Leadership for Equity and Inclusivity in Schools: The Cultural Work of Inclusive Schools

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Abstract

A set of schools located across the U.S. partnered with a federally-funded, inclusive schools, systems approach to improving outcomes for *all* students. *All* students included general and special education students. Specifically, students with extensive support needs stemming from intellectual and development disabilities were members of the school communities. Two years of data from the schools provided evidence of changes in specific school leadership practices. Schools that received targeted, feature-specific technical assistance in the Administrative Leadership domain improved their administrative leadership performance as measured by the SWIFT-FIT. Improvements were noted in the two major aspects of leadership measurement: Strong and Engaged Leadership and Strong Educator Support System features. Improvements corresponded with higher achievement scores on English Language Arts and Math as measured by the PARCC assessment. These results show promise for continued focus on improving school administrator leadership in order to install more inclusive systems of support for learning that are associated with higher levels of student achievement.

Keywords: cultural practice, inclusive education, principals, school leadership, schools, special education, systems reform

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Inclusive schools structure their use of time, professional expertise, and student groupings within and across classes with the complete range of student variation in mind (Kozleski, in press). Schoolwide Integrated Framework for Transformation (SWIFT) Center aimed to improve schools by implementing just such a model through a federally funded national technical assistance center (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, H326Y120005). SWIFT focused on core features of inclusive education support for elementary and middle schools with specific attention to schools that exhibited low performance over a number of years as well as those which serve students with the most extensive needs including students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (McCart, McSheehan, Sailor, Mitchiner, & Quirk, 2016). The work of the last four years in the SWIFT Center (Sailor & McCart, 2014) demonstrates the central role that principals and other school leaders play in leading equity initiatives that require navigation across multiple and intersecting forms of diversity, professional literacies, and community of practice cultures. Further, SWIFT's commitment to schools that are designed and structured to respond to the full variance of human performance, intellectually, linguistically, and culturally, produced evidence supporting a *systems* approach to transforming education for improved outcomes for *all* students (Choi, Meisenheimer, McCart, & Sailor, 2017).

SWIFT technical assistance providers focused the attention of 64 school leadership teams on five domains of change: (a) administrative leadership, (b) multi-tiered system of support (MTSS); (c) integrated educational framework; (d) family and community engagement; and (e) inclusive policy structure and practice. This paper reports on a measure of the administrative leadership domain and its relationship to academic achievement in schools that participated in

SWIFT and the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) state assessment system. These data demonstrate the importance of leadership for leading complex, cultural change in schools (DeMathews, 2016).

Administrative leadership in the SWIFT framework calls for strong, engaged site-based leadership as foundational to transforming systems for learning throughout a school (Ainscow & Sandhill, 2010; Hoppey & McLeskey, 2013; Waldron & McLeskey, 2010; Shogren, McCart, Lyon, & Sailor, 2015). Strong and engaged site leaders (school administrators, teachers, and family members) provide a clear and visible commitment to continuously improve teaching and learning. They tie their efforts to student outcomes; set a vision for the work; and recruit and strengthen a team-based approach to knowledge mobilization and generation for inclusive education within the school. School leaders use data to inform their faculties about student progress, fidelity of implementation, and next steps for continuous improvement (McCart et al., 2016). Strong site-based leadership teams emphasize the need for creating a culture of ongoing inquiry and learning among school faculty, families, and students.

SWIFT's administrative leadership domain of change also calls for a strong educator support system (McCart et al., 2016). Technical assistance work addressed several documented elements needed to support school transformation and teacher professional learning, including: (a) views of culture and its impact on learning; (b) teacher learning models that include ongoing and embedded social and technical supports; and (c) sufficient teacher learning experiences that develop a deep understanding of the cultural nature of learning and shifts in practice that address underlying cultural variations.

Most technical assistance projects rely on views of culture defined largely as student traits that mediate learning, such as ethnicity, social class, or language background (Kozleski &

Artiles, 2015). All three of these characteristics intersect with ability in complex ways that are mediated by communities, families, and individual resistance or reification of dominant cultural values in the U.S. such as English as the language of choice (Artiles et al., 2010). Although the cultural histories of students are important, using race, ethnicity, ability or other group markers as proxies for between group differences ignore both within group differences and the intersectional nature of multiple cultures, sociological, and psychological factors. As a result, culture can be diminished as an active ingredient in transformation efforts, and relegated to a way of sorting and differentiating groups. This static perspective of culture stresses background markers at the expense of a more practice-based view of culture as a core feature of learning and change, based on historical legacies embedded within learning structures, tools (including instructional language) that mediate learning (Cole, 1998). This concept grounds the development of equity-focused inclusive schools since ability *and* language, culture, ethnicity, sexuality and other forms of variance must be accounted for in inclusive schools designs. Leadership that provides ongoing development and progress monitoring for organizational change, recalibration, and knowledge building is essential to create schools that serve *all* students.

Translating Learning Sciences into Action in Schools

SWIFT subscribes to the broad perspective on learning that Greeno, Collins, and Resnick (1996) describe as situative/pragmatist-sociohistoric. That is, learning is, for students and teachers, the enhanced ability to participate in social practices and discourses. For communities of professional practice, it means increasing fluidity in performance and practices, and the development of tools for reflexivity that enable students and schools to improve performance and outcomes through continuous feedback and progress monitoring. This view of learning

encompasses and expands the work of cognitive and behavioral psychology as it shifts the locus of learning from individual to collective activity (Greeno, Collins, & Resnick, 1996). Learning emphasizes the role of culture in the ways in which knowledge is developed and distributed, how particular affordances for learning in our environments are perceived and utilized, what is valued within a community, and how "tools for thinking" are transmitted and embedded within the learning tasks made available and deemed significant within particular contexts.

This view of learning has particular utility for understanding the practices of groups like teachers within a developmental level, school, or discipline because it assumes a distributed, emergent and ecological stance in relationship to cognitive processing and performance. Situative/pragmatist-sociohistoric learning places emphasis on the social nature of learning activities, the material and social resources for learning, the roles that learning takes on within the broader environment, the knowledge distributed within social networks, and the practices for exchanging information. This view of learning is particularly well suited to the design of and research on technical assistance and support when the concern is understanding how people interact with the environment and each other to construct shared understandings and practices. This learning approach translates into the work of school leaders. Strong, engaged site leadership in schools expands *sociocultural awareness*, which, if supported by *participatory learning support structures* results in *culturally responsive, academically rigorous classroom practices* that have *positive impacts on student learning and achievement.* This perspective is crucial for the work of inclusive education since it encompasses the learning needs of students with the most extensive supports needs.

Strong, Engaged Leadership for Academic, Social, and Behavioral Learning

Contemporary research reviews identify design principles for learning in rapidly changing environments (Bransford, 2007; Bransford, Brown, & Cocking,1999). Learning is not only the accumulation of technical skills; it is also entails commitment to the unsteady early stages of learning in which learning failures and successes visit the classroom frequently. Site-based leaders support teachers in making shifts and incorporating new practice despite the challenges in learning new strategies, tools, and approaches. Through support from peers and site leaders, teachers learn to cope with the emotional distress of failure, develop the analytic tools to parse what needs to be improved, and use feedback from their students to help hone their skills to support learner success. At the same time, pedagogical choices both curricular and instructional must be based on scientific evidence about "what works" including the use of universal designs for learning, early intervening for struggling learners, and strategy-specific instruction for math, science, literacy, and social studies. School communities need well-prepared, continually developing principals who serve as instructional leaders for their faculties and can develop a culture of distributed leadership for learning throughout their school communities.

This approach to leadership in schools is congruent with scholarship on how people learn, which emphasizes that learning is not solely an individual or cognitive phenomenon, but takes place in a complex system of social, emotional, and cultural arenas (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 1999). Teachers in schools work in communities of practice (Aladjem et al., 2006). They are deeply affected by the norms, conditions, and standards of practice that they encounter in the schools where they work. The effective inclusive educator excels at content knowledge as well as the design of learning spaces using universal designs for learning, in which students with

multiple capacities and experiences can engage learning, enter a learning domain and sustain engagement and progress, even though what and how they perform may be very different (Kozleski, Artiles, & Skrtic, 2014). Site leaders attend to the affordances necessary for teacher learning and development.

Acknowledging the complexity of change, including its cultural demands, SWIFT supported innovation and change by helping school leaders focus on the cultural shifts in identity, practice, and accountability that new, inclusive structures required (McCart, Sailor, Bezdek, & Satter, 2014). With a shared inclusive mission and vision, school leaders created a forum for faculty and staff to participate in decisions about how to shift resources as the faculty learned the preventative and intervention strategies that a multi-tiered system of support required. This paper reports on the results of this effort by testing three hypotheses:

1. SWIFT technical assistance (TA) increases Administrative Leadership, as measured by the SWIFT Fidelity of Implementation Tool (SWIFT-FIT).

2. Administrative Leadership is positively related to other four SWIFT domains of change.

3. Administrative Leadership is positively related to student academic outcomes.

Method

Participants and Sampling

The recruitment of SWIFT partner sites began with the selection of states. State commitments were crucial to SWIFT implementation because the model was predicated on helping state education agencies (SEAs) to build their capacity and fulfill their state role as a support structure for elementary and middle school transformation. States were selected from a set of voluntary applicants that completed self-assessments of their states' readiness for participation in the transformation efforts. States reviewed their current political, demographic,

fiscal, organizational, and education performance context and needs as part of the application process (Mitchiner, 2014). SWIFT selected five states. Each state nominated local educational agencies (LEAs, $N = 17$) for participation; and the LEAs, in turn, nominated participating schools ($N = 64$). The Administrative Leadership improvement analysis included data from 59 schools that consistently implemented SWIFT from the baseline (Fall 2013). Seventeen of the 59 schools chose to receive SWIFT technical assistance for element one of Administrative Leadership: Strong and Engaged Site Leadership. These 17 schools were located in Mississippi ($n = 7$), New Hampshire ($n = 7$), and Vermont ($n = 3$). Twenty-one schools opted to receive technical assistance for Strong Educator Support System. Mississippi ($n = 6$), New Hampshire ($n = 7$), and Vermont ($n = 5$) were in this group as well. Maryland ($n = 2$) and Oregon ($n = 1$) schools also chose to receive Strong Educator Support System technical assistance. The relationship between Administrative Leadership and other SWIFT domains of change analysis include all 64 SWIFT schools for the 2014-15 school year.

The academic outcome analysis included 31 schools from two states. These schools were purposively selected because they used the same common core state assessment, PARCC. State A was located in the northeast and State B was in the south. Each school had five middle schools (i.e., schools for 5-8 and 6-8 grade levels). One school in State A was an elementary-middle (PreK-8), and all other schools were elementary schools serving preschool or kindergarten to upper elementary grade levels (i.e., 4th, 5th, or 6th grade). Table 1 shows number of LEAs, schools, and grade span served.

Measurements

  SWIFT-FIT. All three analyses used SWIFT Fidelity of Implementation Tool (SWIFT-FIT) (Morsbach Sweeney et al., 2014) to assess the extent to which each school implemented the

SWIFT framework's five domains and ten features. This paper reported results from the Administrative Leadership domain, which contains two features: (a) strong and engaged site leadership and (b) strong educator support system. Data were collected by external assessors who were trained to 80% reliability or greater on the tool. These assessors were selected based on their experience as educators or related service personnel in public school settings. In the course of their preparation for becoming assessors, they honed their skills as interviewers and document analyzers.

One item of the Strong and Engaged Site Leadership looked for evidence that "the principal is the instructional leader of the school and actively engages with faculty and staff in improving teaching and learning" (Morsbach Sweeney et al., 2014, p. 5). The assessor reviewed the school's mission and vision statement, other documents that articulate values and beliefs to guide instructional outcomes, the principal's master schedule, and the school's annual, strategic, or improvement plan. In addition to the principal, interviews occurred with members of the school's leadership team, special and general education teachers, and family members. Questions on the interview protocol include: (a) Does your vision/mission statement and/or annual school plan focus on instructional outcomes?; (b) Does your principal attend instructional meetings and how often?; (c) Does the principal visit classrooms and how often?; (d) Would you say that your principal is perceived as an instructional leader or more of an administrative leader? After document analysis and interview compilation, the assessor scored each item from 0 to 3. The score of 0 indicated that no clear mission statement exists. A 3 indicated that the principal (a) attended at least weekly instructional meetings, (b) observed classrooms at least weekly, (c) led the development of a clear mission and strategic plan to that identifies instructional outcomes, and (d) is perceived by staff and families as an instructional leader.

Other items of the Strong and Engaged Site Leadership measure emphasized (a) teaching and learning and authentic involvement of families as partners in the school transformation; (b) a work environment that supports open, reflexive communication; (c) distributed leadership and empowerment of educator leaders through the delegation of decision making related to their primary functions; and (d) frequent, consistent use of data to monitor progress, evaluate outcomes, and revise interventions. Evidence used to score these items included document analysis and interviews of people with a variety of roles and vantage points.

Items measuring the Strong Educator Support System feature involved evidence about three issues: (a) the degree to which a structured system of instructional coaching that supported improvements in teaching and learning was in place; (b) the delivery of professional learning that was developed, designed and delivered based on data from classroom performance of students and teachers and input from families and community partners; and (c) the degree to which personnel evaluation focused on improving teaching and learning outcomes. These items were also scored with the 0 to 3 scale.

A SWIFT-FIT technical adequacy study concluded that it was a reliable and valid tool to measure SWIFT fidelity of implementation (Algozzine et al., 2016). The instrument's Content Validity Index (CVI) by feature ranged from 0.87 for Strong Educator Support System to 1.0 for Fully Integrated Organizational Structure and Trusting Family Partnerships. Construct validity was examined by comparing scores from Knowledge Development Sites (KDS) (inclusive schools selected by SWIFT Center for qualitative analysis when formulating SWIFT components) and baseline data of sampled initial partner schools. Scores from the KDS ($M = 57.94$, $SD = 15.69$) were significantly higher than the sampled partner schools ($M = 37.83$, $SD = 11.34$) ($t = -2.32$, $p < 0.05$; $ES = 1.77$) (Algozzine et al., 2016). This expected distinction

between the scores from the KDS and the baseline scores in SWIFT schools supported the

SWIFT-FIT construct validity. SWIFT-FIT reliability and internal consistency were analyzed

using Cronbach's Alpha, and produced a total mean score of 0.96. Its average inter-rater

agreement was 79.6% in 14 schools (ranged from 60% to 96%) from a preliminary study; and

90.1% (ranged from 82% to 96%) in six schools' administrations in the Spring 2015.

SWIFT Technical Assistance (TA) Log. The analyses used data from the SWIFT TA

log, a record of TA activities in SWIFT partner schools. The online survey log entries completed

by SWIFT TA providers, referred to as facilitators, documented activity from January 2014 until

Spring of 2015. The log database included records of TA (a) activity format (i.e., coaching,

training, measure/data review, presentation, facilitating, and consulting); (b) target audience (i.e.,

individual, coach, or team at LEA, SEA, or school level); (c) activity impacts and location (i.e.,

specific LEA, SEA, or school); and (d) type and specific area of activity (i.e., exploration /

foundation, feature-specific activities, and implementation capacity building).

Partnership for assessment of readiness for college and careers (PARCC). The

analyses used PARCC state standardized assessment to measure students' English language arts

(ELA) and math performance. PARCC was developed by a group of states based on the

Common Core standards, and provide a valid and reliable evaluation to measure whether

students are on track to be successful in college and careers (Partnership for Assessment of

Rediness for College and Careers-Fifth Edition, 2016). PARCC assessments are valid, reliable,

and fair assessments (Partnership for Assessment of Rediness for College and Careers, 2014). In

2015, the assessment was administered in 11 states and the District of Columbia.

Data Analysis

Three analytic approaches were used to the hypotheses. First, to test the SWIFT TA and

Administrative Leadership improvement hypothesis we used longitudinal, aggregated descriptive

statistics from the SWIFT-FIT, and targeted, feature-specific TA activities provided in schools.

SWIFT-FIT score improvements from the baseline in Fall 2013 to Spring 2015 were calculated

for each school, and independent t-tests were conducted to compare schools that received and did

not receive the feature-specific TA for Administrative Leadership.

Second, to test the relationship between Administrative Leadership and other SWIFT

domains we used Pearson's correlation analysis. School level data for the Administrative

Leadership, as measured by SWIFT-FIT, served as a criterion variable, and four other domain

scores served as dependent variables. A one-tailed analysis was used since the hypothesis was

clearly directed.

Last, to understand the predictive effects of Administrative Leadership and student

academic outcomes we applied a multilevel modeling approach to SWIFT-FIT scores and

PARCC ELA and math scores. The equation 1 represents the null model for individual student i

in school j.

$$Y_{ij} = \beta_{0j} + \varepsilon_{ij} \tag{1}$$

$$\text{where } \varepsilon_{ij} \sim N\,(0,\sigma^2)$$

In the equation, β_{0j} represents the intercept and ε_{ij} explains variation in estimating an

individual student's achievement within groups. Variation in the intercept (β_{0j}) can be

represented as the equation 2.

$$\beta_{0j} = \gamma_{00} + u_{0j} \tag{2}$$

$$\text{where } u_{0j} \sim N\,(0,\tau_{00})$$

The null model with the variation in the intercept can be written as equation 3 below.

$$Y_{ij} = \gamma_{00} + u_{0j} + \varepsilon_{ij} \qquad\qquad (3)$$

The model provides an estimated mean achievement score for all schools and a

partitioning of the variance between Level 1 (σ^2) and Level 2 (τ_{00}). With Administrative

Leadership as a school level predictor (Level 2), the following equation describes the school-

level model.

$$Y_{ij} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01} Leadership + u_{0j} + \varepsilon_{ij} \qquad\qquad (4)$$

The PARCC ELA or math score (Y_{ij}) for individual i in school j is expressed with a

school (level-2) level predictor in the equation 4. PARCC ELA and math achievements were

separately analyzed to examine their unique relationships to Administrative Leadership.

Results

This section describes the results of the analyses for each of the three hypotheses

regarding the relationship between SWIFT's conception of administrative leadership and its

impact on schools participating in SWIFT transformation partnerships.

SWIFT TA and Administrative Leadership Improvement

The first hypothesis proposed that SWIFT TA increased Administrative Leadership, as

measured by the SWIFT Fidelity of Implementation Tool (SWIFT-FIT). Analyses revealed that

SWIFT-FIT Administrative Leadership mean scores consistently improved over time, and that

improvement in this domain was statistically and significantly associated with targeted, feature-

specific SWIFT TA activities. Figure 1 displays SWIFT-FIT domain score changes in the 59

schools that consistently participated in SWIFT from the baseline Fall 2013 until Spring 2015.

While all domains increased, the Administrative Leadership domain was the highest scoring

domain at baseline ($M = 0.56$, $SD = 0.24$) and maintained the highest rank in Spring 2015 ($M =$

0.75, $SD = 0.16$). MTSS and Integrated Educational Framework domain scores were the lowest throughout.

T-test results (see Table 2) showed that SWIFT-FIT score improvement on the Strong and Engaged Site Leadership feature for schools that opted to receive targeted, feature-specific TA ($N = 17$, $M = 0.33$, $SD = 0.31$) was significantly higher than for schools that did not choose to receive targeted, feature-specific TA ($N = 42$, $M = 0.13$, $SD = 0.19$), $t(21.31) = 2.49$, $p < 0.05$. For the schools who were included in the student outcome analysis, the Strong Educator Support System feature score improved from 76% at baseline ($N = 27$) to 83% in Spring 2015 ($N = 31$), while Strong and Engaged Site Leadership improved from 71% at baseline ($N = 27$) to 76% in Spring 2015 ($N = 31$). SWIFT TA for Educator Support, however, did not significantly differ between schools that did and did not opt to receive specific TA ($N = 21$, $M = 0.20$, $SD = 0.22$) and no TA ($N = 38$, $M = 0.18$, $SD = 0.24$), $t(57) = 0.32$, $p = 0.75$.

Relationship between Administrative Leadership and other SWIFT domains

The second hypothesis predicted that Administrative Leadership was positively related to the other four SWIFT domains of change. Administrative Leadership was significantly correlated with all other SWIFT-FIT domain scores (see Table 3). Its relationship with MTSS indicated a strong and positive relationship, $r = 0.78$, $p < 0.01$. The relationship with Integrated Educational Framework, $r = 0.57$, $p < 0.01$, and Family and Community Engagement, $r = 0.47$, $p < 0.01$, showed moderate positive relationship. Inclusive Policy Structure and Practice had a weak positive, yet statistically significant, relationship with Administrative Leadership, $r = 0.29$, $p < 0.05$.

Administrative Leadership and Academic Outcomes

The third hypothesis proposed that Administrative Leadership was positively related to student academic outcomes. Administrative Leadership as a single, school-level predictor of PARCC achievement outcomes (without individual-level predictors) significantly predicted both ELA and math outcomes. Table 4 provides summaries of the fixed-effects estimates for Administrative Leadership on PARCC ELA and math. For PARCC ELA, the intercept (γ_{00}) was 723.75, which indicates that the estimated PARCC ELA score was 723.75 when the school's Administrative Leadership domain met the average of all schools (i.e., when the domain score was 0 since the domain score was grand mean centered). The Administrative Leadership score was significantly and positively related to PARCC ELA ($\gamma_{01} = 35.06$, $p < .05$), which can be interpreted to mean that when a school had a higher score on Administrative Leadership, students scored higher on PARCC ELA. PARCC math was even better predicted by the Administrative Leadership domain. The intercept for the PARCC math model (γ_{00}) was 723.96, and the effect of Administrative Leadership was statistically significant ($\gamma_{01} = 51.79$, $p < .01$). These results also indicate that one unit score change on Administrative Leadership could produce an increase of 35.06 points for ELA and 51.79 points for math. Administrative Leadership explained about 18% of school-to-school variance in the PARCC ELA and 42% of variance in the PARCC math. For the multilevel model with all individual and school level predictors, Administrative Leadership significantly predicted PARCC math, while all other variables were held constant ($\gamma_{01} = 77.30$, $p < .01$).

Discussion

Our hypotheses were supported by the results of the analysis. First, schools that chose to receive targeted, feature-specific TA for Administrative Leadership improved their practices in

both the Strong and Engaged Site Leadership and in the Strong Educator Support System features. Second, improvements in Administrator Leadership were positively related to improvements in the other four SWIFT inclusive education domains. Third, the improvements in Administrative Leadership had a positive, predictive relationship with higher achievement scores on ELA and math outcomes. These results show promise for continued emphasis on improving school administrative leadership in order to develop inclusive systems of schoolwide support for learning. Systems of schoolwide support for learning appear to support higher levels of student achievement.

Over a two year period of time, the SWIFT data suggest that SWIFT's technical assistance in the arena of strong and engaged site leadership changed leadership practice in the schools. As well, there was a significant relationship between schools with higher strong and engaged leadership scores and the other elements of the SWIFT model: (a) MTSS, (b) integrated educational framework, (c) family and community engagement, (d) and inclusive policy structure and practice. These results can be interpreted that schools with better Administrative Leadership were more likely to have higher levels of other SWIFT components (i.e., MTSS, Integrated Education Framework, Family/Community Engagement, and Inclusive Policy Structure Practice) in place. Further, higher ratings in strong and engaged site leadership predicted higher achievement scores on the PARCC English Language Arts and Math scores of students. These findings suggest that Administrative Leadership has an important and positive impact on student performance and the design and development of structures for inclusive schooling.

Administrative Leadership in SWIFT is designed to accomplish the following: (a) cultivate clear vision, (b) shared leadership, (c) trust-building communication based on

reciprocal interaction between and among teachers, students, families and school leaders, and (d) consistent, effective, and data-based teams. These components are congruent with research that has identified powerful connections between leadership and student learning. McLesky and Waldron (2015) pointed out the importance of leadership that included demonstrating expertise at establishing a vision and setting direction, understanding staff, and designing a support system. Data-based decision systems support principal and educator use of progress monitoring and related instructional decisions (McLeskey & Waldron, 2015). Vision, shared leadership, and reciprocal communication build human capacity and sustain cultures that value learning, improvement, and collaborative work. Data-based team meetings guide decisions about the resource use (e.g., para-educators), inform professional learning content, and identify pedagogies and instruction students who need more supports (e.g., more small group activities, use of technology). These findings reinforce the findings of earlier studies (Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000; Stringfield, 1994) that suggested that effective schools have a climate that encourages the use of context-specific information to inform instructional expertise. Even when data systems for academic screening, behavior data, and student information database exist, educators report that the meaningful analysis of data requires a great deal of time and effort (Stringfield, Reynolds, & Schaffer, 2001).

SWIFT TA focused on 'team development and communication structures' at the beginning of its implementation. This initial and foundational activity facilitated schools to document and monitor team membership, meeting norms, meeting process, decision-making process, communication with other stakeholders (e.g., family groups, community partners, all staff), communication with their school district, and use of fidelity and outcome data. The significant relationships between Administrative Leadership and other SWIFT domains imply

that Administrative Leadership is a fundamental element to build other components for effective

and inclusive educational transformation, and SWIFT TA accomplished the foundational work.

The significant predictive effect of Administrative Leadership on academic outcomes in

particular supports critical role of school leadership in effective and inclusive education.

Historically, schools have difficulty reshaping themselves into inclusive organizational

structures because of the intensity, time, and human resources needed for the transformative

work, and the difficulties associated with understanding and engaging culture as an inherent

aspect of learning (Kozleski & Artiles, 2012). For whole school transformation to occur, schools

need a support and feedback model that allows teachers to elaborate a networked view of the

intersection of culture and learning, explore their emerging schemas in practice, and refine newly

acquired practices. This kind of learning not only improves proficiency in the use of new

knowledge and practices, but it also hones teachers' mental models so that they have the

flexibility to continuously improve their knowledge schemas to adapt the complex hybrid

environments of today's schools (Kozleski, Artiles, & Skrtic, 2014). Indeed, the data from this

study seem to indicate how complex this relationship is and the need for continued study of the

links between performance coaching and personnel assessment, which are two items in the

Strong Educator Support System feature.

Limitations

A number of limitations to the findings in this study are evident. A larger and more

diverse (e.g., state, socio-economic affordances within communities, school size, urban,

suburban, small city, and rural contexts, student population demographics) sample is needed to

determine the interactive relationships of various transformation domains with specific contexts.

A longitudinal study would help identify the components of Administrative Leadership that

enhance SWIFT implementation over time, to the maximum extent possible and with the greatest efficiency. The data suggest that the full breadth of strongly influential structures and supports for Strong Educator Support Systems are yet to be clearly defined. For example, the SWIFT-FIT does not yet look at how teachers practice is influenced by work in networks of teachers. As a result, we cannot examine their links to enhanced instructional performance. Thus, it may be that the vehicles for powerful intervention at the teacher level are not yet completely identified. Finally, replication studies of these reported relationships as well as other SWIFT-FIT items and student outcomes will improve understanding about targeted, feature-specific TA to improve student outcomes.

Final Thoughts

The SWIFT approach to supporting schools through transformative leadership at the district and school level was designed to help teachers to elaborate a networked view of culture that intersects with and mediates learning through tools, rules of engagement, the organization of community and the division of labor (Shogren, McCart, Lyon, & Sailor, 2015). This approach is designed to eliminate silos of expertise and promote collaborative teaching structures. None of this can happen without engaged school leadership committed to transformative inclusive education (Burrello, Hoffman, & Murray, 2005; DeMathews, 2016; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005).

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Table 1

The Number of LEAs, Schools, Students in States Administered PARCC

State	Number of LEAs	Number of Schools	Number of Title I Schools	Number of School in Grade Span Served		SY14-15 Enrollment
				Grade Span	Schools	
A	4	16	14	PK-4	1	7,806
				PK-5	8	
				PK-8	2	
				5-8	1	
				6-8	4	
B	3	15	15	PK-5	3	4,973
				KG-5	6	
				KG-6	1	
				5-8	1	
				6-8	4	

Table 2

T-test Results for SWIFT-FIT Score Differences Between Schools that Received Targeted,

Feature-Specific TA and those that did not

SWIFT Feature	Targeted, Feature Specific TA	No Targeted, Feature Specific TA	*T*-statistic
Strong and Engaged Site Leadership	33% (17)[a]	13% (42)	2.49*
Strong Educator Support System	20% (21)	18% (38)	0.32

Note. [a] Numbers in parentheses are number of schools. * $p < 0.05$.

Table 3

Pearson Correlations (r) between Administrative Leadership with Other SWIFT Domains

Other SWIFT Domains	Administrative Leadership
MTSS	0.78**
Integrated Educational Framework	0.57**
Family and Community Engagement	0.47**
Inclusive Policy Structure and Practice	0.29*

Notes. N = 64; **p* < .05. ** *p* < 0.01

Table 4

Estimates of Fixed Effects for Administrative Leadership

PARCC Subject	Variables	β	SE
ELA	Intercept	723.75**	1.89
	Administrative Leadership	35.06*	13.08
Math	Intercept	723.96*	1.60
	Administrative Leadership	51.79**	11.08

*Note. *p < .05. ** p < 0.001

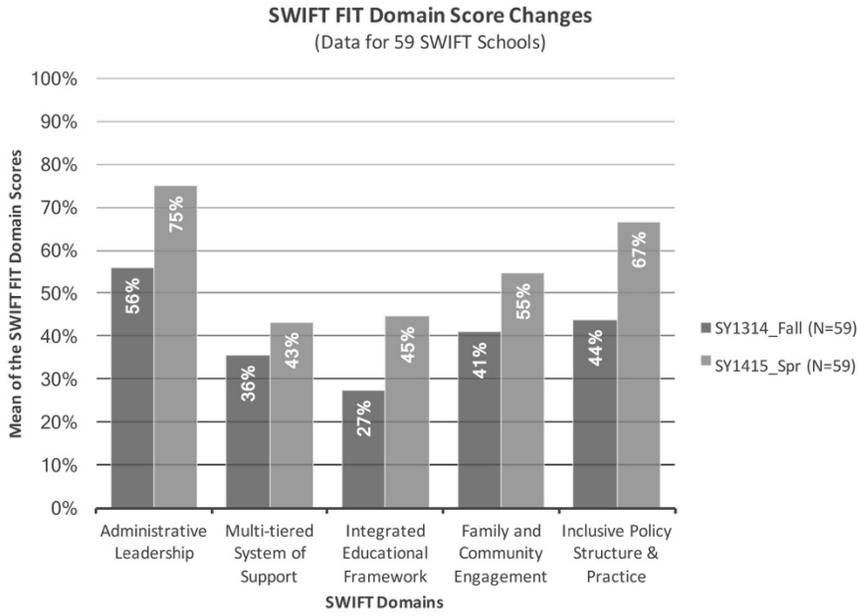**SWIFT FIT Domain Score Changes**
(Data for 59 SWIFT Schools)

Figure 1. SWIFT-FIT domain score improvement from the baseline in Fall 2013 to Spring 2015

for the 59 schools that participated in SWIFT in this timeframe.