Leadership Influence on Teacher Support Teams in High Poverty Elementary Schools

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ABSTRACT

The increased accountability to schools and districts to meet federal standings has lead to commencing systematic approaches to the needs of all students. In order for teachers to be able to facilitate instructional strategies that are differentiated and functional for all students they must receive leadership and support. The importance of expertise and leadership in the educational process is paramount, for there is more power in a leadership model and not necessarily in a model that designs its own standards.

This need for expertise and leadership has lead to collaboration among general and special education experts, as well as the students' families, achieves an integrated and effective approach in response to struggling learners. First supported by senior administration in school districts, the Teacher Support Team (TST) initiative relied upon a selected team within each school to show what it can achieve for students.

This leads to the significance of distributive leadership in the TST and creating relational trust by allowing those in the organization to take leadership roles and distribute the leadership appears to be imperative. This allows for greater participation in the organization, as well as greater morale and a relieved workload for the leader. It also encourages leadership in the organization, which benefits the organization as a whole.

The overall purpose of this study was to establish a connection between the role of distributed leadership and the impact of TSTs on elementary students of high poverty. To achieve this, information was gathered from high poverty elementary schools in the

Sunnyside Public School District. The study examined key respondents' perceptions on the leadership within the TST. A mixed method of gathering both qualitative and quantitative data was chosen as the most appropriate approach to collect the data.

The project began by the researcher contacting six high poverty elementary schools within the Sunnyside Public Schools and requesting their participation in the research project. The purpose of narrowing the research to schools that serve a high poverty population is to ensure similarities within the students and communities. Each TST was made up of the building administrator, a TST coordinator, and other teachers as noted by the team. Each team was provided an opportunity to participate in the research activity and it was assured the data was anonymous and not reflective of employment performance or used as an evaluative tool.

The approach to the design was a mixed methods research study. Based on the data gathered via a survey, quantitative information was gathered in order to address the research questions. In additional to the quantitative approach, a qualitative aspect was analyzed. This mixed methods approach was chosen due to the potential to discover true meaning to the research questions. It was also anticipated the mixed methods approach would allow for further research designs to come to the forefront.

Descriptive analyses were preformed to support the research questions and sub-parts to the research questions. Finding of this study displayed both favorable and less favorable confidence in the leadership of the TST coordinator and the TST itself. The concerns of the TST coordinator and the TST itself were focused on time being wasted, weak leadership, and teachers who were frustrated with the results of the TST process.