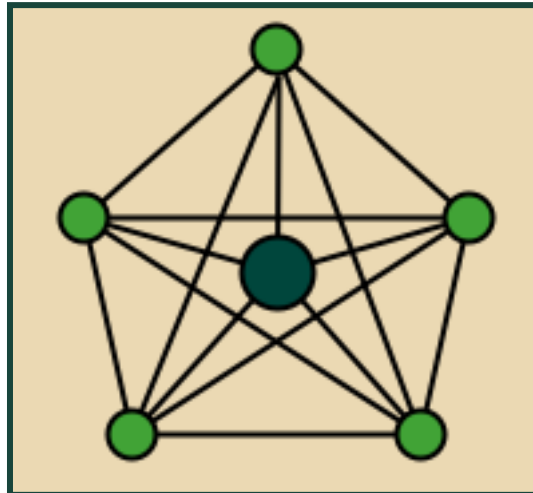


Promoting Academic Success Project

Understanding
Teacher Advice Networks
about Minority Boys' Education in:

Reo Elementary School



A Report Prepared By:

Jennifer Watling Neal, Ph.D.
Giannina Fehler-Cabral, M.A.
Patrick Janulis, M.A.

Department of Psychology
Michigan State University

Project Overview

Why it matters:

- A key goal of the Promoting Academic Success (PAS) Project is to spread information about and encourage teachers' use of classroom practices that support the academic success of minority boys.
- Research suggests that the spread of information about and use of new practices occur through existing interpersonal networks (e.g., Burt, 1987; Dearing, 2008; Rogers, 1995; Strang & Soule, 1998).
- In this study, we collected data to help us better understand who teachers go to for advice around issues related to minority boys' education with the goal of addressing following questions:
 - What do advice networks look like for teachers seeking information and guidance about supporting minority boys' education?
 - How can PAS schools use this information to improve communication and increase sustainability of the program?

Project Overview (cont.)

What we did:

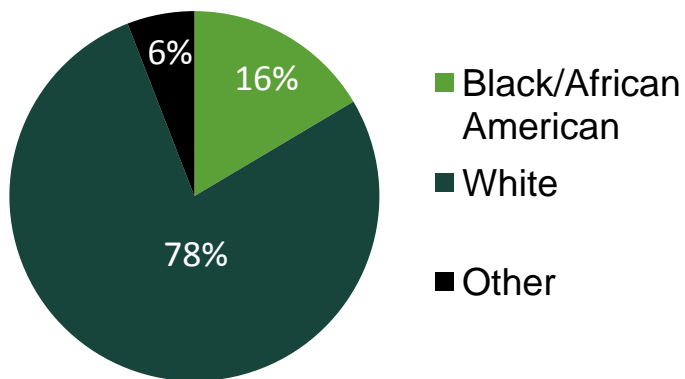
- 20-40 minute interviews with all classroom and ancillary (e.g., special education, literacy) teachers in the 5 PAS intervention schools.
- Similar interviews were also conducted with principals (N=5) and other school staff who were commonly mentioned by teachers in interviews. However, this report focuses only on teachers.
- Interviews asked teachers who they went to for advice around issues related to minority boys including:
 - Instructional methods
 - Promoting positive relationships
 - Involving families
 - Behavior management
- Most interviews took place during the school day at a time convenient to the teacher and school. A substitute teacher covered the teachers' classroom during the interview process.
- Teachers were paid \$20 for their participation.

Who Participated?

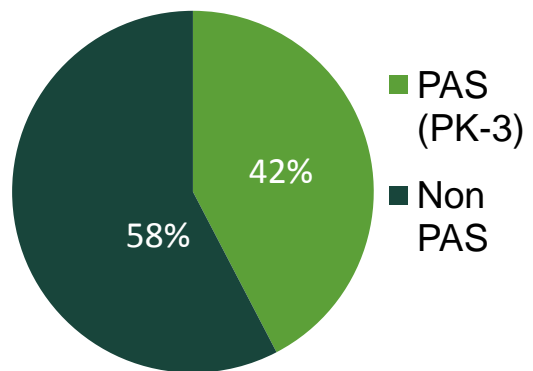
Overall, 85 teachers participated in the study.

	<i>MEAN</i>	<i>MIN</i>	<i>MAX</i>
AGE	46.3	25	64
YEARS TEACHING	17.1	3	39

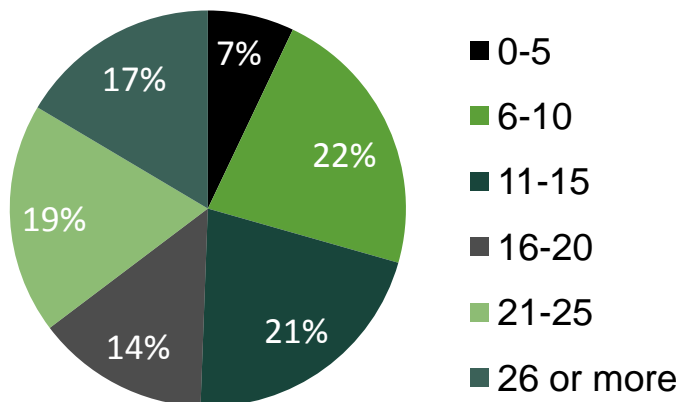
Race



PAS / Non-PAS



Years Teaching



Trends Across All PAS Intervention Schools

Most teachers identify at least some of their colleagues as sources of advice for issues related to minority boys

- On average, teachers tend to identify between **2 - 3 other teachers** from whom they seek advice.
- Teachers named the **most sources of advice for instruction** (Mean= 2.72, SD= .52)
- Teachers named the **least sources of advice for behavior management** (Mean= 2.22, SD= .54)

Teachers are not talking as much as they could be about issues related to minority boys

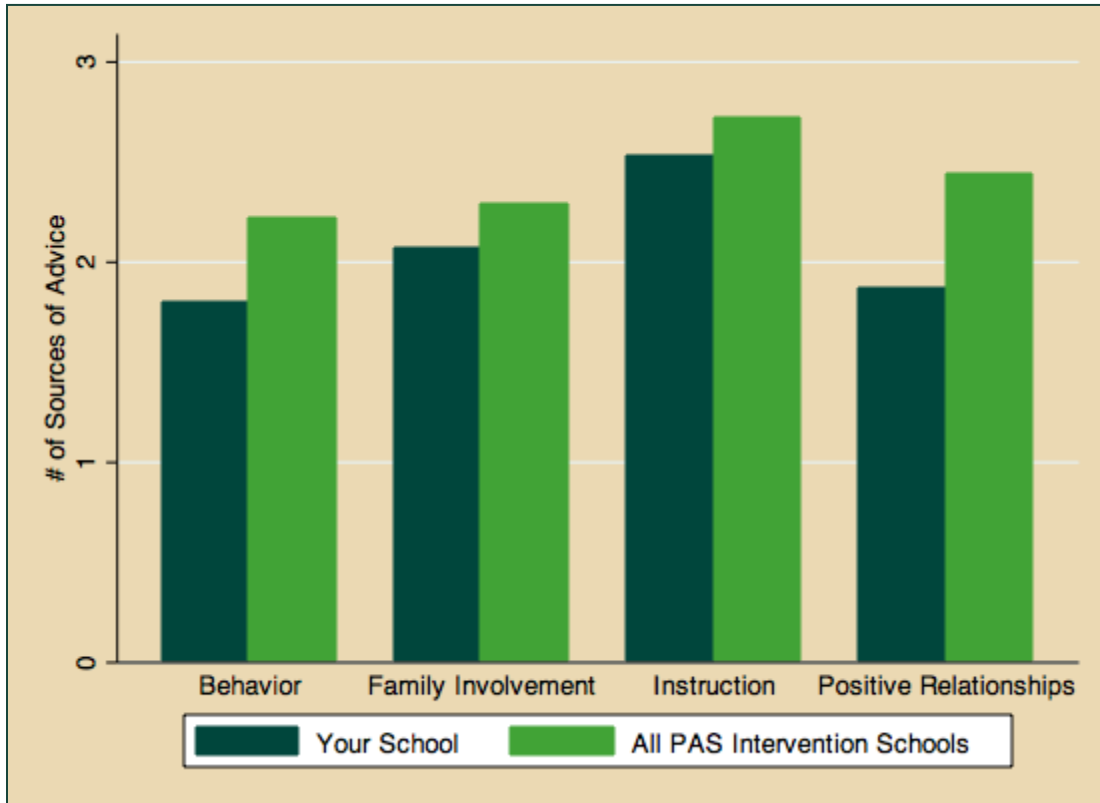
- On average, only **13.8 - 17%** of all possible advice relationships exist among teachers.
- Teachers are the **most connected around issues related to instruction** (Mean= .17, SD= .02)
- Teachers are the **least connected around issues related to behavior management** (Mean= .138, SD= .02)

There is potential to increase communication about minority boys between different groups of teachers

- On average, only **10.2 - 12.2%** of all possible advice relationships exist between teachers targeted by PAS (PK-3) and non-PAS teachers.
- On average, only **13 - 17%** of all possible advice relationships exist between more and less experienced teachers.

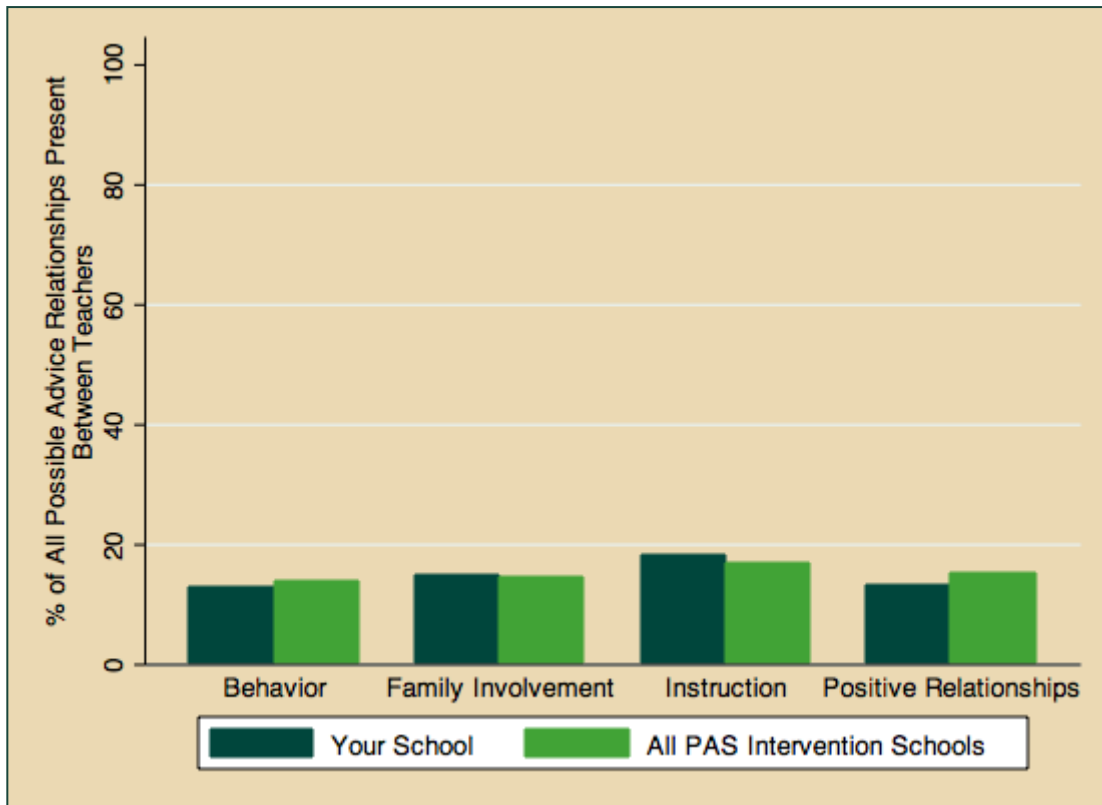
Are teachers in my school talking about issues related to minority boys' education?

- On average, how many sources of advice do teachers have?



- On average, teachers in your school named the most sources of advice for instruction (2.53) and the least sources of advice for behavior management (1.8) and promoting positive relationships (1.87).

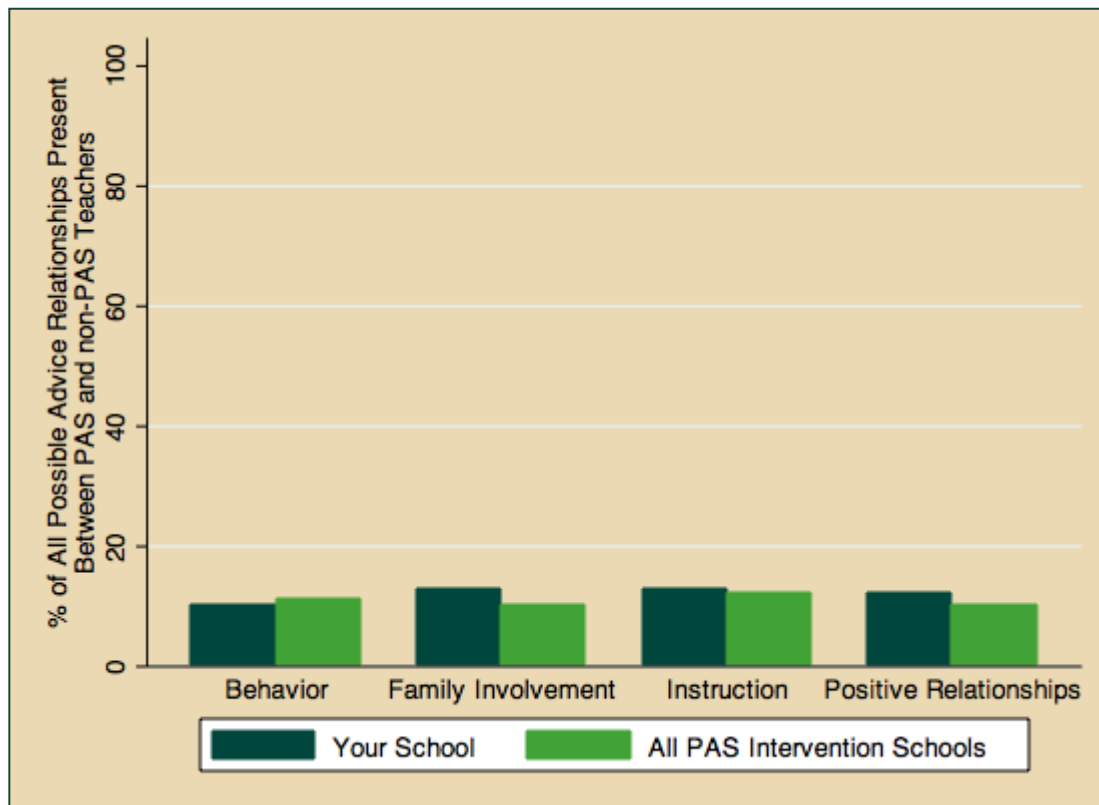
How interconnected are teachers?



- Similar to all PAS intervention schools, only 12.9– 18.1% of all possible advice relationships exist in your school.
- These findings are not atypical given the amount of time teachers have to develop interpersonal relationships with other teachers.
- Teachers in your school are most connected around instruction and least connected around behavior management.

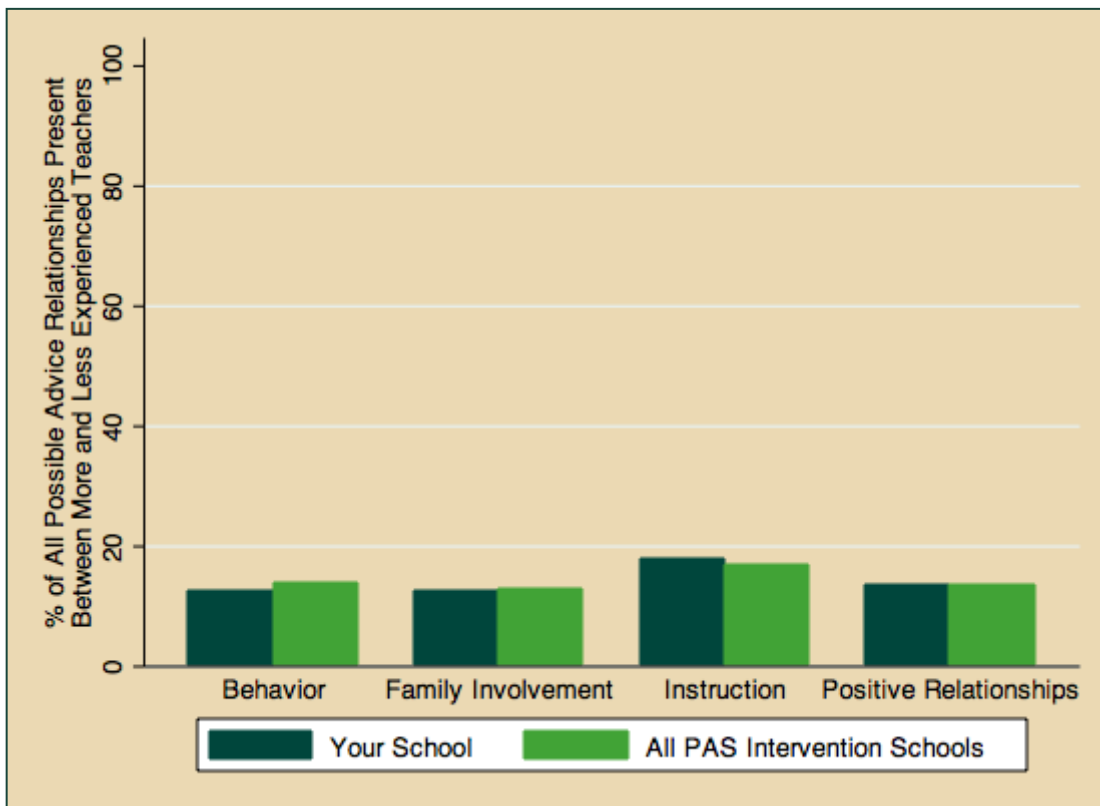
Who's talking to whom about minority boys' education?

- Are PAS and non-PAS teachers talking to each other?



- Similar to all PAS intervention schools, only **10.2 -13%** of all possible relationships existed between teachers targeted by the PAS intervention (Pre-K to 3rd grade teachers) and those not targeted.
- PAS and non-PAS teachers were most likely to have advice relationships about instruction and family involvement. PAS and non-PAS teachers were least likely to have advice relationships about behavior management.

- Are more experienced teachers and less experienced teachers talking to each other?



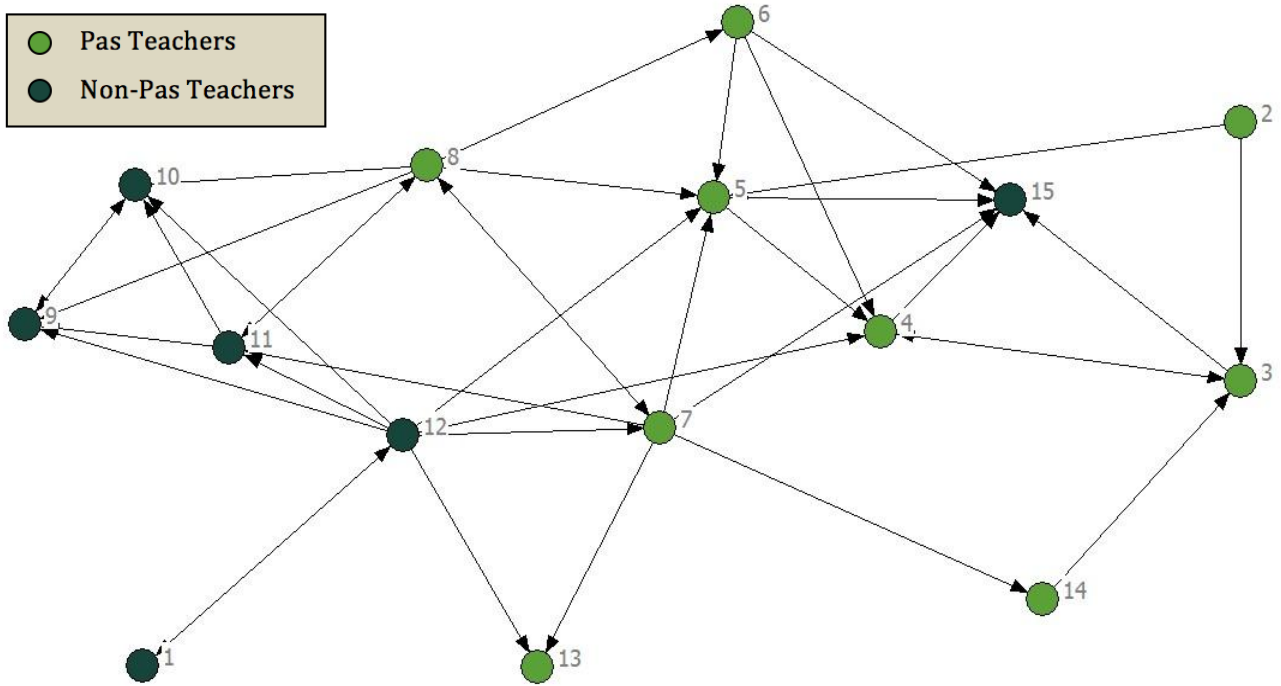
- Similar to all PAS intervention schools, only **12.5 - 17.9%** of all possible advice relationships exist between more and less experienced teachers.
- More and less experienced teachers in your school were most likely to have advice relationships about instruction and least likely to have advice relationships about behavior management and family involvement.

Interpreting Network Sociograms

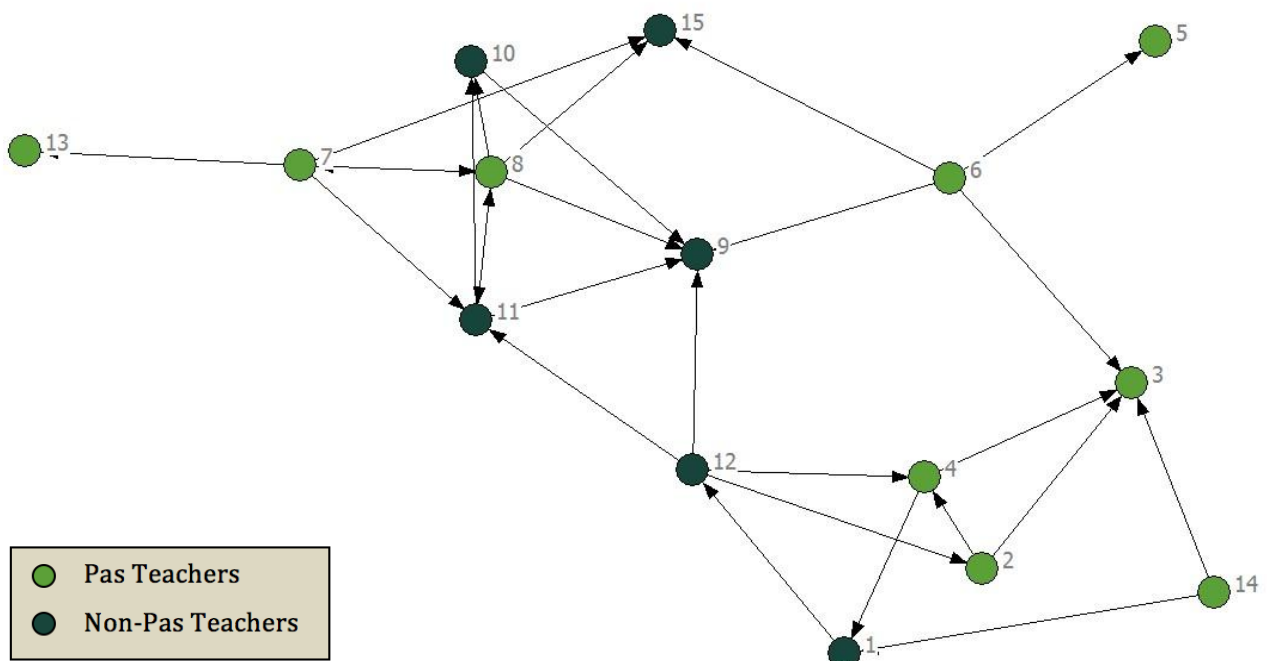
- Each network sociogram below shows advice relationships between the teachers in your school
 - Circles represent each teacher. Light green circles are teachers targeted by the PAS program (PK-3rd) and dark green circles are teachers who are not targeted by PAS.
 - Lines represent advice relationships between teachers. Arrows point in the direction from advice giver to receiver
- As you examine the sociograms, ask yourself the following questions:
 - Are there isolated or peripheral teachers in my school that might be hard to reach with new information?
 - Do teachers in my school tend to have reciprocal advice relationships that allow information to flow in both directions?
 - Do PAS teachers tend to exchange advice more with other PAS teachers? How much do PAS and non-PAS teachers tend to exchange advice?
 - How do teacher advice networks in my school differ based on the content of the advice?

What do teachers' advice relationships look like in my school?

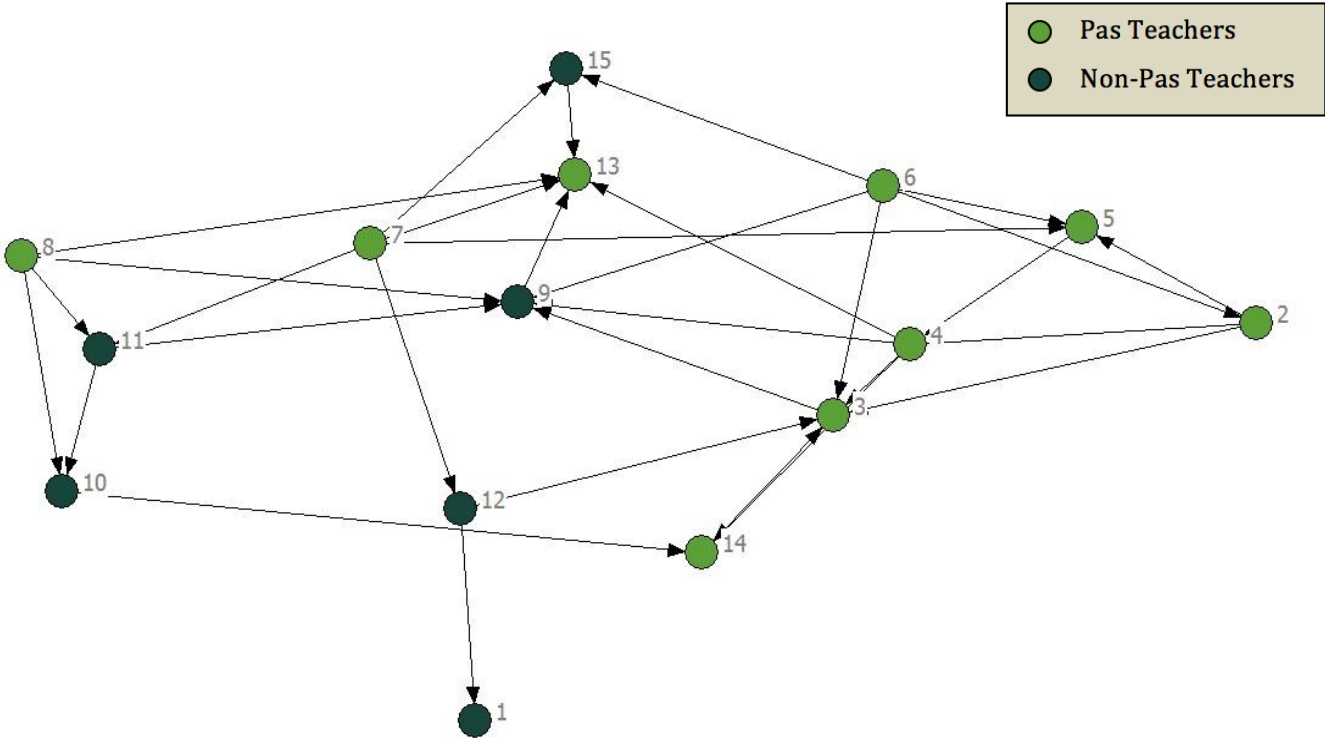
Instructional Advice Network



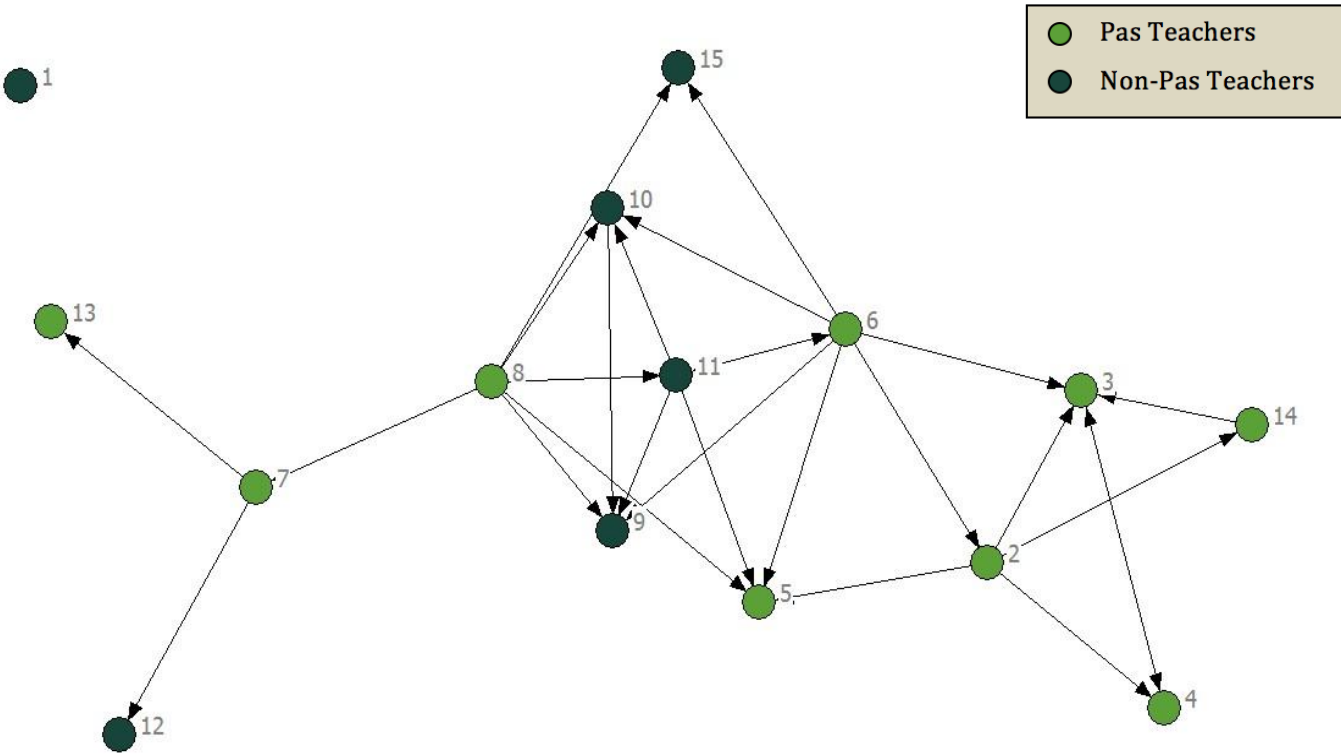
Positive Relationships Advice Network



Family Involvement Advice Network



Behavior Management Advice Network



Reflections & Recommendations

How can improving teacher advice relationships help the PAS project?

- ***Spread information about the PAS project more rapidly.*** Information can spread faster when teachers are well-connected to one another through advice networks (Friedkin & Slater, 1994). Also, because teachers are less likely to be isolated or peripheral in well-connected advice networks, it is more likely that information about the project will reach everyone.
- ***Provide a support structure as teachers try out new practices.*** Teachers with well-developed advice networks are not only more likely to receive information about the PAS project, but are also more likely to have colleagues to go to for advice and support as they try out new practices to improve minority boys' education.
- ***Foster sustainability of the PAS program.*** By ensuring that teachers are aware of the PAS program and have a support structure to try new PAS practices, strengthening teacher advice networks is likely to help maintain the program once research funding has ended.

How can your school improve teacher advice relationships about minority boys' education?

- ***Talk to teachers about the importance of maintaining advice relationships.*** Discussions with teachers can help identify the barriers to forming and maintaining advice relationships and also provide an opportunity to highlight the benefits of these relationship
- ***Create additional settings for teachers to discuss minority boys' education.*** Findings suggest that there is potential for teachers in your school to increase their communication about each of the key areas of the PAS program (behavior management, instruction, family involvement, and promoting positive relationships). Your school may want to focus first on improving communication about behavior management as teachers named the fewest sources of advice and were least connected around these issues. Some examples of ways that your school might create settings to foster more communication about these issues are:
 - ***Including updates on the PAS program at regularly scheduled faculty meetings.*** Findings show that there is limited communication between teachers who are targeted by PAS and those not targeted by PAS in your school.
 - Because PAS students are likely to eventually transition into upper grade classrooms, it is important for all teachers to learn about the goals and purpose of PAS.
 - Keeping all school staff up to date on the PAS program may be useful. For example, PAS teachers could use regularly scheduled faculty meetings to update all teachers on the progress and impacts of the program.

- ***Creating formal and informal mentoring opportunities.*** There were few advice relationships between more and less experienced teachers in your school. Given that these two groups of teachers are likely to offer different, yet equally important types of advice, it may be helpful to provide mentoring opportunities where new teacher strategies could be shared.
 - For example, your school could establish formal mentoring opportunities by assigning pairs of more and less experienced teachers to share advice around the four key areas of the PAS program. Your school could also foster more informal mentoring opportunities by offering “lunch dates” or “coffee breaks” where more and less experienced teachers have the chance to come together to discuss minority boys’ education

- ***Expanding the PAS professional development sessions to include all teachers.*** Another way to encourage communication between teachers targeted by PAS and those not targeted by PAS is to encourage all teachers to attend professional development sessions related to minority boys’ education.

- ***Looking for other school staff members who can serve as resources for minority boys’ education.*** Are there individuals beyond teachers in your school who can serve as resources on the four key areas of the PAS program? Are there ways that you might enlist these individuals to help connect teachers around minority boys’ education?

Acknowledgments: *On behalf of the research team, we would like to thank all the Reo Elementary school teachers and staff who took the time out of their busy schedules to participate in this study.*