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Educator Enhancement Academies Evaluation Study

Phase 1—Preparation of RESA-Based, Next Generation CSO Trainers

This report focuses on six regional Educator Enhancement Academies (EEAs) hosted by the eight regional education service agencies (RESAs) in the spring of 2013. The EEAs prepared RESA-based NxGen trainers to provide professional development for educators—primarily teachers—in schools across the state. This is the first of three planned reports.

Method of study. Two surveys of all 953 EEA participants were conducted: the first was conducted after the spring academies; the second was conducted online in September 2013 to collect participants' views once they had led their own training during the summer.

Findings. The EEAs provided important components of a coherent instructional system by focusing on the new NxGen standards and instructional shifts needed to teach to the standards, and by introducing participants to materials and tools at their disposal in their own trainings and classrooms. The design of the EEAs reflected three of five elements of research-based professional development, including having a strong content and content pedagogy focus; alignment with school, district, and state goals; and active learning. Later phases of the study will examine the remaining two elements (collective participation and duration/time span). Findings also showed differences between the four EEAs led by content experts from the West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE) compared with the two led by Corwin Press. For example, participants at the WVDE-led trainings were much more likely than those at Corwin trainings to indicate that the training had been a good start and they were looking forward to training others or that the training had provided everything they needed to train—by a margin of about 2.5 to 1. Conversely, attendees at Corwin-led events were about 12 times more likely to indicate they did not feel ready to train others. Further, the Corwin-led participants were neutral about the provided materials being relevant and useful for their own trainings, while WVDE-led participants quite strongly agreed they were relevant and useful. Although just under 40% of both groups thought the quality of their experiences had been about the same as in previous regional events, about 56% of WVDE-led EEA attendees thought their EEA experience was more useful, compared with 16% for Corwin—a 40-point difference.

Limitations of study. Slightly different methodologies were used for soliciting participation in the first survey, which may have introduced temporal and response bias due to a time lapse before surveying participants in the Corwin-led EEAs.

Recommendations include (a) develop additional materials and tools to support teachers' use of NxGen-associated instructional practices; (b) continue to offer NxGen professional learning opportunities to the RESA-based trainers; (c) adopt a common set of standards for professional development—and for train-the-trainer events—to guide providers statewide; (d) include standards and clear objectives in contracts with vendors and other providers; (e) evaluate the success of the training based on the trainers' effectiveness in meeting the standards and objectives, and publish the results.

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Findings also showed differences between the four academies led by WVDE trainers compared with the two academies led by Corwin Press, with WVDE generally outperforming Corwin.