



Research UpDATE

College of Education
and Human Services

Utah State University

OFFICE OF RESEARCH SERVICES NOVEMBER 2004



From the Dean's Office

It's been a pleasure to serve the CEHS Office of Research Services with assistance from faculty on the College Research Council. The Council is well served by nine faculty members—one from each department and one representing our research centers. They ensure that their respective departments/centers are fairly represented in funding recommendations for new faculty grant proposals and congressional earmark requests; they review and rank nominees for the CEHS Scholar/Researcher of the Year Award; they advise the Dean on research matters; and they serve as a liaison between departments/centers and the Office of Research Services. The representative for your department or center can be found below:

- ComDDE Kim Corbin-Lewis
- Elem. Ed. Jim Dorward
(Martha Whitaker substituting Fall Semester, 2004)
- FCHD Lori Roggman
- HPER Rich Gordin
- Inst. Tech. Nick Eastmond
- Psychology Karl White
- Sec. Ed. Grace Huerta
(Sherry Marx substituting Spring Semester, 2005)
- Spec. Ed. & Rehab. Julie Smart
- Research Centers Richard Roberts

Their continuing contributions to the research mission of the College are very much appreciated.

Carol Strong, Interim Dean



Announcements

- CURI grant proposals are due in the Office of Research Services by December 1.
- Nominations for the D. Wynne Thorne Research Award are due in the office of the Vice President for Research by 12/6.
- New Faculty Grant proposals are due in the Office of Research Services by December 6.
- Nominations for CEHS Scholar/Researcher of the Year are due in the Office of Research Services by 1/24/05.



Research at the
Center for the School of the Future

The Center for the School of the Future (CSF) is a research center in the College of Education and Human Services dedicated to improving the quality and effectiveness of education through identifying, researching, and developing proven educational practices and supporting their dissemination and adoption in local circumstances. To accomplish this mission, the Center has focused its efforts in the areas of research, development and dissemination, and policy. The following are some of the ongoing projects at the Center. You can find out more about CSF on their web site at www.csf.usu.edu.

Indicators of School Quality

During the 2002-03 and 2003-04 academic years, nearly 200 schools from across the United States used the Indicators of School Quality (ISQ) survey system. Over a quarter of a million parents, teachers, students, and other school staff members were surveyed about their perceptions of their school environment, and results were summarized for use by parents, school faculty, principals, superintendents, and school boards.



Major Findings: Below are some of the major findings from conducting ISQ in these many schools. Together, they show that ISQ is effective in gathering the data necessary to making school improvements related to the desired outcomes of a child's K-12 education.

•The seven domains featured in ISQ were strongly related to academic achievement even after the effects of social and economic risk factors were statistically removed.

•For those administrators who employed ISQ as a tool for school improvement, Signal Analysis was sensitive to planned changes in the school environment.

•Analyses of sample adequacy demonstrated that ISQ accurately represented the views of all parents, teachers, and students at each school.

•Feedback from the participating schools demonstrated that principals were very satisfied with the ISQ content, the ease and timeliness of the ISQ process, CSF staff, and the usability of the ISQ report.

Characteristics of Participating Schools: Sizes of participating schools ranged from small rural schools up to larger metropolitan high schools. Social and economic risk indicators showed that there were a significant number of participating schools from moderate and high risk neighborhoods. There was also wide variation in ethnic diversity. Participating schools included ones in which Hispanic children represented over 75% of the student body, African American children represented over 90% of the student body, and Native American children represented over 80% of the student body. Finally, standardized achievement scores varied. School composite battery percentiles typically were at the 50th percentile, but ranged from the 9th to the 78th percentile.

Relationships between ISQ, Risk, and Academic Achievement: Statistical analyses confirmed that there were strong relationships between perceptions of school environment and the ISQ risk index (e.g., perceptions of parent support are more negative in schools within lower income communities). Analyses also confirmed that there were strong relationships between perceptions of school environment and academic achievement. Although these relationships were very complex and the pattern observed may be hard to interpret, it is clear that the quality of school environment has an effect on learning.

Progress: Schools participating in consecutive years received a report designed to show progress over time. For these schools, progress was revealed in every aspect of school functioning, with elementary schools showing the most positive change. Teacher excellence, student commitment, and administration were the domains showing the most positive change, while resource accessibility and safety showed the least amount of change.

ISQ has highlighted the relationship between school environment, as measured by constituent perceptions, and student learning. In addition, improvement in the school environment can now be tracked using these data. By persistently measuring the perceptions of school environment, it is likely that long-term changes guided by these data will ultimately have dramatic effects on student learning as well as the overall quality of K-12 experiences for children, families, and communities.

Community/University Research Initiative

The Center for the School of the Future is extending its relationship with the Cache County School District and the Utah Commission on Volunteerism by initiating the development and evaluation of interventions to improve academic, social, and self-management skills for students at risk for school failure. Within this project will be 4 separate studies. The first study will examine the effects that written commendations for specific student behavior have on indicators of school climate. The second study will evaluate the effects that hidden behavioral contingencies have on critical social skills. The third study will examine the effects of a peer-managed feedback tool on levels of on-task behaviors. And, the final study will evaluate the validity of the ALERT behavior measurement tool. These studies will be conducted during the course of the 2004-05 school year.



School/District Technology Study

The Center for the School of the Future recently designed and implemented a study of technology use and implementation in the Cache County School District. A short survey regarding technology support and computer use was given to staff members at each school. Information about technology finance, district technology policy and procedures, technology support, professional development, and technology infrastructure was collected from the district staff. In addition to these data, focus groups with selected elementary and secondary principals were conducted. The results suggested that technology support in the district has improved a great deal in the last few years, but the rapid evolution of technology is pushing district resources to the edge. The Center staff made several recommendations and the district plans to carry out many of them over the next year. This pilot study is now complete, and the Center is ready to conduct this same research for other districts in need.

CEHS Research Council: Kim Corbin-Lewis • Jim Dorward (on leave) • Nick Eastmond • Rich Gordin • Grace Huerta • Richard Roberts • Lori Roggman • James Shaver • Julie Smart • Martha Whitaker • Karl White