

DISSERTATIONS IN BRIEF

DISSERTATION ABSTRACTS BY GRADUATES FROM WKU EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP DOCTORAL PROGRAM

THE PREFERRED PRINCIPAL: LEADERSHIP TRAITS, BEHAVIORS, AND GENDER CHARACTERISTICS SCHOOL TEACHERS DESIRE IN BUILDING A LEADER

BY DAN COSTELLOW

Chair: Christopher Wagner; *Committee:* Kyong Chon; Tabitha Daniel; William Schlinker

Defense Date: May 12, 2011

Abstract

This study of 2,802 teachers and 129 school administrators sought to determine the gender, leadership traits, and leadership behaviors most preferred by teachers in Kentucky. Principals were also surveyed to establish which traits they felt were most important for a school leader to possess, and to determine the frequency at which they practiced various leadership behaviors.

Participants were from 194 public elementary, middle, and high schools in thirty-two Kentucky school districts. Leadership traits were based on Marzano, Waters, and McNulty's (2005) twenty-one responsibilities of school leaders. Teachers and principals were asked to indicate the level of importance for school administrators to practice each of the twenty-one traits. The leadership behaviors portion of the surveys included eight transactional and eight transformational behaviors, which were not identified in the survey as such. Teachers were asked to determine how important it was for principals to exhibit the behaviors, while principals self-assessed the frequency at which they practiced each of the leadership behaviors.

Results indicated that while the majority of male and female teachers had no preference in regard to their principal's gender, each group had a significantly higher preference for males. Teachers and administrators in nearly every demographic category (gender, years of experience, grade level of school, leadership experience, and education level) chose communication as the most important trait for a principal to

possess. Other traits, including discipline, culture, visibility, and focus, were among those deemed most important by both teachers and principals. Teachers generally had a higher preference for transformational behaviors rather than transactional behaviors, and principals indicated that the behaviors they practiced were more often transformational.

Implications for practice include opportunities for school leaders to analyze their own traits and behaviors and compare them to those most highly preferred by teachers. University preparation programs can present the findings to aspiring administrators. Schools and districts can use the survey format for principal selection and to evaluate whether principals' traits and behaviors match the desires of faculty.

ASSESSING THE EFFICACY OF A MODIFIED THERAPEUTIC COMMUNITY ON THE REDUCTION OF INSTITUTIONAL WRITE-UPS IN A MEDIUM SECURITY PRISON

BY LEE W. MAGLINGER

Chair: Aaron Hughey; *Committee:* Donald Nims; Monica Burke; Tony Paquin

Defense Date: June 29, 2011

Abstract

This study explored the impact a modified Therapeutic Community (TC) had on reducing institutional disorder as documented by institutional write-ups. Substance abuse treatment programs are typically evaluated in terms of their ability to prevent relapse and reduce recidivism. The current study examined the efficacy of a modified TC in relation to these parameters but also explored its overall impact on prison safety and security for both the inmates and staff of a medium security prison located in Kentucky. Specifically, the number of institutional write-ups exhibited by clients

participating in a modified Therapeutic Community was compared with the number of write-ups exhibited by inmates in five non-treatment units from March 2001 through October 2005. ANOVA revealed that the number of write-ups exhibited by clients in the TC were significantly lower than the number exhibited by inmates in the other five dorms [$F(4, 24) = 5.61, p < 0.005$]. Further, when examined by category of offense (major/minor), it was found that the write-ups of clients in the TC generally were not as severe as those exhibited by inmates in the general prison population. The implications of these findings for corrections administrators are discussed and specific recommendations are provided.

EXPLORING THE DIRECT AND INDIRECT EFFECTS OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT IN KENTUCKY HIGH SCHOOLS

BY SHERI ROBERT MCGUFFIN

Chair: Christopher Wagner; *Committee:* Jay Fiene; John Casper; Hope Marchionda

Defense Date: August 8, 2011

Abstract

With the inception of No Child Left Behind and the national push for standards-based evaluation of student achievement, educational leaders in the United States have been held to a higher level of accountability than ever before for student achievement in their schools. Despite the growing push for accountability in school leadership, research has exhibited limited statistical support to link school leadership directly to student achievement with findings that were either weak or confounded by mixed results. Furthermore, school culture, teacher efficacy, and socioeconomic status have been found to have direct effects upon student achievement with teacher efficacy having additional mediating effects upon student achievement through school leadership. These findings suggest support for an indirect effect of school leadership upon student achievement.

The purpose of this study was 1) to examine the relationship between high school principals' leadership style, school culture, teacher efficacy and student achievement, and 2) to determine the degree that school culture, teacher efficacy, and socioeconomic status accounted for variance in the

relationship between leadership style and student achievement. Participants in the study included principals ($N=13$) and teachers ($N=239$) from randomly selected public high schools in Kentucky. Participants completed online questionnaires measuring leadership style, school culture, and teacher efficacy. The principals provided information regarding their school's socioeconomic status by reporting the approximate percentage of students who received free or reduced lunch. Student achievement was measured by the difference in each school's transition index score from 2009 to 2010 as calculated by the Kentucky Department of Education.

Analyses from the study indicated that behaviors and attributes of transformational leadership were not related to school culture in this population, and none of the behaviors and attributes of a particular leadership style was related to teacher efficacy. Following the trend of mixed results in the relationship between leadership style and student achievement, transformational leadership was associated with a decrease in student achievement while transactional leadership and passive/avoidant leadership exhibited non-significant effects upon student achievement.

In contrast, school culture had a statistically significant impact upon student achievement, and when school culture and leadership style were both entered into a multiple regression, the combination of the two factors accounted for 65.4% of variance in the relationship to student achievement with teacher efficacy found to be a potential mediator in the relationship. Path analysis supported the theory of teacher efficacy as a mediator between transformational leadership style and student achievement through more positive school culture.

Results from the study have indicated that leadership style alone has produced a mixed picture in its relationship to student achievement, but school culture has a significant, direct impact upon student achievement. Furthermore, the combination of a more positive school culture and greater levels of teacher efficacy can have a significant impact upon student achievement when school leaders have strong, transformational leadership characteristics.

THE EFFECTS OF IMPLEMENTING A FORMATIVE ASSESSEMENT INITIATIVE

BY THOMAS A. STEWART

Chair: Christopher Wagner; *Committee:* John Hagaman; Gary Houchens; William Schlinker

Defense Date: September 23, 2011

Abstract

This dissertation supports the work of Black and Wiliam (1998), who demonstrated that when teachers effectively utilize formative assessment strategies, student learning increases significantly. However, the researchers also found a “poverty of practice” among teachers, in that few fully understood how to effectively implement formative assessment in the classroom. This qualitative case study examined a series of voluntary workshops offered at one public middle school designed to address this poverty of practice. Data were gathered via semi-structured interviews. The researcher used constant comparative analysis to discover patterns in the data for the following four research questions: (1) What role did a professional learning community structure play in shaping participants’ perceived effectiveness of a voluntary formative assessment initiative? (2) How did this initiative affect participants’ perceptions of their knowledge of formative assessment and differentiation strategies? (3) How did it affect participants’ perceptions of their abilities to teach others about formative assessment and differentiated instruction? (4) How did it affect school-wide use of classroom-level strategies?

Results indicated that teacher participants experienced a growth in their capacity to use and teach others various formative assessment strategies, and even non-participating teachers reported greater use of formative assessment in their own instruction. Participants and non-participating teachers perceived little growth in the area of differentiation of instruction, which contradicted some administrator perceptions.

The workshops’ contemplative, collegial, professional learning community structure also shaped participants’ experience in important ways. Implications for stakeholder practice and further research are discussed.

CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE KENTUCKY COMPREHENSIVE UNIVERSITIES TO THE GOALS OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION REFORM

BY CINDY EHRESMAN

Chair: Barbara Burch; *Committee:* Ric Keaster; Tuesdi Helbig

Defense Date: October 13, 2011

Abstract

Kentucky is well known for its education reform efforts; the Kentucky Postsecondary Education Improvement Act of 1997 ushered in an era of intense focus on higher education in the Commonwealth. Specific and measureable goals for each sector of the state’s higher education institutions were included in the legislation; however, goals set for the comprehensive universities were less well-defined than those for both the research institutions and the community and technical colleges. Through an analysis of changes in capacity and mission, this study identified the ensuing contributions of Kentucky’s six comprehensive universities as they addressed the goals of the landmark reform. Resource dependence theory provided the study’s framework and helped to interpret the results. Each of the comprehensive institutions met the defined goals of the reform by housing at least one nationally recognized program. These universities also experienced mission change in response to the shift in their environment as evidenced by increased enrollment and award of degrees to students from inside the state and a higher percentage increase from outside Kentucky. Further supporting mission change was the increased number of approved baccalaureate and master’s degree and certificate programs.

AN ANALYSIS OF BURMESE AND IRAQI RESETTELEMENT LOCATION AND ASSIMILATION IN A MIDSIZED CITY: IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL AND OTHER COMMUNITY LEADERS

BY DONNA S. RENAUD

Chair: Douglas Smith; *Committee:* Amy Cappiccie; Ric Keaster; John White; Jun Yan

Defense Date: October 24, 2011

Abstract

Refugees face different circumstances than other immigrants

regarding housing in initial resettlement in the U.S. Refugees have no choice of their initial residence as this is determined in advance by the resettlement agency. Refugees who belong to minority ethnic groups and who have little education or skills may experience discrimination and hostility from local citizens. Resettlement areas that are high in population density, rental units, minorities, crime, unemployment, inadequate transportation, and low income may present additional barriers to cultural and economic assimilation.

This mixed-method study had a twofold purpose. The first was to describe quantitatively how the initial resettlement address affects the refugee assimilation within a mid-sized city allowing for neighborhood demographics. According to assimilation theory, refugees would normally move out of the initial housing into better housing when possible. Using the local resettlement agency database combined with demographics from the 2000 and 2010 U.S. Census, Burmese and Iraqis who arrived between January of 2008 and February 2011 were identified through mapping with GIS geospatial data. Maps were created and combined with Census block and block group level data for neighborhood demographics. Two primary, two secondary, and two tertiary clusters of Burmese and Iraqi housing were identified and evaluated through Kernel Density in 3D.

Total numbers of household moves are tracked within the study period by use of Environmental System Research Institute (ESRI) ArcObjects programming. The researcher found that Burmese often stay within the original resettlement complex or move to those clusters inhabited by other Burmese. The GIS data for the Iraqi refugees was incomplete. However, interviews revealed that Iraqis move quickly and break contact with the refugee agency, resulting in minimal movement data for the second group. The second purpose was to identify needs, strengths, gaps in services, and projects for refugees by conducting a qualitative analysis through semi-structured interviews of educational and community leaders. Nineteen interviews were conducted among leaders in education, health, social work, and spiritualism. Needs reported were English language, transportation, skills, and cultural knowledge, in particular for the Burmese. Strengths included workforce, diversity, and positive attitudes. Both groups report innovative projects in progress.

THE EFFECTS OF PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING IN MATH AND SCIENCE ON HIGH POTENTIAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

BY TRACY INMAN

Chair: Julia Link Roberts; *Committee:* Mary Evans;
Janet Tassell; Steven R. Winger

Defense Date: October 26, 2011

Abstract

This study explored the effects of problem-based learning (PBL) on growth in both math achievement and science process skills within a sample of high potential and high ability students in grades 3 through 6, particularly students from low socio-economic (SES) backgrounds. Six elementary schools were assigned to one of three treatment groups: (a) PBL instruction in math and science in ability-grouped target classes and one-day-a-week magnet program; (b) PBL instruction in math and science in ability-grouped target classes; and (c) non-PBL instruction in math and science as a control group. Stemming from data gathered in Project GEMS (Gifted Education in Math and Science), a federally-funded grant through the Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Act, the current study analyzed data over a two-year period with three assessments (Baseline, post-Year 1, and post-Year 2). Overall findings supported the use of PBL in science instruction for this population showing significant gains in science process skills for both treatment groups when compared to the control with a moderate effect size ($\eta^2 = .17$). Results also indicated a significant interaction in growth in science process skills for SES, time, and treatment group. Students who qualified for free and/or reduced lunch in the magnet group saw significant gains in science each year of implementation; however, students who paid full price for lunch in the magnet group failed to demonstrate significant growth in science process skills from the first to second year. Although students from both SES groups had significant growth in science process skills growth from Baseline to Year 2, lower SES students also had significant growth from Year 1 to Year 2. These results suggested the importance of sustained implementation. Regarding math achievement, results revealed that all three treatment groups experienced significant gains over the two years of implementation, including the control group that received non-PBL instruction. Math achievement in control schools may have been affected

by their participation in two grants that focused on professional development in math content and strategies. However, PBL treatment schools achieved significant growth in math achievement with fewer professional development hours indicating efficiency in PBL professional development. Achievement in the treatment schools could be attributed to PBL.

CARING, INTERACTION, AND ACTIVE TEACHING STRATEGIES: FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THE SUCCESS OF THE ASSOCIATE DEGREE NURSING STUDENT

BY PENELOPE LOGSDON

Chair: Barbara Burch; *Committee:* Keith Bird; Linda Thomas-Glover; Sherry Reed

Defense Date: November 2, 2011

Abstract

This exploratory study examined successful associate degree nursing students' perceptions regarding the importance of caring by the nursing faculty, nursing faculty/student interaction, and faculty use of active teaching strategies. Participants completed a researcher developed survey instrument that measured both the importance and frequency of the caring, interaction, and active teaching strategies. The survey instrument measured six demographic factors and 30 statements regarding caring, interaction, and active teaching. Participants rated the statements for both importance and frequency on a four-point Likert scale. Five community and technical college associate degree nursing programs participated in the research with a total of 270 successful associate degree nursing student candidates completing the survey.

Data analysis revealed that successful nursing students value caring, faculty/student interaction, and active teaching by their nursing faculty. Additionally, the students rated their nursing faculty as providing the care, interaction, and active teaching as often to almost always.

RESPONSE TO AUTISM: AN ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH AUTISM IN KENTUCKY'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS

BY LEIGH ANNE RODEN

Chair: Christopher Wagner; *Committee:* Jie Zhang; Patti Whetstone; Jerry Ralston

Defense Date: November 7, 2011

Abstract

The full implementation of school-based autism services has grown in importance over the past few decades. School systems are expected to provide high-quality educational services for students with autism spectrum disorders. Though several organizations provide recommendations for appropriate program components, Kentucky does not supply education agencies with a means of evaluating the current autism services offered within their districts and schools.

This descriptive study examined the current level of implementation of school-based autism services within an educational cooperative in Kentucky. The research was conducted to determine whether or not school districts are fully implementing essential program components as recommended by the National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorders. Directors of special education and district autism team members from 17 school districts in an educational cooperative completed the Autism Program Quality Indicators and provided an implementation level rating for 14 essential program components. Responses from each group were compared to establish consistency between respondent groups. An overall rating score was assigned to each school district.

Quantitative data demonstrated that, on average, directors of special education reported higher levels of implementation than district autism members. However, the educational cooperative as a whole showed little variability between respondent groups, which indicated consistency in ratings. A comparison of the means for indicators by districts revealed areas of concern were not consistently distributed across school districts. Lower rating scores for indicators by district were disseminated throughout the educational cooperative. Lower rated program components included Community Collaboration, Family Involvement and Support, Curriculum, and Program Evaluation. Finally, the research revealed 75% of school districts included in the sample provided school-based autism programming that indicated sufficient evidence for quality services.