

Executive Summary

LEADING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT: OUR PRINCIPAL PURPOSE

Monday, August 21 and Tuesday, August 22, 2006

SYMPOSIUM

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

Welcome: Nil Parent, ADFO

Overview of Leading Student Achievement: Nelly Kelders, CPCO

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

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

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

Principal teams from a number of boards participated in three symposia during Year 1 of the project. The following positive results emerged from the first year's work:

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

During Year 2 of the project, three symposia will be organized: August 21 and 22, 2006; January 26, 2007; and May 4, 2007.

The Role of Research in the Project: Joanne Robinson

An evidence-informed model is an integral component of the Leading Student Achievement project. In Year 1, Ken Leithwood focused the research on attitudes and changes in teachers. An evidence-informed approach will continue in Year 2, the focus being on recording the influence of Principal Learning Teams. A survey will be distributed in October for completion by principals and teachers.

Breakthrough: Redesigning Classroom Instruction to Transform Learning: Carmel Crevola

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

Leading Student Achievement Project

Crevola reviewed the goal of the LSA project, namely, to raise the bar for student achievement and lower the gap between high achievers and those less successful. She pointed out that the greatest opportunity to narrow the gap is in the early years up to the age of eight when it is possible to accelerate students up to grade level. She noted that preliminary results of the LSA project show growth toward the achievement of a number of significant goals.

Guiding Principles of *Breakthrough*

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

- The role of leadership is to provide the focus and expert support system...to personalize each classroom with greater instructional precision.
- Studies of effective schools show the importance of strong educational leadership.
- Educational reform needs careful and engaged ubiquitous leadership.
- Tri-level (province/district/school) leadership is essential.
- Leadership needs to be pro-active and distributed.

Breakthrough Components: (*Breakthrough*, Chapter 2)

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

1. Personalization – education that puts the learner at the centre;
2. Precision – a system of assessment for learning;
3. Professional Learning – ongoing learning for every teacher "in context".

Moral Purpose

Four beliefs and understandings comprise the moral purpose of education and form the foundation of action (*Breakthrough*, p.12). The following are these nonnegotiable beliefs:

1. All students can achieve high standards given sufficient time and support.
2. All teachers can teach to high standards given the right conditions and assistance.
3. High expectations and early intervention are essential.
4. Teachers need to be able to articulate what they do and why they do it.

Transforming Classroom Instruction: (Breakthrough, Chapter 3)

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

Instruction, not teaching, is the appropriate focus, because it is about interaction with students, teachers, and resources in constantly changing contexts. Instruction begins with what students know and are able to do; it is then designed on the basis of this information. If classroom instruction could be organized to include four essential components – powerful assessment tools, use of data, personalized instruction, and a means of monitoring learning - significant improvement would occur.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Since 2003, the culture of the professional learning community has been the means for improving student achievement in the Durham Catholic Board, in particular, on the EQAO scores. For this reason, the district was organized into families of schools, each one being a PLC. Professional conversation comprised a major component of each family of schools' meetings as did the dialogue that principals were learning in order to conduct such a dialogue within their schools with their staffs.

Professional learning focused on teachers learning in context, the goal being to change teacher beliefs about instruction. To facilitate this learning, principals were given funding to release teachers from their classroom responsibilities in order to participate in learning activities.

Durham Catholic District School Board has been involved in the Leading Student Achievement initiative, with ten principals participating in Year 1. They focused on reading at the junior level. In the coming year, eleven more principals and their staffs will be part of the LSA project and will focus their efforts on instruction in order to improve student achievement.

DAY TWO

Welcome: Nil Parent

Keynote Address: Sandra Pupatello, Minister of Education

The Minister stated that her government aims to reach every student, raise student achievement, lower the drop out rate, and reduce class size to 20 or less in the primary grades. She also outlined a number of additional goals and actions and finished by listing the five goals on the education agenda of the current government:

1. to create good conditions for educators to do their work and fulfill their role;
2. to provide high quality training for principals and vice principals;
3. to increase the input of principals and vice principals to the education system;
4. to create an environment of respect and security for principals and vice principals;
5. to ensure consistency in the province by better defining the role, responsibilities, and obligations of principals and vice principals.

At this point, the Minister opened the floor to questions. Questions focused on these topics:

- program to support the growing number of new principals and vice principals;
- hiring more specialty teachers;
- funding for computers and computer teacher training;
- reinstatement of programs such as the "Best Start Program";
- community supports to help needy students;
- the opportunity for teachers to consolidate the abundance of learning experienced in Year 1 of the LSA project;
- efficient and speedy access to health care services to meet critical student needs;
- guidelines for the two additional P.A. Days.

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

Effective PLC's use data in order to make informed decisions about teaching and learning. The most effective way to monitor and be accountable for student progress is through the use of 'Data Walls'. Their use will result in the following:

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

There are three stages in data wall implementation:

1. Compliance;
2. Accounting;
3. Accountability and Communication.

The presenters ended by listing useful websites and their own e-mail addresses.

Leading Leaders

- A. Barb McMorrow, CPCO, explained that the terms 'Lead Principal' and 'Lead Superintendent', have been carefully chosen to emphasize the leadership role of each. She outlined the roles of the 'Lead Principal' as both facilitator and 'Lead Learner'.
- B. Joanne Robinson, OPC, presented a number of tools to assist the 'Lead Principal': *Powerful Designs for Professional Learning*; "The Promise of Coaching" by Mary Navanti; the handouts in the Symposium package; and a 'Goal Start-up Activity'.
- C. Linda Massey, OPC, described how to use the DVD's and Facilitator's Guide given to each 'Lead Principal' for use with their PLTs, school PLCs, parent groups, and other audiences.

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

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