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SPRCC- Personal Research Agenda for Elisa Shernoff

Time and again, the literature points to strong associations between teacher effectiveness and student achievement (e.g., Crone & Teddlie, 1995), leading to a clear consensus that school effects are best understood as teacher effects (Luyten, 2003). Compelling evidence also suggests that managing classrooms and engaging learners are core resources for effective teaching and student learning (Creemers, 1994). These core tasks of instruction are, however, daunting in high-poverty urban schools given high rates of disruptive behaviors, overcrowding, and stressful work conditions. Classroom management has been identified as teachers' most stressful problem (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006); most pressing professional development priority (Coalition for Psychology in Schools and Education, 2006); and most robust empirical predictor of attrition, particularly among new teachers (Ingersoll, 2001). Unmotivated students who exert little effort and give up quickly are also a major concern in urban schools and present significant challenges to teachers (Jones & Sandidge, 1997). Thus, identifying effective, sustainable professional development models for urban teachers directly targeting those core resources for effective teaching -- classroom management and engaging learners -- is a top priority in education.

My research focuses on the development and evaluation of teacher professional development models for urban teachers to enhance their implementation of evidence-based classroom management and instructional practices. I have conducted research examining the extent to which professional development resources and teacher consultation in evidence-based classroom management practices enhances teachers' fidelity of implementation, acceptability ratings, and students' behavioral outcomes (Shernoff & Kratochwill, 2007). In addition, I have examined how contextual variables (e.g., time, cost, administrator support) impact adoption of interventions in schools (Kratochwill & Shernoff, 2003; Shernoff & Kratochwill, 2007).

Currently, I am co-investigator of a 5-year NIMH-funded study in which community mental health providers collaborate with teachers and parents to promote the use of evidence-based practices around the three components of effective teaching practices empirically linked with student learning: classroom management, effective instruction, and parental involvement (Atkins et al., in press; Neal et al., 2008).

Recent work with colleagues highlighting the overwhelming stressors facing urban teachers (see Shernoff et al., 2008) coupled with accumulating evidence that social relationships play a key role in improving teacher practices (Bryk & Schneider, 2002) suggests the need for comprehensive professional development models targeting teachers' *effectiveness* in the classroom and *connectedness* to colleagues. Social learning theorists and educational sociologists argue that social relationships are a conduit for building skills that lead to effectiveness and can foster belongingness within schools necessary to engender longer-term commitment to teaching (Bandura, 1997; Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Thus, the next step in my research agenda includes clarifying the mechanisms by which these two important spheres of influence (i.e., effectiveness and connectedness) work together to enhance teacher practices. This is particularly relevant to early career teachers (i.e., three or fewer years of teaching experience) who often lack self confidence and feel "lost at sea," with few resources to help them survive (Berry, 2004).

In light of the profound needs and depleting resources facing teachers working in urban schools, creating and nurturing connections with colleagues presents an alternative model of professional development in which naturally occurring relationships and supports are activated on behalf of early career teachers. This work can also contribute to a new understanding of how to enhance teachers' practices around those core resources for teacher effectiveness (i.e., managing classrooms and motivating learners) related to positive outcomes for learners.

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SPRCC- Research Proposal for Elisa Shernoff

Recent research documents what educators have long suspected – perennial high rates of teacher shortages is not due to insufficient supplies of qualified teachers, but to large numbers of teachers leaving their jobs long before retirement (Ingersoll, 2001; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Attrition rates among new teachers are particularly alarming, with up to 20% of new teachers leaving within the first 5 years of entry into the occupation (e.g., Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Schools in high-poverty, urban communities lose up to 50% of their teaching staff yearly (Barnes, Crowe & Schaefer, 2007). New teachers consistently rank difficulties managing classrooms and motivating learners as among their top reasons for leaving teaching (e.g., Evertson & Weinstein, 2006; Johnson & Birkland, 2003; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Despite alarming rates and negative consequences associated with teacher attrition in urban schools, professional development opportunities for new teachers often fails to provide them with targeted support around core resources for teaching (e.g., managing classrooms and motivating learners) associated with positive outcomes for learners (Kardos et al., 2001).

Given the complex needs of early career teachers working in urban schools, I recently submitted a grant to the Institute of Educational Sciences to develop and refine a multi-component professional development model to enhance new teachers': 1) *effectiveness* in the strongest predictors of attrition -- classroom management and student motivation; and 2) *connectedness* to colleagues given the central role that cohesion, trust, and belongingness play in teaching. The two key components of the professional development model include linking new teachers with: 1) peer-nominated mentors to provide intensive support in evidence-based classroom management practices and motivation strategies, and 2) the larger network of teachers via professional learning communities (i.e., groups of teachers working collaboratively to

enhance student learning by improving their own classroom practices). A mixed-methods research design will examine whether the professional development model: 1) can be delivered as intended (i.e., fidelity); 2) is acceptable to teachers and mentors (i.e., consumer satisfaction); and 3) shows promise in impacting proximal teacher outcomes related to *effectiveness* and *connectedness*.

Context and Participants

Collaborative research sites include two K-8th grade Chicago Public Schools located in high-poverty areas with 85% or greater African American students, 85% or greater low-income families, and average reading scores on statewide testing below the 30th percentile ($M = 27.9$, $SD = 3.8$). Participants will include mentors ($n = 3$ per school; $n = 6$ total); early career teachers ($n = 4$ per school; $n = 8$ total); and classroom teachers ($n = 15$ per school; $n = 30$ total). Peer-nominated mentors will participate in a summer course to prepare them implement the service model (i.e., classroom support and professional learning communities) and evidence-based practices to enhance classroom management and motivating learners (see Atkins et al., in press; Neal, et al., 2008 for procedures to identify and select mentors). Qualitative methods (i.e., semi-structured interviews and focus groups) will help us evaluate participants' experience with the model and conditions that promote and hinder implementation. Quantitative data (i.e., rating scales and sociometric interviews) will assess whether the model shows promise in impacting teacher proximal outcomes related to effectiveness and connectedness. Results from this study are expected to result in an enhanced professional development model that can be fully packaged and implemented in additional schools in a subsequent planned study to test its impact on proximal student outcomes related to behavior and achievement and distal teacher outcomes related to retention.

Estimated Budget

Personnel	FTE	Salary + Fringe	Total
Faculty Investigator	0.5	46900	46900
Project Director	0.5	34025	34025
Research Assistant	1	37200	37200
Transcriber (Hourly)	1	1500	1500
			119,625
Supplies			
PC and Peripherals			2500
Office Supplies			1000
			3,500
Participant/Trainee Costs			
Mentor Summer Course Tuition			3000
Participant Compensation			1700
School/Mentor Stipends			7000
			11,700
Total Costs			134,825

Relative Advantages and Challenges of Collaborative Multi-site Research

University-community collaborations are widely recognized as critical to the success of intervention and prevention programming. However, such partnerships may be challenging to develop and sustain in urban low-income communities where resources are scarce and there may be widespread distrust of university researchers who are unable to sustain grant-related services beyond the life of their grant (Atkins et al., 2003; Frazier et al., 2007). We will therefore allocate sufficient time to collaborate with the principal and the school leadership teams to identify existing school resources that can be integrated into the professional development model, to assess perceived barriers to implementation, and to identify critical elements of the school ecology that should be considered when developing and implementing the model. The leadership team will also play a central role in developing and refining the professional development model, including prioritizing the strategies and practices to include and articulating benchmarks for determining whether successive versions of the model are operating as intended.

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SPRCC – Research Abstract for Elisa Shernoff

This proposal presents the goals and objectives of a multi-site project designed to develop, refine, and test the feasibility of a professional development model for early career teachers (ECTs) working in urban low-income communities, where schools can lose up to 50% of their teachers yearly. Despite alarming rates and negative consequences associated with teacher attrition, professional development opportunities often fail to provide ECTs with targeted support around the most observable characteristics of teaching related to positive outcomes for learners. Given the complex needs of ECTs, I propose to develop and refine a multi-component professional development model to enhance ECTs': 1) *effectiveness* around the two strongest predictors of attrition -- classroom management and engaging learners; and 2) *connectedness* to colleagues given the central role that cohesion, trust, and belongingness plays in teaching. This includes linking ECTs with the larger network of teachers as well as peer-nominated mentors who will provide intensive classroom support around managing classrooms and motivating learners. The proposed project will be conducted in two K-8th grade Chicago Public Schools located in high-poverty regions with 85% or greater African American students, 85% or greater low-income families, and average reading scores on statewide testing below the 30th percentile ($M = 27.9, SD = 3.8$). A mixed-methods research design will examine whether the model: 1) can be delivered as intended (i.e., fidelity); 2) is acceptable; and 3) shows promise in impacting proximal teacher outcomes related to *effectiveness* in managing classrooms and motivating learners and *connectedness* (i.e., cohesion and trust with colleagues). This study is part of a planned program of research focused on developing new social structures within urban schools to enhance the capacity of ECTs to be effective in their classrooms and promote positive academic and behavioral outcomes for students living in urban poverty.