

Tenth

Focus on Illinois Education Research Symposium

Illinois Education Research Council

June 11 and June 12, 2012 • Tinley Park, Illinois



**Compendium
of
Abstracts**

**Illinois Education Research Council
at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville
Campus Box 1064
Edwardsville, IL 62026-1064
1-866-799-4372
ierc.siu.edu**

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An Oakton Community College - DePaul University Reverse Articulation Study

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Jaelyn Cameron, Research Associate, Institutional Research and Marketing Analytics
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Purpose of the research:

DePaul University joined together with Oakton Community College to conduct this study as DePaul is a major transfer destination for Oakton students and Oakton is one of DePaul's top five transfer feeder schools. The purposes of this study were to develop a methodology to identify those students who had completed, or very nearly completed, their Associate degree requirements at the four-year institution after transferring from a partnering community college and to estimate the numbers in various stages of associate degree completion. These are needed to develop a more seamless transfer system where there is an articulation method so that passing courses at the four-year institution would notify either the individual student or the community college so that the degree could be awarded.

Methodology used:

An academic transcript analysis was conducted from the population of DePaul transfer students who had transfer credit earned from Oakton Community College. Students meeting the following criteria were identified: transferred to DePaul between Fall 2006 and Fall 2009; entered DePaul with at least 30 semester hours earned at Oakton (the equivalent of a year of full time academic studies which also exceeds the minimum required for residency to earn an Oakton degree); and either earned at least a total of 139 quarter hours at DePaul (combined transfer and DePaul earned credit) bringing them close to baccalaureate completion or, had graduated from DePaul by the Spring of 2010. Oakton requires 60 semester hours, or 90 quarter hours for the Associate of Arts degree. DePaul requires 192 quarter hours (equivalent to 128 semester hours) for bachelor's degree completion. This set of criteria resulted in 294 total students to analyze.

The official transcripts with all articulated and earned coursework included, for each of the 294 students in the study population were compiled and sent as a secured electronic file to Oakton for review. Using the Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI) approved courses and Associate of Arts (A.A.) and Associate of Science (A. S.) degrees as the standard measures, transcripts were reviewed at Oakton. Courses were identified that both

articulated and fulfilled Oakton degree requirements and it was determined if associate degree requirements were met.

Summary of findings:

Oakton's assessment of the data revealed the following:

- 21% (n=63) had earned and were awarded the Associate degree prior to transfer .
- 11% (n=33) had fulfilled the Oakton degree requirements prior to transfer, but had not applied for degree conferral before leaving Oakton.
- 7% (n=21) fulfilled requirements using coursework taken at DePaul.
- 1% (n=4) fulfilled requirements using coursework from schools other than DePaul.
- 59% (n=173) had not fulfilled the Oakton degree requirements.

One noteworthy finding uncovered with this analysis, is the substantial group of students who met the requirements of the associate degree prior to transfer, but did not apply for degree conferral. Additionally, of the 173 students who had not met Oakton associate degree requirements, 61% (n=105), or 36% of the total population, did earn the Bachelor's degree at DePaul. Also, it was found that since articulations are typically built for community college courses to map onto 4-year institutional courses, many courses taken at DePaul would most likely have fulfilled the Oakton requirements, if those courses would have been approved IAI- GECC (General Education Core Curriculum) courses or otherwise articulated by Oakton.

A threshold of when students were close to earning the Associate's degree was not discernable, due to the small number of cases who fit the originally defined profile and the large amount of variation among those cases. It was found that 37% (64) of the 173 who did not meet the associate degree requirements, but graduated from DePaul, only needed one more course to meet the associate degree requirements; an additional 36 % (62)

needed two courses. The results include an analysis of the courses most commonly needed for degree completion.

Implications for Illinois education:

The first intent of this study was to identify key indicators or benchmarks whereby Oakton Community College transfer students who had completed, or very nearly completed, their associate degree requirements while at DePaul University could be identified using the reverse articulation of DePaul coursework. The second intent was to identify the number of students in the various stages of completion. Significant insights were gained about the processes and practices required to make reverse articulation and the awarding of the associate degree using credit earned at the 4-year school feasible. The insights gained were:

- Reverse articulation is not as easy as forward articulation. The policies, practice and systems that have been created to facilitate forward articulation are not well suited to reverse articulation.
- There are sufficient numbers of students to warrant pursuing reverse articulation.
- There are technical methodologies so that it is not necessary to refine the criteria used to select the sample. In fact it may be appropriate to start tracking transfers in their first year at DePaul.

- The lack of automatic degree audit systems at the community colleges is resulting in the under reporting of associate degrees completed by students even prior to transfer. This study identified 11% (33 of 294) who had fulfilled degree requirements prior to transfer, but had not applied for degree conferral before leaving Oakton.
- The study also revealed that students are able to fulfill the requirements for the bachelor's degree without fulfilling the requirements for the associate's degree. There are a select set of courses that, if students took them before leaving Oakton, reverse articulation would be much more productive.

The challenges in reverse articulation can be met and will provide benefits to students, community colleges, bachelor degree granting universities, and the higher education community as a whole, but it will require some additional work and some new perspectives on transfer.

We Know Where They Went, but Where Did They Come From? Analysis of Illinois High School Students, Feeder Schools, and Postsecondary Enrollment

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Purpose

The purpose of this study is to investigate the characteristics of public Illinois high schools that feed large, public universities. These types of institutions also produce a higher number of undergraduate degrees awarded in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields. With the current emphasis for educational policy makers to increase the number of students, and subsequently, the number of undergraduate degrees awarded in STEM, these types of institutions should be of interest to policymakers. In improving access for underrepresented students from Illinois to these types of universities and to STEM fields, a more diverse and better qualified Illinois workforce would emerge. By investigating the extent to which public Illinois high schools “feed” these universities, we hope to better understand how to inform the recruitment efforts of the universities.

Data and Methodology

This study is based on analysis of secondary data obtained from eight large public universities on domestic undergraduate students who entered college in the fall of 1999 and who attended an Illinois public high school (n=6,978). The dataset includes student’s socio-demographic information, high school information, standardized test scores, undergraduate major, undergraduate academic performance, and graduation information. If a student filed a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), additional financial aid information is available for each year the application was filed.

Student’s high school CEEB codes were used to create a variable that identifies feeder schools which was then organized into quartiles (High Feeder, Moderate Feeder, Low Feeder and Non-Feeder). Feeder schools were classified by the total number of students from a high school that were enrolled in one of the eight institutions in the dataset. The following research objectives guide the study of this project:

1. What are the characteristics of Illinois public high schools that are feeder schools to large public universities?

2. What are the characteristics of college students who attended Illinois public high schools, by feeder status?
3. How does entrance into STEM majors in college differ by feeder school status for students who attended Illinois public high schools?

Findings and Implications

The preliminary findings suggest that the majority of Illinois students who attended public high school and enrolled in the universities in this study come from predominately white high schools. By comparison, 9.2 percent and 2.7 percent of students that came from Non-Feeder schools came from schools that were majority African American and Latino, respectively. Finally, 6.9 percent of students that came from Low Feeder schools came from schools that were majority African American. When disaggregated by school locale, 43.9 percent of whites and 61.6 percent Asians came from schools classified as Moderate and High Feeder located in suburban areas. In comparison, 31.4 percent of African American students came from schools classified as Low and Non-Feeder schools located in large cities.

Across all levels of feeder schools, the gender representation was 50/50, suggesting no significant difference in gender for level. The highest percentage of Asians and whites came from High Feeder schools, (45.7 and 29.7, respectively). In addition, 42.5 percent of Blacks came from the lowest quartile, and the percentage of Latino/Hispanic students was consistent over the feeder schools. The percentage of students that filed FAFSA and the percentage of students who received Pell Grants decreased Non-Feeder to High Feeder schools, suggesting that low-income students do not attend high-sending feeder schools. However, a higher percentage of students from Non-Feeder schools started in STEM fields compared to the other three quartiles of feeder schools. Additional research will be conducted to further address the proposed research objectives, including school socioeconomic status, student socioeconomic status, standardized test scores, and post-secondary outcomes including graduation rates.

Implications from the findings will inform program and policy efforts for recruiting Illinois high schools students to large, public universities and to the STEM fields. Implications from the findings may be useful for college administrators in targeted postsecondary recruitment programs of Illinois students. Schools identified as lower feeder schools may garner attention from college recruiters as a way to improve diversity efforts across large, public universities and the STEM fields. By recruiting students from No and Low Feeder schools, qualified students may see attending large, public universities as a viable option for postsecondary education.

Building Illinois' Education Policy Research Agenda Collaboratively

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After considerable time and careful deliberation, the state of Illinois is launching the Illinois Collaborative for Education Policy Research (the Collaborative). Among its many goals, the Collaborative will bring together top state agency leadership with policy researchers employed by Illinois' public and private universities to identify and support longitudinal research that focuses on Illinois' most critical policy concerns. The Collaborative will provide leadership for creation of the SLDS Research Agenda and encourage and coordinate use of the SLDS. In addition, the Collaborative will explore ways to link the SLDS to the work of local education agencies who are engaged in Illinois' Race to the Top application.

This session brings together leaders of research organizations that are committed to conducting education policy research. Following the introduction of

the panel by Debra Bragg, presenters representing each organization will take about 3-5 minutes to talk about their thoughts and expectations for the Collaborative – what its goals should be, how it can be supportive of utilization of SLDS, how it can improve quality research in the state, and how it can function in a coordinated fashion. Past work of the organizations will be highlighted to show ways the Collaborative will benefit from the collective actions of organizations already committed to education policy research. Following their brief presentations, the panel will engage the audience in a Q&A session to solicit their ideas concerning the Collaborative and other actions that can be taken to improve education policy research in the state, particularly as relates to using that state's new SLDS.

REL Midwest Research Alliances: Increasing Relevance Through Collaborative Partnerships

Alicia Garcia, J.D., Policy Analyst
Sheila Rodriguez, Policy Analyst
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Project Overview

REL Midwest is part of a network of 10 regional educational laboratories funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences (IES). American Institutes for Research (AIR) was awarded the new five-year contract that began January of 2012. REL Midwest serves the educational needs of seven Midwest region states, including Illinois. Work in the new contract focuses on four priority areas identified through a variety of needs-sensing activities across the Midwest. The four areas are educator effectiveness, college and career readiness, school improvement, and early childhood education.

In the current REL cycle, each REL has established "research alliances" in their regions and work with them to address regional priorities. Modeled in part after research partnerships like the Consortium on Chicago School Research, Stanford-SFUSD Research Partnership, the New York City Research Alliance, and the Kansas City Area Education Research Consortium, REL research alliances are intended to drive research, evaluation, technical assistance, and dissemination strategies that are relevant and responsive to stakeholder needs. The alliance members work with REL Midwest researchers to develop and carry out a research agenda to address shared problems of practice.

Currently, REL Midwest has ten research alliances spanning a variety of topic areas and geographic regions. Examples include a cross-state alliance focused on rural education needs and an alliance of Iowa principal professional development providers interested in evaluating the impact of leadership coaching model. Currently, Illinois is represented on three of REL Midwest's research alliances.

This presentation will provide a brief overview of the REL Midwest research alliances and the alliance projects (research questions and methodology) that are in progress as of the date of the presentation. We will highlight those projects that involve Illinois stakeholders or are connected to Illinois education needs.

Potential Implications for Illinois Education

Illinois education stakeholders – including practitioners, policymakers, and researchers – would benefit from understanding the goals and plans of the REL Midwest research alliances. In addition, we view this presentation as an opportunity to get feedback on our initial plans from Illinois education stakeholders.

Dual Credit/Dual Enrollment and Data-Driven Policy Implementation: Reform Initiatives and Postsecondary Credential Attainment

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The use of dual credit has been expanding rapidly. Dual credit is a college course taken by a high school student for which both college and high school credit is given. Previous studies provided no strong quantitative evidence that dual credit/enrollment is directly connected to positive student outcomes. In this study, descriptive and predictive statistics were calculated using SPSS. For the predictive analyses, a Cox regression was used. One finding among others of this study is that dual credit/dual enrollment was significantly related to an accelerated time to degree completion.

A dual credit course is a college course taken by a high school student for which the student is awarded both college and high school credit. The use of dual credit has been expanding rapidly. According to the U.S. Department of Education's most recent comprehensive report on the subject, *Dual Credit and Exam-Based Courses in U.S. Public High Schools: 2002–03*, 71% of U.S. high schools and 51% of U.S. postsecondary institutions allowed high school students to take college courses in 2002-03, with 813,000 high school students taking a college-credit course in that academic year.

Advocacy for dual credit has become commonplace with those advancing the completion agenda in the United States. The completion agenda is the series of initiatives aimed at increasing the number of postsecondary credential holders to approximately 60% of the nation's working age adult population. Similar completion agenda initiatives have been proposed by the National Governor's Association, Complete College America, the Lumina Foundation, Gates Foundation, and numerous states including Illinois. In Illinois, for example, this goal is to build working age population postsecondary credential holders from 41% to 60% by the year 2025.

Despite such advocacy, the literature provides no strong quantitative evidence that dual credit/enrollment is directly connected to positive student outcomes. This

is primarily because it is difficult to isolate the effect of participation in dual credit/enrollment programs from other factors which may lead to student success, and data to make such assessments is often incomplete or unavailable.

The Illinois Board of Higher Education in partnership with Illinois Education Research Council (IERC) conducted this study to determine the impact of dual credit/dual enrollment on key postsecondary outcomes, namely enrollment at a four-year institution and the timely completion of a bachelor's degree among those who enroll. The study includes the entire Illinois high school graduating class of 2003 (N=115,677) and tracks bachelor's degree completion until the end of the spring semester of 2010.

Descriptive and predictive statistics were calculated using SPSS. For the predictive analyses, a Cox regression was used. A Cox regression allows the exploration of the relationship between a set of explanatory/independent variables and a time-based event of interest, such as enrollment. It provides an estimate of the treatment effect on survival after adjusting for the explanatory variables, which allows for an estimation of the probability of an event of interest, given the characteristics of the group members in the study.

Learning outcomes include important findings regarding the use of dual credit towards credential attainment goals. The study finds that dual credit/dual enrollment was significantly related to an accelerated time to degree completion, particularly for students in the low parental income category (<\$30K a year). For such students, each semester of dual credit/enrollment increased the odds of a timely degree completion by 10%, even after holding other factors such as AP participation and performance on the ACT at a fixed value. Other findings will also be presented.

Effectiveness of Dual Credit Courses

James Sconing, Assistant Vice President, Applied Research
ACT, Inc.

One of the noticeable trends in college-going students has been the increasing number who come with some college credits already earned. One source of these credits are those earned by exam, including Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), and College Level Examination Program (CLEP). Another fast growing source are credits earned in high school by taking what are known as dual credit courses. These courses are designed to be at a college level, but are taught when the student is still in high school, and the student gets both credit for a college course, and credit for high school graduation. There is no external test that validates the course, as, for example, in an AP course. Instead, the course is intended to run just as a college course might, and the grade at the end is supposed to represent an indication of mastery of the material. The courses are sponsored by a college, and can be taught at the college campus, but the more prevalent model is that the course is taught at the high school. Online courses are also becoming a popular mode of delivery.

If the course is taught at the high school, there are considerable advantages for the student. The courses can be taken with their peers in a comfortable surrounding, with no travel time, and more flexibility in when the course is taken. The college credits are typically available at a reduced rate, and the student has a head start on graduating from college in a timely way.

Given all of these advantages, why should there be any controversy about offering dual credit courses. The perceived problems are in two broad areas. The first is financial. Who is paying for these courses, and who gets the money? While this is an important issue, it is not addressed here. The second issue is one of quality. There is some feeling, particularly at the colleges that are accepting these credits, that the quality of these dual credit courses might not be sufficiently high. This is sometimes hinted at, and sometimes stated categorically. The problem that is mentioned most frequently is that the courses are typically (but not always) taught by a high school faculty member, and they will usually not have the depth of subject matter knowledge that you might find in a typical college instructor. The implication is that the students will not learn as much as from a standard college course. This quality issue will be the subject of this paper. In particular, two studies that look at the success of students who take dual credit classes will be compared to students who take the courses in a traditional college setting.

In order to compare the dual-credit students with the traditional credit students, we need to have an outcome in mind. In this paper, we use two different outcome types. In the first type we concentrate on grades in courses taken subsequent courses within the same subject area. One example might be a sequence of two English Composition courses, say English Composition 1 and English Composition 2. One student takes English Composition 1 as dual credit, and the other takes it in college. Both students then take English Composition 2 at the same college. Which does better? If there is no difference, then the dual credit course would seem to offer the same benefit as the standard course. If dual credit students do worse, then there is some evidence to support the claim that course quality may be a problem. The second type of outcome measures more general success in college. This can be grade point average, retention, or graduation. If dual credit courses suffer in terms of quality, we might expect that students who take these courses to suffer in terms of later college outcomes.

The first study used data from over 200,000 students at 14 community colleges in a single state over a five year span. The data consisted of grades in specific classes, and students were identified as in high school or not at the time of enrollment. Courses were grouped by subject area, and included Fine Arts, Business, Computer Science, English/Language Arts, Foreign Language, Mathematics, Natural Science, Nursing, Social Science, or other. A course was considered only if both the dual credit and traditional enrollees groups had at least 10 students with a grade in at least 2 of the colleges. Because dual credit students tend to be more academically able than students who took the same courses as traditional college students, the outcomes were adjusted using ACT Composite score, high school grade point average, gender, and income. The sample sizes for each course varied from over 16,000 in Composition I (approximately equally split between dual credit students and traditional enrollees) to less than 200 for Analytic Geometry.

The results show that for almost all classes (46 out of 49) dual credit students get better grades than the traditional enrollees. The largest difference was .48 on the traditional 0-4 grade scale. In 18 of the courses, the difference was statistically significant at the $p=.01$ level. In no case did the traditional enrollees show statistically significant better grades. Now it might be argued that these differences are due to difference in grading standards. A better comparison would be to look at subsequent courses. For this comparison, each

student must have a prior course in the same subject area, although it might not be exactly the same course. There were 28 courses with sufficient sample sizes, and in 18 of them, the dual credit students had better grades. None of the differences were significant at the .01 level, and the largest observed difference was .30, favoring the dual credit students. Overall, the evidence from this study is clear. There is no evidence that dual credit classes disadvantage students, and what evidence there is suggests that they actually do better subsequently.

The second study used data from approximately 30,000 students from four state institutions. These students were from the enrolling classes of 2002 and 2003, and the number of dual credit hours was given. The number of AP/IB/CLEP hours was also known. Students were followed for 6 years, with college gpa data available for each year, along with graduation data. Results were adjusted for ACT Composite score. About 1/3 of students had some dual credit hours. Students with any dual credit hours were compared to those with none.

The results are consistent with the results from study 1. Even after adjusting for academic ability, the dual credit students had higher gpa's and higher graduation rates. The results for gpa vary by composite score, with larger differences for students with higher scores. Graduation rates were higher for dual credit students at every point in years 4-6, but the difference declined over time. Again, the conclusion is not only is there no evidence that dual credit students are disadvantaged, what evidence there is suggests that they do better.

While this evidence should put to rest some of the criticisms that dual credit courses provide an inferior education, and that these types of courses are holding students back, it must also be admitted that these studies are imperfect. It does not seem feasible that dual credit courses are superior to those taught in college, and the most logical explanation for these results is that the dual credit group are just better students. While we tried to adjust for that, there is no guarantee that all applicable measures were included.

As the institutions in Illinois see more and more dual credit students, it may become expedient to produce a set of guidelines for dual credit courses, which, if followed, would ensure that the credits were accepted at all Illinois institutions. As part of this process, it will be necessary to reassure the institutions that these courses are taught at an acceptable level. This talk will include some lessons learned that can be applied to get better data for showing the effectiveness of dual credit offerings.

Implementing Danielson’s Framework for Teaching as a Teacher Evaluation Tool: Lessons for Illinois School Districts from Chicago’s Three-Year Pilot Study

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Purpose and Implications

Nearly all school districts in Illinois are preparing either to launch or revise their teacher evaluation systems to be in line with recent legislation (PERA). It is important at this time to provide districts with the wisdom gained from research and experience. Over the last three years Chicago Public Schools (CPS) has been one of the leading districts in a national movement to develop more effective teacher evaluation systems. Over three school years, 2008-2011 CPS implemented the Excellence in Teaching Pilot (EITP), which sought to use a slightly modified version of Charlotte Danielson’s Framework for Teaching to provide teachers with meaningful feedback on their instruction and differentiate between strong, developing and weak teachers. With the support of the Joyce Foundation, Consortium on Chicago School Research at The University of Chicago (CCSR) has evaluated the implementation of the pilot and provided formative feedback to the district. This paper—aimed at practitioners, trainers and district staff - is a collection of the most important findings related to implementation from our three years of research.

CCSR’s recently released report, *Rethinking Teacher Evaluation in Chicago: Lessons Learned from Classroom Observations, Principal-Teacher Conferences, and District Implementation*, describes the key findings from the first two years of the pilot. These are:

- **The classroom observation ratings were reliable measures of teaching practice;** that is, principals and trained observers who watched the same lesson consistently gave the teacher the same ratings; however, 11 percent of principals consistently gave lower ratings than the observers, and 17 percent of principals consistently gave higher ratings than the observers.
- **The classroom observation ratings were valid measures of teaching practice;** that is, students showed the greatest growth in reading and mathematics test scores in the classrooms where teachers received the highest ratings on the Danielson Framework for Teaching, and students showed the least growth in reading

and mathematics test scores in classrooms where teachers received the lowest ratings.

- **Principals and teachers said that conferences were more reflective and objective than in the past and were focused on instructional practice and improvement.** However, many principals lack the instructional coaching skills required to have deep discussions about teaching practice.
- **Over half of principals were highly engaged in the new evaluation system.** Principals who were not engaged in the new evaluation system tended to say that it was too labor intensive given the numerous district initiatives being simultaneously implemented in their schools.

Much attention has been paid to the fact that principal ratings, based on a classroom observation framework, were found to be both reliable and correlated with measures of student learning. However, reliability and validity are not inherent to the Danielson Framework but rather are the result of the quality of implementation of the evaluation system and of the Framework’s users being well trained to use the instrument. But what is necessary for successful implementation? First, the teacher evaluation system must provide something of value to principals and teachers, such as quality feedback on performance and tangible supports for professional growth. Second, practitioners need careful training, continued monitoring and accessible support. For the benefit of practitioners and policy makers we distill our research findings to illustrate the most essential lessons in these areas for new systems.

Methodology

Our findings for this paper will derive from a reanalysis of case studies, interviews, focus groups, and a continuation of unpublished analysis of year 3 data using methods similar to years 1 and 2. This work will focus specifically on evidence suggesting important implementation choices, considerations and pitfalls. Below is a description of the data and methods used in this study from year one through current analyses.

Quantitative Data. We conducted a quantitative analysis of principal and trained external observer ratings to examine the reliability and validity of framework ratings. Our quantitative analyses for years 1 and 2 (2008-09 and 2009-10) of the EITP are based on 992 matched classroom observations of 257 teachers where nearly all of the teachers were observed twice. Matched observations are lessons simultaneously observed and rated by both a principal and a trained external observer. Fewer lessons and teachers were observed in year 3 (2010-11), with a total of 314 observations of 91 teachers, where most teachers were observed two times.

To understand the Framework tool and how raters assigned Framework ratings, we used two statistical methods: multi-facet Rasch measurement (MFRM) and hierarchical logistical modeling (HLM). The MFRM analysis is a technique similar to Rasch analysis that allows us to investigate topics such as component difficulty and rater severity (Linacre, 1994). We also looked at how reliably the Framework ratings in aggregate measure overall teaching ability, controlling for rater severity. HLM is a hierarchical regression analysis technique that allows us to look at how various principal and teacher characteristics may affect the way a principal rates a lesson (Bryk & Raudenbush, 1992). This technique allows us to group Framework ratings within individual teachers.

Qualitative Data. We conducted interviews and focus groups with principals and teachers to explore practitioners' perceptions of the evaluation tool and process. Qualitative data in year 1 consisted of 39 principal interviews and 25 teacher interviews. The qualitative data collection in Year 2 focused on 8 case study schools and explored three areas: 1) understanding the implementation of the teacher evaluation pilot; 2) analysis of the conversations principals and teachers have about classroom observations and instruction; and 3) analysis of the evidence that principals use to justify ratings.

Findings

Further analyses will provide additional lessons and greater depth, building on what we have already learned to provide useful wisdom for those looking ahead to new systems. For example, one of the first battles for those implementing new systems is to convince practitioners, principals and teachers, that efforts involved in learning the new system will be worthwhile. For the EITP, we found that certain benefits arose from having an accepted rubric of good teaching. Teachers and principals resonated with the Danielson Framework and believed it captured quality teaching and represented best practices. This allowed for a common language with which to talk about instruction, clearly outlined expectations for classroom observations and guideposts for improvement. The evidence-based nature of the framework was also valuable. Both principals and teachers reported that evaluations were more objective and that conferences were more structured, reflective and focused on instruction than in the past.

While these benefits existed, they were not inevitable but dependent on good training and support. For example, teachers' positive attitudes toward conferences were dependent on principal skills and buy-in. Our paper will further describe where the training, support, monitoring and logistic considerations in the EITP met and fell short of practitioners' needs. Based on our evidence we will make recommendations for other Illinois districts.

Washington Teacher-Principal Evaluation Pilot: Lessons Learned

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Purpose and Theoretical Framework

Effective teaching and leadership is a cornerstone of education reform (Whitehurst, 2002) and is critical for student academic achievement. But principals and teachers’ abilities to promote student learning vary within and across schools (Aaronson, Barrow, & Sander, 2003; Nye, Konstantopoulos, & Hedges, 2004; Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005; Rockoff, 2004). Research finds that an important tool for improving teacher effectiveness is the teacher evaluation (Danielson & McGreal, 2000; Howard & McColskey, 2001; Shinkfield & Stufflebeam, 1995; Stronge, 1995). In an effort to improve educator effectiveness, the federal government increased its focus on the development and implementation of valid and reliable evaluation systems through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) priorities (e.g., State Fiscal Stabilization Fund and Race to the Top). Across the country, state policymakers have responded to the need for better data on educator effectiveness and are beginning to focus on developing high-quality teacher and principal evaluations that measure effectiveness, promote professional growth, and improve instruction in order to enhance student achievement (Rowland, 2009). Recently, a number of states have passed legislation to set new requirements for evaluating educators. Despite the push for better evaluations, studies of evaluation policies and their influence on schools and educators are scarce (Brandt, Thomas, & Burke, 2008).

Eight school districts and a consortium of eight districts in Washington State are participating in a pilot study to implement Senate Bill (SB) 6696, which establishes new criteria for evaluating educators. The nine pilot sites (the consortium is treated as one site in our study) are working with Washington OSPI to develop nine new and innovative teacher and principal evaluation systems that comply with new state legislation. The systems developed by the nine pilot sites will be used by OSPI to make recommendations to the legislature for the adoption of one or more state-wide evaluation models.

As part of the TPEP project, Washington OSPI partnered with American Institutes for Research (AIR) on a project to understand the current state of evaluation in Washington, document pilot sites’ development processes, examine pilot sites’ experiences and perspectives during development, and provide formative feedback to help pilot sites implement high-

quality evaluation systems. More specifically, this research addresses three overarching questions: (1) Statewide, what are educators’ perceptions of the new state educator evaluation policies? (2) How did Washington’s pilot sites progress in their development and implementation of new evaluation systems during the pilot? (3) What were the potential costs and benefits of adopting a stakeholder-driven process?

Analytic Method

Quantitative Analysis of Surveys

Frequencies were generated from two online surveys (one in year one and one in year two) that were sent to all pilot teachers, principals, and district administrators to present a profile of Washington pilot districts’ implementation progress as well as participants’ hopes and worries concerning the new evaluation systems. Using the online survey results, we also examined the extent of within-district agreement between (1) teachers and district administrators as well as (2) principals and the district administrators. Another survey will be sent to all pilot teachers, principals, and district administrators in April. Results from this survey will also be included in the presentation.

Qualitative Analysis of Interviews, Focus Groups, and Forum Transcripts

Two sets of interviews (one set in year one and one set in year two) were conducted that included a sample of teachers, principals, and district administrators participating in the pilot. Three focus groups with consortium superintendents, principals, and teachers who were actively involved in developing the consortium’s new teacher and principal evaluation systems were also conducted. A total of 10 educator forums were held in 8 different regions of the state. For each interview, focus group, and educator forum, the data were coded and systematically organized with words and phrases that identified regularities, emerging patterns, and topics covered. This method of coding reduced data into equivalent classes and categories and allowed us to organize, manage, and retrieve meaningful components. These procedures produced a dense set of categories and related themes that clearly and meaningfully reflected school participants’ diverse set of experiences and perceptions.

Results

Regarding the first research question, forum participants reported enthusiasm about the project and noted several benefits of well-designed teacher and principal evaluation systems. Participants provided their views and suggestions for improving district evaluation practices, including how to generate and use evaluation results to inform professional development, how to select and incorporate multiple measures and which measures should be included, how to communicate new evaluation policies and practices effectively, and how to involve diverse stakeholder groups in evaluation system development. In addition, participants noted implementation challenges and offered strategies for overcoming challenges related to external mandates (e.g., state and federal requirements), building stakeholder buy-in, managing the scope of implementation, and obtaining valid and research-based resources to support implementation of the new system.

Regarding the second research question about pilot districts' progress, in year one, the data suggests substantial time and resources are necessary for districts to develop and implement new evaluation systems. In the case of the pilot districts, nearly \$200,000 was provided to assist them with development and implementation, yet still most districts were far behind schedule in developing rubrics, identifying measures, and providing professional development for teachers and evaluators. Analysis of second year data is currently in progress and will provide more substantial results regarding this research question.

Full results regarding the third research question cannot be presented in this proposal as portions of the data required to answer these questions is still being collected; analysis of existing data, however, suggest that the pilot project has been an important catalyst for building district and state-level capacity in teacher and principal evaluation, as well as in generating stakeholder commitment and buy-in for using evaluation as key tool for promoting professional growth, improving instructional and leadership practice, and ultimately, improving student outcomes.

Summary and Implications

By highlighting the key costs and benefits of adopting a stakeholder driven-process for developing educator evaluation policies, this study offers useful and informative insights about the development of principal and teacher evaluation policy through a unique, stakeholder driven piloting process. Given the recent adoption of new regulations for teacher and principal evaluation in Illinois, this study will help Illinois education policymakers make informed choices about new, more meaningful methods for engaging stakeholders in evaluation policy development and how they might benefit Illinois evaluation reform design and implementation processes.

Dispositions of Turnaround Principals from Illinois, Wisconsin, and Indiana

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The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological multi-case study was to expand on this researcher's prior work regarding the lived experiences, dispositions, and leadership of turnaround principals in order to better understand what it takes to turnaround a school. Turnaround was defined as a documented, quick, dramatic, and sustained change in the performance of the school. The central research question was: How do turnaround principals understand and describe their leadership experiences in bringing documented, quick, dramatic, and sustained change to their schools? Seidman's (2006) model for in-depth phenomenological interviewing was used to structure the interview process. The interviewer utilized an interview guide for the audio-taped interviews. This study reports what was learned over two years through the examination of survey data from 218 turnaround principals and the lived experiences obtained from interviews of 15 principals who led turnaround schools. The twelve women and three men interviewed were from Illinois, Indiana, and Wisconsin. Four represented elementary schools, four were from middle level buildings and two

were from high schools. Analysis of data revealed major themes describing practices and process of turnaround principals. Although each year revealed major themes, (1) Listening, (2) Caring and (3) Developing a culture in which data drives instruction, were common in both years. Interview transcript analysis also revealed obstacles or challenges to turnaround: (1) Poverty, (2) Dysfunctional families, and (3) Board members that enable teachers to act independently. Implications were drawn from these conclusions as well as a comparative analysis of themes in the literature review, survey data, and interview data. This comparative analysis revealed collecting and analyzing data to be the highest ranked theme common in all data sources. Knowledge derived from this study has implications for inspiring principals, superintendents, boards of education and colleges of education. Recommendations for practice are in two categories: superintendents and boards, and colleges of education. Topics and processes for future research to deepen knowledge about turnaround principals are offered.

Giving 3rd - 5th Grade Students a Voice

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The purpose of this research was to give a voice to elementary students during a select group of teacher candidates' practicum experience. The goal is to continue the study in future semesters in order to gather a larger pool of data, which would provide greater opportunity to discover trends.

Methodology

One section of Block I teacher candidates at Eastern Illinois University was selected to participate in the study. Of the 22 students in the selected section, 11 teacher candidates were placed in 3rd – 5th grade classrooms, which were the targeted grade levels for this rendition of the study. The 11 teacher candidates were placed in two schools in two different districts, both representing rural populations in the Central Illinois region, approximately one hour apart. Of the 11 teacher candidates, two were male and nine were female. The elementary students completed a 10 question Likert-scale survey that also allowed for comments following a specific teaching episode. This same teaching episode was evaluated by the university supervisor and the cooperating teacher (adult observers). All evaluators provided insights to the teacher candidates regarding planning and implementation, enthusiasm/rapport, communication skills, variety of instructional strategies, and classroom management. The elementary student survey was aligned to the required departmental observation form, used by the adult observers. Elementary students ranked the teacher candidates using a three point scale with the terms *Really Good*, *Good*, *Not so Good*, which aligned to the rankings of *Exceeds Standards*, *Meets Standards*, *Does Not Meet Standards* used by the adult observers. Data from the rankings from all evaluators was then tabulated in a coded spread sheet and analyzed for trends within the candidate's teaching episode. Data was also evaluated for correlations between elementary student perspectives and those of the adult observers. The evaluation tool provided an opportunity for elementary students to give written comments to the teacher candidates to support the selected rankings; however not all students chose to leave comments. Teacher candidates used the student surveys, observation forms and all written comments to write a reflective paper on the entire practicum experience. Candidates were asked to synthesize class discussions, classroom experiences and evaluation feedback to demonstrate their growth as a teacher.

Summary of Findings

The observation form contained five distinct categories (planning and implementation, enthusiasm/rapport, communication skills, variety of instructional strategies, and classroom management). Within each category, candidates were ranked on two specific elements. Both elements within the classroom management category revealed pronounced discrepancies between the student perspective and the adult observers. Only one of the elements from the planning and implementation category was found to have a pronounced discrepancy. The three remaining categories did not indicate strong enough discrepancies to be considered noteworthy. For this study, a discrepancy rating of 0.6 and higher was needed to constitute a pronounced discrepancy.

In the classroom management category, evaluators ranked the teacher candidates in two elements related to fairness to everyone and high expectations for all learners. The 22 teacher candidates' average ranking on both elements was a 2.8/3.0 from the student perspective, while the adult observers' average was only 2.0/3.0 for both elements. Some students voiced their opinions through written comments which included, "She was really fair :)" and "She encouraged me to do my best! :)" Another voice from the students came through in the negative reviews such as, "She Dose The Same Person 16 times."

One of the planning and implementation elements assessed the use of an engaging focusing activity. A discrepancy was apparent as the student rankings averaged 2.7/3.0 while the adult observers only ranked the candidates at a level of 2.0/3.0. Positive comments from the students ranged from, "She gave us colored papers and it went on from that" to "She grabbed my ettention by being calm and clear." Negative comments included, "I thought he looked kind of nervouse" and "frgot the video."

Teacher Candidates revealed through the assigned practicum reflective paper, that elementary student input made a significant contribution to the candidates' learning. Some candidates received elementary student comments that did not match their perceived effectiveness in the classroom. For example, one male candidate in a 5th grade classroom stated, "My reviews were not as good as I thought they would be but I see where a lot of the comments were coming from. I will with my next teaching experience improve on all the negative

remarks that I got...the majority of my student reviews were very positive and they all enjoyed that I was there. One thing a few students said was middle reviews for enthusiasm in the classroom. This is another thing that I really plan to work on because I am very excited to be a teacher and I enjoy teaching children...I am glad I got these reviews because it really opened my eyes to what I need to improve on to be a successful teacher.” A female candidate in a 3rd grade classroom commented, “When I begin Practicum for Block II I will know that it is a good thing to respond and talk to your students to get to know them better. I also learned to smile more. I thought I did a good job at smiling at my students, but in my evaluations [students and adult observers] both said smile.”

Teacher candidates also described how their interpersonal relationships with the students impacted the learning environment of the classroom. A female candidate in a 3rd grade classroom related, “Another area I need to work on is being more open with my students. During practicum I wasn’t sure how much I was supposed to open up to the students. I learned that the students want to get to know you as much as you want to get to know them.” Another female candidate in a 3rd grade classroom noticed the enthusiasm level of her students

as well. “One thing that made my practicum experience was how happy the kids always were to see me. I got hugs every morning and sad faces when it was time for me to leave.” According to a male in a 5th grade classroom, “My teaching confidence was at an all-time high because of my comfort level and the way they responded to me. I had the ultimate respect in the classroom and I respected them as students as well.”

Clearly, students in grades 3-5 have substantive opinions about teacher candidates and the teaching/learning process. Teacher candidates and practicing teachers could enhance their instructional effectiveness by intentionally seeking out student voice.

Implications for Illinois Education

Teacher preparation programs should consider involving elementary students in the evaluation of teacher candidates during their practicum experiences. Elementary student voice adds another perspective for teacher candidates to consider as they progress through their undergraduate program.

'It's Not Like with the *Other* Teachers, When *They* Call You Up' Teacher Relationship-Building Priorities & Practices in the First Ten Weeks of High School

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Background & Research Questions

Positive affective teacher-student relationships improve a wide range of student mental health and school outcomes, particularly for adolescents (Fruehdenberg, 2007; Koomer, et al., 2011; Ringesein, et al., 2003). During the high school transition, low-income and immigrant ninth graders are uniquely vulnerable to poor school outcomes, yet these relationships can act as important mediators for enhancing their school engagement, achievement, and graduation rates (Allensworth & Easton, 2007; French, et al., 2000; Langenkamp, 2010; Newman, et al., 2000; Roderick, 2003; Schiller, 1999; Zvoch, 2006). To address some of the structural constraints of large, public high schools, small learning communities (SLCs) have become widely used to increase the frequency of teacher-student interactions in high schools, which in turn can strengthen these relationships (Oxley, 2005; Phillippo, 2012; Stephens, 2008). These, and other high school restructuring efforts, which enhance teachers' monitoring and support of students, along with teachers who utilize clear instruction and feedback systems, improve ninth grade student effort and achievement (Stephens, 2010). Despite widening agreement over the importance of teachers' classroom practices in improving ninth grade students' school outcomes, few studies have explicitly examined how ninth grade teachers develop relationships with students over time, which teacher practices students identify as especially effective, or when they are most salient to students. This study asks: 1) How do ninth grade teachers integrate relationship-building into their planning priorities and classroom practices and 2) what is the impact on ninth grade students' classroom behaviors in the first ten weeks of high school?

Research on teacher-student relationships highlight five key factors and mechanisms which directly shape their development in classrooms: 1) *teacher beliefs and student expectancies* (Aguirre & Speer, 1999; Ferguson, 2003; Moje, 1996; Saphier, et al., 2008; Warren, 2002; Van Eerde & Thierry, 1996), 2) *academic tasks and activities* (Ferreira & Bosworth, 2001; Newman, et al., 2001), 3) *interpersonal communication* (Rubin & Martin, 1994; Wubbels & Brekelmans, 2005), 4) *classroom management and climate* (Klem & Connell, 2004; Rosenbloom & Way, 2004), and 5) *trust-building* (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Cosner, 2010). For ninth graders transitioning into new high schools, the early weeks of this transition can be a critical time for schools and teachers to signal the academic and behavioral expectations and supports

which set in motion the conditions for launching these relationships. Given the importance of this moment, teachers' intentional planning priorities and classroom practices during the early parts of the school year should receive careful examination (Cosner, 2010; Phillippo, 2012). In an effort to understand the development of teacher-student relationships and their impact on students' classroom behaviors, this study examined the relationship-building planning priorities and classroom practices of ninth grade teachers during the first ten weeks of high school in one ethnically-diverse neighborhood public high school in Chicago that uses a SLC model.

Methodology

Because ninth grade academic performance in English, math, science, and social studies courses have been found to be highly predictive of future high school dropout and graduation rates in Chicago (Allensworth & Easton, 2005; 2007) this study closely examined teacher practice in ten ninth grade classrooms, across these four subject areas throughout the 2011-12 school year. In all, eight ninth grade teachers (two in each subject area) participated in individual semi-structured interviews at three time points (24 total) and sixteen ninth grade students were interviewed at five time points (80 total). Each classroom was observed nine times each (72 total). To be responsive to the complex and interrelated factors and mechanisms which unfold in teacher-student relationships throughout an academic year, a grounded theory method was used as the primary analytic approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) and data were coded using the qualitative software package NVivo9. This approach enabled the researcher to simultaneously analyze the dynamic patterns of interactions and practices in high school classrooms, as well as study participants' insights on their intended use and perceived impact, to guide and inform the direction and focus of inquiry throughout the data gathering process.

Findings

Drawing on the voices, perceptions, and observations of ninth grade teachers and students in core curriculum classrooms, this study finds that teacher-student relationships are indeed critically important for how ninth grade students describe their high school transition experiences during the first ten weeks of high school. Specifically, these relationships were seen as having a vital impact on students' early perceptions of their new

high school, teachers, peers, and individual classroom behaviors. For the three ninth grade teachers who made building positive teacher-student relationships top planning priorities and classroom practices, right from the start, and throughout the first ten weeks of the year, the seven student study participants enrolled in their classes reported that they had positive early perceptions of their high school, peer relationships, teachers, and classroom experiences during both their fifth- and tenth-week interviews. As well, these students described their levels of course topic interest, classroom participation, help-seeking, problem solving, peer value, and emerging relationships with these teachers more positively than students enrolled with teachers who did not make positive relationship-building a planning and classroom practice priority. Conversely, for the two teachers who did not prioritize positive relationship-building in their planning and classroom practices, the nine students in their classrooms reported less favorable school, teacher, peer, and classroom climate and behavior perceptions, compared to students who took classes with teachers who made these planning and classroom practices a priority. Additionally, the researchers' classroom observations of teacher practices and student classroom behaviors across these ninth grade classrooms underscored these findings.

Implications for Illinois Education

In many urban public high schools in districts like Chicago the high school transition has become a critical priority for organizing research, policies, and interventions to improve high school students' engagement and achievement outcomes (Allensworth & Easton, 2005, 2007; Gwynne, et al., 2009; Montgomery & Roderick, 2010; Stephens, 2008; 2010). Given that the first ten weeks of high school is an early moment amidst an academic year that is often challenging for many low-income and immigrant ninth graders, these findings suggest that teachers who make building positive student relationships top planning and practice priorities early in the academic year reap valuable rewards in students' classroom behaviors as the year moves forward. Thus, by closely describing and analyzing teachers' relationship-building planning priorities and classroom practices in the early weeks of ninth grade an important dimension of high school transition research can be better understood. In so doing, findings from this study provide valuable lessons and guidance to policy makers, administrators, and teachers in urban districts working to improve teachers' capacity to better support ninth grade students through thoughtful, purposeful, systematic, and student-centered planning and classroom practice.

Bringing Expertise Together: Outcomes from the First Year of the Teacher Collaborative Project

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Established in the spring of 2007, the Center for Education in Small Urban Communities is a research, service, and outreach unit within the College of Education at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. The Center focuses on enhancing teaching and learning, houses a variety of professional development and outreach activities, and serves as the liaison for school-university partnerships. An overarching goal of the Center from its inception has been to provide an infrastructure to improve the capacity of the College to serve as a regional, national, and international resource for small urban communities in implementing cutting-edge programs in education.

One key Center program is the Teacher Collaborator (TC) Project. This project is staffed by full-time experienced classroom teachers who have been hired by the University in the role of teacher collaborator. TCs work on re-conceptualizing professional development and providing school-embedded, classroom-focused collaboration with teachers, school leaders, and district administrators. The embedded professional development model of instructional coaching to influence classroom management and instructional practice is grounded in deep respect for the professionalism of teachers, has an emphasis on listening and dialogical conversations, is flexible in addressing teachers' needs at different points in their careers, and offers a consistent focus on student learning. Significant attention is given to the intellectual growth of teachers and their development as instructional leaders.

Four major principals guide work within the Teacher Collaborator Project:

- Professional learning is student centered and addresses the gap between what our students need and what we know (IRA, 2006; Saunders, Goldenberg & Gallimore, 2009; National Staff Development Council, 2009).
- Professional learning is grounded in teacher inquiry and reflection while respecting the needs of adult learners and using the right balance of pressure and support (Ball, 1996; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Richardson & Placier, 2001).

- Professional learning is collaborative, data-driven, and uses shared decision making in order to build the entire school's capacity to respond to the needs of students (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Lambert, 2008; Lieberman, 1996).
- Professional learning is ongoing and continuous, promoting integrated thinking about curriculum, assessment and instructional practice (Cohen & Hill, 1998; Garet et al., 2001; Loucks-Horsley et al., 1998; Shulman, 1987).

Over the past 4 years this program has had played a profound role in the design of professional development activities in the Champaign and Urbana school districts. TCs work at the district level in planning professional development opportunities and work directly with local teachers observing classroom practice, sharing research, co-teaching, co-planning, and modeling instructional practices. However, while their work has facets of existing models of mentoring or coaching, they diverge from these models as well. This paper will examine recent literature on models of coaching and mentoring and present data on the unique collaboration between the TC and the teachers with whom they work.

Each TC has worked in a teaching capacity and is (or was) a graduate student at the University of Illinois. When TCs understand and engage in educational research they make that ever-important connection of translation of research to practice. Unlike much of the existing research on coaching or mentoring, the classroom teachers in this study were not novice instructors. Some had a few years experience, but other had many years including one with thirty-nine years of teaching experience. The teachers interviewed for this study were randomly chosen from a list provided by the teacher collaborators. The teachers were then interviewed and tapes transcribed and then coded based on emergent findings. The coded data were analyzed and considered in light of the literature to place the data into a framework of community based, mentorship and coaching.

Findings indicate that TCs play a significant role in helping teachers reflect on and rethink their practice. With limited, but purposeful coaching they addressed specific areas of concern for each teacher, and aide with application of new skills and strategies to classroom practice. Unlike seminars that offer ideas for classroom management or incorporating literacy into math, teacher collaborators are on the scene and aid with preparation and implementation. This collaboration changes teaching practice, assists students in accessing and learning material more effectively, and even changes student's views on subjects such as math.

The teacher collaborator project offers an innovative way of viewing professional development in the practice of teaching in Illinois and beyond. It is a scalable program which potentially could link the many Colleges of education in the State of Illinois with local communities, transforms professional development, and aides in the translation of research to practice.

Content Area Reading Professional Development: Adaptations for the Success of Students with Disabilities

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This presentation will showcase professional development materials about content area reading comprehension strategies and ways to adapt them to meet the diverse learning needs of students with disabilities. These strategies and resources were utilized in the Collaborative Teacher Network (CTN)—a federally funded initiative that provided professional development resources for special and general educators in the Chicago area.

Purpose

The purpose of the federally-funded Collaborative Teacher Network (CTN) is to provide effective professional development for general and special educators based on research and using collaboration, technology, and strategy instruction practices. The professional development focuses on enhancing content area reading instruction of middle school teachers, in order to elevate the performance of students with disabilities.

Methodology

A broad spectrum of activities, inclusive of demonstrations and discussions, in-school practice, analysis of student work, and online tenets (e.g., videos of classroom instruction) constituted CTN's professional development. In a typical session, teachers participated in discussions and used their students' work samples (literacy artifacts) as a conduit for individual and collaborative inquiry, and for instructional planning. Teachers worked in pairs, consisting of a general and special educator within each school, and with middle school teachers from other schools within a large urban, culturally and linguistically diverse district. Keeping in alignment with current trends in professional development that shift the focus of training from awareness of practice to behavioral change (Joyce & Showers, 2002), CTN firmly believes that teachers who together demonstrate the learning of strategies, analyze students' work, and

plan their instructional practice can more effectively use student data and reasoning to guide their content area comprehension instruction.

Summary and Implications

Preliminary analyses garnered through focus groups and an on-line evaluation component show that participating teachers expressed improvement in their attitude, and that of their students, toward content area reading instruction. They gained a wealth of information from the strategies taught and the given resources. There was notable improvement in collaboration between participating general and special educators, especially related to making adaptations for their students. Teachers learned about using their student work to inform their instructional practices, and shared this information freely with their fellow participants, thus creating a repertoire of adaptations for instruction. Finally, students showed gains in their content area reading based on on-going observations and classroom assessments.

Reading comprehension remains a problematic area for many students with disabilities. While middle school content area teachers recognize the benefits of strategy instruction, they also acknowledge the challenges of incorporating reading comprehension with the teaching of content area subject matter (Carter & Dean, 2006). Research shows that successful strategy instruction relies heavily on teacher commitment to acquire a variety of instructional strategies, how well teachers model their strategic thinking, and how well students are convinced of the usefulness of strategies (Denton, Wexler, Vaughn, & Bryan, 2008). Integrating these three elements with strategy instruction is the cornerstone of the face-to-face and online activities that constitute the Collaborative Teacher Network.

Haves and Have-Nots: Inducting New Teachers in Illinois

Dr. Patricia Brady, Research Coordinator
Dr. Mary Elin Barnish, Statewide Co-Coordinator
Illinois New Teacher Collaborative

Research suggests that comprehensive beginning teacher induction and mentoring programs can improve teacher quality and increase teacher retention (e.g. Wanzare, 2007; Strong, 2006; Fulton, Lee, & Yoon, 2005; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004). Such programs involve the matching of beginning teachers to carefully-selected and well-trained mentors who act as instructional coaches rather than as “buddies”. Beyond mentoring, the programs provide a host of other supports, including orientations, professional development sessions, principal involvement, and opportunities for networking.

Illinois was an early leader in the area of beginning teacher induction, and starting in 2006, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) was able to fund grants to pilot programs. The number of programs grew from an initial 10 to a high of 67. Of these, 34 programs operated within a single district, and 33 were consortia and worked within multiple smaller districts. Although the grant funds were eliminated for FY2012, at their peak they impacted 38% of the 870 school districts in Illinois.

The Illinois New Teacher Collaborative (INTC), which operated as the administrative home for the funded programs, also engaged in large-scale survey research. In fall 2010 and winter 2011, it surveyed all of the funded programs and all Illinois districts which were not associated with any of the funded programs. The purpose of this survey was to discover what supports new teachers received in Illinois and how the level of support varied with district type, demographics, and ISBE induction grant funding.

Methodology

INTC created an online survey with fixed-choice questions in the following categories:

- number of new teachers and mentors;
- supports received by novice teachers, including orientations, workshops, mentoring, and networking;
- how mentors were selected, trained, and compensated, and requirements for their mentoring activities;
- leadership and organization of the induction program; and
- program budget and funding.

Additionally, open-ended questions asked about program successes and challenges.

INTC sent the survey to the funded programs in fall 2010 and to the unfunded districts in January 2011. The funded programs had to complete the survey as part of their grant requirements, so the response rate was nearly 100%. The unfunded districts, however, had no such requirement. Out of the 536 districts which received the survey, 54% completed it. INTC conducted a follow-up phone survey of a representative sample of non-responders, and determined that the non-responders offered the same induction services as did demographically-similar survey respondents.

INTC also used ISBE databases to compile publicly-available demographic data for each district. This allowed INTC to disaggregate the data in multiple ways, including: size of district; locale of district (e.g. rural, town, suburb, or city); student demographics; and district funding.

Findings

The data allowed us to make two main arguments. 1) There is a vast discrepancy between what beginning teachers receive in certain districts (small, rural, high-poverty) compared with others (large, urban or suburban, well-resourced). 2) The unfunded districts which offer the most new teacher supports still provide less than the average grant-funded induction program—even though the funded programs include small and rural districts in proportion with the state average.

On the unfunded districts survey, different types of districts reported providing different ranges of induction supports for their new teachers. Small and rural districts—and districts with fewer new teachers—provided fewer supports than do larger and city/suburban districts. Districts with more low-income students and lower average instructional expenses also tended to provide fewer supports. These differences were often quite large. Only 65% of small districts but 97% of large districts required new teachers to be paired with a mentor or buddy. Similar differences occurred for requirements that mentors observe new teachers in their classrooms (31% vs. 79%), new teachers attend summer orientations (63% vs. 99%), new teachers attend workshops during the academic year (31% vs. 88%), and new teachers create professional growth plans (21% vs. 73%).

These differences held for nearly all other items on the survey. Large, city and suburban, and well-funded districts with fewer low-income students were able to offer their new teachers significantly more supports. They were able to purposefully select mentors, provide them with training and stipends, and support them throughout the mentoring process. Districts were able to specify requirements for participating mentors and new teachers.

The funded programs, however, were able to provide an even more comprehensive induction system than even the best unfunded districts. Funded programs have stronger leadership; instead of being run by a single administrator, who often has other responsibilities, they were more likely to have a full-time coordinator or a team in charge. Funded programs also underwent cycles of ongoing continuous improvement with goal setting based on the state Standards. All of this allowed the leadership to plan and enact more induction activities for new teachers and mentors; provide more mentoring training and support, so mentors became instructional coaches rather than “buddies;” have a more rigorous mentor selection process to ensure that the best teachers are chosen; and require more time and accountability from mentors. In return, mentors in funded programs were more likely to be paid stipends to ensure their commitment to the program’s many requirements.

All of this means that funded programs provided a more intensive mentoring experience. Studies (e.g. Wechsler, Caspary, Humphrey, & Matsko, 2010; Glazerman et al., 2010; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004) report that long term, intensive induction programs have greater impacts—on teaching quality, teacher retention, and student achievement—than those which provide only some basic elements.

Applying What We Learned from Summer School

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Purpose of the Research

The poster presents findings and implications of the external evaluation of four Chicago Public School (CPS) summer enrichment programs: K-2 Summer of Reading (K2SOR), Freshman Connection (FC), Lawndale Summer Camp, and Summer Plus. The PRAIRIE Group conducted the evaluation for the CPS Office of Student Support and Engagement to provide summative feedback regarding the effectiveness of the individual summer programs. The broader purpose of the evaluation was to identify characteristics of high-quality summer enrichment programs that advance the impact of summer programs beyond remediation to contribute to students' socio-emotional development and academic success. The poster describes each of these four programs in detail.

Details of Methodology Used

The evaluation used qualitative methods to determine effectiveness of program implementation. The CPS Office of Student Support and Engagement selected a representative sample of schools to participate in the evaluation. Key characteristics of each program were used to help select schools such as percent of students at a school enrolled in the program or percent of parent involvement at a school. In order to understand the effects of the summer programs on students' socio-emotional or academic growth, at least two key stakeholder groups within each program were carefully chosen to participate. For example, in the Summer of Reading program, key informants were teachers, librarians, and parents of both participating and non-participating students.

Data Collection Methods and Analysis

For each of the four programs, data collection included some or all of the following methods: observations of program activities, school staff focus groups and/or interviews, student focus groups, parent focus groups and/or interviews. Transcripts of interviews and focus groups and observational data were coded by key program characteristics and desired program outcomes such as: quality of staff professional development, changes in teachers' instructional practice, program's influence on students, parent participation, changes in student behavior, student enrichment, and students' socio-emotional development. For each summer

program, data were triangulated within each sample school to understand views of various stakeholders within the school and to identify discrepancies in the data. Data were also triangulated across the sample schools in order to identify patterns in areas of program success or challenge in relation to facets of the school context thought to be important to program success, such as parent participation.

Summary of Findings

Key findings across the four summer programs are listed below.

Teacher Recruitment: There was a correlation between teacher recruitment and selection practices/policy, and the quality of teachers' participation in the program. Teachers were recruited in different ways for each program; What we found was that the CPS hiring policy dictates the pool of teachers available for a program and in some instances led to less desirable outcomes than in instances where principals /program coordinators were able to bypass policy mandates and more freely select staff who were most appropriate for the position. One program was able to deviate away from the traditional hiring policy and was able to choose teachers whose skills and professional goals were most appropriate for the specific program.

Benefits of Enrichment Activities: Across programs, students enjoyed and appeared to have benefited from the integration of an enrichment component into the program day.

Effects of Enrichment on Academics: Where the enrichment component of the summer program was integrated with the academic portion, students were more engaged in the academic programming.

Time: The quality of program implementation (and academic/enrichment program integration) was negatively affected by the limited amount of time available for planning, student recruitment, outreach to parents, and teacher professional development.

Achieved Goals: Programs that meaningfully engaged all stakeholders (students, parents, and teachers) were particularly effective in accomplishing program goals of contributing to students' academic performance, supporting students' socio-emotional development, and

contributing to teachers' professional development in the instructional areas which the programs supported.

Professional Learning Communities: Three of the programs had formally scheduled time for teachers to convene as “professional learning communities” (PLCs) with the purpose of supporting teachers' professional development and leadership roles. Effectiveness of the PLCs varied, and appear to depend on the extent to which meeting time was structured to allow teachers to share new skills and knowledge and engage in program planning, rather than spending time engaging in compliance/reporting activities.

Implications for Illinois education

Evaluation findings suggest that the longer day, enrichment-framed summer programs may be at least as effective as remediation programs in providing students with a bridge experience that addresses retention of knowledge over the summer while also supporting their broader interest in school and academics. In addition, the comparison of findings from the evaluation of each of these four programs suggests a generalizable program design and corresponding logic model or theory of change that could be applied to any summer school program. However, while the evaluation led to the identification of specific qualities that contribute to effective summer enrichment programs, how those qualities are implemented should take into account specific characteristics of the host school and the community it serves in order to optimize effectiveness.

Assessment of Functional Caregiving in Homes with a Child with an Intellectual Disability

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The authors report on the nature of assessing functional caregiving (FC) via three studies, conducted by a university–public preschool collaboration that was designed to measure mothers’ confidence to care for children with intellectual disabilities in their homes. Caregiving of children with intellectual disabilities was conceptualized in terms of a task hierarchy that occurs in a complex, multi-level sociocultural ecology. Rating scale items were developed to survey mothers’ caregiving confidence in this ecology, which were analyzed with a Rasch model. Raw ratings were transformed to an axiomatically strong, objective, unidimensional scale, and the obtained task difficulties conformed to a three-tier caregiving hierarchy of advocacy, personal caregiving, and community relations domains. Hierarchical regression of task difficulties on item components defined by FC domains was consistent with an ecological model

($R^2 > 0.60$). The task hierarchy was also found to be consistent with humanistic psychology principles. When FC measurement properties were compared between suburban and urban mothers, as well as mothers of educationally at risk and special needs children, psychometric reliability was high (>0.90). Validity studies confirmed FC functional relations with mothers’ health, age, and economic status. In general, these studies found that mothers’ self-confidence measures were valid and reliable, but noted future studies are needed to link FC measures directly to competency and home caregiving quality. Future research should also explore replication of core items across other disabilities and chronic diseases, as well as applicability to objective caregiving standard setting.

E-portfolios: Insights and Reflections from Beginning Special Education Teachers in Illinois

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Teacher education programs in Illinois institutions of higher education and in other states require teacher candidates to create electronic portfolios (EP) in order to assess students at various points during and at the completion of their teacher preparation program.

This research study explores the insights, reflections, and perceptions of beginning special education teachers in Illinois (i.e., those holding initial IL Type-10 Learning and Behavior Specialist I (LBS-1) teacher certification) regarding their development and subsequent use of an electronic portfolio (EP) as part of the requirement for graduation from their teacher education program.

Research Questions:

- 1.) How have graduates of special education teacher preparation programs used their EP since graduating from their teacher education program?
- 2.) Do beginning special education teachers continue to use or update any components of their EPs as they progress from initial to permanent teacher certification?
- 3.) Which aspects of the EP development process do beginning special education teachers find to be of most value in their current work environment?
- 4.) How have beginning special education teachers used the technology skills that they learned through the EP design and development process in their teaching practices with students with disabilities?
- 5.) How have beginning special education teachers used the technology skills that they learned through the EP design and development process in their collaboration and teaming with colleagues and administrators?

Teacher candidates in the UIUC Department of Special Education develop and revise their EP over a 3 year period during their teacher education program. The students do not use a commercially developed EP product. The EP consists of a combination of required objective components and artifacts selected and designed by the teacher candidate. Thus the EP components address both a developmental and an evaluative perspective (Strudler & Wetzel, 2005). The major EP components are: a) multimedia philosophy of education; b) the teacher candidate's resume; c) three to five integrated reflections addressing the LBS-1 Teacher Education Standards and Indicators and supported with artifacts chosen from the teacher candidate's course work and practica assignments. Teacher candidates are encouraged to include additional materials that they believe highlight their skills as beginning special educators (e.g., a video clip of them teaching a particular skill, an instructional unit plan, etc.).

A UIUC Department of Special Education clinical faculty member and a doctoral student serve as EP coordinators. They meet a minimum of once each semester with the teacher candidates to review progress, edit reflections, suggest artifacts, and respond to questions concerning their EP. Each teacher candidate's faculty advisor may review components of the EP (e.g., multimedia philosophy) and provide suggestions and recommendations to the teacher candidate. Reviewing EP components provides the advisors and EP coordinators a window into the teacher candidate's ongoing growth throughout their preparation program. Other teacher education programs may require candidates to complete an EP through the use of a commercially available product while other teacher education programs may require a paper portfolio instead of an EP. We are interested in learning about the use of portfolios (either EP or paper) during beginning special educator's teaching careers.

Project Design and Data Collection: The sample for this phase of the project is special education teachers holding initial IL Type 10 (Learning and Behavior Specialist 1) teacher certification. All participants in this phase of the study are beginning teachers in public schools in Illinois. This sample is drawn from approximately 180 beginning special education teachers. Potential participants are recruited through their IL public school district email address. Participants complete an electronic survey that includes both demographic questions and items addressing the four major research questions.

Data Analysis Techniques: The survey responses will be entered into SPSS. Analyses will include descriptive statistics (e.g., percentages, means, standard deviations) to answer the demographic questions. Content analysis will be used to analyze participants' responses to the open-ended survey questions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Summary of Findings: The poster will include a summary of our preliminary findings using tables and figures to display the quantitative information. Emergent themes and participants' direct quotes illustrating those themes will also be included. The poster format allows us to provide examples of EPs as well as display the preliminary results from this study.

Implications for Illinois education: Teacher candidates and teacher education faculty members in Illinois colleges and universities allocate resources to meet the requirements of the EP process. The knowledge and skills learned through the creation of the EP should be useful and meaningful to beginning teachers beyond meeting a teacher education program graduation requirement. This study was undertaken in order to learn about the extent to which the EP process has been meaningful and salient to beginning special educators beyond the teacher education program. We believe that this study and a subsequent study in which we plan to contact public school administrators regarding their perspectives on the use of EPs with beginning special education teachers will inform Illinois teacher educators and policy makers about the EP process and what aspects have been found to be the most meaningful and salient to beginning special education teachers.

Exploring & Understanding the Quality of Early Math Instruction in Community College Early Childhood Education Programs

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Purpose

In recent years, supporting young children's mathematics development has become a topic of increasing interest among early childhood educators. A joint position statement on preschool math by the National Association for the Education of Young Children and the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics affirmed that "high quality, challenging, and accessible mathematics education for 3- to 6-year old children is a vital foundation for future mathematics learning" (NAEYC & NCTM, 2002). A large body of literature indicates that early mathematics understanding significantly predicts school achievement in later years (e.g., Duncan et al., 2007; NRC, 2009) and early intervention specifically focused on mathematics has broad positive effects on student learning (e.g., Fuson, Smith, & Lo Cicero, 1997; NRC, 2009). In other words, improving early mathematics achievement is necessary, important, and possible to accomplish.

For young children to develop foundational mathematics concepts and understanding, their teachers must be mathematically proficient. Unfortunately, many early childhood teachers are unprepared and do not have a solid understanding of early math. In Illinois, early childhood education programs in community colleges are a major teacher preparation force for child care and Head Start programs. Based on our recent online course catalog survey, of the 40 community colleges in Illinois, nine colleges (22.5%) offer no early math methods course at all, 29 (72.5%) combine the math with science and general pedagogical approaches such as inquiry learning (which usually affords no more than 4 weeks of study for math content), and only two (5%) offer a course focusing exclusively on early math. This lack of attention to early math in early childhood programs at the community college level only serves to ensure that most early math teaching in Illinois remains uncertain and uninspired.

Additional evidence of under-preparation and its relationship to teaching is found in a recent survey conducted by Erikson Institute. We found that the number of pre-service math methods classes teachers had was significantly related to confidence in their ability to help preschoolers learn mathematics [$r(N = 314) = .188, p < .01$], and the amount of time they report teaching math in the classroom, [$r(N = 285) = .139, p < .05$; (McCray, Chen, Zhang, 2011)]. Just as young

children will not be ready for elementary level mathematics without some early childhood math instruction, teachers will not become proficient at teaching mathematics without adequate preparation. To ensure mathematically competent teachers in our early childhood classrooms we must increase the time dedicated to preparing early childhood teachers to teach math and improve the quality of the pre-service math training they do receive.

The purpose of Erikson's Early Mathematics Education Community College Project is to research and analyze the current status of early mathematics teaching and learning in community college classrooms in the greater Chicago area. We will use the results of this analysis to adapt an early mathematics "train the trainers" program (based on materials previously developed by the EME Project) to the needs of community college educators.

Methodology

We have collected data from multiple stakeholders, including chairs, faculty, and students of early childhood programs. We have used a variety of data collection methods, including interviews, syllabus review, focus groups, and surveys. This ensures our findings are complete, representative, and accurate.

Interviews. Ten chairs of ECE programs at community colleges in the Chicago area were interviewed. Participants were recruited through phone calls and e-mails using contact information from college web-sites, through the Illinois ACCESS listserv and by personal recommendation. The interview protocol was e-mailed to participants in advance; interviews were conducted in person or by skype; interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. An emerging theory qualitative analysis approach was used to code the interview transcripts for themes.

Syllabus Review. Twenty syllabi for ECE math methods classes were collected through the Illinois ACCESS listserv and through phone calls and e-mails to program chairs. Syllabi were examined and analyzed for math content covered, math-related assignments, weeks spent on math, and textbooks used.

Focus Groups. Fifteen faculty who have taught ECE math methods courses participated in one of two discussions focused on faculty goals for students in math methods courses (regarding knowledge of math content, knowledge of children's math development, feelings about

math ...) and the effect of students' experiences (with children and with math) on their success in math methods course. Participants were recruited by recommendation of ECE program chairs contacted for interviews and through the Illinois ACCESS listserv. The focus groups were held at Erikson Institute; two graduate assistants took notes during the discussions, and the discussions were audio-recorded and transcribed. An emerging theory qualitative analysis approach was used to code the focus group transcripts for themes.

Survey. Approximately forty students enrolled in math methods courses at two of the City Colleges of Chicago completed a survey at the beginning and end of the semester. The survey has three parts—watching and responding to a short video of math teaching; rating statements about math in general, early math, and math teaching; information about the respondent's education and experience with young children. Survey analysis involves coding of open-ended responses, examination of frequencies of ratings and correlations among the demographics and the responses. Participants were recruited through the program chairs contacted for the interviews.

Summary of Findings

Analysis of the data we have collected is on-going, but preliminary results suggest the following conclusions:

- students in community college ECE programs do not like math and take as little math as absolutely necessary to earn their degree;
- compared to language development and literacy, ECE students spend little time learning about early math development and teaching;
- ECE faculty lack professional development support for teaching early math to their reluctant students;
- ECE faculty are looking for ways to deepen their own and their students' understanding of early math.

Implications for IL education

Because of the variety of students program structures, curriculum offerings, and requirements for early childhood associates degrees in community colleges across the greater Chicago area, the Erikson Early Math Project saw the need for organized study of the situation in order to make effective plans to support faculty. We are learning a great deal about how community college ECE programs function and about their strengths and needs in relation to early mathematics education. The quality of an undergraduate teacher education program relies on the quality of its instructors, their content knowledge and their way of approaching students. We plan to incorporate what we have learned into our development of materials and training to strengthen early mathematics education at the community college level. We are also generating discussion among key stakeholders, by disseminating what we learn widely and providing opportunities for stakeholders to talk with one another and with us.

Is Time of the Essence? Does Increased Learning Time Improve Student Achievement?

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Introduction

State legislatures established mandated policies for the minimum length of an academic school day and year based on federal guidelines. It is the decision of individual districts to go beyond the set minimum standard which many have not ventured past. This research project represents an analysis of data which examines whether there is a correlation between student achievement and the length of the school day and/or school year. Support for this research study underscored the need for data as current trends for securing federal funding focuses on extending the school day and year to improve student achievement

The goal of this project was to analyze the relationship between student achievement with the length of the school day and school year. The research project utilized a regression analysis in relationship to the length of the school day, length of the school year, and the state mandated policy on instructional time as predictor variables and student achievement as the criterion variable. A review of seven Midwestern states comparing state achievement testing in grades 4 and 8 in the areas of reading and math along with the state policy on instructional time served as basis for this study. This study has added to the existing body of knowledge by gauging the effectiveness of extended learning initiatives and providing data for the review of the length of the school day and year and the relationship to student achievement.

Guiding Research

According to Compton-Lilly (2010), time as context is a theory that references time as an essential element of experience. Although time can be allocated in various amounts and can have multiple effects, many educational researchers have become specifically concerned with the quality of instructional time. Copple, Kane, Levin & Cohen (1992) prepared a briefing paper for the National Education Commission on Time and Learning. In that brief, the authors provided data on the relationship between the length of the school day and year to student achievement. Data suggested that there was little evidence to support increasing instructional time by itself had an effect on student achievement.

President Obama's Administration blueprint for ESEA Reauthorization includes proposals to expand the length of the school day and year. At the same time the Obama Administration and Congress are providing unprecedented federal funding to support dramatic education reforms such as Race to the Top, Investing in Innovation Fund, and School Improvement Grants which include federal guidelines requiring increased learning time. In 2010, the government encouraged increased learning time as a core strategy for school improvement. The federal government defines increased learning time as using a longer day, week, or year schedule to significantly increase the total number of school hours to include additional time for (a) instruction in core academics, (b) instruction in enrichment and other subjects, (c) time for teachers to plan, collaborate, and engage in professional development (Frazier & Morrison, 1998).

Methodology

The research project utilized a regression analysis where length of the school day, length of the school year, and state policies on instructional time were predictor variables and student achievement was the criterion variable.

Target Population

The target population included data analysis for seven Midwestern states: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, and Missouri.

Procedures

The following steps were taken to collect data: a grouping by state policy on length of school day and year and grouping by student achievement. The following questions served as guidelines for analysis and comparison:

- 1.) What is the correlation between length of time spent in classrooms and student achievement in the seven identified Midwestern states?
- 2.) What relationship exists between length of time spent in school year and student achievement in the seven identified Midwestern states?
- 3.) What is the association between state policy on instructional time and student achievement in the seven identified Midwestern states?

Parents as the First Teacher: Critical Components of a Parent Education Program that Supports Academic Readiness in Preschool Aged Children

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Purpose of Research

The purpose of this study is to understand the types of experiences that parents had while enrolled in a parent program that places the emphasis on their role as teacher and promoting academic readiness skills. The study will further examine specific elements of the program that parents considered to be essential. Understanding the parent's experiences and what elements are vital to them in a parent education program can inform policy makers, schools, communities and agencies on what is needed to implement an effective parent education model that focuses on academic readiness. Social learning theory provides the framework for this qualitative study.

Methods of Inquiry

Interested parents voluntarily completed a registration form and were entered into a lottery. 128 parents of children ages 3-5 were randomly selected to participate in a year long parent academy (17 sessions). Class sessions were held bi-weekly in the southern portion of Cook County.

This qualitative study utilizes content analyses of testimonials that were taken from parents who participated in the yearlong program (total of 17 sessions) that focus on parents as first teachers. The parent testimonials were analyzed and coded. Then themes were categorized to address the commonalities within the data.

Summary of Findings

The study revealed that parents were overall pleased with their experience in the program. The following themes emerged from the data analysis: (a) educational program yet must be entertaining to hold their attention; (b) supportive and knowledgeable staff; (c) hands on and active engagement during sessions; (d) childcare when class sessions are held; (e) the sense of community among families within the classes.

Implications for Education In Illinois

The results identified from this study will add to the body of research that can be used to create programs, models and or trainings for parents to help to ensure student success within the early childhood years. Previous research shows that parental involvement is critical to student success but the specifics of what parent's roles are in this vital process is not clearly outlined. This research can help Illinois to provide optimal early childhood education programs where parental involvement plays an integral role. In order for Illinois to ensure future student success and positive outcomes for children the parents and families must be empowered to be involved as their child's first teacher.

Partnering to Create a Birth-To-College Continuum of Public Education

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The Ounce of Prevention Fund (the Ounce) and the Urban Education Institute of the University of Chicago (UEI) have formed a partnership designed to improve student outcomes by creating and implementing newly aligned systems to provide vulnerable children and their families with an effective, cohesive continuum of education and family support. The purpose of creating this continuum of public education in Illinois is to lay a strong foundation to accelerate children's development, learning and achievement as well as facilitate parents' engagement with and advocacy for their child's education through college entrance. The long-term, overarching goal of the Birth-to-College Partnership is to collaboratively and continuously align and create instructional practices, academic and social supports, a transformative approach to professional development, and common organizational values, objectives and expectations across early childhood, elementary, and secondary schools. In so doing, we are designing and implementing, and evaluating a new model of public education that seamlessly and successfully prepares children for college, beginning at birth.

Methodology

Description of Sites

The Ounce of Prevention Fund operates the Educare School located in the Grand Boulevard neighborhood on the south side of Chicago. Educare of Chicago currently serves 149 children and their families in a full-day, full year high-quality early education program who come from 17 different zip codes throughout Chicago beginning at birth or before (through a prenatal program) and continuing to age five. The goal of Educare is to prevent the achievement gap between at-risk children and their more advantaged peers by providing rigorous, developmentally appropriate instruction and family support to give students and families the skills they need to succeed in school and for lifelong achievement.

The four campuses of the Urban Education Institute's University of Chicago Charter Schools create a preK-12th grade pathway for families on the South Side of Chicago. North Kenwood/Oakland (NKO) (established

1998) and Donoghue (established 2005) educate students from prekindergarten to grade five. Carter G. Woodson (established 2008) educates children from grade six to eight and Woodlawn (established 2006) educates students from grade six to 12. In the fall of 2010, the four campuses enrolled more than 1700 students from prekindergarten to 12th grade. Ninety-eight percent of the students are African American and more than 80 percent are eligible for free or reduced price meals. The mission of The University of Chicago Charter School is to prepare all students to attend and graduate from four-year colleges and universities.

Project Design

Based on a common recognition of the need to develop innovative approaches to closing the achievement gap, UEI and the Ounce partnered beginning in 2009 with the goal of developing a new model of public education that creates a cohesive educational experience for children and families starting from birth. Over the last two years, leaders from both institutions have shared their respective birth-to-five and K-12 experiences and expertise. Through an intentional, relationship-based approach and in the context of a series of meetings and site visits, our team began the significant task of building mutual understanding and trust among program administrators, researchers, teachers, special education staff, and family support staff, that was critical to co-creating a shared vision, mission, goal and action plan for our partnership.

Coordinated Enrollment

We have successfully arranged to coordinate our independent admissions policies and processes in a way that allows kindergarten-bound Educare students to directly transition into one of UEI's two elementary charter schools (North Kenwood/Oakland (NKO) and Donoghue). The first cohort of students to directly benefit from this process of coordinated enrollment are currently in their first year of Educare's preschool program.

Data Collection and Analysis Methods:

We are taking a primarily qualitative approach to data collection and analysis in our work. All alignment work toward the 4 objectives described above is being documented through the use of SmartPen technology and a “thick description” approach to documentation will be employed. Supplemental data such as archival documents of current practices and policies and products produced by staff will be analyzed to support themes, concepts and theories derived from documentation notes analysis.

Summary of Findings:

At the IERC Focus on Illinois Education Research Symposium in June, we will report progress on each of the four objectives described above and share lessons learned from our alignment work to create a birth-to-college continuum on public education. Reported findings will be from the first year of work on a 3-year project (September 1, 2011 – August 31, 2014) funded by W. K. Kellogg Foundation, the Robert R. McCormick Foundation, and the Foundation for Child Development

Implications for Illinois Education Policy and Practice:

- The transformation of our shared vision into a tangible model of a seamless educational continuum for children from birth to age eight can inform broader efforts in the field.
- The work of aligning standards, curriculum, pedagogy, assessments, and family support practices will serve as a model for others working towards alignment.
- Demonstration of the impact of our birth-to-college approach on the children and families we serve has the potential to spur larger education policy reform efforts in Chicago, throughout Illinois, and across the country through the dissemination of key findings and strategies from our shared work.

Take a Deep Breath and Relax: Effects of Deep Breathing and Muscle Relaxation on ACT Scores

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Purpose

Test anxiety is relatively a new concept in the field of anxiety research. However, it is known that test anxiety differs from general anxiety in that it is situation specific and maintains a social component. Test anxiety can be described in three different terms: a personality trait, an emotional state and a clinical syndrome. Although several treatment options exist, relaxation techniques have been found to be the most effective treatment for test anxiety. This study sought to relieve test anxiety in high school juniors preparing to take the ACT—a college admissions standard test. Participants included 58 eleventh grade students from a Midwestern public high school. The sample size was initially 85 students, however, four students unexpectedly dropped out of the study and only 58 participants consented to release their ACT scores. All students were asked to complete the Westside Test Anxiety Scale (WTAS, Driscoll, 2007) at pre-test. Students in the experimental group were taught relaxation techniques such as progressive muscle relaxation and deep breathing exercises by a research team for a period of five weeks. All students were again given the WTAS at post-test. After comparing control and experimental group results, a significant difference was found between experimental group pre- and post-test mean scores. No significant difference was found for the control group pre- and post-test mean scores. Therefore, relaxation training in the experimental group appeared to have a significant effect on lowering overall test anxiety between pre-test and post-test.

Methodology

Relaxation training and data collection took place at a Midwestern public high school. All eleventh-grade students were invited to participate in the study. Students who returned a signed parental consent form were included. All participants completed the WTAS (pre-test) and a short demographic questionnaire. Due to a request by the school to have the most anxious students receive assistance, the pre-test scores were rank-ordered and then divided in half. Those participants with the highest anxiety scores were assigned to the experimental group, where the other 50% of the sample with the lowest scores

were assigned to the control group. The initial size of the experimental and control groups were 37 and 44, respectively.

Members of the treatment group were taught relaxation techniques by the research team. Training took place at school, two days a week, over a five-week period where the participants were moved from their regular classrooms to a quiet, empty classroom. Members of the control group remained in P.E. class. During training, relaxing music was played in the background and participants were taught both deep breathing exercises and progressive muscle relaxation (i.e., guided relaxation for teens). The present study tested two hypotheses: 1.) relaxation and deep breathing training would affect participant's levels of anxiety and that 2.) relaxation and deep breathing would affect ACT scores for those in the experimental group.

Results

Data was obtained using an independent samples t-test and a bi-variate, Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient with a significance level of .05. Results showed a significant difference of post-test scores between the experimental ($M = 23.31$, $SD = 8.01$) and control ($M = 30.55$, $SD = 6.23$) groups, $t(56) = -3.84$, $p < .001$. A significant difference was not shown between ACT scores and the experimental ($M = 23.31$, $SD = 5.63$) and control ($M = 22.27$, $SD = 4.66$) groups, $t(56) = .762$, $p < .449$. Table 1 expresses these findings. Relationships were found among gender and those planning to attend college, $r(58) = -.31$, $p < .05$; gender and post-test scores, $r(58) = .28$, $p < .05$; ACT scores and pre-test measures, $r(58) = -.41$, $p < .01$. Table 2 expresses these findings.

Summary and Implications for Illinois Education

The present study investigated the effects of relaxation techniques on test anxiety in high school students, specifically, on their ACT scores. Although the sample size is small and unlikely to be representative of students throughout Illinois, the results from this study suggest that treatment and relaxation influenced post-test

anxiety scores, as indicated in a previous study (Larson, et al., 2011). The data did not, however, suggest the treatment had a direct effect on participants ACT scores. Regardless, those with high ACT scores tended to report lower levels of anxiety and those with low ACT scores tended to report higher levels of anxiety on their pre-test measures. Also, the data indicated that females planning to go to college have higher levels of anxiety regarding their performance on the ACT and have a higher tendency to indicate college plans. This interpretation supports earlier theories that females tend to have higher anxiety in terms of seeking college entrance and therefore, supports the concept of making treatment modalities like relaxation and deep breathing available to students who are experiencing test anxiety (Altermatt & Kim, 2004).

It is unlikely that high-stakes testing will be eliminated or significantly reduced in the near future (No Child Left Behind Act, 2002; Triplett & Barksdale, 2005). Students need interventions to combat the adverse behavioral, cognitive and physiological effects of such testing, including anxiety (Carter, Williams, & Silverman, 2008). This anxiety can result in students becoming overly concerned with the consequences of failure (Spielberger & Vagg, 1995), thus adversely affecting their ability and desire to learn (Cheek, Bradley, Reynolds, & Coy, 2002). Schools can play a role in addressing test anxiety by incorporating intervention programs such as relaxation training into the curriculum by scheduling time to teach these skills. (Cheek, Bradley, Reynolds, & Coy, 2002). The interventions discussed in this article are brief and not difficult for children to learn and can be implemented in the academic environment to mediate anxiety and can be generalized to life skills.

Using Code Switching Strategy to Learn English for Spanish-Speaking Children: A Case Study for Language Learners

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Purpose of the Research

Teachers of young children are unsure of which teaching techniques and approaches are effective when it comes to teaching English language learners (ELLs). United States Department of Education reported that there are approximately 11.2 million ELLs in school in 2009 (NES, 2011). Many of these children speak English as their other language. Therefore, it is critical to address the needs of this population by improving instruction in English that would help their school achievement. The present case study examines if the code switching practice, when demonstrated by the teacher helps English language learners acquire a second language. The study is guided by the following question:

- 1) Does the code switching practice support young children from Hispanic backgrounds in acquiring a second language?
 - If yes, which techniques in code switching are effective in assisting young children acquire a second language?
 - If yes, which language skills (verbal or written communication) show improvement?

Code switching is defined as alternating between two languages or linguistic codes within a single sentence or conversation (Ovando & Combs, 2011). In the present study, code switching technique was used by the teacher interchangeably between English and Spanish during opening and calendar, story time, and instructions to the children.

Methodology

A total of 19 preschoolers from Spanish backgrounds from two classrooms participated in the study. Mean age of the children was 56 months. The school is located in rural area but has a high population of families speaking Spanish as their primary language. Data was collected for seven weeks. A total of 1,440 minutes was collected from ten observations for two to two- and half hours in each observation. Children were observed during calendar/opening session, stories, and center time. In the structured classroom observations, observations were focused on the how the teacher interacted with the children and notes were taken during these times.

Four sources were used in data collection:

1. Structured classroom observation
2. Field notes
3. Checklist from pre-and posttest on children's writing, speaking, listening and reading
4. Speaking Component Scale (fluency, pronunciation, grammar, and expressive language).

Children were tested in pre-and posttest in the area of language skills (writing, speaking, listening, and reading). To understand further how children learn best English, the researchers administered the speaking component (fluency, grammar, pronunciation, and expressive language) using Speaking Component Scale.

Summary of Finding

Data from all the sources revealed that the code switching technique does support the acquisition of a second language for English for young children from Hispanic backgrounds. Concrete learning and visual aids provide children with visual and auditory experiences appeared to be an effective way in code switching technique used by the teacher. Songs with CD along with charts written in English and Spanish and books with CD written in both English and Spanish helped the children to figure out the words and sounds. In addition, teacher reinstate questions and statements in Spanish were also helped the children to understand English. Most of the children showed improvement in verbal communication but not in writing. Children used simple speech and paused to find words scored the highest in rating "always." Children occasionally and often speak, used complete sentences pronounced words correctly, and choose appropriate words in English. The present study reported that children learning English as a second language benefit from a variety of instructional strategies, which include using technology to improve their listening and skills.

The Diffusion of Knowledge to District Administrators

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Purpose of Research

School district administrators are responsible for making important decisions about instructional policy, such as teacher performance evaluation, teacher professional development, and adoption and use of student assessments. However, it is unclear whether district administrators have access to relevant research, and how they acquire and use it when it is available. This research explores district administrators' knowledge diffusion networks through close examination of policy-making practices, as they unfold. Specifically, AIR researchers followed four medium-sized Kentucky school districts as they developed two types of policies: an educational technology purchasing policy and a mathematics curriculum policy. Through observations, shadowing, and interviews, each step of the policy-making process was tracked and the extent to which educational research was accessed and used to inform decisions was analyzed, with the goal of strengthening our understanding of district's use of educational research and how it might be improved.

Methodology

Using the distributed leadership research framework, the researchers examined the following broad research questions:

- What types of research are accessed and used by educational leaders, and how do the leaders change what they use over time?
- What social and organizational conditions support and hinder research use in decision-making?
- How do organizational capacity and social networks change over time, and how do these changes relate to research use?

The team collected data using meeting observations, including both in-person and virtual and both formal and informal meetings of the key decision-makers;

semi-structured interviews throughout each stage of the process with key decision-makers as well as with those who supplied them with information to inform their decisions; and social network analysis. Data collection occurred during autumn of 2010 through spring of 2011.

Summary of Findings

Initial findings indicate that, in these school districts, administrators' informal "policy circles" play central roles in the diffusion of policy-pertinent information, including relevant educational research. It was found that research is seldom drawn on to guide decision-making, but when research is referenced during policy discussions, intermediary agencies, teachers, and district-level administrators themselves acquire and use the research. The researchers found that upper-middle district administrators are central actors in regulating information acquisition and use in policymaking.

Implications for Illinois Education

Researchers throughout Illinois conduct studies and write reports, often with the goal that their findings be used to influence more sound decision-making based on evidence. This study provides insight into the extent to which and ways in which school districts access and use research-based information when making policy decisions. This paper describes how educational research was used in four school districts and raises questions for reflection about how the research community in Illinois can improve the bridge between research and practice at the school district level. This builds on a presentation last year on a study of teachers' use of educational research to encourage reflection and dialogue about ways to improve the pathway of research to its various intended users. As such, the findings have implications both for researchers, who are looking to make their work more influential, and for those who work in or with school districts, who wish to identify strategies for utilizing research more in the policy-making process.

A Model Process for Using Research to Inform State Education Policy Development

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Lynne Haeffele, Ph.D., Senior Policy Director for Education
Office of the Lieutenant Governor, Sheila Simon

In September 2011, Lieutenant Governor Sheila Simon launched the Classrooms First Commission, pursuant to P.A. 97-0503, to study issues of school district realignment, educational opportunity, and operational efficiency. Over the course of the following months the commission has worked to develop a set of draft recommendations that will be finalized by July 1 and sent to the Governor and General Assembly.

From the outset, Lieutenant Governor Simon directed that the commission's work be research-based and conducted with broad public participation. Based on that directive, commission staff designed a three-stage process to ensure work was researched—based and open to public review and participation.

To accomplish this charge, the commission held four public hearings across the state in Bloomington, Carterville, Des Plaines and Moline. Approximately 80 people provided oral testimony at these hearings, which included district superintendents, principals, school board members, and some administrators who perform multiple functions such as superintendent/principals. Testimony was gathered from individuals representing thirty two counties and over fifty school districts. This testimony focused primarily on the benefits of small districts and schools, educational opportunity as impetus for consolidation, shared services, support for local control and case-by-case realignment decisions, the challenges and barriers to consolidation and support for consolidation.

An additional 470 comments were submitted to an online survey designed by commission staff to help structure feedback and enhance analysis. The survey was available online and collected submissions from individuals in 71 counties. Feedback focused on in-district efficiency, shared services (educational and operational), realignment and various additional suggestions and ideas.

Furthermore, live streaming audio of all commission meetings and live streaming video of all commission hearings has been made available. All presentations given at commission meetings along with all submitted written testimony have been posted on the Lieutenant Governor's website. All of this ensured the public had ample opportunity to participate in the process.

The commission began their research with a literature review that included state and national school district consolidation and efficiency studies and several studies of Illinois school consolidation. The commission found that economies of scale vary with the size of merged districts; district consolidation often costs more money than it saves, but may be a viable option to improve high school learning opportunities in low population areas; and shared services offer strong potential for “virtual consolidation,” with attendant cost savings and improved education opportunities.

Analyses of Illinois data included: (1) identification of counties with low school-age populations and projected population declines as potential candidates for consolidation feasibility studies, revealing 15 counties meeting this description; (2) an analysis of county census data and school-age population projections, identifying a group of districts that could benefit from targeted efficiency reviews and/or realignment feasibility studies; (3) analysis of district survey data to identify existing shared service arrangements and promising practices, providing a basis for scaling up; and (4) analysis of the state's projected costs for dual district and elementary district mass consolidations, given the state's current incentive payment structure, revealing projected costs to be in the billions of dollars.

A study conducted for the commission by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) concluded that, using the state's current mandated incentives, requiring only the state's dual districts to consolidate would cost nearly \$4 billion, based largely on salary equalization across merging districts. A later ISBE study, again using current mandated incentives, calculated that costs to the state to merge elementary districts feeding into the same high school district--leaving the high school districts separate--would be at least \$2.1 billion. If the state mandated such consolidations but did not pay the incentives, it is unclear how consolidation costs would be covered. Up-front costs are therefore prohibitive in any mass consolidation scenario.

With mass consolidation being identified as impractical, the commission began working on ways the state can eliminate barriers to voluntary consolidation, assist in the development and expansion of shared services or “virtual

consolidation” and provide school districts the resources to develop in-district efficiencies. Over the course of three months the commission members worked in smaller work groups with the assistance of a variety of outside organizations to develop a set of draft recommendations, which were released to the public on April 17.

The commission’s recommendations include proposals to help promote voluntary consolidation such as allowing compact but not contiguous districts to consolidate and reviewing the current incentive structure. The recommendations would make shared services easier by developing new tools and resources such as a revolving loan fund to help seed cooperative service agreements or conduct efficiency studies and a web-based resource management program so districts can help identify potential operational savings.

After having held an additional round of public hearings in Carbondale, Champaign, Chicago Heights and Rockford and allowing public comments to be submitted online, the commission is currently working to use feedback to refine the draft recommendations. A review of those draft recommendations will be included in the presentation. For more information on the Classrooms First Commission please visit www.ltgov.illinois.gov.

College Confidence: How Sure High School Students are of Their Future Majors

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This study examines how confident high school students are of their anticipated college major with an emphasis on students planning to major in one of the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields. The study draws on responses of the Illinois High School Class of 2003 to the ACT Student Interest Inventory, which asks students questions regarding their future educational and occupational plans. Analysis of 75,698 responses reveals important differences by gender, race, ethnicity, and the type of major they intend to pursue. Strategies to increase students' knowledge and understandings of potential majors during their secondary education experiences may help to increase students' confidence in their future college majors.

Executive Summary

In asking high school juniors how confident they were of their anticipated college major, distinct differences were found between different types of students and different types of intended majors. Namely:

- **Women** were more confident in their anticipated college major than men
- **African Americans** were more confident in their intended college major than students from other racial and ethnic backgrounds
- **Low-income students**, who originated from families that made less than \$30,000 per year, were more confident of their intended major than students from higher income backgrounds

- Students indicating they intended to pursue a major in the **Health Sciences** and **STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) Teacher Education** were more confident of their major than students intending to pursue other STEM majors
- Students who expected to complete a **Vocational/Technical Degree** or a **Professional Degree** were more sure of their college major, compared to students who aspired to complete an Associate's Degree, a Bachelor's Degree, or some graduate school.

Although women, students of color, and low-income students are underrepresented in many STEM fields, high proportions of such students who intend to major in STEM fields were very sure of their future plans, as compared to well-represented students. In addition, future occupational plans, and the level of education required for certain jobs, appears to increase students' confidence in certain types of majors. These findings, and others, provide insight into students' confidence levels in what disciplines they may pursue in college, as well as shed light on how one's major may impact how sure they are of pursuing that particular major.

Seeking Excellence and Diversity: How Stages in the Pipeline from High School to K-12 Teaching Affect the Composition of New Teachers

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Brad White, Senior Researcher

Eric J. Lichtenberger, Ph.D., Associate Director for Research
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This study examines how stages in the pipeline from high school through college and initial teacher certification affect the composition of new entrants to K-12 public school teaching in Illinois. Of particular interest are the academic skills and racial/ethnic diversity of the teaching force, two characteristics of teachers that continue to be of national and local concern. In a previous but unrelated study of new teacher cohorts in Illinois, the IERC discovered an overall increase in the mean ACT composite score, but an overall decline in the percentage of minority (i.e., non-white) teachers between 1997 and 2006. The changes in Chicago were particularly striking, with new teachers' mean ACT score increasing by over 11% and the proportion of minority teachers declining by over 30% during that timeframe. It appears from those results that recent improvements in new teachers' academic skills have come at the expense of diversifying the teaching force.

Using a unique, longitudinal state database, the IERC aims to gain a better understanding of how each stage in this important source of teacher supply influences the characteristics of those who enter the profession by addressing three primary research questions:

- 1.) What are the racial/ethnic and academic characteristics of those who aspire to teach while in high school? To what extent do aspirants' characteristics differ from those of non-aspirants? To what extent do the aspirants'/non-aspirants' characteristics differ by geographic region and locale type in Illinois?

- 2.) What proportion of high school students who aspire to teach eventually become teachers? As portions of this group advance through the pipeline while others do not, how does the academic and racial/ethnic composition change at each step? Do those changes vary by geographic region and locale type? To what extent does each step in the pipeline impact Illinois' ability to attract an academically skilled, diverse teaching force?
- 3.) Among those who do not aspire to teach while in high school, what proportion eventually enters teaching? How do the characteristics of non-aspirants who become teachers differ from those of aspirants who become teachers? How do the pathways of non-aspirants who become teachers differ from those of aspirants who become teachers?

In this presentation, we will discuss the initial descriptive findings from this study, as well as the methodological and data issues that arose and how they are being addressed.

College Readiness and the Postsecondary Outcomes of Illinois High School Students

Eric J. Lichtenberger, Ph.D., Associate Director for Research, Illinois Education Research Council

Cecile Dietrich, Ph.D., Research Consultant

This study presents a longitudinal description of the association between college readiness—as measured by the college readiness benchmarks set by ACT—and a series of postsecondary outcomes of the Illinois High School Class of 2003. In addition to describing how college readiness is distributed among the cohort, this study establishes the college readiness of various groups based on select demographic characteristics such as gender, race, and family income. Finally, the relationships between college readiness, student characteristics, and postsecondary enrollment, persistence, and bachelor's degree completion measures are analyzed.

Defining college readiness and developing appropriate metrics have direct policy implications, particularly for states such as Illinois that are attempting to qualify for a No Child Left Behind (NCLB) waiver. The current study could inform the work of policymakers as they adapt measures of college readiness. According to the U.S. Department of Education, states must develop their own definition of and metrics for college and career readiness in order to apply for a NCLB waiver (U.S. Department of Education, 2011).

How is college readiness distributed among the Illinois High School Class of 2003?

Slightly less than one out of every five (18.4%) members of the Class of 2003 met all four of the college readiness benchmarks established by ACT. Nearly twice that proportion (35.7%) missed all of the benchmarks. On the positive side, an additional 12.7% met three of the benchmarks (usually meeting all except Science), and an additional 16.5% met two of the benchmarks (usually meeting English and Reading or English and Math); therefore slightly less than one-half of the class was adequately prepared to have a high probability of postsecondary success in at least two of the subject areas covered by the ACT.

Major findings

College Enrollment

- Missing a single college readiness benchmark in either English or Math had a much more detrimental effect on the initial rate of enrollment at four-year institutions than missing a benchmark in Science or Reading.

- High income students had a relative advantage in terms of enrollment at four-year institutions when compared with similarly ready students in all other income categories.
- Students from Chicago and the Northeast region had the highest rates of enrollment at four-year institutions, regardless of college readiness level.

Persistence

- The greater the number of benchmarks met, the higher the rate of persisting into one's third year in college.
- Among the groups meeting three out of four benchmarks, missing the benchmark in Math appeared to have the most detrimental effect on persistence.
- In terms of the groups that only met one benchmark, meeting the benchmark in English or Math appeared to be related to higher rates of persistence.

Bachelor's Completion

- Among the students meeting three or fewer benchmarks, those ready in both Math and English had the highest rates of bachelor's completion.
- White and Asian students had higher rates of bachelor's completion relative to African-American and Hispanic students from parallel college readiness categories.
- Female students who met three benchmarks had a higher rate of bachelor's completion than male students who met all of the benchmarks.
- In general, students meeting fewer benchmarks who enrolled at institutions that were more competitive had higher rates of bachelor's completion than students meeting a greater number of benchmarks who enrolled at less competitive institutions.

Discussion

The unequal distribution of college readiness across demographic factors

In terms of college readiness and race, the gap between non-Asian minority (Hispanic and African-American) students and their Asian and white counterparts is quite alarming. Non-Asian minorities had the lowest proportions meeting all or most of the college readiness benchmarks and the highest proportions failing to meet any of the benchmarks.

College readiness benchmarks and postsecondary success.

Meeting three or more—and in some cases two (Math and English)—of the benchmarks was related to increased rates of postsecondary success. This was particularly true for higher income students and those enrolling at more competitive institutions. However, differences in the importance of meeting the ACT benchmarks varied across demographic groups and the postsecondary outcome being measured. For example, in most cases, higher proportions of African-American and Hispanic students enrolled overall and at the most selective four-year colleges, relative to white students from parallel college readiness categories.

Assessing the relative impact of ACT subject tests

This study revealed differences associated with the relative impact of each test with respect to postsecondary outcomes, thus substantiating earlier findings from Bettinger, Evans, and Pope (2011) as well as Lichtenberger (2011). For example, the study demonstrated the relative importance of meeting the English and Math benchmarks on the rates of initial enrollment, persistence, and bachelor's completion. Specifically, missing one of these benchmarks had a much more detrimental effect on postsecondary outcomes relative to missing either the Science or Reading benchmark.

Scientific/scholarly significance

Despite this study's limitations, it provides evidence to show that for college enrollment and bachelor's degree attainment, college readiness matters. The findings justify both the support of and creation of interventions implemented at the high school level that increase college readiness, particularly interventions targeted towards groups that are less ready for college.

The Success of African American Males in Higher Education: An Institutional Response to a National Education Policy Concern

Patricia Inman, Ph.D., Associate Director, Office of Degree Progress
Celina Sima, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Educational Policy Studies
J. Malcolm Smith, Assistant Dean of Students
Lon Kaufman, Ph.D., Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Provost
University of Illinois at Chicago

Introduction

The magnitude of the college completion gap for African American males relative to any other racial/ethnic and gender group is well documented nationally. According to the most recent National Center for Education Statistics, across all racial/ethnic groups, more women than men received degrees; and this difference is especially pronounced among African American students. African American females received about twice as many associate's, bachelor's, and master's degrees as their male counterparts (NCES, 2010). In Illinois four-year colleges and universities, African American students represent only 11% of undergraduate degrees awarded; and males are just over one-third of the African American degree recipients (IBHE, 2009).

Purpose and Significance

The purpose of this panel presentation is to examine the intersection of one institution's research, programmatic and policy efforts to understand and improve the persistence and graduation rates of African American male students. During the presentation, we invite participant discussion of broader research, program and policy implications.

At the University of Illinois at Chicago, African American male student attrition threatens the mission of the institution "to provide the broadest access to the highest levels of intellectual excellence." In addition, low persistence and graduation rates have implications for African American male preparation for professional and leadership positions in the state of Illinois, the City of Chicago and local communities. One result of the University's strategic thinking and planning efforts was the realization that Black male student attrition is an important indicator of a lack of engagement in the university and beyond. This realization led to a heightened awareness that the institution must learn more about how to improve the success of Black males. A specific goal in UIC's Strategic Plan (2006) recommended that the campus conduct research to better understand student attrition and determine which factors can improve retention and graduation. The 2009 "Pathways to Success for African American Males at UIC" report was a direct outcome of this strategic goal.

In addition, a number of strategies to address increased campus participation of African American students were developed and implemented. The Black Male Leadership Group (BMLG) is a ground-up initiative designed to convene African American male faculty and staff from across the campus to act on concerns regarding African American male students. As the research team for the Pathways to Success project developed, the BMLG provided guidance in honing the research design and strategies to engage students in the project.

The presentation is designed to describe the confluence of factors—programmatic developments, leadership imperative and research initiatives in confronting concern with African American Male attrition through the representative voices of each of these factors.

Presentation Format

This interactive session will provide three different institutional perspectives related to issues regarding the low graduation rate of African American male undergraduates at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

Presenters

- Patricia Inman and Celina Sima have collaborated on various institutional research initiatives designed to inform campus policy and programs related to African American Male student success at UIC. Patricia is the Associate Director of the Office of Degree Progress and an affiliate staff member of the Office of Diversity at UIC. Celina is Visiting Associate Professor of Educational Policy Studies in the College of Education at UIC.
- J. Malcolm Smith, Assistant Dean of Students, has coordinated many of the Black Male Initiative efforts on campus, and has the most direct contact with students.
- Lon Kaufman, Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Provost, has served in various campus leadership roles. Within his leadership responsibilities he has supported the Black male initiatives at UIC.

The policy research perspective

During spring term 2009, the Pathways to Success study was conducted by Celina Sima and Patricia Inman. This study was designed to better understand the paths traveled by African American male students who were making good progress toward degree completion at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC).

The practitioner perspective: Student engagement efforts

When J. Malcolm Smith was hired by the Dean of Students Office in 2007, among his job responsibilities was the charge to develop programming efforts supporting African American Male success. Malcolm will discuss these efforts related to both student engagement and faculty/staff engagement.

The campus leadership perspective

Over the course of about twenty years, UIC has made a concerted effort to improve student retention and graduation rates. These efforts have resulted in incremental increases in both the retention and graduation outcomes for undergraduates. However, disparities among various racial and ethnic groups have persisted. In the Fall of 2006, the one year retention rate for African American Males at UIC was 54.7%—more than 20% below the campus average. This was a clarion call to action for the campus. Lon Kaufman will discuss various efforts and policy decisions to improve student success and specific programs targeting the graduation gap.

Absenteeism Among Preschool Students in the Chicago Public Schools: How Prevalent Is It and What Are Its Causes?

Stacy Ehrlich, Ph.D., Senior Research Analyst

Julia Gwynne, Ph.D., Senior Research Analyst

Paul Moore, Research Analyst

Elaine Allensworth, Ph.D., Interim Executive Director

Elizabeth Sorice, Intern

Consortium on Chicago School Research at The University of Chicago

Purpose

Consistent school attendance is a foundation of student learning. While missing a day or two of school each year is not likely to have serious consequences, chronic absenteeism—missing more than 10% of school days in a given year—can seriously undermine the learning process. Despite its obvious importance, a focus on younger students with high rates of absenteeism is only just now emerging. This new research indicates that chronic absenteeism is a significant problem even among the very youngest students. Nationally, kindergarteners miss an average of 5 days per year; however, 11% of kindergarten students are chronically absent, missing more than 18 days (3-4 weeks) per year.¹ Students who are chronically absent in kindergarten are more likely to be from low-income families, to live with a single mother, and to be racial or ethnic minorities.² However, the precise mechanisms driving these associations are largely unknown. Yet, preschool attendance may be as critical as grade school attendance, particularly for students who are not receiving instruction in basic academic skills at home. In short, though researchers have begun to outline the scope of chronic absenteeism among young children, they have yet to produce the type of actionable evidence that would help practitioners and policymakers attack the root causes of the problem. The purpose of the proposed research is to provide an understanding of absenteeism among CPS preschool students to help practitioners in Chicago and elsewhere develop well-informed strategies around school attendance for young children.

The goal of this study is to document the pervasiveness of chronic absenteeism in Chicago preschools, identify students who are most likely to experience high rates of absenteeism, determine reasons for their absences, and assess the impact that preschool absenteeism has on student learning and on school attendance in later years. Because this project began in September 2012 and will continue through June 2013, we focus this IERC presentation on our initial research questions, to better understand the pervasiveness of early absenteeism and reasons for absences, and how those differ by individual, program, neighborhood, and school characteristics.

Research Questions

RQ #1: *What is the extent of absenteeism among CPS preschool students?* To what degree are CPS students absent in preschool, and how do these compare to those of students in kindergarten and the primary grades? Looking longitudinally within the same children, how do preschool children's absence rates change as they get older, and to what extent do preschool attendance patterns forecast attendance rates in the primary grades?

RQ #1a: *Who exhibits chronic absenteeism?* What are the characteristics of preschool students with different patterns of absence, as identified under our primary research question? Are there differences based on students' background characteristics, the neighborhoods they come from, or the schools they attend?

RQ #2: *Why are students absent from preschool?* What factors contribute to absences for preschool students in CPS? To what degree are health problems, parent attitudes about preschool, quality of preschool program, access to transportation, or concerns about safety related to student absences in preschool?

Methodology

To answer our first research question, we use monthly and annual data on student absences from 2008-09, 2009-10, and 2010-11 to identify absence rates and patterns of absenteeism for preschool students enrolled in CPS schools. This data is merged with files we regularly receive from CPS with information on students' background characteristics and school-level characteristics, and with census data files that provide neighborhood-level variables (such as block-level social status). In total, we have data for roughly 25,000 preschool students in each year, and 145,000 students from ages 3 through 8. Our analyses include descriptive statistics, and multi-level modeling to account for the clustering of students into schools. To answer RQ #2, we have sampled 60 preschool classrooms, and asked preschool teachers to keep a log of reasons for their students' absences over a three-week period, to be collected at three timepoints over the 2011-2012 school year. For this presentation, we will have

two of these logs analyzed. Analyses include descriptive statistics to determine the range and prevalence of reasons for absences, and describe differences in reasons based on students' background, program, school, or neighborhood characteristics.

Findings

We currently have full findings for RQ #1. In 2008-09, of the roughly 25,000 preschool students we have data for, around 50% of 3-year-olds and 42% of 4-year-olds were chronically absent. The proportion of students who were chronically absent decreased substantially for 5-year-olds (24%) and continued to decrease for older children, such that only 13.5% of 8-year-olds were chronically absent in 2008-09. We also examined the cohort of 3- and 4-year olds in 2008-09 and followed them over the next two school years. As with the cross-sectional data, we saw that absence rates improved the most between the last year of preschool and kindergarten, with average absence rates falling from 12% to 7.5%. We also looked at whether preschool absence rates predicted attendance in the following two years. From ages 3 to 4 (both preschool years), there was some correlation between absence rates, but it was not deterministic ($r = .52$). From ages 4 to 5, the relationship was a bit weaker at $r = .43$. However, although it is difficult to predict future attendance rates based on preschool rates, it is clear that chronic absenteeism in kindergarten does have roots in preschool: of kindergarten students who were chronically absent in 2010-11, 79% had also been chronically absent a year earlier when they were in preschool. We will continue to analyze these data to answer RQ #1a and complete our analyses for RQ #2 in time for distribution by June 2012.

Implications

The study seeks to contribute to the focus on preschool students, who, until now, have been overlooked in all research on absenteeism. By documenting the pervasiveness of absenteeism and its effects on learning outcomes for preschool students, this research has the potential to clarify the debate around school attendance and show educators and policymakers the degree to which chronic absenteeism in preschool are a critical issue, and the patterns which indicate students are at risk for academic problems in the primary grades. Another contribution of this work is that it will identify reasons why students are absent from school. There is great demand for this information since most research to date has only identified factors that put students at higher risk for chronic absenteeism from school (high poverty, single parent, etc.) but has not discerned actual reasons.

¹ Romero, M. and Lee, Y.S. (2007). *A National Portrait of Chronic Absenteeism in the Early Grades*. New York: National Center for Children in Poverty.

² Romero, M. and Lee, Y.S. (2008). *The Influence of Maternal and Family Risk on Chronic Absenteeism in Early Schooling*. New York: National Center for Children in Poverty.

Examining Quality Mathematics Teaching in Early Childhood Classrooms

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As a society, we increasingly recognize the importance of helping children learn to read and write from an early age. Similar attention has not been given to early mathematics education. High quality mathematics education for young children builds a strong foundation for future mathematics learning. Through challenging and engaging early math education, young children acquire such important mathematical concepts as number sense, geometry, measurement, and logical reasoning abilities. Evidence is clear that early mathematics achievement is associated with later school success, but the field lacks clear definition of excellence in early mathematics teaching. We are also short of available tools to assist teachers and teacher educators in monitoring or assessing classrooms around mathematics teaching. The purpose of this paper is to introduce High Impact Strategies in Early Mathematics, (HIS-EM), an observational tool designed to identify and measure the frequency of high quality mathematics teaching practices in preschool through third grade and to report the its early findings. Using a 7-point Likert scale, the observation period is from

the start to the finish of a teacher-directed mathematics lesson. A total of 210 Pre-K through 3rd grade teachers in 16 Chicago public elementary schools participated in the study. These schools serve primarily low-income, ethnically diverse students. During the observation, observers also record the length of the lesson, the major content strand represented by the lesson (e.g., number and operations, algebraic thinking, measurement, geometry, or data analysis), and the instructional format of the lesson (e.g., large group, small group, partner work, individual work). The preliminary results indicate a great variability in early math teaching practice among observed classrooms. Because a wide range of quality is observed in mathematics instruction, high quality mathematical teaching does exist in our classrooms. As a whole, however, math teaching in Pre-K through 3rd grade classrooms appears modest in quality. The present study indicates the potential of HIS-EM as a tool to document the quality of teaching in early mathematics.

Complete College America: Illinois Community College System Results with a Comparison to State and National Outcomes

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Through the Complete College America (CCA) Alliance of States, Illinois higher education is expected to take action towards achieving the goal of increasing the number of students successfully achieving credentials with value in the labor market while also closing the attainment gaps for traditionally underrepresented groups. Illinois is committing to make college completion a priority through: setting annual statewide and institution specific completion goals through 2020; developing and implementing action plans with strategies to reduce and improve remediation, increase the number of on time completions, develop shorter and faster pathways to valuable credentials, and provide incentives to student and colleges for progress; collecting and reporting progress through a system which values completion and contains common metrics, annual public reports against benchmark data, and disaggregated data. (http://www.completecollege.org/alliance_of_states/)

To advance towards accomplishing CCA goals, officials developed a series of metrics identified under three

categories: Progress, Outcomes, and Context. Progress metrics include: enrollment in remedial education (Math only, English\Reading only; both Math and English\Reading); success after remedial education; success in first year college courses (gateway courses); credit accumulation; retention rates; and course completion. Outcome metrics include: degree\certificate production; graduation rates; transfer out rates (for community colleges only); credits and time to degree. Context metrics include: annual enrollment; completion ratio; and market penetration. Several different breakouts are requested including: race\ethnicity, gender, age by range, Pell recipient status, and student status (e.g., first-time full-time, first time part-time, transfer at time of entry) etc.

The Illinois Community College System's (ICCS) overall year one statewide CCA results will be compared to year two CCA data from Illinois. Available National and State comparative information will be referenced.

Taking a Challenge: Incorporating Performance Funding in Higher Education

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Illinois is part of a national movement to consider using performance funding as a policy tool to help increase the number of adults with college credentials that will, in turn, play a critical role in a state's economic recovery and growth. In 2008, the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) adopted the Illinois Public Agenda for College and Career Success which clearly documented that postsecondary education is an essential credential for jobs in today's global marketplace and critical to the economic viability of Illinois. In 2010, the Illinois Higher Education Finance Study Commission, after reviewing higher education finance in Illinois and other states, reported that the current finance system did not align with the goals of the Public Agenda—educational attainment, college affordability, workforce training, or economic development. To help address this disconnect, the Commission recommended moving forward with the development of performance funding as a policy tool to achieve desired outcomes, particularly improving educational attainment.

In 2011, Governor Pat Quinn adopted the 60x25 goal, i.e., 60 percent of Illinois adults will have a college credential—a one-year certificate, associate degree, baccalaureate degree, or higher—by the year 2025. These initiatives and others such as Illinois' Budgeting for Results have contributed to the call for performance funding in fiscal year 2013. Illinois policymakers want “a system for allocating State resources to public institutions of higher education based upon performance in achieving State goals related to student success and certificate and degree completion.” (Public Act 97-320)

Pursuant to Public Act 97-320, the new funding process is to financially reward the performance of public institutions based on outcomes. There must be an emphasis on advancing the success of students who are academically or financially at-risk, first generation students, low income students, or students traditionally underrepresented in higher education. In addition, the new process must recognize and account for the differentiated missions of the institutions, focus on the fundamental goal of increasing completion, recognize the unique and broad mission of public community colleges, and maintain the quality of degrees, certificates, courses, and programs.

The challenge and opportunity for the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) was how to move the concept of performance funding into reality. Starting in August 2011, the IBHE collaborated with a large and broad-based committee of stakeholders to propose a new performance funding model for public institutions. The committee agreed that the model must (1) link to the goals of the Public Agenda; (2) recognize and account for different institutional missions; (3) adjust to account for changes in policy and priorities; and (4) must not be prescriptive in how to achieve excellence and success. Within five months, the committee reached consensus on a model. In February 2012, the Board of Higher Education adopted the incorporation of this model into the higher education budget recommendations for fiscal year 2013. Currently, the Illinois General Assembly and Governor Pat Quinn are considering IBHE's proposal for implementation in fiscal year 2013 (July 1, 2012 to June 30, 2013).

This presentation is about IBHE's proposed performance funding model for higher education. Dr. George Reid, executive director for IBHE, will provide his insight on the how and why the performance funding policy developed in Illinois. Dr. Alan Phillips, deputy director for fiscal affairs, budgeting, and information technology at IBHE, will explain the nuts and bolts of the performance funding model. Ms. Karen Helland, senior associate director at IBHE, will discuss the next steps.

Combing the Wreckage for Survivors: The Search for Validity in How Standards-based Test Results are Reported Back to Educators and Parents

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Purpose of Research

Ten years in, standards-based assessment of student achievement has yet to fulfill its promise as a powerful tool for improving instructional effectiveness. In Chicago and throughout Illinois, achievement on the NAEP and ACT has remained flat. Chronic achievement gaps at virtually all levels of public schooling remain as wide now as they were in 2001.

The principal device for reporting standards-based assessment information back to parents and school personnel is the so-called “content strand.” On both high-stakes annual exams like the ISAT and ACT, and on interim assessments like Scantron and NWEA/MAP, content strands claim to report out specific levels of standards mastery in ways that parallel the architecture of state and national standards. They do that by:

- Breaking down standards into highly specific skills sequences
- Reporting out mastery of specific skills in ways that are ostensibly designed to support improved teaching, grouping and remediation decisions at the classroom and grade/departmental level

This study builds on previously reported research about the construct validity of ISAT content strands. It does that by engaging in a parallel analysis of content strands that are used by many schools and districts to report mastery of ACT College Readiness Standards. The study has two major purposes:

- 1.) To test the generalizability of results from the ISAT study which found no empirical support for using content strands as a valid unit of measure of standards mastery
- 2.) To identify alternative ways to report standardized test results that might provide practitioners with deeper insights into what standardized tests are actually assessing.

Methods of Inquiry

The core inquiry was based on an examination of correct response frequencies and item characteristics for all test items from ACT PLAN exams taken by all Chicago Public School high school sophomores and juniors during the 2005-2006, 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 school years.

All PLAN test items for the years 2005-2006 through 2007-2008 were coded by ACT Inc. into specific content strands, e.g. for PLAN Reading, “Generalizations & Conclusions,” “Main Idea/Author’s Intent” etc.

N-values for each year covered in the core inquiry were as follows:

- 2005-2006: Sophomores=22,887;
Juniors=17,931
- 2006-2007: Sophomores=22,123;
Juniors=16,865
- 2007-2008: Sophomores=23,450;
Juniors=18,072

The core inquiry was supplemented by a review of ACT-coded, correct-response frequencies for all items on the PLAN and EXPLORE exams that were taken by Chicago Public School freshmen and sophomores during the 2008-2009, 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 schools years.

Distributions of correct response frequencies were then compared within and across content strands to assess the independence of content strands as separate constructs

Summary of Findings

Consistent co-variation of correct-response frequencies across sub-populations for content strands on each of the four ACT sub-tests administered in 2005-2006, 2007-2008 and 2007-2008

Consistently wide variations of correct-response frequencies within content strands on all sub-tests administered across all years of administration

Similar rank-ordering of correct-response frequencies (easiest 1/3, middle 1/3, most difficult 1/3) across national, all-Chicago and Chicago sub-group samples

Consistently wide variations of correct-response frequencies within content strands indicates that the factors which make questions harder or easier for students to answer have little or nothing to do with the “strand” that is ostensibly being tested.

Similar rank-ordering of correct-response frequencies across sample groups means that the factors which make questions harder or easier for students to answer are

roughly similar regardless of the overall achievement level of the population being tested.

Implications for Illinois Education

Contrary to popular mythology, standardized tests are not exclusively or even primarily populated with items that require simple skill mastery. Questions and problems that students everywhere find more difficult to answer are typically characterized by additional elements of density, complexity, and/or ambiguity. For the most part, it is the capacity to size up and work through these sorts of questions that allows students to reach higher scale score ranges.

Recent state and national interest in common core standards has sharpened the focus on college and career readiness at all levels of policy and practice. Findings from this study suggest that clearer identification and distributive practice of higher order cognitive strategies have a far greater likelihood producing measureable evidence of that readiness than continuing over-reliance on shored up mastery of discretely teachable skills. This is as true for competencies measured by the ACT/EPAS sequence (EXPLORE, PLAN, ACT) as it is for those measured by the ISAT.

The Illinois State Board of Education's petition to administer ACT EPAS assessments to all Illinois students as part of its recent NCLB waiver request raises the urgency of adopting more meaningful reporting strategies for both the ISAT and the ACT/EPAS sequences in the years ahead.

The Impact of NWEA's Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) Program on Student Reading Achievement

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Effective differentiation of instruction based on readiness and learning profiles requires a valid descriptive data set at the classroom level. While teachers may use their own student-level assessments to monitor learning, it is challenging to use performance on classroom measures to assess likely performance on statewide tests or nationally normed standardized tests. School practitioners view benchmark measures reflective of such external tests as potentially more valid in making differentiated instruction decisions. A widely used system incorporating benchmark assessment and training is the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) program, but there are very few studies of its effects on student outcomes.

The MAP program is a collection of computer-adaptive assessments in reading, language usage, mathematics, and science for students in pre-grade 3 to grade 10, used by schools to monitor student progress toward

state proficiency standards. The study used a cluster-randomized design to randomly assign 174 grade 4 and 5 classroom teachers in 32 schools in Illinois as a grade-level group to either receive the MAP program or to conduct business as usual. The study collected observations, instructional logs, and surveys from teachers, as well as state and MAP assessment data on students in grades 4 and 5 during the 2008/09 and 2009/10 school years. Main and subgroup effects of MAP on student achievement were estimated from grade 4 and grade 5 data in spring 2010, after teachers used MAP for a full academic year. To account for variance in the outcome measure at multiple levels, hierarchical linear modeling was used to determine impacts on student outcomes. Students were nested in schools, allowing the study to account for variance between students within and across schools.

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