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The Journal of the
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The Journal of the Ohio Council of Professors of
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***Leadership and Research in Education:
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Vision and Mission

Vision:

Organic. Creative. Professional. Engaging. Accessible.

Mission:

Leadership and Research in Education: The Journal of the OCPEA offers an academic forum for scholarly discussions of education, curriculum and pedagogy, leadership theory, and policy studies in order to elucidate effective practices for classrooms, schools, and communities.

The mission of the OCPEA journal is to not only publish high quality manuscripts on various political, societal, and policy-based issues in the field of education, but also to provide our authors with opportunities for growth through our extensive peer review process. We encourage graduate students, practitioners, and early career scholars to submit manuscripts as well as senior faculty and administrators. We accept quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods, and action research based approaches as well as non-traditional and creative approaches to educational research and policy analysis, including the application of educational practices.

Leadership and Research in Education: The Journal of the OCPEA is a refereed online journal published twice yearly since the inaugural edition in 2014 for the Ohio Council of Professors of Educational Administration (OCPEA). The journal will be listed in the Current Index to Journals in Education (CIJE), and will be catalogued in the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) database.

Submitting to the OCPEA Journal

OCPEA Call for Papers and Publication Information, 2015

Leadership and Research in Education: The Journal of the OCPEA accepts original manuscripts detailing issues facing teachers, administrators, schools, including empirically based pieces, policy analysis, and theoretical contributions. Submissions must include a one hundred word abstract and five key words. Send one electronic copy of the manuscript to the editor using MS Word as well as a signed letter by the author(s) authorizing permission to publish the manuscript. Additionally, a separate cover page must be included containing the article title, author name(s), professional title(s), highest degree(s) obtained, institutional affiliation(s), email address(es), telephone and FAX numbers. Only the article title should appear on the subsequent pages to facilitate a triple-blind reviewing of the manuscript. Submissions should be approximately 15-20 pages including references. Submissions must align to the standards of the *APA Manual* (6th ed.). Submissions must be double-spaced, 12 point Times New Roman font with one inch margins on all sides, each page numbered.

To submit materials for consideration send one electronic copy of the manuscript and additional requested information to:

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Leadership and Research in Education: The Journal of the OCPEA accepts original manuscripts detailing issues facing teachers, administrators, schools, including empirically based pieces, policy analysis, and theoretical contributions.

General Areas of Focus:

Advocacy

We seek manuscripts that identify the political issues and public policies that impact education and actions that seek to dismantle structures that negatively impact education in general and students specifically.

Policy Analysis

We seek analysis of policies impacting students, teachers, educational leaders, schools in general, and higher education. How have policy proposals at the state or national level, such as the introduction and adoption of national and state standards, affected curriculum, instruction, or assessment of leadership preparation and administrative credential programs?

Preparing Educational Leaders

We seek manuscripts that detail effective resources and practices that are useful to faculty members in the preparation of school leaders.

Diversity and Social Justice

We seek manuscripts on issues related to diversity impacting schools and school leaders, such as strategies to dismantle hegemonic practices, recruit and retain under-represented populations in schools and universities, promoting democratic schools, and effective practices for closing the achievement gap.

Technology

We seek manuscripts that detail how to prepare leaders for an information age and a global society.

Research

The members of OCPEA are interested in pursuing the following: various research paradigms and methodologies, ways to integrate scholarly research into classrooms, ways to support student research and participatory action research, and how to use educational research to influence public policy.

For more information, contact OCPEA Journal Editors, Jennifer Martin at martinjl@mountunion.edu or Jane A. Beese at jbeese@ysu.edu

***Leadership and Research in Education:
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Educational Administration (OCPEA)***

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A Note from the Editors

Jennifer L. Martin, Co-editor
The University of Mount Union

Jane A. Beese, Co-editor
Youngstown State University

Good research makes good policy possible—Gary Orfield

Welcome to the Volume 2, Issue 1 of *Leadership and Research in Education: The Journal of the Ohio Council of Professors of Educational Administration* (OCPEA). In the tradition of the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration (NCPEA), we offer this venue to regional researchers and practitioners to share research in the hopes that, as Orfield suggests, that will offer proper perspectives for educational policy. One of our goals is to bridge the divide between the researcher and the practitioner—to provide research that is relevant, regional, and relatable and from a grassroots perspective. The collegial work and growth that produced this publication foreshadows our continued success both for the journal and OCPEA in general.

Leadership and Research in Education: The Journal of the Ohio Council of Professors of Educational Administration (OCPEA) is peer reviewed by members of the Ohio Council of Professors of Educational Leadership (OCPEA) and their colleagues. OCPEA is honored to bring forth this important and timely publication and hope not only to inform readers with our work, but also to inspire practitioners, graduate students, novice and seasoned faculty members to write for our journal. Part of our mission is to mentor beginning scholars through the writing and publishing process. We would appreciate if our readers would pass on our mission, vision, and call for papers to graduate students and junior faculty as well as to colleagues who are already experts in their fields.

OCPEA is pleased to present an eclectic mix of research and theoretical articles in this issue that are both timely and thought provoking for scholars and practitioners alike in the fields of education, curriculum and instruction, and educational leadership. The manuscripts in this issue detail many of the current controversies in the field of education as we currently experience them including legal issues impacting school leaders, issues of funding inequities for public schools, and the intersection of schooling and politics.

Our first manuscript, “Why Can’t Ohio Equitably Fund Public Education? Education Reform Stifling Equitable Education Funding” reviews policy, and advocates for new policies to addressing funding equity. Our second manuscript, “Relationships and Authentic Collaboration: Perceptions of a Building Leadership Team,” is an action research study providing teachers and administrators with information to improve and model effective cooperative and collaborative practices within Building Leadership Teams (BLT) in order to support a positive and effective school climate.

Our third manuscript, “Administrator Perspectives of Ohio’s Teacher Evaluation System: Implications for Educational Administration Programs in Higher Education,” elicits elementary and middle school administrators’ perceptions of the Ohio Teacher Evaluation System (OTES). Although most administrators were relatively confident in their ability to implement the OTES, they are unsure that it will improve teaching and learning for their students.

Ohio’s highest court has ruled the public school funding method a violation of the state constitution, but the legislature has done little or nothing to offer an alternative plan which complies with state law. Our fourth and final manuscript contextualizes this issue and problematizes Ohio’s voucher programs in general.

We would like to acknowledge the many who have helped to shepherd Leadership and Research in Education: The Journal of the Ohio Council of Professors of Educational Administration (OCPEA) into a living entity. First, we thank our authors for submitting their work. Second, we thank our board of editors who worked tirelessly to create the policies and procedures took the idea of an NCPEA journal for the state of Ohio to fruition. Third, we wish to express gratitude to our esteemed panel of reviewers. Each manuscript goes through an extensive three-person peer review panel, and we are quite proud of the mentoring that has resulted as a part of this process. Fourth, we give a special thanks to the Board of OCPEA who has supported the vision and mission of Leadership and Research in Education: The Journal of the Ohio Council of Professors of Educational Administration (OCPEA). The support and guidance of the Board throughout the process of publishing this issue has been inestimable.

Finally, to Jim Berry, Ted Creighton, and Brad Bizzell of NCPEA Publications, OCPEA is indebted to you for your direction and support. On behalf of the Board of Leadership and Research in Education: The Journal of the Ohio Council of Professors of Educational Administration, the OCPEA Board, and the general membership of OCPEA, we collectively thank the readers of this publication. We hope the information provided will guide readers toward a deeper understanding of the many facets of the fields of education, curriculum and instruction, and educational leadership. OCPEA hopes to continue to provide readers with insightful and reflective research.

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Why Can't Ohio Equitably Fund Public Education?

Education Reform Stifling Equitable Education Funding

**Carlee Escue Simon
University of Cincinnati**

Abstract

Ohio has a long history of school funding inequity. This manuscript provides a brief history of Ohio education funding, the equity and adequacy concerns. Education reform efforts have been expanding while the appropriate management of the funding mechanism has been underfunded or entirely ignored. The researcher examines the negative impact of certain policies and the need to readdress the funding mechanism as well as the associated policies.

Keywords: school finance, education policy, DeRolph, vouchers, charter schools, school levy

Introduction

The Ohio Supreme Court found the state of Ohio's school funding system unconstitutional through a sequence of four separate court rulings of *DeRolph v. State* (1997; 2000; 2001; 2002). The decisions were based on the inequity of funding education and the state's funding mechanism. The mechanism was deemed to not support the Ohio Constitution requiring the state to provide a "thorough and efficient" school system (Ohio Const. art. VI, § 2). Following the fourth DeRolph case, the State Supreme Court barred the trial court from further actions and ended the DeRolph litigation era (State ex rel. State of Ohio v. Lewis, 2003). The resolution of the state's funding mechanism was left to the Ohio legislature.

DeRolph is an excellent example of an "equity suit." There are two main types of education finance litigation: equity suits and adequacy suits (Thro & Escue, 2012). In equity suits, "the plaintiffs assert that all children are entitled to have the same amount of money spent on their education and/or that children are entitled to equal educational opportunities" (Thro & Escue, 2012, p. 773). Although the court agreed the funding mechanism was unconstitutional and inequitable, due to separation of powers the DeRolph cases resolved with a hollow victory.

Equity focuses on the equitable treatment of equals (Alexander & Salmon, 1995; Berne & Stiefel, 1984; Downes & Stiefel, 2008; Guthrie, Springer, Rolle, & Houck, 2007; Odden & Picus, 2008; Thompson, Wood, & Honeyman, 1994). Adequacy recognizes that unequal treatment of unequal students is necessary to increase equity (Guthrie, Springer, Tolle, & Houck, 2007).

[Adequacy] is more complex and polarizing than [equity] because assumptions now rely on personal values and preferences. [Equity] assumes all students are equal. [Adequacy] assumes all students are not,

thus giving value to certain characteristics. Although it is fair to say that all school finance experts agree that students are not all equal they do not agree on how to incorporate [adequacy] standards in order to provide additional resources. (Escue, 2012)

Little action has been taken to remedy the outcomes of the DeRolph decisions in close to two decades. There was a brief period in 2009 under Governor Strickland where the Evidence-Based Model (EBM) was introduced to Ohio as the new funding mechanism (Am. Sub. H.B. 1, 2009). In theory, EBM was going to significantly improve the equity within the Ohio school funding system. Two main issues impeded those outcomes. First, EBM is an expensive funding model when fully funded. EBM is designed to identify the necessary resources to adequately fund education per pupil (Odden & Picus, 2006). The glaring concern with use of the EBM model is the focus on adequacy, which is the driving force behind the model. The Ohio funding mechanism is not equitable; adding adequacy on top of equity proved to be extremely expensive for already burdened school districts and a state not willing to fully fund the endeavor.

Secondly, the state had (currently still has) other external policies that needed to be addressed at the same time as implementing EBM. The state was (and is) over-reliant on property taxes and local control. Poor districts simply did not have the revenues necessary to fund an adequacy model. It is difficult to determine if these poor districts had enough revenue to even fund an equitable model.

EBM did not survive long in the state of Ohio. Following the 2010 elections, Governor Strickland lost his seat and Governor Kasich became the new governor. This left all branches in the state of Ohio under a Republican majority. Governor Kasich immediately ended EBM and reinstated the unconstitutional funding model of the past, promising within his first year to develop a new funding mechanism that would address the DeRolph era.

Simultaneous Actions During the DeRolph Era

This researcher opines that the timings of the expansion of education reform, the lack of motivation to revamp the state funding mechanism, and the DeRolph era are not coincidental. Since 1997, the same year as the first DeRolph case, the community school (commonly known as “charter school”) movement took action through a pilot study enacted by House Bill 215 in June of that year (Ohio Department of Education, 2013b). Two months later the state Senate expanded the community school program beyond the pilot study area with Senate Bill 55 (Ohio Department of Education, 2013b). Virtually year after year the community school program was expanded and modified by Senate and House Bills, with a persistent and focused move to grow, specifically within the urban eight districts,¹ and delve into the new frontier of *eschools* (online charter schools) (Ohio Department of Education, 2013b; see, for example, H.B. 215, 1997; S. 55, 1997; H.B. 770, 1998; H.B. 282, 1999; H.B. 94, 2001; H.B. 3, 2003; H.B. 364, 2003; H.B. 95, 2003; H.B. 66, 2005; H.B. 79, 2005; H.B. 530, 2005; H.B. 119, 2007; H.B. 562, 2008; H.B. 59, 2013).

¹ Ohio’s urban eight districts are Akron, Canton, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton, Toledo, and Youngstown.

While community (charter) school expansion was being developed and refined since the mid-1990s, so was the expansion of Ohio scholarship programs, more commonly known as “voucher” programs. In 1995, Ohio’s first voucher program was developed in Cleveland entitled the Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Program (School Choice in Ohio, 2013). Shortly after this program became fully established and operational, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in the *Zelman v. Simmons-Harris* (2002) case that the voucher program was constitutional. Since that ruling, Ohio has expanded the scholarship programs within the state and now has the most voucher programs in the nation: The Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Program, The Ohio Autism Scholarship, EdChoice Scholarship, Jon Peterson Special Needs Scholarship, and K-12 Literacy Voucher (School Choice in Ohio, 2013; H.B. 59, 2013).

At the origination of the Ohio voucher programs’ movement the emphasis was on providing choice for students that were zoned for failing schools. The state declared that these students had few options within the public education system to acquire a quality education, and the solution to this was to create vouchers allowing students to transfer public dollars into the private market to increase options of educational choice and quality. That no longer seems to be the focus as voucher expansion has grown well beyond this initial ideal of providing better educational opportunities for students in low performing schools through access to alternative schools, both public and private. Now the movement appears to align more with a mission to incorporate “universal school choice,” regardless of the performance of particular schools in the public education system.²

The Current Situation in Ohio

On January 31, 2013, Governor Kasich announced his school reform and funding plan to the Buckeye Association of School Administrators (The Ohio Channel, 2015). In his presentation, Governor Kasich committed to not reducing district budgets and addressing the constitutionality of the funding mechanism. However, the proposal also included increases in charter school funding and voucher expansion (The Ohio Channel, 2015). Governor Kasich’s education reform effort was embedded in the state biennial budget H.B. 59 (2013). Following Kasich’s initial proposal, the bill was forwarded on to the House of Representatives and then to the Senate for modifications and additions. June 30, 2013 Governor Kasich signed into law H.B. 59 as the biennial budget. The budget incorporated massive provisions associated with governance, funding, Medicaid expansion, and education reform efforts. Last minute additions and tax reforms were added days before the bill was signed into law, giving little time for hearings and debates (Blackwell, 2013). What began as a 700-page biennial budget proposal from the governor quickly transformed into a biennial budget of over 5000 pages (H.B. 59, 2013). Simultaneously, school districts’ administrators slowly reacted, realizing that what initially seemed a good faith effort to financially assist public education was in fact another campaign to reform education and channel taxpayer dollars into charter schools and vouchers.

² “Universal school choice” is a term exercised by the Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice (2015). The foundation supported the state in the *Zelman v. Simmons-Harris* case (536 U.S. 639 (2002)).

Base Student Allocation and Associated Mechanisms within HB 59

Governor Kasich and the Republican majority legislature have misleadingly taken credit for increasing funding to Ohio schools and redesigning the school funding formula to address the DeRolph concerns. This argument for increased funding would only be applicable if one were to ignore that the schools' budgets were cut significantly the past two years and that the projected FY 2014 per pupil funding of \$6609.50 is \$72.70 more than the base student allocation for FY 2010 (Fleeter, 2013; Cuts Hurt Ohio, n.d.).

H.B. 59 created a funding category for special need students with catastrophic and expensive therapies and interventions. However, the monies were removed from the special need student line item and not supplemented with additional funds. Furthermore the state incorporated a State Share Index (SSI) to determine proportional allocation of state dollars to districts based on property valuation and median income. Because of the SSI measures, low-wealth districts proportionately pay more for special need students in comparison to higher-wealth districts. The bill also focused on preschool special education but did not include state allocation for approximately one-third of the units.

Ohio has been in the process of replicating a third grade reading model developed in the state of Florida. Ohio's Third Grade Guarantee was modified to require retention of students if they do not meet the minimum standards for the third grade reading assessment. This mandate was slated to begin FY14. To add to the complexity, this mandate began the same year the state standards for Ohio education were converted to the Ohio's New Learning Standards – a variation of the more commonly known Common Core Standards. This created an enormous burden on school districts as they were working to implement the new standards. Furthermore, research indicates multiple negative outcomes associated with student retention mandated by the Third Grade Guarantee.

The funding formula was redeveloped to a point; however there is no indication that outside researchers were contacted to give feedback or insight into the design. The redevelopment of the formula appears to be an "in-house" addressing of the equity concern. Although it is fair to say that the equity of the funding formula cannot yet be determined, this researcher maintains that regardless of the construct of the funding model, equity will not be possible until auxiliary policies and the push for rampant education reform are addressed.

While the additions and modifications to the Ohio funding formula contain problematic outcomes, the reform efforts embedded within the bill indicate the driving force focused on privatizing education and expanding the concept of "choice." These reform efforts appear to have profiteering components and political agendas associated. The remainder of this paper will discuss the nuances of the expansion of charter schools and voucher programs within the state of Ohio.

Charter School Funding

What began as a \$10 million dollar pilot in 1997 has now expanded into an effort that on estimate contributed \$900 million dollars to the 2013 biennial budget. Money was removed from the state allocation to each district for the anticipated charter school recipients. "In, fact, there has never been a single year since 1998 when charter

deductions did not cause children staying in traditional public schools to receive less money, on average, than the state determined they needed to succeed” (Innovation Ohio, 2013, p. 2).

Table 1 describes state aid distribution and charter school deductions for the eight urban school districts. These eight school districts are struggling with high-density poverty and lower property wealth, yet the districts each lost a considerable percentage of state aid to charter schools. In fact, 35 school districts within Ohio have 16.4% or more of their state allocation deducted to fund charter schools. Seven of the urban eight school districts are included in that calculation. So, of the 614 school districts in the state of Ohio, only 28 other school districts experience this level of funding reallocation to charter schools. Further research is needed to examine this dilemma with more depth; however, it is fair to say that this appears to be disproportionate and easily highlights an inequity concern regarding the urban school district populations. This is an example demonstrating that the formula may or may not be equitable, however the lack of equity is associated with the auxiliary policies.

Table 1
Charter School State Aid Deductions³.

School District	% Poverty FY12	Estimated Deduction to charter FY14	Estimated State Aid FY14	Estimated % charter school deduction FY14
Akron	83.3	\$26,281,828.80	\$159,800,454.41	16.4
Canton	79	\$6,358,043.20	\$72,032,739.34	8.8
Cincinnati	85.4	\$52,180,452.36	\$150,799,976.58	34.6
Cleveland	85.7	\$121,721,614.16	\$415,073,765.62	29.3
Columbus	85.74	\$103,710,928.52	\$249,459,476.59	41.5
Dayton	83.4	\$44,407,301.61	\$141,130,784.35	31.4
Toledo	82.65	\$63,677,574.34	\$210,458,475.44	30.2
Youngstown	79.03	\$21,624,171.73	\$81,585,205.66	26.5
Total Urban	83.2*	\$439,961,914.72	\$1,480,340,877.99	29.7
Eight				

*Average % poverty FY12 for all urban eight school districts

³ Data provided by the Ohio House Democratic Caucus, compiled by the Legislative Service Commission.

Furthermore, for the eight urban school districts, \$439,961,914.72 was estimated to be deducted from the \$1,480,340,877.99 total state aid dollars for FY14. This is approximately 30% of state aid being removed from the urban eight school districts to fund charter schools that do not demonstrate significant improvements in achievement when compared to traditional public schools. Figure 1 displays the performance ratings of the urban eight traditional schools compared to the urban eight community schools. For most of the districts the community schools underperformed in comparison to their traditional urban school counterparts (Ohio Department of Education, 2012).

There is continual discussion regarding efficiency within the funding of education, yet when examined at the microcosmic level of the Ohio urban eight, the argument of efficiency appears soft at best. It is hard to understand the rationale for shifting funding to schools that can account for almost 50% of those falling under the rating of “Academic Emergency.”

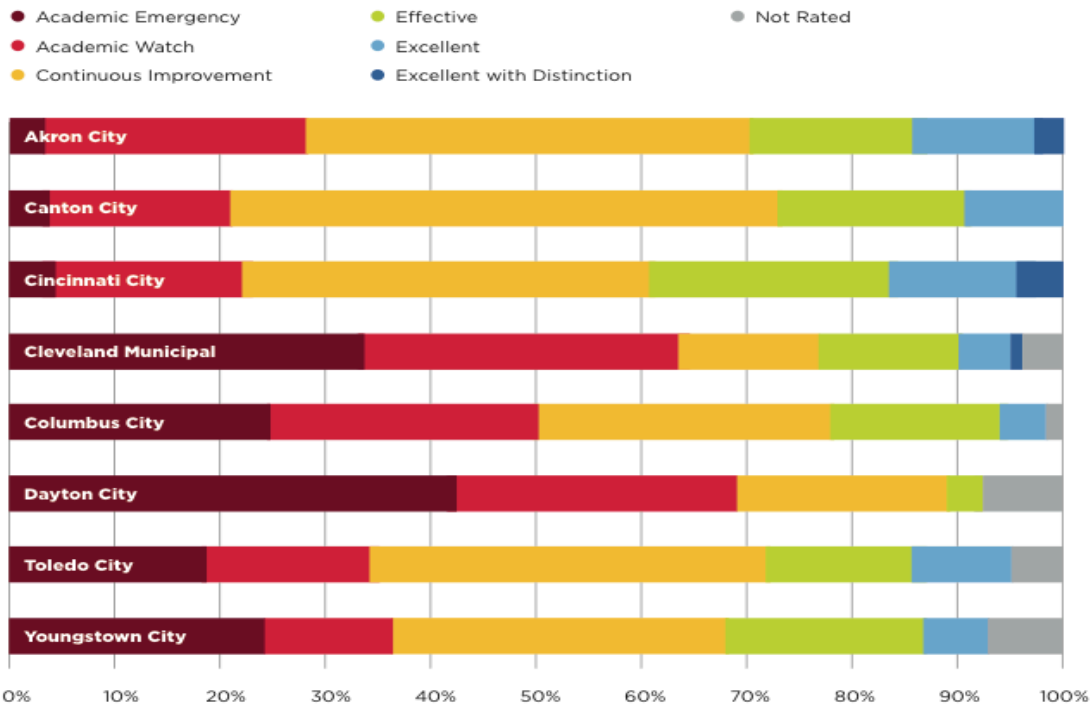
In general, preliminary results show that community schools located in the Cleveland Municipal, Columbus City and Dayton City School Districts outperformed those districts’ traditional public schools while the opposite was seen in the Akron City, Canton City, Cincinnati City, Toledo City and Youngstown City School districts, where the districts’ traditional public schools outperformed the community schools located in those districts. (Ohio Department of Education, 2012, p. 12)

Arguably, the Department of Education’s statement regarding the performance of the community schools in comparison to traditional schools is an understatement. Future research will be performed to assess and confirm this. The non-partisan think tank Innovation Ohio has found that:

90% of the money going to charters was taken from districts that perform significantly better on the state’s Performance Index and... that 40% of the money going to charters in the 2011-12 school year came from traditional school districts that better performed on *both* the state Report Card and the state Performance Index. (Innovation Ohio, 2013, p. 3)

Profiteering in education has become a very lucrative business. Ohio allows For-Profit management companies to work with charter schools. These for-Profits are managed by a small number of businesses that contribute heavily to political campaigns. Ohio has come under considerable criticism for the “wild west” management of charter schools. Reports of nepotism, campaign contributions, federal investigations and local taxpayer monies leaving local economies have begun to shed light on the underbelly of the mismanagement and poor accountability measures in Ohio’s charter school system. There does appear to be some movement in the legislature to address these issues however the movement is slow and at this point appearing to be less than adequate. Furthermore, the lack of transparency of the past makes appropriate policy development

Percentage of Traditional Public Schools by State Rating in each Ohio 8 District: 2012 Preliminary



Percentage of Community Schools by State Rating in each Ohio 8 District of Location: 2012 Preliminary

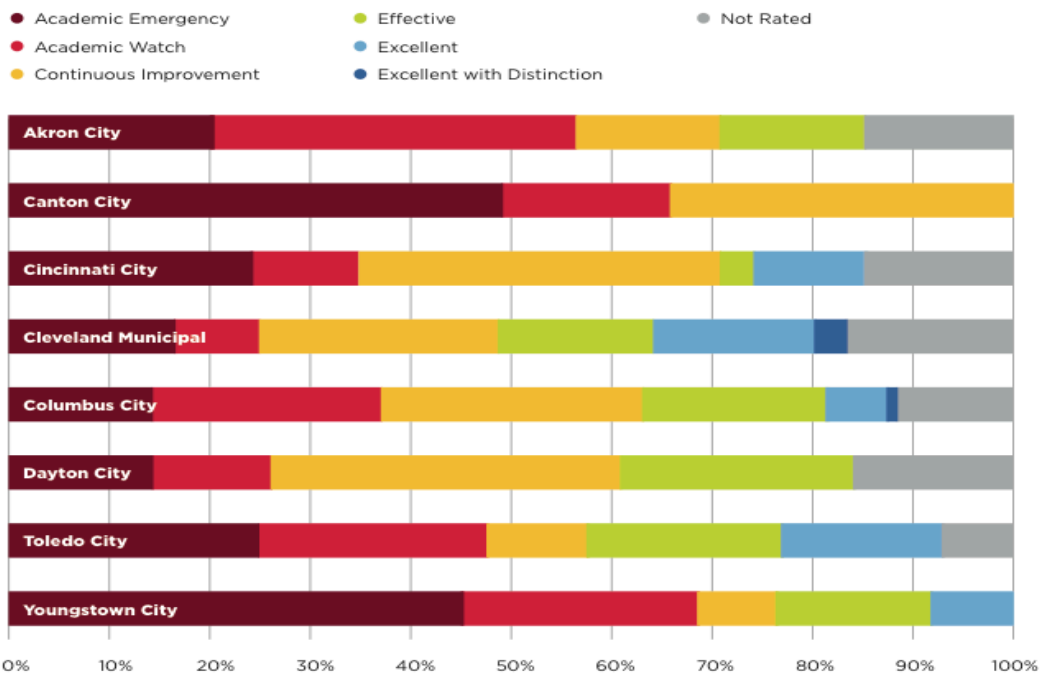


Figure 1: State Rating based on 2011-2012 performance tables provided by Ohio Department of Education (2012, pp. 11-12).

somewhat challenging. It is difficult to ascertain to scope of the concerns as most of the for-profit management companies keep their records private and push back when asked to reveal business practices and information.

Voucher Expansion

As previously mentioned, voucher programs in Ohio increased to situate the state as the leader in voucher programs throughout the nation. Two voucher programs were modified or added in H.B. 59. The previously existing EdChoice voucher program was modified to incorporate a component for students based on income. This voucher program was implemented for FY14 and allowed for students at or below 200% the Federal Poverty Guidelines to utilize vouchers regardless of their zoned school's performance (Ohio Department of Education, 2015). In fact, the voucher could apply to a student attending a school rated Excellent with Distinction. This legislative action supports the ideology of universal choice, regardless of school performance. Future research will determine if vouchers are in fact used by students considered low SES and if students of low SES benefit from a voucher provided education in comparison to a high performing public education.

K-3 Literacy Voucher is a newly developed voucher program that is offered to students attending "D" and "F" graded schools. This voucher is slated to begin the 2016-17 school year and is scheduled to be funded directly with local school district dollars (H.B. 59, 2013). This will be the first voucher model that will directly collect local dollars to fund the state mandated voucher expectations.

Supporters of the school choice movement in Ohio would tell you that the voucher schools must assess their students just like that of the traditional schools. What is not discussed in an acceptable manner is that although students receiving vouchers are required to take the state assessments, there is not a requirement to perform at a specific proficiency level as in traditional public schools (Ohio Department of Education, 2014).

Tax Reform

Ohio has given a 12.5% rollback reimbursement to taxpayers for property taxes for the past 40 years. Days before the signing of H.B. 59, the 12.5% rollback reimbursement was eliminated and now affects taxpayers on their property tax bills. This presents enormous problems for local school districts. The rollback was removed in a precarious and confusing manner. It does not apply to any levy already passed, however it will apply to all new levies. If a levy were to be renewed and had additional monies levied; all additional monies would not have the 12.5% rollback but the preexisting levy would. Ohio suffers from voter fatigue and, some could argue, a voting population that does not have a strong understanding of the education funding complexity will vote negatively on levies due to the convolution of the new mechanism. This puts an enormous burden on school districts to make sure that their communities understand the details of the rollback. Of concern is that the voters will become confused about these intricacies, and in local areas that are financially strained, levy passage will be reduced, including the passing of preexisting levies. The voter will see more monies leaving their household yet school districts will see very little increases in tax revenue.

Furthermore, levy passage is becoming even more complex as school districts are losing enrollments to vouchers and charter schools, yet neither voucher recipients nor charter schools carry the burden of campaigning for levies. School districts are compelled to present a façade of stability and fiscal awareness, yet many find that they do not have control of a large percentage of tax dollars that are instead being funneled into education reform efforts.

Implications

It is not clear what the legislature is planning as an end game. What will happen when local communities cannot pass levies? What will happen when students who are on IEPs are not receiving services that are required due to IDEA? At what point will certain legislators decide that reelection is not worth gambling with taxpayer money and Ohio's future? All these questions currently remain unanswered. Recently Gov. Kasich released his biennial proposal for 2015. It will be interesting to examine any changes in policy as the budget is finalized through committees and legislative votes. Ohio's administration owes superintendents, taxpayers, and educators answers.

In the interim it is clear that educators, taxpayers, and parents cannot quietly wait for the legislative process to organically evolve in an effective way. As has been seen with recent efforts taken by parents to Opt-out of tests this same type of advocacy initiative is proposed to stabilize the seemingly erratic and underfunded current education system. Based on the current state of the affairs in Ohio, a recommendation of building advocacy groups to inform the public and to communicate with legislators both within the district and in the capitol. It has become increasingly important for school administrators and educators to recognize that their role in these discussions and to participate.

Summary and Conclusions

The state of Ohio suffers from an unconstitutional funding system that is approaching a two-decade anniversary. Instead of legislating appropriate modifications to address these inequities, the legislators have tangentially redirected their attention to reform education through privatization and "choice." According to Julie Mead at the Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis Center at the University of Wisconsin, school vouchers were intended to improve student outcomes yet the research does not indicate that they do, as of now, 20 years after the initiative. This researcher opines that the performance of charter schools and, more specifically, for-profit schools validates this same belief, as well as underlines the side effects of profiteering at children's expense.

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Relationships and Authentic Collaboration: Perceptions of a Building Leadership

Team

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Abstract

This research examined perceptions of a Building Leadership Team (BLT) regarding the school climate, collegial relationships, camaraderie, and team-building skills among certified faculty. Participants' perceptions changed from resistance accession once a clear understanding of authentic collaboration developed through five job-embedded professional development sessions. The results from the action research project provided teachers and administration with information to improve and model effective cooperative and collaborative practices to support a positive and effective school climate for all stakeholders.

Keywords: collaboration, relationships, trust, teacher leadership, instructional leadership

Introduction

In a vast and ever changing world of technology and stimulation, teaching problem solving skills, effective communication and critical thinking through more engaging, rigorous, and relevant curricula is necessary in today's classroom. However, how can we adopt these expectations without first addressing relationships within the classroom and school building? Do educators support their colleagues through a community of collaboration and camaraderie? Relationships and authentic collaboration among faculty may be the key to creating an effective learning environment for all stakeholders.

Problem of the Project

The principal of the school identified the problem, based on faculty perceptions, as the school climate lacking in trust, camaraderie, and collaboration. Research from Hindman, Grant, and Stronge (2010) supports the significance of positive relationships between teachers and students, but teachers may not have a positive relationship with one another. Troen and Boles (2012) suggest teachers need to construct collegial and cooperative relationships as the first step to establishing rapport, and then through trust and support, the process of authentic collaboration can begin.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this action research was to improve the school climate by determining the perceptions of the faculty concerning collegial relationships, camaraderie, and team-building skills by providing the foundation for successful authentic collaboration between teachers through job-embedded professional development. The results from this project have provided teachers and administration with information to improve and model effective cooperative and collaborative practices to support a positive and effective school climate for all stakeholders.

Research Questions

Guiding the action research project were the following questions:

1. According to the participants' perceptions, what specific areas are most relevant regarding the school climate?
2. What are the perceptions of the faculty participants regarding teamwork as a member of the BLT compared to their GLT?
3. What are the perceptions of the faculty participants after receiving the job-embedded professional development and implementing the practice of authentic collaboration?

Literature Review

If both physiological and safety needs have been satisfied, the craving for relationships and the connection with people is the next essential requirement within Maslow's (1943) well-known motivation theory of hierarchy of needs. Specifically, one may desire a sense of belonging or finding their place within a group. This intense longing may be more valuable than one's own self-esteem. Relationships build a sense of community and are a vital component of emotional human nature

Teacher/Student Relationships

The emotional dimension of engagement supports the importance of relationships between teachers and students as well as teachers to teachers. The comprehensive definition offered by Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004) includes incorporating the three dimensions of engagement: behavioral, cognitive, and emotional. According to McCann and Turner (2004), teachers prefer students "to experience positive and pleasant emotions with the hope that these emotions will foster motivation, engagement, and learning" (p. 1697). Students conceptualize emotional engagement as a feeling of identification and investment and as a sense of belonging, feeling an important part of the school body, and finding value in the school experience (Finn, 1989).

Students deserve to feel valued and the most effective teachers understand how to provide every student with a sense of worthiness (Breux & Whitaker, 2006). "When a teacher's sensitivity to students increases, so does the opportunity to reach them" (Whitaker, 2004, p. 120). Effective teachers make a point to connect with their students

by getting to know them on a more personal level (Breux and Whitaker, 2006). However, Flynt and Brozo (2009) argue deciding when and how to connect with their students is an independent decision for teachers to make.

Hindman, Grant, and Stronge (2010) explain when building a relationship, students must trust their teacher and find them credible. For example,

When a student deems a teacher credible, the relationship is strengthened and bridges to ideas and new knowledge is built. Every day good teachers build relationships and demonstrate caring with their students. They think about both their students' academic performance and about them as individuals. They ask students about their lives and what is occurring. (p. 15)

Teachers putting forth the effort to building a positive relationship with their students are compensated as their students improve cognitively, behaviorally, and emotionally. When classroom teachers stress their high expectations for all students without building a classroom community they may confront many obstacles. Teachers should be authentic with their own emotions and provide genuine support to help students assimilate high expectations in themselves (Benson, 2012; Sterret, 2011).

Collegial Relationships

Although caring teachers are devoted to supporting students through their academic success, teachers must also encourage, support, and respect one another. Blimes (2012) explains building relationships among colleagues is no different from students. Colleagues should use various occasions throughout the day to build more personal and professional associations among co-workers. A more respectful and personal approach and a feeling of camaraderie may lead to more problem solving and pedagogical collaboration (Blimes, 2012). The Southern Regional Education Board (2011) suggests, "All teachers need to participate and take ownership both individually and as a group" to build better relationships among colleagues" (p. 2). Karns and Melina (2002) elucidate, "When relationships are poorly managed, burnout and frustration can overwhelm the system's commitment to succeed. The relationships among colleagues must be structured by optimal support...a commitment to goals, and fostering 'relationship capital'" (p. 30).

Authentic Collaboration

Troen and Boles (2012) explain collegial relationships depend on the cooperation of colleagues. Cooperative colleagues assist others in various endeavors through compliant and collegial support. This may mean helping someone else work toward his or her goals. However, many times educators may confuse cooperation with collaboration. Authentic collaboration is a profound, collective purpose to achieve a shared goal among two or more. Collaboration among peers includes an ethical priority to model collegiality, collaboration, and effective teaching (Aleccia, 2011; Troen & Boles, 2012). Because education is a culture of autonomy, teachers may not share their ideas with others for fear of imposing, whereas other teachers will not ask for guidance because they fear being

perceived as a weak or struggling teacher. For these reasons, opportunities to influence colleagues are lost and the potential to collaborate is limited and a positive school climate may be diminished (Levine & Marcus, 2007). De Four and Mattos (2013) share, “The most powerful strategy for improving both teaching and learning is to create the collaborative culture and collective responsibility” (p. 37) among school faculty.

Trust

When examining the realities of team building, the Southern Regional Education Board (2009) signified the importance of improving relationships and mentoring through increased administrative collaboration. Teachers need leadership support through professional development, common planning, and team building activities. Administration should establish a substantial commitment to not only supporting, but also modeling positive relationships and a climate of trust within the school and community. According to Bell, Thacker, and Schargel (2011) teachers can build trust through worthy efforts to develop the essential academic and behavioral skills of students, share the workload of extra duties, and implement school and district plans. Suggestions for building trust among colleagues include implementing active listening more often than active speaking, consistency, empathy, gauging your reactions, nurturing leadership potential, improving one’s own competencies, and engaging in critical self-reflection (Bell, Thacker, & Schargel, 2011; Combs, Edmonson, & Harris, 2013).

Though trust among colleagues is essential in implementing authentic collaboration, Caposey (2013) explains trust begins with effective leadership, usually through a BLT. The BLT members include administration and faculty representing all grade levels and resource areas within the school building. The BLT must be clear about its mission and responsibility of building a positive school climate and culture of support for all faculty and staff (Caposey, 2013). Lambert (2003) shares insight on how teacher leaders and administrators must foster an environment of reflective practice and standards-based inquiry to improve teaching and learning. Bridging theory to practice requires a multitude of strategies including collaborative learning, modeling, and peer observation to enhance relationships among teachers.

Modeling and Observations

Arnodah (2012) explains trust and rapport offer a form of social support, making peer observations somewhat more relaxing for all stakeholders. This level of trust permeates throughout the climate supporting a more inviting atmosphere and making it more comfortable to exchange information through peer review reducing the culture of individualism. City, Elmore, Fiarman, and Teital (2009) explain how instructional rounds in education are more than observations and begin with the instructional core signifying,

In its simplest terms, the instructional core is composed of the teacher and the student in the presence of content. It is the *relationship* between the teacher, the student, and the content – *not* the qualities of any one of them by themselves – that determines the nature of instructional practice, and each corner of the

instructional core has its own particular role and resources to bring to the instructional process. (pp. 22-23)

Kachur, Stout, and Edwards (2013) perceive modeling and peer observations as a principle component of effective instructional practice. Having the opportunity to model and observe others teaching breaks the barriers of resistance, opens the doors to a collaborative relationship and may unleash hidden potential. Teachers need multiple opportunities to learn from one another in a safe environment, feeling supported rather than judged. In addition, teachers need the support of administration for scheduled times to collaboratively and vertically plan together, review student work, share ideas, and truly collaborate to meet the needs of *every* student in the building, not just those on individual teacher rosters (Kachur, Stout, & Edwards, 2013).

Methodology

Description of the Action/Intervention

The purpose of the research project was to improve the school climate by determining the perceptions of faculty regarding collegial relationships, trust, and team building skills as a foundation for authentic collaboration. The researcher conducted the project through action research. Typical experimental research is performed “to explain, predict, and or control educational phenomena” (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009, p. 3) as researchers manipulate certain variables to test a hypothesis with a predetermined level of statistical significance. However, Mills (2011) defines action research as,

any systematic inquiry conducted by teacher researchers, principals, school counselors or other stakeholders in the teaching/learning environment to gather information about how their particular schools operate, how they teach, and how well their students learn. This information is gathered with the goals of gaining insight, developing reflective practice, effecting positive changes in the school environment and improving student outcomes and the lives of those involved. (p. 5)

Mills (2011) goes on to explain action research is a four-step process by identifying a problem or focus area, collecting data, analyzing and interpreting data, and developing and implementing an intervention or plan of action to address the problem or focus area.

The intervention provided for this research project included job-embedded professional development based on the practice of authentic collaboration among the BLT participants. The BLT was the primary recipients of the professional development; however, all Grade Level Teams (GLT) received turn-around training using the same information and implementation strategies. The researcher provided job-embedded professional development sessions on five occasions throughout the school year for the BLT by scheduling with the school principal. Scheduled sessions took place in September 2013, November 2013, January 2014, March 2014, and May 2014. The professional development consisted of specifics on how to collaborate effectively with each other based on commitment, building trust, collegial relationships, and team

development skills. In addition, participants were asked to collaborate by reviewing student work samples, observing peers teaching, and completing instructional rounds with a focus on student learning.

When the BLT met for the initial session, the following questions developed by Kachur, Stout, and Edwards (2013) were the topic of discussion:

- How committed are teachers to improving teaching and student learning?
- How committed are teachers to their own continuous learning?
- What is the level of communication, trust and collaboration among teachers and between teachers and administrators?
- How accepting, caring, respecting and encouraging are teachers of one another?
- To what extent do teachers feel safe to say what they really think?
- To what extent are teachers open to examining new ideas and taking risks?
- To what extent do teachers feel supported rather than judged? (p. 15)

Based on the work of Troen and Boles (2012), the identified reasons why teams typically fail provided the topic for participants to reflect through their own personal experiences guided by the following areas during the second session:

- *The complexities of collaboration are untaught*, meaning a group of people does not make a team because team members may come in as novices.
- *Effective teacher leadership is missing*. To teachers' detriment, rejection of another teacher's authority occurs because of lack of seniority or experience.
- *The need for expertise is ignored or misunderstood*. Many teachers are not inclined to admit they need help because of a lack of trust.
- *Pitfalls are unrecognized or poorly addressed*. Teachers often fail to take on leadership roles, do not use common planning time effectively, mistake experience for expertise, do not develop a clear purpose or goal, and talk about the curriculum, but not each other's instruction.
- *Team members give up when they do not get along*. Everyone needs to learn how to have those difficult conversations, put ego, and rank aside.
- *There are no consequences for poor team or individual performance*. Everyone on the team is accountable for every student in the building — not just the students in your classroom. (pp. 11-15)

The third session involved discussions and strategies on building trust. Discussion of trust builders encouraged participants to implement strategies throughout the next months. As homework, the researcher requested participants to observe peers in a vertical position. For example, a third grade math teacher observed first and fifth grade math teachers.

The focus of the fourth session included observation notes, reflections, and shared learning. In addition, participants reviewed student work samples and each participant offered suggestions on how to provide strategies of support for the teacher to meet the students' needs. Homework was again assigned to observe another class, but with the spotlight on student learning. Using the method of Instructional Rounds from City,

Elmore, Fiarman, and Teital (2009) the focus was on *the core*, made up of the teacher, the student, and the curriculum.

The fifth and final session included additional reflections, discussions of instructional rounds and additional designs of vertical planning sessions. The researcher requested participants to complete the Teamwork Survey based on perceptions of teamwork within the BLT and GLT and answer the questionnaire based on the professional development sessions.

Setting and Participants

This action research project took place over 13 months from May 2013 to June 2014 at an elementary school and involved two separate data collections. The student enrollment at the elementary school was 325 students in grades K-5 with 23 certified employees. Demographics reveal 68% of the students were African American, 23% Caucasian, and 6% made up other ethnicities. Furthermore, 88% of the students were receiving free/reduced lunch services qualifying as a Title I school. The BLT involved both the principal and program specialist of the school, but for the purposes of this project only teacher leaders of the BLT were participants. The respondents included 6 classroom teacher leaders each representing one grade level of K-5 and 2 special education teacher leaders representing grades K-2 and grades 3-5. The teacher representing 1st grade also served as the BLT Chair.

Instrumentation

The initial data were collected from certified faculty using anonymous surveys the school principal administered at the end of the 2013 school term. The principal of the elementary school requested the certified faculty to participate in a random anonymous survey titled "Survey for Instructional Staff." The principal routinely requested the same survey at the end of each school year to assist with the effectiveness of the principal in areas of leadership, management, communication, and community relations. Surveys were provided to 23 certified faculty members through their school mailbox distributed by the school secretary. The surveys were anonymous and optional as not all faculty members participated with only 18 surveys returned. The survey contained 39 questions; however, for the purposes of this project only seven questions from the archived survey were relevant because they related to school climate. Some example items from the survey were "Whether or not the school was a good place to work" and "Opportunity to provide input on school matters that affect them". Participants were instructed to respond to the questions by circling the most appropriate answer based on their perceptions. The options included 1=*rarely*, 2=*sometimes*, 3=*usually*, and 4=*almost always*, on a Likert-type scale.

The principal did not require faculty to participate. The survey requested was familiar to the veteran faculty, routinely provided on a yearly basis, and was considered optional. There were no names or other demographic information on the survey. The participants' names, grade levels, or positions were not known by the principal when the surveys were returned in a sealed envelope to the principal's mailbox. Many of the faculty retired or transferred to other schools or districts at the end of the school year and

may no longer be employed at the school. Permission from the superintendent was granted to collect the archived data from the principal and access the data for collection after the approval of the Institutional Review Board.

The second data collection period occurred in May 2014 in the same elementary school through an anonymous questionnaire and surveys. At the beginning of the 2013-2014 school year, the principal of the school appointed eight teachers to serve on the BLT representing the faculty of school. The BLT included eight appointed teachers and two administrators. The school principal required the BLT to participate in a mandatory professional development workshop on authentic collaboration regardless of whether they chose to complete the questionnaire and surveys. The researcher requested the participants to complete the survey two times at the conclusion of the professional development, one survey based on the membership of the BLT and the second based on the membership of their GLT. There were no names or other demographic data requested or collected, keeping all survey data anonymous. The participants labeled their surveys as BLT and the other as GLT. An informed consent form was provided to participants and they were given an opportunity to ask questions before they completed the survey. The survey contained 32 questions classified into one of four categories: Forming Stage, Storming Stage, Norming Stage, and Performing Stage. Participants were asked to indicate how often they perceived the BLT and GLT displayed each behavior using the scoring system of 1=*almost never*, 2=*seldom*, 3=*occasionally*, 4=*frequently*, and 5=*almost always*. The creator of the survey, Clark (2004), provided permission to use the survey, "Teamwork Survey," for the purposes of this project. Some of the questions included, "Team members do not fully trust the other members and closely monitor others who are working on a specific task." and "We are able to work through group problems."

The questionnaire, created by the researcher, consisted of five open-ended questions regarding the job-embedded professional development provided throughout the school year. Some of the questions included, "How has your thinking changed concerning authentic collaboration?" and "Explain your thoughts on the effectiveness of the authentic collaboration job-embedded professional development." The superintendent and principal provided full support and permission for the project to take place as well as the Institutional Review Board.

Data Analysis

Research Question 1

According to the participants' perceptions, what specific areas are most relevant regarding school climate?

The first question of the survey examines whether the participants were given an opportunity to provide input on school matters affecting teachers. The participants reported 39% as *almost always* and 28% *usually* leaving one-third of respondents not perceiving the chance to contribute to the affairs of the school. The survey data reveal similar results on whether the partakers feel the school is a good place to work; however, 61% consider the school to be safe and secure (Table 1).

Moving into the area of cooperation and collaboration with questions 4-7, 44% of respondents report *almost always* and 13% report *usually* spending time with the grade level to plan lessons for a total of 69%. Interestingly, a total of 67% also reveal they *almost always* and *usually* plan in isolation revealing a startling contradiction of planning time. On the other hand, 43% of the respondents revealed they *sometimes* or *rarely* spent time planning with resource teachers supporting isolation planning. The highest score related to perceptions concerning school climate influencing student achievement revealed 78% agreed *almost always* and 22% reported *usually* for a total of 100% in the highest categories. If 100% of the respondents believe school climate *almost always* or *usually* influences student achievement, then these data are the conduit needed to develop the school climate through strengthening the relationships between educators by increasing authentic collaboration (Table 1).

Table 1
Faculty Perceptions Regarding School Climate

“Survey for Instructional Staff”-Questions	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Almost Always
~Opportunity to provide input on school matters that affect them	11	22	28	39
~Whether or not the school is a good place to work	16	12	33	39
~Whether the school is a safe and secure place to work	0	5	33	62
~Plan with their grade level	0	31	25	44
~Plan with resource teachers	19	25	13	44
~Plan in isolation	6	26	21	47
~School climate influences student achievement	0	0	22	78

Research Question 2

Are there any significant differences as to what stage the participants perceive themselves to be regarding Teamwork Building as a member of the BLT compared to Grade Level Team? Using the Teamwork Survey Worksheet—Team Development Score Sheet, scores of each participant were calculated by tallying the provided scores under the assigned four categories. The members of the BLT completed the survey twice. The first survey scores related to the BLT and the second set of survey scores related to GLT. The highest mean scores reveal the stages of team work to be in the Norming and Performing stages with the lowest mean scores in the Forming and Storming stages. The mean scores are similar between the BLT and the GLT revealing the professional development training provided an effective intervention for the BLT. Furthermore, the members of the BLT provided efficient and successful turn-around training to the Grade Level Teams suggested by the data (Table 2).

Table 2
Team Development Scores

Group		Forming	Storming	Norming	Performing
BLT	Mean	21.7500	18.1250	31.5000	31.7500
	N	8	8	8	8
	Std. Deviation	3.69362	3.35676	3.66450	5.03559
GLT	Mean	22.2500	18.5000	30.1250	30.5000
	N	8	8	8	8
	Std. Deviation	1.48805	4.50397	6.49038	5.37188
Total	Mean	22.0000	18.3125	30.8125	31.1250
	N	16	16	16	16
	Std. Deviation	2.73252	3.84220	5.14093	5.07116

Research Question 3

What are the perceptions of the faculty participants after receiving the job-embedded professional development and implementing the practice of authentic collaboration? The data collected from the open-ended questionnaire revealed the participants' perceptions changed from resistance to acceptance once a clear understanding of authentic collaboration emerged through the job-embedded professional development sessions. Participants revealed clarification of misconceptions regarding the differences between cooperation and collaboration. Participants began to work collaboratively as trust was gained. Teachers expanded their discussions of instruction and student learning during vertical and collaborative observations and planning sessions. However, one of the most noticeable changes occurred within the climate through a newly found camaraderie as teachers began to give up their own individual planning periods to take over and teach for a colleague so they may go observe another teacher to improve their own instructional practice. A paradigm shift began to emerge. *Every* BLT member began to take on the responsibility for *every* student in the building. This change in accountability was a fluid approach modeled for the rest of the faculty.

Recommendations

The most relevant findings from this research stemmed from the willingness of teachers to support one another by giving up their own limited planning time to provide observation opportunities for peers; therefore, creating a more trusting and professional learning climate. Principals must afford time for teachers to learn from one another. Providing vertical planning periods and additional observational occasions should be a priority.

Researchers will continue to explore many avenues of best practices to better prepare students for college and career. However, relationships are the key to a successful school climate and camaraderie is essential for building trust and supportive relationships, whether teacher to student or teacher to teacher. Once trust and camaraderie have established a firm foundation for a solid collegial relationship, educators must then use the rapport to move forward into teams using authentic collaboration among grade

levels and the school as a whole. Collegial and cooperative relationships are just the beginning to implementing a resilient authentic collaborative team among educators.

As teachers are preparing 21st Century students for college and career, building a strong teacher-student relationship is essential for optimal student achievement. However, educators must also build personal and professional relationships among themselves to model positive communication, collaboration, and camaraderie. Constructing a positive, trusting, and collaborative climate can only provide more engaging, encouraging, and optimistic opportunities for all stakeholders. Additional research should include multiple schools at all levels, but despite the fact, this project was limited to one elementary school some valuable information revealed the misconceptions of teacher leaders regarding authentic collaboration and the significance of trusting relationships to provide an effective learning environment and positive school climate.

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Administrator Perspectives of Ohio's Teacher Evaluation System: Implications for Educational Administration Programs in Higher Education

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to elicit elementary and middle school administrators' perceptions of the Ohio Teacher Evaluation System (OTES). The researchers created a questionnaire to learn administrators' experiences with and attitudes, opinions, beliefs, and knowledge of OTES thus far. The questionnaire consisted of twenty-five Likert-based questions with four open-ended response questions. The participants included 437 elementary and/or middle school administrators who voluntarily chose to respond to the questionnaire distributed via email to all public school K-12 administrators in the state of Ohio. Based on the analysis of the data, the researchers learned that more than half of administrators have participated in the OTES and they were relatively confident in their ability to implement the OTES. The administrators believe that their teachers are confident in their ability to implement the OTES. However, the administrators reported high levels of skepticism that the OTES will improve teaching and learning for their students.

Keywords: teacher evaluation, administrator perceptions, educational administration

Introduction

Although teacher evaluation has been a heated topic of debate in the educational community for decades, only recently have federal and state policies begun to formally address the issue (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). The U.S. Department of Education (2014) currently defines teacher evaluations as follows:

A system that: (1) will be used for continual improvement of instruction; (2) meaningfully differentiates performance using at least three performance levels; (3) uses multiple valid measures in determining performance levels, including as a significant factor data on student growth (as defined in this document) for all students (including English learners and students with disabilities), and other measures of professional practice (which may be gathered through multiple formats and sources, such as observations based on rigorous teacher performance standards, teacher portfolios, and student and parent surveys); (4) evaluates teachers on a regular basis; (5) provide clear, timely, and useful feedback,

including feedback that identifies needs and guides professional development; and (6) will be used to inform personnel decisions. (para. 33)

Other leading national education organizations such as the National Education Association (NEA), the Center for Teacher Quality (CTQ), the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (inTASC), and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) have also released research-based, practice-oriented policy recommendations for teacher effectiveness and evaluation.

However, many states did not begin to address the federal or national organization definitions and policy recommendations until just recently when federal policies and philanthropic organizations started to necessitate the need for states to reform their current teacher evaluation systems. For example, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) project provided \$45 million to districts to strengthen their teacher evaluation systems (National Education Association, 2011). The MET project investigated how one set of measures could fairly and reliably identify effective teachers. The researchers in this project studied a variety of evaluation measures of more than 3,000 teachers including classroom observation instruments, student perception surveys, and student achievement gains. Through this work, the MET project (2013) partners learned:

- Student perception surveys and classroom observations can provide meaningful feedback to teachers
- Implementing specific procedures in evaluation systems can increase trust in the data and results
- Each measure adds something of value
- A balanced approach is most sensible when assigning weights to form a composite measure
- There is great potential in using video for teacher feedback and for the training and assessment of observers. (p. 20)

The findings of the MET project as well as others greatly contributed to the national and state discourse around teacher evaluation.

As a result of the Race to the Top Program (RttT), many states, including Ohio, accepted the much needed federal government grants with the caveat that they would establish specific reforms such as rigorous teacher evaluation systems (Learning Point Associates, 2010). Although RttT required the development of a teacher evaluation system, Ohio had already begun the process. In 2004, the passage of Ohio Senate Bill 2 mandated the creation of the Educator Standards Board, which was charged with the creation of the *Ohio Standards for the Teaching Profession*, the *Ohio Standards for Principals* and the *Ohio Standards for Professional Development*. As a result of the development of these professional standards as well as an increased federal drive for teacher evaluation systems such as those mentioned above, House Bill 1, enacted in 2009, required the Educator Standards Board to “recommend model evaluation systems for teachers and principals to the State Board of Education for their review and adoption” (Ohio Department of Education, 2012, p. 2). The Ohio Teacher Evaluation System (OTES) was created in response to this mandate and designed by Ohio teachers,

administrators, higher education faculty, and representatives from Ohio's professional associations, in collaboration with national experts in the area of teacher evaluation to be used to evaluate the performance of Ohio's teachers (Ohio Department of Education, 2012). OTEs officially went into effect for most RtT districts during the 2012-2013 school year.

Review of the Literature

The literature related to administrator perceptions of teacher evaluation systems is limited partially due to the relatively new implementation of teacher evaluation systems. Most of the research conducted thus far is internationally-based in contexts different than found in the United States with a small number of participants and/or a more in-depth case-study approach. However, some of the findings from these studies are relevant to this study in respect to how administrators perceive teacher evaluations.

Arar and Oplatka (2011) conducted a series of semi-structured interviews in which fourteen principals were asked to explain their perceptions of teacher evaluation. Through their analysis of the interviews, the researchers learned that the male principals perceived teacher evaluations as way to establish authority while female principals believed teacher evaluation should be used as an opportunity to improve teaching and learning. However, the majority of the principals, regardless of gender, wanted to use teacher evaluation as an opportunity to dismiss teachers but they recognized their limitations to do so within the strict tenure laws. The principals also reported multiple restraints to teacher evaluation such as the local culture that could impede the development of teachers' professional responsibility toward the school and the learners. Overall, the researchers also found that a dilemma emerged "from the complexity of teacher evaluation – balancing the concern and desire to improve students' achievements with concern for the teacher and for the collegial relationship with the teacher" (Arar & Oplatka, 2011, p. 168).

Donaldson (2013) further examined principals' perceived impediments to teacher evaluation. In this study, the researcher conducted 30 semi-structured interviews in which principals were asked to report on how they hire, assign, evaluate, and provide growth opportunities to teachers and the barriers they encountered. In respect to teacher evaluation, Donaldson found that "participants identified many factors that they felt limited their opportunity to carry out rigorous and meaningful teacher evaluations. These included time, a limited chance to observe and document representative teaching, inadequate observation instruments, and school culture" (p. 856). More specifically, all of the 30 principals noted the lack of time to complete high-quality teacher evaluations which for some principals was simply due to the sheer number of teachers to be evaluated. In addition, the principals believed that they were required to utilize inadequate evaluation instruments (Donaldson, 2013).

Orphanos (2014) investigated whether principals can distinguish between effective and ineffective teachers and the characteristics of principals that influenced teacher evaluations. This study analyzed data collected from a principal survey, a teacher survey, and a database with information about teacher academic performance in their teacher preparation program. The results of this study indicate the principals could identify the most effective teachers. However, principals who had longer teacher and

principal careers, higher teacher academic performance, and currently served in a teacher role as well as an administrator role were associated with higher ratings. Although principal familiarity with the teachers did not influence the teacher ratings, parental dissatisfaction with teachers was associated with lower and a wider range of ratings (Orphanos, 2014).

Studies of a similar nature have been conducted around teacher perceptions of teacher evaluations which are relevant to the current study. Kyriakides and Demetriou (2007) conducted a study to learn if Teacher Effectiveness Research (TER) could be utilized as a foundation for a valid teacher evaluation system and teacher reactions to the evaluation system were also investigated in relation to personal interests and concerns. In this study, the researchers administered a questionnaire to 175 teachers in the Cypriot educational system in which they found that teachers “are in favor of an evaluation system which will give them more professional autonomy through their involvement in the process of evaluation” (p. 60). More specifically, in respect to the individual concerns of teachers, the researchers reported these concerns fell in three broad categories: “concerns for self (e.g. How will my advancement possibilities/salary/status change?), concerns for work (e.g. How will the amount of work I do/the importance of my work/the work pressure change?) and concerns for relationships (e.g. How will my relationships with my co-workers/superiors/subordinates change?)” (p. 62).

Ovando (2001) investigated a related question in which she sought to explore the evaluative, affective, and personal experiences of 12 elementary school teachers who participated in the Professional Development System for Teacher Appraisal (PDSTA). Although teachers in this study perceived some benefits as a result of the evaluation system such as opportunities for professional growth, feedback, learner-centered dialogue, and a holistic perspective, the researchers found immense teacher concern around the validity of the evaluation instrument: “teachers believe that the levels of performance do not reflect the true ability of teachers. Specifically, teachers expressed concern with the meaning of the Proficient level and the four-point scale (distinguished, proficient, emerging and unsatisfactory) of the system” (p. 226). In addition, teachers perceive the evaluation process “may be too subjective and may not accurately reflect teachers’ instructional practice” (p. 226).

In 2011, Tornero and Taut conducted a study with a similar purpose in which they wanted to learn more about teachers’ perceptions of a mandatory national, standards-based teacher evaluation program in Chile. However, these researchers focused their study on those teachers who actively refused to participate in the evaluation. They conducted in-depth interviews with nine teachers and utilized grounded theory to discover why these teachers “rebelled” against the system and they found three main causes: “teachers’ perceive lack of legitimacy of the evaluation system, their negative emotions, including fear of results, and characteristics of the culture of the teaching profession in Chile” (p. 138). More precisely, the teachers spoke to a perceived lack of involvement in the design of the evaluation system even though the system was developed as a result of negotiations with the Teacher Union and it did receive their final approval.

Methods

The purpose of this study was to elicit elementary and middle school administrators' perceptions of the Ohio Teacher Evaluation System (OTES). To do so, the researchers focused on the following research questions:

1. How do administrators perceive their ability to implement the OTES?
2. How do administrators perceive their teachers' confidence in their ability to implement the OTES?
3. How have administrators implemented the OTES thus far?
4. How do administrators believe the OTES will improve teaching and learning for students in their building?

To answer these questions, the researchers utilized survey research to better understand Ohio's elementary and middle school administrators' perceptions of the OTES. More specifically, the researchers created a questionnaire to learn Ohio administrators' experiences with and attitudes, opinions, beliefs, and knowledge of OTES thus far. The questionnaire consisted of 25 Likert-based questions with four open-ended response questions that focused on administrator perceptions in three areas of the OTES: general implementation (eight questions), the teacher performance section (11 questions), and the student growth measures section (six questions). In each section, the statements followed the same format but differed in respect to the focus of that section. For example, the following statements were used in the teacher performance section:

- I feel confident in my ability to implement the Teacher Performance Section.
- My teachers feel confident in my ability to implement the Teacher Performance Section.
- I believe the Teacher Performance Section of the OTES will improve teaching and learning for all students in my building/district.

The questionnaire also included a brief demographics section at the end of the questionnaire to collect general participant data in respect to building grade level(s) (elementary, middle, and/or high school), total number of students in the building, the percentage of students who qualify for free and/or reduced lunch, the percentage of students disabled, the percentage of students who are English Language Learners, type of district (rural, suburban, or urban), and number of years as an administrator.

Ohio's Teacher Evaluation System

The Ohio Teacher Evaluation System (OTES) is divided into two sections: Teacher Performance on Standards and Student Growth Measures (see Figure 1). The Teacher Performance on Standards section of the evaluation recommends an annual Mid-Year Review and Conference and a Final Review and Conference both of which include a formal observation, classroom walkthroughs/informal observations, pre-conferences, and a post-conference. The Student Growth Measures section is dependent on the teacher's content area and grade level and may include a combination of teacher-level

value-added data, approved vendor assessment data, local evaluation agency (LEA) measure data and/or the development of student learning outcomes (SLOs). The Ohio Department of Education (ODE) (2014c) defines value-added analysis as “a statistical method that helps educators measure the impact schools and teachers have on students’ academic progress rates from year to year” (para. 3). Teachers with value-added data available must include it in their student growth measures (10-50% of student growth measures). If there is no value-added data available for the teacher, the district may choose to use data from an ODE approved vendor assessment (10-50% of student growth measures). Finally, if there is no valued-added data nor an ODE approved vendor assessment available for the teacher, the district may choose to use district measures in the form of SLOs (0-50% of student growth measures) (Ohio Department of Education, 2014b). There is currently debate in the field as to the difference in reliability and validity between the use of value-added data, LEA measures, approved vendor assessments, and SLOs.

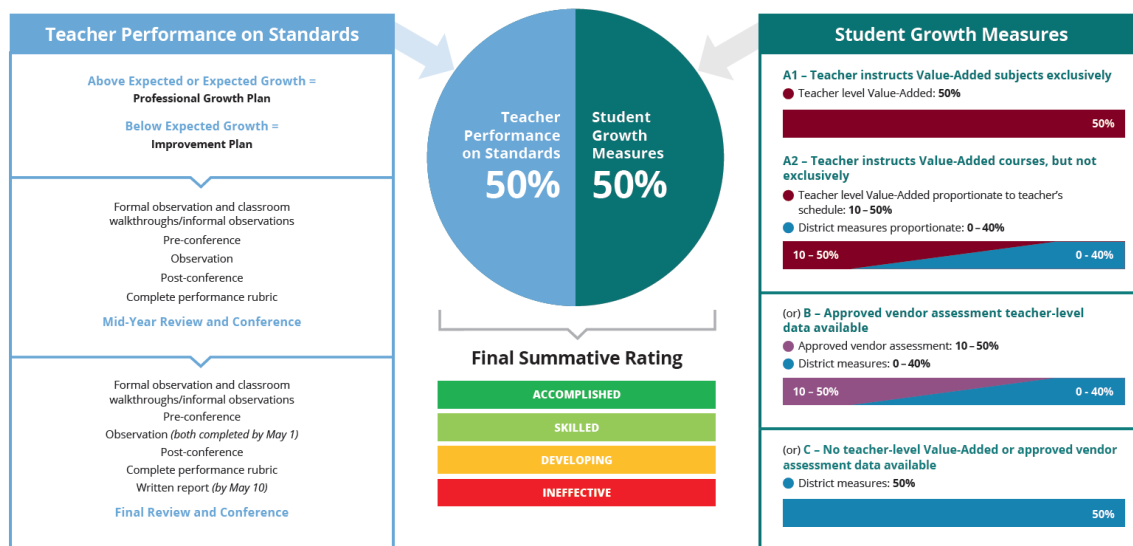


Figure 1. Ohio Teacher Evaluation System (Ohio Department of Education, 2014b)

After the first year of OTES implementation, teachers and administrators expressed the need to share their experiences with it. As a result of numerous requests from the field, the researchers created an opportunity for them to share these experiences through the current study.

Participants

The study was conducted in Ohio in February of the 2012-2013 school year. The participants included 437 elementary and/or middle school administrators who voluntarily chose to respond to a questionnaire distributed via email to all public K-12 administrators in the state of Ohio. Of the participants who responded to the demographic questions, 57% of the administrators reported they teach in an elementary school, 44% in a middle school, and 47% in a high school (with the understanding that they could select all that apply for those administrators who work in multiple schools).

Again, for the purpose of this study, the researchers focused on those participants who selected elementary and middle school.

More than half of the administrator participants work in schools with over 500 students and close to 40% of the administrators reported that over 50% of the students in their schools qualify for free and reduced lunch. The administrators also came from different types of schools in that 57% of the respondents said they work in a rural school, 31% of respondents selected suburban school, and 18% selected urban school (with the understanding that they could again select all that apply for those administrators who work in multiple schools). Finally, their experiences were equally diverse in that 20% of administrators reported that they have been administrators for less than five years, 29% from 5-10 years, 25% from 11-15 years, 12% from 16-20 years, 7% from 21-25 years, and 6% for more than 25 years.

Data Analyses

Data analyses were conducted through the computation of descriptive statistics (means, standard deviation, and frequencies) to calculate the overall perception reported for each statement and the demographic information. In addition, factor scores were created by computing the mean participant response to all statements associated with each of the five research questions. To determine variation in statement perceptions reported relative to administrator school district type (rural, suburban, urban), school building grade levels (elementary, middle, high school), and number of years of experience (<5, 5-10, 11-15, 16-20, 21-25, >25), a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted with these factors as independent variables and factor scores from the five research questions as dependent variables.

Cronbach's Alpha was used to calculate the internal reliability for each research question. The four scales had alpha coefficients of 0.89, 0.92, 0.86, and 0.91, respectively for research questions 1, 2, 3, and 4. These coefficients were satisfactory, as each scale was equal to or higher than .80 (Cronbach, 1990).

A frequency analysis was conducted on all responses, and responses were grouped by the items' associated research questions. This analysis found that, for Research Question 1 (How do administrators perceive their ability to implement the OTES?), 61.1% of responses were positive ("Agree" or "Strongly Agree") while 17.0% were neutral and 21.9% were negative ("Disagree" or "Strongly Disagree"). This indicates that administrators tended to be relatively confident in their ability to implement the OTES (see Table 1). However, within this research question, there were some strong disagreements between items. For example, while the majority of administrators felt confident in their ability to implement the OTES (74.6% were positive), an equal majority of administrators did not feel confident in their ability to have *time* to implement the OTES (74.1% were negative). They were most confident in their ability to conduct Informal/Formal Observation (85.8% positive) and they were least confident in their ability to implement the Student Growth Measures Section (only 34.8% were positive).

Table 1
Response Frequency to Research Question 1 Items

Confidence In Ability To:	SA	A	N	D	SD
Implement the OTES	20.14	54.46	14	9.38	2.06
Time to implement the OTES	2.98	10.09	12.8	38.07	36.01
Implement the Teacher Performance Section	20.82	58.12	11	6.64	3.43
Conduct Informal/Formal Observations	30.73	55.05	9.4	3.67	1.15
Conduct Pre-conferences with my teachers	25.58	55.99	13.6	3.92	0.92
Conduct the Post-Conference	26.15	52.06	13.3	7.11	1.38
Implement the Student Growth Measures Section	7.32	27.46	25.2	28.38	11.67
Use Value-Added data	16.7	41.42	24.5	11.21	6.18

As Table 1 illustrates, the administrators were confident in their ability to implement the OTES but varied in degrees of confidence based on the area of implementation. This would indicate that the high level of administrator perceived confidence in their ability to implement the OTES was primarily due to the confidence in their ability to implement the Teacher Performance Section.

For Research Question 2 (How do administrators perceive their teachers' confidence in their ability to implement the OTES?), 56.3% of responses were positive, 31.2% were neutral, and 12.5% were negative, which indicates relative confidence by administrators in their teachers' confidence in their ability to implement the OTES (see Table 2). More specifically, the administrators believe their teachers are most confident in their ability to implement the Informal/Formal Observations (72.2% were positive) and least confident in their ability to implement the Student Growth Measures Section (only 27% were positive) which clearly aligns with their own confidence levels for these items as reported in the previous research question. However, they are more confident in their own abilities for these items than they perceive their teachers to be.

Table 2
Response Frequency to Research Question 2 Items

Teachers' Confidence In Ability To:	SA	A	N	D	SD
Implement the OTES	5.99	47.47	33.4	10.6	2.53
Implement the Teacher Performance Section	12.36	48.74	30.2	5.95	2.75
Conduct Informal/Formal Observations	19.54	52.64	22.8	3.22	1.84
Conduct Pre-conferences with my teachers	17.05	51.61	27	3.23	1.15
Conduct the Post-Conference	16.67	51.16	26.4	4.17	1.62
Use Value-Added data	10.83	33.18	37.1	12.67	6.22
Implement the Student Growth Measures Section	4.58	22.43	41.7	21.05	10.3

Table 2 demonstrates that administrators perceive their teachers are confident in their administrators' ability to implement the OTES. However, the degrees of confidence varied based on area of implementation which again aligns with the administrator responses to the first research question.

For Research Question 3 (How have administrators implemented the OTES thus far?), 63% of the respondents reported they have implemented OTES, 12.3% were neutral, and 24.7% of the respondents reported they have not implemented the OTES, which indicates a somewhat high level of administrator implementation of the OTES thus far (see Table 3). The greatest implementation has occurred with Informal/Formal Observations (66.4% positive), followed by Post-Conferences (57.3% positive), and then Pre-Conferences (53.6%). The researchers have not determined why the administrators have conducted more Post-Conferences than Pre-Conferences.

Table 3
Response Frequency to Research Question 3 Items

Implementation Of:	SA	A	N	D	SD
Informal/Formal Observations	24.65	41.71	11.5	15.9	6.22
Pre-Conferences	22.3	31.26	12.4	25.75	8.28
Post-Conferences	23.09	34.18	11.3	23.56	7.85
Value-Added Data	19.27	55.73	13.8	7.57	3.67

As Table 3 illustrates, the majority of administrators believe they have implemented OTES but the degrees of implementation varied based on area of implementation. The highest level of implementation has occurred with the Informal/Formal Observations with perhaps a correlation to the previous research questions in that administrators report a high level of confidence in their ability to implement the Informal/Formal Observations and the belief that their teachers have confidence in their ability to implement them.

For Research Question 4 (How do administrators believe the OTES will improve teaching and learning for students in their building/district?), 44% of responses were positive, 28.1% were neutral, and 27.9% were negative, which indicates a somewhat neutral belief by administrators that the OTES will improve teaching and learning for students in their building/district (see Table 4). More than half of the administrators reported the Teacher Performance Section of the OTES will improve teaching and learning for students (56.2% were positive) whereas only 36.7% of them reported the Student Growth Measures Section of the OTES will improve the teaching and learning for their students. They also reported they do not believe that value-added data accurately represents the growth of their students in that only 32% were positive, 28.1 neutral, and 38.3% were negative.

Table 4
Response Frequency to Research Question 3 Items

Belief That:	SA	A	N	D	SD
OTES will improve the teaching and learning for all students	11.24	39.68	26.8	16.28	5.96
Teacher Performance Section will improve teaching and learning	13.53	42.66	26.4	11.47	5.96
Student Growth Measures Section will improve teaching and learning	7.11	29.59	29.6	18.58	15.14
Value-Added data accurately represents my students' growth	5.99	26.04	29.7	23.27	14.98

Table 4 summarizes the level high level to which administrators are not sure if the OTES will improve teaching and learning. While the administrators believe the Teacher Performance Section may improve teaching and learning this is not true of the Student Growth Measures Section.

Findings and Discussion

Based on the descriptive analysis of the data, more than half of administrators (63% of the respondents) have participated in the OTES and they were relatively confident in their ability to implement the OTES and their teachers' confidence in their ability to implement the OTES. However, the administrators reported high levels of skepticism that the OTES will improve the teaching and learning for their students and this was further discussed in detail in their 442 comments for the open-ended response questions.

Overall, the more than 400 elementary and middle school administrators who responded to the questionnaire felt confident in their ability to implement the OTES and they reported their teachers felt confident in their ability to implement the OTES too (they were actually more confident than their secondary peers). These administrators felt especially confident in their ability to conduct the Informal/Formal Observations and the Pre-Conferences prior to these observations. They also reported that their teachers felt confident in their ability to implement these specific aspects of the Teacher Performance Section. As one administrator stated, "we've been doing this for years."

However, although the elementary and middle school administrators were confident in their ability to implement the OTES, they were not very confident in their ability to have the time to implement it. This was the most common concern the administrators shared in the hundreds of comments received from the open-ended response questions. For example, one administrator explained, "Although I believe the process is good, I am concerned about the volume of evaluations that will need to be completed each year. I take this task very seriously but fear that it will consume a great deal of time and will not allow me to dedicate the necessary time needed for other aspects of my administrative position." Another administrator described how the OTES will

impact students, “I am completely disappointed in what this will do to my time with students. Currently, I am able to work with students, meet with them to support their learning and attend parent meetings to assist in problem solving with struggling students. With over 45 teachers to evaluate, that time for/with students will be completely destroyed trying to implement OTES.” This is representative of Kyriakides and Demetriou (2007) research to learn if Teacher Effectiveness Research (TER) could be utilized as a foundation for a valid teacher evaluation system and teacher reactions to the evaluation system. In this study, the participants reported concerns around the teacher evaluation system fell in three broad categories: “concerns for self (e.g. How will my advancement possibilities/salary/status change?), concerns for work (e.g. How will the amount of work I do/the importance of my work/the work pressure change?), and concerns for relationships (e.g. How will my relationships with my co-workers/superiors/subordinates change?)” (p. 62).

The elementary and middle school administrators were equally concerned about their ability to implement the Student Growth Measures Section and they reported their teachers were not confident in their ability to implement this section as well. This was the second greatest concern the administrators shared in the open-ended response commentary. This administrator’s sentiments were representative of the others, “I do not feel competent in guiding or giving support to staff on the 50% of OTES that has to do with student growth. I think the state has not given sufficient time to get administrators trained and therefore we can't even at the district level provide what is needed to support teachers.” In respect to the value-added data component of the Student Growth Measures Section, another administrator explained, “I feel that there are always exceptions and additional factors that play into scores obtained at a certain point in time. I do not feel that value-added data is the only way that we should be measuring student growth.” Ovando (2001) investigated a related question in which she sought to explore the evaluative, affective, and personal experiences of 12 elementary school teachers who participated in the Professional Development System for Teacher Appraisal (PDSTA). Ovando found similar teacher concern around the validity of the teacher evaluation instruments in that “teachers believe that the levels of performance do not reflect the true ability of teachers” (p. 226).

In general, elementary and middle school administrators were neutral in their belief that the implementation of OTES will improve teaching and learning for their students, but they were more positive in respect to the Teacher Performance Section than the Student Growth Measures Section. Perhaps this administrator summarized it best, “I feel the process provides me with great insight into my teachers' strengths and weaknesses. But with almost 40 staff members, I am greatly concerned that I am not able to tend to my other responsibilities as a building leader.” In their study on teachers’ perceptions of a mandatory national, standards-based teacher evaluation program in Chile, Tornero and Taut (2011) found similar concerns around teachers’ perceived lack of legitimacy of the evaluation system.

Implications

As the administrators in this study reported, there are areas of strengths and challenges with the Ohio Teacher Evaluation System (OTES). The challenges provide a

unique opportunity for Educational Administration programs to develop curriculum and field experiences that reflect the need for administrator candidates to learn more about and apply their knowledge and skills of teacher evaluation systems. More specifically, in respect to Research Question 1 (How do administrators perceive their ability to implement the OTES?), Educational Administration programs should provide administrator candidates with the opportunity to not only learn more about teacher evaluation, but also how to efficiently implement it within the realistic demands of their position. The inability to have time to complete the OTES was the primary concern of the participants. Therefore, administrator candidate field experiences should include teacher evaluation with a variety of different mentors who implement the OTES relative to their context. In addition, administrator candidates need to receive training in the interpretation of Student Growth Measures, specifically value-added data, to inform teacher evaluation. This was an enormous concern reported by the participants in this study that could be addressed by Educational Administration programs.

A perhaps even greater implication for improved practice in Educational Administration programs was revealed through Research Question 4 (How do administrators believe the OTES will improve teaching and learning for students in their building/district?). Educational Administration programs, legislators, state department of education, and district administrators, especially, need to provide professional development, resources, materials, and data that clearly demonstrate for administrators the connections between teacher evaluation systems and how they will improve the teaching and learning for their students. The connections need to be made more obvious and further research needs to be conducted to validate these connections. Further research is necessary to determine the longitudinal implementation issues related to updates in teacher evaluation systems such as inclusion of student surveys, teacher self-evaluations, peer review evaluations, and student portfolios (Ohio Department of Education, 2014b) as well as how students, parents, and community members perceive the impact of teacher evaluation systems.

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The Political Boundaries of School Choice and Privatization in Ohio

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Abstract

We analyze the votes taken in the Ohio State Legislature pertaining to the establishment of six school voucher programs: The Ohio Scholarship and Tutoring Program, The Autism Scholarship, The Jon Peterson Special Needs Scholarship, The Educational Choice Pilot Scholarship, The Educational Choice Scholarship, and the Income-based Scholarship Program. We attempt to estimate a legislative voting model on the passage of school voucher programs through the Ohio state legislature. As predicted, the legislator was more likely to vote in favor of a voucher proposal if the district had greater household income and he/she was a Republican. Democratic legislators, who generally represent more minority districts and poorer households, were much more likely than Republican legislators to vote against the voucher programs. In light of clear attempts to limit plaintiff access to the courts, public school advocates should consider a political approach to gaining a more favorable method for funding its public schools.

Keywords: school vouchers, legislature, school finance, scholarship programs

Introduction

Even though Ohio residents are annually asked to fund schools in partnership with state dollars, multiple state Supreme Court rulings in *DeRolph* and article VI § II of the Ohio Constitution (DeRolph, 1997) have confirmed the legislature's responsibility for securing a thorough and efficient system of common schools. There is ambiguity surrounding the "thorough and efficient" clause. When referencing the terms to the period in which the constitution was written; the definition is a perfect and efficient system of education offered throughout the state, of common schools. The term, common schools, implies equality. The constitution also states, no law shall be passed that prohibits the poor. A common school system would provide the same education to all children regardless of who pays the revenue. Ohio's public schools are funded with a combination of revenue from the state and local property tax. This leads to disparities in funding in affluent districts, where high property values lead to greater funding than in urban and rural districts with lesser property values. There also are issues with voter fatigue and a local community's value system associated with taxation. Reliance on local property tax requires levy passage. Ohio law also requires levies to have renewal votes

(Ohio Rev. Code §§ 5705.212). The voters are continually being asked to vote on levies; some are new levies and some are renewals. It is a delicate art to inform voters and prevent fatigue. This challenge then is exasperated when a community has a value of little taxation or on non-public education. There are many high wealth communities that will vote down consecutive levies on the ballot due to ideology.

However, since 1997 state lawmakers have ignored several state Supreme Court rulings reaffirming their charge, and it appears plaintiffs have exhausted all litigation options available to date. After the first *DeRolph* ruling some legislators proposed the removal of the “thorough and efficient” clause from the state Constitution to eliminate potential school finance litigation; the Chair of the Education, Public Institutions, & Miscellaneous and Local Government Committee of the Ohio Constitutional Modernization Commission proposed a similar change to state law (Rowland, 2014). The General Assembly would only be required to provide for the organization, assembly, and control of the public school system in the state supported by public funds. Without this standard, public accountability for school funding is reduced.

On the other hand, Ohio state lawmakers have endorsed school choice and privatization that re-shapes education into a commodity influenced by demand in a competitive framework. Given little or no substantive public school reform through litigation, the best way to influence funding policy in Ohio may be to change those holding public office, namely the state lawmakers, the Governor, and the Supreme Court judges they appoint.

All school choice and privatization efforts take funds away from local school districts. While the voters have had no opportunities to weigh in on the privatization campaign their money has gone to fund these entities. While school districts are strapped with the burden and expense of running a levy campaign the accumulated monies from the passage either go directly to these entities or they are supplanted into the budget due to state monies not being provided to the district. One could easily argue that voters have not been given the ability to decide how their taxes should be used regarding education and those voters that are passing levies have not given the true commitment of the levy on the ballot. Voters are deciding on the campaign ran by the local school district, they have not been told how much of their tax monies would then be syphoned away to chartered schools and vouchers.

Accordingly, this paper seeks to design a legislative voting model on the passage of school choice reforms since 1995, as a function of average household incomes and the assessed value per pupil of the regions they represent. We hypothesize that lawmakers representing poorer districts with lower household incomes are less likely to support school choice and privatization policies. The purpose of this paper is to identify the degree to which levels of poverty and household income influence votes taken by members of the Ohio House of Representative and Senate on several voucher programs.

Voting Political Ideology and School Vouchers

Some of the early examination of legislative voting as a function of political ideology has yielded mixed result. Forty years ago Kalt and Zupan (1984) revealed that political ideology largely influenced votes cast by United States Senators on legislation pertaining to strip mining the act of leveling forests from mountaintops, using explosives to flatten remaining brush, and then using earth moving equipment to remove layers of

the earth covering the minerals sought. Twenty-four years later, the administration of Republican President George W. Bush adopted a rule that authorized mountain top removal mining; conversely, a year later newly elected President Barack Obama eliminated the rule. In March of 2014, the Republican controlled House of Representatives passed the Preventing Government Waste and Protecting Coal Mining Jobs in America Act (H.R. 2824) to reinstate the Bush rule established in 2008.

Sam Peltzman examined congressional votes taken in the twentieth century and argued because legislators are motivated by a veracity for self-preservation, the district economic interests of their constituency will largely influence their voting patterns. Since 1947 Americans for Democratic Action (ADA) has examined voting patterns of the United States Congress. As a progressive organization, it measured the percentage of a legislator's votes consistent with the position taken by ADA on significant issues (Peltzman, 1984). Consistent with Peltzman's theory, in his examination of political support for voucher expansion, Kenny (2010) discovered that most voucher-friendly legislation was enacted in states where Republicans held both the House and Senate chambers of their respective state legislatures. More specifically, Republican lawmakers were in the majority when at least one legislative chamber adopted a voucher law; Republicans were also in control of state houses in nearly each instance where the entire legislature supported pro-voucher statutes (Kenny, 2010). Republican legislators were more likely to support school voucher legislation.

Researchers have also examined the effects of campaign contributions, race, and shifts in political power on voucher legislation. According to Gokcekus, Phillips, and Tower's (2004) examination of Congressional voting patterns, support for voucher legislation was not a function of campaign contributions but there was a connection between vouchers, voting, and party affiliation. However, they also reported that greater percentages of African American voters within a Congressman's district increased the probability of a lawmakers' support of school choice legislation (Gokcekus, Phillips, & Tower, 2004). Author and King found the largest shift in political power during the 2010 midterm election, resulting in Republican control of both state houses and the governorship, served as a catalyst for the largest voucher expansion efforts in the history of American public education (2013).

Ohio's School Choice Legislation

Adopted in 2011, the initial version of the Jon Peterson Special Needs Scholarship provided Ohio's 14,000 students with disabilities the option of attending an alternative public school or a registered private school. Vouchers can also be used for services at private therapists and other service providers. During the 2013-14 school year approximately 2,204 students who participated received vouchers with an average value of \$8,543 (Ohio Rev. Code §§ 3301-101-01-13).

The Autism Scholarship Program, established in 2003, provides voucher for students, ages three to 21, diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder and enrolled in the state's public schools. After students receive the educational services, parents or guardians apply to the state for reimbursement. In 2013-2014, the program served approximately 2,496 students with vouchers averaging \$19,103 (Ohio Rev. Code §§ 3310.41-43.)

It is important to note that both the Peterson and Autism Scholarships require the district of residence to develop the IEP for the child addressing the requirements of a free and appropriate public education (FAPE); however once the individual accepts the scholarships the district is not obligated to meet FAPE while the child is receiving funds (Ohio Admin. Code §§ 3301-103-04 A(7) Ohio Admin. Code §§ 3301-103-04 A(8)). This has proven to be problematic for families when they feel there is an issue with the terms of the IEP not being met by the providers. There is some level of due process for grievances but the privatization of IDEA through a vouchered mechanism presents considerable problems for families and could be detrimental if families do not have the knowledge and ability to self-advocate.

The Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Program originally enabled students in grades K–8 to attend participating public or private schools of their guardian’s choice. Under the law, preference is granted for families with incomes less than 200 percent of the federal poverty level (\$47,100 for a family of four in 2013-14). Children from families with incomes above 200 percent of poverty are eligible to participate in the program if approved by the Ohio Superintendent of Public Instruction. Changes to the program in 2011, sponsored by Republican lawmakers, expanded voucher access to include high-school students. In 2013-14, the voucher amount was capped at \$4250 and \$5700, respectively, for grades k-8 and 9-12 (Ohio Revised Code, § 3313.974-3313.979).

The Ohio EdChoice Scholarship Program (OESP) provides vouchers for students enrolled in public schools “under Academic Watch” for two of the previous three years. Students are also eligible for the vouchers if they are either enrolled or eligible to be enrolled in public schools that (a) received performance index scores from the state in the lowest 10th percentile for two of the most recent three rankings and (b) were also not declared to be “excellent” or “effective” in the most recent state ranking. Expected in 2016-17 eligibility will be extended to students in grades K-3 enrolled in public schools receiving a grade of “D” or “F” in literacy on two of the three most recent state report cards (Ohio Revised Code, § 3310.01-3310.17).

Ohio’s newest voucher program, the Income-based Scholarship Program serves first-time children enrolled in kindergarten from families with incomes (1) no more than 200 percent of the federal poverty level (\$47,100 for a family of four in 2013-14) for a maximum voucher, (2) above 200 percent but no more than 300 percent of the federal poverty level (\$70,650 for a family of four in 2013-14) for a voucher worth \$3,187.50, or (3) above 300 percent but no more than 400 percent of the federal poverty level (\$94,200 for a family of four in 2013-14) for a voucher worth \$2,125. After the initial receipt of a voucher, students remain eligible in future years unless their family income exceeds 400 percent of the federal poverty level. Students from low-income families who do not qualify for the EdChoice Scholarship Program are also eligible for participation (Ohio Rev. Code § 33110.032). Residence school performance is not required for eligibility.

Methodology

Voting Model

In the context of estimating the voting model, the dependent variable is binary, symbolizing whether or not an Ohio lawmaker opposed or supported the voucher

legislation. A vote in favor of the voucher law; the dependent variable in each model equals 1 if the legislator voted for any other of the voucher bills. The dependent variable used in all models was binary. Hence, the probit estimation technique was applied. The Probit Model Equation is shown below (Elliott & Timmermann, 2013, p. 1029).

$$P = \text{pr} [y = 1 | x] = F(X\beta) \text{ \{functional form\}}$$

An increase in X increases/decreases the likelihood that y=1 (makes the outcome more/less likely, in other words, an increase in X makes the outcome of 1 more/less likely. We interpret the sign of the coefficient but not the magnitude as the magnitude cannot be interpreted using the coefficient because different models have different scale coefficients. It is common to report marginal effects after reporting the coefficients, the marginal effects reflect the change in the probability of y=1 given a 1 unit change in the independent variable x.

There were 132 Ohio legislators who voted on each school voucher bill. A limitation of the study was the changes in sample as legislators were voted in and out of office; therefore, the 99 Republicans in 2011 were not necessarily the same individuals who voted in 2003. These votes are generally examined as a function of the lawmaker's economic, ethnic, and political make-up of their constituency. This analysis utilized two dependent variables applied to six models, which represents votes cast by the 132 members of the Ohio legislature; 33 in the Senate and 99 in the House of Representatives. The first model explains the votes cast in 2011 on the passage of the Jon Peterson Scholarship. The dependent variable PASSPETE equals 1 if the legislator voted for the law; REJECTPETE equals 0 if the legislator voted against the law. The second model explains the votes cast in 2003 on the passage of the Autism Scholarship Program. The dependent variable PASSAUTISM equals 1 if the legislator voted for the law REJECTAUTISM equals 0 if the legislator voted against the law. The third model explains the votes cast in 2005 on the passage of the EdChoice Scholarship Program. The dependent variable PASSEDCHOICE equals 1 if the legislator voted for the law REJECTEDCHOICE equals 0 if the legislator voted against the law. The fourth model explains the votes cast in 2013 on the passage of the Income-based Scholarship Program. The dependent variable PASSEDCHOICE equals 1 if the legislator voted for the law, REJECTEDINCOME equals 0 if the legislator voted against the law. The fifth model explains the votes cast in 1995 on the passage of the Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Program. The dependent variable PASSEDCLEVELAND equals 1 if the legislator voted for the law REJECTEDCLEVELAND equals 0 if the legislator voted against the law.

Framework for Findings

Between the first vote on the Cleveland Scholarship Tutoring Program in 1995 and the Income-based Scholarship in 2013, 63 out of 123, (5 Senate, 58 House) legislative seats changed political party. CHANGE DEMOCRAT equals 1 if the district was represented by a Republican across the respective voting years, equals -1 if the district was represented by a Democrat during the respective voting year, and equals 0 if there was no change in the party in the district.

Results from the Probit Models

Table 1 presents the estimated marginal effects from the probit model that examine the legislature's passage of each voucher proposal. There are strong predictions for each of the variables: Household Income of the District and Percent of District Living in Poverty. Both the mean of household income and poverty rate are included in Table 1.

Table 1
Factors influencing Ohio Lawmaker Vote for Voucher Proposals

Outcome variable = vote for Voucher Proposal	
Variable	Marginal Effects Estimates (z stat)
Mean Income	-.000057
Poverty Region	-.000029

The mean income has the predicted negative coefficient and is highly significant in the five probits in which it is utilized. A one standard deviation fall in Household Income leads to a 0.23 to 0.57 rise in the probability of voting against a voucher proposal. The coefficients are significant at the 5 percent level (with a one tailed test) in the first probit and at the 8 percent level in the second probit. A one standard deviation rise in the percent of the population living in poverty was associated with a 0.12-0.29 increase in the probability of Ohio legislators voting for one of the voucher programs. The prediction that richer legislative districts favored voucher programs is supported by these results. In all five probits, Republican legislators were as expected, much more likely than Democratic legislators to support Ohio Voucher Programs. The probability of supporting the voucher bills was 0.89 to 0.97 higher for Republicans than for Democrats. Democratic lawmakers were more likely to oppose vouchers laws than were Republican legislators.

Conclusion

Politics remains a central factor in Education Policy, especially in the aftermath of redistricting and a more polarized electorate in the past 25 years. We attempted to add to the dearth of literature by analyzing five votes taken on school voucher proposals by Ohio legislators from 1995 to 2013. The first vote in 1995 on the Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Program resulted in a party line vote for Republican lawmakers while 42 democrats crossed over and voted in favor of the voucher program; while the vote on the Autism Scholarship in 2003 yielded no cross-over votes. The roll-call vote for the Jon Peterson Scholarship in 2011 yielded one crossover vote whereby a Republican Senator representing district 29 voted against the program. Voting on the Educational Choice Scholarship Program in 2005 resulted in five cross-over votes whereby one Republican lawmaker voted against the program, and nine Democratic lawmakers voted in favor this

program. More recently in 2013, three Democratic lawmakers and one Republican voted against the party-line concerning the Income-based Scholarship Program.

The first vote in 1995 could also be considered a different type of vote since the scale of the program was much smaller than the others as it was within a city and not the entire state. It was a pilot. The concept was essentially at an experimental state. Two decades later we have more data to exam the effects of the voucher programs and the unintended consequences. Furthermore, it is unrealistic to assume that all legislators have a firm grasp on education funding and the benefits and consequences of reform efforts. This is where idealism and reality can have compounding problems. For example, vouchers do offer choice but is it a fiscally conservative model? Is this the most efficient use of taxpayer monies?

A troubling limitation of this study and on a general policy making level was that the majority of voucher legislation was embedded within budget bills. It is challenging as researchers and taxpayers to determine where legislators stand on the voucher reform efforts as there is little legislation directly identifying school vouchers without being entangled with other policy decisions. The only stand-alone voucher legislation was the Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Program, which resulted in the largest number of crossover votes. The rest of the voucher legislation was embedded within budget bills making political support by party lines difficult to determine. Because legislators voted on a package and not stand-alone voucher legislation, results must be interpreted with caution and used as initial exploration into this phenomenon. Further research is needed. The authors also believe legislation without entanglement would also be best practice for a more transparent governmental process.

Scholars have attempted to explain how education driven and shaped by political interest results in public schools incapable of demonstrating improved and sustained learning for the children they serve. In addition, they embraced the emancipation of public schools from political influence by establishing a choice system placing power in the hands of parents who would incentivize schools to improve student outcomes (Chubb & Moe, 1997). Suburban communities have a history of fighting back against education reforms that threaten their existence and quality of life. Efforts to integrate public schools were stymied by Presidential politics in 1972 and *Milliken v. Bradley* (1974) because it would impact suburban learning communities. This same phenomena disturbed school finance reform in *San Antonio v. Rodriguez* (1973) as it threatened Texas suburb's interest similarly; all in the name of local control symbolizing and reserving the ability of suburban schools to retain enrollment in their schools for their neighborhood children. Geographic constraints [urban/suburban] impact other reforms like school choice, charter schools, and voucher programs as legislation for these reforms, more times than not, limits enrollment to children residing in the communities where the charter schools are located (Ohio Revised Code § 3314.02 (C)(1)). The results of this analysis implies that, at least in Ohio, the suburbs remain immune and shielded from the application of significant public school reforms and large urban areas remain laboratories for experimentation and private sector business opportunities.

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