

LEADING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT: OUR PRINCIPAL PURPOSE

Monday, August 21 and Tuesday, August 22, 2006

SYMPOSIUM

**Toronto Airport Marriott
901 Dixon Road, Toronto**

Welcome: Nil Parent, ADFO

Overview of Leading Student Achievement Project: Nelly Kelders, CPCO

The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat was launched April 1, 2005. At that point, ADFO, CPCO, and OPC joined with the Secretariat to focus on the need to educate all students and improve achievement in literacy and numeracy. The critical role of principals and vice principals in accomplishing this task was publicly acknowledged by Dalton McGuinty, Ben Levin, Avis Glaze and Michael Fullan.

Principal Learning Teams were established in order to work towards these goals:

1. provide the mentoring and coaching valuable for principals;
2. develop the skills of principals so that they would be good instructional leaders;
3. focus on improved student learning and impact student achievement in literacy and numeracy.

Principal teams from a number of boards participated in three symposia during Year 1 of the project: August 2005, January 2006, and June 2006. A number of positive results emerged from the first year's work:

- use of a common language in education;
- a consistent message across the province;
- cooperation among OPC, CPCO, ADFO and the Secretariat;
- a desire for sustainability, evidenced in the continuation of the project into Year 2.

During Year 2 of the project, the Secretariat, OPC, CPCO, ADFO, and Curriculum Services Canada (CSC), will continue to support the Leading Student Achievement project and will organize three symposia: August 21 and 22, 2006; January 26, 2007; and May 4, 2007.

The Role of Research in the Project: Joanne Robinson, OPC

An evidence-informed model is an integral component of the Leading Student Achievement project. In Year 1, Ken Leithwood focused the research on attitudes and changes in teachers. In Year 2, the focus will be on the benefits of working in a process such as the Leading Student Achievement project.

A survey conducted at the end of last year indicated that 95% of principals responding rated the benefit of participating on a principal learning team at Levels 3 and 4 on a four point scale. The experience of membership in a PLT provided an opportunity to acquire new knowledge of oneself, understand the workings of professional learning communities in schools, and better appreciate and address teacher needs. There is a strong sense that the PLT is an effective means to influence literacy and numeracy in Ontario schools.

This year, in Year 2, an evidence-informed approach will continue. The task will focus on recording the influence of Principal Learning Teams. A survey will be distributed in October for completion by principals and teachers. The initial preparation of the survey will take place during the August symposium within association meetings, at which time participating principals will be asked to develop questions that should be included in the survey. A research committee will then use this information to draft the survey to be conducted in October 2006.

Breakthrough: Redesigning Classroom Instruction to Transform Learning: Carmel Crévola

Carmel Crévola's presentation was based on the material in *Breakthrough*, the book detailing the work she has undertaken with Michael Fullan and Peter Hill.

Leading Student Achievement Project

Crévola reviewed the goal of the LSA project, namely, to raise the bar for student achievement and lower the gap between high achievers and those less successful. She pointed out that the greatest opportunity to narrow the gap is in the early years up to the age of eight when it is possible to accelerate students up to grade level.

She noted that preliminary results of the project show growth toward:

- understanding of PLCs and their impact on student achievement;
- increasing use of meaningful data;
- moving from surface collegiality to a more intense culture focused on student outcomes;
- understanding the role of the principal as an instructional leader;
- applying S.M.A.R.T. goals.

Guiding Principles of Breakthrough

The guiding principles presented in *Breakthrough* also connect to the LSA project. These principles are as follows:

- The role of leadership is to provide the focus and expert support system...to personalize each classroom with greater instructional precision.
- Studies of effective schools show the importance of strong educational leadership.

- Educational reform needs careful and engaged ubiquitous leadership.
- Tri-level leadership (province/district/school) is essential.
- Leadership needs to be pro-active and distributed.

Breakthrough Thinking

A transformation of thinking about classroom instruction is required. The need is to personalize each classroom with greater precision. This means putting the focus on the individual student and knowing more about the student so that the teacher can help solve his/her problems and direct the learning more effectively. In order to accomplish such a transformation, a concerted tri-level approach by the province, district and school is essential.

Breakthrough Components: (Breakthrough, Chapter 2)

There are three core components that form the “Breakthrough” system; these are called “The Triple ‘P’ Core Components”. These three components must be synergistically interconnected in order to raise the bar and close the gap between high achievers and those less successful. The components are as follows:

1. Personalization – This is education that puts the learner at the centre and provides an education that is tailored to the students’ learning and motivational needs at any given moment. Personalization should be used by every teacher if all students are to learn.
2. Precision – This involves a system of assessment for learning, where the student understands the standard being aimed for, can compare his/her actual level of performance with the standard, and engages in appropriate action which leads to a closure of the gap. Feedback is essential to the student regarding standards and performance, but it is also essential to provide feedback to teachers about instruction so that they can construct the instructional focus and set the goals of the lesson accordingly. Precision also requires the teacher to re-assess the goals/plan/action for individual students in order to determine the level of progress and to track the progress.
3. Professional Learning – This is focused, ongoing learning for each and every teacher “in context” (the setting where one works). Personalization and precision are impossible without daily learning on the part of the teacher, both individually and collectively. Teachers must interact in relation to teaching and learning.

Moral Purpose

The glue that binds “The Triple ‘P’ Core Components” is moral purpose: education that raises the bar as it closes the gap between those who are successful and those who are not.

Four beliefs and understandings comprise the moral purpose of education and form the foundation of action (*Breakthrough*, p.12). These have to be in place, beginning with the first and building to the fourth. The following are these nonnegotiable beliefs:

1. All students can achieve high standards given sufficient time and support.
2. All teachers can teach to high standards given the right conditions and assistance.
3. High expectations and early intervention are essential (know what students bring to the task so there is an accurate starting point and then develop the appropriate intervention plan).
4. Teachers need to be able to articulate what they do and why they do it (theory based – “I have a theory of what I do and why I do it”).

Transforming Classroom Instruction: (Breakthrough, Chapter 3)

Coherence between the multiple levels of schooling – province, district, school, and classroom – is an important pre-condition for successful school reform. The most important condition, however, is the quality of classroom instruction. The new direction is the complex and challenging task of transforming classroom instruction into a “precision-based” process.

Instruction, not teaching, is the appropriate focus, because it is about interaction with students, teachers, and resources in constantly changing contexts. It flows and it adapts to the context. Instruction begins with measuring what students know and are able to do; instruction is then designed on the basis of this information. The challenge lies in wanting to respond to individual needs, but having to do so in a class of 30.

If classroom instruction could be organized to include the following four components, significant improvement in student learning would occur:

- a set of powerful and aligned assessment tools tied to learning objectives;
- a method allowing the formative assessment data to be captured in a way not time-consuming and analyzed automatically;
- a means of using the assessment information on each student to design and implement personalized instruction;
- a built in means of monitoring and managing learning, of testing what works, and of systematically improving the effectiveness of classroom instruction.

Critical Learning Instructional Paths – CLIPs: (Breakthrough, Chapter 5)

CLIPs are devices for bringing expert knowledge to bear on the daily decisions that every classroom teacher must make in teaching a coherent domain of the curriculum. In other words, CLIPs give schools and teachers access to validated knowledge and provide them with powerful tools to manage instruction in the most expert way possible. To implement CLIPs involves a 12-step process:

1. defining the terrain (big picture overview);
2. key stages – mapping the journey;
3. objectives – medium term goals for instruction;
4. indicators – specific and comprehensive short-term outcomes;
5. pre-assessment – starting points for instruction;
6. assessments – short and aligned;
7. student profile – summaries of students’ starting-, mid-, and end-points;
8. focus sheet – planning, assessing and evaluating “on the run”;
9. instructional strategies matrix – aligning curriculum intent, assessment information and instructional strategies;
10. instructional strategies and grouping practices – a core of powerful strategies for use in whole- and small-group instruction;
11. ongoing monitoring – focus sheets, student profiles, indicators;
12. post assessment – end-points of instruction.

The Breakthrough Framework: (Breakthrough, Chapter 6, p.91)

At the centre of the framework is “Moral Purpose”. Surrounding it are the three inner core functions, namely the Triple P Model – personalization, precision, and professional learning. Six core functions support the three P’s: assessment literacy, school and classroom organization, classroom teaching, professional learning communities, intervention and assistance, and home and school/community partnerships. Finally, there are leadership and coordination across the three levels of school, district, and province that are required to orchestrate the first two layers.

Curriculum Services Canada (CSC): Lynne Hyne addressed CPCO and OPC
Bruce Galbraith addressed ADFO

There are various resources available to educators which can be accessed at the following website locations:

1. Click on Leading Student Achievement to access materials. The link can be found on the home page of the three principals’ associations
2. Click on the Curriculum Services Canada (CSC) website to access the Literacy and Numeracy (LNS) archived webcasts (www.curriculum.org);
3. Click on the Student Success webpages on the Ministry of Education website and scroll to the bottom of the page to access the four portals ([http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/english/student success/](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/english/student%20success/)).

Evening Keynote Address: Patricia Manson, Director, Durham Catholic District School Board

Patricia Manson began her presentation by outlining the demographics of the Durham Catholic District School Board. She then explained, that upon assuming the position of Director in 2003, she realized the principals in the district were committed to success for all students in their schools, and, therefore, they made the commitment to work as a team to improve student achievement. In order to do this, developing Professional Learning Communities became the focus in Durham Catholic.

The belief that everyone is responsible for student achievement led to each Superintendent taking responsibility for a Family of Schools. Principals' Meetings and the Family of Schools' Meetings have focused on developing the capacity for leadership in a Professional Learning Community.

The EQAO data has shown that 25% of students in Durham' Catholic schools continue to achieve at Level 2. For this reason, a process has been established to name these students and focus instruction to move them to Level 3.

Opportunities have been created for teachers to become teacher leaders in their schools. One initiative to bring this about is a two year process called "Teachers Coaching Teachers", whereby teachers develop an inquiry project in their own classrooms. A second leadership opportunity has been the "Teacher Induction Process" in which experienced teachers have mentored newly hired teachers.

A key component of the PLC model is teachers learning in context. Therefore, principals were given funds for release time in their schools for professional learning teams to meet in order to have professional dialogue on instruction.

Because of the focus on capacity building for PLC's, the Durham Catholic District School Board became involved in the Leading Student Achievement initiative, with ten principals participating in Year 1. The group decided to narrow their focus of inquiry to reading at the junior level. At each school, the principal used the SMART goal process to determine areas of concern in reading, provided release time for teachers, and led professional dialogue with these teachers. They also continued to meet with their colleagues to share process/goals/strategies. In essence, the LSA project in Durham Catholic became an example of a Professional Learning Community.

In the coming year, eleven new principals and their staffs will participate in the LSA project. The focus will be on instruction that improves student achievement. As well, principals involved will take part in a survey that will determine ways to more effectively support them as instructional leaders.

DAY TWO

Welcome: Nil Parent, ADFO

Keynote Address: Sandra Pupatello, Minister of Education

The Minister stated that her government aims to reach every student, raise student achievement, lower the drop out rate, and reduce class size to 20 or less in the primary grades. She acknowledged that it is the people in the educational system who are the key players, making a difference for students.

She outlined a number of specific goals and actions:

- 90% of JK – Grade 3 classes at 20 students or less by the end of this political term;
- a two billion dollar investment toward enhancements for children in the early years (up to Grade 3);
- a review of Boards' spending to ensure monies are appropriately spent;
- the hiring of 3600 more elementary teachers and 1300 specialty teachers;
- the establishment in secondary education of the 'Student Success Initiative' to reduce the drop out rate;
- the 'Leading Student Achievement' initiative to increase student achievement in literacy and numeracy;
- the 'Ontario Focus Intervention Project' to assist schools in need;
- increased flexibility in course selection in high school;
- assistance for identified needy students as they move from Grade 8 to Grade 9;
- change in the funding process so that it is based on the school rather than the total Board population;
- the work of the Stability Commission (successfully dealing with issues);
- a program review in Special Education;
- revision of the Safe Schools' legislation to provide more effective tools for principals;
- a twenty-three million dollar investment towards anti-bullying programs in schools.

The current government has five goals on its education agenda:

1. to create good conditions for educators to do their work and fulfill their role;
2. to provide high quality training for principals and vice principals;
3. to increase the input of principals and vice principals to the education system;
4. to create an environment of respect and security for principals and vice principals;

5. to ensure consistency in the province by better defining the role, responsibilities and obligations of principals and vice principals.

At this point the Minister opened the floor to questions.

Question: There is an abundance of new principals and vice principals in Ontario. Do you see a day when there will be a program to support this growing group of new administrators?

Answer: First of all, many teachers, vice principals and principals are staying on the job and not retiring. It is generally felt that they are doing so because once again they are enjoying their work. However, this situation involving new administrators needs investigating.

Question: The specialty areas such as the arts and physical education have suffered in past years. Will there be support for these areas in terms of hiring more teachers?

Answer: The government has provided funding to hire 1300 specialty teachers.

Question: Why has money not been allotted for the purchase of computers and the training of those who teach computer technology?

Answer: Much funding has been put into libraries/resource centres, and, a significant portion of this funding went into the purchase of computers.

Question: Are there plans to reinstate programs such as the 'Best Start Program'? Many needs in schools require assistance beyond what the Ministry of Education can provide.

Answer: Community supports to help students fell by the wayside in past years, but this administration is putting the needs of these students back on the table. A Children's Ministry, established under the Minister for Children, is struggling to develop a system approach to addressing these needs.

Question: There has been so much new information for teachers involved in the LSA project to assimilate during the past year. Will these teachers be given time to consolidate their learning?

Answer: The Premier, who must be given marks for being excessively pro-active, "cannot take his foot off the gas". Keeping in mind that this electorate is one consisting of many who do not have children in school, he must prove that the efforts of his government have been successful and worthwhile. In terms of teachers being overwhelmed, Avis Glaze has acknowledged that there has been a high level of expectations and a quantity of professional

development. One answer to addressing this situation is targeted professional development that teachers can now access on their own time by viewing the webcasts available on-line.

Question: Principals often require efficient and speedy access to health care services in order to meet critical student needs. There is also a need to have health education programs in schools that are relevant to the current societal context. Is there any movement toward consultation between the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education to address these needs?

Answer: There have been meetings with colleagues regarding children's mental health agencies. There is a need for fast and efficient access to services and information by principals, as well as a need for Ministries to cooperate.

Question: Have Boards received guidelines regarding the two additional P.A. Days allocated this school year? If so, what are they?

Answer: The topic selection for these days is listed on the Ministry website under the heading, 'Subject Matters'.

How SAO's Can Help Support Principal Learning Teams: Elaine Hine, Catherine Keating, Bonnie McEachern, and Denis Maika – The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat

Effective PLC's use data in order to make informed decisions about teaching and learning. The school's best available evidence concerning student achievement indicators is EQAO data, in particular, the desegregation of the item responses. Schools examine the EQAO booklets and their Individual Item Response Report (IIR) to understand what students were asked to do. Then they analyze how their students performed in relation to the questions.

The most effective way to monitor and be accountable for student progress is through the use of 'Data Walls'. This use results in the following:

- identifying patterns based on students' strengths and needs;
- planning special measures for "students to watch";
- setting targets to predict student success;
- developing an imbedded P.D. plan based on student needs;
- positioning resources to meet students' needs.

There are three stages in data wall implementation:

1. Compliance – The individual submits information as requested.
2. Accounting – The individual sets up the data wall and notes at what level students are positioned in terms of their achievement.

3. Accountability and Communication – The individual predicts, targets, and plans for students based on the information posted on the data wall. Then he/she works in a team to use the information on the data wall to inform teaching and improve student achievement. The teachers look at individual students by name and personalize the instruction for each student.

The following websites are useful:

LNS Webcasts www.curriculum.org

LNS On-line Journal www.inspirelearning.ca

EQAO www.eqao.com

The presenters can be reached at the following e-mail addresses:

Elaine.Hine@ontario.ca
Catherine.Keating@ontario.ca

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Leading Leaders

A. Barb McMorrow, CPCO

The terms ‘Lead Principal’ and ‘Lead Superintendent’ have been carefully chosen to emphasize the leadership role of each. The ‘Lead Principal’ acts as a facilitator of a team whose focus is on improving classroom practice so that the achievement of students increases. To fulfill the role effectively, principals should work on the development of facilitation skills. Each ‘Lead Principal’ is also a ‘Lead Learner’ who models a process of evaluating one’s learning needs and then addressing those needs through appropriate professional learning. The intent is that the other members of the PLT will do the same.

B. Joanne Robinson, OPC

As individuals take on the responsibility of ‘Lead Principal’, there are a number of tools to assist them in the role:

1. *Powerful Designs for Professional Learning*;
2. “The Promise of Coaching” by Mary Navanti (*OPC Register*, Summer, 2006 – available in the Symposium package);
3. Handouts (in the Symposium package) – ‘Facilitator Role – Core Practices’, ‘Types of Peer Coaching’, ‘Team Learning Plan’;
4. Goal Start-up Activity (Joanne Robinson is the resource contact) -

- brainstorm dream conditions that would exist within the Board to enable school achievement to improve; list the actions that a dream team of principals would undertake to make this happen;
- identify the barriers to each item on the list;
- cluster items on the list into thematic groupings which can become the major themes or actions.

C. Linda Massey, OPC and Lynne Hyne, CSC

A partnership between the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat and the Provincial Principal Associations (ADFO, CPCO, and OPC) has resulted in the production of DVD's and a Facilitator's Guide for use by 'Lead Principals'. The package is divided into two parts: 'Speakers with a Provincial Perspective' and 'Content Experts'. These tools and resources can be used to share the presentations from the Leading Student Achievement Symposia of 2005 and 2006 as well as the speeches delivered at the inaugural event on April 1, 2005. Audiences can include groups such as the PLT's, school PLC's, and parent groups. Copies were distributed to every 'Lead Principal'. Curriculum Services Canada can provide additional copies. E-mail CSC at curriculum.org.

The presenters can be reached at the following e-mail addresses:

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Breakout Sessions by Principal Associations (ADFO, CPCO, and OPC) – Planning for Year 2

Task: Participants were given a template titled: "Constructing the LSA Principal/Teacher Survey". This template listed the 12 major characteristics of a Professional Learning Community (PLC). In small groups, principals devised questions appropriate to each of the characteristics. These draft questions will form the basis for the research committee to use in constructing the final version of the survey which will be completed by principals and teachers in October 2006. One purpose of the survey will be to measure the value for principals of working in a Principal Learning Team, their personal growth as instructional leaders, and their development as leaders of leaders. A second purpose will be to measure how teachers' practice has changed as a result of participating in a Professional Learning Community.

APPENDIX 1: Overview of LSA Project by Nelly Kelders

Good morning. Welcome to year two of the Leading Student Achievement Project.

My task this morning is to very quickly give you an overview of the LSA project

To begin, I would like to tell you a story, one I'm sure some of you have heard before but I think it relates well to what we are doing:

This story is called “Divert Your Course”

This is the transcript of the ACTUAL radio conversation of a US naval ship with Canadian authorities off the coast of Newfoundland in October 1995.

Canadians: Please divert your course 15 degrees south to avoid a collision.

Americans: Please divert your course 15 degrees north to avoid a collision.

Canadians: Negative. You will have to divert your course 15 degrees to the south to avoid a collision.

Americans: This is the Captain of a US Navy ship. I say again, divert YOUR course.

Canadians: No. I say again, you divert YOUR course.

Americans: This is the Aircraft Carrier USS Lincoln, The second largest ship the United States' Atlantic Fleet. We are accompanied by 3 destroyers, 3 cruisers and numerous support vessels. I demand that you change your course 15 degrees north, I say again, that's one five degrees North, or counter-measures will be undertaken to ensure the safety of this ship.

Canadians: This is a lighthouse. Your call!

The reason I started with this story is because

- Just like the preceding dialogue, all of us in our educational careers have been asked to divert our direction in teaching many times – for example, whole language, The Common Curriculum, etc.
- Quite often we were being commanded to make changes by people we weren't sure understood what it was like to be in a school let alone a classroom.
- We, the 3 principals' associations and the Secretariat are like the lighthouse –we are ready to offer support to you, our school administrators, to assist you to be successful in staying on course to improve student achievement in literacy and numeracy.

- The initial proposal for this project was developed in February 2005 by the 3 principals' associations and presented to the newly formed Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat under the direction of Avis Glaze.
- The Secretariat was launched on April 1, 2005 and at that time the government of Ontario told the principals of this province, how important they are to the success of education. Let's take a flash back.
- We were excited! We were excited because we were advocating for a unique model to provide and support professional development to school administrators.
- The framework we envisioned was that of principal learning teams (PLT) where the lead principal would work with members of his /her PLT to share ideas, knowledge and strategies to mobilize and sustain the professional learning communities in their schools.
 - The rationale for our framework was based on research:
 - We know the principal is the catalyst for developing and sustaining the Professional Learning community
 - We know the PLC supports teaching excellence and improved student achievement and
 - It empowers teachers to become leaders.
- The Purpose of the Pilot Project is threefold and based upon our beliefs:
 - First:
 - **We recognized the need to build capacity** through principal learning teams
 - Because we believe
 - That leaders lead professional learning communities
 - That none of us is as competent as all of us
 - That mentoring is valuable for practicing principals
 - Building capacity makes school leadership more manageable
 - Building capacity and sustainability are the keys to making a difference and
 - Change and growth continues over time through the transition of leaders in schools

The second part of our proposal is to:

- **Develop the skills & knowledge** to improve principals' instructional leadership skills
 - We believe that
 - Job-embedded PD delivers the most powerful results and
 - Principals need the social/emotional competencies of effective leadership to build professional learning communities

The final part is to:

- **Impact student achievement** in literacy and numeracy
 - We believe that
 - The focus must be on improved student learning and as such

- Principals recognize the classroom behaviours that lead to improved student learning

In June 2005, 23 boards accepted the invitation to participate in the first year of the project

- We hosted the lead principals and supervisory officers at 3 symposia – August 2005, January and June 2006.
 - Keynote speakers included
 - Dr. Jim Parker of Trent University – who spoke about the importance of Emotional Intelligence in August
 - Dr. Richard Sagor who discussed the impact of Action Research, in January, and
 - Dr. Lorna Earl & Dr. Steven Katz who helped participants make sense of how to lead schools in a data rich world in June.
- Each cohort was able to access learning opportunities from their provincial associations, online resources, web cast training sessions, chat rooms to share successful practice and challenges as well as regular updates on what was happening in the project.

So what has happened in the first year of the project?

- The direction has changed: We are hearing a common language in education that everyone agrees upon
 - Through the principals’ associations a consistent message has been delivered across the province
 - “Commands” have turned into a genuine partnership between the principals’ associations, the Secretariat and the cohorts – Critical friends have been formed
 - There is a desire by all the partners to sustain the momentum begun in the first year

That desire for sustainability has led to Year 2 of the project.

- The invitation to participate in the project has been expanded to more than double the number of cohorts in the first year.
- We will continue to support the purpose of the project:
 - **To Build capacity**
 - **To Develop skills and knowledge in literacy and numeracy**
 - **To Impact student achievement**
- The principals’ associations will continue to provide the ongoing support and learning opportunities for the lead principals and their teams in partnership with the Student Achievement Officers and Supervisory Officers:
- There will be three symposia again this year:
 - This, being the first with Carmel Crévola as the keynote speaker
 - Followed by a Symposium on January 26, 2007 and one in May 4, 2007
 - The topics for these symposia will to be determined by the needs you convey to us in the months to come

- As well, web cast and DVD support will continue with Curriculum Services Canada
- The principals' associations will continue to develop and to deliver learning opportunities that are current and research based and we will continue to have
- Support from the Secretariat and its Student Achievement Officers

Before I ask Joanne Robinson to explain the research component, I would like to take this opportunity to recognize and thank some of the organizations and people who are involved in this project:

- Secretariat: Avis Glaze, Ruth Mattingley, Judy Speirs, Carol Campbell, Judi Kokis, Ruth Peden
- ADFO: Serge Plouffe, Martyne Laurin, Nil Parent
- OPC: Joanne Robinson, Linda Massey, Bob Jackson, Susan Nesbitt
- CPCO: Nelly Kelders, Barbara McMorrow, Mary Cordeiro
- Recorder: Bev Miller
- CSC: Lynne Hyne, Jennifer Coens and staff

To determine how well we are doing we have to rely on research so at this time I would like to invite Joanne Robinson from OPC to describe that component of the project to you.