

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 (NCSSU) 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.

Design & Methods: Data Sources (2019-20)

	Description	Time points
Interviews	Experience with programming and program-derived outcomes	Mid, post
Teacher surveys	Select demographic/educational characteristics, program engagement/experience, and outcome measures (literacy instruction self-efficacy ² ; mathematics instruction self-efficacy ² (comparison lens in Year 2); literacy knowledge ³ (Year 2); classroom management)	Pre, mid, post
Observations	Observers' records of instructional practice utilizing the ELLCO ⁴ observational measure	Pre, *post [*2020 cancelled due to COVID]
Administrative records	Program participation (i.e., training session attendance, coaching hours received, number of interventionist sessions, number of online modules completed)	Pre, mid, post

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.

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

¹Tschannen-Moran, M., & Johnson, D. (2011). Exploring literacy teachers' self-efficacy beliefs: Potential sources at play. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 27(4), 751-761.
²Wilhelm, A. & Berebitsky, D. (2019). Validation of the mathematics teachers' sense of efficacy scale. *Investigations in Mathematics Learning*. 11(1), 29-43.
³Folsom, J. S., Smith, K. G., Burk, K., & Oakley, N. (2017). Educator outcomes associated with implementation of Mississippi's K-3 early literacy professional development initiative (REL 2017-270). Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Southeast. Retrieved from <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs>.
⁴Smith, M. W., Brady, J. P., & Clark-Chiarelli, N. (2008). *Early Language & Literacy Classroom Observation Tool K-3, Research Edition*. Baltimore, MD:Brookes Publishing.

