EVALUATING A MULTI-DISTRICT LITERACY INSTRUCTION INTERVENTION FOR BEGINNING TEACHERS: DESIGN & RESULTS IN THE INITIATIVE’S FIRST YEARS

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Evaluation Study & Results (focus on 2019-20 program year)

Background & Study Context

- In 2018-19, North Carolina’s Department of Public Instruction funded North Carolina State University’s (NCSU) College of Education to develop Wolfpack WORKS, a program to enhance literacy instruction for beginning kindergarten through second-grade teachers in high-need, high-turnover school districts.
- In 2019-20, approx. 220 teachers across 16 districts participated.
- Four-pronged approach to new teacher preparation: 1) professional development sessions, 2) online training modules, 3) individual coaching, and 4) interventionist support for students.
- Since its inception, Duke University’s Social Science Research Institute has partnered with the program to design and implement evaluation processes for this intervention.

Results (Selected)

- High program engagement and satisfaction; among program components, relatively greatest value in literacy coaching support, and relatively lesser value in literacy interventionist support.
- Overall statistically significant participant gains in literacy self-efficacy, knowledge and classroom management across participation year.
- Relatively greater satisfaction, participation, and literacy instruction self-efficacy gains for first-year program participants, compared to returning participants.
- More positive program experience associated with greater gains on selected outcome measures, such as literacy instruction self-efficacy.
- Reports of students benefitting from teachers’ program participation.
- Challenges in participation include teachers’ time constraints.

Program Recommendations (Selected)

- Continue program overall and across multiple years of engagement, given value for new as well as returning participants.
- Further potential program differentiation to account for participant background and experience (prior engagement, and other salient factors).
- Augment attention to the role of program “buy-in”, which was associated with greater satisfaction & greater gain in outcomes.
- Further contextualize Wolfpack WORKS within competing demands on teachers’ time and within additional supports teachers receive.
- Take steps to maximize satisfaction with interventionists.
- Further explore relationship between program participation and retention in classroom teaching.

Design & Methods: Data Sources (2019-20)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Time points</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>Experience with programming and program-derived outcomes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher surveys</td>
<td>Select demographic/educational characteristics, program engagement/experience, and outcome measures (literacy instruction self-efficacy²; mathematics instruction self-efficacy² (comparison lens in Year 2); literacy knowledge³ (Year 2); classroom management)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>Observers’ records of instructional practice utilizing the ELLCO³ observational measure</td>
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<tr>
<td>Administrative records</td>
<td>Program participation (i.e., training session attendance, coaching hours received, number of interventionist sessions, number of online modules completed)</td>
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Reflections on Evaluation Process

Iterative adjustments to multi-year evaluation design

Challenge: Ongoing refinements in empirical design are conceptually sensible, but they can inhibit ability to compare results between program years / longitudinally

Considerations & steps taken:
- Engage partner in discussion on tradeoffs & actively incorporate program priorities into decisions
- Adjust prior instruments primarily to clarify question intent rather than alter meaning
- Use multi-year lens to remove items/sources that are not fruitful, making room for addition of new items

Rapid turnaround with multi-source data collection

Challenge: Rapid turnaround of results is necessary for program improvement, given cyclical school-year format; however, this is complicated with a multi-method and multi-source design

Considerations & steps taken:
- Ample advance planning for analysis and reporting, even prior to data collection close (e.g., advance writing of background and methods; pre-writing and testing of code; shell results tables)
- Rapid analysis for qualitative data
- Sharing of findings in ongoing format (regular meetings, memos)
- Acknowledge benefit of / need for sufficient funds and personnel

References

