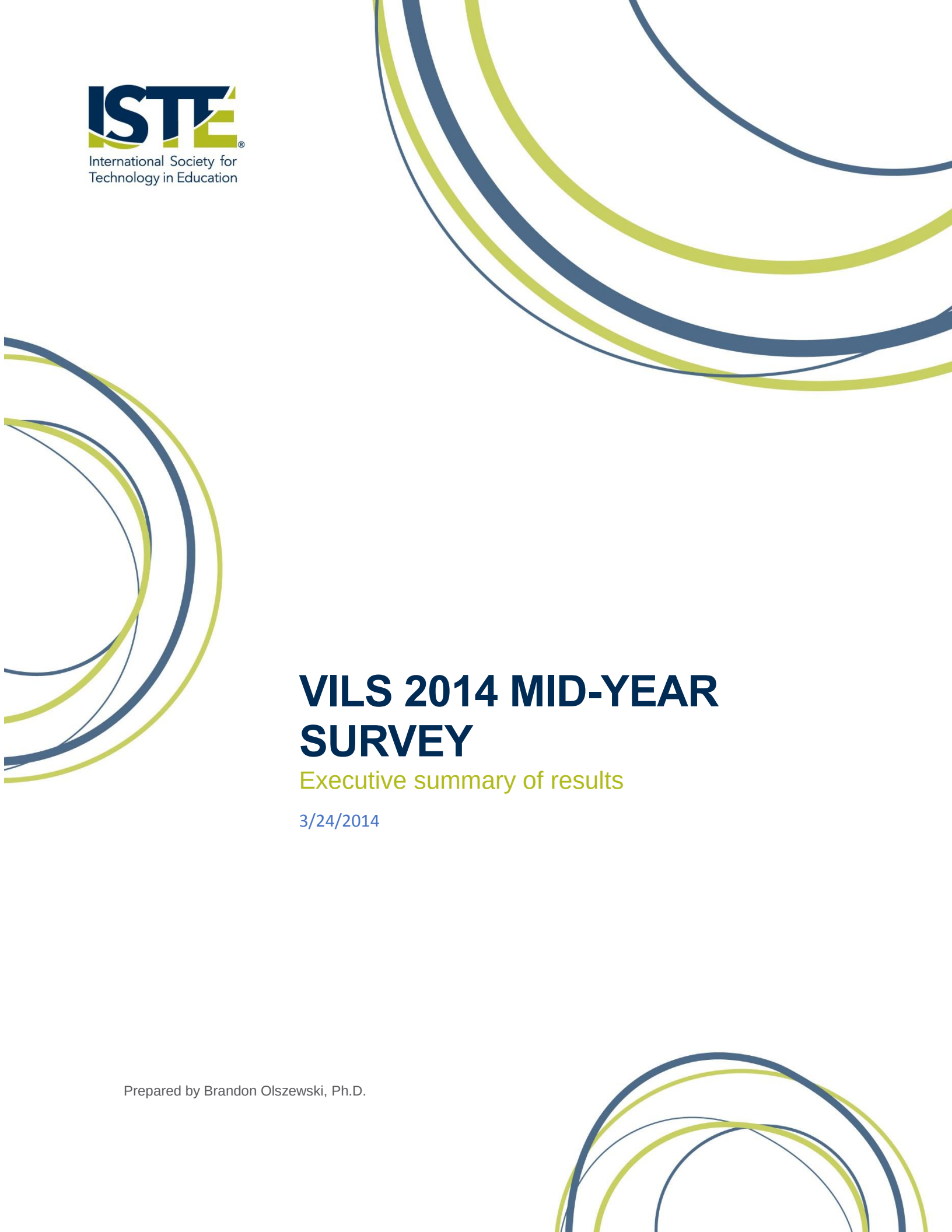

VILS 2014 MID-YEAR SURVEY

Executive summary of results

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Executive Summary

The Verizon Innovative Learning Schools (VILS) program provides professional development and resources to 24 schools across the U.S, including a 2012-13 cohort (cohort one, or C1), and a 2013-14 cohort (cohort two, or C2), each with 12 schools. The schools span every geographic area and from elementary through secondary levels. While the Verizon Foundation funds the initiative, the program is managed by the Professional Development Services (PDS) Department at the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE). ISTE also provides evaluation of the program that includes stakeholder surveys about technology integration and impact, classroom observations, and assessments of student impact including a survey about student interest in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) and an analysis of gains in student standardized assessment scores in math and science. This report details results of a mid-year survey that was completed by VILS teachers, tech coaches, and administrators in January, 2014. Instructional Consultants (ICs) who support the schools completed a related survey in December, 2013.

The mid-year survey recruited a high response rate, suggesting that its results are representative of VILS tech coaches, administrators, and teachers. Responses were submitted from administrators from all but two schools, and from tech coaches at all schools. Between two and 12 teachers responded from each site, with an average (mean) of 6.25 from each site. Collectively, VILS ICs completed mid-year surveys for every VILS school. Combined, results from these surveys paint a broad picture of progress for VILS schools during the 2013-14 year. Although C2 coaches and administrators reported more positive findings about the program, there were not great differences among teachers across the two cohorts.

TECH COACHES

Many coaches support STEM and other subjects, although each cohort had 5 coaches (~40%) that supported only STEM. C2 tech coaches expressed more engagement with the program: they were more likely to attend the on-site training, they viewed more webinars, and did more coaching activities with teachers, including lesson planning and training. Staffing changes at C1 schools complicated VILS participation for some 2013-14 coaches, including fostering buy-in and bringing teachers up to speed. Williamson County coaches, who are staffed as full time (1.0 FTE) tech coaches, reported a higher number of hours in coaching activities than most. Coaches from three other schools reported being staffed at 1.0 FTE for coaching.

Over 80% of coaches from both cohorts reported moderate or high levels of administrative support for the VILS initiative, with most (69%) reporting administrators as “very supportive.” Coaches also reported that the majority of teachers (59%) exhibited “moderate” levels of buy-in (support) for the VILS program, and 35% exhibiting “high” levels of buy-in.

Greater FTE dedicated to coaching at schools was associated with better coach engagement, including more time co-teaching with teachers, training teachers, and working with the school’s IC. Coaches with more FTE also reported better teacher buy-in with the program.

TEACHERS

Across cohorts, teachers who worked at VILS schools at the time were about equally likely to attend the on-site training, and reported viewing about the same number of webinars. They also reported engaging about equally in VILS-related activities, such as working with their tech coach, although teachers from cohort two reported working with ICs and collaborating with each other more than those from C1. Across cohorts, teachers also reported similar levels of support from their administrators, tech coaches, and ICs. Estimates of buy-in for both themselves and other teachers were similar, too. Teachers from both cohorts reported very common daily technology use – 97% reported "weekly" or "daily" use of at least one device, and 86% reported "daily" use. Laptop computers were the most commonly used technology, followed by iPads and then other tablet devices and Smartphones.

Impacts on teachers and students were similar across cohorts, suggesting a common level of efficacy across cohorts. Teacher reported that the most useful VILS resources were the on-site training, support from IC, and resources from content partners. Impacts of the VILS program include on teaching include:

- 36% of teachers report leading more student discussions.
- Almost 50% of the teachers report lecturing less.
- 60% of teachers report providing more individualized student support.
- About 50% of the classrooms are doing more small group and hands-on work, and 40% are doing more writing.
- 50% of teachers report organizing more student projects.
- Almost 50% of the teachers report collaborating more with peer teachers at their school.

Approximately 99% of teachers (98.6%) reported positive impacts on either student engagement or learning. Student impact was assessed by examining teachers' reports of student technology use, student engagement, and student learning, all of which were relatively stable across cohorts. Impacts on student technology use include:

- 60% of their students are using new hardware or software that they would not have used otherwise
- 60% of their students are learning new skills with hardware or software they had already used
- 69% of their students are using technology to access useful learning resources
- 45% of their students are showing evidence of applying new technology skills out of class
- 60% are helping one another with technology in class
- 38% are helping teachers or other adults with technology

Impacts on student engagement include:

- 40% of students are completing work more promptly.
- 38% of students are completing work more thoroughly.
- 37% of students are asking more questions about academic content.

- 18% of students are asking more questions about STEM careers.
- 34% of students are more likely to extend learning beyond the classroom.
- 39% of students are more likely to encourage each other in class.

And impacts on student learning include:

- 37% of students exhibited better recognition of core concepts and vocabulary.
- 36% of students exhibited more appropriate use of concepts in solving problems.
- 33% of students exhibited an increased ability to compare facts and concepts.
- 36% of students exhibited an increased ability to solve problems.
- 35% of students exhibited an increased ability to create alternative solutions to problems.
- 42% of students exhibited more sophisticated student projects or products.
- 37% of students exhibited higher scores on classroom assessments.

ADMINISTRATORS

Administrators were asked about their engagement with the program. Most administrators attended some portion of the on-site trainings, and webinar views are nearly symmetrical across cohorts. In contrast, there were some differences in administrator participation, with cohort two administrators being more likely to work with tech coaches, work with their VILS team, and work with their school's IC. Despite these differences, administrators were fairly impressed with the support provided by their school tech coach, and generally felt that their teachers exhibited moderate to high buy-in to the program.

ICS

While ICs distributed their time with coaches about equally across cohorts, they tended to spend more time with cohort two teams. This is probably due to the fact that several cohort one schools experienced some substantial staffing changes, including one school that replaced all its teachers, and that such changes create turbulence at schools and require re-building buy-in and commitment that was initially established at the on-site training. ICs also rated C2 administrative support and teacher buy-in slightly higher than that of C1.

IMPLICATIONS

The increased emphasis on tech coaches has helped VILS teams in the 2013-14 year, as these are the people that are best equipped to provide in-classroom support for teachers. Tech coaches that enjoyed a higher level of FTE from their school/district reported providing more support to classroom teachers. The emphasis on having tech coach FTE in place for C2 schools (in the Request for Proposals) and tiered approach – of working with both coaches and teachers – has helped the program mature to realize impressive impacts in teacher development, and student learning and engagement.

Virtual support from ICs (especially to the tech coaches) has strengthened access to resources, as have webinars, but face-to-face on-site trainings were instrumental in kicking off the program with teacher buy-in. Schools that faced changes in staffing and challenges to the workplace (un-related to VILS) have had more difficulty than other is fostering program engagement and leveraging the opportunities VILS has to offer. Many of the challenges described by VILS participants are symptomatic in ISTE's Essential Conditions for Technology Integration[1] - participants are surveyed about these on end-of-year survey

Reliable, direct comparisons across years cannot be made due to a difference in response format in the survey, and due to estimation procedures used to compute overall changes in teacher practice and student outcomes. Despite the limitations associated with such comparisons, the results suggest consistent, positive, noteworthy results. As in the prior year, the impacts teachers reported on classroom technology use, changes in teaching, and student engagement and learning are noteworthy. It is also encouraging that these gains were relatively symmetrical across cohorts, suggesting that despite differences in the two cohorts (such as the recruiting process, level of tech coach support, etc.), VILS teachers are able to help nurture engagement in learning. The relative outlier in the bunch of student impact variables was in students asking more questions about STEM careers – gains there were noticeably smaller than in other areas related to classroom work and academic learning. This is expected – helping students make the jump from what one does in school to the kinds of problems one solves as a STEM professional is not easy, as "careers" are not something reasonably proximal for most students before they enter late high school. In this spirit, the program's commitment to the ISTE Standards is noteworthy, as they are the most widely adopted framework for technology literacy in the United States. The standards describe the digital-age skills students will need, in addition to a strong content background, to thrive in the jobs of tomorrow.

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[1] The Essential Conditions are available at https://www.iste.org/standards/essential-conditions.