

Teacher Networks in Philadelphia: The Current Landscape

The Philadelphia Education Fund and Teacher Networks

- For the past two decades, the Philadelphia Education Fund has been incubating emerging networks, and helping grow existing networks, both internal to the Ed Fund, such as the Philadelphia Teacher Residency, Math + Science Coalition, Early Warning System, and Philadelphia Postsecondary Success Program; and external to the Ed Fund, including the Philadelphia Teacher Convenings, Teachers Lead Philly, Reflective Teachers Network, and PA Math Teachers Circle.
- The School District of Philadelphia's current Action Plan describes networks as *meaningful opportunities for teacher collaboration* and encourages partners to identify, scale, and explore opportunities for teacher collaboration in service of making Philadelphia a premiere place to work.

Our Research

- In 2013, the Philadelphia Education Fund (Ed Fund) interviewed 180+ teachers at 15 schools to map Philadelphia's network landscape, including network type and function, as well as the value teachers associate with networks, such as the impact of networks on instruction, expertise, school climate, and persistence.

Our Findings

- Formal, in-school networks serve one or more of the following functions:
 - Support **school-level** systems and practices
 - Facilitate **department-level** curriculum and activities
 - Address daily **grade-level** curriculum and instruction planning
 - Provide **individualized support** for struggling students
- In schools with strong formal networks, informal and out-of-school networks *complement* school and classroom goals and enable additional professional growth and innovation. In schools lacking strong networks, teachers must instead pursue informal and out-of-school networks to *supplement* resources.
- Teachers value networks for building knowledge, enhancing expertise, strengthening relationships and climate, and broadening access to resources.
- Most schools have little structured time and few to no resources to support teacher networks.

What's Next:

- ⇒ **Districts** allocate sufficient time, resources, and network-specific space within schools for teacher networks to operate.
- ⇒ **Schools** benefit from District/Ed Fund support to develop, incubate, and grow networks.
- ⇒ **Teachers** build knowledge, broaden expertise, strengthen relationships, and share resources.
- ⇒ **Ed Fund** continues to enhance the teacher network landscape in Philadelphia.

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Teacher Networks

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Table 1
Descriptive statistics, teacher networks

	All Alters	Alters within teachers				Composition of teacher networks			
		Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Dev.
Number of alters	1,551	2	30	10.62	4.92				
Alter is a group	35.0%	0	22	0.65	2.86	0	100	64.41	21.96
Alter is an individual	46.0%	0	17	4.90	3.27	0	100	33.58	20.49
Alter is an event	20.0%	0	6	2.10	1.46	0	100	53.96	21.84
Formal	45.0%	0	25	4.75	3.21	0	100	45.32	19.85
Informal	55.0%	0	18	5.80	3.53	0	100	54.68	19.85
In-school	68.0%	0	23	7.18	3.42	0	100	69.32	19.08
Out-of-school	20.2%	0	14	2.14	1.93	0	75	19.6	14.74
In person	92.4%	0	27	9.68	4.61	60	100	92.35	10.00
Online	7.7%	0	7	0.80	1.27	0	40	7.02	9.75

Table 2
Results of HLM analyses predicting teacher network composition

	Network size		% Formal		% Informal		% Internal		% Out-of-School		% In-Person		% Online			
<i>Empty</i>																
Level 1 variance	21.95		353.77		338.49		343.27		200.25		94.00		80.85			
% of total	90.35		99.80		83.60		93.81		91.36		93.80		94.87			
Level 2 Variance	2.34	*	0.71		66.39	***	22.64	0.1	18.94	*	6.22	0.1	4.37			
% of total	9.65		0.20		16.40		6.19		8.64		6.20		5.13			
<i>Fixed effects (not robust SE)</i>																
Intercept	1.89		48.44	*	52.59	*	62.01	*	32.72	0.12	84.47	***	14.30	0.11		
<i>Level 1 covariates</i>																
Network size			-0.82	*	0.82	*	-0.61	0.1	0.17			-0.23	0.19			
New to teach (<4 years)	0.41		3.29		-3.28		1.18		1.75		2.74		-3.32			
Core subjects (reference)																
Serves specific need (SPED/ELL)	-2.25	0.07	0.14		-0.14		7.51		-5.61		4.86		*	-5.09	*	
Elective/related arts	-0.05		10.15		*	-10.16	*	-7.11	2.51		-1.29		0.38			
Other/unknown subject	1.39		2.90		-2.90		-2.49		-0.80		-0.57		0.28			
<i>Level 2 covariates</i>																
Elementary school	-1.19		-0.24		0.24		11.06		0.1	-6.45	3.46		-3.79		0.08	
Middle	0.56		-10.53		0.1	10.52	0.099	2.37		-1.45		-3.02		3.74		
High (reference)																
% FRPL	0.10		0.08		0.00		0.01		0.13		-0.15		0.09		-0.08	
School made AYP 12	3.71	*	16.97		**	-16.97	**	3.48		0.50		6.25		*	-4.62	0.07
<i>Level 1 Variance</i>																
Proportional reduction	22.77		317.74		317.81		334.80		202.00		87.41		81.28			
Proportional reduction	-3.75		10.18		6.11		2.47		-0.87		7.01		-0.52			
Lev 2 Variance	0.08		0.25		0.25		16.00		24.49		*	0.05		0.03		
Proportional reduction	96.55		64.77		99.62		29.34		-29.31		99.18		99.28			

(*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001)