

DISSERTATIONS IN BRIEF

DISSERTATION ABSTRACTS BY WKU EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP DOCTORAL PROGRAM GRADUATES

TEACHERS' PERCEPTION OF WORKING CONDITIONS: THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN STATIC AND IMPROVING SCHOOLS IN KENTUCKY

BY AMY BRYANT ALLEN

Chair: Ric Keaster

Committee: Gary Houchens, Michael Putnam, Jerry Ralston

Defense Date: April 3, 2014

The primary purpose of this study was to identify the changes concerning teachers' perceptions of working conditions within Kentucky's District 180 Priority Schools. The District 180 Priority Schools comprises of 41 secondary schools that ranked in the bottom fifth percentile on the Kentucky School Report Card. Schools were divided into two categories, static or improving, based upon student achievement changes from 2009 until 2013. The study utilized results from the 2011 and 2013 TELL Kentucky Survey to determine whether changes in teachers' perceptions of working conditions were statistically significant from 2011 to 2013 in the areas of *instructional time, availability of facilities and resources, community support and involvement, student conduct, teacher leadership, school leadership, professional development, and instructional practices and support*. This quantitative study used a one-way ANOVA to identify changes over time within groups and between groups. Results indicate that teachers' perceptions in static schools did not change significantly; however, changes in teachers' perceptions in improving schools were statistically significant.

CATHOLIC SCHOOL FACULTY MEETINGS: A CASE STUDY LINKING CATHOLIC IDENTITY, SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT, AND TEACHER ENGAGEMENT

BY DARYL CRAIG HAGAN

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Defense Date: March 24, 2014

While research on faculty meetings is limited, existing literature suggests that meetings could be an arena where schools can address their common challenges (Brandenburg, 2008; Michel, 2011; Riehl, 1998). The purpose of this case study was to gain an understanding of the perceptions of Catholic school teachers on teachers in a high-performing Catholic school regarding their own faculty meetings and to explore how faculty meetings engage teachers in the work of promoting Catholic identity and school improvement. This dissertation builds on the work of Macey and Schneider's (2008) Model of Employee Engagement, as well as McGrath's Model of Group Effectiveness (1964). Constant comparative analysis was utilized to categorize data until the themes emerged. Three research questions framed this study. The first identified how faculty meetings contribute to the sense of Catholic "identity" of the school. Findings revealed that signs of Catholic culture are visible within the physical environment of the faculty meeting. Faculty meetings provide teachers opportunities for prayer, catechesis, and strategies for sharing faith with students. The second research question investigated how faculty meetings contribute to the academic improvement of the school. Teachers from the case study reported the faculty meetings serve as a catalyst in developing, discussing, and reviewing school improvement plans. They provide opportunities for professional development, which facilitates new learning for the teachers. The third research question explored engagement of faculty members within the faculty meeting and how engagement contributes to the Catholic identity and academic improvement of the school. Findings revealed that the faculty meeting serves as a conduit to creating a participant-centered learning environment and to creating a sense of community among the faculty. The final chapter discusses the study's implications for teachers, principals, preparation programs, and researchers.

COLLEGE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND ITS IMPACT ON ACCESSIBLE DISTANT LEARNING FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

BY MANA KARIMAN

Chair: Marty Boman

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This research focuses on the impact of organizational structure in colleges on accessibility in distance learning for individuals with disabilities. Research remains limited on the effect of the organizational structure that supports online/web-based courses regarding accessibility. Policies that outline the laws guide faculty to ensure the published online courses are accessible to everyone, including students with disabilities. Further, types of accommodations available to students with disabilities are discussed. Accessibility needs to be addressed by trainings for all faculty who provide accommodations. In conclusion, the accessibility laws affect the organizational structure in institutions and the impact of policy implementation.

AN ANALYSIS OF ACCULTURATIVE STRESS, SOCIOCULTURAL ADAPTATION, AND SATISFACTION AMONG INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AT A NON-METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

BY HAJARA MAHMOOD

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This quantitative descriptive study was designed to analyze levels of acculturative stress and sociocultural adaptation among international students at a non-metropolitan university in the U.S. in relation to college satisfaction and certain demographic characteristics. Surveys were used to measure international students' levels of acculturative stress, sociocultural adaptation, including five subscales of sociocultural adaptation, and college satisfaction (N = 413). Demographic questions included gender, age, country of origin, length of stay in the U.S., degree level, and English language comfort. Results indicated a negative correlation between students' levels of sociocultural adaptation and acculturative stress. In particular, increased competency

among the five sociocultural adaptation subscales (interpersonal communication, academic/work performance, personal interests and community involvement, ecological adaptation, and language proficiency) decreased levels of acculturative stress among the students. In addition, increased sociocultural adaptation related to higher levels of college satisfaction, while higher levels of acculturative stress related to decreased levels of college satisfaction. Interestingly, social interaction among faculty, staff, peers, and community, as well as the importance of academic success, appear to be important factors that influence international students' satisfaction with their experiences at the university. In terms of demographics, differences were evident among students' English language comfort, specifically between students with lower levels of English language comfort and those with higher comfort with the English language. In addition female, non-traditional, and graduate students exhibited higher levels of sociocultural adaptation and higher levels of college satisfaction, while male, traditional, and undergraduate international students indicated higher amounts of acculturative stress and lower levels of college satisfaction. In light of these findings, universities should expand their outreach efforts in improving international students' wellbeing and adjustment to U.S. college campuses as well as promote more diversity, cultural sensitivity, and multicultural competency for all individuals across campus by expanding intercultural contact. More studies are needed to further enhance understandings of international student experiences at U.S. colleges and universities.

IDENTIFYING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE MAP AND WJ-III READING TESTS TO MAKE INSTRUCTIONAL DECISIONS WITHIN A RTI FRAMEWORK

BY LAUREN MARTIN

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The current study explored the relationship between the reading tests of the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), a screening test, and the Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Achievement, Third Edition (WJ-III), a diagnostic academic achievement test. By examining the relationship between these two tests, more reliable instructional decisions within a

Response to Intervention (RTI) framework can potentially be established. Reading scores were collected for 234 students who completed the MAP three times per year both in first and second grades. One hundred of those students were randomly selected and administered the five reading subtests of the WJ-III in the spring of their second grade year. Results indicate that first and second grade MAP scores were significantly and positively correlated at a moderate to strong level with the Basic Reading, Reading Comprehension, and Reading Fluency scores of the WJ-III. The area from the WJ-III with the highest correlation with the MAP scores was Reading Comprehension. For the area of Reading Comprehension, cutoff scores at the 20th percentile and adjusted cutoff scores determined through regression analysis were evaluated using sensitivity, specificity, and positive and negative predictive values. Results indicate that adjustments increased specificity, but sensitivity values remained poor. Results of the study should be regarded with caution, as they could be potentially skewed due to the small sample size. It is recommended that this study be replicated using a larger sample size to verify the findings.

**THE ACADEMIC LIBRARY AND HIGH-IMPACT
PRACTICES FOR STUDENT RETENTION:
PERSPECTIVES OF LIBRARY DEANS**

BY ADAM MURRAY

Chair: Barbara Burch

Committee: Marge Maxwell , Brian Coutts

Defense Date: April 3, 2014

Dramatic declines in state appropriations for postsecondary education, the rise of performance-based funding models, and limitations on tuition increases have resulted in a focus on student retention as a matter of importance to institutions of higher education. Concomitantly, academic libraries face changes in service models brought about by technology and the rising costs of providing access to an ever-expanding field of literature required by academic programs and faculty. The value proposition of the academic library is reduced in the face of budget interests that impact recruitment and retention. Many researchers and university leaders have called on academic libraries to develop new methods of demonstrating value that do not rely on traditional measures of library use. Because this represents a departure from long-standing methods of documenting the success of the academic library's mission, a gap exists in the literature on how best to go about this shift in

assessment. Numerous studies on retention have highlighted the role of student engagement in influencing students' withdrawal decisions. Data gathered through the National Survey of Student Engagement have validated 10 practices that have a "high impact" on student engagement and student retention. This study seeks to address the gap in the literature on the role played by academic libraries in affecting student retention by examining the perception of academic library deans/directors on the alignment between library services and resources with the 10 high-impact practices (HIPs). This exploratory study used a survey distributed to the academic library deans/directors of the public master's level universities in the United States. A positive correlation was found between library instruction, library facilities, and library collections with each of the HIPs and consistent library support practices for each HIP. This study also found a reliance on information literacy assessment and user satisfaction to document library impact on retention. However, a large number of responding libraries reported no methods used for either the documentation or communication of library impact on retention. This study concluded that academic libraries demonstrated a high level of perceived alignment with the HIPs, yet an overall lack of methods to directly document library impact on retention.

**STAFF PERCEPTIONS OF WORK ENVIRONMENT
FACTORS AFFECTING MORALE IN SOUTHEASTERN
REGISTRAR'S OFFICES**

BY RHEANNA PLEMONS

Chair: Janet Applin

Committee: Karl Laves, Brian Meredith

Defense Date: March 11, 2014

Studies on morale are prevalent in industry, healthcare, and public educational systems. However, morale studies are limited within higher education and focusing on the support staff at universities. This qualitative study used focus groups to identify themes among support staff in selected Registrar's Offices in the Southeastern region of the United States. Institutions were chosen based on comparable enrollments and similar organizational structure. The researcher asked participants to discuss their perceptions on current morale levels in the office and how different work responsibilities affect morale. In addition, participants were asked to discuss motivators used by leaders and whether those motivators boost morale. Since the Office of the Registrar is key to the institution, the researcher also asked

participants how the office's perceived morale affected the fulfillment of the office's mission.

MENTORING: THE COLLEGE FRESHMAN FEMALE PERSPECTIVE

BY CATRICE REESE

Chair: Aaron Hughey

Committee: Stacy Edds-Ellis, Monika Burke

Defense Date: April 3, 2014

Grant-Vallone, Reid, Umali, and Pohlert (2004) outlined how students who regularly take advantage of student support services, mentoring, or academic support programming opportunities are more likely to accomplish their academic goals. Postsecondary institutions are responsible for providing innovative educational experiences to students. Proactively identifying key delimiting factors that inhibit student achievement can increase the persistence and retention rates of critical populations. Mentoring relationships are especially crucial to the academic achievement and successful matriculation of first-year freshman students. Approximately one out of three freshmen does not successfully matriculate to the second year of the collegiate endeavor (U.S. News & World Report, 2014). Through same gendered mentoring relationships, female students can positively enhance their life and educational involvements (Carroll, 1997). The relationship between mentoring experiences of first-year female college students positively affects their academic achievement and self-efficacy as they relate to their matriculation throughout college.
