Preliminary Findings from an Efficacy Study of a Distributed Leadership Model of School Organization

Kathryn M. Borman, Scott Patrick Murphy, Joseph LoSasso, & Lea Schlanger

Purpose
The purpose of our Institute of Education Sciences (IES) funded study is to 1) explore the relationships among the Systems Leadership for Middle Schools (SLMS) intervention and student achievement outcomes and 2) to explore factors and conditions that mediate the relationships among the SLMS intervention and student achievement outcomes. The intervention was developed and implemented by Modern Red Schoolhouse.

There are three dimensions to the SLMS comprehensive school reform model intended to provide a basis for support: structure, process, and technical knowledge.

• The structural dimension of program implementation involves the formation of a “guiding coalition” and six task-specific “Action Teams” at each school site.
• The process dimension of SLMS involves the socialization of school participants into new workplace norms.
• The technical knowledge dimension of program implementation involves the embedding of technical knowledge in various aspects of teaching.

School Climate and Teacher-Principal Trust

The school district participating in the study annually administers a 30 item “School Climate Survey.” All employees at each school are asked to complete the survey. Responses to the item, “What overall grade would you give to your school?” reveal a steady decrease in the percentage of employees in treatment schools grading their school either “A” or “B” from 76.7% to 48.0% and a steady increase in the percentage of employees in treatment schools grading their school either “D” or “F” from 1.2% to 21.0% during the study period. Control schools show an inverse pattern, revealing a steady increase in the percentage of employees in control schools grading their school either “A” or “B” from 56.5% to 71.4% and a steady decrease in the percentage of employees grading their school either “D” or “F” from 15.5% to 7.5% during the study period.

The three schools in the sample with the greatest changes in employees’ grading of their schools are the only three schools in the sample that experienced principal turnover during the study period. The same three schools also showed the greatest changes in responses to the item “to what extent do you feel respected by your principal?”

Network Clusters

One implementer-stated goal of the SLMS intervention is to increase the number and density of network ties in treatment schools. We mapped clusters four kinds of teaching relationships those colleagues one goes to for help with technology, colleagues to whom teachers turn for help with interpreting or using student level data, colleagues that discuss teaching and other school related issues, and the colleague most likely to discuss teaching and other school related issues with one another as well as clusters of colleagues that discuss student level data.

Our network analyses are currently in very early and exploratory stages. Tentatively, we anticipate our final analyses will show SLMS Action Team membership a significant predictor of new clusters of colleagues that discuss teaching and other school related issues with one another as well as new clusters of colleagues that discuss student level data. Similarly tentative, we anticipate our final analyses will show SLMS Action Team membership a significant predictor of the persistence of clusters of colleagues that discuss teaching and other school related issues with one another as well as clusters of colleagues that discuss student data level.

Acknowledgements
This research is funded by the Institute of Education Sciences award # R305A090481. Poster created and designed by Lea Schlanger.