BEATING THE ODDS WITH POVERTY-CHALLENGED YOUTH: SCHOOLS GETTING BETTER AT GETTING BETTER

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UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY

CASDA, RENSSELAER NY, FEBRUARY 1, 2017
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 performance based upon their demographic characteristics
• “typically performing” schools (n=6): those with expected CCSS performance based upon their demographic characteristics
Typical Performer

Odds Beater

Expected Score
<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>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rural</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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spring Creek</td>
<td>K-6</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.50-1.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ruby</td>
<td>6-8</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.00&lt;</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>
</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>
</tr>
<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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>Hutch Hill</td>
<td>6-8</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>&lt;1.00</td>
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<tr>
<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>
<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>
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<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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban/Urban</td>
<td>Julesberg</td>
<td>6-8</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.00-1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sage City</td>
<td>6-8</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>&lt;1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Typically Performing Schools

| Rural                     | Wolf Creek                 | K-6        | 35                      | 95      | 0     | -0.20-0.00              |
|                           | Tareltone                  | 6-8        | 40                      | 100     | 0     | 0.00-0.20               |
|                           | Sun Hollow                 | K-6        | 40                      | 90      | 0     | 0.00-0.20               |
| Suburban                  | Locus Glen                 | 6-8        | 30                      | 90      | 0     | -0.20-0.00              |
| Large                     | Paige City                 | K-5        | 55                      | 80      | 5     | 0.00-0.20               |
| Suburban/Urban            | Silver City                | 6-8        | 55                      | 60      | 0     | 0.00-0.20               |

Average for New York

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% Economic Disadvantage</th>
<th>% White</th>
<th>% ELL</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>8</td>
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</table>

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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
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 multi-year study investigating what practices and processes distinguish odds-beating elementary and middle schools from more typically performing but
1. How do teachers describe their experiences implementing the Common Core State Standards?

2. How do teachers describe their experiences with the Annual Professional Performance Review system?

3. How do teachers describe supports for their adjustment to the CCSS, APPR, and DDI innovations?
The performance was shaped by the growing attention being paid to inter-school differences in teachers’ orientations and actions during times of rapid, dramatic innovation implementation.

We provide a new, four-component framework: teacher agency, efficacy, engagement and resilience.

All four can be brought to bear on the study of individuals and also groups of teachers.
- Collective Agency
- Collective Emotional Resilience
- Collective Engagement
- Collective Efficacy

Teacher Agency

Teacher Engagement

Teacher Emotional Resilience

Teacher Efficacy
**Roles**

- 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
### District Office & School Leaders’ Implementation Strategy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Make It Happen:</th>
<th>Help It Happen:</th>
<th>Let It Happen:</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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<td>Top-down compliance directives with scripted protocols, strict implementation timetable and fidelity standards, tight monitoring, And narrow training</td>
<td>Implementation entails mutual adaptation, and it is facilitated by responsive technical assistance, social supports, and needed resources, together with organizational learning mechanisms</td>
<td>Loosely-configured implementation plan with variable guidance and monitoring, technical assistance, social supports, and resources</td>
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### Teachers’ and Other Front-line Professionals’ Motivations for Implementation and Performance Adaptation

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<td>Front-line professionals feel like Implementation puppets, not expert professionals with discretion</td>
<td>Front-line professionals value the innovation and are committed to adapt, learn, and improve as they implement it</td>
<td>Front-line professionals feel a sense of obligation, but “their hearts aren’t in it,” resulting in variable implementation</td>
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Collective Engagement

Teacher Engagement

Collective Efficacy

Teacher Efficacy

Resilience & Effective Adaptation

Collective Agency

Teacher Agency

Have-to Motives:
Front-line professionals feel like implementation puppets, not expert professionals with discretion.
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
Well, I think innovation went out when the modules came in. - Sarah
System Resilience
Collective Agency
Collective Engagement
Teacher Engagement
Teacher Agency
Collective Efficacy
Teacher Efficacy
Resilience & Effective Adaptation
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
TURN AND TALK

Small Group:
• What resonates with you about this performance?
• What kinds of challenges do you face in your own setting with regard to teacher agency, efficacy, engagement, and resilience?
• How have you surmounted those challenges?

Whole group: Key take-a-ways
From School Reform to Innovative Designs

• What forces, factors, and actors explain “innovation-ready and –able district offices and schools?”
• Dual focus: Workforce competencies and organizational capacities (“absorptive capacity”)
• The shift from management (“administrator”) to leadership (“leaders”)
• With Ronald Heifetz, adaptive leadership also is an organizational function: “Distributed Leadership”
• The innovation implementation strategy, especially leadership, determines what gets implemented, for how long, and with side-effects & indicators of future needs
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The Innovation Implementation Journey

- State Policy
  - Goals & Innovations
- District Office:
  - Facilitators, Constraints & Barriers
- School
  - Facilitators, Constraints & Barriers
- Classrooms:
  - Teacher-Student Facilitators, Constraints, & Barriers
What Happens at the Boundaries as Innovations Travel?

- **Buffering Mechanisms**: e.g., slow it down; reduce demands; “let people off the hook” for the time being; develop conflict prevention & resolution strategies
- **Brokering Mechanisms**: e.g., “Cutting deals” with principals, teachers, district central office leaders, unions
- **Bridging Mechanisms**: e.g., Connecting CCSS to DDI & also to other innovations; communications with parents
- **Filtering Mechanisms**: e.g., adjusting the innovation(s) to fit rural schools & communities; adaptations to fit local features such as education workforce competency
- **Learning/Continuous Improvement Mechanisms**: e.g., Craft coherence with bottom-up & top-down strategies; develop & adjust professional development resources
- **Innovation Incubation Mechanisms**: e.g., CCSS, APPR, DDI stimulate and serve as catalysts for companion innovations
Blending Improvement Science with Systems Thinking

• From systems thinking:
  ➢ Every innovation depends on a system for adult learning
  ➢ Adult learning (and professional development) should be grounded in people’s “mental models” for their roles, relationships, responsibilities, & desirable student outcomes
  ➢ Comparative advantage: “What’s new, different and better with the CCSS, DDI, & APPR; and what does it all mean for me & my colleagues?”

• From improvement science:
  ➢ See the system that produces the current outcomes
  ➢ Anchor practice improvement in disciplined inquiry
  ➢ Variation in performance is the core problem to address
  ➢ The context matters.
Figure 1. Antecedents & Co-Requisites

- Stable, Committed, Competent Workforce
- Organizational Readiness/Capacity for Innovations
- Proactive & Adaptive Superintendent Leadership
- Aligned School & District Leadership: Crafting Coherence Together
- The Trust-Communication Connection: Reciprocal & Relational Trust
- Ability to Reallocate Resources
- An Odds-beating Performance Trajectory
Figure 3. Drilling Deeper in Odds-Beating Schools

Positive School Climate Lubricated by Relational Trust
- Four Key Relationships:
  - Educator-to-Educator
  - Educator-to-Student
  - Student-to-Student
  - Educator-to-Parents & Community Leaders

Collaborative Work Structures & Cultures
- PLCs, Teams & Networks
- Distributed Implementation & Instructional Leadership Strategies & Roles
- Supportive Organizational Routines
- Resource Sharing Strategies

Strong Communication Networks
- Principal-to-Teachers
- Principal-to-Other Professional Staff
- Teachers-to-Teachers
- Teachers to Other Professional Staff
- Educators to Students
- Educators to Parents

A Clear, Adaptable Innovation Implementation Strategy
- Professional Discretion to Adapt
- Flexible Timetables
- Implementation Monitoring to Learn and Respond
- Adaptive, Collaborative Leadership for "Implementation Sweet Spots"
Figure 4. Improving the Core Technology

Positive School Climate Lubricated by Relational Trust

Four Key Relationships:
- Educator-to-Educator
- Educator-to-Student
- Student-to-Student
- Educator-to-Parents & Community Leaders

Collaborative Work Structures & Cultures

- PLCs, Teams & Networks
- Distributed Implementation & Instructional Leadership Strategies & Roles
- Supportive Organizational Routines
- Resource Sharing Strategies

Curricular Adaptations with CCSS

CCSS-Aligned, Data-Driven, Differentiated Teaching & Learning Facilitated By Teacher Teams & Student Support Professionals

P-12 Aligned Curriculum Mapping

Strong Communication Networks

- Principal-to-Teachers
- Principal-to-Other Professional Staff
- Teachers-to-Teachers
- Teachers to Other Professional Staff
- Educators to Students
- Educators to Parents

A Clear, Adaptable Innovation Implementation Strategy

- Professional Discretion to Adapt
- Flexible Timetables
- Implementation Monitoring to Learn and Respond
- Adaptive, Collaborative Leadership for “Implementation Sweet Spots”
An Example: The Agency-Engagement Relationship

Student Agency

Teacher Agency

Student Engagement

Teacher Engagement

Optimal Conditions for Learning & Instruction
## Ferguson et al 7 C’s for Student Agency

### Exhibit 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. CARE</th>
<th>Be attentive and sensitive, but don’t coddle.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. CONFER</td>
<td>Encourage and respect students’ perspectives, but don’t waste class time with idle chatter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. CAPTIVATE</td>
<td>Make lessons stimulating and relevant while knowing that some students may hide their interest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. CLARIFY:</td>
<td>Take regular steps to detect and respond to confusion, but don’t just tell students the answers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Clear up Confusion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Lucid Explanations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Instructive Feedback</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ferguson 7 C’s, con’t.

5. CONSOLIDATE
Regularly summarize lessons to help consolidate learning.

6. CHALLENGE:
   - Require Rigor
   - Require Persistence
Anticipate some resistance but persist.

7. CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT
Achieve respectful, orderly, and on task student behavior by using clarity, captivation, and challenge instead of coercion.
Exhibit 4
Emotions, Motivations, and Mindsets Associated with Agency

- Happiness
- Anger
- Mastery Orientation
- Sense of Efficacy
- Satisfaction
- Growth Mindset
- Future Orientation
Ferguson et al Framework

Exhibit 3
Student Expressions of Agency

- Has Agency
  - Punctuality
  - Good Conduct
  - Effort
  - Help Seeking
  - Conscientiousness

- Lacks Agency
  - Faking Effort
  - Generally Not Trying
  - Giving Up if Work is Hard
  - Help Avoidance
THE SCHOOLS

Angelica’s School

As an urban ES school that was not well reputed even ten years ago, Yellow Valley has overcome challenges to become an odds-beating school. Four salient characteristics related to this success:

✓ A collaborative and dedicated faculty
✓ Constant and systematic data-informed intervention
✓ Accessible and needs-based professional development
✓ Caring and self-regulated moral education

Kishmar’s School

A composite of two municipalities with similar histories and demographics, the area that comprises the Sage City school district is considered “rural fringe”. This MS is characterized by:

✓ A welcoming culture that embraces diversity
✓ Team-based professional collaboration
✓ Student-centered and personalized learning, with an emphasis on college and career readiness, and using data to guide instruction and goal setting
TURN AND TALK

Small Group:
• Which OB school strategies resonate with you and which do not?
• What challenges have you encountered in using these strategies?
• How have you surmounted those challenges?

Whole group: Key take-aways, needs, next steps
THE BOTTOM LINE: SUPPORTING TEACHERS SO THEY SUPPORT & ENGAGE 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
THE BOTTOM LINE: SUPPORTING TEACHERS SO THEY SUPPORT & ENGAGE CHILDREN

✓ 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.
SELECTED REFERENCES


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