

Principal as Instructional Leader

Excerpts from
The Knowledge Loom: Educators Sharing and Learning Together
Web site
(<http://knowledgeloom.org>)

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The Knowledge Loom: Educators Sharing and Learning Together

<http://knowledgeloom.org>

The attached document is a user-generated download of selected content found on The Knowledge Loom Web site. Content on The Knowledge Loom is always being updated and changed. **Check online for the most current information.**

What is The Knowledge Loom?

The Knowledge Loom is an online professional development resource featuring specially organized spotlights on high-priority education issues, including:

- a list of promising practices (including an explanation of each practice and a summary of the research or theories that support the practice)
- stories about the practices in action in actual education settings
- lists of related resources found on other web sites.

The site is designed to help educators facilitate decision-making, planning, and benchmarking for improved teaching and learning through collaborative activities.

Are there other resources on The Knowledge Loom?

In addition to printable content, the site features interactive tools that allow users to share information and knowledge, read what panels of practitioners have to say about selected topics, ask questions of content experts, and print custom documents like this one. A companion guidebook, *Using The Knowledge Loom: Ideas and Tools for Collaborative Professional Development* (<http://knowledgeloom.org/guidebook>), can be downloaded. It offers activities and graphic organizers to support collaborative inquiry about what works in teaching and learning in support of school improvement.

What spotlight topics are currently available?

- Adolescent Literacy in the Content Areas
- Culturally Responsive Teaching
- Elementary Literacy
- Good Models of Teaching with Technology
- Leadership Principles in Technology
- Middle School Mathematics
- Principal as Instructional Leader
- Redesigning High Schools to Personalize Learning
- School, Family, and Community Partnerships
- Successful Professional Development
- Teaching for Artistic Behavior: Choice-Based Art

Overview of Spotlight: Principal as Instructional Leader

This overview provides an outline of all content components of this spotlight that are published on The Knowledge Loom Web site. The creator of this document may have printed only selected content from this spotlight. View complete content online (<http://knowledgeloom.org/>).

Two national organizations:

- **The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC)**, a program of the Council of Chief State School Officers; and
- **The National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP)**

have studied effective instructional leadership. Both have published lists of standards, which are presented here. *Scroll down to see the NAESP standards.*

Practices

Each practice includes an explanation, a summary of each story that exemplifies the practice, a research summary (review of the literature), a reference list of the literature, and a short list of related Web resources (URLs and full annotations provided online or in the Related Web Resources section if it has been printed).

Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Model Standards for School Leaders

- A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community.
- A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.
- A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.
- A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.
- A school administrator promotes the success of all students by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.
- A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.

National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) Standards for Principals

- Effective principals lead schools in a way that places student and adult learning at the center.
- Effective principals set high expectations and standards for the academic and social development of all students and the performance of adults.
- Effective principals demand content and instruction that ensure student achievement of agreed-upon academic standards.

- Effective principals create a culture of continuous learning for adults tied to student learning and other school goals.
- Effective principals use multiple sources of data as diagnostic tools to assess, identify and apply instructional improvement.
- Effective principals actively engage the community to create shared responsibility for student and school success.

Stories

The Stories correspond to the summaries printed as part of each practice published on The Knowledge Loom. These are detailed examples of how the practices look in action in educational settings.

Comprehensive Grammar School
Driggs Elementary School
Quinnipiac Elementary School
Woodrow Wilson Elementary School

Related Web Resources: 31

This is an annotated list of resources found on other Web sites that relate to the spotlight topic on The Knowledge Loom.

National Association of Elementary School Principals
Council of Chief State School Officers
The Education Alliance at Brown University

Practices

This section presents the Knowledge Loom practices for the spotlight you selected.

Each practice includes an explanation, a summary of each story that exemplifies the practice, a research summary (review of the literature), a reference list of the literature, and a short list of related Web resources (URLs and full annotations provided online or in the Related Web Resources section of this document).

For an overview of additional content presented on The Knowledge Loom Web site that may not have been selected for this print document, see the Overview of Spotlight located earlier in the document.

Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Model Standards for School Leaders

Formal leadership in schools and school districts is a complex, multi-faceted task. The ISLLC standards honor that reality. At the same time, they acknowledge that effective leaders often espouse different patterns of beliefs and act differently from the norm in the profession. Effective school leaders are strong educators, anchoring their work on central issues of learning and teaching and school improvement. They are moral agents and social advocates for the children and the communities they serve. Finally, they make strong connections with other people, valuing and caring for others as individuals and as members of the educational community.

- A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community.
- A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.
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A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.

The ISLLC standards employ a common design of presenting:

- Knowledge
- Dispositions
- Performances

Knowledge

The administrator has knowledge and understanding of:

- learning goals in a pluralistic society
- the principles of developing and implementing strategic plans
- systems theory
- information sources, data collection, and data analysis strategies
- effective communication
- effective consensus–building and negotiation skills

Dispositions

The administrator believes in, values, and is committed to:

- the educability of all
- a school vision of high standards of learning
- continuous school improvement
- the inclusion of all members of the school community
- ensuring that students have the knowledge, skills, and values needed to become successful adults
- a willingness to continuously examine one's own assumptions, beliefs, and practices
- doing the work required for high levels of personal and organization performance

Performances

The administrator facilitates processes and engages in activities ensuring that:

- the vision and mission of the school are effectively communicated to staff, parents, students, and community members
- the vision and mission are communicated through the use of symbols, ceremonies, stories, and similar activities
- the core beliefs of the school vision are modeled for all stakeholders
- the vision is developed with and among stakeholders
- the contributions of school community members to the realization of the vision are recognized and celebrated
- progress toward the vision and mission is communicated to all stakeholders

- the school community is involved in school improvement efforts
- the vision shapes the educational programs, plans, and activities
- an implementation plan is developed in which objectives and strategies to achieve the vision and goals are clearly articulated
- assessment data related to student learning are used to develop the school vision and goals
- relevant demographic data pertaining to students and their families are used in developing the school mission and goals
- barriers to achieving the vision are identified, clarified, and addressed
- needed resources are sought and obtained to support the implementation of the school mission and goals
- existing resources are used in support of the school vision and goals
- the vision, mission, and implementation plans are regularly monitored, evaluated, and revised

Story Summaries

Quinnipiac Elementary School

Quinnipiac Elementary is a K–4 school where:

- The principal is a strong instructional leader who uses both hard (numbers) and soft (cultural, social) data to drive decision making in the school
- Instruction has been improved by an increased sharing of information about students among staff and parents
- Staff have received strong professional development for gathering and sharing data
- The principal has set clear expectations for the students and the staff
- Home visits by a family coordinator contribute to the knowledge of each student's learning style and the challenges he/she may face outside of school

Quinnipiac principal Pat Morgillo was first introduced to the power of data when she worked at a high school in New Haven. She learned about students' lives, what was going on in the streets outside of school, and what students had to deal with while trying to complete their studies. She realized that sometimes emotional, family, or social situations affected the test scores and grades that she saw on the page.

The training prepared her for running a elementary school that the state deemed a priority school. Because so many students at Quinnipiac were scoring at intervention level on the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT), Morgillo received rigorous professional development from district staff in the use of data, and she developed an enduring culture of information use at her school. Under her leadership, Quinnipiac staff have been able to combine the use of information on the page with observations of their students in the classroom to eliminate misconceptions. They gather and share information at grade–level meetings and constantly refer to the Wall of Achievement — a posting of all students' test scores on the wall of Morgillo's office. They have come to understand that low scores don't necessarily mean lack of ability and that behavioral problems don't necessarily indicate low scores. These findings have enabled them to better serve each unique student at their school.

Morgillo also firmly believes that the students and parents need to be just as aware of the data as staff members. She has forged an atmosphere where all parties involved understand the importance of the

test, but also see improvement a series of small accomplishments on the road to a larger goal.

Woodrow Wilson Elementary School

- the principal is a strong instructional leader
- an innovative school choice program is in place
- parents are encouraged and supported as important members of the learning community
- there are many Portuguese-speaking students
- there is high student mobility

Principal Robin Welch accepted the challenge of leading the faculty of the Woodrow Wilson Elementary School through a change process, taking them from being the district's weakest school in 1996 to an energized community of learners. The school is located in Framingham, Massachusetts, a town that has experienced the decline of an old mill economy and the emergence of a rapidly growing high-tech industrial base.

The town's growth has attracted a highly diverse immigrant population to the area, creating a strongly multi-cultural community. First steps in a much-needed turnaround included replacement of a deteriorated building with a state-of-the art facility.

Principal Robin Welch accepted the challenge of leading his school's faculty through a change process, taking them from being the district's weakest school to an energized community of learners.

While constructing a new facility demonstrated one level of commitment to improvement, it was not enough to energize the community. Welch identified three problems to be tackled:

1. Raising teacher expectations of students.
2. Bringing the staff together.
3. Dispelling the myths about the school and its location while developing a school theme with the community.

Focused on these objectives, his role as a true instructional leader emerged. Over a two-year period, he introduced a variety of best practices and programs to get results. These included supporting an environment where the entire school community accepted responsibility for success OR failure. Performance was monitored at the classroom level and professional development opportunities of various kinds were provided as needs were identified. A concerted effort was made to bring faculty factions together and to use the school's student population diversity as a resource.

Additionally, programs were put in place to bring parents into the learning community as active participants. All of this and a lot of dedication and hard work attributed to achieving the vision that Welch and his staff articulated for Woodrow Wilson Elementary School.



Comprehensive Grammar School

Due to the positive attitude and pride of the staff, students, and parents, the CGS is a school that functions well and has a reputation for being a caring and friendly environment, a school whose teachers have the professional initiative to improve and innovate their instructional methodologies, and a school where parents are involved, informed, and welcome. The success of CGS is due to

several integrated pieces supported by Principal Raiche, carried out by the combined efforts of faculty and staff working toward a common goal of student learning and achievement.

CGS has a healthy and supportive school climate, students know they are there to learn and achieve. The students are the center of all decisions and activities in the school. Examples of student work are everywhere in the school. Motivational and positive message posters and banners are in the cafeteria, hallways, and foyer. Classrooms are brightly painted and equipped with ample resources (i.e. books, computers, materials).

Faculty and staff are respected by each other and the administration at CGS. Professional development activities linked to the school action/improvement plan continually take place. Many of these activities are offered during the school day, with a substitute to cover the classroom.

Meaningful parental involvement is a keystone of CGS. The school is constantly seeking out ways to involve parents in the activities and goals of the school. CGS has been blessed with highly active Parent Teacher Organizations, strong parental representation on the School Council, and a parent volunteer cadre that is ever present during the school day. Minutes from the School Council and PTO meetings are posted on the school's Web Site (<http://www.methuen.k12.ma.us/cgs>). Parent involvement in meaningful volunteer work (over 100 volunteers) is a tangible and productive link between the home and the school. This involvement also creates a powerful political support base for the efforts of the school.

Research Summary

Research Summary

According to the most recent *Phi Delta Kappan/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes toward the Public Schools* both parents of school-age children and other members of the public see education as a major national issue, and believe that parent involvement is a major factor in improving public schools (Rose and Gallup 2001).

Yet educators are bemoaning the fact that they are having a harder time than ever engaging parents to be actively involved. School administrators are hard-pressed to create options that enable most families to play an active and effective role in supporting their children's schooling. And, at a time when schools are being held accountable as never before, they need the help and support of parents more than ever.

You've read and heard about the research that indicates that when families are involved in their children's education, children achieve higher grades, have better attendance, complete more homework, are better motivated, and are less likely to have behavioral problems.

An extensive research base developed over many years has made it clear that meaningful family involvement is a powerful predictor of student success in school (Davies 1993). For example, Anne Henderson and Nancy Berla, after a comprehensive review of the literature on family involvement, concluded that "the research has become overwhelmingly clear; parent involvement – and that means all kinds of parents – improves student achievement." Specifically, they say:

- Educators hold higher expectations of students when parents collaborate with the teacher.

- In programs that are designed to involve parents in full partnerships, disadvantaged students' achievement not only improves, but can reach levels that are standard for middle-class children.
- Schools that work well with families have higher teacher morale and higher ratings of teachers by parents.
- A school's practices in informing and involving parents are stronger determinants of whether inner-city parents will be involved with their children's education than are parent education, family size, marital status, and student grade level (Pape 1998, 19).

When families are actively involved in schools, teachers learn more about the students in their class and are better able to provide appropriate educational services for their students. Ultimately, students become more ready and able to learn – and more likely to stay in school and benefit from high-quality learning experiences. These positive outcomes happen regardless of the ethnic/racial background, social economic status, or the parents' educational level (Henderson 1987; Henderson and Berla 1995).

From *Essentials for Principals: Strengthening the Connection between School and Home* by the National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2001.

References

Berger, E.H. (1991). *Parents as partners in education: The school and home working together*. New York: MacMillan.

Boone, E. &Barclay, K. (1995). *Building a three-way partnership: Linking schools, families and community*. New York: Scholastic.

Caplan, J.G. (2000). *Building strong family-school partnerships to support high student achievement (Informed Educator Series)*. Arlington, VA: Educational Research Service.

Davies, D. (1993). Benefits and barriers of parent involvement. In N. Chavkin (Ed.), *Families and schools in a pluralistic society*, (pp. 205–216). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Decker, L.E. &Decker, V.E. (2000). *Engaging families and communities: Pathways to educational success*. Fairfax, VA: National Community Education Association.

Harchar, R.L. &Hyle, A.E. (1996). Collaborative Power: A Grounded Theory of Administrative Instructional Leadership in the Elementary School. *Journal of Educational Administration*. 34(3), 15–29.

Describes a study seeking to develop a theory of instructional leadership. Effective elementary instructional leaders engaged in various strategies designed to balance power inequities in their school community. They exemplified the use of collaborative power based on trust, respect, and collegiality.

Henderson, A.T. (1987). *The evidence continues to grow*. Columbia, MD: National Committee for Citizens in Education.

Henderson, A &Berla, N. (1995). *A new generation of evidence: The family is critical to student achievement*. Washington, DC: Center for Law and Education.

National Association of Elementary School Principals. (2001). *Essential for principals: Strengthening the connection between school and home*. Alexandria, VA: Author.

NAESP created the *Essentials for Principals* series to provide information that is both practical and solidly research-based. This is a valuable resource for all principals. The tools and materials in this handbook will help provide principals with the best leadership possible to create a school climate in

which families, staff and students work together to promote high levels of student learning.

National Opinion Research Center. (1997). *Study of opportunities for and barriers to family involvement in education*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago.

National PTA. (1998). *National standards for parent/family involvement programs*. Chicago, IL: Author.

Pape, B. (1998). Reaching out to parents: Some helpful ideas for dealing with hard-to-reach parents. *Virginia Journal of Education*. 18–19.

Rose, L.C. &Gallup, A.M. (2001). *The 31st annual Phi Delta Kappan/Gallup Poll of the public's attitudes toward the public schools*. Online:www.pdkintl.org/kappan/kpol9909.htm.

Stein, M.R. &Thorkildsen, R.J. (1999). *Parent involvement in education: Insights and applications from the research*. Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa International.

Related Web Resources

Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) (13)

Keep Talking: The Family on Your School's Agenda (18)

The Knowledge Loom Spotlight on School, Family and Community Partnerships (4)

A school administrator promotes the success of all students by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.

The ISLLC standards employ a common design of presenting:

- Knowledge
- Dispositions
- Performances

Knowledge

The administrator has knowledge and understanding of:

- learning goals in a pluralistic society
- the principles of developing and implementing strategic plans
- systems theory
- information sources, data collection, and data analysis strategies
- effective communication
- effective consensus–building and negotiation skills

Dispositions

The administrator believes in, values, and is committed to:

- the educability of all
- a school vision of high standards of learning
- continuous school improvement
- the inclusion of all members of the school community
- ensuring that students have the knowledge, skills, and values needed to become successful adults
- a willingness to continuously examine one's own assumptions, beliefs, and practices
- doing the work required for high levels of personal and organization performance

Performances

The administrator facilitates processes and engages in activities ensuring that:

- the vision and mission of the school are effectively communicated to staff, parents, students, and community members
- the vision and mission are communicated through the use of symbols, ceremonies, stories, and similar activities
- the core beliefs of the school vision are modeled for all stakeholders
- the vision is developed with and among stakeholders
- the contributions of school community members to the realization of the vision are recognized and celebrated
- progress toward the vision and mission is communicated to all stakeholders
- the school community is involved in school improvement efforts
- the vision shapes the educational programs, plans, and activities
- an implementation plan is developed in which objectives and strategies to achieve the vision

and goals are clearly articulated

- assessment data related to student learning are used to develop the school vision and goals
- relevant demographic data pertaining to students and their families are used in developing the school mission and goals
- barriers to achieving the vision are identified, clarified, and addressed
- needed resources are sought and obtained to support the implementation of the school mission and goals
- existing resources are used in support of the school vision and goals
- the vision, mission, and implementation plans are regularly monitored, evaluated, and revised

Research Summary

Research Summary One task of an instructional leader is to provide leadership in creating an ethical institution (First 1993). All decisions made in schools should have the best interests of students in mind. A leader's behavior, attitude, actions, and decisions have an affect on school climate and the surrounding community. Schools are often the reflection of the educational values of its leader – whether intended or unintended (Goldman, 1998). School leaders have a responsibility to conduct themselves and exercise authority in an ethical manner.

Instructional leaders need to be aware of the values a community places importance on to be able to create an ethical organization that meets and compliments these value priorities. An understanding of the community also gives the school leader the opportunity to strengthen the relationship between school and community (Hessel and Holloway 2002). Principals need to be able to bridge the gap between school and community while upholding the policies, structure, and climate of the school (Arnold and Harris, 2000).

Principals have moral obligations to a number of different stakeholders, each with their own values and interests. When individual values conflict, dilemmas arise. Rushworth Kidder (1995) defines an ethical dilemma as "not a choice between right and wrong, but a choice between two rights." Principals face these ethical dilemmas on a daily basis. Should funding be cut from one program to support another? What does this say about the school's priorities and values (Lashway 1996)?

To resolve ethical dilemmas leaders should have a strong sense of ethical standards and be willing to use those standards (Lashway 1996). Leaders need to be able to view potential ethical dilemmas from various perspectives and ask themselves how they would like to be treated in a similar situation. They can also reframe ethical issues. Kidder (1995) suggests many dilemmas actually offer a third option by avoiding the either–or scenario and enabling principals to offer alternative solutions. A principal who is actively engaged as an ethical leader will challenge faculty to think beyond strategies and their immediate effectiveness (Arnold and Harris, 2000).

Related Web Resources

Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) (13)

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Research Summary

References

Farkas, S., Johnson, J. & Duffett, A. (2001). *Trying to stay ahead of the game: Superintendents and principals talk about school leadership. A Report from Public Agenda.* New York: Public Agenda.

This report is based on surveys of 853 randomly selected public school principals, conducted in 2001. Covering topics ranging from school funding to academic standards to professional development and training, the surveys offer a detailed look at what these educators have to say.

Related Web Resources

"Rethinking the Principalship" Research Roundup (5)
Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) (13)
Principals Share Strategies on Equity and School Reform (30)

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Story Summaries

Comprehensive Grammar School

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Meaningful parental involvement is a keystone of CGS. The school is constantly seeking out ways to involve parents in the activities and goals of the school. CGS has been blessed with highly active Parent Teacher Organizations, strong parental representation on the School Council, and a parent volunteer cadre that is ever present during the school day. Minutes from the School Council and PTO meetings are posted on the school's Web Site (<http://www.methuen.k12.ma.us/cgs>). Parent involvement in meaningful volunteer work (over 100 volunteers) is a tangible and productive link between the home and the school. This involvement also creates a powerful political support base for the efforts of the school.

Research Summary

Research Summary Research over the last 30 years has consistently shown that student results are better in schools where students are well known to their teachers.

Climate is a term that refers to the atmosphere in a school. It is made up by members of subgroups, such as students, faculty, and staff, and by the school population as a whole. Climate affects the morale, productivity, and satisfaction of persons involved in the school.

School climate has been found to positively correlate with student achievement. Several variables have been identified in the literature as being particularly strongly correlated. These include:

1. An orderly and business–like atmosphere;
2. Firm, fair and consistent discipline;
3. A cooperative, congenial atmosphere;
4. Few classroom interruptions;
5. Parent involvement in the learning process;
6. Positive relationships with the school community;
7. Adequate and accessible materials and facilities; and
8. A well kept physical plant.

The physical structure of schools may facilitate or impede change and impact student outcomes, particularly in ways they may contribute to the physical and mental isolation of teachers. Physical arrangements can also contribute to student feelings of isolation and alienation which can contribute to students dropping out of school.

Schools should have enough physical space to accommodate all their students safely and an adequate number of teachers and classrooms to ensure optimum class size. In addition, the school building should be clean, safe from hazards, and in good repair.

Excerpted from Schrag, J.A. (1999). *Inputs and Processes in Education: A Background Paper*. Project Forum: Alexandria, VA.

References

Pavan, B.N. & Reid, N.A. (1990). *Building school cultures in achieving urban elementary schools: The leadership behaviors of principals*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Boston, MA.

Identification of principals' instructional leadership behaviors and the time they spend involved in the process of school improvement is the purpose of this study. A second focus is on the way in which principals build school cultures. Principals indicated that their most frequent behaviors were related to academic concerns, followed by interactive behaviors, and then behaviors requiring intensive time commitment. Findings indicate that most principals have internalized the norm of high expectations for their students and teachers, and were least concerned with behaviors related to maintaining order.

Schrag, J.A. (1999). *Inputs and processes in education: A background paper*. Project Forum: Alexandria, VA.

This background paper is the result of a literature review conducted under Project FORUM that identifies research–based inputs and processes related to student outcomes. It is designed to identify independent variables that should be the focus of systems change in order to positively impact student outcomes.

Related Web Resources

Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) (13)

A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.

The ISLLC standards employ a common design of presenting:

- Knowledge
- Dispositions
- Performances

Knowledge

The administrator has knowledge and understanding of:

- learning goals in a pluralistic society
- the principles of developing and implementing strategic plans
- systems theory
- information sources, data collection, and data analysis strategies
- effective communication
- effective consensus–building and negotiation skills

Dispositions

The administrator believes in, values, and is committed to:

- the educability of all
- a school vision of high standards of learning
- continuous school improvement
- the inclusion of all members of the school community
- ensuring that students have the knowledge, skills, and values needed to become successful adults
- a willingness to continuously examine one's own assumptions, beliefs, and practices
- doing the work required for high levels of personal and organization performance

Performances

The administrator facilitates processes and engages in activities ensuring that:

- the vision and mission of the school are effectively communicated to staff, parents, students, and community members
- the vision and mission are communicated through the use of symbols, ceremonies, stories, and similar activities
- the core beliefs of the school vision are modeled for all stakeholders
- the vision is developed with and among stakeholders
- the contributions of school community members to the realization of the vision are recognized and celebrated
- progress toward the vision and mission is communicated to all stakeholders

- the school community is involved in school improvement efforts
- the vision shapes the educational programs, plans, and activities
- an implementation plan is developed in which objectives and strategies to achieve the vision and goals are clearly articulated
- assessment data related to student learning are used to develop the school vision and goals
- relevant demographic data pertaining to students and their families are used in developing the school mission and goals
- barriers to achieving the vision are identified, clarified, and addressed
- needed resources are sought and obtained to support the implementation of the school mission and goals
- existing resources are used in support of the school vision and goals
- the vision, mission, and implementation plans are regularly monitored, evaluated, and revised

Story Summaries

Driggs Elementary School Driggs Elementary is a K–5 school where:

- The principal supports in–school, job–embedded professional development and participates in training sessions alongside her staff
- The principal has rearranged the schedule to include grade–level meeting time and more uniform time blocks for all grade levels
- Staff have a say in the school's improvement issues and receive professional development training on both academic and school climate issues
- The staff believe in what the principal is doing, and the principal treats her staff like professionals
- The principal supports a homegrown writing program that has produced improvement and reads each student's writing assignment.
- The principal and staff periodically reassess their goals and reflect on those they have reached so far

Mary Ann Marold surprised the staff when she took over at the Driggs Elementary School in Waterbury, Connecticut almost seven years ago. She brought a cheerful, can–do attitude to the school where staff had always been willing improve, but usually didn't have the time, resources, or support to make it happen. "We were the forgotten school," says Joy DeVivo, who has taught at Driggs for 32 years. "We had a big transfer rate. But she put us on the map with her ideas." Ideas that Marold says came from collaboration with the teachers themselves in the wake of the state's designation of Driggs as a Connecticut priority school. Connecticut defines priority schools as those having the largest numbers of students needing intervention on the Connecticut Mastery Test. But instead of reacting erratically to the issues effecting performance at Driggs, Marold listened to the teachers, built relationships with her staff, and then developed a system for collaborating with them to support improvement.

Teachers now attend 50–minute grade–level meetings on a weekly basis, receive a packet about goals and improvement issues before each meeting, and share information and concerns with the principal and other teachers regularly. These meetings allow Marold to schedule professional development workshops and speakers targeted specifically to the concerns of

each grade, and through them teachers have been able to produce homegrown writing and math assessments that mimic test situations. Marold and the front office staff also cover classes when teachers want to observe another classroom or attend an off-site professional development event.

"This took the uncertainty away of what people should be doing for professional development," Marold says. "Now they can work on goals that pertain to their particular grade-level."

As a result, teachers wrote integrated curriculum pieces that combine social studies and science with other content areas, learned how to holistically score writing assignments, and instituted a ridicule-free environment where students are rewarded for being respectful. They also developed exit criteria for kindergarten and their own summer school curriculum. Marold and her staff saw the professional development time and strategies pay off when Driggs' math scores jumped 10% and reading scores improved by almost 12%.

"Now, no one ever has a feeling of not being informed," Marold says. "Staff now have time to grow."

***Woodrow Wilson Elementary School* Woodrow Wilson Elementary School, Framingham, Massachusetts**

A school where:

- ◆ the principal is a strong instructional leader
- ◆ an innovative school choice program is in place
- ◆ parents are encouraged and supported as important members of the learning community
- ◆ there are many Portuguese-speaking students
- ◆ there is high student mobility

Woodrow Wilson Elementary School in Framingham, Massachusetts is located in a town that has experienced the decline of an old mill economy and the emergence of a rapidly growing high-tech industrial base. The town's growth has attracted a highly diverse immigrant population to the area, creating a strongly multi-cultural community. In 1996, Wilson was the weakest school in the district. The existing deteriorated building was replaced by a state-of-the-art facility, and Principal Robin Welch accepted the challenge of leading the school's faculty through a change process.

While constructing a new facility demonstrated one level of commitment to improvement, it was not enough to energize the community. Welch identified three problems to be tackled:

- Raising teacher expectations of students.
- Bringing the staff together.
- Dispelling the myths about the school and its location while developing a school theme with the community.

Focused on these objectives, his role as a true instructional leader emerged. Over a two-year period, he introduced a variety of best practices and programs to get results. These included supporting an environment where the entire school community accepted responsibility for success OR failure. Performance was monitored at the classroom level and professional development opportunities of various kinds were provided as needs were identified. A concerted effort was made to bring faculty factions together and to use the school's student

population diversity as a resource. Additionally, programs were put in place to bring parents into the learning community as active participants. All of this and a lot of dedication and hard work attributed to achieving the vision that Welch and his staff articulated for Woodrow Wilson Elementary School.

Comprehensive Grammar School

Due to the positive attitude and pride of the staff, students, and parents, the CGS is a school that functions well and has a reputation for being a caring and friendly environment, a school whose teachers have the professional initiative to improve and innovate their instructional methodologies, and a school where parents are involved, informed, and welcome. The success of CGS is due to several integrated pieces supported by Principal Raiche, carried out by the combined efforts of faculty and staff working toward a common goal of student learning and achievement.

CGS has a healthy and supportive school climate, students know they are there to learn and achieve. The students are the center of all decisions and activities in the school. Examples of student work are everywhere in the school. Motivational and positive message posters and banners are in the cafeteria, hallways, and foyer. Classrooms are brightly painted and equipped with ample resources (i.e. books, computers, materials).

Faculty and staff are respected by each other and the administration at CGS. Professional development activities linked to the school action/improvement plan continually take place. Many of these activities are offered during the school day, with a substitute to cover the classroom.

Meaningful parental involvement is a keystone of CGS. The school is constantly seeking out ways to involve parents in the activities and goals of the school. CGS has been blessed with highly active Parent Teacher Organizations, strong parental representation on the School Council, and a parent volunteer cadre that is ever present during the school day. Minutes from the School Council and PTO meetings are posted on the school's Web Site (<http://www.methuen.k12.ma.us/cgs>). Parent involvement in meaningful volunteer work (over 100 volunteers) is a tangible and productive link between the home and the school. This involvement also creates a powerful political support base for the efforts of the school.

Research Summary

Research Summary"Learning is the core purpose, the quintessential mission of schools and schooling" (Parker and Day 1997, 83). The principal, as instructional leader, needs to promote an instructional school climate that ensures teachers and students know what is expected of them (Parker and Day 1997).

Administrators are, now more than ever, in the spotlight facing the challenges of improving student achievement. To increase achievement school leaders need to play an integral role in the design and implementation of professional development available to their teachers and staff. The teachers are the foundation of any school, to increase student achievement teachers' abilities need to be increased (Knipe and Speck 2002).

To provide appropriate professional development aimed at increasing student achievement

principals need to ask themselves, "Are students learning the intended outcomes of the lesson?" Instructional leaders need to evolve their thinking from that of a teaching-centered perspective to a learning-centered one. This line of thinking allows principals to shift their focus from teaching and evaluating individual teachers to helping teams of teachers focus on the intended outcomes of their teaching while, hopefully, increasing student achievement (DuFour 2002).

Professional development activities need to be aligned between the principal's and the teachers' expectations while ultimately geared to benefit students and increase student achievement. School leaders need to find a balance between giving teachers academic freedom and requiring them to teach to the standards. Principals need to merge teachers' interests and participation in professional development with standards-based teaching (Knipe and Speck 2002).

"Principals are the guiding force behind creating adequate professional development for their staff members" (Knipe and Speck 2002). By placing importance on professional development activities, principals ensure faculty and staff of the significance the activity has on the entire school culture (Seller 1993). Principals can place importance on these activities by offering substitutes to cover classrooms, freeing up teachers for professional development during the day. This also shows teachers that their participation and input are valued by the administration (Hoerr 1996).

Professional development should be an ongoing, continuous process required of the entire school community.

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Barth, R. (1996). *The principal learner: A work in progress*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Graduate School of Education.

Barth's essay on shared personal learning experiences from principals participating over several years in the Principals' Center for the Garden State.

Blase, J. &Blase, J. (1999). *Principals' instructional leadership and teacher development: Teachers' perspectives*. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 35(3), 349–378.

Describes everyday strategies of principals practicing exemplary instructional leadership and how these principals influenced teachers, drawing on survey data from a qualitative study of over 800 teachers.

Blase, J. &Blase, J. (1998). *Handbook of instructional leadership: How really good principals promote teaching and learning*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

This book is written for practicing and prospective instructional leaders who want to develop reflective, collaborative, problem-solving contexts for dialogue about instruction.

Elmore, R.F. (1999). *Building a new structure for school leadership*. *American Educator*, 23(4),6–13.

Standards-based educational reform helps educators reconsider how schools should help students learn, but public schools are not equipped to meet the demands of such reform. It is necessary to determine how to improve teaching and learning in whole systems rather than isolated schools or classrooms. This requires dramatic change in how leadership is defined

and practiced in public schools.

Hipp, K.A. (1997). *Documenting the Effects of Transformational Leadership Behavior on Teacher Efficacy*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, IL.

Principals play a unique role in school and student outcomes. This paper presents findings of a study that explored how principals' leadership behaviors influenced teachers' sense of efficacy. Specifically, the paper describes how principals in three middle schools influenced teachers' sense of self-efficacy and affected instructional and school improvement from a teacher perspective.

Larsen, M.L. & Malen, B. (1997). *The elementary school principal's influence on teachers' curricular and instructional decisions*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, IL.

This paper presents findings of a case study of two elementary school principals. The study examined the congruence between principals' aims and teachers' decisions; the statements regarding who or what influenced teacher's actions; and the principals' efforts to influence teachers' decisions.

National Staff Development Council. (2000). *Learning to lead, leading to learn*. Oxford, OH: Author.

This report describes some of the new demands on school leaders and identifies what schools, districts, states, and the federal government can do to strengthen the ability of principals and other educators to become instructional leaders.

Related Web Resources

"Leadership for Accountability" Research Roundup (11)

Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) (13)

Isolation is the enemy of improvement: Instructional leadership to support standards-based practice (19)

Leading School Improvement: What Research Says (15)

A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community.

The ISLLC standards employ a common design of presenting:

- ◆ Knowledge
- ◆ Dispositions
- ◆ Performances

Knowledge

The administrator has knowledge and understanding of:

- ◆ learning goals in a pluralistic society
- ◆ the principles of developing and implementing strategic plans
- ◆ systems theory
- ◆ information sources, data collection, and data analysis strategies
- ◆ effective communication
- ◆ effective consensus–building and negotiation skills

Dispositions

The administrator believes in, values, and is committed to:

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- ◆ a school vision of high standards of learning
- ◆ continuous school improvement
- ◆ the inclusion of all members of the school community
- ◆ ensuring that students have the knowledge, skills, and values needed to become successful adults
- ◆ a willingness to continuously examine one's own assumptions, beliefs, and practices
- ◆ doing the work required for high levels of personal and organization performance

Performances

The administrator facilitates processes and engages in activities ensuring that:

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Story Summaries

Woodrow Wilson Elementary School

Woodrow Wilson Elementary School, Framingham, Massachusetts

A school where:

- ◆ the principal is a strong instructional leader
- ◆ an innovative school choice program is in place
- ◆ parents are encouraged and supported as important members of the learning community
- ◆ there are many Portuguese-speaking students
- ◆ there is high student mobility

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While constructing a new facility demonstrated one level of commitment to improvement, it was not enough to energize the community. Welch identified three problems to be tackled:

- Raising teacher expectations of students.
- Bringing the staff together.
- Dispelling the myths about the school and its location while developing a school theme with the community.

Focused on these objectives, his role as a true instructional leader emerged. Over a two-year period, he introduced a variety of best practices and programs to get results. These included supporting an environment where the entire school community accepted responsibility for success OR failure. Performance was monitored at the classroom level and professional development opportunities of various kinds were provided as needs were identified. A concerted effort was made to bring faculty factions together and to use the school's student population diversity as a resource. Additionally, programs were put in place to bring parents into the learning community as active participants. All of this and a lot of dedication and hard work attributed to achieving the vision that Welch and his staff articulated for Woodrow Wilson Elementary School.



Research Summary

Research Summary

Researchers continue to agree that a strong and targeted vision is a critical factor in school, and student, achievement.

David Conley (1996) describes a vision as agreement across an organization on the values, beliefs, purposes, and goals that guide behavior. He refers to it as an "internal compass." Thomas Sergiovanni (1994) calls vision an "educational platform" that creates a "community of mind" and establishes behavioral norms.

Why Does Vision Matter

Robert Fritz (1996) writes that a good vision creates tension between the real and ideal (forming a gap), pushing people to work together. This effect is particularly important in schools, where teacher empowerment strategies do not quickly lead to schoolwide change (Carol Weiss, 1995).

But schools with a clear vision have a standard by which teachers can measure their efforts. According to one teacher, "People are speaking the same language, they have the same kinds of informal expectations for one another, more common ground" (Conley et. al., 1992)

Shaping the Vision

The principal plays a critical role in shaping the vision, which can be made more attractive in the hands of an articulate, persuasive leader. However, WHO creates the vision is less important to WHAT it is (Fritz, 1996). It is important that authors release personal ownership of a vision, or teachers will not commit to it (Conley, 1996).

No matter who creates the vision, the principal is its chief instigator, promoter and guardian. Research has shown that unless the principal takes charge and actively pushes the vision, little changes (Weiss, 1995).

Related Web Resources

Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) (13)
Visionary Leadership (9)

National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) Standards for Principals

With the help of principals throughout the association, NAESP has identified six standards for what principals should know and be able to do. These actions, taken together, serve as a definition of what constitutes instructional leadership.

- ◆ Effective principals lead schools in a way that places student and adult learning at the center.
- ◆ Effective principals set high expectations and standards for the academic and social development of all students and the performance of adults.
- ◆ Effective principals demand content and instruction that ensure student achievement of agreed-upon academic standards.
- ◆ Effective principals create a culture of continuous learning for adults tied to student learning and other school goals.
- ◆ Effective principals use multiple sources of data as diagnostic tools to assess, identify and apply instructional improvement.
- ◆ Effective principals actively engage the community to create shared responsibility for student and school success.

Effective principals actively engage the community to create shared responsibility for student and school success.

Strategies:

- ◆ Engage the community to build greater ownership for the work of the school
- ◆ Share leadership and decision making
- ◆ Encourage parents to become meaningfully involved in the school and in their own children's learning
- ◆ Ensure that students and families are connected to the health, human and social services they need to stay focused on learning

Public schools are, by definition, owned by the public. Parents, business leaders and other citizens have a stake in the product of public schools; they also have a say in decisions that affect the schools in their community. Effective principals understand that they must engage the entire community in conversations and decisions about the school. They promote two-way conversations where both sides are listening and acting. And they help the community define their role and responsibility for public education.

Engage the community to build greater ownership for the work of the school

As a leader in the effort to build greater ownership in schools, the effective principal engages the broad community in setting and carrying out the vision and goals of the school. Sometimes engaging the public simply means keeping them informed of school and student performance. Principals must be willing to tell the bad news along with the good. They must be willing to explain to the community reasons behind what the data say and what is in place to address problems and build on successes.

A principal committed to public engagement understands that the community needs avenues to learn about and reflect on academic standards, the school's goals, how the school is using its resources and what the data shows about the school's progress. Although true public engagement in schools is powerful, it is time-consuming and complicated. It requires ongoing collaboration and communication.

Share leadership and decision making

Some schools have formal structures for shared decision-making, often called site-based management. Under this structure, principals assume a new role as facilitator and leader of a group of people that sets the course for the school. The successful principal instills leadership capacity into these site councils, giving them authority to be full participants in decisions about policy, budget, programs and instructional improvements. This requires shifting traditional lines of authority to take advantage of the unique skills and perspectives this leadership team brings to the learning community.

Encourage parents to become meaningfully involved in the school and in their own children's learning

True learning communities draw parents into the learning culture, assessing their needs and providing information and training where needed. Unused classrooms or obscure hallways become parent resource centers with books, videos and places to connect with other parents

and teachers. Materials are provided in multiple languages and reflect the diversity of the school population.

Beyond welcoming families, schools encourage family involvement by reaching out to families through home visits, connections with faith communities and personal invitations.

To fully support a child's academic success, parents need an understanding of the high standards expected of their children. Schools build this understanding through workshops, back-to-school nights, newsletters, websites, and other communications that emphasize the academic work of the school.

Ensure that students and families are connected to the health, human and social services they need to stay focused on learning

Participants in a learning community know that until the basic needs of food, shelter and health are met, little learning can take place. A caring principal is an advocate for the students who arrive at school with so many barriers in their personal lives that learning is virtually impossible.

With extensive academic requirements, schools are hard-pressed to stretch their staff and resources to provide children with needed services. Effective school leaders will seek help from the community to coordinate health and social services with local providers. At one end of the spectrum, a principal will encourage the development of a full-service school with extensive services on-site with a full-time coordinator. At the other, a principal would help create methods for faculty and staff to help families access the community resources they need.

Story Summaries

Quinnipiac Elementary School Quinnipiac Elementary is a K-4 school where:

- ◆ The principal is a strong instructional leader who uses both hard (numbers) and soft (cultural, social) data to drive decision making in the school
- ◆ Instruction has been improved by an increased sharing of information about students among staff and parents
- ◆ Staff have received strong professional development for gathering and sharing data
- ◆ The principal has set clear expectations for the students and the staff
- ◆ Home visits by a family coordinator contribute to the knowledge of each student's learning style and the challenges he/she may face outside of school

Quinnipiac principal Pat Morgillo was first introduced to the power of data when she worked at a high school in New Haven. She learned about students' lives, what was going on in the streets outside of school, and what students had to deal with while trying to complete their studies. She realized that sometimes emotional, family, or social situations affected the test scores and grades that she saw on the page.

The training prepared her for running a elementary school that the state deemed a priority

school. Because so many students at Quinnipiac were scoring at intervention level on the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT), Morgillo received rigorous professional development from district staff in the use of data, and she developed an enduring culture of information use at her school. Under her leadership, Quinnipiac staff have been able to combine the use of information on the page with observations of their students in the classroom to eliminate misconceptions. They gather and share information at grade-level meetings and constantly refer to the Wall of Achievement — a posting of all students' test scores on the wall of Morgillo's office. They have come to understand that low scores don't necessarily mean lack of ability and that behavioral problems don't necessarily indicate low scores. These findings have enabled them to better serve each unique student at their school.

Morgillo also firmly believes that the students and parents need to be just as aware of the data as staff members. She has forged an atmosphere where all parties involved understand the importance of the test, but also see improvement a series of small accomplishments on the road to a larger goal.

***Woodrow Wilson Elementary School* Woodrow Wilson Elementary School, Framingham, Massachusetts**

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resource. Additionally, programs were put in place to bring parents into the learning community as active participants. All of this and a lot of dedication and hard work attributed to achieving the vision that Welch and his staff articulated for Woodrow Wilson Elementary School.

Due to the positive attitude and pride of the staff, students, and parents, the CGS is a school that functions well and has a reputation for being a caring and friendly environment, a school whose teachers have the professional initiative to improve and innovate their instructional methodologies, and a school where parents are involved, informed, and welcome. The success of CGS is due to several integrated pieces supported by Principal Raiche, carried out by the combined efforts of faculty and staff working toward a common goal of student learning and achievement.

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Research Summary

Research Summary

According to the most recent *Phi Delta Kappan/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes toward the Public Schools* both parents of school-age children and other members of the public see education as a major national issue, and believe that parent involvement is a major factor in improving public schools (Rose and Gallup 2001).

Yet educators are bemoaning the fact that they are having a harder time than ever engaging parents to be actively involved. School administrators are hard-pressed to create options that enable most families to play an active and effective role in supporting their children's schooling. And, at a time when schools are being held accountable as never before, they need the help and support of parents more than ever.

You've read and heard about the research that indicates that when families are involved in their children's education, children achieve higher grades, have better attendance, complete more homework, are better motivated, and are less likely to have behavioral problems.

An extensive research base developed over many years has made it clear that meaningful family involvement is a powerful predictor of student success in school (Davies 1993). For

example, Anne Henderson and Nancy Berla, after a comprehensive review of the literature on family involvement, concluded that "the research has become overwhelmingly clear; parent involvement – and that means all kinds of parents – improves student achievement." Specifically, they say:

- ◆ Educators hold higher expectations of students when parents collaborate with the teacher.
- ◆ In programs that are designed to involve parents in full partnerships, disadvantaged students' achievement not only improves, but can reach levels that are standard for middle–class children.
- ◆ Schools that work well with families have higher teacher morale and higher ratings of teachers by parents.
- ◆ A school's practices in informing and involving parents are stronger determinants of whether inner–city parents will be involved with their children's education than are parent education, family size, marital status, and student grade level (Pape 1998, 19).

When families are actively involved in schools, teachers learn more about the students in their class and are better able to provide appropriate educational services for their students. Ultimately, students become more ready and able to learn – and more likely to stay in school and benefit from high–quality learning experiences. These positive outcomes happen regardless of the ethnic/racial background, social economic status, or the parents' educational level (Henderson 1987; Henderson and Berla 1995).

From *Essentials for Principals: Strengthening the Connection between School and Home* by the National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2001.

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Related Web Resources

Family Involvement in Children's Education: Successful Local Approaches (27)

Keep Talking: The Family on Your School's Agenda (18)

The Knowledge Loom Spotlight on School, Family and Community Partnerships (4)

Effective principals use multiple sources of data as diagnostic tools to assess, identify and apply instructional improvement.

Strategies:

- ◆ Consider a variety of data sources to measure performance
- ◆ Analyze data using a variety of strategies
- ◆ Use data as tools to identify barriers to success, design strategies for improvement and plan daily instruction
- ◆ Benchmark successful schools with similar demographics to identify strategies for improving student achievement
- ◆ Create a school environment that is comfortable using data

Effective school leaders are hunters, gatherers and consumers of information. They use every bit of information they can find to help assess where students are in relation to standards and school learning goals. They know how to communicate the meaning of data and lead the school community in using data constructively to improve teaching and learning.

Consider a variety of data sources to measure performance

Using multiple measures of progress allows a school to do what Grant Wiggins suggests in his book, *Assessing Student Performance: Exploring the Purpose and Limits of Testing*. "Assess the student's accomplishments and progress, not merely the total score that results from points subtracted from a collection of items."

Although standardized test data is the most common measure of performance, such numerical data should be augmented by quantitative data generated in the classroom. Effective principals help their school communities see the value of using both numerical, or hard, data (including norm–referenced and standards–based test scores and performance assessments) and qualitative, or soft, data (including portfolios, student work, interviews, observations and grades) to assess performance and plan instruction.

Analyze data using a variety of strategies

Three data analysis strategies are particularly important for making meaning of data: disaggregation, drilling down, and examining trends.

Disaggregating data – breaking apart big data chunks by student and school characteristics or by grade levels or classrooms – is important in targeting the instructional needs of all students. Principals must insist that their school communities use data in disaggregated ways; looking at averages will only give schools limited information, which in turn yields only average strategies.

The process of 'drilling down' into data means looking more deeply into data and making useful comparisons between data points. Drilling down entails looking at the many factors that affect performance to analyze the underlying reasons for what the surface data tell us.

Looking for trends, or patterns, in the data over time is also helpful in targeting specific areas that show success or need for improvement. Looking at trends is much more informative than simply reporting one year's numbers.

Use data as tools to identify barriers to success, design strategies for improvement and plan daily instruction

By using data as an information source for regular assessment of students and school programs, effective school leaders encourage a view of data as a diagnostic tool rather than a punitive means of pointing out failures.

Effective school leaders support the use of data as a diagnostic tool by doing the following:

- ◆ Making time for teachers to work together or with a school data coach to examine data and discuss what the information means
- ◆ Encouraging teachers to use data to evaluate their own instruction
- ◆ Giving teachers strategies to use data to plan lessons and make decisions about classroom instruction
- ◆ Sharing ideas about successful practices that may contribute to higher levels of performance in certain areas
- ◆ Designing professional development opportunities for teachers based on needs for greater content area knowledge or pedagogical strategies as identified by the data

Benchmark successful schools with similar demographics to identify strategies for improving student achievement

Effective school leaders "benchmark" schools with similar resources and student composition in their quest for instructional practices that can improve student performance. They look for schools that are excelling in areas where they may be ineffective and seek out ways to replicate these schools' best practices.

Several benchmarking efforts across the country show that it is possible for schools to succeed with a large percentage of poor and minority students. These efforts essentially say that the socio-economic status of students need not determine how successful the school can be. A high level of performance in high-need schools is possible.

Create a school environment that is comfortable using data

Effective school leaders show they are willing to immerse themselves in data before asking their staff to do the same. They show they are committed to using data for constructive purposes. And they lead efforts to present data simply and clearly, in formats that are meaningful to faculty, parents and community members.

Story Summaries

Quinnipiac Elementary School Quinnipiac Elementary is a K–4 school where:

- ◆ The principal is a strong instructional leader who uses both hard (numbers) and soft (cultural, social) data to drive decision making in the school
- ◆ Instruction has been improved by an increased sharing of information about students among staff and parents
- ◆ Staff have received strong professional development for gathering and sharing data
- ◆ The principal has set clear expectations for the students and the staff

- ◆ Home visits by a family coordinator contribute to the knowledge of each student's learning style and the challenges he/she may face outside of school

Quinnipiac principal Pat Morgillo was first introduced to the power of data when she worked at a high school in New Haven. She learned about students' lives, what was going on in the streets outside of school, and what students had to deal with while trying to complete their studies. She realized that sometimes emotional, family, or social situations affected the test scores and grades that she saw on the page.

The training prepared her for running a elementary school that the state deemed a priority school. Because so many students at Quinnipiac were scoring at intervention level on the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT), Morgillo received rigorous professional development from district staff in the use of data, and she developed an enduring culture of information use at her school. Under her leadership, Quinnipiac staff have been able to combine the use of information on the page with observations of their students in the classroom to eliminate misconceptions. They gather and share information at grade-level meetings and constantly refer to the Wall of Achievement — a posting of all students' test scores on the wall of Morgillo's office. They have come to understand that low scores don't necessarily mean lack of ability and that behavioral problems don't necessarily indicate low scores. These findings have enabled them to better serve each unique student at their school.

Morgillo also firmly believes that the students and parents need to be just as aware of the data as staff members. She has forged an atmosphere where all parties involved understand the importance of the test, but also see improvement a series of small accomplishments on the road to a larger goal.

***Woodrow Wilson Elementary School* Woodrow Wilson Elementary School, Framingham, Massachusetts**

A school where:

- ◆ the principal is a strong instructional leader
- ◆ an innovative school choice program is in place
- ◆ parents are encouraged and supported as important members of the learning community
- ◆ there are many Portuguese-speaking students
- ◆ there is high student mobility

Woodrow Wilson Elementary School in Framingham, Massachusetts is located in a town that has experienced the decline of an old mill economy and the emergence of a rapidly growing high-tech industrial base. The town's growth has attracted a highly diverse immigrant population to the area, creating a strongly multi-cultural community. In 1996, Wilson was the weakest school in the district. The existing deteriorated building was replaced by a state-of-the-art facility, and Principal Robin Welch accepted the challenge of leading the school's faculty through a change process.

While constructing a new facility demonstrated one level of commitment to improvement, it was not enough to energize the community. Welch identified three problems to be tackled: —Raising teacher expectations of students. —Bringing the staff together. —Dispelling the myths about the school and its location while developing a school theme

with the community.

Focused on these objectives, his role as a true instructional leader emerged. Over a two-year period, he introduced a variety of best practices and programs to get results. These included supporting an environment where the entire school community accepted responsibility for success OR failure. Performance was monitored at the classroom level and professional development opportunities of various kinds were provided as needs were identified. A concerted effort was made to bring faculty factions together and to use the school's student population diversity as a resource. Additionally, programs were put in place to bring parents into the learning community as active participants. All of this and a lot of dedication and hard work attributed to achieving the vision that Welch and his staff articulated for Woodrow Wilson Elementary School.



Research Summary

Research Summary Apart from public relations and accountability issues (which are not insubstantial), educators have come to recognize that they can no longer rely on "intuition, tradition, or convenience" in making decisions. Schools across the country are realizing that thoughtfully collected and analyzed data represent the key to improvements in education.

What are the educational uses of data?

When systematically collected and analyzed, data provide an accurate way of identifying problem areas in school programs. Data reveal strengths' and weaknesses in students' knowledge and skills, and provide meaningful guidance on how teaching practices can and should be altered. Once improvement strategies are underway, educators can continue to analyze the data to monitor and refine their efforts.

From a wider perspective, data can provide an "honest portrayal of the district's and school's climate" (NCREL, 2000). Data can give a clear profile of a district and the schools within it – who are our students, teachers and families? What trends, attitudes and values do they exhibit?

What types of data are most useful?

The profile of a school can include at least four types of data:

- ◆ Student assessment data (including measurements of student performance)
- ◆ Student demographic data (describing things like enrollment, attendance, grade level, ethnicity)
- ◆ Perceptions data (documenting how a district or school is perceived by students, teachers, parents, and the community at large)
- ◆ School program data (defines programs, instructional strategies and classroom practices)

How can a school begin using data?

The process of using data must be supported by as many faculty members as possible. Inquiry should grow out of a common recognition of the potential benefits statistical data can have in helping to achieve common goals.

Data analysis can be used at various levels within the school – individual teachers, groups of faculty, or entire school.

Educational reform through data analysis generally involves four steps:

1. The school staff identifies areas of concern for which improvement is desired. Staff members gather information and create a profile of the school.
2. Interested teachers, administrators and community participants meet to prioritize the areas of concern the profile has revealed.
3. This team collects and analyzes additional data that might elucidate and suggest solutions to the problem. The team then outlines strategies for improvement.
4. After plans of action have been implemented and completed, the team again collects data to measure the success or failure of their efforts. Corrective strategies are discontinued or adjusted or reapplied.

How can administrators overcome barriers and help their schools use data effectively?

Principals and other administrators can best support data-driven reform processes by providing vision and leadership. Although they need not be proficient themselves in sophisticated data-gathering and analysis techniques, they should be acquainted with the field and should respect and value data analysis as an increasingly important tool in education.

What results can be expected from data inquiry and analysis?

When properly focused and implemented, data analysis is one tool that can help raise educational achievement, thereby increasing confidence among faculty, students and the community.

In learning to incorporate data analysis as a regular part of their professional activity, teachers become more reflective and less reactive. As a whole, the school assumes a more professional and civil culture of inquiry, in which "teachers share with each other important questions and ideas related to teaching and learning" (Feldman & Tung, 2001).

Through program improvements brought about by data analysis, a higher level of achievement can also be expected of students.

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Related Web Resources

Data Analysis for School Improvement (29)

Data Inquiry and Analysis for Educational Reform (31)

Data–Based Decision Making: Essentials for Principals (26)

Data–Driven Decisionmaking (28)

Getting Excited About Data: How to Combine People, Passion and Proof (3)

The Toolbelt – A Collection of Data–Driven Decision–Making Tools for Educators (25)

Effective principals create a culture of continuous learning for adults tied to student learning and other school goals.

Strategies:

- ◆ Provide time for reflection as an important part of improving practice
- ◆ Invest in teacher learning
- ◆ Connect professional development to school learning goals
- ◆ Provide opportunities for teachers to work, plan and think together
- ◆ Recognize the need to continually improve principals' own professional practice

Research shows that what teachers know about the subjects they teach and whether they have access to the latest research and materials on those subjects is essential to achieving high levels of student performance. Principals are key to providing the support and learning opportunities teachers and staff need to improve instruction and boost student achievement.

An effective principal works to provide every teacher and staff member with the tools to learn and improve professionally. Development opportunities are not just for teachers, however, and principals, leading by example, should identify professional development opportunities to improve their own craft.

Provide time for reflection as an important part of improving practice

Effective instructional leaders recognize that reflection is an important part of continuous improvement. They also recognize that reflection is not a one-time exercise; they use the process as a tool for ongoing assessments of the progress of attitude shifts, behavioral changes and differences in practice. By making time for reflection, principals and teachers alike demonstrate their belief in the responsibility for their own learning. Taking the time to reflect provides an opportunity to evaluate our past actions and build stronger future activities and teaching situations.

Invest in teacher learning

In its standards for professional development, the National Staff Development Council (NSDC) advocates that at least 25 percent of teachers' time be devoted to their own learning and to collaboration with colleagues. Effective instructional leaders understand how to identify and meet the development needs of all the individuals who work in the school building. Through this understanding, the principal works to build a staff development program that reflects on overall school improvement – focusing on the development of both the students and the adults in the school.

Connect professional development to school learning goals

Principals should periodically review the learning goals of the school. In addition, the principal should determine which students have not met the learning goals. This information can then help determine what professional development is needed to improve instruction for those students. Professional development needs are assessed on a variety of measures, including observations and evaluation of classroom performance and instructional practices; one-on-one conversations with teachers; or small group discussions with grade-level or subject-area teams that focus on student work, test scores, portfolios, performance-based

exams or other measures of student learning.

The success of professional development activities should be based not only on whether teacher practice changes, but on whether student performance increases.

Provide opportunities for teachers to work, plan and think together

Isolation is the enemy of learning. Principals who support the learning of adults in their school organize teachers' schedules to provide opportunities for teachers to work, plan and think together. This team approach allows the school to grow and develop as a single unit, providing the natural development of teacher leaders, coaches, mentors and supporters.

- ◆ **Common planning time.** Teachers often learn as much from each other as they do from outside sources. Their planning efforts are central to the improvement of instruction in schools.
- ◆ **Subject–area or grade–level meetings.** Principals and teachers work together to review student work – and the assignments that lead to it. In addition, working with teachers enables principals an opportunity to develop professional development plans tied to individual needs.
- ◆ **Coaching/mentoring.** By enlisting the help of expert teachers in the school, the principal can provide new teachers and teachers in need with a guide through the process. These coaches provide leadership in standards, content, instruction and other such issues, providing the foundations of quality teaching from those who have achieved it.

Recognize the need to continually improve principals' own professional practice

Continual learning is important for principals. Principals can learn from other principals and should engage in as many available professional development activities as possible.

Today's principals must develop professional development plans for themselves, involving peers, mentors and school leaders in identifying personal goals and needs. Likewise, principals benefit from the same study groups and peer engagement that teachers do. Such dialogues allow principals to identify allies and realize that they are not alone in the personal, instructional and managerial challenges they face.

Story Summaries

Driggs Elementary School

Driggs Elementary is a K–5 school where:

- ◆ The principal supports in–school, job–embedded professional development and participates in training sessions alongside her staff
- ◆ The principal has rearranged the schedule to include grade–level meeting time and more uniform time blocks for all grade levels
- ◆ Staff have a say in the school's improvement issues and receive professional development training on both academic and school climate issues
- ◆ The staff believe in what the principal is doing, and the principal treats her staff like

professionals

- ◆ The principal supports a homegrown writing program that has produced improvement and reads each student's writing assignment.
- ◆ The principal and staff periodically reassess their goals and reflect on those they have reached so far

Mary Ann Marold surprised the staff when she took over at the Driggs Elementary School in Waterbury, Connecticut almost seven years ago. She brought a cheerful, can-do attitude to the school where staff had always been willing improve, but usually didn't have the time, resources, or support to make it happen. "We were the forgotten school," says Joy DeVivo, who has taught at Driggs for 32 years. "We had a big transfer rate. But she put us on the map with her ideas." Ideas that Marold says came from collaboration with the teachers themselves in the wake of the state's designation of Driggs as a Connecticut priority school. Connecticut defines priority schools as those having the largest numbers of students needing intervention on the Connecticut Mastery Test. But instead of reacting erratically to the issues effecting performance at Driggs, Marold listened to the teachers, built relationships with her staff, and then developed a system for collaborating with them to support improvement.

Teachers now attend 50-minute grade-level meetings on a weekly basis, receive a packet about goals and improvement issues before each meeting, and share information and concerns with the principal and other teachers regularly. These meetings allow Marold to schedule professional development workshops and speakers targeted specifically to the concerns of each grade, and through them teachers have been able to produce homegrown writing and math assessments that mimic test situations. Marold and the front office staff also cover classes when teachers want to observe another classroom or attend an off-site professional development event.

"This took the uncertainty away of what people should be doing for professional development," Marold says. "Now they can work on goals that pertain to their particular grade-level."

As a result, teachers wrote integrated curriculum pieces that combine social studies and science with other content areas, learned how to holistically score writing assignments, and instituted a ridicule-free environment where students are rewarded for being respectful. They also developed exit criteria for kindergarten and their own summer school curriculum. Marold and her staff saw the professional development time and strategies pay off when Driggs' math scores jumped 10% and reading scores improved by almost 12%.

"Now, no one ever has a feeling of not being informed," Marold says. "Staff now have time to grow."

Comprehensive Grammar School

Due to the positive attitude and pride of the staff, students, and parents, the CGS is a school that functions well and has a reputation for being a caring and friendly environment, a school whose teachers have the professional initiative to improve and innovate their instructional methodologies, and a school where parents are involved, informed, and welcome. The success of CGS is due to several integrated pieces supported by Principal Raiche, carried out by the combined efforts of faculty and staff working toward a common goal of student learning and achievement.

CGS has a healthy and supportive school climate, students know they are there to learn and

achieve. The students are the center of all decisions and activities in the school. Examples of student work are everywhere in the school. Motivational and positive message posters and banners are in the cafeteria, hallways, and foyer. Classrooms are brightly painted and equipped with ample resources (i.e. books, computers, materials).

Faculty and staff are respected by each other and the administration at CGS. Professional development activities linked to the school action/improvement plan continually take place. Many of these activities are offered during the school day, with a substitute to cover the classroom.

Meaningful parental involvement is a keystone of CGS. The school is constantly seeking out ways to involve parents in the activities and goals of the school. CGS has been blessed with highly active Parent Teacher Organizations, strong parental representation on the School Council, and a parent volunteer cadre that is ever present during the school day. Minutes from the School Council and PTO meetings are posted on the school's Web Site (<http://www.methuen.k12.ma.us/cgs>). Parent involvement in meaningful volunteer work (over 100 volunteers) is a tangible and productive link between the home and the school. This involvement also creates a powerful political support base for the efforts of the school.

Research Summary

Research Summary"Learning is the core purpose, the quintessential mission of schools and schooling" (Parker and Day 1997, 83). The principal, as instructional leader, needs to promote an instructional school climate that ensures teachers and students know what is expected of them (Parker and Day 1997).

Administrators are, now more than ever, in the spotlight facing the challenges of improving student achievement. To increase achievement school leaders need to play an integral role in the design and implementation of professional development available to their teachers and staff. The teachers are the foundation of any school, to increase student achievement teachers' abilities need to be increased (Knipe and Speck 2002).

To provide appropriate professional development aimed at increasing student achievement principals need to ask themselves, "Are students learning the intended outcomes of the lesson?" Instructional leaders need to evolve their thinking from that of a teaching-centered perspective to a learning-centered one. This line of thinking allows principals to shift their focus from teaching and evaluating individual teachers to helping teams of teachers focus on the intended outcomes of their teaching while, hopefully, increasing student achievement (DuFour 2002).

Professional development activities need to be aligned between the principal's and the teachers' expectations while ultimately geared to benefit students and increase student achievement. School leaders need to find a balance between giving teachers academic freedom and requiring them to teach to the standards. Principals need to merge teachers' interests and participation in professional development with standards-based teaching (Knipe and Speck 2002).

"Principals are the guiding force behind creating adequate professional development for their staff members" (Knipe and Speck 2002). By placing importance on professional development

activities, principals ensure faculty and staff of the significance the activity has on the entire school culture (Seller 1993). Principals can place importance on these activities by offering substitutes to cover classrooms, freeing up teachers for professional development during the day. This also shows teachers that their participation and input are valued by the administration (Hoerr 1996).

Professional development should be an ongoing, continuous process required of the entire school community.

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Barth's essay on shared personal learning experiences from principals participating over several years in the Principals' Center for the Garden State.

Blase, J. &Blase, J. (1999). Principals' instructional leadership and teacher development: Teachers' perspectives. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 35(3), 349–378.

Describes everyday strategies of principals practicing exemplary instructional leadership and how these principals influenced teachers, drawing on survey data from a qualitative study of over 800 teachers.

Blase, J. &Blase, J. (1998). *Handbook of instructional leadership: How really good principals promote teaching and learning*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

This book is written for practicing and prospective instructional leaders who want to develop reflective, collaborative, problem-solving contexts for dialogue about instruction.

Elmore, R.F. (1999). Building a new structure for school leadership. *American Educator*, 23(4),6–13.

Standards-based educational reform helps educators reconsider how schools should help students learn, but public schools are not equipped to meet the demands of such reform. It is necessary to determine how to improve teaching and learning in whole systems rather than isolated schools or classrooms. This requires dramatic change in how leadership is defined and practiced in public schools.

Hipp, K.A. (1997). *Documenting the Effects of Transformational Leadership Behavior on Teacher Efficacy*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, IL.

Principals play a unique role in school and student outcomes. This paper presents findings of a study that explored how principals' leadership behaviors influenced teachers' sense of efficacy. Specifically, the paper describes how principals in three middle schools influenced teachers' sense of self-efficacy and affected instructional and school improvement from a teacher perspective.

Larsen, M.L. &Malen, B. (1997). *The elementary school principal's influence on teachers' curricular and instructional decisions*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, IL.

This paper presents findings of a case study of two elementary school principals. The study examined the congruence between principals' aims and teachers' decisions; the statements regarding who or what influenced teacher's actions; and the principals' efforts to influence teachers' decisions.

National Staff Development Council. (2000). *Learning to lead, leading to learn*. Oxford, OH: Author.

This report describes some of the new demands on school leaders and identifies what schools, districts, states, and the federal government can do to strengthen the ability of principals and other educators to become instructional leaders.

Related Web Resources

"Leadership for Accountability" Research Roundup (11)

Effective principals demand content and instruction that ensure student achievement of agreed-upon academic standards.

Strategies:

- ◆ Hire and retain high-quality teachers and hold them responsible for student learning
- ◆ Monitor alignment of curriculum with standards, school goals and assessments
- ◆ Observe classroom practices to assure that all students are meaningfully engaged in active learning
- ◆ Provide up-to-date technology and instructional materials
- ◆ Review and analyze student work to determine whether students are being taught to standard

Principals recognize that children learn at different paces, but they make sure that all children master key subjects and can read, write and calculate on or above grade level in preparation for moving on to higher levels of learning. Student effort is supported by rigorous content and instruction, which are continually assessed through multiple forms of assessment, regular observations and evaluation.

But as Elaine Fink of the San Diego City Schools says, "It's not just about content, it's about leadership. It's about the message you send by what you do, by the urgency you create, by the hard honest conversations you have with people and the hard decisions you make and by acknowledging what you're really seeing – and not sugar-coating it. You have to be able to inspire people if you want to lead. If they believe in you, they will go along with you."

Hire and retain high-quality teachers and hold them responsible for student learning

Effective principals do whatever is in their power to ensure that every classroom in the school has a certified, qualified teacher. Effective principals also work to retain teachers. They provide working conditions that support high-quality instruction, including streamlined recruitment and hiring efforts, reduced teacher load, access to appropriate teaching resources, facilities, time for adequate individual and common planning, moral support and opportunities for reflection.

Effective instructional leaders evaluate teachers based on their instructional effectiveness as demonstrated by student achievement. Through these evaluations, principals document ineffective teachers and assist them in improving their teaching practice.

Monitor alignment of curriculum with standards, school goals and assessments

Principals have to understand academic standards before they can get their school community to align curriculum to standards and to school goals. Principals aren't able to know everything that is taught in every classroom and every grade, but they need a firm grasp of the curriculum and the grade-level objectives for each subject. Principals must have a good understanding of the developmental stages of children and how to create an environment that is developmentally appropriate. They must know how to lead their teachers to effectively implement appropriate instructional strategies.

Observe classroom practices to assure that all students are meaningfully engaged in active learning

Effective principals spend large amounts of time in classrooms, observing the teaching of academic units and provide detailed feedback regarding how teachers' effectiveness can be improved. The point of principal and peer observations is not to catch a teacher doing something wrong. The point is to ensure that all students are meaningfully engaged, actively learning, and that teachers are not simply presenting material.

Effective principals review student work, post student work and talk with students about what they are learning. Because an effective principal is often in the classroom, students get to know that the principal is concerned about their learning.

Provide up-to-date technology and instructional materials

Just as it has in other sectors of society, technology can fundamentally transform how schools and teachers serve students. Technology can connect teachers and students to enormously expanded educational resources and individualized instruction.

Technology can also profoundly improve the administrative procedures that support classroom instruction, helping to report development, inventory control, scheduling and hosts of other administrative matters. Principals and other school leaders make sure that teachers have adequate resources and professional development to use technology as an integral part of daily instruction.

Review and analyze student work to determine whether students are being taught to standard

School leaders can help teachers use student work as an important piece of information about the rigor of their assignments, whether the assignment is aligned to the level of the academic standards taught and whether students are achieving what is expected of them.

Students in effective schools perform well on assessments because they are taught what the district or state expected them to learn. Leaders in these schools ensure – along the way, not just at the testing endpoint – that children are being taught the knowledge, concepts and skills articulated in state or district standards and measured in authentic assessments.

Related Web Resources

"Leadership for Accountability" Research Roundup (11)

Isolation is the enemy of improvement: Instructional leadership to support standards-based practice (19)

Effective principals set high expectations and standards for the academic and social development of all students and the performance of adults.

Strategies:

- ◆ Articulate a clear vision that reflects the beliefs, values, and commitments of the school community
- ◆ Ensure that all students have adequate and appropriate opportunities to meet high standards
- ◆ Develop a school culture that is flexible, collaborative, innovative and supportive of efforts to improve achievement of all students

If we are serious about helping all students achieve at high levels, then principals must rethink the what, how and why of schooling, organized around high expectations and high standards. And they must be given the authority to hold people accountable for results. All policies, planning and decisions must be based on the belief that every child – quite apart from the accident of whether they were born in a low-income family, as a racial or language minority or with a physical or learning disability – can and will achieve at high levels. This fundamental belief is the driving focus of a school community committed to continuous learning and improvement. What would it look like if school communities were to act on the belief that all students could achieve at high levels?

Articulate a clear vision that reflects the beliefs, values, and commitments of the school community

Visions should help others understand what the people in a school believe and are committed to. Principals can and should make clear statements about what they, as school leaders, believe, which will set a direction for the beliefs the school community articulates.

A clear vision enables principals to come back to the fundamental beliefs that drive the actions of a school. This is an essential concept: If people in the school do not believe that all children are capable of learning at high levels, then some children will continue to fall through the cracks.

Ensure that all students have adequate and appropriate opportunities to meet high standards

High expectations and performance-driven schools mock the notion of equity if students, teachers and principals are not given a legitimate opportunity to meet standards. The most fundamental opportunity-to-learn standards encompass the following areas:

- ◆ Safety and school setting. Schools should be safe and conducive to learning.
- ◆ Active and constructive learning environments. Schools should treat students as active learners who construct knowledge from meaningful experiences.
- ◆ Developmentally appropriate. Schools should be socially and emotionally appropriate.
- ◆ Time. Schedules, curricula, instructional strategies and assessments should give students the time they need to meet high academic standards.
- ◆ Resources. Schools should provide an equitable and adequate distribution of resources.

Develop a school culture that is flexible, collaborative, innovative and supportive of efforts to improve achievement of all students

There is nothing routine about teaching and learning. Both require creativity, as well as know-how. If we are to succeed at having all children achieve at high levels, principals must insist that their school environments support continuous improvement. The best way to learn is to become actively involved in risky work. Open communication and sharing are the foundation for work that is collaborative and that requires risk. Joseph and Jo Blase write that principals support teacher development by:

- ◆ Providing time, space and money to implement ideas
- ◆ Reassuring people that ideas and plans, even when challenged, are valid
- ◆ Letting go through the growth process (not directing others, staying out of the way and allowing mistakes)
- ◆ Staying informed
- ◆ Providing open, friendly and supportive environments

To do so, principals need strong skills in providing open, constructive and accurate feedback and sensibility in creating the possibility of self-disclosure. Effective leaders know where they stand on particular issues and, at the same time, are committed to growth and change over time. Principals know that they do not have all the answers, but they are always thinking of new ways to build personal effectiveness and to help the people in their schools do the same.

Story Summaries

***Woodrow Wilson Elementary School* Woodrow Wilson Elementary School, Framingham, Massachusetts**

A school where:

- ◆ the principal is a strong instructional leader
- ◆ an innovative school choice program is in place
- ◆ parents are encouraged and supported as important members of the learning community
- ◆ there are many Portuguese-speaking students
- ◆ there is high student mobility

Woodrow Wilson Elementary School in Framingham, Massachusetts is located in a town that has experienced the decline of an old mill economy and the emergence of a rapidly growing high-tech industrial base. The town's growth has attracted a highly diverse immigrant population to the area, creating a strongly multi-cultural community. In 1996, Wilson was the weakest school in the district. The existing deteriorated building was replaced by a state-of-the-art facility, and Principal Robin Welch accepted the challenge of leading the school's faculty through a change process.

While constructing a new facility demonstrated one level of commitment to improvement, it was not enough to energize the community. Welch identified three problems to be tackled:

- Raising teacher expectations of students.
- Bringing the staff together.
- Dispelling the myths about the school and its location while developing a school theme

with the community.

Focused on these objectives, his role as a true instructional leader emerged. Over a two-year period, he introduced a variety of best practices and programs to get results. These included supporting an environment where the entire school community accepted responsibility for success OR failure. Performance was monitored at the classroom level and professional development opportunities of various kinds were provided as needs were identified. A concerted effort was made to bring faculty factions together and to use the school's student population diversity as a resource. Additionally, programs were put in place to bring parents into the learning community as active participants. All of this and a lot of dedication and hard work attributed to achieving the vision that Welch and his staff articulated for Woodrow Wilson Elementary School.



Research Summary

Research Summary A key factor in the success of high-performing schools is the belief that all students can excel (Lindsay 1997). High-achieving schools expect all of their students to succeed and regard every child as an asset (Bauer 1997).

A 1999 study of 96 exemplary schools found that a challenging curriculum and quality teaching defined each of these schools. Overall, each school had:

- ◆ well-qualified, knowledgeable, and caring teachers who refused to make excuses for students who weren't learning;
- ◆ an expectation that students would take challenging classes;
- ◆ teachers who worked with students to master a core curriculum and who matched teaching styles with learning styles;
- ◆ small classes and heterogeneous grouping;
- ◆ extended blocks of time for classes; and
- ◆ teachers, students and parents who shared a clear vision centered on student achievement (Black, 2001).

Cawelti and Protheroe (2001) found that high achieving schools made intentional efforts to ensure that no student fell so far behind that he or she would have difficulty catching up. Principals and teachers understood that some students would sometimes need extra time and assistance to master core elements of the curriculum, and they organized instruction to provide these opportunities for students who needed them. Smrekar et al. (2001) also observed this in the Department of Defense schools they studied. A teacher interviewed by the researchers stated,

In my old district (a predominantly African American inner-city school), if a student didn't pass a test, one might say, "Okay, you tried." Here they push the kids and don't allow them to settle for less. When they don't succeed, the teacher works harder to get the student to want to excel. The curriculum is not dummed down. This makes kids feel good, and they are able to meet the extremely high expectations.

Providing every student with challenging coursework conveys the message that all students are capable of achieving at high levels. Teachers' and parents' expectations can influence student performance, if students are consistently sent the message that these adults believe they are capable of performing at high levels. All too often, research shows that teachers form preconceptions of students' future performance based on their past academic performance (Hoachlander et al. 2001). These predetermined expectations become self-fulfilling expectations when teachers don't provide challenging work to those students they deem to be "low achievers."

Similarly, studies of high-achieving, high-poverty schools also conclude that higher student achievement levels are attained when "school leaders and staff minimize the role of formal categories or labels, such as 'special education' or 'limited English proficient,' in setting expectations and instead set measurable and high goals for all students." (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2002, 25). Decreasing the use of these "at-risk" levels decreases the likelihood that these students will be subject to predetermined learning expectations that will hinder their academic achievement.

Hoachlander et al. (2001) write that, given the power of such preconceptions ... teachers not only need to express high expectations and confidence in each student's abilities but also need to show that they value the student's culture and language, particularly for students whose backgrounds are not part of the mainstream. Principals can take the lead in this effort by modeling such behavior and expecting it from all individuals on staff.

The above is taken from "Urban Principals Respond – Building and Maintaining a High-Achieving School" published by the National Association of Elementary School Principals (2003).

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Related Web Resources

Isolation is the enemy of improvement: Instructional leadership to support standards-based practice (19)

Leadership for Learning (1)

Principals Share Strategies on Equity and School Reform (30)

Effective principals lead schools in a way that places student and adult learning at the center.

Strategies:

- ◆ Create and foster a community of learners
- ◆ Embody learner-centered leadership
- ◆ Seek leadership contributions from multiple sources
- ◆ Tie the daily operations of the schoolhouse to school and student learning goals

In "Making Sense As a School Leader," authors Ackerman, Donaldson and Van Der Bogert write that leaders "who embrace open inquiry, the sharing of problems and solutions, and collective responsibility will foster creativity, resourcefulness and collaboration in the work of staff and the learning of children." These characteristics are earmarks of leaders who seek to learn and to invent through questioning.

The trick is not to do more, but to rethink how and why you're doing what you're doing. And to keep a simple concept in mind: Everything a principal does in school should be focused on ensuring the learning of both students and adults.

Create and foster a community of learners

Central to the concept of high-quality schools is the creation of learning communities. The notion of schools as learning communities is growing because it must. Schools must be places where everyone in them – adults as well as students – is continually learning and developing.

The goal of learning communities is to build social and intellectual connections among people. Control interferes with the process. The leader of a learning community is a "developmentalist," someone who knows where he or she stands on the issues and is committed to growth over time.

Embody learner-centered leadership

Leadership is a learning activity. By allowing ourselves to see leaders as learners, we create a new image of principals' work, and we present the principal as a model learner. Indeed, the image of principal is one of a public learner. Public learning can be a powerful model for everyone in the school community. Put simply, if children are to be resourceful, energetic and responsible for their own learning, so must every adult in the school – especially the principal. In ever-changing schools, being principal is akin to being the chief learning officer. Through a careful mix of teamwork, assessment, reflection and inspiration, the principal leads the school – managerially, instructionally and motivationally.

Seek leadership contributions from multiple sources

Leaders acknowledge that different types of expertise exist at different levels of the school. The ability to draw on different people where that knowledge is distributed is what Richard Elmore calls "distributed leadership." The basic idea is simple: People in any organization or system develop specialties that reflect their interests, aptitudes and skills. At the same time, even people in similar roles will have different levels of competence.

To help balance the demands of running a successful school, today's principal maximizes the talents and skills of other adults in the school by promoting a shared leadership team. By

utilizing assistant principals or other administrators and teacher leaders to handle issues such as physical plant, social services, discipline and personnel, the principal broadens school attention and resources to such issues. By using teacher leaders to aid in curriculum issues, data collection, professional development and school safety issues, the principal provides the classroom teacher with a greater stake in the success and direction of the school.

This shared leadership not only provides greater coverage and attention to school needs, but it also plays a valuable role in developing skills and cultivating abilities for the school leaders of tomorrow. By dividing duties and tasks, and delegating realms of responsibility, principals demonstrate true leadership by maximizing all of the resources available to them.

The principal doesn't have to do it all, but he or she is responsible for getting it done.

Tie the daily operations of the schoolhouse to school and student learning goals

Everything a principal does sends a signal to the school community regarding what they personally value and what the school believes in. The appearance of the physical plant sends a signal. Whether or not student work is displayed on the walls sends a signal of what the principal and the school find important.

Principals will never get away from the administrative duties involved in running the school. But these administrative duties are not disconnected from the core learning goals of the school. Creating the school budget, for instance, concretely aligns resources with instructional needs. Hiring decisions demonstrate whether the school community is dedicated to learning and growth. All school decisions should be based on the answer to one central question: How will this action improve the teaching and learning process?

Story Summaries

Comprehensive Grammar School

Due to the positive attitude and pride of the staff, students, and parents, the CGS is a school that functions well and has a reputation for being a caring and friendly environment, a school whose teachers have the professional initiative to improve and innovate their instructional methodologies, and a school where parents are involved, informed, and welcome. The success of CGS is due to several integrated pieces supported by Principal Raiche, carried out by the combined efforts of faculty and staff working toward a common goal of student learning and achievement.

CGS has a healthy and supportive school climate, students know they are there to learn and achieve. The students are the center of all decisions and activities in the school. Examples of student work are everywhere in the school. Motivational and positive message posters and banners are in the cafeteria, hallways, and foyer. Classrooms are brightly painted and equipped with ample resources (i.e. books, computers, materials).

Faculty and staff are respected by each other and the administration at CGS. Professional development activities linked to the school action/improvement plan continually take place. Many of these activities are offered during the school day, with a substitute to cover the classroom.

Meaningful parental involvement is a keystone of CGS. The school is constantly seeking out ways to involve parents in the activities and goals of the school. CGS has been blessed with highly active Parent Teacher Organizations, strong parental representation on the School Council, and a parent volunteer cadre that is ever present during the school day. Minutes from the School Council and PTO meetings are posted on the school's Web Site (<http://www.methuen.k12.ma.us/cgs>). Parent involvement in meaningful volunteer work (over 100 volunteers) is a tangible and productive link between the home and the school. This involvement also creates a powerful political support base for the efforts of the school.

Related Web Resources

Principals Share Strategies on Equity and School Reform (30)
Visionary Leadership (9)

Stories

This section presents Knowledge Loom stories about classrooms, schools, or districts that exemplify one or more of the practices in the spotlight.

Each story contains a full feature article and a set of facts about how the practice was put into action. Each story lists the practices it exemplifies and the name of the content provider.

For an overview of additional content presented on The Knowledge Loom Web site that may not have been selected for this print document, see the Spotlight Map located earlier in the document.

Quinnipiac Elementary School

Quinnipiac Elementary School

New Haven, CT

School Type: Public

School Setting: Urban

Level: Elementary

School

Design: Traditional

Content Presented By:

The Education Alliance at Brown University



Quinnipiac Elementary's principal, Patricia Morgillo, knows all about collecting data. Whether it's hard data like test scores and classroom grades or so-called soft data, such as students' background information, Morgillo believes that the more information you have about children, their learning styles, and the environments in which they are attempting to learn, the easier it will be to devise a plan to help them achieve.

"I hate buses," Morgillo said. "If parents come to pick their kids up, I get to talk to them about their kids. Maybe I can pull them aside and say, this is where the kid is and this is what he or she needs to do."

Before she came to Quinnipiac, Morgillo worked within the New Haven district at James Hillhouse High School, where she was constantly collecting data that would make her a strong elementary school leader. She learned what was going on in the community and the outside challenges students had to contend with while trying to concentrate on school. When she and her community liaison, Robert Turner (who had also worked at Hillhouse), found themselves in the halls of an elementary school, they began to make connections between their former students at the secondary level and those at Quinnipiac.

"We'd see someone acting out and say, 'He's going to grow up just like so-and-so,'" she said. "It made us realize, we have to prevent that here, at this level."

However, Morgillo was faced with the daunting task of building an appreciation for data in a school culture where data had never been used before, and devising a way for all staff to share that data for the benefit of all students. When she first arrived at Quinnipiac, the only academic data used was in special education, and the previous principal had simply monitored behavior with a series of checkmarks.

In her opinion, that kind of a system didn't get to the heart of some discipline or academic problems. So, she sent Turner out to the homes to collect family data. She took fourth-grade students to visit the campus of Southern Connecticut State University so they could see their future options. And she instituted grade-level meetings where teachers could share information about students. Patterns of behavior began to emerge, and she and her staff were able to delve into the question of why that behavior persisted.

"If the reading teacher gets frustrated with a kid for a behavioral problem, you might say that kid

probably has a reading problem," Morgillo said. "But, then I look at the scores and see that the kid reads fine. So maybe he's acting out because we aren't challenging him."

Clearing up these misconceptions has been very important to raising the expectations at Quinnipiac. Less than a year into her tenure as principal, the school received designation as one of 28 state priority schools. Priority schools in Connecticut are those schools that have the largest number of students needing intervention on the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT). This was a double-edged sword because more help and money would be coming from the district, but a stigma was attached to the label for both staff and students.

Dr. Elenor Osborne, superintendent in charge of curriculum and assessment for New Haven, presented Morgillo with a comprehensive plan for improvement, and Morgillo received training to look at test scores in a new way. The supervisor for literacy, Imma Cannelli, and the supervisor for math, Pam Barker-Jones, both devised charts that disaggregated Quinnipiac's scores by each strand of the test. What Morgillo saw showed her the real power of data.

"Kids would score between 44-49 on the multiple choice parts of the test," she said. "Then you'd see intervention score on comprehension sections. Why? Well, sometimes the topics of the readings don't apply to or resonate with inner-city kids. So they just give up reading. We realized we needed to teach strategies they could apply to anything."

Analyzing this data led to real shifts in instruction at the school. Now, staff at Quinnipiac focus on the strategies students will need to tackle short answer and essay parts of the test, including reading the topic sentence, identifying the "who, what, when, where, how" of a paragraph, and predicting outcomes of a story. They also took what they learned about students in the grade-level meetings and began teaching students by ability level to ensure targeted instruction.

But Morgillo went a step further. She made sure that everyone at the school was aware of the importance of test scores and other data by posting a huge chart of students' scores on the wall of her office. The Wall of Achievement, as she calls it, is color-coded to show student gains and to give teachers a reference point for the effectiveness of their instruction. She also keeps binders of information handy for each assessment and year so she can refer to the data when communicating with parents, teachers, and the students themselves.

"We don't want students or teachers to use anything as an excuse," says Linda Vessicchio, the school's Reading Recovery teacher. "We look at the data, and modify instruction to give them what they need." Everyone at Quinnipiac was trained to gather and use data, including paraprofessionals, and the staff developed close bonds during summer workshops. That shared vision has carried over to the grade-level meetings, where teachers no longer need prompting to share any concerns about students, academic or otherwise, with their peers.

"In the younger grades, it's not just can this kid identify his letters," says paraprofessional Patty Aceto. "It's can he follow directions, tie his shoes; developmental things that contribute to a calm, orderly, and safe learning environment. Teachers now have input on that."

Under Morgillo's leadership, data has driven most decisions at the school. She made sure her newly-hired kindergarten teacher spoke Spanish because she recognized the changing demographics of her school. Working through the New England Association of Schools and Colleges accreditation process made these demographic changes evident.

In her own words, Morgillo says she may be too honest with her students sometimes. But she feels

that sharing the data about where they are and where they need to be is crucial to improvement.

"I say, 'You're at 10, you need to be at 34 to pass,'" Morgillo said. "Then they have a sense of pride, knowing they're working toward something." This tactic has worked for Quinnipiac, which raised its passing percentage on kindergarten letter identification tests from 27% to 87% and boosted Developmental Reading Assessment test scores in both first and second grade. The school has also reduced the number of fourth–grade students at intervention level in reading on the CMT, from 41 to 28. Pep rallies to promote the importance of the tests have also increased students' motivation to succeed and parents' involvement and understanding of the tests.

Most important, Morgillo and her staff have maintained a very personal approach to dealing with the students, even in the face of so many numbers and pieces of data. They know all the students by name and constantly encourage them to work hard. But, they also try to reduce stress by imparting a sense of pace to the work.

"This process is like a cross–country race," says Morgillo. "They're going to start out slow and, in the lower grades, I hope they're in the back, gathering information and preparing. That way, when they get to the higher grades, they'll be sprinting ahead."

Demographics

- K–4 school with enrollment slightly above 300 students
- 49% African American; 39% Latino; and 12% white
- Majority of students bussed in from other neighborhoods in New Haven
- 10% of student population is designated special education, but fully mainstreamed
- One third of the students speak a language other than English at home, with more than 14 different languages represented
- Twenty–two students in grades 1–4 are receive ESL instruction (10%)
- Strong emphasis on Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) preparation, including rallies to help parents and children understand the importance of the test
- Students must achieve a score of 34 on the Developmental Reading Assessment to pass the third grade.

Background

Less than a year after Patricia Morgillo came to Quinnipiac Elementary School from Hillhouse High School, the state deemed Quinnipiac a priority school. The designation was based on the number of students needing intervention on the CMT. For Morgillo, the label was a double–edged sword. The school would receive more funding and help from the New Haven school district, but a stigma was attached to the label for the teachers and the students. She realized she needed to refer to data about the school in order to convince teachers, parents, and the students themselves that improvement was possible.

Previous administrators at the school had not used hard data effectively to help every student achieve at a high level, and it caused misconceptions about students' potential. "In fact, when I first came here, they used check marks to track students, and it was mostly for behavior," Morgillo said. Quinnipiac had always considered itself a community school, and Morgillo knew staff had to examine a mixture of hard (numbers) and soft (family, social, behavior) data if they hoped to implement lasting change.

Design & Implementation

When the state deemed Quinnipiac Elementary School a priority school, New Haven's Associate Superintendent for Curriculum and Assessment, Dr. Elenor Osborne, devised an action plan. The plan, used by all 11 New Haven priority schools, addressed the issues of low test scores, strengthening professional development, and using data to effect change. Imma Canelli, the New Haven supervisor for literacy, and Pam Barker–Jones, the district's supervisor for math, then provided the principals, including Quinnipiac's Patricia Morgillo, with sets of disaggregated test scores from the different strands of the Connecticut Mastery Test. Morgillo worked with them and with fellow priority principals across the state to learn how to interpret the data.

On the heels of this professional development, she instituted the following measures to instill the importance of data use at Quinnipiac:

- Posted scores from assessments, including the Connecticut Mastery Test, on the Wall of Achievement in her office so staff and parents would have a continuously updated point of reference
- Trained all staff, including paraprofessionals, to understand, gather, and share data; used summer workshops to help staff bond as a team
- Kept huge binders of scores from dozens of assessments, including kindergarten letter identification, and familiarized herself with every score in the context of each student's behavioral and social factors
- Explained to each student where s/he was and where s/he needed to be, setting clear goals of improvement for all of them
- Instituted grade–level meetings once a week, so teachers could share information about students above and beyond test scores
- Grouped students together by ability for part of the day so they could get the kind of targeted attention they needed
- Designated Robert Turner as the community liaison for the school. In this capacity, he regularly makes home visits to gather information about what kinds of challenges the students confront outside the school building and what aspects of their culture could be used in school to engage them in the learning process.
- Developed personal connections with each student to encourage concentration and high performance.

Results

Quinnipiac Elementary recently finished its application procedure for accreditation from the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. The accreditation process is mandated because Quinnipiac is a priority school, but Principal Patricia Morgillo and her staff believe that preparing the report helped them take an objective look at their school, its demographics, and some of the challenges that urban schools face. They will present the report to the NEASC during a visit in November.

During the years that Quinnipiac has been operating as a priority school, staff have seen many indicators of success. Morgillo's policy of letting every child and every parent know where they stand has increased the motivation of the students and the school community's understanding of the importance of assessment tests. This increased motivation has led to gains on the Developmental Reading Assessment in first and second grade, Concepts About Print and Letter Identification in kindergarten, and the number of fourth–grade students moved out of intervention level in reading on the Connecticut Mastery Test.

The staff have also rallied around the use of data and are especially heartened when they can see the

progress students are making. Special education students and English language learners are held to the same retention and promotion standards as the rest of the students, and grade-level meetings have allowed teachers to monitor students' progress in all areas. Students feel they have a number of adults they can turn to at the school because the teachers and administrators share data and keep on top of each student's achievement and behavior.

Students from Quinnipiac have taken third place overall at the citywide science fair, and placed second in the regional Book Bowl — a competition based on reading and comprehension. The school also wrote a proposal for and won a Reading Excellence Act grant, which will further enhance reading instruction and commitment at the school.

Replication Details

It may be difficult to forge a culture of data use at a school where information has not been examined in depth before. However, there are a few things that Pat Morgillo, principal of Quinnipiac Elementary in New Haven, says a school leader should keep in mind when using data to drive improvement.

1. Recognize that data are not just numbers: Study the test scores and grades, but keep in mind the context of the students' backgrounds, cultures, and social situations.
2. Use as much data as possible at staff meetings: Constantly put data in front of your staff so they become comfortable with assessing its meanings. The more staff work with data, the easier it will be for them to collect and share useful data from their own classrooms.
3. Give students clear path to improvement: Let students know where they are and where they should be to achieve their goals. Instill in them the importance of assessment tests, but also show them where high achievement could lead them (visits to local colleges, career speakers, etc).
4. Constantly update data and recognize students when they improve: Keeping up with the data can make it easy to spot improvement and acknowledge those students who have made great strides. Recognition can instill pride in students that will spur them on to continue their hard work.
5. Review practice in light of data: Make sure the kinds of instruction and assessments used in your school are giving you quality information. If not, you may have to change the old ways to gather data that can be used to drive improvement.
6. Get all staff members involved: Train all staff, including paraprofessionals, to collect and interpret of data. Emphasize that the data may show places where teachers need to modify their instruction and strategies.

Costs and Funding

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Rating Criteria

This story exemplifies the following practices:

A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.

Effective principals actively engage the community to create shared responsibility for student and school success.

Effective principals use multiple sources of data as diagnostic tools to assess, identify and apply instructional improvement.

Driggs Elementary School

Driggs Elementary School

Waterbury, CT

School Type: Public

School Setting: Urban

Level: Elementary

School

Design: Traditional

Content Presented By:

The Education Alliance at Brown University



"She'll do backflips for us and we do them for her." That's how teachers at the Driggs Elementary School in Waterbury, Connecticut feel about their principal of seven years, Mary Ann Marold. Driggs has its share of problems ranging from low test scores and an approximately 80% mobility rate to a relatively high number of students identified for special education. But ever since Marold arrived at the school, teachers have seen more unity develop and improvement start to move forward.

"She really molds the staff," says 32-year veteran Joy DeVivo. "She gets people to blend and mesh. Now we all share everything. Before, some teachers shared with each other, but it wasn't widespread."

Marold, however, was nervous about taking over a school where the teachers averaged over 12 years of experience. She didn't want to change too much right away. Her first step was to listen to her staff and internalize the climate of the school.

"I got to know my teachers. I built trust with them," Marold says. "Teachers need to be given respect for what they do."

Through faculty meetings and personal discussions with teachers, Marold saw a school that had a dedicated staff and lots of potential. But she also identified areas where improvement could take root with a little support. Schedules at the school were erratic with no standard times for art and music, and different time blocks for classes of the same grade. The teachers often became just as confused as the students. Because 90% of students at Driggs come from single-parent homes, group placement homes, and Department of Children and Families safehouses, Marold made stability the first order of business.

"When students don't have much stability at home, they need it in school and with teachers," Marold says. "If the teachers couldn't figure out the schedule, how were the kids supposed to feel secure?"

Marold instituted a block schedule, during which all classes from a particular grade level studied the same area at the same time. Not only did this bring stability, but it allowed her to build grade-level meetings into the weekly schedule. During these meetings, teachers could discuss concerns with the principal and each other and work on solutions to the specific challenges of their grade level.

The grade-level time also gave Marold the opportunity to present professional development activities that each group would find most useful. She created a grade-level packet before each meeting, so staff could take the information with them and refer back to it in their classrooms. And she made sure

the teachers knew she was listening.

"With all the state mandates, things tend to float downstream," Marold says. "But if teachers have a say and their expertise is considered and encouraged, they will feel more motivated to put time and effort into improvement."

And that's just what teachers at Driggs did. Encouraged by Marold's support for exploring the issues most important to them, teachers began to work on several different areas of improvement. They created entrance and exit criteria for kindergarteners and a transitional first grade for those students who needed a little extra help to move on. They also took on responsibility for evaluating which students should enter Readiness Kindergarten and which students needed more help with their developmental skills. They developed their own summer school curriculum and wrote lesson plans that integrated social studies with the Signatures English curriculum.

By the time the state designated Driggs as a priority school (a school with a high number of students at intervention on the Connecticut Mastery Test), Marold and her staff had built a foundation on which to support the vigorous improvement plans of the state and district. All staff had trained with Direct Instruction, and Marold had attended each training session alongside her teachers.

"It makes a difference," says teacher Essie Hoffler. "She knows what it's like in the classroom."

Professional sharing and evaluation at the grade-level meetings also led to school-wide collaboration on a writing assessment model. The Write-on-E assessment gave students a prompt and a time limit, just like a real test situation. All teachers and paraprofessionals learned how to holistically score the writing samples, and Marold herself read and stamped every sample and gave the students direct encouragement.

Teachers expressed the need to keep this program as part of their priority school improvement plan. They also suggested extending it to math instruction. To do this, Marold and her staff disaggregated Connecticut Mastery Test data to find the 12 math strands with which students at Driggs had the most trouble. In addition, Marold worked with front office staff and other teachers to cover classes for staff who attended a two-day off-site professional development program on instituting a ridicule-free environment. The participating teachers then returned to the school, trained the rest of the staff, and worked to develop the STAR program: Students That Are Respectful. Behavioral issues have decreased as a result of this incentive program and this is no longer an overriding concern for staff.

The professional development time Marold built into the schedule became essential when the state required the priority schools to write an accreditation report for the New England Association of Schools and Colleges.

"This could have been a difficult process if we had to do it all after school," Marold says. "But the meeting time during the school day allowed the committees to spend a lot of time with each other."

Everyone in the school participated on a committee and took the opportunity to share professionally with teachers and staff they don't usually have contact with during the school day. All staff approved the document in its final form and everyone familiarized themselves with it for the site visit scheduled for November.

"We're all in it together," says Hoffler. "Everyone's equal here. Aides are just as important as the principal. That's the kind of unity we have."

Aside from the considerable support Marold gives her staff, she has also instilled in them the idea of researching ideas for the benefit of the whole school outside the realm of the system. Teachers now regularly bring things in from master's classes, and Marold herself seeks out promising practices from other schools. This work has led to an exchange program with another Connecticut school and a gift of winter coats, mittens, and hats for all students from the Rosie O'Donnell show. The staff also put together a proposal for and won a Reading Excellence Grant and developed an early intervention program where a staff panel reviews all referrals to special education.

For Driggs, improvement has come incrementally. They have seen marked improvement in students' writing samples and raised CMT math scores by 10% and reading scores by 12%. Staff have also used meeting time to check off goals attained on the school improvement plan and reassess feasible goals for the upcoming year. Marold only introduces new goals if the staff feel they have sufficiently mastered the skills connected with the established goals.

"Teachers talk about giving something time to work," says Marold. "Now they see that someone is listening to them when they say they need to be skillful at initiatives they already have."

Marold requires every teacher to turn in a lesson plan at the beginning of each week, delineating the exact goals that correspond to the work, and the district's curriculum goals are posted on the wall in every classroom so teachers can chart progress. She also named a teacher from the school as the master coach and internal facilitator for K–3 teachers, so staff would feel comfortable learning from someone they already knew.

"There is a cohesiveness that we never had before," says DeVivo. "We share informally with each other and we're getting there. It's fun and her enthusiasm just drives us."

Demographics

- K–5 school with enrollment of approximately 600 students
- 36% African American; 44% Hispanic; 17% white
- High mobility: Only 22% of current students have been at Driggs since kindergarten
- 90% of students come from single–parent families and all are eligible for free or reduced–price lunch
- Approximately 17% receive special education services, and 11% receive ESL instruction
- Faculty average 12–plus years of experience
- Some students come to the school from group placement homes and a Department of Children and Families safehouse in the area

Background

Before Mary Ann Marold arrived at Driggs Elementary the school had suffered rapid turnover in leadership. Although the staff were stable and dedicated, they didn't share information with each other or the principals who came through the school. Marold noticed, when she took over, that teachers only saw each other at recess or lunch, a time during which she believed they should be recharging their batteries – not necessarily sharing information about school.

Teachers also pointed out the instability of the schedule to Marold. Reading would be taught for 40 minutes, then math would be taught for 35 minutes. Periods would rotate, and teachers and students often didn't know where they were supposed to be. Marold didn't want to make too many changes right away; she wanted to listen to what the teachers had to say, and learn about the school. But when the state designated the school a priority school (high number of students at intervention level on the

Connecticut Mastery Test), she began to guide her staff toward change, one step at a time.

The biggest concern for the teachers at Driggs was time. They wondered if there would be enough time to complete the accreditation process mandated by the priority school label, integrate the district's initiatives, and grow as professionals. They also insisted that any initiatives for improvement had to be given time to work, and Marold agreed. This input from the teachers led to improvement goals that incorporated constant evaluation of their practice and progress.

Design & Implementation

For Driggs Elementary School teachers in Waterbury, Connecticut, the label of 'priority school' had a stigma attached to it. The state designates priority schools by the number of students at intervention level on the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT). But the staff and Principal Mary Ann Marold also saw the designation as an allocation of much-needed resources to their school, which had received less support in the past.

To ready the school for improvement, Marold talked to teachers, gauged their needs and concerns, and worked with them by grade-level to design professional development that would improve the climate, camaraderie, and student performance within the school. Marold and the staff enacted the following changes to prepare for priority school improvement:

- Moved to a block schedule: All classes of a particular grade-level had the same subjects at the same time. Teachers and students felt like they had more stability and time to work on a particular topic.
- Instituted grade-level meetings: Marold worked the once-a-week meetings into the schedule of the day so teachers could share information, assess progress toward goals, and participate in professional development that was targeted to their grade-level concerns. She attended every meeting and prepared a grade-level packet beforehand so the teachers would be able to refer back to the information covered in the meeting.
- Built time into the schedule for accreditation process: Used meeting time during the day to work on accreditation report for the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC). Teachers and staff (including assistants and custodians) formed committees that crossed department and grade-level lines to work on various sections of the report.
- Trained every teacher and paraprofessional in Direct Instruction: Marold made certain that every staff member became familiar with this method, and she trained alongside her teachers. This allowed teachers to sustain the level of instruction even when they were covering someone else's class.
- Juggled schedules to accommodate two-day Ridicule-Free Environment training: Because students at Driggs often come from difficult home situations, Marold and her staff wanted to ensure that students learned respect not only for their teachers, but for their fellow students as well. Teachers trained with the program off-site and then made a presentation to train others within the school.
- Developed assessments unique to the school's needs: Teachers and staff developed the Write-on-E assessment to mimic test situations. During its creation, every staff member learned how to holistically score a writing sample. Teachers then suggested the same model for math classes, and disaggregated their CMT test data to identify the 12 math strands where students were having the most trouble.
- Developed unique summer school curriculum: Approximately 17 staff members decided to teach summer school at Driggs during their vacation time.
- Involved parents in professional development: Parents and teachers alike attended training to

make the PTO stronger and literacy a priority at home.

Through all the changes at Driggs, Marold and her staff made sure that the measures they had undertaken matched up with the district's curriculum goals, the school improvement plan, and the NEASC seven standards of accreditation. Marold supported her staff in the following ways:

- Never mandated anything
- Took reform one step at a time and didn't overload staff with initiatives
- Constantly reassessed goals in collaboration with teachers
- Participated in all the training herself
- Researched successful initiatives in other systems
- Treated teachers like professionals and collaborators
- Shared community information and school data with teachers

Results

Staff at the Driggs Elementary School in Waterbury, Connecticut feel a renewed sense of enthusiasm and cohesion since principal Mary Ann Marold took over seven years ago. She has given the staff time to share professionally, increase their knowledge and skills, and display their expertise in different areas for the benefit of the entire school.

As a result, the staff members have put a tremendous amount of effort into the school improvement process. The grade-level meetings allowed them to concentrate on issues of importance to them and then relate what they learned to the rest of the staff. Teachers felt that these sessions, along with time spent preparing the accreditation report, really influenced their practice. They were not just isolated in their own classrooms trying to figure it out alone.

In turn, the students benefited in several different ways from the professional development in which teachers engaged. Readiness Kindergarten, Transitional First Grade, and Driggs' summer school all gave special attention to students who may have otherwise moved on without some of the necessary skills. The Early Intervention Program substantially reduced the number of referrals to special education. And, the school boosted its scores on the Connecticut Mastery Test by 10% in math and 12% in reading. Although the writing scores stayed level, the Write-on-E assessment has given students practice with test situations and helped teachers diagnose writing issues early in the preparation process.

Students also have internalized the message of the STAR program (Students That Are Respectful), and the school indicated to the Connecticut commissioner of education in their priority school report that violence and behavior issues were not as pressing concerns as they had been in the past.

Replication Details

Mary Ann Marold, principal of Driggs Elementary School in Waterbury, Connecticut, found that teachers were willing to change their practice if they had adequate support and a chance to succeed at improving student achievement. Here are a few ways schools can offer that support:

1. Give staff time to discuss work and student information during the school day. Work grade-level meetings into the schedule so teachers have time to grow and targeted professional development can take place
2. Give staff input on the school improvement plan and other improvement measures. Listen to

what teachers have to say about time constraints and concerns. This will lead to professional development that is meaningful to them.

3. Share data and information on improvement: When teachers see that something they are doing is working, the sense of accomplishment will drive them to continue to improve.
4. Take it one step at a time: Allow initiatives time to develop and show results before moving on to the next thing.
5. Constantly review goals: Involve teachers in assessing their own progress within the school as a whole.
6. Involve everyone in appropriate training: This includes the principal. When everyone is on the same page, improvement efforts will have a coherence that envelops the whole school.

Costs and Funding

Contact Information

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Rating Criteria

This story exemplifies the following practices:

A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.

Effective principals create a culture of continuous learning for adults tied to student learning and other school goals.

Woodrow Wilson Elementary School

Woodrow Wilson Elementary School

Framingham, MA

School Type: Public

School Setting: Urban

Level: Elementary

School Design: Magnet

Content Presented By:

The Education Alliance at Brown University



Woodrow Wilson Elementary School is located in Framingham, Massachusetts, midway between the urban centers of Boston and Worcester. Following the decline of the old mill economy, the town is now home to a rapidly growing high tech industrial base. The town's growth has attracted a highly diverse immigrant population to the area, creating a strongly multi-cultural community.

In 1996, the district of Framingham instituted an innovative school choice program, giving parents the option of enrolling their children in one of nine themed elementary schools. Wilson Elementary is a "Global Community Studies School, where every child is a star." Principal Robin Welch explains, "Our Global Studies theme was created in conjunction with the Center for Global Studies at Framingham State College. Our goal is to develop an awareness and appreciation of the diversity of



today's world in each of our students and create an environment reflective of our school population. We also encourage students to learn from an appreciate the differences amongst their peers, the staff and the school community."

Our goal is to develop an awareness and appreciation of the diversity of today's world in each of our students...

Welch accepted the role of school leader when Wilson was the weakest school in the district. He describes the location as next door to a chemical plant and down the street from a state prison. The original facility was crumbling.

Many of the students arrived at Wilson directly from Portugal or Brazil with little or no ability to communicate in English. Many students were from single parent households, and living just above the poverty benchmark. Student mobility, caused by families moving into or away from the least desirable section of town, wreaked havoc on an underappreciated and challenged staff.

In 1996, the town razed the old structure and erected a new, state-of-the-art facility. While an important improvement and commitment to the children, it was not enough to energize the community. The principal identified three issues to be tackled.

In the process of addressing these problems, Welch's instructional leadership skills have been critical. While his energy level and personal commitment to success are evident, he implemented a number of strategies to make these a reality. Here, in Robin's words, are how he did it...

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Raising teacher expectations of students.
Bringing the staff together.
Dispelling the myths.

Raising teacher expectation of students.

I created a general theme – ACCEPT NO EXCUSES. If you expect it, they will achieve it. I constantly reminded some of our teachers that the six hours we have our students in the school day may be the best hours of their children's lives. We needed to make each and every minute count.

Teachers were held accountable for how well their children performed (or did not perform). We did this by monitoring student performance at the classroom level. In areas where student performance was below expectations, we brought in individual or grade-level professional development.

The entire school staff was held responsible for how well we performed. If a grade level did well on a standardized test,

we all did well. If they failed, we all failed. I made it clear that we were all accountable.

Teachers were required to send home at least one newsletter a month, summarizing what was being

Teachers were required, not asked, to take risks.

taught and informing families of what was upcoming. Not only did this make the school accountable to the parents, but it created a new culture of community with shared responsibility for each child.

I created more opportunities for teachers to meet by grade level and across grade levels to discuss curriculum. This made them accountable not just to me, but to each other as well.

I created awards ceremonies. Grade level assemblies focused on academic achievements and growth, and each child is required to earn an award at least twice a year. School-wide assemblies focused on larger issues, and were designed to bring the student population together. They focus on themes such as cooperation, acceptance, and unity. Parents are also invited to the school-wide gatherings, broadening our connection with our community.

Teachers were required, not asked, to take risks. We needed to think outside the box and to rethink the needs of our students. This led quite naturally to the notion of differentiated instruction. I made it clear that each student was different, and teachers needed to adapt their style to the needs of the student, not the other way around. This freedom to experiment opened a door for our teachers. They began to think about teaching in many different ways.

"We moved the bus up the hill." This was a favored statement of mine that I shared often with my staff, pointing out that we all needed to push in the same direction to make this happen. Teachers knew they could either join us or watch from the sidelines, and the naysayers quickly lost support for their way of thinking. It made sense, professionally and politically, for them to help us push that bus.

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Bringing the staff together

The staff at Wilson was split into three camps – established faculty, brand-new teachers, and bilingual staff. The old-timers didn't like the fact that the school had doubled in

size, and added a bilingual component. The bilingual staff didn't feel part of the team, and they felt that their students were scapegoats. The new teachers didn't know which team to join, and so banded together.

The process of working with the staff was not easy. It took over two years, but it was worth it. I brought in an outside consultant to address issues of diversity because those issues were so dividing in our community. Over time, this led to honest and sometimes very difficult discussions about our students, teachers, and community. Our staff today has a much broader cultural awareness and has made major growth. Although we continue to deal with these issues, we are better able to identify them and discuss them openly.

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Dispelling the myths about the school and its location while developing a school theme with the community

The students at Wilson come predominantly from single-parent families. Many of these parents are young themselves, and many do not have positive memories of school. This created the appearance of disinterested families, which I knew we had to combat.

We sent out an extensive survey to parents, asking for input on everything from curriculum to vision to safety. We made returning a completed survey a homework assignment, and were thrilled to get an 85% return! These survey results provided clear support of our school theme – Global and Community Studies. It also identified clear ways that we could get parents more involved and invested in the school.

We created a Parent Center for our families. This is a room stocked with information in three languages (English, Portuguese and Spanish) on childcare, vocational, educational, emotional and financial assistance. We also use this room to hold meetings and to provide families with a place to mingle and gather. To that end, we have Tuesday morning breakfasts to bring parents into the school. A computer with Internet access is available for parents' use to create resumes, search the web, or use email. We also started a "First Friday" program where parents meet with grade level teachers once each month.

Along with the parent center, the school maintains a health center, which allows us to meet the basic medical needs of our students and their families. This includes writing prescriptions, performing physical examinations, and working directly with pediatricians. We wrote a grant in

conjunction with the Boston University School of dentistry to provide free dental screenings and free sealants for all students.

We offer baby-sitting services for parents who wish to attend meetings or volunteer their time in the school. We combine these with affordable before and after school child care options. Several parents have been hired as teacher assistants into these child care programs.

As a result of our survey, we hold curriculum nights at school, where parents can see and experience, in a hands-on fashion, what their children are learning in school. Students serve as teachers and parents as learners during these nights.

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Achieving Our Vision

Each of these components was crucial to making our vision a reality. I started at the beginning, and identified what was standing in the way of our becoming a unified team with a common vision. I was not interested in putting a band-aid on anything, but wanted change to be rooted in the core beliefs of our entire community. Together, we identified what we wanted our school to be about, and how we are going to get there. Outside of our school, attached to the building, are banners proclaiming to the world who we are and what we are about – **The Woodrow Wilson School: A Global Education Community School Where Every Child Is A Star.**

Demographics

- School situated in the lowest-income section of town
- PreK – 6
- District enrollment of 8,200 with 26% eligible for free or reduced lunch
- Woodrow Wilson is a Title I schoolwide, with greater than 60% of its students in poverty
- District enrollment is 70% white, 17% Hispanic, 8% African American, 5% Asian
- School enrollment is 62% white, 22% Hispanic, 14% African American and 1% Asian. Of the 70% identified as white, approximately 1/3 are Brazilian, and the majority of the Brazilian students are also language minorities.
- School student population of 491
- School teacher population of 26 with an additional 20 support staff
- District maintains a school choice program, Wilson's theme is Global Community Studies

Background

In 1996, the district of Framingham instituted an innovative school choice program, giving parents the option of enrolling their children in one of nine themed elementary schools. Wilson Elementary is a "Global Community Studies School, where every child is a star." Wilson was the weakest school in

the district in 1996. The location is next door to a chemical plant and down the street from a state prison. The original facility was crumbling. Many of the students arrived at Wilson directly from Portugal or Brazil with little or no ability to communicate in English. Many students were from single parent households and living just above the poverty benchmark. Student mobility, caused by families moving into or away from the least desirable section of town, wreaked havoc on an underappreciated and challenged staff.Ê

Design & Implementation

- Raising teacher expectations of students.
- Bringing the staff together.
- Dispelling the myths about the school and its location while developing a school theme with the community.

Results

The Woodrow Wilson School has united into a team, and the efforts of the team are bearing fruit in many areas. The school has gathered substantial evidence to indicate progress in student literacy achievement.

Indicators of Progress in Literacy 1998–2001

The reading comprehension subtest of the Gates McGinitie test is given to Woodrow Wilson students in grades 2 through 5 in the fall and in the spring. The results of these tests over a 3 year period show a significant improvement in the overall achievement of the first, second, and third graders.

In the first two years, spring 1999 and spring 2000, 38% and 28% respectively of the third graders scored at the 50th percentile or higher on the Gates McGinitie test. In the spring of 2001, 54% of the third graders scored at or above the 50th percentile.

Similar improvement was shown in the scores of second graders. In the spring of years 1 and 2, 46% and 42% of the second graders scored at the 50th percentile or higher. In spring 2001, 56% scored at that level.

In the first grade, the Gates McGinitie was given in 1999 and 2000. The percentage of children scoring at the 50th percentile or higher jumped from 57% to 70%.

The improved performance of Woodrow Wilson students was confirmed by the performance of last year's third grade on the MCAS. At Woodrow, 62% of the third grade students scored in the proficient range. This compared with 61% for the district and 62% for the state. Furthermore, Woodrow Wilson was the only one of nine Framingham elementary schools with no warning scores.

Gates McGinitie Results

PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS SCORING AT 50TH PCT OR ABOVE			
GRADE	Spring 1999	Spring 2000	Spring 2001
Grade 1	57	70	Test replaced with Developmental Reading Assessment
Grade 2	46	42	56
Grade 3	38	28	54

Source of data: Jane Jackson, Literacy Specialist, Woodrow Wilson Elementary School.

Factors Contributing to the Improvement in Reading Comprehension Scores

The staff at Woodrow Wilson believe the evidence of increasing student achievement in literacy is due to a number of highly specific factors.

During the first year (1998), all day kindergarten was implemented, along with the Reading Buddy program in kindergarten and the Literacy Volunteers program in grades 1 through 3.

During the second and third years, a number of other changes were made:

Year 2

- Professional development was offered to all first grade, second grade and Title I teachers in early literacy.
- Guiding reading was introduced in grades 1, 2 and 3.
- Increased time was allotted to silent, independent reading at all grade levels.
- Improved classroom libraries.
- Reading Marathon and other activities were implemented to emphasize the importance of reading, and to give students the message: "Reading is Fun."
- The Literacy Volunteer and Reading Buddy programs were expanded to include about 40 volunteers coming to the school on a weekly basis.

Year 3

- Professional development in balanced literacy and reading comprehension strategies offered for most 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade teachers, and Title I teachers.
- Guiding reading implemented in grades 1, 2 and 3.
- Professional development in early literacy for all kindergarten, first, and second grade teachers.
- Continued improvement of classroom libraries.
- Reading Counts program was implemented in grades 3, 4 and 5
- Continuation of the Reading Marathon and other activities implemented to emphasize the importance of reading and to give the students two messages: "Reading is Fun" and "Readers are Winners."
- Continuation of Literacy Volunteers and Reading Buddy programs.

Replication Details

Principal Robin Welch shares his time management tips for effective instructional leaders

As principal, all of us have to make decisions about what is in the best interest of our students, our parents, and our own self-interest. There is simply never enough time to do all that we need to do if we expect our schools to move forward. A principal needs to be consistent, fair, decisive, and most of all responsive. Here are some of my personal time management strategies:

- I have empowered key staff to take on leadership roles within the schools. Each teacher is expected to serve on a

school-based committee, and many serve on more than one.



- I meet with one key person from each committee. Committees and grade levels compile written reports summarizing issues discussed and recommending a course of action. Decisions are made only with my approval, since I am ultimately accountable for them.
- I arrive at school one and a half hours before the school bell rings, and use this time to meet with committee chairs, answer email and voice mail, review my schedule for the day, and catch up on things I was unable to address the day before.
- I stay, on average, two hours after the children have gone home. This gives me the chance to pull together loose ends and plan for the following day.
- I designate three evenings and Sundays each week for 'homework' and limit the time at home to 3-1/2 hours per day. There is always more work than time, so everything is prioritized. This is the time I use to write teacher observations and evaluations, go through my 'snail mail' and deal with paperwork.
- Any requests made of me are submitted in writing. If a teacher or parent does not want to take the ownership involved in doing this, then I don't view the concern as very important. I have also found that this helps staff reevaluate which issues require my attention.
- I make 'Tours of duty' once or twice a day. During these tours, I try to touch base with every teacher. I have found that I can address many minor issues through short conversations in the classrooms and hallways.
- I use email for almost all teacher correspondence, cutting down on the time needed to find teachers or write individual memos. I also use email to correspond with central office and other principals, cutting down on the time spent waiting for someone to be located and called to the phone.

Creating a time management system that works for you is based on trial and error. It takes time, reflection, and a constant reevaluation of your priorities to develop one that will run smoothly for you.

Costs and Funding

N/A

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Rating Criteria

This story exemplifies the following practices:

A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.

Effective principals actively engage the community to create shared responsibility for student and school success.

A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.

A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community.

Effective principals use multiple sources of data as diagnostic tools to assess, identify and apply instructional improvement.

Effective principals set high expectations and standards for the academic and social development of all students and the performance of adults.

Comprehensive Grammar School

Comprehensive Grammar School

Methuen, MA

School Type: Public

School Setting: Urban

Level: K–8

School

Design: Traditional

Content Presented By:

The Education Alliance at Brown
University



Due to the positive attitude and pride of the staff, students, and parents, the CGS is a school that functions well and has a reputation for being a caring and friendly environment, a school whose teachers have the professional initiative to improve and innovate their instructional methodologies, and a school where parents are involved, informed, and welcome. The success of CGS is due to several integrated pieces supported by Principal Raiche, carried out by the combined efforts of faculty and staff working toward a common goal of student learning and achievement.

The school climate
Support for professional growth
Involving parents

The school climate

CGS has a healthy and supportive school climate, students know they are there to learn and achieve. The students are the center of all decisions and activities in the school. Examples of student work are everywhere in the school. Motivational and positive message posters and banners are in the cafeteria, hallways, and foyer. Classrooms are brightly painted and equipped with ample resources (i.e. books, computers, materials).

Part of the success of the school is due to its K–8 grade structure. The CGS served as the initial K–8 model in Methuen. Due to the successful implementation of the K–8 model at the CGS, all public grammar schools in Methuen now follow this K–8 structure. This was not an easy sell for a community that loved its small neighborhood schools. Promises of the benefit of a state-of-the-art facility with a gymnasium, cafeteria, computer labs, media center, and assembly hall sold the deal.

But concerns lingered over the young kids going to the same school as those 'bad' middle schoolers (drugs, violence, and such). The solution was to create structures with the school that control interactions between the groups: e.g. staggered arrivals/dismissals, tight schedules, strict enforcement of corridor passes, etc. In other words, the only time the younger and older students saw each other was when the school planned the interactions. The Principal knew this to be a critical element for the success of the school. The staff and students knew that this was important as he communicated the vision of a school family from the beginning.

Positive interaction between older and younger students at CGS is encouraged. The older students (grades 5–8) serve as models of good student behavior as they interact in classrooms. 'Reading Buddies' is a great way to direct this interaction towards learning. Seventh and eighth graders also volunteer to help in the classrooms, the media center, or computer labs. These programs foster the spirit of cooperation throughout the school and demonstrate that those 'older kids' do good things. These across grade interactions help build a sense of community within the school. Initially, the vision for such programs was shared with the faculty and they carried the ball from there with tangible support (flexible scheduling, materials) from the Principal. **Over the 12 years of the school's existence, there has not been one negative incident. In fact, the opposite is true.** When passing through the corridors or in the cafeteria, one will often see a kid break way from his/her line and hug an older sibling or babysitter! The 8th graders, after 9 years in the school, feel like it is a home away from home.

The facility is well kept and maintained by all. The building still looks brand new. Custodians are recognized for their hard work. Teachers do all they can to maintain clean classrooms in cooperation with the custodial staff. There is minimal vandalism. Any incident (e.g. writing on bathroom walls) is investigated seriously and community service is the consequence for the culprits. There is an expectation that all students pick up after themselves in the cafeteria. Students who pick up papers (the 'not me' papers) in the corridor or cafeteria are recognized with "Caught Being Good" tickets for raffle prizes. The message is clear: keep our school clean so that students and staff can learn and work in a comfortable, welcoming, and safe environment.

The atmosphere of the school is an important element of the school culture. Students cannot learn in adverse environments. In 1994, the school initiated a Peer Mediation Program when the suspension rate was at a high – 18%. Peer mediation empowers students to solve their conflicts in a peaceful manner with the assistance of trained student mediators acting as a neutral third party. The Peer Mediation Program has won the support of students, teacher–advisors, and staff. The Program, now an ingrained part of the school culture, has been credited as part of the solution for lowering the suspension rate – especially as it is connected to violent incidents. Suspensions dropped to 4% for the 2001–2002 school year. The Peer Mediation program allows students to take responsibility for their actions and to find alternative solutions other than fighting. Last year there were only two fights at the school and they were more spontaneous outbursts as opposed to the "I'll meet you on the playground at recess" kind of fights. Students KNOW that they need to keep their hands to themselves and to seek alternative ways to settle disagreements.

Support for professional growth

Faculty and staff are respected by each other and the administration at CGS. Professional development activities linked to the school action/improvement plan continually take place. Many of these activities are offered during the school day, with a substitute to cover the classroom. Hiring substitutes and enabling classroom teachers to attend professional development activities during the school day shows that a teacher's contribution and involvement is valued. Maximizing teacher time

for professional development, and using grants to support this are essential. Professional development courses are offered in classroom management, learning styles, assertive discipline, and learning theory to support the growth of skills of all faculty and staff. The school is currently involved in a Balanced Literacy Initiative in conjunction with The Center for Child Development at Tufts University. This is a state-of-the-art professional development program that allows for teacher-teacher classroom visitations and collaboration. There are also teacher generated study groups, individual coaching, and formal coursework.

In addition to the variety of professional development activities, CGS offers a mentoring program for new teachers in conjunction with the University of Massachusetts/Lowell teacher preparation program. The program allows new teachers to be linked to experienced master teachers. Mentor teachers offer instructional, professional, and personal support to newer teachers. The mentoring program provides flexible support for experienced teachers and a smooth transition into the field for new teachers. Mentors assist new teachers with several issues relating to teaching, such as effective classroom management. One of the objectives of the mentoring program is to increase new teacher retention.

The faculty at the school is stable. Teachers who start at the school tend to continue to teach at the school unless family or life circumstances force them to leave. The school is fortunate to have quite an age span of teachers from the 30-year veterans to the rookies. During the mid-90s the CGS school enrollment soared to 1750 students! This actually was a mixed blessing. It provided the opportunity to hire teachers committed to the school values, as well as those trained in the instructional skills emphasized in our approach to teaching and learning (e.g. middle school concept; developmental learning; multicultural sensitivity). **This fresh, energetic, and talented cadre of teachers rejuvenated the faculty. The majority of these teachers are still at the school and have become the critical mass necessary to continue our vision.**

Involving parents

Meaningful parental involvement is a keystone of CGS. The school is constantly seeking out ways to involve parents in the activities and goals of the school. CGS has been blessed with highly active Parent Teacher Organizations, strong parental representation on the School Council, and a parent volunteer cadre that is ever present during the school day. Minutes from the School Council and PTO meetings are posted on the school's Web Site (<http://www.methuen.k12.ma.us/cgs>). Parent involvement in meaningful volunteer work (over 100 volunteers) is a tangible and productive link between the home and the school. This involvement also creates a powerful political support base for the efforts of the school.

At CGS the mission statement calls for the school "to develop a system of communication in order to create an informed school community and to provide opportunities for parents to participate in every aspect of their child's education." CGS has always prided itself as having the reputation for being a parent friendly school. There are several factors that have helped with accomplishing this goal. A Parent Newsletter is sent home on a regular basis, keeping parents apprised of various school procedures and upcoming events, highlighting certain programs, and praising students. Open houses are conducted in September. This gives teachers an opportunity to meet with parents to share curriculum expectations and daily school procedures. Teachers are also encouraged to make 'Positive Phone Calls'. These phone calls are made to parents when their children are doing well – a little positive reinforcement goes a long way.

Administration reinforces this teacher practice by making complimentary comments such as, "Ms

Jones, Tom's mother called me the other day and was thrilled to get your phone call over the weekend. It made her weekend!" News of such compliments travel fast in the informal communication network of a school.

In addition to the Parent Newsletter, teachers also send home curriculum newsletters or calendars to parents on a regular basis. These newsletters inform parents of topics studied, projects, homework, field trips, and special events. They also highlight student achievement and special recognition. Parents have informed the school that these newsletters are extremely informative and include the necessary information needed to help their child at home. This is an important initiative that involves parents in their child's schoolwork and helps them be partners in education. These activities take a considerable amount of time and effort on the part of teachers and they are commended for the success. However, the curriculum newsletters are an expectation of teacher performance and are cited in evaluations.

The Comprehensive Grammar School's major goal is to improve instructional methodologies enabling faculty and staff to provide classroom environment and curriculum challenges that allow every student to reach his/her optimum potential. CGS makes this goal achievable through the leadership of the principal, commitment on behalf of teachers and parents, and the hard work and dedication of the students.

Demographics

- PreK–8 school with an enrollment of approximately 1200 students
- Organized into grade level teams with approximately 51 homerooms
- Houses significant system–wide programs for bilingual students, language delayed students, and students with severe special needs
- 21% of the students are classified as limited english proficient
- 18 native languages are represented
- 20% of the students are eligible for free or reduced price lunch
- The school has a staff of 134, including professionals, para–professionals and support staff

Background

The Comprehensive Grammar School (CGS) has been open since 1990 and was a consolidation of smaller, neighborhood schools. Methuen is an urban/suburban school district in the industrialized (former mill cities) in northeast section of Massachusetts. The instructional classes are heterogeneously grouped with the exception of Advanced Math in Grades 7 and 8. Bilingual classes are integrated into the mainstream for all "specials" (Art, Music, etc.) and the students are partially mainstreamed as soon as possible. Although the CGS is a large school, the "school–within–a–school" structure makes the experience personal for each youngster. The K–8 configuration has the school become like a "home" over the 9 years of a student's attendance. Positive reward programs for student recognition supported by preventative guidance and corrective school discipline focus and scaffold the expectations for students upon academic achievement and good behavior.

The school also houses significant system–wide programs for bilingual students, language delayed students, and students with severe special needs. For twenty–one percent of the students, English is a second language (18 different languages). Ten percent (Latino) are enrolled in our transitional bilingual program. Twenty percent of our students are on free or reduced lunch (a decline from earlier years). The school has a staff of 134 professional, para–professional, and support staff. Class sizes range from low 20's in the primary grades to higher 20's in the middle grades.

THE PRINCIPAL:

Richard C. Raiche has 34 years experience as a teacher and administrator. He joined the Methuen Comprehensive Grammar School as its principal at its inception for a planning year in 1989. Prior to 1989, Principal Raiche was an Assistant Principal in a neighboring city for 5 years. He was a classroom teacher for 15 years (mostly 8th grade social studies). Generally, he has a liberal arts education (Bachelors in History; Masters in Teaching History; Masters in School Administration). The "substance" of his education, however, has been in the reflective application of successful teaching and leadership skills. He has been aided over the years in professional growth experiences of which the most influential have been:

- Participation in the Middle Grade State School State Policy Initiative (Turning Points) sponsored by the Carnegie Corporation. This experience during the 1990's allowed him to experience and share successful full school restructuring models with principals from across the country. The Turning Points initiative had a vision. Its successes were documented by solid data, as chronicled in the recent publication, "Turning Points 2000".
- Participation in a few Principals' Institutes cosponsored by the Massachusetts Department of Education and the state Principals' Associations that have focused on Leadership, Standards Based Instruction, and School Change.
- Selection as the 1996 Massachusetts Principal of the Year and National Distinguished Principal. These honors have led to increasing state and national networking opportunities.
- Selected to participate (and represent Massachusetts) at the first National Principals' Summit in Washington, D.C. in 2000. Selected again to participate in the 2001 National Principals' Summit. Selected to co-present (with the LAB) at the 2002 National Principals' Forum. These excellent opportunities to learn the "big picture" of education in America also spawned his participation as one of the founders of the Principals' Leadership Network.
- Participation as one of the founders and members of the Executive Planning Committee of the Principals' Leadership Network (PLN) sponsored by the LAB. He has helped plan three successful Regional Principals' Summits facilitated by the LAB at Brown and planned by the Advisory Committee of the PLN.
- Active and vocal participation in discussions on educational issues locally, regionally and nationally.

Design & Implementation**Results**

Student achievement is improving as evidenced by growth in standardized test scores. The latest test scores on the Terra Nova Tests and the MCAS (Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System) demonstrated significant growth for some grade levels. For example:

- In the English Language Arts MCAS Test, the 4th grade improved from 38% in the Advanced/Proficient Levels in 2001 to 63% in 2002 while failures decreased from 20% to 6%.
- In the Grade 4 MCAS Mathematics Test, the Advanced/Proficient levels increased from 31% (2001) to 60% (2002) while the failures decreased from 20% to 6%.
- In Grade 7 English Language Arts MCAS Tests, the Advanced/Proficient levels increased from 56% (2001) to 70% (2002) while the failures decreased from 12% to 6%.
- The school's scores are above state average (significantly in some areas) in all MCAS tests and in 70th percentiles for the Terra Nova Tests.

Replication Details

SOME 'ONE-LINE' TIPS FROM PRINCIPAL RICHARD RAICHE:

- Try to find some humor in every day. Schools are a microcosm of life.

Vision

- Communicate the vision of the school to all parties clearly and often.
- Be sure that the vision reflects that the mission of the school is to teach children.
- Have an annual plan (goals) to support focused parts of that vision. Try to limit school goals to three accomplishable tasks. Have faculty and parents share in the planning of those goals as well as the evaluation of the related actions.
- Remember that the best decision is when the good of the child or the good of the students is at the center of that decision.

Staff and Instruction

- Hiring quality, new teachers is one of the most important decisions a principal makes. Try to make the process inclusive with parents and teachers.
- Be sure professional 'in service' time is co-planned with teachers and has a direct relationship to school goals. Avoid 'one-shot' deals.
- Don't let the 'difficult teacher' get you down. The rest of the faculty is hoping you address the issue and is in your corner (although you might not know it).
- Unions are made up of teachers too and their core values are also kid centered.
- Internalize that Standards Based Instruction and Accountability is here to stay. Make it happen by 'talking standards' and requiring standards based lesson planning.
- Heterogeneous grouping is the only fair and equitable way to structure an elementary or middle school whether it is diverse or not.

Leadership

- Be prepared to support major decisions (like heterogeneous grouping) with research as well as test achievement data. The 'Lake Wobegon Parents' are indeed out there waiting for a breach in the vision so that they might create elite, tracked, 'top groups'.
- Be visible before and after school where parents congregate and kids are dismissed.
- Be so visible in classrooms that your presence doesn't distract the kids.
- Be visible in the cafeteria. Occasionally have lunch with kids.
- Just plain be visible.
- Learn to let go of some tasks and delegate or what the new buzz word infers – 'distributive leadership'.
- Know that once you have debugged all your routines (busses, lunches, schedules, paperwork), you might now concentrate on instructional leadership.
- Never express an opposing opinion to the Superintendent in front of a leadership meeting or school committee. Make a personal appointment.
- Make budget requests reasonable and always prepare a solid rationale with as much data to support that rationale as possible.
- Get involved in principals' associations and leadership professional development. The peer learning and networking are invaluable experiences for one involved in a very 'lonely' job –

surrounded by people.

Costs and Funding

Contact Information

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Rating Criteria

This story exemplifies the following practices:

A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.

Effective principals actively engage the community to create shared responsibility for student and school success.

A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.

A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.

Effective principals create a culture of continuous learning for adults tied to student learning and other school goals.

Effective principals lead schools in a way that places student and adult learning at the center.

Related Web Resources

This is an annotated list of resources found on other Web sites that relate to this spotlight topic on The Knowledge Loom. We encourage you to access them from the links provided on The Knowledge Loom. To do this, go to the Web address noted in the header. Then click on the Related Resources link.

For an overview of additional content presented on The Knowledge Loom Web site that may not have been selected for this print document, see the Spotlight Overview located earlier in the document.

1) Leadership for Learning
<http://www.ncrel.org/cscd>

From the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, features back issues of the publication **NEW LEADERS FOR TOMORROWS SCHOOLS, THE URBAN LEARNERS LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE**, focused on closing the achievement gap.

2) National Institute for School Leadership
<http://www.ncee.org>

The National Center on Education and the Economy hosts this program, designed to effectively train school principals to succeed in standards-based reform. A train the trainers model is used, and it is a combination of web-based learning and face-to-face workshops.

3) Getting Excited About Data: How to Combine People, Passion and Proof
<http://www.corwinpress.com>

Data analysis inevitably revolves around numbers, which many people regard as cold and abstract. But as Edie Holcomb argues in this book, human hopes, fears and passions are never far beneath the surface. In the end, Holcomb notes, effective data use is less a technical problem than a cultural problem, and it needs to be approached on that basis. This book provides a detailed road map for getting teachers involved with, and motivated by, data.

4) The Knowledge Loom Spotlight on School, Family and Community Partnerships
<http://knowledgeloom.org/sfcp/index.shtml>

A collection of best practices, research and resources on creating quality partnerships with families and communities.

5) "Rethinking the Principalship" Research Roundup
http://eric.uoregon.edu/publications/roundup/Spring_2002.html

This article from the ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management features information about how today's principals are expected to be both instructional leaders and able managers. Given the demands on the principal's time, much current discussion focuses on new ways to allocate the workload.

6) Role of the School Leader
http://eric.uoregon.edu/trends_issues/rolelead/index.html

A "Trends and Issues" summary by the ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management. Discussion of leading change, leaders as learners, providing the moral center, and responding to challenges.

7) NAESP Professional Development for Principals
<http://www.naesp.org/pdev.html>

The NAESP Leadership Academy has programs and events ranging from single-day workshops to conferences and seminars – all designed to help you stay current with the latest developments in education, gain strategies for meeting high standards and implementing innovative programs, and sharpen your leadership skills.

8) Mistakes Educational Leaders Make

<http://eric.uoregon.edu/publications/digests/digest122.html>

A research summary offering six suggestions for avoiding career-ending mistakes: (1) evaluate and refine your interpersonal skills; (2) understand how you perceive the world around you; (3) don't let your past successes become failures; (4) look for organizational indicators that your leadership may be faltering; (5) be assertive in developing a professional growth plan; and (6) and recognize the handwriting on the wall by making the first move.

9) Visionary Leadership

<http://eric.uoregon.edu/publications/digests/digest110.html>

David Conley (1996) has found that many school leaders have become ambivalent—sometimes even cynical—about the usefulness of vision. Yet experts continue to regard it as a make-or-break task for the leader. This 1997 Digest reviews the process and importance of vision to strong leaders.

10) The Strategies of a Leader

<http://eric.uoregon.edu/publications/digests/digest105.html>

This ERIC digest provides a good summary of different strategic approaches to leadership. Included are hierarchical, transformational, and facilitative. A discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of each.

11) "Leadership for Accountability" Research Roundup

http://eric.uoregon.edu/publications/roundup/Spring_2001.html

For school leaders, the accountability challenge is three-fold. First, principals must lead their staffs in a search for instructional strategies that will meet the new expectations. Because so many of today's standards call for achievement that transcends traditional academic skills, the task requires significant teacher learning, not just better implementation of traditional methods. An overview of a number of important works addressing the school leader in today's highly accountable environment.

12) NASSP Professional Development offerings

<http://www.principals.org/training/04.cfm>

The National Association of Secondary School Principals offers a number of resources for instructional leaders, and those aspiring to become instructional leaders. In addition to traditional offerings, the site offers 'virtual mentors' where you can ask questions of current school leaders.

13) Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC)

<http://www.ccsso.org/isllc.html>

The Consortium's vision of leadership is based on the premise that the criteria and standards for the professional practice of school leaders must be grounded in the knowledge and understanding of teaching and learning. The purpose of the ISLLC Consortium is to provide a means through which states can work together to develop and implement model standards, assessments, professional development, and licensing procedures for school leaders. The overarching goals of ISLLC are to raise the bar for school leaders to enter and remain in the profession, and to reshape concepts of educational leadership.

14) IEL's School Leadership for the 21st Century Initiative

<http://www.iel.org/programs/21st.html>

The School Leadership for the 21st Century Initiative's mission is to spark and assist multisector efforts to develop policies and practices and create a new generation of education leaders. To achieve its mission, the School Leadership for the 21st Century Initiative will foster inter-sector relationships, bring greater coherence to these complicated issues and engage the public in addressing the leadership crisis. Some excellent reports, as well as links to on-going events at this site.

15) Leading School Improvement: What Research Says

http://www.sreb.org/main/leadership/pubs/leadingschool_improvement.asp

Leading School Improvement: What Research Says by Gary Hoachlander, Martha Alt and Renee Beltranena, MPR Associates Inc, Berkeley, CA was supported by a grant awarded to the Southern Regional Education Board from the Wallace-Reader's Digest Funds. This review of the literature presents much of the best thinking about practices that promote student achievement and their connection to educational leadership. It shows that there is a common consensus about what leaders need to know and be able to do to lead schools in which students are successful.

16) Northwest Education Magazine: The New Principal

<http://www.nwrel.org/nwedu/spring00/index.html>

Research tells us that principals are the linchpins in the enormously complex workings, both physical and human, of a school. The job calls for a staggering range of roles: psychologist, teacher, facilities manager, philosopher, police officer, diplomat, social worker, mentor, PR director, coach, cheerleader. This Spring 2000 issue of Northwest Education looks in on some of the Northwest's best — principals who are guiding their schools toward excellence while earning the affection and respect of their staff, students, and communities.

17) Standards for What Principals Should Know and Be Able To Do

<http://www.naesp.org/comm/prss10-29-01.htm>

The complete guidebook to the NAESP standards for instructional leadership. In addition to the six comprehensive standards, the guidebook provides examples, tools for administrators to use for assessment, and questions for further reflection.

18) Keep Talking: The Family on Your School's Agenda

http://www.lab.brown.edu/public/pubs/keep_talking/KeepTalking.pdf

For three years, the staff of the Northeast and Islands Educational Laboratory at Brown University (The LAB) has studied family partnerships in several New England schools. They discovered that even the best schools find it hard to create achievement-focused family programs. It is even more difficult to keep them going.

These five conversation guides that make up the "Keep Talking" guidebook will help principals facilitate discussions about family partnerships. They are designed to encourage teachers, parents, and administrators to talk about family and community partnerships in a different way.

19) Isolation is the enemy of improvement: Instructional leadership to support standards-based practice

<http://www.wested.org>

Instructional leaders must understand the demands of standards-based instruction and foster the conditions that support it. This book by Kate Jamentz of WestEd's Western Assessment Collaborative is designed to assist principals and teacher leaders in this effort.

20) Leadership for School Improvement

<http://www.mcrel.org/topics/productDetail.asp?productID=72>

What kinds of leadership bring about meaningful and long-lasting school reform? Leadership for School Improvement probes this question and challenges educators to expand conventional notions of leadership. The report synthesizes some of the most current literature on leadership and offers ideas and suggestions. Fundamental change, according to the report, often requires leaders to question deeply held assumptions and long-term practices. This comprehensive report concludes that educators must reconceptualize leadership as something larger than one person with a specific set of traits or skills; it also involves building the leadership capacity of the community of teachers, students, parents and administrators.

21) Pathways to School Improvement Trip Planner Survey Tool

<http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/trip/welcome.htm>

Trip Planner Survey Tool helps prioritize your use of resources within the Pathways website based on your responses to any or all of 11 surveys. Each survey comprises about 25 statements that invite you to think critically about the topic as it applies to your school or district. Based on your responses, the tool delivers a customized profile that suggests Pathways Critical Issues relevant to your needs.

22) Leadership: Critical Issues

<http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/le0cont.htm>

The Pathways to School Improvement portion of the NCREL website has several articles on the theme of leadership, including building a vision, building a committed team, and creating high-achieving learning environments.

23) Family and Community Involvement

<http://www.naesp.org/comm/p0900.htm>

The National Association for Elementary School Principals (NAESP) presents selected articles from **Principal** magazine that focus on parent and community involvement.

24) Parental Involvement/Public Engagement

http://www.aasa.org/issues_and_insights/parents_public/

This section of the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) Web site contains links to an area that focuses upon leadership strategies in the 21st Century and on home-school partnerships that promote academic and personal growth of all children.

25) The Toolbelt – A Collection of Data-Driven Decision-Making Tools for Educators

<http://www.ncrel.org/toolbelt/index.html>

NCREL's ToolBelt site includes information-gathering tools ranging from checklists to surveys. These tools are designed to help educators collect data about their classroom, school, district, professional practice or community. In addition to the tools themselves, this site includes information to help you use the tools effectively to gather data and use that data to make sound decisions.

26) Data-Based Decision Making: Essentials for Principals

<http://www.naesp.org>

This monograph by Thomas Jandris explores the leadership challenges for principals unleashed when assessment is infused throughout a school's culture. In addition to providing principals with a strong conceptual background to guide their use of data, the report offers numerous concrete examples, a long list of resources, and a glossary of assessment terms.

27) Family Involvement in Children's Education: Successful Local Approaches

<http://www.ed.gov/pubs/FamInvolve/>

This Idea Book is intended to assist educators, parents, and policy makers as they develop and nurture school-family partnerships. The Idea Book identifies and describes successful strategies used by 20 local Title I programs that have overcome barriers to parent involvement. These district and school programs enhance parent-school communications and help parents support their children's academic work at school and at home. Some of the programs involve parents in school planning and governance activities, and as volunteers. Some also provide coordinated essential non-educational services for families to support their children's academic development. Telephone interviews with staff and parents as well as focus group interviews with parents provide the detailed illustrations of specific strategies for overcoming barriers to parent involvement included here.

28) Data-Driven Decisionmaking

<http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/35/52/3552.pdf>

This issue brief from the Education Commission of the States is aimed at helping educators come to grips with the challenges of the new ESEA accountability requirements. Based on a study of schools using exemplary data practices, it provides a brief but well-grounded overview.

29) Data Analysis for School Improvement

http://eric.uoregon.edu/publications/roundup/Winter_2002.html

The five documents reviewed in this Research Roundup find that schools benefit when leaders use data to challenge their intuitions and assumptions. Defining "data-driven" simply as "the consistent use of objective information to enhance human judgement," the authors promote the use of data not just to satisfy legal requirements, but also to focus action to improve student learning.

30) Principals Share Strategies on Equity and School Reform

<http://www.nwrel.org/cnorse/urbaned/98winter/principals.html>

Principals working to improve the success of all students presented at the National Principal's Forum: Equity and School Reform on February 26-27, 1999, in Washington, D.C. Cosponsored by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, the Laboratory for Student Success (Temple University), and the Education Alliance at Brown University, the forum provided principals from across the country an opportunity to discuss, critique, and recommend actions to achieve equity and systemic school reform, improve student achievement, and meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student population.

31) Data Inquiry and Analysis for Educational Reform

<http://eric.uoregon.edu/publications/digests/digest153.html>

This digest outlines the most useful types of data to drive the process of school improvement, the

steps that must be taken to collect and analyze the data, the role of administrators in guiding the data-driven reform process, and the results that can be expected.

Content Providers

This is an annotated list of organizations that provided content for this topic on The Knowledge Loom.

1) Council of Chief State School Officers

The Council of Chief State School Officers is a nationwide, nonprofit organization composed of public officials who lead the departments responsible for elementary and secondary education in the states, the U.S. extra-state jurisdictions, the District of Columbia, and the Department of Defense Education Activity. In representing the chief education officers, CCSSO works on behalf of the state agencies that serve pre K–12 students throughout the nation.

2) The Education Alliance at Brown University

The Education Alliance, a department at Brown University, has been working to effect real change in education for more than 25 years. The organization helps schools and school districts provide equitable opportunities for all students to succeed. It applies research findings and develops solutions to problems in such areas as school change, secondary school restructuring, professional development, first and second language acquisition, educational leadership, and cultural and linguistic diversity.

3) National Association of Elementary 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 an independent professional association with its own headquarters building in Alexandria, Virginia. Through national and regional meetings, award-winning publications and joint efforts with its 50 state affiliates, NAESP is a strong advocate for both its members and for the 33 million American children enrolled in preschool, kindergarten, and grades 1 through 8.

