

Mastering Teacher Leadership

>Abstract

This case is about a multistage, communication study of teachers by Wittenberg University's Department of Education to determine the viability of starting a Master of Education program for Ohio-certified teachers working within school districts serving a five-county area. www.wittenberg.edu

>Background

Ohio legislators recently implemented new standards for those wishing to teach within Ohio's public and private schools. Teachers certified to teach in Ohio in 2002 or later will need to complete a master's degree before obtaining their second licensure renewal. New teachers, therefore, will have a five- to seven-year window to complete the master's degree after their initial licensure to teach.

Historically, teachers have looked to graduate level courses to fulfill their professional development requirements. According to the newly passed Ohio Department of Education Teacher Certification Standards, for the first time all professional development activities must be tied to professional development plans customized by local school district goals. All such plans will be approved and monitored by Local Professional Development Committees. These LPDCs will look favorably on courses that fit local goals, which are increasingly motivated by student performance variances on standardized tests.

Wittenberg University is primarily a resident campus of 2,000 students affiliated with the Lutheran Church in America. Located in central Ohio, Wittenberg is a comprehensive liberal arts institution with professional programs in education, business management, pre-med, and pre-law. It has been training teachers for more than 150 years and has earned a reputation for producing exceptional teachers for K-12 programs. This high quality, as perceived by local teachers who supervise Wittenberg undergraduate field teaching experiences, is expected to be Wittenberg's greatest asset in pursuing the development of a master's program.

Wittenberg, historically, has not offered a graduate degree in education, but it has offered graduate degrees in its nationally recognized music program and, until the mid-1980s, in its theology program. Wittenberg sees the change in Ohio Teacher Certification Standards as an opportunity for its Center for Professional Development (WittCPD), a program of professional development courses designed to fulfill the continuing education requirements of teachers in the area.

Central Ohio is rich with high quality universities. Within a 30-minute drive of Wittenberg's campus, undergraduate teacher education programs can be found at Wright State University (WSU), the University of Dayton (UD), Urbana College, Cedarville College, Wilberforce University, and Central State University. WSU and

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UD currently offer Master of Arts degrees in teaching. WSU offers continuing education programs that fulfill professional development programs.

Increased turnover is also expected to be a motivating factor contributing to increased enrollment in university development programs. Ohio's schoolteacher turnover is expected to increase due to the aging of the teacher population, incentive buyout programs designed to encourage aging teachers to retire, and the need to hire experienced teachers in the hard-to-fill math and science areas. With an average 15 years teaching experience, Clark County schools have more than 900 certified staff and hire 50–60 new teachers each year. Springfield City schools have more than 800 certified staff and hired 119 teachers in 1997, 99 in 1998, and 118 in 1999.

>The Research

The faculty of the education department, in concert with university administrators, conducted a brainstorming session in early fall 1998 to identify university resources that might contribute to a master's program in education. This was followed by a retreat with an Ohio Department of Education consultant, who reiterated the advantages of a liberal arts-based program in the ongoing preparation of K–12 teachers.

To further explore the opportunity for offering a Master of Arts degree in Classroom Leadership, WittCPD conducted three focus groups: two with Springfield City district teachers and one with local school superintendents. Both groups were positive about the likelihood of a program customized to the needs of the various local school districts. Additionally, they provided direction for the desired content and orientation of an effective program. Such a program would need to:

- Deal with the diverse cognitive and social needs of students.
- Emphasize technological literacy for both teachers and students.
- Emphasize both program and classroom assessment by providing a sound research foundation for both curriculum and instruction.
- Address classroom management issues of student social skills, moral education, and discipline.
- Provide a framework for teachers to learn to collaborate with other teachers and with community professionals.

In the spring of 1999, Education faculty associated with the WittCPD drafted a market survey and mailed it to 2,000 practicing teachers in a four-county area. Each of the 1,600 teachers in Clark County, Wittenberg's home county, received a questionnaire, with the remaining 400 surveys delivered to a systematic sample teaching in the outlying counties of Green, Montgomery, and Champaign. By September 1, 1999, 763 teachers had returned their surveys (31.8 percent response), of which 53.8 percent of respondents had completed or were enrolled in degree programs beyond the bachelor's level.

> Initial Results

Out of 763 teachers, 21.2 percent said they definitely would enroll, with an additional 57.7 percent who might enroll, citing professional requirements, professional advancement, or keeping their certification as the three primary reasons for enrolling. Those who expressed a lack of interest in a Master of Arts program at Wittenberg claimed as three obstacles the anticipated high cost, their holding a current master's degree, or family responsibilities.

In order for the Wittenberg Board of Directors to approve offering of the new degree program, the program needs to continue the liberal arts tradition and strengthen the undergraduate teacher education program, as high quality undergraduate education is seen as part of Wittenberg's primary mission. Additionally, new academic initiatives such as the one proposed are increasingly asked by the board to reach break-even within their first operating year.

> Discussion

- 1 Build the management-research question hierarchy for this opportunity.
- 2 Evaluate the appropriateness of the exploratory stage of the research design.
- 3 Evaluate the sampling strategy.
- 4 Evaluate the survey:
 - a In terms of structure, what is the quality of this instrument? What improvements would you make?
 - b In terms of measurement questions, are the chosen response strategies appropriate?
 - c Does this instrument meet the needs summarized in the investigative questions noted in your management-research question hierarchy (question 1 above)?
- 5 Prepare a preliminary analysis plan for this study. Which variables do you want frequencies on? Why? Which variables do you want to cross-tabulate? Why?
- 6 Analyze the data from this study on your CD (Excel 97 file format: Witt Masters CPD.xls). With respect to creating a Master of Arts in Classroom Leadership program, what recommendation is supported by your data analysis?
- 7 What role could GIS play in this analysis?

> Source

Dr. Robert Welker, Director, Wittenberg Center for Professional Development, provided the data and survey instrument to the authors in November 1999.

Survey Cover Letter and Graduate Program Survey

February 22, 1999

Dear Colleague:

Wittenberg University is exploring the potential of a Master of Arts program in education. In order for us to understand the promise of such an effort, we are asking that you complete the following survey. Our purpose is twofold. We would like to understand your potential interest in a master’s program at Wittenberg and in taking courses for graduate credit here. Second, we would like to use the information you provide to create a graduate program as receptive to the needs of practicing teachers as possible.

Please complete the attached survey form and return it in the postage-paid envelope provided by March 20, 1999. Thank you for completing this survey and thank you for your continued work with our community’s young people.

Regards,

Robert Welker, Ph.D.
 Director
 Wittenberg Center for Professional Development

Graduate Program Questionnaire

1. Counting this year, how many years have you taught?

0–5 years 6–10 years 11–15 years 16–19 years 20 or more years

2. Professional responsibility and subject field. Check all that apply.

Grade Level	Subject Area	
<input type="checkbox"/> Preschool to grade 3	<input type="checkbox"/> Art	<input type="checkbox"/> Music
<input type="checkbox"/> Grade 4 to grade 8	<input type="checkbox"/> Business/Economics	<input type="checkbox"/> PE/Health
<input type="checkbox"/> Grade 9 to 12	<input type="checkbox"/> 0–5 years	<input type="checkbox"/> Social studies
<input type="checkbox"/> Special education	<input type="checkbox"/> 0–5 years	<input type="checkbox"/> Science
<input type="checkbox"/> Administration	<input type="checkbox"/> 0–5 years	<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____		

3. Highest level of education obtained. Please select one from the list below.

<input type="checkbox"/> Less than a B.A./B.S.	<input type="checkbox"/> B.A./B.S.
<input type="checkbox"/> B.A./B.S. plus graduate work	<input type="checkbox"/> Currently in M.A./M.S. program
<input type="checkbox"/> M.A./M.S.	<input type="checkbox"/> Ph.D. or currently enrolled in Ph.D. program.
<input type="checkbox"/> M.A./M.S. plus additional graduate work	

If you are currently enrolled in a graduate program, which college or university are you attending?

4. Which of the following qualities are most important to you in a graduate program? (Please rank the top three qualities with “1” being of most importance, “2” being of next most importance, etc.)

___ Reputation	___ Quality of instruction	___ Class size
___ Schedule flexibility	___ Closeness to home	___ Individual attention
___ Cost	___ Other	

(continued)

5. If costs were kept competitive, how likely would you be to apply to a master's degree program in education at Wittenberg?

- Definitely would apply Might apply Would not apply

6. If costs were kept competitive, how likely would you be to enroll in graduate courses at Wittenberg to enhance skills without pursuing a master's degree?

- Definitely would apply Might apply Would not apply

7. Please indicate the three most important reasons for your interest in graduate education at Wittenberg, with "1" being your most important reason, "2" your next most important reason, etc.

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ___ Professional requirements | ___ Increased employability |
| ___ Professional advancement | ___ Additional money |
| ___ Personal satisfaction | ___ Keep certification |
| ___ Future requirement | ___ Upgrade certification |
| ___ Career change | ___ Improving skills |

Other: _____

8. Please check the two most important reasons for your lack of interest in graduate education at Wittenberg.

- | | |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| ___ Cost | ___ Live too far away |
| ___ Family responsibilities | ___ Too near retirement |
| ___ Time to complete the degree | ___ Lack of information |
| ___ Professional commitments | ___ Already have a master's degree |
| | ___ Enrolled in master's program |

Other: _____

9. Please indicate from the list below which of the following might be anticipated as an obstacle to your enrolling in a master's level or graduate class at Wittenberg.

- | | |
|------------------------|-------------------------|
| ___ Child/elder care | ___ Travel |
| ___ Financial need | ___ Employment schedule |
| ___ Family commitments | |

Other: _____

10. What professional development areas most interest you? Please rank the top three professional development areas that interest you, with "1" being your area of strongest interest, "2" being your area of next strongest interest, etc.

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| ___ Enhancing subject matter knowledge | ___ Teaching Arts |
| ___ Using technology in the classroom | ___ Teaching Social Studies |
| ___ Child development | ___ Teaching English/Language Arts |
| ___ Teaching reading/writing | ___ Teaching Math |
| ___ Specific learning disabilities | ___ Teaching Science |
| ___ Teacher leadership development | ___ Urban social backgrounds |
| ___ Developing social skills in students | ___ Moral and character development |

Other: _____

(continued)

11. How far would you have to drive to attend WU?

- under 10 minutes 10–20 minutes 21–30 minutes
 31–45 minutes 46–60 minutes more than 60 minutes

12. When during the year would you be able to take graduate courses? (Check all that apply.)

- Fall (Aug.–Dec.) Spring (Jan.–April) Summer (May–July)

13. Which day and time scheduling option below most appeals to you?

- Fall through spring: Day (8:00 AM–4:00 PM)
 Fall through spring: Late afternoon (4:00 PM–6:00 PM)
 Fall through spring: Evening (6:00 PM–10:00 PM)
 Fall through spring: Saturday
 Summer day (8:00 AM–4:00 PM)
 Summer evening: (6:00 PM–10:00 PM)

If you would like to receive more information about graduate programming in education at WU, please add your name and mailing address below.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Thank you for your time and assistance. Please return the survey in the postage-paid envelope by March 20.