

School Leadership: It's About Teaching and Learning

With more responsibility for higher levels of student performance, principals are now required to take on new and expanded roles as both instructional leaders and managers of their schools. Parents and communities have a responsibility to work with principals and districts to meet the challenges of this changing role. They need to encourage an atmosphere that supports a focus on instruction among school leaders.

First, to empower principals and teachers to make the changes needed to improve student performance, many districts have transferred decision-making authority from the central office to the school building for management and instructional issues, heightening the role of the school leader.

Second, new academic standards have raised expectations not only for students, but also for the teachers charged with improving student performance. These standards give principals an opportunity to push for better and more individualized instructional strategies.

And third, demands for improving instructional strategies present principals with the opportunity to create professional development programs that are customized to their own schools' needs. As researchers have noted in recent years, the best professional development is embedded in the daily context of the school, not in one-shot, off-site workshops. Principals are the logical leaders in these important initiatives.

What the Research Says

Research supports the notion that unless schools have enlightened leadership they are unlikely to become places where positive changes occur. The Educational Research Service, on behalf of National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) and National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), recently conducted a review of the research literature. The synthesis showed that most often high-performing schools had strong leadership. Consider the following:

- A study of 13 high- and low-performing schools in the Jersey City and Paterson Public Schools found that the most important factor in school performance was a dedicated and dynamic principal (Arthur Anderson, 1997);
- In New York City, a study of eight high-performing schools found that school leadership was consistently high throughout the schools (PricewaterhouseCoopers Endowment of the Business of Government, 1999);
- A study of nine high-performing urban elementary schools in high-poverty areas found that the schools excelled because their principals had a collective sense of responsibility

for school improvement, helped teachers increase the time they spent on instructional issues and persisted through difficulties and setbacks (U.S. Department of Education, 1999);

- In Maryland, a study of schools with much higher than expected student performance on state tests showed that the principals in these schools tracked student achievement very closely, demanded high-quality teaching, and made intensive efforts to recruit good teachers (University of Maryland, 1997);
- A study of six schools with high levels of achievement, despite high percentages of student poverty, showed that each had a strong principal who kept staff and students focused on goals developed and adopted by the school community (Educational Research Service, 1999).

Research like this reinforces the point that principals play a critical role in improving school performance. During last year's National Education Summit attended by governors and business leaders, Gov. Thomas Carper of Delaware noted the importance of having a good leader at the helm: "I've never been to a great school where they don't have a great principal."

The Principal Shortage

If parents want to support and advocate for the development of excellent principals, then they should understand the changing dynamics of the principalship and, not incidentally, how difficult it has become to recruit the right people for the job. Several issues have emerged in the last few years.

Unfilled jobs. NAESP and NASSP asked the Educational Research Service to survey superintendents in 1998 to determine how well districts were filling vacancies. The study found that about half of the 403 superintendents reported a shortage of qualified candidates for principal slots they were attempting to fill. The shortages cut across all types of districts: 52 percent of superintendents in rural districts, 45 percent in suburban schools and 47 percent in urban systems. Similarly, the shortages occurred at all levels: 47 percent in elementary schools; 55 percent in middle and junior high schools and 55 percent in high schools.

Retention and raiding. *The New York Times* noted recently that in Washington State, 15 percent of the state's principals left their jobs at the end of last school year, some to accept sign-on bonuses from desperate districts in Idaho, California, Oregon and Nevada.



Johnny Hughes, Principal, Lanier High School in Jackson, MS and Beth Canizaro, Director of Millsaps College Principals' Institute, know the importance of strong school leadership.

In Vermont 20 percent of principals retired or resigned over the summer. New York City has seen principals depart at the rate of 25 percent in the last two years.

Dearth of applicants. Meanwhile, those responsible for filling positions say there has been a scarcity of candidates even applying. *The New York Times* noted that Kentucky and Texas districts, which are seeing departures at the same rate as Vermont, get as few as three candidates per opening — about four times less than five years ago. Those districts that don't have shortages say they stay afloat by actively recruiting. "We don't depend on paper coming in as much as we used to," says Larry Leverett, superintendent in the 7,400-student district in Plainfield, N.J.

Retirements. The graying of the principal workforce is aggravating applicant shortages. The U.S. Department of Labor reports that 40 percent of the nation's 93,200 principals are nearing retirement and that the need for school administrators in the next five years will increase by 10 to 20 percent.

The Complexity of the Job

Applications have not dried up because of a shortage of qualified potential applicants. To the contrary, nearly half of all public school teachers have master's degrees, making them suitable can-

didates. Education experts say people are less interested in becoming principals because the job is increasingly complex. The NAESP/NASSP study highlights this point. Even though the principal's job is among the highest paying in public education, 60 percent of the responding superintendents indicated that the salaries were not enough to justify the increased workload. Survey participants said the job was too stressful (32 percent), that it required too much time (27 percent), and that it was difficult to satisfy parents and the community (14 percent).

Mildred Collins Blackman, director of the Principals' Center at Harvard University, and Leslie Fenwick, a visiting fellow at the Center, write that several factors have converged to make the job more difficult. They include a push from the accountability movement to link principals' contracts to student performance on standardized tests, decreasing public confidence in school quality, the pressure for privatization, growing incidents of school violence, and the increasing ethnic and linguistic diversity of students.

"Added to these demands is the day-to-day reality of the principalship," they write. "The principal must negotiate bureaucratic minutiae, district politics,

and community interactions. He or she must be able to placate and soothe parents' concerns, while also serving as a plant manager who can get the bus schedule right."

At the same time, it is precisely because of the job's growing complexity that principals are considered so critical to the success of schools. Essentially the job requires principals to concentrate on two distinct but equally important tasks: instruction and management.

Instructional Responsibilities

Principals provide day-to-day instructional leadership for their staff. "The burden falls on the principal to provide the instructional acumen, curriculum support, professional development opportunities, data-driven decision-making and visionary perspective to mold a faculty of teachers into a *unified* force to advance academic achievement for all students," writes Gerald Tirozzi, executive director of the National Association of Secondary School Principals.

Ruth Ash and Maurice Persall of the School of Education at Samford University in Birmingham, Ala., call school leaders of the future "chief learning officers." They must be open to new teaching and learning even when that learning challenges their strongly held beliefs; model the learning behaviors they want to see in others; and build a culture of innovation, Ash and Persall write.

To be good instructional leaders, principals need to have what Michael Murphy, director of programs for the National Staff Development Council, calls "deep knowledge" of teaching and learning, as well as skills in how to improve both. "By deep knowledge, I mean more than just a cursory understanding of what happens in the classroom," he says. "You need to know when it's happening, what to look for and what to do when it

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Letter from the Executive Director

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If there could be a silver bullet in public education, school leadership would likely be it. I am not suggesting that the principal can do this work alone, nor that the principal is or should be all-knowing and all-powerful. However, the *role* of the principal is pivotal. It is the principal who sets the tone and expectation that *all* children can learn.

Principals are positioned to unleash all the forces necessary to create a good school or, conversely, to block these essential forces. These forces, of course, include all the factors that go into making schools good: high standards, competent teachers, adequate facilities, fair assessment and accountability, parent and community involvement. School by school, it is the principal who creates the climate for these interrelated elements to be nurtured and to bear fruit.

The absence of good leadership should not condemn a school full of students to a future of educational mediocrity and malpractice. The system's failure to intervene in these cases is the most classic example of how we allow the personal egos and convenience of adults to override the educational needs of children. Failure to intervene is damaging to professionals—and the profession, as well.

Whether the system lacks capacity or the will to get the job done, parents and the community can no longer simply look the other way. The problem is bigger than you may think* and it will not remedy itself. But the news is encouraging: SOLUTIONS ABOUND. The field of education possesses a lot of knowledge about effective school leadership, yet there remains a serious gap in putting this knowledge into practice. Communities must play a role in calling for action and for resources. Parents should be catalysts, too.

Unfortunately, parents' efforts to challenge mediocrity are often frustrated (and frustrating!) because they lack clout as individual consumers within the system, and they lack the technical knowledge to make them credible critics in the eyes of educators. For over a decade, Parents for Public Schools has been stepping into this void to bring knowledge to parents, giving them choices in public education by transforming them into proactive problem-solvers and partners.

By taking the individual motivations of parents and building a collective, constructive and well-informed voice, PPS enables public school consumers to become more effective change agents from *within* the system. And because public school parents are intimately involved on a daily basis with the caliber of leadership at the building level, they represent an important constituency to help influence community awareness and build support for greater accountability. PPS is giving them the additional tools and information to do this.

This edition of *Parent Press* is part of our on-going series to build this knowledge base among parents about issues that support academic achievement. The two previous issues in this series have probed the subjects of *academic standards* and *teacher quality*. Now we turn to the challenge of *school leadership* as a way to shed new light on the evolving role of the administrator and its critical link to student achievement.

Whatever your relationship is to a school leader, I hope you are moved to do your part to close the gap in knowledge, resources, capacity and will.



Kelly Allin Butler,
PPS Executive Director

*The U.S. Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement concluded in its June 1999 report that only about one-quarter of today's 80,000 public school principals currently have the necessary skills to be effective instructional leaders and build authentic learning communities.

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needs improving."

With this deep knowledge, principals are better able to provide support and learning opportunities for teachers. Principals need to know what to look for when they visit classrooms and look at teachers' work. With a solid grounding in content, principals are better able to give substantive feedback to teachers on content and instruction and suggest methods for improvement.

Principals also need a thorough understanding of how data drives the planning process for school improvement. For those who work with site-based planning committees, principals serve in the role of guiding the team through the process to gather, analyze and use data as they create a plan that focuses on instruction and makes the necessary changes in practice to improve student learning.

Management Responsibilities

In addition to the daily instructional tasks, the move to site-based management requires principals to be more adept at managing their operations. Studies show that the typical principal now controls 26 percent of the building's budget. In Chicago, for example, where state reforms have given principals control over the discretionary funds that used to be managed by the Board of Education, principals are running mini-corporations. Albert Bertani, senior executive director of leadership development programs offered by the Chicago Principals and Administrators Association, says elementary school principals are typically managing \$500,000 in discretionary funds; at the high school level, these discretionary funds average \$800,000 but can go as high as \$1.5 million. In Plainfield, N.J., they are managing budgets as high as \$2.5 million.

Principals in site-based managed schools also must have well-developed communication and facilitation skills so they can work well with their site-based teams and the community at large. "Facilitation and communication skills were not so important years ago, but they are vitally important now, especially if the people on the teams are going to assume important roles," Murphy says.

New Skills for Principals

Unfortunately, some people think the job, as it is currently structured, is nearly impossible to do well. "The modern-day principal must be part social worker, nurse, counselor, fundraiser, psychometrician, legal expert, special education expert, security officer, community activist, marketer and Internet expert, in addition to being an instructional leader and school manager," says Vincent Ferrandino, executive director of the National Association of Elementary School Principals. "Clearly the role of the principal has changed and expanded. It's time to redefine that role, to update it."

Because the job has become so complex, some have advocated dividing the position. The Principals' Center at Harvard suggests, for example, that every school have two leaders: an instructional principal and an administrative principal. The instructional principal would be accountable for student achievement, curriculum and technology, and have authority to hire and fire. Meanwhile, the admin-

Who's Accountable?

In the Self-Directed School, the principal is presented with what may appear to be a dilemma: "If I successfully empower my Stakeholders and pass authority and responsibility on to them, will I still be held accountable for the successes and failures of the school, or will the Stakeholders—the real decision makers—be held responsible?" Although it may seem anti-intuitive at first, it soon will be very clear to the superintendent, the Board, as well as the principal that the principal remains accountable.

In a collaborative, high involvement school like a Self-Directed School, principals will no longer be prized for their ability to keep the lid on and to run a tight ship. Instead, the principal will be judged and evaluated based on his or her ability to listen effectively, use conflict resolution, build consensus, build teams, facilitate Stakeholder problem-solving and know how to delegate and hold individuals and clusters responsible for their respective performances.

If a Self-Directed School is successful, it will be because the principal facilitates and empowers the Stakeholders to make the decisions that led to that success. In what appears to be a contradiction, a Self-Directed School principal must be strong enough to be weak. The principal must be strong enough as an attitude builder, facilitator, administrator, coach and advisor to release the power and authority that has traditionally been reserved for the position of principal. Through modeling, coaching, advising and providing training, the principal must allow a new leadership to emerge—the collective leadership of the Stakeholders working together in teams.

From *The Self-Directed School: Empowering the Stakeholders* by Dr. Ronald McIntire and John T. Fessenden. Scholastic, Jefferson City, MO. p. 240.



Panelists speaking at the Jackson PPS Lunch Bunch on the qualities of effective principals and the support needed to create them included Brinkley Middle School Principal Shae Robinson (left), Baker Elementary School Principal Margarit Wallace (second from left) and Beth Canizaro (front right) of the Millsaps Principals' Institute. Joining them are PPS chapter member Mississippi First Lady Melanie Musgrove and chapter president Joe Bennett.

istrative principal's responsibility would focus on plant management, including capitol improvement, transportation, food, and other such areas.

In places like San Diego, Chattanooga, Chicago, and New York, efforts to redesign the job are under way. These districts are using a number of innovative strategies to support principals as they move through different stages of their career. They include sustained professional development for experienced principals, mentoring programs for beginning principals, and programs to help aspiring principals.

In Chicago, for example, the principals' union is taking the lead in offering programs that support principals at several critical junctures. In a program called LAUNCH, a select group of aspiring principals spends five weeks in summer residence at the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University, where they take courses on management issues, instructional leadership team building, and parent and community involvement. The summer session is followed by a semester-long paid internship, during which they are paired up with an experienced principal mentor.

In another Chicago program known as LIFT, first- and second-year principals attend monthly workshops. Two beginning principals are paired up with a mentor to study school leadership, parent involvement and community partnerships, professional development and human resource issues, and teaching and learning. Two other programs work with experienced principals. All but one of the programs are voluntary, and all are well attended.

States, as well as school dis-

tricts, are creating professional development programs to support principals. For example, the Principals' Executive Program, created by the North Carolina general assembly in 1984 with the aim of improving student performance, patterns its program after Harvard University's leadership training for business executives. The Texas Principals Leadership Initiative, created by an education and business coalition and approved in 1995 by the state education commissioner, provides assessment-driven professional development for Texas principals. And Ohio recently launched the Ohio Principals Leadership Academy to assist entry-level and more experienced principals to become stronger instructional leaders.

For principals, the opportunity to develop new skills is one of the most important factors in being able to meet the challenges of their changing leadership role. Named principal of the year for 2000 by the National Middle School Association, Michelle Pedigo believes that it is not adversity to new roles and responsibilities among principals but rather a lack of knowledge and support that slows the pace of change. "To be true instructional leaders is different than the way we've done our jobs in the past," says Pedigo.

Principals, she says, are excited by the possibilities of instructional leadership, but without the requisite support and training, they stay in their manager role, as "clerks of the work." Pedigo believes that only when we create an environment that will encourage principals to take risks, and support them when they do so, will they take the risks needed to change the role of school leadership.

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A Profile of an Instructional Leader: Michelle Pedigo

Michelle Pedigo is a true instructional leader. In her tenure at Barren County Middle School in Glasgow, Ky., the school was one of four schools in the nation to receive the designation of “School to Watch” from the National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform. The National Middle School Association named her principal of the year for 2000.

Pedigo says: “Instructional leadership places at the top of the list a sheer focus and intentionality that what the school and its leader do has an instructional focus. It doesn’t mean that principals don’t deal with administrative issues, but when they do, they look at what will support student achievement. [Leaders] look at all of the resources available and think outside the box about ways to use them. True instructional leaders build the capacity for leadership in other people. This includes teachers as mentors and content coaches, parents, students, and community members.”

To make this definition a reality, Pedigo emphasizes the need for an “overhaul” in leadership training to help principals “use all facets of a team by looking at what needs to be accomplished and putting all the pieces of the puzzle together.” A district needs to create an environment that will encourage principals to take risks and implement risky, or new, ideas that reinforce instructional leadership, she says. In her new position as secondary instructional director in the Barren County school district, Pedigo is helping to design that kind of environment for principals.

Pedigo’s decision to leave the principal position was the “hardest decision” she has had to make in her professional career. “The principalship was the most demanding yet the most rewarding job I’ve ever done,” she says. She remains convinced, though, of the importance of the principal: “I have come to believe that the principal is the most instrumental person in education. It is [principal] leadership that determines the level at which the school embraces opportunities for students,” she wrote on MiddleWeb.

Parents Making A Difference in School Leadership

Several parent and community organizations have successfully raised the profile of parents in efforts to address school leadership issues. These activities can serve as models for PPS chapters and other groups as they create opportunities and take on the responsibility of helping to improve leadership in their schools.

Supporting Principals

The *Ask for More* Collaborative in Jackson, Miss., funded by a \$600,000 implementation grant from the Ford Foundation, is a community-driven effort focused in part on changing the way principals in Jackson Public Schools use data. The professional development for principals also provides opportunities to network with peers, read and discuss current research, reflect on their own practices, and apply what they learn. The Jackson PPS chapter spearheads this partnership with the school district, Millsaps College Principals Institute, the Public Education Forum, the Mississippi Human Services Agenda, 100 Black Men, Jackson State University and the Algebra Project.

Training Parents to be Effective Participants on Site Councils

The *Ask for More* Collaborative also includes a model training program for site-based councils. PPS of Jackson developed *Listening, Learning, Leading: A Site-Council Involvement Guide*. (For more information, see the resources section of this *Parent Press* and the article below.)

In Kentucky, the statewide initiative known as the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence has been a vital force in training parents to assume important positions on school-based decision-making teams. Through the Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership, 200 parents a year, selected from across the state, gain understanding of the state’s education reform act, standards-based education, and the roles of parents in improving education.

Bev Raimondo, director of the Institute, says of the training, “We do see a difference in the way parents are able to work with principals as a result of participating in CIPL. That’s because they know the education jargon, they understand the school’s achievement data and can talk to principals about systemic, substantive achievement needs...[Parents] tell us they have so much more confidence that enables them to approach principals.”

Changing the Role of Parents in Principal Interviews and Evaluations

In West Palm Beach County, Florida, the Coalition for Black Student Achievement worked with the Education Trust to develop a set of questions to be used by parents and community members during principal interviews. The questions force the candidates to address instructional leadership by asking how they would focus on student achievement, professional development, family and community involvement, and innovative leadership strategies. This process also helps educate parents about what they should be looking for in a principal. Candidates have remarked that the Coalition’s questions are rigorous and make them seriously consider how they would approach the principalship.

In Pueblo, Colo., a coalition of the two local school districts, the local university and community college, and the Chamber of Commerce and the Latino Chamber drafted standards for teachers and principals. The district and the principals’ union accepted the standards, which are now used to evaluate teacher and principal performance. Rewards and penalties give the standards teeth.

A Closer Look at Instructional Leaders

National experts at The Education Trust, the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation and the National Staff Development Council; leaders in Pennsylvania public education; and researchers at prominent universities all point to a common set of characteristics that define effective school leadership. According to their definitions, instructional leaders:

- 1. Create a school that is focused on student performance.** They have an unrelenting conviction that youngsters can learn at higher levels and that schools and classrooms need to improve to make these higher levels of achievement possible. They spend a significant amount of time in classrooms, signaling that instruction is important.
- 2. Have a deep knowledge of teaching and learning** that is more than just a cursory understanding of what happens in the classroom. Mary Kay Stein of the University of Pittsburgh and Richard Elmore of Harvard University agree that principals need deep knowledge of at least one content area. With knowledge of content and instruction, instructional leaders are able to ask intelligent questions of teachers about their instruction, look at teachers’ work samples, and watch classroom interactions with an eye toward improving teaching and learning. Lancaster School District expects principals to be able to provide explicit oral and written feedback on teacher lessons and student work.
- 3. Create a learning community in the school.** Principals who are instructional leaders provide support and learning opportunities for teachers to be instructional leaders in their own classrooms. They have knowledge of every teacher as a learner and make professional development a priority, helping teachers see the areas in which they need to improve and making the time in the school day for that learning.
- 4. Pour over data.** Instructional leaders use data to ask hard questions of faculty about the kind and quality of instruction, and how that instruction helps low-performing youngsters perform at higher levels. They are flexible and innovative with resources and instructional strategies and are able to design creative interventions for students not achieving at high levels. They are willing to work with, and reassign if necessary, teachers who are not showing a marked difference in their students’ performance.
- 5. Engage parents and the larger community.** Instructional leaders invite parents and other community members into the school to see and talk about instruction and what kids are learning, perhaps examining student portfolios and engaging students in discussions about their work. They seek out parent advocacy and will advocate for the kids who don’t have their own parent-advocates.

Site Councils: An Opportunity for Parents to Share School Leadership

Parents have unique, structured opportunities to be part of school leadership in schools with site-based authority. To be effective as participants in shared decision making with principals and teachers, parents need to bring certain skills and knowledge to their school-based management teams.

The PPS chapter in Jackson, Miss., has taken the lead in its community to provide the training parents need to be effective members of site councils. PPS of Jackson developed *Listening, Learning, Leading: A Site-Council Involvement Guide*, which gives parents basic skills for participating in school leadership teams and the knowledge that they have the right and power to be involved in the leadership of the school. *Listening, Learning, Leading* contains 17 training topics that cover the mechanics of a council as well as the content of a site council’s work.

The program is tailored so that the topics can be presented individually or in combination, depending on the needs and experience of the parent groups attending the training. The modules build understanding of school management issues (e.g., data, improvement plans, school budgets) and develop the skills needed to participate in site leadership teams (running meetings, building consensus, listening and communicating techniques, models of decision making).

“We train parents how to use data so they can interpret what comes from the district. We help them understand what it means to serve as a representative for other parents. Some parents need more of the basics, like how to run a

meeting, while some need less because they have developed these skills in their professional work,” says Mary Esther Schnaubelt, the former executive director of PPS of Jackson.

PPS chapters can use the training with parents and community members even if there are no site councils in their districts. Principals have used portions of it with their staffs, and other community groups are using it to conduct parent involvement training.

To promote site councils as avenues for parent involvement in school leadership, Schnaubelt advises that district policy needs to specifically indicate that parents do have positions with real power on site councils. Once they have a place at the table, says Schnaubelt, parents can insist that site council meetings are held regularly at parent-friendly times.

Listening, Learning, Leading is used as part of the *Ask for More* Collaborative in Jackson to build strong site-based governance at each school in one of Jackson’s lowest performing feeder systems. *Ask for More* utilizes multiple activities to give parents, teachers, and principals the skills they need to understand and positively affect student achievement in that feeder system. (For more information, see the resources section of this *Parent Press*)

Chris Brown, director of the schools and community program at Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform, trains parents and other groups to use community organizing to improve their schools. Brown, who

is also a parent member of a local school council in Chicago, says that parents need a vision and a core set of skills to be effective participants in site councils. “Parents need to know how to use the power they’ve got to make change happen.” Brown helps parent participants on site councils define their vision, a rationale for that vision, and how they’ll make that vision a reality.

Brown encourages parents, as they make the case for greater or more substantive participation of parents in site councils, to mobilize an alliance between parents and other community members who have a stake in local schools.

Michelle Pedigo, named 2000 principal of the year by the National Middle School Association, echoes Brown’s suggestion that parents bring confidence to their role on site-based teams. “Parents should expect to be treated equally...and expect not to be talked to in a jargon-filled conversation.” She also encourages parents to “come with an open mind” and keep their work focused on instruction while trusting the principal on personnel issues, athletic issues and other administrative issues.

She advises that parent groups approach their work on principal leadership by first developing a common mission by talking with principals about their goals and visions for how parent involvement can help the school. Starting with the idea that parents are there to support student achievement is a way to avoid threatening and alienating the principal.

TOOLKIT

Parent Checklist: Examining Principal Leadership in Your Community

To examine the local landscape of the principalship, parents can look for the following factors that contribute to effective principal leadership:

Principals are focused on instruction

- Do principals spend time in classrooms and working with teachers on instruction?
- What kinds of professional development opportunities do principals make available for the teachers in their schools?
- How do principals use student achievement data to make changes in instruction?

The district supports principals

- How strong is the professional development for principals?
- How is professional development for principals linked with the actual work of their schools?
- What opportunities do principals have to network with peers and receive mentoring and coaching?

Principals have the power they need to lead the school

- What decisions can principals make about hiring, placing and releasing teachers?
- What decisions can principals make about the school budget and the class schedule?
- What ability do principals have to direct their staff members' professional development activities and to carve time out of the school day for these opportunities?

Principal evaluations are substantive and principals are held accountable for results

- How are principals evaluated?
- How frequently are they evaluated (more than once a year)?
- Does the district use multiple measures (e.g., student achievement data, peer review)?

The community has a pipeline for new principals

- Is the community facing a principal shortage?
- What do the data show about the number of principals who will be retiring in the next five years?
- What is the turnover rate of principals?
- What reasons do principals give for leaving the position? What reasons do teachers and others give for not pursuing the principalship?

Tips for Parents:

What to Bring to the Table When Addressing School Leadership Issues

1. Build your understanding of school reform issues and individual school plans for implementing reforms. Spend time on school campuses learning about positive aspects as well as things that need to be changed.
2. Build your credibility with principals by being reliable; staying with something once you've committed to it; demonstrating your expertise about principals' new roles, responsibilities, and pressures; showing that you are knowledgeable about the school and its reform plans; and taking a constructive stance toward change.
3. When participating on site councils, be willing to be part of a team. Put aside personal needs and agendas and learn how decisions are made. Participate in the process, or advocate changing it if it's not inclusive. Be a team player, not just a muckraker.

Actions Parents Can Take to Build and Sustain Effective School Leadership

1. Form good working relationships with the principals in your schools. Gather information, educate yourself on the changing dynamics of the principalship, find common ground with principals, and develop realistic goals—rather than using an adversarial approach. Talk about goals and changes in the context of student achievement. Become advocates for good teaching, learning and leadership.
2. Work at the district level to help redefine the role of the principals—away from manager toward instructional leader. Parents can work with districts and the community to:
 - Advocate that the district creates the support—including training, professional development, time, and compensation—that principals need to be able to focus on instruction in their schools.
 - Ensure that the criteria used in the hiring and evaluation of principals include characteristics of instructional leaders. Advocate for parents to be part of the interview and evaluation processes.
 - Help re-write the job descriptions of principals to include requisite skills and experience that indicates a principal should focus on instruction and create a learning community in the school. Make these descriptions public.
3. Create and sustain partnerships with community-based organizations, universities and consultants to promote effective school leadership practices and provide the support that current and future principals need to be good instructional leaders.
4. Actively promote parent involvement on site-based management councils. Promote programs or other avenues for parents to gain the skills and knowledge they need to become effective partners on site councils.
5. Find common ground with principal unions and teacher unions. Work with them to shine a spotlight on and address barriers to finding, keeping and supporting effective school leaders, such as a principal shortage, increased managerial and instructional demands on principals, and inadequate compensation for principals.

Resources

1. School Leadership

• The **Institute for Educational Leadership**, through its School Leadership for the 21st Century Initiative, has published "Leadership for Student Learning: Reinventing the Principalship," which explores why principal leadership matters and ways to address the principalship crisis. The report is available on IEL's Web site or by calling Mary Podmostko at IEL. *Phone: 202-822-8405, ext. 31; Web site: www.iel.org*

• **Education Week** is running a school leadership series over the course of two years. Recent articles, including one on instructional leaders (Nov. 1, 2000), are available on the Web: www.edweek.org/sreports/.

• **The Fire is Back! Principals Sharing School Governance** by Jo and Joseph Blase. This book portrays exemplary principals' perspectives on shared governance leadership, the role of the principal in restructured schools and the effect of shared governance on the organization. Published by Corwin Press, Inc. *Order via e-mail: order@corwin.sagepub.com or phone 805-499-9774.*

2. The Principalship

• **"The Principal, Keystone of a High-Achieving School: Attracting and Keeping the Leaders We Need"** identifies the characteristics of effective principals, discusses the shortage of principals, and shows programs that address the shortage. Educational Research Service prepared this recent report for the National Association of Secondary School Principals and the National Association of Elementary School Principals. Available for \$12 from NASSP. *Phone: 703-860-0200; Web site: www.nassp.org (in the "Store" section)*

• The Web site, **MiddleWeb**, posts Middle School Diaries of principals and teachers. The entries of principals put a human face on the difficult and changing role of principals. *Web site: www.middleweb.com/MSDiaries.html*

• **The National Association of Elementary School Principals** is a professional organization that advocates for and supports elementary and middle school principals. NAESP's Web site includes an extensive bookstore, articles called "Principals Perspective," select articles from its publications, information about professional development, a school leadership inventory for principals, and links to hot topics, research and learning resources; *Phone: 800-38-NAESP; Web site: www.naesp.org*

• **The National Association of Secondary School Principals** works to promote excellence in school leadership for the middle grades and high schools. NASSP's Web site contains an online store, position statements, select articles from its publications, links to related resources on issues affecting the principalship, and a self-assessment tool to help principals plan their own professional development. *Phone: 703-860-0200; Web site: www.nassp.org*

3. Standards and Support for Principals

• The **National Staff Development Council** promotes high quality professional development

for principals. The winter 2001 issue of the *Journal of Staff Development* focuses on principal leadership and elements of effective professional development for principals. *Phone: 513-523-6029; Web site: www.nsdc.org*

• The **Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium** developed standards for school leaders in 1996. Twenty-four state education agencies and representatives from professional organizations developed these standards, which reflect the centrality of student learning, the changing role of the school leader and the collaborative nature of school leadership. The standards are available on the Web site of the Council of Chief of State School Officers: www.ccsso.org/standrds.html.

4. Training for Site Councils

• **Listening, Learning, Leading: A Site-Council Involvement Guide**, developed by PPS of Jackson, contains 17 training topics that cover the mechanics of participating in council meetings as well as the content of a site council's work. For more information, contact Eileen Beazley at PPS of Jackson. *Phone: 601-353-1335; E-mail: eileen.beazley@parents4publicschools.com*

• Through the **Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership**, the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence trains 200 parents each year to become more powerful advocates for improved education and higher achievement. The Institute's training program includes information and skills that prepare parents to assume important positions on school-based decision-making teams. Contact Bev Raimondo, Director of the Commonwealth Institute. *Ph: 859-233-9849; Web site: www.prichardcommittee.org/cipl/cipl.html*

• **Community Organizing for School Reformers**, from Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform, is a training curriculum to help parents, teachers, community organizations, site-based management teams and others learn how to organize to improve their local schools. More information is available on Cross City's Web site. The curriculum is available for \$30. *Phone: 312-322-4880; Web site: www.crosscity.org*

5. Parent Involvement in Principal Hiring

• The Coalition for Black Student Achievement and The Education Trust have developed **How to Choose a Principal: A Community Protocol**. It is a community engagement process and a set of questions developed to transform parent involvement in principal interviews so that parents know how to look for qualities of instructional leadership. Contact Cynthia Laramore at the Coalition (*E-mail: LaramoreCC@aol.com; Phone: 561-842-1134*) or Stephanie Robinson at The Education Trust (*E-mail: srobinson@edtrust.org; Phone: 202-293-1217*).

• In Pueblo, Colo., a coalition of community, school district, higher education and business members drafted **Standards for Teachers and Principals** that are now used to evaluate teacher and principal performance. For more information about the process, contact LeeAnn Withnell, education director of the Greater Pueblo Chamber of Commerce. *Phone: 1-800-233-3446.*



Myras Holmes shares her experiences in Cleveland public schools with fellow National Board members Myrna Castrejon, Roy Pollard and Salin Geevarghese.



Etta Green Johnson, Jane Beach, former Governor William Winter and Manuel Rodriguez listen intently to Don Davies' wisdom at the fall 2000 National PPS Board meeting.