

Public Abstract

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Title:AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF REFORM INITIATIVES IN RELATIVELY SMALL MISSOURI SCHOOL DISTRICTS

The purpose of this study was to identify commonly implemented school reform initiatives in relatively small Missouri school districts and determine the degree of relationship, if any, between those commonly implemented reforms and student academic success. Superintendents from schools with student populations of 500 - 2000 students were asked to identify initiatives implemented in their districts, the amount of personnel hours and fiscal support committed to the support, the stages of implementation of the initiatives and the perceived level of impact of the reforms on student academic success. Correlational analysis were conducted by building level and grouped grade levels to determined if any significant relationships existed between fully years of implementation, personnel hours, dollars spent, average daily attendance, graduation rate, the superintendent's perceived impact and the percent of students passing communication arts and mathematics as measured by the annual MAP assessment.

The study identified 297 initiatives implemented in 81 school districts. The ratio of dollars spent and personnel hours committed to elementary grade levels and those grades paired with elementary related initiatives outpaced resource commitment across all other grade levels by approximately 3:1. Statistically significant relationships were found between years of full implementation and superintendent perceived impact, personnel hours and dollars spent and percent passing communications arts and percent passing mathematics. No statistically significant relationships were found between years of full implementation, perceived impact, dollars spent, personnel hours committed, average daily attendance, persistence to graduation, and the percent of students passing communication arts and mathematics.

The absence of significant relationships between the listed variables and student achievement raises the question of whether teacher experience and training have a greater impact on student achievement than program implementation or delivery of services. Further study on the influence of teaching practices, resource application, reform implementation and student performance will provide educational decision makers with better information to guide the daily decisions that impact student opportunity and achievement.