

MAJOR FINDINGS

- Teachers and Administrators who are familiar with the STARR program, i.e., those who have attended STARR professional development workshops as participants, do not differ significantly in their opinions about the quality of the presentations, program, and STARR providers.
- Teacher and Administrator participants do differ significantly from the STARR teacher providers in their opinions about the quality of the presentations, program, and STARR providers.
- While teachers, administrators, and STARR teachers agree that the STARR presentations are of value, that the program is beneficial, and that STARR providers are knowledgeable and professional; STARR providers consistently rank the relative merit of each significantly higher than do teacher and administrators participants.
- Respondents noted that STARR presentations are appropriate for adult learners, of high quality, address important topic of interest to educators, and are useful to teachers.
- The lowest rating pertaining to STARR presentations was in the area of follow-up professional development activities at the building level. It is recommended that future STARR training deals with techniques for follow-up to create on-going systemic professional development at the school level.
- Respondents believe the greatest benefit of the STARR program is that it helps districts receive professional development they might not be able to experience otherwise.
- Respondents believe the STARR program encourages teachers to try different instructional strategies and helps teachers improve classroom practice.
- Respondents believe the STARR providers present themselves in a professional manner.
- While respondents believe the STARR providers are well prepared and knowledgeable about the topics presented, the STARR providers, themselves, are less likely to share this opinion.
- Respondents who are professional development committee members, chairs, or administrators are more likely to be knowledgeable of the STARR program than others.
- Respondents most likely to participate in STARR professional development workshops are female elementary teachers or administrators.

- In some geographic areas of the State, administrators reported attending more STARR presentations on average over the past four years than did teachers.
- Overall, school administrators are more familiar with the STARR program than are teachers.
- Teachers and administrators indicated that the most frequent topic addressed by STARR providers was assessment methods, i.e., MAP training, followed by communication arts workshops, cooperative learning, multiple intelligences and learning styles, brain based learning, instructional strategies, discipline, and curriculum alignment. Of these, participants were almost three times more likely to attend an assessment workshop than any other topic. This is a complete turnaround from the two previous years' findings in which MAP training was cited as the most needed, yet least frequently provided topic by STARRs.
- 97% of all STARR providers are female; most are elementary teachers who hold masters+ degrees.
- Of the original 1994-96 cohort of STARR providers, only a third are currently classroom teachers; 16% are administrators; over 40% are university, DESE, or district level employees.
- Of the six cohorts of STARR providers from 1994-2001, 48.8% are currently classroom teachers; 8% are administrators; 22% hold district or school level positions; and just under 5% are no longer in education.
- Of the six cohorts of STARR providers from 1994-2001, 19% are full-time professional development providers, 20% are part-time professional development providers, and 7% are no longer providing professional development.
- Focus group participants generally agree that three STARR providers in any given RPDC designated geographic region of the State is not a sufficient number to work adequately with the number of schools and teachers in that area. In Region VII, for example, approximately 12,000 teachers in 92 districts are vying to schedule 1, 2, or 3 STARR providers.

INTRODUCTION

The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MO DESE) contracted with the Southwest Missouri State University Institute for School Improvement to conduct an evaluation of Missouri's Select Teachers As Regional Resources (STARR) program. Overall program impact on teachers' professional development was examined as well as the impact on teaching and learning. This is the third and final evaluation conducted by the Institute for the MO DESE over a three-year period. .

This research report presents analyses of data provided by 265 educators (i.e. administrators and teachers) across the state of Missouri and from 129 STARR teachers who have participated as the STARR professional development providers. Survey questionnaires were designed to collect perceptual data regarding the Missouri DESE STARR program with regard to organization, supervision, and working relationships with other agencies. These data were compared to examine the differences that may exist between the perceptions of those participating in the program (i.e. administrators and teachers) and those providing the professional development (i.e. STARR teachers). Demographic data were also collected to analyze characteristics most common to those individuals who participate in the STARR program. In addition, this report contains the analyses of six focus group interviews conducted with educators familiar with the STARR program from across the state as well and current and future STARR teachers.

The STARR program's primary goal is to provide professional development opportunities to educators (administrators and teachers) throughout the state of Missouri. Located at nine different university sites, STARR teachers work collaboratively, cooperatively and in partnership with MO DESE, their host universities, area schools and other DESE initiatives, including but not limited to the Regional Professional Development Centers, MAP Program, and Accelerated School. The purpose of this program evaluation is to examine the perceived impact the program is having on teaching and learning throughout the state. Comparisons are made between participants' and providers' perceptions.

METHODS

Survey Questionnaires

The SMSU Institute for School Improvement surveyed a random, proportional sample of 100 PK-12 administrators and 1,000 PK-12 teachers statewide stratifying on geographic location identified at each of the nine RPDC region designations. The sample of educators was drawn from DESE CORE Data. Survey questionnaires (see Appendix A) were mailed to all 1,100 educators on January 24, 2002, producing a return rate of 24% (administrators = 33.0%; teachers = 23.2%). Table 1a displays these data.

All past, present, and future STARR teachers (n = 203) were also mailed survey questionnaires on January 24, 2002, yielding a return rate of 63.1% which is displayed in Table 1b. This survey questionnaire (see Appendix B) was designed to investigate the program's impact on STARR teachers as well as their perceptions of the program's impact on educators who have participated in professional development provided by STARRs. The survey also examined the career choices STARR teachers make upon completion of their presentation year.

The intent of this method of data collection was to aggregate data defining the overall STARR program effectiveness along with the program's impact on teaching and learning. All respondent data were entered into SPSS PC+ for statistical analyses. Demographic data were analyzed comparing frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations across the nine RPDC regions as well as state totals. Statistical tests of significance were computed when appropriate.

Focus Group Interviews

The SMSU Institute for School Improvement conducted six focus group interviews designed to examine a number of issues regarding the STARR professional development program. Focus group interviews were conducted with future STARR teachers on January 8, 2002, and current STARR teachers on March 11, 2002. In addition, thirty-three educators from across the state attending the Show-Me Professional Development conference participated in two focus group interviews regarding the STARR program on March 18, 2002. The purpose of each of the focus groups was to generate information about the STARR program, the perceived impact the program has had and is having on teaching and learning throughout Missouri and to validate the survey questionnaire used in this evaluation.

Focus group interviews followed a semi-structured protocol consisting of ten questions for educators and eleven for future/current STARR teachers. Each focus group interview protocol was developed by the Project Investigator with the assistance of the research evaluation team. Focus group interviews lasted approximately 40-45 minutes, and each group was asked the same questions with follow-up questions based on individual group responses. Sessions were tape recorded, and facilitators also made field notes. Tapes and notes were content analyzed using the constant comparative method of data reduction and association. Appendix C contains the focus group protocols used in each of the focus group interviews along with the field notes (educator field notes are aggregated into one focus group report).