

Showcasing Success

A preliminary study of the experience of three schools hosting visits in the NYCDOE

An analytic report prepared for the Showcase Schools program

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Introduction

During the 2016–17 school year, Eskolta School Research and Design partnered with the Showcase Schools program within the NYCDOE Office of Interschool Collaborative Learning to better understand how Showcase enables schools to enhance and spread promising practices throughout the city. Over the school year, Eskolta conducted interviews with staff at three particularly strong Showcase schools, observed Showcase Days and Extension visits, and conducted focus groups and follow-up interviews with visitors at these schools for use in this analytic report. Each host school studied for this report was classified by Showcase staff as a strong host school, due to each school’s effectively designed Showcase and the growth in the skills of school staff.

To structure research and guide data collection, Eskolta crafted research propositions embodied in the following three statements, and then investigated whether and how the Showcase Schools program fulfilled them:

Proposition 1: The Showcase Schools program strengthens internal coherence in host schools by providing structures to **clarify, articulate, and share** key practices, and deepening the **consistency and effectiveness** of those practices.

Proposition 2: The Showcase Schools program strengthens internal coherence in host schools by providing systems and structures for effective collaboration and leadership development, thereby promoting **adult-learning practices** at host schools and **reinvigorating** commitment to the profession.

Proposition 3: The Showcase Schools program provides visiting schools with the **content, context, and processing time** to learn and adapt practices to their own school environments.

The following report is organized into three sections, each addressing one of the propositions above. Sections 1 and 2 examine the host school experience; data analysis in these sections was informed by *The Internal Coherence Framework*, a research-based framework for creating the conditions for continuous improvement in schools (Forman et al., 2017). Section 3 examines experiences of visitors. Within each section, each paragraph summarizes a major finding, and bolded sentences emphasize points of nuance or important takeaways.

This document is not a program evaluation. Rather, this document describes the extent to which the above propositions were reflected in interview data and indicates which aspects of Showcase support were most useful for school staff. Each section concludes with two to four Areas for Further Inquiry, a series of preliminary recommendations regarding how the Showcase Schools program might continue to support host schools and visitors.

Key Terms	
<i>Host school</i>	School that opens its doors to visitors to showcase a promising practice
<i>Visitor</i>	Any educator who attends a Showcase Day to learn about promising practices
<i>Showcase Fellow</i>	One of two teachers at a host school who design and facilitate Showcase activities
<i>Showcase Director</i>	Staff member from NYCDOE who supports host schools in designing the Showcase
<i>LFA</i>	“Learning Focus Area” in which a host school shares its promising practice
<i>Showcase Day</i>	Day when host schools open their schools to visitors to see their LFA in action
<i>Convening</i>	Thrice-yearly professional-development session where Fellows build adult-learning and leadership skills
<i>Extension</i>	A visit designed to provide visitors with deeper opportunities to engage with the LFA
<i>Internal Coherence</i>	From Elmore et al., “a school’s capacity to engage in deliberate improvements to instructional practice and student learning across classrooms over time, as evidenced by educator practices and organizational processes that connect and align work” (2014)

Section 1: Deepening Consistency and Effectiveness of Practice

The Showcase Schools program aims to build *internal coherence* in host schools, defined as the ability to make “deliberate improvements to instructional practice and student learning across classrooms over time” (Elmore et al., 2014), by supporting schools’ growth of promising practices. To succeed, practices must be **clarified**, so educators have a thorough understanding of why and how the practice in question impacts students and connects to larger goals, and be **easily articulated**, so all parts of the practice can be explained to peers within their community and to visitors from the outside.

Staff across all three host schools examined in this report found that the preparation and intervisitation encouraged by Showcase contributed to consistency across their school. Most important, Fellows reported that the process of feedback and revision they engaged in when designing their Showcase visit helped them think more deeply about their pedagogy in general and in some cases shift their practice.

Deepening Consistency of Approach

1. PLANNING AND DEBRIEFING SESSIONS PROMOTED OWNERSHIP AND SHARED UNDERSTANDING

Schools are more likely to build a culture of improvement when teachers have a common vision of effective instruction (Forman et al., 2017). In interviews, host-school principals identified the pre-visit planning process and post-visit debrief sessions with the Showcase Director as useful for helping **promote a shared understanding of effective practice across their schools**. One principal described the coordination between classroom teachers around the logistics of the upcoming Showcase Day by saying,

“...It’s really forced us to be more conscientious of what works for us.”

“It was more about solidifying the practice over all the classrooms in the early grades [and] looking at bringing practices together.” Another principal echoed this, explaining that having the Showcase Director push staff during debrief sessions “definitely gave us a lot more ownership... because sometimes [they ask], ‘How is this working?’ And I’m like ‘I don’t know. I just do it automatically. It’s in my head.’ But now it’s like, ‘No, tell me what’s in your head.’ So it’s really

forced us to be more conscientious of what works for us.”

2. SHOWCASE PREPARATION PUSHED THINKING ABOUT HOW TO DEVELOP NEW STAFF

Two principals reported that they saw Showcase as a valuable way to improve the experience of new teachers in their school. At one school, the in-depth preparation process—during which Showcase Fellows brought together literature to support their practice, met with each classroom teacher who was to be observed for classroom tours, and created documents that laid out the extent of the practice—served to **bring teachers of all experience levels to a shared understanding of the practice**. “As new people come in, it makes it more of a process... It can help us better prepare newer staff,” said one principal. Another principal reported that Showcase made her think more deeply about the consistency with which she develops new teachers, after she noticed unexpected discrepancies in instruction while leading Classroom Tours. “It’s really made me think about my systems and structures more,” she said. “It’s made me take a little bit of a step back and say, oh, I need to pay just as much attention to every student, every teacher that comes through this door.”

“We’ve always planned together. But it’s made us a stronger team,” a teacher recalled. “More honest with each other about our practices and our ideas. And through that honesty, we’re able to make each other better teachers, and ourselves better teachers.”

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Deepening Effectiveness of Practice

1. VISITOR FEEDBACK DEEPENED UNDERSTANDING THAT CAN YIELD CHANGES TO SPECIFIC PRACTICES

The Showcase Schools program provides schools with the supports to open their doors, present a practice in a meaningful way, and gather feedback from visitors that can help strengthen pedagogy. At one host school, this feedback from visitors drove a large-scale change to their practice. After fielding multiple questions from visitors about how the school recorded data on student progress, **Fellows designed and distributed a new observation tool.** “You do things for years. Work Time is part of our life. But now, we’re really analyzing it again,” reported one Showcase participant. Another participant echoed this sentiment. “I think it’s been really incredible for us to be forced to focus on this,” she said. “We’ve been trying new things for ourselves...We always kind of knew [the gaps in the practice] were there, but then, all of a sudden, they seemed really glaring.”

2. INTERPRETING VISITOR FEEDBACK PROMOTED A CULTURE OF IMPROVEMENT

Discussion around Showcase feedback produced urgency. At one school, the principal compared the process of enhancing her school’s practice to the preparation of a recipe. “When you’re making it for yourself, for dinner, you’re just throwing things into the pot,” she said. “But suddenly, when you’re serving it up for company, you’re being really careful about your measurements. You’re being more

3. SHOWCASE BOLSTERED INTERVISITATION SYSTEMS

Intervisitation can strengthen school-wide instructional skills and help create a culture of consistent improvement (Robin, 2014), but busy schedules and competing priorities often make it difficult for schools to implement such a program on a consistent basis. For Fellows, however, Showcase served as an important catalyst for this collaboration across classrooms. One Fellow described how **the Showcase process created a better school-wide understanding of the practice** after she and her fellow Fellow visited each of the teachers who were observed on Classroom Tours. “We went from class to class and looked at each other’s classroom and got ideas from each other,” she explained. “Come to my room, see if there’s something that I don’t do.” This intervisitation process spread consistency of the practice across the school by aiding individual teachers in refining their own practice.

At another host school where intervisitation had already been commonplace, Showcase sparked more intensive collaboration between two co-Fellows. Here Showcase bolstered extant team bonds: “We’ve always planned

precise. And it's in that fine-tuning that you really discover, 'Oh, maybe I didn't need this piece,' or, 'I was spending too much time on this.'" After reflecting on feedback from visitors, her school team worked to ensure that teachers were making learning objectives clear from the start of every lesson. This data suggests that **Showcase builds an environment of continuous improvement**, in which teachers build skills that enable them to gather feedback, reflect on it, and make meaningful change in their classrooms.

In fact, it is clear from the data that staff across all host schools found the feedback, reflection, and revision process involved in every Showcase visit valuable for their own practice, **regardless of whether they received direct feedback on their practice or not**. Teachers at host schools drew direct connections between the value of receiving feedback on their own pedagogy and receiving feedback on the strength of the visit. One teacher at a host school, for example, described how her team reflected and then made small revisions to artifacts based on feedback from her Showcase Director and visitors about the artifacts' clarity. She explained how going through this process strengthened her own practice: "[Showcase] pushes us as educators and as leaders, because even within your classroom, as a teacher, you try something and if [you] see it doesn't work, you need to be reflective. And you need to figure out, 'Okay, what can I do in order to make it better for next time?' And this is the same thing [as Showcase]." Explained another Fellow, "I definitely feel like I've brought some of that back to my [classroom], or kept some of that in my own head while I'm planning anything with the kids." By undergoing the feedback and revision process multiple times throughout the year in an effort to improve Showcase Days, these school staff found themselves **more likely to conduct the same process during their day-to-day lesson planning and execution**.

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Areas for Further Inquiry

- Consider **formalizing an intervisitation process** as part of Showcase preparation. Showcase bolsters intervisitation where it already exists and sparks it in schools where it has fallen by the wayside; a formalized process can ensure all schools receive the benefits of cross-classroom collaboration.
- Draw **more explicit connections** between feedback/revision process and applications for classroom pedagogy. Showcase strengthens educators' skills in assessing and making changes to a practice over time. The direct connection from improving Showcase visits to improving personal pedagogy was often only implicit in interviews with classroom teachers, so drawing out these connections might impact teachers' learning even more.

Section 2: Building Adult-Learning and Leadership Skills

The Showcase Schools program aims to build internal coherence in host schools by strengthening team processes and efficacy beliefs through provision of systems and structures for effective collaboration and leadership development. In particular, the program supports Fellows in **facilitating adult learning** while providing teachers with leadership opportunities that can **reinvigorate commitment** to the profession.

Interview data shows that host-school staff especially valued the facilitation and communication skills that the Showcase Schools program staff modeled. For staff across all three host schools, Showcase increased teachers' confidence in their capacity for leadership and served as a point of pride for host-school participants.

Building Capacity to Facilitate Adult Learning

1. COMMUNICATION AND FACILITATION SKILLS MODELED BY SHOWCASE DIRECTORS WERE APPRECIATED AND SOMETIMES ADOPTED BY FELLOWS

Interviewee impressions were positive, especially regarding the **communication structures** that Showcase staff used. Fellows and principals noted that they appreciated the frequency of communication and responsiveness, with some Fellows noting that seeing this method modeled had improved their own organization and team communication habits. "Especially with my [Showcase] team, I send constant emails [and] reminders," said one Fellow. Strong communication habits contribute to the success of small-team processes, an important contributor to internal coherence (Forman et al., 2017). Fellows also valued seeing **effective facilitation skills** modeled by Showcase staff during planning meetings. Multiple Fellows reported that they appreciated their Showcase Director's **methodical and focused approach** during planning meetings and appreciated their Showcase Director's ability to conduct meetings efficiently to ensure that Fellows addressed important next steps for planning. One teacher described her Showcase Director, saying, "He provides immediate feedback for us... Always on time, always prepared. And that has helped me become better as a Fellow."

A few Fellows expressed that they initially felt confused about some of the "lingo" that their Showcase Director used, and some Fellows reported that they felt that in-person planning meetings leading up to Showcase visits occurred at irregular intervals. "The gaps between [meetings] didn't lend it to be a smooth thing for me. [Other Fellows] would have to remind me, every time, 'This is what we did last time,'" reported one Fellow.

2. SPECIFIC GUIDANCE IN HOW TO DESIGN ADULT-LEARNING EXPERIENCES BOOSTED CONFIDENCE

Host-school staff also appreciated explicit guidance in tailoring their visits to an adult audience. "Showcase has helped clarify adult learning—how to communicate clearer to people...what we can do, not really knowing who our audience is, to prepare for them so they can understand things better," said one Fellow. Another Fellow valued the fact that **methods to facilitate adult learning were addressed concretely in meetings**: "They've even taught us adult-learning techniques and theory that was even more specific than some of the stuff I've done in the past." This suggests that Showcase builds educators' capacity to design activities appropriate for adult learners, which in turn can strengthen educators' ability to conduct meaningful improvement efforts in their own schools outside of Showcase.

3. ARTICULATING PRACTICES TO SHOWCASE DIRECTORS HELPED FELLOWS REFINE MESSAGING

When Fellows work closely with a Showcase Director to prepare for a visit, they build skills in clearly articulating practices to audiences unversed in their LFA or school context. For example, one school's Showcase Director was unfamiliar with early childhood work, and so had little context for understanding the school's practice. Her pointed questions during pre-visit planning time helped the team examine materials and descriptions of the practice with a closer eye. "It was really helpful because she is, in a way, our target audience," the Fellow explained. "So it really helped us to plan our activities throughout the day to reach someone like her, to really make sure, 'Does this make sense to you?' 'Do you feel like you have the tools you need?'"

On the other hand, a Fellow at another school felt that Showcase's unfamiliarity with her role as a non-classroom teacher meant that "the work didn't always specifically apply to what I was doing," which suggests that an "outsider" perspective is not always advantageous.

4. ATTENDING OTHER SHOWCASES ENHANCED HOSTS' ABILITY TO DESIGN ADULT LEARNING

Multiple teachers noted that their **experience as visitors at other Showcase schools helped them think more deeply about how to present their practice** at their own school. One Fellow explained, "you learn to give them a focus because whenever you go anywhere, if you see everything, you leave with nothing." Convenings were also useful for gathering ideas about how to structure activities for the Visit day. One Fellow described how she "didn't know what was missing" from their Showcase before she visited a Convening. "I don't even think we necessarily used one specific idea," she explained. "But just seeing other ways of doing it got us talking and thinking, and definitely made that time better for the second and third visit." These findings suggest that Convenings and Visits are useful not only because they bring people together, but also because they build Fellows' skills in successfully articulating their own practice and designing effective adult learning activities. Interestingly, this point was also emphasized by staff members who expressed disappointment about not being able to attend other Showcase visits and felt the absence impeded their growth.

Bolstering Teacher Leadership Skills

1. FELLOWS BUILT LEADERSHIP SKILLS THAT TRANSFERRED TO OTHER CONTEXTS

Interview data suggest that both school leaders and teachers saw improvements in Fellows' leadership skills as a result of Fellows' participation in the Showcase program.

Administrators at all three host schools reported that participating in Showcase not only boosted Fellows' leadership skills, but also **gave Fellows the confidence to take on additional leadership**, whether formal or informal. "It certainly led them to have more opportunities leading PD groups and being willing and able to share amongst their peers on their own," reported one principal. Another principal saw a Fellow taking on more day-to-day leadership: "I've noticed, especially in [one Fellow], the spark of this responsibility. She was always involved, but more behind-the-

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scenes. But now, she's taken such a proactive approach. And it's not just Showcase-related stuff. It's anything and everything." Showcase provides teachers with meaningful leadership opportunities that are too often hard to come by in schools, and research suggests these opportunities can bolster commitment to the profession (Furer, 2017), contribute to a school-wide vision of effective practice, and improve student outcomes ("2016–17 NYCDOE Quality Review").

2. FELLOWS DEVELOPED THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT IT MEANS TO LEAD

In general, Fellows saw their own growth in leadership skills as valuable in two main ways. First, Fellows felt that Showcase afforded them the chance to **have a voice in directing the Visit day** and the overall practice. "I think my biggest benefit, personally, has been having a voice in what we do in Showcase and then in [the practice]," explained one Fellow. Another Fellow echoed this: "[I've been a] leader, been planning the days, and had a real voice in the organization of the day, the structure of the day." Being recognized as a leader with important input helped these teachers feel valued and boosted their confidence as educators.

More, after participating in Showcase, Fellows saw **transparency as a vital and necessary element of teacher leadership**. While many Fellows reported initial feelings of apprehension when it came to opening up their doors to visitors, Fellows reported that the Showcase experience made them more comfortable sharing both the good and the bad with fellow educators. "It pushes us as leaders just to make sure that we're always open. It's about trust, and there's a huge trust factor in Showcase. The people coming in are trusting us to be open and honest, and we're trusting them to be open to what we're doing and also give us feedback that we can benefit from," explained one Fellow. This data suggests that Showcase is helping to **build leaders who are open to feedback and can acknowledge areas for growth**, a vital element for leadership at internally coherent schools (Forman et al., 2017).

Serving as a Point of Pride

1. PRINCIPALS APPRECIATED THE OPPORTUNITY TO SPREAD EFFECTIVE PRACTICES

Educators are not often given a chance to share promising practices with a wide audience. Principals at these host schools expressed satisfaction with Showcase not only because of the opportunities for growth for their staff, but also because the program afforded them a chance to **highlight a practice that they knew was effective**. When asked about her goal in participating in the Showcase Schools program, one principal told us, "We think this is a practice that really supports children. And we felt very good about supporting the expansion of this practice...there's such interest in the City and we feel like we're supporting the children in New York City by making this practice available to them." Another principal was emphatic in stating one of her goals for participation in the program: "I strongly believe in the practices that we're implementing. And we do have the data to support that we're doing well...So, I didn't want to keep it to myself." These findings suggest that the Showcase Schools program does particularly important work in recognizing educators by recognizing homegrown practices that school leaders have self-identified as effective.

2. FOR TEACHERS, RECOGNITION YIELDED PRIDE AND APPRECIATION

Teachers also found value in being recognized by their peers and by the central district office. “When you work in public education, there’s not a lot of opportunity for people to see what you do,” said one teacher. “So the recognition from a peer—and also support from Showcase—is particularly important for classroom teachers because they are doing a very hard job.” One principal told us that her teachers “feel like celebrities” when they go to other schools and are recognized. “It’s pride in who they are as professionals,” she explained. According to a Fellow at her school, “everyone would like to be” part of the Showcase process. This suggests that **Showcase builds a belief in individual and collective efficacy.**

Schools where educators believe that their own practices and their school’s practices are contributing to student learning are more likely to bring about meaningful change and see results in student achievement (Forman et al., 2017).

Areas for Further Inquiry

- Create a **more consistent schedule** for in-person planning meetings to supplement the consistent communications structures already in place. This would ensure multiple touchpoints throughout the planning process while differentiating support for Fellows who more easily respond to in-person rather than electronic communication.
- Consider how to **leverage Showcase Directors’ unfamiliarity with certain practices** when strategically assigning SDs to schools. Showcase Directors can use their “outsider” status to build the team’s articulation skills in describing the practice to an unfamiliar party.
- Continue to **support Fellows in visiting multiple Showcases**, perhaps by including this hard requirement in the principals’ application. Visiting other Showcases is valuable not only for seeing promising practices and building community but also for honing Fellows’ skills in articulating their own practice.
- Given that participating as a Fellow can strengthen teacher leadership skills, confidence, and pride in the school, consider **requiring strong host schools to rotate Fellows** every year.

Section 3: The Visitor Experience

Showcase aims to provide visitors with the **content, context, and processing time** necessary to learn and adapt practices to their own school context. In focus groups and follow-up interviews, Extension visitors found that observing content and context of the practice were of equal value for their learning; however, fewer interviewees spoke about the usefulness of processing/planning time. Additionally, Extension visitors most frequently identified **next steps** that involved making changes in their own classroom and communicating about changes with their colleagues, and comparatively less often identified next steps that involved communicating about changes with administration.

Value of Content, Context, and Processing Time

Across all interviews, visitors highly valued both the **content** (e.g., take-home worksheets and planning documents, photos of classroom layout, research materials) and the **context** (e.g., administrator and teacher perspectives in Discussion Forums, insight into collaborative planning, “seeing the flow” of the practice in action) provided during visits.

Valued Elements of Showcase Visit - Visitor Mentions



1. VISITORS VALUED CONTENT THEY COULD WALK AWAY WITH

When it comes to implementing an entirely new practice, educators often do not have the time or confidence to design materials from scratch. Predictably, Extension visitors particularly valued content that they could immediately turn back around in their own school. “When I went back to my principal, I didn’t have to create anything. I just took [the packet] they had and shared it,” explained one visitor. Other visitors gleaned most of their ideas from the classroom visits. “I’m definitely a visual learner,” explained one visitor. “It was really helpful to be able to take the pictures in the classroom and have evidence about what the classroom looks like,” said another. Multiple interviewees reported that **sharing pictures of the practice in action was instrumental** in convincing their colleagues that the practice in question was worth implementing in their own school.

2. SEEING CONTEXT CREATED A MORE COMPREHENSIVE UNDERSTANDING OF A PRACTICE

Seeing the impact of a practice in action during a Showcase lends visitors a better understanding of how a practice might look in their own school with their own students. Research shows staff-development activities that encourage this type of consideration are typically perceived as more meaningful (National Staff Development Council, 2001, as cited in Guskey and Yoon, 2001). After Showcase visits, visitors cited the value of gaining a greater sense of context for the practice almost as often as they cited the value of

receiving specific content and materials. “I had to see the vision for myself” to understand how the practice worked, explained one teacher. Though her colleagues had attempted to explain the host school’s practice beforehand, “[Until the visit], there was sort of a bigger picture missing for me.” This reinforces that **classroom materials alone are not necessarily enough to give educators a full understanding of what a practice entails and why it is important.**

3. PLANNING TIME WAS LESS OFTEN CITED AS USEFUL

While interviewees frequently mentioned the usefulness of the visit in providing both content and important context about the practice, comparatively **fewer interviewees mentioned the usefulness of the planning time.** The few visitors who did mention planning time appreciated the chance to share ideas directly with host-school staff: “They kind of walked us through the process,” she explained. The discrepancy between the high value given to content and context and sparse mentions of planning time might be explained by the fact that one Extension visit did not include action-planning time, instead devoting most of the visit to a deeper investigation into classroom context and research.

4. VISITOR-TO-VISITOR SHARING SPREAD WISDOM

Although only a few interviewees mentioned planning time, those who did described how **time for visitors to share their action plan with one another** served to spark even more ideas for implementation in their own classroom. “At the end of [the visit], when we discussed the different ways, applications, to apply what we’ve been learning in our own classroom—when teachers shared, that was useful,” one visitor said. “Sharing ideas and taking an idea that someone else shared and bringing it into my class [was helpful].” Interviewees explain that both host-school input and visitor input were valuable when planning to bring a promising practice back to their own school, demonstrating another avenue through which the Showcase Schools program contributes to building a citywide community of improvement-minded practitioners.

Next Steps Most Commonly Identified

To better understand the scope of the changes that visitors plan to make after visiting a host school, Eskolta coded focus group and interview data to identify instances when visitors mentioned planning or executing a next step in the following three contexts:

- Within their own classroom/practice
- With their colleagues
- With an administrator or school leader

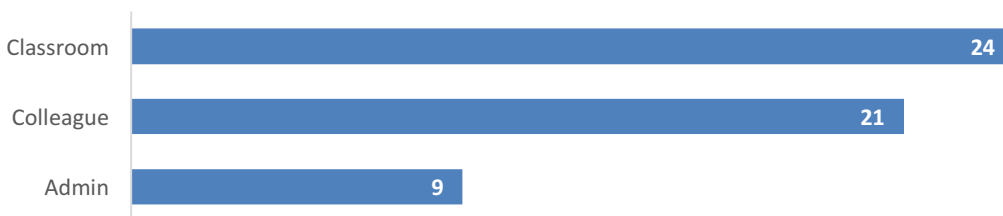
In the coding, no limit was placed on the number of (discrete) next steps identified by participants (e.g., a participant might identify two next steps within their own classroom and one with an administrator).

1. VISITORS MOST OFTEN PLANNED FOR CHANGES IN THEIR OWN CLASSROOM

The type of next step most often identified by Extension visitors during interviews and focus groups was a next step within the visitor’s own classroom. Visitors applied materials and ideas from the Showcase visit with varying degrees of modification—some visitors replicated protocols and activities with great fidelity, while other visitors adjusted the materials for their own school context. Many visitors reported that they

were able to implement changes in their classroom right away. “I did it the following week,” reported one visitor.

Next Steps - Visitor Mentions



2. SHARING WITH COLLEAGUES WAS A MAJOR PRIORITY

Perhaps surprisingly, Extension visitors who were interviewed referenced planning or executing a next step with their colleagues almost as often as they referenced planning or executing next steps within their own classrooms. Multiple visitors reported that they planned on sharing their insights with their grade-level teams, vertical teams, or co-teachers. Another teacher explained how her principal encouraged her to attend Showcase with her colleague with the goal of spreading the practice at their own school: “Our principal came in October, and she’s a big fan of the school...She also wants us to turnkey, which is why she allowed us both time out of the building.” These findings suggest that Showcase might strengthen Extension visitors’ skills in building this shared understanding in their own school by offering **specific guidance for effectively sharing the practice with colleagues.**

3. CONVINCING ADMINISTRATORS WAS A PRIORITY FOR SOME

Visitors less frequently referenced planning or executing a next step with an administrator, though for the visitors who do mention it, it tends to be a key concern. Some hoped to use the information they learned during the visit to convince an administrator or school leader to adopt the practice more widely in their school. “The very first thing I wanted to do [after the visit] was to email the Director of Instruction to see if I could get more time in my schedule to bring that to our school,” said one visitor. Another described how she used resources from the Showcase visit to convince her principal to adapt the practice in question: “I took a ton of notes when the principal was talking...I went straight to my principal and said, ‘This school has got it down. What do you think from this list is effective?’” In a similar vein, more than one visitor expressed a wish for **materials that aid visitors in bringing information back to an administrator.**

4. EXTENSION VISITS APPEARED TO PROMOTE BROADER NEXT STEPS

As described above, written evaluation data from all visitors across multiple years shows that school-based visitors to the three host schools were **much more likely to name a classroom-based next step than they were to reference a colleague-based or administrator-based next step.** Interviewees, however, referenced colleague-based next steps about as often as classroom-based next steps. One explanation for this difference might come from the sample population of interviewees. If visitors are attending an Extension visit, they are more likely than first-time visitors to have a goal for spreading a

practice beyond their own classroom. This suggests that **Extension visits serve as a meaningful bridge to changing school-wide practice.**

Areas for Further Inquiry

- Provide host-school teams with slightly more guidance before Extension visits to ensure that Extensions include **adequate action-planning time** near the end of each visit. Extension visits serve as important bridges to practice for visitors; each visit should involve focused time for visitors to plan for adaptation to their own school context.
- Consistently build in time for **visitors to share action plans with one another** at the end of each Showcase visit (Extension and regular). This allows visitors to gather even more ideas for implementation while fine-tuning their own plans based on feedback from both host-school staff and visitors.
- Provide Extension visitors with **specific guidelines for introducing promising practices** to colleagues and administrators, since Extension visitors are more likely than regular Showcase visitors to be planning a next step with staff and administration.

Methodology

This study was conducted in compliance with an agreement with the NYCDOE Internal Review Board. Fourteen staff members at three host schools were interviewed for this study. Interview subjects included every principal and every current Fellow from each of the three host schools. Other interview subjects included teachers whose classrooms were visited, former Fellows, and other school leaders such as assistant principals and subject-area coaches. Eskolta staff communicated with each staff member via email to reiterate that participation was voluntary. Interviews took place at each host school over the course of either one or two days, and the average length of each interview was half an hour. Interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed for accuracy.

Interview data was gathered from sixteen total visitors via both focus groups and follow-up interviews. At the end of each host school's Extension visit, Eskolta staff conducted half-hour focus groups to better understand visitors' impressions of the day. Participants were recruited by Eskolta staff during the Extension-visit lunch break. All visitors were told that participation was voluntary and that participants had the option to remain anonymous in any final research product. Focus groups were not audio-recorded, though in-depth notes were taken. After each focus group, Eskolta staff contacted all participants via email to raise the possibility of a follow-up phone interview. In total, six participants (plus one visitor who did not attend an Extension visit but had attended multiple other Showcase visits) were interviewed over the phone. As with the focus groups, none of these interviews were audio-recorded, but in-depth notes were taken.

All interviews were semi-structured and used a bank of preselected questions to guide the interview. Interviewers asked follow-up and probing questions when necessary, which were not always part of a structured set and differed across interviews. Interviews were coded using a qualitative coding software to discern trends and patterns across the data.

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