

POLICY STUDIES ASSOCIATES, INC.

EVALUATION OF THE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION MANAGER PROJECT

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Executive Summary

The School Administration Manager (SAM) project, supported by The Wallace Foundation as part of its education initiative, focuses on changing the conditions in schools that prevent principals from devoting more time to instructional leadership. The project addresses the issue that the press of management responsibilities deprives the school of a valuable instructional-leadership resource: the principal's time. In schools participating in the National SAM Project, principals have made a commitment to increase the amount of time they spent on tasks related to instructional leadership, and each school has hired or designated a SAM to support and assist the principal in making this change. The National SAM Project has received grant funding from The Wallace Foundation to scale up and support the SAM innovation through communications, negotiations with prospective sites, and external assistance.

Policy Studies Associates (PSA) evaluated the implementation, early effects, and diffusion of the SAM innovation around the country during 2008 and early 2009. The evaluation documented and analyzed the essential properties of the SAM innovation; the dimensions of variation found across schools; the organizational and individual incentives for adoption, implementation, and adaptation in particular contexts; and the outcomes for individual principals, SAMs, and schools. We anticipated that the state and local policy makers could use the evaluation results to inform decisions about adopting the SAM innovation and that developers could use the results to identify modifications of the innovation and implementation strategies. We approached the evaluation as an opportunity to lend a new source of objective analysis to the ongoing adaptation of a field-based innovation.

From its beginnings in three schools in Louisville, Kentucky, the National SAM Project focused on helping principals delegate time-consuming management responsibilities and increase their interactions about instruction with teachers, students, and decision-making groups in the building. In the initial design, a SAM was always a new staff member, hired to play a dual role of handling management tasks and working closely with the principal to encourage him or her to delegate more managerial work and spend more time on instructional tasks. Later, in response to local concerns about the cost of a new position, the project devised the alternative of adding SAM responsibilities to an existing position in the school. In these schools, the SAM continued to perform some or all (usually all) of his or her existing job and also met with the principal to discuss time use, but was not necessarily expected to take on additional management tasks.

This study would have been impossible without the generous cooperation of the SAMs, principals, teachers, and other school staff who hosted our visits, participated in interviews and surveys, and answered our questions about their experience with the SAM project. State and local coordinators helped with arrangements for data collection as well as sharing their own experiences and insights. Debbie Daniels, Troyce Fisher, Bert Hendee, and Carol Lensing were especially helpful in this process. Mark Shellinger, National SAM Project Director, and his colleague James Mercer were unfailingly cooperative and gracious in the face of our information needs and our critique of the project. Deanna Burney helped us conceptualize issues of principal leadership. At The Wallace Foundation, Jody Spiro, Senior Program Officer, provided invaluable information and help. We are grateful to Edward Pauly, Director of Research and Evaluation, for guidance and encouragement. Throughout, the wise counsel and support of Mary Mattis, Senior Research and Evaluation Officer, has been of immense benefit to our work.

The National SAM Project provided several mechanisms and procedures for focusing principals' attention on their time use. One was a system of measurement that divided instructional and management tasks into a total of 25 discrete categories called "descriptors," each describing an observable behavior. Another was a shadowing process, in which a trained data collector from outside the school observed the principal for a week, recording behavior at five-minute intervals and producing a picture of the time spent, by descriptor, over that week. Shadowing at the beginning and end of a full year in the SAM project provided a pre- and post-test measure of the principal's time use. Special calendar-based software enabled the SAM and principal to record what the principal was doing at all times during the day, by descriptor. The software produced graphical summaries of time use that enabled the principal to track progress toward his or her goal of spending some specific percent of time on instruction. Finally, the project designated an external coach to visit the SAM/principal team monthly.

Although some essential features of the SAM innovation remained constant across sites and over time, many variations emerged in the work, especially at the state and school levels. State coordinators not only took initiative in disseminating the innovation, they developed refinements in such procedures as training and coaching. Across schools, each SAM/principal team developed somewhat distinctive ways of working together. However, compared with states and schools, local school districts were generally less active in adapting the SAM innovation; the limited role of districts is an issue to which we return in our recommendations below.

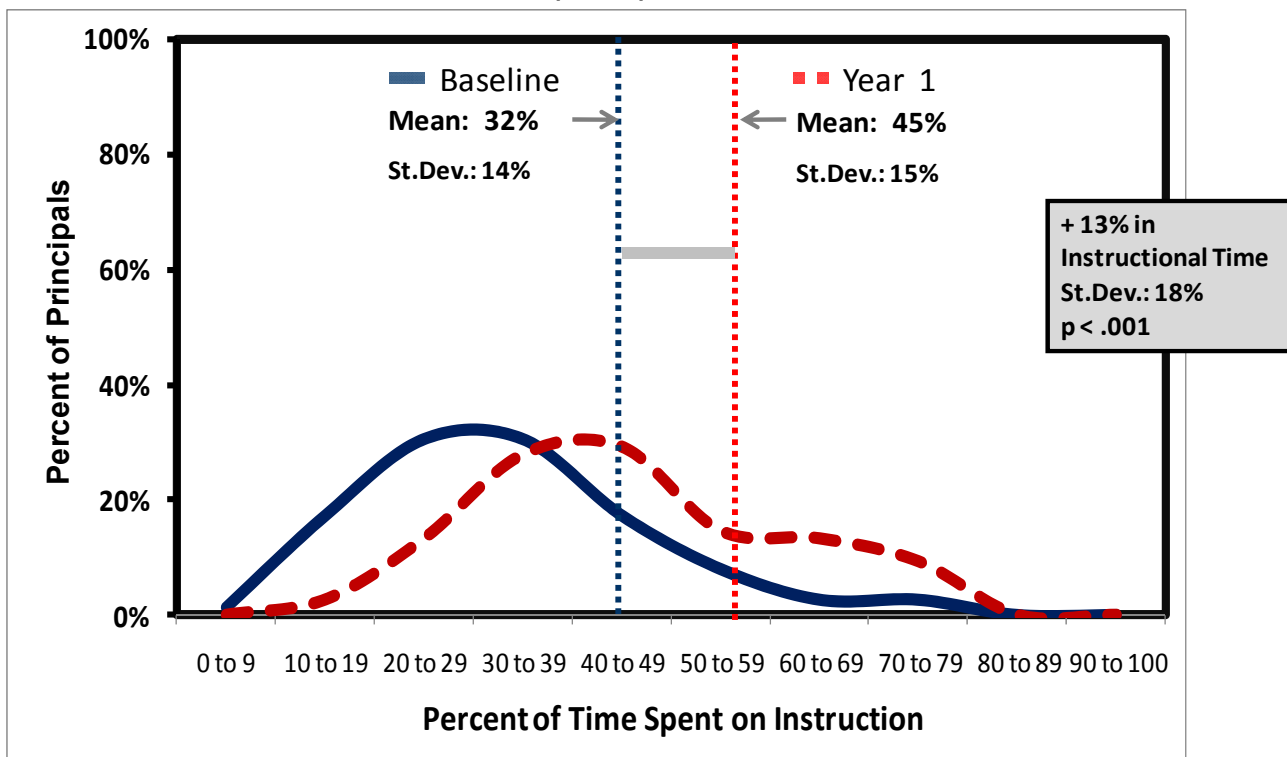
The evaluation team analyzed all the data on participating principals' time use collected by the National SAM Project; administered online surveys to the principals, SAMs, and coaches participating in the project as of late fall 2008; interviewed decision makers in eight states, 11 school districts, and The Wallace Foundation; observed numerous events of the National SAM Project; and interviewed 166 school-based staff (principals, SAMs, teachers, and others).

The following key points emerged from the data collection and analysis:

- As of March 2009, a total of 160 SAM/principal teams in 37 districts in nine states participated in the National SAM Project. Principals reported that they participated because they wanted to spend more time on instruction and to develop their skills in instructional leadership. State and district decision makers typically participated because they saw the SAM project as a means to higher student achievement, having learned that achievement had risen in the three schools that were the first to hire SAMs. Other incentives for policymakers to adopt the project included their belief that participating principals would supervise teaching and learning effectively and that student discipline would improve.
- Among the 75 principals who had participated in the project for at least a full year by April 2009, the time devoted to instruction-related tasks increased by an average of 58 minutes per day or almost five hours per week. They registered this increase in spite of the fact that the length of the average day they spent in school shortened from 8 hours 46 minutes to 8 hours 15 minutes. The percent of time principals devoted to instructional tasks (as defined in detail in the project's

system of measurement) rose from a mean of 32 percent to a mean of 45 percent. The change in time use among this group of principals was statistically significant; it is shown graphically in the following exhibit.

**Percent of Time Spent on Instruction,
at Baseline and One-Year Follow-up, by Principals with Pre- and Post-Data
(N=75)**



Source: Evaluation team’s analysis of all data from the National SAM Project for principals with both baseline (pre-) and one-year follow-up (post-) data.

Exhibit reads: The graph shows two distributions of the percent of principals whose percentage of time spent on instruction fell into each decile (0 to 9 percent, 10 to 19 percent, etc.), one distribution for the baseline data and one for one-year follow-up data. The mean time spent on instruction at baseline was 32 percent, with a standard deviation of 14 percent. The mean at follow-up was 45 percent, with a standard deviation of 15 percent.

- There were three instructional leadership activities on which principals increased their time by at least 10 minutes per day, on average. The descriptors for these activities were “observation and walkthrough,” “instruction-related office work prep,” and “work with students.” Principals decreased their time by at least 10 minutes per day on each of four management activities: “office work prep,” “building management,” “student supervision,” and “student discipline.”
- Principals who delegated five time-consuming management tasks to SAMs (student discipline, student supervision, managing non-teaching staff, managing

school facilities, and interacting with parents) significantly increased their time spent on instruction over one year. But in schools where fewer of these tasks were delegated to SAMs, principals' time use did not change significantly. This difference in delegation may account for the differences observed across staffing models: the change in time use was significant where a new position was added, but not significant where the person designated as the SAM continued to occupy another job.

- Although participating principals welcomed the chance to spend more time in classrooms, our interviews suggested that more could be done to support principals in deepening their repertoire of leadership skills. Feedback to individual teachers was seldom extensive; principals' participation in meetings of school-based teams was typically sporadic. Only in a few sites did we find that the principal had strategically selected a set of high-leverage leadership activities that would serve specific purposes in instructional improvement. Apart from coaching to help SAM/principal teams develop their partnerships and use the project software, the National SAM Project was not designed to provide professional development for principals as instructional leaders.
- SAMs had carved out important roles in a number of schools that we visited. As they settled into their jobs over time, some SAMs took charge of revamping systems for managing facilities, for student transportation, or for discipline. Not only did the SAM's role in management tasks make a difference in the principal's time use, it was also credited with helping the school run more smoothly.
- In their interactions with principals on the subject of time use, SAMs did less probing, reflective coaching than the project originally envisioned. Typically, the required "daily meeting" of a SAM and a principal revolved around coordination on immediate, practical matters and fulfillment of the project's requirements for data entry. Seldom did the SAM's interaction with the principal about time use go beyond routine reminders about following through on planned instructional tasks.
- At the early start-up stage of participation, the project's tools and infrastructure were reportedly useful. Principals recognized the credibility of data collected by a trained shadower; they embraced the challenge of changing their time use; and they saw value in using calendar software to monitor the overall breakout of their time between instructional and management tasks. Initial training provided some needed how-to's. Monthly coaching helped some principals and SAMs smooth bumps in the road to a new working relationship.
- Principals and SAMs who were veterans in the project had different situations and needs than did novices, and they reported deriving less value from the project's tools and infrastructure over time. Although the data on time use were useful to some veterans, few found the detailed breakouts by descriptor to be understandable or helpful, and many found the software cumbersome to use. Veterans were less likely than novices to value the coaching visits, especially

when those visits focused on project mechanics, and some principals wanted more substantive help in developing skills in instructional leadership.

- Alignment of the SAM project with district priorities and procedures was highly variable. District offices only inconsistently recognized the SAM role. They had received little encouragement to strategize about ways of supporting principals' use of time for instructional leadership. In a few cases, district offices purposefully selected principals for participation and supported them with ongoing, thoughtful conversation about instructional leadership. More often, though, the lack of alignment between the SAM project and district priorities for school improvement represented a missed opportunity.

Based on these findings, we offer several recommendations for future development of the SAM innovation. The National SAM Project Director and the state coordinators who have received funding from The Wallace Foundation for their work with the SAM project are continuing to work with the project and are in a position to act on these recommendations; indeed, after early briefings and discussions regarding our evaluation findings, they had already taken steps toward doing so as of fall 2009. We believe that following these recommendations would build on the innovation's existing strengths as a lever for changing principal behavior, alleviate operational issues, and open the door to more substantive and strategic capacity building for participating principals:

- Commit to delegation of management tasks, whether to the SAM or to others in the building, as a way of increasing the likelihood that the principal will change his or her use of time
- Rethink the project's 25 descriptors of time use, which are confusing to many participants and are not well suited to informing the pursuit of strategic goals in school leadership
- Identify stages of project implementation, and provide support to participants tailored to their stage
- Improve the project's data collection and reporting tools for efficiency at scale, simplifying and improving user-friendliness where possible
- Improve coaching, not only tailoring it to stages of implementation but, in particular, providing more in-depth support for principals' development of skills in instructional leadership
- Actively engage school districts as full partners in the project, negotiating expectations more clearly and allowing districts to use the SAM project's tools as part of their efforts in school improvement and principal professional development

More broadly, the record of the National SAM Project points to opportunities, challenges, and tensions inherent in a national intervention aimed at supporting school leadership. In its early years, the project allowed many types of adaptations to arise at the state and school levels while some procedures and priorities were specified nationally. For example, state coordinators determined the amount and content of professional development for principals and SAMs; coaches decided individually whether to use the techniques in which they had been trained; principals identified their own goals for change in time use; SAMs developed their sphere of responsibility as they interacted with the principal and others in the school. Surprisingly few decisions were left to the districts, other than the major decision of whether and how to support SAM positions financially, and for sustainability and effectiveness of the innovation we have advised an expansion of district authority in the project.

As the SAM project evolves, its national and state leaders can capitalize on the variation that has emerged by systematically identifying and cultivating productive variations within the project while weeding out counterproductive ones. However, this will bring hard choices. Stakeholders at the national, state, and school levels embrace their own ways of implementing the SAM innovation, yet as more data emerge, not every feature or adaptation will prove to be workable and effective. Our findings already suggest that one way of implementing the project—designating a SAM but delegating few new tasks to him or her—has not resulted in changing principals’ time use in the desired ways. Other school-level consequences that should be assessed in later years will include whether SAMs stay on the job over time, and how changes in principals’ behavior affect teaching and learning in their schools. Still other consequences will be seen at the policy and system level, including whether districts support the project financially. Each of these types of consequences deserves systematic monitoring and should inform further revision and specification of the SAM innovation’s essential elements. In this way, the project can continue to build on its notable accomplishments in helping principals change their use of time.

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1. Introduction

As part of its multifaceted work in educational leadership, The Wallace Foundation has supported development and diffusion of the School Administration Manager (SAM) project. In schools participating in this project, principals made a commitment to increase the amount of time they spent on tasks related to instructional leadership (as opposed to managerial tasks), and the school hired or designated an individual called the School Administration Manager, or SAM, to help make the change happen. Policy Studies Associates (PSA) evaluated the implementation, early effects, and diffusion of the National SAM Project around the country during 2008 and early 2009. Our central aim in studying the project was to inform further refinements and adaptations of the SAM project by providing insights for practitioners, policymakers, and reform supporters about effective ways of implementing this change.

The SAM project arose originally in one of the funded sites in The Wallace Foundation's education initiative. Its development has been field-based: states and districts in the Wallace network have introduced adaptations that have diffused to other participating sites. The National SAM Project Director, Mark Shellinger, is based in the Louisville, Kentucky, public school system. From that base, working closely with the foundation and with state and local leaders, he has overseen the scale-up process and the ongoing refinement of the core elements of the project.

In this introductory chapter, we first describe the SAM project: its purposes, essential features, implementation tools and infrastructure, and major design variations. Next, we review the questions and methods of this evaluation.

Key Elements of the SAM Project

From its beginning in Louisville in 2003, the SAM project focused on changing the conditions in schools that prevented principals from devoting time to instructional leadership. The central issue addressed was that management responsibilities, for matters that ranged from the physical plant of the school to lunchroom supervision, occupied the principal's time and thus deprived the school of a valuable resource—the time that the principal could instead spend on instructional leadership. If other arrangements could be made for time-consuming management responsibilities, principals would be free to use their skills and experience in more frequent and sustained interaction with individual teachers, students, and decision-making groups in the building. These were the observations that led to Mark Shellinger propose an “Alternative School Administration Study,” exploring changes in principal working conditions through the introduction of the SAM position.¹

Initially, the approach taken was to hire individuals from outside the education field as SAMs. A SAM had a dual role: handling management tasks in the school; and working closely

¹ A summary report is available from the online Educational Resources Information Center as ED490688. Shellinger, Mark, “Alternative School Administration Study,” October 11, 2005, http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/1b/c3/66.pdf

with the principal to encourage him or her to delegate more of the managerial work and spend more time on instructional tasks. Shellinger recalls that the three original SAMs were unsure that the principals were actually using time differently as the school year went on. In response to this concern a new tool was developed: the TimeTrack system, which the SAM and principal used to record in detail what the principal was doing at all times during the day. Originally designed as a simple Excel spreadsheet, TimeTrack divided instructional and management tasks into a total of 25 discrete categories called “descriptors.” External accountability was introduced by the “shadowing” process, in which a trained data collector from outside the school observed the principal for a full week, recording behavior at five-minute intervals, and producing a more formal and complete picture of the time spent, by descriptor, over that week. Shadowing at the beginning and end of a full year in the SAM project provided the measure of the principal’s changed time use.

As the SAM project expanded (as detailed in this report’s chapter on diffusion), variations on the SAM role were introduced. The first change was the recruitment of SAMs from inside the school: school secretaries and teachers left their existing position to become the SAM in their building. This change in hiring practices took on the name of “Model 2,” while recruitment of a SAM from outside was called Model 1. The SAM role was still designed with the dual focus of undertaking managerial work while encouraging the principal to spend more time on the instructional descriptors.

Another variation, introduced in response to concerns about the cost of adding or converting a position, was the addition of SAM responsibilities to an existing position in the school. In these “Model 3” schools, the SAM was not freed up to focus entirely on SAM work, but instead continued to perform some or all of his or her existing duties. The official expectation for Model 3 SAMs was that they would encourage the principal to spend more time on instruction and also encourage the principal to delegate management tasks in some way (but not necessarily to the SAM).

In addition to clarifying the evolving definitions of the SAM position, the National SAM Project developed several tools and a supporting infrastructure for participating schools. Discussed in detail in Chapter 6 of this report, these included:

- Prescribed readiness activities for principals interested in participating in the project
- Procedures for shadowing by the outside data collectors and the resulting Time/Task Analysis report
- TimeTrack software for principal/SAM teams to use in planning, recording, and reviewing the principal’s daily time use; the software produced graphical summaries of the time spent on particular descriptors so that the principal could track progress toward his or her goal of more time spent on instruction
- Coaching by a Time Change Coach affiliated with and trained by the National SAM Project

- Training for participating principals and SAMs

As a field-based innovation, the National SAM Project evolved in many ways through 2009, and different sites have implemented it differently, as this report describes. However, as a way of summarizing an official view of the project's essential features during the period of this evaluation, 2008-09, we quote from materials developed by The Wallace Foundation in late 2008 and distributed to all participants in the Second National SAM/Principal Conference in February 2009.² The project's core elements were described in this fact sheet (Exhibit 1-1).

Exhibit 1-1: Core Elements of the National SAM Project

1. Willingness to commit to increasing time for instructional leadership. Districts and principals voluntarily participate in the SAM Project.
2. Baseline Time/Task Analysis™ Data Collection. Data collectors shadow principals for five days and record in five-minute increments how much time they spend on management, instructional, or personal tasks. Principals use this data to create goals for the time they spend on instructional leadership.
3. Engagement with a SAM. The School Administration Manager or SAM may be a new staff position or an existing staff person who takes on new duties. The SAM meets with the principal daily to analyze how time is being used and to shift managerial duties to others. During meetings, they use a software calendar program, TimeTrack™, which was developed for this purpose. The goals are to help shift managerial duties to others and to increase the principal's time on leading instructional improvement.
4. External coaching. The principal and SAM also meet monthly with a Time Change Coach, a retired school administrator who is selected and trained to discuss progress and challenges and identify training needs with the principal/SAM team. The Time Change Coach also builds support through networks of principals and SAMs throughout the SAM network.
5. Follow-up Time/Task Analysis Data Collection one year later to assess improvement.

Evaluation Questions and Methods

This evaluation set out to document and analyze:

- The essential *properties* of the SAM innovation
- The dimensions of *variation* found across schools
- The organizational and individual *incentives* for adoption, implementation, and adaptation in particular contexts
- The *outcomes* for individual principals and SAMs, and their schools

² "Fact Sheet: National School Administration Manager Project." New York: The Wallace Foundation, n.d.

All of these were interrelated: the properties of the innovation provided incentives for adoption; variations often emerged because of incentives in contexts; initial results might provide incentives for continued implementation; the results might be improved by fidelity to the innovation’s essential properties—and perhaps also by adaptation. By studying the SAM project at different stages of implementation and in different contexts, we documented the properties, variations, incentives, and results, and the relationships among them.

Quantitative and qualitative data were gathered and analyzed. The National SAM Project provided a rich trove of data in the Time/Task Analyses of all participating principals. We reanalyzed these data, and Chapter 3 reports the results. We also gathered quantitative data through online surveys of participating principals, SAMs, and Time Change Coaches (Exhibit 1-2).

Exhibit 1-2: Evaluation Surveys

Survey	Date of administration	Surveys fielded	Surveys returned	Response rate
Principals	November 2008	139	121	87%
SAMs	November 2008	124	101	81%
Time Change Coaches	February-March 2008	37	33	89%

Note: Rosters of participating principals and SAMs were provided by the National SAM Project and verified by state coordinators before survey administration. Individuals who responded that they were not eligible respondents (e.g., principals who returned surveys saying they had not had Time/Task Analysis and were not working with a SAM) were excluded from the total number of surveys fielded and from the denominator for the response rate.

Qualitative data were gathered throughout the evaluation period through observations and interviews. Members of the team observed the following events:

- The First and Second National SAM/Principal Conferences
- Data collector training
- State and local training for SAMs and principals in Kentucky (statewide, for new and returning participants) and Iowa (in a newly participating district)
- State and local day-long forums for all participating SAMs and principals in Iowa (statewide) and Chicago (district-level)
- Two-day training for Time Change Coaches; and a meeting of coaches held in conjunction with the second national conference
- An annual meeting of the National SAM Advisory Team at The Wallace Foundation

Most interviews and focus groups were conducted onsite during visits to participating states, districts, and schools. We conducted in-person or telephone interviews with SAM project leaders or decision makers in 8 states and 11 districts. We visited 17 schools in 7 districts in 4 states. Additional interviews with principals and SAMs were conducted during the second national conference, when we arranged individual appointments during the participants' free time. The numbers of school staff interviewed were:

- 32 principals
- 30 SAMs
- 81 teachers
- 23 other school staff members

Interviews with principals, SAMs, and district leaders were conducted individually. Focus groups were used for many of the interviews with teachers in implementing schools. State leaders were interviewed individually or, if they so chose, in small groups of key individuals in a particular state. Program officers of The Wallace Foundation were interviewed individually.

We promised anonymity for all interview and observation data. Although individuals are quoted in this report, any potentially identifying information has been removed from the direct quotes drawn from our interviews and observations. In a few instances, we quote on-the-record comments made in public settings by key individuals (such as the National SAM Project Director); in each of those instances, the speaker is identified.

We emphasize here that data were collected and analyzed from schools, districts, and states around the country. We have attempted to draw generalizations about the National SAM Project, but also to make the point that implementation of the project has varied a great deal across sites.

Subsequent chapters of this report address: diffusion in the National SAM Project; the changes in principals' time use in participating schools; principals' instructional leadership activities; SAMs' backgrounds and activities; the project's supporting tools and infrastructure; and our recommendations and concluding comments.

2. Diffusion

Diffusion in the National SAM Project reflected The Wallace Foundation's active encouragement and support for a process led by the National SAM Project Director and state-level leaders. Diffusion involved not only informing states, districts, and schools about the project, but also refining the core implementation expectations and options in response to issues and ideas that emerged from the field

We describe first the arrangements made for diffusion, including who was involved and the incentives and supports offered by the foundation and the National SAM Project. Next, we trace the results of the diffusion efforts: the rate of adoption of the project in schools over time, and the adaptations made in successive waves of participation in different states and districts. Finally, we discuss the incentives and disincentives for adopting and maintaining the project, based on the early evidence available from the participating states, districts, and schools.

Diffusion Structure: A Project Within an Initiative

The original idea for the SAM project was created in Louisville, Kentucky, where the Jefferson County Public Schools were a grantee of The Wallace Foundation's education initiative. The overall initiative supported aligned state and local systems of educational leadership, with support for standards and training for leaders at all levels, including principals. Mark Shellinger, a district staff member who later became the National SAM Project Director, responded to Wallace's invitation to develop ways of improving the conditions for the exercise of leadership. It was his contention that principals' instructional leadership was impeded by the myriad managerial tasks that they must perform, and that making other arrangements for those tasks—while simultaneously encouraging and supporting principals' increased time on instructional tasks—would constitute an important change in their working conditions. He based the design of the position on what he had learned about the Victor Elementary School District in Victorville, California, where the SAM position had been created in the 1990s.

After a year of working with SAMs, in November 2004, the first three participating principals in Louisville had posted impressive gains in the amount of time they devoted to instructional tasks. As part of his Alternative School Administration Study, Shellinger gathered and analyzed the student achievement data from the schools the following summer. He found that the school-level achievement gains between spring 2004 and spring 2005 (i.e., the gains reflecting a full year of the SAMs' presence in the school) exceeded the gains those schools had made in previous years.

People involved in the project throughout its history recalled in interviews that other sites participating in The Wallace Foundation's education initiative found these data compelling and expressed interest in the possibility of adopting the SAM project. The grantees had an opportunity to learn about the project because they convened regularly under Wallace auspices, with a structure of subgroups called Leadership Issue Groups (LIGs) that brought together state and district representatives with shared interests. A LIG formed around the diffusion of the

SAM project; in that LIG, state and local grantees worked together to devise diffusion strategies for the project. As a longtime participant in the education initiative recalled in an interview:

[The initiative has been] a learning community. We could percolate interesting ideas, put them in the mix of people who were very motivated to find common solutions. ... Sometimes interesting ideas don't get enough air time to percolate. Because we had the learning community up and running, we could create a space for innovation. ... and the spark could grow.

In addition to supplying a platform for the diffusion of the SAM project, The Wallace Foundation supplied resources to participating states and districts that helped underwrite the costs of SAM project adoption. Since the pilot phase, however, project funding has been a mix of Wallace grant funds and district funds:

- Through the National SAM Project, Wallace supported: shadowing for Time/Task Analysis and the associated training and travel expenses for data collectors; development and refinement of TimeTrack software; some Time Change Coaching, along with travel and training for the coaches; and the two National SAM/Principal Conferences. Coordination of all these project elements by the National SAM Project Director and an associate was also fully supported by Wallace.
- States and districts with Wallace grants used a portion of the grant funds for activities related to the SAM project. The amount of grant support made available for SAM project activities was typically geared to the number of adoptions expected. The uses of the funds varied by locale: for example, Kentucky supported more elaborate training and coaching arrangements than other states.
- Districts supported the SAM positions, with Model 1 and Model 2 positions generally requiring reallocation of resources for salaries and benefits. This reflected a deliberate strategy of engaging district support from the start.

A major contribution of The Wallace Foundation to the diffusion process, including but going beyond the financial support involved, was the engagement of state and district initiative coordinators in the National SAM Project. In meetings that brought all the LIGs together, coordinators had the opportunity to see the SAM project as part of an overall push for strengthening instructional leadership. The LIG organized around the SAM project brought state and district know-how to the project's diffusion strategy. Wallace's financial support for the state coordinators' positions also supported the further dissemination of the project to districts and schools. At the state level in each state where the SAM project was adopted, one or more individuals spent part time coordinating dissemination, Time/Task Analysis by data collectors, Time Change Coaching, and other support activities.

While supporting the project financially, The Wallace Foundation also set constraints on the diffusion process. In particular, the foundation discouraged dissemination to sites outside the network of funded states. This stance was not absolute, however. For example, it did not prevent dissemination to three schools in San Antonio, Texas, a lengthy series of discussions

with Minneapolis, or the participation of Victorville, California (where SAMs had been introduced in the 1990s); none of these states was funded under the Wallace education initiative. The foundation also remained vigilant in the ongoing process of adapting the project, providing a forum for hammering out the specifications for innovations such as Models 2 and 3.

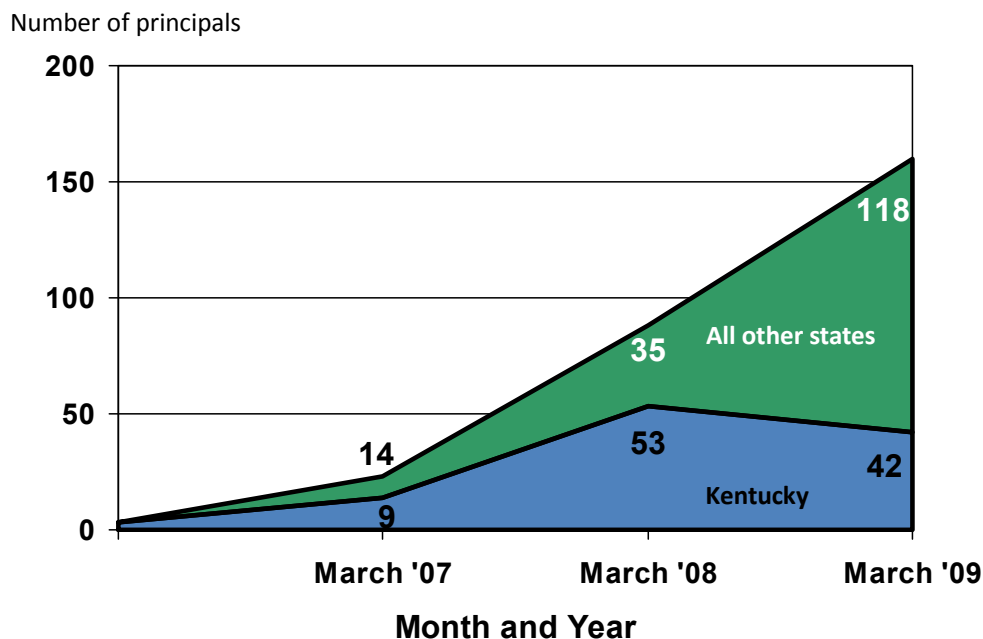
The Roll-Out: Adoption and Adaptation

Each participating state—and, to some extent, each participating district—greeted the SAM project with its own mix of preferences, constraints, and adaptations. Thus, we discuss the roll-out chronologically, elaborating on the major adaptations in the context of the sites that created them. We begin with an overview of the pace of diffusion.

The Rate of Diffusion Over Time

The history of the National SAM Project since fall 2006 shows a gradually increasing pace of adoptions, with initial growth centered in Kentucky and subsequent growth in other states (Exhibit 2-1). Our definition of an adoption is a principal who (1) was shadowed for a baseline Time/Task Analysis and (2) began to work with a SAM.

Exhibit 2-1: Number of Principals Participating in the National SAM Project, by Year



Source: Records and rosters of National SAM Project

Exhibit reads: In March 2007, nine of the 23 participating principals were in Kentucky. In March 2009, 42 of the 160 participating principals were in Kentucky.

As of March 2009, about 160 principals were actively participating in the SAM project. This figure included many new adopters: about 100 had started within the previous 12 months, and of these 24 had started in the first three months of 2009. About 88 principals had been participating a year earlier, in March 2008. (Some of these subsequently stopped participating, most because of routine turnover such as retirements, but some because of district decisions to cut back on the project, as we discuss below.)

Coaching and Training in Kentucky

Having seen the initial results in the three pilot schools, and with encouragement from The Wallace Foundation, the Jefferson County Public Schools and the Kentucky Department of Education (each of which held a Wallace grant) were the first sites to adopt the SAM project in additional schools. In fall 2006 and in subsequent years, Jefferson County invested in SAM positions. SAMs were hired in other districts around the state in 2006, some with federal categorical funds and some with district funds; over time, funding for all the SAM positions was assumed by the local districts.

While the expanded project in Louisville followed the model of the three pilot schools, the state-level grant introduced some innovative elements. The first “Model 2” SAM left her existing position in a school to become the SAM in that school, departing from the original model of a SAM who was new both to the building and to schools in general. The coaching arrangements set up by the state department of education had innovative elements as well:

- In addition to a Time Change Coach paid for by the project, the participating principals and SAMs were regularly visited and coached by district staff
- A consultant’s Learning Centered Schools model was introduced to the principals, and the consultant was engaged to provide them with monthly coaching
- The principals and the SAMs convened regularly (once every month or two during the school year) for other professional development designed by the state department

Delaware’s “Model 4” Time/Task Analysis

Not counted in our adoption statistics, but part of the story of the project’s diffusion, was the “Model 4” variant on the SAM project initially tried in Delaware. As a grantee in the Wallace education initiative, Delaware was interested in coaching principals on their use of time for instructional leadership. However, Delaware schools typically had at least one assistant principal already, and the requirement to add a new position was seen as a deal-breaker that would prevent adoption of the SAM project. Thus, Delaware used the Time/Task Analysis method to gather data on the time use of 11 principals in fall 2006 and incorporated the resulting data into a program of professional development offered to principals with Wallace funding. The idea was that the baseline data on a principal’s time use would be eye-opening for that

principal, and the ongoing leadership coaching would encourage and support the principal in increasing his or her focus on instruction.³ With no one occupying the SAM position in the school, this approach was designated as Model 4; this model was seldom if ever adopted outside Delaware, however.

Back to the Future in Victorville

As mentioned above, the Victor Elementary School District in California had invented the SAM position in the 1990s as an alternative to hiring an educator as the assistant principal for elementary schools. About 10 years later, the district supported another innovation that also resembled the SAM project: it supported a number of principals' participation in Breakthrough Coaching, a system in which a personal coach spent considerable time with each of them, encouraging several changes in their use of time. He taught them to spend much more time in classrooms; delegate all scheduling to their secretaries; and maintain paperless, deskless offices.

The Victor superintendent who had created the SAM position and encouraged Breakthrough Coaching, still on the job in 2006, was approached by National SAM Project Director with an invitation to incorporate Time/Task Analysis, TimeTrack, and Time Change Coaching into the ongoing work of principals and SAMs in the district. Shellinger pointed to the documented changes in principals' time use in the pilot schools and the student achievement gains registered in those schools and asked whether Victorville would be interested in adopting the tools that, in conjunction with the SAM position, had contributed to those gains. He explained that Wallace funds would support the costs of the tools. The superintendent agreed that Shellinger could make a presentation to the principals; seven principals agreed to have a baseline Time/Task Analysis in November 2006 and thus became adopters in the National SAM Project.

Outsourced Hiring in Atlanta

The Atlanta Public Schools, a Wallace education initiative grantee, undertook Time/Task Analysis for selected principals in November 2006. The hiring of SAMs hit a number of snags, however. Because of difficulties in hiring SAMs through the district's personnel system, the district contracted with a temporary staffing agency to provide the SAMs. Under the terms of the contract, the position was without benefits. Only one SAM, an individual who worked with two different principals simultaneously, remained on the job for any length of time.

A fresh start was made in Atlanta in January 2009, when 22 principals had baseline Time/Task Analyses. Again, the district contracted with a private employment agency to provide the SAMs. At least initially, this posed some challenges, such as the prohibition on temporary employees (such as these SAMs) accessing some of the school system data they were expected to use as part of their SAM responsibilities.

³ Two years later, in 2008, two Delaware schools adopted the project by designating SAMs.

Educators in Iowa

Another state with a Wallace grant, Iowa, began exploring the SAM position through participation in the LIG. Having learned about the early experience in Louisville, the coordinator of the state grant encouraged a longtime colleague, a retired educator, to visit Louisville, and together they decided that supporting that colleague's leadership of a state SAM project on a part-time basis would be a good use of some Wallace grant funds. Initial dissemination efforts in Iowa resulted in adoptions of the SAM project in one district in January 2007 and three more districts in September 2007, with a total of nine principals participating by fall 2007.

An adaptation introduced in Iowa was the selection of experienced teachers and assistant principals as SAMs, with the understanding that the SAM position might serve as a path to an eventual principalship. Up until that time, SAMs had been non-educators—perhaps school secretaries in Kentucky, or individuals with leadership experience in other fields in Victorville, but not certified teachers. The new SAMs in Iowa were officially designated as Model 2 SAMs, although in fact some of them retained some or all of their previous responsibilities and thus fit the definition of Model 3 more closely.

An unusual funding arrangement was later pioneered in Council Bluffs, where the Iowa West Foundation agreed to support the SAM position for seven schools. This agreement was reached in spring 2008; Time/Task Analyses were carried out at the end of the school year, and the SAMs began work before school opened in fall 2008. The schools designated for participation were selected primarily on the basis of their low levels of student achievement.

SAMs serving in Council Bluffs were recruited from a variety of backgrounds, but three were retired principals, one from Council Bluffs and two from another nearby district. Although a few retired principals served as SAMs in other districts, Council Bluffs was unusual in the concentration of veteran talent in the SAM position. It was also unusual in being able to hire a group of full-time SAMs at a time when most new adoptions nationally were following Model 3.

Model 3 in Illinois

The notion of repurposing an existing position for the SAM project was fully realized and acknowledged when diffusion began in Chicago and other Illinois districts in fall 2007. In Chicago, Springfield, and other jurisdictions, school business managers and other school staff members were tapped for the SAM position. Principals were not encouraged to delegate managerial tasks to the SAMs; instead, as the particulars of Model 3 were negotiated for Illinois schools and other adopters of Model 3, the central idea was that the SAM would focus on the daily meeting with the principal, encouraging him or her to find ways to spend more time on instruction. (One participant in Illinois termed this the “Jiminy Cricket” role for SAMs.)

Unlike the many sites where participation was offered to all principals on a voluntary basis, Chicago made a more deliberate selection of participants. The district had a cohort of new principals, some coming out of the New Leaders for New Schools program, with experience as

instructional coaches. It offered SAM project participation to some of these principals, in the belief that their background would equip them to make good use of increased time spent on instruction and that working with a SAM would be an incentive for them to remain in their positions.

By March 2008 there were 13 principals participating in the project in Illinois; another five had Time/Task Analyses in April 2008 and then began working with SAMs in fall 2008; additional principals joined the project in the following year.

The Leadership Academy in New York

New York City's participation in the SAM project also included use of Model 3, although some of the participating SAMs gave up all of their old responsibilities and thus would be more accurately termed Model 2 SAMs. An innovation introduced in New York was the close affiliation between the SAM project and the New York City Leadership Academy, an institution launched with substantial Wallace funding. The Time Change Coaches in New York were employed by the academy and had other coaching responsibilities with the participating schools, rather than focusing exclusively on the SAM project. In addition, New York has made considerable use of the Leadership Performance Planning Worksheet (LPPW), and there have been preliminary efforts to forge a substantive connection between that instrument's framework and the SAM project as implemented in New York. Nine New York principals underwent baseline Time/Task Analyses in February 2008, and 10 did so in May; they designated the SAMs for their buildings at various times between the baseline data collection and early 2009.

Almost District-Wide Adoption in a Missouri District

Despite the National SAM Project's emphasis on voluntary participation, the experience of the project in Missouri featured strong top-down encouragement for principals. One of the first two participating superintendents initially argued for mandatory adoption in all schools in the district. After a series of meetings, all but one principal agreed to participate on a voluntary basis, and the superintendent came to see that voluntary participation would be acceptable.

Summing Up: A Protean Project

In the district-level interviews we conducted for this evaluation, nearly every district decision maker began by making a comment along the lines of: "We're not really following the exact model for this project; we're doing it our own way." The above chronology illustrates the adaptations and innovations introduced in the sites.

Most often, hiring preferences or constraints dictated the adaptations. This is understandable since districts were paying the SAMs' salaries. It also reflects the fact that each district surveyed its available talent pool and identified a set of individuals who might carry out the local vision of the SAM role. For example, in the first Iowa districts to adopt the project,

superintendents tapped existing members of the school staffs who were looking for new challenges (and who would not constitute new hires that might raise eyebrows in frugal communities); Illinois designated school business managers as SAMs; a number of sites opted for the low cost of Model 3; and Delaware initially chose not to designate any SAMs (although some were named in 2008-2009).

The qualifications expected of participating principals also varied across sites. Kentucky initially hand-picked principals with high enthusiasm and good skills in instructional coaching—and then invested substantially in their further professional development. Chicago, too, initially focused on principals with strong preparation in instructional coaching. In a number of smaller districts, all principals participated in the project; this raises questions about the extent to which participation was truly voluntary.

Finally, coaching arrangements in the participating districts were not always limited to external Time Change Coaches. In the Kentucky districts other than Louisville, in at least two Illinois districts, and in New York, locally based coaches worked with participating principals.

A corollary of these district-based coaching arrangements was systematic monitoring of principals' TimeTrack data by higher-level officials, a practice that created some tension with the National SAM Project's policy that time-use data should remain the private property of the principal. The project required Time Change Coaches to sign ethics agreements spelling out what they could share with whom. However, many superintendents have argued that they need access to principals' time-use data, citing the importance of holding school leaders accountable for their behavior. At the state level, the Kentucky Department of Education not only enlisted district staff members as local coaches but also required that they send the principals' TimeTrack data to the department (with the knowledge and agreement of the principals).

Incentives and Disincentives

Across states and districts, several themes recurred in discussions of the reasons to adopt or maintain the SAM project and the barriers to adoption or continuation.

Incentives

District and state decision makers cited several expectations as the keys to their interest in the SAM project. Foremost among these was the expectation of achievement gains, but interviewees also mentioned the expectation that principals would be effective in monitoring and supporting teachers, and that a SAM would serve as a less costly equivalent of an assistant principal.

Achievement gains. Policy makers invariably cited increases in student achievement as the overriding purpose and expectation spurring their participation in the project. The gains experienced in the three pilot schools provided a tantalizing glimpse of results that might be expected; school boards were told about these gains as the rationale for putting local funds into the

project. Many of our interviewees referred to the analysis of these schools' gains as "the national data," a phrase that suggested to us that they might have thought the data came from more than three schools, or that variation across schools in principals' time use had been systematically analyzed in relation to variation in student gains. The following comments were typical:

State grant coordinator: *[The project makes] a concrete argument that says if you do allocate your time differently, you can have an impact on student achievement.*

Superintendent: *We were intrigued by the results.... Clearly, in almost every situation, principals were spending more time focused on instruction. That's a value we hold.... But obviously what was more persuasive was the fact that they also could show a parallel increase in student achievement. ... Our hope is that by spending more time on student learning we increase student learning.*

District staff member: *To really attack the resource of time and really directly connect it to student achievement—I don't know a lot of other studies that can have the data to support that.*

Instructional supervision. Some superintendents communicated a view that the SAM project would enable principals to carry out a supervisory role, more effectively holding teachers accountable for implementing the intended instructional programs.

Superintendent: *[I wanted to] get the principals in the classrooms more, to see the innovations and the staff development being implemented. It's one thing when we're going to give teachers an inservice on the topic of [an instructional innovation], and everybody seems to understand, but without support some will do it and some won't. Teachers need that support, and they need to know it's important. You can't communicate it without getting into classrooms.*

Interviewer: *What should principals be doing?*

Superintendent: *Walk-throughs. Then giving the teachers more detailed information about what they see. For high performers, you point out their value to the organization. For medium, you point out what they're doing that's good, and what they can do to improve. For low performers, point out what they **must** do to improve, up or out.*

Leadership for teams. District staff also communicated a view that principals should spend more time encouraging and supporting instructional teams in their buildings.

Superintendent: *We're also promoting collaboration. Getting teachers to work in highly collaborative teams....So anything I can do for a principal to give them more time to collaborate and work as a team, that's important.*

SAM as a less costly assistant principal or disciplinarian. Some district officials specifically mentioned that hiring a SAM could accomplish some of the purposes of hiring an assistant principal but for less cost. And, after having experience with the project, some pointed to improvements in student discipline.

District staff member: *We were growing, and we weren't sure we wanted to have career assistant principals. We realized there are a lot of people who can contribute who weren't educators.*

District staff member: *What are the barriers to increasing instructional time? It's discipline. I said, "look, guys, our board is paying the salary and the goals were to address discipline." The SAM is to take discipline off [principals'] plates. The other SAM duty is to pick up some of their paperwork....*

Superintendent: *A side benefit—it wasn't something we projected, but we'll keep an eye on it. The amount of discipline referrals to our assistant principals is down. We don't know why yet, but what's changed is there's more administrative time in classrooms.*

Disincentives

When asked what stood in the way of adopting or expanding the SAM project, decision makers most often mentioned cost—not just the cost of the position, but also the cost of the support provided with Wallace funding, which they knew would eventually have to be paid for in some other way. Many also mentioned the related issue of the appearance of waste or top-heaviness in school staffing. Some also pointed to a different concern, observing that not every principal was well qualified to spend more instructional time effectively.

Cost of a position. Overwhelmingly, decision makers pointed out to us that adding a position was expensive. This was cited as a reason for adopting Model 3.

District staff member: *Districts can't go out and put extra people in buildings. They can't sustain that. So it took time for it to evolve.... So we said, "OK, Mark, we can't add people. This is what we're thinking. What do you think?"... I kept talking about it with him.*

State SAM project coordinator: *In terms of affording the position, it works out better to reconfigure the role of somebody on staff, because money is tight.*

The appearance of top-heavy staffing. Whatever model was adopted, the designation of individuals as “administrative managers” was considered likely to raise questions among community members who expected frugal budgeting and staffing in their schools.

Superintendent: *It's a challenge with the community. They get what we're trying to do, but we are a small town. So the question was, do we now have [twice as many] administrators? And who's paying for that?*

In one district we visited, the SAM had been renamed “administrative assistant” so as to lower the profile of the position at a time of budget cutting.

And, as mentioned earlier, Delaware decision makers were reluctant to adopt the SAM project because their schools were typically staffed with assistant principals, and they thought the community would respond negatively to adding a new administrative position.

The prospect of picking up costs initially borne by the foundation. While appreciating The Wallace Foundation’s support for data collection, coaching, and the rest of the infrastructure supporting those functions, decision makers were well aware that at some point down the road the foundation support would end, leaving states and districts with the continuing costs.

State Wallace grant coordinator: *[One thing that] keeps me up nights is the cost of the infrastructure support.*

District staff member: *I’m worried about our ability to sustain it. Every time the data collector comes, it’s \$2000 minimum. And their travel. So we’re saying, “What if we want to keep it going? Is there a way to do the [data collection] that would be less costly?” We’re worried. We’ve got a toe in the water, and only maybe one more year of funding.*

Questions about the likelihood that principals would be effective instructional leaders. Some state and local leaders were skeptical about the notion that added instructional time from the principal would necessarily benefit the school. They observed that principals vary in their capacity.

State Wallace grant coordinator: *[The first participating principals] quickly told us, “Help! What do we do?”*

State Wallace grant coordinator: *What I’m interested in is the good principal, who needs that extra relief in order to be more of an instructional leader.... I think the data—the charts, the reports—are incredibly valuable if the principal knows what he or she is doing.*

Some also mentioned that they were skeptical of the quality of guidance provided by the Time/Task descriptor codes or Time Change Coaching.

Superintendent: *I’d have a couple of questions [about the pilot schools], where there was the high correlation of time spent on instruction with remarkable changes in student achievement. Were there particular aspects of the instructional piece that they were attending to? Classroom strategies? Particular approaches within the curriculum? It’s one thing to have all those little codes, but I’d want to know a little more. ... You can’t split the academic side off from the social being [of the student]. I wonder what others are doing to balance those pieces. Are principals really dealing with the instructional side and not the people?*

District staff member: *I’m not sure it aligns [with our district vision of leadership] in the relationship part. Greeting kids when they get off the bus, and walking around at lunchtime. I think that’s an integral part of leadership. ... In the SAM project, I believe they do say that’s management.*

State coordinator: *If you're having trouble knowing what to do in the classroom, what kind of resources can we link you to? [The time spent on] providing teacher feedback is always low on the baseline report, and it's still low after a year. They find walk-throughs plus an email easy.... [The project should provide help, but the Time Change Coaches] are all over the water.*

Selection of Participating Schools

Ordinarily, in the districts we visited, selection of schools for the SAM project was driven by the choices of individual principals. A tenet of the National SAM Project has been that participation should be voluntary on the principal's part, and the typical scenario for adoption included a presentation to all principals and follow-up with those who were most interested.

Comparing the poverty levels of SAM schools with those of their districts, we found no clear pattern indicating selection of either high-poverty or relatively affluent schools. We used the National Center for Education Statistics Common Core of Data for this comparison, which we limited to elementary schools (the grade level for which data on free- and reduced-price lunch participation tend to be most accurate). The following findings emerged:

- In 10 districts, the SAM elementary schools had poverty levels greater than those of their districts. This included Jefferson County, Kentucky, where the 26 participating elementary schools had an average poverty rate of 72 percent, exceeding the district average of 67 percent.
- In eight districts, the SAM elementary schools had poverty levels less than those of their districts
- In one district, the average poverty of SAM elementary schools was the same as the district average; in another five districts, all elementary schools were participating

Transitions and Continuation of the Project

There have been cases in which the implementation of the SAM project did not survive leadership transitions; new superintendents chose to support different projects. The cost of the project was also widely seen as an impediment to its continuation, as already discussed. Nevertheless, we found examples of principals identifying the needed funds within their school budgets to keep a SAM on the job.

The Project's Vulnerability to District Leadership Transitions

In two instances, a change in superintendent either ended or diminished the SAM project in the district. In one of these districts, the new superintendent ended funding for the SAM positions, choosing instead to spend the funds to bring a consultant to the district for regular coaching sessions with all the principals.

In another district, a superintendent transition resulted in a reshuffling of principal assignments. The working relationships between principals and SAMs, only a few months old at the time of the transition, were not sustained through this disruption.

At the same time, superintendent transitions could result in adoptions. In two sites, the SAM project was an innovation introduced by a superintendent who was new to the district.

Individual SAMs' Transitions

In some cases, a principal/SAM team did not work compatibly, and the SAM left the position. We also spoke with disgruntled SAMs. Some were dissatisfied with the lack of a clear career path, viewing the job as something of a dead end. Several expressed unhappiness with district policies that were inconsistent at best in giving them the authority they needed to do their jobs. A few complained about the pay; others made a point of telling us that they put up with the inadequate pay because they loved the job.

All in all, the position seems potentially vulnerable to a good deal of turnover. Because it takes time for a SAM to settle into the work and reach a high level of effectiveness, as we discuss in Chapter 5, turnover in one school weakens the project's effectiveness, and turnover in many schools could pose widespread problems. However, there is as yet no solid evidence about the rate of turnover because few SAMs have been on the job for more than a year or two.

Ways of Maintaining the Project in Schools

In some schools initially selected for scale-up in Kentucky in 2006, the project weathered the transition from outside support (with SAM salaries paid from federal categorical funds) to local support. The school site councils, who must approve hiring in Kentucky schools, were persuaded of the value of the SAM position and voted local funding for it. Similarly, some principals in other sites were able to maintain support for the SAM position through use of their discretion over the school budget.

Summary and Conclusions

From data collection in three schools in Kentucky in 2004-05, the National SAM Project grew to include 23 participating SAM/principal teams March 2007, 88 in March 2008, and 160 in March 2009. The diffusion of the SAM project has benefited from support from The Wallace

Foundation as part of its education initiative, which has provided a forum in which potential adopters could learn about the project in the context of an overall effort to strengthen instructional leadership. However, while the foundation funded the infrastructure for diffusion and external support, the diffusion plan required districts to shoulder the expense of hiring SAMs. In some cases, districts also paid for coaching support.

As the project diffused to more states and districts, variants on the original design were introduced. These typically reflected resources and resource constraints in the sites, especially staff availability to fill the SAM position, and the affordability of adding a position. Arrangements for coaching and, relatedly, for sharing principals' data with district staff also varied.

As a result of negotiations between the National SAM Project and project sites over proposed adaptations, the project's definition of non-negotiable elements changed over time. The project and The Wallace Foundation issued occasional fact sheets and other handouts describing the project, and these, too, changed over time. For participating districts and schools, though, the primary means of learning about the project was through in-person presentations in which the key features and potential advantages of participation were communicated.

At the time of adoption, the project appealed to decision makers primarily because of what they had heard about the early data showing achievement increases in the first three participating schools, but also because of the appeal of bolstering instructional supervision by principals and disciplinary supervision by the SAM. The major disincentive, the cost of a new position, was effectively removed through the invention of Model 3, but concerns remained about other project costs, about the negative connotations of adding a new "administrative" title in schools, and, in some sites, about the likelihood that the project would give enough guidance to help principals use their instructional time well. At this early stage, not enough attrition has taken place to allow generalizations about the reasons that impel some districts or schools to abandon the SAM project and others to maintain it.

3. Changes in Principal Time Use

At the heart of the SAM project is a powerful idea: that principals can deliberately increase the proportion of the time that they spend on work related to instruction rather than management. The three principals participating in the original Louisville effort spent 33 percent of their time on instruction and 67 percent on non-instructional work at the time of a baseline measure in November 2003. After working with a SAM and being coached on time use, the measures used in the data-collection process showed a mean of 67 percent instructional time and 33 percent non-instructional time for these three principals at the end of a year, in November 2004.⁴ This transformation has served as a benchmark for districts and schools joining the project ever since.

As the National SAM Project has grown to engage scores of principal/SAM teams working under varying conditions and implementing the project with a number of adaptations, the data collected on principals' time use are important in addressing several key questions about the project's results. At scale, did principals' time use change significantly after working with a SAM? Based on experience, what magnitude of change can be expected, both in percentage terms and in terms of the number of additional hours and minutes principals devote to instructional tasks? In general, what instructional tasks did participating principals spend more time doing, and what management tasks did they spend less time doing? How did the results vary, if at all, with the way the SAM project was implemented?

Using all the records compiled by the National SAM Project, which have been shared with the evaluation team, we analyzed the baseline and follow-up data from all participating principals. We also explored changes in the amount of time spent on the behaviors corresponding to specific descriptors in the Time/Task system. We tested all observed changes for statistical significance.

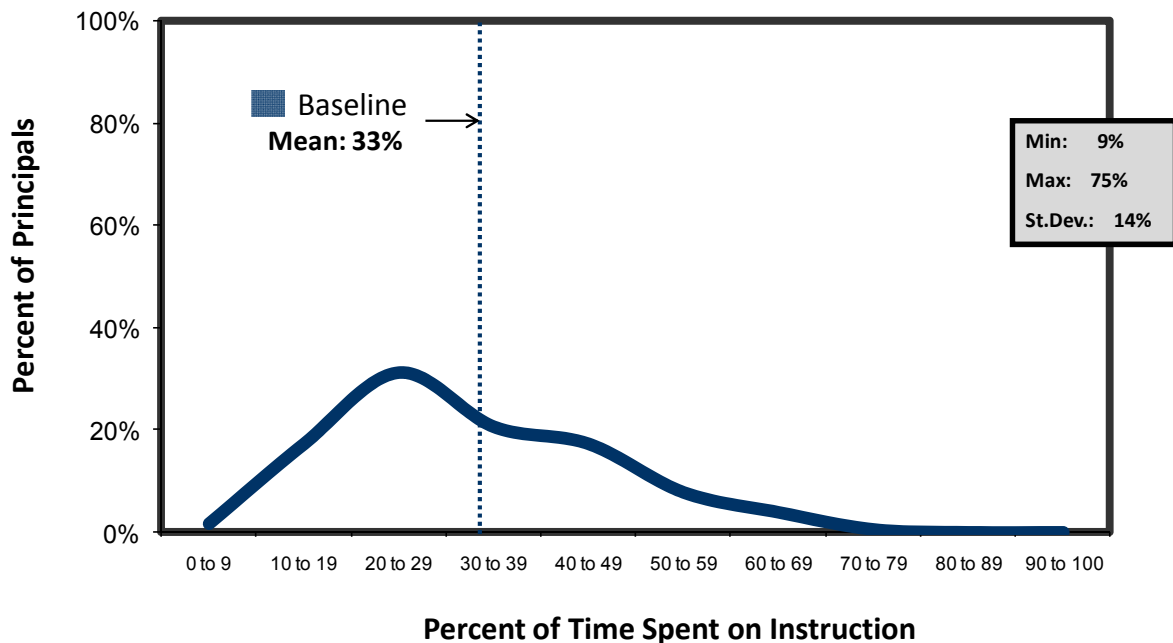
Changes in Time Use from Baseline to Follow-up

As the SAM project scaled up participation, did participating principals change their use of time over one year or more of participation? Our analysis showed a significant and substantial change, although it did not match that of the pilot schools.

Through March 2009, the National SAM Project had collected baseline data from 180 principals. A reanalysis of all these data revealed a mean of 33 percent of time spent on instruction, very similar to the 33 percent found among the original three pilot participants (Exhibit 3-1). The range was wide, from 9 percent at the low end to 75 percent at the high end, with a standard deviation of 14 percent.

⁴ Source: Alternative School Administration Study (ASAS) Time/Task Analysis April 6, 2005. File received from the National SAM Project, titled Original Shadowing Results_2003_2005.pdf.

Exhibit 3-1: Percent of Time Spent on Instruction at Baseline, All Principals (N=180)

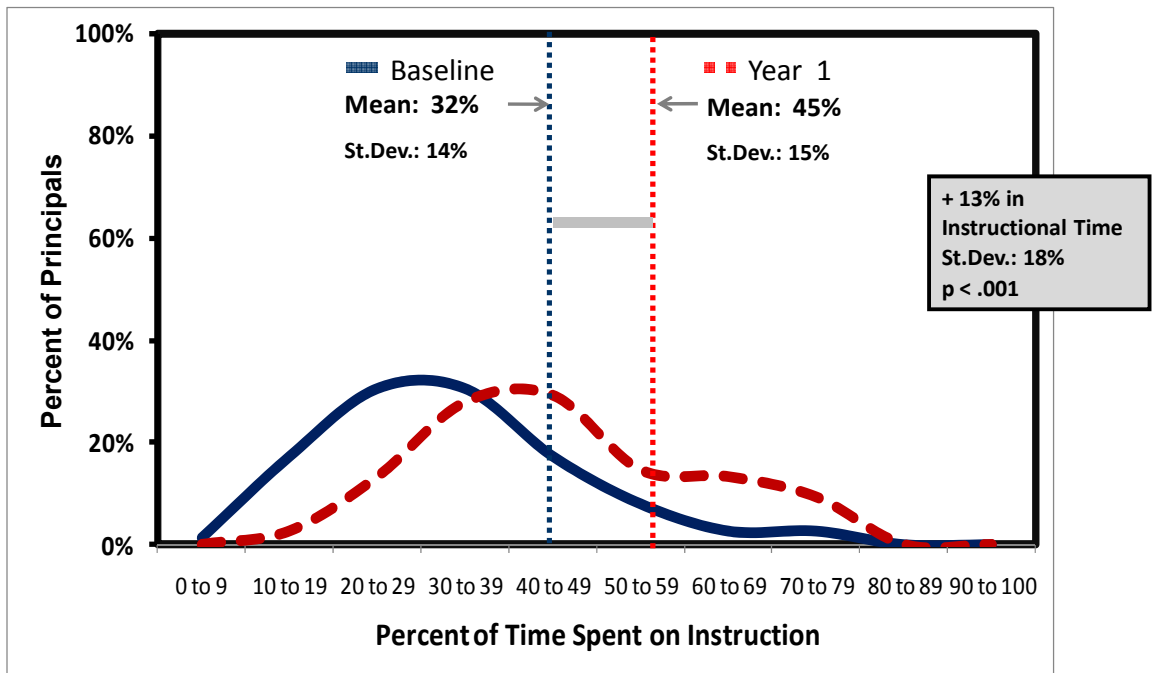


Source: Evaluation team's analysis of all Time/Task data from the National SAM Project for principals who had not begun working with a SAM at the time of data collection.

Exhibit reads: The graph shows the distribution of principals' baseline data by percent of principals whose initial percentage of time spent on instruction fell in each decile (0 to 9 percent, 10 to 19 percent, etc.). The mean across all principals at baseline was 33 percent, with a standard deviation of 14 percent. The minimum was 9 percent and the maximum was 75 percent.

Among those principals who had a full year of participation in the project, we found a statistically significant change in the percentage of time spent on instruction: the mean rose from 32 percent to 45 percent (Exhibit 3-2). The distribution changed substantially, as is visible in this exhibit; the effect size was 0.93 of a standard deviation. In this analysis, data were taken from the 75 principals who had completed a full year of working with a SAM and, as of April 2009, had Time/Task data from both the beginning and the end of that year. Thus, among the several dozen principals participating, in different states and districts and under different conditions, principals' time use changed in a year.

**Exhibit 3-2: Percent of Time Spent on Instruction,
Baseline and One-Year Follow-up, by Principals with Pre- and Post-Data
(N=75)**



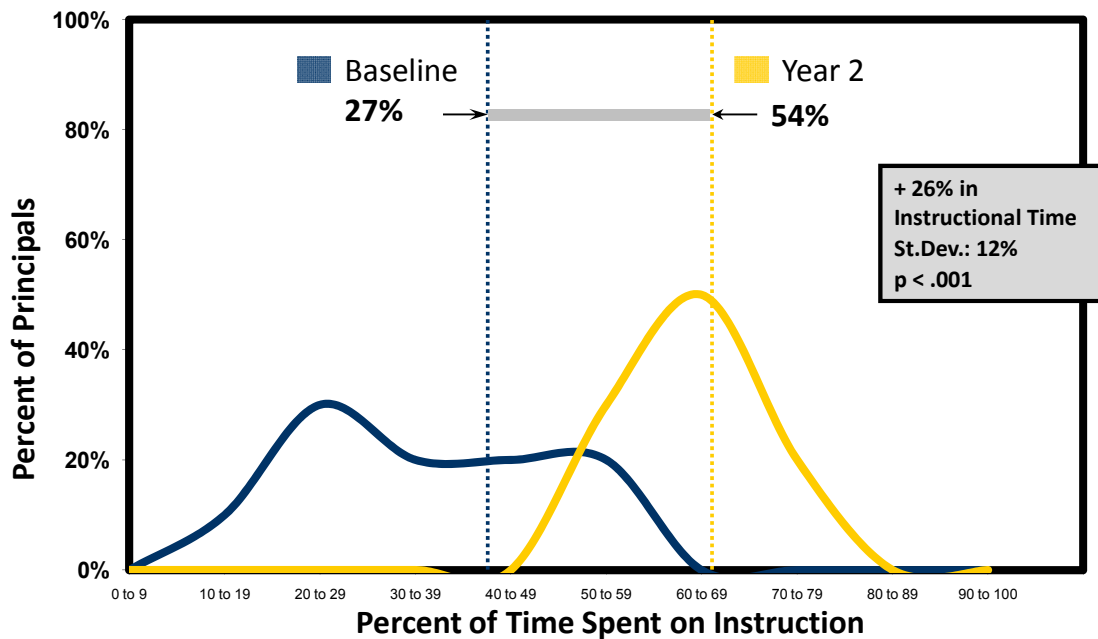
Source: Evaluation team's analysis of all Time/Task data from the National SAM Project for principals with both baseline (pre-) and one-year follow-up (post-) data.

Exhibit reads: The graph shows two distributions of the percent of principals whose percentage of time spent on instruction fell into each decile (0 to 9 percent, 10 to 19 percent, etc.), one for the baseline and one for one-year follow-up data. The mean time spent on instruction at baseline was 32 percent, with a standard deviation of 14 percent. The mean at follow-up was 45 percent, with a standard deviation of 15 percent.

Although the shift in mean instructional time from 32 percent to 45 percent over a year was substantial, it did not replicate the experience of the pilot principals whose instructional time rose from 33 percent to 67 percent in a year. The data from the three original principals were still being cited during our study, but now, with data available from 75 principals participating in the expansion of the SAM project, it would be more appropriate for future scale-up efforts to claim a one-year increase from 32 to 45 percent (based on 75 cases) rather than from 33 to 67 percent (a figure based on only three cases).

A small group of principals, 10 in all, had participated in the project long enough to have had follow-up Time/Task Analyses two years after first beginning to work with a SAM. Among these principals, the percentage of time spent on instruction rose over the two years from a mean of 27 percent to 54 percent (Exhibit 3-3). This suggests that the upward trend in instructional time might be expected to continue beyond a single year, although the observed two-year change still fell short of the change seen in the pilot schools. As the National SAM Project matures and more schools experience two years or more with the project, it will be possible to investigate whether the payoff in changed use of time typically increases over two or more years.

Exhibit 3-3: Percent of Time Spent on Instruction, Baseline and Two-Year Follow-up, by Principals with Pre- and Post-Data (N=10)



Source: Evaluation team’s analysis of all Time/Task data from the National SAM Project for principals with both baseline (pre-) and two-year follow-up (post-) data.

Exhibit reads: The graph shows two distributions of the percent of principals whose percentage of time spent on instruction fell into each decile (0 to 9 percent, 10 to 19 percent, etc.), one for the baseline and one for two-year follow-up data. The mean time spent on instruction at baseline was 27 percent, and the mean at two-year follow-up was 54 percent.

How does a percentage increase translate into actual additional time spent on instruction? One way of looking at the 13 percent average increase over a year of participation is to say that it is like adding 13 percent of a full-time-equivalent principal to the building. Another is to translate this figure into hours and minutes per day and week. Because the data collectors recorded the length of each work day during the shadowing period, the percentages could be converted to hours and minutes. For this analysis, we used the data from the 75 principals for whom baseline and one-year follow-up data were available for comparison.

On average, before beginning to work with a SAM, a principal in this group spent 8 hours 46 minutes per day in school. This average principal’s one-year increase in the percentage of time spent on instruction meant an extra 58 minutes per day, taking into account the fact that the average day had shortened to 8 hours 15 minutes at the time of follow-up (Exhibit 3-4).

Across all schools that had one year of principal participation, then, the gain in principals’ time devoted to instruction averaged almost an hour per day, and just under five hours per week.

Exhibit 3-4: Changes in Time Spent on Instruction, by Day and Week, from Baseline to One-Year Follow-up (n=75)

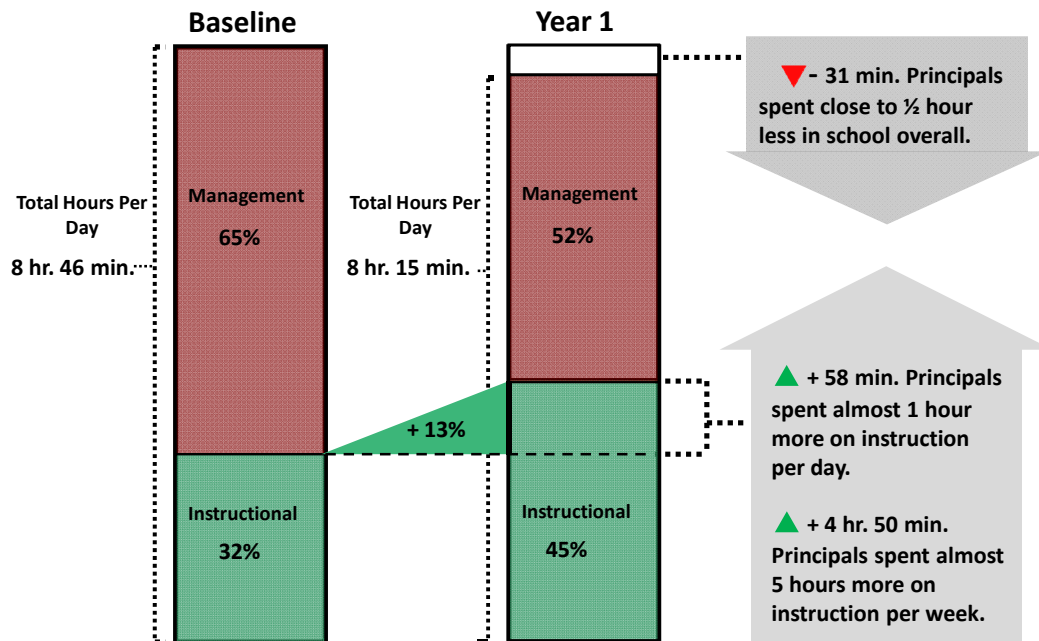


Exhibit Key: ▼ = statistically significant decrease, ▲ = statistically significant increase.

Source: Evaluation team’s analysis of all Time/Task data from the National SAM Project for principals with both baseline and one-year follow-up data.

Exhibit reads: The mean percentage of time principals spent on instruction increased from 32 percent at baseline to 45 percent at the one-year follow-up. This increase of 13 percentage points represented 58 minutes more spent on instruction per day. Additionally, the number of minutes principals spent in school decreased by 31 minutes from baseline to one-year follow-up.

How Principals Used Their Time: The Descriptor Data

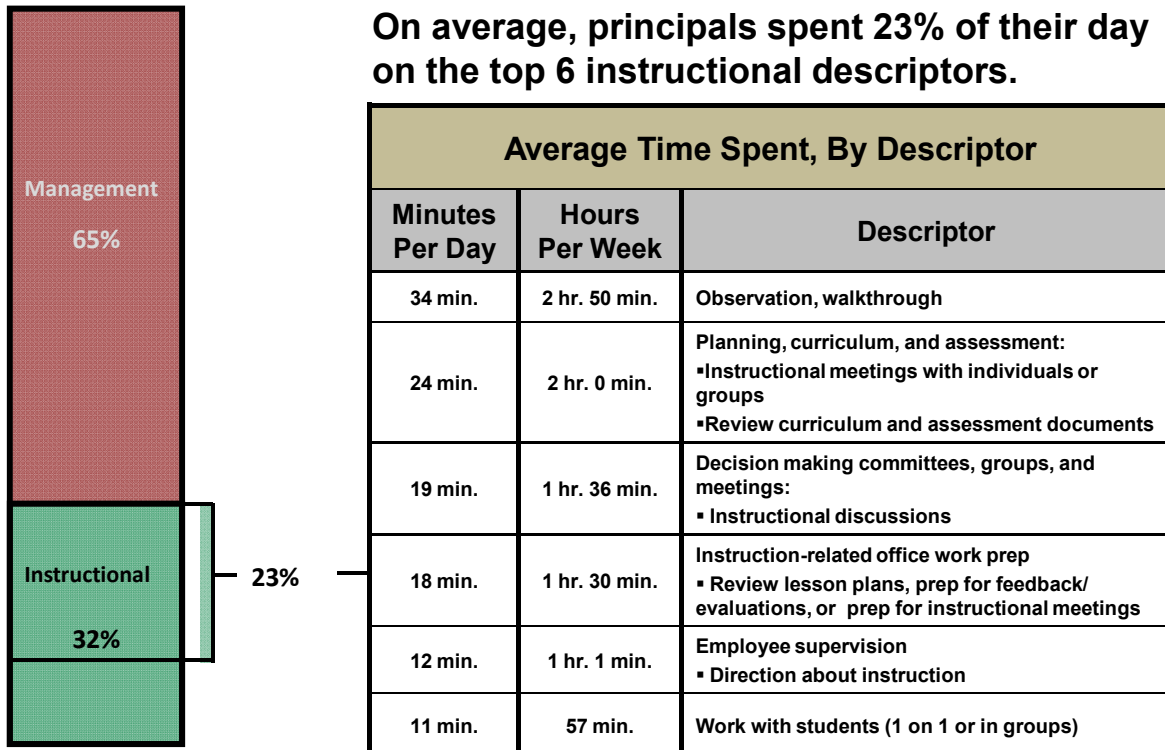
What were principals doing with their instructional and management time at baseline, and how did this change after they worked with a SAM? The detailed records kept by the National SAM Project permitted an analysis of what principals did in their instructional and management time, based on the activity categories that data collectors captured with the descriptors. Again, this analysis was based on the 75 principals with pre- and post-data available.

Baseline Uses of Time in Instruction and Management

At baseline, six instructional descriptors accounted for 23 percent of the principals’ day, or more than two-thirds of the 32 percent of the day that they spent on instruction (Exhibit 3-5). Observations and walkthroughs took the largest share of instructional time, 34 minutes per day. Next was the descriptor “planning, curriculum, and assessment,” which includes instructional meetings with individuals or groups, at 24 minutes per day. In addition to the hour divided

between these two types of activities, a typical principal would spend another hour divided among four other activities: decision-making committees, groups, and meetings; instruction-related office work prep; employee supervision (providing direction about instruction); and work with students.

Exhibit 3-5: Top Six Instructional Descriptors at Baseline (n=75)

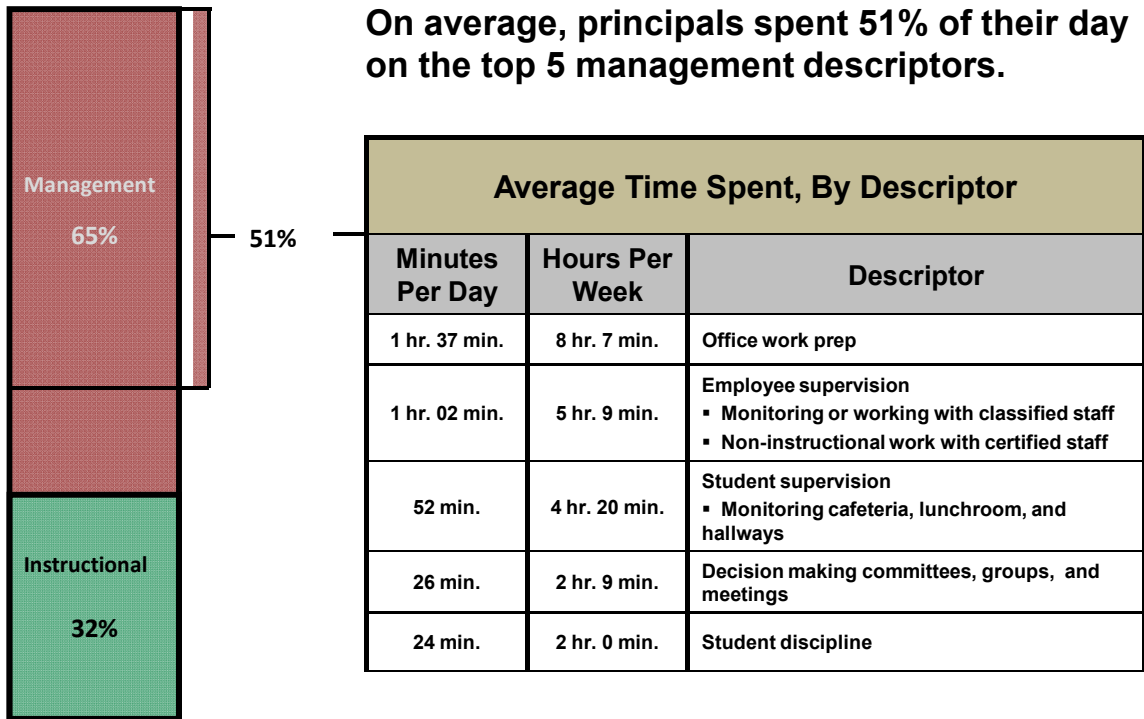


Source: Evaluation team’s analysis of all Time/Task data from the National SAM Project for principals with both baseline and one-year follow-up data.

Exhibit reads: Of the time principals spent in the building at baseline, 23 percent was spent on activities categorized as six instructional descriptors. Principals spent an average of 34 minutes per day (i.e., 2 hours and 50 minutes per week) on one of these descriptors, “Observations, walkthroughs.”

On the management side, there were five descriptors that accounted for the bulk of a principal’s activities at baseline; these five types of activities occupied just over half (51 percent) of a principal’s day and week, on average (Exhibit 3-6). “Office work prep” led the list, taking about one and a half hours in a typical day. Principals spent roughly an hour on each of two other management activities: “employee supervision” (with classified staff, or on non-instructional matters with teaching staff); and “student supervision” (in the lunchroom and hallways). Just under half an hour was spent on each of two other management activities, “decision-making groups” and “student discipline.”

**Exhibit 3-6: Top Five Management Descriptors at Baseline
(n=75)**



Source: Evaluation team’s analysis of all Time/Task data from the National SAM Project for principals with both baseline and one-year follow-up data.

Exhibit reads: Of the time principals spent in the building at baseline, 51 percent was spent on activities categorized as five management descriptors. Principals spent an average of 1 hour 37 minutes per day (i.e., 8 hours 7 minutes per week) on one of these descriptors, “Office work prep.”

What Changed Most in Principals’ Time Use

As discussed above, principals who participated in the SAM project for a full year raised their percentage of time spent on instruction from 32 to 45 percent, and they reduced their time spent on management from 65 to 52 percent. While there were changes in the average amount of time spent on every descriptor, our analysis focused only on the descriptors for which the increases or decreases in time spent were statistically significant.

There were three types of instructional activities on which principals spent at least 10 additional minutes per day: “observation and walkthrough,” “instruction-related office work prep,” and “work with students” (Exhibit 3-7). On a weekly basis, this meant an additional 69 minutes of observation and walkthrough, 55 additional minutes of office work related to instruction, and an additional 49 minutes of work with students. Smaller amounts of time (one to four minutes per day, or up to 20 minutes per week) were added in the categories of feedback to teachers, modeling and teaching, interaction with external officials related to instruction, and celebration related to instruction. There was a significant *decrease* in the time spent on instructional planning, curriculum, and assessment (19 minutes less per day).

**Exhibit 3-7: Changes in Time Spent on Instruction by Descriptor,
by Day and by Week
(n=75)**

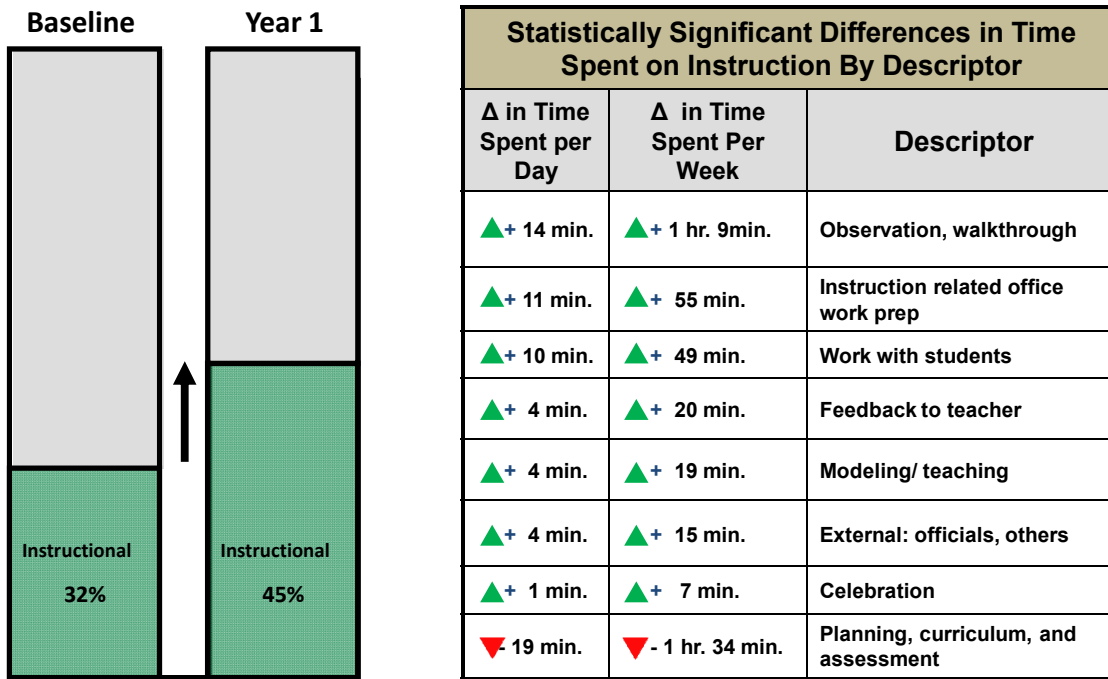


Exhibit Key: ▼ = statistically significant decrease, ▲ = statistically significant increase.

Source: Evaluation team’s analysis of all Time/Task data from the National SAM Project for principals with both baseline and one-year follow-up data.

Exhibit reads: The percentage of time classified as instructional increased from 32 percent in the baseline year to 45 percent at one-year follow-up. The Time/Task Analysis showed statistically significant increases in all descriptors shown except for “Planning, curriculum, and assessment,” which showed a statistically significant decrease. The amount of time spent on activities classified as “Observation, walkthrough” increased by 14 minutes per day and 1 hour 9 minutes per week.

The descriptors related to feedback to teachers deserve discussion here. Analysis, feedback, and guidance on a teacher’s instructional practice can fall under other Time/Task descriptors beyond “feedback to teacher.” How a data collector codes instructional feedback depends on form (writing observations and suggestions vs. meeting after a lesson), tone (directing a teacher to implement specific practices vs. facilitating reflection on a lesson), and degree of guidance (offering suggestions vs. modeling alternative instructional strategies). Consequently, principal feedback can be coded as “office work prep” (if written), “feedback to teacher” (if in person), “employee supervision” (if directive), or “modeling/teaching” (if substantively guided). Program staff also noted that some forms of feedback can be coded as “celebration.” The convoluted and, at times, confusing definitions of the descriptors can cloud what is happening with principals and their time use. Thus, while the amount of time spent on the descriptor “feedback to teachers” rose four minutes per day over the course of one year, it is possible that changes in time spent on feedback are not fully and accurately captured by the descriptor data recorded in the Time/Task Analysis.

On the management side, principals significantly reduced their time spent in seven descriptor categories, with reductions of at least 10 minutes per day in four of these (Exhibit 3-8). The type of activity that diminished the most, 23 minutes per day (and nearly two hours per week), was “office work prep” related to management. Next in magnitude of change were “building management” (14 minutes per day), “student supervision” (12 minutes per day), and “student discipline” (12 minutes per day). For each of these three activities, the average reduction in time spent in a week was about an hour.

Exhibit 3-8: Changes in Time Spent on Management by Descriptor, by Day and by Week (n=75)

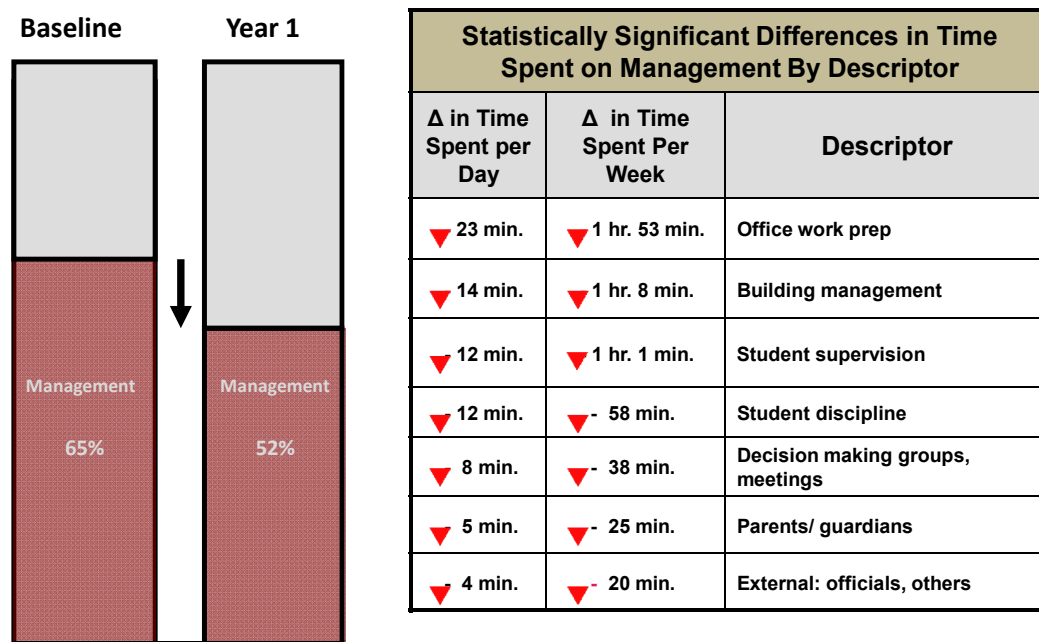


Exhibit Key: ▼ = statistically significant decrease.

Source: Evaluation team’s analysis of all Time/Task data from the National SAM Project for principals with both baseline and one-year follow-up data.

Exhibit reads: The graph shows that the percentage of time classified as management decreased from 65 percent in the baseline year to 52 percent in Year 1. The Time/Task Analysis showed statistically significant decreases for all descriptors shown. The amount of time spent on activities classified as “Office work prep” decreased by 23 minutes per day and 1 hour 53 minutes per week.

How the Results Varied with Different Approaches to Implementation

We found some differences in results when comparing different ways of implementing the SAM project. For this analysis, we investigated possible differences across grade level of the

school and across models, then used our survey data from SAMs to identify possible differences in SAM responsibilities that might be associated with differences in principals' time use.

Variation by School Grade Level

The changes in principals' time use between the baseline and Year 1 were statistically significant in both elementary and secondary schools. The size of the mean gain was smaller at the middle and high school levels, but there was a gain (Exhibit 3-9).

Exhibit 3-9: Changes in Time Spent on Instruction, by School Level

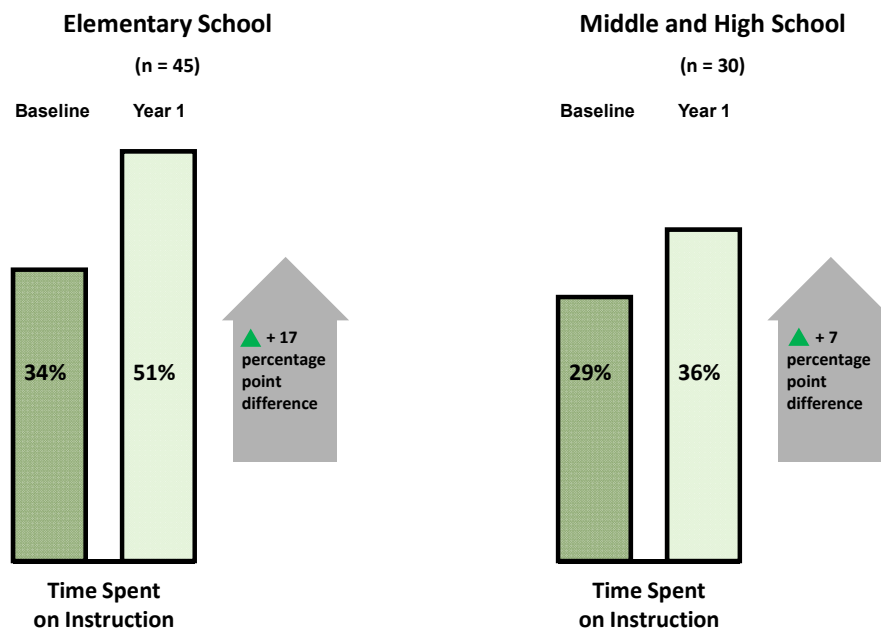


Exhibit Key: ▲ = statistically significant increase.

Source: Evaluation team's analysis of all Time/Task data from the National SAM Project for principals with both baseline and one-year follow-up data.

Exhibit reads: Among principals in elementary schools, the percentage of time spent on instruction increased from 34 percent at baseline to 51 percent at one-year follow-up. Among principals in middle and high schools, the percent of time spent on instruction increased from 29 percent at baseline to 36 percent at one-year follow-up. Both of these increases were statistically significant.

Variation by SAM Model

Much discussion took place in the National SAM Project around the introduction of new models. The pilot schools implemented what is now called Model 1: a new staff member joined the school to work with the principal as a SAM. Later, schools began to implement Model 2, in which a staff member already in the school gave up his or her existing position to become the SAM. Still later, schools adopted Model 3, in which an existing staff member became the SAM while also continuing to hold his or her previous job in the school.

Among the principals who had worked with a SAM for at least a year, those participating in Model 1 and Model 2 changed their use of time significantly over one year, but those participating in Model 3 did not (Exhibits 3-10 and 3-11). In each case the mean amount of time spent on instruction rose, but the apparent increase among the Model 3 principals was tested and found not to be statistically significant; in other words, it could be due to chance. We also analyzed Model 1 and Model 2 schools separately and found that the results appeared similar across these two models, with the caveat that the number of cases of Model 2 was too small to permit a good test of statistical significance (Exhibit 3-10).

Exhibit 3-10: Changes in Time Use by SAM Model

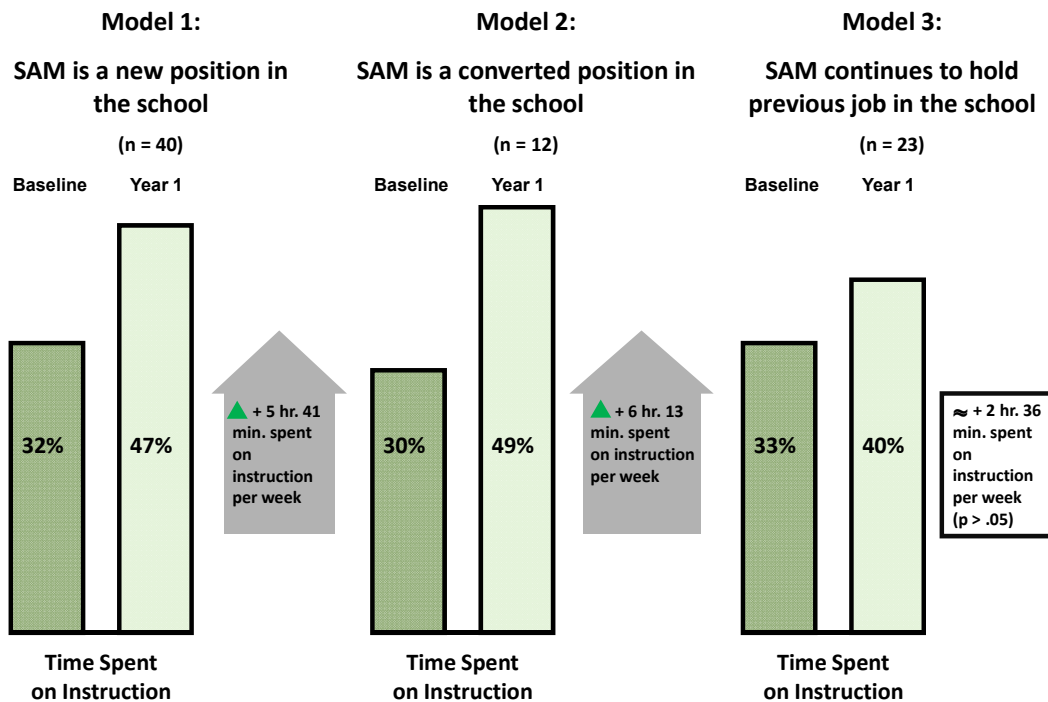


Exhibit Key: ▲ = statistically significant increase, ≈ = change that was not statistically significant.

Source: Evaluation team’s analysis of all Time/Task data from the National SAM Project for principals with both baseline and one-year follow-up data.

Exhibit reads: Among principals in Model 1 schools, the mean percent of time spent on instruction increased from 32 percent at baseline to 47 percent at one-year follow-up. The increase of 5 hours 41 minutes was statistically significant, as was the increase of 6 hours 13 minutes among principals in Model 2 schools. Among principals in Model 3 schools, the mean increase of 2 hours 36 minutes was not statistically significant.

Looking at the specific changes in time use for principals using different SAM models, we see that in Models 1 and 2, principals had statistically significant increases in the amount of time they spent on each of five instructional descriptors (as well as a decrease in one instructional descriptor), and statistically significant decreases in time spent on each of seven management descriptors (Exhibit 3-11). In Model 3, on the other hand, the only instructional descriptor that saw a statistically significant increase was “office work prep,” with an additional 10 minutes per day devoted to it on average.

Exhibit 3-11: Changes in Time Use by SAM Model:

Model 1 and Model 2 (n=52)

Management Descriptors			
	Δ in Time Spent per Day	Δ in Time Spent per Week	Descriptor
▼	-24 min.	- 2 hr.	Office work prep
▼	-18 min.	-1 hr. 30 min.	Building management
▼	-18 min.	-1 hr. 32 min.	Student supervision
▼	-14 min.	-1 hr. 12 min.	Student discipline
▼	-8 min.	-40 min.	Parents/ guardians
▼	-8 min.	-41 min.	Decision making committees, groups, and meetings
▼	-3m.	-18 min.	External: officials, others
Instructional Descriptors			
	Δ in Time Spent per Day	Δ in Time Spent per Week	Descriptor
▲	+ 21 min.	+ 1 hr. 45 min.	Observation, walkthrough
▲	+ 10 min.	+ 55 min.	Office work prep
▲	+ 12 min.	+ 59 min.	Work with students
▲	+ 3 min.	+ 13 min.	Modeling/ teaching
▲	+ 2 min.	+ 10 min.	Celebration
▼	-20 min.	-1 hr. 45 min.	Planning, curriculum, and assessment

Model 3 (n=23)

Management Descriptors			
	Δ in Time Spent per Day	Δ in Time Spent per Week	Descriptor
▼	-19 min.	-1 hr. 36 min.	Office work prep
Instructional Descriptors			
	Δ in Time Spent per Day	Δ in Time Spent per Week	Descriptor
▲	+10 min.	+ 56 min.	Office work prep
▼	-15 min.	-1 hr. 8 min.	Planning, curriculum, and assessment

Exhibit Key: ▼ = statistically significant decrease, ▲ = statistically significant increase, ≈ = change that was not statistically significant.

Source: Evaluation team's analysis of all Time/Task data from the National SAM Project for principals with both baseline and one-year follow-up data.

Exhibit reads: Among principals in Model 1 or 2, there were statistically significant changes in time spent on seven management and six instructional descriptors. Among principals in Model 3, there were statistically significant changes for one management descriptor and two instructional descriptors.

Variation by Amount of Delegation

Often in Model 3 schools, the SAM took on few additional tasks other than keeping TimeTrack records and discussing them with the principal. Based on this finding, we wondered whether the difference observed in the principal's change in time use across models might be related to the extent to which the principal delegated management tasks, rather than simply being related to the model implemented. If this were the case, then all participating principals could be encouraged to delegate management tasks, regardless of the SAM model in use in the school.

We identified five time-intensive management tasks that principals might delegate (Exhibit 3-12). For each of these tasks, our survey data from SAMs showed a good deal of variation across schools in the extent to which the task was actually delegated to SAMs.

Exhibit 3-12: The Delegation Index

Student discipline
Student supervision
Management of non-teaching staff
Management of school facilities
Interactions with parents

Combining the five tasks into a delegation index, we looked at the SAM survey findings to determine how many SAMs were carrying out either all five of the tasks or fewer than five, both overall and by model. Overall among SAM respondents, 47 of the 75 SAMs who answered all the survey questions were carrying out all five tasks; their schools were designated as “high-delegation” schools. The SAMs in the remaining 28 schools were not performing all five tasks. Among Model 1 and Model 2 schools, most (76 percent) were high-delegation; among Model 3 schools, a sizable minority (36 percent) were high-delegation (Exhibit 3-13). Thus, although there was a statistically significant difference by model in the amount of delegation, nevertheless the delegation index was not synonymous with the models. It was a distinct variable that we could study in relation to principals' time use.

Exhibit 3-13: High and Low Delegation Schools, Overall and by SAM Model (N=75)

	Models 1 and 2		Model 3		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
High Delegation (All 5 Tasks)	38	76%	9	36%	47	63%
Low Delegation (Fewer than 5 Tasks)	12	24%	16	64%	28	37%
Total	50	100%	25	100%	75	100%

** Cramer's V: $p < .01$

Source: Survey of SAMs.

Exhibit reads: 38 SAMs in Model 1 and 2 schools who responded to the survey reported that they carried out all five tasks in the delegation index; they constituted 76 percent of the responding SAMs in Model 1 and 2 schools.

Looking at changes in time use among the principals in high- and low-delegation schools, we found different results (Exhibit 3-14). In high-delegation schools (i.e., where the SAMs had taken on all five tasks), principals' instructional time increased from 32 percent to 51 percent over a year. In low-delegation schools, principals' instructional time did not change significantly.

Exhibit 3-14: Changes in Time Use from Baseline to Year 1, by Delegation Index

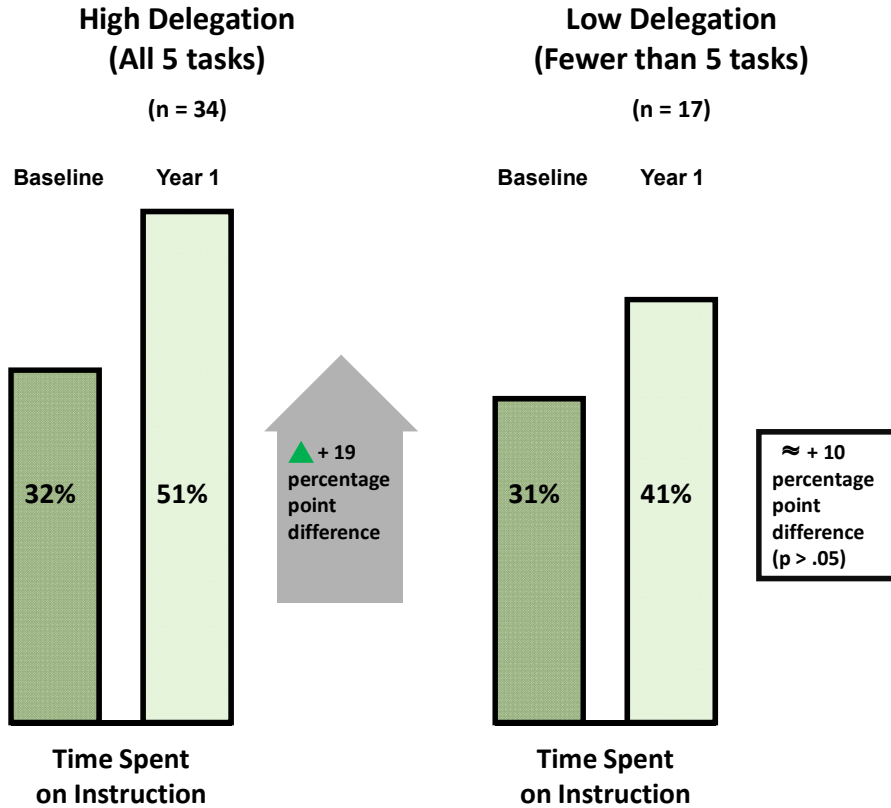


Exhibit Key: ▲ = statistically significant increase, ≈ = increase that was not statistically significant.

Source: Evaluation team’s analysis of all Time/Task data from the National SAM Project for principals with both baseline and one-year follow-up data.

Exhibit reads: In high-delegation schools, the mean percent of time principals spent on instruction increased by a statistically significant 19 percentage points, from 32 to 51 percent, over a year. In low-delegation schools, the mean percent of time principals spent on instruction increased from 31 to 41 percent, but this increase was not statistically significant.

Looking more closely at the patterns of change in principals’ time use across these two groups of schools, we can see that in schools with high delegation to the SAMs there were significant decreases in principal time spent on five management descriptors, and significant increases in the time spent on five instructional descriptors (Exhibit 3-15). By contrast, in the schools with low delegation to the SAMs, principals had significant decreases only in management-related office work prep, and significant increases only in instruction-related interactions with external officials.

Exhibit 3-15: Statistically Significant Differences in Time Spent per Week, by Delegation Index and by Descriptor

Descriptor		High-Delegation Schools (n=34)		Low-Delegation Schools (n=17)
Management Descriptors				
Office work prep	▼	- 1 hr. 59 min.	▼	- 1 hr. 57 min.
Building management	▼	-1 hr. 30 min.	≈	- 14 min.
Student supervision	▼	-1 hr. 37 min.	≈	- 55 min.
Student discipline	▼	-1 hr. 1 min.	≈	- 28 min.
Decision making groups, meetings	▼	-49 min.	≈	- 1 min.
Instructional Descriptors				
Observation walkthrough	▲	+ 1 hr. 37 min.	≈	+ 1 hr. 0 min.
Work with students	▲	+ 57 min.	≈	+ 47 min.
Feedback to teacher	▲	+ 32 min.	≈	+ 21 min.
External: officials, others	▲	+ 13 min.	▲	+ 40 min.
Celebration	▲	+ 10 min.	≈	- 1 min.
Planning, curriculum, and assessment	▼	-1 hr. 41 min.	▼	- 1 hr. 8min.

Exhibit Key: ▼ = statistically significant decrease, ▲ = statistically significant increase, ≈ = change that was not statistically significant.

Sources: Evaluation team’s analysis of all Time/Task data from the National SAM Project for principals with both baseline and one-year follow-up data; and survey of SAMs.

Exhibit reads: Principals in high-delegation schools had a statistically significant decrease of 1 hour and 59 minutes per week spent on tasks classified as “office work prep.”

Summary and Conclusions

Principals participating in the National SAM Project increased the percent of their time that they spent on tasks related to instruction. The mean percentage rose from 32 percent to 45 percent among the 75 principals for whom data were collected at baseline and one year later. Although not equaling the gains made by the pilot principals (whose instructional time rose from 33 percent to 67 percent), this was a statistically significant increase, with an effect size of 0.93 of a standard deviation.

To explore what this increase meant, we translated the percentage increase into hours and minutes, and we also looked at the specific uses of time (as measured by the SAM project

descriptors) that changed. In terms of actual time spent on instruction, the principals with one-year follow-up data increased their time by 58 minutes per day or 4 hours 50 minutes per week, on average. This increase took place despite the fact that principals spent less time in the school each day; the average day in the building shrank from 8 hours 46 minutes to 8 hours 15 minutes.. The instructional leadership activities on which principals spent at least 10 additional minutes per day were, “observation and walkthrough,” “instruction-related office work prep,” and “work with students.” They spent at least 10 fewer minutes per day on each of four management activities: “office work prep,” “building management,” “student supervision,” and “student discipline.”

Principals’ changes in time use were statistically significant in the schools implementing Models 1 and 2, but not Model 3. The changes were also statistically significant in schools where SAMs carried out all five of the following management responsibilities: student discipline, student supervision, management of non-teaching staff, management of school facilities, and interactions with parents. These analyses suggest that principals were able to free up time for instruction by delegating these five management responsibilities. Our data show that delegation to the SAM was associated with changes in the principal’s time use, although presumably delegation to another member of the staff would also make a difference. But delegation was less frequent and, apparently, more difficult in Model 3 schools, where the SAM project added no new staff capacity to the school.

4. Principal Leadership: Vision and Behaviors

The National SAM Project was designed to enable principals to realize their own visions of instructional leadership. As they increased the time they spent on instructional tasks, participating principals would give their schools the benefit of closer attention to teaching, learning, and school culture. The logic model articulated for the SAM project laid out a far-reaching sequence of changes expected to emerge after the principal's time was freed up and he or she spent more time on instruction:

- Improve principal's capacity as an instructional leader (create collegial environment)
- Improve organizational health of schools and school processes
- Improve classroom instruction
- Improve student engagement

In order to attain these long-term benefits for the school and students, principals would have to attend to the quality as well as the quantity of their instructional leadership. Thus, we focus here on the nature of the leadership work that principals carried out when participating in the SAM project.

Using data gathered from principals, teachers, and other school staff, we analyze the leadership priorities that participating principals expressed, what they did with time freed up for instruction, and how their leadership efforts were received in the school. We describe the ways in which participating principals worked with individual teachers, groups of teachers, and leadership teams in the school; we also discuss their interactions with students and parents. Most of the data in this chapter are drawn from our site visits to 17 schools that had been participating in the SAM project for at least a year, where the principals had begun to settle into new routines of time use.

Principal Visions of Instructional Leadership

Most principals who joined the SAM project told us they had a vision of the principalship that highlighted instructional leadership and was well aligned with the SAM project vision. This vision drove their choice to participate in the project.

Purposes that Principals Brought to the Project

Although many principals (76 percent) indicated on our survey that the superintendent or other central office administrator had strongly encouraged them to participate, all of the principals

reported that they decided to participate in order to improve their skills as instructional leaders, and nearly all reported having wanted to spend more time on instructional tasks (99 percent). Likewise, nearly all of the principals we interviewed expressed a belief in the project's potential to help them realize personal and professional goals as leaders involved in instruction in the school. Many were frustrated by spending time on management tasks, which they viewed as a distraction from the work of improving instruction in their buildings, and said they wanted to delegate management responsibilities in routine discipline and other areas. On our survey, 81 percent of principals said they wanted help with administrative tasks. The rationale was expressed clearly in comments like this one:

Principal: If you take someone who can handle the management issues and let the principal focus on the instruction, that's the whole purpose. It's given principals permission to do what's most important. Many of the educational leadership programs for principals have not allowed that to happen. I had years as an AP, but I did nothing but discipline. I longed so much for the other side because that was what I wanted to do.

Management tasks were particularly frustrating for principals who had been instructional coaches prior to becoming principals and who felt they could make a meaningful contribution as instructional leaders if given the time and opportunity.

Principal: I did so much management, I didn't help the kids. I was going to change careers until this [project] came along.

Not all principals were comfortable with their instructional capacity, nor did all principals want to give up their management tasks. In talking about their decision to participate, several principals described either their own uncertainty about this new direction or that of peers who declined participation and kept their existing managerial role. One suggested that without adequate support, principals might actually find it easier to “*fall back to the managerial [tasks]*”:

Principal: I thought a lot about whether I would be effective [as an instructional leader]. What if I'm not good at it? Maybe I was better off doing management.

Principal: Some of the management stuff I gave up was very immediate and gratifying, like filling playground balls. Some was kind of hard to give up.

Principal: We talk about instructional leaders, but not all principals know instruction. Some principals need to develop more knowledge about how to support teachers.

Several principals welcomed participation in the SAM project as an opportunity to learn how to focus or manage their time more effectively. The project encouraged them to analyze and reflect on how they spent their time.

Principal: I liked the idea of someone coming in and giving me feedback on how I use my time.

Principal: *After one year of [being a principal], I felt like I needed time management advice and direction.*

In interviews, some principals spoke of their role in creating and sustaining a school-wide vision. Many emphasized their work with teachers, especially in individual classrooms but also in groups. We discuss these ideas about instructional leadership here.

Principals' Visions for Staking Out and Shepherding a School-Wide Vision for Instruction

Many principals acknowledged in some way that they played a key role in setting the goals and priorities of the school, as well as the expectations and conditions for instructional work. However, a few were notable for the fact that they prioritized this role in their vision of instructional leadership and expressed a desire to redefine their school's vision and introduce broad changes. Some teachers agreed with this depiction of the principal's role, expressing their desire for a principal who, as one described it, "*is really the school climate leader.*"

Principal: *I think the principal creates the weather. What I value and what I monitor and what I espouse is what becomes the mission and vision of the school.... What I see as the most important role of the principal is to define those things to be most valued. I began to define the values of our school.*

Similarly, some principals talked about their leadership role in advancing specific instructional strategies or programs across the school. In addition to choosing the strategies or programs, this might involve developing opportunities for targeted professional development, researching what was working elsewhere, and monitoring implementation:

Principal: *Our primary focus is literacy.... Last year was a catch-up year to see where the building was to see how the professional development was being implemented. I was looking to make sure we were doing things according to the model. [I helped] get small-group reading off the ground like we had implemented it at [my previous school].*

Principal: *I want teachers to use professional development that we're teaching them, with fidelity. I don't want it to be something that they set aside and then don't ever use it again. I want them accountable to me for that.*

Principals who discussed their efforts to lead school-wide change typically put student academic achievement at the center of school concerns. Some wanted to promote professional dialogue, analysis, and reflection on student performance and instructional approaches that could improve student performance:

Principal: *We are still focused on the teaching, not the learning. How do teachers get focused on the learning, on students' work?*

Principal: *Teachers often plan what they do, but not what students do.*

Several principals thought it was important for an instructional leader to include the faculty in school decision making. They said that by dispersing decision making, a leader is able to gather valuable input, build consensus and buy-in, and share accountability:

Principal: *I began to collect a collective vision of the school. I let teachers give voice to whether the vision is accurate or not and what they can contribute to make that happen.*

Teacher: *If she asks for [faculty] feedback, she wants it. Her feelings won't get hurt. She wants that feedback.*

A few principals discussed how an instructional leader builds the internal capacity of the school to sustain its own improvement. Some of these principals were devising structures or expertise that did not depend solely on the principal for instructional improvement. A few also said that as instructional leaders they were responsible for getting the school needed resources related to instruction.

Principals' Visions for Working with Others on Instructional Issues

Although the vast majority of participating principals wanted to be instructional leaders, few articulated a vision of what an instructional leader does or which activities would be the highest priorities. Participating principals bought into the notion that they should spend more time on instruction, but it was not clear that many came to confident conclusions about what to do with that time:

Principal: *We [principals] need to continue to learn about supporting instruction. It is not just about getting the time freed up. We must use that time in smart ways.*

In most cases, principals we interviewed said that they wanted to “get into the classroom more,” or “work more closely with teachers.” They described an instructional leader who is regarded by staff and students as being more present, such as by walking through the halls and classrooms.

Many principals said that instructional leaders should give instructional feedback and coach faculty toward improvement. In fact, a few reported that this had been central to their vision of the principalship before they became principals.

Principal: *The reason I got into administration was because I wanted to influence teachers to become instructional leaders themselves within their classrooms. I enjoy coaching. The SAM allows me to do what I really want to do.... The coaching – the mentoring of teachers – is where my passion lies.*

A few principals had a vision of instructional leadership that focused on working with groups of teachers, facilitating communication and collaboration around specific instructional issues. They saw this work as a way to analyze common challenges and harness collective wisdom into common strategies.

Principal: *I am focused more broadly on instruction [to] find the best way to target what to work on...[I thought I] would get more bang for my buck if I work with teacher teams. Department chairs and AP's can work with individual teachers.*

Many principals continued to see themselves as educators, rather than or in addition to, being managers, and this identity as teachers informed their work with teachers. In describing their role, a few used terms such as “teacher leader” and teacher “colleague.” In one of these schools, a teacher described the principal’s role in the same terms, saying, “I think ‘principal’ means lead teacher.” Other principals added that they were in a unique position as educators with access to outside perspectives and insights that they could bring to their teachers:

Principal: *At my heart is a teacher. I wanted to help teachers help students. So I needed to be in the classroom, in grade-level team meetings, and working with teachers between grade levels. I can be the conduit between all the pieces in a school setting. I know different languages of schooling, which I can bring to a common language and discussion.*

Principal: *First and foremost, I am a teacher. I was once a teacher, and am now supporting them.... I am more like a colleague than an administrator.*

Along the same lines, many principals said that an instructional leader should at least talk with students about their learning, if not work with them on instructional issues. Most often, they said it was important to ask students questions about instruction during walkthroughs or observations. However, some principals saw their role as delivering instruction directly, several teaching a regular class, and others working occasionally with individuals or groups of students. A few principals wanted to be student mentors, regularly meeting with individual students outside of class time, such as to talk about their performance on assessments and academic goals.

Goal Setting in the SAM Project

While principals could point to the general types of leadership behavior that they wanted to carry out, their participation in the SAM project did not seem to have helped them articulate their leadership goals strategically. The SAM project required principals to set and revise goals for their time in percentage terms, and principals typically responded to our interview question about their goals by citing their percentage goals. In nearly all cases, principals set a goal of spending a particular percentage of time in the broad category of time on instruction, as opposed to management tasks. They generally did not describe, even after prompting, goals for their time spent on specific instructional tasks or Time/Task Analysis descriptors.

Principals and SAMs told us that principals sometimes discussed the amount of time they were spending on particular instructional tasks, such as when reviewing TimeTrack data with the SAM or Time Change Coach. A few principals also said they had been encouraged by SAM project staff to focus on descriptor tasks they were good at. However, they rarely said these conversations led to formal goal setting at the descriptor level or a concerted effort to change time use in specific instructional task areas. Furthermore, no one said that the SAM project

asked the principal to set goals at the descriptor level, even though TimeTrack would support analysis of their time in this way. A more typical comment was the following:

Principal: I don't really have specific goals, but I would like to get up to 70 percent. I like [the National SAM Project Director's] idea of choosing one thing that you are good at and working on it.

In short, the SAM project appeared to focus principals' goals on shifting time use from management to instruction. It did little to encourage or help principals to identify the leadership activities that would pay off in their schools or to focus their efforts on these high-leverage activities.

Principal Behaviors by Descriptor

Data collected by the National SAM Project permit us to describe how principals distributed their time after a year in the project. On average, these principals spent over one-third of their 41-hour work week on three management tasks—office work prep, employee supervision, and student supervision. They spent the largest proportion of their time on office work prep, despite having decreased time on that task by an average of nearly 2 hours a week (Exhibit 4-1). After a year of implementation, principals spent somewhat less time on other management tasks, some of which saw steep reductions in time use. For instance, principal time on building management fell 67 percent from 1 hour and 42 minutes to 34 minutes a week. Similarly, as some principals hoped, they spent much less time on student discipline, a decrease of 48 percent to 1 hour and 2 minutes.

Exhibit 4-1: Total Hours Per Week, and Change from Baseline, at One-Year Follow-Up, by Management Descriptor (n=75)

Management Descriptors			
Descriptor	Total Hours Per Week at One-Year Follow-up	Δ in Time Spent per Week	
Office work prep	6 hr. 15 min.	▼	-1 hr. 53 min.
Employee supervision	5 hr. 12 min.	≈	+ 3 min.
Student supervision	3 hr. 19 min.	▼	-1 hr. 1 min.
Decision making groups, meetings	1 hr. 31 min.	▼	- 38 min.
Parents / guardians	1 hr. 10 min.	▼	-25 min.
District: meetings, supervisors	1 hr. 9 min.	≈	+ 4 min.
Student discipline	1 hr. 2 min.	▼	-58 min.
External: officials, others	40 min.	▼	-20 min.
Building management	34 min.	▼	-1 hr. 8 min.
Celebration	13 min.	≈	-8 min.
Employee discipline	7 min.	≈	0 min.

Exhibit Key: ▼ = statistically significant decrease, ≈ = change that was not statistically significant.

Source: Evaluation team’s analysis of all Time/Task data from the National SAM Project for principals with both baseline and one-year follow-up data.

Exhibit reads: After one year of participation in the National SAM Project, principals spent 6 hours 15 minutes per week on managerial tasks classified as “Office work prep” on average. This represented a statistically significant decrease of 1 hour and 53 minutes compared with the baseline measure. Principals spent 5 hours and 12 minutes per week on “Employee supervision”; the increase of 3 minutes per week from the baseline measure was not statistically significant.

The principals who had spent a year in the SAM project spent the largest share of their instructional time on observations and walkthroughs (3 hours and 59 minutes), and they did so by a large margin (Exhibit 4-2). Observations and walkthroughs was also the top descriptor at the time of baseline data collection, but principals increased their time on this task more than any other instructional task (a 41 percent increase in time spent). While they did get “out of the office,” principals devoted a substantial portion of their week to instruction-related office work related to instruction, increasing that time by almost an hour. Having simultaneously decreased management-related office work prep by nearly two hours, principals did in fact spend less time in their offices and focused more on instruction while in their offices.

Tasks falling under three other descriptors made up a smaller proportion of principals’ work weeks but reflected increases in time spent. For instance, principals spent 1 hour and 46

minutes on instructional work with students, nearly doubling the time spent per week (Exhibit 4-2). They also spent an average of an hour on feedback to teachers (51 percent increase) and tripled their time on modeling and teaching to 28 minutes.

Exhibit 4-2: Total Hours Per Week, and Change from Baseline, at One-Year Follow-Up, by Instructional Descriptor (n=75)

Instructional Descriptors			
Descriptor	Total Hours Per Week at One-Year Follow-up	Δ in Time Spent per Week	
Observation, walk through	3 hr. 59 min.	▲	+ 1 hr. 9 min.
Office work prep	2 hr. 25 min.	▲	+ 55 min.
Decision making groups, meetings	1 hr. 59 min.	≈	+ 23 min.
Work with students	1 hr. 46 min.	▲	+ 49 min.
Employee supervision	1 hr. 23 min.	≈	+ 22 min.
Feedback to teacher	59 min.	▲	+ 20 min.
District: meetings, supervision	49 min.	≈	+ 3 min.
Student supervision	42 min.	≈	+ 9 min.
External: officials, others	40 min.	▲	+ 15 min.
Parents / guardians	37 min.	≈	+ 11 min.
Professional development	36 min.	≈	+ 11 min.
Modeling/ teaching	28 min.	▲	+ 19 min.
Planning, curriculum, and assessment	27 min.	▼	- 1 hr. 34 min.
Celebration	15 min.	▲	+ 7 min.

Exhibit Key: ▼ = statistically significant decrease, ▲ = statistically significant increase, ≈ = change that was not statistically significant.

Source: Evaluation team’s analysis of all Time/Task data from the National SAM Project for principals with both baseline and one-year follow-up data.

Exhibit reads: In the year one Time/Task follow-up, principals spent 3 hours 59 minutes on average per week on instructional tasks classified as “Observation, walk through.” This represented a statistically significant increase of 1 hour and 9 minutes compared with the baseline measure.

To learn more about instructional leadership, we asked principals, SAMs, and teachers to detail the specific instruction-related activities that principals carried out in the school. These interviews allowed respondents to describe principals’ work in their own words. As analyzed

below, the responses illustrate how principals worked with individual teachers, groups of teachers and school leaders, and students and parents.

Principal Work with Individual Teachers

Both in vision and in practice, most principals put work with individual teachers at the top of their lists. Many described feedback and coaching for teachers as core components of their vision of leadership. However, interviews and Time/Task Analyses indicated that principals were much more likely to spend time on walkthroughs or informal observations than on substantive, individual feedback.

As discussed above, the instructional descriptor that represented the largest share of principals' instructional time at the one-year follow-up was the descriptor for informal classroom observations and walkthroughs.⁵ When talking about their instructional leadership in interviews and at SAM project gatherings, principals talked most about observing teachers and providing feedback. In fact, the majority of principals we interviewed spoke first, most often, or solely about observations and feedback as what they did with the time they spent on instruction. Furthermore, when SAMs and teachers discussed changes in principal time use, they most often said that participation resulted in principals spending more time in the classroom.

Observation

Observation was strongly encouraged in many of the participating districts. In addition, conducting observations offered a relatively quick and easy way for principals to increase the time they spent on instruction. Observations take place in readily measured units of time, can be done with minimal preparation, are scheduled easily or done on-the-fly, and do not require follow-up. As such, they could fit readily into a principal's repertoire, especially at the early stages of implementation:

SAM: The principal had some difficulty finding activities other than observations and feedback to increase instructional time at the beginning of the school year, but has overcome that now.

Many of the principals who told us they engaged in informal classroom observation typically conducted frequent, brief walkthroughs of three to ten minutes' length. For example, several said they conducted a walkthrough in every classroom in their building over a period of a few weeks. Often these brief observations were described as a principal's primary strategy for seeing instruction in classrooms:

⁵ Like our respondents, we refer to "informal observations" as occasions when a principal goes into a classroom for reasons that are not associated with formal teacher performance evaluations. However, despite being non-evaluative, some "informal observations" have formal features, such as being a regular or scheduled event, highly structured around a checklist, or evaluative in some teachers' eyes.

Teacher: *They are only in the classroom for five minutes. It is a quick data collection. Not supposed to be a gotcha. But it is a quick look and gives you feedback. It gives the principal and teacher a snapshot of what was seen.*

Some teachers found brief observations unnerving or unlikely to give the principal an accurate picture of their instruction:

Teacher: *The snapshot is great because it gives you a flavor, but it's just a taste. I would like longer walkthroughs. She can walk in at the wrong time.*

In some cases principals conducted longer, more intensive observations in tandem with the brief observations. Some principals preferred to spend greater amounts of time for each observation (more than 10 minutes), or did not have time parameters they tried to follow. These principals reported that they needed more or variable time for an accurate picture of each teacher's instruction. For example, a principal described using two 10-minute visits in order to see various stages of each lesson:

Principal: *We [on my school walkthrough team] do two-part visits. [We observe] 10 minutes, leave to another class, and then come back. We have 90-minute blocks, so we drop the first 10 minutes and the last 10 minutes. That allows us to get into at least two rooms two times during the block. We could see differentiation and see full-lesson scope. It takes a lot of time, but [it's] very telling. You can see changes over a 90-minute block.*

Principals varied in how they chose which teachers to observe informally. About half of the principals we visited said they observed all teachers in the school. Half of these used systematic strategies to track their visits, such as scheduling teachers in their calendars or using TimeTrack reports of who had been visited. Others said they targeted specific teachers, such as new or struggling teachers, those teaching particular content or grade levels, or those who requested observations. Two of these principals also delegated some informal observations to coaches or assistant principals. However, teachers in several schools said they did not have a clear understanding of how their principal made decisions about who to observe.

When asked about principal observation, although most respondents spoke about informal observations, a few principals and teachers pointed to formal evaluative observations. The respondents who said that their evaluative observations had been meaningful referred to benefits associated with pre-observation consultation, an extended observation period that captured an entire lesson, and follow-up feedback.

Observation Tools

Many principals who made informal observations, particularly those conducting brief and frequent walkthroughs, relied on a checklist of "look fors" or a standardized observation protocol. Often, principals used walkthrough checklists or protocols that were designed or promoted by their district. Several principals said their district organized teams of principals and central office staffers to conduct group walkthroughs with a standard tool.

Checklists typically prompted principals to focus on specific behaviors or evidence. For example, many principals said that when they visited each classroom they looked to see whether an instructional objective for the lesson was posted visibly on the board. Principals also often said they looked for levels of student engagement, specific instructional strategies, and formative assessment. Many principals said that checklists prompted them to talk with students to determine their understanding:

Principal: *We have a walkthrough template of what we are looking for.... We took our schedule of 18 math teachers, divided up and went into every classroom and brought that data together to see what we can do.... Years ago the walkthroughs weren't happening. Part of [the change] is the result of the district focus, part of it is [the] time factor that SAMs freed up.*

Principal: *If the kids are involved in a lesson, often I'll talk to the kids. On the walkthrough sheet, I look for three things: Is the objective evident? Did kids know the objective? Is it on the board?*

On the other hand, some principals had tried using checklists, but rejected them for less standardized observation approaches, which they said helped them provide more useful feedback to teachers:

Principal: *No, I don't use a tool or checklist for my observations. It is more informal. I've used a checklist in the past, tried to do the e-data tool [walkthrough PDA and software]. Nah. Keeping up with the pen and small screen, for me to put down my thoughts, I didn't find it a useful tool. Now, my feedback, I try to give it to the teacher at some point while I'm in there, or by the end of the school day. We'll talk about their outcomes, core content. But I don't use the checklist.*

Principal: *I used every walkthrough instructional tool that the district recommended. They are not useful to me. I made up my own that is more narrative.*

Informal Observations as a Cultural Change

Observations outside of formal performance evaluations represented a cultural change in many schools—one that appeared to be gradually accepted with time. Where informal observation was new, principals and teachers described initial discomfort, if not resistance, associated with an increase of principal time in classrooms. Many principals told us they had a priority of “getting into the classrooms,” and teachers largely agreed that principals were spending significantly more time in their classes than before SAM implementation. In earlier stages of implementation, many teachers were upset about this and were uneasy about the ramifications that informal observations could have on formal evaluations:

Principal: *[The teachers] knew I would be coming from that standpoint—that I'd be in the classrooms more.... The first thing I told them is [that] this is going to be different. I'm not going to be downstairs dealing with [management] things, but upstairs dealing with*

[instruction]. At first, during the first year, this was radical and progressive and intimidating. I had to ease their fear and explain that this is why it had to be done.

Principal: *At first, they thought I was checking up on them and they weren't doing their job. They're used to it now. I had [the SAM] explain my extended walk through last week. He said a couple [of teachers] were nervous, one of the union reps wondered if [it was] part of their formal evaluation. We said no, it's just for data.*

Although some unease and resistance remained, the interview responses we gathered suggested movement toward adaptation and acceptance of informal observations, particularly in schools with longer histories of SAM implementation:

Teacher: *She observes me informally any time she walks past the room.... With me sometimes she is there five minutes, sometimes she's there most of the day, 20 minutes or more at least. She observed me about a month ago for about an hour. People used to be really nervous, but now she's there all the time. I do attribute that to the SAM.... It is not a scary thing. The kids are used to it now.*

Teacher Accountability vs. Teacher Development

Principals' comments pointed to two different purposes for observing and providing feedback to teachers: either to bolster teacher accountability, especially for use of particular instructional strategies or curricular alignment; or to develop teacher capacity through individualized support and reflection. Sometimes principal work with individual teachers was said to encompass both purposes. Regardless, the tension between the purposes had implications for the processes and outcomes of principal observations.

When teacher accountability was a priority, principals typically monitored teacher practices and weighed instruction against a set of criteria or a framework. They monitored horizontal or vertical alignment of the curriculum, use of preferred instructional strategies, or academic progress across classrooms:

SAM: *She is holding teachers to the fire for using instructional strategies. That's why the walkthrough sheet is based on that. ... Her central job is to try to change the mindset to use instructional strategy with more fidelity and consistency.*

Teacher: *[Principal observation] has probably spurred other people to be on their toes. At first, it makes people possibly defensive but anyone who does any introspection will realize she's only asking me to do what I was supposed to do anyway—be more prepared to teach my students.*

Often, accountability-driven observations were associated with a district initiative and relied on a checklist or protocol that was designed or promoted by the district:

Principal: *A district must agree on what it is looking for so it can look at data. To do this in [our district], we do walkthroughs as an [administrator] group in a particular building with the superintendent. That way we are all able to see the same thing and talk about it.*

In contrast, a smaller number of principals' observations focused on individualized support that would build upon the teacher's current capacity. Such support involved substantive interaction between the principal and teacher around the teacher's practice, and it demanded a greater investment of principal time in working with an individual teacher. Observations were less standardized in content and processes, compared with observations that were driven by accountability purposes:

Principal: *We focus on teacher behavior. Walkthroughs focus on teacher strategies, but I want my staff to think about what they did to get achievement, over strategies we identify. I don't want to focus on whether they just did the strategy we wanted them to. They should look at what has worked for them, which of their own behaviors are leading to improved achievement?*

Principal: *I agree that district consistency is good, but teachers also say that they need individualized feedback.... I think it is easy to not take the time to follow through after an observation. We have to give the feedback. Teachers want the feedback so we must. If I put the time in, I must demonstrate that I know what they are doing, then we can proceed to a second discussion that is about how to change.*

Feedback

Time/Task Analysis data indicated that principals spent about one-fourth as much time on "feedback to teacher" (60 minutes per week after one year of implementation) as on "observation/walkthrough" (3 hours, 59 minutes per week).⁶ Nevertheless, it was clear that feedback figured large in principals' visions of instructional leadership.

The quantity and types of feedback varied substantially by principal or, for some principals, by teacher. There were several cases in which principal descriptions of their feedback diverged from the reports of their teachers or others, who described the feedback as less frequent or less useful than did the principals:

District staff member: *Yeah, they are getting into the classroom but they are not providing any feedback. Students don't improve just because the principal is in the classroom. But the critical point is that you do not influence that teacher until you provide feedback.*

⁶ It is possible, however, that feedback may be recorded under each of several descriptors or delivered in a way that is not readily captured by any descriptor. Also, feedback may simply require less time to meet its strategic purposes, in comparison with other activities.

Teacher: *In walkthroughs, we aren't told exactly what they're looking for. They talk about it in the leadership teams. They have a rubric in front of them and are looking for certain things, but I don't know what it is. They are just hanging out in the back or watching what is going on. The first time they came in, they stayed for 10 minutes. The second time a bit longer. We haven't gotten anything back from them.*

Teachers in several schools said that their principal gave little or no individual feedback, choosing instead to focus on giving group feedback to the entire school, department, or grade level. These data were typically frequency reports on specific checklist criteria, such as the frequently mentioned example of the tally of classrooms that had objectives posted on the board.

Teacher: *[The administrator team] might say, "We walked through 20 classrooms and 20 of you had learner goals up." They use that information in our faculty meetings.*

"Quick hit" feedback. Many of the principals who used handheld devices to collect checklist data sent the data in an email directly to the teacher, a task made easy by observation software. Teachers who reported receiving this type of feedback often said they received little else, and most said the feedback was not helpful in changing their instruction:

Principal: *I am getting into 55 rooms in two weeks. If I did face-to-face, teachers would be upset. It would be impossible. So I do initial email feedback with data on what I saw.*

Many principals, facing the time pressure of school schedules, found time only to give teachers brief narrative feedback in the form of a notecard or email message. Based on descriptions provided by principals and teachers, these could range in their depth of content from "great job!" to reflective questions about specific instructional strategies.

Face-to-face and reflective feedback. A smaller number of principals made a strategic effort to provide individualized face-to-face feedback following informal observations, even if that feedback was brief. One principal spoke of this as a strategy to encourage an ongoing professional conversation and teacher reflection. Others said this format was more meaningful than electronic or written communication and more likely to result in changed behavior. Finding the time for face-to-face feedback was a challenge, although several principals said they were successful in giving feedback in the classroom at transition times or at opportune times during team meetings:

Principal: *My sessions... might be 10 minutes at the end of a grade-level meeting.... After the walkthrough, after a live scoring session, all of her kids, it was fourth-grade reading, had to identify the main idea of the passage, but most of the kids ended up summarizing and not doing a very good job of that. They were telling me a list of main events that occurred. So that afternoon, I pulled her aside and asked, "What was your goal? Here is what I saw from the kids. Why do you think you're doing that? OK, if we are going to plan this out for the future, how are we going to plan this differently?"*

A few principals said they differentiated their feedback to meet the needs of individual teachers:

Principal: *I go into a classroom, and I may walk in with a different purpose. Like with a high-performing teacher, I work on reflection. With a really effective teacher, I want them to understand why they are doing well. With lower-performing ones, I might do a formal evaluation and [outline] what they need to work on. It depends. It is probably equal. Some teachers are in the middle section. With them I can look at: Where are they? Are they worried about moving backwards? If so, it means pairing them with the demonstration coaches.*

Modeling with follow-up. A few principals modeled instruction as part of building teachers' instructional capacity. They described the modeling as part of a process leading to independent teacher use of a classroom strategy. They also cited other benefits of modeling, such as building credibility, improving teacher relationships, and sensing student progress. Principals who modeled were apt to describe themselves as teacher leaders or coaches:

Principal: *Being in there to model teaching and see student abilities is helpful. And it gives me credibility as a staff developer. It gives teachers ideas. Then I can look at student work from MY lesson and ask, "how can you follow up? I open up opportunities to the entire staff. The SAM encourages me to go into class, and schedules debriefing time for me. It is a gradual release approach. I model, then team-teach, then I observe.*

Principal: *I am learning and modeling at the same time. After modeling in classrooms and faculty meetings, three teachers have used me as Smart Board backup during my observation. They invite me in and take a risk in using them while I am in observing, but they aren't afraid of failing.*

Feedback Evolving with Principal Capacity

Principals described a hoped-for evolution toward more intensive observations and more specific feedback to teachers:

Principal: *I am learning as [the teachers] do They see me as a coach. I always thought of myself more as a facilitator, so I am changing more. I would like to give more feedback.*

Principal: *I don't know if [giving feedback] ever gets easy. I hope it does.*

Several principals expressed an interest in providing coaching and "deep feedback" that would build teacher capacity. However, these principals also said that this role would require specific skills and knowledge, which they were working to develop:

Principal: *I've done a much better job this year with the feedback. That was important to me. ... I had never really structured pre-conferences with teachers. I didn't used to be face to face. But now when I do a pre-conference face to face, when I give feedback afterwards, the feedback is a lot deeper. It is better. The teachers are very responsive to very specific feedback and suggestions.*

Principal: *I got training in walkthroughs. A lot of them were just three minutes in and out. Those had a different look. This year, I focus more on implementation. I am making sure they're teaching what's on their curriculum map so it's a viable curriculum. I am staying in there longer and having those teachers give me some feedback and do some reflection on their own teaching.*

Sharing Responsibility for Observation and Feedback

Several principals pointed out that they drew on the expertise of others in the school for coaching. Staff members in coaching roles drew on their own experience but provided assistance that was consistent with the principal's vision. In some cases, teachers were released from the classroom on a case-by-case or part-time basis to help their peers; in other cases coaching was a full-time position designed to assist teachers. We heard of principals drawing on other resources in the school in order to conduct observations, model, give personalized feedback, deliver professional development, assist with instructional planning, and analyze data:

Principal: *I am spending less time in the classroom, but fortunately, I have built the capacity for others to be able to do that. I have an instructional coach and a coaching team who're going in classrooms. We have demo site teachers who go in. They spend the last two hours of the day modeling.... The demo teacher is freed up to do focus groups to work with teachers and look at data and do those things that are global.*

Similarly, a few principals called on the leadership team to conduct structured walkthrough observations throughout the school. Whereas some schools were observed by administrator teams, these observation teams were in-house and included teachers from the school.

Principal: *We've developed peer-to-peer walkthroughs. It is not administrator-driven, rather teachers are giving feedback to each other. There are growing pains, but we have some tools in place.*

Principal: *The instructional leadership team meets during the day. This year we started to do walkthroughs, using the Charlotte Danielson framework. The team picked a half dozen elements and cut and pasted them into a walkthrough tool. This becomes a vehicle to get feedback out there.*

One principal elaborated on teacher expertise, explaining how teacher leaders can help principals wishing to improve their own feedback to faculty. For a willing administrator, this principal explained, a master teacher can serve as a resource and help build the principal's capacity for effective coaching, particularly in content areas:

Principal: *I try to handpick strong teachers to work with, at least initially. They have helped me learn about literacy so I will be able to work with others who need it. It is good when we learn from teachers when we look at their plans and observe.*

Principal Work with Groups of Teachers

Nearly all of the principals we talked with described working with groups of teachers and other school staff. However, there was wide variation in how often, intensively, and strategically the principals engaged in this work. Furthermore, there was variation in group composition and purposes, as well as in the challenges schools faced in meeting and carrying out the work.

Teacher Group Composition

Principals worked with different types of teacher groups, including those organized around grade level, department, smaller learning community unit, or ongoing professional development activity. The groups were typically composed of teachers who shared common instructional interests, and many also included an instructional coach or specialist.

Elementary principals most often met with grade-level teams, while high school principals most often met with departments or smaller learning community units. Some principals met with groups implementing specific instructional programs or professional development efforts. Most teacher group meetings were expected or mandatory, although at least one was a weekly voluntary meeting that garnered substantial attendance.

Principals with Occasional Interaction with Teacher Groups

Most principals we talked with worked with teacher groups on an occasional or case-by-case basis. Indeed, most principals found it difficult to commit a great deal of time for this purpose, even if they said that they found it important. A few principals described intentions of attending weekly meetings, but principals' and teachers' responses made it clear that conflicting priorities often got in the way. Other principals committed to participating in meetings less frequently, such as monthly or by trimester.

Principals who occasionally met with teacher groups were less likely to be described by the teachers as active participants in the meetings. Unlike the few principals who regularly met with such groups, these principals were there as observers:

Teacher: *We meet weekly on Mondays. Every once in a while he'll filter in.... For the most part, he sits and hangs out to see where we are and see what to expect. He's not there to meddle or judge.*

Also, teachers were less likely to describe the meetings as being exclusively focused on instruction when the principal was not an active participant in the meetings:

Teacher: In grade-level team meetings she's giving us information about something, an event or student concerns.

Principals with Frequent and Strategic Interaction with Teacher Groups

Less common were examples of principals' regular and strategic work with teacher groups, but we describe these examples here because of the favorable reviews given by principals and teachers. In a few schools, principals and teachers agreed that the principals participated in weekly group meetings with teachers and included the meetings as a regular fixture in their schedules. These principals and teachers reported that the principals took an active and substantive role in discussions at the meetings, regardless of whether they led the meeting or gave that responsibility to a colleague. They also reported that group meetings focused on instructional issues. Here are snapshots of these principals' strategic approaches with teacher groups:

- In one school, the principal met with every grade-level team twice a week, essentially scheduling the better part of two full days each week for these meetings. The meetings in this school were facilitated by a literacy specialist or an administrator focused on teacher development, with assistance from the principal. The principal had say over the agenda for one day a week, focusing mostly on analysis of student work and formative assessments, and teachers decided on the second day how to use that analysis for planning future instruction.
- In another school, the principal joined a weekly professional development meeting in which teachers presented and discussed promising practices identified by the principal during the week. These meetings were voluntary, yet attended well. This principal also attended weekly grade-level meetings for "job-embedded professional development" that were regularly facilitated by instructional coaches, and also regularly attended meetings with a cohort of literacy teachers.
- In a third school, the principal met with K-2 grade-level teams once a week and with 3-5 grade-level teams twice a week. These meetings, which included support staff as well as the teachers, were led by the principal. The groups worked on backward mapping and data analysis as part of planning instruction.

In schools where principals regularly met with teacher groups, respondents of all types agreed that these meetings were regarded as a high priority in the school and that the principal's time during meetings was protected from competing priorities. Teachers in these schools expected principals to attend meetings and stay for the full duration, which they said was a change occurring after SAM implementation. In the past, they said, principals were often and easily pulled out of such meetings. As a further sign of the priority given to these meetings, teachers described efforts to ensure that teachers and other group members (e.g., instructional specialists, instructional administrators) attended and were not pulled out:

Principal: *[Before,] more than half the time, I had to step out of the meeting, or couldn't finish the meeting, due to a discipline issue or due to a parent issue. You name it, and I'd hear the beep. We'd sit down for ten minutes [and be interrupted]. There wasn't a whole lot accomplished in my mind.*

Teacher: *We know that Wednesday is planned for the grade-level meeting and we don't plan anything else. We plan nothing with parents or other teachers. We also asked the special ed coordinator to not plan case meetings for that time. It is high priority.*

Teacher: *We have six first grades, it is tough to have a planning time together and have the principal show up. There are so many different meetings. And there are always parent issues. But with her, we are always there. We can count on the time.*

Teacher, principal, and SAM respondents often pointed to the SAM as actively protecting principal time during the meetings and reducing distractions, although they also said others in the school helped in this effort. During meeting time, some SAMs were particularly vigilant about screening phone calls and other requests for the principal. Likewise, principals spoke of turning their “walkies” off.

SAM: *It was unusual for him to spend the entire time in grade-level team meetings, but now not so. He used to get pulled out. Now we have walkies and I pick up and screen before he gets pulled out. I can protect his time in there.*

These principals set high expectations for the teacher meetings, promoting substantive engagement in instructional issues and maintaining a focus on purposeful work that built over time. Teachers described the expectations for the meeting processes and outcomes:

Teacher: *We have a plan when we come into meetings. It may be the same for many meetings, but it is structured. It is not just random what we address. Like we will know before[hand] that we may be looking at this or that data. For instance, recently we looked at last week's math scores. Then we reflected on core content and planned from there.*

In these meetings, principals engaged with the group on instructional issues, such as analyzing student work and data, reflecting on instructional strategies, designing assessments, and planning new instruction. Furthermore, teachers said that the principals' contributions were useful and their participation appreciated. The principals brought expertise to the table and were not regarded as meddlesome:

Teacher: *He is more present at the meetings and is not focused on discipline. He is in the meetings to talk about curriculum and instruction, and that is clearly the focus.*

Principal: *And now, we go in and we know [that on] Mondays we are dealing with some data and student work and student performance, and Wednesdays we are focused on planning and developing assessments. We look to accurately assess what we are supposed to be teaching. We make sure they are congruent with core [content] and work*

backwards and make sure what we are teaching is aligned also.... On Wednesdays [the teachers] set the agenda. It might be something we've talked about based on Monday, or units coming up that we need to plan.

Principal: The time is protected more. We look at student work more, as opposed to management issues, like who is going to plan the field trip? And the newsletter? Now it is, what are we teaching, why are we teaching it, is it coming from core content, and what kind of results are we getting from that teaching?

When teachers described outcomes from their group work, their responses suggested that tangible products or strategies were created and that these influenced their instruction:

Teacher: We look at assessment data. What are we using for instruction and what are the outcomes? How [do we] create assessments that measure what we want and instruction to teach it? We make common assessments during this time. Then, that week we will give the assessment and when we meet next time we grade them together.

Teacher: [In meetings,] teachers in every grade are looking at student work and assessment and planning around the core content. We are not in isolation. The whole school feels like a team effort because [the principal] gives us all the time.... She knows the curriculum. She can help us pull out the core content for our planning. And she helps with analysis and what it means, and helps us build on that.

Two principals said that their increased effort to work with teacher groups was driven in part by district initiatives. Nevertheless, both principals and the teachers in both schools found value in the practice. Furthermore, the principals said that the SAM project improved their ability to carry out the district initiative of working with teacher groups.

Challenges and Experimentation in Principal Work with Teacher Groups

There were challenges for schools that wanted to have teachers meet in groups. First, arranging time for teachers to meet regularly required a concerted and creative effort in school master scheduling. This was particularly true in schools where teachers had not traditionally had common planning times, which was often the case in small schools, high school departments, and schools that had few teachers in elective or “special” content areas. In some districts, teacher labor contracts presented obstacles for repurposing planning time. Scheduling common meeting time sometimes bordered on the impossible during the regular school day:

Principal: Teachers have no common planning time. Everyone says to do [professional learning communities] and collaboration, but the structure of the system is the barrier. The idea is great, but if the structure doesn't allow it, then it can't happen. At least with a SAM, there is time for me to meet with [individual] teachers. It is a step, but more is needed.

There were also challenges in persuading teachers to relinquish authority over how they spent a block of professional time:

Principal: *The first and second years, we met once a week.... [Now] two grade-level meetings a week is a pain for some [teachers].... We had a pretty decent gain this year in test scores, and so teachers asked me if we were going back down to one grade-level meeting a week—and I wanted to say I think we need to go to three or four!*

Principals themselves faced challenges in committing to regularly scheduled meetings. For instance, in large schools, there might be many group meetings.

Nevertheless, we found some principals in the SAM project who were thinking past observation and time in the halls to other ways of building teacher capacity, including working with them in collaborative groups. One principal experimented with bringing her content expertise to one department over a series of collaborative meetings, with hopes that this model would spread to other departments and administrators in this large school:

Teacher: *Now the math teachers meet to look at lesson planning and curriculum issues. Before, the principals couldn't get free for this kind of stuff, but now they can.... They couldn't have even thought about doing that without the SAMs.*

Similarly, a few other principals who had been working with a SAM for a year and a half said that they were newly able to lead embedded, professional development meetings, as a result of SAMs freeing up time to focus on instruction:

Principal: *This Monday we're going to meet with [a small group of teachers], and I will be the instructional leader of the embedded professional development. Before, I could only pop in. Now I can be the leader if I am the right person to do it. This never happened before I had the SAM.*

Principal Work with Leadership Teams

Some of the participating principals were acting on a vision of leadership that included shared responsibility for decisions and distributed ownership for important schoolwide work. Although we found no evidence that this type of leadership vision had resulted from participation in the SAM project, it was still the case that working with a SAM could provide support for principals who wanted to lead in this way. A handful of the participating principals made statements like the following:

Principal: *One person is not a leadership. I am trying to take myself out of the role of leading the meetings and making staff members take that on.*

Principal: *I promised them that I won't make decisions alone. But once we make the decision, we will stick to it unless we prove that it doesn't work.*

Similarly, some principals found that teacher leaders could facilitate teacher ownership and buy-in. For this reason, a few principals spoke of including teachers in decisions and on leadership teams:

Principal: If we don't present [new ideas] in such a way that the teachers have a role, and ownership and a stake in it, if that doesn't occur, then that top-down approach, we don't get the buy-in from teachers. That makes things miserable no matter how good an idea it may be.

Structure of Leadership Teams

Most principals we visited said that their school had a leadership team. Most often, principals and their leadership teams met monthly, although respondents in some schools described bi-weekly meetings and others did not identify regularly occurring meetings.

Leadership team members typically included at least a few teachers, particularly those who were grade-level, department, or program leaders. In schools with instructional coaches or resource specialists, those individuals were often on the teams, along with the principal and other administrators. A few principals made it clear that they strategically chose membership to fit the purposes of the leadership team. For instance, several teams included representatives who would return as leaders to professional learning community or grade-level team meetings. In some cases, the team members brought expertise in instruction, professional development, or data analysis.

Purposes for Leadership Teams

The leadership meetings varied in the degree to which they focused on instructional versus management issues. Many leadership teams focused, as they had for years, on resolving management issues in the building. Principals and other leadership team members we spoke with said that time was spent on management topics such as field trips, scheduling, handbook revisions, fundraising, and transportation.

On the other hand, some leadership teams also addressed instructional issues, such as those related to curricular choices, school improvement strategies, academic data analysis, and professional development. In some schools, there was agreement that instruction was the team's focus, and the interview responses suggested that this had resulted from a deliberate decision:

Principal: We developed an instructional leadership team last fall. The purpose of the team is to get key people from all areas of the school in identifying one thing to focus on. One thing everyone can really get that is going to make a difference in student achievement.... [The instructional leadership team] talked to the faculty and decided student engagement was what we came up with [that] would make the most difference. This year all our professional development time is dealing with learning more about student engagement.

Principal: *Out of the leadership team, we got subs for the entire day—one person from every grade level in leadership team, and they went through what the ELD standards were and “making meaning” as a part of our curriculum. Now we have a matrix of standards. We have other staff members who contributed in that. I never tell them what the next step is. But I will say, “We have this...we have this in place. What do we need to do [next]?”*

In some schools, principals relied on teachers on the leadership team to fit district initiatives to the school’s instructional needs and capacity, thereby facilitating implementation:

Principal: *[The leadership team focuses] on initiatives that have come down from the district, they want us to do this. So we take that tool and ask, “How can we make this work for our school?”... We try to balance what we have been successful with, and look at other places and other schools that are successful and take pieces from there. They are good with that. Sometimes they’ll have the teacher’s perspective, the pros and cons.*

Teacher: *[The principal] will come to us [on the leadership team] with ideas and run them by us before sharing with the whole faculty.... It is often stuff from the district. It can be instructional, not just administrative. She wants ideas of how this stuff will better fit for us teachers.*

Leadership teams could also be created as temporary bodies focused on addressing specific problems. One principal described how, in addition to a broader leadership team, she pulled teachers together into committees to think hard about problems the leadership team identified. Additionally, she drew feedback from the whole faculty to build ownership and minimize resistance:

Principal: *Leadership is my sounding board.... Once [the leadership team] makes some decision, we get input from the whole staff so the flow of information is going back and forth. Then committees come out of that. Over time, committees will dissolve. So when our feedback on behavior was negative, we started a behavior committee to look into it and meet monthly.*

Some principals designated representatives to communicate or employ a strategic vision with other groups. For instance, they might regularly meet with a group of teacher leaders on a topic, who in turn returned to grade-level or department teams to facilitate group work on that topic. Such representatives could also function as a conduit for communication and needs sensing, reporting back to the principal:

Principal: *I usually [influence teacher meetings] through the leadership representative. They have directions on how to handle certain conversations. This is for other than just planning for this next week; we had a recent discussion on our EL kids. The direction for leadership was: Let’s talk to our grade level on how to do the EL block. Let’s try to get something in place this year and address problems that might come up. It’s loose-tight*

control. I don't want to make decisions for them, I want them to have an opportunity to make decisions for themselves.

Teacher: [The principal and PLC leaders] meet as an advisory group to determine what should be happening in our PLCs, to determine our objectives. She leaves it up to us as the leaders to work with our groups, and to monitor them. We do report to her after each meeting, talking about what we covered in the meeting.

Challenges of Leadership Teams

Distributing authority and responsibility to teachers was not without challenges, especially in schools where teachers resisted new and differentiated roles. As with other educational innovations, new leadership structures might be met by some teachers with skepticism and expectations that this too would pass:

Teacher: I don't think people are used to seeing teachers as leaders. In some way it's a hard role to be in. Teachers ask, "Why are you telling me what to do...?" It's been a struggle. Last November we had a come-to-Jesus meeting with the [teacher leaders] and all the staff. We said this isn't going to go away. There are still some who are just defiant.

Some school leadership teams found management tasks a distraction from dealing with the instructional problems the school faced. The principals responded with strategies to increase their ability to work on instruction. For example, one principal envisioned having two separate leadership teams—one focused on instruction and led by the principal, and a second focused on management and led by the SAM:

Principal: This is the first year with a formal leadership team for instruction. Before I didn't know how it worked. Before I had one, but it wasn't instructional in nature.... We talk about instructional issues every other week. We talk about studying data as a group. Sometimes someone has a question and we say, "That's management, we're not talking about that." Next year, we will formalize the management team. [The SAM] will run that. I will go but she will run it.

Principal: [The leadership team] is more focused on instruction, like with the grade-level meetings. In the [SAM's] first year, and the [instructional specialist's] first year, we'd still spend half our time talking about non-instructional things as a leadership group. We have gotten away from that. We'd spend 30 minutes in grade-level meetings talking about field trips. Who would get the bus? Did we send our lunch count in? Now, we don't touch that unless it is something about if we are going on this field trip because it will help us teach this part of the curriculum. It has changed from the top down—we wouldn't allow that now.

Principal Work with Students and Parents

Although the participating principals generally emphasized their work with teachers when describing their instructional leadership, some also discussed their interactions with students, and a few spoke of their interactions with parents. Their comments reflected the SAM project's division of interactions with students and parents into two distinct categories, those that dealt with management matters (especially discipline) and those that dealt specifically with instruction.

Principal Interactions with Students

Many principals, particularly those who spent a substantial amount of time in classrooms, described working with students on instructional matters more than before. In many schools, there was a concerted effort to shift non-instructional time with students to instructional time:

Principal: One thing that I noticed was that I was spending a lot of time on student supervision as a non-instructional activity. I started to think about how to change that. I need to be out and around to be visible in the school. So I decided to turn that into instructional time by talking with students about how things are going in class, and what they are learning.

Principals who increased their interactions with students often said that the students increasingly saw them as instructional leaders, as opposed to disciplinarians. Some principals and teachers commented that the increased interactions led students to take their learning more seriously and that discipline problems decreased:

Teacher: [The principal] will be there more often in general, including in class. The students see how important it is, the learning and the assessments. His presence communicates the importance and his interest. It makes them feel good.

Principal: I see [students] in positive ways, not just as behavior problems. They see me as someone who can help them. I helped a kid in class with math and I got to be someone who helped him. SAM has definitely increased these positive contacts.

Teacher: Sometimes [the principal] is in for seconds. Sometimes he'll pull up a chair beside someone and stay for 10-20 minutes. Lots of times he'll ask the children questions. Sometimes he's there to help put out fires for some of the kids—check that their day is going OK if they are having issues.

Principals' work with students took many forms, but most often, the principal asked students questions about instructional objectives for the lesson or their learning. These types of interactions were encouraged by classroom walkthrough checklists, which frequently had principals asking students questions. The purpose was primarily to assess the teacher's work through student understanding, rather than to deliver instruction directly to the student. Our

sense is that this type of interaction predominated in some principals' instructional interactions with students:

Principal: *I talk with students. Teachers often plan what they do, but not what students do. Students should know why they are doing this and how to measure if they got it accomplished.*

Principal: *After having a SAM, I take it for granted. I get to go and start doing walkthroughs, talking with kids to see if they understand what they're doing. What are they learning?*

In other cases, the principal might sit down briefly with individual or groups of students to work on a lesson. These situations were usually described as being unplanned and unstructured, occurring when the principal was in the classroom on a walkthrough and saw an opportunity to help. Principals and teachers typically said this was a change in behavior and that they found value in these principal interactions with students:

Principal: *I am obviously out constantly in classrooms.... The first hour of my day is [scheduled for] working with students. The teachers can have me do whatever that they need me to do. I can do a "re-teach" or work with individual students.*

Less frequently, the principal led instruction, either by taking regular responsibility for a class or by occasionally modeling a lesson for the teacher. The few principals who delivered instruction to students in these ways noted the opportunity to sense student needs, stay connected to the instructional realities of the classroom, develop and share instructional strategies, and build credibility with teachers as an instructional leader:

Principal: *I do a lot more teaching now. I work with kids and I am often modeling for teachers. I teach two guided reading groups.... This started this year and I attribute it to the SAM focus on instruction. It enables me to teach, since I have more time for instruction.... But it is worth it because I can practice and try new stuff in the classroom regularly, and then I share with teachers. Plus, it helps teachers see you as a colleague.*

Principal: *I teach one hour of African American history every day.... Every time I teach kids, I learn what is effective, how I can teach teachers, do professional development. I love teaching. This is my first year teaching this class. The SAMs thing empowered me to do it. It gave me a better sense of control over my time.*

Teacher: *This year she is teaching one class. In my opinion that is her biggest strength – that she is hands-on. That she is not cloistered away somewhere. I think it is important because of the image it gives to the faculty. The kids see that as someone who is working and caring. Someone who sits in the office, that is meaningless to them.*

Several principals spoke of regularly meeting one-on-one with students, such as at lunch time, to talk about their learning and to build relationships. One did this daily, another had

coordinated with another instructional leader in the school to meet with all students in two grades about assessment results and goals:

Teacher: *[The principal and instructional specialist] have attempted to meet with each child in grades four and five to talk about how they did on the end-of-year test from last year. They encourage goal setting and talk with the students individually about how to do better. [They are] trying for all fourth- and fifth-graders. Last year, he was always pulled out. He couldn't have done this in the past.*

One principal maintained his role in student discipline. Disagreeing with the SAM project's categorization of discipline as a management task, he felt discipline was part of his role as leader in the school:

Principal: *I take control of the discipline. Discipline is not about punishment. It is about relationships with kids and understanding them and their issues. I don't want to make it a managerial issue. [The SAM] will take over some of them, but I take that because that is building relationships with kids and teachers.... If there is an issue with the student, we will deal with it so that the teacher can keep on teaching.... I have reduced suspensions by 60 percent and reduced referrals by 80 percent.*

Principal Interactions with Parents

When asked about their interactions with parents, principals most often spoke first of whether the parents were “on board” with the SAM position at the school. At start-up, schools typically made an effort to educate parents about the SAM role and how they could expect to communicate with the administration.

In describing the roles to parents, some principals purposefully delineated between instruction and discipline, working to define the principal as the school's instructional leader. As the SAM spent more time talking with parents, the principal spent less time talking with them on matters that were not serious or instructionally related:

Principal: *Parents now know that they deal with me instructionally. They ask how is so-and-so is doing. I could say, “From my observations in the classroom, she is doing fine. If you have questions about discipline, then you need to talk to [the SAM].” The parents are seeing me more in an instructional role.*

Principal: *Most everything that I talk to parents about is academics.... The only time that I probably deal with parents regarding discipline is if they're concerned that their children's behavior is interfering with their academics or if they are having a disagreement with the teacher.*

A few principals struggled with the loss of opportunities to develop relationships with parents when they were often taken out of the communication loop. This was a trade-off that most, but not all, principals accepted:

Principal: *This is a negative thing with SAMs. Before SAMs, I had contact with parents. There was a relationship there. When SAMs came in, that piece was lost. Now administrators have little contact. Before, I would know the parents and they would know me. That relationship didn't build.*

Summary and Conclusions

In its logic model, the National SAM Project offered a vision of unleashing principals' skills as instructional leaders and thereby transforming their schools' organizational health, classroom instruction, and ultimately student achievement. Our survey and interviews demonstrated that principals brought to the project an intention of engaging more actively in instructional leadership.

Most of the principals we interviewed emphasized a general notion of "getting out of the office" and "being more visible" in classrooms and around the building, a notion that had been encouraged through their participation in the SAM project. SAMs and teachers in most schools we visited said that the project had enabled the principal to spend more time in classrooms.

The instructional descriptor called, "observations, walkthroughs," along with many school districts' encouragement for principals to use standard observation protocols in classrooms, offered principals incentives to increase their instructional time through brief classroom visits. On average, after a year in the project, principals were spending about four hours a week observing classrooms.

Other leadership behaviors remained a challenge for a number of participating principals. In interviews, principals said that coaching teachers on their instruction was more difficult than observing classrooms, and indeed the average time they spent giving face-to-face feedback increased only to about one hour a week after a year in the SAM project, or one-fourth of the amount of time they spent on observations. Moreover, we found only a handful of principals who made a point of meeting regularly with teachers in groups for ongoing discussion of teaching and learning.

These findings suggest that, while the SAM project was realizing its aim of shifting principals' time into instructional leadership activities, principals could benefit from more support in broadening their repertoire as leaders. The brief classroom observations that most principals carried out could effectively heighten teachers' compliance with readily observable behaviors such as writing the day's objective on the board, but they seemed to have limited power to transform organizational processes or overall instruction. To live up to a more ambitious vision of leadership, principals would need more support and skill-building than the SAM project had been designed to provide. Although we visited some principals who were thoughtfully engaged in carrying out such a vision and were glad not to be distracted by routine management work, the SAM project had not been structured to cultivate the knowledge and skills that these principals exercised as instructional leaders.

5. SAMs

The key function of a SAM, according to project literature, is to meet daily with the principal about his or her time use and to shift managerial duties to others. The SAM's reflective questioning about time use is expected to help principals' efforts to direct their focus and efforts toward instructional leadership.

This chapter details how these core ideas have played out in the field by chronicling the many different ways districts, schools, and principals have worked with the SAMs. In addition to taking a close look at who SAMs are and what they do inside their schools, this chapter also describes differences among SAM models, identifies factors that influence SAM responsibilities, and examines conditions that appear to influence SAMs' approaches to increasing principals' instructional time.

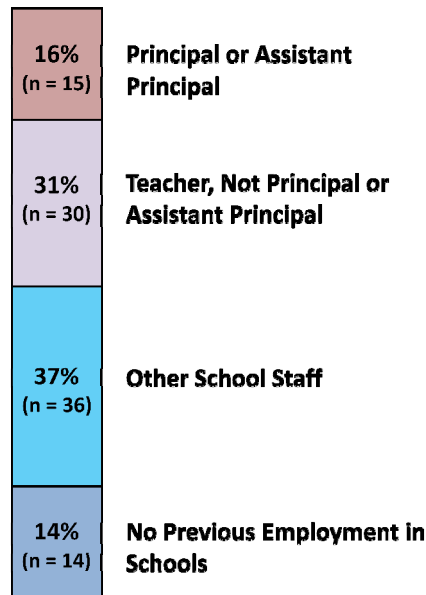
Who Were the SAMs?

A SAM could have been a retired principal or current assistant principal, a teacher interested in school administration, a secretary or office manager, or a career-changer with no previous experience in schools. He or she might have expected to remain in the SAM position for years, or might have viewed it as a stepping stone to a principalship. Here we describe the considerable variation found in SAMs' career histories, their experience within the school system, and their professional aspirations.

Career Histories

We grouped the SAMs into four mutually exclusive categories of career histories inside or outside schools: those who had been a principal or assistant principal; those who had been a teacher but not a principal or assistant principal; those who had been a school secretary, instructional aide, or other school support staff but not a teacher, principal, or assistant principal; and those who had not previously worked in a school. A plurality of SAMs responding to the November 2008 survey (37 percent) said they had been employed as "other school staff" (Exhibit 5-1). Almost as many (31 percent) had been teachers. Just 14 percent had had no previous employment in schools, although this had been the career history of the three pilot SAMs in Louisville. A similar number, 16 percent, were at the other extreme in their school-based experience: they had been principals in the past, or they were assistant principals either previously or at the same time as they held the SAM position.

**Exhibit 5-1: Distribution of Survey Respondents by Previous Employment
(n=95)**



Source: Survey of SAMs.

Exhibit reads: Sixteen percent of SAMs responding to the survey indicated that they had been either a principal or assistant principal prior to becoming a SAM.

Other school staff. Thirty-seven percent of SAMs surveyed had worked as school support staff. These SAMs had been or continued to work as secretaries, bookkeepers, instructional aides, and tutors. While some were new to the school in which they worked as the SAM (Model 1) or dropped all of their former duties to take on SAM responsibilities (Model 2), many of them continued to perform some or most of their previous duties along with SAM responsibilities (Model 3):

SAM: Before [I was a SAM], I was a secretary at a high school. Before that, I was in personnel with the Assistant Superintendent's Division for Instruction for some years.... I've been with the school board for 16 years.

SAM: I was a clerk in the reading department of a school. I was coming back to the school. I worked as a bookkeeper for seven and a half years.

Principal: [The SAM] was already working as my business manager for one year before becoming my SAM.

Teachers. Thirty-one percent of SAMs previously worked as teachers. They included SAMs who were interested in changing positions, or lead teachers being groomed and trained as administrators:

SAM: *[Before I took the SAM position] I was working at a school. I taught biology. I [had] my administrator's degree, and I wanted administration experience. The description that they put out - the job really fitted me. Someone who has management skills, able to work with others well, just generally someone who can organize another individual.*

Principal: *My SAM was a lead teacher in the school before he became the SAM. He basically had the role of AP when he became the SAM in October 2007.*

Principals and assistant principals. Sixteen percent of SAMs were either former principals or current or former assistant principals. For some assistant principals, the SAM designation was largely nominal, bringing few changes in their daily responsibilities:

Principal: *He was already here as an AP when I came to the building. ... The [district] made the decision that at the middle school and high school level the SAM would be an AP.*

Several sites hired previously retired principals as their SAMs. Recognizing the capabilities they developed in their experience as principals, some districts recruited them for the SAM position:

Principal: *When [the other participating principal] and I went through the interview process, I liked the fact that [the SAM I selected] had been a former principal. She wouldn't shy away from discipline.*

No previous employment in schools. The SAMs with no previous employment in schools had a variety of backgrounds, including many with business experience, but also including a pastor, a retired colonel, and an individual who had worked for AmeriCorps.

SAMs' Career Aspirations

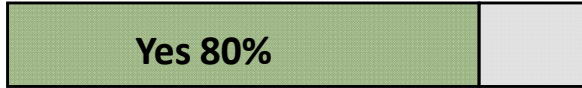
Most SAMs reported that they wanted to continue working in the education sector. Eighty percent of SAMs surveyed thought they would be working in a school in five years, while 16 percent were unsure. Thirty-five percent thought they would like to be a principal or assistant principal, while 24 percent were unsure (Exhibit 5-2).

Some saw the SAM position as a stepping stone to teaching or administration. In Iowa, for example, districts have treated the position as a training ground for aspiring principals. And even in a state that has not systematically encouraged SAMs to move into administration, a SAM said:

SAM: *I could see doing this for the next year or two. I want to take what I learned in this role and move higher in the district. Hey, even maybe go back and get certification as a teacher. I'm already seeing that administration piece. I see myself in this role for a couple of years.*

**Exhibit 5-2: Professional Aspirations of Survey Respondents
(n=89)**

SAM sees self working in a school in 5 years



SAM wants to be an assistant principal or principal



Source: Survey of SAMs.

Exhibit reads: Eighty percent of responding SAMs indicated that they see themselves working in a school five years from now.

At least one SAM complained, however, that there was little mobility within the position:

SAM: Also, for a SAM, there's a ceiling. I'm 27, and I've been a SAM for two years. There's no mobility upwards.

Some individuals who served as SAMs while also serving as assistant principals said that they viewed the SAM position as a possible impediment to their career progress toward a principalship. They felt that the SAM's clerical responsibilities (especially maintaining TimeTrack) took time that they would otherwise spend honing their skills in instructional leadership.

Thus, the SAM position represented a mixed picture for the career hopes of its incumbents. For some, it was a step up in responsibilities within a school—and a school was the workplace of choice for 80 percent of SAMs. Among those who aspired to be principals, constituting about one-third of the SAMs, it might appear to offer a good path to that role or to sidetrack them from that path.

The SAM Hiring Process

Among principals who provided a survey response about the hiring process, 90 percent indicated that they had some say in the selection of the SAM. Most (59 percent) made a selection from a pool of applicants, sometimes in conjunction with other decisionmakers (e.g.,

district staff or a school site council). A sizable proportion, 31 percent, designated a SAM, generally from within the building, without a formal application process (Exhibit 5-3).

**Exhibit 5-3: The Principal’s Role in Selecting the SAM
(n=98)**

Which statement best describes your role in selecting the current SAM?	
Participated in selecting the SAM from a pool of applicants	59%
Selected the SAM without an application process	31%
Had a SAM assigned or already in place	10%

Source: Survey of principals.

Exhibit reads: Fifty-nine percent of responding principals indicated that they selected the SAM from a pool of applicants. Thirty-one percent of principals selected the SAM outside of a formal application process.

Although only 10 percent of principals had no say in SAM hiring, the fact that this happens at all is noteworthy in a project that depends upon a close working relationship between the SAM and the principal. It is likely to happen more often as time passes: when a new principal arrives in a school where a SAM has been working for some years, the new principal will have to choose either to continue working with that SAM or to make a potentially disruptive change. We did not hear from districts that they had thought ahead to the type of succession planning that would ease these transitions.

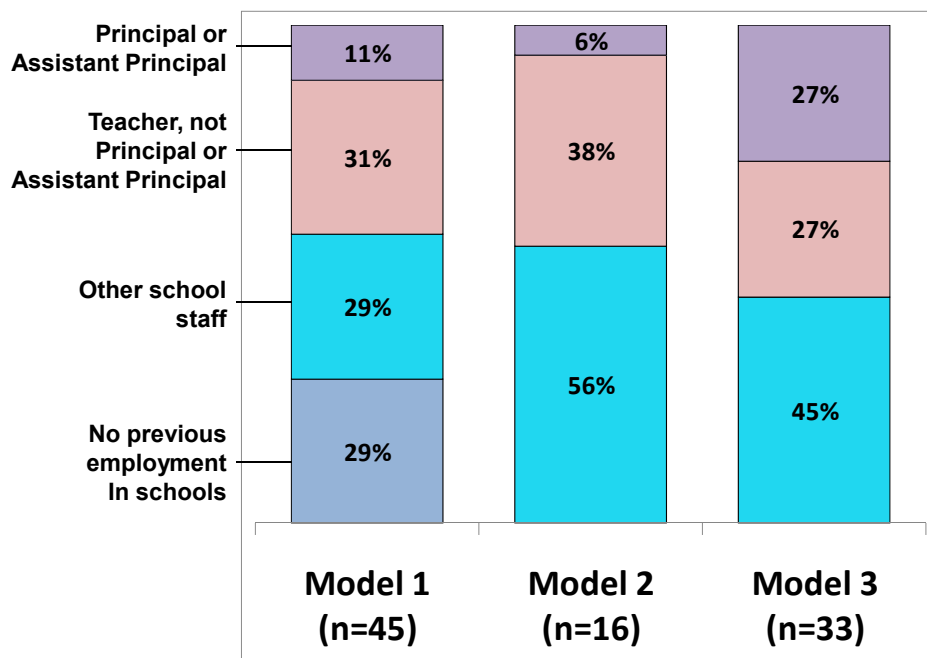
We found differences in the hiring and selection process depending on SAM model (Exhibit 5-4). The background of SAMs in each model is described in detail below.

Hiring Model 1 SAMs

Model 1 SAMs were new hires who came from a wide range of career backgrounds, with roughly equal numbers having worked as teachers, as other school staff, and outside schools. A handful had been principals or assistant principals in other schools.

The project did not place strict guidelines on SAM background and qualifications. Minimum qualifications identified by some participating districts included a bachelor’s degree, experience in public school or a business, and experience in supervision/administration and communication systems. Job postings were placed in district websites and newsletters.

Exhibit 5-4: SAM Previous Employment by SAM Model



Source: Survey of SAMs.

Exhibit reads: Eleven percent of Model 1 SAMs had experience either as a principal or a assistant principal. Six percent of Model 2 SAMs had this experience and 27 percent of Model 3 SAMs had this experience.

Generally, schools had discretion over final hiring decisions. In most cases, SAMs went through an open selection process in which they applied for the position, interviewed, and carried out tasks to demonstrate their skills. The district, sometimes in conjunction with the SAM project personnel—including the National SAMs Project Director Mark Shellinger in earlier years of the project—often played a screening role by vetting applicants and developing a pool of SAM candidates for principals’ consideration:

SAM: There was a process of filling out an application, [meeting] with the director of human resources, turn[ing] in references, interviewing with all the principals whom I would be working with and the district coordinator. I believe they interviewed 10 like this, plus there were other applicants, so they put a lot into the hiring...

SAM: It was a long and rigorous process. We started at 6 and finished at 9:30. Mark said the SAMs applying had to complete tasks, there were roundtables with principals, school scenarios and how to handle the scenarios. We had to type a letter to parents about behavior and the grading process. Those of us who met the score went in a bucket to the principals. I only interviewed at two schools.

Principals, often with permission of their school-based committees, selected the SAMs:

Principal: *We had a list of candidates that had applied. We got a list from the district as a school selected for the SAMs. We got names and went through an interview process. I was part of that process. I was one who gave the most feedback about whether I could work with that person.*

Principal: *There were 30 applicants and we narrowed that down to eight people. Then began the interview process. [I was] looking for somebody that had a good head on their shoulders and could work with people...[someone who would] know how to supervise an organization and have insight and experience with the supervision of employees. [The SAM] had that with background in human resources and banking... Having that insight on things has paid off time and time again.*

Selecting Model 2 SAMs, and Converting an Existing Position

With Model 2 SAMs, a person already in the school was singled out to change positions and become a SAM. Fifty-five percent of Model 2 SAMs gave up non-teaching positions in the school, often as secretaries or bookkeepers; one had been the security officer assigned to the school. Another sizable group, 38 percent of Model 2 SAMs, had been teachers.

Often the Model 2 SAM was a person the principal had worked with for some time, or someone whose specific skills were seen as a good fit for the job:

SAM: *My boss was like, "I want you to be my SAM." [The position] tied in with what I was doing already. I was doing secretarial work about a year and a half beforehand.*

SAM: *I was a secretary at [the principal's] old school.... I already worked with the principal for five years and knew the good and the faults. That helped with communication, which is a big key.... We were comfortable.*

Selecting Model 3 SAMs, and (Sometimes) Redesigning an Existing Position

Like Model 2 SAMs, Model 3 SAMs continued as staff members in their school. The difference was that they retained some or all of their previous responsibilities while taking on SAM duties. Almost half of Model 3 SAMs were secretaries and other administrative staff; the others were evenly divided between assistant principals and teachers.

The National SAM Project did not require that Model 3 SAMs take on additional responsibilities beyond meeting with the principal about his or her time use. And, in a majority of the Model 3 schools we visited, designation as a SAM brought a minimal change in staffers' daily work. SAMs continued to serve as the assistant principals, secretaries, and bookkeepers in their schools but held daily meetings with their principals:

Principal: *What are [the SAM's] new responsibilities? TimeTrack. Then meeting with me. We never did that before.... She is only doing 25 percent specific SAM stuff. Going over my schedule, putting it into the system. [It's] not the same model as in other places. She is not a dedicated SAM.*

SAM: *I became a SAM because the principal asked me. I am still full time as a disabilities resource teacher, so this is an add-on I am doing for the principal.*

In some cases, however, Model 3 SAMs took on different responsibilities beyond daily meetings. Examples included school support staff who took over areas such as transportation, facilities, and student supervision.

SAM: *Have I taken on new functions day-to-day? We had an assistant principal that really dealt with discipline and dealt with security issues. I focused on the business part. When she retired, the [principal] came [into the school]..... All of those responsibilities became mine also. Attendance stuff, security, lunchroom engineer, and so yes, [I have taken on more responsibilities].*

What Did the SAMs Do?

Several tasks recurred in the SAM position across participating schools:

- Daily meetings with the principal
- Student discipline and student supervision
- Facilities management
- Communication with parents and others
- Supervision of classified staff
- Office work

This section describes how each of these tasks was carried out in the schools visited, noting some of the important types of variation observed. Later sections in this chapter explore in more depth the variation and the reasons behind it.

Daily Meeting

A core element of the National SAM Project was the daily meeting between the principal and the SAM. For schools implementing Model 3, this was the only task officially required of SAMs. In the project literature, the meeting was portrayed as an in-depth discussion of the principal's use of time, intended to refocus him or her on devoting more time to instructional tasks. Thus, we investigated not only the frequency and duration of these meetings, but also their content and the principal/SAM dynamics at play in them.

All of the SAM/principal teams were aware of the requirement that they hold a daily meeting. In the majority of cases, SAMs indicated on the survey and in interviews that they met daily, sometimes several times a day. Thirty-five percent of SAMs reported that the daily

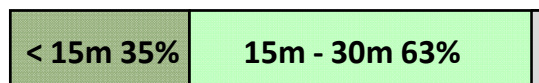
meeting lasted fewer than 15 minutes; 63 percent reported that this meeting lasted between 15 and 30 minutes (Exhibit 5-5).

Exhibit 5-5: Frequency and Length of Daily Meeting (n=97)

So far this school year, approximately how often have you met?



Typically, how long do these meetings last?



Source: Survey of SAMs.

Exhibit reads: Seventy-nine percent of SAMs indicated that they met with the principal either daily or almost daily.

As respondents described the meetings in interviews, most of the meetings were informal. Their length varied:

SAM: *More often, it is lots of walk down the hall and talk.*

Principal: *Sometimes it's a five-minute meeting and sometimes it is 30 minutes.*

In some cases, the meetings happened at different times of the day depending on need and circumstances. In others, the meetings were scheduled at a regular time during the day, such as in the morning before students arrived, at the end of the day, or during cafeteria duty:

SAM: *We meet at some point every day. It just depends on for what reason. How his day is right now.*

Some respondents mentioned mixing up informal short daily meetings with more formal, usually less frequent, scheduled meetings:

SAM: *We're always in communication. We do have a formal meeting, not every day.*

Principal: *We talk daily to quickly touch base but at least formally once a week for sure.*

What did principals and SAMs talk about in their daily meetings? All SAMs reported discussing the principal's use of time in one way or another. However, in the plurality of cases, SAMs and principals described their daily meetings as a means of addressing immediate concerns, talking about the day's priorities, and delegating tasks that the principal would like done. Despite encouragement from the National SAM Project and state coordinators for reflective questioning, a coaching interaction between the SAM and the principal was not the usual practice. There were instances of SAMs, with the aid of TimeTrack, coaching and gently guiding their principals into spending more time on specific instructional tasks, but in many schools visited, it was clear that this simply did not happen. One SAM who had been on the job for six months said he had heard about a more structured coaching and questioning relationship in other sites, but that he and his principal were not taking that approach:

SAM: I understand there's a huge binder and it's very specific on how you conduct an interview with the principal. [But at our school], it's very casual. We're doing it differently.

As principals and SAMs described their daily meetings, their discussions could be grouped into four relatively distinct categories. These four types of interactions were all discussions about time use and had ramifications for the principals' behavior. However, the nature and quality of these interactions varied greatly. We describe them here in order of the frequency with which we found them in our fieldwork.

Daily Meeting #1: "What's up? What can I do for you? Can you take care of this?"

This type of meeting was the one most frequently described in the schools we visited. It was a meeting about school management in which the principal and SAM might discuss parent or discipline issues, upcoming events for the day, or what specific tasks the SAM could take on. The SAM might offer to carry out needed tasks, and the principal might delegate work during this type of meeting; however, the focus was on what had to happen in the school, not on the principal's ongoing effort to reshape his or her time use:

Principal: We would look at the calendar, go over day-to-day stuff. She checks in to see if there is anything she can take off my plate.

Principal: We make an attempt to do it every day. Usually, I would say, "Can you take care of this?" We try to meet once or twice a day.

Principal: With my SAM, [the daily meeting] is more about talking about how discipline should be handled and how we are working together to get the job done.... [H]e comes in to say, "What can I do for you so that you can do things in your calendar?"

Thus, in most of our interviews, principals and SAMs described their daily meetings as Type #1 in which principals and SAMs discussed issues that had come up and worked through the principal's plan for the day, often dividing tasks between the two of them.

Daily Meeting #2: "We have to do TimeTrack." Because principals and SAMs had agreed to use TimeTrack, they met to coordinate time use as part of this required process.

Interviewees also commonly mentioned Type #2 daily meetings in which they reconciled the principal's schedule with actual time use via TimeTrack. In most instances (although not all), this was described as a procedural exercise, devoid of any questioning or coaching about trends in the principal's time use, as illustrated by the following quotes:

SAM: *[The principal] likes to initially do [her schedule] on her own. We might look at it and make adjustments together at the end of the week. To be honest with you, have we sat down and analyzed the data? We haven't.*

SAM: *[The principal] will print out a rough draft of his calendar from Outlook, and on Monday I add into TimeTrack. So we start each week with TimeTrack filled in based on his calendar. Then I update it daily. I tweak what we had scheduled with the realities of the day. After I enter, about weekly I will print out a calendar and put it in his box to look at.*

Daily Meeting #3: "Principal, follow your schedule. Stay on task." Some principals and SAMs had developed a style of interaction in which the SAM often reminded the principal to adhere to a planned schedule. (Perhaps coincidentally or perhaps significantly, all the examples shown here were Model 3 schools with the same Time Change Coach.) With Type #3 meetings, principals were thinking about their time use – mainly that they should stay on task. However, in these cases SAMs did not describe instances of coaching interactions in which they prompted principals to reflect on ways of altering their time use:

SAM: *Sometimes you have to go behind people and remind them. Otherwise it might not get done.*

Interviewer: *Are there things you push her to do?*

SAM: *Mostly to stick to the calendar. "You said you were going to be here." But then other things happen.*

Principal: *She manages me. She does the total calendar.... I have asked her to be more hard headed than me, so she'll come in and tell me, "You have to do this. This is what you have to do right now." We've developed a plan.... Really it's time management on a day to day basis.*

Interviewer: *He's the boss but you're telling him what to do?*

SAM: *He's the boss but I'm telling him, encouraging him. I think we have that kind of relationship. [I tell him], "You got me into this project and I'm just doing what I was told I was supposed to do." He's my boss. I give him his schedule. I tell him where he's going and what he should be doing. He knows it's important.... I know when I'm nagging too much and I know when to back off.*

Daily Meeting #4: "Do you think you're spending enough time on instruction?"

Finally, instances did exist of principal/SAM teams who characterized their daily meetings as coaching interactions. Reflective questioning for the principal about time use were functions of the daily meetings mentioned by a small number of SAMs and principals:

Principal: *[The SAM has] the power to question the principal. This doesn't always make me happy, but it ensures the change is positive.... When we agree on something she will hold me to it, including when it was originally my idea. She asks the hard questions that keep me focused on what I need and want to be focused on. Most principals never have someone like this. It is a unique role.*

Why weren't there more Type #4 meetings? There were several hurdles that impeded Type #4 daily meetings. One was the inherent tensions in the working relationship of SAMs and principals. Few SAM-principal partnerships were structured for the SAM to substantially coach the principal. Principals held positional authority as SAMs' bosses, which made coaching and criticism potentially difficult and uncomfortable. Furthermore, SAMs were often new to the world of schools or new to positions of authority:

Principal: *[Does the SAM] help keep tabs on [my] schedule and tell me what to do? It has gotten to that. I had to tell her to stop looking at me **as her boss** and tell me "Aren't you supposed to be in the classroom? Go!"*

Principal: *We are still working on it. I want her to get on me. But she is really nice! I have other folks who like to boss me around, and they don't mind that. She is trying to get accustomed to [bossing] me around.*

SAM: *I'll tell her that she hasn't been in so and so's classroom.... We are limited in what we can and can't do. I can't tell her, "You gotta go to___."*

Coaching conversations were also difficult when principals had a firm vision of what they wanted to do. Principals who "knew" how to spend their time generally did not value or welcome conversations about their time use:

SAM: *I don't do it a lot, [talk with the principal about her data]. She is spending a lot of time with the intermediates [grades 3 through 5] because they are the testing grade. She is very – she knows when she has to work with other teachers.... She is very self-motivated with her schedule. I don't do a lot with it.*

Principal: *She does not control my calendar. I know where I want to go.*

In addition, the project's tools and infrastructure did not necessarily provide effective support for more reflective and in-depth coaching. The mechanics of TimeTrack often left little time for more substantive discussion; principals and SAMs were not systematically given the in-depth understanding of the descriptors that would help them use the TimeTrack data for reflection; and in some states SAMs' training and Time Change Coaching did not specifically emphasize a coaching role for the SAM.

Other Responsibilities

Exhibit 5-6 below shows the SAMs' responses to the survey when asked what responsibilities were formally assigned to them as a SAM. The discussion that follows describes these specific responsibilities in the broader school context.

**Exhibit 5-6: Responsibilities of SAM Survey Respondents
(n=97)**

Responsibility	Percent of SAMs
Interacting with parents	87%
Interacting with district central office staff	83%
Managing school facilities	76%
Managing non-teaching staff (e.g., office staff, custodians, cafeteria workers, etc.)	74%
Supervising students (e.g., daily arrival/dismissal, lunch duties)	73%
Handling routine student discipline	70%
Creating the principal's schedule	47%
Keeping records (e.g., student attendance data, free-lunch data, etc.)	43%
Managing the school budget (e.g., purchasing, account management, bookkeeping)	34%

Source: Survey of SAMs.

Exhibit reads: Eighty-seven percent of SAMs reported that one of their responsibilities was interacting with parents.

Communication. SAMs performed some communication roles. Some SAMs sorted, filtered, intercepted, and responded to visits, phone calls, email, and letters from parents, central office, and other community members. On the survey, 87 percent of SAMs reported taking responsibility for working with parents, and 83 percent reported taking responsibility for working with the central office. Some SAMs also managed intra-school communication and managed daily announcements. Some served as a liaison between the principal and the teaching staff on non-instructional matters; they asked staff questions, provided answers on request, and addressed requests unrelated to instruction, such as paperwork or payroll.

Facilities and building management. Seventy-six percent of SAMs had roles in facilities and building management in their schools; our visits indicated that some had taken over these functions entirely. The tasks included managing the school grounds, identifying and processing repairs (leaks, toilets), and overseeing food service and security.

Many SAMs also took on tasks related to scheduling special events and facilities use, essentially managing who got access to which spaces. These events included pep rallies and assemblies, staff days, professional development events, and field trips.

Supervising classified staff. Seventy-four percent of SAMs took responsibility for supervising classified staff. These tasks included evaluating and hiring new staff. Many also evaluated the administrative staff. SAMs also delegated some tasks to other staffers such as custodians, food service staff, and bus drivers.

Student supervision and student discipline. Seventy-three percent of SAMs handled student supervision. This included overseeing student arrivals and pick-ups, meeting and greeting students and parents, covering classrooms for teachers, monitoring hallways, and observing lunch and recess.

SAMs described their work in student discipline, which was an area of responsibility for 70 percent of SAMs, as incorporating many tasks. They included paperwork on recording tardies, detentions, suspensions, as well as recording office and bus referrals. Tasks also included holding conversations with students, teachers, and parents about disciplinary incidents and consequences. These conversations varied in length depending on the severity of the action. SAMs varied in the proportion of time they spend on discipline; some spent all day on it, some took on minor discipline problems from time to time, some did not handle discipline at all.

Purchasing and budget. A number of SAMs handled things like purchase orders, bookkeeping, and payroll. About one-third had substantive responsibility over budget, but principals often were reluctant to cede that responsibility to SAMs.

Ad hoc assignments. Finally, most SAMs took on many miscellaneous tasks as requested by the principal. Often these requests pertained to atypical events and needs that required immediate attention.

Why Did SAM Responsibilities Vary?

Principal: *Our school is just a different animal. That SAM [at another school] won't do what our SAM does.*

This statement from a principal highlights the flexibility of the SAM position across schools. Here, we describe and analyze the variation observed in SAMs' work across schools, identifying reasons for the adaptations and adjustments that we found in the field. The SAM model was one source of variation, but far from the only one. Factors that greatly influenced a SAM's work could be found in the school, the principal, the SAM himself or herself, the district, and the school community. An important factor, too, was the passage of time, as SAMs and those around them grew accustomed to the SAM role, renegotiated it, and often broadened it over time.

Model 3 versus Models 1 and 2

Model 3 SAMs were likely to continue performing their accustomed duties. Secretaries continued handling scheduling, communication, and office work. Business managers continued handling budget and finance. Assistant principals continued handling their many different duties, including discipline. These became SAM responsibilities in the sense that the individual carrying them out had been newly designated as a SAM, but they did not reflect a change in the division of managerial work in the school.

In Model 3 schools, the teachers we interviewed were sometimes not aware of the SAM position in their school:

Interviewer: *Do you know who the SAM is in this school?*

Teacher: *No. I didn't know there was one. I don't know what a SAM is.*

Teacher: *I knew she had some kind of position in between, I didn't know the title until I got the email about this interview.*

Under Models 1 and 2, where a new division of labor was made possible by the addition of staffing capacity, principals described designing a role tailored to their SAM's background and strengths. For example, the SAMs we interviewed who have taken over discipline included a colonel, a pastor, a police officer, and a retired principal.

In the sections below, where we discuss other factors that affected the SAMs' responsibilities, the examples are drawn from schools using Models 1 and 2 unless otherwise noted. It was primarily in these schools that the question of SAM assignments, other than maintaining TimeTrack, came up.

Needs and Conditions of the School

Schools had different needs and challenges. Some schools faced tremendous achievement gaps, were under considerable pressure to improve, and were pursuing numerous curricular and instructional initiatives with hopes of turning their situations around. Some schools were undergoing physical change and faced challenges related to renovation and expansion. Some schools had discipline and behavioral problems that disrupted the work of students, teachers, and administrators. Some were coping with an influx of new teachers.

These different school conditions placed different priorities on principals, with consequences for the operation of the SAM project in the school. Consider the following three schools and the unique challenges their principals faced:

“The Titanic.” This was one of the lowest performing elementary schools in the state. Prior to the arrival of its current principal, the school's recent history had been marked with chronically low student performance, an astonishing record of principal turnover, and increasingly poor relations with parents and the community. The principal said:

When I came into [the school], they had had four principals in the prior year. The principal left in September, then there were three other principals and an intern. The school was in disrepair. ... The school was so dysfunctional that it was spiraling out of control. It was violent. It was contentious with the community. It was a place with teacher complacency, a culture of dysfunction. I have been in lots of low performing schools.... I have never seen a school in such dismay. It was like the Titanic. That required a great deal of energy on my part and a time commitment on a lot of different areas... One minute I will be dealing with a parent who is calling everyone F-ers. But they were yelling and screaming, and I would be back in here trying to get into the classroom with an incompetent teacher and get an evaluation system in place...Look at me. This has been the morning for me. I'm sweating.

There is such an overflow of responsibility when a school is in transition. Talk about sweating. Thank God [the SAM] is here. In that transition period, it has required a great deal of the reactionary rather than the proactive approach. My leadership style is to be proactive and lead the school to what it needs to be.

We have an instructional coaching team in place that addresses problems and looks at initiatives I want to start before I present it to the faculty. I believe in being proactive. However, a school in transition has a great number of issues that have to be dealt with immediately.

[The SAM] deals with the infrastructure issues. I need materials. I want Smartboards and document machines. I am selling that to them and modeling that for them. She takes care of purchase orders. She knows how to make that happen. She talks to the secretaries. She plans ahead for that during the year.

Renovation. A second school faced different and non-trivial challenges related to the physical renovation of its facilities:

Principal: Last year, we were getting ready to be renovated. [The SAM] coordinated the whole thing. We had to move all the materials out of the building and then move it back in 90 degree weather! She also met with contractors and sat in on weekly meetings with contractors and then she coordinated with the custodial crew. She coordinated the whole thing to get us moved out and moved back in. She's been a Godsend.

Discipline challenges and new teachers. A third school was also undergoing transition, but of still another kind. Its two major challenges concerned discipline problems in the school and the induction and training of a number of new staff. Veteran teachers described the challenges in their school:

Teacher: I've been here for five administrations.... We did not have as many discipline problems as we do now.

Teacher: The biggest thing is that our principal was bombarded with behavior. She was adjusting to being a new principal. A lot of time, you were talking to her about behavior

and curriculum. She had to deal with bus referral and student issues.... It's hard to be productive academically when you have to deal with discipline constantly.

Teachers noted the challenges posed by discipline problems and principal transition. The principal of the school reflected on her interest in hiring a SAM and outlines her priorities:

It was about creating instructional time. I had to think about how I am spending my time. And most of my time was dealing with parents and discipline. I was looking for someone who is able to deal with conflict resolution and a mentor type of person who would do well with students, [someone] who can redirect them.

The most important thing to me is the ability to spend quality time with the teaching staff. We have 12 new staff. The thing this year is that I spend more time with the new staff. It's important to talk about the new programs. This year, we have a new math program. To have conversations about this program and what is working, I wouldn't have had that time. "How can we at this grade level make this minor adjustment or major adjustment to make this program more effective in our school and be able to communicate that to the district?"

How school conditions shaped priorities and SAM work. As these vignettes show, different school conditions lent urgency and importance to different tasks. The "Titanic" school required the principal to develop, implement, and assess an array of curricular and instructional initiatives while attempting to reshape the culture of the school and its relationship with the community. The school undergoing renovation faced challenges of coordinating with contractors, facility closures, and classroom reassignments. The third school had a principal still learning the ropes, disciplinary problems that disrupted teaching and learning, and a cohort of new teachers still learning their craft.

These vignettes also show the different responsibilities that SAMs took on in their schools. The first handled the paperwork and other logistical tasks to put the principal's plan in place. The second coordinated the school's renovation. The third primarily handled discipline in the school. In short, school conditions affected what the principal did, which in turn helped determine what tasks and areas of responsibility the principal delegated to the SAM.

The Principal's Skills, Leadership Style, and View of the SAM Position

Principals naturally varied in their skills and experiences. And, partly because of the great amount of adaptation allowed in the SAM project, they varied in their interest in and view of the SAM position. Some principals had a clear strategic vision for their school, and some had skills and experience as instructional leaders. Some principals knew how to manage their time, and reflected on how they spend their time and how they wanted to spend their time; others were less skilled and reflective with regard to time use. Some principals had difficulty ceding control. Most principals volunteered for the SAM project, but some had little or no choice in the matter. All of these characteristics and conditions had major effects on a SAM's work.

Interest and skills in instructional leadership. The principal's desire to become an instructional leader and his or her knowledge of which responsibilities to delegate and which new responsibilities to take on—all these played a role in determining what duties the SAM gained. The following quote came from a principal who embraced a shift to an instructional leadership role:

Principal: *I got my degree in instructional leadership. My first year of being a principal, I was far from [being an instructional leader]. I was Mr. Cop. I was always dealing with the new case. Who did it? I spent all my time investigating the most insane things. The next year I thought I'm better, I'll know more. But that didn't happen.... [T]o me, I was so far from being an instructional leader. The SAM's position allows me to deal with things that have a greater impact on student achievement. Not things that are more important, because if we didn't take care of discipline or building issues, that would be a problem for instruction. But the biggest thing is increasing my time with teachers.*

Leadership style. Many principals were reluctant to cede responsibility. A secretary and a principal (in different schools) made the following comments:

Secretary: *Just knowing him, he ... is not using the SAM to what he could use her for. There are times that I think that she might take care of something – not always behavior but like small things most of the time. He shouldn't deal with the small stuff. He should be down in the classroom ... There are small things that the SAM can take care of.*

Principal: *Personally, the only difficulty would be that first couple of years. I had difficulty in delegating responsibility.... That is the biggest challenge, delegating responsibility.*

Vision for the SAM position. Ultimately, SAMs performed whatever tasks the principal assigned to them. What principals wanted to do and how they wanted to work with a SAM greatly affected what SAMs did:

SAM: *When I came in, I kind of knew the expectations. It was discipline. I heard it over and over.*

Principal: *There are some things I won't let go of and won't turn over to her. The budget, for example, there's no way I'm not going to do my budget and staffing. Those things I haven't turned over.*

Level of interest in the project. If the principal had only limited interest in working with a SAM, the SAM had little to do. While most of the principals surveyed and interviewed saw merit in the project and voluntarily chose to participate, we found some exceptions:

Principal: *The decision was made for me prior to me accepting the building principal position.*

Model 3 SAM: *There was no aspect of volunteering. [In the] summer, our superintendent was already about this project. He expressed interest in signing us up to do it. We attended [the workshop] in August where they presented SAMs. It was told to us then that we were going to be on board.*

In two different cases that we heard about second-hand, while onsite in nearby schools, the principal's lack of interest in working with a SAM was said to have led to a SAM's resignation:

SAM: *You have one SAM who left because their principal wanted to run everything. As this principal said, "I didn't become a principal to hand it over to someone else." The SAM had nothing to do. They didn't really want a SAM; they were given a SAM.*

The District's Vision for the SAM Position

Districts could empower SAMs in their role but instead often limited the SAMs' role. The following examples illustrate how a high level of district support contributed to the SAMs' feeling of being valuable members of a team:

SAM: *What I like about the central office is that they respect my opinion or respect my request. I call them and tell them the things I need, they get right to them as if [the principal] is asking for them. If I need to talk to the superintendent, his secretary has him get back to me before the end of the day. If I wasn't valued, I don't think that would happen.*

SAM: *They understand what the SAM position is about. [Our district coordinator] has helped communicate that to the district and to the board. She has presented data to the board. They are supportive of the position. They pay my salary. They allow us to go to training. They allow [us] to go to national conferences. I don't really know what else the district could do to help.*

In a similar vein, a SAM reflected on differences between his SAM position and what he has seen of SAM positions in other districts:

SAM: *What I have seen is that in some districts ... SAMs are more like clerks. [In other districts] there tends to be a big division between those certificated and those who are not. We are fortunate here that we don't have that kind of gap. [SAMs] are respected in the district for the professionals that they are.*

More often, however, SAMs, principals, and other school staff described district support for the project and the position with a degree of frustration. They felt that the role of the SAM was neither consistently nor fully defined in the district. They described instances in which the roles and responsibilities of this position changed without warning or notification. Additionally, in some cases there were differences between what the principal felt the SAM should be able to do and what the district would allow. These conditions all fostered uncertainty, which had

negative effects both on the specific activities the SAM performed and on the standing of the SAM within the school.

Consistent definition of the SAM role at the district level. Inconsistent definitions presented challenges for the school in two ways. First, respondents cited examples where the district continued to treat the principal as the point person even though the SAM had assumed that role. This undermined the SAM role and took the principal's time away from other activities:

Principal: *There are emails I have received that my SAM should get - like student assignment. It would be as easy as including the SAM in the cc [line]. Like signing off on things, I have received things back from the district to re-sign after the SAM has signed them. There is only one reason for that and it is that if this goofs up then they want the principal to take responsibility. That is unfortunate. That builds cynicism and distrust.*

SAM: *This district is still not really on board. We keep getting calls from the district from people expecting only to speak to [the principal].*

Principal: *People at the Board of Education, we tell them the SAM is going to be doing this and not me, for example, we're getting ready to have a safety assessment. Instead of going through the SAM, they keep still coming to me and then I give them to her.*

Second, in some cases the district was perceived as changing the rules midstream. For example, SAMs were given a specific responsibility and then were told they are no longer able to carry it out. This scenario was particularly frustrating at the school level because the uncertainty it fostered had a negative effect on the SAM's status in the school:

Principal: *One thing they told us: A SAM signs off on something that normally I would sign off on. They didn't communicate that with the Department...[The SAM] would send stuff in and they would say, "No. We need a principal signature." That communication was poor....*

SAM: *When the program was being pitched to go more district-wide, some people neglected to explain the role of a SAM thoroughly and what it is designed to do. It was redesigned to pitch to the group they were trying to get to join in. It affected me. When you are used to doing some things certain ways, [then they change it and tell you that you misunderstood a policy or decision.] I love the phrase: "you misunderstood."*

SAM: *The district doesn't recognize [our authority.] One day I can sign off on something then another day I can't...They have taken away so much away from what we can and cannot do. It's coming from the district. They really need to define the position.*

Differences between district and principal views of appropriate SAM responsibilities. Districts and principals sometimes had differing views on when the SAM could stand as a proxy for the principal. For example, one principal cited some administrative meetings at the district

office that took him out of the building. He felt that his role as instructional leader would be better served if he remained in the building and sent the SAM to these meetings:

Principal: There is a direct tension between the requirements placed on the principal and the notion of that TimeTrack and the types of things that the SAM program has asked for. In some ways – overall, they are aligned. They say that they want principals to be instructional leaders. The district says that, but I think that there is some tension on what that exactly that means. Like with principals’ meetings, ... I can’t send [the SAM] for those meetings – those things that require me to be out of the building.

Another principal felt that the SAM in her school should have had more authority to sign documents, such as suspension letters. Not only would this change have reduced administrative burden for her, but it would also have enhanced the SAM’s authority. This approach, however, did not align with district policy:

Principal: One of the biggest challenges is I would like to see the district [treat SAMs] in the administrative capacity that they are in. For example, our budget office, when we were audited, said that he doesn’t really like the SAM signing things. Would I take that back? No. Their department felt like that is something the principal should be handling. Like signing deposit slips - why can’t the SAM do that? I would like him to be able to sign for things, like have the suspension letter come from him.

Finally, one SAM described a situation where the district gave the SAM a responsibility but then did not provide the resources necessary to perform it:

SAM: I am supposed to work on the budget and to help with student attendance and reporting, but I do not have access to [the district data system] so there is not much that I can do. I hope that something can be worked out.

Negotiation and Evolution of the SAM Role over Time

In speaking with principals, SAMs, teachers, and other school staff, it was clear that the SAM role in each school evolved over time. In part this evolution took place because the SAM position became better defined. Many respondents (including SAMs and principals) indicated that when the SAM project started in their school, it was not at all clear what role the SAM should play or what responsibilities the SAM should take on. Once the project was under way, respondents reported that they saw evolution of the SAM role in four main areas: (1) interactions with parents, (2) interactions with other school staff, (3) settling in to an established routine, and (4) acting as a problem solver. As the SAM’s working relationships with the principal, staff, and parents developed, many respondents indicated that interactions improved and that the SAM took on more responsibility, often by winning people over and gaining their trust through competence.

Start-up issues related to the SAM’s career background. SAMs varied in their background, and we found instances in which a SAM’s role was initially constrained by

teachers' perceptions of his or her capabilities. If teachers did not hold the SAM in high regard or did not feel that the SAM was capable of handling a particular request, they were unlikely to approach the SAM with that request and instead continued to pepper their principals with non-instructional issues:

Principal: *My teachers did not respect the first SAM. And her resume and her background and they never really accepted her here.*

Teacher: *People had a problem with it. She worked in my classroom with me. She does an excellent job. It didn't matter; in the first year a lot of people were saying, "You can't tell me what to do. You came out of a classroom for a year!" [The SAM would say "But the principal] told me what to do."*

Evolution of the SAM role as part of start-up. Several respondents expressed broader challenges in introducing the SAM position in the school. Many noted that at start-up the SAM position was described in a vague way (for instance, in Model 3, as one part of the individual's larger job description), and that they were not able to fully understand or define the role until the SAM was in place and school was under way. In part, though, this delay provided time that was needed in order to understand the strengths the particular SAM brought to the school:

School support staff: *[The principal] just asked [the SAM, secretary, and] me to write up our job descriptions and what we do, and what we think we should do, and what we shouldn't do. It is still evolving on how to be most efficient on what we are doing. We don't have too much overlap – only [that we should] tell each other what is going on.*

Principal: *Last year, the first year there was a lot of trial and error. It was a huge learning curve for [the SAM] This year there wasn't that part. It was smoother for her.... Behavior disorder was a huge curve. The district could be a part of how SAMs are handling this, maybe some training....*

There were a few schools where staff reported initial challenges associated with the principal's ability and enthusiasm for ceding responsibility to the SAM. In these examples, the principal gave the SAM additional responsibilities as he or she became more comfortable with the SAM's skills and more relaxed about delegating responsibilities:

Teacher: *Starting up was hard for everyone. [The principal] had to let go. Everyone else automatically was used to going to her. So that was hard at first.*

Interacting with parents. SAMs noted that dealing with parents, especially those with children facing disciplinary action, had been a challenge. Parents often demanded attention from the principal and held the view that principals alone had the authority to deal with their requests and concerns:

Principal: *At first, parents thought that it was an insult when the SAM called and not me. They were used to talking to the principal. I had to communicate to parents and to*

newsletters and I had to communicate that clearly and, gradually, that was reduced. There are still parents there who feel that it is an insult.

SAM: You have to earn it. I feel like I earned it. I like how I handled my conversations with parents. I am really liking the fact that parents are opening up about their kids personal [lives]. It's important for me to see that I'm not just there as a disciplinarian. I also feel like a mentor."

Several SAMs assumed high-profile roles such as bus and carpool duty in order to increase their level of positive exposure with the parents:

Secretary: Little by little our parents have gotten used to [our SAM]. Now they are more willing to talk to him. He volunteers at the car drop. Some parents call and ask for [the SAM]. It's been gradual. It has taken a few years to build those relationships.

Teacher: I think [the SAM] has worked to build that relationship. He does the car rider line. He's out there opening the doors for the kids. A lot of that is his personality. He's very outgoing, very friendly. Parents respect him.

Over time most parents came on board with the SAMs project, especially after they had positive experiences with the SAM serving as a surrogate for the principal. They found that the SAM often addressed their issue faster than the principal would have:

SAM: It takes people a while when they first come in. ... It takes [parents] a little while at first that I am the person they call. But they eventually do come to me. People come to me a lot with questions. I am the one they come to with anything that has to do with the administration side. People know to come to me for the most part.

Principal: We have had much quicker responses to parent needs. Even from [the SAM], she is able make phone calls to respond. "[The principal] can't talk to you right now. Can I help you? If not, he will call you later." She has quicker responses and addresses those concerns on the spot or it would have been 4 or 5 o'clock until I would be able to get to it. They can be handled quickly and directly by her and indirectly by me.

Secretary: [The SAM] is more accessible than [the principal] is. Something may come up. You can get an answer [much faster with the SAM.] [The principal] was always tied up.

Interacting with other school staff. Respondents described an evolution in interactions with both the administrative school staff and the teachers. In some cases, administrative staff other than the principal attempted to redistribute some of their duties to the SAM. This problem was made greater if the SAM position was not strictly defined:

Secretary: [The] SAM's job has become a fill-in - doing something that someone else doesn't have time to do. She does anything and everything. Which I did prior to her being here. The school is busy. She has been a help to me, not that she [is here] for me. She has been a real help to all of the administrators.

Office manager: *They kinda moved some of our duties around. Before, I spent a lot of time working on the budget, which he does now. I was given payroll, which the other secretary did before.*

And in one case, an unclear vision for the SAM position and an overburdened administrative staff overwhelmed a SAM. Rather than focusing on taking management responsibilities from the principal, this SAM had taken on the work of others:

SAM: *There's been some change. People are giving me all types of tasks. Sometimes my plate would be too full. It's overwhelming. Other people in the office are also [giving me work]. [The principal] is taking some things back. But for the most part, she's doing what she needs to do in the classroom.*

Settling in. Once the SAMs project was under way in a school and the initial start-up wrinkles were worked out, the SAM and principal team generally settled into a routine. The working relationship with teachers and parents changed as the SAM ably handled requests:

SAM: *There have been some growing pains with my role change. Others thought of me one way and I am learning how this change should look. I was an administrative assistant and am now in more of a boss role. So that was a little challenge but not that bad. And then teachers weren't used to going through someone. So that process was new for them. It just took time and being persistent in reminding everyone about the SAM role and new procedures. And I have been shaping the job around me. It helps being out in the forefront of issues and getting things done. That way, they see it is working. Getting them to shift is easiest when they see it is working.*

Several school staff members reported an initial distrust of the SAM position, their primary concern being that they would no longer have access to the principal. But, as was the case with parents, many found that it was much more efficient to work with the SAM to get an issue resolved than it had been in the past when similar issues had to be handled by the principal:

Teacher: *That concerned me at first. I was worried about my position filtering through him. I feel teachers needed access to the principal. But it worked itself out. [The principal's] door is always open no matter what. For field trips, any sort of paper thing that needs to be signed, you go to [the SAM].*

Secretary: *I don't have to wait for [the principal]. A lot of times before he would have been busy with the students or with a meeting. So it [business/administrative/budget matter] would be put off a little longer than it is now. It is helpful to have [the SAM] here to sign off.*

The SAM's relationship with the principal also changed over time. Many SAMs noted that once trust was established with the principal, the principal was willing to cede other responsibilities to the SAM:

SAM: *Even though we both agree on the kind of discipline we want for children, he wasn't sure how I told that to the parent. At the start, he sat first and watched me to know we were on the same page. I started doing that in May and now I do it.*

Principal: *He also deals with some budget type of issues--signing checks for me for folks to go on field trips, and he signs payroll now. That took a while before I felt comfortable releasing that, but after a while I felt comfortable giving that to him.*

The SAMs' assertiveness in taking on tasks made a lasting difference in what they did. Several SAMs made comments like the following, observing that the job was flexible and responsibilities expanded depending on the SAM's zeal for the work:

SAM: *It is a huge job. There is a lot in it. You can make it even bigger depending on how much you want to take on. The challenge is time management, giving priority to certain things.*

SAMs' assertiveness was particularly important when they worked with principals who were inclined towards micromanaging:

SAM: *When I came in, it was like, "Here are your duties," [and it hasn't changed much] other than taking more things on. When she gets those notes or makes those calls to parents, I would say, "I can make those calls back to the parents." If I see a note, I'll try and grab it. I work on taking care of those things.*

There were instances when trust, persistence, and the SAM's demonstrated skill and ability helped lead a principal to release control:

Principal: *Personally, the only difficulty would be that first couple of years. I had difficulty in delegating responsibility.... That is the biggest challenge, delegating responsibility. It is a growing process and I think there has been a learning that has come along with it....*

Principal: *Anytime you change culture, of course there are challenges. People came to me for things I don't have to handle. I used to handle it anyway. Now, I don't handle them.*

SAMs as problem solvers and system creators. As SAMs became familiar with the rhythms and culture of the school, became more comfortable in their roles, and became familiar with their tasks, many took on more tasks. Increased experience yielded substantial benefits in some schools. Once SAMs became aware of the needs of the schools, they could become problem solvers able to address root causes of problems and implement systems rather than merely addressing immediate problems and symptoms. One SAM reflected:

SAM: *I think that you grow into the position. First, you think there is minimal responsibility. Once you learn the school system and the needs of the school, then your responsibilities begin growing. There are needs for systems to take place, and adjustments to take place with personnel. You get more involved as you grow into the*

position. You find something and say, “This is really what I need to focus on.” We implemented a new system in the beginning of the school year. After many back and forths and coming up with the best system to maintain a safe environment, we created the progressive discipline plan. It was finally 100 percent in October. Since, we have seen a huge drop in referrals. There are still challenges. But there is more understanding in the system and making sure that the students benefit from it.

Instances of problem solving and system setting were not uncommon:

Principal: At dismissal time I always had a knot in my stomach for the first two years as principal. Do we know if they got on the bus? Do we know if they left the building? I don't have to worry about it now. Before, at 2:30 I would be outside. But now if I had to talk to a kid or to a parent, I can keep talking to them. I don't have that knot in my stomach anymore. Transportation now is peaceful. [The SAM]'s got it down to a system.

In some cases, SAMs established better working relationships with key district staff through a series of discussions with the district. A SAM described how all SAMs' efforts to introduce themselves to the central office management departments led to better alignment and more efficient interactions with the central office, although more recent district policies that limited outreach efforts have limited their effectiveness:

SAM: When we started, we met once a month. With our schedule, we would talk to security and safety, the food processing [department]. They had a face [to tie with the position.] When a SAM called, they'd say, “Oh, you are the SAM at so and so's school.” We had a scheduled agenda that was helpful especially when there are new SAMs coming. [Now,] well...[departments] are like, “What the hell is a SAM?”

SAM Archetypes

At one site the SAM described her position as “everybody” in the school:

SAM: The SAM is everybody. “Who'll do this?” – I will. They're all coming to you anyway. Today the janitor was gone so I knew I needed to be at the lunchroom to help out early or it would be tough. The kids call me the AP.

SAMs, principals, teachers, school secretaries, and other school staff often described the SAM as someone who was willing to step in and do whatever needed to be done including organizing field trips, bus duty, discipline, building management, lunchroom supervision, supervising classified staff, working with parents, defusing difficult situations, building maintenance, the principal's schedule, PTA, and building construction.

However, in some schools, specific tasks consumed a majority of the SAM's time. Across districts—and across the formal job descriptions that some districts and states developed for the position—a few archetypal SAM roles can be discerned:

- Disciplinarian
- Building manager
- Administrative assistant

Two additional role types that we observed were less prominent – gatekeeper and coach to the principal. In order of frequency, interviewees described the SAM first as a disciplinarian, building manager, or administrative assistant, and then went on to say that the SAM also served as the gatekeeper or coach to the principal. We rarely, if ever, heard gatekeeping or coaching described as the primary SAM role.

The three main SAM archetypes are described below followed by brief descriptions of the gatekeeper and coach roles.

SAM as Disciplinarian

In many schools when we asked teachers, principals, and SAMs to describe the SAM’s responsibilities, the first word spoken was “discipline.” As disciplinarian, a SAM assumed a role with a very high profile and one that could be very time-consuming. Many SAMs reported that they were spending over three-quarters of their time handling discipline and attendance issues each day:

SAM: I do a lot of discipline, the daily goings-on like someone is coming to do a play at the cafeteria, buildings and maintenance. I work with long-term staff, the lunch time staff. The discipline can take up 100 percent of my day. I talk a lot to parents. There are a million little things. I schedule the principal’s day. I schedule events for the building.

SAM: Discipline is the biggest bulk of it.... There are other areas that I want to address that can’t be done because discipline takes up most of your time.

SAM: The position itself is evolving, which is expected. I deal mostly with discipline.... Discipline is almost 80 percent of my job. I’m dealing with referrals or kids being put out of class. I also cover classes when teachers need to be out of class. I do the school monthly newspaper. I do supervision in the cafeteria during lunchtime. I do evaluations for classified staff. I also fill in when we had our secretary out. I was able to do the payroll for the school. That was outside [my responsibilities], but I had the ability to do it.... It’s like that a lot. If there’s a need, as far as my position goes, that’s what I do.

SAM: The majority of my time is discipline. 70 percent of my day is discipline, 10 percent is getting her to where she is supposed to be and what she needs to get there, 10 percent is the bus, getting the bus lined up and logistics, 10 percent is dealing with the staff itself. I’ll bend over backwards for staff. If behavior issues like cussing occur, they will send the students to me. I think they like that they don’t always have to go to the principal. They come to me, it works out.

While many principals and SAMs reported that discipline took nearly all of the SAM's time, in one school the SAM drew on his experience as a former principal to cultivate a sense of order in the school that ultimately reduced the number of discipline referrals:

SAM: When I first started here it was not uncommon to deal with 20 students a day with discipline issues. Now it is about three students a day. There has been a progression over the past few years. Working with staff through an in-service to help them understand that when they give up the kids they give up the power. The kids know the rules as well. For instance, when I first came here there was chaos. I added [decals] on the floor that the kids walk on. That was the start of things. Set out clear guidelines.

SAM as Building Manager

In several schools, the SAM served as a manager for the school building. He or she often managed custodial and other classified staff and was the point person for many other roles including building maintenance, PTA, dismissal, and school events. SAMs who fit this type often had some responsibility for discipline but it played a more minor role:

Principal: Anything that has to do with the building operations, classified staff, budget, fiscal, anything that is non-instructional. I would say that the reason discipline is not on the list is that discipline has become less and less an administrative responsibility and more and more a classroom teacher responsibility.

Principal: [The SAM] manages classified staff ... who is in the cafeteria or the car rider line, how dismissal is going to work.....She takes care of certain kinds of issues with parent complaints and problems. I want her contacting the bus compound. I want her meeting with the bus drivers.

SAM: The principal is the instructional leader. We do pretty much everything else - running the school and discipline. I try to handle as much of the discipline as I can so that she doesn't have to. Sometimes we both have to do it. I order the supplies. Maintain the budget. Look after the maintenance of the site, lease of machines. I take care of all that. I supervise all the classified staff including the instructional aides.... It's varied. No two days are the same. We put out a lot of fires. They are the things I enjoy.

SAM as Administrative Assistant

Some SAMs served as, in effect, assistants to principals. In these cases the SAM handled the principal's mail, e-mail, phone calls, and calendar. We most often found this role in Model 3 schools.

SAM: I handle concerns from the staff about routine things in the school. I take care of all of his mail—I go through it, sort it, prioritize it, but I don't throw anything out. I forward letters about scholarship information to the counselors.

Principal: *She does whatever I ask. She handles the phone calls and she keeps track of my calendar [using TimeTrack as a calendar]. She also handles a lot of paperwork and is responsible for scheduling classroom observations for me and the assistant principals. This is a big issue because we have a new rubric this year and it means that we pretty much have to be in the classroom for the whole period to do the observations.... Then there are the reports and feedback conversations, so scheduling is a really big thing.*

Principal: *He builds my day. I arrive at 6:30 am, go to my Time/Task, and he has my schedule in already. During the course of the day, he answers my personal line and works with freshmen regarding discipline issues. My SAM is the AP in the building as well.*

SAM as Gatekeeper

According to the National SAM Project, one of the benefits of having a SAM was that the SAM served as a gatekeeper, limiting access to the principal to only those staff, teachers, and parents who truly needed to speak with him or her. SAMs buffered the principals' time from interruptions by teachers, parents, or district staff whose questions could be answered by others. The goal was to free up the principal's time by deflecting requests to someone else within the school. Many respondents described the SAM in their school as performing this function, but often it was a function that was secondary to other responsibilities such as discipline or building management:

SAM: *They call me a bouncer because no one gets by me. To get to the principal you have to go through me. Teachers will also go directly to me.*

SAM: *I try to be the buffer with the parents before they go to him.... If I can handle it then I handle it. If I see that it's not going to work, then I schedule for him to handle that.*

SAM as Coach

Finally, the National SAM Project prescribed that the SAM serve as a coach to the principal on his or her time use. As discussed earlier, this role was sometimes mentioned by respondents but never described as the primary role of the SAM. Like gatekeeping, the coaching function was secondary to discipline, building management, and administrative assistance.

Summary and Conclusions

This chapter has detailed the considerable variation in SAM backgrounds and SAM responsibilities. Coming to their positions with experience that ranged from principalships to bookkeeping, facing different types of pressing issues across different schools, and working with principals who had a variety of expectations and work styles, the SAMs understandably varied in what they did and how they did it.

The daily meeting, considered by the National SAM Project to be a cornerstone of the role, took different forms in the schools we studied. From most to least common, these could be characterized as:

- “What’s up? What can I do for you? Can you take care of this?”
- “We have to do TimeTrack”
- “Principal, follow your schedule. Stay on task.”
- “Do you think you’re spending enough time on instruction?”

SAMs’ roles evolved over time as they and the others in their schools became accustomed to the role and its possibilities. After overcoming start-up challenges, the SAMs settled into solving problems for parents and for other school staff. In some cases they took the opportunity to develop and institute new systems for particular aspects of school management such as discipline, to the benefit of their schools. In a number of cases, however, district policies and practices constrained the SAMs’ work by limiting their authority to represent the school or sign official documents.

At this point in the project, archetypal SAM roles that have emerged are the SAM as disciplinarian, the SAM as building manager, and the SAM as administrative assistant. Our findings about delegation indicate that many SAMs carried out multiple tasks (i.e., all five types of responsibilities in the delegation index discussed in Chapter 3), but circumstances in a school and the working relationship developed with the principal often led a SAM to focus more intensely on particular types of tasks. We think it is noteworthy, however, that only rarely did SAMs take a coaching role with principals, beyond the simple function of reminding the principal to adhere to his or her schedule.

6. SAM Project Tools and Infrastructure

Starting in the original three schools and continuing through the life of the National SAM Project, the director, the participating states, and The Wallace Foundation collaborated to develop tools and supports for implementation. The tools and infrastructure evolved over time, informed by experience with project start-up in the field. In this chapter, we discuss readiness activities, Time/Task Analysis and reporting, TimeTrack, Time Change Coaching, and training for participating principals and SAMs. In each section we first describe the project's aims and design for the particular tool or element of infrastructure as of 2008-09, recognizing that this might vary across sites. We then describe participants' reports, gathered during our data collection in 2008-09, on the strengths and weaknesses of the tool as implemented in their schools.

Readiness Activities

The National SAM Project encouraged schools to complete a series of "SAM Readiness Steps" before participating in the project (Exhibit 6-1).

Exhibit 6-1: SAM Readiness Steps

1. **Talk with your school's leadership team** about what it would "look like, feel like" if you spent more time on instructional improvement and less time on management.
2. **Talk with your SAM.** *Is he/she willing to take on this task of coaching you each day on your use of time? He/she will meet with you each day to complete a calendar tool called TimeTrack.*
3. **Talk with your assistant principals.** *Are they supportive? Ask them: "Would you be willing to have your time tracked for a week for your own professional development?"*
4. **Talk with your school's teachers' union representative.** *Does he/she think you are good at working with teachers on instructional improvement? Is your Human Relations IQ high enough?*
5. **Make a list of time winners and losers in the school.**
6. **Meet with your secretary and other office support staff.** Ask for their permission and support as you attempt to make this change in how you use time.
7. **Practice and role-play with your secretary and office support staff** on how to explain to parents/students/staff when you are not available due to instructional work.
8. **Talk with parent and student group representatives** about why you want to make this change. Can you explain your reasons in a persuasive way?
9. **Review the readiness tools developed by Dr. Jody Spiro.** Use the tools with appropriate groups.
10. **Send a letter to your staff and parents** and ask for their reaction. Are they ready for a principal who spends most of his/her time working to improve instructional practice?
11. **Take a look at your calendar for yesterday.** Try to enter all the things you actually did—how you spent your time. Highlight the management work that you could have delegated. Looking at the same calendar, list the instructional work you would have liked to do. Are you willing to spend time each day analyzing your use of time?
12. **Talk with your supervisor(s) about the change you are making.** Explain that you will be on a tight calendar/schedule and your office staff will make every effort to keep you on task.

Ideally, the principal worked closely with teachers, other school staff, parent representatives, and district staff to ready the school for the SAM project. These activities would include a formal needs assessment during which the roles and responsibilities of the principal and SAM would be defined and conveyed to all stakeholders.

Implementation varied. There were instances of serious engagement with some or all of the prescribed steps. For example, in a local training session that we observed, principals and SAMs were coached in their “passion speech,” in which they would communicate to the school community their reasons for introducing the SAM role. In addition, some principals confirmed in interviews that they had engaged in a series of several readiness steps:

Principal: [There was] a step-by-step protocol for our building if we were interested, things that had to happen if we were going to be accepted [for participation in the project]. We had to meet with teachers, the union, the leadership team, to kind of get their approval, then come back to [Mark Shellingner] and explain how it went and whether we were still interested.... They force you to go to the powers-that-be in your building, and make it clear how things would change. I had to talk with a core group of parents, and I said, “You’re used to coming in and yelling and getting me, and [now] you’re going to get the SAM.”

However, in schools where the project had been under way for at least a year, no teachers or other school staff remembered an elaborate effort to cultivate readiness. In reality, the start-up period was usually very brief and took place at a time when the stakeholders in the school were occupied with other things. According to teachers, the readiness activities consisted primarily of informing the staff of the implementation of the SAM project in a staff meeting in the flurry of activities either at the end of the school year or in the days prior to the start of the next school year.

The lack of careful preparation sometimes led to frustration on the part of the staff as well as confusion about the roles and responsibilities of the staff member in this new position:

Teacher: We were introduced [to the SAM] at a meeting. We didn’t know what his job was. We still don’t know. That’s how we were introduced.... We just kinda thought he was here to help [the principal]. I think it was told to us at the beginning that if you have referrals, they go to [the SAM].

Several respondents commented with frustration on the way they were notified that the SAM project was being implemented in their school, without sufficient notice or information:

Teacher: There were lofty expectations as well as apprehension. It would be best if the roles were laid out. You need a few weeks before school starts up to talk about hierarchies and talk about that role. There was not a lot of reflection time. If other schools that have already done it could come and talk to the schools that are new to it to talk about what has been successful, and what the pitfalls are at the end of the school year, that would give us a clearer picture of how it was going to work.

Teachers in several schools described their initial apprehension about the project. They were worried about how it would affect them, and they were particularly concerned that they would not have the access to their principal they felt they needed:

Teacher: We had started talking about getting a SAM. [The principal] brought it up at the staff meeting. I just remember thinking that we will filter through [the SAM] to get to [the principal]. That was troubling to me. Having someone there between me and my principal.

In a few sites, the school staff reported that they learned of the project at the start of the school year but that the SAM was not actually in place until several weeks later. This posed additional start-up challenges because the principal had defined a position and the front office staff were working to get parents and school staff to use this new position, although no one initially served in that role:

Secretary: I would tell you one thing right off the bat. When [the principal] started, and [the project] started, there was a time frame of three weeks where [the SAM] was not here. People continued to ask. They have to talk to the principal and me. Maybe if she was in place at the first day of school. That would be perfect.

Even among the SAMs who said initial readiness activities had been adequate, some said they later realized that reinforcement was needed in subsequent years:

SAM: We don't have everyone totally on board here. The staff doesn't exactly understand the SAM project. I think that we did OK last year in explaining things to the staff. We didn't do it this year and that was probably a mistake. We need to keep reminding them about [the principal's] focus on instruction.

SAM: When we first started this project, we pushed it. We sent letters home to parents, teachers, and students.... Now this year, ... we didn't do the same things we did last year. There's a new group of parents and new staff came in. We didn't push it. That's our fault. We...dropped the ball on that as far as informing teachers.

Shadowing: Time/Task Analysis

The National SAM Project design includes a baseline shadowing by a data collector, delivery of a Time/Task Analysis showing the principal's baseline time use, and follow-up shadowing at 12-month intervals after the baseline. The Time/Task Analysis was described as a confidential document for the principal; the National SAMs Project Director stated that although superintendents might want access to their principals' time use data, the data could only be released voluntarily by the principals.

We gathered survey data from 106 principals who had experienced baseline shadowing, and 46 who had experienced a one-year follow-up at the time of the survey. The great majority

of them, but not all, remembered receiving their Time/Task Analysis reports: 84 percent said they had received a baseline report, and 84 percent said they had received a follow-up report.

Usefulness of Time/Task Analysis

Of the principals who said they had received a baseline Time/Task Analysis report, 52 percent said it was “very useful,” and another 40 percent called the data “useful.” The survey responses on the usefulness of the follow-up Time/Task Analysis were similarly favorable: 66 percent termed it “very useful” and 27 percent “useful.”

In interviews, principals said they found the Time/Task Analysis useful because it helped them reflect on time use, use time more effectively, and set goals for time use:

Principal: When I did the shadow [the time I spent on instruction was low]. It was 49 percent the next time. So from that standpoint, it showed me how to structure [my time] and focus....

SAM: I think the feedback [the principal] received was probably useful to her. It's kind of a way to doublecheck what we are doing.... They can assess whether that time she is spending is effective.

Principal: [The Time Change Coach] sat down with me, showed me the results of the shadowing, explained the different codes and where I was for instructional as opposed to management, and I set my goals based on that.

In a few cases we heard that principals valued the affirmation they received from the Time/Task data. One SAM said of the principal:

SAM: He really took to heart the shadow days and the information he got from the shadows. When they did it the second time, he could show his teachers that an outsider shows his percentage in the classroom went from 34 percent to 57 percent.

Some principals who had been implementing the project for more than a year noted that the Time/Task Analysis was useful in the beginning of the project, but less so over time:

Principal: TimeTrack and shadowing were important at the beginning, but we're beyond it.

Sharing Time/Task Analysis Data

Upon receiving the results of the baseline Time/Task Analysis report, most principals shared their data with others (Exhibit 6-2). Sixty-five percent of principals said they shared the data with someone who coached them on time use, and 50 percent said they shared the results

with teachers. And, despite the national project’s cautious stance on releasing data to the central office, 40 percent of the principals said they had done just that.

Exhibit 6-2: Principals’ Release of Baseline Time/Task Analysis Results to Others, in Percents (n=91)

	Yes
I shared the results with someone who has coached me on time use.	65%
I shared the results with teachers.	50%
I shared the results with someone in the district office.	40%

Source: Survey of principals.

Exhibit reads: Sixty-five percent of principals indicated that they had shared the Time/Task Analysis results with someone who coached them on time use.

Some survey respondents noted other ways in which they shared baseline Time/Task Analysis results. One principal reported having provided the data to the school board. A few principals said that they shared the data with parents. One published highlights in a newsletter that went home to parents, and another shared the results with the school parent organization.

Interview data from principals and teachers showed the variation in discussions within the school: some principals chose to discuss their data at some length, while others chose to maintain their privacy:

Teacher: She [the principal] did facilitate several conversations with staff about the percentage of time that she is in the classroom. She definitely shared that with us.

Principal: The staff are very veteran.... If I got the vibe that they perceived it as something negative, I limited what I shared with them; so I kept it to myself.

Teachers also varied a great deal in their level of interest in the data. Some reported that the principal’s sharing of Time/Task Analysis data was well received by the teachers:

Teacher: I saw a huge difference in [the principal’s] time in the classroom. Whatever data you were bringing—they came in and said the principal should be in the classroom x amount of time. She set goals specifically. She was on 40 percent and she knew that she had to better keep track of her time. I think that was an eye opener—setting goals for yourself, making yourself specifically go to the classroom. We were a new school, and she’s a new principal. She was running everywhere and the data showed that.

Others were less interested in the results. For example, one teacher noted that the results of the Time/Task Analysis were of no concern to him, and that he trusted the principal to make the right decisions:

Teacher: *We knew to expect a lady to come in to follow him around to see how he spends his day. We had notification she was coming, but nothing at the end. I don't think we care. I respect him and trust he knows what he's doing.*

Principals' Concerns about Time/Task Analysis

Although a majority of principals who received baseline and follow-up Time/Task Analysis data found them useful, some principals had reservations about the process or the results. Their experiences engendered ambivalence about the quality of the results and doubts about the reliability of the data. Three perceptions on the part of principals emerged as the biggest barriers to a satisfactory experience: inappropriate scheduling of data collection; failures in reporting or in support for data use; and a conviction that the Time/Task Analysis data were inaccurate.

Inappropriate scheduling of data collection. Principals often commented that the shadowing occurred at times that were atypical for the school year, such as the beginning of the year when they were dealing with start-up administrative issues. The principals felt that the resulting Time/Task Analysis did not truly represent their work as a whole. Some principals had had a follow-up data collection when the SAM was absent for part or all of the shadowing week. Some respondents said that their data collector was inflexible about rescheduling. One principal was shadowed during a week when a number of meetings were scheduled that only occurred three times during the year. These principals believed that their data were inaccurate as a result of the poor timing:

Principal: *That first year, it happened the first week of school. The second and third year, [the Time/Task Analysis] was further into the school year.... I've never had a spring follow-up. The problem is, in the first few weeks of school, no one can deal with instruction.*

Principal: *The second time was a bad experience. The [data collector] cancelled the first visit, and then she came during a week when we had had a really bad incident.... I did try to get her to come at a different time, but she said that she couldn't.*

Principal: *I believe the data [were] not a true reflection of how I spend my time. I warned our central office that the week chosen for me to be shadowed was an unusual one because of a number of data review meetings that were set for that week. These meetings occur three times a year. Being observed during this time provided an unrealistically high picture of how I usually spend my time. It is going to be difficult for me to improve upon my score depending on when I am observed again.*

Insufficient support for data use. Sixteen percent of survey participants who were shadowed at baseline, and the same percent of those shadowed for follow-up, did not recall receiving a report of their results.⁷ Some reported that they did not have a discussion about how

⁷ The National SAM Project Director has commented that these frequencies are not consistent with project data, which indicate nearly universal reporting to principals. Several explanations for this discrepancy are possible: the

to improve their results, and it is possible that among those who did not remember receiving a report, some had forgotten it because it was not accompanied by explanation and support. The following comments illustrate some of the issues principals faced with getting data and support:

Principal: *We didn't have a big follow-up. For that baseline they came out in August in 2007. They came back and shadowed but nobody said anything about major improvements.*

Principal: *The reports came very late after the shadowing and we had to ask for them. It would have been useful to have them within 2-3 weeks of the shadowing.*

Time/Task Analysis data perceived to be coded inaccurately. A few principals reported that they did not believe that their data collector accurately coded their time and, consequently, that the Time/Task Analysis results did not accurately reflect how they used their time:

Principal: *At lunch time, we have three lunch sections. I have instructional questions; I target kids every single day.... She would never follow me into the lunchroom. Without seeing all of her five-minute segments, there's no way to know where the coding went wrong. I rely heavily on TimeTrack, I would like my shadowing experience to reflect what I see in TimeTrack. I don't like that our national data include numbers that don't match.*

Adaptations Suggested for Time/Task Analysis

When asked what changes they would recommend in the SAM project, a few interviewees made suggestions for improvements in Time/Task Analysis. One district coordinator suggested that the Time Change Coach and Time/Task Analysis person be the same. A principal who reported that the Time/Task Analysis was helpful suggested more frequent shadowing early in the project. A principal who experienced challenges with the Time/Task Analysis data collection suggested less time for shadowing is needed:

Principal: *I understand the purpose. There's probably no other way, but it's kind of artificial.... I'm not sure a whole week is needed.*

To improve consistency between baseline and follow-up, one principal recommended that the same person who conducted the baseline data collection should also conduct the follow-up. This principal reported that the Time/Task Analysis data differed from year to year and that the data collector did not follow the same observation procedures. A few principals noted that they preferred to use TimeTrack to evaluate their performance:

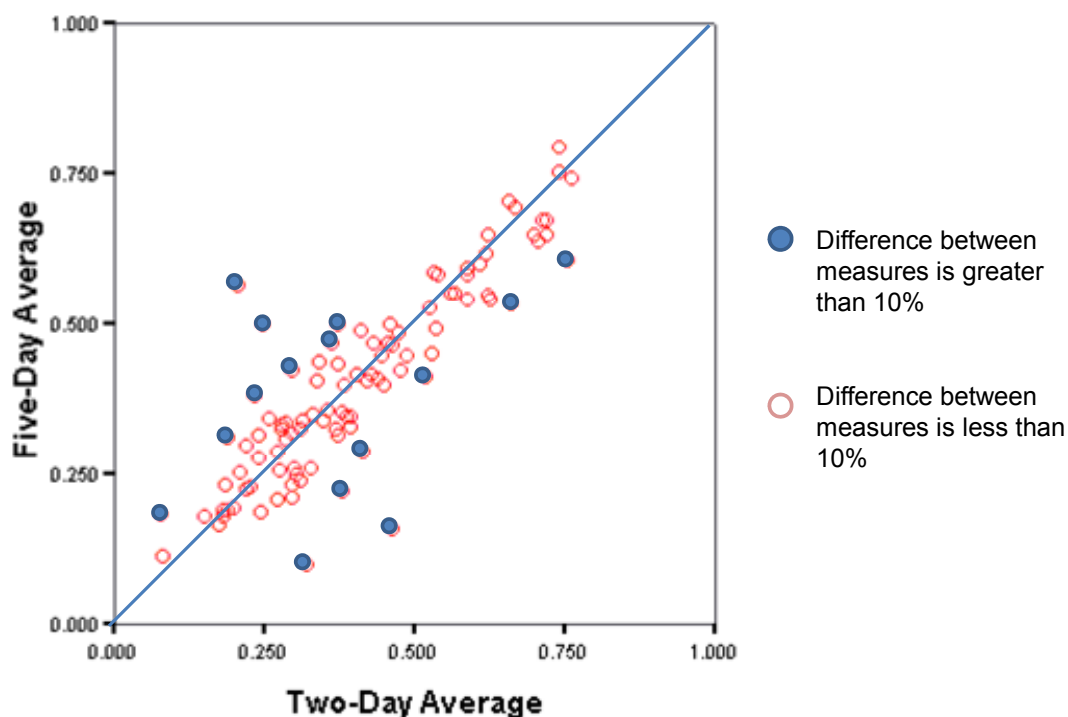
Principal: *I believe using the calendar program on a consistent basis would be much more pragmatic and would reflect what is really happening.*

project records may have been incorrect in some instances; the principal might have completed our survey very soon after shadowing and before the report arrived; or the principal originally received a report but had forgotten about it by the time he or she was surveyed.

Questions have also been raised—by principals and, in particular, by decision makers looking at costs associated with the SAM project—about the possibility of gathering fewer than five days of data for Time/Task Analysis. To explore the implications of this change, we used the National SAM Project’s data to simulate a two-day process of data collection.

This simulation showed the two-day average percentage of instructional time to be highly correlated with the five-day average ($r = .87, p < .001$)⁸ for 100 randomly selected baseline and Year 1 reports. For individual principals, the differences between two-day averages and five-day averages ranged from a low of .02 percent to a high of 36 percent. Eighty-five percent of sampled principals had two-day averages within 10 percentage points of their five-day averages (Exhibit 6-3). On average, principals’ two-day instructional average differed by ± 5.7 percentage

Exhibit 6-3: Plot of Five-Day and Two-Day Averages of Principals’ Time Use (n = 100)



Source: Evaluation team’s analysis of Time/Task data from the National SAM Project.

Exhibit reads: For 100 records selected at random, the graphic shows the five-day average of principals’ instructional time percentage plotted against an average of two random consecutive days selected from the same Time/Task data collection cycle. For most principals, the difference between the five-day and two-day average was less than 10 percentage points (shown as hollow circles). For the 15 principals for whom the difference was greater than 10 percentage points, the plots are shown as solid circles.

⁸ Time/Task Analysis reports provided the principal’s average instructional percentage for the five-day visit, along with the instructional percentage for each individual day of shadowing. We randomly selected 50 baseline and 50 follow-up records and compared their five-day instructional percentage average with the instructional percentage average that would have resulted from data collection on two consecutive days. The consecutive days used in computing the two-day average were randomly chosen for each principal, such that two-day averages might be composed of Monday-Tuesday data for one principal and Thursday-Friday data for another.

points from their five-day instructional average. Considering these findings, it appears that two-day shadowing visits would be sufficient to produce measurements of principal's instructional percentage similar to those found during five-day visits.

TimeTrack Software

Participating schools received and were expected to use the proprietary software package, TimeTrack, which was based on a spreadsheet created for principals and SAMs to track time use in the original three schools and was further developed and revised over time by the National SAM Project. Principals and SAMs were expected to use TimeTrack in looking ahead to develop the principal's schedule for each day, in looking back to record how the principal had actually spent his or her time during that day, and then in reviewing the graphic summary of time use that the software produced. Diligent use of TimeTrack was expected to help principals see their progress in changing their use of time as well as revealing areas for possible improvement.,

Use of TimeTrack: Frequency and Purposes

SAMs and principals varied in how frequently they reported using TimeTrack. Some used it daily, some monthly, a minority not at all:

SAM: We don't [look at it] as much as we should. Basically only when we know [the coach] is coming

Principal: We look at it about once a month.

Principal: Every day I get a printout with what classroom to go to.

Participating principals also differed in how useful they found TimeTrack. Some found it helpful in keeping track of their time and as a reflective tool, while others found it more hindrance than help. Several principals agreed that it was a burden but also felt it provided some value added.

Principal: I think it's a useful way for us to look at how I'm spending my time.... We look at TimeTrack and look at instructional meetings with teachers about student data interventions. Looking at it and talking about it, I realized, "Yeah, I had been doing instructional things." That was very helpful to me to see that and know....

Principal: Right now, we see the entering-data part as more a task than having something of value.

Principal: To be frank, I think it is redundant.... Is it useful? Yes, it is a good tool for reflection. But it takes a lot of time. I do see that there is meaning in being able to reflect on your time.... That being said, it is useful as data and seeing your time in numbers.

The purposes served by TimeTrack differed across schools, as well. According to our survey data, those principals and SAMs who used TimeTrack were most likely to use it once a week or more to record how the principal actually used his or her time. They were least likely to use it at all to create the principal’s schedule (Exhibit 6-4).

Exhibit 6-4: Frequency of Principal and SAM Use of TimeTrack for Specific Tasks

How often does the principal or SAM....	Principal (n=67)		SAM (n=75)	
	Once a week or more	Not at all	Once a week or more	Not at all
Create the principal's schedule?	73%	19%	54%	39%
Record how the principal actually use his or her time?	90%	1%	87%	3%
Examine what the data say about how the principal has used his or her time?	71%	3%	59%	1%
Examine how often the principal interacts with individual teachers around instruction?	60%	4%	57%	8%

Source: Surveys of principals and SAMs.

Exhibit reads: Seventy-three percent of principals indicated that they created their own schedule on TimeTrack once a week or more. Fifty-four percent of SAMs reported creating the principal’s schedule on TimeTrack once a week or more.

Most principals and SAMs focused on increasing the principal’s instructional time generally, without much attention to the individual descriptors. Some indicated this was because they didn’t really understand the descriptors and how they were supposed to be coded, while others said that they did not have time to dig down to the level of the individual descriptors:

Principal: *We look at it about once a month. I look to see how much time I’m spending in the classroom. You have to take in consideration things like meetings. [If there is a dip in my instructional time,] we have to evaluate what we should do different.*

SAM: *I don’t generate reports because I really don’t understand the descriptors. How do you know when office work is instructional or non-instructional? I need some help in understanding the descriptors. The shadowers know how to enter the information. Is there something for the SAMs to help them understand?*

Interviewer: *Do you focus on instruction vs. non instruction or the descriptors?*

SAM: *I focus on instruction vs. non-instruction. Period.*

SAM: *Descriptors are OK, but we don’t have the time to analyze them.*

There were also concerns about the consistency of coding the data, both between the principal/SAM team and the shadower, and across schools. A related issue was whether some were gaming the system:

Principal: *I would like to see more consistency in how people are entering data. This summer at the institute we spent time looking at videos and practicing coding, yet we didn't have this consistency in coding.*

Principal: *I think you can get really tied up with the numbers. My view is that the numbers are great for setting goals. If you're truly just about numbers, you can make the numbers look good without being an effective principal. It's a nice reminder, but I'm not going to do something otherwise than what needs to happen.*

SAM: *We don't use it to make our calendar green; [I don't say,] "Wow, we didn't make green so let me add a couple of things [to the schedule]." We try not to use the graphs to say, "Let me change this because you should be at 48 [percent instructional time] this week."*

Several respondents mentioned the benefit of a new TimeTrack feature that broke out observations by teacher, allowing them to track the frequency of visits to each classroom:

Principal: *I look at data in charts and graphs every couple of weeks. I like how it shows time with different teachers.*

SAM: *I schedule my principal based on graphs by teacher.*

SAM: *This year it is nice, you can keep track of which teacher she is observing. It is helpful to run that report.*

The idea of using TimeTrack as part of a larger strategic approach to instructional leadership appeared a few times in interviews, although not often. One respondent indicated he was operating day to day, but wanted to become more strategic using TimeTrack:

Principal: *I want to figure out how to be more strategic with TimeTrack. Have a clear, strong weekly plan. I go day by day or every two days [right now]. Really setting a weekly work plan and sticking to that. Want to do that better and with her. Align it with the goals. Even the times I'm not directly working with teachers, what am I doing with my planning time? Being more strategic.*

Another principal indicated little awareness of using TimeTrack as a longer-term strategic tool. As an example of how he used TimeTrack, he described reacting daily to changes in his instructional time:

Principal: *Wednesday I was only at 44 percent [instruction], so thought that I would like to have some more time on instruction. I thought what I could do differently that day. I ended up reading with kids, and it made a difference. The kids benefitted, and I*

benefitted. I was in the classroom and saw what was happening, and more important I felt a connection with students. I left happy.

And still another respondent, who saw himself as taking a strategic approach to instructional leadership, responded:

Principal: I would scrap the TimeTrack. It needs to be results driven rather than day-to-day driven.

Several respondents indicated that TimeTrack was most useful for those relatively new to the project. TimeTrack provided the initial information and prod for principals to think about how they used their time. However, over time the burden of entering the data and examining the TimeTrack reports came to outweigh the benefits. Some veterans of the project suggested either scrapping TimeTrack or reducing the frequency of use:

Principal: In the beginning, it was useful. You need it the first six months.

Principal: TimeTrack and shadowing were important at the beginning, but we're beyond it. I have no idea what my percentages are.

SAM: We meet every day. TimeTrack, I don't have time for that. I did it for the first few months of school. She knows me and I know her. We talk in the morning.... We kind of communicate a lot. We don't do much through the TimeTrack system.

Results of Using TimeTrack

According to the survey, 92 percent of those principals using TimeTrack indicated that using it “has helped increase my awareness of how I use my time.” For some this reinforced what they already knew or suspected; for others, it provided new information:

Principal: It's been nice to see exactly where my time was spent. This has been a nice reinforcer as a goal setter. How much time have I spent on feedback? Who have I missed for walkthroughs? It's worked best when we take the time to really plan out the next week based on that. It's nice to see where I am with feedback with specific teachers. It's been good to sit down with my superintendent and say I KNOW I'm spending time doing this and am still swamped.

SAM: It is a good tool to assess [whether you're] spending time where you want to. Once you have the data in TimeTrack and have the percentages, then you can see if you're on instruction as much as you thought. The interludes can eat up the day. The time with parents, or this teacher, or this student. Those can eat up the day...

Using TimeTrack also encouraged many to focus their time on what some respondents termed “instructional” matters. Instructional matters were defined differently by different respondents. Most often, instructional was defined as “*being visible in the classroom,*” and by

being “*out and around to be visible in the school.*” Some principals provided more detail, mentioning walkthroughs and observations, providing feedback to teachers, and talking with students:

Principal: One thing that I noticed was that I was spending a lot of time on student supervision as a non-instructional activity. I started to think about how to change that. I need to be out and around to be visible in the school. So I decided to turn that into instructional time by talking with students about how things are going in class. What they are learning, what they are interested in? I never ask them to talk about their teachers, but I still get a lot of information about teachers from what they say.

One principal indicated that TimeTrack made her see that time she had seen as non-instructional was in fact related to instruction:

Principal: I think it's a useful way for us to look at how I'm spending my time. Because there's a week or so that I've been in the office, we look at TimeTrack and look at instructional meeting with teachers about student data interventions. Looking at it and talking about it, I realized, “Yeah, I had been doing instructional things.” That was very helpful to me to see that and know....

However, another principal questioned whether TimeTrack encouraged an undue focus on increasing the amount of time spent on instructional activities without encouraging principals to think about the quality of those activities or how they fit within the larger strategic picture:

Principal: It is so shortsighted that the number of minutes I spend with teachers is more important than the quality of the minutes I spend. There might be a situation where I can spend five minutes talking with a teacher and solve big, big problems and some days where I can spend a whole day and not accomplish anything.... I work on systems and ways to [really move this school]. I may work on something here that doesn't look like instruction but it is connected—like with grant writing. Funding all three of those plans [that the school is working on]. All three of those I would say are directly related to student achievement, but the shadower would say that was management.

Mechanics of TimeTrack

A common complaint was that TimeTrack was cumbersome to use and did not mesh well with existing software and devices. For instance, many complained that it did not synch with Microsoft Outlook or their handheld device. Several respondents indicated that as a standalone system it did not allow them to work from home or somewhere other than from their office computer:

SAM: TimeTrack: the biggest challenge is I'm still using paper. His computer is supposed to link with mine, and it hasn't happened. That is really frustrating. I keep track of the TimeTrack on paper, of what is on his machine.

Principal: *It would be GREAT if TimeTrack could be coordinated with Outlook.*

Principal: *If it was able to work with my Palm Pilot, if it could be downloaded on to something smaller [than my desktop], then it would be helpful. The fact that it is only friendly to one computer station means I have to come in over the weekend.*

There were also complaints about the reliability and technical support for TimeTrack:

Principal: *[The TimeTrack software] has not worked for the last four-five months. We've asked for help but it is not fixed yet. We loved it when it worked. The SAM could plan out an entire week.*

In many cases, SAMs and principals found ways to work around the shortcomings of TimeTrack. However, this often meant duplicating efforts, such as keeping two calendars and having to double-enter some of the data, first on paper and then into TimeTrack:

SAM: *I have it on my computer; I enter each week. She writes down what she's doing in her day. This is an actual, true reflection on how her day is spent. She gives handwritten yellow lined sheets to me, and I enter [the data] into TimeTrack. I'll print that off, give a copy to her and allow her to review it.*

Principal: *The first year, I had a clipboard I tried to carry around. I would give [the SAM] my sheets. Next year, instead of a clipboard, I used my computer. But if I entered something she couldn't always see it. At one point we even lost some data. We had to rebuild it. So now, I keep my time on an Outlook calendar printout for the week, and I'm giving those to the SAM.*

Accountability

For some, TimeTrack was, at least in part, an accountability tool. One respondent saw it as a way of holding himself accountable:

Principal: *TimeTrack holds me accountable for what I do and how I spend my time.*

Another saw it as a combination of internal and external accountability tools and shared it with the superintendent:

Principal: *I showed the data in October to the superintendent and I give it to them if they ask. It's part of my own professional growth*

Still others used TimeTrack primarily to satisfy the requirements of others and were unlikely to use it if left to their own devices:

SAM: *Honestly, [the principal] keeps up with it when there's a Time Change Coach coming. It's a discipline thing that we haven't yet arrived to.*

SAM: *I don't know the purpose of it other than the Wallace Foundation SAM office at the district, for them to have backup for justifying my position. For me personally, I don't see how it would help us out. When we do the report, we give it to them and that's all we hear from them. That's it.*

One principal expressed resentment that the district looked at TimeTrack data. He felt it implied a lack of trust and respect for him as a professional:

Principal: *Honestly, I feel insulted as a professional by using TimeTrack. With my master's degree, I have to account for my time every minute.... I hate to sound negative, but I don't want to feel like I have to punch a time clock. The district wants to keep track of our time. They want to check up on us to make sure we aren't just sitting in a classroom or in the office.*

Suggestions for Improvement in TimeTrack

Suggestions for improvement included both how to improve the mechanics of TimeTrack and how to revise its content to support more purposeful use.

Many respondents commented on the need for TimeTrack to interface with other calendar programs already in use by the school or district (primarily Microsoft Outlook) and handheld devices. Several also suggested making it web based so it could be accessed remotely:

Principal: *It is an amazing tool when it works for us. I have been disappointed in the ability to implement TimeTrack consistently. There are some changes that I believe would make it an even greater asset to me—combined instructional categories for resource options, ability to distribute time block noted on TimeTrack for walkthroughs with many resources; the ability to have multiple resources listed when meeting with people in many roles. I wish I could consistently count on TimeTrack to work on my laptop and my desktop—it is often an added bonus for us when it works the way it is intended two days in a row! I rely on TimeTrack to achieve my goals and don't want to attempt to implement SAM without it.*

Respondents suggested ways to improve both the content of TimeTrack and the way principals and SAMs are instructed to use TimeTrack. They suggested a clearer designation of what is management and what is instruction, having the graphs break out management into the individual descriptors as is the case with instruction, and inclusion of time spent beyond the school day:

Principal: *The TimeTrack piece is confusing at times differentiating between management and instructional. It depends on what piece of paper I have at the time. ... That could be improved on—a much more clear designation on what is management and instructional.*

SAM: *There are no breakouts for the different types of management. The graphs show how you spent instructional time but management is not broken out. So you cannot isolate just how you are spending the management time.*

Principal: *They told me to restrict what I enter in TimeTrack to the instructional day so my numbers look better. That's ridiculous; the full day is my job. If I have a meeting at 7:00 p.m., I'm going to record it. I just code what the day is. In my mind this whole project doesn't work unless I code the whole picture. If I am in the building, I code it.*

Time Change Coaches and Coaching

The assignment of a Time Change Coach to work with each principal/SAM team has been an important part of the project's strategy from the beginning. The use of written protocols for the coaches, a formal Memorandum of Understanding, and monthly discussions among coaches have been designed to strengthen the coaching function in the National SAM Project. Here, we describe the coaches, their preparation, how they worked, the value they were seen as adding in the field, and concerns expressed about perceived weaknesses in the coaching process.

The Coaches and Training for the Coaching Role

As of early 2009, about 30 coaches were deployed to work with principal/SAM teams. All of the coaches were veteran educators. According to data gathered in our survey of the coaches, all had been teachers, and all but one had served as a principal or assistant principal. Many had worked as supervisors or coaches in other education settings. Ten reported experience as a member of a university faculty, and four had been superintendents. About two-thirds of the coaches reported also working with principals outside of the context of the SAM project. A few of the coaches had been instrumental in leading the roll-out of the SAM project in their states or districts.

Coaching assignments were divided unevenly among the coaches. Eight coaches worked with nine or more schools, while 11 worked with one school each. Three coaches worked with five to eight schools, and nine worked with two to four schools. In general, schools in which the coaches worked were in reasonably close proximity to each other, although some coaches traveled great distances for their assignments.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), distributed by the National SAM Project for signing by coaches, principals, and SAMs in the participating sites, specified the following goals for coaching:

- Support the principal's goal of increased instructional leadership time
- Support the goal setting of the principal and SAM based on data
- Support the SAM in building a professional relationship with the principal

- Support the improvement of instructional performance of the principal and SAM
- Provide confidential support to the principal and SAM at all times
- Provide a face-to-face meeting time at least once a month

Additional guidelines distributed to coaches underscored the importance of confidentiality and the expectation for monthly meetings. The guidelines called for the monthly meetings to last about an hour, with the time divided evenly among observation of a daily SAM/principal meeting, a meeting with the principal, and a meeting with the SAM. The monthly meetings were expected to include a review of TimeTrack data and the principal's progress toward goals. The coaches were also expected to identify principals' and SAMs' needs for training and professional development and to maintain logs documenting what happened in the meetings.

A number of coaches reported in a meeting at a National SAM/Principal Conference that they used the MOU in their early conversations with principal/SAM teams. One coach said:

I use the form with all of my teams. They take it very seriously and I often refer back to it. It is a really good reference point to remind people of what they agreed to.

Another coach agreed and added that using the form “*really formalizes the relationship...and it helps to clarify things.*” A third coach, who was just beginning to work with new principal/SAM teams, reported using the form with all of the teams and noted that:

The emphasis on confidentiality is really important, and the principals like [the message]. It has also helped to get the message [about confidentiality] to the superintendent.

Finally, a veteran coach put it succinctly:

This is the importance of using these protocols. It helps keep people's feet to the fire. Knowing that they have something to do is important.

The SAM project provided several kinds of support for the coaches to help them become familiar with the expectations for their role, although there was no systematic procedure to verify that the guidelines were followed or the coaching goals were met. We were told that early concerns about the quality and consistency of coaching, expressed by several of the coaches, led to these support activities. The project's two national conferences included sessions for the coaches, and there was a two-day training session on coaching in summer 2008. In addition, there were monthly conference calls to discuss current issues and concerns.

Early efforts to improve quality and consistency encouraged the coaches to apply a particular framework of questioning strategies to their interactions with principals and SAMs. This framework, labeled with the acronym *ORID*, included four sets of questions, including (1)

objective questions, which call for straightforward factual answers, (2) reflective questions, which call for personal and/or emotional responses, (3) interpretive questions, which call for identification of possible solutions to problems, and (4) decisional questions, which call for choices about changes and improvement. As it was communicated to the coaches, the expectation was that coaches would plan and conduct their meetings with principals and SAMs by posing one or more questions in each of these categories. Based on our observations at the sessions where this framework was presented, however, there was little substantive discussion of the framework and its application, and limited opportunity for practice and feedback.

The summer 2008 training session for coaches sought to add another approach to the coaches' repertoire: it focused on "blended coaching," an approach that integrates many coaching strategies into a single comprehensive approach and that is then tailored to specific coaching relationships.⁹ This session was notable for the fact that it compressed what is normally a three-day workshop into a scant two days. It was also notable for the absence of substantive references to the SAM project or SAM-related coaching in the main presenter's comments. Several role-play activities, developed by one of the Time Change Coaches and specifically tailored to the SAM project, were interspersed with the main workshop, but their connections to workshop topics were not obvious or explicit. However, the coaches who attended the session reported that they had enjoyed the workshop and found it useful.

In a third example of communicating expectations for the coaching role, a state leader presented the Leadership Performance Planning Worksheet (LPPW)¹⁰ and examples of how his state is using it to support principals at a meeting of the coaches who attended the Second National SAM/Principal Conference. In this session, which consisted mainly of a PowerPoint presentation on the LPPW model, the presenter asserted that the LPPW framework is aligned with the SAM time-use descriptors, and there was a suggestion that the coaches consider using it in their work with principal/SAM teams. Because copies of the LPPW were not made available to participants, it was difficult for them to grasp the details of this complex framework. Further, there were no opportunities for discussion of specific applications in their SAM/principal coaching.

Coaching Activities

Time Change Coaching received mixed reviews from principals and SAMs in our evaluation. Several had positive comments; others expressed concerns about the quality and usefulness of coaching. Principal and SAM comments on coaching suggested that there was considerable variation in how coaches approached their work.

⁹ Gary S. Bloom, Claire L. Castagna, Ellen Moir, Betsy Warren. *Blended Coaching: Skills and Strategies to Support Principal Development*. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2005).

¹⁰ On LPPW, see The Wallace Foundation, *Assessing the Effectiveness of School Leaders: New Directions and New Processes* (New York: Author, March 2009). Additional information about LPPW can be found at <http://www.wallacefoundation.org/KnowledgeCenter/KnowledgeTopics/CurrentAreasofFocus/EducationLeadership/Documents/LPPW%20Explanatory%20Text.pdf>

As noted above, the MOU for the coaching relationship with principal/SAM teams called for hour-long monthly visits. The expectation was that each visit would include three 20-minute segments—a conversation with the principal, a conversation with the SAM, and an observation of a daily meeting.

In surveying and interviewing principals, SAMs, and coaches, we found considerable variation in the frequency and duration of the coaching sessions. Some principals reported meetings every other month, and some said that the meetings occurred even less often. In contrast, other principals reported meetings occurring several times a month, especially in the very early phases of implementation. Principals noted a trend toward less frequent meetings over time. At the time that the principal and SAM surveys were administered (November 2008), about 17 percent of the principals who responded indicated that they had not met with a coach, and just under half indicated that they had met with a coach between one and three times. About 12 percent said that they had met with a coach on eight or more occasions.

In part, this variation reflected the varying lengths of time that respondents had spent with the project, but sizable numbers of participants had met with their coach less often than would have been expected based on their length of participation in the project. For example, looking specifically at the 37 principals who had participated in the project for 13-24 months, 40 percent reported three meetings or fewer with their coach, and 38 percent reported four to seven meetings. Just 22 percent reported the eight or more meetings that would have been expected if meetings had occurred monthly through more than a full school year of participation.

When asked about the duration of visits with principal/SAM teams, 17 of the 31 coaches said that the visits lasted more than an hour, and ten said that they lasted between 45 minutes and an hour. Three reported meetings of 20 minutes or less, and one said that the meetings lasted between 20 and 30 minutes.

The Value Added by Coaching

Overall, about a quarter of principals and SAMs who responded to the surveys described working with a coach as “very helpful,” and slightly less than half of both groups described it as “helpful.” The surveys also asked principals and SAMs to rate the importance of various topics in their interactions. None of the topics listed in the survey was rated as “very important” by more than about a third of the principals and SAMs who had worked with a coach (Exhibits 6-5 and 6-6).

**Exhibit 6-5: Importance to Principals of Various Topics
in Meeting with Time Change Coach
(n=88)**

<i>How important was each of the following in your conversations with the Time Change Coach?</i>	Very Important
Working with a SAM	35%
Setting goals for how I use my time	32%
Providing feedback to teachers	31%
Observing teachers	26%
Modeling instructional practices for teachers	25%
Encouraging professional collaboration among teachers	24%
Interpreting the Time/Task Analysis report	20%
Interpreting and using TimeTrack to review progress toward my goals	19%
Delegating managerial tasks	17%
Scheduling my day	15%
TimeTrack mechanics	10%

Source: Survey of principals.

Exhibit reads: Thirty-five percent of principals indicated that they felt working with a SAM was a very important topic they had had with their Time Change Coach.

**Exhibit 6-6: Importance to SAMs of Various Topics
in Meeting with Time Change Coach
(n=78)**

<i>How important was the following topic in conversations you had with the Time Change Coach since you began working as a SAM?</i>	Very Important
How to encourage the principal to increase his or her time on instructional tasks	38%
How to encourage the principal to delegate non-instructional tasks to others	34%
How to code the data on the principal's time use	33%
How to address managerial issues (e.g., budget, staff management, school facilities)	22%

Source: Survey of SAMs.

Exhibit reads: Thirty-eight percent of SAMs indicated that they felt that “how to encourage the principal to increase his or her time on instructional tasks” was a very important topic of conversation they had had with the Time Change Coach.

Principals and SAMs were most likely to report that topics related to their working relationship (e.g., “working with a SAM,” “how to encourage the principal to increase his or her time on instructional tasks,” “how to encourage the principal to delegate non-instructional tasks to others”) were very important in their conversations with the coaches. Just under a third of principals reported that setting goals for time use and providing feedback to teachers were very important topics, and about a third of the SAMs indicated that coding principals’ time use was a very important topic. About one-fourth of the principals reported that each of three topics typically associated with instructional leadership (observing teachers, modeling instructional practices for teachers, encouraging professional collaboration among teachers) was very important in these conversations (Exhibits 6-5 and 6-6).

Data from interviews with principals and SAMs suggested that the coaching component of the SAM project could add value in three ways. It could support implementation of the project, help principals and SAMs address principals’ time use, and help principals with more general issues of instructional leadership.

Supporting implementation of key elements of the SAM project. During the early months of coaching a particular team, coaches often focused on encouraging the principal and SAM to meet regularly. They also encouraged them to use TimeTrack, in terms of both data entry and using the TimeTrack data to reflect on principal practice. Coaches offered tips about data entry and coding, although as discussed below, coaches reported some confusion about several of the time use descriptors and how various principal behaviors should be reported.

For some principal/SAM teams, a coach helped them to establish their working relationship or served as an idea bank:

SAM: Meeting with the coach is really helpful. We meet every month. [The coach] gives us tips and encouragement. The coach and I meet first for 10 minutes and then the coach meets with the principal. Finally all three of us meet together. We have a chance to unload privately, and then the coach brings us together and says, “Here’s what you can do.” It’s good to have an outsider perspective. [The coach] helps us think about how to negotiate our relationship.

Principal: [The coach] goes to other states and that’s been helpful. She’ll say, “This is what they were using. Why don’t you try this?” Honestly, I wouldn’t change the way it’s worked for us. It’s flexible with what you need. It’s very much been a support system. So really the Time Change Coach has really been a support system and helping our school.

Other principals and SAMs offered examples of ways that coaches helped them with specific problems that arose early in their partnerships. In one district, coaching began before principals had committed to participation, but the help, which included a visit to another district where principals were already involved in the project, facilitated early implementation:

Principal: Taking the initial leap was big but it has been smooth since. Going to another district was huge for start up. First we saw it in action and could ask questions of people

who were doing it. Then with the other principals we could talk collegially about how it could happen. We worked out a lot of details last spring and summer before the school year started. [The coach's role] in the visit and help in launching were critical.

When coaching focused on implementation, it added external accountability. Some coaches viewed the monthly meetings as reminders to principals and SAMs that they should be using TimeTrack and having daily meetings; data gathered from principals and SAMs corroborated this view.

Helping principals and SAMs address issues related to principals' time use. An important part of coaching involved reviewing TimeTrack data and discussing how principals could change their time use:

Principal: It's nice to have someone helping you be accountable to what your goals are. It's nice to have them to bounce thing off of from time to time. They have been very supportive of the goals. My data have been pretty good...[but] it's nice to have a shot in the arm to keep me going.

Principal: I see [the Time Change Coach] once a month. We talk about time tracking. She will talk about up and down in percentages and what may have caused the changes in time.

Coaching on time use issues could have a very practical dimension:

Principal: In the beginning of the year I was not delegating as much to the SAM as I could or should. I was going home and spending hours on email.... I just couldn't keep up with it and it was very stressful. [The coach] suggested that I set up office hours for teachers to meet with me. I didn't want to give up my open-door policy, but the change made a difference. I got fewer emails and met with teachers at a scheduled time. This allowed me to close the door for a short bit and schedule a time for office work and email. I organized my time better and it made a difference.

Helping principals solve problems related to instructional leadership. Coaching conversations about the particulars of time use could move into other dimensions of instructional leadership and lead to wider ranging help:

Principal: I meet with the coach every month and every time [the coach] comes we look at my time data. We talk about what I can do to change how I spend my time and I may ask for resources on certain topics such as common assessments. [The coach] provides support for what I need and not what I don't need. These conversations all center on time change and how [the coach] can help me address key areas. What are ways that I can increase feedback.... [The coach] has also encouraged me to look at whether feedback is useful. What feedback am I giving? What are different methods of feedback and what is most useful? What isn't as useful and what just takes time away from the useful feedback. We talk through those types of issues.

Principal: *I meet with the coach once a month and we talk about the data and how things are going. [The coach] is always very supportive and very positive. It is always a feel-good meeting. [The coach encourages] me to think about what is going on without a lot of pressure. You would think that this would make me blow it off, but it doesn't. We look at TimeTrack to see how I am doing against my goals. [The coach] is encouraging and always shares. The conversation goes from SAMs to other things in the school. [The coach] shares experiences from being a principal and working with faculty and might sometimes share a poem. It's a very nurturing relationship. [The coach] points you to things that you have to think about. What do you think was happening here or there. What would be a good way to address it? [The coach] asks questions and probes, but doesn't say, "You better do this...." [The coach] really models how I should work. [The coach] is like a Yoda.*

The above examples also illustrate how coaches' questioning strategies might lead principals to reflect on their practice. In the second example, the coach interspersed personal and professional experiences with the questions, with the result that the principal reported gaining much from the interactions. A final example further illustrates the importance of coaches drawing on their professional experience, especially their experience as principals:

Principal: *Fortunately, my coach is an extremely experienced principal. I respect [the coach] immensely. What [the coach] says I listen to very closely. It was helpful for [the coach] to say, "Look at these numbers. This is incredible. You are spending this much on instruction. That is impressive." That was affirming for me.*

This principal went on to say that the coach advised him to look at the TimeTrack data on feedback and suggested that feedback was an area for improvement. Other principals provided similar descriptions of valued interactions with the coaches.

Factors That Enhanced Coaching

Many factors were likely to contribute to productive coaching, but looking across the examples of how coaching added value, three factors appeared especially important:

- A focus on practical and timely solutions to workplace problems, including problems related to components of the SAM project, time use, and other tasks and dimensions of instructional leadership
- Explicit reliance on the coach's prior experience as a principal
- Coaching strategies that combined thoughtful questioning to stimulate reflection with specific guidance to solve pressing problems

In addition, conversations with the coaches suggested that another factor that could contribute to effective time change coaching was well-designed protocols that could set the parameters for relationships with principal/SAM teams and help structure individual coaching

sessions. For example, as discussed above, some coaches agreed that the project's coaching MOU served as a useful reminder to principals and SAMs about their commitments to the project. Coaches agreed that they would also like to have rubrics that describe the expected characteristics of principal/SAM teams in various stages of maturation, because these would help them anticipate the kinds of issues that they should be prepared to address over time. Coaches also sought clarification about the meaning of some of the time use descriptors, especially descriptors related to providing feedback to teachers.

Concerns about Time Change Coaching

Principals and SAMs also expressed concerns about the coaching component of the SAM project. Some wanted more help. Others saw limited benefits from their interactions with the coaches.

A principal who had been involved in the SAM project for about eight months at the time of the interview said:

It would be more helpful maybe if we had more frequent feedback from the coach. Monthly meetings are too infrequent. We especially needed feedback up front. We needed more help learning how to start. Coaching in general should happen more than once a month. Coaching takes more relationship [building] and more ongoing contact, then [less] as the person becomes more successful. It is the same as coaching teachers.... But up front, you must have standards and you must be there to see what is happening. The way it is now, there are no observations to see if it is working.

A second principal also saw a need for more frequent interactions early in the implementation of the project:

I recommend that in the first couple of months, we should meet with the coach every couple of weeks. We could also set up a teleconference. The coach was very helpful and made sure that I was doing it right and not picking up any bad habits.

In addition to wanting more frequent early interactions with a coach, these principals also wanted feedback on implementation.

In contrast to principals who wanted more interactions with the coaches were principals and some SAMs who did not find the interactions productive.

SAM: I think that sometimes the coach comes in and says, "This is the set model and this is how it should look. But you don't look like this, and that is a problem." Yet we are getting the job accomplished. The coach could come in and say this is the model and this is how it is in [your school] and here are some suggestions. [The coach] should not force a square peg into a round hole.

SAM: *I have a question: If part of the SAM philosophy is to do what works for the principal, the building and the SAM, why do they require [us] to model and play-act what our meetings look like? It feels more like a hoop through which we jump to give the coach something to talk about rather than something that is meaningful [for us].*

Principal: *[Coaching] has been nice but probably not that beneficial. It's just support. [The coach asks.] What can I do to help you, anything we need to work on? Nice, but not a factor. We walk around the building, get a few suggestions.*

Principal: *I'd rather use the time visiting with other schools to see firsthand what is going on in our district. While I love our coach, I feel as if it's just another way of reporting, rather than learning. For reporting, isn't that why they use TimeTrack?*

These examples are perhaps best characterized as reflections on ineffective coaching. The first example suggested that coaching that imposed or appeared to impose a narrow or rigidly defined practice on a school or school staff would have little or no success. Together, the first two examples underscored the importance of coaching that explicitly recognized and addressed contextual factors. The last three examples described coaching sessions that were superficial and, consequently, of limited use to principals and SAMs. None of the examples represents a good use of time.

Training and Conferences for Principals and SAMs

Training was not part of the SAM project design in most states and was not counted among the SAM project's non-negotiables. However, in their initial orientation workshops and in state and district meetings, principals and SAMs reported that they learned about project implementation. In Kentucky, funds were used for initial and ongoing training for principals and SAMs. Principals and SAMs also considered the two National SAM/Principal Conferences to have been professional development, and reported them as such to their districts. Here, we examine participation in training by principals and SAMs and their overall ratings of the usefulness of the training. We also discuss several training activities and the national conferences.

Participation in Training

Overall, about 85 percent of all principals and SAMs who responded to the surveys reported that they had participated in at least some training as part of the SAM project. Looking at the three states with largest numbers of principals and SAMs, almost all of the Kentucky and Iowa principals and all of the SAMs in these states participated in some sort of training related to the SAM project. The numbers were somewhat lower in Illinois, with 78 percent of principals and 61 percent of SAMs reporting participation at the time of the survey.

Although large numbers of principals and SAMs participated in training and professional development, the quantity of these activities that was available varied considerable across the

states. For example, in Kentucky, roll-out of the project after the pilot phase included a fairly extensive portfolio of ongoing activities, supported by Wallace grant funds and state funds, for both principals and SAMs. In Iowa and Illinois, training and professional development were more limited. In Chicago, the primary pre-implementation preparation was an orientation session that was intended to explain the initiative to prospective participants.

We learned in interviews that some principals and SAMs participated in training after they began the project. (This may help explain the relatively low rates of participation in training reported in Illinois on our survey, where several schools were in their early weeks with the project at the time of the survey.) The lateness of training was a problem for some:

Principal: We got no training in the beginning. Well we had an introduction from [the National SAM Project Director] and he gave us some materials and articles and we did some readiness stuff and that worked, but we got no initial training. It would have been helpful.... Training would have helped us to define responsibilities.... I end up telling people what to do, but no one is telling me how to use my time. So original training could have had guidelines and a model to follow.

During one of our interviews a SAM who had been on the job for almost a year reported that she had received no training on how to use TimeTrack and was quite surprised to learn about various report functions as well as the capacity to track principal interactions with individual teachers. The lack of pre-implementation training in some sites meant that principals and SAMs had to fend for themselves as they embarked on their new roles, used new tools, and negotiated new relationships.

Overall Ratings of the Usefulness of Training and Professional Development

The surveys asked principals and SAMs to rate how helpful the training was and the extent to which it met their needs in various areas. Overall, large majorities of principals and SAMs rated the training they received as either “very helpful” or “helpful” (76 percent of principals and 81 percent of SAMs). SAMs were almost twice as likely as principals to give a “very helpful” rating, however (42 percent versus 22 percent). The surveys also asked principals and SAMs to assess the extent to which training met their needs in specific areas (Exhibits 6-7 and 6-8). For most areas, the most frequent rating in both groups was that the training “was a good start.”

Exhibit 6-7: Principals' Ratings of Training by Content

How fully did the training address your needs in each of the following areas?	Addressed my needs completely	Was a good start
Working with a SAM (n=90)	44%	47%
Using TimeTrack data to monitor progress toward my goals (n=91)	41%	45%
Delegating managerial tasks to others (n=91)	36%	45%
Preparing teachers for a change in my role (n=91)	35%	47%
Working with a Time Change Coach (n=89)	35%	42%
Interpreting the Time/Task Analysis report from the week of shadowing (n=90)	28%	59%
Mechanics of using TimeTrack (n=83)	25%	47%
Setting goals (n=92)	24%	62%

Source: Survey of principals.

Exhibit Reads: Forty-four percent of responding principals indicated that the training on “Working with a SAM” addressed their needs completely.

Exhibit 6-8: SAMs' Rating of Training by Content

How fully did the training address your needs in each of the following areas?	Addressed my needs completely	Was a good start
Engaging the principal in conversations about his or her time use (n=80)	50%	39%
Mechanics of using TimeTrack (n=76)	51%	29%
Interpreting and using the Time/Task Analysis report from the data collector (n=76)	45%	43%
Assigning tasks to others (n=72)	38%	36%
Interacting with teachers and support staff(n=79)	34%	46%
Interacting with parents/community members* (n=78)	33%	41%
Managing my time as a SAM (n=80)	29%	48%
Interacting with district staff* (n=76)	26%	37%
Managing school facilities* (n=68)	28%	37%
Handling routine student discipline* (n=68)	27%	49%
Managing the school budget (e.g., purchasing, account management, bookkeeping)* (n=54)	22%	30%
Keeping records (e.g., student attendance data, free-lunch data, etc.)* (n=58)	14%	29%

Note: Seventeen percent or more of SAMs who responded to the survey indicated that the topics denoted with an (*) were either “not part of the training” or “not part of my job.”

Source: Survey of SAMs.

Exhibit reads: Fifty percent of SAMs indicated that training addressed their needs completely in the area of “Engaging the principal in conversations about his or her time use.”

Looking across the three states with the largest numbers of principal/SAM teams, principals and SAMs in Kentucky were more likely than their counterparts in the other two states to report that the training addressed their needs completely with respect to individual topics.

State Training Activities

Early in the SAM project, the National SAMs Project Director provided almost all of the pre-implementation orientation and training for prospective and new principals and SAMs. Thus, these sessions are probably best viewed as a combination of marketing to encourage new participation and basic training. As the project expanded it was not possible for the director to continue providing all of the training. Therefore, in a train-the-trainer strategy, he began working with state project leaders to assist them in providing training in their states. The usual pattern was that he led the training in the first year; they co-led it in the second year; and the state leader led it in the third year. The National SAM Project Director continued to introduce the project to prospective sites and to launch training, as needed, in those sites.

In Kentucky, a relatively extensive program of professional development for SAMs and principals was included in the activities for which the state sought and received Wallace Foundation support. The training in Kentucky was organized by staff in the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) in conjunction with the Kentucky Leadership Academy. It included (1) week-long summer institutes for SAMs and principals to familiarize them with the project and expectations for their roles, (2) ongoing training for principals on topics related to instructional leadership, and (3) ongoing networking opportunities for SAMs. In addition to addressing the nuts and bolts of the project (e.g., readiness, TimeTrack, daily meetings), sessions for the SAMs also explored a number of other topics, including site-based decision making and school budgets, maintenance of buildings and grounds, bullying, special education, school law, and responding to school emergencies. This list of topics defined a rather broad set of expectations for the SAM role. It also located these expectations in the context of the regulatory structure that governs Kentucky schools. Finally, consistent with the state's approach to the SAM project, these topics and the training were intended to underscore the notion that the SAMs were to serve exclusively in management roles and that the position was not a pathway to the principalship.

Training for Kentucky principals on instructional leadership featured a number of sessions with a North Carolina-based consultant and professional development provider. At the risk of some oversimplification, this individual's approach is to help principals work with teachers to enhance what he calls the "six essential attributes of excellent teaching," which include:

- Clear learning goals
- Congruency of action
- Task analysis
- Diagnosis
- Overt responses
- Mid-course corrections

The consultant's training for Kentucky principals included presentations at the summer institutes, as well as ongoing sessions with the seven principals who signed on to the SAMs project in 2006. Sessions focused on helping principals recognize the attributes of good teaching in classroom observations and, based on the observations, coaching teachers on how to improve their practice. A key assumption of this strategy was that focusing on areas of strength in teachers' performance has the most potential for continued improvement. An important corollary is that focusing on areas of weakness is likely to have much less payoff and that, indeed, principals should limit their coaching efforts to the teachers whom they consider most talented.

In interviews and presentations that we observed, Kentucky principals said that they found these sessions useful, especially because they provided what principals saw as a practical framework for working with teachers. District decision makers also saw value in the consultant's work with the participating principals. Indeed, one district subsequently dismissed its SAMs and, with the money saved, hired the consultant to provide additional ongoing coaching to all principals in the district.

The networking activities for SAMs in Kentucky included meetings and conference calls. The primary purposes of the networking were for KDE project leaders to provide updates to the SAMs and for the SAMs to discuss questions and concerns and to share experiences about what was working and challenges.

We observed two activities for SAMs and principals in Iowa during 2008. The first was a July training session for the SAMs and principals in the Council Bluffs Community School District as the district joined the SAM project. This training included a day-long meeting for SAMs and a second day for SAMs and principals to work together. It focused on adherence to the core elements of the SAM project. There was hands-on training in the use of TimeTrack, discussion of readiness strategies, and preparation and practice of the "passion speeches" that participants would deliver in their schools. Establishing and maintaining a strong working relationship between principals and SAM, especially on potentially difficult issues such as discipline, was another key theme throughout the event.

The SAM/Principal Forum for Iowa teams, held in December 2008, was an occasion for participants to share their experiences and to learn from each other. Participants appeared to find the discussion with the data collectors especially valuable in shedding light on details of Time/Task Analysis and the descriptors. They also had opportunities to meet in job-alike groups with their peers from around the state.

National Conferences

The National SAM Project convened two National SAM/Principal Conferences in January 2008 and February 2009. The first conference included a mix of principals and SAMs who were in the early phases of implementation and principals and district staff who were considering participating in the project. The second conference included principals and SAMs with varying degrees of experience in the project. Time Change Coaches and state project

coordinators also participated in both conferences, with Time Change Coaches responsible for facilitating many of the breakout sessions. Both conferences were organized around a series of plenary sessions and breakout sessions.

The first conference primarily featured presentations by people who were involved in state and local implementation of the SAM project. The presentations generally focused on explanations of the core elements of the SAM project, with highlights from early efforts in Kentucky and Victorville, California. The breakout sessions consisted of discussions of various implementation issues and often served as opportunities for those who were considering participation in the project to ask questions of those who were already on board.

The second conference differed from the first conference in several ways. First, as noted above, participation was limited to principals and SAMs who were already involved in the project, albeit in the very early stages in some cases. Second, the conference agenda included two keynote speakers who addressed principal coaching strategies and brain research, respectively. Their presentations were accompanied by breakout sessions to permit attendees to interact more directly with the two speakers. Other breakout sessions included training to help SAMs take a coaching role in their interactions with principals, opportunities for principals and SAMs to share experiences and descriptions of what was working, and state meetings to facilitate networking within the states. Finally, as described earlier, the second conference also included a day-long pre-conference session for Time Change Coaches.

Observations about the Training and Conferences Available to Principals and SAMs

As they did in rating the quality of Time Change Coaching, principals and SAMs gave training mixed but mildly positive reviews, with many survey respondents labeling the activities as a good start and a few characterizing them as inadequate or simply not a good use of time.

Based on interviews conducted during the site visits and interviews and observations at various project events we offer the following observations about the overall quality of training and conferences.

Principals and SAMs welcomed opportunities to learn from other principals and SAMs. A number of principals and SAMs agreed that they benefitted from interactions with colleagues:

SAM: We get together with others in the district, which is good, but it could happen more often and include SAMs from other places....In our district meetings we share ideas about and what is working....Being in a high school, hearing about elementary [schools] is very different. But it is absolutely beneficial to hear a different perspective. Sometimes the issues in other schools are similar, but they address them in a different way.

Principal: *The SAM and I went [to the national conference] last year. It was good. It was helpful to meet SAMs from other states and to learn what they do. [The SAM and I] were together and said “We could do that in our school.”*

Finally, the lively interactions that took place in many of the breakout sessions at both of the national conferences confirmed our observations about principal and SAM perspectives on the benefits of these learning opportunities.

Conference sessions and other training activities did not always anticipate participants’ needs and interests. Effective training recognizes and addresses participants’ needs and interests. Some of the activities we observed did not meet this standard. For example, the First National SAM/Principal Conference was billed as an opportunity for principals and SAMs who had made progress in implementing the project’s core elements to share their experiences and learn from each other. As it turns out, relatively few of the participants had been engaged in the work for very long, and a significant number attended the conference because they were considering the SAM approach and wanted more information. One result was that breakout sessions became a mix of practitioners sharing their experiences and looking for new strategies and shoppers asking questions about the basics. The mismatch between purpose and participants diluted the benefits for both groups.

At the second national conference, the featured presentations rested on extensive and complex theoretical and conceptual frameworks, which could have potentially important implications for practice, especially in the area of instructional leadership. The presenters were skilled, and held the audience’s attention. In addition to the two keynote presentations, representatives from the Atlanta Public Schools introduced the district’s new teacher performance appraisal system in a third plenary session.

Although many principals and SAMs said in interviews that they enjoyed these sessions and saw them as sources of many good ideas, and although the project’s own conference evaluation reportedly showed positive findings, we saw two problems with these presentations. First, even though some SAMs said that they liked the sessions, there was no attempt to connect the messages to the SAMs or to the expectations for their work. Therefore, it is unlikely that the SAMs, other than those who aspired to be principals, gained much from these sessions. Second, there was no planned follow-up to these sessions (other than the immediate breakouts) that could have helped participants reflect on what they learned, study it more depth, or practice applying new strategies in their schools. Hence, the comments about these sessions providing “a number of good ideas” describe both the outcome and its limits.

In some of the other training activities that we observed, as well as the blended coaching training for coaches, the presenters were not familiar with the SAM project. As engaging as the presentations might have been at the moment, participants were left to figure out for themselves how to interpret and apply the substance of the presentations in their work as principals, SAMs, or coaches.

Extensive reliance on frameworks and lists may cloud meaning and lesson understanding. A hallmark of many of the activities we describe here was the introduction of

multiple frameworks and lists to define elements of instructional leadership and coaching. Examples include the National SAM Project's 25 descriptors for time use, the eight strategies included in blended coaching, the four ORID questioning strategies, the Leadership Performance Planning Worksheet's (LPPW's) nine dimensions of leadership and 40 core behaviors, a consultant's six attributes of excellent teaching, and Robert Marzano's 21 responsibilities of school leaders. The introduction of these and other lists and frameworks has served several functions in the national project. First, each was proffered as a useful tool that principals, SAMs, or Time Change Coaches could use in their work. Viewed this way, the ORID framework could help guide SAMs' conversations with principals and the conversations between coaches and principals. Blended Coaching and LPPW could also guide these conversations. The project's time use descriptors, the LPPW, and Marzano's responsibilities could help principals focus on practices associated with instructional leadership. Second, the frameworks were often introduced as mutually reinforcing. Thus, there were claims that the SAM project's descriptors, the responsibilities of school leaders, and the LPPW's leadership dimensions and core behaviors were all research-based and aligned, with the implication that users of these tools have only to look around in the tool kit until they find a tool they like. This perspective masks both the underlying complexity of these frameworks and the fact that they offer different visions of school leadership in general and instructional leadership in particular. We did not see in-depth review or critical reflection on the lists and frameworks in the training sessions we observed.

Summary and Conclusions

Readiness activities, data collection and Time/Task Analysis, TimeTrack, Time Change Coaching, and project training all reflected efforts to support effective implementation of the SAM project. With the exception of the descriptor framework, which remained intact for the sake of consistent data, they all evolved over time and across sites.

With new schools joining the project each year, it is understandable that these project tools were primarily geared to supporting start-up. By and large, principals and SAMs said the tools had served this purpose reasonably well, providing basic orientation when it was needed, although there were some exceptions (e.g., in schools that entered the project without the benefit of any training). Several said that more intensive help would have been welcome at the beginning, such as a more immediate report from the Time/Task Analysis and more frequent coaching in the early weeks.

Down the road, as principals and SAMs settled into the project, many questioned the continuing value of the project's tools in their current form. They acknowledged that Time/Task Analysis could provide needed accountability, but their enthusiasm for using TimeTrack had waned considerably, and they varied in the extent to which they valued their Time Change Coaches' visits, depending both on their own amount of experience with the project and also on their coach's skills.

In addition to gathering these views from participating principals and SAMs, we had the opportunity to observe several project training events and to meet with almost all the coaches. Our observation was that, despite strengths, these project resources were not sufficient to address

all the purposes that principals and SAMs brought to them. By design, other than in Kentucky, the training was very limited in cost and scope. Thus, it did not aim to provide principals with in-depth resources that could help them use their time most effectively in instructional leadership. Training also gave only limited help to SAMs who were trying to assume major roles in school management. In addition to these built-in limitations, we observed that the cumulative effect of multiple, overlapping conceptual frameworks in the training and coaching materials seemed certain to leave participants with an experience that was less than the sum of its parts.

7. Recommendations

With the number of participating principals likely to increase beyond the current 160 by the 2009-10 school year, the National SAM Project has outgrown the option of relying on face-to-face communication or ongoing local adaptations for its important work. Increasingly, it will need standard operating procedures and standardized tools to support implementation. At the same time, the project is still in its youth, with adaptations evolving in states, districts, and schools in a process that The Wallace Foundation has encouraged from the start. The time is right for taking advantage of this flexibility and, based on the strengths and weaknesses that have emerged in different sites, rethinking some assumptions and procedures in the project to improve the prospects for long-term results.

Our findings point to promising variations in SAM project implementation as well as to issues that impede more effective implementation. Based on these findings, this chapter offers six recommendations for the further development of the SAM project. Together, these recommendations underscore the importance of collaboration among key stakeholders as well as ongoing training and professional development for participating principals and SAMs.

Commit to Delegation

Our findings suggest that a critical ingredient in changing principals' time use is the delegation of routine and time-consuming management tasks to someone else in the building. Principals' time use changed over the course of a year in those schools in which SAMs were carrying out the five responsibilities on our "delegation index": student discipline, student supervision, managing non-teaching staff, managing school facilities, and parent interactions. Principals who shared or delegated these time-intensive managerial tasks to SAMs significantly shifted their time use towards instruction. Principals who did not or could not delegate these managerial tasks did not significantly increase the time they spent on instruction. Although we do not have systematic data on delegation to individuals other than SAMs, it is logical to assume that delegating these tasks to anyone—not just a SAM—would make a difference in principals' time use.

These findings were not surprising. Principals had to cede some responsibilities to take on new ones. And this transition from management to instruction was expedited when the school added new staff capacity (Model 1) or converted existing staff capacity (Model 2) for management operations. The central premise for the project seems to be: to significantly redirect principals' efforts towards instruction (in a relatively short period of time), provide principals with extra capacity, so they can pursue instructional improvement while still meeting the school's basic needs of safety, order, and stability.

Delegation is a challenge in schools that do not add any new staffing when they adopt the SAM project. As adoptions of Model 3 increased, more and more SAMs came to the position with a full plate of existing assignments in their schools. We found that Model 3 principals' time use did not change significantly over a year, possibly because the SAMs in Model 3 schools were

not in a position to take on additional tasks. Although districts may argue that Model 3 is the only affordable model, there is little point in doing something affordable if it does not make any difference. It is possible that principals with Model 3 SAMs could show gains in time devoted to instructional issues once further data are collected. It is also not implausible that principals with Model 3 SAMs could show significant gains in the future. As National SAM Project Director Mark Shellinger notes, “Maybe [one of the Time Change coaches] is right – that Model 3 just takes more time.” These are certainly issues that can be explored in the future. Our advice, given the tension between affordability and effectiveness, is that principals find ways to delegate and that districts encourage and support their efforts to do so.

Based on our visits to schools, we are under no illusion that delegating time-consuming responsibilities is easy. In no case did we find an employee in an existing position, other than the SAM, who took on major new management work when the school started implementing the SAM project. We interviewed school office staff other than principals and SAMs—school secretaries, assistant principals, and others with building-wide responsibilities—and found that they were continuing to do what they had been doing before. In most schools SAMs were not, as far as we could tell, arranging for the principal to delegate work to anyone other than themselves.

Thus, a commitment to delegation would require a serious effort to break with customary school practice by re-engineering the assignment of responsibilities. Adding a new SAM position, as in Model 1 or 2, clearly makes this easier. It is possible, however, that readiness activities and Time Change Coaching could be systematically organized to promote and support delegation in Model 3 schools so that principals’ time use could change.

Another step that would facilitate delegation in any model would be to work with the district office to ensure that delegation will be effective. We found that a number of SAMs faced inconsistent responses from the central office when they tried to use authority that they believed they held (e.g., to sign particular kinds of documents on behalf of the school). Clearing up this confusion would save time for the SAM/principal teams or for anyone else to whom principals delegate management responsibilities, and thus would help increase the time that principals could spend on instruction.

Rethink the Descriptors

The 25 descriptors of management and instructional tasks have several virtues: they can be interpreted to cover everything a principal does in the building; they are framed in relatively concrete behavioral terms, compared with some literature on leadership in organizations; and they are untainted by faddish leadership jargon. For trained data collectors, they appear to function reasonably well.

However, the descriptors’ utility to principals is much less clear. Although SAM/principal teams dutifully enter data into TimeTrack by descriptor, our interview questions about their use of the data revealed that principals are not setting goals in terms of descriptors, and that many (perhaps most) pay little attention to the reports of their time use broken out by descriptor. Instead, they generally look at their overall percentage of time spent on instruction,

and many look at the record of the specific classrooms in which they have conducted observations. (Indeed, they are unable to look at a breakout of management tasks by descriptor, since TimeTrack does not furnish such a breakout.) This suggests that much valuable time is wasted in entering detailed data that go unused.

Revamping the descriptors used for Time/Task Analysis and TimeTrack would be no small undertaking. We suggest that it begin with a careful analysis of the ways in which principals use—or would use—a data system. For example, a system with fewer categories would make recording easier, which would be an incentive for principals and SAMs to do the recording more frequently (rather than catching up on a month’s worth of time use just before the visit of the Time Change Coach, as some have been doing). A streamlined system could also minimize existing problems such as having four categories that can be used to record the act of providing feedback to teachers.

To inform the selection of a smaller set of more meaningful categories, we would suggest in-depth conversations with principals who are veterans in the SAM project and principals who are highly skilled instructional leaders (inside or outside the SAM project). One of the options for discussion, too, should be the use of a data system analogous to a blank Excel spreadsheet, with no categories pre-set, that would accommodate whatever descriptors the district or the principal wanted to track.

Use of the Time/Task and TimeTrack data would also be enhanced by adding in-depth training for participating principals about the descriptors, their meaning, and how to use them to inform strategic choices in leadership. Coaching should help SAM/principal teams use the data to identify time-consuming management tasks that could be delegated, and should help principals plan and monitor their use of time to pursue their substantive goals in school leadership. This would include tracking the use of time spent outside the building (which TimeTrack does not now do), identifying more and less productive leadership activities carried out at the district office or with community groups.

Identify Implementation Stages for Tailored Support

Understandably, the supporting tools and infrastructure of the National SAM Project focus on the start-up phase of project implementation in schools. In each year of the National SAM Project, the majority of participating schools have been in the start-up phase.

Down the road, however, support for mature stages of implementation is likely to become increasingly important. The Time Change Coaches have already expressed interest in mapping stages of implementation, and we think this would be a useful perspective for the project to bring to bear in its continuing work, as more schools reach stages beyond start-up.

We found that SAMs and principals who were veterans with the project tended to express polite toleration for Time/Task Analysis, TimeTrack, and Time Change Coaching. Few could point to specific benefits they derived from them. Some principals said that Time/Task data collection was useful for their accountability, whether to themselves or to their districts (since

about half were sharing their data with the central office). Those whose Time Change Coaches were veteran principals said they valued the opportunity to discuss their practice with an experienced colleague. On the other hand, several commented that TimeTrack and the other supports for implementation were starting to outlive their usefulness, once the SAM settled into the job and the principal's focus on instructional time had become second nature.

Substantive professional development for principals in the later stages of project implementation—which has not been part of the overall project design—would be welcome and useful, we believe. Once a principal has developed a set of routines that get him or her out of the office and into the classrooms and hallways, the productive use of this time offers a challenge worth embracing. What are the higher-leverage approaches to conversations with teachers, students, and parents? How can a principal work with professional teams in the building over time, guiding them to own and lead the continual improvement of teaching and learning? A continual round of classroom inspections does not seem to us to offer the best leverage on school improvement, yet the project's supporting tools tend to give principals credit and reinforcement for that kind of leadership practice.

Once again, our recommendation to the project is that principals who have had experience in the SAM project be consulted extensively in the process of designing tools and supports that would help them deepen their leadership work. The process should also reflect data on the ways in which principals' behaviors and challenges evolve over time in the project. Some of the coaches have said they could do their work better if they knew what stages to look for, and we agree that a delineation of stages would be helpful.

Improve the Data Collection and Reporting Tools for Efficiency at Scale

So far, the systems used for Time/Task data collection and TimeTrack reporting are functioning acceptably, although strains are evident. Data collectors are comfortable with paper-and-pencil recording; the National SAM Project typically completes the analysis of the paper data and returns a report to the principal within two weeks. TimeTrack draws complaints from SAMs and principals who would prefer to use handheld devices and to synch it with their existing calendar software, but they put up with it because it is required.

We think that automating and streamlining these tools would make them more user-friendly as well as saving project resources in the long run. We have already discussed the notion of simplifying the descriptor system. Simplifying the mechanics of collecting, recording, and reporting data would also bring benefits, we believe.

For Time/Task data collection, we recommend that a two-day procedure replace the current five-day procedure. Our simulation showed that for 85 percent of principals, the instructional-time percent calculated from two days of data collection would be within 10 percentage points of the percent calculated from the current five days. Both the cost savings and the reduction of burden for participating schools would be substantial. Although it is always possible to argue that greater accuracy is desirable, we would note that five days of data

collection also provides only a sample of behavior and entails some level of inaccuracy. There will always be trade-offs between accuracy and affordability, and our opinion is that two days of data collection would achieve substantially the same benefits as the current five-day procedure, at lower cost.

Automating the Time/Task process on handheld devices would permit the data collector to give the principal immediate feedback on his or her time use, with a substantive debriefing, perhaps including a Time Change Coach, on the spot, rather than shipping the paper-and-pencil data to the National SAM Project for processing. If the project is to scale up, this decentralized processing and reporting would offer needed efficiencies, especially at peak times for data collection in the spring and fall.

For TimeTrack, we echo the pleas of participating principals and SAMs who would like the system to work on handheld devices as well as computers, and to synchronize with the calendar systems that are widely used in schools. A proprietary system layered on top of existing calendars does not fulfill the project's overall aim of respecting and supporting principals' use of time for leadership.

Improve Coaching

Currently, Time Change Coaches sign agreements that deal with confidentiality and their responsibility for supporting principals and SAMs. This is a commendable feature of the project. We suggest that additional expectations for Time Change Coaches also be codified and clearly communicated. The regularity of coaching visits and written feedback should be monitored, as should coaches' participation in professional development. Delineating and enforcing a larger set of basic requirements for coaching would help improve the professional stature of the coaching corps.

More substantively, coaches would benefit from more guidance on the start-up phase of project implementation, when participants agree that their contribution is important. Coaching at this stage should be more frequent than the required once a month, we believe. All coaches should be well equipped to troubleshoot the initial stages of school readiness, principals' reflection and strategic goal setting, use of TimeTrack, and development of new habits. As we have suggested, active intervention from coaches should support the delegation of management tasks, which appears to be a challenging process in Model 3 schools in particular.

As a school's participation in the SAM project matures, coaching should shift to more in-depth support for the SAM's assumption of greater management responsibility and for the principal's instructional leadership practice. We are not at all convinced that external coaching is the best approach at this stage, given the importance of aligning SAMs' and principals' work with district procedures and priorities. Instead, where a district has the capacity to provide coaching, we believe locally based coaching is likely to be the best option.

Although leaders in the National SAM Project have tried to realize a vision of the SAM as coach for the principal's reflective practice, and have in turn encouraged the Time Change

Coaches to develop the SAMs' capacity for reflective coaching, we are skeptical about this vision. In participating schools, even the SAMs who are themselves retired principals gravitate more to the execution of management tasks in their own sphere of work than to serving as an in-house shepherd for the principal's reflection on leadership activities. And most SAMs, lacking the professional stature of experienced principals, are in an even weaker position for carrying out such a role. On the other hand, we found many SAMs who were skillfully carrying out management tasks, to the benefit of the school and the principal. We suggest, therefore, that coaching SAMs on the assumption of management responsibilities and the improvement of the school's management systems would be more productive than coaching them on how to be coaches. If, however, the National SAM Project continues to expect SAMs to assume a coaching role, we suggest that the project encourage Time Change Coaches and SAMs to coordinate their coaching efforts to reduce or eliminate inconsistent messages to the principals.

An aspect of coaching and support that deserves more attention, we think, is the creation and support of opportunities for SAMs and principals to convene for networking as well as professional development. Where these opportunities occur once or twice a year—or, even better, monthly—they are appreciated. Working in new ways is never easy, and peer networks can provide both practical ideas and moral support.

Pay More Attention to Districts

As a national project that has a state-level infrastructure in several states, the National SAM Project has not developed a clear district-level strategy that would integrate it into districts' priorities for school improvement. To be sure, districts pay the SAMs' salaries, and in several districts the superintendents or other central-office staff have embraced the project and turned it into an instrument for their priorities. However, goal setting in the project remains a school-by-school process, focusing on time-use percentages rather than on broader goals. Moreover, the National SAM Project has insisted that principals' disclosure of their time-use data can only be voluntary, and has maintained a coaching structure that is external to districts.

We believe that gaining—and building on—a district-level commitment to using the project should be a key ingredient in future scale-up activities. Districts work with principals on their substantive priorities for school improvement, and we believe that reorganizing principals' time use should be viewed as a means of advancing such priorities.

It would be useful for districts to draw up memoranda of understanding with the National SAM Project and their participating principals, identifying the school-level outcomes that are expected and the timeline for achieving these outcomes. These goals might be framed in terms of principal behavior, changes in teaching practice, or targeted improvements in student performance (e.g., mathematics at particular grade levels, or achievement among particular demographic groups). The district would also commit to supporting the authority of the SAM position and the principals' delegation of specific management tasks.

The goals and procedures associated with the SAM project in a district should also be aligned with professional development available to principals. Typically, districts offer their

principals some set of professional development activities related to instructional leadership, but people in the SAM project infrastructure (coordinators and coaches) have not focused on helping principals align the two, or on working with districts to restructure what is offered. District-level coaching should also be part of the agreement, unless the district is too small to have the capacity to provide coaching.

We also think that district supervision and incentives for the processes of tracking and changing time use would add to the power of the SAM project in schools. We recognize that our stance is at odds with the policy of maintaining local confidentiality of principal time data. The National SAM Project has held that protecting confidentiality contributes to principals' willingness to embark on the process of learning to use their time differently. But the fact that 40 percent of participating principals already share their data with district staff suggests to us that many principals are comfortable with transparency and do not need to have their data held in confidence. The confidentiality requirement undoubtedly discourages participation by some districts that are committed to accountability and would use the data effectively in conjunction with local supports and incentives for principals.

Challenges and Future Prospects

We have suggested here some ways in which the SAM innovation might be strengthened for implementation in the current sites and others. Other adjustments will be needed over time. For example, the sustainability of the SAM project remains somewhat uncertain. Several threats to its continuation are evident. Transitions are difficult: we observed the disruptions that come from routine transitions in school staffing (such as the transfer or retirement of a principal) and from the tendency of new superintendents to discard their predecessors' programs and substitute new interventions. Some current SAMs are dissatisfied in the position, especially where the district does not support their authority. Districts express concerns about the public response to the addition of administrative positions. Although many benefits are evident in our findings on principals' time use and on the improvements that SAMs have instituted in their schools, the maintenance and expansion of the National SAM Project will require that these threats be addressed.

For schools implementing the SAM project, changing practice requires more than reflection and a desire to change, and principals appear to be learning by doing. In the SAMs project, principals seem to be learning to do the work of instructional leaders by both trying out new tasks and specifically not doing other types of work. Principals are able to get into classrooms, observe teachers and students, and offer feedback by not doing car pick-ups or lunch duty, or breaking up fights and writing referrals, or processing building repairs or worrying about the cafeteria or sitting in the office filling out form after form. Capitalizing fully on these changes, which the SAM project has effectively supported in participating schools, is the important work that lies ahead, especially through more opportunities for professional development for principals.

More broadly, the record of the National SAM Project points to opportunities, challenges, and tensions inherent in a national intervention aimed at supporting school leadership. In its

early years, the project allowed many types of adaptations to arise at the state and school levels while some procedures and priorities were specified nationally. For example, state coordinators determined the amount and content of professional development for principals and SAMs; coaches decided individually whether to use the techniques in which they had been trained; principals identified their own goals for change in time use; SAMs developed their sphere of responsibility as they interacted with the principal and others in the school. Surprisingly few decisions were left to the districts, other than the major decision of whether and how to support SAM positions financially, but for sustainability and effectiveness of the innovation we have advised an expansion of district authority in the project.

As the SAM project evolves, its national and state leaders can capitalize on the variation that has emerged by systematically identifying and cultivating productive variations within the project while weeding out counterproductive ones. However, this will bring hard choices. Stakeholders at the national, state, and school levels embrace their own ways of implementing the SAM innovation, yet as more data emerge, not every feature or adaptation will prove to be workable and effective. Our findings already suggest that one way of implementing the project—designating a SAM but delegating few new tasks to him or her—has not resulted in changing principals' time use in the desired ways. Other school-level consequences that should be assessed in later years will include whether SAMs stay on the job over time, and how changes in principals' behavior affect teaching and learning in their schools. Still other consequences will be seen at the policy and system level, including whether districts support the project financially. Each of these types of consequences deserves systematic monitoring and should inform further revision and specification of the SAM innovation's essential elements. In this way, the project can continue to build on its notable accomplishments in helping principals change their use of time.