Journal for Leadership and Instruction

AN INTERNATIONAL PEER-REVIEWED RESEARCH JOURNAL FOR EDUCATIONAL PROFESSIONALS

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Practical Research for the Educational Community

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The Journal for Leadership and Instruction is an international peer reviewed publication that is published twice each year. Authors should follow the APA Manual 7 guidelines. The review of related literature should be written in the past tense. No article will be accepted if it is more than 10 pages (double spaced) long. Suggested changes are the responsibility of the author. For the Spring issue, we ask that all submissions arrive by March 1, 2021.

How to Submit Articles:
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The Editorial Board of the Journal for Leadership and Instruction has identified the following thematic interests for the 2021 issues:

1. Early Childhood Development
2. Social and Emotional Development and Mental Health
3. School Finance
4. Culturally Responsive and Sustaining Education
5. Media Literacy
6. Equity in Student Achievement
7. School Safety
8. Diversity in the School Workforce

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Editor's Perspective

Systems

This pandemic of Covid 19 challenged every educational institution across the globe. State departments of education relaxed regulations and testing regimes. School district leaders, school boards, union leaders for school personnel worked together to achieve a consensus about how to proceed with teaching and learning, building management, cleaning and feeding children. Multiple levels of adaptations were required depending upon whether the school was in a hot spot for the virus, a densely populated area, a more rural or suburban area or even a small community suffering a local spread of the virus. Many schools and colleges moved quickly to distant learning formats. Colleges had the infrastructure in place for many years to expand all courses to a distant learning format. Many K-12 school systems had to adapt as quickly as possible. They had to rely on the ingenuity of their teachers, administrators, and support staff to meet the basic needs of children. School personnel learned through experience what was working and what was not working. Nine months into the pandemic as winter approaches here, we know that indoor gatherings help to spread the virus. We know that wearing masks, keeping a social distance, and washing hands frequently depresses the spread of the virus.

As schools and colleges adapt to their own specific conditions, we appreciate all that these institutions accomplished to expand learning options by creating hybrid in class and at home learning processes, fully online classrooms, reducing density of students in classrooms, providing protective gear to all staff and ensuring as safe transportation options as possible.

In interviews I conducted with college professors, high school teachers, middle school teachers and elementary school teachers, I learned how difficult it is to keep students engaged online and how much more work and how time consuming it is to prepare lessons online or in hybrid format. One of the more common themes all educators raise is how challenging it is to keep students engaged in learning in this digital environment. Many researchers have identified one shared characteristic of teachers who have success with many diverse students; the teachers communicate they care about each student and the students feel that the teachers care about each student personally. Some teachers use a variety of chat groups to augment their classes. Some teachers create a town hall meeting at the beginning of each class. Some teachers dedicate one class day a week to student concerns.

The most frequent complaint I hear from parents and students is when there is a lack of personal attention to students. One parent told me that his son in college received two video lectures a week with two assignments to be completed by Friday night. No other contact with the professor occurred. An elementary teacher, on the other hand, who has 25 students in a hybrid class with students attending in person two days each week, said that she could not keep up with the number of parents texting and emailing her each day and night. She said she had to restrict them to one communication each week unless there was some critical issue related to the health or safety of the child.

What we have learned is that public service whether it be in policing, fire-fighting, nursing, medical interventions, transportation, waste removal, teaching or managing service in civil institutions, the jobs are not easy in the best of times. We, the public, who rely on these services that many of our neighbors provide, must offer our support and respect to our neighbors who care for us.

In this issue of our journal, we provide the work of scholars with important insights into teaching and learning. Our first article deals with the theme of accelerated learning as the better approach to teaching that uses student assets to expand learning. The second article addresses the issues around the testing and optout of testing issues within k-12 schools. The third article deals with the efforts of school districts to use summer intervention programs to reduce student regression in academic skills. The fourth article deals with the challenges of the co-teaching model in which a general subject teacher and a special education teacher team together to instruct general education and special need students in the same classroom. The fifth article examines how curriculum development and academic performance interface. The sixth article examines how institutional culture that addresses employee sense of belonging influences employee happiness The seventh article in our section From the Field examines how judicial decisions affect school policy and practice. In addition, we have two fine book reviews that deal with the future of education.

The co-editors of our Journal are pleased to announce that Professor Rene Parmar, St. John's University, School of Education, will join the Co-editor Team for the 2021 fall issue and lead the invitation for articles related to leadership and instruction pertaining to special education issues. Please send your submissions to ccosme@scopeonline.us by August 1, 2021.

Please keep safe and we will overcome this pandemic with the help of science, patience and care for one another. Have a Peaceful New Year.

Robert J. Manley,
Editor-in-Chief

Accelerate, Don't Remediate: An Instructional Framework for Meeting the Needs of the Most Vulnerable Students after COVID School Closures

by Melissa Lambert, M.Ed., and Joseph Sassone, MA

Abstract

Research on seasonal learning and time in and out of school provided the foundation for preliminary projections that students would return in fall 2020 with approximately 63-68% of the learning gains in reading relative to a typical school year and with 37-50% of the learning gains in math (Kuhfeld, Soland, Tarasawa, Johnson, Ruzek, & Liu, 2020). This is detrimental for all students, but potentially catastrophic for those who were already academically behind grade-level. Responding to this unprecedented crisis will take more than the typical academic remediation for students, there is a need to improve access to rigorous, grade-level academics with targeted support to accelerate learning. In this article the authors provide a narrative review of research related to the impact of COVID-19 school closures on student achievement and what it means for educators. Findings were applied to an instructional framework that incorporates critical considerations toward equitably serving the most vulnerable students.

Introduction

There is no precedent for what school districts face following the COVID-19 global pandemic school closures. Impacts on student achievement are far reaching particularly for the most vulnerable and marginalized students including, students with disabilities, students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE), lower income-socioeconomic status (SES), and English language learners (ELL). Students spent nearly double the amount of time away from classroom learning in 2020 in comparison with a typical 10-week summer break (Kurtz, 2020).

While COVID learning interruptions are unprecedented in modern times, existing research on the impacts of missed instruction due to chronic absenteeism, summer learning loss (learning slide), economic impacts, and catastrophic event closures informed projections of potential learning impacts due to the pandemic (Kuhfeld & Tarasawa, 2020; Perry, 2020). Known broadly as "learning loss" researchers have studied contributing factors to "unfinished learning" for decades (Cooper, Nye, Charlton, Lindsay, & Greathouse, 1996). Unfinished learning refers to concepts and skills students have not yet mastered - rather than deficit terminology such as "loss" and "gap," unfinished learning suggests that with more targeted support, students can and will achieve mastery (Council of Great City Schools [CSGS], 2020).

Findings from research on unfinished learning hold implications for schools in the current crisis. In order to also integrate emergent themes from work specifically related to COVID-19 impacts, we conducted a narrative review of published and grey literature. Key findings from this and earlier literature were used to develop a framework for responding to unfinished learning.

Method

We conducted a narrative review of articles and reports on the impacts of the COVID-19 school closures on students (K-12). We searched electronic databases (Institute of Educational Sciences (IES) What Works Clearinghouse (2020), ERIC, Sage Pub, and ERIC) from April 2020 until August 2020. We carried out the search using free text terms and Boolean operators; COVID-19 and School Closures [All Fields] OR Instructional Impacts of COVID-19 on Diverse Learners; [All Fields] OR COVID Unfinished Learning OR COVID Learning Loss [All Fields] OR COVID Learning Slide [All Fields] OR COVID Instructional Recovery [All Fields]. This search strategy and terms were modified for other databases as appropriate. Twenty-two articles and reports were included from guidance published in White Papers, Policy Briefs, and Reports from the Annenberg Foundation at Brown University, Rand Corporation, Brookings Institute, Council of Great City Schools, Chiefs for Change, Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), The New Teacher Project (TNTP), Learning Policy Institute (LPI), Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA), National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NAP), and the National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment (NCIEA).

Key Findings

Impact of COVID School Closures and Unfinished Learning

The Annenberg Institute at Brown University defines the "loss of students' educational gains" over the summer as the "summer slide". Three trends are consistent across seasonal learning research findings: achievement typically slows or declines over the summer months, declines tend to be steeper for math than for reading, and the extent (proportionally of loss) increases in the upper grades (Kuhfeld & Tarasawa, 2020; Polikoff, 2020). Researchers used summer slide research, combined with the time lost during the school year due to the pandemic, to determine learning impact projections. These results were analyzed from a national sample of five million students in Grades 3-8 who took NWEA Measures of Academic Performace (MAP)® Growth™ assessments as they compared typical growth trajectories across a standard-length school year to learning projections that assumed students were out of school for the last three months of the 2019-20 school year (Kuhfeld & Tarasawa, 2020). Results estimated students exited the 2019-20 school year with roughly 63-68% of the learning gains in reading and 37-50% of the average gains in mathematics-compared to a typical year (Kuhfeld, Soland, Tarasawa, Johnson, Ruzek, Liu, 2020). Additional range projections report outlined variability by subject (reading and mathematics) for 4th and 6th grade using the Rasch UnIT (RIT), to measure student achievement and growth **(Figure(s) 1-2)**. These forecasts assumed students lost instructional gains at the same rate over a typical summer since mid-March, when school closures commenced.

The shaded areas display the distribution in potential outcomes between students who showed the steepest decline in summer learning (25th percentile) and those who showed no change, or small gains (75th percentile). In mathematics, the majority of students show the learning slide over the extended closure and summer period

Figure 1. Estimated variation in achievement range between very high and very low performing students in reading   Source: Brookings Institute & Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA), 2020.
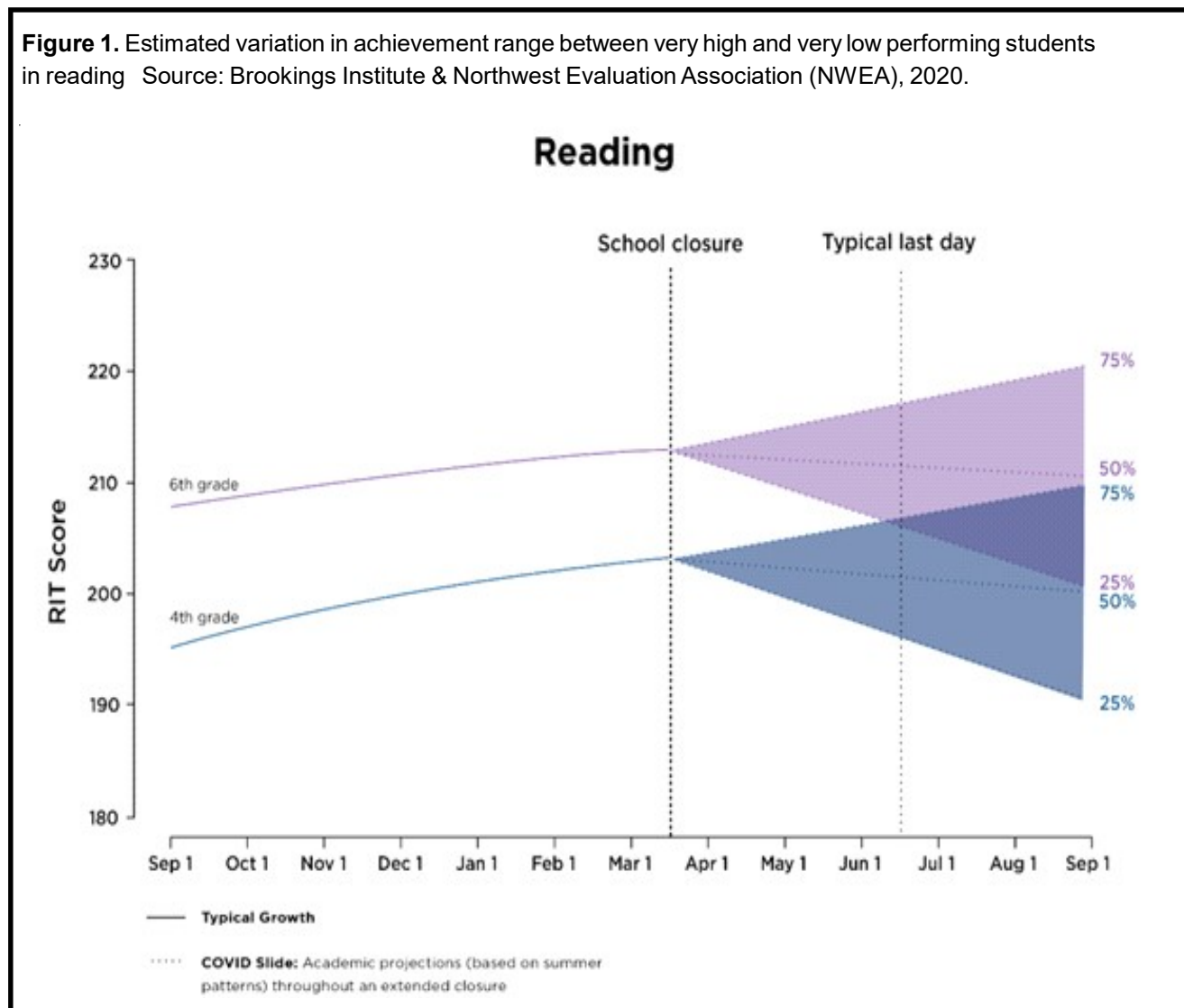
while reading presents a wide spread of potential outcomes (Kuhfeld, et al., 2020). Though extreme, these projections assumed students did not have access to instruction during school closures, for many marginalized students, this is the reality.

Instructional Implications

Unfinished learning has the protentional to show up differently across grades and subjects, with intensive recovery needs concentrated in the early grades and among already struggling students (Council of Great City Schools [CGCS], 2020). School closures of this scale can potentially have long term effects. A recent study found that teacher strikes in Argentina had a negative impact on the incomes of students, now in their 30's, who had lost 80 to 90 days of school as children. Those deficits extended to the children of those students, presenting a generational impact. That research also suggested that lost learning in early grades had the biggest impact (Jaume & Willén, 2017). The recovery process for unfinished learning would

be in addition to the new knowledge and skills aligned to the standard expectations of the current grade level. This requires growth above and beyond one year's worth. All students need support to access rigorous and challenging work, yet despite support for standards, marginalized students already lacked access to grade-level work, and remediation programs that supplanted regular instruction prevented students from learning new, grade-level content (The New Teacher Project [TNTP], 2018).

Across the field there is consensus around the importance of responding to recent unfinished learning with the following recommendations and guidance (1) prioritize grade-level content and instructional rigor and depth of instruction, with support (rather than pace) (2) maintain the inclusion of each and every learner and (3) identify and address gaps in learning through instruction, avoiding the misuse of standardized testing to place students into high or low ability groups or provide low levels of instructional rigor to lower performing students, and (4) focus on the commonalities that students share in this time of crisis

Figure 2. Estimated variation in achievement range between very high and very low performing students in mathematics Source: Brookings Institute & Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA), 2020.
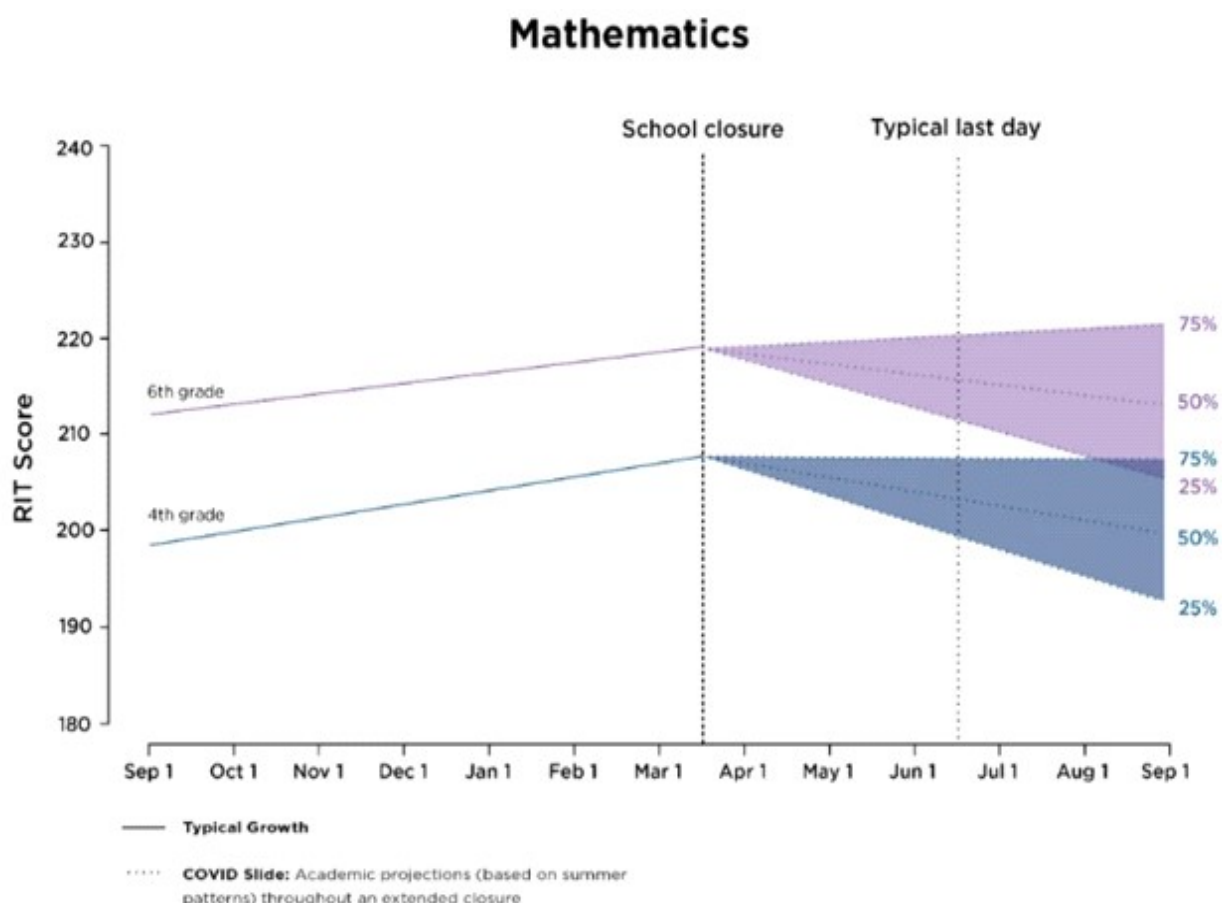
(Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Council of Chief State School Officers [CCSSO], 2020; CGCS 2020; Kuhfeld, et al., 2020).

Implications for the Most Vulnerable Learners

While school closures have impacted all students, the most vulnerable students will be disproportionately affected by school closures. Unequal access to learning during the pandemic further exacerbated the vast differences between learning opportunities for the most vulnerable learners (i.e., students with disabilities, SLIFE, lower-SES, and ELLs).

Too often, educators are tempted to rely on traditional remediation, which involves administering diagnostic assessments to identify deficits to provide below grade-level instruction for unfinished learning (CCSCO 2020; CGCS 2020). However, there is significant evidence that this remediation approach compounds unfinished learning by taking time away from core instruction and thus further isolates marginalized students, impeding access to rigorous grade-level content. Often delivered in "pull-out" time (removal from standards-based instruction) is used to reteach basic-skills work with minimal real-world relevance. This form of remediation is based on the misconception that in order to learn any new information, students must learn all the information they previously missed. This means missing out on rigorous, engaging coursework, and learning alongside proficient peers (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2018).

Remediation was found to have few benefits and many risks where less able students, when segregated from their more able peers, are at risk of being taught an inferior curriculum and consigned to low tracks for their entire academic career (Molnar, 2002). Moreover, review of the literature showed that giving students below-grade-level content stigmatizes learners and reinforces inequities which not only negatively impacts immediate recovery, but also diminishes access to grade-level work in the future (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; CGCS 2020; TNTP 2018).

Instead of delaying access to grade-level work for students who are below-grade level, educators should provide opportunities to accelerate learning (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Rand Corporation 2020; TNTP 2018). The process described includes teaching concepts and skills in the purposeful context of immediate (and future) learning. Heterogenous group instruction with targeted (small group) support aimed at accessing grade-level rigor academic opportunities for all students, especially struggling students, alongside their more successful peers (CCSSO, 2020; CSGS, 2020; TNTP 2020).

Research findings showed that heterogenous inclusion is a strong predictor of academic growth for students with disabilities-the greater the level of inclusion (80% or more of the day), the greater the rate of academic growth (Hehir, 2014). Also, four randomized controlled trials conducted on reading interventions for struggling English learners showed that providing small-group support in literacy and English language development benefitted learners' access heterogenous grade-level academics (Gersten, Baker, Shanahan, Linan-Thompson, Collins, & Scarcella, 2007). Recent findings also showed ELLs develop academic language during content area instruction in meaningful and motivating situations along with English proficient peers. English learners develop the concepts and skills needed to master grade-level coursework (e.g., providing middle school ELLs with materials at the same grade level as that of their peers) is important to enable them to meet the requirements for deep understanding of academic texts in English, as long as such instruction is coupled with evidence-based methods that support ELLs in comprehending the core content (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2017). Recommendations related to these studies call for ensuring English language learner support programs are implemented effectively and directly prepare students for grade-level tasks (Goldenber, 2008).

A middle school longitudinal study examined the effects of providing an accelerated mathematics curriculum in heterogeneously grouped middle school classes in a diverse suburban school district. A quasi-experimental cohort design was used to evaluate subsequent completion of advanced high school math courses as well as academic achievement. Results showed completion of advanced math courses increased significantly in all groups, including minority students, and students of low socioeconomic status (Burris, Heubert, & Levin, 2006). Providing access to rigorous and engaging grade-level instruction with targeted small groups support led to successful new learning. Students received both instruction in prior knowledge and prerequisite skills.

Furthermore, with the objective of grade-level learning the recommendations emphasized that educators commit to redesigning assessments to emphasize purpose and increase applied learning and complex problem-solving (CCSSO, 2020). Informal formative assessment information was used to identify students' current thinking, skills, language, and ideas, allowing teachers to provide students with the specific supports to be able to engage with new information. Tailored acceleration strategies used formative assessments to explicitly address learning associated with skills that were meant to be previously learned. Educators are advised to avoid using unnecessary tests and data as gatekeepers for grade-level instruction, instead they should link formative assessments to grade-level concepts to accelerate progress which was shown to be more effective than remedial courses (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; CCSSO 2020).

Figure 3. Sample Instructional Framework to Meet the Needs of the Most Vulnerable Students after COVID School Closures.   Source: Fostering Quality Schools, 2020.
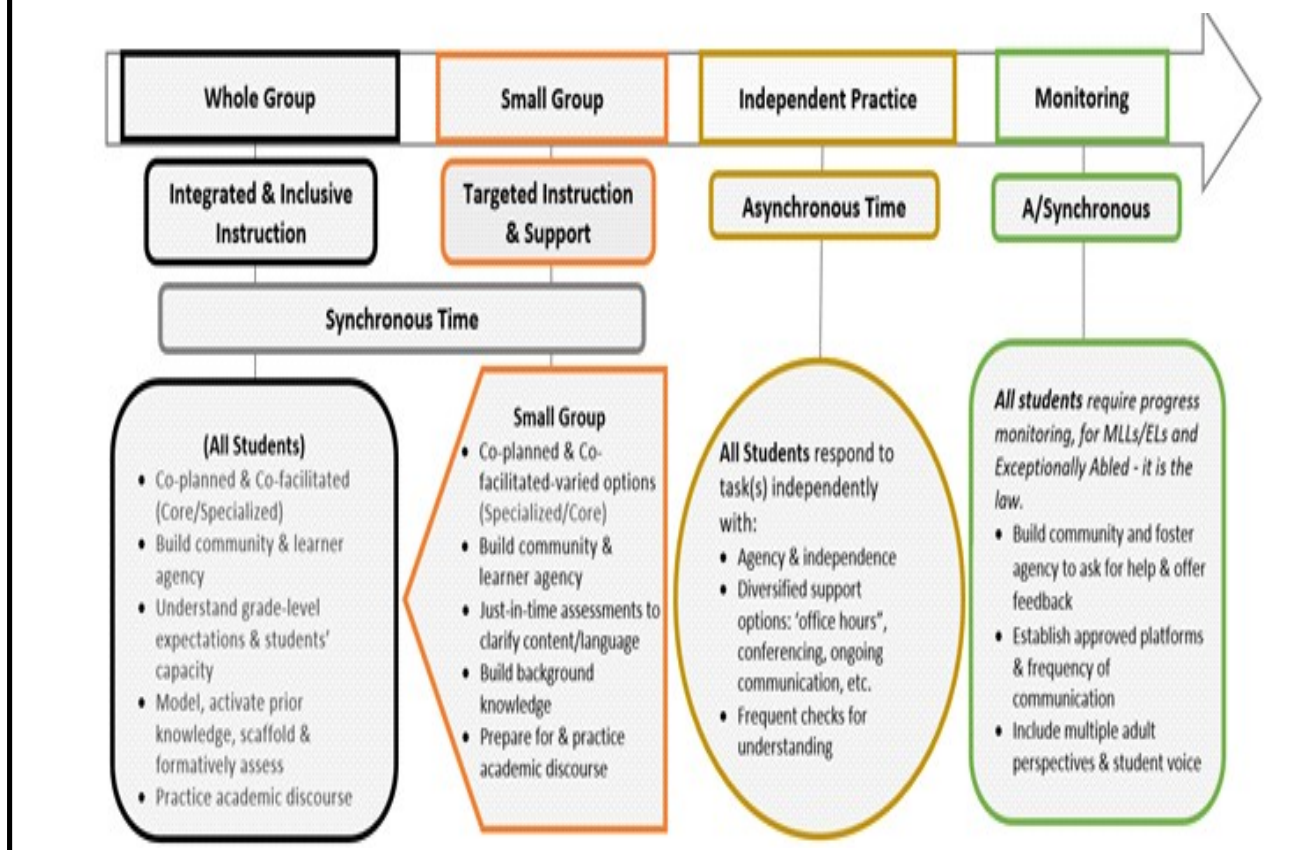
Instructional Recommendations

A Sample Instructional Framework to Meet the Needs of the Most Vulnerable Students

Adopt an instructional framework to exemplify access to grade-level academics with targeted support to accelerate learning opportunities. Developed to support and accelerate learning in a hybrid and/or remote learning environment, this sample framework clarifies how inclusive and integrated instruction can be achieved through a balance of synchronous and asynchronous delivery **(Figure 3)**. The framework was based on the principles of co-teaching (instruction that is co-planned and when possible, co-facilitated) in tandem with targeted support. Structured grade-level instruction must maintain clear learning goals and success criteria, extended and ongoing formative assessment, targeted support with feedback, ongoing family communication, and teacher collaboration (Black & Wiliam, 2018). Conditions and capacities that lead to results include a high-quality curriculum, approved communication platforms, and a collaborative team of teachers who take an assets-based approach. Heterogenous instruction includes the most vulnerable students learning alongside their grade-level proficient peers (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020).

Conclusion

Review of the literature revealed further implications beyond academics - students are grappling with both the trauma from the pandemic and the results of racial discrimination clear throughout the course of the pandemic (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). Several reports asserted educators address these critical issues and simultaneously provide students with specialized learning needs the same challenging work and cognitive demands as their peers.

There is a pressing need for planning longitudinal studies and implementing an evidence-based plan of action to address the educational needs of the most vulnerable students affected by COVID-19 school closures - now and post-pandemic. Education policy reform, with direct and virtual collaborative networks of educators, education specialists, families, and communities - are deemed necessary.

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Towards an Understanding of the Testing Opt-Out Movement: Why Parents Choose to Opt-Out or Opt-In

By Margaret Paladino, Ed.D.

Abstract

The opt-out movement, a grassroots coalition of opposition to high-stakes tests that are used to sort students, evaluate teachers, and rank schools, has the largest participation on Long Island, New York, where approximately 50% of the eligible students in grades three to eight opted out of the English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics tests in 2019 ("Projects: ELA and Math Opt-Outs 2016-2019," 2019). Quantitative research has shown a racial disparity between parents who opted out and opted in with White, middle class parents participating in the opt-out movement at greater rates than Latinx, Black, and Asian parents (Au, 2017; Bennett, 2016; Hildebrand, 2017; Klein, 2016; Murphy, 2017; Phi Delta Kappa & Gallup Poll, 2017; Pizmony-Levy & Green Saraisky, 2016; Ryan, 2016; Tompson, Benz, & Agiesta, 2013).

Parents are powerful policy actors that influence policy at the district and school level (Bakeman, 2018). This study has important implications for state legislation that supports a more equitable assessment and accountability system-one that does not undermine the student and teacher relationship. In addition, one that reports reliable individual growth of the students. Providing an equitable system that does not put undue pressure on low-income districts of color to raise scores or get sanctioned. Crafting an accountability system that fosters teaching and learning grounded in comprehensive educational pedagogy instead of test prep materials for corporate profit.

This study yielded three major findings. First, the districts' messaging about the state testing and parent's right to opt out was reflected in the opt-out rates. The high opt-out district disseminated the most information about the testing and parents' rights to opt out. Meanwhile, the low opt-out district held pep rallies and pizza challenges to incentivize opting in. Second, although the opt-out movement's original aim was to improve public school education for the greater good, the parents interviewed in this study made individualistic choices for their child about opting out or opting in based on the information they had access to from the district and social networks of information, as well as their philosophies of parenting and education. Finally, regardless of parent involvement levels, race/ethnicity, and socio-economic status, parents' reasons for opting out or opting in were based on superficial reasoning and were more similar than different across the three districts.

Statement of the Problem

The number of students who opt out of the NYS tests are high for Long Island, NY, and as a whole, the numbers do not represent all districts equally and all people equally. Across New York State, there are districts with opt-out rates that fall within the range of 10% to 79% (Harris, 2015; "Projects: ELA and Math Opt-Outs 2016-2019," 2019). These statistics give insight into the breadth and frequency of opting out across districts but fail to meaningfully describe the types of families engaging with this movement. In fact, opt-out rates follow clear racial and socioeconomic lines and are not representative of the diversity of New York State and Long Island. The question remains, do all parents have the same information and opportunity to make an informed decision to participate or not participate in the opt-out movement?

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine how parents in high, medium, and low opt-out districts made their decision to opt out or opt into the ELA and math tests in the fourth and fifth-grade. It also explored how superintendents and principals made sense of their opt-out rates in their respective districts and how each district's procedures and policies that are in place, if any, regarding information about testing and opting out influenced the process.

Theoretical Framework

The framework of the study included social movement theory, social capital theory, and rational choice theory to provide insight as to how a movement is propelled forward, who is included and excluded, and how the decision to participate is made. Christiansen's (2009) four-stage model of social movements was utilized to examine the social movement theory and to apply the key components

of the theory to the opt-out movement. Bourdieu's social capital theory (1973, 1984) was used to understand how parents access information about the opt-out movement, and rational choice theory was utilized to examine how parents made their decisions and what components are considered when making their decision rational (Abell, 1992; Coleman & Fararo, 1992; Mooney-Marini, 1992; Münch, 1992; Scheff, 1992).

Methods

This study is a qualitative phenomenological multi-case study that utilized an inquiry-based research design and a constructivist worldview with a purposive sample of three suburban school districts with a high, a medium, and a low opt-out rate. For a qualitative multi-case study, Creswell (1998) recommended five to 25 participants, and this study included three superintendents, four principals, and 52 parents (n=59). The inquiry-based research design was in-depth, face-to-face, semi-structured, 30-60-minute interviews collected over a period of six months that began in late September 2018 with the superintendents, followed by the building principals and then the parents, which concluded in late March 2019. In addition to the interviews, fieldnotes obtained from attendance at PTA and PTSA meetings as well as school-based programs added to the data collection.

Setting

Interviews were conducted in three school districts located on Long Island, New York. One district reported a high opt-out rate, one a medium opt-out rate, and the other a low opt-out rate. The superintendent interviews took place at the central administrative office in each district, principals' interviews were conducted at their school office, and parent interviews at public libraries and coffee shops within each neighborhood. See **Table 1** for district demographics. To ensure confidentiality, all names including districts, schools, administrators, and parents were assigned a pseudonym.

Research Questions

1. What does it mean to be a fourth and fifth-grade parent in a high, medium, or low opt-out district?

2. What are the stated reasons parents give for opting or not opting their child out of the New York State tests in high, medium, and low districts?

   a. How do these parents receive their information about the New York State tests and their options to opt their child out of the tests?

   b. According to Christiansen's model, how does each of the three districts opt-out movement correspond to the four-stages?

3. How do the high opt-out, medium opt-out, and low-opt out districts communication strategies and responses to parents differ regarding the state tests?

Findings

The data collected revealed three main findings: a) parents make their decision to opt out or opt in based on the information they have access to from the district or social networks, b) Latinx, immigrant families may not be able to access the social capital of the school community and are

Table 1
District Demographics

	Ashbury SD	Butler SD	Culvert SD
Opt Out 2018 ELA & Math	>50%	30-40%	<20%
Total Population	3,570	1,890	3,300
Ethnicity	Predominately White	Most Prevalent Latinx	Majority Latinx
ELL Students	1-5%	5-10%	25-30%
Special Education	10-15%	15-20%	10-15%
Economically Disadvantaged	10-15%	45-50%	65-70%

Note. Demographical data for Table 1 from New York State Education Department *https://data.nysed.gov*
Opt-out rates from *Newsday https://projects.newsday.com/databases/long-island/ela-opt-out-2019/*
*Percentages presented in a range to ensure confidentiality

not always aware of their right to opt out of testing, and c) although parents cite the original reasons from the opt-out movement when making their decisions, the reasons they gave for opting out or opting in were mostly superficial and individualistic.

Parents as decision-makers. Parents make their decision to opt out or opt in based on the information they have access to from their district or social networks. In the Ashbury district, opt-out rates are high and the stakes are low for them. The district has a middle to upper socioeconomic status (SES), is a predominantly White district (see Table 1), and the superintendent freely shares his opinion about the unreliability of the NYS tests. Parents are aware of his stance, as Lori, a White opt-out parent, said, "Superintendent Kent made it clear that he was not a believer in this particular test."

On the other hand, the Butler district reported a diverse community with the most prevalent population of Latinx families and a middle SES (see Table 1). The Butler district had medium opt-out rates without high or low-stakes attached to the scores. The superintendent of the Butler district does not share his view of the test or any information about opting out and takes a neutral stance regarding the opt-out movement as a whole." Unlike the Ashbury district, parents in the Butler district are on their own to research opting out. Natalie, a White opt-in parent, remarked, "The level of discussion in my district is not the same as other surrounding districts."

In the Culvert district with a low SES and a majority population of Latinx, immigrant families (see Table 1), the opt-out rate is low and the stakes attached to the test scores are high. The district does not give out information about parents' rights to opt out, but they do give a substantial amount of information about the test content. They offer pizza party incentives to take the tests, and out of the three districts, Culvert is the only one that participates in test prep with purchased materials from private companies. Similar to the Butler district, parents in the Culvert district are on their own to research opting out. Helena, a Latina opt-out parent, stated, "It's just like kind of informing us, okay the state tests are happening this week, but there's no mention 'Do you want your kids to take it or not?'"

Breach in communication. The findings revealed that Latinx, immigrant families may not be able to access the social capital of the school community and may not be aware of their right to opt out of the testing. This finding resonated in the Butler and Culvert districts who had a more prevalent Latinx, immigrant community as compared to the Ashbury district. Both the administrators and the parents in the Butler and Culvert districts were aware that there was a segment of their population that is not involved and may be uninformed. Tina, a White opt-in parent in the Butler district, stated, "We have a lot of ESL children, so their parents are not involved in the day-to-day PTA stuff." Superintendent Simmons of the Butler district also commented, "We do have a segment of our population which is new to the country, new to education,

new to learning experiences, so they're not as involved in that process yet as others may be." PTA meetings in the Butler district confirm that parent attendance is lacking as compared to the meetings in the Ashbury district.

Over the past two years, the Culvert district has experienced an increase in Latinx, immigrant families in the community. A common theme that ran through the data collected in the Culvert district to explain the low opt-out rate is the absence of these families at school meetings due to the number of Spanish dominant speakers. Although Culvert offers auditory devices to Spanish-speakers, and they have a translator present at their meetings, attendance is not representative of the district population. Maria, a Latina opt-in parent, said, "Maybe more parents would attend different meetings if they understood what was going on." Superintendent Iams of the Culvert district attributed their low opt-out rates to the Latinx community and explained, "I would also attribute it to our high immigration population. With 67% Hispanic, not all are immigrants, however, they may be first or second-generation immigrants where their parents may not be English speakers and may not understand the whole opt out movement."

Individualistic decision. The data disclosed the parents' reasons for opting out or opting in and how and why they made their decision. The opt-out movement began as a call for parents to take back their autonomy as decision-makers for their child's education. Although some of the parents interviewed mentioned the political aspect of the opt-out agenda, none of them cited any of those talking points as their reason for opting out or opting in. For the most part, parents' decisions were mostly superficial and individualistic. For the parents interviewed, unnecessary stress and anxiety, tests do not count, and the scores used to evaluate teachers were their top reasons in preference order. Some of the parents interviewed had a child with an Individual Education Plan (IEP), which played a role in their decision. Lidia, a Latina opt-in parent, said, "It's what is best for my child, and it may not be what's best for everybody else's." Some parents discussed the decision-making process with their child. Carol, a White opt-in parent, explained, "I've always based my choice on how my kids felt that day. What do you want to do?" For some of the parents in the study, if their child did not show signs of anxiety or were capable students, parents opted them in. Alma, a Latina opt-in parent, stated, "She was comfortable taking the test." Other opt-in parents stated that testing is a part of life and school, so it is good practice for future tests, while other opt-in parents said they wanted the objective data.

Implications for Policy and Practice

For the opt-out organizers, when parents choose to create an impact on the state, they should be more inclusive. Some of the parents in the three districts were aware of the Latinx, immigrant population in their district and the possible challenges they may have as Spanish-dominant speakers, but they are not offering an option to promote inclusion. Next, educational practice should be

aligned with educational philosophy rather than constraints of testing. The first step is to decouple the high-stakes associated with the tests, as tests should be viewed as one indicator of a child's academic achievement and not used to evaluate teachers, sort students, or rank schools. Doing so would increase valuable teaching time and reduce time spent on test prep and money spent on the test prep materials. Administrators and teachers in low-performing districts, like Culvert, are under pressure to raise low-test scores to avoid state oversight, and they hold pep rallies, offer pizza parties, and other incentives to persuade students to take the tests. In addition, low SES districts with diverse populations, like Culvert, are forced to exchange progressive educational pedagogy for skill and drill test prep to raise test scores to avoid state intervention. Districts with the greatest need for educational resources to improve the quality of education are confronted with using those funds for test prep materials.

Lastly, district administrators would benefit from expanded efforts into knowing the community. Administrators in the three districts are aware of the lack of attendance at school-based meetings and events by the Latinx, immigrant population in their district, yet they do not offer any outreach programs that involve the community leaders to lend support and oppotunites for parents to be a part of the school community. The administrators' voice or lack of voice creates a breach between the school and the community they serve.

Conclusion

The debate between parents, administrators, and the state, as to who owns a child's education was the impetus for parents to take a stand, speak out, and take back their power to decide what is best for their child's education. Unfortunately, not all parents have the same voice and are not given the same forum to express their views. Schools that have low-performance rates on the NYS tests are under the watchful eye of the state to raise their scores. The data from this study showed that parents in low-performing school districts with a low SES, and a majority of Latinx and Black populations are not given the same information as the predominantly White parents in school districts with a higher SES. In low SES districts, information about parental rights to opt out is exchanged for pep rallies, pizza parties, and prizes to encourage test-taking.

Parents are their child's first educator, and their participation in their child's education does not end at the school's front door. They are their child's advocates and outside forces, such as testing, are interfering in their relationship. Not all parents made an informed decision to opt out or opt in their child to the NYS tests, but they all consider their personal values and beliefs about education, and the role they play in their child's education. In doing so, they are actively shaping their children's academic lives and remaking the landscape of standardized testing in New York State.

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One District's Strategy to Curb Summer Slide Among Elementary School Students

By Annette Shideler, Elizabeth Scaduto, and Grace B. Wivell

Introduction

Across the United States, K-12 schools are recognizing that as the number of English Language Learners (ELLs) enrolled increases, there is an opportunity for greater linguistic and cultural exchange among all learners. ELLs also face the dual challenge of learning English in addition to rigorous academic content. This makes them vulnerable to "summer slide," one of several terms used to describe when students attain a level of measured achievement based on standardized testing at the end of the school year, but begin the following school year with lower scores after having spent approximately 8 to 10 weeks outside of an academic setting.[1]

A diverse suburban school district on Eastern Long Island, New York has seen a dramatic increase in English Language Learners over the past decade. The district recognizes that these students make strong progress during the academic school year and also experience the effects of spending two months away from school in the summer. This diverse suburban school district has run a grant-funded summer program for seven years as of 2018. The initial goal was simple: to help students learn English. Success was measured anecdotally at first: students were excited about the experience, and teachers reported considerable language growth. However, the district recognized that more was needed and created a partnership with Stony Brook University. For two summers, reading scores for students in the program were more closely examined. When reading scores at the end of the school year were compared with reading scores at the start of the following school year, students who participated with regular attendance in a summer program for ELLs were able to begin the school year in September without further academic loss. In fact, the majority of students had reading scores that either improved or remained at the same level - a great step toward reducing the academic learning gap.

Literature Review

There is considerable research documenting the need to bridge the K-12 summer learning gap across the United States, much of which focuses on the way summer slide disproportionately affects students from a lower socioeconomic status (SES) background. When considering the various factors influencing academic performance of 9th grade students with a low SES indicator and mid-and high-SES indicator, Alexander et. al found "two-thirds of the total achievement loss could be traced to summer learning differences over the elementary years" (2007, pg. 171). Although all students tend to lose ground in math, students with a low SES indicator tend to lose ground in reading scores while Mid- and high-SES indicator students tend to gain ground during the summer months (McCombs et. al. 2012, pg. 47). Allington (2013), Alexander et. al (2007), and Cooper & Charlton (2000) all suggest that much of the summer slide experienced by students from lower SES backgrounds is attributable to a lack of access to experiences that can improve academic performance: while middle and high SES students often have the opportunity to attend summer camps and other programs, students from low SES background are often not.

While many ELLs have access to enriching summer experiences, English learners who have a low SES may not. English learners also often receive language input throughout the summer in a language other than English, and this can affect students when they return to school in the fall (DelliCarpini 2009). To embrace all students' home languages and experiences, schools must employ culturally responsive educational practices and provide equitable access to education.

One approach to continuing academic progress is the implementation of summer programs, and several studies have sought to measure the effect of summer school programs toward neutralizing summer slide for mainstream students. McCombs et. al. (2012), found that various kinds of summer programs, mandatory and voluntary, had some measure of positive effect on student achievement. Borman and Dowling (2006), in their three-year study of the Teach Baltimore Summer Academy, found that students who participated in at least two of the three years of the program experienced a "treatment effect" that was the equivalent of "50% of one grade level in vocabulary, 40% of one grade level in comprehension, and 41% of one grade level in total reading" when compared to their peers who did not participate in the program (pg. 46).

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[1] Other frequently used terms include: Summer Gap, Summer Learning Loss, Summer Setback, Summer Shortfall, Summer slump, and (Summer) Regression.

Furthermore, researchers do not find that all programs lead to an equal effect, and offer suggestions for a successful program. Borman and Dowling emphasize that continued participation in summer programs is key (pg. 26). Alexander, Entwisle and Olsen's work points to the importance of implementing efforts to bridge the learning gap early: "...attempting to close the gap after it has opened wide is a rear-guard action. Most of the gap increase happens early in elementary school, which is where corrective interventions would be most effective, or even before" (2007, pg 176). They also stress the importance of summer school programs which target economically disadvantaged students: "All children can benefit from high quality 'universal' programs--preschools for all; summer schools for all--but they will not benefit in equal measure" (2007, pg 177). In other words, the importance of such programs is greater for students who may not otherwise have access to similar programs.

There is little research which focuses *exclusively* on the effect of summer school programs for English Language Learners. Though ELLs did make up at least part of the population in each of the aforementioned studies, they were small in number and the researchers did not consider their scores separately. However, in their study of a summer school program for ELL students in kindergarten through eleventh grade in Kentucky, Vanderhaar and Munoz (2005) found that when tested before and after participation in the program, a majority of students' scores increased and, importantly, students who had the lowest scores at the outset of the study were those who showed the greatest gains (pg 15). While the Kentucky summer program focused on both reading and math, students experienced greater gains in reading, reinforcing the strong effect summer programs have on reading (pg 17). Hur and Suh conducted a two-year study on a summer school program focused on assisting native Korean speakers from late elementary school through high school, and found this program improved students' confidence in their English abilities as well as academic skills, especially for those students in the elementary school grades, again showing that early intervention is key (2010 pg. 16).

The Study

This study focused on the diverse suburban school district's Summer Program for English Learners. The program was developed by the district's English as a New Language (ENL) and Bilingual Education department with the explicit purpose of providing an opportunity for ELLs at the elementary level, in keeping with the literature's assertion that this is a key time to bridge the learning gap, to continue their academic learning throughout the summer. The program was voluntary and open to all elementary ELLs with particular attention to students identified as Students with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE). The program has run for seven years.

For the first six years, the program ran for four weeks (20 days), but due to funding cuts the 2018 program ran for only three weeks (15 days). Students attended for three hours each day, from 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. The district provided transportation and partnered with Island Harvest, a local food bank and summer feeding program provider, to ensure students received breakfast and lunch each day. The district had two primary goals for the program: 1) students should feel that they had a fun, learning-rich summer camp-like experience and 2) students would be provided access to high-quality, culturally and linguistically responsive learning experiences. The program began with approximately 50 students in the first year and in 2018 served over 200 students in grades K through 5.

In order to assess the success of the summer school program, we compared students' Spring and Fall Reading scores, and sorted the scores into two groups to measure program success: students whose scores decreased and those whose scores either increased or remained the same. We chose to group score increases and no change together because research shows the students in our studies to be statistically likely to lose reading skills over the summer, and it was this loss that the program sought to prevent. Even if student's scores did not increase, the anticipated loss was still prevented, and the program could be considered a success.

Several reading assessments were used to understand students' progress from the Spring to the Fall. This district is currently shifting their literacy and assessment programs and therefore multiple assessments were being used by the schools in the spring and fall of 2018. Rather than implement an assessment solely for this research, we used data from the standardized reading assessments already used by the district. This was useful as access to data was simplified and the assessments were administered by trained teachers in the district. There were three tests being used during this time period[2], and while each test might have its advantages or disadvantages, for the purposes of our research, we treated each test equally. Importantly, we ensured that the scores we compared for a single student were from the same test. Any students who were assessed with one assessment in the spring but a different assessment in the fall were excluded from our study.

Included in this study are data from a total of 92 students in 2017, and 158 students in 2018. We were unable to compare scores from all 200+ students who participated in the programs each year, either because a student did not receive one of the tests, or because the student was assessed using different tests in the Spring and in the Fall, which we did not consider valid representations of student progress. We were able to look at both spring and fall data points from 92 of the students who regularly attended the program in 2017, and 158 of

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[2] Teachers College Quick Assessments, The American Reading Company's Independent Reading Level Assessment (IRLA) and its Spanish language partner, Evaluación del nivel independiente de lectura (ENIL), and Renaissance Learning's STAR Reading Assessment

Table 1: Number of Scores by Grade

	K	1	2	3	4	5 (+6)[3]	Total
2017	11	16	24	31	-	10	92
2018	34	27	32	36	15	15	158

the students from 2018. A breakdown by grade level of students from whom we compared data can be found in **Table 1**.

For the summer of 2018, we had hoped to provide training in intentional teaching[4] as part of the instructional plan for the program. This focused teaching, specifically based on trends seen in students' state assessment scores, may have provided a stronger base for teachers to work from. However, there was not sufficient time for teachers to undergo specific training for this intentional teaching. Teachers involved in the planning and implementation for the 2018 program were still asked to focus on the identified areas specific to their grade levels, but it

is our belief that if the training had occurred, we would have seen even greater success. It is an area which the department in this diverse suburban school district will continue to explore.

Results and Discussion

Overall, the summer school program demonstrated significant success. In 2017, the summer program saw a majority of students improve, as can be seen in **Figure 2.** The largest percentage of students whose scores increased or remained the same was found in the class of mixed fifth and sixth grade students, in which 100 percent of students improved or remained the same from the spring

Figure 2: Summary of Student Scores, 2017

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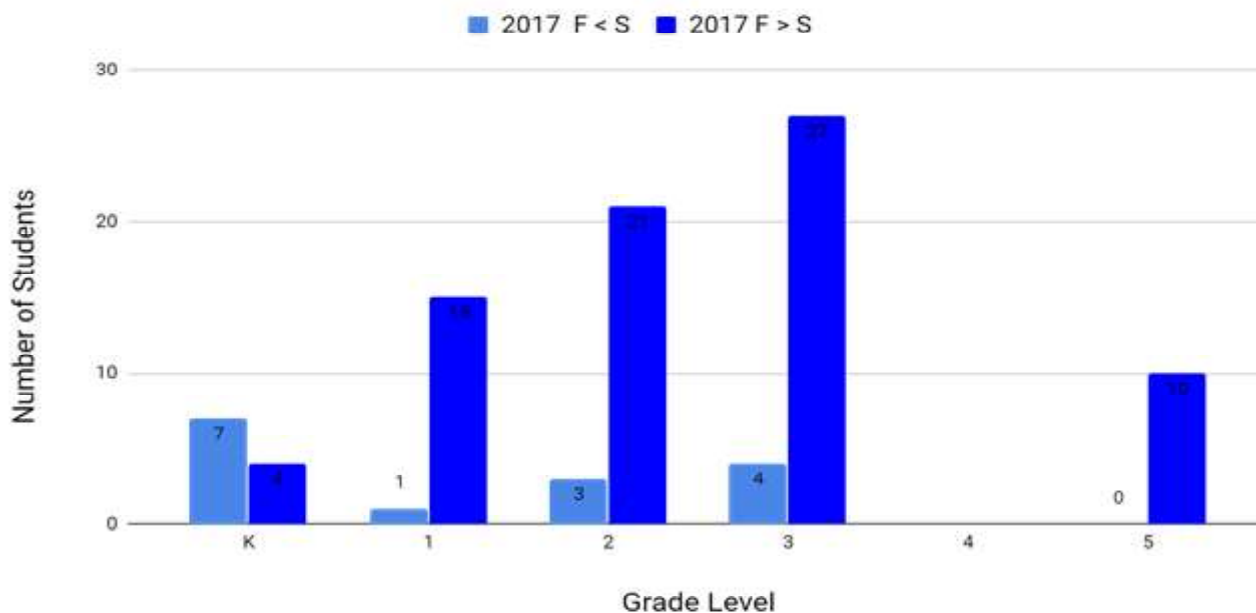
[3] In 2017 some students who had already completed the sixth grade included in the fifth grade class. There were not, however, any students who were identified as SIFE that year. In contrast, in 2018 while there were no sixth grade students included, all of the students in the fifth grade class were identified as SIFE (Students with Interrupted/Inconsistent Formal Education). Of these 14 students, 10 improved and 4 declined in their reading levels. Two of the four who declined in reading levels were very new entrants to the country.

[4] For additional information regarding "intentional teaching," please reference Shideler, A. (Fall, 2016) 'A case study of data use, project-based learning, and language development for ELLs. Journal for Leadership and Instruction pp.22-27.

Figure 3: Summary of Student Scores, 2018
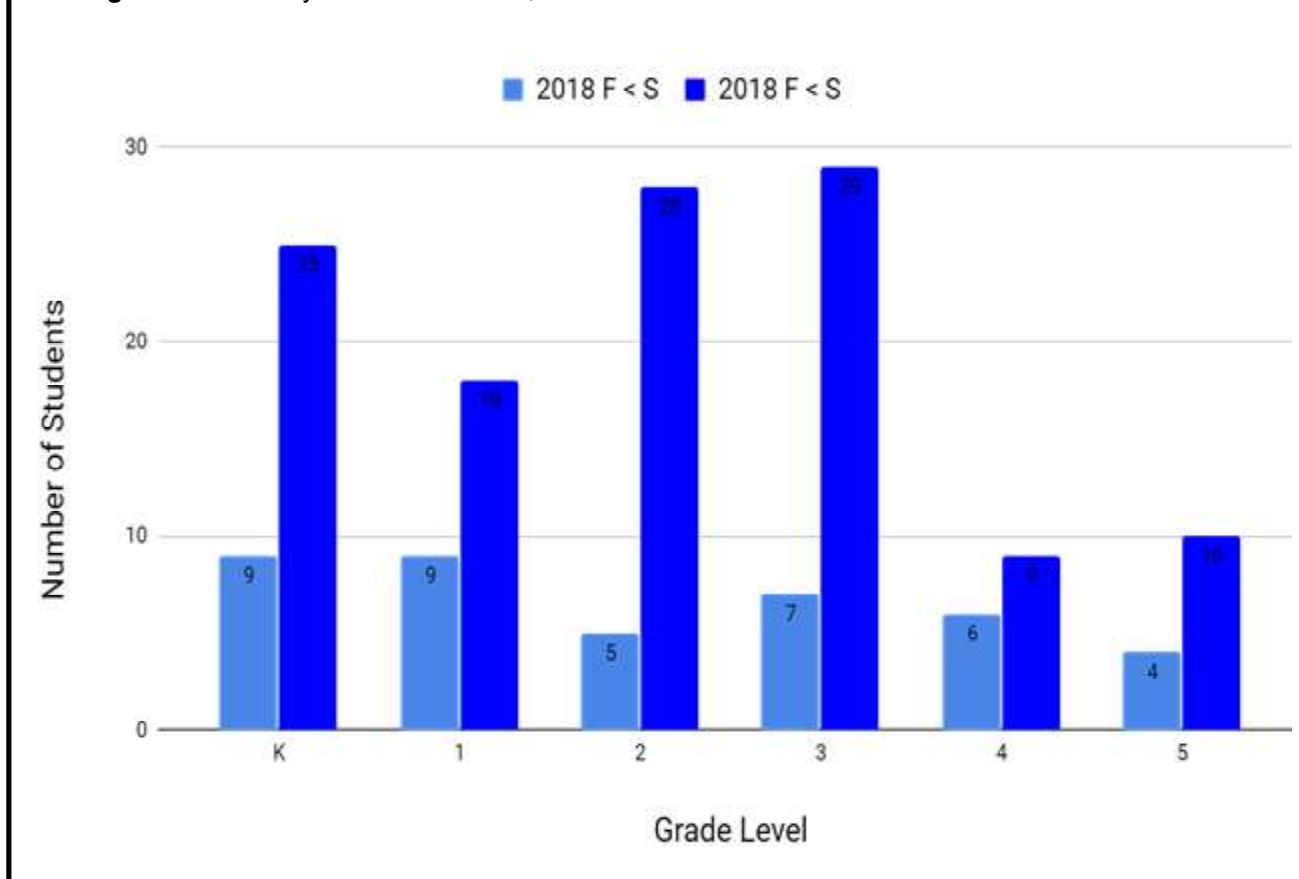
to the fall. Students in this group had the most to gain because they began at a point of very low literacy in any language and had interrupted formal education. Class size for this group was relatively small and for 2017 and 2018, the district noted greater advancement for this age group than in previous years. This may have been due in part to changing the location of the classroom to another part of the building, perhaps giving the older students a sense of greater autonomy. Also, for 2017 and 2018, the 5th and 6th grade students' regular teacher during the school year worked with them again during the summer. Both the students and the teacher began the summer program already comfortable and knowing what to expect from each other.

The other classes also demonstrated notable results in 2017, with the scores of 94 percent of first grade students, 88 percent of second grade students, and 87 percent of first grade students improving or remaining the same. The 2017 kindergarten class that year was the exception to the overall trend, both that year and in the overall two-year study, in that a majority of student's scores actually decreased, and only 36 percent of students' scores increased or remained the same. Many of these

students, however, had been enrolled in bilingual class-rooms during their kindergarten year and in the first grade some were placed in monolingual English classrooms with monolingual teachers who did not have training in TESOL, and we believe this might have played a role in the decrease in students' scores.

The 2018 student group also demonstrated con-siderable success, with over half the students in every class showing scores which improved or remained the same, as can be seen in **Figure 3.** The scores from 74 percent of kindergarteners, 67 percent of first graders, 85 percent of second graders, 81 percent of third graders, 53 percent of fourth graders, and 71 percent of fifth graders increased or remained the same. It is especially exciting to note that so many of the fifth grade students showed positive results, as all of these students were identified as SIFE students, and therefore had additional barriers to overcome in their pursuit of academic success.

Though both years showed excellent results, there were fewer positive scores in 2018, when 75 percent of all students had scores which increased or remained the same, compared to 2017 when 84 percent of students'

scores increased or remained the same. There are a few possible explanations for this decrease in positive results. Because of the overall increase in students in the program, class sizes were larger in 2018 than they were in 2017 and this may have affected on the amount of direct individual support received. Though no research was found to specifically document the effect that the length of programming can have on student progress in summer programs, we also believe that since the 2018 program was shorter than the 2017 program, this may account for some of the difference. However, almost three quarters of students for whom we have data had scores which improved or remained the same, making the results similarly impressive. This is a group of students who will have started the school year on more solid footing because they had access to a quality summer learning program and for whom the academic learning gap continued to narrow as students' progress continued.

Conclusion

Previous research suggests that the implementation of a summer program for students likely to experience an academic gap will have a positive effect and help reduce or overcome this potential obstacle. Practical experience and existing research would indicate that English Learners are at particular risk for having the achievement gap increase annually. Furthermore, prior research indicates that students at the elementary school level have the greatest opportunity to bridge this gap and reduce or even eliminate the achievement gap through participation in summer learning programs. Our experience with the ELLs of this diverse suburban school district fully supports this research. The majority of elementary students who attended regularly maintained academic success over the extended summer recess period, and many increased their reading levels. Improvements can and should be made to the program outlined in this study, but our results clearly show that summer programs specifically developed for ELLs can effectively reduce the achievement/opportunity gap.

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Special Education Administrative Supervision of Integrated Co-Teaching

By Jordan McCaw, Ed.D.

Abstract

In the K-12 setting, integrated co-teaching has developed as a popular service for students with disabilities. This paper examines how administrators define the most effective model of integrated co-teaching. Additionally, this paper explores the extent to which administrators' supervisory expectations/practices are consistent with the model delineated in the foundational research of Cook and Friend (1995).

Co-Teaching Defined

In recent years, co-teaching has developed as a common instructional delivery model that meets the needs of all students, including those with disabilities, in K-12 public schools around the country. It is designed as a service delivery system for students with mild and moderate disabilities (Simpson, Thurston & James, 2014).

Murawski and Dieker (2004) described co-teaching as two or more teachers who are equal in status located in the classroom together, working together, and providing instruction. In another study, Fennick and Liddy (2001) established their definition of co-teaching "in collaborating teaching teams, general education teachers and special education teachers share responsibility for planning and teaching in a general education class" (p. 229). Co-teaching must unite the science of specially designed instruction and effective pedagogy with the art of reorganizing resources and schedules to provide students with disabilities better opportunities to be successful in learning what they need to learn. Co-teaching is a special education service-delivery model in which two certified teachers-one general educator and one special educator-share responsibility for planning, delivering, and evaluating instruction for a diverse group of students, some of whom are students with disabilities (Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamberlain, & Shamberger, 2010).

Researchers and practitioners have made the case for co-teaching as a program that gives all students access to the general education curriculum and experience. Prior to its implementation, classified students were placed in a more restrictive program such as a special class with a small student-teacher ratio or in a less restrictive program such as a general education setting with related services.

Administrator's Role

Administrators play a key role in the successful implementation of co-teaching. Principals who have had a positive experience with students with disabilities were more likely to have a positive attitude toward co-teaching (Praisner, 2003). Kamens, Susko, and Elliot (2013) found that administrators were inconsistent with their knowledge base and practices and recommended professional development to address this issue. In studies that focused on the logistical issues of co-teaching implementation, researchers found that master scheduling, common planning time, time of day, and ratio of students with disabilities to general education students were problematic (Isherwood, Barger-Anderson, & Erickson 2012; Simmons, 2007). Administrators who empower their teachers often find that the teachers are more positive about the practices they are implementing (Hamill & Dever, 1998). The research suggests that forced partnership arrangements by school administrators do not promote best practice (Solis et al., 2007). Administrators have significant responsibility when it comes to co-teaching and their visible involvement is critical (Phillips & McCullough, 1990; Villa, Thousand, & Nevin, 2008). Wilson (2005) studied the observation and evaluation of co-teachers and made recommendations for such. The success of any co-teaching program is grounded in the common vision, dedication and support of the general education teacher, special education teacher and the administrators who supervise them.

The Standard

Current research on integrated co-teaching generally cites the foundational work offered by Marilyn Friend and Lynne Cook which served to define co-teaching by examining the past, the present, and recommendations for the future. Cook and Friend subsequently co-wrote several articles and studies which are frequently cited by researchers examining this topic. Cook and Friend (1995) outlined the six approaches to co-teaching that are the foundation for co-teaching instruction: one-teach-one assist, one teach-one observe, station teaching, parallel teaching, alternative teaching and team teaching.

The Cook and Friend model, including the various approaches, is the accepted standard. The approaches are universal in that they can be provided across all settings,

so long as there are two qualified adults, a single instructional space, and blended students with individualized education program (IEP) goals. An IEP is a written statement for each child with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised that addresses the child's present levels of performance, annual goals, progress monitoring, special education, related services, supplementary aids and services, explanation of the child's participation with nondisabled peers, and dates relevant to implementation. An IEP identifies the program that should constitute the least restrictive environment (LRE) for the student. The LRE emphasizes that to that maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities are educated with their nondisabled peers (IDEA, 2004). The ICT model in particular promotes the delivery of specially designed instruction to students with disabilities in the general education environment. Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamerlain, and Shamerger (2010) revisited the model in their later research, as did Friend in 2016.

Most Effective Model of Integrated Co-Teaching

For the purpose of this case study, the most effective ICT model was defined by three characteristics, as outlined in the research of Friend and Cook.

- "Two or more professionals are delivering substantive instruction to a diverse, or blended, group of students in a single space" (Cook & Friend, 1995, p. 20).
- These two professionals share instructional responsibility for a single group of students for specific content or objectives with mutual ownership, pooled resources and joint accountability (Cook & Friend, 1995).
- The teachers utilize all six approaches as noted below to address students' IEP goals over the course of the school year.

These approaches enable teachers "to address the individualized education program (IEP) goals and objectives of students with disabilities while at the same time meeting the learning needs of other students in the class" (Friend et al., 2010, p. 12). Although research continues to provide variations of each model, those illuminated by Cook and Friend (1995) are the most popular. These instructional delivery approaches are meant to utilize the various members of the team to capitalize on their knowledge and understanding of content taught and instructional knowledge related to teaching students with disabilities (Friend et al., 2010; Scruggs et al., 2007).

Method

This study was a collective case study that focused on the administrator expectations and supervisory practices in connection with the integrated co-teaching model. The study focused on administrative supervision of co-teaching from grades kindergarten through 12. The case is how administrators within one suburban school district perceived the most effective ICT model and to what extent their supervisory expectations resembled the practices associated with the most effective model of integrated co-teaching as defined by Cook and Friend (1995). Three strategies were used to gather evidence: (1) administrator interviews, (2) an administrator focus group, (3) document review.

Field Setting

The setting for this case study took place in an elementary school (kindergarten through fifth grade) and a high school (ninth through twelfth grade) located within the same school district. The total student population is over 7,000 students from grades K-12. On the New York State Report Card, 10% of the student population is eligible for free or reduced lunch and 10% are SWDs. The elementary school enrollment was 608 students with 53 students with disabilities (9%). The high school enrollment was 1,657 with 202 students with disabilities (9%). As one of the largest towns in the county, this school district has ample resources in the area of special education. Administrators who participated in this study had K-12 responsibilities.

Participant Selection

The study's participants were selected based on purposeful sampling to recruit administrators who supervised co-teachers. Therefore participants were chairpeople of academic departments (math, science, English) or of special education. Eight administrators were interviewed for this study and four administrators participated in a focus group.

Procedures

Interviews

A total of eight (8) interviews were conducted with the following administrators: Director of English Language Arts, Director of Science, Elementary Principal, Elementary Assistant Principal, Elementary Special Education Supervisor, Secondary Special Education Supervisor, and two High School Assistant Principals.

Interview questions elicited information about the following:

- prior administrative positions and current responsibilities
- the number of teachers they observe/evaluate
- definition of the most effective model of ICT
- expectation of teacher practice
- supports for co-teachers
- observation protocols
- co-planning
- observed co-teaching approaches
- selection of co-teachers
- effectiveness of model for general education and special education students

Focus Groups

The administrative focus group consisted of an elementary assistant principal, a secondary special education supervisor, director of science, and director of English.

Focus group questions elicited information about the following:

- definition of the most effective model of ICT
- logistical steps involved in the implementation of a new co-teaching program (staffing, scheduling, training)
- beliefs regarding the responsibilities each co-teacher should have within a co-teach setting
- extent to which the actual model implemented is consistent with the most effective model of ICT
- observation/assessment and evaluation of ICT
- beliefs about the effectiveness of ICT for general education students and special education students

Data Analysis

Data analysis began with a thorough reading of all interview, focus group, and document review transcripts. First round primary codes were assigned to each research question to initiate the three-stage coding process (Miles et al., 2014). Following the initial coding, each piece of data was reread and several data reduction steps were taken. First, relevant data were highlighted and underlined. Second, each code with respective evidence were stored in a Microsoft Excel file. Third, after re-reading the data, codes were readjusted/organized to make them more specific to organize findings. *Dedoose* data management tool was used to create interactive visualizations and analytics.

Dedoose is a cross-platform app for analyzing qualitative and mixed methods research with text, photos, audio, videos, and spreadsheet data. Finally, visual thematic representations were created which helped synthesize the emanating themes, research, findings, and implications for the research question.

Findings

The findings' section illuminates key themes that emerged during the data analysis. The findings answered the two essential research questions: 1) How do administrators define the most effective model of ICT? 2) To what extent are the supervisory expectations/practices consistent with the Cook and Friend model (1995)?

Administrators' Definition

Administrators' definition of the most effective model of ICT was predicated on equal and shared responsibility, student-focused co-planning, relational trust/mutual respect, and implementation of varied co-teaching approaches. See **Figure 1.**

Equal and Shared Responsibility. The administrators expressed that responsibilities for teaching and learning should be shared between the general education teacher and special education teacher. Participants by and large reported that teaching responsibilities included common preparation time, lesson delivery, and assessment. One administrator shared, "Both co-teachers should literally be presenting the instruction, assisting students, and designing the lesson and checking for understanding." Similarly, another administrator expressed that one of the most important parts of a successful co-teaching program is "collaboration."

Figure 1. Definition of the Most Effective Model of Integrated Co-Teaching
How do administrators define the most effective model of ICT?
Administrators' definition of most effective model of ICT
• Equal & Shared Responsibility • Student-Focused Co-Planning • Relational Trust, Mutual Respect, and Roles • Implementation of Varied Co-Teaching Approaches

The director of mathematics explained that when she enters the room, "I should not be able to tell who the math teacher is and who the special education teacher is." Similarly, the director of English language arts agreed that students should view both teachers as equal and that, most importantly, both teachers should be working toward meeting students' IEP goals. Administrators during the focus group agreed, "It just looks simultaneous, like there's no distinguishing between each teacher's responsibilities." Moreover, the consensus of the focus group was the most effective model is when teachers work together in planning and in executing instruction to meet the needs of all learners in the classroom.

Administrators reported that the certification of teachers is a factor in selecting them for co-teaching. The director of science expressed, "It doesn't mean that the special educator in the room has to be certified in that subject area, but they have to be open to learning and open to putting themselves out there."

The elementary principal defined true co-teaching as being a partnership in which the special education teacher is not a "glorified teacher assistant." He reported that "good co-teaching teams are based on mutual effort." Additionally, a secondary supervisor of special education said, "The most effective model of co-teaching is when both teachers are invested, both teachers articulate and communicate effectively, starting with what the vision and the design for their classroom is."

Student-Focused Co-Planning. Co-Planning is an important element in the effective delivery of co-taught instruction. Administrators reported that co-planning went beyond curriculum. For example, an elementary administrator indicated that you are not only planning content but "you are really talking about students." Most of the participants indicated that collaboration is an integral part of co-teaching but it is the most difficult because not all teachers will plan during their personal time. Moreover, the reality of their schedule sometimes makes common planning time a challenge.

School administrators tended to view co-teaching through a different lens. The special education administrators acknowledged the various approaches to co-teaching. The high school supervisor explained that co-teaching is not just one approach but rather, it should be rotational. She reflected on recent classroom observations. Specifically she referenced "on the fly teaching" or she'll see the "general education teacher do the planning and the special education teacher push-in and do a role of a teaching assistant." In defining the model, she said, "I think small group instruction, whether through centers or rotating is very effective." She underscored, however, that the needs of the students should dictate the approach that is utilized.

Collaboration is not just theoretical. In fact, the district's special education plan, as required by the New York State Education department, explicitly notes, "An important component of this program is the ongoing collaboration between the general education and special education teacher." It further explains that modifications in curriculum, method, assessments, and environment are assessed and individualized according to each student's IEP.

Relational Trust, Mutual Respect, and Roles. Relational trust is necessary in the development of any professional partnership. Four of the administrators interviewed analogized that a co-teaching partnership was tantamount to a marriage. The participants agreed that the team members must have professional and personal respect and feel comfortable relinquishing control over their classroom. The administrators felt that a positive partnership translates into a more welcoming classroom. For example, an administrator said that students should feel that both of the teachers are theirs and that in an effective model of ICT, the strengths of both teachers are maximized.

Not all participants framed their responses in the positive. For example, an elementary special education administrator commented that the dynamic of pairing friends may be problematic. She noted that pairing friends is a common practice with which she disagrees. She said, "When you have friends, you can kind of lean back, and maybe your planning may not be as effective."

Trust is not just predicated on the co-teachers' dedication and commitment to collaboration. A math administrator explained that among math educators, certification in mathematics earns immediate respect. She said that math teachers are more likely to trust special education co-teachers who have dual content certification. She reported that her department staff is fortunate to work with a special education department who all have dual certification. Both she and her teachers trust that the certification enables them to understand the content. In contrast, the director of science explained that content certification was not a necessary factor in establishing relational trust. Rather, an openness to learning was more important.

Administrators reported that challenges within a co-teaching partnership are often linked to a misunderstanding of teachers' roles. To illustrate this, administrators referenced when a special education teacher "acts a little bit more like a teaching assistant than a specialized instructor. High school administrators described how when certain teachers take the lead, the other teacher often functions in a subordinate role. They reported, however, that there should be a "fluid back and forth." Secondary administrators agreed that in higher level, content rich classes, the general education would more often than not take the lead.

Not all administrators were comfortable with this dynamic. The elementary principal, for example, said, "When I walk into a classroom and I see basically one of the teachers serving a role as a teacher assistant, it's ineffective to me."

Co-Teaching Approaches. Administrators consistently reported that co-teaching approaches should be varied based

on students' levels of need. When speaking about the most effective model of integrated co-teaching, an administrator noted that highly effective instruction goes beyond the one teach-one assist approach. Rather, "It is effective using multiple models based on students' needs."

Administrators globally expressed that co-teaching approaches should vary as a function of students' needs. Specifically, they reported that the various approaches allow for a smaller student-teacher ratio which translates into meeting the needs of more students. Factors affecting the selection of each approach include the students' needs and the dynamics of the classroom. The elementary administrators reported that the current elementary model of integrated co-teaching replicates a "push-in service." They described the model as including a general education teacher for the full day and a 90 minute push-in by a special educator.

All participants emphasized the importance of putting the classroom into different configurations where both teachers take the lead and engage in the various approaches of integrated co-teaching.

Effectiveness

Most administrators, except one, reported that co-teaching was an effective model for general education students. For example, a secondary administrator said, "If it [co-teaching] is done the right way, it could be a big advantage for both general education students and students with disabilities, especially if you are breaking up into small groups, and differentiation is going on."

A secondary special education administrator expressed that while she has no data to support, she believes the district should explore data collection to analyze the effectiveness of the co-teaching program by comparing performance scores in co-taught classes versus non-co-taught classes. When describing the effectiveness of the model, an administrator said, "My favorite moment is when a student or parent indicates that they don't know who the special educator is or who the content area teacher is."

The special education administrators explained how the success of the co-teaching model for special education students is based on the partnership and the delivery of instruction. A challenge to the program is when two teachers are both talking excessively, which can be distracting to students with auditory processing and executive functioning deficits.

In order to increase the effectiveness of the co-teaching model, some administrators raised the issue of enrichment for general education students. Specifically, one participant stated, "Very little time goes into how we can enhance or enrich a lesson to reach those higher level kids." Moreover, a secondary administrator indicated the program is "not as beneficial as it could be." He said, " I guess my belief is that you're an average to above average

regular-education teacher, you could probably do the job and get through the same material and content in a way that special education students would understand as having a special education teacher in the room, too."

Another issue related to the effectiveness of the integrated co-teaching model is appropriate placement. Administrators reported that when students are inappropriately placed into the setting, that could be problematic. Some participants verbalized that when parents want their child in a general education class, co-teaching is a solution; however, when this decision is made, it impacts all of the students in the setting.

Are Supervisory Expectations and Instructional Practices Consistent with the Cook & Friend model of ICT?

> **To what extent are the supervisor expectations/ instructional practices consistent with the Cook and Friend model (1995)?**
>
> - Selection and training of co-teachers
> - Support for practice of co-teaching
> - Observation of co-teachers
> - Expectation regarding co-planning
> - Observed co-teaching approaches

Administrative and Supervisory Practice.

The study found that the following themes were noteworthy: selection of co-teachers, training of co-teachers, support for practice of co-teaching, observation of co-teachers, observed co-teaching approaches, and co-planning expectations.

Selection. When discussing the selection of co-teachers, two high school assistant principals had different points of view. One indicated she looks for someone who enjoys teaching, loves kids and is collaborative. By contrast, the other assistant principal indicated that selection is based on who is available to do it and who has shown an interest. When describing how special educators are selected, an elementary principal indicated that it was a matter of who is assigned to the building. A department administrator for mathematics commented that she looks for someone who is strong with content, instruction, and flexibility. Several administrators indicated that the selection of co-teachers is predicated on who works well together. At the elementary level, they indicated that they look for individuals who work well together and who have experience in that assignment.

Training. Based on interviews and a focus group discussion, it appeared that the training of co-teachers was more of a priority when co-teaching was a new district initiative; however, as the program gained popularity, the need for additional training was not emphasized. Moreover, administrators reported that they support their teachers by familiarizing them with the six Cook and Friend recommended co-teaching approaches and the methodologies of co-teaching. An elementary principal indicated that he encourages his teachers to visit the classroom of other teachers to demonstrate effective practice. Further, he encourages them to co-plan with these teachers. By contrast, a high school administrator said, "We've fallen short of the mark because I don't see a consistent message as to what the co-teaching model should be necessarily."

Observation Practices. Administrators reported a range of responses regarding co-teacher observations. Specifically, several participants indicated that they conduct formal observations of both co-teachers simultaneously and then follow up with a post observation conference that includes both team members; however, the majority of participants reported that they observe each teacher separately and only the teacher being formally observed attends the post observation conference. The high school special education administrator and the director of mathematics, for example, reported that they observe both the general education and special education teacher during each lesson. Further, they invite both teachers to the pre-observation conference and the post observation conference. The elementary principal, by contrast, observes one co-teacher at a time. His assistant principal similarly reported, "Sometimes I'm looking simply just for possibly a special education teacher's ability to modify, differentiate, and in that sense, I'd want to really hone in on just that teacher."

Co-Planning. Co-planning is a critical component to effective co-teaching. In a co-teach situation, co-planning should be utilized to prepare for instruction. Administrators reported their expectation and practices in this area. One high school assistant principal noted that she works with the building administration to make sure that co-planning time is built into the master schedule. She also suggested that co-planning does not always have to involve face-to-face conversation. She explained her expectation that technology has the potential to enhance co-planning in the sense that teachers can use google docs or other web-based programs to plan with their colleagues without being physically together. An elementary principal indicated that he "trusts that they understand the challenges that are associated with working with another teacher and they will plan accordingly." Another administrator stated, "My expectation regarding co-planning is simply that both teachers know what is going on at the very moment that that co-teacher is expected to come into that classroom." One administrator articulated that co-teaching at the secondary level is more effective than the secondary level because the secondary teachers have planning time built into their schedules.

Discussion

The study explored administrator definitions of the most effective model of integrated co-teaching, as well as their expectations and practices. Qualitative case study methodology - including interviews, focus groups, and document reviews - was utilized. As a collective case study, the research was bounded by setting. The research investigated two schools within a suburban school district. Eight administrators participated in individual interviews and four administrators participated in a focus group discussion. Additionally, various documents from the East Park Public Schools, as well as documents from the state regulations, were reviewed and provided information on the integrated co-teaching program.

The findings from this collective case study reveal that administrators have a range of opinions regarding the implementation of an effective integrated co-teaching model. The findings related to administrative supervisory expectations reveal that administrator expectations are more or less consistent with the model of Cook and Friend; however, their actions were not always consistent with the Cook and Friend practices. Inconsistency of actions and practices results in diminished and/or unclear administrator expectations which impacts teachers ability to follow best practices as noted in the research of Cook and Friend.

Findings indicate that integrated co-teaching is a valued district instructional program that has widespread support by administrators. Administrators are charged with establishing expectations regarding co-teaching practices (e.g. selection, supervision, and training of staff). Effective co-teaching practice is predicated on administrative understanding and support (Cook & Friend, 1995; Walther-Thomas, 1997.) The findings indicate that although not all practices were consistent with those outlined in the research of Cook and Friend, all administrators involved in this study, except for one at the secondary level, understood the model and supported it. Effective co-teaching is predicated on constant direction and support from administrators who would be willing and able to listen and learn, and help deal with challenges (Arguelles, Hughes, & Schumm, 2000). Teachers are given many of the resources they need in order to meet with success (e.g. common planning time). Administrators must ensure that co-taught instruction is substantially different from instruction offered in other classes (Friend, Reising, & Cook, 1993).

There were several noteworthy findings related to administrative supervision. An overarching finding is teacher dominance/influence. The administrator participants framed their responses to a greater or lesser degree based on a power dynamic between teachers. According to Scruggs et al. (2007), the "one teach, one assist" model was used most frequently and resulted in the special education teacher being placed in the less dominant role. Several administrative participants expressed in relevant part that the most effective integrated co-teaching model is one in which the observer is unable to discern who the general education

teacher is and who the special education teacher is. In the Cook and Friend (1995) model, both professionals share responsibility for students in a manner that is equitable. The administrative expectation that co-teaching be different from the instruction in general education classes is consistent with the research. Specifically, Cook and Friend note, "When one teacher assists, especially if this is the role of the special educator, he or she may feel like a glorified teaching assistant and students might question that teacher's authority in the classroom" (Cook & Friend, 1995).

Another finding is expectation versus implementation. According to Cook and Friend (1995),

Administrators can support co-teachers by modeling desirable traits that promote collaboration. Administrators can support co-teaching by (a) helping co-teachers plan and schedule their programs (b) provide incentives and resources that allow co-teachers to design and reflect about desirable changes in the way they provide services (c) assist teachers in setting priorities that protect their limited time.

Observation protocols were focused on one co-teacher and not both co-teachers. A critical factor in the success of any program is the extent to which the program is evaluated and supported (Wilson, 2005). As noted in Cook and Friend (1995), "Evaluation is a vital component of any innovation in school-based services. Co-teaching is no exception. Both formative and summative evaluation are needed to develop and implement an effective co-teaching program adequately" (p. 17). Although administrative observation is not explicitly identified, Cook and Friend emphasize the importance of using multiple data sources to examine the effectiveness of an integrated co-teaching program. It appears based on administrator interviews that administrative observations, an important source of data, were conducted in a manner that evaluated individual teacher performance and not programmatic effectiveness.

Another distinctive finding is that in elementary school, co-teaching was offered in a manner that replicated a push-in service. For example, special education teachers pushed into the co-teaching classroom for 90 minutes per day. By contrast, at the secondary level, all co-teaching classes have a general education teacher and a special education teacher for the duration of the period, as per students' IEPs. The administrators felt that the elementary model should more closely resemble the secondary model with respect to co-planning time and length of time that both teachers are in the classroom. According to Friend and Barron (2016),

It is anticipated that co-teachers spend the majority of their shared time (whether it is a time block, a class period, or an entire school day) working with students in various grouping arrangements. This is one of the primary strategies for increasing instructional intensity (p. 3).

In order for this model to be implemented, teachers must have ample planning time to discuss daily lessons and relevant co-teaching approaches based on students' IEPs and emergent needs.

Friend et al. (1993) defined co-teaching as a model in which "two or more professionals are delivering substantive instruction to a diverse, or blended, group of students in a single space" (p .1). Second, these two professionals share instructional responsibility for a single group of students for specific content or objectives with mutual ownership, pooled resources and joint accountability (Friend, 2016). Third, the teachers utilize all six approaches to address individuals I.E.P. goals over the course of the school year (Friend et al., 2010, p. 12).

Implications for Practice

Integrated co-teaching is a highly effective research-based instructional delivery system for students with mild and moderate disabilities. Students in this program can thrive academically, behaviorally, and socially. Cook and Friend (1995) articulate the rationale for co-teaching, identifying five elements: increase instructional opportunities for all students, improve program intensity and continuity, reduce stigma for students with special needs, increase support for teachers and related service specialists, and increase instructional options. It is hoped that the findings of this study will provide administrators with valuable insight regarding how to successfully implement and maintain a co-teaching program. The findings indicate that this district's co-teaching program has most of the ingredients necessary for staff to meet the needs of students: dedicated instructional personnel, a variety of administrators with diverse skill sets and knowledge to conduct training, and positive, trusting employer-employee relationships that are necessary to effectuate positive change. There is definitely a need for more large-scale quantitative studies to determine teacher and administrator dispositions toward the ICT model. Consistent with the recommendations of Cook and Friend, co-teaching programs should be frequently evaluated using multiple data sources.

Cook and Friend (1995) emphasize that administrators play a key role in supporting co-teachers. Specifically, the researchers underscore that committing resources to enhancing preparation of co-teaching partners, participating with them in training activities, and scheduling additional planning time are sources of administrative support that teachers appreciate.

The findings indicate that there is room for growth in the area of developing more consistent supervisory practices. Observation of co-teaching should include both of the involved teachers and they should both be invited to the pre- and post-observation conferences. Additionally, the focal point of the observation should be the extent to which the practice of co-teaching is delivered. Next, defined intervals of common planning time should be universal for all co-teachers and teachers should be actively developed through co-teach-

ing professional development opportunities offered by the school district. Finally, teachers should be selected based on mutual interest and they should be trained together (Simmons & Magiera, 2007).

It is also recommended that school districts revisit the length of time that elementary special education teachers are present in the class. If the goal is to create a true co-teaching environment, both professionals should be delivering substantive instruction to the same group of elementary students throughout the school day. Cook and Friend state that "ultimately the decision regarding the amount of co-teaching that is possible and desirable must be made at the local district and school levels" (p. 11). The district may consider the collection of data to support the need for such a change. Although in New York co-teaching is not a mandatory service that districts must include in their continuum of services, this district has vast co-teaching offerings - multiple levels of math, English, social studies, science and world language. It should be further noted that although the state cap of special education students who are legally permitted to be placed in a co-teaching class is 12, the district guideline is 8 and most classes have fewer than eight students with disabilities in each of their co-teaching classes.

Conclusions

This study demonstrated that the co-teaching program within this school district was consistent with the philosophy and practices of the Cook and Friend model; however, the participants identified areas in which the district was not following the model with fidelity. This research can guide future research on integrated co-teaching as a service delivery model in the areas of evaluation, training, and scheduling.

As educators, we must constantly evaluate the effectiveness of our programs and attend to areas in need of attention. School districts considering implementing an integrated co-teaching program should take the appropriate steps in selecting, training, and supervising teachers and administrators. Any school district looking to refine its integrated co-teaching program should consider aligning its observation/evaluation system with research-based, peer reviewed standards. Although the Cook and Friend model does not specifically identify the frequency and nature of teacher observation/evaluation, the model emphasizes the importance of ongoing reflection and evaluation based on data collection.

The results of this study suggest that, ultimately, the integrated co-teaching program is a powerful instructional model to meet the needs of students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment. Administrators agreed that training was important, but it seemed that in recent years, there were fewer trainings to support effective co-teaching partnerships. The research of Cook and Friend consistently highlights the importance of training to prepare teachers for this rich model.

Next, the observation/evaluation instruments utilized by the school district should include both teachers, not just one. Observing both teachers simultaneously - inviting them to the pre-observation, post observation and giving them both a written analysis of their co-teaching - conveys a powerful message: Specifically, it is not the work of one co-teacher within a co-teach setting that accomplishes the goal of the program - rather, it is the work of both. When teachers' collaborative work is recognized and validated, they are more likely to function as a team.

The Cook and Friend model underscores the importance of two teachers being present in the classroom; however, the researchers also express that the model should be designed based on student goals. Therefore, an effective model can be developed that does not involve full day instruction. Toward this end, in order for co-teachers to realize their true potential, school districts should evaluate the length of time special educators are assigned to co-taught classes. Most importantly, they should ensure that students' IEP goals can be met. Although any programmatic change in this regard would need to be substantiated by evidence, co-teachers who "push-in" are at a programmatic disadvantage. If school districts are truly promoting shared responsibility and a collaborative approach, both teachers must have ample opportunity to co-plan and to work with their students in an integrated fashion.

The findings of this study convey that an effective integrated co-teaching program must include cooperation and collaboration and must involve ongoing administrative supervision and support for all teachers involved.

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Improving Academic Performance through a Unique Curriculum Development Process

By Dr. Colin R. Brown and Lindsay J. Prendergast, M.Ed.

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of implementing a unique and systematized version of curriculum planning and documenting across all levels of a Pre-K-Grade 12, US-curriculum, and international school in the Dominican Republic. Based on the Backwards by Design philosophy, cemented with a standards-based approach highlighting aligned assessments, the researchers sought to observe how weekly curriculum documenting would provide structure and a deliberate focus on the standards. As the researchers were administrators at the school, evidence was collected over five consecutive school years, 2014-2019 in order to determine the effect on student learning of this specific curriculum planning process.

In 2014, in the international school where the research occurred, the importance of clearly articulated and vertically aligned curriculum standards became a priority. The school adopted the Common Core Standards for English and Mathematics that Fall, yet the curriculum around those standards was not well fleshed-out nor was there evidence of consistency in the planning or teaching practices. Subsequently, results on standardized assessments such as Measure of Academic Progress (MAP), Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and Advanced Placement (AP) indicated poor to satisfactory academic achievement.

Researchers Dr. Colin Brown and Ms. Lindsay Prendergast looked to rectify this situation by implementing a unique and systematized version of weekly curriculum planning and documentation based on the Backwards by Design philosophy. It was expected this intervention would positively influence teaching and learning practices through:

1. Zeroing in on standards and teaching practices on a weekly basis.

2. Guaranteeing teachers have a clear understanding of their weekly objectives.

3. Providing greater attention to detail during the planning phase.

Literature Review

The practice of curriculum development is one of the most critical components of teaching, yet research on the effect of particular planning processes is limited in its agreement. Elements of planning may be dictated by district leaders, or driven by little more than teacher's personal interests. Regardless, effectively designed curriculum has a significant effect on student learning. According to researcher John Hattie, teacher clarity or, "a research-based process for narrowing and focusing activities, cutting away aspects of instruction…by identifying the most critical parts of instruction" (us.corwin.com, 2017), has an effect size of 0.75 on student learning. Despite this importance, there exist various gaps in the research around differing curriculum development practices. The intent of this literature review is to analyze existing curriculum documentation processes and identify where future investigation is needed.

Advocates for intentional and deliberate design of curriculum are often grounded in principles developed by the behavioral psychologist and researcher Ralph Tyler. In *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction*, the result of his Eight-Year Study, Tyler pioneered the organization of curriculum design around four basic principles: 'The Tyler Rationale' (1975).

1. Defining appropriate learning objectives.

2. Establishing useful learning experiences.

3. Organizing learning experiences to have a maximum cumulative effect.

4. Evaluating the curriculum and revising those aspects that did not prove to be effective.

Of distinction in Tyler's work is not only the establishment of learning objectives, but placing those objectives at the forefront of the planning process. He argued, 'the problem with education is that educational programs lack unmistakably defined purposes' (Tyler, 1975). The principles outlined in 'The Tyler Rationale' are also regarded as the philosophical underpinnings for a more modern, widely acclaimed curricular planning approach, Understanding by Design.

Subsequent practitioners of curriculum design varied in their adherence to Tyler's principles, though a lasting influence had been made in the idea that learning objectives, or standards as they came to be called, were an effective focus when placed at the forefront of the planning process. In *Evolution of Research on Teachers' Planning*,

Yinger (1980) identified three stages in the planning process: the problem-finding stage (content, goals and own knowledge), the problem formulation and solution stage (the design of instructional activities carried out through continuing processes of mental or hypothetical testing and adaptation), and implementation and evaluation of the activities as they unfolded in the classroom setting (Munthe, Conway, 2017).

This model, which has predominated trends in curriculum development in recent decades, emphasizes placing instructional activities immediately following the learning standard. Assessments were found to occur after the activities; such assessments were often, though not always, meant to guide future instructional activities. Continued research by Yinger found that, "teachers tend not to change the instructional process in midstream, even when it is going poorly" (Munthe, Conway, 2017). Following Ralph Tyler's research, in 1973, theorist James MacDonald claimed, "Teachers often make curriculum plans by first considering the type of learning experience or activity they can provide, based on available materials and their knowledge of a subject area" (Koeller, Thompson 1980). Yet a risk of designing activities before assessments involves teachers' propensity to select them on factors unrelated to student learning. "The activities listed in these units often seem to be engaging and kid-friendly - fine qualities as long as the activities are purposefully focused on clear and important goals" (Wiggins & McTighe, 1990). Today, these traditional lesson planning processes are often taught in teacher preparation courses. Critics, however, assert such plans yield limited impact on student learning. "When teachers are designing lessons, units, or courses, they often focus on the activities and instruction rather than the outputs of the instruction. Therefore, it can be stated that teachers often focus more on teaching rather than learning" (Bowen, 2017).

Effective curriculum planning should, inherently, yield measurable results in student learning. Yet, designing activities first and assessments 'after the fact' all too often reveals that the activities may not contain evidence of learning. As a result, students do poorly on the test. In the past, teachers have even blamed the students for not learning what they were taught (Aviles, Grayson, 2017). As practitioners recognized the flaws in curriculum design around activity-oriented teaching with no clear purposes, the concept of planning curriculum in a 'backwards' manner began to revolutionize modern curriculum design. The backwards design planning process is based on the steps of first identifying desired results, followed by determining assessment evidence and, lastly, planning learning experiences and instruction.

Though the original concept of planning backwards can be attributed to Ralph Tyler, the significant altering of the process sequence is credited to Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe, who conceptualized their work in the book, *Understanding by Design* (1990). Researchers assert that when teachers utilize this process, student learning is measurably greater, and classroom instruction leads to both specific outcomes and transferable skills (Fuglei, 2015). As described by Professor Ryan Bowen of the Vanderbilt University Center for Teaching:

The incorporation of backward design also lends itself to transparent and explicit instruction. If the teacher has explicitly defined the learning goals of the course, then they have a better idea of what they want the students to get out of learning activities…it eliminates the possibility of doing certain activities and tasks for the sake of doing them. Every task and piece of instruction has a purpose (2017).

When applied correctly, the process of designing curriculum in a backward manner can significantly enhance not only the quality of teaching, but the resulting student learning as well.

McTighe and Wiggins' approach is rooted primarily in planning instruction in terms of Units - a chapter, theme, or period of time spent addressing a specific concept or skill. Although they caution teachers against relying solely on end-of-unit assessments as evidence of learning, this remains an innate risk of unit-style planning. The authors mention this in *Understanding by Design* as a 'Misconception Alert': "When we speak of evidence of understanding, we are referring to evidence gathered through a variety of formal and informal assessments during a unit of study or a course" (1990). Yet planning for extended time periods (weeks, even semesters) runs the risk that teachers may not, in fact, adjust instruction throughout the planned time period as they move towards a culminating assessment. McTighe and Wiggins, however, do not assert that the model in *Understanding by Design* should be applied on a more succinct basis.

The developmental progression of curriculum design has led to widespread favor of the backward planning method. This framework supports the researchers' philosophy that high-quality curriculum should indeed be developed by focusing on the standard (desired outcome) first, followed by the assessment (acceptable evidence) and thereafter, not before, the instructional activities. Such frameworks almost exclusively tout the effectiveness of Unit planning over extended periods of time. The researchers believe that their unique style of curriculum development on a weekly basis acutely zeros in on the standards, assessments and activities. The research within attempts to explore how this process will positively impact student academic achievement.

Methodology

Through numerous professional development workshops and conferences, teachers were trained by the researchers to develop and document curriculum using a weekly planning template and identifying the specific planning details for each day and period of instruction.

	Class:	Class:	Class:	Class:
Standards and Benchmarks				
Assessment				
Activities				

Step 1: Identify Standards or Benchmarks for the Week

To begin the process, teachers must identify and choose the standard which will be explicitly taught and assessed for that particular week. Once identified, teachers were given the liberty to modify the standard or benchmark to ensure it truly represented what would be explicitly addressed during the week. For example, if the standard chosen was: "Students can add and subtract two-digit numbers with regrouping," but the teacher knew they would only be able to cover addition during the week, they would cross out the part that would not be covered. Therefore, the standard would look like this: "Students can add and subtract two-digit numbers with regrouping." The purpose for allowing this change helped teachers be meticulous about what the objective was for the week. Additionally, teachers were also encouraged to add specific detail to the standard where appropriate. For instance, if the standard was, "Students are able to isolate and pronounce the initial, medial vowel, and final sounds (phonemes) in three-phoneme (consonant-vowel-consonant, or CVC) words," teachers were encouraged to add the specific words the students would be working with during the week.

For example, "Students are able to isolate and pronounce the initial, medial vowel, and final sounds (phonemes) in three-phoneme (consonant-vowel-consonant, or CVC) words." (*bat, cat, sat, mat, rat, fat and hat*). Again, this addendum to the standard was purposeful in order to hone in on the precise goal for the week.

Step 2: Choose Assessments to Appropriately Address Standards

This step in the process ensures teachers are critically evaluating and deciding what evidence can be garnered that will demonstrate student proficiency towards the objectives. Teachers have full autonomy over which assessments they choose. The only constraint is that there must be clear and direct linkage between the assessments and the standards.

Each assessment piece is directly linked to the standard to ensure it will give rich information regarding student progress. Simply giving a "Chapter Test", perhaps provided by a textbook, where some of the questions could relate to the standards being addressed but others do not, as the assessment piece would not suffice. However, a summative test designed by the teacher which included specific questions that targeted specific standards addressed would be acceptable. Additionally, formative assessments which were directly linked were also acceptable. The rigidity of the expectations for standards-assessments linkage was purposeful. By reinforcing this, teachers must think critically about the standard and appropriate assessments; ultimately, this ensures teachers have a clearer vision of the objectives they want students to attain during the week, and, specifically, what to observe to analyze their progress.

Step 3: Plan Activities and Learning Experiences

Teachers are now able to creatively plan instructional strategies, activities and necessary resources for student learning. During this stage, teachers want to explicitly provide teaching and learning opportunities which will best prepare students to demonstrate their acquired knowledge or skills

Standards and Benchmarks	3.MD.A.1 – Draw a picture graph and scaled bar graph to represent a data set with several categories.
Assessments	• Exit slip – pictograph class's favorite color • Draw a scaled bar graph using the data from class's favorite team • 1-1 conference with student discussing pictograph

on the assessments. Again, the activities and assessments must be linked. As in the example below, the researchers believe detailed planning encourages teachers to provide more succinct, focused and powerful learning experiences.

Step 4: Submitting Weekly Curriculum Document and Feedback

The final step of the process was for teachers to submit their weekly curriculum document to administrators for feedback. Administrators provided weekly feedback directly on the curriculum document and set up bi-weekly meetings to guide accordingly. Ongoing guidance and feedback from the researchers (administrators of the school) ensured that teachers gained valuable pedagogical experience and developed clear expectations of the process.

Data Collection & Sampling

For the purpose of this research, the authors decided to measure the effect of our weekly, standards-based curriculum documentation process using a selection of internationally-recognized, valid, reliable and research-proven student learning assessments: the NWEA Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), the College Board Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), and College Board Advanced Placement (AP) exams. Analysis involved the researchers collecting the following data for inclusion in this study:

1. Comparison of average grade-level MAP scores to the NWEA international norms

2. Comparison of average SAT scores to international averages published by College Board

3. Total number of passing scores on AP exams in comparison to the prior school year

4. Percentage of passing scores on AP exams for our school in comparison to the percentages achieved in the Dominican Republic and the global averages

The sample groups of students consist of grade levels between Kindergarten and 12th Grade. Due to enrollment changes, there were small changes in the makeup of each grade; nonetheless the data were collected by the average score of each grade level for that testing period.

Results

The researchers aimed to measure how this unique curriculum design approach would directly impact student learning and gathered evidence of improved academic performance on standardized tests including MAP, SAT and AP assessments. The results indicate that over the five-year period from 2015 to 2019, students made considerable gains and showed consistent growth in performance on all standardized tests (MAP, SAT and AP).

Discussion

Given the sustained, consistent increase in student achievement results on theses assessments throughout the years of this study, the researchers have identified a clear connection between these results and the intervention implemented at the onset of the study: implementing a unique and systematized version of weekly curriculum planning and documenting which is based on recognized learning standards (Common Core, Aero, and NGSS) and aligned with the backwards planning process. Future studies may be conducted to continue validating the results of the researcher's work and to determine its potential to be replicated in different settings, with different groups of students and teachers.

Conclusion

The action research conducted in this study confirmed the researchers' hypothesis: implementation of a comprehensive curriculum planning process and documentation thereof, utilizing a unique weekly format following the sequence of identifying first the standard, then assessment, and finally the instructional activities, would result in more focused teaching and learning practices, and, ultimately, improved academic performance.

| Standards and Benchmarks	3.MD.A.1 – Draw a picture graph and scaled bar graph to represent a data set with several categories.
Assessments	• Exit slip – pictograph class's favorite color • Draw a scaled bar graph using the data from class's favorite team • 1-1 conference with student discussing pictograph
Activities	I Do – We Do – You Do • Model constructing a bar graph, explaining parts of a bar graph (axis, titles, units of measurement, etc.) and how to use the data set to create a scale and label parts of the graph • Teacher and students construct a bar graph • Students construct a bar graph with guidance from teacher • Students independently construct a bar graph

Measure of Academic Progress (MAP)
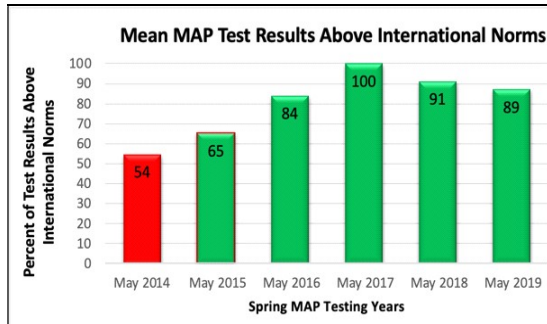
Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT)
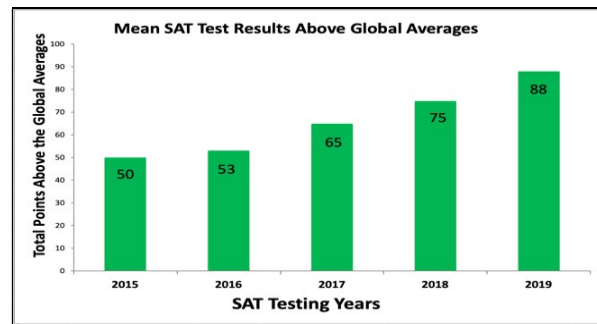
Advanced Placement
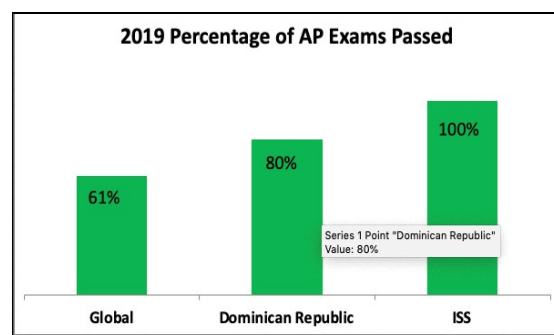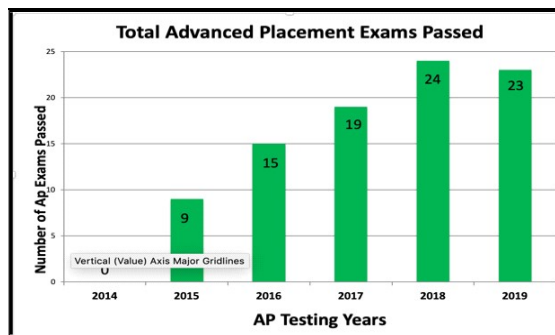
The research question, "Can highly-focused curriculum documentation increase student learning?" was answered affirmatively by annual, significant increase in the achievement results on MAP, SAT and AP. The research question, "Does developing curriculum in a manner tightly-aligned to academic standards and aligned vertically from one grade level to another improve student learning?" was also affirmed by the aforementioned positive results of the standardized assessments. Though the limitations presented by the study occurring only within one school with one sample set of students and teachers, the action research conducted supports the researchers' original theory. To further validate results, the researchers should consider expanding the scope and duration of the activities in new school settings.

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Does Organizational Culture Affect Employee Happiness?

By Laura Ficarra, Ed.D., Michael J. Rubino, Ed.D., and Elsa-Sofia Morote, Ed.D.

Abstract

This study was conducted to determine the effect of organizational culture on employee happiness. A self-reported survey examined organizational culture and the levels of employee happiness at work. For this study, 59 employed top leaders, management, and workers of faith-based higher education institutions were surveyed to measure the effect of organizational culture on employee happiness. Factor analysis was performed to create a variable to evaluate organizational culture (the reliability for organizational culture was 92.8%). The happiness at work variable was divided into two groups (happy and unhappy) based on a specific response. An independent sample t-test and descriptive statistics were conducted. The data were split to compare groups and descriptive frequencies were analyzed. Organizational culture was found to be statistically significant on employee happiness. An item-by-item analysis was performed. The results indicate that unhappy employees have the highest disagreement in statements such as "coworkers being nonjudgmental" (66.7%), "leaders are aware of the needs of others" (38%), and "leaders are humble and do not promote themselves" (50%). However, happy employees unanimously responded to most items. Therefore, happy people were more likely to be more consistent. The mean for happy people was 76.48 with a standard deviation of 9.56. The mean for unhappy people at work was 58.22 with a standard deviation of 15.33. This study was highly statistically significant with a p value of 0.00.

Introduction

If asked, most people probably would not immediately associate "happiness" with "work" and yet, happiness at work may be the key to happiness in general. Creative types have long subscribed to this notion. Confucius was among the first to make the connection between choosing a job you love, and how that will make you feel like you never worked a day in your life (Ware, 1955). Thomas Edison echoed these sentiments and claimed, "I never did a day's work in my life, it was all fun" (Ford & Edison, 2004, p. 22). More recently, the late Steve Jobs (2005) put his own spin on it by saying, "The only way to do great work is to love what you do," (p. 3). In all three cases, the message is clear: Happiness at work equals happiness in life.

Sounds simple, right? So, what is the problem? For starters, philosophers, inventors, and technological wizards make up a minuscule percentage of the workforce, and secondly, it seems likely that most of us would earn very little money doing only what we love. The great Russian writer, Maxim Gorky (1956) once quipped, "When work is a pleasure, life is a joy! When work is a duty, life is slavery;" but what is not reflected in this statement is the five years he spent travelling the countryside on foot, his failed suicide attempt, or plethora of odd jobs he took before becoming a literary sensation (p. 14). It seems likely that most of us have no choice but to work, and unfortunately, few of us love our jobs to the degree the distinguished gentlemen above did. We may love certain aspects of our chosen vocations, but a more reasonable expectation would be that we like our jobs and earn enough to make a comfortable living. The question remains then: Can we be happy at work?

According to Muchinsky (2000), "we spend more of our lives engaged at work than any other single activity" (p. 801). It is important to realize how much of our life is tied to work. There are 168 hours in a week, and after subtracting the recommended 8 hours of sleep per night, 112 hours remain. Of those, 40 would constitute an average work-week. Additionally, 25 minutes is now the average one-way commute according to the U.S. Census Bureau, and this translates to nearly an hour a day round-trip in work-related transit. After further factoring in the amount of time it takes to get ready for work, almost half our waking hours, and in some cases, more, are spent preparing for, commuting to, and being at work. It is probably more time than we will get to spend with family and friends combined. With so much of ourselves invested, more research on this matter is necessary for employers and employees to know what influences employee happiness.

Workplace happiness impacts employees' overall happiness (Money et al., 2009). In a recent study, a spillover-crossover model was conducted to examine if there is a connection between being engaged at work and being happy at home. The study found a "clear bidirectional crossover" of daily happiness at work affecting the happiness level at home, therefore going beyond the work setting and beyond the employee (Rodriguez-Munoz et al., 2013).

Moreover, happiness has been attributed to better overall health (Frederickson, 1998). Happiness has been linked with an increase in one's lifespan and quality of life including decreased symptoms of pain (Cohen & Pressman, 2006). Additionally, one's physical health, social functioning, and coping strategies have been positively impacted when one is happy (Pressman & Cohen, 2005). According to Barbara Fredrickson (1998), happiness can even play a role in reducing illnesses like coronary disease and some cancers. Happiness not only improves well-being over time but also produces psychological growth (Fredrickson, 2001).

This study provides a contribution to the body of knowledge concerning the theory of happiness by meeting the need for additional empirical research to develop fully the concept and construct of happiness as it relates to employment. Research states that most people express positive satisfaction with their work due to several variables (Diener & Diener, 1996). This paper will examine employee happiness and the variable organizational culture. The variable organizational culture is pertinent in this study because there has been a direct link between organizational culture and happiness (Fisher, 2010). It is therefore essential to understand the relationship between organizational culture and happiness.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine how organizational culture influences employee happiness at faith-based higher education institutions. This study is necessary to increase an awareness of the importance of job happiness. Job happiness has many benefits for employees and employers alike. It has a positive impact on the success of a business, for instance, when companies have a reputation for being a desirable place to work, market value increases by 1.8 percent (Tobias, 2000). Additionally, employee happiness impacts a company's financial performance, employee retention, higher quality of customer service, and subsequently customer loyalty (Harter et al., 2010).

This study operationally defines organizational culture as a workplace environment, trust in the workplace and feeling appreciated. A study that determined the reason African American males were more likely to leave their university found that the university culture was not making them feel valued and the university possessed a negative environment and increased their feelings of isolation (Wolfe & Dilworth, 2015). Those are a few factors that negatively impacted the university culture. Sense of appreciation and gratitude fosters a high-performance team committed to growth and success, improves organizational culture, and increases happiness and motivation among employees (Riordan, 2013). "Organizational culture strongly affects not only the functioning of an organization but also its interactions with its environment" (Yesilkagit, 2004, p. 547).

Statement of the Problem

How does organizational culture differentiate between happy and unhappy employees at faith-based higher education institutions in the United States?

Definitions of Major Variable and Terms

The following variables and terms are explained as used throughout this study.

Happiness at Work

"Happiness is the experience of frequent, mildly pleasant emotions, the relative absence of unpleasant feelings, and a general feeling of satisfaction with one's life" (Biswas-Diener & Dean, 2007). According to Wright (2006), "job satisfaction became the most commonly used measure for determining job happiness" (p. 272).

Faith-Based Higher Education Institution

Faith-based higher education institution refers to the religious colleges and universities where participants in this study worked.

Organizational Culture

The organizational culture encompasses the environment of a company that includes social relations with management and colleagues in terms of trust and a sense of appreciation (Zak, 2017; Gibson et al., 2020). Sense of appreciation as per this study is the validation one feels within the organization in the form of praise and recognition.

Theoretical Framework

Happiness has been the topic of over three thousand journal articles, 16,000 books, and one million websites that can be found on happiness today by doing a simple Google search. A large combined literature now exists on the causes of happiness (Ferrer-i-Carbonell & Frijters, 2004). The evolution of happiness can be linked to one of the pioneers of positive psychology, Martin Seligman (Forgeard et al., 2011). Subject well-being (SWB) was the term used to describe a global sense of satisfaction with life particularly in the areas of work, marriage and other domains (Myers & Diener, 1995). Social, cultural, and psychological indicators of personal happiness have made significant empirical advances from the SWB literature (Feist et al., 1995). SWB is based on hedonic happiness, which is a temporary form of happiness that is superficial and not long lasting (Diener et al., 2006).

Emotional wellbeing (EWB) is also another conceptualization of happiness. EWB supports the eudemonism philosophy that consists of one's life having a sense of meaning and purpose, the pursuit of excellence and intense involvement in activities (Waterman, 1993).

Later, EWB was incorporated with Maslow's self-actualization explaining psychological well-being to include self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life and personal growth (Ryff et al., 2003).

In the mid 2000's, positive organizational behavior (POB) describes the positive constructs that exist within organizations that produce job satisfaction, commitment, job happiness, and prosocial behaviors within that organization (Youssef & Luthans, 2007).

According to Meyers and Diener (1995), work adds a sense of community and helps people increase their pride and sense of belonging to a group, cultivating their social identity. In a recent study, EWB was identified by participants as stability, coping ability, happiness, confidence and empathy and emphasized a need for promoting a sense of belonging (Coverdale & Long, 2015). In yet another recent study, well-being is positively correlated with belonging, connectedness, and interdependence (Hammell, 2014). According to another recent study, a sense of belonging increases meaning in one's life (Lambert et al., 2015). Based on these disparate studies, it is obvious that a sense of belonging is a key component to happiness.

"People who are happier achieve better life outcomes, including financial success, supportive relationships, mental health, effective coping, and even physical health and longevity" (Cohn et al., 2009, p. 361). However, money was not found to be an important indicator for happiness (Cheng et al., 2013; Ferrer-i-Carbonell & Frijters, 2004). Subsequently, if money is not an indicator of happiness as per Ferrer-i-Carbonell and Frijters and Cheng et al., then what is? This study will examine the potential indicators that are meaningful to organizational culture and happiness.

According to Diener and Diener (1996), "most people are happy and their environment can produce lasting differences in SWB" (p. 185). An organization gains competitive efficiency by increasing employee satisfaction (Parvin & Kabir, 2011). An organization's culture impacts employees' happiness. In a study measuring teacher-librarians' job satisfaction, there was a strong systematic relationship between job happiness and job environment (Kwan, 1992). However, Kwan found no relationship between personal needs and job happiness. This, therefore, indicates the importance of organizational culture. Lok and Crawford's (2003) study confirmed that organizational culture and leadership styles are important antecedents of job happiness and commitment. Their study found organizational culture and commitment to be statistically significant on job happiness (Lok & Crawford, 2003). Furthermore, a study conducted with nurses in Taiwan, found that "direct working environment was a statistically significant predictor of nurses' intention to quit and affected both their job satisfaction and job happiness" (Lok & Crawford, 2003, p. 876).

Organizational culture includes trust in management and supportive relationships within the organization. These factors matter to employees. Employees value trust in management more than monetary income by 30% (Helliwell & Huang, 2011). Supervisor support and coworker team support were both statistically significant predictors of employee happiness and employee retention (Jacob et al., 2008). Furthermore, a recent study found that coworker and supervisory relationships affected happiness (Kittipichai et al., 2014). In short, organizational culture has no doubt proven to have a direct influence on happiness, but there are other factors to consider.

In a recent study, formal organizational performance appraisals were highly correlated with job happiness and organizational commitment (Youssef & Luthans, 2007). Fisher recommends that organizations that wish to improve happiness at work provide recognition to employees (Fisher, 2010). Therefore, by simply praising employees, you can increase happiness and gain organizational commitment.

A meta-analysis done on employee work perceptions found a strong relationship between employees' global satisfaction with a company and feeling recognized (Harter et al., 2010). The importance of feeling appreciated cannot be understated for an employee. In an article that discussed the correlation between job satisfaction and market value, 12 questions were linked as predictors for high employee satisfaction, retention, productivity, profitability, and high customer satisfaction, and among them was; "In the last seven days, have I received recognition or praise for good work?" (Tobias, 2000, p. 101). Apparently, employers will also greatly benefit from giving their employees a sense of appreciation.

A significant correlation was found between work motivation and satisfaction with reward and recognition and impact on employee motivation (Danish & Usman, 2010). Therefore, if recognition is increased, motivation is increased.

According to Danish and Usman (2010), if motivation is increased, so is performance and the best performance was found with committed employees and was achieved only through employee motivation. Organizational commitment increases employee performance, enhances loyalty to the organization, reduces stress and promotes happiness at work (Sadoughi, & Ebrahimi, 2015).

Employee turnover and lack of employee retention adversely affects an organization (Eseme Gberevbie, 2010). First, let us look at what we know impacts employee retention. Recently, a study examining bullying found that both job engagement and satisfaction hindered employee turnover (Trepanier et al., 2015). Therefore, even under less than favorable circumstances, if one is happy at work, one would be more inclined to stay. Happiness affects one's perception, interpretation, and appraisals of organizational environment and to maximize this, organizations should create respectful and supportive organizational culture (Fisher, 2009). The main reason skilled employees leave organizations are due to poor relations with managers, lack of appreciation, recognition and rewards, and lack of connectedness within the organization

(Muteswa & Ortlepp, 2011). Organizational culture, especially environment and a sense of appreciation are more prominent indicators of employee retention. Compensation and benefit packages may also be indicators of employee retention, but work environment and culture likewise have a great bearing on whether or not an employee remains with an organization (Lesabe & Nkosi, 2007).

Employee happiness is our primary concern for many reasons. Employee happiness may promote health since positive emotions may be linked to preventing disease and illness (Fredrickson, 1998). Also, according to Lyubomirsky et al. (2005), happy people are successful and flourishing people.

Employers benefit from employee happiness from greater performance and productivity (Fisher, 2010). Happy people are more productive; therefore, organizations can benefit by improving work environments and facilitating unhappy employees to become happier (Zelenski, 2008). The happier and more positive toward their organization an employee is, the greater the quality of customer service (Harter et al., 2010). Happy employees are more likely to produce long-term organizational success and sustain high performance over time and deliver key results (Kerns, 2010). Boehm and Lyubomirsky (2008) found that happy employees outperform unhappy employees.

Nonetheless, organizations can improve employee happiness. A New Zealand study examined an employer's proactive steps to improve work conditions:

Three organization-wide surveys were conducted over a 3-year period within the New Zealand Customs Service to determine the influence of perceived job conditions on individual and organizational health outcomes. Staff retention and employee satisfaction significantly improved over time and these increases were attributable to workplace improvements. Stable predictors of job satisfaction included minor daily stressors, positive work experiences, job control, and perceived supervisor support (Mansell et al., 2006, p. 84).

Most of those predictors could be classified as organizational culture, subsequently confirming that organizations can improve their employee happiness by changing their culture. Moreover, improve their service quality. The importance for employers to improve their employee happiness cannot be stated enough.

Happiness at the workplace is crucial for improving productivity in any organization. Happy people are productive people while those people who are unhappy may not pay full attention to any task. Some scholars believe that organizations which are able to maintain long-term happiness at the workplace could probably increase and sustain productivity. Therefore, they should know what factors could affect employee happiness in order to effectively enhance happiness at the workplace (Wesarat et al., 2015, p.78).

Based on the aforementioned studies, happiness at work is important for both employers and employees alike, but more significantly, has proven to be attainable through minor adjustments to the various aspects that make up an organization. Many, such as praise, cost very little, but can help foster commitment towards an organization, and in turn, enrich the quality of an employee's life. It also stands to reason that a happy person will be far more likely to remain with an organization than an unhappy person. Work adds focus and purpose, sense of belonging to a group, which helps people construct their social identity (Myers & Diener, 1995).

Research and Methodology

Participants

There were 59 respondents, inclusive of 29 workers (49% of participants) and 30 leaders and managers (51% of participants) at faith-based higher education institutions in the United States. A randomized sample of about 3300 of e-mail participants were identified and invited to participate through Survey Monkey. 68 responded of which only 59 were deemed usable. This yielded a two percent response rate.

Instruments

These data were taken from a larger study as investigated by Michael J. Rubino (2012) entitled, "Descriptions of Organizational Servant Leadership Practices, Job Satisfaction, and Organizational Commitment at Faith-Based Higher Education Institutions." This study was conducted in 2011-2012 at Dowling College in Oakdale, New York. Rubino (2012) surveyed leaders, managers and workers at faith-based higher education institutions in the United States. All 84 items pertaining to Rubino's Organizational Leadership Assessment (OLA) survey were considered for this study. A 5-point Likert Scale (1 Strongly Disagree, 2 Disagree, 3 Undecided, 4 Agree, 5 Strongly Agree) survey was administered to participants.

Methods

A quantitative study using descriptive statistics was conducted for this study. After defining organizational culture, the researchers selected the items from Rubino's (2012) survey that measures organizational culture. All 84 items pertaining to Rubino's Organizational Leadership Assessment (OLA) survey were considered for this study but only the items in **Table 1** were used for this study. Additionally, this study examined people who were "happy" at work as compared to "unhappy" at work and its relationship to organizational culture. The dependent variable (Instrument of Survey Questionnaire) was Item 79 suggested by Maria Pepey (personal communication) "I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization" (Rubino, 2012, p. 84). Participants who were unhappy were taken from all who answered 1 (strongly disagree) and 2 (disagree) on the survey. Participants who were happy answered 4 (agree) and 5 (strongly agree) on the survey.

Results

How organizational culture differentiates between happy and unhappy employees at faith-based higher education institutions in the United States was determined. A factor analysis was performed to evaluate the items seeking underlying unobservable items that are reflected in the organizational culture variable. After selecting the items that best fit our organizational culture concepts, the reliability was 92.8% (**Table 2**). Out of 84 items, 16 items were selected since they met the definition of the variables used in this study which were organizational culture which also include happiness, trust, and sense of appreciation (Zak, 2017; Gibson et al., 2020).

Table 3 displays an item analysis before the t-test which was normally distributed for both variables.

An independent-sample t-test (**Table 4**) and descriptive statistics were conducted. An independent-sample

Table 1

Organizational Culture

Item Number	Dependent Variable
1	Trust each other
3	Non-judgmental
4	Respect each other
6	Maintain high ethical standards
8	Value differences in culture, race & ethnicity
9	Are caring & compassionate towards each other
10	Demonstrate high integrity & honesty
11	Are trustworthy
12	Relate well to each other
15	Are aware of the needs of others
48	Are humble—they do not promote themselves
56	I am working at a high level of productivity
58	I feel good about my contribution to the organization
60	My job is important to the success of the organization
64	I am able to be creative in my job
66	I am able to use my best gifts and abilities in my job

Note. All Items from Rubino's dissertation

Table 2

Reliability

Reliability Statistics	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
	.928	16

t-test was conducted to evaluate the hypothesis that organizational culture in faith-based higher education institutions differs between happy employees and unhappy employees. The test was highly statistically significant, p= 0.00. However, happy employees unanimously responded to most items. Therefore, happy people were more likely to be more consistent. Organizational culture scores were higher for happy employees (M = 76.48, SD = 9.56), than unhappy employees (M = 58.22, SD = 15.30). The 95% confidence interval for the difference in means ranged from -26.42 to -9.88. The reliability was 92.8% (**Table 4**). Descriptive statistics were conducted using an item-by-item analysis (**Table 3**).

Table 3

Item Analysis

Item Number	Dependent Variable	n	M	SD
1	Trust each other	59	3.86.	.89
3	Non-judgmental	59	3.42	1.14
4	Respect each other	59	4.00	.80
6	Maintain high ethical standards	59	4.13	.95
8	Value differences in culture, race & ethnicity	59	4.18	.88
9	Are caring & compassionate towards each other	59	4.10	.84
10	Demonstrate high integrity & honesty	59	4.22	.85
11	Are trustworthy	59	4.15	.86
12	Relate well to each other	59	3.79	.84
15	Are aware of the needs of others	59	3.81	1.02
48	Are humble—they do not promote themselves	59	3.62	1.15
56	I am working at a high level of productivity	59	4.06	.63
58	I feel good about my contribution to the organization	59	4.13	.73
60	My job is important to the success of the organization	59	4.10	.90
64	I am able to be creative in my job	59	4.13	.77
66	I am able to use my best gifts and abilities in my job	59	4.01	.99

Note. All Items from Rubino's dissertation. Before *t*-test, normal distribution was tested and both variables were normally distributed.

Table 4

Organizational Culture on Employee Happiness

Q 79 Happy/unhappy	n	M	SD	SEM	*t*	*df*	*p*
Organizational Culture							
1. Unhappy at work	18	58.33	15.30	3.61	-4.52	25.33	0.00
2. Happy at work	29	76.48	9.56	1.78			

Happy employees only disagree 3.4% to 10.3% for the rest of the statements of organizational culture, whereas unhappy employees went from 11% to 67% of disagreement found in **Table 5**. The highest level of disagreement (disagree plus strongly disagree) is the statement of their colleagues being "non-judgmental," this has a 66.7% of disagreement (disagree plus strongly disagree) from unhappy employees versus only 6.9% for happy employees (**Table 5**). Unhappy employees are in disagreement (disagree and strongly disagree) with the statement "leaders are humble - they do not promote themselves" by 50%. 38.9% of unhappy employees disagree with the statement "are aware of the needs of others" and 33.3% disagree with the statement "trust each other." Therefore, unhappy employees not only had the highest number of discrepancies between all items but also the greatest disparity between those items.

This shows how unhappy employees expressed discontent in their responses as shown in **Table 5**.

However, according to **Table 5**, all happy employees unanimously agree with most of the statements like "respect each other," "maintain high ethical standards," "value differences in culture, race and ethnicity," "are caring and compassionate towards each other," "demonstrate high integrity and honesty," "I am working at a high level of productivity," "I feel good about my contribution to the organization," "My job is important to the success of the organization," and "I am able to be creative in my job." Unhappy employees disagreed by about 20% to the following statements; "respect each other," "maintain high ethical standards," "value differences in culture, race, and ethnicity," "are caring and compassionate towards each other," "demonstrate high integrity

Table 5

Organizational Culture Item Frequency Analysis: Differences Between Happy and Unhappy Groups

Item Number	Dependent Variable	Unhappy Strongly Disagree and Disagree	Happy Strongly agree and Agree
1	Trust each other	33.3%	6.9%
3	Non-judgmental	66.7%	6.9%
4	Respect each other	22.2%	0%
6	Maintain high ethical standards	22.2%	0%
8	Value differences in culture, race & ethnicity	22.2%	0%
9	Are caring & compassionate towards each other	16.7%	0%
10	Demonstrate high integrity & honesty	22.2%	0%
11	Are trustworthy	27.8%	0%
12	Relate well to each other	27.8%	6.9%
15	Are aware of the needs of others	38.9%	6.9%
48	Are humble—they do not promote themselves	50%	10.3%
56	I am working at a high level of productivity	5.6%	0%
58	I feel good about my contribution to the organization	11.1%	0%
60	My job is important to the success of the organization	16.7%	0%
64	I am able to be creative in my job	16.7%	0%
66	I am able to use my best gifts and abilities in my job	27.8%	3.4%

Note. All Items from Rubino's dissertation

and honesty," "are trustworthy," "relate well to each other," "my job is important to the success of the organization." "I am able to be creative in my job," and "I am able to use my best gifts and abilities in my job." Their consistency demonstrates a high level of agreeability among happy employees which was not prevalent in unhappy employees. Thus, suggesting that happy employees are more prone to displaying solidarity in their responses. Whereas, unhappy employees displayed profound amounts of discontent.

Conclusion

Employee happiness is a primary concern for many reasons. First of all, happier people have been shown to be psychologically healthier than unhappy people (Fredrickson, 2001; Pressman & Cohen, 2005). Happiness at work also impacts our physical health (Frederickson, 1998). On average, happy employees are more financially successful than unhappy employees (Cohn et al., 2009). Notably, happy employees are, overall, more successful than unhappy employees (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005). Their job and its organizational culture satisfies them, not only on a work-related level but also on a social level, where positive interactions with coworkers often manifest into friendships, create a team mentality, and increase their sense of community and sense of belonging (Hammell, 2014; Jacob et al., 2008; Kittipichai et al., 2014; Meyers & Diener, 1995).

Organizational culture and employee happiness are of utmost importance to the company too, because of the symbiotic nature of the employee/employer relationship. Studies have found that happier employees are more motivated and outperform unhappy employees (Danish & Usman, 2010). Happier employees demonstrate a higher quality of customer service, which increases customer loyalty, and positively impacts a company's financial performance (Harter et al., 2010). Happier employees are likewise more likely to stay with a company (Harter et al., 2010; Jacob et al., 2008; Lok & Crawford, 2003). A happy employee's positive outlook also shapes the organizational culture of a company by helping to provide a more pleasant work environment. In short, the happiness of an employee can affect the business's success. This alone is reason enough to merit more research on how to achieve a positive organizational culture that increases employee happiness at work.

The results indicate that unhappy employees have the highest disagreement in statements such as "coworkers being nonjudgmental" (676.7%), "leaders are aware of the needs of others" (38%), and "leaders are humble and do not promote themselves" (50%). These findings are similar to the findings in other studies that have found both supervisor and coworker support and relationships predict employee happiness (Jacob et al., 2008; Kittipichai et al., 2014; and Lok & Crawford, 2003).

Overall, the happiness of a single employee has a wide-ranging reach. It can either positively or negatively affect many people, including the family of that particular employee (Rodriguez-Munoz et al., 2013). Furthermore, most of our lives are spent at work (Muchinsky, 2000). Therefore, when we take into account the endless hours we spend at work and work-related activities, it is imperative that we are as happy as we can be at work to improve our overall well-being.

Limitations

Since the data collected were self-reported, there exists a possibility of response bias. Despite this limitation of collecting self-reported data, behavioral or experimental data on happiness would not be practical or even a viable solution.

Recommendations for Future Research

Gender was not examined in this study. However, gender differences have been found when examining employee happiness while examining financial and nonfinancial variables that impact happiness especially with trust (Helliwell & Huanng, 2011). Therefore, future research should examine gender differences in employee happiness using the variables in this study. Furthermore, studies should be done in non-faith-based institutions in higher education to compare to this faith-based study. Studies examining other levels of schooling such as elementary school, middle school, and high school can be conducted, as well as examining both faith-based and non-faith based elementary, middle school, and high school.

Recommendations to the World

Although organizational culture has been found to affect employee happiness, more research should be done on the other variables that affect employee happiness since happiness has been proven to improve business.

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From the Field: Practical Applications of Research

Is 'Just More Than Trivial' the Best We Can Do?

By Kate Anderson Foley, Ph.D.

Abstract

This is not a legal brief. This is an article written by a special education expert who has witnessed the very best and the very worst education has to offer. This article is meant to serve as a springboard for examining what is meant by education for all, high expectations, schools as laboratories for innovation, high caliber academic and social emotional learning, and comprehensive data systems used to gauge growth. This article advocates for the use of a higher standard because children with disabilities are general education students first and they deserve the very best education has to offer. I encourage readers to refer to legal articles and state and local education agency definitions of the standard used to determine a Free Appropriate Public Education or a FAPE under the Individuals With Disabilities Act [IDEA].

Introduction

In 2017, the Supreme Court (SC) decided 8-0 the case of Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District RE-1. Depending on one's perspective, the ruling was hailed for raising the standard of education for the wide spectrum of children with disabilities or it had little impact. Consider that it wasn't until the 1982 Rowley decision that state education agencies and local school districts had to wrestle with what a free appropriate public education or FAPE meant. The Rowley standard required school districts to offer an individualized education program [IEP] that was 'appropriate' and 'reasonably calculated to enable a child to receive educational benefits such as earning passing grades and grade advancement. But the Rowley decision did not substantively address the 'how' for determining whether a FAPE was met.

Further, the Court did not address the wide continuum of students served under the Individuals with Disabilities Act [IDEA]. Instead, the Court held that an IEP only needed to provide some benefit meaning a *de minimis* standard or a '*just more than trivial'* education. Hence, because an IEP is the vehicle for a FAPE, school districts and state education agencies should recognize the shifts detailed in Endrew F. and advocate for a higher standard so that students served under the IDEA are insured equitable opportunities.

Outcomes

When the Supreme Court decided the Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District RE-1 case, it ushered in a broader vision by writing, "to meet its substantive obligation under the IDEA, a school must offer an IEP that is reasonably calculated to enable a child to make progress appropriate in light of the child's circumstances; and, that "every child should have the chance to meet challenging objectives." As a result, the shift from a basic floor of education (*de minimis*) to being held accountable for substantive progress was viewed by many to have answered the question about the wide continuum of children served under the IDEA. Whereas Rowley was educated for the most part in the regular education setting, Endrew required more intensive academic and behavioral services. Thus, regardless of where a child sat on the continuum of disability, the SCOTUS decision ushered in clear criteria that state education agencies, local school districts, charter schools, and other education organizations must consider. The new standard includes the following features:

- Address the child's potential for growth

- Implement an IEP that is reasonably calculated to enable the child to make progress in light of h/his circumstances

- Develop an IEP aligned to challenging standards

- Use a variety of data sources to determine the amount of progress

- Determine a FAPE via multiple data sources

- In order to meet this higher standard, each feature has been translated into an ethical and legal consideration.

- Set high, non-negotiable, expectations for all adults who serve children under IDEA

- Provide deep professional development focused on equitable systems of support

- Make the I in Individual Education Program (IEP) the driver

- Develop a cogent and prospective IEP

- Implement a comprehensive data system

Commentary

First, it is paramount for educators, families, and board members to understand that the federal education law, *The Every Student Succeeds Act*, encompasses the needs of ALL children, meaning that a student with a disability is a general education student first. Thus it is incumbent upon state education agencies to set the tone and communicate high expectation for students' learning and for teachers' teaching. It also means local school districts and charter schools must set asset-based policies that recognize the wide spectrum of learners and implement effective practices that result in tangible measures of growth. Relentless implementation of high expectations benefits all children including those served under the IDEA because a meaningful and substantive opportunity will have been provided rather than a 'just more than trivial' education.

Second, teacher preparation programs and licensure systems must change. Teachers should come out of college with a dual license as a generalist and a specialist in order to design and facilitate learning across the wide array of student profiles. For example, leveraging personalized and project-based learning, universal design, artificial intelligence, cultural, linguistic, and social emotionally responsive practices can effectuate the needed change.

Third, since an IEP is the vehicle for a FAPE, it must be individualized at the deepest level. It doesn't mean that IEPs become longer; rather, the converse could be true. Specifically, future-oriented IEPs should be developed with a laser-focus on results-based, specially designed instruction and accountability measures that demonstrate substantive progress. Further, the local school district has the responsibility of drafting an ambitious and cogent IEP, thus the fourth standard can be appropriately addressed when multiple sources of data are used.

A comprehensive data system widely implemented across an asset-based education system would benefit all students while also meeting the critical requirement of determining meaningful progress under the IDEA. Finally, by implementing a comprehensive data system that is, nimble and transparent for how students learn, teachers can leverage better information that can be used to plan and facilitate learning and families can become more engaged. In turn, the IEP process can become more authentic and progress toward achieving challenging goals measured more accurately.

Conclusion

So why does all this matter? It matters because for the past forty-three years, children served under the IDEA have experienced their education via a parallel system. Shifting from a 'test and place' framework to an asset-based system that asks, 'How is the student smart?' is hard work but this author would argue is the right work. Furthermore, that is precisely how schools become labs of innovation and where students become owners of their education. Think how the trajectory of a child's life can change when potential is considered expansively rather than limited by low expectations and labels. Think about the number of children who came to school and whose background or circumstance resulted in being inadequately prepared for learning. For many of these children, they get mistakenly labeled as disabled and endure a *'just more than trivial'* education. Is that really the best we can do? The Supreme Court of the United States determined it wasn't. While we wait for the reauthorization of the IDEA reauthorized to occur, states, local districts, and charter schools should become the authors of audacious change that focuses on the assets students exhibit for continuous learning.

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Book Review:

The Signals are Talking:
Why Today's Fringe is Tomorrow's Mainstream

Forecast and Take Action on Tomorrow's Trends, Today

- by Amy Webb
- Reviewed by Richard Bernato, Ed.D.

There is an apocryphal story about the Great Hall in England's Oxford University that reflects the soul of Webb's book: According to atlasobscura.com, one of Oxford's first colleges built in 1379, was home to a huge dining hall. Its high roof had been constructed with huge oaken beams, measuring two feet square and forty-five feet long. About a century ago an entomologist climbed to the beams for inspection. To his dismay he found that the beams were infested by wood chomping beetles whose feast would soon doom the hall's roof. The Oxford Fellows were rightfully dismayed and wondered how they could replace these huge timbers. On consulting with the Royal Forester, the forester responded by saying "I was wonderin' when you'd be askin."

It seems that his predecessor, five-hundred years before, anticipated the inevitable victimhood of these timbers to the insects. He had planted a stand of oak trees then so that when the roof had to be replaced, the needed huge timbers would be ready for the future they had projected five centuries ahead.

That is what I call futuring, the act of weighing emerging and probable futures, and considering their outcomes against an organization's preferable futures. This is the sum of Amy Webb's excellent book. It offers guidance for how to read potential futures, and more importantly how to evaluate their intersection with desirable futures and design for the preferred future.

A professor of futures forecasting at NYU and Colombia, founder of the Future Today Institute, and publisher of the annual FTI Trend Report, Dr. Webb was recognized by Forbes as one of the five women changing the world.

Webb's conversational style engages organizational leaders to not only master many future forecasting strategies but more importantly, prompts readers to reflect deeply on the extent to which decision makers and their stakeholders' dispositions about planning and futuring help or hinder their organizations' ability to align with their preferred futures. Futuring is an essential competency-set for our accelerating world.

While her book is not directed specifically to educators, its theme is particularly relevant for educational leaders in 2020. In the midst of the perils of the COVID crisis, had school and college leaders had a futuring structure for decision making, leaders might have anticipated a number of issues that have stopped our educational processes. Perhaps had we acculturated our colleagues with skills and dispositions to think future, instead of from one budgetary year to the next, we might have built infrastructures and professional development with a strategic foresight towards a safe and effective learning cycle within a pandemic.

Webb's book and website, along with other sources can help school leaders futurize our school systems and enable leaders to guide their institutions to prepare for the future and not be lost within the twenty-first century.

Author: Amy Webb
Penguin Books, NY 2016

Reviewed by Richard Bernato, Ed.D., Associate Professor, St. John's University (Ret.)

In Creating Space for Democracy: A Primer on Dialogue and Deliberation in Higher Education

- by Nicholas V. Longo and Timothy J. Shaffer (Eds.)

- Reviewed by Mubina Schroeder, Ph.D. and Joanna Alcruz, Ph.D.

Recent events in our nation have underscored that we are living in schismatic and transformative times. In Creating Space for Democracy: A Primer on Dialogue and Deliberation in Higher Education, Nicholas V. Longo and Timothy J. Shaffer present timely discussions on the critical nature of democracy in higher education. The authors emphasize how higher education communities are vital components of democracy--provided that they commit to creating spaces for discourse and remain open to the sharing of ideas.

The text draws on the voices and experiences of experts such as Derek Barker, from the Kettering Foundation, and Martin Cascasson from the Center for Public Deliberation. The authors stress the responsibility for higher education to support and promote participatory democracy. While many colleges and universities are grappling with crucial questions on how to promote democracy and equity on their campuses, there is an absence of a framework to provide pragmatic guidance. This text serves as a blueprint which ties in best practices for discussing democracy so that campus communities can work in harmony and function as a springboard towards transformative change.

The first part of the book provides a conceptual framework to lay the foundation for discussing democracy, equity, and inclusion. It is anchored in the Engagement Streams Network, echoing various approaches to dialogue and deliberation ranging from Reflective Structured Dialogue to simple but elegant Story Circles. In the second part, the focus is on methods of shaping receptive communities and campus cultures. The practical strategies, supported by an array of case studies for dialogue, are further explored in the remaining parts of the book, starting with curriculum-based integration and ending with the broader higher education landscape of communities and networks.

Perhaps one limitation of this text is that it frequently references partisan-based data to demonstrate that affiliations with certain political parties are associated with being antithetical to open discourse. Since the goal of dialogue is to promote a free-flowing exchange of ideas, this referencing of partisan data runs the risk of appearing unwelcoming to those who perhaps need to participate in democratic discourse the most. Community trust-building, an element mentioned throughout the text, involves inclusion of diverse voices, whether or not those voices fit an acceptable paradigm of democracy.

This text motivates higher education communities to create educative spaces and to seize the opportunity to engage in fruitful discourse that helps break down barriers. Through collaborative work and deliberative pedagogy, the authors propose that there can be a genesis of progressive and innovative discussion on any campus. One of the most salient features about this work is that it emphasizes not just the need for fostering change through dialogue but also for sustaining the conversation. Many of the models discussed in the text are about ways to permanently infuse these dialogue practices into campus practices.

Authors: Nicholas V. Longo and Timothy J. Shaffer, (Eds.)

Reviewed by Mubina Schroeder, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Molloy College; and Joanna Alcruz, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Molloy College.

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