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*Courageous Leadership,
Promoting 21st Century Leadership*



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chinese symbol for courage

Foreword

Courageous Leadership Promoting 21st Century Learning

NYSASCD wants to thank William Silky and Suzanne Gilmour for serving as guest editors of this issue of IMPACT. In inviting and selecting articles for this issue your editors cut a wide swath across the spectrum of educators in all positions and at various levels. As one looks at education for the 21st Century it would be shortsighted to think that leadership resides solely in the hands of designated leaders. Rather, everyone involved in this enterprise we call American Education, must accept the responsibility of leadership and have the courage to stand for that which they believe is best for all educators and students.

In a time when educators are being attacked from all sides it is vitally important that all have the courage to stand firm for those practices that are believed to be beneficial for all students. The articles herein present a wide variety of ideas concerning different areas and types of leadership called for as we move forward. It is interesting to note that many of the concepts are not new, but traditional practices that have always been part and parcel of leadership: trust, reflection, transparency, openness and cooperation. Traditional as they might be will we be able to hold on to them as educators work in the current climate? Regardless of the external pressures educators must stand firm. Resist unacceptable practices and stand for that which we know is best

I hope that you find this collection of articles both stimulating and thought provoking.

Over the past eighteen years this managing editor with the assistance of some wonderful guest editors, has sought to present topics of interest and value to our members. It is my hope that or a similar format will continue. It is now time for me to move on to other pursuits ending a twenty five year career with ASCD and fifty three years in public education. I move on with the hope that educators continue to stand for quality education and equal opportunity for all.

Anthony Mello Ed.D.
Managing Editor - IMPACT
Executive Director - NYSASCD



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Introduction

William Silky Ed.D, Susanne Gilmour Ed.D - Guest Editors

Much has been written about preparing today's students to be college and career ready. In fact, last spring's issue of **Impact** revolved around the theme of designing schools, curriculum and instruction to foster 21st century learning. In the last year or so, our aspirations to accomplish this goal have clearly been tempered by the fiscal realities of New York State. While we must not backtrack on the goal of providing an education for 21st century learning, now more than ever we need to harness the courage and creativity to do so in this very difficult environment. That is the theme of this spring's issue you are holding.

We invited a number of well-respected educators to share their perspective on what it will take for school leaders today to garner the courage and creativity to meet this challenge. Dr. Chris Brown, Superintendent of the West Genesee Central School District, writes of his ah-ha moment during the 9/11 crisis into what leadership really means. He argues that leaders need the courage to know what really matters and he provides a blueprint how to accomplish this. Jeff Craig, Assistant Superintendent at Onondaga-Cortland-Madison BOCES argues that school principals can no longer be managers if we want to ensure all students receive the quality of education they deserve. He insists that principals need to spend more time fulfilling their instructional leadership role. This may require the courage to not do some of the managerial tasks that can consume a large part of a principal's day and finding creative other ways to get these accomplished. Mary Cronin, children's author and adjunct professor uses children's literature to demonstrate ways in which we can be resilient. Mary Ellen Kalil-Shevalier, teacher and author, illustrates courage through her innovative ideas for fostering collaboration and creativity in her high school. Tim Kremer, New York State School Boards Executive Director writes about what to expect from school boards during difficult times. Dr. Giselle Martin-Knief, author and CEO of Communities for Learning suggests that courageous leadership embraces a systems-perspective and looks at non-action and slow action as courageous acts. Dr. Marilyn Tallerico, Professor of Educational Leadership at SUNY Binghamton, challenges state policy regarding the implementation of the new APPR regulations and questions if this mandate thwarts 21st century learning. Suzanne Tingley, author and former superintendent of the Sacketts Harbor School District, advocates listening to our critics during difficult times and finding the value in their thinking to help inform decisions. Kate Thomsen, former program administrator now consultant and author, says that—in our push to help students grow cognitively, teachers cannot abdicate their responsibility to grow the whole child so that s/he becomes a healthy, happy, productive citizen of the world. Co-editor of this edition, Dr. Suzanne Gilmour, implores us to “stay in the moment” despite our press to do it all, for it is this ability to stay that transforms relationships and school culture.

As one of this issues guest editors, Bill Silky, Director of the Educational Leadership Program at Le Moyne College and an educational consultant, could not pass up the opportunity to share his views on the role brave superintendents play as they challenge their school communities to explore school district mergers. For many districts, this may be the only strategy they have to provide the rich curricular offerings at the high school level which are so necessary for a complete education.

“May you live in interesting times” the proverb says. These are indeed interesting times in public education in New York and nationally. The brave and resourceful will survive, those less so may not. Remain positive....the glass is half full.....read the articles here, reflect on what you learn, go forth courageously and serve.

Chris
Coherence
PATIENCE
Jeff
transparency
Tingley
Time
RESPECT
Tallerico
Matthew
overload
Optimism
SUCCESSIVE
Giselle
perseverance
visible
Silky
fragmentation
Shevalier
Not Letting Up
COURAGE
KNIEP
analyze
resilience
Sustainability
Heart
Brown
regroup
staying
tenacity
DISCOURSE
TRUST
RESULTS

When Non-Action and Slow Action are Courageous Acts

Giselle O. Martin-Kniep, Ph.D

*Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak;
courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen.*

- Winston Churchill.

We don't often talk about the hidden curriculum of running a school or a district, yet leading either one of these institutions requires far more than knowledge and expertise. It calls for a clarity of purpose, foresight and vision, and a commitment to collegiality, reflection, intellectual perseverance and deep understanding. It also demands an ability to de-personalize, an understanding of the downsides of multi-tasking, a great deal of political acumen, a decent dose of humility, and a phenomenal dose of courage.

Merriam-Webster defines courage as the mental or moral strength to venture, persevere, and withstand danger, fear, or difficulty. Practicing courage is an ongoing endeavor that draws on our inner dispositions and values as well as our understanding of the system in which we operate. The latter is the focus of this article.

Systems thinking is a way of understanding reality that emphasizes the relationships among a system's parts, rather than the parts themselves. It includes a conceptual framework as well as variety of tools, and was brought to the fore in the organizational literature by Peter Senge (1994, 1998, 1999, 2000). In this article I will draw on several systems thinking constructs and principles, and discuss the ways in which they can support school leaders and the courage they need by proposing questions and tools that can strengthen the activation of such courage.

1. In systems thinking there are no single right answers. There are several potential high and low-leverage actions.

There are two parts to this principle, one that requires having the courage to abandon the illusion of panaceas, and the other that demands the courage to engage in a deep enough understanding of our school system to identify relevant, strategic and deliberate cost-effective actions.

Giselle Martin-Kniep is President of Learner Centered Initiatives and the founder of Communities for Learning: Leading Lasting Change. She has written extensively and worked with thousands of schools nationally and internationally.

Anyone that has worked in schools for over ten years has experienced the illusion of the next best thing, method, resource, and program. The pressure to adopt innovations, coupled by the growing forces of external accountability which impose a constant sense of urgency in schools, cannot be underestimated. Yet, and drawing on another principle that states that in systems thinking there is no blame since we are all part of the problem

and the solution, leaders need to combat the illusion of panaceas. They can do this by surfacing and uncovering assumptions about proposed actions/innovations, considering how mental models affect people's perceptions of the school's current reality and future, and asking questions that can reveal complex cause and effect relationships between what is proposed and its intended effects.

While there are a variety of tools and processes for identifying potential high and low leverage actions, they all require that leaders have the courage to devote needed time to look for interdependencies, consider the short and long term consequences of actions, and identify potential unintended consequences of proposed actions.

Some of the questions that can assist leaders in this process include:

- What parts of our school system are interconnected? How do they relate to each other?
- Which parts are most affected by the problems we want to examine?
- What are the events, patterns of behavior, structures, and mental models of our school's system's current reality?
- What are the events, patterns of behavior, structures, and mental models of the desired reality for our school system?
- Based on the desired results, what elements in the school system do we want to see increase or decrease relative to the current reality?

Consider using these questions in relation to new mandates related to the Common Core Standards. How might they help you understand the kinds of moves or questions needed to engage in the kinds of deliberate and thoughtful behaviors that support a readiness to incorporate these standards into the fabric of teaching and learning?

2. Small, well focused actions can produce significant and enduring improvements, if they are in the right place.

It takes dedicated effort and time to understand the system in which we operate and the forces that impinge on it. School leaders need to activate the cour-

age to exercise patience, commit to discourse with people who have a different roles and understandings of the school system, and pursue the kinds of questions that can help them distinguish symptoms from problems and uncover appropriate decisions and actions.

The process of identifying most appropriate actions/moves demands that leaders unearth the assumptions and concerns behind problems and proposed solutions and help people in their schools recognize the inherent limitations of matching them to each other before further analysis. One of the best tools to unpack assumptions is the Ladder of Inference. The Ladder of Inference was originally articulated by Chris Argyris and popularized in Peter Senge's book – *The Fifth Discipline*. It can help leaders grapple with a core set of beliefs and assumptions which guide their behavior. These include:

- Our beliefs are the truth
- The truth is obvious
- Our beliefs are based on true data
- The data we select are the real data

Using the Ladder of Inference leaders can examine their beliefs and assumptions before they take action. Here's how the Ladder of Inference works:

- **I observe objectively** (bottom of the ladder)
- Observation by itself is not a biased activity. When I observe I see what happens, hear what was said, or experience a situation.
- **I select data from what I observe** - I create assumptions about which parts of the event I have observed are important. This assumption about importance is based on how the things that have been observed affect me, or fit into my background and cultural experience. This is where filtering begins.
- **I add meaning to what I have selected** - I derive meaning using the norms of my culture or experience.
- **I make assumptions based on the meaning I have added** - This process begins to fill in gaps in knowledge. Where I don't know something about the event, I naturally assume that the motivations, behaviors, wants, desires, likes and dislikes should match my own. These assumptions take the guesswork out of understanding the situation.

- **I draw conclusions and experience associated feelings** - I draw conclusions about why one or more individuals or groups are behaving that way and begin to have feelings about these conclusions.
- **I adopt beliefs about the world** - Based on my conclusions, I either see things as out of alignment (in the case of a negative conclusion), or in alignment, and have either negative or positive feelings about the situation. At this point I believe some form of action, whether it is a physical act, spoken words, or other behavior on my part, is necessary.
- **I take action based on my beliefs and feelings** (top of the ladder)- I now fully understand the entire situation and take the necessary action: This is often an emotional, rather than a rational response.

It takes courage for leaders to postpone or slow down the decision and action-taking process by using the Ladder of Inference to analyze their reasoning working back down the ladder and tracing the facts and reality that they are actually working with. The payoffs lie in the increased likelihood that the decisions and actions that will be taken will be more thoughtful and better positioned.

Some of the questions that can assist leaders in using the Ladder of Inference include:

- Why have I chosen this course of action? Are there other actions I should have considered?
- What beliefs lead to that action? Was it well-founded?
- Why did I draw that conclusion? Is the conclusion sound?
- What am I assuming, and why? Are my assumptions valid?
- What data have I chosen to use and why? Have I selected data rigorously?
- What are the real facts that I should be using? Are there other facts I should consider?

While it is true that school leaders are constantly engaged in decision making activities related to specific problems, it is also important that these decisions be informed by the larger purpose of improving schools. Making appropriate and significant changes requires

very specific organizational moves that engender a shared vision and a collective commitment to the actions that need to be deployed. These moves are beautifully depicted by John Kotter in his book “Our Iceberg is Melting” where he uses a fable to characterize the process of organizational change (Kotter, 2005). Among others, these moves include creating a sense of urgency; pulling together a guiding team, developing a change vision and strategy, empowering others to act and not letting up. The latter is particularly related to courage because it acknowledges the inevitability of time delays and compensatory feedback as we move organizations from where they have been to a new territory that feels most uncertain.

Some questions that can assist leaders in identifying the kinds of actions that can improve their schools include:

- What are the true problems behind the symptoms that our school experiences?
- What actions can move us from our current reality to our desired results?
- Who will be affected by any of the proposed actions, processes and programs?
- In what ways are they or should they be included in deciding what action(s) to take?
- How are the current structures in our schools and/or mental models hindering our efforts to take the necessary actions?
- Are we keeping our focus on our areas of influence, rather than areas of concern which we cannot influence?
- How will areas of concern that we cannot change affect the desired results for our school system?

3. The system is more than the sum of its parts

It is both easy and natural for us to believe that we can address individual problems and issues in isolation. However, in most cases, the implementation of an apparent solution in one part of the school does not mean that we have actually addressed what lies beneath the problem.

Some of this can be best understood when we consider that school systems and other organizations are not often driven by rational decision-making. James March and his colleagues have articulated the

ways in which most leaders make decisions in time of uncertainty in what they have coined as the “garbage can model of organizational choice”. According to this model, organizational leaders deal with four streams.

- 1) Problems that require attention and are the result of performance gaps or the inability to predict the future. Organizations tend to go to the “garbage” and look for a suitable fix or solution.
- 2) Solutions that have a life of their own and are, in fact, answers looking for a question. Leaders and others have ideas for solutions which they advance or advocate.
- 3) Choice opportunities or occasions when organizations are expected to produce decisions.
- 4) Participants who come and go and vary between problems and solutions and may have favorite problems or solutions which they carry with them.

In the garbage can model, organizations tend to produce many “solutions” which are discarded due to a lack of appropriate problems, while problems may eventually arise for which a search of the garbage might yield fitting solutions. For example, in the quest to meet accountability requirements related to external tests, schools scramble through previously tried solutions including more attention to tested subjects, more test preparation time, and more test practice tests. At the same time, individuals are exposed to a variety of “solutions” in search of problems stemming from their participation in professional development experiences, access to the literature and offers by publishers and other resource providers. Choice opportunities operate as garbage cans into which various kinds of problems and solutions are dumped. The mix of garbage depends on the mix of labeled garbage cans, on the garbage that has been produced and on the speed with which the garbage cans are removed.

Leaders need to exercise the courage to recognize and actively respond to the dynamics of the garbage can model. They need to ascertain the assumptions behind what individuals and groups construe as problems and solutions and the logic behind matching the two. They also need the courage to negotiate and manage individual agendas and advocacies for specific

innovations and resources without alienating those that propose them. This can be greatly supported by seeking to understand the big picture and changing perspectives to increase understanding, two important habits of systems thinkers articulated by the Waters Foundation (2000).

4. Pushing harder and harder at familiar solutions while fundamental problems persist is a reliable indicator of non-systemic thinking and seldom leads to problem resolution.

One of the ways in which systems thinking theoreticians have helped all us understand systems thinking principles is through the use of archetypes. Systems archetypes are a class of systems thinking tools that capture common challenges that occur in all kinds of organizations.

Fixes that Fail is one of the eleven archetypes. When problem symptoms are assumed to be a unique set of circumstances that are isolated from each other and separate from other problems and parts of the larger whole system, people focus on the problem symptom. In Fixes that Fail, leaders focus their responses on the problem symptom rather than spending time on the more difficult task of identifying the underlying, systemic problem. In Fixes that Fail, the unintended consequence that emerge from the quick-fix functions as a reinforcing loop exacerbates the initial problem symptom. An example of a Fix that Fails occurs when a principal decides that the only way to increase test scores is to increase the amount of time students spend practicing the specific skills and knowledge they need for the test. Two blocks of time are added to the day, a 120 minute block for English Language Arts and a 90 minute block for Mathematics. The addition of these two blocks results in the loss of arts, music, or physical education periods. For a couple of months, the students’ scores on practice tests go up. But then, suddenly, they stop improving and even decrease. Behavior becomes a problem, and students develop an “I don’t care” attitude. By the time the real tests are administered, the students don’t even take them seriously. Later on in the year, Social Studies and Science tests are also administered. Without consistent classes in either content area, the students do even more poorly on these tests than they had on the Math and English Language Arts exams the year before.

Enacting short term solutions can be construed as evidence of leadership and decisiveness. However, to address the deleterious effects of Fixes that Fail, leaders need the courage to withhold the need to act and consider actions which will not result in unintended consequences that can actually worsen the problem. This requires that they hold the tension of paradox and controversy without trying to resolve it quickly and that they engage in what systems thinkers call “Successive Approximation” by making and monitoring the impact of small and deliberate moves instead of taking dramatic system-wide moves.

Another systems thinking principle which requires courageous behaviors states that as a systems effort makes underlying structures clearer, people may become very frustrated and things will look worse before they get better. This is further exacerbated by the fact that in complex systems there is a time delay between an action and how long it takes for the entire school to feel it. It is difficult for us to uncover the complexity and seeming irrationality of the systems in which we work. Time delays and the structure and flow of people’s work compromise access to all stakeholders in the school system, minimize the flow of information, preclude the ongoing use of feedback loops, and limit access to deep collaborative work. As a result people get frustrated and may complain that things are not working, or that the leadership is indecisive, too scattered or too slow to take action. Leaders need to summon the courage to stay the course, be thoughtful and deepen the work. To assist them in this process, they can engage school stakeholders and themselves in the pursuit of questions such as the following ones:

- What are the inherent tradeoffs in taking a proposed action versus another action?
- What do we think the effects of this proposed action will be short-term and long-term on the various parts of the system? Does the long-term effect justify the short-term effect?
- What can we do to minimize any “less desirable” long-term effects/short-term effects of this proposed action?
- Considering that there will be time delays before experiencing some of the effects, how and when will we look to see what effects (intended and unintended) this action has had on the system and how that will affect our future actions?

Finally, it is critical for leaders to recognize that often, the most effective action is the subtlest. Sometimes it is best to do nothing, letting the system make its own correction. The courage to withhold the need to act, while being open and receptive to information from within the system at large cannot be underestimated in a time when our behavior as leaders is conditioned by the ever-present pressure to take action.

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What to Expect From School Boards During Difficult Times

Timothy G. Kremer

School board service is complicated and misunderstood – by the public, by school administrators and, too often, school board members themselves.

Ask a school board member why he or she ran for office. Expect to hear sincere and legitimate responses about improving graduation rates, assuring a safe teaching and learning environment, hiring a well qualified staff, overseeing wise budget decisions, and advocating on behalf of all students. If only it was so clear-cut.

Enter reality. School boards have become the de facto policymakers responsible for meeting national priorities with local resources. It is a hard job that is getting harder.

Well-meaning school board members are facing tremendous pressures brought about by increasingly prescriptive and standardized state and federal mandates, evolving support for a national core curriculum and a new complex teacher and principal evaluation system linked to student test data. They face severe state-mandated limits on their authority, arcane prohibitions, unavoidable budget cuts and crushing costs. A growing number of boards will be threatened by mayoral and state takeovers, charter school competition and school district mergers. And every New York board that puts a tax levy up for a vote will now grapple with the harshest property tax cap in the nation.

So can school board members be expected to support curriculum development during difficult times like these? Yes, but only if curriculum directors and their superintendents are effective in explaining how each request made of the board will advance the mission of the school district. How will your request promote college and career readiness and promise fulfillment of high performance expectations for ALL students? How is your project supported by research? How does it represent an optimization of resources?

Simply put yourself in the shoes of your board members. You are their guides through the unknown. Their role is to ensure, on behalf of the community, that the school district is preparing students for a future that is not easily described. Many students -- including board members' own children -- are leaving after high school graduation, never again to reside in the old hometown. The future for these students is elsewhere doing something one can only imagine. They are furthering their education and

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School Boards Association*

competing for jobs across the globe with a diverse set of peers, many of whom have been exposed to extremely rich preK-12 curriculum offerings.

Everyone in your school district, including your board, must embrace a dynamic global perspective and find local ways to prepare students for success in a changing world.

Given these assumptions, school board members and superintendents (and to those who rely on boards for direction, resources and support), must comprehend the board's critical policy-making role in the curriculum development and approval process, both what it is and what it isn't. The following questions could be useful to those looking to the school board for guidance and support:

Does the board know its role?

Today, the New York State School Boards Association (NYSSBA) counts over 660 boards of education and Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) as its members. The individual members of these boards are elected (or occasionally appointed to fill an unexpired term). They come from all walks of life (quite a few are professional educators). While many hold graduate degrees, high-level professional positions and are experienced leaders, virtually none have had training specific to school board service. Therefore, a major responsibility of the NYSSBA staff is to provide members with tailored leadership development training and up-to-date information so they can understand and fulfill the school board's main purposes and functions. While financial and governance training is mandatory, training in many other important areas – education law and curricular matters, for instance, is voluntary.

The board's responsibility for curriculum development is essentially one of providing direction and support to the professional staff. Curriculum specialists should expect a school board, as the governing body of a public education institution, to be able to clearly articulate its expectations for academic performance from preK through high school graduation. The board must comprehend and agree on what and why the school community it represents wants its students to know and be able to do. The board does this by formally adopting clearly-stated governing policies

and relevant performance objectives regarding the instructional program.

The board must also authorize a budget and appropriate the necessary resources to support ongoing curriculum development to meet those performance expectations. That is easier said than done. Given that federal grants are drying up, state aid cuts have reached record levels, and a new cap on property tax growth will debut next year, school district budget development is akin to tightrope walking across Niagara Falls.

Finally, the board must fairly and consistently assess academic results against a consistent set of performance measures. If student achievement is insufficient, the board should be prepared to analyze the problem and decide on new targets that will prioritize areas in need of progress. Such targets (a term I prefer over goals) must clearly communicate the movement that should occur between the discrepancy that exists now and the desired level of achievement.

While the classroom teacher and building principal are responsible for teaching methodology, most board members know that a strong curriculum is the foundation for good teaching. Ambitious academic targets can be achieved if each team member -- school board, administrator, teacher, parent and student -- works together.

Has the board set a strategic education agenda?

The number one complaint about school boards is that they micromanage operational details that have little to do with student achievement. The cafeteria, bus routes, parking lots, athletics and personnel assignments get far too much attention while the district's education program is ignored. Truth be known, a board will usually follow the superintendent's lead when it comes to establishing priorities, planning board meeting agendas and communicating with the staff and community. Those superintendents who fully understand the board's role help their boards represent community interests and stay focused on educational outcomes rather than "beans, basketballs and buses".

As the district's chief academic officer, the savvy superintendent ensures that the board meeting

agendas concentrate on educational program deliverables, student achievement data and community relations. Today, every school board member (as well as educator and community member) should be exposed to the key issues that will likely contribute to student academic outcomes such as individual learning styles versus standardization, testing and accountability requirements, measuring high school graduation rates, college and career readiness, the challenges of at-risk and special needs students, and the research on early childhood education programs. Are these the policy-level, strategic issues being addressed at your board meetings? They should be.

Is the board addressing issues that are relevant today?

As an elected representative and student advocate, a school board member must be engaged, aware and up-to-speed regarding issues that drive student behavior. Rapid change is everywhere and life for most students is taking place at a very quick pace. As a result, many of them have a comparatively short attention span, require a high level of interaction to become engaged, and expect to see tangible results instantly.

Today's students are technology dependent; they won't leave home without devices that immediately gather information and exchange communications. According to Cathy N. Davidson, co-director of the annual MacArthur Foundation Digital Media and Learning Competitions: "Pundits may be asking if the Internet is bad for our children's mental development, but the better question is whether the form of learning and knowledge-making we are instilling is our children is useful to their future." In fact, Davidson suggests, students are developing formidable cognitive skills on their own due to their digital prowess that many of us over 40 years old do not possess.

School boards should be discussing how Internet technology cuts through issues of class size, school day/year, district boundaries, access to rare electives and teacher qualifications in ways that are fundamentally changing the education delivery system. They must also understand the union resistance to change embedded in collective bargaining contracts.

As policymakers, school boards should express a clear understanding of changing local demographics,

family structures and values, as well as student health issues, safety epidemics and school violence concerns, all of which have a potentially life-changing impact on students. It is up to curriculum directors and superintendents to "sharpen the saw" by keeping their boards educated about such matters. Awareness of the environment and societal context of education will drive important curriculum decisions.

Does the board value quality?

Staffing and compensation issues are a core concern for any organization. They become expressly sensitive in a public sector, unionized environment. Add due process rights and tenure protections, state mandates that govern many of the provisions found in negotiated labor agreements and layoff decisions based solely on seniority. It is a gross understatement to say that maintaining teacher quality at every level is challenging. School boards must rely on strong administrative leadership, accurate data, effective professional development and, yes, a fully aligned and adequately resourced curriculum to insure a high quality program.

New York's new Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) system will eventually help in screening out individuals who are ineffective and in the sharing of instructional practices that improve student achievement. Now, more than ever before, the strength of the educational program -- based on a strong curriculum and quality instruction -- will serve as a basis for the board to make important, high-stakes staffing and compensation decisions. Anecdotal evidence, intuition and cozy evaluation practices are about to be replaced by student performance data and objective evaluation measures that will enable quality improvements.

Does the board exercise effective leadership?

The late management guru Peter Drucker wrote: "Effective leadership does four things: Develops followers, Focuses on results, Remains visible, and Exercises responsibility."

As community leaders, school board members must be a reliable, balanced conduit for two-way communications between the school community and the school system. They must strive to increase community participation and support, but not ignore

legitimate negative perceptions and pressure from constituents. Forward-leaning boards understand that change is inevitable and progress is good. They also know that they are only as effective as the support they receive from the community.

High-functioning school boards will not shy away from inter-district comparisons of student achievement. In fact, they will seek out and study numerous, independent sources of information, evaluate performance honestly, and set aspirational targets for better results.

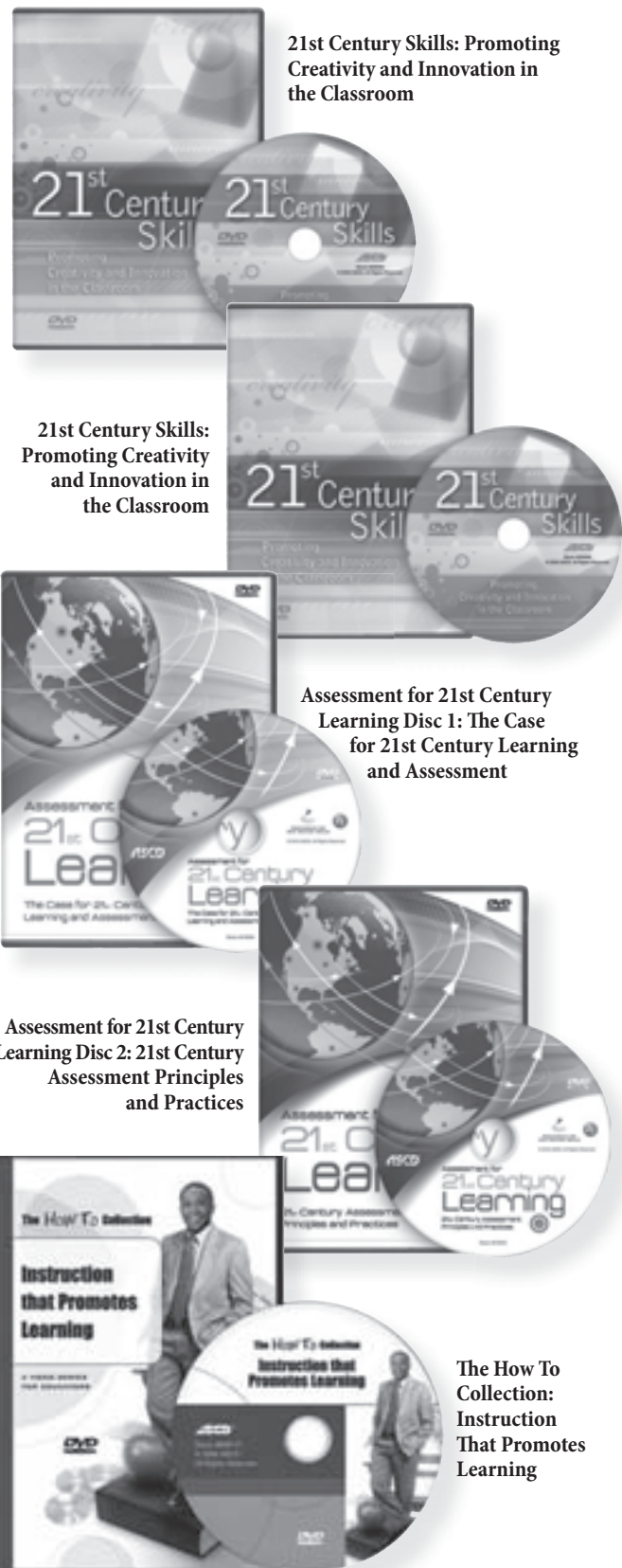
The true test for any board's leadership capabilities comes during times of fiscal uncertainty due to uncontrollable conditions. This is when boards must both "own the mission;" that is, protect the traditional core programs, especially curriculum development and quality instruction while cutting costs. Boards and professional educators are forced to adapt to a new normal that commands new teaching and management methodologies and efficiencies. This phenomena -- exciting and excruciating at the same time, depending on circumstances and one's point of view -- is on display in school districts across New York.

It has been said that to get the best, one must expect the best. The curriculum development process is key to meeting academic performance expectations. Student-centered, forward-thinking, courageous school board leadership, unwaveringly committed to raising achievement levels, has never been more in demand.

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Resilience and Literacy: Building Two Strengths at Once

Mary E. Cronin

Current educational leaders know well the quest to reach and teach the whole child. This approach includes ensuring that children have the skills and support to become successful and engaged learners. Resilience figures into this equation; many children face obstacles and challenges that threaten their engagement in learning. Educators, in teaching the whole child, must be aware of the factors that foster resilience in children.

What are the factors that contribute to resiliency in children, and how can we teach and learn about these elements through high-quality children's literature?

Resilience Defined

"Resilience does not come from rare and special qualities, but from the everyday magic of ordinary...human resources in the minds, brains, and bodies of children, in their families and relationships, and in their communities" (Masten 2001, p. 235).

Resilience is "the idea... that people can bounce back from negative life experiences and often become stronger in the process of overcoming them" (Henderson 1996, p. 3). In children, resilience can be defined as "a class of phenomena characterized by good outcomes in spite of serious threats to adaptation or development" (Masten 2001, p. 228).

Nan Henderson (1996) writes in *Resiliency in Schools* that all people, regardless of economic or social standing, experience obstacles and hardships. "The process of resiliency... is in fact, the process of life" (p. 4).

It's important to note that resilience does not refer to invulnerability to obstacles. Rather, it is about response to adversity—an ability to bounce back from adversity as opposed to being impervious to it. When we consider resilience in children, we are not referring to "super kids" who have super-human powers with which to withstand poverty and other life challenges. Rather, resilience is built on ordinary factors. As Ann Masten (2001) writes in her article "Ordinary Magic," "The great surprise of resilience research is the ordinariness of the phenomena. Resilience appears to be a common phenomenon that results in most cases from the operation of basic human adaptational systems" (p. 227).

This is encouraging to school leaders facing budgetary constraints. Relationship-building, positive expectations, and proactive school climates are within reach of nearly all educational communities.

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Child development specialist Marian Marion (2007) writes that adults can foster resilience in children by providing them with three elements: high expectations, a nurturing relationship, and opportunities for participation (p. 173).

A Nurturing Relationship

The first element contributing to resilience is a nurturing relationship. This is a protective factor, offering a child armor against the obstacles she faces. Whether from a parent, sibling, mentor, or friend, children need the emotional anchor of a nurturing relationship in order to develop resilience. Educators and counselors can also fill this role. There has to be at least one special someone in every student's life. It should be a connective, supportive relationship, one in which the child has an active role. These relationships can offer a child a psychological "safe harbor," and an opportunity to process difficult information and reach new understandings about challenging circumstances from within the safety of a secure relationship. The nurturing adult provides a source of buffering for the child, portraying truths that may be difficult or challenging, while presenting them in a way that the child can take in.

We can see excellent examples of this positive relationship in many high-quality books for children. In Jacqueline Woodson's picture book *Coming On Home Soon*, set during World War II, the young protagonist Ada Ruth misses her mom terribly. Ada Ruth's mom has left for Chicago, to pursue the work opportunities there for women on the home front. Ada Ruth is cared for by her grandmother, who clearly offers her security, even as Ada Ruth longs for her mother's return, a family circumstance mirrored by many contemporary families.

The presence of a nurturing relationship can act as a buffer for a child, giving him security even in the midst of instability. Eve Bunting's picture book *Fly Away Home* offers us a portrait of a homeless family living at a busy airport. A young boy, Andrew, and his father strive to be inconspicuous as they sleep in airport terminal chairs, eat fast food, and wash up in the public bathroom. When his father goes off to work, another homeless family cares for Andrew. He is aware of his father's fruitless search for affordable housing, yet it is clear that Andrew feels secure in the order that his father has established within chaos. The constancy and guidance of the boy's father, even in the context of their rootless existence, clearly gives Andrew security and comfort.

This calls to mind an anecdote shared by one of my community college students on Cape Cod. She told me about a young boy in her preschool class. His mother confided to the teacher that they had just moved into new housing after living in their car for two weeks. The teacher never knew that this was happening, as the child was brought to preschool each day by his mother during that two week period. We discussed the mother's internal strength, and her ability to act as a buffer for her young son even in the midst of instability. Clearly the child felt secure, even though their life had temporarily fallen apart. Thanks to the mother's nurturing, steady presence, her son had developed resilience.

This "buffering" is something supportive adults do for children—they protect children from too much information, or reframe the information so that the child may take in what he is able to. Young children need this; middle graders may chafe against it, and not need this filtering quite as much.

Yet to the middle-grade child, the nurturing relationship also acts as a mainstay. In Sharon Draper's novel *Out of My Mind*, ten-year-old Melody faces a mountain of obstacles every day. She is severely physically handicapped by cerebral palsy, confined to a wheelchair and unable to speak. Yet her mind, her intellect, is sharp. She is intelligent, observant, and funny—trapped inside a body that doesn't work very well. In the course of the story, we follow Melody as she copes with the crushing underestimation of those around her, who assume that this drooling, spastic child could not possibly have an intelligent thought in her head. When Melody gets a communication device that allows her to speak through an electronic keyboard, her life changes, although the alienation and prejudice she feels from peers, and some teachers, do not magically melt away. Her mainstays—her harried but caring parents, and her loving caregiver—keep Melody grounded and sane. They keep her from going "out of her mind." This book serves as an excellent model for resilience and for the positive outcomes of inclusion.

A Second Factor: Opportunities for Participation

Children...require chances to operate as a member of a group, and adults in protective systems make sure that children get those chances (Marion 2007, p. 174).

In order to develop resilience, children need opportunities for participation; this occurs when a child

feels part of a solution, or part of a larger idea or process to which they can contribute. This is the second factor contributing to resilience. Opportunities for participation occur when children feel part of decision-making and goal setting, on the family, classroom or school level. In addition, giving students opportunities to help others and contribute to the greater good fosters high self-esteem and connectedness.

This element is illustrated beautifully in *A Chair for My Mother*, a picture book by Vera B. Williams. Rosa has nurturing adults in her life: her mother, grandmother, and other relatives. How does she participate? She helps her mother, a waitress at the diner. Rosa earns coins by doing small tasks: she washes salt and pepper shakers and fills ketchup bottles. With her earnings, Rosa pitches in as the family puts aside money in a large jar. They are saving for an easy chair, symbolizing comfort and shelter from hard work. In a flashback, Rosa tells of the house fire that burned all of the family's possessions, leaving them to start anew with meager furnishings, the support of neighbors and family, and no soft chair in which to sit after a hard day. Rosa not only helps by saving coins for the chair, but she also participates by helping to pick out a new chair when the jar is full.

In *Out of my Mind*, Melody does not sit on the sidelines in her wheelchair. She goes to school, participates alongside typical peers in inclusion classes, and once she masters that new communication device, even lands a spot on the school's quiz team.

Deborah Wiles' middle-grade novel *Each Little Bird That Sings* introduces us to Comfort Snowberger. Comfort lives with her parents and various other relatives above the small-town funeral home that they run. She has multiple opportunities to participate—she helps with floral arrangements, cooking, and funeral preparations, working alongside family members in a connected, supported way. Comfort is given large helpings of the factors that build resilience—something she will need when tragedy strikes.

When faced with challenges, children yearn to feel part of the solution—this participation fosters resilience. Even in small measures, children gain a sense of mastery by contributing towards solutions and working towards reaching a common goal.

The Third Factor: High Expectations

In her book *Guidance of Young Children*, author Marian Marion (2007) writes about the role of high expectations in fostering resilience in young children. “Authoritative adults who have high but reasonable expectations help children develop competence, control, and worth, the building blocks of positive self-esteem. Competence, control, and a belief that one is worthy of affection also form the foundation of a resilient spirit” (p. 173).

High expectations can lift, prod, or propel a child forward. High expectations help children develop competence, control, and worth, and they can be of a concrete or abstract nature.

In *Out of My Mind*, Sharon Draper (2010) illustrates the power of high expectations in an early scene, as Melody's parents are making child care arrangements with Mrs. V, a retired nurse who will become Melody's caretaker:

“Melody can be a handful,” Mom had warned.
Mrs. V. lifted me into the air. “I’ve got big hands.”
“We want her to reach her highest potential,”
Dad added.

“Oh, gag me!” Mrs. V. said, startling him. “Don’t get bogged down in all these touchy-feely words and phrases you read in books on disabled kids. Melody is a child who can learn and will learn if she sticks with me!”

Dad looked embarrassed. But then he grinned.
“Bring her back in twenty years.” (p. 41)

In other cases, high expectations can be more internalized—expecting children to understand complicated problems, and to do without. In *Fly Away Home*, Andrew is expected to adhere to his father's rule about blending into the crowd at the airport (a tall order for a young child), and to cooperate with the plan of being cared for by another family while his father goes off to work each day. Father and son follow rules to remain undetected by airport personnel: “Dad and I try not to get noticed. We stay among the crowds. We change airlines...Not to be noticed is to look like nobody at all.”

In *Coming on Home Soon*, Ada Ruth's grandmother acknowledges her sad feelings about missing her mom, but urges her to “Hush now,” or “Don’t start that

crying.” She encourages her to keep writing letters to her mother, another way of demonstrating high expectations in the face of adversity. This can also be seen in *Those Shoes*, as Jeremy’s grandmother attempts to convey to him the difference between “need” and “want”-- a vexing and abstract concept for a young child, and one to which many of our students can surely relate.

Author Richard Peck has said, “All of our stories, when you think about it, are biographies of survivors. We read fiction to see how people survive.”

By sharing these excellent books, these stories of surviving hardship, in honest yet nurturing ways, we as educators can communicate a powerful message to young children: you are not alone. By including stories of resilience within our academic instruction, we are building multiple strengths in our students: stronger literacy skills as well as emotional strength.

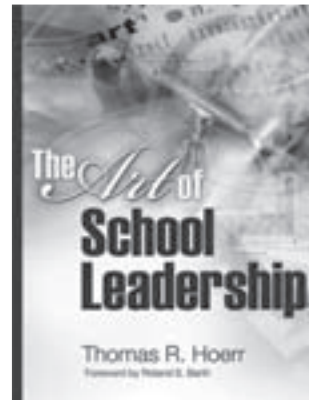
Resilience researcher Bonnie Benard (2004) writes in *Resiliency: What We Have Learned*, “The innate self-righting tendencies that account for the resilience of young people facing adversity and challenge are precisely the same supports and opportunities that nurture us all” (p. 10). Educational leaders would do well to read stories of survival and perseverance to feed our own need for connectedness and examples of resilience amid challenges.

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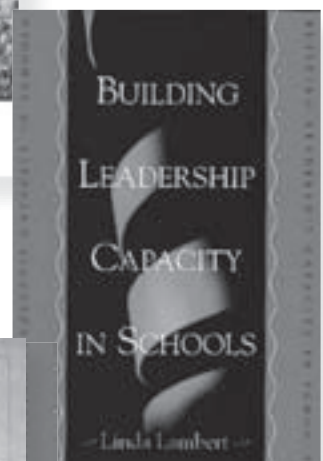


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Courageous Leadership for Fostering 21st Century Learning

Chris Brown

When I first became a superintendent of schools in 2000 I thought I was a leader. My roles included head of the school district, community liaison, and public speaker; all of the things that would put someone into the “leader” column. School budgets were built, programs added, staffing added seemingly on a whim at times, things being built. Progress. With each decision about what color paint to use on the new walls of the science lab or which six figure curriculum series we were going to purchase, I felt more and more confident about my “leadership” skills.

I read all of the top selling leadership books, and even facilitated community book discussions about them. I also accepted awards for academic achievement, put a shovel in the ground for two major capital projects, and took on Board positions in some major community organizations. Life was good and at the time aside from a few hiccups and controversies, things went very smoothly. Being a “leader” was pretty cool.

I came to realize after September 11, 2001 that I had not lead anything yet; I had just run and managed things. When the planes hit the towers and no one knew what was coming next, all of the staff looked to me for guidance. It was right then and there when I made the first announcement on the public announcement system to stay in place and await further instruction that I began to lead. With complete uncertainty ahead, and a staff member with a brother trapped in Tower Two in my office, I reached for the only tools that I have always had, trust and communication. I listened as this staff member finally reached her brother, being told by him that he was in Tower Two and would be getting out shortly. She hung up, encouraged. Minutes later she and I watched on the tiny television in my office as Tower Two collapsed, killing her brother and hundreds of others.

I felt embarrassed. I had been a teacher there for years before becoming superintendent of schools. This was a small school and I knew every student and every staff member. I had not taken the time however to peel off another layer of the onion on all of the staff, so I didn’t know that her brother likely would have escaped if he had not been in a wheelchair. Trusting in me, she looked for guidance and I drove her to the mother’s house. I composed a calm assured voice and communicated a plan for the day to the staff. I went home and did not sleep. Hundreds of people were REALLY depending on my guidance and vision in a time of crisis, and I felt lucky that I had not screwed it up. That was the last day of being a “flat footed” leader.

*Christopher Brown is Superintendent
of Schools of the West Genesee
Central School*

A crisis comes in many shapes and sizes. September 2011 was a crisis in that it caused the nation to panic over fear of the unknown. Health, welfare, and safety issues in school buildings or in the community are sometimes also elevated to the crisis level. Lately, the state of the economy is creating a crisis in education because even though resources are dwindling, the expectations are increasing and community members are less tolerant of waste and inefficiency in schools than ever before. With this rate of change, the downturn in economic resources, and increasing demand for accountability these past two years, and probably the next two to three ahead of us, will go down as the “most challenging times in education EVER”. Anyone who finds success during these times of challenge is a true leader; not a manager or someone who runs things. There are some key ingredients to leading during challenging times that do not cost a thing but become priceless when mastered.

Some people entering the leadership field think only of curriculum, operations, Board policy, and finance as the key things that they need to know in order to be successful. These skills in my opinion are prerequisites before even thinking about entering a leadership position. When hiring an administrator in my particular district these skills must be present before seeking a final interview. At the final interview I try to determine if the candidate has the following “other” skills that will help you to be a true leader in these challenging times.

The Ability to Earn Trust

I was recently asked by a Board member from another school how our school district was successful in being the first to secure a total wage freeze for staff and also able to have close to 90% of our voting public support a school budget with a 3.8% tax levy increase. When I replied that trust and the ability to be transparent and communicate were the keys to our success, the Board member responded with, “no really, how did you do it?”

The quick answer is that I do not do anything. The community, staff, Board of Education, and students come together when the chips are down because we trust each other. How do you build the trust necessary to be able to accomplish a task that makes its way to the national news media? You start by genuinely caring about the people working for you, what the students

truly need to have in order to be successful, and the understanding that it is not about YOU.

People are sometimes surprised when they learn that I visit every building and area in our district at least once a week (we have eight buildings, 4,950 students and 820?? staff). I want to take the time to get to know them, their families, their situations, and their skills. I also want them to know who I am as well. Not just as a suit in a classroom or hallway, but as a human being. This exchange of feelings helps to foster a trusting environment. The next important step is to appreciate this trusting environment by telling the truth at all times (even in bad times) and expecting the trust from them as well.

The Ability to Communicate and Foster Transparency

When students and parents learned that our staff had taken a wage freeze to help retain programs and employees they were incredibly appreciative. You might be reading this and thinking to yourself that parents and students were thankful out of selfishness that their loved program or activity was saved. This was certainly not the case, and in many cases STUDENTS who lost things were appreciative that others might still have their opportunities available to them.

With a trusting environment established it is critical to communicate and offer the highest degree of transparency possible. Does this involve more than putting Board policies on your website or writing a monthly passage in your school newsletter? Yes, and you would be surprised at how many people I have met who are unwilling to go the extra distance to get the message across, create a dialogue and give the public what they are entitled to see without them having to ask for it through the FOIL process.

Communication comes in many shapes and forms. Because I visit so many classroom and buildings, finding a way to relay what I see and hear to staff and parents in a timely manner is very important. It is important for parents and staff to know and understand things that are being discussed at various education levels and how those discussions will affect their children. It is also important for parents, students, and staff to know that I actually have a pulse on what is happening and that I am a parent and community member just as they are.

The use of Facebook, Twitter, a blog, as well as just being visible in the community has accomplished this task. From a leadership point of view I can control the message at all times, but at the same time input from stakeholders can influence my decision making. This marriage of sorts has helped to make the community feel they are active partners in their school district with the added bonus of letting me lead it due to the mutual trust we have for each other. This partnership makes the seemingly impossible, possible. It makes the incredible seem ordinary.

If one can have the academic, operational, and financial pieces as well as the ability to earn trust, communicate, and be transparent in place then real things can happen. We are now in the position to be truly discussing vision, change, and accountability.

What does all of this have to do with 21st Century Learning? The square peg, square hole school model of the past is over. It is true that students need to be prepared for jobs that have not been created yet, so we should be looking at ways to offer content strands in the potential fields that may create jobs down the road. It is equally true that as 21st Century leaders we need to look outside the box to create these opportunities for students in an environment with fewer resources and more accountability. How can this happen? Do not fret and follow these steps.

1. Earn trust.
2. Create an omni (multi?)-directional communication plan.
3. Make all forms, policies, and practices available on the website.
4. Take yourself lightly and your job seriously.
5. Understand the real economic challenges by keeping up with Federal, State, and local economic news.
6. Understand the policies, regulations, and practices at the State Education Department level.
7. Combine 5 and 6 to create a vision for what lies ahead.
8. Through 1 and 2 make 7 a reality.
9. Celebrate ownership.
10. Repeat.

I have never described the business of education as difficult. I have always described it as challenging. If you have the desire to earn the trust of others and communicate to others, there really are few things that cannot be accomplished. If you are reading this and sense that you have all of the skills mentioned above, then welcome aboard as we give the students of the 21st Century what they are going to need to be successful.





FACTS *about* NYSASCD

VISION STATEMENT

- Is a diverse organization with a strong, representative infrastructure and ties to other professional organizations
- Anticipates and responds to needs and issues in a timely manner
- Provides quality, personalized, accessible and affordable professional development services that support research-based programs and practices, particularly in high need areas
- Recognizes a responsibility to identify and communicate the views of members
- Promotes the renewal and recognition of educators
- Supports the development of teachers and leaders, with an emphasis of those new to the profession

GOALS

- NYSASCD will provide research-based quality programs and resources that meet the needs of members
- NYSASCD will ensure that NY's diverse community of learners is reflected in our programs, resources, membership and governance. Diversity will be reflected in the following ways: board members, association members and committees are diverse in terms of gender, age, ethnicity, region of the state, professional position, and years within the position, with the intention of building the capacity of the organizations
- NYSASCD will influence educational policies, practices and resources in order to increase success for all learners
- NYSASCD will create and utilize structures/tools which enable us to be flexible in our actions and responsive to the changing climate and environment within education

PURPOSES

- To improve educational programs and supervisory practices at all levels and in all curricular fields throughout New York State
- To help schools achieve balanced programs so that equal and quality educational opportunities are assured for all students
- To identify and disseminate successful practices in instruction, curriculum development and supervision
- To have a strong voice in the educational affairs of the state by working closely with the State Education Department and other educational groups across the state and nation.

MEMBER BENEFITS

- IMPACT-New York State ASCD's professional journal provides in depth background on state and local issues facing New York State Educators
- ASCDdevelopments-the newsletter, furnishes timely announcements on state and local events related to curriculum and instruction
- Institutes-two or three day institutes that bring together national experts and state recognized presenters with practitioners to share ideas and promising educational practices
- Regional Workshops-bring together recognized presenters with practitioners to share ideas and promising educational practices
- Diverse Professional Network-enables members to share state-of-the-art resources, face challenges together and explore new ideas

Back to the Future: Applying 20th Century Knowledge to Acquire 21st Century Skills

Kate Thomsen

*To learn something new, take the path that you took yesterday.
~John Burroughs*

Introduction

I recently presented a workshop entitled, “21st Century Skills in Action!” for about 35 teachers and school counselors. As an opening activity, I asked them to introduce themselves and rate their understanding of 21st Century Learning Skills on a scale of 0 – 10. Here are the results: no one reported a ranking higher than a 3, and at least one third of the group rated themselves a 0. When you consider that information about 21st Century Skills has been around for almost 10 years, this minimal familiarity is absolutely...not surprising at all. We are talking about education, after all.

Our educational system is like that huge ball crashing down on Indiana Jones, if you recall the scene from *The Temple of Doom*. Faculties and administrators, courageous people just like Indy, are running for their lives just to stay ahead of the ball before it crushes them! Rules, regulations, standards, policies, unions, tenure, standardized tests, college preparation, outdated curricula, disinterested or over-interested parents. It just keeps on rolling. This ball is outdated and in need of massive revision, but it seems impossible to stop it, recreate it, and get it moving again in a better direction. Ours is a difficult system, but not all systems do business like this.

The Partnership for 21st Century Skills is mainly comprised of people from business and industry. When business or industrial machines become inefficient and outdated, companies make plans to incrementally halt production while they retool and install updates. This makes perfect sense if your products are inanimate. However, when you are in the business of educating children, halting production is not an option. Educators are encouraged, and often mandated, to make changes and improvements in their systems while they continue to run, however ineffectively. Maybe that's why teachers in my workshop rated their knowledge of 21st Century Learning Skills so low. They haven't been able to stop running long enough to learn about them. Many of them have not yet integrated knowledge from the 20th Century either!

*Kate Thomsen is an independent
education consultant from Jamesville,
New York*

Many of the teachers who entered my workshop that day came hoping to learn how to teach 21st Century Skills. As we progressed through our first activity, it became clear to me that they viewed teaching 21st Century Skills as one more thing to add to their already lengthy list. Once they

became familiar with the skills, these teachers expected that I'd provide them with ideas for lesson plans on "communication", "flexibility" or "self direction & initiative." I explained that 21st Century Learning Skills are acquired rather than taught in a lesson or two. In fact, ideally, they should be developed through challenging and positive learning experiences over a 12 or 13 year school career.

It's not one teacher's responsibility to "teach" these skills, as acquiring 21st Century Skills is a process, not an event. I sensed that this explanation provided some sort of relief, but, in their eyes, they were still facing a meaty dilemma. They asked, "How do we provide challenging and positive learning experiences when we have standardized tests and Regents looming over us? How can we give up seat time to try new approaches?" I suggested the answers could be found if we went back to the future.

Keeping Sane in a Crazy System

Insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results.

~Albert Einstein

I segmented my workshop so that we immediately delved into the Career Skills and Learning & Innovation Skills. I asked participants to work in a cooperative learning jig saw. Each group was responsible for one skill and their task was to teach the rest of the groups what a student might do if he/she had acquired this skill. For the first time, they told me, these people were thinking about the 21st Century skills as something more than a concept. By imagining what they would look like in action, the skills were becoming real to them.

As each skill was fleshed out, a few of the teachers and counselors realized that they were already promoting some of these skills, although, admittedly, in a fairly hit and miss fashion. They felt it was good to know that they were doing some of the "right" things. Yet they wanted to know how to do those activities more planfully and deliberately in a system where they felt overwhelmed by so many conflicting demands. Many felt helpless to control all of the influences that impede students' progress.

I drew a large circle on the board and explained that this circle represented all that happens in our

current educational system, from the Federal and the State regulations right down to the day to day activities in the buildings in which they work. After that, I drew a very small circle within the larger one and indicated that this represented what they could control. This was their "Sphere of Influence." This circle is tiny in comparison, I told them, because they can control very little.

Getting discouraged and bogged down in what one cannot control saps energy and hinders creativity. The truth of the matter is that they cannot control government policies and regulations, or even the way schools are set up and managed. They cannot control the curriculum they have to teach or whether or not they must prepare for and give standardized tests. They cannot control their colleagues and their attitudes and behavior. They cannot control the lives that their students lead outside of school. However, they can control what they think and do every day in their classrooms and offices. And that is a powerful amount of influence that can go a long way toward helping students develop 21st Century Skills. With this small circle in mind, we forged ahead.

20th Century



21st Century

Bridging the Gap

"The last three decades have brought an important revolution in our understanding of how people learn. This new 'learning about learning' is surprisingly in tune with both the new expectations of net generation students and the new demands and tools of the Knowledge Age" (Trilling and Fadel, 2009).

When I read this statement, I must confess to feeling a bit annoyed by the author's use of the word "surprisingly." In my opinion, the tools for getting us to the 21st Century workforce have been in our tool belts for many years. The trouble is that most teachers haven't integrated what we know about "learning about learning" into their work with students for all the reasons mentioned earlier. In great part, entire faculties haven't been engaged in concerted efforts to practice and use this knowledge, thus failing to become competent with it. Ignoring the existence of

these tools for so long is like using a powerful computer, capable of assisting in myriad ways, to simply write letters.

For the first time, the Partnership's identified "soft" skills, such as flexibility, adaptability, initiative and self-direction, communication, and collaboration, are being recognized as more important than knowledge of facts. This appears to have thrown teachers a curve ball. They know how to teach facts, but teaching flexibility, or leadership and responsibility, is not as clear to them. As with all worthwhile efforts, the first step is to begin with the end in mind. Envisioning, as we did in our workshop, what the student with "soft" skills would know and do helps us to know where we are headed.

Going back to the future is the way to go. We may be standing in the 21st Century, but the answers to the questions above lie back in the 20th. The soft skills, which are really skills of emotional literacy, are best acquired when experiencing educational strategies such as cooperative learning, social emotional learning, or project based learning, and these strategies have been at our disposal for many years. They have been, and remain, extremely useful tools because they actually develop soft skills at the same time that content is being learned. And, most importantly, teachers can easily use these tools in their spheres of influence.

Facts can be learned with or without a teacher present, as long as the learner is self-motivated and the content is readily available and understandable. Soft skills, on the other hand, are best acquired through thoughtfully planned academic experiences. While technology in the 21st Century will support and enhance learning in ways most of us cannot yet imagine, there will never be a substitute for a well-trained teacher who understands more than her content. She must also know how to relate to and build relationship with her students. She must consistently utilize Multiple Intelligences and learning styles to differentiate instruction and create meaning. She must incorporate cooperative learning and group work in order to engage students in the process of developing 21st Century Skills.

Connecting the Dots...

Relationship and Student Motivation

We have the bridge that we need to support 21st Century Skill development. In Figure 1, I have identified a list of many research-based educational approaches from the 20th Century that, if experienced by students consistently, would certainly develop the skills required for success in the 21st Century workplace. This chart is certainly not exhaustive, and its format is not meant to imply that there is a one to one correlation between each skill and each topic. Rather, one topic may positively impact many different skills.

I placed "relationship and student motivation" first because ... "It is obvious that children will work harder and do things, even odd things like adding fractions, for people they love and trust." (Noddings, 1988)

Teaching is an activity, but learning is much more complicated. One might even suggest that learning is a choice. When students engage their hearts and minds, they learn, but there is a caveat. The caveat is that students, especially those we regard as unmotivated, will only risk engaging their hearts and minds when they believe that their teacher respects and understands them. As we all know, respect and understanding are at the heart of any healthy relationship. That is where positive youth development and resiliency-building strategies come in. These approaches to teaching are based on the belief that all students are capable of becoming competent given the appropriate supports and opportunities. Teachers who wish to build relationship with their students view them as resources rather than liabilities. They look for and find strengths upon which to build, and they don't give up when the strengths are not immediately obvious.

Learning Styles

In order to build productive, mutually respectful teacher/learner relationships, teachers must see their students as individuals who enter their classrooms with unique experiences, assets, and talents. Every excellent speaker knows his audience, yet most teachers launch into their lessons without ever finding out their students' learning styles or strongest intelligences. The assumption is that there is work to be done, things to be learned, and the students need to get on board. And yet,

21ST CENTURY LEARNING SKILLS	20TH CENTURY KNOWLEDGE AND RESEARCH IN SUPPORT OF 21ST C SKILLS
LIFE & CAREER SKILLS	TOPICS & RESOURCES
Flexibility <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - incorporate feedback - deal with positive praise as well as setbacks and criticism - understand, negotiate, and balance diverse views to reach workable solutions 	Relationship and Student Motivation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tomlinson (September, 2002) - Sagor (September, 2002) - Bondy & Ross (September, 2008) - Mendler (2000)
Adaptability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - roles - responsibilities - ambiguity 	Learning Styles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Silver, Strong, & Pirini (2000) - Don Lowry's True Colors www.true-colors.com
Initiative and Self Direction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - mentorships - internships - apprenticeships - community service projects 	Emotional Intelligence or EQ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Goleman (1995)
Social and cross cultural interaction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - interact effectively with others - work effectively in diverse teams 	Positive Youth Development & Resiliency <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Thomsen (2002)
Productivity and accountability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - manage products - produce results 	Character Education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lickona (1991)
Leadership & responsibility <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - guide and lead others - be responsible to others 	Cooperative Learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Kagan (2010)
LEARNING & INNOVATION SKILLS	
Critical thinking & problem solving <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - reason effectively - use systems thinking - make judgments and decisions - solve problems 	Multiple Intelligences <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gardner (1983) - Checkley (1997) - Armstrong (2009)
Collaboration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - team work - compromise - share responsibility 	Social Emotional Learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bocchino (1999) - Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL)
Communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - communicate clearly - articulate thoughts, listen, use media 	Project-based Learning & Service-Learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Thomsen (2005)
Creativity & Innovation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - think creatively - work creatively with others - implement innovations 	Brain-based Instruction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wolfe (2001) - Jensen (1998) - Sprenger (2007) - Gurian (2004)

Figure One

“in many cases...our own learning preferences dominate our classroom so that learners whose styles are different from our own become disengaged and unmotivated, while the learners whose styles match our own breeze through our assignments easily and without thinking deeply. Without even knowing it, we may be creating an environment where students find neither comfort nor challenge in our classrooms. For this reason, we must bring to the surface and analyze the ways in which we appeal to different styles of learners with the work we assign and the instruction we provide.” (Silver, Strong, & Pirini, 2000)

One of the best ways to begin gathering information about your student audience is through identifying individual learning styles and finding out about what students do in their out of school time. Teachers can then make deliberate efforts to remember and utilize that knowledge when planning assignments and assessments. Planning content-related tasks that would appeal to each style of learner is not as difficult as it may seem. A student who enjoys research may choose that type of task, while another student may choose to learn about the human or personal side of an issue. And some students might choose to demonstrate their knowledge through written assignments, while others would choose a musical or artistic representation. The key is to provide choices and challenge for students so that students and teachers are partners in learning.

Multiple Intelligences

When a student appreciates how he and others learn best and how he and others are smart, he is developing valuable life skills. These skills will assist him in choosing a career, in effectively interacting with others, in working in a collaborative fashion, and in being a creative problem solver, to name just a few.

I asked my workshop participants to tell me why they think teachers have not embraced multiple intelligences. As I suspected, they said that most teachers believe that accommodating different intelligences means having to create individual lesson plans for each child's intelligence. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Teachers may find this advice from Howard Gardner helpful:

“You can say that a child is a visual learner, but that is not a multiple intelligences way of talking about

things. What I would say is: ‘Here is a child who very easily represents things spatially, and we can draw upon that strength if need be when we want to teach the child something new.’” (cited in Checkley, 1997, p.13)

Armed with knowledge about how their audiences learn best, and what they are interested in, teachers can make their content meaningful and exciting. They can offer choices, challenges and some level of comfort when assigning tasks or assessments. Allowing students to choose tasks that appeal to their styles and then to demonstrate their learning in a variety of ways is a sure way to develop skills such as initiative and self direction, productivity and accountability, critical thinking and problem solving, and creativity and innovation.

Emotional Intelligence or Emotional Literacy

Teachers must model skills of emotional literacy. By their own behavior and interactions with staff and students, they teach how to handle stress or anger. They teach how to give and accept a compliment or how to make another person feel better. They demonstrate cultural sensitivity and respect for differences of all kinds. Even students who do not experience this modeling at home will learn better ways of interacting with the world when a teacher shows the way.

And how does one go about developing flexibility and the ability to deal with positive praise as well as setbacks and criticism? Students who believe their teachers care about them as individuals are far more likely to accept feedback and redirection. This won't happen without a strong relationship with a teacher, of course. Once a solid relationship is established, teachers can push a student to accept challenging tasks or to refine a product. And, as we all know, when students feel safe, they are more likely to take learning risks.

Project-Based or Service Learning

Probably the most effective teaching strategy for developing 21st Century Skills is Project-Based Learning. Experiential learning and service learning are both forms of project-based learning. This is a strategy that brings together all that we know about “learning about learning.”

In project based learning, students experience an inquiry process that is stimulated by a question that is: related to content, a real world issue, provides authentic tasks, and offers opportunities to demonstrate learning in a wide variety of ways. This approach is appropriate for any age or grade level. Students may be presented with a question or they may develop a question on their own. The question is the catalyst for in-depth study, and so is very important.

Once the question is determined, students move forward. They work in cooperative groups in which they organize tasks, conduct research and study, problem solve, manage time and products, and engage in formative assessment through the process. They display the product of their study in a variety of ways, often choosing the methods which reflect their individual styles and intelligences.

Getting the Question Right

Teachers might want to conduct their own project based learning when considering how to teach 21st century Skills. Their pivotal question would be "How can I craft assignments and activities that will not only teach content, but also develop 21st Century Skills?" Once they have asked the 'correct' question, the possibilities for answers are limitless. Teachers have always been creative souls who, when they put their minds to it, can come up with amazing ideas. But, just like their students, they must feel safe to take risks. They need time to learn about and practice new strategies. They need to believe that they will be supported by their administrators for teaching in more effective, but possibly less traditional ways.

Teachers need to believe that teaching with the tools at their disposal will not penalize their students, or them, because they are no longer focused on standardized tests or Regents. In other words, teachers need help to stay out of the way of that ball and they need to garner the courage to teach what students need to know and be able to do. If the Federal and State Departments of Education are serious about graduating students with the skills for the 21st Century workforce, and if they accept the skills put forth by the Partnership for 21st Century Skills, then it is high time we leave the temple of doom and go back to the future.

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Resources

CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning) www.casel.org

www.Kaganonline.com

Project based learning www.pbl-online.org

www.true-colors.com

Desired 21st century skills Harvard School of Education

- Managing ambiguity
- Agency and responsibility
- Finding and sustaining community
LCI, Ltd. (2010)
- Managing emotions
- Managing technological change

Desired 21st century skills –| Tony Wagner

- Critical thinking and problem solving
- Collaboration across networks and leading by influence
- Agility and adaptability LCI, Ltd. (2010)
- Initiative and entrepreneurship
- Effective oral and written communication
- Accessing and analyzing information
- Curiosity and imagination



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Instructional Leadership: It Takes Courage (and a Plan)

Jeff Craig

It's easy to say that instructional leadership is important for educational leaders; it's far more difficult to actually do it. Sure, the literature about effective educational leadership consistently promotes its importance. So, too, do the NCATE and ISLLC Standards emphasize instructional leadership. In fact, the ISLLC 2008 Standards display Standard 2 (*Leadership for Teaching & Learning*), at the center of the six-standard framework indicating its importance and centrality to effective leadership (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008).



Figure 1: ISLLC 2008 Framework (Council of Chief State School Officers)

Yet, the data about how principals and other educational leaders actually spend their time tells another tale – a reality-based tale that suggests that instructional leadership is often elusive and difficult to achieve. There have been many studies about how principals spend their time. A quick look at just a couple of them paints the picture well. When asked about their most important job responsibilities, principals reported that their top four priorities are: supervision/instructional support, school improvement, staff development, and curriculum planning/development (Chan & Pool, 2002). An actual examination of how they spent their time indicated that student interaction/discipline and personnel administration

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crowded out their most important responsibilities (Chan & Pool, 2002). Another study found that principals spend the most time overseeing students, managing budgets, and dealing with student discipline (Horng et al, 2009). That same study found that principals spend 10% of their day on instruction. Interestingly, Horng and her coauthors found that time spent on management tasks has a positive impact on student achievement in addition to the positive impact that instructional leadership has on student achievement. This means that good leaders are both good managers and good instructional leaders. But how to do both, and how to do both well?

One way to do a good job at both management and instructional leadership is to divide the two important areas of responsibility between two different people. A new position is appearing in some schools, that of School Administration Manager. An analysis of schools which have principals and School Administration Managers (SAM) indicates that principals in such schools are able to spend an hour per day more on instructional leadership than without a SAM (Turnball et al, 2009). The kind of activities that principals report doing more of included observation, classroom walkthroughs, and instruction-related work (Trunball, et al., 2009). Conversely, principals in the same study reported spending less time on student discipline, student supervision, managing non-teaching staff, and managing school facilities. All of this sounds good, and many principals might be asking for their own SAM as they read this. The problem with this, however, is that the addition of School Administration Managers is simply out of the question given the difficult financial situation in which all districts find themselves.

Until every school has its own School Administration Manager, it's up to the principal to do it all, whether all alone or with the help of assistant principals, department leaders, or instructional specialists. First and foremost, the principal has to be committed to the goal of instructional leadership. Commitment to instructional leadership means making it a priority both in intention and in action. Instructional leaders know that they must effectively and efficiently manage their school, but they also know that learning and teaching have to permeate all aspects of decision making and school management. Instructional leaders have the courage to make learning a priority, even when pulled in many directions and even when a

status quo of complacency drags like an anchor. Instructional leaders have the courage to be agents of change. Instructional leaders have the courage to model good instruction at every opportunity, including faculty meetings, team meetings, and committee meetings. Instructional leaders are deliberate and thoughtful about change and match change to the context and culture. But, instructional leaders know that standing still and watching the world rush past is not an option. To be an instructional leader, it takes some courage – deliberate courage.

How do courageous instructional leaders act? How do you know one when you see one? Most of all, courageous instructional leaders make instruction important by placing it at the center of their work and at the center of their school's work. They don't leave it to chance or serendipity – it is deliberately and carefully planned for. There are many different ways that courageous instructional leaders are deliberate about their focus on instruction and those methods vary from leader to leader. What doesn't vary, however, is the deliberateness that leaders bring to the mission.

One tool that has been proved useful is the Professional Learning Map. There are two parts to the story about Professional Learning Maps that are important to hear. First, the genesis of the tool is a good example of courageous instructional leadership. Second, the tool itself is a great tool to help leaders become more deliberate about instruction (and other aspects of their leadership). First, I will describe one example of instructional leadership which will then lead to another example which is accompanied by the actual tool.

As a principal of a large middle school, I facilitated a transition away from inconsistent lesson and unit planning practices to a backwards-design approach. My observations and interactions with teachers had shown me that the unit planning practices were all over the place and I thought that we could do better. Previous experience with unit planning had also convinced me that the unit plan could be a tipping point for teaching and learning in a school. Good unit planning practices can integrate and unite all aspects of the instructional process, from curriculum to assessment to design. Based on this thinking and the data I had collected from my formal and informal observations, I made the decision to facilitate a move

to a common unit planning process that was based on backwards design. I knew enough about the culture of the building to know that it would be a welcome change for many staff members and I also knew that other would be reluctant. I knew that the teachers' association would be watching to ensure that I didn't dramatically change working conditions. I also knew that lesson and unit planning were an accepted and recognized part of a teacher's professional responsibilities. Armed with all of this, I made a plan.

My expectation for teachers would be for them to work collaboratively to redesign and deliver one new unit per year. Since planning was an accepted part of teaching responsibilities, I knew I wasn't asking too much. Yes, I was asking teachers to plan a unit in a different way, but planning units was already an accepted practice. Since I was asking them to use a new model, I made sure that I provided time in which at least some of the work could be done. I ended up employing staff development days, some staff meeting time, and release time to provide common planning time for unit planning.

In addition to providing time in which to do the work, I thought it was important for me to model the work. If I was going to ask teachers to plan units in a particular way, I thought that I, too, ought to plan a unit using the same model. For the first year, I decided that my unit would be about unit planning. I would publicly plan a unit about unit planning and then deliver the unit to my class which was, in this case, the teaching staff. In effect, I would practice what I preached. I started by identifying the goals and objectives of the unit. To help make this concrete, I gathered illustrative examples of units and shared them with teachers. I made sure that I found examples from a wide variety of grade levels and subjects. Once the goals were clear, I identified the assessment. In this case, I was asking for one new unit per year. To provide feedback to teachers, I developed a unit plan rubric which I provided from the very beginning (cover sheet for the rubric is pictured; each stage had its own dimensions and descriptors). I used the rubric both formatively and summatively with teachers and I asked the group of teachers to self-assess with the rubric before seeking my feedback.

My task analysis of the situation indicated to me that I first had to build a common understand-

ing of best-practices in unit planning. Embracing the work of Wiggins and McTighe (1998), Rutherford's interpretation of that work which she calls *Standards-Based Planning* (2008), and Martin-Kneip's *Curriculum Unit Development Process* (1997), I developed a series of lessons that I used with the staff to teach them about the unit planning process. I collected a variety of electronic resources and made them readily available to the staff via a website; paper copies could be assembled in binders as well. Some of the lessons included descriptions and application examples of tools and templates that teachers could use to help them through the process. I made the deliberate decision not to require the use of one template over the other. My expectation of a backwards-designed unit was consistent for all; I tried to provide multiple paths toward that objective. Wiggins and McTighe (1998) have print and electronic templates – we bought multiple copies of the CD-based template and joined the on-line repository. I made paper and print copies of Rutherford's (2008) organizers and question-based process available as well. All of these were offered and modeled to the teachers for them to choose the one that would work best for them.

As teachers worked on their first unit plans during the year, I included a variety of formative assessments and checkpoints along the way. I made sure we talked about the under-development unit plans in all observation and evaluation conferences I referred to my unit planning at every opportunity. As deadlines for unit plan completion neared, I deliberately sought out the teachers and teams of teachers from whom I had seen very little, trying to offer a careful juxtaposition of expectation repetition with an offer of support. All annual summative evaluations specifically referenced the unit plan work and product.

In subsequent years I expected a new unit each year. I too, produced a new unit each year. Rather than a unit plan for lesson planning, however, I deliberately collaborated with a teacher from the staff who was either struggling with unit plans or struggling in general. Thus did I continue to model the expectation for all while also working closely with a teacher who needed the assistance. In retrospect, I do believe that the unit planning work at that school was a tipping point for the school as a whole. It lifted our collaborative culture and collective practice to a new level.

Of course, there were some obstacles that popped up along the way, but I stuck to my guns and tried to find the right amount of push to give the process. I think this anecdote is an example of courageous instructional leadership. Certainly, unit planning wasn't the only thing that was happening at the school during those years, but I kept it in the forefront and it made a difference.

After a few years of unit planning it became evident that a larger organizing scheme for the units would be necessary. That need brought us to curriculum mapping. After another deliberate analysis of the cultural and professional climate, the decision was made to begin a curriculum mapping initiative in order to create a coherent organizing schedule for the units. I applied a similar approach to curriculum mapping, both with the development of a unit plan for curriculum mapping and the decision to model what I was expecting from the teachers. As I sought a curriculum map to work on for myself, I created a tool that both allowed me to model the expectation and allowed me to become a more organized and deliberate leader: The Professional Learning Map.

Consider this excerpt from a Professional learning Map I used for the 2002-2003 school year. Just a quick glance is all that is needed to see how it is related to a curriculum map. In this case, I arranged the month of the year vertically and, across the top, identified the larger components of the year's work. I identified an essential or guiding question for each month in order to ensure coherence and focus in my leadership. The weekly readings that I included in my Friday memo lined up with the guiding question for the month. So, too, did the objectives of faculty meetings, support for new teachers, and professional learning opportunities. In short, the Professional Learning Map kept me honest!

In other years (and other schools) the Professional Learning Map took on different labels across the top. The point, however, is to make sure that instructional leadership was planned for, thoughtful, and aligned with everything else in the school. I have shared this tool with others and some principals have adopted the tool in order to map and guide their instructional leadership. While it may sound trite, you are far more likely to reach your destination when you know what your destination is and how you will get there. Such is the case with courageous instructional leadership.

Thoughtful consideration of the context and data a principal collects from her/his school can be translated in a map that shows how to get from here to there. As with any trip, detours and adjustments to the estimated arrival time will inevitably have to be made. But, using such a map (and making necessary mid-course adjustments) can also help an instructional leader who is undertaking a change to be a little more courageous. Having a deliberate and thoughtful objective that takes into consideration the context and culture is part of being courageous. Having a good plan, a Professional Learning Map, can contribute to a leader's confidence and enable courageous instructional leadership.

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What's Right about Reform

Suzanne Tingley

The officers of the senior class made an appointment to see me as superintendent of our small rural school. Their class wanted to take part in the National Day of Silence “to heighten the awareness of persons being silenced about homosexual or transgender issues through political or social means, or even death.” The event is sponsored by LGBTA (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered Alliance), and students participate by remaining silent for the entire day.

The students and I sat in my office and talked through their proposal. Participation was voluntary, they said, but they had met with their class and nearly everyone wanted to do it. They showed me a sample of the t-shirt they would wear that day, and it did not violate the school's dress code. I expressed my concern that silence during classes would not be conducive to education. They thought about that and then came back with another very mild proposal: They would remain silent only during their lunch period.

I was impressed. The students were concerned, sincere, and committed enough to give up their own social time to make a point. I gave my permission and my support.

And that's when things got interesting.

By the time I got to school the next morning, I had a stack of phone messages on my desk. Led by the ladies of the Parents' Association, parents were definitely not happy and had plenty to say about my “encouraging those kinds of beliefs.” The rumor mill was churning, and 30 minutes of silence at lunch quickly morphed into a K-12 gay pride parade around the school and down Main Street. The local newspaper and the television stations called but thankfully decided to downplay the incident. One parent, whom I had respected up to this point said, “If not supporting this makes me a bigot, then I'm a bigot and proud of it!”

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Well.

The ladies of the Parents' Association marched into my office and demanded that I not let students be silent even during lunch. I told them I doubted that I could make them talk if they didn't want to, half expecting one of them to say, like in an old Harvey Korman sketch, “Ve haf ways to make zem talk!”

I had kept the Board of Education informed right from the beginning, and at this point, I decided I would not back down unless they ordered me to. I simply could not rescind my approval of the seniors' very reasonable and admirable request.

After a few days of turmoil, the seniors made another appointment to see me. They had decided to abandon their idea. It was now causing problems for students whose parents had forbidden them to participate. It had become divisive issue for their class. So they decided it was best at the moment to let it drop. They thanked me for my support.

As they stood up to leave my office, the class president paused. "We just want you to know, Ms. T," she said, "that the irony of this situation is not lost on us."

Common wisdom tells us we learn more from defeat than we do from victory provided that it doesn't dissuade us from ever trying anything new or controversial again. Instead, we regroup, we reflect, and we step up to the next challenge. Next time I'd do a better job of laying the groundwork. Next time I'd plan a little better. Next time I'd ask the Parents' Association ladies to buy the t-shirts. OK, maybe not. But next time I'd still approve the students' proposal. My job, after all, included supporting positive change.

Storied news anchor Dan Rather, at one point in his career, took to closing his usual evening litany of wars, murders, fires, hurricanes, and other bad news by looking directly into the camera and uttering a single word: "Courage." This baleful farewell was short lived, however, as his producers felt that maybe a simple "Good night and thanks for watching" was more appropriate in that it didn't leave viewers feeling they needed to go out and build a bunker by the next morning.

If you've been paying attention to the latest developments in education reform over the past year, however, you might think Rather's "Courage" is apropos. It turns out lots of people don't think we're doing a very good job of educating kids and have lots of ideas of how things should be changed. Business people and politicians in particular seem to believe that all of our schools are failing miserably from sea to shining sea with the possible exception of a few in Scarsdale, Hollywood Hills, Grosse Pointe, and, of

course, the schools that their own children attend. Ignoring the multitude of successful schools outside the big cities, critics paint everyone with a broad hairy brush.

During this period of virulent school reform, teachers have become targets of national criticism and legislation. Over the past year Wisconsin and Ohio have limited collective bargaining for teachers and set minimum amounts of health insurance contributions. Legislation in New York, Florida, California, New Jersey and many other states now require teachers' evaluations to include "value added," a euphemism for students' progress as measured by standardized, state or local tests.

Funding for schools has been drastically, some say punitively, cut, resulting in furloughs for perhaps thousands of teachers and other school personnel nationwide. Seniority no longer has rights in some states when it comes to who goes and who stays. A few schools have been shut down; others have fired all of their teachers and administrators only to rehire a few of them back. New Jersey and other states hired outside consultants to devise statewide protocols for classroom evaluations, ignoring the important idea that local teachers and administrators need to agree on what constitutes good teaching and speak the same language to describe it.

NCLB is still alive, but no one is quite sure how it will look after surgery. We can only hope that politicians will take into consideration recent studies that reveal that (surprise!) high stakes testing every few minutes hasn't improved student performance and in fact has led to gaming the system.

Change is not new to schools; neither is criticism. There are some differences this time around, however. The federal government has always set guidelines for schools in general and has funded (or defunded) various pieces of legislation as political winds change. Every president wants to be known as the "Education President," so we are used to signature initiatives like NCLB or Race to the Top. At the state level, however, this time it's not about curriculum. It's about benefits and job performance. Most importantly, it's about money.

State governments facing huge deficits have lost patience with schools that chronically underperform.

Why continue to hand out millions in state aid to schools like Central Falls in Rhode Island where about a quarter of their students graduate? Teachers protest that they are doing the best they can with kids who come from difficult home situations, but all kids can learn, right? Not just those from middle class homes. Make no mistake: Michelle Rhee's now-famous observation in *Waiting for Superman* that some schools have become great places for adults, but not such great places for kids resonates with reformers.

Like it or not, all schools are going to have to change how they do business. Some might say it's punishing the entire class for the behaviors of several enormous wayward students, but every school needs to look at itself and decide how to do things better, cheaper, and more efficiently.

In the face of all this criticism, building a bunker certainly has appeal, and a few educators have attempted it, metaphorically speaking, of course. Some teachers, union leaders, and talking heads, now in defense mode, have regressed to pointing to poverty as the real reason kids don't learn. Union leaders protest that they can't control what happens to kids outside of school (as if they ever could). Still others insist that school districts simply haven't given educators the tools they need to do their jobs. And then there are those, unfortunately, who simply blame the kids.

None of these excuses enhances our reputation to the public.

Even the best schools can be better, but looking at ourselves critically takes courage. Accepting outside criticism and responding by doing a better job takes courage. Refusing to build bunkers by complaining, whining, making excuses or feeling sorry for ourselves takes courage.

If we were honest, we'd have to admit that some of the ideas put forward by reformers have been a long time coming and may very well be good for kids. Granted, some of them are just plain crazy too, like the Florida legislature's idea to have teachers put grades for parents on the child's report card. But by staying positive and refusing to make excuses, educators can catch the wave instead of going out with the tide.

Let's take, for example, using test scores as part of a teacher's evaluation. Ignore for a moment all the objections – classes vary, kids may be absent, tests are suspect, not every subject has a test, etc. Instead, think of your self as a parent. Which teacher do you want your own personal child to have, the one whose students show a year's progress most years or the one whose test scores over several years are always the lowest of the group? Of course, politicians muck up the idea by suggesting that changes be both instantaneous and draconian; some are suggesting that 50% of a teacher's evaluation should be based on test scores and that the evaluation will determine pay. And it should start tomorrow.

Using test scores is an important measure, but only one measure. And data should be longitudinal. Our job as educators, as the New York State Council of Superintendents has chosen to do, is to try to intelligently influence policy makers so that we get the best iteration of a new idea. Otherwise we will be looking at one more initiative that might have been useful, but because of hasty implementation will be met with frustration, anger, and resistance.

Consider another policy change: Using competency rather than seniority to determine how cuts are made. Of course, we would all prefer that no cuts be made at all, but no school administrator hasn't thought at least once of how great it would be for kids if ineffectual Mr. Jones would finally retire so that one of the best and brightest new hires in years would have a job next year. Even if this proposal does become law, it will still take courage on the part of the administrator to make the call. And it will take courage on the part of the teachers' association to consider what's best for kids rather than what's best for self - protection.

I'm not talking about making lemonade from lemons; I'm talking about making lemon cookies and lemon tarts and lemon meringue pie and maybe limoncello. There is much in the reform movement that will benefit kids and eventually adults too even though we may not like all of it. We can work more effectively and efficiently without looking for excuses. There is no question that serious attention must be paid to schools in large urban areas that have been overwhelmed with problems for a long time. They not too big to fail; they fail because they are too big. But there are many smaller schools in every state that

competently carry out their mission of educating kids and work to continuously improve.

As educators, we are nothing if not resilient. And by the way, two years later the National Day of Silence went off without a hitch. The kids still bought their own t-shirts.

LEADERS WITH COURAGE ARE:

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UNDERSTANDING

REFLECTIVE

ACCOUNTABLE

GENUINE

ENERGETIC

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Courage x Three

Mary Ellen Kalil Shevalier

A French and art teacher courageously stepped out of their comfort zones to collaboratively teach a new course that focused on media literacy and 21st century methods. Entitled “I am a citizen of the World”, the course was a great success. Was it courageous of these two veteran teachers to embark on a new journey (teaching for 25 and 30 years respectively) so late in their careers? Was it courageous of them to journey more deeply into the digital territory much more familiar to their younger colleagues? As the designer of this new course, I didn’t feel courageous at all, but rather naturally compelled to help fix a system that I knew was broken; a system that was losing our greatest American resource, our children! The immense responsibility that our profession holds for the future of our country and world made the decision to embark on this pilot program easy. The timing seemed right. Educational reform, one of the hottest topics of our time has been a topic simmering (or stewing) for years! Although I am a product of this system, I optimistically view this as a time in history when we will record the greatest positive systemic transformation since the inception of public school.

With the support of administration to initiate our pilot, the efforts yielded an increase in student engagement and positive influence for district-wide and regional initiatives promoting 21st century learning. With all the talk about why we need to transition into 21st century teaching, our course offered a model for a high energy, authentic and successful classroom. Highly satisfied with our findings, my colleague, Françoise Piron and I published a book entitled *World Class, the Re-education of America*. (United States ReinventED, Sheviron, LLC, NY, 2010.) This book offers a clear philosophy for students, teachers, parents, administrators and policy makers to create the change that is needed in our American educational system. More importantly, the reader is taken from philosophy to a tangible How-To format that will make their children’s education one that will infuse them into a “World Class”, to which this generation truly belongs. *World Class, The Re-education of America*, is a must read for all stakeholders who understand the implications of our educational system for our personal, national and global success. It is for all of those who know that the system is broken and that it is too important not to fix. We are now sharing our experience to benefit other K-12 schools, colleges, and educational leaders at the regional and state levels. As the designer of this new course, I realized that it took optimism, perseverance and perhaps a bit of tenacity. I did not realize at the onset that courage might need to be called upon to see this pilot through, but indeed courage was needed; not the type of demonstrative courage one would typically expect but rather courage of the heart.

Mary Ellen Shevalier is an art teacher in the South Jefferson Central School District in Adams, New York. She is co-author of, *World Class, The Re-Education of America*.

In reflection, I discovered three types of courage needed for success. Ultimately it is the same three types of courage that will be needed for our educational leaders to embrace if they desire a successful transformation to 21st century schools and the healing of our educational system overall!

- The courage to take risk.
- The courage to let go.
- The courage to believe!

As the burdens of increased mandates, financial woes and legal/social pressures pile high, I wholeheartedly wish for our educational leaders to have courage! Within the following examples I encourage our leaders to envision how powerfully different their role and the roles of their teachers could be in the upcoming school year. The power to change perception lies within. It is ours for the taking.

The courage to take risk

In November of 2010, Oprah Winfrey, world famous talk show personality, hosted a panel of government, business, and educational leaders who echoed the need for educational reform. I was impressed by the benevolence of Mark Zuckerberg, the 26 year old CEO of Facebook, when he made a substantial personal and financial investment to assist the educational reform movement. Zuckerberg said that he had been seriously thinking about educational reform for the past year. He proceeded to tell a story about one of his employees who had caused the entire Facebook site to crash. Can you believe the company celebrated his “risk-taking” attitude by having a party? Zuckerberg indicated that his company rewards risk-taking as well as moving quickly. He considers these the two actions that propel us forward.

Throughout our observations and documentations we consistently witness a new enthusiasm among our students. Twice a year (once each semester) we greet a new group of diverse students. The diversity ranges in grade levels from 9-12, intellectual, academic, and socio-economic realms. It is important that we emphasize this diversity so that it is understood that the high quality work that has resulted is not from only higher academic-level students. During a community presentation, one business leader asked after seeing numerous student-created projects; “Is this class an Advanced Placement course?” We credit the outcome

of powerful student projects as a result of diversity. That is to say, utilizing individual strengths collaboratively will maximize team potential, and quality of outcomes. After all, our most successful corporations, and our most meaningful discoveries in the professions of medicine, law, and engineering for example, come from collaborative work. Our students’ renewed engagement with learning is the foundation to all other educational success. The astounding renaissance that was seen in our most apathetic student is due to the enlistment of two fundamental considerations in our 21st century approach to learning. The first element is to respect the unique gifts of each individual and empower them to use these gifts to their fullest capacity with intent to benefit their team. The second is transparent accountability that ensures various and fair means of assessment. This will expose the truth of individual performance as well as provide the tools for reflection and growth.

Element One: Respect each individual

One would think that respecting each individual is a natural mind-set that exists within our school systems. In fact, our system is primarily still being run in a 19th century, industrial age model. This model does not respect the individuality of the students, but rather works at molding them into a “One size fits all” group of learners. Teams of students (properly trained in teaming*) quickly understand the concept of working smarter not harder. * (see five steps of teaming developed by Sheive and Metivier © 1994, *World Class the Re-Education of America*, pgs 121-123) Feeling respected by their colleagues for offering their personal strengths to benefit the team, each student grows in confidence, engagement, and ultimately ownership of their education. The areas of strength range from organizational & leadership capabilities to strengths in facilitation, mediation, technology, research, creative problem solving, presentation and public relations to name a few. Students begin to naturally teach one another, if by nothing else, through example.

Element two: Accountability

We have certainly come a long way in identifying brain functions, different learning styles and abilities and we have rightfully provided various services to accommodate the individual student. To what avail are these programs however, when all students are held accountable to passing a standardized test?

Authentic assessment is an essential consideration for the 21st century student so that the individual is held accountable within the team setting. Adapted from the SUNY Oswego Administration in Education program, the various forms of assessment that we employ gives a true picture of the accomplishments and level of mastery that each student achieves. Our students are transparently informed that all aspects of their work will be evaluated by self, colleagues and supervisors. (Our new name for teachers to indicate the new role as one who guides the student to knowledge rather than one who gives information in the hopes that the student will gain knowledge.) As supervisors, we provide rubric templates for daily and weekly work ethic/progress. Students were asked to record this as a team and have open dialogue to reach consensus. Online surveys to evaluate one's contributions as a team member came next. Online assessments of fellow team members ensued. The most powerful form of assessment, one that almost always pinpoints the level of student achievement was a final essay. Deemed the "truth essay" this form of assessment became a strong tool to develop professional and objective viewpoints as well as tools for personal reflection.

As seen in the following requirements, the "truth essay" allows students to reflect upon the process and paint an honest picture of each team member's contribution. (as seen in World Class, The Re-education of America, pg 159)



FINAL TEAM ASSESSMENT: THE TRUTH ESSAY

"You cannot control the actions of others.
You can only change yourself!"

Write an essay that includes the following:

- Page 1: Unit title, team members' names, the author's name and date submitted;
- Pages 2-4: Each separate page should have each team member's name and the various roles s/he played for each process. Each team member is to detail his/her perceptions of his/her team members' contributions as weak, mediocre, or strong. They must detail evidence to support their perceptions. Each member must include a page about him/herself;
- Page 5: Each member must write a concluding paragraph that summarizes his/her overall experience as a part of the team and what s/he would like to do differently to improve his/her contributions during the next team experience.

Each unit of study concluded with a "board meeting". This was student facilitated as the supervisors simply listened to (and transparently documented on a smart board) the class' critique of the pros & cons of the unit, teaming, production/process and outcomes. The supervisors addressed each and every comment within two days of the board meeting and with class consensus, moved on to a new unit whose procedural considerations had been tweaked for this particular group of learners.

The courage to let go:

We are committed to holding true to the principles and needs of the 21st century student. One such principle is to give students a voice and a choice. This necessitates our acceptance of two beliefs within our classroom dynamic; change is the constant and control is an illusion. This realization led us to practice these concepts which, we soon discovered, took us courage to un-learn what we had been taught and practiced throughout our careers. Ultimately, we had to have the courage to "Let Go!"

In May of 2004, I entered this story in my journal. It is a story that has had a profound impact on me. Little did I know that I was being introduced to a concept that would become a key factor in the success of creating a 21st century learning environment.

The story is about a little monkey who is trapped. (adapted from Sister Sebastia's story, "*Catching Monkeys*", as told in *Stories They Will Remember* by Rose D. Sloat, Darryl S. Doane, p. 64). The monkey caught sight of a luscious banana that lay neatly tucked inside a hole of a tree's trunk. As the monkey fit his tiny and supple hand into the hole to grab the banana, he was unaware that this was a trap set to keep him in captivity. As the monkey attempted to pull the banana out of the tree's trunk he found that he was stuck. At first, the monkey calmly tried to maneuver the banana and his hand free but as each attempt rendered him unsuccessful, he became more and more frantic. Soon, the monkey was squealing and crying. The harder he tried to free himself, the more he cried aloud. A wise person happened along during a walk through the jungle. Upon hearing the distressed monkey, the wise person stopped at the base of the tree. This person possessed many, many years of life and had great gifts of observation. The wise man saved the little monkey by calling out to him; "LET GO"!

The story of the monkey and the banana hit my heart in a special way. In reflection, I came to realize that if I wanted to enjoy the luscious rewards of watching students engaging in their education in a new and meaningful way, then I must climb the tree and reach for it. I also realized that I must risk much, while avoiding the numerous personal traps and pitfalls that I may encounter in order to invest myself wholly in the process. The scariest part for me was intrinsically understood; to empower my students, I must first "LET GO"!

"Some of us think holding on makes us strong; but sometimes it is letting go." Hermann Hesse

I truly enjoyed my new found courage to "let go" in the classroom. It took a great deal of practice and self-restraint but I was reminded over and over that to truly encourage my students to own their education, I must constantly let go of my perceived control. With use of minimal guidelines and objectives,

this transformed the classroom to a place of student initiated decisions, ground rules, goals and educationally sound outcomes!

The courage to believe!

When it comes to courage; I credit our superintendent, principals, guidance department, and district leader of technology. At the onset of our proposed class I knew that the support of our administrators was essential. Intinctively, I anticipated opposition from various factions to be a very real possibility. I believe that the positive majority of professionals work tirelessly to ensure each student's personal growth and success. We all know however, that the educational institution is well versed with professional jealousy, territorialism, and elitism. What may be worse are those who wish to protect the isolation and mediocrity of which they are accustomed. It is the latter with whom our administration must courageously deal with to un-do the incompetence and inequities within our system.

After all, it takes courage to support an effort when it reflects upon your reputation. It is this group of educational leaders that would ultimately shoulder the complaints and may be called upon to justify offering such a course while in the midst of economic strife and increased mandates from the state. Without the courage to believe in us, this journey would have never begun. Our potential to influence positive change in our school system would have been null and void. We simply needed the chance to share our strengths. It is with gratitude that I credit our district's leaders with true courage; the courage to believe!

Reference

For further information and student samples visit our class website: <http://www.spartanpride.org/webpages/citizen/index.cfm>

Or our book's site: <http://sites.google.com/site/worldclassbook/>

Organizing Schools for the Future: Reacting to the Perfect Storm

William D. Silky, Ed.D.

In the past year and a half, one of my colleagues—Alan Pole—has been delivering talks all over New York State to school leaders. The essence of his message is that education is confronting a “perfect storm” and that schooling as we have known it for many years will no longer suffice. Alan has argued that we need to make some fundamental changes in how schools are organized and operate if we wish to prepare students for their future in a highly connected, global world. The forces impacting schools today that have created this perfect storm include higher expectations of students, significantly less financial resources to accomplish the mission, and for most (at least upstate) districts these challenges are occurring in a period of declining enrollment. Will it be possible to make all students college and career ready when they leave high school? To do what my colleague argues will undoubtedly take a tremendous amount of courage and creativity.

Nearly all school leaders have been scratching their heads trying to find ways to reorganize schools and school districts to survive this storm. Some districts have explored closing school buildings and consolidating with another school in the district. Others have examined reorganizing grade levels such as moving sixth grades to the middle school. Consortia of school districts have considered forming regional high schools while yet others are considering various ways to share programs and services. Certainly, the most dramatic change in school organization that a large number of school districts have wrestled with is consolidation of the district with a neighboring district. Any and all of these means of riding out the storm take a tremendous amount of courage on the part of the school leaders calling the questions.

Mere discussion of school district consolidation (merging with a neighbor) can cut short a superintendent’s or school board member’s tenure. This type of courageous leadership has been needed in the past and will be needed even more so in the next few years. In today’s environment it is this sort of dramatic, fundamental change in the way schools operate that may be the only (or one of the few) options for districts that wish to deliver the type and quality of education the 21st century will demand. This is why we need leaders with great courage more than ever today.

William Silky is a Professor and Director of Educational Leadership at Le Moyne College, Syracuse, New York. He is the co-editor of this edition of IMPACT.

School district consolidation is not new in New York. In fact, in 1910 there were approximately 10,000 school districts in the state; today there is slightly less than 700 (NYSED, 2011). In the past century we have seen tremendous consolidation of districts. Since 1960 however, the pace of school merger has slowed precipitously. In recent years there has been

perhaps one or two district mergers per year. Raising the “M” (merger) word evokes a lot of emotion. We see this not only with schools, but also in discussions involving churches, fire departments, towns and villages. Loss of control, identity, concern for longer bus rides, dealing with vacant school buildings, increased class sizes, among other issues are invariably raised. On the other side of the argument are concerns for maintaining (and perhaps adding) programs—particularly at the secondary level—that students need to prepare them for their future and the ever-present concern for local taxpayers being able to foot the bill.

Research on school size is fairly extensive (for example see Cotton, K, 1996). One conclusion that seems to be widely accepted is that the minimum high school size to offer a broad curriculum is approximately 400 students in grades 9-12. A recent study several of my colleagues conducted for districts in Wayne County (N.Y.) examined the curricular breadth of high schools (similar demographically to those of Wayne County) with 400, 800 and 1200 students. One of the key findings in this investigation was that high schools of 1200 students on average offered 15 Advanced Placement courses, 10 International Baccalaureate courses, 16 other college bearing courses, and two out of three high schools provided Project Lead the Way. By contrast, high schools in the study with approximately 400 students averaged three Advanced Placement courses, two IB courses, nine other college credit bearing courses, and none of the high schools examined provided Project Lead the Way. Other researchers have found that there are diminishing benefits in terms of curricular breadth if high schools become too large (too few students benefit from additional course offerings to justify the cost) (Monk and Haller, 2011). Does breadth of curriculum ensure that students will be college and career ready upon high school graduation? Of course not, but there is a much greater probability that students will be if a broad curriculum is available. And, while there are there other ways to deliver a broad curriculum—such as through video conferencing and asynchronous learning—these have not yet been widely embraced by most high schools.

Since 1986 I have conducted more than 20 school district merger studies in various regions of New York State. As a result, I have had the pleasure of associating with quite a few sitting superintendents that were brave enough to challenge their communities

to at least explore the merger option. And, in nearly all cases, this was done so the local community could continue to offer its children a high quality education at a cost the local taxpayers could afford. Exploring reorganization for a superintendent is high risk; should a merger (centralization) occur between two districts, only one of the two (or neither) may end up being the superintendent in the merged district. I have seen superintendents lose their jobs for doing the right thing—this is courage in action! Yet, my own research (Silky and Castallo, 1999) of districts that have merged with a neighbor has found that high school curricular offerings increased following the merger. Clearly this is a personal risk-community reward paradox.

I recall from a number of years ago one instance of a local superintendent that did in fact lose his job simply by going out on the limb and calling for his district to merge with a neighbor. In this case he did so knowing in his heart that a merger would provide better education for local schoolchildren. And, it is important to note, that this superintendent himself had grown up and lived in this community his entire life. His school district and the neighboring district did in fact consolidate. Fortunately for him personally he did secure another school superintendent position from which he has since retired.

As we look to the immediate future, the events that have led us into this perfect storm will necessitate more of this type of courageous leadership. In its absence, many school districts in New York will not be able to prepare students adequately for a successful, fulfilling life in this century. A merger study I recently conducted for two very small school districts in the Adirondacks is the perfect example. These rural districts already combine their high school students for grades 10, 11 and 12. Yet when we examined the high school curriculum we found that there are many electives, and even some core courses, that may not survive these tight fiscal times and declining student numbers. For example, in 2010-11 there were only four students each in Pre-Calculus, Calculus, and Chemistry and only two in Physics. The question becomes, if we continue to operate the same way as we have in the past, will we be able to prepare students in these STEM fields? This is the reason these two districts chose to at least study consolidation.

In conclusion, school leaders today need to show the courage and creativity to rise to this challenge if we are to ensure that today's students are being prepared for their future, not our present. So I ask, are you up to the challenge?

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Staying

Suzanne Gilmour, Ed.D

There are so many reasons to leave... our jobs, locations, relationships, and the present moment. Yet, despite unimaginable obstacles, we stay. Sustainability is key to the success of organizations and relationships, but do some underlying truths mask the real reasons for this sustainability? Some stay in jobs because of health insurance benefits or in careers because they can't think of anything else to do with the years of education it took to get there. We stay in relationships that no longer feed our souls because of financial reasons. But, many stay for all the right reasons.

Interestingly, we almost never stay in the one place where we have the most control- the present moment; this is where sustainability is most authentic, most powerful, and most doable if we choose to remain. Why don't we stay? Because it isn't valued.

When I was a principal, we created a support group for children who had suffered a loss, whether through parents' divorce or the death of a loved one. Jonathan had lost his grandfather and was despondent. His grandfather had been his hero and Jonathan was floundering without him. His mother asked if I would encourage him to join the group since she had not had luck in doing so. One morning his mother called and thanked me for persuading Jonathan to join the group. She asked what I said to convince him and I told her I didn't know; she should ask him. She did and his response was "It's because she stops in the hallway to say my name and gives me a thumbs up." This tiny example taught me to stop, give real eye contact and stay in the moment, even if it was only for 2-3 seconds. Being truly present made a difference to Jonathan. From that moment on I suspected it would make a difference in my interactions with others as well.

The Antithesis of Staying

One gift of our modern society is speed. We can do so much more, faster and faster. We can look as though we are multi-tasking when in fact we are engaging in split-second simultaneous activity, none of which is getting our best thinking. While researching for this article, I read books published as far back as 1995. In one book the opening paragraph talked about the difficulty of living in such a fast-paced, ever-changing society. It's over 15 years later and we are still struggling with this.

If I haven't seen you in awhile and ask how you have been, often I'll get a response something akin to, "I've been so busy." It seems to be the word of the new millennium. And yet, if I apply the lesson from Jonathan, it was my pulling back of this sense of urgency to be busy that allowed a

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connection between us that changed his outlook about an important issue for him. It was not being busy that helped; it was being simple; it was staying in the moment for just those few seconds instead of rushing off to numerous compelling priorities down the hall. I continue to hope that the next time I ask, “How have you been?,” I will get an answer such as, “I’ve been so simple.” This is of course with the full realization that simple in no way means easy. It is also recognizing that underlying this simplicity is trust. Without this trust, great leadership is not possible (Blanchard & Miller, 2004).

Although I heard this lesson of staying the moment from Jonathan early in my leadership career, it has been a life-long challenge to first value it and then achieve it. I think it’s interesting that I still choose to talk about *being* in the present moment not as being present but as *achieving* it. It seems I still have work to do. As leaders we may be drawn to solving problems; we need not always give our advice or opinion. We just need to be present (Palmer, 2004).

It is so much easier to fill up our PDAs and other devices with multiple appointments or activities than to delete them. I remember my Parents Club president talking to me about the additional activities they wanted to plan for the upcoming year. When I asked what we wouldn’t be doing she was stunned. We never took anything off the calendar. We had travel sports teams go further and further afield from our school. We just kept adding games to make better experiences for our students and our teams more competitive but the whole system couldn’t keep up. Parents felt guilty because now they had so many scheduling conflicts it was impossible to get to every game. Teachers felt the pressure of assigning homework that could be completed while riding on a bus or for catching students up on missed work. Our capacity may continue to be stretched beyond what we can sustain without sacrificing quality.

This mindfulness and staying in the present moment may be particularly difficult for leaders. Our effectiveness is often viewed by how well we live in the future. Being future-oriented enables us to predict what will happen so we can develop processes, procedures and programs to either avoid potential problems or enhance experiences for others. Our wisdom lies in our ability to translate experiences from our past or

past research to provide better opportunities for the future. We have bifurcated our effectiveness: one branch is our wisdom from the past and that impacts the other branch- our action for the future. Past and future are represented but where is the present moment in this? If we are mindful and can stay in the moment, we can use this past knowledge or visions for the future to add to *now* before we take action.

Learning to focus may be assisted by getting away from all of our hectic and busy pace. We may need to intentionally put reflection, space and quiet in our day (Dalai Lama, 2006). If we are to lead *a fortiori*, with a higher aim, we need this intentional reflection (Gilmour & Kinsella, 2009). We also may need to not strive for perfection but rather making the mistakes of action or inaction, knowing that we will either have criticism from cynics now or criticism from the future generation. We must choose (Reeves, 2009).

When looking at these forks in the road, Yogi Berra said, “When you come to a fork in the road, take it.” I wonder if we stop to reflect before we decide which road to take, might we capture some insight or way of knowing that would better inform what we do next? When Einstein developed the Theory of Relativity he was not in his science lab; he was taking a walk in the woods. He was spending quiet moments to let all of the disparate ideas swirling in his head find their own meaningful connections rather than constructing conclusions solely from the data before him. The incubation time allowed for this synthesis of ideas. Barth (2001) reinforces this idea of taking time for reflection so that we may “distill, clarify and articulate our craft knowledge”.

What can writers and scientists tell us?

Writers and scientists have a way of staying. They use individual moments to observe their surroundings so they can formulate words or hypotheses to help describe the world. Writers are excellent observers of behavior and environment. They spend intentional time observing and soaking in what’s around them to add validity to characters and authenticity to their stories. Scientists engage in similar observation that leads to their discoveries. It’s a combination of observation and reflection. Mozart talked about how he needed to have distance from his composing for new ideas and combinations to

come to him. As with Einstein, Mozart and others, it was that purposeful observation, coupled with time to resonate that created outstanding work.

Drift Throughs as a means of staying

Recently, in the midst of my presenting a professional development session with some very talented principals I thought about how I was not modeling being in the moment. These principals were concerned about how the new APPR and new state regulations would affect their ability to conduct walk-through observations. Instead of highlighting the need to be in the moment, I was only encouraging them to have a specific focus when they entered the classroom. This focus for walk-throughs reflects good practice, but it is incomplete. For example, while using a specific focus, principals gather data perhaps with an itouch with an embedded rubric; they are then able to make comments about how well the teacher reached her objectives and where she fell on the rubric. Done.

However, in addition to very focused actions of research-based walk-throughs which are necessary in our new APPR process, this same technology also supports what I'm calling drift-throughs. During these drift-throughs we stay in the moment. In this process principals drift in and out of classrooms and note what catches their attention. Just like the writer or the scientist, what patterns do they see as they meander from room to room? Although the technology will graph and pie-chart whatever we enter, this drift-through requires us to be attune to what we are experiencing, not what we are typing in to a smartphone. It's like the photographer who really isn't in the moment because she is spending so much energy getting just the right photo and trying to capture what's happening that she is outside of it. The photo is not the event. The rubric is not the learning. The map is not the territory.

Alfred Korzybski (1933) coined this phrase, meaning that a map (our technology embedded rubrics) can describe a territory (the classroom) in a way that resembles the real events(s) but this map can never equal the territory, only our own perception of it, our map. Everything we perceive from the outside world comes to us as second-hand information; it is delayed, even if by only a few milliseconds and then we process it according to our experiences. While it may look as though we are in the present, our thoughts and our

collected data reflect the past. We might caution using these data to make decisions, knowing they only represent what we saw; they are not the actual events whose meaning could vary depending upon the observer. If we describe what we see during these drift-throughs, using language that is open-ended rather than linear and discrete we open up more possibilities for others to share their interpretations. It's this type of language that enables poetry and parables to speak to so many. It's why stories are so powerful (Intraot & Scribner, 2007).

The data that are evident tell the story of the entire school's culture that encompasses all classrooms, offices etc. How do these reflections become the story of the school? This story, that includes what is done well in the school to help students achieve, becomes embraced by all stakeholders and moves us to a shared responsibility for the success of learning for all students. It leads us toward sustainability. During these drift-throughs we take the time to stop and ask students what they are learning, and how they are learning it, so that their voice is heard and given value. We can pass the story on to parents so they can have hope for their child's future as well. We share the story with the community because it is their school, funded by their resources.

Through drift-throughs we observe what's working so we can build on these successes. If I ask teachers to raise their hands if something that went wrong last week, many hands are held up. How many analyzed what went wrong? Most of the same hands would be still waving. If I ask who had something go well last week, there are generally fewer hands raised. And the final question, "How many of you spent the same amount of time analyzing why something works as you do analyzing why something doesn't?" When we get something to work we may just take it for granted and move on to the next challenge rather than focusing on what works so we can devise ways of getting more of it. If the story of our school is one of labeling us as a SINI or PLA, we may not get to the analysis of what's working. This is where leadership is so essential. Leaders find these successes, cultivate them and weave them into the fabric of their school's story, a non-fiction story that is.

We say we don't have time for these drift-throughs because there is too much to do. However, if we don't

challenge ourselves to be keen observers and to stay in the moment, how will we impact the school's culture and refine the story that tells who we are as a learning community? It isn't either-or; it's the integration of being present during these drift-throughs coupled with other focused observational practices that will move student learning forward.

Just as we have embedded observational rubrics, perhaps we need a drift- through app on our smart phones as well. We can jot down a comment on our iphone or take a photo so later when we intentionally put some quiet in our day, we can compile the data to illustrate the patterns we observe, recognizing still that the map is not the territory.

I once wrote an article about the most misunderstood language: silence. When we walk into our organizations or home or friends' houses and we're quiet the most frequent question asked is, "What's wrong?" In our western culture silence has somehow become an indicator of something awry rather than a good sign; a sign that severe creativity is taking place. Placing silence in our day might entice these new ideas to connect so we can try new interventions. Otherwise, we are not engaging in second or third order change, but merely changing the color of the crayons and expecting major changes in student success.

Experts at not staying present

We are very skilled at not staying. We have honed our escape responses better than any Houdini. I am facing you and I appear to be listening to you but I'm really going through my to-do list in my head. I can stay profoundly busy so it's easy to avoid what I don't want to address, at least in the short term. I can numb out; for example, I can read my email for endless hours instead of sticking with something that requires my presence. Attending to my email enables me to get out of the current moment to a place that is more familiar and comfortable. This reason behind this not-staying reflects what Tibetan Buddhists have termed *shenpa*. It's a bit difficult to define but it's the energy that is the sticky feeling, the urge or the attachment we have to something that entices us to go to a familiar activity rather than stay in one that needs our attention. By continuing to do what we want to do versus what we need to do, we avoid the *shenpa* rather than address it (Chodron, 2005).

For example, I don't like writing up an evaluation that needs to contain some negative comments about a teacher's performance, so I do my email instead... and I do this for several days in a row until a looming deadline arrives. Then I ask myself the same question that I ask my students when given their excuse that they do their best work under pressure: Is it your best work or your only work? Only when we fight the urge to go to a place that is more comfortable rather than staying with what needs our attention will we achieve sustainability of effective teaching which benefits our children. By staying and working through the *shenpa*, the prickly moments, we will help be able to turn the observations and connections that are initially fuzzy into innovative ideas that will enhance student success.

Final thoughts

"We can make our minds so like still water that beings gather about us that they may see, it may be, their own images, and so live for the moment with a clearer perhaps even with a fiercer life because of our quiet."

Earth, Fire and Water, William Butler Yeats

Staying takes courage. We have heard of the fight or flight response to stress and neither one provides a model for our effective response to the challenges facing schools today. Staying is the third option. We don't flee or fight it; we stay. We address the *shenpa*, whatever irritates us or is scratchy, and we work through by our mindful staying with it. We continually ask "who am I?" so that our roles can remain congruent with what is needed, rather than a pre-conditioned role that may no longer match the growth of the organization or meet the needs of those with whom we engage (Tolle, 2005).

We engage in drift-throughs so we can continue to ask "What if?" as we seek to find creative solutions to sustain learning for each child in our school. We notice patterns of effective teaching that are then woven into the story of our school. This story illustrates how students benefit by our asking, "What's working?" rather than always focusing on what isn't. Sustainability is more than just keeping things going. It's about keeping the right things going. Sustainability is about the courage to stay despite the many reasons to leave. And, for us personally, if we don't learn to stay in the moment, what will we have at the end of the day? The moments are all we have.

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NYSASCD WHOLE CHILD FOR THE 21ST CENTURY AWARD PROGRAM

2010 Awardees

Lima Primary School
Honeoye Falls CSD
Principal: Ms. Jeanine Lupisella

Lynwood Elementary School
Guilderland CSD
Principal: Mr. James Dillon

Pine Grove Middle School
East Syracuse Minoa CSD
Principal: Ms. Kelly Sajong

Port Jervis Middle School
Port Jervis City Schools
Principal: Ms. Cynthia Benedict

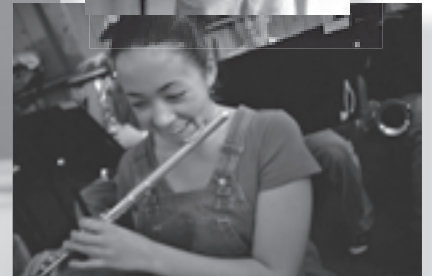
2011 Awardees

The Bronx Charter School
for Children
District 7, New York City
Executive Director: Kristina Jelinek

Fishkill Plains Elementary School
Wappingers CSD
Principal: Sylvia Epstein

PS 110 - The Monitor School
New York City
Principal: Anna Cano Amato

Washington Drive Primary School
Harborfields CSD
Principal: Maureen D. Kelly



How State Policy Thwarts 21st Century Leadership for Learning

Marilyn Tallerico, Ph.D.

Courageous leadership can take many different forms. Among them is the vital role of school leaders in challenging and speaking out about policies and practices that are inconsistent with research on educational effectiveness. The aim of this article is to equip readers with a strong rationale for why a recently revised New York State policy on teacher evaluation warrants the critical voices and “civilized disobedience” of courageous leaders (Morris, Crowson, Hurwitz, & Porter-Gehrie, 1981; Patterson, 2009).

Background

The general train of thought characterizing national and state education policy over the past several decades goes something like this (Tallerico, 2011):

- a) Subject-specific curriculum standards provide frameworks for defining what students should know and be able to do.
- b) Annually assessing student achievement of those standards produces useful information for educators’ planning and instruction.
- c) Student achievement on high-stakes exams can be enhanced by tightly aligning taught and tested curricula.
- d) Formative assessment of student learning should supplement annual testing and shape timely, responsive interventions so that no child falls behind.

The constellation of policies contributing to this overall trajectory is well intended, in that it is aimed at reducing historically-persistent achievement differences associated with color, socioeconomic status, and other variables. These policies also seek to elevate expectations of students, teachers, and administrators, while increasing accountability to the public.

Though hard to fault such respectable goals, these directions for PreK-12 schooling in the U.S. have not been without critics. Among the steep downsides noted is a narrowed, basics-oriented curriculum that hyper-values test taking, kindles cheating and test tampering, constrains teaching, limits personalization in classrooms, and diminishes the potential joys of learning for its own sake (Anyon, 2005; Apple & Beane, 2007; Au, 2007; Eisner, 2001; Gabriel, 2010; Toppo, 2011; Wolk, 2008 & 2010).

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Added most recently to this policy mix are:

- Federal Race to the Top (RttT) financial incentives to reform state

laws governing charter schools, the preparation and evaluation of educators, Common Core curriculum standards, and more (Heitin, 2011).

- A national socioeconomic context in which powerful political constituencies have mobilized to reduce the clout and benefits of public employee unions (Otterman, 2011).
- The Great Recession's pressures to reduce government spending, including education and resulting in numerous teacher layoffs throughout the U.S.
- Calls for replacing seniority-based layoff practices (i.e., last hired, first fired) with merit-based methods (i.e., worst performing, first fired) (Dillon, 2011).

In New York state (NYS), this confluence of sociopolitical and policy trends led to revised education regulations regarding how teachers are evaluated. These changes to previous Annual Professional Performance Reviews (APPR) have been critically appraised and contested on numerous and varied grounds (Heitin, 2011; Matthews, 2011b; Munno, 2011; Otterman, 2011; Saunders, 2011). This article explicates a critique based on particularly strong foundations of relevant research and field-tested theory. Those foundations center on what is known about evaluating teaching effectively and facilitating systemic change.

New York State Teacher Evaluation Policy

Let's start with a short, blunt overview. Even if the revised NYS APPR had incorporated the "best" and most widely agreed-upon assessment criteria, rubrics, performance measures, data infrastructures, and procedures for evaluating teaching, the timetables and preparation for policy start-up violated much of what prior studies conclude is needed for effectively implementing change in educational practice.

More nuanced discussion follows, though space limitations preclude elaboration of all aspects of these teacher evaluation policies and protocols. Throughout, it will be important to bear in mind the wider district, regional, state, and national context of budget cutting and personnel downsizing during spring and summer 2011. Why? Because both had some of their sharpest impacts on "non-essential" functions such as teachers' and administrators' professional development.

Timelines and Changes Required. Basically, the 700 or so NYS school districts were afforded about 12 weeks in summer 2011 to prepare for fall start-up of a significantly revised evaluation system (Matthews, 2011a; NYSED, 2011a, 2011b, & 2011c; Steiner, 2011). The reformed process required (among other things) explicit rubrics for assessing teaching quality, as well as linking students' standardized test scores to individual teacher performance. Also included in the mandate were requirements for garnering collectively bargained agreement on the specifics of the new system for each school district, when extant contracts expire.

Teachers – most not on contract during summer months – had to become familiar with the changed rating scales and criteria they would be judged against. Principals and other evaluators needed to become adept at evidence-based classroom observations of students and teachers using detailed rubrics differentiating among ineffective, developing, effective, and highly effective teaching performance. These same educators also were required to hone their skills in raising reflective questions and delivering timely and constructive feedback to teachers, as part of evaluation and improvement processes.

District leaders had to accurately determine (again, among other things) teachers-of-record for particular students in interdisciplinary, team teaching, inclusive, or multi-grade classrooms and other specialized pull-out or push-in program settings. Districts needed to enhance systems to collect, report, and verify multiple measures expected to contribute to a composite numerical score – ranging from 0 to 100 – for each teacher evaluated. Teachers of English Language Arts and Mathematics in grades 4-8 were subject to the new policy in 2011-2012. Thus, "during the phase-in of the new system, districts and BOCES [would] be operating a dual system of evaluations" (NYSED, 2011c, p. 41). Thereafter, the policy would apply to every teacher and principal.

By September 1, 2011, local boards of education (BOE) were required to adopt APPR plans for their districts, and post them on district websites within 10 days of adoption. Teams of administrative and teacher leaders were expected to create or revise policies for developing individual improvement plans for teachers whose composite scores fell below 75, for BOEs to approve. Additionally, BOEs needed to approve new

structures and procedures for handling appeals of performance evaluation scores. Districts also had to choose “Locally Selected Assessments” from a state-approved list that was released in August 2011, or invent their own assessments, whose results would contribute to teachers’ composite scores.

During summer 2011, the 37 regional Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) had to gear up to provide much of the training for evaluators. This process involved identifying selected BOCES representatives to participate in two days of Albany-based professional development in August 2011. Those representatives were then expected to turnkey train their respective BOCES “Network Teams” (NT) of experts in curriculum, data analysis, and instruction. The latter were to subsequently assist the initially-trained BOCES representatives to turnkey train school district personnel.

Additionally, although the state’s original plans were for all Network Team members to participate in the inaugural Albany training, budget and space constraints meant that many fewer were allowed to attend. This multi-step, “trickle-down” turnkey training approach was further complicated by the fact that small proportions of existing BOCES staff developers held administrative certification. Early on, this reality raised concerns about the credibility of those tasked with training principals and other administrative leaders.

Guidance documents and webinars from the state Education Department (e.g., NYSED, 2011c; www.engageny.org) indicated that additional NT training of evaluators was expected to continue through academic year 2014-2015, as more and more teachers and principals would become subject to the revised APPR requirements. Districts needed to invent ways to support the evaluation system and ongoing training needs themselves, when RttT grant funding ends three years after policy launch.

What We Know about Implementing Change and Evaluating Teaching

Now let’s contrast the overview presented above with what research and theory suggest as best practices for assessing teaching and for increasing the odds of implementing educational change successfully.

First, studies and expert opinion confirm that it takes considerable time and practice to hone the skills required to differentiate teaching quality through evidence-based classroom observations (Danielson, 2011; Downey, Steffy, Poston, & English, 2010; Hinchey, 2010; Toch, 2008; Weisberg et al., 2009). These skills include, for example, the ability to:

- Consistently distinguish between evidence and inference/opinion;
- Align relevant evidence with clear standards and rigorous criteria;
- Gather sufficient evidence to credibly justify differentiated ratings; and
- Achieve inter-rater consistency among evaluators.

Similarly, ample research and field-tested theory demonstrate the complexity of instructional leadership (Carver, Steele, & Herbel-Eisenmann, 2010; Danielson, 2009; Drago-Severson, 2008; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, Louis, Leithwood, & Anderson, 2004; Marzano, 2007; Stumbo & McWalters, 2011; Wahlstrom, 2010). This complexity includes the challenges of:

- collecting accurate, valid, and reliable classroom data,
- facilitating professional dialogue about student learning,
- communicating performance feedback constructively, and
- developing sound, defensible individual performance improvement plans.

This convergence of research and theory also underscores how crucial it is:

(1) to ground performance evaluation in shared teacher-evaluator understandings of what high-quality teaching looks and sounds like (Bowgren & Sever, 2010; Danielson, 2007, 2009; Marzano, 2007; Tallerico, 2005; Toch, 2008; Weisberg et al., 2009) and

(2) to train evaluators to gather relevant evidence reliably, interpret that information carefully, learn differentiated approaches for conferencing effectively with teachers, and design meaningful

performance improvement plans (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2006; Platt, Tripp, Ogden, & Fraser, 2000; Sullivan & Glanz, 2009; The New Teacher Project, n.d.).

The highly compressed calendar for APPR policy launch fell remarkably short on both counts, because time and resources for negotiation of understandings, capacity-building, and effective professional development were scant. These critical shortcomings undermined the likelihood of successful implementation, fidelity to policymakers' goals, and sustainability (Fullan, 2001; Joyce & Showers, 2002; Reeves, 2009). More about why and how, follows.

Prior Research on Time and Training

What does it take for adults to learn complex new educational skills at levels sufficient for adept application in real schools?

Five components are necessary for training to be effective (Joyce & Showers, as cited in Tallerico, 2005):

1. **Theory.** Presentation of the theory or rationale that defines the value, importance, and use of the skill. Often, this is what looks and sounds like a lecture or the equivalent of direct instruction for students. It is the telling or describing aspect of training.
2. **Demonstration or modeling** of the skill, typically by the trainer(s).
3. **Practice.** Opportunities for adult learners to practice the skill, both while under the direction of experts, and over time in more natural settings.
4. **Feedback.** Timely and constructive assessment and reactions to learners' practice, so that they can understand what they are doing well and what needs further refinement.
5. **Follow-up or coaching.** Long-term guidance and assistance so that what was practiced in training sessions or other simulations is transferred to the actual work setting.

To reiterate, this five-part, field-tested model is most appropriate for teaching educators to use, or to refine their use of, moderately complex strategies or techniques. For example, in the context of APPR

implementation, such strategies might include how to apply new rubrics reliably and fairly in classroom observations, how to ask questions that elicit meaningful sense-making of multiple measures of student learning, how to communicate feedback to teachers constructively, and how to design and supervise worthwhile individual performance improvement plans.

Typically, skill training for educators is often incomplete (Joyce & Showers, 1995, 2002). It may include one or two elements required to be successful, but not all five. Effective training is an expensive, long-term investment. Multiple opportunities for practice with feedback, as well as follow-up over time, are frequently neglected or absent. Consequently, hoped-for changes in professional repertoires do not occur.

More specifically, prior research from decades of study indicates that it takes at least 20-25 practice trials over approximately 8 to 10 weeks to transfer moderately complex new skills and strategies appropriately and consistently into routine use (Joyce & Showers, 1995, 2002). Moreover, it takes 3 to 5 years to implement changed educational practices school- or district-wide (Corcoran, Fuhrman, & Belcher, 2001; Fullan, 2001; Wagner et al., 2006).

Recent Research on Professional Development

The latest multi-year studies published by the National Staff Development Council and led by scholars from Stanford University shed additional light on time, timing, and professional development results. For example, Wei, Darling-Hammond, and Adamson (2010) find that professional development "that is sustained over time and includes a substantial number of contact hours on a single professional focus" is most effective (p. 2). They define "substantial" as ranging from an average of 49 to a high of 100 contact hours per single focus.

Their data also illuminate notable changes in the broader context of time for adult learning in education:

Unfortunately, in this regard, U.S. trends are going in the wrong direction. The data reveal that there has been a dramatic shift in the last decade away from professional development of a modest duration

of 9-16 hours to professional development of 8 hours or shorter in length. (Wei et al., 2010, pp. 2-3)

Impact on Instructional Improvement

The research-base makes clear that the absence of sustained time for adult learning and capacity-building can be anticipated to result in incomplete or misguided implementation, as well as cynicism or frustration with inadequately-supported “reforms” (Datnow, 2005; Hall & Hord, 2001; Fullan, 2001; Reeves, 2009). Such unfortunate and predictable outcomes thwart, rather than facilitate instructional improvement. How so? In at least two ways.

Deflection from ongoing priorities. First, rushed deadlines and insufficient supports short-change planning and lead to partial understandings that are reactive rather than smart. These inadequacies often derail other leadership- and time-intensive educational innovations underway, such as those described by the various authors in this issue. As Fullan’s longitudinal and highly-regarded research on change underscores:

The greatest problem faced by school districts and schools is not resistance to innovation, but the fragmentation, overload, and incoherence resulting from the uncritical acceptance of too many different innovations. (1991, p. 197)

The hastened roll-out and truncated training of trainers highlighted in this article occurred amidst an already-loaded statewide educational context of newly implementing more challenging Common Core curriculum standards, as well as increased expectations for school-based inquiry and data driven instruction teams (among other things). Each of these major initiatives was accompanied by significant technical and logistical hurdles for translating policy into reality in schools (Patterson, 2010; Sawchuk, 2011; Tallerico, 2011).

Patterson’s (2010) research and DuFour’s (2002) extensive work facilitating improvement in student learning confirm that:

Schools stumble when their leaders cannot identify priorities, or when they seem to say, “Pay attention to everything; everything is important.”... Six school improvement goals are not better than

one. Meaningful substantive changes in schools occur through focused, concentrated efforts. (pp. 60-61)

And comprehensive investigations of the ways schools address the problem of limited time for professional learning conclude that “Sometimes it is better to slow down, accomplish more by attempting less, and accept the fact that you can’t do it all” (Watts & Castle, 1993, p. 309).

Divisiveness. The analysis just presented has broad relevance in education. However a second way that truncated timelines and stretched supports thwart instructional improvement is quite particular to personnel evaluation.

That is, judging the quality of professionals’ performance is sensitive work, especially when linked (as it is in the revised APPR) to high-stakes decision-making including termination, tenure, promotion, retention, and supplemental compensation (NYSED, 2011c). The evaluation of teaching has always been contested and contentious terrain in the U.S., often contributing to divides between administrative leaders and teachers (Danielson, 2011; Sullivan & Glanz, 2009; Toch, 2008).

Historic rifts are exacerbated by the introduction of students’ standardized test scores into individual performance appraisals. And perennial tensions are heightened when they occur in one of the largest and most diverse states in the nation (New York), with one of the strongest teacher unions, at a time of intense pressure for schools to do more with fewer resources (Matthews, 2011; Munno, 2011).

Daunting training timetables and hurried implementation can strain even the most positive existing teacher-administrator relationships. They can increase wariness of school leaders and evaluators, destabilize prior partnerships, weaken professional learning communities, erode trust, and foster climates of resentment, misunderstanding, or antagonism (Bowgren & Sever, 2010; Patterson, 2010; Tallerico, 2005).

This kind of divisiveness and erosion of collaborative culture engender significant educational consequences. That is, school cultures are not neutral; instead, they either facilitate or impede student and adult development (DuFour, 2001; Fullan, 2001).

Negative cultures, often characterized by blaming students for lack of progress or having “hostile relations among staff...are not healthy for students or staff” (Peterson, 2002, p. 11).

Concluding Remarks

In sum, at the same time that PreK-12 teachers and administrators were being pressed to use exclusively evidence-based practices for 21st century learning, New York State’s revised APPR policy start-up requirements countered what the research tells us about implementing educational change effectively.

Certainly, setting ambitious statewide goals is admirable. Similarly, promoting a sense of urgency about addressing children’s needs can be a powerful catalyst for innovation. However neglecting what is known about supporting sustainable improvement is seldom wise. And mandating unrealistic timelines and unworkable implementation expectations for changed educational practices is unfair.

Why? In part because it sets up local schools, districts, and BOCES to fall short or fail. Also because such policies add to a pattern of unfeasible targets whose non-attainment contributes to skepticism about public education. For example, despite the considerable effort accompanying national and state “Goals 2000,” the 1990’s came and went without “all children arriving at school ready to learn” or U.S. schools becoming the “first in the world in science and math.”

Since then, PreK-12 systems have endured another scores-driven decade wherein, not unexpectedly, some children fell behind despite colorful policy tag-lines demanding otherwise. Additionally, as this article demonstrates, racing - - to the top or elsewhere - - rarely succeeds, when systemic and sustainable educational change is the goal.

Perhaps the next few years will prove the revised NYS APPR different from this unhelpful past pattern. However, the research and best practices summarized herein suggest otherwise.

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Endnotes:



Leading and Learning Together: Building a Collaborative and Respectful Learning Community

Mathew Swerdloff

Mrs. DeGrassi, a young fourth grade teacher, asked me how to connect a projector to a computer for Open House. She had a PowerPoint to show but she was not able to determine which cable to connect to which ports on the two devices. I plugged the blue cable into the blue port and the connection worked. Ms. Jenks, a veteran high school teacher, called and left a message saying her computer would not start, could someone come and fix it. A technician arrived and connected the monitor cable which had become loose. Mr. Lent, principal, called me to say he could not find his sent email. "Everything is deleted" he wailed. I logged in using his account and moved his Sent mail folder back to the correct location from where he accidentally dragged it.

These three adults, all well respected educators with advanced degrees, were severely handicapped by a lack of technology literacy and a notable lack of self-confidence. All three had a desire to use technology in their work, and all three were hampered by a dearth of training and frustrated by the apparent complexity of what they thought should be simple systems. Most vexing was the lack of a community, or a support network, that they could rely on for assistance.

This was the situation when I arrived at my current district in 2004. While there was a desire amongst staff for more technology, there was no formal structure in place for hardware and software acquisition, training, or support. One teacher called it the Wild West, meaning there was no supervisory authority, and the lack of order was profound. My entry plan was multi-faceted, and included addressing an antiquated technology infrastructure, hiring highly skilled technicians, and implementing a robust professional development program for all staff. I recall that at the time, in discussing my plan with the superintendent, I told him that "It is easy to replace computers and wires and hire new support staff, changing the culture and training teachers is not so simple." This proved to be quite true. We have come quite far in terms of the first 2 items, infrastructure and technical support. The subject of this article is the latter, training teachers and changing the culture, an ongoing process.

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The Big Picture

The challenge for any learning organization is adaptation. Successful adaptation to new fiscal realities, to new legal mandates, and to new organizational priorities is a key factor in an organization's long term success. The learning organization of the 21st century must meet the needs

of diverse students facing a rapidly changing and consistently challenging workplace. New technologies stress the daily interactions between students and their peers, and force teachers to learn and grow at an unprecedented pace. All of these factors have converged in the midst of the harshest anti-union and anti-teacher public rhetoric in decades, along with drastic funding cuts in many schools. To develop agility and foster success, schools need to help teachers work together to develop new skills and new strategies to enhance instruction.

In the Hendrick Hudson School District, the Community of Practice theory (Wenger, 1998) was used to develop and implement a technology staff development program for all staff. The Instructional Technology Academy, or ITA, has been in place for six years. Inspired by the theory of Wenger, the ITA fosters collaboration, respect, and team-building, while imparting 21st century skills to our staff. The program offers training in a variety of modes, locations, and schedules, and on many topics. The diversity of offerings is notable, but the commonality of purpose is what makes the program exceptional. By empowering staff to play a large role in the development of the program, we have built in the need for collaboration and the growth of an intellectually stimulating and respectful community amongst our teachers.

When stakeholders are involved with a common domain, in community, and using common practices, they are able to work together to enhance the learning process (Wenger 2006). This is the concept of the community of practice model of Lave and Wenger (1991). They argue that it is by learning *in situ* that community is fostered. Groups of individuals working together to achieve a group goal are learning as a cadre and with a purpose that is more powerful and affirming than abstract learning typical in many schools, often devoid of context or relevance.

In our case, the domain is instructional technology, the area we all agreed to focus on. The community is our staff and Technology Committee, a group of educators working together to move the district forward. Our practice is the Instructional Technology Academy, a collaborative methodology and delivery system for staff training. Honed and

refined over the last 6 years, the ITA is a perfect example of a focused community of practice.

“Over time, this collective learning results in practices that reflect both the pursuit of our enterprises and the attendant social relations. These practices are thus the property of a kind of community created over time by the sustained pursuit of a shared enterprise. It makes sense, therefore to call these kinds of communities, communities of practice ” (Wenger, 1998).

Implementation

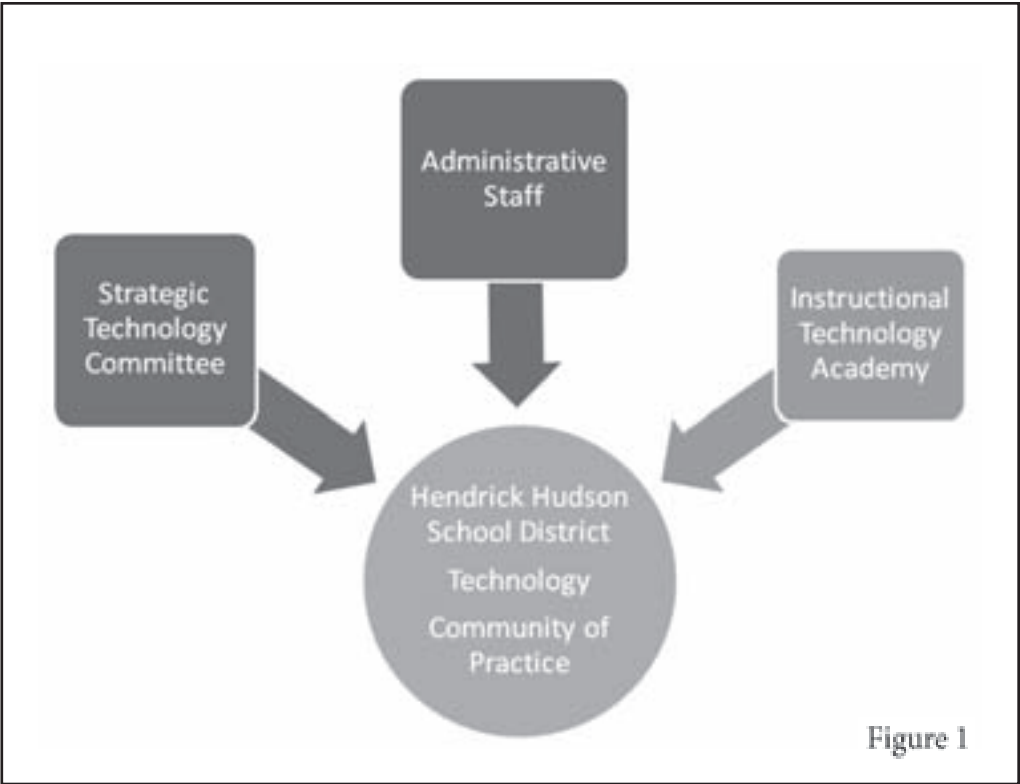
In the spring of 2004, we began discussions on developing a training program for teachers. Prior to this point there had been very little staff development in technology, and most of what was offered was from sources outside the district. In many ways this was an ideal situation in that we had a tabula rasa on which to write our vision for technology training. The process was collaborative and collegial, with key stakeholders involved from the start. Fortunately we did have a Strategic Technology Committee in place and it was with this group that we began a discussion of developing an Instructional Technology Academy, or ITA. The ITA was presented as an opportunity to develop a community of teachers focused on the technology goals of the district. These teachers would soon emerge as leaders within the district in their areas of expertise. I knew that for the ITA to be successful, I needed the support of teachers, administrators, and the Technology Committee. These three groups make up the core of the technology community of practice at the Hendrick Hudson School District.

It's Simple

Looking back, it seems like a very simple approach. Bring together key stakeholders (see Figure 1), empower them to make decisions and plan together, and then let them move forward and implement the plan. While the concept is indeed simple, the implementation was not. I knew from past experiences that for the model to succeed, we needed support at every level and that the initiative had to be built on the needs of the teachers for the skill level they were at, not at the skill level they should be at.

Plan, Plan, Plan

Our first meetings were focused on the what. What should we offer training on? We knew that many of our staff had minimal technology proficiency. We had not measured this formally yet, but we all knew it from experience. So our first year was focused on basic proficiency, and the catalog from year one of the program looks like a computer basics boot camp. We offered application courses in Word and Excel, how to use email, web searching tips, basic troubleshooting and file management. We knew that we needed all staff to have a basic proficiency level in key skills before we could move to higher level offerings. So in the first three years we offered basic courses, each year offering a few less basic courses and also few more advanced courses. By year four we had completed the basic skills courses and were moving on to courses that challenged teachers to change their instructional practice using technology. The comparison of selected courses from year one and year four in Table I below is indicative of this transformation.



Involving the Entire Staff

We found out early on that we had to involve all staff in the planning process but knew that we needed to keep our planning group small. We decided to leverage the technology itself, and used online surveys to solicit feedback from all staff on desired training topics. In addition we had key stakeholders reach out to staff in each school at faculty meetings to get their input.

Table I

Comparison of ITA Course Titles in Year One and Year Four

Year 1 Course Title

- Hardware and Software Troubleshooting
- File Management Basics
- Gradebook Fundamentals
- Creating a Classroom Newsletter
- Mastering Email
- Windows Tips and tricks
- Microsoft Word Basics

Year 4 Course Title

- Digital Stories as Learning Tools
- Blogs as Learning Tools
- Using Podcasting to Enhance Communication
- Advanced Whiteboard Applications
- Using the SmartBoard in the Classroom
- Basic Digital Video in the Classroom
- Introduction to Web 2.0 Tools

We had all experienced enough drive-by staff development to know that if this plan was to succeed we needed to do this with teachers, not to them. The annual surveys offered a menu of a wide variety of themes and topics and we were able to plan the ITA classes according to two factors; we aligned the courses to the needs of the staff as identified in the surveys, and we used our vision of where we felt the district needed to move. Keeping both of these targets in our sights proved to be a challenge but was ultimately successful. For those who needed more direction and focus, we could move slowly, for the bolder teacher, we could move faster. Planning sessions took place in May when our core group of trainers and I came together to review survey data, self-assess the previous year's offerings using attendance data and course evaluations, and refocus on our vision of enhancing every teachers technology proficiency. Based on the data we had, we planned sessions for the next year.

The program has grown each year and is now offering traditional fifteen hour courses, blended learning using face to face and online modes together, fully online courses using Moodle, and open source learning platform, and shorter half day mini-sessions. This year we began to offer on-on-one mentoring to teachers and are hosting professional learning communities for exchange of dialogue and sharing of best practices. We continue to expand, refine, and re-invent ourselves in response to the need of the organization and the staff.

Lessons Learned

According to Wenger (n.d.), a successful community of practice requires participants that are fully engaged at all levels of the process, including planning, creating, implementing, and evaluating. In addition, the domain must be one that is inherently valuable to each member. Our Instructional Technology Academy meets this criteria and the program has become a forum for sharing and respect amongst all staff. Time and again teachers have told me how the training they received has helped them change their instructional practice, how the ongoing sense of community around technology helps them overcome their hesitations, and how it is now safe to take risks knowing there are colleagues in their building that will support them.

Final Thoughts

Throughout this process I have often felt that the ITA was a truly creative process. In fact, I was not alone in that perception. All of us involved in the program were able to work together, with respect and as peers, to bring change to our district. Within the framework of our shared domain (technology) we were able to build and sustain a community within the large district community, in which we share a common practice. For us, the model works and meets our needs now. As we evolve and grow, it seems flexible enough to change with us and allow us to remain creative, respected, and forward thinking well into the future. As for Mrs. DeGrassi, Mr. Lent and Ms. Jenks? Each of them has participated in our community often and each has grown along with the rest of us, expanding our community ever-outward.

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Notes



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