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ABSTRACT

This report describes some of the new demands on school leaders and identifies what schools, districts, states, and the federal government can do to strengthen the ability of principals and other educators to become instructional leaders. It begins by offering different definitions of instructional leadership and describing standards that provide guidance for the professional development of school principals. Shortcomings of present-day programs in school leadership are presented, such as the emphasis on theory. Suggestions follow on how to make practical "hands-on" experience part of principal-development programs. Two professional-development initiatives demonstrate the usefulness of inschool, continuous-learning programs in Kentucky and New York. Recommendations include: (1) having the federal government expand Title I legislation to include principal professional development and set money aside to fund such programming, create a national board on school leadership, and conduct research and forge coalitions on professional development; (2) having states develop quality review and accountability for professional-development programs, make greater investments in school-based professional development for school leaders, and fund teacher-leadership academies; and (3) having schools, networks, and districts encourage principals to distribute leadership in their schools, and make time for professional development. (Contains 28 references.) (RT)

Learning to Lead, Leading to Learn

Improving School Quality through Principal Professional Development

December 2000

National Staff Development Council

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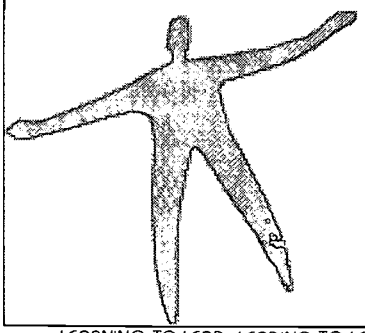

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OVERVIEW

In their search for ways to improve school performance, educators and policy makers have addressed a broad array of challenges confronting schools. These approaches to improvement have included raising standards, strengthening teacher professional development, refocusing schools around the primary goal of student achievement, and holding schools accountable for results. But only one area of policy focus — strengthening school leadership — can exert control over all of these challenges simultaneously.

Instructional leaders shape the environment in which teachers and students succeed or fail. Even if by some magic we could immediately do what it takes to give all teachers the time and opportunity to upgrade their skills and knowledge, we would still require skillful leadership to ensure that teachers can operate in an environment that values and takes advantage of what they know.

This is one reason principals have found their jobs more challenging. Not only must school leaders perform what Richard Elmore (2000) calls "the ritualistic tasks of organizing, budgeting, managing, and dealing with disruptions inside and outside the system," today's instructional leaders must be able to coach, teach, and develop the teachers in their schools. They must be steeped in curriculum, instruction, and assessment in order to supervise a continuous improvement process that measures progress in raising student performance. They must build learning communities within their schools and engage the broader school community in creating and achieving a compelling vision for their schools.

Research and common sense support the notion that improving school leadership at the building level holds tremendous potential in helping schools bolster student academic performance, particularly for low-income and minority students. Studies of effective urban schools (Mendez-Morse, 1992) have found that a key factor in the success of these schools is the presence of a skilled principal who creates a sense of shared mission around improving teaching and learning and delegates authority to educators who have the trust and support they need to get the job done. Meanwhile, research shows that schools that have raised student achievement in spite of students' socioeconomic backgrounds almost invariably do so with the guidance of an effective leader (Keller, 1998).

In a study of elementary school leadership in Chicago, Penny Sebring and Anthony Bryk (2000) found three common elements among the principals of productive schools: leadership style, leadership strategies to spark improvement, and the issues on which principals focus. These principals' leadership style had an inclusive, facilitative orientation that helped principals in their efforts to focus the institution on student learning, provide efficient management, and combine pressure with support. These principals used strategies that included targeting a highly visible problem and solving it quickly ("quick hits"), maintaining a long-term focus on the instructional core, creating a strategic orientation through a comprehensive, coherent plan for school development, and attacking incoherence. Principals in these schools addressed key issues, including strengthening parent/community ties to school,

developing teachers' knowledge and skills, and promoting a school-based professional community.

Common sense also says it is easier to dramatically strengthen the knowledge and skills of 100,000 principals in one fell swoop than it is to significantly improve the performance of 3.5 million teachers or 53 million students. A more targeted approach — the one presented in the recommendations of this report — is to invest in professional development for the nearly 17,000 principals of low-income and disadvantaged schools that receive schoolwide funding for Title I, the federal government's compensatory education program.

"People think principals know how to do it all. All too many principals fall into the trap of playing the all-knowing one. A big step is recognition by principals that they don't know how to do something and that they want to learn to do it. That's huge. It's a risky statement to make."

— Roland Barth, a former principal and long-time consultant on principal development.

In the words of the blue-ribbon Consortium on Renewing Education: "If we could do only one thing to build school capacity, we would develop a cadre of leaders who understand the challenges of school improvement, relish academic achievement, and rally all stakeholders to higher standards of learning" (Consortium, 1998, p. 35).

Business leaders recognize the importance of a well-functioning leader at the school level. For example, John Pepper, CEO of Procter and Gamble, told participants at the 1999 National Education Summit in Palisades, New York, that improving the quality of principal leadership and training must "go hand-in-hand" with raising teacher quality if we are to improve student learning.

While there seems to be universal agreement on the importance of the principal, school systems are finding it difficult to attract qualified candidates for vacancies created by retiring "boomer" administrators. And because few districts have "aspiring principal" programs to identify and develop prospective leaders, more and more districts find themselves between the proverbial rock and a hard place. Consequently, the skillful principals that schools so desperately need are harder than ever to come by.

This report, prepared by the National Staff Development Council, describes some of the new demands on school leaders and identifies what schools, districts, states, and the federal government can do to strengthen the ability of principals and other educators to become instructional leaders. The focus is on what can be done to bolster the skills and knowledge of principals already on the job who are, on average, 48 years old and nearly a decade (nine years) past their original training for the job (NCES Principals, 1997). Current principals need practical training aimed at helping them doing their jobs more effectively from the start, additional professional development to keep them fresh and adaptable, and continuous support in order to incorporate new thinking about what constitutes effective leadership.

WHAT IS INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP?

Experts note that quality leadership means sharing authority and responsibility, establishing a culture that supports high achievement, and continuously using information about student performance to guide improvements and hold individuals and groups accountable for their work. Principals who serve as instructional leaders add a focus on helping teachers improve their classroom performance and making academic instruction the school's top priority.

Effective principals who are good instructional leaders spend large amounts of time in classrooms, observing teaching and encouraging higher performance. They track student test score results and other indicators of student learning to help teachers focus attention where it is most needed. Equally important, instructional leaders focus much of their time on staff development, helping teachers assist all students in reaching high standards. Instructional leaders challenge staff members to examine traditional assumptions about teaching and help provide opportunities for them to share information and work together to plan curriculum and instruction. For principals to learn how to do these things, they themselves need professional development.

California State University Professor Linda Lambert (1998), argues that "Leadership is about learning together, and constructing meaning and knowledge collectively and collaboratively. It involves opportunities to surface and mediate perceptions, values, beliefs, information, and assumptions through continuing conversations; to inquire about and generate ideas together; to seek to reflect upon and make sense of work in the light of shared beliefs and new information; and to create actions that grow out of these new understandings. Such is the core of leadership."

"The job of administrative leaders is primarily about enhancing the skills and knowledge of the people in the organization, creating a common culture of expectations around the use of those skills and knowledge, holding the various pieces of the organization together in a productive relationship with each other, and holding individuals accountable for their contributions to the collective result."
— Richard Elmore, Harvard University Graduate School of Education.

Richard Elmore (2000) offers a more succinct definition of school leadership: "Leadership is the guidance and direction of instructional improvement." (p. 13). He promotes "distributed leadership" in which formal leaders widely distribute leadership responsibilities among various role groups in the organization while they work hard at ". . . creating a common culture, or set of values, symbols, and rituals" (p. 15).

"In a distributed leadership system," Elmore writes, "the job of leaders is to buffer teachers from extraneous and distracting non-instructional issues so as to create an active arena for engaging and using quality interventions on instructional issues" (p. 24).

According to Joan Vydra, a principal in a Glen Ellyn (Ill.) elementary school district, the task of instructional leadership requires "making sure that teachers have all they need to make magic for kids." That includes, if necessary, spending countless hours scheduling and planning to enable teachers to have time to work together.

STANDARDS FOR LEADERS

Four sets of standards provide guidance for the professional learning of principals:

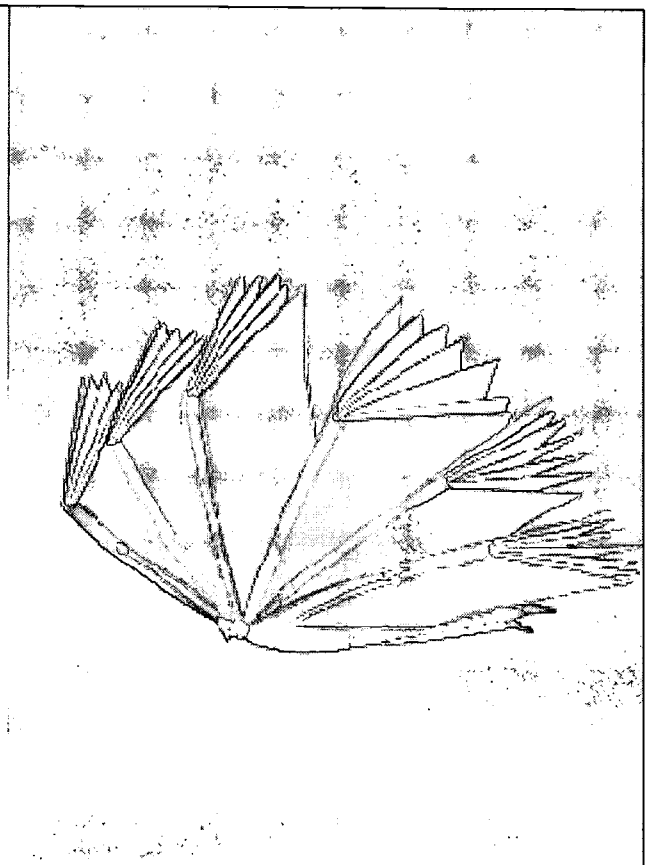
Standards for **student learning** provide direction for the school's improvement and help the school determine its academic strengths and weaknesses.

Standards **for teaching**, such as those developed by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, offer a benchmark against which the principal and teachers can compare their current practices, provide a common vocabulary for instructional improvement, and give purpose and meaning to teacher development.

Standards for **staff development**, developed by NSDC, inform decision making about the selection of the content and learning processes for all school employees.

Standards for **instructional leadership**, developed by the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996) provide a framework for effective practice for principals and other instructional leaders. These standards say school leaders should be able to:

- Facilitate the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community;
- Advocate, nurture, and sustain a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth;
- Ensure management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment;
- Collaborate with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources;
- Act with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner; and



- Understand, respond to, and influence the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.

For each of these standards, administrators must develop a deep understanding of what must be improved and skill in how to do it; must believe in, value, and be committed to their importance and implications; and must facilitate processes and engage in activities to ensure that the goals are met. Many more leaders will become effective if these skills and knowledge are explicitly taught. To meet these worthy goals for what school leaders should know and do, society must provide them with better professional development.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR SCHOOL LEADERS

Most administrators were not taught how to inspire and empower others, work collaboratively, listen and communicate effectively, or transform the school into a learning community (Ramsey, 1999), and existing professional development for leaders tends to be either too academic and abstract or too focused on managerial tasks. Programs emphasize discipline, finance, legal issues, and management but ignore instructional leadership and exploring better ways to use leadership to raise student performance.

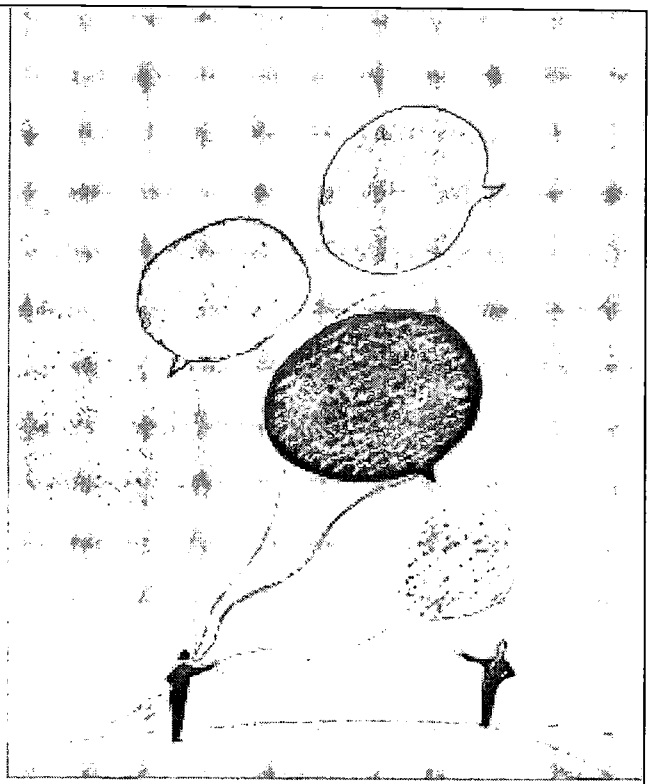
When Anthony Alvarado, now deputy chancellor of instruction of the San Diego (Calif.) Unified School District, was superintendent of New York City's District 2, his efforts to improve student achievement focused heavily on teacher and administrator professional development. At the NSDC 1999 Annual Conference, he noted that we have miles to go to make professional development for principals effective. "The preparation of supervisors makes the preparation of teachers look outstanding. Principals and vice principals and superintendents rarely have good places to learn."

As a result, "There are a lot of principals out there floundering trying to learn things all by themselves," says Mack Bullard, a principal in Clayton County, Ga. (Womble, 2000).

A growing number of school leaders are rejecting the traditional university-based administrative certification and "continuing education" programs because they are too theoretical and classroom-oriented and demanding more active learning related to the practical problems principals face on the job each day. Instead of programs that give principals and superintendents the same Ph.D. training as future professors, they are calling for practical job-oriented training based on solving real school problems.

According to reporter Bess Keller of *Education Week*, "Quietly, under cover of educational lingo and university requirements, reformers around the country have established beachheads of clinical education for principals. The programs view schools — not university lecture halls — as the proper training ground for future leaders, and they put student learning as job one for principals" (2000).

The best preparation for principal leadership is participation in programs "focused around the real work of principals," notes Ron Williamson, an assistant professor at University of North Carolina at Greensboro who has worked with the National Association of Secondary School Principals on principal development (2000). Williamson says principals need to "grapple and deal with issues that are really important to them, things they can use and apply in their own schools....It's all about having [principals] identify



"Principals must make their own instructional knowledge a priority, identify what they need to learn, and seek their own professional development."

— Debbie Backus, principal of Montview Elementary School in Aurora, Colorado and a 1998 USDOE Model Professional Development Program Award Recipient.

"One thing that we need is massive inter-visitation . . . to go places, to see practice that is actually the kind of practice that we want to implement."

— Anthony Alvarado, San Diego (Calif.) Unified School District

an issue or a problem and then researching (it) ... (and ultimately) designing a solution that works for their own setting."

Observers note that existing university academic-oriented training needs to be supplemented by job-embedded and other forms of learning. School leaders must learn how to introduce a continuous improvement process and how to build supportive cultures that communicate the link between adult and student learning. Principals' professional development should include deep knowledge of individual and organizational change processes and effective staff development strategies. Additionally, administrators should learn how to use data in planning for continuous improvement. Training in public engagement strategies and interpersonal relationships can help leaders win the support of the public and their staffs.

Professional development for school principals also should communicate to teachers the importance of principals' continuous learning and clearly demonstrate that enhancing one's abilities is so vital that principals are willing to allocate time to increase their own knowledge and skills (DuFour and Berkey, 1995).

According to the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium's "Proposition for Quality Professional Development of School Leaders" (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2000), quality professional development:

- Validates teaching and learning as the central activities of the school;
- Engages all school leaders in well-planned, integrated, career-long learning to improve student achievement;
- Promotes collaboration to achieve organizational goals while meeting individual needs;
- Models effective learning processes; and
- Incorporates measures of accountability that direct attention to valued learning outcomes.

The Educational Research Service's *Informed Educator Series* (1999) publication "Professional Development for School Principals" declares that effective staff development for administrators is long-term, planned, and job-embedded; focuses on student achievement; supports reflective practice; and provides opportunities to work, discuss, and solve problems with peers. The publication identifies a number of professional development activities that reflect these principles: journal keeping, peer study groups and support networks, administrator portfolios, team training for school improvement, and personal professional development plans.

Besides emphasizing the importance of principals making regular visits to other schools to observe classrooms and analyze instruction, Alvarado also enthusiastically advocates coaching. "You cannot change behavior, change practice in organizations, without large-scale coaching by people who know the content, who know how to do it, and who know how to help people learn. At the heart of it is the simple notion that you need someone working with you to model, to give feedback, to assist in the actual trying of the new practice, to support in the ongoing habituation of new practice. It is impossible to improve practice without access to high quality coaching" (Alvarado, 1999).

A final important ingredient proposed by Alvarado is study groups in which principals consider problems, particularly those in the critical areas of reading and mathematics, and figure out what to do about them. "This sense of organizing ourselves through study groups, action research groups, or a wide variety of practitioner-related structures is essential to making progress in organizations," he says (1999). Study groups provide a structure that ensures principals engage in continuous learning focused on schoolwide student results and best practices to support higher levels of achievement.

According to Richard Elmore, effective principal development "... should provide principals with substantive research on teaching and learning, take place in the principal's home school, focus on solving real problems, and include networks of principals who serve as 'critical friends'" (Black, 2000, p. 48).

Consequently, school systems that are serious about standards-based student learning and the quality of teaching will ensure that all principals:

- Are members of ongoing study groups that delve deeply into the most important instructional issues in their schools;
- Regularly visit one another's schools to learn about outstanding practice, critique colleague's improvement efforts, and support one another in improving instruction; and
- Receive frequent in-school coaching on critical skill areas such as working with teachers to improve instruction, analyzing data, and critiquing student work.

EXAMPLES FROM THE FIELD

Jefferson County Public Schools in Louisville, Kentucky operates a professional development initiative for middle school principals that illustrates the kind of in-school and continuous learning required today for bolstering instructional leadership.

"Until several years ago, professional development for principals was really done by the shotgun approach. It wasn't necessarily connected to specific student outcomes," says Sandy Ledford, assistant superintendent for districtwide instructional services in JCPS. "Now, it's very much job-embedded, it's ongoing and it's sustained." (Richardson, 2000.)

Louisville's principal professional development program has four components:

Institute learning that includes both principals and teachers. The three-day summer institute brings together middle school principals and the teacher leadership team from their schools to focus on standards for a particular academic area. During the institute, principals and teachers examine data that shows how their schools measure up against those standards, and work together to develop a school improvement plan and a year-long professional development plan for their own buildings.

Regular staff development days for principals that focus on a single area of instruction. To ensure that this time is focused on professional development, leaders of the program meet in advance with a small group of principals to determine what should be addressed with the group and what can be covered in memos. During the last two years, sessions have focused on improving student writing. Principals have met with the district's writing specialist to review writing standards, understand the state's writing assessment, compare student work to the standards, and understand what classrooms should look like if students are writing to high standards. In 13 of the district's 24 middle schools, students improved their writing scores.

A cohort strand in which principals learn with other principals who share a common interest. During afternoon sessions, the 24 middle school principals are divided, according to their interests, into five groups (integrating technology into instruction; developing leadership skills; and three groups on learning more about "knowledge work"). The cohort groups were determined by a self-assessment the principals designed themselves focused on what they believed were the 20 most important indicators for high-performing schools and areas in which they needed to learn the most. Each group has a coach, a former middle school principal with expertise in the area studied, who guides its work and stays with it over time.

Individual professional development plans and a peer evaluation program. Each middle school evaluation team is selected from the principal's cohort group. Three principals from the cohort are selected to serve on each evaluation team. Each principal creates an individual professional development plan. Then, each year, one of the three principals in the group has a summative evaluation. During mid-year, the three principals meet at that principal's school for at least 90 minutes to talk in detail about that principal's growth. Principals can demonstrate what they've done by providing artifacts, creating a portfolio, doing a walk-through of their buildings — whatever they believe is relevant to their professional development plan. The administrator signs off on the evaluation, as do the other principals in the cohort group.

In addition to Jefferson County, another community where principal development has enhanced academic quality is New York City Community District 2, which encourages principals and teachers to tour classrooms and discuss their observations. In District 2, experienced principals mentor new principals and hold principals accountable for meeting school instructional goals. District 2 even has a hiring process that requires prospective principals to watch a teacher in action and develop suggestions for improvement.

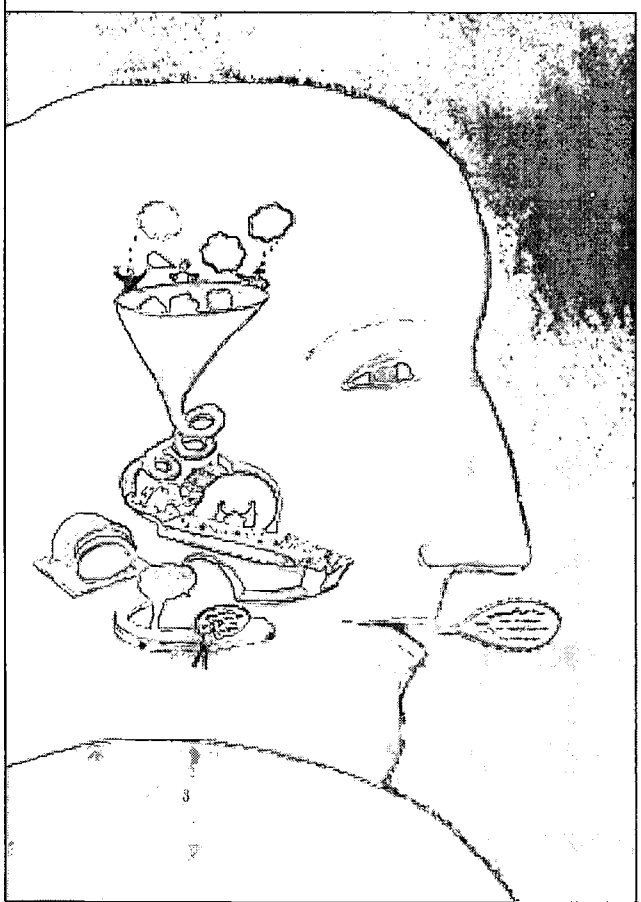
All principals need similar opportunities to learn from their staffs and to use their first-hand knowledge of student needs and instructional methods to shape school improvement efforts. The development of principals cannot continue to be the neglected stepchild of state and district professional development efforts. It must be standards-focused, sustained, intellectually rigorous, and embedded in the principal's workday. Nothing less will lead to high levels of learning and performance for all students and teachers.

TEACHERS AS LEADERS

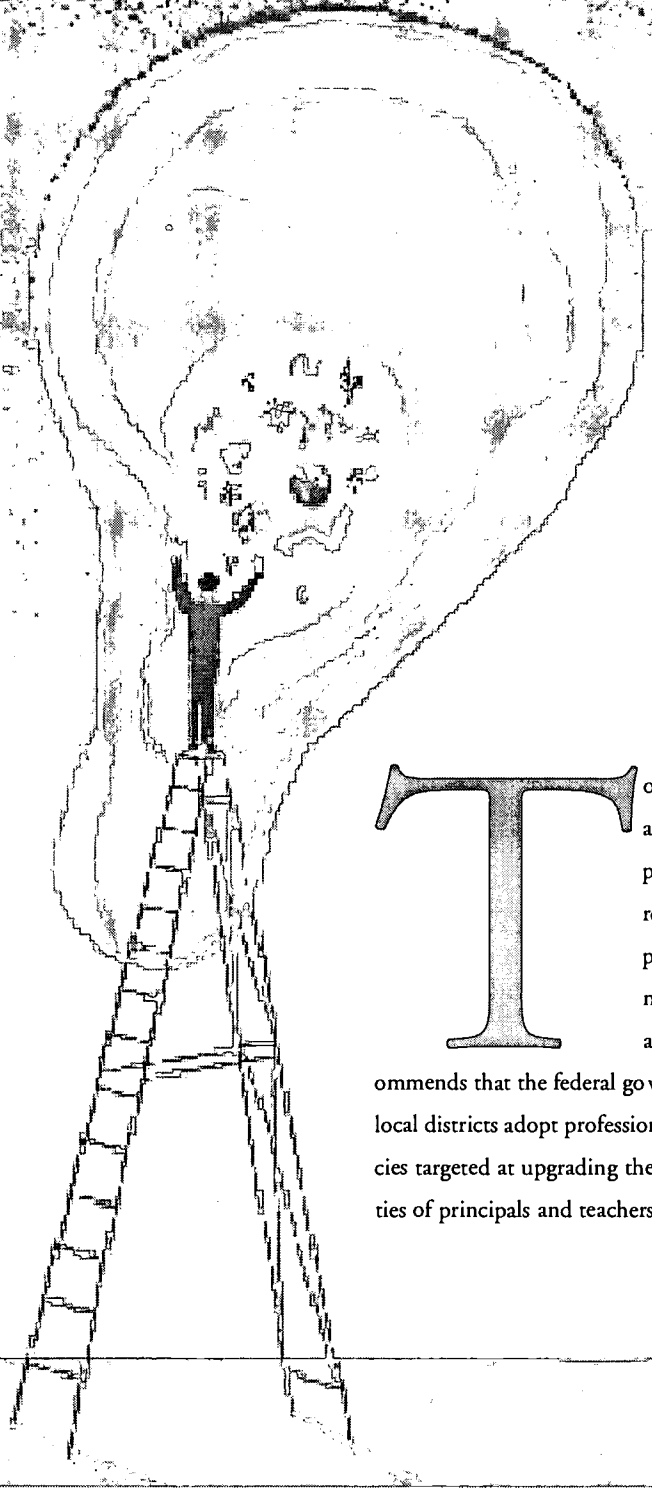
Of course, even the best principals cannot single-handedly transform a school. To create a culture that promotes what Elmore calls "distributed leadership," principals must assist teachers in becoming leaders in their schools. Teachers need opportunities to serve on governance committees, mentor less experienced staff, coach peers, and support colleagues who want to seek certification through the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. In some cases, the principal can transfer some of his or her administrative power to faculty committees, exchanging authority for the greater accomplishments of teamwork. Studies of schools in the Midwest found that "teachers appear substantially more willing to participate in all areas of decision making if they perceive their relationship with their principals as more open, collaborative, facilitative, and supportive" (Smylie, 1992, pg. 63).

Teachers also can lead their peers through participation in lesson study, where a group of teachers collectively develop and test the lessons that each will use individually, and by working with principals to develop school improvement plans and professional development programs. Experienced teacher leaders can both formally and informally share their skills with new teachers and discuss ways the whole school can be improved. They also can participate in action research that continuously improves classroom and schoolwide practice.

To achieve these ends, professional development for teacher leadership must go beyond training teachers in content knowledge and pedagogical skills. Our vision of effective professional development for teachers and school leaders calls for a daily, job-embedded, team learning approach that focuses on planning lessons, critiquing student work, and group problem solving.



RECOMMENDATIONS



To improve leadership and ensure that principals and teachers receive the necessary professional development to be instructional leaders, NSDC recommends that the federal government, states, and local districts adopt professional development policies targeted at upgrading the leadership capabilities of principals and teachers.

FOR FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Targeted assistance, research, and demonstrations

For most of America's history, the federal government has had the least influence on education; however, since the 1983 report, *A Nation At Risk*, the federal government has become more active, convening summits of governors and supporting higher standards. The federal government also has influenced education reform by funding professional development and establishing model programs.

Government leaders need to understand that establishing standards and improving curricula, tests, and teachers still will not provide significant improvement unless the capabilities of school leaders are increased. The federal government can:

Expand Title I legislation to include principal professional development and establish setasides to fund such programming. The reauthorization of Title I in 2001 represents a great opportunity to focus on the professional development of principals to help educators meet the new accountability requirements of the previous reauthorization (1994) and those under discussion. The previous reauthorization of Title I focused on requirements that ensured that states would adopt content standards articulating what students should know and be able to do and performance standards describing levels of proficiency that students would reach in meeting the standards. In addition, it called for statewide criterion-referenced assessments and public reporting on adequate yearly progress. Those changes cannot happen without the guidance of a skillful principal. If Title I legislation were to recognize the importance of principal development, it would enhance federal efforts to use Title I funds to further schoolwide improvement initiatives.

But, if that is to happen, Title I must establish specific set-asides for the professional development of school leaders. While the National Staff Development Council has previously called for setting aside at least 10 percent of school district funds for the professional development of teachers and administrators, we believe Title I legislation should go a step further and set aside an additional two percent for principals in schoolwide Title I programs. Even if principals in the 17,000 schools receiving schoolwide Title I money were to have as much as $10,000 annually set aside for school districts to provide appropriate professional development, this would cost $170 million which is only about 2.1 percent of Title I's $8-billion budget. While administrators may be understandably reluctant to take away money from the many other needs of high poverty schools for a priority that seemingly does not directly flow into the classroom, skillful principal leadership is essential for schools to make significant learning gains.

Adopt provisions of the Administration's School Leadership Institute legislation, a $40 million initiative now before Congress that would train 10,000 potential school administrators. This effort is meant to bring attention to the alarming shortage of school administrators nationwide, an issue that is often overlooked because of heavy publicity surrounding the teacher shortage. NSDC recommends that the federal government use this Institute to provide professional development for existing school administrators and to develop model and online programs to teach administrators how to become instructional leaders.

Create a National Board on School Leadership. Just as the federal government supported the creation of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, it can support a program to recognize principals and other school leaders who demonstrate accomplished leadership practices. Such a board would build on the work of the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium to measure the potential of principal applicants and to identify and measure what highly accomplished leaders should know and be able to do. The National Board on School Leadership will stimulate the professional growth of applicants in the same manner as the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards has promoted the professional development of teachers.

Create an awards program that recognizes outstanding leadership development programs. The U.S. Department of Education already recognizes quality staff development programs for schools and districts. The department can extend that work by identifying and honoring exemplary professional development programs for principals that have a demonstrated link to improving student learning. Through such an effort the

federal government can stimulate the creation of new models of leadership development focused on student achievement.

Establish urban grow-your-own programs for principals. The federal government can work with national foundations and states to establish grow-your-own programs that help urban school districts identify school leaders and invest in their professional development. Just as states support new induction and mentoring programs for teachers, they can develop similar initiatives for new principals that would provide opportunities for experienced and retired principals to mentor others. These programs can be modeled after successful efforts studied by Recruiting New Teachers that have helped paraeducators and others receive necessary education and certification to enter the classroom.

Conduct research and forge coalitions on professional development. The government also can take a larger role in research and development on what makes leaders effective and how better leaders can be developed; this study should examine ways to replicate successful programs to spread knowledge about what works in principal development. It can form coalitions with key groups like the National Association of Elementary School Principals, National Association of Secondary School Principals, American Association of School Administrators, National Center on Education and the Economy, and National Staff Development Council to conduct and disseminate research through their members and through a web site. It can establish research panels to sort out what researchers and educators know about effective leadership and hold public meetings to educate Americans on the importance of developing school leadership and on what makes a school leader effective. This can be modeled on the NSDC research effort on what works in the middle grades.

FOR STATES

Standards, requirements, and technical assistance

States can revise their requirements for new principals and make the criteria and assessments for principal certification and re-certification more relevant to the skills actually needed to do the job. To improve professional development for school leaders, states can:

Develop quality review and accountability for professional development programs. Working with the universities that educate most of the state's principals, states can require that they teach new models of leadership and include more on-site, hands-on practice. Meanwhile, the state can impose an external results-oriented quality review for all leadership professional development programs with the aim of eliminating those that are not working.

Make greater investments in school-based professional development for school leaders. Using existing resources and funds currently used to reward teachers for obtaining extra degrees and higher education course credits, local districts should spend at least 10 percent of their funds for ongoing, school-based professional development programs for teachers and school administrators. Programs for principals can include mentoring and peer coaching, opportunities to visit other schools, training in ways to distribute leadership, and efforts to strengthen principals' understanding of how to implement standards, monitor school performance, and strengthen quality professional development for staff. NSDC will soon develop audit tools that can serve as a framework for allocating resources.

Create leadership networks for principals. To provide statewide support to districts, states can create online learning experiences and electronic networks for principals to communicate with each other, share ideas, and solve problems and fund demonstration programs that encourage districts and higher education institutions to collaborate on new approaches to professional development.

Establish a new position of state staff development director. A state staff development director would share information among district coordinators about what works in staff development to raise student achievement. This individual also could provide information on new research and effective programs and help establish statewide networks for school leaders. He or she could also oversee state grow-your-own principal programs.

Incorporate professional development into school evaluations. States can add measurements of principal professional development to their evaluations of schools and request that schools provide measures of principal progress.

Create incentives for better principal performance. To recognize and reward talent and strengthen principals' skills and knowledge, states can add professional development to state grants awarded for demonstrating higher competency. States can help make leadership more attractive to prospective administrators by urging districts to give principals more autonomy and explore different governance models.

Fund teacher leadership academies. States can create teacher leadership academies to prepare teachers to facilitate local learning teams, conduct action research, lead study groups, serve on site-based committees and prepare for certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. These academies would give teachers the opportunity to develop and practice the skills and knowledge needed to become leaders in their schools and districts. These academies would model programs that can be adapted for district use and also provide advanced training for teacher leaders.

Provide tools to evaluate professional development. States can play major roles in providing tools and methods to evaluate the professional development of administrators. These tools should include guides and criteria for comparing programs and calculating the costs and benefits.

Advance teacher leadership initiatives. States can signal their understanding that teachers have a critical leadership role beyond their work with students. States could fund pilot programs to develop peer review models and provide financial incentives to enable districts to support teachers seeking certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. States also could identify and disseminate information about model programs for teacher participation in committees and in partnerships with parents.

FOR LOCAL SCHOOLS, NETWORKS, AND DISTRICTS

Implementation of school-based professional development for principals

Traditionally, most of the daily management of American schools occurs at the local level. Teachers report to their principals, who in turn are responsible to the superintendent. The superintendent and district determine which principals to hire, what they will be allowed to do, and how power will be shared among the board of education, the superintendent, the principal, and the teachers of a school. Without strong local support for school leaders, the recommendations made above will have little effect. Therefore, districts can:

Encourage principals to distribute leadership in their schools. They can establish annual evaluations of principals that incorporate a measure of principals' effectiveness at establishing a collaborative culture.

Improve the selection and continuous learning of principals. Districts and schools can rethink their approach for determining who becomes a principal (and other school administrators), how they are developed, and what they do in the school. They can grow their own administrators by spotting potential leaders early in their teaching careers, strengthening their leadership skills to give them the option of becoming an administrator or enhancing their role as a teacher leader. Local districts can partner with universities to create programs of alternative certification in leadership through district academies that provide practical hands-on training in how to guide and lead schools. While this training should have an academic core, it must also provide time for quality professional learning experiences. For example, New York City's Community School District 2 works with Baruch College, City University of New York to help teach and fund classes for future principals (Keller, 2000).

Create apprenticeship programs for principals. The Aspiring Principals Program run by Dennis Littky of Rhode Island's Big Picture Company, helps train aspiring principals by partnering them in a one-year apprenticeship with a distinguished principal from one of the nation's best small schools. Apprentice principals shadow distinguished principals as they do their job, observing and learning. While there is an academic component with the aspiring principal and certification from a college, the bulk of the program is hands-on work and projects. According to Ronald A. Wolk, founding editor of *Education Week* and *Teacher* magazine and chair of Big Picture's board, "You can't really train principals in college courses the way we've done it all these years. The apprenticeship is key to this, having them out there learning on the job" (2000). The organization continues to maintain contact with its graduates, forming a network of principals who share information with each other.

Establish support networks for school leaders. Districts can establish networks of principals, study groups, and formal, sustained mentoring arrangements. Some of this networking can take place online as principals discuss problems and work together on solutions to improvement issues. Experts can show principals how to analyze data and plan improvements. Superintendents may help lead learning sessions, provide incentives for high-achieving principals to support other principals, and even incorporate peer evaluations of principals into their review systems.

Provide coaches for principals. Principals frequently need guidance in managing the demands of their full lives. Coaches can enable principals to stay focused on their instructional goals while also leading balanced, healthy lives.

Require a focus on instruction. Districts can require that principals spend more time in classrooms. Superintendents should design and lead professional development with principals in classrooms at different schools, demonstrating the knowledge and skills they will need to use with teachers. Principals would then use this training with teachers in their own schools and be evaluated on their progress in this area.

Build grow-your-own principal programs on the local level. Many districts have programs to encourage

school aides and other staff to become teachers. They can develop similar programs to help teachers becoming instructional leaders.

Make time for professional development. Districts can reconfigure the school day to provide principals and teachers with opportunities for team meetings focused on instructional improvement and additional time for teacher leaders to facilitate, plan, mentor, and coach other teachers on the team.

Create career ladders that have rungs for teacher leaders. Districts can re-allocate resources to ensure that professional development for teachers, principals and administrators comprises at least 10 percent of school budgets. In addition, districts can encourage experienced teachers to become teacher leaders by establishing career ladders so the best teachers take on mentoring and curriculum development tasks. Districts can require principals to create leadership teams with real power. And they can reward teachers who have achieved national certification with new positions that combine school or district leadership with a continued classroom role. One district working on these solutions, Blue Valley School District in Overland Park, Kansas, found that encouraging teachers to lead helped them retain more of their senior teachers. Since teachers feel they have a say in how the school is run, they are more willing to be held accountable for its performance (Hardy, 1999).

Increase incentives that encourage teacher leadership. Incentives can include released time, job restructuring, and greater flexibility in the use of resources Some of these plans may require district personnel to work with unions to develop more flexible contracts that establish teachers and administrators as partners in leadership.

CONCLUSIONS

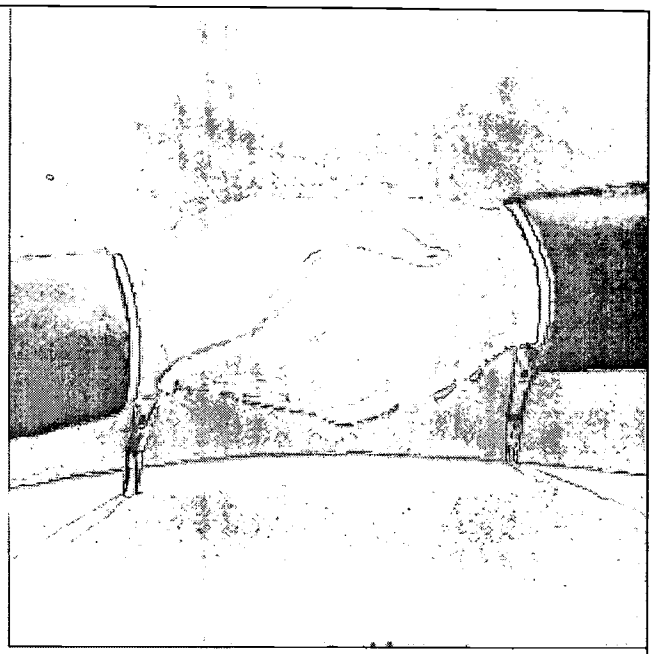
Strengthening school leadership will require unprecedented cooperation and tolerance for blurring the roles among teachers, administrators, and staff developers. We can no longer rely on charismatic leaders to form model schools of excellence or trust that every individual teacher acting alone will make the right changes to improve teaching and learning. Instead, administrators must learn to develop the capacities of their schools and teachers.

Shifting to this model of instructional leadership will not be easy for schools or for school leaders. It will require substantial change in district practices that have caused administrators to be preoccupied with management issues. Districts will have to overcome resistance from district administrators who want principals at their beck and call, from teachers and unions who fear that principals' greater focus on instruction will reduce their own professional control and from some principals who may fear change or doubt their ability to successfully perform in this new role.

This model also will require a greater stability in school leadership to ensure greater continuity of leadership and community understanding. The game of "musical principals" undermines the authority of all school leaders, as educators see principals as temporary overseers — not part of the community — whose leadership style and structures may soon be replaced.

Better professional development can help leaders learn to lead teams in distributed leadership, which is very different from the traditional top-down authoritative leadership. They must learn how to build support for change, motivate teachers to become leaders and take charge of their own projects, and provide reasons for people to want to change. They need to learn how to let go of some authority and controls so teachers also have opportunities to become leaders.

Improving the quality of America's school leaders is the most feasible way to make a significant difference in American education. Beyond the fact that improving principal performance provides great leverage over school achievement at limited cost, school systems owe it to their communities to ensure that all principals meet high standards of performance and that they are engaged in sustained, serious study of the most effective ways to improve student learning.



Standards for principal performance exist, and leading-edge professional development models for principals are available for adoption or adaptation. Federal, state and local authorities must now step up to their important responsibilities in this area. Without a sustained focus on improving the quality of school leadership, this nation's reform efforts will falter. And the ultimate losers will be our children.

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