

Executive summary



Teacher Learning & Leadership Program

Research Report
for 2016-2017

July 2017

Carol Campbell,
Ann Lieberman,
Anna Yashkina &
Joelle Rodway with
Sharon Alexander





OVERVIEW OF TEACHER LEARNING AND LEADERSHIP (TLLP) PROGRAM RESEARCH



Launched in 2007, the Teacher Learning and Leadership Program (TLLP) is a joint initiative through partnership between the Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF) and the Ontario Ministry of Education with shared goals to:

- support experienced teachers to undertake self-directed advanced professional development;
- develop teachers' leadership skills for sharing their professional learning and exemplary practices; and
- facilitate knowledge exchange for spread and sustainability of effective and innovative practices.

Following completion of our initial research study of the TLLP (Campbell, Lieberman & Yashkina, 2013), we were invited by the Ministry to submit a proposal for a longitudinal study, beginning in 2013-14. We provided a report of findings and work on progress during 2013-14 (Campbell et al., 2014), 2014-15 (Campbell et al., 2015) and 2015-16 (Campbell et al., 2016). This report provides an update on research conducted and findings emerging during the 2016-17 year of research.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions for the current study are:

1. What are the impacts of TLLP projects for: Teachers' professional learning, knowledge, skills and practices? Teachers' leadership skills and experiences? Other adults affected by the TLLP projects? Student engagement and learning?
2. How is learning being shared beyond the TLLP project team?
3. What longer-term impacts of participating in TLLP projects can be identified?

METHODS

The research methods conducted during 2016-17 were:

1. Review TLLP data for approved project and Final Reports for Cohorts 9 and write a final report for all 9 cohorts.
2. Ministry survey – analysis of 2015-16 data.
3. Provincial Knowledge Exchange (PKE) – analysis of logs and end of year reports for 2015-16.
4. Case studies - write and update case study report for 2015-16 case study (Ultimate Potential Math).
5. Analysis of NING Mentoring Moments data for 2016-17.
6. Case study of TeachOntario.
7. Focus group with provincial TLLP teams in the OTF and Ministry of Education.
8. Attend Leadership Skills for Classroom Teachers training and Sharing the Learning Summit.

FINDINGS

Our 2015-16 report concluded that:

2015-16 was a “milestone year” for the TLLP; in many respects, the TLLP became larger during 2015-16 in terms of scale, awareness, influence, and impact.
(Campbell et al., 2016, p. 135).

While it seemed likely that the success of TLLP would sustain into 2016-17, we had not anticipated that TLLP would actually become even larger and more successful this year. From the launch of the 10th cohort, through continuing important evidence of achieving the goals for teachers' professional learning, leadership and knowledge exchange, the launch of a TLLP book (Lieberman, Campbell & Yashkina, 2017), and the influence on policies and practices within Ontario and beyond in Canada and internationally; 2016-17 has been the “coming of age year” (OTF interviewee) for TLLP. Below we highlight findings from our 2016-17 research for the key research questions.

WHAT ARE THE IMPACTS OF TLLP PROJECTS FOR TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL LEARNING, KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND PRACTICES?

Based on our analyses of a sample of Cohort 9 projects, the majority of TLLP teacher leaders report improvement in their knowledge and understanding (95%), teaching practices (90%) and technological skills (50%). In regard to how teachers approached their professional learning; in 95% of TLLP projects,

participants engaged in some kind of collaborative learning to acquire new knowledge or skills or to develop new strategies or resources. Collaborative inquiry, observation with colleagues, community of practice, and Professional Learning Community were the most common collaborative learning activities. In 70% of the projects, TLLP leaders chose to learn directly from or with an expert/specialist in the area such as a professor, a psychotherapist, a technology expert, or a local artist. Sixty-five % of the projects in the sample referred to literature and research to improve their knowledge and understanding of the topic.

WHAT ARE THE IMPACTS OF TLLP PROJECTS FOR TEACHERS' LEADERSHIP SKILLS AND EXPERIENCES?

The majority of TLLP teacher leaders also report growth in their leadership confidence and skills. Based on surveys comparing TLLP teacher leaders' reported confidence levels at the start and end of their TLLP projects; statistically significant improvements in their leadership confidence for implementing practices, sharing practices, leading professional learning, being a teacher leader, and leading a team were identified. In our analyses of Cohort 9 Final Reports, all (100%) TLLP teacher leaders reported growth in their skills for collaborative problem solving. The majority of TLLP teacher leaders also indicated improved skills for communication (90%), facilitating sharing of learning (85%), collaborative decision making (80%), giving presentations (70%), team building (70%), empowering others (65%), facilitating adult learning (65%), organizational ability (65%), project management (65%), administrative capacities (65%), mentorship (60%), building trust (55%), research (55%), and change management (50%).

WHAT ARE THE IMPACTS OF TLLP PROJECTS FOR OTHER ADULTS AFFECTED BY THE TLLP PROJECTS?

Knowledge exchange involves consideration of audience. In all projects in the sample, the main audience for sharing was teachers, which is expected and is consistent with the goals of the program. TLLP teacher leaders also reported sharing with school and district administration. Some projects shared their learning with parents, students, and community partners. In our analyses of Cohort 9 Final Reports, the main benefit reported for other adults from the TLLP was improved knowledge and understanding (75%), followed by inspiration to make a change (55%). In terms of impact within schools specifically, the main identified benefit was contributing to furthering a culture of collaboration (65% of sample projects).

WHAT ARE THE IMPACTS OF TLLP PROJECTS FOR STUDENTS' ENGAGEMENT AND LEARNING?

Comparing our analysis of recent (Cohorts 7-9) TLLP projects with our analysis of Cohorts 1-6, we notice a shift in the central focus of projects from teaching to student learning and from student achievement to student learning and well-being.

An increasing focus on pedagogical change, student well-being, and 21st century skills was identified. In our sample of Cohort 9 projects, the majority reported improvements in students' learning experiences and skills (90%) and improved engagement and attitude (55%).

The combination of student learning, well-being, and pedagogical change is exemplified by our PKE case study of UP (Ultimate Potential) Math at Monsignor John Pereyema Catholic Secondary School in Durham Catholic District School Board (DCDSB). Using a focus on gratitude to change mindsets, raise self-esteem and uphold high expectations by and for students; the evidence from UP Math indicates benefits for empowering students' voices and leadership and for developing their self-efficacy and engagement with noteworthy gains in student achievement. Such gains are not only about test scores, they are about the moral and ethical commitment to improve students' lives. As Leanne Oliver, the PKE leader, explained:

It's emotional, these are our kids. We saw that when these kids are falling behind in Grade 9, the limitations that are placed on their life and on their further academic achievement are profound. And so, we need to remove those barriers. It had to change. It's our moral imperative. It must change. And we were sick and tired of waiting for this to happen.

From a starting point of 17% of participating students achieving the provincial standard or above in Grade 9 Applied Math when UP Math was first introduced as a TLLP project, last year, 73% of students achieved or exceeded the provincial standard.

HOW IS LEARNING BEING SHARED BEYOND THE TLLP PROJECT TEAM?

Comparing our analyses of recent (Cohort 7-9) TLLP projects with previous (Cohort 1-6) projects, we have identified further growth in collaboration and sharing. With an increase in the number of the approved team projects (vs. single-person projects) and greater availability and use of technology for collaborating and sharing, collaboration has become even more prominent in TLLP projects. Ninety-five percent (95%) of sample projects reported sharing within their own school; 95% also reported sharing within their own board. Although less frequent, sharing with other boards, with the local community and provincially, nationally and internationally is occurring also. There are two equally dominant methods of sharing: 85% of sample projects are using online methods (especially blogs and social media); 85% of sample projects are also working with other teachers in their classroom to share learning and improve practices. In addition, 65% of sample projects provided workshops to share professional learning. This combination of online and in-person sharing, within schools across classrooms and also outside of school is noteworthy.

A further development to support wider sharing is TeachOntario. Officially launched on March 31, 2016; our analyses indicated that there was an average of 13,902 monthly site visits over the last year. This compared with an average of 6,817 site visits per month prior to the official launch. Hence, the number of site visits has more than doubled in its first official year. In 2016-17, new TLLP projects had the choice whether to use the TeachOntario platform. Our TeachOntario case study indicates that TLLP teachers are supportive of the concept of TeachOntario, welcome support to participate, and are interested in accessing and sharing resources. However, perhaps as this is the first official year of TeachOntario, there is a need for further support to develop TLLP teachers' active participation. Teacher interviewees expressed a lack of wider awareness of TeachOntario, uncertainty about how they were expected to use TeachOntario and/or the pre-existing Mentoring Moments NING, need for support on how to actually use the platform, and encouragement to engage in sustained and interactive online networking.

WHAT LONGER-TERM IMPACTS OF PARTICIPATING IN TLLP PROJECTS CAN BE IDENTIFIED?

As TLLP projects have time-limited funding, questions of sustainability are critical. Consistent with our previous research, we have highly encouraging results concerning the longer lasting impact of TLLP projects beyond their specific funding period. In our analyses of a sample of Cohort 9 projects, all (100%) reported continuing implementation of the innovative practice from their TLLP. The majority also reported sustained professional learning related to their TLLP (75%), continuing to respond to interest in their work from others (50%), and continuing the collaboration/networking that they had developed. A minority (45%) reported sustaining online sharing; this is an area worthy of further consideration in combination with supporting the development and use of TeachOntario as a long-term platform for continued TLLP sharing. There is interest also in creating and maintaining a searchable database of all TLLP projects.

Now in its 11th Cohort, the TLLP's longer-term impact is notable in the cadre of "TLLP alumni" who are now contributing to the further development of future TLLP participants, as well as leading professional learning in a range of forums, events and activities. The scale of the "TLLP alumni" has the potential to significantly affect the culture, practices and outcomes of the Ontario education system. Importantly also, beyond the impact of specific TLLP projects and TLLP teacher leaders, the TLLP "way of doing business" has become highly influential. This is best exemplified in PPM 159 Collaborative Professionalism, which builds on the TLLP commitment to mutual respect and partnership as the way the Ontario education profession, government and stakeholders are to work together.

FINAL REMARKS

Starting with the launch of the 10th TLLP cohort, through continuing excellent evidence of achieving the goals for teachers' professional learning, leadership and knowledge exchange, the launch of a TLLP book, and the influence on policies and practices within Ontario and beyond in Canada and internationally; 2016-17 has certainly been the year of the "full possible blooming" of TLLP. Reporting on our results in 2015-16, we did not anticipate that our 2016-17 TLLP results would indicate even further and deeper impact. Congratulations to everyone involved in the TLLP family. We cannot wait to see what 2017-18 will bring!

REFERENCES

Campbell, C., Lieberman, A. & Yashkina, A. (2013). *The Teacher Learning and Leadership Program: Research Project*. Toronto, Canada: Ontario Teachers' Federation.

Campbell, C., Lieberman, A. & Yashkina, A. with Carrier, N., Malik, S. & Sohn, J. (2014). *The Teacher Learning and Leadership Program: Research Report 2013-14*. Toronto, Canada: Ontario Teachers' Federation.

Campbell, C., Lieberman, A. & Yashkina, A. with Hauseman, C. & Rodway, J. (2015). *The Teacher Learning and Leadership Program: Research Report 2014-15*. Toronto, Canada: Ontario Teachers' Federation.

Campbell, C., Lieberman, A., Yashkina, A. with Rodway, J., Alexander, S. & Malik, S. (2016). *The teacher learning and leadership program: Research report 2015-16*. Toronto, Canada: Ontario Teachers' Federation.

Lieberman, A., Campbell, C. & Yashkina, A. (2017). *Teacher Learning and Leadership: Of, By and For Teachers*. London, UK: Routledge/Taylor & Francis.



**Ontario Teachers' Federation
Fédération des enseignantes et
des enseignants de l'Ontario**

416.966.3424, 1.800.268.7061
FAX 416.966.5450

www.otffeo.on.ca