Leaders of Processes

The primary responsibility of curriculum leads is to develop the collective capacity of the organization to assure that all students are successful. One of the functions of these individuals' work to assure the capacity of the system and the success of the students is their collaborative leadership in establishing and monitoring common practices and procedures to assure alignment and achievement of initiatives and plans with district and building goals.

The key words are *common practices and procedures*. Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) is a perfect example; a protocol, a common set of procedures, is necessary if we want a systems-wide approach and impact of PLCs on learning. Established processes assure alignment within these communities of practice as well as across the district and promote the achievement of the district's intentions in learning. Without them, we may achieve "pockets of excellence." With them, we will create a system of quality learning and achievement.

As leaders of processes, major initiatives for which we need to establish common practices and procedures are hiring, evaluation, intensive assistance, data analysis, school improvement, and evaluation of programs and initiatives. Others we might consider are processes for learning walks, classroom observations, professional learning communities, facilitation of meetings, and behavior expectations.

A first step in establishing a common process is to benchmark the initiative or plan and then determine the specific steps that will be needed to achieve the desired outcome. Once established, the process must be monitored during implementation and evaluated for its impact based on the initially identified benchmarks. Obviously, skills in monitoring, coaching, and feedback are paramount if the process is to become consistent and universal in the district.

The benefit of the common and successful use of a specific process is the increase in the beliefs of its users in the value and impact of the process. An additional plus is the capacity the use of the common process builds in the organization – capacity in consistency of actions, capacity for achievement of the intended outcomes, and capacity of a system to support teaching, learning, and organizational effectiveness consistent with the district's vision and goals and student needs.

Common processes are especially beneficial when working and communicating with the public. These standards of action create structures and partnerships for meaningful and respectful parent and community involvement in your schools. Parents know what is expected of them and what they can expect from educators when standardized processes and procedures for their involvement are implemented with fidelity. For example, when the parent of a child with special needs knows the process for the meetings to develop or evaluate progress with the individual educational plan (IEP) of the child, they are more comfortable taking part in the meeting. They understand their role and the roles of the educators in attendance; they know how to come prepared for the meeting, and they know what and how they will learn about their child at school.

Our work as leaders of processes requires that we select, design, and work collaboratively with other educators within the district to provide tools to guide the processes and common practices. These will often be in the form of handbooks, templates, configuration maps, rubrics, or evaluation protocols. When educators know the processes for the use of data, for providing input, for making decisions, for

facilitating meetings, and even for monitoring and evaluating progress, their level of trust increases as they see fairness in the process. Added benefits include a shared understanding of a common language, common routines and practice, and regular, ongoing capacity building of networks for learning and achievement.

The system must be on the side of the principal if we are to increase students' success beyond "pockets of excellence." We must assure them the organizational structure and support to achieve the expected. For example, if we want our principals to collect information for the system through learning walks, we must establish a process with specific criteria and expectations. We must also complete structured learning walks with them – modeling the procedure, coaching their own actions, providing feedback that will allow them to increase the quality of the walks as well as provide consistent data to their building and to the district.

Just as helpful to principals are specific common approaches for improvement plans. Sustainability is linked to planning and goal setting that begins at the district level and is enacted at the school level. It is our responsibility to assure the building leaders have the capacity to plan for and accomplish the goals for the building.   To achieve this with consistency and positive impact, the leaders of central office, including curriculum leads, must model the planning and then provide the structures and coaching for the principals to "make it happen" in their own buildings. Data consults, based on a standardized process that accurately monitors implementation, around each school's plan and portfolio throughout the year allow the building and district leaders to address barriers and celebrate accomplishments as well as increase the capacity of each individual building leader and the leaders across the district to create a *system* of success. It is the pressure and the support of the central office leaders, using common approaches and procedures and ongoing coaching that build the capacity of these instructional leaders to achieve the expectations.

As leaders of processes, we orient the culture, the resources, and the sets of actions around the learning agenda. We gain more traction when capacity is shared. We accomplish this through standardized processes, the "connective tissue" in keeping the moving parts all headed in the same direction. These wrap-around supports and directions allow those pockets of excellence to become a system of quality learning.

Processes – a must if we are to get the work done, achieve a common purpose, and build the capacity of the system to improve instructional practice and performance.