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Educator Enhancement Academies Evaluation Study

Phase 2. Teacher and Trainer Reports of NxGen Professional Development and Their Sense of Preparedness

This report further examines the experience of Educator Enhancement Academies (EEAs) participants in providing their own training in the Next Generation standards and examines additional professional development they received from the RESAs. It also looks at the experiences of the end-user teachers who received professional development from the EEA-trained teachers and other sources in the targeted grade levels across the state during the 2013-2014 school year.

Method of study. Using surveys and interviews, we examined three populations in this phase of the EEA study: (a) 953 participants in the RESA-sponsored EEAs; (b) leaders from the eight RESAs; and (c) teachers involved in teaching English/language arts (ELA) and mathematics across the state in Grades 2-3, 6-8, and 10-12.

Findings. While the great majority of EEA participants indicated they had provided training, the duration and follow-up depended greatly on their regular role in their counties. District central office staff seemed in the best position to provide training while other role groups appeared at a disadvantage, especially teachers and principals. Challenges included scheduling time for training, and overcoming their own need for more training, especially in classroom implementation, and help in locating curriculum and other resources they needed for planning instruction. Relatively few teachers received professional development of a duration (at least 30 contact hours) that one would expect to produce changes in teacher practice or student performance. Further, it was relatively rare for end-user teachers to meet for NxGen training more than three times between June 2013 and May 2014. At the end of the 2013-2014 school year, just over a third of end-user teachers viewed themselves as well prepared to teach to the NxGen standards. Notably, more than a quarter of all teachers responding to the survey considered themselves not at all prepared. Overall, teachers believed themselves to have gained the most from their training in their knowledge of the standards, less in their practice of the instructional shifts, and least of all in their beliefs about the potential success of their students in reaching the NxGen benchmarks. On average, they began and ended the year believing “to a small extent” that their students could reach the benchmarks. When working in combination, district, school, and RESA staff were more likely than when working alone, to provide higher quality, more frequent, and longer duration professional development—all qualities associated in this study with heightened confidence in being prepared to teach to the NxGen Standards.

Limitations of study. Findings in this report are based on self-reports by providers and participants, which may be subject to bias.

Recommendations include (a) strongly focus on raising trainers’ and teachers’ expectations and beliefs that their students can learn at levels benchmarked in the Next Generations standards; (b) focus any future train-the-trainer activities on district level staff; and (c) provide an infrastructure for ongoing training and access to guidance materials for local trainers.

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District central office staff seemed in the best position to provide training after the Educator Enhancement Academies, while other role groups appeared at a disadvantage, especially teachers and principals.

EEA participants expressed the need for more training, especially in classroom implementation, and help in locating curriculum and other resources they needed for planning instruction.