Journal for Leadership and Instruction

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A SCOPE Education Services Research Publication

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Practical Research for the Educational Community

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Article Submissions:

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 February 1, 2024.

How to Submit Articles:

To be considered for publication, all submissions should be double spaced, in 12 point characters and should be sent by email as a Word document to:

Publishing Staff: Ms. Judy Coffey   jacoffey@atmc.net
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About SCOPE:

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

The Editorial Board of the Journal for Leadership and Instruction has identified the following thematic interests for the 2023 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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We members of the Journal of Leadership and Instruction observe and mourn the passing of Nassau BOCES' Superintendent, Dr. Robert Dillon. His services to the students he tended across many years of leadership positions and his professional contributions both to SCOPE and to this publication are honored here.

JLI Podcast Episodes

Episode Title (Episode #)	Speakers	Date Published
Greetings from JLI (001)	George Duffy, Robert Manley, Rich Bernato	9/13/2022
Students with Disabilities and Suspension Rates: A Cautionary Tale for School Districts (002)	Craig Markson, Kenneth Forman, Rich Bernato	9/21/2022
How Teachers Perceive their Principals' Effectiveness in Supporting Special Education Student Needs (003)	Rene Parmar, Rich Bernato	10/24/2022
How Special Education Can Promote Adaptive Leadership (004)	Nancy Morris, Rich Bernato	11/1/2022
Striving for an Inclusive Workplace (005)	John Coverdale, Rich Bernato	12/12/2022
Effectiveness of Policies and Procedures for Addressing Challenges and Threats to Transgender Youths (006)	Eustace Thompson, Jeff Harris, Rich Bernato	12/19/2022
Gamification Models of Practice in Higher Ed	Harilka Rao, Rich Bernato	3/6/2023
Please note that all podcast episodes below this line are linked to Spotify.		
Diversity, Inequity, and Exclusion: How SATs and Other Standardized Tests Reduce Diversity in Higher Education		10/2/2023

Editor's Perspective

It is not meant to sound like a riddle but here is a question that indeed sounds like one, (except that it is not): What do,

- SEL programs,
- virtual professional development,
- equity or support from State Education department agencies,
- optimal ways to use reading strategies in Advanced Placement instruction,
- social media's role in supporting college readiness,
- the relationship between systems thinking and optimal technology instruction,
- the equitable application of homework, and
- leaders' obligation to infuse trust, empowerment, and inspiration into their school cultures,

have in common?

Obviously, each is a research topic article in this issue's Journal for Leadership and Instruction. Scrape deeper though, beneath their focuses. What are the basic beliefs, assumptions, and priorities these articles sum to? What deeper purpose(s) are the driving force-emphases this issue's authors have explored?

Were this column a forum, I'd wager that a healthy panel discussion would likely follow as, it is clear there is more than one answer to this question. Yet I'd offer that the message behind our authors' music is fundamentally the same, i.e., each seeks in her own way and according to her own strengths, to improve our collective efforts to make all of the system(s) that we call education synergize so that the total exceeds the sum of its individual parts.

Dr. Gabriella Franza's research, The Impact of Restorative Circles on School Connectedness: A Student Perspective, explores and identifies strategies that schools may use to strengthen our efforts to help students manage their emotional needs in these times of high stress.

A Phenomenological Study Exploring Teachers' Perceptions of Virtual Professional Development through the Lens of Adult Learning Theory, a study described by Mary-Ellen Montauredes-Kakalos, Ed.D., captures the premise that professional development of any kind must be delivered through sound research-based practices like those espoused Dr. Malcom Knowles.

Dr. Franza and her colleagues, Dr. Patrick Pizzo, and Dr. Michele Williams, offer strong data that speaks to how or whether the New York State Education Department's efforts to upgrade the state's educational effectiveness, Are All Schools Getting Fair Treatment Under New York State Education Law?

Dr. Christina Cone's study, An Analysis Of If The Advanced Placement: World History Modern Reading Is Effective Teacher Professional Development continues this issue's theme of fashioning programs that effectively work.

Nowadays, it is virtually impossible to overlook the influence Social Networks exerts on all of us. The same is no less true for high school students who need all the support they can get to navigate the difficult choices of their post high school futures. Dr. Megan O'Neill's study, The Different Social Networks That Impact College Readiness Between Genders shows how these networks hold the most sway over students' choices.

Systems Thinking as an Approach to Technology Integration at the K-12 School Level by Gustavo Loor, Ed.D., and Catherine DiMartino, Ph.D. uses research methods to peel back how the macro level of school organizational structure and that of the intent to effectively embed technology into all of our instructional intents are critically connected.

A From the Field article, Equity and Elementary School Homework: A Case Study, authored by Rosebud Elijah, Andrea Libresco, Ed.D., Sandra Stacki, Christina Drago-Botti, Debra Goodman, and Judith Kaufman, argues compellingly about how educators must reconsider whether their usages of homework are equitably applied.

Finally, JLI thanks newly minted Superintendent of the Year in New York State, Dr. Joseph S. Famularo, for his book review of Steven Covey's Trust & Inspire: How Truly Great Leaders Unleash Greatness in Others book reminds educational leaders that we are in fact charged with that obligation to empower our stakeholders to empower each other to make all of education work for all.

Finally, as a reminder, each issue results in an individual podcast and sometimes panel discussion interviews where we explore in greater depth, how the authors' conclusions may be applied to practitioners and professors' own endeavors to reform and re-create what we collectively do. You can expect bi-weekly podcasts that you can use with your own cabinet and staff, or with your graduate students. Look for the link to these in the accompanying QR code.

And feel free to email me with any questions or ideas you might have about how we at the JLI can work with you on these themes and initiatives.

A happy holiday season to all.

Richard Bernato,
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The Impact of Restorative Circles on School Connectedness: A Student Perspective

By Gabriella Franza, Ed.D.

Abstract

The COVID-19 school shutdown took students out of the school building and into the virtual classroom. With this, students lost opportunities to connect with their peers and school members. With students reentering the schools, there is a great need for structures built within the school day for community building. Restorative circles are safe spaces created to help students connect with their peers and build community with the guidance of a facilitator. The purpose of this qualitative narrative study was to explore the impact that restorative circles have on school connectedness at the high school level.

Introduction

With The NYS Senate currently drafting Bill 1040, where the use of restorative practices will be encouraged, understanding this process and its purpose is pointed for this time in education. This practice can also be used for academic and personal reflection, with the students looking within themselves or with a healing circle group to address personal decisions and trauma (Wachtel et al., 2010). School connectedness is the extent to which students feel personally accepted, respected, included, cared for, close to, and supported by others in the school environment (Goodenow, 1993). Libbey (2007) defined the terms as a combination of feeling a part of school, feeling safe, and feeling that teachers and staff members care for their well-being and success. Implementing social-emotional literacy skills and relationship-building, on top of academic structure, can develop school connectedness for students.

Theoretical Framework

This study focused on critical theory (Freire, 2000/ 2014), the culture of care theory (Cavanagh, 2003; Cavanagh et al., 2012), and the whole-child approach to navigate narrative research. These frameworks examined how the application of restorative practices, both in school and other organizations in education, challenged the punitive structures that exist systemically. Each framework addressed the needs of students and how they can be implemented to make them feel safe and connected to their school community.

Critical Theory

Freire (2000/2014) looked at education critically, wanting to take it from being "an act of depositing … [where] the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits" (p. 72). Freire saw the traditional education system at the time, where students were given information by a teacher to memorize, as educational oppression, thus failing to have students learn how to think for themselves. Forcing people to have secondary roles regarding their own learning and self-development was considered dehumanizing. Students are considered objects meant to be taught how to exist in an oppressive system rather than be participants in change. This state of fully realized "humanness" existed in dialectical opposition to the education system set up that Freire (2000/2014) considered atemporal and ahistorical (Blackburn, 2000). (Freire 2000/2014) believed in having students challenge the status quo in the educational structures presented and think critically about their own education. Restorative justice is based on the same foundations, having students guide their learning, both in the classroom and on a social/emotional level. By focusing on restorative circles, students get to look at their school community and how they influence school culture.

Culture of Care Theory

Cavanagh et al. (2012), just as Freire, (2000/2014), looked at Indigenous cultures, the traditional education system, and humanity when creating a "culture of care." Cavanagh et al. created this theory after spending time in New Zealand to learn about the Māori culture, the use of restorative practices to create community change, and looking at connections between their national curriculum and the Te Kotahitanga,a project that is used to create educational reform with the Māori school system. Cavanagh et al.

created a research and professional development project, aiming to engage at-risk students in learning, thus retaining them in school.

Whole Child Approach

All aspects of the child are to be considered when making decisions, with the hope that each student reaches their own goals, which are created and set by them. The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (2007) took a stance on the need for this mindset in education, asking:

> If decisions about education policy and practice started by asking what works for the child, how would resources - time, space, and humans - be arrayed to ensure each child's success? If the student were truly at the center of the system, what could we achieve? (p. 4)

When looking at making an education approach focused on school connectedness rather than an academic focus, looking at a holistic evaluation of students is necessary.

Historical Context

Restorative justice has no one definition or origin. Restorative justice was a program, but many societies used it to resolve conflicts. Weitekamp and Kerner (2003), citing Zehr (1990), described First Nations' restorative practices as a thread in their life. Restorative justice emphasizes how community members are interconnected and must take their social roles seriously. Pranis et al. (2003) examined the Indigenous community's cooperative attitude.

The first case of restorative justice in North America is noted to have been when Mark Yantzi and his colleague, Dave Worth introduced two young men who had vandalized a neighborhood to meet their victims (Johnstone, 2007). Their alternative approach led to a change in these men's lives and the way that they addressed conflict.

Methodology and Research Question

Restorative circles confront restrictive language and culture - how humans interact and fit into the world (Parker & Bickmore, 2020). Properly run restorative circles provide a safe area for stakeholders to examine their role and influence. A narrative study allows the researcher to explore each participant's experience due to the intimate aspect of this examination, especially when looking at kids' school connections. The study aims to explore "How can restorative circles affect student views of school connectedness?"

The Setting

This study included a deliberately selected setting to conduct a narrative study of a newly implemented restorative circle program with ninth-grade students. A purposeful sample is widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases related to the phenomenon of interest (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Both the program and the researcher specifically targeted ninth-grade students because the ninth grade is a transitional year and considered a "make or break year" for completing high school for the first time, which means students must earn passing grades in core courses (Fulk, 2003).

Participants

The participants for this study included nine ninth grade students from a suburban New York public high school who were currently taking part in year one of the school's Restorative Circle Program (RCP). The sample was made up of seven females and two males. Teachers and administrators created this curriculum based on the training provided by Restorative Justice Education. This study used purposeful sampling to select the students who participated in the narrative study. Purposeful sampling gives the researcher a choice of a participant due to the qualities the participant possesses (Etikan et al., 2016). Purposeful sampling allows the highest amount of variation and best captures the diversity of a sample (Creswell et al., 2013; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The sampling techniques were used to gain maximal variation to develop perspectives about the restorative justice program, its implementation, and its effect on school connectedness. Criterion-based sampling was utilized with qualifying samples if the student was willing and able to participate in the study.

The parent/guardian allowed the student to participate in the study. Each participant was from a different facilitator group. Due to the nature of each restorative circle group, the researcher wanted to measure the program's impact, not a specific facilitator's impact, so there was a need to select students from various facilitator groups.

Data Collection Methods

This research covered the 2021-22 academic year. This research used narrative and semi-structured interviews. Anderson and Kirkpatrick (2016) claimed narrative interviews may help researchers comprehend people's experiences and actions and better convey their context and integrity than quantitative methods. The 45-minute virtual interview was audio-recorded. Nine ninth graders were interviewed after the second semester of restorative circles. Interviews comprised three sections (sub-sessions). The listener asked one introductory narrative question in the first sub-session. The interview used biographic narrative interpretive techniques.

The Program

Contributors designed a restorative circle program utilizing the Restorative Justice Education Program and Circle Forward: Building a Restorative Community by Boyes-Watson and Pranis (2015). Staff employees learned how to turn-key the software last year. Facilitator-trainers then devised a monthly schedule, routine, and script for circles. Each facilitator's goal, materials, flow, and closure were written to simplify and organize each circle.

Data Analysis Approach

This study employed coding to thoroughly analyze and understand interview data. Korsgaard (2019) states that coding allows the researcher to select relevant parts for the reader. Interpretation will always be part of the researcher's job. Each interview was coded for meaning and data inventory. Kim (2016) advises researchers first to find a word or phrase that can be an attribute for a portion of their data, then find relationships between these codes to create a category. This "identifies emerging patterns within the data" (Kim, 2016, p. 4). The researcher personally searched for narrative analysis patterns three times. Deductive coding and codebook codes were utilized.

Results

Four themes emerged from the restorative circle program's influence on students' school connections. The first theme highlighted that restorative circles allowed students to find common ground with their peers beyond what they experienced in traditional academic settings. Collaborating on shared experiences helped them reflect on their engagement in school and develop a sense of community. The second theme revealed that restorative circles facilitated discussions about postsecondary ambitions, encouraging students to set goals for their future. The program provided inspiration and collaboration among peers, shifting mindsets and emphasizing the academic aspect of school. The third theme indicated that students enjoyed restorative circles when they felt a genuine investment from their circle coordinators. Personal connections with facilitators fostered a sense of comfort and encouraged participation, leading to increased school connectedness. The fourth theme emphasized the importance of emotional connections between students. Peer-to-peer interactions provided a space for social and emotional growth, allowing students to support each other and develop a stronger sense of school community.

Restorative circles enabled students to understand the commonalities they shared with their peers, fostering a sense of community beyond the traditional classroom environment. One learner spoke about how the restorative circle program catalyzed goal-setting for her. She stated:

> This one time we were talking about goals and how it's important to set goals and I feel like it really inspired me hearing everyone else's goals and how they wanted to achieve it. Even though they knew [that] maybe they weren't the best academically, they knew eventually, "I'm going to work harder to get where I want to be.

This aligns with critical theory, which emphasizes the need to break down oppressive educational systems and promote critical thinking. Students also engaged in dialogue and reflection about their postsecondary goals, benefiting from the opportunity to self-reflect and plan for their future. This aligns with the concept of self-reflection as a catalyst for academic achievement. One learner, who transferred from another school, had prior experience with restorative circles before. He stated, however, that they focused on speaking to students about rules and behavioral concerns, and not social/emotional growth and understanding. He further clarified that the circles focused on peer-to-peer interactions and understandings. He stated that he wanted to be around his peers in his circle because he connected with their positive mindsets.

The role of restorative circle facilitators was found to be crucial for students' school connectedness. Students who felt connected to their facilitators experienced a more positive engagement with the program and greater overall school connectedness. This aligns with the whole-child approach, which recognizes the importance of holistic support and care in fostering positive relationships between students and teachers.

Furthermore, peer-to-peer interaction emerged as a significant factor in shaping the student experience and promoting school connectedness. Students valued the opportunity to connect with their peers, sharing positive mindsets and supporting each other's social and emotional growth. This aligns with critical theory, the culture of care theory, and the whole child approach, all of which emphasize the importance of relationships within the school community.

Overall, the findings suggest that the restorative circle program can effectively enhance students' school connection by promoting shared experiences, goal setting, positive relationships with facilitators, and peer-to-peer interactions. These findings contribute to the growing body of research on restorative practices and highlight their potential to foster a sense of belonging and connectedness among students in schools.

Conclusions

From the reflections of the Maori people to Freire's work on systemic oppression in schools, restorative practices have proven to support student learning and growth when it comes to community building and understanding. Having students understand each other's histories, insights, feelings, and stories can have a positive impact on their development. This impact can be both academic and social/emotional. This research aimed to look at the impact of restorative circles on school connectedness. Based on the qualitative analysis of the researcher, the sample researched at a New York high school started to experience a shift in mindset, reflection, and learning because of the restorative circles that were implemented during their ninth-grade year. Students felt more connected to their community, school, and peers, with those who transferred from an urban school experiencing the greatest impact. The sample also reflected and shared that more time, space, and training of the restorative circle facilitator would only further the success of the program.

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A Phenomenological Study Exploring Teachers' Perceptions of Virtual Professional Development through the Lens of Adult Learning Theory

By Mary-Ellen Montauredes-Kakalos, Ed.D.

Abstract

This phenomenological study design explored the lived experiences of teachers' perceptions of virtual professional experiences through the lens of adult learning theory. The participants were comprised of elementary educators from a suburban county in New York state. The participants in this study were all forced to shift to virtual teaching and learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. The research questions addressed were how do educators describe their experiences with virtual professional development, what characteristics of adult learning do educators value most, and how does virtual professional development compare to traditional in-person professional development related to educators' professional growth and/or career? Through qualitative analysis of email questionnaires, interviews, virtual observation, and document analysis, coding was conducted to discover themes to understand the educators' lived experiences better. The findings from this study were as follows: Participants preferred in-person professional development experiences; the positive aspects of virtual professional development were convenience and the relevance of topics; the negative aspects of virtual professional development were lack of engagement and technological issues; and participants benefited from in-person professional development experiences as related to their careers.

Introduction

In the field of education, professionals are expected to expand their knowledge to stay current about topics relating to student learning in the 21st century. Many states passed laws requiring professional development hours for teachers to retain their certification or teaching license. For example, New York state teachers must maintain 175 hours of professional development every five years under the NYS Department of Education Commissioner's regulation (NYSED, 2009). In addition, many teachers' contracts include required professional development time at the school district level. "Professional development is a strategy that schools and districts use to ensure that educators continue to strengthen their practice throughout their career" (Mizell, 2010, p.1). Society has moved into a digital age and there is value in exploring teachers' perceptions of virtual professional development as it relates to adult learning theory.

Research Questions

The objective of this research was to explore teachers' perceptions of virtual professional development as compared to traditional in-person professional development through the lens of adult learning theory. The three specific research questions that guided this qualitative study were:

1. How do educators describe their experiences with virtual professional development?

2. What characteristics of adult learning do educators value most?

3. How does virtual professional development compare to traditional in-person professional development as it relates to educators' professional growth and/or career?

Review of Literature

Theoretical Framework

The greatest teachers of ancient times were the teachers of adults (Knowles, 1990). The ancient Greeks were taught by Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle while Cicero and Euclid taught ancient Romans. These teachers invented ways to involve the learner in the activity of learning because they viewed learning as the process of active inquiry.

Andragogy is a concept popularized by Malcolm Knowles. Knowles' theory of andragogy created a way to differentiate learning in childhood from learning in adulthood. In his book, *The Modern Practice of Adult Education: From Pedagogy to Andragogy, Knowles* (1980) contrasts andragogy as "the art and science of helping adults learn" with pedagogy, the "art and science of helping children learn" (p. 43). Andragogy, stemming from the Greek language meaning "studies of man," can generally be described as a "model of assumptions" about how the characteristics of adult learners are different from the traditional pedagogical assumptions about child learners. Knowles' concept of andragogy presents the individual learner as one who is autonomous, free, and growth-oriented.

Knowles et al. (2015) stated that andragogy is anchored in six main assumptions:

1. Learner's need to know
2. Learner's self-concept
3. Learner's prior experiences
4. Learner's readiness to learn
5. Learner's orientation to learning
6. Learner's motivation to learn

Knowles believes in fostering self-direction. He argues that proactive learners, who take the initiative in learning, learn more and learn better than passive or reactive learners, who wait to be taught by a teacher. "They enter into learning more purposefully and with greater motivation. They also tend to retain and make use of what they learn better and longer than do the reactive learners" (Knowles, 1975, p. 14). Grounded in a humanistic philosophy, Knowles also suggested that self-directed learning should have the development of the learner's capacity to be self-directed as its goal. The constructs of andragogy by Malcolm Knowles is the theoretical framework referenced throughout this study.

Professional Development Concepts and Strategies

Well-designed and implemented professional development should be considered an essential component of a comprehensive system of teaching and learning that supports students in developing the knowledge, skills, and competencies they need to thrive in the 21st century (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). It is thought that professional learning should link to educators' experiences and bridge into leadership opportunities to focus on the growth and development of teachers. Darling-Hammond (1994) believes that teachers need to understand subject matter deeply and flexibly, so that they can help students create useful cognitive maps, relate ideas to one another, and address misconceptions. Teachers need to see how ideas connect across fields and to everyday life. It is beneficial for teachers to know about curriculum resources and technologies to connect their students with sources of information and knowledge that allow them to explore ideas, acquire and synthesize information, and frame and solve problems. In addition, Darling-Hammond believes that teachers need to know about collaboration: how to structure interactions among students, how to collaborate with other teachers, and how to work with parents to shape supportive experiences at school and home.

Virtual Learning

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, students and educators were suddenly shifted into new virtual learning environments with new methodologies. Synchronous learning is learning that takes place in real time, where a group of people are engaging in learning simultaneously (Lawless, 2020). Synchronous learning enables learners to ask questions and receive answers on-the-spot, while also collaborating freely with their co-learners. Some examples of synchronous learning include live webinars, video conferencing, virtual classrooms and instant messaging. *Asynchronous learning* is designed to allow learners to complete courses without the constraints of having to be in a certain place at a certain time. Asynchronous learning does not hinder learners by place or time. With the internet, asynchronous learners have the freedom to complete course materials whenever they choose, and from any location. Some examples of asynchronous learning include online courses, email, blogs, pre-recorded video lessons or webinars, and online forums and discussion boards.

With virtual learning, the range of educational experiences for students and adults extends far beyond those offered in traditional settings. Teacher-centered classrooms may evolve into student-centered ones. The role of the teacher may change in becoming more of a coach than an information dispenser. To realize the vision of utilizing technology, school districts and colleges of education must prepare teachers to use it.

Data Collection Procedures
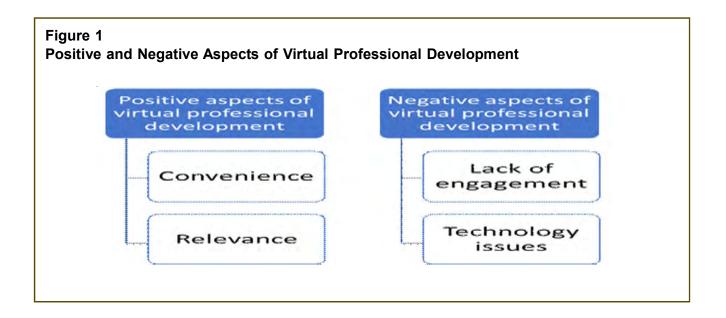
For this qualitative phenomenological research study, four main types of data collection methodologies were used to analyze teachers' perceptions of virtual professional development as it relates to adult learning theory. The data collection methods were email questionnaires, interviews, observation, and document analysis.

Credibility and Dependability

Validity and reliability are the standards most frequently used for good and convincing quantitative research (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Lincoln and Guba (1985; 2000) propose specific criteria for qualitative research using the terms credibility, dependability, and generalizability. The researcher employed the use of member checking to ensure credibility in addition to maintaining detailed explanations of how data were collected and analyzed for dependability. Data sources and perspectives triangulated this study. Using detailed questionnaires and interviews, observation, and document analysis, the researcher developed a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena. Lastly, by using these combined data sources, the researcher triangulated it by viewing the data through both the participants' and researcher's lens. This combination increased the generalizability and authenticity of the study.

Participants and Methodology

The eleven participants in this study were selected with a purposeful sampling approach as is frequently utilized in qualitative research studies (Creswell, 2018). A phenomenological methodology was used as it was best suited to explore the lived experiences of educators who have

Figure 1
Positive and Negative Aspects of Virtual Professional Development

participated in virtual professional development. The study participants were emailed the questionnaire in order to provide meaningful and thoughtful responses. Virtual interviews were conducted as a follow-up to each questionnaire as a method of member checking for accuracy and reliability. For this study, the participants are referred to by pseudonyms.

Results for Research Question One

All the participants in this study commented on the positive and negative aspects of virtual professional development for research question one. The major themes are indicated in the figure above (see **Figure 1**).

Positive aspects of virtual professional development

The data revealed two main themes regarding the positive aspects of virtual professional development: *convenience and relevance.* When discussing the overarching theme of convenience, the participants shared examples from their own experiences with travel, home life, time management, and lifestyle. Under the theme of relevance, most participants highlighted that they appreciated the variety of topics that could be offered through virtual professional development. They also valued the ability to choose the topics that interested them or filled a particular need they had for their teaching. Convenience and relevance were highly regarded as two of the most positive aspects of virtual professional development.

Negative aspects of virtual professional development
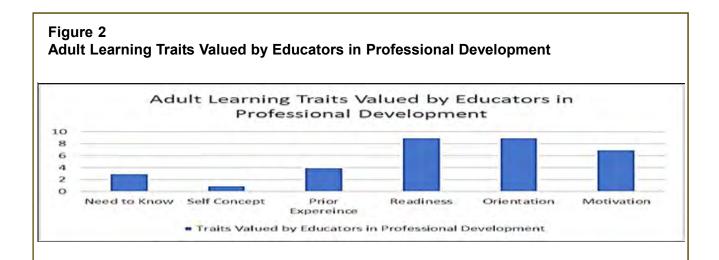
The data revealed two main themes regarding the negative aspects of virtual professional development: *lack of engagement and technology issues.* The participants shared the sentiment that virtual professional de-

velopment lacked the interpersonal connection that traditional in-person professional development offers its educators. Technology issues are the other main drawback to virtual professional development. The educators in this study had all shared multiple instances when an aspect of technology had failed. These glitches included wireless connectivity issues, apps or websites not responding, problems with a site's log-in, and/or audio and visual problems.

Findings for Research Question Two

Research Question Two addressed what characteristics of adult learning do educators value most. Each participant was asked to rank which of the following six constructs were the most valuable to them as adult learners as related to professional development. They were instructed to choose from the six statements listed below and select their top three choices.

1. I learn best with PD courses that I feel that I have a need to know.

2. I learn best with PD courses that are self-directed.

3. I learn best with PD which adds to my specific experiences.

4. I learn best with PD courses that have immediate relevance.

5. I learn best with PD courses that have immediate application.

6. I learn best with PD courses that I am internally motivated about.

Figure 2
Adult Learning Traits Valued by Educators in Professional Development

The results are displayed in the bar graph above.(see **Figure 2**).

Knowles' constructs 4, 5, and 6 (readiness to learn, orientation to learning, and motivation to learn) received the highest rankings by the educators in this study with approximately 80% of the total votes. The majority of the participants related to the belief that when learning as an adult, it is valuable for the learning to be directly relevant to an aspect of their job responsibilities or classroom practice. This readiness involves situations where educators become aware of the content they need to know to effectively teach their students.

Equally as important to the belief that it is valuable for the learning to be directly relevant to an aspect of a teacher's job responsibilities was the construct of learning orientation. This idea supports the notion that the educators in this study valued professional development opportunities that had an immediate application of knowledge gained. The educators in this study appreciated learning about topics that had real-life applications in their classrooms.

Having an internal motivation to learn was ranked third. The educators in this study valued the desire to achieve their goals and pursue learning opportunities that they are internally motivated about. Having the option to choose topics of interest based on internal motivation for professional development is valued by the educators in this study.

Findings for Research Question Three

The researcher posed the last question: How does virtual professional development compare to traditional in-person professional development as it relates to educators' professional growth and/or career? Each participant in this study, responded that they preferred traditional in-person professional development to virtual professional development even though they had some positive experiences with the virtual format.

One participant summarized her thoughts below:

Both virtual and traditional professional development can be beneficial. While virtual learning offers the convenience and the opportunity to work at your own pace and maybe even from your own home, I do feel as an educator, it will never be as engaging as in-person learning. Adults, as well as our children, need to learn not only content and curriculum, but they also need exposure to social interactions and norms. After living through a pandemic, with wearing masks and long periods of time of having to be isolated, it is even more important now to bring back as many in person opportunities, because adults still need to practice interpersonal skills.

Without exception, the educators in this study felt strongly about the need for in-person opportunities to learn together as adults for their professional growth, career satisfaction, and advancement.

Discussion and Recommendations for Future Practice

This study was beneficial for two groups of stakeholders: school leaders and instructional coaches. From the findings of this study, school leaders can gain insight into the type of professional development they offer to their faculty. In-person professional development should be considered as the "first choice" of format for PD offerings at Superintendent's Conference Days or faculty meetings. In-person training was especially valued when educators were learning about a topic that either had direct relevance or direct application to their classrooms. In-person coaching and modeling should be considered as well as allowing for opportunities for teachers to talk with each other about the content presented. If school leaders cannot provide in-person trainings because of time constraints or financial limitations, choosing or developing virtual professional development sessions which increase teacher collaboration should be considered.

Instructional coaches can also benefit from the findings in this study. It is recommended that the virtual instructor integrate activities that foster communication and engagement. Some techniques can include the use of the chat feature, break-out rooms, screen sharing, asking direct questions to participants, and allowing participants to come off "mute" to engage in dialogue. Allowing the use of the chat feature enables the participants to share their thoughts with each other during the session which increases the extent to which they are active learners. Break-out rooms, which can be used during synchronous virtual professional development, allow for the participants to speak to each other in real-time and share their thoughts and experiences about the content being presented. Break-out rooms also offer the opportunity for the instructor to interact with the participants in smaller groups and check for understanding. Allowing for screen sharing, is another way for the instructor to encourage participants to add on to their learning by showing or illustrating a concept to the group based on their experiences. Instructors may also consider organizing their content in a PowerPoint format to make the information more accessible for the participants and increase their engagement with the topic. Building a "question and answer" period into a virtual professional development session also increases collaboration because it affords the participants an opportunity to share their thoughts. Encouraging and/or requiring participants to keep their cameras "on" during a virtual professional development session allows for increased interaction between the instructor and the participants. Verbal and non-verbal feedback can be used by the presenter to adjust the content of the session if necessary.

Additionally, developing a hybrid virtual professional development session which the researcher had observed in this study, is another way to increase engagement among the participants who are in-person learning together while the instructor is presenting the content virtually. Asynchronous virtual professional development can be offered for topics that are generally a requirement for the district and/or state regulation. Teachers could complete these types of training at their own pace and in their own choice of location. Lastly, instructional coaches can benefit from the knowledge of adult learning styles specifically valued by educators. They can gain insight into the way that educators perceive their adult learning based on the lived experiences of the participants in this study. Virtual learning is here to stay in the world of education but finding ways to prioritize authentic in-person experiences is still a valued and important characteristic of adult learning and the human experience.

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Are All Schools Getting Fair Treatment Under New York State Education Law?

By Gabriella Franza, Ed.D., Patrick Pizzo, Ed.D. and Michele Williams, Ed.D.

Abstract

This article examines the needs in New York State for public policy to address disparities in educational outcomes, opportunities to learn and appropriate evaluations that assess student readiness to advance in their education or work opportunities. Several proposals for educational public policy changes and practices are offered in the conclusion of this article.

Federal education law under Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires state education systems to include high-stakes accountability policies and multiple indicators of success, such as growth scores from standardized tests, English Language Proficiency, and absenteeism, to determine the accountability status of schools and districts for rewards or sanctions. In New York State, high-stakes accountability policies do not hold schools accountable for student progress related to learning standards. Instead, they use comparative measures to rank schools against each other to determine their proficiency levels, annual yearly progress, and accountability status. Critics argued against using comparative measures, stating that it would make the accountability system inherently unfair (Koretz et al., 1992; NYSED, 2018; Williams, 2021). Research has shown that these policies promote uniform learning outcomes, control of educator behaviors, and test-driven learning cultures that do not align with the reality of instruction and learning in public schools with predominantly minoritized student populations. Instruction and learning are dynamic because educators and students have diverse sets of skills, talents, cognitive processes, and various levels of access to resources within the learning environment. This makes uniform learning conditions challenging to establish as school leaders and teachers work under restrictive policies to prepare students for the high-stakes exams and diploma requirements (Williams, 2021).

Historical Overview of NYS Education Assessment Policy and Accountability

The New York Board of Regents has been at the forefront in the design of policies to influence the direction of schooling using assessments as they sought to institute statewide uniform learning standards to expand educational opportunities for its diverse student population. For example, in November 1865, the New York State Board of Regents created a uniform high school entrance examination to determine the most qualified elementary school students to continue their education. Students were awarded a certificate at graduation, and this influenced educators to prepare students for the test (Bishop et al., 2000). During the 1870s, there was a strong national movement for uniform high school graduation standards and college admissions requirements that was led by the National Educational Association (NEA), whose members were primarily college presidents and state superintendents (Williams, 2021). In June 1878, New York took the lead and administered its first curriculum-based assessment for high school Regent's credit (Bishop et al., 2000; The University of the State of New York, 1965). These exams were deliberately designed to be a strong supervisory and instructional tool that influenced educators towards the state's version of effective pedagogical practices, not just to measure student achievement. For example, New York State Assistant Commissioner for Examinations and Scholarship, Sherman Tinkelman, was successful in getting foreign language teachers to emphasize conversational and reading comprehension skills by including these components on the Regents exams (Bishop et al., 2000; The University of the State of New York, 1965).

This push for common standards and uniform testing at the state and national level has been in progress for over a century and the same methods are still in existence. One of the consequences of the Regents tests was that it created two educational tracks for students-Regents diploma and local diploma. There were more students in low income and underfunded schools that received local diplomas as opposed to Regents diplomas and some attributed this to low expectations. However, NYS did not provide any incentives for students to pursue a Regents diploma. For instance, New York State-sponsored scholarships required an aptitude test, and Regents scores were not used for in-state or out of state college admissions or employment, so students avoided them (Bishop et al., 2000). In 1984, Commissioner Gordon Ambach wanted to address low expectations and

established a policy which required schools to demonstrate universal competency in all academic subjects and remediation for students that failed the new Regents Competency Tests. But this policy revealed another factor that the state was not addressing. "By demanding the same set of tests from all schools, administrators documented the gap between performance in the poorer New York City and upstate schools" and other public schools (Johnson, 2009, p. 8). This factor continued to be ignored.

During 1991, the U.S. Congress created the National Council on Education Standards and Testing (NCEST) to determine the feasibility of national standards and assessments, and they recommended states increase their learning standards, use high stakes standardized tests for students and school system accountability. NCEST wanted assessments "used for such high-stakes purposes as high school graduation, college admission, continuing education, and certification for employment," and to have a mechanism in place for their alignment to NAEP (Vinovskis, 1998, p. 37; Williams, 2021). New York State began to implement these recommendations.

In 1994, New York City Chancellor, Ramon Cortines, blamed school failure on the low expectations of students and teachers and declared that all students entering ninth grade must pass three Regents level science and math courses to graduate. This was supposed to abolish the bottom local diploma track. Two years later, the New York State Board of Regents established a new policy that mandated all students take Regents courses and pass five Regents exams. The Regents believed "that requiring all students to take and pass five Regents examinations will significantly improve student achievement" (Bishop et al., 2000, p. 335).

This policy of blame and raising standards continued with the Federal government's 2001 No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and the 2015 Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Federal education policies made high-stakes tests, learning standards, school supervision, and systems of punishment the dominant education agenda in each state. ESSA policies were implemented through state and local education agencies to regulate schooling using business principles. This resulted in a reduction of local control over curriculum, instruction, and learning, while power to influence schooling shifted towards policymakers and business markets (Madaus, 1999; Rossides, 2004; Williams, 2021). Policies requiring a mandatory, rigorous curriculum did not always result in improved student achievement or graduation rates and may be discouraging for some groups of students (Comprehensive Center Network Region 2, 2022).

Beneficiaries of the Current Paradigm

High-stakes tests have greater consequences for minority and poor children than they do for majority and more affluent students, albeit non-diverse students are also impacted by the power of these tests (Madaus & Clarke, 2001). Resulting from high-stakes testing, low-income children of color are subjected to a qualitatively different educational experience than that of their Whiter, more affluent counterparts who have a much higher likelihood to access a more engaging, content-rich education (Au, 2015). The empirical test results provided by presumptively "objective" standardized tests, could mask school structural advantages, the existence of systemic racism, justify racial hierarchies, and promote bias towards specific racial groups as less intelligent and inferior (Au, 2009b, 2013) within a seemingly meritocratic framework (Au & Ferrare, 2015).

Racial Disparities Reinforced by the Current Paradigm

As stated by Ford (2005), psychological and psychoeducational assessment is an area that has been heavily subjected to complaints about the differential treatment of diverse groups. Korchin (1980), and others contend that standardized tests have contributed to the perpetuation of social, economic, and political barriers confronting diverse groups (Padilla & Medina, 1996; Suzuki, Meller, & Ponterotto, 1996).

Research suggests that many diverse communities have suffered from the application of high-stakes testing. Decades of research demonstrate that Black, Latinx, and Native students, as well as students from some Asian groups, experience bias from standardized tests administered from early childhood through college (Rosales, 2021).

Children of color have experienced sharper curricular and pedagogic squeeze, resulting in a disparate education than affluent, primarily White, counterparts (Nichols & Berliner, 2007; Nichols et al., 2005; von Zastrow, 2004). The resulting outcome portrays low-income students of color as failures through high-stakes, standardized testing. This allows unequal opportunities to be imposed on low-income, children of color (Melamed, 2011).

What is the Solution?

Performance-Based Assessments

New York is one of twelve states who require an exit exam to graduate from high school. Of those 12, NY is one of five that do not allow for the ACT or SAT to be one of the options of an exit exam. Performance-based assessments offer an alternative to the high stakes standardized testing that is being utilized in NY. These assessments are meant to measure the skills that are developed after a unit of study and can vary greatly depending on the subject/grade/unit. Although the tasks can all differ, they should all be complex and rigorous in design, and have an extensive rubric that measures mastery of the skill.

Work Based Learning

According to the NYS Education Department, Work-Based Learning (WBL) is the umbrella term used to identify activities which collaboratively engage employers and schools in providing structured learning experiences for students. These experiences focus on assisting students develop broad, transferable skills for postsecondary education

and the workplace. A quality WBL program can make school-based learning more relevant by providing students with the opportunity to apply knowledge and skills learned in the classroom to real world situations. (2022). Students are able to earn credits for their jobs and internships, which can replace several credits towards graduation, with a focus on career development and outside learning. Work Based Learning programs have allowed students to earn credits for their work and outside experiences. The programs have not yet been able to have students use these credits toward their learning unless they are participating in the New York State (NYS) Career Development and Occupational Studies (CDOS) Commencement Credential, which requires a connection to a Career and Technical Education (CTE) course load.

Alternative Settings: Big Picture Learning and New York Performance Consortium Schools

Big Picture Learning Schools are a network of schools, who use mentorship and internship to educate students, which has a different structure when compared to traditional schooling. Students at Big Picture schools spend half of their time outside of schools on internships and experiences, where their learning of numeracy and literacy occurs through real life experiences. Students in Big Picture Learning Schools can choose to participate in the NYS Regents, or they can apply to be a part of the Consortium, and only participate in the NYS English Language Arts Exam (Big Picture Learning, 2023).

New York Performance Consortium Schools have a similar model to the Big Picture Schools, where the focus is about learning through experiences outside of the classroom. Schools who are a part of the consortium only have to participate in the NYS English Language Arts Exam. As opposed to a focus on internship, there is a focus on project-based learning.

Both Big Picture Schools and Consortium schools need to go through an application and acceptance process in order to create a shift to this way of evaluation and participation. To make a shift into one of these programs would take a tremendous amount of time, money, resources, restructuring and community buy-in, which is not accounted for in policy recommendations.

Policy Recommendations

New York State has mechanisms that appear to maintain the failing status of marginalized students by setting different performance expectations for Regents accountability. For instance, the NYS Education Commissioner established higher proficiency benchmark scores for Title 1 schools than for non-Title 1 schools. On the Algebra 1 test, Level 3 proficiency cut scores ranged from 65% to 84% for non-Title 1 schools, but only from 79% to 84% for Title 1 schools. By increasing the benchmark to 79% and reducing the performance range, this policy increased the chances of accountability failure and sanctions against Title 1 schools (Williams, 2021). The New York State Board of Regents defined equity as

the "guarantee of fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all while striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of all groups" (Young Jr., 2021, p. 6). Performance Level Score Ranges represents one barrier for Title 1 school advancement. One recommendation to help our most vulnerable students is to level the playing field by holding all students and schools in New York State under the same Performance Level Score Ranges for Regents Accountability and a benchmark cut score that is equitable, reachable and does not fluctuate annually. This will be one measure to guarantee fair treatment for Title 1 schools under state education policy.

A second would be supporting schools through Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (D.E.I.) implementation. School districts and practitioners are expected to institute DEI strategies and mechanisms to create effective learning environments for students, while the state education policy undermines this mandate. The Board of Regents sets requirement levels for achievement and expects every school to meet them in a uniform manner without considering the local learning conditions of school instructional environments, such as the lack of appropriate funding to purchase instructional resources, equipment for schools, repair and upgrade of building facilities, and the hiring of high quality and experienced educators. Local taxes vary throughout the state and determine the amount of funding to school districts. This affects their ability to meet New York State education requirements to provide all students with a significant opportunity for a high-quality education. These are some areas the state should consider when evaluating policies related to the success measures of schools and educators.

Therefore, it is recommended that the NYS Board of Regents and the NYS Commissioner of Education create a DEI rubric to evaluate education policies, metrics, and regulations, whether under development or in existence, to ensure it equitably supports and meets the needs of students, educators, schools, and districts across the state. Those policies and regulations that do not meet proficiency levels on the DEI rubric are to be revised or eliminated, and schools and districts should not be penalized during the review and revision process. The Board can adapt their New York State Integration Project (NYSIP) tool kit for the purpose of evaluating state-level education policies. This kit is provided by the State to assist districts and schools in initiating, monitoring, and maintaining DEI integration efforts. As outlined in the tool kit, the Board can begin their review "with the crucial recognition that there is a system that by design (whether intentionally or accidentally or a combination of the two) creates the conditions that your integration initiative aims to change" (NYSED, 2023, p. 16). The Board's primary responsibility is to comprehend the impact of their policies on schools and districts, and can begin by responding to these revised tool kit questions: What people, conditions, or forces within NYS are likely to be positively or negatively affected by the current state of education policies? What people, conditions, or forces inside or outside NYS exert considerable influence on the policies that are intended to be altered? (NYSED, 2023). Schools and districts will benefit from this

process as the Board will collaborate with local education agencies in the collection of data. This may represent the first instance of state-level reforms being driven from a grassroots perspective, as all districts participate in DEI evaluation and integration.

Additionally, Funding for New York State schools varies greatly from community to community. Progressive calculations for Foundation Aid, the largest wealth-based aid category, and expense driven aid mitigate the inequities of local resources. The Foundation Aid formulas, which are a focus of future funding, are again under review. Changes in population and other factors need to be re-evaluated to capture changes in the communities served. Which constituencies will establish the future formulas, and then maintain the required wealth-based adjustments, is a current concern for equitable funding. Traditionally, wealthy districts which had the ability and will to increase local funding (local levy) were able to offset short falls in state funding, although that option is vastly reduced by the tax cap now codified into law. Low-wealth districts rely more heavily on State Aid for their revenue, therefore any reduction in State Aid will have a disparate impact on low-wealth districts.

In a Tax Cap environment there is no viable option for low-wealth communities to mitigate this substantial impact. The Campaign For Fiscal Equity settlement was implemented by Governor Hochul and has been phased in to achieve full funding of the Foundation Aid formula. Reliance on Foundation Aid impacts low-wealth districts far more than higher-wealth districts. During our current funding paradigm, inequities have been mitigated, but not eliminated, by the full funding of Foundation Aid. Federal pandemic aid funds are expiring for districts, which are known locally. But, despite the assurances from New York State, federal aid will be reduced for the state as well. This reduction, which has occurred periodically over the last several decades (GAP Elimination/ DRA), will occur again, and then will have a greater impact on low-wealth areas.

Cross System Impacts

The basis for any funding mechanism must be consistency of the flow of resources. Effective planning for schools, and really any organization, includes long-term plans based on an understating of the future resources to be allocated. Historic fluctuation in resources had a more severe effect on low-wealth districts, which impedes potential student progress for our most vulnerable students.

Low-wealth, and often diverse, districts who are most affected by non-local resources (state/federal) need fiscal certainty to implement, support, and evaluate programmatic changes based on promised resources. New programs need support which may include additional staff, staff training, and infrastructure related alterations. The financial impact of these changes will occur during multiple years and be impacted by increases related to contractual settlements and general inflationary pressures. Implementing any new program is a long-term commitment.

Effectively implementing and supporting, via policy and fiscal resources, new programs is key for success. Any program initiated without a multi-year commitment and an effective plan of support will ultimately fail. Programs must be implemented after proper planning to ensure an academic benefit for students and a consistent funding stream to support the changes long-term. Variations to programs must only be after a consistent application over a pre-prescribed period of time and proper support for professional development for staff throughout the process. If long-term changes are required, they must be validated by data, and a component of a comprehensive plan.

New York State establishes long-term progress goals for schools and districts over a 5-year period and collects annual data on various aspects of education, including school achievement, learning environments, educator quality, and demographics. We propose this data be used to develop an algorithm that predicts the necessary level of foundation and federal funding to provide consistent support and resources to schools. It would benefit the NYS Board of Regents to incorporate this funding element into their DEI rubric, along with a review of educational regulations, policies, school models, and accountability metrics to ensure that the process promotes equity of opportunity for all students.

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An Analysis Of If The Advanced Placement: World History Modern Reading Is Effective Teacher Professional Development

By Christina Cone, Ed.D.

Abstract

This study explored if the Advanced Placement (AP) World History: Modern Reading is effective teacher professional development (PD). The researcher used a mixed methods explanatory sequential design. A survey was completed by 83 AP World History: Modern high school teachers who had attended the AP World History: Modern on-site Reading. The researcher then conducted a focus group discussion with eight participants to study teacher perceptions of the Reading experience. Quantitative and qualitative results were integrated in order to gain a deeper understanding.

The researcher found that attending the AP World History: Modern on-site Reading is beneficial teacher professional development. The structure of the in-person Reading allows for collaboration, engages participants and is relevant to the attendees' classroom practice.

Introduction

The Advanced Placement World History: Modern (APWH) course focuses on a study of the world from 1200 CE to the present. High school students enrolled in this class learn content and specific skills, such as understanding historical context, analyzing primary and secondary sources, making connections, and developing and supporting arguments. Students must demonstrate their knowledge of both content and skills on an examination administered each May. Teachers of AP courses do not need a master's degree in the content area of the AP course, unlike the requirements for dual credit courses (Sadler et al., 2010). In 2002, College Board implemented an AP teacher survey to gauge information regarding AP teacher training and experience. From data collected from 32,109 AP teachers, Milewski and Gillie (2002) found that many AP teachers participated in some form of professional development before teaching the course. The most common were one-day workshops and Advanced Placement Summer Institutes (APSIs) sponsored by the College Board. However, the percentage of teachers who attended those trainings was still low compared to other forms of indicated PD, such as reviewing released exams and AP course materials. In addition, only a small percentage participated in the AP Reading.

According to the College Board, the AP Reading is purported to afford participants the opportunity to learn more about the exam and how to assess students (College Board, 2021). The College Board holds the AP Reading each June, with the disciplines allocated to one of four different reading locations. There are also options for Distributed Readers, who score components of the exams from their homes. The on-site Reading takes place over a seven-day period and Readers work for eight hours each day.

Due to her experience as a College Board consultant teaching APSIs, serving as a table leader at the Reading, as an administrator working with teachers, and from engaging in discourse with APWH teachers, this researcher believes that many teachers of this course need professional development. The researcher designed this study to evaluate if the AP World History: Modern Reading is effective teacher professional development.

Literature Review

Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) defined effective teacher professional development as "structured professional learning that results in changes in teacher practices and improvements in student learning outcomes" (para. 3). Many researchers (Desimone et al., 2002, 2009; Fischer et al., 2019; Klein & Riordan, 2009; Small et al., 2020; Thomas-Brown et al., 2016) concluded that there were essential features of professional development that rendered it effective. Desimone's Core Conceptual Framework (2002) highlighted the importance of teacher professional development (TPD) that was content-related, allowed for collective participation, was of a sustained duration, allowed for active learning, and demonstrated coherence.

Darling-Hammond et al. (2017), Firestone et al. (2020), Hauge (2019), Kennedy (2016), O'Brien et al. (2008), Sims and Fletcher-Wood (2021), and Varga-Atkins et al. (2009) added to the list of characteristics of effective teacher professional development the importance of coaching or expert support, opportunities for teacher reflection and feedback, a focus on teacher input, teacher motivation, and the role of school district administration.

Research Design and Methodology

This study used an explanatory sequential mixed methods design. In phase one of the study, the researcher used an online Likert style survey to collect quantitative data. The quantitative data analysis helped inform the researcher's decisions as to which participants to seek for the second phase of study, which consisted of a focus group discussion. The researcher then triangulated the data as she integrated the two strands for analysis and comparison.

A total of 83 AP World History: Modern teachers who had attended the on-site Reading responded to the teacher survey that was posted on a closed AP World History Teachers Facebook page of over 7,000 members, as well as on a Facebook AP World At-Home Nerdfest (2021) page which consisted of 531 readers.

The researcher first used quantitative analysis to investigate the research question. She performed descriptive statistics and conducted bivariate analysis to examine relationships between variables. The quantitative data analysis helped inform the researcher's decisions regarding where to seek elaboration and clarification of results. The researcher then conducted a focus group discussion with eight participants. The researcher conducted thematic analysis of the qualitative data and then linked the quantitative results from all participants with the qualitative findings from the focus group participants for the purpose of further explanation and increased understanding of the research question.

Results, Conclusions and Discussion

The results and findings indicated that the AP World History: Modern Reading is beneficial professional development. No respondents disagreed with that statement, and the majority strongly agreed. While survey respondents were under no obligation to share additional comments, quite a few volunteered that the Reading was "Hands down the best PD I have experienced throughout my teaching career. I always recommend it to anyone capable of going," and "This is the best PD I do for my AP instructional practices."

The study investigated what might lead participants to that perception. The researcher utilized Desimone's Core Conceptual Framework (2009) as an evaluative tool. Desimone claimed that there were core critical features of effective teacher professional development: a focus on content, active learning, coherence, duration, and collective participation. The researcher also identified

additional characteristics from a review of other literature that posited the additional importance of the role of administration, the impact of trainers, teacher input, and teacher attitude toward PD. The researcher studied which factors correlated with participants indicating stronger agreements with the benefits of the Reading. Based on this study's findings, the on-site Reading structure reflected many of those elements.

Content

Participants' perceptions about learning content from the Reading varied. According to the literature, researchers found that professional development that emphasized discipline-specific curriculum improved student learning because the focus on content correlated with the relevance of the PD for teacher participants (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Many participants strongly agreed (62.7%) or agreed (31.3%) that the Reading improved their content knowledge and spoke to how reading student work and speaking with colleagues, some of whom are college professors, helped improve their content knowledge. However, others disagreed (6%), and commented that "in-depth content learning isn't what I have gained."

The data showed that in the earlier years of the Reading there was more of an emphasis on providing content enrichment for participants. Survey and focus group participants discussed "evening speaker events" held in earlier years which increased their content knowledge.

Teacher Engagement

Desimone (2009) referred to teacher engagement as "active learning." Studies of professional development programs found that lecture-based PD was less likely to translate into improved teacher knowledge (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Garet et al., 2001). At the Reading, participants score student free response questions (FRQs), which is an example of active learning.

The majority of participants strongly agreed (67.5%) or agreed (30.1%) that the Reading engaged them as a learner. One participant noted, "the in-person Read is by far better professional development and more engaging as both a learner and regarding collaboration with colleagues." In addition, after speaking with focus group participants, the researcher felt there was an overlap between engagement and relevance. For example, teachers spoke of the benefits of scoring student work and the direct connection the activity had on their classroom practice.

Relevance

Desimone referred to relevance as 'coherence' in her Core Conceptual Framework. Relevance is the extent to which professional development aligns with a teachers' goals and a teachers' curriculum (Desimone et al., 2002; 2011). The statistical results of the Reading's relevance to the participants' classroom teaching of the course were very simi-

lar to the results for engagement. Based on the quantitative and qualitative data, the researcher summarized that the practice of scoring student work at the Reading is relevant to the classroom practices of AP World History: Modern teachers. Participants shared,

- "The grading itself is immensely useful for learning what College Board is looking for when scoring and has certainly shaped how I approach my course."

- "Seeing the trends of students from the previous year makes it better for my current students to avoid those pitfalls."

- "The AP Read has provided me with valuable insight into the scoring rubrics, as well as the writing structure of all FRQs."

Duration

Similar to the findings in the literature review about the duration necessary for a PD opportunity to translate to meaningful learning, there was also not unanimity as to the appropriateness of the duration of the AP World History: Modern Reading. The on-site AP World History: Modern Reading takes place over seven days, and Readers work eight hours daily. Through the quantitative analysis, the researcher identified a direct relationship between duration and whether or not participants felt that the Reading was beneficial professional development. However, the researcher could not deduce from the quantitative data alone whether respondents felt the duration was too long, too short, or just right. Therefore, during the focus group, the researcher asked that specific question. Some participants expressed that three to four days was needed to learn and to be able to apply the rubric. Others spoke to the need for more breaks and the concern that when the duration was too long "it can cause people to get sloppy in their grading and…lead to inconsistency."

The researcher reports that there is the sense among some that the Reading "is more about a race to grade the exams rather than talk through things on the exams." One participant said, "they [College Board or ETS] are driving us, like, you know, there's pressure to get it done." The duration allocated is not necessarily what is best from a professional development standpoint, but rather more utilitarian surrounding the need to score all student responses.

Collaboration

Much of the literature reviewed that related to collective participation espoused the importance of teacher collaboration in professional development. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) found PD that was collaborative aided in positive results as "teachers create a collective force for improved instruction and serve as support groups for each other's work on their practice" (p. 10). The findings from this study indicated that teachers enthusiastically valued the collaborative nature of the Reading. All participants agreed that collaboration contributed to their learning, with 90.4% of respondents rating it a 4 (strongly agree).

At the on-site Reading, participants worked at a table with seven other Readers and a Table Leader. As a result, participants reported they shared ideas and made connections with fellow Readers and leaders. All focus group participants discussed the benefits of working with others and many opted to write about collaboration on the survey. In addition, many participants shared that they were the only teacher of the course at their school and felt this was one of the few opportunities to learn from peers and build a network of support. Some participant comments about the benefits of collaboration at the Reading were:

- "The ability to communicate with other teachers that are in the trenches with you is invaluable, especially when you're the only teacher of the subject in your school. No one understands as well as someone that has gone through it also. The exchange of techniques and lessons, the confirmation that you are doing it right, the comradery and the fellowship and friendships make the long hours reading worth it."

- "As the only teacher in my building that teaches AP World History, the ability to connect with other teachers that understand my content is invaluable. I have learned from fellow high school teachers as well as made connections with college professors that I would not have had the ability to do if not for the on-site Reading. The professional connections with these fellow educators have profoundly influenced my teaching."

Role of Administration

Researchers found that it was difficult for teachers to engage in meaningful PD without the support of their administration (Fischer et al., 2020; Hauge, 2019; Klopfenstein, 2003; Kyndt et al., 2016; Martin et al., 2019; Varga-Atkins, 2009). However, this researcher did not find the role of administration to have an impact in this study. In quantitative analysis, the researcher did not identify a dependence between the support of administration and whether the Reading was seen as beneficial professional development. As a result, the researcher did not discuss the topic during the focus group discussion.

The researcher believes there are a couple of reasons why this factor did not prove meaningful. First, the Reading is held in June when many school districts are not in session. Therefore, many participants do not have to seek release time from school. In addition, the costs associated with attending are paid for by the College Board and not by the teacher or school district.

Teacher Input and Attitudes

As mentioned, the Reading takes place in June. Therefore, high school is no longer in session in many parts of the country and teachers are on summer break. Based on the timing of the Reading, many participants voluntarily give up some of their summer holiday. Studies by Kennedy (2016) and Martin et al., (2019) found that when teachers are mandated to attend PD as opposed to choosing to attend, there is less success. Participants in this study reported an intrinsic desire to attend. The teacher questionnaire results showed that 98.7% of participants strongly agreed or agreed that the decision to attend was self-motivated.

Klein and Riordan (2008) determined that the teachers' level of excitement about the PD was a determining factor in how much implementation took place. In this case, the researcher also believed that the level of excitement played a role in how Readers recommended attending the Read to others. For example, a participant exclaimed, "I was highly encouraged to participate in the Reading by the previous APWH teacher in my building and I do the same to other AP teachers I meet." Further evidence to support this claim was that 70 of the 83 survey respondents had attended the Reading more than once.

Role of Leaders

Much literature on teacher professional development discussed the trainer's or leader's impact on teacher learning. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) and Firestone et al. (2020) concluded that "expert input" provided a supportive role for teachers and was a determinant in whether the PD offering was effective. In this study, participants had mixed feelings about whether the Table Leader at the AP World History: Modern Reading was beneficial to aiding in their learning. This question received more disagree responses than any other (8.4%). The researcher investigated this further in the focus group discussion.

Many participants raved about their experiences with Table Leaders and expressed how the Table Leaders provided meaningful feedback. A survey participant supported a finding from Kennedy (2016) that individuals who led effective programs had experience working with teachers and truly understood their participants' problems and experiences. The respondent in this study shared that "The discussions were very beneficial, especially if the TL was a good high school teacher."

Participants also expressed their dissatisfaction with scoring in the absence of a Table Leader, as can happen in a virtual setting at times. The reoccurring comments about the structure of the virtual Read in relation to the role of the Table Leader substantiated the value that Readers placed on having good leadership.

However, both in the focus group and through the survey, participants shed light on problems with leadership. In the focus group discussion, a participant shared,

I'd say, let's say 90% of the leadership, the best leaders are the ones that are going to give that feedback and put their ego to the side if they're challenged. The only issue that I've seen is…when ego gets in the way.

That participant also discussed the power that some have to blacklist others from advancing. A survey participant similarly stated, "I disagree with the way that the leadership assigns roles. I feel that I had to know someone to get into my role."

Summary

The results and findings indicated that the AP World History: Modern Reading is beneficial professional development and that the teachers' decision to attend was self-motivated. Participants indicated that actively scoring student work was engaging and relevant to their classroom practice. In addition, participants perceived that the ability to collaborate with others also contributed to their learning. While 56 hours of scoring students work was thought by some to be too lengthy, participants indicated that it was of a long enough duration for them to gain understanding and to support their learning. The perception of the role of the Table Leader and of the ability to learn content varied amongst participants. There was limited indication that the support of administration played a role in whether the Reading was seen as beneficial professional development.

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The Different Social Networks That Impact College Readiness Between Genders

By Megan O'Neill, Ed.D.

Abstract

Strong evidence suggests that U.S. high schools are falling short of graduating college- and career-ready students, giving rise to calls for more focus on the factors that impact students' success in college and career. The main purpose of this research was to identify the impact of social support networks on college readiness across genders in hopes of producing findings that could help future students become college-ready. The 18 participants (n = 18) were 18 to 22-year-old undergraduate students with various backgrounds and genders. This qualitative case study involved interviews, journals, and surveys used to examine how different social networks affected the participants' college preparation.

Introduction

College and career readiness became a point of interest in the education system starting over the last half century with various government initiatives. Strong evidence suggests that U.S. high schools are falling short of graduating college- and career-ready students, giving raise to calls for more focus on the factors that impact students' success in college and career. New York State has implemented an accountability system under the Every Student Succeeds Act that requires schools to measure all students who graduate high school and attend college (New York State Education Department Office of Accountability, 2020). This act does not guarantee that students are college-ready. Ed Trust, a national non-profit advocacy group that supports all students achieving high academic standards, reported that only 8% of U.S. high school graduates completed a full college and career readiness curriculum (Bromberg & Theokas, 2016), and one-third of U.S. high school graduates completed a college-ready curriculum.

School districts and school counselors have stepped in to assist with these gaps; however, the school-counselor-to-student ratio is high, and not all students receive the specific support they need. To be successful in college, students must be college-ready; the research question that guided this study was: What are the most effective social networks for each gender?

Literature review

This study examined how the impact of social networks on college readiness differed between genders. Previous researchers have studied components of what prepares a student for college, and this literature review highlights the key components and how they relate to social networks. Although many factors influence college readiness, this study focused on how support networks affected college readiness differently across genders.

Tierney and Auerbach (2005) focused on how social groups affect college readiness by reviewing the literature on family engagement. The authors argued that family engagement is vital to college preparation for underrepresented students, and they showed parents wanted to more helpfully guide their children throughout the college process. The researchers reviewed the history of parent involvement, in the 21st century, families play a critical role in fostering a child's academic success. The term family has traditionally referred to a mother, father, and two to three children; however, that definition has broadened to include extended family members such as older siblings, aunts, uncles, and grandparents. Tierney and Auerbach (2005) showed how parental support differed for students from different racial backgrounds, with some types of support (i.e., motivational words) more visible than others (i.e., fiscal sacrifice). Cultural capital and a willingness to invest in the academic sector influence academic achievement (Tierney & Auerbach, 2005). White parents with high social and economic status encourage cultural capital by constantly reminding their children of the value of education and its impact on long-term financial gain, and students with lower socioeconomic status must rely on school counselors (Tierney & Auerbach, 2005). Social capital is disproportionately dispersed in society, giving social mobility to families that have invested in educational growth as a way to increase cultural capital. Families with high social and economic status invest now by showing their children how they can invest in themselves to achieve social mobility by furthering their education. Conversely, families with low social and economic status may not be able to pursue such goals due to financial constraints (Tierney & Auerbach, 2005).

Tierney and Auerbach (2005) showed that students had higher rates of achievement, attendance, homework completion, graduation, and college enrollment in homes where parents were more involved with their lives, were supportive, and expected success. In addition, the authors found that high socioeconomic status parents were more likely to seek additional help for their struggling or low-performing child, and college-educated parents could better guide their children in course selection, so they took appropriate level secondary school coursework for a student intent on a college education.

The research by Tierney and Auerbach (2005) provided useful data for this current study by showing the connection between the social network of family and its impact on college readiness. In addition to academic achievement, course selection at the high school level helps to determine college readiness. Families, extended families, older siblings, community members, and school counselors all provide social support that can help students choose appropriate courses, including advanced and remedial courses. These networks can also advise on when students should take such courses. In this current study, the researcher recruited participants who had social networks that helped them choose their educational pathway during the secondary school level.

This current study added to the scholarly research and literature in the field concerning factors of social networks such as peer groups, family, and other social supports that either guided or interfered with a student's path to college readiness. The aim of this research was to enlighten others on which factors, in addition to academics, contribute to college readiness and completion. These factors include the social fabric that can serve as the driving force for an individual seeking a college education. In this study, the researcher aimed to show that educators should include a combination of factors (e.g., academic coursework, classes in socialization, networking, and mentoring) in the curriculum to help students prepare for college. In addition, strong social networks may help bridge the gap between all students at the college level regardless of socioeconomic status, school performance, or gender.

Method

In this qualitative case study, the researcher gathered data using interviews, journals, and surveys to examine how different social networks affected participants' college preparation. The participants of this study all attended a private catholic university on the northeastern coast of the United States. The participants used the interviews, journal entries, and survey responses to candidly share information about their experiences and their thoughts about the college-readiness process.

Participants

The researcher selected the specific participants for this study to see how social networks impacted students differently across genders. Participants included 18 (n = 18) 18-22-year-old undergraduate students contacted through introductory courses offered at the university. This researcher used a mixture of sampling methods: a nonprobability sampling method and a convenience sampling method. The researcher considered the sample in this study a convenience sample because students were asked to participate via an email that their professor shared with them.

Data Collection Procedures

The data collection process began when professors disseminated a recruitment letter with the survey link to the undergraduate students in their introductory classes. After interested participants completed the Google interest survey, the researcher contacted individuals to set up interviews and clarify the research study. Once the first interview was completed, the participant received a daily journal prompt for two weeks, followed by a final interview. Another open-ended online research survey was distributed to the same students to acquire more student participation.

The researcher conducted individual 30- to 45-minute interviews at a convenient time for the participants via WebEx. Each participant took part in two interviews: one as an introduction and data collection meeting and one after the collection and review of the journal entries to ensure the researcher had interpreted the entries correctly. The interview had no set minimum time but had a maximum time of 60 minutes. The researcher informed the participants of their right to participate in the interview and reminded them they could decline to answer any question they chose and could end the interview at any time for any reason. A second interview occurred after the researcher completed the document analysis. The second interview enabled the researcher to perform member checking that validated the participants' responses.

In addition to interviews, the researcher gave each participant 2 weeks to record the social encounters that have prepared them for college. The journal had some guiding prompts to help the participants understand the expectations of the journal. The researcher reviewed the journals multiple times to identify important information related to the research on how social groups impact students of different genders to see if similarities or differences existed.

The researcher conducted an additional survey using Google forms. The survey consisted of seven demographic questions and 16 open-ended questions pertaining to college readiness and social networks. The survey opened with a paragraph informing the participants of their rights and asking them to consent to the study. The survey was created to solicit more feedback from college freshmen who did not want to participate in the interview or journal processes but still wanted to share their insights. The researcher reviewed the results from the survey using the same methods applied to the interview transcripts.

Limitations

Sample bias may have occurred because this study only involved participants who were in nonremedial courses, had high GPAs, and attended high graduation-rated high schools. The increased demand for support after COVID-19 may have strained participants social networks and impacted their college readiness experience.

Obtaining participants was a challenge for this study. After a month and a half of trying to obtain additional participants by reaching out to various programs at the college such as the writing center, student government, freshmen center, and student affairs, an additional data collection method was added to obtain more participants. A survey consisting of seven demographic questions and 16 open-ended questions pertaining to college readiness and social networks was created which resulted in acquiring 13 additional participants.

Data Analysis

This section presents the findings from data collected from 18 college students using interviews, journals, and surveys regarding how their social networks helped them become college-ready. Quotations included in this section highlight a deeper sample and reflect a snapshot of the research study. The participant pool was 56% female and 44% male. The majority of the participants were freshmen (61%), followed by sophomores (28%) and juniors (11%). The participants came from homes with parents with educational backgrounds ranging from high school equivalency degrees to doctorates. Of the participants, 78% had declared a major, and 22% were undecided. The findings answer questions about the most effective social network across genders. The participants' social networks included college counselors, assistant teachers, friends, significant others, sisters, athletic advisors, parents, and grandparents.

The female participants reported that during high school, they tended to be more open to social networks and gathered support from various people, such as counselors, assistant teachers, friends, family, and athletic advisors. When asked if they talked with their high school friends about their college experiences, Participant 3 responded, "Yeah, we have a FaceTime every week, and we kind of just give each other advice." She continued by saying her current college supports included "a few people I met online who all went to college before me. From 1 year before me to about 3 years before. They would sometimes tell me of things to be aware of, and what to brace myself for."

Participant 4 mentioned her mom helping her out: "She gives me advice when I need it, and she helps with my school work sometimes. Less now, but more during high school, when I was struggling." She also reported relying on her guidance counselor: "My guidance counselor also helped me a lot. She gave me a lot of information, explained everything to me, and advised me on where she thought I would suit, I guess, where I should apply."

Participant 7 shared her experience with various school staff members. She explained: "My college counselor in high school and assistant teachers" (Participant 7). Participant 11 reaffirmed going to a school staff member for help with the college readiness experience, pointing to the help she received from her "athletic advisor." Last, Participant 13 described similar support. She stated: "My high school resource teacher has prepared me for college by giving me amazing advice."

Female participants did not solely rely on school staff members for assistance with strengthening their college readiness skills. Participant 16 reported leaning on her family, significant other, and roommates during the college-readiness process. She shared the following: My support systems in college are my roommates, my boyfriend, and my family. My roommates help me when I'm stressed on an everyday basis, my boyfriend is always there to help me if I ever need it, and my parents are obviously not here with me and give me my space but will always be around if I had a question or something to talk about with them.

Male participants tended to rely on more intimate and close relationships, such as parents and grandparents, for support. Seven out of the eight male survey participants mentioned a family member as the person they went to for support. These family members included mothers, sisters, fathers, and grandparents. Like the female participants, the males also relied on individuals who were currently in college. Participant 2 stated:

Because I do know a few people online who are in college, so they're older than me. So, they were in college before I went to college, and they told me a bunch of stuff to expect and, you know, what to brace myself for.

Participant 2 went on to acknowledge he went to his father for advice and credited his professors with helping him create social networks, explaining, "Some of our professors have had us interact with each other in class for assignments."

Similarly, Participant 5 described having friends who were current freshmen and older so they could help with the college readiness experience. Participant 5 also acknowledged the college supported the creation of social networks via orientation and clubs. He stated: "I think that you can also learn about college culture by talking to people who have gone to college." Other male participants confirmed the importance of having a support network that included an individual who is currently attending college. Participant 9 expressed: "My sister, she has been through the college process; therefore, she had a lot of

answers to my questions." Participant 1 supported the same view about listening to friends who currently attended college, saying:

> Seeing friends of mine go to school in Boston, for example, influenced my decision to seek a college in a major city as well. I felt like I had a better understanding of what I wanted out of college, where I wanted to be.

These experiences included emotional and logistical advice pertaining to adapting to college. Institutions of higher education have created opportunities for students to create new social networks at college via clubs, orientations, and group assignments. Male participants indirectly acknowledged these efforts:

> Yeah, I would say [reserve officers training corps], actually. I can talk to people. I mean, it's mostly emotional in a way, like in a sense, they'll support me. They'll be like, "you can make it through this. Other people have done it before. Your problems are not unique to you." (Participant 5)

Participant 1 acknowledged that his professor encouraged peer-to-peer interaction: "We have done . . . In this specific example in our class, we've done workshops where we would pair up students, and we would read each other's essays."

Applying to college and adjusting to college culture can be challenging, so students benefit from support networks where they can vent and ask questions without feeling embarrassed. Acknowledging the difference between men's and women's support networks can help educators and counselors avoid pressuring individuals into adhering to a mode they find uncomfortable. The results of this study showed both genders valued family and peers who attended college as strong advocates for their college readiness success.

Conclusion

The findings showed male participants utilized family and peers as social networks during the college-readiness process, more than the female participants, who relied on family and peers as well as school staff members, significant others, roommates, and athletic advisors. If participants do not make a trusting connection with the individuals trying to support them through the college-readiness process than the participant may dismiss the support even if the support is helpful. In order to encourage male students, educators should share college preparation recommendations with parents and guardians and introduce female high school students to a variety of social networks that can help them become college-ready (O'Neill, 2023). Secondary schools can help create peer mentoring programs between college attending students and high school students. Additionally, these mentors can speak to parents to share their insights on how to overcome challenges regarding financial aid, the college application process, course selection and emotional support needed pertaining to the college readiness process.

The participants who had parents who supported them from high school through the transition to college moved along the college-readiness process successfully because they had someone helping them navigate paperwork, deadlines, emotions, and coursework. Schools should introduce parents and students to college readiness skills as early as elementary school. This would enable parents without college experience to gain the knowledge necessary to better prepare their child for the transition from high school to college.

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Systems Thinking as an Approach to Technology Integration at the K-12 School Level

By Gustavo Loor, Ed.D., and Catherine DiMartino, Ph.D.

Abstract

Amid the pedagogical and leadership shifts that the COVID pandemic placed on the K-12 educational landscape, the pandemic itself brought to light the systems that need to be in place for technology to be effectively integrated in classrooms and school buildings. The COVID transition period has produced a technology rebirth in K-12 schools across the country. This article provides a theoretical framework for K-12 leaders to utilize as a guide to establishing a technology integration system in schools that is effective and sustainable. This comparative case study examined two school districts and utilized multiple methods to formulate an actionable framework for technology leaders. Through the combined theoretical lens of Peter Senge's learning organizations and Hargreaves & Fullan's professional capital model, researchers highlight the need and value of current instructional technology measuring and evaluative tools, and how they resourcefully support and guide technology leaders. Findings revealed leadership practices and systems thinking matter, and that they have a prominent impact on technology implementation and adaptation within the fabric of K-12 schooling.

Introduction

There is a new technology era within the K-12 educational arena. The COVID pandemic disrupted education in the United States and the world; first closing schools and then pushing them to pivot to distance learning (Alvarez, 2020; McLeod, 2020). K-12 teachers and leaders have become more resilient to change and equipped and confident to leverage technology within their practices. Leading schools and teaching learners amid a pandemic have taught leaders a great deal. Success and missteps during the COVID transitional period have brought to light the systems and personnel infrastructure that need to be in place for effective technology practices in K-12 schools. As this study highlights, in order to achieve the kinds of instructional technology effectiveness required for 21st-century teaching and learning, a systems thinking approach is needed by leaders.

The International Society for Technology in Education, or ISTE, identified key roles of leaders in effectively leading the integration of instructional technology. The new standards identify essential components of technology leadership and have been adopted by many school districts to guide technology integration initiatives and serve as a technology accountability tool (ISTE, 2018; Christensen et al., 2018). Most recently as a response to the pandemic, Congress has increased funding to the Emergency Connectivity Fund, which provides monetary funds to selected elementary schools, secondary schools, or libraries to purchase equipment or services (e.g., Wi-Fi hotspots, modems, and routers) for use by students and staff at locations other than the schools (Flannery, 2020). The National Education Technology Plan (NETP), released in 2017, laid out the vision of the U.S. Department of Education for the purpose and use of technology in American K-12 education. Nationally, the United States government has spent billions of dollars for technology infrastructure in K-12 schools and has made it clear that technology is at the forefront of educational initiatives.

As technology in education today is evolving and transforming instructional pedagogy, research in the field must also be ongoing and progressing to keep up to date with evolving times. Leaders today must be capable of establishing a system that mobilizes resources to support and build the collective capacity of teachers with instructional technology. This study identifies actionable steps that leaders can take to create supportive and sustainable technology integration opportunities. All the elements identified in this study relied on the technological leadership skills of sitting administrators and their ability to react to change. This study provides a useful framework to facilitate systemic change needed in today's schools, as well as capturing research-based practices that lead to effective technology leadership and integration during a time of change and in preparation for 21st century teaching and learning.

This study's purpose is guided by the following research questions:

1) What leadership practices and approaches influence technology implementation and adaptation efforts at the K-12 level?, and

2) What elements within a system infrastructure are necessary to effectively support and sustain technology integration initiatives at the K-12 level?

Theoretical Framework

The researchers chose to review the research base through the combined theoretical lens of systems thinking (Senge, 2006) and professional capital (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). Peter Senge (2006) has identified five disciplines of a learning organization: Systems Thinking, Shared Vision, Mental Models, Personal Mastery, and Team Learning. Systems thinking is the core of the five disciplines. Systems thinking allows us to recognize the interrelationships of the disciplines and how each one is needed to foster the growth of a learning organization (Senge, 2006). Hargreaves & Fullan (2012) express professional capital in a formula, where PC is professional capital, HC is human capital, SC is social capital, and DC is decisional capital. Effective learning and teaching during a change process (e.g., COVID pandemic) can be viewed as a product of these three kinds of capital amplifying each other (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012).

Merging Theoretical Frameworks
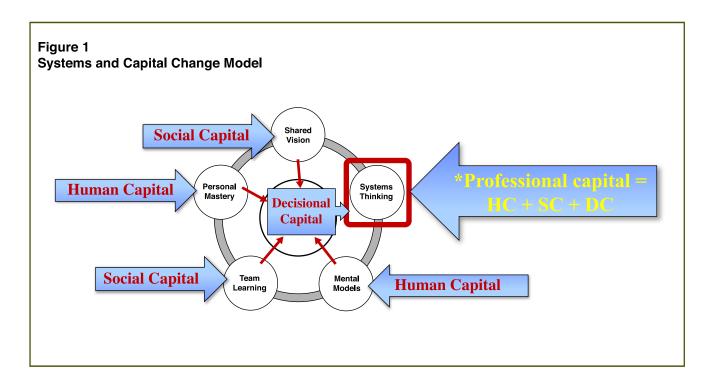
To organize the concepts in a coherent way, the researchers integrated both frameworks and constructed the Systems and Capital Change Model **(See Figure 1)** as a comprehensive framework intended to guide educational leaders during change efforts. Although there are two separate constructs, professional capital can effectively be applied within the five disciplines of learning organizations. As seen in **Figure 1**, three effective interconnections can be made by coupling and integrating both constructs: (a) Human capital corresponds to individuals attaining personal mastery and shifting mental models; (b) Social capital aligns to the disciplines of team learning and shared vision within a learning organization; and (c) Decisions made with a high level of decisional capital can help establish and sustain systems thinking. The human and social element of Fullan's professional capital theory strengthens and reinforces the dynamics of Senge's systems thinking in collaborative and efficient ways. The investment in the progression of people matters (Fullan's model) and can only be attained within a system that cultivates the process (Senge's model). Educational leaders nationwide will benefit from the fusion of both Senge's and Fullan's theoretical frameworks as they attempt to establish a system and culture of learning and collaboration among teachers during a time of change.

Review of the Literature

Following the ISTE standards for educational leaders, and to further synthesize and organize the robust literature, effective technology leadership is sub-categorized into five essential aspects: (1) establishing vision; (2) empowering and collaboration; (3) model & advocacy; (4) connected learner; (5) systems designer; and (6) accountability.

Technology leaders must build on a shared vision by collaboratively creating a plan that articulates how

Figure 1
Systems and Capital Change Model

technology will be used to enhance learning. Creating a shared technology vision during a change process enables leaders to communicate and collaborate with key stakeholders and facilitate conversations regarding technology initiatives or implementation plans (Schrum et al., 2011; Tucker, 2019). The ISTE leader standards recommend that leaders create a culture where teachers and learners are empowered to use technology in innovative ways (ISTE, 2018). To ensure that teachers feel empowered, technology leaders must provide opportunities for them to learn (e.g., professional learning communities, or PLC's) and participate in conversations that drive and support technology initiatives (e.g., technology committees).

Technology leaders must be willing to model change efforts (Afshari et al., 2010). According to the ISTE standards for education leaders, technology leaders need to model digital citizenship by intentionally adopting and demonstrating best practices to teach others (ISTE, n.d.). Further, technology leaders must consistently encourage teachers to enhance their teaching craft, actively introduce new technological resources to teachers, and advocate for their usage and effectiveness in the classroom (Hsieh et al., 2014). To stay current and effectively model and advocate for innovative technologies, technology leaders need to stay connected with other leaders as continuous learners of technology. ISTE recommends for technology leaders to sustain a continuous learning mindset in the field of technology by practicing being connected learners (ISTE, n.d.) and remain current with current research, best practices, and technological trends and advancements (Christensen et al. 2018).

According to the ISTE standards for leaders, technology leaders must assure that systems are in place to effectively implement, sustain, and continuously improve the use of instructional technology to support teaching and learning (ISTE, n.d.; Machado & Chung, 2015). Technology leadership involves designing and establishing a system of interrelated support components that promote and invest in the growth and enhancement of the teachers (Bleakley & Mangin, 2013). Part of that system infrastructure include technology committees, professional learning communities (PLC's), enhancement opportunities (e.g., training, workshops), and support teams (e.g., technology coach/es, IT department). It is necessary for technology leaders to set the path and structure for all the essential components of the system to be established and implemented within the dynamics of a school system. Lastly, ISTE contends that it is important for technology leaders to implement evaluative procedures that allow for the technological growth of teachers (2016). Two current commonly utilized and researched evaluative tools for instructional technology include the Substitution, Augmentation, Modification, Redefinition model (SAMR) and the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge model (TPACK). Technology leaders need technology evaluative and reflective tools alongside them to create and sustain a system of technology

integration accountability within their building or district. In an evolving educational technology landscape, it is essential that technology leaders approach technology integration in a systematic and reflective way.

Methodology

The researchers conducted a comparative case study to capture the lived experiences of participants as they navigated technology in their diverse school contexts within a real-life, contemporary context (Creswell & Poth, 2018) - K-12 technology integration during a time of change (e.g., COVID). Purposeful sampling was used to select two high-achieving suburban school districts in opposite counties in Long Island, New York (Nassau and Suffolk). Data collection spanned the 2020-2021 school year. Open-ended, semi-structured interview questions were utilized during both individual and focus group interviews. Each case (school district) within the study provided insight from various stakeholder perspectives (administrators and teachers), which facilitated understanding of their district's technology integration system design during a time of change. Participants included elementary and secondary level principals and teachers, and district-level technology directors and building-level leaders for this study. Additionally, district documents, archived documents (e.g., technology integration plans; Smart School Plan; teacher contracts) and district website were analyzed to gain further input on technology initiatives, budgetary allocations, or contractual language regarding technology integration efforts. The researchers triangulated the data by utilizing not only three methods of data collection (individual interviews, focus group interviews, document analysis), but also three sources of data from divergent stakeholder voices (leader perspectives, teacher perspectives, varying grade levels) to confirm this study's findings.

Findings

Three pertinent overarching themes emerged from the study:

   a) Technology Leadership;
   b) Systems infrastructure; and
   c) Accountability.

Technology Leadership

The analysis of the interview data found that technology leadership requires a specific set of interpersonal skills to be able to influence teachers' instructional technology usage. In essence, people skills allow technology leaders to build trust and communicate change efforts more effectively. Across both cases, most teacher and leader participants emphasized that technology leaders need patience. Patience to listen and value their perspectives. Patience to understand and acknowledge that teachers have diverse levels of technology proficiency. Both leader and teacher

participants across both cases also expressed that technology leaders must have humility to accept assistance from others when needed, and humility to not be afraid to learn along with teachers. Among the main practices identified by most leader and teacher participants included, modeling expectations, allocating time for teachers to learn and practice instructional technology along with colleagues, listening to understand, and practicing a continuous learning mindset. As expressed by many teacher participants from both districts, time is also an essential consideration technology leaders must consider if they want teachers to successfully incorporate technology. Lastly, most district leaders expressed the importance of technology leaders consistently practicing being life-long learners by staying current with best practices, collaborating with other leaders, and seeking learning opportunities.

Systems Infrastructure

The analysis of the interview data found that, overall, systems thinking matters with technology leadership. The findings revealed that every aspect or element of instructional technology relates back to the system that has been put in place to support and sustain it, which leaders are charged with establishing. Most leaders across both districts agreed that adequate bandwidth speed and Wi-Fi capabilities are crucial foundational system needs. Without adequate bandwidth or Wi-Fi capabilities, schools and districts will not be able to sustain technology integration initiatives. In addition to foundational needs, the majority of leader and teacher participants across both cases reported that technology leadership must continuously structure enhancement opportunities for teachers with technology more consistently to enhance their craft. Teachers must have support available when it comes to instructional technology. As such, teacher and leader participants across both districts identified specific technology positions and departments within a K-12 district or school system that provide available support. A prominent position that surfaced from all leader and teacher responses across both districts was the notion that having a designated person (e.g., technology coach) responsible for assisting and guiding teachers' technology usage in the classroom is vital to a district's success with technology integration. The information technology (IT) department was also reported as an essential support component alongside technology coaches. The IT department takes care of all network and hardware/software related matters within instructional technology, while technology coaches focus on the instructional aspect of technology in the classrooms.

Accountability

Findings revealed that technological accountability is an important aspect for an effective technology inte-

gration system. The 2018-2021 Instructional Technology Plan from both cases communicated and outlined a three-year plan for the district's technology vision, short-term and long-term goals, and action steps. The presence of each district's 2018-2021 Instructional Technology Plan showed alignment with the ISTE standards. Moreover, all leader participants shared that their district utilized Google Forms as surveys to gather information from parents, students, teachers, and administrators to evaluate the needs and progress of their technology initiatives. All leader participants also expressed the importance of establishing technology committees within the district to be able to gather stakeholder input and collaboratively work towards a technology vision. Technology committees develop consensus and create and facilitate buy-in from stakeholders at all levels. Another important finding was that no other guiding framework, such as the SAMR model, or standards, such as ISTE, were being utilized by teachers or leaders within each district. Across both districts, findings revealed that most teacher participants from both districts were not knowledgeable or familiar with either standards or framework. This key finding alludes to the notion that ISTE technology standards and guiding frameworks such as SAMR or TPACK are just touching the surface of awareness by K-12 educators. Lastly, the researchers also discovered that contract language regarding instructional technology expectations were non-existent in both district's teacher contracts.

As the findings reflect across both district cases, a system thinking approach is necessary for technology leaders to establish a system of interrelated support components that are integral to the instructional technology infrastructure of schools and districts.

Discussion and Conclusion

Creating a system that nurtures teacher's growth with technology, and providing a framework for consistent collaboration and communication were found to be vital components for a functional, efficient, and effective instructional technology environment in schools. After interviewing and listening to the stories of leaders and teachers from both participating districts, the researchers identified the following key conclusions: a) technology leaders must establish processes and systems design as foundational aspects of the technology infrastructure within a school; and b) accountability for the effectiveness of instructional technology integration is needed, thus K-12 technology leaders and teachers will benefit from adapting and utilizing models that are guiding, evaluative, and reflective (e.g. ISTE; SAMR; TPACK). Future studies should investigate leader preparation programs and determine if leadership programs are adequately preparing leaders to become technology leaders. The digital divide between

school districts with varying demographics is also an area that merits further study. School districts, educational leaders, and leader preparation programs can utilize the findings from this study to provide a basis to inform and guide 21st century technology leadership.

In a continuously emerging technological age marked with rapid change, it has become imperative and necessary to continue understanding the depth of influence that leadership practices and systems and structures have on technology integration efforts at the K-12 school level. Only then can educational leaders establish and sustain the means to experience success with instructional technology implementation initiatives.

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Equity and Elementary School Homework: A Case Study

By Rosebud Elijah, Ph.D., Andrea Libresco, Ed.D., Sandra Stacki, Ph.D., Christina Drago-Botti, M.S. Ed., Debra Goodman, Ph.D., and Judith Kaufman, Ph.D.

Abstract

At the end of a two-year discussion about the value of homework in elementary school, the Seaview district decided to move away from the traditional model of homework, and introduced Wonder, Reading, and Play (WRaP) intended to be more equitable and authentic. A case study was conducted to assess the district's goals for and implementation of more equitable learning through WRaP. The experiences of stakeholders with regard to equity issues revealed success in reading due to an already established culture of reading. Lack of structure, consistency, and accountability in wonder, play, and content areas other than language arts resulted in limited success.

The Seaview school district spent two years discussing the value of homework in elementary school (Cooper, 2007; Cooper et al., 2012; Kohn, 2006b; Weir, 2016). Subsequently, the district decided to move from the traditional model of homework and introduced Wonder, Reading, and Play (WRaP) for the 2018-19 school year, intended to be a more equitable and meaningful way to spend time with family and produce opportunities for authentic learning. A district-wide letter (in Spanish and English) from the superintendent shared research on the ineffectiveness of homework at the elementary level (Hattie, 2014) and the benefits of WRaP. The letter encouraged guardians' involvement in literacy activities, including reading to children in their native language or having children read to them in English.

Attentive to the demographics of the district (59% White, 27% Hispanic/Latino, 8% Black/African American, 4% Asian/Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander, 2% Multiracial; 28% Economically Disadvantaged; 5% English Language Learners; 16% Students with Disabilities (New York State Education Department, 2022), in an interview, the superintendent argued for the elimination of traditional homework to serve the principle of equity: Independent reading … automatically differentiates … We want to ensure that the playing field is level in terms of what they can accomplish [at home] regardless of ability and resources. Reading does that in ways that other … assignments do not." If reading was seen as accessible to all families, math was not. Therefore, math would not be the province of families

in the home; rather, it was fairer to leave math to the classroom teachers: "We want practice in Math in school with people who can help them." WRaP activities, more than traditional homework, would help neutralize the disparate socioeconomic statuses, languages, and abilities of students in the district, providing access to and engagement in the curriculum for all students.

Prior to the administration sharing plans with teachers and guardians, an area newspaper reported that the district was rolling out a "No Homework" policy. Thus, the first information about WRaP that circulated was neither from district officials, nor accurate. The resulting confusion was reflected in a teacher's anecdote. Her son's friend (not in Seaview) had packed a bag, come to her door, and asked to please take him to Seaview, where there was no homework.

At the district's request, we conducted a case study of the WRaP program over the 2018-19 academic year. Here, we assess the district's goals for and implementation of more equitable learning through WRaP. Findings suggested success in reading due to an already established culture of reading. Lack of structure, consistency, and accountability in wonder, play, and content areas other than language arts resulted in limited success.

Literature Review

The evidence about the value of homework for elementary students is mixed. Studies show some benefit in students doing homework (Bempechat, 2004; Cooper, 1989; Cooper, 2001; Cooper et al., 2006; Dolean, & Lervag, 2022); others suggest homework may have negative effects (Corno, 1996; Couts, 2004; Holland, et al., 2021; Jackson, 2007; Kohn, 2006a). Myriad factors influence student learning, attitudes, and behaviors in doing homework, which may explain this mixed evidence. Student ability and special needs (Olympia et al., 1994; Oram & Rogers, 2022) are important factors, but so are the quality of homework assignments (Chen & Stevenson, 1989; Cooper, 1989, Darling-Hammond & Ifill-Lynch, 2006; Epstein & Van Voorhis, 2001), cultural influences (Chen & Stevenson, 1989;

Martinez, 2011), nature of parent involvement (Chen & Stevenson, 1989; Epstein & Van Voorhis, 2001; Ji & Koblinsky, 2009; Lareau, 2011; Li & Hamlin, 2019), home resources (Krashen, 2005; Lareau, 2011), and parent attitudes toward homework (Warton, 1998; Wu et al., 2022).

Given the nature of these factors, assigning any kinds of activities to be done at home raises the issue of equity. One argument (e.g., Jackson, 2007) is that thoughtfully designed homework is essential to level the playing field -- otherwise how would students without the resources (libraries, museums, educated family, etc.) ever catch up? Others argue (Zalaznick, 2018; Hobbs, 2018) that too many factors (resources, level of parental involvement, student needs and interests) prevent leveling the playing field.

Evidence-based research about homework and equity is scarce. Rønning (2011) explored the heterogeneous impact of homework on Dutch elementary student achievement and found that the test score gap was larger in classes where everyone got homework in comparison to classes where no one got homework. Rønning concluded that homework can amplify existing inequalities through home inputs. While more research is needed to establish whether and how homework might be equitable, the nature, quality, and structure of homework (e.g., Cooper, 1989; Couts, 2004; Epstein & Van Voorhis, 2001) may be at the heart of the equity issue.

Methodology

To understand the range and diversity of stakeholders' perspectives on WRaP, during the 2018-19 school year, researchers used a case study approach (Yin, 2017). We sought to understand learning environments at the four elementary schools, four WRaP Teacher Committee meetings, two faculty meetings, one parent academy, and two administrator interviews. We obtained documents and artifacts from these meetings; for example, explanations and expectations about WRaP, #SeaviewReads, and book recommendations.

In addition, we conducted two guardian, one teacher, and eight student focus groups (Broström, 2012), composed of first and fourth graders nominated by teachers as representing diverse learners. Invitations for focus groups were sent in English and Spanish. A focus group of principals was canceled due to an emergency. Guardians completed a short survey, as did 98 teachers. All focus groups and interviews were audio recorded after obtaining informed consent.

The research team analyzed the data both inductively and deductively. General methods of grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1994) were used to establish inductive codes for all three groups (students, guardians, teachers, administrators), site visit memos, meetings, and artifacts. Data were then triangulated (Flick, 2007; Maxwell, 2013) across participant groups. There was no expectation of consensus among groups. In the descriptive representation of the findings, researchers reviewed the data analysis across all data sources for exemplars of varied perspectives addressing a pattern or theme.

Findings

"I get to read now a lot!"

The overarching goal of WRaP emphasized reading. Students were to see themselves as readers and take pleasure in reading (Lindfors, 2008). Administrators emphasized that strong reading skills are "the #1 predictor of academic achievement" and these skills are developed in "sustained independent reading." The district had established this culture over the years through school and community connections such as Parents as Reading Partners, book fairs, and local business reading enticements ("tell me what you're reading, get a free slice"). Reinforcing the "culture of reading" theme, one administrator noted, "I think if they don't enjoy reading when they're young, it's very difficult to develop that habit as they get older." Family reading "will create enduring memories of reading as an activity that provides comfort and enjoyment."

Stressing equity, the district believed that independent reading at home, which builds vocabulary and meaning, would level the playing field, regardless of students' ability and resources, automatically differentiating. Administrators emphasized the importance of modeling and scaffolding reading in the classroom to help students experience successful reading at home, even if "a student doesn't have a parent at home to support them." An ENL teacher was grateful to be "part of the team, … [supporting] our Spanish families," as they navigated WRaP.

Many guardians supported the reading approach in WRaP. At a school board meeting, they emphasized that their children were reading more at home with less struggle because they were encouraged to read what they wanted and were not doing busy work. A guardian reported that her son, who had not liked "homework," loves WRaP ("I get to read now a lot!"). She added, "now he can sit with a book, and he can get into it." Guardians appreciated the WRaP process as helping with the natural maturing process, not rushing and forcing homework for young students before they are ready, allowing them a chance to be kids.

Essential to the equity focus on reading, all students indicated their autonomy in choosing their reading material. Their attitudes toward reading varied: two boys said they were forced to read while another said, "I just play video games." Other responses included, "I always love to read;" "I don't love to read;" "I read all the time;" "nothing for me is better than reading." Some students believed, especially with non-fiction, "The more you read, the more you're better at it." While one student described the experience of reading 20 minutes each day as "stretching," expanding her mind, a few did not recognize that they were learning "because it's just reading."

"the projects are funner"

Well-designed, open-ended projects can be equitable because they allow students to engage in learning at their own levels, develop knowledge and skills, represent their learning in multimodal ways, and collaborate with peers, resulting in increased learning. This goal of open-endedness was echoed in this administrator's comment:

What does that say to our students if ... they don't get ... a chance to experiment with the things that [they like] to do. Read about something [they're] interested in, do a[n] ... experiment or ... build something or grow something. Those are the Wonder experiences.

Some guardians recognized that students were assigned WRaP projects. For example, "There's a monthly assignment, like a bigger project type thing," but, mostly, guardians discussed their perceptions of WRaP more generally: "The point of it was not that they were going to be assigning specific things because it was more open," "I think it's fantastic that they're doing it this way," and "parents who have kids with IEPs love [non-traditional activities] because their kids struggle all day long."

Students stated their clear preference for projects over traditional homework: "Homework is much more boring, and the projects are funner." Students perceived projects as distinct from homework describing projects as when "you get more extended time." Students were also articulate about their favorite projects and what they learned. Fourth graders described a historical figure museum project in which they all chose whom they wanted to portray by making a board, memorizing a speech, and creating a costume. The student who chose to portray Neil Armstrong described the process: "I read it for myself, then I act like I'm on the news, ... I'll read it to another friend and pretend I got a microphone," implying reading, wonder, and play wrapped into this social studies project. Another student described what they liked about this project, "reading facts, us[ing] photos, backgrounds, animat[ion], gif moving pictures."

In another project assigned, students were asked to create a puppet from paper plates at home; they were asked not to buy objects at a store. One student described what they made as "fun as a store bought toy." Students demonstrated awareness of inequities ("kids are poor ... they can't ... just go to the store and buy their own toys") and displayed autonomy and agency ("instead of having to go to a store and buy things, you can just make things").

Not all assigned projects engaged all students. Students had difficulty recalling the details or were clearly not engaged in some "projects." Some of these challenges included coloring, reading a book about rain while wearing rain boots, completing a project in exchange for points or prizes. Making clear that the reinforcements of prizes and points did not work consistently, one student declared, "My mom said I don't need a prize because I have over 200 toys in my house." The quality of engagement evident in the social studies projects (described above) seemed qualitatively different from students' engagement with some of the other challenges, suggesting that students valued well-structured projects that allowed them to engage in the content and form in a variety of ways.

"no fidelity across the district"

WRaP was conceptualized to facilitate authentic assessment and, thus, support diverse families, by offering open-ended invitations for home learning and assuring that students would not be academically disadvantaged if their guardians could not assist with home activities. Multiple areas of confusion and inconsistency among teachers, guardians, and students suggested that the first-year implementation of WRaP lacked clear communication and accountability around goals and meaningful home activities, limiting the potential for equity. Some teachers provided invitations for reading and active learning. Yet, without a clear home-school connection, guardians and students engaged unevenly with WRaP.

One teacher's experience reflected her frustration with WRaP's accountability inconsistencies: "How can you do project-based learning when nothing comes back from home?" A survey of most (N=98) elementary teachers revealed that the types of work sent home for WRaP varied widely. Only 72% of teachers assigned daily independent reading--the heart of WRaP--and only 14% promoted reading logs. Other assignments (games to promote learning 45%; choice menus 27%; research projects 30%) did not indicate consistency, nor did the 13% of teachers who selected "I don't send work home for WraP." Some students' teachers gave "prizes" and "points" to encourage WRaP completion; others did not discuss WRaP opportunities at all. When discussing Mathematics, teachers were particularly concerned: "The parents need to see models of problems in order to properly question their children and help reinforce concepts." Multiple guardians expressed their discomfort at these inconsistencies, one summing up, "there's no fidelity across the district." Some students loved the reading challenges; others completed them because their parents told them to; some did not complete them. One first grader succinctly expressed the difficulty of understanding what was required and the lack of accountability: "Me and my dad always can't find the WRaP. Poof! It go. We lost it."

The equity gap between the ideal and the practice of WRaP was an expressed concern. Teachers suggested that the same students who were doing traditional homework were picking up on WRaP invitations, while students who needed extra help might not be picking up on those invitations. One guardian commented: "I can imagine that WRaP actually may reduce disparities, [with] … the responsibility potentially … shifted to the [classroom] teacher. I know that's not [how] everyone experiences it." Guardians spoke of the unfairness of having to search out materials ("hours researching on google") to help their children, when that

help "should be coming from the school district." They raised questions about families who had neither the wherewithal ("they are not creative, they are not going to sit there and make puppets with their kids about the story") nor time ("they're working three jobs," "both my husband and I work full time") to "make connections within the home or the learning."

Discussion and Implications

WRaP was a bold initiative, a paradigm shift, with potential and promise for students of all backgrounds, especially welcome, given the dearth of evidence-based research regarding the links between home academic activities and equity. That potential and promise were realized in the area of reading. The district had developed a culture of reading over a period of two years, involving all stakeholders, even community businesses. Thus, WRaP's emphasis on independent reading was well-received and resulted in benefits for students, including struggling readers and ELLs. Cultivating engagement by providing children with choice and access to books nurtured students of varied backgrounds to see themselves as readers and increase their pleasure in reading, thereby enhancing equity for all levels of readers. Similarly, the use of home time for well-structured, meaningful activities, such as the historical figure museum project, wherein students had choice about both topic and presentation method, promoted equity, as students from a variety of backgrounds were invited into meaningful work.

Changing the culture around homework for teachers, guardians, and students is a challenging endeavor, requiring communication (prior and ongoing), scaffolding (via meetings and exemplars), and time, all of which are necessary for buy-in. While these crucial elements existed with respect to the district's reading initiative, similar investments were lacking for math, science, social studies, wonder, and play. Insufficient professional development and discussions about pedagogy, goals, and authentic accountability prior to WRaP made a consistent approach to meaningful home activities unlikely. One explanation for this lack of investment in the other subjects and aspects of WRaP was the belief of administrators that improvement in reading would close the achievement gap in all subject areas. While reading competency is important, the district did not provide evidence that reading efficacy would necessarily translate to measurement and other mathematics, science, or social studies concepts and practices.

Without clear expectations, goals, and exemplars in these less accessible aspects of WRaP, teachers and guardians were left to interpret home academic activities as best they could. The inconsistencies in activities assigned and levels of accountability expected resulted in inequities for families with varied backgrounds and levels of time to devote to their children's academic home activities. Not all teachers and guardians had been provided with games and activities that employed math in thoughtful, academic ways. Thus, guardians who felt that their children would fall behind without traditional homework (e.g., math worksheets) sought out those materials online, thus potentially increasing the gap between students who did and did not receive some sort of math homework. If WRaP activities required guardians to be creative and resourceful, perhaps, as both teachers and guardians suggested, some students were advantaged and benefiting more from WRaP experiences, contrary to the district's aim in instituting WRaP.

The district's explicit valuing of wonder and play was innovative and sought to promote healthy family interaction but required more scaffolding for students and guardians lacking the academic and cultural capital to understand what was expected. Years of district work in supporting reading suggests a way forward.

Cultivating thoughtful and creative approaches that bring wonder and play to math, science, and social studies, and clearly communicating these to all stakeholders, will contribute to supporting and building students' identities as mathematicians, scientists, and social scientists (beyond their identities as readers). Building and supporting meaningful activities and accountability structures, as well as sustaining home-school relationships, will lessen the inconsistencies in the practice of such a homework paradigm shift. Teachers and guardians need extensive preparation and ongoing scaffolding to change definitions and practices of homework in a variety of subject areas; only then can students from families with varied academic and cultural backgrounds have an equitable opportunity to succeed.

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Trust & Inspire: How Truly Great Leaders Unleash Greatness in Others

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In a world where leadership has often been synonymous with control and hierarchy, Stephen M. R. Covey's "Trust and Inspire" presents a compelling and timely argument for a new approach to leadership. Drawing from personal anecdotes and real-world examples, Covey invites us to explore the Trust and Inspire leadership style, a refreshing departure from the conventional Command and Control approach that has dominated workplaces for centuries.

Covey begins the book sharing his journey into the world of leadership by recounting a childhood memory that set the foundation for his innovative leadership philosophy. At the tender age of seven, Covey's father, author of the 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, tasked him with the responsibility of maintaining their lawn. Rather than imposing rigid rules, Covey's father communicated a simple expectation: the lawn should be "green and clean." This pivotal moment was more than just a chore; it was a lesson in trust, empowerment, and mentorship. Covey's father provided guidance and support, but he also allowed his son the autonomy to figure things out on his own. The result? A sense of pride and accomplishment that resonated with Covey even half a century later. Inspired by his father's teachings and guided by his own experiences, Stephen M. R. Covey conceptualized the Trust and Inspire leadership style, which he believes is the future of effective leadership.

"Trust and Inspire" dives headfirst into what makes this leadership style so compelling and relevant in today's world. It begins by dissecting the shortcomings of the traditional Command and Control approach as described as feeling like a cog in a organizational machine, stuck in a routine, mindlessly executing tasks without a sense of purpose. The Command and Control style, prevalent since the Industrial Revolution, treats employees as mere resources to be controlled for maximum efficiency and productivity. It is a top-down, authoritative approach that often leaves individuals feeling disengaged and uninspired.

Covey astutely points out that Command and Control leadership isn't confined to the workplace. We encounter a similar dynamic in parenting when we hear the dreaded phrase, "Because I said so." Leaders who adopt this approach rarely explain their decisions or trust their subordinates to understand and contribute to the bigger picture. In an era where individuals have more options and seek meaningful work experiences, this style is woefully ineffective.

The alternative, as Covey passionately argues, is Trust and Inspire leadership. At its core, Trust and Inspire is about empowering and emboldening individuals, recognizing their inherent potential, and inspiring them to reach new heights. It's the difference between a manager who relies on "carrot and stick" techniques and a leader who instills a sense of purpose that genuinely excites people about their work.

Covey illustrates this transition beautifully with a real-life example from the education sector. He recounts a school where a principal initially followed the Command and Control style. The school experienced high teacher turnover, conflicts with parents, and a general lack of enthusiasm. However, when a Trust and Inspire leader assumed the role of principal, everything changed. Trust was established from day one, and the entire staff felt supported and appreciated. Despite budget constraints and limited resources, the school's atmosphere became more enthusiastic, collaborative, and innovative. Test scores improved, parents noticed the positive transformation, and teacher turnover ceased. The shift in leadership style made a tangible, positive impact.

Covey's message is clear: leadership matters, and it can profoundly shape the culture and performance of an organization, whether it is a school or a corporation. Trust and Inspire leaders understand that everyone has ambitions, dreams, and untapped potential. They harness this potential by creating an environment of trust and mutual accountability. Covey compellingly argues that when individuals feel trusted and empowered, they naturally excel and take ownership of their growth and performance.

The core principles of Trust and Inspire leadership are embodied in what Covey terms the "three stewardships." These stewardships-modeling, trusting, and inspiring-provide a practical framework for aspiring Trust and Inspire leaders.

While the Trust and Inspire leadership philosophy sounds simple on paper, Covey acknowledges that it requires effort, commitment, and a willingness to change. Breaking free from generations of Command and Control conditioning can be challenging. However, Covey offers practical guidance on how to implement this approach in everyday leadership practice, emphasizing the importance of the "stewardship agreement." The stewardship agreement aims to replace micromanagement with self-governance, transforming managers into coaches who share in their team's success.

Covey wisely advises leaders not to abandon individuals who may initially fall short of expectations. Instead, failures should be seen as opportunities to build trust, learn from mistakes, and strengthen relationships. These moments of growth are an integral part of the Trust and Inspire leadership journey.

In summary, "Trust and Inspire" by Stephen M. R. Covey is a compelling exploration of a transformative leadership style that challenges the traditional Command and Control approach. Covey draws from his personal experiences, real-world examples, and a deep understanding of human nature to advocate for a leadership philosophy that centers on trust, empowerment, and inspiration. The book provides practical tools, such as the stewardship agreement, to help leaders transition to Trust and Inspire leadership successfully. Covey addresses common barriers and provides insights and guidance for leaders seeking to embrace this innovative approach.

Whether you are a seasoned leader looking to revitalize your leadership style or someone aspiring to become a more effective and inspiring leader, "Trust and Inspire" offers valuable insights and a roadmap for creating a workplace culture where trust, accountability, and purpose thrive. It is a must-read for educators, business leaders, and anyone interested in the future of leadership in an ever-evolving world. Stephen M. R. Covey's message is clear: to lead is to trust, empower, and inspire.

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