



Making Time for Instructional Leadership

VOLUME 1: THE EVOLUTION OF THE SAM PROCESS

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This study was commissioned by The Wallace Foundation. It was conducted by researchers at Vanderbilt University and the University of Pennsylvania. The contents expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the sponsor.

Cover photo: vgajic

Front and back cover design: José Moreno

Acknowledgement

The support and valuable contributions of several individuals and organizations were essential to this study. We thank Mark Shellinger, Director, National SAM Innovation Project, for his ongoing engagement and valuable feedback throughout this project. Jim Mercer at NSIP assisted us with survey implementation and was consistently helpful with our numerous data questions. Other staff from NSIP gave generously of their time and provided crucial insights. We thank the participants in this study who welcomed the researchers into their schools and districts, and shared their experiences and expertise through interviews and surveys. Mollie Rubin and Laura Rogers provided valuable research support.

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Table of Contents

I. Introduction	3
Purpose of this Report and the Approach	3
The Study Methodology.....	4
II. The Design and Theory of Action of the SAM Process.....	6
Overview of the Essential Components of the SAM Process	6
The SAM Process.....	11
Fidelity Versus Adaptation of the SAM Process	14
Changes in the SAM Process over Time.....	15
III. The SAM Process and the Literature	18
Principal Instructional Leadership	18
Previous Evaluation Reports of the SAM Process	24
IV. The Actual: SAM Process Implementation in the Field.....	26
Spread of Current Implementation.....	26
Goals for Adopting the SAM Process.....	28
Benefits of the SAM Process	31
Fidelity, Adaptation, and Challenges of the SAM Process Implementation.....	36
V. Summary	54
References.....	56

I. Introduction

Purpose of This Report and the Approach

In July 2013, the Wallace Foundation awarded Vanderbilt University a research grant to “investigate the status of the SAM or School Administration Manager process,” including “the extent to which the current process has changed since [the Wallace Foundation’s] last commissioned evaluation and whether it makes sense to pursue a Randomized Controlled Trial or RCT.” This report presents the research findings, while the recommendations regarding a RCT are shared in Volume 2.

The SAM® process was formed to address a key dilemma in the domain of school leadership. On one hand, the importance of principal instructional leadership is a cardinal theme in the school administration and school improvement literature. On the other hand, research over the past 35 years consistently reveals that principals spend minimal amounts of time on instructional leadership activities (see Murphy, 1990; Horng, Klasik, & Loeb, 2010; May & Supovitz, 2011; May, Huff, & Goldring, 2012). The SAM process was originally developed and implemented to address this challenge: to increase principals’ time allocation in the domains and task of instructional leadership.¹

The SAM is a school staff member who works with the principal to assist him or her in spending time on instructional leadership; many schools employ SAM teams comprised of multiple SAMs. Research to date reveals that the SAM process has been successful, perhaps uniquely so, in moving the needle on the allocation of instructional time by principals (Turnbull et al., 2009). At the same time, a variety of issues have surfaced to suggest that additional study of the SAM process is needed. These include the growing complexity of the intervention itself, specifically that the model has developed and changed; the importance of context in the implementation of the SAM process (e.g., elementary versus secondary schools); the shifting policy context of the principal’s role (e.g., principal requirements in new teacher evaluation systems); and the need for a more nuanced understanding of principal time (e.g., quality of use). We also know that initial findings need to be tested using more robust scientific methods to make causal inferences.

We organize this report in three main sections: (1) the SAM process design approach and theory of action, (2) the SAM process and the literature, and (3) current SAM process implementation in the field. We end with a brief summary.

The first section addresses the overall SAM process and the theory of action behind the approach. We ask, “What is the current SAM process and theory of action? How has the SAM process changed since the last major evaluations?”

The second section reviews the literature as it informs the SAM process theory of action and the importance of the focus on time allocated to instructional leadership. We ask, “How does the literature inform us about the SAM process theory of action and principal instructional time use? And what do prior evaluations of the SAM process suggest as it relates to the literature?”

¹ We use the phrase “SAM process” to distinguish the overall program from a person who fulfills a SAM role in a school. “SAM process” is also used by the National SAM Innovation Project.

The third section addresses current implementation of the SAM process in the field. We ask, “Who is currently implementing the SAM process? To what extent are program components implemented with fidelity? What proportion of time is spent on instructional leadership tasks and domains? Why have schools and districts implemented the SAM process, and what benefits do they see? What are challenges?”

The Study Methodology

We used multiple methodologies to study the SAM process, including case studies, document and literature reviews, individual interviews, analysis of calendar and shadowing databases from principals currently participating in the SAM process, and surveys of principals SAMs®². Specifically, early on in the project, we conducted face-to-face interviews with key leaders at the headquarters of the National SAM Innovation Project (NSIP), including Mark Shellinger, director of NSIP and creator of the SAM process.

Second, we conducted four case studies in districts implementing the SAM process to understand the current state of the SAM process and study the extent to which it is being implemented with fidelity: Gwinnett County Public Schools (GA), Boston Public Schools (MA), Hillsborough County Public Schools (FL), and DeKalb County Public Schools (GA). As both Gwinnett County and Hillsborough County have connections with the Wallace Foundation through SAM leadership-related grants, we also chose Boston and DeKalb County as non-Wallace Foundation districts³ to provide contrast, in case the implementation was uniquely similar in the other two counties because of converging interests and resources. Characteristics of these districts are shown below.

Table 1: Characteristics of Case Study Districts

District	# Teams	Mean Years Active	# Schools	# Students	% Free and Reduced-Price Lunch
Hillsborough County	84	1.2	305	194,525	55.9
DeKalb County	9	0.2	146	98,115	69.7
Gwinnett County	39	5.3	132	160,744	52.4
Boston Public Schools	26	0.7	131	56,037	74.4

Four schools were chosen in each district, resulting in 16 total schools. We chose these 16 schools strategically so that our sample had variation in terms of length of time in the SAM

² A SAM is an individual who helps ensure that the principal’s time is spent on instruction; SAM teams are groups of school staff, such as secretaries and assistant principals, who work together to ensure the principal’s time is spent on instruction. An Implementation Specialist works with schools for two to three weeks to orient the principal and SAM to the various aspects of the SAM process. Time Change Coaches work with principals and SAM teams on an ongoing basis throughout the process. First Responders are a group of staff members in a school who have been identified as those who can respond first to management issues that arise, thus freeing up the principal to focus on instruction.

³ DeKalb County Public Schools was not a Wallace Foundation grantee at the time of this research study; however, the Wallace Foundation is now funding DeKalb as part of the Principal Supervisor Initiative. Similarly, Boston Public Schools is also a Wallace funded district at this time.

process, student enrollment, school level, percent students identified as minority, and percent of students participating in the free and reduced-price lunch program (see each case for details). Within each school, we conducted semi-structured interviews with the principal, at least one SAM, and at least one First Responder, if available; and, at the district level, we interviewed district office personnel familiar with the SAM process and/or Time Change Coaches.

Third, during the winter of 2014, two researchers interviewed Time Change Coaches and Implementation Specialists at the annual national SAM Conference.

Fourth, we analyzed Time/Task Analysis and TimeTrack calendar data (a proprietary NSIP software calendar program designed to determine the amount of time a principal devotes to instructional leadership), provided by NSIP. TimeTrack calendar data covered the dates from August 1, 2013, to June 15, 2014, for consenting principals.

Fifth, online surveys were administered to all current principals and SAMs participating in the SAM process in fall 2014 over a three-week period in late November and early December 2014. The Vanderbilt team developed survey instruments for principals and SAMs. The survey was conducted anonymously using SurveyMonkey, with links distributed to principals and SAMs directly by NSIP. Among the 720 principals contacted who are actively participating in the SAM process, survey responses were received from 388, for a response rate of 54%. The response rate from SAMs was lower, with 382 of a possible 982 SAMs responding, or 39%.

Sixth, a member of our research team interviewed key researchers from Policy Studies Associates (PSA) who were directly involved in previous evaluations of the SAM process.

Seventh, we carefully reviewed documents and reports specifically related to the SAM process, including the earlier PSA evaluation reports.

Finally, we reviewed the literature on the importance of principals' instructional leadership roles for school effectiveness and the prevailing explanation for why it has been so difficult to move principals toward instructional leadership.

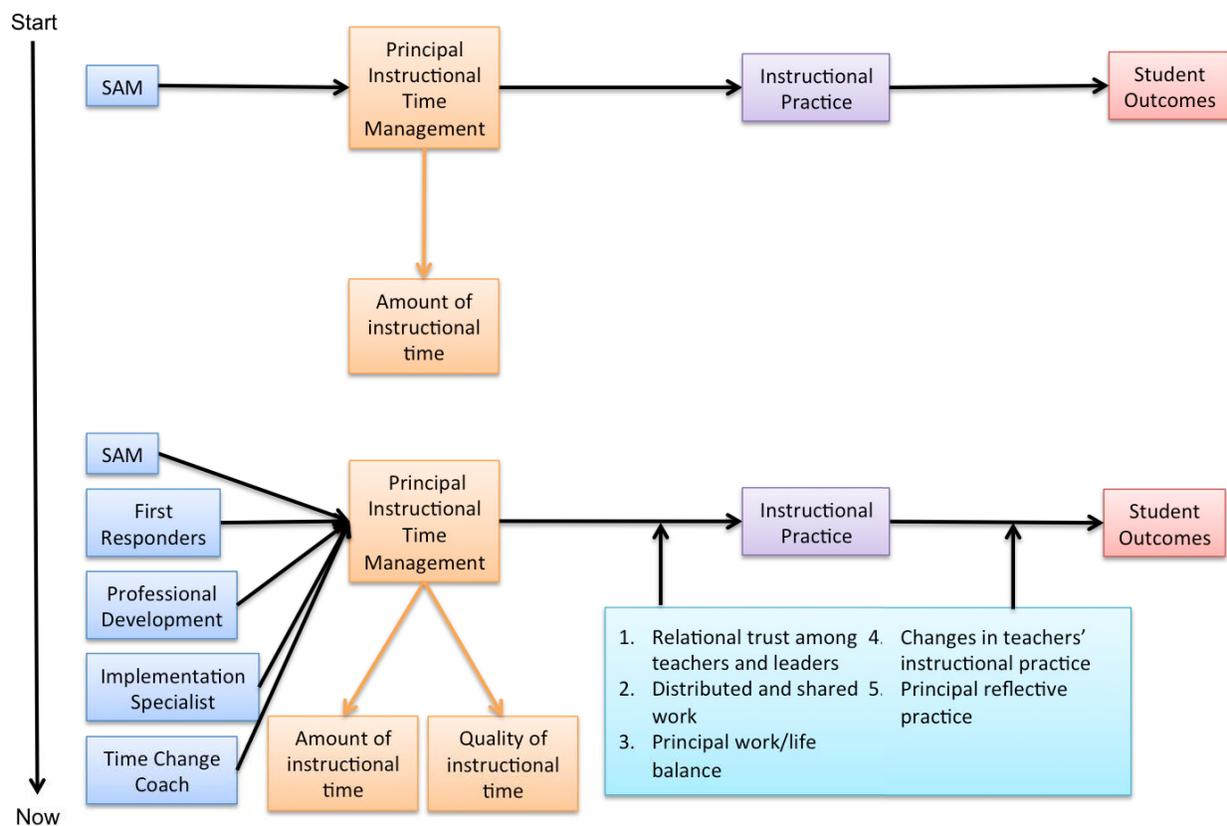
Our approach is to integrate the findings across all sources of data in this summary report. It is important to note that all data collection was coordinated through NSIP and required that potential subjects consent to NSIP releasing their individual data (e.g., TimeTrack calendar data) and to being contacted for research purposes (e.g., for an interview).

II. The Design and Theory of Action of the SAM Process

In this section, we describe the SAM process, as conceptualized by NSIP. We present the theory of action of how the SAM process is designed. First, we describe the essential components of the SAM process, and then we explain the ways in which the components interact to enable principals to increase and improve their use of instructional time. Much of this section is based on interviews with personnel from NSIP, Implementation Specialists, and Time Change Coaches, as well as review of artifacts. In the subsequent sections, we describe how the SAM process is implemented and enacted in districts and schools.

Figure 1 illustrates the SAM process theory of action. This theory of action has developed and emerged since its earlier days and today encompasses a set of core components.

Figure 1: SAM Process Theory of Action



Overview of the Essential Components of the SAM Process

The underlying philosophy of the SAM process is that the principal will develop the capacity to use time in instructionally focused ways while decreasing time spent on management activities. To build this capacity, the SAM process relies on a set of essential components: the principal, Time/Task Analysis®, Implementation Specialist, Time Change Coach, district contact, the

SAM(s), TimeTrack calendar, Daily Meeting, First Responders, and professional development (PD). An overview of each of these components is outlined below.

The Principal

The overarching goal of the SAM process is to enable the principal to increase instructional time and decrease management time. The principal uses various tools to facilitate this shift. He or she is given a TimeTrack calendar with which to record daily activities and code them as “instructional,” “managerial,” or “personal.” Within “instructional” and “managerial” time categories are subcategories, or descriptors, to further specify time use. These descriptors are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Categories of Time Use

Instructional	Management
Decision Making Groups and Committees	General Management
District: Meetings, Supervisor, Others	Building Management
External: Officials, Others	Celebration
Feedback: Celebration	Decision Making Groups and Committees
Feedback: Directive	District: Meetings, Supervisor, Others
Feedback: Non-Directive	Employee Discipline
Modeling/Teaching	Employee Supervision
Observation	External: Officials, Others
Office Work/Prep	Office Work/Prep
Parents/Guardians	Parents/Guardians
Planning, Curriculum, Assessment	Student Discipline
Professional Development	Student Supervision
Student Supervision	
Walkthrough	
Work with Student(s)	

Reviewing this calendar during a SAM Daily Meeting with a support person or team, namely the SAM, enables the principal to review previous time use and plan future time use. Each day, the principal is working toward a personal goal around the percentage of time spent on instruction, which is calculated through the TimeTrack calendar. At the same time, the principal delegates managerial responsibilities to various school staff, or First Responders, so that some of his or her time is freed to focus more substantively on instruction. As the SAM process has evolved over time, NSIP has emphasized the idea that the principal not only measures increases in instructional time, but also reflects on the way in which that time is best used. The following sections illustrate the ways in which the various components enable the principal to use this process.

Time/Task Analysis

Before the SAM begins working with the principal on increasing time spent on instruction, the school must engage in initial data collection. A Time/Task Analysis Data Collector spends approximately five days in the school, shadowing the principal and coding what he or she is

doing every five minutes. These Data Collectors are trained by NSIP to use a structured, formal protocol to collect the data as a baseline for the principal. These baseline data are then presented to the principal so that he or she might develop a personal goal around increasing instructional time. For example, if the baseline data show that the principal spends only 25% of his or her time on instruction and 75% on management, the goal might be to increase instructional time to 35%. The Time/Task Analysis shadowing is repeated annually to check on progress and reevaluate goals.

Implementation Specialist

To orient the principal and SAM to the various aspects of the process, an Implementation Specialist works with schools for two to three weeks as they begin implementing the basic SAM process components. The Implementation Specialist is an employee of NSIP from outside the school who trains the principals and SAMs to use the TimeTrack calendar, Daily Meeting, and First Responder system. They help the school get the basic components of the process up and running. In some cases, the Implementation Specialist works in the district and combines this with other district/central office roles.

As one NSIP staff member explained, the “implementation specialists begin their relationship with a school at the meeting where [NSIP] presents the data to the principal SAM team. [The director] comes in and says, ‘Okay, you’ve been shadowed, here it is ... here’s all the data.’ They get it in a hard copy and of course it’s online. And then he shows them TimeTrack, which they’ve seen before, but now it’s personal and he guides them through ... “Each team member gets the data on a laptop with instructions to program in time-use goals for the next day, each month, and the year before the meeting concludes.” During that initial meeting, the Implementation Specialist is present and assisting with the process: “At that meeting, we say hello, we say I’m going to be working with you, I’m going to help you, support you, encourage you, be a cheerleader for getting this to actually be in practical application.”

The Implementation Specialist then begins working directly with the school, reviewing the baseline data with the team, discussing the principal’s goals for improvement. NSIP has developed a Team Performance Rubric by which the Implementation Specialist measures whether the team is functioning at a sufficient level to begin implementing the process on its own and start working with a Time Change Coach. As the NSIP director explained, “An Implementation Specialist has a specific list of objectives they have to complete before they can turn the team over to coaching ... about 35 items.” Once a school has reached a 3 on each component of the 4-point scale rubric, the team is considered ready for the Implementation Specialist to transition them to the Time Change Coach.

Time Change Coach

At the end of a successful implementation phase, according to NSIP’s director, the final tasks of the Implementation Specialist are to review the SAM team’s progress with them, discuss next steps, and introduce the Time Change Coach.

Time Change Coaches work with principals and SAM teams on an ongoing basis throughout the year, working in the schools one day per month and remaining in email contact weekly. The NSIP director noted that coaches follow a protocol when in schools that “includes meeting with

each SAM privately and having a non-directive conversation about how things are going and then also figuring out what else a SAM needs to be effective. Then meeting with the principal privately, doing the same thing. Then observing a Daily Meeting and giving feedback.” Once a week, coaches review TimeTrack data electronically and give feedback via email or by phone to the SAM and the principal. Through an electronic system, the coach is automatically alerted if the SAM team has not been at or above goal in the prior week; at that point, the coach contacts the principal and SAM to determine whether they are struggling and need additional support. If the team does not meet its goal for a second consecutive week, the system generates a message to the state coordinator or district contact.

Time Change Coaches can be district employees who coach part-time or affiliates of NSIP. As the director of NSIP explained, “We will ask the district for recommendations. Often times, districts have coaches they’re currently using, and we will look at that. We always ask the principal, ‘Who do you want, who would you recommend?’” NSIP provides training for the Time Change Coaches and has a number of affiliates who are deployed across the country as the coaches.

Before starting to work with the coaches, principals are given an opportunity to review the coaching protocol, as well as an ethics agreement created by NSIP, which establishes that the relationship is always between the coach and the SAM and the principal, not the district. “We’re careful with that,” said the NSIP director. “Even in places where the district provides the coaches, we have an ethics agreement that the SAM, the principal and the coach all sign ... because you want to protect that environment.” This step promotes trust between the coach and school staff.

SAM

The role of the SAM is to help the principal increase instructional time and reflect on its impact. The SAM meets with the principal each day during a SAM Daily Meeting to hold him or her accountable for recording, reconciling, and analyzing the amount of time spent on instruction and management using the TimeTrack calendar. The SAM is sometimes a single school employee, such as the secretary, but NSIP, as noted by the director, encourages the principal to choose two or more individuals to create a SAM team for several reasons, including that “probably it’s harder for the principal to brush off two people” when they arrive for the SAM Daily Meeting. As the director of NSIP explained, that team may be composed of a vice principal, a teacher leader, a counselor, a secretary, or a bookkeeper, and SAM team membership is determined by the principal. The NSIP Director emphasized the importance of the principal choosing a SAM who is comfortable pushing his or her boss on time use and asking reflective practice questions.

TimeTrack Calendar

The TimeTrack calendar system allows principals and SAMs to track and manage how the principals’ time is spent during each day and to compare that data with the time-use goals set by the team. The principal and/or SAM(s) fills out the TimeTrack calendar for each day with plans for how they expect to use their time that are mindful and intentional. The calendar is then reconciled (changed) during the Daily Meeting with the SAM if the principal’s actual time use differs from the plan. This reconciliation provides an opportunity for the principal and SAM to

discuss why the principal did not follow his or her plan. More recently, the TimeTrack calendar has incorporated features that can report analysis and more refined disaggregation of data, such as providing a breakdown on the time spent with specific teachers.

SAM Daily Meeting

Beyond increasing the percentage of time spent on instruction, the SAM process is also meant to help the principal reflect on time use. The Daily Meeting between the SAM and principal provides an opportunity for the principal reflect on how he or she has used time on instruction and plan future time use. During this meeting, the SAM asks the principal “non-directive” questions that promote reflection and goal-setting around instructional time and explore why the principal may not have followed his or her calendar. More recently, the meetings have come to include data analysis and discussion to probe deeper into patterns of time use, such as the extent to which principals are spending time with teachers who might need support.

First Responders

The First Responders are a group of staff members in a school who have been identified as those who can respond first to management issues that arise, thus freeing up the principal to focus on instruction. For example, a janitor may become a First Responder for the school’s maintenance issues; an administrative assistant may become a First Responder for school bus concerns. The First Responders are identified and their specific domains of responsibility are determined as part of work with the Implementation Specialist, whose job includes verifying responders’ willingness to serve and provide training to use a particular protocol when responding to management issues. For example, when a parent calls wanting to speak with the principal, the secretary may put a trained First Responder on the phone to assure the parent that the issue is important and will be addressed. This enables the principal to spend more time on teaching and learning, rather than on managerial issues.

District and State Roles

NSIP establishes a district contact, and when possible, a state coordinator, for the SAM process. The NSIP director describes the district contact as “the person that [NSIP] connects with on any contract issue to talk about how we integrate SAMs at a district level.” NSIP may work with this person to determine needed PD for principals and SAMs, as well as to build a long-term sustainability plan for the process in the district. The NSIP director explained the importance of this role: “One of the things we’re interested in is developing capacity within a district so they can do most of this work themselves, because that brings the cost down,” increasing the likelihood the SAM process can be sustained. He also indicated that NSIP is very interested in how the SAM process integrates with other district initiatives, goals, and leadership development efforts.

Professional Development

NSIP provides PD to participating schools through workshops and state and national conferences. Additionally, it works with districts to provide tailored PD that addresses context-specific needs. Through the Implementation Specialist, Time Change Coaches, and national and local PD, schools receive ongoing training and support for the SAM process.

The SAM Process

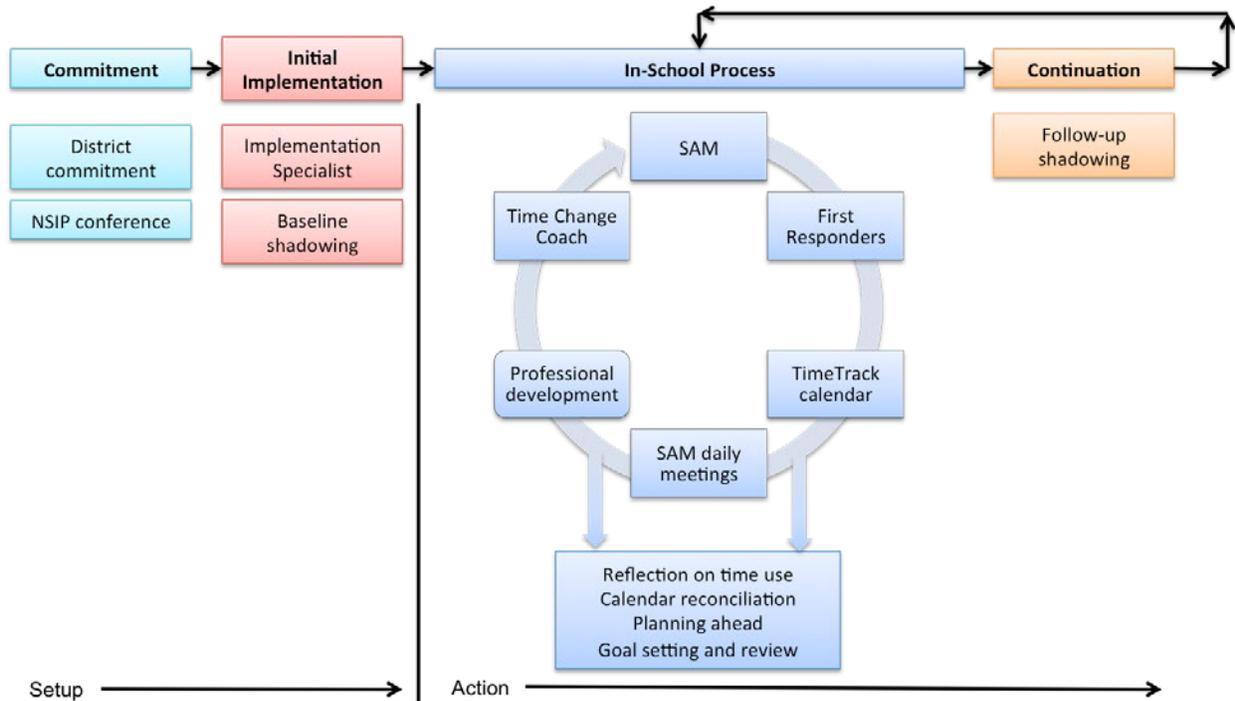
NSIP intends that the aforementioned elements interact so that increased principal instructional time enables reflection and change in time use. More specifically, “the theory of action is [that] as the principal increases their instructional time, they’re then able to have a data set where they can be more reflective on whether that time spent makes a difference in terms of teacher practice, student and parent engagement—and that during the Daily Meeting, conversation occurs about the principal’s use of time,” the director of NSIP said. NSIP encourages principals to think about the SAM process as “a series of actions you take,” rather than a “magic recipe” or specific formula that must be followed.

While some principals initially believe they have achieved success once they have increased their instructional time, this is only the first step in the SAM process. “The next step is, can you make a reasonable case that [increased instructional time is] making a positive difference?” NSIP’s director said. The increase in instructional time enables the second step: reflection on TimeTrack data to determine whether more time spent on instruction is making a positive difference in teacher practice, student engagement, and parent engagement. The third step is making necessary changes in the principals’ use of time based on that reflection. These three steps form an ongoing process, in which data collection on principal’s instructional time leads to reflection on whether and how time is making a difference. Based on that reflection, principals alter their time use and then reflect further on how that time use impacts teacher, student, and parent outcomes.

Throughout this report, we highlight this difference between *increased instructional time* and *quality of time use*. In sum, NSIP believes that an increase in principals’ time spent on instruction is an important first step in the SAM process. Reflection on how time is spent leads to a potential improvement in the quality of time use, which can be defined as principal time spent on instruction that leads to positive changes in teacher, student, and parent outcomes.

This process is illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2: SAM Process Implementation



How do the essential elements interact to facilitate this process?

The essential components are used to facilitate this three-step process, both by protecting the principal’s instructional time and enabling him or her to reflect on instructional time use. The following provides an overview of how those components are intended to work in this process.

Step 1: Increased Principal Instructional Time

First Responders are trained to take over many of the principal’s management tasks to allow him or her to have more time for instruction. This system is designed to ensure that the principal is not the first person pulled away for every management issue but can instead increase his or her time spent on instruction. According to the NSIP director, Implementation Specialists “will teach the communications protocol, for example, to the front office staff, so when somebody calls up and says, ‘My child had a problem on the bus and I want to talk to the principal right now,’ ... [rather than] ‘Principal’s not available’ or ‘I’ll take a message,’ ... we train people to validate the caller. ‘I’m so sorry to hear that, is your child okay? I know my principal’s going to be concerned.’ Very different response Then the next piece is tell the person what you can do, not what you can’t. ‘A First Responder, vice principal, will talk to you right now. The principal wouldn’t want you to wait.’” When the First Responder system is implemented successfully, school leadership becomes more distributed, enabling the principal to spend more time focused on teaching and learning, rather than being the sole resource for every issue that occurs in the school.

In addition to the First Responder system, the use of the TimeTrack calendar also allows the principal to increase instructional time. The process requires that principals be very diligent

about planning their day in advance, through daily coding of their time spent on instruction and management. By recording daily time data, the principal and SAM are then able to analyze the principal's actual time spent on instruction relative to the principal's goal and to make changes accordingly.

Step 2: Reflection

Since the crux of the SAM process is that reflection on time use is as important as increasing instructional time the role of the SAM is critical. The SAM is trained by the Time Change Coach to help the principal reflect by asking non-directive questions about his or her time use, why he or she has used it that way, how it is helping to bring improvements, and what plans he or she has for time use in the future. As the NSIP director explained, "So you want to make sure that the SAM team, the people doing the work with the principal every day, can ask those kind of questions. We tell the principal that you have to give your SAM team permission to irritate you a little bit every day because if you're not feeling a little irritated, you're probably not getting the benefit The truth is it's hard and a lot of principals will push away at first. I've had SAMs—and we do teach SAMs to say this—turn to the principal and say, 'Talk to me about why you're pushing away, why you're not having your meeting. I thought you wanted to improve your practice. How will you be any better if you don't do this?'"

This daily interaction between the principal and SAM involves analyzing and reflecting on the TimeTrack data, as well as discussing how the principal's instructional time is being used. The SAM and principal consider whether the principal's time allocations are helping to change the school culture, building trust among the staff, and changing the teachers' instruction in positive ways. They reflect on whether time use also is improving student and parent engagement in the school. Based on the answers to these questions, the principal can then determine how to change his or her time use to further improve these outcomes.

Annual Time/Task Analysis shadowing is used to provide outside validation of the overall change in time spent on instruction. This offers a new baseline each year by which the principal and SAM can reflect on and plan future time use.

Step 3: Principal Time Use

The reflection on the TimeTrack data then allows the principal to think through how to improve the use of his or her time on instruction. The NSIP director explained, "That's why we train a SAM during the Daily Meeting to ask questions. 'Here's the time that you spent with Jason so far this year. Talk to me about what it is you're hoping to see in terms of change in Jason.'" Tying this reflection to action is an ongoing process. Once the principal attempts to improve the use of his or her time, he or she returns to reflecting with the SAM on whether or how that is working; from there, additional changes in time use can be made. "And so our theory ... is that if you increase your instructional time and then if you're reflective and willing to involve other people in improving practice as a whole, so you don't feel like you need to know all the answers, that you can then use this system, this process to change what occurs," NSIP's director said.

Training and Support as Part of the SAM Process Theory of Action

The training and support provided to principals and SAMs are a major element in facilitating the success of the SAM process. The Implementation Specialist ensures that the school staff is trained on using the basic components of the program, or the “mechanical” aspects of the SAM process. The ongoing support and training by the Time Change Coach helps the SAM to learn how to best “push” the principal in his or her thinking around time use. In addition, NSIP offers various PD opportunities for principals and SAMs to better understand the SAM process. This includes an annual conference, as well as district specific PD days with sessions aligned to the SAM process, covering topics such as how to have difficult feedback conversations with teachers. These various learning opportunities occur continuously for schools participating in the SAM process, so they can deepen their understanding of the way in which the components interact, as well as deepen their understanding of the reflective aspect of the process.

Fidelity versus Adaptation of the SAM Process

NSIP encourages fidelity in the use of a series of “non-negotiables,” but it also allows a certain amount of adaptation on the ground. The NSIP director listed four non-negotiables: (1) commitment and desire to adopt the SAM process, demonstrated in part by attending a readiness and orientation session; (2) participation in baseline data collection using the NSIP Time/Task Analysis and protocol; (3) the use of the TimeTrack calendar and Daily Meeting; and (4) ongoing coaching to support the work.

From the perspective of NSIP, these basic elements combine to make the process work. Yet, as the NSIP director explained, NSIP also left “quite a bit of freedom at the school level. It couldn’t become lockstep because you would destroy the creativity and the evolution of the SAM process, but we knew we had to set some non-negotiables.”

The director of NSIP also explained that “real success for us is when they don’t say we’re a SAM school but instead, SAM is just a process they’re using in their school or their district and it becomes integrated.” This line of thought discourages viewing the process as a formulaic program without flexibility. Once the non-negotiables are met, schools should determine how to use the process to best meet their needs.

This combination of fidelity to the basic, non-negotiable components and encouragement to adapt the process to the needs of the individual school was also evident in interviews with Time Change Coaches and Implementation Specialists. For example, coaches emphasized that they pose reflective questions to principals, rather than “tell them what to do.” Thus, as one explained, once the basic components are in place, the coach individualizes training for each school and each staff member:

“I try to individualize my coaching to each building because they are all unique.... New teams tend to need a lot more support in the technical aspects of the program like the TimeTrack software and ... how do we get our Daily Meeting in, how do we get that scheduled, what should we be doing in our Daily Meeting? And then as we move forward with teams, after they’ve been in for a while, what I focus on is if you’re the principal, you have time now to be in the

classroom, so how do you spend that time and what's the impact of how you're spending your time?"

Another coach reinforced the idea that the SAM process is “really not a canned program and that there's no right or wrong ... that it really truly is individualized, and that's what gives it its power... that the individual determines what it's going to do for them and what they need.” She further explained that the idea is that the SAM process provides “the system or a structure, a vehicle, a process, whatever word you want to use, so that the principal can meet with other people daily in order to plan and follow through on how their time is spent in a way that increases instructional—a focus on more instructional time. That's the whole purpose of the process, to increase the way a principal spends his or her time so that it's more systematically on instructional areas.” The nuances of how that plays out beyond the essential components can vary by school, depending on individual needs and context.

Changes in the SAM Process over Time

There are a number of areas in which the SAM process has changed and evolved over time. Some of the changes are in response to prior findings in the PSA evaluation, and others are in response to reflection on the process by those involved, as well as feedback and engagement with the field. In this section, we detail those changes based on interviews with NSIP, Time Change Coaches, Implementation Specialists, and PSA evaluators.

Time Change Coaches and Implementation Specialists

Although time change coaching has been a part of the SAM process since its inception, the role of the coach has become more formalized over time. As the NSIP director explained, “We have a very strict protocol in terms of how we train coaches and we do ongoing coaching training throughout the year electronically ... [and] in person because we think that's really important.” He also noted that increasing NSIP's work to train and support coaches “was something we learned from PSA [T]hey pushed us really hard on improving coaching and professional development and TimeTrack. At the time, we weren't doing PD at all, or much” beyond the annual conference.

Coaches now follow a protocol when they are in schools, meeting with each SAM and principal privately. During these meetings, the coaches facilitate “non-directive conversations” to understand what additional support the SAM and principal need to be effective. They also observe the Daily Meetings and provide feedback.

In addition to formalizing the coaching process, NSIP also added an Implementation Specialist position in 2010, relieving the NSIP director of that task. He explained, “Three years ago, I was the implementation specialist. I would go back and forth between districts,” noting that he could not give nearly the amount of time the SAM teams needed. To address this issue, NSIP built a cadre of Implementation Specialists to support schools. According to interviews with Time Change Coaches and Implementation Specialists, this new position helps schools with the technical aspects of the SAM process, such as the TimeTrack calendar and Daily Meeting. The Implementation Specialist typically spends two to three weeks in a school to ensure that the basic mechanics of the SAM process are implemented. The SAM Team Implementation Chart and the 4-point SAM/Principal Team Performance Rubric helps the Implementation Specialist identify

which level of the process the SAM and principal have reached: beginning (1), developing (2), accomplished (3), or exemplary (4). Implementation Specialists work with schools until they reach a 3 on each component of the rubric, which indicates successful implementation of the program's basic components. Accordingly, most Implementation Specialists in our sample mentioned the importance of using the rubric to determine when the school was ready to transition to the support of the coach. One offered, "We work with a rubric So when we get them to, say, level three of that rubric, we then begin to transition them over to a Time Change Coach. That individual will continue ongoing support. But our role is really like almost turning the key over and starting the car and letting it run very smoothly. And then once it's running, you put the Time Change Coach in there, and they're driving it." Interviewees perceived the recent development of the Implementation Specialist role as helping to improve the quality, pace, consistency, and fidelity of implementation.

Professional Development

According to NSIP, the only PD that was initially provided was the annual national SAM conference. That PD was expanded to include targeted, district-specific learning opportunities for principals and SAMs. These PD opportunities are currently offered to schools approximately twice per year. The director explained the genesis of contracting with external providers to develop appropriate PD: "PSA's report pushed us that we should be more involved in PD We began a process of talking with districts to see what they needed and what we found out is there were some commonalities, particularly with SAMs, mostly about communication, questioning structures, and coaching people." After realizing that additional PD was needed, NSIP began working with a variety of external groups, including Rutherford Learning Group; Fierce, Inc.; Dale Carnegie Training; and Top 20 Training. With these groups, NSIP developed day-long workshops that are SAM-specific.

TimeTrack Calendar

The TimeTrack calendar, although in existence since the start of the SAM process, has been expanded and improved over time. PSA suggested that at the time of their evaluation, the calendar was "cumbersome" and only allowed principals to record their time working in school, which left some principals unable to accurately record instructional or managerial time that was completed after school hours. The newer version includes a variety of graphs and features to track and analyze time use. It also allows principals to record time use during any working hours. The calendar now has features to disaggregate data, to help probe much more deeply into principals' time use. For example, the calendar can be used to analyze how much time principals spend in particular teachers' classrooms (i.e., are they avoiding teachers who need support the most?). TimeTrack data can be exported to other calendar programs, such as Outlook. NSIP continually updates TimeTrack based on user feedback.

In some schools, assistant or vice principals or others also use the TimeTrack calendar and meeting with a SAM for their own development. Multiple people within some schools can also access and view the principal's calendar.

Emergence of Model 3

The original approach to the SAM process (Model 1), still used by approximately 10% of SAM teams, was to hire a new staff person specifically to be the SAM. Model 2 designated an existing staff person as SAM as part of his or her job and provided the SAM with a stipend; only a few schools currently use this model. Most schools now use an existing staff person or persons to take on the SAM role in conjunction with their other job roles, without a stipend (Model 3). Schools fund the SAM process from various sources, including private grants, general funds, and state and federal categorical funds, such as money from School Improvement Grants or Race to the Top. Services for the SAM process cost, on average, \$12,900 per school, with costs dropping each year the process stays in place.

First Responder System

The First Responder system emerged as part of the general move from Model 1 to Model 3, with schools usually no longer having staff whose sole role was to be the SAM. The First Responder system is the process of training staff members to take on non-instructional leadership tasks in a clear and routine manner. The principal distributes leadership tasks, especially non-instructional leadership tasks, such as parent questions, bus monitoring, and facility management to specific members of the school staff to free up principal time to focus on instruction. NSIP provides specific training for First Responders as part of the role of the Implementation Specialist.

Change in Philosophy and Theory of Action

According to interviews with Time Change Coaches and Implementation Specialists, “SAM” originally referred to individuals. Now, SAM is considered a process, rather than a person, with a greater emphasis on distributed leadership. One Time Change Coach explained, “We have got to stop thinking about this as a person. It’s not. SAM is a process. And once you get that, that it’s a process, then you really can work So we stopped looking at it as a person. SAM is not a person. It’s a process. That was critical.”

Another coach indicated that NSIP now encourages schools to use a team, rather than an individual approach, to the SAM. They believe that SAM teams are better able to ask non-directive questions of the principal and to push his or her thinking around use of instructional time. The NSIP director also stated that the organization encourages schools to use SAM teams.

While the SAM process began as a way to help principals increase instructional time, it has developed into more. Time Change Coaches and Implementation Specialists described how principals are now also encouraged to think about how they *use* their time on instruction. This has been a major shift in the theory of action. One coach explained this shift: “What began maybe several years ago as a way to help protect the principal’s time has now leaped ahead into much more than that, because what we see we’re actually doing by helping principals identify and provide training support for First Responders is they are building a culture that is way different in their building -- one of distributed leadership, one of problem- solvers, independent thinkers, people that can take a look at issues and say, ‘I can take care of this, I don’t need someone else to tell me what to do.’ But, that takes place over a long period of time.” Time Change Coaches view the process as intended to impact the school at a deeper level, beyond just the implementation of the basic components of the SAM process. “So the process has evolved

beyond just this setting up a calendar, managing your time, asking these kind of questions now to we're getting steps beyond that to say okay, this is what we do when we have that time to get in the class" This shift has allowed for more of a focus on ongoing reflection and changing principal actions accordingly. It also has allowed for a movement from a focus on increased instructional time as the primary outcome of the SAM process to the ability for schools to concentrate on other outcomes: how principal time should be used, the way in which teacher practice can improve based on that time use, school culture, parent and student engagement, and student achievement.

III. The SAM Process and the Literature

In this section of the report we address the following question: How does the literature inform us about the SAM process theory of action and principal instructional time use? At the end of this review we address the following question: What do prior evaluations of the SAM process suggest as it relates to the literature?

Principal Instructional Leadership

As noted, the SAM process theory of action is deeply rooted in the ideas that instructional leadership is at the center of effective schools and that increasing the time principals spend on instruction will improve the quality of instructional leadership, teaching, and, ultimately, student outcomes. These ideas are supported by a large research base that links principal instructional leadership to positive school outcomes, including improved teacher practices and higher student achievement, across a variety of organizational (e.g., elementary, middle, and high schools; public, private, and public charter), spatial (e.g., urban/suburban), and temporal (1980 through present) contexts (e.g., Day et al., 2009; Heck & Hallinger, 2009; Heck & Hallinger, 2010; Goddard, Neumerski, Goddard, Salloum & Berebitsky, 2010; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; May & Supovitz, 2011; Nettles & Harrington, 2007; Quinn, 2002; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008; Sammons, Gu, Day, & Ko2010; Supovitz, Sirinides, & May, 2010). Recent measures of instructional leadership, such as the Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership in Education (VAL-ED) can distinguish between higher and lower levels of instructional leadership effectiveness (Covay Minor et al., 2014). In short, a program or intervention that encourages increases in principals' investments in instructional leadership seems a clear step in the right direction to improving school performance.

This conclusion, however, is less clear in the context of the struggle in this literature to settle on a definition of what instructional leadership includes. According to Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004), "the term is often more a slogan than a well-defined set of leadership practices" (p. 6). Instructional leaders are often described as leaders who maintain a focus on improving teaching and learning in daily decision making, but there is limited specificity as to what matters for whether instructional leadership leads to school improvement. At a more macro level, the literature provides markers for what this specificity should be, espousing that strong instructional leaders establish a school vision (Murphy & Hallinger, 1992), build a school culture (Heck & Hallinger, 2014), create a positive instructional climate (May & Supovitz, 2011; Supovitz et al., 2010), and engage with curriculum and instruction issues with teachers (Hornig & Loeb, 2010), among others.

At the more micro level of how a principal should conduct his or her day-to-day work, however, the literature provides much less guidance. If the goal is school improvement, simply increasing one's time on instructional matters may not be sufficient unless that increase is part of a strategy that improves the school's instructional climate or advances the other broad goals of instructional leadership. Indeed, recent empirical evidence demonstrates that principals who spend more time on instruction-related tasks, broadly defined, achieve no better school growth than principals who spend less (Goldring, Huff, May, & Camburn, 2008; Grissom, Loeb, & Master, 2013). Moreover, instructional investments cannot be undertaken without attention to maintaining a high level of organizational management in the school, which multiple studies have linked to positive school outcomes (Grissom & Loeb, 2011; Hornig et al., 2010).

In sum, there is broad research consensus that instructional leadership matters, but there are many open questions as to what the day-to-day, behavioral level of leadership practice should entail to improve school and student outcomes, the level at which the SAM process operates.

The remainder of this review of the literature informs those questions. Specifically, we address four areas germane to the SAM process. First, how much time do principals spend on instructional leadership? Second, beyond time allocation, what do we know about the quality of instructional leadership behaviors? Third, why is it so difficult to change the amount of time principals spend on instructional leadership? Moreover, fourth, what interventions have been studied to date regarding instructional leadership and time use?

Principal Time Allocation on Instructional Leadership

Researchers have been interested in how principals allocate their time across leadership and management tasks for four decades. In early studies, principals devoted little time to instructional matters; instead, principals' work was characterized by an array of short, fragmented activities often conducted through brief, unplanned personal interactions dominated by managerial issues and unrelated to teaching and learning (Wolcott, 1973; Peterson, 1977). Other research characterized principals' work as consisting of few self-initiated tasks, many activities of short duration, and an unpredictable flow of work with an emphasis on specific, concrete, and immediately pressing priorities (Pitner, 1982).

Principals in early studies rarely displayed instructional leadership behaviors (e.g., Little & Bird, 1984). One study of secondary school principals found that only 17% of principals' time and only 8% of the tasks on which they worked dealt with academic matters (Martin & Willower, 1981). Similar conclusions were established in another study on students' course-taking patterns in high schools (California State Department of Education, 1984), in which the investigators found that principals had little direct involvement with the school curriculum and almost all important decisions in this area (e.g., determining course content, assigning staff, aligning curricula, establishing criteria for student placement) were made by departments and department chairpersons. In their comprehensive ethnographic study, Morris, Crowson, Porter-Gehrie, and Hurwitz (1984) concluded that secondary school principals are "conspicuous by their relative absence from the site of teaching and learning" (p. 57), spending, on average, 7% of their time in classrooms. In a similar study, Willis (1980) reported that the secondary principals observed spent only 2% of their time visiting classrooms. In yet another study (which included elementary schools), Hanson (1981) found that almost all important decisions in the areas of curriculum and instruction were made by teachers.

Other early research on the instructional leadership role of elementary school principals reinforces these findings from secondary schools. Morris and his colleagues (1984) reported that the elementary principals they observed devoted 9% of their time to visiting classrooms. Peterson (1977) found that elementary principals spent less than 5% of their time in classrooms. A third study reported that elementary principals spent less than 2% of their total time acting as instructional leaders (Howell, 1981).

A small handful of more recent research has implemented more systematic data collection techniques to measure and understand principals' time use during the typical school day, such as end-of-day logs and full-day shadowing (see Appendix D for annotated bibliography). For example, Martinko and Gardner's (1990) structured observations showed that principals' time was consumed most frequently by unscheduled meetings—they reported that “almost 40 percent were initiated by other people and less than 4 percent were scheduled. Thus, large amounts of both time and events were apparently spontaneous” (Martinko & Gardner, 1990, p. 344). Horng et al., (2010) and Grissom et al. (2013) found that on average, principals spent less than 13% of their time on instruction-related activities; principals' days were instead dominated by administrative and managerial activities. The latter study showed that brief classroom walkthroughs were the most common of those instructional activities, comprising about half that time. Coaching, in which principals discuss with teachers how they can improve their practice, proved a very rare occurrence. Similarly, May and Supovitz (2011) found that principals spent a small portion of time on instruction, only 8% overall, while Goldring and colleagues (2008) found 20% of the principal's typical day is spent on instructional matters.

In summary, while principals perhaps spend more of their time on instructional activities today than they did in the 1970s and 1980s, time devoted to purposeful engagement with instruction remains below one-fifth of the typical school day. These meager numbers coupled with the literature relating principal instructional leaders to school improvement and student outcomes suggest that there is substantial merit for an intervention aimed at increasing principals' time allocation to instructional domains, such as the SAM process.

Beyond Time Allocation: Specificity and Quality of Instructional Leadership

While the spotlight is on principals' time allocation to instructional leadership roles, there are other aspects of instructional leadership beyond how time is organized that must be considered simultaneously to realize the goal of improving instructional leadership. These include both specificity and quality of instructional leadership behaviors. Unfortunately, the research in this area is thin, and we suggest that research on the SAM process can inform this important gap in our understanding of school leadership.

There is limited consensus regarding which specific behaviors constitute instructional leadership roles and whether some behaviors are of higher value than others for improving instruction, student achievement, and other outcomes (Grissom et al., 2013; Neumerski, 2013; Robinson et al., 2008; Supovitz, Sirinides, & May, 2009). In general, studies define principal instructional leadership in broad actions, such as having a visible presence, setting goals for the school, visiting classrooms, supervising instruction, providing feedback to teachers, and coordinating curriculum (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Hallinger, 2005; Horng & Loeb, 2010). Empirical studies of these broad domains typically have relied on judgments of principals (by themselves or teachers) from surveys of how frequently or effectively principals engage in these areas. More

recent empirical work aiming to document principal time via end-of-day logs or in-person observations have further defined tasks such as monitoring/observing instruction, supporting teachers' PD, analyzing student data or work, modeling instructional practices, and teaching a class as the domains of instructional leadership (Goldring et al., 2008; Grissom et al., 2013).

Moreover, as teacher evaluation systems have become more central to the policy landscape, tasks such as conducting structured classroom observations, providing teachers with feedback, having "courageous conversations" with teachers about performance, placing teachers on improvement plans, monitoring teacher progress via data systems, and removing consistently low-performing teachers are increasingly recognized as key components of the instructional leadership role (Goldring et al., 2015). These emerging roles highlight the importance of greater specificity in defining for principals what effective instructional leadership is in response to policy changes.

Thus, the literature suggests that allocation of time alone does not address the quality of the leadership behaviors. Quality of practices can be on a continuum from effective to poor. Practices also vary in frequency, from routinely performed to rarely undertaken. Scope, a characteristic that first surfaced empirically in work by May and Supovitz (2011), addresses the number (or percent) of people touched by a leader's practice, from one to all. Intensity is an important element of practice as well, ranging from high to low. Range addresses the coverage of behaviors from few to many. Integration refers to the extent to which practices are aligned and coherent (see Murphy, Neumerski, Goldring, Grissom, & Porter, 2014).

Therefore, the extent to which a change in time allocation to instructional leadership alone, versus a change in allocation to specific sets of both behaviors and practices, as well as the quality of those practices, is related to school improvement and is an important area for empirical research. A study of the SAM process could provide important insights to the field regarding the relationships among the allocation of instructional leadership time, the quality of specific instructional leadership behaviors, and school outcomes.

Challenges to Increasing Principal Instructional Leadership

Rhetoric, policy, and the literature all appear to support the need for principals to devote time to instructional leadership, but little change in time devoted to this aspect of principal leadership has been documented over decades. Why? The analysis in the literature establishes three reasons for the quite limited progress in changing principal attention to instructional issues in their schools: (1) organizational norms push them away from instructional leadership (Murphy, Hallinger, & Heck, 2013); (2) principals lack skills and knowledge about learning, teaching, and related domains required to undertake instructional leadership work; and (3) principals lack sufficient time to do the work, largely because of the press of other responsibilities. The SAM process intervenes to address these challenges.

Organizational Norms away from Instructional Leadership

One aspect of the gap between teaching and school administration is what organizational scholars refer to as the norm of legitimacy, what counts as appropriate work for teachers and principals (Little, 1988). In short, the job of teachers is to teach and the task of principals is to manage (Doyle, 2000). At the heart of this norm is the understanding that learning and teaching and the places where they occur are the rightful and often inviolate domain of teachers (Barth,

2001). Relatedly, the definition of teacher professionalism has formed over time to include a strong pattern of autonomy (Griffin, 1995; Smylie & Hart, 1999). Thus, historically, principals have been reluctant to interfere or question teaching practices.

Principals traditionally were not held accountable for teaching, learning, and outcomes for students. Evaluations of principals tended to rest on their ability to maintain a non-conflictive school environment; that is, to keep order among students and calm between teachers and administrators and between the school and the larger community. The formal and informal expectations of many districts thus actively pushed principals away from instructional leadership functions and toward those building and political management activities that determine whether they survive and flourish professionally (Murphy, 2013; Callahan & Button, 1964).

Lack of Skills and Knowledge about Learning, Teaching, and Related Domains

Traditionally, the principalship has been a management role rather than an educational one (Murphy, 1992), with principal preparation programs rooted in management fields and largely ignoring matters of teaching and learning, pedagogy, and curriculum (Greenfield, 1988; Hills, 1975; Norton & Levan, 1987). With the accountability era came expectations that principals would drive the improvement of teaching in struggling schools, but many principals remained unprepared to meet these demands and were offered few tools or development opportunities to help them learn to lead for improvement. Volumes have been written about the shortcomings of preparation programs and PD opportunities (Young, Crow, Murphy, & Ogawa, 2009; Grissom & Harrington, 2010).

The introduction of federally funded Race to the Top has added further pressure to the idea that the principal should be an instructional leader, but it remains unclear how principals will develop the skills and knowledge to undertake these new responsibilities. By and large, much of the PD for principals is inadequate and insufficient to change principal behavior and practices.

Lack of Sufficient Time to Do Instructional Leadership Work

Principals are expected to fulfill a large variety of disparate roles with competing expectations and demands from teachers, parents, central office staff, and others. As already noted, the average workday of principals is characterized by attention to a variety of tasks, fragmentation of activities, brevity of attention to issues, and lack of control over how they spend their time. Some instructional leadership domains, however, demand uninterrupted blocks of time for activities such as planning, writing, conferencing and observing, analyzing curriculum, and developing professional growth activities for staff. The result is that much important work on instructional matters is lost to the day-to-day operation of the typical school (Murphy, Hallinger, Lotto, & Miller, 1987).

Many principals are unequipped with the time management skills necessary to prioritize these instructional functions (Grissom, Loeb, & Mitani, in press). The introduction of new teacher evaluation systems with their new emphasis on teacher observation and feedback may prove to increase principals' time on instruction, but potentially only in specific areas of instructional leadership. Furthermore, these new responsibilities continue to compete with principals' responsibilities for managing and running the day-to-day functions of the school. In short, increased accountability expectations have done little to change the structure of principals' daily

work routines to allow them the time to focus on instruction; demands to manage the school facilities and budgets have continued, despite the increased pressure to add instructional leadership to the mix (Murphy & Beck, 1994; Murphy & Meyers, 2008; Neumerski et al., 2014).

Past Interventions to Increase Principal Time Use

Despite the consensus regarding the centrality of instructional leadership for school improvement, there have been no large-scale interventions that we know of that have attempted to specifically focus on changing principal time allocation beyond the SAM process. Furthermore, there have been very few randomized controlled trials (RCTs) aimed at principal development overall (see Camburn, Goldring, Sebastian, May, & Huff, in press). In contrast, an array of public and private organizations has devoted money and programmatic activity to increasing and improving principal instructional leadership. The U.S. Department of Education has sponsored the School Leadership Development Grant program “to support the development, enhancement, or expansion of innovative programs to recruit, train, and mentor principals (including assistant principals) for high-need [local education agencies].” In 2013, 20 individual awards were made for more than \$13 million. Similarly, districts, states, professional organizations, nonprofits, think tanks, and for-profit organizations all offer preparation and PD, many, if not most, stressing increased quality and quantity of instructional leadership.

Despite the optimism that some researchers, policymakers, and practitioners have about the potential benefits of principal development programs, evidence of the efficacy of principal PD is scarce, with little of that evidence coming from studies that permit strong causal inferences about whether and how PD influences principals or other important outcomes (LaPointe, Meyerson, & Darling-Hammond, 2006).

While advocacy has increased for experiments in education research, few have been conducted in the field of educational leadership. Camburn and colleagues (in press) assessed the availability of such evidence through a search of the Campbell Collaboration Social, Psychological, Educational & Criminological Trials Register (C2-SPECTR) and the What Works Clearinghouse. C2-SPECTR contains abstracts of more than 10,000 randomized trials in the fields of sociology, psychology, education, and criminology. The authors searched C2-SPECTR using the terms “principal” and “leadership” and keywords “educational administration” and “educational supervision.” These searches identified a total of 18 articles. Of these, only three involved studies in which principals participated as subjects in a randomized experiment. One of these studies assessed principals’ decision making in the teacher hiring process (Young, 1997). The remaining two randomized trials tested the effect of principals’ participation in PD on their practice. In an experiment reported by Thomas (1970), 28 principals were randomly assigned to participate in five days of training designed to improve their relationships with staff members. The study found “more positive change by principals in the experimental group than by those in the control group, and showed that laboratory training in interpersonal relations positively affected the administrator’s behavior with his staff” (Thomas, 1970). In the third randomized experiment, principals were randomly assigned to one of four conditions: (1) principals but not their teachers participated in a classroom management and a supervision workshop; (2) both teachers and principals participated in a classroom management workshop; (3) teachers participated in a classroom management workshop, but principals did not; and (4) neither teachers nor principals participated in the workshop (Grimmet & Crehan, 1987). The results

indicated that supervision behavior was more effective when both teachers and principals participated in the workshop training.

We note that a second major repository of experimental evidence on educational interventions, the What Works Clearinghouse, systematically excludes studies that do not examine student outcomes and thus, by design, is unlikely to include studies of the effects of PD programs on principals.

A limited number of relatively new randomized experiments involving principals are currently emerging from the field. In one such study, for example, the School Leadership Improvement Study, principals were randomly assigned to either receive or not receive the Balanced Leadership program (Jacob, Goddard, Kim, Miller, & Goddard, 2014). More recently, the U.S. Department of Education has embarked on a rigorous, large RCT of one principal PD program. The results of that study will not be available for years.

We conclude from this literature search that experimental evidence on principals, their practice, and the effect of principal development programs (either PD or pre-service) is limited. We know of no studies that have examined the outcome of an intervention on principal time use. The extant published empirical work on leadership effects is primarily (a) correlational, (b) cross-sectional, and (c) non-interventional. Positive findings from correlational and quasi-experimental studies provide a persuasive promise, while the lack of rigorous causal leadership studies provides a compelling need for rigorous evaluations, including of the SAM process.

Conclusion

Given prevailing forces that continue to push against principals spending time on instructional leadership behaviors, targeted and specific strategies to help principals undertake this uphill struggle to become instructionally oriented leaders and reshape their work are required. The SAM process is the only process we are aware of that squarely intervenes on principal time use to increase instructional leadership.

The SAM process is designed to help principals become more focused and deliberate around the domains of instructional leadership, and it addresses the problems noted in this section that have made increasing energy and time to the instructional dimensions of schools so problematic. Therefore, we conclude from the literature review that the SAM process needs to be studied with seriousness and rigor.

In addition, the literature review surfaces four important questions that should be investigated in a study of the SAM process beyond the main question of whether it works: (1) If the process is found to change instructional leadership behaviors and practices, why does the change occur? (2) What specific domains of instructional leadership impact school leadership? (3) How does the quality of the instructional leadership impact school outcomes? And (4) What types of effects does the SAM process have on schools, teachers, and students?

Previous Evaluation Reports of the SAM Process

Given that there are no similar evaluations of principal time use, the PSA evaluations and an unpublished manuscript of the SAM process in Davenport, Iowa (Kilmer, Shen, Wolff, & Yager, 2014) are the primary source of direct study of the SAM process. The SAM evaluation by PSA for the Wallace Foundation, and reviewed by the Vanderbilt research team, indicate that the theory of action of the SAM process initiative at the time was that increasing principal time on instructional leadership work would lead to better outcomes for the school—envisioned in terms of student learning. Our most direct evidence of the latter linkage is that student achievement gains were assessed in the PSA evaluation. The operational model was that ratcheting up principal time devoted to instruction, as defined by the indicators in the baseline data collection tool, was the key to school improvement. Surrounding the logic was the belief that the SAM role, time tracking and the SAM Daily Meeting, coaches for principals, and the yearly PD experience would make the model work.

According to our review of the PSA reports, the model did what it was intended to do: It increased the percent of time principals spent on instructional tasks (Turnbull, White, & Arcaira, 2010) (Turnbull, White, & Sinclair, 2011) (Turnbull, Haslam, Arcaira et al., 2011). But the PSA evaluation does not find consistent evidence that implementing the SAM process produces increases in student achievement. We note that the PSA achievement analysis, described in the report as “preliminary,” faces a number of statistical and data limitations that preclude strong conclusions from being drawn from it. Thus, we believe more research is warranted in a rigorous causal design.

A topic that was not addressed in the PSA studies is the quality of instructional time usage. While the SAM data collection process is exceptionally powerful in providing information on the what, when, and where of principal time usage, it is silent on the why and how issues. That is, there are no data on the quality of time usage, an issue highlighted in the literature review. Thus, we are left with a bit of a new black box that needs to be explored.

A second issue that merits attention is time for impacts to materialize. Research to date shows us that the effects of principals are indirect, that principal action is mediated by the instructional program and school culture. Considerable research tells us that changes in these two domains take significant time to unfold. Thus, an important note is that more than two years may be necessary for effects in student learning to appear. Furthermore, as will be noted in the section of this report on implementation, some aspects of the SAM process are more difficult to implement well than others and may take more time.

In addition, a study of the SAM process must examine mediating factors more closely related to principal leadership, such as changes in the instruction, quality of feedback to teachers, culture, and reciprocal trust.

Furthermore, there have been notable changes to the SAM process since the earlier PSA evaluations: implementation specialists, a more sophisticated TimeTrack calendar allowing for data disaggregation and deeper analyses, and enhanced PD, to name a few. It is plausible that the enhancements of the SAM process, such as Implementation Specialists and more PD, address the need to increase the knowledge, dispositions, and skill sets of principals that might have been insufficient in the original SAM process logic model. Although some developmental activities were built into the earlier SAM model (i.e., the yearly conference and the coaching strategy), they were likely not enough to address these needs. The law of school improvement here is that it

is very difficult to lead what one does not know. It may be that insufficient attention was provided to these input variables in the earlier SAM process. At best, there was an implicit sense that these inputs were malleable and that they would grow during the process. In the current theory of action, much more direct attention is provided. Given changes to the SAM process, new evaluation is highly warranted.

IV. The Actual: SAM Process Implementation in the Field

In this section, we address the current implementation of the SAM process in the field. We provide an overview of who is currently implementing the SAM process and which models are being implemented. We report the goals and motivations behind the adoption of the SAM process, as well as the benefits and challenges schools experience in implementing the process. We also highlight the ways in which schools implement the essential components of the SAM process with fidelity and the ways in which they adapt the process to their specific needs. We conclude with suggestions for improvement.

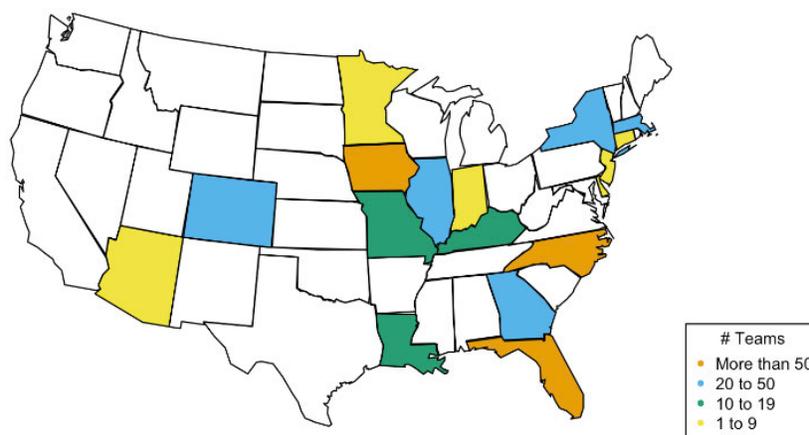
We draw on a variety of data to address these issues, namely interviews with key leaders at the NSIP; interviews with PSA staff members; interviews with principals, SAMs, First Responders, and district officials in four case study districts; interviews with Time Change Coaches and Implementation Specialists; Time/Task Analysis and TimeTrack calendar data; results of the principal and SAM surveys; and NSIP documents and artifacts.

Spread of Current Implementation

In this section, we report on the implementation of the SAM process, including the locales of SAM implementation across the United States, years of experience in the program, and the specific models being implemented.

As of January 9, 2013, based on data from NSIP, 63 districts were participating in the SAM process, with the greatest numbers in Iowa, Delaware, and Illinois. These districts had anywhere from one (e.g., Caruthersville Public Schools [MO]) to 84 (Hillsborough County Public Schools [FL]) active SAM schools. In total, there were 481 active SAM schools (or teams), distributed across the nation as shown in Figure 3, with Iowa, North Carolina, and Florida having the most teams.

Figure 3: Distribution of SAM Teams as of January 30, 2013



Not all schools in a district participate in the SAM process. This is not surprising in that, largely, the process is voluntary. In the 13 districts for which we were provided information on percent participation, the level ranged from 21% (Boston Public Schools [MA]) to 88% (Council Bluffs Community School District [IA]). On average, 43% of district schools participated.

Length of participation ranged from one-tenth of one year (e.g., Manchester School District, NH) to 9.4 years (Jefferson County Public Schools, KY), with an average of 2.7 years.

Of the 481 schools, 77 (16%) were implementing Model 1 (a newly hired SAM), 3 (less than 1%) were implementing Model 2 (in which a current staff member took on the role of a full-time SAM), and 401 (83%) were implementing Model 3 (adding the SAM responsibilities to existing school personnel).

From the survey data, we learned that SAMs held various positions in the school. According to principals who responded to this question (N = 302), those positions were:

- 189 (63%) secretaries,
- 74 (25%) assistant principal,
- 12 (4%) school business manager/bookkeepers,
- 36 (12%) teachers, and
- 107 (35%) other positions, including school counselors, parent coordinators, and deans, plus a small number of Model 1 SAMs.

Note that some schools have more than SAM, some of whom are in different roles, so the percentages sum to more than 100%. Of those reporting more than one position, many (12% of the full sample) had a secretary and assistant principal combination. Five percent of principals reported having a staff person dedicated exclusively to the SAM position. Twenty-seven percent of the principals had their SAMs change at some point, excluding those changes that occurred because the principals changed schools or their SAM left the school.

In January 2015, we received follow-up information regarding the distribution of SAM teams. At this time, NSIP reported 1,042 TimeTrack calendar users (including assistant principals, principal supervisors, and other district officials) and 714 SAM teams. Among the 714 SAM teams, 46% were in their first year, and 32% were in their second year. Sixty-four percent were

elementary teams, 16% were middle school teams, 17% were high school teams, and 4% were other, including principal supervisors or principals in schools with non-traditional structures. The average school enrollment for schools participating in the SAM process was 684 students, 66% of whom were eligible for free and reduced-price lunch.

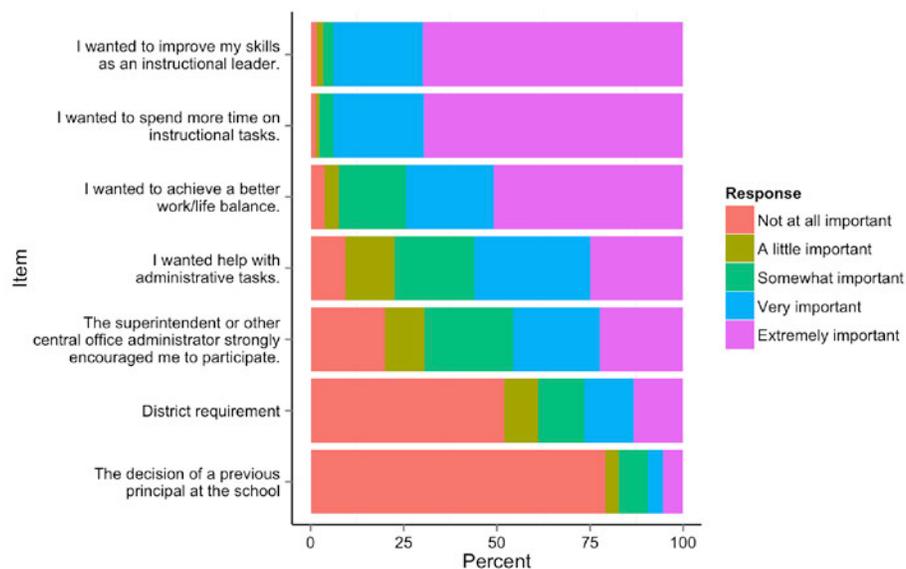
Goals for Adopting the SAM Process

Principals largely reported that participation in the SAM process was voluntary. Overall, they were motivated to adopt the SAM process to improve their capacity as instructional leaders and to spend more time on instruction. Many were also interested in using the process to gain a better work/life balance.

Principals' Perspectives

We surveyed principals to better understand their motivations for adopting the SAM process. Principals were asked to rate the importance of various factors in their decision to participate in the SAM process. Ninety-four percent of surveyed principals rated both “I wanted to spend more time on instructional tasks” and “I wanted to improve my skills as an instructional leader” as “very important” or “extremely important” in their decision. Seventy-four percent rated wanting “to achieve a better work/life balance” as very or extremely important. Interestingly, 46% also noted that superintendent or other central office administrator encouragement was very or extremely important; 50% wanted help with administrative tasks.

Figure 4: Principal Motivations for Participating in the SAM Process



Interview data from the four case study schools largely supported these findings. The large majority of principals described joining the SAM process to improve instructional leadership, and to a lesser extent, they specifically mentioned student achievement. While a few new principals hoped the process would teach them to become instructional leaders, most principals already considered themselves instructional leaders and hoped the SAM process would help them improve. They noted that the process would enable them to “be more organized” or

“manage their day” in ways that would allow for a deeper focus on instruction. As one principal explained, “I don’t need the instructional leadership training. I need something that’s more logistical and operational to help structure my time more so I can use my strengths in the instructional area to their maximum, and so when this came along, I immediately wanted to do it.” A Time Change Coach made a similar comment about why principals adopt the SAM process: “Number one . . . , they really do want to impact teaching and learning in their buildings. They want to impact teacher practice. They want to understand more deeply what’s happening in classrooms. Some of them do it, because they, as leaders, have a need to . . . it’s really from the professional development end for themselves as leaders. Others feel very strongly that they have the skills to be that instructional leader, but they have never been able to figure out how to spend the time doing it. Or how to set goals around how they should spend their time.”

These results reflect NSIP’s perspective that improving instructional leadership is the primary motivation for principals to participate. The NSIP director explained: “Most principals didn’t sign up to be a principal to be a manager, and so the idea . . . of being able to get a better handle on what that life would be and be able then to focus more energy and time on instructional leadership work is really appealing to most principals.”

Many principals sought work/life balance through the adoption of the SAM process. A principal, who already felt competent at instructional leadership recognized that he was “really struggling with time management and really the balance between instruction, management, and the balance between work and personal life So when this was offered up, [he] jumped at the opportunity.”

A few principals explicitly hoped the process would improve student achievement. For example, one veteran principal expressed: “No matter what I was doing as far as the students and what I thought was the best, I still wasn’t getting what I wanted. In the end, I wasn’t getting the scores that I wanted My hope was that [SAM] would impact student learning.” She contrasted her motivation for adopting the SAM process with that of many of her peer principals, who, she believed, mainly sought to improve their time management and work/life balance, not to increase student learning: “I do have 20 years in, so I’m way past the days of spending until 10:00 here . . . so I wasn’t really one of those people that was hoping to find a way to still get your job done within a reasonable amount of time But I did want to be able to use the time at school more wisely.”

Although NSIP described the importance of principals reflecting on the *quality* of their instructional time, only a handful of principals across districts identified this as a motivating factor for adopting the SAM process. The reason for this disparity is unclear. It may be that reflection develops later in implementation, rather than as a motivating factor at the outset.

Only two principals of the 16 we interviewed felt pressured by district administrators to adopt the SAM process. One principal believed he had been “voluntold” to implement the process, and for this reason, he was largely unmotivated to take part in it. Another principal felt her district nudged her to consider it, explaining, “The percentage of time spent on instruction versus management is certainly something that the district wants us to look at.”

SAMs' Perspectives

In general, most SAMs were aware of their principals' goals for joining the process and largely echoed their sentiments around the need to focus more intensely on instruction. However, some SAMs were not able to articulate these goals as fully or deeply as the principals. For example, one SAM talked about the goal as "seeing how much curriculum and instruction and how much management the principal has on [the TimeTrack calendar] charts." While some SAMs could explain their principals' reasoning for adopting the process, overall they seemed to have less of an understanding of its long-term goals. One possible reason is that some of the SAMs were still relatively new to the process when we interviewed them and were still trying to fully understand it. However, this does suggest that some SAMs may need additional coaching around the goals and potential benefits of the process. Another possible explanation is that many SAMs are secretaries or assistants, and they may not be in a position to know enough about educational leadership.

District Perspective

Interviews suggest that the most prevalent reason for adopting the SAM process at the district-level is to improve principals' instructional leadership and to increase student achievement. In fact, district staff were more likely than principals to note student achievement as a motivating factor for adopting the process, often as a result of improved instructional leadership.

Said one district official: "We're not performing as well as we could be as a district, so it's been very difficult for us to really impact leadership performance at a broad scale, and so when we began to do the research for SAM, we saw the value of, look, here is what you're able to do as a SAM principal, which is find this additional time from your current time. That really helps you devote time on instructional leadership." That focus is now shifting to increasing the *quality* of time spent on instruction. "Now the key piece is—so now sometimes even though you have that additional time, it's what are we actually doing with that time. That's the next level of the conversation."

Time Change Coaches and Implementation Specialists echoed the idea that districts are largely motivated to adopt the SAM process to increase the instructional leadership of principals in ways that positively impact student achievement. As one coach explained, districts are interested in the process to "help [principals] to manage it all in an effective, clear fashion so that instead of spending all their time on the management things that don't touch student achievement ... helping that principal to build a team so that they can really take care of the priorities of teaching and learning."

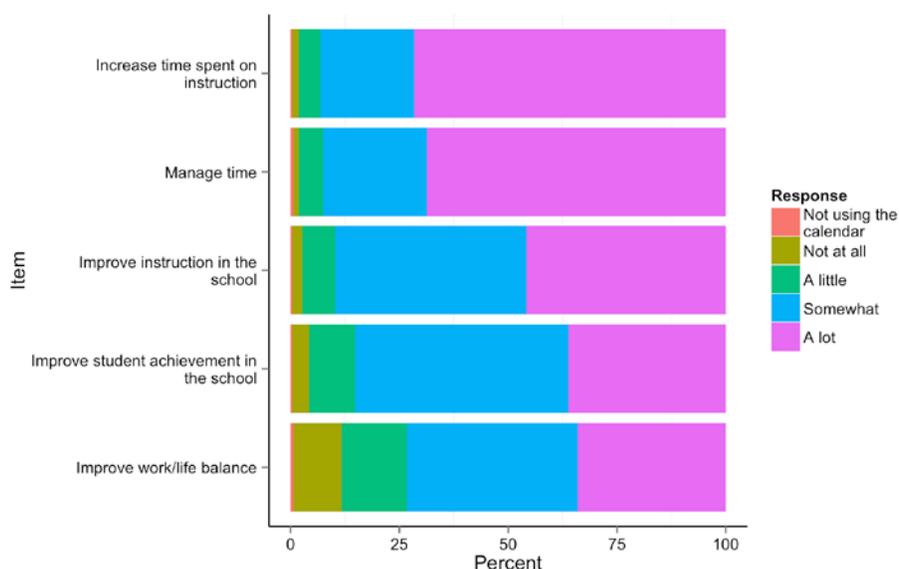
A district official explained the way in which the SAM process might help principals to focus more closely on teaching and learning: "The job of the principal is so cumbersome and it's virtually impossible to do as one person, so you have to figure out as a system, 'How do you create—with all the demands on principals—how do you help them organize their time to pay close attention to what's happening in classrooms?' And this is a low cost way to do that."

Benefits of the SAM Process

Both principals and district-level staff found an increase in principal instructional time to be the greatest benefit of the SAM process. They also indicated that the process helped principals to better manage their time. Several principals discussed work/life balance as an important benefit, as well.

Figure 5 illustrates the various benefits of the SAM process that principals noted on the survey. Seventy-one percent of principals found that increasing time spent on instruction was the greatest benefit, followed by 69% who found managing time to be the greatest benefit. Only 36% of principals indicated that the “SAM process helped improve student achievement a lot.” Work/life balance was the weakest benefit principals reported – only about a quarter considered this an important outcome – despite the large majority who noted this was an important goal of the SAM process.

Figure 5: Principal Perspectives on Benefits



In a separate question, we asked, “To what extent has the SAM process increased your focus on teaching and learning?” A large majority of principals (83%) said at least “very much.” Additionally we asked, “To what extent are changes occurring in classrooms because of the SAM process?” Forty-four percent of principals responded “tremendously” while 41% said “somewhat.”

It is important to note that SAMs were somewhat less positive about benefits. Most (64%) indicated that the SAM process has increased the school’s focus on teaching and learning at least “very much.” In terms of whether changes were happening in classrooms as a result, 42% responded “very much,” while 36% responded “somewhat.” These patterns, while positive, are less so than the responses given by principals.

Principals in the four case study districts echoed many of these findings. An increase in time spent on instruction was noted as the greatest benefit of the SAM process, and many principals connected this with improved feedback for teachers. Some principals indicated that using the

SAM process to track which teachers receive feedback helps ensure that all teachers receive help, not just a subset. For example, a principal reported that the process enabled him to know whom “I’m actually spending most of my time with” and determine whom he “might be neglecting on the campus that I need to try spending time giving feedback.” Time Change Coaches and Implementation Specialists also described this as a major benefit for principals. As one coach explained, “[Principals are] having more conversations with teachers. A, they have to anyway, because that’s the district expectation, but B, they’re tracking them. They’re scheduling them, and they’re reminding themselves or the SAM team member is reminding them to also have celebratory conversations. We chart it. Each month, I hand them a chart that says, this is how many hours and minutes you’ve had on these feedback conversations, on these observations. How is that working for you? Is that getting the results you want? Is there something you want to try and do more of?”

Time Change Coaches also believed that a major benefit for principals was not only increasing time on instruction, but also improving the quality of that time. One coach explained how some principals use the TimeTrack calendar to review the ways in which they used their time: “We have the data. You get to look at the charts. Annual progress over time. You can see how much time was spent a year ago on instruction, and how much time is being spent now. You can look at the quality of what was done versus what’s happening now. What are the areas the person is focusing on, and you can see a change or a shift.” However, coaches also indicated that not all principals made the shift to focusing on quality of time use; some principals increased instructional time without necessarily improving the quality of that time use. This seemed to vary by individuals, rather than by systematic differences in districts or principal characteristics.

Some principals saw the increased instructional time as improving their role as instructional leaders. One principal explained, “I feel like this process was kind of like my lifesaver, because instruction, that’s where my passion is. That’s my love anyway, and so it was just that piece that helped me figure out this really can exist if you have this in place, so I think it’s helped me from a professional standpoint to really—I think it really helps to keep this whole idea of instructional leadership accessible as opposed to this just great big abstract idea that sounds good, and we know it’s good, and we know it’s meaningful, but it really gives you a pathway to get in there.” Other principals believed that they were already successful instructional leaders but that the SAM process helped them to become better managers.

Across the case study districts, many principals credited the SAM process with changing school culture in positive ways, such as highlighting the importance of instruction and making the principal more visible. Some noticed that the process helped the principal’s credibility; others felt the process improved the staff’s understanding of their work. As one principal explained, “It’s helped other people be more cognizant of what my role should be. I think that’s probably the biggest benefit. They’ve realized that I really don’t need to manage discipline and other things, that it’s really instruction This was a biggie.” Another described positive changes to the school culture: “A beautiful thing happened here because we were in the classrooms every day We were able to see exemplary instructional practices, and then we were able to say, ‘Hey, will you come present to our staff? Will you come and model this for our staff?’ And it has become our culture, that we’re not up there talking—it is people they respect and people that are in the trenches every day with If we had not been in the classroom, we may have missed some of that. We may have missed some of that quality, top-notch instruction that was going on.

And I love that, love that, love that.” Part of this culture includes a celebration of staff talents and abilities that were previously unrecognized. For example, secretaries and janitors may be celebrated for their role as SAMs or First Responders in protecting the principal’s instructional time.

Consistent with survey results, principals also described improved time management. For example, a principal described the SAM process as shifting her day from “unstructured time” to “organized time.” The process gave her more time to focus on teachers and enabled her to be more accessible. Before its implementation, teachers routinely stopped her in the hallway to discuss pressing matters, and she struggled to keep up with their needs. Now, teachers check her schedule to make an appointment. A First Responder talked about the SAM process allowing the principal to spend adequate time evaluating teachers: “[The process takes] a lot of that burden off of the principal so that she can actually do more of the work that she needs to get to, which is evaluating teachers and making sure the school is running efficiently.”

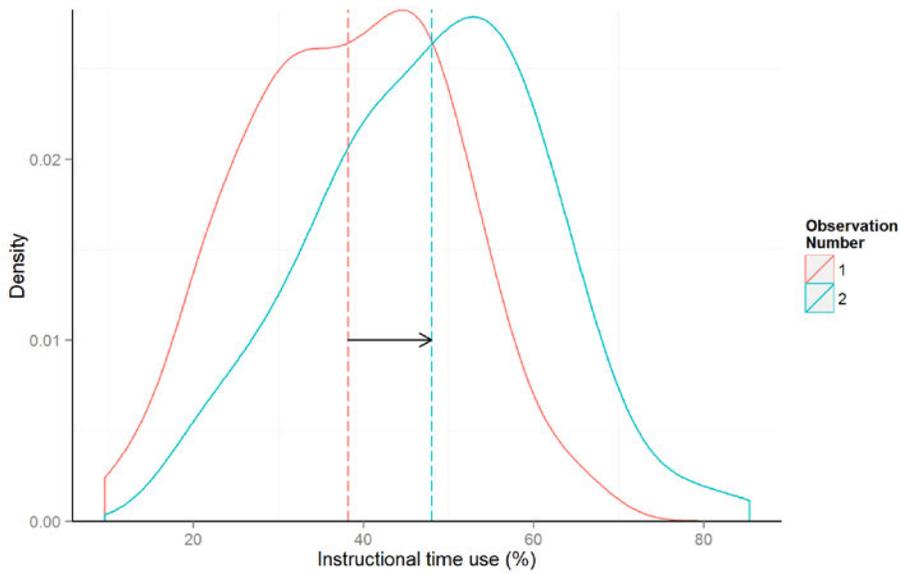
For other principals, managing time was directly related to an improvement in work/life balance. A principal described how the process allowed him to spend less time working overall and to focus that time more specifically on classrooms. He said: “I may have made a career change if it wasn’t for the SAM process, because what I was trying to do was not sustainable. It was not sustainable, and I would change jobs before allowing my wife to divorce me.” He added: “I wouldn’t have had a solution to how to manage life and work, and so the SAM calendar—I keep using this word, like [it] doesn’t make me feel guilty or gives me permission to say this is how I spend my time. It’s legitimate. Classroom observations are the most important thing.”

Several Time Change Coaches and Implementation Specialists commented that an additional benefit of the SAM process is making the mandatory teacher evaluations occur more smoothly: “Because of this goal that [principals have] set, they are spending more time in conversations with teachers, and in doing observations, and planning things, and it really ties together with all the new evaluation requirements that are happening all over the country. It fits real well.”

In one district, for example, principals cited the access to national expertise and PD as a major benefit of the SAM process, although this is the only district in which we heard this consistently. Some principals connected this access to an increase in their ability to provide adequate feedback to teachers.

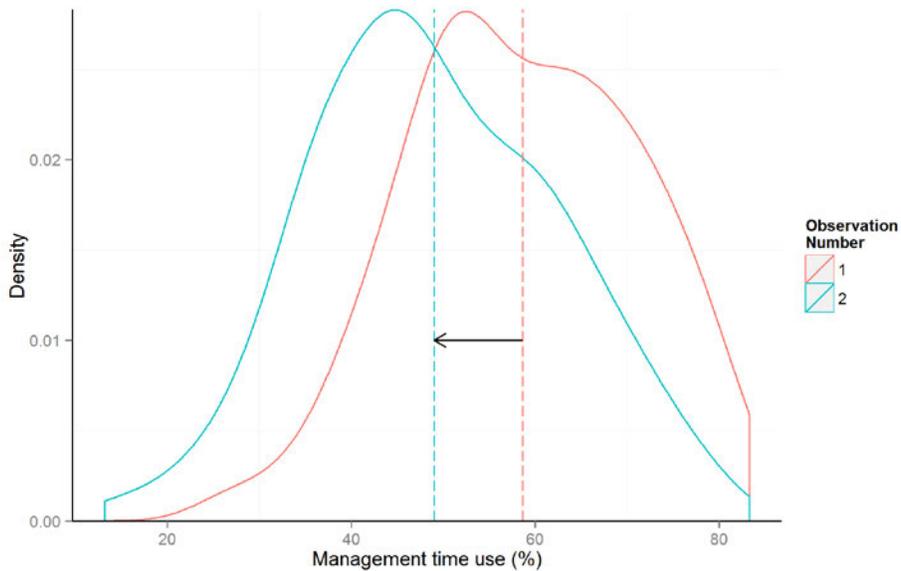
The findings from our analysis of the Time/Task Analysis data also suggest that the SAM process is increasing time spent on instruction. In Figure 6, we see that for individuals shadowed twice, the mean percent time spent on instruction increases from 38% to 48% from one year to the next.

Figure 6: Change in Instructional Time for Individuals Shadowed Twice



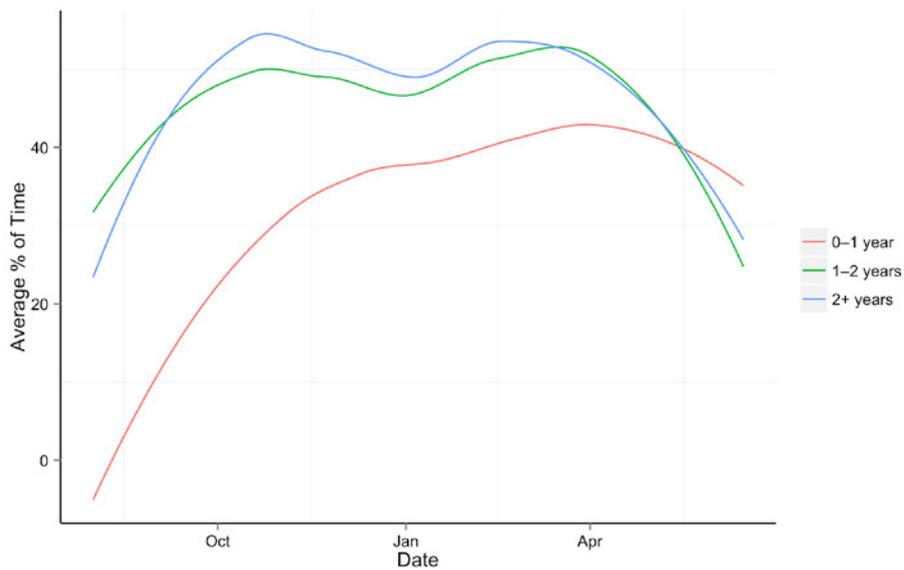
Concomitantly, time spent on management decreases from one year to the next.

Figure 7: Change in Management Time for Individuals Shadowed Twice



We also have evidence of the impact of the SAM process in the TimeTrack calendar data. We might consider the second-year participants, for a moment, to be representative of what the first-year participants will look like in the next year. With this consideration, it appears that most of the growth in time spent on instruction occurs in the first year; after that, the time principals spent on instruction follows a more seasonal, regular pattern that is always greater than what was recorded during in their first year. This change with years of participation is evidence that the SAM process may indeed be having some impact on instructional time use, as we would otherwise expect trajectories to be consistent across amounts of experience.

Figure 8: Instructional Time by Years in Program



It is important to keep in mind that these are average trends, created using the average percentages from each date. Individual trajectories varied widely, and the evidence here needs to be evaluated accordingly.

Benefits for Students

Some principals, SAMs, and First Responders also connected the SAM process with an increase (or potential increase) in student achievement, even though this was rarely stated as an initial goal for adopting the process. Most were reluctant to draw a direct link between the implementation of the process and changes in student outcomes because they believed many factors likely contributed to student achievement. Still, they tended to note the ultimate benefit of the SAM process was for students. One principal explained: “One report or one sort of chart that I looked at toward the end of the year was how much time I spent with teachers who I know are struggling. And by time, that means classroom observations, giving feedback, planning, or doing model lessons in those classrooms. If I’m not doing that, then that’s hurting those students. If I’m doing that, then that’s helping those students. So I absolutely see a direct connection to student learning.” Similarly, a SAM commented, “The main benefit [of the SAM process] is, if the principal is in the classroom with instructional leadership and everything, the benefit is going to be that we’re going to see improvement in our scores.” Time Change Coaches and Implementation Specialists also noted that they only had anecdotal evidence of such increases, as there was no way to isolate the SAM process as the variable that had increased student achievement in some schools. However, much like principals, they believe the SAM process is likely one variable that contributes to such a change. They described looking for the focus in schools “on increasing instruction with the intent to impact change and influence different levels of teacher practice” as a means to improve student achievement.

Benefits for Staff

Overall, principals reported that their staff felt more valued because of the SAM process. In particular, SAMs and First Responders were given additional responsibilities, and the importance of their role was shared with the school. Principals believed that other school leaders, such as assistant principals, also benefited from the process, sometimes adopting TimeTrack calendars for themselves and shifting their own focus more heavily on instruction.

Time Change Coaches indicated that another benefit is when the leadership in a SAM school shifts from being that of the solitary principal to a shared approach. Specifically, the First Responder system invites school staff to take on new responsibilities, which protects the principal's instructional time while building a sense of distributed leadership throughout the school. One coach explained: "The leadership really does become a much more distributed model. It has to. If the principal is going to spend a greater amount of time with teachers, and that's not always just in the classroom ... you have to have other people in your building that you rely on to be leaders in a variety of areas, whether it's content areas or whether it's in office things, management things. So it really does lead to a much more distributed model when principals are truly and fully implementing the process." This shift in leadership was a major benefit noted by Time Change Coaches.

Several SAMs described direct benefits for themselves. For example, one SAM believed the greatest outcome of the SAM process was that she could better manage the principal's schedule and was able to spend more time with him with fewer interruptions. Although she saw this as a benefit for the teachers, as well, she did not draw the connection to instructional leadership explicitly. Similarly, some SAMs described an increase in their direct communication with the principal. One noted: "The best part of the whole SAM initiative, for me, is the fact that it makes the principal and I communicate, because it's very hard to really have time with your principal When we do meet, we find out that we are able to communicate about a lot of things I'm going to look at it now as a tool for me as well, just to be able to voice my concerns." It was unclear whether this SAM believed the increased communication improved the principal's job performance or whether this was simply an added benefit of the process. Although improved communication is not an explicit goal of the SAM process, several SAMs commented that they enjoyed having a new level of conversation with the principal, as well as increased access to him or her. And while this was not described by every SAM we interviewed, it was a consistent enough response to warrant reporting.

Fidelity, Adaptation, and Challenges of the SAM Process Implementation

NSIP designed the SAM process to include a set of essential components that are to be implemented with fidelity in schools, while allowing for adaptation to the local school context. NSIP does not intend for the SAM process to be a "canned program" or lock-step process with scripted instructions on exactly how principals should increase and improve instructional time use. Instead, once the basic components are implemented, schools are to engage in self-reflection, work with their Time Change Coaches, and attend PD to determine the best ways to adapt the process to their own needs.

Across case study districts and in survey data, we found evidence of this combination of fidelity and adaptation. Most schools were largely committed to the process, had participated in baseline

data collection, implemented the essential components with moderate to strong fidelity, and had ongoing coaching. This is unsurprising, as Implementation Specialists work with schools until they reach a 3 on the rubric, indicating that they have successfully implemented the Daily Meeting, the TimeTrack calendar, and the First Responder system. This consistency may also be a relatively recent improvement, as PSA interviewees found considerable variability in the definition and implementation of the SAM process across sites at the time of their evaluation. In contrast, we observed only minor variation in the implementation and use of the process. Furthermore, the adaptation of these components was a way of tailoring the process to the school's unique needs, not a radical deviation from the use of the components as NSIP intended. Put differently, the quality of implementation and use of the components varied somewhat, but schools adopted the components consistently across districts. Nonetheless, there were some challenges that participants faced in implementing and sustaining parts of the SAM process.

In the following sections, we describe the ways in which various aspects of the SAM process were implemented with fidelity, the ways in which they were adapted to local needs, and challenges that arose. We conclude with cross-cutting issues that impacted implementation across components, as well as recommendations for improvement based on our findings.

The SAM Daily Meeting

Across case study schools, participants indicated that they engaged in the SAM Daily Meeting routinely and as expected by NSIP. There was some minor variation in how frequently participants engaged in the Daily Meeting and the typical length of those meetings. For example, some principals and SAMs met every day, while others met a few times per week. Specifically, 72% of surveyed principals met with their SAM at least once a day; 23% met with the SAM two to three times per week. In a handful of case study schools, principals and SAMs struggled to conduct the meetings consistently, but these deviations were exceptions. There was also some variation in the content of the Daily Meetings. While the majority of principals and SAMs we interviewed indicated that they discussed the principal's schedule during the meetings, a smaller subset also had conversations that related to instructional practice and the implications of principals' time use. Finally, we did find several challenges that emerged around implementing and sustaining the Daily Meeting, namely finding time, asking the principal hard questions, and choosing the "right" SAM.

Finding Time

Although we found that principals and SAMs typically met routinely, finding time to fully participate in the Daily Meeting was a challenge in some case study schools. An assistant principal who served on a SAM team explained the difficulty of juggling her other responsibilities with the need to meet daily with the principal: "We don't know what our day holds when we arrive, so it's a matter of being available at the time and trying to remember to be available. It's like I have to decide, am I going to go into a classroom? And I know that this class is giving this teacher a particularly hard time, so it would be good for me to be in that room and sit in the back and show my presence; at the same time, we need to be down here talking about things. So it's like, what do I choose and how, and maybe it's good that there's four [SAMs] assigned to him." We hear this concern around lack of time among SAMs in various jobs, be

they secretaries, curriculum specialists, or assistant principals. A few principals also felt this challenge was exacerbated by working in fast-paced, high-needs schools.

Asking the Hard Questions

The majority of SAMs we surveyed (86%) reported being at least “very comfortable” with questioning their principal about time use. Seventy-two percent indicated they were at least “very comfortable” with having difficult conversations about their principal’s time use. Nonetheless, this was an ongoing stress for several of the SAMs in our case study districts. Across all four districts, some SAMs indicated that it was difficult to ask their principals hard questions related to time use or “push” their boss around instructional use. One SAM explained: “I’m only going to push him as much as I’m comfortable pushing him, because he’s my boss, so if he doesn’t want to go into a classroom and do an observations, I can only ask him so many times. I can’t make him do it. So I think there’s that strange power dynamic ... sometimes it’s awkward saying to your boss like, you know, ‘From 9:00 to 10:00 today, what were you doing?’ ... sometimes I feel like—I don’t want to harass this man and ask him where he’s been every second of the day. Like maybe he went to the bathroom, I don’t know. So [the coach] wants every single space filled in, and I kind of feel like if he had done something really important and instructionally related, he would have told me to add it.”

PSA also noted that, at the time of their evaluation, some SAMs didn’t seem comfortable in the role of “nudge the principal,” suggesting this has been an ongoing challenge. Despite the positive survey results, the case study findings suggest that this is an area that may need to be investigated more deeply to determine how widespread the discomfort around difficult conversations may be. At the very least, it appears to be an area in which some SAMs need additional support.

We did see that some SAMs learned to address this challenge through the coaching and training they received. For example, a clerical SAM found cards provided to her during training helpful in overcoming this challenge: “The SAM also has ... a list of questions. We’ve got our little flip charts that kind of help us, you know, when we’re sitting there just trying to pull something out of thin air.” Eventually, the questions were internalized, and she relied less and less upon the guiding questions.

Choosing the “Right” SAM

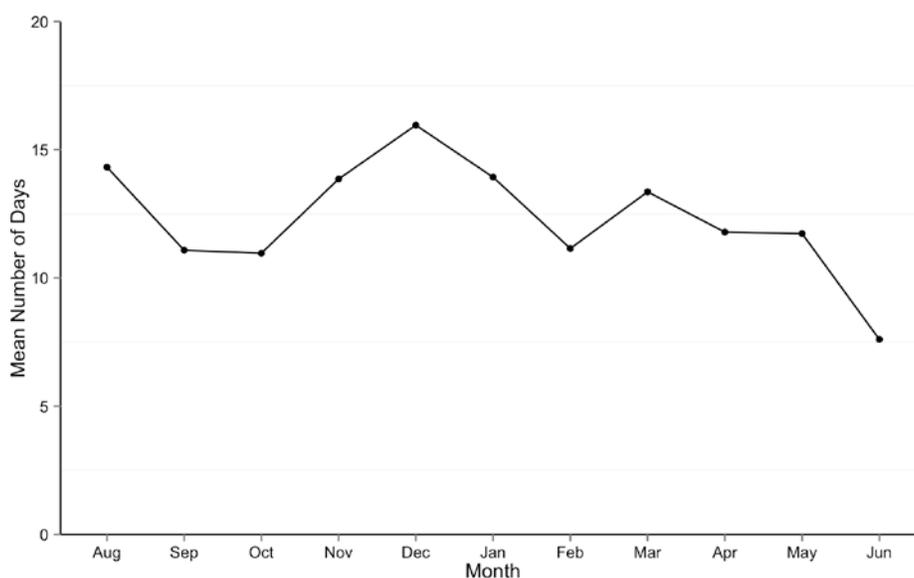
From the principals’ perspective, the flip side of this challenge is choosing the “right” SAM, who is comfortable questioning the principal around time use and asking reflective questions. Principals who do not target those qualities tend to struggle. An NSIP staff member explained that sometimes principals change their mind about a proposed SAM to address this: “Once they get it, about the reflective part, some people come right up to us at that meeting and say, ‘Um, I may have put the wrong name down, you know, now that I see this, I want to do it this way or I want to add this person.’” However, some principals do not believe they have anyone in their school who can appropriately take on the SAM role. A principal commented on this difficulty: “I think the biggest challenge is that I don’t have a logical SAM here. I think [my SAM] is a very, very busy secretary, and she actually shares some of my weaknesses in terms of her own structure, and so I actually think we’re blind leading the blind here a little bit, and I don’t think that’s working.” Several principals noted that this was a difficult problem, and recognized that

poor choices impeded success. Time Change Coaches reiterated that this was a critical issue: Principals needed to choose SAMs who were comfortable asking the principal reflective questions; SAMs needed to learn to be comfortable pushing their principals about time use. Despite the ongoing training they provided, coaches still identified assertiveness as a challenge for some SAMs.

TimeTrack Calendar

Most participants used the TimeTrack calendar routinely and as intended by NSIP. The vast majority of entries into the TimeTrack calendar system are made during the normal work week (Monday through Friday). Still, there were varying numbers of missing days. It is difficult to determine how often participants were not using the calendar (as opposed to just not working) because calendars differ across schools and districts, but the plots below provide some insight.

Figure 9: Days of Missing Calendar Data, by Month

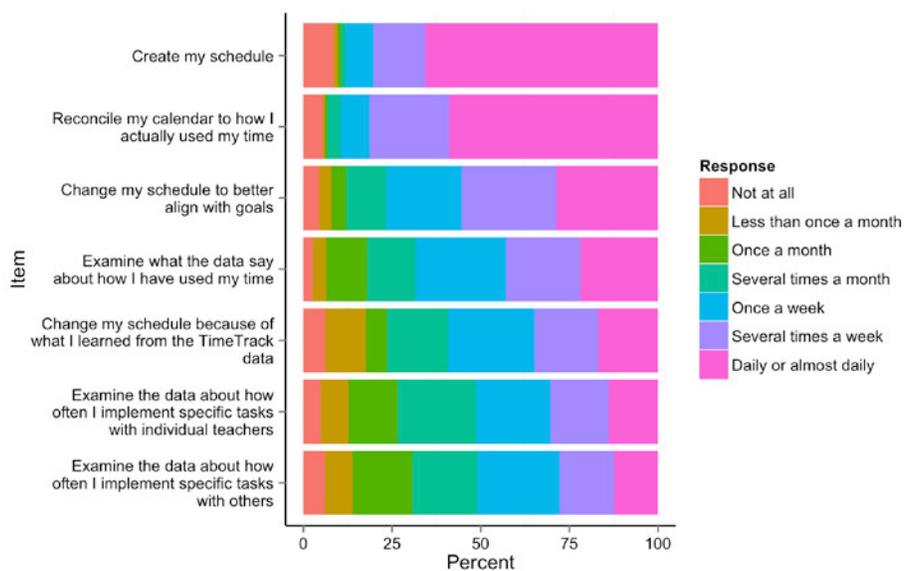


As might be expected, there were greater numbers of missing days in December, presumably due to holidays. Note that because we had access to TimeTrack data only from August 1, 2013, to June 15, 2014, there are no data for July, and June’s data are truncated.⁴ There are also somewhat higher numbers of missing days during months associated with breaks from school (e.g., Thanksgiving, spring break). Overall, it does not seem that there is any significant trend in missing days across the school year. In addition, there does not seem to be any significant difference in missing data between groups of participants with different years of experience in the program.

⁴ Counts of missing days were calculated for each month by subtracting each person’s number of entries for each month from the number of days available in that month (i.e., June’s entries are subtracted from 15). Resulting differences will be inflated because of weekends, but should be, for the most part, equally inflated across months, so the plots here are still useful for comparison.

We asked principal survey respondents the extent to which they implemented the calendar in different ways, the results of which are shown in Figure 10.

Figure 10: Use of the TimeTrack Calendar



According to principals, SAM teams frequently used the calendar to create the principal’s schedule and reconcile the calendar with what actually happened in the day. Principals used the calendar data to look at specific task items relating to specific people (e.g., teachers, others) and determine how much time was being spent with specific people less often. Principals in larger schools used the calendar more often to create their schedules.

There were minor variations across principals in how the calendar was used. For example, some principals used the tool faithfully and throughout the day, updating and reconciling it on their phone or on paper. Others reconciled once a day or every other day. Still other principals had their SAMs monitor and update the calendar for them. Those who noted challenges with using the calendar discussed a lack of time, pressure to meet instructional goals, the use of multiple calendars (i.e., maintaining another working calendar in addition to the TimeTrack calendar), and difficulty coding.

Time

Some principals and SAMs found it difficult to have enough time to complete the TimeTrack calendar. One principal said that the tracking on the calendar is “time consuming. It means [the SAM’s] not doing something else, or she’s staying late or something, yeah, that’s the cost.” Another principal explained: “You’re always having to go back track what you did ..., so it’s just a time factor.” However, other principals spoke about the ease with which they had incorporated the TimeTrack calendar into their daily routines, updating it throughout the day and without difficulty.

Concerns about Pressure to Meet Goals

One principal felt strongly that “there’s tremendous pressure to meet your [SAM] target” on the calendar. He suspected that NSIP wanted principals marking time as instruction “for their research reasons. I think they want to be able to say that principals are meeting their targets, and I don’t like that. Again, like I said, I’m not a grade inflation person Like should I mark this as instructional time? I don’t think so. It’s not. There’s nothing wrong with this time, but this is not instructional. But they want me to like say, well, it relates to instruction because in a secondary—well, so does cleaning the bathroom in some way. So I feel pressure to misrepresent my time, and I don’t want to feel that We were always fudging stuff We all want to claim success for things that actually we might not be successful at, and I just fear that a little bit. Like I don’t think I’m failing, because I’m not hitting my percentages. I just think that I’m still struggling to figure out how to adjust my time. I don’t want to meet it by recoding time that I’m already using in one way or another.” Although we did not hear this from many principals, it was a serious enough concern to warrant identifying in this report.

Multiple Calendars

Both Time Change Coaches and principals described the challenge of using the TimeTrack calendar for those who already used a different electronic calendar. Some principals were reluctant to give up their familiar calendars, and, as a result, used multiple calendars. However, other principals kept an alternate calendar because of district policy and found managing multiple calendars burdensome. One Time Change Coach saw this as one of the largest challenges of the SAM process: “Many schools are using multiple calendars. They’re using Google Doc or they’re using Microsoft Outlook or what else, and so the SAM calendar is another calendar that’s thrown into the principal’s world, and so the challenge becomes keeping track of things that might be in the Microsoft Outlook or the Google Doc calendar and can then get recorded into the SAM calendar.” One principal faulted the TimeTrack calendar for its inability to sync with the district calendar software: “We have to do dual calendars. I don’t like that at all.” This suggests that some principals may need additional training around using the TimeTrack calendar exclusively or in conjunction with other work calendars. Without such training, some principals may not implement the process fully.

Coding

Some principals found the coding in the TimeTrack calendar challenging. As one principal explained, “And then there’s some real dilemmas, like hiring people for next year, interviewing someone who I end up not hiring; is that instructional, is it management, or is it some other category? I don’t know. So the breakdown of the time is not logical to me, and I’m the kind of person that if I don’t have comfort with something, I don’t like to use it It relates to instruction. It’s incredibly important, but if I interview 10 people for five hours, nine of them—I don’t know, is that completely instructional? I really don’t know.” Another principal believed he simply needed to spend more time working with his SAM to understand “what each one of those categories means ... to make sure we’re coding things correctly.”

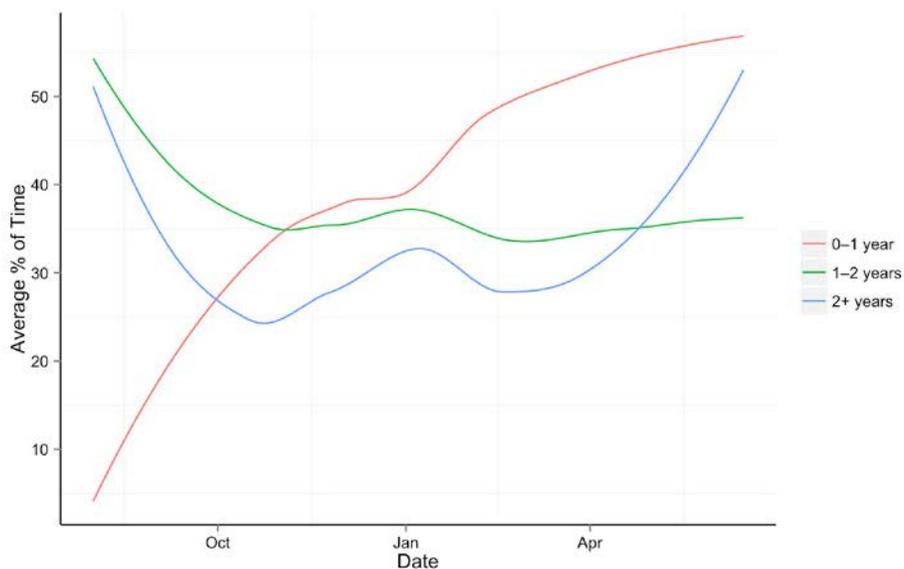
This was also a challenge highlighted by PSA interviewees, as they thought that there might be difficulties in shared understandings on what the various codes were across principals/SAMs. However, PSA also indicated that once a principal/SAM team got into it, there was consistency

in interpretations of codes across time. It appears that some principals and SAMs, although certainly not all, are still struggling with coding and may need additional training.

Unscheduled Time

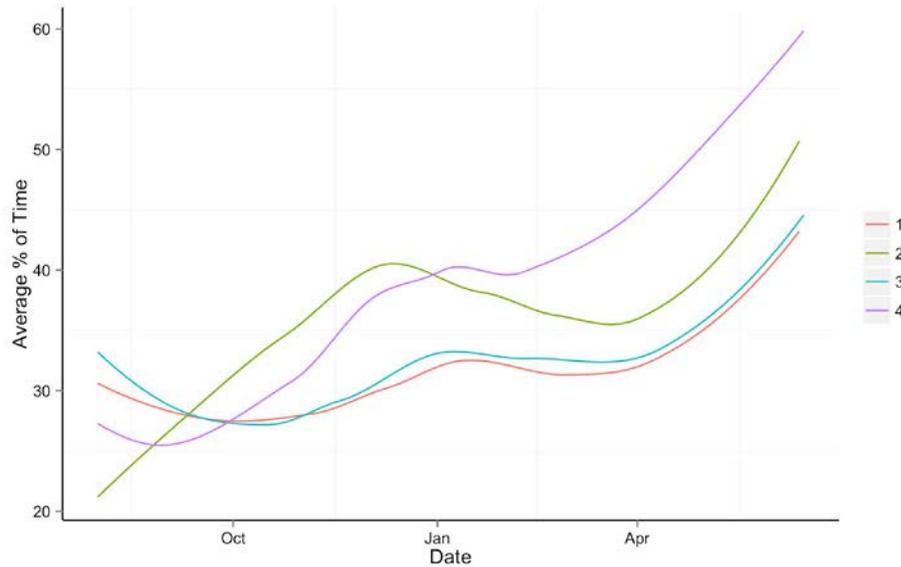
Another challenge that emerged from our analysis of the TimeTrack calendar data is that participants may neglect the calendar during the day, leaving much unscheduled time that could make the interpretation of the data difficult (because we do not know what was happening during the unscheduled time). In the figure below, we can see that while principals, in their first year of implementation, tend to be very diligent about scheduling all of their time at the beginning, by the end of the year, more than half of their time is unscheduled. In later years, principals start higher, but seem to settle after October to have around 25% to 35% of time unscheduled.

Figure 11: Unscheduled Time by Years in Program



Interestingly, we also see that those principals who started off with the highest baseline instruction levels (quartile 4) tend to become more lax in their time logging throughout the year, ending with around 60% of time unscheduled.

Figure 12: *Unscheduled Time by Baseline Instruction Quartile*



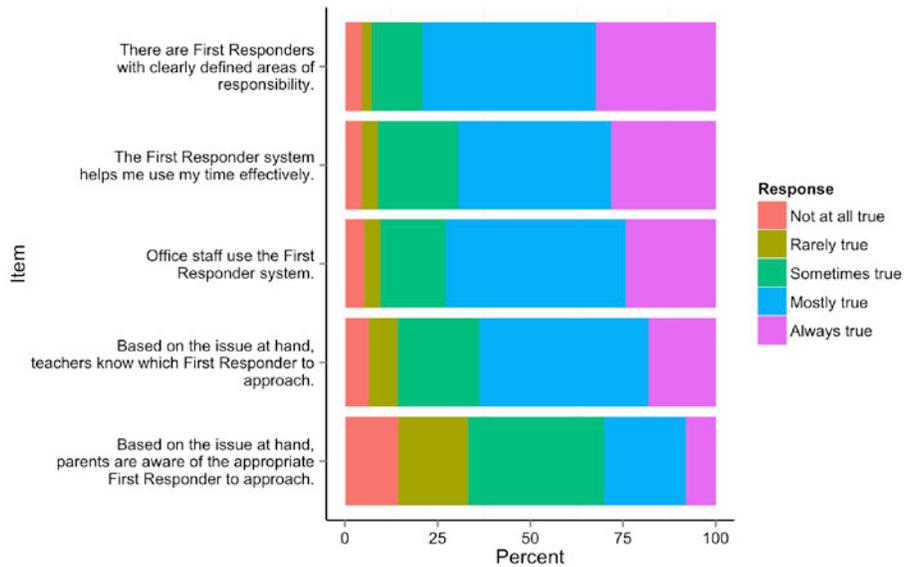
First Responder System

The First Responder system was the hardest feature for principals to adopt with complete fidelity. Most case study districts had at least one school that had only partially implemented this component, and it was a challenge across case study schools. Only 73% of surveyed principals noted that they mostly or always “utilize a First Responder system.” Moreover, only 64% of principals said the statement that teachers knew which First Responder to approach when appropriate was “mostly” or “always” true. SAMs’ estimates were even lower (50%), and principals considered parents’ knowledge of First Responders was very low, with only 30% agreeing that parents “mostly” or “always” knew whom to approach for assistance.

Generally, principals felt the First Responder system helped them organize their time. Among SAMs, 57% considered the First Responder system “good” or “excellent,” indicating that some SAMs feel lukewarm about the First Responder system’s success in their schools.

Some differences emerge by school characteristics. In general, elementary principals less positive on First Responder survey items, with the exception of office staff who used the First Responder system. In larger schools, principals were significantly more positive that there were First Responders with clearly defined areas of responsibility, and that the First Responder system helped them use their time effectively. In schools with more students participating in free and reduced-price lunch, however, principals reported more challenges with parents knowing the appropriate First Responder to approach.

Figure 13: Principal Perspectives on First Responders



Many case study principals were relatively new to the SAM process (i.e., first- or second-year participants), making it difficult to know whether this challenge is a manifestation of early stage of implementation.

Teachers, Parents, and Staff

One difficulty with the First Responder system was cultural: helping teachers, parents, and staff understand that they should turn to a particular list of people when they needed assistance, rather than turn to the principal or secretary. For example, a principal explained, “I think now the secretary is the first person everyone goes to. It isn’t that they’re going to a First Responder list first. So we talked about this recently with our coach—and she had some great strategies, like make sure the First Responder list is hanging up in all staff bathrooms, and in the teachers’ lounge. Maybe have 20 copies next to the secretary, so when somebody comes, she can just hand them the list of First Responders.” A SAM added that the most challenging piece for her is the rare occasion during which angry parents demand to see the principal instead of a First Responder. A principal similarly noted, “The communication piece and getting the staff, getting my PTA, my school council, getting those people aware of what was going on so that ... they would know, ‘Oh, wow, I have to interact with him differently now.’ Because before that, my school council president, my PTA, they had my direct line, and my office, even had my cell phone, and weren’t afraid to use it.”

Another SAM described the difficulty that teachers had with the shift to the First Responder system: “Some of the teachers are old school, and it’s just taken some getting used to for them. They’re working on it. They’re getting there, but it’s a real big adjustment for them The move has made it seem to them like [the principal is] inaccessible, because they have to come through me anyway.... He has a schedule that he follows, but he’s not inaccessible. He’s just doing something else, and it’s not convenient for them.”

However, two high school principals pointed out that they already had a system in place similar to First Responders because of the nature of secondary schools. In these schools, it seems that parents and teachers are used to contacting various staff members, rather than the principal, for different issues.

Principals

The First Responder system also presented significant challenges for principals themselves, as many found it difficult to relinquish their responsibilities. For example, a principal commented: “One thing that I do worst is I never say no to anybody, so when a parent comes in and they’re upset, I always just say, ‘Come on in. We’ll solve it. We’ll fix it.’ It’s one of the things that [the SAM] always says, ‘You can’t do that. You’ve got to stay true to those First Responders . . .’ I really feel like especially on site, folks do follow it, and I enable them not to follow it when they’re upset. I don’t want anyone to walk around upset thinking that they have to wait until 1:30 to see me and it’s 9:00 in the morning type of thing. There are times if the system doesn’t work, I flex the system to meet the needs of those individual folks.”

Several SAMs commented that it would be important for their schools to fully commit to the First Responder system and for their principals to more fully embrace delegating responsibilities. For example, one SAM believed that if the principal had used the First Responders, she would have been more successful at completing teacher evaluations: “We had evaluations that had to get done, and she said, ‘I’m still doing evaluations,’ and I think that if she had relinquished some of those, just to be frank, if she relinquished some of those things to the First Responders that we had designed, I think she would have had more time to do some of those things we’re talking about. But often times the district—a parent will call and complain, or it gets to a level where that person feels like she has to—you have to respond to it. So it’s a catch 22.” Time Change Coaches and Implementation Specialists also echoed this concern. One explained: “That’s a hard, hard, hard part of this, for principals to do. Because, they come into their role believing . . . that they are to have all of the answers. And of course the buck does stop with them, so giving up pieces of their responsibility is really hard. Harder for some than for others.”

Because this challenge was so prevalent across case study schools, it may be an area in which principals and staffs need additional training and support to be successful. An NSIP staff member explained plans to help schools better understand and use this system: “We have beefed up our content regarding First Responders beyond just ‘Gee, who could be the delegate to hand out supplies?’ or something. How can we have a real net within the school culture to not only do a better job, have more people engaged, but give the principal more instructional time? So we now have a new document coming out, it’s called a flip book, that is all about First Responders. We will be working with them on that. We’ll be talking to them about what categories do you see yourself developing, and when do you see yourself putting this together, and have you thought about how you might train these people or what’s involved.” Training will use a question and answer format, so that it can be tailored to the specific needs of a school staff.

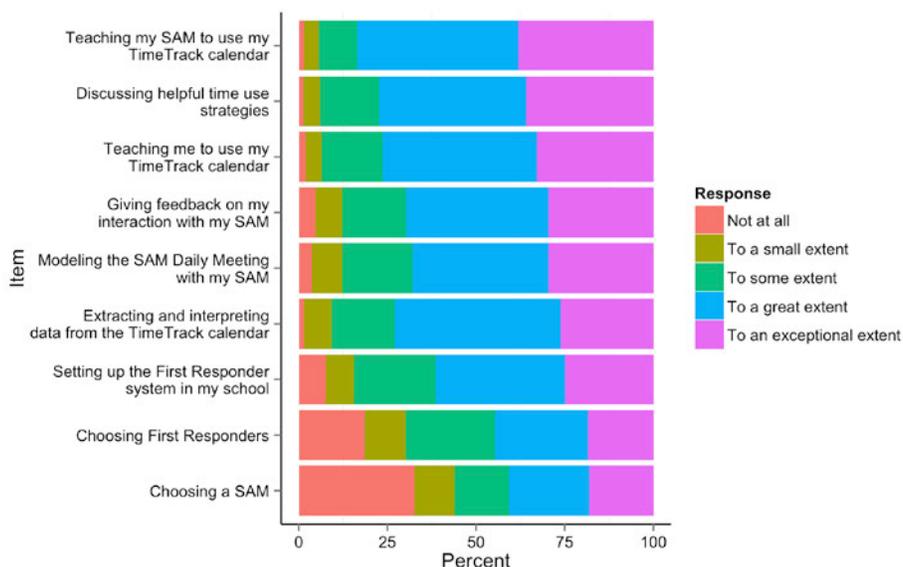
NSIP Training, Implementation Specialists, and Time Change Coaches

Survey results indicate that 92% of principal respondents had participated in some sort of training run by the SAM process. Eighty-nine percent reported working with Implementation Specialists, and 90% reported working with a Time Change Coach. It is unclear why there are

some participants who reported that they have not had the standard, planned training and coach support.

We asked principal survey respondents the extent to which their Implementation Specialists assisted with various items. Results are shown in Figure 14.

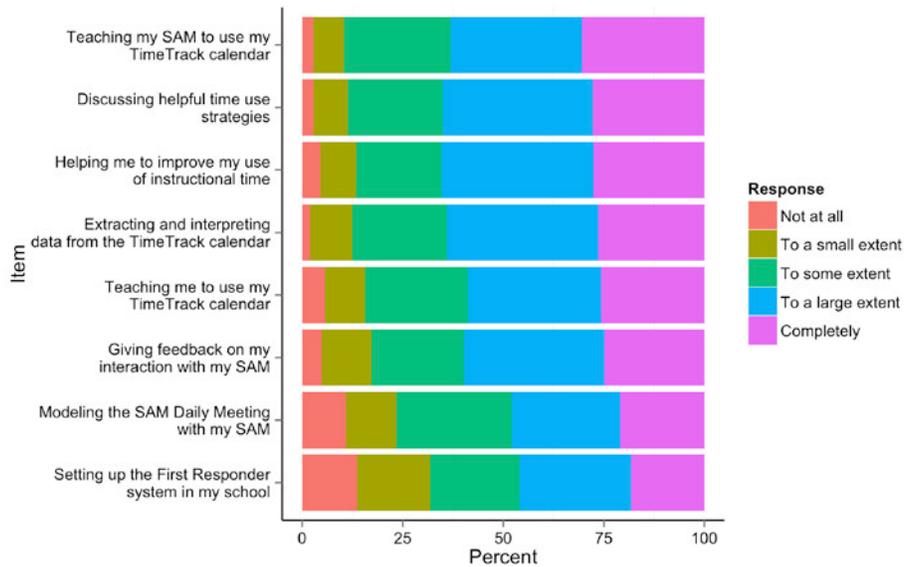
Figure 14: Principal Perspectives on Implementation Specialists



Largely, principal respondents indicated that the Implementation Specialists greatly assisted with most initial training needs for the principal and SAM. However, respondents did not feel that the Implementation Specialists helped as much with setting up the First Responder system, choosing a SAM, or choosing First Responders. Implementation Specialists did not seem to work as much with elementary school principals on modeling the SAM Daily Meeting or giving feedback on interaction with the SAM, as compared to other school levels.

We also asked principals about the work with their Time Change Coaches; results are shown in Figure 15.

Figure 15: Principal Perspectives on Time Change Coaches



Generally, the coaches seemed to spend more time providing feedback to SAM teams on the use and progress of the TimeTrack calendar, and relatively less on modeling SAM Daily Meetings, providing feedback on principal-SAM interactions, and setting up the First Responder system to a smaller extent, according to respondents. Interestingly, the coaching work looked slightly different from the SAMs’ perspectives. Generally, the coaches seemed to spend more time with SAMs on addressing the relationship between the principal and the SAM (in contrast to the principal responses). SAM respondents also indicated, however, that coaches worked on setting up the First Responder system to a smaller extent, relatively.

Most (86%) of principal respondents found the Implementation Specialist to be at least “very helpful,” while 14% found them “minimally helpful” at the most. The majority (74%) also found their coaches to be at least “very helpful.” However, some respondents in case study districts found challenges in working with Implementation Specialists and Time Change Coaches; Implementation Specialists and coaches also noted a few difficulties about their own roles.

Implementation Specialists and Time Change Coaches

Most interview subjects in the case study districts reported positive experiences with Implementation Specialists and Time Change Coaches. For example, a SAM spoke about her “phenomenal” Implementation Specialist, noting that “She has a way of getting things out of you and making you really think and rethinking how you ask a question, making you think about those extra things that you wouldn’t normally mention or even think about. She makes you think about this process and how we can move it to the next level.” These perspectives were not universal, however. In one district, principals reported not necessarily receiving sufficient support from Implementation Specialists, particularly when the school had experienced principal or SAM turnover; new principals and SAMs desired additional training from the Implementation Specialists that they did not believe they had received. Additionally, at least some district officials noted that the coaches in their district have been spread too thin and that access to coaching has been uneven.

Interestingly, earlier PSA evaluations suggest that the coaching component of the SAM process was not up to the challenge of helping principals improve. PSA reported that principals did what they understood and found to be easy, such as observing teachers, while being less likely to analyze the data to then provide feedback to those teachers. In contrast, principals and SAMs in our study seemed largely satisfied with the training they received from coaches, and coaches themselves seemed very aware of the importance of helping principals analyze data.

Concerns from Time Change Coaches and Implementation Specialists

Time Change Coaches and Implementation Specialists indicated a few challenges about the way in which their roles have been designed. One Time Change Coach believed once-monthly school visits limited her impact. Others said their districts had too few coaches or Implementation Specialists to do their jobs well. Still others described occasional lags between the completion of the Implementation Specialist's work in a school and the start of the coach's. Sometimes the two were able to speak by phone or meet before the transition occurred, but scheduling sometimes made this impossible. This was not prevalent across all coaches and Implementation Specialists, but a handful shared these concerns.

Quality versus Quantity of Principal Instructional Time

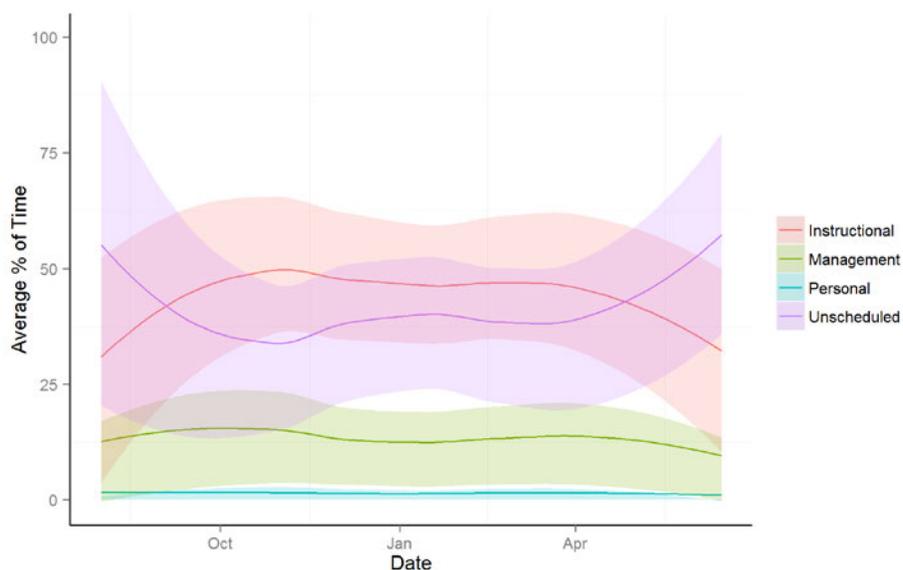
Focus on Increased Time, Not Quality of Time

NSIP's theory of action posits that principals and SAMs will not only reflect on how to increase principal instructional time, but will also consider how to improve the quality of that time. This expectation was reiterated by Time Change Coaches and Implementation Specialists as a major goal of the process. They view the process as intended to impact the school at a deeper level, beyond just the implementation of the basic components of the SAM process. One coach said: "So the process has evolved beyond just this setting up a calendar, managing your time, asking these kind of questions now to we're getting steps beyond that to say okay, this is what we do when we have that time to get in the class We're now getting into more discussion about what principals can do with teachers." However, we did not find this shift from increased time to improved quality of time occurring across all case study schools. Instead, only one or two principals in each case study district were working to achieve this. While it is unclear why we did not see this more consistently, it is important to consider that most of the schools in our study were early in their adoption of the SAM process, often in year one. It is possible that schools must first focus on implementing the basic components and striving to increase their time on instruction before they can think about using their time more constructively. In addition the focus on quality of time use is recent in the evolution of the SAM process, and it is still being brought to life across districts. The implied need for gradual introduction of changes aligns with the reflections of Time Change Coaches about working with schools on different aspects of the process. Coaches are tasked with ensuring that the basic components of the SAM process are understood and used, as well as with helping principals think more deeply about how they use their time. One coach described her role as mostly helping with the "mechanical aspects" of the SAM process for the first year and then beginning to ask "deeper questions" in year two. This suggests that a first-year school may only be focusing on implementing the basic components of the process, while a third-year school may be talking deeply about time use.

PSA staff members noted similar challenges. At the time of their evaluations, PSA researchers felt the SAM process was not equipped to improve quality and instill in principals the knowledge and skills to more fully implement instructional leadership. PSA speculated that helping the principals learn how to be effective instructional leaders might be a good role for districts to assume. Although this aspect of the process is now clearly articulated in the theory of action and espoused by Time Change Coaches as a major aspect of their work, it does appear to remain a challenge, at least in some schools.

TimeTrack calendar data reveal discrepancies between quantity and quality of instructional time use. The average trajectory of time use over the year, broken down by categories coded in the TimeTrack data, is shown below. The graph shows the average percent of time spent by principals on different categories of activity (on the y axis) on each day of the year (on the x axis). Loess smoothing was used to demonstrate overall trends,⁵ and shaded areas encompass the middle 50% of the data (bounded by the 25th and 75th percentiles).

Figure 16: Average Percent on Time Categories by Date



From these trends, we can see that instructional time does tend to increase over the course of the first half of the year (from August to December), and then it decreases toward the end of the year (starting in April). Time spent on management also seems to follow the same trend (very slightly), although not to the same magnitude. Personal time is relatively stable throughout the year, and unscheduled time seems to generally increase as the year goes on.

We cannot determine from Figure 16 whether the program is working, because principal time use probably reflects seasonal demands, such as standardized testing and end-of-year activities. However, it is interesting that while we see changes in instructional time over the year, we do not see corresponding decreases in management time. Part of the theory of action for the SAM process includes more distributed leadership within schools so principals do not have to spend as

⁵ Loess smoothing is a technique often used for extracting non-parametric trend lines from scattered data by using locally weighted polynomial regression on subsets of data surrounding each individual point of data. This was conducted using R version 3.0.1.

much time on managerial duties. We see here that management time instead seems to increase, although not to the same extent as instructional time.

Lack of Principal Knowledge of Instruction

Some Time Change Coaches described the challenge of working with principals who did not have a strong understanding of effective instruction. They lamented that these principals could comply with the SAM process, implementing it fully, but still not reap the desired benefits. If principals increase their time on instruction but do not improve the *use* of that time, they will see little change in teacher practice or student achievement. One coach described her struggle to work with one such principal: “His instructional time looks fantastic on the calendars, but because I am there all day and I do walkthroughs and I do see other aspects of the school, I’m not sure he knows what’s good instruction. So just because it looks like you’re spending all this time in instruction, are you really making a difference? And I keep hounding on these so what? Has student achievement changed? Are things changing? Are the teaching strategies in place that will make a difference? ... And he answers the questions the way that he’s supposed to, but I’m not sure he even knows what’s good instruction. So the weakness there is just how much can a time change coach do Bottom line is if you don’t know what good instruction is, then poor instruction’s going to happen and you’re not going to know the difference So if they don’t know what good instruction is, everything can look good, it can look good on paper It’s not going to make a difference in student achievement.”

Cross-Cutting Issues

Most aspects of the SAM process were implemented with fidelity and consistency, despite some challenges. However, some cross-cutting issues emerged as potential reasons for variation and/or difficulty with aspects of implementation. These are described in the following sections.

Buy-In

There were a few principals in case study districts who half-heartedly adopted the process and implemented the components only somewhat; these tended to be principals who lacked buy-in around the process and sometimes felt pushed to adopt it. Time Change Coaches and Implementation Specialists strongly believed that a lack of principal buy-in could be problematic, leading principals to drop out or implement the process in a limited fashion. One coach commented, “The biggest difference that I see with the schools I’ve worked with is whether a school volunteered to be in it, seeing the value of it and wanted to be in it, or whether the superintendent has said you’ll be a part of this program. In that respect, some of them were just compliant. ‘I have to do this, it’ll be over, I’ll do it.’”

In contrast, earlier evaluations by PSA suggested that the SAM process was not for everyone and that it required some principals to relinquish their comfort zone of management for their less comfortable zone of instructional leadership. They noted that there were different ways of dropping out of the process and huge differences in level of implementation. However, our study suggests that few principals dropped out.

Timing

Several case study participants stated that the beginning of the school year was a difficult time to focus on the SAM process because of competing managerial needs. They felt that their fidelity to implementation increased as the school year went on. A SAM expressed hope that implementation would be back on track after the “first rush of the beginning of the school year is over with – the changes that we’ve had, new [assistant principal], me new to the position, moving some people around. I think now we can start really implementing, but we’ve had a few meetings, and it’s been helpful, but I think now we can really get going.” Another principal noted: “Starting a school year with SAM, that’s interesting, because there are a lot of managerial components to starting a school year.” Another cited problems in getting the SAM process up and running in the new school year while also being faced with a new student registration system.

District Support

Time Change Coaches and Implementation Specialists discussed the importance of district leadership, both in initiating the SAM process in its schools and for sustaining their involvement. They believed that district level buy-in was critical for the process to continue over time. They noted, there was initial buy-in from the district, but that turnover of district-level staff became problematic when new staff did not understand or believe in the program, despite enthusiastic initial implementation. Principals see the benefits of a SAM quickly, but such benefits are less direct for those farther up the line, who ultimately must decide whether to invest in it. One Time Change Coach noted: “We’ve all talked about transitions in leadership and how you get the district office people on board, and then they move on and the next group coming in doesn’t have that [buy-in]...even though principals are still very committed, but they don’t have the district support.”

The level of district support may affect ease of implementation in schools. In the case study district with the greatest consistency and highest levels of fidelity in implementation, the SAM process is highly valued and is aligned with the district vision and strategy for leadership development. From the superintendent, and throughout the central office, the SAM process is viewed as an avenue for ongoing leadership development. Principals feel part of a community of practice that provides them with added value. The leadership coaches and Implementation Specialists are employees of the district for whom the SAM process is part of their district roles and responsibilities. They therefore can support principals in ways that align with district initiatives and expectations. This case suggests that the district commitment has played a major role in the principals’ engagement and implementation.

Staff Turnover

A few schools indicated that staff turnover caused delays in implementing the components. It seems logical that such turnover also would make it difficult for principals to begin using the components at a deeper level to think about quality of time use. One principal discussed the problems of turnover related to the SAM process: “We will definitely have to revisit quite a bit, because I have a new staff ... probably about 10 new personnel, so they will have to understand and get introduced to this way of working.” Similarly, in another district challenges with implementation occurred when a SAM left the school and was replaced by someone new. In such

schools, SAMs appeared to need more training from Time Change Coaches, even around the basic mechanics of the process.

Problems identified with turnover at both the district and school level suggests that this could pose challenges for the SAM process in some locations.

Sustainability

The biggest concern that Time Change Coaches expressed about the SAM process was sustainability. This was particularly true with Model 1, as it was difficult to sustain the salary and benefits of an additional staff member to work as a SAM. However, even in Model 3, some schools must rely on Race to the Top money or other grants to fund their participation, making sustainability questionable. This struggle also was reflected at the district level, as one district official noted: “Ultimately, we would love to have every principal in our district being a SAM principal, a SAM team, a SAM school, but when you look at a district this size ... I wish there could be a way to reduce that cost somehow.” Furthermore, while several Time Change Coaches noted the impressive leadership of the NSIP director, his passion for the work, and his dynamic personality and commitment to the SAM process, a few questioned how sustainable the process would be once he was no longer in charge.

Still, 78% of principals predicted there is a 100% chance the SAM process will stay in place as long as they remain leaders of their schools. However, only 36% predicted there was a 100% chance the process would continue if they left. Twenty-two percent predicted a 75% chance, and 27% predicted a 50% chance.

School Level

Some differences emerged in findings about principals at different school levels. One Time Change Coach believed high school principals had far greater difficulty implementing and sustaining the SAM process than did principals of elementary and middle schools. She believed the high school principals had a harder time focusing on instruction over management. She explained: “Now, we’ve had three principals say, ‘I don’t want to do this anymore.’ And it’s been very interesting. They are high school principals. And we’ve noticed phenomena with high school principals, and to be quite honest and open here, a lot of it has to do with the expectation or this almost a stereotype of what a high school principal is. And they’re finding it very difficult to focus on instruction. They really—at least these three—really like the management. They had a difficult time with instruction. I think it opened up something they didn’t want to show about their skill level. And they might have been great teachers; but leading, and having instructional discussions, they were having a difficult time doing that.”

Differences in administrative structure between secondary and elementary schools might explain some differences in implementation. For example, two case study principals noted that they already had a First Responder system of sorts, prior to adopting the SAM process.

Survey results also suggested possible differences by school level. Elementary schools and schools with fewer than 700 students were less likely to have all components of the SAM process implemented fully, especially the First Responder system.

As mentioned previously, survey results suggest that Implementation Specialists did not work as much with elementary principals on modeling the SAM Daily Meeting or giving feedback on interactions with SAMs, as compared to other school levels.

Finally, the Time/Task Analysis data contain some evidence that the benefits of change in instructional and management time use across years might also vary by school level, size, and demographics. We investigated the extent to which the differences in instructional and management time across shadowing observations were of differing magnitudes across different types of participants. The mean differences in percent time spent from the first shadowing observation to the second (a year later) for different subgroups of participants are shown in Table 3.⁶

Table 3: Shadowing Observations Differences by Subgroup

	Instructional (% change in time use)	Management (% change in time use)
Full Set	9.09	-9.01
Model 1	8.49	-8.06
Model 3	9.27	-9.29
Years in program < 3	10.10	-9.92
Years in program ≥ 3	6.57	-6.76
Elementary school	9.91	-9.73
Middle school	5.95	-6.02
Quartiles 2 and 3 for enrollment ⁷	13.98	-14.08
Quartile 4 for enrollment	5.33	-4.99
Quartiles 2 and 3 for free and reduced-price lunch	9.67	-9.70
Quartile 4 for free and reduced-price lunch	12.00	-11.82

Overall, it appears that principals in Model 3 schools are modestly more effective at increasing their instructional time. Principals in schools with higher percentages of students enrolled in free and reduced-price lunch, lower enrollment, and elementary grades (as opposed to middle grades) also are more effective at increasing instructional time. The same is true of principals who are newer to the program. These trends are similar for decreases in management time.

While we cannot reach a clear conclusion or recommendation regarding possible distinctions of the SAM process according to school level, our data do suggest that there could be important differences.

⁶ Only subgroups for which there were practically large sample sizes are shown here.

⁷ Quartiles for enrollment and free and reduced-price lunch variables were created by taking the distribution of these variables across all schools in the United States (from the Common Core of Data) and determining the quartile of these distributions for each of the schools participating in the SAM process.

V. Summary

This report described the ongoing development and implementation of the SAM process, which has the goal of increasing the capacity of principals to use time in instructionally focused ways while decreasing time on management tasks. In closing, we summarize the key findings regarding current implementation, changes over time, lessons learned from the literature, and future developments.

Current Implementation

The study data suggest strong fidelity of implementation of the SAM process in schools. NSIP encourages fidelity around four non-negotiables in the SAM process: 1) commitment to the SAM process, 2) participation in baseline data collection using the Time/Task Analysis and protocol, 3) use of the TimeTrack Calendar and SAM Daily Meeting, and 4) ongoing coaching. Principals and SAMs generally report high levels of engagement with these main components. Consistency of implementation in schools likely flows in part from the consistency with which supports for implementation are provided by NSIP; the majority of schools received SAM training before implementation, and most found Implementation Specialists and Time Change Coaches to be quite helpful. Simultaneously, NSIP allows for some flexibility and adaptation to meet the needs of districts and individual schools, and we saw evidence of adaptation, including how many SAM team members a school utilized and how these team members worked with the principal to change time use.

Although not conclusive, our data also show evidence of the efficacy of the SAM process in changing behaviors or outcomes consistent with its theory of action, including increases in instructional time use. Results from our analysis of survey responses, TimeTrack Calendar data, and Time/Task Analysis data, as well as what we heard in interviews in the case study districts, are consistent with the idea that the SAM process helps principals focus on and find ways to increase the time they engage with the school's instructional program.

This evidence also is consistent with the reasons principals and districts gave for participating in the SAM process. For principals, the main motivations were to improve their capacity as instructional leaders, to spend more time on instruction, and to gain better work/life balance. For districts, the main reasons for adoption were to improve principals' ability to be instructional leaders and to increase student achievement.

Principals and districts found an increase in principal instructional time to be the greatest benefit to the SAM process, followed by improving their time management and work/life balance. Principals also reported that the process increased their focus on teaching and learning. The primary benefits identified by Time Change Coaches were increasing both the time principals spend on instruction and the quality of that time. They also considered shared leadership beneficial to schools.

Changes in the SAM Process

The SAM process has developed over time in several ways that likely have improved its consistency of implementation and efficacy. Coaching has become more formalized and includes the use of a protocol. The Implementation Specialist position was added in 2010, and the First

Responder system was developed as well. In addition, professional development has been expanded and the TimeTrack Calendar has been improved in response to feedback from the field. A new model of the SAM process was developed to allow an existing school staff person to become a SAM, rather than someone hired externally, and SAM teams (rather than only individual SAMs) have emerged. Lastly, there is an emphasis not only on increasing time spent on instruction, but on developing the quality of that time as well.

The Literature and the SAM Process

The literature strongly supports the rationale behind the SAM process. Principals are expected to be instructional leaders, but multiple studies conclude that principals actually spend little time on instruction. Many challenges exist around principals increasing their time on instruction: organizational norms push principals away from instructional leadership; the many demands on principals' time make it hard to focus on instruction; and they may lack skills and knowledge about instruction; and Aside from the SAM process, no large-scale interventions have attempted to focus on specifically changing principal time allocation.

Future Developments

We note three areas for continued development of the SAM process. First, increasing time spent on instructional leadership may be necessary but likely is not sufficient to improve teaching and learning in SAM schools. Principals must increase the quality of instructional time as well. Few schools are making the shift from a focus on increased instructional time to a focus on the quality of that time use. Unfortunately, the research literature in this area is limited, providing few firm conclusions regarding what kinds of instructional activities are most valuable.

Second, related to the prior point, some principals lack knowledge of instruction, teaching, and learning. Asking principals to increase their time on instructional leadership, including teaching and learning, presupposes principals have the knowledge to improve their teachers' skills. Administrative support personnel as SAMs may not be in a strong position to help principals improve this capacity. Increased professional development has begun to address this need.

Lastly, there are possible differences between elementary and high schools' experiences with the SAM process. This distinction could warrant further exploration and development as those differences become better understood.

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