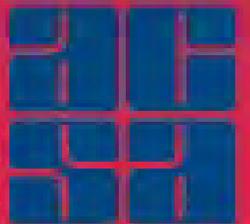


# Leadership *Extra*

association of california  
school administrators



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# Educational parenting, school responsiveness and family engagement

As educators, we try our very best to serve all children and love all children, but without the parents, the job is that much harder, overwhelming and can feel futile.

**By Tovi C. Scruggs**

We all want our children to succeed. Yet, school alone is not enough to produce the type of young person a parent may envision their child to become.

What I am about to say may seem alarming coming from an educational leader and high school principal, but I love our children and humanity enough to stand in truth and courage of what must be said: Our children, especially those of color, are not fully served as our current schools stand.

Unfortunately, the school system is too convoluted and teachers simply cannot do it alone. The overall job is simply too great and schools have too many distractors and competing moral values for parents to trust that their children are getting exactly what they want for their character, achievement and success.

As educators, we try – most of us – our very best to serve all children and love all children, but without the parents, the job is that much harder, overwhelming and can feel futile.

Day after day, year after year, parents continually turn their most precious possessions over to us – often without any sort of monitoring. It is imperative that parents partner with schools and take more significant and active roles in our children's education.

Parents must take action in the education of our children with greater intentionality, clarity and strategy. I call this role that parents must take “educational parenting.” The important aspect of educational parenting is that we're making skillsets of parenting a child in school very explicit.

When parents hear “parenting,” they try to make it a whole umbrella, and when their kids are having trouble in school, they think it might be something they're doing, or not doing, and feel defensive when we try to discuss it. I have found the term of educational parenting to give enough of a differentiation from “parenting,” and this allows parents to surrender defensiveness. It's been hard to talk with families about parenting, and hear them respond with, “What are you talking about my parenting for?” Only for me to clarify, “No, no, I'm not talking about your parenting, I'm talking about educational parenting, because it requires different skills than regular parenting.”

I can visibly see the parent become less tense and become more open to dialogue. Then we talk about the mindset, the “being” part of educational parenting, followed by the actions, which is the “doing” part of educational parenting.

To really own this work and attempt to earnestly contribute to the solution, rather than continuing to struggle in frustration and complain, I authored a book about it titled “Be a Parent

Champion: A Guide to Becoming a Partner with Your Child's School." In the book, I teach parents specifically how to be better partners with schools.

The book is not a traditional parenting book. It is a partnering book. Partnering equals "we," "us" and "ours." It is a book designed for parents to create better school success for their own children as the initial step, which will then help improve our schools to better serve our students and families on a systemic level with the spirit of oneness. It is a book serving to articulate the need for parents and educators to engage in a partnering relationship as "we" and "us," treating and serving children as "ours."

Parent Champion is an empowerment model of support to increase parent engagement and student success, presenting solid strategies, tools and supports to empower parents to best serve their children to survive, thrive and achieve in our educational systems. I encourage parents to unify to demand higher standards and results from our schools, participate more fully in realization those expectations, serve as contributing authors of the agendas in our schools, and take more definitive action in their homes.

"Parent Champion" shares important aspects of exactly how to do that. By the time I finished the book and was editing the last chapter, a leadership shift of my own happened: I realized that not even my own high school was upholding our end of the partnership; we were not fully supporting parents in what we were asking them to do.

And that's when it hit me: It is the school's job and responsibility to set the tone and create the space for parents to be champions. We both must hold up our ends of the partnership, beginning with us first as the school leaders. Who best to teach parents about educational parenting than educational leaders? They are in our key domain of expertise.

The responsibility of the invitation and being welcoming lies with us – the schools and the school leaders – being more responsive. It is about what I call "school responsiveness." Meaning, we as educators need to look at our visions for our families and family engagement, look at our own mindsets concerning family engagement and equity, and finally ask ourselves just how empowered do we want families to really be?

I assert that our schools and the school system are not truly ready to be responsive to parents and what we are asking of them. If every parent – every parent – did what we are asking them to do in partnership with us, our schools could not handle the load; we would be too overloaded to service our families. I have to pose the question for us to consider honestly, "Are our schools really ready to be that responsive?"

Being responsive also means taking risks, often what we do not like to do, especially publicly. But what have you got to lose by taking a risk in the area of family engagement? We are not very good at it, so it's all risk-taking at this point because our system and our schools are not ready for the level of engagement we are espousing.

Whatever that risk-taking strategy or action might look like for you, the biggest aspect of cracking the nut on parent engagement, and perhaps our greatest challenge, is putting ourselves in the place of most potential – "take action where you are clear," one of my favorite leadership phrases.

Just take action where you are clear. Once you take that first step, the next step is going to reveal itself. We keep thinking, "What's going to be that one model? What's going to be that one

thing?” Well, do some of the things that are definitely showing and revealing themselves to you to aim at getting higher family engagement. Take that risk.

Just about anything we start to do differently, start to examine more creatively and innovatively, is probably going to lead to something better. Guess what else? If there’s something you’re doing around family engagement that’s not working, stop doing it. Stop. If it’s not working, put your energy into manifesting a better idea, a better way, rather than beating your head up against the wall to get more than 10 parents to respond.

Seriously, I have been there, and I empathize with our struggle. You are not placing yourself in the place of most potential with continuing to do what is not working. You’re doing the thing that you’re “supposed to do” because it’s been done that way for so long. But if it’s not working, you’re wasting time, you’re wasting energy, you’re wasting the translator’s time, and you’re wasting the childcare person’s time.

Too many people’s time and effort is being wasted in trying to get that same thing that’s not working to work without doing anything different. We must take the risk to be more responsive to the needs of our families in educational parenting and family engagement.

To become more responsive as schools, and an entire system, will be pressure for us, but a good kind of pressure. It’s going to cause us to be different, and to do different. This will shift the status-quo in our schools.

For some, this is not a good thing, and for others, it’s a great thing. But for our children, the ones who matter most in this, it is the best thing. In order to transform our schools into the quality and successful institutions they were intended to be for all children, school operations must be more engaging and inclusive to everyone they serve.

This level of engagement and change is going to be a transformational process, a process that may not always feel good, or be smooth. It is going to be a paradigm shift in our ways-of-being in order to make these improvements from a place of compassion and love. It will be the “heart-work” of our California Professional Standard for Education Leaders.

To participate in this transformation fully will require us all to be willing and open to do that which we often do not want to do: be open to change and be open to feel discomfort. The transformation will require that we get uncomfortable, have difficult conversations, and be challenged to face ourselves and our mindsets.

We must remember that we are on the same team, with the same positive intent for our children. We must be mature and wise enough to trust the process with all of its uncertainty, while keeping our focus on the greater success of our children. And we must empower and teach parents how to be in this work with us. That is a part of our key role as educational leaders.

As a teacher, visionary and leader with more than 20 years of experience, I have learned that the best way for our children to benefit from and succeed in school is that we – educators and parents – work together.

I am aware that asking parents to be quality partners with schools, in turn, creates a dialogue and expectation that schools, leaders, counselors and teachers improve in partnering as well. Good. It’s not a blame-game or competition, it’s an opportunity to show up more fully and partner, then nurture the greater invitation to create success for our children from there. It is an opportunity for our schools to become more responsive to those we serve: children and families.

Tovi C. Scruggs is a high school principal in the Bay Area and 2015 recipient of the ACSA Region 6 Marcus Foster Award for Administrator Excellence.

# Building strong administrator teams: Learning and leading the district together

Creation of District Instructional Leadership Learning Teams in San Rafael City Schools is bringing school leadership closer to the district's vision, mission and strategic goals, embodying the full scope of LCAP.

**By Michael Watenpaugh, Harriet MacLean and Michael O'Neill**

Districts throughout California and the nation have invested time, energy and resources in discovering, developing and even borrowing pathways to the promised land of powerful instruction. They know their duty is to prepare students for the world of tomorrow. To meet this challenge, they are preparing teachers in the world of today.

What is missing in this work is a clear, compelling and consistent shared understanding at the school and district administrative leadership levels of what that the future should address and include, no matter what the grade level or subject. To build that understanding, a set of agreed upon road maps must be generated and embodied districtwide, through school and district administrative leadership-level knowledge and mutual commitment.

The San Rafael City School District is like many other districts in California, determining how best to meet the needs of each student, acknowledging that as a system many of our second language students and those who qualify for free and reduced-price meals have been historically underserved. The district is unique in that it comprises two separate districts, a 9-12 Basic Aid funded high school district, and a Local Control Funding Formula K-8 district, overseen by a common board of education, a common central services staff and a single superintendent.

Communication across schools and across school tiers is challenging in every district; it is even more important here. Parents, families and communities understand that their students begin in kindergarten and finish at one of the two high schools or continuation high school. They see it as one district and that their students go through one entity, no matter the circumstances or settings.

In June 2014, district and staff leaders identified the following questions:

- How do we link teaching and learning throughout the district?
- What would it take to identify and establish districtwide components for meaningful and powerful units of instruction?
- What ongoing and appropriate assessments would propel students to higher levels of confidence and readiness for the work world as well as for higher education?
- What does every one of our students need and deserve?
- How should a family's children experience our district across their K-12 span?
- How will school administrators lead, monitor and support their teachers in this brave new world?

During the 2014-15 school year, San Rafael City Schools' answer was to create District Instructional Leadership Learning Teams (D-ILLTs) and to conduct a year-long set of seminars. The purpose was to:

- Build administrative instructional leadership capacity across the district.
- Facilitate an ongoing exchange of ideas and experiences.
- Create an atmosphere of trust and shared practices among administrators at the school and district administrative level.
- Link instructional programs together across classrooms, grade levels, content areas, schools and district levels.
- Use the model as a platform for evidence-based ideas, practices and procedures at every school and level.

As a foundation, the entire District Administrator Leadership Team met in August 2014 to build shared knowledge. Working in mixed teams, everyone from the superintendent to first-year principals examined the clear vertical relationship among the Common Core State Standards in reading and writing across the grade levels and content areas. Teams discovered 90 percent of key verbs in past state standards read “students will know...” and realized that 90 percent of CCSS standards now began, “determine, analyze, interpret...” This made the necessary enormous leap understandably more challenging, but more real.

Teams wrestled with the components of meaningful units of instruction. They questioned what content and context would be deep and complex, challenging, yet age appropriate. Two things quickly became clear.

First, meaningful learning is not a focus on a topic. It is a weaving together of big ideas based on a variety of materials and sources. This learning demands instruction that shapes interactions and leads to student achievement through the lens of a worthwhile question.

Second, this shift in teaching and learning would not be accomplished in a year; it would be a multi-year undertaking.

Next we crafted an essential question for ourselves: “What must I know, understand, and be able to do in order to lead and support a school and district where instruction every day, for every teacher, at every grade level, and in every subject is at the highest level possible?” That question opened every subsequent seminar.

Our desire was to build an equity-driven school system, not to have teachers and schools work in isolation. There were many considerations given to such a commitment of time and resources.

- Teams needed to be mixed across grade levels as well as geographic areas.
- District leaders' learning (e.g. assistant superintendent and directors) had to take place side by side with school principals and assistant principals.
- New district and school leaders needed to be mixed with experienced district leaders.
- Time to learn together and flexibility were paramount, but not at the risk of ignoring the day-to-day operational needs of each campus

A plan for two teams emerged. Principals and assistant principals of high schools and middle schools were assigned to different teams. Elementary principals were assigned to match up the new with the experienced, to vary the geographic area, and to vary the socio-economic makeup of the schools.

A Thursday and a Friday of each month were calendared, and Teams 1 and 2 alternated meeting dates, so no one would be off campus the same day of the week each month. Meetings began at 8 a.m., and lunch was brought in at noon, allowing site administrators to continue their collaborative work or, as needed, return to their schools.

We worked with Michael O'Neill of the BridgeWorks Group. Working with a planning team of site and district leaders, O'Neill was able to craft, deliver and lead the year's syllabi. It included the following major topics:

- Taking Stock
- Next Steps – Design and Refine
- Assessment and Student Performance
- Renewed Efforts through Culture and Climate
- Staying the Course
- Surging Ahead
- Decisions and Directions

Superintendent Michael Watenpaugh, Assistant Superintendent for Education Services Harriet MacLean and three teaching and learning directors shared leadership at every meeting with facilitator O'Neill. Seminar topics were explored from the perspective of students, teachers and families. The superintendent provided the point of view of the school board, community and key stakeholders in making these transitions in teacher, learning and assessment.

“Taking Stock” continued our dialogue on the design, content and implementation of powerful units of instruction that demonstrated depth and quality. This begged the question: Did we believe units under construction or completed at that time climbed that mountain? If so, how many units of that description had been submitted to us by grade level and course? If not, what would we would need to do to re-boot? We asked whether those units had been designed in collaboration or isolation. Had units of quality been designed and taught or were they in development and yet to be taught? Were there any schools where the work had not even begun?

Given these new parameters, were we as district and school administrative leadership qualified at this point to review, observe and give truly instructive and helpful feedback on the depth and complexity of units? A plan for engaging teams of teachers in this conversation was paramount. But when? At this moment or once we were more secure in direction?

Thought was given to how this process and product would be communicated to families and community. Small group dialogue gave everyone the opportunity to speak to his or her findings and listen to the thoughts of other leaders. A pathway to a school system where instruction every day, for every teacher, at every grade level, and in every subject was at the highest-level possible had begun.

“Next Steps” addressed the rigor we needed to require of ourselves as instructional leaders. Each school administrative leader brought in the early findings from the questions identified in Taking Stock. “Helping Trios” gave everyone the opportunity to speak to their findings and listen to the thoughts of other leaders regarding the work that would create a school system. Research on the use of instinct and intuition balanced individual reflection on creating a timeline and the “hows” for a transition to CCSS by school and District, according to individual starting points.

By December, both Team 1 and Team 2 were ready to move to a formal matrix of critical components for unit design. Even though the two teams were not physically together at the same time, the studies that had been undertaken brought them to a remarkably similar set of components to be included in every unit, regardless of grade level or content area. These were compared with work from other states and research groups and found to be rich and full of potential. The questions from the opening session were beginning to be answered.

Now we needed to address administrative school level coaching for the identified results in design and instruction. What would be the best way to support units of clear quality and content as opposed to units that needed revision, addition or re-start? What models could be provided? Or would we have to forge models ourselves? What formats for successful interactions would be most appropriate? Each administrative leader and set of leadership teams made a commitment to working with at least one teacher team and to returning with insights and information.

The natural bridge to the next seminar was staying the course through redefining climate and culture. What was new was building a culture of teaching for rigor in a climate of collaboration and innovation. O’Neill brought a design concept and examples of English and history/social science units that served as a starting point.

We identified quotes from world leaders that illuminated each seminar topic, research articles, and videos of work taking place in high rigor student performances, such as Socratic seminars that led to identifying appropriate components of assessments, projects and performances to tie together the unit design process. Anchor standards, writing text types/purposes, and examples from Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium added breadth and depth.

A first draft of components for powerful assessment emerged and was completed at follow-through elementary and secondary directors/principals meetings. A set of 10 questions about unit content was now matched to a set of elements of measurement.

In April, the influence and make-up of PLCs took center stage. We used a rubric to determine where each PLC needed kudos, encouragement, support or direction. The elements of powerful and appropriate assessment were set, and each administrative leader had the luxury of time within the seminar to design their district or school trajectory and set of expectations for grade levels, departments and individual courses. All of this work was now to be the information and foundation that guided our system of schools.

Board and superintendent workshops created a district set of statements for vision, mission, core values and strategic goals that married this work with the Local Control Accountability Plan and Local Control Funding Formula. The concept of “ripples in a pond” was the metaphor that ensured that board and superintendent goals would lead to the development of assistant superintendent goals, director goals, and school administrative leader goals, all in direct alignment to those identified by the school board for the entire district. Once again, a school

system. Every goal would have at its heart student success. Every goal would weigh design and implementation with measurement of learning experiences and adjustments for success.

Our first year concluded with “Decisions and Directions.” Administrative leaders, in small groups, shared:

- scope of their school’s growth toward CCSS
- number of grade level, department, and course units
- quality of those units
- level and commitment to collaboration in the design of the units
- connections among A-G requirements and Career Technical Pathways
- remaining challenges.

A final matrix would return to a revisit of Taking Stock, this time considering number of units designed; designed and taught; designed, taught and refined; designed, taught, refined, observed and given feedback.

A protocol for interdisciplinary examination and reflection on units grew from the interactions among administrative leadership and teacher leadership.

Through this first year of D-ILLTs, learning and life lessons were bountiful. First, the goals of this project would not be completed this year. Second, the goals were worth the effort. Third, planning, drafting and refining agendas and identifying support materials and resources together as a team were critical.

A debrief after each seminar with the superintendent, assistant superintendent of Educational Services, directors and Michael O’Neill identified progress and areas for further work and tighter focus. Teams bonded quickly and the benefits of K-12 grouping of administrators underscored.

New principals were able to explore, add to the group’s knowledge, and understand district culture. Experienced principals were able to share history, benefit from cross grade-level approaches, and re-norm our district culture. Trust became increasingly evident as principals and assistant principals shared aloud and in written reflection in small and large groups. The plan for a group small enough to bond, yet large enough to be a system of schools, was a success.

Products that emerged included a matrix of components that should be in every unit of instruction, a matrix of components for assessment, a matrix for Taking Stock of units completed and yet to be completed, and a draft model protocol for administrator and teacher groups to examine other teacher groups’ work among and across grade levels, disciplines and schools.

Anonymous surveys at the end of the year identified the time together as an opportunity for everyone to learn and plan together. A common approach to working as D-ILLTs through a matrix of components for curriculum design and assessment proved invaluable. “Lead Learners” now reflects the attitude and the work of our site administrators.

Learning to look at curriculum design through a new lens empowered us to work more effectively with advanced teacher teams and those teachers and teacher teams needing focused support. Personal stories of the joys and pains of growth emerged.

San Rafael City Schools entered its second DLLT year with renewed energy and confidence. The summer's opening Leadership Advance gave Teams 1 and 2 the opportunity to share stories, ideas, successes and plans. It was clear by the types of questions they asked, and the professional level discussions that followed, that we were ready to move forward. The second year of the work with DLLTs is taking San Rafael City Schools ever closer to its vision, mission and strategic goals, embodying the full scope of LCAP.

Michael Watenpaugh is superintendent of San Rafael City Schools, where Harriet MacLean is assistant superintendent. Michael O'Neill is president of the BridgeWorks Group.

# Righting the Principalship: Shifting to ‘captain-only’ work

If you are a principal who is burned out, overwhelmed and frustrated because you have been doing the work of captain and crew for far too long, there are steps you can take to provide your school with the leadership it desperately needs.

**By Andy Johnsen and Jill Pancoast**

The problem of stress in the principalship is an issue that almost all school leaders are confronting these days. From the first-year, small town, elementary principal, to the urban, high school veteran, school leaders of all kinds are suffering from too much work and not enough time. For many, “stress in the principalship” is a redundancy—the two terms are synonymous.

A casual observer might not catch this by watching principals joyfully interact with students, lead the monthly awards assembly, or fawn over kindergartners’ artwork. But pull them aside and ask them how things are going, and they will invariably tell you, “I’m exhausted. I can’t seem to get caught up.” Or, as one seasoned administrator recently told me, “I’m just not sure how much longer I can do this.”

Principals are professionals, and they can put on a good game face when all eyes are on them. But at the end of a long day when—yet again—theirs is the last car to pull out of the lot, many wonder if it’s worth it.

Much has been written about the sources of stress in the principalship. Increased mandates, shrinking budgets, and staff reductions certainly contribute. But perhaps the greatest source of school leader stress is one that is rarely, if ever, articulated: principals simply don’t know what their actual job is.

## **The prevailing mental model**

Close your eyes and imagine a typical school leader. What do you see? Chances are you envision a busy principal—a very busy principal. You see a man or woman who is constantly on the go. She is the first one to arrive in the morning and the last one to leave at night. She often goes without lunch, and always seems to be late to a meeting somewhere.

Sometimes she is seen walking at a clip through the hallways, but most of the time, she is at her desk signing requisitions, reviewing attendance reports, and replying to email. She answers every question, involves herself in every decision, and has her hands on every lever and dial required to run the school. She is the principal who does it all!

Why is this mental model of the overworked principal—the principal who does it all—so easy to conjure up? And why do so many principals fit the bill? One answer is “monkey see, monkey do.” Generations of aspiring administrators have watched their mentors live this way—working 70 hours a week, running from one thing to the next, lugging briefcases full of paper home to complete at night and over weekends.

They have witnessed the constant interruption of school leaders in meetings to handle minutiae. They have rarely seen a school administrator enjoy a 30-minute sit-down lunch. Then, when they become principals themselves, they very naturally continue to do the job the way it's been modeled for them—and the cycle continues.

Administrator training programs are co-conspirators in perpetuating this vicious cycle. Universities teach school law, district policy, education theory and leadership principles. Graduate-level work in these areas is often rigorous and beneficial. But the prevailing mental model of the overworked, stressed out, do-it-all principal is rarely challenged or even addressed. The result is a public school system full of disillusioned, overwhelmed, and frustrated principals. Drawn to the job because of a desire to make a difference with teachers and students, the prevailing paradigm has them stuck in their offices – their energy, enthusiasm and expertise steadily waning.

### **A better mental model**

The 2003 high-seas adventure film “Master and Commander” offers an alternative backdrop for studying the complexities involved in leading large numbers of people who are charged with fulfilling a specific mission. Cannonballs and scurvy aside, leading schools and commanding sailing ships can be quite similar, and embracing a mental model of the principal as “captain of the ship” can give school leaders a whole new sense of what their job really is—one that gives them permission to do less and focus instead on the high-impact activities that make the greatest difference.

Nineteenth-century sailing vessels were busy, complex operations. Hundreds of seamen had to work together to operate sails, yardarms, and rudders to navigate the ship. Cargo had to be stored, meals had to be prepared, and the sick or injured required treatment.

The crew included gunners, sail makers, coopers, and carpenters—each with specific technical skills and tasks to accomplish. Sometimes these were experienced seamen who knew their jobs well. Other times, crews were outfitted with whoever was available, and newbies received on-the-job training.

However, in order to reach their destination and accomplish their mission, every crew member needed to properly complete his task at the right time; failure to do so put everyone at risk. As it was in the nineteenth century, so it is today.

### **Enter the captain**

Sailing vessels, both historical and modern, carry hundreds of crew members, each responsible for performing a specific job. But each ship has only one captain, and his job is qualitatively different from the rest of the crew.

The captain has two primary responsibilities: 1) to keep an eye out to sea to ensure the ship remains on course; 2) to keep an eye on the crew to make sure their work is coordinated and executed well. That's it.

Keeping an eye out to sea involves maintaining a proper course toward the intended destination, speeding up or slowing down when appropriate, navigating safely through storms, and getting back on course after the tempests have passed. No one but the captain has this responsibility.

Keeping an eye on the crew is just as important. Each crewmember is a specialist who performs a particular task, and relies on others in their respective roles to do the same.

Crew members haul the ship's lines, trim its sails, and grind its winches. The captain observes, coordinates, and supports their work. The captain has the unique job of ensuring that crew members perform well by providing training, oversight, acknowledgment and corrective feedback.

A ship captain earns his position by moving up through the ranks. He may know how to trim sails, haul lines and grind winches—all skills he acquired earlier in his career. However, the moment he is commissioned as captain, he must let go of performing the aforementioned tasks and take up the business of leading and managing the crew.

Essentially, the captain must stop working in the system and start working on the system.

### **The principal as captain of the ship**

The parallel to the principalship is clear. The principal's role in a school is the same as that of a ship's captain: first, attend to the school's mission, vision and direction; second, make sure that each staff member has the support needed to do his or her work well.

The principal's primary functions include training and developing, coaching, and supporting and directing staff. Nobody else in the entire school has this charge. If a principal does not do this work, it goes undone, and the entire organization suffers.

The stress and strain principals feel is the inevitable result of doing two or more jobs simultaneously. They labor relentlessly in a futile attempt to perform both captain's and crew members' work, and many of them would end that sentence with "and doing neither one particularly well."

The result is that principals spend the bulk of their days hunkered down in their offices, buried under mountains of paperwork, doing their employees' jobs.

But just as the captain needs to plant himself firmly up on deck to know where the ship is headed and to monitor the crew's performance, a school principal needs to be "up on deck" at school, present where the real work is happening.

"Up on deck" includes walking the hallways, interacting with parents at drop-off and dismissal, and most importantly, in classrooms observing teaching and learning. This can only happen when the principal ceases doing their employees' jobs and instead, begins training and developing their staff to do their work themselves.

If you are a principal who is burned out, overwhelmed and frustrated because you have been doing the work of captain and crew members for far too long, here are five steps you can take to "stop the insanity" and provide your school with the leadership it desperately needs from you:

1. Change your point of view. Look at your school through the eyes of a ship captain and take note: What up-on-deck work is there to do that only I, the principal, can do? Given sufficient training and development, what administrative work could others do?
2. Review every piece of paper strewn across your desk and ask yourself, "Is this my job or is there someone else in my organization whose job description actually includes this?"
3. Deliver each piece of paper to the specific person who is responsible for its completion and ask them to handle it.
4. If a staff member is not yet competent to perform a certain task(s), train them so they become competent.

5. Get out of your office and into classrooms. When you are interrupted from this mission-critical work because front-office staff requires your assistance to complete their duties, make a note and schedule a “training and development” session for them.

Shifting principals’ efforts into “captain-only work” takes time and practice, but it is energy well spent. Indeed, it is the most effective way for school leaders to stop working in the system, get up on deck, and start working on the system that requires their leadership and direction. Then it is smooth sailing ahead!

Andy Johnsen is assistant superintendent, educational services in Lakeside Union School District and a master coach with The Breakthrough Coach. Jill Pancoast is vice president of The Breakthrough Coach.

# Take Me Out to the Ball Game: Nine lessons learned

Exhibiting a strong personal leadership presence can boost the effectiveness and success of the organization you serve and have a lasting impact on both adults and students.

**By Lauren Leahy**

The game of baseball is one unlike any other. As I transitioned from my role as a classroom teacher to that of an administrator, the need for a strong personal leadership presence was essential to the effectiveness and success of the organization I served. Many of my leadership skills and approaches for site administrators can best be described in nine innings.

**Know the Scouting Report.** We need to remember that teachers and staff live lives outside of the school setting. Much to the dismay of many elementary-age children, their teachers do not in fact spend the night in their classrooms with a sleeping bag.

As much as our students come to school each day with more than just the weight in their backpacks, our hard working staff members do too. As an administrator, you need to take the time to get to know the people you work with.

Our relationships develop into a family dynamic, and we experience many of life's milestones together. It's important to be that support system when your staff might be going through the highs and lows in their personal lives.

**Take Batting Practice with the Team.** Nothing tells others that you're invested in them better than actually joining them on the front lines. When was the last time you served as an extra chaperon on a field trip? Or offered to take a class period for a teacher to observe one of their grade level colleagues? Not only do these gestures go a long way with teachers, but students also value your presence.

**Concession Stands.** Never underestimate the power of food. Surprise your staff on days besides Teacher Appreciation Week. One of my favorite days is to have a catered lunch for the staff the day we return from winter break.

Usually people are getting back into the routine of the schoolwork days and are still recovering from the chaos of the holiday season. Packing a lunch is one less thing that they need to focus on.

In placing the lunch order, I also support the local independently owned restaurants for a continued partnership with our community.

**Celebrate Your Victories.** You win as a team, and that needs to be celebrated. Be sure to share your school's accolades in weekly newsletters or use social media to expand your audience. Often times with a big school event or fundraiser, we promote a hash tag to get participants in the spirit. #Promote.

**Evaluate Your Loses.** Practicing the art of self-reflection is a necessity in the field of educational administration. Even with the process of shared decision making, not everyone is going to agree

with your procedures and guidelines.

As a lifelong learner, your role in evaluating systems and procedures will make you a strong leader. Your team members will respond to this opportunity to review and edit as needed to make a program, event or academic procedure more successful moving forward.

Remember that it's never really a lose if you learned something from the experience.

**Practical Practice.** How do you evaluate the effectiveness of your grade level and faculty meetings? I most recently started utilizing the free screencast websites to record 5- to 10-minute video clips of items that I would have addressed in person during faculty meetings.

These screen casts are information items, but now providing them to teachers before the faculty meeting has helped streamline our agenda. This flipped approach has helped to maximize attention to items on the agenda.

Your teachers will appreciate you valuing their time. As an added bonus, people can go back later to watch the screencasts again if they need a refresher on the information shared.

**Autograph Signings.** Often times parents are in frequent communication with their child's teacher. However, campus presence and informal interaction with parents helps to contribute to a positive school climate.

If I am not in a meeting, I stand out at the front of school each morning and greet each person who enters. Even joggers and delivery drivers for the people in the neighborhood get a wave from me. A welcoming smile is what helps build community.

I can also get a feel for what kind of day a student is going to have just as I help them open the car door. A friendly greeting from the principal will help to remind them that you're an additional support system for them on campus.

**Single A Baseball.** Sometimes the best talent can be found in the places you would least expect. What are you doing to support those teacher credential students in your school community?

Encourage students from the local university to do their observation hours at your site, especially alumni. They get a sense of pride coming back, and they can see the school site from a different perspective.

Also, encourage high school students who are trying to earn their Gold Award and Eagle Scout honors to consider aiming their proposal around a school improvement project.

**History of the Game.** Never forget the traditions that are deeply rooted in what builds the history of your school. While an organization should not merely rest on the past, it's important to remember the successes of those who came before us.

Babe Ruth, Derek Jeter, and Fernando Valenzuela were some of the best to ever play the game. While they may have been in a slump or had a higher ERA at times, you have to admire the talents that made them some of the most iconic players in baseball history.

What are the sacred traditions at your school site? Utilize your School Site Council and other stakeholders to evaluate if these traditions are still making a valuable impact on the campus community.

A former superintendent in a previous district would often ask his administrators the famous question, "If you didn't have the title, would they still follow you?" Even if baseball is not your

game, our role in administration is one of those rare opportunities to make an impact on both adults and students.

Dust off that glove, and let's play ball.

Lauren Leahy is a principal in Arcadia Unified School District.

# Strategic Leadership that Works: Priority 21

The collaborative and innovative Priority 21 journey focuses on the 4Cs of communication, collaboration, critical thinking and creativity to cultivate 21st century learning environments throughout the Hesperia Unified School District.

**By Cindy Costa**

It's almost impossible to talk about education today without hearing about how the traditional education system is failing students. With students disengaged, budgets stagnating, and teachers burned out, many districts are looking for answers that will help them redefine 21st century learning and prepare students for the real world. At Hesperia Unified School District, this isn't just a priority, it's Priority 21.

Priority 21 is a calibrated model to transform the educational process. Led by Superintendent David McLaughlin and the Board of Education, this collaborative and innovative journey focuses on the 4Cs of communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity to cultivate 21st century learning environments across the district. Priority 21: The Transformation of our Educational System was developed to determine how HUSD will prepare students to thrive and be successful in an increasingly complex, demanding and competitive 21st century world.

It is with urgency and commitment by the superintendent and board to provide an academically robust educational experience for students by creating innovative, systematic and sustainable avenues for instructional development. McLaughlin ensures everyone has a voice in the collaborative process by nurturing individual strengths and talents to accomplish a common goal.

The process to make the pedagogical shifts demanded by the new state standards and to align them within the instructional practices across the district began in 2012 through Richard Dufour's Professional Learning Communities (PLC) centering on core learning questions: 1) What do we expect our students to learn? 2) How will we know they are learning? 3) How will we respond if they don't learn it? 4) How will we respond if they already know it? Integrating PLCs with established Collaboration Wednesdays proved to be a perfect match. Every stakeholder played a vital role in the districtwide transformational movement by dedicating time, securing resources, and implementing authentic practices.

The action plan focuses on our moral imperative to prepare students to be college and career ready using 21st century skills of the 4Cs: communicate effectively, collaborate well with others, critically think to solve problems, and creatively apply learning to new situations. In tandem with Priority 21, Educational Services created a model of Instructional Design that centers on developing the learning capacity of students and staff to shift thinking from regurgitation of information to authentic real world learning experiences. The guiding policies and activities contained in Priority 21 directly fulfill the district's mission of "Preparing Today's Student's for Tomorrow's World."

"As I work with the community, particularly with our local Chamber of Commerce regarding High Desert (San Bernardino County) opportunities, most of our employers are looking for a different type of student than what we have produced in the past," Superintendent McLaughlin noted.

“They’re looking for a student who can communicate more effectively than what we produced in the past, collaborate well with others, and know how to problem solve; which, ironically, ties directly to our 4Cs program.”

Program goals for Priority 21’s Instructional Design model emphasize 21st century learning through the portal of state standards. The superintendent, board, and Educational Services division collaborated to provide clarity, direct actions in the learning process, develop accurate measures of accountability and lead by doing. The goal to guide the professional development for 900 teachers and 100 administrators in the same direction is twofold: 1) provide every opportunity for our students to be college and career ready and 2) support and enhance the culture of all school sites. Goal one centers on ensuring implementation of standards and the cultivation of 21st century skills; and goal two provides structured coaching sessions for teachers and administrators through interactive professional development.

The key outcome of the Instructional Design model is to develop the learning capacity of students and staff through purposeful teaching and engaged learning, where students have the knowledge, skills and expertise to thrive in the world they will work in and live.

“Learning through the 4Cs has greatly changed the way students view the world, teachers approach learning, and administrators lead,” McLaughlin said.

One high school student reflects, “Classroom instruction now resembles a college setting, which generates more discussion between students and teachers versus before where teachers would tell us facts and expect us to memorize.”

“We’ve actually seen passion and love for teaching back in the classroom,” states Jovy Yankaskas, assistant superintendent, Educational Services. She has observed students more engaged in their learning. “Kids are loving that their teachers are excited about teaching.” She credits the change and the positive classroom impact with the introduction of the 4Cs of 21st century learning and teaching. “It’s definitely getting them prepared for application of their learning,” Yankaskas said. “When the kids are excited about learning and the teachers are excited teaching, the learning happens.”

To further boost 4Cs integration, a districtwide rollout of 1:1 Chromebooks illustrates the successful transformation to the next generation of learning “by moving away from paper and pencils into bright screens,” as stated in one high school’s student newspaper. “The impending switch to advance technology is the future of education.”

With the new state standards helping to ignite the technology revolution, putting a device into the hands of 20,000 students purposely sends the message that HUSD wants to level the playing field; making learning equitable for all. English learner parents and other stakeholders expressed the belief that their children now have access to the same tools and opportunities as everyone.

“Typically in the old style, the teacher was the keeper of the knowledge and whatever gate they opened, that knowledge came out,” said Robert McCollum, director of secondary education, Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment. “Now the kids have that ability. What’s really cool about technology and the way we’re doing it; it’s the great equalizer with kids. It creates equity all the way across.”

Baseline data indicates 64 percent of students, grades 2-12, use their device at least half of the day while 59 percent of teachers embed Chromebook use in their daily instructional plans. The

majority of students expressed it was easy to use technology. “It makes me a better student,” a middle school girl eagerly explained. “Using the Chromebook makes it easier for me to do my work and it helps me to concentrate.”

“I just finished 18 years as a high school history teacher,” Keith Locklear stated. “I was very old school. I came in every day, put notes on the board and gave quizzes and tests. Using Chromebooks, I was able to have the students not be so reliant upon me and be more reliant upon themselves. I think that is an improvement overall.” He added: “When they graduate they don’t take us with them, they have to be their own expert.”

By leveraging technology to effectively deepen student learning for real world readiness, Priority 21 has systematically changed the learning dynamics across the district. San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools Ted Alejandre addressed 2015 graduates at one of our high schools stating it had the highest graduation rate in the county at 95 percent. What distinctively emerged as our foremost outcome is summed up by an HUSD instructional coach, “We are our best resource.”

What naturally materializes out of innovation and creativity is a plethora of outstanding resources. Integrating and posting pioneering ideas such as Project Based Learning, blended learning models, Units of Study ideas and curriculum on Google Drive organically formed a community of collaboration throughout the district. That led to the crafting of Plugged In, a free workshop for teachers led by HUSD experienced educators and administrators, to provide professional development opportunities and resources to educators in the community.

The workshop is designed to provide effective strategies for authentic application of the standards using the 4Cs. Plugged In 2015: Empowering Today’s Students—Tomorrow’s World included hands-on interactive workshops highlighted by keynote speaker Mike Robbins, author of “Nothing Changes Until You Do,” “Be Yourself” and “Focus on the Good Stuff.” In its third year, Plugged In is a unique vehicle to showcase 21st century learning. Its impact reaches far beyond HUSD and into classrooms everywhere. Plugged In 2016: The Year to Imagine is slated for March 12, 2016 at Hesperia High School.

The innovative system for transitioning to new state standards via the Instructional Design model begins with school site leadership teams of teachers, instructional coaches and administration defining their educational vision, student outcomes and staff supports. Together, the team defines the instructional focus through tools and resources that promote collaboration. Curricular maps called Units of Study are developed to guide and sustain the continuous improvement of 4Cs learning through delivery of curriculum and instruction.

A 4Cs rubric guides observation of student learning and clarifies instructional priorities. Teachers and coaches refine instructional design through collaborative coaching and formative feedback based on PLC core questions. Common Formative Assessments are utilized to identify student learning needs and to clarify best practices for re-teaching or enrichment.

To enhance the learning capacity of all students, staff and administrators, HUSD designed a Curriculum Articulation Team (CART). Instructional coaches and administrators put CART into action to prepare and assist educators to develop a depth of knowledge for learning and apply it to their instructional practices.

CART training is not an event; it is a process that ensures quality teaching and skillful leadership. CART is unique to HUSD, and a staff development opportunity of this magnitude has not been

seen in recent years. As a result of the superintendent's and board's commitment to implement state standards, instructional coaches and district personnel lead teams of teachers and administrators in two-hour CART workshops at each of 25 sites four times a year.

The board's vision, mission and goals reflected in "Preparing Today's Students for Tomorrow's World" stand firmly as a core value for successfully changing HUSD's instructional landscape. The board makes decisions that align and direct all efforts toward improving teaching and learning. The superintendent, board and Educational Services division have worked cooperatively to ensure the elements of Priority 21 include the essential components for students to be prepared for college, career and civic life.

Board members participated in Unit of Study training during the same time of CART implementation at the sites. They not only had firsthand knowledge of the process, but their ownership and understanding spoke volumes to HUSD stakeholders through their "lead by doing" approach.

During school visits, board members effectually communicated using the new standard's language and observed the elements of 4Cs in action. The Board endorses the educational platforms, budget and community partnerships by setting the direction, establishing structure, providing support, ensuring accountability and acting as a community leader to move our district forward. HUSD has been recognized statewide by California League of Schools and Policy Analysis for California Education.

Priority 21 is systematic, deliberate in its delivery and easily sustainable. Commitment and support by the board were paramount in navigating the educational policy changes to ensure its success. It is an internal process of transitioning to lead the learning with external results of increased student achievement and life-long learning.

The superintendent and board discussed and prioritized, based on stakeholder feedback, what was needed to fiscally support each phase of the plan beginning in 2012. Priority 21 is strategic, fluid and flexible to purposely integrate state standards; years one and two focused on the establishment of PLCs, year three on delivery of workshops via CART, and year four on teaching through technology. The next phase is to augment the integration of PBL within the Units of Study.

The initial investment for PLC professional development during a two-year period was funded at approximately \$300,000. The board's approval of 10 additional instructional teacher coach positions solidified their commitment to the implementation process. In-house CART training for staff reached \$220,000 in contract hours during the third year of the transformation cycle. The next year, a three-year commitment of \$100,000 per year to support an Early College Academy at a comprehensive high school was supported.

The board's commitment to fund more than \$4 million, via district and CCSS monies, to support instructional coaches and the technology roll out, broad band and infrastructure upgrades, and a three-year lease of 20,000 Chromebooks is noteworthy.

The preceding Priority 21 items are reflected and designated in our yearly Local Control and Accountability Plan, and state standards funding allows each site to address specific program needs. Applying for local and state grants and building community partnerships helps defer costs and enrich our developing programs. The Instructional Design model is sustainable through

continuous improvement efforts and staff development opportunities conducted in-house. All of HUSD's investments are thoroughly vetted and supported by the board for deliberate results.

The community is witnessing firsthand the impact of innovative practices and how they are changing the trajectory of each student's life. A significant program that emerged at one high school, the Early College Academy, grabbed local newspaper editor Steve Hunt of the Victor Valley Daily Press to write, "Residents of Hesperia should be thankful that McLaughlin and his team came up with this idea. I have not heard of any other high school in the state doing this (program)."

He is referencing the ECA courses the superintendent and principal, working in tandem with the local community college faculty, brought on-site for 11th and 12th graders, where they earn concurrent college credits without paying for tuition or books. By design, students could theoretically leave high school with up to 30 credits toward an associate's degree.

"Before I began the Early College Academy, I didn't have the confidence I could be successful in college," one ECA student said. "I now know I can go on and get my degree." ECA opened doors to students that had been previously bolted shut. The superintendent and the board's commitment to HUSD students by providing the cost to attend college classes, speaks volumes beyond fiscal needs.

The action plan for Priority 21 is easily replicable for districts to employ as they transition to the new standards. It is a carefully calibrated model that creates a learning environment that will prepare students for 21st century success. The strategic plan sets clear goals and procedures that clarify state standards' instructional shifts and provide guidance for educational decision making. The synergy of PLCs produces authentic practices, in which learning truly matters; thus enabling educators to collaborate, share best practices and integrate 4C skills into real learning experiences that will last a lifetime.

Our teachers and administrators "grapple" with the "how" and "why" in this transitional phase. It is an arduous task of aligning curriculum to meet the shifts, but it is one that pays big dividends for our students. "I took a college course this year at my high school, and using the Chromebook is very much like college," one student said. "I think it prepares us for how it's going to be when we go to college."

McLaughlin inspires and motivates by pushing staff to be creative in the process of developing 21st century learning practices. He issued all employees a "Get Out of Jail Free" card to encourage and challenge innovation, try new pathways or to take risks.

High school English teacher Maq McNair jumped on board to incorporate a blended learning model to differentiate instruction "They're giving us the freedom to try things and giving us the resources to be able to grow what we already know. And that is very helpful to us and the students," he explains. "It definitely helps me to focus on not necessarily being in front all the time. It allows me to be fluid in my class."

Priority 21 ensures all students learn through equitable access to quality learning tools, technologies and resources. HUSD actively shares best practices through a variety of trainings reaching out to assist other districts within the county, County Office of Education and throughout the state.

Staff is readily available to discuss our program, demonstrate effective instructional strategies, and refine ideas to support our diverse student population. HUSD has successfully implemented

educational reform with minimal staff changes or funding. What is happening at HUSD can occur anywhere, but it takes the strategic leadership of the superintendent and board who merge standards with a 21st century vision and use innovation through collective capital to prepare students to be architects of their future.

Priority 21 makes a difference and makes sense. “By infusing the new state standards, we are preparing all of our students for 21st century learning,” said Board Vice President Niccole Childs, who was president during Priority 21’s inception. “As a board member it is essential to support our students and their education. Through Priority 21, we’ve been able to do that through CCSS, technology, training, coaches and materials.”

“The students of HUSD are receiving an excellent education because of the support of the superintendent, board members, teachers and staff who have embraced a new way of teaching,” said Director of Secondary Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment Robert McCollum, program lead. “Priority 21 reclaims learning for the teaching profession.” Strategic leadership that works.

## **Resources**

Richard Dufour (et al.) (2006, 2010). *Learning By Doing: a handbook of professional learning communities at work*.

Cindy Costa is a grant writer outreach and site support leader in Hesperia Unified School District.

# Developing a Leadership Pipeline for the Future

In order to ensure the very best talent is encouraged into the profession, districts must take a more intentional approach to who is encouraged to step up to a leadership challenge.

**By Laurie Wellner and Tamerin Capellino**

Through our collective professional experiences in working with hundreds of new and aspiring leaders in our roles as mentors, leadership coaches, instructors, curriculum developers and faculty members in institutes of higher education (IHE), it has become clear there is a mounting need to construct a more robust pipeline of educational administrators.

According to some estimates, this need is quite urgent, as a large percentage of the current school administrative workforce is retiring, and turnover rates have significantly increased statewide. In order to meet this increasing demand, collaborative partnerships must be formed between districts and IHEs to support a continuum of leadership development.

A collaborative model designed to identify, train, promote and support leadership candidates can improve motivation, retention and performance in this critical role. From our experience, we know districts have made a priority of searching for and hiring talented leaders. However, there has not been widespread coordinated efforts in developing leaders from within the organization, paired with the support of both the district and IHEs.

Building capacity from within an organization, now more than ever, is essential to bringing about the transformation necessary to implement the desired organizational goals for continuous improvement.

The California Department of Education's model of leadership development, the "Learning to Lead" continuum, provides an excellent foundation for leadership development and encompasses four global steps: Pre-Program Requirements, Preliminary Credential Preparation, Clear Credential Preparation and Credential Renewal.

However, the model's entry point focuses primarily on prerequisite requirements—five years of experience under a prerequisite credential, principal recommendation, etc.—and the point at which a candidate enters a formal leadership preparation program. We believe there is a need for an expanded continuum with two key preliminary steps, a robust process of leadership talent identification and building initial leadership capacity.

## **STEP 1: Leadership talent identification**

We propose leadership talent identification (LTI) be facilitated by districts and include a variety of existing district-driven processes and key indicators of potential leadership success, such as positive evaluations, leadership responsibilities assumed at the site level, principal recommendation and leadership skill identification to identify those candidates that exhibit the greatest leadership potential.

Further, school leadership is often known as the "accidental" profession. When talking to hundreds of new school administrators, it is very rare to find someone who entered the field of

education with the sole intention of becoming a school administrator. In fact, a recent survey supports our observation and indicates 80 percent of those who pursue school leadership do so because of early encouragement.

This speaks volumes regarding the impact of a “tap on the shoulder.”

In order to ensure the very best talent is encouraged into the profession, districts must take a more intentional approach to who is encouraged to step up to a leadership challenge.

Part of LTI includes leadership skill identification in a process supported by observation and data. Assessments such as the Aspiring Leaders Skills Assessment (ALSA), a short questionnaire based on the newly adopted California Administrator Content Expectations, can be used to identify those potential candidates with the greatest leadership potential.

Assessment items correspond to six overarching leadership domains that research support are key for aspiring leaders and include: Instructional Leadership, School Improvement Leadership, Organizational and Systems Leadership, Community Leadership, Professional Learning and Growth Leadership and Visionary Leadership.

Teacher candidates who have earned positive evaluations, scored high on the ALSA, participated in site and/or district leadership responsibilities and exhibit 21st century technology skills should be among the first considered to enter the leadership pipeline. Additionally, professional dispositions and other principal input is valuable longitudinal information that should be considered and include the following explicit categories:

- Professional demeanor and responsibility.
- Commitment to learning for all students.
- Communication.
- Collaboration.
- Self-reflection.
- Ethics.

## **STEP 2: Development of leadership capacity**

Developing the capacity in those identified as potential leaders is the next step of the proposed continuum and builds from previous informal leadership experiences. Unfortunately, research has shown teachers involved in informal leadership responsibilities rarely engage in leadership development activities, such as vision setting, instructional leadership, organizational leadership and systems, and professional learning and growth that actually translate into the ability to become a school leader.

Therefore, we believe leadership capacity building should be formally supported prior to entering a preparation program and move through all phases of training to expose candidates to diverse views regarding educational and organizational management. Preparing those who enter formal leadership preparation programs, will provide the ability to more authentically apply the content they learn and appreciate the context in which leaders must operate within the educational system.

In our experience, there are numerous districts that, as part of their own professional development offerings, provide leadership academies or other training options for those

previously identified as potential leaders. This model should be expanded, and a partnership between districts and IHEs should emerge that truly prepares candidates to enter the field of leadership. With the state's increase in the number of years to five that must be served under a prerequisite credential before a preliminary credential can be earned, there is ample time to cultivate the competencies within the leadership pipeline before formal preparation commences. Encouraging early participation in professional organizations such as the Association of California School Administrators is another approach for developing competence and commitment in aspiring school leaders. Rubbing elbows with those already in the ranks of school leadership can be a powerful motivator for ongoing training and development. Making professional connections has the potential to generate alliances and mentoring relationships, which we know can make a big difference in inspiring new leaders to become great leaders.

The intentional collaboration with the IHE in this phase is also key to the recommended model presented by the authors. The partnership between those with experience in the district's culture and future organizational goals paired with the expertise of the IHE faculty will provide an authentic, experiential, relational and developmental instructional model that can only enhance the existing Learning to Lead continuum in California.

### **STEP 3: Formal leadership preparation**

Once a district has identified leadership talent from within the ranks and has invested in building its leadership capacity in line with the district's own needs, vision and goals, it is time for candidates to commence formal leadership preparation with the full support of their district. The district's role in recommending high quality leadership preparation programs cannot be understated. Often candidates tell us their supervisor recommended they pursue administration, but very little support is offered beyond that.

In 2013, with the transformational shifts in education, we saw the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) revise the Preliminary Administrative Program Standards prompting IHEs to either revise or fully re-write their existing leadership preparation programs. As higher education faculty, we were ecstatic to see the standards continue to shift away from an emphasis on social science theory to practitioner-based problem-solving programs rich with relevant, authentic field experiences. This approach ensures a connection between the curriculum taught and the actual demands, conditions and problems encountered by leaders in the field.

The new standards were expanded to include 109 Content Knowledge Expectations and 20 California Administrative Performance Expectations (CAPE) that describe the knowledge, skills and abilities required of a candidate preparing for their first administrative position.

A collaborative partnership between the IHE and district should exist to ensure program quality and consistency, candidate recruitment, selection and advisement; curriculum development; delivery of instruction; selection of field sites; design of field experiences; selection and preparation of mentors and leadership coaches; and assessment of candidate competence. When looking for high quality leadership programs with which to partner, we suggest districts look for the following components that research has indicated forms the basis of exemplary leadership preparation programs:

- Utilization of a cohort model.

- Emphasis on transformational leadership, organizational systems and instructional leadership.
- Inclusion of ongoing leadership competency assessments.
- Emphasis on technology integration/21st century skills.
- Strong leadership coaching/mentoring model.
- Authentic fieldwork assignments to promote CAPE mastery.
- Leadership portfolio development.
- Inclusion of career planning components.

Considering these elements in a formal program comes with a host of benefits. First, candidates are not left to their own devices in selecting a reputable program. Without a recommendation from a peer, supervisor or district, candidates will often focus on program components not related to program quality, such as length of the program, tuition costs and delivery model.

We have heard from many candidates who selected leadership preparation programs without the core components or for the wrong reasons express regret, as they find it more difficult to obtain an administrative position and/or feel less prepared to tackle the demands of school leadership.

This collaborative method also reduces the number of candidates who “self-select” or nominate themselves into leadership preparation programs. Unfortunately, candidates who “self-select” often have no intention of ever seeking a leadership role, have fewer prior quasi-leadership experiences, and lack support of their districts; thus have reduced access to real-world field experience throughout their program.

These same teachers often seek advanced degrees and/or certifications for mere financial gain (step and column increases) with no intention on entering the field of educational leadership. In our experience, these candidates also often have lower levels of commitment and motivation in the classroom.

All of these factors create an inaccurate view of the leadership pipeline, as credentials issued is not a true indicator of the potential pool of future school leaders. This is known as “over certification.”

As this new pool of leadership candidates complete their formal preparation programs, districts must be prepared to utilize their talent and find positions that are the “right fit” for their leadership growth to flourish.

Often, candidates complete their formal preparation and do not pursue or obtain their first leadership position for several years, negatively impacting the leadership pipeline, as the content mastered is either forgotten or outdated by the time they obtain a leadership role. An efficient leadership pipeline would create a constant supply of high quality leaders to meet the demand rather than candidates waiting years to seek a leadership role.

Similarly, districts should also carefully consider the disincentives often associated with school leadership, such as time commitment, nature of the work, emotional aspects of leadership, inadequate compensation and impact on home/work life balance to potentially “unclog” the leadership pipeline. For example, it is not uncommon to have very few women apply for secondary school leadership positions due to the increased perceived time commitment associated with supervision.

A recent survey also found more than 80 percent of teachers, regardless of gender, said they were unlikely to pursue school leadership in the future. In an attempt to address some of the disincentives, Denver Public Schools introduced a school leaders pay-for-performance plan in 2012-13. Principals and assistant principals can be awarded between \$1,600 and \$10,000 in one of four categories:

- Hard to serve schools.
- Top performing schools.
- High growth schools.
- Unified improvement plan.

School districts in California should look carefully at this and other models. We cannot afford to discourage and lose potential aspiring leaders in the pipeline due to disincentives.

#### **STEP 4: Ongoing coaching and mentoring**

Once a candidate has obtained his or her first leadership position the collaborative relationship between the district, IHE and candidate remains crucial. Candidates are required to enroll in a Clear Credential induction program within 120 days of obtaining their first position with formal coaching commencing within 30 days of enrollment.

Much like Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA), candidates must engage in two years of job embedded induction experience. The induction provider may or may not be their current district or IHE where they earned their Preliminary Administrative Service Credential.

We recommend each district, in conjunction with an IHE, offers a “First 90 Days Transition Program” to bridge the gap between hiring and the start of formal induction. The importance of the “First 90 Days” of transition has its roots in the presidency of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. This sets the tone for the leader’s tenure and can build a foundation for success.

Many new leaders with whom we have worked, in accordance with the “old” clear credential requirements, commented how they wish they would have had coaching and mentoring from their first day on the job. We recommend this district sponsored transition program be part of the on-boarding process to prepare the new leader for transition, provide socialization opportunities, help build key relationships, assess the reality of their organization and understand district priorities and procedures. A district mentor should also be assigned at this time to provide insight on the history of the organization and the political aspects that may not always be immediately visible to a new leader.

Once formal induction has commenced, a plan for ongoing professional growth and coaching should be mutually developed between the candidate, induction provider and district mentor. In addition to targeted professional development based on candidate leadership assessments, PD should also continue to provide leaders with the knowledge and skills to implement district priorities.

The demands of school leadership today require a collaborative approach to the support of new leaders. It is not only important leaders know how to lead but lead within the context of the organizations they serve.

Much like the teaching profession, school administration sees a large number of its ranks leave leadership positions within the first five years. It is not surprising they often cite “lack of support” or “I felt so alone” as a primary reason.

The ramifications of losing talented leaders to transform our schools cannot be quantified and further compromises the leadership development process. This speaks to the necessity to have a comprehensive spectrum of candidate support from leadership talent identification through their entire leadership tenure.

With this structure, the district and IHE develop a seamless partnership to develop individuals who are equipped with the skills to transform and lead today’s complex school environments.

## **Resources**

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# Preparing Teachers to Facilitate the Learning of Digital Natives

The San Diego State University and San Diego County Office of Education collaboratively developed Master of Arts in Educational Leadership with a Focus on Technology program was developed to bridge the gap between current traditional teaching practices and the approaches digitally native students need.

**By Cheryl James-Ward, with Alicia Gallegos-Butters, Greg Ottinger and Ulises Cisneros**

My son is 10 years old, and every day after school you can find him engaged in a menu of activities. He might be at baseball or tennis practice; Skyping his mandarin tutor, whom he's never met face to face; reading an eBook using his iPad and Kindle app; or watching science or history videos on YouTube.

Though, he sometimes uses pencil and paper to complete assignments, a great amount of his math, Spanish and Mandarin homework is also done using technology. For math homework, he might use the online Khan Academy and for Spanish, the Google language translate tool. For Mandarin homework, he often uses voice threading so that classmates can review and critique his audio work using another web-based program called Schoology.

In other subjects, like language arts, my son might be required to access a web-based interactive program.

When my son practices piano lessons, he uses his iPad to access the notes for his songs. When he thinks he's mastered the songs, he records them directly onto the piano, which has a digital component. Sometimes, he records his piano teacher playing and then plays it back slowing the tempo to watch how the piano keys move. This piano also allows him to download music from the internet as an accompaniment to his playing.

Four days a week, including weekends, my son joins his BFFs (best friends forever) for a multiplayer game called Minecraft. They watch the Minecraft videos and create servers to play on. Before they begin a session, my son gets out his iPad and group Skypes two friends, while connecting the third through his iPhone's FaceTime feature. Once everyone is connected and can hear each other, they begin the game.

With Minecraft, players can connect with one another from different parts of the world in a single virtual space. This is his world after school.

Technologies and the web have changed everything. Kids today are digital natives who take control of their learning outside of school. As such, we should be asking ourselves not just how to do school better, but how to do it differently (Richardson, 2013). The second question then becomes how do we ready teachers to tear down classroom walls and allow students to truly drive their own learning?

To bridge the digital divide between teachers and students, school districts, county offices of education and universities can each, using their expertise, collaborate to close the gap between

teacher and student, as well as to ensure students who don't have access to the technologies at home are immersed in self-driven experiences during the school day.

Recognizing the need for institutions to collaborate on ways to close 21st century instructional gaps, San Diego State University and the San Diego County Office of Education collaboratively developed and launched a Master of Arts in Educational Leadership with a Focus on Technology program. Developed to address the technology vacuum, our program bridges the gap between current traditional teaching practices and the approaches digital natives expect and require.

As teachers move into the digital learning space, they must be prepared to develop instruction and pedagogical practices embedded in a strong understanding of technology integration; hence, learning management systems, collaborative models, and the ever expanding universe of technologies and applications each became a focus of the collaborative MA.

## **Getting started**

As the two entities got started, we looked outward—at the everyday learning occurring in classrooms and in schools—and then inward—toward our existing leadership programs. We then posed some difficult questions. What are we, SDSU and SDCOE, doing to develop Pre-K-12 students who are creators of content and learning, not just consumers? Secondly, what do teachers need to know to effectively utilize technology in order to build students' creativity and curiosity such that they are prepared to thrive in a global, pluralistic society, one that we cannot yet imagine?

Based upon these questions, we developed a master's program to provide teachers and teacher leaders with the knowledge base and skill set we believe are necessary to create classrooms, schools and districts that reflect the needs of students in the 21st century. In this article, a teacher in our program candidly shares what he has learned and the resulting changes in his classroom. Then, we provide some brief examples of ways to support teachers and schools transitioning to 21st century learning environments.

## **A teacher's perspective**

Ulises, a teacher in the master's program, describes his experience:

Our professors understood the need for us, as MA students in the program, to evolve from an antiquated way of teaching. For teachers to strengthen professionally, the students in our master's program were challenged to develop projects with theories based on 21st century teaching and learning.

One assignment in particular had us create a flipped lesson using Blendspace. This lesson required us to incorporate the current International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) standards, and at the same time link to the current Common Core Standards. Moreover, it required us to stay above the augmentation level on the Substitution Augmentation Modification Redefinition (SAMR) model.

For me and my classmates, this was not an easy task, but once completed, I looked back and clearly understood why this was a better way of teaching my students.

The amazing thing about the master's program was that I could take what I had learned from one of our assignments and immediately apply it to my own classroom. I began by giving my second grade students a common place to collaborate, communicate, be creative, and tap into

their critical thinking skills via Schoology. My students were able to use this space to share ideas with each other about current class topics, not only while at school, but also at home.

I created discussion assignments on Schoology, where I would ask my students to post any questions or connections they had made to stories we were reading. We would do this the first day of the school week. The following day, I reviewed these questions in class and had the students vote for the three most interesting questions using an app called Socrative. I then took those questions and would create a Padlet and link it on Schoology. Here the students answered the questions they chose.

Finally, on the last day of our school week, I would have the students create e-books, on an app called Book Creator. They would summarize their understanding of the story using visuals, develop a well-written description, and create an audio recording. This would be shared on Schoology where students could post comments on classmates' work. I observed this to be a task they loved and did with ease.

### **Making 21st century classrooms a reality**

Ulises' reflections illustrate a simple, but important fact: To make 21st century classrooms, schools and districts a reality, we need to create a paradigm shift, where teachers and teacher leaders rethink what it means for them to be learners themselves, rethink how they teach students and what learning really is.

With the SAMR (Puentedura, 2006) model as a guide for instructors, we designed courses to move students along the continuum of teacher technological practices. The evolution of the SAMR model moves teachers from simply enhancing the old curriculum to the creation of new types of learning using technology. For example, an educator might begin by copying a paper-based worksheet to a Smartboard or tablet—substitution: the “S” in SAMR, which is the most basic level of the model.

He or she might then navigate up the SAMR model through increasingly sophisticated uses of learning technologies, and ultimately transform the teaching so that students are able to create a unique new evidence of learning. For example: creating a solution to water pollution via research, contacting experts, designing a solution, presenting findings to classmates and the larger community, then receiving feedback to continuously evolve their product—all using a series of technology platforms. This example instantiates redefinition, the “R” in SAMR, which is the model's highest level of technology integration.

### **Teachers in tech transition**

We started the program with teachers being introduced to the power of online professional learning networks and collaboratively sharing their learning experiences. They blogged as they read books, such as “Catching up or Leading the Way” (Zhou, 2009) and “The Global Achievement Gap” (Wagner, 2008). As students began to feel more comfortable publicly sharing their professional growth and realizations, they would tweet links to their posts, so that followers from within the program and around the world could engage with them on their learning journey. Students were challenged to think differently by following the Google 20 percent project model, dedicating 20 percent of their academic time to pursuing a new hobby or learning a new skill and documenting the resulting personal journey. The purpose of this assignment was to follow their passion, while carefully observing the process of learning.

All students were expected to have specific, identifiable learning outcomes for this work, based on the assessment process and the self-evaluation. As our MA students learned, they posted the learning experiences, creating a shared learning commons.

Our students, spent time in a gamified learning environment that provided a living example of various ways to bring gamification to life in their classrooms. According to James Paul Gee (2012), a video game is a set of problems you must solve in order to win. He goes on to say that building principles of learning into good games empowers learners, teaches them problem solving and enables deep understanding of the subject matter. Here, the objective for the instructors was to introduce teachers and teacher leaders to a different way of presenting concepts to their students and a new way to provide faculty development to their staff.

During this eight-week course, MA students spent approximately three weeks in the Learning Management System 3D GameLab. The 3D GameLab is a gamified Learning Management System that allowed MA students to create course content while their progress was being tracked and gamified. Assignments each carried a point total, and students in our program were able to pick and choose the assignment they would complete. They were able to move on to the next module when they reached 250 points.

Some students were drawn to complete two large tasks worth approximately 125 points each, while others completed a greater number of smaller tasks worth 25 to 50 points each. Each assignment or combination of assignments met the same course objectives, while varying the level of perceived difficulty. In addition, while the game was on, course instructors logged into 3D Game Lab every one to two hours so they could grade tasks and unlock ensuing modules of the game for students as they completed assignments.

### **Aligning goals to tech implementation**

A major part of rethinking the education process involves helping teachers gain perspective beyond their classroom, school, district and even vocation. For this reason, we introduced teachers to the Enterprise Architecture (EA) methodology, which is used for aligning organizational strategies, goals and education drivers to the implementation of technology. EA is deeply rooted in the principle that an organization's mission and strategic plan should drive technology decisions and implementation.

Teachers and teacher leaders were asked to determine the who, what, how, when and why of their schools and districts. For example, what were the key goals for the school and/or district as determined by all stakeholders? This question created the blueprint for the subsequent applications, data and related technologies students implemented in the Enterprise Architecture course.

“The role of technology in 21st century education is key, primary critical. We are dealing with digital natives. These are students who were born in a technological society. Technology now will actually focus their careers. It will drive where they go in life and what they do.” – Helen Griffith, executive director of the e3Civic High School, San Diego

Twenty-first century learning is not simply about using technology with students. It is about channeling that technology in ubiquitous ways that will transform learning for the 21st century student, provide them with innovative avenues to showcase their learning, and ready them for the 21st century global workplace. The idea of learning is not what it used to be, where teachers were the holders of all information and their students' empty vessels to be filled.

Twenty first century teachers are recreating boundaries, engaging students in new ways, collaborating locally and globally, building new learning structures and developing learners who are critical thinkers, innovators and initiators of their own learning.

## **Resources**

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Puentedura, R. (2006). *Transformation, Technology, and Education*:

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Wagner, T. (2008). *“The Global Achievement Gap: Why even our best schools don’t teach the new survival skills our children need – and what we can do about it.”* New York, NY: Basic Books.

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# Re-energizing Career Technical Education: Palmdale High finds success with project-based learning

In transitioning to Career Technical Education programs for this century, Palmdale High School incorporated the tenets of Linked Learning and tools developed by the California Department of Education to accomplish its Solar Car Project.

**By Elizabeth McKinstry**

For the past several years, many of those in Career Technical Education have been faced with the uncertainty of the future of their programs, which had been such an integral part of preparing students for the workforce and careers.

As budgetary decisions and increased accountability of academic proficiency at the state and local level impacted both Regional Occupational Centers and Programs and general funded CTE courses, administrators had to make difficult decisions that often resulted in restructuring and/or eliminating CTE programs. The challenging factor for these education leaders was that they knew CTE and ROCP courses had a positive impact on students' lives.

They also were aware that the components of what made these programs successful—work-based learning, career focused relevancy and relationship building—helped to give students a focus to their education that had been void from their other coursework.

It was acknowledged that the California Department of Education had collaborated with industry professionals and educators in both the core academic and technical areas on Career Technical Education Standards within each industry sector that had been adopted. But administrators were also facing the fact that CTE programs were of varying levels of quality throughout the state. But like any organizational change brought on by external factors, these changes within the education system presented an opportunity for leadership to evaluate, assess and reconfigure all CTE programs to transition in meeting the needs of the increased skills, knowledge and demands of the 21st century workforce.

It's an exciting time; the "tipping point" is being seen across all facets of public education. Common Core, Local Control Funding, Project Based Learning and the infusion of technology are just some of the influencers changing the way business is done. The tools and resources are available for those education leaders with a vision to align CTE to this evolving landscape to ensure all students are college and career ready.

Courses have moved beyond taking one single CTE or ROP course to a sequence of courses that make up a pathway within an industry sector. The California Department of Education has revised the original CTE industry sector standards by pathway to align with the new Common Core State Standards, to address emerging occupations and focus on increased technical levels needed for the 21st Century workforce.

The Standards for Career Ready Practice have been developed to address the knowledge and skills needed for all students to transition to postsecondary education. Courses within pathways offer articulation and/or dual enrollment with the community college. The CTE a-g list has grown from 250 to close to 12,000 in the last decade. The University of California Curriculum Institute has developed courses that can be adopted by districts for academic credit that integrate CTE content. These academic courses provide relevance, support CCSS and focus on project-based learning.

Another approach to CTE integration and development of strong CTE pathways is Linked Learning. It has been recognized as an education reform strategy that implements CCSS within the context of an identified industry sector to provide both rigor and relevance for students. The education reform approach of Linked Learning has identified four evidenced-based elements that are essential to assure all students, regardless of background, are prepared for college, career and life. These four elements are: rigorous academics, high level technical coursework, student support services, and work based learning.

One example of transitioning to the CTE programs for this century by incorporating the tenets of Linked Learning and the tools developed by CDE is the Solar Car Project at Palmdale High School. The high school is one of eight comprehensive sites in the Antelope Valley Union High School District located in the northern most part of Los Angeles County.

Palmdale HS has had a history of strong, successful CTE programs but had struggled with rate of completion of a-g courses by the majority minority and socio-economically disadvantaged student population. The school's Health Careers Academy has been a model program for more than a decade. Yet, in the industrial technology area, there was an awareness of the quality of instruction in the automotive and construction courses, but the programs were not getting the same level of recognition as the other STEM programs in the district.

Several years ago, the school applied for and was awarded a three-year California Partnership Academy grant. This allowed for funding to plan, develop and implement the Falcon Academy of Sustainable Technologies (FAST) to change the "vocational model" of construction and automotive classes. The process started to incorporate the tenets of Linked Learning by transitioning to an engineering pathway without sacrificing the automotive and construction focus.

The Project Lead the Way (PLTW) engineering course sequence was adopted and teachers were sent to extensive professional development to teach the curriculum. The construction teacher's comment was: "I wish I would have done this years ago. It has changed how I teach, what I expect of students and the perception of the class to the school and community."

The engineering curriculum broadened the pathway and was supplemented with adding automotive and construction lab classes. These lab classes expanded upon the prescribed PLTW courses by extending the time needed for application and design of high quality projects that aligned with CDE's pathway and career preparation standards. The PLTW classes increased a-g courses within the sequence, and the additional lab class also allowed for certifications.

The academy and the new course sequence began to attract the students who were interested in science, and a physics teacher became part of FAST.

One of the students in the physics class suggested the FAST students get involved in the Solar Car Challenge. From there, the idea of constructing a car and racing it in a year was born. The

teachers and the students exhibited 21st century skills by connecting and building relationships with industry representatives and the community college. Engineers from Lockheed became an essential part of the project, mentoring students on a weekly basis on the designing, building and assembly of the car from the ground up.

Psomas FMG, a solar company, facilitated a business meeting with their engineers and executive team to give the students input on the technical and marketing aspects of the solar car. Students gave quarterly presentations to the community, educators and industry representatives on their decision-making process of building and selecting the materials based on the return on investment. Students from the Ag Welding class helped in the fabrication process. A relationship one of the business partners had with his alma mater, University of Michigan, resulted in a trip to Ann Arbor to collaborate with their world renowned solar car team. As momentum grew, other industry partners donated resources that allowed students to enter the Solar Car Challenge in Fort Worth Texas. The goal of the event is “to help motivate students in science, engineering, technology and alternative energy. It teaches high school students how to design, engineer, build and safely drive a roadworthy solar car.” To compete students have to go through a proposal process and then pass the rigorous qualifying undertaking of “scrutineering,” which ensures the vehicle demonstrates compliance with all rules of the competition.

In July, the students traveled to Texas Motor Speedway to compete in their first competition. The EMT certified students from the Health Careers Academy accompanied the team to monitor the race car drivers and pit crew’s vital signs, ensure they stayed hydrated in the heat, and took care of any medical concerns. Students from the Design, Visual and Media Arts Pathway documented the progress through various mediums and posted to social media.

The team placed seventh in the competition and received the Michael Foree Award for best utilizing computer technology in design, production and racing of the car.

But the impact of the project that was a result of transforming the CTE program to incorporate Linked Learning, 21st century skills and CTE standards goes way beyond what was envisioned. The students’ lives were changed as they built relationships, were exposed to higher education opportunities, increased their skill and knowledge, met goals they thought were unattainable and bonded as a team.

Teachers strengthened and integrated their curriculum across industry sectors and were re-energized with a purposeful project. Administrators and district leadership worked together to provide resources and expertise to the students and teachers. Industry partnerships were strengthened and expanded as they became involved in a project where their role was clear. These partners experienced the rewards of mentoring high school students.

Parents became more vested in the school site and the project. These parents saw their children’s excitement in learning and commitment to team. This project changed the trajectory of the old model of industrial technology. The foundation has been set. This school year will incorporate analysis of the first race and improvements to that car, while the design of a new car is being done.

Career Technical Education has always been at the forefront of engaging students in the classroom and in experiential learning opportunities. Education leaders acknowledge that all students have to be college and career ready to compete in the workforce of the 21st century. By

assessing the quality of current CTE pathways, using the resources and tools available to them, incorporating the elements of Linked Learning and creating a strategic plan, CTE can become a vital integral part of every student's education plan. Administrators can set the conditions to drive it forward. It works, just ask the students at Palmdale High School.

## **Resources**

[www.solarcarchallenge.org/challenge](http://www.solarcarchallenge.org/challenge).

<http://phssolarcar.weebly.com/gallery.html>.

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# School counselors: Collaborating for LCAP goals

Often underutilized, school counselors can be strong partners in meeting the academic, social-emotional and career development needs of students.

**By Caroline J. Lopez and Loretta Whitson**

Administrators are currently faced with directing and implementing several initiatives, including Common Core State Standards, Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium testing, and Local Control and Accountability Plans. Within that context, it is important to recognize that the eight core LCAP priorities require intensive and authentic involvement of stakeholders.

The challenges of meeting these goals are too complex for any one individual to manage. Instead, meeting the wide range of student needs in today's educational settings calls for strong collaborative leadership.

The report "How the World's Most Improved School Systems Keep Getting Better" examined school systems in 20 diverse countries that experienced continuous improvement (Mourshed, Chijioke and Barber, 2010). One common thread was a strong reliance on teamwork to identify and respond to problems. Through collaborative leadership, administrators can make the changes required to raise the bar and close the gap for all students.

One often underutilized collaborative partner is the school counselor.

The LCAP creates a unique opportunity for school counselors and administrators to act as allies in school reform. Too often school counselors have been left at the periphery of education reform. As part of the administration's collaborative team, school counselors have a vital role to play in addressing three broad domains: 1) Conditions of Learning; 2) Pupil Outcomes; and 3) Engagement.

As California aims to improve its education system and implement the Local Control Funding Formula, school counselors can play a critical role in addressing equity challenges and meeting the eight state priorities, which include school climate, high school graduation rates, and access to college preparation courses, among others.

## **The principal-counselor relationship**

How do administrators and school counselors begin to build a collaborative relationship? What are the qualities and actions that make a strong relationship? According to a study conducted by the College Board (Finkelstein, 2009), the 10 characteristics of a strong principal-counselor relationship include:

- Open communication that provides multiple opportunities for input to decision making.
- Opportunities to share ideas on teaching, learning and schoolwide educational initiatives.
- Sharing information about the needs within the school and the community.
- School counselor participation on school leadership teams.

- Joint responsibility in the development of goals and metrics that indicate success.
- Mutual trust between the principal and school counselors.
- A shared vision of what is meant by student success.
- Mutual respect between the principal and school counselors.
- Shared decision making on initiatives that impact student success.
- A collective commitment to equity and opportunity.

There are several ways that administrators and counselors can begin to establish collaborative relationships. First, administrators and counselors should set aside time for regular communication and collaborative planning. Administrators and counselors have identified time as the greatest challenge to collaboration (Finkelstein, 2009).

Collaborative planning can be accomplished through weekly, bi-weekly or monthly meetings that include a review of student needs, mutually established goals and individual tasks for the week. Purposeful planning helps ensure that school counseling services align with the mission and vision of the school.

Secondly, administrators and school counselors should share information. The more each knows about the work they are doing, the better they are able to support the whole child.

Lastly, administrators can include school counselors on school and district leadership teams. School counselors understand children as individuals and as participants within a system. They take a holistic approach to student development and can provide valuable insight into how to best meet the academic, social-emotional, and career development needs of students.

Simply put, a strong collaborative relationship takes place when members of an inclusive team work together as equals to assist students to succeed in the classroom. Michael Fullan argues that purposeful collaboration is one way of ensuring that there is coherence and centrality of purpose within any reform process. By merging effective skills sets and abilities and making effective use of time, school counselors and administrators can address current issues and challenges more comprehensively.

### **The role of the school counselor**

Effective collaboration is focused and intentional. Therefore, it is critical that administrators understand what expertise and services school counselors bring to the table. According to the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Model, school counselors play an important role in the academic, social-emotional and career development of all students through the implementation of a comprehensive developmental school counseling program.

School counselors are specifically trained to provide services that identify and resolve barriers to student success (Whitson and Stephens, 2014). To achieve maximum program effectiveness, ASCA recommends a school counselor to student ratio of 1:250.

California is second to last in the nation, with a ratio of 1:826. Given these enormous caseloads, it is essential that administrators and counselors are strategic in the ways in which school counseling programs support students.

School counselors should spend 80 percent or more of their time in direct and indirect services to students. Direct services include classroom lessons, individual and group counseling,

advisement and crisis response. Indirect services include consultation and collaboration with parents and teachers, and referral.

In October 2015, Senate Bill 451 was passed, updating Section 49600 of the California Education Code authorizing school districts to provide the structures for a comprehensive educational counseling program to meet the growing demands of California's K-12 students. These updated statutes align school counseling services in a way that helps districts meet the eight statewide education priorities.

The following outlines the LCAP priorities, along with examples of authorized counseling services that meet district goals.

### **The eight LCAP priorities**

Priority 1 – Student Achievement: Improving student achievement and outcomes along multiple measures, including test scores, English proficiency, and college and career preparedness.

Administrators and school counselors can work together to disaggregate achievement data and identify students in need of support. School counselors are masters at relationship building. By meeting with students individually and/or through the administration of a needs assessment, school counselors can help identify barriers to learning, including self-esteem, home-life, study skills, motivation, learning or mental disorders, and coordinate appropriate and targeted intervention services, such as counseling, community agencies, tutoring or study skills and time management groups.

School counselors collaborate with parents, community members and community agencies to secure resources that may not be available within the school setting. When appropriate services are lacking, school administrators and counselors can brainstorm to identify and seek out resources. Furthermore, school counselors can conduct classroom lessons and parent workshops on a variety of topics related to student achievement including: 1) the purpose and impact of the Common Core State Standards and Smarter Balanced assessments; 2) the benefits of Advance of Placement courses; 3) test-taking strategies and ways to reduce test anxiety.

By participating in leadership teams, school counselors can work with administrators, teachers and the counseling department to develop systems for monitoring and increasing enrollment in AVID, Honors and AP courses, A-G courses and early assessment programs.

Priority 2 – Other Student Outcomes: Measuring other important student outcomes related to required areas of study, including physical education and the arts.

School counselors should assist administrators and teachers in educating parents and students about multiple student outcomes, including academic pathways. Because school counselors work with students on academic planning and career and college counseling, they are in a unique position to support in this area.

For example: school counselors can assist in monitoring course enrollment patterns. They can also work on educating students and parents on standardized testing such as PSAT, ACT and SAT, as well as monitor results and passage rates.

School counselors frequently utilize computer assisted career guidance systems, such as Naviance, with students. Their knowledge of these systems can be useful in monitoring

enrollment patterns, goal-setting and successful completion of community college and four-year colleges and universities.

Lastly, school counselors can refer students to career technical education programs and internships.

Priority 3 – Course Access: Ensuring all students have access to classes that prepare them for college and careers, regardless of what school they attend or where they live.

Academic and career planning resources are part of a comprehensive school counseling program designed to guide students through a successful transition from school to viable postsecondary options and to develop the career self-management skills necessary for life-long career success. Furthermore, counselors can assist in professional development workshops that train teachers on recruiting under-represented subgroups for enrollment in Honors/AP courses.

School counselors are uniquely trained in career development theory and interpreting career assessments. Given this knowledge, school counselors can assist administrators in the development of interest inventories to determine next steps in increased course offerings.

School counselors work toward removing systemic barriers at any level to create an environment where all students can succeed. Through the use of focus groups and needs assessments aimed at parents, teachers and students, school counselors can assist in investigating barriers to UC/CSU A-G completion rates and help administrators develop a plan to reduce these obstacles.

Together, administration and the counseling program can review current graduation requirements and move toward greater alignment to UC/CSU A-G course requirements.

School counselors can also lead parent workshops to provide in-depth information on CCSS, UC A-G, post-secondary options, college admissions, as well as financial aid parent education workshops, in collaboration with community organizations.

Through vertical team articulation between elementary and middle school, and middle and high school, school counselors and administrators at all levels can collaborate to ensure successful transition plans and systems of support are in place for students in need of additional assistance.

Priority 4 – Common Core State Standards: Implementation of California’s academic standards, including CCSS in English language arts and math, Next Generation Science Standards, English language development, history social science, visual and performing arts, health education and physical education standards.

School counselors in several ways can work collaboratively to contribute to the success of CCSS implementation. Over the years, researchers have pointed to the relationship between high-stakes testing and teacher stress, suggesting the additional stress undermines meaningful instruction as well as diminished job satisfaction for those working in low-performing schools (Foley and Nelson, 2011).

In 2013, Frank Wells wrote for the California Teachers Association, “Educators are heading back to school with a mix of optimism and anxiety over the transition to the new Common Core State Standards.”

School administrators, in recognizing staff needs regarding stress, could work with their school counselors to develop staff development modules to reduce stress and increase productivity and

tolerance for the changes they have had to face because of the implementation of CCSS and other reform measures.

Another partnering opportunity is school counselors supporting the school's parent outreach goals by conducting parent workshops, assisting parents in understanding the CCSS and the Smarter Balance assessment measures.

Priority 5 – Core Services: Providing all students access to fully credentialed teachers, instructional materials that align with state standards, and safe facilities.

School counselors and school administrators working collaboratively can help “equalize the playing field” for California’s legislatively identified youth, providing the additional services and support they may need in gaining access to instructional materials. This begins by school counselors utilizing their skills in building community partnerships and to increase access to the variety of services available to these youth.

For example, they can collaborate with churches and community outreach centers to increase community referral resources. Additionally, they can work with foster care providers and social workers to ensure each student has the school supplies they need and understand the other provisions offered under California law for transitioning foster care youth to access college or other post-secondary opportunities.

Equally, homeless youth often need a school-based case-management approach in managing the unique challenges associated with being homeless. They may need special arrangements for managing text books, instructional materials and after-hour access to technology.

Priority 6 – Student Engagement: Supporting student engagement, including whether students attend school or are chronically absent.

Administrators and school counselors can identify and track chronically absent students, determine reasons for absenteeism, and develop appropriate intervention plans. By working in partnership, truant students are quickly identified and referred to individual or group counseling services offered through the school counseling program.

School counselors can also conduct workshops for both parents and students on topics such as time-management, establishing routines, or coping with anxiety-based school refusal behavior.

Priority 7 – Parent Involvement: Parent involvement and participation, so the local community is engaged in the decision- making process and the educational programs of students.

According to the American School Counselor Association, school counselors are called to work with students, their families and community members as part of a comprehensive counseling program to become knowledgeable about community resources and actively pursue collaboration with family members and community stakeholders.

School counselors are skilled in family-school collaboration and in program development and evaluation. Consequently, school counselors are called to create, lead, facilitate and evaluate these partnerships and work to remove barriers to collaboration, including mistrust and miscommunication between parties, resistance to the concept and practice, transportation and childcare issues, and accessible meeting times.

This can include collaborating with administrators to provide parent information nights, academic planning programs for parents and students, and classes on parent and family education. School

counselors can invite parents for one-on-one conferencing to review student progress toward both education and career goals, assist in the interpretation of assessment results for parents, provide resource referral information, and exploration of college/career options with parents and students.

In order to ensure joint responsibility in the development of goals and metrics that indicate success, school counselors should participate in the creation of parent surveys to ensure parents have the opportunity to provide feedback on school counseling programs and services. School counselors can sit on a variety of schoolwide advisory committees, including committees related to LCAP priorities.

Priority 8 – School Climate: Highlighting school climate and connectedness through a variety of factors, such as suspension and expulsion rates and other locally identified means.

School counselors work to promote safe learning environments for all members of the school community and regularly monitor and respond to behavior issues that impact school climate, such as bullying, student interpersonal struggles and student–teacher conflicts. School counselors use research-based strategies to reduce stigma, conflict and pupil-to-pupil mistreatment and bullying.

Administrators can work with their school counselors toward promoting and maintaining safe learning environments by participating in leadership committees implementing Restorative Justice practices, Positive Behavior Interventions and Support services. School counselors can assist in analyzing climate survey data, including expulsion/suspension rates and the California Healthy Kids Survey, and deliver evidence-based curriculum on violence prevention, social and emotional competence, character development and health.

School counselors and administrators can work collaboratively to develop an improved, progressive and developmentally appropriate discipline plan, that includes teacher training, in order to provide other means of correction. Furthermore, school counselors can assist administrators in consulting with teachers on student behaviors and in monitoring schoolwide small group and individual interventions for students.

Elementary, middle and high school counselors can assist in the coordination of peer mediation and character education programs.

It is through effective collaboration that school staff can begin to accomplish extraordinary things. Fullan attributes this to two factors. One is that knowledge about effective practice within education specialties becomes more widely communicated and accessible. Second is that working together creates a commitment to shared goals for student success.

By merging skill sets, administrators and school counselors can more efficiently address current issues and challenges more comprehensively, and creative possibilities can be imagined and implemented.

## **Resources**

ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs:

<http://schoolcounselor.org/ascanationalmodel/media/anm-templates/anmexecsumm.pdf>  
(accessible at <http://goo.gl/HuFCGP>).

SB 451 and the updated role of school counselors in California:

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Planning tools to enhance the principal-counselor relationship: [https://secure-media.collegeboard.org/digitalServices/pdf/nosca/11b\\_4729\\_PC\\_Toolkit\\_WEB\\_111104.pdf](https://secure-media.collegeboard.org/digitalServices/pdf/nosca/11b_4729_PC_Toolkit_WEB_111104.pdf) (accessible at <http://goo.gl/DMCLWO>)

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# Shooting in the dark: Developing K-12 gun policy

There are a number of variables that must be considered in coming to a sound policy decision on school weapons policies. There is no ‘one size fits all’ answer; each district must navigate the policy decision for themselves.

**By Catherine Jones**

On Oct. 1, 1997, Luke Woodham grabbed a lever action deer rifle, donned a trench coat, and headed to Pearl High School in Pearl, Miss., where he shot and killed two students and wounded seven others.

Vice Principal Joel Myrick apprehended Woodham as he tried to escape, allegedly on his way to another school to continue his rampage. Hearing the shots, Myrick ran to his truck to retrieve his Colt .45 and bullets from a secured case. Intercepting Woodham at his vehicle, Myrick held the Colt to the shooter’s head and said, “Why are you shooting my kids?”

Woodham is one of the earliest school shooters of the modern day, and Myrick is one of the first armed school employees to stop an attack. Although Myrick’s actions were largely applauded as saving lives, he was not regarded universally as a hero; he soon felt betrayed and isolated. Some of Myrick’s colleagues simply could not accept that he had held a gun to a student’s head.

This case provides an example of how the decision to arm school employees can be confounding and complex. The debate has been ongoing at the national level since the late 1990s, yet shows no sign of resolution or conclusion.

With the recent revisions to the California Gun Free School Zone Act, under Senate Bill 707, many California school administrators are now contemplating weapons policies for the first time. With this in mind, how is a school superintendent to decide? There are a number of variables that must be considered in coming to a sound policy decision.

It is possible to consider this issue from the standpoint that there is no one correct nor universally applicable outcome; rather, there are possible options for every school district applicable to the unique environment, context, values, current capabilities and competencies (or those that could exist), and risk tolerance.

The measure of effectiveness for each criterion considered is whether the risk associated with each criterion has been managed (or can be) in an acceptable manner. Given the current legal and social environment, there is no “one size fits all” answer; each district must navigate the policy decision for themselves.

Professor Robert Brinbaum characterizes the policy options as being either MoreGuns or BanGuns. These are positions which reflect the main paradigms in today’s gun debate.

Brinbaum asserts that MoreGuns and BanGuns groups persist in their advocacy because they are promoting goals using data and arguments processed through the lens of their intrinsic values. This prevents an objective assessment of the issue.

According to Brinbaum, instead of basing policy on the “assessment of empirical evidence, empirical evidence is selectively collected, interpreted, and used to support a priori commitments to a policy view.” This makes MoreGuns and BanGuns ideologies self-validating because selective data and arguments will always support and reinforce the desired interpretation. However, there is a middle ground.

A SomeGuns approach is founded on the concept that not all firearms should be prohibited and therefore an acceptable compromise can be achieved. A SomeGuns policy option provides reduced risk and liability for the school district, restricts who can carry a firearm and requires less oversight than a MoreGuns policy approach. The main characteristics of each policy option are as follows:

## **BanGuns**

A BanGuns ideology primarily comes as a result of any of the following:

- An unwillingness to incur any liability or any level of risk associated with firearms (risk avoidance).
- A culture that fundamentally does not support the presence of firearms on campus (risk avoidance).
- A determination that adequate insurance cannot be obtained or is cost prohibitive (the inability to transfer risk).
- A lack of capacity/capability to administer a weapons policy (inability to mitigate risk).

A BanGuns approach is also appropriate for districts where their limited resources have already been allocated to early intervention programs, such as school psychologists or social workers who implement behavioral intervention strategies, and strive to address the underlying school culture.

This approach does not account for shooters who are not associated with the school; however, research has shown the majority of school shooters have some type of relationship with the school they attack, thereby validating efforts to invest in culture and threat assessment strategies.

## **MoreGuns**

A MoreGuns ideology results when culture and capacity support firearms on campus. To date, this ideology has been most prevalent in states with liberal gun laws, which does not include California. In these instances the following characteristics apply:

- Parent and employee groups support guns on campus and no opposition is expressed toward arming staff or security personnel.
- The use of a firearm is a desired part of the job to provide enhanced security on campus (acceptance of risk). However, a caution is noted here. According to an interagency security committee, “Confronting an active shooter should never be a requirement of any non-law enforcement personnel’s job.” Direct response is an individual choice.
- Attitudes are accepting of voluntary carry by personnel who have a license to carry a concealed weapon.

- The district is willing to incur liability, has adequate insurance in place, and uses indemnification agreements where appropriate; thereby achieving adequate risk transfer.
- Training for persons authorized to carry a firearm is robust and consistent with Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) or other as prescribed by policy or regulation (risk mitigation).

## **SomeGuns**

This ideology is a middle ground, where neither gun advocates nor gun opponents achieve their fundamental goal. This approach is characterized primarily by the following:

- The culture may be opposed to arming civilian employees but does not oppose armed security or law enforcement personnel.
- A willingness to incur some liability but in a limited fashion (risk acceptance).
- Adequate insurance is in place and contractual liability pertaining to the use of outside agencies or firms has been addressed (risk transfer).
- Training for persons authorized to carry a firearm is robust and consistent with POST or other as prescribed by policy or regulation (risk mitigation).

A successful policy approach considers the whole system of interconnected pieces and understands how one decision or action affects other parts. Using risk management principles as the backdrop and foundation for making policy provides the best opportunity for success moving forward by prompting policymakers to objectively assess culture, capability and resources in creating sound policy. As a decision-making process, it involves the following sequential steps:

1. Identifying and analyzing exposures, conducting risk assessment, setting strategic goals and objectives and determining constraints.
2. Examining and evaluating options for dealing with the exposure/risk.
3. Selecting the apparently best risk management techniques/options.
4. Implementing the chosen techniques/options.
5. Monitoring results to determine effectiveness and results.

Although rooted in the insurance industry, the risk management process provides an applicable framework for use in decision making where any type of risk presents the possibility of unintended or undesired loss to an organization.

Douglas Hubbard defines risk management as, “the identification, assessment and prioritization of risk followed by coordinated and economical application of resources to minimize, monitor and control the probability and/or impact of unfortunate events.” More simply put, risk management is “being smart about taking chances.”

The literature is filled with commentary and proposals about what schools should do on this issue and what policy they should adopt. Advocates for arming school employees (MoreGuns) cite the need for school staff to become first responders in order to provide protection in the

event of an active shooter scenario. They say allowing concealed weapons provides a deterrent because a shooter would not know who is carrying a weapon and therefore would likely choose another target.

In addition, they also assert that gun prohibitions only make schools more vulnerable because the bad guys know staff are unarmed.

With law enforcement response times of 20 minutes to an hour in rural areas, the MoreGuns folks assert that arming school employees is a prudent decision. The Federal Bureau of Investigation has noted the special vulnerability of rural schools and has acknowledged that armed citizen responders should be anticipated.

Lastly, the MoreGuns advocates are supporters of gun rights in general and big Second Amendment supporters. One of the most detailed resources on the subject of guns in schools is the National Rifle Association's National School Shield Program. Not surprisingly, it advocates for more guns in schools, but does so via more school resource officers and qualified school personnel.

As passionate as the MoreGuns advocacy is, so is the BanGuns advocacy.

Former New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg pledged \$50 million to his group Everytown for Gun Safety to help fight the NRA. The BanGuns constituency believes the gun problem cannot be solved by adding more guns. This constituency includes school administrators, teachers' unions, law enforcement agencies, higher education officials, campus police chiefs, some student body associations, and the Brady Center to Reduce Gun Violence.

It is ironic that with an abundance of gun legislation proposing to lessen gun restrictions on primary, secondary and higher education campuses, the recipients of the legislation are overwhelmingly opposed to adding more guns. Their chief argument is increased risk due to the presence of firearms.

A recent accident where a Utah teacher accidentally shot herself is a good example. Although shooting herself is bad enough, if she had accidentally shot another staff member or student there would have been a great deal more public outrage.

Utah has been allowing concealed carry on campuses for many years and has been heralded by the MoreGuns constituency as an example to follow. The BanGuns constituency can now use Utah as rebuttal to the argument that accidents never happen.

Other concerns on this side of the issue include increased liability, confusion during emergencies over who has a weapon, what level of training is appropriate when a teacher may have to shoot their own student, and that the unknown specter of guns on campus creates fear and paranoia that is not conducive to a healthy learning environment.

The training element is one that is hotly debated and one where the BanGuns folks seem to have the upper hand.

What is the minimum amount of training required to enable a layperson to develop an appropriate mindset and become proficient in handling a handgun under volatile, unpredictable and stressful situations? For law enforcement and security personnel, a minimum of 24 hours of training is required for firearm certification, but the initial basic training is not enough. Accurately shooting a weapon, especially under pressure, is a perishable skill, and ongoing training and range time is critical in order to maintain proficiency.

BanGuns advocacy says that educators are not warriors and cannot be trained to become so. Lastly, they also claim that adding more guns will not provide a meaningful deterrent because it will not stop the individuals who are mentally ill or suicidal. If anything, it increases the likelihood they choose a target where they know they will encounter armed individuals. It could become somewhat of a “suicide by cop” scenario.

For some shooters, dying is part of their plan. “Take everyone down, turn the guns on the cop, take out myself. Perfecto,” were the words written in preparation for an attack at Connetquot High School in New York in 2007. In a study of 48 shooters conducted by Peter Langman, 46 percent died by suicide, thereby ending the attack. In addition, many of the suicides occurred after police arrived and engaged the shooter with gunfire.

California school agencies have liability for the actions and in some instances the inactions of their employees in addition to liability for the failure to perform a statutory duty. Because there is no statutory requirement for schools to implement a weapons program or to allow employees to carry firearms, there is no liability for declining to do so.

However, once a duty is accepted, by implementing a firearm policy or allowing individuals to carry concealed weapons, the district creates potential adverse liability for itself. This liability is found in the established principle that a duty voluntarily assumed must be performed with care.

Whether or not the assumed duty, such as protecting students or the failure thereof, is performed with reasonable care will be a decision for the trier of fact (judge or jury). In addition, under tort principles of negligence, K-12 educators owe students a duty to anticipate foreseeable dangers and to take reasonable steps to protect those students from that danger. To this end, K-12 educators owe the same degree of care and supervision to their students that reasonable and prudent parents would employ in the same circumstances for their children.

Making the decision to arm employees because they had no other security policy in place, Sidney Ohio school district Superintendent John Scheu said, “We may not stop a shooter from getting into the building. If they want to, they will find a way, but if they enter, we can stop them in seconds.”

While adding trained faculty to its current cadre of armed security at its entrances potentially increases security at its schools, the superintendent’s statement “we can stop them in seconds” is concerning. It could be argued that the Sidney policy creates the duty to stop armed intruders in seconds. When (if) that does not happen, it logically follows that the district will have failed to fulfill its duty (even if self-imposed), and therefore liability may attach.

Generally, immunity exists if the injury results from the public employee’s discretion to undertake an activity, and liability attaches if it results from his or her negligence in performing it after she or he has made the discretionary decision to do so.

Providing armed security at schools may be a desired policy approach, but the outcomes of doing so should not be exaggerated. There is no evidence that having armed personnel on site effectively deters a potential shooter. Unfortunately, there have been several school shootings where the perpetrator knew there were armed personnel on site yet still continued with his plan.

A MoreGuns approach should not be portrayed as anything other than a desire to expand response capabilities, avoiding any commitments that can be used against the district for failure to act. A MoreGuns approach leaves little margin for error. It may increase the level of safety, but it also brings the highest level of liability to the school agency.

Every element of a MoreGuns policy can potentially form the basis for a lawsuit and adverse liability. Therefore, schools that adopt this ideology must have a high tolerance for risk, strong risk management oversight, and rigorous policy administration.

Decisions to arm employees or provide armed security are not guarantees a shooter will be stopped before killing or injuring victims; therefore, it is critical that the decision making process is objective and properly assesses the overall risk. The use of risk management principles supports the decision-making process by introducing objective decision making where process drives outcome and ideology rather than the other way around.

Brinbaum puts it as “ready (have an ideology), fire (attack using the ideology), and then aim (construct a narrative).” In a risk-management-driven approach, the ideology and resulting policy come as the end-result of the process; thereby righting the sequence to ready (setting goals and objectives), aim (assessing risks and constraints), and then fire (implementing corresponding policy).

Employing The Risk Assessment Matrix for Gun Policy in K-12 Schools (In “Armed to learn: Aiming at California K-12 school gun policy” by Catherine Wilson Jones, <https://www.hsaj.org/articles/10932>), can guide stakeholders in determining the level of risk. It illustrates how key decision points move from conditions warranting risk avoidance, to conditions supporting policy and acceptable levels of risk.

The Decision Framework for Determining Concealed Weapons Policy in California K-12 Schools (accessible at <https://www.hsaj.org/articles/10932>) is another decision making tool that provides a collective criteria assessment requiring affirmative responses prior to moving forward with policy.

The policy options of MoreGuns (allow teachers to be armed), BanGuns (no one is armed), or SomeGuns (trained security or law enforcement can be armed, but not teachers) represent the various paradigms that exist or can exist to create policy.

In her book *Thinking in Systems*, author Donella Meadows asserts that no paradigm is “true.” Therefore, none of these policy options is truer than the next, but instead are all true, and it is the mission of superintendents and boards of trustees, in partnership with the applicable stakeholders, to determine which option is most true for them. They must honestly look at the feedback within the system, assess capacity and capability. This will help create sound policy. Anything less is shooting in the dark.

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# Statewide teacher increase relies on substandard permits

Fewer students who now complete a teacher preparation program need to find a job upon doing so. The successful completion of an initial student teaching experience now serves to qualify a candidate for a teaching position.

**By David R. Jones**

This article isn't about the shortage of teachers in California. This article is about increases. Don't celebrate just yet.

The good news from the Learning Policy Institute is that the teacher workforce has clambered back to a five-year high. Comparably, and according to the same source, district hiring has hit an upswing, returning to a level of activity not seen since 2007.

## **University prep program increases**

As an administrator of a university-based, teacher-preparation program, I see an increase, too. Over the previous three years in one Central Valley program, the number of students receiving mentoring while completing field-based experiences has nearly doubled, spiking from a mere 163 candidates for teacher credentials in the fall 2013 semester to 293 in the spring 2016 semester.

This means more up-and-coming teachers, yes? Not exactly.

What this information so far disguises is the realization that the increase has little to do with the number of individuals preparing to become teachers. Instead, the rise owes to the six-fold increase in a category we, in our teacher preparation program, christened independent teachers and includes those with internship credentials, short-term staff permits, and provisional intern permits – what the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing refers to as substandard permits.

These candidates already constitute the workforce, despite a lack of preliminary credentials, and reflect district efforts to staff every classroom despite the unavailability of credentialed teachers. The independent teachers at our representative university-based, teacher preparation program consisted of special education credential candidates almost exclusively in the fall 2013 semester and, in the spring 2016 semester, grew to include candidates from every credential and specialty area.

Furthermore, increasing numbers of student teachers opt to complete their teacher preparation program as an intern – that is, as an employee – rather than as a volunteer student teacher. The number of initial and final student teachers in our preparation program grew overall in the 2013-14 and 2014-15, with expected inversions occurring each semester as initial student teachers became final student teachers.

The number of final student teachers – those students who will earn preliminary credentials at the end of the semester – plummeted during the fall 2015 semester, surpassed concurrently by an influx of interns. This shift indicates that more teacher candidates than ever before seek and

achieve paid teaching positions before finishing their preparation program. In other words, fewer of those students who now complete the teacher preparation program need to find a job upon doing so. The successful completion of an initial student teaching experience now serves to qualify a candidate for a teaching position.

The number of candidates in our teacher preparation program employed on substandard permits increased at least four-fold each year over the previous three years. This trend corresponds to one of the most alarming findings reported by the Learning Policy Institute: California has seen an explosion in the number of substandard permits that comprise the teacher workforce.

It appears that the shortage has not only depleted its supply of newly credentialed teachers and substitute teachers, it is even carving into the pool of aspiring teachers. Substandard permit holders may assume teaching roles before enrolling in a teacher preparation program. The disparity between the number of substandard permit holders employed in local districts and the number of substandard permit holders enrolled in teacher preparation programs suggests that they may assume teaching roles without enrolling in a teacher preparation program at all. Conversations with other university-based programs yielded evidence that the trend is general within the region.

### **CCTC support requirements**

The rise of substandard credentials, though, raises serious concerns about the decrease in the quality of teaching. Many university-based teacher preparation programs responded to the call from Mary Sandy (2016), executive director of the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, by committing themselves to cooperate with districts to support those on substandard permits.

Sandy's articulation of expectations attempts to raise the rigor of support but doesn't elude the irony of highlighting the disparity between expectations for interns who have already completed a noteworthy portion of their teacher preparation and short-term staff permit or provisional intern permit holders ranging from those who may not even be enrolled in a teacher preparation program to those who have not yet finished the program requirements to advance to intern-eligible status.

The CCTC issued two Program Sponsor Alerts in 2013 (PSAs 13-04 and 13-06) that drove university-based, teacher preparation programs and districts to provide weekly and intensive support to intern credential holders. Whereas interns are provided a mandatory 144 hours of support (at minimum), those on permits have only a vague guarantee of any support.

### **Implications for superintendents**

Superintendents have relied on pools of newly credentialed teachers as a source for staffing their districts. However, the discussion above advises strategic shifts.

*Choose the preparation program.* Districts now have much more say in where their teachers obtain training. In situations where a newly hired teacher is employed on a short-term or provisional intern permit, districts can steer the selection of university-based programs that suit the collusion of the individual's and the district's needs. The assumption here is that district representatives know the needs of the individual and have a meaningful relationship with local teacher preparation programs and can speak to the contrasts among programs.

None of this discussion intends to imply that the traditional model of teacher preparation – a candidate begins a training program in pursuit of personal aspiration, completes student teaching, and then takes a position with a local school district – has turned obsolete. Instead, this evidence points to an alternate pathway for teacher recruitment – one in which the district more directly drives its own recruitment process by nominating teachers and recommending them to a teacher preparation program, rather than relying on a new pool of credentialed applicants.

*Forge partnerships.* At our representative university-based teacher preparation program, the change in enrollment patterns informed an effort to forge a deeper partnership with local districts. Even before Sandy's communiqué, these partnerships grappled with the question of how to support those holding substandard permits. Besides addressing pragmatic concerns about support like how much, the effort of grappling helps stakeholders maintain their commitment to their respective roles in the process and avoid disappointments that result should one or both parties fail to perform according to the expectations of the other.

The partnership to support those on substandard permits can bolster the skills of a qualified candidate and stave off the loss of quality teaching. Moreover, the university provides a reflection to the districts in understanding where substandard permit holders might have insufficiencies. By respectfully informing partners, districts can continue adapting their support efforts. The partnership cannot, though, replace the careful selection of promising, albeit un-credentialed candidates – a task that remains exclusively the district's privilege.

*Two-way support.* Substandard permits holders seek district support in two ways. The obvious type of supports relates to classroom teaching. In many cases these teachers have never planned a lesson, recruited curricular resources, written IEPs or led the meetings associated with special education, or scheduled a full day of classes. However, their new assignment will require them to complete several of these tasks within the first few weeks of school. These teachers need intense support, especially at the beginning of the contracted period – the time when resources have not yet arrived and when the most qualified support personnel are most likely divided among competing demands.

I suggest using the CCTC's outline for intern support – see especially PSA 13-06 – as a model for supporting those on substandard permits. Besides enhancing the teacher's ability, district support demonstrates commitment to its teachers and improves retention. Our university-based program saw many substandard permit holders leave districts that provided insufficient support. The less obvious direction of support entails participation in teacher preparation. This partnership concedes that many substandard permit holders never succeed in forming a niche within the teaching profession, owing in part to that these teachers never earn admission to a teacher preparation program. Because districts issue substandard permits at their own discretion, program administrators lack the means to identify these teachers and support them into, through, and out of a preparation programs. The onus rests on the teacher and the district to translate a yearlong appointment into a career.

## **Conclusion**

In a long-standing conversation about the teacher shortage, evidence of increases portends good news and – dare we say it? – resolution. However, un-scrutinized increases insufficiently reflect our progress and fail to inform long-term and sustainable solutions. This present discussion

dissects the increases observed at one university-based, teacher preparation program located in the Central Valley. By doing so, I hope to raise awareness of the ramifications of our actions and foster efforts to redress potential and unforeseen pitfalls.

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