

Workshop 2

Creating Communities that Learn Together

PRINCIPLE: Principal as Advocate for Inclusion of All Voices

FOCUS QUESTION: How do we build unified learning communities with so many different points of view, levels of knowledge, and mandates?

Change needs to be supported by all the stake holders. With the goal of building learning communities that improve math and science outcomes, this workshop shows several ways that principals can work toward including all voices—teachers, students, and parents—in a new dialogue about education reform.

Preparatory Readings

We suggest that you read the following articles, included in the Appendix at the back of this Guide, prior to viewing Workshop 2:

“Talking to the Public about Public Schools” (Kernan-Schloss and Plattner)

“The Principal as Team Builder” (Maeroff)

“Moving from Publicity to Engagement” (Thompson)

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Video Clips

Joan Marks—Avenue Elementary School

"It takes a village..."

Carpenter Avenue Elementary School is located in Studio City, CA, a suburban district that is home to large numbers of professional parents employed in the television and film industry. When principal Joan Marks was hired in the mid-1980s, the school was going to be closed because less than 15% of the school's students attended the school by choice: most of the parents in the district immediately surrounding the school opted to send their children to private school. Joan kept the school open by actively recruiting students and involving parents both inside and outside the classroom. The video profiles a parent who helps the teacher in a grade 4/5 classroom on a daily basis to better meet the needs of all students in the classroom.

Bob Mackin—Souhegan High School

"Democratic school"

Retired principal Bob Mackin describes the democratic principles upon which Souhegan High School in Amherst, NH was founded and how the school involves parent and student voices in governance. In addition, parents actively participate in assessing student work.

Elisabeth Douglass—Fernangeles Elementary School

"Children's school, parents' school"

Principal Elisabeth Douglass leads Fernangeles ES, Sun Valley, CA, a year-round school of 1,175 students in pre-K through 5th grade, nearly 100% of whom are on a free or reduced-price lunch program. Located in a largely Hispanic district, Elisabeth's school builds parent (and other adult caregiver) involvement by listening to their needs, creating a Parents' Center that actively recruits their involvement, and providing daytime and evening adult education classes. Elisabeth also strives to clarify for parents the curriculum and pedagogy used in the school so that they can help their children at home. In the video, a large group of parents participate in a daytime computer workshop and join the principal in a discussion about the math program.

Eric Nadelstern—International High School

"International High School"

Eric Nadelstern is principal of International High School in Queens, NY, a pilot public high school designed for limited English language proficiency students. At International High School, multi-grade, multi-ability classrooms mix students from more than 60 different countries, with the goal of preparing them for higher education without further remedial education. An integrated math/science unit led by teachers Jonathan Katz and Duane Stillwell shows how student voices are heard through collaborative structures that overcome language barriers so they can help each other learn.

How Schools Make School-Based Management Work

Strategies

- Establish multiple, teacher-led decision-making teams.
- Make professional development an on-going, school-wide activity.
- Disseminate information broadly.
- Frequently reward staff behavior oriented toward achieving school objectives.
- Select principals who can facilitate and manage change.
- Adapt a well-defined vision for curriculum and instruction to focus reform effort.

Successful Middle Grade School/Family Partnership

Strategies

Successful Middle Grade School/Family Partnership

- Are supported through well-developed policies at the school, district, state, and federal level.
- Involve parents in the design, plan, and implementation of school/family partnership programs.
- Use parents in appropriate roles through home learning, school restructuring activities, and district-wide involvement programs.
- Employ frequent, varied, two-way communication.
- Value the roles of parents and community members.
- Provide sufficient physical, human, and fiscal resources and training.
- Attempt to measure student, parent, teacher, and school outcomes through evaluation.

Studies in Education Reform: Parent and community involvement in education

US Dept of Education, Office of Educational Research

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Discussion Questions

(remember to choose a Structure from those listed on pages 12 to 14)

- How can I get all of the voices into the conversation?
- How do we get unity with so much disparity?
- With student, teacher, and parent collaboration, how do we get beyond governance to talk about teaching and learning?
- Whose responsibility is it to educate parents and the community? How do we find the time?
- Why would we want to include all of the voices?
- If everyone is collaborating, what is the role of the principal?
- What is appropriate involvement for students and parents in the teaching and learning process?
- Parent involvement can take on many faces—what is the most important for parents to be involved with?
- How can we truly get the school community to believe that each member has something to contribute?

Bibliography

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- Fullan, M. and Andy Hargreaves. *What's Worth Fighting For? Working Together for Your School*. The Regional Laboratory for Educational Improvement of the Northeast and Islands, 1991.
- Kernan-Schloss, A. and A. Plattner. "Talking to the Public about Public Schools." *Educational Leadership* Oct. 1998, 18-22.
- Maeroff, Gene. "The Principal as a Team Builder." *The Principal* May 1993.
- Sergiovanni, T.J. *Building Community in Schools*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1993.
- Sussman, A. *Science Education Partnerships: Manual for Scientists and K-12 Teachers*. San Francisco: U of CA, 1993.
- Thompson, Scott. "Moving from Publicity to Engagement." *Educational Leadership*. May 1998: 54-57.

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Web Sites

Blueprints for Reform from AAAS' Project 2061. Internet Address:

<http://project2061.aaas.org/tools/bluepol/blpframe.html>

Columbia School of Education link to ERIC.

Internet Address: <http://eric-web.tc.columbia.edu/families>

Global Learning Communities. Internet Address:

<http://www.vision.net.au/~globallearning/main.html>

Government Website. Internet Address: <http://ed.gov/pubs/SER/SchBasedMgmt>

High Performance Learning Communities (HPLC). Internet Address:

<http://project2061.aaas.org/newsinfo/earlychild/fostering/weiss.htm>

Learning Sciences at Northwestern University. Internet Address:

<http://www.ls.sesp.nwu.edu/lc/thinkpath.html>

The Learning Communities Network. Internet Address: <http://www.lcn.org>

National Parent Information Network. Internet Address: <http://npin.org/reswork.html>

Pathways to School Improvement. Internet Address: <http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/pathwayg.htm>

Regional Alliance Education Reform Network: Parent Involvement Project. Internet Address:

<http://labnet.terc.edu/archive/ra-ed-reform/00000079.htm>

University of Leeds in England-Creative Schools as Effective Learning Communities. Internet

Address: <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/documents/000000131.htm>

US Charter Schools. Internet Address: <http://www.uscharterschool.org>

Wohlstetter and Mohrman. "Assessment of School-Based Management." *Studies of Education*

Reform. US Department of Education Online Library. 1999. Internet Address:

<http://www.ed.gov/pubs/SER/>

Wohlstetter and Mohrman. "School-Based Management: Promise & Process." *Studies of*

Education Reform. US Department of Education Online Library. 1994. Internet Address:

<http://www.ed.gov/pubs/CPRE/fb5sbm.html>