ISP 2015-002: Best Practices from Arkansas Schools

(Preliminary Findings)

Gary Ritter, Ph.D.

Sarah McKenzie, Ph.D.

Joint House and Senate Education Committee

February 8, 2016

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS

Office for **E**ducation **P**olicy

office for education policy

- •AR Education Reports
- • Policy Briefs
- • Report Cards
- • Newsletters
- • Data Resources

www.officeforeducationpolicy.org/

2

Study Request: Interim Study Proposal 2015-002

An augmentation of the Arkansas Charter School Evaluation and
Best Practices study was requested by Rep. Charles Armstrong
that would consider best practices of traditional public schools
that **improve student achievement growth.**

3

ISP Language

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the **study shall review and provide recommendations for the application of the successful strategies of charter schools to non-charter public schools** for:

(1) Improving student learning for all students;

(2) Increasing learning opportunities for all students through expanded learning experiences for students who are identified as low-achieving;

(3) Using different and innovative teaching methods;

(4) Creating new professional opportunities for teachers, including the opportunity to be responsible for the learning program at the school site;

(5) Providing parents and pupils with expanded choices in the types of educational opportunities; and

(6) (A) Increasing parental engagement in and responsibility for the education of their children in public schools.

(6) (B) The study of parental engagement strategies at charter schools shall compare those strategies with the implementation of the state's current laws governing parental involvement in non-charter public schools.

4

"Imperfect" Methodology to Study Best Practices

School-level achievement growth calculated based on state assessments in literacy and mathematics (2012-13 and 2013-14).

Preliminary interviews conducted:

8 high achievement growth traditional public school principals (3 elementary, 3 middle and 2 high schools)

"What do you feel contributes to the high growth of your students?"

Survey developed based on interviews:

Four domains:

- school leadership
- school culture (parent involvement, discipline)
- academic curriculum/programs
- professional development

Surveys were sent electronically to all traditional public schools: 1,076
- **177 responses received**
- **Responding schools were similar to state population**

Survey results analyzed for relationship to school-level achievement growth.

5

Research Questions

1. **School leadership**: What is the relationship between principal leadership styles and student achievement growth? How might opportunities for teacher leadership relate to this student growth?

2. **School culture:** How do schools with high student achievement involve parents at school? What types of practices are used at successful schools to manage student discipline?

3. **Instructional improvement:** What types of professional development opportunities do teachers access at schools with high student achievement growth? How do these schools utilize instructional coaches? How do teachers use data to improve instruction?

4. **College and career readiness:** What types of post-secondary opportunities do students encounter at schools with high student achievement?

6

I. School leadership:

What is the relationship between principal leadership styles and student achievement growth?

How might opportunities for teacher leadership relate to this student growth?

7

School Leadership: Principal

What percent of time do you use the following leadership styles?

_ School Leader: Teachers take their cues from my actions and directions.

_ **School Leader with input: I welcome teacher input into what does and does not work.**

_ Co-Leader: I work with my vice principal(s) and/or lead teachers to make decisions.

_ Facilitator: I look to teachers to make decisions about the school.

School leader with input was the most common leadership style across all levels of achievement growth, but all styles were used frequently.

Percent of Time Spent Using Each Leadership Style

Low Growth   Middle Growth   High Growth

8

4
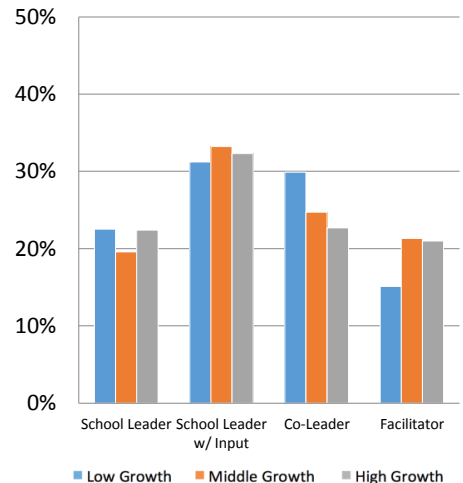
School Leadership: Principal

With which leadership style did principals primarily identify? (Based on highest percent of time selected)

Surprisingly, Co-leader was related to <u>lower</u> student achievement growth.

Possible explanations:
- Ineffective communication between co-leaders and staff
- Most effective teachers focusing on school leadership responsibilities instead of teaching responsibilities
- Others?

Most Identified With Leadership Style
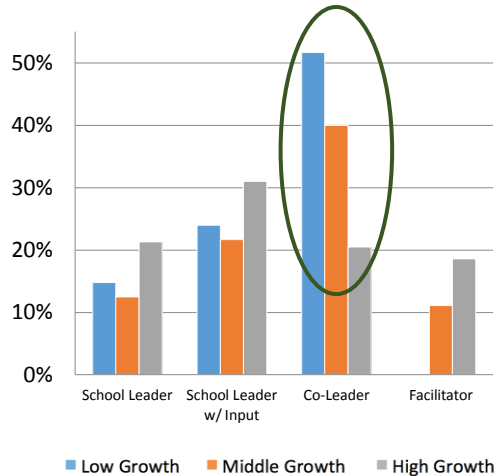
9

School Leadership: Local Leadership

Decision Making

Who makes the following decisions:
(Teachers, Principal, District, Other)
- Curriculum used
- Disciplinary consequences
- Classroom management system
- Professional development
- Staff hiring

Locus of decision making was <u>not related</u> to student achievement growth.

Teacher Leadership Opportunities

Which of the following leadership positions are made available to teachers?
- Grade level lead
- Content area lead
- Instructional coach
- Athletic Coach
- Club/Extra Curricular advisor
- Part-time administrator
- Other (please specify)

Teacher leadership opportunity was <u>not related</u> to student achievement growth.

10

5

II. School culture:

How do schools with high student achievement involve parents at school?

What types of practices are used at successful schools to manage student discipline?

11

School Culture: Parent Involvement

Amount of parent involvement <u>was associated</u> with positive achievement growth: even when school-level characteristics were controlled.

How often does your school have...
(Once a year, once a quarter, once a month, at least once a week)
- Student artistic performances
- Parent-Teacher conferences
- Family nights
- Sporting events on campus
- Parent classroom visits
- Parent volunteers
- Open Houses
- Academic activities (i.e. spelling bee, science fair, etc.)
- Award ceremonies
- PTO/PTA meetings
- Parent surveys administered

12

School Culture: Discipline

Disciplinary Practices <u>were associated</u> with positive achievement growth.

No single practice, but some combinations

- Staff-student relationships +
  Good instruction +
  Clear expectations

- Engaging curricula +
  Good instruction +
  Clear expectations

- Consistency across staff +
  Staff-student relationships +
  Clear expectations

Choose 3 practices you feel are most important to minimizing discipline issues at your school.
- Consistency across staff
- Staff-student relationships
- Positive peer relationships
- Engaging curricula
- Good instruction
- Fidelity to behavior system
- Individualized consequences
- Teacher discretion over consequences
- Clear expectations
- Teacher professional development
- Parent involvement
- Adherence to school handbook

13

III. Instructional improvement:

What types of professional development opportunities do teachers access at schools with high student achievement growth?

How do these schools utilize instructional coaches?

How do teachers use data to improve instruction?

14

Instructional Improvement: Professional Development

Access to professional development opportunities **was not related** to student achievement growth.

How often do your teachers have access to the following...
(Once a year, once a quarter, once a month, at least once a week)
- Principal instructional coaching
- Collaboration with curricular coaches
- On-site professional development
- Professional development through your co-op
- District required professional development
- Teacher led professional development
- Formal evaluation
- Peer observations
- Informal classroom walkthroughs
- Vertical planning time
- Horizontal planning time
- Data interpretation support

15

Instructional Improvement: Instructional Coaches

Instructional coaches were reported by 60% of schools.

Having an instructional coach **was not related** to student achievement growth.

Specific activities of instructional coaches **were not related** to student achievement growth.

Does your school have an instructional coach (any subject)? Yes/ No

Select the percent of time instructional coaches spend doing the following:
_ Observing teachers
_ Working with teachers
_ Developing materials for teachers
_ Other (please specify)

16

Instructional Improvement: Using Data

Reported data usage practices were not related to student achievement growth.

(e.g., formative assessment data, summative assessment data, RTI, student work, attendance, discipline, observations)

Reported differentiation practices were not related to student achievement growth.

(e.g., small groups, strength-based, technology, formative assessment).

17

IV. College and Career Readiness:

What types of post-secondary opportunities do students have at schools with high student achievement?

18

College and Career Readiness Activities

College-focused schools <u>were associated</u> with positive student achievement growth.

> Most commonly selected:
> Financial Aid/ Scholarship Assistance
> College Visits

Choose 3 activities that are most important to helping students meet their post-secondary goals.
- College visits
- Individual college advising
- Apprenticeships
- College entrance exam preparation
- College fairs
- Career fairs
- Internships
- College entrance essay support
- Financial aid and scholarship assistance
- AP/IB classes
- Resume building/editing
- Career interest surveys

19

Prior Study: High Growth Traditional

- Visible, supportive, and pro-active leadership

- Autonomous teaching driven by consistent monitoring of data

- Culture of success and high standards permeating school community

- Collaborative environment for entire school family

In 2011, OEP published *"Spotlights on Success: Traits and Strategies of Five High-Growth Schools in Arkansas".*

20

Prior Study: High Achieving Charter

- Flexibility to hire a variety of teacher types

- Flexibility to use additional instructional time

- Charter schools often shifted staff responsibilities to ensure student readiness for post-secondary school opportunities (e.g., ACT prep, college visit, resumes & college essays)

- Opportunities for teacher leadership and parent involvement

21

Concluding Thoughts

- Associated with **increased student achievement growth**: Parent involvement, some combinations of discipline practices and supporting students to prepare for college.

- Not associated with increased student achievement growth: data usage, instructional improvement practices and opportunities for teacher leadership.

- Practices that improve student achievement growth are complex and variable. Schools should be supported in identifying what 'works' for their students, based on multiple data sources including high-quality information about student growth. Input-driven policies are not recommended.

- Questions?

22

Thank you for allowing us to present today.