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ABSTRACT

The Program for Disadvantaged Youth, funded by the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, understood that the ultimate impact of the program on students would depend on the capacity of principals to take on new leadership roles and responsibilities. This report analyzes principals' perceptions of the variety of professional development opportunities in which they participated as part of the Clark Foundation-funded reform efforts. The analysis is based on hour-long formal telephone interviews with each of the 23 principals (at least 2 from each Clark-funded district) and 3 staff development providers and on briefer conversations with Clark program liaisons and an evaluator. Principals were very positive about the professional development opportunities provided by the Foundation, which included formal training and opportunities to participate in conferences, to visit other districts, and to receive visits from others participating in reforms. Both the form and content of the development efforts for principals appeared well-suited for the desired learning outcomes. Principals learned new strategies and skills and became articulate in expressing their goals and needs. Issues related to professional development for principals are explored. (Contains 3 references.) (SLD)

IMPROVING PRINCIPALS' PRACTICE:

THE INFLUENCE OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ON PRINCIPALS' WORK IN MIDDLE SCHOOL REFORM EFFORTS SUPPORTED BY THE EDNA McCONNELL CLARK FOUNDATION

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INTRODUCTION

School principals are deemed essential to current school reform, and yet the rhetoric about their importance is often unaccompanied by sufficient attention either to what new knowledge and skill they need, or to how they will learn what they need to know in order to forward today's complex reform agenda. Roles and relationships between teachers and principals and between schools and central office are changing; so are ideas about curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. According to Murphy (1994), the work of principals involved in these reforms is becoming more difficult and more ambiguous. Chief among the role changes that Murphy notes are a) "the attempt to reshape power relationships" so that the principal is now "delegating responsibilities, and developing collaborative decision-making processes," and b) "...enabling and supporting teacher success," which involves, among other things, creating a shared vision, fostering collaborative and team relationships among staff members, allocating resources, providing the information that teachers need in order to be successful with youngsters, and promoting teacher development. Principals who were trained to be managers are now expected to be leaders in the context of school reform and district decentralization. As Payzant and Gardner (1994) note, "strong collaborative and instructional skills have replaced strong bureaucratic skills as important qualities needed for effective school principals."

The Clark Foundation's Program for Disadvantaged Youth, now the Program for Student Achievement, understood that the Program's ultimate impact on students would be influenced significantly by principals' capacity to take on this new leadership role and its associated responsibilities. As a result, the Foundation provided principals with a) direct professional development training, b) opportunities to learn from conferences and networking with other principals, and c) resources with which to access additional knowledge and skill tailored to their own local needs.

Evaluation Design. This report analyzes principals' perceptions of the variety of professional development opportunities in which they participated as part of their Clark-funded reform efforts. We give special emphasis to the programs provided by Don Rollie and his associates due to these trainers' lengthy involvement with the Program's principals. The analysis is based on hour-long formal telephone interviews with each of 23 principals (at least two from each Clark-funded district) and three staff development providers: Don Rollie, Vernon Polite, and Bob McLure; and on briefer conversations with Clark liaisons in four of the districts and with Barbara Berns, evaluator for three of the districts.[1]

[1] We are pleased to report that, for the most part, principals who are no longer in Clark funded middle schools, as well as principals who work in districts that are no longer part of the Program for Student Achievement were willing to give an hour of their time to discuss the principal professional development in which they had participated. Their insights are especially important to our understanding of the early years of the Program.

During the interviews, we asked principals a) to reflect on what they needed to know in order to provide leadership for their schools when they first became involved with the reform process and as they continued their work, b) to describe what they learned in their formal and informal professional development opportunities, c) to assess the extent to which those opportunities helped them in their work as principals, and, d) to consider what else they might want to learn as they continue the reform process.[2] We asked Don Rollie, Vernon Polite, and Bob McLure to respond to the same set of issues from their perspectives as professional development providers. In other words, we asked them to reflect on what principals needed to know, what their training provided, whether and to what extent principals used what they learned, and what else principals might need to know.

Principals discussed a range of learning opportunities that included: working with Don Rollie and his associates; attending Clark Day/The Reform Connection and NMSA; presenting at one or both of these conferences; participating in National Staff Development Council and/or National Education Association training workshops; participating in district provided training; and working with local mentors or other knowledgeable people who helped principals with their reform efforts.

Our report on these learning opportunities is based on

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[2] Principal interviews were conducted by Barbara Neufeld and Mary Ann La Bue.

retrospective data; we did not observe any of the training nor did we observe principals attempting to use what they learned. Instead, we asked principals to talk about the form, content, and value of their opportunities to learn through Clark funded training initiatives. For the principals who worked in Baltimore, Louisville, Milwaukee, Oakland, and San Diego, that meant recalling training that began approximately five years ago. This condition poses some threat to our findings, first, because memories are faulty, and, second, because it is difficult for people to remember what they did not know in the past if, by now, that new knowledge has become commonplace. Significant principal turnover also complicated our ability to obtain a longitudinal picture of learning opportunities; only two principals, Skip Clemons in Louisville and Sheila Kolman in Baltimore were principals in the Program at the start of the training as well as at the time of our interviews. Nevertheless, we have reasonable confidence in our data since most principals provided us with concrete examples of their learning and they described and emphasized similar learning experiences.

The principals in Chattanooga, Jackson, and Long Beach began their involvement with Clark sponsored professional development just over two years ago. Their experiences necessarily are of shorter duration and of somewhat different organizational structure. Their responses, however, complement those of the Big Five principals.

Principals were not equally articulate as they discussed

what they knew, what they needed to know, and what they learned in their professional development training opportunities. They varied in the knowledge and skill that they brought to the training and in their desire to learn. Therefore, they varied in what they gained from the experiences. Principals who were most articulate about their roles and their learning, who sought out additional new learning opportunities, and who expressed a sense of efficacy were those who reported most positively and in the greatest detail on the training. It may be that those who said little and were still unclear about their roles learned more than they were able to articulate. It is also possible, however, that they have not yet grasped the complexity attached to the role of middle school principal.

Organization of the Report. Principals were engaged in a variety of formal and informal activities that together created opportunities to enhance their knowledge and skill with respect to their roles as school leaders. Most of the time, activities had more than one purpose. As a result, it is difficult to disentangle the parts of principals' learning experiences in order to evaluate their independent and singular impact. When principals were learning about specific planning strategies with Don Rollie and his associates, for example, they were also learning about their role in implementing a participatory strategy that was tied to their vision. At conferences principals learned new content and met new colleagues; they also took on new roles as presenters either alone or with their

teachers in sessions that described what they were doing in their schools and what they were learning from their experiences. Preparing for a presentation required principals to analyze what they had learned and tease out the portions relevant to a presentation. It also required them to work jointly with their teachers to consider how to present the material. Each component of the many activities in which principals participated had multiple learning opportunities.

We see this integration as an indication that professional development was taking place in real contexts and/or with reference to real contexts. This is how it should be. But we still needed to choose a method for presenting what we learned from principals that in some way identified which aspects of their training were more and less helpful; which aspects were over- or under-emphasized.

The approach we have chosen is to briefly review the activities that principals described as most salient to their learning, providing examples, when available, of how they used what they learned in their own schools.[3] With respect to each of these activities, we will identify what we think was beneficial in the approach and what might strengthen future work with the activity. Then, we will turn to a discussion of what else principals report that they want to know. We will also discuss the areas that the major trainers think deserve continuing or new

[3] We do not identify principals by name in this report. Instead, we have assigned a letter of the alphabet to each one.

emphasis. Finally, we will speak briefly about professional development opportunities that may be important for central office personnel if they are going to lead districts that intend to support, sustain, encourage and nurture middle school reform.

MAJOR FINDINGS

Overview. Principals were exceedingly positive about the professional development opportunities provided by the Foundation. These included, not only the formal training, but also the opportunity to participate in conferences, to visit other districts, and to have their schools visited by principals and teachers from other reforming schools. Principals reported a) learning a great deal that was useful to them in initiating and sustaining change, and b) gaining a new perspective on their roles and on themselves as professionals. Principals from the original five districts described a varied and longitudinal formal program that supported them over time and responded to their changing needs whether they were experienced or brand-new at the job. Principals in the more recently involved districts had less direct training and focused their comments on the access to professional resources that they had, on the "shadowing" leadership experience, and on the conferences they had attended. The description and assessment of formal training that both cohorts of principals provided matched quite closely the major emphases described by the trainers.

Principals with a great deal of prior experience reported learning little that was completely new. However, they valued

the leadership components of training, in particular, and wanted additional opportunities to have personal conversations about their leadership. They also identified areas about which they would like to know more, including, for example, building teams and making site-based management effective. These principals reported that the quality of the learning opportunities was high and that it extended their knowledge and skill.

Regardless of their experience on the job, and regardless of how much of the training content was new to them, principals reported gaining an increased sense of their own potential efficacy as well as a feeling that they were part of an important, national movement to improve middle schools. As one principal noted, participation in training and in the entire reform project gave him the opportunity to become a learner once again.

> I think that one of the most important things that happened is, it kind of awakened my curiosity, and kind of gave me some tools to start the [reform] project with. It's given me the confidence. Those tools that I don't have, I have the ability to build them and the ability to continue moving forward. (Principal A)

Participation in Clark reform, writ large, others reported, gave principals the legitimacy they needed to convince their communities that middle school reform was worthwhile.

> It's given us validation, the right to go on amidst people who want to say [our ideas] are radical....I could say, if it hadn't been for McConnell Clark, I don't feel like we would have had the right to do some of this stuff. (Principal B)

The opportunities that the Foundation provided did not duplicate training available in the districts. Most principals

reported that they had few, if any, professional development opportunities within their districts that focused on their own professional development. They reported, instead, opportunities to learn more management skills and bureaucratic requirements, as this principal notes:

> In the district, it's not great. It's management; it's not instructional leadership. I really think the program is poor. But people...take it and they learn a lot about paperwork and things like that. (Principal C)

Most principals reported that they did not have professional development opportunities within their districts to learn about their own leadership role and how it might evolve in the context of middle school reform aimed at improving student achievement. As a result, the Clark related professional development opportunities were exceptional.

Before we detail what principals found most useful in their learning opportunities, we want to note that they consider the training provided by Don Rollie and his associates to be central to their learning. This is especially true for the principals of the Big Five schools who spent the most time in such training. As we discuss the various learning activities in the next section, principals' voices will provide additional detail about the value of the Don Rollie-related training opportunities available to them as a result of participation in the Foundation's Program.[4]

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[4] A few principals talked about leadership training that occurred as part of a special district initiative or as part of a national training effort. Several principals spoke highly, for example, about their work in Academy III organized by the National Staff Development Council. Others praised the

Learning Opportunities. In the remainder of this section, we describe the major learning opportunities available to principals, beginning with the structures and activities that connected them with one another and forged important personal relationships. These structures and activities set the context for learning: principals were to learn "in the company of others."[5] They were central to all of the other learning experiences, especially those of the Big Five principals. Next, we turn to the ways in which training addressed the nature of leadership itself. This section is followed by one which explores principals' opportunities to learn some of the discrete skills essential to their capacity to nurture and sustain middle school reform: assessing the progress of reform; developing and supporting teams of teachers; implementing effective planning and goal setting strategies; and, creating a school culture that supports new approaches to teaching and learning. We end with the issues of teaching and learning because improving these areas should be at the heart of and the culmination of principals' training. The ultimate purpose of principals' work is to create the opportunities in their schools in which teachers can develop the capacity to teach so that children's achievement improves in meaningful ways. Ending with this area leads us to a discussion of what might remain to be included in further principal

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professional development available under the auspices of their local Public Education Fund.

[5] This phrase is used by Marilyn Cochran-Smith in her discussion of teachers learning in the company of other teachers.

professional development.

1. Being Part of a Cohort. Traditionally, districts have not created structures or opportunities in which principals forge working relationships with each other. Principals, generally, are not encouraged either to share what they know with those less experienced, for example, or to reveal areas with which they would like assistance. The principalship, for many, becomes a lonely enterprise.

Because of this general condition, the opportunity for principals in the original Big Five, to become part of a small cohort that participated in formal training opportunities several times a year, provided support for one another, shared experiences and met informally at conferences was unique. Principals reported that the cohort structure was key to their establishing new views of themselves as leaders and learners, and to their developing knowledge and skill in areas that would help them forward middle school reform.

What was important about the cohort structure? First, it gave principals someone to talk to **outside of their district** and this made the encounters "safe." No one was listening to the conversations to evaluate the principals or to make decisions about their tenure. Second, the cohort provided principals with the opportunity to be knowledgeable for one another as well as to gain knowledge. It gave them colleagues to call upon when they were back in their districts, thus reducing the loneliness of their positions. Despite the high turnover among the principals

participating, they described a longitudinal feel to the experience that supported the collegial cohort effect.

> Even though we were scattered all over the country, it became a very accepted [strategy] to pick up the phone and call a principal in California or Tennessee or wherever to try to get a feel for what they were doing in their area and how that might help us. They would share some of the pitfalls they had tried. And we would do the same thing. (Principal D)

Principals not only telephoned each other, they arranged to visit each others' schools. Several talked about the value of having taken teachers to another district to observe programs in action; of sitting down with those teachers and their principal to discuss issues associated with implementing new programs and practices. Principals reported that they and their teachers learned a great deal from these exchanges that were a dramatic change in how they interacted with one another.[6]

In the Big Five, the cohort culture was created apart from the district context. In the three sites newer to the program, formal principal professional development was provided on a district basis with the idea of creating a within-district cohort of principals who could support each other in implementing middle school reform. Because this effort had not been lengthy at the time of our inquiry, understandably, principals did not describe a networking or cohort impact similar to that described by the Big Five.

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[6] It is important to remember that the cohort came together around some formal learning experiences developed by Don Rollie and his associates; that it was more than a networking experience. We discuss below some of the content provided in the training and describe what principals learned from it.

We know, however, that the task of creating a district-wide cohort effect is likely to be challenging for several reasons. First, because all principals will be involved, the group will vary in the extent to which individuals are committed to the reforms and to working with colleagues. Second, the groups will be larger, increasing the demands on the trainers to develop strategies to create the kinds of "buddy" arrangements and support structures that developed among the original cohort of fifteen people. Third, as Vernon Polite pointed out in his interview, establishing trust among principals within the district, may be more challenging than establishing it among principals from different districts. On the local scene, principals may fear the evaluation of their peers; they may worry about the negative outcomes that may occur as a result of exposing some lack of knowledge on their part. And, fourth, in the original design, it was unlikely that two or three principals would create much pressure on central office to change its roles and relationships with principals. Creating a cohort of all middle school principals will likely have an impact on the districts' organizational culture. We will discuss later the attention to central office roles and district culture that might arise from professional development opportunities and the creation of a district cohort of middle school principals.

2. Developing "National" Identities Through Attending and Presenting at Conferences.

Principals applauded their opportunities to use Clark funds

to attend national meetings. A few principals worked in districts that had encouraged them to develop national connections and a broad perspective on school reform prior to their involvement with the Clark Foundation. Other principals worked in districts that provided scant resources for conference travel or other out-of-district activities. Still others reported working in districts that had discouraged them from attending conferences or visiting schools outside of the district. These districts worked on the assumption, principals reported, that all that principals needed to know was available in-house.[7] As a result of this variation, some principals found the conferences and other travel opportunities provided by Clark to be a "first." However, those who had travelled before still valued the opportunity to attend conferences and reported that The Reform Connection, especially, helped them forge national connections and a national identity for themselves. The Reform Connection provided principals with a wealth of information about the progress of middle school reform in other districts, and it led to networking that resulted in sites visiting one another. These visits to observe programs and practices expanded principals' horizons, they reported. The Reform Connection also involved principals as active participants; as presenters and not merely observers at the conference.

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[7] It is important to remember that this paper describes **principals' perspectives.** We are not reporting our conclusions about the districts' position on any of the issues raised in this report. Nor are we suggesting that all principals in any of the districts would necessarily share the views of principals included in this study.

> [I've learned so much] from all the things I've done. ...Coming to these meetings for the last five or six years and just sharing and talking; sitting in sessions and hearing all the things that were going on. I had never presented at a conference before Clark involvement. Now, I think we have developed some skills at putting together presentations, and at making the presentation. (Principal E)

Principals' own orientation to learning influenced the use they made of these opportunities to travel outside of their districts. Some described taking advantage of everything that came along; this led them to begin to create new opportunities for themselves. One principal in this mode described his delight in attending a weekend session presented by Don Rollie and his associates and then attending a week-long Principals' Institute run by a local college. He felt the training was well worth the time even though it was held the week before school opened. Several years ago, he reported, he might have felt obliged to be in school; now he felt his learning was more relevant to his teachers and students than was dealing with administrative details. The same principal described how he identified a program that he wanted to observe in a neighboring state, rounded up a teacher who wanted to observe it, and visited the program even though he had no external funds to pay the expenses. (Principal K) Seeking out learning opportunities was becoming a habit. A principal colleague of his who we also interviewed, in contrast, did not attend the Principals' Institute because it was the week before school; he felt that, as principal, he belonged in the building.

How principals think about their learning needs and make

decisions about what activities are essential to their role, therefore, influences the ways in which and the extent to which they take advantage of what is available to them through the Foundation or through other sources. Training opportunities were enabling principals to expand what they considered to be their legitimate roles and, in some cases, set new priorities with respect to how they could assist in improving their schools.

3. Learning About Leadership and Leadership Style. Most Clark principals had been trained to be managers -- and their districts expected them to fulfill that role. District administrators desired increases in student achievement, but often their message to principals was to emphasize order, discipline and control. Middle school reform changed the emphasis of the principals' role; now they were to lead instead of manage. In order to make this change, principals needed to learn what leadership meant, what it included, and how to do it. What activities did they structure to teach these leadership skills? How did principals respond to these learning opportunities?

Trainers involved principals in looking closely at what their work entailed, what they considered to be important to maintain, and what they could delegate or drop. They included a strong focus on the elements and implementation of leadership as contrasted with management. Trainers used a variety of self-analysis instruments to assist principals in understanding their own leadership style and how they could use their style to forward their schools' agenda. They spent a day with each

principal in a shadowing activity designed to "hold up a mirror" to the principal, to give the principal data with which to assess his or her work in the school and determine whether the actual interactions and allocation of time reflected what the principal wanted to be doing.

a) Leadership Style: Personal Inventories and Shadowing. Through their training, principals completed one or more self-analysis inventories which provided them with information about their "natural" approaches to a) interacting with people and b) problem solving. The activity involved, however, much more than the reporting of outcomes to the principals. It included, for the Big Five, personal conferences in which the trainers explained the results of the inventory, and a set of role-playing exercises that enabled the principals to now look at their interaction styles and those of their cohort colleagues with new eyes. The role-playing experiences allowed the inventory information to come to life in practice and in the safety of the cohort as this principal reports.

> The [role-playing] led to us actually being able to really see the strengths and weaknesses that had been identified [so] that we could come to an agreement on understanding [what they meant]. (Principal F)

According to the trainers, the next step was to connect the inventory information with the principals' home situation. Part of the intention here was to help principals understand that there were many effective ways to approach a problem and that, as leaders, they needed to appreciate the styles with which their administrators and teachers did so.

> We began to lay the self analysis...back against the reality of their home scene. We asked a lot of why questions and how questions. If you see yourself as this kind of leader, and if the situation in your school is the way you have described it, then how can you possibly, using your leadership style, and the situation in your school as the basis for any kind of planning, how can you possibly forge a group of pecple into some kind of cohesive faculty. And there was an understanding that a leadership style is just not something that sort of sits out there in a vacuum; that it is really a set of skills, that is, a style that they apply to their own situation and to their own faculty. (Don Rollie)

Principals' discussion of the self-inventory experiences revealed that the instruments had more than descriptive value; that they helped principals understand their own and their colleagues' interactions. Even principals who were skeptics at the outset, described these activities as useful. A few principals asked their administrative teams to complete a short form of one of the inventories, and then led a team discussion on the implications of the findings so that the team could better understand its interactions.

> I came back (from training) and used the Myers-Briggs with my administrators. We're very different; I'm very different and we clash all the time. We are extremely different in how we approach things. It was nice to talk about our differences. (Principal H)

Although we do not know the extent to which principals continued to attend to these aspects of leadership style in their work, we know that they valued the experiences, saw their relevance, and indicated that they could be useful.

Trainers used another strategy to assist principals in learning about themselves and their leadership: they shadowed them for a day keeping careful track of how they spent their

time. This activity was designed, in the words of one of the trainers, to hold a mirror up to the principals; to enable the principals to consider the range of activities in which they participate each day and the role they take in those activities.[8]

For the most part, principals found that the shadowing was a validation: the trainers' observations matched the principals' self-assessment of how they spend their time.

> Bob McClure became my mentor for a year. He made two visits out to the west coast and during those two visits he shadowed me all day, and gave me a lot of technical input as to how to time manage, and also just to validate what I was doing which was extremely important to me -- my leadership skills, my interaction with staff, my goals and objectives for the school year -- that validation came very loud and clear from him. (Principal G)

> I liked it, because it reinforced [me] at a time where I was questioning my leadership style -- because of this problem that I was having with decision making becoming a complaint -- as to what I thought I was focusing on. Then they came back with this, and it's exactly what I want to do, where I want to spend my time. (Principal I)

> [Shadowing] wasn't to come and tell you what to do, but to look at what you were doing,...So that one, they could understand: what are the barriers and blocks that we have in the every day job that keep us from just enacting things immediately? And [two], to get an idea of whether we're really proceeding on course with the objectives that we have set and just to make sure that these things were really happening. And that also was part of the critical friends development. That's a process where there's someone you can talk to but that person is not just going to solely agree with everything that you're saying, but is probably going to come down and point [out] some things, in a frank,

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[8] This activity, although directly related to developing leadership, might also be thought of as an element of developing a professional culture in the school. After all, principals were opening up their practice to scrutiny by others. This is similar to encouraging teachers to create a culture in which they observe each other and hold up a mirror to teaching practice.

> professional way that you are not doing correctly or that should be changing. (Principal A)

The job shadowing activity was implemented with principals of the Big Five and with principals in the districts newer to the program. Given the parameters of principal program for the three newer districts, shadowing did not include additional follow-up group sessions. For principals in the Big Five, shadowing was followed by another training activity that built on aspects of the experience. One principal described it this way:

> The shadowing led to another training session where we were paired up with critical friends, another principal. I'm sure that they probably matched us on our strengths and weaknesses. That was another invaluable experience, because you could share with a colleague from another state. No connections to back home, and you were probably more apt to be more comfortable and honest about your feelings; about what you look like on paper in terms of how do things. It was a wonderful match,...We complemented each other very well and I could see why they paired us. (Principal F)

Principals in all eight districts described the shadowing activity as valuable. Many said that the feedback sessions gave them insight into their work and provided them with an opportunity to talk at length about what they do and why they do it. It gave them an opportunity to discuss areas of leadership that they thought could be strengthened. These responses indicate that the principals were developing skills of reflection.

What the shadowing and feedback sessions could not do was provide principals with the help they needed to improve an identified weak area. Two principals, for example, told us that

they had poor delegation skills and that the shadowing experience had correctly identified this problem. These principals understood why delegating was difficult for them, and yet, on their own, they were unable to improve their skills, as this principal reveals:

> I haven't learned to delegate. (laughter) That's still something that I really need to do better. It's a weakness. I know what to do and if I do it, it will be right. I really am surrounded by intelligent people whom I don't trust enough...That is my greatest weakness. I need to give more things to other people to do. That is something I really, I really need to learn. (Principal C)

Principals would like to have the on-site support that would enable them to develop the skills that they currently and which were identified in their training.

b) Garnering Local Leadership Assistance. Principals in some of the middle schools took advantage of the opportunities available through their grants to engage outside consultants to help them develop their leadership and move their reforms forward. Principals in San Diego, for example, involved Charles Palmer, a man they described as knowledgeable about schools and reform, trustworthy, sensitive and helpful to them as they developed their roles and dealt with difficult issues. Robbie Champion in Long Beach was described similarly as helpful to principals and to teachers. She, along with Charles Palmer, were able to respond to local conditions and they were readily available to principals in ways that Don Rollie and his associates could not be. These individuals provided on-site leadership support and technical assistance, and they further

reduced the isolation that principals often experience.

c) Summary: Leadership and Leadership Support. Principals reported that the training provided them with new ideas and helped them develop connections between the ideas and their particular schools. Whatever the focus of the leadership training, principals reported that the trainers "did something to make it relevant to the back-home situation." Principals also reported that the leadership training had great breadth, permeating all of the areas in which they worked:

> All of Don Rollie's workshops have been excellent. It was probably the best training for principals I ever had, because it focused on leadership development... Building the leader who could change the climate. Building the leader, who could change the strategies. Building the leader who could be a critical friend. Building the leader who understood his or her own leadership style and how a leader impacted other people. Building the leader who would be a facilitator and not a dictator. The other thing,...they built teacher leaders. I didn't anticipate that....So I was supported by Clark in my own skills as well as the emerging skills of my staff. And I was taught how to use [the new teacher skills] and not be threatened by that. (Principal E)

> I would definitely say for me as a principal, the support that was invaluable to me, which was not available via my district, was Don Rollie's support network for the principals. It was relevant to critical issues that existed for mid level principals in a day and age when there was no training in this area for a new breed of administrator. And so having that kind of a principal support for leadership first of all, and helping us work with our leadership, define our roles, to be able to put into place the types of programs at each of our individual sites has really made a difference to meet the needs of our children. (Principal F)

> The specific activities have really become internalized. But I think that part of it was the development of a new paradigm, developing a vision, developing a mission, learning some of the specifics

about what is it that we're talking about when we talk about cooperative learning, when we talk about innovative teaching/learning strategies. What is program assessment with examples of it. [We got] really kind of an indoctrination to the development of a new paradigm. (Principal A)

Principals said that they needed this kind of attention to leadership as they found themselves in the midst of reform. Several principals pointed out that they did not know how to **facilitate** reform rather than mandate it; they did not know how to create a buy-in on the part of their faculty. Training helped some of them gain new skills in these areas as this principal forthrightly reported:

> One of the things that I think I was lacking in as an administrator was [knowing] that middle grade reform was something that could not be top-down driven. It had to be something that was from the grass roots up....Staff were not buying into it...Nothing that I learned in a textbook for my...degree in administration helped. [laughter] It was nothing that I could relate to [what I needed], -- The practicality was that I needed to pull on a lot of people skills, communication skills, being able to move from a leadership position where I would say "this is going to happen" to one that had a lot of input from my colleagues -- and I'm talking about my colleagues at the school site. Because...it had to be a collective effort on the part of everybody here at the school site. And it's a little different from what I had been used to. And it was different from what I had learned in school. (Principal G)

These comments describe the value and comprehensiveness of this professional development especially for principals who were part of the original Big Five. Principals from all eight districts, however, talked about the opportunities that they had to learn more about their own leadership style and how to use that style to advantage. Almost every principal attributed these

significant learning opportunities to the training provided by Don Rollie and his associates.

One reason to learn about one's leadership and interpersonal style is to understand how it influences, for better and for worse, the school's movement toward its goals. While we have testimony that principals gained insight into their leadership and interpersonal styles, we do not have much evidence that they used that knowledge to inform their practice. One principal, for example, found that she was allocating her time so that she was spending sufficient time on instruction during the year she was shadowed. In the next year, she was quite sure she was spending much more time on issues of discipline. This was not what she wanted, but, she said, she did not know how to change the situation. Another principal reported that he kept the findings of the shadowing experience in mind as he worked, but that he had not yet had the time to consider what to do with them.

While it is important to provide principals with the kind of information personal inventories and shadowing provide, this is only the beginning of a long process of helping principals move toward their new roles as leaders of middle school reform. For meaningful change to happen, follow-up discussions that include some goal setting and additional skill-building opportunities need to be available for the principals. It is unrealistic to assume that Don Rollie and his associates could provide this follow-up in all of the districts and for all of the principals. Other forms of support, perhaps one similar to those identified

locally in San Diego and Long Beach, provide a model for other districts and the Foundation to consider. Whatever the source and organization of this support, it will be as critical for principals to have it as it is for teachers to have on-going support as they take on new roles an teaching practices. Beyond this, as suggested by Vernon Polite, trainers need to consider not only what principals do and whether it is worth doing, but the quality with which they do it. Training for principals, in other words, needs to be attached to some set of criteria and perhaps to benchmarks and standards of high quality practice.

4. Learning Specific Skills.

Until now, we have been discussing broad areas of leadership development that principals identified as valuable -- working with colleagues and having critical friends developed in the cohort structure for the Big Five; attending national conferences and gaining a sense of participation in a national reform movement; learning more about oneself and ones' leadership style in order to better understand the impact of these on colleagues and reform at the school sites. Principals needed these learning opportunities, but they also needed to learn more about specific tasks associated with reforming their middle schools. In this section, we review the skills that principals reported were important and were stressed in their training program. These include: assessing the progress of reform, developing and supporting teams, planning, and creating a collaborative culture that supports teaching and learning.

a) Assessing the Progress of Reform. At the beginning of their involvement with the Clark Foundation, principals of the Big Five Schools, for the most part, did not think a great deal about how they could evaluate the progress they were making with the programs and practices in place at their schools. They thought about evaluation as something done by outsiders or as assessment based on test score reports. Principals were not especially eager for training in how to assess their programs and progress. They did not think of this activity as one they would do in-house. Nor were they sure that the information could be useful. One principal reported,

However, as they continued with their training and with middle school reform, some began to wonder how they could tell whether they were making any progress. At a basic level, principals wanted to know how to answer the question: Are these programs working? A few principals reported that they had access to a great deal of test score information and that it could be disaggregated in many ways. But, that information could not tell them about progress with program implementation. Principals began to want to learn how to assess the impact and progress of specific changes in organization, pedagogy, and curriculum. Some wanted to know how they and their teachers could learn to do their own assessments so that they would not always have to rely on outside consultants. Out of these interests, trainers developed as assessment component for their training.

> [This] is an excellent example of an outcome from training. We were at one of the sessions with Don [and it became clear that] many of the principals didn't understand what program assessment was....He said, "Is this something that you would be interested in?" and we all said, "Yes." So as a result of that, the next time we met with him the whole piece was around assessment. Then they did a follow up with some of us in our cities. Vernon and Bob came to [our city] and worked with us, with our own schools, to help us learn how to develop instruments that met our specific needs. (Principal F)

Principals from the Big Five described several opportunities to design their own assessment strategies under the guidance of Vernon Polite, Bob McLure and Don Rollie. One principal described a "high content" observation instrument organized by the trainers that her teachers could use in classrooms. She said:

> Teachers observed each other and determined how high the content was by an assessment instrument they put together, by criteria they identified. So we did that. ....We learned that assessment didn't have to be done by outsiders. We learned that assessment could be done with what you had right inside the building, by your own people. Assessment could be analyzed by your own people; with what you had inside the building. (Principal E)[9]

In addition to the "high content" assessment, this principal, along with one of her principal colleagues and a group of teachers, developed interview questions that teachers could use in the school to learn about the progress of advisory, career exploration or any other component of the middle school program.

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[9] Despite the value the principal attributed to this process, she was unable to sustain its use. The district, she reported, was never convinced about the value of such self-analysis and required completion of a different set of assessment instruments. There was not enough time or energy in the school to sustain both processes and the district's prevailed.

Another principal in the district also talked about learning how to assess the progress of particular programs and program components.

A few principals reported that they learned that it was important to build program assessment into curriculum development; that on-going evaluation information could help them make program adjustments. Principal L described the research that he and his teachers completed to determine the quality of the implementation and the impact of their HOTS program.

Despite its apparent value, principals report that on-going assessment has not become a routine part of their work. Most often, initial enthusiasm waned as the process got further away from the initial training structure. This finding suggests that the training in assessment was successful in sensitizing principals to the issue and providing them and their teachers with skills that they could use. The principals have not yet created a culture in which this kind of program evaluation is necessary for decision making; therefore, it is not a priority in their practice.[10]

b) Developing and Supporting Teams of Teachers. When researchers write about the new roles that principals are being asked to take on in the context of current school reform, they usually talk about the principal's role in forming, sustaining,

[10] Principals in the districts newer to working with Clark did not talk about on-going and in-house assessment being part of their training. Several indicated that they would like to gain the skills with which they and their teachers could determine whether and in what ways they were making progress.

and evaluating teams. They note that most principals have not had experience either a) with working on teams or b) organizing and sustaining them. Most Clark principals would agree with this conclusion and apply it to both site-based management teams, and teaching teams. With respect to both kinds of teams, principals described needing help with forming the teams -- considering the professional and personal characteristics of teachers that might constitute the team -- and then, helping the team members work with each other, and, in the case of site-based management teams, with the principal. Principals from the Big Five reported that their training addressed some of these issues, and that they would have liked more help in this area.

> What we did was look at team building from the aspect, quite physically, of how you put people together on a team. And then how you make that decision about who works best together for the different programs. [The trainers] did a wonderful job of moving that into the concept of...how you could build your administrative team so that you had members of each personality type present...balancing, and encouraging us. (Principal J)

Principals from the other districts reported that they did not spend much time on issues of teaming and that they, too, would like assistance in this area.

The trainers concluded that virtually all principals needed additional work on issues of teaming. In particular, according to Don Rollie, they still need to learn how to forge a sense of what he calls "facultyness": a cohesive faculty unit that works together toward the school's vision, goals and objectives. The principals, for their part, reported that they still need to know a great deal about a) creating and maintaining teams, b) figuring

out what teams should do, c) connecting them to schoolwide reform, d) dealing with within-team conflict when it arises, and, e) evaluating team progress. Although principals did not raise this issue, we would add that principals likely need assistance in learning how to relate to teams as teams, in addition to relating to the individual teachers who comprise the teams.

c) The Continuum: A Planning Approach. Without exception, principals praised the training activities that involved them in learning how to use a planning device that Bob McLure calls The Continuum. This device, used in conjunction with the school's vision statement, can assist principals and their faculties in figuring out a) where they are, b) where they want to get to in a particular area, and, c) how to get there. Many principals indicated that they had tried this activity with their faculty and that it was useful. Because the Continuum was so desirable to principals, we include here a brief description of what it is and how it is used.

According to Bob McLure, the process starts with the principal and/or teachers identifying an area that they would like to improve.[11] Next, the teachers and the principal together identify the two ends of the Continuum -- what the practice would look like if it were exactly what every one would prefer

[11] Part of the principal's job is to encourage the faculty to realize that there are areas in need of improvement so that they desire to make some changes. This identification of the problem area would precede the use of the Continuum. As one principal said, "I think what was most provocative in my mind about it was that whole idea that first of all, you have to find some way to bring about movement. That you have to get people off-center or encourage them to look at the problem from a different point of view." (Principal J)

(the right hand end of the Continuum), and what the practice would look like at the extreme opposite (the left hand end of the Continuum). Teachers and principals then decide where they are on the Continuum and what practice looks like at that point. As Bob McLure put it:

> [Their job] is to define the two ends of that Continuum with words that everybody in the room can understand. So, if you're down here [at the left] in terms of the way this classroom looks, tell us what's going on in that place: Students facing front, teachers doing most of the talking, all of the standard stuff. And on the right side, if you want it to be a more interactive, engaging classroom, then what are the words that would describe the other end? So, there begins to be some kind of concreteness about how this looks. Secondly, we would ask them, "What is it that would cause movement on this Continuum?"...[Then] we would get them to go home and try some things out...and then report back. The third question had to do with how you would know that movement had occurred. And, the fourth question had to do with: What are the measures that you would employ in order to find out if movement actually had occurred? Vernon [Polite] would skillfully teach them two very specific ways: one using a questionnaire and one using interviews. (Bob McLure)

When principals spoke about using the Continuum, they were quite specific about what they did. Their descriptions of the process matched the trainer's.

> Let's say the area that you want to look at is reading scores....You draw a continuum of what would be the worst example and the best example, and place yourself on there. And then [you] begin to talk with staff about what would need to happen to bring about movement, what would be the impetus for the change, the indicators for success, and what you're going to do to collect data in order to know, one way or the other. (Principal J)

> Bob McClure does a process on these learning continua, and while they're not teaching and learning per se, they are a way of looking at where we want to go and where we are. We did that. That was great. I used that to help define what we were going to do in our

> special ed program. I called the special ed department together. It was more than special ed; it was a number of teachers. We talked about where we wanted special ed students to be in the ideal. Then we said where it is when it's not ideal. And then we placed ourselves on the continuum. And then we brainstormed. How do you get from this point to this point and how do you break it down. It's a visual process of listing out where you want to go and how long it's going to take you to get there. And trying to really be honest about where you are. (Principal H)

A principal in still another district described how she and her staff agreed to use the Continuum to consider where the school was with respect to teaching high content. Using one of their planning periods, all teachers visited three other teachers to assess what was going well and what might need improvement. They used this information to determine where the school was on the continuum. Although the observations caused some nervousness, the principal reported that the data would now assist them to develop strategies to move from where they are to where they want to be. (Principal C)

Another virtue of the Continuum, according to principals, was its potential to create thoughtful decisions that might, in the words of more than one principal, "minimize the chances of disaster." (Principal J and Principal K) Several principals noted that had they gone through the Continuum process with some decisions they had made in the past, they would have been able to identify serious stumbling blocks that led to bad feelings among teachers. The planning process encourages principals and teachers to figure out ahead of time the likely positive and negative implications of some decisions and strategies. It

encourages collaborative planning which might increase faculty "buy-in." The process, according to principals, guards against making decisions too quickly and with insufficient input and thought.

There is no question that the Continuum provides principals and teachers with a beneficial tool that they understand and value. During our interviews we heard examples of how principals used it shortly after the training experiences. What we do not know, is the extent to which this process has become a part of the normal operating procedure of the schools. One principal noted that the Continuum takes a great deal more time than making a decision without sufficient attention to the vision, goals, or current state of the school. Other principals voiced similar concerns despite their high regard for the strategy. Given the time demands on principals and on teachers, we think it would be important to learn more about the implementation of this planning strategy, and, if necessary, provide principals with advice on how to include it in a routine manner. From our perspective, it has the potential to keep everyone's eyes on the goals and on progress towards them.

d) Creating a Collaborative Culture that Supports New Approaches to Teaching and Learning.[12] All of the leadership

[12] Principals in Chattanooga described a number of opportunities they had to learn about teaching and learning and other aspects of their role. Some of these were available through a local public education fund; some through the University of Tennessee; and some through Clark funds supporting attendance at NSDC Academies. Principals in Chattanooga, more so than principals in other districts, described learning from each other. We do not know how accurately our represents collaboration in the district, since we focused on principals who had been involved in the planning grant year (1992-1993) and worked with the Paiedeia

development and training activities that were provided for the Clark principals pushed them in the direction of developing a shared, collaborative culture in their schools. The attention to leadership and leadership style, the inclusion of teachers in assessment strategies, the focus on building teams, and the collaborative planning device called the Continuum, for example, all involved principals in thinking about their own roles and the roles of their teachers in making decisions and acting together for the improvement of the school. The collaborative culture developed in the cohort of the Big Five principals was, in some ways, an example of what the principals might want to create at home among their teachers, and, to some extent, between themselves and their teachers.

Many principals reported, however, that they had not yet created this aspect of a reformed middle school. They were still developing teaching teams and trying out the new planning strategies. They were working on the components of reform, but those components, according to most principals, had not yet led to collaboration around teaching and learning. Principals told us what else they needed to learn in order to achieve this new school culture. Some spoke directly about needing to know more about creating such a school culture. The following comment is typical of what principals said in this regard:

> I would really like to learn how to develop a learning community. A community where we build upon each other's strengths and we learn from one another. That

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schools.

> we are not the experts in teaching, but rather we are always exploring different things that our colleagues are having success with to reach all kids. Teachers are resistant to that philosophy. (Principal I)

We are not sure of everything that should be included in such a learning community, what we call a collaborative culture, but it certainly includes a) exposing one's practice to the scrutiny of others in the interest of improving it, b) assuming the responsibility to help others and to share knowledge, and, c) creating a safe environment in which to do each of these.

To create such a culture, principals need to model some of the practices they value from their own professional development experiences, and they need to convince teachers to take on these new and somewhat threatening roles. Principals from the Big Five knew how it felt to have their knowledge and skill scrutinized. Several acknowledged that the trainers had pushed them hard to clarify their thinking and express it in meaningful words.

> I thought I was good, but I learned I wasn't as good as I thought I was. At points [Don Rollie] would play the devil's advocate and say, "I don't know what you mean." Then he would say, "Tell me more." And we would tell him exactly what we meant, and **we knew what we meant.** And he'd say to us, "That's just educational jargon." Until you were forced to be very specific. So, we got better at being more specific about what we wanted to do, at looking at how we were prioritizing things, and doing a better job of setting some points along the way so we could measure accomplishment. (Principal D)

> They made me stand with my vision. "What's your vision for the school?" Well, it's in my head and I have these feelings! [They made me] use terminology and language and words to connect; to help us understand what our vision for this school really is. "What is a leader to you? What does a leader do? Be more specific. On a continuum with where your school is now, where do you see it five years from now?" Those

are the kinds of probing questions that nobody [else] asked. (Principal F)

These experiences were new, memorable, and valuable to the principals; they left them understaning that addressing hard questions and scrutinizing practice could help them clarify their thinking and their practice. None was sure, however, whether or how to use that strategy, or any others, with their faculties. They had experienced the practice, but they did not know how to teach or lead it, except, perhaps with respect to using the Continuum planning process. Principals knew that there was more for them to do than implement the Continuum if they were to create a culture which would assist teachers in improving teaching and learning.

As we consider what principals need to learn in order to help establish such a culture, it is important to remember that Big Five principals were exposing their practice to colleagues, most of whom were from other districts. In contrast, they are asking their teachers to expose their work, their strengths and weaknesses, to colleagues with whom they work everyday. Principals are not sure how to set up a structure in which such interactions could take place; they are not sure how to assess the possible stumbling blocks and pitfalls that might accompany such processes; many do not think they have the knowledge and skill with respect to teaching and learning to take on such a responsibility.

For example, some principals have basic questions about whether the new teaching and learning practices are plausible for

their teachers and their students.

> Even if principals learn a great deal about the new teaching and learning strategies, they still have questions about whether they can truly be implemented with the range of students that they have and whether all students will master the higher level material. And so my exposure to some of these programs has been just basic enough that I get excited about "Wow, this is really great, it's really exciting, I think it's right on track." It certainly appeals to me emotionally; it appeals to me professionally. But, "How do we actually make the mechanics of it work?" And I don't know the answer to that question. (Principal J)

Because of such feelings, principals want to know more about current ideas about teaching and learning in order to assess the potential value of programs that they might adopt in their schools.

> We need, in the next phase, staff development to train administrators to make sure they are [knowledgeable enough to] monitor what should be going on. In other words, these Socratic seminars -- is it actually Socratic seminars? Or is an interdisciplinary unit actually an interdisciplinary unit aimed at meaningful learning or is it simply deviation from the normal school day? (Principal N)

> I want kids to be able to read up a storm and really understand what they're reading and question what they're reading. And teachers want that, but we don't know how to get to that. How to be a better instructional leader: That's what I want....I feel like my teachers are my classrooms, and I don't know how to help them and they want to do it. It's even more frustrating. They want to do it, and I don't know how to get them there. (Principal C)

> I don't think I can guide a staff if I don't know anything about it myself....I feel like anything that I'm going to be for, I've got to be the one that knows as much about it as anybody in this building. And when I talk to teachers, ...I've got to be knowledgeable of the things I'm pushing or [they're] not going to happen. (Principal M)

> I would like to learn more about some of the teaching, learning and assessment strategies coming out and be able to practice those more often...an in-service in those would give the principals a lot more ability to lead and to develop a vision. The other thing is, there is a high level of respect that develops between staff and principal. The staff perceives that you know what they are doing or what they are not doing and it becomes really a partnership effort. (Principal A)

In describing the considerable work that remains to be done with respect to helping middle school principals become leaders who can influence teaching and learning, we are in agreement with Don Rollie and his associates. They conclude that principals have developed some knowledge and skill in this area, but that they have not yet been able to forge their teachers and themselves into a cohesive group that focuses on teaching and learning in a collaborative culture.

e) Summary. Learning Specific Skills. Most principals reported that the training they participated in as part of Clark funded middle school reform enabled them to a) better understand leadership in general and their own leadership style in particular, and, b) improve their knowledge and skill with respect to a number of leadership activities such as planning, working with teams, assessing the progress of reform, and creating a collaborative culture in their schools. Principals who were also participating in other leadership activities still valued the Clark funded training. Principals could articulate what they learned, citing both the theory and the connections that it could have for their practice. In some instances, they were able to provide detailed examples of what they used in their

schools and how well those strategies worked for them and their teachers.

But the role of the principal is not yet fully transformed. Principals talked about the time demands that they face that lead them, at times, to take short-cuts rather than deal with the elaborated planning processes. They want to know more about teaching and learning so that they can better lead their faculties in decision making about programs and practices. They want to find the time to develop, with their teachers, assessment strategies that will help them answer questions about the progress they are making toward improving student achievement. They need additional help in learning to work with the variety of teams that are now functioning in their schools. The process of creating, as one principal put it, "a new breed of middle school principals" is underway, in part, as a result of the Clark funded professional development activities that focus on principals' knowledge and skill. But much remains to be done to enable principals to figure out, at their own schools and in the context of their own districts, how to put these practices into place.

CONCLUSIONS

At the start of this report, we provided an overview of our findings. At the end of this discussion, what more can we conclude about the form of the professional development opportunities as well as about their content and impact? First, the overarching goal of the professional development program for Clark middle school principals was ambitious: it was to help

transform principals from managers into leaders; and, to provide them with the knowledge and skill they would need for their new roles. Principals were engaged in an effort to reconstruct ideas about their role and, therefore, how they should spend their time, set their priorities, seek new knowledge and skill, and situate themselves with respect to teachers and others in the educational community.

In many respects, the principals were undertaking a role change with demands similar to those required of teachers who are attempting to become facilitators of childrens' learning, and are rethinking their conceptions of content, pedagogy, and assessment. We know from professional development activities designed to help teachers change their practice that the process is complicated, takes time, requires models of good practice and coaching support. We also know that it works best in the company of others, and in an environment which encourages risk-taking designed to improve student learning.

Given these parallels, we conclude that the form and content of the principal training were well-suited to the desired learning outcomes. This is especially true for the principals from the Big Five, who experienced training over time, and in a supportive cohort. Their training was developmental, building both on what the trainers thought the principals needed to know, and on the principals' definitions of their own needs. It took place over a long period of time and provided opportunities for principals to try new skills at home and then review their impact

at the next training session. As a result of training, principals developed a greater sense of efficacy, the capacity to see themselves as learners a) capable of improving what they do, and, b) able to ask for assistance. This is an essential first step.

Second, we know that principals learned a number of new strategies and skills (summarized at the end of the previous section) that can assist them in the work of middle school reform. Based on our interviews, we know that principals are articulate about what these new practices and relationships with teachers should look like. They are implementing some, but not all that they have learned. Principals want additional assistance directed toward further implementation of practices that will lead to improved student achievement. Chief among these is attention to working with teams, creating a collaborative culture, and understanding more about the new approaches to teaching and learning.

If we refer back to what we know about changes in teaching practice, we can better look at how far principals have come with changing their practice, and view their progress in the context of a developmental pathway. We know that when teachers attempt to learn new ideas about pedagogy and practice, for example those connected with the mathematics standards developed by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, they generally become familiar with the new ideas first. Next, they develop the vocabulary and concepts with which to talk clearly about the new

practices. Then, gradually, they adopt the new practices, merging them with what they knew and did before. (Cohen 1990) While teachers are still learning the new practices, they are likely to revert to their old and much more comfortable practices when they are under stress -- if a lesson is not going well, if the children are disruptive, if a required test looms on the horizon. It can take several years for teachers to fully transform their roles and their practices.

We suggest applying this description of individual change to principals in order to understand a) what they have accomplished with respect to learning new roles, knowledge and skill, and b) why they are not currently using all that they have learned. Such an analytic stance could also assist in the process of identifying further training needs.

We do not have the expertise with which to make specific recommendations for further principal training. Furthermore, the structure of the Program for Student Achievement is changing; the district wide focus suggests additional considerations for a training model. What we can provide is a set of questions focused on issues and concerns raised by the principals, the trainers, and ourselves in light of the work that has been accomplished so far. We suggest that attending to these questions, as well as generating others, could prove a productive strategy for continuing the professional development program that principals need in order to accomplish the goals of middle school reform.

Issues Related to Developing Principals' Knowledge and Skill

1. What are the ways in which principals can improve with respect to managing time, delegating responsibilities, organizing and working with teams, and developing assessment strategies? Principals' training included attention to these skills, but principals report that they need further help in implementing them at their schools. Shadowing provides one strategy for both collecting data and providing principals with feedback on their current practice. This might need to be coupled with some form of close up work with a coach or a critical friend in order to move current practice in productive directions.

2. What can be done to increase principals' knowledge about current views of teaching and learning? Attention to this area needs to include knowledge of how teachers learn to use these new strategies, as well as knowledge about diverse learners and the impact of reforms on their opportunities to learn. This will be a formidable task for many principals (and for those providing the professional development) because, too often, principals have not been attentive to these areas.

3. Will principals' professional development be the same for all principals? Some of the principals from the three districts newer to the Program objected to having to attend professional development sessions that addressed areas with which they already felt expert. This issue may arise again when all middle schools are involved in reform. It is not clear to us how to make a decision in this area, but we know from discussions with the

trainers that years of experience will not be a good predictor of what principals need to learn. This is an issue for further discussion, also, in light of the value of creating a cohort of principals who can support each other both in their individual professional development, and in the implementation of changes in their schools.

4. How will the quality of principals' work be determined? How will the benchmarks as well as standards of performance be established? The issue of quality is significant in its own right; it is also related to the question of how the decisions will be made about tailoring principals' professional development to individuals' identified needs.

Issues Related to the District Context of Reform

1. What changes will central office need to make in what it requires of principals, what it rewards and sanctions, and what it provides in the way of support in order to assist in the development of principal leadership? We know, from our interviews with principals and with the trainers, that central offices, for the most part, are still most attentive to the management side of the principal's role. Principals are rewarded for keeping order more so than for increasing student achievement. According to Vernon Polite, one important question is about how to change the culture of the district and shift the incentives so that principals are more likely to change their roles and be rewarded for those changes.

2. How can principals gain the perspective of central office so that they better understand the organizational context in which they are operating? As principals roles change, as districts decentralize authority to the schools, principals will likely need to understand how the district operates in order to successfully negotiate for their schools. They will need to understand the incentives and sanctions that influence central office personnel as well. We are not sure how such learning should be organized, but we think that districts, principals and trainers need to consider what principals need to know in this area.

3. What knowledge and skill will central office administrators need to develop in order to nurture and support the leadership development of their middle school principals. It is likely that central office personnel will need to learn more about leadership, leadership style, teaching and learning, and the various skills that accompany leadership if they are to assist principals in implementing their roles. If this is so, then someone needs to consider who would provide such training and how it would be organized.

4. Might it be beneficial to train leadership teams in addition to principals. The new ideas about leadership include changes in the roles that teachers play in school organization. It would be worthwhile to consider the potential benefits of training teachers in the group process skills that they will need to work on teams and to work with the principal. Some of this training

might include both principals and teachers in the same sessions.

5. What will trainers have to consider with respect to the design of their program if they are working with an entire district? There are ways in which the scale of the operation will influence the structure of training activities. One of the trainers explained that with only two principals from a district, they could work with teams of teachers and the principals on assessment, for example. They could help the teams design interview instruments and then analyze the data. When they worked with entire districts, they could not provide that one-on-one attention. Instead, they trained only the principals and had them take the knowledge and skill back to the school. There will be many design features to keep in mind as training is developed for all of the principals in each district.

6. How will professional development at the district level create the beneficial aspects of a cohort of principals who are learning together and can trust and rely on one another? The Big Five principals regarded the cohort experience as primary to their learning. They came to rely on their colleagues as individuals with whom they could share their shortcomings as well as their strengths; as individuals who could assist them and who they could assist. Principals reported that these relationships worked, in part, because their "critical friends" were not from their districts. They wondered how successful this component of their training would have been if they feared exposing themselves to other principals. They wondered how to create such a culture

without exposing principals to negative evaluation by their colleagues and their superiors. Given the importance of the cohort experience, and the development of individuals' trust for one another, this is an area that will merit careful attention in the development of future professional development program.

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