

# LEADING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT: OUR PRINCIPAL PURPOSE

Wednesday, August 22 and Thursday, August 23, 2007

## SYMPOSIUM

Toronto Airport Marriott  
901 Dixon Road, Toronto

### Executive Summary

#### DAY ONE

#### **Welcome: Nil Parent, ADFO**

Nil Parent explained that the focus of the symposium would be on taking the Leading Student Achievement project to the next level during the coming year.

Included in the introduction was a 15 minute archival video montage documenting the purpose and history of the project. This video will be available on the web at the beginning of September 2007 so that participants can access it for use with their principal learning teams.

#### **Teachers' Professional Learning: Paul Anthony, Director Policy and Standards Branch Ministry of Education**

A new provincial Teacher Learning and Leadership Program is in the process of being established by the Ministry of Education. This program (TLLP) will have two objectives:

- 🍏 To support experienced teachers to undertake self-directed advanced professional development related to improved student achievement;
- 🍏 To develop leadership skills for classroom teachers who wish to share learning and exemplary practices on a board and/or provincial basis.

#### **Taking the Project to the Next Level: Dr. Kenneth Leithwood Professor of Educational Leadership O.I.S.E./UT**

**Concept of 'Project':** Dr. Leithwood explained that a project has the following components:

- 🍏 goals and targeted funding;
- 🍏 a timeline with intense activity;
- 🍏 an agent to whom the participants are accountable and who controls the funding;
- 🍏 the success of the project being dependent on participants who must acknowledge and accept the goals;
- 🍏 the intensive effort of participants building momentum which will continue to build upon completion of the project.

**Evaluation:** Most often, a project has an assessment component. In the case of the LSA project, the assessment process will consist of the following in 2007 - 2008:

- 🍏 a brief survey to be completed by principals at the start of the school year and again in the spring;
- 🍏 an on-line survey to be completed by teachers in early fall and again in the spring;
- 🍏 telephone interviews with a random selection of principal team leaders in mid-winter;
- 🍏 an examination of EQAO achievement data.

**Objectives to guide LSA Initiatives over the Next Year:** Dr. Leithwood initially introduced three objectives, but as he spoke, he added a fourth to his list.

1. Focus the content of the conversations within district principal learning teams and school PLCs on conditions which robust evidence indicates have the most powerful direct effects on student learning.
2. Deepen participants' understanding of effective PLC processes and refine their skills in managing such processes in their own PLCs.
3. Significantly extend principal and teacher capacities for effective literacy and numeracy instruction.
4. Identify how to continue the momentum of increasing literacy and numeracy achievement in our schools.

**Existing Priorities that Warrant Ongoing Attention in the LSA Project:** Two existing priorities deserve continued focus:

1. Professional Learning Communities
2. Focused Instruction

**New Priorities for the LSA Project:** In addition to focused instruction, there are five school-level conditions that have powerful direct effects on student learning. These are:

1. Academic Press
2. School Disciplinary Climate
3. Collective Teacher Efficacy
4. Teacher Trust in Colleagues, Parents and Students
5. Time for Learning

**A Synthesis of Instructional Practices:** There are a number of leadership practices that cross contexts. The manner in which the practices are enacted may change within a new context, but the practices themselves are constant. These core practices of successful leaders fall under five headings:

- 🍏 Setting directions
- 🍏 Developing people
- 🍏 Redesigning the organization
- 🍏 Managing the instructional program
- 🍏 Other practices

**Reflective Activity:** Board teams discussed these three questions:

1. Of the three objectives for this year, which will demand the greatest effort by you and your colleagues?
2. What concrete actions might you and your colleagues take to improve the five key conditions in our schools?
3. In what areas (objectives, conditions) will you and your colleagues need the most support?

**Teacher Teams That Get Results – Part I: Gayle Gregory, Educational Consultant**

Gregory's presentation was based on a series of overheads distributed in print form to all participants as well as the following publication which was also distributed to all participants:

Gregory, G. & Kuzmich, L. (2007). *Teacher Teams That Get Results: 61 Strategies for Sustaining and Renewing Professional Learning Communities*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Strategies/topics shared during the presentation included ones such as “Developing Norms for PLCs”, “Creating a Growth-Oriented Climate”, and “Importance of Vision”.

**Carousel Sessions: Sharing Exemplary Practices:** Participants had the opportunity to attend two of the sessions listed below, each of which was prepared by a team of principals who have been involved in the LSA project for some time.

Sessions:

1. Maximizing Students' Mathematics Potential and Achievement
2. Building Principal Learning Teams Using a 3 “P” Framework
3. Principal Learning Teams That Work
4. Our Principal Purpose: Leading Student Achievement
5. Principal as Lead Learner: Sustaining a collaborative culture for school improvement – a system approach
6. Principal Professional Learning Teams
7. Rencontres regionales par niveau
8. Encourager la lecture autonome chez les garçons

## DAY II

### **Principals' Association Meetings: ADFO, CPCO AND OPC**

Principals met in their association groupings to discuss the conditions in schools critical to improvement in student learning and achievement as outlined by Dr. Leithwood on Day One of the symposium. In addition, principals completed the principal survey and collected sufficient copies for members of the PLTs in their boards. Dr. Leithwood made himself available to answer questions during each of the association sessions. Participants also began the completion of the 2007 – 2008 learning plans for their local PLTs.

Participants received a number of resources and were given information on an upcoming LNS symposium titled, “Building System Capacity for the Diagnostic Process in School Boards” to be held September 17 & 18, 2007. The LSA SO at each board will be designating board representatives.

### **Teacher Teams That Get Results – Part II: Gayle Gregory, Educational Consultant**

Gayle Gregory highlighted “Best Practices in Our Schools” and reviewed the study, “Instruction and Achievement in Chicago Schools”. This study contrasted didactic and interactive instruction components and found that interactive methods resulted in a higher level of student achievement.

She then explained a strategy termed, “Poke and Stroke”, a method which encourages teachers to use new instructional strategies in a way that is non-threatening to them.

The next portion of her presentation focused on building internal capacity in schools. She outlined six strategies for accomplishing this goal and showed a video of Montview School in Colorado, asking participants to note the evidence of these six components within the school. She concluded this section of her presentation by providing a tool to measure school capacity, “Assessing Your School Capacity for Student Learning”.

Gregory finished Part II with an explanation of the importance of building trusting relationships within a school, emphasizing the important role of the principal in establishing this climate of trust. She also reviewed the five core characteristics of a professional learning community and included in her discussion, activities to promote collaboration among teachers. She then provided an assessment tool, “Assessing Your School Culture and Climate”.

### **Closing Address: Dr. Avis Glaze, Chief Student Achievement Officer of Ontario & CEO of The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat**

Dr. Glaze highlighted key concepts, reviewed past efforts and assessed the status of the LSA project at the present point in its implementation.

The topics covered were as follows:

1. Principals as Learning-Centred Leaders – the components that comprise instructional leadership;
2. Seven Strong Claims about Successful School Leadership – seven claims developed by Dr. Kenneth Leithwood;
3. Nine Key Strategies – the developmental strategies adopted by the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat to move education forward in Ontario;
4. Signs of Progress – signs of progress evident as a result of the implementation of the nine strategies;
5. Moving Forward – characteristics evident in schools that are moving forward and those factors educators must heed to continue the momentum;
6. Professional Learning Communities – an important means by which schools can maintain the momentum.

**Closing Remarks: Nil Parent, ADFO**

Nil Parent thanked all participants and presenters for their contribution in making the August symposium a success. He then provided the dates for the two Leading Student Achievement symposiums that will take place during the coming year:

**February 1, 2008 and May 9, 2008**