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## ABSTRACT

Prepared as background for participants in an exploratory conference, this paper examines whether school-business partnerships and other forms of business assistance are contributing to fundamental change and reform, in the education system. Five questions are investigated. (1) How are businesses currently working with public education? The four categories of involvement described are adopt-a-school programs, school improvement and support initiatives, employability initiatives for disadvantaged youth, and advocacy for public education. (2) To what extent has business involvement improved or changed the public schools? Outlined are the benefits to students, to education personnel, and to public education in general. (3) What additional changes or reforms are needed in public education? Redesigning local schools, professionalization of teachers, accountability, and strengthening efforts to serve at-risk students are detailed. (4) What role can business play in bringing about the needed changes and reforms? Changing aspects of existing structure and support for initiatives to address the needs of the disadvantaged are explored. (5) What can be done to encourage and support business to become more active and effective in bringing about needed changes and reforms? Six suggestions are given, including education of local business leaders and conducting joint meetings among business, education and political leaders. Information on the Institute for Educational Leadership is appended. (RR)

# Supporting Leaders for Tomorrow

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NEXT STEPS IN THE RELATIONSHIP  
BETWEEN  
BUSINESS AND PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
Occasional Paper #1

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**NEXT STEPS IN THE RELATIONSHIP  
BETWEEN  
BUSINESS AND PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
Occasional Paper #1**

Working Paper for the February 24, 1988 Exploratory Conference

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The Institute for Educational Leadership**

**The Institute for Educational Leadership, Inc.  
The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation  
February 1988**

## PREFACE

The Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL) with the support of the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation has been exploring the evolving relationship between the public schools and the business community. IEL has been particularly interested in examining the extent of business involvement with and commitment to resolving the complex issues pertaining to educational reform.

As we pursue these important issues, we would like to share our information with interested parties from the worlds of business, education, and government.

The enclosed Occasional Paper #1, Next Steps in the Relationship Between Business and Public Schools, is a working paper prepared by IEL Senior Fellow, Martin Blank, as background for the participants in an exploratory conference which IEL and the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation held on February 24, 1988. It represents the first of a series of Occasional Papers on Business-Education Relationships which IEL will disseminate periodically. We would welcome your reactions.

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July, 1988

## **NEXT STEPS IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BUSINESS AND PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

### **INTRODUCTION**

In recent years, American education has seen a resurgence of business involvement with the public schools. But the question is now being asked whether school business-partnerships, collaborations and other forms of business assistance are contributing to the fundamental change and reform which many argue is necessary in our education system.

The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation and the Institute for Educational Leadership are sponsoring a meeting on February 24, 1988 to explore this question. The desired outcome: The formulation of a strategy that can lead to more direct involvement by business leadership in education reform. This paper is designed to contribute to the discussion at the meeting by answering several questions:

1. How are businesses currently working with public education?
2. To what extent has business involvement improved or changed the public schools?
3. What additional changes or reforms are needed to make the public schools more educationally productive?
4. What role can business play in bringing about these needed changes and reforms?
5. What can be done to encourage and support businesses to become more active and effective in bringing about needed changes and reforms?

Issues for consideration by business leaders participating in the meeting are raised at certain relevant points in the discussion.

## **I. HOW ARE BUSINESSES CURRENTLY WORKING WITH PUBLIC EDUCATION?**

Business involvement with the public schools can be described in four categories: A. Adopt-A-School Programs; B. School Improvement Initiatives; C. Employability Strategies for Disadvantaged Youth; and D. Advocacy for Public Education. Other ways of categorizing business-education partnerships have been suggested, but we believe that these four explain in the simplest terms the nature of current business involvement with the schools.

### **A. Adopt-A-School Programs**

More common than perhaps any other form of business involvement in education, Adopt-A-School Programs exist in nearly every city in the country. These partnerships involve business people offering a wide variety of help to an individual school which their company has "adopted." Activities include tutoring programs, speaker's bureaus, mentoring, teacher training (including in some cases summer employment in the private sector), field trips, providing a staff to guide clubs and other extra-curricular activities, and a variety of other supportive activities. Typically, the specific activities emerge from joint planning between the school and the company.

### **B. School Improvement and Support Initiatives**

Businesses are assisting with the implementation of a wide variety of school improvement initiatives that go beyond Adopt-A-School Programs. These include equipment contributions; scholarships; summer training programs for education personnel; teacher recognition programs; promises to pay for college education; management training programs; legal, financial or tax assistance; public relations consultation; management training and other activities which creative school and business people agree to implement.

### C. Employability Initiatives for Disadvantaged Youth

This form of business assistance typically targets disadvantaged youth using a job as the major incentive. These programs are student-focused, and generally operate apart from the normal school setting. The selection criteria tend to exclude the most at-risk students -- many drop out before becoming eligible to participate in these programs. The service delivery strategies include vocational training/work experience, remediation and basic skills, and a focus on developing work skills. The programs are often managed by intermediary organizations, such as Private Industry Councils or specially created local alliances whose primary task is to facilitate the relationship between the business community and the schools.

The most developed and acknowledged partnerships of this type are the *Boston Compact* and the *Atlanta Partnership of Business and Education*. These cities have begun to move toward systemic change in education. Efforts to replicate these programs are now underway in seven additional cities under the auspices of the National Alliance of Business.

### D. Advocacy for Public Education

To a limited extent, business leaders have been involved in state and local legislative advocacy in support of issues such as extending the school year, improving math and science programs, and toughening teacher tests and standards for students. In a few instances, business leaders have been willing to advocate for greater public investment in the public schools. The California Business Roundtable was instrumental in the passage of state education reform legislation which included a tax increase. At the national level, the business community has spoken loudly and clearly on the issue of education reform and restructuring through two reports of the Committee for Economic Development (CED): "Investing in Our Children" and "Children in Need." These reports urge the business community to play a stronger role at all levels of education governance

on behalf of change in our education system, especially changes that will meet the needs of disadvantaged children. The CED reports are the impetus for the meeting that the Clark Foundation and IEL are sponsoring.

## **II. TO WHAT EXTENT HAS BUSINESS INVOLVEMENT IMPROVED OR CHANGED THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS?**

Reliable quantitative data reflecting the outcomes and tangible effects of school-business programs are limited. However, there are a range of positive effects for students, educational personnel, and public education in general which should be recognized. The benefits discussed below are drawn primarily from a recent report prepared by Michael Bailin of Public/Private Ventures.

### **A. Benefits to Students**

Employability initiatives focused on disadvantaged youth provide participants with skills training and work opportunities, clear evidence of the link between education and income, and access to major employers and the potential of using a part-time job as a step to permanent employment. Modest improvements in academic achievement and increases in attendance rates have been noted, but it is difficult to attribute these gains to business-education programs; no improvements in dropout rates have been observed.

The efforts of business volunteers in Adopt-A-School Programs and other school improvement initiatives have no doubt helped some students in some classes in some schools, but there is little or no hard data to support this conclusion.

### **B. Benefits to Education Personnel**

Business-education programs assist education personnel in a number of different ways: offering a chance to work cooperatively with other professionals; providing professional development opportunities; giving public recognition or monetary rewards; creating opportunities for involvement in decision-making; and eliminating the sense of isolation that many education personnel experience. These benefits can be characterized as



improving both the morale and the working conditions of education personnel.

**C. Benefits for Public Education In General**

The fact that the business community is showing concern and support is a boon to public education at a time when schools are being criticized strongly. Business initiatives have helped the public education enterprise by building interest in and stronger political and economic support for schools, and helping to increase public understanding of complex education issues. There are some signs that a few business leaders are willing to join school officials to lobby for more support for the public schools, but this is limited by the fact that raising taxes is a divisive issue in the business community.

Recently, there has been significant commentary on the utility and relevance of today's business-education partnerships. Two different views are presented for consideration here:

Very little of the present business involvement in public education . . . can be called either challenging or decisive. Rather, "partnerships" are the order of the day. So the problem gets framed by the people who run the schools. And business gets involved not with the central issues in education but with a classroom here, a school there, a district somewhere else. (Kolderie)

Often, the more sophisticated partnerships begin quite modestly, and do not aim at more than limited, project-specific activity. Many then build on a progression of successes, increasing their credibility, investment and trust among the partners. Over time, they broaden their agendas and the numbers of partners involved and take on increasingly difficult problems on many levels at once, becoming multi-dimensional. (National Alliance of Business)

**ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION:** What is your assessment of business-education partnerships?

Have they avoided the critical issues facing our education system or set the stage for business to become involved in the more difficult issues of education policy, education reform and school restructuring at the state and local levels?

### III. WHAT ADDITIONAL CHANGES OR REFORMS ARE NEEDED IN PUBLIC EDUCATION?

Business and education have largely failed in their partnerships to improve the schools. The reason is that business lets education frame the problem and set the agenda. 'Feel-good' partnerships, I call them. They hurt more than they help, because they are shoring up a system that needs deep structural changes. (David Kearns, CEO, Xerox Corporation)

The first wave of education reform emphasized tougher standards for students, teachers and schools. These standards alone are generally considered to be insufficient if America's schools are to respond to continuing changes in the social, demographic and economic environment, as well as to the necessity for developing higher order skills (to draw conclusions from written information, communicate an idea or point of view effectively in a coherent essay, and solve problems involving mathematical reasoning). For many, the debate has moved beyond improvement and even reform to 'restructuring' -- a basic change in the manner in which schools are organized to educate our children and youth. Restructuring, conceived of as a strategy to improve education for all children, has three key elements: redesigning schools at the local level; professionalizing teaching; and creating new accountability mechanisms. The concept also recognizes the need to change schools to meet the needs of educationally disadvantaged children. There is an essential corollary to restructuring schools for disadvantaged children - - special, targeted investments to meet their educational needs.

#### A. Redesigning Local Schools

The basic element of school restructuring is more autonomy for individual schools. Parents, teachers and administrators would work cooperatively to set school goals; principals and teachers would run the schools with academic and administrative autonomy; and teachers would adjust curriculum and techniques to fit the students they are educating. The Dade County Public School (Miami, Florida) System is conducting a major experiment along these lines. It has turned over the running of 32 schools to teams of

principals, teachers and parents. Waivers to the contract with the United Teachers of Dade County have been negotiated to enable the experiment to proceed. Examples of resulting changes illustrate what is possible when autonomy is granted :

When parents complained that their children were not learning enough Spanish, the school management team arranged for the language teacher to transfer to another school and used her salary to hire the local Berlitz language school;

The position of Assistant Principal was eliminated at four schools, and the funds used to pay for after-school programs, teaching supplies, and teacher aides. (Fiske). The results of this experiment -- whether students learn more -- will not be in for three years.

Albert Shanker, President, American Federation of Teachers, recently described a "restructured" school (in Germany) which serves a heterogeneous population with problems similar to those in many American schools:

"Students are not assigned to a given teacher or class. Instead 85-90 students are assigned to a team of 6 to 8 teachers. This team then makes important decisions. How will students be grouped? Which teachers will be assigned to which students? Which teachers will teach German, math, history? Should students be taught 7 or 8 different subjects each day or should they concentrate on a few subjects this month and other subjects next month? Here in the United States there is much talk of teacher empowerment, but what does empowerment mean if the school schedule, teacher and pupil-class assignments, etc. have all been made in advance."

There are those who argue that we should consider going even further than restructuring individual schools, by building choice for students into the public school system. David Kearns proposes:

"A system of choice would allow students to attend any school in their district, or conceivably in the region where they live. If choice were to extend beyond the school district, states would have to fund children equally without regard to tax base or neighborhood. If a child changes schools, state money would follow. Children with special needs would get proportionally more."

Choice is viewed as a mechanism for motivating schools and school systems to change to meet the challenge of achieving greater productivity in our education system.

The foregoing discussion provides an idea of what restructuring schools means, but there is by no means unanimity within the education community on this issue. Experts suggest that the discussion about restructuring schools needs to become more clear and

precise in order for educators and policymakers to make progress. Michael Cohen of the National Governors' Association (NGA) suggests that they "need a map or a vision of what restructured schools might look like in order to go beyond rhetoric." Michael Kirst of Stanford University says the debate over restructuring is "fizzling" at the state policy level because there are no clear steps that states can take on the issues. "There's got to be a clearer articulation of what states can do about it."

**ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION:** How can the business experience of restructuring companies in the 1980's be of value to the education community? Can the business community help define restructuring in conjunction with education and political leaders?

**B. Professionalization of Teaching**

If restructured schools are to work, it is essential that we create a genuine profession of teaching. Without the ingenuity, creativity, imagination and dedication of professional teachers, restructured schools will not work any better than the schools that we criticize today. What will it take to professionalize teaching?

o **Teacher Pay:** Pay for teaching must become competitive with other professions. School systems can no longer rely on the bifurcated labor market which made teaching one of the few professions to which women and minorities could aspire. Increasingly, women and minorities are selecting other professions which promise substantially greater remuneration. Better pay for teachers is a vital response to the shortage of teachers which we are now experiencing and which will grow in coming years.

o **Accreditation of Teachers:** A National Board for Professional Teaching Standards has been established to implement the recommendation of the Carnegie Forum Report, A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century, that a mechanism be created to accredit "lead teachers" for America's schools. Lead teachers, with higher pay and

status, would play major roles in restructured schools. With national accreditation of teachers who demonstrate outstanding teaching ability, school districts will have incentives to turn to such persons when seeking classroom personnel.

o **Teacher Preparation:** Dramatic changes are proposed in teacher preparation programs. Teacher training programs would be remodeled to emphasize arts and sciences education at the undergraduate level, and graduate training that included the extensive use of internships (the medical education model). Better pay and the accreditation of teaching could encourage workers from other careers to give teaching a try. But creative means of teacher preparation must be developed if we want people from other careers to enter the field. Appropriate academic training and simultaneous opportunities for closely supervised teaching experience will be essential.

o **Teacher Commitment:** Educating disadvantaged children -- especially those living in our major urban centers -- requires teachers who have a commitment to work with the disadvantaged, expertise in dealing with children with multiple problems, and an ability to serve as role models. Of particular concern is the expected shortage of minority teachers. Yet teacher testing programs initiated in many states have resulted in the loss of one-fourth of the black teachers in the past five years. Asa Hilliard, Fuller E. Callaway Professor of Urban Education, Georgia State University, argues that this has occurred despite the fact that "there is no proven connection between performance on teacher certification exams and student output." Reconciling the need for minority teachers as role models with the mandate of teacher testing is but one of the thorny issues that must be considered in the process of professionalizing teaching.

**ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION:** How can business help schools improve the working conditions of personnel? To improve the quality of teachers and teaching?

### C. Accountability

Restructuring schools cannot occur simply in individual school buildings. Restructuring anticipates a new system of accountability at the school building, local school system, and state level to determine whether autonomy and the professionalization of teaching is producing improved educational outcomes. Such a system might include not only testing, but also put emphasis on other outcomes such as reduced dropout rates, degree of parent involvement, and testing of socialization skill. States and local school systems both must re-examine their accountability mechanisms.

At the state level, the bureaucratic/input model now predominates. In this model, states mandate minimum standards for staffing, pupil/teacher ratios, hours and days of attendance. The utility of this model in the context of restructuring schools is being questioned and new options are being explored. Cohen of NGA suggests, for example, a model which includes the inspection of outcomes, reliance on professional control mechanisms, and reliance on market control mechanisms.

- o Inspection of outcomes requires states to establish clear outcome goals and standards, measure the extent to which these goals are achieved, provide effective rewards and sanctions, and leave schools relatively free to determine the means to achieve state-determined ends.
- o In a professional control model the presumption is that the profession develops high standards for training, certification, and entry into the field (viz., the changes in accrediting and preparing teachers discussed earlier) and the state relies on the internalization of professional norms to ensure high quality.
- o A market-oriented model provides students and their parents considerable choice over which public school a student will attend and in so doing creates the possibility that schools which are "under-enrolled" will simply close. This is the concept of choice discussed earlier but placed in the context of accountability. Advocates argue that under this arrangement there would be a strong incentive for schools to satisfy client demand, that is to be more accountable.

Local school boards must also rethink accountability mechanisms. "Standardization of practices across schools without regard to building variations and needs is

incompatible with the discretion required at the school site in order to improve education productivity." (Cohen) Such standardization is the norm in most school systems today, and school boards have great difficulty determining whether and how to give away the control they now exercise over individual schools, while still maintaining accountability. Defining outcome measures that will be convincing and informative at the local level is an essential part of the process of change that must occur in education governance.

If we are to restructure schools at the building level, there must be new mechanisms for accountability -- in the school, at the school district and school board level, and at the state level. The complexity of the existing education governance system will not make this an easy task.

**ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION:** What is there in business experience with decentralized operations and performance measures that can inform the efforts of states and local school districts to define and implement new accountability mechanisms?

**D. Strengthen Efforts to Serve At-Risk Students**

The report of the Committee for Economic Development, "Children in Need, Investment Strategies for the Educationally Disadvantaged," proposed a series of "investment" strategies for providing children in need with a better start and a boost toward successful learning: prevention through early intervention, restructuring the foundations of education, and retention and reentry. The concept of restructuring endorsed by CED has been discussed earlier, and their recommendations on early intervention, and retention and reentry follow:

- o A series of initiatives must be undertaken to prevent the early failure of children in schools. These address both parents and children and include pre- and post-natal care for high risk mothers and follow-up health care and developmental screening for infants; parenting education for mothers and fathers; family health care and nutritional guidance; quality child care arrangements for working



parents that stress social development and school readiness; and quality preschool programs for all disadvantaged three and four year olds.

- o Programs designed for students at risk of dropping out and those who have already left school should meet particular needs and deficiencies and include a combination of work experience with education in basic skills, operate in an alternative setting that focuses on improving motivation, skills, and self-esteem, and provide continuity in funding and long-term evaluation of the success of the program and the progress of the participants.

**ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION:** The initiatives proposed to assist the educationally disadvantaged require a substantial investment of public resources. Is the business community prepared to support such an investment and deal with the difficult budget priority decisions, and even the increase in taxes that they may require?

#### **IV. WHAT ROLE CAN BUSINESS PLAY IN BRINGING ABOUT THE NEEDED CHANGES AND REFORMS?**

As we begin to explore roles that business could play in promoting needed changes and reforms in our education system, it is useful to be aware of the issues which have been raised about the willingness and capacity of the business community to involve itself with these issues. Three such questions emerge from articles by Dale Mann of Columbia University:

- o Business has no intention or desire to control schools or interfere with their operations. This is partly due to the fact that business people do not know much about the schools, and therefore tend to defer to the superintendent, or respond to the requests of the school board.
- o Businesses do not want to assume responsibility for becoming involved in fundamental governance or restructuring issues. Business wants to cooperate -- conflict and controversy are someone else's business. The prospect of controversy represents one of the major tests of business commitment. Business must decide whether it is serious or not.



- o Partnerships will not be the levers for reform of public education. "The structure of school governance isolates schools from any single group and the business community lacks the unity, expertise, resources and authority necessary for school reform." (Mann)

**Given these caveats, what are the roles that business can play in the process of change and reform in our schools?**

First, business leaders can choose to be more strategic in their relationship with schools, focusing on how to change aspects of the existing structure where business believes change is necessary. This will require business to view its relationship with the schools more like that between a corporation and a subsidiary in trouble. When a subsidiary is in trouble, a corporation is strategic and willing to take on the tough issues, not just involve itself in incremental improvements. This has not been the case with most business-education partnerships to date. By and large, businesses do not approach collaborations with the notion of achieving specific quantifiable goals as they would in business deals. (Bailin) To be specific, business could:

- o be the catalyst for programs similar to the restructuring initiatives now going on in Dade County;
- o urge school officials to examine the working conditions of their teachers, offering the support and expertise of business personnel; and
- o adopt-a-school for purposes of facilitating the process of restructuring.

Second, business can support initiatives to address the needs of the disadvantaged. The value of preschool education and child care for disadvantaged children has been thoroughly documented. The importance of dropout prevention programs cannot be overlooked, but access to the labor market remains a critical need for disadvantaged youth. However, these initiatives should not occur in isolation. Rather, they should be part of a broader strategy to make the public schools capable of meeting the needs of all of America's children.

Finally, business can be a continuing source of advocacy and support for public

education. Advocacy can take many different forms: public support for needed investments in public education and services for the disadvantaged, participation in coalitions promoting change in public education, or independent business initiatives to continue to educate the public about the needs of public education. For example, business groups at the state and local levels could conduct independent analyses of school restructuring issues or participate in coalitions for this purpose, thus contributing to further definition of school restructuring and helping to educate the public on the issue.

**ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION:** There are many roles that can be conceived for the business community in school reform and restructuring. The issue is what role business leaders are willing and able to play. What roles do you believe business can and should play?

**V. WHAT CAN BE DONE TO ENCOURAGE AND SUPPORT BUSINESS TO BECOME MORE ACTIVE AND EFFECTIVE IN BRINGING ABOUT NEEDED CHANGES AND REFORMS?**

Shifting the nature of business involvement with the schools will not be an easy task. The question for business leaders is how to move that process forward. Here are a few suggestions:

- o Begin to educate local business leaders (currently involved in partnership programs) to help them understand the reform and restructuring issues, assess their own efforts with schools to date, and develop a revised strategy. Meetings such as the Clark/IEL meeting in New York City would be held regionally or in metropolitan areas.
- o Expand the cadre of business leaders committed to reforming and restructuring the public schools. Educate them about the public schools, and seek their commitment to reform initiatives in their communities. A large number of business people across the country expressed a strong interest in attending the February 24th meeting, but could not attend. They represent a core with which to begin this process.
- o Create a vehicle, independently or in conjunction with the education community, that underscores business commitment to reform, and provides a continuing focal point for business initiatives to reform education.
- o Conduct joint meetings among business, education, and political leaders at the state and local levels to examine school reform issues.

- o Organize a small national meeting of business leaders and urban school superintendents to explore the business role in restructuring schools.
- o Organize meetings and discussions between business, political, and education leaders to examine school reform issues.

**ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION: What steps would you recommend to move the business community toward a more aggressive and strategic stance in its relationship with public education?**

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## ABOUT THE INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

The Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL) has programs in more than 40 states and is unique among the organizations that are working for better schools. It is a Washington-based nonprofit organization dedicated to collaborative problem-solving strategies for education. IEL works at the national, state, and local levels to bring together resources and people from all sectors of society in a new coalition in support of essential change in schools. IEL works to develop the ideas, leadership, resources, and programs that will enable American education to meet today's challenges, and tomorrow's as well. IEL has four primary components that are the driving forces behind its work. These components are as follows.

1. **Coalition Building: Strengthening Business Involvement in Education** -- The strength and vitality of business can be traced directly to the quality of the education America's young people--and business's next generation of workers--receive in our schools. IEL forms the crucial link between the schools and the business community to establish dialogue that creates an understanding of the common interests of business and the schools. From its position as a knowledgeable but uniquely independent participant in school reform, IEL brings business and education together to strengthen both.
2. **Emerging Trends/Policy Issues: Demographic Policy Center** -- America's demographic changes are in evidence everywhere from maternity wards to advertising campaigns, but nowhere are the challenges of these changes more real or pressing than in America's schools. IEL's Demographic Policy Center, headed by nationally prominent demographic analyst Dr. Harold Hodgkinson, is working to generate greater awareness of the forces reshaping our society and to provide services that will make business and political as well as education leaders more responsive to changing needs.
3. **Leadership Development: A Motivator for Informed and Pace-Setting Leadership** -- IEL sponsors a variety of programs that serve to develop and promote leadership. IEL's Education Policy Fellowship Program gives mid-career professionals the opportunity to explore policy issues and to understand better how policy is influenced. In collaboration with the Education Commission of the States, IEL sponsors the State Education Policy Seminars Program which provides for the exchange of ideas and perspectives among key state-level political and educational policymakers. Through a variety of leadership development services to public school systems, IEL has a learning laboratory to work with school-based staff. IEL and the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, jointly sponsor the National LEADership Network and work in collaboration with the 51 LEAD centers across the U.S.--with principals, with superintendents, and with other school leaders--to promote leadership in schools.
4. **Governance** -- IEL's governance work focuses on all levels of education policy and management, with the emphasis on performance and action to help local education leaders sort out appropriate roles, responsibilities, and trade-offs. Currently, IEL is working through its School Board Effectiveness Program to develop leadership capabilities and is examining various aspects of local school boards to enhance their effectiveness as governing bodies. IEL's Teacher Working Conditions Project seeks to understand and address the work place conditions and issues which promote or impede teacher effectiveness in urban school systems. This project is part of the overall national effort to professionalize teaching and to gain greater commitment to excellence in learning.

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