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TITLE

Elementary Media Specialists as School-Based Support Leaders: Effects of Technology and Leadership Skills on Teachers' Technology Use

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OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this research study was to (1) determine how elementary media specialists' technology and leadership skills impact the sharing of best practices of instructional uses of technology and (2) how elementary media specialists foster the development of technology integration skills among teachers in their schools.

METHODOLOGY

The sample of this study came from a large, suburban school district, Diversity County Public Schools, in Maryland that employs 11,544 teachers in 200 schools. Media specialists and teachers in the district's 130 elementary schools were invited to participate in the study on a voluntary basis. The participants consisted of 67 media specialists who completed three surveys, of which most were female (94%), between 51 and 60 years old (49%), with a post graduate degrees (60%), an average of 16 years of teaching experience overall and eleven years in their current position. The 713 teacher participants were drawn from 129 elementary schools. There were mostly female (90%), and in terms of ages, 31 percent were between 21 and 30, 25 percent were between 31 and 40, 24 percent were between 41 and 50, and 19 percent were over 50. Three-quarters had master's degrees, or post graduate degrees or certificates. They had an average of 13 years of teaching experience, and average of six years in their current school and seven years in their current position.

In addition to completing the Leadership Practices Inventory (used as single measure of general leadership skills) Self and Observers forms, participants completed the Technology Professional Development Survey for Media Specialists (Part One - School Information, Part Two - Technology PD (developed by the researcher), and Part Three - Leadership to Support Technology Integration (Griffin, 2003; Hernandez-Romos, 2005), Levels of Technology Implementation (LoTi) Questionnaire (Moersch, 1995, 2002); and Technolgy Leadership Scale (researcher derived). Nine respondents were also interviewed.

KEY FINDINGS

Overall leadership scores (overall LPI scores), using regressions analysis, were not significant for the variable set consisting of the formal and job-embedded technology PD hours, years of teaching, Title I School status, presence of a technology teacher and a technology committee. Similarly, the variable set consisting of media specialists' LoTi Level, LPI overall score, Technology Leadership score, and Title I School status and school average of teachers' LoTi overall score failed to predict the level of teachers' technology use. The author concludes: "To play the role of technology leaders in the schools, media specialists need to learn how to effectively lead colleagues to achieve the shared goals with regard to technology integration and prepare students with the information technology literacy skills needed for the 21st century" (p. 142).