COURAGEOUS LEADERSHIP FOR DISTRICT-WIDE SUCCESS

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Agenda

1. Congratulations!
2. Framing the Challenge Ahead
3. Building Capacity to Meet the Challenges
Rising Job Frustrations

A new national survey finds that three out of four K-12 public school principals, regardless of the types of schools they work in, believe the job has become “too complex,”

1/3 say they are likely to go into a different occupation within next five years.
83% percent of school leaders rate “addressing individual student needs” as “challenging” or “very challenging.”

78% rate managing the budget and resources as challenging or very challenging.

53% Evaluating Teacher Effectiveness
What is Creating These Challenges?

1. Disparity of Wealth
2. Expanding Underclass
3. Growing Student Diversity
4. Increasing Disorder
Top 1% has more of US wealth than bottom 95%
The Majority of Students in U.S. Public Schools are Now “Minority”

- 2 or More Races
- American Indian
- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Black
- White

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The Majority of Students in U.S. Public Schools are Now “Minority”
Could We Educate all These Children?

Places with bigger elderly populations now spend less on public education, especially when youth are of different races.

--James Poterba, MIT
We Need a New Paradigm...

... And Courageous Leadership to Advance “the Movement”
5 Principles of Courageous Leadership

- Assuring Constancy and Consistency of Purpose
- Facing the Facts and Your Fears
- Building Sustainable Relationships
- Making Organizational Meaning
- Getting to Your Core
II. The Equity Challenge:

- Excellence and Equity are perceived as incompatible goals
- Too many schools become accustomed to the predictability of achievement patterns
- Addressing the needs of poor and immigrant children is difficult because it requires adaptive leadership
- Fiscal constraints: Doing more with less
- Political pressure: the public is impatient, politicians set unrealistic goals
- Accountability is too narrowly defined - based largely on test scores
Pervasive inequality makes the pursuit of equity difficult

- Equity Defined - Equality of opportunity with focus on outcomes and results;
- Attention to addressing the needs of all students
- Recognition that not all students are the same
- Those with less will need more (e.g. time, attention and support)

Staying focused on outcomes – academic and developmental is key to progress
Balancing Technical and Adaptive Work
Leadership on the Line, R. Heifitz

**Technical work** - A focus on managing the operations of the system, insuring that procedures are working and that employees are in compliance with policy.

**Adaptive work** - A focus on the dynamic and complex nature of the work, its substance, meaning and purpose. Work guided by a long term vision, with medium and short term goals. An awareness that we are trying to achieve our goals in a constantly changing environment.
The Five Essential Ingredients for School Improvement

Organizing Schools for Improvement, 2010 – Bryke, et.al

A coherent instructional guidance system
Ongoing development of the professional capacity of staff
Strong parent-community-school ties
A student-centered learning climate
Shared Leadership to drive change
Framework for Pursuing Excellence Through Equity

Child Development – requires a holistic approach to education and differentiation

Neuroscience – elasticity of brain requires personalized approaches to learning

Understanding and responding to the way students are affected by environmental context

Family
Peers
Community
Society
Building School Capacity: A holistic vision

- Teaching and Learning
- Extended Learning
- Safety, mentors
- Community partners
- Family engagement
- Health and Nutrition
Schools are Influenced by Their Environment

Safety, health, culture, political economy of local community have an impact on schools

Broader demographic and economic trends also influence schools – immigration, globalization

Schools must devise strategies to mitigate harmful effects of the environment and draw upon community resources for support
Key Adaptive Questions:

What does it take to educate children in our schools?
   The skills of the staff and resources available to the school must match the needs of students.

What are their lives like outside of school? What challenges do they and their parents face?

What are their unmet needs that may impact learning?

What are their dreams and aspirations?
   We must know our students and see beyond their limitations.

How do they learn at home? What motivates and interests them? How can we generate excitement about learning?
   Engagement is multidimensional and a pre-requisite for learning.
The Work:

- **Creating a culture** in which respect for teaching and learning are at the center of what we do
  - Rituals, shared practices and common expectations – how things are done
- Generating and sustaining **buy-in** among staff around shared goals and strategies
  - Clear and measureable
  - Time to deliberate, collaborate and process
- **Building community** with staff, students and parents
- Developing the **intrinsic motivation** of students to learn; it’s easier to teach kids that are invested in learning
III. Building Partnerships with Parents Based on Shared Interests

Key Ingredients

Staff is trained in how to communicate respectfully and effectively with parents across race/class differences.

A variety of events and activities are organized throughout the year for parental engagement and to build trust.

Parents receive clear and consistent feedback on student performance and guidance on what they can do to support their children.

Keep in mind: The most important form of parental involvement occurs at home.
Why Working with Parents Can Be a Challenge

Differences related to race, class and culture often make communication difficult

**Lack of trust** – Do parents believe that the school is looking out for the interests of their children?

**Lack of respect** - Are parents treated with respect?

**Lack of cultural competence** - Does the staff have the ability to interact comfortably across differences?

**Projection** - Parents who have had bad experiences in school often have negative attitudes toward school

**Deferece** – Immigrants and some low-income parents may be more likely to defer to school authority, less likely to understand why they should be involved
Basic Requirements for Improving Relationships Between Parents and Schools

Must be based on
...a recognition of mutual need, responsibility and respect
...a recognition that all parents can help their children
...empathy for the situation confronting parents and families

Are We Ready for Parental Involvement?
Middle class parents often have strong sense of entitlement and awareness of their rights.
Are you willing to solicit ideas from parents to make your schools more responsive to their needs?

Tolerance for tension and some degree of conflict is necessary
Possible Areas for Cooperation Between Parents and Schools

- Parent-School Contracts - Formal agreements laying out expectations for all parties, can include children
- Site-based leadership - Comer model, Chicago site councils, provide parents with decision making roles at schools
  - Mutual accountability
- Academic enrichment - math and literacy nights, diagnostic testing
- Parent education - discipline, raising teenagers, talking to kids about sex, helping kids get ready for college
IV. Building partnerships with community to address student needs

Universities – curriculum development, tutors, mentors, professional development for teachers

Hospitals and Clinics: wellness, immunizations, nutrition, counseling

Employers: internships, career academies, management support

Community-based Organizations and Churches: Outreach to parents, social services, mentoring and tutoring

Create opportunities for youth leadership and civic engagement
Key Conditions for Effective Partnerships

Clear agreements on front end to prevent turf wars

Clear, measurable goals to evaluate effectiveness

Regular communication, mutual respect
Poverty is not a learning disability, but...

WHEN POVERTY IS IGNORED IT CAN BE DISABLING