The authority on professional learning

# JSD

APRIL 2010, VOLUME 31, NO. 2

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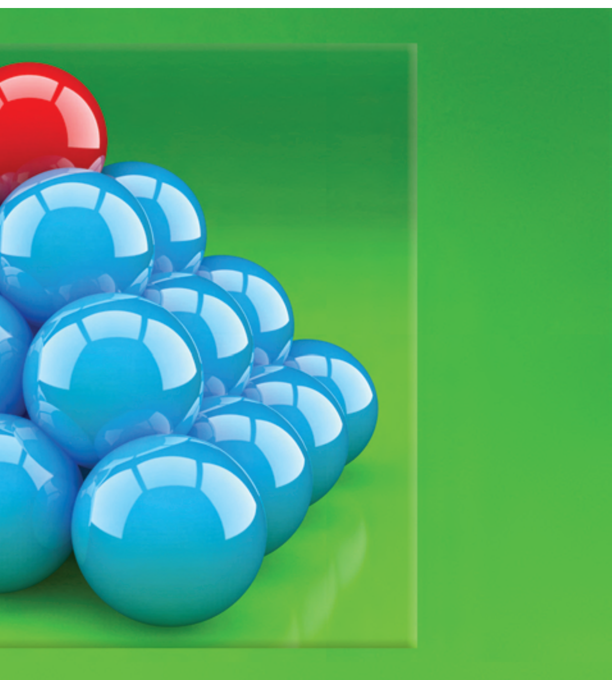
**←Massachusetts state capitol building in Boston, the State House.**



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# Let's shift our expectations of school leaders

In 1902, principal George E. Atwood of the Liberty Street School in Newburgh, N.Y., writes in an annual report to the local board of education:

"It gives me pleasure to say that the teachers of the several classes have pursued their work with interest and energy, and the results have therefore been reasonably satisfactory. We do not mean to assert that we have reached our ideal or that we consider our work perfect. Our ideal is a perfect human being, one who has developed intellectual and moral power" (Newburgh, N.Y., Board of Education, 1902).

In their reports, Atwood and his colleagues at other buildings share details of the curriculum and where teachers and students succeeded and struggled, the number of books in the library, how illness affected their buildings, and how class size was sometimes a challenge. We see the beginnings of the principal as building administrator, but with most energy focused on student learning.

Jump ahead 20 years, and in the fifth yearbook of the National Association of Secondary School Principals (documenting remarks at NASSP's annual meeting), Ray H. Bracewell, principal at Burlington High School in Burlington, Iowa, notes:

"In my judgment, the biggest problem facing the principal of a high school of five hundred or more students is to decide whether he shall carry out an efficient administration at the expense of supervision or whether he shall neglect the work of administration in order to find time to do the work of a supervisory nature that needs to be done. It is certain that he cannot do both with the amount of assistance that is regularly granted him."

By supervision, Bracewell means the work of keeping in "close touch with the work of each teacher in his school, to contribute materially to the work of outlining various courses offered in the school, and finally to assist his teachers to improve their methods of instruction."

Move forward in time again to the principals we had as young students, when we formed our first image of what a principal was. Many of us share a picture of the principal as disciplinarian, whether kindly or strict. If we gave any thought to what the principal did for the teacher, perhaps we imagined a supervisor who supported the aims of the classroom without much interference.

Now each of you as readers has a very specific image of the principal today and in the last several years, formed in the school or district as your workplace. Many of you are school leaders, and you've worked to make the job your own, informed by those who came before you and the demands you feel each day to support teachers and students. How has your view of the school leader changed?

The research and knowledge resulting from the long-term commitment of The Wallace Foundation, sponsors of this issue of *JSD*, light the way to a new vision for the school leader. We know more now than ever before about the policies, strategies, and conditions that support the school leader who prioritizes teaching and learning. Changing all of those elements is both possible and difficult. As we do so, however, let's first change our minds. Let's shift our expectations away from the disciplinarian and the business manager and remember that the first principals were head teachers.

•

**Tracy Crow (tracy.crow@nsdc.org) is associate director of publications of the National Staff Development Council.**

### REFERENCES

**National Association of Secondary School Principals. (1921).** *Fifth yearbook of the National Association of Secondary School Principals*, pp. 38-39. Available online at http://snipurl.com/vgfjy.

**Newburgh, N.Y., Board of Education. (1902).** *Annual report.* Newburgh, N.Y.: Author, p. 43. Available online at http://snipurl.com/vgfd3.

**Focus on leadership**

The Wallace Foundation has engaged in a decade-long commitment to study and improve the quality of leadership in schools. The reports included here highlight selected results of those efforts.

## TIME MANAGEMENT

**"Evaluation of the School Administration Manager Project"**
*Policy Studies Associates, December 2009*

Acknowledging that time-consuming management and administrative responsibilities can detract from principals' ability to perform a valuable instructional leadership role, the School Administration Manager (SAM) project encourages principals to increase the time they spend interacting with teachers and students by delegating noninstructional tasks to existing or new staff members. An assessment of the project two years into its implementation found a significant increase in the amount of time participating principals were able to devote to instruction-related tasks. This report explores how they did it and identifies recommendations for future SAM innovations.
**www.wallacefoundation.org/KnowledgeCenter/KnowledgeTopics/CurrentAreasofFocus/EducationLeadership/Pages/evaluation-of-the-school-administration-manager-project.aspx**

## LEARNING-FOCUSED LEADERSHIP

**"Leadership for learning improvement in urban schools"**
*The University of Washington's Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy, October 2009*

What do education leaders need to foster effective learning for all students? This question is behind a study of leadership in four urban districts. Researchers looked at the roles of supervisory and nonsupervisory leaders, considering what it means to work in a challenging school environment and what principals, department heads, and teacher leaders face daily. Researchers outline reasons the learning-focused leadership is succeeding in these schools and offer lessons that can be translated to other schools.
**www.wallacefoundation.org/KnowledgeCenter/KnowledgeTopics/CurrentAreasofFocus/EducationLeadership/Pages/Leadership-for-Learning-Improvement-in-Urban-Schools.aspx**

## STAFFING RESOURCES

**"How leaders invest staffing resources for learning improvement"**
*The University of Washington's Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy, October 2009*

This report acknowledges the issues surrounding teacher recruiting, retention, and support, particularly for the traditionally high proportions of new teachers in challenging schools and districts. The researchers focused on what it means to invest staffing resources, considering how the districts in the study developed investment frameworks and then used those frameworks to guide their allocation decisions.
**www.wallacefoundation.org/KnowledgeCenter/KnowledgeTopics/CurrentAreasofFocus/EducationLeadership/Pages/How-Leaders-Invest-Staffing-Resources-for-Learning-Improvement.aspx**

## POLICY LESSONS

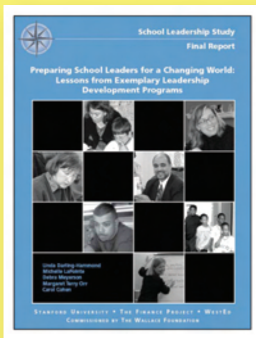
**"Research findings to support effective educational policymaking: Evidence & action steps for state, district, and local policymakers"**
*The staff of The Wallace Foundation, September 2009*

The Wallace Foundation has accumulated a body of knowledge and field-based lessons that are highly relevant for developing comprehensive approaches to achieving federal reform objectives. This report highlights research findings and action steps drawn from policies and practices shown to be critical to the success of educational reforms at the local, district, and state levels.
**www.wallacefoundation.org/KnowledgeCenter/KnowledgeTopics/CurrentAreasofFocus/EducationLeadership/Pages/Research-to-Support-Effective-Educational-Policymaking-for-State-District-Local-Policymakers.aspx**

### PRINCIPALS SET AN EXAMPLE

**"The New York City Aspiring Principals Program: A school-level evaluation"**
*New York University's Institute for Education and Social Policy, July 2009*

In 2003, the New York City Department of Education created the New York City Leadership Academy to recruit, train, and support principals, emphasizing the skills and ideas needed to work in schools with high rates of student poverty and staff turnover and low rates of student achievement. This report follows graduates of the Leadership Academy's Aspiring Principals Program (APP) and draws comparisons between APP and non-APP principals. After three years, student achievement in schools led by APP graduates had significantly improved in both English language arts and mathematics, even passing their non-APP counterparts in language arts.
**www.wallacefoundation.org/KnowledgeCenter/KnowledgeTopics/CurrentAreasofFocus/EducationLeadership/Pages/The-New-York-City-Aspiring-Principals-Program-A-School-Level-Evaluation.aspx**




### PRINCIPAL PREPARATION

**"Preparing school leaders for a changing world: Lessons from exemplary leadership development programs"**
*Linda Darling-Hammond, Michelle LaPointe, Debra Meyerson, and Margaret Orr, 2007*

For years, the training and ongoing professional development of school principals have been criticized as inadequate for the demands of their jobs. This report by Stanford and Finance Project researchers fills a major knowledge gap with case studies of eight effective programs that document the key characteristics of high-quality school leadership training. Among the lessons learned: Careful screening of potential principals makes a difference as do the thoughtful structuring of an integrated internship experience and a cohort of peers.
**www.wallacefoundation.org/KnowledgeCenter/KnowledgeTopics/CurrentAreasofFocus/EducationLeadership/Pages/preparing-school-leader.aspx**

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**HOW TO GET IN TOUCH**

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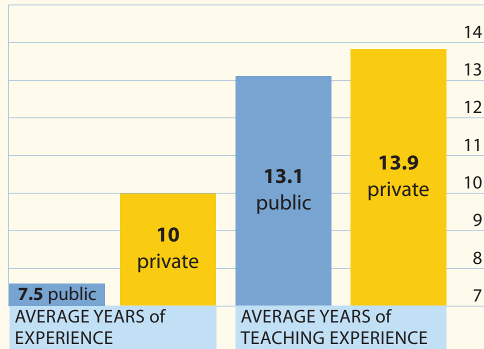
## Data sheet

### Principals, by the numbers

Number in public and private elementary and secondary schools (2007-08)

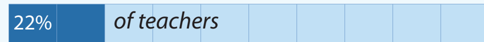
TOTAL 118,430



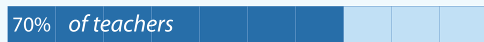

**Source:** *Digest of Education Statistics, 2009.* U.S. Department of Education, April 2010.

### Teacher perspectives

Principal observation and review of teacher performance is very accurate.




Principal observation and review of teacher performance is somewhat accurate.




**Source:** *Primary sources: America's teachers on America's schools.* Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2010.

### Working together

I believe that greater collaboration among teachers and school leaders would have a major impact on improving student achievement.

I believe that, ultimately, the principal should be held accountable for everything that happens to the children in his or her school.

**Source:** *The MetLife survey of the American teacher: Collaborating for student success.* MetLife, 2010.

## IN THIS ISSUE OF *JSD* THE LEARNING STARTS HERE

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| • HOW POLICY affects leadership | 18, 30 |
| • THE ROLE of data in instructional leadership | 10, 38 |
| • PRIORITIZING time use | 40 |
| • ALIGNMENT of practices to boost leadership | 30, 36 |
| • The conditions that support instructional leadership | 10, 24 |

KEEP UP with the latest research at
**www.wallacefoundation.org/KnowledgeCenter/**

The Wallace Foundation's Knowledge Center is one stop for finding research and tools from their funded projects. Topics include not only educational leadership but also out-of-school time learning and arts participation and education.

"We view educational leadership as the responsible exercise of influence by multiple actors who impart purpose to the school and mobilize effort toward fulfilling that purpose. Leadership inevitably implicates a range of activities, roles, commitments, and material and social resources, and it is best understood as collective work. If there is heroism in this work, it lies less in the actions of charismatic individuals (e.g. a turnaround principal) and more in the sustained engagement of multiple people around a shared learning improvement agenda."

**Source:** *Leadership for learning improvement in urban schools.* Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy, 2009.

PREVIEW THE ONLINE

## JSD Professional Learning Guide

With each issue of *JSD*, NSDC publishes an online companion to the magazine to facilitate the use of *JSD* articles with school faculties, teams, district staff, or other groups of education stakeholders.

While the online guide will give in-depth questions and reflections for the entire issue, here a few questions on selected pieces to start you off on considering how to expand and share your learning.

Download the entire guide at **www.nsdc.org/news/jsd/**

**Urban renewal:** PAGE 24

- How could the instructional improvement goals in my school or district be made absolutely crystal clear? Can I sum up our highest-priority instructional goal in a quick sentence?
- How has the leadership work in my school or district shifted to place an emphasis on instructional improvement? What one or two key actions would begin to or continue to transform the school leader's work?

**Data present a clear picture of time spent on instructional tasks:** PAGE 40

- What steps could our school or district take to increase the percentage of time the principal spends on instruction?
- How can our schools support the culture change that happens when principals shift their priorities toward instruction?

**3 steps lead to differentiation:** PAGE 44

- What supports do we need in our school or district to increase the differentiation of learning for our teachers?
- How could my school or district adapt this differentiation model, with or without the support of coaches?

**Use a systematic approach for deconstructing and reframing deficit thinking:** PAGE 55

- Who in our school or district has the capacity to skillfully facilitate discussions about cultural proficiency? How can we increase their capacity?
- Are there times I should question the appropriateness of some of the words I hear in discussions about our students and community? What should I be saying when I hear such language?

## Tip *of the* tongue

Simple explanations of a few commonly used concepts in this issue of *JSD*.

**Cohesive leadership systems:** An aligned set of leadership actions and policies from the state level to the school building level.

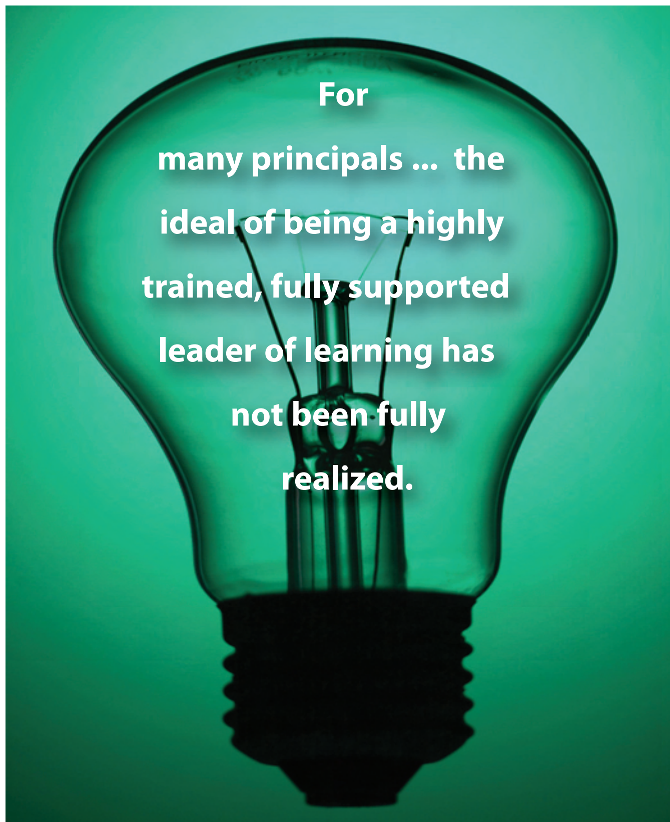
**ISLLC standards**: The Interstate School Licensure Leadership Consortium Standards for School Leaders, first developed in 1996, guide and inform leadership policies and practices in many states and districts. The standards were updated in 2008 to reflect the latest knowledge in this field. The standards are published by the Council of Chief State School Officers and created by a coalition of leadership associations.

**Instructional leadership:** Leadership at any level that places teaching and learning at the center of all school and district efforts.

**Licensure policies:** Each state requires that school leaders meet a set of requirements to ensure they have the skills to do their jobs. Policies vary widely from place to place in purpose, alignment to outcomes desired in schools, and role in leadership development.

**School Administration Manager (SAM):** A Wallace-funded project designed to help principals delegate some of their administrative and managerial tasks and spend more time interacting with teachers, students, and others on instructional matters. Schools often designate a person to serve as a SAM to take on administrative tasks.

**School leader:** Though this most frequently refers to the principal, many school-based staff members fulfill school leadership roles, whether they are assistant principals, instructional coaches, teachers, or others.


For
many principals ... the
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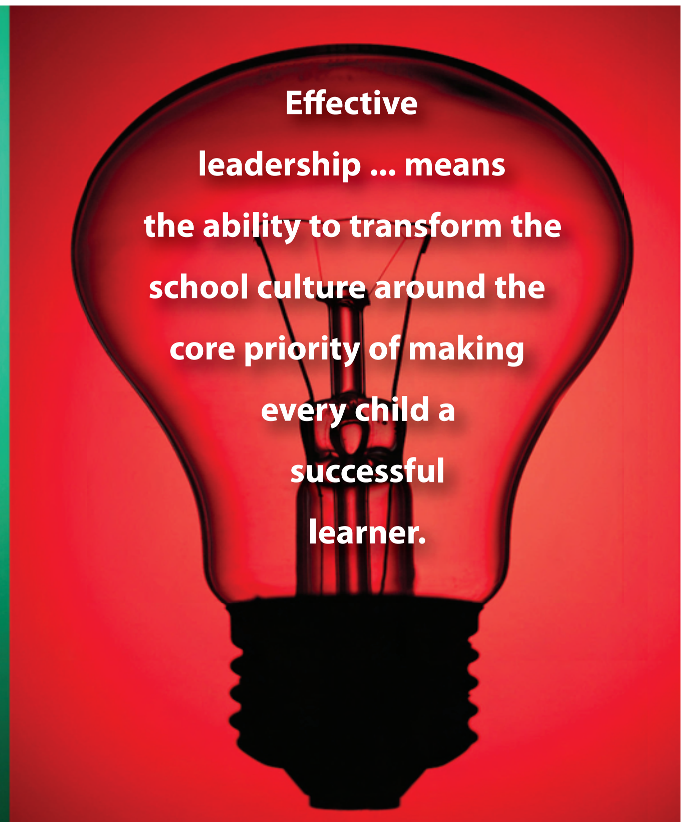
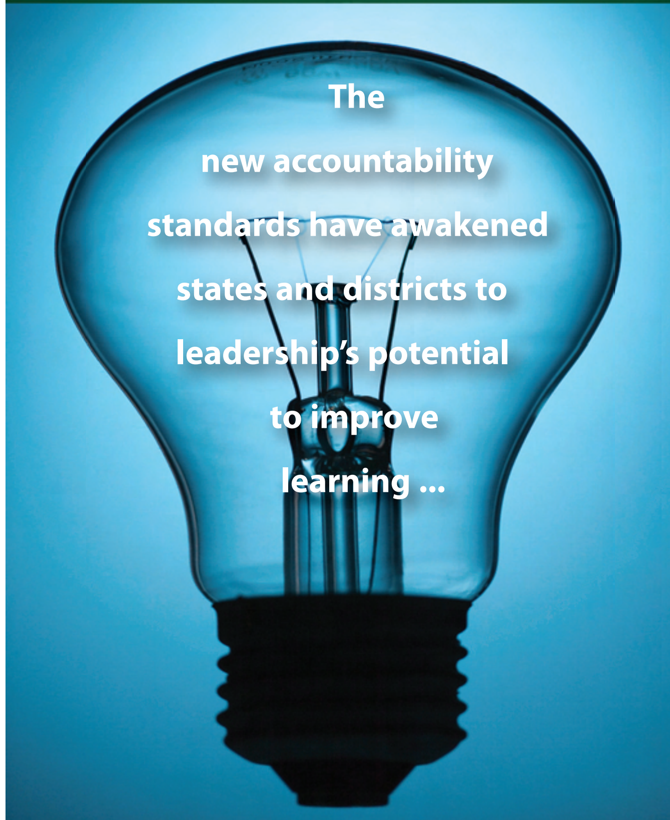

Effective
leadership ... means
the ability to transform the
school culture around the
core priority of making
every child a
successful
learner.


The
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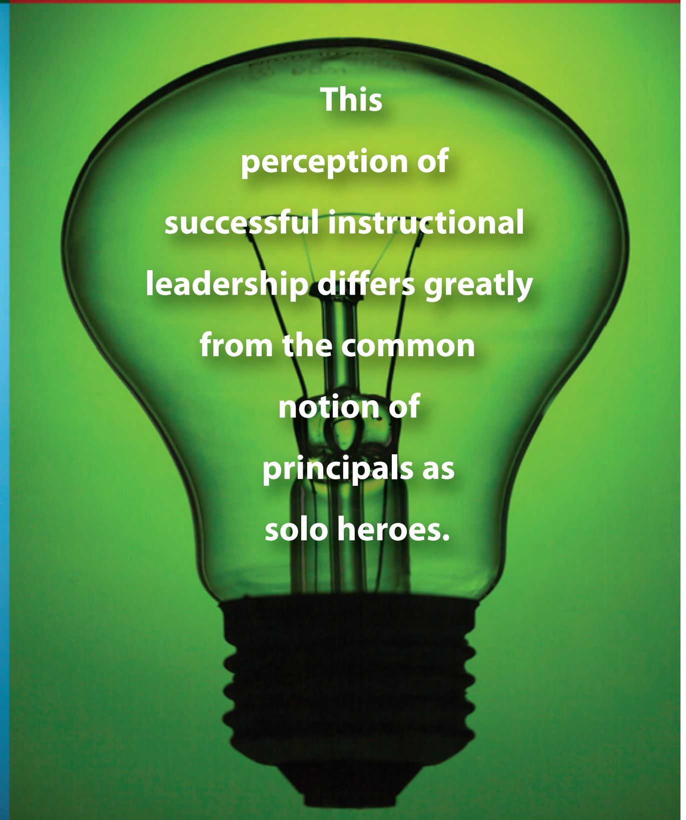
to improve
learning ...


This
perception of
successful instructional
leadership differs greatly
from the common
notion of
principals as
solo heroes.

# REIMAGINING THE JOB OF LEADING SCHOOLS

Lessons from a 10-year journey

**By the staff of The Wallace Foundation**

Quality leadership is a must in any important human pursuit, and education is no exception. While teachers have the most direct and obvious impact on student learning, the school leader is in the best position to ensure that excellent teaching and learning aren't limited to single classrooms but spread throughout entire schools. Indeed, research finds few documented cases of turning around a failing school absent the strong hand of a qualified leader. Improving leadership, then, holds particular promise as an effective way for states and districts to help better the fortunes of the nation's most underserved students.

Those are the facts and convictions at the heart of a decade-long commitment by The Wallace Foundation to work with states and urban districts across the country to change the lives of education leaders so that they, in turn, are better able to lift the educational fortunes of every student in every school in America.

To translate that ideal into practice, however, we believed at the onset that at least two related challenges had to be addressed. First, the field needed to know more about what constitutes good leadership, how to train for it, and how to support it on the job. Ten years later, we have much clearer answers to those basic questions, and we also have examples of places that are actively putting solutions into practice from which others can learn.

The second challenge was to supply the necessary proof to persuade state and district leaders that improving school leadership deserved significant, sustained attention and investment. If meaningful change were to occur, it could no longer be secondary to other reform priorities. There, too, we've seen real progress in the last decade. Not only have states and districts taken serious steps to improve training and support of school leaders, but U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan has been a vocal champion for ensuring that principals take their rightful and long-neglected place as central players in turning around the nation's most troubled schools.

Yet the truth remains that, for many principals — especially in the most disadvantaged school systems — the ideal of being a highly trained, fully supported leader of learning has not been fully realized. More often, school leaders spend much of their days disconnected from the core business of better learning. Consider the frustration of one elementary principal in Kentucky we met a few years ago. Before the start of each school year,

he told us, he would picture himself visiting every classroom in his school daily. He'd sit with teachers, one-on-one, and help them improve their performance. He'd work with teacher teams to hear their thinking and share authority for improving learning schoolwide. In short, he imagined himself as a real leader of learning. Then reality would hit each September, with a daily stream of administrative or disciplinary duties, scores of e-mails to answer, urgent phone calls, and unscheduled visits by parents.

The passage of the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 shortly after we began this work created a nationwide sense of urgency by exposing how students everywhere are performing and by providing tough sanctions on schools that continue to fail in helping each child to be successful. The new accountability standards have awakened states and districts to leadership's potential to improve learning and fueled demand for evidence and practical lessons about leadership, its potential, and how best to train and support leaders.

Those lessons can be grouped under four ideas:

1. The job of leading schools needs to change fundamentally.
2. Leadership training must change to correspond with this new definition of good leadership.
3. School leadership requires conditions that will allow leaders to drive better teaching and learning throughout their schools.
4. States and districts need to collaborate closely to ensure that policies and practices at all levels of the school system are aligned with supporting principals as effective leaders of learning.

**The job of leading schools needs to change fundamentally.**

An extensive body of research has settled the bedrock question: Leadership does count in improving learning. In fact, it is "second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn in school." Furthermore, there are few cases where schools have significantly improved without a skilled principal's guiding hand (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004).

Realizing leadership's full potential to jump-start learning requires very different thinking about what principals should do. Effective leadership, especially in the most disadvantaged schools, means the ability to transform the school culture around the core priority of making every child a successful learner. It means that principals need to get out of their offices and spend more time each week in classrooms to observe and knowledgeably comment on what is and isn't working. In addition, a newly published examination of effective urban leadership concludes that principals need to set a schoolwide vision for learning success by all students, and then share responsibility with all adults in the school for realizing that vision (Portin, et al., 2009).

This perception of successful instructional leadership differs greatly from the common notion of principals as solo heroes. There is mounting evidence that if school leaders are to spread teaching and learning excellence beyond isolated classrooms, they need to create high-functioning instructional teams and distribute authority among staff members in the school building (including teacher leaders) to realize that vision, and then provide support to help others exercise their shared responsibility for improved learning (Portin, et al., 2009).

**Leadership training must change to correspond with this new definition of good leadership.**

If the duties and responsibilities of leadership need to change fundamentally, it follows that the preparation aspiring school leaders receive needs a similar overhaul. University-based leadership programs that train the majority of future principals have been called "the weakest programs in the nation's education schools" (Levine, 2005). These programs have been criticized as being indiscriminate in whom they admit, unresponsive to the current needs and realities of districts, and misdirected in their lack of emphasis on instructional improvement or transformational leadership. Some critics doubt that these programs will improve significantly without powerful prodding from states or districts or both (see Fry, O'Neill, & Bottoms, 2006).

The good news is that the past decade has witnessed significant activity in a number of states and districts aimed at raising the quality of leadership training. Since 2005, more than 200 university-based leadership programs in 16 Wallace-funded states have either been forced by the state to redesign their programs to align with standards and effective training practices or shut down for failing to do so.

More districts are also discovering their own consumer power to influence the training of the school leaders they will eventually hire. New York City is among a growing number of districts that have opened leadership academies to prepare leaders capable of turning around the toughest schools. A study by the Education Development Center describes how some districts are becoming more discerning customers by being more selective in hiring program graduates (for example, Chicago; Ft. Wayne, Ind.; and Louisville, Ky.); using contracts and other inducements to influence universities to improve their selection criteria or program content (Louisville; St. Louis, Mo.; Chicago and Springfield, Ill.); or becoming competitive with universities by starting up their own district-level preparation programs (New York City; Providence, R.I.; Ft. Wayne, Ind.; Springfield and Boston, Mass.) (King, LaPointe, & Orr, 2009).

To guide these reform efforts, we also have solid evidence about how best to train new leaders who can transform schools and improve teaching and learning. A report by Stanford researchers identified a number of effective training practices based

on an examination of nine exemplary preservice and inservice programs. They include: a standards-based, coherent curriculum emphasizing instructional and transformative leadership; instruction that integrates theory and practice; knowledgeable faculty, including experienced practitioners; more selective admissions and recruitment policies; and well-designed supervised internships (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr, & Cohen, 2007).

Finally, about half of the nation's states and many districts have abandoned their sink-or-swim attitudes toward novice principals and now provide mentoring for one year or more. New York City has been a standout in this growing trend. The NYC Leadership Academy, opened in 2003 with Wallace funding, has provided such support to more than 800 new principals. More recently, that mentoring has been made available on a voluntary basis up through the fourth year on the job.

**School leadership requires conditions that will allow leaders to drive better teaching and learning throughout their schools.**

Even the best-trained principals won't succeed or survive for long unless states and districts pay serious attention to the conditions that support or stand in the way of these leaders. Among those where Wallace and its partners have developed significant new knowledge are:

- Useful, timely data to inform decision making;
- Leader performance assessments that accurately measure and reinforce what matters most; and
- More time for leaders to focus on instruction.

Over the last decade, many states within and beyond the Wallace network have adopted laws and policies to address those needs. But translating laws and policies into practice has proven difficult because doing so often involves reallocating scarce time or money, revising contracts, shifting people or their roles, or changing cherished behaviors or customs.

## DATA, DATA EVERYWHERE

On the desk of Benton Harbor (Mich.) elementary principal Ericka Harris-Robinson sat a foot-thick state report called the "Golden Book." It told her how every student in grades 3 to 6 performed on every question on the Michigan Educational Assessment Program. But it contained no guidance on how to interpret or make use of that data to improve the teaching of her mostly disadvantaged students. "It does you no good to just get numbers. You need to get information," she said (Colvin, 2007).

States and districts churn out loads of education data. But it often isn't the right data, delivered in useful, timely forms, needed to help district and school leaders diagnose and address learning problems. And, too often, leaders or others in the school lack the analytic skills to make sense of the information and construct solution-oriented conversations around the data they have.

This is starting to change. An analysis by University of Washington researchers finds that urban districts, including Atlanta, New York City, Portland, and Eugene, Ore., are increasingly investing in new data systems, in data literacy for school staff, and in generating new forms of data (for example, regular surveys of principals or other school-level staff concerning district support). These investments, the report concludes, will enable school administrators to "drill down to individual students and track progress toward one or more district-defined learning targets" (Plecki, et al., 2009).

Numerous states have recently enacted laws to put in place data systems and warehouses to provide school leaders with the right information, in usable forms, to guide decisions on resource allocation, improving teacher quality, and increasing student achievement. Some states have begun providing local districts with guidance and expert help in using state-generated data to diagnose learning problems and monitor student progress. New Mexico, for example, is helping local districts use such tools as pivot tables to enable them to extract information about individual student performance by grade, subject matter, or particular teachers from raw data (Feemster, 2007).

## ASSESSING LEADER PERFORMANCE

The way that states and districts measure the performance of school leaders could influence how the jobs are reshaped. Effective assessment processes can identify and reinforce the most effective leader behaviors, pinpoint individual weaknesses, and help districts tailor professional development and other support to correct them. Unfortunately, education has been slower than many other fields in developing such leader assessment processes.

This, too, is changing. For the first time, an education leader assessment called VAL-ED meets those quality criteria. Created by researchers from Vanderbilt University and the University of Pennsylvania with Wallace's support, the system was tested in a number of Wallace-funded states and districts and marketed for broad use in 2008. The results found that VAL-ED has "excellent reliability, strong validity, initial national norms for reporting percentile ranks, and performance standards to identify 'distinguished,' 'proficient,' 'basic,' and 'below basic' principals" (Porter, et al., 2008). Delaware, Kentucky, Iowa, and Ohio are at varying stages of developing and implementing their own leader assessments that aim at similar purposes.

## THE GIFT OF TIME

Most school principals struggle to focus more time on instructional matters. The average principal spends a third or less of his or her time each day on matters directly related to teaching and learning, studies indicate. One potential remedy pioneered in Louisville with Wallace's backing provides schools with an additional administrator, known as a School Administration Manager (SAM). The SAM's job is to relieve principals of rou-

tine administrative chores such as checking bus schedules, managing school facilities, or supervising discipline so that principals can concentrate more time on improving teaching and learning. More than 300 schools in nine state or district sites have participated in the SAM project since 2005. While it's early to judge the full value of having a SAM, an independent evaluation of the project found that after one year, principals were spending an average of about an hour more per day on instruction, including more classroom observations and more opportunities to provide feedback to teachers (Turnbull, et al., 2009).

Experience has also taught that changing principals' priorities doesn't automatically happen by adding a new administrator. The SAM project found that principals generally need help in dropping comfortable administrative routines and shifting more time and attention toward instructional improvement. A key feature of the SAM project is a time-tracking tool that allows principals to chart how much time they are spending each week on instruction. Armed with that information, coaches can then work with principals to help them change their priorities.

**States and districts need to collaborate closely to ensure that policies and practices at all levels of the school system are aligned with supporting principals as effective leaders of learning.**

A well-coordinated, supportive leadership system with the ultimate aim of better student achievement begins with a shared vision at the state, district, and school level of what good leadership is. That vision is then captured in statewide leadership standards. Almost all states have now adopted such standards. States then need to bring those standards to life by ensuring that leadership training provided by universities and others are aligned to those standards, as are certification and licensure, as well as the data they provide to districts. Districts, for their part, need to enforce basic expectations for their leaders through incentives and performance assessments. They need to collaborate with local universities to ensure the relevance of leadership training. They need to provide mentoring and other professional development to new and veteran principals, and set hiring, evaluation, and succession policies. They should also provide leaders with the authority to allocate people, money, and other resources to where they're most needed to improve learning.

When, by contrast, state and district policies affecting leaders are out of synch or poorly connected to the core goal of better teaching and learning, the results can seriously undermine the effectiveness of training and professional development leaders receive, and working conditions that affect their daily lives, to the detriment of their ability to function as leaders of learning.

Recent efforts by states and districts to achieve cohesive leadership systems with Wallace's support have proven difficult, but new research by RAND concludes that developing such systems is a possible and promising means of ensuring that principals throughout entire states get the preparation and support they need. Three states in particular — Delaware, Iowa, and Kentucky — were found by RAND to have made the most progress in creating such systems (Augustine, et al., 2009). States making the most progress tend to have a history of collaboration, political support, and strong state-district connections, and comparatively little staff turnover at key policy positions. The impetus for developing and maintaining a cohesive state-district leadership system can come from a variety of sources — often within state government, but also from an innovative, committed district, or (as in Iowa, for example) a professional organization representing school administrators within the state.

One benefit of a cohesive leadership system identified by RAND's research is that the more successful a state is in developing such a system, the more time principals tend to devote to improving instruction.

**There is more to learn about:**

- How best to strengthen principals' skills and performance;
- How to interpret and use data, including test scores, to identify areas of improvement for principals and act constructively on those findings;
- How to do more to ensure that best practices identified in new research about effective leadership training take hold in all institutions, not just a relative few;
- How to spread the lessons we're learning about cohesive leadership systems beyond the relatively small number of states that have made major progress in developing them.

## LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING: A WORK IN PROGRESS

After a decade of effort, there's still much to learn and more to accomplish in raising the quality of leadership so that many more students benefit. A number of states and districts have made significant improvements in leadership training, but we are still in the beginning stages overall in improving the key conditions affecting school leadership. There is more to learn about how best to strengthen principals' skills and performance; how to interpret and use data, including test scores, to identify areas of improvement for principals and act constructively on those findings; how to do more to ensure that best practices identified in new research about effective leadership training take hold in all institutions, not just a relative few; and how to spread the lessons we're learning about cohesive leadership systems beyond the relatively small number of states that have made major progress in developing them. We don't yet know how much difference high-quality leadership will ultimately make in creating measurable

student achievement gains, given its indirect effect compared with teaching.

What we do know is that without enough qualified leaders, the goal we've set for ourselves as a nation of transforming failing schools into places where all students succeed will be difficult to achieve. If high-quality teaching is the lynchpin for any reform approach to succeed, effective school leadership is the key to making good teaching happen in all classrooms, not just a few. Armed with what we've learned over the last decade about leadership's potential and what it takes to prepare and support it, we are optimistic that the field's long neglect of leadership is ending. Signs are everywhere that this imperative to improve leadership has finally earned its place in school reform and is gaining traction in ways that are worth learning from, preserving, and building upon.

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*Collective. Comprehensive. Cohesive. These are the words Gene Wilhoit uses to talk about education reform that involves multiple levels of the education system — states, districts, and schools. Today it is widely accepted that education leadership is crucial to improving student performance, and Wilhoit, executive director of the Council of Chief State School Officers, has persistently called on states to take on a larger role in standards-based reform and to create policy that supports improved leadership.*

*"Now that there is consensus on the important role education leadership plays in raising student achievement, we must promote policies and activities that build strong leaders at all stages of their careers," Wilhoit said in a 2008 news release. "Implementing and following a set of guiding policy standards is the best way to make this happen."*

*In this conversation with JSD, Wilhoit lays out his views on the alignment of the three levels of the system to create the kind of leadership that can lead to real reform and improved student learning. — VF*

**"We have some major issues in public education that are systemic and will have to be taken on," says Gene Wilhoit.**

# STATE POLICY IS KEY TO BUILDING STRONG LEADERS

**Education leader Gene Wilhoit calls on states and districts to work together to develop policies that support improved leadership**

**As told to Valerie von Frank**

We're moving to a higher level of education in this country, and we need innovation. If we don't make dramatic shifts, we're not going to be able to reach our goal that every child graduate with the skills and knowledge to be successful, to be able to go on to higher education without remediation or move into a successful career. That's what society has said to us as educators needs to happen.

We've never had that mandate before. Before this, there was an unwritten code that some kids could not be successful, and we could get by with it. There were avenues in this society for those who didn't get an education to earn a living. The United States of America is now operating in a dynamic global economy and social context, and we need every youngster to be able to move into a successful, rewarding career for his or her own benefit and also for societal benefit. If that's our goal, we have to have different mechanisms, structures, and assumptions in place about how we're educating children that will get every one to graduate, not just 70% on average.

We have established a system of delivering education under a different cultural and economic environment and with a set of different resources and expectations, and today we are trying to improve that system.

What we have to do is to step back from that system and be willing to challenge some of the basic assumptions about this thing we call schooling, because as long as we assume that everything we have in place right now — all the conditions, all the rules, all the relationships we have right now — is going to get us to our goal, we are going to fail. We have some major issues in public education that are systemic and will have to be taken on.

## LEADERSHIP IS CRITICAL

If we expect to get all children to high levels of learning, we have to have highly effective leaders in every

school, and we must have a high-functioning district office to support the educational program in schools. That's a broad agenda.

The Wallace Foundation has had a 10-year commitment to strengthen education leadership. Much of the work has focused on a systems approach. This is a new thought process for everyone to link in a much more specific way.

No one piece of the system can be poorly functioning. Reaching our goal will require rethinking and adjusting and aligning three elements — school, district, and state — in a coordinated effort that produces high quality and coordinated conversations between the states. Each level has a critical role. You cannot succeed with a weak district office and high-functioning principals; you can't have weak principals and a highly functioning district office; and you can't have effective principals and districts and have systemwide change without a state context that sets policies in place and makes sure all parts of the system are operating effectively.

### THE STATES' ROLE

I want states to develop a comprehensive program to identify, prepare, and support administrators. Support for leaders has to be a state policy, as opposed to individual institutional capacity.

Currently, leadership preparation is an overlooked phenomenon in state policy. We have paid more attention to developing teachers than leaders. We have a patchwork of leadership programs, too many of which are poorly designed, are not developed with the cooperation of school systems, and are not held to rigorous standards.

### Gene Wilhoit

Gene Wilhoit became executive director of the Council of Chief State School Officers in 2006.

He began his career as a social studies teacher in Ohio and Indiana. He served as a program director in the Indiana Department of Education, an administrator in Kanawha County, W.Va., and a special assistant in the U.S. Department of Education before serving as executive director of the National Association of State Boards of Education from 1986 to 1993.

From 1994 to 2006, Wilhoit was director of the Arkansas Department of Education and deputy commissioner and commissioner of the Kentucky Department of Education. In those positions, he shepherded finance reform, led equity initiatives, designed and implemented assessment and accountability systems, advanced nationally recognized preschool and technology programs, and reorganized state agencies to focus on service and support.

Wilhoit has a bachelor of arts degree in history and economics from Georgetown College and a master's in teaching, political science, and economics from Indiana University Bloomington.

He is a member of numerous education organizations, has served on national and state commissions, and has written and spoken on a variety of education issues.

**Currently, leadership preparation is an overlooked phenomenon in state policy. We have paid more attention to developing teachers than leaders.**

In addition, we do not have the kind of comprehensive, statewide support systems needed for leaders once they assume their roles, both in terms of immersion into the role and in terms of ongoing professional support.

Some states have stepped back and made dramatic shifts in the ways they organize their overall support system. Delaware and Iowa have done an outstanding job of redesigning their support systems to provide different ways of approaching state support. (See the RAND research study at www.wallacefoundation.org/KnowledgeCenter.)

The first step for states is to look at the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium standards, an agreed-upon set of competencies and practices that need to be undertaken by an effective leader. Those standards ought to become a central point for designing leader preparation programs. States ought to begin to send strong messages about critical attributes we want in leaders and be very specific.

Next, I would expect that states ask their preparation programs, in order to be accredited, to adopt those standards and to show how they are providing experience for principals that lead to high-quality practices.

Third, state accrediting boards should look at their requirements for licensing to make sure the requirements are in line with these standards. I would expect the state to revise licensing standards to make sure leaders exhibit agreed-upon competencies.

In many cases, we've used fairly weak measures to determine who is licensed. We don't expect beginning principals to be masters, but we do expect them to have certain competencies, and you have to have multiple ways for people to demonstrate those. Many states don't have those kinds of measures in place.

I would ask preparation programs to establish a partnership of governance between those institutions preparing leaders and K-12 districts responsible for hiring and bringing them along professionally. I'm not sure many states have a systematic professional growth program for most principals. Generally, I would describe professional growth for principals as a potpourri of opportunities in which an individual in isolation may participate, and these options often are disjointed and short-term. I would shift that practice to a required professional development plan jointly determined by the leader and the district around a set of principles of quality practice and supported through embedded learning at the school site. Job-embedded learning will require master leaders to coach and mentor other leaders. It will require states to provide resources. Those five to six shifts would make a major difference in state practice.

**DISTRICTS' ROLE**

State systems need to be there for support. The second element for change is a different vision of what a good leader is, with a particular emphasis on the roles that need to be played at the district and building levels.

The district is the central point for making sure every school has a highly effective principal. The district is responsible for identifying potential leaders, establishing a network of learning for those individuals, and helping those individuals develop a professional plan that takes them into a leadership track. Central office staff need to be organized to support those building-level leaders. The district office needs to have a coaching/mentoring relationship with the principal, to provide adequate resources where concerns are surfacing, and to be a support as that principal grows. The district identifies strong mentor leaders to work on a regular, ongoing basis with principals. The district also organizes principals to ensure a constant dialogue between the buildings and district office about how they support each other.

P-16 councils are emerging in a lot of states, or P-20 councils — states have different titles for them. These councils are organized at the state level to bring the various systems pieces together — the higher education community with the pre-K-12 community with licensing boards, standards boards, and other entities interested in improvement, and they come together for a coherent whole. I have seen these councils' effectiveness in Kentucky, where leaders took the state-level conversation, which can only set a policy context, and moved it down to regional councils, where specific community and technical colleges and specific higher education institutions met with specific school districts. Then you have policy setting and an overall design coming out of the state, but all that comes to life at the local level. When you have regional councils and a strong commitment to work together, you can see remarkable changes in the design of leadership preparation programs, the way the districts act toward their leaders, and in policies. And what is really exciting to see is that these entities no longer see themselves in isolation from each other.

**BUILDINGS' ROLE**

At the building level, we may have a job (of principal) that's not doable, a matter of the greatest concern right now. We have to look at what it takes to be a strong leader in schools. The first shift in thinking is making sure we define that role as a person or teams of people who are educational leaders. It is not sufficient any longer to expect that a good building manager is going to be able to bring about the kinds of changes we need in this country.

We need a serious investigation of what changes in functions need to occur in school buildings. Jefferson County, Kentucky, and now 11 states have created new positions called School Administrative Managers, people who carry out the management functions and free the principal to carry out the central business of the school — educating children and supporting teachers.

Lots of people in the system now are frustrated. The very thought of being able to do something differently, an opportunity for change, just raising ideas and possibilities has generated a lot of excitement.

That points us right back to the system. People are willing to take on the challenge, they're willing to go for higher results, but they are concerned about the conditions that inhibit that. They want strong professional development, they want time with each other to make changes, they want states to allow them to try new things, they want states to begin to question practices around funding resources, around how they get educational credit, around how they can organize student learning. They want more resources, greater assistance in diagnosing student learning problems, and outside support. To become stronger leaders, they cannot see themselves operating in isolation without a strong support base.

### Resources

The Council of Chief State School Officers released a revised set of education leadership standards in 2008. These revised standards, based on 1996 standards by the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium, were developed by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration, a steering committee of 10 membership organizations that represents state policy makers, school leaders, professors of education, and other scholars, with support from The Wallace Foundation.

The ISLLC standards guide leadership policy and practice at the state level. A database of research and other sources of information supporting the six standards is available online at **www.ccsso.org/ISLLC2008Research.**

The Wallace Foundation web site, **www.wallacefoundation.org/KnowledgeCenter**, offers reports and information about education leadership issues.

### About the council

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) is a nationwide, nonprofit organization of public officials who head departments of elementary and secondary education in the states, the District of Columbia, the Department of Defense Education Activity, and five U.S. extra-state jurisdictions. CCSSO provides leadership, advocacy, and technical assistance on major educational issues. The council seeks members' consensus on major educational issues and expresses their views to civic and professional organizations, federal agencies, Congress, and the public.

**POSITIVE CHANGES**

I've seen some real changes occurring in some states. Conversations between universities and pre-K-12 systems have resulted in higher-quality preparation programs. In Kentucky, for example, almost across the state you can see districtwide and regional mentor and training programs. Almost all the large districts now have some mechanism in place for tapping individuals with leadership potential and bringing them along and helping them with the work. Many programs are now being aligned within the state. Academies are being shared between and among districts. The state department of education is providing resources for those academies. Superintendents have begun supporting each other, starting with a small nucleus but now organized regionally so superintendents mentor superintendents and offer organized learning opportunities for those at various levels. Most states have begun collecting better data to inform decision making and changes in the system. Behind that data collection is a state network of support for schools that are struggling, and the best-case scenario is the district is the frontline intervention, but there are cooperative agreements across the state among school boards, superintendents, and departments of education to help these struggling schools. So networks exist that weren't in place 10 years ago. There are different levels of conversation and alignment now, and not so much territorialism.

What we're looking for now as a nation is a high level of learning for every student. It may take more time; it may take different experiences; it may take different resources, but it's a very different system than what we have in place right now. But we either give up on the goal of success for all kids or we change the system. We've decided here (at CCSSO) that the system has to be challenged. That's a big leap for a lot of people, and we have to think deliberately about how we get from one place to another. The alternative is we drop out kids or graduate them without knowledge. We're doing that now.

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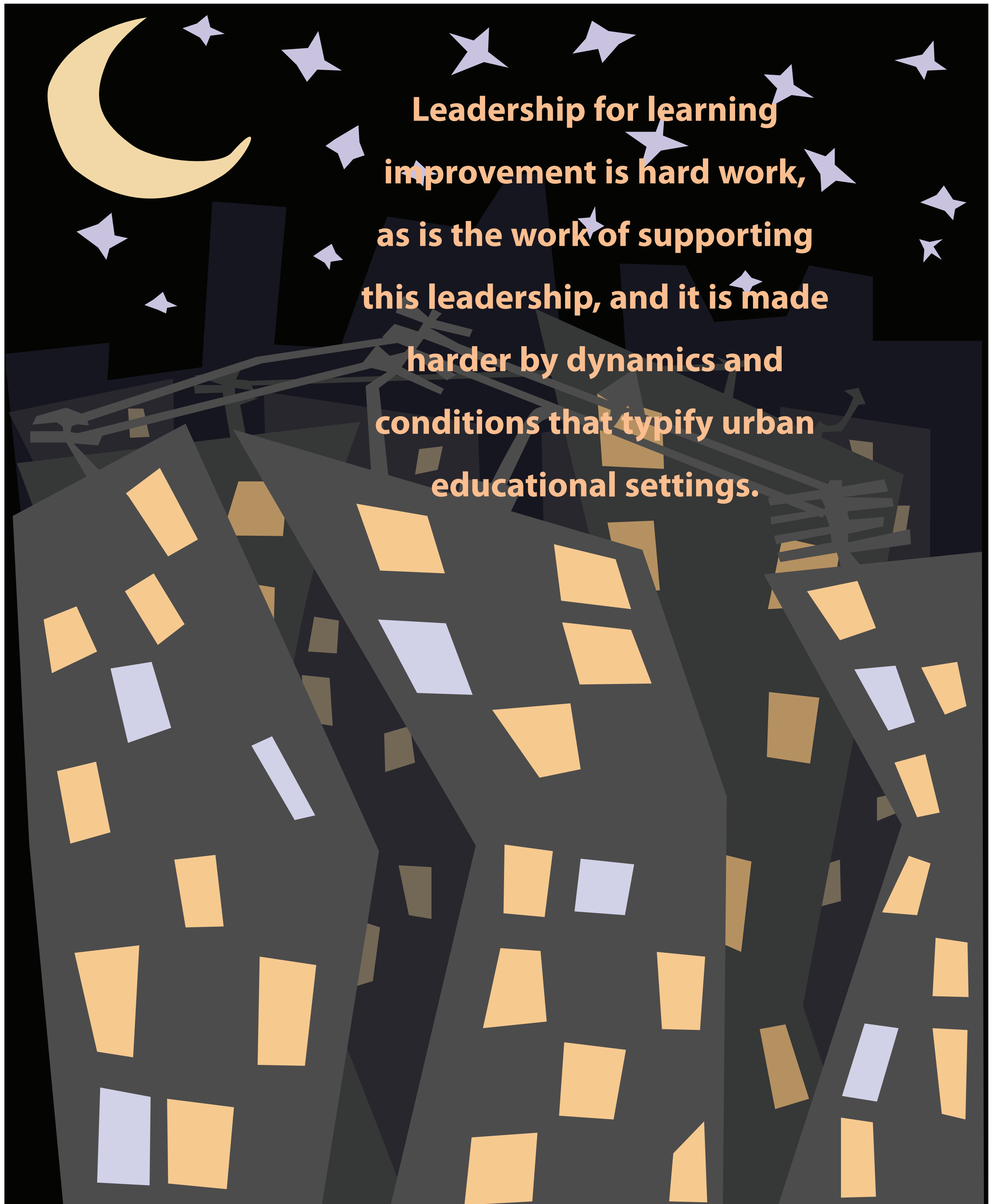
Leadership for learning improvement is hard work, as is the work of supporting this leadership, and it is made harder by dynamics and conditions that typify urban educational settings.

# URBAN RENEWAL

## THE URBAN SCHOOL LEADER TAKES ON A NEW ROLE

**By Michael S. Knapp, Michael A. Copland, Meredith I. Honig, Margaret L. Plecki, and Bradley S. Portin**

This article is informed in part by research commissioned by The Wallace Foundation.

It's a familiar story: A cycle of mutually reinforcing and often self-defeating conditions shapes the schooling of young people in the nation's cities. A diverse and historically underserved student population struggles with academic learning and social adjustment in a context of limited resources. Support for staff efforts or special student needs is also limited, making it harder to attract and retain qualified staff, thereby reducing the morale of the staff who do remain — all feeding a continuing pattern of chronic low performance. Then locate this cycle in the crucible of high-stakes accountability and a press for learning improvement that has wide backing from the public. While well-intended, such pressures may not always have the desired effect of motivating and producing greater effort and higher achievement.

The situation creates a major challenge for school and district leaders, who are central to the learning improvement process and who are striving to cope, intervene productively, and even thrive in this situation. Many of these leaders are rising to the occasion by bringing concentrated energy and resources to bear on the improvement of instruction, either through direct interaction with teachers or by working more indirectly to guide, direct, and support instructional improvement. These efforts raise important questions:

Given the conditions that educators must contend

with in such settings, what does the attempt to improve teaching and learning imply for the work of leaders within schools, central office staff, and for others who contribute to the system of public education?

What are the implications for the way leaders' work is supported?

One source of answers comes from a close look at schools and districts that are making progress, by varying local definitions that include measures of student learning. With support from The Wallace Foundation, the authors have conducted recent research that examines such schools and districts, and the findings of these studies substantially add to our insight into the urban educational leadership challenge.

**There were unmistakable signs that these systems were announcing and embracing an idea of learning improvement.**

This coordinated set of studies — collectively referred to as the Study of Leadership for Learning Improvement — closely examined leadership aimed at learning improvement in urban schools and districts. All relied heavily on qualitative inquiry strategies, conducted during the 2007-08 school year and beginning of the next, through repeated visits to a small number of districts and selected schools within them. The studies investigated leadership for learning improvement and how it is supported, from three vantage points:

- The investment of staffing and other resources in support of learning improvement and the enhancement of equity (Plecki et al., 2009).
- The configuration and exercise of distributed instructional leadership within the school (Portin et al., 2009).
- The transformation of central office work practices and district-school relationships to develop and sustain instructional leadership capacity (Honig et al., 2010).

The studies examined these matters in overlapping critical case samples — sites that were proactively addressing leadership for learning improvement.

The three studies shared two district sites (Atlanta Public Schools and the New York City/ Empowerment Schools Organization), along with selected schools in these districts. (All schools in New York City choose to be part of one of 14 school support organizations, the segment of the district central office that offers the most direct support to the school. We concentrated our research on the largest of these organizations, the Empowerment Schools Organization, which subsumes approximately 500 schools, or nearly a third of the city's schools.) Each study added one or two other sites and selected schools that offered useful contrasting windows on the study focus. While different from one another, the sites shared a press for improvement, the presence of promising practices and structures, and some evidence that progress was being made in student learning.

### INSIGHTS ABOUT LEADERSHIP AND LEADERSHIP SUPPORT

Four themes capture central ideas across the three studies of leadership for learning improvement and the conditions that enable it. School and district leaders in these sites:

1. Focused persistently and publicly on equitable and powerful teaching, learning, and instructional improvement;
2. Invested in and expanded an instructional leadership cadre within and across schools through targeted investments, restructuring, and the reconfiguration of staff roles;
3. Actively reinvented leadership work practice, especially between school and district central office; and
4. Paid explicit, sustained attention to leadership support at all levels.

## THEME 1

**Place a persistent, public focus on improvement goals that maximize the quality and equity of instruction.**

There were unmistakable signs that these systems embraced learning improvement. Consider the words of a new 3rd-grade teacher in a New York City school, barely into her seventh week of a teaching career:

"OK, the priorities for learning. I believe that, well, first of all, in terms of subject, I believe reading, writing, and math are the utmost importance for the school. I believe that [the leadership team] speaks about differentiating our instruction to reach all kinds of learners, no matter what level they are at and no matter how they learn, what modality they learn by. We really want to collect data, make sure that everything is assessment-based so that we can see where they stand and what progress, if any, they are making. That is pretty much what I have been told by the school, which I think is exactly what we need to do…"

This teacher owed much of her sense of direction to her school's leadership team. She had internalized a larger systemwide message the leaders had also internalized and owned: that the learning of each child mattered and should be approached in a way that addressed that particular student's learning needs in a way that could demonstrate what progress was being made and what needed to be addressed next.

This district, as in others we studied, was actively promoting these ideas about the improvement of teaching and learning. A member of a school reform team in Atlanta — the central office unit positioned to serve a network of schools — described her work with school principals:

"I … spend time in [schools] helping the principals … focus their work … working on the quality of teaching and learning, looking at the student work, looking at the rigor, looking at best practices, giving them feedback. [If I don't] … it's not going to pay out in dividends in the student achievement … So taking principals who have not spent time in their classrooms and getting them to shift their focus takes a lot of work, intentional work. And then to be able to maintain that focus in a culture where

people are used to sending you kids and keeping you in an office to deal with this one [student] all day — that's a whole other level of work … . And then helping people to prioritize their time, so that they do spend their time on the core business in the areas that matter the most."

This kind of attention directed at the improvement of teaching and learning was pervasive in the sites we studied.

## THEME 2

**Invest in and expand the instructional leadership cadre within and across schools.**

Building a systemwide approach to improving teaching and learning means more than guiding the work of school principals. A striking feature of the schools and districts studied was that many educators were exercising instructional leadership. These educators were generally organized in teams and occupied a variety of positions within a single school or across networks of schools.

Within schools, this instructional leadership cadre brought the efforts of principal, assistant principals, and department or grade-level team heads together with instructional coaches, teacher mentors, instructional leadership specialists, and assessment coordinators aimed at instructional support for classroom teachers. Across schools, staff in new or newly repurposed central office positions — administrators who acted as instructional leadership directors, such as the school reform team staff noted above or network leaders in the New York City/Empowerment Schools Organization, as well as others in more traditional positions — directed their energy to the instructional improvement taking place in schools.

Establishing or expanding the instructional leadership cadre implied several different kinds of leadership work at school and district levels. Principals and district leaders invested staffing resources strategically in instructional support arrangements, with an eye to sustaining an equity agenda, as much by reallocating existing resources as by bringing in new resources. Roles and structures within schools and the central office were reconfigured, especially in the intermediary units that work most directly with the schools, but others as well. District and school actions laid the groundwork for instructional leadership teams in schools.

## THEME 3

**Reinvent leadership work practice in schools and districts.**

Establishing or expanding the instructional leadership cadre implied a fundamental shift and rethinking of the leaders' work. These shifts reflect both a leadership response to a demanding environment and a deeper engagement with powerful processes of professional learning.

In schools, principals and other supervisory leaders found themselves taking on several new kinds of leadership work, in addition to forms of instructional leadership that have long been recognized. For some, finding ways to put more time into conventional forms of instructional leadership (such as teacher supervision, informal one-on-one interactions with teachers, and participation in professional development) was a significant step forward. But for others, the instructional leadership work of the school meant:

- Creating and working through an instructional leadership team;
- Normalizing the instructional improvement work of teacher leaders and other nonsupervisory staff in the school;
- Anchoring instructional improvement activities to data, evidence, and inquiry of various kinds; and
- Building robust professional accountability systems within the school that responded to external demands such as federal/state accountability requirements while preserving a focus on school priorities and learning improvement agenda.

For their part, teacher leaders and others in nonsupervisory positions were engaging in related practices — among them, connecting with teachers and instructional improvement issues through data and inquiry and navigating the middle ground between classrooms and school leaders.

Though not school-based, educators in the district central office — especially those newly positioned to work directly and continuously with the schools — engaged school principals and others in relationships aimed at improving instructional leadership. Especially in districts that had initiated a central office transformation process, specific practices in these relationships included:

- Focusing the relationship on the principal's instructional leadership as joint work or a shared common challenge;
- Modeling instructional leadership thinking and action;
- Developing and using particular tools to support principals' engagement in instructional leadership;
- Brokering external resources to help principals focus on their instructional leadership; and
- Helping all principals become leadership resources for each other.

**At the building level, we may have a job (of principal) that's not doable, a matter of the greatest concern right now. We have to look at what it takes to be a strong leader in schools.**

**Building a systemwide approach to improving teaching and learning means more than guiding the work of school principals.**

For most staff in these districts, these practices represented new lines of work as a systemwide approach to improving instructional practice.

## THEME 4

**Give explicit attention to leadership support at all levels.**

Schools and districts that made progress on a learning improvement agenda actively guided and supported leaders' work. Rather than assuming that all who were in position to exercise instructional leadership knew how to do this work or would be able to do it without ongoing assistance, these schools and districts had taken steps to provide leaders at every level a system of supports for instructional leadership work.

Within schools, the support system might consist of teacher leaders' regular access to peer-alike colleagues, regular occasions for instruction leadership team members to problem solve, or more focused mentoring relationships. Growing relationships between central office and the school provided ongoing supports for school principals especially, but also for other school-based staff involved in instructional leadership work. And for central office staff, a variety of actions, structures, and practices supported the work of the instructional leadership directors, while also reinforcing instructional leadership at the school level, among them:

**The pattern of leadership support we observed was intimately connected to leadership for learning improvement.**

- Professional development and other forms of assistance for instructional leadership directors;
- Reorganization and reculturing of other central office units to support partnerships between central office and principals;
- Stewardship of the overall central office transformation process through the relentless sponsorship of executive leaders, systems that held everyone in the central office accountable for the new work, and the brokering of external resources and relationships to support improvement efforts; and
- Evidence use throughout the central office to support continual improvement of work practices and relationships with schools.

In practical terms, these practices provided different kinds of support: direction and rationale for leadership work, direct technical help and teaching, material and intellectual resources, personal and emotional help, and sponsorship.

### HOPE AND THE HARD WORK AHEAD

The pattern of leadership support we observed was intimately connected to leadership for learning improvement. Leadership support is itself leadership, and it is necessarily distributed among various people, situations, and interactions at different levels of the system. Taken together, these activities are plausibly related to improving student learning, though studies such as these cannot offer definitive causal proof.

**Participants at all levels face a steep learning curve, in part because changes in work practice are not minor incremental adjustments, but rather fundamental shifts in how teachers leaders, principals, and central office administrators do their daily work.**

Leadership for learning improvement is hard work, as is the work of supporting this leadership, and it is made harder by dynamics and conditions that typify urban educational settings. Our analyses underscore several aspects of the effort to support leadership for learning improvement that will continue to challenge education leaders, especially under the conditions that prevail in many urban settings. In particular, participants at all levels face a steep learning curve, in part because changes in work practice are not minor incremental adjustments, but rather fundamental shifts in how teachers leaders, principals, and central office administrators do their daily work. Pursuing these matters with an equity agenda in mind adds other resistances, from both inside and outside the school system, with which leaders must contend. Successfully meeting these resistances and staying the course while leaders learn new ways of doing business presume a modicum of stability in key leadership positions. Stable superintendents, among others, are a key source of the sponsorship that leadership for learning improvement entails. And doing all these things in the context of an economic downturn presents major obstacles that call for creativity and adaptability.

The sites we studied had made headway on most of these matters, and their successes should be attributed, in part, to their ability to develop and sustain conditions that enable leadership to prosper. Their examples offer hope and images of possibility for the future of teaching, learning, and leadership in schools.

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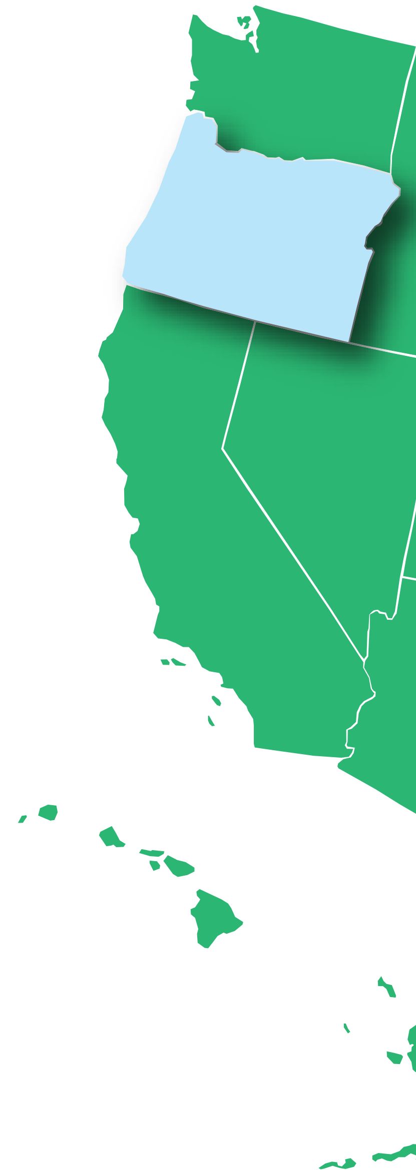

# STATE *of the* STATES

**The search for ways to improve instructional leadership zeroes in on 6 policy areas**

**By Catherine Augustine and Jennifer Russell**

The recognition of the importance of effective school leadership is not limited to district-level leaders and academic researchers. State educational leaders have increasingly taken up improving school leadership as part of a general shift toward greater involvement in school reform efforts. The power of states in education matters has grown since the time of Brown v. Board of Education (1954), when states were required to assume responsibility for ensuring equity for students. Since that time, federal and state roles in education have changed and increased. The reform movements of the 1980s and 1990s brought more state involvement, as did increases in states' share of education funding.

By 2000, the emerging connection between strong instructional leaders and school improvement was making its way into state education policy discussions. The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) had produced its first set of standards for school leaders in 1996 (CCSSO, 1996). Several national and state-based policy organizations then turned their attention to recruiting, training, and retaining instructional leaders (see Crews & Weakley, 1996; Murphy, Martin, & Muth, 1997; Hoyle, English, & Steffy, 1998).

Through its engagement with grantees on initiatives to improve school leadership, The Wallace Foundation

## WHAT STATES FOCUSED ON

State-level organizations sought to improve school leadership in six policy arenas:

**1. Leadership standards**

All 10 states had statewide leadership standards that were aligned with national standards.

**2. Licensure policies**

Respondents highlighted changing licensure policies as an approach for improving the quality of school leaders and providing alternative pathways to leadership positions.

**3. Preservice programs**

Many states and districts were reforming their preservice programs to better align them with districts' needs and state standards for leadership.

**4. Professional development**

States provided professional development for practicing leaders, including programs, mentors, coaches, and networks to support professional growth.

**5. Leader evaluations**

Some states were pursuing policies and initiatives for evaluating leaders.

**6. Improving conditions**

States were working to improve the conditions facing school leaders in several key ways: by providing timely data to inform leaders' decision making; by allowing sufficient authority to reallocate people, time, and money; and by targeting resources according to students' needs.

**Research included 10 Wallace-funded states, highlighted in blue: Oregon, Iowa, Missouri, Ilinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Georgia, Massachusetts, Delaware, and Rhode Island.**

This article is informed in part by research commissioned by The Wallace Foundation.

came to recognize the important role that state organizations play in advancing effective leadership in districts and schools as well as the importance of coordination among state- and district-level policies. The foundation asked RAND to examine which state-level entities were involved in this work and how they attempted to improve school leadership. We studied 10 Wallace-funded states: Delaware, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Missouri, Oregon, and Rhode Island.

We analyzed documents describing state-led efforts to improve school leadership and interviewed more than 120 state-level representatives about this work. We also interviewed almost 200 district officials from 17 (mainly large urban) districts, in part to understand their response to state efforts to improve school leadership. Here, we describe the actions they took and provide recommendations to states endeavoring to improve school leadership.

We have recently concluded a study for The Wallace Foundation on the role of cohesive leadership systems — that is, policies and initiatives that are well coordinated across the state and between the state and its districts (Augustine et al., 2009). The actions and recommendations we describe here are informed by that work.

**WHAT ACTIONS WERE STATES TAKING TO IMPROVE SCHOOL LEADERSHIP?**

State-level organizations sought to improve school leadership in six policy arenas:

1. Leadership standards;
2. Licensure policies;
3. Preservice programs;
4. Professional development;
5. Leader evaluations; and
6. Improvement of conditions for school leaders (e.g. access to data, autonomy, and resources).

Not surprisingly, there was variation across the states. Actions varied in terms of range of positions targeted, comprehensiveness of actions, number of people served, magnitude of change, and the stage of the initiative. States also varied in terms of how active they were in improving school leadership in general. Although some states were clearly driving change, others allowed their large urban districts to take the lead in improving school leadership. In these cases, some states were adept at identifying and spreading good practices that started in their districts.

**1 LEADERSHIP STANDARDS**

All 10 states had statewide leadership standards that were aligned with national standards. Some states, including Delaware and Rhode Island, simply adopted the ISLLC standards. Most others created their own standards based on the ISLLC or other national standards. Some states were updating their standards to align with the new 2008 ISLLC standards (CCSSO, 2008).

Others were broadening the positions addressed by standards. For example, the standards sent to the Rhode Island Board of Regents in November 2008 for approval covered a continuum of school leaders, including principals, central office administrators, building administrators, teacher leaders, department chairs, and any educator with leadership responsibilities. A consortium of states, including Delaware and Kentucky, was engaged in an effort to develop standards and training programs for teacher leadership.

**2 LICENSURE POLICIES**

Our respondents also highlighted changing licensure policies as an approach for improving the quality of school leaders and providing alternative pathways to leadership positions. Some states had changed their licensing structure. For example, Indiana eliminated the elementary and secondary school distinction. Oregon reduced the number of levels of administrative licenses from three to two and increased the experience requirements for the second level. Delaware instituted a three-tier system that provided initial, continuing, and advanced licenses. Kentucky provided a teacher leader endorsement, and Illinois provided a teacher leader license and a master principal license. Indiana, Iowa, and Oregon revised their requirements to align with the new ISLLC leadership standards.

**3 PRESERVICE PROGRAMS**

Many states and districts were reforming their preservice programs to better align them with districts' needs and state standards for leadership. Among the changes were: ending existing preservice programs and requiring programs to reapply for accreditation; collaboratively redesigning preservice programs; creating alternative preparation programs; offering training and experiences aimed at increasing interest and knowledge about the principal position; and improving recruitment efforts. For example, the Iowa Department of Education and State Board of Education jointly decided to terminate all leadership programs in 2004 after a task force determined that the programs were not producing high-quality leaders. Programs would not be reinstated until program administrators demonstrated alignment with leadership standards and district needs.

**4 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

States provided professional development for practicing leaders, including programs, mentors, coaches, and networks to support professional growth. Massachusetts, for example, made a national instructional leadership program, the National Institute for School Leadership, available to all principals in the state. This intensive program required participants to attend two days of professional development every month for a year and a half. The program primarily targeted principals, but districts were encouraged to attend as leadership teams that included central office staff. At the time of our study, the National Institute for School Leadership program in Massachusetts had trained more than 790 educators. Indiana supported sustained cohort-based professional learning opportunities through a state principal academy.

**5 LEADER EVALUATIONS**

Some states were pursuing policies and initiatives for evaluating leaders, which is not typical — principals tend to be evaluated infrequently or not at all (Usdan, McCloud, & Podmostko, 2000). Delaware, for example, developed the Delaware Performance Appraisal System for administrators, which is designed to measure progress according to the ISLLC standards. To rate principals, evaluators review evidence submitted by the principal; outcomes of three conferences between the principal and the evaluator; survey data from principals, teachers, and evaluators; and student achievement and growth data from state and local assessments. This evaluation system is now mandatory for all districts in the state.

6
**IMPROVING CONDITIONS**

States were working to improve the conditions facing school leaders in several key ways: by providing timely data to inform leaders' decision making; by allowing sufficient authority to reallocate people, time, and money; and by targeting resources according to students' needs. Iowa was in the process of developing an end-of-course assessment aligned with the new state curriculum and had recently started to provide state assessment results at the individual student level.

Oregon had created an online adaptive state student assessment system that would provide teachers with instant results. Other sites were allocating resources for additional leadership personnel, such as school administration managers (SAMs), who assume traditional managerial responsibilities so that principals can reallocate their time in ways that better meet students' learning needs. For example, Kentucky was working with the Jefferson County Public Schools to scale-up the use of this practice throughout the state by providing specialized training for SAMs.

**WHAT DID WE LEARN?**

States' actions across the six policy areas demonstrate that the state can play a critical role in improving school leadership. Also, some states are taking actions in arenas once dominated by districts. For example, states are mandating school leader mentoring and evaluations. In the states undertaking the most comprehensive actions to improve school leadership, study district respondents reported three types of benefits: more sophisticated support, increased funding, and, in those states where specific improvement actions were mandated, an "excuse" to direct energy toward leadership improvement. In other words, district leaders could invoke state law to support efforts to improve school leadership, which saved time and resources that would have otherwise gone toward motivating support for change.

**States' actions across the six policy areas demonstrate that the state can play a critical role in improving school leadership.**

Although we were unable to determine which state actions were most promising, some may prove to be quite significant. Requiring regular school leader evaluations, reforming preservice

programs, and mandating coaching for all principals in a state have the potential to result in significant professional growth. And because the large urban districts in our study reported benefits from state involvement, we suspect that smaller, less-resourced districts would also benefit from it.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STATE-LEVEL ORGANIZATIONS

Our interviewees credited both contextual factors and implementation strategies for their success in implementing policies and initiatives to improve school leadership. These recommendations are based on our analyses of these interview data. We target our recommendations to any organizations with state-level responsibilities, given the important roles that many nontraditional state organizations played, including universities, professional associations, and unions.

### Make strategic decisions about lead agencies and cultivate broad engagement.

Across the 10 states, we observed significant variation in terms of which organizations took the lead on school leadership improvement. Organizational configurations that work in one state may not work in another. State officials spent time determining best organizational and individual leads given their state context, and leads often rotated across offices and people. In most states, the chief state school officer played a key role in promoting the importance of leadership development, as did state boards of education. Education agencies were involved in all 10 states — sometimes in the lead role and sometimes, particularly in cases where the education agency had limited capacity (a problem that has been exacerbated by recent budget crises), as a key partner in the work. Some states intentionally involved universities, leadership academies, professional associations, and teacher and administrative unions. In Kentucky, the work was jointly led by the state education agency and the Jefferson County Public Schools.

What seems most important is not which state-level agency coordinates leadership improvement work, but that decisions about lead agencies are driven by the context, structures, and capacity of the state, and that leadership improvement strategies promote engagement across all participating organizations.

### Build trust between the state and its districts.

Our interviewees reported the importance of improving relationships between state agencies and local education agencies before the state could launch leadership improvement efforts, which most often necessitate district buy-in. Trust building often involved recognizing innovative districts as "lead learners" and scaling district-developed practices to other districts in the state.

Trust also increased when state agencies shifted from acting as compliance monitors to also become support providers. Opportunities for state and district officials to participate in joint work and professional development, in forums such as the exec-

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utive training programs offered by Harvard and the University of Virginia, also facilitated trust.

**Engage in continuous learning and improvement.**

Our interviewees reported the importance of continuing to learn about what works to improve school leadership in their states. State leaders involved individual and organizational experts on school leadership (e.g. Southern Regional Education Board, The Wallace Foundation) in critiquing their work and providing ongoing feedback. Study states also appreciated participation in the Wallace network, where they benefited from the exchange of promising practices and the opportunity to work with other states launching leadership improvement efforts.

**Monitor districts and provide them with support.**

With the advent of standards-based accountability and No Child Left Behind, states have had to shift their focus to supporting districts and providing resources for school improvement. This is a new role that is outside many states' core competencies. Indeed, many initiatives began by focusing on building better relationships between state agencies and districts, as well as on developing ways to encourage districts to change while also providing technical assistance to support the change process. Study states also faced challenges in holding universities accountable for the quality of their school leadership preservice preparation programs. Those that were able to exercise their authority to influence change while providing support for the change process reported that they were able to implement new policies and initiatives to improve school leadership. Ongoing professional development and technical assistance from the state increased the likelihood that the state's intentions would be fulfilled as districts implemented policies and initiatives tailored to their contexts.

**Structure leadership improvement work to have a lasting impact.**

Interviewees reported a number of actions they were taking to ensure that their leadership improvement efforts would have lasting impact. Many states established distributed leadership models for this work, vesting leadership of the initiatives in many different organizations, including some outside of government to help shield the work from future political changes. Most states ensured that there was a connection between their leadership efforts and their leadership standards. For example, mandated evaluation tools were based on leadership standards. Connecting leadership improvement reforms to other education reforms in the state was also a strategy that helped ensure sustainability. States also reported providing ongoing incentives to districts for implementing demonstration or pilot programs to improve leadership, to ensure continued buy-in, and to develop programs that other districts could adopt when appropriate. Legislation and regulations that solidified programs and their funding also encouraged buy-in from districts and schools.

## LOOKING FORWARD

State organizations are in a strong position to improve school leadership, given their ability to set education reform agendas, legislate change, fund implementation efforts, and spread promising practices across districts. As they anticipate the future, interviewees stressed the importance of knowing that their leadership improvement efforts are actually improving leadership and, ultimately, student achievement.

This will be an important next step to attract additional funding and motivate ongoing participation.

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By Troyce Fisher

# Developing cohesive leadership means addressing all parts of the system

Photo by ANNA MOSER/Anna Moser Photography

**Troyce Fisher and colleagues have learned a number of lessons as they have worked to create leadership cohesion in Iowa.**

In my role with the School Administrators of Iowa leading Iowa's leadership grant from The Wallace Foundation, I work with a coalition of individuals and groups striving to implement a cohesive leadership system for school leaders. Efforts to create a cohesive leadership system in Iowa for the past nine years have resulted in:

- Establishing leadership standards and criteria against which every administrator is to be evaluated;
- Modeling evaluation resource guides to ensure that the process is rooted in best practice;
- Redesigning leadership preparation programs in all our universities;
- Trainings for administrators through leadership academies;
- A required mentoring and induction program for new administrators;
- Strengthening leadership work delivered through the intermediate service agencies;
- Redesigning the role of central office leaders to more clearly align with the work of the building principal;
- Instituting a School Administration Manager (SAM) program to help principals focus their use of time on improving instruction; and
- Developing supportive policies and other conditions that ensure the work will go on.

**HERE ARE SOME OF THE LESSONS WE'VE LEARNED:**

**Having a moral purpose trumps turf:** From the beginning, our mantra was that "every learner in every building in every district in every part of Iowa deserves quality leadership." We made the link between leadership and learning, from the board table to the classroom, from policy at the state level to practices that freed principals' time to be in the classroom promoting high levels of learning, and from what we did as a guiding coalition to what our chances were that every student would be a successful learner, earner, and citizen. We started most of our meetings with the question, "What good has been done for the children in your sphere of influence lately?" We kept kids' needs at the center. We had few turf battles, and I think that's a major reason why.

**You can't beat a solid theory of action:** Wallace's theory of action states: When leaders' behaviors are grounded in standards of best practice and leaders are supported by quality training that increases their skills to meet those standards and conditions at the local, regional, and state levels support leaders' abilities to focus on creating learning systems, then student achievement increases. All of our efforts and initiatives development were filtered through that theory.

**Relationships matter … a lot:** We worked hard to create a climate and culture of transparency, honesty, and collaboration with everyone involved. Honoring others' expertise, being willing to look at issues from multiple perspectives in individual and group settings, and letting go of ego went a long way towards building a climate of trust and a culture of results. Without respectful relationships, this work would not have progressed very far. We used our respect for one another to engage in tough conversations because we trusted each other. The soft skill of paying attention to relationships provided human capital to sustain the work in difficult times.

**Sometimes you just have to step up to the plate:** Our chief state school officer took the bold step of requiring each of Iowa's preparation programs to redesign their programs to more closely align with the Iowa Leadership Standards and to provide evidence that they were preparing a different kind of leader with much more emphasis on improving student achievement. If the programs did not meet expectations as determined by a neutral review panel, they would cease to exist. This was not politically popular and met with significant resistance, but it worked. Programs were revised. Some institutions withdrew their programs from consideration. Those that remain are much more focused on creating leaders whose primary focus is increasing learning for all.

**It's better to have a hand in the doing than to be done to:** From the beginning, we said a core value of ours was to involve as many practitioners and those impacted by this work as possible. We've had hundreds of different people serve on project task forces, committees, and design teams. The products and processes they designed were useful, enjoyed large buy-in from their colleagues, and were grounded in best practice. Iowa's school leaders wanted to be involved in creating a new culture for their profession and responded with enthusiasm to our invitations to participate.

**Never underestimate the power of adult learning theory:** We structure our meetings to include overt intended outcomes; intentional use of protocols and multiple groupings; and specific attention to what decisions have been made, who is responsible, and by what deadline the work will be done. We share reminders about norms for our learning community. These norms address sidebar conversations, multitasking, and other behaviors that can undermine the productivity of meetings. We know this sends a message about the importance of the work and how we value others' time.

**It's who you know — and leadership matters:** We assembled a 14-organization coalition from the beginning that we called the Leadership Partnership to guide the accomplishment of our action plan and scope of work. It has representatives from the major groups that have a stake in ensuring that quality leadership exists in every district and that state policies and conditions support their work. Besides the state board of education, the department of education, intermediate services agencies, and local leaders, we also have all the professional education associations, the Iowa Business Council, a group dedicated to meaningful parent involvement, and representatives from state government.

**We worked hard to create a climate and culture of transparency, honesty, and collaboration with everyone involved.**

The comprehensiveness of the work meant assigning responsibility for each of the various components to appropriate individuals, who then assembled task forces and committees to inform the work and who ultimately had responsibility for making sure the work got done. We chose respected recently retired educators, current professional association employees, and experts in professional development to do the work.

Having the political cachet of a major foundation funding us was a huge plus. The Wallace Foundation's decade of commitment to this goal and the Iowa Department of Education's wisdom in subcontracting the work to the professional association for school administrators combined to lend great credibility to our efforts. Involving key policy makers all along the way is key.

**There's nothing as practical as good theory:** The Wallace

*Continued on p. 42*

**By James Luján**

# Educators use student performance data to plan, implement, and evaluate

Photo by CLIFF OCHOA/Portraits by LaDonna

**James Luján tracks a variety of data at Ernie Pyle Middle School in Albuquerque, N.M., where he is the principal.**

Do you believe that using data effectively plays a big role in the success of students? I certainly do. As principal of Ernie Pyle Middle School in Albuquerque, N.M., my goal in collecting data is "to transform data into information, and information into insight" (Fiorina, 2004). Having data about student academic performance motivates us to perform better as educators and tells us where we need to concentrate our efforts to improve.

In the Albuquerque Public Schools, we analyze data that tell us how schools with similar demographics perform better than others on New Mexico's high-stakes assessment. When we hear that a particular secondary school in one area graduates more students than other schools, we want to know why. What is in their data that indicates what they are doing right? What practices should we consider in order to achieve at higher levels? This attitude about data and what we can learn from it is part of our district's competitive spirit, instilled in the culture and evident throughout the educational environment of teaching and learning.

As principal, I have many responsibilities, and I find that the constant use of relevant data helps me stay focused on my instructional leadership responsibilities. However, I am not the only instructional leader in the building. The minute I receive school data, I share the

| Data generated by students | Data generated by families | Data generated by instructional leaders |
|---|---|---|
| • Student portfolios include representation of student work from various classes. The students collect their exemplary work and share it with their parents or guardians during a schoolwide student-led conference.<br>• New Mexico Standards-Based Assessment.<br>• Student data notebooks include class quizzes, unit tests, sample tests, and academic progress illustrated in graphs.<br>• Student self-assessments allow students to reflect by writing about their academic and behavior progress. This process includes short- and long-term goal setting. | • An online quality of education survey allows parents to express their satisfaction or concerns about the school and its instructional programs.<br>• Consensograms and questionnaires gather parent opinions about school programs, activities, and initiatives.<br>• Attendance data monitor the number of family participants at school events over time.<br>• We compare frequency of family participation in math, reading, GED, science, citizenship, and English language learners events to student attendance data. | • Daily walk-throughs are five- to seven-minute classroom observations that give the administrator a snapshot of student and teacher behavior, student performance, and classroom environment and artifacts. We also look for evidence of data use.<br>• Albuquerque Instructional Management System (AIMS) is a database that contains the New Mexico Standards-Based Assessment, district benchmark assessment scores and graphs, standard maps, demographic information, and qualitative data to help teachers document student progress over time.<br>• Classroom profile sheets show specific student data at a glance.<br>• Short-cycle assessments are recorded and monitored by teachers, students, and parents.<br>• Weekly records, academic vocabulary tests, minute math, and writing/vocabulary assessments are meaningful ways to measure student progress on a daily/weekly basis.<br>• Quarterly assessments of standards.<br>• Demographic data allow us to disaggregate our data for many purposes. |

information with my data team, which includes teachers, parents, and students. Once we study and analyze the data, we create an action plan that demonstrates the next steps to take to improve the academic progress of every student in every grade level in any specific area. These action plans are connected to every teacher's professional development plan. Each educator uses his or her data as a tool to drive daily instruction.

## DATA USE IN OUR SCHOOL

Data are everyone's responsibility. We hold all stakeholders accountable for using data. How do students know whether they performed better than other students in a similar group on a certain test? How does lack of family engagement affect student performance? How do school administrators know that their students' academic performances improve from one year to the next? The answers are found in relevant educational data, which can be used to make decisions and enhance that competitive drive to achieve success for students.

In the past, we felt inundated with data and had little time to analyze and use them effectively. Today in most of our schools, the staff uses data to create action plans that identify areas of strengths and areas for growth. Data provide me a clear view on what is going on academically at any given time and assist me in aligning my professional development with school needs. Throughout the school, the effective use of data allows administrators, teachers, parents, and students to bring about change. Thanks to data, students know where they are and where they are going academically.

I also use data as an important communication strategy with parents. When parents know where their children stand, they are more likely to stay active through their participation in school activities, which helps students stay in school, and improve academically (Cervone & O'Leary, 1982).

As a data-informed leader, I ask all stakeholders to turn to different types of tools to inform our decision making at Ernie Pyle Middle School. (See chart above.)

## LESSONS LEARNED

I know now that to be successful in using data to strengthen my role as an instructional leader, I must first have a plan of action for how I will use the data, and then implement the plan, evaluating progress regularly. What the owner of the data does with them are critical to the success of a school. I challenge school leaders to ask themselves: Who is the owner of the data? The owner of the data is the person or team willing to use them effectively to improve students' academic performance.

I believe data can be a double-edged sword. One side of the sword can wound you, inundating you with statistics that overwhelm and confuse you. The other side is the reflective edge that allows students, parents, and instructional leaders to see the progress, be motivated by it, and gain knowledge to become our very best.

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By Carol Seid

# Data present a clear picture of time spent on instructional tasks

Photo by ANNA MOSER/Anna Moser Photography

**Carol Seid visits the library at Fairmeadows Elementary School in West Des Moines, Iowa, where she is the principal.**

I had been an elementary administrator for about nine years when I first heard about the SAM (School Administration Manager) project. I was in my second year as elementary principal in West Des Moines, Iowa. I had begun to make significant changes in this building and had already asked teachers to think about their educational purpose and programs much differently than they had before. We were in the initial stages of using instructional decision making and professional learning communities to focus on using relevant data to make highly effective instructional decisions.

Each building administrator in my district had been asked to indicate his or her interest in a time analysis study with possible future implications. Little did I know that this SAM would have such a huge impact on the way that I look at everything I do.

I didn't know much about the School Administration Manager project at that point, but I did know that I was already really busy and exhausted daily. I was shadowed for a week by someone from outside the district trained in the SAM protocol, and I was sure that this initial examination would show just how busy I was. My time change coach, Carol Lensing, a retired superintendent who works with The Wallace Foundation on the SAM project, went over my baseline data with me. It turns out my instincts were right — I was really busy. I was just wasn't busy on the right things. My baseline

showed that I spent 32% of my time on instructional tasks. Lensing shared my information and told me I could decide if and how it would be shared with others. She also suggested some ways that I could work to make that percentage change, if I wanted to. Now I had some questions to consider. What should I do with this information? Would I be able to effectively implement SAM? Who would be a good SAM for me? Do I have the right relationship with anyone in a relatively new position for this to work? Would there be a cost — financial and relational? Could I give up being a manager — and do I really want to? Would I be supported at the central office level? These are some of the questions I worked through as I moved forward.

I went back to the educational leadership research that had been presented to me over time. I knew that instructional leaders can make an impact on student achievement. If I could focus my time on instructional issues, I could make a greater impact on student achievement. I talked with key people in my life about my vision for implementation of SAM and asked for the district superintendent's support.

**What is SAM?**

The School Administration Manager (SAM) project is a national pilot project funded by The Wallace Foundation to better understand how principals spend their time and to develop strategies to help principals focus more of their time on teaching and learning. The project's goal is to shift the principal's time away from administrative duties to provide more time for instructional leadership responsibilities.

In addition to providing principals with the data and strategies to enhance their instructional capacity, schools participating in the project may also choose to designate a person as a SAM, a person to whom the principal delegates some administrative duties in order to shift focus to instructional tasks.

To learn more about the SAM project, see **www.wallacefoundation.org/SAM.**

## MOVING AHEAD WITH SAM

As we moved forward, we used an existing position in the school (my principal secretary) and reallocated some of her tasks to other staff members in order to implement SAM. We received a small increase in clerical time to accommodate the implementation of SAM. My SAM, Rhonda Neal, had participated in a similar project in a corporate setting, so she understood what a SAM's role would be. She also has a clear understanding of my educational vision and personality.

Neal and I were trained on the software component for the implementation of SAM. Together we set goals for the percentage of time I would spend on instructional tasks and talked through coding the tasks and events of the day. We agreed to meet daily to track events. In our meetings, we would also talk about management tasks I could delegate and my specific instructional goals, and we would share gentle coaching comments. Initially, our meetings were spent almost entirely on the analysis of how I spent time. Because the data collection and software allows for specific instructional categories, we discussed what instructional category would be the best fit. For example, would the discussion within grade-level meeting be considered a decision-making group category, or a planning/curriculum/assessment category?

My SAM schedules all my meetings and my teacher pre-observation conferences, observations, and post-observation conferences. She takes all my phone calls and answers most of the questions that people may have. Neal reminds me of my specific instructional goals — to increase time spent modeling/co-teaching, providing feedback, and being a part of student celebrations — and holds me accountable to the schedule appropriately.

I believed it was important to share my baseline data and plan for SAM implementation with the school staff and with the community. I have continued to demonstrate my focus with complete transparency. Neal facilitates the changing perception of how I use my time within school and community by communicating about what I do with complete openness. For example, she specifically shares that I am working with 2nd-grade teachers to plan math lessons, rather than saying, "She's never in the office anymore. I'm not sure where she is." She also deals with ordering, purchasing, and receiving supplies. She takes care of the logistical aspects of assemblies, events, and standardized testing. Neal schedules student celebrations focused on instruction. No longer do I deal with most building maintenance issues or share management information with staff. My SAM takes care of it. She promotes the vision for the school with staff, students, families, and community so that I can focus on instructional leadership. The most important thing that Neal does for me is to protect my time so that I can be the kind of instructional leader I want and need to be.

My colleagues have noticed that SAM expands leadership opportunities beyond what we initially expected. As we talk more openly in the school about our instructional goals and our data, teachers have more opportunities for leadership as well. Our decision-making processes have shifted as I participate side-by-side in teaching and learning. This also helps me be more accessible to both teachers and students.

At our first annual data collection last October, we were eager to see if the external data collector coded events the way that we had on the software calendar. My monthly goal was to increase the percentage of time on instructional tasks from my baseline of 32% to 75% by the following year. My first annual data collection showed that I was spending 74% of my time on instructional tasks. And, although I had not made my goal of 75%, I was pleased. Recently I completed my second annual data col-

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*Continued from p. 37 (Troyce Fisher)*

Foundation supported our work in innumerable ways. Because of the findings from the research they commissioned, the support of the national coalition of partners they assembled, the ongoing professional development we were given, and the networks of grantees they fostered, we were able to apply the best research to our efforts.

**The key word is system:** Developing a cohesive leadership system means addressing all parts of the system. The comprehensiveness of our work was overwhelming at times, but without paying attention to how all the facets impacted each other, we wouldn't have realized the levels of success we have to date. Having standards requires aligning evaluation systems to those standards and training people in how to coach and evaluate against those standards. Revising preparation programs means having cohesive mentoring and induction programs in place once those aspiring leaders land jobs. Robust training through leadership academies requires coordination between higher education, intermediate service agencies, and professional associations. Polices at the state and local level must be enacted that reinforce best practices. Changing only one part of the system while not addressing all of the others that impact the work would be wasted energy.

**There's no there there:** This is a process, and we're not there yet. In fact, we doubt that we ever will be. The more we accomplish, the more we see there is to accomplish. Iowa's school leaders have their biggest challenge ahead as they work to implement the Iowa Core Curriculum, which details learner outcomes for every student. Based on input received from the Leadership Partnership group, we have now launched a public engagement effort to help Iowa's communities understand the magnitude of the changes that need to occur in schooling if our students are to achieve success in the 21st century. From that, some other need will emerge.

## LOOKING AHEAD

Despite all the lessons and challenges, we know we are on our way. We've enjoyed progress in improving leadership statewide and a measure of success. We believe we are building a scaffold of supports for leaders in the form of standards, training, and conditions that can equip them to meet the learning needs of every student in Iowa. We won't be content until that's true.

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*Continued from p. 41 (Carol Seid)*

lection. My goal now is to maintain 75% to 80% of my time on instructional issues. I am hoping soon to see data indicating I have been able to attain at least 80% of my time on instructional tasks. I do not think that all my time can or should be focused on instruction. There will always be management issues that the principal needs to handle. The daily SAM meeting itself is a management task. Yet I know how easy it is to be overwhelmed with those management issues and lose sight of the most important responsibility: how to ensure that each student has the highest quality educational program possible. SAM helps me retain that focus, always.

## SCHOOL RESULTS

Fairmeadows is a building with positive student achievement data. Last year, our building student achievement goals were to have 92% of students in grades 3-6 demonstrate proficiency (at least the 40th percentile) on core areas for the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills, 95% of students in grades K-6 demonstrate proficiency in reading, and 77% of all students proficient in mathematics on district assessments. These goals represent a 5% increase in proficiency from the previous year. We met these student achievement goals.

I am not naïve enough to think that SAM made this happen. I am privileged to have extremely professional, effective, and dedicated teachers and amazing students at Fairmeadows. The initiatives we continue to refine and implement (instructional decision making and professional learning communities) provide a structure for our community to maintain a focus on improvement of instructional strategies to increase student achievement. I do believe that our implementation of SAM has been a factor in the effectiveness of instructional strategies and the efficient use of data to drive instructional decisions. These are aligned quite closely because the purpose is the same for each of these big initiatives: ensuring the highest quality educational programs for each student at Fairmeadows. Our student achievement goals for this year continue to focus on increasing the proficiency for each student at Fairmeadows.

## SAM CHALLENGES

This is nowhere near a perfect world. We struggled with some aspects of SAM as we began our implementation. We are glad to look back on some of those struggles, while other aspects of our implementation continue to be challenges. Right away we

*Continued from p. 39 (James Luján)*

There is an urgency to educate instructional leaders about quantitative and qualitative analysis of school data. However, instructional leaders must instill that sense of data accountability within all stakeholders involved in improving student learning. As Henry Ford said, "Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success."

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**Asking the right questions**

In my leadership role, I ask several questions to understand how various sources of data can guide instructional improvement and professional development plans.

- **What do the data tell us?** While Ernie Pyle teachers are reaching proficiency on standards, they must also target intervention based on specific item analysis for student groups.
- **What questions are further raised by these data?** Does movement of students between classes or schools have an effect on results/scores and data?
- **What standards do we need to focus on, by grade level, for more improvement?**
- **What's working?** Earlier data analysis tells us that a focus on standards, critical thinking, reteaching, and assessment supports student proficiency.
- **What's not working?** We learn from data that some teachers are teaching skills in isolation and working in isolation, negating the benefits of collaboration with colleagues.
- **What are our opportunities for improvement?** Staff members need more information and training on our data system to know how to access information. They need to continue collaboration on content and teaching specific skills.
- **What do we need to focus on next?** Grade levels need to collaborate on content to assure all staff is teaching essential skills. Teachers need support on differentiated instructional strategies.

*— James Luján*

struggled with the software. We struggled with our district technology folks and SAM tech support staff to find a way to use the software more efficiently. We can say without a doubt that this is an aspect we are glad to look back on now.

At first, our daily SAM meetings were focused on how to code events. It was a part of every month's meeting with our time change coach for that first year. We rarely have those discussions now. We continue to struggle with time. There are days when Neal and I don't get to meet. If that happens a couple days in a row, I feel lost and less effective.

I thought I might regret giving up some management tasks and the acknowledgement I would get from them. Any acknowledgement I may have given up has been replaced by the satisfaction I have knowing I am focused on the right work now.

There are people who do not care for the implementation of SAM because they don't have the access to the principal that they were used to. There are some situations that need to be addressed by the building administrator, and others that are perceived as needing to be addressed by the building administrator. I work hard to ensure that all situations are addressed in a caring manner, but not necessarily by the building administrator. I am not willing to sabotage my instructional leadership to appease everyone's perception of my role.

**HONING MY FOCUS**

I have heard from other administrators that they are too busy to meet daily with a SAM. My response to them is that I am too busy not to meet with Neal. I can't afford to spend any of my time inefficiently. There is just too much at stake for our students and community. I cannot overemphasize how important the coaching aspect of SAM is, along with the analysis of the data.

We ask teachers to use relevant data to make instructional decisions in their classrooms. This is a way I can use data as an administrator to ensure I am making effective instructional decisions as well.

The data from this initiative allowed me to see in black-and-white the difference between what I thought I was doing and what I actually did instructionally. Richard Elmore reminds us that we must be focused on the right work. SAM is the way I can maintain my focus on the right work.

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# 3 STEPS LEAD TO DIFFERENTIATION

**By Linda Bowgren and Kathryn Sever**

Just as all students do not benefit from a one-size-fits-all model of learning, neither do teachers. Much has been written about the value, need, and complexity of differentiating learning within every classroom based on student readiness, motivation and interest, apparent skills, learning preferences or styles, and identified cognitive needs. Teachers are encouraged to look at differentiation for students not as a formula for teaching, but rather as a way of thinking about and shaping the learning experiences of all (Tomlinson, 1999). If, as Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock note in their book, *Classroom Instruction That Works* (2001), it is the classroom teacher that is the most important factor in student success, then how can we ignore the value of differentiation for teachers?

What is differentiated learning? Rick Wormeli (2006) tells us in his book, *Fair Isn't Always Equal*, that teachers must do whatever it takes to provide students with a chance for success. This means teachers give every learner whatever he or she needs before teaching, while teaching, and after teaching. Teachers change the nature of the learning to fit the needs of the learner. While the intent is for all students to learn the same content and standards, teachers will have to find the best path to that content for each particular learner. Differentiation does not dilute content, add to content, or change content. Rather, it presents content in differing ways with necessary adjustments to pave each learner's way to successful learning.

A district's staff is as diversified as any classroom of students. There are reluctant learners, gifted learners, those who struggle with literacy, numeracy, or technology, those who are artistic, as well as others who find it difficult to sit still for more than an hour at a time. Without different pathways that are specific to each learner's

needs, only a portion of these learners will succeed. Professional growth is vital for every educator, but it is not always shaped in ways that work for each individual. Differentiation guarantees all learners the opportunity to succeed. If districts intend to add value to professional development, they must consider the power of differentiation for teacher learning.

**JOB-EMBEDDED DIFFERENTIATION**

In the foreword for NSDC's *Professional Learning in the Learning Profession: A Status Report on Teacher Development in the United States and Abroad*, James B. Hunt Jr. writes, "It is time for our education workforce to engage in learning the way other professionals do — continually, collaboratively, and on the job — to address common problems and crucial challenges where they work" (2009). Ongoing, differentiated professional development allows teachers to optimize their learning through the context of their daily classroom practice.

As we wrote in *Differentiated Professional Development in a Professional Learning Community* (Bowgren & Sever, 2010), teachers receive the differentiated support they need to transfer theory into practice using a three-step process: "I do," "we do," and "you do." The "I do" step of demonstration and expectation provides the modeling that offers teachers a common springboard from which to launch a learning process. The "we do" step of approximation and response personalizes the learning through joint practice and coaching support that ultimately results in the "you do" step of responsibility and independent practice. When districts use an in-house coaching model during the second step of this model, research-based strategies are infused throughout all teachers' classrooms, resulting in a systemic approach that increases student achievement. Coaching promises follow-up action. Effective coaching relationships are true examples of a differentiated learning model. The types of coaching offered, however, must be dependent upon each learner's needs. Individual learners do not experience the same type of coaching, but all coaching focuses on the learning that has been demonstrated in the first step of "I do." Following the demonstrations in this first step, learners enter the collaborative coaching of "we do," where they are given ample time and opportunity for approximations. Together, coaches and learners decide what is missing, what learning and strategies to target, and what data to collect in order to plan next steps. Individual coaching over time allows learning to become transparent for each learner, resulting in the embedding of the new learning in each classroom setting during the "you do" step.

Teacher learning is demonstrated through changes in behavior, such as routinely implementing a teaching strategy deemed effective through the collection of student data. Brian Cambourne (2000) believes that learning, or behavior change, happens when the learner has models, feedback, peer support, and a lot of practice. Learners move from novice to more expert through social interactions with others who are more knowledgeable. As learners share expertise with peers, the learning continues. This model of learning is the "gradual release of responsibility" (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983) where participants feel a purposeful shift in their level of accountability for the learning.

**If districts intend to add value to professional development, they must consider the power of differentiation for teacher learning.**

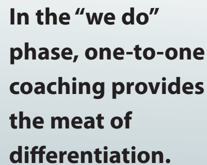
**DOING IN-DEPTH**

Let's take a more detailed look at the steps in the model to show how all teachers can move from initial learning to successfully embedding practice in a way that is responsive to the needs of both teachers and students.

**I DO**

In the "I do" stage, the teacher leader demonstrates the new learning through a traditional workshop setting or through modeling during team meetings or in

classrooms. New learning topics are determined after districts, teams, disciplines, or grade levels gather and interpret student data. The "I do" step makes the connection between new learning and district initiatives and cements the purpose for any new professional development. Teachers become aware of expectations and the process for reaching them. As part of this process, teacher leaders invite questions, develop vocabulary, and propose action research possibilities for each participant. To illustrate, we can envision a guided reading workshop. Once participants learn about the necessary research base for the strategies, teacher leaders model the process with a group of students while their colleagues observe the demonstration. One leader may do the modeling while another cues the participants about what to observe and why: "Listen to how Kyle is reinforcing prediction skills…" When learners observe, they see how to do something and build an understanding for its purpose and value.




## WE DO

After presenting the necessary background and initial modeling, teacher leaders segue to the "we do" phase of the model. In this phase, one-to-one coaching provides the meat of differentiation.

After observing, asking questions, and reflecting, participants begin to "learn by doing" (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2006). Each learner is allowed many tries and time to achieve self-sufficiency with the learning. Some participants now work with their coaches in a push-in model, others co-plan and co-teach, while others engage in continued observations. Each of these methods provides time for developing individual action research plans for all classrooms. Coaching requires a variety of skills and levels of trust between leaders and learners. Differentiated coaching builds emotional connections where colleagues become equal partners in search of effective learning paths. Perhaps Teacher A would like to have the "I do" teacher leader model the guided reading format with additional student groups while Teacher B feels ready to jump in and lead a group, asking the leader to provide feedback and coaching. We begin to see the need and opportunity for differentiation. While Teacher A is not quite ready to enter the collaborative effort of "we do," Teacher B is anxious to begin a coaching relationship. The "we do" phase is the opportunity for absolute differentiation during practice, through feedback, reflection, and purposeful planning. The demonstrations of "I do" have left these two teachers in different stages of understanding and at different levels of confidence. Each will receive support that is unique to his or her readiness. This differentiation ensures growth and eventual success for each of these teachers, and is most often missing from traditional professional development.

## YOU DO

The "you do" step is a time of full control. The teacher-learners make the final shift and accept ownership of their learning through independent action, allowing them to use their own

### THE MODEL IN ACTION

Differentiated, job-embedded professional learning is key to unlocking the potential of all adult learners. By experiencing the power of differentiation in their own learning, teachers will be better equipped to transfer differentiated support to their students, regardless of the focus of their own professional growth.

In the Maine-Endwell Central School District in upstate New York, the "I do, we do, you do" model has been successfully implemented to support numeracy instruction at the elementary level and literacy across the content areas K-12. Let's consider one example.

- **Through data analysis,** middle school teachers discovered that their students struggled with editing tasks on state assessments.
- **As the colleagues** discussed the data, they realized the curriculum was not thoroughly addressing the state guidelines for this particular skill.
- **As a result,** grades 6, 7, and 8 language arts and literacy teachers adjusted their existing curriculum maps. They identified targets for each grade level that would build student ability in editing tasks.

#### I DO

- **These teams** of teachers expressed a need for professional development to help them develop new lessons and strategies to address current instructional gaps. During a team meeting, language arts teachers asked the middle school literacy team (three literacy teachers and one academic intervention teacher) to model some editing strategies for them to begin teaching. They had established a target and focus for the initial "I do" step of differentiated professional development.
- **Since literacy team** teachers were already involved with push-in activities with language arts teachers, they agreed to provide several demonstrations over the next few weeks. They also offered to present a two-hour workshop session to teach language arts teachers a method for teaching a strategy as well as providing a list of best practice strategies that they would be demonstrating in the classrooms.

**WE DO**

- **Literacy team** members provided follow-up through individualized coaching as they continued their push-in work in classrooms. In this case, language arts teachers practiced the initial demonstrations during the "we do" step with their teacher leaders now becoming their coaches.
- **A few took** advantage of colleague-to-colleague visits during this practice time in order to watch the action in other classrooms. A number of others engaged in co-teaching with their coach to solidify the methods and language of the new strategies. Still others desired more demonstrations before they were ready to try what the coach was doing. More traditional professional development might have found these teachers attending a workshop to learn new strategies, but would never have offered the coaching each would need over time to successfully transfer workshop information to classroom practice.

**YOU DO**

- **One by one,** these language arts teacher learners consistently embedded the new strategies into their daily work. Each entered the "you do" step of independence, able to lead their students to higher achievement levels with editing skills. They no longer needed the demonstrations and specific feedback provided in "I do" and "we do."
- **However, they did not** all enter "you do" at the same time or with the same amount of expertise. Nevertheless, their in-house coaches continued to be available. Their professional learning was job-embedded with a coach who worked along with them in the classroom.
- **Once teachers** reached the "you do" step, coaches sustained them with encouragement and continued support through face-to-face meetings, e-mail journaling, and team sharing time to help learners maintain their level of success. And then it was on to the next topic and continued differentiated professional development.
- **When the teachers** studied initial data from the current state assessment, the growth in student achievement was astounding. Students attaining mastery on the editing section jumped 20%, while the number of students at proficiency increased by 30%. What a testimony to the power of targeted, differentiated professional development.

learning to create student learning. Colleague-to-colleague support results in deeper learning for both the participants and the teacher leaders and coaches. Haven't we all learned new things through our teaching? Through this collaboration of teacher-learner and colleague-coach, the learning is ongoing as well as job-embedded.

Even after the teacher-learner is comfortable with embedding the new learning independently, the coach is still available for a peer observation or simply to answer questions as they arise. At this point, the teacher and coach may establish new goals for their collaborative learning journey. When professional development is differentiated, school communities become stronger, providing the foundation for student learning.

To be successful with this differentiated model of professional development, teacher leaders/coaches must experience the learning necessary to develop the coaching skills that they will need to support their colleagues. They need pedagogical expertise, yet they must also learn about adult learning and coaching. Administrators must not only "talk the talk" but must also model their understanding and prioritization of job-embedded professional development. This is reflected in how they allocate time and money.

What must educators do to redesign their professional development? Differentiation is crucial in revamping a traditional approach. Regardless of the professional development targets of your district, employing a differentiated, job-embedded model of professional development will add value to your learning community by providing an arena for teachers to improve instructional practice that will be evidenced in increased student achievement.

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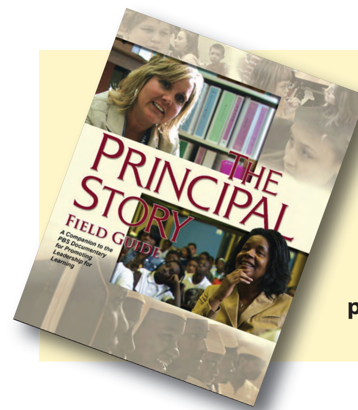
# TWO PRINCIPALS, TWO JOURNEYS




The Field Guide and the clip reel are available free online at **www.nsdc.org/news/principalstory/**

THE PRINCIPAL STORY is a national broadcast film and media outreach project commissioned by The Wallace Foundation. Originally broadcast on PBS, the film follows the journey of two elementary school principals throughout a school year as they strive to improve student achievement and implement school reform.

Featured are novice principal Tresa D. Dunbar of the Henry H. Nash Elementary School in Chicago and veteran principal Kerry Purcell of Harvard Park Elementary School in Springfield, Ill.

Their stories unfold in an hour-long documentary that illustrates the struggles and successes these leaders encounter. Visit **www.wallacefoundation.org/principalstory** for more information about the film.

A clip reel includes 23 minutes of scenes from THE PRINCIPAL STORY. Scenes are organized around four themes that are central to the role of principals in improving teaching and learning. The clip reel may be viewed in its entirety, without stopping, or on a start-and-stop basis to view sequentially.

NSDC was honored to contribute to this project and created THE PRINCIPAL STORY Field Guide to accompany the film and clip reel.

Included here are excerpts from the field guide — facilitator's tools and notes on using a portion of the film to discuss the principal's role in creating an effective learning environment.

**Discussion prompts for pre-viewing**

- **Creating** an instructional environment conducive to learning for all students and teachers should be a top priority for school leaders. What are the key characteristics of such an environment? What responsibilities — such as developing leadership teams, addressing discipline issues, and working with families — do principals have for creating and maintaining schools that are focused on learning?
- **How can** developing the leadership skills of staff help build sustainable learning environments?
- **To what degree** are principals in your district prepared to lead teachers in creating high-quality instructional environments so that all students succeed in school?
- **What actions** should central office administrators take to support principals' focus on teaching and learning? For example, how might districts help principals build the capacity of teachers, strengthen their own skills, and engage school communities?

In Clip 3, Tresa and Kerry grapple with balancing student discipline with the need to nurture children and give them the means to a successful future. The clip also emphasizes that parents are vital participants in the school learning community.

# CREATING THE INSTRUCTIONAL ENVIRONMENT

**CLIP 3:** Tresa and Kerry grapple with balancing student discipline with the need to nurture children and give them the means to a successful future. The clip also emphasizes that parents are vital participants in the school learning community.

**SAMPLE AGENDA**

**Film clip:** Creating the Instructional Environment (www.nsdc.org/news/principalstory/Principal_Story_Clip_Reel.cfm)

**Outcome:** Examine how school leaders create the instructional environment

**Setup:** Table groups of 4 to 8 participants each

**Time:** 1 hour 15 minutes

| TIME | TOPIC | ACTIVITIES | MATERIALS AND TOOLS |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **Preparation** | Post the title of the film clip and the session outcomes. | Name tags, agendas |
| 15 min. | **Meet and greet** | Ask participants to greet each other by sharing one benefit of studying school leadership. | |
| 15 min. | **Pre-view activity** | Ask participants to identify the greatest challenges in creating a quality instructional environment. Record their responses on chart paper and post. | Chart paper, markers, tape/tacks |
| 5 min. | **Film introduction** | Inform viewers of the purpose of viewing this film clip, its length, and the plan to engage in discussion after viewing the clip. Ask participants to watch for examples of how principals create an instructional environment. | |

| TIME | TOPIC | ACTIVITIES | MATERIALS AND TOOLS |
|---|---|---|---|
| 7 min. | **View the film** | Watch the film clip. | DVD player, film clip, speakers |
| 15 min. | **Table discussion** | Review discussion guidelines with the group. Ask table groups to discuss strengths and weaknesses of how each principal developed an instructional environment. | Discussion guidelines (see p. 44 in the field guide) |
| 10 min. | **Group presentations** | Invite participants to share one strength and one weakness of each principal that they heard in their group. | |
| 5 min. | **Reflection** | Ask participants to answer in writing the question: What has become clearer to you about creating instructional environments? | Notepaper |
| 5 min. | **Closing** | Ask participants to share one idea with the group. | |
| 3 min. | **Wrap-up** | Tell participants how to access more resources related to THE PRINCIPAL STORY. Thank participants for attending. | |

**Discussion prompts for post-viewing**

- **How did** Tresa and Kerry balance the demands of schools and districts with those of the larger community? How do public expectations of principals differ from the expectations of school staffs and district supervisors?
- **What specific** challenges do new principals like Tresa face in creating and maintaining instructional environments that support effective instruction?
- **How did** Tresa and Kerry use data to improve teaching and learning in their schools? How can principals engage teachers in using data?
- **Describe the ways** Tresa and Kerry interacted with families. How were the interactions of the veteran leader different from those of the novice principal? How do principals work effectively with parents and their communities to support student learning in their schools?
- **What do** principals and teachers need to know and do in order to create instructional environments that promote learning for students from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds? What evidence did you observe at Nash and Harvard Park that the schools offer equitable or inequitable experiences for their students?
- **What roles** do mentors, principal supervisors, and central office administrators play in developing school communities that are responsive to the learning needs of students from all backgrounds? What examples did you see at Nash and Harvard Park? What data or strategies might help principals or central office administrators assess the effectiveness of instructional environments in their schools?

# Engage in conversations that enrich relationships, build meaningful partnerships, and expand knowledge

*Carol Corwell-Martin is supervisor of the Washington County (Md.) Public Schools' Center for Peak Performance and Productivity. In this issue, Corwell-Martin shares how she and her colleagues use conversations to further the professional learning in their district. The primary differentiator for individuals and organizations is our ability to connect at a deep level with those who are central to our success and happiness. This is the No. 1 competency employers seek, the glue that keeps couples together when things get tough, the experience that makes life so precious. And it occurs, or fails to occur, one conversation at a time, at work, at home, in our communities. Anything we can do to improve on this, wherever we are, is of tremendous value.* — *Susan Scott*

**By Carol Corwell-Martin**

"I see that I spend a lot of my time in conversations. It's really the core of the day." Teachers around the table nod in agreement as we review their monthly logs. "Yes, the same for me," remarks another. "The teachers and administrators are coming to me looking for resources, data collection ideas, and Critical Friends Group issues."

So starts a recent discussion with teachers in the Center for Peak Performance and Productivity, our county's professional development office. The four teachers sitting around the table serve the county's 45 schools in two major roles: as professional developers and as mentor teachers to new teachers. The results told a story. Whether they wore the hat of a professional developer, or a mentor, or that of a consultant, collaborator, or coach, no matter with whom they were speaking — teachers, principals, school teams, or central office supervisors — conversations were the core of the work. It was unanimous.

I smiled. One conversation at a time, one relationship at a time, and one school at a time, we were turning around old paradigms and ways of going about the business of professional development.

One theme has become clear: Conversations are central to high-quality professional development. Look at NSDC, Title II, or your state's standards for professional development. The standards are laden with references to conversation: planned collaboratively, continuous feedback, reflection, self-assessment, inquiry, and peer coaching. Moller and Pankake (2006) describe professional learning: "The real learning happens in the cycle of conversations, actions, evaluation, and new actions."

Two years ago, I first saw the book *Fierce Conversations* at a peer coaching session. The quote on the back was intriguing: "While no single conversation is guaranteed to change the trajectory of a career, a company, a relationship, or a life, any single conversation can." The book gives synonyms for fierce: "robust, intense, strong, powerful, eager, unbridled" (Scott, 2002). As a county supervisor for professional developers, these characteristics are essential. It is no small task to convince educators that their instructional techniques or knowledge set may benefit from change.

**Corwell-Martin**

My staff and I were in the third year of working to redefine professional development practices by changing the way we worked with educators. We found that we were depending less on

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**In each issue of *JSD*, Susan Scott (susan@fierceinc.com) explores aspects of communication that encourage meaningful collaboration. Scott, author of *Fierce Conversations: Achieving Success At Work & In Life, One Conversation at a Time* (Penguin, 2002) and *Fierce Leadership: A Bold Alternative to the Worst "Best" Practices of Business Today* (Broadway Business, 2009), leads Fierce Inc. (www.fierceinc.com), which helps companies around the world transform the conversations that are central to their success. Fierce in the Schools carries this work into schools and higher education.**

Columns are available at www.nsdc.org.

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teaching others through trainings than we had in the past. Instead, we were engaging others in on-the-job conversations that enriched relationships, built meaningful partnerships, and expanded knowledge. These conversations captured critical components necessary to transfer skills and bring about change.

We learned about four conversational models, each with a purpose central to the work of education leaders: involving teams in decision making, coaching, delegating, and confronting problem attitudes or behaviors. The models provide structure to these conversations, and this communication philosophy is providing our office an enriched way of conducting business, of leading the learning, and clarifying priorities.

## FIVE KEY IDEAS THAT HAVE IMPACTED OUR WORK

**1. The conversation is the relationship.**

If the conversation stops, so goes the relationship. Think about your role. Are conversations a priority? I don't mean e-mails. If you made time for conversations, could you envision more success in helping a school with their school improvement plan, a teacher get through the implementation dip in the use of a new strategy, or a colleague rethinking a stalled initiative?

The landmark Joyce & Showers research (1980) pointed out that transference of skills requires specific steps that involve conversation: practice, feedback, and coaching. If you want change, you've got to talk with people one-on-one or in small groups so you can truly listen to what people are saying. In my context, this has meant a teacher from our professional development office is assigned to every school, engaging individuals and small groups in robust conversations about strengths, needs, and how their work is evolving. It has meant a central office buddy is assigned to all instructional staff carrying on regularly scheduled conversations, followed by relentless follow-through and ongoing support.

**2. Conversations versus "versations."**

Are you talking *with* others (in Spanish, "con" means "with") or *to* them (versations)? Clark (2001) writes, "Conversations feel like an exploratory, wandering walk around a mutually interesting place, rather than a direct journey from one point to another." For me, this has meant a very different way of approaching my planning meetings with staff. Rather than checking off my to-do list of activities, focusing on my priorities, and advising the staff how to successfully bring about task completion, conversations are *with* my staff, focused on *their* issues, and that mutually interesting place for our discussion. I still have priority items to discuss. It's just not the focus of our planning time.

**3. Remove the word "but" from your vocabulary.**

Have you thought about how "but" impacts a conversation and how often you interject it into conversations?

"That's a really good idea, but ..." "I understand what you're saying, but ..." Is this the message you want to send? "Thanks for the idea, but, of course, mine is better because, after all, I'm from the central office, so I must know more about professional development than you." This practice was one of the first fierce practices to take hold in our office. We started listening for the word *but* and consciously began to use the word *and* instead. *And* changes the message you send to others and triggers a different message in your head. Try it.

**4. How we spend our days is how we spend our lives.**

Time is a scarce commodity in education and for anyone involved with professional development. Are you busy or are you doing the most important things, making time for your core responsibilities versus tasks? Our transformation from a focus on activities, and reasons why it is not possible to reach goals, to a focus on results, holding ourselves accountable, and execution of initiatives has had a huge impact on our work. We've moved from a focus on dates and activities to a focus on results. A results focus means we gather and analyze qualitative and quantitative data, evidence of the impact of our work.

**5. Ship to shore conversations.**

In *Fierce Conversations* (2002), we read about the separation between the office and vessel people in a fishing company. The office people complain that the vessel people don't appreciate their work, and vice versa. It reminded me of the animosity that can exist between central office people and the school people, stemming from the difference in roles and the communication gaps that occur when people work in different sites. Time and logistics make it tough to keep the conversations going, and yet, conversations take time. Not having them takes even longer. In our office, making conversations a priority closes that communication gap and brings the office and "vessel" people closer together.

## REFERENCES

**Clark, C. (Ed.) (2001).** *Talking shop: Authentic conversation and teacher learning.* New York: Teachers College Press.

**Joyce, B. & Showers, B. (1980, February).** Improving inservice training: The messages of research. *Educational Leadership, 37*(5), 379-385.

**Moller, G. & Pankake, A. (2006).** *Lead with me: A principal's guide to teacher leadership.* Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education.

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Guerra

Nelson

# Use a systematic approach for deconstructing and reframing deficit thinking

An interesting change occurs as educators develop cultural proficiency. After about a year of participating in ongoing professional development, they begin to develop a pluralistic or social justice lens. Ethnocentrism — the idea that one's own culture is superior — is replaced by an understanding that an individual viewpoint is one of multiple perspectives. Each perspective is neither right nor wrong, but different. They begin to see inequities they hadn't noticed earlier. As their lens widens, educators identify systemic inequities in practice and policies that favor some student groups over others. For example, they can recognize culturally irrelevant instruction and curriculum, culturally biased assessment procedures, and exclusive parent involvement programs.

Educators with this newly acquired social justice lens are eager to address the inequities they see. They understand they cannot do it alone, so they often want to assist colleagues in becoming culturally proficient by leading book or article studies related to culturally responsive teaching and learning. To be effective, these studies must be led be a skilled facilitator who can challenge and reframe the deficit thinking that will inevitably emerge. Educators express deficit thinking when they attribute students' struggles in school to their cultures and, specifically, to how they assume those cultures deny students' access to resources, effective parenting, and early learning opportunities. Some educators mistakenly believe just reading the right materials will be enough to transform deficit thinking. This is not the case. Most people do not transform their deficit thinking solely through reading. They require guidance from a facilitator with an extensive knowledge of culture along with the courage to question, probe, and push thinking.

Carefully selected literature on systemic inequities and culturally responsive practice will surface deficit beliefs because they find it difficult to believe research that counters long-held assumptions, generalizations, and stereotypes. With little to no authentic experience with diversity, this new information measured against their personal experiences and middle-class standards produces cognitive dissonance. Struggling to reconcile this dissonance, individuals usually voice deficit beliefs when providing examples of personal interactions with culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse students and parents. It is not uncommon to hear comments like, "These kids come without any experiences," "These children are loud and don't know how to sit still," or "These parents don't come to meetings because they don't care about their child's education."

## ADDRESSING ASSUMPTIONS

To deconstruct and reframe deficit beliefs, facilitators need to consistently use one approach each time they hear a deficit belief. The approach we use is adapted from a model of reflection developed by Hatton and Smith (1995). This approach requires that trust be established within the group so that members feel supported rather than

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**In each issue of *JSD*, Sarah W. Nelson and Patricia L. Guerra write about the importance of and strategies for developing cultural awareness in teachers and schools. Nelson (swnelson@txstate.edu) is an assistant professor in the Department of Education and Community Leadership and associate director of the International Center for Educational Leadership and Social Change at Texas State University-San Marcos, and co-founder of Transforming Schools for a Multicultural Society (TRANSFORMS). Guerra (pg16@txstate.edu) is an assistant professor in the Department of Education and Community Leadership at Texas State University-San Marcos and co-founder of Transforming Schools for a Multicultural Society (TRANSFORMS).**
Columns are available at www.nsdc.org.

attacked when deficit beliefs are challenged. When deficit beliefs surface, resist the urge to respond using a didactic approach. Preaching about cultural differences or multiple realities does little to change deficit thinking and may result in a heated debate or lack of participation as individuals become defensive or hurt. To more effectively deconstruct deficit beliefs, encourage individuals to step back from the events and actions and describe, rather than interpret, the behavior of those involved in the situation. Help them understand that describing promotes problem solving, communication, and trust, which builds relations with students and parents, while interpreting or judging behavior shuts down communication and alienates students and parents.

The next step in deconstructing deficit thinking is to understand the origins of such beliefs. Ask purposeful questions to help group members identify assumptions governing their behavior, how they developed these assumptions, and how these assumptions are related to expectations for student and parent behavior.

Start by describing a common scenario that is encountered in schools or an expectation that is often held by educators. Ask group members to discuss their assumptions and beliefs about the scenario or expectation.

Here is just one example. Many educators believe education should be an equal partnership between teachers and parents. Formed from observing their own parents' involvement and teacher preparation coursework, this assumption is reinforced daily in school. Consequently, educators expect parents to help with academic learning and behavior management at home and in school, maintain regular communication, and volunteer at school. When culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse parents do not meet these expectations, educators assume the parents are unsupportive and don't value education.

## REFRAMING ASSUMPTIONS

Once such deficit beliefs are identified, they must be reframed. Have group members identify alternative explanations for behavior using the content of the articles they've read. The purpose here is to understand problematic situations in light of multiple perspectives. Use questions such as: "What else could be going on here?" "What's another way of thinking about this situation?" or "Based on what you've read on culture, what beliefs might be governing students'/parents' actions in this situation?"

Next, asking group members to consider the effects of their actions on students and parents and develop alternate actions informed by the reframing of the situation. Questions here might include: "What role did your actions play in the situation?" "What was the impact of your assumptions/beliefs on students and parents?" and "What alternate actions can you take?"

As the facilitator repeatedly models this process in study group sessions, educators learn to explore and reframe their own deficit beliefs. Once internalized, they apply this process to new situations and transform practice using the cultural knowledge they learned from their readings and discussions. In turn, they will use this process to challenge others' deficit beliefs.

Throughout the process, group members may offer personal experiences as evidence to validate deficit beliefs (i.e. "My friend who is Hispanic does…" or "My black co-worker says…"). When such claims surface, provide alternate examples to help group members understand individual cases from personal experience do not necessarily represent the experiences of an entire cultural group. Emphasize the necessity of reading multicultural research, which aids in understanding the experience of many and not just a few individuals. Also underscore that being a person of color does not automatically equate to having a deep understanding of one's cultural identity.

## THE POWER OF WORDS

Another caution for facilitators is to be aware of the deficit beliefs hidden in everyday language. Although often thought of as benign, expressions such as "ghetto," "Jew them down," and "redneck" or even subtle ones like "I'm just a teacher" or the "Subpopulation at our school is composed of…" label certain people as less than others. Allowing such language to go unchallenged suggests that listeners condone its use. In many cases, group members only need to be made aware of the power of language and its impact on others to understand why deficit language cannot be tolerated.

When comments like these surface, help the individual reflect by saying, "I heard you say … . Is this correct?

Without judgment, give the individual an opportunity to explain the comment by asking, "What do you mean by the term …?" Then explain what you heard or ask others in the group to explain their interpretations to help the speaker realize language often sends unintended messages. When this practice becomes the norm, group members will become more conscious of word choice and the intended and unintended messages of language.

Deconstructing and reframing deficit thinking requires knowledge of culture, group facilitation skills, courage, and, even more importantly, a systematic approach. Without those, the best intentions are likely to fail.

## REFERENCE

**Hatton, N. & Smith, D. (1995).** *Reflection in teacher education: Towards definition and implementation.* Sydney, Australia: The University of Sydney, School of Teaching and Curriculum Studies. Available online at http://alex.edfac.usyd.edu.au/LocalResource/Study1/hattonart.html. ■

DOWNLOAD FREE TEAM TOOLS

## www.nsdc.org/news/teamtools/

Each month, NSDC is offering free sample tools from our books, newsletters, and magazines. New tools will be available on the first of each month. We'll keep an archive of past featured tools available for browsing.

CREATE A CHANGE IN CLASSROOM PRACTICE

## www.nsdc.org/elearning/programs/

**Pat Roy**

Join NSDC author **Pat Roy** for a four-week program starting **May 17** focused on implementing professional development **strategies that improve student outcomes**. Framed around NSDC's Standards for Staff Development, this program will assist school and district leaders in moving NSDC's standards into practice in ways that improve all students' learning. Program attendees will use NSDC's Innovation Configuration (IC) maps to understand the responsibilities of different role groups within a school and district in implementating the standards, and will discuss how to share the ICs with colleagues in ways that strengthen their work as individual educators and as teams of learners.

GET A GUIDE TO EVALUATION

## www.nsdc.org/news/evalguide.cfm

NSDC and the Maryland Department of Education have jointly released *Teacher Professional Development Evaluation Guide*, a resource guide for assisting schools and districts to evaluate the impact of teacher professional development on teaching practice and student learning. The guide offers succinct recommendations for more frequent and more rigorous evaluation of teacher professional development to improve the quality of professional learning and its results for teachers and their students.

WHAT ABOUT THE LOW-PERFORMING TEACHER?

## www.nsdc.org/learningblog/

*Hayes Mizell blogs about the challenge of low-performing teachers in a district and cautions that professional learning is not a quick fix. From his posting:*

"It isn't clear that education leaders who advocate professional development as a "fix" for low-performing teachers have carefully considered their proposal. There are many reasons why some teachers are not effective. The continuum of inadequate performance includes a wide range of pedagogical deficiencies and behavioral anomalies. It requires time and effort to understand why a teacher is not effective, whether professional development is a potential remedy, and how to organize a set of learning experiences that may significantly improve the teacher's performance. Such a process should be serious and thoughtful; every teacher deserves that."

**Hayes Mizell**

**What do you think? Read Mizell's posting and others and offer your two cents.**

DOWNLOAD *JSD* TOOLS AND DISCUSSION GUIDES

## www.nsdc.org/news/jsd

For each issue of *JSD*, turn to the web for tools created specifically to support the use of the magazine with learning teams. Tools include discussion guides for specific themes and articles and reflection questions.

# abstracts

## theme LEADERSHIP

**Reimagining the job of leading schools:**
LESSONS FROM A 10-YEAR JOURNEY.
*By the staff of The Wallace Foundation*

After a decade-long commitment to creating a knowledge base on school leadership, The Wallace Foundation has disseminated valuable research to inform school, district, and state strategies and policies. The lessons encompass four big ideas: The job of lead schools must change, principal training must also change, several conditions support strong instructional leadership in schools, and states and districts must collaborate closely to ensure effective practices are aligned.

**State policy is key to building strong leaders.**
*As told to Valerie von Frank*

In a conversation with *JSD*, Gene Wilhoit, executive director of the Council of Chief State School Officers, shares his perspective on supporting leadership at all levels — from the state to the district to the school building. While he sees positive changes at all levels, he knows the entire system must be challenged to attain high levels of learning for all students.

**Urban renewal:**
THE URBAN SCHOOL LEADER TAKES ON A NEW ROLE.
*By Michael S. Knapp, Michael A. Copland, Meredith I. Honig, Margaret L. Plecki, and Bradley S. Portin*

A series of research studies investigated leadership in urban schools. From these studies emerged several related themes. Schools with improvements in leadership for learning focused persistently on instructional improvement goals, invested in an instructional leadership cadre within and across schools, reinvented the practice of leadership work, and paid sustained attention to leadership support at all levels.

**State of the states:**
THE SEARCH FOR WAYS TO IMPROVE INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP ZEROES IN ON 6 POLICY AREAS.
*By Catherine Augustine and Jennifer Russell*

Researchers engaged with state-level and school and district personnel to understand what state organizations do to advance leadership at the school and district level. The actions of states fall broadly into six areas: standards, licensure, preservice programs, professional development, evaluation, and improving conditions for school leaders.

**Developing cohesive leadership means addressing all parts of the system.**
*By Troyce Fisher*

An educator at the state level shares her perspective on what it means to work as part of a coordinated leadership system from the state building to the school building. She has learned the importance of relationships, a clear moral purpose, a solid theory of action, and engaging actively in the work. She also recognizes the value of foundation funding.

**Educators use student performance data to plan, implement, and evaluate.**
*By James Luján*

A principal in Albuquerque, N.M., explains how data in its many forms bolstered his success in taking an active role in leading the learning in his school. He outlines his lessons learned and the types of data that all instructional leaders took into account to improve student learning.

**Data present a clear picture of time spent on instructional tasks.**
*By Carol Seid*

When an opportunity arose to take part in the School Administration Manager (SAM) project, this principal in West Des Moines, Iowa, decided to see what she could learn about how she spent her time. By delegating administrative tasks and making instructional leadership a priority, she significantly increased the time spent on teaching and learning.

## feature

**Three steps lead to differentiation.**
*By Linda Bowgren and Kathryn Sever*

Children aren't the only students who benefit from differentiated learning experiences. The authors use a three-step model that allows adults to learn at their own pace through demonstrations and models, one-on-one coaching, and opportunities to try out new practices with ongoing support.

## columns

**Collaborative culture:**
ENGAGE IN CONVERSATIONS THAT ENRICH RELATIONSHIPS, BUILD MEANINGFUL PARTNERSHIPS, AND EXPAND KNOWLEDGE.
*By Susan Scott and Carol Corwell-Martin*

In her role in the county professional development center, this educator learned how central conversations are to the learning work her office supports, whether in team, coaching, or mentoring relationships.

**Cultural proficiency:**
USE A SYSTEMATIC APPROACH FOR DECONSTRUCTING AND REFRAMING DEFICIT THINKING.
*By Patricia L. Guerra and Sarah W. Nelson*

Educators eager to share their newfound passion for achieving cultural proficiency must deliberately facilitate discussions with their colleagues and recognize the journey will require addressing long-held beliefs and assumptions.

**From the director:**
WE NEED EVERY SCHOOL SYSTEM TO ESTABLISH ITS VISION FOR THE PRINCIPAL AS INSTRUCTIONAL LEADER.
*By Stephanie Hirsh*

Principals can take three immediate steps to improve their learning: Participate in the learning of the teachers in their school, join a principal learning community, and work one-on-one with a coach.

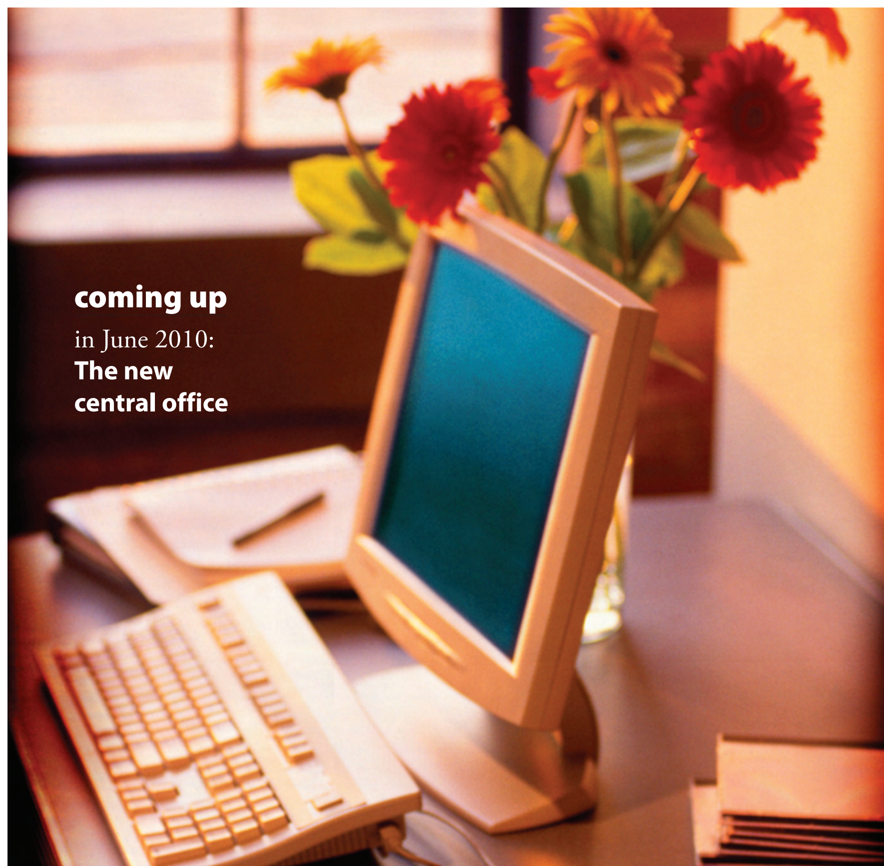
## call for articles

**Theme:** Working with external partners
**Manuscript deadline:** June 15, 2010
**Issue:** February 2011

Please send manuscripts and questions to Rebecca Bender (**rebecca.bender@nsdc.org**).

Notes to assist authors in preparing a manuscript are at **www.nsdc.org/news/jsd/guidelines.cfm**.

Themes for additional upcoming issues are available at **www.nsdc.org/news/jsd/themes.cfm**.

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# nsdc@work

CALLING ALL HIGH SCHOOLS

## Join the Learning School Alliance

Thanks in part to support from the Arthur Vining Davis Foundations and the MetLife Foundation, NSDC invites high schools to join the Learning School Alliance, NSDC's network of schools committed to improved professional practice and student achievement.

The Learning School process is based on research validating the effectiveness of professional learning communities in schools committed to improving the performance of both teachers and students. High school teachers and principals from no more than 30 schools will receive training, coaching, and facilitation to advance their skills in applying the NSDC Learning School principles and practices. Community members will learn together in their own schools, with other schools through webinars and facilitated conversations, and at NSDC conferences. They will share openly their goals, their progress — and over time — their results. Other benefits of membership include:

- Two complimentary and two discounted NSDC Summer Conference registrations;
- NSDC's Standards Assessment Inventory;
- Library of books and materials;
- Learning School Innovation Configuration tool to map a strategy for improvement;
- Five NSDC comprehensive memberships;
- Four discounted NSDC Annual Conference registrations;
- Monthly webinars and facilitated conversations tailored to participants' needs;
- Technical assistance and coaching support; and
- 24/7 online community networking and e-learning platform.

Applications are due May 31 or until all openings are filled. For more information or to apply online, visit **www.nsdc.org/alliance/.**

**Powerful words**

"The eye sees only what the mind is prepared to comprehend."

*— Henri Bergson*

NSDC CALENDAR

**May 31**
Last day to save $75 on registration for NSDC's 42nd Annual Conference in Atlanta, Ga.

**July 18-21**
NSDC's Summer Conference, Seattle, Wash.

**July**
Registration opens for NSDC's 42nd Annual Conference in Atlanta, Ga.

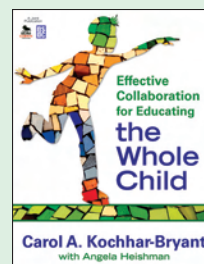
**Dec. 4-8**
NSDC's 42nd Annual Conference, Atlanta, Ga.

**book club**

EFFECTIVE COLLABORATION FOR EDUCATING THE WHOLE CHILD

It takes a team of professionals working together to support a child's emotional, physical, and academic development. In the next NSDC Book Club selection, Carol A. Kochhar-Bryant examines collaboration between educators to successfully teach children with complex learning needs, both with and without identified disabilities.

Developmentally responsive school environments depend on constructive relationships among the adults in a student's life, making this a vital resource for anyone who interacts with children.




Through a partnership with Corwin Press, NSDC members can add the Book Club to their membership at any time and receive four books a year for $49. To receive this book, add the NSDC Book Club to your membership before June 15. It will be mailed in July. For more information about this or any membership package, call NSDC at 800-727-7288 or e-mail NSDCoffice@nsdc.org.

## To have the greatest impact on student learning, every educator needs to be an instructional leader

**on board**
INGRID CARNEY

I have worked in leadership development for years, working with principals at all stages of their careers. I have led leadership academies that provided professional development for aspiring principals, beginning principals, midcareer principals, and veteran principals. My work has affirmed what so many in this issue of *JSD* attest to — an effective school leader is essential to move a school toward success.

In a school, instructional leadership isn't just the principal's responsibility. My belief is that if every educator's goal is for all children to learn at high levels, then every educator must wear the mantle of instructional leader. Roles in a school or system shouldn't dictate whether instructional leadership is an educator's responsibility — the goals for students should. An educator's position in the system simply determines how he or she fulfills leadership responsibilities.

What is instructional leadership? Instructional leadership is being relentless about improving teaching and learning. It is having a personal vision of what students can accomplish and being able to articulate that vision to the people in your sphere of influence, whether they are central office staff, principals, teacher leaders, teachers, parents, or students. Instructional leadership is being knowledgeable about teaching, learning, assessment, and use of data to improve everything. Effective instructional leaders observe, monitor, provide critical feedback, and work toward continuous improvement. They also provide coaching support and opportunities for reflection and growth. They know the value of communication and develop skills for having difficult conversations and building coalitions aligned toward a common vision.

In an aligned system, superintendents provide a supportive instructional context for central office staff and building leaders. Central office staff members ensure support and technical assistance to schools. Principals create a nurturing and stimulating learning environment for teachers so that they grow, create, and innovate. Teacher leaders and coaches provide modeling, support, and skills development for teachers. Teachers build classrooms that support, nurture, and stretch students and their learning. This is a model that brings NSDC's purpose to life: "Every educator engages in effective professional learning every day so every student achieves." When adults learn, children learn.

I know I'm not alone in feeling a sense of urgency about ensuring effective leadership. Leaders have an opportunity each day to create great learning experiences for children and adults, but those days pass quickly, and those opportunities pass. And, while I see the challenge in instilling and aligning this definition of leadership in school systems, the good news is that educators can learn to be a new type of leader. The professional learning that NSDC envisions for every educator puts leaders in collaborative learning environments where they can develop the expertise they'll need. With learning communities thriving at every level of a system and a guiding vision that permeates the work, the alignment of leadership actions will move students forward.

Coherent, aligned systems will have the greatest impact on student learning. In order to do this, every educator must see themselves as instructional leaders, and every conversation should begin with these questions: "What do the children need? What can we do? What else can we do? What else?"

I know I'm not alone in feeling a sense of urgency about ensuring effective leadership. Our students can't wait. We have to deliver, no matter what. No excuses. ■

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**Ingrid Carney is president of the National Staff Development Council.**

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## Foundation tops fund-raising goal of $40,000

The Impacting the Future Now Foundation surpassed its goal of raising $40,000 in honor of NSDC's 40th birthday. The foundation will use these funds to provide ongoing support for grants and scholarships. The 2010 awards will be announced shortly.

The funds include more than $6,700 raised at the silent auction at NSDC's 2009 Annual Conference. Many thanks to those who organized the auction and the many conference goers who made purchases. Their names, and those of donors to the foundation, are listed here. We have made every effort to provide a complete list of 2009 donors and sincerely regret any errors or admissions. Please contact Sybil Yastrow (sybil@yastrow.com) with corrections.

The foundation is dedicated to furthering NSDC's purpose by supporting a new generation of leaders in professional learning. Learn more about the foundation's scholarships and grants at **www.nsdc.org/getinvolved/foundation.cfm.**

Please consider a donation today. Your contribution will enable the foundation to continue its commitment to continuous learning for tomorrow's leaders.

**Future NSDC leaders:**

BOARD NOMINATIONS DUE JUNE 1

NSDC is seeking candidates for three open positions on the NSDC Board of Trustees. Members whose terms expire this year are past president Charles Mason, Alabama; Cheryl Love, Georgia; and Ed Wittchen, Alberta, Canada. The election will be held in September, and new board members will join the board at the conclusion of NSDC's 2010 Annual Conference in December.

To qualify to run for office, an individual must be a current NSDC member and have been a member for at least two years; have attended at least one NSDC annual conference; be employed in the field of education; and have not served on the board during the past two years. Special consideration will be given to candidates employed by K-12 school districts.

Members interested in nominating themselves or other NSDC members should submit an application to Joel Reynolds, board secretary, by e-mail to joel.reynolds@nsdc.org by June 1, 2010.

**Find an application and details at www.nsdc.org/about/elections.cfm.**

- Joellen Killion
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- Jim Winter
- Ed Wittchen
- Steve Wlodarczyk
- Jody Wood
- Sybil Yastrow
- Joan Zaretsky
- Randy Zila

## WE'VE BEEN HEARD ON THE HILL

On April 15, Executive Director Stephanie Hirsh testified before the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions as part of a hearing on the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Hirsh spoke of the importance of NSDC's definition of professional development and how its inclusion in the next version of No Child Left Behind could significantly improve the quality of professional development in schools and districts.

Panelists included representatives of American Federation of Teachers, New Leaders for New Schools, the New Teacher Center, and the New Teacher Project.

**An archive of the hearing is available at http://help.senate.gov.**

**NSDC'S PURPOSE:**
Every educator engages in effective professional learning every day so every student achieves.

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## We need every school system to establish its vision for the principal as instructional leader

Leadership matters. Research funded by The Wallace Foundation (sponsors of this issue of *JSD*) has demonstrated that school leadership is second only to high-quality teachers in what matters most for student learning. NSDC demonstrated its commitment to this belief when we adopted our 2007-10 strategic plan. The plan's third priority is developing school leaders. In this issue of *JSD*, we share significant findings from The Wallace Foundation's 10-year investment in leadership. Because of this vision and commitment, the field of education has much useful and important information to explore.

Elsewhere in this issue, you can read about findings from Wallace-sponsored research, starting with "Reimagining the job of leading schools" on p. 10. These findings leave little room for debate, but I suspect there are many educators who are concerned about the time it will take to establish effective systems to improve leadership and who recognize we cannot afford to wait. I believe there are things we can do now to advance leadership support.

What is common to our knowledge about leadership development is the importance of high-quality professional learning for principals. Although the expectations for the position have changed over the last decade, few school systems have shifted their practices to address new priorities. We need every school system to establish its vision for the principal as instructional leader and to provide the professional support required to ensure that vision is realized. In my view, there are three components essential to its success.

First, I believe principals who serve as instructional leaders prioritize participating in professional learning that is planned for teachers in their schools. There are many important reasons for doing this — demonstrating the importance of the issue being addressed, modeling behaviors of a committed learner, gaining deeper understanding of the issues teachers will address in classrooms, learning what is necessary to provide follow-up support, and evaluating the value of the professional development. This commitment extends also to the principal's responsibility to monitor implementation of desired changes in classrooms and team-based meetings of learning teams.

Second, I believe principals benefit from participation in principal learning teams that share the characteristics of teacher learning teams. As members of learning teams, principals can develop camaraderie and shared responsibility for the success of their students. They can provide perspectives on others' data, identify common student and teacher learning priorities, investigate and invest in examining strategies that will benefit their staff and students, guide new learning on their campuses, and assess and reflect in a community of supportive practitioners.

Finally, I am an advocate of individual coaching and support for principals who seek it. I have had the benefit of an executive coach for three years, and I see the impact of it on a daily basis. My principal friends tell me how their coach served them in their quest toward higher student performance. Effective principal coaching can address principals' immediate concerns as well as long-term goals.

When NSDC released the revised edition of NSDC's Standards for Staff Development in 2001, we included the Leadership standard: Staff development that improves the learning of all students requires skillful school and district leaders who guide continuous instructional improvement. At that time, we had some research to support this principle. Thanks to The Wallace Foundation, we now have knowledge we can no longer ignore. ■

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