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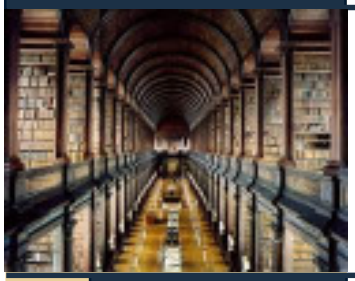

LONG ISLAND'S PEER-REVIEWED RESEARCH JOURNAL FOR EDUCATIONAL PROFESSIONALS

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Practical Research for the Educational Community

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Article Submissions

Long Island Education Review is a peer reviewed publication that is published twice each year. To be considered for publication, all submissions should be double spaced, in 12 point characters and accompanied by a disk in Word, or they should be sent by email as a Word document. Authors should follow the APA guidelines. For the Fall issue, all submissions must arrive by October 15, 2011.

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About SCOPE

SCOPE Education Services is a not-for-profit, private, voluntary organization permanently chartered by the New York State Board of Regents to provide services to school districts. Founded in 1964 by school superintendents, it is a cooperative venture for sharing resources to deal with common concerns. It is governed by a Board of Directors of school superintendents and college representatives and serves as a regional School Study Council and School Board Institute.

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Editor’s Perspective

Dollars and Sense

First let me say how privileged I am to take over as Editor-in-Chief of the Long Island Education Review. Most importantly, on behalf of the SCOPE family, let me offer our most sincere appreciation to Kevin McGuire and to our first editor, Bob Manley, for their guidance and leadership in developing this journal into one of such high regard on Long Island and throughout New York State. Their contributions and the contributions of similarly dedicated educational professionals from the K-12 sector and college/university community are to be applauded.

As we approach "budget season," talks often drift from contributions to costs and dollars and cents. Dollars for needed materials/resources for our students, dollars for mandates, dollars for manpower, dollars, dollars and more dollars. It is May, and we beg for them, race for them, and apologize for the dollars we need. Through it all, I would only ask we be reminded that as important as dollars are, we need to be no less concerned with the "sense." I speak not of cents as in pennies, but of sense as in a sense of who we are and a sense of our noble mission.

This Education Review journal honors the diligent researchers and dedicated practitioners whose common sense of purpose and very uncommon, extraordinary efforts have benefitted the field of education on Long Island, the state, and the country. And now, we seek to create a broader base of contributing authors and researchers as well as a greater diversity in the nature and narrative of those contributions. Qualitative and quantitative research, contemporary book reviews, and substantive, substantiated opinion pieces are all welcome. Moreover, we would like to hear "from the field" regarding promising practices and research in action. This feature is initiated in this issue by Dan Domenech’s reference to Superintendent realities and struggles with red tape.

Step away from the dollars and the dilemmas of the day, and take a moment to grasp the sense of who you are and the nobility of what you do. Share your pride, passion and professional expertise with your peers and partners in education. Looking forward to hearing from you,

Carl Bonuso

Editor-in-Chief

From the Field

Viewpoint: School Leaders Need More Help And Not Red Tape To Transform Education

By Daniel A. Domenech, Ed.D.

(Editor's note: This article appeared in the "Learning Leadership" section of the March 2011 edition of eSchool News.)

The American Association of School Administrators' mission has evolved into an advocacy role. As the oldest and largest organization representing school superintendents and other school system leaders, AASA now sees its primary function as the voice of school administrators in the nation's capital. In fulfillment of that function, AASA's Executive Committee and Governing Board met at the National Conference on Education in Denver last month to approve the association's legislative agenda.

Advocating on behalf of public education is critical at a time when the Elementary and Secondary Education Act is due to be reauthorized, and our public system of education seems to be under constant attack from the media and self-appointed "reformers." Regardless of the opinion those outside of education might hold, it is those of us who have long worked within the system who know it best and can bring about the changes that will lead to a high-quality education for all of our children.

To those critics who would point a finger and say, "Then why haven't you made those changes," we would respectfully suggest that they join us in changing or eliminating the myriad of federal, state, and local laws, rules, and regulations that have set the antiquated stage upon which educational acts take place.

Consequently, we advocate to ensure that no additional harm is done by well-meaning legislators and regulators who do not realize the potential havoc their actions will wreak upon an already overburdened system. We point to No Child Left Behind as a specific example. Although there were positive elements to that law, such as the reporting on the performance of sub-categories of students so that we could all see the sins covered by a school-wide average, the overemphasis on standardized testing and the metrics behind Adequate Yearly Progress have even led the president of the United States to refer to NCLB as a "flawed law."

Along those lines, if ESEA is not reauthorized this year, then we beg the administration to use its regulatory power to grant significant relief from the punishments bestowed upon schools that fail to make AYP. Choice and Supplementary Educational Services are costly and have not proven to be workable solutions, but more and more schools will be forced to adopt them as the number of schools not making AYP increases.

We support the Common Core Standards but warn Congress and the Department of Education not to interfere in their development or adoption. The department did just that by stipulating their adoption or "something similar" as a requirement for Race to the Top funding. No question that the United States will be hard-pressed to be globally competitive with 50 set of standards going against nations that only have one.

We object to the use of ESEA dollars to finance competitive grants. ESEA funds should be carefully targeted and delivered entirely through formulas based on the percentage of poverty in a school system. The percentage of poverty should be determined by free and reduced-price lunch costs. We believe that was the intent of Congress when the law was passed back in the mid-60s.

We object to the growing intrusion of the federal government into the decision-making process at the local level. NCLB brought federal intrusion to an unprecedented level, but the current administration has taken it a step further by implementing policy through its requirements for receiving stimulus-funded grants at a time when states and school systems were desperate for dollars. We believe that the jurisdiction of ESEA regulations, guidance, and evaluations should be limited to ESEA programs, and required federal approval of state regulations and statutes beyond ESEA programs as a condition of receiving ESEA funds should be prohibited. The federal government's role should be to supplement and support, not dictate the policies and responsibilities of local school districts.

For years, the concern over unfunded mandates has grown. School systems should not be required to spend state and local dollars to fund federal mandates. If there are to be reductions in federal support, then they must be accompanied by a commensurate reduction of the federal mandates. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act is a case in point. The federal government has never lived up

to its promise to fund IDEA at 40 percent of the national average per-pupil expenditure. We urge for full funding of IDEA. School districts should be allowed to reduce local effort by up to 100 percent of any federal funding increase. We advocate for the maintenance of the services we now offer our special-needs children, and we want the federal government to pay its fair share.

NCLB rightfully brought school system accountability to the forefront of the public's attention. What happened behind classroom doors became very visible as the performance of school districts and every school within that district became a matter of public record. The achievement gap that has always existed between white middle-class students and children of poverty, language and ethnic minorities, and special-needs students was now measured and out there for the world to see. Schools with a high average performance had to acknowledge that sub-groups of students within the building were performing well below the average.

The metrics that uncovered the achievement gap, however, were simplistic and convenient. They focused on performance in two areas of the curriculum, language arts and math, measured by standardized, fill-in-the bubbles tests that were cheap to develop and easy to administer.

As schools began to feel the pressure of accountability, specifically in two areas of the curriculum, some began to narrow the curriculum to focus on the areas to be tested and began to teach to the test. Episodes of cheating became more prevalent, and some states began to game the system by lowering the cut points on the state tests to better meet the NCLB requirements for AYP. This is the phenomenon that Education Secretary Arne Duncan referred to when he accused the educational system of lying to parents and students relative to their true achievements. Evidence of this is apparent in the comparison of state performance on their own tests versus their performance on the National Assessment for Educational Progress, otherwise known as the "nation's report card."

The reauthorized ESEA must maintain the high level of accountability that NCLB introduced but must replace the metrics with a more comprehensive, valid, and reliable system of evaluating student performance. That can begin by separating the assessment that is done for purposes of accountability from the necessary assessment that must be done on a regular basis to inform instruction. Growth measures that assess the performance of the same student from year to year should be used. Assessment tools that will be valid and reliable for use with special-needs students and English language learners should be developed. There should be a shift from emphasizing punishment in accountability to building capacity and rewarding success.

We believe that the lowest-performing schools in each state should be targeted for extra assistance and funding, but we support a broad range of turnaround models that include flexibility and avoid a one-size-fits-all approach.

We believe that the accountability for the effectiveness of teachers and administrators is a responsibility of state government and local school districts, and not the federal government.

There is much more to our legislative agenda, and I refer those interested to our web site at www.aasa.org. Although I have focused here mostly on areas of disagreement with the status quo, there are many changes that have been put forth by the Department of Education that we support, such as plans to consolidate funding sources to provide schools systems with greater flexibility, a reward structure for school systems meeting their goals, and a more comprehensive system of accountability emphasizing growth measures.

The current administration has been very approachable and has consistently demonstrated its willingness to engage our members in constructive dialogue. This is very encouraging and conveys a sense that it isn't afraid to involve "traditional" reformers in the process of transforming our schools.

Daniel A. Domenech, Ed.D. is Executive Director of the American Association of School Administrators (AASA).

Project SAVE - Fingerprinting

SCOPE offers fingerprinting services for Long Island school districts, under New York State's PROJECT SAVE Legislation. The law also applies to those working five or more days in any school building, such as substitutes, guest speakers, or outside consultants.

If you would like additional information, or to schedule an appointment to be fingerprinted, please call SCOPE, at (631) 360-0800, ext. 118.

Award Winning Study - Recipient of First Prize Award from the National Association of Secondary School Principals

Professional Learning Communities to Improve High Schools

- By Gaurav Passi, Ed.D.

The professional learning community model holds both significant and specific implications for high school reform by challenging the very culture that plagues most high schools. DuFour and Manzano (2009) claimed that high schools were often plagued by teacher isolation. The daily routine of many classroom teachers comprised high levels of autonomy, for instance, instead of reviewing and revising curriculum, collaborating with colleagues on issues related to student achievement, many secondary school teachers work independently and therefore miss opportunities to learn and grow with their colleagues. The concept of teacher isolation has been challenged by efforts to create a professional learning community.

The concept of a professional learning community is not new. Researchers have been arguing for quite some time that teachers should be taught to analyze data to inform instruction (Dewey, 1929), be integrally involved in the development of curricula (Steinhouse, 1975), and be given the skills to become reflective practitioners. The ultimate goal of a professional learning community is a commitment to improved student achievement.

The professional learning community model flows from the assumption that the core mission of formal education is not simply to ensure that students are taught but to ensure that they learn. This simple shift-from a focus on teaching to a focus on learning -has profound implications for schools. A key characteristic of the professional learning community model is a culture of collaboration. Educators in this model recognize that they must work together to achieve their collective purpose of learning for all (DuFour, 2004).

In order to achieve meaningful collaboration focused on student achievement, DuFour (2004) argued that teachers should be organized into teams. These teams on the secondary level were often content specific, and the teachers within the teams judged their effectiveness on the basis of student achievement. This focus on student achievement helped to perpetuate a climate focused on continious improvement. Each teacher team participated in the ongoing process of identifying the current levels of student achievement. They then established goals to improve the current level. The teachers then worked together to achieve that goal, and provided periodic evidence of their progress (DuFour, 2004).

The Professional Learning Community Model Tested in Long Island High Schools

A quantitative study of three Long Island high schools was conducted to test if the professional learning community model had an impact on student achievement. Specifically, the purpose of my study was to examine how, four dimensions of a professional learning community that included a focus on learning, shared vision, collaborative culture, and supportive structures, moderated by training in professional learning community principles, and teachers' practices of professional learning community principles were related to levels of student achievement within the schools under investigation.

Student achievement was measured by determining the three-year average percentage of students who achieved mastery on the ELA Regents exam. The study was conducted in three suburban high schools located in Long Island, New York that had high, moderate, and low levels of student achievement.

Professional Learning Community Dimensions Examined

A focus on learning:

In this study, a focus on learning meant that teachers engaged in dialogue specifically linked to gains in student achievement, teachers adjusted instructional strategies and/or curriculum based on student data analysis, teachers routinely analyzed data related to student achievement, teachers developed common assessments, teachers routinely diagnosed student achievement data to determine weaknesses in the curricula, instruction, and special needs that children have. Lastly, teachers observed each other teach in order to learn and grow with one another.

The Pearson product moment coefficient analysis indicated that the practice of professional learning community principles was highly related to a focus on learning, and this accounted for 21 percent of the variance in practice of professional learning community principles.

In the discriminant analysis, a focus on learning, coupled with collaboration and practice of professional learning community principles accounted for 32.7 percent of the variance

in student achievement. It is through professional collaboration and a focus on student learning that teachers will discover how they should change and improve instruction.

In order for school leaders to begin to restructure their schools as professional learning communities they must begin to change the conversations regarding student achievement. The professional learning community model insists that the conversations in schools focus on student learning. In particular, professional learning communities have an enduring focus on student learning (Hord, 1997). The very essence of a learning community was a focus on, and a commitment to, the learning of each student. DuFour et al. (2006) stated: "When a school or district functions as a PLC, educators within the organization embrace high levels of learning for all students as both the reason the organization exists and the fundamental responsibility of those who work within it" (DuFour et al., 2006, p.3). In order to achieve this purpose the members of a professional learning community created a clear and compelling vision of what their school must become in order to help all students learn. Members of a PLC worked together to determine how each member of the community would help the organization reach its goal.

Collaborative Culture

In this study, a collaborative culture meant teachers learned together with their colleagues, collegial relationships existed, teachers informally shared ideas to improve student learning, caring relationships among teachers and students existed, and teachers regularly discussed teaching methods with their colleagues.

The question of how to improve schools has been a particularly daunting task in the traditional high school culture. A professional learning community challenges the traditional high school setting that typically contained a series of independent classrooms staffed by autonomous teachers who were responsible only for what occurs in their own classrooms (DuFour, 2009). In this culture of isolation the individual teacher becomes the focus of school improvement. The focus on the individual teacher does not address the conditions and constraints of the systems within the school (Senge, 2003).

Throughout the literature, an essential component of a professional learning community was the collaborative team. These teams were comprised of groups of teachers on the same grade level or teachers who taught the same course. These teams were the driving force behind an effective professional learning community. Teachers worked in collaborative teams to clarify the intended outcomes of each grade level, course, or unit of instruction. They developed common assessments that they considered valid measures of student achievement. Teams of teachers then jointly analyzed student achievement data to draw conclusions and establish improvement goals. In short, individual teachers gave up their personal autonomy in an effort to work together, to build best practices and to expand their professional expertise (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008). Stiggins (as cited in DuFour et al., 2005) continued speaking of the value of teachers working in teams when he stated: "To the extent that teachers work together in teams to analyze, understand and deconstruct standards, transform standards into high quality classroom assessments, and share and interpret the results together, they benefit from the union of their wisdom about how to help students continue to grow as learners" (DuFour et al., 2005, p. 82).

Professional learning communities of teachers go beyond pooling opinions; they build shared knowledge. Teachers in a high functioning collaborative team move past statements such as, "This is how I like to teach this concept," "I have always done it this way," or "This seems to work for me." Instead, the teachers become students of the research on effective instruction.

Collaboration was significantly related to the dependent variable training in professional learning community principles. Collaboration along with a focus on learning, and practice of professional learning community principles accounted for 32.7 percent of the variance in student achievement.

McLaughlin and Talbert (1993) made an important finding in their research on professional learning communities. They found that subject area departments could differ enormously from one another in the opportunitites they provided teachers for collegial support and for improving their practice (McLaughlin & Talbert, 1993, p. 11). This finding has specific implications for the high school principal. Specifically, it is important that the high school principal focus their attention on all subject areas/departments, as each department's implementation of the PLC principles may vary greatly. McLaughlin and Talbert (1993) also found that when teachers and administrators discussed instructional practices with each other, teachers' ideas of good teaching and classroom practice were better defined (McLaughlin & Talbert, 1993).

Shared Vision

Senge (1990) has called a shared vision an absolute requisite for any learning organization. Creating a shared vision is an important step in creating a learning centered professional learning community focused on student achievement. The shared vision for student learning should serve as the basis for all decision making within the school. DuFour et al. (2006) indicate that a shared vision should be the driving force behind any learning community. A shared vision helps to perpetuate the school's mission and serves as a basis for decision-making. The school's shared vision should be centered on student learning and school leaders should focus the professional conversation of their school on instructional based research and student results.

In this study, a shared vision meant teachers had high expectations for student achievement, policies were aligned to the school's vision, students in the school were required to devote extra time and receive additional support if they are experiencing difficulty learning, the school had a system of

interventions in place that guaranteed each student would receive additional time and support for learning, student learning was the clear focus of all departmental meetings, and communication systems promoted a flow of information.

High school teachers in the high performing school had a significantly higher response in the dimension of a shared vision. The practice of professional learning community principles was also highly influenced by and significantly related to the school's shared vision.

Supportive Structures

In this study, supportive structures meant the availability of fiscal resources were available for professional development, time was provided to facilitate collaborative work, instructional materials were available to the staff, the curriculum had been mapped to promote consistency amongst teachers, and the school provided personnel space to collaborate with colleagues.

High school teachers in the high performing school had significantly higher responses in the dimension of supportive structures. The Pearson product moment coefficient indicated that 35 percent of the variance in student achievement was accounted for by supportive structures. In addition, the practice of professional learning community principles were highly influenced by and significantly related to supportive structures in the school. Supportive structures also accounted for 66 percent of the school rank for student achievement.

Supportive structural conditions are the springboard for creating a professional learning community. These structures help to support and sustain the school's commitment to the PLC principles (Huffman & Hipp, 2003). The structures within the school dictate when and how teachers will meet to conduct the work of a professional learning community. This research indicates that the most important thing that a school can do is to invest in creating the structures to support student learning. Providing teachers time and space to collaborate on substantive student learning issues, to map the curricula within the school and to ensure equity in the access to curriculum for all students are basic responsibilities of the school principal.

Teachers in a professional learning community are not given prescribed lessons. They have an agreed upon curriculum and an understanding of the essential outcomes for each unit of study. They should be given the autonomy to decide how to teach a particular concept and how to respond to the individual students in their class. However, an important component to a professional learning community is the common formative assessments. Teams of teachers teaching the same subject matter or grade level should develop common assessments. Principals must help create the structures for these assessments to be developed and analyzed in such a manner that student achievement improves.

DuFour and Marzano (2009) report that principals of schools who seek to function as professional learning communities should put the following structures in place. Create schedules to ensure that teams of teachers can meet at least one hour every week. Create checkpoints to ensure that collaborative team time is focused on issues and questions that directly affect student learning. Provide teams with training, support, resources, tools and templates they need to become effective in these new structures.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based upon the findings and conclusions of this study.

Schools should devote time and resources to developing professional learning communities within their school. They should begin this work by developing a shared vision for student learning. It is important that this vision include a focus on student learning rather than solely on teaching. All decisions in the school should be focused on issues related to student achievement. Teachers in a professional learning community should measure their success by measurable results in student achievement.

Principals and other administrators should set aside resources to develop supportive structures to promote the work of professional learning communities. It is important that school schedules be developed to provide teachers with time during the school day to collaborate.

Teachers should be divided into teams based on their curricula focus and then work together to map their curriculum and develop common assessments to ensure students equitable access to this curriculum and authentic assessments.

Principals and other administrators should also ensure that teams of teachers grade these common assessments together so that they identify which students need additional time and support in learning the essential components of the lesson. These assessments should also be used to determine which students require additional enrichment. The common assessment allows teachers to work together and to share their craft knowledge.

As teachers grade the assessments, they should also examine the strengths and weaknesses of their individual instructional delivery. Principals should be careful to ensure that teachers understand professional learning communities do not advocate prescribed lesson plans.

Teachers should be given the autonomy to teach a lesson based on the needs of the students in their classroom. However, professional learning communities do advocate that teachers decide together what curriculum will be taught, and approximately how long each teacher will spend on a particular topic and how student learning will be assessed.

Principals in a professional learning community should also create structures that ensure that students who have difficulty in a subject matter and need additional time and support are given that support. When students experience difficulty learning there should be a systematic approach to address these difficulties. It should not be up to the individual teacher to encourage a student to attend extra-help. The school should have a systematic approach for students in need of academic help that involves counselors, department chairs, principals, parents and students.

Professional learning communities monitor student performance on a timely and regular basis and then mandate that students who experience difficulty are given additional support.

As school leaders begin to transform their schools into learning communities they should set aside resources for the appropriate professional development for teachers. This professional development should be job embedded and should focus on collaboration, coaching, and mentoring.

Teachers should be encouraged to work together to develop lessons, observe each other teach, and engage in conversation about issues related to student achievement.

For the purposes of this study student achievement was measured by mastery rates on the New York State ELA Regents examination. Mastery on this exam was chosen for a number of reasons, to include that there was enough disparity between schools when examining mastery rates. This raises an important issue, it appears that some schools focus on mastery rates while others simply try to ensure students are passing the assessment. Passing only ensures minimal competency and school leaders should focus their attention on ensuring that students are mastering the learning outcomes in each course.

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A CASE STUDY of TWO HIGH SCHOOL SMALL LEARNING COMMMUNITIES in NASSAU and SUFFOLK COUNTIES, LONG ISLAND

By Doretha C. Brown-Simpson, Ed.D.
and Korynne Taylor Dunlop, Ed.D.

Introduction

The purpose of the study was to describe the characteristics of two high school small learning communities in Nassau and Suffolk counties on Long Island, New York. Cotton (2001) identified five domains or best practices for successful small learning communities: self-determination (autonomy), identity, personalization, support for teaching, and functional accountability. These domains were the basis for measuring the best practices in each high school.

The crisis regarding the current educational system has sparked interest across the nation. A call for more effective high schools has led education researchers, state legislators and the U.S. Congress to approach the problems that exist today by suggesting research-based reform strategies that can remedy the status of the American high school system (United States Department of Education, 2001, 2008). A key concept that continues to be supported within the high school reform movement is the adoption of the small school or small learning community model.

Balfanz and Legters (2004) suggest that much is known about reforming low-performing, high poverty, neighborhood schools. The challenge is to develop the capacity, know-how, and will to implement what is known to work in middle and high schools in need. First, is the recognition that truly comprehensive reform is required. Research has demonstrated the need for increased personalization and student outreach, high standards, intensive instructional programs, improved teacher quality, parental involvement, engaging school programs, and strengthened connections between high schools, colleges, and employers, which are all needed in large, sustained, coordinated measures.

Research Questions

Research Question 1: What are the demographics of each small learning community?

Research Question 2: To what degree does each domain function as a major factor in the success of the small learning community?

Conceptual Framework

Each small learning community was studied using the five characteristics of successful small learning communities (SLC) identified by Kathleen Cotton (2001), Northwest Regional Education Lab Research Associate. Northwest Regional Education Lab is one of ten Regional Education Labs that is authorized by the United Stated Department of Education to assist schools and districts that utilize the federal SLC grant to create small learning communities.

Figure 1.0 illustrates how the key elements of Cotton's five independent domains are linked to the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory's three core areas for school improvement. The outcome of this combination determined the best practices and described the two high school small learning communities in this study. The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory's Self-Study B: Smaller Learning Communities Rubric and an interview protocol were adapted from the United States Department of Education (2008) Implementation Study of Smaller Learning Communities: Final Report-Appendices, Periodic Implementation Study 2002-2003, were used to describe the characteristics of these high school small learning communities.

Methodology

Qualitative methodology was used to examine the significant features of each domain or best practice. These domains are autonomy, identity, personalization, focus on teaching and learning, and accountability.

Subjects

The high school principals or building level school leaders who supervised the small learning communities were the subjects of this study. A total of four school administrators participated in this study.

Setting

The study was conducted in 2 high schools on Long Island containing large populations of black and Hispanic students.

Data Collection

The qualitative data collection included the following:

1. A site visit protocol was developed by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory for observing the small learning community program.

2. Interviews with the high school principals and assistant principals were conducted to understand their perspectives of the existing small learning community. The questions were adapted from the United States Department of Education (2008) Implementation Study of Smaller Learning Communities: Final Report-Appendices.

3. Archival data were collected from each high school to corroborate patterns and themes found during the interviews and observations. In addition, the 2008 SCOPE Annual School District Almanacs, developed by Dr. Jonathan Hughes of St. John's University, were used to describe the demographics of the school district including minority student enrollment.

Data Analysis

The site visit protocol and interview questions were delineated by domain so that a snapshot of the small learning community could be studied.

Findings

Research Question 1: What are the demographics of each small learning community?

High School A

The four career-themed academies focus on law and government, science and human services, entrepre-

Figure 1.0 Illustrates how the conceptual framework combines with Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory's three core areas for school improvement.

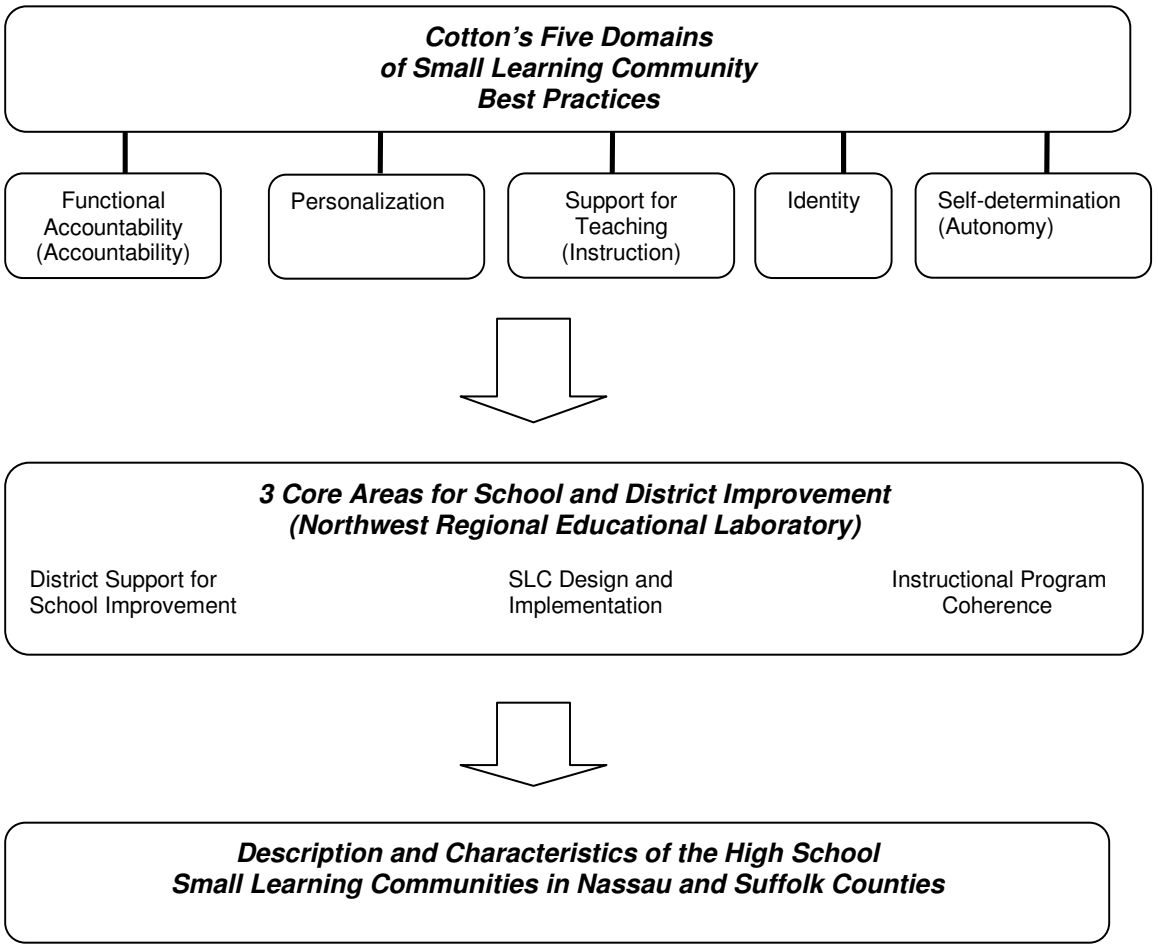

Table 1.0 Placement of Students in High School A

Designation of Category	***Criteria for Placement***	***How Academic Needs Are Addressed***
Career Academy Placement (Grades 9-12)	*Terra Nova* Score from 8th grade assessment	By instructional approaches of subject areas teachers within each academy
Freshman Programmed for Extra Skills Class	Small Learning Communities English and Math Assessment Exam and 8th grades ELA exam	Students are given an additional skills class to remediate English and Math
Course Repeaters	Failed Subject Area in Previous Semester	Students are programmed to repeat course with teacher that they failed
Inclusion (General and Special Education)	Students with level 3 or 4 on 8th grade ELA or Math exam	Special Education and General Education Teachers
ESL (English as a Second Language)/ English Language Learner (ELL)	NYSESLAT Exam given in May to test progress toward language acquisition	Self-contained and homogeneous classes to remediate language needs.
Honors	Teacher and guidance counselor select students based on academic performance	Homogenous classes taught by subject area teachers

neurship and stock market business. All students in grades nine through twelve are separated into one of the academies. Therefore, the demographics of the high school population are parallel to the demographic composition of the four career-themed academies.

After a thorough analysis of the school's archival data, it was important to note in what ways the master schedule reflected the needs of the changing population of students in the four career academies.

Courses were created in the master schedule to meet the language needs of the growing population of students with limited English proficiency.

High School B

The small learning community at High School B is a freshman academy for new ninth graders. These students were placed in the small learning community (freshman academy) because they received level one and two on the eighth grade English and Math assessments.

There were significant increases in the Hispanic student enrollment in each school district from 2001 to 2006 (Hughes, 2008). The Hispanic population increased from 10 percent in the district containing High School A. The district Hispanic population increased from 9 percent in the district containing High School B.

Table 1.1 Placement of Bilingual Students and Students with Disabilities in High School A

Course/Program Offering	***Criteria for Placement***	***Academy Placement***
English Language Learner/English as a Second Language	Mandatory	Stock Market and Entrepreneurship Academies
Bilingual Program	Not Mandatory	Entrepreneurship Academy
Native Language Arts	An English class that is taught in Spanish	Entrepreneurship Academy
SIFE (Students with Interrupted Formal Education)	Mandatory	Entrepreneurship Academy
Inclusion	IEP/ Assessment Scores	Stock Market and Entrepreneurship Academies
Self-contained special education classes	Individualized Education Program (IEP)	Law and Government Academy

Table 1.2 Master Schedule Composition of Ninth Grade Students at High School B

Designation of Category	***Criteria for Placement***	***How Academic Needs Are Addressed***
Regents (9th grade Small Learning Community)	Level 1 and 2 on 8th grade ELA and Math exam	New 9th graders from middle school only Block schedule instruction for 9th grade English and Integrated Algebra Re-test students at the end of 9th grade in English using the Gates-MacGinitie Assessment
Non-Link (NL)	9th grade Repeater Not placed in SLC for new ninth graders	Revamp summer school for possible credit recovery (if student is absent over 20 day, he/she is not eligible for summer school.)
Inclusion (General and Special Education)	Students with disabilities who scored level 3 or 4 on 8th grade ELA or Math exam	General Education/subject Area Teacher and Special Education Support
English as a Second Language/ English Language Learner	NYSESLAT Exam given in May to test progress toward language acquisition	Language acquisition skills taught by ESL teacher (separate class)
Regents Honors	Teacher selects students based on middle school academic performance	Possible academic enrichment in summer school

- Based on the data yielded from Hughes (2008) Scope District Almanac and the 2007 New York State School Report Card, each high school has increased its population of Hispanic students.

- The enrollment of Hispanic students is larger in High School B than High School A.

- The population of Hispanic students in High School A is increasing in larger increments each year.

Ethnicity of Student Population - Both High Schools A and B are located in two suburban school districts with high ethnically diverse student populations.

The Hispanic student enrollment is increasing in High School A and the school district. Interview responses from the administrators in High School A corroborated the findings from the archival student data regarding Hispanic student enrollment patterns. Findings from Hughes (2008) Scope School District Almanac for Nassau County revealed that the Hispanic student enrollment in the school district has increased by 10% from 2001 to 2006. Similarly, the 2007 New York State School Report Card yielded findings suggesting that the population of Hispanic students continues to rise in School A. In addition, a greater portion of students in School A receive free lunch services than in School B. Both schools report increases in their levels of student mobility and LEP populations.

Research Question 2: To what degree does each domain function as a major factor in the success of the small learning community?

High School A

Figure 1.5 Rating of Domains in High School A (Ranking)

Personalization	Autonomy	Instruction	Identity	Accountability
1 Lowest	2	3	4	5 Highest

High School A - Rating Domains

Domain	Rank	Based on Observations, Interviews and Archival Data
Instruction	3	1) Teachers and administrators meet weekly to discuss career academy topics (2) Teachers and administrators participate in professional development sessions in the summer and during the school year (3) Students are attentive during academic tasks but, they are not engaged in the learning process (4) Differentiated instruction is limited in the classroom (5) No incorporation of technology in the curriculum.
Accountability	5	1) Focus on New York State accountability reports based on disaggregated data and federal legislation due to *No Child Left Behind* (2) use of a variety of assessments to measure student progress-New York State standardized assessments, reading assessments, Institute for Student Achievement English and Math assessment exams (3) Professional networking to improve academic achievement via the Institute for Student Achievement.
Identity	4	(1) Archival school documents - meeting notes, brochures were specific according to the 4 career-themed academies (2) The names of the academies are affixed on the doors outside of the classroom. (3) the four career-themed academies are making progress toward a particular topic or focus (4) the vision and goals are generated at the building level with some input from the teachers.
Autonomy	2	(1) There are no designated teacher leaders to promote a governance structure (2) the staff has little or no control over budget, curriculum, scheduling and staffing (3) separateness exists in a few designated areas within the school (4) professional development is made at the district/administrative level (5) administrators assign teachers to career academies based on priorities.
Personalization	1	(1) Students play a minimal role in governance of the career academies (2) the mentoring program addresses the needs of black males only (3) teacher-student interactions is limited to the classroom (4) outreach to encourage Hispanic parent/community involvement (5) no specific activities for students based on the four career-themed academies.

High School B

Figure 1.6 Rating Scale of Domains in High School B (Ranking)

Identity	Autonomy	Personalization	Instruction	Accountability
1 Lowest	2	3	4	5 Highest

High School B - Rating Domains

Domain	Rank	Based on Observations, Interviews and Archival Data
Instruction	4	(1) most students were actively in discussions about the lesson (2)technology was integrated into the curriculum (3)curriculum maps were developed as a guide for standards-based instruction
Accountability	5	(1) the focus on New York State accountability reports based on disaggregated data and federal legislation due to *No Child Left Behind* (2) the use of a variety of assessments to measure student progress-New York State standardized assessments, Gates-MacGinitie reading test (GMRT), *Read 180* (3) creation of programs and courses to improve academic achievement for all students.
Identity	1	(1) the vision and goals for the freshman academy were generated at the district level with limited teacher input (2) stakeholders have minimal involvement in planning and decision making (3) the freshman academy is organized randomly with some focus based on students' low performance on standardized assessments.
Autonomy	2	(1) there are no teacher leaders to promote governance structures (2) the teachers have little to no input regarding the budget, scheduling and staff (3) department chair people design the course content and select instructional strategies based on New York State learning standards.
Personalization	3	(1) freshmen are encouraged to attend after school session and participate in special trips and events (2) learning the career goals are personalized for freshmen who take a career exploration course in the ninth grade (3) some teachers have opportunities to meet with the freshman for after school and Saturday tutoring programs (4) student voice encouraged via selection of student government class officers and character education initiatives (5) the pupil personnel staff has the greatest interaction with freshmen students.

These are direct observations based on the field notes during visits to High Schools A and B.

Table 1.3 Relationships between the Direct Observations and the Five Domains

Domain	High School A	High School B
Support for Teaching (Instruction)	Subject area teachers in the small learning community collaborate to discuss ways to boost achievement of a failing students. Lack of technology as evidenced in social studies class. No technology integration into the curriculum. Other classes did not promote rigorous or relevant instruction. Students did not appear to be engaged in the lesson. Student with limited English proficiency had difficulty with sentence structure and paragraph development.	English teacher adapted readings from Chaucer to appeal to the 9th grade students. There was a supplemental integrated algebra course (block schedule) provided for level 1 and 2 students. Technology integration infused into math instruction via Smart boards and graphing calculators Cooperative group instruction in 9th grade Integrated Algebra class. Students engaged in active inquiry to determine solutions to geometry problems.
Functional Accountability (Accountability)	Assistant principal functions as the principal of the small learning community. Discussion of progress in core subject area classes in SLC.	The uses of a student self-check in procedure and database for attendance in character education course.
Identity	Student participation in field trips and class activities that focus on the theme of the academy vary based on the SLC.	No clear delineation of small learning community in school building. Academic areas were dedicated to specific subject area classes only.
Self-Determination (Autonomy)	Each of the 4 small learning communities has its own assistant principal who oversees the SLC as the principal. Teachers can join PTSA (Parent, Teacher, Student Association)	Teachers functioned in other leadership roles that were not directly associated with the small learning community. Special programs promoting work internships and character education appeared to be more autonomous than teachers in small learning community classes.
Personalization	PTSA works with the administrators to increase parental involvement of Latino parents. Organization formed to facilitate parental involvement in school. Transition plan for new freshman who are exclusively housed on the third floor.	Poster of after school events and other posters promoting themes of character education were distributed throughout the school. Interactions between teachers and students were generally respectful. A student appeared to be intimidated in class when teacher made a negative comment pertaining to his math ability. Student-student interactions between students in hallway.

The themes emerged and categories created as the data were analyzed for High Schools A and B.

Table 1.4 Description of Small Learning Community Program Attributes

Theme	High school A	High school B
Master Schedule	Extra skills class assigned to every 9th grade student in reading and math. Every 9th grade student is required to take reading from September-June. Writing is given from February-June. Integrated algebra skills course is given as a supplement math instruction. Maintain "pure" academies to monitor different cohort groups until graduation. One honors homogeneous class including the talented and gifted students in Stock Market Business Academy. Pre-scheduling meetings for students.	Block schedule of English and Math given to new 9th graders only. Lab classes are joined with the regular content class to form a 90-minute block. Freshman Academy is "pure" because it contains new 9th grade entrants from middle school only. Pre-scheduling meetings with students.
Identity/Separateness of SLC in the school building	4 heterogeneous career academies Hallway and classrooms decorated according to SLC college names	No separate wing or designated area in the building for SLC
Description of SLC activities	Local and national college tours for 11th and 12th graders Partnerships with local businesses to promote internships according to specific subjects in the small learning communities.	No specific activities. School wide activities only.
SLC Design Committee Meetings	Parents involved in meetings. Team of teacher, administrators and students meet once a week	School staff not involved in planning. Principal meets with central office administration to discuss SLC planning.
Role of the Assistant Principal	Each of the assistant principals functions as the principal of the 4 career themed academies.	There is one assistant principal for the 9th grade. The principal supervises all SLC activities. The other 3 assistant principals do not have a defined role in the freshman academy small learning community.
Student placement in small learning community	Building administrators pre-select students from middle schools. Random placement based on Terra Nova scores.	The students are placed based on their scores on the 8th grade English and Math assessment (level 1 or level 2)
Selection of teachers	3 core teachers (English, Math, Social Studies.) Science, ESL, special education and reading are shared across academies. Teacher from other academies are "drafted" to teach in new Academy for science and human services in 2009-2010.	9th grade English and Integrated Algebra-voluntary and involuntary

Patterns

The following patterns emerged in both schools.

- Additional English and Math classes are offered to the students in grades nine through twelve to remediate academic deficiencies.
- Students were given academic and social/emotional support via mentoring or extra curricular activities such as trips or after-school programs.
- Administrators focused on the small learning community to improve student achievement and accountability status based on New York State performance results.
- Clubs and school activities celebrated and recognized students' cultures and language.
- Teachers engaged in professional development activities to improve instructional approaches in the classroom.
- Building-level administrators were mostly responsible for selecting the teachers.
- Freshman students were given redial instruction based on 8th grade ELA and Math exam.
- Increasing number of students - free and reduced priced lunch, limited English proficiency, mobility.
- Domain Rating - Accountability (5) and Autonomy (2)

Conclusions and Recommendations

After observing the characteristics of two established small learning communities- four career academies in High School A and the freshman academy in High School B, conclusions and recommendations to both high schools follow. As an outcome of this analysis, critical elements are found based on the data collected to suggest that technical/illusory school cultures are dominant in High School A and High School B. These outcomes can be categorized according to Popkewitz (1982) and Smith (1990.) Conclusions that the illusory school is one that engages in rituals and routines, the appearance of collegiality, top-down leadership styles, avoidance of the examination of students performance data, and a disconnectedness between what the students are taught and expectations for productivity. There is an appearance of being collaborative but, in essence, true capacity building is not achieved at the high school building or the central office level.

The effective school is built on the constructivist theory that focuses on student-centered learning, interdisciplinary instruction and autonomy that includes the creation of governance structures that give school staff the authority to make decisions involving policies and practices, staffing teachers, curriculum and assessment, scheduling and school budget (Feldman et al., 2006). In contrast to the constructivist school, technical schools approach learning through rigid, teacher-centered activities that focus on rote memorization, rules, top-down management and non-collaborative practices. In illusory schools, there is a false appearance of productivity, collaboration and achievement that is masked by rituals, routines and collegiality. Using the Popkewitz et al. model, ***Table 1.5*** illustrates the relationship between selected incidents and the cultures of schools A and B.

Conclusion - Research Question #1

- According to census data about school enrollment in the United States, the population of black students (14%) and Hispanic students (14%) were the largest minority group among the enrolled native-born non-Hispanic white population (United States Department of Commerce, 2008).
- High School A and B provided academic support for limited English proficient students.
- The Hispanic student population is growing rapidly in some districts.

Conclusion - Research Question #2

There were similarities found for both High Schools A and B based on the rating scale.

Accountability - Ranked 5 (highest) for High Schools A and B

- Emphasis on New York State Assessments
- Federal Legislation/NCLB

Autonomy - Ranked 2 for High Schools A and B

- In High School A, ninth graders are given an extra class throughout the school day. Both High Schools A and B are following Cotton's suggestions as they focus on the academic needs of new freshman entrants by providing them with remediation through additional English and Math to remediate their academic deficiencies in English and Math.
- Teachers were not a part of the planning process and implementation of the small learning communities in High School A and B. Also, there was no consensus approach for decision-making. No governance structure for teachers. Teachers are drafted for academies.

There were differences found between High School A and High School B.

Identity

- Ranked 4 for High School A - Emphasis on career academy names and contiguous space
- Ranked 1 (lowest) for High School B - No identification of freshman academy in school

Personalization

- Ranked 1 (lowest) for High School A - Mentoring for specific ethnic/gender groups only, no specific activities for career academies based on themes
- Ranked 3 for High School B - Upper classmen and guidance counselors support freshmen, no advisory with adult mentors in school or in community

Instruction

- Ranked 3 for High School A - Common planning meetings
- Ranked 4 for High School B - Technology integrated into curriculum, project-based learning

Table 1.5 Relationship between Selected Incidents and School Culture - Popkewitz Model

Incidents	***Significance***	***Culture***	***Criteria***
The names of four career academies (law and government, stock market, entrepreneurship, science and human services) based on career themes. (High School A). Only two career exploration courses are available for freshmen. (High School B)	Students are pre-selected for academies regardless if they are interested in a career. Classes are not offered to students based on career theme.	Technical/ Illusory	Create activities and events that are specific for the academies. Allow students and staff to collaborate and share ideas across academies. Offer courses based on students' career interests.
4 heterogeneous career academies with hallways and classrooms decorated according to names of college/universities	Motivates students to attend college after high school.	Illusory	Engage students in trips and visitations to colleges and universities. Invite guest speakers and former students to help students establish their post-secondary goals.
Mentoring program for black males -*100 Black Men*	Minority males need role models to succeed in school.	Illusory	Partnerships with local businesses to promote internships according to specific subjects in the small learning communities.
Involvement of Hispanic parents *in El Centro de La Esperanza de Los Padres*	Hispanic parent involvement is important in the school.	Illusory	Involve parents in the planning process. In conjunction with the central office staff, the principal can meet regularly with school staff, parents and students to discuss next steps for small learning community. Encourage participation from all parents.
Professional development activities are determined by the school administrators.	Professional development activities help teacher to understand administrator's goals and objectives for the next school year.	Technical	Allow teachers to collaborate to analyze student data. Professional development activities will focus on students' area of need. Teachers will develop instructional practices based on research-based instructional strategies. Professional development is geared to help teachers use these strategies in the classroom.
Building administrators pre-select students from middle schools. Random placement based on *Terra Nova* scores.	Students are heterogeneously placed in academies.	Technical	Use various career oriented techniques including interest inventories and place students based on their career interests.
3 core teachers (English, Math, Social Studies) Science, ESL, special education and reading are shared across academies. Teachers from other academies are "drafted" to teach in new academy.	Not enough teachers in specialty areas to specifically teach in one academy.	Illusory	Promote interdisciplinary unit planning by allowing teachers to choose a colleague in a different subject area to create project-based lessons. Hire more subject area teachers to work in specific academies.

Recommendations

The recommendations will be addressed in terms of Cotton's (2001) five domains - instruction, accountability, identity, autonomy and personalization. Based on the findings from High School A and High School B, the following recommendations were made.

1. Respond to Needs of Changing Demographic Populations

The high schools in this study are predominantly populated by black and Hispanic students. With special emphasis on the growing Hispanic population, it is recommended that High Schools A and B allow the students of diverse ethnic groups to express their culture. Specific recommendations are encompassed within the domains of instruction and personalization.

- Integrate technology in curriculum
- Foster inquiry, project-based activities, and authentic learning tasks
- Develop a *habit of mind* to encourage students to use higher order thinking skills and inquiry-based learning
- Foster culturally responsive teaching
- Promote positive interactions with the community and families from diverse cultural backgrounds
- Establish mentoring programs for black and Hispanic males, females and non-minority students by soliciting participation from local business partners and community volunteers.

2. School Vision Promoting Collaboration and Shared Decision-Making

All stakeholders must have the opportunity to contribute their ideas or share their opinions during the planning phase of the small learning community. Support from the school district is needed to sustain the provisions for staff planning and professional development to support the needs of the small learning community. Specific recommendations for High Schools A and B are discussed in terms of the domains of accountability, identity and autonomy.

- Promote data-driven decision-making through collaborative and reflective practices.
- Eliminate "hidden" tracking systems by including students heterogeneously in all academies including interest inventories to place students in academies.
- Establish identity of academies through separateness and distinctiveness within school building.
- Create activities and events that are specific for the small learning community and have tournaments and competitive activities to promote camaraderie between career academies.
- Conduct periodic needs assessments throughout the school year to take stock of what is working and not working in existing SLCs.
- Provide opportunities for the teachers to reflect on professional practices to clarify their expectations for teaching and learning.

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Interpreting Item Analysis: What Do All The Numbers Mean?

- By Virginia Peterson-Graziose DNP, RN-BC, APRN-BC

Abstract

Item analysis is a valuable tool for objectively interpreting the reliability and validity of multiple-choice exams, yet many faculty are not familiar with this process. The purpose of this article is to review the common statistical procedures included in the item analysis. It will assist the reader to interpret exam results and improve exam items for future use.

Introduction

Nursing faculty are often faced with the need to measure and assess student learning in their courses. Many forms of evaluation are available and frequently used in nursing curricula; however, the use of multiple choice tests is the most common mode of objectively evaluating learning (McGahee & Ball, 2009). Semester after semester nursing faculty painstakingly strive to write the perfect exam. Is there such a thing? How would one know even if they saw it? Faculty members often think they have written an exceptional test, but without an objective item analysis it is impossible to have any guarantee of its evaluative quality. Computer software programs are extensively available for use with electronic answer sheet scanning equipment. Item analysis is rich with information; however, many faculty do not understand the statistical concepts involved in the process. As a result the item analysis is habitually underutilized.

Statistical Concepts

The statistics reported in an item analysis may vary slightly depending on the software program used. It is important to note that most item analysis techniques are designed for items that are scored dichotomously and are not norm referenced (Oermann & Gaberson, 2009). Therefore, utilizing the item analysis to determine the overall reliability and internal consistency of a multiple choice exam is ideal. The general measures included in an item analysis are measures of central tendency, p-value, point biserial, reliability coefficient, and standard error of measurement. All faculty should have a basic understanding of these statistics in order to accurately assess the reliability and validity of their exams. In addition, item analysis can be used to improve test questions for future exams.

The most commonly used measures of central tendency in education include the mean, and the median. The mean is the best known and widely used average of the individual test scores on an exam. The median is the middle value in a set of ordered numbers. It is the number at which 50% of all the scores on that test fall below (Munro, 2001). The median is useful in identifying skewed distributions. One would expect to find a negatively skewed distribution on a typical nursing exam.

Measures of variability should also be examined to determine how much the scores spread out from the mean. Measures of variability include the range and standard deviation. The range is the difference between the highest and lowest scores. The standard deviation is the most generally used measure of variability. It measures the variability of scores around the mean, the smaller the variance the greater the similarity in scores. The most useful application of the standard deviation is to help understand the reliability and standard error of measurement of a test (Munro, 2001). Interpreting these statistics is somewhat unique when looking at exams taken by nursing students. For example, in a senior level nursing course it is expected that most students will pass the exam so scores may not have great variability and a high class mean is expected.

The p-value of an item is the percent of correct responses to an item. This is sometimes referred to as the difficulty factor. The p-value is a basic indicator of how easy or difficult an item is. If all students answered the question correctly, the item was too easy. Conversely, if all of the students answered the question wrong, it needs to be revised for future exams. Keeping the p-value of items in the 0.70-0.80 range will yield a test with a mean in the range between 0.70-0.80. This is appropriate for a course where generally 75% is a passing grade. Including easier items (p-value of > 0.80) and more difficult items (p-value < 0.70) will contribute to the reliability of exams (McDonald, 2002). Very hard or very easy items have little power to discriminate between the students who know the content and those who do not. These items also decrease the reliability of test scores (Oermann & Gaberson, 2009).

The point biserial index (PBI) represents the discrimination ability of an item, which is the basic measure of

item quality for multiple-choice exams (McDonald, 2002). The PBI ranges from -1.0 to +1.0; the higher the PBI, the better the item discriminates between the high and low achievers on a test. A positive PBI indicates that the students who did well on a test chose the correct answer more often than those students who did poorly. If an item has a negative PBI the test item is usually flawed and should be revised for future exams. Generally accepted guidelines for nursing curricula exams are that a PBI of < 2.0 is considered a poor question and should be revised. Items between 2.0 and 3.0 are considered fair but could be improved upon. Items between 4.0 and 7.0 are considered good (McGahee, & Ball 2009; Oermann & Gaberson, 2009). However, each item should always be evaluated within the context of the course. For example, there may be an item that the instructor requires all students to answer correctly, so a PBI of 0 may be the goal.

The overall reliability of an exam is assessed using a reliability coefficient. One cannot expect test scores to be 100% free from error. Therefore, the goal should be to limit the amount of error and establish the level of error one is willing to tolerate (McDonald, 2002). The reliability score measures the internal consistency of an exam. The two most common measures of reliability used in nursing education are Cronbach's alpha and Kuder-Richardson Formula (KR 20). Cronbach alpha is generally used for surveys and Likert scales but can also be used to measure dichotomous variables. The range is 0 - 1, the higher the score the more reliable the exam. Values of 0.7 to 0.8 are generally regarded as satisfactory (Bland & Altman, 1997). The Kuder - Richardson 20 (KR 20) is also a measure of internal consistency and is appropriate for use with dichotomous variables. It includes the number of test items on an exam, student performance on every test item, and the variance for the set of student scores. KR 20 scores range from 0 - 1. The closer the results are to 1.0 the more confident one can be with exam results (Kehoe, 1995). Remember, however, that a reliability coefficient of 1.0 is not practical. The examiner must decide what reliability coefficient is acceptable. If the exam is a unit exam, the examiner may find that a KR 20 of 0.6 is acceptable. If the exam will determine whether a student will pass or fail, a higher KR 20 of 0.7 or greater may be desired.

The Standard Error of Measurement (SEM) is another component of an item analysis that should be considered. SEM reflects consistency of an individual's test score if the test was given repeatedly. The lower the SEM, the more reliable the test score (McDonald, 2002). Because it is not possible to give the same exam to the same student multiple times, an estimation of an individual's true score is derived from a mathematical equation combining information about the reliability coefficient and the standard deviation of the exam (McDonald, 2002). The SEM is useful in interpreting test scores because it establishes the number of points that should be added to or subtracted from the student's score to estimate the parameters in which the true score can be found. For example, if the SEM was 2 and a student obtained a grade of 80 on the exam, the examiner can be confident that the actual grade is between 78-82. The smaller the SEM, the greater the confidence one can have in the obtained score (Linn & Gronlund, 2000).

Item distractors must also be evaluated when a questionable test item is identified. Every distractor should be chosen by at least one student who performed poorly on the exam (McDonald, 2002). Poorly performing students should select the distractors more often than higher achieving students. If higher achieving students choose a distractor with about the same frequency as the correct answer, this usually indicates that there is no one clear or best answer. If no student chose a particular distractor it means that the number of plausible answers was more limited than intended (Oermann & Gaberson, 2009). Statistics must always be reviewed within the context of exams. The answer key should be checked for accuracy if high achieving students overwhelmingly choose a particular distractor.

Conclusion

Once a working knowledge of item analysis has been developed by nursing faculty it can be utilized to evaluate the reliability of an exam and improve individual test questions for future use. Item analysis can uncover inaccuracies in scoring, such as omitting the correct answer or including 2 correct answers. Additionally, it is helpful in identifying items that are exceptionally easy or particularly challenging. Systematic item analysis objectively ensures the fairness and accuracy of individual test items and confidence in the test as a whole (McDonald, 2002).

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GENDER DIFFERENCES IN NURSING STUDENT DESCRIPTIONS OF FACULTY SUPPORT AND ACADEMIC SUCCESS

- By Janet Raman, Ed.D.

Abstract

This study contrasts 78 female and 26 male nursing student descriptions of faculty support. Their grade point averages were compared and the differences on eight variables of faculty support for male and female nursing students were noted. Overall, female nursing students had significantly higher pre-nursing program Grade Point Averages than male students who entered the nursing program, although there were no significant differences.

Introduction

The status of employment for registered nurses' has cycled through many highs and lows. In the 1990's, there was an attempt to replace registered nurses with unlicensed ancillary personnel (Barter, McLaughlin, & Thomas, 1994). This was followed by resurgence in the desire for highly skilled, trained, professionals such as nurses (Joel, 1996). Despite much discussion about a nursing shortage (Gambino, 2009; Henle, 2007; Laibach, 2006), the nursing profession in New York City and Long Island has entered another employment phase. The downward trend in the United States economy brought about hiring freezes, layoffs and hospital closures (Webber, 2009), creating less job opportunities for registered nurses (Carlson, 2009; Nelson, 2009) both in hospitals, and at other sites in communities.

As a result of the recession in 2009, new graduates from nursing programs are competing with experienced nurses for employment (Webber, 2009). Under these circumstances, nursing students realize that they must be academically competitive, and highly prepared to enter the workforce.

What predicts academic success for nursing students? Aber and Arathuzik (1996) stated that the most reliable predictor of success was the student's previously obtained Grade Point Average. Waterhouse and Beeman (2003) listed several factors that influenced students' success including "admissions criteria, grade point averages, grades in science classes, grades in specific classes and ethnicity, among others" (p 35).

Beard (2009) noted in her qualitative study of 10 nursing faculty and their roles in teaching ethnically/culturally diverse students, that the nurse educators did not believe that ethnic/cultural diversity was "an important factor influencing the educational process" (p. 120). Students in her study performed better on the NCLEX when nursing faculty were directly engaged in supporting their academic progress and did not rely on external tutoring centers. Ethnic/cultural affiliation had been discounted as a performance variable among 197 engineering/science students at a mid-size West Coast university (Hackett, Betz, Casas, & Rocha-Singh, 1992).

Nevertheless, Gardner (2005) found in a qualitative study of 15 ethnically/racially diverse nursing students in public universities in California, that "loneliness and isolation" (p. 156), and "lack of support from teachers" (p. 158) reduced their academic success.

Salamonson and Andrew (2006) studied 267 nursing students in an Australian regional university during a two-year period. They determined that not working had a positive relationship with nursing students' performance, while academic performance was less for students who had part-time employment and those who expressed an ethnic/cultural affiliation with People of Color. The root causes for lower performance were not reported.

Goldberger and Kazis (2009) and Lincoln (2009) stated that completion of an associate's degree should count as academic success. Rothkopf (2009) stated that individuals who achieve workforce success exhibit academic progress.

Waterhouse and Beeman's (2003) study of 538 baccalaureate nursing students at the University of Delaware used the Delaware Risk Appraisal Instrument (DRAI) to look at nursing student success. They found that the DRAI was predictive of the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX-RN) pass rates. The DRAI demonstrated that students with lower grades (lower GPAs) usually did worse on the NCLEX-RN exam. Waterhouse and Beeman found that if

they replaced the DRAI with the students' performance in a particular nursing course, they could make similar NCLEX pass rate predictions as they did with the DRAI scores.

Some studies found that gender had no affect on college students' performance (Hackett, Betz, Casas, & Rocha-Singh, 1992) while other studies reported that gender can be an issue in the success of the nursing student (Bong, 1999; Muldoon & Reilly, 2003).

Factors Associated with Nursing Student Success

All nursing students must pass the National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses (NCLEX-RN) to work as registered nurses. The exam is "meant to test basic nursing knowledge" (Sitzman, 2007, p. 272) and passing represents success for registered nurses. Nursing students who have higher grade point averages (GPAs) at graduation are more likely to pass the NCLEX-RN on their first attempt (Davenport, 2007). Sands (as cited in Beard, 2009) found that there was a small positive relationship between college GPA and NCLEX-RN success among 67 Black nursing graduates, although not significant at the .05 level.

Many variables can influence nursing students' academic achievement, and NCLEX-RN pass rates. Academic self-concept (Helmke & van Aken, 1995) and commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1997) have been associated with enhanced performance. Cokley, Bernard, Cunningham, and Motoike (2001) noted that academic motivation was related to academic achievement. It has also been demonstrated that goal orientation (Bouffard & Couture, 2003) and nursing faculty support (Poorman, Mastorovich, & Webb, 2008) can positively impact student success.

Nursing faculty support has been viewed in terms of faculty-student relationship and support provided by faculty to students. Danielson (1996), Frankel and Swanson (2002), and Hammer (2005) identified several faculty behaviors related to instructional support that make a difference in student success: unambiguous directions for all assignments, receptiveness to adjusting lessons and the ability to deal with individual student needs.

In a qualitative study of 26 nurse educators and 17 nurses of different cultural/ethnic affiliations who graduated from nursing schools located in California, students identified by Yoder (2001) as ethnic and minority students also reported "social or interpersonal barriers such as unfavorable faculty attitudes and negative stereotyping" (p. 322) as inhibitors to their success.

Gardner (2005) found in a study of 15 nursing students identified as ethnic and minority individuals in public universities in California, that these students desired teachers who would offer "emotional support" (p. 158), and who would "treat them like individuals with unique needs" (p. 157).

Beard (2009) noted that "faculty perceptions about their role in teaching ethnically and racially diverse nursing students may affect minority attrition rates and successful completion of the NCLEX-RN" (p. 5). Beard (2009) further noted that some faculty "held negative attitudes towards some minority groups" (p. 106), which may detrimentally affect student-faculty relationships.

Chang (2005) pointed out that satisfaction with individual contact with faculty had been linked to higher Grade Point Averages. Cotton and Wilson (2006) described that faculty-student relationships increased the students' self-efficacy, self-concept and commitment to the organization. Martinez-Aleman (2007) described this relationship as a gift which was given from the faculty member to the student and was an indication of "faculty productivity" (p. 582).

In 1999, Bong studied self-efficacy in relation to gender, previous academic achievement and ethnicity. She looked at 383 10th, 11th, and 12th graders in Los Angeles. She found that male students had stronger self-efficacy than female students. Muldoon and Reilly (2003) considered gendered constructs in choosing a career in nursing. Three hundred and eighty-four nursing students in the United Kingdom completed a BEM Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) and the Occupational and Academic Self-Efficacy for Nursing (OSEN) scales. They found that self-efficacy was higher among male nursing students and psychologically masculine nursing students when combined with their ability to succeed in highly feminine and gender-neutral nursing specialties.

Gender and Nursing Student Success

Although much has been written about gender differences in academic success, little has been discovered regarding the relationship of faculty support to gender in nursing programs. In this 2010 study, a survey was developed to measure different motivational and personal factors nursing students reported as related to their success.

For the purpose of this study, a survey with 46 Likert scale questions was employed. Eight questions measured the students' descriptions of faculty support. Students' responses ranged from strongly disagree, disagree, slightly agree, and agree, to strongly agree. The respondents were pooled from a first semester, second-year class in an associate degree in nursing program. Out of the 104 study participants, approximately 25% were males. When the nursing students were divided into females and males, an independent samples t-test was employed to determine if their descriptions of faculty support differed (P value of .059).

The P value of .059 approached the criteria for significance. The survey responses were divided by gender to further examine student impressions of faculty support. ***Tables 1.A*** through ***1.H*** provide the students' responses to the eight questions exploring their descriptions of faculty support by gender.

Table 1.A The nursing instructors in this program explain nursing practice to me very clearly.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Male			
Disagree	1	3.8	3.8
Slightly Agree	5	19.2	19.2
Agree	11	42.3	42.3
Strongly Agree	9	34.6	34.6
Total	26	100.0	100
Female			
Strongly disagree	1	2.6	2.6
Disagree	5	6.4	6.4
Slightly Agree	26	33.3	33.3
Agree	34	43.6	43.6
Strongly Agree	11	14.1	14.1
Total	78	100.0	100.0

Six percent of the female students disagreed and 14 percent strongly agreed that nursing instructors explained nursing practice clearly while 35 percent of the male students strongly agreed.

Table 1.B The nursing instructors in this program seem more interested in themselves than in me.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Male			
Slightly Agree	7	26.9.	26.9
Agree	10	38.5	38.5
Strongly Agree	9	34.6	34.6
Total	26	100.0	100
Female			
Strongly disagree	3	3.8	3.8
Disagree	6	7.7	7.7
Slightly Agree	9	11.5	11.5
Agree	38	48.7	48.7
Strongly Agree	22	28.2	28.2
Total	78	100.0	100.0

Both male and female students reported nursing instructors were more interested in themselves than they were in individual students. A small percentage of female students disagreed (7.7 %).

Table 1.C The nursing instructors in this program are very familiar with course content.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Male			
Slightly Agree	3	11.5	11.5
Agree	15	57.7	57.7
Strongly Agree	8	30.8	30.8
Total	26	100.0	100
Female			
Disagree	2	2.6	2.6
Slightly Agree	17	21.8	22.1
Agree	41	52.6	53.2
Strongly Agree	17	21.8	22.1
Total	77	98.7	100.0
Missing	1	1.3	
Total	78	100.0	100.0

Male and female nursing students tended to agree in large numbers that nursing instructors were familiar with course content.

Table 1.D The nursing instructors in this program are easy to talk to.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Male			
Disagree	1	3.8	3.8
Slightly Agree	6	23.1	23.1
Agree	11	42.3	42.3
Strongly Agree	8	30.8	30.8
Total	26	100.0	100
Female			
Strongly Disagree	2	2.6	2.6
Disagree	6	7.7	7.8
Slightly Agree	13	16.7	16.9
Agree	40	51.3	51.9
Strongly Agree	16	20.5	20.8
Total	77	98.7	100.0
Missing	1	1.3	
Total	78	100.0	100.0

Seventy percent of the male and female nursing students agreed that nursing instructors were easy to talk to and 7.8 percent of the female students disagreed.

Table 1.E The nursing instructors' in this program primary concern is to help me succeed.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Male			
Slightly Agree	6	23.1	23.1
Agree	12	46.2	46.3
Strongly Agree	8	30.8	30.8
Total	26	100.0	100
Female			
Strongly Disagree	2	2.6	2.6
Disagree	7	9.0	9.1
Slightly Agree	15	19.2	19.5
Agree	37	47.4	48.1
Strongly Agree	16	20.5	20.8
Total	77	98.7	100.0
Missing	1	1.3	
Total	78	100.0	100.0

Nine percent of female nursing students disagreed the nursing instructors' primary concern was to help them succeed. Males slightly agreed to strongly agreed with this statement.

Table 1.F The nursing instructors in this program genuinely enjoy helping me.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Male			
Slightly Agree	5	19.2	19.2
Agree	15	57.7	57.7
Strongly Agree	6	23.1	23.1
Total	26	100.0	100
Female			
Strongly Disagree	3	3.8	3.9
Disagree	6	7.7	7.8
Slightly Agree	28	35.9	36.4
Agree	32	41.0	41.6
Strongly Agree	8	10/3	10.4
Total	77	98.7	100.0
Missing	1	1.3	
Total	78	100.0	100.0

Eighty percent of the male nursing students and 52 percent of the female nursing students agreed that nursing instructors genuinely enjoy helping them.

Table 1.G The nursing instructors in this program are friendly.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Male			
Slightly Agree	7	26.9	26.9
Agree	11	42.3	42.3
Strongly Agree	8	30.8	30.8
Total	26	100.0	100
Female			
Strongly Disagree	1	1.3	1.3
Disagree	21	26.9	27.3
Slightly Agree	31	39.7	40.2
Agree	16	20.5	20.8
Strongly Agree	8	10.3	10.4
Total	77	98.7	100.0
Missing	1	1.3	
Total	78	100.0	100.0

Twenty seven percent of the female nursing students disagreed that nursing instructors were friendly while all of the male nursing students slightly to strongly agreed that the nursing instructors were friendly.

Table 1.H The nursing instructors in this program like to help students.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Male			
Slightly Agree	6	23.1	23.1
Agree	15	57.7	57.7
Strongly Agree	5	19.2	19.2
Total	26	100.0	100
Female			
Strongly Disagree	2	2.6	2.6
Disagree	1	1.3	3.9
Slightly Agree	25	32.1	32.5
Agree	32	41.0	41.6
Strongly Agree	17	21.8	22.1
Total	77	98.7	100.0
Missing	1	1.3	
Total	78	100.0	100.0

Seventy seven percent of the male and 64 percent of the female nursing students agreed that the nursing instructors liked to help students. Overall, one should note the disparity between male and female nursing students. Males report more friendly and supportive attitudes towards them than female nursing students report the nursing instructors exhibit. The greatest disparity appeared in the degree to which male and female students perceived nursing instructors to be friendly.

In a comparison of mean score differences between male and female students Faculty Support, General Self-Efficacy, Affective Commitment, Math Self-Concept, Identified Barriers to Success, Pre-nursing Program GPA and Current Nursing Program GPA, only pre nursing program GPA revealed a significant difference between females and males.

Table 2. A Descriptive Statistics for female and male students' perceptions of Faculty Support, General Self-Efficacy, Affective Commitment, Math Self-Concept, and Barriers to Success in the nursing program.

Subscale	Mean	Std. D.
Male (n=26)		
Faculty Support	32.4615	4.50094
General Self-Efficacy	38.8462	6.23982
Affective Commitment	39.5000	4.36578
Math Self-Concept	19.9615	3.06569
Barriers to Success	14.8846	3.74515
Pre GPA	3.4540	.32240
Cur GPA	3.4139	.30995
Female (n=77)		
Faculty Support	30.1558	5.57028
General Self-Efficacy	37.1733	4.95213
Affective Commitment	38.0526	5.63535
Math Self-Concept	21.1818	3.81730
Barriers to Success	15.8182	3.54567
Pre GPA	3.6276	.33210
Cur GPA	3.5025	.37827

Table 2.B Male and Female nursing student comparisons for the dimensions of Faculty Support, General Self-Efficacy, Affective Commitment, Math Self-Concept, Barriers to Success, Pre-nursing Program GPA and Current Nursing Program GPA.

Factor	t-statistic	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Faculty Support	1.909	101	.059
General Self-Efficacy	1.385	99	.169
Affective Commitment	1.349	56	.183
Math Self-Concept	-1.476	101	.143
Barriers to Success	-1.145	101	.255
Pre-GPA	-2.285	99	.025
Current GPA	-1.018	93	.311

Conclusion

The findings of this analysis revealed that the males in this study never strongly disagreed and rarely disagreed with the eight statements related to faculty support, while the female students more frequently strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statements relating to faculty support, indicating that male nursing students felt more positively about the faculty support that they received while in this nursing program.

Are the male students receiving different treatment from their instructors? Is it possible that the emphasis in the nursing profession to incorporate males into the practice has motivated nursing faculty to treat males differently than females in the nursing courses? Much has been written about the differential treatment of the sexes in the classroom, most, except Bell-Scriber, stating that the male students receive preferential treat (Allan & Madden, 2006; Bell-Scriber, 2008; Buffington & Stilwell, 2001; Kingdon, 2002). The male nursing students' greater perception of friendliness in their nurse educators in the above-mentioned study needs to be further investigated. Nurse educators need to continue investigating approaches to providing fair and consistent support to all nursing students and close the gender gap in students' perceptions of faculty support.

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THROUGH THE LENSES OF A FEW MODERN CLASSICS: CHANGE AS IT RELATES TO THE EFFECTS OF MENTORING ON THE PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL CULTURE

- by Korynne Taylor-Dunlop, Ed.D. and Alison Bruno

INTRODUCTION

Mentoring fosters change. Change drives improvement. Improvement starts with strong leaders. "Support is essential to retaining new teachers, but the ultimate goal of beginning-teacher induction must be the development of professionals who can help complex learning happen for students" (Feiman-Nemser, Carver, Schwille, Yusko, 1999, p. 3,). One could make the argument that the goals of mentoring programs are to promote a love of learning and the aspiration of being a life-long learner for all educators. Collaboration of staff members through the mentor-mentee relationship compels change efforts and overall improvement. When educators inspire their peers, a climate of change and improvement prevails. It is our responsibility as leaders and professional educators to not only foster the next generation of students, but also encourage and support the next generation of teachers. Teacher mentor programs cultivate a particular aspect of organizational culture within a school building.

A definition of culture

> The culture of a group is formally defined by Schein as "a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way you perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems" (2004, p.17).

Schein (2004) believes there are three levels exemplifying the culture of an organization. These levels are artifacts, basic assumptions, and the beliefs and values embraced by a group. According to Schein (2004), artifacts are "visible organizational structures and processes; they are hard to decipher". Espoused beliefs and values are the "strategies, goals, and philosophies." These are known as "espoused justifications". The third layer of culture is the underlying assumptions, which are "unconscious, taken-for-granted beliefs, perceptions, thoughts, and feelings". These are the "ultimate source of values and actions". It is the combination of the three levels of culture that truly define the school's culture.

Culture, is also defined by Schein (2004), as norms, values, behavior patterns, rituals, traditions of a group of people. Culture implies structural stability and is the accumulated shared learning from shared history (2004). Schein states that great leaders create an enjoyable and effective organizational culture based upon the leaders' beliefs, values, and assumptions. A school's culture affects how significant a change can be made within a specific setting or learning environment. A collaborative, reflective, constructivist school culture will impact positive changes in the learning community and school.

The actions of educators and administrative leaders impact educational change. Manley and Hawkins (2010) note that "Effective change agents employ fewer advocacies and more inquiry, and suffer less push-back than most change agents (p.66)." The stable foundation of educators will ultimately aid in molding new teachers and modeling excellent teaching practices.

Fullan (2006) addresses change theory as a vehicle of force for school improvement.

> "Change theory or change knowledge can be very powerful in informing education reform strategies and, in turn, getting results - but only in the hands (and minds, and hearts) of people who have a deep knowledge of the dynamics of how the factors in question operate to get particular results" (2006, p. 3).

Based on Fullan's concept of change, the few selected individuals are best used to convey the mission of the building and promote the best teaching practices and strategies that uphold the leadership's vision

for the building. In turn, one must be an excellent, well-respected educator and teacher leader prior to taking on the commitment of mentor.

Fullan goes on to say, "If teachers are going to help students to develop the skills and competencies of knowledge-creation, teachers need experience themselves in building professional knowledge" (2006, p. 4). It is through the years of broad experiences of our veteran teachers that they have gained enough knowledge, wisdom, and understanding of the profession and culture to be able to promote and cultivate the skills of new teachers, inspire them to continue learning, to seek new information, and encourage them to develop into reflective practitioners. In turn, new teachers build confidence, improve on their skills, and construct an understanding of curriculum content, concepts, and skills. Consequently, new teachers will better be able to educate students in learning the important skills and concepts needed to succeed yearly as a result of being mentored by master teachers of the profession.

Currently, new teachers have a state mentoring requirement for certification. Mandated by New York State, mentoring is now required for teachers to obtain initial and conditional certifications since 2004.

> "Teachers with NYS initial teaching certificates must complete a mentored experience in their first year in the teaching profession. School districts must plan and implement teacher-mentoring programs to serve teachers in their employment who are obligated to have such mentored experiences, in any school within the district. A framework for these experiences is provided in section 100.2 (dd) (2) (iv) of Commissioner's Regulations (district professional development plans)" (NYSED: Office of Teaching Initiatives).

Hence, "Holders of the [both] Initial and Conditional Initial certificate must receive mentoring in their first year of teaching or school building leadership service in a public school district" (NYSED: Office of Teaching Initiatives). In addition, "new Initial Certificate holders are to receive mentoring from an experienced teacher" (NYSED: Office of Teaching Initiatives). Consequently, the commissioner's regulations of Part 100 (section 100.2, dd) determined that all new teacher candidates seeking certification after February 4, 2004 will receive teacher-to-teacher mentoring in their first year of employment by a qualified and experienced peer educator.

New York State defines the importance of mentoring in its purpose.

> "The purpose of the mentoring requirement is to provide beginning educators in teaching or school building leadership service with support in order to gain skillfulness and more easily make the transition to one's first professional experience under an Initial Certificate. Satisfaction of a mentored experience is one of the requirements individuals must meet in order to qualify for the Professional Certificate" as declared by New York State Department of Education" (Commissioner's Regulation sect 100.2 dd, NYSED: Office of Teaching Initiatives).

These state mandates were initiated creating a non-negotiable change in approach to how teacher support and initial training would be conducted. There is now a new and mandatory culture of change being implemented in order to pursue excellence in education for all, to include the educators as well as the students. It is stressed that positive change occurs through the guidance of experienced teachers as they have based their best practices and effective approaches from the field of education on the prior experiences in the classroom. The culture possessed by the mentors and conveyed by the leadership supports new teachers in their professional development journey as successful educators.

The mentoring process is a necessity in building a positive school culture and learning environment; in other words, "A mandatory, structured induction program introduces new teachers to the culture, expectations, and vision of their district and school" (Martin and Robbins, 1999, p.27). Novice educators benefit from the guidance of colleagues; therefore, teachers perform best when they are transitioned through a mentoring program from the university world and college preparation programs to the workforce setting as they assimilate into a school's culture.

As described by Hargreaves and Fink, "Sustainable leadership is distributed leadership" (2006, p. 111). Sustainable leadership comes from consistency in education and educational practice over time with success and legacy. In order to maintain strong sustainable leadership, deep learning and slow learning must occur to achieve broad learning.

Broad learning is "to know, to understand, to communicate, and leave the world a better place...-therefore learning for meaning, learning for understanding, [and] learning for life" (Hargreaves and Fink, 2006, p.33). A great teacher, good mentor, and promising novice educator all should strive for the goals of learning: finding meaning and understanding as a life-long learner. If these goals are accomplished, we have developed reflective, constructivist practitioners. Consequentially, it becomes evident that leadership impacts culture, and positive culture is sustainable through effective leadership. Experienced, well-respected teachers often become the leaders. The teacher leaders and mentors strive to sustain and improve the culture and climate within a well-managed school setting. "No one has to distribute leadership in a school; it's already distributed. Leadership exists everywhere…" (Hargreaves and Fink, 2006, p. 136-137). The administration's responsibility is to identify and empower these leaders. Experienced teachers and building mentors, as well as administrative leaders, can all be leaders in a particular setting when simply provided with a common vision and set of expectations. Master educators, brilliant mentors, and inspiring administrators facilitate a common goal of creating a culture for learning as to empower novice

teachers to grow professionally and gain confidence in the field of education. Although, the administrative leadership drives the direction of the school, all leadership groups need to work together to develop a culture of learning and excellence for all.

Therefore, the essential focus of school buildings' leaders becomes organizing a commitment to the achievement of high standards for all students, and it is accomplished by setting the goal of learning not just for the student but also setting the same high standard of learning for the teachers too (Rutherford, p. 3, 2005).

> "Mentoring is a critical topic in education today and a favored strategy in U.S. policy initiatives focused on teacher induction. Besides creating new career opportunities for veteran teachers, assigning mentors to work with beginning teachers represents an improvement over the abrupt an unassisted entry into teaching that characterizes the experience of many novices. Still, the promise of mentoring goes beyond helping novices survive their first year of teaching. If mentoring is to function as a strategy of reform, it must be linked to a vision of good teaching, guided by an understanding of teacher learning, and supported by a professional culture that favors collaboration and inquiry" (Feiman-Nemser, 1996).

Additionally, the process of mentoring is the act of changing attitudes and behaviors. Mentoring fosters collaboration among colleagues. This initiative is implemented by "creating a culture for learning" by establishing "clearly articulated, commonly held, and acted upon beliefs" and the beliefs incorporate the value of student learning as well as the importance of professional growth and development (Rutherford, p. 4, 2005). Planned, distributive leadership paired with an inspirational leader, various leaders in the classroom and community, and clear vision of the goals, allows change to occur in order to improve school culture and strengthen a love of learning approach towards teaching and learning.

Through the actions of educators based upon their beliefs, teachers within a school environment "seek to be mentors and actively pursue the learning of knowledge and acquisition of skills identified as critical for successful mentors", which is described as analytical, reflective practitioners (Rutherford, p. 4, 2005). New teachers benefit from the wisdom, knowledge, and experiences of master veteran teachers to make adjustments and modifications to their curriculums, as well as instructional approaches and strategies.

The New York State Education Department created guidelines for implementing district-based Teacher Mentoring Programs.

> "These guidelines are offered to assist school districts and teachers in understanding their responsibilities under the new teacher mentoring regulation. Under previously revised provisions of Section 100.2(dd) of the Commissioner's Regulations, effective February 2, 2004, new teachers must complete a mentored experience in their first year of teaching. Likewise, under the new provisions of Section 80-3 of the Commissioner's Regulations, employing districts are now responsible to provide such mentoring to new teachers and must incorporate the design and planning of such mentored experiences into the district's professional development plan" (NYSED: Office of Teaching Initiatives).

A key provision of the mentoring regulation was stated "the purpose of the mentoring experience is to improve the skill and retention of new teachers as they transition from academic preparation to their first professional appointment" (NYSED: Office of Teaching Initiatives). The implementation of a district mentoring program helps to eliminate obstacles promoting change to develop best teaching practices and professional growth while still continuing to educate our novice teachers and encouraging veteran teachers to take a leadership role in the school community.

In an effort to promote effective mentoring practices and overcome obstacles, schools must be analyzed using a specific framework to understand and interpret the criteria that form its culture. According to Popkewitz, Tabachnick, and Wehlage (1982), the Individually Guided Education framework, known as IGE, can be used to determine outcomes of three basic questions. The questions address the key areas for understanding the meaning of "to know", "to work", and "authority". "What does it mean to know?" "What does it mean to work?" "What does it mean to exercise authority?" These three questions are assessed by Popkewitz et al. through the eyes of a technical, illusory, or constructivist school setting.

Technical Culture

In a technical school setting, the culture is developed from a top-down authoritative approach, and in turn students and teachers are learning the concrete answers and specific rules that need to be upheld. Students and staff know the technical, routine procedures for learning and teaching. Everyone does what they are told to do. They approach work by following the rules and expectations without question of the teachers or administration within a micromanaged educational environment.

Illusory Culture

In an illusory school setting, the culture is developed from a compliant, complacent, non-confrontational authoritative approach. Students and teachers know the procedures and how to do things in a much rehearsed way. "Teacher observations and evaluations are ritualistic [and] lacking substance" (Smith, p. 29). Work is mediocre and unimaginative due to complacency. Teachers and students

follow the rules and often appear to be busy. People in the illusory setting are not always told what to do, but there is not much initiative for improvement or change.

Constructivist Culture

Finally, the constructivist school has a culture of people who embrace change and strive for constant improvement. The purpose of all people involved is shared. Authority may come in many forms since not only administrators are leaders, but also teachers, mentors, community members and even students. The environment fosters collaborative practices. The meaning of knowing is to be interpretive, subjective, creating knowledge, and apply an interdisciplinary approach. Students and teachers demonstrate skills and apply them to real-world situations. Work in a constructivist environment is cooperative, imaginative, creative, self-directed, collaborative, and hands-on learning for all.

Managing change through mentoring requires us to develop a shared understanding, create a positive work environment, and manage the external environment around us (Hatch, 2009). The act of mentoring with appropriate leadership lends itself to the development of a constructivist school setting. Administrative teams and leaders should make decisions that lead teachers to become collaborative practitioners in hopes to create a truly constructivist school setting with provided support and professional development opportunities for personnel.

Advocacy Design Center Model

Smith's Advocacy Design Center (ADC) model explores four main aspects of an educational system: instruction, organization, governance, and accountability (IOGA). Before we explore the impact of each, we need to see the connection it has on the development of school culture. Smith's framework asks participants to change their view of their school. When people view their school in a shared way and define their school as a whole, the four design elements can be applied. Smith developed twenty-nine questions to be used as the foundation of his framework, which span across the four topics of instruction, organization, governance, and accountability.

Instruction

Instruction must be thoroughly examined within the school setting institution. Instruction defined by work includes reviewing teaching practices, teacher role, materials and tools, workplace organization, classroom management, and work patterns. "What does instruction/the learning process look like?" (p. 30). Instruction and learning is examined through understanding student work habit patterns. "What does it mean for students to work?" (p. 30). "What are the observed work strategies and practices?" (p. 30). These are a few of the reflective questions to tackle. The responses can range from a (1- technical) individual work expectations to a (5-constructivist) cooperative learning, collaboration approach. Once again, schools are being assessed as mostly technical, constructivist, or (3) illusory (mixed) as demonstrated by middle of the range responses. If students are assessed on their performances in a particular school setting as mostly constructivist within a collaborative, cooperative environment, then it could be said that teachers and leaders established this environment through modeling their values, beliefs, and practices. In a school's culture embedded with effective mentoring practices, a school would tend to be a (5) cooperative and collaborative approach towards learning and teaching rather than a (1) where individuals are working harder to accomplish their own goals.

While instruction is defined by work, it can also be defined by knowing. Knowing addresses the creation of knowledge, demonstration of learning, and student interests. Work and the act of knowing are both key fields of study to examine within the instruction area. Questions about knowing deal with how knowledge is created and learned, as well as what type of thinking skills are used to obtain knowledge. "What order thinking skills are evident in student work?" (Smith, p. 33). In a technical setting, students and educators are gaining knowledge from (1) simple recall through a non-critical approach; however, a constructivist setting fosters (5) problem identification and divergent opinions through creative, evaluative, and critical means. Teachers must embrace the higher-order, critical thinking approach towards knowing to establish this philosophy as a key component of their blueprint for students. Mentoring and a critical thinking approach promote teachers to develop their problem solving skills through reflection and collaboration. Once more, the result of a mentoring program is to encourage a constructivist culture and school setting.

Organization

Next, we explore the impact of organization within an educational environment. Organization is defined as access to programs and services, staff work patterns, and influence of external organizations. "How is the school organized?" (Smith, p. 33). "What do staffing patterns look like for the educational program (within a school)?" (Smith,p.34). The technical approach would see a "collection of individuals". Conversely, the constructivist approach would witness "collaborating teams [and] task groups". Collaboration is the backbone for the mentoring process, and collaborative teams rather than random individuals working in isolation advance a school towards a truly constructivist culture.

Governance

The aspect of governance examines authority. Governance includes planning change, examining resources and commitment, control of training, inquiry into success, and authority distribution. "How is the school governed?" (Smith, p.35). "How is the school governance system representative of the stakeholders? Who plans and/or implements the school model or design?" As we spoke about earlier, a technical approach uses a top-down management style with central office and administration leading the way entirely while a constructivist approach includes a "core group, team, [and]

working communities". Mentors are inherently part of the core group of leaders of authority within the constructivist school. This next question deals with deeply analyzing the role of authority, teacher leaders, and mentors. "What commitment do stakeholder partners make to program? What do they bring to the table?" (Smith,p.35). Rather than simply offering "(1) goodwill [and] advice", "(5) field experience, mentors, access, jobs, [and] teacher support" are all essential components to developing a collaborative constructivist school.

Accountability

Finally, accountability comprises the improvement of community life, professional growth, and data analysis. "How does the school account for education?" (Smith,p.36). "How will this school design or model make the school community better for all adults as well as children?"(Smith,p.36). "What will it do to build civic capacity and a sense of community?" (Smith,p. 36). Once again, our technical culture embraces "isolated services and agencies" whereas a constructivist culture supports "integrated, collaborative efforts". A collaborative school will welcome mentoring through integrated, collaborative efforts and numerous opportunities for learning.

A school's mentoring program is a philosophical approach that is embedded within each layer of the culture that several theorists address. The philosophy of supporting mentoring is entwined in people's beliefs, values, and basic assumptions about their school. It is evident through the artifacts within the school, such as collaboration between colleagues, mentoring procedures, the use of reflective practices after observations, vertical teaming, and even grade level meetings, that mentoring is important in their culture and building. The familiarity and support of an already established mentoring program influences staff's beliefs, values, and assumptions on establishing, maintaining, and even improving their current mentoring program. A strong mentoring program will in turn shape the values, beliefs, and assumptions of novice teachers. Hence, mentoring allows all staff members the opportunity to encourage each other to establish a collaborative, constructivist school environment.

Our goals as educators and leaders are to strive for encouraging mentoring, collaboration, learning, seeking knowledge, determining a deep understanding of work, empowering authority, and building a sense of community within the educational school setting. The mentoring process is a tool required to facilitate this goal, and mentors are the leaders who can convey the message set forth collaboratively by the leadership, teacher leaders, and chosen mentors. The effects of changing a school culture to move towards a constructivist approach can have a significant impact as not all members of a school community are willing to take this new journey and embrace change. Therefore, leaders drive this change in the right direction and mentoring allows teacher leaders a greater opportunity for spreading the message and hopefully almost all accepting the message. Manley and Hawkins sum it up this way, "Few leaders can interest their followers to become more collaborative if their relationship with faculty and staff is not built on a foundation of mutual trust and respect. The three R's of leadership are as follows: Relationships, Relationships, and Relationships. In school systems that work for students, leaders develop strong professional relationships with all constituent groups" (p. 35).

Summary

When analyzing the impact that teacher mentoring can have on school culture, there is the realization that it is essentially the values, beliefs, and assumption of educators and their leaders that shape the culture of a school building. When mentoring is supported and promoted consistently, it establishes a sense of camaraderie among the faculty. It allows colleagues to feel comfortable to communicate with each other about difficult situations. Teachers tend to be most comfortable discussing these problems with each other. Ultimately, novice teachers are learning the profession from master teachers, which may at times, be more rewarding than learning from just the administration. If teachers learn from each other, their fears may be reduced and they feel safe to make try new strategies in the classroom.

The timeless works of Smith's Advocacy Design Center framework, Schein's three levels of culture, and Popkewitz et al. IGE framework, are crucial to understanding culture. There were various aspects of these frameworks and the perspectives of the authors that have implications for practitioners. These models challenge administrative leaders, teacher leaders, and mentors to rethink how they view education and change.

Administrators are confronted with sharing and embracing their vision for all, in addition to including teacher leaders and mentors, teachers unwilling to change, community members, students, and even central office leaders. Teacher leaders and mentors are challenged in how to express viewpoints as to establish a collaborative, constructivist community and foster fellow teachers to partake in professional development opportunities and reflective practices. These trials leave leaders in a difficult predicament often when staff becomes complacent and unwilling to change. These frameworks may be helpful in the evaluation of all aspects of their building from instruction, organization, governance, and authority. Leaders must have a strong understanding of the meaning of knowing, work, and authority. Leaders need to set goals that include opportunities for communication among faculty and time to reflect upon decisions previously made.

Great leaders impact change. Hence, planned change will make the greatest impact on our staff, community, and students. There are many obstacles that leaders may face when dealing with personnel, but knowing your culture and cultivating your leaders simply leads to establishing positive change and a constructive culture

within a school. Changing attitudes and changing behaviors of a group is a grand task. The mentoring process supports a positive climate of change to promote excellence in education and encourages a collaborative learning community for all.

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Courtocopia

Student Questioning by Police at School: Should Administrators Become Involved?

By James I. Brucia, Ed.D.

Often, a school building administrator or teacher is called upon to restore order, discipline misbehaving students, counsel teachers, or calm anxious parents. In the course of a school year, these encounters usually are resolved and parties move on. Sometimes, however, additional parties such as advocates, attorneys, relatives, etc. are invited by parents and become involved on behalf of the student. Also, if there is a suspicion or charge of a crime, a police officer may arrive at school to request an interview with a student.

In these encounters, a number of questions arise: Should the student be "protected" and the interview delayed pending parent notification and permission? Do administrators cooperate with police and permit the interview in the presence of a school official? If so, how is an expected parent outrage dealt with when informed that the school permitted the questioning without notification or an opportunity to refuse, be present, or retain an attorney? If police suspect the student of a crime, should an administrator insist that police provide Miranda rights at the start of the interview? Or, should (s)he advise the student not to answer incriminating questions? Without legal assistance, how does one even realize the implications of questions asked? Judgment here is critical. If there is the sense that a student has no real choice to refuse the interview and might be considered a "captive audience," should a school official step in, end the session, and advise police to contact parents or come back with a court order?

As can be seen in this brief description, these situations can lead down unexpected pathways and administrators may find themselves in over their heads without preparation and advice beforehand. Stepping into the middle is fraught with danger. The possibility of making an error, despite good intentions on behalf of a student, may well lead to litigation against the district.

So what's a busy administrator to do? This article will provide some advice to administrators confronting these situations. More on that later. First, two cases being heard by the United States Supreme Court may be helpful in illustrating these problems.

Camreta v. Greene (Docket No. 09-1454):

In 2003, in the Bene-LaPine, Oregon school district, a child-protective-services caseworker and a deputy sheriff arrived at the elementary school and requested to interview a 9-year old female student on suspicion that she was being sexually abused by her father at home. The municipal officials requested the interview be held at school due to the sensitive nature of the case. The school, they felt, was a safe, neutral, and comfortable area rather than at home, where the activities allegedly took place and student answers would not be influenced by the presence of parent(s).

The school counselor removed the student from class and she was questioned for a two-hour period. Identified as S.G., she told investigators, during the first hour, that she was not improperly touched by her father but, in the second hour, admitted that she was. S.G. and her sister were subsequently removed from their home and S.G. was medically examined, with the mother being barred from the examination. After the investigation was completed, criminal charges against the father were dismissed.

S.G.'s mother was outraged by the whole episode and sued the counselor, school district, caseworker, and deputy sheriff. The mother claimed that removing her daughter from class for an interview with a caseworker and police without her permission or a court order, amounted to an illegal "seizure" and violated her daughter's 4th amendment rights to be protected from unwarranted searches and seizures. It was only after two hours of questioning, the mother claims, that S.G. told the investigators what they wanted to hear, that her father touched her improperly.

At the Federal District Court in Eugene, Oregon, the school district and counselor were dismissed as defendants. The mother did not appeal their dismissal so they were, in fact, removed from the suit. For the remaining case the court granted summary judgments to the caseworker and police officer that included the seizure, removal of S.G. and her sister from their home, and a medical exam which the mother was barred from witnessing. Summary judgment is a victory for one side in a lawsuit (or in one part of a lawsuit) without trial, when the judge finds, based on pleadings, depositions, affidavits, etc. that there is no genuine factual issue in the lawsuit (or in one part of the suit.)

With regard to the removal from class, the court reasoned it was truly a seizure under the 4th amendment, but objectively reasonable under the facts and circumstances of this case. The defendants were entitled to qualified immunity because no reasonable school official, counselor, or police officer would have believed their actions violated the 4th amend-

ment. Qualified immunity is granted by a judge based on a defendant's special status such as being a parent or spouse of the person suing or being a corporate or public official doing a job in good faith. Thus, at the district court level, the school officials escaped court action.

As you can imagine, S.G.'s mother was predictably outraged and she appealed the decision to the 9th Circuit Federal Court of Appeals. The circuit court carefully considered each of the summary judgments' three aspects: the removal from class without parent notification, home removal of S.G. and her sister, and the medical exam where the mother was barred.

We will spend some time commenting on the seizure aspect since this involved school officials, even though they were dismissed from the suit. The seizure occurred at school with cooperation from the guidance counselor and administration. The circuit court affirmed the summary judgment for all involved, reasoning that although S.G.'s 4th amendment rights were violated, officials involved acted in good faith when exercising their responsibilities and, thus, were entitled to qualified immunity under the facts and circumstances. There were no special circumstances at play and no imminent danger to life. But, in a clear warning to school officials, the circuit court found that S.G.'s parents did not consent to her seizure at school and they were not notified of the planned interview. The fact that the caseworker and deputy sheriff received permission from school officials to conduct the interview did not constitute a valid consent under the 4th amendment. The court felt that school officials had overstepped the limits of the in loco parentis doctrine in this context.

The court is sending a warning to school officials. Be very careful when agreeing to take students out of class and turn them over to caseworkers or police. Parent notification and the opportunity to refuse permission or seek counsel are constitutional 4th amendment rights that cannot be overlooked by school officials under in loco parentis unless there are special circumstances or valid dangers, which must then be justified when the dust clears. Municipal authorities or police cannot expect that school officials are acting for parents just because the minor is in school. Absent compelling circumstances, the rights of students and obligations of officials to secure parent permission or a court order prevail. The court found no such compelling circumstances in this case.

With regard to the home removal of S.G. and her sister and follow-up medical exam of S.G. without the mother present, the 9th circuit court reversed both decisions by the district court. This, of course, upset the caseworker and deputy sheriff. They felt that reversing these summary judgments was serious enough to tarnish their reputations and prevent them from effectively performing their responsibilities. Thus, they appealed the decision to the U.S. Supreme Court seeking to have the 9th circuit court's decision completely nullified. The High Court heard the case on March 1, 2011 and, as of this writing, we are awaiting their decision.

J.D.B. v. North Carolina (Docket No. 09-11121

In the second case, the circumstances are somewhat different but the same cautions and alerts remain. Legally, the issue involves a question of age and whether that should become a consideration if a youth is placed in custody and, thus, entitled to be informed of his/her constitutional rights under the landmark U.S. Supreme Court case, Miranda v. Arizona. This was the case where the Court set out the procedures that police must use when placing a person under arrest. These include informing the suspect that (s)he is being arrested, (s)he has the right to remain silent, that anything said can and will be used against him/her in court, that (s)he is entitled to an attorney and if (s)he cannot afford one, an attorney will be provided. The police also must ask if those rights are understood by the suspect.

J.D.B. is a 13-year old special education student. He was under suspicion by police for breaking into and entering several homes, stealing items including jewelry and a digital camera. A Durham juvenile-offenses officer and a uniformed police officer came to the middle school and were joined by an assistant principal to question J.D.B. Parents were neither notified nor present for the questioning. During the course of the interview, the assistant principal took it upon himself to urge J.D.B to "do the right thing," because the truth will come out in the end. After that encouragement, J.D.B. confessed to the thefts, his statement was then used against him at a juvenile proceeding, and he was judged to be a delinquent.

After reading through the previous case, a number of red flags and questions arise. Why weren't parents notified and allowed to be present or have an attorney present? Why did the assistant principal insert himself into a police matter and actively urge J.D.B. to admit to the crimes? Was the action by the assistant principal the correct and responsible one? When the student was placed under arrest, why weren't his Miranda rights read to him?

The case wound its way through the state courts and reached the North Carolina Supreme Court. The justices there split the decision and the majority sided with police, affirming their right to take J.D.B. into custody. The majority reasoned that if age and J.D.B.'s status as a special education student had to be taken into account regarding whether the police had to read him his Miranda rights, the process would become subjective, rather than objective as the U.S. Supreme Court set the precedents for police to do their work. The key indicator for those precedents is whether a reasonable person in the same situation, as J.D.B. in this case, would realize that he was free to leave the room during police questioning. Reasonableness is often used by judges as a criterion for deciding an issue. Coming to the conclusion that something is or is not reasonable is often itself subjective, depending on how a judge sees it. Thus, arguments an attorney uses to persuade a judge must be carefully crafted to shed the best possible light on a client's position.

In this case, J.D.B. is a 13-year old student confronted by three officials at school, a place where students

are taught they cannot leave without permission. Add to that, the assistant principal is the only familiar person in the room and is urging him to "do the right thing." In J.D.B.'s mind that familiarity and trust prevailed, and he confessed. The attorneys for J.D.B. made a point, in their brief to the U. S. Supreme Court, to highlight the minority North Carolina Supreme Court judges' position that police took advantage of the fact that J.D.B. was compelled to be in school, typically submitted to school authorities, and parents were absent.

The issue of students not forfeiting their constitutional rights was settled by the U.S. Supreme Court way back in 1969 in the landmark case, Tinker v. Des Moines, where a group of students protested the Vietnam War by wearing black armbands to school. The High Court ruled that expressing constitutional rights by students was not surrendered, just because the students were in school. Yet, it sometimes seems that police, in their energetic pursuit of an arrest, may feel free to skirt by constitutional safeguards when the suspect is a juvenile and the setting is the schoolhouse. Administrators must be especially careful when committing to actions that, while cooperative, may prove to be unconstitutional and place them and the district into liability.

In any case, the North Carolina Supreme Court decision was appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court which heard oral arguments on March 23, 2011. A decision is also expected in June.

Strategies for School Administrators

The decisions when rendered by the High Court in these two cases, hopefully, will contain guidance for educators and police with regard to their responsibilities to provide appropriate due process information to students, parents, and school officials when police show up at school to question a student. As can be seen from the discussion above, great care must be used by administrators before injecting themselves into situations with legal consequences. Their motives for doing so may be well meaning but the results may, indeed, backfire. As we said earlier, what's a busy administrator to do? Here are a few strategies which may be helpful if a situation presents itself whereby an administrator is faced with choosing actions which may have serious, legal implications. The strategies cover both short and long term suggestions.

- ***Know Your School and District Policies***

Each district should have a comprehensive set of written policies which have been approved by the Board of Education and represent positions and procedures the district expects to take in situations where conflicts may arise. Become familiar with these policies, especially those dealing with situations you are most likely to encounter in your positional responsibilities. If there are areas not covered by policy, and you know they need addressing, speak to supervisors and make them aware that these areas need to be placed into policy statements. Many state school boards associations provide services to aid districts in putting together, updating, or refining policy statements. Whenever legal entanglements arise, among the first questions asked by attorneys, judges, etc. is, "What is the district's policy regarding this issue?" The answers, "We don't have a policy," or "I don't know," may lead to results that can be very troubling.

- ***Consult With Your School District's Attorneys***

Almost all districts have attorneys or legal firms on retainer to advise them on appropriate legal steps to follow during conflicts. Serious, complex cases may require the attorney to be present and represent the school officials or the district in a legal proceeding. Some districts restrict who may call the attorney(s). Find out who, in your district, is permitted to call. If you become involved in an issue, ask that person to call for advice or give you permission to make the call. School attorneys are very helpful in putting issues into perspective, providing assurances for steps to be taken, and answering your questions.

- ***Hold Regular Meetings With Colleagues to Discuss Cases***

Administrators who handle discipline, parent issues, situations involving probation, child protective services, etc. need to meet on a regular basis to discuss cases, compare notes, raise concerns, and support each other. Invite the school district attorney to meet with the group, if not on a regular basis, then when a complex legal issue arises that needs explaining and clarification. If your school or district does not have this type of group meeting regularly, start a group up. The confidence you will feel interacting with those who have similar responsibilities will help you greatly as you go about your daily tasks.

- ***Attend Bar Association Meetings and Other Legal Conferences Concerning School Law***

Many county bar associations hold annual or semi-annual meetings on developments in school law. These meetings are informative and provide a wealth of information on recent cases, changes in the law, and occurrences at the state and national level which can be very helpful. They may also allow you to interact with the school district attorneys at a more personal level. Find out where and when these meetings are held, and attend.

- ***Do Not Go It Alone***

In the complex world of legal issues, don't try to be the Lone Ranger, bringing truth and justice to America by yourself. This includes your supervisors in the building or at district level. Share what is happening with them. Often, they have had encounters with the same student or parent with whom you may be having difficulty. They can share their experiences which may prove helpful to you. Unlike hospitals or ambulances, decisions in education are rarely life-and-death requiring instant actions. There is time to call someone to seek advice. Do not become intimidated into taking a hasty action which could backfire and involve the district in a legal action. School districts have many resources and an array of specialists either in their employ or on retainer that can and will help you. Call them, consult them, and use them.

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BOOK REVIEW

DESIGNING SCHOOL SYSTEMS FOR ALL STUDENTS: A Toolbox to Fix America's Schools

by Robert J. Manley and Richard J. Hawkins

Reviewed by Stanley H. Friedland, Ed.D.

The first question to be asked in reviewing a book with such a formidable title is whether the authors have the width and breadth of credentials to tackle and do full justice to such a challenging task? I'm pleased to report that they do. Having worked in education on their home turf of Long Island for some 50 years, I am very familiar with their outstanding reputations as innovative and dynamic school leaders. Each has been a classroom teacher, a building administrator and principal, a strong superintendent of schools and now a professor at the graduate education level.

The next question is whether they, having been a part of the public school scene for so long, can offer a truly critical evaluation of the deficiencies and weaknesses of the programs, people and policies that have contributed to the consistently weak results of our nation's public schools? Once again, I'm please to respond in the affirmative.

In the Introduction to the book, the authors present a strong indictment naming specific leadership groups and their practices and motives that have held back the changes necessary to improve our schools in any significant way. For example, the authors cite the common practice of many school districts that over-publicize the achievements of their best students, while being satisfied with the mediocre results from the vast majority of each graduating class. These districts continue to be driven by the prevailing test based accountability that still dominates the practices, programs and methods of school personnel at all levels. Such practices only serve to maintain the status quo of overall mediocrity.

The major obstacles to "school re-design" are examined critically and candidly by the authors and they offer specific "tools" to achieve the title of their book: Designing School Systems For All Students. But, that is not the only value of the book to the reader. The authors are experienced enough to know that it is one thing to identify what has to be done to improve our schools, but it's another thing to actually know how to accomplish this daunting task.

They readily understand that "***process is product"*** and for every school area they identify for required improvement, they fully detail the processes needed to arrive at the desired product or goal. Having been successful principals and school superintendents for many years, and having worked with their diverse communities and boards of education, they present innovative and sound methods that unite their publics into the collaborative approaches needed to achieve effective new designs.

Each chapter of the book is presented in this dual manner. The importance of the area is explained; its current weaknesses are explicitly identified; the new directions in which it needs to go are detailed and justified; and then the HOW of actually getting there is presented clearly and forcefully.

While most books of this genre are quite good with the diagnosis and prognosis for the major problems facing America's schools, this book not only does that at a top level, but it also presents a realistic road-map for navigating the difficult path to actually reach the elusive goals of real change and improvement.

Another desirable feature of this book is that it accomplishes all of the above with succinctness and brevity. Just 150 pages long, the authors readily understand the daily time pressures that all educational leaders are under and they've crafted their book accordingly. There are only seven chapters, but a quick look at their titles will let a prospective reader know that the authors have identified the most pivotal areas essential to meaningful school change. They seem to be saying, "We'd rather give you the meat of the matter, succinctly but substantively, than taking you over hill and dale just to elongate the book."

These seven chapter titles are as follows:

- *Getting the Curriculum Right*
- *School District and Building Leadership*
- *Diagnostics, Prescription and Assessments for Success*
- *Planning for Change: Vision and Core Beliefs*
- *Student Engagement in the Learning Process*
- *How to Govern Schools Effectively*
- *Character Education and its Impact on Student Achievement*

I have read many books of this type during my 50 plus years in education and most of them have been well worthwhile. This book is certainly the best that I've read in a very long time. It really hits the mark of its title because it is indeed a veritable "toolbox to fix America's schools" and I recommend it most enthusiastically to anyone who is interested in finding out how to do so.

Designing School Systems for All Students, by Robert J. Manley and Richard Hawkins, Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Baltimore, Maryland.

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Sincerely,

Joseph J. Del Rosso

Dr. Joseph J. Del Rosso
Executive Director, SCOPE