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COMMENTARY

Christopher H. Tienken, Editor
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Common Core State Standards: An Example of Data-less Decision Making

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) initiative continues to move forward. As of October 2010, 37 states and territories made the CCSS the legal law of their land in terms of the mathematics and language arts curricula used in their public schools.

Over 170 organizations, education-related and corporations alike, have pledged their support to the initiative. Yet the evidence presented by its developers, the National Governors Association (NGA) and Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), seems lacking compared to the independent reviews and the available research on the topic that suggest the CCSS and those who support them are misguided.

The standards have not been validated empirically and no metric has been set to monitor the intended and unintended consequences they will have on the education system and children (Mathis, 2010). Yet most of the nation's governors, state education

leaders, and many education organizations remain committed to the initiative.

Surely there must be more compelling and methodologically strong evidence available not yet shared with the general public or education researchers to support the standardization of one of the most intellectually diverse public education systems in the world.

Or, maybe there is not?

A Bankrupt Argument

As colleagues and I presented previously (Tienken & Canton, 2010; Tienken & Zhao, 2010), the major arguments made by proponents in favor of the CCSS collapse under a review of the empirical literature: (a) America's children are "lagging" behind international peers in terms of academic achievement, and (b) the economic vibrancy and future of the United States relies upon American students outranking their global peers on international tests of academic

achievement because of the mythical relationship between ranks on those tests and a country's economic competitiveness.

The persuasive, and to this point, effective argument made by proponents combines the classic combination of fear and falsehoods. The Roman Poet Seneca wrote, "We are more often frightened than hurt, and we suffer more from imagination than reality" and in this case he was correct.

Unfortunately for proponents of this empirically vapid argument it is well established that a rank on an international test of academic skills and knowledge does not have the power to predict future economic competitiveness and is otherwise meaningless for a host of reasons (Baker, 2007; Bracey, 2009; Tienken, 2008).

However, fortunately for proponents it seems as if some policy makers, education leaders and those who prepare them, and the major education associations and organizations that penned their support for the CCSS did not read the evidence refuting the argument or they did not understand it. The contention that a test result can influence the future economic prowess of a country like the United States (U.S.) or any of the G20 nations represents an unbelievable suspension of logic and evidence.

The fact is China and its continued manipulation of its currency, the Yuan, and iron-fisted control of its labor pool, has a greater effect on our economic strength than if every American child scored at the top of every international test, the SAT, the ACT, the GRE, or the MAT.

According to Nobel Prize winning economist Paul Krugman, China's undervaluation of its currency cost the U.S. almost 1 million jobs and over 200 billion dollars in lost economic growth and 1.5% of its

gross domestic product last year (The Washington Times, 2010). Economic strength of the G20 countries relies more on policy, than education achievement. Tax, trade, health, labor, finance, monetary, housing, and natural resource policies, to name a few, drive our economy, not how students rank on the Trends in International Math and Science Study (TIMSS) or the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA).

To believe otherwise is like believing in the tooth-fairy. The U.S. already has one of the highest percentages of people with high school diplomas and college degrees compared to any other country and we had the greatest number of 15 year-old students in the world score at the highest levels on the 2006 PISA science test (OECD, 2008; OECD, 2009; United Nations, 2010).

We produce more researchers and scientists and qualified engineers than our economy can employ, have even more in the pipeline, and we are one of the most economically competitive nations on the globe (Gereffi & Wadhwa, 2005; Lowell, et al., 2009; Council on Competitiveness, 2007; World Economic Forum, 2010).

19th Century Skills

The vendors of the CCSS claim that the standards address critical skills necessary to compete in the 21st century. If so, why do they repackage 19th century ideas and skills? We only need to look at the mid 1800's and the Lancasterian Method used in London and some of America's cities and the Quincy, Massachusetts schools to see how the idea of standardization will play out. It did not work then and it will not work now.

The language arts and mathematics curriculum sequences embedded in the standards are nothing more than rehashed versions of the recommendations from the

Committee of Ten in 1893 and the Committee of 15 in 1895; hardly 21st Century innovations.

The standards do little to promote global literacy through cultural collaboration and cooperation. They do not stress socially-conscious problem-solving or strategizing. In fact, a conscious is not even necessary because there is not any authentic, critical thinking in

the standards. They are inert, sterile, socially static, and in stark contrast to what the United States Council on Competitiveness called for:

At the beginning of the 21st century, America stands at the dawn of a conceptual economy in which insight, imagination and ingenuity determine competitive advantage and value creation. To succeed in this hyper-competitive, fast-paced global economy, we cannot, nor should we want to, compete on low wages, commodity products, standard services, and routine science and technology development. As other nations build sophisticated technical capabilities, excellence in science and technology alone will not ensure success (p. 10).

The results from the *2010 Global Chief Executive Study* conducted by the IMB Corporation made several recommendations that call into question the use of 19th century curriculum standards to address 21st century issues.

After analyzing data from interviews with 1,500 of the world's CEO's the authors stated that to remain competitive in the global economies CEO's and their employees must:

- (a) use creative leadership strategies;
- (b) collaborate and cooperate globally amongst themselves and with their customer bases;

(c) differentiate their responses, products, and services to “build operating dexterity (p.51); and

(d) be able to use complexity to a strategic advantage.

The vendors of the CCSS have a problem: They have no data that demonstrates the validity of the standards as a vehicle to build 21st century skills nor as a means to achieve the things the business leaders say will be needed to operate in a diverse global environment. The CCSS are stuck in a time warp. A curricular time machine, if you will, set to 1858.

Evidence Please

School administrators are encouraged to make decisions based on data. The word data appears 230 times in the No Child Left Behind Act (No Child Left Behind [NCLB PL 107-110], 2002). The websites of every state education agency include references to data-driven decision making.

Many school districts or schools have “data committees” that make school-wide decisions based on some type of data. Surely there must be quality data available publically to support the use of the CCSS to transform, standardize, centralize and essentially de-localize America's public education system. The official website for the CCSS claims to provide such evidence. The site alleges that the standards are “evidence based” and lists two homegrown documents to “prove” it: *Myths vs Facts* (NGA, 2010) and the *Joint International Benchmarking Report* (NGA, 2008).

The *Myths* document presents claims that the standards have “made use of a large and growing body of knowledge” (p. 3). Knowledge derives in part from carefully controlled scientific experiments and observations so one would expect to find

references to high quality empirical research to support the standards.

When I reviewed that “large and growing body of knowledge” offered by the NGA, I found that it was not large, and in fact built mostly on one report, *Benchmarking for Success*, created by the NGA and the CCSSO, the same groups that created these standards; Hardly independent research.

The *Benchmarking* report has over 135 end notes, some of which are repetitive references. Only four of the cited pieces of evidence could be considered empirical studies related directly to the topic of national standards and student achievement.

The remaining citations were newspaper stories, armchair magazine articles, op-ed pieces, book chapters, notes from telephone interviews, and several tangential studies.

Many of the citations were linked to a small group of standardization advocates and did not represent the larger body of empirical thought on the topic.

The *Joint International Benchmarking Report*, the primary source of evidence provided by the NGA and CCSSO, draws most of its conclusions from one report, *The Role of Cognitive Skills in Economic Development* (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2008). The use of that report is troubling because it has several fatal flaws in its logic and methodology.

Questioning the Evidence

The Role of Cognitive Skills report is the primary piece of evidence used by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers to support their claim that achievement on an international test

causes future economic growth and that national standards will improve international test scores for U.S. students.

The report is methodologically and logically flawed on several levels. First, the basis of the argument supported in the *Role* report about a cause and effect relationship between standardized test results and national economic growth is derived from a different, yet unsophisticated economic argument that an individual’s grades in school and performance on standardized tests predict his or her economic growth later in life. That sounds logical at first, but the cause and effect slight-of-hand associated with that logic and the leap from individual effects to national effects of grades, test scores, and rankings are untenable.

Most economists understand that the variables that drive individual income growth cannot be applied to an entire national economy. They are two different units of analysis; two different scales if you will. It would be like claiming that because a certain teaching method was effective with one student in a very small school in Maryland that we should make national education policy for all students in all states based on the results of that one method, with one student, in one small school (See Baker, 2007 & 2010 for more complete economic examples.).

Connecting an individual’s education achievement on a standardized test to a nation’s economic future is not empirically or logically acceptable and using that mythical connection for large-scale policymaking is civically reckless. When education leaders and those who prepare them parrot that argument they actually provide credence to that anti-intellectual myth. When school administrators implement programs and policies built on those faulty arguments, they commit education malpractice.

Size Matters

When trying to extricate the facts from fiction in terms of the relationship between education and economic strength at the global level, it is important to understand that not all economies are created equal (Baker, 2007, 2010; Rameriz, Luo, Schofer, & Meyer, 2006; Tienken, 2008).

It is not methodologically correct to include every country from the TIMSS or PISA testing samples into the same economic or education pool. The size of the economy matters. Correlations between test rankings on international tests and economic strength can be statistically significant and moderately strong when all the small or weak economies like Poland, Hungary and the Slovak Republic remain in the sample with the G20 countries. Whereas the relationship between international test ranks and economic strength can be non-existent or even negative when only the G14 or G20 economies, the strongest economies in the world, form the sample (Tienken, 2008).

The authors of *The Role of Cognitive Skills* (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2008) do not cluster the samples to compare “apples to apples,” and they simply place all the countries in the same analysis pot and act as if size does not matter. Of course there is a positive relationship between rankings on international tests and economic growth when one includes 18 countries with weak or collapsing economies but who have international test rankings above those of the U.S.

The inclusion of very small economies with very large ones is statistically deceptive and actually demonstrates that rankings do not predict economic success. To think that Poland, Slovakia, Bulgaria, or Hungary, all countries that outscored the U.S. in math on the 2006 PISA test, will ever eclipse the U.S. in economic prowess based on its education output on international tests defies reality.

Economic Realities

Nations with strong economies (e.g. the G20) demonstrate a weaker relationship between increases in education attainment (e.g., output on international tests, percentage of population with at least a BA degree) and economic growth.

Japan provides an example of this phenomenon. Japan’s stock market, the *Nikkei 225 Average*, closed at a high of 38,915 points on December 31, 1989 and on October 15, 2010 it closed at 9,500 points, approximately 75% lower, but Japan ranked in the Top 10 on international tests of mathematics since the 1980’s and has always ranked higher than the U.S. on such tests. Yet Japan’s stock market and its economy have been in shambles for almost two decades. They have national curriculum standards and testing, and have for over 30 years. Japanese students outrank students from most other nations on math and science tests.

In contrast, the Dow Jones Industrial Average broke 1,200 points for the first time, on April 26, 1983, the day *A Nation At Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) was released. The Dow closed at 11,691 points on January 4, 2011, over a ten-fold increase. The U.S. consistently outranks Japan on the World Economic Forum’s Growth Competitiveness Index.

So I am still wondering, where is the connection? (See Tienken, 2010).

Maybe Japan’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) benefitted from the high rankings on international tests more so than the U.S.? Since 1984 the GDP of Japan and the U.S. have grown at basically the same rates. The U.S. posted third-quarter GDP in 2010 that was approximately 3.74 times larger than in 1984 whereas Japan’s 2010 third-quarter GDP was

3.48 times larger than in 1984. Advantage U.S. regardless of what some call poor international test rankings. The U.S. had approximately two-times the number of 15 year-old students who scored at the top levels of the 2006 PISA science test compared to Japan. The U.S. accounted for 25% of the top scoring students in the world on that test even though the U.S. did not outrank Japan overall.

Economic Competiveness

The education system needs the economy more than the economy needs the education system in the G20 nations. Competitive, nimble, and expanding labor markets in countries with strong economies drive the citizenry to seek higher levels of education. This was known over 50 years ago when Harbison and Myers (1956) noted, "Education is both the seed and flower of economic development." (p.xi).

Somehow those who continue to proffer the mythical relationships between international test rankings and economics and sell the idea of centralized curricular and knowledge standardization have not yet discovered this. Neither have those who continue to believe the worn out ideas and slogans about international test ranks and nationalized curricula.

Nations functioning at high levels economic growth and education attainment require larger changes in the education levels of a majority of the citizenry to have a statistically significant influence on the economy (the ceiling effect). But they need strong economies to stimulate the population to continue their education. Rameriz, Luo, Schofer, & Meyer (2006) found that, "School achievement levels appear to have a greater influence on economic growth in countries with lower levels of enrollment" (p.14). Those are countries like Chad, Honduras, and Sudan.

The U.S. has ranked either first or second out of 139 nations on the World Economic Forum's (2010) *Global Competitiveness Index* (GCI) eight out of the last 10 years and never ranked below sixth place during that period, regardless of results on international assessments and without adopting national curriculum standards.

No other country has ranked better consistently on the GCI. The U.S. workforce is one of the most productive in the world and best educated. Over 70% of recent high school graduates were enrolled in colleges and universities in 2009 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010). Approximately 30% of U.S. adults between ages 25-34 years-old have at least a bachelor's degree. Only six other industrialized nations have a higher percentage of their population holding at least a bachelor's degree (OECD, 2009) but their economies pale in comparison to the U.S.

The U.S. leads the world in what are known as utility patents or patents for innovations. In 2009, the U.S. was granted 95,037 patents whereas Japan, the country with the next greatest number, was granted 38,006.

The countries of world combined were granted only 96,896 such patents (U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, 2010). The U.S. is home to over 28% of the patents granted globally (resident patents); the largest percentage of any country. Japan is second with 20%. The U.S. is second behind Japan for the number of Trademarks, 1.7 million versus 1.4 million. (World Intellectual Property Organization, 2010).

The World Economic Forum (2010) stated that the U.S. has an outstanding university system. It is home to 11 out of the top 15 universities in the world; the United

Kingdom is next with three out of 15 (The Times Higher Education, 2010). It seems illogical that the country with the best university system in the world can have a failing PK-12 education system that needs to be placed under centralized curricular control.

The World Economic Forum attributed the fall of the U.S. from second place to sixth place on the 2010-2011 GCI in large part to increased weakness in auditing and financial reporting standards and a lack of corporate ethics. The overall trust in the U.S. market sophistication has dropped from ninth in the world to 31st place during the last two years due to the fact that the global economic meltdown was created by the U.S. financial markets and vended across the globe.

Conspicuously missing from the list of reasons for the U.S. drop in competitiveness was the quality of its education system because education does not drive the U.S. economy (World Economic Forum, 2010). Test rankings simply do not correlate to economic strength when one compares apples to apples. Baker (2010) found a -.48 correlation between a country's rank on the First International Mathematics Study (FIMS) in 1964 and its Purchasing Power Parity Gross Domestic Product (PPP-GDP). Rameriz et al., (2006) found very weak positive relationships ranging from .048 to .142 and those positive relationships were mainly for small and weak economies – size still matters.

Tienken (2008) found no statistically significant relationships between the Top 22 performing economies in the world and their ranks on international tests of math and science going back to the FIMS. Salzman and Lowell (2008) documented that 90% of the variance in test scores on the PISA is explained by factors within countries, not between countries. Why

do we focus on a solution that at best will provide only up to a 10% improvement?

A Decision in Search of Data

Where is the evidence to support the rhetoric surrounding the CCSS? This is not data-driven decision making. This is a decision grasping for data.

The evidence offered by the NGA and CCSSO to make the case for a cause and effect relationship, or any significant relationship for that matter, between test result ranking, economics, and the need for national curriculum standards (and eventually national testing) amounts to nothing more than snake oil.

Yet this nation will base the future of its entire public education system, and its children, upon this lack of evidence. Many of America's education associations already pledged support for the idea and have made the CCSS major parts of their national conferences and the programs they sell to schools.

This seems like the ultimate in anti-intellectual behavior coming from what claim to be intellectual organizations now acting like charlatans by vending products to their members based on an untested idea and parroting false claims of standards efficacy.

Where is the evidence that national curriculum standards will cause American students to score at the top of international tests or make them more competitive? Some point to the fact that many of the countries that outrank the U.S. have national, standardized curricula.

My reply is there are also nations like Canada, Australia, Germany, and Switzerland that have very strong economies, rank higher than the U.S. on international tests of

mathematics and science consistently, and do not have a mandated, standardized set of national curriculum standards.

McCluskey (2010) reported that for the 27 nations with complete data sets that outranked the U.S. on the 2006 PISA science test, 10 of those nations did not have national standards whereas 12 of the 28 nations that ranked lower than the U.S. had national standards. The same pattern of mixed results held true for the 2007 Grade 8 TIMSS mathematics results. Although the eight countries that outranked the U.S. on that test had national standards so did 33 of the 39 countries that ranked lower (McCluskey, 2010). The students from the majority of nations with national standards ranked lower than the U.S. students. The same pattern held true for the TIMSS science assessment. More countries with national standards underperformed the U.S. than did countries without national standards.

Alternative Explanation

Perhaps there is another explanation for scoring high on international tests other than standardized national curriculum standards.

I noticed that every industrialized country, 24/24, that outscored the U.S. on the 2006 PISA mathematics test of 15 year-olds has some form of universal healthcare system for at least mothers and children, whereas the U.S. and 40% of the countries that scored lower than U.S. students do not (World Health Organization, 2010).

Most of those countries that outscored the U.S. also have lower child mortality rates and most have longer overall life expectancies than the U.S. (CIA, 2010). Only Poland, Slovakia, and Hungary have shorter life expectancies and still outscore the U.S. on international tests. Many of the countries that

outscore the U.S. also have comprehensive fair housing policies.

Housing policy has been shown to be a stronger intervention for increasing test scores than nationalizing curriculum (Schwartz, 2010).

Perhaps it's not universal curriculum standards that make the difference. Maybe it's a comprehensive social system that provides a quality social safety net for children and mothers that has the greatest influence on ultimate education outcomes.

The data point in that direction. Although this would not qualify as empirical argument, it does highlight some interesting relationships and also is just as strong as the evidence offered to support the standards, maybe stronger.

Centralized Curriculum Planning

The U.S. has a population of over 300 million and is more ethnically, religiously, and racially diverse than many of the smaller nations that outrank it on international tests. The U.S. has the third largest population in the world behind China and India and it has the largest population of any country that participated in the TIMSS and PISA testing. Japan ranks 10th in population and the other countries that have larger populations than Japan did not participate in the TIMSS/PISA or are not in the G20 set of nations.

Size matters because size brings complexity. Finland, the country that usually ranks in the top five on international tests has 5.5 million people. In the U.S. we call that Wisconsin.

In fact, the top six scoring nations on the PISA 2006 math test have a combined population of only 240 million people.

Singapore, another country commonly cited as one the U.S. should emulate in terms of mathematics and science curriculum and testing has only 4.8 million people, a little more than half that of New Jersey.

To think that every student in this country should be made to learn the same thing is illogical—it lacks face validity. The U.S. is just too large and too diverse to engage in such folly. We should have learned from the Soviet Union that central planning does not work in the long-run. The diversity of the U.S. is one of its greatest strength. The U.S. economy is able to adapt to change because of the skill diversity of the work force.

The intellectual, creative, and cultural diversity of the U.S. workforce allows it to be nimble and adapt quickly to changes in the marketplace.

China, another behemoth of centralization, is trying desperately to crawl out from under the rock of standardization in terms of curriculum and testing (Zhao, 2009) and the effects of those practices on its workforce. Chinese officials recognize the negative impacts a standardized education system has had on intellectual creativity. Less than 10% of Chinese workers are able to function in multi-national corporations (Zhao, 2009).

I do not know of many Chinese winners of Nobel Prizes in the sciences or in other the intellectual fields. China does not hold many scientific patents and the patents they do hold are of dubious quality (Cyranski, 2010).

The same holds true for Singapore. Authorities there have tried several times to move the system away from standardization toward creativity. Standardization and testing are so entrenched in Singapore that every attempt to diversify the system has failed, leaving Singapore a country that has high test

scores but no creativity. The problem is so widespread that Singapore must import creative talent from other countries (Tan, 2010).

Oversimplification

It is terribly naïve to think that all children should be made to master the same set of academic skills and knowledge and that it would actually benefit them or a country in the long run to do so.

It is an Orwellian policy position that lacks a basic understanding of diversity and developmental psychology. It is a position that eschews science and at its core, believes it is appropriate to force children to fit the system instead of the system adjusting to the needs of the child.

It is fundamentally un-child centered and it is an overly simplistic proposal for such a complex nation. Standardization is a Pollyanna approach to policy-making.

One cannot separate curriculum from culture, emotions, personal backgrounds, life experiences, prior knowledge, home environment or stages of cognitive and social development.

Cognitive Development Theory (Piaget, 1963; 1967; Vygotsky, 1978), Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner and Evans, 2000), and Socio-cultural Theory (Vygotsky, 1986), or Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1954) among others, suggests that we cannot pretend curriculum operates in a vacuum apart from other factors.

Standardization assumes that children are not active constructors of meaning that bring prior knowledge and experience to the learning situation. It assumes that all students start at the same academic place with the same advantages and set of skills and that they will finish with the same results. Those assumptions

seem more like a fairy tale than evidence-based decision making.

Curriculum Research

So what does the research suggest in terms of centralized curriculum planning? Wang, Haertel, and Walberg (1993) found that curriculum has the greatest influence on student achievement when it is a proximal variable in the education process. They found that the closer to the student that the curriculum is designed, deliberated, and created, the greater influence it has on learning.

This means curriculum should be largely a local endeavor. When curriculum is treated as a distal variable, something that occurs distant from the student, handed down from on-high, as is the case with the CCSS, it has a much weaker influence.

National policy mandates have the weakest influence of all on student learning, because like the CCSS, they are distal to the actual learning process (Wang, Haertel, and Walberg 1993).

Recently, Tramaglini (2010) found similar results in a study of the 120 New Jersey high schools that serve the state's poorest communities. Tramaglini found that the more proximal the curriculum development process, the better the students performed on the state's high school exit exam. Reed (2010) reported that universal curriculum standards do not close the achievement gap, the achievement gap is not a product of an "expectations gap" (p. 38) via differing standards for different types of students, and that local school contexts explain more of the achievement gap than universal standards.

Alexander's (2002) study of course taking pattern before and after the introduction of New York's regent standards revealed that local contexts such as school size and

demographics accounted for most of the disparity in course taking, and universal curriculum requirements did little to overcome that after their initial implementation. Local context, involvement and input matters greatly.

There are also seminal works from education's history that point to importance of curriculum as a proximal variable. Of course we have the mountains of curricular knowledge created by Francis Parker, John Dewey, Horace Mann, Ralph Tyler, Boyd Bode, the Harap Committee, and Hilda Taba to name just a few.

But we have large studies from others as well. The landmark Eight-Year Study demonstrated that curriculum can be an entirely locally developed project and still produce better results than traditional curricular programs (Aikin, 1942).

In fact, the experiment demonstrated that the less standardized, more diverse, locally developed and designed the programs (based on demonstrated research and theories of learning), the better the students did in college academically, socially, and civically compared their traditionally prepared peers.

Results from several well-known earlier studies demonstrated that there is not "one best curriculum path" for students in high school and standardized curricula sequences are not necessary to achieve superior results in elementary and high schools (Collings & Kilpatrick, 1929; Jersild, Thorndike, & Goldman, 1941; Thorndike, 1924; Wrightstone, Rechetnick, McCall, & Loftus, 1939; Wrightstone, 1936).

The Road to Nowhere

We have been down the road of standardized curriculum and that road is a dead end in terms of ensuring that more children learn more. The results from the "college prep for all" initiatives in Chicago beginning in 1997, New York State

in 2001, Texas in 2003, and mandated use of universal state standards via the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 have done little to close the achievement gap, or the social/economic gaps that exist in this country (Allensworth, Takako, Montgomery, & Lee, 2009). The growth of blacks and Hispanic subgroups on the NAEP slowed after NCLB was enacted compared to the same time period before the law. One mandated universal curricular program for all children just does not make conceptual sense, is intuitively contradictory, and has no empirical backing.

Equality of curriculum standards is inherently inequitable. Mandating that everyone follow the same set of standards and perform at the same level of achievement guarantees that everyone will not get what they need and that certain groups of students, those that do not fit into the new system, will lose out.

They will be labeled “not proficient” or “in need” of something, when perhaps they just need more choices, more pathways, and more diversity of curricula within the system.

We should be increasing curricular diversity, not seeking to constrict it. We should be trying to help students explore and enrich their intellectual and social growth, not constrain them or funnel them into a small set of subjects.

A comprehensive curriculum is supposed to fulfill a unifying and specializing function. The Common Core State Standards does neither.

It creates a standardizing apparatus. We should respect differences among children, not try to extinguish them. There is a lot more going on here on the societal level than meets the eye. It's more complex than the creators

and vendors of the standards either understand or wish to present.

Think It Over

There is no reliable, independently validated empirical support for the CCSS initiative and yet many policy-makers and educators support it.

It is an attractive idea to support because it limits the intricacies of the real issues and makes it easy to lay the blame at the foot of a system (public education) that reacts to society, not drives it.

The CCSS initiative compartmentalizes complexity and compartmentalizing messy issues allows people to be intellectually lazy. Developing coherent education and social policy is more difficult.

The vendors of the CCSS present the standardization of America's children as a neat and clean solution, easily manageable and easy to discuss.

Unfortunately the real world is not so organized and it is much more cognitively complicated. Believing that we can eliminate the complexity of educating all students by putting forth superficial ideas like one-size fits-all standards is like believing rankings on international tests really mean something. (Is your tooth under the pillow?)

It seems anti-intellectual, and based on the lack of evidence, unethical to support such a massive social experiment, using participants who have no choice but to go along.

The evidence suggests that there is not a crisis in education; there is a crisis in education leadership at all levels. Those who perpetuate bad ideas based on flawed data are practicing poor leadership. If some school leaders and

their organizations do not want to stand up for children then they should stand down and let those who are willing assume the leadership reins.

School leaders do not have to conduct the research on these topics but at least they should read it and dig below the surface to understand it.

Children have a right to a quality education. School leaders, those who prepare them, and the people who lead our professional organizations have a duty to help provide the quality. If some education leaders choose to

drink the snake oil then they should expect to get sick. If some help sell it, they should resign.

Children do not have a seat at the policy-making table. Policy is thrust upon them, not created with them. They are helpless to defend themselves against poor decision making.

They do not have a voice. They have only the voices of the adults who are supposed to know better. I welcome your rebuttals but please remember: Leave the opinions and ideology behind and bring the evidence.

Author's Note

Portions of this commentary were adapted from Tienken 2010 & 2011 listed in the references.

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Perceptions of the Role of the School Principal in Teacher Professional Growth

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate teacher and principal perceptions of the role of the principal in fostering teachers' professional growth. A Likert-type questionnaire was used to explore the ways 476 teachers and 135 principals see themselves as being supported in their professional growth. New and veteran teachers and principals differ in their perceptions of what support they deem important to teacher professional growth. Teachers indicate that having a mentor is the most supportive factor in their growth. Principals tend to agree that listening to teacher concerns is the most supportive factor in fostering teacher professional growth.

Keywords

teacher professional growth; principal-teacher perceptions; teacher development

Every year, nine in ten of the nation's three million teachers participate in professional development designed to improve their content knowledge, transform their teaching, and help them respond to students' needs (Johnston & Louveouzo, 2009).

The value of teacher professional growth, the important role of principals in fostering that growth, and the techniques that are most often used by principals to assist in teacher growth and development have been examined by a number of education scholars in the past (Berube, 2004; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Darling-Hammond, 2000, 2005; Drago-Severson, 2007; Dufour, 1995; Glickman, 2002). Most of these studies focus on new and beginning teachers.

What is not clear from the literature is how principals and teachers perceive the behaviors exhibited by principals in promoting the professional growth of teachers.

In this study the researchers examine how principals promote the professional growth of teachers from the perspectives of principals and teachers themselves by describing principals' and teachers' views on several aspects of principal behaviors.

Currently, there is a national focus on teacher quality. We assert that a contributing factor to teacher effectiveness is how the principal fosters teacher professional growth.

An integral component of sustained school improvement has been the willingness and ability of principals to assume the role as staff developers. To do this, principals must have clear and open communication with teachers and create opportunities to build relationships (Halfacre & Halfacre, 2006;

Youngs & King, 2002). These principal behaviors increase principal-teacher trust, a necessary ingredient in helping teachers reach their professional goals (Gimbel, 2003).

Principal leadership which supports adult development makes schools better places for teaching and learning. Several studies suggest that principals realize that most teachers expand their teaching range only with carefully designed support and assistance (Berube, 2004; Blase & Blase, 1998; Gimbel, 2003; Halfacre & Halfacre, 2006; Sergiovanni, 1992; Zimmerman, 2006).

Findings from these studies point to the principal sharing decision making with teachers and involving them in planning professional development to meet their goals. Teachers tend to demonstrate high self-efficacy when communication with the principal is regular, open and honest (Gimbel, 2003).

Formal and informal opportunities that principals provide for teacher collaboration yield vast positive results for teacher growth. In schools where teachers frequently talk to each other the most about practice and where principals stayed in touch with the community, students had noticeably higher academic achievement (Blase & Blase, 1998; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Drago-Severson, 2007; Leanna, 2002; Wenglinsky, 2000).

Results from these studies point to feedback from principals that was particularly helpful for teachers in implementing new ideas, using greater variety in teaching, responding to student diversity, preparing and planning more carefully, taking more risks, achieving better instructional focus, and using professional discretion to make changes.

Findings from studies of narrative feedback written by principals to teachers in their annual evaluations suggest that simply providing general feedback to teachers by the principal did not “promote and support” professional learning.

Rather, more structured and focused performance rubrics, used by the principal, helped provide quality constructive feedback to teachers and had a significant impact on their professional growth. Teachers could use principal feedback to promote self-inquiry (Feeney, 2007; Frase & Streshly, 1994).

Existing literature on teacher growth and leadership suggests that effective principals develop strong relationships with their teaching staffs through both formal and informal evaluations, coupled with ongoing positive dialogue between principals and teachers (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Danielson, 2002; Glickman, 2002; Kaplan, 2001; Pancake & Mollier, 2007; Zimmerman, 2006).

In sum, by sharing the decision making, principals can engender positive interpersonal relationships with their teaching staffs. Building on these relationships, principals can find time for teachers to collaborate and offer timely, appropriate feedback on evaluation. In so doing, they promote the growth of their teachers.

Methodology

Design

For this descriptive-exploratory study of principal and teacher perspectives, an original questionnaire was used. A list of 20 final questions was developed and critiqued by university colleagues with expertise in questionnaire design. The creation of the final questionnaire emanated from data compiled from a 2-question, field-test questionnaire

pilot-tested with a sample of graduate students enrolled in summer graduate courses in education. The 2 questions were:

1. What kind of tangible supports does your principal offer to make you feel you are growing professionally? List 10 behaviors, structures or policies of the principal.
2. What are the barriers to your principal not being able to support your professional growth? List 10 structures, behaviors, or policies which impede your principal from supporting you professionally.

Method

Following editing, revision, and IRB approval, the final 20-question questionnaire was sent electronically by using Zoomerang, which guarantees anonymity (Table 2). Teachers are not necessarily rating their own principals. Data were treated and analyzed through the use of SPSS.

Results/Discussion

Demographic data

Respondents included 478 teachers and 135 principals. Elementary principals responded more than those from other grade levels while the greatest number of teacher respondents came from the high school level (Table 1).

Principal respondents were predominantly white females who worked at the high school level for 2-5 years. Teacher participants were predominantly female, white and were likely to work for 2-5 years at the K-5 grade level. In each question, “n” will vary as not all of the 135 principals and 478 teachers responded to each question.

The free/reduced lunch demographic data show that 41.7% of principal respondents came from schools with 5-19% free/reduced lunch while 40.3 % came from the least

affluent schools with fewer than 20% of students eligible for free/reduced lunch. Teacher respondents came from schools with

21.5% free and reduced lunch in the 5-19% category and 17.3% in the free/reduced lunch category of 20% or more.

Table 1

Demographic Data

	Principals n=134	Teachers n= 476
Grade Level		
K-5	39.6%	28.5%
6-8	16.4%	22.7%
9-12	20.8%	30.8%
Other	23.0%	17.0%
Length of Employment	Principals n=134	Teachers n=475
First year	14.9%	7.8%
2-5 years	38.1%	29.7%
6-10 years	20.9%	25.4%
11-20 years	14.9%	23.3%
21 or more years	11.2%	13.1%
Ethnicity	Principals n=134	Teachers n=474
White	96.0%	94.0%
Hispanic	0.0%	1.2%
Black	1.5%	0.6%
Other	2.3%	3.8%
Percentage Free/Reduced Lunch	Principals n=134	Teachers n=474
5-19%	41.7%	21.5%
20% or greater	40.3%	17.3%
Gender	Principals n=134	Teachers n=473
Male	41.0%	18.7%
Female	59.0%	79.6%

Note. Other = K-12, 5-8, K-8, 7-12 grade levels; number of students eligible for free and reduced lunch in schools

Questionnaire

Table 2 results from SPSS show a rank order comparison of behaviors principals and teachers agree most support the professional growth of teachers. The top 5 ranked by principals are not the same as the top 5 ranked by teachers.

Table 2 shows the percentage of principals and teachers responding to each of the 15 non-demographic questions on the questionnaire. A striking finding from this table is the difference in perception of what teachers, as opposed to principals, indicated as the most important action by the principal that impacts their professional growth. The first ranking supportive action indicated by teachers is ranked eleventh by principals: "I offer a mentor to new teachers."

Further dissonance in perceptions is shown in Table 2. Principals ranked time devoted to listening to teacher concerns as the first supportive behavior for promoting teacher professional growth while teachers ranked the time principals spend listening to them as fourth. Perceptions that teachers have of principals visibly supporting their growth is ranked second by teachers whereas principals rank that action as eighth. The encouragement of teacher collaboration is ranked third by teachers and seventh by principals. Principal visibility is ranked fourth by teachers and third by principals.

A comparison of questions 14 and 15 revealed that twice as many principals (100%) as teachers (45%) responded that they seek teacher input into the decision process.

Our questionnaire responses showed that 94% (Table 2) of principals indicated that they seek teacher input before making a decision and only 45% of teachers reported this is so.

Moreover, 100% of the principal respondents indicated they spent time listening to teachers as an action which influenced teacher professional growth while 78 % of teachers perceived that action as influential to their professional growth.

Ninety seven percent of principals responded that they conducted classroom observations and the same percentage of principal respondents indicated that they offer constructive feedback on instructional practices. Sixty eight percent of teachers reported that their principals conduct observations and evaluations. How can principals report that they support teacher professional growth if only 68% (Table 2) of teachers reported that they felt supported by observation and evaluation and only 56% reported that they felt supported in their professional growth by constructive feedback about their teaching from their principals?

Table 2 shows that about half as many teacher respondents (46%) as principal respondents (95%) reported that the time principals spent speaking informally with them about instructional practice was important to their professional growth. Sixty six percent of teachers indicated that principals acknowledge and recognize their professional growth and 91% of responding principals reported that they do acknowledge such growth.

Table 2

Rank Order Comparison of Behaviors Principals and Teachers Agree Most Support the Professional Growth of Teachers

Principal Questionnaire Item	Principals		Teachers	
	Rank Order	Overall Response	Rank Order	Overall Response
I spend time listening to the concerns of my teachers.	1	100% (135/135)	4	78% (368/469)
I promote a school climate of open and honest communication among teachers and administrators.	2	99% (134/135)	9	62% (292/475)
I am a visible presence to students and teachers.	3	98% (130/132)	4	78% (368/474)
I feel comfortable speaking informally with teachers in my school.	4	98% (131/134)	6	76% (363/478)
I personally conduct classroom observations and evaluations of teachers.	5	97% (129/133)	7	68% (319/473)
I offer constructive feedback on instructional practice.	6	97% (126/130)	10	56% (260/471)
I encourage teachers to collaborate.	7	97% (127/132)	3	82% (391/479)
I support the professional growth of my teachers.	8	96% (129/134)	2	82% (392/479)
I spend time speaking informally with teachers regarding instructional practice.	9	95% (127/134)	12	46% (218/474)
I often ask teachers for input before making decisions.	10	94% (126/134)	13	45% (214/473)

I offer a mentor to new teachers.	11	93% (123/133)	1	84% (398/472)
I show recognition and acknowledgement of teachers' professional growth.	12	91% (122/135)	8	66% (313/477)
I offer an adequate amount of time for teachers to collaborate.	13	69% (92/134)	11	47% (222/474)
I procure funds for tuition reimbursement for teachers.	14	62% (82/135)	14	44% (207/474)
I have adequate monies to provide professional development for teachers.	15	39% (53/135)	15	30% (139/472)

A cross-tab analysis (see Table 3) of length of employment and the question about the principal offering feedback on instructional practice revealed a striking finding. Over 60 %

of teachers reported that they received feedback on their practice from the principal in their first year of teaching while after 21 years of tenure, 42.9% of teachers said they received such feedback.

Table 3

Question 5: cross tab analysis by length of employment and “I offer constructive feedback on instructional practice.”

Length of employment	Principals n=135	Teachers n=478
First year	95.0% (19/20)	60.4% (22/37)
2-5 years	100% (49/49)	48.2% (67/139)
6-10 years	96.3% (26/27)	39.7% (48/121)
11-20 years	95.0% (19/20)	46.3% (51/110)
21+ years	92.3% (12/13)	42.9% (27/63)

A cross-tab analysis of length of employment with the question on recognition and acknowledgement of teachers’ professional growth (Table 4) shows that 78.3% of first-year

teachers reported that principals supported them in this manner and only 59.6% of teachers with more than 21 years experience indicated such recognition by principals.

Table 4

Question 13: cross-tab analysis by length of employment and “ I show recognition and acknowledgement of teachers’ professional growth”

Length of employment	Principals n=135	Teachers n=478
First year	100% (20/20)	78.3% (29/37)
2-5 years	90.1% (46/51)	72.4% (102/141)
6-10 years	85.8% (24/28)	59.8% (73/122)
11-20 years	85.0% (17/20)	62.5% (70/112)
21+ years	93.3% (14/15)	59.6% (37/62)

Implications

The purpose for this study was to examine how principals and teachers perceived the role of the principal in facilitating the professional growth of their teachers as determined by self-reported responses of a sample of Massachusetts teachers and principals. The response rate was 8.6% and, as such, this is an exploratory study.

In order to see how similar the 8.6% was to the original sample, we reviewed the composition of the original principal/administrator sample and saw that the respondent sample paralleled the composition of that sample. For the teacher sample, we had difficulty obtaining email addresses, and therefore, used a purposive sample which

reflected the same composition as the principal/administrator sample.

Respondents for both teacher and principal questionnaires reflect similar demographics to the original Massachusetts sample population.

One finding from this exploratory study suggests that the longer teachers are employed, the less the principal seems to recognize their professional growth. If such is the case, this could be demoralizing to veteran teachers, especially those who retool to update their pedagogical and technological skills. The same could apply with regard to principal-teacher communication.

Our data seems to suggest that the longer a teacher's tenure, the less communication there is between principal and teacher. This may be a factor in veteran teachers feeling isolated, especially when new teachers arrive at their schools. Further study, with a larger sample and higher response rate may corroborate these preliminary data.

According to our results, teacher respondents do not perceive that principals acknowledged their professional growth, but principal respondents do.

This dissonance in the data may contribute to some teachers feeling unappreciated by their school principals and not being held in esteem for their professionalism. Zimmerman (2006) found that high levels of communication between administration and staff correlated positively with high teacher self-efficacy.

Our literature review demonstrates that strong principal-teacher relationships through both formal and informal evaluations, coupled with ongoing positive dialogue between principals and teachers, are integral to teacher professional growth (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Danielson, 2002; Glickman, 2002; Kaplan, 2001; Pancake & Mollier, 2007; Zimmerman, 2006).

Another finding from this exploratory study is the difference in principal and teacher perceptions on the value of having a mentor. For principal respondents, offering a mentor to promote teacher growth does not seem as important as it does to teacher respondents. The first-ranking supportive action indicated by these teacher respondents is ranked eleventh by these principal respondents: "I offer a mentor to new teachers."

Teachers want to feel that their input is valuable in school governance. If they are left out, they feel disenfranchised. Data suggest that principal participants think they seek teacher input before making a decision, but teacher participants do not agree with this perception. Studies conducted by Blase and Blase (1998), Gimbel (2003), and Zimmerman (2006) indicated that teacher input into decision making is important for building principal-teacher trust.

These same authors propose that an open and honest climate is conducive for teacher growth, yet data suggest that such a climate is valued among our principal sample but less so by our teacher sample. Youngs and King (2002), Gimbel (2003), and Zimmerman (2006) suggested that to enhance teacher growth, principals should solicit input from their teachers when making decisions and should maintain open communication with all teachers, new and veteran, to engage them in conversations about instructional practice. In this way, teachers feel validated and respected for their professionalism.

Recommendations

The value of teacher professional growth, the important role of principals in fostering that growth, and the techniques that are most often used by principals to assist in teacher growth and development have been examined by a number of education scholars in the past (Berube, 2004; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Darling-Hammond, 2000, 2005; Drago-Severson, 2007; Dufour, 1995; Glickman, 2002).

Three recommendations flow from this exploratory study. First, principals should observe and offer effective, timely feedback to teachers on instructional practice.

Second, the principal's role in providing a mentor, especially to new and beginning teachers is important. Teacher data from this exploratory study suggest the importance of a mentor in teacher development.

Principals should look for effective teachers to serve as mentors and provide training for them to serve as role models for their peers. The quality of the teacher mentor, the mentor-protégé relationship, and how the mentor is trained all contribute to the professional growth of the teacher.

Principals need to pay heed to veteran teachers and be sure they are acknowledged for their experience. Additionally, principals need

to provide appropriate professional-development opportunities for veteran teachers to grow and contribute to their schools.

Finally, the low response rate may mean that principals and teachers in Massachusetts may be too busy, too disinterested, too distracted, or do not have computer access to participate in an electronic questionnaire. This is disappointing in that the findings may inform practice. Perhaps providing a free course for principals and teachers at our university would increase the sample size. Additionally, the questionnaire could be mailed in a self-addressed, stamped envelope with a follow-up postcard reminder.

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Conceptualizing a System for Principal Evaluation

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Abstract

A disconnect exists between principal leadership expectations and the actual practice of supervision and evaluation of principals. Increased principal responsibilities and rigorous standards require that a new approach to principal evaluation be considered. The authors provide a framework for a multi-dimensional approach to principal supervision and evaluation. This conceptual leadership evaluation model provides a multi- step evaluation process that embeds (a) a supervisory relationship based on trust, (b) selection of research-based leadership standards, (c) collection of performance data using multi-dimensional approaches, and (d) a rubric for judgments and decisions based on principal performance supported by the data. This article presents a framework or system of principal evaluation built upon previous research and experience.

Keywords

principal evaluation, principal, administrator evaluation

Busy superintendents and district administrators who supervise principals might be tempted to use the “don’t make waves” strategy when evaluating principals. The implicit message sent in this hands-off approach is “Do your job and I won’t bother you unless something goes wrong.”

This supervisory philosophy might have worked in an era of decentralization and nebulous leadership standards, but it will not work in the current era of principal accountability. Because of increased principal responsibilities and rigorous new standards, principals need support and guidance from a supervisor, not a laissez-faire attitude toward supervision and evaluation.

However, our studies revealed a disconnection between principal leadership expectations and the actual practice of supervision and evaluation (Derrington & Sharratt, 2008; Sanders, 2008).

Missing is an illustration or description of an effective and comprehensive system of supervision and evaluation of principals. We searched for a theoretical frame to provide this best practice picture.

We found the most-often cited process to be a three-step approach described by Harris and Monk (1992):

1. Determine the competencies desired.
2. Describe the expected performance in terms of the desired competencies.
3. Make judgments or decisions based on the closeness of fit between the desired and described leadership competencies.

While widely cited, this brief and linear model is insufficient to create a comprehensive and descriptive framework for the supervision and evaluation of principals. This traditional model relies on the observation and evaluation of one supervisor as the judge of a principal’s administrative effectiveness.

Thus subjectivity, personality differences, and bias might strongly influence the outcome. A more comprehensive model will incorporate a larger body of evidence, in addition to the supervisor’s judgment, for evaluating principal effectiveness.

In this article, we describe an expanded model developed as a result of our research and experience. We present this conceptual model as a required precursor to researching and operationalizing the components detailed in the model.

This conceptualization is necessary to capture and articulate relationships between each component so that it can be measured and described through further research (Green, Camilli, & Elmore 2006).

In our model, we recognize the supervisor-principal relationship as a fundamental component in the development of leadership behaviors. Our model also incorporates multiple strategies for data collection essential in creating a well-rounded picture of a principal’s competencies as measured in any standards-based assessment evaluation model.

The four strategies of our model are illustrated in figure 1:

- 1) create and maintain a supervisory relationship based on trust;

- 2) determine the competencies desired through selection of research-based leadership standards;
- 3) describe performance in terms of the desired competencies by collecting data using multi-dimensional approaches;

- 4) make judgments and decisions based on the closeness of fit between the standards and principal performance as supported by the data.

Figure 1.

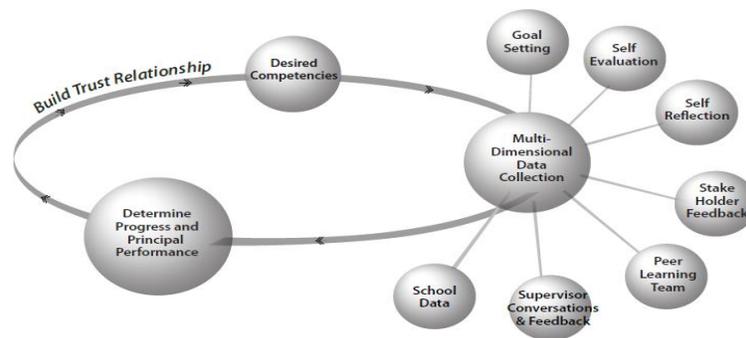


Figure 1. System for Principal Evaluation

Establish Supervisor-Principal Relationship

The antecedent of an effective evaluation process is the establishment of a positive supervisory relationship based on trust. Indeed, the connection between trust and supervision is “one of the central mechanisms through which supervisors exert their positive influence on subordinates” (West & Derrington, 2009).

Interpersonal trust is the glue of day-to-day life in the supervisory partnership between a principal and evaluator. Trust is also a necessary foundation in evaluation, a process laden with emotional overtones and risks.

After all, the supervisor is judging the abilities of the principal as a leader and making a decision that might adversely affect both a career and a livelihood.

On the other side of the evaluation equation, the principal’s development of new leadership skills is dependent on the willingness to embrace change, learn new strategies, and take risks.

The extent to which a principal is willing to accept the vulnerability that comes with this philosophy depends on the belief that the supervisor will be benevolent, caring, open, and reliable (West & Derrington, 2009).

In other words, if the principal trusts the supervisor, then an openness to embrace change is likely to occur. Thus a supervisor's priority in the evaluation of a principal is to work intentionally on relationship building.

The first step a supervisor can take is to accept the philosophy and belief that performance evaluation is most effective when it takes place in a culture of collaboration, trust, and respect.

Next, the supervisor must convey the message both in words and actions that the supervisory relationship is intended to help and support. A supervisor might begin by creating a belief statement explicitly acknowledging that the supervision and evaluation process in the district is based on collaboration and trust. One frequently used strategy is the collaborative development of norms of working relationships.

Determine Desired Competencies

The second step in this evaluation framework is to determine the competencies desired or, in today's semantics, the leadership standards to be implemented. We suggest that the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards are a good place to begin.

An independent review of principal evaluation studies funded by the Department of Education (DOE) cited the Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership in Education [VAL-Ed] as the most reliable principal evaluation tool available. VAL-Ed is aligned to ISLLC standards and is recognized in the report as a highly reliable measure of the effectiveness of school leaders.

An earlier study done in Washington State (Derrington & Sharratt, 2008) found that both superintendents and principals support the

ISLLC standards as an evaluation tool because they align with current responsibilities of school principals and offer a clearer and better set of indicators than did previous criteria.

Illustrative of the comments from this study is this superintendent's statement: "Principals did not have a clear focus on the importance of leadership versus management before. I found that these [ISLLC] standards clearly articulate leadership. The one and only reason I use the ISLLC standards is because I believe they do the best job of addressing the true work a principal needs to be doing" (p.22).

Likewise, principals in this study appreciated the specificity of the standards, as indicated by this comment: "Past evaluations were general. We were given a number with a generic comment. I like the ISLLC standards because they force the superintendent to be more specific and spell out areas of deficiency and needed growth" (p.23).

Lastly, use of standards provides consistency, direction, and focus in conversations on performance across the district. This consistency is important for the development of an evaluation process that can be applied fairly across all schools in a district.

Use Multi-Dimensional Approach

Frequently, evaluation begins when the principal sets goals at the beginning of the year. The evaluation is completed at the end of the year when the superintendent writes a narrative summary describing progress toward goal completion. This goal-setting method, however, is insufficient to adequately document and assess principal leadership.

In our model, a leadership evaluation features multiple instances of data collection and numerous interactions with both supervisor

and peers (Sanders, 2008). Currently in many evaluation processes the supervisor's observations and judgment are the sole data-collection tool and the basis for judgments of principal demonstration of competencies.

A single source of evidence is unreliable in rating employee performance. The one-person, one-opinion model is fraught with potential for bias. On the other hand, multiple raters and perspectives provide a variety of views and opinions on a principal's leadership as various people review different parts of the process.

Compare the one-person, one-opinion approach to the multi-dimensional model of data collection in evaluation that we propose. In the multi-dimensional approach, goal setting is only one part of the process. Added to goal setting is the principal's self-reflection, conversational reflection time with peers, the collection of many sources of data including stakeholder feedback, and the presentation of documentation as evidence of goal attainment at the end of the school year.

The principal collects multiple pieces of feedback on leadership competencies from peers and supervisors. Data on the school's academic, cultural, and community strengths and weaknesses are collected, analyzed, and shared with colleagues. The data include stakeholder feedback from surveys or questionnaires.

Additionally, the principal completes a self-evaluation of leadership competencies. This self-evaluation utilizes a scaled score so that the principals have a good understanding of their areas of strength and their areas of need. The principal then meets with several other peer colleagues to discuss the self-

evaluations as well as to analyze school data. Principals use the data to determine appropriate leadership goals for the year.

These peer learning teams allow for rich collegial conversations and reflection. Team members assist each other in analysis, data collection, and determination of appropriate goals. The benefits of a peer learning team approach was highlighted in Sanders' study when a participant commented, "The reflective conversations either help you find new ways to do it or solidify your decision to do things a certain way...I think it probably helps you sharpen your skills and think about how you might do things differently" (Sanders, 2008, p.41). Teams meet several times throughout the year to discuss goal progress and make adjustments as needed.

Once the initial goals have been established with the assistance of the learning team, each principal meets with his or her district-level supervisor to share goals and, if necessary, make adjustments. The principal continues to meet with the supervisor and the learning team throughout the school year and collect and analyze data throughout the year as well. These documents and other data are organized in a binder or portfolio that becomes the basis for the summative evaluation and final conference with the superintendent.

Determination of Performance As Indicated In Data

The principal and evaluator review progress toward goals and discuss overall performance relative to the standards on at least two scheduled occasions during the year. At the end of the year the principal completes a self-reflection and goal-rating that is relative to the multiple pieces of evaluation evidence and documentation data collected during the year.

A simple check system can be used by the supervisor to describe progress toward goal attainment and achievement of identified leadership competencies. For example:

- ❑ No progress
- ❑ Some progress
- ❑ Significant progress
- ❑ Completely accomplished

However, when the evaluator utilizes a multi-dimensional leadership evaluation process, a rubric would be the optimal way of describing administrator performance throughout that year. Thus, a more specific rubric for assessing educational leaders is desirable. One rubric example is presented by Dr. Douglas Reeves (2004). The Reeves' rubric provides criteria as follows:

exemplary – illustrating system-wide impact;

proficient – demonstrating local impact;

progressing – showing leadership potential;

no progress – not meeting standards.

Summary

Principal performance is one of the most significant indicators of student achievement (Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005).

Sadly, supervisors of principals receive little training in improving principal competencies through effective supervision (McAdams & Barilla, 2003). We offer in this article a framework or system of principal supervision and evaluation built upon our previous research and experience.

Although the audience for this article is the direct supervisor of a principal, the framework might be useful to university faculty who prepare principals and superintendents, and also provide guidance to mentors who work with principals and develop leadership skills.

The next step is an evaluation study of the effectiveness and feasibility of the model through researching an implementation in a school district. Each step should then be described in sufficient detail to allow for replication of the model.

Author Biographies

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School Leadership and Technology Challenges: Lessons from a New American High School

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Abstract

In this evidence-based practice article the authors investigate the challenges that leaders (administrators, staff, and teachers) face in high schools where personnel navigate technology reform. We studied an American comprehensive high school within a large school district in the Southeastern United States. School administrators and teachers faced three technology-related challenges: troublesome support structures, conflicting instructor roles, and a pervasive youth digital media culture. In response, school administrators and teachers used “workarounds” that alleviated technology problems and they adopted innovative, technology-infused instructional practices. We conclude the article by providing five recommendations for district and school-based administrators: plan early for long-term support, determine teacher needs, formalize informal support networks, showcase successful instructional adaptations, and adopt student personal media device (PMD) appropriate-use guidelines.

Keywords

school technology, leadership challenges, supporting change

Powerful new technologies stand poised to reform curriculum and instruction in K–12 schools. In empirical studies researchers have described how technology encourages change within and adaptation by teachers (Coppola, 2004; Means, Penuel, & Padilla, 2001). A study of 10 laptop schools demonstrated how students became more engaged in learning in response to ubiquitous computer access (Warschauer, 2006). Zucker (2008) argued that technology is “an essential component of the transformation of schools that most people believe is necessary” (pp. 15-16), and Collins and Halverson (2009) contended that technology will assist educators in adopting new, effective instructional practices.

Christensen, Horn, and Johnson (2008) asserted that online learning is a “disruptive innovation” that will fundamentally change schools and education. In contrast, other researchers have raised the issue of why increased access to technology is having little impact on instruction (Cuban, Kirkpatrick, & Peck, 2001; Li, 2007).

Addressing technology leadership challenges for schools, Creighton (2003) described how principals and other leaders can plan for successful technology integration. Anderson and Dexter (2005) conducted a survey study and concluded that leadership affects students’ technology use.

An extensive survey of school district administrators’ attitudes toward emerging Internet-based programs and policies has provided important contextual information about prevailing conditions in American schools today (Lemke, Coughlin, Garcia, Reifsneider, & Bass, 2009). Papa (2011) and Schrum and Levin (2009) outline topics of interest to school leaders responsible for implementing and managing

instructional technology. The International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) (2010) provides “Technology Leadership Standards” that district and school-based leaders can use for guiding implementation and integration.

Purpose

Editors of several leading education technology journals have observed that site-based research on instructional technology in schools is rare (Schrum, Thompson, Sprague, Maddux, McAnear, Bell, & Bull, 2005).

Further, few contemporary site-based studies offer empirical insight into how leaders (defined for the purposes of this study as school administrators, staff, and teachers who operate in both formal and informal leadership capacities) are addressing the challenges they face as high schools navigate technology reform.

This evidence-based practice article helps address this gap in the literature by presenting thematic findings from a study of technology and change at an American high school. We conclude by providing specific recommendations for district and site-based administrators leading technological change.

Study Site

Opened early 2008, Newlands High School (a pseudonym) is a district high school situated in a growing suburb in a Southeastern metropolis in the U.S. The school building incorporates “green” design elements like controlled day lighting.

Within its large district, Newlands is the first newly constructed comprehensive high school in over three decades. During the time of our study (the 2008–2009 school year), a new ninth-grade class joined students in the

tenth and eleventh grades, which raised the total student population to approximately 800. Student demographics that year were 70% White and 30% students of color, who were predominantly African-American in background.

Besides a new facility, Newlands offers its students an environment well-equipped with advanced technology. At the time of our study, Newlands had over 50 computers deployed in the media center; classrooms intended for technology-related elective courses had desktop units available for all students; and almost all academic classrooms contained a digital overhead projector, pull-down screen, and speakers.

All teachers received laptops that could be attached to the digital projector. Classical music played over the PA system to mark class changes; on Fridays, students or faculty selected popular music that would signal class changes. Teachers submitted their attendance and grades records online, administrators distributed most messages to staff via email, and wireless Internet access served the building.

According to students and staff alike, almost all Newlands students brought personal media devices (PMDs) such as MP3 players, iPods, cell phones, and mobile Internet devices with them to school.

In response, Newlands' school leaders implemented student PMD "appropriate-use" guidelines, which permitted students to use their devices before and after school as well as between classes and at lunch.

During instructional time, teachers had discretion over whether students could use

devices in their classrooms and, if so, under what circumstances. Newlands' approach differed from the district's other school communities, which followed policies that prohibited student PMD use throughout the school day.

Personnel and organizational structures supported technology infusion and use at the school. Newlands' two media specialists led technological curricular integration through staff development trainings and individualized tutoring.

Technology support staff who operated out of the district's central offices serviced the computers via online request tickets. School-based staff and faculty submitted request tickets for all technology issues, such as for loading printers onto the network.

The central office's technology support staff also employed a district-wide Internet filter and they had the capability to monitor activity on the schools' networked computers. The district and the school personnel utilized Internet-based programs for student remediation, course credit recovery, and pursuit of Advanced Placement (AP) or college credit classes.

Design and Method

Our research team consisted of university faculty and graduate students with K-12 administrative experience who were not staff at the study site. We sought a grounded understanding of how technology adaptation is progressing within and affecting schools.

Therefore, we designed a bounded case study in which we investigated a comprehensive high school located in the

Southeastern United States that was explicitly identified as a promising research site.

With its technology-rich environment and innovative practices such as student PMD appropriate-use guidelines, Newlands offered the promise of yielding insight into emerging technology trends rooted in specific leadership practices and challenges involving technology implementation.

The study we conceived was non-experimental. Though similar in design to the technology-focused descriptive case study in Yin (2003), our project was more specifically designed to follow the qualitative approaches that Cuban, Kirkpatrick, and Peck (2001) described.

Administrator, teacher, and student participants voluntarily participated in our study by providing written consent in accordance with Institutional Review Board and district policies.

The on-site research included observations of prevailing technology practices in classrooms, media spaces, hallways, and major community areas (e.g., school cafeteria, gymnasium). The observations varied from several minutes to several hours.

As part of the observation process, we shadowed five different students through their entire school day in order to witness typical student, staff, and school technology-use practices. An observation protocol we created guided our research with visual and textual prompts regarding types and frequency of students' and teachers' technology use. This protocol helped ensure that each member of our research team followed a common "field

agenda" (Yin, 2003). In total, we completed over 40 hours of on-site observations.

We also collected documentary evidence such as student and teacher handbooks, school technology policies, school website pages, classroom lesson handouts, media center sign-up data, the district technology plan, and administrator memoranda regarding school technology.

To augment our understanding, we conducted seven interviews with classroom teachers and four with staff members who performed technology-related leadership support roles. We also interviewed eight students drawn from across the school's grade levels. The research team designed separate interview scripts, one for adults and another for students. Each script contained general questions and probes intended to elicit views about personal and school technology use. We used what Rubin and Rubin (2005) coined as "hard listening" to ask follow-up questions. The 19 digitally-recorded interviews were transcribed.

For the subsequent data analysis (Creswell, 2007; Glesne, 2006), the researchers coded interview transcripts, observation and shadowing field notes, and documentary sources.

In coding, we specifically identified participant statements and observational data related to technology leadership challenges such as support structures and student PMD use. The research team members participated in the coding in order to surface common ideas and maintain consistency. We used member checking to gauge the validity of emerging data interpretations. The thematic findings were collectively agreed upon by the research team.

Findings

After performing the data analysis based on our study of Newlands High School, we determined that administrators, staff, and teachers faced three major technology-related challenges: (a) troublesome support structures that negatively affected technology implementation; (b) teachers' conflicting obligation to encourage and "police" student technology use simultaneously; and (c) a pervasive digital media culture that enhanced students' ability to contest established authority systems and classroom norms.

In response to these challenges, school administrators, staff, and teachers used "workarounds" to alleviate technology problems, and they adopted and shared innovative, technology-friendly instructional practices.

Troublesome Support Structures

School administrators, staff, and teachers at Newlands encountered various obstacles regarding school technology implementation, teacher training, and maintenance. For example, it took two months to move a digital projector that had been installed so close to the wall that it prevented the illumination of an image large enough to be seen.

The delayed response occurred in part because two separate work-order tickets (one to technology services and one to facility maintenance) needed to be submitted and then fulfilled.

In another case, unforeseen technical complications arose during the district's spring semester transition to a new online attendance system. Newlands' teachers were compelled to keep attendance in both the old online and the

new online systems for the remainder of the year, in effect doubling the time needed to complete this administrative task.

Describing a facility design issue, a teacher explained how the environmentally-friendly yet un-shaded windows produced an intense glare that prevented some students from seeing images on the digital projector screen. These episodes from the data illustrate how Newlands' personnel depended on technology support structures that, in fact, sometimes eluded the site-based staff's immediate control.

Training teachers in new instructional technologies proved a structural support challenge as well. For instance, the research team learned that school administrators purchased digital tablets (i.e., devices that sync with the computer to illuminate images on a screen via a digital projector) and distributed them to the faculty earlier in the school year.

However, the digital tablets were only minimally adopted. In interviews, only one classroom teacher (of seven teachers interviewed) reported that she utilized the instrument routinely, explaining, "I've got it to where I really integrate it. I've learned how to do that."

Conversely, six teachers reported being non-users of digital tablets. A veteran teacher stated that "the training has been spotty" while a beginning teacher remarked that the training was only "thirty minutes – it wasn't even an afternoon." A beginning teacher near his students' age stated that the digital tablet was "not quite as user friendly as it could be." Another young novice teacher added, "I feel guilty that I don't want anything to do with [the

digital tablet]. I hate it.” One teacher reported that she permanently stored her digital tablet in a filing cabinet.

When shadowing five students through their full schedule on randomly selected days, the researchers visited 27 classes taught by 19 different instructors. Only one of the 19 teachers observed attempted to use the digital tablet, and the attempt was made twice. On each occasion, the teacher was unable to make the device work properly; instead, the device went into sleep mode and projected a computer-brand-name screen saver onto the pull-down screen for much of the period. Each time, the teacher resorted to using a dry-erase marker to write on the white board.

Examining the district’s official technology plan—a disseminated document that describes how the district personnel utilized and maintained instructional technology—provided some insight into the difficulties that computer-support personnel faced. The district employed just over 40 full-time technicians to maintain network and hardware, including over 25,000 computers.

The district technology plan reported, accordingly, that each technician was responsible for approximately 600 computers. For context, on its “Technology Support Index” ISTE considers a district computer-to-technician ratio of fewer than 75:1 as “high efficiency,” a ratio between 75:1 and 150:1 as “satisfactory efficiency,” and a ratio of 250:1 or over to be of “low efficiency” (Kimball, n.d., p. 3).

Under the conditions described in its technology plan, the district’s reported average turnaround time of approximately three days on over 14,000 submitted technology request

tickets is quite remarkable. Taking into account the high computer-to-technician ratio, however, not all technology problems could be solved quickly nor could sufficient resources be devoted to training teachers in the use of new equipment or software.

Even as Newlands’ staff encountered troublesome support structures, dedicated staff aided their school’s push for technology integration. Several interview respondents described how in-house experts helped keep the technology working. We learned during observations that central office technology staff would sometimes reach out to well-informed school-based personnel to rectify a problem quickly.

We also witnessed the media specialists and computer teacher transmit relevant technology information to faculty, and individual staff share their technical expertise with other faculty. These collaborative efforts constituted, in essence, an informal technology support network.

The ability to develop “workarounds” in which individual initiative trumped systemic barriers was a particularly lauded skill. Staff members, for example, shared with us that they had discovered how to utilize educationally-relevant content from a popular site blocked by the district filters.

In another workaround, we witnessed a staff member transfer the audio output for a movie to a different outlet, dramatically improving sound quality. The instructor also added captions to ensure students could follow the dialogue. Finally, media specialists addressed a software incompatibility problem by finding a way to translate student-created videos for editing on school computers.

Conflicting Roles for Teachers

Another technology reform challenge for Newlands' school administrators, and especially classroom teachers, involved the conflicting obligation of encouraging and "policing" student technology use simultaneously.

On the one hand, teachers regularly used electronic instructional and communication aids such as presentation software, digital projectors, microphones, musical devices, online attendance systems, web-based assignments, and email. During interviews, all seven classroom teachers reported that they had recently used email and accessed a search engine (e.g., Google). All but one reported having recently utilized a video-sharing site like YouTube.

Several core subject teachers emphasized their efforts to provide special opportunities for their students to use computers. For example, a social studies instructor reported in her interview that she took her class on a trip to the media center to research human population trends. She characterized such instructional opportunities as a special "event" conducted outside of the planned instruction.

During student shadowing and participant observations, we witnessed a computer-networking academy course where student use of technology was the primary instructional mode; a social studies class where students made digital presentations about different countries to the entire class; a mathematics class where the instructor used a document reader and digital presentation slides to communicate key ideas; and a social studies class where a teacher's digital presentation

slides enlivened a discussion of "The Roaring '20s."

Although teachers exhibited various instructional technology approaches, they also felt obligated to monitor and even police students' use of technology, especially cellular phones and PMDs. Though the school's appropriate-use guidelines relieved staff of the burden of monitoring student PMD usage outside of class, it was left to the teacher's discretion as to if and when students could utilize cellular phones, MP3 players, and other devices inside their classrooms.

Some teachers openly encouraged student PMD use as an accepted part of daily lessons. As students completed independent painting projects in an art class, for example, the teacher played popular music over a speaker while 12 (of the 30) students listened to music from their PMDs using headphones.

A young first-year English teacher reported that she established a social networking page for her class, commenting, "I use it to post assignments or [help students] remember to do [the] assignment tonight for homework." A veteran English teacher told us he allowed students to listen to music channeled through headphones while completing independent assignments.

A few classrooms had become contested terrain over PMD use. During student shadowing visits to 27 classes, the researchers witnessed one teacher who confiscated a student's personal technology in two different classes. In four other classes, teachers admonished students who used PMDs in ways that violated established classroom policies and norms, which differed from class to class.

The seven teacher participants, ranging from technology enthusiasts to hesitant adopters, expressed concern during their interviews that student use of PMDs was having or could have a negative effect in their classrooms. One teacher called it “a big distraction” and another explained that “[students] want to text, not pay attention in class.”

Other teachers expressed concern that hand held electronic devices could enable cheating or encourage student isolation, and that it was often hard to detect student PMD usage. Even those teachers willing to adopt digital-friendly instructional approaches voiced concerns.

The veteran teacher who permitted headphone use during individual work mentioned to the researchers that, at times, students spent more time scanning music selections on their PMDs than focusing on assignments.

The beginning teacher who created a social networking page noted how her students sometimes attempted to use cellular phones for “texting each other or someone in a different class.”

Youth Digital Media Culture

In high schools across the U.S. and around the world, youth digital media culture challenges traditional ideas and practices regarding learning and authority (McPherson, 2008; Montgomery, 2007; Tapscott, 2008). This tension existed with some degree of intensity at Newlands and propelled what we determined to be a third technology-related challenge that confronted school administrators, staff, and teachers.

The data suggest that technology expertise enabled students to circumnavigate various district and school rules and prescriptions.

For instance, one tech-savvy student reported that he and others used “proxies” and other maneuvers to access preferred Internet destinations blocked by the district’s network filter. Another student explained that he simply accessed district-blocked sites during school time through his PMD that utilized a private wireless provider network.

Some students also held the power to interfere with or simply not assist with instruction. In one interview, a student described how he had withheld information that could have helped a teacher remedy a technology glitch, thereby further delaying the lesson.

Besides listening to music through headphones, text messaging was the PMD application students most favored. While shadowing in classrooms, the researchers observed students texting messages while hiding their devices behind the cover of desktops, book bags, or backs of students.

Typically, students read incoming text messages, wrote responses, and sent them in five seconds or less. During student shadowing in a class of 25 students, the researchers normally identified up to four students send messages, almost always undetected by teachers.

Other text-message exchanges, students reported, were completed while the device was hidden inside pockets or book bags, rendering this communication almost imperceptible to

teachers or the observers. For example, a student reported sending four text messages during the previous class. The researcher had not observed this action. The student showed the researcher the PMD that indeed proved that four messages were sent during class time.

Importantly, one student revealed that students would share information about how closely teachers monitored PMDs in their classrooms, and students would adjust their personal practices accordingly.

Media savvy youth at Newlands, it seems, found and shared ways to utilize their PMDs no matter any obstacles that district, school, or teacher policies may have presented.

Recommendations

Based on findings from this study of technology leadership challenges at Newlands High School, we offer five recommendations for district and site-based administrators.

Plan Early for Long-Term Support

Newlands' troublesome support structures impeded well-intentioned instructional technology reforms. Administrators should plan and establish well-funded, long-term support systems before technology infusion. ISTE's "Technology Support Index" provides a helpful list of necessary considerations for district administrators (Kimball, n.d.).

Researchers who promote instructional technology reform can help lead change by providing blueprints for how schools and districts can resolve the challenge of limited resources (e.g., budgets for technology specialist hiring, teacher training, and hardware maintenance).

Determine Teacher Technology Needs

Though Newlands teachers received digital tablets, few used them. This case in particular illustrates how administrators would do well to determine teacher needs prior to new technology implementation.

Administrators should consider surveying staff regarding a technology product under consideration. If the equipment or software is unfamiliar to most faculty members, administrators need to provide appropriate initial and follow-up training. If significant numbers of teachers report that a potential new technology product is undesirable or unnecessary, administrators should anticipate complications in the adoption process if the product is indeed purchased.

Formalize Informal Technology Support Networks

By implementing and sharing useful workarounds, Newlands' staff discovered ways to make technology work despite significant obstacles. In the process, they created an ongoing yet informal technology support network.

Administrators would do well to help strengthen such collaborative relationships by creating school-based technology teams, facilitating electronic distribution of workaround updates, maintaining interactive technology forums on the school website, and publicly recognizing tech-savvy staff members as important school leaders.

With encouragement, informal support networks could become a vital, formalized means for ensuring the success of school technology reform.

Showcase Successful Instructional Adaptations

Notably, teacher leaders at Newlands found creative ways to incorporate educational technology and even student PMD usage into their instruction, thereby enhancing learning and engagement. Administrators should help highlight such adaptations by providing time for faculty to demonstrate their educational technology approaches during professional development meetings.

Describing a teacher's exemplary digital instruction in venues such as school newsletters and local newspapers can help provide further acknowledgment and attention.

Adopt PMD Appropriate-Use Guidelines

Newlands employed "appropriate-use" guidelines that allowed student access to PMDs outside of class time, and teachers the discretionary freedom to establish classroom policies they found most effective.

As reflected in the findings we presented, there were discernible imperfections in this real-world approach. In some cases, we witnessed student absorption in technology-enabled, off-task behavior.

The teachers we interviewed considered PMD usage as a persistent source of student distraction. Nonetheless, the students

appreciated and (in general) respected the school's tolerant appropriate-use policy, and most teachers also supported it.

In addition, students' opportunity to use the devices in the building while outside of class may have served as a release valve that forestalled wider inappropriate usage during class time. We believe that in a world of PMD ubiquity, zero-tolerance prescriptions against student usage of PMDs may only invite increased conflict and confrontation.

Conclusion

By using creative and resourceful approaches for responding to technology-related challenges, Newlands' personnel provided useful lessons for high school in the digital age.

Based on our study, we cannot predict whether instructional-technology reform is indeed a "disruptive innovation" that will radically alter schooling (Christensen, et al., 2008) or whether a widespread "rethinking [of] education" will result from technological advances (Collins & Halverson, 2009).

However, we can predict that resourceful administrators and teachers, through best practices such as support workarounds and innovative instruction, will be at the forefront in helping school communities successfully navigate technology reform.

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Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action

By Simon Sinek

Reviewed by:

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Change has to happen in schools and businesses to keep up with the changing society. The key is to know why you are changing. The book, *Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action*, by Simon Sinek inspires readers to understand the process of changing successfully.

Many companies focus on what they are doing and how they are doing something, but when asked why they are doing something, they do not have an answer. The companies that have started with why as the main focus, such as Southwest and Apple, have maintained a strong and successful productive business that surpasses the competition.

The idea of starting with the question *why* will help educational leaders to reach to the fullest implementation of ideas and practices that take place in schools. The leader that runs a school needs to keep in mind why procedures happen in the school(s). It is visible what students are doing, but to understand the benefits of the procedures or practices the leader needs to ask why it is being done.

If the answer of why it is being done cannot be answered, then is it truly beneficial? Explaining why practices are taking place in the school allows for greater buy-in and trust from the stakeholders of the school. Sinek states that “*What you do serves as the tangible proof of why you do it*” (p. 78). Stakeholders see what is being done, but to fully buy-in, they must understand why it is being done and that comes through communication of the leader.

The success of prominent companies such as Apple and Southwest did not develop by just the leader alone. From the book, “the role of the leader is to create an environment in which great ideas happen” (p.99). The leader of great organizations creates an environment that employees want to work in by inspiring the creativity of all employees.

The key for success is for the leader to share the inspiration of the *why* of the company. Why is the company doing what it is doing? If the leader shares the why and inspires the employees to take action, success will follow. School leaders should follow in the footsteps of great leaders and explain the reasoning of *why* things are happening in the

school and providing the opportunity for teachers and staff members to understand *why* leads to enriched *how's* and *what's*, as well as greater buy-in. When the whole school is on the same page, success is bound to happen.

To inspire the employees the leader of the company must gain the trust of those who work under them. For the employees to trust the leader, the leader must help the employees understand *why* the leader is doing what he/she is doing.

One of the great examples the book, *Start with Why*, gives is that of when Gordon Bethune became the CEO of Continental Airlines. At the time he took over, Continental Airlines was in great trouble, but Bethune was able to gain trust of his employees. As the leader he developed an open door policy, went out and worked with his employees, and shared his vision of *why* with the employees.

Bethune was assured to share *why* events were happening. He inspired all employees to work for the same goal, which in turn would save the company money. Bethune explained that on-time flights would save money and in turn he would compensate the employees. Explaining *why* they should work toward the goal, helped employees to work together.

For inspiration of stakeholders to be possible, a school leader needs to gain their trust. Without trust, the buy-in is not there, and a common goal is not present. The key part of gaining the trust of the stakeholders is sharing the *why's* of the school. Understanding why procedures are in place helps to earn support from the stakeholders and build a successful educational setting.

The Golden Pyramid discussed in the book gives a good basis of building a successful school.

The top of the pyramid should be the *why's*. The leader should inspire the rest of the group with the *why*. The second level is the *how's*, which support the *why* and defines how the company or school will make the *why* happen.

Lastly, the *what's* is the products of the *how's* and *why's*. The marketplace is the group that gets the products. In a company it is the consumers or possible consumers, while in a school it is the students and the parents that are the marketplace.

Start with Why gives a great foundation for how a successful business should run. It defines the layout of a strong company, and provides multiple inspirational stories. For a leader to make a great company or school, they must start with *why*.

Reviewer Biography

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Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action by Simon Sinek is published by Portfolio Trade, 2011; 256 pages; softcover \$15.00.

99 Ways to Lead and Succeed: Strategies and Stories for School Leaders

by Howard J. Bultinck & Lynn H. Bush.

Reviewed by:

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As a former superintendent of schools and school level administrator, I recently read a well-structured resource that can provide educational administrators strategies (through stories) that can help ensure successful leadership. The book, with its forward written by Dr. Roland Barth, can be read from cover to cover or it can be a resource that is read section by section or strategy/story by strategy/story. In addition, this would be an excellent book to provide to new administrators that can serve as a resource as they enter into the world of educational leadership.

In *99 Ways to Lead and Succeed: Strategies and Stories for School Leaders*, Howard J. Bultinck and Lynn H. Bush, professors at Northeastern Illinois University describe ways to lead and succeed by sharing strategies through stories and experiences. The authors break down the necessary leadership skills into five categories: On Being a Dynamic Leader, On Becoming a Moral and Ethical Leader, On Dealing With Stress, On Staying Alive and On Honoring Yourself.

As the authors cite, “Dynamic school leadership is both a responsibility and a privilege. It is a responsibility because by position leaders have the fate of others in their hands. This trust placed in the leader is earned

over time through meaningful relationships and positive interactions. It is a privilege because of the nature and opportunity to provide service to others and serve along with others.”

Throughout each section of the book, the authors review ninety-nine ways to lead and succeed through citing a variety of strategies and describing relevant stories that can provide guidance for new and experienced administrators as they face the daily challenges of today’s educational environment.

Within the section related to becoming a dynamic leader, the authors review such issues as understanding your Achilles heel, the importance of engaging the broader school community, reaching out to involved parents, fostering purposeful and consistent communication, the ability to think beyond the current time and the necessity to value parents as allies. These important strategies, along with several others, are reviewed through the effective documentation of the authors’ personal experience and through telling relevant and compelling stories.

Bultinck and Bush go on to provide a detailed description and analysis of what it takes to become a moral and ethical leader. Through writing about such concepts as caring deeply, establishing an ethic of compassion,

gaining acceptance by making moral and ethical decisions, leading with moral compass and standing up for integrity, the authors provide the inspiration for educational leaders to continue to explore the belief systems that are necessary to establish oneself as a respected leader. They even provide an “honesty test” within this section of the book.

The authors highlight their understanding of moral and ethical leaders as they write, “Education should be the profession where courtesy, respect, kindness, and politeness are “paid forward” every day. If we can’t do this because it is in our heart and soul, we should at least do it because it is right for us to do so”.

In these most difficult and challenging times in education, Bultinck and Bush dedicate an entire section of the book toward dealing with stress. They provide several useful strategies that should be embraced in order to balance the demands of educational leadership with leading a healthy life style. It is essential that educational leaders develop and embrace the strategies outlined within this book to deal with daily stress in an effective manner.

As a former practicing superintendent of schools and current university professor teaching graduate and undergraduate level education majors, I found the leadership strategies and stories that are outlined within this resource to be appropriate fundamentals that should be reviewed by a school leader.

As outlined within the final section of this book, the concept of honoring yourself through the strategies and stories told through such topics as establishing an anecdotal file on yourself, reflective thinking, and leaving your trademark is vital toward educational success. The authors highlight this section within two of the final strategies as they describe the importance of making a difference in the lives of students and safeguarding the public trust by remembering that educational leaders are *In Loco Parentis*.

The leadership strategies that Bultinck and Bush outline certainly demonstrate the potential to make a positive impact on educational leaders and will assist them in ensuring their success.

Reviewer Biography

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99 Ways to Lead and Succeed: Strategies and Stories for School Leaders by Howard J. Bultinck & Lynn H. Bush is published by Eye on Education, Larchmont, NY, 2009; 161 pages; softcover, \$39.95.

Mission and Scope, Upcoming Themes, Author Guidelines & Publication Timeline

The *AASA Journal of Scholarship and Practice* is a refereed, blind-reviewed, quarterly journal with a focus on research and evidence-based practice that advance the profession of education administration.

Mission and Scope

The **mission** of the Journal is to provide peer-reviewed, user-friendly, and methodologically sound research that practicing school and district administrations can use to take action and that higher education faculty can use to prepare future school and district administrators. The Journal publishes accepted manuscripts in the following categories: (1) Evidence-based Practice, (2) Original Research, (3) Research-informed Commentary, and (4) Book Reviews.

The **scope** for submissions focus on the intersection of five factors of school and district administration: (a) administrators, (b) teachers, (c) students, (d) subject matter, and (e) settings. The Journal encourages submissions that focus on the intersection of factors a-e. The Journal discourages submissions that focus only on personal reflections and opinions.

Upcoming Themes and Topics of Interest

Below are themes and areas of interest for the 2010-2011 publication cycles.

1. Governance, Funding, and Control of Public Education
2. Federal Education Policy and the Future of Public Education
3. Federal, State, and Local Governmental Relationships
4. Teacher Quality (e.g., hiring, assessment, evaluation, development, and compensation of teachers)
5. School Administrator Quality (e.g., hiring, preparation, assessment, evaluation, development, and compensation of principals and other school administrators)
6. Data and Information Systems (for both summative and formative evaluative purposes)
7. Charter Schools and Other Alternatives to Public Schools
8. Turning Around Low-Performing Schools and Districts
9. Large scale assessment policy and programs
10. Curriculum and instruction
11. School reform policies
12. Financial Issues

Submissions

Length of manuscripts should be as follows: Research and evidence-based practice articles between 1,800 and 3,800 words; commentaries between 1,600 and 3,800 words; book and media reviews between 400 and 800 words. Articles, commentaries, book and media reviews, citations and references are to follow the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, latest edition. Permission to use previously copyrighted materials is the responsibility of the author, not the *AASA Journal of Scholarship and Practice*.

Potential contributors should include in a cover sheet that contains (a) the title of the article, (b) contributor's name, (c) terminal degree, (d) academic rank, (e) department and affiliation (for inclusion on the title page and in the author note), (f) address, (g) telephone and fax numbers, and (h) e-mail

address. Authors must also provide a 120-word abstract that conforms to APA style and a 40-word biographical sketch. The contributor must indicate whether the submission is to be considered original research, evidence-based practice article, commentary, or book or media review. The type of submission must be indicated on the cover sheet in order to be considered. Articles are to be submitted to the editor by e-mail as an electronic attachment in Microsoft Word 2003 or 2007.

Book Review Guidelines

Book review guidelines should adhere to the author guidelines as found above. The format of the book review is to include the following:

- Full title of book
- Author
- City, state: publisher, year; page; price
- Name and affiliation of reviewer
- Contact information for reviewer: address, country, zip or postal code, e-mail address, telephone and fax
- Date of submission

Additional Information and Publication Timeline

Contributors will be notified of editorial board decisions within eight weeks of receipt of papers at the editorial office. Articles to be returned must be accompanied by a postage-paid, self-addressed envelope.

The *AASA Journal of Scholarship and Practice* reserves the right to make minor editorial changes without seeking approval from contributors.

Materials published in the *AASA Journal of Scholarship and Practice* do not constitute endorsement of the content or conclusions presented.

The Journal is listed in the Directory of Open Access Journals, and Cabell's Directory of Publishing Opportunities. Articles are also archived in the ERIC collection.

Publication Schedule:

Issue	Deadline to Submit Articles	Notification to Authors of Editorial Review Board Decisions	To AASA for Formatting and Editing	Issue Available on AASA website
Spring	October 1	January 1	February 15	April 1
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AASA Resources

- ❖ ***The American School Superintendent: 2010 Decennial Study*** was released December 8, 2010 by the American Association of School Administrators. The work is one in a series of similar studies conducted every 10 years since 1923 and provides a national perspective about the roles and responsibilities of contemporary district superintendents. “A must-read study for every superintendent and aspiring system leader ...” — Dan Domenech, AASA executive director. See www.rowmaneducation.com/Catalog/MultiAASA.shtml
- ❖ ***A School District Budget Toolkit***. In a recent survey, AASA members asked for budget help in these tough economic times. The toolkit released in December provides examples of best practices in reducing expenditures, ideas for creating a transparent budget process, wisdom on budget presentation, and suggestions for garnering and maintaining public support for the district's budget. It contains real-life examples of how districts large and small have managed to navigate rough financial waters and offers encouragement to anyone currently stuck in the rapids. See www.aasa.org/BudgetToolkit-2010.aspx. [Note: This toolkit is available to AASA members only.]
- ❖ Learn about **AASA's books program** where new titles and special discounts are available to AASA members. The AASA publications catalog may be downloaded at www.aasa.org/books.aspx.
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Upcoming AASA Events

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Apr. 6-7, 2011
- ✓ **Inside Innovation Workshop, Arlington, Va.**
Oct. 19-20, 2011
- ✓ **Inside Innovation Workshop, Arlington, Va.**
Nov. 15-16, 2011