self-assessments, role-playing, simulations, mimicking the realities of an actual principalship, and group exercises. This type of pre- service training did not reflect the implementation of activities in the Beginning Principals' Mentoring Program, which were coordinated after the principals were hired.

Unlike the implementation features of the BPMP, the New York City (Corcoran, Schwartz, & Weinstein, 2012) mentoring program sought to develop a set of personal qualities and behaviors typically associated with leadership effectiveness, and only two of the nine competencies from that research were directly focused upon in the current program: communication and situational problem solving. Whereas, the other five areas: personal behavior resilience, learning, supervision, the context of learning, a focus on student performance, management, and

technology, were not targeted. This counters the importance that previously was placed upon instruction by earlier researchers as important for principal training and behavior/characteristics that they should exhibit in order to be effective (Heck,1992; Hipp & Bredeson,1995; Marzano, 2003). Again, these inconsistencies may be due to the current political landscape which sole concern is test scores.

Seventy-six percent of participants indicated that mentoring provided the participants with the support needed to navigate their first year experience. Two respondents had mixed reviews about the program with one stating that the program would have been more supportive if the mentoring would have been on-site and added that it would have been better to have the elementary and high school principals meet separately. Additionally, one principal said the mentor was a sounding board and someone to turn to when things got overwhelming. These comments are aligned with earlier research regarding the support that is necessary to ensure principals are successfully navigating the early years of their tenure.

The Wallace Foundation (2012) extensively studied and cited their findings in a publication entitled *The Making of a Principal, 5 Lessons of Importance*. Two of these lessons were about the support needed before hiring and after hiring: providing pre- service training for aspiring principals, first year assistance for high-quality mentoring, and professional development tailored to individual needs. Mendro (1998) maintained that “for better or worse” there is a correlation between the effectiveness of the principal and the effectiveness of a school. Therefore, it logically follows that providing the new principals with good support is critical. Only one principal answered no, the program was not supportive. This result may have been due to the fact that the mentor assigned was not a currently practicing administrator, therefore he was not “experiencing the same challenges” which the mentee thought as important.

The Vanderbilt Assessment for Leadership in Education (2009) stated that learning-centered leadership behaviors should be assessed during principal preparation (Porter, Murphy, Goldring, Elliott, Polikoff, & May, 2008). This is contrary to the process with the BPMP participants. The BPMP worked with principals already hired, not those in college preparation or programs to get hired. A best practice would be the mentoring of educators in their final year of securing a principal license. Activities could include shadowing a principal to see first-hand their job duties.

The International Summit on the Teaching Profession (Stewart, 2013) examined several countries that were considered excellent in teaching lessons about defining the role of school leaders. They emphasized that best international practices target four areas in making a difference: purposeful recruitment, continual development of skills through high-quality training, intensive mentoring with ongoing job-embedded coaching, and systematic feedback.

Only one of these tools, intensive mentoring, mentioned at the Summit was emphasized during the Beginning Principal Mentor Program. Unlike the Summit data, the Beginning Principal Mentoring Program was not involved in the recruitment of principals, and the program did not focus on continual development of skills, nor provide participants with systematic feedback until the end of the program. These tools are critically important to the success of leadership development of the principal. As such, job-embedded coaching may have happened inadvertently only as a result of the participants' requesting the presence of the mentor at their school.

Kouzes & Posner's Leadership Inventory Results

What impact did the BPMP have on the participants' leadership practices, as measured by Kouzes and Posner Leadership Practices Inventory? As evidenced by the improved pre- to

post-test ratings on the LPI results, there was a positive, significant impact found for all factors except the Encourage factor. In the open-ended questions, participants mentioned an improvement in their leadership skills due to their involvement in the program. This is consistent with research focusing on leadership skills as the priority, primarily due to the high stakes accountability mandates that are part of the new evaluation system for principals in the state of Ohio.

The Leadership Practice's Inventory assesses the Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership. These practices focus on the leader and the followers' relationship. The Inspire factor was highly rated. This is likely due to the importance of leaders having a clear image of the possibilities of their organization, if they persuade others to foster their belief in a common goal. Leaders step out in faith to accept the position, and the Challenge factor is about not accepting the ordinary, but striving for the extraordinary.

During this era of accountability, the leaders cannot be in charge and alone, but with group purpose, they challenge others to "get with the program" and make a difference. First and foremost, the leader must be credible if she/he is to going to be effective. Credibility occurs as principals Model the Way through example and commitment to the task in an effort to create progress and build the momentum to reach the highest goals achievable. The principals cannot improve student achievement, but they can Enable Others to get the job done. When the building administrators are on cue with this factor, they will foster collaboration and strengthen others. Confidence will build, risks will be taken, growth will occur.

The area that was not significant in the current investigation was Encourage the Heart. For example, when a group of people are forever identified by a decline in scores on an annual test and/or an increase that is miniscule, the group can give up hope for the lack of progress not

made. A leader must show appreciation and create a climate of camaraderie through celebration. This feeling of community spirit can carry a group through the toughest of times and keep them motivated and focused on the work that must continue for the future.

Additionally, a principal evaluation was highlighted in the research conducted by Lyons (2002), who asserted that a solid evaluation system must be aligned with the leadership skills of a principal to be effective. Leadership was found to be second only to classroom instruction in influencing student learning, based on a decade-long study by Louis et al., (2012). Leadership was further identified as pivotal to student success by teaching staff as important to their development and retention (Tubbs & Garner, 2008). These staff rated leadership as the most important element to affect their teaching environment.

Limitations

One limitation of the current investigation was the limited number of participants. The invitation to participate was open for up to 40 participants; however, this program only served 19 beginning principals who volunteered to participate. However, this small sample provides a representative sample of new principals in county. Likewise, the participants were nearly all from the inviting county; therefore, generalizing these results beyond this area of the state should be done cautiously.

Conclusion

Hipp and Bredeson (1995) stated “the principal is the key to affecting not just the work conditions, but also the professionals in the building” (p.49). Walker and Slear (2011) postulated that when implementing key behaviors for individual teachers, the potential exists to unlock tremendous positive advances for the teacher and students. When the principal is able to exhibit a model of leadership, the performance of the followers can be elevated to a height that

would not be expected (Barnett, Marsh, & Craven, 2005). Mentoring can make a difference in providing support through communication, networking and building relationships as they improve their instructional leadership skills, thus having positive impacts on student achievement.

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Authors

Marva K. Jones, EdD, is an Educational Leadership Consultant for the ESC of Cuyahoga County in NE Ohio. She can be reached at mkayj1@aol.com

Karen H. Larwin, PhD is a professor in the Education Leadership program at Youngstown State University. She can be reached at khlarwin@ysu.edu

THE SIX P'S OF READING:

UNLOCKING LEARNING THROUGH DISTRICTWIDE LITERACY FOCUS

by

Jane Holmberg

A Needed Change

By many accounts, Intermediate School District 287 is a successful educational service agency that serves other successful districts. In partnership with 12 school districts in the suburban Minneapolis, Minnesota area, Intermediate District 287 has grown over 40 years to offer 120 unique services and programs that range from operating schools for special student populations to coordinating high level professional development that brings research to practice. With our track record, up until 2006 we thought we had good reasons for not teaching reading to the low or non-readers in our school programs. The most cognitively impaired students were in their late teens and needed daily living skills more urgently than phonics; the most behaviorally challenged and mentally ill students already had had so much failure that stressing the complex task of reading would more than likely backfire, escalating their bad behavior and taking away from the needed focus of learning social and emotional regulation skills; and the high school students in our alternative learning programs were so far behind in credits that we couldn't take time to explicitly teach reading--besides which we couldn't afford a separate reading teacher when we needed to have so many different academic licensure areas covered for our relatively small programs. Our school district whose mission was to educate those most in need was systematically ignoring the one area of instruction that would unlock learning for every student. Although there were pockets of concern, there wasn't widespread understanding or planning to change the culture, to see how reading IS a daily living skill, if only to read a crosswalk sign; to

see how social and emotional skills can only be strengthened in the context of meaningful work, such as learning to read; and to see how futile it is to march along in the high school curriculum knowing the students can't access the texts to understand the material.

It is sobering to look back and see that this was the circumstances at Intermediate District 287 prior to 2006, and it's discouraging to know this still is the situation in an overwhelming number of school districts across the country. The emphasis on teaching reading before grade three is laudable, but for the students who do not learn to read by then, ongoing, coordinated reading intervention and emphasis on reading across the curriculum is essential. We know this now, but in 2006 we were just beginning.

A Plan

Our story actually starts with a space rather than an idea. Our school district provides direct service to students in schools that we run as well as coordinates a host of instructional and administrative services, such as professional learning and curriculum development, which can be done more efficiently and effectively across district lines. One of those services is to run college licensure classes at our conference facility. When the reading licensure cohort program began at the 287 Conference Center in 2004, several district staff members attended classes to gain reading expertise. As they learned more, they began having informal discussions with the administration about how to approach reading more systematically in the district.

Doing anything related to curriculum systematically in an intermediate district is a challenge. The uniqueness of the population and a culture based on individual education plans (IEPs) can defy centralization of any kind. We did have, however, curriculum groups that met across the district and our sister intermediate district, Northeast Metro 916, had also expressed interest in working on the topic with us. With this foundation, a representative group began

meeting in the summer of 2006. This group of qualified and interested staff were charged to make recommendations to the District-wide Curriculum Committee. We used a format for writing a business plan that the two districts together had used successfully to launch other important initiatives. We knew the power and importance of having a roadmap created by those with the most knowledge. Elements of the plan included assessment of current programming, review of research, recommendations, coordination and evaluation.

The group assessed current instruction in programs across the district and compiled relevant research. After synthesizing their findings, they adopted the Principles for Supporting Adolescent Literacy and Growth found in the 1999 *Position Statement for the Commission on Adolescent Literacy of the International Reading Association* (Moore, Bean, Birdyshaw & Rycik) as the foundation for their recommendations. These principles created a reading manifesto for the district:

1. Adolescents deserve access to a wide variety of reading material that they can and want to read.
2. Adolescents deserve instruction that builds both the skill and desire to read increasingly complex materials.
3. Adolescents deserve assessment that shows them their strengths as well as their needs and that guides their teachers to design instruction that will best help them grow as readers.
4. Adolescents deserve expert teachers who model and provide explicit instruction in reading comprehension and study strategies across the curriculum.
5. Adolescents deserve reading specialists who assist individual students having difficulty learning how to read.

6. Adolescents deserve teachers who understand the complexities of individual adolescent readers, respect their differences, and respond to their characteristics.

7. Adolescents deserve homes, communities, and a nation that will support their efforts to achieve advanced levels of literacy and provide the support necessary for them to succeed.

Several related research reports confirmed these principles and suggested the overall goal for the district should be to develop a comprehensive approach to reading across the district. We should be talking about a reading *program*, not only reading instruction or reading intervention. The reading program could include reading in the content areas, staff development, and developing a culture of reading in addition to addressing explicit reading instruction as its own subject area.

These points created a moral foundation for the change we were seeking--a truly adaptive change that would transform how we would approach literacy. Examining the seven principles, the group made a series of recommendations that served as important guideposts:

- The instructional framework needs to address individual differences and motivation, not “one size fits all.” Therefore the program should include a variety of genres (including electronic) and access academic content, life skills and leisure reading.
- Programs and buildings need to develop a culture of reading.
- The instructional framework should include initial assessment to determine each student’s needs and learner characteristics in reading, as well as ongoing assessment to monitor growth and adjust instruction as needed.
- The instructional framework should include initial assessment to determine each student’s needs and learner characteristics in reading, as well as ongoing assessment to

monitor growth and adjust instruction as needed.

- Quality reading instruction is offered to every student every day. Instruction by all staff should address specific reading skills and strategies that include explicit instruction modeling and opportunities for students to practice new skills.
- Professional development and ongoing support should be provided to ensure staff members (including content-area teachers, educational assistants, volunteers and administrators) develop the expertise necessary to implement the instructional framework.
- Individualized assessment and an intervention plan for additional instruction is provided by a licensed reading specialist for students whose reading instruction needs are beyond the scope of what the regular classroom teacher can provide.
- There must be ongoing professional development and support for teachers that is research-based and aligned with effective practices for reading instruction that respect the individual characteristics and complexities of students.
- Enlist the involvement of families, administration, higher education and the broader community in addressing the reading needs of our unique population of students.

For each recommendation, the group included actions for the district, program, school, and classroom levels. When the report and recommendations were adopted in the fall of 2006, we had a glimpse of the future and the districtwide resolve to make that vision a reality. In the intervening years, we learned how each point was critical to achieving literacy gains. Having started with the first essential “P,” the Plan, there have been other Ps critical to our success: People, Protocols, PLCs (Professional Learning Communities) and other Processes, and Persistence.

People

All plans depend on the people carrying them out, and this was certainly the case with this reading plan. The recommendations were broad in scope and included ideas such as “reculturing.” Of course something as far-reaching as affecting culture can only happen when leaders and specialists who have the resolve and talent to begin carrying out the plan with the staff at the sites who also have resolve and talent. The district began by establishing a Reading Subgroup of the District Curriculum Committee. This subgroup was a natural offshoot of the group that had formed to write the initial plan. They had a keen interest in putting the plan into action by gathering data, facilitating collaboration and decision-making, and communicating findings.

While the reading group began, the administrative staff and the staff development committee also became involved as key players in carrying out the recommendations. The administrative representative on the reading committee, the Executive Director of Teaching and Learning, facilitated administrative considerations related to the recommendations, especially with regard to staffing, budgeting, and goal setting. Reading group members, several of whom were also members of the Staff Development Committee, brought forward recommendations related to staff development to assure coordination.

One of the most visible and successful efforts of the reading committee has been their presentations at all curriculum meetings. We adopted the practice--that still continues--of presenting common information on teaching literacy within the content areas to all teachers in their respective curriculum groups. The reading committee works on a common presentation about some aspect of literacy that can be enhanced in all classrooms. Then on the three days throughout the school year in which teachers meet districtwide in their content-area groups, a

reading specialist joins each group and facilitates a 20 minute session that focuses attention on literacy. The main messages began as high leverage instructional strategies that would enhance literacy and have since expanded to include broader instructional topics such as using formative assessment or determining literacy levels. The presenters use examples from the content area and provide time for the teachers to share ideas about how they might use the information. Over the years this has proven to be a very powerful strategy. The reading committee has established important relationships, there is a districtwide common vocabulary and set of expectations for such things as word walls, the importance of using precise and ever-expanding vocabulary, and the “power” words that translate most to academic success.

As the reading committee began its work, we also recognized that to have a districtwide instructional framework for reading that would be sophisticated and flexible enough to span our diverse student population, we needed to spend more time doing an assessment of student needs and the state of our reading program. By hiring a part-time reading specialist in 2007, we were able to learn more about the district. This specialist also began increasing the visibility of the reading commitment by her presence in the buildings. Some of the most important things we learned were:

- Ninety percent of our students were three to 10 years behind their same-aged peers in reading.
- Five to eight percent of our students were non-readers.
- Sixty percent of our students had language-based reading issues.
- Motivational issues and “time on task” contributed to poor reading progress.
- Methods used to assess reading were varied and inconsistent.
- Reading interventions had been limited or lacked efficacy.

- Time spent reading each day was limited.
- Staff had access to limited resources and training.

These findings were somewhat expected given that the largest part of our student population was comprised of special education students with the very highest level of disabilities.

Intermediate District 287 also serves students enrolled in Alternative Learning Centers (ALCs) who qualify for services based on several factors that put them at risk of not graduating from high school. Taking a hard look at this dismal assessment gave the district even more resolve to put resources into literacy.

The ongoing review suggested that reading specialists would be needed at the building level. Up to that point hiring any type of specialist had been a de-centralized process in the district, with the principals having the largest say in how staffing dollars would be allocated. To assure the success of the literacy plan, however, it was essential to centralize the hiring and funding of reading specialists. Through this action the district was able to carry out more uniformly the growing expectations for literacy coordination and instruction. We began with just a few specialists spread across many sites and now have 10 full time specialists. These are important teacher leaders who leverage many district systems to assure focus on literacy.

Protocols

While the people were being put into place, we also secured the first major element in the instructional program. After extensive comparison among many programs, we chose Scholastic's READ 180 because it would provide high interest content and structure to our reading efforts. READ 180 is a blended instructional model, using computer-based individual reading, small group instruction, and independent reading. With READ 180, students receive an intensive 90 minutes of literacy instruction each day.

Before making a districtwide investment into materials and training, we began with a pilot of READ 180 for our middle level students with Emotional Behavioral Disorders (EBD). According to prior research, we could expect that students in this type of program would make about a half a year's reading growth using READ 180 for one school year. Because this was substantially more annual gain than these students had made previously, we were excited to begin implementation. What we found at the end of the year was that our students had averaged more than a year of growth. This level of success cemented our resolve to increase our capacity to teach READ 180 for all students who were two or more years behind in their reading.

READ 180 is used in many school districts; however, in most instances, only a few students are enrolled for this intensive program. Because of the low reading levels determined by initial needs assessment and because of the success of the pilot, the READ 180 program became the standard literacy instruction in many sites. Where the students reading levels were lower than 4th grade, which was the case with many of our cognitively delayed students, we also implemented System 44, Scholastic's program to teach the foundations of literacy. The district English Language Coordinator, who was also a reading and assessment specialist, took on the job of supporting READ 180 instruction, and over the next several years coordinated training and implementation among what is now over 40 teachers at the sites. We found this level of coordination to be critical to assure the highest reading gains with our students. Our own experience supports Scholastic's research that it is essential to use the program with fidelity. We also attributed the success of the program to the expertise of the staff. Even though many of them were not literacy specialists or had not taught in a blended online program, their expertise in helping students see the benefit of reading and in sustaining motivation were evident in all corners of the district.

With people now in place and instructional resources available, we were able to codify our expectations across the district. We had centralized our hiring of specialists and purchasing of READ 180 and now felt the need to make a statement about the protocols for literacy at all sites. During the 2010-2011 school year we clarified the specific expectations and instruments for assessing student literacy levels and progress, including:

- the expectation that all instructional staff would know the reading level of their students and the reading level of the materials used in their classrooms,
- the expectation that all instructional staff would take into account their students' reading levels in the design and implementation of instruction,
- the expectation that instructional staff would obtain and analyze student-specific assessment data to guide their instructional decisions about student learning in the area of literacy, and
- the expectation that all students whose reading scores were below grade level would participate in research-based explicit reading instruction daily using specific curriculum.

PLCs and other processes

The reading protocols created expectations for use of data to inform literacy instruction for all students. This clear statement for all programs dovetailed with the district's work in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). Each year the PLC efforts had become increasingly refined. PLCs in our district were understood as a system of setting academic goals for a group of students and then working collaboratively on the instruction that would help students attain the goal. Over the years we had gone from setting SMART (Specific and strategic, Measurable of student progress, Attainable, Results oriented, and Time-bound) goals that used a variety of measures of attainment to using standardized assessment measures. The reading protocols

provided a further structure for the PLC work and allowed us to set districtwide direction for the academic goals. By 2010-2011 we had a sufficient foundation for all of the goals districtwide to focus on literacy. The positive results were convincing that we were on the right path:

- Seventy-five percent of students enrolled in READ 180 at an Area Learning Center (ALC) program increased their reading level by a year or more, which is expected annual growth for a typical regular education high school setting. At one of the ALC programs where students historically had made little or no progress in reading, 71% of the students increased their reading comprehension by one or more grade levels.
- Seventy-five percent of our secondary students enrolled in READ 180 at our Special Education Centers demonstrated a half-year's growth or more, which is expected annual growth for students in any special education program, not only those with the most severe disabilities such as those at 287.
- In our itinerant Deaf/Hard of Hearing programs 100% of the students increased their word identification skills.
- At one of our Care and Treatment Centers 75% of the students increased their reading comprehension by one month's growth or more for every one month enrolled.

By the following year, 2011-2012, we appreciated the extent to which the reading specialists were a major resource to PLC teams, and we increased their ability to act as data coaches. Reading specialists attended an administrative planning retreat to guide the goal and assessment choices at their sites. We began incorporating formative assessments (frequent progress monitoring check-ins) to ensure students understood what was taught. Formative assessments monitored reading progress; summative assessments gave us our reading growth results. This work was strengthened through continued uniform presentations by the reading

committee at all curriculum group meetings and ongoing communication about expectations with administration. With such a firm foundation, it has been possible in subsequent years, to expand the literacy focus to include writing as well as to incorporate new national and state expectations related to the Common Core Curriculum Standards (CCCS) and standards-based Individual Education Plans (IEPs).

The general timeline shows the step-by-step progression of literacy focus in the district, building on the PLC and curriculum group structures.

2006-2007	Reading committee established and prepares staff development opportunities
2007-2008	High leverage reading strategies across the curriculum are presented to curriculum groups
2008-2009	Literacy goals are set at the site level to guide PLCs Reading specialists begin to be hired for sites
2009-2010	Literacy goals are set at the district level to guide PLCs
2010-2011	Districtwide reading protocols are adopted, providing standardized measures for summative assessment of PLC goals
2011-2012	Formative assessments are introduced through curriculum groups and are used in PLCs for more frequent student monitoring to guide instruction
2012-2013	Expectations of Common Core State Standards and standards-based IEPs considered in PLCs

2013-2014	Literacy definition expanded to include writing and the expectation all students will write every day is introduced through curriculum groups.
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Persistence

The central office administrators, including especially the superintendent and the three executive directors of instructional programs, performed their role in the culture shift by staying consistently on message and also by integrating district processes to aim toward increased literacy. The reading plan called for a culture shift that changed our expectations for students and teachers: Our job was to make readers of everyone. It was no longer acceptable to hide behind the students’ disabilities or poor past performance and not teach literacy. This came through increasing refinements to current systems as well as our commitment to incorporate new national and statewide expectations into our plan.

- When Minnesota instituted *Read Well by Grade 3* in 2012-2013, we were able to meet this mandate and create the required plan for Grades K-3 with only minor additions to our current practice.
- When the CSSS became understood as the national direction, we trained reading specialists to help instructors focus on cross-disciplinary “Power Words” that aligned to the academic requirements of the standards.
- When the Minnesota Department of Education promoted the need to make Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) for special education students based in academic standards, the district task force chose reading as the first area to address.

District leaders also clarified for the School Board and other stakeholders that the accountability system for the district should rest on these important and well researched goals

and assessments, not the statewide tests that were designed for a general population. The annual presentation to the School Board on literacy efforts included reports on the extent to which goals at each site were met as well as reflections on how to improve for the following year.

Results

Over the years since the district reading plan was enacted, we have started to think of our work as closer to making a soufflé instead of a casserole. The success of a soufflé comes from slowly folding in new ingredients. In order to incorporate new flavors, you cannot dump them in all at once as you would when making a casserole. In our reading efforts, we deliberately and carefully folded in new resources, skills, and parameters. As a result of our People, Protocols, PLCs and Other Processes, and, above all, Persistence, we measured remarkable student learning gains each year. These gains culminated in highlights from 2013-2014:

- The over 300 students in our READ 180 and System 44 reading intervention programs increased their reading levels at an average of slightly more than 1.5 years.
- Eighty-two percent of students in a high school Care and Treatment program showed an average reading comprehension growth of more than three years.
- Eighty-one percent of one site's Transition students who were already readers showed at least one year's increase in skills in one literacy area; 79% of non-readers improved in at least two pre-reading skills by one level.

One area that has received special recognition is our Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) program for transition-age students. This program created and piloted an adult-based college prep reading intervention program for their DHH students who had a desire to attend college but were not able to meet the reading requirements. Typically, DHH students' reading levels do not surpass the 3rd or 4th grade level due to their hearing loss. Through restructuring the time

commitment and curriculum for these students, the program realized unprecedented gains. Using this new college prep reading intervention, the majority of students increased two to six years in their academic reading growth. This program's work has received national attention and publication in the High Expectations for All issue of *Odyssey* (Palmberg & Rask, 2014), Gallaudet University's annual publication focusing on education issues related to deaf and hard of hearing children.

Lessons Learned for ESAs and Districts Unlocking Learning through Reading

As we look back at the last several years, there are a few lessons we have learned. While any school district adopting a reading focus would benefit from these points, they are crucial guideposts for educational service agencies.

1. Create districtwide protocols and expectations

In a district dedicated to serving students with special educational needs, it is critical to state explicitly that a broad definition of literacy will include even those most cognitively challenged. With that in mind, protocols and expectations can be realistic and supported.

2. Leverage other systems

Reading should not be considered one more thing. It should be THE thing because without literacy, individuals do not have the ability to integrate new knowledge. Making literacy the focus of any instructional improvement system already in place in the district--curriculum groups, PLCs, annual goals, etc.--gives purpose and clarity to those structures as well.

3. Dedicate resources

Hiring a districtwide reading specialist and then adding specialists at the building level were key to the success of our reading efforts. They provided the professional learning for all staff and helped in the ongoing selection and implementation of reading curriculum resources. In many

special districts, resources that have gone previously into behavior management can be repurposed to instructional support that positively affects behavior as students do better.

4. Declare every student a reader through a systematic approach

Intermediate District 287 has been systematically emphasizing reading improvement for the past seven years for every one of our students. The recommendations we made after adopting the principles of what adolescents deserve from the International Reading Association (Moore et al., 1999) as our guide have served our students well. We have moved our district to address the first six of the principles and now hope that by sharing our story we have taken a step to our collectively achieving the last of the principles. We believe that not only do adolescents deserve what schools can provide (as reflected in the first six principles), they also “deserve homes, communities, and a nation that will support their efforts to achieve advanced levels of literacy and provide the support necessary for them to succeed.”

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Dr. Jane Holmberg is the recently-retired Executive Director of Teaching and Learning for Intermediate District 287. She can be reached at 612-799-9018 or at jholmberg@hotmail.com.

The Impact of Inter-district Open Enrollment in Mahoning County Public Schools

Ronald J. Iarussi

Mahoning County Educational Services Center and Mahoning County Career and Technical Center

Karen H. Larwin

Youngstown State University

In 1989, the Ohio General Assembly passed a law enabling school districts to adopt open enrollment policies. Since then, 540 districts across the state of Ohio have implemented open enrollment policies. Primarily, rural school districts and suburban districts that are not located near urban districts are those that currently have open enrollment. Many of the suburban districts are having conversations within their communities about implementing open enrollment mainly for financial reasons. In many of those districts, the perception that open enrollment students may harm the reputation of the school exists. There are community folks, teachers and even district administrators who believe that open enrollment students will not perform at the level of expectation that exists for resident students. This investigation attempts to provide information to districts to better equip them to facilitate those conversations through the use of accurate data.

In Ohio, ESCs are often charged with helping school districts make informed decisions about such topics as curriculum, finance and other potential controversial issues. Data analysis and data warehousing are two very important services that we provide for our districts to help them with such topics. The school districts we serve have been inundated with reform initiatives and accountability measures that limit the amount of time spent on data collection and analysis. This service is valuable and appreciated by the districts we serve.

There is a dearth of known research examining the impact of inter-district open-enrollment on academic achievement. The existing research studies that have addressed

academic impacts have presented mixed results. These mixed results are likely mitigated by context specific factors. For example, a study that examined the impact of OEI in Colorado concluded that OEI is having positive impacts for students who are not economically disadvantage or academically disadvantaged (Lavery & Carlson, 2012). Colorado's school districts, like many districts in the western states, have experienced an influx of undocumented students over the last few years, resulting in many urban district students leaving their home-districts for other types of educational opportunities (Glass, 2014). Similarly, research out of Wisconsin (Welsh & Zimmer, 2011) and California's Los Angeles schools (Ledwith, 2010) suggest that the impact of open-enrollment on student achievement has been beneficial for students afforded the opportunity to attend school outside of their home districts. Contrarily, studies out of Florida (Juhyoung, 2012), Colorado (Carlson, 2014) and Arizona (Powers, Topper & Silver, 2012) suggest that OEI has not shown any notable impact on academics, especially when examining its impact across all student groups.

One theme that is consistent across the existing research is a question about socio-economics of the students who are electing to attend neighboring districts. Research not specifically looking at the impact on academics suggests that OEI has a "re-segregating" effect on student populations (Goodwin, Lehand, Baxter, & Southworth, 2006). Studies based on school districts in North Carolina and Colorado highlight that a large number of students participating in OEI come from more affluent student groups, and subsequently the more academically prepared student groups (Goodwin, et al., 2006, Lavery & Carlson, 2012). Similarly, research out of Massachusetts found that overwhelmingly parents will participate in OEI in an effort to send their children to more affluent and higher achieving schools (Fossey, 1994). The result of these types of migration can have a debilitating effect on the already struggling schools that students are leaving (Welsch & Zimmer, 2011). This "geography of opportunity" (Ledwith, 2010, p. 243) for students who have the means to attend a neighboring school (i.e., mobility and motivation) may explain why some research concludes that OEI has a positive effect on the students who choose to open-enroll.

This investigation includes data from the public schools in Mahoning County, across the years of 2004-2014, that have students participating in the open-enrollment. Data are not included for students opting for private schools, or alternative schools, such as career schools, or

charter schools. The data for this investigation was specifically limited to OEI from one public school district to another neighboring regular public school district. Student level data for the years 2003-2014 were recorded in an Excel spreadsheet by the Executive Director at ACCESS for the purposes of this investigation. Data included student socioeconomic status (qualification for free or reduced lunches) and indicated both the student's home-district and attending-district information. Student data included scores from grades three through eight, as well as high school achievement scores. This data included grade level exams (3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, and Ohio Graduation Tests, area of standardized assessment score (reading, math, science, social science, and writing), raw scores and scaled scores for each assessment. Student data included scores from grades three through eight, as well as high school achievement scores. Lastly, data are examined at the district level.

Analysis was conducted with student scores as the dependent variable of interest. The goal of this analysis was to assess if there were differences in student achievement scores if student's participated in open-enrollment, based on student's SES status, based on the assessment type, the grade level, and/or the year associated with the scores. Analysis reveals no differences in average student achievement scores for those who participate in OEI relative to students who remain in their home-district. Further examination of the data for OEI status by socio-economic status indicates that no differences exist indicating that for this sample of data, socio-economic status does not differ for the students who are attending school in their home-district relative to students participating in the OEI. Additionally, analysis examined whether differences exist in assessment scores across exam sections (i.e., math, reading, etc), for students enrolled as OEI relative to those students who attend their home-district, and no significant differences were found. Lastly, county data was examined by district. Results indicate differences do not exist across the two groups, with the exception of one struggling district in Mahoning County.

The results of the current investigation suggest that students who leave their home district to attend an open-district perform at or above those remaining in the home district. However, these differences were not found to be statistically significant, with the exception of students from the poorest performing district. This finding is consistent with existing research that found that OEI did not have a significant impact on student achievement for those electing to enroll in

neighboring public school districts (Hong & Choi, 2015). This finding, however, is contrary to the generally held perception that by allowing students from poorer performing districts to open enroll into higher achieving district, this migration will have a negative impact the district that they attend (Barney, 2002). While students who migrate to higher performing districts may arrive with lower scores, the data consistently suggests that these students are, on average, performing slightly above their in-resident peers in that same district.

Secondly, the data suggests that students, who migrate out of the poorest performing district included in this investigation, perform significantly better in the districts that they elect to attend when compared to their peers who continue to attend that same district. This is consistent with the findings of Ledwith (2010) and Welsh & Zimmer (2011) who found that students who are able to take advantage of inter-district open enrollment opportunities experience an academic benefit. The reasons for that academic benefit can be attributed to a number of possible factors. Research suggests that families will opt to send their children to districts that have a better academic reputation because they believe that their student will benefit from an enhanced educational environment and an abundance of resources (Fossey, 1994, Ledwith, 2010). Ledwith maintains that the commitment to participate in OEI may be indicative of a higher level of commitment and motivation on the part of the family. Consistent with these findings, some research suggests that student data will recover to higher levels in a stable educational environment as the student acclimates to the new learning environment (Betts, Rice, Zau, Tang, & Koedel, 2006;).

Morris (2013) suggests that parents and caregivers are motivated to participate in OEI if they believe that this choice will academically and socially benefit their student. Some parents will participate in OEI for reasons of convenience (before and after-school childcare) as well as out of nostalgia: the wish for their school-age children to attend a district that they attended. Regardless of why families participate, the current investigation suggests that there is generally no association between participating in inter-district open enrollment and student achievement, with the exception of the poorest performing district. For many of those students and their families, they seek to participate in OEI because they believe this “choice” to attend another local public school provides them access to the educational environment and resources they need to be academically successful.

CONCLUSION

The information presented in this research should be used by districts to inform their own communities about open enrollment whether they currently participate or are considering participating. The information should not be used to recruit students nor should it be used to disparage any district. The districts that are included in this research were consulted with before the research began. The information was also shared with districts before any articles were published.

This is the second study the MCECSC has conducted for the districts that are serviced. Data analysis and warehousing have become an important service provided for districts. The MCECSC works closely with ACCESS, the Information Technology Center that services the same districts served by the ESC to extract and analyze data. The MCECSC also employs Dr. Larwin, a psychometrician, to assist in data analysis.

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Authors

Dr. Ronald J. Iarussi, Superintendent, Mahoning County Educational Service Center/Mahoning County Career and Technical Center. He can be reached by phone at 330-965-7828 and by email at r.iarussi@mahoningesc.org

Dr. Karen Larwin, Professor, Youngstown State University. She can be reached at 330-941-1436 and email at klarwin@ysu.edu