

A brief Review of Leadership and School Improvement Literature

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Leadership Development

The role of the principal, as anyone connected to schools is well aware, has changed drastically in the past decades (Farkas, Johnson, Duffett, Foleno, & Foley, 2001; Murphy, 2002). School leaders must still have a deep knowledge of issues such as facilities, personnel, and finance management; yet these alone areas are not enough to support deep, sustained school improvement. Effective school leaders today must, at minimum, foster rich learning environments for students and adults in their buildings (Barth, 2001); open avenues for sharing expertise (Elmore, 2004); facilitate democratic dialogue that values all voices (Scheurich & Skrla, 2003); build trust (Bryk & Schneider, 2002); and promote shared understandings and a sense of shared responsibility across classrooms and with parents (Elmore, 2004; Epstein, 2001; Porter & Soper, 2003). Indeed, such skills make up a large portion of the New Mexico State Administrative Competencies, the national standards from the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium, and the accreditation guidelines for administrative preparation programs. When principals achieve these kinds of leadership goals, they become crucial positive factors in students' development (Christie & Lingard, 2001; Educational Research Service, 2000). In fact, research now demonstrates that the principal's role is second only to the classroom teacher's role in student achievement (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). Further, schools that face significant obstacles to improvement have been unable to turn around without a strong leader present to guide in the difficult work of changing the school's culture (Duke, 2004).

In addition to the expanded roles within the principalship, a growing body of literature documents the need for school leaders to work in conjunction with a wider range of educational leaders. The Educational Leadership Program at the University of New Mexico, recognizing this reality, recently planned and implemented wholesale curricular reforms to support leadership development across two domains in addition to school administration: instructional leadership and community/organizational leadership. Instructional leadership development is necessary for schools as they develop shared accountability, shared responsibility, and shared pedagogic and curricular

understandings—all of which are crucial to student success (Elmore, 2004). Community and organizational leadership brings in an array of individuals committed to other aspects of learning and youth development, from after school programs to parental and community groups, to museums to universities. These leaders, when working in partnership with schools, can support improved school outcomes (Sandoval, Prior, & Bookmyer, 2003); similarly, when school leaders work in conjunction with these groups, improved advocacy for broad-based community needs is realized (Educational Resources Information Center, 2002; Rothstein, 2004).

School Improvement

Schools across the country face challenges to improve student outcomes, and the pressures of No Child Left Behind have heightened accountability for schools having difficulty reaching their learning goals. Overwhelmingly, the schools needing extra supports in achievement serve students from low income backgrounds, English language learning backgrounds, and special needs backgrounds (Scheurich & Skrla, 2003). In the Albuquerque Public Schools, such school communities by and large are the ones facing significant difficulties reaching achievement goals. Though disparate achievement patterns by ethnicity and income have been pervasive across the country since the inception of public schooling, the achievement gaps do not have to remain (Scheurich & Skrla, 2003). Examples of school improvement in schools serving historically marginalized groups abound, and those examples share some common qualities, qualities that educational leaders must understand and be prepared to develop in their school sites. To achieve sustainable improvement, schools must be culturally responsive in pedagogy and human interactions (Ladson-Billings, 2001; Nieto, 1999); commit to social justice and ethical decision making as foundational principles (Marshall & Oliva, 2006); use data to understand and improve both processes and outcomes in the building (Marzano, 2005); provide appropriate curricular programming that maximizes student learning (Newmann, Smith, & Allensworth, 2001; Thomas & Collier, 2002); use effective content-specific pedagogic approaches (Hiebert & Stigler; Shulman, 1987); and provide access to high-quality learning experiences for all populations (Picucci, Brownson, Kahlert, & Sobel, 2002; Villa & Thousand, 2000). These are among the critical elements leaders must know and be committed to developing for school improvement in high-need schools.

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