TEACHERS IN SCHOOLS BEATING THE ODDS FOR STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT ON COMMON CORE ASSESSMENTS: A PARTICIPATORY PERFORMANCE

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RESEARCH PURPOSE

- The primary purpose for the proposed research was to identify the school practices and policies found in elementary and middle schools whose students exceeded performance expectations on New York State Common Core assessments (as well as those that were used prior to the CCSS).
This study was conducted during the simultaneous implementation of three Race to the Top (RttT) innovations:
- The Common Core State Learning Standards (CCSS)
- New Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR)
- Data-driven instruction (DDI).

These innovations were purportedly intended to improve student outcomes by disrupting status quo operations in schools and classrooms: They are “disruptive innovations” (Christensen, Horn, & Johnson, 2011).
The Common Core State Learning Standards (CCSS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shift</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shift 1</td>
<td>Balancing Informational &amp; Literary Text</td>
<td>Students read a true balance of informational and literary texts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shift 2</td>
<td>Knowledge in the Disciplines</td>
<td>Students build knowledge about the world (domains/content areas) through TEXT rather than the teacher or activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shift 3</td>
<td>Staircase of Complexity</td>
<td>Students read the central, grade appropriate text around which instruction is centered. Teachers are patient, create more time and space and support in the curriculum for close reading.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shift 4</td>
<td>Text-based Answers</td>
<td>Students engage in rich and rigorous evidence based conversations about text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shift 5</td>
<td>Writing from Sources</td>
<td>Writing emphasizes use of evidence from sources to inform or make an argument.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shift 6</td>
<td>Academic Vocabulary</td>
<td>Students constantly build the transferable vocabulary they need to access grade level complex texts. This can be done effectively by spiraling like content in increasingly complex texts.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• New Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR)

All teachers annually rated from “highly effective” to “ineffective” based on:

• Measures of student academic growth (20%).
  • State CCSS assessments
  • Student learning objections (SLOs)

• Other measures of student achievement (20%).

• Evaluation of teacher performance (60%).
  • Using approved teacher practices rubric.
  • Mandated multiple classroom observations.
  • Teaching portfolios as negotiated.
  • Student and family surveys if selected.
THE STUDY DESIGN

- A mixed-method multiple case study of 18 elementary and middle schools
- “odds-beating” schools (n=12): those with above expected CCSS ELA performance based upon their demographic characteristics
- “typically performing” schools (n=6): those with expected CCSS ELA performance based upon their demographic characteristics
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Odds-Beating Schools</th>
<th>School Pseudonym</th>
<th>Grade Span</th>
<th>% Economic Disadvantage</th>
<th>% White</th>
<th>% ELL</th>
<th>Average z Residual Range</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>Eagle Bluff ²</td>
<td>K-6</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.00-1.49</td>
<td>1.50-1.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spring Creek</td>
<td>K-6</td>
<td>55³</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.50-1.99</td>
<td>2.00&lt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Ruby</td>
<td>6-8</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.00&lt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Roaring Gap</td>
<td>6-8</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.50-1.99</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Starling Springs</td>
<td>K-5</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2.00&lt;</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yellow Valley</td>
<td>K-5</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.50-1.99</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>Hutch Hill</td>
<td>6-8</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>90</td>
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<td>&lt;1.00</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Larabee</td>
<td>5-8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.00&lt;</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bay City</td>
<td>K-6</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.50-1.99</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Goliad</td>
<td>K-6</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1.00-1.49</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban/Urbana</td>
<td>Julesberg</td>
<td>6-8</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.00-1.50</td>
<td>&lt;1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sage City</td>
<td>6-8</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typically Performing Schools</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>Wolf Creek</td>
<td>K-6</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>-0.20-0.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Tarelton</td>
<td>6-8</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00-0.20</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sun Hollow</td>
<td>K-6</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00-0.20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>Locus Glen</td>
<td>6-8</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-0.20-0.00</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Paige City</td>
<td>K-5</td>
<td>55³</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.00-0.20</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban/Urbana</td>
<td>Silver City</td>
<td>6-8</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00-0.20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average for New York</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ Ranges and rounding of numerical data are provided to ensure anonymity.
² All school and district names are pseudonyms.
³ Schools highlighted are those with greater poverty, ethnic and/or linguistic diversity than the state average. Percentages for each subgroup are not provided as to minimize the possibility of deductive disclosure of any school or participant.
DATA SOURCES

District-Level Interviews
- Superintendent Interview
- Asst. Super for Curriculum & Instruction Interview
- Director of Special Education
- Community Outreach Coordinator
- Director of Assessment
- Director of Professional Development
- Director of ESL/Bilingual Ed
- Director of Student Services

School-Level Interviews and Focus Groups
- Principal Interview
- Building Leadership Team Focus Group
- **Mainstream Content Teacher Focus Group**
- Support Staff Focus Group (School Psychologist, Social Worker, Nurse)
- **ESL Teacher Interview (or Focus Group upon request)**
- **Special Education Interview (or Focus Group upon request)**
- Instructional Coach/Master Teacher Interview
- Individual Mainstream Teacher Debrief Interview

Other Data Sources
- Interpretive Memo
- Classroom observation protocol ELA Part 1
- Classroom observation protocol Math Part 1
- Classroom observation Part 2
- Documents
- Surveys:
  - (1) Of all Staff
  - (2) Of teachers of math and English Language Arts
Common Core Research

NYKids researchers teamed up with other School of Education faculty to complete research on Odds-Beating Schools and the Common Core in 2014-2015.

News!

Practices and Processes of Odds-Beating Schools: Examples from Representative Cases

Introduction
A research team at the University at Albany School of Education recently completed a study that explored the practices and processes that distinguish odds-beating elementary and middle schools from more typically performing but

http://www.albany.edu/nykids/
This Analysis

- How do teachers describe their experiences implementing the Common Core State Standards?
  - In what ways do odds-beating school teachers’ experiences differ from their peers in typically performing schools?

- How do teachers describe their experiences with the Annual Professional Performance Review system?
  - In what ways do odds-beating school teachers’ experiences with APPR differ from their peers in typically performing schools?

- How do teachers describe supports for their adjustment to the CCSS, APPR, and DDI innovations?
  - In what ways do odds-beating school teachers’ experiences with supports for innovation implementation differ from their peers in typically performing schools?
The performance was shaped in response to the growing attention being paid to inter-school differences in teachers’ agency, efficacy, engagement and resilience during times of rapid, dramatic innovation implementation (Eppley, 2015, Supovitz & Spillane, 2015).
CRAFTING OF THE PERFORMANCE

• Phase 1: a priori coding for themes based upon the initial literature review (Maxwell, 2012) taking note of the logical sequences, natural turns, and thematic connections

• Phase 2: selecting passages that illustrate major themes in relationship to our research questions

• Phase 3: delimiting evidence to represent the interplay of perspectives and how they manifest teacher agency, efficacy, engagement, and resilience in different school contexts
• Researcher: Female. White. Age 40 to 49 years. Graduate degree
• Narrator: No distinguishing characteristics
• Odds-beating School Teachers (Their voices in italics)
  • Nancy teaches in a low poverty and low diversity school
  • John teaches in a low poverty and low diversity school
  • Angelica teaches in a high poverty school
  • Kishmar teaches in a high poverty and high diversity school
• Typically performing School Teachers (Their voices in regular font)
  • Sarah teaches in a low poverty and low diversity school
  • Chen teaches in a low poverty and low diversity school
  • Kathleen teaches in a high poverty school
• Collective Agency
• Collective Engagement
• Collective Resilience
• Collective Efficacy

Teacher Agency
Teacher Engagement
Teacher Resilience
Teacher Efficacy
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District Office &amp; School Leaders’ Implementation Strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Make It Happen:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top-down compliance directives with scripted protocols, strict implementation timetable and fidelity standards, tight monitoring, And narrow training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Help It Happen:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation entails mutual adaptation, and it is facilitated by responsive technical assistance, social supports, and needed resources, together with organizational learning mechanisms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Let It Happen:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loosely-configured implementation plan with variable guidance and monitoring, technical assistance, social supports, and resources</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers’ and Other Front-line Professionals’ Motivations for Implementation and Performance Adaptation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Have-to Motives:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Front-line professionals feel like Implementation puppets, not expert professionals with discretion</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Want-to Motives:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Front-line professionals value the innovation and are committed to adapt, learn, and improve as they implement it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ought-to Motives:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Front-line professionals feel a sense of obligation, but “their hearts aren’t in it,” resulting in variable implementation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Collective Engagement

Collective Agency

Teacher Agency

Teacher Engagement

Collective Efficacy

Teacher Efficacy

Have-to Motives:
Front-line professionals feel likeImplementation puppets, not expert professionals with discretion

Resilience & Effective Adaptation
There doesn’t seem to be a lot of “hey I know you’re a good teacher and I am going to let you do what you do best, because we hired you and we believe in you.” And incrementally control was taken away from us. First it had to be you’re teaching the same thing at the same time. Now we have to teach the modules. And now our grade books have to look identical. It’s just one more thing in a litany of ways to take control away from us. I think it makes us feel devalued. – Chen
Collective Engagement

Collective Agency

Teacher Agency

Teacher Efficacy

Collective Efficacy

Resilience & Effective Adaptation

Ought-to Motives:
Front-line professionals feel a sense of obligation, but "their hearts aren't in it," resulting in variable implementation.
Well, I think innovation went out when the modules came in. - Sarah
System Resilience & Effective Adaptation

Collective Agency

Collective Engagement

Teacher Agency

Teacher Engagement

Collective Efficacy

Teacher Efficacy

Want-to Motives:
Front-line professionals value the innovation and are committed to adapt, learn, and improve as they implement it.
A number is not going to affect me because we get a score for the whole school. And anyway, I know I’m a good teacher. I know that everyone around this table meets their kids’ needs and is dedicated. - Kishmar
POVERTY AND DIVERSITY

• Specific supports in odds-beating higher poverty and higher diversity schools
  ✓ School-wide APPR scores (not individual)
  ✓ Team approach to supporting children academically, socially and emotionally
  ✓ Useful and sufficient professional development and material resources
TAKE-AWAYS TO SUPPORT TEACHERS’ SUPPORTING CHILDREN

- Teachers interact, plan, and learn together and support each other in teams and professional learning communities.
- District office and school missions, goals, and leadership priorities emphasize high standards and equity of opportunity for learning for all students.
- New teachers are prepared for challenges of diverse student populations and experienced teachers have received effective professional development that is responsive to their needs and concerns in service of their sustained agency, efficacy, engagement, and resilience.
- Innovation adoption and implementation proceed with teachers-as-partners and co-designers, including guidelines and mechanisms for top-down and bottom-up learning and improvement.
- A district office-school “911 system” for teachers, enabling rapid responses to their needs for coaching, mentoring, peer supports, and responsive professional development resources to bolster engagement and emotional resilience in the face of challenges.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- This performance was crafted with the help of doctoral student Mary Jo Morgan and colleague Hal A. Lawson. I would like to also recognize the following people for their assistance with recruitment, data collection, and data analysis: Francesca Durand, Linda Baker, Kathryn Schiller, Kathy Nickson, Michael Lawson, Shari Keller, Hal Lawson, Dorothy Porteus, Karen Gregory, Ben Malczyk, Michelle Bianchi, Sarah Zuckerman, Fang (Lisa) Yu, Sharon Wiles, Nisa Felicia, Juliana Svistova, Lynn Lisy-Macan, Deb Byrne, Piera Camposeo, John Costello, Heather Kurto, Aaron Leo, Christl Mueller, Gretchen Oliver, and Kemm Wilson. We would also like to thank representatives from the New York State Education Department for their ongoing support of this research.

- Most importantly, I would like to acknowledge all of the teachers, teaching aides, support staff, ENL teachers, and special education teachers who took time to share their experiences with our research team.
SELECTED REFERENCES


For other related reports see “common core study” at http://www.albany.edu/nykids/