

THE LEARNING Principal

FOR A DYNAMIC COMMUNITY OF SCHOOL LEADERS ENSURING SUCCESS FOR ALL STUDENTS

WHAT'S INSIDE



School Leadership

Deborah Childs-Bowen (above) introduces 4 R's for equitable schooling that support teaching and learning.

PAGE 2

Focus on NSDC's Standards

An equitable environment creates high levels of learning for *all* students.

PAGE 3

NSDC Tool

What a school leader needs to know about creating norms.

PAGES 4-5



National Staff
Development
Council
800-727-7288
www.nsdcc.org

PULLING TOGETHER

*Principals can empower teams of teachers
by taking on the role of facilitator*

BY CHERYL GRAY

Developing a small group of people into a lean, mean, decision-making team is neither easy nor quick. Random acts of teambuilding have served principals well as “climate changers” — icebreakers and warm-ups for 3:35 p.m. faculty meetings. What you may need, though, is long-term climate change — a figurative global warming — to move from random acts to habitual actions of teambuilding.

Transforming a team to take on the responsibility and accountability for improving the school requires a principal who can lead teams that can eventually lead themselves.

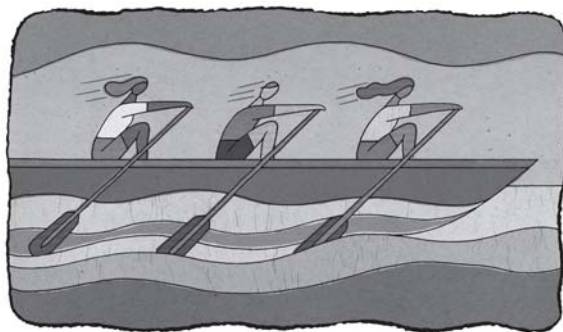
THE PRINCIPAL AS FACILITATOR

Principals who elect to transform a team and empower it to make decisions are facilitators who

help the team achieve results. In working with a team as a facilitator, you move out of the “deciding and doing” role to helping the team decide, take action, and evaluate results.

Richard Weaver and John Farrell (1997) describe how leaders handle multiple roles of leader, manager, and facilitator. “If the task is setting direction for a group — helping group members see the bigger picture — then the leader role is best,” they state. “If the task is setting limits on the work, delegating or

defining deadlines, then the manager role should be the choice. If the task is more complex, requiring the assistance of a number of other people to complete, then the facilitator role is best. As a practical guideline, for a given work session or meeting, one primary role should be used.”



Continued on p. 6



Deborah Childs-Bowen is the director of the Institute for Teaching and Student Achievement and assistant professor in the School of Education at Samford University in Birmingham, Ala.

Respect, responsibility, relationships, and results are the pillars that support the foundation of all teaching and learning in policy and in practice.

These 4 R's for equitable schooling support teaching and learning

For generations, the 3 R's — reading, writing, and arithmetic — have driven education. Those R's may have been fine for several generations of students but now it's time to add 4 new R's to the education lexicon — respect, responsibility, relationships, and results.

RESPECT

Equity and social justice are rooted in the concept of respect. Respect is not a stable element. It can be gained and lost.

Schools function as social institutions where people of varying cultural experiences merge for the same purpose, learning. Students and the adults who work with them come with their own ideas about respect, how it is evidenced, and even who deserves this social grace. Many school leaders assume individuals will automatically coalesce around a single notion of respect. Unfortunately, that rarely occurs. Effective school leaders are intentional about developing respect given the many different perspectives.

Therefore, Equitable Leaders:

- Encourage schoolwide respect for cultural influences in students' lives and encourage teachers to leverage these experiences for maximum learning.
- Promote schoolwide dialogue favoring culturally responsive teaching practices.

RESPONSIBILITY

For schooling to be successful, students must be encouraged to be responsible for their learning and growth in a positive manner.

Therefore, Equitable Leaders:

- Create learning environments that assist students in assuming responsibility and that provide opportunities to work interdependently in school and society.
- Create learning environments that enable

students to assess their strengths and set personal learning goals as an instructional strategy that binds their interest and commitment in learning.

RELATIONSHIPS

The nature of schooling is relational: administrator to teacher, teacher to teacher, teacher to student. Schools thrive when there is authentic caring and cultural competency between teachers and students. Teachers are able to develop positive relationships with each other when they have ongoing opportunities to learn together through such activities as mentoring, induction, analyzing student work, whole-faculty study groups, coaching, and action research. Teachers who experience good collegial relationships create schools that foster similar positive relationships between students and teachers. Establishing positive relationships that support teaching and learning is essential work for a leader.

Therefore, Equitable Leaders:

- Establish respectful and productive relationships with key stakeholders in support of student learning.
- Establish school environments of reflective practice, diverse perspectives, high expectations for all students, and collegial relationships among all stakeholders.

RESULTS

Results evolve from respect for the uniqueness and strengths of others, combined with responsibility for the core work of schooling, a standardized curriculum that is implemented in a culturally competent manner, with healthy relationships that result in collaborative learning, decision making, and strategic practices.

I believe that these are the schools that we want for all of our children.



Pat Roy is co-author of *Moving NSDC's Staff Development Standards Into Practice: Innovation Configurations* (NSDC, 2003)

Learn more about NSDC's standards, www.nsd.org/standards/index.cfm

REFERENCES

- Education Trust. (2001).** Dispelling the myth. Available at www2.edtrust.org/edtrust/dtm
- Marzano, R. (2003).** What works in schools: Translating research into action. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

An equitable environment creates high levels of learning for *all* students

The Coleman study, which suggested family background *rather than schooling* was a better predictor of student success, caused an uproar when it was published 40 years ago. Yet many modern-day schools seem to act as if those findings were scientific fact. Later, a more sophisticated analysis revealed contrary findings using the same data and showed that “highly effective schools produce results that almost entirely overcome the effects of student background” (Marzano, 2003, p. 7).

So, what is the principal’s role in developing an equitable school environment? The principal **communicates high expectations for self and for all teachers and students.**

High expectations is a complex and misunderstood concept. Let’s dissect this idea. First, the principal **accepts no excuses for the lack of**

achievement by subgroups of students. Instead of accepting the idea that some students will not or cannot learn because of their family background or other factors, the principal must believe and then communicate the belief that all students can learn, although possibly at different rates and in different ways. Principals who have closed the achievement gap identify that belief as a critical first step in the process.

Second, the principal **changes school schedules, curriculum, and use of staff time to support the learning of struggling students.** Schools have to operate differently to cause the desired changes in achievement. Every routine is questioned and adjusted in order to accomplish high levels of learning for students.

The principal also **expects teachers to change classroom practices to support the learning of struggling students.** The reason many educators do not change their classroom practice is that they don’t believe it will make any difference in student learning. The principal may need to highlight changes in student learning that result from changes in classroom practice that occur within the school. This expectation is also supported by **encouraging**

respectful dialogue among faculty regarding their role in helping all students learn.

Work by the Education Trust and Marzano indicate that teachers can make a difference in student learning by using strategies that are not yet widely used in schools. Part of the faculty dialogue needs to include the principal **challenging educators’ underlying assumptions concerning the role of parents, SES, race, and**

background in student learning. The principal can encourage faculty to learn about high-performing, high-poverty/high-minority schools studied by the Education Trust (2001). This work dispels the myth that poverty and minority status prevent high achievement.

Last, the principal **provides an ongoing system of staff development to enhance teacher skills and knowledge about teaching struggling students.** This staff development helps and supports teachers implement new practices that will make a difference in student learning.

An equitable learning environment is possible. But schools will not achieve high levels of learning for all students without the courageous efforts of principals.

EQUITY

Staff development that improves the learning of all students prepares educators to understand and appreciate all students; create safe, orderly, and supportive learning environments; and hold high expectations for their academic achievement.

CREATING NORMS

SAMPLE NORMS

We agree to...

MEET only when there is a meaningful agenda.

START and end on time.

ALLOW everyone to contribute an agenda item.

POST the agenda before the meeting.

AVOID interrupting others when they are speaking.

DRESS comfortably but appropriately.

HAVE healthy refreshments.

HAVE a different facilitator and recorder for each meeting.

DIFFERENTIATE between brainstorming and discussion.

ADDRESS only schoolwide issues.

EXPRESS disagreement with ideas, not individuals.

This activity enables a team to develop a set of operating norms or ground rules.

Preparation: Before the meeting, write the list of norms at the left and on Page 5 on a sheet of chart paper and post on the meeting room wall. In addition, refer to the handout on Page 5 and create six more posters, one for each category:

- Time
- Listening
- Confidentiality
- Decision making
- Participation
- Expectations

Place these posters on the meeting room walls as well.

Supplies: Chart paper, sticky notes, pens/pencils.

Time: Two hours.

Directions

1. Indicate to the team that effective teams generally have a set of norms that governs individual behavior, facilitates the work of the team, and enables the team to accomplish its task.
2. Point out the sample norms that are posted in the room. Point out the other six posters and the questions that are posed on each poster. *Time: 15 minutes.*
3. Recommend to the team that it establish a set of norms:
 - To ensure that all individuals have the opportunity to contribute in the meeting;
 - To increase productivity and effectiveness; and
 - To facilitate the achievement of its goals.
4. Place a pad of sticky notes on the table and give every person the same kind of writing tool. Ensure that all sticky notes are the same color.
5. Ask each person to reflect on and record behaviors they consider ideal behaviors for a group. Ask them to write one idea on each sticky note. *Time: 10 minutes.*
6. Invite the team members to place their ideas on the charts at the front of the room. Ask them to refrain from discussion while doing so.
7. Read each norm that has been suggested. Allow time for group members to discuss each idea. As each recommended norm is read aloud, ask the group to determine if it is similar to another idea that already has been expressed. Sticky notes with similar ideas should be grouped together. *Time: 30-45 minutes.*
8. When all of the sticky notes have been organized, assign two individuals to work together to write the norms suggested under each heading. In some cases, there may be only one norm; in others, there could be several. Use the worksheet on Page 5 to record these norms. *Time: 30 minutes.*

**SAMPLE
NORMS**

We agree to...

FEEL responsible to express differing opinions within the meeting.

MAINTAIN confidentiality regarding disagreements expressed during the meeting.

REACH decisions by consensus.

LISTEN respectfully to all ideas.

CONDUCT group business in front of the group.

CONDUCT personal business outside of the meeting.

SILENCE all cell phones during meetings.

AVOID checking for or sending text messages or e-mail messages during meetings.

AVOID personal grooming (brushing hair, applying makeup, cleaning fingernails) during meetings.

9. Read each of the proposed norms aloud to the group. Determine whether the group can support the norms before the group adopts them. You could ask for a thumbs up to indicate support or find another way for each team member to indicate to the team his or her willingness to abide by these ground rules. *Time: 30 minutes.*
10. When the team agrees that it will abide by this norm, the facilitator writes the norm on a new sheet of chart paper with the label “_____ Team Norms.” Leave that poster in the team’s meeting room for future meetings.
11. The facilitator should also transcribe the norms onto an 8½-by-11 sheet of paper and make copies to distribute to all team members.
12. The facilitator should review the meeting norms at the beginning of each meeting to ensure that participants are regularly reminded about the agreements they have made to each other.

Creating norms

When establishing norms, consider:

TIME

- When do we meet?
- Will we set a beginning and ending time?
- Will we start and end on time?

Proposed norms:

LISTENING

- How will we encourage listening?
- How will we discourage interrupting?

Proposed norms:

CONFIDENTIALITY

- Will the meetings be open?
- Will what we say in the meeting be held in confidence?
- What can be said after the meeting?

Proposed norms:

DECISION MAKING

- How will we make decisions?
- Are we an advisory or a decision-making body?
- Will we reach decisions by consensus?
- How will we deal with conflicts?

Proposed norms:

PARTICIPATION

- How will we encourage everyone’s participation?
- Will we have an attendance policy?

Proposed norms:

EXPECTATIONS

- What do we expect from members?
- Are there requirements for participation?

Proposed norms:

Pulling together: Principals can empower teams of teachers

Continued from p. 1

To better understand the facilitator role, Weaver and Farrell contrast the roles of leader and manager. (See chart on Page 7.)

Facilitators help teams achieve their goals and accomplish their tasks. They clarify the team's purpose, provide resources for the work at hand, and laud the team's accomplishments along the way.

TEAMBUILDING ACTIVITIES

Teambuilding activities provide a structure for the team's development. A key to teambuilding is selecting activities appropriate for the needs of team members, stages of team development, and the school culture. Here are teambuilding activities that can accomplish this:

Create a team "charter." Spend the first team meeting creating a one-page document that "charters" the team and specifies its purpose, describes how the team will function, and determines how and when team members will assess how well the team is functioning. You could call the charter a "Declaration of *Interdependence*" or another name that brings meaning to the concept of teaming.

Create meeting norms. A short list of meeting behaviors should be posted or regularly listed on written agendas. To develop such meeting norms in a safe and humorous manner, spend 20 minutes of the first or second meeting having two people role-play "miserable meetings" and then have the team decide what norms would prevent this type of meeting. (See Pages 4 and 5 for another option for creating team norms.)

Recognize diverse team member roles. Team members will serve different roles as contributors (task-oriented), collaborators (willing to pitch in), communicators (process-oriented), and challengers (questioning and encouraging risks) (Parker, 1990). One effective strategy to use for this is the Six Hats Thinking Process (De Bono, 1985). Team members wear and switch one of six colorful and symbolic "hats" for comprehensively devising and discussing goals and actions:

- White is for information known or needed.
- Yellow symbolizes optimism and the positives.

- Black is for judgment, why something may not work.
- Red signifies feelings, hunches, and intuition.
- Green focuses on possibilities and new ideas.
- Blue is used to manage the thinking process.

Teams that use this process begin to look at decisions by wearing all of these hats.

Observe and assess meetings. Effective teams assess their own processes. Assigning a team member to provide feedback on team process at the conclusion of each meeting focuses the group on living out its charter and team norms of behavior. The feedback can include such things as the balance of communication within the meeting, the attention to each task on the agenda, the ability to "parking lot" or curb distracters from the agenda, the overall meeting climate, and other aspects described in the charter and team norms. Feedback should be provided and accepted by the team without discussion. Rotating this important observer role for each meeting builds the skills of each member in recognizing effective team processes.

REFLECTION SKILLS

Another key to teambuilding is to reflect individually and debrief collectively regarding each teambuilding strategy. Reflection and team debriefing builds the capacity for organizational learning, a concept paramount to school improvement. As you facilitate the team's work:

- **Allow time for reflection and debriefing.** Allow enough time at each meeting for thoughtful consideration, but not too much time to discuss sub-issues. Put discussion items that emerge on the next meeting's agenda. Debriefing is for group reflection, not action.
- **Consider introverted and extroverted personalities.** Some team members will prefer individual reflection and others will prefer group debriefing; encourage both. Three common individual reflection or team debriefing questions use shapes to launch each team member's thinking: What "squares" with my thinking? What's still rolling around (circle) in my mind?

Continued on p. 7

Facilitators help teams achieve their goals and accomplish their tasks. They clarify the team's purpose, provide resources for the work at hand, and laud the team's accomplishments along the way.

Cheryl Gray is coordinator of the Leadership Curriculum Development and Training, Southern Regional Education Board in Atlanta, Ga. You can contact her by e-mail at cheryl.gray@sreb.org.

LEADER	MANAGER	FACILITATOR
Concerned with doing the right thing.	Concerned with doing things right.	Concerned with helping people do things.
Takes the long-term view.	Takes the short-term view.	Helps people find a view and articulate it.
Concentrates on what and why.	Concentrates on how.	Helps people concentrate and be clear on the here and now.
Thinks in terms of innovations, development, and the future.	Thinks in terms of administration, maintenance, and the present.	Helps people think, and helps them communicate their thoughts.
Sets the vision: the tone and direction.	Sets the plan: the pace.	Helps people make meaning of tone and direction, and to function well at the required pace.
Hopes others will respond and follow.	Hopes others will complete their tasks.	Hopes others will engage in the process.
Appeals to hopes and dreams.	Monitors boundaries and defines limits.	Helps others make meaning of hopes and dreams; pushes appropriately on boundaries.
Expects others to help realize a vision.	Expects others to fulfill their mission or purpose.	Helps others articulate a shared vision and common mission or purpose.
Inspires innovation.	Inspires stability.	Helps people respond to things that are new and things that remain the same.

Source: Weaver & Farrell.

Continued from p. 6

What do we need to change (triangle for delta)?

- **Don't avoid tough issues.** If team members only focus the debriefing on the niceties, they are not engaged in hard work and do not have a trusting climate. If tough issues emerge, focus on the issue and not the persons involved. Paraphrase and ask clarifying questions to get to the essence of the concern. Encourage a balance of problem identifying and problem solving by putting the issue on the next meeting's agenda for resolution. Emphasize learning together, even through failures, mistakes, and miscommunication. Be an example — inside and outside of the

meeting — of listening, learning, and leading through conflict.

Team learning occurs through selecting the right teambuilding activities and then reflecting and debriefing on each. Yet effective teambuilding alone is no replacement for the goal and actions of the team in changing school and classroom practices. By incorporating the role of facilitator alongside their roles as leaders and managers, principals can help teams achieve goals and accomplish more on behalf of improving student learning.

*Adapted with permission from **Leadership Compass**, Summer 2006. ■*

REFERENCES

- De Bono, E. (1985).** *Six thinking hats*. Boston: Little Brown.
- Parker, G. (1990).** *Team players and teamwork: The new competitive business strategy*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Weaver, R. & J. Farrell. (1997).** *Managers as facilitators: A practical guide to getting work done in a changing workplace*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.

ISSN 0276-928X

The Learning Principal is published eight times a year by the National Staff Development Council, 5995 Fairfield Road, #4, Oxford, OH 45056, for \$49 of each membership. Periodicals postage paid at Wheelersburg, OH 45694.

© Copyright, National Staff Development Council, 2006. All rights reserved.

NSDC STAFF

Executive director

Dennis Sparks
dennis.sparks@nsdc.org

Deputy executive director

Stephanie Hirsh
stephanie.hirsh@nsdc.org

Director of publications

Joan Richardson
joan.richardson@nsdc.org

Director of special projects

Joellen Killion
joellen.killion@nsdc.org

Director of business services

Leslie Miller
leslie.miller@nsdc.org

Editor

Joan Richardson

Designer

Sue Chevalier

MAIN BUSINESS OFFICE

5995 Fairfield Road, #4
Oxford OH 45056
513-523-6029
800-727-7288
513-523-0638 (fax)
E-mail: NSDCoffice@nsdc.org
Web site: www.nsdco.org

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

William Sommers,
president (2007)
Deborah Childs-Bowen,
past president (2006)
Sydnee Dickson (2008)
Karen Dyer (2007)
Sharon Jackson (2006)
Charles Mason (2007)
Sue McAdamis,
president-elect (2008)
Sue Showers (2008)

COPYING/REPRINT POLICY

Please see www.nsdco.org/library/publications/permpolicy.cfm for details and a form to submit a request.

BACK COPIES

Back copies of *The Learning Principal* are available for \$3 per copy. Member and bulk discounts apply. To order, contact NSDC's main business office.

Postmaster: Send address changes to the National Staff Development Council, 5995 Fairfield Road, #4, Oxford, OH 45056.

Check out NSDC publications in the members-only library

As an NSDC member, you can access this issue of *The Learning Principal* and all other NSDC publications in the members-only library whenever you need them.

Every issue of *The Learning System*, *The Learning Principal*, *Tools for Schools*, *Teachers Teaching Teachers*, and *JSD* is available as a PDF file for any NSDC member. You must be an NSDC member in order to access all of our publications online at no additional charge.

Files are posted as soon as the publications are mailed, which means that you can access them even before they arrive in your mailboxes.

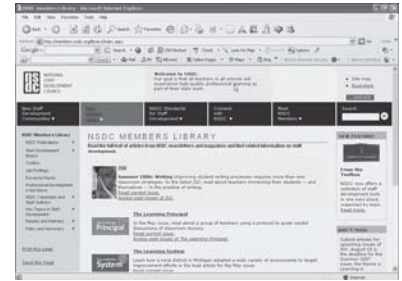
Here's how you find current and past issues of our publications:

1. Log into the members-only area of the NSDC web site by visiting members.nsdco.org or follow the "sign in" link in the upper right corner of www.nsdco.org. You need your membership number, which appears on the mailing label of this newsletter, and the password (learning). If you are logging in for the first time, you will have the option to personalize your password.

2. Click on the NSDC Members Library at the top of the page. That will open the library page. You will see the nameplates for each of the NSDC publications. You can click to access the current issue or choose the option to access past issues of each publication.

3. Select the search function in the upper right part of that page to search all of the publications for a specific author or topic.

If you have ideas for other features that would improve this area of our web site, please e-mail web editor Tracy Crow, tracy.crow@nsdc.org.



NATIONAL STAFF DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

Member Services

5995 Fairfield Road, #4

Oxford, OH 45056

Membership info: 800-727-7288

Periodicals
Postage
PAID
at
Wheelersburg, OH
45694