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ABSTRACT

          This paper presents the results of the first year evaluation
of a 2-year project, "Comprehensive Accountability, Professional Development,
and Assessment System for the Tri-County Charter School Partnership." This
partnership of five charter schools was working to develop a replicable and
comprehensive accountability system for each of the schools. A mixed method
research design was developed using parallel or simultaneous methodologies.
Quantitative methodology provided the primary data for assessing outcomes
related to student achievement, and qualitative methodology provided
additional data on outcomes while adding depth and breadth to the evaluation.
Surveys completed by 793 students, 335 parents, and 21 teachers were used to
obtain information, workshop evaluations gave insight into what participants
found useful and effective, and interviews with 5 administrators provided
depth and insight into the context in which the program was conducted. Taken
together, findings indicate that the partnership was successful in
establishing the groundwork for year-two activities. The schools collaborated
in providing professional development and aligned their curricula with
Florida state standards. No computer-based student progress and standards
reporting system had yet been developed, but it was recognized that a student
database was essential for tracking student performance on standardized tests
and performance assessments. Stakeholder surveys showed very positive
attitudes and provided information for the second year of program activities.
Although no comprehensive accountability system has yet been developed for
the charter school system, the project has provided the framework for the
schools to develop such a system. (Contains 17 references.) (SLD)

Sharing a Model of Accountability:

The Tri-County Charter School Partnership

Evaluation

by

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Please note that this is a draft and may not be cited without the authors consent.

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Sharing a Model of Accountability:
The Tri-County Charter School Partnership Evaluation

INTRODUCTION

Background

Concern that no appropriate means existed to measure how successful charter schools were at improving students' performance, a partnership of five charter schools in Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach counties (Tri-County Charter School Partnership) applied for and received a South Florida Annenberg Challenge Implementation Grant. Given the high expectations for student performance driven by state standardized tests (FCAT), the member schools proposed the development and implementation of a replicable, comprehensive accountability system in each of the partnership charter schools. This paper shares the results of the first-year evaluation of a two-year project, "Comprehensive Accountability, Professional Development, and Assessment System for the Tri-County Charter School Partnership."

Program Goal

The goal for this project is to improve student achievement through the development and implementation of a replicable, comprehensive accountability system in each of the partnership schools. This goal would be accomplished through the autonomous leadership at each school under the guidance and direction of the principal. This decentralized decision making allows each school to have ownership of the program (Schwahn & Spady, 1998).

Program Objectives

To support the partnership in achieving its goal, six project components were identified and restated to serve as program objectives. Each of these objectives supports the formation of the accountability system. The purposes of this project are to:
1. Provide the opportunity for professional development activities to prepare teachers and administrators with the skills necessary to develop standards-based accountability systems with performance assessments aligned to these standards.
2. Align the curriculum at each charter school with the Florida Sunshine Standards and other agreed upon standards and benchmarks.
3. Create and utilize appropriate classroom performance assessments.
4. Design and implement a standards based student progress report.
5. Implement a computer-based system to provide feedback to students, teachers, administrators, and parents on student progress in meeting these standards.
6. Implement a parent, student, and community satisfaction survey.

Evaluative Questions

To focus the direction of this evaluation, six evaluative questions were developed. These evaluative questions were derived from the program's objectives. The questions and the sub-questions generated from them broadly assess the foci of the project.

Evaluative Question 1. Did the program provide opportunities for professional

development activities that prepare teachers and administrators with the skills necessary to develop a standards-based accountability system and performance assessments aligned to these standards.

> **Sub-question 1.1.** Did teachers and administrators attend the professional development workshops?
>
> **Sub-question 1.2.** Did participants perceive that the professional development workshops provided them with the information they needed to meet program objectives?
>
> **Sub-question 1.3.** What other forms of professional development activities did the participants feel would be helpful in meeting program objectives?

Evaluative Question 2. Did each charter school align their curriculum with the Florida Sunshine Standards and other agreed upon standards and benchmarks?

> **Sub-question 2.1.** Were power standards identified?

Evaluative Question 3. Did each charter school create and utilize appropriate classroom performance assessments?

> **Sub-question 3.1.** Were customized performance assessments purchased from the Center for Performance Assessment?
>
> **Sub-question 3.2.** Was the International Performance Assessment System (IPAS) purchased?
>
> **Sub- question 3.3.** Was the IPAS (performance assessments) utilized by each charter school?
>
> **Sub-question 3.4.** Did each charter school create their own customized classroom performance assessments?
>
> **Sub-question 3.5.** Did each charter school utilize their customized performance assessments?

Evaluative Question 4. Was a Standards Based Progress Report created and implemented?

Evaluative Question 5. Was a computer based student progress and standards reporting system purchased and utilized?

Evaluative Question 6. Were stakeholder satisfaction surveys administered to students, parents, teachers, administrators, special program/resource teachers, and auxiliary personnel?

> **Sub-question 6.1.** What were the perceptions of the school of students, parents, teachers, administrators, special program/resource teachers, and auxiliary personnel?
>
> **Sub-question 6.2.** What are the stakeholder perceptions when the questionnaire results are broken down by sub-scale: administrative leadership, high expectations, school climate, basic skills, monitoring pupil progress, and resources?

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

Evaluation Design

In order to evaluate success in meeting the project goal and assess outcomes related to the objectives, a mixed method research design was developed using parallel or simultaneous methodologies (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). This design was selected because it provided in-depth evaluation of the program, addressing concerns about validity and reliability and thus the transferability of the findings to other settings. In addition, the use of parallel quantitative and qualitative methodologies triangulates the data and strengthens the evaluative findings (Breen, Jenkins, Lindsay, & Smith, 1998).

Quantitative methodology provided the primary data for assessing outcomes related to student achievement. This methodology used descriptive research to provide insight into the current status of the project and to gather baseline data for future research (Gay & Airasian, 2000). Additionally, this design was selected because self-report instruments, observations, and record files were used for gathering data.

Qualitative methodology provided additional data on outcomes while adding depth and breadth to the evaluation (Seale, 1999). The qualitative methods of interviews, document analysis, and observation served as additional data sources to obtain participants' perceptions. Documenting and analyzing these perceptions allowed the evaluation team to better understand the "how" and "why" behind project outcomes (Morgan & Krueger, 1993; Posner, 1995; Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

Theoretical Framework

In addition to an evaluation design, a theoretical framework was used to guide the evaluation of the project. It provided a structure for thinking about data and a basis for generalizing the qualitative findings (Seale, 1999). The theoretical framework used for this evaluation was an adaptation of the Tylerian Evaluation Approach, an objectives-oriented evaluation model. This approach was selected since the broad goal of the program was identified and the focus of the evaluation was to determine if and to what extent this goal had been met (Worthen, Sanders, & Fitzpatrick, 1997). This framework identifies discrepancies between performance and objectives. The modified model used the following steps: (1) articulation of the broad goal, (2) restatement of program components as behavioral objectives, (3) identification of situations where achievement of objectives can be demonstrated, (4) selection of measurement instruments, (5) data collection, and (6) comparison of data results with objectives.

Validity and Reliability

Survey instruments were selected which had demonstrated high levels of validity in their development and factor analyses, and high levels of internal consistency reliabilities for total scale and sub-scale analyses. Test scores utilized by the schools were obtained from instruments that yielded high levels of validity and reliability.

To increase validity, the evaluators used multiple sources of data. Surveys were used to obtain information, workshop evaluations gave insight into what participants found useful and effective, and interviews provided depth and insight into the context in which the

program was conducted. Triangulation was obtained through analysis of these multiple sources of data (Stake, 1995).

Ensuring that data collection methods were consistent throughout the project and between the evaluators increased reliability. Additionally, reliability of the qualitative portion of this evaluation was addressed using standard procedures in the field such as defining the reporting of the methods, utilization of a theoretical framework to guide the study, and utilization of multiple evaluators (Seale, 1999)

Data Sources and Data Collection

The School Improvement Progress Needs Assessment Questionnaires. A review of the literature was conducted and theses questionnaires were identified as best meeting the needs of the evaluators. The questionnaires were developed by the Norfolk (VA) Public Schools to facilitate a School Improvement Program (Dodson, 1984). These questionnaires were designed for six respondent groups (all stakeholders in the school improvement program): (1) parents, 42 items, (2) pupils, 50 items, (3) teachers, 85 items, (4) administrators, 75 items, (5) special program/resource teachers, 75 items, and (6) auxiliary personnel, 40 items. Each questionnaire was composed of six sub-scales: (1) administrative leadership, (2) high expectations, (3) school climate, (4) basic skills, (5) monitoring pupil progress, and (6) resources. The coefficient alpha reliability estimates ranged from .86 to .97 for the six questionnaires, averaging .95.

Sets of student questionnaires were delivered to each of the five charter schools by the evaluators. Student questionnaires were administered by the teachers in the classrooms and collected by the evaluators in the principal's office. Address labels for the parent questionnaires were supplied to the evaluators. The evaluators mailed the questionnaire, a cover letter from the respective principal, and a stamped, return envelope to parents at four of the schools. The return envelopes were addressed to a neutral site. At one of the schools, questionnaires were distributed at a parents' meeting, together with the stamped return envelope. Questionnaires for the teachers, principals, special programs/resource teachers, and auxiliary personnel were distributed at the schools together with the stamped return envelope for their responses. Surveys were coded to identify the respective charter school represented, but not to identify the respondent.

Workshop Evaluations. Throughout the year, five staff development workshops were conducted for program participants. A three-day workshop started the year in August, followed by a one-day workshop in November, and three two-day workshops in January, March, and April. Program personnel developed an evaluative instrument to query workshop participants on various aspects of the program, including the quality of the presentation, content, handouts, and usefulness for the classroom. In addition, comments were elicited from the participants regarding any phases of the workshops on which they wished to express their views.

The project coordinator was responsible for administering the workshop evaluations at the close of each of the five workshops. The completed evaluation forms were mailed to the evaluators for analysis.

Project Correspondences. Throughout the year, the evaluation team was kept abreast of project activities through regular correspondences from the project coordinator and through numerous discussions regarding the project.

On-site Visits and Steering Committee Interviews. The background or context for the evaluation was developed from on-site visits to the five charter school campuses participating in the project. For the on-site visits and interviews, two evaluators visited each of the five charter schools. Prior to the visits, the evaluators met to develop a series of objectives for the visit, including a set of common questions that were posed at each of the five sites. At each site a member of the steering committee, generally the principal, was interviewed about the project and its implementation at that school. These on-site visits provided an opportunity to gain additional insight and enhanced the validity and reliability of the subsequent descriptive analyses.

FINDINGS

The following section presents the findings of the evaluation for the first year of the Annenberg funded grant, "Comprehensive Accountability, Professional Development, and Assessment System for the Tri-County Charter School Partnership." These findings are built on the data collected and relevant literature reviewed. Prior to presenting the findings, the context in which the project was initiated is presented. Context as described here refers to the environment, which is also sometimes termed climate or culture of the school (Silverman, 1993). As mentioned earlier, context and organizational support are critical elements in introducing any change into a school. Therefore, understanding context is essential to assessing the success of the project. Following a discussion of the context that framed this project, the findings are presented in response to the evaluative questions and sub-questions.

Context

The evaluators, to better understand the context in which the project was being implemented, conducted interviews during the on-site visits. Using a semi-structured interview protocol, a team of two evaluators met with a member of the Steering Committee at each school. The first interview question focused on obtaining the participant's perceptions on charter school effectiveness and the effectiveness of their charter school. The second question focused on perceptions of professional development (a key element in project implementation) and the participant's perception of the current professional development activities. The questions were:

1.   a. In your opinion, what represents an effective charter school?
      b. In what ways is your school effective?
2.   a. In your opinion, what makes a professional development program effective?
      b. How would you describe the effectiveness of the current professional development program?

In response to the first part of question 1, "In your opinion, what represents an effective charter school?" several common themes emerged. Interviewees from three schools stressed the importance of support and communication with parents. For example, one administrator stated that an effective charter school has good "parental buy-in." Another principal who commented that at such a school, "parents are very involved" reinforced this.

Another concept mentioned by interviewees at three schools focused on the importance of meeting students' individual needs. They described an effective charter school as one that motivates children to achieve potential by meeting the needs of individual children. It was also stated that these schools have a multi-age/multi-level program, which is tailored to the individual child.

A third area of agreement for three of the school administrators was the importance of community involvement. They believed that effective charter schools are very community-oriented. The mission should be to provide an "enriched, innovative educational program and a positive safe environment for students."

Three interviewees stated that good charter schools have good staff members and good teachers. For example, one principal noted the importance of "quality teachers" while another stated that an effective charter school "puts teachers on a pedestal," and teachers are very receptive to the school's mission.

Two school principals pointed out that competent budget and financial management is important. As an example, one principal said that an effective charter school must be well managed with financial systems in place.

Two school interviewees felt that high academic standards are important. As one principal pointed out an effective charter school will "demonstrate high academic standards and expectations."

Several concepts for effectiveness were mentioned by one of the interviewees. These included cooperation with the board of education, professional development, safety, character development, integrity, no discrimination, vision and mission, and family atmosphere.

In responding to the second part of the question, "In what ways is your school effective?" all five of the interviewees agreed on two common themes. The first was that their schools have academic integrity. One principal described her school as a school that practices "high standards of academic integrity," and another administrator said that the her school has a focus on "core knowledge." Still another principal described her school as a place with a focus on learning styles. Finally, another principal reported that 100% of the students in his school passed the Florida Writes test.

The second area of agreement by all five interviewees was the importance of the involvement of parents and the community. Administrators reported inviting parents into the school through volunteering. As one principal stated "parents share time, talent, and money. Some taught for FCAT prep. Parents empowered to be part of SIP input on strategies." The relationship between the schools and the parents were summed up nicely by a principal who said, "...part of the mission is to involve parents. Our parents are our community."

Two school interviewees commented about the importance of having a sound organization, having an evaluation and planning system, and teaching character education. Single interviewees discussed several concepts regarding their schools. These included vision and mission, no discrimination, safety, technology, and communication with stakeholders.

The second question posed to the interviewees focused on professional development programs in general. "In your opinion, what makes a professional development program effective?" In response to this question, no common themes emerged. One interviewee did not respond to this question. Although the other four interviewees did not mention common concepts, they did offer ideas. Concepts mentioned by one interviewee included teacher buy-

in, learning communities, communication with staff, understanding of school's vision and mission, awareness of cultural differences, teacher empowerment, and assessment.

In response to the final question, "How would you describe the effectiveness of the current professional program?" several common themes emerged. Interviewees from three schools commented that resources were adequate. However, one administrator felt that the challenge was getting all counties to work together. For example, he noted that planning days were different across counties. He also commented that a positive element is that schools get to communicate with other schools.

Another area where three interviewees concurred was that teachers have written performance assessments. One principal reported that "teachers have already written performance assessments and are ready to implement. Initially, they thought of the experience as 'tedious'; however, now they see the merit."

Three interviewees discussed attendance. One administrator reported asking for "buy in" from teachers because attendance was not "compulsory." Teachers may not be required to participate because of the union contract. He added that teachers from the areas of physical education, social studies, and foreign language dropped out although a bonus of $1,200 was tied to the professional development. Initially, attendance was not compulsory, but one of the principals stated that she now required teachers to attend professional development workshops. Two interviewees agreed that the time frame for the professional development has been drawn out. Some teachers got bored because each charter school is different. Teachers have voiced they want to go to the next level.

The data from these interviews indicates that effective charter schools were viewed as those having strong parental and community support, a caring and capable faculty, and high standards. Additionally, teaching and learning in these schools is geared to the individual learner. All of the charter schools that participated in this project expressed their commitment to academic integrity and high standards. They also unanimously articulated the importance of the support they receive from parents and the community.

While it is interesting to note that no common description of effective professional development programs was found, all of the schools felt that the current project provided elements that have been previously described (U.S. Department of Education, 1994) as key to effective professional development efforts. These include an extended commitment of time and resources, development of a framework to teaching to high standards (written performance assessments), collaboration between teachers and facilitators, and teaching effectiveness and student learning as the basis for measuring success.

Evaluation Questions and Sub-Questions

In the following sections the findings of the evaluation are presented in context of each of the 6 Research Questions.

Evaluative Question 1. Did the program provide the opportunities for professional development activities that prepare teachers and administrators with the skills necessary to develop a standards-based accountability system and performance assessments aligned to these standards?

The program provided a yearlong series of workshops and professional development opportunities for teachers and administrators within the participant schools. Staff from the

"Center for Performance Assessment" facilitated these activities and provided on-site opportunities for faculty professional development. These school visits provided teachers and administrators with the opportunity to interact on an individual school basis with staff members who could provide assistance with project activities.

As mentioned previously, schools were free to select their own level of participation in these activities. While some schools chose to make these professional development activities a mandatory requirement for their faculty, other schools sought participants on a voluntary basis.

Sub-question 1.1. Did teachers and administrators attend the professional development workshops? Overall, charter school participation in the workshops was 34%. The most popular workshop attended (60%) was on "Data Driven Decision Making" in November. The lowest participation rate (20%) was noted on the first day of the "Advanced Seminar in Standards Based Performance Assessment" in April. Overall teacher attendance was 36%; overall principal attendance was 21%. These workshops were held throughout the year while many other school-related obligations were being met and teacher participation at some schools was voluntary, this probably would account for these attendance rates.

Sub-question 1.2. Did participants perceive that the professional development workshops provided them with the information they needed to meet program objectives? Tallies from the workshop evaluations indicated that the participants felt (1) the material was presented in a clear, concise, and easy to understand manner, (2) the material presented was relevant to their classroom teaching, (3) new information and insights were presented, (4) the handouts would be useful to their teaching, (5) much of what they had learned will be applied in their classrooms, and (6) they now have a much better idea of what their roles will be in implementing the Annenberg grant at their schools. In addition, (7) they feel comfortable about training their colleagues in sharing what they learned at the workshops.

Sub-question 1.3. What other forms of professional development activities did the participants feel would be helpful in meeting program objectives? Comments on the evaluation forms for the five professional development workshops indicated that the participants generally appreciated what was presented in the workshops and how it was presented. The most prevalent theme in their comments was more "hands on" workshop time to help participants in developing the kinds of lessons and performance assessments they'll need to facilitate the performance assessment systems being developed.

Evaluative Question 2. Did each charter school align their curriculum with the Florida Sunshine Standards and other agreed upon standards and benchmarks? Each of the participant schools aligned their curriculum to the Florida Sunshine Standards. Benchmarks that quantify standards were also completed by the 4 elementary schools and were almost completed at the middle school level.

Sub-question 2.1. Were power standards identified? During the third quarter, 60% of the schools had identified and prepared a first draft of power standards in all content areas and grade levels. In addition, these schools were able to share this information with their teaching staff. During the fourth quarter, the principals of the elementary charter schools met

and identified a common list of power standards from the Florida Sunshine State Standards. The middle school had prepared the first draft of their standards.

Evaluative Question 3. *Did each charter school create and utilize appropriate classroom performance assessments?*
Most schools had created and utilized appropriate classroom performance assessments.

Sub-question 3.1. Were customized performance assessments purchased from the Center for Performance Assessment?
The Center for Performance Assessment no longer provides customized performance assessments as a service to its clients. This objective was modified and the Center helped schools develop their own customized performance assessments.

Sub-question 3.2. Were the IPAS purchased? Schools received 192 model student performance assessments from the Center for Performance Assessment and were encouraged to select and adapt these assessments for use in their classrooms.

Sub-question 3.3. Were the IPAS utilized by each charter school? Four (80%) of the schools reported using one of the IPAS at different grade levels.

Sub-question 3.4. Did each charter school create their own customized performance assessments? At the end of the academic year, 100% of the schools developed a custom made performance assessment with power standards.

Sub-question 3.5. Did each charter school utilize their customized performance assessments? Three schools (60%) reported using the first custom made performance assessment in the classroom at the grade level for which it was designed.

Evaluative Question 4. Was a Standards Based Progress Report created and implemented?
The standards based progress report is still in the developmental stage. Recent discussions have begun to address this matter. The creation and implementation of the standards based progress report will be a critical need to be addressed and resolved in year two.

Evaluative Question 5. Was a computer based student progress and standards reporting system purchased and utilized?
To date, no student progress and standards reporting system has been either identified or developed. This is a critical need that is to be addressed and resolved in year two.

Evaluative Question 6. Were stakeholder satisfaction surveys administered to students, parents, teachers, administrators, special program/resource teachers, and auxiliary personnel?
The *School Improvement Progress Needs Assessment Questionnaires*, previously discussed in this report, were administered to the six groups listed above (all stakeholders in the school improvement program). The response rate for each of the respondent groups was:

(1) students, 79%, (2) parents, 31%, (3) teachers, 38%, (4) administrators, 89%, (5) special program/resource teachers, 38%, and (6) auxiliary personnel, 35%.

Sub-question 6.1. What were the perceptions of the school of students, parents, teachers, administrators, special program/resource teachers, and auxiliary personnel?
The following section presents a brief summary of the findings from these surveys. The student questionnaire has a simple "Yes or No" response scale. The remaining five questionnaires all use a 5-point Likert response scale (1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Undecided, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree). Along with the frequency (N) and percentage responses (%), the average score (mean) and standard deviation (SD) is reported for each item. For items that are negatively stated, the optimal response is "Strongly Disagree." The scoring for these items is the reverse of the 5-point scale above.

Student Questionnaire Results. A total of 793 usable questionnaires were returned for students at the five charter schools. In review of the responses to the items, students were quite positive in their perceptions of the school. The highest rated items, those receiving 95% or more responding favorably were: "my teacher expects me to complete my work," "my teacher knows that I can do things right," and "the principal wants me to be successful." Other than the "library item," the lowest rated item was "my teacher does not grade homework assignments."

Parent Questionnaire Results. There were 335 parent questionnaires mailed back from the five charter schools. In general, parents were quite positive in their perceptions of the charter school their children were attending. For parents, the highest rated item regarded the statement, "this school is a safe place in which to learn and work." These charter schools evidently fulfill parents' wishes for safe keeping for their children. The lowest rated item was "the building and grounds are adequate for the school's program." This rating reflects the conditions under which these charter schools have opened in quite meager facilities in contrast to other schools parents.

Teacher Questionnaire Results. Twenty-one teacher questionnaires were returned from the five charter schools, representing a 38% response rate. The item means for teachers were generally quite positive, but not at the level observed for parents. The highest rated items indicated "teachers at this school treat children as persons" and "students in the school were being trained in test-taking skills." The lowest rated teacher response was to the statement "at this school the number of low-income children retained in a grade is proportionate to the number of other children retained in that grade."

Administrator Questionnaire Results. From the responses to the administrator questionnaire, these charter school leaders are positive about their programs, personnel, and students. This questionnaire had the highest response rate 89%. On 8 of the 75 items, administrators were unanimous in their optimal ratings of the characteristic being queried. These items included three (3) statements about themselves, "the principal of this school provides clear, strong, and centralized instructional leadership," "the principal of this school holds high level of expectations for all teachers," and "generally, principal-teacher relationships at this school are very good," and three (3) statements about their teachers,

"teachers in this school pay as much attention to slow students, by smiling and making eye contact as often with them," "when students are assigned seatwork, teachers in this school monitor their efforts closely," and "teachers in this school make a conscious effort to involve every student in class discussions and exercises," and two (2) statements about school policy, "every teacher in this school has access to written school-wide goals and objectives" and "a specific time schedule has been established for teaching reading and mathematics by each classroom teacher." The single item rated markedly lower than all other items by the administrators was consistent with the low ratings on the item given by teachers, "at this school the number of low-income children retained in a grade is proportionate to the number of other children retained in that grade."

Special Program/Resource Teacher Questionnaire Results. There were six special program/resource teacher questionnaires returned for analysis. For the item responses, this group appears generally positive about the various aspects at their charter schools. On 6 of the 75 items these teachers were unanimous in their optimum appraisal; 5 of these items were complimentary of the principal, "the principal is very active in securing resources to facilitate instruction," "the principal of this school provides clear, strong, and centralized instructional leadership," "the principal is highly visible throughout this school," "the principal of this school holds high expectations for all teachers," and "the principal at this school is accessible and responsive to parents" with the sixth item regarding the fairness of handling discipline incidents, "students in this school are not punished for observed offenses differently for one student than others." The three lowest rated items were "teachers in this school believe that a student's home background is the primary factor that determines individual student achievement," "a policy that no one disturbs a teacher during instruction on the basic skills is enforced throughout this school," and again, the item, "at this school the number of low-income children retained in a grade is proportionate to the number of other children retained in that grade."

Auxiliary/Professional Personnel Questionnaire Results. There were 22 questionnaires returned by auxiliary/professional personnel. Overall, this group rated school characteristics as generally good, but lower than the other groups using this 5-point scale. Five items were rated above 4.5, "this school informs parents regularly of their children's academic progress," "students in this school are expected to master the basic skills," "the principal is an important resource person in this building," "I am an important member of this school's staff," and "the principal of this school is very accessible to all personnel." The three lowest rated items reflect a variety of concerns, "students in this school abide by the school rules," "most parents would rate this school superior," and "there are sufficient supplies and materials in this school for all personnel to perform their assigned duties."

Sub-question 6.2. What are the stakeholder perceptions when the questionnaire results are broken down by sub-scale: administrative leadership, high expectations, school climate, basic skills, monitoring pupil progress, and resources?

The *School Improvement Progress Needs Assessment Questionnaires* can be broken down into sub-scale analysis for each of the respondent groups. As shown in the tables that follow, each questionnaire item can be classified into one of the six sub-scales.

Administrative Leadership. Seventy percent of the student responses were positive regarding the principal. In the overall responses for the other respondent groups, ratings were quite favorable to administrative leadership with, not unexpectedly, the administrators' ratings being the highest.

High Expectations. The highest overall sub-scale rating for students was high expectations with 86% of the responses being positive. In particular for teachers and auxiliary personnel, the overall ratings for high expectations were lower. These low ratings are affected by responses to the items "at this school the number of low-income children retained in a grade is proportionate to the number of other children retained in that grade" and "teachers in this school believe that a student's home background is the primary factor that determines individual student achievement."

School Climate. For students, 74% of the ratings on school climate were positive. For the other respondent groups, school climate was rated generally good. For students, the highest rated item (90%) on school climate was "I like my teacher." For the other respondent groups, parents liked the school's safety, understood the policies, and reported teachers make themselves accessible to parents. Teachers felt they treated children as persons and said parents felt welcome when they visited the school. The administrators optimally rated principal-teacher relationships. Resource teachers reported students were disciplined fairly and auxiliary personnel rated the principal high on school climate related items.

Basic Skills. Student ratings of basic skills items were 82% positive. Basic skills were generally rated quite positive by the other respondent groups with administrator ratings being higher than teachers, auxiliary personnel, and parents. Ninety-two percent of the students said, "my teacher gives us tips on learning how to learn" and 89% reported "my teacher encourages me to answer difficult questions." For teachers, averages of the basic skills items are centered and about equally split around 4.00. The lowest rated items by teachers on basic skills involve school policy, "teachers at this school set aside at least 120 minutes per day for basic and content teacher-directed reading" and "a policy that no one disturbs a teacher during instruction of the basic skills is enforced throughout this school."

Monitoring Pupil Progress. Student responses to the monitoring pupil progress sub-scale items were 73% positive. For the other respondent groups, overall responses on monitoring pupil progress were quite positive with teachers having the lowest average. The student responses to these sub-scale items are quite positive about being taught to take tests (92%), having the teacher talk to them about lessons and grades (88%), and in the teacher talking to their parents about their schoolwork (86%). However, it should be noted that 51% of the students reported their teacher does not grade homework assignments and 42% reported their teacher never tells them how they do on tests. Administrators reported unanimously "when students are assigned seatwork, teachers in this school monitor their efforts closely." The lowest rated items by teachers were four items about using standardized test results for evaluating student progress and for evaluating the effectiveness of the instructional program.

Resources. The lowest overall rating by students on the six sub-scales was for resources with only 62% of the student responses being favorable. For the other respondent groups, teachers and parents rated resources lower than did the administrators, resource teachers, and auxiliary personnel. Student responses to the resources sub-scale items may reflect some shortage of books and supplies. Some teachers and auxiliary personnel report there is a lack of sufficient quantities of supplies and materials for them to perform their assigned duties. The administrator responses to the resource sub-scale items were generally quite favorable.

FINAL COMMENTS

In summary, the partnership was successful in establishing the groundwork for year two activities. Specifics strengths and limitations of the project after year one have been identified through the comprehensive evaluation.

Throughout year one of the project, the charter school partnership collaborated in providing various professional development activities to acquaint the participants with the requisite skills needed to complete the project. Attendance in the training sessions was limited due to the voluntary nature of the project at some schools and the many other school-related obligations participants were involved in. Overall, the training sessions were well received and provided insight into the project objectives and development of performance-based assessments. Thus the teachers and administrators who did attend all or a majority of the workshops had the advantage of being able to integrate these new skills into their teaching repertoire (Arrends, 1998; Joyce & Showers, 1995).

The charter schools aligned their curricula with the Florida Sunshine Standards. The schools identified power standards and are developing related performance assessments. Each school has piloted performance assessments at various grade levels. This commitment to building a framework to assess student performance is a key indicator of an effective accountability system (U.S. Department of Education, 2000) and an important component of this project.

While no computer-based student progress and standards reporting system has been identified or developed, it is recognized that a student database is essential for tracking student performance on standardized tests and performance assessments.

Stakeholder surveys of students, parents, teachers, administrators, and auxiliary personnel generally were very positive about the schools, programs, teachers, administrators, and relationships between the various stakeholder groups. This is extremely important since the literature indicates that context and relationships are important elements in implementing successful programs (Cherniss, 1988; Schwahn & Spady, 1998). In addition, much insight into the climate of these charter schools was gained from the questionnaire tallies and breakdowns into six sub-scales: administrative leadership, high expectations, school climate, basic skills, monitoring pupil progress, and resources. Since the principal's support of new programs is key to success (Fullan, 1992; Yukl, 1994), feedback from these surveys provided a rich source of data to reinforce the need for change.

An important component of this accountability system is student achievement (U.S. Department of Education, 2000). Currently, no comprehensive accountability system exists within the charter school network. This project has provided the framework for the partnership schools to focus on developing and implementing a replicable, comprehensive accountability system in each of the schools during year two.

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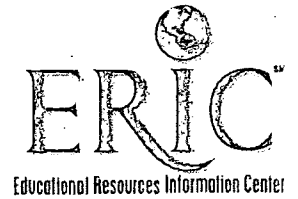
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