

CHRONICLES:
A History of the Development
of the Principals' Leadership Network

THE Addressing
Leadership Challenges
FACED BY Principals



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Northeast and Islands Regional Educational Laboratory

A program of The Education Alliance at Brown University



The LAB, a program of The Education Alliance at Brown University, is one of ten educational laboratories funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement. Our goals are to improve teaching and learning, advance school improvement, build capacity for reform, and develop strategic alliances with key members of the region's education and policymaking community.

The LAB develops educational products and services for school administrators, policymakers, teachers, and parents in New England, New York, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. Central to our efforts is a commitment to equity and excellence.

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National Association of Elementary School Principals

Serving all elementary and middle level school principals

The 28,500 members of the National Association of Elementary School Principals provide administrative and instructional leadership for public and private elementary and middle schools throughout the United States, Canada, and overseas. Founded in 1921, NAESP is today a vigorously independent professional association with its own headquarters in Alexandria, Virginia, just across the Potomac River from the nation's capital. From this special vantage point, NAESP conveys the unique perspective of the elementary and middle school principal to the highest policy councils of our national government. Through national and regional meetings, award-winning publications, and joint efforts with its 50 state affiliates, NAESP is a strong advocate both for its members and for the 33 million American children enrolled in preschool, kindergarten, and grades 1 through 8.

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Foreword

The role of the principal is evolving every day. The responsibilities concerning instructional leadership, school management, diverse populations, and accountability mandates continue to intensify. Principals must provide a positive learning environment and find innovative ways to connect with their school communities. At the same time, many face the challenge of marketing and promoting their schools in the face of existing negative perceptions.

We are pleased that the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) and the Northeast and Islands Regional Educational Laboratory at Brown University (LAB)—a program of The Education Alliance—have partnered to create the Principals' Leadership Network (PLN). The PLN, an emerging organization for principals, of principals, and by principals, conducts action research in the field to develop solutions to the problems faced by today's K-12 principals in the region. The network supports collegial relationships, guides professional growth, and fosters collaboration among principals.

The LAB and NAESP are committed to supporting initiatives that focus on reshaping the principalship and providing opportunities for diverse populations. Ultimately, the work of the PLN will improve student achievement and principals' comfort with their roles as instructional leaders.

*Vincent L. Ferrandino, Executive Director
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and
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Acknowledgments

A good principal is the keystone of a good school. Without effective instructional leadership, efforts to raise student achievement cannot succeed. The LAB and the NAESP and its state affiliates are in a unique position to respond to the challenges facing the principalship in the Northeast and Islands region. Both the LAB and NAESP applaud the Principals' Advisory Committee, which took the idea of the Principals' Leadership Network (PLN) from its inception to its current status. A full list of committee members is printed at the back of this publication. In particular, we would like to thank Elizabeth "Bamby" Neale, principal of the Conte Community School in Pittsfield, Massachusetts and the 2001 Massachusetts Elementary School Principal of the Year. Bamby's hard work and high energy not only contributed to the formation of the PLN, but also led to her election as the first chairperson by the Advisory Committee in September, 2002.

About the Authors

This publication was authored by the LAB/NAESP team, which consisted of E. Donald Bouchard, Laureen Cervone, Hal Hayden, Cheryl G. Riggins-Newby, and Phil Zarlengo. The authors' biographies are included below.

E. Donald Bouchard is currently a program planning specialist at The Education Alliance focusing on applied research and development for teacher education and principal leadership projects in New York City. He has served as coordinator of the Institute on Cultural and Linguistic Diversity's teacher development project entitled Problem Solving through Action Research, taught courses in community education and ESL methods and curriculum, and worked for the New England Multifunctional Resource Center at Brown University providing training and technical assistance to Title VII programs in the region. He has been active over the years in school restructuring, school-based family centers, family literacy, adult learning programs, alternative education programs, and middle school language arts instruction.

Laureen Cervone currently works in the Collaborative Leadership program area of The Education Alliance, focusing on support for the Principals' Leadership Network and management of the Information Center, which provides educators with research-based resources. She has worked with the Rhode Island State Department of Education on the development of curriculum frameworks and the provision of general technical assistance to districts. She holds an M.Ed. from Rhode Island College and a B.S. from Cornell University, with additional coursework in the areas of technology and distance learning.

Hal Hayden, Ph.D., acts as the liaison between The Education Alliance and the PLN. His professional experiences include serving as the state director of special education for Kentucky, designing and implementing education evaluation systems for Maryland and Delaware, acting as the local director of special education for New Hampshire, and serving as a principal and teacher in Northern Virginia. He has also taught in Baltimore and holds a doctorate in curriculum and instruction from the University of Maryland, two master's degrees from the University of Maryland (special education) and George Mason (administration and supervision), and a bachelor's degree from Lyndon State University in Vermont.

Cheryl G. Riggins-Newby, Ed.D., Associate Executive Director for Urban Alliances at the National Association for Elementary School Principals, assumes responsibility at NAESP for assisting the LAB with the management of the PLN. She has served as a teacher, principal, chief educational administrator, and administrative officer for alternative programs in Prince George's County, Maryland, and worked at the Maryland State Department of Education to develop alternative programs. She recently launched Urban Connections, a program that provides resources and will serve as the foundation of a network for urban principals. Riggins-Newby also works with the Reengineering School Leadership project spearheaded by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL).

Phil Zarlengo, Ph.D., is the designated LAB director who supervises all phases of the PLN project. Zarlengo, who earned his doctorate from the University of Connecticut and his M.A. from Brown University, served as the previous executive director of the LAB, assistant superintendent of schools in Providence, R.I., and a director at the Rhode Island Department of Education. He also served as a teacher, and held various school building-level administrative positions in suburban and urban school districts. He is recognized as a national leader in school leadership, strategic planning, grant development, and special populations.

Introduction

The normal demands faced by principals across the nation have, in recent years, become more and more complex as the populations they serve grow more diverse. Effective principals of the past were problem solvers, good communicators, risk takers, and good managers. They also understood that instruction formed the core of the school. The school principal is, and has undeniably been, the single most important person in the educational setting—having the single greatest impact on student performance and achievement. As the determining force behind the degree to which a school may or may not be deemed successful, the principal has been faced with a dilemma created by the emerging, expanding role of the principal, a dilemma that significantly challenges the future of educational leadership.

The challenges related to raising achievement and sustaining school-wide improvement continue to intensify, especially in low-performing, urban schools. Public scrutiny and the increased concentration of poverty in urban settings have created the need for principals to more effectively guide instruction and manage change. The challenge of improving school leadership, however, is one that requires new approaches to support and sustain principals. Effective leaders must create instructional designs for change and establish visions and philosophies of high expectations and excellence. They are the ones who shape the environment in which teachers and students succeed. They understand the importance of integrating assessment, curriculum, and instruction in a continuous improvement process, and the necessity of building learning communities within their schools.

The Northeast and Islands Regional Educational Laboratory at Brown University (LAB)—a program of The Education Alliance—and the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) partnered to create a network of principals with the goal of developing innovative ways to meet the needs of leadership in our schools. The partnership will collect data, develop action research projects in the field, and publish results in user-friendly formats around selected issues of regional and national significance to our principals. Discussion of these issues will allow the organization to network and to address practical issues that face today's principals.

Aimed primarily at the creation of a collaborative leadership model throughout the region, the partnership established the Principals' Leadership Network (PLN) “for principals, of principals, and by principals.” Managed by an Advisory Committee representing New York, New England, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands, the PLN guarantees that the voices of the region's principals will be brought directly into the most current dialogue on issues that face them, and that they will help formulate solutions that are practical and workable. Additionally, with the support of NAESP and the LAB, the PLN works toward helping principals become the most effective and efficient school leaders they can be.

The ultimate goal of the PLN is clear: To define and promote the collaborative leadership roles of principals, especially in low-performing schools. The PLN model will begin to address the needs that pose a critical threat to the principalship.

The Advisory Committee, comprised of principals representative of PLN membership, identified an action research approach as the core strategy for professional growth. The agenda for the

PLN reflects a commitment to serving the needs of practicing and aspiring principals, and focuses on three essential questions:

1. How can we operationally define the many roles of the principalship (i.e., facilitator, manager, instructional leader)?
2. What constitutes an effective and comprehensive mentoring program for practicing and aspiring principals, and how can it be implemented?
3. How can we communicate the complexity of the role and work of the principalship to the community and our constituencies?

This work was encouraged by the National Principals' Leadership Summit in July 2000, sponsored by the United States Department of Education.

The National Principals' Leadership Summit

In July of 2000, the United States Department of Education sponsored a Principals' Leadership Summit in Washington, D.C. The purpose of the summit was to inform the Department of Education's thinking, planning and research agenda, and to discuss activities around the role of today's principalship. It was during this event that LAB staff conversed with principals from their region and formulated the idea for their own regional network.

Two principals from each of the 50 states were invited to participate in the national summit. The program was designed to investigate the complexities surrounding the role of the principal and focus on the development of an action plan to address those critical issues.

Prior to the summit, organizers asked the principals for responses to the following questions:

1. Today's principals are expected to be effective instructional leaders. Considering all aspects of your role, is this a reasonable expectation? Why?
2. What are the major challenges that discourage a person from pursuing the principalship as a career goal?
3. What changes would you recommend or make to current principal preparation programs?
4. What parts of your own preparation for the principalship did you find most helpful? Least helpful?
5. How might practicing principals be supported in learning new skills?

Ninety principals responded. Despite the diversity of the respondents, the responses were consistent and indicated general agreement on one or more issues of paramount importance to principals. Worthy of note is that a majority of principals felt that the definition of the role of the principal as instructional leader as described below was a reasonable expectation.

An instructional leader must understand what is important and valuable to the school in terms of learning theory, effective instruction, and the curriculum and furthermore must be able to communicate and represent these interests to students, teachers, and parents. All respondents agreed that the major challenges of the principalship included the changing demands of the job, including increased accountability, responsibility for raising all students to high standards without adequate support, coupled with a lack of parent and community support and the negativity of the media and the public toward schools (see Appendix A).

The initial summit charged the participants with addressing the complex difficulties in leading the nation's schools. The following questions were addressed:

1. How do you define instructional leadership?
2. What does instructional leadership look like in your school?
3. What is the greatest barrier to instructional leadership?
4. What is the most important support necessary for creating instructional leadership in every school?
5. What must be done to overcome the barriers to instructional leadership? Who must do it?
6. What will the principalship need to look like to meet future educational challenges?
7. How would you change the job to allow principals to have a more active role in the teaching and learning process?

Participants were assigned to discussion groups to elicit comments about these issues. Participant's responses from this summit were used to create an agenda for the Second Annual National Principals' Leadership Summit during the summer of 2001, again in Washington, D.C. It was at this gathering that the development strategies for improving the nature of the principalship evolved.

Developing A Voice: The PLN's Beginnings

In October 2000, as an outgrowth of the first national summit, the LAB and NAESP co-hosted their first regional summit to focus on the emerging role of the principal and to provide an opportunity for dialogue around the role of the principal as instructional leader. A group of 83 elementary, middle, and high school principals from suburban, rural, and urban geographic areas gathered in Providence, R.I. Additional representatives from various professional organizations, the U.S. Department of Education, the state departments of education, and institutions of higher education were in attendance. This practitioners group was convened to

- provide leadership in defining the changing nature of the principal's role in educational reform,
- identify support and training that would be most effective in advancing educational reform and professional development, and

- assist the LAB and NAESP in establishing a Principals' Leadership Network.

From this summit came the consensus that the role of the principal in a public school is very complex. Participants concluded that one can find many problems, but there are limited resources to solve them.

The term *instructional leader* was difficult for some participants to define because the role of manager often gets in the way of evaluating instruction in the classroom. Although there was some difficulty in defining instructional leadership, participants were able to determine barriers that hindered effective instructional leadership. Among the predominant barriers expressed were management tasks, lack of respect for the office, teacher contracts, students with chaotic lives, staff development, a lack of parent participation, and limited resources. Participants contended that overcoming these barriers is a challenge and a work in progress.

All participants agreed that more meetings on a regional level were needed to clarify the definition of instructional leadership. There was a consensus that it is important to bring principals together to help them define what their job is and, perhaps, what it should be. Further, the regional meetings are useful because many principals do not have resources to attend a national meeting, and especially because only a small, select group of principals are afforded the opportunity to attend such gatherings. There were positive comments regarding an appreciation for the opportunity to discuss and reflect with colleagues from across the region (see Appendix B). From this feedback, the initial structure for the PLN and a yearly regional summit was put into place.

Reportings from Across the Region

While acknowledging the hundreds of studies that report the complexities of the principalship as well as its successes, the PLN Advisory Committee indicated a need for a current measure of the actual and perceptual temperature of the principalship across the Northeast and Islands region. A semi-structured interview protocol focusing on three major areas suggested by the PLN was developed and served as the tool for eliciting dialogue from principals during site visits across the region. These areas included mentoring, the role of the principal as instructional leader, and the public image of the principal.

An initial focus group session with selected principals in Rhode Island conducted by LAB and NAESP staff indicated concern that the demands of spending large blocks of time on management issues created less time for instructional leadership. One principal stated, "The role of the principal as instructional leader is a complex one and a role that most of us prefer to concentrate on. Since our primary focus is students, teaching, and learning, it is most appropriate for us to model lifelong learning, be models and coaches to our teachers, and support the students' journeys toward excellence." She continued, "The role demands a lot and is hard to balance with all of the managerial tasks we are asked to do, not to mention crisis intervention. It has to be a priority."

The group concurred that a mentoring network is essential to providing an appropriate mechanism of support for principals. The implementation of mentoring programs could easily provide direct support as well as online support for principals, especially in their early years. “The feeling of isolation that principals feel will be reduced and a professional, emotional and social network will flourish. Principals will stay on the job longer,” said one principal. Participants suggested the use of retired principals as mentors. This concept was echoed in numerous site visits. The call for the endorsement of mentoring initiatives will lead to the development of an action plan on mentoring, which will focus on best practice models available to districts across the nation.

During a one-day visit to Queens by NAESP staff, members of a New York principals focus group expressed concern regarding “The increased accountability demands being placed upon principals without the appropriate authority to deliver.” One principal commented, “The role of the principal is constantly expanding. As new standards are introduced, there is not enough professional development for principals. Invariably, one of the standards of administrative evaluation may be based on student performance, although there is little support that will allow them to hold some teachers accountable for instructional improvement.” Another stated, “Principals are committed to doing an exemplary job, but environmental issues, especially in urban districts, also hamper that commitment.” And, from a third principal, “If the principal is to perform as an exemplary instructional leader, the support mechanisms must change.” The Principals’ Leadership Network is working to develop comprehensive and systemic solutions that will connect principals with networks that provide supportive resources to address those issues for which they are held accountable.

The reports from the field indicated a high level of enthusiasm and passion for the job that principals must do. From lively and often highly reflective dialogue evolved a number of recommendations for improving the state of the principalship. These included the following:

- All aspiring principals must have longer and more comprehensive training, including mentoring.
- More training in pedagogy, finance, and human relations is needed.
- Highlight the positive attitude of principals who are committed to improving the principalship
- Ensure an appropriate compensation structure
- Work out a system to ensure positive press whenever possible
- Identify and publicize concrete reasons for becoming a principal
- Develop and maintain smaller schools
- Provide more authority over hiring within the school
- Provide more and better uninterrupted instructional time
- Promote a national “Love Your Principal Day”

An analysis of the reportings from across the region indicated overwhelming support for the continued organizational development and expansion of the Principals’ Leadership Network as a major vehicle for advancing the work around mentoring for practicing and aspiring principals, defining (or redefining) the principal’s role, and enhancing the principal’s image (see Appendix C).

Addressing a National Audience

In early April 2001, several members of the PLN Advisory Council and representatives of the LAB made a major presentation at the NAESP Annual Conference in San Diego, California. This presentation was seen as a way to bring the concept and early accomplishments of the PLN to a national audience. Cheryl Riggins-Newby, associate executive director of the NAESP and member of the PLN Executive Committee, sponsored and introduced the presentation. Phil Zarlengo, director of special projects at the LAB, provided an overview of the background of the PLN and clarified its goals and mission.

Octavia Wilcox, principal-on-assignment from Syracuse, New York, and a member of the PLN Advisory Committee, presented information on defining the role of the principal. In her comments she underscored the need for today's principals to have a clearly defined vision of the many different roles they must play. She spoke about the pressures brought to bear by increased accountability from local, state, and federal agencies, and discussed the need for viable principals' networks for collegial support.

PLN Advisory Committee member Peter McNally, from Queens, New York, provided a discussion of the work being done in the area of mentoring practicing and aspiring principals. He noted that as the demands of the principalship change, so too do the challenges of doing the job. Thus, even veteran principals need opportunities to grow as professionals. He also stated that the growing principal shortages place extreme pressure on the position. Through personal experience, McNally explained how the relationships between practitioners can evolve into mentorships, and how all involved parties can reap the benefits. He concluded that the work of the PLN in this area can help focus attention on the joys of the principalship, and hopefully lead to an expanded understanding of how best to develop tomorrow's school leaders.

Finally, Frank Spencer, principal of Wilmington Middle-High School in Vermont, represented the perspective of the PLN Advisory Committee regarding the image of the principal. His delivery was centered around three major questions:

1. How can PLN members best communicate the complexity of the principal's role to the community and our constituencies?
2. Does a clear, accurate image of the principalship currently exist among key stakeholders?
3. How can we attract quality candidates to the principalship?

In answering these questions, Spencer noted that the image of the principal can't be enhanced if principals don't work together. He also recommended that the key image to portray is that of the principal focused, first and foremost, on students. Finally, and perhaps most significantly, he emphasized the importance of working together through groups like the PLN to define the desired image of the principal.

Thus far, the PLN has developed action plans that address redefining the principal's role in today's accountability environment, engaging constituencies in the development of strategies that will enhance the image of the principal, and mentoring initiatives that will address the professional development needs of both practicing and aspiring principals.

Organizational Structure of the PLN

The Mission Statement

The National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) and The Northeast and Islands Regional Educational Laboratory at Brown University (LAB) have partnered to create a network of K-12 principals to develop innovative ways of meeting the needs of leadership in our schools. The partnership is collecting data, developing action research projects in the field, and publishing results in user-friendly formats around selected issues of regional and national significance to the principals in the Northeast and Islands region, including those from low-performing schools. These projects are action oriented and aimed at producing direct effects in the field.

The Advisory Committee

The partnership receives input from an Advisory Committee representing New York, New England, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. The Principals' Leadership Network (PLN) is an organization for principals, of principals, and by principals. It guarantees that the voices of the region's principals will be brought directly into the most current dialogue of issues, and that principals will help formulate solutions that are practical and workable.

Additional critical partners include state principals' associations, The National Association of Secondary School Principals, and The American Federation of School Administrators.

The Role of the Committee

The Advisory Committee provides ongoing advice and input to LAB staff and partners (including NAESP) in accord with the PLN's overall mission and goals. The committee meets semi-annually to work with staff and promote the following goals of the PLN:

1. Create a regional forum "for principals, of principals, and by principals," which enhances the values of collegiality, productivity, and learning
2. Provide a peer-to-peer setting for K-12 principals to network and discuss instructional leadership issues openly and honestly
3. Assist principals and their schools to develop practical approaches to improving student learning in the current accountability-oriented school culture
4. Conduct action research projects with principals and their schools on three questions:
 - How can we operationally define the many roles of the principalship (i.e., manager, facilitator, and instructional leader)?
 - What constitutes an effective and comprehensive mentoring program for aspiring and sitting principals, and how can it be implemented?
 - How can we communicate the complexity of the role and work of the principalship to the community and our constituencies?
5. Develop specific strategies for principals to use to communicate the essence of the new principalship and its needs to policymakers, political leaders, and the public

6. Conduct an annual summit for K-12 principals in the Northeast region, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands to discuss the results of action research and networking
7. Assist in the development of collaborative leadership that will include principals, teachers, parents, superintendents, central office staff, and others
8. Provide vehicles for sharing our results with state principals' associations

Leadership

The Advisory Committee selects a chairperson every three years, beginning in November of 2002, whose function it will be to provide leadership for the committee, its major functions, and ongoing operations. During the period prior to November 2002, the interim chair was empowered to implement these functions as well as to set up the committee's structure.

Membership

The committee consists of approximately 19 members who serve terms of three years beginning in November of 2002, and are practicing principals. Membership is as follows:

- Two principals each from Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont
- One from Puerto Rico
- One from the Virgin Islands
- Three from New York
- Chairperson

The Advisory Committee also includes ad hoc representation from The National Association of Elementary School Principals, The National Association of Secondary School Principals, The American Federation of School Administrators, and other groups as needed.

The Executive Committee

The Executive Committee consists of the chairperson and selected members of the Advisory Committee (as representative as possible) who are able to meet four times each year to make recommendations to the full Advisory Committee. This is an important standing committee.

Program Committees

The three standing program committees reflect the three action-group topics selected by the PLN Advisory Committee and regional principals:

- Role of the principal
- Image of the principal
- Mentoring aspiring and practicing principals

An additional committee, the PLN Chronicle Development Committee, has also been formed. Other committees will be established as needed.

New Members

As needed, the PLN recruits new members to be reviewed by the Executive Committee and the full Advisory Committee. Principals from all schools in the region, including low-performing schools, are eligible to serve as members.

Liaisons

The Advisory Committee has individual members who represent the PLN with key Education Alliance programs (The Superintendents Leadership Council (SLC), the LAB Board of Governors, and the R.I. African American School Administrators). Other liaisons will be established as needed.

The Second Annual Regional Summit

The Second Annual Regional Summit of the Principals' Leadership Network (PLN), hosted by The Education Alliance and NAESP in Mystic, Connecticut, resumed where the first summit concluded by providing a time and place for principals from across the region to discuss issues pertinent to educational leadership. This event provided a continued opportunity to define and promote the collaborative leadership roles of K-12 principals.

Summit participants benefited from working with those who knew first-hand the challenges that confront today's public school principals. In addition to further elaboration on the role of the principal, other topics of discussion included improving the public understanding of the principalship and mentoring programs for practicing and aspiring principals. Each of the three topics is being developed into a regional action research project.

Featured speakers for the summit included Wayne Tanaka, distinguished principal from Las Vegas, Nevada, a retired principal and Clark County School District employee, whose enthusiasm, positive attitude, and work ethic proved contagious.

Retirement was only momentary for Tanaka who became the executive director/principal of the Andre Agassi College Preparatory Academy one day after leaving the Clark County schools. This new public charter school, located in a low-socioeconomic neighborhood, opened its doors in August 2001 to students in grades 3-5. Tennis pro superstar Andre Agassi is the academy's philosophic and financial backer. "This academy gives children from at-risk neighborhoods the finest education, equal to any public or private school in America," Agassi said.

Additionally, Douglas Reeves, chairman and founder of the Center for Performance Assessment and author of 10 books and numerous articles, provided useful insights on holistic accountability. A featured speaker for education, government, and business organizations throughout the

United States and abroad, Reeves is one of the nation's leading advocates for holistic accountability systems, in which the study of teaching and leadership practices takes priority over a recitation of test data.

Clifton Taulbert, noted author, lecturer, and president of the Building Community Institute, provided an inspirational luncheon talk to the 95 summit participants. Through his voice and words, he provides an inside look at the cultural lives of African Americans who lived in the 1940s, 50s, and 60s in his award-winning memoirs *Once Upon A Time When We Were Colored*, the Pulitzer-nominated *The Last Train North*, and *Watching Our Crops Come In*. In 1997, *USA Today* named his *Eight Habits of the Heart* as their year-end choice for a book to enrich our minds and lives.

In *Eight Habits of the Heart*, Taulbert again traveled back to the Mississippi Delta of his youth, and as a literary anthropologist, dug through the overlooked and undervalued. In Taulbert's lecture he invited the participants into those same front rooms where he experienced the timeless and universal ideals that shaped his community. Over the past few years those same life lessons of Taulbert's beloved *Porch People*, now known as the *Eight Habits of the Heart*, have quietly been changing the world through the Building Community Institute. *Eight Habits of the Heart* has become the foundation for the internationally embraced Character and Community Building curriculums for preschool through high school.

Throughout the summit, participants were briefed on the evolving projects for each of the essential questions (see Appendix D).

The Action Research Projects

The Public Image of the Principal

INTRODUCTION

There is a sense among principals that most people have a good impression of their school, but that the general public is getting more and more worried about the capacity of public education to meet the challenges inherent in attempting to educate all students to their maximum capacity.

The recent National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) 10-year study on the principalship pointed out that community and public relations, and engagement activities, are given more time and importance than ever before. However, the public still rates its local schools about twice as high as other public schools around the nation (NAESP/NSPRA, 2000).

The LAB has begun a district study group to design, develop and implement a pilot program to enhance the public's image of one or more schools and/or principals. Initial comments from visits with principals conducted by LAB and NAESP staff are included below.

INITIAL FINDINGS

- Principals generally acknowledge that their image varies with student test scores and the public's perception of what school is all about. "The press can be the principal's worst enemy."
- Principals are concerned that their image is being shaped by negative publicity and want the general public to know that they are working hard under extreme conditions to help students.
- Principals seem to be angry with some of the publicity and the publication of test scores, which compares schools that are not similarly situated.
- Principals agree that public image can be shaped; there was a program in place to do that in some of their districts. Others report that image begins with the attitudes of the principals themselves.
- There were suggestions that the Principals' Leadership Network, NAESP, NASSP, NEA, and other respected organizations should do more to enhance the image of principals.
- There was agreement that image and knowledge of what principals do day to day were closely linked. They indicated frequently that when the public saw what they were doing and the conditions under which they work, there was more appreciation for what they were doing.
- There was hope that someone would create/develop a program that could be used by even small school systems to enhance the public image of principals.

The Principal As Instructional Leader

INTRODUCTION

The PLN is working to create a new spotlight collection focusing on the principal on The Knowledge Loom Web site. The Knowledge Loom is an online resource that was designed for interactive use by educators and education leaders. It is primarily a tool to facilitate professional development through collaborative activities, using Knowledge Loom content to guide and improve teaching and learning.

INITIAL FINDINGS

- The groups generally agreed that today's principal has many roles, some that are poorly defined, or others for which the definition changes with the political flow.
- Although many principals have and still perceive themselves as instructional leaders, they acknowledge that legislation, accountability, issues surrounding training of staff, budget, and union concerns are sapping their strength and time.

- The role as instructional leader is becoming very complex. Current pedagogy requires that the principals stay current with new technology, student scheduling, materials, and presentation processes. These new, quickly changing, and complex requirements make it almost impossible for a principal to be an effective instructional leader.
- Principals acknowledge that most schools have several instructional leaders who are classroom teachers. But they are concerned that it is they, not the teachers or the lack of resources, that are held accountable for low test scores.
- Principals want to be seen as instructional leaders because instruction is the core of what they do and what they have been trained to do. It is the main factor that contributes to how they are perceived by the community. They appear frustrated that their role as instructional leaders is being overshadowed by other responsibilities.
- As instructional leaders, the principals also see themselves as “curriculum facilitators” who need to work with the teachers, state requirements, the community, and students to ensure the best possible educational opportunity for all. They see this need to be flexible and fluid as necessary, but difficult.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The role of the school leader today is directly tied to the quality of the school and the achievement of its students. Not only are principals increasingly held accountable for every student’s success, but research is demonstrating that schools and students cannot be successful without a competent and caring school leader. Richard Elmore (2000) describes five principles that lay down the foundation for a model of leadership focused on large-scale improvement:

- The purpose of leadership is the improvement of instructional practice and performance, regardless of role.
- Instructional improvement requires continuous learning.
- Learning requires modeling.
- The roles and activities of leadership flow from the expertise required for learning and learning improvement, not from the formal dictates of the institution.
- The exercise of authority requires reciprocity of accountability and capacity.

Two national organizations, the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) and the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) have studied effective instructional leadership. Both have published lists of standards embodying best practices for principals. Using this dual set of standards, the spotlight allows educators to do the following:

- Read about practice
- Gain insight into successful strategies
- Review research that supports the practices
- View stories about the practice in real schools and districts
- Add your own stories, questions, and bits of wisdom
- Participate in online panel discussions
- Discover supporting organizations and resources

The collection is enhanced by the active partnership of the NAESP, the Council of Chief State School Officers, and the Southern Regional Education Board.

Downloadable workbook material will help principals to shape their own stories for inclusion on the site. Specific principals will be featured on the site on a quarterly basis. As principals who exhibit best practices in effective leadership standards are identified, the site will highlight their success stories related to improving student achievement. As part of the development work, a series of focus groups provided input on making the spotlight collection a high-quality and valuable tool for both practicing and aspiring principals.

Mentoring for Practicing and Aspiring Principals

INTRODUCTION

Now more than ever there is an urgent need for strong, inspired and dynamic leadership in public schools. The research related to effective schools and student achievement has long acknowledged the critical role of principals in providing school leadership that will shape a highly complex human organization into a cohesive and collaborative community of learners. Historically, the ability of principals to acquire the skills needed to integrate knowledge, wisdom, theory, and experience has depended less on their prior training than on the insights and practices informally shared by and with their more senior colleagues in service.

To this end, a group of retired principals in New York City has established the Emeritus Corps, a fellowship of distinguished and experienced principals, with a membership representing a wide range of skills and knowledge at all levels of education. The project was established in cooperation with the New York City Council of Supervisors and Administrators (CSA), under the leadership of Peter McNally, First Vice President. These veteran principals are committed to sustaining an ongoing cadre of highly skilled and dedicated school-based leaders to meet the needs of the incumbent leadership in New York City schools. To fulfill its mission, the Emeritus Corps has been working to develop an innovative Advanced Leadership Program in partnership with the PLN.

INITIAL FINDINGS

- There is little formal mentoring going on in any of the districts visited.
- The practice ranges from being assigned a mentor by the superintendent to just calling colleagues to ask for advice.
- No group reported that there is a formal mentoring training program available from their district, but there were some indications that the universities and colleges were using mentoring models as part of the graduate programs leading to certification for principals.
- There was concern that there could be a poor match between a mentor and an individual being mentored, leading that individual to feel “trapped” by the situation.

- Several principals indicated that they would like to mentor newer principals, but there was no additional time or funding provided to do this important job.
- Even experienced principals indicated that they would benefit from occasional mentoring sessions. The sessions could be group or individual opportunities to discuss process/procedures and general concerns in an enlightened, non-threatening way.
- There was general agreement that the person who was doing the mentoring needed to be more than just a good principal. He/she needed to be trained as a mentor.
- Virtually all agreed that if mentoring was provided in a systematic way, it would be beneficial to the profession as a whole and in turn to students. The feeling was that competent, well-trained principals were far more capable of overcoming the vast difficulties inherent in being a principal.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Advanced Leadership Program will offer a menu of learning opportunities through which in-service principals with three or more years of experience can define, develop and improve their leadership roles and develop effective schools. The program will include access to

- resource consultation teams,
- monthly seminars, and
- mentors as 21st century trainers.

By accessing the resource consultation team, principals can develop an ongoing network of professional and personal resources and relationships that will lead to the identification of goals, objectives, and strategies for the implementation of a school improvement, plan that will support school growth.

Monthly seminars will enhance the principals' knowledge and skills base related to professional growth, leadership, and school improvement, while creating a personal vehicle for ongoing professional development. It is further expected that the seminars will additionally support the development of a collegial network.

As a result of a sustained relationship with a mentor as a 21st century trainer, the principals would likely establish ongoing, trusting relationships with veteran principals who are independent from supervisory or evaluative functions, and acquire new knowledge, skills, and attitudes to support sound decision making, both collaboratively and independently.

As principals have become more aware of the emergence of the Emeritus Corps, they have expressed much interest in participating.

The Strength of the Partnership

The challenge of educational reform has created a new focus on the role of the principal, a focus that will significantly impact educational leadership. The principal is expected to successfully fulfill expectations as an effective instructional leader, as well as to function as an efficient overall manager. An ever-mounting increase in personal and professional responsibilities, with little or no district or administrative support, has placed the dwindling ranks of qualified experienced administrators in the forefront (NAESP, 2001). With the recognition that the principal is critical to educational change and school improvement, issues such as attracting and retaining highly qualified candidates have created a need for the development of strategies to offset these emerging dilemmas (NAESP/NASSP, 1998).

Today's schools are challenged to serve increasingly complex and diverse communities. Children of immigration comprise the fastest growing sector of our child population, with the poorest districts—particularly those in urban areas—facing the greatest infusion of language minority children. Such changing demographics constitute a demand for aggressive leadership recruiting methods to attract qualified persons to the principalship and intensive programs of support for retention and professional development of those who currently lead urban elementary and middle schools.

The organizational structure and resources of the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) and its 50 state affiliates provide an established, supportive structure upon which to create state and regional principals' leadership councils focused on building the leadership capacity of urban principals. The councils will foster critical alliances and create opportunities for mentoring, action research, coaching, problem solving, and dialogue among urban school leaders.

The research-based instructional and organizational models developed by the LAB offer the essential support and resources for professional development that will address the unique issues so critical to the principalship.

Through this joint effort, the PLN will be recognized as the major vehicle in the implementation of collaborative leadership initiatives, which address critical problems in the region with a focus on advancing leadership networks. The partnership's commitment to enhancing leadership growth and development through implementation of this model will afford the creation of a collaborative network among principals that will have a nationwide impact on the principalship.

The development of a supportive network among K-12 principals and a platform for action based on identified mutual issues is the major focus of the Principals' Leadership Network. Continued leadership meetings and regional field visits with selected administrators will provide the foundation for the development of the platform. Implementation activities include the development of a committee structure that will meet on a quarterly basis and the ongoing identification of issues that principals need to address through yearly summit meetings. Strategies will be developed to address the following objectives:

- Educate the public about the principalship through an examination of the role of the principal

- Develop a common definition of “instructional leader” as it impacts the role of the effective principal and the successful school
- Develop support and mentoring of practicing and aspiring principals that will begin to address the shortage of qualified candidates
- Research best practices among leadership development initiatives as a means of providing proven practices that work to improve the quality of the principalship, thus improving the quality of teaching, learning, and performance
- Establish mechanisms for collaboration that will further stimulate and support regional, site-based initiatives and action research, thereby enhancing the context for professional growth

Previously reported data from *The Principal, Keystone of a High-Achieving School* (ERS, et.al, 2000) concluded that, given the value of networking with principals and other professionals who work with principals, indicators point to a need for continued focus and intense efforts toward supporting and promoting the development of high-quality, well-prepared, and committed people to lead our schools. The four unifying themes that emerged from this research and that continue to guide the implementation of the PLN are summarized as follows:

- A good principal is the keystone of a good school. By supporting and encouraging good teaching, helping everyone in the school develop and focus their efforts on high standards for all students, and being an effective manager, a good principal makes a difference.
- Concern about the shortage of quality principals is well-placed. Many districts have already experienced a shrinking pool of candidates for their principal openings, and many well-qualified people who complete graduate programs in educational administration do not go on to apply. While most talented practicing principals are quick to point to the satisfaction inherent in the job, a host of other issues act as barriers to attracting, retaining, and providing continuous support to the best and the brightest candidates.
- Many good programs designed to address a variety of the critical issues have already been implemented. An encouraging sign is the degree of collaboration between organizations such as school districts, professional associations, universities, foundations, state departments of education, and private businesses in the development and implementation of these efforts.
- These efforts do not go nearly far enough in addressing the issues. The depth and quality of support programs vary widely, often due to the available resources, or lack thereof (NAESP/NASSP, 2000).

Lessons Learned

1. The challenge of educational reform has created a new focus on the role of the principal.
2. Collaboration is hard work and requires negotiation, clarity, and trusting relationships.
3. The sponsoring agency (LAB) must be prepared to extend resources to support a network of principals.
4. The sponsoring agency must be willing to encourage the principals in the network to assume leadership.
5. Action research projects selected by the principals may be different than those selected by the sponsoring agency and could have more relevance to principals in their day-to-day work.
6. Releasing principals for attendance at network meetings is difficult because of building pressures, and requires a special relationship between principals and their superintendents.
7. It takes considerable time to develop a network “for principals, of principals, and by principals,” and the sponsoring agency must continue to support the effort.
8. A successful regional network of principals offers great rewards to the principals and the sponsoring agency.

Resources

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National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP). (2001). *Leading learning communities: Standards for what principals should know and be able to do*. Alexandria, VA: Author.

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Appendix A

Summary of Survey Responses

**National Principals' Leadership Summit
Washington, D.C.
July 24-26, 2000**

Summary of Responses to NAESP/NASSP/NMSA Survey Questions

Principals' Leadership Summit
Washington, D.C.
July 24-26, 2000

This event was sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education and the Rainwater Foundation, with assistance from the National Association of Elementary School Principals, the National Association of Secondary School Principals, and the National Middle School Association.

Prior to the Principals' Leadership Summit, organizers asked participating principals for responses to the following five questions:

1. Today's principals are expected to be effective instructional leaders. Considering all aspects of your role, is this a reasonable expectation? Why?
2. What are the major challenges that discourage a person from pursuing the principalship as a career goal?
3. What changes would you recommend or make to current principal preparation programs?
4. What parts of your own preparation for the principalship did you find most helpful? Least helpful?
5. How might practicing principals be supported in learning new skills?

Nature of the Responses

Ninety principals responded. The open-ended questions resulted in a broad range of answers. Although these principals represented urban, suburban, and rural schools from districts ranging from small to large, and socioeconomic levels from poor to affluent, there was a consistency to their responses and general agreement on one or more issues that are of paramount importance.

Question

1

Today's principals are expected to be effective instructional leaders. Considering all aspects of your role, is this a reasonable expectation? Why?

At present, much of the literature around school leadership is focused on the need for principals to be instructional leaders. An instructional leader must understand what is important and valuable to the school in terms of learning theory, effective instruction, and the curriculum. Furthermore an instructional leader must be able to communicate and represent these interests to students, teachers, and parents.

- Fourteen principals believed that the expectation for them to be instructional leaders is a reasonable one.
- Sixteen said it is not reasonable.
- Fifty-one believed that it is reasonable, but with challenges. Legal issues, discipline, special education, record keeping, accountability and assessment, working with parents, and counseling overworked and stressed staff members take much of their time, principals say.

While much of the current research indicates the importance of the principal assuming the role of the instructional leader, many principals feel they have reached their limit and readily admit that their day is spent dealing with a multitude of other tasks.

As one principal stated, “Whether or not it is a reasonable expectation, however, is debatable since by design and circumstance there are substantial barriers to being able to carry out this mission.” Respondents generally agreed that the demands of the principalship continue to increase exponentially.

Question 2

What are the major challenges that discourage a person from pursuing the principalship as a career goal?

Principals strongly agreed on five reasons why fewer people seek to become principals:

1. The changing demands of the job, including increased accountability and responsibility for raising all students to high standards without adequate support
2. Salary
3. Time
4. Lack of parent and community support and negativity of the media and the public toward schools
5. Lack of respect

A middle school principal wrote on the issues of accountability, “You are responsible for everything that happens in your building, yet in many cases, even in those buildings that have site-based management, you don’t control the factors that can impact your school.” He mentioned the following factors as being out of his control: home environment, socioeconomic status of families, mobility of families, and the number of non-English speaking students.

An elementary school principal wrote, “People look at the hours principals devote to the job, the demands made by unreasonable parents, the liability for students and staff, the legal issues, the increasing needs of students that the school is expected to meet (as reasons not to become principals). Then they look at the salary and the fact that in many districts principals’ efforts are not acknowledged and appreciated.” Another elementary school principal added, “Those close enough to be interested in the job are also close enough to be discouraged by it.”

A high school principal said, “The job requires confidence and moral courage. Not everyone has that.” Another suggested that, “We are the most stable, warm, caring, and concerned adult role models available to our at-risk population.”

In their answers there was a frustration about time—never enough of it and so little control over how it is used. One principal stated, “It took me almost seven years before I realized that, unlike teaching, there would never be a time when I could leave school with a sense of completion. I could work 365 days and not accomplish all that I am asked or required to do. This does not necessarily include what I want to do or think should be done.”

Another suggested that “Intelligent, committed, driven, professional people can double or triple their salaries by choosing other careers. The burden is heavy for middle managers and the hours are long. Nothing on the horizon gives any indication that this will change.”

Although the challenge of student behavior has appeared on lists of concerns for years, a new concern was mentioned by several principals—the behavior of parents. “Demanding,” “rude,” and “angry” were words used to describe challenging parents.

Question 3

What changes would you recommend to current principal preparation programs?

Principals responding to this question had at least 25 different suggestions.

- Internship/mentoring programs:
 - Fifty-seven principals listed an internship as necessary.
 - Sixteen mentioned mentoring in position.

If these two were put together, 80% of respondents favored some type of work with a master principal in the school setting as a part of the preparation program. Several suggested that a full-time internship could be supported financially at the federal, state, or local level. One principal suggested that a part of the internship should be spent observing leadership in the corporate world.

- Several other respondents suggested seminars led by effective practicing principals.

Other suggestions:

- More training in human relations areas: conflict resolution, dealing with difficult people, and the change process
- Eighteen suggested a solid foundation in curriculum.
- Eleven others added training in leadership.
- Seven wanted best practices added to the program.

- Several others suggested Socratic seminars, simulations, and the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills.
- Managerial skills such as finance and budgeting, legal issues, and management of stress, time, anger, and crisis were also mentioned.

What was missing?

- Although the use of data is a skill most principals need in today's world of accountability and school improvement, only three principals suggested it as an addition to the preparation program. The collection and use of data was also absent from the lists of answers to question four—those parts of their program that were most and least helpful to them.
- With one exception, there was no mention of the inclusion of leadership training from the military and/or the business world, although this is an area that is being discussed by policymakers and some in the field of principal preparation. Perhaps one principal best represented his and other colleagues' thoughts when his first recommendation for change in the preparation program was “a course in ‘reality therapy’.”

Question 4

What parts of your own preparation for the principalship did you find most helpful? Least helpful?

At least 20 varied responses were provided.

Most helpful:

- Having an internship experience with another principal
- Mentoring
- Knowledge of school law, given increased liabilities in the position

Other suggestions:

- Conversations with practitioners
- Learning analysis of “real” situations
- The use of small cohort groups

Least helpful:

- Theory courses like the history and philosophy of education
- Statistics and research courses

However, some other respondents listed these courses as “most helpful.”

What one may have found valuable, another described as a waste of time. Most had definite answers, including one principal who, under the category of “least helpful” wrote, “Most of it!” Another mentioned, “I had the child psychology courses in my undergraduate work. What I needed was adult psychology courses.” Finally, one wrote, “I was, and I suspect many others are, taken by surprise when they first enter the field and find that many of the courses they had to take for administration certification didn’t prepare them for the many things that landed in their laps and on their desks when they took that first job.”

Question 5

How might practicing principals be supported in learning new skills?

- Forty-one principals listed assistance and support from the superintendent (district office), including encouragement and financial support, as their leading suggestion.
- Time for professional development
- Networking with colleagues, including critical friends and collegial circle models
- Distance learning opportunities for those in rural areas
- Internships, mentoring with master principals in order to learn new skills
- Visiting schools. One principal stated, “It’s okay to get away from school” to make such visits.
- Attendance at national principal association conventions and programs offered by those associations
- Leadership academies and summer institutes

Principals stressed that they want to have a say in what type of professional development is offered to them. They want it to be meaningful and fit with their school goals and improvement plans. Having teams of both principals and teachers could be valuable as schools move to increase collaboration and begin to develop communities of learners.

“Principals must have the desire to learn,” said one participant. “Principals learn best when they (like students) feel happy, safe, are a part of the group and see a purpose in what they are being asked to do. They learn least when afraid, lonely, intimidated, and/or without a purpose,” said another.

Other replies included:

- “It seems strange but, as educators, we work hard to make sure that students are at their best, but we do not put a lot of stock in our own growth.”
- “If principals are allowed to explore new approaches and new skills in a collaborative way, they will be most likely to find ways to be more productive and effective.”

- “School districts need to create a climate in which the principal is a valued and respected professional, so that new skills can be developed in a safe environment, with encouragement and appreciation.”

CONCLUSIONS

It is clear that while principals who attended the National Principals’ Leadership Summit wished to be instructional leaders, many faced challenges in carrying out that role. They saw some of these challenges as the reasons others do not want to become principals: long hours, salary not commensurate with responsibilities, greater responsibilities and accountability but lack of necessary authority to make meaningful changes, and dealing with more difficult students and sometimes parents.

They saw both benefits and drawbacks to their own preparation for the principalship and offered solutions to preparation and professional development that rely heavily on internships and mentors, networks, and opportunities to interact with effective principals.

Despite the drawbacks, their commitment to their profession and their desire to improve the principalship is clearly evident throughout the responses.

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Appendix B

The Principals' Leadership Network

Developing a Voice:

*Proceedings from the
First Regional Summit 2000*

October 24-25, 2000

The Biltmore Hotel

Providence, Rhode Island

Developing a Voice: Proceedings from Summit 2000

**October 24-25, 2000
The Biltmore Hotel
Providence, Rhode Island**

FOREWORD

The Northeast and Islands Regional Educational Laboratory at Brown University (LAB)—a program of The Education Alliance—and the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) sponsored a meeting of principals from the Northeast region in order to give them an opportunity to talk about their roles as instructional leaders. The group of 83 participants came from elementary, middle, and high schools. It also represented suburban, urban, and rural geographic areas. In addition, other guests were invited as observers. The guests represented various professional organizations, the state departments of education, institutions of higher learning, the U.S. Department of Education, and independent consultants. The gathering, in Providence, Rhode Island, was an outgrowth of the National Principals' Leadership Summit, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, held in Washington, D.C., in July 2000.

The purpose of the PLN Summit was to bring a select group of principals together for a discussion of the changing face of the principalship. The goal was to initiate a practitioner group to accomplish the following:

1. Provide leadership in defining the changing nature of the principals' role in education reform
2. Identify support and training that would be most effective in advancing educational reform and professional development
3. Assist in establishing a structure for a principals' network

The agenda included an opening session and four breakout sessions. Participants were grouped randomly for the first and last breakout sessions. The second was grouped by grade level (elementary, middle, or high school), and the third was grouped by geographical location (rural, suburban, and urban). Facilitators conducted the meetings using prescribed questions. A recorder was present at each session. Facilitators, recorders, and guests were directed not to impose their opinions on the group. It was stressed that the discussion was to be among the practicing principals. The questions that were discussed in the first three sessions were:

- How would you define instructional leadership?
- What are the barriers to instructional leadership?
- How do you overcome barriers to instructional leadership in your school?

The question discussed in the fourth session was:

- What does the principalship need to look like in the future?

Phil Zarlengo and Juan Lopez from The Education Alliance, and Cheryl Riggins-Newby from NAESP, held an alternate meeting with state association directors. The focus of that meeting was to inform them as to the purpose of the summit and to answer any questions they had regarding it.

OPENING SESSION

Don Bouchard from the Alliance facilitated the opening session. The program consisted of a welcome from Phil Zarlengo, who was the executive director of the LAB at the time. Commissioner Peter McWalters from the Rhode Island Department of Education extended his greetings to the participants, and Carole Kennedy was the keynote speaker.

Kennedy was the principal in residence at the U.S. Department of Education, and coordinated the national summit. Her remarks were directed to the principals. They included references to the many challenges facing the public school principals today. She noted that the principalship is in crisis. The problems with the job include long days, poor salaries, and disruptive students and parents. Today, there are many vacancies across the nation that cannot be filled. Nobody wants the job. The hottest seat in education is in the principal's office. It raises the question, "Can it be done by one person?" Principals need professional development programs based on information derived from data in order to improve our schools. In her remarks, Kennedy emphasized that principals have to realize that they must change. Also, they must work harder to let people know what they are doing and what they need to do to help improve our public schools. School building leaders were urged to let their voices be heard.

Commissioner McWalters, in his statements, also noted the difficulty of the principal's position. He mentioned that a high standard for all students is a challenge for public schools. He also stated that "...one couldn't find a good school without good leadership. The principal is in an impossible situation. S/he is the linchpin of the organization, but has no authority. It may take legislative action to change the situation. That is political...We are the last public institution of consequence. We must develop a voice."

How Would You Define Instructional Leadership?

Notes from the Principals' Leadership Summit, held in Washington, D.C., indicate that a definition of instructional leadership is "providing the spirit and vision necessary for optimum student learning. It includes, but is not limited to knowledge of curriculum trends and best practices; providing a safe, secure, and nurturing learning environment; facilitating staff development and training; supporting staff leadership in school improvement; and modeling professional growth." Another definition presented noted that, "An instructional leader creates an environment in which all children can be successful learners." The principals also listed the characteristics necessary to be an instructional leader. He/she is a person who

- encourages thinking,
- has a vision,

- provokes change,
- moves beyond the managerial aspect of the principalship,
- uses research-based strategies and models,
- works within a specific time frame, and
- sets measurable goals.

First breakout session (grouped randomly)

The regional summit meeting generated a great deal of discussion regarding the definition of instructional leadership. Many of the comments dealt with why the term is so difficult to define. The role of the principal is very complex. S/he is in the unique position of being accountable for student achievement and student access to programs, while having little or no say about who works in his/her building. The manager vs. instructional leader argument makes it very difficult for a group of principals to come up with the ultimate definition of instructional leadership. The job involves managing many groups of people, such as students, teachers, parents, non-certified staff, central office staff, and local school boards. Principals must also deal with the consequences of contract negotiations as well as state and national mandates. All of these groups impact, in some way, on what happens in the classroom. Their influence can be positive or negative.

The role of the first session was to develop a number of definitions for instructional leadership. The most concise was, "Instructional leadership maintains a vision and focus on student learning. The principal orchestrates all the stakeholders to get them focused on the fact that the only purpose for schools is student performance and achievement. The principal knows the lay of the land and adjusts practices to fit the school."

The role of the principal is multifaceted. S/he must support effective practice through coaching, mentoring, nurturing, and pushing. The schools must reach out to students they have not served well and seek ways to serve them effectively. They must encourage teacher leadership by listening to their ideas and creating opportunities for them to develop into leaders. Principals must lead the school to become a community of learners, which means providing quality professional development opportunities.

It is recognized that the teacher is the instructional expert. However, it is the principal who is the instructional leader. This requires that the principal be well-read and able to communicate what current trends and research reveal about teaching and learning. It is important that the instructional leader be able to look at achievement test data and glean information for analysis about the educational needs of his/her school. Knowing how to communicate these needs to teachers, and supporting them in the process of changing instruction, is a formidable challenge of the principalship.

Second breakout session (grouped by grade level)

The summit format required that the same question of defining instructional leadership be posed to the principals grouped according to grade level. The purpose was to see if there was a difference in the definition, either gross or subtle, due to students' different developmental needs and/or the differences in how instruction was delivered (i.e., self-contained classrooms, team teaching, departmentalized teaching).

Elementary. The principal, as the instructional leader, must know the fundamental aspects of emergent literacy at the elementary school level; literacy (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) is the first instructional goal of the primary school. S/he must also know the cognitive developmental stages for students' readiness to learn. Articulation with the middle/junior high school is important. The coordination of curriculum to properly prepare students for the next level can eliminate duplication of instruction. Communicating with the next level also gives the elementary school an opportunity to inform the accepting school as to the needs of individual students. There is a strong belief at the elementary school level that all children can learn. Participants believed that this makes the elementary school uniquely different from the middle, junior, and high schools.

Parents play an important role in a young child's learning. The principal must engage in regular communication with parents to make certain that they are part of the agenda. Parents must have a feeling of ownership within the school community. They must be informed regarding the successes and shortcomings of the school. It is important that parents know what is needed to improve student learning and how their talents and participation will help the school to improve instruction.

Middle/Junior High. The challenges of the middle school principal as an instructional leader lie in the developmental needs of young adolescents, and the fact that s/he must bridge the gap between academic preparation of the elementary school and the academic needs for a successful high school experience. The principal's goal is to join the two, in order to make learning a meaningful continuum. S/he manages systems of people to help achieve this goal. This requires the mentoring of leaders within the school.

There is a lack of preparation programs designed specifically for the middle school teacher. Therefore, it is important to provide professional development opportunities for the elementary school-trained teacher to master content, and for the secondary school-trained teacher to learn how to understand the social and emotional needs of the young adolescent. The principal must set high academic standards for teaching/learning, while providing the necessary services and activities to accommodate the social and emotional needs of the middle school student.

High School. The high school principalship is a very complicated job. The number of students, the complexity of academic offerings, and the time consuming demands of extracurricular activities make it a 24 hour, seven-days-a-week job. In addition, it is imperative that the high school principal provide a safe environment for learning.

The size of many high schools forces the principal to take on the role of a moderator. S/he must work with teams of people, both certified and non-certified. The team members are all stakeholders in the academic achievements of the school. S/he provides mentoring for teachers and teacher leaders. As a leader of leaders, s/he develops a cadre of people who will carry on the vision of the school long after s/he is gone.

Third breakout session (grouped by geographical setting)

The format of the summit required that the question to define instructional leadership be brought before participants grouped by geographical location: rural, suburban, or urban. The purpose of the groupings was to determine if the location of the school provided unique circumstances that would pose a gross or subtle difference in the definition of instructional leadership.

The definition of instructional leadership did not change in relation to the geographical setting.

What Are the Barriers to Instructional Leadership?

First breakout session (grouped randomly)

The participants discussed a plethora of barriers to instructional leadership, from student mobility and overcrowded classrooms in old and poorly maintained buildings to state and federal mandates.

Students come to school with many issues. Meeting their needs, in order to get them ready to learn, is a monumental task in many cases. The necessary resources available to a school to help students with their personal needs are often not adequate.

There are many issues with the classroom teacher. Principals find that teachers are not always receptive to shared decision making. They have their unions make their decisions for them and they are not willing to be accountable. The union gets in the way of reform. This is especially true in the area of authentic teacher evaluation. Strong teacher contracts eliminate the ability of a principal to hire the teachers for his/her building. This is frustrating when trying to change the culture of the school. If the principal is to be held accountable for student achievement, s/he should have more say about who teaches in his/her school. Lack of substitute teachers is another barrier. What do you do when you have five teachers absent and only three substitutes? Some schools find it difficult to locate and keep good teachers. In addition many teachers resist retraining.

The many managerial tasks of the principal are a barrier to instructional leadership. Concern with the health and safety of students and staff requires a great deal of time and energy. Sometimes bureaucracy dictates what goes on in a school instead of the principal. Collective bargaining agreements, district policies, and state and federal mandates, at times, get in the way of what the local culture of a school needs. This ladder of influence weakens the ability of the principal to meet his/her students' needs.

It must also be mentioned that the principal may not be comfortable with the role of instructional leader. This discomfort may cause him/her to hide behind the role of manager. When this happens, the principal's own attitude becomes a barrier. The practice of issuing one-year contracts to principals is considered an obstruction. It makes them reluctant to take risks if they have no job security. It is difficult to sustain a shared vision when the principal's office has a revolving door. Principals do not feel that they have enough time for professional development. They also voiced concerns for the professional preparation of principals. It lacks instruction on the politics of schools.

Money is another obstacle. This includes a lack of funds for salaries for teachers and administrators, as well as for human and material resources needed for quality instruction. It is a dilemma; districts require schools to do more while competing for less resources. Schools do not communicate well what it takes to educate a child in the 21st century. The community at large often makes demands on schools that are unreasonable. It does not understand that it takes time for change to occur.

Second breakout session (grouped by grade level)

The summit format required that the same question of instructional barriers be posed to the participants grouped according to grade level. The purpose was to determine if there was a difference in the barriers, either gross or subtle, due to students' different developmental needs and/or how instruction was delivered.

Elementary. Most elementary schools have one administrator. This leads to a feeling of isolation on the part of the principal. There is a lack of meaningful collaboration among principals and sometimes they are competing for limited resources. The central office does not provide a climate for collegial relationships. High-stakes testing puts principals in a non-collaborative mode; there is too much competition and therefore a lack of cooperation. There is a belief by some that the elementary level is a dumping ground for initiatives. Since literacy is their primary instructional goal, principals feel it is their job to protect teachers from too many new initiatives.

Middle/Junior High. There is a serious problem with finding people who want to be building administrators. The shortage of principals has forced some districts to look for new principals among their teaching staff. They require only one year as an assistant before giving the person a job as principal. This practice leads to a variety of problems because someone who is not ready filled the position.

Decisions are not based on sound research. Principals make many decisions based on personal bias or gut feelings. Schools isolate instruction from standards and assessment. This is a problem because you cannot improve instruction without understanding where you are and where you want to go.

High School. The high school is concerned with the dilemma of having students meet performance standards vs. students acquiring Carnegie Units. It leads to problems between academic offerings and what research dictates is the best practice in instruction. There is also the issue of resources for athletics vs. academics and all the political and public relations involved if you decide to divert athletic funds to academic areas. Local values do not always support change in how we deliver instruction or what that entails.

Teachers resist taking ownership of student performance across content areas (i.e., a social studies teacher fails to see why the reading teacher is not the only one responsible for teaching reading). Some teachers become entrenched in their subject matter; for example, they want to be an algebra teacher for thirty years with no interest or enthusiasm to try another area of math. There is also the difficulty in maintaining balance between content area expertise and a focus on student needs.

When there is no support from the district office, you become isolated. There is a feeling of always being in a battle with the district office over issues such as social promotions and tracking. There is a perception that, when policy regarding accountability for student achievement is decided at the district level, without input from the building principals, expectations are usually unrealistic. It is also very difficult to implement meaningful change in response to changing demands.

Third breakout session (grouped by geographical setting)

The format of the summit required that the question regarding barriers to instructional leadership be brought before participants grouped by the geographical location of their school: rural, suburban, or urban. The purpose of the groupings was to determine if the location of the school provided unique circumstances that would pose a gross or subtle difference in the types of barriers to instructional leadership.

Rural. There is not a large tax base in a rural community. Many communities regionalize their schools into one district. Regionalization makes governance and coordination difficult. Participating communities may have different local cultures, thus making a shared vision difficult. Transportation is costly in rural areas, which in turn takes money out of the budget that then cannot be used for instructional purposes. The problem of distance also makes it difficult for parents to get to the school, for principals to get to the district office, and for schools to plan professional development opportunities for teachers or administrators. Some rural areas must hire teachers at the top step to be competitive with suburban communities. The community does not treat teachers as professionals. Principals must try to keep good teachers with little to offer to them.

When someone is absent, it is the principal who must pick up the slack. This is the case whether it is the nurse, a teacher, or a custodian. Community agencies to help families in crisis are hard to find. The school is usually used as the community meeting place. The principal must spend time learning the politics of the town. A rural principal must be careful; s/he can upset half the town by saying the wrong thing.

Suburban. The lack of leadership from the superintendent is a barrier. When a superintendent does not support or is not knowledgeable about reform, change is difficult. Some superintendents play a political role and impose impossible tasks on principals. Suburban schools have a fear of diversity and a predominance of homogeneity. Their schools are wed to outdated policies such as tracking. The school board's involvement can be very political, especially when appointments are based on an agenda. These politics draw principals away from their strategic plans, making achievement of goals difficult.

Urban. The every day grind of being an urban principal is a barrier to instructional leadership. New principals are not adequately prepared for the job. Resources are scarce for the complex needs of the urban student. Student mobility makes it difficult to see student growth in academic areas. Many people in power have devalued children; we, as a society, have devalued children. Public schools have been devalued; people do not see them as important. Principals do not have the political leverage that teachers have; they lack the power to get the resources they need for their school. There are teachers in our schools who do not like children. Students know these teachers do not like them. Principals feel that they are stuck with these teachers; removing a teacher is very difficult and very time consuming. What have the schools done to students in the lower grades that makes them so negative about school by the time they get to the middle school? There appears to be a mindset of the students, a defeatist attitude that is pervasive. They question, "What is the purpose of school?" When they go home, there are not enough positive role models to continue pushing them toward high school and academic goals. Parental support is lacking. Social welfare and support programs are requiring more hours at work or in training of adults, leaving the schools to parent their children. Parents feel insecure in the school. They are politically disenfranchised.

What Must Be Done to Overcome the Barriers to Instructional Leadership?

First breakout session (grouped randomly)

The principal can play an important role in overcoming the barriers to instructional leadership. S/he can be better at managing his/her time, delegating managerial duties to others, supporting risk takers and communicating with all stakeholders. The principal must stay focused on the vision and goals of the school and measure all initiatives in terms of what is best for the individual school. It is important that s/he learn to lead the school through a collaborative effort that includes teachers, parents, and the community at large.

Lack of district funds cannot be used as an excuse for not improving the school. Principals must look for other funding sources, such as grants. Writing grants, or training someone in your building to be a grant writer, can be another source of revenue. Getting politically savvy can also lead to more financial support for your school. Invite legislators into your building and show them the good things going on along with the needs in your school. Focus on the needs of the students. It is essential that leaders prioritize their needs when faced with too many initiatives.

Learn to live with the teachers' union. Participate in contract negotiations to protect the integrity of the school as a learning place for students. It is important to be part of the team that controls the learning climate of the school. There must be clear expectations for everyone, stated rules of conduct, positive attitudes, a healthy and safe facility, a common vision, and a code for procedures that is upheld. A principal must be visible and take pride in his/her school organization. S/he must find and be the keeper and preacher of the spirit of the school. Data from standardized tests must be looked at and understood. Analysis of information gained from testing can help to develop a plan for improved instruction. Improved instruction will lead to improved learning.

In order to combat the isolation of the job, mentoring programs can be established, either with peers or with a local institution of higher learning. Participation in activities provided by professional associations can help to develop a network of peers. Mentoring programs can also be used to improve teacher performance. Providing quality professional development opportunities for teachers and administrators can also improve instruction.

The leadership must set its own pace for reform; different buildings have different needs as well as different barriers to reform. It may be necessary to resist micromanagement from the school board. It is necessary to step in and resist getting on the bandwagon of an initiative that is not in the best interests of your school. Efforts must be made to reduce class size and the size of some schools. Smaller is better when trying to meet student needs. Large schools must be reconfigured into small, manageable units.

Principals must do a better job of keeping parents informed about what is going on in school. Sometimes this means going to local community agencies to spread the word. Parents are needed as a political force for getting funding for schools. They should be made allies in the reform process.

Second breakout session (grouped by grade level)

The purpose of the grouping was to determine if the grade level of a school provided unique circumstances that would pose a gross or subtle difference in what must be done to overcome instructional leadership barriers.

Elementary. In order to improve instruction, the philosophy that every student can learn must be accepted by the entire school community. Children do not come to school with a mind that is tabulae rosa. Therefore, it is necessary to listen to the clashing of different belief systems in order to work with the families and community to support children. The principal must find ways to be proactive in finding funding sources in the private sector. Funding for elementary schools must be increased to provide the necessary services needed to help children become better learners. Parents must be educated on their important role in school improvement.

Middle/Junior High. Establishing a leadership team can overcome barriers to instructional leadership. The principal must be willing to give team members important leadership roles. The team must establish a positive climate to set a tone and vision for the school. The school must do all they can to help all students be successful. Parents and politicians must understand that school is more than a “care place.” The primary mission is to academically prepare young people for the future. More funding is needed to do the job.

High School. The high school principal must look for new ways to bring along and nurture new leaders in his/her school. S/he must make room for people who are making mid-career changes and coming into education. The school must invest in professional development for teachers. Its leader must publicly acknowledge the accomplishments of the staff. The principal must be a strong advocate for public schools and carry that message to the community at large.

Third breakout session (grouped by geographical setting)

The participants were grouped by geographical location to determine if there were any differences in what needs to be done to improve instructional leadership.

Rural. A rural setting allows a principal to be closer to the community. S/he can develop a personal connection with the students and parents to know what they need. It is possible for him/her to communicate with the members of the community at large and build a level of confidence and public support for schools in the district. Rural schools do not have the issue of violence to distract from instruction. It is essential that technology be used to communicate with others, including parents, the district office, and other principals. In order to get all the small towns to support a regional school district, there must be increased outreach programs to communicate a vision and gain their support of it. State aid for rural schools must be increased to equalize cost per student with suburban districts.

Suburban. There is a need to increase the number of personnel in all areas. Instructional leaders must stand up to those who impede their vision. They must prioritize programs they can support and draw lines where they cannot comply. Schools must align activities to core values and filter out those activities that do not support goals. School leaders need opportunities such as the summit to network and learn how to overcome barriers. The collective voice that emerges from such forums can be used to communicate barriers and to impact the future of instructional leadership. School leaders must start to educate congressional leaders about the needs of public schools.

Urban. The urban principal needs to be a strong mentor for new building leaders. New leaders need encouragement. They have to be passionate about improving schools and they must infuse everyone around them with that passion. Principals must teach staff how to work with people from a variety of cultural backgrounds. All the stakeholders are necessary to turn a school around. Parents are a vital part of the process. They are a political force that must be utilized by the public school. The strengths of each staff member must be discovered and utilized. The culture of some urban schools must change. It must be made clear that effort leads to achievement, being smart takes hard work. The school must have structure, order, and routine; this is important to students whose lives are in a chaotic state.

All teachers must be trained to teach reading. The student population of urban schools is so diverse that alternative learning programs must be developed for some students to succeed. Principals must get into classrooms to see what is going on in them. There has to be a realistic way to remove teachers who do not belong in the classroom. Having a plan makes a difference in school improvement. The plan helps a school toward progress; however, it is a slow process. It takes a long time.

What Will the Principalship Need to Look Like in the Future?

Fourth breakout session (grouped randomly)

Many of the participants believed that the principal should be the leader of leaders in a school building. The building leader would still be responsible for finding the resources needed to provide an optimal learning environment. There is concern regarding the quantity and quality of aspiring principals. More must be done to attract the best leaders for the job. A support system will be needed for inexperienced administrators. The system should use mentoring, professional development opportunities, and networking to support collegial interaction with other principals. It is necessary to start recruiting candidates now. The image of the principal must be brought to the public as an honorable and important job. The voice of the principal must be heard when districts are negotiating contracts and/or planning new initiatives.

The principal of the future will know how to be a better listener. S/he will recognize that s/he must solve some problems and staff members must solve some problems. All the problems do not have to be reconciled by the principal. Principals will be trained as mediators, conflict resolution counselors, and deescalating counselors. This will give them skills in turning a volatile situation around. They will be more proactive than reactive. It will also help them to work closely with teachers and parents. The principal will have to understand the needs of the students in the school and know how to prepare teachers to meet those needs. The principal will know how to administer a standards-based school. Professional development for teachers and principals will be an integral part of the school culture.

The use of technology by principals increases the opportunities to communicate with peers, teachers, parents, and the community. The use of technology also helps schools analyze data.

Understanding data analysis helps in setting goals. Principals need good office managers to take care of the paper work. This gives them more time to be an instructional leader. The politics of education have never been in the training for the principalship. The future principal will have to be politically savvy to get local, state, and national politicians to support schools. Institutions of higher learning are going to have to do a better job of training. They should work with schools to develop a meaningful program. Working with the media is another area that needs to be addressed.

School administration could be divided into two positions: the managerial and the instructional. This would allow time for instructional leadership. It may also mean creating a team of specialists in assessment, curriculum development, and student behavioral management. The concept would require clear job descriptions before implementation. Principals should understand that by allowing stakeholders to participate in decision making, their understanding of the decision-making process will increase. It will encourage team building. The principal who shares leadership with staff must be mature, persistent, and have the courage to overcome bureaucracy. Faculty meetings should be positive, well-structured, data driven and thematic.

One group agreed that autonomy needs to reside with the principal and the building. The principal of the future should have autonomy and the resources to make decisions about teaching and learning, personnel, finance, curriculum, and facilities, with input from various stakeholders.

CONCLUSIONS

The role of principal in a public school is very complex. One can find many problems, but there are limited resources to solve them. The term “instructional leader” was difficult for some groups to define. The role of manager is important, but gets in the way of evaluating instruction in the classroom. The public sees a building’s test scores in the newspapers and forms a perception about that school. There is resentment about the public disclosure of test scores. The public does not always know the problems behind those results.

Although the participants had difficulty defining instructional leadership, they could find many barriers to it. The areas of most concern are the management tasks, lack of respect for the office, teacher contracts, students with chaotic lives, staff development, lack of parent participation, and limited resources. One principal said that he needs “... more than 24 hours in a day.” Student mobility was mentioned as a barrier. It is wrong to assume that all principals want or believe their job is to be an instructional leader. There are some who believe that this task can and should be delegated.

Overcoming the barriers is a challenge and a work in progress. Better time management, delegating responsibilities, working with teams, finding and keeping good teachers, and knowing the local culture were a few of the suggestions. It is very difficult for some principals to delegate authority and/or work with teams. More professional development is needed in this area. Building leaders must become more political to get more resources for their school.

Participants determined that more meetings on the regional level were needed to clarify the definition of instructional leadership. It is important to bring principals together to help them define what their job is and perhaps what it should be. Many do not have the resources to go to a national meeting and find the regional meeting very useful. There were positive comments about how they appreciated the opportunity to have a dialogue and be able to reflect on their practices with each other.

Appendix C

The Principals' Leadership Network

Reportings from Across the Region

The Principals' Leadership Network Reportings from Across the Region

“I work upwards of 60 hours per week, including evenings and weekends. Today, I disaggregated test data, searched for a lost lunch box, spoke at a Chamber of Commerce business luncheon, taught a group of 10-year-olds how to divide, developed a spending plan for a \$30,000 grant, counseled a distraught parent about her child’s school phobia, and met with the bee man to determine how to keep the swarm from attacking first graders’ peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. Who am I? Why, an elementary principal, of course!”

*Suzette Lovely, former principal and Director
Elementary School Operations
Capistrano Unified School District 1*

BACKGROUND

Many principals, elementary and secondary, can relate to Lovely’s description of a “typical” day on the job. As she explains, “Principals must be able to work quickly, shift gears easily, and complete tasks in tiny bits and pieces throughout their day. In a job full of so many brief encounters, it comes as no surprise that principals often feel overwhelmed, disheartened, and emotionally drained.”

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRINCIPALS’ LEADERSHIP NETWORK

In an effort to streamline the load for principals and positively impact our nation’s public schools, the Northeast and Islands Regional Educational Laboratory at Brown University (LAB)—a program of The Education Alliance—in partnership with the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), has established a network of K-12 principals who are working together to strengthen leadership skills for principals.

The group, collectively known as the Principals’ Leadership Network (PLN), is comprised of approximately 25 outstanding principals proportionally representing each state and island served by the LAB. The leadership group is broken into two groups: the Executive Committee comprised of 10 principals who meet four times a year, and the Advisory Committee comprised of the Executive Committee members and 10 additional principals who meet twice a year. The function of the Executive Committee is to examine the profession and to make recommendations for action to the Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee reviews the recommendations and gives endorsement and/or suggestions for changes in direction.

The PLN work is guided by three important values—the work must be productive, collegial, and provide learning to the participants. Within the values, the PLN's work is guided by three essential questions:

- How can the PLN enhance the capacity of school principals to be instructional leaders?
- How can the PLN frame and accelerate mentoring opportunities for sitting and aspiring principals?
- How can the PLN communicate the complexity of the role and work of the principalship to the community and our constituencies?

Three study groups currently operate in collaboration with other organizations to examine the literature, speak with colleagues, collect data, and implement action plans that will address these questions. The intent of this activity is to offer practical solutions to the complex challenges faced by principals on a daily basis. The National Association of Secondary School Principals and the American Federation of School Administrators actively support the partnership.

THE SITE VISIT PROCESS

While acknowledging the hundreds of existing studies that report on the plights and successes of principals, the PLN Advisory Committee indicated a need for a current and accurate temperature of the profession within its own region—New York, New England, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. Cheryl Riggins-Newby, Associate Executive Director for Urban Alliances at the NAESP, and Hal Hayden, LAB Liaison to the PLN, developed a semi-structured interview protocol shaped to focus on the three major areas suggested by the PLN:

- Mentoring
- The role of the principal as instructional leader
- Communicating the principal's complex role to the community.

Equipped with specific questions to elicit concerns and suggestions from the principals, Riggins-Newby and Hayden arranged site visits to schools in the LAB's region to talk with the principals about their concerns. Participants were asked to provide reactions/thoughts/suggestions relative to the following topics:

- The role of the principal as instructional leader
- The public image of the principal
- The impact of mentoring
- Developing and retaining quality principals
- Professional development
- Factors that are barriers to the principalship
- Recommendations for improving the state of the principalship

Additional comments were encouraged.

REPORTINGS FROM THE FIELD

Focusing on the PLN's three essential questions and additional areas of concern, participants' comments are reflected below.

The Role of Principal as Instructional Leader

- Today's principal has many roles that are poorly defined and/or changed according to political flow.
- While many principals perceive themselves as instructional leaders, they acknowledge that legislation, accountability, and issues surrounding staff training, budgets, and unions are sapping their time and strength.
- The role as instructional leader is becoming very complex. For example, current pedagogy requires that principals stay current with new technology, student scheduling, and presentation processes.
- Accountability for low test scores falls on principals, not on teachers or on the lack of resources.
- Principals embrace their roles as instructional leaders because it is the core of what they do, but they are frustrated that this role is being smothered by other responsibilities.
- As curriculum facilitators who work with teachers, the state, the community, and students, they need to be flexible and fluid, which is difficult.

Communicating the Principal's Complex Role to the Community

- A principal's public image varies from test score to test score. "The press can be the principal's worst enemy."
- Image is being shaped by negative publicity. Principals need the public to understand they are doing their best under the circumstances and need support.
- The public has misperceptions because of the press. Test scores among schools that are not similarly situated are unfairly compared.
- Most community members seem to have a good impression of their own school, but sense that public education on the whole does not have the capacity to meet the challenges of educating all students to their maximum capacity.
- Public image begins with the perceptions principals have of themselves.
- More should be done by organizations such as the PLN, NAESP, NASSP, and NEA to enhance the image of the principal.
- Image and knowledge are closely linked in the public's eye. When the public sees what principals are doing and the conditions under which they work, they appreciate their accomplishments more.
- There is hope that someone will develop a program that can be used by even small school systems to enhance the principal's public image.

Mentoring

- Little is known about any formal mentoring programs, but some universities and colleges use mentoring models as part of graduate programs leading to principal certification.
- Informal mentoring ranges from a new principal being assigned a mentor by the superintendent to calling colleagues to ask advice.
- There are concerns that a poor match between mentor and principal would leave the principal feeling trapped.
- While several principals indicated an interest in being a mentor, they expressed little available time.
- Experienced principals were open to an occasional mentoring session, either in a group setting or individually, to discuss process/procedure and general issues in an enlightening and non-threatening way.
- There is general agreement that the mentor has to be more than a good principal; he/she needs to be trained in mentoring.
- If mentoring were provided in a systematic way, it would be beneficial to the profession and to students. Well-trained principals are far more capable of overcoming difficulties inherent in the profession.

Developing and Retaining Quality Principals

- The “job is impossible.” Requirements are difficult, the remuneration inadequate, time requirements excessive, and there is a lack of public appreciation for accomplishments and challenges. All of these factors negatively impact the capacity to develop and retain quality principals.
- All participants cited remuneration as a critical issue. There is general agreement that differential pay between experienced teachers and principals is insufficient when considering the added responsibilities of being a principal.
- There is a great deal of overlap in discussing mentoring and development and retention. There is general agreement that if aspiring principals received appropriate mentoring and training beyond “university courses that are virtually worthless,” then there might be hope of retaining quality principals.
- Many principals reported plans to “bail out” as soon as financially possible. Just as many expressed concern about being forced out for the same reason.
- Emotional and physical burnout is blamed for early retirement or return to the classroom. Returning to the classroom offered almost the same money for “half the work and worry.”
- There is concern that school systems are going to be in deep trouble if society does not acknowledge and take action in regard to the drastic shortage that is about to occur.
- Several principals expressed that “No one wants to work seven days a week, 24 hours a day, and be told that s/he is not doing the job.”

- Despite the downside of the job, many expressed that being a principal was the best thing that ever happened to them. They helped students, teachers, and their communities. They wished that there was more time and less pressure in order to expand their positive impact.
- Though it is a difficult job, many stated how proud they were to be viewed as community leaders, especially when the community appreciates their work.
- They feel most valued when they are “honored” by the superintendent, school committee, and/or community.

Professional Development

- There is general agreement that continual education is important, especially on issues such as unions, budgets, state testing, and technology, where there is constant change.
- Better training in technology is crucial to managing instructional and non-instructional aspects of the job.
- While many reported “too many e-mails,” others liked the idea of being able to respond “on their own time schedule.”
- Professional development was not well-planned or targeted to their needs. Training was “wholesale” and wasted a lot of time for some.
- There is considerable agreement that the best professional development came from colleagues. This tied closely with the finding relative to mentoring. Principals enjoyed learning from peers who “had been there and knew what they were talking about.”
- Many reported disappointment and even “hated the one-shot deal where the expert came in to tell [them] how to do it.”
- They prefer that professional development be provided on an ongoing basis, such as the first and third Wednesday of the month. It should focus on discrete topics such as drugs in school, school finance, discipline, and technology.
- Principals should be compensated for professional development; not necessarily money, but some recognition and/or advanced certification in an area that is recognized by an official body.
- Associations should coordinate their programs more closely with districts and/or universities so principals can get “more for their ‘time’ buck.”
- Professional development must be current, and deal with today’s problems to be practical.
- “Being a principal is way too important to be left to learning how to do it day-to-day. Doctors and lawyers don’t learn that way.”

Factors That Are Barriers to Being a Good Principal Include but Are Not Limited to:

- Lack of superintendent support: “The capacity of the superintendent to support building principals is proportional to the political power the superintendent has.”

- Lack of time for principals to “get away” and discuss their issues and possible solutions
- School committees (especially in rural areas) that micromanage the system
- Lack of funding for schools, school/instructional programs, training, and salaries
- “Woefully inadequate” professional development
- Sixty- to eighty-hour weeks with no time for a personal life
- Regulations without concurrent funding to support their implementation
- Lack of a comprehensive public relations campaign that tells the good stories about principals
- Unfair bad press: “It’s an uphill battle when the headlines scream about how bad your school is.”
- Those who think they know the solutions, but don’t offer or support ways of implementing them

Recommendations for Improving the State of Principalship

- All aspiring principals must have longer and more comprehensive training, including mentoring.
- More training in pedagogy, finance, and human relations is needed.
- Highlight the positive attitude of principals who are committed to improving the principalship
- Ensure appropriate compensation structure
- Work out a system to ensure positive press whenever possible
- Identify and publicize concrete reasons for becoming a principal
- Develop and maintain smaller schools
- Provide more authority over hiring within the school
- Provide more and better uninterrupted instructional time
- Promote a national “Love Your Principal Day”

The Education Alliance at Brown University will continue to work with K-12 principals from the PLN’s Advisory Committee to develop field projects that will create ideas as to how to define the principal’s growing role, how to improve the public image of the principalship, and how to establish a mentoring program for practicing and aspiring principals.

Inquiries about this project should be directed to Phil Zarlengo, LAB Director of Special Projects at 1-800-521-9550, 222 Richmond Street, Suite 300, Providence, Rhode Island 02903 or Cheryl Riggins-Newby, Associate Executive Director for Urban Alliances, National Association of Elementary School Principals at (703) 684-3345, 1615 Duke Street, Alexandria, Virginia 22314.

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**Appendix
D**

The Principals' Leadership Network

**Proceedings
from the
Second
Regional
Summit
2001**

November 5-6, 2001

Mystic Hilton

Mystic, Connecticut

Proceedings from the Second Regional Summit 2001

**November 5-6, 2001
Mystic Hilton
Mystic, Connecticut**

FOREWORD

The Second Annual Regional Summit of the Principals' Leadership Network (PLN) hosted by The Education Alliance and NAESP resumed where the first summit concluded by providing a time and place for principals from across the region to discuss issues pertinent to educational leadership. This event provided an opportunity to define and promote the collaborative leadership roles of K-12 principals. Summit participants benefited from working with those who knew first-hand the challenges that confront today's public school principals. Opportunities were provided for further elaboration on the role of the principal and around improving the public's understanding of the principalship. Additionally, mentoring programs for practicing and aspiring principals were the focus of a series of workshops.

One of the featured speakers, Wayne Tanaka, encouraged reflection among members of the group as he told them, "If you always do what you've always done, you only have what you already had." Tanaka, a retired principal and Clark County (Nevada) School District employee, has always been an advocate for students. Earlier this year, he took on a new challenge in accepting the role of executive director and principal of the newly chartered Andre Agassi College Preparatory Academy in Las Vegas. This new public school, located in a low socio-economic neighborhood, opened its doors in August 2001. The goal of the academy is to have all students proceed onto college after high school.

As the opening keynote speaker on Monday, November 5th, Tanaka drew on his extensive experience as a building principal to share his thoughts on what makes an effective school leader. Highlights of his talk follow.

ON EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

The principal ...

- Demonstrates the power to produce meaningful change in the achievement or lives of students
- Builds a school that is safe physically and emotionally, warm and caring, and able to build connections for all students
- Understands the needs of kids and what motivates students toward achievement
- Builds partnerships with businesses, government and community agencies, universities, and non-profit agencies, by using his/her own personal style to develop resources for the school
- Writes grants and pilots new programs

- Develops trusting relationships with parents, students, teachers, and staff by creating opportunities for real input in curriculum, athletics, activities, and academics
- Keeps up with research and uses it to enhance career skills and technological developments
- Hires the best people and encourages them to be the best they can be
- Stands for something, or falls for anything
- Develops smaller learning communities
- Believes in and demonstrates skills in assessment and accountability
- Is a skilled conductor who orchestrates the different areas of content instruction into a meaningful, congruent, and aligned curriculum
- Reallocates FTEs in special education, reading, and mathematics to assist regular teachers
- Acts as an educational entrepreneur, by being clear, complete, and concise when working with partners such as businesses

ON ENHANCING THE PUBLIC UNDERSTANDING

The principal ...

- Opens the school to the media at all times
- Creates media panels for principal training workshops and conferences
- Creates opportunities for the media to teach in the school
- Asks media to serve on adjudication activities such as theater, drama, speech, science fairs, and as speakers at school events
- Learns public relations and marketing skills, not just public information
- Develops parent committees for all areas

ON MENTORING, ASPIRING (PERSPIRING), AND SITTING (MOVING) PRINCIPALS

The principal...

- Knows the difference between leadership and management
- Leads people, manages programs, and never gets the two mixed up
- Speaks positively about the principalship
- Demonstrates passion for the job
- Expresses and demonstrates the power to produce meaningful change to improve the achievement and lives of children
- Demonstrates transformational and situational leadership
- Demonstrates the ability to be flexible with his/her style and assists the mentee to find or achieve his/her goals

- Shares vision with proven leaders about marketing and public relations
- Uses video about principals with proven leadership skills
- Creates a network of caring, selfless principals who truly lead by example

The second featured speaker, Douglas Reeves, introduced his presentation by stating that holistic accountability is favorable to the current high-stakes state assessments being used to hold schools accountable. It was his perspective that a holistic accountability system must be aligned with learning objectives, which redefine educational accountability, develop a set of principles for effective accountability, provide a framework for the accountability system and a plan for implementation of a comprehensive accountability system.

Reeves used an example of an urgent issue that calls for action as a way of illustrating how we sometimes deal with data. Sometimes we shoot the messenger, provide scant information, humiliate others, hide the information, or respond to what we have learned. Key to public acceptance is eliminating the information vacuum and providing straight answers. “What does accountability really mean?” he asked. It can mean “gotcha”, excuses, test scores, guesses, headlines, or the tyranny of the norm. He moved from a humorous stance to stating that principles of accountability include congruence, specificity, relevance, respect for diversity, continuous improvement, and focus on achievement, not norms. He then elaborated on each of these points.

Reeves then talked about typical systems of accountability as having a direct equation with test scores. He stated that efforts are sometimes made to try to compare the incomparable. Often too little quantitative work is done, with a fixation on thresholds and binary categories.

A holistic accountability system was described as being a three-tiered system having (1) system-wide indicators; (2) school-based indicators; and (3) narrative. Characteristics of each tier were provided. In describing systemic development wherein everyone is at the table, there is agreement on principles before tackling structure that includes fairness, comprehensiveness, transparency, and accuracy. The focus on accuracy is math, not politics. Unexpected benefits of accountability include replicable studies such as the 90-90-90 study, union cooperation, parent-community engagement, and strategic planning which shifts from opinions to data.

Accountability systems sometimes suffer false sophistication with incomprehensible indicators or analysis over assistance. At the core, questions include: Is accountability a strategy, or a report of self-fulfilling prophecies? Is accountability designed to break the mold, or confirm our prejudices? Is accountability designed to improve education or destroy confidence? A discussion of case studies such as Milwaukee and St. Louis highlighted success stories where significant increases in student achievement have occurred.

In summary, accountability is more than test scores; it can be a powerful advocate or perverse enemy; accountability can be applied at school, district, or state levels.

Discussion Session A: The Emerging Role of the Principal

Principals today are well aware of the many barriers and obstacles that prevent them from fully assuming the role of instructional leader. Some principals, however, have been highly effective in moving beyond (or around) these obstacles. A number of recognized, distinguished principals were surveyed to discover how specific barriers have been addressed in their own professional lives.

This workshop session was repeated three times on November 6th, allowing all participants at the summit to attend and share their own thoughts. The 90-minute session was organized around the three leadership qualities of vision, culture, and collaboration. Panelists presented an overview of how they have been successful in one of the areas. Open discussion from the participants followed. The following is a summary of all three sessions.

Panelists Pamela Burke, Richard Raiche, and Robin Welch were introduced. The initial findings from the survey, completed by the national distinguished principals hosted by NAESP in October of 2001, were shared and discussed. Drawing on this very small sample and with only preliminary results, the surveys generally indicated that principals rated their efficacy in most instructional leadership areas quite high. The exception to this feeling of general competence appeared to be in the areas of politics (both local and national) and influencing policy overall. Securing grants was also frequently mentioned as an area principals highly valued but in which they felt they lacked skills.

Robin Welch led off the workshop with a summary of his experiences at the Woodrow Wilson Elementary School in Framingham, Massachusetts. He focused his comments around the leadership quality of developing a vision for the learning community. Specifically, he related his experience of moving into a long-neglected school and his efforts to turn it around and build it into a high-achieving learning community.

The successful strategies Welch employed included:

- Making sure the vision of the school drove all actions
- Developing and distributing a parent survey. This survey was distributed as homework for the students, and they achieved an 85% return rate.
- Opening the classroom doors and insisting on teacher and classroom accountability. Addressing this through professional development and peer observations.
- Creation of a parent center in the building, providing a host of social and health services
- Requiring teachers to send home a monthly newsletter
- Telling teachers, not asking them, to take risks
- Making time for teachers to meet across grades and curriculum areas. This allows teachers to share responsibility and understand the needs of students as they move through the school.

- Nurturing an environment of change where everything relates to the vision of the school community. Create an environment where ‘naysayers’ damage themselves politically and professionally.
- Hiring parents as teacher assistants
- Hosting curriculum nights for the community and parents, where students served as teachers
- Holding award ceremonies and school wide assemblies. Pay attention to academics, not just music and athletics.
- Bringing in outside help to deal with issues when needed
- Building strong partnerships. One example is a partnership with Tufts Dental Center, in which Tufts makes dental services available to the students in the school.
- Creating and prominently displaying banners outside the school proclaiming what the school is about (Every student is a star).

Richard Raiche was the second panelist. He focused on building a climate and culture supportive of student achievement at the Comprehensive Grammar School in Methuen, Massachusetts.

Raiche’s strategies included:

- First, being an advocate for change. Student achievement is hard to argue against.
- The creation and use of a community needs assessment. Developing this with input from all members of the community created a sense of ownership, and though longer, it was preferable to using something ‘off the shelf’.
- Making the student the center of all decisions and activities in the school. This is held as a non-negotiable point.
- Promoting your successes widely
- Moving from advocacy to a climate where change is nurtured. This is largely sustained through targeted and high-quality professional development. Make professional development convenient for your staff, holding it in school when possible. Make sure it is linked to your action plans.
- Continuing professional development for the principal
- Always nurturing your risk takers, and rewarding them tangibly when you can. Good principals know how to do this.
- Supporting decisions and actions in the school with data and research that will sustain change. Proving, through the use of data, that changes you have created are effective in increasing student achievement. Annual parent and student surveys can often provide simple data to support decisions and are helpful in seeking funding to sustain change.
- Creating a climate of ownership for change, making people think changes are their own ideas
- Judicious use of the power of the principal, and the ability to subtly underscore projects that he or she does not support. Keep in mind that the principal must be accountable for their actions and decisions.

- Maximizing teacher time for professional development and using grants to support this
- Networking and calling on associates to share ideas
- Hiring kindred spirits. When dealing with staff who are perceived as blocks to change, place them in a position of being less disruptive to student learning.
- Don't give up!

Pamela Burke, principal of the Merrimack Valley High School, in Penacook, New Hampshire was our final panelist. She focused on the challenges of creating a collaborative community in a widely dispersed geographic area.

Burke's successful approaches include:

- Getting out into the communities and introducing yourself
- Being aware of the principal's role in educating all adults in the school community, not just the students
- Ensuring that the parent role includes a voice in substantive issues, not just participating in fundraising
- Hosting parent groups and asking them what they want. Parents can also provide powerful connections for the school.
- Giving away decision-making capability, and knowing when that is okay to do
- The creation of a school council or senate
- Creation of a school-based health and dental clinic

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