

# LEADING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT: OUR PRINCIPAL PURPOSE

Friday, February 1, 2008

## SYMPOSIUM

Toronto Airport Marriott  
901 Dixon Road, Toronto

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

Nil Parent explained that the Leading Student Achievement project is now midway through its third year. He also presented the following statistics:

- 46 districts are involved in the project;
- 209 Principal Learning Teams have been established;
- 1734 principals and their schools are participating;
- 67 supervisory officers are supporting the project in their districts.

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

**Introduction:** Dr. Glaze began her presentation by congratulating the LNS staff for their continued efforts and introducing Ann Perron, who will be fulfilling the position of Interim CEO of LNS as of February 13, 2008, at which time Dr. Glaze moves into her new role as Education Commissioner and Senior Advisor to the Minister on equity and character development. She completed her introduction by recognizing principals' sense of mission, moral purpose and support for the work of the Secretariat.

**Considering the Future:** Dr. Glaze listed the following tasks:

- Education must be re-missioned to meet the needs of students who possess diverse needs.
- We must rekindle the interest of our students in the sciences, so that we can prepare them effectively for SPOT (Smart, Personal, Object, Technology), the semantic web and nano-technology.
- We must ensure that the graduates of the future possess appropriate competencies such as the ability to problem-solve, think critically, be creative, lead and follow, span divides, and behave ethically.

**Leadership Skills Required of Principals Today:** In order to be a successful leader today, a principal must demonstrate competencies that include educational leadership, the power to influence, political astuteness, and social intelligence.

Furthermore, today's leaders will be judged on three criteria:

1. their achievements;
2. the way lives have been changed by their actions;
3. the level to which they have met the needs of those they serve.

**Linking Professional Community and Real School Improvement:**  
**Dr. Karen Seashore Louis, Rodney Wallace Professor for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning in the Department of Education Policy and Administration University of Minnesota**  
**Recipient of the NSDC Award: Contribution to Staff Development**  
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Dr. Seashore Louis covered a number of topics in her presentation linking professional community and school improvement:

- Core of Resilient Cultures and Leadership – A resilient culture is one where joint activities bring groups of teachers together around moral purpose and accountability.
- Professional Community – Such a community is comprised of shared values, reflective dialogue, deprivatization of practice, a focus on student learning and collaboration; a supportive principal is the most critical element to create these conditions, while teachers have the primary responsibility for maintaining these conditions once they have been established.
- Principal “Leadership for Learning” – Principals have a strong impact on the classroom when they behave as instructional leaders, share leadership activities with their teachers and engender trust; the results include focused instruction and higher achievement for students.
- Instructional Leadership and Shared Leadership – These concepts elude exact definition, but there are two possible perspectives of instructional leadership. One views it as instructional expertise and the other as instructional support. Considering the extent of the workload, it is impossible for the principal to provide both; so, the solution is sharing instructional leadership with teachers.
- Reverting to Default Cultures – A lack of trust, combined with teacher workload stress and an inconsistent approach to professional norms, can result in teachers reverting to default cultures (e.g. teaching in isolation, abandoning shared leadership for hierarchical structure and responsibilities).
- Schools as “Giant Hairballs” – “Hairballs” are the accumulated practices which have been successful and provided a sense of comfort for staff; if these practices are hindering school improvement, they must be changed;
- How to Continue Your Work - It is important to link organizational learning (OL) and professional community (PC) through the practice of reflective dialogue. The following actions will contribute to success: engage in reflective dialogue when something new comes along to determine what action to take; address default cultures; conduct conversations on shared leadership; provide staff development; avoid implementing superficial changes; align energy and resources with teaching and learning; form strong relationships.
- Three Principals for Instructional Leadership – There are three responsibilities of instructional leadership (Manzano, 2005):
  1. knowledge of curriculum, instruction and assessment;
  2. involvement in curriculum, instruction and assessment;
  3. establishment of a monitoring(feedback)/evaluation process.
- Principles for Maximizing Shared Leadership for Student Learning –
  1. Teacher leaders are respected, are learning-oriented, and have leadership capacity.
  2. Leadership work is valued, visible, negotiated, and shared.
  3. Conditions include a supportive culture, a supportive principal, time, resources and development opportunities.

**Principal Association Meetings: ADFO, CPCO, OPC**

Principals met in their association groupings to review the objectives and five conditions established as the focus for Year 3 of the LSA project. They discussed progress to date, as well as challenges encountered. Dr. Seashore Louis spent time at each of these association meetings in order to answer questions of clarification and provide additional insight into the material she presented during the morning.

**The next Leading Student Achievement symposium will be held on May 9, 2008.**