

**IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL SAM  
INNOVATION PROJECT: A COMPARISON OF  
PROJECT DESIGNS**

Brenda J. Turnbull  
Erikson Arcaira  
Beth Sinclair

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Policy Studies Associates, Inc.  
1718 Connecticut Avenue NW, Suite 400  
Washington DC 20009

For The Wallace Foundation  
5 Penn Plaza  
New York, NY 10001



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## Executive Summary

This report explores implementation of the National School Administration Manager (SAM) Innovation Project (NSIP), which seeks to enable principals to spend more time on instructional leadership tasks and less time on management tasks. In this project, which was originally developed and expanded with support from The Wallace Foundation, a participating principal works closely with a member of the school staff in monitoring the principal's daily time use. The study reported here follows up on an earlier evaluation,<sup>1</sup> using the additional years of data from the field now available to examine a key type of variation in implementation of the SAM process: whether the person who works with the principal in time management (called the SAM) is an employee newly hired for this purpose or a person who is already carrying out the duties of another position in the school.

Among the 181 schools for which the NSIP has baseline and one-year follow-up data on principals' time use, 116 implemented the SAM process with a newly hired staff member (a design that the project calls Model 1), and 57 assigned SAM responsibilities to a staff member who continued to carry out his or her existing responsibilities (a Model 3 design).<sup>2</sup> In either model, principals spent more time on instructional tasks, as defined in the NSIP record-keeping system, after one year of participation and still more after two years.

- The mean percentage of the principals' time spent on instruction rose from 32 percent at baseline to 46 percent after one year. Assuming a workday of 8.5 hours, this was the equivalent of adding 71 minutes of instructional time within a day, or 5 hours 57 minutes in an average week.
- Among the 93 principals with two years of implementation, those in the Model 1 group increased their instructional time from 33 percent to 52 percent, adding 1 hour 37 minutes of instructional time in an 8.5 hour workday or 8 hours 5 minutes in a week. Those in the Model 3 group increased their instructional time from 30 percent to 52 percent over two years, adding 1 hour 52 minutes in an 8.5 hour workday or 9 hours 21 minutes in a week.

All of these differences from baseline to follow-up were statistically significant. The small difference between Model 1 and Model 3 in the two-year results was not statistically significant. In short, the models had equivalent results in terms of principals' time use.

The principals' and SAM's accounts of their project implementation, in interviews that we conducted with members of 17 SAM/principal teams, shed light on how the teams functioned. We examined three features of the SAM process that NSIP highlights in its informational materials: delegation of management tasks to someone other than the principal; daily meetings between the SAM and principal; and use of calendars to schedule and record the principal's time.

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<sup>1</sup> Brenda J. Turnbull, M. Bruce Haslam, Erikson Arcaira, Derek L. Riley, Beth Sinclair, and J. Stephen Coleman, "Evaluation of the School Administration Manager Project." Washington DC: Policy Studies Associates 2009.

<sup>2</sup> A handful of schools had arrangements that did not fall into either of these categories.

In order to free time for instruction-related work, principals had to delegate some of their management responsibilities to someone else. In a Model 1 design, the SAM was most often the person who took the lead in accepting time-consuming management tasks. The amount and type of delegation to the SAM varied not only with the model but also with the SAM's background, which ranged from administrator certification to a secretarial position. Thus, in a Model 3 design or when working with a less skilled SAM, principals retained the lead in some management tasks, although they delegated some tasks to other staff members.

Daily meetings between the SAM and principal were a set part of the routine for about half of the teams we interviewed; the other teams met less frequently or more informally. The content of the meeting tended to differ depending on the SAM's skills and role: when the SAM was handling major management tasks, the team would discuss those as well as other delegation possibilities; when the SAM was functioning as a gatekeeper for the principal's time, the team would focus more heavily on examining the principal's time use.

Most of the principals we interviewed were using calendars to pre-schedule substantial amounts of their time. Although fully adhering to such a schedule was rarely possible, most principals appreciated having a pre-filled calendar as a reminder of the way they intended to use their day. After the fact, all the SAMs recorded the principal's actual time use. Some principals paid close attention to their instructional time percentage; others checked it infrequently.

We observe that principals making changes in the *amount* of time they spend on instructional leadership must also work to ensure that the *quality* of their leadership is high. The SAM process includes coaching for SAM/principal teams, but we found that in many cases the coaching focused more on the reallocation of time than on the knowledge and skills needed in instructional leadership. The SAM process should not be viewed as a full answer to the challenges of strengthening principal leadership, even though participating principals do change their use of the important resource of time.

Having studied Model 1 and Model 3 in some depth, we also observe that Model 1 offers the possibility of serving an additional purpose beyond that of shifting principals' patterns of time use. If a school would benefit from adding management capacity, a Model 1 design has the advantage of bringing the SAM's skills into the building. In some cases we were told that this made a visible difference in school functioning, over and above the effects on the principal's use of time. More predictability in discipline, faster follow-up with the families of absent or tardy students, and faster handling of minor issues were among the benefits cited. Thus, although the data on principals' time use are identical across models, implementation shows other differences that some districts and schools would find important in deciding which model to adopt.

## Introduction

The National School Administration Manager Innovation Project (NSIP) seeks to improve schools by enabling principals to spend more time on instructional leadership tasks and less time on management tasks. For the past several years, in schools around the country, the project has supported principals in this effort. The project relies on a system of detailed record keeping: principals' tasks are categorized into 25 types, or "descriptors," divided into instruction-related and management-related tasks; the running record of a principal's time use by type of task provides that principal with motivation and guidance for improvement. An individual in the school becomes the School Administration Manager (SAM) who will work with the principal in the management of his or her time, hour by hour and day by day. The SAM is expected to maintain and monitor the principal's time records with proprietary software called TimeTrack, to review the records with the principal in a daily meeting, and to either carry out management tasks or help the principal delegate these tasks to others.

This report explores implementation of the project, with particular attention to the differences among various arrangements for the SAM position. The amount of time the SAMs can devote to their project responsibilities varies because some districts or schools hire a SAM as a new position on the school staff, while others add the SAM responsibilities to the existing job of someone in the school. The experience and qualifications of the SAMs also vary. Finally, as years pass, more schools have more years of experience in implementation. This report examines the implications of the differences for project implementation and principals' time use. It builds on an earlier evaluation completed by Policy Studies Associates (PSA) in 2009, when The Wallace Foundation had supported five years of development and expansion for the SAM project.<sup>3</sup> Key conclusions of the 2009 PSA evaluation were the following:

- On average, participating principals increased the percentage of their time that they spent on instructional tasks, as defined by the program, over one year of participation. This finding reflected data from 75 principals, whose mean increase of 13 percentage points in time spent on instruction represented a statistically significant shift in the overall mean, from 32 percent to 45 percent.
- The gains in instructional time found in 2009 varied according to features of the project's implementation, however. The gain was statistically significant only in the group of schools where SAMs reported on a survey that they took responsibility for five time-consuming management tasks: student discipline, student supervision, managing non-teaching staff, managing school facilities, and interacting with parents. It was also statistically significant only among schools that added a staff member when joining the program—i.e., that hired a SAM from outside the school or reassigned all of an existing staff member's previous responsibilities so that he or she could instead serve as the SAM.

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<sup>3</sup> Brenda J. Turnbull, M. Bruce Haslam, Erikson Arcaira, Derek L. Riley, Beth Sinclair, and J. Stephen Coleman, "Evaluation of the School Administration Manager Project." Washington DC: Policy Studies Associates 2009.

- SAMs did their jobs in a wide variety of ways, depending on their qualifications, their skills, and the evolution of their working relationship with the principal. The amount of responsibility that they took for school management varied. So, too, did their assertiveness in shepherding the principal's use of time.
- The project allowed principals to exercise their existing skills in instructional leadership but was not designed to transform the principals' approach.

In this follow-up study, we took a closer look at the similarities and differences across schools in which the SAM position did or did not represent an added staff member for the school. We compared these schools with respect to persistence in implementation; changes in principals' time use over one, two, and three years; and the ways in which the SAM/principal teams handled delegation of management tasks, their daily meetings, and the use of TimeTrack software. Our analysis addresses other differences in SAM arrangements, including the prior experience and skills the SAMs bring to their positions, and how long the SAM/principal team has worked together.

## **SAM Models**

The National SAM Innovation Project has special terminology for staffing configurations. In the initial design of the SAM project, which was the only design in place through 2006-07, a SAM was always a new staff member, expected to devote all of his or her working time to SAM responsibilities (notably using TimeTrack, meeting with the principal each day, and handling school-management tasks). This arrangement is now called Model 1. 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 the current definitions of the models, a position may be redesigned and a stipend added (Model 2), or a school staff member may retain all of his or her existing duties while also serving as the SAM for no additional compensation (Model 3). Finally, the term "Model 4" has been used for the few schools in which project methods were used to gather initial data on the principal's time use but no further engagement with the project was expected.

Looking at the numbers of schools that have followed each model, by year of adoption, we see that about two-thirds of new SAM/principal teams have followed the Model 1 structure with the SAM as an added position, one-fourth have followed Model 3 and added the SAM duties to an existing position, and the remaining teams have followed either Model 2 or Model 4 (Exhibit 1). There was a surge in Model 3 adoptions in the school years from 2007 through 2010. Some schools that initially adopted the project using Model 1 have subsequently shifted to Model 3.

Of the 346 teams in the national project's database, measures of principal time use after one year of implementation are available for 181 teams (Exhibit 2).



**Exhibit 1: SAM/Principal Teams, by Baseline Year and Model**

	2004-05		2006-07		2007-08		2008-09		2009-10		2010-11		2011-12		Model Total	Percent
	(n)	percent	(n)	percent	(n)	percent	(n)	percent	(n)	percent	(n)	percent	(n)	percent		
<b>Model 1</b>	1	100%	17	81%	46	61%	63	65%	41	49%	61	92%	1	100%	<b>230</b>	<b>66%</b>
<b>Model 2</b>	0	0%	1	5%	4	5%	2	2%	2	2%	2	3%	0	0%	<b>11</b>	<b>3%</b>
<b>Model 3</b>	0	0%	3	14%	25	32%	32	33%	23	27%	3	5%	0	0%	<b>86</b>	<b>25%</b>
<b>Model 4</b>	0	0%	0	0%	1	1%	0	0%	18	21%	0	0%	0	0%	<b>19</b>	<b>5%</b>
<b>Cohort Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>346</b>	<b>100%</b>

Exhibit reads: This exhibit shows the number and percent of SAM/principal teams with baseline data for each model type for each school year cohort. Of teams participating in baseline data collection in the 2004-05 school year, 1 team or 100 percent of the cohort was Model 1. Of teams participating in baseline data collection in the 2006-07 school year, 17 teams or 81 percent of the cohort were Model 1; 1 team or 5 percent of the cohort was Model 2; and 3 teams or 14 percent of the cohort were Model 3. Overall, 230 SAM/principal teams or 66 percent of teams across all cohorts were Model 1.

**Exhibit 2: SAM/Principal Teams with at Least One Year of Follow-up Data, By Baseline Year and Model**

	2004-05		2006-07		2007-08		2008-09		2009-10		Model Total	Percent
	(n)	percent	(n)	percent	(n)	percent	(n)	percent	(n)	percent		
<b>Model 1</b>	1	100%	15	79%	42	67%	42	61%	16	55%	<b>116</b>	<b>64%</b>
<b>Model 2</b>	0	0%	1	5%	4	6%	2	3%	1	3%	<b>8</b>	<b>5%</b>
<b>Model 3</b>	0	0%	3	16%	17	27%	25	36%	12	41%	<b>57</b>	<b>31%</b>
<b>Cohort Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>181</b>	<b>100%</b>

Exhibit reads: This exhibit shows the number and percent of SAM/principal teams with baseline and one-year follow-up data for each model type for each school year cohort. One team or 100 percent of the 2004-05 cohort with baseline and one-year follow-up data was Model 1. In the 2006-07 cohort, at teams or 79 percent of the teams with baseline and one-year follow-up data were Model 1; 1 team or 5 percent were Model 2; and 3 teams or 14 percent cohort were Model 3. Overall, 116 SAM/principal teams or 64 percent of all teams with baseline and one-year follow-up data were Model 1.

**Exhibit 3: Persistence Rates for Model 1 and 3 Teams,  
By Baseline Year and Model**

		2004-05		2006-07		2007-08		2008-09		2009-10		<b>Total</b> <b>Percent</b>	
		(n)	percent	(n)	percent	(n)	percent	(n)	percent	(n)	percent		
<b>Model 1</b>	<b>Continuing</b>	1	100%	8	47%	28	61%	36	57%	15	78%	<b>88</b>	<b>60%</b>
	<b>Withdrawn</b>			9	53%	14	30%	21	33%	3	16%	<b>47</b>	<b>32%</b>
	<b>Did not implement</b>			0	0%	4	9%	6	10%	1	5%	<b>11</b>	<b>8%</b>
	<b>Status Unknown*</b>										22	*	<b>22</b>
<b>Model 3</b>	<b>Continuing</b>			2	67%	10	40%	18	56%	12	71%	<b>42</b>	<b>55%</b>
	<b>Withdrawn</b>			1	33%	8	32%	10	31%	3	18%	<b>22</b>	<b>29%</b>
	<b>Did not implement</b>			0	0%	7	28%	4	13%	2	12%	<b>13</b>	<b>17%</b>
	<b>Status Unknown*</b>										6	*	<b>6</b>
<b>Cohort Total</b>		1	100%	20	100%	71	100%	95	100%	64	*	<b>251</b>	<b>*</b>

\* Persistence data for 22 Model 1 SAM/principal teams and 6 Model 3 SAM/principal teams from the 2009-10 cohort have not been verified and have been excluded in the calculation of their model's persistence rates for the 2009-10 cohort and for its overall sample. Percents for these subgroups indicate percent of model in 2009-10 cohort and percent of unknown for model total.

Exhibit reads: This exhibit shows the number and percent of SAM/principal teams that (1) continue to participate in the program, (2) have withdrawn from the program, (3) participated in baseline data collection but did not implement the program, and (4) whose persistence outcomes have not been verified at the time of this report, for each model for each school year cohort. One team or 100 percent of the 2004-05 Model 1 cohort continues to participate in the program. Eight teams from the 2006-07 Model 1 cohort continue to participate in the program while 9 teams or 53 percent of the 2006-07 Model 1 cohort have withdrawn from the program. Overall, 88 teams or 60 percent of all Model 1 teams whose persistence outcomes are known continue to participate in the program.

Attrition has not differed systematically across models. For all Model 1 and Model 3 SAM/principal teams, more than half of those that adopted the project through spring 2010 were still considered to be implementing the project as of spring 2011 (Exhibit 3). This was true for 60 percent of the Model 1 teams and 55 percent of the Model 3 teams for whom data were available.<sup>4</sup> About one-third of teams have withdrawn from the project (32 percent of Model 1 teams, 29 percent of Model 3), while 11 percent are classified as never having implemented the project (8 percent of Model 1 teams, 17 percent of Model 3 teams).

The national records of adoption and persistence thus reveal that about twice as many Model 1 teams have completed at least a year of implementation as Model 3 teams (a total of 116 teams vs. 57 teams), and that the rates of attrition since inception are similar across the two models. The number of cases permits us to analyze principals' time use by model, and we turn next to that set of findings.

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<sup>4</sup> A caveat to these figures is that the project has not yet determined the status of 28 of the 64 Model 1 and Model 3 teams that started in 2009-10; their follow-up data have not yet been reported, and so it is not possible to determine whether they have continued, started but stopped, or never started implementation.



## Changes in Principals' Time Use

Our earlier evaluation of the National SAM Innovation Project left open the question of the effectiveness of a Model 3 design in altering principals' time use in comparison with a Model 1 design, which adds staff capacity to the school. With only 23 Model 3 teams having data on principals' time use after a full year in the program, the observed changes in these principals' time use were not statistically significant. The larger volume of follow-up data now available permits us to revisit this question with greater statistical power, as well as to update the analysis of changes in time use among all participating principals.

The National SAM Innovation Project has exceptionally detailed records of participating principals' time use. As part of the program, principals agree to be shadowed by trained data collectors who record and analyze their use of time, in five-minute increments, at the start of their program participation and at the end of each year of participation. Results are presented in Time/Task Analysis reports that display the percentages of time each principal spent on instruction-related tasks, on management-related tasks, and on personal tasks during the shadowing period of two to five days. The national office retains all the records and has made them available to us.

While the project's records afford a close look at changes in time use among participating principals, we note that the attribution of changes to the SAM project would be stronger if we also had data from a comparison group of principals who did not participate in the project. As volunteers, the participating principals had demonstrated their interest in changing their use of time. Their districts may also have encouraged or even mandated that they spend time on instruction-related tasks such as observing classrooms. Therefore, we cannot say to what extent the SAM process caused the observed changes, over and above what might have been caused by the principals' own motivation or district encouragement. But despite this limitation, the available data are suitable for comparing the changes in time use across subgroups of principals participating in the SAM process.

In this section, we examine the average changes in the percentage of time principals spent on instruction after one, two, and in some cases, three years of working with a SAM. We also explore differences across SAM models and compare the outcomes of principals in elementary, middle, and high schools.

### Overall Change in Principals' Time Use

Principals participating in the SAM project significantly increased the percent of time that they spent on instruction-related work after one year in the project, based on the records from 181 principals with pre- and post-test data. On average, participants spent about one-third of their time (32 percent) on instruction-related tasks at baseline. The average increased to 46 percent after one year in the program (Exhibit 4). Viewing these principals as a group, the change in time spent on instruction-related work was statistically significant ( $p < .001$ ) and equaled an effect size of 1.03 of a standard deviation. In terms of time units, principals increased

the time they spent on instruction-related work by 71 minutes in an average 8.5 hour workday<sup>5</sup> or 5 hours 57 minutes in an average week.

**Exhibit 4: Percent of Principal's Time Spent on Instruction, Baseline and One-Year Follow-up (N=181)**

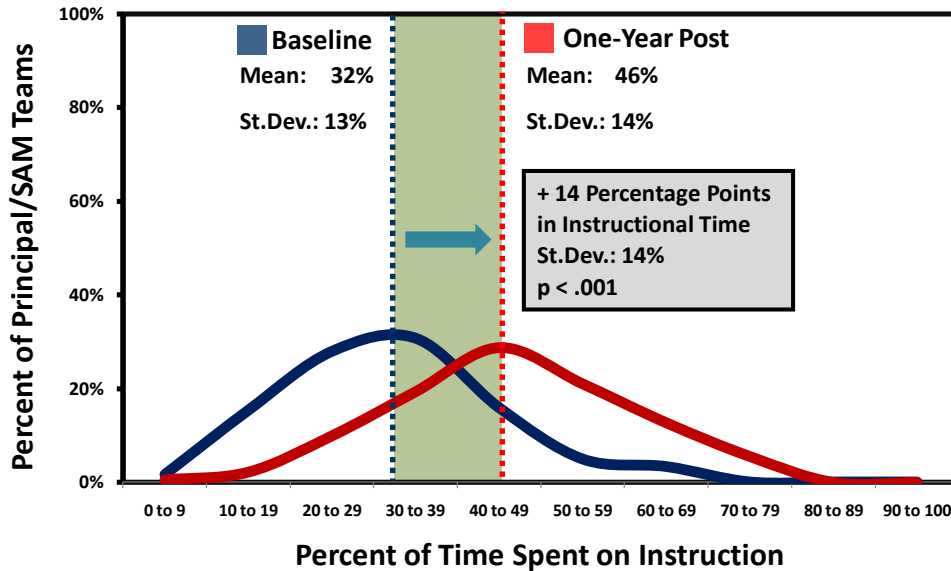


Exhibit reads: The graph shows two distributions of the percent of principals whose percentage of time spent on instruction fell into each decile (0 to 9 percent, 10 to 19 percent, etc.), one for the baseline and one for one-year follow up. The mean time spent on instruction at baseline was 32 percent, with a standard deviation of 13 percent. The mean at one-year follow up was 46 percent, with a standard deviation of 14 percent.

Participants achieved further increases in the percent of time spent on instruction-related work after two years of participation. For this smaller group consisting of 93 participants who had been in the program for two or more years, the baseline was again about one-third of their time (32 percent) spent on instruction-related work. The proportion of time spent on instruction-related tasks rose to a little over half of their time (52 percent) after two years in the program (Exhibit 5). The 20 percentage point increase is statistically significant ( $p < .001$ ) and equals an effect size of 1.48 of a standard deviation. In terms of time units, principals spent an additional 102 minutes on instruction-related work per day, or 8 hour 30 minutes per week, compared with their baseline rates.

<sup>5</sup> A 8.5 hour workday serves as the typical workday for this analysis. Time that principals spend after regular school hours is not included in Time/Task Analysis or in these calculations.

**Exhibit 5: Percent of Principal's Time Spent on Instruction, Baseline and Two-Year Follow-up (N=93)**

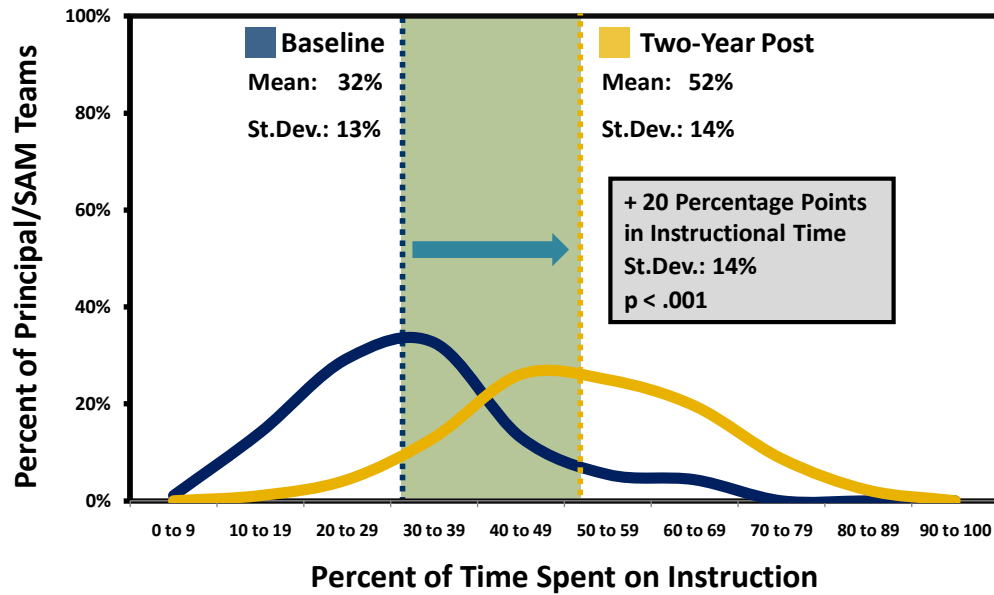


Exhibit reads: The graph shows two distributions of the percent of principals whose percentage of time spent on instruction fell into each decile (0 to 9 percent, 10 to 19 percent, etc.), one for the baseline and one for two-year follow-up data. The mean time spent on instruction at baseline was 32 percent, with a standard deviation of 13 percent. The mean at two-year post was 52 percent, with a standard deviation of 14 percent.

Participants continued to make gains in the percent of time that they spent on instruction-related tasks during the third year of program participation (Exhibit 6). The 39 principals with three-year follow-up data nearly doubled their baseline rates, increasing from a rate of 30 percent of time spent on instruction-related work at baseline to 59 percent after three years in the program. The 29 percentage point increase is significant ( $p < .001$ ) and equals an effect size of 2.41 of a standard deviation. In terms of time units, principals spent an additional 2 hours 28 minutes per day on instruction-related work per day or 12 hours 20 minutes per week from their baseline rates.

**Exhibit 6: Percent of Principal’s Time Spent on Instruction, Baseline and Three-Year Follow-up (N=39)**

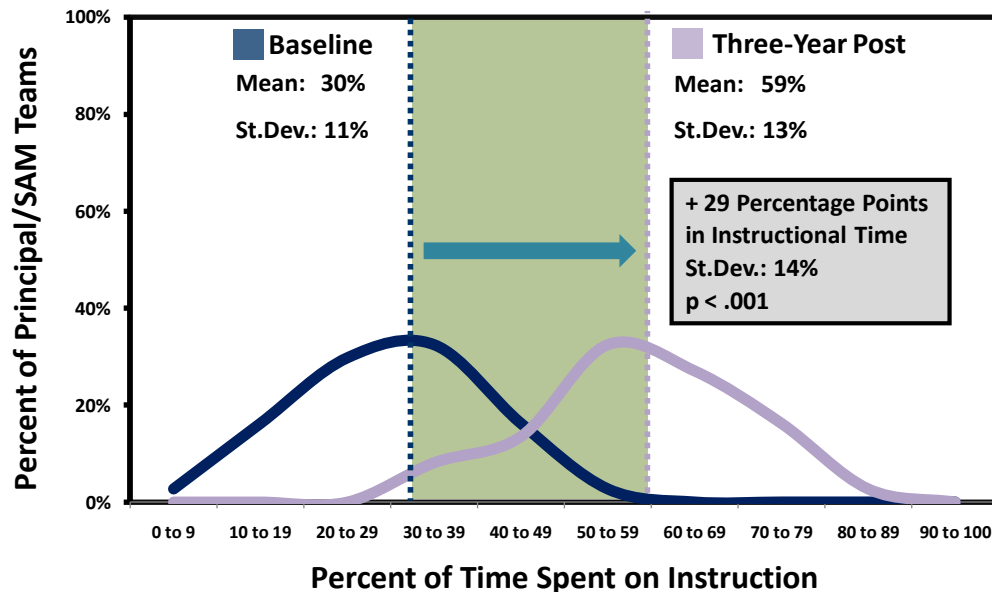


Exhibit reads: The graph shows two distributions of the percent of principals whose percentage of time spent on instruction fell into each decile (0 to 9 percent, 10 to 19 percent, etc.), one for the baseline and one for three-year follow-up data. The mean time spent on instruction at baseline was 30 percent, with a standard deviation of 11 percent. The mean at three-year post was 59 percent, with a standard deviation of 13 percent.

These findings show that participants can redistribute their use of time to incorporate more instruction-related work with support from a SAM. In addition, the higher gains in time spent on instruction-related work after the second and third year of participation demonstrate that over time SAM/principal teams can further redirect the principal’s time towards instruction.

This data analysis may be useful to the National SAM Innovation Project as it continues to examine the guidance given to teams. Based on our earlier evaluation, which showed a 13 percentage point average gain for teams over the first year of participation, the project has set a criterion for teams’ “success” that includes a gain of 13 percentage points or more compared with the initial baseline, irrespective of the number of years of implementation.<sup>6</sup> The project might want to identify higher targets for teams with more than one year of participation.

<sup>6</sup> The success criterion also specifies that more than 50 percent of the principal’s time is spent on instructional tasks, the Time/Task Analysis aligns with the TimeTrack record, and the coach and principal attest that the principal’s instructional time is likely to have positive effects on teacher practice.



Another way of displaying these average results is with a graphic that shows the hours spent on instructional tasks in a week, projecting the principals' baseline and follow-up data onto a week of 42.5 hours (Exhibit 7). In this exhibit, the two-year follow-up group is a subset of the one-year follow-up group, so not all bars represent exactly the same set of principals, but the general magnitude of the increase can be seen.

**Exhibit 7: Principal's Hours Spent on Instruction Per Week, Baseline, One-Year Follow-up, and Two-Year Follow-up Projections**

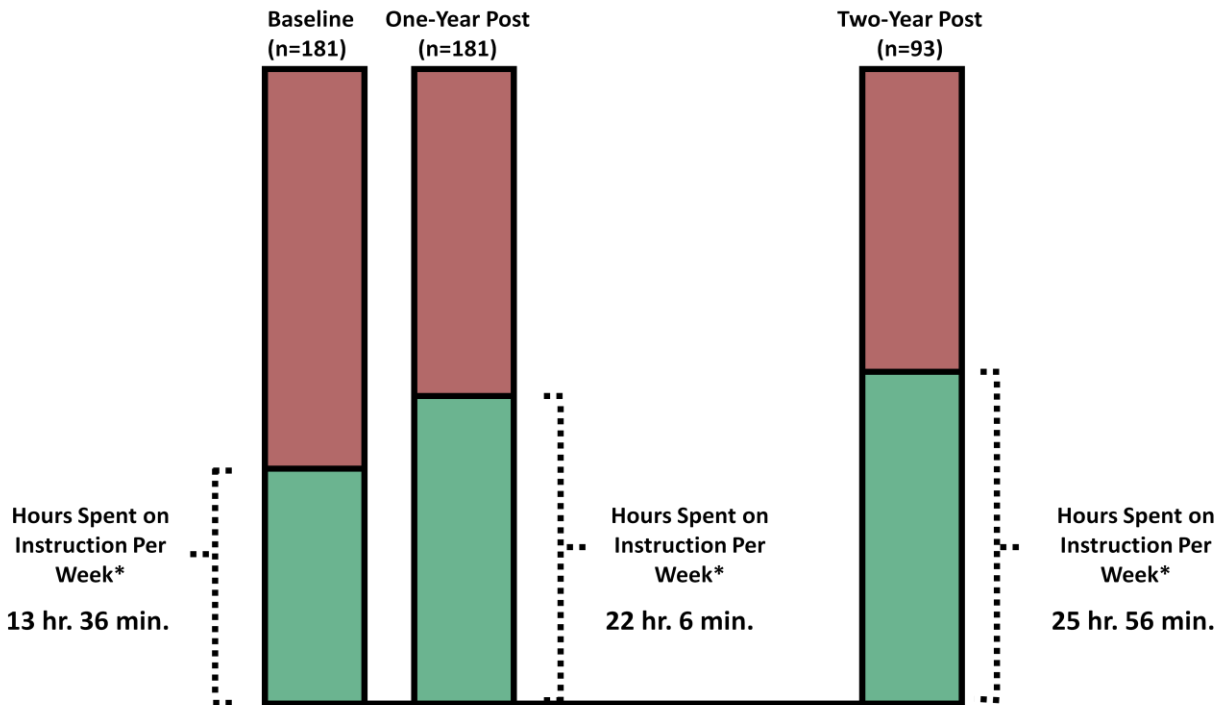


Exhibit reads: The graph shows three bars indicating the mean hours and minutes spent on instruction per week at baseline, one-year follow up, and two-year follow up for all principals. Principals with one-year follow-up data had a baseline mean of 32 percent of time spent on instruction per day, equivalent to 13 hours and 36 minutes spent on instruction per week.

\*Time unit projections are based on a 42.5 hour work week.

## Variation by SAM Model

We can compare principals' time use by SAM project model, although disaggregation of the principals' data by SAM model continues to pose some limits. There were too few Model 2 SAM/principal teams with one-year follow-up data for statistical analysis, and too few Model 3 teams with three-year follow-up data for three-year comparisons. Nevertheless, we can compare time use after one and two years of program participation for Model 1 and Model 3 SAM/principal teams.

Principals in Model 1 and Model 3 teams had identical baseline rates and one-year gains in the percent of time that they spent on instruction-related tasks (Exhibit 8). On average, principals in Model 1 and Model 3 teams respectively spent 32 percent of their time on instruction-related work at baseline. Each group's instruction-related time increased to 46 percent after one year in the program for an increase of 14 percentage points ( $p < .001$ ), which is equivalent to 71 minutes of instructional time within a day, or 5 hours 57 minutes in an average week.

**Exhibit 8: Principal's Time Spent on Instruction, Baseline and One-Year Follow-up, Model 1 vs. Model 3 Designs**

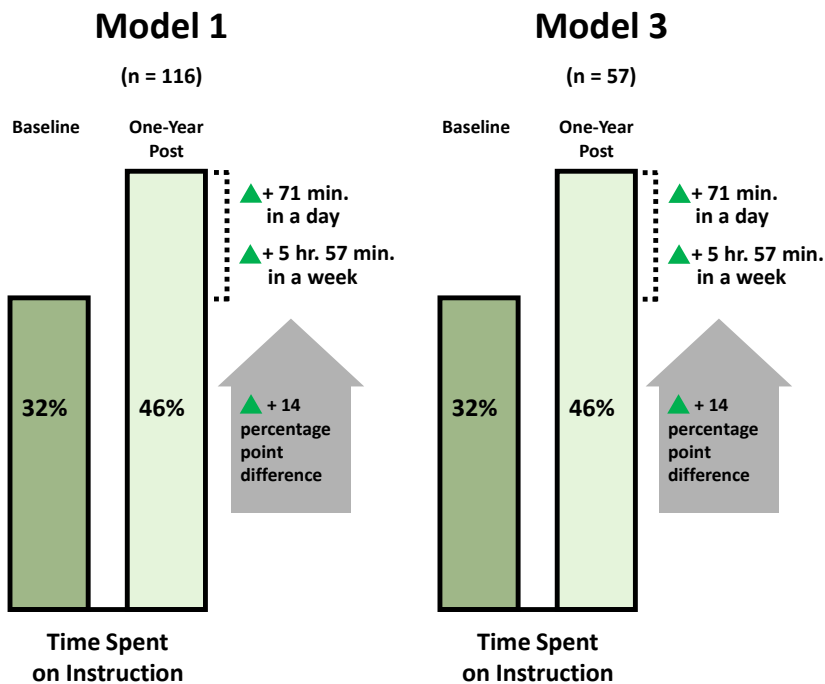


Exhibit reads: The exhibit shows the mean percent of time spent on instruction at baseline and at one-year post for Model 1 and Model 3 SAM/principal teams. Principals in Model 1 teams had a mean of 32 percent of time spent on instruction at baseline and a mean of 46 percent of time spent on instruction at one-year post. On average, principals in Model 1 teams increased the time they spent on instruction by 14 percentage points after one year. These gains equaled an additional 71 minutes of instructional time within day, or 5 hours and 57 minutes in a week.

Principals in Model 1 and Model 3 teams also had similar two-year gains in the percent of time that they spent on instruction-related tasks. Principals in Model 1 teams had a 19 percentage point increase, improving from a baseline rate of 33 percent of time spent on instruction-related tasks to 52 percent after two years in the program. In time units, principals in Model 1 teams added 1 hour and 37 minutes of instructional time within the day, or 8 hours 5 minutes in a week. Principals in Model 3 teams had a 22 percentage point increase in the percent of time spent on instruction-related work, improving from 30 percent to 52 percent. These gains are equivalent to an additional 1 hour and 52 minutes of instructional time within the day, or 9 hours 21 minutes in a week. Each group’s gain was statistically significant; the difference in gains across the two groups was not statistically significant (Exhibit 9).

**Exhibit 9: Principal’s Time Spent on Instruction, Baseline and Two-Year Follow-up, Model 1 vs. Model 3 Designs**

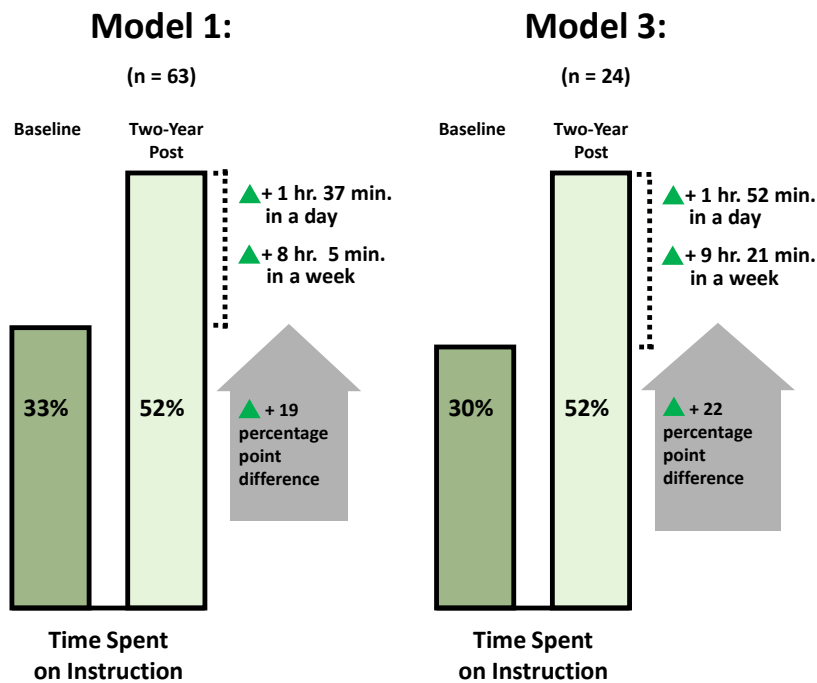


Exhibit reads: The exhibit shows the mean percent of time spent on instruction at baseline and at two-year post for Model 1 and Model 3 SAM/principal teams. Principals in Model 1 teams had a mean of 33 percent of time spent on instruction at baseline and a mean of 52 percent of time spent on instruction at two-year post. On average, principals in Model 1 teams increased the time they spent on instruction by 19 percentage points after two years. These gains equaled an additional 1 hour and 37 minutes of instructional time within the day, or 8 hours and 5 minutes in a week.

## Variation by School Grade Level

Because elementary schools often differ from middle schools and high schools in terms of enrollment, size of physical space, scope of administrative and management responsibilities,

and availability of additional administrators, we also compared the outcomes of principals in elementary schools versus principals in middle and high schools. In the earlier evaluation, the change in time use was statistically significant for both elementary and secondary schools, although it was smaller in magnitude in secondary schools. In the current study, overall, principals in elementary schools spent significantly more time on instruction-related work at baseline ( $p=.001$ ) than principals in middle schools and high schools: elementary school principals spent an average of 35 percent of their time on instruction-related work at baseline, compared with 29 percent for principals in secondary schools (Exhibit 10). While elementary school principals had different baseline rates than their secondary school counterparts, both groups significantly increased the percent of time they spent on instruction-related work after one year ( $p<.001$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Elementary school principals had a one-year gain of 15 percentage points, increasing to an average of 50 percent of time spent on instruction-related tasks. These gains equaled an additional 77 minutes of instructional time within the day, or 6 hours 23 minutes in a week. Principals in secondary schools had a one-year gain of 12 percentage points, increasing to an average of 41 percent of time spent on instruction-related work. In time units, principals in middle schools and high schools added 61 minutes of instructional time within the day, or 5 hours and 6 minutes in a week. While principals in elementary schools had higher one-year gains than principals in middle schools and high schools (15 percentage points vs. 12 percentage points), the difference was not statistically significant ( $p=.129$ ).

**Exhibit 10: Principal’s Time Spent on Instruction, Baseline and One-Year Follow-up, by School Level**

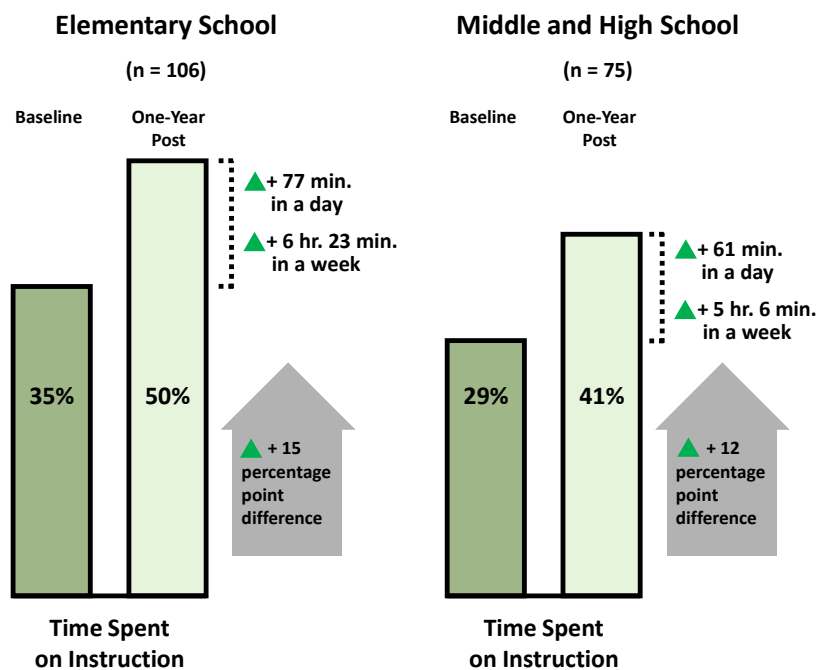


Exhibit reads: The exhibit shows the mean percent of time spent on instruction at baseline and at one-year post for elementary school principals and principals in middle and high schools. Elementary school principals had a mean of 35 percent of time spent on instruction at baseline and a mean of 50 percent of time spent on instruction at one-year post. On average, elementary school principals increased the time they spent on instruction by 15 percentage points after one year. These gains equaled an additional 77 minutes of instructional time within the day, or 6 hours and 23 minutes in a week.

Principals in both groups further increased the percent of time they spent on instruction-related work during the second year of participation. Elementary school principals had a two-year gain of 21 percentage points, increasing from a baseline of 35 percent of time spent on instruction-related tasks to 56 percent after two years in the program (Exhibit 11). In time units, principals in elementary schools spent an additional 1 hour and 47 minutes on instruction-related tasks within the day, or 8 hours 56 minutes in a week after two years in the program. Principals in middle schools and high schools had a 17 percentage point increase in the percent of time spent on instruction-related work, increasing from a baseline of 27 percent to 44 percent after two years in the program. Their gains equaled an additional 1 hour and 27 minutes within the day, or 7 hours 14 minutes in a week. While elementary school principals had higher two-year gains than their peers in secondary schools (21 percentage points vs. 17 percentage points), the difference was not statistically significant.

**Exhibit 11: Principal’s Time Spent on Instruction, Baseline and Two-Year Follow-up, by School Level**

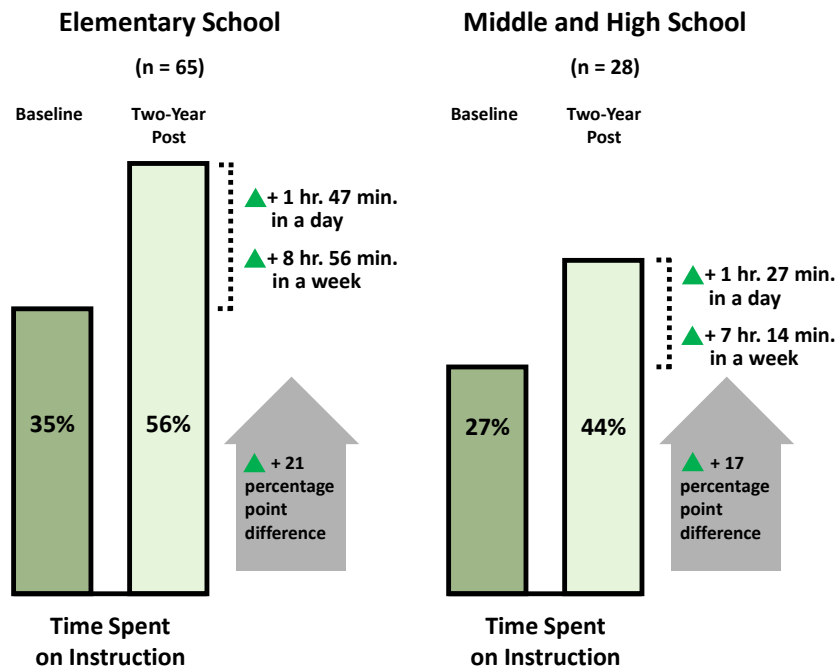


Exhibit reads: The exhibit shows the mean percent of time spent on instruction at baseline and at two-year post for elementary school principals and principals in middle and high schools. Elementary school principals had a mean of 35 percent of time spent on instruction at baseline and a mean of 56 percent of time spent on instruction at two-year post. On average, elementary school principals increased the time they spent on instruction by 21 percentage points after two years in the program. These gains equaled an additional 1 hour and 47 minutes of instructional time within the day or 8 hours and 56 minutes in a week.

Elementary school principals continued to increase the percent of time they spent on instruction-related work during the third year of participation. Elementary school principals significantly increased the percent of time they spent on instruction-related work, increasing from a baseline rate of 32 percent to 60 percent after three years in the program ( $p < .001$ ). In time units, these gains equaled an additional 2 hours and 23 minutes within the day or 11 hours and 54 minutes in a week after three years in the program (Exhibit 12). There were too few principals in middle schools and high schools with three-year follow-up data for statistical comparison.

**Exhibit 12: Principal’s Time Spent on Instruction, Baseline and Three-Year Follow-up, by School Level**

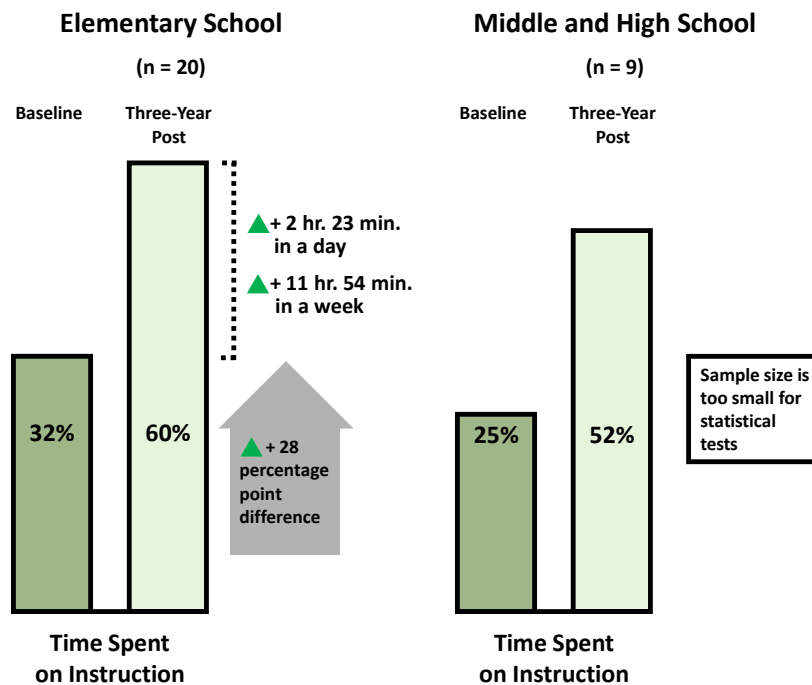


Exhibit reads: The exhibit shows the mean percent of time spent on instruction at baseline and at two-year post for elementary school principals and principals in middle and high schools. Elementary school principals had a mean of 32 percent of time spent on instruction at baseline and a mean of 60 percent of time spent on instruction at three-year post. On average, elementary school principals increased the time they spent on instruction by 28 percentage points after three years in the program. These gains equaled an additional 2 hours and 23 minutes of instructional time within the day, or 11 hours and 54 minutes in a week.

## Implementation of Key Project Features

SAMs are expected to carry out their role in several ways. They may take on management functions themselves, or help shift those functions to others in the school. They are expected to meet with the principal in a daily meeting. They use a software calendar program, TimeTrack, developed by the project. A Time Change Coach affiliated with the project visits the school monthly to encourage the team, provide advice based on experience, and troubleshoot any issues that are arising.

A key to the SAM project is that the SAM and principal together monitor the principal’s time use, on the assumption that the data on the percentage of instructional time will motivate the principal to keep striving to raise that percentage. If the Model 3 design is effective, it is because the essential SAM responsibilities can be carried out efficiently by a person who is already doing another job in the school. A rationale for this view would be that TimeTrack allows relatively easy data entry; the daily meeting can be a swift, pointed discussion of the principal’s recent and planned time use; and the SAM can help keep tabs on the assignment of management responsibilities rather than carrying them out.

The PSA evaluation team interviewed members of SAM/principal teams in 16 schools in order to learn how they carried out these functions in the Model 1 or Model 3 design (Exhibit 13). We sought variation in length of time in the project and in the school’s grade level. The schools were recommended by the project’s state-level coordinators and coaches in Delaware, Illinois, Iowa, and Missouri and the local coordinator in a Minnesota district, who said these were sites in which we could learn about a range of project approaches. Our focus was on the mechanisms for changing principals’ time use, but we also gained some insight into principals’ opportunities to learn how to use their time well, a subject to which we return in the concluding section of this report.

**Exhibit 13: SAM/Principal Teams Interviewed, by Model and Years in the Project**

<b>Years in the Project (Implementation Year)</b>	<b>Model 1</b>	<b>Model 3</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>1 (2010-11)</b>	4	1*	<b>5</b>
<b>2 (2009-10)</b>	1	1	<b>2</b>
<b>3 (2008-09)</b>	3	6	<b>9</b>
<b>4 (2007-08)</b>	1*	0	<b>1</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>17</b>

\* Interviews were conducted in 16 schools. However, one school is included twice in this table because it used a Model 1 design for three years and then shifted to a Model 3 design.

Exhibit reads: The evaluation team interviewed a total of 17 SAM/principal teams, four of which were Model 1 teams in their first year of implementation.

Our interview protocol addressed the backgrounds of the SAM and principal; their practices with respect to delegation, the daily meeting, and use of TimeTrack; their experience with Time Change Coaching; and their perceptions of the project's effects on their work and their school. Interviews were recorded for cross-site analysis. We conducted onsite interviews with the SAMs and principals in 14 of the schools and telephone interviews in the remaining two schools. We promised anonymity to all interviewees, assuring them that their experiences would be reported and their comments would be quoted without details that would make individuals or schools recognizable.

## **Delegation to SAMs and Others**

As described in SAM literature, the role of the SAM is to “help principals distribute management responsibilities and work with classified and support staff to keep routine management administration work from pulling the principal away from instructional leadership work.”<sup>7</sup> The goal in this effort is to carve out time for the principal to help improve instruction in the school that would otherwise be taken up doing administrative tasks. The important thing is that the tasks move from the principal's plate to others'. Among the building staff members who could potentially absorb the tasks would be assistant principals (in schools that have them), secretaries, and instructional coaches or teachers.

## **Variation in Delegation Practices by Model**

Our earlier evaluation identified five time-consuming management activities that could be assigned to someone other than the principal in order to free substantial time for instructional leadership: student discipline, student supervision, management of nonteaching staff, management of school facilities, and interactions with parents. Our analysis of survey data for that evaluation showed that among teams where SAMs carried out all of these activities, principals' change in time use was significant; among other teams, it was not.<sup>8</sup> Based on this finding, the National SAM Innovation Project has made a concerted effort to help principals and SAMs ensure the delegation of management activities. For example, the project distributed copies of one school's single-page summary of “responder” assignments: which individuals on the administrative team were designated as first, second, and third in line to handle issues that could arise in each of 17 areas, including behavior, transportation, supplies, and the like.

In the schools sampled for the present study, we looked specifically at the arrangements for the five activities identified in the previous study as high priorities for delegation. We determined which staff member was the “first responder” for each, that is, who would ordinarily make the first effort to handle situations involving one of these activities. (We recognize that a principal might have to become involved in serious situations, but wanted to know who routinely handled the less serious ones.)

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<sup>7</sup> <http://timetrack.jefferson.kyschools.us/talkingpoints.html>, Retrieved June 25, 2011.

<sup>8</sup> The survey did not address whether someone other than the SAM carried out these responsibilities, but we—and the National SAM Innovation Project—have inferred that delegation to another individual could reasonably have similar results.



The Model 3 design, which adds no extra staffing to a school, appeared to leave some principals with no one to whom to delegate one or more of these activities. Among the Model 3 schools, although there were many instances of delegation, there were principals serving as first responders for each of these activities (Exhibit 14). In three of the eight Model 3 teams, principals took the lead in management of nonteaching staff. Principals in two of the eight Model 3 teams were first responders for each of the other activities studied. In the Model 3 team where the SAM was new, the principal took the lead in all five activities, but the newness of the SAM process did not fully explain the more limited delegation found with Model 3: for each activity there was also at least one principal in a longer-established Model 3 SAM/principal team who took the lead.

**Exhibit 14: “First Responder” for Management Tasks, by SAM Model**

School Number		Student Discipline	Student Supervision	Management of Non-Teaching Staff	Management of School Facilities	Interactions with Parents
<b>Model 1 (N=9)</b>	SAM	5	7	7	7	9
	Principal	0	0	0	0	0
	AP/Dean (n=4)	4	2	2	2	0
	Other	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Model 3 (N=8)</b>	SAM	2	1	1	1	3
	Principal	2	2	3	2	2
	AP/Dean (n=5)	3	3	3	3	0
	Other	1	2	1	2	3

Note: Interviews were conducted with teams in 16 schools. However, one school is included twice in this table because it used a Model 1 design for three years and then shifted to a Model 3 design.

Exhibit Reads: For five of the nine Model 1 teams in the study, the SAM was the first responder for routine student discipline. For four Model 1 teams, in the four schools with assistant principals or deans, they were the first responder in that area.

In schools with Model 1 teams, on the other hand, we found no instances of a principal serving as first responder for any of these activities. Even in the four schools with new Model 1 SAM/principal teams, either the SAM or another person in the school took the lead.

Thus, while most principals using either model were able to delegate most of these time-consuming activities, there was a difference associated with the added staff capacity that a Model 1 design brought to the school. It stands to reason that delegation would be easier with the addition of a new administrative staff member to absorb extra work.

We also found evidence that principals going into Model 1 teams worked especially hard to select SAMs who could serve as effective surrogates for them. Two principals working in

Model 1 teams emphasized how carefully they had selected the SAMs for their schools, with delegation in mind. One held second-round interviews in order to test the ways in which candidates would handle challenges:

*Principal Model 1: I went back to our HR director and I said, I need to do another round of interviews. And she said, okay. So I wrote some questions, some scenarios about how would you handle this, what would you do about that, what do you think you'd do if you were faced with this? And she and I sat through another round of interviews where I gave these scenarios to some candidates. And it was from that, that I was able to select. So I think that gave me the match I needed.*

Another commented that the SAM's philosophy on student discipline was critical in the selection process:

*Principal Model 1: It was clear to me that this is somebody that had the same kind of philosophy, especially when it came to student discipline, that we were very much on the same page in how we treat kids and work with the kids.*

We heard comparable comments from one principal in a Model 3 team—the only Model 3 principal in our sample who happened to have the opportunity to select a new staff member for the SAM position. This principal was able to select a new person who would fill a vacant position in the building and would handle SAM responsibilities along with the responsibilities of that existing position. The principal said that at the start of the hiring process, which saw more than 80 applicants, an important criterion in the selection was the candidate's experience working with the public:

*Principal Model 3: I was looking for somebody who was highly organized, that had a background in management that could manage people and that understood customer service, I really kind of do a customer service model in my head, and could work with teachers, students and families. We've got some pretty tough families. So a manager understands that sometimes you've got to just let somebody yell at you and then pause, take a deep breath and then work through it and not take it personal. So I was looking for somebody that could do that, that was organized, that was also, like I mentioned before, a detail person, because I knew my strengths and weaknesses and one of my weaknesses is losing those details.*

The difference between models was not the only difference that could matter, however. We look next at other factors that might be associated with differences in delegation practices.

### **Variation in Delegation Practices by Years of Experience with the SAM Project**

Many principals told us that it took some time for them to delegate key types of management tasks to a SAM. They needed time to become well acquainted with the person in the SAM position and to have a good sense of how he or she would handle responsibilities.

Interviewees usually described a process in which the distribution of tasks evolved as the SAM became more familiar with the position and the principal became more comfortable working with the SAM. Delegation of discipline to the SAM was often the slowest change to take place. In many cases, interviewees described working together in areas like discipline to ensure that the SAM would handle the responsibility in a way that the principal could endorse:

*SAM Model 1: Well, I think that at the very beginning, since my principal and I had never worked together before—I'm new to the district, and we had some time where we had to get to know each other, get to know each other's styles and how we do things. And I wanted to make sure what I was doing is what she would want for the building because ultimately she's responsible for anything I say really. And so I wanted to make sure what I was saying discipline-wise was kind of matching with her style. And so through about October of my first year, we did a lot of situations together.*

A principal in his second year in the project commented that even after initially delegating discipline tasks to the SAM, he was not immediately able to focus fully on his instructional tasks:

*Principal Model 3: Because there was a time I'd be working with a student, but ... I'm thinking, it's 1:00 o'clock, [the SAM is] probably dealing with some discipline related to recess. So that becomes a distracter. You could probably never capture that in a study, but I think anecdotally it's interesting, because even the quality of [my instructional time], I would say, is better now. I'm more focused. I'm instructionally present physically, but I'm also instructionally present mentally and totally engaged with that child, because I'm not concerned, I know she's taking care of it and I know it's being taken care of well.*

Still, some principals described management responsibilities that they chose to retain, despite encouragement from the SAMs project to delegate the task to a SAM or other person in the school:

*Principal Model 1: Some morning supervision, like being out in the multipurpose room and saying good morning to kids, that's been something that I—there are days that I don't get it, but there's a lot of days that I'm out there talking to kids. I would miss that if I didn't get to do that. So I couldn't give that up. Like I want those hugs in the morning, when you have those little kids walking in and they're so glad to see you.*

*SAM Model 1: [The principal] does the bus line every morning to greet parents. And she's always out at the end of the day to greet parents. That's pretty much an expectation of our district.*

## **Variation in Delegation Practices by SAM Experience and Skills**

Among the 17 teams, seven of the SAMs held principal certification; one had previously served as a principal; and six told us that they aspired to become principals. Of the past or

aspiring principals, all but one were part of Model 1 SAM teams. Other SAMs in Model 1 teams came to the role from a variety of other occupations, including retail, office management, and athletic coaching at the college level. For SAMs in Model 3 designs, the other positions they currently held in their schools included three who were administrative assistants or secretaries, two who were teachers, an instructional coach, and a library/media specialist.

The sharpest contrast in delegation could be seen in comparing the work of two SAMs: a retired principal in a Model 1 design contrasted with a principal's secretary in a Model 3 design. With a full school day to devote to SAM duties and with years of experience in school leadership, the retired principal settled into a substantial role in managing student discipline, managing the nonteaching staff, and other potentially challenging responsibilities. This SAM pointed to the role of prior experience in making this role feasible:

*SAM Model 1: I guess it was easier for me [than for other new SAMs]... since I had the background in administration it was easy for me to jump in and not have to be instructed as to what to do because I was involved with it for so many years. I just kind of knew.*

For the principal's secretary, taking on the SAM role meant learning to manage the potential interruptions to the principal's day. The principal described the delegation of this triaging function to the secretary when she became the SAM:

*Principal Model 3: She is not as quick to send a phone call or a complaint my way. She asks a lot more questions of people, anyone. She's sort of like the gatekeeper there. Anyone who wants time on my calendar, anyone who calls and has an issue or a concern. In the past she might say, "There's a parent complaining," and then it [would come] to my office.*

In each of these two cases, the SAM project brought new capabilities to the school, but there was an obvious difference. The Model 1 SAM with experience as a principal set up new systems for such perennial challenges as classroom discipline, interacted with parents about student behavior, supervised the classified staff, and handled much of the school's community outreach. The Model 3 SAM who was continuing in a secretarial position screened phone calls and other interruptions. In fact, this person commented that SAMs in other schools could "take away some of the duties" of principals but that her skills placed a limit on how much she could do in the school:

*SAM Model 3: Well, we can't—I mean, a lot of the managerial stuff, we can't take that over. You know what I mean? You have to have someone—I mean, I'm not saying I'm not educated, but ....*

SAMs who were aspiring principals took an interest in watching the principal work, and the principal took time to help the SAM absorb useful lessons about the principalship—sometimes with encouragement from the school district. The superintendent of one school district in fact said that the district saw the SAM project as a means of increasing the pool of eligible candidates for administration.

District Superintendent: *We have in our district a lot of baby boomers in our administration; [more than one-third of] district administrators will retire in the next 4 years. We wanted to get a group of SAMs together that might give us a pipeline to fill some of the vacancies coming forward.*

SAMs who came to the position with principal certification told us that they were gaining valuable exposure to both the administrative and instructional aspects of being a principal:

SAM Model 1: *I've really taken on the role of SAM. I'm not doing instruction. I'm really focusing on behavior, I'm focusing on the building. But every day I'm having instructional conversations with [the principal] because I'm saying, how did you spend your time in that meeting? Was that really instructional? What were you talking about? We worked together on trying to figure out how do we get these professional learning communities to work because we've had to, to make it work in the schedule.*

### **Variation in Delegation Practices by School Administrative Staffing**

The NSIP encourages SAM/principal teams to identify others in the building to whom management work can be delegated. In three of the five elementary schools with no assistant principal and a Model 1 design, we were told that parents and teachers viewed the SAM as an assistant principal. In schools that did have assistant principals or deans, on the other hand, we found that negotiating new delegation arrangements might be complicated.

In a high school with assistant principals and deans, the principal is not typically expected to be responsible for student discipline, building management, management of non-teaching staff, or other administrative responsibilities. In one such high school, the SAM served as a point person for the staff, parents, and district; this SAM described the need for the position in this way:

SAM Model 1: *I think it was just that he was bogged down. The teachers, if they needed something they were just walking right to his office, so he was dealing with these individual contacts, [plus] the man gets 50 to 75 phone calls a day, obviously, a lot of them are from within the school district, but outside the school district.*

In addition to serving as a gatekeeper, this SAM handled the time-consuming task of managing community use of the school facilities that include an auditorium/theater space, gym, and several meeting spaces. The SAM also managed contracts, insurance, and collection of fees.

In another high school with several assistant principals that used a Model 3 design, the SAM's primary responsibility was as secretary to the principal, and the SAM role was limited almost exclusively to managing the principal's time.

An ongoing challenge in schools with a SAM was working with staff who felt that their job or prestige was threatened by the presence of the SAM. For example, for assistant principals

working their way up the ladder to be principals, the arrival of a SAM could create a worry that their own path was becoming less certain:

*SAM Model 1: I think there's probably some uncertainty with the assistant principals as to, "what if they decide that this SAM does enough that they don't need me anymore?" I know a couple of other schools have run into that, [but] I don't think we ran into that here. There's just way too much to do.*

A district administrator commented on the concerns that arose when the district adopted the SAM project with a Model 1 design, and how those concerns have been handled from a formal labor-relations standpoint:

*District Administrator: We were able to create the SAM positions as not affiliated with any bargaining unit. Not part of any union. There has been low-level pushback but nothing has risen to a higher level. I've heard anecdotally that the APs are very concerned that we're trying to take their job away. I know that some of the SAMs have struggled with the school secretary in defining their roles. There has been some pushback, nothing formal, no grievances filed.*

In this district, a SAM described the initial questions posed by others in the school:

*SAM Model 1: "Who are you? What do you do? You're administration? You're not? You're office staff?" Everyone wants you to fit into a niche. They want you to fit into this classification. Well, the SAM role just kind of doesn't. You're administration. You're office staff. I go pick up garbage if I have to. ... But they want you to fit into a role. "So are you administration, are you office, are you somewhere?" So you have to keep saying who you are. So the teachers kept asking and asking [the principal], the vice-principals, myself and I was really surprised at -- I know people want you to fit somewhere, but I was really surprised at how much they wanted you to either be this or that.*

Other comments also brought into focus the extent to which a school office is a very small village, where individuals' skills shape the assignment of work. One school had a change in assistant principals, and found that the new person in that position was not skilled in the types of work that had been assigned to the previous assistant principal. The SAM reported that in the previous year, the three-person team of principal, assistant principal, and SAM was working very well together in this Model 3 design. This year, the principal was unable to delegate management work and instead was doing the work after school and on weekends, unrecorded in the TimeTrack system.

Moreover, customary practices in the "village" may override more practical delegation approaches. A Time Change Coach commented on the need to re-examine the division of responsibilities in school offices periodically:

*Time Change Coach: You need to do a task analysis of the clerical staff. Who's doing what, and is this the logical approach? Over time, the secretaries end up with duties but no one remembers why they have those responsibilities. It may be that the person 10*

*years ago had that responsibility because she was very good in that area but it is not a strength of the subsequent staff.*

## The Daily Meeting

According to the project description on the SAMsConnect website,<sup>9</sup> the daily meeting is a key component of project implementation:

Principals and SAMs participate in a ***TimeTrack daily meeting*** to review progress, mitigate management interruptions and consult with teachers and parents to increase the leader's effectiveness.

The meeting is 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.

The on-the-ground reality in our sample of schools understandably fell short of this methodical vision in two ways: principals and SAMs did not always meet regularly, and there was little in-depth discussion of the principal's role. The following description was not unusual:

*SAM Model 3: Yeah, we kind of see each other in the office. We see each other in the gym every morning. We kind of touch base then. I'll come in here and we'll touch base, usually at the beginning of each week. But, really, I talk to [the principal] everyday; I'm in and out here. So we don't have like a set day and time that we meet every week or anything like that. We just kind of—we work pretty closely together so we communicate just in short [talks]—all the time pretty much.*

Time Change Coaching also has a focus on the daily meeting: part of the coaching visit is a session in which the principal and SAM hold a daily meeting with the coach observing. The coach then offers feedback on the way they enact this routine.

In interviewing principals and SAMs about daily meetings, we did not find teams that characterized the meetings as opportunities for reflection on the quality of the principal's practice in school leadership. Meetings were said to focus on happenings in the school, the responsibilities delegated to the SAM, or the amount of time the principal was spending on particular types of tasks, as described below.

### Variation in Daily Meeting Practices by Model

There was not a systematic difference between our sample of Model 1 teams and our sample of Model 3 designs in the teams' fidelity to the idea of a daily meeting. Among the Model 1 teams, five of eight generally held a daily meeting; among the Model 3 teams, four of nine did so. We should note that our definition of fidelity was somewhat flexible, because minor

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<sup>9</sup> [http://timetrack.jefferson.kyschools.us/service\\_overview.pdf](http://timetrack.jefferson.kyschools.us/service_overview.pdf) p. 4. Retrieved June 25, 2011.

lapses in implementation were common among the teams that did generally hold daily meetings. One team reported holding a meeting about four times per week, for example. Another team touched base by phone in the evenings, having found that meetings were too often crowded out by events during the school day. We counted each of these as a team that did generally hold a daily meeting. On the other hand, where the principal and SAM said that they met once or twice a week, we did not count that team as holding a daily meeting.

## **Variation in Daily Meeting Practices by Years of Experience with the SAM Project**

There were notable changes in implementation of the daily meeting over time. Our sample included five teams in their first year of project implementation (counting the principal who had shifted from a Model 1 to a Model 3 design, working with a new SAM), and twelve teams in their second or third year. In the group that was new to the project, one out of five teams held a daily meeting. In the veteran group, nine out of twelve did so.

We could discern three stages that applied to many teams' experience with the daily meeting. In the first year of implementation, facing the challenge of a new working relationship and new routines, establishing a pattern of daily meetings was a work in progress. The first-year teams were aware that they were expected to meet more often than they were meeting. Some expressed an intention to establish a more regular schedule:

SAM Model 1: *We're trying to get better at it.*

Other novice SAMs were more skeptical of the idea of a daily coaching session on time use. One commented that the principal did not really need that kind of help:

SAM Model 1: *One of the goals of the SAM project is to ensure, I should ensure that [the principal] is spending a certain amount of her time in the classrooms or on instructional leadership, however that looks. ... Because that's really what they want the SAM to do, to coach the principal to do that. And when we go in our [SAM] meetings they give us lingo and things to say to the principal in order to encourage them to go do that and push back on them to make sure that they do that. [But the principal] is very good at it herself. ... I don't, as a SAM, have to really--she's a long-time principal with lots of experience doing it, so for me, I'm kind of fortunate that way.... I mean, all day long we're reflecting or chatting.*

Among more settled teams, most of whom did conduct daily meetings, we found a later stage of practice, in which the team had developed a routine for their meeting that included attention to the principal's time use. A principal in the second year of project implementation said:

Principal Model 1: *Our daily meeting really just sets the tone for, it's like a quick recap of here's what we had yesterday, and here's what we're looking at today. And don't forget, you need to do this or you've got to have that. Then we could take longer times as we're planning bigger chunks of time. And she'll make sure she asks me things about*



*what's your goal now, and where do you need to be, and what do you want to do about this, and how do you want to be responding to that? And so, we do kind of a long range planning, and then we have our quick day meetings where we just talk about our schedule.*

A few veteran teams were most comfortable with informal conversations, as described by a SAM who had been in the position for a year and a half, working with a principal who was in the third year of implementation:

*SAM Model 3: We've talked about, as far as meeting time, if [the principal] and I should have a formal time that we meet. But that never really did work for [the principal] and me just because of our schedules. ... It just—we feel like it runs pretty smooth. This is [the principal's] third year doing this. We kind of feel like we have it where [the principal] wants it at this point.*

At this stage, too, some teams commented that they no longer needed feedback from the Time Change Coach on the way they conducted their meetings. They felt that enacting a daily meeting as part of the coaching session was not the best use of their time.

### **Variation in Daily Meeting Practices by SAM Experience and Skills**

The content of the meeting discussion differed when the SAM was a skilled educator with administrative certification as opposed to a member of the school's clerical staff. In both cases, the content of the meeting was typically perceived as valuable, but it was different. For a principal working with a SAM who had administrative certification, the meeting generally focused on the substantive school matters for which they were sharing responsibility:

*Principal Model 1: We meet every morning at 7:30. That's just very religious. That's just part of our day. We talk about anything that may have come up that I need to, that he needs to know about, things I need to delegate to him that maybe I've gotten an e-mail about.... If he has worked through an issue with a student, or a classified staff member that he thinks I need to be in the loop about, we have conversations about that.*

A SAM who also served as the principal's secretary described the meeting in terms more focused on the calendar and the principal's time use:

*SAM Model 3: We always get together every day for a half hour to 45 minutes, sometimes an hour.... During this meeting... we always go over what we did yesterday. Was this managerial? Was this instructional? I mean, we're more detail focused on what she did the day before, what she's going to do today, and what's planned for the rest of the week. ... What can she do to improve her instructional time? Is there anything -- and we go over what she's done. Can we do a little bit more of this? ... I'm just trying to keep her focused on instructional because I know how important that is to the district.*

Clearly, the SAM's skills could drive the type of work delegated to the SAM, and this in turn could drive the content of the daily meeting. When a principal was delegating management responsibilities to a SAM, their daily discussion of that work might crowd out a focus on the principal's use of time. When a SAM had a more limited repertoire of management skills, the focus could be more squarely on time use. A principal working with a SAM who had a non-education background described a daily meeting of 10 to 15 minutes looking at TimeTrack:

Principal Model 1: *[The SAM may say,] "What happened here? There was a day here when you spent very little time instructionally." So we have that conversation.*

## Use of TimeTrack

Participating schools received and are expected to use the proprietary software package, TimeTrack. It was originally developed for use in the first schools that hired SAMs, and has been extensively revised over time by the National SAM Innovation Project. The current version is web-based and has been modified to synchronize with Outlook.

Principals and SAMs are expected to use TimeTrack in looking ahead to develop the principal's schedule for each day, in looking back to record how the principal actually spent his or her time during that day, and then in reviewing the graphic summary of time use that the software produces. Each type of use is considered important. Not only does the review of actual time use provide potentially motivating feedback, but the very process of scheduling in advance may help principals focus on the choices that they are making in using the hours of a finite school day. As described in SAM literature:<sup>10</sup>

Principals and SAMs use the baseline data to begin a daily process of scheduling their time using *TimeTrack*<sup>TM</sup> software, also developed for the project. This creates a lesson plan for the principal's work to improve instructional practice, increase parent engagement and improve the rate of student achievement.

When asked to describe their use of TimeTrack, all SAM/principal teams reported using the tool to some degree. All reported having at least tried to use it for prospective scheduling of the principal's time, and all but three were continuing to do so. All reported maintaining some awareness of the principal's time use through reviewing the TimeTrack record, although the extent to which they perused the record in detail varied across teams. The use of TimeTrack for scheduling or data review did not differ systematically by model, by length of time in the project, or by the SAM's experience and skills.

With respect to scheduling, the variation was idiosyncratic: several principals found value in a detailed schedule, while a few did not; some teams willingly took the time to make a schedule and then revise it for the record, while others concluded that this was too time consuming. With respect to the intensity of focus on TimeTrack data, some of the variation was

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<sup>10</sup> [http://timetrack.jefferson.kyschools.us/service\\_overview.pdf](http://timetrack.jefferson.kyschools.us/service_overview.pdf) p. 4. Retrieved June 25, 2011.

idiosyncratic, but encouragement or pressure from outside the school seemed to make a difference: a district policy or a Time Change Coach's emphasis could direct the team's attention more forcefully to the percentages. Thus, we discuss each of these uses of TimeTrack separately below.

## Variation in Scheduling Practices

Most of the principals liked having a schedule for their day. One principal learned from experience with the SAM project that planning a schedule in advance made a difference in her use of time:

*Principal Model 3: That's something that I definitely discovered through SAMs. The more I don't have on my schedule, the less I get done. And so if it's on there, [the SAM] is good at holding me accountable. And [the SAM says,] "Aren't you supposed to be in this classroom right now," or whatever. So that's been a good thing for us.*

Other principals and SAMs made similar comments. They pointed to the effectiveness of having a schedule as a way of helping to ensure that they would spend time on the instructional tasks that they wanted to accomplish:

*Principal Model 1: I'm getting in the classrooms, but it's ... the conversations that were taking place afterwards and the follow up, I believe is what really makes the difference. And having [the SAM] schedule that really is wonderful. I never took that time myself to schedule and organize myself like that.*

*SAM Model 3: If it's on the calendar, [the principal] gets it done.*

*SAM Model 1: We pre-calendar. We last year experimented with a lot of different ways of trying to meet our goals, and found if we didn't pre-calendar, we didn't have a shot at meeting [the principal's] goal. And so, we pre-calendar everything.*

There was an exception, however. For one principal who tried using a calendar that the SAM had pre-filled using TimeTrack, the effect was discouragement, not help, and this principal scaled back to a schedule with only a few fixed appointments entered in advance:

*Principal Model 3: I had trouble with the idea that we were writing down things and scheduling things that I know I'm not going to be able to fulfill.*

Principals were seldom able to adhere closely to a planned schedule, and teams had different reactions to that fact. Some teams nevertheless found value in having a schedule so that the principal would "have a shot" at meeting a time-use goal. But a few teams found it too burdensome to make a schedule in advance and then correct it later. They felt they had to choose between using TimeTrack for scheduling and using it for record keeping. Because they perceived that they were accountable for an accurate after-the-fact record of the principal's time, they chose not to make a schedule in advance:

SAM Model 1: *What has happened is the principal's schedule seems to vary greatly from what is actually scheduled. So all the time I would put in, when I was doing this originally, into pre-scheduling everything in Time Track, I had to go back and redo everything. It [was] very time consuming to basically do it twice. So instead, what I do is I capture what [the principal] did from the day before.*

Technical challenges with TimeTrack impeded some teams' use of the software as both a calendar and a record of actual time use, although these issues appeared less troublesome than we had observed in visits for our earlier evaluation. Some used Outlook or Google for the calendar, then manually entered the actual data into TimeTrack later. Many principals jotted paper-and-pencil notes recording their time use during the day. As one SAM explained, synchronizing TimeTrack with an Outlook electronic calendar had not yet worked, despite the efforts of the national project staff:

SAM Model 1: *They do have the ability to have the two systems talk to each other now. And I was working with [the National SAM Innovation Project], and we've tried three times to get them synchronized and we've run into snags. ... Every time we do it it's messed up [the principal's] Outlook calendar and even changed meetings.*

We were struck by the SAMs' diligence in finding and using software that would accomplish what they and the principals wanted from their calendars and time records. For example, a SAM in a first-year team used Outlook for "the go-to calendar" because he could access it at home; he also hand-entered the principal's time-use data into Excel so that he could generate particular types of graphs that the team found helpful.

## **Variation in the Use of TimeTrack Data**

Principals varied in their zest for scrutinizing their time-use data. Some expressed enthusiasm about reviewing the data as a measure of their progress toward their goals, while others showed much less intense interest in the details. The differences were largely individual, although a superintendent or Time Change Coach who focused on the TimeTrack record could spur greater attention to TimeTrack by principals.

Some experienced principals had seen the records of their time use and were confident that their percentages of time spent on instruction could and would remain high enough without day-to-day fretting over the records. When we asked about their use of TimeTrack, they responded politely but vaguely.

Other principals found professional value in challenging themselves to better their instructional time percentage, and they paid close attention to the details. For example, one said that tracking time in 15-minute intervals every day did not give enough information:

Principal Model 3: *Things we would work on next year would be getting a little tighter on the tracking of my time..., getting it into five minute intervals. Typically we operate in 15 minute intervals and what I try to do is be purposeful in that, just spend 15 minutes*

*observing this teacher. But I do find that there's times where [I spend five minutes with a student]. ...You know, maybe that's asking too much, but I think it's important data that I could look and say, isn't that interesting how many five minute [time periods] I worked with the students?...*

Some principals commented that they were sharing their time-use data with their supervisors as part of their performance reviews. For example, in a district where a grant supported the Model 1 design, the superintendent gathered the data for reporting to the funder. In another district, principals' time spent on instructional tasks was part of the district's internal and external reporting. Principals in these sites, not surprisingly, were paying attention to their instructional time percentage on at least a monthly basis.

Some Time Change Coaches maintained a more intense focus on the TimeTrack record than others. Principals and SAMs in several schools described coaching visits that revolved almost solely around looking at the graphic displays of the principal's time use. In a few cases, the coaches were more likely to talk about the substance of the principal's work, offering only a cursory look at the TimeTrack percentages. Coaches also varied in the frequency of their visits, with the result that some teams seldom received outside encouragement for reviewing their time records. Not every team followed the lead of its coach—some were less focused on TimeTrack percentages than their coaches, others more so—but the coaching practice did appear to make some difference.

Thus, while some experienced teams remained quite focused on the data over the years, some did not. Members of a few teams told us that they had initially paid close attention to their TimeTrack data but, in their third year with the project, believed that could strike a better balance. A SAM described the team's progression from year to year:

*SAM Model 3: I think year one was to look at what you're spending your time on and putting things in place that are going to make you change what you're doing. Year two, it was creating habits. Let's continue to watch this and see what we're doing and making sure that I'm ... sliding instructional things into my calendar so that I'm not going back to the old habits. Year three, I feel like we've really gotten past, "are you doing instructional things?" to, "what instructional things are you doing?" So it just seems trivial at this point to look and see, are you putting instructional time in? It's more of, what kind of instruction are you putting in, and what other things could we do to make greater impact on the teachers and students?*

Thus, in the use of TimeTrack and, indeed, in all aspects of project implementation, teams worked out their own adaptations, depending on the affordances of their model and the SAM's skills, and on their experience over time. Some principals who were veteran participants commented on their journey in trying to learn how to become better leaders, as suggested in the quotation just above. What principals and SAMs learned over time is the subject of our next, concluding section.



## Conclusion: Experience and Learning in the SAM Project

In interviewing principals and SAMs about their work with the project, we heard some impressive accounts of principal leadership and found examples of professionals who sought to deepen their skills. Based on their comments, we offer thoughts about the accomplishments and limitations of the National SAM Innovation Project as a contributor to school leadership. We first review the ways in which the SAM process worked as intended in the schools we visited, expanding the time that principals devote to instructional leadership through implementation of several key features of the process. Next, we elaborate on the SAM process in the larger context of principals' and SAMs' repertoires of knowledge and skills and their opportunities to learn, which powerfully affect the quality of the leadership that principals bring to bear in their schools.

First, we note that across all principals in the NSIP dataset, the average participating principal increased the percentage of time spent on instruction, adding 14 percentage points in the first year of project participation, 20 percentage points across two years, and 29 percentage points across three years. The record of Model 1 and Model 3 was statistically identical in this regard: principals using both models made comparable increases in their instructional time, on average. Thus, in this study as in the predecessor evaluation, we conclude that the SAM project did what it set out to do, enabling principals to increase the amount of time they spent on the tasks that the project defines as instructional leadership. Moreover, unlike the previous study, this one has found that the same changes in time use were attained when the SAM was carrying out the work of another, existing job in the school.

The principals' and SAM's accounts of their project implementation shed light on how this happens. First, most principals found ways to delegate management responsibilities. In a Model 1 design, the SAM was most often the "first responder" for a set of time-consuming management tasks. Delegation to the SAM varied not only with the model but also with the SAM's background, which ranged from administrator certification to a secretarial position. In a Model 3 design or when working with a less highly skilled SAM, principals retained the lead in some management tasks, but delegated some to other staff members.

Daily meetings were a set part of the routine for about half of the teams we interviewed; the other teams met less frequently or more informally. The content of the meeting tended to differ depending on the SAM's skills and role: when the SAM was handling major management tasks, the team would discuss those as well as other delegation possibilities; when the SAM was functioning as a gatekeeper for the principal's time, the team would focus more heavily on examining the principal's time use.

To a greater extent than in our earlier study, we found that principals were pre-scheduling substantial amounts of their time. Although fully adhering to such a schedule was rarely possible, most appreciated having a pre-filled calendar as a reminder of the way they intended to use their day. TimeTrack was often, although not always, the software chosen for the calendar. After the fact, all SAMs recorded the principal's actual time use in TimeTrack. Some principals then paid close attention to their instructional time percentage; others were comfortable checking it infrequently.

Like any innovation in school structure or professional practice, the SAM project has limitations. It is not a vehicle for transforming a principal's skills. Instead, it creates conditions in which principals are more likely to use their skills in instructional leadership. This may make a difference in school functioning, depending on the principal's existing skills. Conditions created by the SAM process may also open opportunities for principals to learn new leadership skills, including strategies and skills too subtle to be captured in the SAM project's descriptors of principal practice. We discuss these issues in the following pages.

## Supports for Principals' Learning

Reflecting on the comments of some of the principals and SAMs we visited, we can identify ways in which principals were trying to bring about potentially far-reaching school improvement, and how they found support for their efforts. Some principals already had strong leadership knowledge and skills; most told us that they wanted to learn to do better. We found examples of principals reflecting on their own practice and finding help in setting their own directions for new ways of working. However, we found that coaching from the SAM project was seldom a major support for this thoughtful process, at least for the schools that we visited. More often the coaching was narrowly focused on basic matters of time use.

One principal who was new to the project was a veteran principal. Asked for a definition of instructional leadership, this principal took a deep breath and offered the following capsule vision extemporaneously:

*Principal Model 1: The bottom line is, are the teachers moving the students forward? Instructional leadership, I think, needs to be centered on students—where they are and where they get to in a years' time. So instructional leadership is helping teachers use data to drive their instruction, helping them understand multiple forms of assessment, ... and then how you use those assessments to adjust the instruction. How you promote teacher dialogue and reflection. How you support them through professional development. How you make sure the professional development is happening in the classroom, which means multiple visits to classrooms.... Then when you have teachers who need additional support it's adding more time in your visits and targeting in whatever the rubrics are. ... You have the professional learning communities that are occurring to support that, and you are always looking at the data and the problems of the kids.*

This was a person who had a clear idea of what to do as an instructional leader and simply needed more hours in the day to do it. Adding a SAM to the building provided needed support. With a SAM who was eager to solve problems of all kinds in the running of the school, the principal was able to find some of those hours.

Another principal gave us a window into a thoughtful process of reflecting on how to use additional time and continually searching for better ways of making a difference in the school. This principal initially worked with individual students, then with teachers in groups; the grade-



level meetings had evolved to address teaching practice; and the principal was currently trying to learn how to give more and better feedback on classroom observations:

*Principal Model 1: The first year [in the SAM project] it was like, wow, what does an instructional leader do? All day, what am I going to do with myself? ... I remember the first year I polled every student and tried to work with students about goal setting and I thought, oh, that's not really an effective use of my time. ... [Then we started] grade level meetings. We started that the first or second year with the SAM. And what did those look like? What's actually going on within a grade level meeting? Well, it's much more focused on instruction and looking at student work, and talking about kids now. At first it was like, okay, let me make some announcements here, which is not really what grade level meetings are. So I mean, I had to really learn more about what does instructional leadership actually look like in day-to-day practice. And then figuring out the whole feedback piece, too.... So every year I've refined what I've done as an instructional leader.*

This principal found support in district innovations such as a new focus on grade-level meetings and, especially, in books about instructional leadership. We asked this principal about the visits of the Time Change Coach, wondering whether the coach (who was a veteran principal) might have offered useful advice, but heard that those interactions tended to focus narrowly on what TimeTrack revealed:

*Principal Model 1: Those meetings are more about talking about that accountability piece or looking at your data. "Are you looking at your data? Is there anything it's telling you that you need to be mindful of?"*

The SAM project was thus furnishing a basic springboard for reflection on the distribution of time, but not going beyond that core purpose. This principal was taking initiative to reflect more deeply, but several other principals we interviewed were not.

For another principal in the third year with the project, the initial delegation of management tasks had left a void that was difficult to fill. Having fulfilled the project's goals of delegating management tasks, this principal struggled and then was rescued by guidance from the district:

*Principal Model 1: The second year I went through, I would say, depression. I didn't really care if I got up, came to work.... I didn't have any clear guidelines, what was expected of me. I didn't have any purpose. Why was I here? I just hated my job. So then this year [I began working with a new central-office staff member]. I just love her. Well, her expectations are [high], and she holds you accountable to everything.... Back in the middle of last year, she gave me such a purpose, and now I'm on fire again and I love my job and I can't wait to get here and I don't have enough time to do all I need to get done....But it took me a while to give up what I had known and what I had been accustomed to doing. I mean, it wasn't easy, and it took a while to get there.*

From this range of experiences, we see that an ideal program of coaching would have to be differentiated to address the different circumstances of principals in the project. Ideally, it would help them set and pursue substantive goals for their schools and their own practice. After two or more years in the project, when each principal faced different personal or contextual challenges, the limitations of Time Change Coaching became apparent to many principals. For several SAM/principal teams in their third year with the project, conventional Time Change Coaching was no longer offering a great deal of value. Although first-year teams said they appreciated being helped with TimeTrack mechanics and being pushed to increase the amount of feedback the principal provided to teachers, we did not hear these comments from third-year teams. Instead, we heard about recurring reminders to increase instructional time (which appears in green on the TimeTrack graph):

Principal Model 3: *[The coaching is focused] more on the technical end. “How much green and yellow do you have? How many gaps of space do you have?” ... [The coach focuses on] the technical pieces of Time Tracker and looking at our graphs and charts.*

In one site, Time Change Coaching had simply been dropped in favor of principals’ meetings for discussion of issues of common interest. No experienced teams told us that they wished they had more frequent coaching visits, although some teams had met with their coach only once or twice in the school year. A few could not remember their coach’s name, even if the coach had visited several times.

Rethinking the coach’s role with experienced teams, then, would be a worthwhile challenge for the National SAM Innovation Project to pursue. To date, the national project reports that it has increased coach training and sought to align coaching with district professional development. Since project leaders rightly note that the project cannot provide extensive professional development for participants, one way to be helpful might be to do less: they could scale back the coaching that focuses narrowly on daily meetings and TimeTrack data when teams have moved beyond a need for such coaching.

## **Supports for SAMs’ Learning**

Another area in which we saw a need for a different approach was in the professional learning opportunities offered to SAMs. Here, we recognize that the large differences across models, SAM roles, and SAM skills would require tailored offerings. However, some building blocks for a SAM curriculum could be found in the comments and suggestions that we heard in interviews.

For SAMs who are taking on newly delegated responsibilities (generally in the Model 1 design), basic information about district requirements and procedures is essential, but this information was not always made available. Having the needed information at hand, electronically or in hard copy, would have helped many SAMs. Once the basic, formal procedures are accessible, these SAMs also need to know the informal lore: what person in what office will respond and help solve problems? The SAM meetings held in some districts allowed SAMs to share these tips.

Ironically, no system of annual or ongoing data collection on time use has been developed specifically for the SAM position. Such a system would enable SAMs to benefit personally from the skills they have developed in looking at patterns of time use. In our interviews, several SAMs made comments about the way they spend their time, commenting that some task was time-consuming. With systematic information about their time use, no doubt the SAMs could find ways to work more efficiently, and could work with principals to rethink aspects of the role that are not the best uses of their time.

The national SAM/principal conference, held annually, could also do more to address SAMs' purposes. In recent conferences, the plenary sessions have featured expert speakers addressing principals' practice. While SAMs said they found these sessions interesting, they took away very little knowledge that they could directly apply in their work. Instead, veteran SAMs would like to see, as one put it, "more meat" in conference sessions for SAMs, beyond what they gain by talking informally with one another.

Finally, some districts and schools have chosen to assign SAM responsibilities to individuals who are either former or aspiring principals themselves. From a district perspective, offering appropriate learning opportunities to an aspiring principal is a valuable investment in future leadership. The SAM position can be deliberately crafted to afford these opportunities if it is part of the path to a principalship.

## **What the SAM Project Does**

Although we have suggestions for the National SAM Innovation Project, we remind readers that it accomplishes its central stated purpose: it enables principals to spend more of their time on a set of tasks related to instruction. As long as adopting districts and principals understand that principals will continue to face a sizable do-it-yourself project in learning how to use their time wisely and skillfully for school improvement, either SAM model will accomplish its stated purpose.

Having studied Model 1 and Model 3 in some depth, we also note that Model 1 offers the possibility of serving an additional purpose. If a school would benefit from adding management capacity, a Model 1 design has the advantage of bringing the SAM's skills into the building. In some cases we were told that this made a visible difference in school functioning, over and above the effects on the principal's use of time. More predictability in discipline, faster follow-up with the families of absent or tardy students, and faster handling of minor issues were among the benefits cited. An efficient, well-organized person can do much of this. A person who is also qualified for a principalship brings another set of potentially relevant skills to the position. Thus, although the data on time use are identical across models, implementation shows differences that some districts and schools would find important in making a decision about which model to adopt.