

# DISSERTATIONS IN BRIEF

## DISSERTATION ABSTRACTS BY GRADUATES FROM WKU EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP DOCTORAL PROGRAM

### ONE-TO-ONE LAPTOP PROJECT:

#### PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHERS, PARENTS, AND STUDENTS

BY MATTHEW CONSTANT

*Chair:* Marge Maxwell; *Committee:* Tony Norman;  
Nedra Atwell; Christopher Wagner

Defense Date: Feb 21, 2011

#### Abstract

One-to-one laptop programs are becoming more prevalent across the world in K-12 institutions. School districts are searching for more engaging tools that seek to have impact on school success, such as grade achievement, college/career preparation, and/or 21st-century skill preparation and attainment. Additionally, boards of education continuously want some positive indication of the return on their substantial financial investment.

This study utilized surveys of three important stakeholder groups (parents, students, and teachers) related to a one-to-one laptop project in a moderately-sized rural Midwestern school district. Perceptions about how often laptops were used in the classroom setting and across content areas (Language Arts, Social Studies, Mathematics, and Science) were explored. Finally, the same respondents were asked to identify their perceptions about how laptop computers had a positive or negative impact on quarterly grade averages within these same content areas. Results were extrapolated and associated with the Rogers' Innovation Continuum (Innovator, Early Adopter, Early Majority, Late Majority).

Data indicated significant mean differences in perceptions among the three groups in terms of use. Teachers believed students were using laptops more often than students or parents reported their use. Nearly all groups reported Mathematics as the area with lowest amount of use and Science as the area with

the highest. Almost all three groups believed laptops had little to no effect on quarterly grade averages. Mathematics teachers, however, believed laptops had a decidedly negative effect.

The data seemed to indicate a need for additional teacher training on best practices for implementing laptops within the content areas, as well as specific attention paid to mathematics instructors. Further, the school district was mapped to an Early Adopter on the Rogers' scale. This indicates a need for further implementation and refinement if it is to be an accepted part of the educational culture.

### MOTIVATION FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS TO READ: DIFFERENCES AMONG STUDENT PERCEPTIONS AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN STUDENT AND TEACHER PERCEPTIONS

BY ANGELA GUNTER

*Chair:* Marge Maxwell; *Committee:* James Berger;  
Nedra Atwell; Robert Smith

Defense Date: Feb 21, 2011

#### Abstract

Many high school teachers are unaware of, or mistaken about, specific strategies and practices that actually motivate their students to read, and that what motivates one group of students may not motivate another. Although content-area instructors may not have been trained in teaching reading strategy and may feel as though teaching reading is not their job, it is an expectation that could largely be met by the implementation of motivational strategies.

This exploratory study utilized the expectancy theory of motivation and was conducted to determine which strategies and practices would be most motivational for high school

students to read. In a survey created by the researcher, student participants were identified as having high or low self-efficacy and high or low value of reading. Also included in the survey were 27 motivational strategies and practices garnered from previous studies and research among all age groups. Finally, an open-ended question was included to determine the most motivational strategy. Four student groups were identified (those with high and low self-efficacy as readers and those with high and low value for reading) to correspond to aspects of the expectancy theory of motivation, as were the most motivational strategies and practices for each group. Student responses were also compared to teacher responses to the same survey to determine how closely aligned the teachers were with their students in regard to motivation for reading.

Data from both qualitative and quantitative analyses demonstrated that in fact there were differences in motivation to read both between high school teachers and their students and among the four designated groups of students. Significant differences between the mean scores of teachers and students were revealed in 15 of the 27 motivational strategies and practices included in the study. Among the most revealing results was that teachers seem to have underestimated their students' willingness to read. Significant differences among the means of students in four groups were revealed in an astounding 22 of the 27 strategies and practices listed on the survey, indicating that a one-size-fits-all approach to reading motivation is not effective.

### **PROGRAM EVALUATION OF UNIVERSAL POSITIVE BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTIONS AND SUPPORTS IN KENTUCKY**

**BY KELLY S. DAVIS**

*Chair:* Christopher Wagner; *Committee:* Kyong Chon;  
Martha Day; Mary Evans

Defense Date: March 23, 2011

#### **Abstract**

The current study was undertaken to examine the impact of PBIS implementation on schools in Kentucky. Research questions evaluated (a) whether schools in Kentucky implemented PBIS with fidelity and (b) how PBIS

implementation impacted student outcomes. Results of the study indicated that elementary, middle, and high schools implemented PBIS with fidelity. Associations were noted between PBIS implementation and decreases in office discipline referrals, out-of-school suspensions, dropout rate, and student retention rate. Results suggested that the PBIS model of training and technical assistance used in Kentucky demonstrates a reliable model for schools to follow to implement sustainable behavior change that likely will lead to improved student outcomes. Future research of PBIS in Kentucky would be beneficial. Analysis of statewide versus regional data would provide a more comprehensive picture of the strengths and limitations of Kentucky's PBIS model. The current study results suggest a need to examine both quantitative and qualitative data related to PBIS implementation. Evaluation of this nature would provide greater insight into barriers and successes of PBIS implementation which would promote more effective training and technical assistance.

### **AN ANALYSIS OF PEER LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES AND SKILLS**

**BY JOHN BAKER**

*Chair:* Nevil Speer; *Committee:* Cecile Garmon;  
Shane Spiller; Charley Pride

Defense Date: March 30, 2011

#### **Abstract**

A significant leadership challenge exists while leading others without legitimate or formal authority. Leading without legitimate authority may require different and limited leadership skills and competencies, especially when leading peers. This quantitative study analyzed the leader competencies and skills needed for effective peer leadership.

A literature review identified four competencies cited frequently as important: (a) communication; (b) support; (c) mental/hard work ethic; and (d) reflection/feedback. Analysis of an ROTC leadership assessment database provided convergent validity for the literature review while adding one additional competency, physical. The lack of existing instruments measuring peer leadership competencies and skills necessitated the development of an influence survey. The

Multiple regression analysis conducted on each peer leadership competency defined in this study identified the most important peer leadership skills. Analyzing the questions comprising the Participate competency indicated that peers prefer peer leaders who communicate effectively, listen effectively, encourage them, and included them when making decisions. The Assist competency included peers skills that demonstrated a positive attitude, provided assistance in defining goals or making decisions, and made a sincere effort to reach consensus with the peer. The Presence competency focused on the peer leader having a physical presence with the peer. The Reflect competency consisted of peer leader actions that caused the influenced peer to analyze the situation, learn from the situation, and reflect and meditate to better understand the situation.

## Abstract

The results of this study provide useful information to scholars, educators, and leaders about conflict which could be directly related to the communication choices of our generations. Although additional research could be conducted that would add to this study, the information provided here expands on theories by others, suggesting generations are different and do create their own social identity.