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Southeast CC e-Bulletin Focus: The Challenge of Educational Leadership

By Sandra Lindsay, Program Associate

Educational leadership is often likened to the work of an orchestra conductor. An educational leader must recognize and stay focused on the overall educational goals, while giving individuals in the organization the specific attention they need. The work does, metaphorically, resemble that of the conductor of an orchestra. For example, how the conductor chooses and assembles talented musicians matters greatly. Who the conductor chooses to play first chair is critical to the quality of the performance. How the musicians relate and blend their talents, in spite of individual differences among themselves and with the conductor, determines the resonance of their music.

Also, the conductor is constantly examining and refining the performance. The conductor's leadership will determine who will play, whether there will be any solo parts, when some will play more softly, or when others will increase the volume to emphasize a key part of the performance. It is clearly understood, however, that each member of the orchestra is important. Mistakes result in disharmony, and the commitment and hard work of the individuals and the group will determine the degree of success.

The orchestration of educational leadership takes place through various leadership styles and approaches employed



A Note from the Director

Welcome to the second edition of our e-Bulletin for Year 3 of the Southeast Comprehensive Center (SECC). In this issue, we focus on leadership development. In addition to the lead article that provides research and information on educational leadership, this issue includes updates from each of our states about their efforts in this area.

As many of you know, research over numerous years has validated the critical importance of strong leadership focused on instruction in successful schools. That research continues to be validated in more recent work including *The Turnaround Challenge* by Mass Insight Education & Research Institute, which found that high-poverty, high-performing schools were characterized by highly capable, distributed school leadership that included an effective leadership team, not just the principal.

I hope that this edition of our e-Bulletin will be helpful and informative for you in your work with your state, districts, and schools. If we can be of any assistance to you in this area or any other issue related to improving student achievement or meeting the goals of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) act in your state, please feel free to contact your state liaison or me.

We at SEDL are pleased to provide the services of the Southeast Comprehensive Center and look forward to our continuing work with all of you.

Robin Jarvis, PhD
Director, SECC

by state level leaders, principals, superintendents, teacher leaders, and other administrators. Welcome attention is being directed at this important process. New research suggests that leadership styles and approaches have a significant impact on student achievement. According to a report from the Education Commission of the States, energy and resources are emerging for policy discussion about the aspects, types, and styles of leadership that lead to effective school practices (March 2005).

Multiple studies are underway to determine the impact of leadership on school and student success. The conclusions are generally similar to the findings of the Wallace Foundation-commissioned study of the impact of leadership approaches and practices on student learning (Leithwood, Seashore, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). These findings suggest that the work of principals and superintendents has a powerful, albeit indirect, impact on student learning, second only, among school-related factors, to the quality of classroom instruction. Also, the impact they found tended to be greatest in schools in which the learning needs of students are greatest.

Opportunities exist in educational leadership worthy of our joint efforts to find best solutions. Some of the emerging issues include the examination of standards for defining high quality leaders. We must identify the best preparation and certification programs and determine the types and format of the most promising professional development practices for leaders' ongoing growth.

We also need to examine a leader's influence on the school culture simply because we know that some school cultures support effective teaching and learning while others are toxic to this process. And finally there is the important ongoing issue of deciding how to evaluate performance and determine when leaders are doing their jobs well.

According to Warren Bennis (2004), most organizations evaluate leaders using seven criteria:

- Knowledge of the territory
- Capacity to motivate people
- Ability to put things together
- Track record
- Capacity to choose terrific people, most of the time
- Ability to make wise decisions
- Integrity to walk the talk

If we believe the old adage that we inspect what we expect, perhaps we should give particular emphasis to the instruments and processes we use to evaluate school leader performance. We need to be very careful what we ask for—we might just get it.

Time spent researching and documenting leadership best practices and how they can be effectively integrated into leadership training programs is worthy of our attention. The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards are now more than a decade old but still represent meaningful work in framing what it means to be a highly qualified leader. The six standards, with accompanying dispositions and performances, have served as the launch point for more recent work from other organizations, such as the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), Education Leaders Constituent Council (ELCC), Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL), and others that carry on the work of examining and re-examining what we need to expect from school leaders. It is significant that the new work from these organizations still incorporates the basic premises of the original ISLLC standards (1996):

- Developing and articulating a vision
- Creating a culture of learning
- Managing effectively for a safe, efficient learning environment
- Collaborating with families and communities
- Acting in an ethical manner
- Understanding and responding to the larger social, political, economic, legal, and cultural context of education

The following reflective thoughts also point out the need to look at the role of leadership with a broader lens than has recently been the norm. Consider the following statements as you think about the new roles leaders must fulfill in the age of accountability.

- Authentic educational leadership is a delicate blend of facts and feelings, head and heart, personal and professional, and reasoning and relationships.
- The genesis of one's success as a leader lies in the personal qualities one brings to the professional role and the understanding and development of others in the educational environment.
- Effective leaders value and practice intentional questioning, pondering, planning, implementing, and assessing with others.
- Collegial relationships and teamwork are important in most organizations, but especially in public education.
- Creating and sustaining effective learning environments is a process, not a product.

Note the emphasis on the personal qualities that effective leaders bring to the table. Accountability requires a focus on data, bottom line performance, and careful monitoring, but those who lead education communities through the process also exhibit a sense of who they are and what they personally

must be and do to be effective in their leadership (Welch, Halfacre, Lindsay, 2008). To be highly effective, leaders must also take the actions described below.

Exhibit a positive attitude. Unfortunately in every organization, including the school, there are people whose only purpose for finding meaning in life is to feel sorry for themselves, to discredit others and their ideas, and to respond negatively to everyone around them. Such individuals function as a cancer-like disease in the school, wreaking havoc upon attempts to establish a congenial and collaborative learning community. The leader works daily to mitigate the negative aspects by focusing on maintaining a positive attitude. Organizations succeed when the leader faces the brutal facts, yet never loses faith in what schools can and should be doing for children (Collins, 2001).

Demonstrate perceptual objectivity. Excellence in educational leadership depends upon the mastery of perceptual-objectivity or the ability to view issues and situations from multiple perspectives. Leaders realize that in order to make the best decisions, they must understand the perspective of others and objectively analyze each situation. They realize that their own success depends upon understanding and being understood, trusting and being trusted.

Keep things in perspective. The thrill of victory and the agony of defeat are short-lived in the world of schools. A variety of emotions, high highs and low lows, occur within an educational leader's daily life, because the nature of working with children and adults results in fleeting moments and multiple examples of successes and failures. Effective leaders don't get too excited about their successes or too upset about their failures; they keep their emotions in check and the daily, weekly, monthly and yearly school activities and accomplishments in perspective.

Maintain a balance in life. The concept of balance is a universal principle. Ecosystems exist because of a balance in nature. Physical health is supported by dietary balance. Democracy works because of its foundation of checks and balances. So, it is with successful leaders—they are productive due to their understanding and practice of maintaining a balance in their lives. High-performing leaders know when to work and when not to work.

Value humor. High-performing educational leaders believe that humor is serious business in a school. Therefore, they plan for, recognize, and celebrate humor as an integral component of their personal and professional lives. Effective leaders understand that humor draws people together, serves

Tips for Effective Leaders

- Exhibit a positive attitude
- Demonstrate perceptual objectivity
- Keep things in perspective
- Maintain a balance in life
- Value humor
- Possess an internal locus of control
- Have a people support system
- Value risk taking and change
- Care about others

as a lubricant for increasing work efficiency, reduces stress, increases rapport, and functions as a therapeutic antidote for conflict situations.

Possess an internal locus of control. Today's high-performing educational leaders operate from an internal locus of control. They believe and cause their teachers to believe that, regardless of the external factors impinging upon them, they can make a difference in the learning and lives of their students. They create an understanding that, while they cannot control the negative factors related to academic achievement, they do control what they will do about these conditions, and what they can do and will do effects positive growth for their students.

Have a people support system. Effective educational leaders find supportive colleagues and friends to assist them on and off the job, socially and emotionally.

Value risk taking and change. Effective educational leaders demonstrate a continual questioning attitude towards all of their practices and procedures. They tinker with leadership, consistently approaching their craft as if there are better ways for providing support for the learning community. They do not view failure negatively; they quickly turn the negative situation into a learning opportunity.

Care about others. Competent leaders care; superior educational leaders care that others know that they care. An aura of caring surrounds their work as educators and as individuals.

A primary leadership action in state departments of education requires the use of levers of change to help district and school leaders improve the opportunities to learn for all students. Levers are important tools for state level leaders who have the responsibility but not the direct line authority to make local school district changes. As noted previously, unique leadership skills may be essential to “leading when you are not in charge.”

In *Changing Minds*, Howard Gardner (2004) suggests seven such levers that we might consider: resources or rewards, reason, research, resonance, representational redescription (presenting the information in lots of different ways), real world context, and recognizing and honoring resistances. If we are to be successful in our work, we’ll need all seven and any others that hold promise for assisting in the unique role of state level leadership.

This article would not be complete without some reference to the importance of trust in the role of educational leaders. Anthony S. Bryk and Barbara Schneider (2005) point to a number of case studies and clinical narratives that direct our attention to the engaging but elusive idea of social trust as essential for meaningful school improvement. Bryk and Schneider conducted almost a decade of intensive case study research and longitudinal statistical analyses from more than 400 Chicago elementary schools. They spent approximately 4 years in 12 different school communities observing school meetings and events; conducting interviews and focus groups with principals, teachers, parents, and community leaders; observing classroom instruction; and talking to teachers about the progress and problems in their reform efforts.

Essentially, their work reveals that leaders have a chance for implementing school reform successfully in school settings in which there is high trust or in school communities are working on trust. More telling, if there is low or no trust in the setting, the quality of the intervention, the reputation of the program, the expertise of the implementers, the amount of money expended, all amount to very little in making school reform initiatives successful. Without trusting relationships, school reform measures do not meet with success.

The message for leaders is clear—relationships matter, and character counts. Time must be spent developing and mentoring strong ethical leaders who understand that trusting relationships among adults and among children and adults will determine the success of our students. The challenges for educational leadership are many, but the journey toward best responses is interesting and important work. SEDL stands ready to partner with you in your journey.

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Leadership Book Reviews

The Balanced Leadership Framework: Connecting Vision with Action

Review by Glenda Copeland, Program Associate

Waters, T. & Cameron, G. (2006). *The balanced leadership framework: Connecting vision with action*. Denver, CO: Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning.

Based on previous meta-analytic studies on the practices of effective schools, teachers, and principals, the authors saw a need for leaders to understand why practices used by successful leaders are effective, when they should be used, and how to apply these practices in different settings. By

developing this Balanced Leadership Framework, they hoped to help leaders connect the vision (what and why) with the how of applying practices in their context.

In the previously published *School Leadership That Works: From Research to Results*, the authors identified 21 leadership responsibilities and 66 practices or behaviors associated with fulfilling these responsibilities that are statistically significant correlations to student achievement. In order to help individuals better manage this large number of items, the Balanced Leadership Framework divides the 21 responsibilities into domains: focus, magnitude of change, and purposeful community. Leadership is the foundation of the framework and is seen as the interface between focus, magnitude, and purposeful community.

Change Leadership: A Practical Guide to Transforming Our Schools

Review by Ed Tobia, Program Associate

Wagner, T., et al. (2006). *Change leadership: A practical guide to transforming our schools*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

“Our educational system was never designed to deliver the kind of results we now need to equip students for today’s world—and tomorrow’s. The system was originally created for a very different world. To respond appropriately, we need to rethink and redesign.” (Wagner, et al., 2006)

Discouraged by the millions of dollars being spent on school reform efforts, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation wanted to explore why schools that received extensive resources for reform were having such a difficult job changing. The foundation focused on the question, “Why is both personal and organizational change so hard?” To answer that question, they funded the creation of the Change Leadership Group at Harvard University, which brought together the best minds from the world of educational reform, organizational development, and adult learning. The result of their work from 2000 to 2005 is *Change Leadership: A Practical Guide to Transforming Our Schools*.

The book combines the conceptual with the practical through a combination of research and best practice along with the use of diagnostic tools and exercises for personal growth aimed at transforming organizations, while simultaneously sharpening leaders’ outward and inward attention.

In paying attention to both organizational structures and the individuals who make up organizations, leaders can help create the context (i.e., the culture of workplaces, the

conditions that support learning, and the competencies needed for transformative work) within which organizations and individuals can adapt and become more future oriented and no longer the custodians of an antiquated system.



State Highlights and Events

Alabama

Professional Development for Leaders

Provided By Angela Mangum, Alabama State Department of Education

The Office of Leadership Development and the Alabama Leadership Academy (ALA) provide leadership and professional development resources for educators and administrators at the following Web site: <http://alex.state.al.us/showleaderpg.php?lnk=aldhomepage>. The site offers an electronic version

of the *Leadership Quarterly* newsletter (shown on right), which provides information concerning professional development offerings for leaders. During the first semester of the 2007–2008 school year, Alabama delivered a training event entitled *Developing and Sustaining Professional Learning*

Communities (PLC), to leadership teams consisting of a principal and two teacher leaders. A follow-up event was held in February 2008, featuring principals and teacher leaders who have successfully implemented the PLC model. The work of the Governor’s Congress on School Leadership has been the major focus of the Office of Leadership Development. This work, as well as other leadership initiatives, is featured in the newsletter, which was distributed to all superintendents, principals, assistant principals and central office instructional staff in Alabama.



Georgia

Interactive Sessions Connect Leaders Statewide

By Glenda Copeland, State Liaison

During the 2008–2009 academic year, the Georgia Department of Education (GDE) will implement a new graduation rule and the rollout of the new Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) high school math curriculum. Throughout January, February, and March, the divisions of academic standards and school and leader quality are hosting a series of Illuminate sessions to assist leaders throughout Georgia in understanding these two important initiatives.

The Illuminate platform enables participants to engage in an interactive discussion with others throughout the state from their own computers. Each session is recorded, so there is an opportunity to review the information, share it with others, or listen to it multiple times.

An initial Illuminate session was held in December 2007 to provide specific, detailed information about the new graduation rule. Following this session, question and answer sessions were hosted within each of the five school improvement regions to provide participants with an opportunity to obtain additional information and to identify areas for further discussion through a smaller virtual community.

As a result of the initial dialogue, a series of Illuminate sessions were scheduled on the following topics identified by principals and other leaders from throughout Georgia:

- Career, technical, and agricultural education elective choices
- Reading, English language arts (ELA), science, social studies
- Mathematics (multiple sessions)
- Middle school
- Leadership
- High school scheduling
- Teachers-as-advisors
- Postsecondary credit opportunities
- Counselors

Facilitators of these discussions have included staff from the divisions of academic standards and school and leader quality, as well as principals from throughout the state.

For more information, contact the following individual at the GDE:

Barbara Lunsford, EdD
Program Manager, Quality Assurance
Division of School and Leader Quality
Phone: 404-463-1712
E-mail: BaLunsfo@doe.k12.ga.us

Louisiana

Louisiana Educational Leaders Network

Provided By Janet Broussard, Louisiana State Department of Education

Louisiana's plan for School and District Educational Leadership Development is a comprehensive, coordinated, standards-based approach to strengthening school leadership that is guided by the State Standards for Educational Leaders in Louisiana and the programs of the Louisiana Educational Leaders Network (LELN). The LELN is a comprehensive framework for the recruitment, induction, and ongoing support of educational leaders within Louisiana. The LELN builds on existing state leadership initiatives as well as research-based models designed to give administrators the capacity to provide leadership to their schools and districts in both instructional and administrative areas. The LELN Network consists of the following programs:

Louisiana Leadership Excellence Through Administrator Development (LA LEAD) Program – is a leadership initiative designed to support the local educational agency's efforts to identify, recruit, and prepare teacher leaders for success as future school and district leaders. It is a comprehensive development program that identifies, assesses, and develops future leaders. Following successful completion of the program, candidates may earn a Teacher Leader Endorsement on their teaching certificates.

Louisiana Educational Leaders Induction Program (LELI) – is designed to provide newly appointed administrators—principals, assistant principals, superintendents, curriculum supervisors and coordinators, etc.—with professional development experiences that build administrative, instructional, and personal knowledge and skills needed for success in their respective leadership positions. The induction program for new principals is a 1-year commitment designed to prepare effective transformational leaders.

Louisiana's Principals' Academy – is designed to provide ongoing support, professional development, and networking opportunities to Louisiana principals as they grow in their roles as instructional leaders. The focus is on organizational and instructional leadership in the context of whole school improvement and student achievement. The academy structure provides a variety of face-to-face and online learning opportunities.

Louisiana School Turnaround Specialist Program (LSTS) – is the newest program in the LELN. The LSTS is a 2-year leadership development program that borrows heavily from the corporate world. It is designed to strengthen the organizational and instructional leadership skills of currently certified and experienced principals to prepare them to lead low-performing schools to higher student achievement. The LSTS Program builds on existing research that identifies rigorous selection criteria, significant integrated field-based and mentoring experiences, relevant coursework, and strong coordination with local schools and districts as critical to leader preparation and turnaround of failing schools.

Mississippi

Leadership Initiatives Focus on Administrators

By Debbie Meibaum, State Liaison

To strengthen Mississippi's efforts to increase the quantity and quality of administrators, two major education leadership efforts have been implemented to enhance school leaders' impact on improving teaching and learning.

First, Mississippi's Principal Preparation Programs will be required to be redesigned using programs based on the following new standards:

- Dictate how leadership candidates who will become principals are selected
- Describe the knowledge and skill set that principals need to possess to be successful
- Develop evidence of practice for each one of the standards
- Prescribe an internship program
- Prescribe follow-up and support

Secondly, the Mississippi Department of Education has built a comprehensive training program for practicing and new administrators. A group of highly regarded facilitators have undergone extensive preparation to deliver the modules for

this program. The results of this new leadership development program will be leaders who possess a deeper understanding of leadership; act from a core of clearly expressed and enabling responsibilities, beliefs, and assumptions; and align their daily actions with those practices.

Leadership training modules included in this program will focus attention away from services that promote development of isolated skills in favor of services that focus squarely on the leader's role (and the layers of leadership around the leader) in improving their particular school. Services will embody the best practice principles of leadership development. The four module categories and their subtopics are as follows:

1. Leadership Development

- a. Balanced Leadership
- b. Leadership for School Change
- c. Purposeful Communities Supporting Student Achievement

2. Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

- a. Ensuring a Guaranteed and Viable Curriculum
- b. Quality Instruction for Learners
- c. Focusing Leadership for Student Achievement



3. School Improvement

- a. Using Data to Facilitate Change and Support Achievement
- b. Learning for Student Achievement

4. Improving Student Achievement

- a. Introduction to Leadership
- b. Coaching to Facilitate Change

For more information, contact Bill Welch, Director of the Office for Leadership and Professional Development, MSDE, at bwelch@mde.k12.ms.us or 601-359-3954. Other MSDE sources include the following:

Dr. Beth Sewell, Executive to the Superintendent, Instructional Programs and Services

Paula Means, Special Assistant for Leadership and Professional Development

MDE Web Site: <http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/olpd/prdev/adminhm.html>

South Carolina

Building Strong Leaders for Positive Change

By Sandra Lindsay, State Liaison

Housed within the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) is an Office of School Leadership (OSL) whose primary mission is to provide a continuum of professional development opportunities and experiences for educational leaders, focusing on improving school and student achievement. The range of programs offered includes opportunities for those who aspire to the role of school administrator as well as for those who are nearing retirement. All OSL programs have a foundation in state and national standards for educational leaders, and each program helps build the skills and competencies needed to succeed in that phase of the educational leader's development.

In South Carolina (SC), there is a strong belief that schools and districts can only achieve as their leaders inspire and lead them to achieve. The OSL programs help build strong school and district leaders who can lead positive change in their schools and communities. Fourteen programs are currently offered with plans for expansion. Some are single-day seminars and others extend sessions over a 2-year curriculum. A sampling of the programs and a brief description follows.

Foundations in School Leadership – is designed to help teachers determine whether school leadership is the career path they wish to pursue.

Assistant Principal Program for Leadership Excellence (APPLE) – is designed specifically for newly assigned assistant principals.

Principal Induction Program (PIP) – provides quality professional development for newly appointed principals. The content is practical and deemed essential in a principal's first year on the job.

The School Leader's Executive Institute – is a world-class initiative designed to give veteran principals the insight, knowledge, and competencies to lead SC schools to success. The initiative is a partnership with the internationally renowned Center for Creative Leadership, the Moore School of Business at the University of South Carolina (USC), the School of Education at USC and the SCDE. Participants proceed through the curriculum in cohorts, thereby building a strong sense of camaraderie and a strong network of expertise and support.

Institute for District Administrators – is a 6-day professional development opportunity for assistant and associate superintendents, program directors and other school district officers. The professional development of these individuals has been ignored in leadership training and yet they play a key role in school and district success.

For more details on all 14 programs offered, visit the SCDE Web site at the following location: <http://ed.sc.gov/agency/Educator-Quality-and-Leadership/>.



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Wesley A. Hoover, PhD, SEDL President and CEO
 Robin Jarvis, PhD, SECC Program Director
 Chris Times, MBA, SECC Communications Associate
 and Publication Editor

Alabama State Liaison: Lou Meadows (lmeadows@sedl.org)
 Georgia State Liaison: Glenda Copeland (gcopeland@sedl.org)
 Louisiana State Liaison: Jill Slack (jslack@sedl.org)
 Mississippi State Liaison: Debra Meibaum (dmeibaum@sedl.org)
 South Carolina State Liaison: Sandra Lindsay (slindsay@sedl.org)

The Southeast Comprehensive Center (SECC) is one of 16 regional centers established by the U.S. Department of Education. The primary goal of the regional centers is to build the capacity of the state education agencies and statewide systems of support to implement NCLB. Links to the other regional centers, the content centers, and the U.S. Department of Education may be found on the SECC Web site (secc.sedl.org).

SEDL
 4700 Mueller Blvd., Austin, TX 78723, 800-476-6861, www.sedl.org

SOUTHEAST COMPREHENSIVE CENTER at SEDL
 3501 N. Causeway Blvd., Suite 700, Metairie, LA 70002, 800-644-8671,
secc.sedl.org

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